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"A Memory" from Mama Kat

After reading Wally's "Its Never the Same", well, it got me thinking.

My husband says he has a tendency to bring out the best in me. Riding is one that has had a big impact of my life and who I am to this day.

We started out not even having a bike. And picking up our first one proved to set the tone for us on a bike together. We drove a 1994 Mustang Convertible 8 miles east of Hayward and traded it for a V65 Magna. It was early spring and temp was a balmy 40 degrees when we left Eau Claire but by the time we made the trade and headed toward home it had dropped to 28 degrees. Neither of us had leather at this point - we stopped at a gas station, bought gloves and goggles for hubby, topped off and made for home. I had on thermals, jeans and a hoodie. I tied that hood so tight I had nothin' but a peep hole to see out of. I tucked my hands between my legs and hunkered down, thinking warm thoughts.

About half-way home we stopped at a bar to warm up. Coffee for the driver, a couple of shots of Jack for the frozen passenger. Once our circulation was flowing good again we braved the cold and piled back on the bike.

We haven't been "fair weather" riders ever since.

We rode the Magna for a couple of years. "Our time" on the bike was precious. I felt immediately at home on a bike and was at ease riding behind hubby from the get go.

Suddenly all those stickers made sense!

Soon a couple of friends were riding along with us. I will admit, I didn't like it at first - having to share "our time", as well as the road, with others. It didn't take long to feel blessed as our "family" grew. On the now rare occasion that we got to ride by ourselves again it seemed strange.

Most of those we rode with were either single guys or guys whose ol' ladies didn't care to ride. I couldn't imagine not wanting to ride, and the more miles the better!

We put on some miles through the week but always planned a long ride for Saturday. Everyone would meet at our house by 9:00 and I'd have a breakfast spread set up. (Most of the guys would head out on an empty stomach otherwise.) Eggs, home made cinnamon rolls and biscuit with gravy, sausage links, coffee, juice and a Mtn Dew for the one guy who didn't drink coffee. I put it in a bucket of ice and set it on the table for him - just to teas him a bit.

I also became the groups photographer. I have some great shots of the guys and their bikes, riding off into the sunset, group shots at a local watering hole and a few times that some would rather forget - like having to push start their bike at every stop for the day!

A couple thousand miles and some horse tradin' later we got rid of the Magna and got a 1980 FLT or "geezer glide" as we affectionately called it. It wasn't the style of bike I like but I figured I was the passenger, if hubby was more comfortable on this bike, well, that's what was important. Truth be told I didn't like much about the bike. Too much "stuff" as I called it - hard bags, trunk, even the front end was too much for me. And getting on this beast was different and difficult. Before I could put a foot on the peg, push up and swing my leg over. Not with this beast! It was too wide and the arm rests always seemed to catch my boot.

A few rides, trial and error and soon I was on her slicker than snot. And comfy? With a good bed roll on top of the trunk I could lay my head back and nap or look up at the sky. Yow I loved to lay back and watch a star-filled sky floating over head. A couple of close calls with deer near nightfall put the kibosh on that. I soon learned to put the ambers on and keep a vigilant look-out for the critters who seemed drawn to the road, despite the roar of the pipes.

If I could get hubby to leave "the bitch" as we came to call her, at home for the day I'd get her clean. And those hard bags I had complained about soon contained tools, a first aid kit, blanket and yes, I'll admit, it was nice to have a place to put my leather and my purse.

Our "family" was tight. We took care of one another, stood up for one another and Lordy did we put on the miles. One day hubby announced he was getting me a bike. Now, I rode my own some years ago and didn't care for it much. Maybe it was the teacher (impatient). For whatever reason I was now completely content being "fender fluff". But, there was a catch - it was a project bike. He found a wrecked bike on ebay and the frame at a local shop.

OK, I'll admit, I'm a bit of a gear head. I had been working on cars with hubby for quite a few years. He said I was one of the best mechanics he's ever had and more common sense than most. "Common sense aint so common" he would say. I jumped at building my own bike.

It was a '91 softail custom. The chassis rolled into the living room where we set the engine in and I started working on it. I didn't mind it in the living room a bit! Tools, parts ad a manual soon followed. He'd come home from work and I'd have a question, need a tool or have something put together. We soon found out this engine had a few aftermarket and high performance parts on it. Even better! I was looking forward to getting this bike done and ready to ride. Even if I never rode it myself, how many guys could say "My wife built it."?

The bagger was going through head gaskets and we soon fell into a pattern of me tearing it down while hubby was at work and him coming home with the replacement part, puttin' it in and puttin' her back together. Ready to ride again, at least for a while.

Well, its been a few years since our "family" has rode together. Relationships changed, respect was lost and, well, things just changed. Someone (or anyone) now rides on the back of the bitch and I didn't get to finish the softail. I long for the miles, the wind in my hair and the camaraderie. But, I have come to realize, as someone else so eloquently put it, things will never be the same. I have the memories, and plenty of pictures to boot.

Many miles, safe and enjoy -

Mama Kat

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