

COG net

by Rick Hall

There is a segment of the Concours Owners Group that many of you are unfamiliar with, a segment that occupies some of our free time when we're not out strafing a canyon or riding to a distant rally. We're the ones with the glazed over eyes, no doubt caused by sitting in front of a computer screen for hours on end, "surfing the net." For those of you that aren't connected to the internet through home or work, I've been asked to start a column about what some of us do in our spare time on the internet and how it relates to COG.

As this column progresses, we'll have future articles written by some of the online members of COG, explaining some of the features of the internet. We hope to cover the basics of what's required for computer hardware, the many types of software used to access the internet, and pointers to unique and informative resources on the internet about the Concours, COG, and motorcycling in general.

By way of introduction, my name is Rick Hall (#1914), the volunteer editor (webmaster) of our web site for the last few months. I've been a COG member since April of 1995, and found out about COG from George Fitch through an e-mail he sent me in April of 1995, which may explain my enthusiasm about the internet. I started writing a web 'page' about COG on my own computer in the fall of that year, and soon found there were several people that said we should get professional. After personally 'hosting' the unofficial COG pages for several months, we made the plunge, and on March 28, 1996, our 'name' was officially registered to all of the internet as *concours.org*.

Lest you think I was the only one who had anything to do with this, there are some people that played a larger roll than me, Dan Pritts (# 1666) happens to be one of them. Not only did Dan provided a computer to store the files on, but he also found, installed, and configured the software necessary to run the computer on his desktop at work. OOPS, I almost forgot, he also provided **the most important part,**

an extremely fast connection to the internet, gratis! Did I mention he lives in Michigan and me in Arizona, and we've never met?

One of the few COG related resources on the internet, we are fast becoming a premiere online resource for information about upcoming COG rides and rallies, membership in COG, and hints and tips about maintenance of the Concours.

A seat of the pants estimate says approximately 10% of the COG members are connected to the internet through work or personal online services. For the other 90%, we hope to provide you with a birds eye view into what we do, the information available on the internet, and guide you through some of the steps necessary to become a participant in what some of us call the COGnet, through any of several online services.

The first requirement to getting online, is a computer and modem. There is no 'minimum' requirement for computing power or speed, but you should have at least a 14,400 baud modem (or fax modem) for a home computer. Talk with a computer retailer if you have any questions. We'll touch on this topic in upcoming articles too.

The World Wide Web (or web as it's usually known) is an information resource in the form of text and graphics in a display ad or 'yellow pages' type format. Web sites run the gamut from personal "home" pages with pictures and text about the family dog, to mega sites like *Microsoft* and *IBM*, to newspapers and magazines (E-zines) like the *Wall Street Journal* and *Cycle World*. Many times you can read news on the internet before it comes out in print. We'll delve into the web in an upcoming article, and touch on ways to find these resources using web search engines such as *Webcrawler* and *Yahoo*.

Electronic mail, or e-mail, is basic to any connection to the internet. With it, you can send notes across town or across the world at the speed of light. Mark Cipriano, our safety director, recently transferred from

Edwards Air Force base, to Aviano air base in Aviano, Italy. I understand one of his first questions to the base commander was "What's my e-mail address?" Never mind his Concours was still in a crate in the USA and would arrive in Italy some 2 months later, a man has to know his priorities! Mark knew the cost and time savings of communication via the internet, and we 'talk' on a regular basis.

E-mail is also used to communicate with a listserver, a program on a remote computer used to distribute e-mail to many people at once, bulk mail if you will. Anyone can subscribe to a listserver (free), then once subscribed, when someone posts an e-mail message to the list, electronic copies are made and sent to all the subscribers to the list, usually within five minutes.

If it sounds like there is a potential to abuse this system by broadcasting junk e-mail, you're right. However, the listserver program is maintained by Matt "Iron Fist" Stoller (#1242), who makes sure the 350 or so subscribers to our list keep the topics of the messages about the Concours in some way or another.

The listserver is our primary means of exchanging timely information and questions about Connie and her maintenance. Our listserver isn't the only one out there, there are literally hundreds about motorcycles. Ranging from ones about the ST-IIOO and the HSTA, to a group of motorcycle affectionados in the Pacific northwest who call their list *WetLeather*.

In the next article, we'll talk a little more about getting connected to the internet, the World Wide Web, and some of the informative web sites out there. We should also have a list of volunteers who can give assistance via e-mail. In the meantime if you have any questions, drop me an e-mail or visit our web site. I'd offer my phone number but it's usually busy, I'm connected!

My e-mail address is:

rickh@getnet.com

and our web site is:

<http://www.concours.org/>

See ya on the net!

Rick