

THE SOCIAL VALUE OF MOTORCYCLING

A Collection of Essays

*Overview and Introduction by
J. Richard Gray*

When a mandatory helmet law was enacted in Pennsylvania twenty-five years ago, a challenge to its constitutionality was mounted. A lower court found the requirement that one wear a helmet under sanction of criminal penalties to be unconstitutional as an unlawful extension of the police powers of the state. This judge found that the decision to use or not use a helmet was a personal one which affected only the individual. In view of this, the state had no power to regulate in this area, and the law was unconstitutional.

This decision was appealed to an appellate court which reversed the lower court's decision. The reversal was on the basis that in certain situations, a helmet would protect the motorcycle rider from losing control and causing an accident which could injure others. It would be difficult for an experienced rider to imagine such a situation, but the reason for the poor rationale was the court's perceived necessity to relate individual actions to the posing of some danger to another before the state could restrict freedom.

In the last twenty-five years, those who would argue for more governmental regulation have advanced a new, and widely accepted, theory for extension of the police power of the state to regulate individual conduct: the "social burden theory." The "social burden" theory has as its foundation the rationale that any action taken by an individual which could result in death or injury affects society as a whole by placing a "burden" on society. The burden is defined as increased medical costs, lost productivity and need to support the dependents of those so injured. Based on this rationale, the argument is now made that it is no longer necessary to show that your perceived risk-taking directly affects another person, but so long as some perceived damage to society as a whole can be pointed to,

the state can restrict your conduct through the use of the criminal law.

The "social burden" argument has been used to justify mandatory helmet laws, but more importantly, if taken to its logical conclusion, can be used to argue for the outlawing of motorcycles. How is a rider any less of a social burden if he has spinal cord injuries as distinguished from brain damage? Further, if this rationale becomes widely accepted for governmental action think of the magnitude of the power the government would have to regulate. You could be punished for not wearing rubbers when it rains. The state could force a woman to have an abortion if it was shown that the child to be born would be a "social burden." Is this too strong a statement? Remember, twenty-five years ago we were arguing about direct injury to another when discussing the power of the state to criminalize conduct. Now, the proponents of such laws need only show a "burden."

In response to this philosophy, we have decided to examine the positive side of motorcycling. All too often we play into the hands of the "social burdenists" by permitting the accidents and dangers of motorcycling to be emphasized; personal injury lawyer involvement in our movement is the most obvious example. So if motorcycling is not a "burden," is it of any social value? Your immediate reaction is, "Of course!" Okay, what *is* the social value of motorcycling?

This question was asked of a large group of motorcyclists who were asked by the MRF to put their thoughts on paper. The responses were as varied as motorcyclists themselves. These papers were difficult to write and those who submitted them are thanked by the MRF for taking the time to think positively about our rides. We hope that the intellectual stimulation you get from the pa-

pers will give you a different perspective and perhaps different ideas that you will share with us in the future.

The papers presented provide others' perspectives on the "Social Value of Motor-cycling." My wife Gail, always the artist and philosopher, presents her thoughts on motorcycling as an expression and symbol of our freedom. Indiana's Mike "The Stranger" Kuhn follows up in discussing the public safety aspect of motorcycling and the personal satisfaction derived from riding. I try my hand in a discussion of motorcycling and the environment.

Lee McCubbin, Director of ABATE of Iowa's Rider Education program, discusses the social value of the many types of riders, and the effect on those riders that motorcycling has. Maryland's Gary "Garcya" Jode attempts to answer the question, "Does motorcycling have a positive effect on society and its institutions?" Finally, Elizabeth "Boots" Sawyer speaks personally about the brotherhood and sisterhood found between motorcyclists.

AN EXPRESSION AND SYMBOL OF OUR FREEDOM

Gail C. Gray

The analysis of the social value of motorcycling can be divided into two broad categories. One category incorporates those attributes which are quantifiable and can be supported by statistical evidence. This category is more appealing to minds with a scientific bent because we can gather and analyze concrete facts and formulate an objective argument which convincingly demonstrates the positive values of the sport.

The second category is much more challenging to explore because it resides in the realm of philosophy. It is to the realm of philosophy that human beings must look in order to formulate an overall concept of the nature of our human experience — a reason for our existence. It is philosophy which enables us to grapple with the eternal questions, "Where did we come from? — Who are we? — Where are we going?". Much as a navigator utilizes the configurations of the stars to guide the path of a voyage of discovery — so too, do we turn to philosophy in the quest for meaning in our lives. In a world which is not merely physical and material but also spiritual, psychological, intellectual and social, we must examine our activities in the light of the role they play as integral parts of our basic existence.

How does this mode of inquiry impinge upon the activity of motorcycling? Let's begin with the motorcycle as a machine, an assemblage of metals, rubber, plastics and chemicals. How did it

come into existence? We can assume that it was invented at least primarily out of the need for a fast, modern, economical form of transportation in a world quickly changing from an agrarian, rural culture to an industrial, urban culture. An individual was possessed of a need to create a machine which could propel him across the landscape of his world faster than his own body or animal powered conveyances were capable of doing. The machine took on the property of being an extension of the individual's own body. This initially one-person mode of transportation was probably not greeted with enthusiasm as a practical means of getting around, but it revealed other benefits which captured the human imagination — a sense of freedom, economy, of adventure and exploration and play — in short, of fun.

