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ROAD RIDER

AMERICA'S FIRST TOURING MOTORCYCLE MAGAZINE

One Year And 17,000 Miles On A **SUZUKI GV1400GD CAVALCADE**

Detailed Report: Mileage, Reliability, Accessories, Costs!

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It Was a Very Cavalcade Year

*A Complete Accounting Of A Year's
"Ownership" Of The Suzuki GV1400GD*

by BOB and PATTI CARPENTER

Question: "Instead of bombing around like idiots trying to destroy the bikes they test, why doesn't someone try to test a motorcycle as if it were being ridden and used by an owner?"

Answer: By golly, that's a good question. Why doesn't someone?

And so we did.

In May, 1985, *Road Rider* Magazine took delivery of a brand new Suzuki GV1400GD Cavalcade, equipped with the full assortment of factory accessories. For the remainder of the 1985 riding season, the bike was used as any real-life owner might have used it. It served primarily as a long-distance, two-person touring platform — the specific function for which it was designed. We made two major trips on the





Cavalcade, with a goodly measure of casual weekends and day-trips thrown in for fun.

A variety of aftermarket items — including tires, bolt-ons, and a trailer — were used during the year, just as they might have been used by the average owner of a large, heavyweight highway hauler. Except for a couple thousand miles in the clutches of managing editor Salvadori, the GV1400 lived in our garage the whole time. We even — *blush!* — managed to wash it periodically.

Most important, meticulous records were kept of all operating costs and related expenditures.

What follows, then, is our year-end report on the Cavalcade after eight months and 17,000 miles of "ownership." To say that we had no idea how this report was going to turn out when we started the project is a whopper of an understatement. In fact, the experience proved to be a constantly changing proposition, and our evaluations became *re-evaluations* almost on a trip-to-trip basis. Here's the whole story ... warts and all.

One factor did not change during the year. Our regard for the Cavalcade as a comfortable, almost sybaritic luxury liner remains as high as it was when we first tested the machine in Japan early last year. After 17,000 miles we continue to believe that the Cavalcade is the most comfortable two-wheeled vehicle for long-distance highway travel available in the marketplace today — especially where the co-rider is concerned. That's a pretty strong statement. We feel the Cavalcade's living accommodations can back it up all the way.

The same superiority could not be claimed for the Cavalcade's mountaineering manners. It is a ponderous handler, at best, either in a parking lot or on a kinky road. Fair's fair: we should mention that our opinion here is probably harsher than it would have been if we'd ridden *only* the Suzuki all year. In this respect the bike undoubtedly suffered in comparison to some of the lighter, more agile machinery we spent time on during 1985. Getting off a 450cc Honda Nighthawk, for example, and climbing onto the Suzuki the next moment was like trying to run wind-sprints through thick chicken soup. Luxurious appointments, lest we forget, are *heavy!*

The Cavalcade's performance, rated in terms of stop-sign getaway, is fair to

First outing of the Cavalcade Year was a shakedown cruise to California's Joshua Tree National Monument.

middlin'. Again, the machine's weight is a factor; putting all that mass into motion is quite a chore. Passing acceleration and power on upgrades, however, proved to be exceptional. Cubes really do count. It was in the final stages of the test that we discovered just how powerful the V-Four engine really is. It didn't even whimper when we hooked up a TravLite camper-trailer (gross weight about 400 pounds) and went traipsing off into the California deserts. In its role as trailer-tower, the big-hearted machine proved to be an excellent performer.

During the original tour test in the wintery weather of a Japan January, one aspect of the Cavalcade's design goals had to remain a question mark: the heat venting system. In the early planning stages, the GV1400's designers were determined to route as much engine heat as possible away from the bike's occupants. An adjustable louver arrangement was developed that would permit the engine heat to be directed at the rider's legs in cold weather, but



could be closed to shunt the heat harmlessly back through the integral plastic bodywork in hot weather. A ride to Florida in mid-July was the "test track." Happily, the venting system worked quite satisfactorily; we were as comfortable as anyone can get on a bike in 110-degrees and 90-percent humidity. At least the bike's engine heat did not add to our discomfort. Under those prickly conditions, that's the highest praise you can give anything!

All of the above is only by way of a thumbnail summary of the Suzuki's touring prowess. We've covered most of this in earlier Cavalcade evaluations. More important for this report are the factors that played a part in the day-to-day ownership of the machine.

LIVING WITH THE CAVALCADE

On a day-to-day basis, minor nits either are soon adapted to and forgotten, or they become sources of irritation. In this latter category, one complaint focuses on something rarely mentioned in tour tests: clean-ability. The Cavalcade is a real booger to keep clean. Recognizing that any machine with this much "stuff" hung on it will be hard to keep in white-glove condition, the Cavalcade has more than its share of nooks and crannies. The job of clean-up can become an all-day affair.

Everytime we rolled up our sleeves and got out the wash-bucket, we felt nothing but pure admiration for those wax-and-polish types who always show up at the rallies with glistening mobile monuments to their dedication to cleanliness. (As for us, we'll take a stripped, 500cc, single-cylinder thumper any day when it comes time to play the wash-tub blues.)

