

# Family members recall beginning of Harley-Davidson

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

WILDWOOD — The Davidson brothers — William, Walter and Arthur — liked to go fishing but it was an arduous 18-mile trip on their bicycles to their favorite fishing hole. So the boys experimented with putting a motor on a bicycle frame.

They had help from their friend, William Harley, and thus was the beginning of Harley-Davidson motorcycles, according to Jean Davidson, granddaughter of Walter Davidson, one of the founders of the company.

She and Jon Davidson Oeflein, great-grandson of Walter Davidson, visited the annual Roar to the Shore motorcycle event Sept. 8 in Wildwood, an event washed out by two days of rain. The two authored a book entitled "Harley-Davidson Family Memories."

Alexander Davidson, born in 1807, was a wheelwright in Scotland who emigrated with his family to Wisconsin, where he went to work for the railroad.

The Harley family was living in England and also emigrated to Wisconsin and wound up as neighbors of the Davidsons in Milwaukee.

Oeflein said Harley-Davidson did not invent motorcycles and was not the first company to make motorcycles in Milwaukee.

More than 200 brands of motorcycles have been made in America, but Harley-Davidson is the sole survivor, he said.

The company's first motorbikes were made in a shed in her great-grandfather's backyard after they were kicked out of the family home's basement for making a mess, Jean Davidson said. The shed was eventually moved to the grounds of the first Harley-Davidson factory, she said. It featured lettering on the door from her grandfather's older sister. "She hand-painted all the first motorcycles," Jean Davidson said.

Her grandfather was president of Harley-Davidson from its beginning around 1903 until 1942, she said.

Early Harley-Davidson motorcycles had strap tanks with an oil tank located on top, according to Oeflein.

"The oil just dripped into the cylinder and burned up," he said. "There was no recycling oil, so when you ran out of oil in your oil tank, you'd have to stop or you'd burn up your motor."

A rider would set up an oil drip, about one drip per second, into the motor using a sight glass, Oeflein said.

As designs progressed, early Harleys were developed beyond being bicycles with a motor. They

received suspension and a belt-driven motor of which the belt acted as a clutch, Oeflein said.

"A lot of people thought motorcycles were just going to be a fad, just for fun, but my family did not," he said.

Mail delivery was determined to be a handy use of a Harley-Davidson, Oeflein said.

Walter Davidson wanted to expand sales to the East Coast, which was dominated by motorcycles made by the Indian Motorcycle Manufacturing Co. He entered a two-day endurance race in Massachusetts and won, Oeflein said.

"It very much helped put Harley-Davidson on the map because before that we were very regional, Midwest, so beating Indian on its turf was a huge feather in our cap in 1908," he said.

Jean Davidson said Arthur Davidson had the gift of gab and delivered motorcycles.

"If you had trouble, he'd go to your house," she said. "He was the one that set up all the dealerships."

Initially, Harleys were sold in bicycle shops, Jean Davidson said.

She said her grandfather, Walter, was very serious and a great leader. Bill Harley wanted to be left alone to design new motorcycle features, holding 80 patents by the time of his



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Jon Davidson Oeflein and Jean Davidson are the great-grandson and granddaughter of two of the three Davidson brothers who started Harley-Davidson motorcycles circa 1903.

death, Jean Davidson said.

The Davidson brothers married German women in Wisconsin. Jean Davidson said her grandmother was aboard the Andrea Doria when it sank off the coast of New Jersey.

"She was 76 years old. She survived, she slid down the deck, shimmied down a rope, she was one of the last survivors to get off," she said.

Oeflein said his great-grandfather was friends with Fritzie Gettleman, who owned a brewery in Milwaukee.

"If it was a good week at Harley-Davidson, my great-grandfather would hang a flag out of his window and Fritzie could see it from his brewery right across the way and he would bring a keg over and all the employees would drink beer on Friday nights," he said.

In 1929, the three teenage Davidson brothers rode their newest model of motorcycle from state to state to each dealer. Jean Davidson said the trip was an excuse to take the summer off, something their father

would have never permitted otherwise.

She describes herself as a restless child. Jean Davidson said her father would take her to the factory.

