

**D**epicted here is a beast of myth and legend— as fabled and elusive as Sasquatch or the Loch Ness Monster, and, evidently to some segments of society, twice as scary. So scary that its merest glimpse can inspire terror and reduce otherwise reasonable people to gibbering incoherence as they are forced to rely upon their most basic instincts. Unfortunately, this has nothing to do with Sharon Stone misplacing her undies or anything else of a sexual nature. Instead it has everything to do with fear and the old fight or flight response.

To many bikers it seems that Harley-Davidson, after having blossomed from a struggling company that produced "motorcycles by the people, for the people," into a major league corporate entity, isn't about to fight over anything if there isn't the promise of a buck involved. Steamrolling independent shops over the use of the word *hog* and other so-called trademark infringements is one thing; taking a stand based upon principle is quite another. Where's the percentage in that?

Back in issue #132 we carried the news of Harley-Davidson's decision to "eliminate" the use of the Confederate flag in conjunction with its products ("Panty-wearing PC pansies at Harley punk out") based upon a single complaint from "a civil rights activist." (*Iron Horse* is indebted to Charlie Clark of Bowling Green, Kentucky who first alerted us to the new H-D policy last November. Charlie sent us a clipping from a Macon, Georgia newspaper that carried a letter from John Wayne Dobson complaining of Harley's actions.) Currently, the Harley-Davidson corporation is high-tailing it away from anything to do with the rebel flag just as fast as its pudgy little legs can carry it. It would be too kind to characterize Harley's position on the rebel flag issue as "back pedalling"— a full blown wind sprint for the hills would be more like it.

It wasn't always that way. At one time, nearly twenty years ago, Harley produced a line of "Confederate Edition" motorcycles— Sportsters, Super Glides, and Electra Glides. I had always heard of these models, but had never actually seen one and assumed they were similar to the garish Bicentennial bikes produced for the nation's 200th birthday in 1976. For some time up into the early '80s, the Confederate Edition paint decals were still available in Harley parts catalogs. The irony of H-D producing such machines was mentioned in IH #132.

Shortly after that issue went to press in early December, I received a phone call regarding Harley and the Southern

# REBEL

## 1977 CONFEDERATE EDITION



Cross. The voice on the other end of the line was distinctly southern and distinctly pissed. It was a biker from Virginia named Steve Edmondson who was angry over the disrespect shown by Harley-Davidson towards the rebel flag. During our conversation he revealed that he owned an original

condition Confederate Super Glide. At last— one of the beasts in captivity!

I sent him a copy of #132, and over the course of a few phone calls we've had since December, I found out more about Steve and his rebel Harley. He's owned the Super Glide for five years now, after having purchased it from its

