

Trail Gazette

December 2015

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November 21, 2015 Meeting Minutes

President Bruce Reichelt called the meeting to order shortly after a noon potluck repast. The meeting was held at the Old Gas Station at Antique Powerland, Brooks, Oregon.

Officers in Attendance:

President Bruce, Treasurer Tom Ruttan, Vice President Chuck Hodson and your faithful secretary, Tom Krise. *[editors note: other officers are also faithful].*

Attendees:

Jackie Colwell & past-president Gene Walker. Also in attendance via speakerphone were Tom & Jen Nielsen.

Reports:

Last meeting minutes was given by Tom N. Tom R. gave the treasurer's report.

Tom K gave the correspondence report, which consisted of contacts and schedules for the 2016 Road Run, and status on the December 12 Christmas Party.

Old Business:

- Chuck has compared the various versions available of old bylaws and remarked that little has changed.
- No new information from the One Show.
- A selection of tapas were discussed and a down payment was made to THE DRUNKEN COOK for our December 12 Christmas Party (RSVP, kids!).

New Business:

- Discussion was held on having a ¼ page ad in the National Magazine. With deadlines and solid information at hand, Tom R Motioned and Tom K 2nd we place a ¼ page ad promoting our 2016 Road Run in the April-June ANTIQUE

MOTORCYCLE (National AMCA Magazine). Motion Passed.

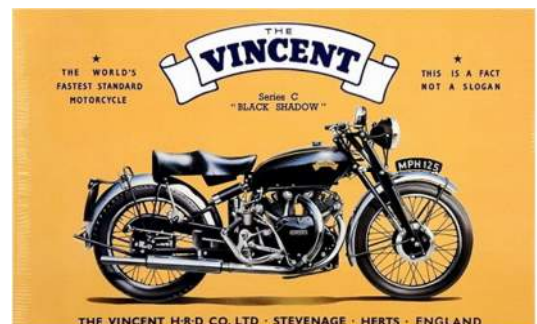
- Jackie motioned and Tom R 2nd we use the same prices as last year's run. Motion passed.
- It was suggested by Tom K. that we should be prepared to make a club 2016 calendar of events.
- Tom K. informed those present of his upcoming Airheads Beemer Club Tech Day the Saturday after Thanksgiving at his garage.
- Tom R. invited all to the December movie night at the NWCMM, with a screening of an incredible car journey in the very early 1900s.
- The next business meeting will be back at the Brooks Powerland Old Gas Station on January 30, 2016, at noon, with a potluck lunch.
- Tom K. Motioned and Tom R. 2nd that the meeting be adjourned. Motion passed.

Respectfully submitted by Tom Krise, Secretary.

NEXT MEETING: January 30, 2016

High Noon, The Old Texaco Gas Station,
Antique Powerland, 3995 Brooklake Road
NE, Brooks, Oregon.

It will be a Potluck.





Building the Perfect Crocker – Special Feature

Now the Greatest Generation's toys are worth a Great Deal of Money.

August 25, 2010 By [John Burns](#) (reprinted from Cycle News online)

<http://www.cycleworld.com/2010/08/25/building-the-perfect-crocker-special-feature/>



The problem is, according to master craftsman/restorer Steve Huntzinger, that it's almost impossible not to "over-restore" things like the 1936 Crocker you're looking at here. Even when you're working with what's commonly referred to as the Duesenberg of motorcycles, it's easy to overdo it with a level of perfection the original never quite achieved. There's always the temptation to polish or chrome what wasn't—the spokes, for instance. Who knows when in the last 74 years they were replaced, but whatever miscreant did the deed used four-flat spoke nipples. *Wrong!* Huntzinger had new two-flat nipples made for Crocker #14 and bead blasted them. No chrome, no polish. Engine cases get tumbled in some sort of sodium mixture that gives the look of the original casting, along with various bits of aluminum trim. And for God's sake, don't chrome what should be nickel plated or vice versa. Then there were the chain adjusters to think about. The old ones were beyond saving and new ones hard to come by, so Huntzinger's son made new ones from steel blanks, just like the originals, and those were cadmium plated, of course. The generator's not the original one, but now it has the correct serial number stamped on the correct blank plate, in the correct typeface, of course. The Champion sparkplugs are new old stock, 1936. A Willard battery box is not an easy thing to find, and an even harder thing to restore—but this one's perfect. Or looks like it would've been perfect in 1936.

