

It's time for a trip down memory lane for all of us folks who used to race motorcycles during their time at Kagnev Station. Let me introduce myself – my name is Jim Ferris and I was stationed at Kagnev from 1968 to 1971 and assigned to headquarters company. Prior to my arriving at Kagnev I had never ridden a motorcycle before but was soon bitten by the bug and bought a used 125cc Suzuki to see what it was like. Sure enough, it was great fun and before long I had developed a desire to go faster and explore the wilds of Eritrea. Of course this involved buying a bigger motorcycle so I ordered a new Yamaha 250cc enduro and never looked back.

After riding a while and getting to know other motorcycle riders I joined the Blue Knights motorcycle club and eventually became the president of the group. Some of the members and others used to gather out in an open area in the general direction of Stonehouse where there were some gullies and have fun jumping our bikes. This was great sport and being guys we of course had to see who could jump the farthest. This led us to think of the possibility of some other kind of competition that we could engage in and naturally racing came to mind.

After much discussion over many drinks at the Oasis club we finally decided to see if we could find a place to build a race track. After some research and paperwork (this was the Army, after all) we found a suitable location and an agreeable land owner out along the track C road about a mile or two out the back gate of track E. A group of us began the sweaty work of laying out a track and moving rocks out of the way (there were lots of rocks, of course). Thanks to some more paperwork and lots of cajoling we managed to get the Army to loan us a road grader and operator which made the construction of the track much easier and also enabled us to put in some dips and hills to make things more interesting.

Once the track was finally finished the Blue Knights started holding races on Sunday afternoons. Initially we only had a few classes of people racing but as things progressed we ended up with novice, amateur and expert classes and those were broken into up to 175cc displacement, 176 to 250cc displacement and 251cc and up displacement. We didn't always have riders for every class but most of the time we had enough people show up to make for some interesting racing.

The races attracted a fairly good sized crowd of fans as well as the racers and the club charged admission to the fans (\$1.00 for members and \$2.00 for non members as I recall) to help defray the costs of putting on the races as well as to provide a small amount of prize money for the winners. We even had some prize money from the local Yamaha and Suzuki dealers in Asmara. I'm sure that the racing inspired some people to purchase motorcycles from them (at least that's what I told the dealers).

I also wrote a column for the Kagnev Gazelle called the Cycle Analyst where I reported the race results along with other motorcycle related information. Believe it or not I still have copies of most of those columns after all these years. Here are some names of racers that were mentioned in the columns:

Al Leitig (250 Kawasaki), Chief Brown (250 Kawasaki), Ron Lindeman (175 Kawasaki), Bob Moorehead (250 Yamaha), Al Corron (250 Suzuki), Dave Mitman (250 Yamaha), Del Roser (650 Triumph), Jerry Krasser (250 Yamaha), Ralph Morton (novice class, bike unknown), Kevin Talbert (bike unknown), Terry Riley (bike unknown). There were many others of course but those are the only ones that I have a record of. Oh yes, I also raced on my 250 Yamaha and later on a 360 Yamaha.

I hope you have enjoyed reading this recollection of our motorcycle racing adventures. I left Kagnev in the spring of 1971 so I don't know what happened after that but I'm sure that some of you can fill in those details. I'm also sure that there are lots of things that I have not mentioned so please feel free to add to this story.