



THE WAY I SEE IT *by Genevieve Schmitt*

## A Shoe On The Side Of The Road

There are several web sites devoted to this whole mind-swirling thought

YOU'VE SEEN ONE. I know you have. Most of us have spied this roadside phenomenon if you've ridden a motorcycle for any length of time. I saw one just the other day: a shoe on the side of the road. Yes, a shoe. A lone shoe.

What's a shoe doing on the shoulder of an interstate? How did it get there? Did someone toss his shoe out the car window, because the shoes I see always look like they were tossed, not placed. I've seen a few over the years. They're usually dirty. Did someone pull over to fix a flat, take off his shoes to do it, and then forget to put one back on? Tell me, how does a shoe come to be on the side of the road? Maybe it was in the back of someone's pickup and it flew out? If that's the case, why was the person not wearing those shoes? And is the truck draft enough to hoist a shoe into the air?

When I'm alone with my thoughts on a lonely highway, and I see a shoe on the side of the road, my mind ponders these thought-provoking questions. If I were in a car jamming to my favorite song, or immersed in a story on an audio CD, I'd think nothing of that shoe. Sure, I'd notice it and have a momentary thought like "Hey, there's a shoe on the side of the road," but I wouldn't dive into the who, what, where, and why of it. On a motorcycle, where there are no physical boundaries between you and the outside environment, thoughts take on a different dimension. For me, I'm either thoughtlessly reveling in my empty and quiet mind for a change, or I'm consumed by one thought, working every angle of it — like I do when I see a shoe on the side of the road.

Surely I have more important things to fill my inquisitive brain with, but honestly, let's get real here. How the heck does a shoe get on the side of the road where there are no houses, stores, or inhabitants nearby? It's such an oddity to me; the pure ridiculousness of it becomes mind candy. Actually, the first time I saw a shoe on the side of the road, I didn't give it more than a passing thought as I flew by it on my bike, but over my many years in the saddle, there'd be the occasion where I'd cruise by a shoe again and think "Another shoe. What is up with that?" and conclude that seeing a shoe on the side of the road is not a once in a lifetime occurrence, that a shoe on the side of the road is one of those roadside lures. Shoes come in pairs and are usually worn by a person. People don't walk around with just one shoe. If I see a lone shoe, I immediately think "How did it get separated from the other shoe; and who's walking around wearing just one shoe?"

Just for fun, I Googled "shoe on the side of the road." Aha! I'm not the only one, thank goodness! There are several web sites devoted to this whole mind-swirling thought; my favorite is [www.RoadSideShoe.com](http://www.RoadSideShoe.com). Check it out. Next time I see a shoe on the side of the road I'm going to photograph it and submit my finding.

While seeing a shoe on the side of the road doesn't bother me other than exer-

cising my motorcycling mind for a time, what does get my goat are those road gators — not to be confused with road snakes, those black bituminous compound strips that render motorcycle tires slippery. Road gators are the highway's version of an alligator: long thick strips of tire rubber that lie haphazardly on the roadway, usually on interstates. They're often so big that motorcyclists have to swerve to avoid them. We have truckers to thank for bringing rubber reptiles to America's highways.

Road gators are sometimes born when a tire blows out on a semi. Boom! I've never seen a tire actually blow like that, and I'd like to keep it that way, but it must be quite the explosion judging by the pieces of rubber strewn across the highway. So the part that bothers me is why doesn't the person whose tire blew up clean up the ensuing mess? Doesn't he have to stop to check the blowout? Fix the blowout? Or does one less tire on an 18-wheeler not make a difference in the ride? Turns out, a driver can be cited if he doesn't remove his tire trash from the roadway. Often, though, a trucker isn't aware of the blowout until miles down the road, so the road gators are unintentionally left there to wreak havoc on oncoming vehicles. Turns out, motorcycle accidents as a result of colliding with a road gator are rare. The black blob is usually big enough that one has time to see it and react. Next time you see a road gator ... or a shoe on the side of the road, think of me and let the mental inquisition begin.

---

*Genevieve Schmitt is the founder of WomenRidersNow.com, the leading source of motorcycling lifestyle news and reviews. E-mail her at [gschmitt@womenridersnow.com](mailto:gschmitt@womenridersnow.com).*