It is impossible to stifle the innate human need to explore, both inwardly and outwardly. Human nature is driven to test itself against limits and barriers, whether real or imagined. This modern contraption, the motorcycle, was one of several inventions which provided an outlet for this undeniable urge at the dawn of the modern era. The very design of the motorcycle as an entity makes the statement: Individuality and Self-Reliance. It did not require a crew to operate or to maintain. It could tackle, if at times with difficulty, the rudimentary road system already in use.

If we speak of social value, focusing first on

the meaning of the word value as having worth or importance, of being regarded highly, prized and esteemed, it is not much of a leap to considering the word values. Individuality and self-reliance, in addition to being attributes are also values. In the American tradition, individuality and self-reliance as values in large part define the legendary American Spirit — that revolutionary spirit which distinguishes us as a social entity from all of our predecessors throughout history. All of us at one time or another have referred to the concept of the American Spirit and the human spirit. Indeed, the term is used liberally in political speeches, advertising campaigns, appeals for voluntary efforts to help with disaster relief and to give credence to our leadership role in world affairs. It is a concept so taken for granted that few look beyond the use of the cliché to the deeper significance of the term.

The American Spirit is synonymous with freedom. It is freedom which we prize most highly and which is the hallmark of the American way of life. In general terms no one is opposed to freedom. We are all for it. Yet both freedom and spirit are abstract concepts. It is only when freedom becomes objectified in a specific activity, form of behavior, or idea that it becomes real. Freedom and spirit do not exist at all if they do not emerge in some visible, identifiable, experiential behavior or activity.

Motorcycling is one such visible, identifiable, experiential activity. In the operation of a motorcycle, the rider discovers and explores not only the external landscape through which he moves, but an inner landscape which is simultaneously revealed as the motorcycling experience brings freedom to life. In the operation of a motorcycle we encounter challenges which are not only physical but mental and psychological as well. From an individual standpoint, a physical challenge, met and successfully conquered, enhances the capacity to deal with intellectual, psychological and emotional challenges. From a social standpoint, these individual experiences translate into a collective identity of a people who possess the positive values of courage in times of crisis, an irrepressible drive to expand on all frontiers, compassion, and a willingness to come to the aid of

those in need. Imagine the American pioneer, arriving on this continent wanting more than just basic survival, bringing a passionate desire to create a life in which the dreams and pursuits of each individual are valued more dearly than the stifling social control and order sought by powerful institutions of government. That American pioneer is personified today in the image of a motorcyclist traversing the breadth of this land, daring to confront the vicissitudes and anomalies of climate, weather and terrain, embracing the continually unfolding drama of new faces, places and customs.

Motorcycling as an activity stimulates another cherished American value: competitiveness. As a competitive sport motorcycling has made a considerable contribution to our society in the form of motorcycle racing of all kinds, professional and amateur, on and off road. Competitiveness has led to technical advances and innovations which have in turn led to applications far beyond the field of motorcycle engineering. Competitiveness has also provided a social benefit in the development of a popular spectator sport. Competition generates business and travel. The combined total of motorcycling related business enterprises and businesses indirectly benefited by the sport is impressive. Competition brings personal benefits in the form of setting higher standards for oneself, of creating goals and surpassing them, and by striving for ever better performance records and demanding the best that we can from ourselves. It creates positive cultural role models and sports legends.

As a touring sport and hobby, motorcycling provides a wonderful opportunity to explore our country and to get to know its people. What could be of greater social value than individuals moving freely, enjoying their leisure time, spending their vacation dollars traveling alone or with family or friends to the far corners of our land, learning first hand rather than from books or other media what our great land is really like?

Organizations of motorcyclists, whether political, social, business, or sports oriented, make significant contributions to our society. Their fundraising activities are vast and benefit medical research, service organizations, public insti-

tutions, private individuals in need, charities, grassroots political movements, motorcycle racing and community projects to name but a few.

Motorcycling also makes a positive social contribution in the field of art and design. Performance and engineering are not the only areas of innovation. Aesthetics takes us into yet another realm. Consider the motorcycle as an art form — as industrial art or as art in the purest sense and how its design and the ongoing search for the unique and beautiful have epitomized that ideal of individuality. The motorcycle exists not only as an art form in itself but inspires art in the commercial sphere, in all entertainment forms such as motion pictures, music, visual arts, literature and the fashion industry.

To those who subscribe only to the negative Hollywood image of the motorcyclist as a modern day barbarian in our midst, bearing down with malevolent intent upon innocent citizens in his path, we need only counter with the positive image, indeed the romanticized image of the motorcyclist as that typically American embodiment of the free and rugged individualist, who loves the outdoors, who is gregarious and disposed to come to the aid of someone in need, who pits his skills against known and unknown forces, who loves to be alone with his thoughts and to ponder the mysteries of the universe as he follows the road into the future. Isn't this one of the many personifications of the American Spirit we believe carries over into the other areas of our lives, into the business world, the scientific world and the academic world?

