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Photographs by Karen Cunningham for The New York Times

VOWS

Jennifer Kohns and Gregory Rathe

By STEPHEN HENDERSON

IN August 2005, Jennifer Kohns was enduring what she calls her “Job-ian” period. Unlike the Biblical figure, Ms. Kohns, a restaurateur, said her suffering was a result of her separation from a 10-year marriage and the closing of Lunchbox Food Company, a West Village diner of which she was an owner.

Disinclined to socialize one Tuesday evening, she nevertheless thought she couldn’t let down a friend who had invited her to the Ear Inn’s weekly motorcycle night to help distribute fliers for the Lady Liberty Ride, a charitable motorcycle rally. In the middle of her travails, you see, Ms. Kohns had picked up motorcycling as a hobby.

A native of Kalamazoo, Mich., Ms. Kohns, 37, describes her upbringing as “main line Protestant.” Her demeanor combines steeliness and innocence in a way that’s reminiscent of a young Cybill Shepherd. Knocked down, her friends say, she gets right back up. (Her newest culinary venture, Sweetpea Biscuits & Coffee, is to open in Manhattan this July.)

“I was 35, single again and in a bad mood, but decided I could at least put on some mascara and a less ratty T-shirt,” Ms. Kohns recalled. Off she roared downtown on her BMW.

This late-minute primping was appreciated by Gregory Rathe, another cycle enthusiast who spotted Ms. Kohns dismounting at Ear Inn. Mr. Rathe, raised Jewish in New York, owns the Displayers, a Chelsea firm that makes displays for museums,



MANHATTAN PENTHOUSE, APRIL 22 On the avenue, Fifth Avenue, the newlyweds get ready, set and roll, heading for their Village reception.

trade shows and retail locations. When Ms. Kohns subsequently handed him a Lady Liberty flier, they chatted briefly.

“Greg was clearly trying to impress me, but there was no arrogance to him,” she said. “He seemed a pure, generous, loving soul.” She was especially delighted by his claim that he’d been riding motorized bikes since he was 4.

Likewise intrigued, Mr. Rathe, 39, said he made it his business to keep Ms. Kohns in sight all evening. His friends describe him as a “serial first dater” who had cut a wide romantic swath through the 10021 ZIP code. (Mr. Rathe insists that because his parents and grandparents enjoyed long, happy marriages, he didn’t want to rush into matrimony blindly.)

On dates, “he always had the upper hand, so something was always missing,” said Nancy Green-span-Wilson, a friend. “Jen can stand up to Greg, but be there for him, too.”

On that first night, he and Ms. Kohns left the Ear Inn on their motorcycles (he on a Buellco, a Spanish

make) and rode to a Spanish tapas bar, where they dined and talked until it closed. Mr. Rathe escorted Ms. Kohns home, and they shared a goodnight kiss. “We were committed to each other from the moment we met,” he said. He called the next day and they met for coffee. That weekend, they rode their motorcycles up to his family’s weekend house in Cold Spring, N.Y.

They continued to discover things they had in common: a passion for industrial design, music and cooking and a degree of self-assurance that caused Laura Rose, a mutual friend, to say, “Greg and Jen don’t need each other, they want each other.”

Their engagement, which took place last fall in the Chelsea apartment to which they had moved, was spur of the moment. “Without any premeditation, I asked,” Mr. Rathe said. “The next day, as a temporary thing, I gave her my paternal grandmother’s wedding bands to wear. She’s never taken them off.”

A crowd of 120 gathered on April 22 at the Manhattan Penthouse, where Rabbi Peter H. Schweitzer officiated under a wedding canopy created from intertwined white and pink cherry blossoms, a color scheme echoed by Ms. Kohns’s strapless trumpet gown and Mr. Rathe’s fuchsia tie.

Rabbi Schweitzer alluded to their beginnings by stressing that every union creates its own instruction manual on handling problems, “like fixing a flat motorcycle tire on a dark highway.”

Then, the couple read aloud declarations they had written for each other. Mr. Rathe quoted a song by the indie-folk act Iron & Wine. But Ms. Kohns’s words were largely inaudible, for as she spoke they were drowned out by the rumble of several motorcycles roaring by the windows, which had been giddily opened to take in the spring warmth.

This might have been a disappointing turn, but this couple — on a roll themselves — merely laughed at the irony of the interruption.

ONLINE: BRIDE AND VROOM

▶ In a video feature, Jennifer Kohns and Gregory Rathe tell of how they met on motorcycle night at a Chelsea bar, and then accelerated to the altar: nytimes.com/weddings.