


personal charm. Her disarming smile and friendly approach help paint a happy face on the corporate structure that is Bayerische Motoren Werke.

Rupe's phrase "interacting with the guys" prompted the question what it is like for her, as a woman, to work in her present job. The short answer is - no problem. She finds that new colleagues may act a little surprised at a first meeting, but not for long. What matters is whether you can do your job well. If so, you are accepted like anybody else. Gender and job performance are completely uncoupled. "But maybe we (women) at BMW are a little bit spoiled. We are quite a few lady riders here and not considered such exotic creatures," is Rupe's explanation for this gender-neutral culture at BMW. Beyond this, Rupe has some interesting observations on the sociology of riding, where gender may matter more. She has organized and led tours as part of her work at BMW and says, "In my experience with a tour group it's more enjoyable if a few women are included because, if it's only guys, they can get a trifle competitive and forget to enjoy the ride. If there are a few girls around, everybody calms down and gets down to riding. But that does not mean that the riding is any slower."

When asked about what she plans to do next at BMW-Motorrad, Rupe responded, "I know what's in the pipeline, and I can tell you that this job will be quite interesting for some years to come." This reflects

her view that the segment of the market addressed by the G-series will continue to grow and be professionally exciting. Since the founding of the GS series 25 years ago, dual sport or enduro riding has been a mainstay of BMW. With the conviction of recent experience Rupe says, "This class is gaining momentum all over the world. If you look at BMW's model launches over the past few years, we have changed quite a lot and continue to change, to introduce innovative new models. It's fascinating to be a part of this change."

Changes there have been! The G-series had hardly appeared in showrooms when the first spy photos of the 450 cc

MX machine appeared. Then, in July, the purchase of Husqvarna was announced by BMW. This shows a clear, expanding commitment to lighter-weight motorcycles with a competitive, adventurous edge. It looks like Dorit Rupe will be in one of motorcycling's dream jobs for some time to come. 

*A motorcyclist since 1958, Bob Stokstad had to wait until 1994 to own his first BMW - a R100GS Bumblebee. In recent years he has enjoyed riding the R1200RT and K1200GT on European tours and combining that with interests in journalism and photography. He lives in Berkeley, California.*

