



CONCOOURS OWNERS GROUP

Hello Fellow Concoours Owner!

Enclosed you will find a copy of our first issue of the Concoours Owners Group Newsletter. This newsletter is the official publication of the Concoours Owners Group, which is a new motorcycle club that was recently started when several Concoours owners got together during a motorcycle rally to have a group photograph taken. We all enjoyed the sight of so many ZG 1000 Concoours together at one time and the chance to talk about them with each other that somebody suggested that we stay in touch somehow.

The rest is history, so to speak! We formed the Concoours Owners Group, or COG, and put together this newsletter. Cog is nationally organized so that anyone can be involved no matter where you live. As you'll see in the newsletter, we have regional directors and want to include every Concoours owner we can.

So please enjoy the premier edition of our newsletter. We hope you'll want to do what we did, join a Concoours club with several other proud owners. If you want to be a member, send a check or money order for \$20 payable to Concoours Owners Group at P.O. Box 2331, Chino, Ca., 91708.

We plan to produce four issues a year of the newsletter and look forward to hearing from you soon!

Yours In Sport,

Rob

Rob Stevens



CONCOURS OWNERS GROUP

VOL. 1 NO. 1

Summer, 1989

NEWSLETTER

Executive Director:
Rob Stevens

Editor:
Arnie Wolf

Technical Editor:
Rich Reed

Director-at-Large:
Clement Salvadori

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Ron Ramlow

**Northwest
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Jim Harriger

**Southern
Area Director:**
David Bramm

**Central
Area Director:**
A.J. Christopherson

**Northern
Area Director:**
Arnie Wolf

The Director's Drivel

By Rob Stevens

Boy, did it ever take a long time to get this club we call the Concours Owners Group "off the ground." What with getting the word out and waiting for your response, it just took longer than I ever expected. So, first of all, I want to thank you for your patience and support these past few months.

This first column might be kind of lengthy because there's so much to say. I promise to keep my future blatherings shorter and simpler.

I guess I should start by telling you a little about myself. I'm Rob Stevens, 47, single, professional truck driver, I've been riding for 27 years, I'm "owned" by four motorcycles and a slightly psychotic housecat named Murphy. I had a less than successful background in road racing and desert racing when I was younger. I quit racing when I started to notice that the headliners in ambulances are all made out of the same material. It was time.

I am an AMA life member, District 37 AMA road rider and dual sport competitor, plus belong to the International CBX Owners Association, Honda Sport Touring Association, and of all things, the Concours Owners Group. If you haven't guessed by now, I kind of like motorcycling. I usually manage to ride about 30,000 miles or more a year. Everything I make that isn't house payment, car payment, cat food or my food goes into the bikes. Yeah, I guess I'm "hooked."

Now, about the organization of COG. Because we are a small club and riding seasons and riding styles vary so much around the country, I've set up five geographical areas around the Country. They are: **Southwest;** California, Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, Utah and Nevada. **Southern;** From Texas and Oklahoma through Arkansas, Tennessee, Virginia, Delaware and everything South from there. **Northern;** West Virginia, Pennsylvania and everything North and East from there. **Central;** From the Dakotas, Nebraska and Kansas through Missouri, Kentucky and Ohio and everything North from there. **Northwest;** Wyoming, Montana, Idaho, Washington and Oregon.

Each area has a Director and he will pretty much organize and coordinate the activities in his areas. The area directors will be running sort of a small Concours Owners Group within the national COG. They have much more familiarity with their areas than I could possibly have living here in California. Help your area directors. Give them some idea of what kind of activities you would like to see happen. I know you've heard it before, but this is **your** club, it's not the Rob Stevens Motorcycle Club. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or ideas to help COG grow and progress.

A little about how and why I've set up COG to operate. I'm the one to blame or praise, no one else. All COG officers are volunteers, as are all of you. I hope they will remain in their positions for at least a year. I hate politics and I don't believe there is any place for it in an organization such as this. I don't plan for any elections. If you would like to be an area director or something, talk it over with your area director. He might be getting "burnt-out" and be ready for a change. If not, I guess I'll have to make a decision what to do. That's what I'm here for (among other things).

It seems to me, from reading the notes and letters that you have sent me these past few months, you are an experienced bunch of motorcyclists. That will go a long way towards making COG a club with a degree of "respectability" in the motorcycling community. I'll have more to say about this in a future column.

COGnitions

By Arnie Wolf

I've been having a ball since this whole party started! Eight months ago, if you had asked me if I would be writing an editorial for a group of Concours riders, I would have said, "Huh??." Rob Stevens sure changed that viewpoint around pretty quickly.

You see, I picked-up my copy of some cycle magazine, sometime during the winter, and was lulling myself to sleep while reading articles about exotic places and new bikes that I'd never own or places that I'd never see, when I saw this brief note about some guy in California who was trying to organize Concours riders into a group called COG. That surely caught my attention since I'm the proud owner of a 1987 Concours.

I wrote a letter to Mr. Stevens, expressing my love for the bike and my interest in joining the group (provided that New York City dwellers were eligible). Well, Rob answered my letter and I sent in my dues along with an interest in serving as the editor of the newsletter.

Next thing I knew, Rob called me on the phone. Instantly, I knew that I liked this guy. I liked him a lot. He had some great ideas, a love for bikes, and we seemed to agree on almost anything that we talked about (he's even a former New Yorker). Since that time, I've spoken with Rob on several occasions and I like the guy more each time that I speak with him!

