



## **Howard W. "Skip" Forderkonz Jr.**

**Low Rider – A Story Written in Memory of Howard Forderkonz by his Wife**

It is a peaceful ribbon that flows across the country and city landscapes that can take you anywhere. You can easily be caught up in the excitement, physically and mentally, like untying the bow of a present of the most anticipated gift you have ever wanted in your entire life.

When I ride my motorcycle, I seem to catch just a little of life's little things that we all take for granted and don't realize we miss so much. On a cool late summer morning I rise early to low misty clouds that only seem to block my sight. I have my usual oatmeal with milk, brown sugar and butter for breakfast. Every morning while eating my breakfast I listen to the radio for the daily weather forecast, as I am a fair-weather rider, to make sure it will be a clear, sunny, and hopefully a safe day to ride. After making the decision to ride, I dress according to the forecast but always have other weather-related gear packed in my saddle bags in case of a change in weather conditions. Geared-up and ready to ride, I close the doors behind me, only to open wide others as I start this new day's journey.

I check the tires, look for any loose wires, make sure my lights and turn signals operate correctly and clean the windshield. My tool bag is strapped to the front forks in case an adjustment is needed on the road. I lift my right leg over the motorcycle and settle myself on the seat. I turn the key, pull out the choke, make sure it is in neutral, turn the throttle a few times to give it some gas, push the start button and I hear and feel the rumble. The neighbor's dogs bark at the loudness of my motorcycle. After a few minutes of warming up the cold engine, I push the choke halfway in and the engine quiets down to a low rumble. I must physically back the bike out of the garage, as there is no reverse on this motorcycle. I stand up to balance the weight of the bike and shift the weight of it to the right so I can push the kick stand out of the way on the left. My feet and legs steady the movement to do this. I push with my legs to back up and to turn the motorcycle around in the driveway. I pull in the clutch with my left hand, put the bike in first gear by stepping down on the pedal with my left boot, ease out the clutch and turn the throttle with my right to begin my adventure. Once I lift my right foot and I am in forward motion the weight of the bike is easier to handle.

The slowly rising clouds paint a frosty picture on my windshield as I drive through the lowland areas early. The canvas is there briefly only to be replaced by another one further down the ribbon. These canvases remind me of the ever-changing clouds above on a clear afternoon that you try to find an image in. Direction, whether to work, to play, with friends or alone, is different every time. Some trips are very well organized and planned in detail and others are as free as the breeze.

I think at least once in a person's life, everyone should experience the different smells

while riding on a motorcycle. The freshness is almost like inhaling pure oxygen that comes from the moist morning greenness. The lilac bushes in full bloom during springtime start the riding season here in New York State. The just mowed grass of lawns on a summer afternoon mean there are many good days ahead to enjoy a ride. Onions being harvested on the muck fields in early fall by the migrant workers tell me good riding days are getting few. The honey wagon spreading its heavy load that will enrich the land again to ensure the future growth of all things that are planted or the lingering smell of the furry black and white creature who didn't make it across the roadway. These are just a few I remember.

The hands of time have weathered barns, rocks and mountains, streams, and bodies of water. The brightly painted red barns remind me of my grandfather's dairy farm where I jumped off the highest beam I could climb on and into the soft yet scratchy hayloft below with my older brother and cousins. Good thing Grandma didn't find out! In Vermont and New Hampshire while on a bike trip with my late husband June 1998, we rounded many curves, crossed many crystal-clear streams, and rode up and down mountain roads that Mother Nature and man have had a hand in shaping. The roadsides are sometimes filled with the colorful paint palette of every wildflower that grows or there can lie a still and innocent victim. Life springs from every turn and can be taken away just as fast.

I see and sometimes meet people who enrich my life. I see little boys and girls on their way to school that could be President someday. While waiting in line to pay for my gas at a very busy local convenience store, there is a young man also waiting that has his leg in a cast, proceeds to tell me the funny story of how it happened while on his honeymoon! A woman stopped at the traffic light rolls down her car window and asks me, "Where is 101 Walnut Street?" My response is, "Two blocks straight ahead, turn left, and it is the first right-hand turn after that." There are no similarities in any of these examples, just many people doing what they can on the many ribbons in front of them. Looking at this planet we call earth, if only in our own backyards or around all of it, takes time and energy. We would all be wiser, to take the time to experience some of the little things, even if we think we don't have the time to spare. Riding past the ever-changing scenery, breathing in the many aromas, the feeling of freedom and openness, the touch of the wind seems to tell you today is a wonder, so don't let the little things slip away.



No matter how, why, or where you travel or what your mode of transportation is now, try taking a ride, near or far, on a motorcycle to get caught up in the excitement, freedom, and smells. Don't put it off. Ride on all the ribbons you can and untie the many wonderful gifts in front of you as you go, because it is the "knots" that could change your life in an instant. I'm glad my late husband gave many gifts to untie.