Far more objectionable, from a functional point of view, was the day-to-day difficulty of dealing with battery and rear-tire maintenance, especially on the road. During the development stages of the machine, the prototype testers urged the designers to consider angled valve stems. It never happened. As a result, the only way to check the rear-tire air pressure is to: 1) roll the bike around until the valve can be seen, 2) lay down on your back, 3) scootch your shoulders partway under the right saddlebag, and 4) try to get an accurate reading in that position without: A) letting any air out of the tire, or B) chopping your knuckles off on the sharp edges of the rear disc brake! (Oh, by the way, if you need air, you'll have to make sure you're close to a service station that has the "right" kind of air-

pump fitting. Several of the most common air nozzles simply can not be maneuvered anywhere close to the rear air valve.)

Anyone who faithfully performs this weird and uncomfortable tire checking ceremony in a motel parking lot at 5:30 a.m. in a pouring rain deserves a medal! Yet, for safety's sake, it's a task none of us can afford to shirk. Keeping the psi at the proper load-carrying levels is vital, especially on the half-ton highway travelers.

The question that remains is this: if tire pressure is so extremely important, shouldn't the procedure for checking it be extremely simple?

Ditto battery surveillance. Actually, *finding* the battery on a Suzuki Cavalcade without a blueprint is an intelligence test. Here's a clue: you'll never get there without the ignition key and a Phillips screwdriver. To check the electrolyte level you must unlock and remove the right fairing-pocket cover. Then you must unscrew six — count 'em SIX — screws that secure the pocket itself and lift out the plastic section. This permits you to see the *top* of the battery. If you're lucky, you'll be able to use a flashlight and peer down at the side of the battery to view the liquid level. (One Cavalcade owner who happens to have the letters D.D.S. after his name, told us he uses a long-handled dental mirror to do the job — not bad!)

On the positive side of day-to-day

ownership, let us now praise the Cavalcade's luggage. There are disadvantages to monster saddlebags and travel trunks. Specifically, they create an enormous amount of drag, which puts your gas mileage into the basement. But for long-haul convenience, big, big bags are wonderful. The Suzuki proved most satisfactory in terms of having plenty of space on board for stashing our traveling duffel. Never in our riding history has any machine offered so much in the way of packing flexibility and volume.

We'll pay a particularly fond compliment to the storage compartments built into the saddlebag lids. For the co-rider, these were perfect for carrying the inevitable odds and ends: paperback novels, sunglasses, the rain cover for the fleece saddle covers, and all manner of cosmetics, sun-screen lotion, hair brushes, sidestand plates and so forth. The little pouches are a five-star design feature for long-term liveability.

Overall, the Suzuki Cavalcade was easy to live with on the road. After a few thousand miles there were no lasting problems with control familiarity, or mental difficulties in picking up the instrument readouts quickly and consistently. In this context, the only item we'd like to see revised is the bright blue high-beam indicator. On a dark night, it glows brightly enough to interfere slightly with night vision. The design engineers certainly should be able to improve on our solution: a short



They've finally erected a "Southernmost" sign down in Key West that no one can steal! The Florida trip was the Cavalcade's longest of the year: 6,274 miles round trip.

strip of electrician's tape over the light for night riding.

One improvement that owners of the Cavalcade have requested for subsequent models is a longer sidestand. We can't say this presented any great problems during our year of "ownership," however many Cavalcaders have said they would appreciate a more upright stance while parked. For some, pulling the heavy machine up off the sidestand to the proper 90-degree angle is a grunt-and-heave process — one of those irritating nits that grow bigger on a day-to-day basis.

As long as we've introduced owner comment, we'll repeat two more of the most common constructive criticisms we heard the Cavalcade Bunch voice during the year, primarily at the major rallies around the country.

Most owners want some kind of lowers, preferably as a retro-fit package that will attach to first-year models. Suzuki engineers have been working on this item all year; prototypes were mounted on production machines as early as May, 1985, at the Lake George Aspencade rally. Almost certainly, lowers will be a standard feature on the second-generation Cavalcades.

One other comment we heard frequently: "Put the air up front, too." Apparently, the co-rider comfort level is a matter of pure envy among the Cavalcade pilots. Well, why not? We'd be willing to bet that the saddle airbags will evolve to include the entire saddle in the near future.

Another druther mentioned frequently by the owners is highway pegs mounted on the engine-guards. This option will have to come from the aftermarket. Product liability considerations prevent the OEMs from installing any rider pegs without also installing separate foot controls — brake and shift levers — at the optional peg location.

RELIABILITY

At mile 4,125, the RR test Suzuki was returned to U.S. Suzuki in Brea, California, as part of a voluntary recall action initiated by the factory in early summer, 1985. The recall was necessitated by two minor production glitches: a faulty headlight dimmer switch, and random incidents of inadequately lubed rear wheel bearings.

The dimmer switch problem was



In our January issue, the Cavalcade helped illustrate Les Kelly's "Biker's Guide To Cajun Cooking" by posing next to the Evangeline Oak in southern Louisiana.

caused by a contact that could break in normal use, allowing the headlight to go out: not a happy occurrence while riding at night. A simple reinforcement block was installed in the dimmer contact, effecting an efficient, permanent fix.

Where the rear wheel bearings were concerned, Suzuki determined that their bearing suppliers had not lubed some of the units in accordance with factory specifications. As a consequence, the entire lot was recalled and the rear wheel bearings replaced. This recall was effected on the dealer level — replacement wheel-bearing kits were installed in all Cavalcades pre-

viously sold, as well as those still on the dealers' floors. Also, the factory corrected both situations with all models still in warehouses at the time. There was no charge for these recall services.