I'm convinced that if anyone can make this group work, it will be Rob. He's motivated, knows how to organize things, and clearly has a love for the Concours. As long as my word processor works, I'll write editorials and prepare the newsletter for publications; all based on Rob's motivation which he's shared with all of us over the long distances that only a telephone can reduce.

Yet, there is something more important than just getting involved in a new organization based around ownership of a certain type of motorcycle. It's called makin' friends and having places to go on trips. At this point, I know that I can go to California and have a destination in Chino where Rob lives.

It may have started with Rob, but it sure hasn't ended there since I've spoken with two other great people, both members of COG, since my first conversation with Rob. Rich Reed, our technical editor, lives near me out in Riverhead, New York. Two conversations later, I feel as if I've known Rich for a long time. Hopefully, we'll get together real soon since we're so close geographically. We're already planning some rides together, provided that jobs and family obligations allow.

Then there's A.J. Christopherson in Wisconsin. One telephone call from him and, you guessed it, another friend. We're planning on meeting at Cooperstown, New York (home of the Baseball Hall of Fame) during the summer while he and his wife are taking a biking trip up to Maine.

You might be wondering also what kind of editor am I going to be? Well, I'd like to be the type who describes great riding trips in beautiful detail but it's kind of difficult to describe trips on a Concours in New York City where the traffic begins

at about 4:00 a.m. and doesn't seem to let up until 3:59 a.m. the next day. So, you'll see very few such editorials from me.

I'd like to be the type of editor who can discuss the technical grace, charm, and beauty of the Concours but the best I can do is to replace a bolt (it happened once) and I did "invent" a kind-of "cruise-control" using a medical tongue depressor and some waterproof tape, but that doesn't qualify me at all.

However, I am pretty good at organizing things. So, it will be my pleasure to write brief editorial and to encourage that each and every one of you write articles for our newsletter. It is far better that you send in your opinions, trips, and tips than to listen to me complain about riding in traffic every day.

Obviously, this is our first newsletter. It includes articles from Rob, some of the regional directors, a technical column from Rich Reed, a story or two, and a couple of tips. In future newsletters, we'd like to see articles from everyone and a "Letters to the Editor" column. So start writin'.

There are a lot of questions that will not be answered in this newsletter. We all need some more time to get better organized. For example, dues rebates to the regionals for local events, and organization of regional and national rallies. I'm equally sure that there are other concerns that many of you will raise. Let us know what you want and how we, as a group, can meet each of our needs. After all, we'll only survive if we stick together, share ideas, and listen to each other.

I've rambled-on long enough. Oh yeah, I'm also Northeast Area Director of COG so you won't find another article from me in this newsletter in that capacity. I will try to get the Northeast organized but I truly hope that someone wants that job (please!!).

In the meantime, please send articles, letters, jokes, or anything connected to the newsletter to me, at:

Arnie Wolf
59 11 174 Street
Fresh Meadows, NY 11365
Work: (718) 830-2565
Home: (718) 357-3639

Send dues to:
Rob Stevens
COG
P.O. Box 2331
Chino, California 91708

Make checks out in the amount of twenty (\$20.00) dollars to "COG" and not to Rob. After all, we don't want Rob buying another Concours on our dues.

That's all for now. Hope to hear from all of you soon.

COG MEMBERSHIP LIST

New members, names, addresses, and COG I.D. numbers will be published in each newsletter.

redacted

COGs AND THINGS: Technical Tips

By Rich Reed

Opening Thoughts

Back at the beginning of this year, when this organization was still on the drawing board, Rob Stevens asked me to be the Technical Editor of this newsletter. I accepted. Suddenly it was April, and Editor Arnie Wolf was on the phone, gently reminding me my first column was due now.

I found myself asking, "What have I got myself into?"

When I first contacted Rob, I had sent along a short narrative of how I troubleshot, diagnosed and repaired an electrical problem I had experienced with my Concours. Apparently, he felt that qualified me as the Tech Editor, I was not so sure. All I wanted to do was share a tip with other Concours' owners to help them from further contributing to their dealer's retirement fund.

So, that will be the theme of this column. No detailed write-ups on re-jetting the carbs or polishing ports (at least not yet.) This will be the place for tips, information, and how-to's on doing your own maintenance. Additionally, this column will be clearing house for tips, modifications and evaluations of accessory equipment passed on to me by you, the membership of COG.

~ If you have tried a set of tires other than the OEM Dunlops, let me know how they worked out. If you have tried a new seat, an aftermarket windshield, or a new cleaner, send me your observations and opinions. I'll compile these reports, and publish them in this column, and I promise to give credit where credit is due.

I will try to emphasize maintenance. The big Connie may at first look intimidating when it comes to wrench turning, but remember—a human mind conceived it, and a human mind can fix it. I will always pass on information that has worked (read: "We tried it first"). My goal is complete self-reliance in servicing the machine and confidence in attempting and successfully completing repairs. Those of you who are experienced mechanics will hopefully use this column to share your knowledge with fellow members.

So as they say, "Watch this space." We are off and running. Kawasaki has built us a great motorcycle. You, as members of COG, can use this column as a tool to make the Connie even better.

I am looking forward to hearing from you. Send your tips, problems or questions to:

Tech Tips
c/o Richard Reed
30 Dolphin Way
Riverhead, NY 11901

*My goal is complete
self-reliance in servicing the
machine and confidence in
attempting and successfully
completing repairs.*

Editor's Tip:

I spoke with Richard Walker of "Dangerous Designs" since I wanted to buy some of their t-shirts. They are truly top quality items, using silk-screen printing with some great bike scenes. What you don't see in their advertisement is the back of their t-shirts which bears the "Dangerous Designs" logo in two colors. Mr. Walker said that he would gladly work with any regional group to design our own COG logo. Start-up costs would be around \$200.00 for the design and layout work. I found Mr. Walker to be a pleasant person who responds quickly to orders submitted. The only drawback to "Dangerous Designs" is that they are currently limited to about nine shirt designs. Maybe we can encourage them to add a Concours?

