

Kansas motorcycle rider revved up about next ride

By Brandy Nace
Emporia Gazette

EMPORIA (AP) — Roberta Seaman isn't your ordinary motorcycle rider — she races at speeds of 120 miles per hour and plans to race even faster this season with alterations she plans on making to her bike.

Seaman, who lives in rural Emporia, completed her first season last year in the All Harley Drag Racing Association circuit.

The new season will start in March. She got involved in racing because her husband, Julian, had been drag racing for years. He started in cars and then decided to race motorcycles.

"He's the one that got me into this. I would go to drag races when my husband was racing and watch him on his bike," Seaman said. "I had a lot of down time. I realized there's no speed limit.

"You can go as fast as you can go."

Seaman likes to race for the thrill of it, especially at the start of the

race.

"I mostly like the launch," she said. "When you are at the starting line you rev the bike up, dump the clutch and you just shoot out there like a rocket."

Seaman said there are a lot of other things she likes about the sport of motorcycle drag racing.

"The people that we race with are a lot of fun," she said.

"I look forward to seeing them next year. I've become pretty passionate about this sport. A lot of people don't get it."

Although most of the drag race competitors are men, the sport isn't exclusive.

When Seaman raced in Las Vegas and won every round, she raced against men, she said, and a woman won a national event.

"The guys look out for us, I think," Seaman said.

She described how the events work. The qualifying rounds are the first day. The riders are paired up and those who qualify go into the next day's competition.

"On Saturday morning you have

to qualify in order to get in on Sunday," she said.

This past season, Seaman was named the 2006 AHDRA Lady of the Year. Her peers in the racing circuit voted for her, she said.

"I had a lot of firsts last year and it's a pretty high honor," Seaman said.

"I didn't know I was going to get the award until a banquet."

Seaman also won the 2006 Western Division Champion in the super eliminator competition. She raced in an index class, and the racer who crossed the finish line closest to the index number wins. She also placed fifth overall in the nation this past season.

"That's pretty good for your first year," she said.

Seaman is looking forward to the new season, which starts on March 3 and ends on November 18.

"We just keep counting down the days until March 3," Seaman said.

Seaman would like to make at least one big change.

"I could really use a sponsor," she said.

Titanic re-enactors get a taste of the times

WICHITA (AP) — Don't clean your plate. Don't wear diamonds before sunset.

Don't speak to servants. And please, ladies and gentlemen, do not, under any circumstances, touch your face or your hair in public. To do so would be terribly uncouth.

Liza Gilbert had researched the customs and mannerisms of Edwardian England around 1912, when Titanic set sail on her maiden voyage.

On a recent Monday, she had to teach a couple dozen modern Americans how to act their parts.

When "Titanic: The Artifact Exhibition" opens at Exploration Place opened recently — and especially during a re-creation of the final meal aboard ship later this month — museum employees assumed the roles of Titanic passengers, from Capt. Edward John Smith to the unsinkable Molly Brown.

Gilbert, the museum's research specialist, was charged with assigning parts and helping the cast look and act authentic.

During an initial training session, she reviewed general behavior, including formal introductions, table manners and topics of conversation.

"Never ever talk about health or diseases," Gilbert said.

"It's something we do all the time these days, but back then it was considered very uncultured, very third-class."

Or, perhaps, very American. Of all the cultures in the world, Gilbert said, Americans have never been viewed as elegant, and this was especially true during the Victorian and Edwardian eras.

Aboard Titanic, Brits and Americans mingled, she said, even though social classes did not.

"If you are portraying an American," she told the group, "you can be a little brasher, a bit more undignified."

But still no belching or scratching yourselves, she warned. Even "uncouth" Americans had manners, and were far more prim and proper than people today.

After reviewing her immense list of dos and don'ts — always introduce a gentleman to a lady, never drain your glass in one or two gulps, never talk about religion — and going over basic table manners, Gilbert led participants through a mock dinner scene.

On the menu: large marshmallows, miniature chocolate chips and cups of juice.

"Please take a drink," Gilbert directed.

Like most of her tablemates, Joyce Gedraitis reached for her cup. "No!" Gilbert interrupted. "Remember: Blot, drink, blot."

In 1912, proper ladies wiped — nay, gently blotted — their mouths with their napkins both before and after taking a drink, Gilbert said.

They also sat up straight, removed their gloves by the fingertips, never opened their mouths too wide and never laid their silverware on their plates.

And don't give your food more than a passing glance, Gilbert directed.

To stare at one's food was considered impolite, and implied that the diner didn't trust that the food was safe to eat.

The cadre of rules soon overwhelmed most of the museum

“ Never ever talk about health or diseases . . . It's something we do all the time these days, but back then it was considered very uncultured, very third-class.”

Liza Gilbert, researcher on manners, customs

employees, who struggled to cut their marshmallows into tiny pieces, and to scoop their chocolate chips without using their fingers.

When Brenda Jones retrieved a dropped napkin and handed it to the woman across the table, Gilbert stopped her.

"No, no, no — never reach across the table," she said.

"You mean I have to get up and walk all the way around there to give it to her?" asked Jones, who will play Joseph Laroché, one of the only black passengers aboard Titanic.

"Yes," Gilbert answered.

"You'd better not drop anything, then," Jones said, laughing.

The Titanic cast and crew have several days to practice their parts before donning costumes and assuming their roles next week — and, thankfully, a few weeks to rehearse for the big dinner.

During the Jan. 26 event, visitors

at the captain's table will enjoy a four-course meal of salmon, beef, duckling, wine and port.

Those in third class will eat Irish stew after passing through an optional lice and teeth check. All will find out during the evening whether their characters survived the sinking.

Communications manager Christina Bluml knows that her character, fashion entrepreneur Lady Duff Gordon, survived the tragedy by procuring seats on Lifeboat 1 and bribing the crew not to rescue other passengers. Bringing the character to life, however, will take practice.

"We're all doing a lot of research, a lot of reading," Bluml said Monday.

"It's a challenge, but it's really fun, too."

Gilbert hopes the research and rehearsals will give visitors a more accurate look at what life was like



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Up on the roof



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

A crew from Roofmasters Roofing worked on the roof at the Developmental Services of Northwest Kansas building today. Heavy snow has caused structural problems for buildings around the county.

when Titanic sailed — and perhaps a better understanding of why the tragedy unfolded the way it did.

"It's so easy for us to say, 'How could this have happened? Why weren't more people rescued?' And the answer is, everything was so divided by class," she said.

"The only way to explain why the tragedy happened is to explain what the culture was like. And the only way to explain that is to show it."

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