

WCMC Member Profile

Name:

Chester Osten 1928- 2011

Born in...Crowland Township (Now Welland)

Written posthumously by WCMC member, Dave Thomas, with memory contributions by Bob Taite, John Clare, Wes Pierce, Ron Putman, Ritz Raineville, Jim Stokes and Harry Osten



Chester Osten

Date of Profile:

January 2021

Date Joined:

1950

I became interested in motorcycles:

From Bob Tait's memories: "I first met Chester when he showed up at the family cottage driving a 1930's vintage Plymouth. Chester had been taking a radio course by correspondence from a school in Toronto from which older Tait brother, Don, had graduated. The school had suggested Don as a local source of assistance.

On arrival Chester took an interest in the motorcycles sitting in the yard, asking lots of questions. Don eventually offered to take him for a ride. It was obvious Chester enjoyed the experience.

Nothing more was thought of Chester's interest until the next time he showed up at the Tait's cottage he was riding his newly purchased 1942 – 45c.i. Harley-Davidson.

Last Motorcycle Owned:

1967 – 74 c.i. AMF Harley-Davidson bought almost new from club member, Ray Sparks.



Chester on his 1967 AMF Harley-Davidson

I have owned (list motorcycles owned):

- 1942 – 45 c.i. Harley- Davidson (W.W. 2 Surplus)
- Pre-1949 – 74 c.i. Harley-Davidson
- 1952 – 74 c.i. Harley-Davidson
- 1958 – 74 c.i. FL Harley Davidson
- 1967 – 74 c.i. AMF Harley-Davidson

The reason I joined the club:



*Don Tait & Chester at
Tait's Farms*

Since this is a posthumous member profile, the exact reason likely will never be known. However judging from Chester's beginning with the Skyhawks in 1950 he was active from the beginning, joining the many rides and events the Skyhawks put on and travelling to events attended by the club in Southern Ontario and in the US. This included numerous club rides to Buffalo, NY, to visit the Buffalo Zoo and absorb the unique culture of the American bar scene at the then famous Schupper House.

the Skyhawks, whose membership base at the time would be very young, knew something about "Inclusiveness"....long before the word was invented!

Chester has been known to be very particular about the care and appearance of his motorcycles, according to Wes Pierce. I do not recall him that way, but perhaps in the early years?

Some of the popular places Chester and the Skyhawks would ride were Wasaga Beach, Brantford, Hamilton, etc. spectating or participating in

Not to mention the legal drinking age in New York State at the time was 18, as opposed to 21 in Ontario. It would seem



Robert (Bob) Tait and Chester Osten around 1951

hillclimbs, enduros, trials and field meets. Farther afield rides to American Motorcycle Association races in Laconia, New Hampshire and Daytona.

Bob Tait recalls the Skyhawk's riding home from an event in Hamilton. Chester was leading a dozen or so riders at an exuberant pace when a cop went screaming by them and pulled Chester over as the lead bike. When he stopped and looked around Chester realized he was all alone. No other bikes were in sight leaving frugal Chester to settle with the Crown.

Chester is known for a couple of long distance trips; one where he journeyed to California, then across the Southern states to Florida for the Daytona 200 on the old beach course. Travelling on a shoestring budget – but a budget requires money (?) – he was sleeping wherever the accommodation was free. When found by Skyhawk members John Clare, Hank Rodrick and Bob



Chester getting out of the trunk of Hank Rodrick's Oldsmobile, Sneaking into the Daytona 200. The girls are teachers on spring break the guys happened to meet in Daytona.

Tait, Chester had been befriended by a local Daytona resident who let him sleep on his garage floor. The boys invited him to throw his sleeping bag on the floor of their rented cottage. They had driven to Daytona in, Hank's, new Oldsmobile.

John Clare relates the story of him and Chester riding west to the Calgary Stampede, doing it all in two weeks. According to the WCMC 50th Anniversary booklet, the second day out they

rode 500 miles through northern Minnesota, all in the rain. John describes the trip as a grind only a young man would do. John said, "They camped all the way." and "When you ride with Chester, you ride all day." John remembers many parties at Tait's cottage. John and Chester also rode to Laconia together. Another trip was a circle of Lake Erie, this time with Marv Nash as the third rider.

In later years, Chester's wife Charlotte used to accompany him. I recall meeting them at Laconia the year the new, Loudon track, was opened. After that they became parents, when son, Harry, came into their lives. I don't recall Chester making long distance trips after that.

