T100R

With the front forks fully compressed and the tie-downs secured we backed out onto Elizabeth Lane and started back towards Savannah. As we wound our way out of the quiet neighborhood of neatly tended suburban homes I kept looking back through the pickup's rear window to be sure things were secure and by the time we broke out on to state road 78 I was pretty comfortable that things were staying put. Beside me Patrick was still buzzing from the jolt he got when Richard first fired up the bike - the throaty roar of the old Triumph bringing distant memories up through my bones.

The madness that is GA78 soon gave way to I-285 then I-640 and finally I-75 south toward Macon, the little four cylinder truck engine heaving in and out of high gear as the cruise control coped with the long rolling terrain south of Atlanta. We had commitments back in Savannah that night so the ride home had some urgency to it and as we rolled along the conversation in my mind turned to the wisdom of my purchase . . .

An old 1971 British motorcycle - you are crazy! What

have you done? Your girl friend . . and even your brother, in their own way, rolled their eyes at the thought. Where you gonna keep it? When you gonna ride it? Will the curse of Lucas get you by the diodes? Should'a bought a cheap jap bike for what you want to do. Should'a put the money in your IRA. Should'a . . . back and forth and on and on . . .

As the miles tick away I remember that I need to get a helmet. Question is, do I do so tomorrow back home or take the time now and find a bike shop in Macon. Another bout of dithering ensues as the exits click by and Macon draws ever nearer. In the end I decide to stop and after asking at a convenience store we are pointed west on Mercer University Avenue looking for that stretch of town where "the bike shops are." Past the housing projects and the mall, all the time westward we traverse Macon ending finally at Capital Cycles, a huge phantasm of recreational hardware – four wheelers, jet skis, dirt bikes, cruisers, road bikes, clothing, equipment, all in and surrounding a huge building fronted with big glass windows.

I park out front and ask Patrick to stay with the truck while I go in and peruse the helmet selection. After some mild hand wringing I make my choice and as I'm headed to the cashier I look out through the windows at Pat - up on the truck sitting the bike. The phone lines are clogged so the charge authorization takes a while. When I finally exit the shop and head to the truck I see a guy, fore arms resting on the truck bed his feet crossed behind him, talking to Pat. As I approach I'm introduced to Rod one of the head mechanics at the dealership. He's glowing. "Man this is gorgeous! a T100, cool, I've had a 650 Tiger for years, wiring harness burned up a couple years ago - oh there's this great guy in Marietta does incredible restorations - buddy of mind had a Daytona like this that caught fire and he took the charred remains and for six grand put it in show room condition - man you know what you can get in there (he points to the showroom) for six grand? shit, that's what - guys in there, I try to tell up but they don't know, this here's a real motorcycle." I haven't said a word yet. He slows down and we chat some, sharing that particular (and there are many) interest in old British motorcycles. As we part he says he'd buy it from me right then and there.

Buoyed by the encounter Patrick and I head back through Macon to pick up I-16 eastbound and home. Once up at highway speeds my mental conversation begins anew but with a difference. Yea, I bought an old British bike and the last ten minutes demonstrates one of the main reasons why. At this point in my life the objects I acquire need some substance about them beyond just the atoms and molecules from which they're made - quality, a story, history, some characteristics which connect people together across the gaps that isolate us so.

After a while, as the rolling red clay hills of central Georgia give way to the sandy pine forests of the coastal plain Patrick pipes up as to how he needs to take a leak. We're okay on fuel so we dodge into a convenience store at the next exit. While waiting in the store for Pat to do his business a voice from behind me asks "Is that you're Triumph out there?" I turn to find a man coming through the entrance door with a swarm of children weaving and dodging to get through and into the rows of candy. "A six fifty?" "No, a Daytona" I reply. "Whow, I had a Bonneville a long time ago" he says. We chat a while. You can see the distant look in his eyes, his wife walks by behind him and into the rest room, our eyes making contact momentarily, she smiles and her's twinkle, the door swings closed. His kids are running around but he is now floating. I tell him I just bought it and with a soft snap he disconnects completely - unplugged entirely from this space/time continuum. We could have walked out and spent the next hour leaning against the pickup running our eyes across the old familiar parts and pieces that loosely come together to form a 1971 Triumph Daytona. But Pat and I needed to get on home so I shook his hand and left him standing in the candy isle amid the wonderful sound of his kid's voices discussing the pros and cons of a 5th Avenue vs. a Snickers Bar.

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