

Life etc.

The Patriot-News Harrisburg, Pa.

TV

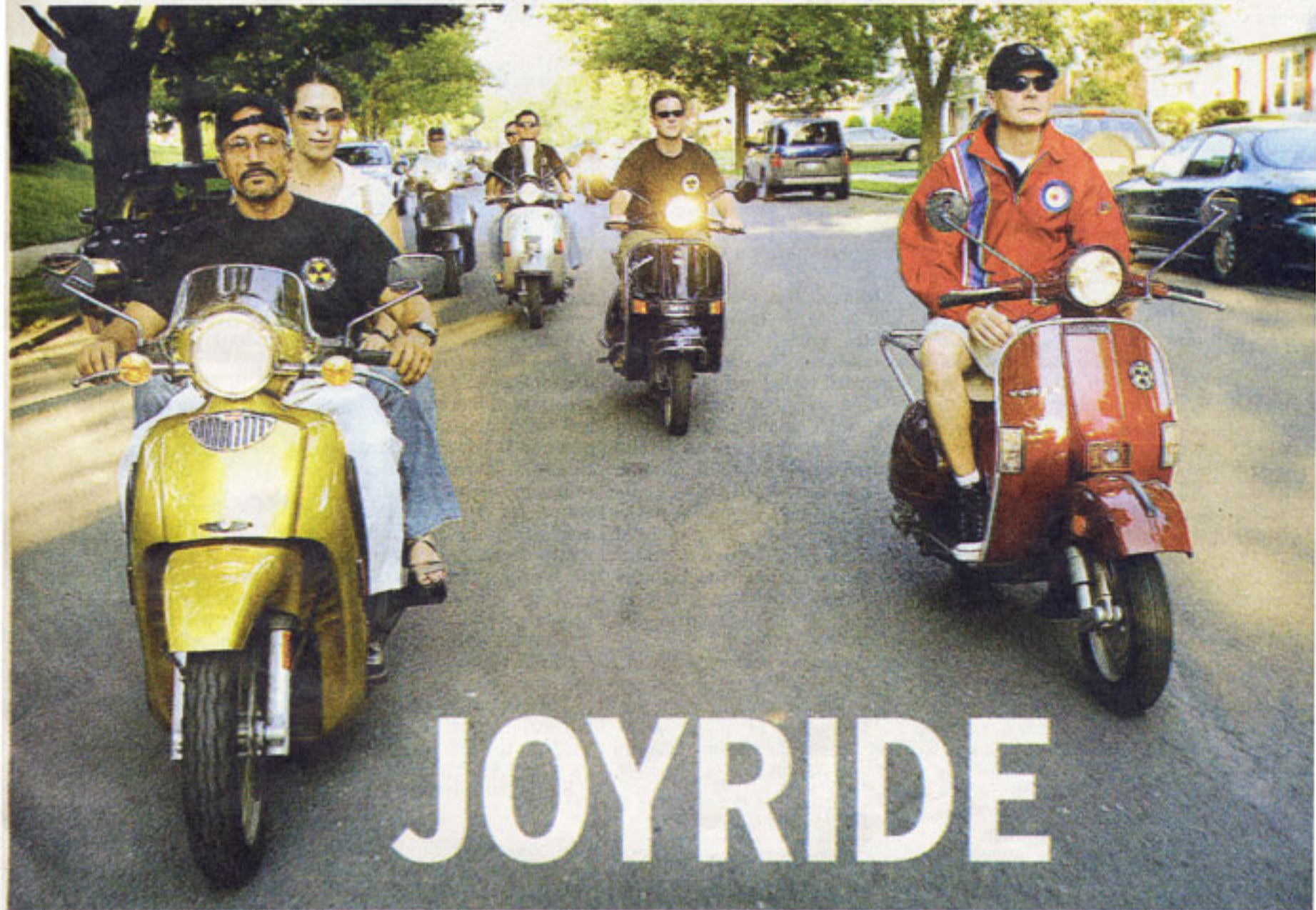
'The Closer'
closes its first
season tonight

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**"Without a doubt, I get better miles to the gallon than a car.
Plus my insurance has gone way down."**

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SUMMER '05



JOYRIDE

SEAN SIMMERS, The Patriot-News

Scooters replace gas costs with fun

BY KRISTEN LAUERMAN
Of The Patriot-News

In the swinging '60s, motorized scooters were a pop culture item with a European mystique that was analogous to freedom and exploration.

