

Motorcycling cited as hazardous hobby

By JUDY ANN LYNN
Red blinkers flashed on the ambulance as attendants eased the inert body of a motorcyclist off the concrete embankment at the Lodge Freeway.

On I-96, a motorcyclist hit a rut in the road and was thrown, suffering broken bones.

Autos missed by inches hitting a motorcyclist as he wove in and out of heavy traffic on Southfield Road.

Isolated instances? Sadly, motorcyclist accidents are on the increase.

"Motorcycle riding in traffic is a very hazardous hobby," said Michigan State Police Trooper Robert Kraft.

According to Michigan State Police Safety and Traffic Division statistics, 209 persons died in motorcyclist accidents in 1973. Only 138 such deaths occurred in 1969.

STATE POLICE estimate that for every 100 million miles traveled, 25.6 motorcyclist deaths will occur if the rider travels 5,000 miles per year, and 36.6 motorcyclist deaths will occur if the rider travels 3,000 miles per year.

Only 3.8 deaths per 100 million miles traveled is the average for all motor vehicles, including pedestrian and non-occupant deaths.

"Motorcycles should not be allowed where there are motor vehicles," said Southfield attorney Lawrence Charfoos.

Charfoos rode a motorcycle for five years and just recently gave his away with the stipulation that it will not be ridden on city streets.

The attorney has prepared files of cases involving accidents, injuries, defective parts and fatalities that he will document in court action against two manufacturers.

Both Kraft and Charfoos agreed that many accidents are caused because motorists do not see the motorcyclists.

"IT HELPS," Kraft, said, "when a motorcyclist keeps their headlights on during the day."

"Motorcyclists are more sensitive to road conditions," Kraft explained. "They can easily throw a motorcycle off the road."

"Ruts in the road, loose gravel and railroad tracks are particularly bad and can easily throw a motorcycle off the road."

"Head-injuries are the biggest cause of fatalities in motorcyclist accidents," said Charfoos.

"The safety helmet is the most important accessory."

"Don't try to save money," he cautioned. "Check the federal and state ratings and get the best you can afford."

Charfoos cited the case of a 33-year-old woman with three children who fell off a motorcycle at 10 mph and suffered permanent brain damage because she wore a poor helmet.

"The helmet is useless at speeds above 30 miles per hour."

"AT SPEEDS faster than 35 miles per hour, eye protection is required by law," Kraft said.

He adds that medium- and smaller-sized motorcycles are involved in more accidents than the larger ones.

Defective parts are occasionally the cause.

Charfoos cited the case of a 16-year-old boy on a small motor-scooter attempting to turn right.

The motorcycle didn't respond and hit a car. The boy suffered fractures in 20 bones.

Charfoos places much of the blame on the sex-oriented ads of manufacturers who present the motorcycle as a glamorous masculine-type vehicle providing hours of happiness.

Dealers give free riding lessons to purchasers. Yamaha has a school conducted at Edsel Ford High School, Dearborn, the third week in May and first week in June.

Charfoos listed important safety pointers for potential motorcyclists. They are:

- Learn how to ride the motorcycle away from obstacles and traffic.

- Try to avoid riding motorcycles wherever there are cars.

- Check the helmet's rating factor.

- Try not to do things with the motorcycle you're not qualified to do by training and experience.

- If you must ride where there are cars, assume that every car on the road is not going to see you. Motorcycle operators' licenses are mandatory, and a road test must be taken to obtain one. Motorcycle accidents are related to an enormous increase in the number of motorcycle riders. The Michigan Traffic Accident

Digest reports that the number of motorcycles registered in Michigan rose 109 percent from 1969 to 1973.

This is contrasted to a 20 percent increase in total motor vehicles registered during that period.

The digest also reported that the number of motorcycle deaths in Michigan did not increase as greatly as did the number of registrations due to helmet law, driver licensing and more awareness of cycles by the motoring public.

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'Young people don't realize what the manufacturers know: that you're getting a death machine'

—Lawrence Charfoos

Children who fell off a motorcycle at 10 mph and suffered permanent brain damage because she wore a poor helmet.

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Farmington Community Calendar

AN ELEPHANT CALLED SLOWLY

Thursday, Aug. 1: "An Elephant Called Slowly" is the movie scheduled for showing in the Farmington Public Library, 32737 W. 12 Mile Road, at 7 p.m., produced by the studio that made "Born Free" starring Virginia McKenna, Bill Travers and George Adamson. No charge.

ROCK CONCERT

Sunday, Aug. 4: Rock Concert continues the Oakland Community College's Sunday Summer Series in the amphitheatre on the Orchard Ridge Campus, from 3-11 a.m. No charge.

ROGER WILLIAMS

Sunday, Aug