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# An aftermarket saddle can be a valuable **ASSET**.

by Sharon Faith

**W**hen you dream about adventure riding, your mind hardly wanders to the “big city” of Jacksonville, Florida. But in those dreams you’ll want to ride in comfort and style....

Meet Mark Todd, owner of *Sargent Cycle Products*, who, along with his father and brother, has been in the upholstery business since 1935 in Jacksonville’s historic Springfield area. A small yet powerful company, their main focus is on high quality, aftermarket motorcycle seats. I recently had the pleasure of meeting Mark and touring their factory; it was fascinating to chat with key employees and learn about the technology involved in their work and the serious thought that goes into their aftermarket saddlemaking—most impressive.

In the ‘80s and ‘90s, Mark often rode to *Daytona Bike Week* and *Biketoberfest* motorcycle rallies, enjoying all that bike culture had to offer. On a ride into the Smokey Mountains with Tom Taylor, he noticed his friend’s seat was in desperate need of repair and asked Tom to ship it to him for reconditioning and reupholstering, an event that spawned the idea of having other motorcyclists ship their seats to *Sargent* for similar treatment. It wasn’t until later that Mark realized that making completely new and custom saddles, from the ground up, would provide even better quality and ease for his customers.

By offering motorcycle owners a choice of advanced features not seen previously in the market, *Sargent* established its position as an innovator in the industry under a new entity: *Sargent Cycle Products North America*. In 1996, the first prototypes were rolled out for the *Honda CBR600*.

Around that time, Mark met Michelle, who had 10+ years in marketing. After she learned to ride (she calls it the “girl-friend test”), Mark realized that “she was the one.” They married a year later, spent their honeymoon motorcycling Europe, and she’s been an integral part of the company ever since. But



**Polytech seat base pan assembly:** Injection molded Polytech seat bases are hand assembled, adding various components such as storage compartments, built-in flashlights, and more.

during the honeymoon, on an *Edelweiss* tour of the Swiss Alps, they realized there was a need for adventure touring model saddles. And to this day, they continue to design full custom seats, adjusting and replacing foam, fabric and piping, offering their customers a multitude of choices in upholstery.

Aftermarket saddles are available for *Aprilia, BMW, Ducati, Harley-Davidson, Honda, Kawasaki, KTM, Suzuki, Triumph, Victory* and *Yamaha*. Sargent continues to purchase, ride and tour on different style bikes for seat development. Some adventure touring models include the *Yamaha Super Tenere XT 1200, Suzuki V-Strom 650* and the big *BMW GSes*. It was the *GS* that was mainly used in development and testing of their patented *Zone Suspension Body Contour Technology* and *Advanced Heat Systems*. But one of Sargent's biggest selling seats of all time for adventure riding is for the *KLR 650*. This bike is a great, do-almost-anything-on-any-terrain motorcycle, so its popularity is no surprise. And, a seat for the *Honda Africa Twin* is in the early stages of R&D, aiming for a release this summer.



**“The bike I used in South India was a *KTM 390 Duke*. By no means was it a touring bike but I toured all India, Nepal and even touched inside Bhutan—22,000 km on some of the best, worst and most treacherous roads in the world! In the end, I fell in love with the bike and it was a nearly perfect mount for me to explore the region. The *Sargent* seat made a huge difference. I didn't realize how big until I put the stock seat back on to sell it. I rode with the stock seat for one hour and my ass was sore. So, I shipped that *Sargent* seat home. It cost me a small fortune, but it's a keeper. I hope to buy another *390 Duke* when I get home.”—Edward Bach**



**Sewing:** Seat covers are sewn using the best quality UV treated, marine grade materials available.



**Seat base pan processing:** PVC/Acrylic Alloy seat bases are hand cut and finished.

If their seat making weren't enough, *Sargent* also offers other products such as driver and passenger backrests. Their patent pending *EM-5* technology, currently available for the *BMW 1600GT/GTL*, *BMW R1200GS LC/OC* and *RT*, *KTM Adventure* and the *Yamaha FJ09*, allows the rider five-way adjustability for perfect placement, with the ease of quick and tool-free adjustment.

*Sargent* is forging ahead by creating more innovations to accommodate the needs and lifestyles of adventure riders. For example, a seat system that can be transformed from a duo to solo with an aluminum rack that repurposes the pillion's seat area for more room for luggage.

Now, *Sargent* is a global leader, and everything is manufactured at their 30,000-square foot facility with a crew of around 30 employees, right here in the U.S. If you want to treat yourself and improve your ride but have no idea where to start, their customer service team will walk you through each step to make sure you're getting the right

product for your style of adventure riding. Buy it and try it—you'll have 30 days to decide. *Sargent* is proud of their 95–98% customer satisfaction rating.

*Sargent* is also a proud sponsor of the ACC parts *Mexico Enduro Team*, *The Dirty Canadians*, *@TACBIKE*, *First Ride Up the Divide* and Ed Bach. Ed Bach is one man who can certainly attest to the comfort and quality of *Sargent* saddles; He's ridden in 103 countries and logged over 225,000 kilometers. Ed says, "The company is a pleasure to deal with. The owner and employees are not just business people, they're motorcycle enthusiasts. And it shows in their final products, as well as how they stand by their products." After spending some time with Mark and touring the factory, it's easy to see why *Sargent* is a great success. They stay focused on technology, research and a demand for excellence.

If you're in the Jacksonville, Florida area, stop by the factory. Take a tour, enjoy a coffee, visit the showroom, and see firsthand the commitment to excellence and

hometown values executed daily by *Sargent's* employees—values rooted deep in the community and which will continue to have an impact on how we ride. Mark Todd was born and raised here in Jacksonville and has a lifelong respect and love for his hometown and he instills those values into every *Sargent* product.

The company motto is "Never Stop Riding," and with such a wide choice of comfortable saddles, that's now easier than ever to achieve.

**SargentCycle.com** **ADV**



**Sharon Faith** grew up in Oak Harbor, Washington, but now calls Florida her home. She's been obsessed with motorcycles from an early age and started riding in

2008, discovering that she is a long distance, adventure-seeking motorcyclist. She's ridden in Nicaragua, Australia, Canada, Peru, Mexico, Bulgaria and many parts of the U.S. She is always looking forward to exploring more of our great big beautiful world.

**SharonFaith.com**



**Seat foam cushion molding:** This process involves reaction injection molding and *Sargent's* patented *Zone Suspension Body Contour Technology*.



Samples of *Sargent's* excellent workmanship, a saddle for a *BMW R1150GS* and a *Kawasaki KLR 650*, both with matching piping and heat controls.