



Hi, welcome to the West Texas Chapter of the Harley Owners Group (HOG)! Let me take a few minutes to tell you about the chapter and what we do.

The Harley Owners Group was created in 1983 to bring together motorcycle riders with one thing in common -- they ride Harley Davidson motorcycles. I would imagine one of the reasons it was created was so that riders would get together with their friends and put even more miles on their Harleys than before. And thus, the sooner you might buy another one with zero miles on it so you can put miles on that one and continue the process. Also, bringing together all these riders provides the opportunity for them to share ideas about accessories such as pipes, seats, bags, etc. So when you see/hear the nifty pipes, for instance, that Joe Blow just put on his scoot it might spur you to think about adding the same thing to your bike or researching the same type item for maybe a slightly different addition. But it's all good.

Kent's Harley Davidson sponsors the West Texas HOG Chapter #4958 which was created in 1989 as the Abilene Texas Chapter. At some point a couple of years later it was changed to the West Texas Chapter as there were many riders in far reaching areas such as San Angelo, Ballinger, Snyder, Brownwood, Eastland, Ranger, Haskell, etc. for whom Abilene and Kent's was the closest chapter and dealer for them to interface with.

Our chapter's mission is the same as that of HOG all over the world; ride and have fun. Along the way we engage in a few other activities such as fund raising for MDA and local charities as well as other types of activities. However, none of these other activities are mandatory. It's just that simple -- Ride and have fun.

There are a variety of web resources for you as a member of the West Texas Chapter. The first is the national HOG site -- <http://www.hog.com>. There you will find information about state and national HOG rallies. There is information about various HOG programs that you can participate in as well as downloading the forms you'll need to complete for those programs. You can also renew your membership online. The only requirement for becoming a national HOG member is that you own a Harley Davidson motorcycle. You may also add associate members such as your spouse, children, girl/boy friend, etc. with you as their sponsor.

A second web resource is the chapter website -- <http://www.westtexashog.com>. There you will find contact information on the chapter officers, calendar info about upcoming events, etc.

Last but not least is the website of our sponsor, Kent's Harley Davidson -- <http://www.kentscycles.com>. You'll find that Kent's Harley Davidson is unsurpassed as far as support for their HOG chapter. We get more from these fine folks than we could ever hope to ask.

Ride Safely -- One of the most important aspects of our chapter and motorcycle riding is safety. We recommend that each rider take the Motorcycle Safety Foundation (MSF) course. Many a rider has become aware of bad riding habits by taking this course and made an attempt to improve their riding skills by developing better habits or by practicing certain riding skills they might be lacking or in need of improving. Taking the MSF course also may mean a discount on insurance depending on the particular insurance company.

When riding in a group the chapter rides in a staggered formation. This means that the lead rider rides in the left one-third of the lane. The second rider rides in the right one-third of the lane and far enough back so as to provide a sufficient safety margin. It is recommended that each rider allow at least one second between them and the person

ahead in the other side of the lane. And they should allow at least two seconds between them and the person directly in front of them riding on the same side of the lane. These intervals are the absolute minimum and should be lengthened depending on each rider's skill, the conditions of the road and other factors as well.

Hand signals are used for such things as pointing out obstacles on the road or other obstacles off the road such as pets, deer, livestock, etc. that might possibly enter the roadway. Other hand signals may be used as well. Check here for some additional hand signals that many riders use -- http://www.msf-usa.org/downloads/Group_Ride.pdf.

When riding in groups riders should break into manageable groups of no more than 6 or 8 bikes. A smaller number makes interfacing with other traffic much easier, especially on 2-lane roads. Riders should always be aware of the traffic behind them as well as ahead. When overtaken by faster traffic from behind the riders in the rear should fall back making a hole between them and the rest of the formation to allow for passing by the faster traffic. Remember -- Share the road, it's the courteous thing to do. Ride Friendly!

One of the things to consider when riding in West Texas as well as many other places is to watch for critters. Deer, livestock, pets, etc. could ruin your entire day. Be especially watchful during the early morning and evening hours when wild animals are likely to be on the move in search of food.

Alcohol is a recurring factor in many automobile and motorcycle accidents. HOG's policy on alcohol is simple -- DON'T! Riders showing up for an event who appear to be under the influence will be asked to leave and not participate in the ride.

First and foremost as far as safety goes -- Ride your own ride! Do not be pressured into exceeding the speed that you feel comfortable with or taking challenging roads at a more aggressive pace than you normally would if you were riding alone. It's better to get there late than not at all.

HOG Programs (Get involved!!!) The first of these programs is the **HOG Mileage Program**. You can find info and necessary forms for it and other HOG programs on the national website. You may also obtain forms from the Assistant Director, Barbara Sapp, as her duties include being the program director for the chapter or from your Dealer Rep, Steve Hood, at Kent's. An initial form must be completed and mailed or faxed to HOG with the starting mileage of your newly acquired Harley. The form must be signed by your Dealer Rep. You'll then receive in the mail a patch and pin for the Mileage Program. Upon acquiring 1,000 miles another form should be completed, signed by the Dealer Rep and mailed/faxed to HOG. You'll then receive in the mail a rocker for that first 1,000 miles. This process is repeated for 5,000, 10,000, 25,000, 40,000, 60,000, 80,000, 100,000, etc. with each level giving you an additional patch and pin to display on your vest.

