

Becoming Ambassadors

What have I done lately for motorcycling in general?

I recently overheard an older rider talking to a young man who was interested in the older man's Harley and in possibly becoming a rider. One of the things the rider stated was that the person can take a motorcycle riding course, which offers the opportunity to both learn how to ride and get licensed. He highly recommended doing so. Great stuff to hear. Once I was able to break free from the conversation I was involved in, I approached the rider, introduced myself, and told him that it was good to see a younger person interested in riding and a veteran rider pointing him in the direction of taking a course. I then asked when he took a course, under the assumption he did. His response was—wait for it—"I never took a course, I know how to ride."

Now my first reaction was dejection, but I didn't want to be negative, yet this seems to be an all too frequent response when it comes to rider education. This biker may very well be an accomplished, proficient motorcyclist, but various studies and/or reports indicate that riders are far more responsible for the unfavorable statistics we encounter every year.

Granted, my opinion of rider education is biased because of what I do, but I honestly believe (like many others involved in rider education) that the more bikers become better educated and skilled, the better the odds of reducing the risks we run every time we ride.

The need for riders becoming better educated may just tie into the recent slump of motorcycle sales to younger people. Baby boomers who are riders have to realize the world around us has changed in many ways, but when it comes to motorcycling, all of us have seen articles, postings, etc. of the decline of interest in the motor-

sport with the younger generation.

Technology, smartphones, social media may well be a major part of the problem. We that are older have to realize that our world has changed. Many of us grew up in a different time, and the reasons for our initial interest in motorcycles may no longer exist. To be honest, I cannot remember the last time I saw a minibike buzzing around, the first thing related to riding that I thought was extremely cool. Even something as simple as cloth pins holding playing cards to the spokes of bicycles seem to be a long-gone memory. Youngsters today just seem to be engrossed in their screens, whether part of a phone or a computer. The world as the young know it has become a digital one, a world where they can find anything they need, at least so they are inclined to believe.

The younger generation is interested in new experiences, but if they are not exposed to the new, how will they become interested? This is where I believe we can make a difference as a community. As bikers, we should be doing what we can to promote what we all know is amazingly fun, adventurous, and fulfilling. Who better to encourage a new generation of riders than us? We have traveled numerous miles, visited and seen memorable places, and enjoyed biking in every form possible. But as we become the ambassadors of biking, we should also serve as models of what new riders should be. Our job

is to become better educated in riding skills and the know-how to ride safer. I have always said that we as a society can do better to help ourselves survive the risks we encounter; we really need to do it not just for ourselves but for the sport of motorcycling in general.

As much as we can all benefit from becoming better educated, doing so can also promote a better future for motorcycling. Ask yourself, what have I done lately to make myself safer? What have I done lately for motorcycling in general? We all know the enjoyment of riding and its rewards. It's time to share the knowledge of these rewards with a new generation. Along with promoting riding, we should also be prime examples of what new riders should strive for to become safer and more educated. This is something each of us can easily do and perhaps may be the strongest force to help ignite the spark to ride. As a group we can do this, and the time to do it is now.

The benefits can be endless and can give you a whole new, satisfying experience. **AIM**

