

A Canadian bike and one fun trip to get it!

(A little tale from the land of Mom and Apple Pie)

2021 was one heck of a year for me. I got a good job, my Yamaha RD250 was basically completed to a restoration standard that fit my liking and I was in the process of sourcing another machine. You see, I ride my Yamaha a lot. Coming from a '72 Kawasaki G3SS (my first motorcycle), the RD was a much larger machine, capable, and darn right fast(ish). What's not to like?

Well... it's not comfy. The part that sucked the most was my aching rear end. It hurt to ride that RD for any length of time. I took it on a 200 mile trip up the thumb of Michigan (look at a map and you'll get it), to a small port town on Lake Huron. Beautiful scenery, great craft beers, and one long... slow... 55mph road to get there. I only thought of how much my butt hurt... and whether or not I had enough oil. It was that ride that sparked a comforting thought in the back of my mind... the Suzuki GT750. The Water Buffalo! Why? Because triples are sweet, full stop - and liquid-cooled triples are even sweeter! Having said that, they're also triple the money to fix when they blow up... which brings me to the tale of my latest acquisition.



A listing popped up on Canadian-only Kij... kijji, Kijiji (?-Ed). Seeing as I'm a broke, 30-something with a nasty habit of buying old junk; I saw this bike and my wallet started crying. A 1975 GT750M with a hodge-podge of parts (that I knew nothing about) was on the other side of Lake Huron in Sudbury, Ontario. The same process of starting over from scratch with a new motorcycle fizzed in my head - "I know nothing about these bikes, but I know I gotta have one".

Several messages, phone calls, wire transfers, and one U-Haul trailer later; I

was on my way to far northern US/CA border, in the region of Sault Ste. Marie, tucked neatly in the southeast corner of Lake Superior. In order to avoid dealing with crazy import shippers and their rates; the seller and I had agreed to meet as close to halfway as possible. For him it was a 3-hour drive. For me, it was more like 5 hours, one way. The guy was as nice as any Canadian had any right to be (eh), but because the borders were still in lock-down, we had to get creative in order to successfully import this machine. So, enter the seller's dad (he was a cross-border worker) and the International Bridge Border Agents. Hilarity ensued.

The Dad spoke very broken 'Quebecqua' English. So, not knowing where to go, what to do, or who really to talk to; the Border Agents had him call me (Oh... no). For 5 minutes it was as confusing as a game of cricket, and as fast-paced as curling. The situation was quickly deteriorating until thankfully, it was remedied by one fast-acting, phone-snatching Border Agent on my side, who explained the process to me. A couple of bridge-crossing tolls and one awkward, paperwork session later and the importation process for the machine was taken care of (\$0 EPA fees, \$0 Import tax). Apparently, the old bike was TOO old to matter.



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I had to then transfer the bike backwards, from the seller's pick-up truck to my trailer, across a bit of wood that he'd brought along, whilst he repeatedly chanted "no damage" in what roughly passed as 'English'. And guess what? No damage was incurred and we didn't drop it on me, him, or the ground! Once I got the bike turned around on the trailer (which was fun - by myself), I headed for home and as I crossed the Mighty Mack (Lake Michigan) a smile spread across my face.

The Bike - A few fun-facts I've learned about this machine...

It was still shod with the original Bridgestone tyres. The speedo is in good old British Imperial miles. Apparently the Canadian bikes from the 70's were all in MPH, not KPH as I was expecting (It turns out, the Canadians didn't switch to metric on their vehicles until the 80's). That makes my life easier, given that I won't have to squint to make out the tiny indented MPH numbers. I've already rebuilt the forks, fitted a new chain and sprockets, replaced the manifold and intake rubbers and installed some fresh BT46's. She is FAR from pretty... but for \$2900 US and around \$1000 in parts so far... I don't think I've done too bad.

The trip to the great white north was one long day to do alone, but, it will be a great story to regale to my almost-born son (December 7th!) someday. I just hope everyone else enjoys seeing another one saved from the scrapyard as much as I love taking on the challenge!

Happy Riding,

Matt Bradshaw – Michigan USA



