

SO LONG SUMMER...SCHOOL IS BACK IN SESSION!

HEALTHY LIVING

MARION

Women on

WHEELS

HITTIN' THE ROAD
WITH MOTOR MAIDS

+

SIZE ON THE RISE

*Tackling The Childhood
Obesity Epidemic*

STRESSED-OUT
STUDENTS





LIVE TO

Ride

BY CYNTHIA MCFARLAND
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN JERNIGAN

BIKER BABES. MOTORCYCLE MAMAS. HARLEY CHICKS.

The problem with all these descriptions can be summed up in one word: stereotype.

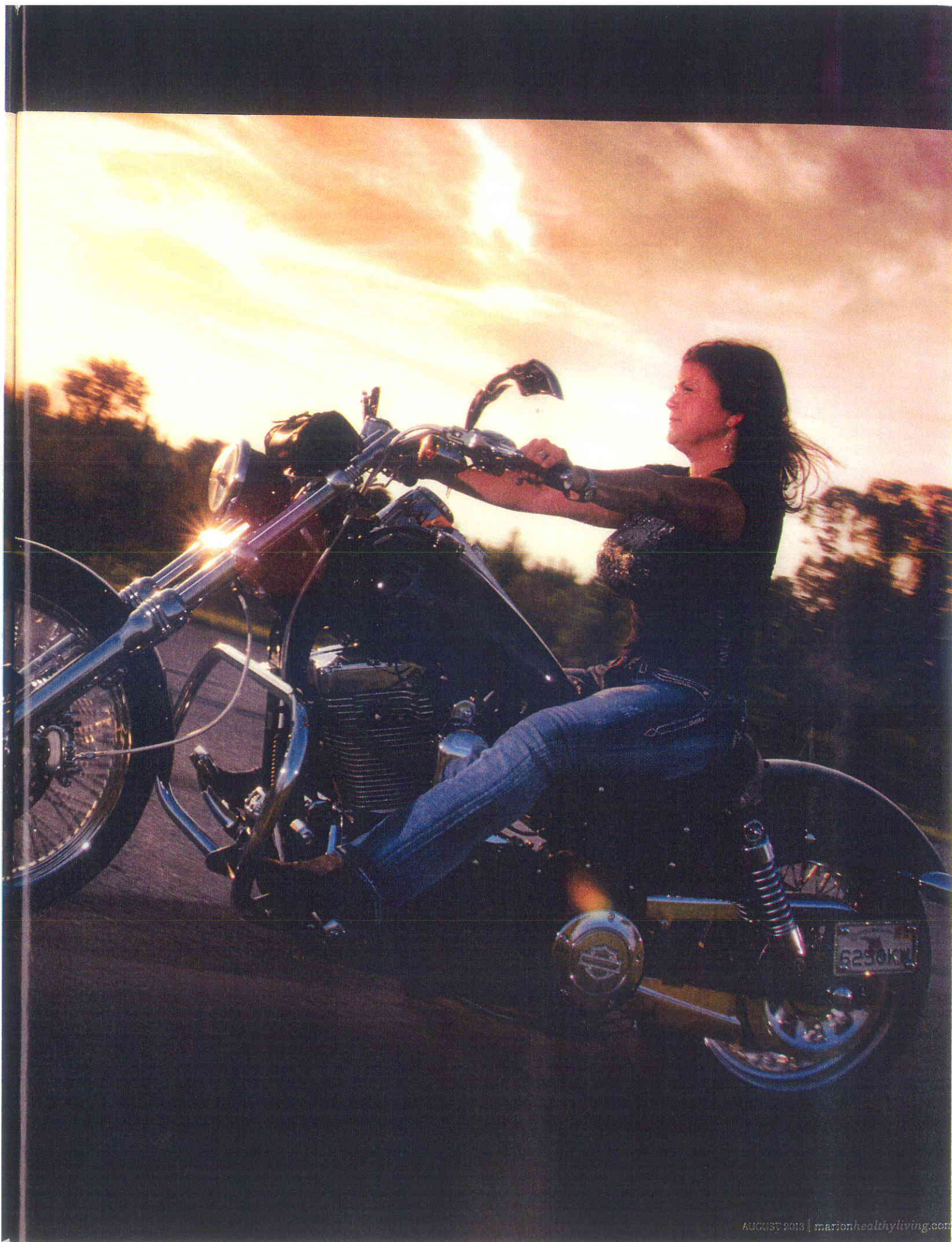
Sure, they bring to mind scenes of women and motorcycles, but those images tend to include lots of black leather, more than a few tattoos and, typically, the woman as a passenger.