"My mom didn't know what to do with me, so my dad would take me to the company and put me on the assembly line and I'd just ride around and around on the parts," she said.

Jean Davidson said she learned to ride a motorcycle "really fast." She had a boyfriend who lived 30 miles away and wanted to see him, and her backyard was full of motorcycles.

"The worst thing was trying to start the thing, if you've ever tried to kick start," Jean Davidson said.

When she arrived at her boyfriend's house on a motorcycle, the boy's mother would not let him out of the house, she said.

Harley-Davidson celebrated its 115th birthday two weeks ago in Milwaukee.

Why do so many riders love Harley-Davidson?

"I don't think it's the machine, I think it's more the people behind the machine, starting with my great-grandfather," Oeflein said.

He said having a family behind the product continues today.

"You're not just riding a machine, you're becoming part of this brotherhood," Oeflein said.

## Veterans park

Continued from Page A2

park call for expanding

the grassy area around the memorial and closing the one way branch

of Gurney Street, along with implementing proposed improvements such as ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliant curb ramps and high visibility crosswalks. The park would have seating, lighting and plantings.

WSP Engineering Consultants stated "the existing configuration of the intersection creates wide pedestrian crossings and a small public green space at its center. However, the War Memorial located at the center of the island is underutilized and difficult to access due to the lack of marked crosswalks and curb ramps."

### TIDES : Sept. 12-19, 2018

DATE	HIGH		LOW	
	A.M.	P.M.	A.M.	P.M.
12	10:41	10:59	4:16	4:40
13	11:29	11:47	5:02	5:33
14		12:18	5:49	6:27
15	12:38	1:11	6:38	7:24
16	1:34	2:07	7:31	8:24
17	2:35	3:07	8:28	9:26
18	3:39	4:06	9:27	10:24
19	4:40	5:01	10:24	11:16

### MOON PHASES

First quarter, Sept. 16 • full moon, Sept. 25

## MUA, condo complex reach deal for meter replacement, lost water

By RACHEL SHUBIN

Special to the Star and Wave

VILLAS — A water-main break at Canyon Club Marina led to the discovery of a broken water meter at Canyon Club Condominiums. The Lower Township Municipal Utilities Authority reached agreement with the condominium complex to install a new meter and pay fees for their late payment.

"The condo meter hadn't been working for quite some time," MUA Director Michael Chapman said. "They should have let us know that their bills had become drastically reduced. We're guilty, too."

Chapman extrapolated data to determine whether the property had been correctly metered, with the result showing Canyon Club possibly owing the MUA \$53,000.

"In a letter, they proposed to put in a new water meter and pay a quarter of their past bills and future bills for this year, to call it square,"

Chapman said. "We agreed. It doesn't require a resolution because we did not bill them."

The MUA received a good Energy Star rating for electrical usage but there are additional opportunities for savings, Chapman said.

"We did not get all the information we wanted from that study," Chapman said. "They were studying the air production and facility. We use a lot of air for aeration for biological processes which is the highest percentage of our total energy usage."

The East Villas Phase II project is moving along. Fifty percent of the water main is installed.

"We had another step done with Shawcrest and had meters put in," Chapman said. "The next thing we have to do is document the system and get shots of all the manhole elevations, storm sewer elevations, pipe elevations and starting to video smoke test. There may be very significant

savings at the end of the tunnel."

Solicitor William Kaufmann reported that the MUA renewed their shared service agreement with Lower Township.

"It is essentially a renewal that's been in place for quite some time," Kaufmann said. "The bulk of the time during this month was spent on the water agreement with Middle Township and circulated that to our Del Haven water working group."

There are three engineering projects in the works on the wastewater treatment plant.

"The bids on the clarifier were awarded and we did pricing on the roofing," Engineer Dennis Yoder said. "We are in final designs for electrical upgrades at the plant. It is a matter of coming up with a plan for making all of it work seamlessly and we should receive bids at the end of this month and award at the November meeting."

Yoder reported that the energy audit was completed and there are opportunities for funding at the facility.



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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Email or phone: \_\_\_\_\_

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