What is life without the risk and thrill of discovery, daring and creation, and self-actualization, without curiosity and motivation to find out where the next bend in the road will take us? We must not buy into the propaganda so pervasive

today that our freedoms are really more of a burden than a blessing. We must resist campaigns to frighten us into desperation so great that we thoughtlessly relinquish the multiplicity of activities that collectively constitute our freedom. In a frenzied hope that the constraints on our freedom will somehow guarantee us a safe, predictable existence in which no one will be injured or harmed we will lose that American Spirit we say we hold so dear. We will lose our peculiarly American zest for life and we will ultimately lose ourselves.

Those who share the joys of motorcycling rely on their experience in forming impressions of the world and those impressions affirm what is basically good about preserving diversity in American life. Our options will only grow more numerous if our philosophy remains in keeping with that pioneering spirit of freedom. Politically aware motorcyclists are thinking individuals who recognize that threats to the existence of their own chosen activity and lifestyle are really threats to the broader spectrum of behaviors. This is why we must move beyond awareness to organized political activity. The exercise of vigilance by individuals in defense of our freedoms is in itself an endangered activity precisely because too many citizens have lost sight of the value of self-reliance. Much of the power over our lives has been shifted to government, its agencies and institutions, and other concentrations of power such as big business and the media. When we pay no more than lip service to our once and still revolutionary American philosophy, we keep its principles alive in name only. The words will become as hollow as our existence. The ultimate social value of motorcycling lies in preserving motorcycling as both an expression and symbol of our American freedom.

AN OPEN LETTER FROM SOCIETY TO TODAY'S MOTORCYCLES: "P.S. — WE STILL NEED YOU"

Mike "The Stranger" Kuhn

In addressing the topic of "the social value of motorcycling," I would like to focus on the "P.S." portion of my title. To me this phrase refers to "Public Safety" and "Personal Satisfaction," the two main areas in which motorcycles still contribute greatly to society.

The public safety aspect of motorcycling can be divided into three main areas in which motorcycles serve our society. They are: military use, law enforcement use, and the new category of emergency medical motorcycles.

Military Use

It is not my aim to discuss the morality of or justification of war. Many nations have called upon the motorcycle to aid in their war effort in the past 80 years. In 1917 during World War I, about 20,000 motorcycles were used for dispatch work and as scout vehicles for the Americans alone. The first American to invade Germany in 1918 rode in on a Harley-Davidson.

An offshoot of this military use was the creation of a motorcycle mechanics school. This training has been offered continuously by Harley-Davidson since its first class in 1917.

In the great struggle of World War II, more than 90,000 motorcycles were put into service, with another 30,000 machines produced just for spare parts and maintenance. Following this terrible war, the presence of American motorcycles left such an impact on the nations they served that cities such as Capetown, Seoul, Utrecht, Sydney, Mexico City, and even Tokyo adopted our bikes into their public services.

Since WWII, many armies of the world (including the United States) have used light off-road motorcycles in their infantry units. These fast, mobile vehicles have replaced the horse in classic new cavalry units. They help the soldiers travel quickly through rough, mountainous, or desert-like terrain.

Law Enforcement

Motorcycles have been in police service since at least 1909. A photo from about this time period was discovered that pictured the Oak Park, Illinois Police Department. It shows fifteen proud men, one van, and three Harley-Davidson motorcycles. Motorcycles have many uses in today's modern police fleet, such as traffic patrol, accident investigation, escorts for VIP's, funerals, marathons, and special events, public relations, and even new uses in gang and tactical units.

Even though departments first used bikes 85 years ago, the reasons modern departments still use them today are the same. An officer on a motorcycle can maneuver in congested areas of a city. He is effective in patrolling and pursuing in rural and off-road areas. And of course, motorcycles are more cost-efficient than automobiles, vans, or trucks.

The cost of a fully-equipped patrol car today can be as high as \$18,000. A factory ready police motorcycle can be purchased for under \$8,000. Kawasaki and Harley-Davidson have a separate sales division for this purpose. BMW sells police bikes in every nation of the world except the United States (thanks to liability suits against manufacturers).

Although it would be impossible to gather such data, one's imagination can compute how many criminals have been apprehended or lives saved by a quick responding officer on his motorcycle. In my area of service (the Chicago metro area), motorcycles are used every day for these purposes. According to Harley-Davidson's sales figures alone, police bikes are in service in at least 48 states, the District of Columbia, and dozens of cities in Canada.

The city of Los Angeles prepares extensive reports regarding all aspects of their police services. Using the figures of vehicle cost from my paragraph above, eliminating police bikes and

substituting cruisers would cost the city more than \$2.9 million. L.A.'s cruisers average 8 m.p.g., and their police bikes average 36 m.p.g. (My own police bike, a 1990 Harley-Davidson FXRP, in the city of Griffith, Indiana, averaged 44 m.p.g. in 1992 and cost only \$249 in maintenance, excluding gas and oil.) To my amazement, the L.A. report also had data relating to accident involvement for their cruisers and motorcycles. In the year they studied, motorcycles were involved in accidents one for every 98,400 patrol miles, as compared to one for every 28,300 miles for cruisers. If these figures were applied nationwide, the cost of replacing motorcycles with cruisers would be astounding.

