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Gateway Gazette

Gateway Riders BMW Club
The Legendary Riders of the Midwest

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President's Column

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Deadline for the next issue is February 10, 2017. The Gazette is published in February, April, June, August, October and December.

Hi Everyone!

Here we come to another end of the year closing of our beloved riding. We are blessed to live in a state that provides us with warm weather to ride right up to the end of a year. So, did you get enough riding in? Could you have ridden more? I know I could have, but of course things, life, and responsibility gets in the way.

As the year 2016 comes to a close, we can reflect on our accomplishments: finalization of our Constitution and Bylaws, granting two Lifetime Memberships, and having a successful rally. Thanks to Al Schroer for being the "lonely bean counter" that he is; he's managed to not only tidy up our general account with the use of spreadsheets, but also has taken on the financial responsibility for the rally. He's brought a level of understanding of how our club can operate more efficiently and peacefully. If I can say one thing about Al, he's certainly earned the title of "Financial Advisor." This job I was blessed with wouldn't have been as easy or enjoyable if it weren't for Dave Bissell. If it weren't for him wearing multiple hats and being the standup man that he is, I certainly would of had a tougher time, so thanks be to him! I can't go without commending the rest of our support team, our secretary and directors were always ready for issues that occurred. Thanks to all!

So, on to the elections! See where our journey for 2017 begins? Plan our trips and adventures as a club, as friends, and as fellow motorcyclists. I'm looking forward to next year, hoping I get more riding in...lol! Most of all, I hope you get more riding in because that means I'll have someone to ride with...hehe.

Jim

P.S. To Cathy Bissell who has done a fabulous job continuing to grow the club. Our club's future memberships are what keeps us strong! Thanks Cathy for your time and efforts.



On the Cover: Back in 2012, Santa Quindry arrived the Gateway Riders holiday party via vintage sidecar rig and snuggled up with Susan Anderson. Photo by Marilyn Roberts.

Winter 2016-2017 Events

Compiled by Jeff Ackerman, Events Director

Note: The ride starting points depend on the direction we are going:

NORTH: The QuikTrip at 2791 Dunn Rd.; it's the QuikTrip at New Halls Ferry and Dunn on the north side of I-270.

SOUTH: The McStop (McDonald's/Phillips 66) at Pevely (Exit 180 off I-55 at Z) OR the south end of the Dierberg's mall on Hwy. 21, just south of I-270 (on the left hand or east side of 21 at the first light) OR by the Pink Elephant on Hwy. 141 and Schneider Rd.; just north of Hwy. 21 (across the road from the QuikTrip at Hwy. 141 & Schneider).

WEST: The QuikTrip off I-70 (exit 222) by I-370 at Mid Rivers Mall (on the north side in St. Peters); or the BP just south of Hwy. 40 (I-64) on Long Rd.; or the QuikTrip in Eureka, just south of I-44 (exit 264) on 109.

EAST: The Dierberg's on 21 (south) or QuikTrip at 2791 Dunn (north) – See above.

Shop Rides: Forever Endeavor has shop rides every 3rd Saturday of the month, typically meet at 8:00/leave 8:15 (next rides are Jan. 21 and Feb. 18), followed by a hearty breakfast. Meet at the shop at 518 East Osage, in Pacific, MO 63069, 636-257-8343. Check first because of the weather and time of year.

NOTE: Starting in January, we are moving the weekday lunch get together on the second and fourth Wednesdays of the month to a new location. Meet at the Fazoli's at 12341 St. Charles Rock Rd, Bridgeton, MO; not quite a half mile east of I-270 on the north side of Rock Rd. at noon for lunch with some of your friends. Dave Mattis, 314-968-1186.

Winter Sunday Breakfast: Starting in January, we are going to try some Sunday "meet for breakfast" get togethers. For more info call: Dave Mattis, 314-968-1186.

1st Sunday of the Month: Meet at Uncle Bill's Pancake House at 14196 Manchester Rd., Ballwin, MO at 9 a.m. This is about 1/3 mi. east of Woods Mill/141 on the south side of Manchester.

3rd Sunday of the Month: Meet at the Daytime Cafe at 742 N. New Ballas Rd., Creve Coeur, MO, at 9 a.m. This is just south of Olive on the east side of Ballas.

Holiday Open Houses:

Dec. 17: (Saturday): Gateway BMW Holiday Open House from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. There will be lots of goodies and Honz is always making some great deals. If you are interested in a new bike, come prepared to buy.