For years after I joined the Club in 1965, I remember Chester riding the "Hare & Hounds". He very often won. I followed him once to see his strategy. While everyone else was screaming up

and down the back roads, losing the bags, making u-turns and screaming back in the opposite direction to pick up the trial again - by any definition this was a speed event - Chester, would plot where he thought the Hare might go. Then he would make a big loop in the hopes of picking up the lime bags; or often catch the Hare on the road. Kind of like, Hare vs the Fox, eh?

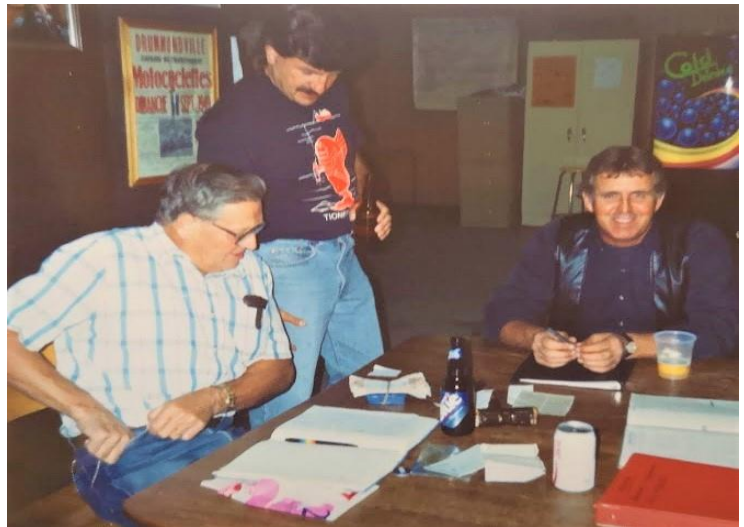
Chester was a bit of a rebel in one way: When the helmet law came in it was very controversial for many years for reasons, probably today, only an anti-masker would understand. From his cloth visor cap, Chester moved to a Bell Shorty, half helmet, but he never, ever did up the chin strap which was quite noticeable flapping in the breeze as he rode.



Chester wore a unique wallet, a long tri-fold leather wallet, long ago out of fashion but very popular in the 1970's. It protruded about 2 inches from his back pocket, with a metal chain attaching it to his belt.

The other part of Chester was his undying devotion to Welland County M.C. from acquiring our present property to construction then maintenance of the property.

Our original ½ acre, on which our clubhouse sits, was purchased from Chester's mother. A further purchase of 4 ½ acres also was from his mother's farm. The remaining acreage acquired was compensation by the St. Lawrence Seaway for expropriating the back of our property for the Townline Tunnel approaches. Chester was a Union Carbide electrician. To the end he donated the skills of his trade and time running wires, both in the clubhouse and out at the track....and of course many materials. We used to joke, Union Carbide, owned most of what we had, but they didn't know it. Chester was heavily involved with the, Welland Central Credit Union (long ago absorbed by mergers), on the board of directors. WCMC member, Jim Stokes, also a board member of the credit union remembers Chester was the chair of the board. Chester served 5 terms as club president, 1956, 58, 59, 62, & 63; then many more years as treasurer, probably from 1963 to about 2000. During all that time Chester would often, during meetings, scold the membership over being irresponsible with club property: the heat was left on, doors not locks, reckless spending, etc, etc.



Treasurer, Chester with his ledger book open, a wad of bills beside it.



Chester leading the 50th anniversary photo parade from the Club, towards the Townline Tunnel.

Year after year Chester would receive the, Most Valuable Member, award at our annual banquet, and for good reason.

Until the day he died Chester was always affectionately known as “Dad”. How this came to be was probably members respect for his judgement, his lecturing like a father and 10 or so years senior to most of the membership.

For sure Chester’s contribution and dedication enabled the Welland County Motorcycle Club to put down roots and become a member of the community representing motorcycle sport across the Niagara Region.

Please check out the Newspaper Clippings on the following three pages.

A Fitting Tribute to an Incredible Man

LOCAL NEWS



Dozens of riders from the Welland Motorcycle Club joined founding member Chester Osten for his final ride on tuesday to Doan's Ridge Cemetery where he was laid to rest.

One last ride for club founder

BY STEVE HENSCHEL
STAFF

Under Tuesday's blue skies a group of men, clad in black leather, chaps and gloves, quieted their rumbling motorcycles and gathered in solemn silence at Doan's Ridge Cemetery to lay to rest one of their own.

