

Black and Chrome – The story of a lifestyle change for one female biker

By: Mark "The Wizard" Tilkens

For 26 years, Jackie Strassburg was a typical mom of two kids. She liked country music, baseball and NASCAR. For over ten years her ex was involved in racing at the pit level, crewing for several drivers including the early days of Dick Trickle's fabulous run at the local level of racing. They had a basic ranch house just outside of the WI Rapids area and for the most part, she was a stay-at-home mom for much of that time, raising her kids and taking care of her husband and the household.

Fast forward to the year 2001. The kids were gone and on their own, her marriage was breaking up and Jackie was working at a local factory to earn a meager living while trying to figure out how to live on her own. During her separation she went through the usual post-separation dating scene, shared an apartment with a girlfriend, tried living with a guy for a short period of time, went out occasionally with friends, and continued to meet a few new people. During this time she found a new job at a distribution firm in Wausau and moved up there into a new apartment in town. But, nothing or no one made much of an impact or difference in her life ...up to this point. And so, the story of her post-separation life was starting to look like that of a thousand other people. Then in January of 2002, she met a man on the Internet that would soon turn her life upside down and change it forever. They were both very different people

"She" was the consummate hard-working, somewhat blue-collar lady, and recently divorced mother and wife. "He" was a newly separated, hard-core ex-biker, who became a well-educated, professional corporate climber and entrepreneur. She liked country music – he liked heavy rock and roll. She liked to have things safe and comfortable – he liked life that was fast changing and liked taking risks. She liked fast food and junk food – he liked exotic cuisine and sushi bars. She drove a van – he drove a Corvette. But... they both drank Pepsi. (I think we have a match here) So, there were differences to overcome if this were to work out. However, in the first few weeks of getting to know each other better, one word continued to come up that would make these differences disappear – MOTORCYCLE.

The stories of his past biker life were soaked up like water to a sponge. The first seed to a lifestyle change was planted and began to grow. The thinking turned to interest. The interest turned to desire. The desire turned to wanting. The wanting turned to acquire. And in April of 2002, she ordered a brand new Black Harley Davidson 1200 XL Sportster that was due for deliver in late June. She had never drove a motorcycle before and had only ridden on one as a passenger many years ago. But, she enrolled in the local "Riders Edge" course and passed her motorcycle drivers test the first time. On June 27 of 2002, she would put her signature on two important documents that would set her life in a totally new direction. At 1:30 pm that day, she signed her final divorce papers at the Wood County Courthouse in WI Rapids. She quickly got in her van and drove back to Wausau to the Harley Davidson dealership and at 4:30 pm she signed the purchase agreement and took delivery of her new Harley - just 3 hours after her divorce became final. She said, "This is a present to myself and I am making a statement to the world that my new life is about to begin. I hope I can be some inspiration to other women to take the plunge and experience life as a participant - not just as a spectator."

Throughout the rest of 2002, they rode together on that "Sporty" with him showing her what the biker lifestyle was all about, like the great people you meet and the close, lasting friendships you develop, and the parties that create lifetime memories. They went to biker events, poker runs, races, rallies and swap meets. In 2003, they did even more of the same and took the whole week off to be at the Harley 100th bash. In January of 2004, he ordered his new "Heritage" and by May they were riding together, each on their own Harley. It was at this time that the second seed to her lifestyle change started to germinate.

She was being exposed to his new part-time motorcycle parts business. And with his other business interests and regular



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