Dec. 24: Donelson Cycles on St. Charles Rock Road is having their Christmas open house from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Good food, drinks, and other activities.

Events:

NOTE: We need volunteers for the New Year's Eve and St. Patrick's Day (or Valentine's Day if that is what you really want) parties.

* Dec. 31: We are still looking for a volunteer to host the New Year's Eve Party – The club buys the drinks and some snacks if you would like to volunteer. Please let Jeff know. If I find a volunteer, I will send out a note with the details.

* Jan. 1: New Year's Ride (weather permitting): Come join us for the perfect way to kick off the New Year with a fun and festive activity and get a start on that resolution to "Ride more in 2017." This will be a joint Gateway Riders/Jack's Pack New Year's day ride. Meet at the Jack's Pack departure location at the 7-Eleven on the northeast corner of Olive and N. Woods Mill Dr. and just west of 141 (13491 Olive Blvd, Chesterfield, MO 63017) Meet at 7:30/leave at 8:00. If you can't make the club ride, Jeff, the Events Director, will give anyone credit for any ride they take on New Year's Day (whether 1 block to 400+ mi.); just let him know. Dave Anderson, 978-395-5555.

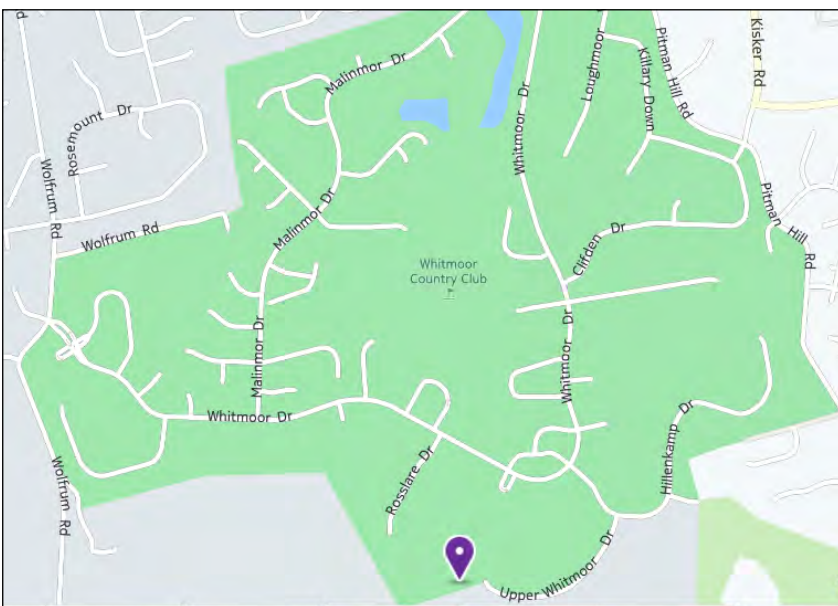
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January 14 & 15: 3rd Annual STL Motorcycle Show. There will be a local show again this year; last year it was a nice show. It is inside the dome at America's Center in Exhibit Hall #1 and #2. Hours: 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Saturday and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday. There is a two for one entrance coupon and more information on the website. <http://stlmotorcycleshow.com/>. Two for one entrance coupons are also available at Gateway BMW.

* Jan. 18: Wednesday General Meeting at Miss Sheri's at 9967 Manchester Rd., St. Louis, MO 63122. When you come through the doors, the meeting room is to the left. They need us out by 8 p.m., so arrive no later than 6:30 p.m. if you plan on eating. Meeting starts at 7:00 sharp.

* Jan. 28: Ice Racing at the Family Arena in St. Charles. Racing starts at 7:30 p.m. Meet at the Cracker Barrel at 901 Fairlane Road, St. Charles, MO (just off 5th St. at I-70) at 5:30 if you want to have dinner with the group beforehand.

* Feb. 5: 51st Super Bowl Party with Jill and Al Schroer again this year. Bring snacks and your favorite beverage if you don't like beer or soda. The game starts in the late afternoon (around 5 p.m.), show up 1 hr. before game time for pre-game festivities. 8 Upper Whitmoor Dr., Weldon Spring, MO. 63304. See the map below. Al and Jill Schroer, 636-441-8038.



