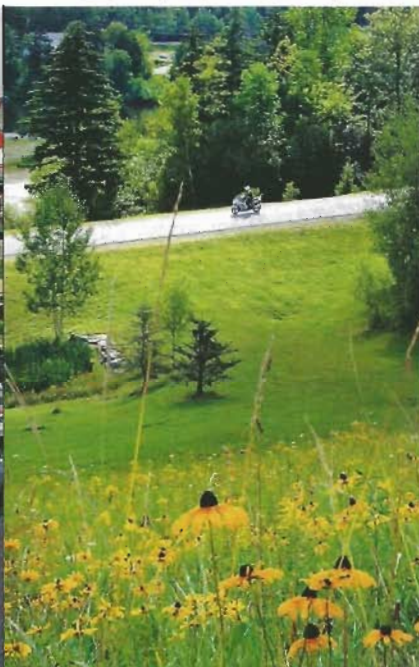


2011 COG National Rally

The Concours Owners Group celebrates 25 years of the Concours.

RALLIES & CLUBS

The Grand Summit Resort Hotel at Mount Snow turned over its main parking lot to the COG rally.



In 1986, Kawasaki introduced the Concours ZG1000, a turn-key sport tourer with a liquid-cooled engine, shaft drive and hard bags for just \$5,899, a fraction of the cost of the European competition.

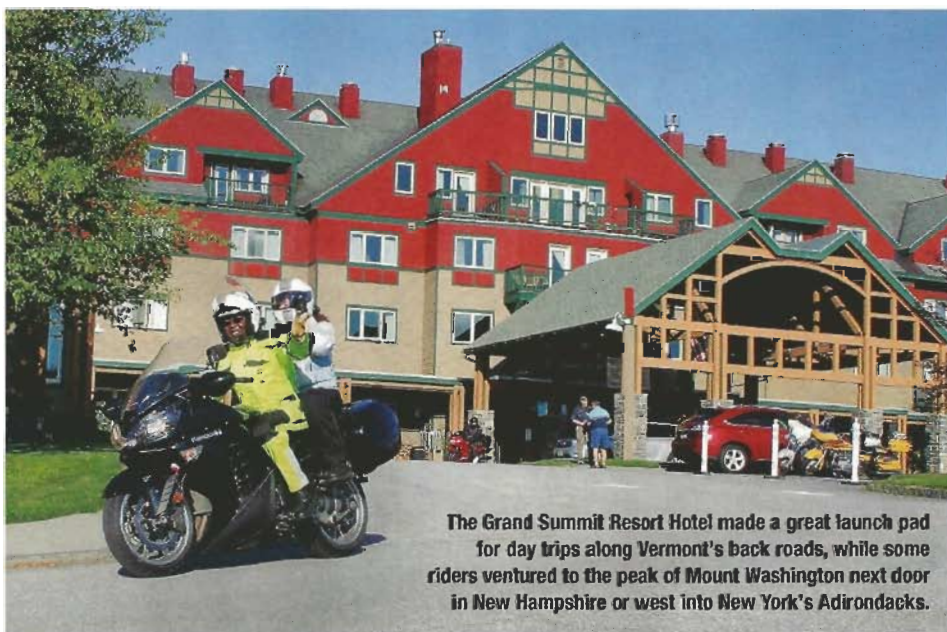
Not surprisingly, when *Rider* sponsored a rally in Cody, Wyoming, two years later, several riders showed up on the Concours. Among the post-ride tire-kicking at the rally, someone raised the idea of creating a club for owners of the new model.

Rob Stevens took the initiative, bought a magazine ad and sent out letters to gauge interest, and by the spring of 1989 he had enough commitments to form the Concours Owners Group (COG). Now, shift through time to another rally in 2011 at the Grand Summit Resort Hotel at Mount Snow in West Dover, Vermont, where hundreds of Concours owners, former Concours owners and people who ride other bikes but like to hang out with Concours owners are all gathered for the COG National Rally.

Riders' organizations come and go. Very few motorcycle models endure for 25 years. But plenty of

Above: Riders enjoyed the scenic back roads of the Green Mountain State.

Connies are still going strong, and so is COG (now with about 1,700 members). It just makes sense, really. The bikes are built for the long haul, and they attract that kind of rider.



The Grand Summit Resort Hotel made a great launch pad for day trips along Vermont's back roads, while some riders ventured to the peak of Mount Washington next door in New Hampshire or west into New York's Adirondacks.

Right: Joining an impromptu group ride during a COG rally is as simple as walking out to the parking lot in the morning and asking, "Where ya going today?"

"We're all serious motorcyclists," says Steve Smith, the volunteer Northeast Area Director for COG and thus one of the main hosts for the 2011 National Rally. "The folks who own these bikes are riders. That's the tie that binds. We're not the type to ride for 10 miles and then go home to polish the bike."

