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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## Going Big

*In 1966, Kawasaki leapt from making small-displacement 2-strokes to a big 4-stroke parallel twin in a single bound.*

**IRVINE, Calif. (Mar. 18, 2016)** – Fifty years ago, if you wanted a big-bore, high-performance streetbike, you looked to the British or American brands. With the exception of a 450cc twin from a competitor, in the mid-1960s there weren't any such offerings from a Japanese manufacturer. Enter the Kawasaki W1. Based on a 1950s BSA design and built by Meguro for the Japanese market, the W1 was a 624cc overhead-valve 4-stroke parallel twin. As such, it looked much like the leading British bikes of the time, and with most domestic sales being small bikes, it was a rousing success in Japan.

Nonetheless, the W1 was an enormous reach for the young motorcycle division of Kawasaki Aircraft Co., LTD., as it leapfrogged the company from small-displacement transportation machines directly into the American market's premium segment: large-displacement motorcycles. Here in America, the original W1 – later superseded by the twin-carbureted W2SS streetbike and W2TT scrambler – sold for five years, facing stiff competition from the established motorcycle companies the entire time. Making the task even harder for the W1 were Kawasaki's own A1 and A7 2-stroke performance demons, and finally the raging 500cc H1 triple.

To the delight of racers in America though, the W1 engine provided just the sort of powerbase needed for flat-track racing, where big 4-stroke twins dominated. Thus, modified versions of the W1 engine were soon powering the dirt-track racers that barnstormed the ovals at Ascot Park and other venues. Remarkably, this same synergy continues a half century later with the Ninja® 650 sportbike-based flat trackers that helped Kawasaki win the 2015 AMA Pro Flat Track GNC1 manufacturers championship.

Honoring the original W1 and embracing an emerging retro movement in motorcycling, Kawasaki Motors Corp., U.S.A. introduced the W650 in 2000. With a classic gear-driven overhead camshaft and vintage styling, combined with modern features including electric starting, an engine balance

shaft and front disc brake, the W650 merged the soul of the original W1 with easy-to-use modern technology.



W2 Commander



W650 Flat Track

## **ABOUT KAWASAKI**

Kawasaki Motors Corp., U.S.A. (KMC) markets and distributes Kawasaki motorcycles, ATVs, side x sides, and Jet Ski® watercraft through a network of approximately 1,100 independent retailers, with close to an additional 7,700 retailers specializing in general purpose engines. KMC and its affiliates employ nearly 3,100 people in the United States, with approximately 300 of them located at KMC's Irvine, California headquarters.

Kawasaki's tagline, "Let the good times roll.®", is recognized worldwide. The Kawasaki brand is synonymous with powerful, stylish and category-leading vehicles. Information about Kawasaki's complete line of powersports products and Kawasaki affiliates can be found on the Internet at [www.kawasaki.com](http://www.kawasaki.com).