It helps that Huntzinger had already restored five other Crockers and knows who to call, but it still seems slightly amazing that he was able to track down this bike's original Linkert carburetor and restore it to its original manifold. That's a partial

listing of the small stuff. Then it was time to build a new exhaust system, using photos and other Crockers for templates. For Huntzinger, who also restored Burt Munro's Indian and many other high-end machines, it's sort of all in a day's work. In the end, what you're looking at, they tell us, is the world's most perfect Crocker, which also might make it the world's most expensive motorcycle.

World's most expensive production motorcycle?

The most important man to call if Crockers are your thing is a retired high school teacher/administrator in La Mirada, California, named Chuck Vernon, keeper of the Crocker Registry. It's not a thick tome, since there are thought to be only 68 surviving original Crockers rolling around, and maybe 25 complete engines. Born in 1922, Vernon was apparently brought into the world to share information: He spent the entire Big One stateside training flight crews, training gunnery crews, teaching radio schools and radar crews (when they got around to inventing radar) for the Army. As of 2010, his brain is also "the reservoir of knowledge" when it comes to Crocker motorcycles, says Huntzinger. And Huntzinger, Vernon says, "doesn't know the meaning of the word 'shortcut.' He's not just a master craftsman, he's also a student who learns all he can before proceeding."



Huntzinger's technical ability came together with Vernon's first-hand encyclopedic knowledge to build what serious collectors agree is the reference standard Crocker, the closest thing to what Al Crocker and crew hand-built in their Los Angeles factory/foundry in 1936, a motorcycle for posterity. Vernon owned a '37 Harley-Davidson 61, and at some point during his travels went on a ride with a guy on a Crocker, swapped bikes for a while and never forgot the experience. Most of the V-Twin Crockers were also 61 inches (though built to be easily bored-out up to 90 c.i.), but they made a bunch more power than contemporary H-Ds and



Indians of the same displacement. According to Vernon, a stock Harley or Indian was good for around 95 mph, while a stock Crocker could do 110. Al Crocker knew how to make power; his Singles were the scourge of speedway racing for years before he turned his attention to big twin-cylinder "touring bikes." Not just fast, the Crocker was just plain trick, too, with its gearbox housing built as an integral part of its steel tube frame, and a tricky, cast aluminum gas tank. Number 14, the last one produced in 1936, was also the last "hemi-head" Crocker built. The hemi's splayed valves were closed by external valve springs that had a few problems. Later versions got fully enclosed, perpendicular valves.

In any case, so the lore goes, Al Crocker lost money on every bike he built, what with starting out in the middle of the Great Depression and giving people free upgrades and repairs and things. Selling for around \$550 new, the typical Crocker commanded about a 10-percent premium compared to its H-D and Indian competition. Just enough too much in the middle of the Depression, Vernon thinks, to keep them from becoming really popular. (That, and maybe that there were only like 100 ever built.) After switching over to the more lucrative production of airplane parts during the war, Al Crocker, for whatever reason, never did get around to resuming motorcycle production after it ended; Crocker Twins were produced for just six years, from '36 to '42, but they weren't forgotten by the loyal few who owned them or rode one.

After WWII, Chuck Vernon settled happily in SoCal and went to work as a high school teacher, riding the great postwar suburban boom and riding his old '37 Harley to work with a teacher buddy of his on back, as unusual then as today. It was the only motorcycle in the faculty lot for sure, he says. La Mirada was just slightly removed from the shadows of the defense plants that many people theorize sort of spawned the whole hot-rod movement. Or did those plants and the climate just attract pre-existing gearheads?

