

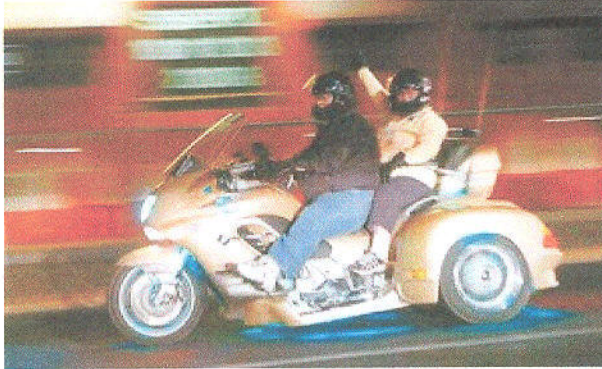
Sunday, August 31, 2008

PENDLETON

Gold Wing Touring Association lights up the night

By **ERIC FLORIP**
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Members of the Gold Wing Touring Association ride down Court Avenue Saturday in Pendleton. Staff photo by E.J. Harris

The Gold Wing Touring Association isn't your typical motorcycle group.

After making some noise and riding through downtown Pendleton during its light parade Saturday night, members didn't go to the bars. They didn't cause any trouble.

They went to Dairy Queen.

GWTA Regional Director J.R. Phillips said such an evening isn't uncommon for the group, which exists more as a social group than a stereotypical "biker gang."

"They see us coming on bikes and they automatically give us a bad name," he said, adding friendship, camaraderie and service are the GWTA's main purpose. "We'll sit down at Dairy Queen and have an ice cream and a pie. That's just the way we are."

Before the convoy of 30 bikes rolled into downtown Saturday, several riders spent time decorating their motorcycles with lights and flags. The lead bike, driven by Stanwood, Wash., resident Bonnie Bruner, adorned star-shaped Christmas lights with a sidecar. Nearly all riders flew American flags. Behind another, trailed a large banner bearing the Seattle Seahawks logo.

Despite the name, GWTA members aren't required to ride a Gold Wing motorcycle. Spokane resident Chuck Wisowaty drove his new, bright yellow Thoroughbred Motorsports Stallion bike, a three-wheeler that resembles a Ford Mustang from behind. Wisowaty said the vehicle - which drives with a steering wheel instead of handlebars - gets about 50 miles per gallon, but doesn't sacrifice anything on the performance end.

"It'll put a Corvette to shame," he said. "It handles like a go-kart."

To back that claim, Wisowaty said he raced a neighbor, who drove his own Corvette, and won easily by a car length.

Phillips said the GWTA, which was founded in 1987, is no stranger to Pendleton. The organization held its annual national gathering here in the 1990s and was convinced to come back by Pendleton Convention Center Executive Director Pat Kennedy, Phillips said. Though this weekend's gathering wasn't on the same large scale as a normal event, the GWTA's purpose and camaraderie remains the same, he said.

"It's a good group," Phillips said. "There's not a person here that wouldn't give the shirt off their back to help you."