Evidence of that included multiple riders who showed up in Vermont from California, Oregon and Washington. More evidence was the emptiness of the parking lot during daylight hours, as Connies whirred off in singles, pairs and groups to sample the local roads.

And while the Concours, both first-generation and the newer C14, were clearly the most common bikes in attendance, there was plenty of diversity to be spotted in the parking lot, from multiple KLR650s to various non-Kawasakis such as Honda Gold Wings and even a Ducati Diavel.

All of which illustrates the club's slogan: "Join for the bike, stay for the people." COG is open to owners of all makes and models, and many former Concours riders remain active in the organization long after they've switched to another machine. Evidence of the camaraderie was everywhere, from the all-volunteer nature of the leadership, to the daily impromptu group rides that formed up in the parking lot to the popular after-dinner gatherings around the outdoor fireplace on the resort's patio every night for socializing, sharing stories of the day's ride, and planning the next day's route.

"Even if I didn't get to ride at all, this would make it all worthwhile," says Eddie Minter, one of the volunteer workers at the event.

In addition to COG's longevity, one element that demonstrates the strength of its grassroots support is an entirely unofficial, member-supported program called "Over The Pond." Each odd-numbered year, the members of the European equivalent of COG select one lucky



The camaraderie and COG's slogan, "Join for the bike, stay for the people" was evident wherever you went.



The August timing was perfect as attendees enjoyed great weather and were able to sample Vermont's backroads before Hurricane Irene washed away several of them.

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rider RALLIES & CLUBS

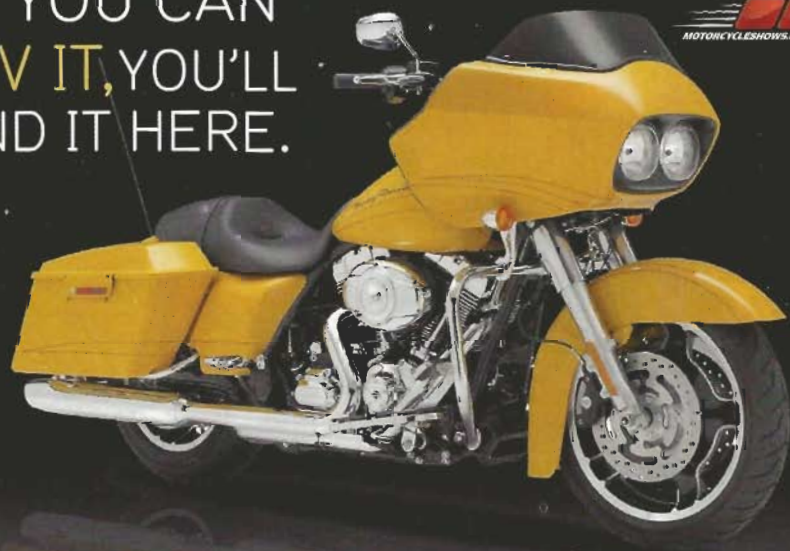
rider to travel to the national rally in the United States. The trip is paid for by voluntary donations. In even-numbered years, a U.S. rider is sent to the European rally. This year's lucky winner was Bernd Neumann from Germany, who decided to share his good fortune and made sure that his friend Gie Lambeir of Belgium (who had come in second in the voting two consecutive times) could join him. Neumann flew to Colorado, picked up a borrowed first-generation Concours and rode to the Kawasaki plant in Nebraska, where a Kawasaki executive handed

Below: Blaise Brojakowski, left, leads a tech session on balancing the carbs on a first-generation Concours.



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him the electronic fob to a new Concours C14 to use for the rest of his trip. Lambeir joined him in Nebraska and rode the older bike. They were hosted by COG members as they crossed the country, riding through sites as varied as the Blue Ridge Parkway and midtown Manhattan.

"To me, it really was a trip of a lifetime," Nuemann said.

Coming from Europe, Nebraska was a new experience for him, too: "I had never heard from my GPS, 'Ride 735 kilometers and turn left.'"

While the original Concours soldiered on in Kawasaki's lineup for 20 years with only minor changes, the Concours terrain shook in 2007 when

the new C14 was introduced, totally different from the old bike but still carrying the Concours name. The old bike attracted what Smith calls the "frugal Connie buyer" who wanted a basic but competent sport-touring machine. The C14, on the other hand, is packed with features, from its KI-PASS key fob ignition to its electrically adjustable windscreen and even a slipper clutch for the sporty side of sport touring.

"We still get the same like-minded riders," Smith says, "but we knew the new bike was going to bring in a new type of buyer. It's bringing in new faces."

That helps ensure that COG, like the bike that spurred its creation, will be around to see its 25th anniversary, too.

The 2012 COG National Rally is scheduled for June 11-15 in Eureka Springs, Arkansas. Visit www.concours.org for more information. 



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The "Over the Pond" riders, Bernd Nuemann, left, of Germany, and Gie Lambeir, of Belgium, pose with their borrowed rides.

Vermont's backroads offer mountain views in a convenient, day-ride-size package.

