

# Part two: an Italian, an Isuzu, and an interstate

By Corrado Giambalvo

## Feature

(If I remember correctly, we were last in Buffalo. . .)

### STAGE 2: Buffalo, NY, to Chicago, IL

From Buffalo I decided to cross over to the Canadian side and go to Detroit via Route 3, a picturesque and extremely flat two-lane highway. It was here that I saw some of the smallest urban conglomerations. With the shores of lake Erie on my left, I comfortably cruised at 75 mph, hoping the local police was not patrolling this desolate country road.

I arrived at the border of the automotive capital of America. After a poor excuse for a pre-ruminated, synthetic chicken sandwich I continued my journey on route 12. By riding on the smaller highways I figured I would avoid the mastodontic 18 wheelers and the keen highway patrolmen. The former were especially scary since when I tried to overtake them, first I would get sucked in by the posterior turbulence, and after countering this force by shifting my body weight in the opposite direction, I was further pushed towards the divider by the air gusts jutting from the sides of the truck. Many a time I thought that it was going to be the last truck I would pass.

Route 12 took me to Chicago, passing through Indiana first. The site of the gargantuan steel mills was breathtaking. There were no people to be seen.

I observed that other cyclists were not wearing safety helmets in Indiana. After 540 miles of hard riding I was craving for the feel of cool air on my steaming face. But I quickly put it back on due the foul taste of the industrial waste.

In Chicago I stayed with Andrea Ghez, a fraternity sister from Number Six. She lives very close to the University of Chicago, in Hyde Park, a residential area very similar to Cambridge: intellectual, ethnic but most of all very lively.

After a much needed rest, the next day Andrea and I set out for Chicago Downtown. On top of the Sears Tower, the tallest building of the world (the tallest structure is actually Toronto's CN tower at a whopping 1370 ft not including antenna) we looked at the array of stunning architecture. I remembered all the slides I had seen in 4.605 (History and Theory of Architecture) and was reassured that the buildings really did exist. The day was clear and we could see as far as the horizon on Lake Michigan.

Without warning, a vicious dust storm developed. I then understood why they call Chicago the Windy City. Suddenly, a perilous gust attacked a distinguished-looking lady. Her glasses, blown away from her nose, were crushed by a rushing car, driven by an equally panicked driver.

### STAGE 3: Chicago, IL to Lawrence, KS

The next day, after saying goodbye to my wonderful hosts, once again, I hopped on my faithful machine. Surprisingly enough the bike had given me no trouble at all. I had been ex-

tremely careful to lubricate the chain after every stage of my trip, to change the oil as frequently as needed and generally to ensure that everything was running smoothly.

### Missouri was rolling.

In Lawrence, I stayed with Norayan Sastry, my roommate's brother, a student at the University of Kansas. This was going to be the last place where I had a friend who could put me up for the night. Up until now my hosts had treated me with uncommon care and generosity. From now my only friends were going to be at Best Western, purchasable for cold green cash. . .

I spent one day windsurfing on a lake near Lawrence. Norayan and I were the only two human beings short of some men in leather boots, 501 Blues and bare torsos running around in Broncos, blasting Bruce on the stereo.

