HARLEY-DAVIDSON - 105 YEARS OF CUSTOM LEADERSHIP

1900s: A Legend Is Born

1903: Humble beginnings: the motorcycle born in a shed

- 105 years ago, lifelong pals William S Harley and Arthur Davidson realised a dream of manufacturing a motorized bicycle and produced their first Harley-Davidson motorcycle in a shed in Milwaukee, Wisconsin

- The dream was realized with the additional help of Walter and William Davidson. Their combined efforts would be the beginning of a motorcycle legacy

- The first Harley-Davidson motorcycle came at a time when a motorised bicycle was a very rare sight – the main form of transport was still horses, horse-drawn carriages or on foot. But its arrival coincided with a general desire among American people to get out and see their country and experience what the world was all about

- The 10 x 15 ft shed was built by Arthur's father, William C Davidson and **HARLEY-DAVIDSON MOTOR CO.** was painted on the front door

- While working in that shed nights and weekends, could these young inventors have known what lay in store for them on the road ahead?

- Willie G quote: *'The Founders could never have imagined that their enterprise would turn into a treasure respected by enthusiasts around world. What they established was monumental, though probably hard to place in any real context because everything was yet to come. Put simply, it was the beginning.'*

1903/1904: First born Harley-Davidson motorcycle: serial number one

- This is the first production Harley-Davidson motorcycle

- Following great experimentation, ingenuity, entrepreneurial spirit and engineering savoir-faire, this viable form of transportation was born

- The bike was built to be a racer with a 3-1/8 inch bore and 3-1/2 inch stroke

- Its beauty is its simplicity: an engine and a set of wheels with a pedal system to get the engine started

- In 1904, the first Harley Davidson dealership opens. The dealer is C.H. Lang of Chicago, IL, who sells one of the first three production Harley-Davidson motorcycles ever made

1905: The Silent Grey Fellows

- Because William Harley was a quiet, reserved man whose hair had turned silvery grey at an early age, he was affectionately known as the “Silent Grey Fellow”

- Because the nickname coincided with the standard grey colour, the Davidson brothers nicknamed Harley’s latest motorcycle in his honour and the bike went public in 1906

1906/1907: The Harley empire evolves

- A new factory, measuring 28 x 80 feet, is built on the Chestnut Street site, later re-named Juneau Avenue

- William A. Davidson, brother to Arthur and Walter Davidson, quits his job as railroad tool foreman and joins the Motor Company

- Harley-Davidson Motor Company is incorporated on September 17th and stock is split between the four founders. Staff size rises to 18 employees and factory size soon doubles

- Dealer recruitment begins, targeting the New England region

RACING – Rich Racing Heritage

'Harley-Davidson motorcycles were raced almost from the very beginning of the company, first by independent owners, and then by an official racing department in 1914," Bill Jackson, Manager of Harley-Davidson Archives.

- From its early days, Harley-Davidson became synonymous with excellence in motorcycle racing
- Though Harley-Davidson was one of the first motorcycle manufacturers – building a bike in 1903 – that position was challenged by more than 150 other companies that entered the marketplace by 1911
- But racing would quickly set Harley-Davidson apart from its competitors and lay the foundations for a century of dominance in motorcycle racing, as well as helping to establishing Harley as the most respected manufacturer in the business

1908: Harley racing heritage begins: endurance runs

- Endurance Runs are introduced to prove dependability of the Harley motorcycle – they are long distance, through woods, rivers and steep, rugged terrain which test both man and machine

- Walter Davidson scores a perfect 1,000 points at the 7th Annual Federation of American Motorcyclists Endurance and Reliability Contest

- Endurance Runs help to establish Harley-Davidson and its president as industry leaders and word of Harley's extremely tough motorcycle spreads rapidly

1909: Built for speed: with debut of the V-Twin, Harley races ahead

- Harley-Davidson owes its racing prestige to its famous V-twins, but it wasn't until 1909 that the firm released its first V-twin engined motorcycle

- Bill Harley perfects his first 45 degrees V-twin by grafting a second cylinder behind the forward-leaning cylinder