On Friday, March 11 Chester Osten, a founding member of the Welland Motorcycle Club, passed away in his home at the age of 83, leaving behind his wife Charlotte and son Harry. In a fitting tribute his remains were carried via motorcycle hearse behind a long procession of bikes from J.J. Patterson and Sons Funeral Residence to the site where he was laid to rest.

George Bosak joined the club in 1948 after it was formed in 1946 and recalls Osten joined sometime around 1950.

"He was the backbone of the club," said Bosak, who recalls Osten diligently collecting the quarter-a-month dues and ensuring the club members didn't spend too much. He pointed out that it was Osten's family that sold the land for the club's home.

"We'd have nothing if it wasn't for him," said Randy Doan, current president of the club. A member of 20 years, Doan described Osten as "the greatest guy ever."

"Everybody looked up to him, he was the pillar," said Doan.

"He was honest as the day is long," Bosak said, adding, "he wasn't the typical motorcycle rider."

Bosak remembers Osten as a quiet and polite man happy to remain behind the scenes ensuring the club remained operational.

"The boys used to call him 'dad,'" said Bosak, letting out a slight laugh.

"The boys would start getting carried a way a bit, drinking too much beer, riding too fast, chasing girls," said Bosak, who went on to describe Osten urging them to take it easy on the booze and lay off the throttle.

"We would say 'OK dad,'" Bosak said grinning before fellow long-time club member Ron Turnbull added, "of course they went right back to doing it."

Turnbull added he will always remember Osten's classic Harley.

"He drove that same beat up Harley his whole life," he said chuckling.

After a short internment the crowd of fellow riders, club members, friends and family departed from the cemetery making their way to the Welland Motorcycle Club to share fond memories of the man who meant so much to all of them.

Motorcycle club founder takes

BERND FRANKE
Tribune Staff

WELLAND — Chester Osten's final ride was in a style befitting a founding member of the Welland County Motorcycle Club and a lifelong Harley enthusiast.

On Tuesday he was carried to his final resting place on a Harley-Davidson equipped with a custom sidecar designed to hold a coffin.

Seventeen club members, all of them on their motorcycles, followed the unique hearse along a route past the former Ucar property, where Mr. Osten worked for more than 30 years, and by the clubhouse and his one-time boyhood home on Netherby Rd. before going on to Doan's Pidge Cemetery.

Club president Handy Doan came up with the idea to rent the hearse from Windsor-based Forever Free to give the beloved volunteer one final ride on a Harley.

"That was the bike Chester rode his entire life. He had a model from 1965 that he kept in mint condition. He was still riding last year," longtime club

“That was the bike Chester rode his entire life. He had a model from 1965 that he kept in mint condition. He was still riding last year.”

Wes Pierce, Welland County Motorcycle Club member

member Wes Pierce said of Mr. Osten who died Friday at age 82.

His deep roots in the promotion of motorcycling locally reach back to 1958 when the club purchased a half-acre from Mr. Osten's mother for \$50, using the land to build the current clubhouse.

"He got us a real good deal," Pierce said.

Then again, Mr. Osten always had a way with making sure the club always received the best value for its money. In his off-hours the one-time Ucar electrician checked and rechecked the wiring to ensure the track would also stay lit on race nights.

"With Chester around we never ran out of lightbulbs. He did all the stuff that needed to be done. He was 'The Guy,'" Pierce said.

Mr. Osten spent many years serving on the club's executive,

including volunteering his time to keep track of expenses as treasurer.

"Chester was very frugal when it came to the club's money."

It was that fond recollection that caused Pierce to chuckle at what his longtime friend would have thought about the club going to the expense of hiring a motorcycle hearse for his funeral.

"I think he would be smiling but he would be mad about how much we spent. He would have said 'Gee, you can't spend that much money.' But deep down Chester would have appreciated the gesture. He would have been happy."

Mr. Osten is survived by wife Charlotte, who accompanied her husband on motorcycle trips to Daytona, Fla., and son Harry.

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George Winney from motorcycle hearse a Harley-Davidson motorcycle club. Osten was a founding member of the final resting place.

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A FITTING FAREWELL

The Welland Motorcycle Club failed to cost one of their own on Tuesday. Founding member Chester Gotsen soon was laid to rest with a long procession of bikers before he was laid to rest at Dour's Ridge Cemetery. See story on page 5.

