

## “Resigned” - Leaving Corporate America?

by Kerry Bryant for Bikeland.org

*My, how far a young street racer has come...*

When I turned Pro in the racing world in the late seventies I really thought I was “going to be somebody”. I resigned from my ten-year career at Goodyear where I had started as a floor sweeper while I was still a freshman in High School. I had just graduated from MTI and I was on my way! I had some skills to proceed in the racing world, and back-up skills to take me into corporate America. Which direction to take? I chose both...

### SUPERTRAPP DAYS

I got a job at SuperTrapp around 1980, where I made \$1000 per month. The big bonus was that they paid for ALL of my racing expenses! I could keep feeding my habit. This was a racer's dream come true! Back in those days the only other “privateers” getting that kind of backing were the likes of John Ulrich from Roadracing World and Bruce Hammer with Chevron Team Hammer. I was in heaven!

SuperTrapp had just shipped their first street bike exhaust. It was for the Yamaha XS1100. They wanted to get into the Sportbike and Harley Davidson markets, as well as expanding their Dirt and ATV divisions. SuperTrapp was my first taste of Corporate America. I loved almost every minute of my time there. The CEO of SuperTrapp had a racquetball court in the facility and every single day at exactly



KERRY BRYANT of Placerville is shown with the motorcycle he will race tomorrow at the Sears Point Nationals. After missing the first professional road race of the year (the Daytona 200) due to illness, Kerry says he is “really pumped about this one.” According to the man standing behind him (Steve Guellette, one of his sponsors from McIntires and Tubes) Kerry stands a good chance of winning. The bike on the right is the one he will be riding in the super bike production class. Kerry has invested an estimated \$15,000 in the Yoshimura Kawasaki, a bike capable of hitting speeds in excess of 160 MPH. He'll be riding the Honda at left in the box stock class of a Sears Point race May 7. Also sponsoring Kerry are Hangtown Wheels and Mike's Cycle of Placerville.

4:30 pm we would play, even if it meant he had to excuse himself from a high-level meeting. On the court it wasn't “boss vs. employee”, it was just two guys playing hard.

Slowly my corporate career evolved and eventually I became the Director of Motorcycle, Automotive, Marine, and Industrial divisions at SuperTrapp. In my racing career I was pushing the envelope more and more. The crashes became faster, bigger, and more costly in all areas. I was starting to break myself as much as my bike(s) and anyone else's bike that I had the chance to ride.



In 1988, while racing the Suzuka 8 Hour with

Rich Oliver, I had a huge crash that I was very, very fortunate to walk away from. I lost the front brakes on the racebike and was catapulted through the "bubble" and into the gravel trap at well over 100 mph. I came home with a new lease on life. I had a wife and two kids, why the hell was I being so selfish living my life on the edge? Was it time to have some fun and take up golf?  
*Note – Rich Oliver also had a big crash at the Suzuka, but he "Cowboyed Up" big time and got us into the show!*



SuperTrapp was a division of the Moller Corporation ([www.moller.com](http://www.moller.com)). Moller is an aircraft developer whose focus is VTOL aircraft ("Vertical Takeoff and Landing"). SuperTrapp's aircraft division was located in Davis, CA. In 1987 they decided to move the SuperTrapp Division to West Sacramento, CA so they could concentrate their sole efforts on Moller Corporation International. In 1988 the move paid off. Dreison International, out of Cleveland, Ohio, purchased the SuperTrapp division from Moller.

Two years later we purchased our main competitor and exhaust icon, Kerker, from Fred Fox of LeMans/Parts Unlimited fame. Kerker was moved from Canoga Park, CA to West Sacramento. In the process all the employees that wanted to join Kerker moved with the company. We combined these two former bitter, but semi-respectful rivals into a single exhaust giant, "SuperTrapp/Kerker". Several years later, Dreison International planned to move the SuperTrapp/Kerker divisions to Cleveland, Ohio.

I'd traveled to Cleveland on many occasions

and there simply was not enough money on the table during negotiations to motivate me to move from California; no way, no how.

Sadly, after almost 13 years I was moving on. Jenny, my loving wife and work partner, and I had no choice but to leave SuperTrapp/Kerker. It broke our hearts to leave the company we'd help put on the map, and all the friends and fellow employees we literally "grew up with". This was a wake up call about Corporate Life.