# SOUL

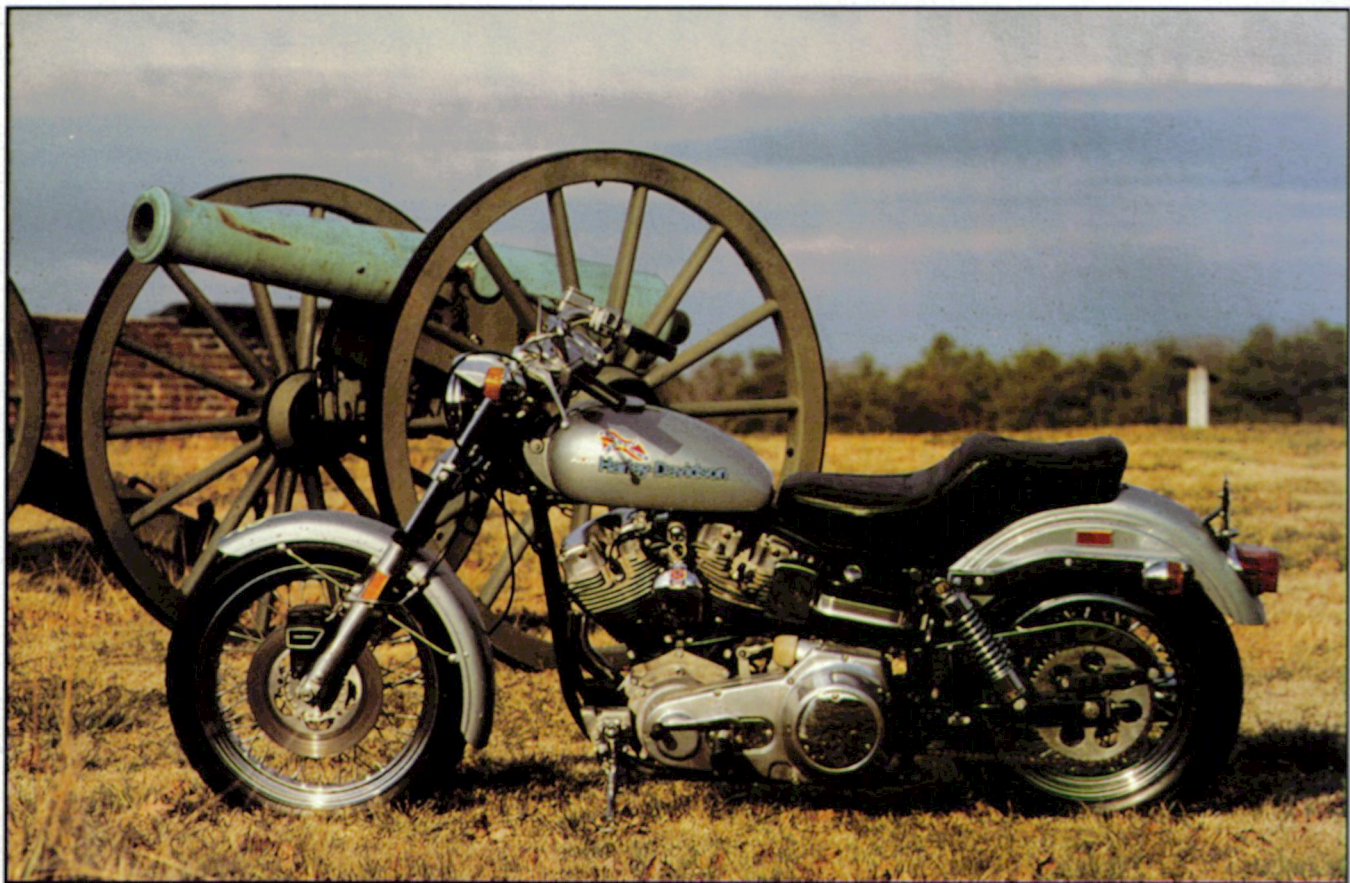
## ON FXE SUPER GLIDE



second owner in South Boston, VA. Steve had been intrigued by rumors of the Confederate Edition Harleys after having seen one of the flag decals in a parts book. Over the years he tried to come up with information about the bikes, but it proved difficult. "I used to walk around at swap meets with a t-



shirt I made up that said, 'Wanted: Any parts or info related to Confederate Edition Harleys.' People would come up and say, 'What the hell you talkin' 'bout?' Most people thought it was bull-shit, and it's hard to convince them if you don't have any proof and they're drunk." It got to the point where Steve



made a Xerox copy of the decal in the H-D parts book which showed its very own Harley part number. That quieted the skeptics but didn't turn up any concrete info. It wasn't until he spied this Confederate FXE for sale in a local motorcycle shopper that he confirmed the rebel hog's existence for himself. He snapped the bike up and later, also scored a Confederate Edition Sportster.

Steve kept up his research on the bikes, advertising in *Hemmings Motor News* and writing letters to Harley-Davidson. "Even they couldn't help me," he said. "The closest they could come was that there were about 600 Super Glides and 600 Sportsters built as Confederate Editions." Eventually Steve was put in touch with Gene Perryman, a Harley-Davidson archivist. "Gene is the ace," said Steve. "He,

more than anyone, knows the story behind these bikes." Even that seems to be sketchy at best. However, Gene did manage to supply Steve with more accurate production numbers which he listed as 228 FXEs, 44 FLHs, 299 XLs, 15 XLTs and 45 XLCHs. These figures were recently published in *Old Bike Journal* (Feb. '95) which contacted Steve for an article they featured on a Confederate Super Glide that turned up in California.

