

Even Wearing Green Doesn't Guarantee a Problem Free St. Patrick's Day

By Dawn Weston

What a great idea! We'll ride in the Leavenworth, Kansas, St. Patrick's Day parade. People will know we exist and join our group. Wheatearts member Maryann had an excellent idea to ride our bikes in the parade. Enthusiasm for the project was high. We planned to meet at Abeles Field in Leavenworth at 9 a.m. on March 17.

I chose to ride my older bike because it doesn't have a windshield and parade goers could better see my Chihuahua, Dolly, with her homemade motorcycle helmet, goggles and green scarf riding in a carrier strapped to me.

Usually I ride with a full-face helmet. Dolly has never figured how to lick my face when I wear my full-face helmet. Licking people seems to be her mission in life. I chose to ride with a half helmet and goggles. With my half helmet, Dolly could lick my face whenever she wanted.

I checked weatherchannel.com for several days before St. Patrick's Day. The forecast was for a sunny warm March day. I was ready. Upon waking on March 17, I noticed it was overcast. Checking the Weather Channels website, the forecast was for cloudy with some rain. Not ready to let my spirits be dampened, I prepared for the parade. Instead of riding to Leavenworth with my 1985 Kawasaki 454 LTD, I would put it in the back of my Toyota truck.



Installing an auxiliary power supply on my bike on the day of the parade, I would be prepared for anything that would need charging or powered during a ride. For the parade this power supply would power a magnetic red light I use as a volunteer firefighter. The red light fit well on my bike's front chrome bumper.

Before we left to meet our group, My husband and I struggled to get the bike in the back of the slippery truck bed. Then we drove it down to Abeles Field. At 9 a.m., only Dorothy Thompson was there in her pickup truck. Her dog Harley was with her. Dorothy didn't bring her trike because she has been waiting for her cousin to install a battery. The battery was still in her cousin's garage. Dorothy said only Ruth, she and I, were coming because the other members had family emergencies and commitments. According to Dorothy, Ruth was riding her bike from Topeka. There would be at least two bikes in the parade.

Dorothy had called Ruth at her home that morning. Since Ruth didn't answer the phone, Dorothy assumed Ruth was on her way. But we were worried because Ruth was late. A van pulled next to us. It was Ruth. She couldn't get her bike to start even after using a battery charger. She was in her garage when Dorothy tried to call her.

We now had one bike for the parade. We did have our banner though. As a convoy, we drove to the area where parade entries gather and parked in the courthouse parking lot. We had plenty of time before the parade would start so we went to the Village Square Restaurant for breakfast.

When we got back, I noticed the weather was clearing. I decided I wanted to ride my bike after all. Besides Dolly would get all the attention she enjoys riding on my bike. With Ruth's help, we got the bike off my truck. I hooked up the red light and we mounted our banner on the back of Dorothy's truck. The bike started

up nicely.

However, by this time, Dorothy realized Harley, her dog, had stepped on her door lock and locked himself and the keys in her truck. At least she had cracked the passenger window and her door lock control was on the top of the door armrest. I tried a stick but it was too short and dropped it inside the truck. The dog just watched. I tried using Dorothy's CB radio antenna after she unscrewed it from its mount. It was too long and I dropped it into the truck. The dog was still watching. Ruth had a coat hanger in her van. I unwrapped the antenna and bent it to fit. After some maneuvering, I was able to hit the unlock button. Harley was free and Dorothy was back in her truck.

Time to line up. I hooked the dog carrier to my chest. Dolly had on her goggles, helmet and green scarf. I got on my bike and Dorothy and Ruth followed me in Dorothy's green truck. We got into position in the parade. Ruth rode in the back of the truck. I walked Dolly around the other parade goers before parade time for the kids could pet her. She was an immediate hit.

When the parade started, I turned on my red light. Of course there was the parade goer who yelled, "Don't you wish you had a Harley?" I told him no, I like my three Kawasakis. There is a market for Harleys and a market for the metric bikes. I just happen to be partial to Kawasaki. Conversion is not an option.

I was doing fine but most of the time the parade was so slow I had to duck walk my bike. The kids enjoyed Dolly in her costume. All was going well until the power drain from the red light killed my battery. I stalled halfway through the parade. Of course, we were in an uphill part of the parade. Ruth jumped out of the truck and helped me push start the bike. I attempted to get back in the parade but the battery hadn't had a chance to recharge. The bike stalled again. Ruth helped me push start it again.

Ruth and I were so far, behind where Dorothy was at this time, we decided to quit the parade and meet Dorothy at the end of the parade. I told Ruth to ride on the back of my bike. This was my first attempt at two-up riding. We survived.

After all that, I did not want to put my bike back into the back of my truck. Ruth drove my husband back to my house in my truck. I drove Ruth back to her van in my Ford Explorer. In fact, I was driving to Topeka where Ruth lives.

I showed her the back way from Leavenworth to Lawrence. Ruth led from Lawrence to Topeka and showed me to where I needed to go in Topeka.

I think in spite of the tests of patience required of the day, we had camaraderie, I got to ride my bike instead of being stuck inside working and I was able to practice two-up riding. I think we should try again next year.