

# Privateer Profile: Dennis Parrish

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**Name:** Dennis Michael Parrish

**Race Number:** 49 (SMRI, CCS SW) & 490 (AHRMA)

**Hometown:** Corrales, NM

**Team:** N/A



AHRMA, CCS, and SMRI racer Dennis Parrish with his number-one supporter, wife Lyn. •  
Courtesy Paris

## **How did you get introduced to motorcycles?**

My cousin had an old two-stroke 50cc Ducati that he taught me to ride around his house. I was a little slow in grasping the concepts and he saved their front picture-window by grabbing the back of the bike and dragging it to a halt as I was headed toward that window trying to remember which way the twist-grip was supposed to go in order to slow down.

## **What made you want to start racing?**

I followed all types of bike racing starting in the late '60s in the bike magazines of the day, and went out to the local bike club's hillclimbs and flat tracks in the same timeframe. But when me and my dad rode our bikes (both Yamahas, a '71 XS650 for him and a '72 R5C 350 for me) over to Seattle International Raceway to watch a club race, I was hooked. I still remember a guy we

knew riding a '72 blue Kawasaki H2 750 triple getting passed down the front straight by a fully faired Honda CB-350 twin!

**How do you finance your racing habit?**

I have a couple of sponsors that help. My primary sponsor is Randakk's Cycle Shakk; he provides resto parts for late '70s & early '80s bigger Hondas with a focus on the GL1000. I'm also supported by A.P.E. (American Performance Engineering) and Motonation.

**What do you find most difficult about balancing your racing with other responsibilities?**

Making sure I do all the things I need to do before I start doing all the things I *want* to do! I'm going to school (again and still) for a Master's degree, work full time, am married, have step kids, grand kids, and my own kids plus a wife who understands my motorcycle compulsion. Organizing the race requirements—like a safe, well running bike and a rested driver (me)—with time off and chores around the house is tough, so sometimes my bikes aren't as clean and neat as I'd like, but they run great!

**What series and region do you race, and who are your toughest competitors?**

I race nationally with AHRMA and have been to Daytona, Road America, Barber, Mid-Ohio, Miller, Willow Springs, and several other tracks. I race locally with our Albuquerque (yes, I can spell it correctly) club, SMRI, at Sandia Motorsports Park. We've put together a small regional vintage series with CCS SW and race at Firebird in Phoenix a couple of times a year. Recently, my toughest competitor nationally has been Dave Crussell, a great guy who's beat me nearly every outing on his Z1R. I raced a couple of times the year before last with Thadd Wolf, but he's so much faster than me it's not funny.



One of Dennis' two DOHC CB900Fs (this one a circa-'82-Freddie Spencer tribute) in action at Firebird. • Photo by Chris Roberts/Racers Photo

**Describe a typical race weekend.**

When I'm traveling to a national event I usually end up going by myself. I drive about 700 to 800 miles a day, and time it so that I get to the event late the evening before. Bright and early I get on the track and pick a spot with some slope to it so I can bump-start my race bikes instead of the pushing and jumping and wheezing and praying that's required if I'm on the flats. My pits usually has three race bikes: a '74 Z1 and two DOHC CB900F bikes, one done up like Freddie

Spencer's '82 and the other a black version of the same. My goal at the local events is to try to win plus beat some modern bikes if we run mixed classes, and at the AHRMA Vintage events it's to finish on the podium. I get away with going by myself because we vintage racers are a pretty laid-back group of buddies who help each other out with everything.

**How would you describe yourself as a racer?**

All the racing I've ever done has been for fun. I have dirt tracked, desert raced, ice raced, motocrossed, and road raced. Even though I like to win, it's not as much fun as when I get to contest someone for a position. I'm 55 and a grandfather now, so I don't go out there with blood in my eyes and a mission to win; it's to have fun on the track and in the pits and be able to come back and do it again next time.

**What activities do you do outside of road racing, either for fun or for training?**

I got my dream job when I turned 20—I was a motorcycle mechanic for both Kawasaki and Honda dealers from the middle '70s to the middle '80s. After a couple of years I figured out that I wouldn't be able to make enough money to buy a lot of bikes doing that, so I went off to another profession (engineering) and turned my love of messin' with bikes from a living into my hobby. I don't have a training regimen, but do try to keep from getting fat and lazy!

**What do you love about road racing?**

There is an elegance and precision in road racing that I haven't found in other motorcycle racing disciplines. To be able to place your bike at the same place every lap, brake at exact locations, know how much traction you have to use, and adjust your riding behaviors to pass other riders takes planning and finesse. It's a great blend of mental and physical abilities.



The Parrish pits. • Photo by Dennis Parrish

**What other road race series do you follow?**

I enjoy World Superbike for the close and unpredictable racing. I like MotoGP as the pinnacle of bike development and rider skill, but miss the brute force and associated rider adaptations required on the older 990s and 500 two-strokes.

**Your road racing hero/heroes?**

Eddie Lawson and Wayne Rainey. I loved watching them horse around the 1025cc Superbikes and the precision and speed on the 500cc GP bikes.

**Your own personal favorite race or best finish thus far?**

Last year in Vintage Superbike Heavyweight at Road America, Dave Crussell on his Z1R, me on my CB900F, and a guy named Richard Goldberg on a GPz750 had a three-way battle going where every one of us spent some time in the lead and swapped positions for the entire race. Whoever was behind on the front or back straight would draft past the others into the lead, and positions changed constantly. Sadly, I ended up third with Dave winning on his Z1R and the GPz in 2nd.

**Your career goals (if any) in racing?**

My only "career" goal in racing is to keep it fun. As long as I enjoy working on my bikes, driving to races, enjoying the company in the pits, and having someone to race with, I'll keep doing it.

**Where can people learn more about you or follow your on-track progress?**

My main sponsor, Randakk's Cycle Shakk, has set up a blog series with several links. The primary one is <http://www.randakks.com/RandakkRaceSponsorship.htm> and has links to photos and several other sections.

**People you'd like to thank?**

I'd like to thank my wife, Lyn, for understanding how much fun racing is and has been for me. Randakk's Cycle Shakk, Team A.P.E., and Motonation also make it far more possible for me to participate in this sport, and if it wasn't for them, I'd do it a lot less or possibly not at all.