Feb. 14: We have had a St. Patrick's Day party in lieu of the Valentine's Day party the last few years because Valentines is so close to the Super Bowl. However, if you would like to host either a Valentine's Day or St. Patrick's Day party this year, please let Jeff know and we will get the information distributed.

* Feb. 15: Wednesday General Meeting at Miss Sheri's at 9967 Manchester Rd., St. Louis, MO 63122. When you come through the doors, the meeting room is to the left. They need us out by 8 pm, so arrive no later than 6:30 p.m. if you plan on eating. Meeting starts at 7:00 sharp.

* Feb. 26: "Woo's Folly" ride to Diamond Mineral Springs. Meet at the QuickTrip at 2791 Dunn Rd. at 9:45 a.m./leave 10:15. (We'll take cars if the weather is bad.) Jeff Ackerman, 314-838-2161.

Events that are starred * are point events. Any motorcycle rallies greater than 200 miles away or any BMW rallies are point rides, even if not listed. Note: See the MOA magazine or website: www.bmwmoa.org for more rally information.

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Summary of the 2016 Gateway Riders Events and Event Points

Compiled by Jeff Ackerman, Events Director

While the emphasis of the club is obviously riding motorcycles, there has been a lot of hard work done by many of our members to make the wide variety of club events held this year possible. As usual, we had a number of traditional recurring events, like the rides to St. John Gildehaus and St. Patrick's in Ruma for their church dinners. We have also tried to expand the season a little by scheduling a December ride the last three years. We also added a club lunch on the second and fourth Wednesdays of the month late in the year and will try a bi-monthly breakfast over the winter. While these are like impromptu rides and aren't point events, they do allow the club members to socialize when the weather may not be suitable for riding. I want to thank Dave Mattis for organizing both the lunch and breakfast get togethers. This article briefly summarizes the club activities for the last year. The 2016 season started with last year's Christmas party (Dec. 2015) and ended with Phil's "I'm sick of turkey ride," a brisk last ride of the season to the Forever Endeavor Holiday Open House on November 26. It is good to see the club has a number of newer members that are going on many of the rides.

We had 38 club rides this year, counting the two tech sessions, that someone went on and I got an attendance roster for while we had 40 last year. There were 45 scheduled rides but 5 were canceled due to weather and I didn't get rosters for 2 more. However, I typically give credit to the ride leader or to anyone that may have showed up at the start of a canceled ride. Several of the canceled rides were later rescheduled. The number of cancellations was up slightly this year to 5 while there had been 3 in the previous 2 years.

Ride leaders showed some flexibility again this year. Phil Sulstede turned the rider's choice to the Washington County Fair in Potosi (where we hold the rally), into a "bring out your airhead ride" with Phil, Marilyn Roberts, and Doug Schneider all riding their classic airhead BMWs, and Phil's "I'm sick of turkey ride" ended at Forever Endeavor's open house where they had lots of goodies, but no turkey.

I listed 13 rallies this year, vs. 16 last year. However, we attended more of the rallies with 10 of the 13 attended this year vs. only 8 out of 16 last year. Last year was a bad year for conflicts between rallies with the Iowa and Missouri; the Dink's and Trail of Tears; and the Hoosier and RAMS rallies conflicting with each other on the same weekends. While we went to more rallies this year, the average attendance at each rally fell about 25% from 8.1 last year to 6.1 this year. I may drop a couple of rallies, like the Georgia rally and "Chicken rally" which haven't had any attendance for a couple years. Interestingly enough, the member attendance at the MOA National was 23 both this year and last year (also the previous year) even though Billings was much farther away than Hamburg. I also give credit for rallies that aren't specifically listed and we had a few members attend some of these other rallies. However, it is my observation that rally attendance in general appears to be declining at many of the Midwest rallies (your Event's Director has attended 9 rallies each of the last 3 years and 7 rallies each of the previous 3 years). The long term linear trend for Gateway Rider attendance at other club's listed rallies has fallen from slightly over 10 in 2006 to just fewer than 7 in 2016. Also, consider that even with good weather for the last two years at the Falling Leaf, we have probably had a couple hundred fewer attendees than we would have had a decade ago. Age is catching up with a number of rally goers, camping is looking less appealing, and the rally at Barber's certainly conflicts with the Falling Leaf.

In addition to scheduled events, we had a number of impromptu rides this year with Phil or others often sending out a "let's go riding" note or several different members posting on Facebook for nice days. Since Phil retired last year he isn't restricted to weekends anymore but was out of town quite a bit more this year than last year.

