

## **Mastering the U-Turn**

**by Jerry Palladino (MOTORMAN)**

Recently some friends and I took a Sunday afternoon ride to Ybor City. Ybor, for those of you who don't know means, NO PARKING in Spanish. Once there, as usual, we had a tough time finding a parking space. In order to actually park, we had to make several quick U-turns on the narrow streets. Since I was leading, I could see in my mirrors the dirty looks my friends gave me as I led them on several U-turns in an effort to find the elusive parking spot. Their grumblings over the quick turns inspired me to write these tips.

As I have stated before, just about all production motorcycles are capable of making a U-turn in well under 20 feet. That means that you can U-turn on just about any two lane road including the narrow streets in Ybor City. Here's the technique you need to apply. If you are about to make a left hand U-turn, keep your foot firmly on the rear brake, keep the clutch in the friction zone and roll on the throttle. Dip the bike towards the right curb, then quickly and smoothly turn your head completely around to the direction you want to go. At the same time you are turning your head, you should be pushing on the right grip turning your handle bars as far as possible and leaning the bike to the left. The same technique applies if you are making a right hand U-turn.

To practice this maneuver, find a parking lot with back to back parking lines. You will find the white lines of the parking spaces are placed 10 feet apart. At first, use three parking spaces. Start with your motorcycle towards the left side of the first parking space, then ride forward towards the right of the opposing parking space, turn your head completely around as you turn the handle bars and make a 30 foot U-turn. Keep practicing this making your turn tighter each time till you can eventually turn using only two of the parking spots. That will give you a 20 foot U-turn and enable you to make a U-turn on just about any street.

Practice this maneuver equally to the right and to the left. You may find that making a right hand U-turn seems to be more difficult if you are right-handed. That means you practice the U-turn to the right more than to the left and you will get comfortable making the U-turn in both directions. The real key to this maneuver is to look where you want the bike to go. Remember, if you look at the curb or the end of the pavement on that narrow street, that's where you will go. So, at all costs, avoid that temptation. With about 3 hours practice, you should be able to turn on any street whenever you feel like it with total confidence. Good Luck!