I asked Steve if he'd ever seen any factory brochures or promotional literature for the models. "A fella in Oregon described one over the phone to me—it showed a girl wearing a cowboy hat with a Confederate flag on it standing next to Sportster. That's about it, though." When asked if the Confederate Edition Harleys were only marketed in the Deep South as a part of some type of regional promotion, Steve was quick to point out that he's received information from the second owner of a Confederate Electra Glide in Maine who said that the original owner did indeed purchase the bike in that state. "I've also got photocopies of a couple of original bills of sale from Illinois," he added, "so the Confederate Harleys were definitely marketed outside of the south. Yankees were sellin' 'em—everyone was. I know that one bike even went to the Netherlands!"



## The multi-faceted flags of Dixie

The Confederate States of America had three different national flags that represented the collective sovereign states of the Confederacy. The Confederate battle flag, or Southern Cross, was *never* one of them. The reasons for changing the Confederate national flag so many times makes for an interesting and enlightening story.

The first of the three was the traditional "Stars and Bars," a name frequently misused when referring to the Confederate battle flag that came a little later in the Civil War. The Stars and Bars looked somewhat like the Texas State flag except it had more stars in the field; it had two horizontal broad red stripes separated by an equally wide white stripe and initially seven white stars in a blue field that extended to the top of the lower red stripe. The Stars and Bars was adopted as the official flag of the CSA by the Confederate government on 4 March 1861, a little over a month before they opened fire on Fort Sumter. The problems started quickly when the Stars and Bars was shaken out on the battlefield for the first time; it was too easily confused with the Federal Stars and Stripes of the Union forces in the smoke of Civil War era blackpowder rifled muskets and cannon. General Pierre G.T. Beauregard designed a military banner after the first battle of Manassas (first Bull Run to the Union) on 21 July 1861 to give Confederate units and soldiers a distinctive symbol to cling to. The X shaped design of the Saint Andrew's cross helped the Rebel battle flag stand out in the terror of close combat. No description of the Dixie Cross is needed for any American that can draw a breath.

The Stars and Bars and the Cross of Saint Andrews battle flag flew side by side for most of the Civil War: the first representing the Confederacy and all it stood for and against, and the second standing as the standard of the men that stared into the eyes of death for their leaders and fellow soldiers. Reduced to the hair, teeth and eyeball, hand to gland level of combat, no values survive but those related to personal influence, not letting your buddies down, and ordinary extraordinary bravery. The Southern Cross appealed to the hearts of the men in gray, not their minds. Any other "meaning" is the product of present day thought that was impossible in the shock of muzzle to muzzle warfare during the Civil War. (Watch the movies "Glory" or "Gettysburg" and ask yourself, "Where are the ideology, the statement, the social and economic and political causes, the racism— or the lack of it— when the bullets and shot and shell start to fly?" You're right; it is blown away by the winds of war— in the context of the heat of the moment for which it was intentionally designed, the Confederate battle flag meant only three things: We live, We can, Follow me. To death or glory. Any other attribution is misattributed— for reasons having nothing to do with war, military

virtue and courage, and United States history. Or tolerance in America today.)

Because southern political leaders felt that the presence of two "Confederate" flags in battle subordinated the political statement and identity of the National Stars and Bars to the personal influences of the Rebel battle flag, they tried to wrap up the agenda of the first with the glory of the second. As a nation the CSA was not doing very well: poor economic planning, lack of foreign recognition, lousy strategic military forethought, and an inability to agree on much of anything as a corporate political body. But as a fighting force, the Confederate army struck fear into the souls of northern soldiers and civilians alike. For good reason.