For us, the recall action was timely. While the bike was at the factory, the rear tire was changed and the bike was serviced in preparation for a trip to Florida. Also, the left front fork accessory lights had stopped functioning properly and bulbs were replaced at this time.

The only serious mechanical mishaps came to light between the Florida trip and the ride to Arkansas for Aspencade, Hot Springs. Just before the

Hot Springs trip, the on-board air compressor began running open. To prevent seal damage in the rear shocks, we pulled the compressor wires loose until we could get the bike to the shop. The problem turned out to be a stuck contact inside the auxiliary compressor switch. Easily fixed; no harm, no foul.

While the bike was in the shop, we requested a regular 11,000-mile service. During this service, the factory mechanics noticed some oil leakage, which they traced to a blown secondary output shaft seal. The seal was replaced. Owner feedback indicates that this was not an isolated incident on a single machine; it is apparently a first-year weak point that will require monitoring by Cavalcade owners, and repair where necessary.

By the 12,000-mile mark, the Cavalcade had gradually developed a detectable "looseness" in the way it felt and handled. Also, the bike was evidencing a distinct deceleration yaw wobble, which could be quite disconcerting. A re-torquing of the steering head bearings was all that was required to eliminate the wiggle and bring the bike back to normal.

The only other malfunction on the Cavalcade during its year in our company was related to the OEM accessory package — of which more in a moment.

For a first-year model, the Suzuki Cavalcade's problems were quite minimal... based on the 17,000 miles it traveled...even exceptionally so. Suzuki Motor Corporation has a long-standing reputation for excellent reliability, particularly where their street machines are concerned. Given a season to work out the inevitable new-model bugs, the Cavalcade will certainly perpetuate that reputation.

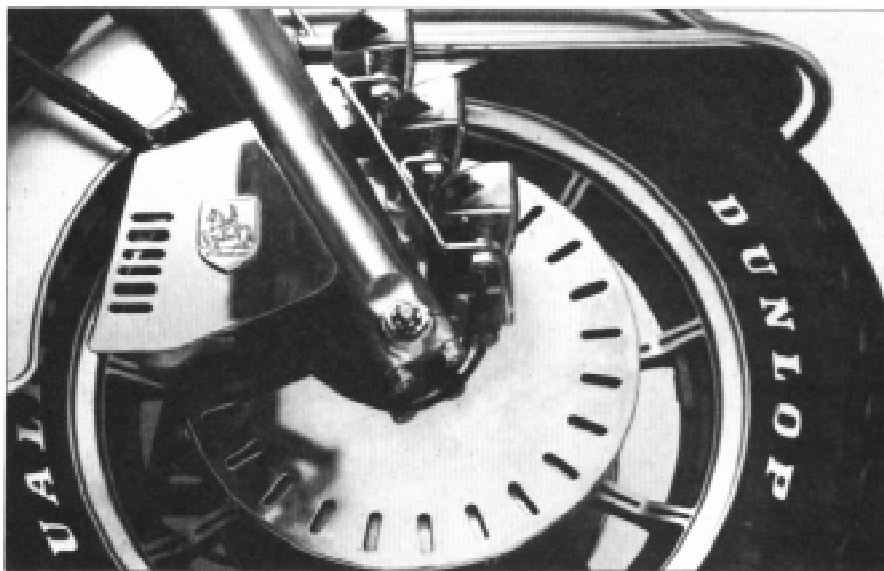
ACCESSORIES

Show us an average owner of a full-dress touring heavyweight who has never added an unnecessary accessory or a chrome decoration...and we'll show you an owner who isn't "average" at all! Let's face it, most big-bike owners are accessory enthusiasts who individualize their touring machines to suit their needs and their esthetic tastes.

So we did too.

OEM Accessory Package

At our request, the test Suzuki was delivered with the full complement of factory-designed accessories. From front to back, these included: front fork light-bars, chrome brake-disc covers



Fork-mounted light bar is unsupported at the lower end; on the test machine it eventually wore through to the bare wiring, shorting out the bulbs.

and caliper covers, front fender trim, saddlebag and travel-trunk light-bars, license plate trim and accessory lights, tail-pipe extensions, a luggage rack, and a chrome-trimmed mud-flap.

The whole package gave the Cavalcade a custom look, but without being overly garish. A tasteful accessory treatment, reasonably priced relative to existing aftermarket items. For the most part, the optional bits and pieces just went along for the ride, adding a cheerfully glittery note without detracting from the machine's functions. As tested, however, there were a couple of slight discords along the way.

The aforementioned problem with the front-fork lights proved to be a recurrent one. The lights repeatedly refused to perform according to plan. We finally pinned the crime on two design oversights: poorly routed wiring, and the unsupported light bar itself. On the road, the lower arm of the light bar could bounce up and down — a situation that eventually caused wear spots to appear on the fork legs. Over time, the loosely routed wiring was able to work under the bouncing light bar, which proceeded to pound the trapped wires until the insulation wore through, shorting out the lights. (*Possible owner fix:* a Cavalcader in Hot Springs showed us how he'd attached a strip of weather-stripping to the underside of the light bar, thereby cushioning the impact and limiting the amount of vibration getting through to the bulbs in the lights.)