- With a displacement of 49.5 cubic inches, Harley's new V-Twin powered motorcycle produces seven horse power. With increase in horse power, speed became the new focus and small towns would see racers on bikes now hitting speeds of 100 mph on special board tracks

Corporate Racing

'When Harley-Davidson decided to go racing, the company made the decision to race to win. And win it did.'
Jeanne Davidson, grand-daughter of founder Walter Davidson

- Temporarily withdrawing from racing, when board track racing became more extreme and dangerous, Harley re-entered the racing game in 1914, starting up a new racing department, sponsoring teams which cleaned up in major events across the country

- The Harley team come to be known as the "Wrecking Crew" because of their incredible dominance of the sport

- In 1921, Harley-Davidson become the first to win a motorcycle race at an average speed of more than 100mph

- In the late 1920s, with a movement to reduce speed, Harley introduced the Peashooter, a single cylinder racer, and one of its most beautiful creations

- As 'flat track' or 'dirt-track' racing starts to replace board-track racing, Harley is now the largest motorcycle producer in the world with a reputation to uphold on the tracks

History of flat track racing

- 'Flat-track' or 'dirt track' racing is the oldest least unchanged form of motorcycle competition

- Joe Leonard, Carroll Resweber and Brad Andres are historic, famous dirt track racers in the Dirt Track Hall of Fame. Joe Leonard won several AMA championships from 1958-61 and Carrrol Resweber was also a national champion from 1958-61

- Harley-Davidson's dominance at the sport continues: HD sponsored Kenny Coolbeth on the AMA GNC flat track series and the Wrecking Crew - featuring Jared Mees on the Blue Springs Harley Davidson, Brian Smith on the Moroney's Harley-Davidson and Joe Kopp on his Team Latus Harley-Davidson

C Class Racing: For people of 'The Street'

- The 1929 introduction of the DL Peashooter, a street model, ushered in the era of Class C racing – for the everyday rider
- Owners could ride standard machines like WLs and WRs, known as Flatheads, to the track and race. Flatheads were kings of the Class C circuit for years
- Bikes like "Knucklehead", "Shovelhead" and "Panhead" were named from street lingo that described the look of the upper parts of the engine. Knucklehead describes the gnarly look of the rocker cover

Racing: Hill-climbing

- In the 1930s, racing up steep inclines becomes very popular, as riders try to reach the top of the hill in the fastest time
- Like board-track racing before it, Hill-climbing becomes the great extreme sport of its era and people love to watch and talk about it

Harley: A history of famous racing bikes and riders

Petrali – The Name Meant Victory

"Every sport has had its legendary heroes," said Jackson. "The sport of motorcycle racing had its own hero, Joe Petrali, a star whose championship performances have never been matched and not even approached."

- Harley has a long line of celebrated racers, but the man who laid the groundwork for it all was Joe Petrali
- Joe Petrali was a mega legend in the 1930s racing Harley on board, track, roads, beach, hills and winning record after record
- In a six-year stretch between 1931 and 1936, Petrali amassed the most National points five times
- In 1935, perhaps his best season, he won every race on the 13-stop National schedule
- In 1937, Petrali set a speed record of 136.183 mph by piloting the 1937 Model E 61 cu. in. V-Twin Streamliner at Daytona Beach
- He also won the National Hillclimb Championship eight years running, beginning in 1929

Other racing highlights

- In 1930, Bill Davidson (father of Willie G) established an endurance run legend, winning the 2-day Jack Pine Enduro event on a stock motorcycle. Harley now had a reputation for building stock motorcycles capable of superior performance

- In the 1950s, Harley introduced the KR which powered its way through the national championships. The KR had a peanut-shaped fuel tank borrowed from the 1948 125cc S Model

- The peanut shape became synonymous with Harley performance. It found its way onto the Sportster XLCH Model in 1958 and continues to be a Sportster trademark

- In the 1960s, Harley riders competed in Daytona racing on numerous variations of the KR Model. Harley presented a strong racing programme on Sportsters and KRs

