

By Lawrence Hacking
Photography by Hugh McLean



The Cord

Set in the rugged Canadian Shield, the Corduroy enduro is one of Canada's longest-running motorcycle competitions. Something special in 1953, it remains so today.



Enduro riding is a transcendental thing of beauty, but one rarely observed.

More often that beauty is created and felt by a rider performing at the highest level. The mind is cleansed, dealing with a series of obstacles or problems never seen before, arriving at lightning speed. Unlike the circuit competitor, the enduro rider must make one correct decision after another based on a blizzard of information. Accurately reading the terrain allows for a greater margin of error. Focus and concentration are key, and experience a huge asset, but skill and bravery are essential. The object is to maintain a specified average speed, usually 36 or 42 km/h. Riding too fast in the easy parts will put you ahead of schedule, which could result in a heavy penalty should you encounter a hidden check. On the flip side, sitting stuck in a mudhole or caught on a rocky uphill when you should be averaging 36 km/h will put you behind the eight ball.

Since 1953 the benchmark of the sport has been the Corduroy enduro, held each fall in the Haliburton Highlands of Ontario. The Cord represents a true pilgrimage for the Canadian enduro rider and also a homecoming for the close fraternity of riders in the sport. The picturesque landscape's welcome is not exactly friendly, though, and the Cord strikes fear into the hearts of many, with its slick mud and cruel northern bedrock, especially the tough sections restricted to masters and experts. But the Cord, which is one of North America's longest-running motorcycle competitions, was never intended to be easy.

In the fall of 1953, a small group of riders belonging to the British Empire Motor Club (BEMC) gathered at the Glen Eagles Hotel, which overlooked the Rouge Valley east of Toronto, to plan the first event. BEMC members Ron Jackson and Don Charters had returned from the famed Jackpine enduro in Michigan in 1952 with the idea that Canada should also have a two-day event. It was named the Corduroy after a half-mile stretch of logs laid across a bog near McArthur's Mills in a formidable part of Ontario wilderness. Charters fashioned the coveted trophy, which is called simply "the log." Twelve competitors squared off for the inaugural event in 1953. The winner was declared as the rider who had left his lights intact and showed the



At left, Glen Nicholson crests some bedrock coated in slippery muck. The masters and experts sections of the Cord strike fear in the hearts of some. Below, Randy Griffiths on the gas through the special test section, which is scored purely on speed.