The tail-pipe extensions and the fancy mud-flap took quite a beating while in our clutches. No matter how con-

scientious we were, every once in a while we'd manage to back the bike into a curb or a low wall or something. At test's end, the chrome mud-flap holder had been thoroughly thrashed and had broken through in one spot. The tail-pipe extensions looked as if someone had gone after them with a maliciously wielded ball-peen. We'll share the blame on this one; chalk it up to half "owner" clumsiness, half easy-to-clobber design.

Though we washed the Cavalcade more than most bikes we associate with on a long-term basis, several chrome bits managed to go rusty on us over the year. This was especially noticeable on some of the chromed nuts involved in mounting the accessories. Surface pitting also showed up on some of the thinner chrome plated areas, such as the travel-trunk and saddlebag light bars. Also, just to be totally persnickety, in several spots the chrome plating had been done over inadequately polished surfaces, allowing the tooling marks to show through. Minor criticisms, perhaps, but the kind of thing that drives some owners up a tree. True, we live on the Left Coast of the country, and salt air is definitely a contributing factor in this kind of deterioration. Even so, we feel the quality of chrome used on the factory options could and should be improved if it is to be competitive with some of the better aftermarket products.

With these criticisms on record, we will also admit that we enjoyed trundling around all year in the baubles-and-bangles mode. Among other things, we learned that it was rather nice to be able to turn ourselves into a

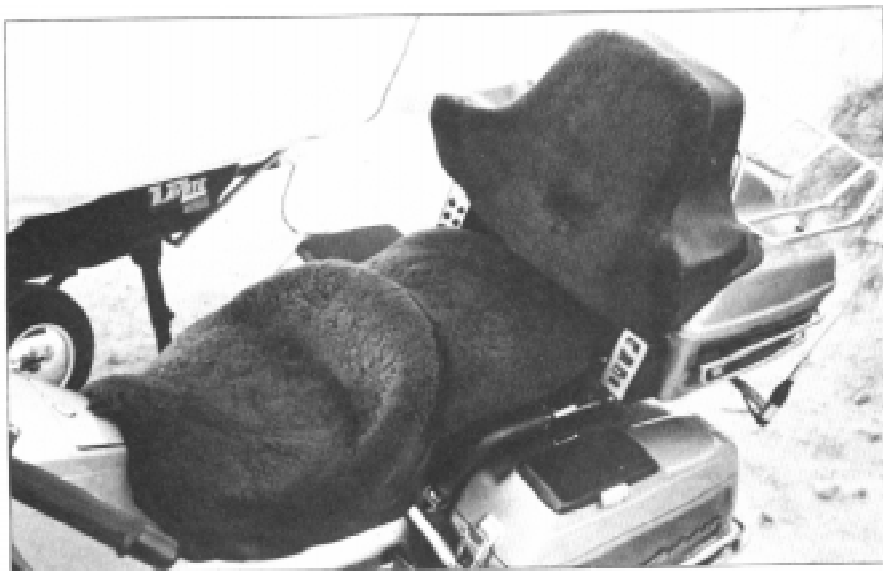
Christmas tree while riding at night. Gaudy, maybe, but certainly conspicuous in the best sense of the word.

**Al Simmons
Mustang Woolees**

If there was one single option that we felt enhanced our comfort and enjoyment of the Cavalcade more than any other, both of our votes would go to the Mustang Woolees. Put succinctly, sheepskin saddle and backrest covers are the kindest thing you can do for your beloved bottom!

There are numerous companies manufacturing sheepskin saddle covers these days; Al Simmons' outfit turns out a top-quality example of the art. The Woolees are cut to fit the Cavalcade's saddle contours exactly, and they do this unusually well. Color-matched vinyl skirting extends all the way around the stock seat, the fleece portion covers the saddle surface. For a perfect fit it was necessary to unbolt the saddle and smooth the vinyl sections of the Woolees into proper position. Once in place, the seat covers looked as if they'd been put on at the factory.

The matching backrest Woolee section, as tested, didn't fit quite as tightly to the Cavalcade's backrest; some loose portions at the arm-rest area had a tendency to pucker somewhat. As it turned out this was just fine, since it made it easy to remove the backrest Woolee at night and when the weather turned dampish.



Al Simmons Mustang Woolees fit over the Suzuki's saddle like a glove. They look good and keep the occupants comfortable in temperature extremes.



Metzeler tires (Lazer on the front, Marathon on the rear) finished the final 4,472 miles of the year-long test. A conservative estimate indicates the tires are still good for many thousands of miles of service — well into the second year of Cavalcade ownership.

In terms of function, the Mustang Woolees kept our sit-down parts comfortable in hot weather — *really* hot weather! — and in moderately coolish temperatures. We've been fans of sheepskin saddle blankets for a long time. After living with the Al Simmons Cavalcade Woolees all year, we wouldn't hesitate to recommend them to any long-hauler interested in comfort at the bike-rider interface.

The saddle Woolee has a suggested retail price of \$99.95, the back pad cover goes for \$54.95; an optional nylon rain cover is available for \$14.95. For more information, contact: Al Sim-

mons Company, Inc., Town Hill Road, Dept. R R, Terryville, Connecticut 06786-0029, (203) 582-9633, or toll-free: 1-800-243-1392.