Now, 45 years later, there's a scooter resurgence. National sales, estimated at 86,000 last year, have doubled since 2000, according to the Motorcycle Industry Council.

While rising fuel costs are cited as a big reason for accelerating sales, Chris Cuomo, owner of Velocity Cycles in Mechanicsburg, points out that many of today's scooters are equipped with automatic transmissions and are far easier to operate than the scooters of the 1960s.

More powerful motors allow today's scooters to accommodate a trip to the beach and cross country travel, and to excel as commuter vehicles or for in-town trips. Some can even carry two people.

When Lucas Androwick, 20, of Gettys-

■ While a top-of-the-line scooter can run \$8,000, most cost between \$1,750 and \$5,000.

■ There are three categories of scooters, broken down by engine power — 50 cc (cubic centimeters), 250 cc and 600 cc.

■ The 50 cc engine is the only size for which the driver does not need a motorcycle license.



PAUL CHAPLIN, The Patriot-News

Denise Beachley says her Honda Metropolitan provides a fun and economical way to get around. Above, some members of the Three Mile Island Scooter Club, cruising Camp Hill, are, from left, Harry Borreli with Tara Maldonado, Jeremy Sutton and Svend Sheppard. The group meets Wednesday evenings at a coffee shop and then takes a ride.



SEAN SIMMERS, The Patriot-News

A scooter belonging to Roland Henry of Camp Hill proclaims his association with the Three Mile Island Scooter Club.

SCOOTERS: Fun ride picked for savings, too

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burg, could no longer afford to fill his Geo Metro with \$180 worth of gasoline every month, he bought a Honda Metropolitan scooter with a 50 cc engine.

"A lot of people told me it was stupid, at first," he says. "But I just moved into my first apartment, and I couldn't afford to do that unless I got rid of my car."

Although it only reaches a top speed of 40 mph, it's Androwick's only mode of transportation. "I can't take it on the turnpike. But I don't really need to go there anyway. If I did, I would just ask friends for a ride or rent a car."

Gary Laughlin, 56, of Hummelstown, is another scooter owner — he bought a Honda Reflex last July — who was motivated by the high cost of gasoline. "Without a doubt, I get better miles to the gallon than a car, plus my insurance has gone way down."

Laughlin, a high school teacher, rides his scooter to work and for errands. He's put 5,000 miles on it.

It's not only men buying into the scooter market.

After Denise Beachley's husband put the brake on her desire for a Harley, the 39-year-old Mechanicsburg resident bought a 50 cc Honda Metropolitan.

"Not needing a motorcycle license was a big plus," she says. "It's so much easier than getting in the car and a lot more fun. Also, I get about 80 miles to the gallon, which is much better than my SUV."

Beachley uses her scooter for errands around town. "Most people smile and stop me at red lights and say 'That is so cool. Where did you get it? How fast can you go?'"

She isn't the only woman in the family with a scooter — her three sisters also own models. "We're biker chicks," she says.

Jed Minaya, 56, of Mechanicsburg, purchased three scooters last summer and added another one this year.

Minaya agrees that a scooter makes sense when you look

at the cost. But for him, there's more to it than that. "You have a lot of fun wherever you're going."

Minaya, who began riding motorcycles in the 1960s when he couldn't afford gas for his car, now owns 71. "I got hooked. These things are fun, and there's a social angle to it."

Minaya is a member of the Three Mile Island Scooter Club, which meets every week for coffee before hitting the road for a joyride.

Last year, he purchased a Honda, Yamaha and a bright pink 50 cc model with "Hello Kitty" decals for \$300.

"I bought it as a spoof," he says. "When I showed it to the scooter club, they said I wasn't manly enough to ride it in the Mechanicsburg Halloween parade, but I proved them wrong. The young girls and moms really like it."

His most recent addition was a 1979 Vespa in homage to his Italian grandmother.

"I just didn't feel right owning three Japanese scooters and no Italian model," he says.