

To paraphrase an old proverb, "Be careful of your thoughts, for they become actions in your life". This could not have been more true than during the February Kirkwood HOG chapter meeting. The Chapter Secretary had uttered the words, "We still need a Safety Officer" and I found myself quietly wondering what the requirements for that position might be, that maybe I should offer to be of service for the chapter. No sooner had that thought occurred than when I felt a tap on my shoulder. I turned to see not one, but two, former Chapter Presidents looking quite intently at me indicating that I, though unknown and new to the chapter, should step into the Safety Officer role. I could not be more thankful for their encouragement and my thought became an action.

I'm Matt Thomason and although being a life-long rider of some kind of motorized cycle, I have only recently come to know Kirkwood HOG. I have been on various Harley-Davidson motorcycles for twenty years and last fall's purchase of a 2015 Road Glide became the first new motorcycle I have ever owned.

For as long as motorcycles have been ridden, there has been the inherent need to find ways to make them faster. It really is little surprise that today's bikes are strong enough to pull right out from underneath you when you rev them up. What caught my attention last year wasn't the engine power, though. It was the braking power! I had been riding a 1999 Road King Classic for ten years and had no intention of trading bikes as Black Bob and I had a real good history together of riding and taking care of each other. (Yes, I name my bikes....and other vehicles).

In March, 2014, I rented a new Street Glide at the dealership in Las Vegas as I wanted to go get lost in the desert for a few days. The dealer there was sharing with me about the new linked braking system with ABS that the Motor Company had installed on the bike. So what's the way to get used to it? Go try it out! I found a wide open space somewhere in the Mojave desert, and slammed down on the rear brakes at 60 mph and the bike promptly came to an impressive, smooth, manageable, safe, and steady stop, in a much shorter distance than I would have been able to make happen on my own 15 year old bike. I repeated, grabbing the front brake with all the grip I could muster with the same result. Stopping power was automatically and appropriately divided between both wheels and there was no sliding! So it was there, on the edge of Death Valley in California, I thought to myself that if this new braking system could save me even two feet in stopping distance before hitting something, then it just might be worth it. Would I rather spend \$20,000 on a new bike or take an even greater chance of spending \$20,000 in a local emergency room and injuring a potential riding mate? I returned home where my thought became my action.

Enter Betty Blue, my 2015 Road Glide Special. Not only is she quick to get going, but with the linked braking and ABS, she is also quick to slow things down. Thank you Doug Rothberg for introducing me to Betty Blue and Kirkwood HOG!

Now, I don't want my introductory article to sound like I am some kind of corporate shrew for the Motor Company by pushing new bikes for safety reasons. The new bikes are full of all kinds of dashboard distractions with media players, navigation, bluetooth interoperability, and a questionably-intuitive user interface. However, if you have not had the chance to try a recent model with the linked braking and ABS, you may be in for a pleasant surprise. It isn't for everyone, yet I know that I'm all for any advantage for my iron horse getting me home safe, to ride another day. I'm sure you and your riding mate, if applicable, feel the same way.

I'm looking forward to serving you as your new Safety Officer, sharing topics that are important to you, and helping us all watch each others' six while out on the road...as you will mine! I also look forward to hearing from you with ideas you feel are important to share with the chapter.

Soon the roads will be clear and we will be riding again. In the meantime, I'll close with a final thought that will hopefully become an action for you, by quoting an old television cop who sent his officers out onto their beat by saying, "Hey! Let's be CAREFUL out there!"

Thomason: OUT!