

## **Professors bring enthusiasm for motorcycling to class**

by Sheryl Hanson - Thursday, September 04, 2008

<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/1190/professors-bring-enthusiasm-for-motorcycling-to-class/>

This year's Homecoming on October 18 will bring motorcycling enthusiasts from near and far to UW Oshkosh to celebrate the Harley-Davidson theme.

Nursing professors **Sharon Chappy** and **Suzanne Marnocha** will be two of them.

The friends and colleagues, who have known each other since they began doctoral studies in 1995, got into the pastime — without the other's knowledge — in summer 2004.

“Sharon came back to school that fall and said, ‘You won't believe what I did this summer,’” said Marnocha, who currently serves as director of UW Oshkosh's undergraduate nursing program.

Chappy, who earned a master's in nursing in 1994 from UW Oshkosh, became interested in riding because her husband owned a bike. She owns a Harley Heritage Softail, and he has a Harley Road King.

Together, they have logged three trips to the ultimate Harley riders' destination, Sturgis, S.D., and completed the Lake Michigan circle tour, which includes a long, lazy ride around the perimeter of the lake.

They've also taken a three-week motorcycle trip out west, where they explored Yellowstone and its magnificent mountains and have enjoyed fly-and-rides, where motorcycle lovers fly to a destination and then do a short bike tour of the area. So far, they have enjoyed fly-and-ride trips to Hawaii, Las Vegas and New Orleans.

“They say in the Harley ads that one of the best things about biking is that you don't just see the scenery — you become part of it,” Chappy said. “That is so true.

By far, Chappy's favorite destination is Lake Superior.

“We have seen most of the southern border and I would love to do a circle tour,” she said. “Some places are so remote that you go for 30 miles without seeing another car. The water is turquoise, and there are all kinds of sand dunes. I don't think I will ever get enough of that lake.”

Marnocha, a five-foot, two-inch grandmother of four, enjoys riding her bike — an 800-cc Kawasaki Vulcan — closer to home and often uses her bike as primary transportation back and forth to work from her home in Hortonville.

“I ride my bike to campus as much as possible,” she said. “My students think it's cool. One bought herself a Ducati as a reward for graduation.”

Marnocha finds riding an excellent way to boost her spirits.

“When I am in a bad mood, I get on my bike and it takes about five minutes. Then I’m not in a bad mood anymore,” she said.

For both women, safety comes first when they ride. As nurses, they know the dangers involved with the sport. And because they work in nursing part-time outside the classroom — Chappy in an operating room and Marnocha in an ICU — both have seen patients who suffered motorcycle-related injuries.

It’s no surprise that they took safety classes before they began riding and wear the recommended safety attire.

“When I come to school in my boots and jeans, I explain to my students that I am dressing down for safety. I try to emphasize safety all the time,” Chappy said.

Marnocha had an accident that taught her first-hand the value of safety attire, which includes helmets, face shields, steel-toed shoes and leather chaps and gloves.

“I was trapped under my bike and it weighs about 300 pounds,” she said. “I was wearing chaps and they burned, but I was okay.”

Women riders like Chappy and Marnocha are becoming more common throughout the country.

“I feel a lot more comfortable driving my own bike than riding behind my husband,” Chappy said.

“Women are the biggest group of new riders, so motorcycle makers are designing bikes that women can handle better, ones that are lower to the ground and more comfortable for women to ride.”

One of Marnocha’s friends is a great example of the excitement many women feel about riding.

“At first she thought I was nuts for buying a bike, and now she has purchased four in the time I have owned two, and she has ridden cross country by herself, all the way to Oregon.”

At Homecoming on October 18, all motorcycles and other non-motorized bikes are welcome to join the parade. Parade grand marshals will be **Pete Johnson** ’89 and ’93 MBA, and **Lori Thiel**, owners of Open Road Harley-Davidson in Fond du Lac.

- For more information on Homecoming or to register for the parade, visit [www.homecoming.uwosh.edu/alumni.php](http://www.homecoming.uwosh.edu/alumni.php).

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