Since 1920, LAPD's motor officers have been a dedicated group, and have remained the pride of their city. In my own state, we have two nationally known police motor units. The city of Indianapolis and its home county of Marion have two excellent units and drill teams that have taken home dozens of awards in nationwide competitions.

No matter what uniform an officer wears, or what type of bike he or she rides, there is a special bond between all motor officers worldwide. This was proven over and over again as I attended the 90th Harley anniversary in Milwaukee this year. The friendship shared, the interest in motorcycling, and even the "war stories" will be in my mind for a long while. And besides, what would a presidential escort or a parade be without that shiny police bike leading the way?

Medical Motorcycles

Motorcycling's newest area of service is in the field of emergency medical response. The EMT's and paramedics of Chicago and other metro areas across this nation are employing motorcycles to save lives. With today's expressway and freeway traffic, a serious motor vehicle crash will instantly jam traffic in all directions for miles. Many states and cities are using motorcycles as first response vehicles to speed basic life support assistance for seriously injured victims. After medical aid is rendered, the riders can then unclog traffic to assist in the arrival of cruisers and ambulances. Once again, who can figure how many lives are

saved through programs such as these?

As I conclude this portion of my paper on public safety, I would like to relate an event that combines this topic to the second half of my report, which addresses personal satisfaction. Earlier I mentioned the 90th Anniversary celebration in Milwaukee. Harley-Davidson invited police motorcycle officers from around the country to assist in the massive task of escorting the anticipated thousands of bikes converging on the city, and my department graciously allowed me to attend. In my wildest dreams, I could not have imagined the magnitude of the event. I will never forget the sensations and sounds of the police bikes, with sirens screaming, leading 60,000 motorcycles past some 100,000 cheering and waving spectators and supporters. The cheering crowds made us feel like we were visiting dignitaries or returning war heroes.

Personal Satisfaction

This leads me to relate my personal satisfaction in motorcycle riding. In their latest data, the American Motorcyclists Association reports having over 200,000 members nationwide. Add to this all the ABATE chapters, HOG groups, Goldwing clubs, BMW and Yamaha groups... God knows how many bikers are really out there.

As for me, I bought my first motorcycle in 1971. From the first day I owned it, that little Honda 125 was therapeutic to me. The sights and sounds of the road were magically soothing and exciting at the same time. Since then I have owned bikes that include other Hondas, a Harley, a Kawasaki, and a BMW. I regarded each of these bikes as a friend and confidant. How many times have I started one of these buddies and gone for that ride to relieve the stress of a hectic shift, or to sort out a troubling problem? It has to be a thousand times. In my 17 years of police work and many years of membership in various motorcycle groups (ABATE, AMA, Blue Knights, and MRF), I have known other riders who use their bikes for the same therapy.

What a tragedy it would be if the government and greedy insurance companies were to continue to gain a hand to force people from this renewing pastime. In this age of self-serving busybodies

and corporate greed, how can these people try to take my freedom from me? They try to force me into helmets, choking insurance policies, and seatbelts. Is this still America? Didn't I read something about "pursuit of happiness" and "freedom from oppression"?

I am a veteran, and I have served my country to maintain these and other ideals. I will not quietly stand by and allow rich politicians, safetycrats, and stooges of corporate America to shove me into their box!

Well, enough of my soapbox. I know you in motorcyclists' rights groups have heard all of this

before. We are uniting, and we are winning our freedoms back. Let us continue in these efforts, but also keep in mind our responsibility to educate our riding brothers and sisters, teaching them to ride safe and sober. I have very strong feelings regarding these issues.

Anyway, this is my report, incomplete and rambling though it may be. But who cares? I'm going to ride my new motorcycle (while I still can)! Remember to spread our ideals, and wave to that oncoming biker, no matter what he's riding.

MOTORCYCLING AND THE ENVIRONMENT

by Rick Gray

There are two ways one can analyze the relationship between motorcycles and the environment. The first is the practical, environmentally friendly nature of motorcycles. The second is the special way that motorcycles put the rider in touch with the environment.

Due to its size, a motorcycle is environmentally friendly on a number of bases. A motorcycle provides a fuel efficient form of transportation with gas mileage often in excess of fifty miles per gallon. Additionally, the amount of space occupied by a motorcycle makes it a valuable form of transportation in urban areas. The ability to commute on a motorcycle and not cause traffic jams has been recognized by permitting motorcyclists to use "high occupancy" lanes, but this often occurred only after struggles with the authorities for recognition of this fact. Similarly, in parking a motorcycle, less than half the space of an automobile is used even for a dresser. This fact is generally not recognized when parking fees are set and space for a motorcycle is charged at the same rate as other vehicles. Finally, the motorcycle's weight and size results in little or no damage to the infrastructure. It is for this reason that many state motorcyclists' rights organizations have as part of their agenda the reduction or elimination of tolls for motorcycles.