They can be reached at: Dangerous Designs, P.O. Box 8823, Minneapolis, MN 55408.

Ask for their free catalog.

Clement Salvadori

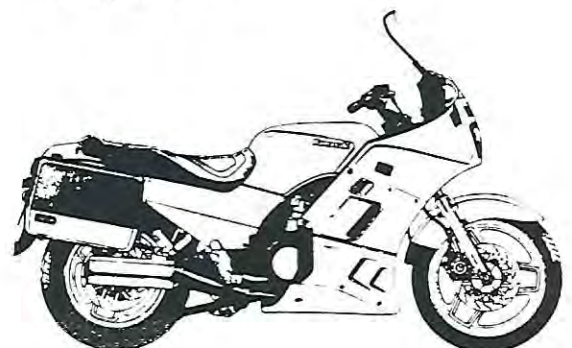
We are very fortunate to have as a member and Director-at-Large, Clement Salvadori. Many of, I'm sure, have seen Clement's writings in many major motorcycle magazines. Clement has an '87 Burgundy Concours. Hopefully, Clement will be gracing our humble newsletter with his unique prose as his time and inspiration permit—Rob.

If you haven't read Clement's article in this newsletter yet, then you're missing the best feature. I made the mistake of drinking a cup of coffee while reading it and nearly choked to death from laughter. It beats anything that I've ever read in a motorcycle magazine and is probably closer to the truth than what we read in the slicker tabloids—Arnie.

Want To Join COG?

Write to your regional area director using the membership list or contact Rob Stevens:

Rob Stevens
COG Executive Director
P.O. Box 2331
Chino, CA 91708



TECHNICAL STUFF

J-Box Blues

By Rich Reed

I had stopped off for a meeting on my way home from work. I had only rode a block or two, and had noticed nothing wrong. After the meeting, I hopped back on the Concours, fired up the engine, and noticed I had no neutral light. I quickly found out I had no lights! The horn did not work. The only things that did work were the turn signals, and obviously, the ignition and starter (whew!).

I got the bike home and started troubleshooting. I consulted my shop manual, and located a common fail point—the main relay. All electrical devices except the turn signals, ignition and starter motor are powered via the main relay. Some quick checking with a multimeter and some jumpers verified the main relay was shot.

The main relay is mounted inside the junction box ("J-box"), a 3" by 5" plastic box under the left side cover. It holds the headlight relay, the main relay, the start relay, some diodes and most of the fuses. A phone call to my local dealer revealed a replacement would cost Big Bux. I decided to disassemble the J-Box and try to replace the relay myself.

I removed the J-Box from its rubber mountings. Disconnecting the electrical connectors was difficult, but patience and a small flat-tipped screwdriver prevailed.

The J-Box is a two-piece affair, with the backside consisting of a plate cemented to four posts molded into the box (see fig. 1). I drilled out the four posts, and removed the back plate. What I saw surprised me. My J-Box was a victim of water intrusion.

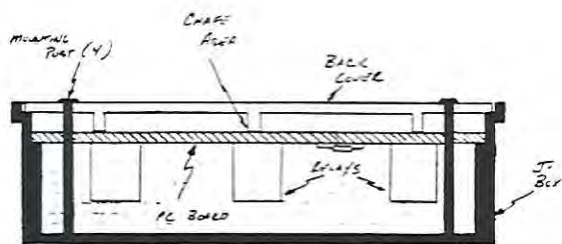


Fig 1

The circuitry inside the box is on a printed circuit board. To protect and insulate the foil circuits, the board had been dipped in a varnish. This is common practice on all PC boards from doorbells to mainframe computers. On this board, however, water had gotten between the varnish and the board's surface, causing corrosion of the foil circuit paths.

Closer examination revealed the real fault. One of the circuit paths had been worn through, and a second was close to being cut. By comparing the wear marks on the PC board and the inside surface of the back plate, I found the culprit. Strengthening ribs, molded into the back cover, made direct contact with the board. Between the water intrusion and the Connie's natural vibrations, the rib had slowly worn through the circuit path. This path turned out to be the main relay engage circuit. By using a jumper wire and the bike's battery as a power source, I determined the relay itself was OK. This would be easy and cheap to fix.

After removing the fuses, I popped the PC board out of the box. Using a soft, clean rag and some contact cleaner, I cleaned up the corrosion and loose varnish. With a low wattage DC soldering iron, I soldered in new jumper wires for the two damaged circuits. A low wattage iron must be used to prevent damage to the PC board and the components on the other side.

I then reinstalled the board into the box, and temporarily connected it to the Concours' electrical system for an "ops check." Everything now worked as specified.

I had decided to modify Kawasaki's design to prevent this from happening again. Instead of re-installing the back plate with its circuit-eating ribs, I filled the cavity with RTV (Room Temperature Vulcanizing) rubber (See Fig. 2).

