

Who is Jimmy O?

Those who have been longtime fans at Niagara Motorcycle Speedway will have no trouble answering. He raced dirt track then switch to speedway when Stan Bradbury came along to start the popular European style racing in Canada, here at Welland. But did you know Jimmy rode trials and enduros before building his Triumph 500 fuel burning hill-climber he rode to a Cdn. Championships in 1971? And he drag raced a 500 c.c. and 650 c.c. Triumph at Cayuga?

He's Jump'n Jeff's Orosz daddy.

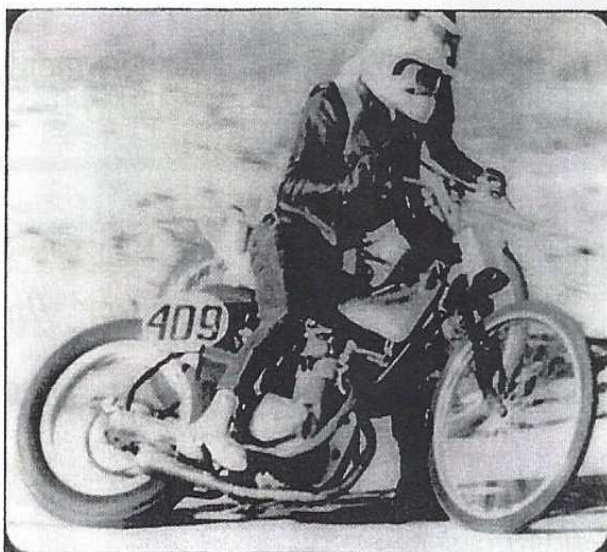
For Trials and Enduros – he admits; never finished even one event – he rode Jawa CZ's. He didn't say if his first 3 CZ's - slightly used examples - purchased from Welland's famed announcer, Wes Pierce, had any affect on his lack of success. After all Wes did very well as an Enduro rider....But not too well in the eyes of Jimmy's Father who hated motorcycles!

Jimmy started riding at age 17 (1964) when he got his 1st bike and joined WCMC. He has bought many motorcycles since that first one but has not sold even one!

As a WCMC member Jimmy got into Sportsman Hill-Climbs at Fonthill; Steel City, Hamilton; Grand Valley riders, Brantford and Springville Travelers, Springville N.Y. He ice raced in Port Colborne and as far away as Quebec City on spiked tires. Of course he always had a road bike.



Robin, Jimmy and the Triumph 500



Campaigning the \$50 Honda, 1977

When Welland's dirt track opened Jimmy's competition interests switched to Dirt Track until he tried speedway. "I liked sliding" says Jimmy. From there his budget race program involved building a home-made speedway bike powered by a 350 c.c. Honda twin dubbed "The \$50 Honda" by Welland's famed announcer every time it appeared on the track. For those who can't fix a leaky tap; can you imagine building a frame for a speedway bike so it looked exactly the same as the real thing? For a couple of years he followed the white boots, and winning style, of Stan Bradbury.

Jimmy is also famous for his knife collections and for the handmade knives he makes and donates for fundraisers. There will probably be one around the track sometime this season. Get your tickets. They are beautiful.

From a stint working at Clare's Cycle to part owner of Atlas Cycle Jimmy moved on to a career at INCO where he kept the wheels of industry rolling as Mechanical Coordinator, until retirement. So let your kids play with motorcycles its good for their minds and could lead to a good job!

Limited budget meant limited success: Finally with a \$1000 Canada Savings Bond as instant cash Jim and wife Robin bought a real Jawa speedway bike from Gary Ford, who just happened to want exactly \$1000 for it. It was obvious that bike could win. At that time Gary was the guy you followed riding for second place.

From then on Jimmy flew; and slide he did, throwing stones from the track into the stands. He was a crowd favourite. But as always its not "Fast" that wins championships; its "Fastest the most often"! Len Dillon was one of the riders who snatched the gold while Jimmy got 2nd in CMA Ontario season points. For good reason he's called "Lightening Len".

All was well until the night he hit the wall coming out of turn two causing a serious injury. Coming back after recovery he packed it in after one season "Realized I was touring, not racing" says Jim. He had lost his nerve to take the necessary risks to win.

I have often wondered why people race given some degree of injury is inevitable eventually. Its fun to watch from the safety of the stands but what are the riders feeling? At a trials in New York State I got talking to a man wearing shorts. I could see his legs were more than a little crooked. He was an old road racer, thus the injuries. We talked about the risks: He said "When you're on the starting grid or take a curve just right, there is no feeling like it. It is an incredible adrenalin rush". He had no regrets and would do it again if his youth could return.



Nitro Burning Triumph 500 Hill-Climber, Orangeville, 1978

However being the parent of a racer is different than being a racer; Jimmy and Robin soon found they were going to reap what Jimmy had sown: Jeff who had only a marginal interest in motorcycles as a child wanted to race. What does an old racer say to his 17 year old son? "Well go ahead but you're on your own", hoping the lack of money would be enough discourage Jeff's interest.

The rest is history but the same worry is still there for Mom and Dad; plus Jimmy having some regrets for not financially supporting Jeff's efforts in the past.

Tonight you will see Jimmy in his usual place; flagging corner two and either one of his two Gold Wings in the motorcycle parking: the 1978 (with bags and fairing affectionately called the Winnebago) or the stripped down 1981. He is on corner two in case Jeff needs minor mechanical help or a push to get him started.

Jeff has more than once won the Speedway Championship of which Jimmy is immensely proud but "Proud / Scared" as he says!

Jump'n Jeff is a chip off the old block in many ways. I have not seen a father and son with all the similarities of "Mature Jimmy" and "Prime-of-Life Jeff", be it racing, personality or the ability to understand anything made of nuts and bolts. May Jump'n Jeff have another successful season while Mom and Dad enjoy the "Proud"!