

RIDING AROUND

BY JERRY SMITH

PHOTOGRAPHY BY EDDIE GREEN

This Butt's For You

BILL MAYER SADDLES.

The first thing Bill Mayer III, who goes by Rocky, wants you to know about his company is that it makes motorcycle saddles, not seats. "The difference is in the firmness and the positioning," he explains. "It's a throwback to the old days when a saddle was something you could ride in all day." It might seem like a fine distinction, but Rocky's list of satisfied clients, which includes weekend tourers, Iron Butt Rally riders, and just about every type of rider in between, are not inclined to argue the point.

Nor is Rocky the first to make the connection between a motorcycle seat and the cowpoke's saddle. His father, Bill Mayer, Jr., began building custom seats in 1971. "He was a rider all his life," Rocky says, "and he knew the human butt is not shaped the way they shape motorcycle seats." So, calling on his background in engineering and the furniture manufacturing industry, Bill developed a shape that looked to him what a motorcycle seat should look like. "But at the time there wasn't any foam that could take the right shape and be self-supporting. So he engineered and developed a spring mechanism that he sunk into the foam, and that was the first Mayer Day-Long Saddle."

Bill Mayer's revolutionary new saddle design made it possible to ride longer, and in more comfort, than had been previously possible. Day-Long saddles took on a semi-legendary status and became a sort of secret handshake among those riders who clocked serious miles. Eventually, after 14 years in the business, Bill's accountant, Don Russell, bought him out. The new company still builds the same saddles, now under the name Russell Day-Long.

Bill Mayer signed a 10-year non-competition agreement as part of the sale, but even though he was out of the motorcycle saddle business, people still kept coming up to him at rallies to ask when he was going to get back into it. So in the early '90s, when he was in his 60s, Bill—who Rocky described as "still a perfectionist, one-at-a-time kind of guy"—opened Bill Mayer Saddles.



Mayer saddles' unconventional shape reflects years and miles of seat-of-the-pants research. Each seat is tailored to the rider's size and weight, and if it's not right the first time, Mayer will make it right.