

American Legion Riders

On Saturday night we went to the potato bar at the local American Legion post 131. We noticed some interesting things. First, the potato bar closed at 6:45, luckily, we got there at 6:15. Last call from the bar was at 7:50. This is a Legion post in a retired community where everyone goes home by 8:00. The volunteers doing the potato bar were all American Legion Riders. After the meal was done and nearly everyone else had left, we chatted with the volunteers on a variety of subjects. Bev and I were Legion Riders in Moorhead before I gave my bike to my step-son. I told the group that I write a weekly column and asked for suggestions. Legion Riders seemed the most logical so, of course, I did some research.

In Garden City, Mich., in 1993, Chuck "Tramp" Dare and Bill "Polka" Kaledas, commander of American Legion Post 396, shared an idea to start a motorcycle enthusiasts association within Legion. The two longtime riders wanted an environment where Legion family members could come together to share a common love for motorcycles. The two took the idea to the Michigan Department Adjutant who liked the idea and asked the two start the program. There were 19 other post members who rode motorcycle and became the founding members of the Legion Riders. Word spread and other posts wanted to form their own Riders. Concerned that the groups might become typical motorcycle gangs, the two men developed criteria that would ensure that the groups would be part of the Legion family, including Legion members, Auxiliaries and Sons of the Legion. The group in Green Valley is typical of Legion Riders throughout the country, it a family organization. There are over 2,000 chapters with about 110,000 members in the country. Green Valley is a bit different in that about half the riders own trikes, three-wheeled motorcycles. Some of the more traditional modified Honda or Harley bikes with two back wheels and the front of a motorcycle. However, a number are riding the newer style Can Am trikes with two front wheels and one rear. The biggest reason for the change is the age of members. We are not as stable as we used to be and a trike won't tip very easily!

A few years ago, some Moorhead motorcycle riders started a Legion Riders group. It started small and we did several runs the first year. Since then the Moorhead and Fargo Legions have become partners with one group, the FM Legion Riders. Legion Riders throughout the country help their Posts and community in a variety of ways. FM Riders help with the Honor Flight, go on runs and help with Post social events rode with the American Legion Legacy Run last summer and are good Legion family members. The Green Valley Riders, being a larger group also participates in local parades, helps with fund raisers and serves meals at the local post.