

As an active pilot, I did not want to start my novel with a plane crash. Even after losing about a dozen friends in various accidents and tragedies over my 22-year airline career, I have not lost faith in aviation.

So, I started my novel, *Pushing Leaves Towards the Sun* with a plausible motorcycle accident and challenged my two protagonists, the surviving friends of the first chapter fatality, to experience what I have dealt with.


I made their reactions the extreme ends of survivor's guilt and grief. I hoped to show readers who are experiencing their own losses that their reactions, however emotional, are normal and that they're not alone in their feelings of despair. They are not forgotten while the rest of the world seems to move on without them. Little did I know that I would gain a respect and affection for motorcycle riding like I've always had for aviation. Both airplanes and motorcycles are exciting and inherently safe, but unforgiving of mistakes.

In Chapter 1, "Oso" hopped a curb to cut through a church parking lot and skip a red traffic light. This decision led him to the lot's closed chain as he tried to exit. "The chain struck the headlight and rode up the quarter fairing, cleared the top of the tinted Plexiglas with a snap, and connected under Roberto, a.k.a. Oso, Acevedo's chin strap, fatally separating the rider from his motorcycle." Having written that opening, I researched popular motorcycles from the 1980s where my book is set. During this process I became enamored with the GS style. As I wrote my novel I realized I was not finished with this motorcycle. Without giving away the plot, it becomes a strong supporting link for both of Oso's friends, Billy and Lindy, left living without him. This bike has its own name, "Phoenix," and is a 1981 BMW R80GS.

After almost a year of casual searching, I found a 1981 BMW R80GS that had just been fully restored by Dale Beason at BMW of Las Vegas. Too perfect in its stock paint, Dale even found and repainted a spare tank, front fender, and side panels so that I wouldn't ruin his hard work transforming the bike into Phoenix from my novel.

Having allowed my riding skills to rust, I recently attended an MSF sponsored Experienced Rider Safety Course in St. Louis which was as fun as it was a confidence builder. The instructor asked to buy my bike (which I have no interest in selling) and comments from other bikers are regular as they encounter the restored 27-year-old motorcycle.

My renewed enthusiasm for riding can best be expressed with the song that my protagonist Lindy writes for Oso in Chapter 1 of my novel. It's called "One Down and Four Up" and it shows how young, alive, and happy they are and riding together is one of their great thrills. Below are the lyrics. The song has been produced by music artist Kim Smith and can be heard on her MySpace Web site, <http://www.myspace.com/kimsongsmith>, and also on BMW *Owner's News* Web site in conjunction with this article.

If you'd like to read the first three chapters of my novel or leave me any comments, my Web site is www.pushingleavestowardsthesun.com. 

“One Down and Four Up”

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and Music by Kim L Smith

*Kick start
Spread my legs apart
I need
The open road today
Give me
An easy ride
Take me
Anywhere, take me away*

*One down and four up
Feeling through turns we're leaning from side to side
One down and four up
There are no seatbelts on this E ticket ride*

*I try
To read your mind
There's no
Telling what I'll find
Miles fly
By in a blur
Knees squeeze
I feel the engine purr*

*One down and four up
Feeling through turns we're leaning from side to side
One down and four up
There are no seatbelts on this E ticket ride*

*Wrap my
Arms around you
And I lace my fingers across your heart
If you
Only knew
That I have loved you from the start*

*I feel
Wind rushing through my hair
Our Hearts
Are racing the engine
Like two
Bats out of hell straight to heaven*

*Hold tight
It's just you and me
Saddled up
We're always rolling free
You are
My love my guy
And we
Will never say goodbye*