



THE CORD'

The Golden Anniversary of The Corduroy Enduro - one of the oldest, toughest off road events in North America

By Trevor Wideman

Cor du roy - To form, as a road, by laying logs together transversely; to make a corduroy road over

The past

This year's famed Corduroy national celebrated its 50th anniversary. Such milestones always inspire people to do something memorable. For an Enduro that has a reputation as one of the toughest races in North America, even Mother Nature wanted to contribute. After a dry summer She sent Hurricane Isabel up for a short visit. Fortunately Bobcageon, ON is far enough inland that it didn't get hit with Isabel's full fury, but she managed to dump enough water to refill all the swamps, bogs and water holes that had dried out over the summer. Thanks Mom!

This story begins in 1952 when two good friends, and members of the British Empire Motor Club (BEMC), Ron Jackson and Don Charters decided that Canada needed a two day enduro similar to what the Americans were doing at events like the Jack Pine. The rugged terrain of the Hailburton district in northern Ontario was the perfect location with its endless network of gravel roads and forest

trails. Named after the corduroy roads, which could be found traversing bogs throughout the region, The Cord' has endured through the years and is equally as challenging to the riders today as it was to the first competitors.

The inaugural race was held Sept. 19-20, 1953 in adverse conditions. A steady drizzle on the Saturday scared off the faint of heart and reduced the entry to 14 brave souls, seven of which would make it through the final check on Sunday afternoon. The riders, mounted on Triumph, Norton and Matchless bikes, were true believers in the "run what you bring" philosophy. They rode them up, raced and rode back home in true motorcycle enthusiast fashion.

The first day consisted of 143 miles of rough roads, which became very slippery with the non-stop rain. The weather cleared for Sunday's longer route of 227 miles, and with a slightly slower pace most of the riders managed to stay on time. In the end Basil Jackson was declared the winner because he kept his lights intact and led the rest of the riders to the finish.

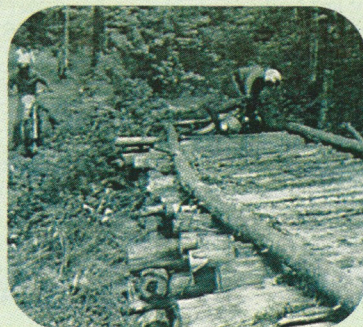
Through the 50's and 60's the interest in The Cord' grew. It continued to build on its reputation as a grueling event. In those days many of the riders would pack camping gear

and food on the bikes because they never knew if they would have to spend the night in the woods. In '78 the infamous Powerhorn Trail incident had many competitors certain they would be sleeping under the stars, with the bugs and bears.

Ron Jackson recalled checking out a great section of trail in '77 that they thought would make a good section to add to the '78 silver anniversary event. It was a tough and interesting

(top) Founders Ron Jackson (l) and Don Charters (r) celebrate the Cord's 50th by working a check (bottom) Some insight to what the Corduroy looked like in the beginning. (l) Bridge at the devil's staircase downhill. (c) John Penton in 1960 on his 175 NSU (r) Anniversary winner, Aaron Kopp works his way through the course

PHOTOS BY RICHARD KAT AND RON JACKSON



trail that wound a long way into the wilderness. In fact, it was so far off the proverbial beaten track that the check crew went in by boat! It was a very wet year and by the time the race rolled around the organizers discovered that the trail base was really swampy. It was so bad that very few made it through. Most of the riders got stuck in such a bad way that the sweep riders had a monumental task to get everyone out. With so many bikes sucked fender deep in the soil, it took until the next day to remove everyone. Ron couldn't confirm that anyone had actually spent the night out there but there were stories that some did. Now it's a story they use to frighten children around the campfire.

In '68 the organizers made the decision to switch to the FIM enduro rules. The Cord' became The Corduroy International Trials. The new rules made for a totally different event. It eliminated the intense clock watching and the riders could be early to a check (whose location was not secret). In addition the numerous special tests made for great spectator fun. Overall the riders liked the change.

This continued till the late '70's when they returned to North American style rules. The feeling was the FIM format created a situation where the riders would run much higher speeds because they could be early at checks. With a lot of the race run on cottage roads, the change was made for safety reasons. The organizers were smart enough to realize that you had to keep the locals happy if you wanted to race the next year.

