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Dead Rockers Art Show, Etc. by Kenn Hartmann

"To figure out the name of this show you have to know the brother behind it. Kenn Hartmann is not of the modern way of thinking. You may know him from here in this rag, where he is a regular contributor. His latest writing "The Anatomy of a 60's Gang Jacket" is a good example of his thinking. Not many people can sit and dissect something like that," wrote Preacher.

"Let me dissect a little further, or rather elucidate. Is this Preacher's way of enticing me to write another story? Saying someone is not modern was disconcerting in a Jane Austin novel but not in biker literature printed on the finest stock. Preacher then refers to his own newspaper as a rag. Let me add that it's a classic rag," replied Kenn.

I'm at Demito Time bar in Villa Park, IL. For you cats that are doing time you can live vicariously. There are a lot of folks walking the streets imprisoned by their own illusions. Not me, I'm stoned looking for a sign at the bar. Ah, there it is. Did you know you have to be born on this date in 1984 to be legal to drink? That was the year George Orwell predicted Big Brother would intrude into our very hearts and souls. Some say Orwell came close in his prediction.

Demito Time bar is located about a block from the old Olvaltine factory. Once again, for those of you who have been incarcerated, the decoder ring thing turned out to be a sham. Life on the outside is not static. The Ovaltine plant was abandoned, boarded up, windows got busted out, pigeons roosted. Gentrification happened, the old plant became condos, boutiques and a swinging hotspot. Paradise lost, found and paved over. Demito Time is in the heart of it and to quote ZZ Top, "they got a lot of pretty women in there." The gossip columnists report this as a Robbie Knievel hang-out whenever he's in town. Those damn gossip columnists with their cushy assignments.

I'm to write a column for FRP called Pit Stop. It's below freezing, I'm on a motorcycle, have traveled many a weary crooked highway past dark, sad forests and over a frozen creek to get here. Of course, I get no sympathy. Nobody believes this is work. I'm not sure if it's the motorcycle part or the going into the bar part or the actual drinking part of researching the story that doesn't jibe with the 9 to 5 mentality. I've heard that some employees are forced to keep records of their movements at work on a Time Clock.

I interview a few regulars for the story and my questions are mechanical like perhaps this really is becoming a job. That's why I'm staring off into space. Looking for a sign from God. For me a bar literally is a pit stop on my way to somewhere else. Even if it's another bar. I'm not here for the duration. There's always another joint down the road.



Kenn Hartmann

Out of neon haze of bar-light comes Muskrat. I ask him a few questions but my heart isn't in it. He asks me how he can write a story for FRP? I shrug him off, he persists. We spread copies of Preacher's rag on bar tables and go over form and content – I explain size constraints –

page dissertation on why some cager bought a lawnmower instead of a motorcycle. He'd prefer a vignette, a slice of the biker life. Something that would actually fit into the paper. I encourage Muskrat to submit. Anyone can do it. Pick up a pen and write what you know. Muskrat held court with a hardcore biker story about a vacation from Chicago that included a bike breakdown near St. Louis, the Outlaws MC coming to the rescue, a helmet law incident across the border (the Arkansas border) and the ultimate Mardi Gras gris-gris in the land of voodoo and hoodoo known as the French Quarter Na'lins. A crowd gathered to listen. The story blew my mind. I'd love to steal it and use it as my own, however, it has too many gloriously sinister plot twists and anyway, it's not my story to tell. But I encourage him, nay, I demand he send his story to Preacher. What's the worst that can happen? Preacher says you suck and takes out a restraining order.

Now what am I doing here? It's 2 a.m. I just got home and opened an email from Preacher. During the month of February, Preacher and his wife Lorie were on a whirlwind three state promotional tour. In the midst of it, they made an appearance at the Dead Rockers Motorcycle Art Show at Thornwood, in Wood Dale, IL.

DRMAS was a showcase for artists to display their talent. No holds barred. The idea was to break people out of the doldrums, out of the mindset that bikers are of only one ilk. I don't even listen to the naysayers anymore who only see stereotypes and clichés that are foisted upon the motorcycling community.

The Dead Rockers Show was a concept, not an annual event. It involved the idea of Jimi Hendrix, Kurt Cobain and Buddy Holly. It involved the idea of the 60's Quadrophenia Mods versus hard riding Triumph Rockers in England. It involved the outrageous artwork on the back of biker's jackets called colors.

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