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## Born to Ride

*A group of Silicon Valley attorneys say motorcycling is therapy as they take to the open road.*

By Skylar Dubelko  
Daily Journal Staff Writer

A group of Silicon Valley lawyers compare motorcycling to therapy and take to the open road whenever possible. “Law can be all-consuming — there’s a massive amount of anxiety,” said Quinn Emanuel Urquhart & Sullivan LLP partner Claude Stern.

When Stern gets on his Harley-Davidson, “all that disappears,” he explained. “You are completely immersed in the riding. All your senses are on. ... You’re focused on the road. You’re focusing on the scenery. You are in the moment.”

Explaining he was given a one-day Harley-Davidson rental certificate years ago, Stern said he quickly fell in love with the bike. Soon after, Stern invited Hanson Bridgett LLP counsel Ronald Wynn and Gunderson Dettmer Stough Villeneuve Franklin & Hachigian LLP founding partner Scott Dettmer to join him for a ride.

“They started renting bikes too,” Stern said. “Scott ended up buying the first bike. He bought his Ducati. Then I bought my Harley. Then Ron bought his BMW.”

Attorney Mark Perry, formerly with Cooley LLP, later joined the group and the foursome began calling themselves the SLOBs.

“SLOBs stands for Senior Lawyers on Bikes,” Stern clarified, laughing.

Others sometimes join them, including Wachtell, Lipton, Rosen & Katz of counsel Selwyn Goldberg plus Vera Elson and Bradford O’Brien, partners at Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati PC.

Formerly a partner in Wilson Sonsini’s Palo Alto office, Goldberg “got the motorcycle riding bug” about three years ago, Stern explained. “At some point [he] invited me to go riding with these guys. So that’s the connection.”

Interrupting Stern, Dettmer laughed before adding, “In mafia talk, that’s when they say, ‘The families were joined.’”

Each summer, the original SLOBs hit the open road, embarking on multi-day rides across the state.

“We do about 1,200 miles,” Stern said. “There’s different places around California. We’ve gone up into Oregon, dropped into Nevada.”

Noting he’s only ridden on weekends with O’Brien, Elson and Goldberg, Stern said the attorneys often discuss going on longer rides.

There’s one ride Stern does alone each year, he said, explaining he regularly embarks on an eight-to-nine-day ride to Sturgis, South Dakota, home of the largest motorcycle rally in the world.

Noting the motorcycle rally predominantly attracts Harley riders, Dettmer described Stern’s bike as both giant and loud.

“And he’s got all the leathers and everything else that goes along with it, so he fits in very nicely with that high-profile crowd in Sturgis,” Dettmer said. Asked if Stern has invited the other attorneys to join him, Dettmer laughed before adding, “He says, ‘Yeah, you’re invited, but you will get beat up.’”

After some good-natured banter, the other attorneys admit they have a bone to pick with Stern.

“[We’re] now struggling with something,” Dettmer said. Stern — who they’d “pegged” as the Harley guy — recently bought a new BMW motorcycle.

“Sometimes he confuses us even more by using some of his leathers that he’d normally use for the Harley when he’s riding the BMW,” Dettmer added.

The lawyers are quick to define themselves by the kinds of motorcycles they ride. For Goldberg, his BMW represents the pinnacle of



Gary Wagner / Special to the Daily Journal

From left, Vera Elson of Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati, Claude Stern of Quinn Emanuel Urquhart & Sullivan LLP, Scott Dettmer of Gunderson Dettmer and Bradford O’Brien of Wilson Sonsini.

motorcycle technology.

Explaining there are an infinite number of gadgets and high-tech devices that can be acquired for a high-end performance motorcycle, Goldberg quipped, “In the Harley you have a cigarette lighter.”

Noting Goldberg is the most recent motorcyclist in the group, Stern said his friend first started riding in his late 50s.

“That’s a very brave move,” Stern said. Describing Goldberg as “kind of a gadget nerd,” he explained, “He has like 24 cellphones and ... his bike has got every fancy safety precaution that can possibly be put on a motorcycle.”

Laughing, Stern added, “He literally has a rearview video camera ... that projects in the helmet what’s happening behind you.”

When Stern invested in a Blue-

tooth-capable helmet so he could communicate with the other attorneys on the road, however, not even Goldberg was interested.

Recalling Stern’s excitement, Dettmer said, “He told us about how we could get the same for our helmets. ... [But] the last thing we want to hear while riding through beautiful country is Claude jabbering away at us!”

For the most part, the attorneys described motorcycling as a great escape from their legal practices.

But from time to time, “we’ll pull up to a stoplight and Claude’s head is bobbing in a funny way and we’ll go, ‘What the heck is he doing?’” Dettmer explained. “We’ll pull up next to him, see he’s talking away on his cellphone-enabled helmet and then ... he’ll smile at us and ... say, ‘billing time.’”