

## Excerpt – Perceptions of Power

The stories in Chapter 2, Perceptions of Power, reflect how the environment in which we're raised can affect our perception of power and our personal capabilities. The education we receive during this time will do one of two things: it will nourish us and encourage us to be who we are with full knowledge and access our wild nature, or our nature will be covered over to varying degrees. When that happens, we will have to call on our warrior selves to find and release it again. These women reflect both perspectives — and what happens when we look at things differently.

Sgt. Lise Grenier is a prime example of that.

Occupation: provincial motorcycle coordinator, Ontario Provincial Police president, Ontario Association of Police Motorcycle Instructors; ride master, OPP Golden Helmets Motorcycle Precision Riding Team

Location: Orillia, Ontario

Age: 43

Riding Discipline: street

Began Riding: 1992

*Lise is becoming legendary as she has progressed steadily through the ranks of the motorcycling division of the Ontario Provincial Police.*

*Twenty-one years ago, when she started her career, you would have been hard pressed to find two more solidly male bastions than the police force and motorcycling. Lise never considered she couldn't do either. She was raised with traditional values and believed she could do anything she set her mind to.*

*She can ride circles around just about anyone on her big police Harley, and she is an extraordinary leader and mentor to an ever widening circle of protégées.*

I joined the OPP (Ontario Provincial Police) Force in 1988 and was posted at the Port Credit Detachment near Toronto — totally out of my element. I was the youngest of eight, born and raised on a farm near Sturgeon Falls, a small town in northern Ontario, so it was a bit of a culture shock. I had to mature fairly quickly and develop confidence to deal with whatever came up.

In 1992, the OPP offered a three-week motorcycle course. That sounded pretty cool. On your first day, you had to pick up this eight hundred and fifty pound Harley-Davidson Police Special, and thank God they taught some techniques for that. We took those motorcycles through every road surface possible, grass, sand, asphalt and bushes: everywhere that could come up during enforcement.

By the time I graduated, I was bruised in every way possible, but I loved it. If it's raining or if it's snowing, you don't want to be out there in some ways, but I still say the worst day on a motorcycle is better than the best day in a car.

The course itself boosted my confidence because it was all male instructors and I was the only woman student. Deep inside I was thinking, "I'm going to show them I can do this job." In 1988, some men didn't think it was a job for women. Now it's different.

Getting out there and working in what I was trained to do made a big difference in thinking with both the male officers and me.

In 1997 I joined the OPP Golden Helmets Precision Riding Team and in 1999 I became an instructor. I actually came and taught all these people in the OPP how to ride! I had to show them first that I'm capable of doing this stuff and I can actually teach them how to do that. In a lot of cases, I'd have to get on the bike and start whipping through some cones and doing some tight turns just to prove it.

Later, I became heavily involved in the Ontario Association of Police Motorcycle Instructors and am now the president. We introduced the Great Lakes Police Training, four days every year for police officers on motorcycles from across Canada and the United States to improve their riding skills. We include a bit of a rodeo, ending with a friendly competition. I'm pretty pleased that this year, I came in fourth out of one hundred and twenty riders.

Last year I was promoted into a new position, Provincial Motorcycle Coordinator. I'm responsible for ensuring all the motorcycles have been properly equipped so the officers can do their jobs.

I'm the Ride Master for the twenty people on the Golden Helmets. I'll tell you they're the best bunch of guys to work with. The fact that I'm a woman just doesn't faze them whatsoever. I'm also in charge of the VIP escorts for any dignitaries coming into town: the Prime Minister and any Presidents. I've escorted the Pope, the Queen, Lady Diana and Prince Charles in 1991. I actually cared for the two boys, Prince William and Prince Harry, for ten days, doing things like taking them to McDonald's or swimming.

We deal with a lot with children, especially with the Golden Helmets performances. The kids can approach us and talk to us. We travel the province, sell regalia during our performances and donate the proceeds to a children's charity.

After a performance, the women and girls all line up at the "girl's" bike to meet me and congratulate me. I get that a lot and it's a really good feeling. I get silly comments, too, mostly from men, about special concessions because I am a woman, so it pleases me to tell them, guess what, I trained all these guys here.

Riding my own personal bike, a 1996 Electra Glide, is a completely different experience. When you're on a police bike, people are staring at you and not paying attention to the road and you have to be careful. You're scanning around you all the time — which you should do all the time anyway — but you're also looking for violations or you're looking for whatever call you're going to. But on your own bike, it's awesome. You get on it and you don't know where you're going and you go wherever you want.

It's awesome to see other women riders. I think there was a time when there weren't many women riding, but there really isn't anything you can't do, as long as you put your head, your heart and your passion into it. Then you can do anything.