

CHRISTIAN MOTORCYCLISTS A BLESSING TO MUSSELMAN ORGANIZERS
WRITTEN BY CHRISTOPHER HENDERSON FOR THE MUSSELMAN TRIATHLON, 2009
SPECIAL TO THE FINGER LAKES TIMES

You're at a stoplight, patiently waiting for the light to turn green.

Even before you see them, you feel it. The distant, throaty rumbling can only be one thing: Motorcycles. Lots and lots of motorcycles.

Before you know it, you're surrounded by men and women clad in leather.

The light turns green, and they roar away just as you check to make sure your doors are locked. Admit it: you probably weren't thinking that you've just been passed by a dedicated group of faith-based volunteers.

But if you've just had a run-in with the Christian Motorcycle Association, that is exactly the case.

Since the inaugural race in 2004, members of the CMA Syracuse chapter, Central New York Sunrise Riders 429, have taken to the roads each Musselman morning, providing road support to race organizers. Many race officials and marshals will hitch a ride with a CMA member before the day is through.

The CMA boasts thousands of members, with hundreds of chapters across the country. According to the organization's Web site, each member "must agree to live and act under Biblical principles of conduct."

"The basic purpose of a CMA Chapter is to support the National CMA effort of sharing and showing the love of Jesus Christ to motorcyclists, and supporting the overall ministry of CMA," the Web site says.

Many volunteer their time and hardware to organizations such as the Musselman.

John Austin, race director of the Cazenovia Triathlon and an official at the Musselman since its inception, has come to know the CMA volunteers well.

"These are really, really good people," Austin says. "They make communication so much easier. They really help make these races go smoothly."

Austin remembers his first encounter with a CMA rider. Approaching the man on the motorcycle and unsure where to assign him, he asked the rider a question: Where can I use you?

"His answer made me think," Austin said. "He told me, simply, 'We're here to serve.'" Austin found several places for the motorcyclist to help, but the man's response left him thinking.

“He may have meant that two ways,” Austin said. “They’re like any other motorcycle club, but their purpose – wow.”

Al Desederio, coordinator of the Syracuse chapter, said his members get as much out of helping organizations as the organizations receive from their service.

“This race is a blessing, something we look forward to,” he said “We try to bring as many people as have the weekend off and help wherever we’re needed. We stay with them from start to finish, at their service.”

Desederio said members have become accustomed to handling road support for triathlons, but they look forward to the Musselman year after year.

“It’s a great race, with really great people,” he said. “It supplies a good rush of adrenaline. We’ve been with the race since the beginning, and I can easily see us in Geneva every summer for the next 20 years or more.”

Jan Regan, Musselman’s original run course coordinator, has used the CMA’s services in her duties as the race’s official photographer. Riding the course on a motorcycle gives her vantage points that would otherwise be unavailable, she said.

“I know this wonderful group does much more important things than what they do for me, but I will never forget having my own motorcyclist transport me all over the course so that I could get the photographs we needed to document the race,” Regan said.

Any qualms she had about hopping on a motorcycle were quickly put to rest.

“He would patiently stop wherever I asked,” she recalled. “And I’m pretty sure he was gauging his speed by my low tolerance for going too fast. It made photographing the bike course both doable and a lot of fun.”

Journalists covering the race have used CMA volunteers’ services as well.

“This is a terrific group of men and women, and race day would be very difficult without their assistance,” said race director Jeff Henderson. “From crowd control in the park to transporting race officials throughout the course, they’re everywhere. They ride the course at the front of the pack, checking to make sure the roadway is clear of obstructions, and they handle the ‘sweep’ at the back end, making sure no stragglers are left behind.”

Henderson is especially impressed that the group supports the race year-round.

“We have race committee meetings throughout the year, and without fail the Christian Motorcyclist Association attends,” Henderson said.

“I’ve overheard athletes refer to them as the Heaven’s Angels, and I have to agree,” he said. “We hope to be blessed with their services for as long as there is a Musselman.”

'HEAVEN'S ANGELS'



Jan Regan

A member of the Christian Motorcyclist Association is ready to escort a race official onto the bike course during last year's Musselman. The group has volunteered at the event since 2004.

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By C.D. HENDERSON
PUBLIC RELATIONS COORDINATOR
FOR THE MUSSELMAN TRIATHLON

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Inside

- ◆ The Pan American Cup has been canceled this year due to a lack of funding.
- ◆ Seven women join forces to tackle the sprint triathlon as a team they've dubbed "Heart, Wine & Soul."

Tomorrow

- ◆ A preview of the first ever "Musselman Arts Triathlon," featuring performances by musicians, dancers and painters.
- ◆ Geneva Bicycle Center owner Jim Hogan's role as bike course coordinator.
- ◆ One local competitor picked up some tips when he housed USA Elite triathlete Victor Plata two years ago.

Friday

- ◆ The growing popularity of the mini-Mussel and its Novice Wave.

Sunday, Monday & Tuesday

- ◆ Full race coverage and results.



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