**Metzeler ME-33 Lazer,
ME-88 Marathon**

Just before we left for Aspengade Hot Springs, we asked the folks at John Preston's Custom Touring Cycle Design to install a set of Metzeler tires. C.T.C.D. has the fastest tire-swappers in the West; before the Cavalcade knew what was going on, it was wearing a Metzeler ME-33 Lazer (130/90x16) on the front, and an ME-88 Marathon (150/90x15) on the rear. During the next 4,000-plus miles, the Metzeler proved out as worthwhile aftermarket replacement units.

According to the Metzeler people, the era of selling — or buying — “matched sets” of tires is over; the Lazer front tire was specifically designed to be used with a wide variety of rear tires. (For cross-matching information consult your Metzeler dealer.) The Lazer is a flashy looking item, with the most eye-catching and identifiable tread pattern in the market. It looks good, and in an Arizona cockroach floater we discovered the “herringbone” grooves operated most satisfactorily in the rain, refusing to lift even though the water was running deep and the bikes were running fast.

On the downside, the Lazer produces

noticeable tire whine, particularly at moderate (legal) highway speeds. Also, the tire is a "low-profile" unit; the diameter is about 3/8-inch less than stock. This does not appreciably change the handling properties of the machine, however it does result in a two-percent, high-side odometer error.

The Metzeler Marathon was made to last, just as its name suggests. After 4,000 miles, the wear rate on the Marathon was surprisingly low; by way of a conservative eyeball guesstimate, we'd have to claim between 10,000 and 12,000 safe miles for the tire, used on a fully dressed and loaded heavyweight tourer. That is, we would predict that mileage if — repeat, IF — the tire pressures are kept up to recommendations.

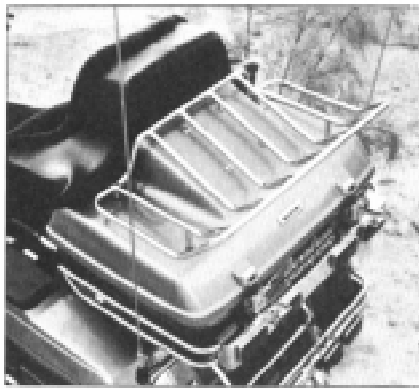
On both the Lazer and the Marathon, the sidewall construction seemed a bit more flexible than the stock tires. No problem unless a careless owner allows the required psi to drop, at which point the sidewalls can give a bit, particularly under lateral load — i.e., during hard cornering or with a trailer in tow. While the Metzelerers were on the Suzuki, the pressure were religiously maintained at 36-38 psi front, 40-42 psi rear.

With that tire-pressure proviso, the Metzeler combination worked well on the Cavalcade. They should prove to be durable, long-lasting units. With a suggested retail slightly under that of the stock units — \$86.95 for the Lazer; \$99.95 for the Marathon — they add up to a good value. Check your dealer, or send for information to: Metzeler USA, 144 Railroad Ave., Suite 215, Dept RR, Edmonds, Washington 98020 (206) 774-1581.

Markland Luggage Rack, Trailer Hitch

Don Markland was the first aftermarket manufacturer to produce accessories for the Cavalcade. After featuring some of his goodies in *Road Rider's* December gift-buying section, we made it a point to glom onto a Markland luggage rack and a trailer hitch for the final stages of the Cavalcade test. In the process we goofed up badly by failing to request a set of the high-tech, good-looking highway boards from the same company. Our oversight, for which we apologize to all the Cavalcade owners who are shopping for exactly those items.

The silver lining (make that "chrome" lining) is that both the Markland luggage rack and the trailer hitch

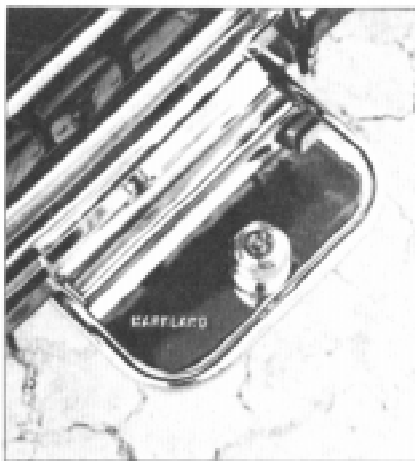


Markland luggage rack is a top-quality unit that makes a convenient storage place atop the travel trunk. Functional upturn at the rear helps secure your duffel.

earned high marks during their tour of duty on the GV1400. The Markland luggage rack is almost twice the size of the OEM accessory. It follows the contours of the travel-trunk lid, and features a weather-sealed, four-point mounting system. An upturned section at the rear of the rack provides additional security for duffel. Just add bungee cords and you've gained valuable stowage space for distance work. Perfect for foul-weather gear, or a place to stash extraneous clothing that comes off as the day warms up.

If you're contemplating attaching a trailer to your touring motorcycle, you should be forewarned that when it comes to mounting bracketry and hitches there is a lot of junk being marketed these days. A word to the wise: successful, safe trailer tugging begins at the hitch mount.

Apparently, Markland's design team



The clean, unobstructed visible section of the Markland hitch gives no hint at the extremely strong, four-point mounting system that locks into the Cavalcade's frame.



