

## Aria

## H A R L E Y - D A V I D S O N

B E R N A R D E . R O L L I N O N H A R L E Y - D A V I D S O N

## QUOTE OF THE WEEK

The now corresponds to the traveling thing, just as time corresponds to motion. For the traveling thing gives us knowledge of the before and after in motion, and the now is what makes the before and after countable.

— ARISTOTLE  
(Physics. Book IV,  
Chapter 1 1, 23-24)

Some years ago, my son and I took a two-week motorcycle trip to Wyoming and Montana and stopped at Yellowstone. Before we left the park we, in good tourist fashion, went to watch Old Faithful erupt. We just missed it, but were assured it would go again in twenty-five minutes or so. As the twenty-five minutes became closer to an hour, we struck up a conversation with an outlaw biker from L.A. We had a marvelous conversation; he was both a well-informed and a witty conversationalist. But a shadow hung over the discussion, rooted in my fear that he would ask me what I was thinking of as "the

Dreaded Question," namely, "What do you do for a living?" Had Old Faithful been truer to its name, I might have avoided the Dreaded Question; but it was not.

About five minutes prior to eruption, he did indeed turn to me and asked, "Say, what do you do for a living?" I briefly contemplated a variety of plausible falsehoods I could fake—"I am a welder ... a cowboy ... a construction worker." But I was raised to tell the truth, and anyway figured his response to the truth would probably make for a good story. Steeling myself, I squeaked, "Actually, I'm a philosophy professor." At this point, he leaped off his bike, embraced me enthusiastically and intoned, "Gee that's great! You have a steady job so you can keep the bike running!"

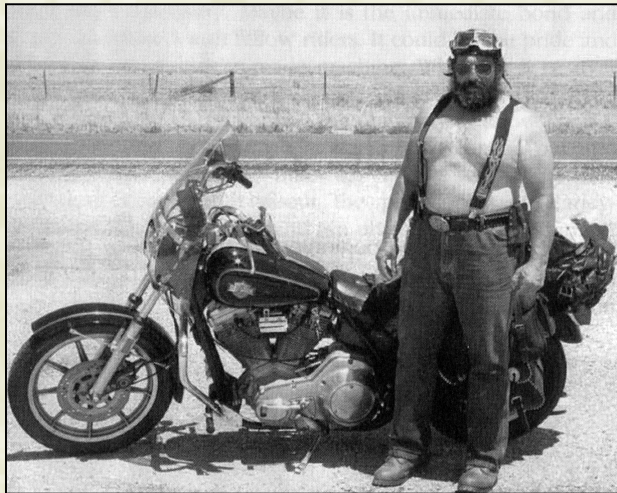
In the first place, the easy camaraderie that our conversation evidenced is typical of what occurs when Harley rid-

ers of all backgrounds meet under any circumstance. There is an instant bonding that can be found among fraternity brothers, Shriners, and former New Yorkers. Some of it is, of course, very

simple—revolves around and is ancillary to one's time on the motorcycle. Whether the biker is a professor, an outlaw, a surgeon, a lawyer, or a plumber, the motorcycle is

never far from the center of one's consciousness. On one occasion, I went for a ride with a friend who was not an experienced rider; she promptly crashed the motorcycle on a rural road, cracking three ribs and breaking her clavicle. Fortunately, we were not far from Laramie, Wyoming, and what is arguably the nicest hospital either of us had ever been

in. Within thirty minutes we were in the emergency room, and a trauma surgeon was examining her. After finishing his examination and telling me the damage, he looked me in the eye and said, "God damn you and your friend! If it weren't for the two of you I would be out riding my Harley on this fine summer day." That anecdote tells it all.



**Bernard E. Rollin (Distinguished Professor of Philosophy at Colorado State University) with his 1986 Harley-Davidson low-rider**

simply the brotherhood of people evidenced in those who share a common interest. But there is something extra among Harley Riders that is elusive to characterize, but exists nonetheless. It is not only a sense of shared pursuit, but also a kind of quiet elitism stemming from absolute certainty that one is privy to something that most people will neither experience nor understand. Second, the story evidences the fact that the biker automatically assumed that everything—even one's profes-