



Easy Riders

ON ANY GIVEN SUNDAY MORNING, ABOUT 10 OR 12 HARLEY, SUZUKI, AND YAMAHA MOTORCYCLES ROAR UP TO THE GATES OF GLASSY MOUNTAIN, THEIR RIDERS EAGER TO TAKE TO THE HIGHWAY IN SEARCH OF ADVENTURE.

To be sure, this is no rowdy biker gang. “In fact,” member Buzz Buvinghausen says, “to the best of my knowledge there’s only a single tattoo among our 20 or so riders, and that belongs to the retired chief information officer of the state of New York, Jim Dillon.”

The club is no organized group with a President, Treasurer, and Secretary who keeps minutes, but like Buzz, it’s a collection of free spirits who share a passion for motorcycles, a love of adventure, and the joy of the open road.

AN APPETITE FOR ADVENTURE

For Buzz, that means traversing the backroads he calls the “twisties,” the blacktops that wind their way through the Carolina mountains along the 400-mile Blue Ridge Parkway — he’s ridden every one of them on his Harley CVO Ultra.

Of course, every rider has a favorite ride. For Doug Walton, who lives at The Cliffs Valley, it’s the mountain roads that lead to Waynesville and the 318 curves along an 11-mile stretch of highway known as the Tail of the Dragon.

Together, Doug and Buzz have biked up to Niagara Falls and across Ontario before returning to The Cliffs via Michigan and Indiana.

Often accompanying Doug is his wife, Sue, who used to ride her own bike but now prefers to travel in comfort on the seat behind him — all the better to enjoy the magnificent sights and scenery of their travels on Doug’s Harley Road Glide.

NOT JUST AN OLD BOY’S CLUB

Sue is not the only spouse to ride along — or ride her own bike. The Cliffs at Mountain Park resident Sandy Vernon’s first motorcycle was a Christmas gift from husband Bill, 20 years ago. Two years later, seeing how much fun his wife was having, Bill got one for himself, a matching Harley 1200.

The couple is still riding twin bikes, 2013 Harley Trikes. Sandy also has a rare Harley 900 FXR2 cycle. If you know bikes, it’s a true collector’s item.

They particularly enjoy riding together up to Saluda in the mountains that are “just out the back door of our home here at The Cliffs,” Sandy says. And they have even cycled abroad in Italy and New Zealand. For the past dozen years, they’ve ridden extensively through the West with three other couples. “Eight

riders, no passengers,” Sandy explains. This past summer, their travels took them on a 2,800-mile trip through New Mexico and Arizona.

THE JOY OF THE OPEN ROAD

All of these riders have made the pilgrimage to Sturgis, the South Dakota mecca, where for 75 years tens of thousands of motorcycle enthusiasts from all over the world converge to celebrate and ride the historic Black Hills.

Like Buzz and Doug, Gere Gaige is a retired military pilot who flew with a commercial airline before turning to other professional endeavors. Unlike them, he had never ridden a motorcycle before moving to Glassy. It was a conversation with Buzz that got him started — and hooked. In fact, it was Buzz from whom he bought his first motorcycle. Today, he rides a 2013 Harley Davidson Road Glide.

“It’s the feeling of controlled power, along with the freedom and independence of no enclosure. It’s like riding a magic carpet whose acceleration and speed you can control. There’s definitely an adrenaline rush and a thrill on the ‘twisties’ and grades. You finish it safely, and you have a feeling of self-satisfaction that you’ve met the challenge, much like flying,” which remains a passion for Gere, who flies his own Cirrus SR 22 single-engine plane. In fact, a tour by air with Gere is part of the Welcome Basket for every new resident of The Cliffs at Glassy.

For Buzz, who owned a dirt bike while in college, riding meant “getting nasty, muddy, and gnarly.” And though he’s graduated from dirt bikes to a succession of Harleys, he’s never

lost that feeling of joy that comes with “getting nasty, muddy, and gnarly.”

“Freedom” is the first word Doug uses to describe his feeling when cycling. “I’m an adventurer, and this community of riders is people with like-minded interests. I play at golf, I do a lot of sailing, but the motorcycle is something I love.”

“There is an excitement when you hit the starter and hear the growl of the engine, and you know there is an adventure just waiting to happen, whether it’s near home or across country,” is how Sandy sums up her love of biking. “There is the challenge, freedom, and the quiet in your mind as you and your bike are one with the road. Friends and an open road ... life is truly good.”



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