One of them was Ernie Skelton, a truck driver who happened to live around the corner from Vernon. Skelton was also a helluva salesman, Vernon recalls, endlessly proselytizing as to the superiority of the Crocker until the already susceptible Chuck was also ensnared in the Crocker web. In 1965, Vernon bought Crocker #39 for \$365. In '68 Skelton bought a Small Tank model for \$500. In *Camping at Canby Races*

a truck and trailer and dragged back "five or six bikes and a bunch of parts" from a guy who'd got

the last batch of Crocker stuff from a former Crocker employee named Elmo Loooper.

Five or six? Chuck, did you ever have any idea what these things would be worth? "Of course not," says Vernon, "otherwise I'd've kept every one of them. Although Ernie and I did often commiserate as to why such a great-performing, beautiful motorcycle didn't cost more than it did..."

Then again, you can't put a price on the good times Chuck and Ernie had riding around on their Crockers while they were still just nice motorcycles. It was Skelton, in fact, who began the Crocker Registry, and when he passed on to his reward in the mid-'90s, he passed the Registry on to Vernon. As a matter of fact, the bike you're looking at was originally restored by Skelton at some point and went away, only to re-emerge less than a decade ago in the Chicago area, whence it was repatriated to California and restored once again to its current immaculateness. Like the collectors are so fond of observing lately, we don't own these things, we're only stewards of them for a while (and all the better if we can make a *killing* on 'em).



Combining the talents of master craftsman Steve Huntzinger with the elephantine memory of the keeper of the Crocker flame, Chuck Vernon, resulted in the 1936 Crocker pictured here. By painstaking design, this is the "most correct" of the 68 Crockers known to still exist and for that reason the most valuable, so far. Serial #14 was the last of the hemi-head Crockers, identified by its external valve springs. Note correct pinstriping and decals, original Linkert carburetor, correct Willard battery box—and about a thousand other things we'll take Vernon's word for, since 1936 is kind of hazy for us...



Well, it's all about supply and demand, isn't it? And when you combine rarity with the natural animal attraction of a high-performance motorcycle and the David and Goliath tilting windmills aspect of the Crocker saga, what you've got on your hands is a Hollywood blockbuster. According to Don Whalen, who's in the business of brokering these kinds of deals (a good business to be in, it seems), *The Art of the Motorcycle* exhibit at the Guggenheim 10 years ago legitimized motorcycles as collectibles. Then, what happened to really spur the market was the death of Los Angeles publisher and collector Otis Chandler. The Chandler Collection's Crocker #55 (also restored by Steve Huntzinger) sold for \$236,500 at auction. Then in 2008, ex-Boozefighters President Jack Lilly's cool old green-and-white Crocker sold at auction for \$300k.

As for Crocker #14, we were even more careful with it than usual during its brief stay in our studio bay. After leaving us, it was crated up and shipped directly off to its new home somewhere in Louisiana, to live with an unnamed collector who prefers to remain anonymous. The sale price, we're told: 350,000 semolians. Such a shame you so often have to be deceased to see your dreams come true... Are there lessons to be learned? Of course. All other things being equal, it's probably better to be wealthy. How you get there is up to you. Hedge funds are so passé. But collecting rare, expensive motorcycles lately seems like a reasonably good bet. The time has come for something tangible you can toddle out to the garage to visit on an evening, and fire up in a cloud of expensive cigar smoke and Scotch fumes—ahhhh, the corporate pirate's life for me. (Or not. Word is, the new owner in Louisiana immediately encapsulated his new Crocker in a dehumidified chamber, probably a good idea given the climate.) Say, does anybody know how many Buell 1125RRs were made? You might want to throw one in your shed. And sit on it for 63 years or so... Here's to Al Crocker for doing the right thing, and to Chuck Vernon and his pal Ernie for making sure nobody forgot. Two pistons up!