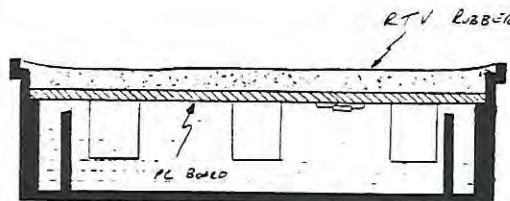


Fig 2

GE Silicone works just fine. This accomplished two things. It seals out all water, air and dirt, better than the old back plate did. Also, it absorbs shock and vibrations. I used a tongue depressor to smooth out the surface, then left the box laying flat overnight. I reinstalled it the next day, and in seven months have not had any trouble.

A drawback to this fix is the rubber more or less seals permanently, making any subsequent repairs to the J-Box difficult. However, since the enemies of electrical devices are water, dirt and vibration, the trade-off in protection is, to me, acceptable.

An alternate method would be to reinstall the plastic back plate with a sheet of teflon or thin rubber between it and the PC board. This would protect the board from chafing but not water intrusion.

One final thought. The failure occurred suddenly on a bright, sunny day at 3:30 p.m., seven miles from home, while the bike was parked. What if it occurred at night, on a winding mountain road, seven miles from the nearest telephone, at 55 mph? Ever try to ride a bike blindfolded?

With this mind, you may want to consider doing something before your J-Box fails. If you live and ride in a high-humidity area, and if your scoot has over 18,000 or so miles, I recommend you at least consider it. The truth is, we just don't know the extent of this type of problem. So far, I know of only three, including mine, J-Box failures. While at Daytona this year, I specifically asked the Kawasaki tech guys about this. All claimed it was news to them. If you have had similar problems, let me know. Send me a postcard with the symptoms, the mileage, and what was done to correct the problem. If you fixed it yourself, tell me how. See my "Tech Tips" column for my address. By sharing information, all Concours riders will benefit. That's all until the next issue.

DIRECTOR-AT-LARGE

by Clement Salvadori

The Concours International Press Introduction or: The Story Behind the Story

When the average citizen hears about an "international press introduction," his mind's eye usually turns to large jets floating into major airports, assorted flacks and photographers appearing on the ramps in Ralph Lauren's latest sartorial splendor, lap-top computers in the Gucci luggage, limousines, plush hotels, champagne and caviar, and then the return to reality. Which usually means writing nice things about the intro so you will be invited on the next one.

Well, here is the unvarnished truth about one of these international press introductions, the one that pertains to our particular chosen mount, nothing less than the focal point of the Concours Owner's Group. Some of this does not make for pleasant reading, so keep this away from the children and impressionable adults. This may be my last job in the moto-industry, and if you see me selling pencils on the street corner, be kind.

Along about Christmas time in 1985, the mainstream American motorcycle magazines received a letter from Kawasaki Motors Corp., U.S.A., that a grand party was to be given by Kawasaki Motors, Japan, to celebrate the introduction of this new sport-touring motorcycle, the Concours. The other 159 countries on this planet refer to it as the GTR 1000, but Americans always have been a little different.

Each magazine was invited to send an editor, and the lucky scribe would be stuffed into an airplane, flown to northern Italy, given a Concours, and sent south to Sicily where the festivities would take place. Sounds idyllic? Well, Italy can be cold in the winter, and terrorists had just made a hash of the airport at Rome. And there is always the fear of indigestion.

Some curious excuses came up. "Gee, I'd love to, but I have to get that root canal job taken care of." "Sorry, but the wife and I have a fly-or-die vacation in East St. Louis at that." "My mother won't let me go." SUPERCYCLE and EASYRIDERS claimed a conflict of interest. The BMWMOA and GWRRA sniffed the air and said this motorcycle would never amount to much.

Anyway, late in January, 1986, half a dozen happy-go-lucky moto-journalists—DD, RG, JK, Roscoe, MM and yours truly—gathered at the Los Angeles airport, representing six of the more notorious moto-rags. It's a dangerous profession we have, but somebody has to do the dirty job. Coming along as a drill sergeant and general mover and shaker was Mike the Bike, a hired gun in the employ of Kawasaki. He's a man who knows how to get things moving, and keep them moving. No attitudes allowed; "Lighten up!" was his favorite expression.

We funneled into our flying cigar. Commercial flying is the flip side of submarining, and only an agoraphobe enjoys the process. And none of those phobics ride motorcycles. We attempted to ease the long flight east by imbibing large quantities of the second pressing of a third-rate French grape. It wasn't the bouquet we were after, but the alcoholic content.

We groggily changed planes somewhere in Europe, getting on a puddle-jumper that would fly us down to Genoa,

birthplace of Christopher Columbus. The American connection was growing. The problem with the Genoa airport is that it was built in the era of the Ford Trimotor, and as the planes grew and required more landing space, the city fathers just kept extending it further and further out into the Ligurian Sea. It was a dark and stormy evening when we landed, and a lot of superstitious passengers were doing the "spectacles, testicles, watch and wallet" routine. The plane settled down like Baryshnikov doing a clog dance, and as the plane careened along the narrow runway, all one could see out the windows were whitecaps on both sides.

We climbed out, slogged across the puddled tarmac and into the customs shed. Six of us got through fine. However, the seventh, Morphic Mark, had a ponytail down to the middle of his back, and the Italian profile of a drug smuggler fit him to a T. Now, this for a man who indulges in no drugs, not even caffeine, and takes naps about four times a day. He was about to be hauled off to the inquisition when we managed to convince the customs men that he was really the illegitimate nephew of Ronald Reagan.

After checking into a highrise (circa 1890) hotel in the middle of town, we had a moderately raucous evening, which grew wetter and colder as we crawled back to our digs. Come morning we woke to find that a foot of frozen slush covered the entire city and little valley that it was in. Rumor had it that the French Concours group had skirted the city in the middle of the night, and all the pressmen had fallen on black ice on the highway.

