

Published on Thursday, September 15, 2005

 [Printable Version](#)

Cyclists gather in memory of fallen rider
By ROSS COURTNEY
YAKIMA HERALD-REPUBLIC

SUNNYSIDE — Look out for motorcycles is the theme of this Saturday's Char Smith Memorial motorcycle ride and gathering.

The 68-year-old Mattawa woman was killed this spring after the motorcycle she was riding on was struck by a pickup near her home.

"Just pay attention when you're driving," says Ron Smith, her husband. "The 'I didn't see them' to me just doesn't wash. It tells me they weren't really looking."

The Smiths were headed to a Spokane motorcycle rally on May 13 when, shortly after leaving their Desert Aire home, a Ford pickup pulled onto State Route 243 and crashed into their orange 2003 Honda Gold Wing 1800 motorcycle.

Char died about four hours after the accident. At the hospital, doctors were forced to amputate Ron's left leg. He also suffered a punctured lung, broken ribs and broken vertebrae.

The driver, from Spokane, was ticketed for not yielding the right of way, although the Smith family is trying to convince the Grant County prosecutor to press for more serious charges, such as vehicular homicide. An investigation by the Washington State Patrol indicated no drugs or alcohol were involved.

At the time, Ron Smith was director of the Yakima Valley Wings, a club made up of primarily Honda Goldwing touring bike riders, which had a ride scheduled in Sunnyside the next weekend.

It was rescheduled for this Saturday.

Ron is still recovering at his Desert Aire home and wears a prosthetic leg. He will attend Saturday's event, but will not ride. He says he hopes to one day buy a new Goldwing and have it converted into a three-wheeled vehicle.

More than 200 bikes are expected at Saturday's 100-mile run, double the usual turnout, says his daughter-in-law, Melodie Smith of Grandview.

Ron says Char would be pleased to hear it. In fact, she would probably join the fun.

"She loved to bike," Ron says.

If you go ...

* The memorial ride begins at 8:30 a.m. at the Sunnyside Community Center. A memorial service for Char Smith will be at 4 p.m. when the riders return to Sunnyside. For more information, visit www.yakimavalleywings.com, or call Melodie Smith at 840-4160.