



## ChimDingo Publishing – Motivational

### “Overcoming Fears – Learning to Ride Real Motorbike Mexico”

*Author's Note: This is about me overcoming a 20 year gap in riding a motorbike because the first time was a bit of a disaster and re-learning to ride a real bike in Acapulco, Mexico; a pretty scary thought!*

My previous experience of riding motorbikes was a 175cc trail bike when I was twenty. That wasn't an overly successful venture ending with a crash near the cemetery on Thursday Island, Australia; a badly broken collarbone in two places, several stitches and severe concussion the result, after my helmet came off. I repaired the bike and when recovered had another go and fell off again, more embarrassing this time and mostly gravel rash. That dented my confidence a lot and I never really rode again, sort of figured out bikes and I weren't suited. I travelled to Acapulco, Mexico in 2004 to do some volunteering for street kids. That's another interesting story. Anyway my Mexican amigo's only means of transport was a couple of large motorbikes. Lenin said, "You can take the bikes". I said, "I can't ride either one that size". He said "Come on! I can teach you". I said "Ok but it'll have to be the smaller of the two as I can't pick up the Gold Wing if I fall off, I'm not strong enough." So I made the decision to learn to ride the 800cc Suzuki Intruder. It had the mufflers removed so it was "throaty" and loud.



So we started out slowly just learning to manoeuvre it in figure-eights<sup>1</sup> and getting some balance, footwork and clutch timing basics at a carpark across the entrance from the Mexican Air Force base at Pie de la Cuesta. The second or third night they got sick of the noise and told us to take a hike. Then I did basic up and downs along the beach road up towards the lagoon (where a lot of the Johnny Weissmuller Tarzan filming was done). After that I got a bit more adventurous around the suburb, up and down the hill at Jardin Palmas. The hill was a bit of a challenge as it was rather steep and the way you had to turn around to get on the other side of the road divider plus there was always sand strewn across the intersection. I'd swept that off several times for safety

reasons just for the local taxis, buses and cars seeing as no one else seemed interested. Then I rode it down the 30km to the orphanage on the main north highway to Coyúca & Penjamo. There were lots of topes (speed-bumps) along this stretch and a fair bit of traffic. The good thing on a motorbike is that the driving on the right side of the road isn't such a big issue as it is in a car. I fell off a few times but mainly when slowed down and trying to turn or negotiate holes in the road so it was more a balance thing. One notable one was when waiting at the hill divider to turn and basically just keeled over slowly due to the weight much to the amusement of the locals sitting in front of the shop drinking beer! Anyway I managed to get reasonably good after a few weeks apart from being a little wary of leaning over too far on corners at speed; that's just a confidence and practice thing. A few years later I tried my son's racing dirt bike; man have those things got some takeoff power and acceleration. I found this wasn't such a problem to ride and that I could even stand up on the pegs no problem; a bit of confidence makes a big difference and maybe working in Iraq at the time made it not seem so daunting or dangerous a prospect?

You can pretty much do anything you put your mind to if you can overcome your initial blocking factors that are stopping you e.g. fear of embarrassment or failure. It might be a little more difficult if you've got a phobia or it's just plain extremely dangerous and granted you might not be a world champion at it but with some perseverance you'll be surprised at what you can actually do; you're never going to know if you don't try. If you want to try something it's important to identify a non-threatening environment in which to do it, what key skills you might need some help with to overcome the blockages<sup>2</sup> and some good support from someone who knows what they are doing to mentor you<sup>3</sup>. This way you'll not get discouraged the first time it doesn't go so well.

<sup>1</sup> I start in a similar manner when instructing lifesavers to drive an inflatable rescue craft.

<sup>2</sup> My speech would be clearer and louder if I learned to sing properly with some voice coaching but I feel a bit shy about that so will have to overcome that little blockage one of these days.

<sup>3</sup> Tried a little hang-gliding off a small hill with a crazy mate who had never tried it before either in a hang-glider he bought second-hand out of the paper (like a version 1 model). Wouldn't recommend that scenario again!