These practical arguments should be advanced whenever and wherever the opportunity arises. For example, on one ride this summer several of us came into a construction zone where traffic was backed up for miles. Trucks were blocking both lanes so that other motorists could not get in front of them, thus adding to the back-up. Our engines began overheating, so we decided to ride the shoulder of the road. As we did, several truckers complained on the CB, as only truckers can, about our doing so. I got on my CB and reminded them that if everyone was riding a motorcycle there wouldn't be any back-up or need to repair the road. Though I didn't make any friends, I made a point which, judging from the nature of the truckers' response, touched a sensitive nerve. When discussing motorcycling with "non-motorcyclists" we should always be ready to argue the motorcycle's positive effect on the environment.

The second aspect of motorcycles and the environment is the motorcyclist's "being in touch" with his or her environment. Just as campers, rock climbers, white water rafters, skiers, and other outdoor sports enthusiasts have as an element of their sport the fact that it is "out of doors" and "in touch with nature," so, too, does the motorcyclist. A motorcycle provides a means of trans-

portation that floods the senses with what is around the rider. On a motorcycle you see, smell and feel where you are, and the experience of freedom is unmatched. You know if it is raining, cold, hot or dry. Nothing separates us from what is around us, our environment.

How can the social value of this experience be measured? The recreational and relaxing effect of being in touch with nature while causing less damage to "Mother Earth" than many hikers is a social value. Though we are not often described as environmentalists, we are, as we ride motorcycles, much more the environmentalist than many of us realize.

THE MOTORCYCLIST AS A MEMBER OF SOCIETY

Lee McCubbin

Motorcycling is far more than the physical skill of keeping a two-wheeled vehicle upright and moving in an intended direction in a safe manner. Motorcycling is more than a way of life, a feeling, or a way of thinking.

What does it mean to be a motorcyclist? Or maybe the question should be, what does being a motorcyclist mean? For some it simply means being able to operate an alternate form of transportation for commuting. Some enjoy the challenge of matching their skills and ability against those of other riders on a track or hill in a sporting event. Some enjoy testing their riding technique on the obstacles provided by man and nature off the road. For others, it means a sense of belonging and acceptance by fellow riders who do not judge you by what you do for a living, what you ride, or where you came from, but for who you are and what you believe in. Still others find it to be a way of thinking and living that is reminiscent of the cowboys and the freedom of the old frontier.

For many of us, just learning to ride a motorcycle has been an inward look at ourselves. We have discovered our capabilities and learned our limitations. We have learned to deal with frustration, fear, and uncertainty. We have learned to use our heads and to respond appropriately to ad-

verse situations in life. We have grown in our self esteem and realized a greater level of self worth. It has allowed us to explore all of our possibilities. As we continue to ride and practice these skills, we have become safer, more responsible, more aware, and more productive in all aspects of our lives.

To be a motorcyclist is a responsibility. It is one we choose to take. It involves more than just learning to operate the motorcycle. It means that we must accept the responsibility for life and death decisions for ourselves, as well as those we share the road with. We must also accept the responsibility to maintain the integrity of the sport and the safety of those involved. We can't just throw a leg over the saddle, start the engine, ride down the road, and not do anything more.

Motorcyclists are involved in many charitable and public assistance issues. They collect toys for the Toys for Tots program. They collect food for local food pantries, and help distribute food and clothing to the needy. They hold many fund raisers for local needs such as families displaced by disaster, or needed equipment for volunteer ambulance services and fire departments. Motorcyclists often assist local law enforcement agencies with crowd and traffic control at special events or parades. They donate blood and often host

special events for this purpose.

You will find motorcyclists involved in all levels of politics and government as a direct result of their interest in the betterment of their communities, as well as their desire to protect the integrity and safety of their sport and their fellow riders. They are deeply involved in education and safety programs, and promotions for both their fellow riders and the general public with whom they share the roadways.

Often the catalyst to this involvement is the influence of other riders, riders' organizations, or a proposed law that could adversely affect their sport and the enjoyment of it. Once they have started down the path of "involvement" they draw strength and commitment from those they come in contact with. Their activity increases and their determination grows.

They begin to learn how the political system works, and what they have to do to make it work for them. Their eyes are open and their ears alert. They are ready to do what needs to be done.

Along the way they find out many other things that add to their desire and belief that they can make a difference. They begin to realize that the difference they can make is a positive one, and will not be limited to motorcyclists or the sport of motorcycling.

The next thing you know, you may have a motorcyclist running for the school board, the city council, the county board of supervisors, mayor, state representative, state senator, governor, U.S. House of Representatives, the U.S. Senate — even President. Or they may choose to take another route. They may become a lobbyist. They may stay on the grass roots level and work to organize and inform both riders and the general public of the issues and the personal impact to each of them.

Motorcyclists come from all walks of life, all income levels, all religions, all professions, and all ethnic groups. There may be one living next door to you or just down the street. They are ordinary people who enjoy a common interest, and when they share that interest there are no dividing lines between them. They can, by virtue of their diversity, come in contact with and influence many other people.

