

A few of the party revelers send their greetings from Margaritaville.



Hogs on the High Seas Rally

Harley enthusiasts take to the sea

story and photos by Marilyn Stemp



Let's say there are two million Harley-Davidson riders in the United States. That would mean that about 1,999,200 of you missed out on a unique riders' rally and a great time in the western Caribbean last November. I refer to the 2003 Hogs on the High Seas Rally, orchestrated by Debbie and Dean Anderson, and located, among other places, on Royal Caribbean's Voyager of the Seas, one of the largest cruise ships afloat.

At first it sounds incongruous; a Harley riders' rally on a cruise ship? How could that venue possibly allow for all the usual rally activities that participants might expect? Who came up with this idea, you might ask. Well, several years ago, motorcycle enthusiasts Dean and Debbie Anderson found themselves at yet another typical rally—in the rain, no less. There had to be a way, they thought, to breathe fresh air into activities that had become rather routine, even boring, for seasoned enthusiasts. So within three months, Dean and Debbie bought a cruise franchise, started negotiations with Royal Caribbean and began 15 month's worth of planning and sleep deprivation.

So how does this work? Really well, as it turns out. First, you line up a group of high-profile aftermarket vendors such as Perse Performance, Corbin, Hallcraft's Wheels, and Red-neck Engineering, to name a few. Add to this a poker walk, some vendor seminars and unique ocean-going biker games, along with the usual on-board activities you associate with a Caribbean cruise, not to mention exotic island ports of call.



Heading down the road to Hell. Hell, Grand Cayman, that is. Born to be wild, Diane Gates of Greenbrier, TN, mounts her scooter for a ride to Hell. This was the only two-wheeled time most HOHS folks got.



Ron Tominack is all smiles for Speed Vision's cameras after winning the Belly Flop Contest. Ron, on the cruise with his wife Jenny to celebrate their 25th anniversary and his retirement from 32 years as a teacher, rides with a group called Two Wheel Tuesdays in northeastern Ohio.

Plan on-shore parties at places like Jimmy Buffet's Margaritaville in Ochos Rios, the Hard Rock Café on Grand Cayman, and Carlos 'N Charlie's in Cozumel. Then, top it all with \$176,000 in cash and motorcycle related giveaways—including a brand new 100th Anniversary Road King as the grand prize. Add temperatures in the low 80's, plus plenty of sunshine, and you can't lose. Sure, it's a fact that participants couldn't bring their own bikes aboard the ship, but at a time of year when many riders have put their bikes in storage for the winter, the idea almost makes sense.

But the people who attended weren't concerned with making sense. They were preoccupied with

making merriment with 800 of their closest friends, and winning their share of the giveaway prizes. In fact, activities started even before we boarded the ship. People who arrived a day ahead could take part in a motorcycle ride from Miami, the ship's home port, to Islamorada in the Florida Keys. The ride was guided by H.O.G. members from Peterson's South Harley-Davidson. That same group, along with a police escort, made a spectacle of themselves the next morning by forming a 100-plus bike parade from Peterson's H-D to the port to board the ship.

Speaking of spectacles, a Harley-style wedding was in progress as the ship disembarked; Lester and

continued

Roxanne Morey exchanged vows and spent their honeymoon on the cruise. Far from boring, the days were filled with gatherings, vendor seminars, contests, and, of course, all the amenities you'd expect on a top-of-the-line cruise ship. Voyager of the Seas provided swimming pools and hot tubs, a complete spa and fitness center, rock climbing wall, library, internet café, food and dining options galore 24 hours a day, and bars at every turn. Four ports of call—Labadee, (Royal Caribbean's private island,) Ochos Rios, Jamaica, Georgetown, Grand Cayman, and Cozumel, Mexico—allowed participants time for beaching and exploring along with raucous party behavior at those popular venues. The party at Margartaville's beachside pool bar provided an easy way to meet other cruisers in a festive ambience. And despite the slow service, we still managed to rack up a bar bill that resembled a California mortgage payment.

As you can imagine, the logistics involved in this undertaking were enormous. "This had never been done before. It was a first for everything," said Dean Anderson. For example, display motorcycles, placed inside cargo containers, were loaded by crane from the dock directly onto Deck Two, some 40 feet up. And that was the easy part. Who knew if the bikes would fit in the ship's elevators to be moved around on the various decks? Dean credits Captain Howard Newhoff, head of security for Royal Caribbean, as being the Anderson's



inside man. "Along with being a Harley rider and enthusiast, Howard was the middleman who got things done, knew all the right people, and in general helped us convince Royal Caribbean that today's Harley riders were not the images on TV movies from the '60s," explained Dean.