I did have fairly good success getting attendance rosters this year but it still takes more coaxing than it should for events that I don't attend. Remember, if you go to a rally, lead a ride, etc. please jot down the names and get them to me. Email works great and a number of members like C. Kerckhoff have done that. Phil does a good job carrying blank signup sheets in his saddlebags while several members email me a list. There were several events, like some of the rallies or Rider's Choice, where I believe that some members attended but for which I never got a roster or only a partial roster. I would love to give people credit for all the events they attend, however, clairvoyance doesn't work. If you don't tell me, I don't know, so please get me those attendance rosters.

The average attendance at rides was down this year while the attendance at parties was up again this year. We had 5 club sponsored parties again this year, with the Christmas party and the (empty) pool party. The St. Patrick's Day party has replaced the Valentine's party as a regular party. In addition, we also had the hot dog roast the week after the rally and Ron Bier had a BBQ at his house in September. I want to thank all the members who served as hosts for the parties.

The Christmas party at the Ameristar Casino in 2015 was a huge success other than a couple members getting food poi-

soning at the banquet. The attendance was up from the previous year with 72 members and 17 guests. This is the largest attendance that I can remember. The pool party had the same attendance with 31 members and 1 guest vs. 29 members and 3 guests last year. This was good considering the pool was empty for the party, having developed a bad leak right before the party. Again this year, we had the hot dog roast after the rally at Phil’s house and didn’t have the hay ride. I have considered the hot dog roast, along with the Progressive Dinner and Ron Bier’s BBQ as “eating events” rather than as parties.

We also had 10 general meetings (excluding the Pool Party meeting), and the 41st Falling Leaf rally this year. Having a December general meeting separate from the Holiday party was something new we did this year.

The weather for the rally was good again this year and 486 attended, down some from the 612 who attended our 40th, with the raffle bike last year. Only 50 Gateway Riders attended the Falling Leaf this year, down from the 63 last year. A summary of attendance at the various types of events is given below along with the best attended (maximum attendance) for each type of event: meetings, rides, and parties.

The Progressive Dinner and Christmas party remained the most popular ride and party, as they have been for more than the last ten years. The Christmas party was the most attended event in at least the last several years with 72 members and 17 guests. The best attended meeting this year was April with 43 members followed by May with 40. The best meeting attendance last year was August with 53 members (the best meeting attendance I have recorded).

Three sets of average attendance numbers are shown below; the first set is calculated on the 38 local club rides including the two technical sessions but doesn’t include rallies. The second set includes the 38 rides plus 9 rallies I listed. The third set shows the attendance average for just the 9 rallies I listed (w/o the Falling Leaf, which would distort the numbers). All these averages don’t include the canceled rides or for rallies and rides for which I didn’t get a roster. They are based on members only, and don’t include guests. We typically have one to several guests at each event, so total attendance is even higher than shown here.

Attendance Summary:

Event Type	2016 Average Attendance	2015 Average Attendance	2016 Maximum Attendance	2015 Maximum Attendance	Most Attended Event
Rides (w/o rallies) (with rallies)	9.2 – down 6% 8.6 – down 10%	9.8 9.5	47	45	Ride: Progressive Dinner
Listed Rallies (w/o Falling Leaf)	6.1 – down 25%	8.1	23	23	MOA National
Parties	36.4 – up 10%	33.0	72 + 17 guests	56 + 7 guests	Christmas; largest event
Meetings	34.0 – down 11%	38.2	43	53	April in ’16; August in ’15
Falling Leaf			50	63	

The weather canceled 5 rides this year compared to 3 in 2015. Attendance was down slightly in 2016, after being up significantly last year but was still slightly above 2014 levels. Newer members make up a significant portion of the local ride attendance. The big drop was the average attendance at the rallies. While we went to more rallies (10 vs. 8), the attendance at each dropped ~25%, from 8.1 to 6.1 and are also lower than the 2014 numbers (7.2). Surprisingly, the Gateway Riders won the “Largest Club in Attendance” at two rallies this year, Kansas and the RAMS rally. This is partially due to Craig Pelletier making sure that the club was signed up for largest attendance rather than perhaps having the largest attendance. The attendance at the MOA National was 23 both last year and this year (and at St. Paul in 2014). I guess the allure of riding out west last year was enough to overcome the much longer distance to Billings over Hamburg this year. We often only had 2 members attend some nearby rallies where the club used to have a group of 5 – 10 or more attending. However, the club did have large groups (5 or more) at the Kansas rally, the Hoosier rally, and the RAMS rally this year. I encourage everyone to think about attending more rallies next year; they are always a good time. It does appear that we are getting lots of new members and a wider mix of members on the club rides, which is good for the future of the club.