Within the motorcycling community you will

find doctors and other health care providers who are doing valuable research into the mechanisms of injury to cyclists and automobilists. They are also working to educate others in their field on how to recognize these mechanisms so that injuries which may not be readily apparent can be anticipated. This increases the chance for survival of the injured person, and decreases the incidents of additional injury due to improper handling of the patient or delayed treatment of an unrecognized condition. Research of this type will be invaluable in product design, the formation of educational materials, and the changing or improving of services provided.

You will also find educators in the motorcycling community. The individuals have a great deal of contact with young people and are working to assist them in learning responsibility for their own actions, respect for others, and respect for themselves. Research by some educators has been directly responsible for the development of a nationally accredited Motorcycle Rider Course to train motorcycle riders in the safe and sensible operation of a two-wheeled vehicle. Others in the field have influenced advancements and improvements in teaching techniques that are applied at all levels of education.

Motorcyclists in the road construction field have worked to improve surface conditions to reduce danger to all vehicles. Design advancements in modern highways have been achieved with input from motorcycle operators and with consideration for all the types of vehicles that use the roadways.

Motorcyclists from every walk of life have made positive contributions to their jobs, families, and communities by virtue of being aware, by caring, by taking the time to help, by doing something instead of just complaining, and by sharing with others the problems that they see or experience, along with ideas for solutions.

Other professions have heard the needs of the motorcycling community and rallied to provide for those needs. The garment industry has developed and manufactured flexible, weather-protective clothing for riders. Shoe and boot manufacturers provide stable footwear for the rider. Protective apparel such as leather jackets

and pants, helmets, gloves, and eye protection have been improved, changed, or developed to meet the special needs and desires of the users.

With the expansion of the interest in motorcycles, from a simple alternate form of transportation to a primary form and often a recreational form, the development of products and the design of the basic motorcycle has changed. When Mom and Dad get on the motorcycle today, they may each ride their own bike and have a son or daughter riding behind them. They may be pulling a trailer full of camping gear for a weekend outing or an extended family vacation. They may have a sidecar on one or both cycles, and have another child or two riding in it.

The number of truly “lone” riders is fewer. Motorcycling has become a family affair in many ways. A few years down the road, Mom and Dad may each still be riding on their own cycle but may now have two, three, or four grown kids riding alongside on their own motorcycles; and maybe a grandchild or two are now riding on the back.

Some of these individuals may even take their interest in motorcycling a step or two further. They may become motorcycle safety instructors, with the opportunity to have a direct influence on current and future riders. The impact includes training students in proper braking skills, accident avoidance skills, rider responsibility, riding straight and sober, and intervention skills to use with other riders who may try to ride when not straight or sober.

Safety instructors, who are riders themselves, can relate to both the new rider and the more experienced rider. But safety instructors and motorcyclists do not limit themselves to educating only riders. They also help to educate other road users on how to recognize motorcycles and how to respond to them. This creates safer and more aware roadway users of all types, and has made a positive contribution to the lessening number of accidents that occur. Instructors are in the “how” business. They have to help people learn how to do, or not to do, something that may directly affect themselves or the people they share the road with.

Instructors’ training and teaching lead them

to develop leadership and communication skills, which they go on to apply in their personal lives. Job promotions or positive career changes may result. Any involvement in politics, community, or service organizations is enhanced by the development of these skills. Their influence in the community, on the job, with other riders, and with young people takes on a very positive aspect.

Motorcycling can be a weekend getaway for some. It can be an alternate or primary form of transportation for others. For some it is a way to make a living, or an additional income, as a participant in the various motorcycle sports, as a mechanic or salesperson, as an instructor, as a manufacturer or designer of cycles and accessories, as a lobbyist for motorcyclists’ interests — the list is endless. For most of us it is simply a wonderful experience. The feeling of freedom and the wind in your face is something that a person has to experience to understand.

Being a motorcyclist is a choice, a responsibility, an asset, and a continual learning and growing experience. For everyone who chooses to ride a motorcycle, it is an important part of their lives on some level, and their whole life is affected to some degree by it — and so are the lives of those around them.

DOES MOTORCYCLING HAVE A POSITIVE EFFECT ON SOCIETY AND ITS INSTITUTIONS?

Gary "Garcya" Jode

My first step in attempting to answer this question was to define the terms:

Social: Being concerned with human beings as a group, or liking to live with others. Man is a social being. Third definition is for companionship or friendliness; liking company. Connected with fashionable society.

Value: Worth; excellence. The real worth; proper price; power to buy. Used as a verb: thinking highly of.

Worth: Deserving of; equal in value to. As a noun: merit, usefulness, or value.

Looking up these words in the Thorndike Barnhard dictionary was most interesting. Does motorcycling really have value or worth? Is it a social function? And what does it mean to society in general? Do others see motorcycling as enjoyable or worthwhile? Interesting!

I broached the subject with a woman who works at a beach area. She collects the money for parking as well as admission to the beach area. When she hears the sound of a motorcycle or motorcycles, she thinks only of negatives. They're going to argue over the cost of parking (the size of a motorcycle vs an automobile); the people inside the beach area are going to be concerned whether this is trouble coming down the road. Are they going to create problems for everyone? And, of course, in the back of everyone's mind is the one percenters. Are they about to rape, pillage, and burn?

