

# AMCA Pioneer: Dottie Mattern Wonder Woman?



As we wrap up the 60th anniversary of the AMCA, it's appropriate that we feature a dynamo of a person who has enough motorcycling memories to fill a hundred scrapbooks. And yet, Dottie Mattern continues to think more about what she's doing next, rather than what she's done in the past.

Dottie is an Honorary Member of the AMCA, a former member of the AMCA Board, and a current member of the Board for the AMCA's sister organization, the Antique Motorcycle Foundation.

These days, she and her husband, John, split their time between homes in the North Carolina mountains and the Florida Keys. But that's when she's home at all, which isn't often, what with her other pursuits: drag-racing her antique Indian, grandmothering five young ones, riding coast to coast in the Motorcycle Cannonball Endurance Run or riding modern bikes all over the world.

You wouldn't suspect it today, but Dottie started in motorcycling as a mild-mannered college teacher who needed cheap transportation.

"I bought a Honda 90 to get to class," she says. "But it had to be the step-through model, since teachers still wore dresses in those days!"

She caught the two-wheeled bug right away, and started getting involved in motorcycling on many levels.

"I was moonlighting as a program director for a YMCA in Baltimore in the late '60s," she says, "and I was looking for help to put together an instructional mini-bike program for kids in our summer day camp (as an alternative to horses). That led to a competitive program and the first sanctioned AMA National Meet for kids in 1972. I also convinced the Baltimore County Trail Riders Club and the Baltimore Ramblers Motorcycle Club to volunteer to help me at the YMCA.

"It was during this time that some of the old timers in these clubs talked about Indians and Harleys. I was intrigued and wanted to know more about them. So I went to my first AMCA meet at Fort Mott, New Jersey, in 1977 and got hooked from the get-go.

"I first met Bob McClean, Doc Patt and Earl Chalfant (all of whom held the position of AMCA President at various times from 1974 through 2002) at Fort Mott," she recalls, "and they quickly worked on recruiting me as National Secretary for the Board of Directors." Dottie would go on to become the first woman elected as an individual to be a national Club officer, and she would hold that post for 15 years.

"At the time," she says, "I lived in Maryland and was married to Mort Wood (another AMCA Honorary Member, now deceased). We had many gatherings at our house that led to starting the Chesapeake Chapter.

"We also went on several antique road rides. My first was the D-J Run in Colorado (which would become the prototype for AMCA National Road Runs), and I was having such a good time that everyone said I had a continuous smile on my face."

Dottie's interest in all kinds of motorcycles remained strong, and she ended up riding on tours in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Italy, England, Ireland, the Isle of Man, Scotland, New Zealand and South Africa. More recently, she and John have ridden in the south of France and the three lower islands of Japan. They have also done off-road exploring in central Mexico, the Baja and parts of Canada.



**Ride, Dottie, Ride: This 1936 Indian Sport Scout carried Dottie Mattern 3,665 miles in the coast-to-coast Motorcycle Cannonball Endurance Run.**

Her riding career took another turn several years ago when she was asked to ride a friend's 1937 Scout in speed-record runs organized by the East Coast Timing Association on a strip of pavement in North Carolina known as the Maxton Mile. She set a class record of 94.7 mph. That led her to take the Ed Barge Racing School at age 62 and qualify for her road-racing license. Last year, she raced a 1972 Honda 350 in vintage races run by the American Historic Racing Motorcycle Association (AHRMA).

But one of Dottie's proudest and most memorable riding experiences just wrapped up in September, when she participated in the Motorcycle Cannonball Endurance Run from Daytona Beach, Florida, to Tacoma, Washington, on her 1936 Indian Sport Scout. Only a problem with the bike's distributor one day kept her from completing every one of the 3,938 miles in this year's route. As it was, she finished as the top woman rider, logging 3,665 miles.

But that Cannonball result wasn't just a personal achievement. Dottie rode as a fund-raiser for both the Colon Cancer Alliance (she is a survivor herself) and the Antique Motorcycle Foundation.

"It was awesome," she says. "Physically challenging to be sure, as we had all sorts of weather and roads to deal with. I also went without a mechanic at the last minute, which is unheard of! Thankfully, the other riders and crews were so friendly and supportive, and I treasure these new friends.

"Across the country, hundreds of people came out to meet and cheer us. So many came up to me and asked to take my picture or have me autograph something. It was humbling.

"There were a couple of times when I was freezing or soaked, shoulders aching from all the rough roads, and I questioned why I was doing this. Then I remembered all the names on the back of my shirt—loved ones of donors who had been hurt by cancer—and I knew I would ride on. I felt so fortunate to be alive and riding my little Suede (named after her mother). I learned from her that you never know how strong you are until that is the only option."

At age 70 (seemingly going on 30), Dottie's grateful for what she's been able to do, and hopeful about all the things she still wants to do.

"I would dearly love to challenge myself again and ride the 2016 Cannonball that will be for bikes at least 100 years old (1916 and earlier). I do not have a motorcycle that old, but I would love to find a sponsor.

"I'll be going on 72 then," she says, "but I know I can ride!" No doubt, Dottie. No doubt. —Greg Harrison