



THE WAY I SEE IT *by Genevieve Schmitt*

When Will You Stop Riding?

“When will motorcycling not be a part of my life?” I asked myself recently.

ALL GOOD THINGS USUALLY COME TO AN END. I FOUND THIS out recently when my beloved cocker spaniel, my soul mate, Charley Girl, passed away from old age in February. I haven't been the same woman since. She was my first

doggie companion as an adult, so I'd never had to put down a dog before. She was by my side constantly, consuming my thoughts (like a mother would think of her child) for the last 11 years. The immediate loss of her presence in my world was so tangible; my heart ached for months.

As I've been processing her passing (I don't say death because I believe her soul passed on to heaven and that I will see her there someday), I've been looking at other things in my life that I hold near and dear to me that I will have to let go of at some point. This includes activities like motorcycling, which takes up a large part of my life. “When will motorcycling not be a part of my life?” I asked myself recently. Will I still be able to ride when I'm 85 years old like Gloria Tramontin Struck, a friend of mine and fellow member of the Motor Maids who's been riding for 60 years and still finds herself in the saddle of her Heritage Softail Classic riding down to Daytona Bike Week from New Jersey each February? Will I have the physical and mental fortitude to do that at 85? Will I even be around at 85? Will I ever become too blasé to ride? Have you ever thought about this?

Even though the latest reports say motorcycle fatalities are down, for some reason stories of motorcycle accidents seem to come my way almost weekly, and some are so senseless. I must admit that lately I've questioned my passion for riding in light of all the accidents that

have been happening, many occurring because of distracted drivers. When will we get a handle on distracted drivers, texting while driving, cars plowing into you from behind? I am the most defensive rider of all, but, please, you cagers! I don't have eyes in the back of my head! Pay attention to the road!

In addition to managing and editing my online magazine aimed at women riders, WomenRidersNow.com, I also own TrikeRidersNow.com. I see how a trike enables folks to continue feeling the wind in their face when riding a two-wheeler is no longer feasible. A lot of people tell me the reason they opt for a trike is they are simply tired of mustering up the extra effort needed to keep the bike upright. You can fall over on a motorcycle as easily as having a moment's inattention; you can't on a trike. As our minds age and become less sharp, and as our bodies age and become less strong, riding a motorcycle safely and keeping it upright, especially if you have a passenger, can require more than you're physically and mentally able to give. A trike solves the balance issue.

Are you destined for a trike or will you call it quits when your body slows down? A lot of motorcyclists say they'd never ride a trike, that's what they say now. Just wait until you get a little older and your bones start creaking, or an illness slows you down and you're rethinking riding your two-wheeler after you had a few too many close calls.

I said I'd never trade my spry Low Rider for a bulky dresser, but eventually I did just that when I got “a little older” and was ready for the creature comforts and smooth ride a dresser serves up.

That said, will I trade in my Street Glide for a three-wheeler when two wheels get to be too much so I can continue feeling the wind in my face? Uh ... yeah ... probably. Unlike Gloria, who told me “When I can't ride on two wheels, I'll stop riding,” I may end up choosing a trike or a Can-Am Spyder (love that vehicle!) so I can continue to experience all the mind-clearing and rejuvenating effects that come when you're scooting down a scenic strip of asphalt without a box surrounding you. There are a lot of byways I still want to ride. Will my body and mind be as alert and agile in 40 years? I'd like to think so, but just in case, I'm opening myself up to the fact that there is an alternative to two wheels.

With the recession, a lot of people had to give up riding because they couldn't afford the costs associated with owning a motorcycle, or they needed the money from the sale of the bike. I say they probably never really enjoyed riding if they could part with their bike that easily. My motorcycle would be the last thing I'd sell. If I lost my house and everything in it, at least I'd have my motorcycle. I could just pack it up and ride around the country, crashing at friends' pads, scrounging for gas and food money, but I'd still have my bike to ride around on to visit my favorite places, a simple act that enriches my soul.

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