



It's THAT You Ride, Not What You Ride

You might not have noticed, but our “Gold Wing Touring Association” is rapidly becoming diversified. We’re gradually becoming the “Whatever-You-Ride Touring Association”. And I think that’s a good thing.

I first started riding with my Chapter before I knew what the GWTA was. And I wasn’t on a Gold Wing at the time. Sure, I envied those guys with the big bikes and the CB’s and all that stuff. But my little Silver Wing did me just fine, thank-you very much. For about six months. Then I started telling my wife, Sweetness, that I really wanted a bigger bike. She didn’t think so. It got to the point where I actually had to produce tears. (And you can’t use that angle very often.) Even then, I didn’t really realize that there was an organized group to which my friends belonged. I saw that they had matching jackets and stuff, but I honestly didn’t know it was a national organization until the Chapter Director, Mike Mullins, gave me an application.

Even then, not everybody in the group had a Gold Wing. A few of the wives had Yamaha Virago’s, because they were too short for a Wing. The guy I bought my Wing from had moved to a Harley. Some folks had cruisers. It was a mixed bag. But it didn’t matter. What was important was THAT you rode, not what you rode.

I should probably mention here that I often tell people that I’m going to get a Harley before I grow up. (I figure that gives me a long, long time.) I rented one for a few days when my wife had her 25th Wedding Anniversary in Hawaii. I liked it, but not so much that I want to give up my Wing. She says I can get a Harley if I want, but I have to trade in the Wing. She doesn’t understand. I want one of each.

I know a guy who has a Yamaha Venture, and swears by it. Keeps telling me all the people who ride his bike and wonder why they have a Wing. I think that’s great. Whatever floats your boat.

My buddy Burt Wagner puts his chapter newsletter in various dealers, and ends up with several members with “Crotch Rockets” who like to ride. I say great! (Between you and me, I’m betting that folks who like to ride will eventually find their way to a Wing, sometime or other. And, like I dream, they might have two bikes: one for their style of cruising, and a Wing for touring. Again, whatever works.)

I have a best friend, Jimbo, who rides a Ducati. (I need friends like Jimbo, because he’s so eccentric that he makes me look normal.) Jimbo came to the Yuba City birthday party with me, but was a bit worried that he might not fit in well with the Gold Wing crowd. I was with the Washington State Staff group, and they quickly adopted him. Now he’s thinking about coming to Gold Rush, because he had such a good time with my friends.

This proves my point better than any other example. When my friend Jimbo has such a good time with my Wing buddies that he wants to come to Gold Rush, that just shows that it really doesn't matter what we ride, we can enjoy the company of any kind of rider.

There are other positive benefits to expanding our membership to include all kinds of riders. Perhaps the biggest is that we as an organization need more members, period. Another is that we need younger blood, with new ideas. And finally, we are always looking for folks to step up to leadership roles. Newer, younger members are probably more likely to accept that kind of opportunity with vigor and enthusiasm.

Did you notice that we're even offering a Gold Wing or a Harley in our Gold Rush Raffle tickets this year? That's the kind of diversity that I'm talking about, that will help us reach out to more riders, and get more new members. When you want to grow your Chapter, remember to reach out to all riders, no matter what they ride.

There are all kinds of different bikes on the way to "Destination Friendship". Enjoy them where you find them!

Jerry Weltner
National R&R Director (Recruitment & Retention)