Attendance at meetings was down 11% this year and is at the lowest level in several years. However, the attendance at the club parties was up another 10% this year to 36.4 (after being up 11% last year). The club sponsors the parties, so it’s good to see more people taking advantage of most of the parties. At year end, I showed 118 members. About 88% of the members (104 out of 118) attended at least one event this year as compared to about 86% of the members (97 out of 113)

last year. However, the median number of events attended was 4 this year, down from 6 last year and 7 the previous year. It looks like we are getting more members that only attend a few events a year plus the number of new members at the end of the year both reduced the median attendance (new members could only go to a few events before year end). Overall membership appears to be up both of the last two years (118 vs. 113 vs. 107).

Ride Leaders: These are the people who spend their time and effort to arrange, organize, facilitate, and lead rides or events. Only 10 members (roughly 1 in 12) were ride leaders this year, down from 13 last year and 16 the year before. This is disappointing and the club can't have rides if no one is willing to lead them. It is time for more members to step up and lead just one ride a year. If a few more members would lead just one ride it would make it easy to fill out the ride schedule every time and provide a wider variety of rides. If you don't like the pace of the club rides or the destinations, you can solve this by leading a ride to where you want to go, at the pace you want to ride. Without the hard work of the ride leaders, we wouldn't have the wide variety of events that we have, which is the main reason to have the club. Ride leadership includes items like the Floyds and Al Schroer organizing the Christmas party or Phil often taking his grill to events. While some rides may be a simple, straight from memory ride, like leading the group to St. John's Gildehaus, others take hours of planning and preparation to organize and execute like the camp out events or GS rides. I would like to thank Phil Sulfstede for really stepping up to leading rides (both scheduled and impromptu) as usual this year. He always finds some of the best scenic routes to lead the group on. Jeff Ackerman also led a large number of rides including a GS ride and some backroad rides this year. Chris Kerckhoff, Jim Shaw, Ron Bier, and Mary Ackerman all continue to lead a number of rides. I also want to thank all the others who led a ride or otherwise helped make an event happen this last year.

Ride Leaders (people who led a ride or helped make an event happen):

Member	Number of Rides Led '16	2016 Rank	Member	Number of Rides Led '15	2015 Rank
Sulfstede, Phil	11	1	Sulfstede, Phil	8	1
Ackerman, Jeff	6	2	Ackerman, Jeff	7	2
Bier, Ron	4	3	Floyd, Larry	4	3
Kerckhoff, Chris	4	3	Kerckhoff, Chris	4	3
Shaw, Jim	4	3	Bier, Ron	3	5
Ackerman, Mary	3	6	Ackerman, Mary	2	6
Floyd, Larry	1	7	Bissell, Cathy	2	6
Floyd, Sharon	1	7	Bissell, Dave	2	6
Green, Jay	1	7	Shaw, Jim	2	6
Williams, Jim	1	7	Floyd, Sharon	1	10
			Green, Jay	1	10
			Halbert, Mike	1	10
			Williams, Jim	1	10

Hosts: Being an event host garners the most points per event, 5, because it requires the most work. I really want to thank everyone that took the extra effort to serve as a host for our various club events this year. Phil Sulfstede hosted 3 events this year. Phil had two at his house, with Mary Baker graciously helping plus he brought his grill and helped BBQ at the pool party. Mary Baker, Dave Leligdon, Ron Bier, and Tammy Hatchard were all hosts twice. Other hosts for parties and the Progressive Dinner included the Ackerman's, Dave and Tracy Anderson, the Bissells, the Diazs, the Robertses, and the Schroers.