That was not what Linda Dugeau had in mind back in the late 1930s when she came up with the idea of a national organization for female motorcyclists. Linda was not interested in perching on the back of a bike while a man drove. The Providence, Rhode Island, woman believed there were others just like her who had their own bikes and were all about the ride.

By 1940, Linda had managed to find 51 women who shared her passion, including Dot Robinson of Detroit. Linda founded Motor Maids Inc., the first and oldest continuously operating women's motorcycling organization in North America. Dot became the organization's first president, a position she held for 25 years. Today, the group includes approximately 1,500 members across the United States (including Alaska and Hawaii) and most Canadian provinces.

The Motor Maids are a wide-ranging group of women motorcyclists united by a passion for riding while dedicated to fostering a positive image and promoting safe riding skills.

"It's a very diverse group of women, and there is no average age; we have everyone from teens to women in



"The best part of being a Motor Maid is the adventure of riding and being empowered,"

-Pam Tiller

their 90s. Dot's daughter, Betty Fauls, now in her 80s, lives in Orlando and is still an active member," notes Pam Tiller, Motor Maid district director for Florida and a resident of Panama City.

No matter if they're college age or have great-grandchildren, all members must own (or have access to a bike within their household) and ride a motorcycle. The key word here is "ride."

"It's not just a group you belong to; they want you actively riding," says Pam, 56, who became a Motor Maid in 2011.

Many members don't start riding until well into adulthood. Pam was in her early 50s when she got her first bike and learned to ride.

Members meet in their districts at least once a month to ride and socialize. The annual Motor Maids convention is held each July in a different city around the country, and members can only participate in all functions if they ride to the event on their bikes. You must register as a guest if you do not ride your motorcycle, Pam explains. You can go to convention; you just can't vote in the membership meeting, participate in the parade or be in the convention picture when registered as a guest.

Motor Maids are known as the "Ladies of the White Gloves," thanks to numerous parade appearances. And no, they aren't decked out in head-to-toe leather. Instead, they wear a uniform of black pants and boots, royal blue shirt with a white vest and, of course, the trademark pristine white gloves.

"The best part of being a Motor Maid is the adventure of riding and being empowered," says

Pam, who rides a 2008 Harley-Davidson

Street Glide. "This year, I've put over 12,000 miles on my bike," she adds, noting that her husband, Slim, recently started riding, inspired by the enthusiasm of Pam and women like the following Central Florida members.

"I think my grown kids were a little apprehensive at first, but they got over it. I wish I'd done this earlier in life," says Joyce Cadorette, 72, who retired in 1994, got her motorcycle license in 1997 and has been a Motor Maid since 2004.

Originally from Springfield, Massachusetts (where the first Indian motorcycle was made), Joyce and her husband, Edward, moved to Florida in 1983 and reside in Chiefland.

Although she was intrigued by the thought of riding a motorcycle decades ago, her mother wasn't crazy about the idea, so Joyce didn't pursue it then. After her husband bought one, Joyce rode on the back for a few short trips but nothing more.



JOYCE CADORETTE

"We were watching *The History of Harley* on TV one night. I looked at him and said, 'Maybe we could go riding again.' The next morning, he was down at the bike shop," recalls Joyce.

Shortly afterward, they met up with another husband-wife riding couple, but that woman wanted her own bike.