The ship's largest conference room served as the vendor midway. Wonder how Tom Langton came up with his wild design for last year's Camel bike? Want to know the engineering behind Baker's latest right-side drive tranny or are you curious about Legend Air's suspension system? Have questions about Mid-



Cruise directors Debbie and Dean Anderson had the entire trip mapped out, right down to that fancy plaque at Carlos 'n Charlie's. How'd they manage that?

USA's new PowerHouse engine? No problem. A week at sea provided ample time to trade tech tips or customizing tricks, and to swap riding yarns with industry experts in an unhurried atmosphere.

What else? A closed circuit HOHS TV channel and daily itineraries kept cruisers apprized of happenings. Speed Channel had the cameras rolling all week long, too. Companies such as Ridley, Motor Trike, Cycle Care, Luster Lace, and Segal Fine Art, among others, offered seminars.

Scheduled events ended each night with a giveaway where thousands of dollars in prizes were



Plenty of H-D dealer employees and H.O.G. club members were present, too. Here Rick and Chris Mainville of Harding H-D in Corning, NY, prepare to hoist...sail?



And yet more smiles for the camera, this time from Lorraine DiFiore, winner of the '03 Road King that all cruisers were eligible to win. Lorraine's husband (left) was happy, too.



"Check out the size of those exhaust pipes," proclaims Marilyn Stemp upon returning from Margaritaville. Eat your heart out Denis Manning and Gerald Rinehart. What do you expect from a vehicle with six diesel engines at 12 cylinders per, for a total output of 102,000 horsepower?

awarded, compliments of the rally's vendors. Giveaways included Windvest windshields, art reproductions from Hippodrome Studios, pewter models from Franklin Mint, Driven Gear bike lifts, aluminum hoops from Ego Tripp Wheels, and boots from Red Wing Shoes. Each night winning participants walked away with gifts such as Baker 6-speeds, complete trike conversion kits, chopper frames, cleaning and detailing kits, spoke wheels, weekend motorcycle rentals, or prescription riding glasses. One lucky cruiser even won a free stateroom for next year's rally. No need to buy raffle tickets, either; if you booked the cruise with Hogs on the High Seas, you were automatically entered for all the drawings.

The Andersons had planned to fill half of the ship with HOHS folks for the inaugural cruise, ending up with 805 rally goers from 43 states and Canada. The other half of the ship's passenger contingent must have been surprised, discovering our biker crowd already on board when they arrived. But most seemed receptive or downright eager to join us. Some stayed for the group antics such as the belly flop and bikini contests, joining us later at the bar to learn more about our bikes. No



Vendor Row was well stocked, and manned. Doug Dober from Windvest screens a question from a cruiser.

doubt, new recruits to the H-D legion signed on as even now, several months later, there are probably women in New England, Colorado and the south of France trying to talk their husbands into—or out of—buying Harleys. The Andersons even got e-mail from passengers on other cruise ships that same week, saying they had their best cruise ever just by following our party crowds on shore.

The ship's crew got into the act, too. Any questions regarding the sea of black leather that flooded the swanky dining rooms on formal night were answered the following evening when wait-staff arrived for duty wearing biker T-shirts and HOHS do-rags.

We brought back plenty of memories, too, such as watching as the ship's distinguished Captain Svein Pettersen—surrounded by fog and several of the Purrfect Angelz dance team—rose up through the stage floor astride the Grand Prize Road King just minutes before drawing the winning ticket. Then there were those two guys who entered the bikini contest, which, frankly, the world could have lived without, but they added to the reverie that occurs when a crowd like this gets together.

Lest you think this was all for fun,

2003 HOHS Vendors

American Road Collection
Baker Drivetrain
Corbin
Cycle Care
Doc Bailey Leather Care
Driven Gear
Franklin Mint
EgoTripp Wheels
Flying Pig Eyewear
Hallcrafts Wheels
Hippodrome Studios
Luster Lace
Legend Air
Mid-USA Motorcycle Parts
Motor Trike
Perse Performance
Redneck Engineering
Redwing Shoes
Ridley Motorcycles
Rumble Customs
Segal Fine Art
Wiley-X Eyewear
Windvest
HOHS

you should know that charity work is a part of the HOHS Rally, like so many biker gatherings on terra firma. Proceeds from events such as the poker walk, biker bingo and 50/50 raffle—up to \$10,000—were generated for Dialysis at Sea, a service that provides staff and equipment for people suffering from kidney failure. As many as 14 fellow riders who are generally limited to just two days away from their resident dialysis centers can now join the cruise in 2004 thanks to money raised on the 2003 cruise.

Oh, yes, the second annual Hogs on the High Seas cruise leaves the Port of Miami November 6-13, 2004. Events added this time include a Photo Bike Show with winners pictured in this magazine, more games and contests, and get this—instead of a stock Harley, some lucky cruiser will win a full-blown "pirate edition" custom bike built from scratch. How's that float your boat?

So get on board—literally. Then get ready to party, me hearties.

Resource

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