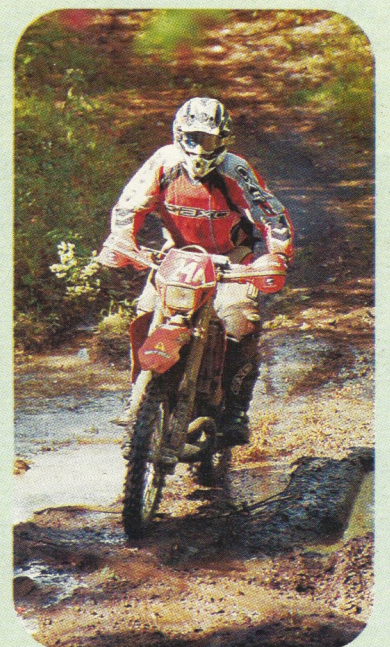
The black year for The Cord' came in '69. The BEMC was forced to cancel because it lacked

enough manpower for a layout crew. It was a time when the core of the club was very busy with their day jobs and needed a lot of help to get the event put together properly. They didn't have the luxury of relying on a number of retired members that were sick of golfing and would spend days on end scouting trail and putting up arrows. Fortunately, by 1970 enough club members came forward to ensure the event continued.

Americans have won the event more often than Canadians (29 to 21). However Canada's first family of off road, the Sharpless clan, has managed to triumph over America's first family of off road, the Pentons, as the most victorious family in Cord' history.

Bill Sharpless won the event three times through the 50's and 60's. John Penton took five wins during the same time period. Through the '70's John's sons Jeff, Jack, and Tom combined for another four wins. Then in the early '80's Bill's son Blair picked up where his father left off. From '83 to '93 Blair won a record seven times. Blair made a commitment that he wouldn't retire from racing until his family's name made it onto the coveted Cord trophy, better known as The Log, more times than the famous Penton clan. Family Feud final score: Sharpless 10, Penton 9.

In 1990 the BEMC handed the event over to the Steel City Riders. The BEMC had an aging membership and it needed some young blood to carry on the tradition. Under the direction of Trail Boss Larry Bastedo, The Cord' was put in good hands. Although the BEMC is no longer running the event, a few of its original members (including founders Don Charters and Ron Jackson)



still help out each year running checks and helping with scoring.

The present

After her thoughtful Anniversary gift on Friday, Mother Nature came through with perfect riding weather on Saturday, cool and sunny. Over 180 riders started and as usual a number of Yanks made the voyage to enjoy the Canadian wilderness, hospitality, and beer.

Day one started with an optional free ride through one of the special tests, giving the riders a chance to warm up,

and pre-ride the test they would run after lunch.

The tough part of the day was the famed River Trail. This section is a Masters/Expert split that has been used numerous times over the years and always causes lots of moaning.

To make it more difficult a number of adventurous, or colour blind, trail riders wandered in and decided to give it a go. Some of the slippery, rocky hill climbs became an extra challenge as the Experts now had to navigate around Novice riders in addition to the natu-

ral obstacles.

The rest of the day was made up of lots of tight trail, on the traditional boggy soil and rock, and some fast fire roads. At the end of the day Aaron Kopp was in first with Matt Spigelmyer and the pride of Quebec, Allan Lachappelle right behind.

As usual day two was longer and tougher, and it began with some minor mayhem. Confusing arrows and a mistake on the route sheet had most of the riders going in circles for close to an hour looking for the proper route. Somehow the organizers managed to round

everyone up and get them on the right path.

In the end the visiting Americans took top honors - again. Kopp won his first Cord' and added his name to the historic 'Log'. Spigelmyer continued his tradition of finishing in the top three, followed by Lachappelle.

We would like to thank all the organizers, new and old, for their assistance. Steel City Riders; Graham Henry, Larry Bastedo, and Phil Ashmore, as well as BEMC members Ron Jackson, Don Charters (his son Alex), Frank Langdon, and Kerr

Chalmers.

The BEMC and Steel City Riders have put together a great history book to celebrate the 50th Anniversary. It's full of old photos and stories, a must read for anyone who has ridden the event, or wanted to. If you're interested in obtaining a copy (\$10.00 Canadian) please contact:

Canadian Motorcycle Association
Box 448, Hamilton, ON
L8L 1J4
905-522-5705

RIDER STORIES

What really make events like the Cord' so memorable is the stories it creates for those who have participated in it. We spoke to current and former riders and asked them for their favorite Cord' story.

Don Albertson (raced '68 - '78. Hodaka and Suzuki)

"I was climbing the old Tory Hill section when my clutch broke. I was struggling to get the bike up the hill when this old guy came along to give me a hand. I didn't

think he would be any help but it turned out he was a 60-year-old marathon runner and he got me over the top."

Jake Kadwell (raced '67 - '87 Hodaka, Suzuki and Penton)

"I was following my friend Don (Albertson) through a swamp. He fell in front of me and just as I got to him I lost my balance. The only way I could keep from falling was to step on him and push him back into the water as he was trying to get up. I didn't fall."