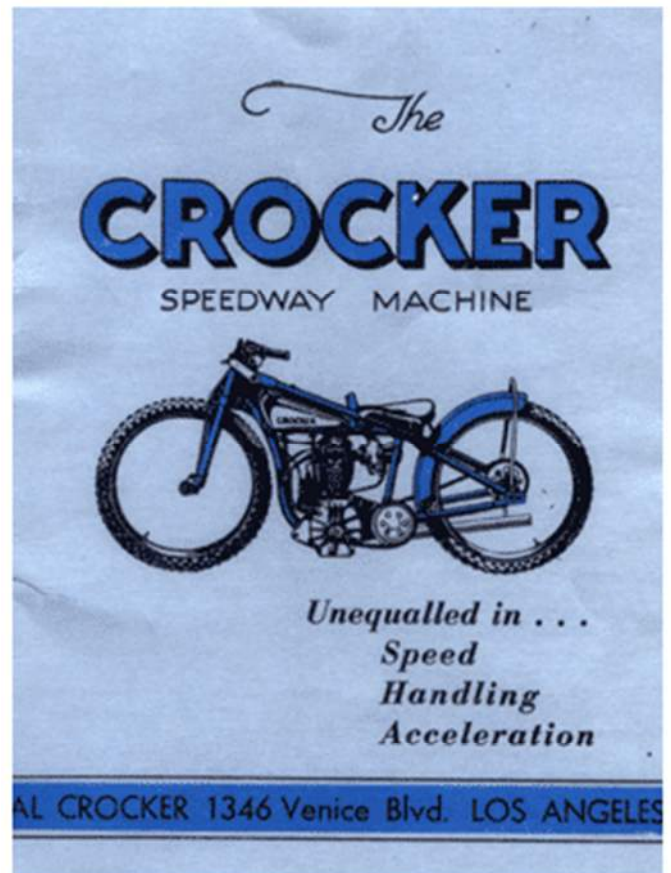
In case you did not know, Crocker Motorcycles are being made again in California. The annual production runs are about 100 bikes, cost is around \$65,000 each, and the bikes are exact copies of the old bikes. See links below:

<http://www.crockermotorcycle.com/>

<http://brandlandusa.blogspot.com/2008/09/crocker-motorcycle-returns-after-66.html>



"Small-tank" Crockers like #14 held 2.5 gallons of fuel (and oil in the front right part of the tank). Big-tank versions came a bit later. Both were made of aluminum in the Crocker factory/foundry in L.A., and #14's tank attaches as if built by some sort of master cabinetmaker. In 1936, the Crocker was good for 110 mph, leaving Harleys and Indians in its dust. Yours for around 550 Depression-era dollars, a bit more today.





Two Wheels Around Town

We report on events in the area that include antique motorcycles. This month a brief report on our annual Holiday Party.

OTC Annual Holiday Party

The Party was held at the *Drunkin Cook* in Salem on December 12th. The food included diverse appetizers in abundance. Our club had reserved the restaurant before normal operating hours, so we had the place to ourselves. The waitstaff were dedicated to our service, attentive, and friendly. Two new members joined the festivities.



OTC members at the 2015 Holiday Party. Unfortunately, several members had left by the time we remembered to get a photo

Trip Report

This month is a report of Tom & Jen's trip to Florida.



Florida from the Princess Seat

By Jennifer Nielsen

Our adventure began with packing. Tom has ridden several long trips on bikes, but this was my first planned, long-trip ride. As our destination was Florida, more specifically The Keys, we weren't too worried about needing cold-weather gear. We were, however, flying to Florida to begin our trip, so packing our riding gear into a suitcase (very large suitcase) was a key component.

