

LAKE LIFE

CELEBRATING THE PEOPLE OF THE FINGER LAKES

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• P E O P L E •

AUBURN MAN FINDS RARE MOTORCYCLE POSTER!



Sam Tenney / The Citizen
Doug Holland holds a poster
he found advertising an all-
female motorcycle show held
in Waterloo in 1940.

Gavin Strube
Special to The Citizen

In 1940, the Hells Angels met Charlie's Angels in Waterloo.

That year, Louise Menzer Scherbyn organized America's first all-girl motorcycle show, held at the Waterloo Fairgrounds at 1:30 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 29.

The historic nature of this event has been highlighted by the discovery of an advertising poster for the event by Doug Holland. Holland, of Auburn, makes a living by dismantling old barns and turning the wood into antique-style flooring, paneling and furniture.

While his job already involves giving the past new life, he was amazed at the historic poster's discovery.

"I was dismantling a barn back in July," Holland said, "It was out on Route 89 outside of Seneca Falls, and as I was doing my initial walkthrough, I found this poster just laying on a box in one of the stalls. I did some research and found out more about this show and the woman who organized it."

Holland uncovered the story of Scherbyn, a dynamic woman who did much for the sport of motorcycling and women's involvement in it.

"She was the founder of the Women's International Motorcycle Association, the first group that organized women motorcycle enthusiasts outside of local regions, back in the '50s," Holland said.

WIMA is not only notable as the first large scale women's motorcycle group, but also for being one of the only motorcycle associations that is international in charter and membership, even today.

Scherbyn became an icon among female motorcycle enthusiasts, and remains so today.

"She was a very courageous and devoted woman," Holland said. "And the things she did were really quite a big deal. She rode all over the United States and Canada, over 225,000 miles. She was the first woman to ride a motorcycle all the way up to the far north of Canada. The Waterloo Historical Society has a lot of information about her, a scrapbook and other memorabilia."

Holland continued, "What makes it amazing is how close to home a lot of this is. ... She was a central New Yorker who did what she wanted to do, and she had a real impact. She is just like people we know; in fact, she was born at the same hospital I was."

Scherbyn's contributions to motorcycling have not been recognized by everyone, however.

"I've been talking to Alice Sexton, the president of the American division of the WIMA," said Holland. "She told me that they have been trying to get Louise inducted into the American Motorcycle Association Hall of Fame in Ohio. Why she isn't already in there is beyond me, but they tried back in 2003, when Louise passed away, but it didn't happen."

That injustice may shape the future of the poster Holland found.

"At first I was going to donate it to the WIMA," Holland explained. "But after talking to Alice, we think this piece of history may be the last thing we need to get her in. I mean, this show was sanctioned by the AMA; it's there on the poster. So instead of sending it to Alice, she suggested I send it straight to the AMA. Hopefully it will help, this is apparently a pretty rare find. The only other

surviving copy of this poster that I know of is in the Indian Motorcycle Museum in Springfield, Mass.”

Whatever happens, Scherbyn's legacy lives on in the organizations she helped create, and pieces of history like the poster Holland uncovered.

“She was just an incredible woman who deserves her due,” Holland said. “And maybe this lucky find will help that happen.”