- The XR750 – one the world's most famous race bikes debuted in 1972. The XRs were winners on dirt-tracks from the beginning and some of the biggest names in dirt track racing – Jay Springsteen, Chris Carr and top legend Scott Parker – earned their fame on XRs

- During his racing career, Scott Parker set a record with nine Grand National championships, many in the 1990s

- Joe Leonard, Carroll Resweber and Brad Andres were famous dirt track racers in the Dirt Track Hall of Fame. Joe Leonard won several AMA championships from 1958-61 and Carrrol Resweber was also a national champion from 1958-61

- The VR1000 was introduced in 1994 for superbike racing – in recognisable orange, white and black paint scheme

- It was followed by the VRSCA V-Rod at the turn of the new century – its successful development owes much to the rich Harley racing heritage

- From Walter Davidson's legendary 1908 endurance run to now – the victories on the racetrack have made Harley better at building motorcycles

1908: Harley Enters The Police

'There's something unbelievably right about a cop on a Harley-Davidson'
(Early poster Advert)

- In 1908, the first motorcycle sold for police duty is delivered to the Detroit Police Department
- From the beginning, police departments recognized the tactical advantage provided by a manoeuvrable vehicle such as a motorcycle along with Harley-Davidson's reputation for reliability
- Expanding Police use gave the bikes an air of authority
- Presidential motorcades and downtown parades started to feature police escorts on Harley-Davidson motorcycles and black and white movies popularised these images
- During The Roaring '20s, state police forces protect rural areas from lawlessness and to enforce Prohibition. The motorized vehicle of choice on rutted rural roads was the motorcycle
- By the end of the 1920s, more than 3,000 police departments and government agencies used Harley-Davidson motorcycles
- During The Great Depression, Harley-Davidson aggressively marketed its product as "The Police Motorcycle" and supported national campaigns for traffic safety. The three-wheel Servi-Car, introduced in 1931, became very popular with police departments for traffic and parking enforcement
- Through the economic ups and downs of Harley-Davidson's history, the police and fleet businesses have helped keep the Harley-Davidson brand alive
- Today, more than 3,400 police departments ride Harley-Davidson motorcycles in the U.S. alone. Harley-Davidson Police motorcycles are also used in 45 countries.

1910s: Harley-Davidson At War

1910: The famous “Bar & Shield” logo is used for the first time.

1912:

- Construction of six story headquarters and main factory building begins at Juneau Ave.
- H-D exports motorcycles to Japan, first sales outside of the US
- Dealer network grows to over 200 nationwide
- First clutch mechanism introduced

1913: The Forecar delivery van is offered for the first time

1914:

- Sidecars are made available to Harley-Davidson buyers
- Clutch and brake pedals now available on F-head singles and twins

1915: Three speed transmission introduced

1916:

- The Enthusiast begins its reign as the longest continuously published motorcycle magazine
- The first military Harley-Davidsons with sidecar-mounted machine-guns chase Pancho Villa bandits into northern Mexico.

Harley-Davidson At War

- Harley-Davidson motorcycles proved their value as military hardware
- With U.S. entry into World War I, approximately 20,000 Harley-Davidson motorcycles were built and transported to Europe for the Allies in 1917/1918
- The Harley bikes proved very effective for dispatching messages before the advent of reliable radio communications. Most of these motorcycles had sidecars which could be fitted with machine-gun mounts if needed
- During WWII, Harley-Davidson produced 88,000 motorcycles for the war effort, including the horizontally opposed, two-cylinder, shaft-drive XA 750 model
- Soldiers praised the Harley-Davidson and it proved its metal in the most brutal circumstances
- HD was awarded four prestigious Army-Navy "E" awards for its patriotic efforts in WWII

1920s: Harley-Davidson - The Greatest Motorcycle In The World

- By 1920, Harley-Davidson motorcycles were sold by dealers in 67 countries. Production was 28,189 machines
- So what how they managed to capture the hearts and minds of America and beyond so quickly?

Harley's elusive mystique

'If our mystique could be put into words, it wouldn't be mysterious anymore. Feelings were never meant to be fully understood, that's their beauty. And since emotions are essentially personal, it means there are millions of reasons why people chose to ride Harley-Davidson motorcycles."