Event Points Ranking: The table below has the top ten event point rankings for 2016 as well as statistics from last year. Most of the names are similar, accounting for the fact that some just below the top ten last year climbed into the top ten this year while others just fell out. The points were more spread out this year than last year, where several positions were determined by the final ride of the season. However, there were still only 11 points between the 6th and 10th places this year. The points are a combination of the number of events attended (see the second table below) along with the credit given per event (e.g. being a host at 5 points is worth 2 ½ rides at 2 points). Again this year we awarded two points to anyone writing an article for the *Gazette* to encourage submitting. This really helps Marilyn fill out the *Gazette* and added to the points count for a number of members. However, it would be nice for a few more members to write some articles so Marilyn isn't compelled to keep writing articles to fill out the newsletter (she wrote 6 this year). Jeff Ackerman held on to first this year and earned 2 more points than last year by attending 1 more event. Jim Shaw moved into second place by earning significantly more points (83 vs. 59) while Phil Sulfstede fell to 3rd place. Phil is spending more time traveling and to New Orleans after retiring and didn't make near as many events this year (but did keep up his great work as a ride leader and host).

Event Points Ranking:

Member:	Rank 2016	Points 2016	Member:	Rank 2015	Points 2015
<u>Ackerman, Jeff</u>	1	94	<u>Ackerman, Jeff</u>	1	92
<u>Shaw, Jim</u>	2	83	<u>Sulfstede, Phil</u>	2	91
<u>Sulfstede, Phil</u>	3	73	<u>Kerckhoff, Chris</u>	3	61
<u>Anderson, Dave</u>	4	67	<u>Shaw, Jim</u>	4	59
<u>Leligdon, Dave</u>	5	59	<u>Anderson, Dave</u>	5	57
<u>Green, Jay</u>	6	54	<u>Floyd, Larry</u>	6	55
<u>Ackerman, Mary</u>	7	48	<u>Green, Jay</u>	6	55
<u>Kerckhoff, Chris</u>	8	47	<u>Bissell, Dave</u>	8	51
<u>Roberts, Marilyn</u>	8	47	<u>Leligdon, Dave</u>	8	51
<u>Leslie, Rich</u>	10	43	<u>Bissell, Cathy</u>	10	50
<u>Schroer, Al</u>	10	43			

Events Attended Ranking: Number of club events (including rallies) attended by the member.

The events attended rankings were mostly similar to last year, with some moving up slightly and some moving down slightly. Jeff Ackerman was first again this year by attending 41 events. Jim Shaw swapped places with Phil Sulfstede, with Jim coming in second by attending 10 more events while Phil fell to fourth by attending 10 fewer. Dave Anderson took over third place by attending 5 more events. Rich Leslie just made the top ten in events attended while Mary Ackerman and the Bissells just missed out. The differences between points and number of events attended shows the impact of *Gazette* articles plus being a host and ride leader on the final point count. Phil went to fewer events than Dave Anderson (28 vs. 33) but had 6 more points by being first in leading rides and being host.

Events Attended Ranking:

Member	Number of Events in 2016	2016 Rank	Member 2015	Number of Events in 2015	2015 Rank
<u>Ackerman, Jeff</u>	41	1	<u>Ackerman, Jeff</u>	40	1
<u>Shaw, Jim</u>	38	2	<u>Sulfstede, Phil</u>	38	2
<u>Anderson, Dave</u>	33	3	<u>Murray, Ron</u>	28	3
<u>Sulfstede, Phil</u>	28	4	<u>Shaw, Jim</u>	28	3
<u>Green, Jay</u>	27	5	<u>Anderson, Dave</u>	27	5
<u>Leligdon, Dave</u>	27	5	<u>Bissell, Dave</u>	27	5
<u>Schroer, Al</u>	25	7	<u>Green, Jay</u>	27	5
<u>Murray, Ron</u>	24	8	<u>Bissell, Cathy</u>	26	8
<u>Kerckhoff, Chris</u>	23	9	<u>Kerckhoff, Chris</u>	26	8
<u>Leslie, Rich</u>	23	9	<u>Schroer, Al</u>	25	10

Overall, the club did well this year with the number of events and the fact that ride attendance is only down slightly (6%) after significant growth last year (up 15%). Phil and Jeff have held the top two spots for points earned, rides led, and number of events attended for a number of years with Phil just falling to third in event points this year while Jim Shaw has consistently been in the top five for years. His recent retirement has allowed Jeff to earn more points by attending more events. Phil, on the other hand, has used his recent retirement to take a number of long trips and thus his points and attendance have decreased slightly due to his travels. However, Phil is still number one in leading rides, which is probably the most important attribute for the club. Jim has been retired longer and has climbed into second place for points and events attended while being third in leading rides. After Jim, Phil, and Jeff, the names and the values for the points and events attended are similar with some moving up slightly and some moving down slightly for most of the top ten. To make Marilyn’s life easier, more people need to step up and write more articles for the *Gazette* like Jeff (4), Dave Anderson (3), plus Tracy Anderson, Larry Floyd, and Dave Leligdon all writing 2 articles. Certainly a fun ride or rally should be worth an article or two a year out of every member.