Doing our due diligence, we checked out the same model bike we were renting in Florida at Paradise Harley Davidson. How much space was in the saddle bags? Was there a travel pack? How large

was it? And of course, my princess seat. Yes, we were renting one bike, an Electra Glide. I love to ride, both on my own and pillion. I do NOT like to ride fast and NOT on highways, so one bike it was!!! Besides, I was to be the navigator for this trip.

Day 1 – Trains, Planes, and Lyft

We began our excursion by taking the Amtrak train to Tukwila, WA. To get into a seafood frame of mine, we had clam chowder on the train, and to keep Tom on his toes, I spilled some of his beer. We spent the train ride reading, Tom reading *Motorcycle Consumer News* and I was reading one of my foodie mysteries. So relaxing! This is a great way to begin any trip. We grabbed a Lyft from train to airport. What a concept and so much better than a taxi! (A Lyft is essentially a person using their private vehicle as a taxi. You schedule the ride through an app on your smart-phone.) Dinner at SeaTac was at Big-Foot Food and Spirits, followed by coffee and chocolate. Our flight to Orlando was packed with families heading to Disneyland. It was a red-eye direct flight, and we had entertainment provided by a two-year old loudly emitting sound effects with his Thomas-the-Tank. Not very conducive for sleep, but not screaming child loud either!

Day 2 – Surviving the Fast Lane

Upon arriving in Orlando airport at 6:00 AM, we looked for a large couch in a more subdued corner of the concourse to catch a nap. My breakfast was oatmeal at Starbucks and a very, very large tea. Eagle Rider, the rental agency for our bike, picked us up at airport about 9:15. Once at Eagle Rider, we began transferring clothes for our ride, snorkeling – masks and snorkels, and donning riding gear. We left our suitcase and travel clothes at a storage room at Eagle Rider.

After loading, we did our bike check and the bike did not check out, no rear brake light, so we needed to wait for new bike to be made road ready. We then unloaded our gear from the previous bike, then reloaded onto the new bike. We went from a gorgeous mysterious red sunglow and bourbon colored bike to a utilitarian black bike with a stubbed windshield. The gent at Eagle Rider was so excited showing us all the bells and whistles—GPS, surround sound, Bluetooth, yada yada yada. Little did he know we are pretty vanilla when we ride – Tom feels the bells and whistles are distractions from hearing the bike and engine.



Florida from the Princess Seat (cont'd)

We finally get on road, went about two toll lengths (yup, we learned there were unbelievable number of toll roads, interstates, arterial roads intersecting in Orlando), and realized we forgot our Go-Pro camera, so back to Eagle Rider we went to get it. While back at Eagle Rider, we found out we could get a prepaid toll pass, so we did!!!



Getting back on the road, we took off to the Atlantic side of Florida so I could get a glimpse of Cape Canaveral. A quick glimpse we had, then off to see Tom's high school friend in Melbourne. After visiting and catching up, we got back on the road heading south in Loxahatchee at one of Tom's sisters to visit and spend the night.

Through the requisite afternoon rain storm, the crazy fast and furious traffic on I-95; the speed limit was 70 we were doing that and more and felt like we were standing still as traffic passed us. I had my cell phone with Google maps clutched in one ungloved hand praying I would not drop my phone!! It would have been a true test of the Life Box phone case I bought!

After an hour of this craziness, we got off 95 and got onto the Florida Turnpike. To refresh the gas tank, our tummies, and calm our nerves, we stopped at a gas station. It is truly amazing what a quick snack of Twixt and extra thick peanut butter cup washed down with green tea will do for frazzled nerves! Getting back on the turnpike, we made it to Loxahatchee to be greeted by Tom's sis, Jan, standing in the middle of her isolated country road flagging us with jumping jacks (she heard us coming). This was the same sis who took a long distance trip to the North Cascades with Tom on his

750D Yamaha in the early 80s. We stayed up late catching up and making plans for resuming our visit on Thanksgiving Day.

