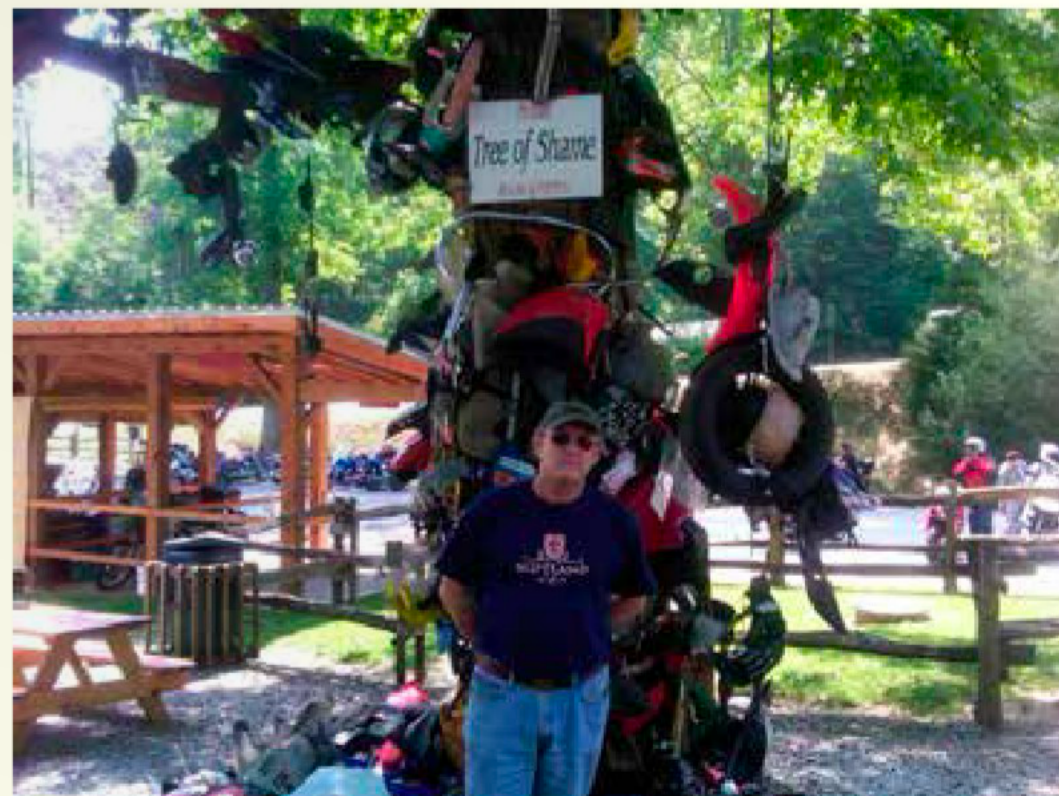




*“That little yellow sign
can’t be ignored.
I’m telling you it’s mighty nice
Each trip’s a trip to paradise
With my baby on board!”
– Homer J. Simpson*



each rider’s responsibility to avoid the latte drinking, texting “cagers” that proliferate the roads. If they look up from their Facebook feed, long enough to read the bumper sticker, then maybe there is hope. But I am not so sure. There is only one slogan I subscribe to on a regular basis and that is, “Watch out for the other guy/gal.”

When I was got hitched to my first wife (full disclosure: she is still my wife – but calling her my first wife, is just as accurate and yes, I like being punched in the arm every time I say it) over 14 years ago, I encouraged her to take the ABATE (<http://www.abate.org>) motorcycle course. I never suspected she would become a fulltime rider. What I hoped for was that she would gain an understanding about this crazy world of riders that I love being a part of . . . She attended her class



like a champ, even dropping her bike and scraping her knee, but still finishing successfully! She completed her test and received her “M” endorsement. She only rode solo on the street for a short time, but she gained an appreciation for motorcycle safety and more importantly it made her a more aware driver in a car. I believe the motorcycle safety course should be the prerequisite for anyone wishing to obtain a driver’s license, even if they never intend on riding motorcycle on the street. Perhaps, if everyone felt that vulnerability, even briefly they could have a more visceral awareness when they see motorcycles around them. Maybe then they would keep their eyes on the road and their phones down. And one last thing, on that topic, I have actually heard people say, “ I wasn’t texting I was checking my email.” Newsflash, emailing is the same as texting! Ok, down off my soapbox for a minute.

