



Ladies Up Front

THE FEAR OF FIRST GEAR

by Holly Clayton

This is Holly's story about moving from her fear and dislike of motorcycles to enjoying the ride on the back of the custom trike she and her husband had designed and built in 2014 and featured this month here Thunder Roads Colorado Magazine.

It all started when my first husband and I were in California more than twenty years ago. We were in a church parking lot behind the small apartment building that we managed in Imperial Beach, CA. My first husband and his older brother were determined to teach me how to ride this Honda 550 that they had managed to scrounge up from somewhere. My husband was pitching the idea of buying a bike that we could not afford; he was enlisted in the Navy and stationed at the 32nd Street Naval Base in San Diego. According to his argument, a bike would "save us a ton of money". We were only 20 years old and had a baby girl at that time.

So there we were with the scrounged Honda 550, "Come ooooooon!" My brother in law kept taunting me. "Just put your feet up and go!" The parking lot was very small and I could not go very far before I would have to make a wide circle to turn around. I could not even get up enough speed to get it out of first gear. On my last pass, I went the length of the lot and slowed to a stop. I was really tired and wanted to get off the bike. The guys were talking and not facing me. In the blink of an eye, I lost my balance and the bike and I hit the ground. My leg was caught under the weight of the bike and I could feel the exhaust burning the inside of my left ankle. Unfortunately, the burns were bad enough that we took a trip to the Naval Hospital and I was treated for severe burns and an infection. I'll never forget the pain of the doctor scrubbing the burn and trimming away the burned skin. Anyway, my fear and dislike of motorcycles started with this incident.

Unfortunately, there were several other incidents that happened with my husband and his Honda 750 while we were in California that scared me into never wanting anything to do with motorcycles again. Like the time I got a call and had to pick him up in the middle of the night because he had just wrecked the bike on base. I got to the gate and he was sitting on the curb, slumped over and bleeding, a piece of the windshield had broken off in his lip. Somehow it just did not seem worth it to me.

Admittedly, a lot of things have changed since California; twenty-one years have passed, my husband and I divorced and I remarried to a man whose love of all things with wheels might



have been a huge red flag....instead the flag was checkered and we won the race.

My second husband and I met at work, we both worked for the City of Westminster at that time. Bill was into racing cars. Once in a while he would send out invitations to coworkers to come out to Second Creek and watch a race. I did and after a time we started a relationship and were later married. He raced for another fifteen years with me helping out in the pits. Luckily he was never seriously hurt and I trust him behind the "wheel" of pretty much anything.

Eventually we got into ATVs and then a UTV. After a few years we sold those off--the ATVs because our bodies could not take the bouncing anymore and the UTV because of a lack of areas to ride it. So Bill was just looking for something to do as sort of a hobby. He had ridden bikes in his youth, and was looking to maybe get another bike (even though I had vowed to never ride on a two wheel bike again).

So, we looked at the Can Am and I liked that they felt somewhat like an ATV and I was used to riding ATVs. The one thing we could not get past though--neither of us thought it was comfortable.

I also thought it was still too close to just two wheels with the two up front and only one in back where I sit and it still scared me some too.

Since my husband Bill has always liked building things, be it cars or structures, he has a true gift.....and he's never backed away from what he considers a challenge. Sooooo.... since two wheels will not do and we decided against the Can AM, it seemed like the three wheels of a trike might just be the right thing and Bill was off to look into building us a trike. He could drive and I would be less afraid of falling over while sitting on the back. It is a good thing I trust him.

The build process wasn't at all what I had expected. Granted, I knew that Bill would research every single detail, and he did... sometimes to death it seemed (just like the basement finish).

I still didn't see the big deal. Buy a bike...check. Paint it the desired color...check. Add a couple of modifications...check. A couple of days in paint....a couple more for tweaks....check. Buy some leather gear, a helmet and some cool shades...check. Close your eyes and point to a destination on the map then go riding...check. I 'm not sure, but I would bet there was a little less engineering and thought utilized in the construction of the space shuttle.