Day 3 – The Electra Glide and the Glades

We awoke to gorgeous blue skies, coffee on Jan's screened porch, and more catching up. Loading the bike back up, we got on road, planning to head south down the coast, but after 30 minutes, of passing continual strip malls and countless traffic lights, we backtracked to take a less traffic lighted route. We ended up on east-west highway, US 98, through sugar cane fields, passing houses with porches and rocking chairs. We stopped in Belle Glade in a hole-in-a-wall restaurant, Taqueria Guerro, for a FANTASTIC Mexican lunch and horichata.

Continuing south and inland on US, 27 then onto State Road 997, we were west of all the Oceanside development, and cruised down the east side of the Everglades for 100 miles. Picking up Highway 1 in Homestead (which was hosting the final NASCAR race of the season), we tooted along and knew we were in the Keys when we hit our first looooooonnngggg causeway buffeted by wind. I mean really buffeted!! At times it was like being on a carnival ride!

Arriving at the Hampton Inn in Key Largo, the hotel staff said we could leave our bike under the covered front of the hotel, so they could keep an eye on it. We unloaded the bike, changed into swim suits and hit the mini beach out back, grabbing fruit smoothies from the tiki bar on the way. Sitting in comfy lounge chairs, we chatted with a family from Michigan, then watched the sunset. WOWWWW!!!



We walked to dinner at *The Fish House* in Key Largo—crab and asparagus salad for us to share, Tom had a whole yellow snapper and I had blackened grouper (my first experience). We also split our first of many KEY LIME pies. Yum!! After dinner, we walked around a bit to settle food, then headed back to hotel to get a good nights' sleep for



Florida from the Princess Seat (cont'd)

snorkeling the next day. However, when we got back to the hotel, we received a call that the boat we were to take out to snorkel on the Coral Reef had cancelled all trips due to high wind. Bummer.

Day 4 – Snorkeling and Key Lime Pie

I got up early to see the sunrise, and my valiant driver slept in. While watching the sunrise and drinking coffee, I sat and looked for a manatee in the harbor behind the hotel. I learned of a sheltered harbor for snorkeling at John Pennekamp State Park. We left the hotel on our bike wearing chaps and riding jackets over our swimsuits and carrying snorkels and masks. When we got to Cannon Beach at the park, we were met with high winds and very limited visibility, so Jen watched as Tom did a quick snorkel run. We then satisfied our aquatic view of the Coral Reef by looking at great displays and the aquarium in the park museum. We went to lunch at the famous *Mrs. Mac's* where Jen tried conch and hog fish for the first time. We split a key-lime-freeze (mostly I split the freeze) and a really, really, really good piece of key lime pie.

Getting back on the bike, we tooted around the Keys just sight-seeing and being tourists, then headed back to the hotel for fruity drinks at the tiki bar (complimentary drinks for our 25th wedding anniversary). We sheltered from the rain sitting inside the tiki bar and watched the sunset.



Dinner was a walk across the street to *The Catch*, a local sports bar, where we feasted on oyster shooters, conch fritters, and more seafood. We finished the meal with a piece of key lime pie so bad we did not finish it. (Any pie that comes to the table smothered in 2-3 inches of whipped cream should

have been our first clue.) Another walk to settle our food and see if there were any t-shirts we could not live without (nope-none). We headed back to the hotel to get to bed early, as we were planning on being on the road no later than 7 AM.

Day 5 – The Back Way is THE Way Back

We woke to beautiful blue skies and WIND. We had almost 300 miles to make it back to Orlando by early afternoon to return the bike and pick up the rental car, then head to Gainesville for Thanksgiving with Tom's family. We ate breakfast, loaded the bike, then took off back north. On the road by 7:07 AM.

Going over the long, final causeway, I saw a manatee poke his or her head up in a canal so exciting and BIGGGGGGG. Our intended route was to retrace our steps north on Highway 1 to Homestead, then take State 997 to US 27 crossing Alligator Alley, onto US 98, (on the East side of Lake Okeechobee) to Highway 441 north and west toward Orlando, then pick up US 192 the remainder of the way to Eagle Rider in Orlando.