As a result, the Stars and Bars was replaced on 1 May 1863 by a new "National Flag" that attempted to incorporate the role of the battle flag too so it could stand by itself on the battlefield. The fact that the second flag also fell short is testimony to the affectio of Johnny Reb for the Southern Cross alone and validation of its sole function as the military— and only the military— standard of the Confederate fighting man. The national flag was all white with a reduced size battle flag in the upper corner as a distinctive field. And no one remembers it.

The third and last Confederate flag was created on 4 March 1865, a month before Lee's surrender of the army of Northern Virginia at Appomattox courthouse. Ironically, a wide vertical red stripe was added to the outer edge of the national flag of 1863 so it would not be all white when it was furled or hung limply on its staff and appear to be a token of defeat and surrender. And guess which flag led Lee's troops as they slowly and sadly marched past Joshua Chamberlain's brigades for the highest honor soldiers in blue could pay those in gray? The battle flag. The same one that stands for pride, spirit, and individualism in Americans of all kinds today. An excellent history of the Civil War— and its cultural, political, racial, economic, and military aspects— can be found in James McPherson's very readable *Battle Cry of Freedom*. The issue of slavery is squarely dealt with by the author in its critical primary role in helping cause the war, as it should be. And it is over. There is no point in refighting past battles; there are enough new ones to go around. The Confederate battle flag is not one of them, any more than depreciating Malcolm X or Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. We are all Americans because of the Civil War, not in spite of it. Peace... from a warrior. ☩