"I'd planned on riding 'two up' (riding behind her husband on the same bike), but when she said that, I thought it sounded good to have my own bike," Joyce says.

She took a motorcycle class and was hooked. Although she's had cruisers, her current bike is a 650 Kawasaki Ninja.

Within a year after getting her first bike, Joyce and Edward sold their house and hit the road.

"We full-timed it on the road for over three years, camping and riding. We've been to Alaska twice and all over the country," she notes. "While we were out West, we met a Motor

Maid at one campsite. Turned out she was the vice president and lives in St. Augustine, and she gave me an application."

That was July 2003. A few months later, after Joyce and Edward returned to Florida, she joined the organization.

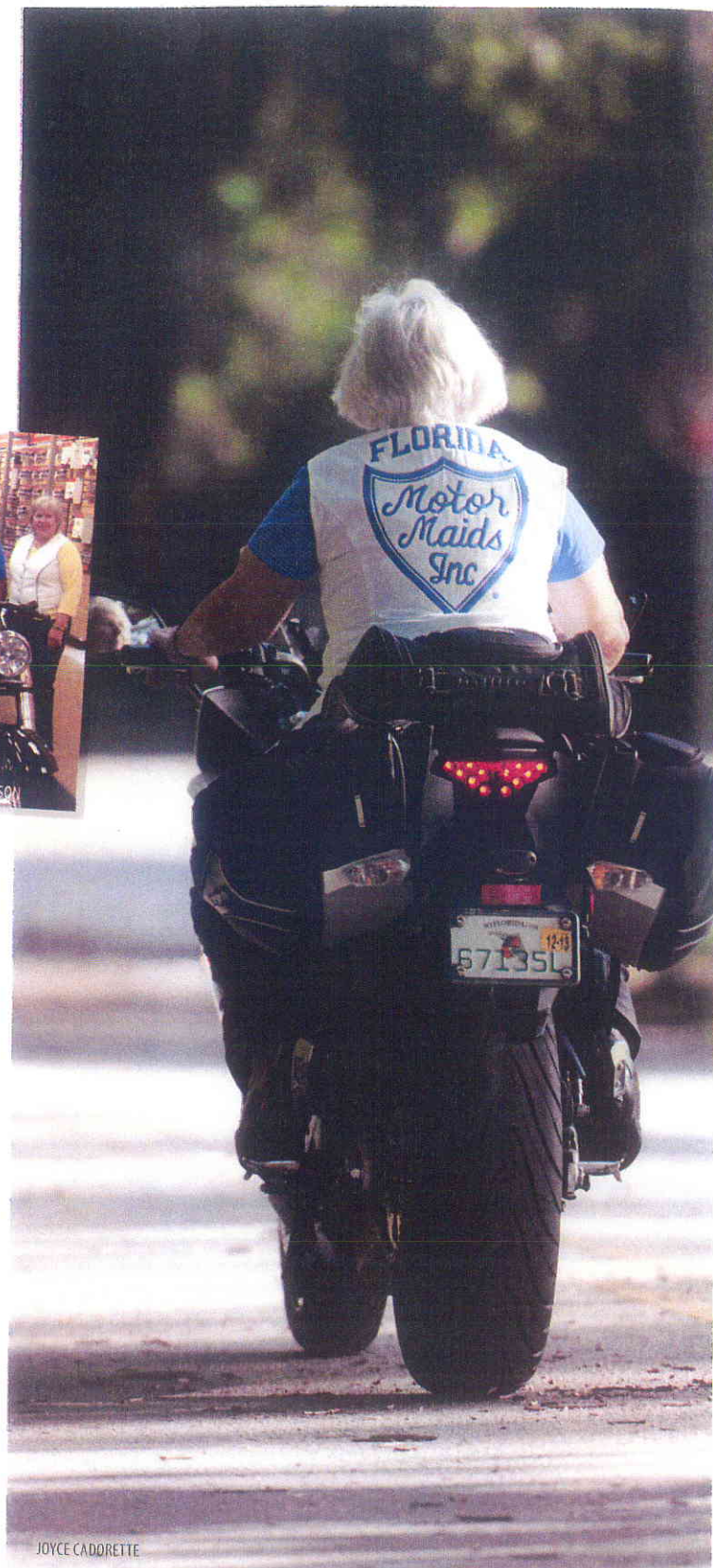
"We all enjoy riding, and it's nice to be with a bunch of women. Florida is great for riding every month because of our weather. I think my mindset is younger because of riding; you have to be alert at all times. A lot of women are scared to ride a bike, so if anyone asks me, I say, 'Go take a Motorcycle Safety Foundation course and see for yourself.'"