As one can see, not only is our image not so hot, but even the sound of our motorcycles conjures up images that threaten our very existence. Was it movies which have portrayed motorcyclists as a terror, or are we somehow, deep down inside, with a genetic memory of yesterdays, likened to the marauding tribes of — and you fill in the space — bandits, Vikings, Huns, etc.? No matter what is conjured up, it's not a very positive image.

How do we reach out to the general public and convince them that, "Hey, we're really nice guys. We like doing what we're doing and it doesn't interfere with you at all." sounds good, doesn't it? But our politicians are constantly telling everyone that we somehow cost them in tax dollars for the havoc we wreak, either upon them or upon ourselves; that somehow we are not responsible human beings, but menaces to society, either through the misuse of our machines or somehow the misuse of others by us. We cost tax dollars when we're lying in hospitals recuperating from the injuries we have inflicted upon ourselves by not wearing helmets, etc. Or is it the woodland that we have just motorcycled through, to the horror of all the little animals, trees, trails, bushes, etc.? Or as we travel down the highway in great numbers going to a rally do we upset everyone who can't make a right turn from the left hand lane through our group?

Many of our political activities seem to be very self-serving. We are interested in ourselves not wearing a helmet; we're interested in safety programs for us as motorcyclists, not for everyone; and we ally ourselves to organizations that are not universally seen as wonderful — for example, the National Rifle Association.

What do we really do that helps our society as we ride our machines? Sometimes we may be the source of envy; perhaps we represent one of those things that everyone would like to do — fly an airplane, climb a mountain, ride a motorcycle; but the sport is much too dangerous. Therefore I, being more socially responsible or intelligent, just don't do those kinds of things.

Relating motorcycling to, shall we say, those who play golf, brought little or no sympathy. To me it's kind of foolish to be chasing a little white ball all over a green area with sand, water, and little holes, and yet that is a sport preferable to that of riding one's Harley Davidson down the highway. Somehow the golfer is more acceptable

to the general public, even though he carries a club and he deals with bunkers and barriers. He is not seen as someone who is selling dope to our children, or mugging little old ladies for their pocket change. He usually isn't barred from hotels, motels, or bars, and in fact is usually welcomed in these places, whereas we as motorcyclists may find ourselves being asked to move on to the next spot.

What are we doing wrong? What are we saying to the public that somehow is being interpreted in such a way that it presents either a threat or a problem to them?

As a motorcyclist, you certainly know the joys of riding one of these machines; how it feels; the sights, the sounds, the smell of hay or new cut grass; how coming through a wooded area the colors and shades rapidly move by as you go through various curves in the road. You know the sense of moving through time and space in such a way that it is enjoyable (and I don't mean doing 95 miles an hour on a back road that is as crooked as a corkscrew); the leisurely ride through a mountainous area, being able to see the trees, and not a blur; being able perhaps to see the animals and yet not run over them. Motorcycling can be very enjoyable.

Yes, it certainly appeals to certain individuals. We may ride in groups, but we all are individuals. We do our individual thing in a group process, not a group thing. It's hard to explain to a person who has not functioned as a motorcyclist the ability to feel the air, and how cool it can be in the shadey areas on a hot day. Oh, yes, it does have its drawbacks. A heavy rainstorm is no fun at all. But, again, this can be a challenge, if you like challenges.

Yes, it is very difficult to explain to a nonrider what the enjoyment is — and yet, it is enjoyable. I've been riding for a number of years and always look forward to riding again — today, tonight, tomorrow, going nowhere, seeing everything. The camaraderie with my friends who also ride, the jokes, the kidding around; and yet we're not falling down drunk, nor beating up anyone. To listen to a finely tuned machine as it goes through the tunnel, to see the top of the mountain just before you start down again astride your motor-

cycle. How can you convey that to someone who has never experienced it, and perhaps is even fearful of us experiencing it?

There appears to be a contradiction here. Motorcycling is a feeling process, not a logical one. If we really looked at it logically, none of us would probably ride. It certainly is too dangerous in traffic. It certainly can get you injured, perhaps even permanently, and yet the mystique of motorcycling leads us into a world known only to a few.

Perhaps our positive value to society is that we reflect a people who want to be free; who are willing to accept challenges; who realize that one must depend upon oneself and one's skills. There are dangers inherent to living, and yet, without them, is it really, truly living? Is it we who really reflect to our society that freedom is worth it; that freedom is something of value; that we can't just give it up and all become identical, in-line persons? We seek our own paths, but in such a way that it doesn't violate everyone else's rights, and yet that the rights of the masses don't interfere with the rights of the individual. Oh, what a balance this must take! Motorcycling reflects these things — the value of the individual versus the value of the group.

Perhaps down the road we as motorcyclists may cease to exist. Probably as we cease to exist, our country and its freedoms will follow shortly after. We are one of the environmentally fragile elements in our society. As we start to disappear, people should start to get concerned that the ecology of a normal, healthy society is slowly but surely changing, and as the changes occur, sooner or later the environment will become very hostile, not just to the disappearing motorcyclist, but now to everyone.

