

The Road Taken for Granted

Let's start with a question often asked in motorcycle training – is it better to see or be seen? Here is an example of how those concepts come into play.

In this case, it's a road I ride almost daily. I have it memorized; the corners, the intersections, the driveways. Its dawn and I know to use the glare of oncoming headlights to illuminate the road and where the glare blinds me. So blinding I'm convinced they're driving with high beams. I'll get over it; the road demands my attention.

There's the drive-thru coffee shack ahead, and that can be festive though I'm getting good at predicting who will turn in, some use turn signals. A bend to the left is approaching, with a street on the outside of the curve. Once or twice an oncoming car turned at the last second, so I know to expect the unexpected as I slow and keep my eyes peeled.

From there, fewer driveways and the endless stream of oncoming headlights; all-the-while I'm enjoying the cool morning air. I look ahead as the road bends right and I find myself in the right third of the lane.

Do you see any patterns? Am I too comfortable with the commute?

Just another day going to work until my thinking is interrupted with "Oh @\$*%, this is gonna' hurt;" I mean, this is really gonna' hurt. Brake, brake, BRRRaaake! Go right, right, rrrriiigggghht. Somehow, someway there is no collision. I was pretty certain the crash bar would catch the rear bumper, but I did sense the car sped up to get onto the road. I'm thankful the car didn't panic stop or there would have been a motorcycle in the driver's lap.

An amazing sense of calm engulfed me as I resumed the ride to work. I immediately started to wonder why I wasn't mad at the driver of the little orange car. Clearly it wasn't done on purpose, but if the driver failed to see me, where did I fail?

Back to the question I started with – is it better to see or be seen? On this morning, I saw the headlights of oncoming cars. In the glare I assumed all lights were vehicles on the road. I assumed wrong. I may have been looking, but I was not seeing, and I was not seen until almost too late.

Did lane position play a role? Where could I have placed myself to be seen by all drivers? Did I use my lights to my advantage? So I ask myself, did I present my best self? Why was I invisible? Questions and more questions. Amazing how this thing plays with my head.

I'm left with: stop making assumptions, be alert, be ready (and don't be a statistic).