

Jim Cozzarin: Editor on a Motorcycle

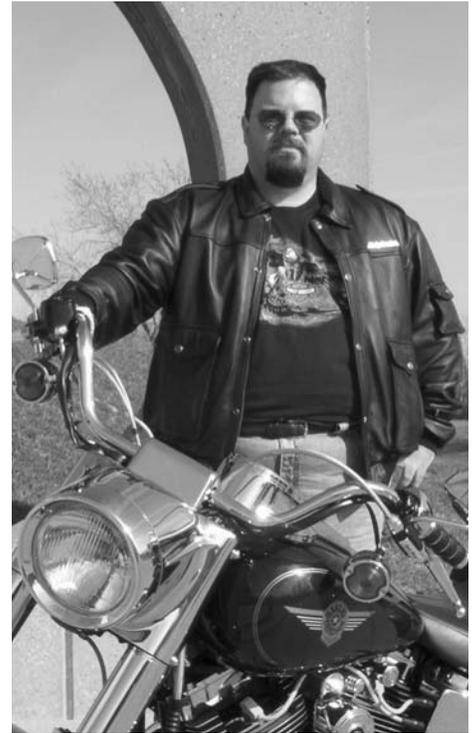
At his office, Jim (James) Cozzarin is a hard-working editor, diligently reading, fact-checking, editing, and rereading each of the dozens of manuscripts that come across his desk each week. But at the end of the day, when colleagues are rushing to their vehicles for the journey home, Cozzarin strides quietly to a seemingly empty parking spot between two cars. With a loud growl and a flash of light that can cause passersby to jump in surprise, Cozzarin marks the end of another day and roars out from between the cars. Flying directly in the face of any and all stereotypes, Cozzarin's chosen form of transportation is a motorcycle.

"I try to ride the bike to work every day when I can, when the weather's good", he said.

Cozzarin began riding in the early 1980s when he caught the bug from friends in college. "It first got my interest because it was just something a little bit different", he said, "so I thought I'd pick one up and see what all the fuss was about. That was just for a while, and I enjoyed it." That episode, although short-lived, began an interest in Cozzarin's life that would not end.

"I was going to school fairly heavy there and didn't have time to ride or get out. There was nowhere in school to store [my motorcycle], so I was winding up riding it a couple of weeks every summer only", he said. A motorcycle requires a lot of attention if the owner wants to keep it running smoothly. Just as in a car, the moving parts in a motorcycle's engine must be kept lubricated to run smoothly; otherwise, vital pieces begin to deteriorate. Cozzarin attended school almost year-round and had to leave his bike back home, so he couldn't perform the upkeep of the bike as regularly as he should. "So I packed it in while finishing up at college", he said.

Cozzarin went to school at Kent State University in Kent, Ohio, where he received a BS in education. The degree track required him to choose a major and minor discipline, so Cozzarin chose his two passions: an English major and a general-science minor—"which means I know just enough about four different



sciences to mess kids up real well, but I can spell almost anything", said Cozzarin. After graduating, Cozzarin did what many college graduates only hope to do someday: he found a job in which he could actually use his degree.

"I was a junior-high English teacher for a few years at a parochial school in Euclid, Ohio", said Cozzarin. "At the same time I was doing that, I was teaching nights at the high-school level at a private high school in Wickliffe, Ohio. I was teaching 8th-, 10th-, and 12th-grade English there in the evenings." However, even teachers can suffer burnout and therefore make minor mistakes after a few years. "At one point, because of poor planning, I had 100 term papers [to grade] on the same weekend. After that I decided that might not be the career path for me after all", said Cozzarin. "Then I took my love of science and my love of English and wrapped them together into a career in publishing."

Fifteen years later, Cozzarin is a senior copyeditor and staff writer for Pro ED Communications, Inc, a health-science communications company specializing in the marketing needs of its pharmaceutical

Other Than Editing

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clients, in Beachwood, Ohio. “I think I’ve really found my niche, too”, said Cozzarin, “because it gives me not only the day-to-day challenge of editing copy from up to 30 authors a month, but also the knowledge of the science and being able to substantively contribute to the final piece. It’s quite a diverse field; one day I can be working on a medical device for orthopedic surgery, and the next day I’ll be working on a cardiac drug, and the next day I’ll be working on something that’s going to cure cancer in some subset of patients.”

There is a saying that once you’ve ridden a motorcycle the thrill never leaves you. “There’s nothing like getting your wheels out on the road and taking off. It’s a phenomenal feeling”, said Cozzarin. About 2 years ago, he started getting interested in riding again. After being in the workforce for several years, Cozzarin was in a better financial position than in college and made a beeline to Harley-Davidson. His first choice was a 1990 Harley-Davidson XL883 Sportster. “I just [sat] on the bike and headed out, and I was hooked. I can’t even imagine giving it up now.” Since he purchased that motorcycle, Cozzarin says he always tries to find time to ride in the evenings and on weekends. “It can be a little bit confining sitting at a desk 45 to 50 hours a week”, he said.

Both riding a motorcycle and finely editing a manuscript require an immense amount of concentration, what Cozzarin refers to as “living in the moment”. “When I’m editing a manuscript, I must have total immersion”, said Cozzarin. “My whole consciousness is focused on the work. Everything from the macro level—Is this organized correctly? Do I need another subhead in here to give readers a clue as to what’s coming up or where they’ve been?—all the way down to the micro level—Is this a dangling modifier? Is this an essential or nonessential appositive? And so on. Similarly, when riding a motorcycle . . . you have to be constantly

aware of your surroundings, what’s coming up behind you, cars passing you, dogs running out in the street. You have to be in the moment.

“What’s really interesting about [such focus] is that all the things that bother you on a day-to-day level just disappear. Bills you have to pay, a sick relative somewhere, whatever . . . it’s all gone. It allows you to have an almost Zen-like experience”, said Cozzarin. “That would be my parallel. When you really get into the work you’re doing, you can look up and it’s 2 or 3 o’clock in the afternoon, and ‘Where did the day go?’ You’ve been in the moment. There’s no consciousness left over for looking at the clock. . . . Really, the time does fly when you’re immersed in any activities you enjoy.”

Cozzarin certainly seems to enjoy riding his newest bike.

“I just picked up a 2001 Harley-Davidson FLSTF Fat Boy. It’s pretty much my dream bike”, said Cozzarin. “I’ve been looking to get into this one for a while now, and I finally found one . . . that had the right after-market modifications to it.

“It has a Jade Sunglow paint job, which was a fairly limited run for the Harley Fat Boys. The paint actually changes colors as you walk around the bike. It goes from almost a metallic British racing green down to a midnight blue. And then at night it’s almost completely black. . . . And the previous owner had tricked it all out. It’s chromed out; it’s got a large chromed nacelle around the headlamp, which gives it a very nice streamlined look. The front forks are like tree trunks, just massive. The tires are much wider than you get on the other models and give you more ride stability. It’s just phenomenal; it’s the bike I wanted. And at 1450 cc it was more than enough power to get me where I want to go and back.”

JOSHUA HARRIS *prepared this profile while a Science Editor intern.*