As I write this article, I am riding through the Southwest. I was headed west, but had to detour south from Colorado due to snowstorms. Something that folks in cars rarely have to consider, except in very extreme situations. As motorcyclists we need to consider weather conditions constantly. In a car, they are often taken or granted and settled with no more than a flick of the windshield wipers. To add to the difficulty of travel on this particular trip, I am writing from an unexpected extended stay at the Inn of Governors in Santa Fe as a result of a recent breakdown. One of the cells in my battery collapsed and my bike simply stopped running. Fortunately, I was able to recover quickly and safely, but that is not always the case when the unexpected happens.

Motorcycle awareness, is much more than drivers being more aware and riders watching out for cars. Proper maintenance, basic pre-ride safety checks, and having proper insurance and endorsements on our person when riding are all very important. As a rider, we often check out tires, fluids, mirror positions, cables, etc. prior to riding; perhaps not as often as we should, but far more often than the average automobile

driver. With this in mind, being on the road can be dangerous. It is filled with unexpected happenings. At the risk of sounding like a lawyer, preparation is truly the best defense. Reports show that on average 384 riders die in the U.S. every month. That is an ominous 13 unlucky riders a day. It is a sobering reminder, that we must all be careful out there.

I am passionate about motorcycle safety. I fully support the “Check-Twice” campaign, but I am also, as I am sure many readers are as well, painfully aware of the realistic dangers of riding. In 2012, my father, rode with me from Colorado to Vegas. He then flew home to Connecticut. Weeks later, he was riding home from his local grocery store, from picking up a chicken, of all things, when a neglectful driver pulled a “left hand Louie;” hit and killed him. Not a day goes by that I don’t think about that. Mere hours before leaving for my most recent trip, which has me here in Santa Fe, a friend died while riding home. The details of whether a car was involved or not, have yet to be released, but it hurts nonetheless. It only reinforces how aware we all must be, whether we are riding or driving.

As riders, we know, motorcycles are everywhere, but getting motorists to recognize this requires more than slogans. Yes, it is a start, but we must always be vigilant when we ride, not aggressive, simply hyper-aware. Yes, it takes away some of the freedom feeling that we all seek on two wheels, but if we want to live to ride another day, it is a must. In the end, aren’t we all Somebody’s Baby?

In Memory of Brian Sanders of Colorado and my dad, Chris Trey of Bolton, CT and to everyone who has lost a loved one pursuing their passion of two wheels . . .

Joe Trey
Adventure Hermit
Don’t go anywhere . . . Go Somewhere!

Ah the 80’s? When ubiquitous yellow, men-at-work placards seemed to be suctioned cupped to the back of everyone’s car window? Simply stating, “Baby on Board.”

It began in 1984, with seemingly good intentions, by the Safety First Corporation. However, it did not take long before it devolved into parody and all sorts of variations began appearing. Any good intentions were soon drowned out. New signs cropped up, each trying to out do the other with outlandish claims, such as, “body in trunk” or “Jedi on Board.”

Prior to the “Baby on Board” campaign there was another dip into the baby sentimentality pool when the 1982 movie Fast Time at Ridgemont High featured Jackson Browne’s “Somebody’s Baby” in its soundtrack. Is it possible that the Safety First Corporation had this song on their mind when they created their campaign? I doubt it. But it is possible that Massachusetts Motorcycle Association (MMA) Chairman Bob Doiron heard it when he coined the phrase, “Check Twice – Save a Life, Motorcycles are Everywhere!”

Why do I bring up this comparison? Well, because I’ve always struggled with the “Baby on Board” approach. Don’t get me wrong. I love babies. I have two of them who have grown into fine young girls. All without the aid of a “Baby on Board” placard. What bothered me about it was the request that we should treat a car, with such a sign, more courteously and safety just because a baby was on board. I believe we should do that all the time?

This is why, I believe, the “Check-Twice” campaign is important, but also almost as silent as the “Baby on Board” campaign. I know I am preaching to a choir of riders but it is