A bright spot for the club is that we continue to have an influx of new members. Many of them are attending a number of events including rides. Hopefully, we will see the newer members on the leader list in the near future and can get them to organize and lead some new rides.

I look forward to seeing all of you on a number of the club rides in 2017, and remember, I am always looking for the next ride and/or event idea. Please let me know and I will get you on the ride schedule. **GR**

Chain-ge It Yourself

By Larry Floyd



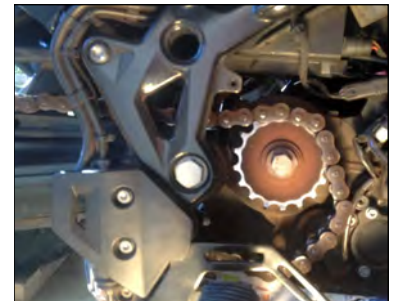
Chain and sprockets as they arrived from Sprocket City. With a name like that why would you not order there?

My annual "September in the Smokies" ride this year turned into "October in the Smokies" due to some unforeseen scheduling conflicts; however, the change turned out to be serendipitous because the Fall colors were spectacular, the twisty roads scrumptious, and the temperatures absolutely balmy. My F700GS proved to be the perfect vehicle for the trip. It is an ideal size, weight, and configuration for me. It does depart from the BMW motorcycle standard by having a chain instead of a shaft drive. While lubricating the chain during my trip, I noticed the chain tension was getting a little sloppy and, on further inspection, found the rear sprocket looking worn. At 39,XXX miles, that was hardly a surprise. It was either time to trade in the motorcycle or develop a new skill - removing and replacing the drive chain and sprockets. I chose the latter.

According to information gleaned from several sources, a modern motorcycle chain should last about 20,000 miles before needing replacement. I had my chain replaced at about that last year during my extended trip to the MOA National Rally, but did not change the sprockets at the same time. Most sources of information on drive chains recommend changing the chain and both sprockets at the same time as they tend to wear down as a unit. I found some other sources that seemed to think replacing the chain every 20K and the sprockets every 40K was OK. Regardless of what you find on the internet or hear from "experts," I think it best to inspect the sprockets and chain at regular intervals and do the maintenance when the parts show wear rather than use an arbitrary mileage figure to dictate your actions.

Wear and tear on the chain and sprockets can be easily assessed by visual inspection and measurement. The rear sprocket teeth should appear uniform and symmetrical. When they start to look like "shark fins" then you know it is time for a change. The drive sprocket can only be inspected by removing the cover guard. This is done on my F700 by removing two screws. Chain wear results in stretching. This is evident when you have to adjust chain tension frequently and can be proven by measuring a set length of the chain. The BMW riders manual describes how to determine the acceptable amount of chain wear by measuring the distance between 9 rivets, with the maximum length being 144.30mm. Anything greater than that means the chain has stretched beyond the acceptable limits.

OK. My sprockets look like a school of sharks and I have been adjusting the chain tension frequently for the last couple of thousand miles. It's time to actually do something about it. I did a quick search and found all the information I needed at a website called Sprocket Center. My 2013 F700GS came with a 17 tooth front sprocket, a 42 tooth rear sprocket, and a 526 pitch chain with 116 links. Changing the number of teeth would change the gear ratio, and I have been quite happy with the performance so no need to mess with changing sprocket sizes. The 526 chain refers to the distance between the link pins and also the width of the plates. The chain pitch must match the sprockets, so you want to make sure you get the right one when you order. In this case, the company cut the chain to the proper 116 link length for me although I could have cut the unnecessary links out myself. The whole package, with free shipping, came to \$170, which, I think, is a reasonable cost for a 20,000 mile plus maintenance item. Everything arrived by UPS two days later, placed right on my doorstep.



Old front sprocket with old chain still loosely attached.

