

## Humbled by a Harley: One woman's quest to reinvent herself.



Article by Rick Townley

DOTHAN, AL, May 1, 2013 — Linda Crill did all the usual things to regain her equilibrium after finding herself a widow at age 57. She was a successful corporate consultant, but work was quickly losing its flavor like the proverbial gum left on the bedpost overnight. There were plenty of activities to indulge in, people to socialize with and hobbies to pursue, but something was still amiss in her new, single life.

Like any good baby boomer with a sense of adventure, she decided to spit in the face of convention and signed on for a 2,500-mile motorcycle trip along the Pacific Northwest coastline. All she had to do first was learn to ride.

During our recent interview, Linda was quick to point out that while she has continued riding, she is still not an expert on motorcycle mechanics. She is frequently asked but turns down requests to speak at biker events where the focus is on technical aspects of the machinery. However, she offered some interesting insights into a predominantly male world where women are mostly relegated to the role of passenger.

“Women who ride their own bikes are still relatively rare,” she noted, “but the bike scene is changing fast. Many riders today are well-to-do professional people like doctors and lawyers.”

One reason the sport is slow to attract solo women riders is the sheer size and weight of the machines and the difficulty of picking one up if it falls over. Linda describes herself as a “greenie” and a “tree hugger” but is not bothered by the contradiction of burning up fuel and creating “noise pollution” with a metal monster. She is also an avid bicyclist and frequently prefers the quiet serenity of pedaling. “On a bicycle you can be more aware of what’s around you,” she noted.

During the course of her road adventure, Linda found herself also on a spiritual trip she refers to as the “shadow journey.” Each day brought new insights about facing challenges and not being afraid of the “blind curves” in our lives. Learning to get around a blind curve to the road beyond is really the major theme of this story.

Linda emphasizes that “Blind Curves is a memoir, not a self-help book” and she does not promote the idea that everyone can find reinvention by riding a motorcycle. “This worked for me,” she said, “others will need to find what works for them.”

One thing becomes very evident as Linda’s road trip progresses.

“We are not trained to deal with major loss,” she told me, “but internal timing is important when finding ways to move past a loss.” In other words, you have to be emotionally ready to make a change.

Linda’s long-time friend Ron was the one who prodded her into taking the trip. While on the road he pointed out to her that “we avoid fear,” but “facing fears and overcoming them gives us the freedom to experience life.” That sounds faintly reminiscent of what Jack Nicholson’s character told us in the movie *Easy Rider*.

Life rarely goes in a straight line and, like navigating a heavy motorcycle around curves and over potholes, we have to find ways to deal with failure and loss and keep going. Linda almost didn’t make the trip because she failed the training class and, with a deadline looming, had to try again and again just to get her license. Even then, taking a heavy motorcycle on a long road trip without more hours of practice was by most measures foolish and potentially lethal, but that initial failure is what saved her life later on.

Sorry, no spoilers here, you have to read the story for details. It can be revealed though that Linda’s passion for getting around blind curves, both on and off a motorcycle, is as infectious as it is inspirational.

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