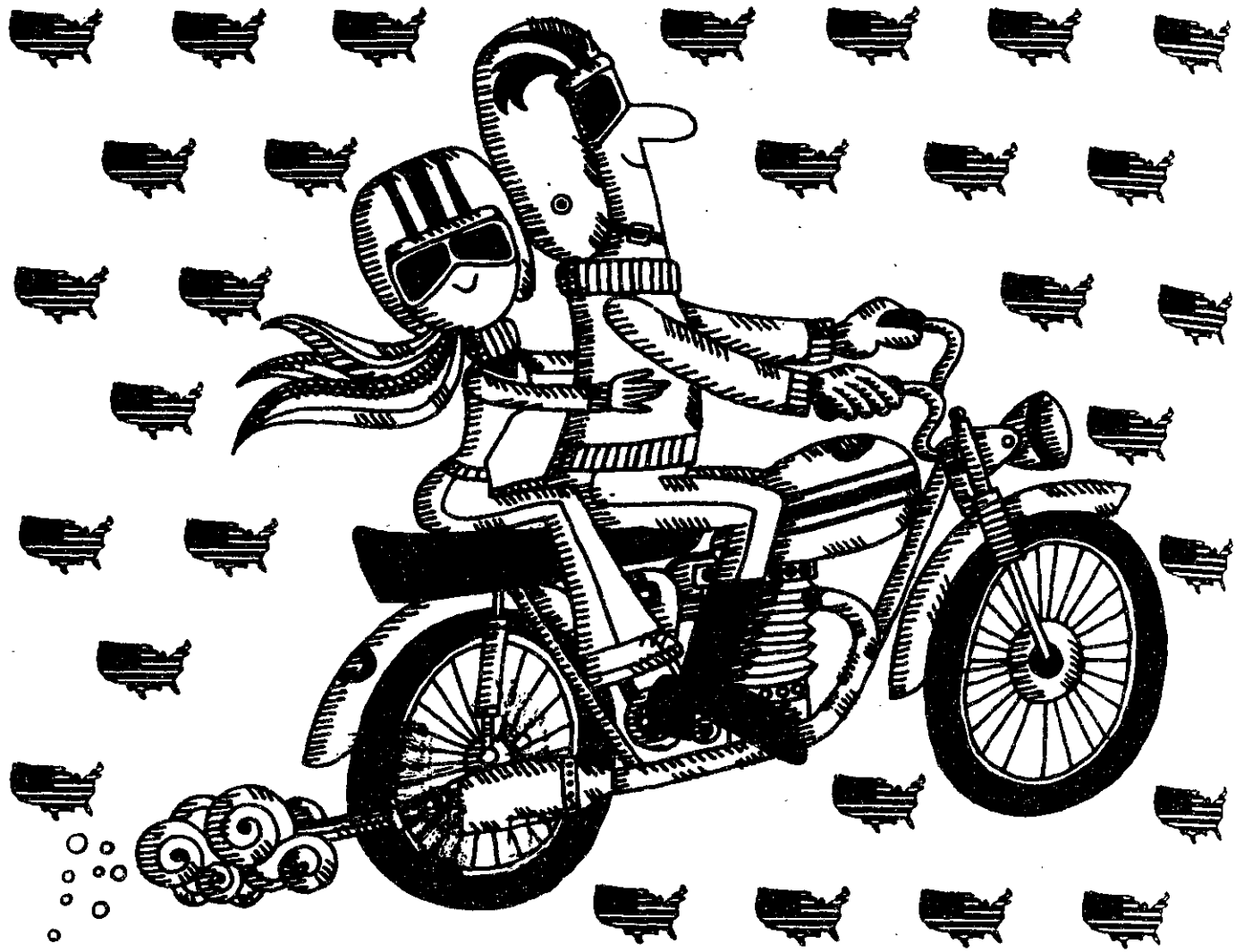
I had now been on the road for six days; exactly half way through my trip. If I was going to be in Los Angeles within ten days, I needed to go along at a faster rate.

### STAGE 4: Lawrence, KS to Boulder, CO

I left Lawrence at 4 am on the 7th day of my trip. Prepared for the worst, I headed toward Mork and Mindy's home town. I was intrigued by all the rumors I had heard: fresh air, dusty drugs, permissive customs, foreign cars, in an atmosphere of yuppie wealth.

I arrived in Boulder 11½ hours and 620 miles later averaging the speed limit which wasn't bad considering I had to stop every 110 miles for gas, (and every two hours or so to regain circulation in my buttocks.)

The city was stiflingly hot. I was sweating like a pig immersed in a cauldron of smoldering excrement. I knew that there wasn't a chapter of my fraternity so I begged for hospitality at another (I won't mention the name) frat house. But I was turned away. I guess my headband, the army jacket and the ragged overalls created an image somewhere between a wimpy Rambo and an even wimpier Terminator after he was run over by the 18 wheeler



that exploded. Not surprisingly, the sophisticated house-spokesman turned me down.

I looked for something a little more in line with my appearance. At this other (nameless) fraternity, they welcomed me with open arms. As I browsed amongst the upturned furniture, graffitied walls, and the copious trash I couldn't stop laughing. To save a few dollars I was actually going to degrade myself by staying in a living establishment that looked like the Animal House Fraternity run through a Cuisine Art.

Temporarily I left my backpack under a couch and started walking around Boulder looking for an alternative accommodation. As I was on the phone with my father, to reassure him of my

well-being a car with Massachusetts license plates sped by. I hurriedly said bye and started chasing the car down the street. After several hundreds of yards the car finally stopped at a red light. I ran up to the window, and with a look of desperation I said: "So you are from Massachusetts? So am I." (knowing full well that my blemished accent would give me away.)

she could keep all of my vital belongings for safety if she'd be so nice as to offer me a place to stay.

I guess she felt somewhat sorry for me. She opened the door and took me to her house. Maybe the fact that I lived close to the place she was born (Mt. Auburn Hospital) was a common factor for mutual trust.



"Yes," replied the driver, retracting away from me.

Before the light turned green I had to convince her that I wasn't a psychotic killer and that I needed a place to stay. Thrusting my passport, wallet and motorcycle keys in her hand I told her that

We went by the garbage-dump frat to collect my stuff and then I followed her home on the bike. I met her roommates, her somewhat bewildered boyfriend and then we all went out for pizza and beer.

(Read Friday's issue for the chilling climax. . .)



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