- The HD founders provided a sheer glimpse of the fun of motorcycling
- Harley-Davidson came to symbolise the dream of being at one with nature on the open road - senses bombarded with the beauty and smells of the surrounding natural landscape
- HD riders describe the heightening of the senses and the feeling of power on two wheels – the pulsing of the V-Twin, 'the wind in your hair'
- Harley became synonymous with FREEDOM – escaping everyday life and the sheer exhilaration and adventure on the road
- Motorcycling grew as a hobby and then likeminded people began to gather together to ride and share stories
- Winning Endurance runs helped win trust in the Harley brand and help it to take on an emotional meaning
- People wanted to be associated with Harley and riders wore jerseys with Harley-Davidson emblazoned across the front

Harley's commitment to riding fuelled a passion for the brand

'I believe the extraordinary efforts of all the great people in this company to bring riders together is what separated HD from its competitors. Our name generates passion, which is brought to life and perpetuated by our dealers and ultimately by everyone who owns and enjoys Harley-Davidson products.'
Willie G

- Through their commitment to riding, the founders instituted a spirit of shared experience that riders still appreciate today
- With the onset of The Great Depression, Harley dealers placed more emphasis on promoting rider gatherings which kept riders excited and involved through the Depression and WWII, keeping motorcycling alive
- The Harley mystique grew stronger as people shared their positive experiences of races and events

1920s continued:

- 1920: Leslie “Red Parkhurst” breaks 23 speed records on a Harley-Davidson 61 cubic inch racing motorcycle
- 1922: Harley Davidson riders sweep all eight National Championships
- During the 1920s, several improvements were put in place, such as a new 74 cubic inch (1200cc) V-Twin, introduced in 1922 and the "Teardrop" gas tank, still seen today, in 1925
- 1925: Joe Petrali begins racing for Harley. He will become one of the most successful dirt track racers for HD and one of most successful racers of all time
- A front wheel brake was added in 1928
- In the late summer of 1929, Harley-Davidson introduced its 45 cubic inch flathead V-Twin to compete with the Indian 101 Scout and the Excelsior Super X. This engine stays in production for 45 years
- 1929: The 45 inch V-twin engine (later known as the “flathead”) is introduced on the D model. The engine proves to be so reliable that variations are available on Harley-Davidson motorcycles till 1973

1930s: … and the Great Depression

Harley-Davidson penetrates the heart and mind of America

"Throughout the course of the 20th century, Harley-Davidson motorcycles were woven into the fabric of American life. In many ways, Harley-Davidson came of age and matured with America." **Willie G.**

- By the 1930s, Harley-Davidson was firmly entrenched in US consciousness and was widely used and seen in many key arenas of American public life – the race track, the postal service, the police and at war
- Groceries, mail or laundry were delivered to your door by a Harley-Davidson
- Police gave the bikes respect and reputation for quality
- Through their use in WWI, the bikes became potent symbols of American strength around the globe
- After decades of economic swings, HD's imagery and style were alive in people's minds
- Harley-Davidson motorcycles are central to riders' lives: *"When we're not thinking about them, we're riding them."*

1930s

- 1930: Bill Davidson Jr wins Jack Pine Endurance contest
- The Great Depression began a few months after the introduction of Harley's 45 cubic inch model and Harley-Davidson's sales plummeted from 21,000 in 1929 to less than 4,000 in 1933.
- By 1931, all of Harley's remaining American competition had gone except Indian. Harley and Indian remain the only two American motorcycle manufacturers till 1953

- In order to survive, the company manufactured industrial powerplants based on their motorcycle engines
- More emphasis placed on promoting rider gatherings
- In 1932, the three-wheeled Servi-Car delivery vehicle is released, remaining in production until 1973
- In 1932 flat-track racing, HD racer Joe Petrali begins a 5-year consecutive streak of winning the AMA Grand National Championship. He also wins the National Hill-Climb Championship of 1932-1935
- 1933: The landmark art-deco "eagle" design is painted on all gas tanks
- An 80 cubic inch flathead engine was added to the line in 1935, by which time the single cylinder motorcycles had been discontinued
- 1935: Joe Petrali wins all 13 of the American Motorcycle Association National Championship dirt-track races on an HD Peashooter, breaking four records in the process

- By 1937, all the flathead engines were equipped with the dry-sump oil recirculation system that had been introduced with the 61E and 61EL "Knucklehead" OHV models

1940s: Enter The Outlaws

1941: America plunges into World War II: production of civilian motorcycles is almost suspended in favour of military production.

