

Rider Education By Robin Koontz

Where to Park the Beast

We all love to ride...that's why we spent the megabucks to own a GoldWing. A lot of attention is given to riding the bike in a safe and courteous manner while still enjoying the ride. But like all good things, the ride must come to an end. Now, it can be a temporary stop (did somebody say 'ice cream!'), or shacking it up for the winter. It does matter where and how you park your 900 pound beast.

Ideally, everywhere we park would be concrete, level all around, with no other vehicle in sight. The weather would be 70 degrees, overcast (but no rain), and no wind. Or there might be an awning to pull up underneath. But how many times does this happen? Very few.

Listed below are some conditions or scenarios, and how they can affect your bike while parked:

ASPHALT: If it is new, or the weather is warm, your sidestand will sink down, sometimes to the point where the bike is on it's side. This is quite embarrassing. Putting something underneath your kickstand may prevent this, or you may get one of those oversized "duckfoot" kickstands.

GRAVEL: Watch your footing as you park it...your foot may slip and the bike may go down at slow speeds. The kickstand may sink into the gravel just like above. Use your kickstand foot.

GRASS: Slippery, especially when wet. Hidden gopher holes can make life interesting.

CROWDED PARKING LOT: I try to get a spot at the end of a row, so that one side is exposed. I have actually witnessed a car come within a gnat's whisker from plowing into a motorcycle because there were vans on either side of the bike, and the car thought the parking spot was empty, not seeing the bike until the last instant as he went racing into the spot. I would also not pull all the way forward in the parking spot, just so my tail is visible to any nut cruising for a spot. Another fear of mine is some idiot trying to back my bike out of my spot so he can pull in, leaving the bike in the aisle. If I ever see this happen, I'll probably lose my temper.

WIND: If it is real windy, do not use your centerstand. Three points of contact is more stable. Try to maneuver the bike so that the sidestand is in the lee of the wind. And if it is a choice between head-on to the wind or tail-on, choose head-on. Your bike is aerodynamic from the front, not the rear. Your windshield would make a good parasail to catch the wind and move the bike.

SLOPING GROUND: Honda says to put the bike into first gear as a parking brake. Don't use your reverse gear. Honda says this does awful things to the reverse mechanism. If there is a curb, nose into it at an angle if you are headed downhill, and back into it if headed uphill.

SUN: The sun can fade your new custom seat real quickly, not to mention your dash also. Parking in the shade helps against that, but be leary of trees: some trees drip sap, and there are creatures called birds that make bird guano that can destroy paint almost instantly, not to mention that new seat. A partial or full bike cover is another option here.

RALLY: Everyone has a different battle strategy here. Some will look for that spot up front (Store Parking Lot Syndrome), some look for bikes of people they know (kind of daunting in a sea of three thousand bikes), and some try to park it in a landmarked location so they can find it later (ask Roy Jenkins about his methods). I look for a place that I know I can get out of when I want to, without having to do a lot of jockeying and reversing. Or worse, you may get trapped by bikes parking all around you. Again, you may try to get enough space around your bike so that anyone trying to join our Horizontal Parking Club won't bang into your bike with their efforts.

There are other factors, like night time versus daylight, kids are playing nearby, water sprinklers about to turn on, etc..