Joyce's three grown children warmed up to the idea of their mom's adventurous hobby, and her six grandkids think it's great.

"I'm starting to get a little arthritis here and there but think if I keep going, I'll be OK," says Joyce. "I'm not a person who likes to sit long... except on a bike. You don't seem to get stiff on a bike."

In mid-June, Joyce and her husband hit the road, headed across the country for Bend, Oregon, site of the 2013 Motor Maids annual convention.

"We plan to stop and see family along the way and then tour around the Northwest before coming home, so we'll be gone five or six weeks," she says.



JOYCE CADORETTE



GRACIE SMITH

In addition to Motor Maids activities, Joyce rides at least twice a week with her husband. On Saturday mornings, they often meet up with other couples to ride, typically along backroads rather than interstates so they can enjoy the scenery.

One of the most adventurous experiences took place during their first trip to Alaska when a huge grizzly bear came lumbering up the road. Joyce and Edward flagged down a motorist driving a camper. He agreed to drive in one lane as they passed the bear while Joyce and Edward rode alongside so they wouldn't be in the bear's line of vision. Smart move, as the grizzly charged the camper.

"There are motorcycle rallies all over the country. We've been to Sturgis a few times, and that's a hoot," says Joyce. "Of course, we've been to Daytona, but we're not 'night people,' so we just go for the day."

Joyce is a serious rider. In 2006, she won first place recognition with the Motor Maids for having ridden the most miles in one year: 27,744.

"You have to get your bike's mileage certified every year," she explains. "I put on about 25,000 miles a year. The last four or five years (and once again this year), I've been in the top 10 for most miles ridden."

"Some day I'm going to ride with those ladies," said Gracie Smith the first time she saw the Motor

Maids. It was the 1960s, and the group was participating in a parade in Columbus, Ohio, where Gracie lived for 45 years.

At that stage in life, she was busy working and raising her young son and daughter and had no spare time. But sure

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enough, fast-forward four decades and Gracie became a Motor Maid in 2006.

Not that she was new to motorcycles. She started riding in the early '70s, and her children grew up with that reality. In fact, her son, Jeff, rode with her for many years.

"It's been a family thing. He shares the love of motorcycles as I do. My daughter, Marsha, likes the bikes but works six days a week and can't fit riding into her busy schedule," says Gracie, who has two grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. "I find it relaxing; you can clear your head and let your problems subside. I like to just go out, enjoy the scenery and think positive things."

Gracie was a “Red Hatter” back in Columbus, but since retiring and moving to Weeki Wachee in 2010, she’s been busy with other hobbies.

“I’m into fitness and trying to stay young. I have several passions and find doing a combination of things keeps you healthy,” says Gracie, who turns 68 in August. She and her significant other, Roger, not only motorcycle together at least a couple days a week but are also avid kayakers and bicyclists.

The mild climate drew her to Florida, and she loves the fact that she can ride year-round.

Over the years, Gracie has had seven or eight motorcycles, but her current ride is a 2012 Honda Goldwing 1800. Although she just bought it last December, as of early June, she already had over 5,000 miles on it.

“It’s a big bike, and we’re still getting to know each other,” she adds. “I usually ride about 7,000 or 8,000 miles a year, but this year I’m going for over 10,000.”

