

## The Perfect Ride



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“Riding on a motorcycle can make you feel joyous, powerful, peaceful, frightened, vulnerable, and back out to happy again, perhaps in the same ten miles. It is life compressed, its own answer to the question “Why?” — Melissa Holbrook Pierson, [The Perfect Vehicle: What It Is About Motorcycles](#).

On Sunday, September 30th I joined a group of determined enthusiasts in Penacook, New Hampshire for [The Pewter Run](#), a road trial for motorbikes made before 1950. The event has been held since 2005 and is sanctioned by the United States Classic Racing Association.

The weather was suboptimal for this year’s event: 50 degrees and rainy. I was the last rider to get her bike started, and despite many practice sessions with Dad’s Norton Dominator I wound up asking for help with the uncooperative kick start. Not an auspicious start to a two-hour adventure! About 20 miles into the course there was an option of taking a short-cut back to the starting point, or continuing on for the full 48 mile route. Bikes in the post 1925 classes were expected to complete the longer course, but given the weather conditions, the unpredictable nature of classic bikes, and the sanctioning authority’s commitment to safety, we all understood that opting for a shorter route was ok.

The event organizer, Shane Rivet joked during the riders’ meeting, “When you reach a fork in the road... take it.” As I reached that “fork in the road,” I briefly considered making a right turn and opting for the 24 mile route. At that moment I was soaked from the rain, chilled to the bone, and my left hand was starting to feel numb. My decision to press on and complete the longer route was motivated by the thought that in so many cases, something worth doing isn’t easy to do. I found myself riding alone during most of the latter half of this year’s Pewter Run. My riding companions, Jack Alexander on a 1925 Norton 16H and Dad, on his 1913 Motosacoche 2C7, both opted for the shorter routes.

My solo ride in the rain provided the perfect opportunity to contemplate the risk-reward dynamic in nonprofit life. While trying to ignore the persistent cold rain, I reflected on examples of transformative risk management practice. My favorite recent client examples of things worth doing that weren’t easy to do include:

- An international nonprofit’s decision to supplement online training with new in-person and on-site training despite the cost of doing so;
- A grant maker’s decision to provide youth-protection resources instead of imposing impractical screening requirements on its resource-strapped, rural grantees;

- An association board that recognized its responsibility for undertaking a thoughtful succession planning process for the CEO position, despite its concern about offending the current charismatic and effective CEO; and
- A national youth-serving nonprofit's decision to help its local affiliates learn how to identify, understand and treat the risks they face, rather than providing a ready-made, overly simplistic checklist for managing risk.

It has been an honor to work with these best in class nonprofits as they evolve the risk management function to truly suit their organization's mission, context, aspirations and resources. While many clients initially approach the Center hoping we can simply install a generic risk management system, most of our clients leave with the understanding that custom-fit, culture-sensitive risk management trumps borrowing another nonprofit's policies any day. And like a 48-mile ride on a cold rainy day, facing a bit of discomfort, or even stakeholder pushback reminds us that a rewarding journey may involve navigating a bumpy road.

To read more about The Pewter Run, and see photos of some of the participating riders and bikes, visit fellow rider Dave Roper's blog at <http://daveroperracing.blogspot.com/> or the Pewter Run [website](#).

*Melanie Lockwood Herman is Executive Director of the Nonprofit Risk Management Center. She welcomes your ideas about any risk management topic, suggestions for best-in-class risk management, and questions about the Center's resources at [Melanie@nonprofitrisk.org](mailto:Melanie@nonprofitrisk.org) or 703.777.3504. The Center provides risk management tools and resources at [www.nonprofitrisk.org](http://www.nonprofitrisk.org) and offers [consulting assistance](#) to organizations unwilling to leave their missions to chance.*