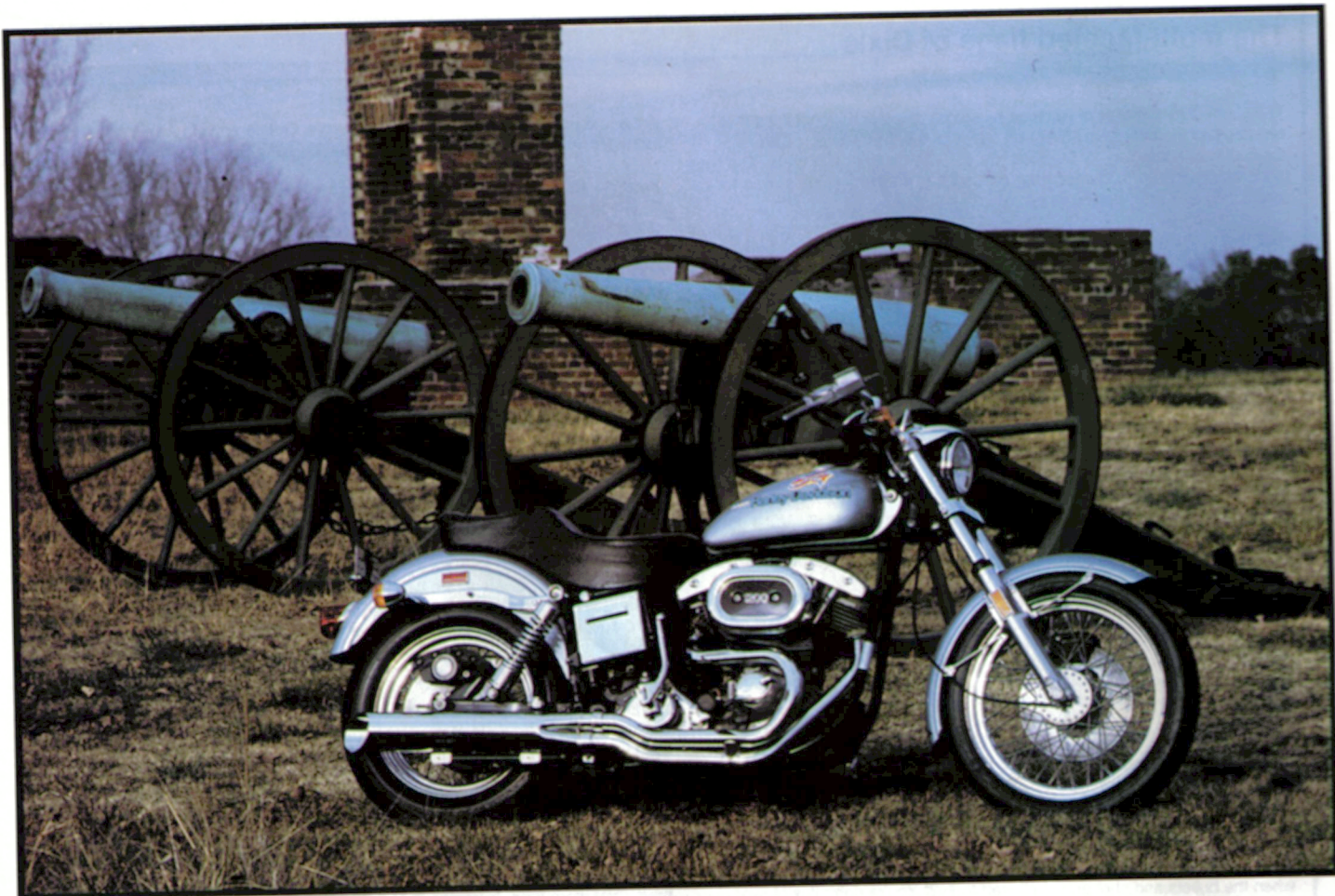
— Noyes Livingston

Steve announced in *Old Bike Journal* that he was starting a national registry for owners of Confederate Editions. Interested parties should contact him at (804) 541-4040. He said he's gotten about fifteen responses so far, from all over the country. "They were mostly Sportsters," he said, "plus the dresser from Maine."

I was curious as to why Steve originally contacted the Horse back in December, and whether he'd gotten in touch with any other magazines regarding the rebel flag controversy. He prefaced his answer with a disclaimer: "Well, not to get into any ass kissin', but ya'll are the only bike magazine that tells it like it is. I figured if anybody would get the story out it'd be *Iron Horse*." Aside from the Horse, he wrote a letter to a local motorcycle newspaper. Typically *Old Bike Journal* didn't deal with the flag issue, but then what can you expect from Yankees? At least the mag featured a decent profile of the bike. The Confederate Edition Super Glide was a stock FXE with

a special paint scheme and a simple decal package. A rebel flag appeared on each side of the gas tank above the H-D logo. On the front fender was a golden sleeve braid based upon a CSA uniform and the words "Confederate





States of America." All Confederate Editions were painted a cool shade of Ice Blue Metallic. The model in *Old Bike Journal* has black Morris mag wheels, black lower fork legs and fork brace. Steve rebel hog is plainer with spoked wheels and stock spec forks.

Steve was born and raised in southern Virginia. On the tech sheet he list-

ed his home as Prince George, VA., CSA. He lives on Ruffin Road, named for Edmund Ruffin who fired the first shot of the Civil War on Fort Sumpter. His Doberman, Mosby (named for a Confederate general), is trained to attack on the word "yankee." You might expect Steve to have some strong feelings on Harley's decision to ban the

rebel flag from their product line.

"I feel that Harley-Davidson has disrespected a great symbol of southern pride and heritage. I wrote them a letter questioning their position on the matter and included over 75 signatures from local Harley riders who disagreed with their decision. What I got back from them was a form letter that said they were basically taking a neutral stance on the subject.

"How can they claim that? They've made a decision to eliminate the symbol, and they call that a 'neutral stance'? Great time of the day! You're not neutral any more when you do that. It'd be different if they'd never used the symbol, but by eliminating it Harley is very definitely taking a stance—against the flag and all that it stands for."

Harley's problem is that it has allowed others to define for them just what the Confederate battle flag represents. And we're not just speaking of some nameless "civil rights activist." Harley has allowed every racist who ever used the Confederate battle flag to dictate the terms of the debate. In doing so Harley is in great danger of alienating a whole new segment of the population, not just bikers. By accepting the racist view of the rebel flag and validating it as a part

