

A different kind of gang

Sun City's 'Easy Riders' take to open road

By GEORGE FLYNN

Wayne Ware is a mild-mannered 64-year-old computer Web page designer who, when the time is right, mounts a throbbing Honda Sabre motorcycle to become the Leader of the Pack to his Sun City 'cycle pals.

The Sun City Motorcycle Club is a loose-knit group of 40 senior citizen motorcycle enthusiasts who meet for coffee at 1 p.m. on Tuesdays at Accents café to chat up their 'cycles and plan local and long-distance trips.

Mr. Ware began riding motorcycles 30 years ago, but gave it up until he moved to Sun City where he bought a motor scooter, which reminded him of the joys of two-wheel travel. He later bought the more muscular Honda Sabre, a machine whose 1100-cubic centimeter engine is only slightly smaller than engines in many economy cars.

"You really don't go any faster on a motorcycle than you do in a car, but it sure feels like it," he says with a smile. "And on curves, it's the leaning over that's a thrill you don't get in a car."

Mr. Ware was born in Childress, Texas, but spent his growing-up years in Omaha, Nebraska, the son of a house mover. Mr. Ware got in on the ground floor of the computer revolution as a programmer before Macs and Microsoft Windows made them suitable for everyday use.

He freely shares his computer skills as the developer of the City of Georgetown Web site (www.georgetown-texas.org) and the on-line presence of the Williamson County Historical Museum (www.wchm-tx.org).

Another stalwart Sun City motorcyclist is Mark Atkinson, 64, a Wisconsin newspaper owner and television producer who straddles a throaty Yamaha Royal Star he's been riding 10 years. He's often followed by — or led by — his wife, Pamela, who rides her own Yamaha V-Star.

The intensity of the riding experience is what appeals to Mr. Atkinson. "You can talk about the wind in your face, but when you're on a motorcycle, all you can think about is the motorcycle. If you start thinking about other things, you'll find yourself in trouble," he said.

It is a motorcycling fact that a bike tends to go where the rider's eyes are focused — and when they're not focused on the road, danger looms.

"When I'm riding, I can block out the rest of my life and take in the sights and sounds and smells of the countryside," Mr. Atkinson said.

He humorously boasts that older riders are more suited to motorcycling than younger people. "We're more streamlined," Mr. Atkinson said, patting his



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Wayne Ware
Sun City Motorcycle Club

rounded paunch and stroking his smooth pate.

Tom Kretzinger and Mona Ravin are another husband-wife team. He rides an exotic Buell Lightning, a Harley-Davidson product; she rides a Yamaha Virago, a Japanese bike inspired by the Harley.

Mr. Kretzinger considers himself an original when it comes to Sun City 'cycles. "When I got here seven years ago, there were only three bikes on the reservation."

He's also discouraged by the discouraging words many non-riders have about motorcycles. "They always want to bring

up the motorcycle-wounded that they have known," he said.

Ms. — make that Doctor — Ravin is a community health nurse with a doctoral degree in education. "It's more interesting having your own bike," she said, "but we usually always ride together."

Both still smile on the memory of 4,000-mile motorcycle trips from their home in Anchorage, Alaska, to points in Canada and the western states.

Horacio Gonzales, 71, retired to Sun City after 35 years as a mechanic for American Airlines. He rides what motorcyclists lovingly call a "hog," a Harley-Davidson FXD Dyna Superglide. Mr.

Gonzales' first bike was a sluggish Cushman motor scooter that he rode as a high school student in Corpus Christi.

Mr. Gonzales is pleased that recent years have seen the popularity of motorcycles spread to the professional classes.

"It used to be that if you rode a motorcycle, people thought you were crazy. Now, everybody's riding."

Mr. Gonzales is only too aware of the danger. "People see you on a motorcycle, but forget that you are a human being. They pull out in front of you as though you could instantly stop or turn to avoid a collision."

Wayne Ware puts it this way: "You've got to ride as though everyone out there will run into you. There's no such thing as a fender-bender on a motorcycle — you're talking about flesh and bone."

Writer George Flynn, 68, gets around Georgetown on a Triumph Bonneville.



Photos/Patric Schneider

Tom Kretzinger, Gerald Marshall, George Flynn, Mark Atkinson, Judy Boegler, Wayne Ware, Craig Boegler and Tony Hein are members of the diverse Sun City Motorcycle Club of 40 motorcycle enthusiasts who meet weekly for coffee to discuss their bikes and plan rides.

