

Oh The Times They Are Changing

By: Terry "Big-T" Miller

Sixteen dollars my friends, sixteen dollars. The cost for me and my lady to see a movie? Not this time. Cost of a case of beer and a pack of smokes? Guess again. Cost for 3 porn flicks out of the bargain bin at Lions Den Adult Superstore off exit 113 on highway 45 just south of Oshkosh? Never even heard of the place. No, this was the price for a tank of gas on my Electra Glide Classic last week. Don't believe me, you do the math. 5 gallons x \$3.35 = Bend Over!

This realization got me thinking that the world of motorcycles is changing. I take that back. The world of motor vehicles is changing. That's not quite it either. The world is changing. That's it. Now I'll freely admit that I'm still a young buck by some standards, hell the wetness behind my ears finally dried out last week, and I am aware that things have always changed. However I will say our world, the motorcycles we ride in it, and the sport of motorcycling as we know it will see more drastic changes at a faster rate than we have ever seen before. All of this begs the question; will my children and their children ever know the feeling of driving a true free-breathing, air-cooled, gas powered, American V-Twin engine? There is a very good chance they will not.

Flash ahead 15 years and we may see the 2023 introduction of the new Harley-Davidson lineup go something like this.....

"Ladies and gentlemen we are proud to unveil to you today yet another milestone in Harley-Davidson history. For our 120th production year we proudly present to you the all new Harley "No-Pollution™" hydrogen powered V-Twin engine. The engine that will propel our entire lineup into the future and beyond. This engine has the quietness you have come to expect from Harley-Davidson, and you'll know you're on a genuine Harley when you feel your pants melt from the heat of our new Screaming Eagle catalytic converter pipes. Beyond this we now offer owners the piece of mind knowing your new Hog is protected by an industry first "Hands Off™" maintenance system where if anyone but your local Harley dealer so much as loosens a bolt on your bike, it will instantly burst into flames!" So long shade tree mechanic, my god Soylent Green is people!! – let's see who gets that. Oh, the end is near...but is it?

My motorcycle memories began out on old highway 29 just West of Ringle Wisconsin in the fields of genuine farm land. Growing up out there as a juvenile-slave-farm hand I literally had hundreds of acres at my disposal. Here I learned to ride a motorcycle not too long after I learned to pedal a bike. That rush of freedom and escape those old 2-stroke dirt bikes gave to young country boy is forever etched in my memory. It is a gift which can never be repaid, and remains the foundation of an almost spiritual connection I feel with these two-wheeled machines today. Motorcycling was and still is an escape

from work and day to day life. I am not saying that I don't love my life or my work, but unless you are in charge of quality control at your local topless bar then only a fool would say, "A day on the job beats a day on the bike." Those early memories of spiking every gas can I could find with oil to keep the blood flowing to those 2-stroke bikes of my childhood are still with me today. As adults I think we all find that certain sights, sounds, and smells can trigger some strong memories of long ago, and to this day when I smell the wonderful exhaust of a 2-stroke engine I can close my eyes and if only for an instant remember exactly what it was like to be that kid, with all the experiences and lessons I would learn still ahead of me.

I learned how to work like a man as a young boy, and back then just knowing that my motorcycle was parked under a shade tree waiting for me kept my spirits up on some sweltering summer days. I knew when the work was done I'd be on that bike tearing down old trails, and blazing new ones as I saw fit. Though the bikes and technology have changed, I find the reasons I own and ride motorcycles today remains unchanged. As I look around these days, and look ahead to the future I can say with certainty that yes we are in for some changes ahead. Scientists are not going to stumble upon an endless supply of oil, and the EPA is not going to stop choking the breath out of our engines anytime soon. Love it or hate it the Revolution engine that currently powers the V-Rod will find its way into other models. Not to be outdone S&S has developed the new X-Wedge engine which you will hear more about in the coming years.

Despite all of this there are some things that will never change as long as humans ride motorcycles. The feelings we get while tearing down the road on two wheels, and the personal memories that have founded our individual reasons for riding cannot be changed. The spirit and camaraderie we feel with old riding buddies, and new riders we meet cannot be changed. The nearly telepathic relationship a group of riders develops to communicate while thundering down the freeway in a perfect, fluid formation cannot be changed.

So will my great-great-grandchildren ever know the feeling of driving that true free-breathing, air-cooled, gas powered, American V-twin engine? Maybe not. But if they do feel the same rush of freedom and escape, weather their bike is powered by gas, ethanol, or hydrogen then maybe it doesn't matter. If they receive the same gifts from their motorcycles as given to me by mine, then I can look down on them, (or up at them if things don't go as planned) and smile. I guess when you get down to it, much like humans, it's the spirit inside that counts, and not the body or machine that contains it. You can change our means of travel, but you cannot change our destination.

-Ride on.

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