Lots and lots of sugar cane fields were our primary scenery. We stopped for a brunch and potty break in Bell Glade, this time at McDonalds. We got several free food scratch its. We gave them to an old gentleman who said he had been coming to this McDonalds every morning and sitting at the same table for something near 13 years. His smile was beautiful as he accepted the food tickets. We stopped for gas after breakfast, then got back on the road.

We rode for miles and miles with no one in sight or behind. The roads were so very flat and very straight. We saw one ½ S curve and one full S curve sign. Believe me, the curves were so flat you did not have to hardly turn and absolutely NO leaning was necessary. I almost asked Tom to stop and take a photo of the signs because they were the only ones we saw on our entire trip.

At times the wind was so strong I felt like we were a chess piece being picked up and moved across the chess board. Tom did a great job rolling with it. Several times I laughed out loud because it was a rush! At one point I dozed off behind Tom. I hear, "Jen, Jen, what's up back there?" Obviously NOT me!! Kinda scary in retrospect.



Florida from the Princess Seat (cont'd)

We stopped about noon in St Cloud for a peanutbutter Twixt and green tea break (our last food until almost 7:30 that night). During this break we ran into another rider who left his map at home and was wondering where he was. We shared our map and the route we had been on, then got back on the road for the final leg of our bike trip. We got back on the toll road on the way to Gainesville, then took Highway 441 west-which we found to be very residential and required a few turn arounds to get us back on track. It was at this point that Tom commented that the Electra Glide in a parking lot was a lot like a pregnant elephant in a closet. He was REALLY missing his Sportster! Changing our route, we took 192, a toll road, into Orlando and back to Eagle Rider.

We unloaded the bike, retrieved our suitcase, and changed out of riding clothes into travel clothes, picked up our rental car, and hit the jam packed toll road north. All told, a very fun trip!!!

Our conclusion from the ride:

We are spoiled in Oregon. We do not have tollroads, we have nowhere near the number of idiot drivers, and we have curvey mountain roads!!

P.S. I did get to snorkel on our last day in Florida in Crystal River!

Classified

Wanted: Website Manager for our club website. Involves updating activity calendar and photographs. Time commitment about an hour a week. Contact Jen Nielsen at nielsents@comcast.net if interested.

Wanted: Trailer to carry two motorcycles. Open or enclosed. Approximately 6 to 8 feet wide by 8 to 12 feet long with integral ramp. Contact TomNielsen at nielsents@comcast.net or 503-522-2124

Upcoming Events	
Date	Event
January 1, 2016	The Polar Bear Ride Portland, Oregon http://www.trinityroadriders.com/polarbearrun-home.html
January 7, 2016 12:00PM Public Preview Jan 6: 9AM - 6 PM	Bonhams Las Vegas Motorcycle Auction Bally's Las Vegas Hotel & Casino, Las Vegas Nevada https://www.bonhams.com/auctions/23131/?department=MOT-CY
January 30, 2016	NEXT MEETING 12 Noon The Old Texaco Gas Station, Antique Powerland Museum
February 12-14	ONE Show 2016 Portland, Oregon 831 SE Salmon Street, Portland, OR http://the1moto.com/

Zen Sarcasm

The journey of a thousand miles begins with a broken fan belt and leaky tire.

If you tell the truth, you don't have to remember anything.

Some days you're the bug; some days you're the windshield.

Everyone seems normal until you get to know them.

A closed mouth gathers no foot.

Duct tape is like 'The Force'. It has a light side and a dark side, and it holds the universe together.

SUBMISSIONS TO NEWSLETTER:

Please submit article contributions, classified advertisements, photos, trip reports, and suggestions by the second Thursday of each month. Prefer Word or Adobe PDF for text and .jpg or PDF for graphics to nielsents@comcast.net

Thanks, Tom and Jen

Oregon Trail Chapter, AMCA

