



Emilio Scotto: the man, the book and the bike

By George Woodside

When he was 8 years old, young Argentine Emilio Scotto's mother gave him a world atlas. He was fascinated and spent hours studying the pages, imagining himself visiting all those strange, far-off lands. After a year of his imaginary voyages, Emilio announced to his mother that he was going to travel around the world, visiting every country.

Some 20 years later, Emilio was passing by the local Honda dealer. He saw the flyer for the 1980 Gold Wing GL1100 Interstate. He decided on the spot he was going to own one. He was employed by Pfizer Pharmaceuticals as a sales representative. Although he lived and worked in Argentina, he was paid in U.S. dollars. At the time, though, all transactions were done in Argentine pesos. After many negotiations with the Honda dealer, Emilio reached an agreement with him. He made a down payment of \$1,000 worth of Argentine pesos, and agreed to pay off the rest in one year. All transactions were spelled out clearly, and all were to be in pesos. The exchange rate was about 170 pesos to the U.S. dollar. Soon after the papers were signed, though, the Argentine government devalued the peso to 1,700 per U.S. dollar. Within a week, that rate had exploded to 6,000 pesos for one dollar. Emilio had his precious Gold Wing paid for with ease.

Sept. 27, 1984, Emilio celebrated his 30th birthday. He decided it was time to fulfill his childhood dream of traveling around the world. He had his Gold Wing, his dream, and

The journey in numbers

- 10 years, 2 months and 19 days on the road
- 6 continents crossed
- 232 countries visited
- 485,000 miles traveled
- 13,000 gallons of gas burned
- 250 gallons of oil
- 86 tires
- 12 batteries
- 9 seats
- 1 spare engine
- 6 times in jail
- 11 passports of 64 pages each
- 2 accidents (Yugoslavia, Tanzania)
- 2 tornadoes
- 4 hurricanes
- 2 times shot at (Nicaragua, Somalia)
- 3 sickness (malaria, Bicho de pe, intoxication)
- 5 times robbed
- 15 traffic tickets
- 9 collisions (a man, taxi, deer, eagle, baboon, pig, ostrich, two dogs ... millions of insects)

TRAVEL

his determination. He sold everything else he owned, loaded the bike, and set out on an absolutely amazing adventure. Over the coming years, he would encounter mountains, swamps, freezing temperatures and intensely hot deserts. He would be arrested, jailed, shot at, threatened, befriended, admired, interviewed and celebrated. And when he made it all the way around the world, he decided to turn around and go back around the world again, in the opposite direction.


In all, he traveled nearly half a million miles over 10 years. He returned to his native Argentina as a hero, and eventually wrote a book about his journey. That book, *The Longest Ride*, by Emilio Scotto, is ISBN-13: 978-0-7603-4650-1. It is a fascinating read, full of great stories and hundreds of photos.

During his first trip across the United States, he was stuck in a traffic jam in Houston, Texas. As was the custom in Argentina, and where he had recently been in California, Emilio proceeded to navigate his way through the traffic by riding between the lanes of cars. Soon, though, he was spotted by the police, who pulled him over. After he was told that lane splitting was not legal in Texas, one of the officers asked him about where he was from, and what he was doing in Texas. Emilio explained that he was a tourist on his way around the world. That officer also owned a Gold Wing, befriended him, and told him about the Gold Wing Road Riders Association. He provided Emilio a place to stay, and then took him to a GWRRRA event. From *The Longest Ride*:

The Gold Wing Road Riders Association

organizes a meeting in Shreveport, Louisiana, and we go there: my friend Terry, the sheriff, and his son and daughter-in-law, who follow us in a van. Of the ten thousand motorcycles present, mine is the oldest, but the way people welcome me makes me feel at home. "Americans are cold," someone once said to me. Well they ought to attend a meeting like this one. The only cold things are the thousands of drinks consumed.

During his 10 years of travels, Emilio visited 232 countries on six continents. He burned 13,000 gallons of gas and used 250 gallons of oil. He went through 86 tires, nine seats, and had the engine replaced. He went through 11 passports, each with 64 pages. He received 15 traffic tickets, and 13 of those were in California! He now holds the Guinness World Record for the longest motorcycle ride.

Emilio is now 63 years old, and lives in Miami, Florida. His Gold Wing, though, is on display in the classic car showroom at the Riverside Resort Hotel and Casino in Laughlin, Nevada. 



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