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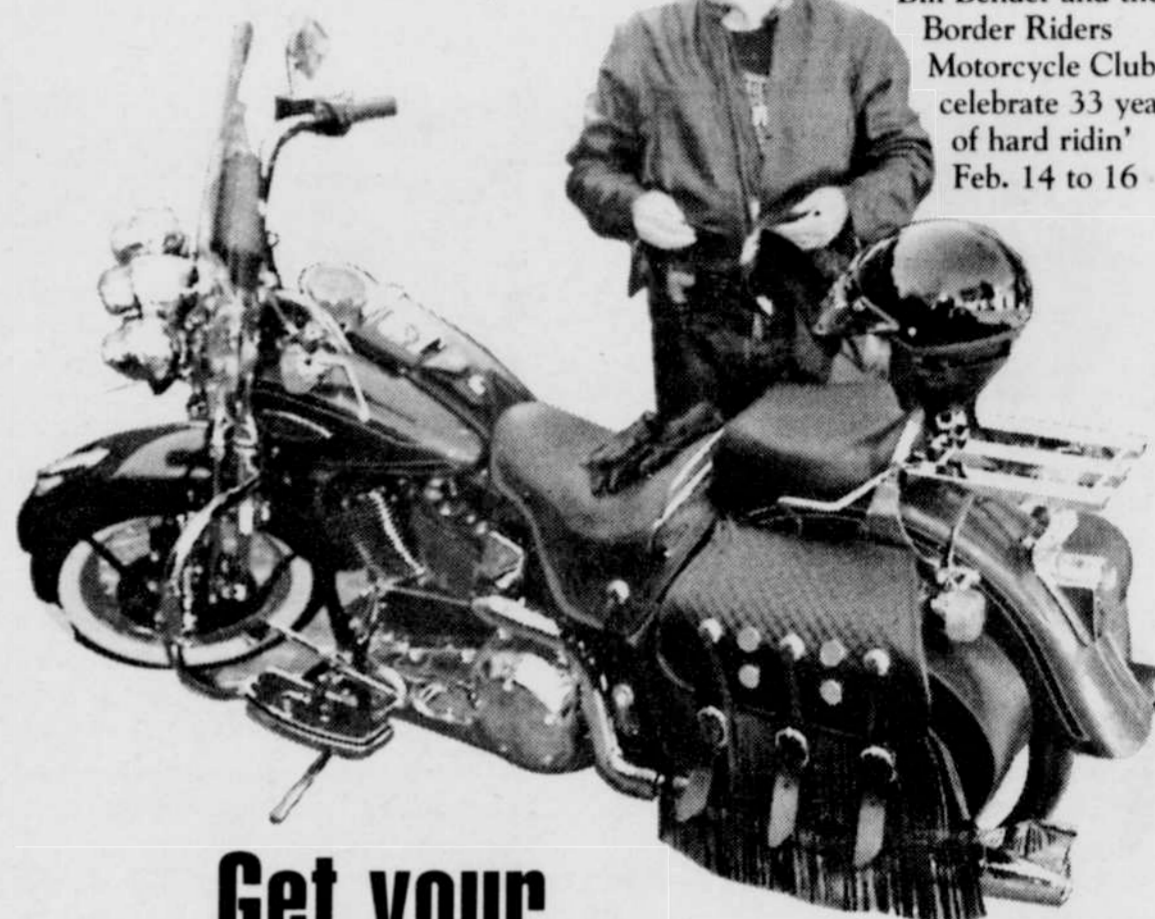
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CULTURE

Born to be wild:
Bill Bender and the
Border Riders
Motorcycle Club
celebrate 33 years
of hard ridin'
Feb. 14 to 16



Get your motor runnin'

Head out on the highway
with Border Riders

BY GLENN WILLIAMS

The sun and wind tighten the skin on your face as you fly down the landscape. Beneath you, a growling beast of metal and rubber moves you down the road with smooth and simple ease.

