

Hair by Harley
by Colleen Swartz

Why do I bother? Why do any of us bother? Why do I continually try to look "normal" at any bike event?

But I keep trying. I try to shove a hairbrush in the bag, I try to find a hat that will stay on while riding and not wreck my "Doo" while still having the ability to get a camera within 5 inches of my face, I try to find ways to tie a bandana so that I don't get weird tan lines and ratty hair, I put leave-in conditioner and sunscreen in my hair but I still end up sitting in the bottom of the tub at the end of the day with 2 cups of conditioner on my hair trying to get the knots out without ripping the follicles from my scalp.

This is coming from a woman with short hair! Maybe it would be easier if I had long hair. Maybe I could just French braid it into a nice, neat coif that required absolutely no maintenance. But I don't think it works that way. I probably will never know because I continue to break my hair off by detangling it before it has a chance to grow longer than 4 inches.

I see women all the time with do-rags and hats and headbands and helmets that look just fine. But I know they hate it as well because as soon as I pull my camera to my shooting eye the immediately get this stressed look on their face and their hands go up to tuck or smooth something that they know is hanging out in a less-than-flattering manner. I can't be the only voice of reason in this mass of hair-abusive behavior.

Is this where the tradition of "flashing" comes from? Is it a instinctive reaction to take attention away from the appearance of our hair? When was the last time a guy saw a girl "flash" and he said, "I'd take a photo of that, but her hair isn't looking that hot."?

The men seem to have it together. I'm not sure if it is because the men either fall into the category of "screw it, I'll shave the whole thing clean" or "screw it, I'll grow it as long and ratty as I please" category. When was the last time you saw a guy step off his bike and look for his comb? Never.

So now I think I'll just give up and declare proudly that I have "Hair by Harley" and let them deal with it. Maybe I can have cards printed up with a photo of me on them showing that I do have hair and that I do have normal grooming practices for myself when I am not on a bike and walk around with a sack over my head. Or maybe we will all get lucky and the "bald and shiny" look will come into vogue for women as well.

For now, I guess it is more important that I am out there getting really ratty than sitting worrying about how I look.

And that is how I see it, From Behind The Lens.
Colleen Swartz

Your comments and suggestions are welcomed at
colleen@digitalmagicbigshots.com



Tommy Thompson and the "Sturgis Factor"

His campaign has very little money, his polling numbers are... well, let's just say they are sub-par, and he is not exactly the darling of national media. Yet there is an almost religious like fervor among his supporters that makes former Wisconsin Governor Tommy Thompson's presidential candidacy hard to dismiss.

Governor Thompson is a motorcycle rider. Not a photo op or Saturday afternoon parade rider, but a real motorcyclist who takes thousand mile plus trips. He has won much respect from Wisconsin bikers for his time in the saddle and they regard him as one of their own.

Despite a lack of special interest cash, Governor Thompson feels that his campaign of commonsense conservatism will resonate in the heartland. His campaign strategy is that a win or a very strong showing in the Iowa presidential straw poll this August would act as a springboard to his moving into contention for the Republican nomination. He is asking his friends in the motorcycle community for help.

In writing about Governor Thompson's campaign strategy in the Washington Post, columnist George Will described something called the "Sturgis Factor." The "Sturgis Factor", as defined by Mr. Will, is the possibility of a large number of motorcyclists returning home from the annual motorcycle rally and participating in the straw poll. Could this politically hard to define voting block turn from the current front running juggernauts and cast their lot with a fellow rider such as Mr. Thompson? In a small sampling such as the straw poll a solid block vote would have an impact. A strong showing by the governor could change the dynamic of the GOP race as it heads into the primary season.

Before one snickers and turns away, it may be worth a moment to recall some early presidential frontrunners who purportedly couldn't lose (anyone remember Gary Hart?) and a once obscure governor from a small southern state who stunned the political world in 1992 by beating an incumbent president who had a double digit lead early on in the race. Picking whom will be the next President of the United States sixteen months before Election Day is akin to playing the horses on a muddy race track. It's not usual for the frontrunner to fade in the stretch.

The Motorcycle Riders Foundation (more specifically MRF PAC) is not endorsing a candidate in the Iowa straw poll. We are encouraging involvement however.

A group of riders has formed "Team Tommy" to support the governor's campaign. Team Tommy counts among its members the founder of ABATE of Wisconsin. They are planning a ride on August 10 in Ames to support the governor's efforts which will coincide with the Iowa straw poll. Non-Iowa residents will be welcome to participate in the parade. Check out Team Tommy's web site at www.teamtommy.org and consider supporting a fellow rider.

No matter which presidential candidate you support, whether you are a Democrat, Republican, or independent you have to admit that seeing terms such as the "Sturgis Factor" used by such a prestigious journalist as George Will means that we are doing something right. Perhaps a new term has been coined here. Let's hope the "Sturgis Factor" is something that will blossom into increased political involvement and activism by motorcyclists and play a part in many congressional and local races throughout the country in 2008. Best of luck to our good friend, Governor Tommy Thompson.

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Michael Kerr
MRF Vice President

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