Our group had grown from seven to nine, with the addition of two Kawasaki irregulars, Chip (sorry, Joe-B) and Dale, who had come a day earlier and hired a tiny FIAT van to act as chase vehicle. We all crawled in, with all our luggage, ad helmets and cameras, and Joe-B slithered through the streets to Kawasaki HQ—Italy. Not much was moving that day, unless it was sideways. Nobody was moving in the van; we were too squashed.

Seven lovely Concours (Concourses?) awaited us. But we were not about to ride them out of town. It would have meant seven mashed fairings within a hundred yards. But Italy is a land of inspiration, not despair, and by the time we hooked up the wires for our electric vests, a large truck was waiting, into which we loaded the seven machines. What a wimpish start, we all agreed; we must never let the public know of this.

Thirty miles south of Genoa the snow had vanished, and we even had hopes (short-lived) of some nice weather. We unloaded, donned helmets, and went off at a modest 130 mph. We didn't get to see much of the Italian Riviera, though lunch at Portofino would have been a treat. We did stop on the autostrada west of Pisa to gaze at the Leaning Tower of. Don't laugh—it requires genius on a par with Leonardo da Vinci to build a 180-foot tower that will stand for over 500 years with a 15-foot lean.

Nightfall found us in Rome at the Jolly Hotel. Does that sound cheerful? The Jolly chain is roughly equivalent to our Holiday Inns—drive all day and spend the night in the same room you slept in the night before. Come morning, we woke to find the sky leaden and leaking. We intended to do a little

sight-seeing, but by the time we got to the Coliseum the rain was coming down so hard one needed an underwater camera to take pictures.

We headed for the autostrada going south. It was the sort of rain that could get inside all rainsuits, even the compression chambers if you dallied too long, and the only real protection was speed. At 120 mph the fairings worked very well in creating a rainless bubble around the rider. And the Dunlops worked fine in the aquaplaning department. The Carabinieri (apara-military police in Italy) smiled and waved as we rushed by them in their piddling 1.8 liter Alfa Romeos.

The Italians have a very sensible theology concerning the speed one drives. If God was fit to give you a powerful engine, it would be a sin against Him not to use it to its full potential. We did.

Late afternoon we were weaving around the urban disaster called Naples, and down into Salerno for the night. Salerno hit the headlines twice in its 2,500 years of existence, once when the Normans took it over in 1076, and again when the Allies landed there in 1943. Other than that, not much has happened. Activity is limited because there is permanent gridlock in the city streets. The evening rush hour begins to clear out about 3 a.m., just as the morning rush begins. We rolled down the sidewalks of a one-way street for half a mile to get to our destination, but such things are understood by the locals. They merely admired the motorcycles as we went by. The hotel was a monument to the Dark Ages, having no hot water and no heat, and 30 watt bulbs in the rooms.

Next day for lunch we stopped at a seafood restaurant on the shore promising good fresh catch. The menu was a bit cryptic, and our translation a bit rough. The waiter described one dish as being a white fish that lives on the floor of the ocean, and Roscoe thought that flounder sounded good. He quite enjoyed it until we told him he had just eaten a plateful of squid. Gastronomical hazards are part of a motopundit's life.

Then it was a mad dash for the ferry at Villa San Giovanni. Italian road engineers are world renowned, and the Autostrada del Sol is designed for mad dashes, as endless tunnels bore through the mountains, and huge viaducts span great valleys. The province of Calabria through which we were rushing is not noted for flat land. We clipped along at a good pace, knocking off a mile every 29 or 30 seconds.

However, as we approached Villa SC, we realized something was amiss. Traffic backed up alongside the highway several miles short of the exit with four police cars barring the way. It appeared the weather had held up the ferries that crossed the Straits of Messina to Sicily. For all you classicists, that is the Odyssean Scylla and Charybdis, the original Rock and a Hard Place. In the 3,000 years that ships have plied the straits, a goodly number of hulls have decorated the rocks.

We could see the line of traffic backed up for miles all the way to the ferry loading ramp. However, we convinced the police that the fate of the free world depended on our getting across to the big island, and they detailed a car to escort us to the ferry. But a bicycle couldn't get through the jammed traffic. Instead the cop, lights and siren going, took us on a circuitous route through town (during which time MM stopped for a nap, but we found him in time), and left us a chain-link fence away from where we wanted to be.

Somehow we squeezed through, thanks to folding mirrors and other such niceties. The teamsters cheered us

on, as they ate thick salami sandwiches and drank cheap red wine, their fourth day of waiting. Patience is not a virtue in Italy, it is a requirement. In the choppy crossing we feared the bikes might all tip over; they didn't.

Kawasaki had taken over the Holiday Inn in Naxos, not a very inspired hotel, but big enough to house some 60 journalists and lots of Kawasaki employees. No covered parking was available, so the big banquet hall was used as a garage.

Next day was riding time, and we Yanks headed into the mountains. It was rumored that the local brigands had all been paid off, so we did not have to worry about the dreaded Black Hand and other manifestations of the Cosa Nostra. Sicilian roads are a tribute to the devious meanderings of generations of mules, and no matter how good the motorcycle, the going tends to be slow. JK repeatedly tried to prove that he could scrape the saddlebag on the pavement without falling down. He did neither. At Novara, instead of completing the planned loop, we chose to return.

