

Riding Into History

ANOTHER SPRING HAS BLOSSOMED AND like the gorgeous flowers at the World Golf Village in St. Augustine, Florida, the Seventh Annual Riding Into History Concours d'Elegance – the South's premier motorcycling event (<http://www.ridingintohistory.org/>) – has spread its two-wheeled beauty on the landscape. The RIH show has expanded into a full weekend's event.

By Paul Franchina

Saturday begins early with a benefit ride from the downtown Jacksonville area to the show site. There the show bikes take center stage for the remainder of the day. The Biker's Ball, which caps off the day on Saturday evening, is an event in and of itself. Finally, the weekend is brought to a close by the Vintage ride on Sunday morning. This is about as fine a bill of fare as can be found anywhere in motorcycling.

Saturday, May 20th 2006 was nothing short of spectacular. A bright blue sky with high fluffy clouds greeted everyone. While the Florida midday sun got a bit toasty with temps touching the low 90s, there was a soft breeze blowing that, along with low humidity, kept things pleasant. This year's event was extra-special because the quintessential moto-journalist, Mr. Peter Egan, served as Grand Marshall. For all his fame, Pete's just another down-home motorcycle enthusiast at heart; no pretensions, no haughty attitude, just one really nice guy. Pete toured the grounds, making multiple laps of the central lake around which the bikes were placed, and gave autographs for both his books. I don't know who will be the GM next year, but Pete is going to be a hard act to follow. Knowing the RIH folks, they'll make it happen and stun us with their choice. I'm sure this show will get coverage in the national magazines, especially given Pete's presence, but there are some VJMC-specific issues that may go unmentioned in those publications, so

that's what I'd like to highlight here. The VJMC was definitely present in force this year. There were two major reasons for this. First, having lost our spot in Delano during Bike Week, we were seeking another Florida venue for our springtime bike show. The second reason was that this year's theme for RIH was "The Landmark Motorcycles of Japan." I can't quite think of a more fitting theme for the VJMC to rally behind. It must be noted that the VJMC takes no credit in organizing this show. That's the charge of another fantastic group of folks under the auspices of the Atlantic Beach Vintage Motorcycle Club, out of Jacksonville, Florida. Mr. Billy Aldrich and his club deserve the credit for putting on one fabulous event. But it should also be noted that some of those ABVMC folks (the

honorable Mr. Aldrich included) are also card-carrying members of the VJMC. So, if there was ever a time to come to the support of fellow enthusiasts in furthering our cause, this was it and there we were. The ABVMC provided booth space for the VJMC free of charge and only asked that we put as many display bikes in it as we could fit. They also asked if I could coax as many VJMC members as possible to come out and show their bikes. I believe we accomplished this, though I'm sure some members on the mail list were getting sick of my many email announcements toward the end date, but it worked and the results were awesome.

As a special promotional item for this show, the club produced informational displays for members who had entered their bikes in the show. These were 16 x 20 inch placards with data about the bike, its owner and any special history. These were a great hit at the show, with many folks inquiring as to their availability for purchase. They made a powerful statement as to the extent of the club's presence here too. It was impressive to see a row of Japanese bikes with the VJMC logo placards prominently displayed on many of them!

I guess others were equally impressed as we signed up 11 new members! One gent even opted to go for our three-year deal right from the get go. Regalia sale weren't too bad either, as we sold a bunch of T-shirts and, surprisingly given the hot weather, coffee cups! We also



VJMC Display Booth w/ Bikes



Display Bikes



Award Winners



distributed almost 100 back issues of the club magazine. Lots of folks were very impressed with the professional quality of the magazine. We'll never know how many more memberships may be generated from those issues that we handed out, but my guess is that it was a determining factor in some people's decision to sign on with us. I'd like to extend a special thanks to Field Rep. Marty Landry and my wife, Rose Franchina, for their invaluable efforts at the VJMC Booth.

As to the Club's impact on the show, the adjective would have to be OUSTANDING! The attending VJMC members just outright kicked butt in the trophy department.

There were three categories for Japanese machines: Modern: 1980 - Present, Classic: 1960-1979, and Vintage: Pre-1960. This ran parallel with the categories (three each) for machines from other countries. Given the shorter history of Japanese motorcycles, the categories seemed very broad, and highlights the meteoric rise of the Japanese manufacturers from virtual non-existence in the early 50s to the incredible road burners of the 80s. That level of technological advancement had never previously been attempted, let alone achieved, by any other manufacturer over a thirty-year period.

Here are the show statistics as provided by the ABVMC themselves:

Number of Motorcycles in the judged Concours: 305
People in attendance during the day: 3000+

Best in Show

Japanese Modern 1967 Honda CL 77
Terry Mitchell (VJMC mbr)

Best in Class

Japanese Modern 1984 Honda VF500
Steve Passwater (VJMC mbr)

Best in Class

Japanese Classic 1976 Suzuki GT750
Paul Franchina (VJMC mbr)

Best in Class

Japanese Vintage 1966 Honda CB 77
Robert Barton (VJMC mbr)

Award of Merit

Japanese Modern 1982 Kawasaki AR80
Bob Brandner (VJMC mbr)

Award of Merit

Japanese Classic 1975 Honda CB400F
Steve Passwater (VJMC mbr)

Award of Merit

Japanese Classic 1966 Honda CB 77
Chase Knight (VJMC mbr)

Award of Merit

Japanese Classic 1973 Kawasaki HD
Rich Keuchenmeister (VJMC mbr)

Award of Merit

100K mile Award 1980 Suzuki GS1000E
Floyd Webb (VJMC mbr)

In recognition of all the other folks that came out to display their bikes, there were a few other Awards of Merit presented. I think the fact that the VJMC members swept the entire field of top honors says that our members, in general, had the nicer bikes. Maybe it's all that support and valuable information we get from the mail list and club magazine. Or maybe it's because folks who become C members are just more committed individuals. Whatever those qualities may be, the VJMC has it in large doses.