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## Assistant DA simply loves his motorcycle

### Biker image has gone far beyond rabble-rouser stereotype, he says

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By Amanda Michaels, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

From the top of his black and silver hair to the hem of the sharp suit that grazes a pair of well-shined black shoes, Jerry Cassidy looks every inch the lawyer.

Walking briskly through the parking garage, he talks confidently about his work as an assistant district attorney for Butler County, weighing the ethical pros and cons of working for the prosecution or the defense. A svelte six feet, he is free of piercings and tattoos and sports only a moustache and very thin beard. All and all, Cassidy, 45, is not the type of man one might expect to get revved up over two wheels and an engine.

Looks can be deceiving.

As he turns the corner of the garage, he pauses mid-stride, utter delight in his eyes.

"Just seeing it makes my heart beat faster."

"It" is his BMW R1150 GS, a bright yellow dual-sport motorcycle purchased on March 23, 2000, for about \$15,300. He rattles off the date without prompting.

The bike is well-groomed, like Cassidy himself, and has only a few tiny stickers, including ones advertising his favorite riding spot and the shop where he bought the bike.

Though it was the morning of national Ride to Work Day, celebrated on the third Wednesday in July for the past 13 years to demonstrate the diversity of motorcyclists and the utility of cycles, Cassidy did nothing different from his usual routine.

He rode to work from his home 40 miles away in Franklin, wearing his \$1,500 green-and-black Gortex riding suit and silver helmet. He uses his Jeep only when the roads are icy, insisting that the plug-in heating unit in his riding suit keeps him relatively comfortable even on the coldest days.

Cassidy doesn't build bikes or keep them hidden in his garage or even race them. Simply riding them is what he loves, and he's already put 65,000 miles on this bike over the course of his daily commute, a few trips to the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally in South Dakota and a venture or two down the Eastern Seaboard.

"A lot of people are interested in racing, or trying to go fast in a straight line," he said. "But I just love the feeling of the bike accelerating, turning, braking. When I had my Harley, I would get a rush just out of the bike starting."

Cassidy was recently certified to be a RiderCoach for the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation's Motorcycle Safety Program, a free service for everyone holding a Pennsylvania Class M permit or license.

He lauded the program as outstanding, explaining that such safety classes are essential because motorcycles are "nothing to be trifled with." And he would know, having once hit a deer while going 45 mph, miraculously rolling away with only a shoulder contusion.

"Let me tell you, everything I had on, every piece of safety gear, was used," he said.

Cassidy's love affair with motorcycles began with the Honda 70 minibike he got at age 12. He started racing motocross soon thereafter, much to his mother's initial dismay, and he managed to go through three bikes before stopping after high school.

By 33, he was able to reunite with the motorcycle, and he bought a Harley Davidson before moving on to the current BMW.

Cassady said his wife occasionally rode with him before the birth of their daughter, but now she makes it clear to their 8-year-old that "Daddy's bike is off limits." In what he calls a "mutually agreeable situation," he rides his motorcycle while his wife, daughter and in-laws ride in a minivan on their family vacations to New Jersey.

Though he loves talking about his bike, Cassady said he can't figure out why a rider like him is a novelty.

"It seems to me that we're far enough beyond the stereotype of motorcyclists as rabble-rousers. I mean, I heard even the chief justice of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court rides," he said. "Well, I guess when I go to rallies down at the Cranberry Quaker Steak and Lube, not a lot of guys have a bike like mine or a riding suit like mine. But we're such a diverse group, motorcyclists."

While raving about the race in Ohio for which he will be a course marshall, Cassady shoots a faraway look in the direction of his bike, hidden at least eight walls away.

"Sometimes it's hard to park it, especially on a gorgeous day," he explained. "Knowing my bike is there, I can't have a bad day. I can hear it talking to me. I just love it."

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