



**LA District Educators
Reba and Jim Berry**

**IF YOU DON'T USE IT,
YOU LOSE IT!**



This summer, we along with 5 other gold wings, headed out on a 22 day, 6000+ mile ride that we called our Continental Divide Ride. We traveled due north to Canada, then left to Jasper. Alberta, south to Santa Rosa, NM and east to Monroe. Most of us had ridden together previously and all had experience in GWRRA Team Riding techniques. This is what makes us feel more comfortable and safer on our rides. It didn't take long to discover we were rusty, very rusty in our skills. As the ride leader, I made several sudden turns that weren't effectively communicated beforehand, causing near misses and missed turns. Our intervals were sometimes too far apart and at other times too close. When we would pull into a parking lot instead of staying together until out of harms way and adequate space was attained, some would separate to find their own parking. All things indicating that we were out of practice. Then one afternoon, reality snuck in.

Riding south from Calgary to the States, we were passed by a group of 6 Canadian Gold Wings. They were riding in a tight, staggered formation, spoke to us briefly on the CB, merged back into the right lane in front of us much like synchronized swimmers. It was a beautiful sight. How come they looked so good and we didn't? Well, they were all on their home turf, probably had not ridden 4000 miles, they were all two wheelers and they did not have trailers. I asked myself, "How can we look like that?" The answer, we can't. We were all trikes each with a loaded trailer. The Team Riding Manual says that we are to ride 1 second behind the bike immediately in front of us, if staggered, and 2 seconds behind the bike in our lane. So, I asked myself, "Are trikes really staggered?" A trike always takes 2 of the 3 tracks in a lane. So, we should be 2 seconds behind the bike in front. Maybe more while pulling trailers in other than good conditions. At a cruising speed of 70 miles per hour you are traveling approximately 100 feet per second. At a 2 second interval, with 6 bikes (5 gaps), your group would stretch out 1000 feet. Longer than 3 football fields. Can you imagine what is going through the mind of that 18 wheeler driver coming up in the left lane when the drag bike secures the left lane for a team riding maneuver and he sees 6 bikes spread over 1000 feet slowing him down and keeping that much longer from a day's end? I retired from a trucking company. I know what he is thinking and it's not nice. So, what do we do?

The Team Riding Manual mentions 2 other group riding styles. There is "Mass Riding" which is what you generally see at poker and toy runs when all kinds of bikes are participating. It is generally undisciplined and not recommended. There is also "Leisure Riding". This is defined as traveling with a group of people you know with some agreed upon techniques and ground rules. Many of these can come from the Team Riding style; staggering, distance, speed, knowledge of the route, etc. Each rider is responsible for his own ride. Our group fit the Leisure style more so than the Team style. When our speed slowed down and we were going through communities and cities, we were able to revert back to team concepts as not to get lost or separated. I can hear someone saying right now, "People are going to get all up in your formation!" Yes they will. But, that happens in Team Riding as well, especially at entrance and exit ramps. The two second interval is not designed to keep people out of your formation, it is to provide you with adequate reaction time for what happens in front of you. Remember, the Motorist Awareness slogan is "Share the Road", not "Get Off My Road".

Is it time to renew safe group riding skills in your chapter? I'll bet it is! You find a place and a time and we will get you the instructors. Call Mike Stevenson, Joan Partigianoni or me today.