I learned so much from so many brilliant engineers and craftsmen at SuperTrapp that to this day I maintain a very close relationship with most of the principals. Today I sit on the Board of Directors of their Freedom Motors division (Aerobots/VTOL Aircraft).

### WHITE BROTHERS DAYS

White Brothers was a fledgling company in Southern California (SoCal) formed by twins Tom and Dan White, both ex-racers. Jenny and I had been friends with them for years. We had discussed working with Tom and Dan many times, however I couldn't imagine moving to Southern California. Life in NorCal is completely different than life in SoCal! During the Christmas of 1992 we hammered out a deal with White Brothers and they convinced us to make the big move to SoCal in February of 1993. The going away party we were given at SuperTrapp/Kerker was outrageous! We did not make our scheduled departure date! Oh! The hangover...

White Brothers was bursting at the seams with growth potential, expanding at an exceptional +20% per year. They had 25 employees and \$8 million in sales. I started as the Director of Operations, and Jenny, as

the Distributor/Export Sales Manager. We loved our jobs! White Brothers was a company full of die-hard enthusiasts. They are very, very passionate about the lifestyle. Motocross, Roadracing, Speedway, Dirt Track, Trials, Mountain Biking, Watercraft, Harleys, Sportbikes, Cruisers, Dual Sport, you name it. Life was good in SoCal with White Brothers!



My design partner was Willy Musgrave. Together Willy and I worked on many different products, so many that I'd have a hard time remembering all of them. The one that I'm most proud of is the "E-Series" exhaust line. This was our baby. Musgrave and I trademarked and patented (#D424,492) the "E-Series" and signed the patents over to White Brothers. White Brothers became a viable manufacturing power, increasing their manufacturing divisions first from 6,000 square feet to 12,000 square feet, and then again to 20,000 square feet. In late 2001, White Brothers had 121 employees, \$30 million (plus) in sales making it so attractive that it was acquired by MAG Industries (Motorsports Aftermarket Group).

I have always believed that if you don't like what's going on around you, let your feet do the talking and don't be afraid when the door hits you in the ass on the way out. You'll probably be better off for it.

I walked out one night after a meeting. We had a difference of opinion over the direction of the company. I took ten minutes to pack my briefcase and I left everything else behind. After nine years I parted ways with White Brothers and it was on to my next challenge. Jenny stayed on with White

Brothers for a while longer. She absolutely loved her job, her customers and her staff.

I still stay in touch with all the principals of White Brothers and MAG Industries and value my relationship and friendship with them greatly. We taught each other a tremendous amount and for that I thank them.

My office phone (which was now at home) started ringing the day after I left White Brothers. People called to offer advice on what to do with my career. Hmmm... I thought perhaps I might go on to something I really enjoy, like being a SCUBA Instructor. One day Fred Fox of LeMans/Parts Unlimited called. I had always looked up to him and had remained in contact with him since working together at Kerker. We came



up with a few ideas.

I've been a friend of the principals at Summit Industries since the mid-80's. Summit Industries was the parent company of Jardine Exhaust and Doug Thorley Headers, which had been around since 1958. Fred

suggested I work at Jardine. I took his advice and after a few meetings with the ownership of Summit Industries a deal was hammered out. A few months later, Jenny joined me.

### **JARDINE DAYS – THE BEGINNING, THE END**

Shortly after joining Jardine, I was made Vice President and put in charge of both Motorcycle and Automotive divisions; specifically focusing on Sales, Marketing, R&D, Engineering, and Racing Programs. Jenny was made Sales Manager. Ownership put trust in us to do our jobs, and let us do it for the most part. During a fast-paced three years we hired a new staff, nine of which followed us from White Brothers. We built a new 30,000 sq ft facility, and made many noticeable changes to the image of Jardine Exhaust and Doug Thorley Headers.

I absolutely relished getting back to my roots, especially Roadracing, something White Brothers was enthusiastic about, but not successful in. Jardine was not only enthusiastic about Roadracing, but also successful. Working with American Honda & Honda Australia's Roadrace teams was awesome! Win or lose, Honda only does it one-way; first class and BIG!