Gracie is not only a Motor Maid, she’s the co-assistant district director for the central west region, which includes Ocala and south toward New Port Richey. She helps plan monthly luncheons and ride events, what she calls “meet, greet and eat.”

“In Florida, we have 137 members now and are growing by leaps and bounds,” says Gracie. “The best thing about being a Motor Maid is just being part of this wonderful, elite group of women who enjoy getting together, promote women motorcycling and always ride with safety in mind.

“It’s a great group of ladies; really, it’s a sisterhood. We care about one another, and we’re always there for each other,” says Gracie. “If you think you want to ride, follow your heart, get out there and pursue it!”

Motorcycles have been part of Melissa Winiarski’s

life for decades, but in the last few years, they have taken on much more significance.

“My dad rode, and as a young adult, I was around dirt bikes and three-wheelers, but I never even thought about riding on the road,” she recalls. “At the time, I didn’t see a whole lot of women who rode motorcycles by themselves. It was never something I even considered.”

In 2004, Melissa, now 43, moved from her home state of Oregon to Wildwood. When riding behind her husband, Joe, she frequently found herself being a “backseat” driver.

“I was giving him directions and being kind of bossy, so he suggested I go take a class and learn to ride by myself,” she says.

Melissa did just that, signing up for a class at Harley-Davidson of Ocala in 2010.

“I was still a little nervous to buy a bike. The bikes at Harley were so big, so my husband and I went and bought



GRACIE SMITH



L TO R: MELISSA & JOE WINIARSKI, PAM TILLER, ROGER & GRACIE



everywhere, all over the backroads, learned how to turn and started feeling more comfortable.”

Riding with Joe on the weekends, however, Melissa quickly discovered her little Rebel couldn't keep up with his Harley-Davidson Heritage. Within two months, she sold the Honda and bought a Harley Dyna Wide Glide. A year later, she bought a big touring bike, also a Harley, but still kept the Dyna Wide Glide.

“I wanted to customize the touring bike, so we went to a show in Clearwater,” Melissa remembers. “At the hotel where we were staying, there was a sign in the lobby mentioning the Motor Maids. We'd been in a couple motorcycle clubs, but they got too political and gossipy, which took all the fun out of the riding. We went to check out the Motor Maids, and they were very welcoming. I got an application and sent it in a few months later.”

After becoming a Motor Maid in 2011, Melissa was overwhelmed with how many activities were available. She participates in the luncheon/ride every month and often in additional events. Husbands and significant others are welcome if they ride. (“I think mine secretly wants to be a Motor Maid!” laughs Melissa.)

“It's a great group of women, very helpful and supportive. I'm lucky that I have a husband and he likes to ride, but some of these women don't have husbands. They are completely

independent and do their own bike maintenance. I admire them and love to hear about their riding adventures,” she notes. “I love that some of these women are older than my dad, and they can outride him. Some of them ride 600 miles a day when they're on a trip. I've become a better rider riding with these women. I rode like 12,000 miles the first year I got my touring bike and thought that was a lot until I heard one woman say she'd ridden about 45,000 miles that year! That's what they're all about: These women love to ride.”

Melissa has a grown son and daughter; while her son has been riding dirt bikes since childhood, her daughter has no interest in mom's motorcycle obsession. Melissa and Joe own their own brokerage business; they also have a small farm with miniature donkeys, which provides another satisfying hobby. Melissa likes to garden and does some embroidery, but nothing compares to riding her bike.

“Everything looks different from a motorcycle; the scenery is just more beautiful. You can't help but know there's a Higher Power when you're out there riding,” she says. “I would encourage any females who have an interest in learning to ride to take a rider's education class at your local community college and join a group like the Motor Maids.

“I'm so thankful now that my husband encouraged me to join. A lot of men just want their wife or girlfriend on the back of their bike, but he said, ‘Yeah, Babe, get a bike!’”MH

Learn More

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