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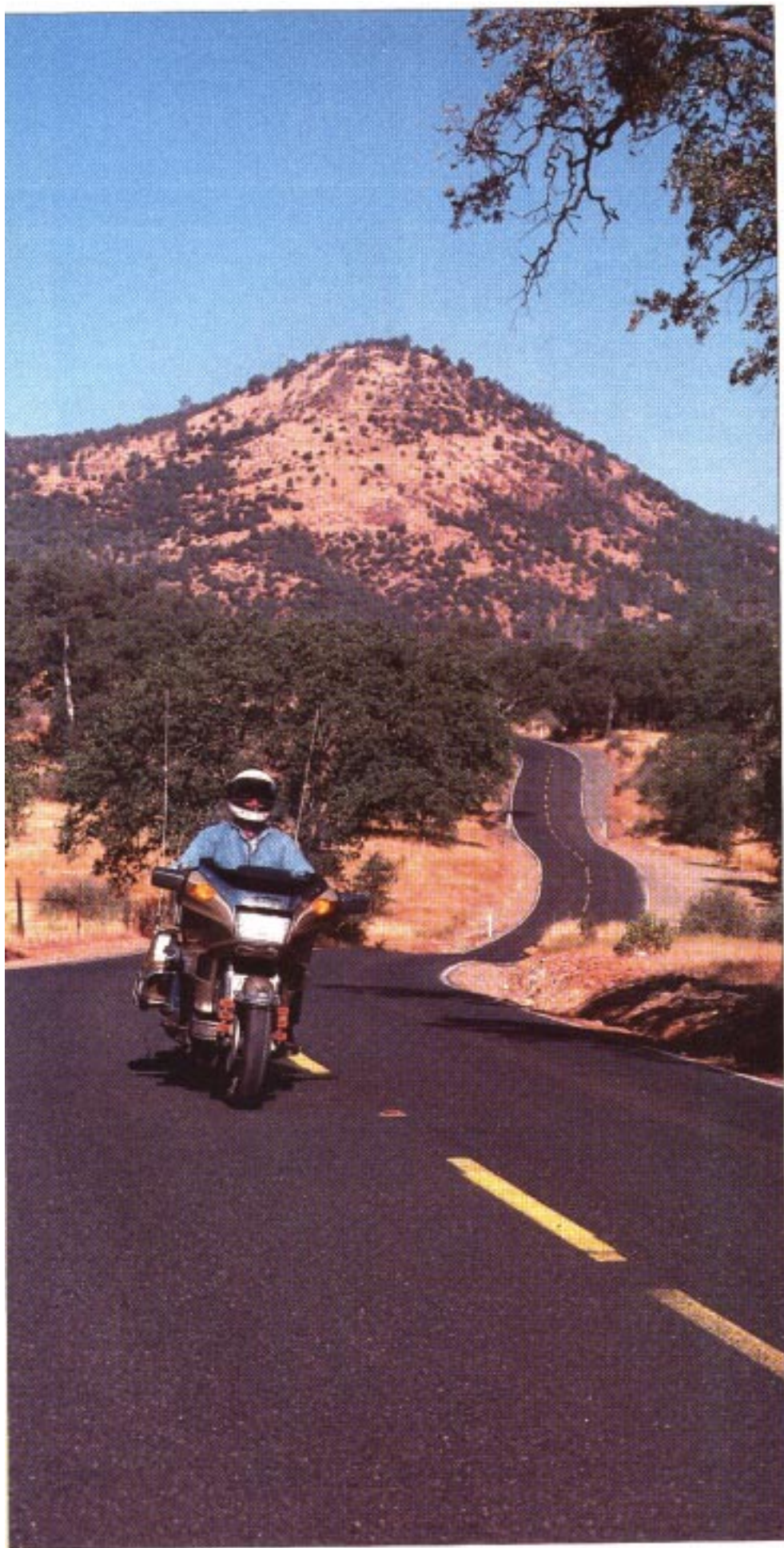
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CAVALCADE *(continued)*

appreciated the importance of hitch rigidity. The Markland unit integrate with the Cavalcade frame in a most praiseworthy manner; a four-point, high-low mounting system locks the hitch solidly to the frame structure of the Suzuki. There are two good ways to test a hitch: 1) stand on top of it and bounce up and down, and 2) grab hold of the ball and forcefully attempt to shove the hitch back and forth laterally. If the hitch gives in either plane, or moves without also moving the entire bike simultaneously, it's probably not as sturdy as it should be. Markland's product met both of these tests without flinching.

Add to the functional strength of the hitch a top-quality chrome plating job and a standard 1-7/8-inch ball, and you have a firm grasp on whatever trailer you want to pull around. In the case of the Cavalcade test, the Markland hitch coupled to a 325-pound TravLite camper was a most acceptable matchup. It's a good product.

The Markland luggage rack carries a suggested retail price of \$70; the hitch goes for \$100; both are available through your dealer, or write for more information to Markland Industries, Inc. 3500 Carriage Drive, Dept. RR, Santa Ana, California 92704 (714) 754-1151.

TravLite Trailer

Because so many touring enthusiasts are hauling trailers these days, we definitely wanted our year-long Cavalcade sojourn to include some tag-along time. After the usual debate about "cargo versus camper," we finally decided that if we were going to pull a box around behind us we might as well be able to sleep in it. So we called the local distributors for TravLite Trailers, and two days later we were Death Valley bound ... with a caboose.

