

Motor Maids roar into town for national convention



About 400 women motorcyclists and their guests from across the U.S. and Canada came to the 72nd annual Motor Maids National Convention. The event will be held this week at the Spartanburg Marriott. On Tuesday, the group rode from the Spartanburg Marriott to downtown Chesnee.

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More than 400 women from across the United States and Canada rumbled into Spartanburg to celebrate the 72nd convention of the oldest continuously operated ladies motorcycle organization.

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- [Motor Maids in Spartanburg take to the road](#)

Motor Maids was established in 1940 to unite female motorcyclists and promote a positive image of motorcycling. The group has more than 1,200 members, yet only 20 are "Golden Life" members. These ladies have 50 consecutive years of active riding membership.

Among them is Betty Fauls, 80, of Florida. Her mother, Dot Robinson, co-founded Motor Maids. Fauls rode her late mother's pink Harley-Davidson motorcycle to the conference, which is being held at the Spartanburg Marriott in downtown this week.

Fauls joked she learned motorcycling through "osmosis."

She was a teenager when she and her mother took a 15,000-mile trip on their motorcycles.

"Mom figured I was going to meet some guy and she wanted to show me the country," she said.

"My first ride on a bike was at 6 weeks old," Fauls said. She was placed in a sidecar with hot water bottles and blankets.

Gloria Struck, 87, of New Jersey left for Spartanburg on her birthday.

It was a "short" ride, 737 miles.

"That's nothing," Struck said.

Her longest ride was 7,450 miles; part of it was through the Mojave Desert in 124-degree heat.

Struck said she never wanted to ride a motorcycle. Her brother talked the once quiet, shy girl into it.

"I said, 'I don't wanna ride a motorcycle.' Well, 71 years later, I'm still riding," Struck laughed.

She was motorcycling in the 1940s, but really took to the road in 1950 on a new Harley-Davidson. She was featured in a magazine and received several letters from male admirers wanting to meet her.

Struck has wanted to ride through Europe since 25. "All of a sudden, one day I was 74, and I hadn't done it yet." She and her son rode through the Alps, Austria, Germany and other areas.

They returned for a second trip a couple years later, riding more than 4,000 miles in eight countries.

Margaret Wilson's first motorcycle came as complete surprise. The Harley-Davidson was a present from her husband, Mike, for her 26th birthday. After his military service, the World War II veteran purchased a motorcycle. On his way home, he remembered it was her birthday. Wilson had ridden on the back of his motorcycle, but never considered driving one herself.

Now 92, the Iowa woman is still riding. She and her husband have ridden through all 48 states in the continental United States and visited 10 Canadian provinces in the course of a three-month journey. Wilson has been inducted into the American Motorcyclist Association's Hall of Fame.

Glenda Harmon's mother was a Motor Maid. The 67-year-old Kentucky woman learned to drive at age 9, and Harmon has been a Motor Maid since 16.

Harmon can't tell you her longest trip in mileage. She only recently purchased an odometer. She does remember the duration, though, three months. The starting point was Kentucky, and the destination? "Anywhere." She simply set out to ride.

"I ride fast enough to scare me, so it keeps me awake," she said.

Ev Straight, 86, of Montana, got her first motorcycle in 1950. At the time, she couldn't even ride a bicycle. She recently fulfilled her dream of riding the Blue Ridge Parkway.

She did not realize how beautiful the region was until the 370-mile journey on a Yamaha.

"It was wonderful. Those mountains are just gorgeous," Straight said.

Straight met Kathy Anderson, 88, at a Sturgis, S.D., motorcycle rally.

Anderson stopped riding about four years ago due to health issues, including a hip replacement. Yet the Minnesota woman still attends the annual conventions. She has served three terms as president and held other offices in the Motor Maids organization.

Anderson said there was a "pleasant surprise" at every gas stop. And she's made many wonderful memories. Her husband asked her if she wanted to drive his motorcycle. And she did. His motorcycle got a little crowded after their two daughters were born. That's when he purchased Anderson an Indian Warrior.

There is no single reason why motorcycling is a love and passion for the women.

It's therapeutic, they say.

"We have a saying, 'You'll never see a motorcycle parked inside of a psychiatrist's office,' " Harmon said.

Struck most enjoys the people she has met through motorcycling.

She's made life-long friends, wonderful people she says, especially fellow Motor Maids, who shower you with cards if you're sick.

"This is a family," Harmon said.

And it's a love that seems to be handed down. Anderson, Fauls and Struck all have daughters who are Motor Maids.

Members ride all models of motorcycles and they have ridden a total of more than 63 million miles, according to their statistics.

This is the organization's first convention in South Carolina since it formed in 1940 and "many of the original women who joined were motorcycle couriers in World War II," according to a written statement from the organization.

To learn more about Motor Maids, visit www.motormaids.org.