Why you should TCLOCK your bike – at least occasionally

I took my riding gear just in case the opportunity arose. It did. "Let's go to Boomtown and play Keno." That sounded like a good idea at the time. There probably wasn't any snow on the pass because the sun had been out for a few days (between rainstorms). My friend John had both an 1800 and his old 1500 and he said I could ride the 1800. What a deal!

We left Sacramento and headed up I-80 eastward. I thought Boomtown was only a few miles uphill, but it turned out to be 8 miles shy of Reno. The ride up the hill (elevation 7227 feet) was beautiful. The pavement was bare and the snowdrifts stayed on the side of the road. The coldest it got was 47 degrees.

Boomtown was a small casino that had enough slots and other devices to keep you entertained for as long as you had money. After watching him push the button on the slot machine for a few hours (you can pull the handle if you want to, but you can lose your money much faster just pushing a button) we decided to leave before it got too cold.

The ride started out like any other ride: sweeping 75 mph curves and more beautiful photo ops that I had to miss. I started noticing that whenever we made a right turn the pavement seemed bumpy. Left turns were fine. I asked John if he thought the pavement was bumpy and he said no, it was quite smooth. As I pondered this, the pavement started to get bumpy while going in a straight line, so I said that I need to pull off and look at the tires.

We took the first exit and put the bike on the center stand. While I put it in gear and started spinning the rear wheel, John started making all kinds of unhappy noises from the rear of the bike. The right side of the rear tire had developed an 18 inch long bulge where the outside of the rubber had separated from the inside. Fortunately, it hadn't decided to blow out yet. My mind went back to about 3 minutes earlier when I was in the middle of those right hand sweepers, in the left lane, with the guard rail and drop off only a few meters away.

While I had no luck at Boomtown (I only gambled $5), I had much better luck while riding the bike. I still don't want to think about what could have happened. Anyway, we were still more than an hour and a half from his house (at ¾ impulse power) and to quote Spock "Hours had become days."

We decided to limp slowly down the freeway as far as we could in the hope that we could get closer to civilization before anything happened. As we crept down in the far right side we were passed by everyone, including big trucks. We were afraid of getting run over, but there were no other roads to take. Fortunately, the tire gods smiled on us (a little late) and we made it back to his house with no further mishap.

So what did I learn? It is always a good idea to check the machine you will be riding, especially if it doesn't belong to you. I don't know if the tire showed any signs of problems before we left the house, but now I will never know. A visual inspection really doesn't take that much time and can be well the worth the trouble. Here is a list (shamelessly stolen from the internet) of things to look at/check:

T-CLOCK MOTORCYCLE INSPECTION CHECKLIST

ITEM	What to Check	What to look for	Check-off
T-Tires and Wheels			
Tires	**Condition**	Tread depth, wear, weathering evenly seated, bulges, imbedded objects	front / rear
	Air Pressure	Check when cold, adjust to load/speed	front / rear
Wheels	**Spokes**	bent, broken, missing, tension, check at top of wheel. 'ring' = OK—'thud' = loose spoke	front / rear
	Cast	Cracks, dents	front / rear
	Rims	Out of round/true = 5mm. Spin wheel, index against stationary pointer	front / rear
	Bearings	Grab top and bottom of tire and flex: no freeplay (click) between hub and axle no growl when spinning	front / rear
	Seals	Cracked, cut or torn, excessive grease on outside, reddish-brown around outside	
C—Controls			
Levers	**Condition**	Broken, bent, cracked, mounts tight	front / rear
	Pivots	Lubricated. Operates smoothly	
Cables	**Condition**	Fraying, kinks, lubrication: ends and length	
	Routing	No interference or pulling at steering head, Suspension, no sharp angles, wire looms in place	
Hoses	**Condition**	Cuts, cracks, leaks, bulges, chafing, deterioration	
	Routing	No interference or pulling at steering head, suspension, no sharp angles, wire looms in place	
Throttle	**Operation**	Moves freely, snaps closed, no revving	
Brakes	**Condition**	Drum: indicator is within tolerance Disk: no grooves or glazing on disk. Pads still have center groove for wear check	front / rear
Mirrors	**Condition**	Two in place, not cracked, securely mounted	
L—Lights			
Battery	**Condition**	Terminals, clean and tight, electrolyte level, held down securely	
	Vent Tube	Not kinked, routed properly, not blocked	
Lenses	**Condition**	Cracked, broken, securely mounted, excessive condensation	
Reflectors	**Condition**	Cracked, broken, securely mounted	
Wiring	**Routing**	Pinched, no interference or pulling at Steering head or suspension, wire looms in place and ties tight, connectors tight, clean	
Headlamp	**Condition**	Cracks, reflector, mounting and adjustment system	
	Aim	Height and right/left	
Taillight	**Condition**	Operates off both front and rear brakes Operates when headlight is on	
Turn Signals	**Condition**	Front and rear are operational	
Horn	**Condition**	Operational	

O—Oil

Levels	**Engine Oil**	Check warm according to mfgr specs. Dipstick or sight glass	
	Hypoid Gear Oil	Transmission, rear driver, shaft	
	Hydraulic	Brakes, clutch, reservoir or sight glass	
	Coolant	Reservoir and/or recovery tank Check cold ONLY	
	Fuel	Tank or guage	
Leaks	**Engine Oil**	Gaskets, housings, seals	
	Hypoid GearOil	Gaskets, seals, breathers	
	Hydraulic	Hoses, master cylinders, calipers	
	Coolant	Radiator, hoses, tank, fittings, pipes	
	Fuel	Lines, petcocks, carbs	

NOTE: Some leaks are from overflow tubes and is normal

C—Chassis

Frame	**Condition**	Cracks at gussets, accessory mounts. Look for paint lifting/peeling	
	Steering Head	No detent or tight spots through full Travel, raise front wheel, check for play By pulling/pushing forks	
	Swingarm	Raise rear wheel, check for play by Pulling/pushing side to side	
Suspension	**Forks**	Smooth travel, equal air pressure/damping/ Anti-dive settings. No leaks at seals	front / rear
	Shocks	Smooth travel, equal pre-load/air pressure/ Damping settings, linkage moves freely and Is lubricated	front / rear
Chain or Belt	**Tension**	Check against mfg specs at tightest point	
	Lubrication	Should not be dry. DO NOT lube belts	
	Sprockets	Teeth should not be hooked or overly pointed Securely mounted	
Fastners	**Threaded**	Tight, missing bolts/nuts	
	Clips	Broken, missing	
	Cotter pins	Broken, missing, reused	

K—Kickstand

Centerstand	**Condition**	Cracks, bent
	Retention	Springs in place, tension to hold position
Sidestand	**Condition**	Cracks, bent, safety cut-out switch if equipped
	Retention	Springs in place, tension to hold position

And remember: Drive on the right except to pass…