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Dear Rob,

Thanks again for enquiring about our club about opening an international chapter. As discussed, we're not really set up to operate like that and our club name is geographically-based; however, we whole-heartedly support you starting your own club and will guide in any way possible.

We have e-mailed you a copy of our constitution and bye-laws to assist you in developing your own club. Of course, you cannot use our club's name as your own, but other than that, feel free to use our documents to develop your own. We have re-written and amended our constitution and bye-laws several times over its 56 years of existence to repair oversights, clear inconsistencies and ensure membership of elite riders with specific participation requirements and club obligations.

Enclosed are TWO (2) friendship pins, for your vest, jacket or collection. In case one is damaged in transit, you will at least have a working pin. If both survive the mailing – you'll have one to wear and one to keep!

In our club, friendship pins are rarely given out to casual acquaintances. In many gay clubs, friendship pins are used to arrange sexual meet-ups. Our friendship pins feature our official colours (emblem/patch/backpatch) and should be treated with the same respect you would with any club's colours. These pins serve as an indirect verified acquaintance where members of the said club will attest they have previously known or physically met you.



Here is a photo of one of my retired vests with friendship pins, run/event pins, imperial court pins and membership patches for the Rochester Rams, Boston Bears and the MMA (Massachusetts Motorcycle Association). It's quite heavy and some pins on this vest date back to the onset of the AIDS crisis in the 1980s. Many of the clubs shown on this vest no longer exist, mainly due to attrition, lack of interest, and relocation of members.

There is a document on the internet entitled Leather Protocols available at <https://leatherati.com/leather-protocols-2f733407d1b8> which explains the stereotypical method friendship pins are distributed. I have modified their description to be a bit more honest and straightforward information:

Friendship Pins

- Pins which are given to an individual, by a club member, who merited the honour of wearing their clubs' friendship pin. It's bad etiquette to ask for a Friendship Pin.
- Traditionally, friendship pins are given as an invite for sex. Usually, the recipient's Levi's are pinned at the crotch where it's visually adjacent to the tip of the penis. The friendship pin is transferred to the vest after the person who has pinned and the pin receiver have sex. Popular men will feature multiple pins at events and it's in their best interest to quickly move the pins to the vest and avoid being pin stabbed in the groin.
- This ritual dates back to old school, 60s/70s, pre-AIDS days; however, some people still practise it today! Once upon a time, it was traditional for a pledge to have sex with every club brother before they could even be considered for full membership.
- Club members are encouraged to introduce themselves whenever they see their clubs' pin on a stranger's vest. Their fellow club member gave this person the honour of wearing their club pin. It is common courtesy to introduce yourself as a member of that club.
- There are *other pins* used in the gay community that indicate attendance at an event (or a run). There are also titleholder pins, which are handed out to friends of titleholders (leather contests), run pins, bar pins, and so on...

We sincerely wish you all the best with the formation of your new club and we beg you to have patience in the early developmental stages. Clubs are very instrumental to the existence of our underground society and are becoming very endangered since the advent of mobile phones and the internet. We are sure you understand the need and importance of face-to-face communication and the fostering of brotherhood in this digital world. As a community club, we share the unabashed love of men and motorcycles through some of the worst times. We have survived ourselves and helped others survive through the epidemic of AIDS, gay-bashing (sometimes by the authorities), the ungraceful process of aging and more. With that in mind, we wholeheartedly extend an invite for you (and other riders) to visit us in late-June of any year for New York City Pride. The big NYC Pride March is always on the last Sunday of June.

If you cannot reach us, there's also our umbrella organisation, the AMCC (Atlantic Motorcycle Coordinating Council), with webpage at <https://www.amcc76.org/amcchome.html> which is another discussion all together.

In leather brotherhood,

Chaz Antonelli,
Secretary, ECMC

Erik Ross,
Vice President, ECMC