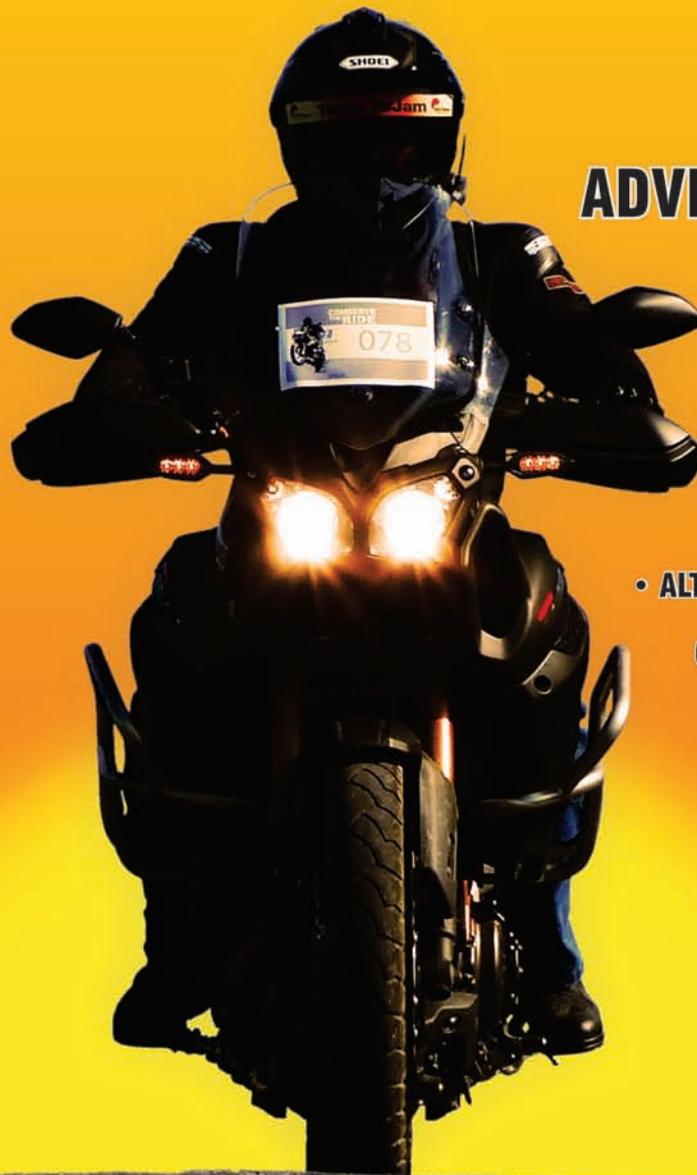


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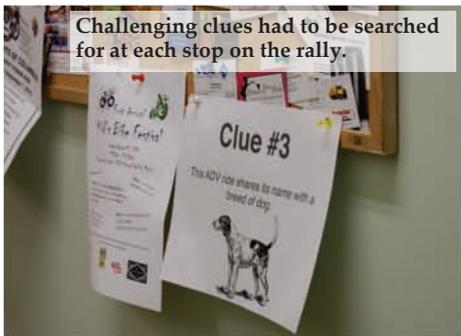


Riders gathered at each stop to share answers and ask each other questions from the clue-book. It was a great way to break the ice.

BY GRAEME JONES



Everything is welcome—even a Honda F6B—at the Overland Adventure Rally.



Challenging clues had to be searched for at each stop on the rally.

SEVEN CLUES

LAWRENCE HACKING'S OVERLAND ADVENTURE RALLY ADDS A MYSTERY TWIST TO THE TRADITIONAL ADV RIDE

The second running of Lawrence Hacking's Overland Adventure Rally topped last year's well-received inaugural edition on several fronts. Last year's event, based at the Mohawk Inn and Toronto West KOA Campground in Campbellville, ON, featured respected guest speakers and interactive presentations, reputed vendors, great food, awesome roads and a friendly, social atmosphere. The event returned in June to the same location but threw in more guest speakers, more exhibitors (including Honda, BMW and Triumph), a rider improvement course, a truckload of prizes, and a really unique twist: the Mohawk Mystery Challenge.

The Mohawk Mystery Challenge added a new dimension to the traditional adventure ride, leading participants to seven clue sheets located at predetermined stops along the 200-plus km rally route in the Caledon area. In order to be eligible for one of the fantastic prizes (which ranged from riding boots to t-shirts to crash bars and gift certificates), riders had to find the clues, displayed fairly conspicuously at each stop, and scribble down an answer in the clue book received earlier at morning registration. Added to the book were 40 tricky bonus questions to serve as tiebreakers that could be answered easiest by quizzing fellow riders and exhibitors. It provided a fresh twist on the traditional ride, like a poker run and a geocache all in one.

The clue hunt idea isn't anything new to Dakar Rally and adventure race veteran Lawrence Hacking, the man whose name stands behind the Overland Adventure Rally. "The clues and questions were an original idea that I first used in 1998 at a Kawasaki dealer meet-

ing," Hacking indicates. "It's designed to motivate people to mix and meet each other and to discover more about the sponsors and exhibitors. It worked really well. The question is a great way to break the ice amongst a large group."

That large group was comprised of 154 official participants who took one of the three established routes (two on pavement and one with dirt road/trail sections) navigated by GPS, not by signs and arrows like some ADV rides. Riders without GPS could follow one of three official guides or join an established group that already had the route programmed.

The clues, while relatively easy to find, required serious knowledge of global ADV events, rallies and locations. This was partly Hacking's intent, as it forced riders to communicate with each other to get answers; the bonus questions were created for the same purpose. "I think many people liked the challenge of riding the route, finding the clues and discovering the answers," Hacking explains. "I wanted the OAR to have an element of competition. The questions were fairly difficult, but also possible to answer if you really worked at it."

Hacking was right. Riders at many stops were huddled into groups sharing answers, others were approaching random strangers looking to swap answers, and back at rally HQ exhibitors were busy answering bonus questions for excited participants.

"The clues were fun," said Julie, who rode the OAR on her Honda CB500X after having her licence for less than two months. "As someone who's not part of the adventure community, I didn't know a lot, but we weren't made to feel less a part of it," she admits. "As a newbie, I learned a lot about the adventure community and industry."

Ollie Tichel, whose company (Ollie's Cycle & Ski) was an exhibitor at OAR, also rode the event on his Triumph Tiger 800XC. While not a big fan of the clue game, he enjoyed the riding. "Having the option of doing the paved route was good for me," he says. "I'm not the hardcore adventure riding person, so coming here is just fun. Maybe I'll do the gravel route next year... maybe."

The paved routes showcased some of the nicest back road riding that south-western Ontario has to offer, including switchbacks, long sweepers and elevation changes through deep forest, villages and past farms. The 'mixed' route stuck mostly to gravel roads, but also included ATV trails and one particularly deep section that had riders hopping off their bikes to help each other push through.

That selfless act in itself captured the essence of the Overland Adventure Rally and ADV riding in general. It wasn't a race, and finishing first meant nothing. What was important was interacting with fellow enthusiasts, discovering new roads, finishing it all off with a feast (the Mohawk Chop House served up a five-star quality steak dinner) and toasting the day's ride over a beverage with new riding chums. Many a strong friendship has been made at an ADV gathering, and the Overland Adventure Rally was no different.

"It's very social, very easy going, there's great food, not much rule structure, interesting presentations, and awesome roads to ride," Hacking summarized. "I think there's something for everyone."