Society needs to look to us as one of the barometers of freedom. When we start to disappear, will society be far behind?

THE DESIRE IS BORN

Elizabeth "Boots" Sawyer

Growing up in a middle class family, the only child of parents who wanted the best for their daughter, was not that easy. Mother taught me what young ladies needed to do for the PTA, how to do creative knitting, needlepoint, what to do and not to do in polite society. Dad took me to repair washing machines with him and into every tavern and bar in town. It made for an interesting, if not conflicting, time in a young person's life.

My first recollection of seeing a motorcycle was at about the age of nine. I wasn't paying much attention at that time, but as years went on I noticed more and more. The shiny chrome, the unusual paint designs, and the clothes these people wore. Who ever heard of wearing a leather jacket in 90 degree weather? Not me.

Well, as time passed my parents absolutely refused to hear anything about these unusual machines. When I was 16, my family decided to take a trip to Florida. On Daytona Beach, there were vendors that would rent a 125cc motorcycle if you had a driver's license. Needless to say, that was my first experience at riding one. It was absolutely wonderful. No helmet was needed; I had the wind and surf in my hair, and the feeling of freedom to go up and down the beach with all the other people looking at this smiling young lady having the time of her life. Well, that lasted for only a day and a half, but little did I realize that feeling would stay with me for the rest of my life. The vacation ended, but the desire never did.

Back at home I got on with a so-called normal life — going to school, making mostly passing grades, going out with boys, and finally getting married. The idea of motorcycling lay dormant for many years. Then my husband brought home a friend who rode a 750 Honda. It brought back all my desires to ride again. I was a dutiful wife, and knew his objections to how dangerous it was to ride a motorcycle, so the feeling of wanting to ride became suppressed again.

Fortunately or unfortunately, the desire to

ride overpowered the instinct to obey the husband who forbade the wife to go riding. I sneaked out of the house on the Fourth of July at midnight to go for a ride with a friend (I know that is not a very nice thing to do). After donning a helmet (New York state law) and getting some quick instructions on being a passenger, we were off. I'll never forget that ride: helmets clashing during the first few accelerations, the night air, the excitement, and the power of this machine under us.

Well, due to many different reasons, the marriage did not last much longer. I did continue to go for rides on the back of that 750 Honda, but soon grew tired of having to wait for someone else to decide it was the right time to go for a ride. I decided that it could not be that difficult to learn to drive a two wheeled vehicle.

I went out and bought a 400 Honda Automatic just to make it even easier to learn. After many tip overs (short legs) I decided there had to be something that could be done to make it fit better. I did not think that at this time of my life I would be getting any taller. This was several years ago, when it was a novelty to see a female on a motorcycle, but the shop I went to seemed to accept it. They taught me how to do simple repairs and introduced me to ABATE.

Now ABATE has many different meanings, but back then in New York state it meant A Brotherhood Against Totalitarian Enactments. What did that mean? During my first group ride with them, I found out part of it. It rained, lightninged, and rained some more but we still went on. Apparently my tail light decided to drown itself because it was full of water. They put me in the middle of the pack for safety. I thanked them for being so protective of me but told them it wasn't necessary to protect the only female rider. Boy was I wrong.

There turned out to be several other minor repairs that needed doing that day due to the rain. I watched friend helping friend and stranger alike. This must be what they meant by brotherhood. Little did I know, it goes much deeper than

just helping one another out.

After several Niagara County Chapter meetings and a few more events, it was time to go to a state meeting. As I had never been before, I did not know what to expect or where to go. We decided to car pool, as it would be late in the evening when we got back. As we drove, we talked about motorcycling rights that have been slowly eroding. Did we ever have any to start with? Well, after the meeting I was even more convinced we did need to do something to fight for the rights we had lost. Who gave the government the right to decide what is right for me? I did!

My rights took a back seat for another couple of years. There was a move to Florida, work to look for, and a whole new place to get used to, and a different motorcycle. It took a long time for me to adjust to my new way of life. Finally a friend talked me into going to an ABATE meeting here. I went, I listened, and met a few more people who wanted to make a change in government. I became somewhat involved with the chapter and went to some state meetings just to see what was going on. I did not become passionate about in-

volvement until a person on the Board of Directors of ABATE told me I could not do something just because I was a woman. WRONG IDEA!

I do understand why he said what he did. I was very vocal about why he, as a person in power in a rights group, could not do that, just as our government was wrong to tell us what to do. I thank him now, as this was the beginning of my getting up to my ears in fighting for not only my rights, but the rights of all motorcyclists. I hope to continue this for a long time to come, as it not only helps other motorcyclists in this state, but helps protect me, too. As we all know, the government is becoming more intrusive in not only motorcycling, but sticking its nose into a person's private life. It has to stop somewhere.

Age has not been kind to me, and the body has gotten weak in some spots. I may not be able to ride in the wind much anymore, but I shall never forget the desire. All of us in the rights movement have our own stories on how the desire began. May we all continue to keep the desire in our hearts and the politicians on their toes.