In the morning several of us decided to tour Mt. Etna, hopeful that we would be able to capture on film a gigantic eruption, and that we would be posthumously recognized for the magnificent pictures found in the cameras clutched in our dead hands. No such luck.

The others followed M't'B, to complete the loop. But come evening, there was no sign of them, no sign at all. And a major to-do was going to take place at the Hotel San Domenico up in Taormina. It would be embarrassing if the Americans weren't there. At least two of us were at the table with the stars and stripes on the flag, along with one host from Japan, but the other seven seats were sort of conspicuously empty. As the various nations were being recognized, and the Japanese honchos coming around to each table to say their hellos, M't'B and the boys came sliding in through the curtains, slipping into their seats like children late to class. The loop had taken a little (lot?) longer than anticipated. All is well that ends well, and M't'B still has his job.

By the way, should you ever be in Taormina, on somebody else's nickel, do stay at the San Domenico. It is a converted 15th century convent, and one of the nicest places in a nice part of the world. Pricey, too. What Kawasaki dropped on that banquet was probably more than the gross national product of the average Caribbean country.

Then it was the long haul back north. Take the ferry and rush up to Salerno. The way the group worked was that the front rank would be dicing like Rainey, Schwantz and Lawson, and when they got lost, they would wait for the others. RG, a mature gent who is also very fast, rode in the front, and when he stopped he would inevitably light up a Cigarillo, and the back-benchers could tell how slow they were by the amount of ash on the cigar. It got to be four inches in length. At least the hotel had hot water that night.

In the morning we stopped at Pompeii, which endured a minor mishap when Mt. Vesuvius blew off in 79 A.D. If all those ancient Romans had had a Concours in the stable, undoubtedly they could have escaped the poisonous gases that came rolling down from the volcano. As it was, the place makes great history. In another historical context we rode the wrong way up the Appian Way south of Rome, pretending we were conquering generals coming from North Africa. Two thousand years ago it was a two-way road, but the Rome

DIRECTOR-AT-LARGE

Continued from previous page

authorities have turned it into a one-way road to ease traffic congestion. Never let it be said that Americans are reluctant to go against the tide.

We got back to the Jolly late, but not too late for Joe-B and Roscoe to go out and explore the pleasures of Roman nightlife. Being impressionable youths from sheltered homes, they accepted the kind offer of a man dressed in a white suit to enter the cellar of a building. Inside were some women who seemed thirsty, and our dynamic duo were hospitable enough to provide some libations. Unfortunately, when the bill arrived there was a long string of zeros in evidence, and the pair could not come up with enough money to cover it. They offered to write an IOU, and eventually settled for one staying as hostage while the other returned to the hotel and scrounged up all the money he could. Boys will be boys.

To add moral insult to financial injury, on the way back to the Jolly, now about 1 a.m., they saw a statuesque lady in a very short skirt standing on a corner. They were about to approach and ask if they could be of assistance, when Joe-B noted that there was something a little, well, a little odd about this person. Thus did they come to learn of the large, and attractive, community of transvestites that inhabit the Eternal city.

A day for sightseeing, but just as Rome was not built in a day, nor was it seen in a day. The rag shops on Via Condotti took precedence over the Vatican. Picture postcards stood in for the Sistine Chapel. More time was spent at Doney's sidewalk cafe than at the ancient forum. There was a vote as to whether they should take the Concours and do laps at the Circus Maximus (remember Ben Hur?), but the yeas lost.

And the final push back to Genoa. JK and Roscoe missed the lunchtime exit off the autostrada by 20 miles while trying to redline the tach needle in sixth gear. Lunch was at a three-star restaurant in the delightful medieval town of San Gimignano, harking back to the 13th century when upwardly mobile status depended on how high a tower you could attach to your house. It was a noble meal, though one scribe was heard to ask if there was a MacDonald's in the area.

After lunch, in the distance, could be seen the city of Florence, hometown of one Amerigo Vespucci. He got the pleasure of naming both continents in the Western Hemisphere. More Italo-American connections, along with Frank Sinatra, Ducati, Rome (New York), Naples (Florida), and Chef Boyardee..

Then it was over. The odometers had turned about 2,000 times. The tires were down to the second layer of cord. The engines had been thrashed as hard as possible and never failed. Great bikes. Great trip. And we all promised we'd tell lots of lies when we wrote about it.

Rob's Tips

Tech Tip: Is your Concours starting to sound a little "rough and gravelly" at idle? Kind of like an Oldsmobile diesel car engine at idle. There is a good chance that the cam chain tensioner is about to fail. This is not too unusual, according to my mechanic. I'm on my third tensioner right now and the one in the bike might be ready to go soon.

Touring Tip: Carry a bottle of Wet Ones in your pack. They are good for "cleaning up" after "having a scratch in the cat-box" in an unimproved campground. They also do a pretty good job of cleaning bugs off your faceshield.

Do you have a product you use with good results? How about some other tip? Write in. Share the news. This is YOUR forum. YOU are the "editorial staff."

Rob's Pitch

OK! Here it comes. A not too subtle "pitch" for you to do something for yourselves and for our sport. What I'm talking about is: Joining the American Motorcyclist Association. The AMA has done and is doing more to keep us riding than any other group in the country. The AMA has been "battling" (with a lot of success) the "Robber-Baron" insurance companies, misinformed legislators, oppressive local governments and any enemies of motorcyclists wherever they may appear.

Membership in the AMA is \$20.00 a year and is just about the best investment you can make in your motorcycling future. If you have a major credit card, you can join by phone. Dial: 1 (800) AMA-JOIN. 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Eastern time, Monday through Friday. The person on the other end of the phone will take care of everything.