Another fun HOG program is the **ABCs of Touring**. This is a year long quest for as many cities, counties, states, etc. beginning with the different letters of the alphabet (one for each letter) as you can locate. For each one you must have a picture taken with you, your scoot, a current copy of HOG Tales magazine in front of an identifying road sign, post office, or other proof of having been there. Points are also awarded for state and national rallies, national parks and forests, visiting Harley Davidson factories, etc. Then all these are sent in to HOG at the end of the year for them to compile and award points. Prizes are awarded depending on the accumulated points and recognition is given in HOG Tales to the higher scoring participants. Complete guidelines as well as the form may be found at the national HOG website.

The West Texas HOG Chapter has their own version of the ABCs of Touring with their **Chapter Challenge Book**. Points are awarded for attending monthly meetings, breakfast runs, supper runs, annual chapter events, visiting Harley dealerships, visiting different states, visiting various points of interest in Texas, number of miles ridden, etc. Chapter officers and road captains can sign verifying attendance. If none happen to be available a picture with your motorcycle, the Challenge Book, and an identifying landmark such as a city limit sign provides proof the next time one of these individuals is available.

Participants are eligible for a Challenge patch and rocker depending on the number of points earned during the year. The yearly program runs from December 1st to the following November 30th. Patches and additional prizes are awarded at the annual Christmas party in December.

Another program is the **Ladies of Harley (LOH) Motorcycling Memories Contest**. This is an event for those ladies who've always wanted to write the great American novel or short story. Once again check out the national website.

Are you one of those tourists who take a lot of pictures? If so, submit your better pictures as a **Staff Photographer** for possible inclusion in a future HOG Tales magazine. Guidelines are on the national website.

Would you like to be involved in other ways? Each state rally requires the work of more than just the chapter that is putting on the rally for that particular year. They require assistance with registration, security, help with bike games, assistance with bike judging, etc. Attendees may usually sign up to volunteer on the website when they register for the rally online. It's a great way to get involved and you'll find you might have as much fun volunteering to do something at the rally as you will simply attending.

Local events don't happen by themselves either. They require members to plan poker runs, assist with registration at the events, judge bikes and similar duties. You'll find that that working one of these events is a great way to get to know your fellow HOG members.

Want to be further involved? Become a chapter officer. Each two years the chapter nominates and elects a Director, Assistant Director, Secretary, Treasurer, Activities Director, Safety Officer, Ladies of Harley Officer, Editor, Photographer/Historian. Additionally a number of Road Captains are selected to lead the various different rides throughout the year. Ideally these positions are filled by members who are nominated by their peers and are willing to accept the challenges of leading the chapter. It's often a

difficult task getting members to accept these nominations. However, if no one volunteers to assume the positions everything falls apart and you no longer have a club.

The chapter publishes a monthly newsletter. These are sent by email to anyone having an email account. This cuts down on the cost of mailing a newsletter monthly to approximately 400 members so our funds can be used for more useful purposes. Articles in the newsletter are written by chapter officers. However, you don't have to be an officer to submit an article for the newsletter. Anyone can write about a recent trip they took and share the details so that others may ride along vicariously. Or maybe there's some aspect of motorcycling about which you'd like to voice an opinion. Or if there's a safety issue that's been troubling you here's the perfect opportunity to sound off. It's your chapter. It's your newsletter. Make use of it.

Did you know that as a HOG member you're covered by standard Roadside Assistance? Active full members may use the program once per year with a maximum coverage of \$100 for that occurrence. Other levels are available with the Deluxe, Ultra, and Ultra-Plus packages with the high end package entitling you to unlimited towing and other benefits. See the national website for details and cost of each package.

Chapter Activities -- Let's talk about the various events that our chapter is involved with. The first of these events is the New Year's Day ride each January 1st. During the 2009 ride we went to Alejandra's in Ballinger. Someone counted 59 bikes and 81 members. The West Texas HOG chapter filled up the restaurant that day.

The monthly business meeting is held at 7:00 p.m. on the first Tuesday of the month unless it turns out to be a holiday. Although we may have it at other locations it's normally held at Amanda's at the south end of Sayles near the freeway as there aren't too many locations that will hold the number of members that we sometimes have attend. The meeting starts at 7:00 but everyone shows up early if they want to order and eat. Many are normally there about 6:00.

The other Tuesdays of the month there is a scheduled supper run. The meeting place for these is Kent's parking lot. They have traditionally departed at 6:30 p.m.; however, as the days got shorter this past winter the members asked to move it up to 6:00 instead during the cooler, darker months.

