

Don Gomo

Known to most as “GOMO”

Years Riding – 37

Home Region – Hudson Valley, New York

A rider for over 37 years, Don has experienced the sport of motorcycling at many different levels; from dirt rider to street, sport to touring, from riding unskillfully to becoming a Motorcycle Safety Foundation (MSF) RiderCoach in 2004 and an advocate for safe skilled riding today. Don made the choice to start riding more skillfully and safer after realizing the risks of riding untrained, as well as hearing the stories of friends and fellow riders who learned the hard way about poor rider skills.

Don volunteers his time to promote motorcycle awareness, the importance of rider education, and for riders to become involved with motorcycle rights. He speaks throughout the Hudson Valley to driver education programs and area motorcycle clubs, and he is also a seminar speaker at regional motorcycle rallies. Don is often sought out by the local media for interviews and discussion relating to our sport. He is also the administrator for his safety information website, www.skilledrider.net

Don has received several awards relating to the promotion and education of motorcycle safety and skills, including the MSF 2006 Outstanding Motorcycle Safety Award and other regional awards. Along with the safety side of riding, he is a member of several motorcycle rights organizations such as the American Motorcyclist Association (AMA), the Motorcycle Riders Foundation, and the local ABATE.

Presently, he is the Director of the Woodstock, NY Harley Owners Group (H.O.G.) Chapter where he shares his enthusiasm through riding, touring, and social camaraderie.

In 2006 Don became part of American Iron Magazine as their Safety/Skills columnist and also contributes to local motorcycling publications.

Now, it's not always business for Don, in 2003 he was crowned the King of Americade; The Worlds Largest Touring Rally. An event that is rooted riding, touring plus the joy and fun of motorcycle touring.



He not only has a passion for riding but enjoys sharing his experiences with all, even those who do not understand why we ride. His choice of iron includes owning a Harley-Davidson 2007 Screaming Eagle Ultra Glide, a 1999 Buell Thunderbolt S3T and a customized 1986 Liberty Edition XLH 1100 Sportster – his first new Harley. Don has ridden a variety of motorcycles from different manufacturers.

From Don: Though I am the new kid on the block to moto-journalism, I am looking forward to sharing my thoughts and opinions of riding, touring and the experience connected with owning a Harley-Davidson motorcycle. I also am looking forward to hearing from you, too. Input is always welcomed and helps in keeping the sparks flowing.

(next page for Don's First Column)

New Starts / First Sparks

By GOMO

It sure is exciting to start on a new project with the first spark of the engine and open roads ahead. So what can one expect from this column? Everything in the world of Harley-Davidson through the senses of an enthusiast that not only rides, but has a passion for what the Motor Company has to offer. Can you look forward to product reviews with discussion of installations, test rides, and more information? Absolutely! I'll also incorporate subject matters pertaining to the Harley Owners Group (H.O.G.), including items from membership to local chapters plus regional and national events. From time to time, you may find a Buell column tossed in there as well.

It's practically guaranteed that the majority of my articles will be about touring on a Harley and the experiences that come with that thrill. Since I live in New York's Hudson Valley region, I consider it to be the gateway to some of the greatest roads to ride. From the Catskills to the Adirondack mountain ranges, to the central part of New York's Finger Lake region and roads less traveled, there are many miles of journeys to discover. Then, we can venture out to the likes of Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts and beyond for endless roads of pleasure and bliss. Definitely an unlimited supply of tarmac to embark on with two wheels and, with each road, it will look and feel like a new one just by turning around and taking it the other direction.

Sure, we can tour on a multitude of different motorcycles, but those of us that swing our legs over those rumbling V-twin steeds know that there is a difference. Trust me; I have a passion for all motorcycles. It's just that the Milwaukee Iron is



My First Bike: A 1973 Honda SL70

what gets my motor running. With that, I thought for my first time out of the gate I'd write about the time I got that first spark for owning a Harley. For many, the thundering sound of a hog roaring down the road was the first thing that caught their attention, for some it was all the glistening chrome, or maybe it was just how cool we thought they looked.

Kick-starting the time machine, I'll let you know my first bike was a brand-new Fire Red 1973 Honda SL70 when I was 13 years old. A friend of my family, a lifelong rider and even part of the motorcycle division in World War II, thought a kid in the country should learn to ride and have a motorcycle/dirt bike to keep occupied and stay out of trouble. Though a great idea, the staying out of trouble part didn't work out too good for me (too long of a saga to go into). I spent countless hours and days riding that bike along with neighboring friends that owned a couple of mid-Seventies Indian dirt bikes (that's right, the Indian

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name was even tossed on 2-cycle dirt bikes). We probably covered every logging road and many paved ones within a 20 to 30 mile radius of home. Add to the fact that we were constantly practicing and performing some wild and stupid stunts while riding on those bikes, it surely seemed that we lived on them.

One day, as we were riding in a field close to our home that had some great knolls for jumping the bikes, a couple on a Harley rumbled up and stopped on the side of the road, watching us for a while. The two certainly looked as if they were pulled right out of one of those B-rated Sixties biker movies. I remember the bike as a blue FLH, late 60s perhaps, with the big dual person "buddy pogo" type seat. We continued to zip around the open field when all of sudden the biker was riding alongside us in the field while his lady watched from the road. He circled around our beaten course with us a few times. Then, being the rambunctious teens we were, we headed to the jumps, hoping to show off. One by one we sailed through the air higher than we ever did before; almost looking like professional stunt riders (that teenage showoff adrenaline was kicking). After we all landed we turned around to see this biker heading to our favorite jump at a good clip. Suddenly, to our surprise, that Harley went into the air at amazing heights with the rider standing on the floorboards and his long hair flowing behind him. He landed slightly awkwardly, but kept the big blue machine up on its rubber. That was the coolest thing I ever saw. He then rolled up back on the road, picked up his girl, waved to us and went roaring up the road with that rumble that gets all of our hearts beating. Looking back, I really don't think he knew how drastic that jump was when he hit it, but he forged forward and pulled it off with style all of his own, leaving us at a sense of awe. I can only imagine how those two told their version of the story while describing the looks on our faces.

There are always certain factors or situations in our lives that help form thoughts or images in our minds, no matter whether they're logical or emotional. Even though the person that bought me my first bike was a Harley owner and spoke endless stories of riding them; it wasn't until that event in the field that made me desire to own and ride a Harley; but I just don't see myself jumping my Ultra anytime in the future.

-- GOMO



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