Some of you are already AMA members and that's GREAT! Please send me your AMA numbers so I can add it to your member file. I am also asking that all officers of COG become AMA members if you are not already one.

If you prefer, you can join the AMA by mail. Send a check or money order for \$20.00 to: American Motorcyclist Association, P.O. Box 6114, Westerville, OH 43081-6114

Think about it. Do something about it. Soon.

Hello To Canada!

By Rob Stevens

I would like to extend a special welcome to our two members from Canada.

Marc Tardiff is from Montreal, Quebec. Marc is a member of the Quebec Tourism Motorcycle Association and is in charge of public relations for that organization.

Rob Tiarks is from Bridgewater, N.S. Rob has an '88 Concours and at last word, was waiting for spring with "bated breath." Rob also sent a motorcycling poem that we may be able to publish in the future.

Welcome, gentlemen. Your support is valued and appreciated. Consider yourselves to be part of COG's northern area.

COG AREA DIRECTOR REPORTS

NORTHWEST AREA

by Jim Harriger

Well, well, what have we here? It looks like a Concours Owner's Group. This group is one of those things I always thought someone should make happen, but I had no idea how to go about it. Thank God Rob Stevens thought the same thing, eh? We all owe Rob a great debt for getting this thing off the ground. Without him to act as the catalyst, this club might have remained just a fantasy that a lot of us shared and not much else. Well, I guess I'm supposed to be introducing myself here, so...

I am Jim Harriger, I'm 28 years old, a computer software engineer by profession, and a motorcycle nut by choice. I have been riding motorcycles, in one form or another for about 23 years. All of my early motorcycle experience was on dirt bikes, and I am still an active participant in the sport of Observed Trials here in the Northwest. I started riding street things (I hesitate to call my first road-going two-wheeled vehicle a motorcycle) when I was 20, on a Honda Express (remember that thing: sorta like a moped, except no pedals? I called it a no-ped), so I've got about 8 years of street riding under by belt. I do all my own work on my vehicles except things that require special tools that I don't wish to mortgage my house to acquire.

I bought my Concours right here in Portland, 5 days after the first one hit the dealer's back door, in a crate. He uncrated it Wednesday night, I put a deposit on it on Saturday morning, and rode off on it Monday night. Never regretted it for a minute! I've put about 28,000 miles on it since I've had it, and enjoyed them all (well, most of them, but that's another story). I've left it mostly stock, but I have made some mods, which I'll talk about in another column.

I would very much like to hear from anyone out there as to what you'd like to see this club do for you. I'm particularly interested in hearing from anyone in the Northwest region, but I'll welcome mail from any of you. Address your comments, suggestions, rude remarks, etc. (no letter bombs, please, I just bought a new house . . .) to: Jim Harriger, 733 SE Madera St., Hillsboro, OR 97123.

Here is what I would like to see this club become: I would like us to be a way for Concours owners to communicate information about maintenance, accessories, and riding tips to other owners. I'm sure each one of you has your own little tidbit (maybe a flood of tidbits) of information that the rest of us would dearly love to hear about.

I would very much like to hear from anyone out there as to what you'd like to see this club do for you. I'm particularly interested in hearing from anyone in the Northwest region . . .

For example, no one I know of has the time, facilities, or money to do a thorough evaluation of the many different kinds of tires that you can put on a Concours when the stock ones wear out. I tried one brand other than stock and didn't like it, so I went back to stock, but I'm sure someone out there has found another tire that works wonderfully. In addition to tires (my current pet subject, since my Concours is going to need some soon), there are many other subjects I'm sure you folks have a lot of knowledge to share: windscreens, aftermarket seats, tankbags, and so on. If you know, write to me or the editor of this reverend publication and tell us about it!

The other function that I would like to see this club have is organizing rides, get-togethers, and 'events.' Things like a group meeting to ride somewhere for breakfast on Saturday or Sunday. Obviously, things like this have to be done on a local basis, but longer-duration happenings could be organized on a wider-ranging basis. I understand that Rob is planning for a national rally in 1990, so that should be fun. Once I get a members list, I hope to organize a breakfast ride for the folks in the Portland area. If anyone out there has any other ideas, or would like to do something like this in their local area, give me a call, or go for it! Well, that's about the end of my babbling for now. Write or call, I'd love to hear what you have to say!

CENTRAL AREA

By A.J. Christopherson

April 2nd, 1989, a great day for a ride on a great bike. Highs in the mid 50's and a lot of sun. Hello, I'm A.J. Christopherson, the central area director for COG.

A brief description of myself would go as follows: 6' tall, 190 pounds, brown hair, blue eyes and totally consumed by motorcycles. In the Will Rogers' tradition, I never met a bike I didn't like.

There seems to be very few things closer than the camaraderie of motorcyclists and for some owners of certain bikes it's more than that, it's a lifestyle. I wouldn't go so far as to say I expect that kind of dedication from our members, but we will be no more active than the people that make up our membership.

I was talking with Rob the other day. He has some exciting things planned for COG members this summer. The plan now is to have a rally at Brainerd, Minnesota, June 10 and 11, which would include our own Concours' Coral. I would like to see if we can do the same type of thing at Elkhart Lake, Wisconsin, June 24 and 25. These are just a couple of things to get us going. What we need is input from our members. What would you like to do? Where would you like to hold rallies and rides?

It's been a very long and cold week here in the Midwest. I'm looking forward to seeing you on the road, I'll include my name and address at the end of this letter so you can write to me and let me know your suggestions.