The TravLite camper-trailer shell is constructed of high-density ABS plastic, molded as a one-piece unit. On the road the trailer height is 40 inches; when erected, the camper top offers stand-up headroom for six-footers. In the camper mode, the living area measures 8-feet, 8-inches wide; 5-feet, 2-2-inches long. Under way there are 20 cubic feet of storage available for ice chests, chaise lounges, and other amenities. The TravLite weighs 325 pounds unladen, and has a 30-pound hitch weight. Two three-leaf springs provide



Continental Industries' TravLite Trailer joined the Cavalcade for the last rally of the year. Towing weight: 325 pounds unladen, with a 30-pound hitch weight. The Suzuki's big-hearted engine didn't even know it was there.

suspension while in tow; in camp, four corner jacks level the unit and provide excellent stationary stability.

It's been a long time since we went trailer-touring, so the first hundred miles or so were a bit anxiety-ridden. We had to work our way back into some sort of compatible relationship with a tail-gating object as we went along. For a larger trailer, the TravLite made this reacquaintance period fairly easy. We noticed some insecurity in the form of spooky handling feedbacks at higher speeds, or with a strong tailwind, but this is characteristic of most trailers; it's especially noticeable with the heavier varieties. Nonetheless, we did im-

prove somewhat as our towing mileage built up. At least the trip home seemed less amateurish than the outward bound leg had been.

Based on that relearning context, the TravLite received full marks on the road. It was even more enjoyable as a weekend lodge. During the day, there is a dinette arrangement inside that folds down at night to make a sizeable (72 inches by 42 inches) and comfortable bed. Thick polyfoam mattresses are included with the trailer.

Though it was a beautiful, rain-free outing, a fellow TravLite-towing friend assured us that his experiences with the camper had included quite a bit of nasty

weather. He said the unit keeps its occupants dry and cozy, even in a heavy downpour. We'll take his word for it.

Minor criticisms can be directed at the method of attaching the tent fabric to the ABS camper-top. Heavy-duty Velcro is used, but it can get misaligned rather easily, making it tough to realign and properly zip up the door. Also, we've never been pop-rivet fans, though in all fairness, the TravLite rivets seemed to be adequately anchored. We'll leave the trailer's long-term reliability up to a jury of owners rather than comment on the basis of a few hundred miles.

The biggest surprise was the ease with which the TravLite can be transformed from trailer to camper. Unlike many camp trailers made for motorcycle use, the TravLite features a fairly simple set-up procedure. With the aid of built-in "helper" struts, the whole thing can be set up by one person in slightly more time than it takes to put up an A-frame tent. (Of course it takes a lot longer if a dozen or so friends want to help.)

Trailering isn't for everyone. Some like 'em, some don't, and *that* debate will probably go on indefinitely. The point is that if you decide your motorcycle needs a trailer bringing up the rear, the TravLite camper unit would be a worthy, hard-working choice. Suggested retail on the TravLite, as tested, is \$1,875.00. You can get more information and the location of the dealer nearest you by writing: Continental Industries, P.O. Box 440, Dept RR, Davison, Michigan 48423 (313) 793-6223.

ECONOMICS

There are two things motorcyclists aren't supposed to talk about: how dangerous motorcycling is, and how much it costs. A lot of bike-people get irked if you casually mention that someone could get damaged while participating in this sport. But they *really* start looking for sharp-edged objects to throw if you even suggest that a full-dress highway hauler costs as much or more to operate than the family station wagon.

As much as we'd like to pretend that "motorcycles are economical," however, the fact is that they aren't, necessarily, and since we promised warts and all in this report... here are the financial warts.

In the interests of staying on speaking terms with the folks at Suzuki Motor Corporation, we hasten to note that the



Set up, the TravLite makes a roomy, stable home away from home. The trailer lid serves as the camper roof. Best of all, the conversion from trailer to camper is a quick, one-man task.

CAVALCADE (continued)

costs detailed here are not exclusive to the Suzuki Cavelcade. Our records indicate that the total costs incurred during the 17,000-mile "ownership" test are representative of the whole category of heavyweight, full-dress tourers. In other words, none of 'em run cheap. And with that caveat, hold on to your wallets, and get ready for a dose of financial reality.

The Suzuki Cavelcade lists for \$7,999; add \$900 for the combined accessory package as tested, bringing the purchase price to \$8,899. All sub-

sequent figures will be based on a cash purchase at this suggested retail price.

Taking delivery in California, tax and license would come to about \$735; dealer set-up would tack on another \$125. We would be out the door for a grand sum of \$9,759.

The recall at the 4,125-mile mark was a no-charge event. A routine service was performed at this time in accordance with manufacturer recommendations. Cost of the service: \$42.50 plus parts, for a \$48.00 total. At this time we also changed the rear tire. With only 4,125 miles on it, the stock tire still had plenty of remaining mileage, however with a cross-country trip ahead of us, we opted to change the tire before we left instead of halfway through the trip.

We replaced the tire with a stock Dunlop Qualifier — \$105.40, plus a \$40 tire-change fee. (Note: tire-change costs vary *greatly*, depending on how many optional accessories the dealer has to dig through to get to the tire.)

Another routine service was performed at 12,536 miles. Since this check required partial dismantling of the fairing and body sections for plug replacement and valve examination, the cost was correspondingly higher — \$82.50 labor, plus \$10 for parts, for a total of \$92.50. At this time both tires were exchanged for a set of Metzlers — an M-33 front (\$86.95) and an M-88 rear (\$99.95) — the charge for installation was \$63.

