

Women bikers roar across corner of N.D.

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PARK RIVER, N.D. — There were Harleys and Hondas, Kawasakis and Yamahas, Victory chrome-and-steel steeds built in Iowa by Roseau, Minn.'s own Polaris Industries.

Some "trikes," and a sport bike or two, even an elegant European "Beemer" gave the group scope. The power plants ranged from modest 250-cc bikes to a massive V - 6 - p o w e r e d , w a t e r - c o o l e d behemoth.

Bikers, 140-strong, in black leather boots, zippered-leather jackets and chaps, leather caps, lots of leather but no lace.

Not showing anyway.

A long line of ladies displayed peace signs on denim, a few tattoos, windburned and sunburned faces of the open road crowned with red, black and pink bandannas, now "do rags," that rippled in the wind of 65 mph down a North Dakota highway.

It was the 21st annual North Dakota "Ladies Run," the "longest-running, women-only motorcycle rally in North America."

This year, it was based in Park River, and Saturday's run had 140 women tooling a circuit of about 150 miles, north to Walhalla, N.D., — with stops in Edinburg and Mountain, N.D., — east to Cavalier, N.D., down south through



Lady bikers parade through Park River on their way to Edinburg during the 21st Annual North Dakota Ladies Motorcycle Run. This is the longest running "women's only" rally in North America, and this year had the highest turn out ever with 145 female bikers. Herald photo by Dustin Finkelstein.

Grafton, N.D., back to Park River for festivities including a bike show, supper, awards and karaoke into the night at the American Legion club.

They gathered Friday evening, ran and rallied Saturday, and today, after a breakfast and church service, they will go home.

Kathy Enders started it all in 1988 when she and eight other female bikers met in Bismarck. It's the most enduring such women's motorcycle event run in the nation, she said. Women of multiple generations come, from kids and to some as old as 80, Enders said.

This weekend, Enders, 60, on her custom-painted Harley Heritage, was joined by her daughter, Ruth Faul, rural Fargo, who rode

a Honda Magna. "I've been riding since I was 14," Faul said of her own biker heritage. Her children, too, no doubt will get into it, Faul said.

The bikes run from less than \$4,000 to more than \$40,000, depending on how big you go and how much customizing you do, Enders said.

She mailed off the "hard parts" of her Harley — the gas tank, fenders and fairing — to a painter in Kentucky via e-Bay to give it a customized look.

Lady bikers probably aren't "gear heads" like male bikers are, the women agree.

"We can talk engines, I guess," Enders said. But the point of the Ladies Run is to get more women riding bikes, she said.

Faul agreed, saying it was all about getting together bikes and women of all kinds.

"But it isn't what kind you ride," Faul said. "It's getting out there, feeling the wind in your face."

Enders nods approvingly. "I've always said riding keeps the cobwebs out of your head."

The Tioga, N.D., woman is a social worker and a hypno-therapist. Like most of these lady bikers, she doesn't live the wild life of the stereotypical biker mama seen in movies. Few of the 140 could be seen drinking beer or booze in the Mountain bar during their lunch break, although many were smoking.

"You can't afford the machines if you don't have a job," Enders said.

The ride started Saturday with a prayer by Sunshine Minzlaff, Sturgis, S.D., and a leader in the Christian Motorcyclists Association, quoting the prophet Isaiah's promise that God would give strength to these women so "they could run and not grow weary."

This is the biggest turn out yet for the Ladies Run, with women coming from several states, including Colorado, and several Canadian provinces. There are both the "Christian bikers" and the "Hell's Angel" type, and they all seem to get along, said hostess Daphne Fallis of Park River.

Raelene Fieber rode her Yamaha Virago 1100 nearly six hours from her home in Estevan, Sask., to spend the weekend in Park River. She's 37 and hasn't missed this annual run

since she was 18, Fieber said. Her husband is finishing up her customized Harley, which she will debut next year, she said. They often take bike treks with their children in side-cars, she said. It's a good lifestyle, Fieber said. Her local Prairie Winds club, for example, is a nonprofit that raises funds for needy people.

Lynn Connell, Bismarck, was here on her fourth run, riding her Kawasaki Vulcan 900. A speech and language pathologist with Bismarck's public schools, Connell has been a biker for 25 years.

"There's a nice camaraderie," she said as, like many, she walked around taking photographs of others and their bikes.

Robyn German, Hankinson, N.D., was riding the Harley-Davidson Sportster her husband bought her on their 10th wedding anniversary.

"My husband doesn't ride," she said. "But my dad always rode." So, she mostly goes out on the road with her women friends.

With a family and a job in a dental office in Fargo, she finds too little time for her motorcycle. But this is one weekend she's making a habit of, she said.

"This is my third Ladies Run."

With friends, she's spending the weekend in Park River. Some filled the local motels, others camped out, some stayed with host families in Park River.

A couple of husbands trailed the group with a pickup truck and trailer for any maintenance problems.

But bike-wise, this was all ladies.

"Riding with other women," German said. "It's a lot of fun."

On the net:

www.ndladiesrun.org.

Jane Joyce of Grand Forks shows off her hand-painted helmet during the 21st annual North Dakota Ladies Motorcycle Run. This is just one of the 145 riders, each with unique accessories like this. Herald photo by Dustin Finkelstein.