Now for the interesting stuff, actually removing the old parts and replacing them without screwing something up. After watching a couple of YouTube videos, I was ready to tackle the job. There is a distinct order to the process that needs to be followed. First, I removed the two retaining screws and the front sprocket cover. There is a big nut on the drive sprocket which has to be removed. Here is where the need to follow a specific order of steps becomes evident. If you take the chain off before removing the sprocket nut, there is no way to fix the sprocket in place to keep the wrench from turning the sprocket and not the nut. I left the transmission in gear and stepped on the rear brake to hold the sprocket before fitting a big breaker bar wrench on the head of the nut and giving it a hefty tug. Surprisingly, the retaining nut was not on all that tight and it spun free with relative ease. I left the front sprocket loosely attached to keep the chain in place for the next step, rear wheel removal.

I've taken the rear wheel off several times to change tires; it is not a difficult thing to do. Again, the BMW riders manual steps you through the process with good pictures and clear instructions. Once the rear axle was pulled, the wheel could

Continued on next page

be maneuvered forward and the chain slipped off of the rear sprocket teeth. Now the chain was resting on the floor, still attached to the loosened front sprocket.



Here comes the fun part, breaking the old chain so it can be completely removed. This step would be very difficult without the proper tool. I bought a Motion Pro PBR Chain Tool (left). The "PBR" stands for Press, Break, Rivet, which are the three functions needed to complete the chain removal and replacement process.

First, there is the Break step. The tool is fitted to one of the pins in the old chain and then tightened until the pin is pushed out and the link released. Now the chain is no longer continuous and you could remove it but it is better to leave it in place for now with the loose ends resting on the garage floor.

Remember the old front sprocket was left in place. At this point, it can be replaced with the new sprocket, again with the old chain loosely engaged. Once that is accomplished, you can attach the end of the new chain to the end of the old chain with a zip tie, and then the new chain can be pulled easily around the new sprocket without a lot of fuss or muss (right). The zip tie can be cut and the old chain discarded.



Now, the ends of the new chain have to be securely connected. Here come the Press and Rivet steps. The PBR tool is now set up to press the side plate onto the master link of the new chain. Once the side plate is in place, the tool is reconfigured for the Rivet step. The clear instructions included with the tool were much appreciated. When I was done, I could hardly tell which link I had just successfully riveted in place.



Rear wheel with old sprocket removed, new sprocket in place.

I then turned my attention to the rear wheel. Taking off the old rear sprocket required only removing the retaining nuts and doing a direct swap out. I put a little bit of blue LocTite on the nuts just to make sure they would not work their way loose. The rear wheel was then replaced. Remember, though, that the front sprocket nut could not be tightened until the rear wheel was set and the brake could be applied. This is a step that it would be very wise to double check. Having a front sprocket come spinning off when zipping around a corner would not be a pleasant experience. After tightening the front sprocket retainer, I adjusted the chain tension per the Riders Manual instructions. Just to be on the safe side, I went back and checked the tightness of every bolt and nut I had touched during the job. The final step was to replace the front sprocket cover and take the bike off the center stand.

Time to take a ride. During the Smokies trip, I noticed a lot of clunking in the drive train when rolling off the throttle approaching a curve and then whacking it back on coming out. After renewing the chain and sprockets, what a difference! I had apparently gotten used to the drive line slop because the wear occurred gradually. Now, the bike performs like it did when brand new.



New chain and sprocket on and tension adjusted per the manual. Ready to ride.

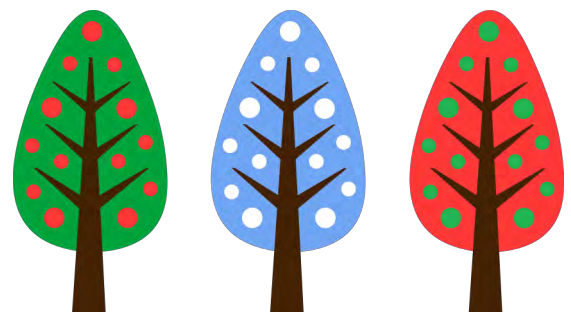
This was my first time replacing a motorcycle chain. It proved to be fairly easy, although without the right tools and instructions, it would have been nearly impossible. BMW shaft drives are clean and reasonably reliable but there is no reason to fear buying one of the chain drive models. Chains are a proven method for driving motorcycles and ATVs, and the maintenance and costs aren't that bad. **GR**

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This was the 2008 Woo's Folly ride to Diamond Mineral Springs restaurant in Grant Fork, Illinois. Looks a bit wet and snowy. We took cars that year. This annual ride will happen again in February!