



# Where You Been?

LARRY MACKE

Feeling lucky? Chances are good that you are. Most who read this are involved in motorcycling, and memories of pre-motorcycle days tend to be rather dim. There are a few warm memories, of course, but no strong desire to go back there. It's like Dorothy touching down in Munchkinland: The world's in Technicolor® now, and ol' black-and-white Kansas is looking pretty dull.

So you're probably thankful that you've discovered this amazing world. If this isn't enough to make you feel fortunate, consider that you're alive as the Harley-Davidson family celebrates 100 years of bold and beautiful motorcycles, and that you are family. Anniversaries often prompt reflection on how the special occasion came to be, and today I invite you to do likewise: Consider the people and events that have contributed to the motorcyclist you are today. And then give thanks.

How did it begin for you?

There was one kid in third grade, Todd, who had a motocross bike, and I remember drooling over glossy brochures of colorful, pristine bikes built to fit people my size. It was the first (but certainly not the last) time I heard my mother use the expression, "Over my dead body." Maybe you had a little more support at home. Or at least somebody who let you keep your first motorcycle in an alternate garage or shed, away from the naysayers. Thank him/her/them.

For some, the first day of the rest of their lives was the day they took their first ride. Like most, I hadn't been past second gear when I first left the nest (i.e., parking lot), and those first miles were a whirlwind of exhilaration, panic, and furious concentration. A friend, Dan, had secured for me the use of a Sportster® 1200, and my first ride would be between Sturgis and Deadwood in South Dakota.

Highway 14A twists almost relentlessly through the Black Hills National Forest, a magnificent ride in the light of day. Work duties, however, pushed our excursion from day to night, at which time 14A becomes a novice rider's nightmare. It didn't calm me to know that Dan had a close encounter with a deer earlier in the week, earning him the nickname, "Hunts With A Motorcycle."

Nevertheless, we arrived safe and sound, and my world was awash in Technicolor. Later on at a casino, I noticed a roll of quarters under the chair of somebody playing blackjack. My initial reaction was, "Where are

the quarter slots?" But then I considered karma, the notion that the spirit of one's actions is reflected back to the individual. Finally I thought about 14A. Consequently, the man was glad to have his quarters back, and I was glad that the rain that baptized our ride home was gentle. Thank you, Dan; thank you, karma.

Maybe there's somebody who helped you through the process of buying your first or a subsequent Harley®. Perhaps it was a knowledgeable friend or relative, or maybe a particularly helpful dealer salesperson. Although I never met him face-to-face, I'm grateful for Gil, a cycle-savvy friend of my sister. Finances dictated that my first Harley would be a pre-owned Sportster, and I knew as much about buying one as I did about building one from scratch.

Gil took care of me, patiently fielding a dozen phone calls as I searched for the right ride. What do I look for? What do you think of this one? How much should I offer? The end result was a like-new Shovelhead that ran like a champ, so thank you, Gil – I still owe you lunch.

Sometimes the things that shape us are those that go wrong. I had owned my bike for a handful of weeks and was getting increasingly comfortable with it. That was my very thought, in fact, as I was approaching a right-hand turn under Chicago's elevated train tracks: "Hey, I'm pretty good at this. Let's take this turn with a little extra spice, shall we?"

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If you didn't know already, the pavement under elevated train tracks is not the best place to test lean angles. The good news is that the damage was limited to a scraped pipe, a ruined brake pedal, and a small hole in the knee of my jeans. The better news is that I realized the danger of overconfidence. Thank you, minor accident.

We're all lucky for so many reasons. Some we share with fellow riders, others are unique to each of us. Think about them, give thanks, and enjoy the summer of the century.

*Larry Macke is a full H.O.G. member and long-time Harley-Davidson enthusiast.*