



THE WAY I SEE IT *by Genevieve Schmitt*

Remember When?

It's all about options today, isn't it?

MILLIONS OF NEW RIDERS WERE MINTED OVER THE LAST 10 years. That was before the recession hit. Many of them will never know the joys of riding when you had to make do with what you had — at least when you knew no better. I'm

heading into my 22nd year in the saddle and lately have been missing those good old days.

During a test ride of Harley-Davidson's new Dyna Switchback last autumn, I started thinking about technology and how far we've come. I had pulled over to the side of the road and needed to turn on my flashers. I knew Harley had created a dedicated flash button on the Softails last year and the Dynas this year, and I had to think where it was as I was about to depress both turn signals at the same time, the old way of turning on the flashers. "Ahhh ... there it is," I muttered, noticing the triangle symbol on top of the starter button. Anyone buying his first Harley in 2012, a Dyna or Softail model that is, will never know the simultaneous turn signal execution method of turning on the flashers. The Touring models still do it the old-fashioned way, but I'm guessing it won't be long before Harley wires a dedicated switch on those bikes as well.

Let's go way back. I loved my analog odometer. I didn't like it when gauges went digital — all gauges, even alarm clocks. I loved my bedside analog alarm clock. On my early Harleys, it was fun to watch those mileage numbers literally turn, slowly, slowly, as I anticipated reaching milestone mileages like 10,000, or ones with all the same digits like 33,333. My gaze would shift from the road to the gauge, then nervously fixate on the gauge while knowing I should be watching

the roadway, anticipating the two rolling to three so I could see the odometer read 33,333. All threes! Woohoo! Those little things used to get us excited. With digital gauges, you're lucky if you actually see the numbers change. It's just too quick.

All the fun's taken out of it now.

While we're on the subject of gauges, new riders will never know what it's like to have just one tripmeter. I remember when tripmeter B was introduced. "What do we need that for?" was my initial reaction. I quickly learned to appreciate having two tripmeters, though.

I'm no gearhead, but I sure did love my carbureted engine. A mechanic once showed me how to adjust the jets so that when I rode over higher mountain passes above 9,000' in Colorado, I'd know how to adjust the air/fuel mixture so my bike wouldn't sputter. I'd use the end of a metal nail file and thought I was so cool because I knew how to do that.

New riders of Harley-Davidsons will never know when a seat height of 28" was considered low. That was the seat height on my Sportster 1200 back in 1993. I installed lower shocks so I could sit on the motorcycle with both feet flat on the ground. Not many riders have to switch out their suspension today when the lowest seat height in Harley's lineup now measures nearly 4" lower at 24-1/4"!

New riders will only ever know the luxury of having accessories that detach easily, like a windshield and a

luggage rack. I remember when I committed to putting a windshield on my Dyna Low Rider in 1994. There was no turning back. Once those braces were installed on the forks and the windshield bolted to them, the shield was on for good. Better get used to it. No more riding with my smile in the breeze for all to see. Now my mug's stuck behind a plastic window. My cool quotient just dropped tenfold. Sure, I could take off the windshield with some time and a wrench, but those ugly braces would still be part of the bike. Better to just leave the windshield on all the time and get use to it.

Looking back, I'm glad I started riding with a windshield when I did. Now that Father Time's gotten ahold of my late-'40s face, I'd like to think having wind protection all these years lessened his grip on it a bit.

Funny, though, when Harley introduced its line of detachable accessories, a windshield was the first thing I bought. "At least now I have the option of removing the windshield when I want," I thought as I plunked down \$300 for the same thing, but with different attachments. "There!" I said to myself as I attached the detachable windshield to my Dyna Low Rider and packed up the perfectly good, hard-attached one into the empty cardboard box never to be used again. Know what? For as long as I rode that bike — 14 years — I never detached that detachable windshield. But it's all about options today, isn't it? Bells and whistles, conveniences. All these luxuries are supposed to make life easy. I don't know about you, but I liked things the way they were.

Genevieve Schmitt is the founder/editor of WomenRidersNow.com and TrikeRidersNow.com, two online magazines. E-mail her at GSchmitt@WomenRidersNow.com.