

around the bend...

The Wave
Carmen Juch

WARNING

This article is based on opinion.

It can contain sarcasm, derision or incongruities. Protective clothing may be necessary when reading.

To wave or not to wave, that is the question. I have been doing it for so long at this point it has become second nature, my hand in the position as soon as another rider is in my site.

One of the first particulars about riding a motorcycle that I realized was a wee bit different from the "normal" cage riders and one that made me feel we were out of the ordinary. Not only do we wave at one another, more often than not, if your bike were broken down on the side of the road, another rider would stop to see if you needed help. It's a brotherhood "thang".

No one told me that, it was by example that I learned. As is the way of bikers, we train the new riders. And that may now be the problem. With all the new riders not every one has a mentor to guide them any longer. Riding isn't only because of the mere love or riding it is also because of the cost of gas, insurance and an automobile.

I do so hate to see that the greeting we have shared for so long

seems to be dying. This wave goes back a long, long time. Way back when motorcyclists *had only each other to depend on*. Okay, that isn't so much true any longer but the spirit remains. That spirit of camaraderie is one of the most important phenomena of the motorcycle rider. It has held us together and holds us together still, keeps us a part of each other much the way common language, race or religion keeps people together.

The motorcycle wave is something we do like an underground greeting, as if to signal to each other "We sure are having fun! Ride ON!" I've noticed it seems to take on a different configuration according to the kind of bike the rider is on. Harley riders usually do the down low hand out pointing towards the ground while Honda rider's seem to prefer the "HOW" Indian style, arm bent at elbow palm out up in the air and "crotch-rocket" riders lean towards a quick nod and/or the finger wiggle keeping their hand on the clutch. Beemer riders have a quick wave that I call the "parade" wave, from side to side and the Gold Wing rider have the hand up and hand back down, short, sweet and to the point.

Any way the wave is preformed, it is still each biker's recognition to the other. Just a wave to say we

acknowledge that we have a common love of riding and we both are unique in that knowledge of the reason we ride.

You meet all kinds of people on motorcycles - tall, squat, thin, wide, lots of hair, no hair, bearded, clean-shaven, and tattooed, earringed, no jewelry at all, a ring on every finger, college grads, high school dropouts, nice, not so nice - but you'll find most of them wave to each other no matter what they ride.

When I was very young (not all that long ago!!), I waved at the riders who appeared to be "my kind" of biker. Later it was everyone except the ones doing wheelies because I didn't include them in my definition of what a biker should be. (I didn't want them to try to wave and fall off either.) Now, I wave at people on any kind of two-wheeled vehicle including the four year old on their "bike". I've grown up.

As I have evolved in my existence in "bikedom", I learned a lot about people on motorcycles and the one common theme is "we love to ride" so I quit being stingy with my "waves". I give up trying to determine the kind of person by the kind of ride they happen to be on, which was sort of ridiculous anyway. Talk about intolerance.

At first, the crotch rockets tended to be cautious when I waved and sometimes even looked puzzled, like "Do I know you?" But in the last couple of year I've noticed they have joined in and started waving back, sometimes even before I can get



my hand up. They have joined the "club" and I am happy to welcome them.

I feel regret, and a little bit of guilt, when I am enjoying my surroundings and fail to spot some rider waving at me until it's too late. As I lower my arm, they are already gone. I realize they may believe I ignored their expression of friendship. I want to assure them; it wasn't that, it was that I was caught up in the ride.

What I find hilarious in myself is that even in my car I have to fight the urge to stick my arm out the window to wave as a rider passes me. (I have actually done so a couple

times to very bewildered looking riders.) What I find even more curious is the rider who clearly sees me wave but doesn't wave back. I know they could have waved if they had wanted to; they looked me dead in the eyes, but they made a decision not to.

For the most part I don't understand not waving, but there are times it happens, like mentioned above for one, just not paying any attention. Obviously that isn't safe but it does happen. Also for safety reasons, it's always understandable not to wave in heavy traffic. But in the countryside on a leisurely ride, well, it seems rude not to wave or acknowledge

the other rider. We have a link; we ride, say howdy.

The reason then? Could it be that they are so new to riding that no one has yet told them that it's a biker "thang"? Still, after riding for any length of time surely they have been waved at enough times that one would certainly get the idea, right? I know I've waved at people who first waved at me while I was walking down the street. I didn't know them but, they waved first, so automatically, even involuntarily, I returned the wave. It's just natural. There is always the likelihood that another rider didn't see you, especially if they are indeed newbies and engaged in watching the road with deep concentration or enjoying the scenery.

Or could these be the riders who don't really "ride" but bought into an image? The ones who park it in the garage and put a total of almost 500 miles on the odometer every year - if they really push it, "whewwww" and that just wears 'em out. It isn't riding they love so much as the picture of themselves in their own mind that they are "cool" in their spiffy outfit and on their à la mode motorcycle. It's all about "them". But, I really like to think not, that they just don't know about waving.

Whatever it is, I have a News Flash - not waving to look cool is just not! But I like to think those non-wavers just don't know, so I am giving them a break and hoping they get the hint soon.

To all the rest of you, wave on!