1941: 74" OHV Super Power engine introduced.

1943: Overseas, many American servicemen get their first exposure to H-D motorcycles, which they won't forget when they return.

1945: WWII ends and Harley has produced almost 90,000 WLA models for military use. Soldiers returning home from the war continued their love affair with the Harley-Davidson motorcycles.

1945: One of the family - importance of employer passion and being seen

- Founders were true enthusiasts who rode, raced and ignited the passion in the company
- The founders inspired great emotion between the walls of HD and employees believed in the brand and what it represented
- Today, more than 9,000 people worldwide are Harley employees but HD still has a small company feel
- The dedication of the employees extends beyond factory and office, to being the eyes and ears of the riding community - they attend rallies and feel in tune with the hobby
- The philosophy of the founders has stuck: root words like 'family' and 'heritage' have powerful connotations

1946: Harley introduces the 45 cubic inch flathead WR racing motorcycle. It proves to be one of the best racing motorcycles ever built.

1947: 74" OHV Big Twin engine. Last year of the Knucklehead.

• HD dirt track racer Jimmy Chann wins first of three consecutive AMA Grand National Championships.

1947 Legacy of Hollister – Enter the outlaws

"I'm convinced that there's a little outlaw in all of us. And back then, as now, a lot of people wanted to break away from the norm from time to time" **Willie G**

- After the war, hellraisers took to the roads who wanted to have an excess of fun and they were flamboyant and rebellious and used bikes to express themselves and stand out from the crowd
- To make bikes faster and lighter, they took parts off and made adjustments
- They rode together on loud machines in black leathers creating a scene – rebels that didn't adhere to the rules
- The Summer of 1947, a rider gathering at Hollister, California set off a media frenzy with booze, fighting and arrests and a photo of a ruffian on a Harley made it into Life magazine
- Hollister created an aura of menace for motorcycling, creating negative 'outlaw' coverage and fear grew among the public towards these outlaws

1954 The Wild One: the film adds to Outlaw hype

- Starring Marlon Brando, the film reinforced the stereotype of bad guys on bikes
- Harley became a potent symbol of rebellion and breaking away from the norm as people rose to declare their rebel status
- Hells Angels showed up on Harley-Davidsons with Harley patches on their vests
- The Easy Rider film of 1969 added further fuel to the rebellious image of Harley and motorcycling
- The Bad Boy era still echoes – in the custom bikes, the black leather, the tattoos, the Softails. But it didn't stop Harley getting where it is today, perhaps it even helped!

1948: 74" "Panhead" engine is introduced. Production of American-made lightweight motorcycles begins with the various model S versions being sold till 1966.

1949: The Hydra-Glide debuts.

1950s: Harley Celebrates 50 Years

1950: Harley-Davidson riders win 18 of 24 National Championships and set six new racing records.

1953: HD celebrates 50th Anniversary in style. A V logo is created to honour the engine with an overlaying bar reading 'Harley-Davidson – 50 years – made in America'.

1953: Indian (Hendee Manufacturing) goes out of business. Harley becomes the sole US motorcycle manufacturer for the next 46 years.

1954: 50th Anniversary models introduced (that's right, 1954 not 1953).

1954: Dirt track racer Joe Leonard wins the AMA Grand National Championship. Over the next eight years, this race will be won by HD racers.

1955: Beginning of seven-year run of victories at Daytona 200. Victories won on KR models are shared by Brad Andres, Johnny Gibson, Joe Leonard and Roger Reiman.