One unscheduled repair was necessary during the year. Replacing the blown output shaft seal would have required 3.5 hours, according to U.S. Suzuki's flat-rate chart, for a labor charge of \$122.50 (at an average of \$35 per hour), plus about \$5 for a new seal and case gasket, giving a repair total of \$127.50.

Total service, repair, and tire replacement costs for the 17,000 miles would have totaled \$663.30. (Factory work performed has been priced at prevailing local dealer rates.)

Insuring the machine for a year takes another bite. Again, this factor varies a great deal depending on where you live, your estimated annual mileage, and the extent of the coverage you intend to carry. Here's the breakdown as it applied to the test bike:

Liability	\$310
Uninsured motorist	56
Collision (\$250 deductible)	144
Comprehensive (fire/theft)	
(\$250 deductible)	<u>92</u>
Total annual premium	\$602

During the year we used 456.3 gallons of fuel at an average cost of 1.29 per gallon for a total fuel bill of \$588.17. Ten quarts of oil (8 in oil changes, 2 to top-up on the road) at an average cost of \$2.85 a quart come to \$28.50. Total for gas and oil: \$600.30.

At the time of this report, the most current Blue Book (July, 1985) listed the Suzuki Cavelcade at a retail figure (the price a dealer would be able to get for a used machine) of \$6,395. In other words, the total value of the bike, not counting the optional accessories, would have depreciated *at least* \$2,505 during the first six months of 1985.

Add it all up and you arrive at the grand total of \$5,246.68 for all costs

TRIP RECORD

For those who like charts, here is the breakdown of the Suzuki Cavelcade's travel and service record during 1985, with related gas-mileage figures and averages. Casual riding is not included.

Mile	Destination	Service Goal	Trip Miles	MPG
264	Pick up Cavelcade at U.S. Suzuki		—	—
725	Joshua Tree National Monument (shakedown ride)		462	36.1
1,773	Sequoia National Forest		1,630	37.2
4,125	Factory Recall	Regular svc., New rear tire	—	—
4,155	Key West, Florida		6,274	38.7
10,903	Eastern Sierras, California		896	38.1
12,536		Regular svc., Change both tires, Repair seal	—	—
12,568	Hot Springs, Arkansas		3,497*	36.8
16,344	Death Valley N.M., California (TravLite trailer)		664*	33.1

Mileage at time of report: 17,008.4 indicated on odometer.

*4,472 miles were corrected downward for a two-percent odometer error imposed by a low-profile tire (less 89.4 miles from mileage total). Actual RR test mileage: **16,655.0 miles.**

MILEAGE

High-mileage tank: **46.4 mpg** (Flagstaff, Arizona, to Gallup, New Mexico. Tailwind, net altitude loss.)

Low-mileage tank: **27.4 mpg** (Las Cruces, New Mexico, to Lordsburg, New Mexico. Steady speeds of 70 to 75 mph into a strong headwind, driving rain.)

Trailer mileage: **33.1 mpg** (Variable winds, terrain.)

Overall mpg average for 16,655.0 miles traveled: 36.6 mpg.

incurred subsequent to the original purchase price. Put another way: for the first year, the Suzuki Cavalcade would have cost its owner approximately 31.5 cents per mile to own and operate.

Grabs you right here, don't it?

Some qualifications are necessary to put things in perspective — and to soften the blow somewhat. Pessimistically speaking, the numbers could easily have been worse. Not included in this total are "interest lost" (the amount the purchase price would have earned had it been invested instead of used to buy the bike — it is a questionable figure, but is sometimes used in similar cost breakdowns), and finance charges that would have been levied if the bike had been purchased on a time contract. Financing a \$8,900 machine on a 36-month contract, for instance, would push the cost per mile up significantly.

On a more optimistic note, the total expenses also could have been less. We have not calculated the income tax deductability of the sales tax on the bike, which would have occurred in the second year of ownership, and certainly there are cheaper areas in the U.S.A. to own a bike than Southern California. Dealer labor charges, for example, vary widely around the country, as do insurance premiums. Our tire changes were done long before the safety indicators were showing, and the Metzler tires on the bike at the time of this report have many thousands of miles left in them, enough to take them well into the second year of ownership.

Finally, remember that the first year is always the most expensive, particularly in terms of tax and license, and depreciation. Owner costs typically begin to amortize down to a more reasonable level during the second year. Since the heavyweight touring motorcycles being made today are designed and built for long-term durability, a three to four-year ownership duration would reduce the cost per mile substantially, approximately into the low 20-cent-per-mile level.

Even so, the bare truth of the matter is that motorcycling is not always an "economical" recreation, particularly where the big road burners are concerned.

And, of course, the other side of *that* coin is simply that for anyone who has ever ridden one and loved it, the darn things are worth every lousy penny!

So ends the year with the Cavalcade. It was a good year. We had some good times on the big fellow; we saw some memorable sights, rode some happy miles and some miserable ones, and ended up learning a few things about motorcycle touring that we'd never known before. You can't beat that for a good deal. All things considered, the Cavalcade is a fine old Road Warrior to go a-touring with. Given half a chance, both of us would happily do it all over again.

As a matter of fact — with a different marque, a different model — we're already doing exactly that!



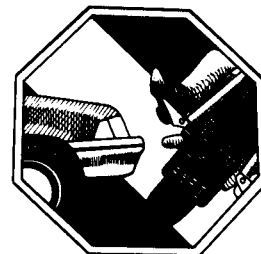
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