

organization founded by a California woman in 1982, WOW now has more than 3,500 members across the United States, Canada and several other countries. The group's mission is "to unite all women motorcycle enthusiasts for recreation, education, mutual support, recognition and to promote a positive image of motorcycling."

The Portland-area chapter formed in 1998 and has grown from a few founding members to about 50 strong. Women of the Rivers co-director Laura "Garbot" Mosier grew up in a motorcycle family.

"Motorcycling is extremely demanding," she says. "There's you, your bike and the environment. And nothing else.... It's a commitment to oneself to be on a bike and riding well."

The group meets monthly and plans rides through to the next meeting. During good weather they have a trip planned every weekend. "We want to keep people's wheels in motion," says Mosier.

The group consists of expert, intermediate and beginning riders, with the more experienced looking out for the least experienced. "Motorcycling is very challenging, and we don't want anyone riding beyond their limits," says Mosier. "To improve you need to push those limits, but pushing limits is very different from riding beyond them."

Women of the Rivers holds clinics, attends open houses at different motorcycle shops and has a booth at the Seattle International Motorcycle Show.

Mosier is a part-time instructor for Team Oregon, an organization that provides motorcycle safety and skills training. She emphasizes that motorcycling is not a gendered activity.

"They're always going to assume you're a guy out there, especially when you're riding well. If you're tearing up turns and coming through at a good speed, they're always going to assume you're a man," she says. "You get to kind of live in a man's shoes and take the advantages of those while at the same time

enjoying the pleasure of revealing the fact that you're a woman."

Mosier adds that the motorcycle industry is not doing an adequate job of marketing to women. "We're constantly talking to local dealers and shops, begging almost for them to pay attention to our disposable income. It's starting to come around, but it's very slow. It doesn't make capital sense not to pay attention. If you're marketing to us, then you're listening to us. If you're listening to us, then you're handing us product that we want. I think you can ask almost any woman out there if she has a pair of gloves that fit and the answer would be pretty much 'no.'"

Women of the Rivers goes on day and overnight rides, three- to four-day retreats and weeklong getaways. Some recent trips have included Mosier, Cave Junction and the Astoria Bridge (a group favorite).

Mosier rides a 2002 BMW R1200C and a 1980 Suzuki GS1000 and looks forward to her "helmet time." She explains: "We get on the phone with each other and say: 'It's been a rough day. I need some helmet time.' It's better than therapy because you can't think about anything else. And sometimes that's better than talking about all the problems."

Women of the Rivers members range from age 25 to 60. "When the visors come down and the bikes fire up, you'd be hard-pressed to find anyone not smiling inside those helmets," says Mosier.

Mosier's love of riding is evident and infectious. "You've got you, your bike and the environment, and all three are awesome," she exclaims. "Sometimes you'll see a bald eagle or flowers or meadows or mountains and that's your wonderful environment; the bike because it handled that turn awesomely; it's you because you're so excited you actually scream inside your helmet with joy. It's a sensory delight." ☐

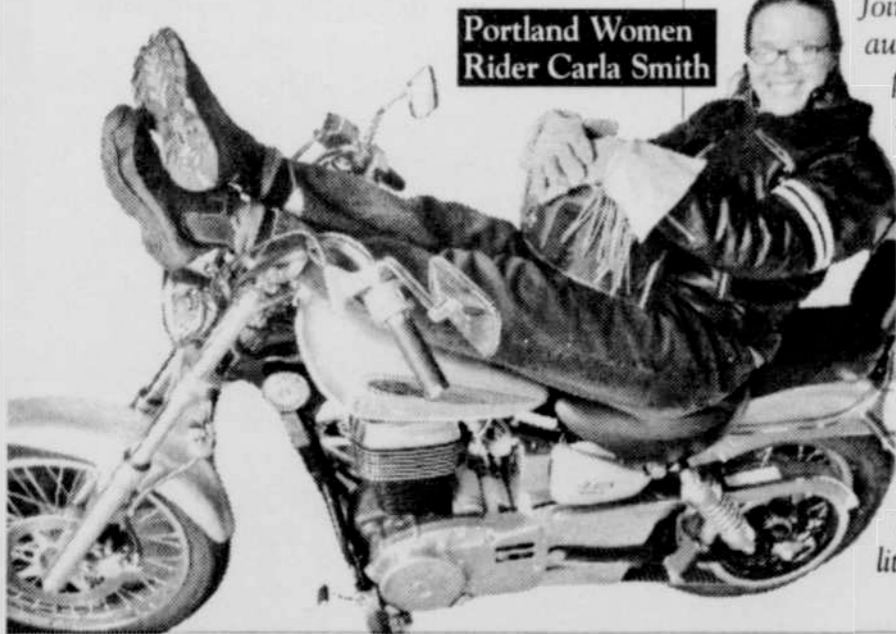
Contact PORTLAND WOMEN RIDERS at viragovyxyn@yahoo.com.

Join the listserv at autos.groups.yahoo.com/group/pdxwomenriders.

Annual dues for WOMEN OF THE RIVERS is \$30. The group meets the second Sunday of every month. Visit them at www.hevanet.com/chama/wow or e-mail andidthots@yahoo.com.

JAMIE BOLIYARD is a Portland free-lance writer and executive director of the Lesbian Community Project. She can be reached at littlemac2@earthlink.net.

Portland Women Rider Carla Smith

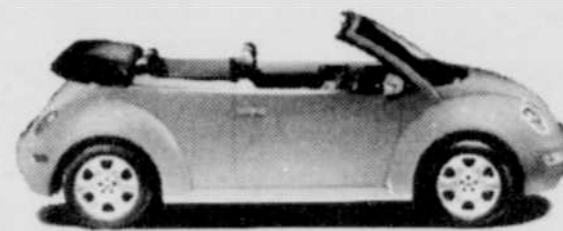


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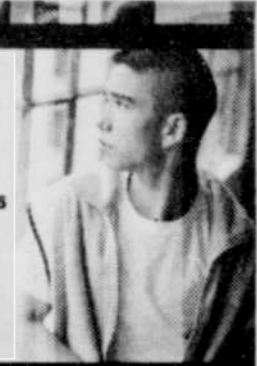
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