



OUT OF THE SADDLE

Tamela Rich

RA 40500

[@Tamela.Rich](#)

www.TamelaRich.com

Thoughts on “Stuff”

(With apologies to George Carlin)

I’m preparing my heart to say goodbye to my 2010 G 650 GS—the first and only motorcycle I’ve ever owned. It hasn’t been easy.

The Latin root of “memento” means “to remember,” which explains why we attach emotional energy to our stuff. I still have sea glass that I picked up on a Corsican beach in 2018 in the pocket of my CamelBak. No one would pay me money for the worthless slivers, but they’re priceless to me because they’re charged with memory. Similarly, my old(ish) motorcycle is worth more than its weight in gold emotionally, but there’s a limit on what a buyer will pay for it. Some of you might name your motorcycle or refer to it with a gendered pronoun. I’ve never gone that far, but I understand the tradition.



Colorado National Monument

I’ve ridden other bikes from time to time, one of which, the F 900 R, I profile in this issue. I also spent two weeks in the Pacific Northwest on an R 1200 GS, and rode in Italy, Corsica, and Sardinia on a F 750 GS. After those moto-trysts, I came down with major bouts of new bike fever, but afterwards I practiced gratitude for the bike that I already had—the one that was fully paid for—and the one whose every idiosyncrasy I know.

I talked to my brother about my dilemma since he’s had dozens of bikes. His pro-sale arguments were rational. He reminded me that I want a boxer engine with more zest for highway sprints and more available lean angle so that I don’t have to worry about scraping a peg. I also want a bike that will last another ten years without a lot of maintenance because I don’t do my own wrenching. I kept responding his arguments and mine with “Yeah, but...”

Then he said, “Can you buy another one if you keep this one?”

Ouch. He hit the nail on the head. I need the proceeds from this one to put toward a new one, but at the same time I don’t want to feel disloyal to my first love. (Can you even believe I’m admitting to this?)

Oddly enough, the “Ship of Theseus Paradox” is helping me loosen my grip on my favorite moto-memento. Theseus, who killed the Minotaur and founded Athens, sailed a famous ship that was eventually kept in a harbor as a museum piece. As the years went by some of the wooden parts began to rot and were replaced by new ones until, after a century or so, every part had been replaced. The question Plato and other big thinkers asked... is the “restored” ship still the same object as the original?

You say it is? Then suppose the removed pieces were stored in a warehouse and, sometime in the future, technology could reverse the rot and enable you to reassemble them into a ship. Would this “reconstructed” ship be the original ship? If it is, then what about the restored ship in the harbor? Are there now two Ships of Theseus?

Maybe you know this question as the

“Grandfather’s Ax Paradox,” where both the ax’s head and handle have been replaced over time. A memento with only two parts is trickier than a sailing ship. Sure, it’s more your grandfather’s ax than one your neighbor picked up at the local hardware store, at least emotionally, but nothing of your grandfather’s actual ax survives in the new one.

My bike is ten years old. I’ve changed the oil and tires several times, along with other routine maintenance. I’ve farked it this way and that. I’ve had the engine rebuilt and changed the suspension. After all that change, can I say I really have the same bike? The title says it’s the same bike, but philosophically speaking, is it? If more than half of the parts and fluids have been modified or replaced, is it the same bike?

I always figured I’d enshrine the old girl in my garage and let my children fight over her along with the photo albums and family silver but, truth be told, it would be a hassle to them since neither is a rider.

I remember when we moved out of the home where we’d lived for twenty-six years. I was paralyzed by the countless decisions I had to make about the mementos I’d accumulated: macaroni art from my boys in preschool, the full leather-bound collection of Agatha Christie books I hadn’t read since 1985, and my Brownie Girl Scout membership pin from first grade to name just a few. One of my neighbors came over to help me box things up and I pointed her to a stack of my husband’s things while I worked on my own. After observing me staring blankly into the middle distance, she said, “Tam, you need to take pictures of everything and move along. Keep them on a thumb drive or make a screen saver out of them so you’ll have the memories without the mementos.”

She was right. Taking pictures was the bridge step then, and it is now. I have plenty of pictures of my bike. Good-bye, my moto-memento.

On *The Level* columnist Tamela Rich hopes to be leading tours on a new bike in 2021. For group tour information, visit TamelaRich.com/upcoming-tours.



At 22 feet, the world’s largest Czech egg is found in Wilson, Kansas. Also in this area are gas, food, and a wonderful, newly restored hotel, The Midland Railroad Hotel.