

Freedom of riding unites people from all walks of life

By Tom Batters

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In the last couple years, Debra York has traveled to Texas, New York, the mountains out West, the vast great plains and many other places that many people never see in their lifetimes.

But York, who lives in Washington, does not particularly like to fly, or ride buses, trains or even cars.

When the urge to travel strikes her, she just hops on her motorcycle and takes off down the highway.

York is one of about 130 members of local Chapter Z of the national Gold Wing Riders, a group of motorcycle enthusiasts who love the open road.

"The best part about it is the people," York said. "Everybody gets along so well. We're like a big family."

Even when they are not taking extended trips to the Smoky Mountains or the badlands of California, they meet frequently to travel the roads of Central Illinois.

Last week, they met on a whim and rode from Morton

to Hopedale.

Many of the members own Honda Gold Wing Motorcycles, but the club is open to all riders. Some own Harley Davidsons, and there are a few Yamahas, too.

Bill Liberty, who rode more than 20,000 miles last year alone, said all the members of Chapter Z share the same passion for riding.

"You really have to love doing this," he said. "And, it does take a certain skill, too. When you're going more than 60 miles an hour on a 1,000-pound piece of machinery and you are riding next to semi-trucks, you really have to know what you are doing."

Liberty, who always has his signature pink flamingo fastened to the front of his motorcycle, said he enjoys the subtle pleasure of riding that never can be experienced inside a car.

"I can smell corn or flowers or somebody grilling hot dogs before I even see them," he said. "You cannot do that in a car. Of course, the downside of that is I can also smell



All the same once on bikes: Members of Chapter Z of the national Gold Wing Riders, above, prefer their bikes to any other kind of transportation. As weather is getting warmer, motorcycle riders are more numerous on the roads. May is a Motorcycle Safety Awareness month.

hog farms and things like that, too. But, my point is that I enjoy the freedom and the oneness of riding. Driving a car is too closed off to the rest of the world. Too many people travel through life with their windows up. What fun is that?"

R. Ted Jones, a stock bro-

ker, and his wife, Pam, just returned from a trip to Pigeon Forge, Tenn.

"We ride about 2,000 miles a year," he said. "I've been riding since college, but I slowed down a little when we had children. Now that the kids are grown up, we like to ride every chance that

we get."

Doc Stein, who calls his shiny red Gold Wing Honda a "sweet machine," said that motorcycles are easier to take care of than cars.

"Many of them will go well beyond 200,000 miles," he said. "All you have to do is change the oil."

The group is very diverse. Its members include a chiropractor, four nurses, a veterinarian, a stock broker, and York works as a librarian.

"We're all the same, once we crawl on our bikes," Liberty said.

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