1955: Custom odyssey takes off

"Tailoring a bike to one's vision is the purest form of self expression." **Willie G Davidson**

- Custom bikes and leather jackets became a fad in the late 40s and early 50s
- Mid-America was bland, so self tailored bikes were special, making personal statements
- Custom bike guys designed, built and modified their bikes themselves in back alley garages
- The Big Twin shows how wheel and tire changes can affect the look of a motorcycle. Solid wheels make a big difference to the Fat Boy model
- By the 60s, the custom movement was gaining momentum
- Changes to the basic anatomy of motorcycles – e.g. wheels, fenders, handlebars, seats - radically altered the look of a bike
- Harley decided to become part of the custom movement, starting with the experimental Super Glide model
- Willie G Davidson was taken on as a designer at H-D in 1963 and started a design department – he made refinements and improvements to existing product lines and created new features but keeping the overall look the same

- Factory customs would become synonymous with HD – The Super Glide Low Rider; the entire Soft Tail line; now the V-Rod
- HD provided parts, accessories and inspiration
- Individual customisation has become part of owning a Harley-Davidson

Motorcycle To The Stars

- In 1956, young star Elvis Presley poses for the cover of The Enthusiast astride a 1956 model KH
- In the 50s, Harley became an icon: stars of music and screen began riding H-Ds for fun, giving the bikes style and cudos

The lowdown on some of the most famous Harley riders of our time:

- Malcolm Forbes, founder of Forbes Magazine and one of the wealthiest men ever, amassed a collection of more than 50 Harley-Davidson motorcycles. His personal endorsement helped Harley sales soar
- Dennis Hopper and Peter Fonda are probably the most famous Harley riders of all time. The iconic photo of the cult duo atop their Harleys in the 1969 movie Easy Rider remains one of the most sought-after photos of all time
- Brigitte Bardot began a love affair with Harley-Davidson in the ‘60s and debuted her hit single with the title ‘Harley Davidson’
- Evel Knievel was the ultimate motorcycling celebrity, famous for his dare devil stunts in the 1960s and 70s. HD sponsored him to promote a better image for motorcycling
- Other famous Harley riders include Don Johnson, Mickey Rourke, Tina Turner, Arnold Schwarzenegger and Elizabeth Taylor
- Celebrities aren’t the only famous people riding Harleys. During an appearance in his campaign to become President of the United States, then Governor Bill Clinton happily posed astride a Harley

Back to 1950s:

1957: XLH Sportster – the first of the “Superbikes” – is introduced, setting a whole new style with its "peanut" gas tank, 4-speed transmission and massive rear fender mounts.

1958 The Hydra-Glide turns into the Duo-Glide. Rear suspension with dual shock absorbers is available for the first time.

1960s: The Hippie Years

The 60s had a major impact on anyone involved with Harley-Davidson motorcycles

- The hippie era with its anti-Vietnam war protests and Rock n Roll captured the way young people were feeling and Harley bikes reflected the counter-culture spirit of the times
- Increasingly creative bike-building expressed the growing distaste for the status quo and the passion for freedom
- With tie-dye, beaded jewelley, psychedelic art in custom paint, long front forks and coffin tanks, bikes looked increasingly extreme
- The Harley-inspired custom bikes of Easy Rider ridden by Nicholson and Hopper captured the rebel spirit of the times

1960: The “Topper," a fiberglass motorscooter was introduced – the only HD scooter ever produced.

1960: Harley-Davidson teams up with Italian manufacturer Aeronautica Macchi, to produce a line of smaller bikes including the Shortster and Sprint models.

1962: HD buys 60% of Tomahawk Motoring Company, recognizing the rising relevance of fiberglass.

1964: The three-wheeled Servi-Car becomes the first Harley-Davidson motorcycle to receive an electric starter.

1965: The Electra-Glide debuts with an electric starter.

1965: George Roeder sets a world land speed record (177 mph) for 250 cc motorcycles on a much modified Harley-Davidson Sprint.

1965: After being privately held for over 60 years, Harley-Davidson goes public.

1966: The introduction of the Shovelhead engine is introduced on Electra-Glide models.

1968: Cal Raybon wins first of back-to-back victories at the Daytona 200 on a 750 KR model.

