

# SANTA THINKS SAFETY

I told the Board of officers that I would be talking about riding in the cold this month. And, that was my intention until I read the letter to the editor in MCN entitled THE VIRTUES OF RIDING GEAR. That gave me another idea to share with you. First, let me share his letter.

*Here is yet another testimonial for proper riding gear. I was rear-ended recently at a traffic light by a fellow traveling at an estimated 40 mph. My bike was rammed into another car which was then rammed into yet another and driven about 22' from the impact point.*

*I was apparently launched off the hood or the windshield of the car that hit me, landing about 27' from the impact point. I was wearing a leather jacket, boots, gloves, work-grade denim jeans and, most importantly, a full helmet that fitted my head properly (an Arai in my case).*

*My injuries seem to be limited to a few chipped teeth and lots of bruises and cuts. The only thing that doesn't hurt is my head! The top layer of the helmet was abraded off, so I can certainly thank it for my scalp, if not my skull. My neck is quite sore, and I suspect that the helmet limited the probable whiplash so that I didn't break my neck or twist my brains too suddenly. The other clothing served adequately, although the summer weight leather and jeans were worn through in spots and wouldn't have taken much more.*

*I wish I could adequately describe this for folks who have never experienced something like this, but there just aren't words in our language that can do it well. One instant I was sitting there warm and bright and cozy and then it was as if someone switched my universe to the nightmare channel – silent, dark, disorienting, and miserable.*

The author goes on to explain that he was very lucky to have been hit by a small automobile with a low hood and sloped windshield. Had it been an SUV or a pickup truck, he might not have been telling the story.

You never know when something, totally beyond your control is going to “mess up your day.”

Anyway, that got me to thinking about the season of the year we are just entering. It is the season where we all take the opportunity to present those we love, those we truly care about, with gifts to demonstrate that emotion. What better gift could you give a motorcyclist than a gift that would make their riding experience more comfortable and would enhance their safety? I consulted with SANTA BIKER and he agreed and told me to offer some suggestions for your gift giving this year.

It's no secret that motorcyclists are style conscious. Walk through the showroom at the Harley Shop and you'll have proof enough. Stand at the corner and watch the bikes go by and you'll see that each genre of riders has their own general style trends. I suggest, however, that you look past style as your first criteria and look to providing your loved one with another level of protection.

A gift is defined (by me) as being something I give to someone that I know they will enjoy, benefit from, and something they would probably not buy for themselves. (ie – replacement underwear is not a proper gift). These suggestions, therefore, go one step beyond what many of our riding partners have purchased for themselves. They all cost more than the “standard” stuff.

**Helmet:** If your giftee is wearing a *BEANIE* (looks cool, does nothing to protect your brain) perhaps a DOT or SNELL approved helmet is a good gift. You might even go all the way to a full-face – the ultimate in protection.

**Jeans:** Jeans are OK but now there are jeans woven with Kevlar fabric. They look like jeans but provide more protection.

**Chaps:** Studies have shown that typical jeans abrade through in 0.6 seconds – then it’s your skin that is abrading. Leather, however, @ 1.4-mm thickness will last nearly 6 seconds. A good pair of chaps (not the paper-thin stylish ones) will protect a lot more. Chaps over jeans = 6.6 seconds. Chaps over Kevlar jeans = even longer.

**Pants:** Take it to another level. Do you think its is likely that a fallen rider will slide only on his or her legs? I suggest that many, maybe the majority, of “git-offs” result in a butt-slide. If you really want protection, consider leather pants. You know, a road-rash scarred butt is not a pretty sight – and quite uncomfortable to sit on.

**Gloves:** Betcha thought gauntlets on motorcycle gloves were intended to keep the wind from going up your sleeve. That’s a nice side benefit but their purpose is to protect your wrist as your jacket sleeve is pushed up. There is a good selection of lightweight riding gloves that have gauntlet protection.

**Warmth:** We live in a northern climate and we stretch our riding season on both ends of summer. That means we ride in the cold. A cold rider is not riding in the safest condition. You can help keep your giftee comfortable with heated grips (can’t ride with numb hands); heated seat (aftermarket retrofit); electric vests, jackets, gloves, socks, etc. There are riding mittens, head-socks, thermal underwear, riding silks, etc. all of which will help keep ‘em warm.

**Knowledge:** There are several good publications that any rider can benefit from that we can make a gift of. Consider the books written by David Haugh – Proficient Motorcycling and More Proficient Motorcycling. Or you might consider a subscription to Motorcycle Consumer News or Rider. Both have excellent riding tips in every issue.

**Ultimate:** Nothing substitutes for knowledge. All the protective gear you can put on you and your bike cannot guarantee you a perfectly safe riding environment. Reading is good. Training is best. Consider giving your loved rider a training course. Perhaps you can do that by freeing up a weekend for them and pre-registering them. Perhaps you need to be a little more subtle – you’ll find a way and, they will benefit. Hey –if you ride, take the course with them. You’ll both benefit.

Have a great holiday season – and a safe one. Remember that it can be dangerous off the bike too.

Mike – the Safety Guy