Breakfast runs are at 7:30 on Saturday mornings. We meet in the Stripes parking lot on Loop 322 and Industrial Boulevard. Destinations are selected for each Saturday during the warmer months of the year and will appear on the monthly calendar that is emailed along with the newsletter. During the months from about November to March the breakfast runs are impromptu and the destination is chosen by the members who show up on that particular day.

During those winter months a brunch run is scheduled on the calendar rather than the usual breakfast run. These depart from Kent's parking lot at 10:30 a.m. for a chosen destination. The mid-day run allows for temperatures to warm up a bit for those on the cold-bloodied side.

The past couple of years during January and February rather than having supper runs movie nights are held on Tuesdays. This keeps you off the highways during the cold weather and also during the dark nights when you'd normally be coming back from a supper run about 9:00 or so. The movies are shown in Kent's customer lounge and begin at 7:00 p.m. There's free popcorn and chairs are set up so bring a brown bag and maybe your cooler, kick back and enjoy the movies with friends and family.

In January there is the Electric Glove Run down to Terlingua and the Big Bend area. It received its name a few years ago because some years if you don't have electric gear then you'll certainly be hurting on the ride home if not on the ride down. It's a 3-day run Friday through Sunday.

In February or early March is the South Texas run. This ride takes you down through a portion of the hill country, along the Rio Grande border and all the way down to the tip of Texas. It can still be a tad chilly during this event.

In March Kent's has their Rides of March offering you a chance to try out a brand new Harley Davidson motorcycle. Kent's also sponsors a free poker run that weekend with prizes awarded to the top 3 participants.

Kent's has an open house and bike show on a Saturday in April. There's another open house during the fall.

An Easter egg hunt on motorcycles was created a few years ago as an additional event. It's a fun event; however, one year all the chocolate eggs melted because of the heat and the following year the event was cancelled because of ice on the ground.

The Llano Crawfish Festival takes place in April as well. While not a HOG specific event, many in the chapter get together and ride down for this event. Some make a day trip out of it while others reserve a room and make an entire weekend out of it.

April also brings us the LOH Flower Sniffin' trip down to the hill country to see the wild flowers. The home base for this event is either Fredericksburg or Kerrville depending on availability of hotel rooms.

The Republic of Texas (ROT) rally usually takes place in May. It also isn't a HOG event but there's always a group going to ride with.

In May we normally have the MDA rally with bike events and a fund raising lunch in support of the MDA. A live television presentation of funds raised is done by the chapter during the telethon in September.

The past few years Kent's has put on what they call Party on the Patio. For 6 weeks beginning in late June through July or maybe even into the first week in August they hire a band to play from about 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 each Thursday on the patio outside of Kent's. It's a fun event. Bring your lawn chair, cooler, maybe a brown bag and kick back with friends and family. There is usually a food vendor available there in the parking lot as well, selling brisket sandwiches or other goodies.

The Sunburn Camping Trip up to Lake Texhoma just across the border from Denison takes place in July. It's a 3-day event.

For those inclined to journey to Sturgis there's usually a small contingent heading that way each August.

The Texas State HOG Rally has traditionally occurred in May. However, in 2009 the rally coordinators opted to move the date to September. In June of each year the chapter officers (and anyone else who wants to ride along) go to Austin to hear presentations by willing chapters and to vote to decide where the rally will be the following year. The 2010 Texas State HOG Rally will be in Wichita Falls and in 2011 it will be in Beaumont.

Several of the rallies going on in adjoining states (LA, AR, OK, NM and sometimes a couple more) are attended by a number of the West Texas Chapter members. There's usually someone to ride with to and from these rallies.

The national rally is in a different location each year. Previous locations have included Murfreesboro, TN (2008) and Billings, Montana. The 2009 rally was in Oklahoma City and the 2010 turned out to be a riding rally with a scheduled route. There are normally 2 or 3 other national rides going on each year. Check out the national website for current information.

October brings us the chapter Halloween party at Kent's. It's preferred that you dress in costume but you can't come as a biker!

December brings the year to an end with the chapter Christmas party. The past couple of years it has been held at the old American Legion hall in Tuscola with 140-160 in attendance. A dinner of steak, baked potato, salad and dessert were served free of charge to current year local chapter members. Guests are included at the cost of \$25.

Entertainment was provided by the Back Woods Biker Boys, chapter members who sing and play guitar (some sing and play a little better than others). Their motto is, "The more you drink, the better we sound." It's during the Christmas party that officers for the following two years (assuming the previous officers have completed their two year term) are announced. We used to do a white elephant gift exchange but with the addition of many more members it got to be too time consuming. In previous years we've brought canned goods to donate to the Abilene Food Bank and this past year we've collected monetary donations that we contributed to Abilene Adult Day Care. We've felt that a gesture of this kind is much more worth while than the gift exchange.

Once again, welcome to the West Texas Harley Owners Group. I'm looking forward to your participation in our chapter's activities. Feel free to contact me via email at guinn.cooper@suddenlink.net or by phone at (325) 665-1129.

Ride and Have Fun!!!

Guinn Cooper

Director, West Texas Harley Owners Group