1968: Harley produces only 15,475 motorcycles. The floundering company is sold to leisure products conglomerate, AMF.

1969: Merger with American Machine and Foundry Company (AMF). Harley became a target for a takeover and looked for a buyer equipped to perpetuate their business.

1969: Harley introduces the XR-750, the definitive V-twin race bike.

1970s: Harley Wins More Racing Honours

1970: Cal Rayborn breaks the world record for land speed set by a motorcycle on a 16 foot streamliner with a Sportster engine – an average of just over 265 mph.

1970: A new Sportster-based motorcycle, the XR 750 racer is introduced. Harley starts putting VIN numbers on the frames.

1971: Willie G introduces the first factory custom, the FX 1200 Super Glide, combining a sporty front end (aka the XL series) with the frame and powertrain of the FL series.

1972: The new XR-750 debuts and becomes the dominant dirt track racer through the next three decades. Dirt track racer Mark Brelsford wins the AMA Grand National Championship on it.

1975: First of four more consecutive years of Harley-Davidson AMA Grand National Championships in dirt track racing.

1977: HD introduces the FXS 1200 Low Rider. Willie G. Davidson unveils the XLCR Cafe Racer, a European-style sport bike 10 years ahead of its time.

1979: Introduction of the FXEF Fat Bob – 'Fat' due to duel gas tanks and 'Bob' for the bobbed fenders.

1980s: H.O.G. And The Rides

1980: H-D introduces first FLT with rubber mounted engine.

1980: Willie G releases the FXB Sturgis, with belt drive developed by Gates Rubber Company.

1981: Harley-Davidson senior executives led by Vaughn Beals purchase the Harley-Davidson Motor Company back from AMF and it becomes a privately owned company once more. The phrase "The Eagle Soars Alone" becomes a rallying cry.

1981: Scott Parker begins racing for team H-D on the AMA dirt track circuit. He will become the most successful racer in HD history, accumulating 93 career victories and winning nine Grand National Champion titles over a 10-year period.

1982: New FXR/FXRS Super Glide II demonstrates continuing commitment to quality.

1982: The top three finishers in the AMA Grand National Championship are H-D riders Ricky Graham, Jay Springsteen and Randy Goss.

1983: The Harley Owners Group (H.O.G.) is established and runs events attracting thousands of riders, run by volunteers.

H.O.G and the Rides

- 85th, 90th and 95th anniversary rides and other riding events led by the H-D family are opportunities to show the world what Harley is about
- Many of the company sponsored rides are for the Muscular Dystrophy Association – a cause close to Harley hearts
- These rides have helped H-D family raise $40 million for the fight against neuromuscular diseases
- Hundreds of regional, national and international events take place, reflecting the combined passion of riders, dealers and company leaders

1984: The introduction of the Evolution engine on five models, produces more power and runs cooler and cleaner.

The First Softail is introduced with leading edge design of hidden rear shock absorbers.

1986: Harley-Davidson once again becomes a publicly owned corporation.

The Evolution version of the Sportster is introduced in 883cc form.

Willie G. introduces the Heritage Softail.

To diversify its holdings, Harley-Davidson purchases Holiday Rambler Corporation.

1980s Continued:

1987: President Reagen tours H-D plant and praises the motor company for its superior products. The event is covered on National TV News, adding to brand recognition.

Harley-Davidson is listed on the New York Stock Exchange – the event is marked with a motorcycle parade down Wall Street.

H-D makes history by petitioning the International Trade Commission for early termination of the five-year tariffs on heavyweight motorcycles. Demonstrates confidence in H-D's ability to compete in the market place.

1988: HD celebrates 85th Anniversary with a homecoming in Milwaukee, attended by 60,000 HD fans.

The Sportster 1200 is introduced. Old-fashioned spring-fork front suspension is resurrected for the Springer Softail.

H-D Travelling Museum goes on tour, showcasing memorabilia, classic H-D motorcycles and the history of the H-D rider.

Scott Parker wins the first of his nine AMA Grand National Championships. His winning dominance is unprecedented in the history of dirt track racing.