"Riding up here was the best years of my life. It's a real family affair. Every year you would see the same people and build on the memories."

Hubert Laurin (raced '72 - '89 Maico, Penton, KTM, Husqvarna and Can-AM)

"I was riding a Husky through a swamp and I seized the motor. I got the bike up on a stump, pulled the barrel and used a screwdriver to free up the rings. After I put it back together it had just enough power to let me ride it out of the swamp."

"In the early days if you managed to get in before dark you would always get a trophy."

Don Charters (founder)

"In '62 I put up signs on some trees in the Bobcageon Trail to warn guys about the approaching swamp. I'd put a single word on each sign "YOU" "ARE" "NOW" "APPROACHING" "SWAMP", and then big arrows to detour them around it. I figured no one would miss it that way. Then Norm Smith came barreling down the trail and didn't read any of them and went straight into the water and

drowned his bike. He managed to recover and win the medium weight class but lost out on repeating as the Grand Champion."

Aaron Kopp (raced '01 -- '03 KTM)

"Two years ago I saw my first moose. I was riding behind Matt and it walked right out in front of me. It scared the crap out me. Those things are huge! I don't think it was following the arrows."

-- Trevor Wideman

The ONTARIO TRAILRIDER



Published by The Ontario Federation of Trail Riders (OFTR)

Notes from northeastern Ontario:

Larry Murray once again worked his magic in the Limerick forest for another successful kids (big and small) ride July 13th. Both the venue and the event continue to grow in popularity and quality with almost 100 riders enjoying many new, well-marked trails, good weather (as always), and lots of smiling faces. Larry's work here, with the advisory group overseeing the forest area, also included several work parties over the summer, painting the old MNR buildings and generally "sprucing" up the area while protecting our right to ride. Those who frequently ride here without giving it any other thought... give it some thought, and don't forget to say thanks to Larry when you see him! 110-plus riders and 20 BMA event workers attended this year's Calabogie Boogie,

two-day trail ride. After the heat and dust of the past two events, the comfortable conditions experienced this year were very welcome. Many great comments were overheard regarding the course, trail quality, arrowing, and of course, the famous lunches! Dave Wrack and Co. ran the event like a well-oiled machine, and it remains one of the premier trail rides in the country. A huge amount of planning, organization, communications, cartography, diplomacy, effort and cost go into the running of such an event. Thanks again to everyone involved.

Doug Hunter

Regarding the Haliburton Rail Trail Meetings: I'm pleased to report that the consultant's report was most favorable towards ATV usage and even went so far as to specifically list licensed and insured "Enduro

Bikes" as an acceptable user group. I note the term "dual-sport" did not appear in any text and that is good news for WR category bikes. It is recommended that ATV/Enduro user groups will have access to the rail trail from 10am to dusk only - 3 seasons of the year - we can live with that. Snowmobiles would have exclusive use in the winter months. Excluded user groups include any unlicensed off-road bikes such as MX's and highway legal cars and trucks such as jeeps. ATV/Enduro riders may be faced with a trail permit scenario and will most certainly see speed restrictions and increased policing. I'm certain you will soon see gating systems similar to Kinmount south, which is a good thing. The crowd of 80 or so people was largely power sports in nature, including seven enduro types. Bob Kendall, Bruce Moffatt (OFTR representative) and Al Buck (Ontario Dual Sport Club/OFTR) all presented excellent points. The presence of John Bayliss

and Rick Lewis from Yamaha was noted and appreciated by the power sports group - ATV/Enduro/Sleds. My thanks to all who attended and have shown quite a bit of interest from afar. The local politicians must now study the consultant's report and make a final decision, so it is far from a done deal yet. I will keep you informed and ask that you be ready to respond with letters and presence at future meetings. The complete consultant's report will be available in three weeks and should be available on-line - I will inform you ASAP. Multi-use has been accepted by the power sports group. I'd also say that the dialogue was healthy and all sides learned something useful on the way to future cooperation.

Steve Brand

From the incoming emails: If you haven't all heard. I blew the motor on the KTM at the Great pine. It dropped a valve that took out the piston - that bent the rod - that crushed the head - that probably bent the crank - that is going to cost me a small fortune. I have posted some pics and I will accept all your sympathies and donations gladly!!

Ken

KTM 400 EXC - soon to be a 450 or 453. Last thing I heard from Ken, he volunteered to man a gas truck at the Terra Nova Enduro. It just shows you the spirit some riders have. You cannot keep them away from an event. The 50th Corduroy Enduro was held under sunny skies but earlier hurricane induced rains left abundant moisture on the route. OFTR member, Ken Gardner boasted of discovering more mud inside his boots than on them.

The Voice of Motorcyclists and ATVs in Ontario!