

Why I Ride - Robert Fiske, USAF Engineer at Robins ALC

My brother took me for my first ride when I was 5 in 1959 on his 350 Zundapp ... could have easily been my last. I refused to get on without a helmet. At one point in the ride, he accelerated as hard as he could ... I could not hang on and he dumped me off the back directly on my head destroying the helmet. Even so, I fell in love with the acceleration, wind, maneuverability, traction, freedom, and relaxation. I started riding my own Honda 350 around age 14. Before my God Father Dr. Jack Sanders would give me his blessing, I had to spend two beautiful summer Friday and Saturday nights in the emergency room with him. Those evenings talked me out of dirt bike riding, and two accidents' victims educated me in the importance of PPE.

Over time the reasons I ride have changed, however the exposure to the elements has always remained among the greatest reasons I ride. 63 Years after my first ride on a motorcycle, a motorcycle has won out over any car and is my preferred daily transportation. I use it for everything; shopping, camping, travel, commuting, fun, whatever. Each of my motorcycles have done something the ones I had before couldn't. The Concours I currently ride, for safety reasons has proven it can go from 0 to 80 in first gear in under 2 seconds, and they claim you can shift to 3rd and be north of 140 in about 3 more and I believe it. During track training using high silica tires I have drop into corners and dragged the mirrors on the ground. The best performance feature is it stops almost as fast as it accelerates ... has sold me on ABS on motorcycles, and I will not ride on one without ABS again.

Training and PPE are a must for safe riding, and you have two types. Training to include one basic, intermediate, and advance class after another to reinforce basic riding skills. And secondly the training that uses the basics and challenges you like the specialized cornering training from Keith Code, and of course Police Officer Motor Training (grueling). I take some sort of training class every year and have yet to not learn something. I practice risk management when riding and vary my PPE according to the ride. However, I will not take off without at least a full coverage helmet, boots with some sort of ankle padding, gloves, and cloths covering the rest of the body. Motorcycle leathers are preferred until the heat sets in when I transition to modern gear with much better ventilation.

There is an old saying, you never see a motorcycle parked outside a psychiatrist office and there is a reason. As soon as you start riding, any stress and anxiety, or anything bothering you, just seems to disappear. It is a lot like sailing, it relaxes you, and brings a total piece over you few things in life can or do.