1990s: The Birth Of The Fat Boy

1990: The FLSTF Fat Boy is introduced and almost instantaneously becomes a modern legend of motorcycle design.

1990: The Dyna model is introduced, starting with the 1991 FXDB Dyna Glide Sturgis.

1993: HD celebrates its 90th Anniversary in Milwaukee with a Family Reunion. Around 100,000 people ride in a parade.

1992: Harley-Davidson buys a minority interest in the Buell Motorcycle Company.

1994: Harley-Davidson enters Superbike racing with the introduction of the VR1000 – the liquid-cooled motorcycle comes with a dual overhead cam.

1995: The 30th Anniversary Ultra Classic Electra Glide becomes the first H-D motorcycle to include sequential port electronic fuel injection.

1996: A new Parts and Accessories Distribution Centre opens in Franklin, Wisconsin. By the beginning of 1997, all inventory is moved from the original warehouse at Juneau Avenue to the new facility.

1997: A new 217,000 sq. ft. Product Development Centre opens next to the Capitol Drive plant in Milwaukee. The building is dedicated to Willie G. Davidson.

1998: Harley-Davidson's 95th Anniversary homecoming. 140,000 plus riders are welcomed to Milwaukee to celebrate.

A new assembly facility opens in Manus, Brazil - the first operations outside of the US.

Harley-Davidson buys a remaining 49% of sportbike manufacturer Buell, which builds innovative Harley-powered cafe racers.

1999: New Twin Cam 88 engine introduced to Touring and Dyna motorcycles.

Present Day: Celebrating 100 Years And More

2000: FX Softail Deuce is introduced to the immediate delight of riders.

Buell introduces the Blast – a single cylinder motorcycle which receives glowing reviews.

The Blast is introduced in tandem with the Riders Edge Academy of Motorcycling, a beginners rider course available from H-D and Buell dealerships.

2001: The VRSCA V-Rod is introduced: H-D's first motorcycle combining fuel injection, overhead cams and liquid cooling, it delivers 115 horsepower.

Harley announces expansions at the Product Development Centre in Milwaukee, as well as facilities in Tomahawk, WI, York and PA.

2002: New Buell Firebolt takes the world by storm.

The Open Road Tour debuts in Atlanta, GA, in July, to celebrate forthcoming H-D 100th Anniversary.

2003: Buell Motorcycle Company unleashes the Lightning XB9S.

Celebrating 100 Years of the Harley-Davidson Family

- More than 250,000 people come to Milwaukee for the final stop of the Open Road Tour and the HD 100th Anniversary and Party
- Celebration also marks the legacy of the Harleys and Davidsons who came to the US from England and Scotland almost 150 years earlier. Their great grandchildren were now honouring the families motorcycling tradition

2004: The FLHRSI Road King Custom is introduced. With its low rear suspension and wide handlebars it brings a 'beach' look to a classic HD motorcycle.

2005: Harley Davidson and the Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA) mark the 25th Anniversary of their partnership.

2006: The first of the 6-speed transmissions are made available on the 2006 model year Dyna motorcycles. The FXDBI Street Bob joins the Dyna family.

HD unveils plans for a new museum in Milwaukee, scheduled for opening in 2008.

Harley Davidson appoints Beijing Feng Huo Lun (FHL) as the first authorized HD dealer on mainland China.

2007: The Harley-Davidson XL 1200N Nightster rocks onto the road.

H-D fundraises $150,000 for MDA (Muscular Dystrophy Association) during Daytona Bike Week.

H-D 2007 MDA contributions reach $5.1 million (September), bringing cumulative fundraising for MDA since 1980 to more than $65 million.

2008

- New Softail Cross Bones makes Dark debut in January
- H-D's epic 105th anniversary concert in Milwaukee in August will be headlined by Bruce Springsteen, the E Street Band and Daughtry
- 105th Anniversary Ride Home in August will be the largest H-D ride ever with 25 routes at 105 starting points across the country, cruising towards the birthplace of Harley-Davidson
- H.O.G. celebrates 25 years with an all day event at Miller Park, including finale concert with Aerosmith and Kid Rock