



By Alisa Clickenger

MID-ATLANTIC WOMEN'S MOTORCYCLE RALLY

Things Happen In Threes

Three events this week have me rethinking the industry's belief that people "aging out" of being motorcycle riders. The demographic has certainly changed from older males making up the bulk of the baby boomer ridership, but have they really aged out or been replaced by a more diverse market? That includes customers as well as a product.

I arrived at the Mid-Atlantic Women's Motorcycle Rally (MAWMR) on Wednesday to see a significant number of three-wheelers in the parking lot. More than I've ever seen in the past in any rally parking lot. The variety and level of customization was astonishing, so much so that I took a stroll and captured a few of them with my camera. Little did I know that the next day I would see another whole another set of threes, only in a slightly different context.

Thursday I was on assignment at Coleman PowerSports to write this issue's cover story (starting on page 20). A leading powersports dealer in the Washington, D.C. area, GM Kim Coleman Harrison spoke at great length about the ever-increasing impact of three wheelers on the dealership's bottom line. And indeed, a variety of Vanderhalls, Can-Ams, Nikkens and Slingshots had prominent placement at the front of Colman's retail space.

It occurs to me that autocycles are currently lengthening our collective riding careers well beyond the zone where those riders with balance and orthopedic issues might have stopped riding altogether. There's a burgeoning extension of the oldest riders' ages due to the ease of use vehicles — through them, we're able to keep those older folks riding longer. Through three wheelers, we're also keeping these aficionados' dollars invested the industry longer, thereby giving ourselves some more leeway while we sort out how to

get the younger generations interested in purchasing power toys.

The crowd at MAWMR certainly seemed to validate my theory. All the three-wheeled riders I spoke to cited physical reasons for turning to three after riding on two wheels. To a one they were entirely ecstatic about the ability to continue ride and to take part in these types of gatherings, just as they had done before. Apparently Can-Am's Spyder campaign for the past decade has paid off — to the benefit of physically challenged riders and other autocycle manufacturers alike.

The third comment of the law of threes happened at the other end of the longevity of riding spectrum: kids balance bikes. We've seen Strider making a tremendous investment in PR and boots-on-the-ground brand advocates for their campaign to get more kids on two wheels (see Robert Pandya's piece on page 44). The collective hope is that these young bicyclists evolve into fans of powered two wheelers as they mature and develop their own economic power. It's a brilliant approach, actually.

But what's in the middle? How are we going to help those Strider kids make the leap from human-power to electric or gas power? And how are we going to sustain the investment that the OEMs have made in the R&D for our current better-and-better marketplace, right here and right now? I suggest we invoke the power of the Moms.

Mothers, and women in general, are the key to the longevity of the powersports industry. It's a much bandied-about statistic that women control 85% of household purchases. Women decide how the family spends the majority of household money. True fact. Beyond that, women are usually the ones who say 'yes my kid can ride' or 'heck no, my kind isn't going to ride'.

What if we started rethinking the health of the industry in the middle of the spectrum and focused on getting more women to ride right now? Women are most strongly influenced by other women. When more women ride, more families ride. And when more families ride, we've got the next generation of riders already in the powersports pipeline. And that is the middle third of the market that's going to build a better, more sustainable industry.

Things really do happen in threes... and women are that third rail that charges it all! 📺

