

Russian bike featuring sidecar selling in Saskatoon

BY SCOTT LARSON, THE STARPHOENIX NOVEMBER 12, 2010



Ray Korpan, who was introduced to motorcycles in the 1960s, said the Ural bike has character and soul

Photograph by: Richard Marjan, The StarPhoenix, The StarPhoenix

Getting older has meant speeding up, not slowing down for Ray Korpan.

"I've always wanted to know what was on the other side of the fence," said Korpan, 62, who seems to be enjoying life as much now as ever.

A lifelong traveller and motorcycle enthusiast, Korpan's latest venture is Cossack Cycle.

Cossack sells Ural motorcycles, a unique Russian-made bike that comes with a sidecar.

"This bike is a conversation starter," said Korpan, who also co-owns Korpan Tractor.

All of the bikes have a 750-cc, 42-horsepower engine with a four-speed transmission. Other unique features, besides the side car, are two-wheel drive and a reverse gear.

"If you are interested in an adventure vehicle, I will sell it to you," Korpan said of the Ural. "They have character and a soul."

The Ural came about in 1941 to supply the Russian Red Army with combat motorcycles using technology obtained from the Germans. The bikes were made in Irbit, Siberia, as they still are today.

Bikes were produced for civilian use in the 1950s and came to North America in 1993.

Styles range from Tourist to Retro to Gear-Up 2WD and Patrol 2WD.

In the spring this year, Korpan received an email from a friend with a photo of a Ural bike complete with the sidecar.

"I'd seen them in Vietnam," he said.

TASTE OF ADVENTURE

Korpan did some research and in September went to Linz, Austria, for the annual meeting of Ural distributors.

"I met all these Ural dealers from France, Portugal, Spain and Italy," he said.

After testing the Ural he knew he had to bring it to the Prairies.

"I think you have to have a particular, undefined personality (to ride a Ural)," Korpan said, laughing. "Adventurous, independent."

Korpan fits into the adventurous category.

He got his first motorcycle in the early 1960s, "a black Honda S90."

Marriage, kids and work curtailed riding for a few years, but "as the kids got older, motorcycles came back into my life," he said.

Ray and his brother Bob are in the midst of handing over Korpan Tractor to the third generation of Korpans. The company, which was started by their father in 1965, sells, rents and services all types of machines related to earthmoving.

For Ray, it means more time to travel and ride.

Korpan has seen some phenomenal sights atop a motorcycle, from Machu Picchu in Peru to the green hills of Vietnam to trekking across Europe.

"It is a sense of smell you get (riding on a bike)," he said. "It is very tactile. And the education you get on the road is something you can't learn in a classroom."

Cossack Cycle is located within Korpan Tractor, with hours from 3 p.m. to 8 p.m. or by appointment. Call 242-2040 to set up an appointment. People can buy one of the bikes he has on hand or order a particular model and colour.

Korpan has also built a service garage at another location, complete with his own service technician.

"It's all about having fun," Korpan said of the Ural.

"I'm selling a sense of adventure. The karma is good coming off these bikes."

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