A.J. Christopherson, 1363 G. Josephine St., Waukesha, WI 53186

P.S. My bike's name is Lizzy B. with a hatchet!

SOUTHWEST AREA

by Ron Ramlow

As the Southwestern Director for COG, I was asked by its founder, Rob Stevens, to write a biography for this newsletter. I thought what a great way to lose an audience fast! People join a club because of a common denominator or interest—the love of a sport and the sharing of ideas and experiences—a form of bench racing if you will.

So, rather than a biography, I would like to relate a few of the motorcycling experiences that have brought my wife Carol and me to where we are today. Hopefully they will parallel many of your own experiences.

First off, Carol and I get a lot of our adventure and ideas from working for the Auto club of Southern California for more than twenty years. It's exciting and puts gas in the bike. With regard to the AMA, although I haven't raced in several years, I've maintained my AMA membership because of what it and the sport have given me. I'm just a couple years short of being a "lifer."

It's ironic how things come full circle. In the 25 years I've been riding, I've owned a lot of bikes, just like most of you. What's funny is after learning on a step-through Honda, the first bike of my own was a Kawasaki. They called it a Bushwacker, and I bought it as transportation for my last year in college. It came with performance kit for the dirt and every Friday night, on it would go! The power band was, it seemed at the time, like a toggle switch—about 500 RPM's wide. Racing around with my friends on their Hodaka's, I was either in the lead or writhing on the ground.

This led to a Penton and 15 years of an increasingly serious attempt at enduros. In the beginning, just finishing was a thrill. Then I wanted to "place" and then "trophy." My last two years were on a Husky out of "Malcolm Smiths" which resulted in my working up to a single digit plate in District 37, as well as winning the Open Class Championship in a separate series. My wife came in second in her class!

I fell down a lot . . . but then I always did; the difference was I was getting up much slower! It didn't take a lot of brains to realize my chronological age had deviously slipped up on me when I wasn't looking. The enthusiasm was there, but the body wanted to slow dance.

It was time, time for a change—a time for genuine bike withdrawals. A search for a replacement activity ranged from one jump out of a plane to a little scuba diving to some serious snow skiing. Good diversions, but for me they just didn't offer the rush and sense of freedom one gets from throwing a leg over a good bike!

Along about this period I spent some time in the hospital. Due to an oversight, an air bubble reached my heart—instant cardiac arrest. Contrary to what my wife says, there was no brain damage!

The only reason I bring this up is that it brought home that life was to be lived, savored, milked for all it's worth. Carol came to see me one day with stories of bikes leaving for the weekend and of our own past street experiences. I reminded her she was suppose to be the rational one, but the memories bubbled forth and there was no turning back.

I read an article on the yet to be released 1984 900 Ninja. They said it "looked fast standing still." Mellowed, but still an adrenaline junky, my first stop out of the hospital was to put a deposit on the first Ninja to reach Pasadena!

Not able to leave the bike stock (sound familiar) I massaged it into a carbon copy of Joe Minton and "Motorcyclist" magazine's project bike, with a few touches of my own.

Realizing I was over my head, I attended Keith Code's riding school which turned out to be the most humbling experience to date. There I was, tucked in, leaned over doing about 100 MPH in a big sweeper, when half the class passed me—on the outside!

The 900 Ninja served us well for four years and I loved and believed in it so much I sold it to a close friend, with the clearest of conscience. The bike still sees two or three hundred miles every weekend.

For Carol and me it was time for a little more comfort and practicality, especially since most of our riding friends were getting back into sport touring with longer distances on the menu. Fine bikes that they are, we weren't ready for the Voyager class. Carving mountain roads and "sport" were still top priorities, which the Concours handles very nicely, thank you!

This brings us up to here and now. Part of the duties of director include coordinating two rallies a year. With areas encompassing Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico and Utah, we have the enviable problem of deciding a destination. Suggestions have included a campground on the Northern California Coast near Oregon, or possibly Durango in Southwest Colorado.

This is your district . . . what do **you** want? Weekend trips, three dayers, what destinations?

Above all this should be fun, and it will with your participation and thoughts. Welcome to the Concours Family and let me hear from you!

SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

SOUTHERN AREA

by David Bramm

Greetings from the sunbelt and my heartiest congratulations to Rob Stevens, our beloved founder, who has brought COG from small talk to fruition. Motorcyclists are blossoming with the dogwoods here in the south and the spring and summer should provide good riding and hopefully more COG members.

I have an '87 Concours and got involved with COG through an ad in a national magazine. Since then correspondence with Rob has led me to prepare newsletter material. Although I have put less than 10,000 miles on my Concours, I agree with Denis Rouse of "Rider" that the ZG1000 is the most "incredible" sport tourer on the market.

My Concours has been from the Appalachians to the Natchez Trace and I will be in Richmond to further the COG cause. I would like to hear any ideas, comments, or complaints from Southern Concours owners; perhaps a Deep South Concours rally can be planned for September or October. In the future I would like to contribute articles on southern rides, accessories, and a topic I'm looking at now on a conditioning program specifically for Concours riders designed in conjunction with an orthopedist and physical therapist ("how to Make Your Iron Butt Last Another 300 Miles").

I will leave you all with a vital piece of information obtained from a Peace Corp. worker who spent 3 years in East Africa. There, when referring to a 4-stroke motorcycle one uses the Swahili word "Dukah Dukah," whereas the two-strokers are called "Ticka Ticka." When riding to Kilimanjaro, please keep this straight.