

Watch Out For Motorcycles

Riding With Good Friends: The Importance Of Riding With Others

Recently, I rode to Helen, Georgia with my fellow members of the Old Town Chapter, Brandon Harley Owners Group. We left on a Thursday and arrived in the North Georgia Mountains before sunset and had a great weekend. There were about twenty-five bikes, all were in good condition and had no problems throughout the weekend trip.

Weather conditions were terrific. Temps were in the 70's, there were a few isolated showers, and we could not have asked for much better weather. We enjoyed great companionship and great dinners together under the stars. During the weekend, riders split off into smaller groups and enjoyed riding the Appalachians of their own choice, riding in North Georgia, North Carolina and Tennessee.

During much of the trip, I rode with a newer rider who was riding a fuel-injected Harley Davidson 883 Sportster. This "new" biker had water bottles in her saddlebags to keep hydrated and also had rain gear. The bike itself was also impressive, keeping up effortlessly with my 2005 Harley Davidson Electra Glide. During stops we talked about many riding subjects including the importance of not riding alone, making ride plans, turns, the importance of looking through the turns, braking, encountering gravel in the turns, good hand signals ("communicating with your fellow rider"), and riding in staggered formation. The new rider was a quick study. But after hearing her dragging the pegs on a few twisting turns, we reminded her not to get "over-confident"; as, that too can sometimes cause accidents or mistakes. Altogether, from Thursday to Sunday evening return to Tampa, we easily rode over 1,500 miles.

Since returning home, I read of local news or more motorcycle accidents, including a fatality this past weekend in Pinellas County, Florida. Also, just yesterday, I drove up onto an accident scene involving another biker, where a Harley Davidson Heritage was lying in an intersection in front of a police vehicle, and the officer was interviewing the driver of an SUV just off the side of the road, with everyone else gone. My first thoughts were sorrow, and then wondering if I recognized the bike, wondering if it might be someone I know.

From my observations, most accidents appear to involve "solo" riders where someone else, usually a car, has made an unexpected left turn in front of them, or someone just pulls out from a side road, violating their right of way. One of the cases on my desk happens to be a client who is a motorcycle safety instructor, who is a pilot, having years of military experience, who flew combat missions in Vietnam. With all of this experience, on his way home after teaching a motorcycle safety class, a car pulled out in front of him without warning; and, he says there was "absolutely nothing" he could do to avoid the crash. Another case on my desk involves a gentleman who was simply stopped at a stop sign at an intersection, when a texting driver made a wide turn and hit the biker.

As the saying goes, we "Live to Ride, Ride To Live!" Certain things are within our control: keeping our bikes in good mechanical condition; wearing the proper clothing and equipment; and, being of the right state of mind to ride. We can have years of riding experience; and, like the motorcycle safety instructor, we can even be an expert rider. Still the roads today are more dangerous than ever. Not only are the roads more crowded, you also have to worry about drunk drivers, phone drivers and texting drivers.

When possible, make an effort to ride with others so you are more visible which will increase the chances we are seen, so we continue to "Live to Ride, Ride to Live!" and lets remind our family, friends and neighbors to: "Watch Out For Motorcycles!"

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