# DRUID DRIBBLE

## Edition 1 Volume 6 – Topic: The Vest

I have had a few folks pull me aside over the years who have asked me various questions about etiquette when riding in a group. Most recently occurring at the last social. Valid questions as if you are not accustomed to riding in a group, it can be a daunting, almost overwhelming dreaded feeling that you might "step in it" when on a group ride… Everybody wants to fit in and do it without fuss. So, I never blow off anyone who approaches me with a question. I will break this into several parts. I will start with one of the predominate questions that I routinely field and what can be the elephant in the room. Your vest.

Since we are a social riding group, a factory sponsored motorcycle club (MC), one of the most common questions I have answered is IRT the vest, as it identifies us. Many folks ride with a vest. This is a personal choice, as there are also a significant number of riders who don't ride with a vest. No issue either way. The most popular is a black leather vest…that is fine but in the middle of the summer in Texas, a black leather vest can be a royal pain in the butt. A number of folks have moved away from leather and now use a heavy fabric style vest, or a heavy-duty work shirt. They will then usually cut the sleeves off. I will say if you look around the various "Goodwill" type stores, one may find a used Wrangler or Levis Jean jacket you can turn into a vest which will save you some $$. In any event, like a rain suit, make sure it is a size or two over your normal size so it can fit over your ballistic nylon jacket and/or cold weather clothing. Nice thing about a fabric style vest like garment is that just about anyone with a sewing machine can customize the vest with your selected patches. Of note, many folks are reconsidering pins on their vests as they add weight and, in an accident, can painfully dig into your flesh. Pins can be expensive and yet they routinely break off leaving you one or more pointy ends still attached to your vest.

Leather takes a tad more effort and thus cost. As for color, that is a personal choice. Just remember that once you start putting on patches and pins, it may become a tad more difficult to launder and you will have sweat stains along with spilled ketchup, BBQ sauce, dead bugs, whatever…to contend with. With a leather vest, wipe off the "goo" with a sponge and if it really starts to draw flies, Fabreeze or Lysol spray goes a long way. Go thru a rainstorm and you may also see which of your patches have unstable ink as that patch has now puked on your vest or if you bought a cheap vest somewhere, you now have vest ink all over your shirt or skin. That ink is hard to get off. Thus, you walk into work Monday morning and they evacuate the building as someone will think you have Ebola… Look for a vest with some decent internal pockets. Cell phone/wallet/concealed carry are all options here. I like snaps vice buttons as I use vest extenders which come in handy when I wear a vest along with a cold wx jacket.

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Making it "your vest". Bottom line is this. We are a family friendly, social motorcycle riding club sponsored by an H-D Dealership and our mount of choice is a Harley Davidson. H-D (and H.O.G.) does not mandate what can go on your vest. With that being said, opinions are like assholes and we all have one. Remember we routinely go into public restaurants and like areas where we represent not only our Chapter/Dealership but H-D as a whole. If you wouldn't wear your vest in front of your mother or your kids, (or your boss) take a moment, take a breath and see if you really want that patch or pin on your vest. I also highly suggest you shy away from anything racist or radically political (left or right). A lot of folks get diarrhea of the mouth on Facebook/social media as they can hide in digit land. Put that kind of stuff on your vest - you do so at your own peril.

At the H.O.G. Training for Chapter Officers that I attended a few years back, it was explained to us that for years, H.O.G. avoided the term "MC" (Motorcycle Club). By not referencing MC, there was evidently some "confusion" building across the motorcycle community. So at a National Council of Clubs/Confederation of Clubs (aka CoC) meeting several years back, attended by the leadership of the 1% MCs and other non-aligned MCs/riding clubs, H-D made it abundantly clear that H.O.G. was the largest factory sponsored MC in the world and H-D along with H.O.G. are not aligned with any 1% MC nor are they subordinate to them. Period. All members of the CoC recognized and acknowledged H-D's stand and there it sits. Thus, we ride. Dealerships are neutral territory. However, use common sense and common courtesy when dealing with any MC/riding club. Some advice here, as an H.O.G. member, I would avoid putting any 1% MC "support" patches on your vest.

1% MCs typically wear 3 piece "colors/cuts". The top rocker is the group's name, ex. "Bandidos". The center patch is the club's logo. The bottom rocker is the area (city/state/etc.) they claim. The H.O.G. series of patches do not constitute 3 piece "colors". Our "top rocker" you normally see is the Dealership/Chapter name/sometimes location. The center patch is normally one of the H.O.G. patch options you can purchase. We do not claim territory by using a bottom rocker. It is, however, OK if you have a road name in the place of that bottom rocker. Road name is like a pilot's call sign. This was recognized and acknowledged by all parties at the National CoC.

Places you have been, events you have attended, positions you had or are holding in a chapter, patches signifying military service, a "funny" or "personal" patch, you name it, are all seen on various vests. There is no right or wrong. This is unlike most 1% clubs as they have specific patches that go on specific places of their vests. 1% MC patches are also normally club owned. Probably best to avoid red and yellow themed patches as they may be considered disrespectful to the Bandidos (our local 1% club). The big four 1% MCs here

in the US that you might come into contact with are the Hells Angels, the Pagans, the Outlaws, and the Bandidos. If you travel in southern CA or in Mexico, the Vagos are another MC to be aware of. I throw this in, as we have folks attend rallies such as Sturgis, Laconia, Daytona, etc…and you may encounter members of one or more of these MCs. Treat them with courtesy and respect and it is routinely returned.

If you have any questions on this topic or any other Druid Dribble topic, feel free to bend my ear. Be safe while riding and remember, we ride to have fun. That is the total focus.
Regards, F2