

Though I have been told many times that there is nobody else like a Matt Thomason, I can't help but think that there are many others out there who are indeed like me in one way: They have been riding so long that they really can't remember how they learned to ride. You may also be lucky like me in that muscle memory and instinct has kept you safe. While those are great to have, there are a couple other things that are just as important to a rider: education and experience. Education will help you to recognize a situation before or when it occurs. Experience will help you recall how your reaction worked, or didn't work.

I recently enjoyed a documentary about a group of young riders on an expedition using primarily uncharted roads through the Himalayan state of Arunachal Pradesh in northeast India. The film is titled "One Crazy Ride" (see www.dirttrackproductions.com). One of my favorite quotes about riding is cited by the documentarian, "According to me, motorcycle travel....is not about speed or movement. It is about stillness. It is about moments....when a strange place feels like home. It is about how the place makes you feel and how you feel about the place. It is the search for such moments and places that gets one addicted to travel."

I couldn't agree more. There is a special, symbiotic relationship between rider and bike. In order to feel that stillness with the world around you, one should feel in tune, almost as one, with your motorcycle. Experience and miles together will create that. Education, though, will give you the tools you need to keep you and your iron steed safe, living to ride another day.

So how does one acquire this rider education? Is there a class for that? Absolutely! Even if you have been riding longer than you can remember, Doc's Harley-Davidson offers a New Rider Course to help you familiarize yourself with your ride. Why would a rider with years of experience sign up for a New Rider Course? I asked that very question to Grace Bobrinitz, the New Rider Coach at Doc's. She said that over time, we develop habits that we don't realize may be dangerous to us. "Most anyone can hold a bike upright and ride. However, we oftentimes need to modify our habits in stopping, starting and cornering. There are risks that are associated with riding and the class also points out potential hazards and how to manage them."

Already experienced Harley's New Rider Course? Think you know it all now? Don't fool yourself! Any time spent watching a Shriner motorcade in action or law enforcement motorcycle skills competition will tell you that there is more to learn in developing that relationship with your bike than most of us have ever known. Make sure to ask the riders you respect and admire how they received advanced training in the handling of their bikes. I'm sure they will be glad to tell you and look forward to sharing the opportunity to test those skills with you, and others, as you develop your experience from your education.

You will find below the schedule for Doc's New Rider Course for the next few months. Make sure to sign up for one of them! Just as we start each each year refreshing our bikes for a long riding season, we should refresh our skills as well! Contact Grace at Doc's by calling her at 314-965-0166 or you can sign up for a class directly on Doc's website!

Until next time, as the old television show police Sergeant used to say while sending his officers out on their beat, "Hey! Let's be CAREFUL out there!"

NEW RIDER COURSE:

All classes are Thursday & Friday, 6:00pm-9:00pm as well as Saturday & Sunday 7:45am-5:00pm.

- May 14-17
- May 28-31
- June 4-7
- June 11-14
- June 25-28
- July 9-12
- July 16-19
- July 23-26
- July 30-Aug 2

More classes being added soon to extend through November 2015! Be sure to check www.docsh-d.com for the latest updates.