Why leave? Sometimes trying to get things done in a Corporate environment can be difficult, frustrating, and time consuming. Often changes take a lot of meetings, a lot of time, and a lot of money. As you grow older, priorities change and spending time with family becomes more important.

After 25 years, it was time to let my "own feet" do the talking and strike out on our own. Enter – AREA P



### **AREA P – THE BEGINNING OF THE END**

Area P is the culmination of everything in my career. Most importantly I finally have the chance to work alongside my family; with Jenny, my wife of 29 years and now with my 24 year old son, Kenny.

Kenny is turning into a master fabricator, electrician, welder, machinist, CAD designer and salesman. In his very short career he has worked for many brilliant people and has a knack of being able to look at something and learn it instantly. He did not get that from Dad... He is truly amazing and I am so very proud of him. Thank God he is working with us!

Our youngest son Kelly (19) is an extremely fast Motocross rider. Doing Doubles and 90' triples with ease, he's so fast he scares me to death. He has fused vertebra in his back, along with two 16" titanium rods and a host of screws thrown in there as well. He is just as fearless, just as fast as ever, and he's getting faster.

AREA P will be filled with passion; passion for success and more importantly, quality of life. I gave up the life of Corporate America to be completely in control of my own destiny, and love of the life we call

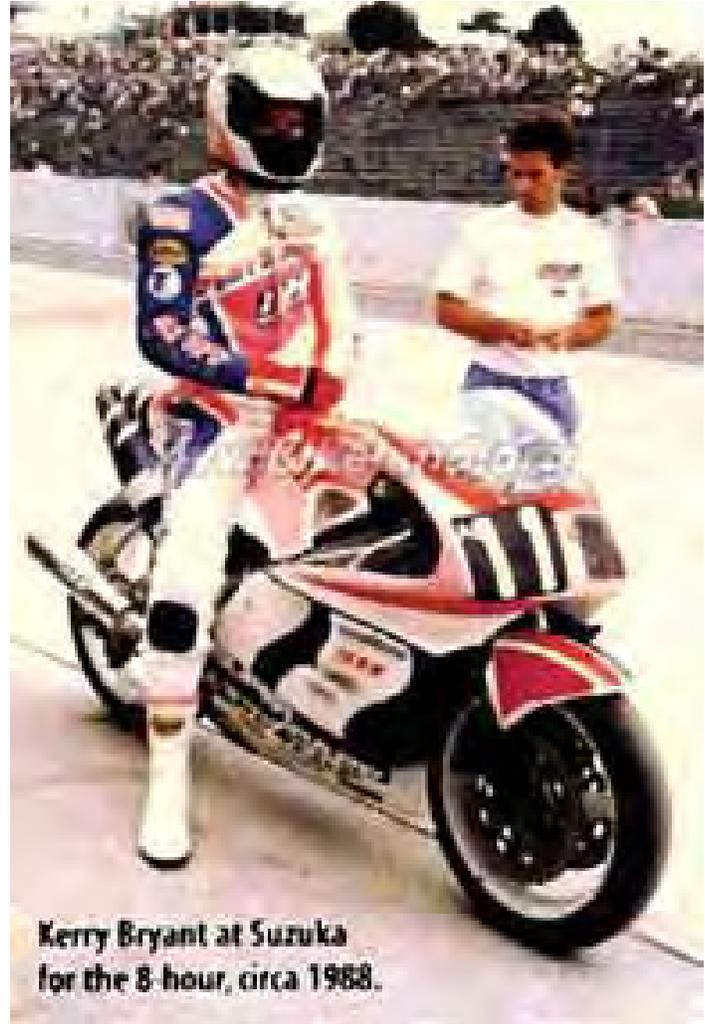
Motorcycles. AREA P will succeed because we love what we do. Good-bye Corporate America! Thank you for teaching me so much along the way, and for everything you will continue to show me in the years to come.

In time AREA P will one day become a part of the "Corporate Circle". It will always, however, have one very important difference, the buck will start and stop at my doorstep.

To all my competitors around the world: don't fret about AREA P.

*Not just yet.*

Kerry Bryant of Team Bryant  
Area P – No Limits



**Kerry Bryant at Suzuka  
for the 8-hour, circa 1988.**