

HOWARD WOLFF, PHOTOGRAPHER FOR SOUTH AFRICA'S TYGER VALLEY CHAPTER, RECOUNTS THE HISTORY OF THE CHAPTER AS WELL AS A RECENT RIDE TO THE WEST COAST RALLY



TYGER VALLEY

EARNNS ITS STRIPES

Harley-Davidson® Tyger Valley in Bellville, Cape Town is situated in the beautiful wine lands of the Western Cape. The dealership first opened its doors in August 2007 and a couple of months later, in October, the H.O.G.® Tyger Valley Chapter was born. Friends, relatives and new owners were invited to the opening, and a total of 30 people attended. The three experienced and successful business partners, aided by enthusiastic volunteers, spread the news.

Regular Sunday breakfast rides that were arranged for new Harley® owners also attracted Harley riders from other parts of Cape Town. It then became time to consider safety officer training, which is a vital and integral part of any chapter. A veteran rider undertook to train a group as safety officers and, from then on, the chapter grew exponentially.

In April 2008 it was decided to have the first 'overnighter' at a small fishing village called Paternoster, up the west coast. It was a great success, with 80 participants. The Western Cape is without doubt a biker's paradise, with thousands of kilometres of beautiful scenic mountain passes, magnificent seascapes and excellent paved roads.

Paternoster was also chosen as the site of our very first rally in 2009. Attracting 160 bikes, Nigel Villiers, International H.O.G. Director, attended on this small but groundbreaking occasion. Thereafter, each year in October, successive rallies grew in size and popularity, drawing riders from many parts of South Africa. In 2010 and 2011, a village called Langebaan on the west coast hosted the rally.

In 2012 the venue changed to Lamberts Bay. A record-breaking 403 riders attended, and in 2013, at the same venue, the figure increased to an impressive 568. This is now believed to be the biggest Harley-only rally in Africa, and is a tribute to the co-operation between the thriving dealership and the dedicated H.O.G. chapter.

A rally of this size becomes a very

sociable event; most of the participants had met at previous gatherings. There was a comfortable vibe of joining up with old friends with the happy anticipation of three days of riding ahead. Vendors at the rally site, selling items from food to accessories, kept people wandering around busily.

A number of riders had completed a non-stop 1,600km ride from Johannesburg to Cape Town, and a further 260km to the

rally the next day. They all arrived cheerful and in good spirits, with any aches forgotten and ready to go again.

The main rally site was the usual meet-and-greet. The ride-outs allowed for a choice of pack or individual rides, with lunch in a venue in the mountains with excellent roads and superb scenery.

Harley Games was another exciting programme, testing riding skills and creating great competitive spirit and good

South Africa, declared that of all his rides throughout the world, he has never experienced such great rides as here in the Cape. A particularly popular yearly ride for our Chapter is the eight mountain passes, which is done in one day. Those who complete the ride get a much-treasured commemorative pin.

Being the designated photographer for our Chapter puts me in the enviable position of enjoying two passions in my life: biking and photography. Being a wildlife and pictorial photographer, now retired, and since purchasing my first Harley four years ago, I am fulfilling a long-cherished ambition of riding, which I have done for the past 40 years, and capturing photographs along the way.

Each week, the road captain sends out the route planned for the following Sunday ride; this enables me to decide whether to ride with the pack or go on ahead, find a picturesque spot and wait for the pack to photograph them as they pass; this generally works well.

On one occasion the pack had a 'butt rest', breaking a longish ride, and I decided to go on ahead. I was told to go straight and just after the intersection I would find an ideal downhill curve to photograph the pack, showing the long line of headlights like jewels outlining the ride. Thoughtlessly I instead turned left, found a curved downhill, parked and waited. After a few minutes of trying to outstare a cow, I realised that there was a noticeable absence of that familiar sound. I got back on the Road King® and shot back up to the intersection and there was dead silence. I found a lady carrying a small baby. On enquiring about the pack she shouted to me: "You are late, sir, they passed long ago!" So much for pictures, lesson learned!

One cannot adequately describe the scene; the countryside morphing out of the mist on a winter's morning and the sound that reaches you, as you wait along the road, as the pack approaches around a mountain pass. The road captain leads, followed by the safety officers and the pack of riders accompanied by the familiar and unforgettable symphony of sound that we all know so well.

There is dignity, pride and a tremendous feel-good factor that is shared being a member of a H.O.G. chapter. I am happy to be with such a great bunch of people and machines, sharing experiences that enrich our lives. I am grateful that I have the opportunity to take the photographs that allow us to relive these occasions, always reminding us of our good fortune. ■