

Deviant, shameful behavior

I sold pot in high school because it was deviant. Following the rules never appealed to me. Having been raised a military brat, I was unwillingly incarcerated in normalcy boot camp as a youth, which ended up being the impetus for my hunger to color outside the lines. Deviating from the norm by straying off the path was much more interesting than schlubbing along on the treadmill. I'm not slamming the normies that stay on the treadmill their whole lives; us weirdos need them to retain our deviant status because it's all relative.

The aftermarket is the colorful side of the motorized vehicle business. Automobiles, golf carts, snowmobiles, ATVs, PWCs, motorcycles and others all have vibrant aftermarkets that bring some really cool, out of the box, progressive ideas to the market. The people in these aftermarket companies are usually colorful and therefore not normal. If they were normal they would have pursued treadmill jobs. If a normal person does sneak into the aftermarket they usually don't last long.

The aftermarket would not exist without the OEM level manufacturers. For American motorcycles, Harley Davidson (MOCO) is our OEM mother with the lactating teats. We need her because she provides us the canvas to paint with. She needs us, too, but she will never admit it because she is very large and mighty. She keeps a sharp eye on us, and what we, the aftermarket, do. The most recent evidence of this is Sturgis this year. In years past she set up her display in Rapid City at the uber-sanitary Civic Center away from the mayhem in Sturgis. This year she set up at in the Community Center parking lot on Lazalle Street next to our display and all the blood, piss, puke, and dumpster juice. They made a really good move because riding motorcycles is anything but sanitary. They did a similar thing at Daytona this year.

So why does Harley need us deviant weirdos? Because we push her. We shame her into doing things she might not necessarily want to do. If S&S didn't give birth to the big displacement motor era in the 90's, MOCO might still be offering 80-inch motors. Instead, you can get a 110-inch motor straight from the factory these days that runs way stronger than a 49-horsepower, 80-inch EVO motor of days gone by. Same thing applies to the transmission business. In



the '70s Little John out of Colorado converted the factory 4-speed into a 5-speed on a pre-CNC Bridgeport with a dividing head or something unimaginable like that; what a stud. Harley introduced their 5-speed in 1980, Hmmm. BAKER Drivetrain introduced the 6-speed in 1998 and MOCO introduced their 6-speed in 2006. The wide tire wars between Avon and Metzeler started in 2001 and stimulated the MOCO to ante up. You can get a 200-series tire on a Softail straight from the factory these days. Now that's friggin cool!

There are those who might contend that the MOCO would have evolved their products in the above referenced manners eventually with or without us deviants shooting spit wads at them. I don't believe it. If you sit on the couch drinking beer all day watching Jerry Springer and *Leave it to Beaver* reruns and your wife doesn't say a word, you'll probably keep lighting farts with your drunken buddies and having a good time. If your wife starts hassling you to change your ways and get a job, you'll either comply or start drinking at your buddy's house. You might also kill your wife and collect the life insurance but I'll expand on that another time.

So does MOCO copy the aftermarket? No way in hell is the answer to that, Jasper. They do what they want, when they want. They are a behemoth and the collective aftermarket isn't even a gnat or a turd from a gnat. They may borrow ideas and concepts from the aftermarket, but they always end up implementing their new products in their own corporate manner. Now there may be one or two examples of the MOCO blatantly copying something from the aftermarket but that really doesn't matter because their annual legal budget could feed Zimbabwe for 100 years.

So am I worried about Harley snatching all my progressive product ideas, adopting them into their mainstream, and putting me out of business some day? No way. This cat and mouse game is too much fun for me. And I love motorcycles. See, if the hall monitor in high school caught me selling pot next to my locker I might relocate my activity to the girl's bathroom. There's always another way. **IV**

