



The WLA model was the workhorse of military motorcycles during World War II. Harley-Davidson produced more than 90,000 WLA's for the war effort.



Photo courtesy Harley-Davidson Motor Company Archives. Copyright H-D

Two Wheels Serving America

Since WWII, Harley-Davidson has treated U.S. service members especially well. The company still does.

By Leslie Rigoulot

Harley. You don't even have to use the full name: Harley-Davidson Motor Company. Just Harley will be enough to get the adrenaline going for motorcycle enthusiasts. And let's face the reality that a lot of military folks are adrenaline junkies or they wouldn't be jumping out of airplanes, blowing stuff up, going on daily patrols or riding fast, loud motorcycles. On the one hand the military has one of the sweetest deals when it comes to buying Harleys and Buells and on the other hand is the concern for safety.

As Army Lt. General Rick Lynch, commander of the 3rd Corps and Fort Hood, Texas said when he organized a 60-mile ride in

2008 to emphasize motorcycle safety, "it is ridiculous to have survived the fields of battle and combat and come home and die on the highways and byways of Central Texas."

But Harleys earned their stripes a long time ago. After WWII two young combat veterans formed a company so that military people serving overseas could get a great deal on an American made car or motorcycle upon their return. Instead of hassling with trying to get settled in and get transportation, the deal would already be done and you would just pick up your ride at a local dealership.

The Overseas Military Sales Group (OMSG) was founded out of



necessity since returning soldiers didn't have a residence and dealers wouldn't sell to them. But it has become the largest retailer to military personnel because it continues to offer great deals. No hassle pricing is backed with a 100 percent price protection and a lowest price guarantee. If you get a bona fide lower price on the same vehicle with same options for same delivery date from a dealer in the US, the Military Advantage Program will pay the difference. And you get up to two weeks after delivery to file your claim.

If you are assigned overseas on active duty in any branch of the military including the National Guard and Reserves, you are eligible to get the special deal on Harleys and Buell provided you have been overseas for 30 days or more. You need a copy of your orders to prove it. And you have to place your order before you head back to the continental US. If you want to order it now but know you won't be able to get it until next year, you can still order it at a fixed forecasted price and get next year's model and be protected from any price increases. You can even custom order colors and options.

Buell may not be as well known as Harley or have the mystique of Harley but they are a subsidiary of Harley-Davidson.

Sure, there aren't any iconic photos of Elvis Presley on a Buell but that is because the company started in 1982 when Erik Buell left H-D Research and Development to start his own bike company. Erik Buell designed the bikes for Formula 1 racing and in 1987 released the Battle Twin (RR1000) at 395 pounds with half of that being engine. By comparison, the Harley-Davidson Sportster 1200 is 497 pounds, the Sportster 883 is 550 pounds and the ever popular Fat Boy is 672 pounds. In 2007, Buell released the 1125R, breaking free of the air-cooled technology of Harley-Davidson. The new V-Twin motor designed by Rotax features innovative liquid cooling. But don't think the bikes are in competition with each other. Harley bought the majority of Buell back in 1998 but didn't interfere with the path of research while lending a hand in marketing.

The Overseas Military Sales Group AKA Exchange New Car Sales was looking for new ways to reach service members. The showroom at the NEX or AAFES wasn't enough anymore. Online marketing and digital kiosks were implemented to work in conjunction with face-to-face sales.

That is where the safety issue comes into play. More military personnel are buying bikes but not necessarily getting the



Harley-Davidson riders enjoy cruising a mountain pass during the Road Candy Tour of Harley Owner's Group (H.O.G.)

needed training. In September of 2008, a Fort Rucker, Alabama soldier died when he lost control of his new motorcycle in a curve. Although wearing a helmet, it didn't help when he was ejected off the bike and hit a light pole. He hadn't attended any motorcycle safety courses and didn't have a motorcycle-class license.


According to the American Forces Press Service, he had been pulled over by a local police officer ten minutes prior to the accident traveling 84 mph in a 55 mph zone.

A series of accidents led the Army to introduce Warrior Adventure Quest as a means of helping soldiers readjust to a 'new normal' after the high-paced combat experience. The program began in 2008 with outdoor activities for returning units such as whitewater rafting, paintball and mountain biking. Training and Doctrine Command officials said it costs the Army \$54,700 to train a basic combat arms soldier, and as much as \$67,000 for other military occupational specialties. Since there's no way to put a dollar value on a life, determining a return on investment is impossible. However, the average cost per person to participate in Warrior Adventure Quest is only \$86 – less than it costs to fill the fuel tank of a Humvee.

Whether or not a unit participates, the Exchange New Car Sales sponsors the Cycle Safe Program, an instructional course on the principles of safe riding, which is incorporated under its Military Riders Academy. In addition, you can get up to a \$200 reimbursement of the motorcycle training course fee at an accredited basic rider's course taken within 6 months before or after deployment, if you buy through the Exchange New Car Sales. You can take the three- or five-day course, which entitles you to a discount on motorcycle insurance from most insurers.

And another cool thing, if you buy through them and are deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan, they will extend your warranty for the entire time. And if your orders change after you have ordered your bike, it will be held at no additional charge.

Adrenaline isn't a bad thing. It is very useful in combat situations and fun when you aren't. Realizing that troops get accustomed to a certain level of risk-taking is essential to keeping them alive on the battlefield and at home.

To find out more about the Exchange New Car Sales Harley/Buell overseas buying program or the safety programs sponsored by ENCS, visit www.encs.com. 

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