Around you—the Cascades, the Pacific, the interior valleys, Douglas fir and Sitka spruce, a happy taverned evening, a midnight campground with the fiery faces of your mates and the laughter and banter of a long, jovial ride.

Sound a bit like heaven? Maybe you belong in Border Riders.

Formed in 1969—the year *Easy Rider* was released—the Border Riders Motorcycle Club is the longest-running queer activity group in Portland. Founded by a dozen or so gay motorcycle lovers from all over the Pacific Northwest and British Columbia, its purpose is to "provide a social fraternity for gay men and their friends interested in recreational motorcycle touring in the Pacific Northwest."

But those parameters don't stop others beyond those borders from traveling here to ride. "We have members in Palm Springs, Australia—all over," says retired parole officer Bill Bender. He's been a member and a motorcycle lover for two years.

"I came out late in life," he explains. "Met some leather folks, which led to camping out with the Border Riders and eventually..." Bender's smile is infectious. He pronounces "motorcycle" like "motor-sickle"—the prerogative of a seasoned rider. He rubs his close-cropped hair; his leather jacket squeaks.

"It took me about six months, looking at motor-sickles," he continues. "I don't know if it's a male ego thing or what, but I decided I

wanted a Harley. I've been on it every day for the last two years."

In Portland, Seattle and Vancouver, British Columbia, Border Riders meet on weekends in the summer months and have monthly runs to the mountains, the coast and other places. The club emphasizes safety consciousness: "We don't condone drinking or drugging and riding," Bender asserts.

Although essentially a gay men's organization, members insist the rides are open to everyone. They often include lesbian friends, straight bikers and companions. "You don't really even have to have a motorcycle," Bender admits. "Folks come in a camper or anything. It's pretty much about the ride."

Deb Odenrider, the handsome, dimple-faced, handlebar-mustached president of Border Riders, agrees. "It's about...sitting, talking by the fire, telling stories or joking with one another. Or talking about the day's ride and where we ate!" Odenrider's face crinkles into a deep grin.

"It's amazing how many gay men ride bikes from around the country," he continues. "I've met up with a group that goes to Sturgis every year [a huge motorcycle rally in South Dakota], where all walks of life show up." The grin gets wider. "This is one big adult party." But, he adds, "that's another story."

The Seattle man and owner of a 1974 Harley Sporty XLH 1000 has been riding for 11 years. "The community that binds us is the love of motorcycling and the enjoyment that comes from touring some of the best roads for biking in Canada and the U.S.A."

Most people join by taking a weekend ride and getting a current member's sponsorship. Then it's just \$45 a year, which comes with a well-put-together newsletter. "If you like motorcycles, you should ride with us," Bender encourages. "See if you like it."

And, wouldn't you know it, you can do just that at the Border Riders 33rd Anniversary Party, which comes to Portland from Feb. 14 to 16. Members will shoot the breeze with you about the club, the rides and the bikes. "I just have fun," Bender smiles. "It's that freedom you feel when you're on that bike, going down that road. That's what got me going in the first place." **JW**

Visit the BORDER RIDERS MOTORCYCLE CLUB at www.borderriders.com.

GLENN WILLIAMS writes poetry, prose, plays, periodica and porn from Portland.

Border Riders Motorcycle Club's 33rd Anniversary Party

- **Meet & Greet:** 8 to 10 p.m. Feb. 14 at the Eagle PDX, 1300 W. Burnside St. For anyone interested in motorcycling or leatherwear. Munchies provided.
- **Anniversary Banquet:** Feb. 15 at Portlander Inn, 10350 N. Vancouver Way. Meeting and announcements at 6 p.m.; dinner at 7 p.m. is \$35. Slide show and reminiscence of last year's rides starts at 8 p.m.
- **Anniversary Brunch:** 10 a.m. Feb. 16 at Delta Park Elmer's, 9848 N. Whitaker Road.

Register as soon as possible by calling Jeff at 503-283-4903.

