

I can't recall whether it was Kierkegaard or Warren Buffett who once said, "Riding a motorcycle is simple, but isn't easy." That thought is the reason for the numerous articles, books and videos on motorcycle safety scattered all over my home office.

I do recall, however, Dean Martin's observation, "You're not drunk if you can lie on the floor without holding on." Occasionally, in the biker world, a glass or bottle will get lifted during a ride and a mix of the two phrases above can be heard: "I'm alright to ride. All I have to do is hold on." If only it were true.

God built bikers differently. He built them with the spirit that embraces all the risks that are associated with riding in the open. There is no safety of airbags, collision avoidance systems and steel beam reinforced doors. Because of this openness, bikers are more susceptible to the injury and mortality that is inherent with motor vehicle accidents. It's not really a place designed for just holding on, when under the influence of alcohol or other drugs.

Whether made in a distillery, brewery, laboratory, RV, or even grown in nature, there are many effects that these products have on humans. Some of them may be refreshing during a long day with your riding buddies. Others may create a sense of relaxation or stimulation to take us away from the everyday stressors of our lives. I, personally, am not a fan of the use of any of these. However, not everyone is the same as me. So, no matter which of these one may choose to enjoy, time and place must be taken into careful consideration, should one wish to experience those effects. Here is why....

Per the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), of the 4,323 motorcyclists killed in the U.S., in 2011, a full third (1,426) of these riders were under the influence of alcohol. Stated another way, one in three fatal motorcycle accidents are attributed to drinking and riding!

In the same study, only 42% had alcohol levels of .08 or higher. This means that the majority of fatalities that occurred that year happened to riders who were not even legally drunk, but had alcohol in their system! That's a pretty sobering fact unto itself!

NHTSA figures also show that in 2011, riders killed at night were nearly three times more likely to have alcohol levels of .08 or higher as those riders who were killed during the day. This shows that the more you drink over the course of the day, the better your chances of being legally drunk, whether you feel it or not.

These numbers simply reflect fatalities. It does not tell the story of the survivors. It does not share the quality of life of those permanently injured or disabled, due to an accident, while under the influence of any kind of intoxicant. Nobody wants harm caused to themselves or their families by the moments of refreshment, relaxation or stimulation, that come from the utilization of alcohol or other drugs. There is too much at risk for such activities, so why is it worth taking the chance? If you have the answer to justify it, I would love to listen, but be prepared for an impassioned response!

Many of today's civilized riding groups have policies directing that if one wishes to participate in alcohol consumption, it is to be done at the end of the riding day. Pretty simple, isn't it? The reason for that is that motorcycle riding is indeed simple! It just isn't easy. Keep yourself healthy and sober, live to ride another day.... and, "Hey! Let's be CAREFUL out there!"