



Motorcycle Mentors Lead Autumn Ride

Article and photo by Mrs. Amy Drummond

Safety checks, history lessons, and fun may not normally be associated with one another, but those were the various aspects used to promote and describe the 15th Military Police Brigade Motorcycle Mentorship Program Autumn Ride, which was held at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 22 October 2010.

More than 40 riders, including Soldiers, civilians, family members, and retirees, participated in the 162-mile trip, which encompassed all types of riding—group, urban, country, and staggered. Motorcycle mentors stressed the importance of being safe while having fun.

The day began at 9 a.m. when the mentors inspected the participants' bikes using the Tires and Wheels; Cables and Controls; Lights, Oil and Fluids; Chassis; and Sidestand or Kickstand (T-CLOCS) Preride Checklist. The T-CLOCS check is a comprehensive inspection that is conducted semiannually. Following the inspections, the riders received free reflective T-shirts and participated in a safety equipment raffle.

After a safety briefing, local motorcyclists rode to Worth Harley-Davidson of Kansas City, Missouri, where they ate lunch and participated in additional raffles. The group then proceeded to the Battle of Lexington State Historic Site for a history lesson. From there, they returned to Fort Leavenworth for more food and raffles.

The Army's Motorcycle Mentorship Program began with a 2005 message, in which the Chief of Staff of the Army stated that too many Soldiers were being lost to accidents and unsafe motorcycle practices.

"The program is not rank-induced in any way. We have E-4s out here that have been riding for 25 years; we have E-8s that have been riding for a year. It's about mentors being mentors—guys that have been riding, who have a long history and a lot of knowledge of riding—sharing that experience with younger and less knowledgeable riders," one of the organizers said. "We try, as a group, to take care of each other; Soldiers taking care of Soldiers, so we have safe—or as safe as possible—riding in an inherently dangerous activity."

The course providers and mentors want riders to find something other than the "need for speed" on the road. According to a representative from Worth Harley-Davidson, "The street is not the place to be going at 120 miles per hour down the road." Instead, she would like Soldiers and other riders to be aware that there are places where they can channel their adrenaline. Furthermore, the camaraderie and friendships developed during group rides can last a lifetime.

Even one of the seasoned riders, with 36 years of experience, admitted that he is not an expert. "We all pick up bad habits," he said. "The mentorship program is about improving and getting rid of those habits."

Motorcycle Mentorship Program meetings are planned throughout the off-season; and with the help of the community, organizers hope to have a bigger and better season-opening ride in the spring.

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