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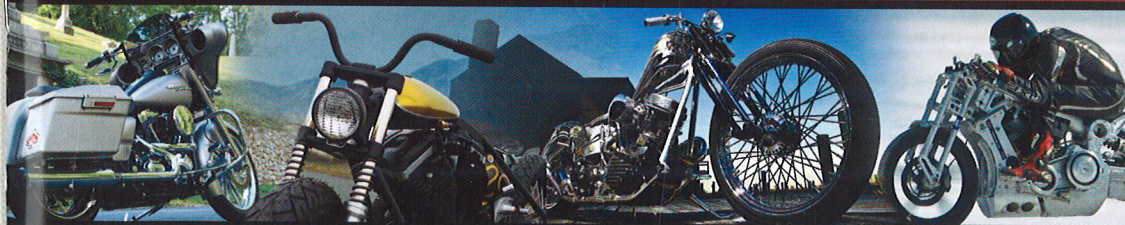
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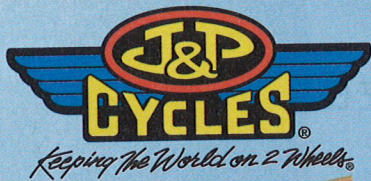
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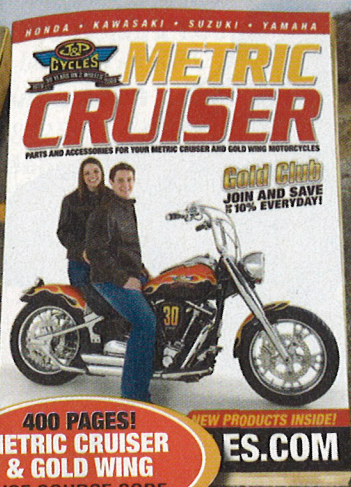
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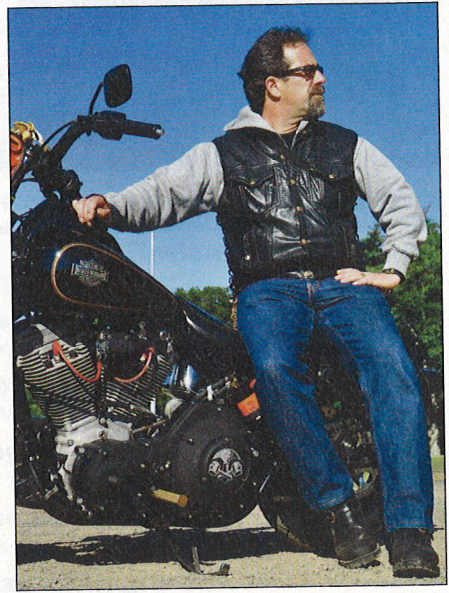


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## Utility

These days with things being what they are and luxury being what it is, I am thinking utility. To that point I've been churning the manner in which we use and relate to our motorcycles, which if you look at, in many cases, are luxury items relegated to Sunday duty. In pursuing this line of utilitarian curiosity, I've had dialogue with taste makers, journalists, pundits, commuters, hi-milers and have studied the Aerostich catalog (the bible of motorcycle utility).

So, how did we get to this sorry state of affairs, where our favorite flavor of motorcycle is for the most part relegated to casual duty or the occasional road trip? Andy Goldfine of Aerostich bangs the drum loudly every year for "Ride To Work Day" (and we applaud and support that effort), but what happened to the idea of us using our motorcycles as a primary means of transportation on a day-to-day basis?

At some point it must have been consciously decided that motorcycles were toys for the weekend, "not worthy or appropriate for day to

*continued*



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day commuting." I suspect increasingly greater distances to commute, the odious dress code of the white collar world and the shift of values from honoring utility and thrift to holding comfort and plushness in higher regard, all conspired to sink the good ship Moto-Utility.

In the early 1990's I commuted to a job in Manhattan during from Spring to Fall on my FXR. There is no denying that getting on your bike, rather than sitting in your car or standing on the train, is the best way to start the day. I actually looked forward to getting to work on two wheels. Even then, I traveled with a rainsuit, simply to *Be Prepared* (blame it on Boy Scout training). When you ride to work, you are making a commitment to end the day as you began it, no matter the meteorological condition. Man up.

Those mornings started in Southern Connecticut and the 35 miles to Manhattan were fraught with all sorts of opportunities for traffic, accidents and danger—but they were also some of the best moments of my day. White lining (not legal in NYC) through urban traffic gives the prepared and attentive rider a clear sense of control (and superiority) no cage driver can experience.

One day, the man I worked for pulled his car in behind me as I parked in a nearby garage, saw me pull off my jockey helmet and slither out of my coverall. He got a shock when he saw it was me. "Steve, how long have you been using that *thing* (I love when people call my bike a *thing*, don't you?) to get to work?" he asked. After relating that I had been using the bike to get to get to work for a few months, he asked the standard question (why?) and made the standard comment (...must be dangerous).

As to the Why? I related to Herb that even with tolls and parking costs taking the bike was less expensive than the standard options (train, bus, cab) and that I was no longer a victim of delays inherent in all those modes of transport. He nodded in understanding, as I fin-

ished extricating myself from my coverall, balled it up and threw it in my saddlebag, grabbing my work stuff. Herb understood those rational reasons.

After I had explained myself in terms he could relate to and understand, I shared with him the real reason I ride to work. Riding to work was fun. Riding to work allowed me to launch into my day with a smile on my face. Riding to work allowed me the sense of having a bit more control. Riding to work was a stress reliever.

Riding south on the West Side Highway along the Hudson River in Manhattan, past the George Washington Bridge is a great ride into the belly of the Midtown beast. Nice comfortable Summer time temperature, inspiring views and when the traffic gets tight, the road can easily be sliced and diced on two wheels.

Riding at 7:30 AM, white-lining through stationary cages filed with styro-cup coffee drinkers, make-up checkers and newspaper readers (these were the days before cell phone talkers and four-wheel texters.) cruising by them stuck in traffic, cracking my throttle, sharing the *sound of stroker* with them, as I passed, I thought, now *that's* the way to start the day.... *Hear my train a comin'.....*

I felt good those wide eyed mornings, I was spreading the V-Twin gospel, I was conducting Public Relations for the FXR Stroker Society and most of all I was using my machine for a broader, nobler, utilitarian non-Sunday morning purpose.

*As transportation... fancy that.*

So friends, fans, readers and riders, when the opportunity allows—ride to work. It really is a great way to start the day. Go and blow your co-workers minds, shake it up a little. If you've got ride to work stories you'd like to share, send them to me.

Until next time, ride long, ride hard and ride safe.

—steveb