

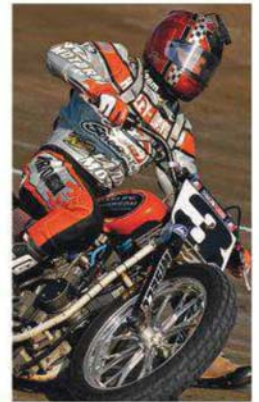
HARLEY SPECIAL ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

For People Who Love Harley-Davidsons

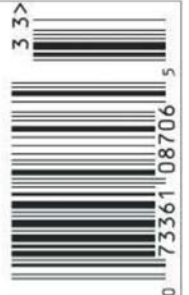
American Iron Special 2013
ON SALE UNTIL 12/31/13

American Glory

110 YEARS OF HARLEY HISTORY



AMag.com US \$12.95



Harley Owners Group

HOG celebrates its 30th anniversary

BY DON GOMO

SAFETY SKILLS COLUMNIST, *AMERICAN IRON MAGAZINE*

IF YOU'VE BEEN IN THE WORLD OF HARLEY-DAVIDSON FOR THE PAST FEW DECADES, ESPECIALLY IF YOU'VE purchased one during that time, you've heard of the Harley Owners Group (aptly known as HOG). If not, well, you may be missing out.

In 1983, Harley-Davidson launched a new riding organization for like-minded riders to join and share their experiences with their hogs. *Like-minded* meaning having a passion for Harley-Davidson motorcycles, and riding and enjoying the camaraderie of others that also live to ride (or is it ride to live?). With about 33,000 signed up that first year, Harley realized that it was onto something. It may have started off as a marketing idea, but it wasn't long after the Harley Owners Group was revealed that local, dealer-sponsored chapters started to spring up around the country and, in time, throughout the world. Today, HOG is the largest manufacturer-sponsored riding organization, and with over a million members (reached in 2006), it may be the largest riding group in the world — not too shabby for something that started off as a grassroots idea.

From the beginning, HOG offered benefits that other groups didn't have, such as its Fly & Ride Program. In 1986, it established the Ladies of Harley (LOH), which was set up to get women interested in riding (either as a passenger, or solo). HOG introduced a mile merit program in 1989 for members to show off the miles they had ridden as a



PHOTOS COURTESY HOG

HOG member. HOG also had regional rallies over the years, and, in 1993, 20,000 members showed up in Milwaukee not only for Harley's 90th, but to celebrate 10 years of HOG.

IN 1996, HOG TOOK A BIG STEP WITH ITS FIRST CROSS-COUNTRY tour retracing Route 66 from Milwaukee to Los Angeles, which was followed up in 1997 by the Posse Ride from Portland, Oregon, to Portland, Maine. As the years went by, more and more events were scheduled, and there were also state rallies throughout the country. All shared the common theme of HOG: ride and have fun.

HOG learned as it grew. Regional training sessions were held for chapter officers to get together and learn how to operate their chapters more effectively. Not only did the officers get information, but HOG got tons of feedback from the attendees on what worked, what didn't, and what they would like to see more of. It time, the information presented at these

events became more finely tuned. Not resting on its accomplishments, HOG would continue to work on keeping things fresh and current. The work must have showed because 16 years after starting, HOG had its 500,000th member. By 2003, in time for H-D's 100th celebration, membership had grown by an additional 250,000.

The HOG anniversary celebrations that coincided with H-D's events offered members exclusive admittance to such top music and comedy acts as Jeff Beck, BB King, Kid Rock, the Doobie Brothers, ZZ Top, Lewis Black, and others. The HOG areas also offer opportunities to check out new merchandise as well as connect with members from all around the globe. You could easily see chapter reps from North America, Europe, Asia, the Middle East, and other regions. Though sometimes there would be a bit of a language barrier to work through, the common enthusiasm, love for riding Harleys, and pride in a rider's region were unmistakable.

Okay, so HOG has a lot of people that love to ride and have a good time, but what else is there to being a



member? To start, each full membership includes a roadside assistance program. Harley-Davidsons have advanced by leaps and bounds from the days many of us remember (or sometimes would rather forget), and their reliability is unsurpassed, but sometimes things happen and you need help. Having required the assistance of its roadside service, I can tell you it's well worth the membership cost. Each time I used it, the folks associated with the program were efficient, courteous, and quick to meet my needs.

HOG magazine is published five times a year with stories of member journeys, tech and safety information, and, at times, introductions to new models or accessories. Each yearly membership also includes a year patch and touring handbook loaded with maps and riding information. HOG members can also get discounts from companies such as AT&T, Best

Western, and motorcycle shippers and insurance companies.

My personal introduction to the Harley Owners Group was in 1986, when I purchased a new Liberty Edition 1100 Sportster. Every new bike purchase came with a national membership. From that time until the 1990s, I attended several regional events, as well as checked out some local chapter events in my region. It wasn't until I became a member of the Woodstock, New York, HOG chapter in 1999 that I really found out what the benefits of being a chapter member meant. The group was extremely active, not only with riding but socially too. I was welcomed from Day One, and over the years, I filled various officer positions. Though at times the "work" was challenging, it was enjoyable to do knowing that others would not only be there to help, but also enjoy the time spent. I can honestly say that many of my lifelong friends

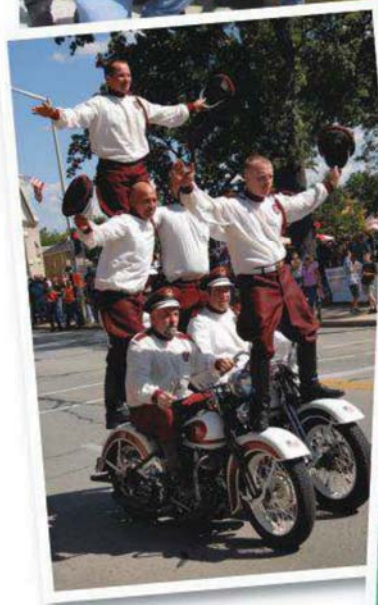
today came from this camaraderie and shared passion for riding our Harleys wherever we can. Along with the experiences I gained from being a chapter member, I've always found enjoyment and sometimes envy speaking with other HOG members with whom I cross paths.

HOG, without a doubt, has what almost every Harley rider enjoys: great rides, events, and, most of all, people who have the same obsession. No matter how much a company can try to make something great, it wouldn't work without one basic element — passionate people supporting it.

So this year, starting the last week in August, Harley-Davidson is celebrating its 110th anniversary in Milwaukee. HOG will once again be onboard, this time to commemorate its 30th year with

The Motor Company. I know both will put together a party and good time that will certainly be the core of some fantastic moments and memories.

AG



■ Top: The Space Coast HOG Chapter from Palm Bay, Florida poses proudly with its flag and a NASA space shuttle. Photo courtesy of Nick Galluzzi. Above: A couple members of the Mariana Islands HOG Chapter discover a Harley WLA that was likely dumped off a ship by Marines during World War II. Photo courtesy of Pete Siguenza, Jr.