After in depth researching of makes, models and manufactures of trikes, trike kits, exhausts, wheels, tires, tire sizes, tank design, rake and triple tree calculations, paint schemes, fender design, floor boards vs no floor boards, lights, accent lighting, contrast cut replacement parts, air suspensions and a plethora of additional choices and decisions (oh, and the cup holder... can't forget the cup holder)...I was overwhelmed. I should have known what was to come when we fashioned the design for the fenders out of cardboard on a card table in our driveway and it took us two days. I seriously didn't think we'd ever get to the riding part.

Bill stayed very involved in the build and kept me abreast of progress and involved in decisions. You couldn't imagine my surprise and absolute elation when in early September, 2014, Tyler Goodbout (then with Gunslinger, now Goodies Cycles) rolled out of the garage this gorgeous citrus beauty we now call "Cactus Medicine". It had been 8 long months. I couldn't believe what they had done with our original design. Simply stunning! I asked them to do some additional graphics on the sides of the tank and they did a spectacular job. The best part though was when Tyler and painter, Jeff Showalter, gifted us with matching painted helmets. I couldn't stop crying....over a motorcycle...who would've thought.



The very next day we rode the Veterans Memorial ride to Cripple Creek, Co. I was in utter awe the entire ride. It wasn't just the number of bikes..... or all the exotic types of bikes..... or the diversity of ridersbut the visual canvas of bikes laid out before us, two by two.....for miles.....I had no idea! I couldn't stop waving at all the people who had lined the route to wave flags and throw peace signs. Cars would pull up next to us and the people, especially kids, would just smile or give us a thumbs up. Sometimes they would roll down the windows and start a conversation with us while sitting at a light. Being a passenger is awesome because I get to see ALL of that. I can shoot photos and see all the things I couldn't see (or slept through) if I were in a vehicle. As we approached town, I was overcome with the sadness of the event and a pride that I can't explain. The crowd was surreal. I don't think I could have felt what it was I was feeling anywhere but on the back of that bike.

Since then we have gone on some truly awesome rides. My favorite part of being a passenger is that I can see everything around me, I can actually smell the journey, both the sweet and the not-so-sweet, and feel the rapid fluctuations in temperature as we ride. One minute I'm sweating in my leathers, the next

minute we've gone into a canyon, the sun is going down and it's so cold I could cut glass with my nipples--you girls know what I'm talking about!

All in all I think the best part of having the trike is the people it attracts to us and the conversations it encourages. I think there is a preconceived notion out there that trikes are owned mainly by women, the elderly and persons with disabilities....not so. We are seeing more and more trikes on the road all the time and those trikes are ridden by a pretty wide variety of people.

Bill and I have entered the Trike in several shows and I think it is just so cool to hear some of the comments—especially when we can hear those comments and they come from people you would least expect them to come from. Many people have said things like, "Well, I'm not a fan of trikes but, I didn't know they could look like this. It's pretty amazing!"

During one show, I was sitting behind the bike reading when I noticed a young man standing back and looking at the bike with a melancholy look on his face. So I got up and started to talk with him. Turns out he was in the military and in Colorado

on leave. He said that his Dad had had a trike and that he had passed away some years before. I asked what happened to the trike? He said he thought his uncle back east may have gotten it but he wasn't sure. He told me what fond memories he had of his Dad and that trike and how much he liked ours. I was dead serious when I told him that he should get on his phone, call his uncle, and find out what happened to his Dad's trike. I said, "Right now, call him and find out." He just smiled and said he did not know really where the trike was and he

continued on down the aisle.

About an hour later he stopped by again, this time with a huge smile on his face. He said, "I called my uncle. He still has the trike! He said I can have it!" He gave me a huge hug and had tears in his eyes. He thanked me and said he had not thought of those memories of his father and the trike quite some time. He said he was going to refurbish the bike in memory of his Dad.

I now think that having the opportunity to experience motorcycles, whether as a rider or a passenger, is one of the most awesome freedoms we can enjoy. Bikes can and do bring total strangers together and give us the ability to experience our surroundings in a very unique way. Thank you to Thunder Roads Colorado for featuring our bike in the magazine this month. This has been so much fun!

I also want to send a special thank you to our photographer; Wayne Madison and his wife Sue, for making this very nervous and aging lady feel at ease and beautiful....

P.S. I am also hoping to appear on the Thunder Roads Colorado magazine tattoo page once I get my first tattoo. I want my first tattoo to be a camel on my big toe..... I wonder if I'll be charged extra for two humps :)