

## Continued from page 7

Ellen didn't move.

"Okay, I'm goin'." He shrugged, then turned and started back to his motorcycle.

Glancing into the mirror, Ellen's eyes followed him. Frantic thoughts of being left alone again on this lonesome road trumped the risk of taking help from a stranger. She stumbled out of the car. "Wait! Don't go!"

He turned. The headlight of his motorcycle outlined his daunting silhouette. Ellen leaned against the car, knees buckling. With long quick strides, the stranger's arms tightened around her. Helping her to the seat, he frowned.

"You're as white as a ghost. Don't move! I'll be right back." He headed for the bike.

Ellen watched him. A patch with Sons of Thunder MC written in cryptic font decorated his back along with a large center patch of a skull embossed over a flaming motorcycle.

Returning with a small flask, he unscrewed the cap, squatted, and handed it to Ellen. "Here, drink some of this."

Ellen hesitated.

"It's only water." He grinned.

Ellen took the flask, sniffed then took a sip. The water eased the tightness in her throat.

"Thank you," she murmured, handing it back.

"No problem." A friendly smile cut across his jaw. "My name is Mason. Mason Hackett."

"I'm Ellen Abrams." Looking him bravely in the eye, she noticed his brow furrow in suspicion and wondered why.

"So what in God's name are you doing out here all by yourself?"

Like rain to a swollen river, his simple question burst the dam of nervous energy swelling in Ellen. Words escaped in a rush. "I was visiting a friend and his wife at their cottage on Bass Lake, and I don't know what happened." Her hands flew up. "I heard a snapping noise, and then my car suddenly went dead." She looked up, shaking her head. "They told me to spend the night there, but I had to get home because JD is going to be calling me at nine o'clock, and if I don't answer, he's going to panic, and now--"

"Whoa, slow down will ya. I'm still at the Bass Lake part."

"I'm sorry, I tend to talk too fast when I get nervous." She took a deep breath and slowly exhaled. "You don't happen to be car savvy?"

"I can take a look under the hood, although I'm not all that good with cars. If we were talkin' motorcycles--" Mason shrugged. A half-cocked smile revealed white teeth and Ellen found herself smiling back at this formidable stranger. "Fortunately for you, I know a licensed mechanic and he happens to be camping a few miles down the road. If I can't figure out what's wrong, he'll know. Pop the hood." Mason stood and walked over to the front of the car.

Calmer, Ellen pulled the hood release. She grabbed the flashlight then opened the glove compartment to retrieve her pepper spray. Tucking it into her jacket pocket, she joined Mason. Not willing to hand over the flash light in fear she might need it to defend herself, she offered to shine it where Mason instructed.

"I'm not positive, but I think your alternator belt broke. Looks like I'll have to go fetch Mad Dog after all."

"Mad Dog?" Ellen repeated, swallowing hard.

"His real name is Mike O'Donnell, but everyone calls him Mad Dog. Ever hear of O'Donnell's Auto Repair in Westwood? He's the owner."

"Afraid not, but I just moved--" she stopped, realizing her error.

Mason straightened and scrutinized her. "Where did you come from?"

Ellen breathed through her mouth. She couldn't tell this man she had just moved to Milwaukee and had never been this far north. "I mean my husband takes care of all the car maintenance, that's all."

"Well, your husband should know better than to let you drive all the way out to Bass Lake alone at night. The engine isn't hot. You must have been sitting here for quite a while. Seems like he should be out looking for you by now, especially since there's no cell signal out this way." His voice had an edge to it.

Ellen pulled her shoulders back. "My husband is none of your damn business. Besides, in case you haven't heard, women can travel alone these days. As a matter of fact, women can do a lot of things without the help of a man."

"Yeah well, this is precisely why you shouldn't be driving around in the woods by yourself. Especially in the dark!" Mason shook a finger at the disabled car.

"What has being a woman got to do with a broken down car? You don't know how to fix it either."

"Does your husband even know where you are?"

Ellen stared into his face. His mouth was a tight, angry line, but his eyes gently considered her. Ellen looked down at her sandaled feet. The still air was suffocating. Rubbing her fingertips across her forehead, her irritation subsided.

"No one is looking for you, are they?" Mason asked, moving closer.

She smelled wood smoke. He wasn't lying about camping. Was it safe to tell this man the truth? Looking upward, Ellen searched Mason's eyes for any trace of malice. "No. No one knows where I am."

Continued next issue

## Spring Pre-Ride Checklist

by Wally Wersching

I ride all year but I know that some people can't ride during the winter. That first ride in the spring can be an adventure if you don't completely check the bike before you ride. Sometimes gremlins take over the bike when it sits for any length of time. The list below will help chase the gremlins away so that your first spring ride won't be your last.

1. Check the air pressure in both tires - inflate to the mfr's recommendation. Look for cracks and tread depth. Change tires if needed.
2. Check your wheels. If laced wheels, check for loose spokes.
3. Check the battery. Hopefully you had a battery tender keeping your battery fully charged all winter long. If not, and it needs a charge, charge slowly with a trickle charger. Charging too fast can warp the plates and destroy the battery.
4. Ensure that all the back lights work - tail, stop, and both directional lights.
5. Ensure that all the front lights work - headlight both beams, and both directional lights.
6. Check the oil. It also a good idea to change the oil if you didn't change it before storing.
7. Check the belt or chain for the proper tension. Clean and oil the chain. If you have a shaft drive, check fluid level. Check transmission fluid too. Now would be a good time to change all the bike's fluids.
8. Check the front end for excessive play, leaks, and any other abnormalities.
9. Check the brake fluid levels, and ensure that the hand lever, and foot control are working properly.
10. Remove the plugs, clean, and check gap - or replace with new ones. Check the air cleaner element - clean or replace when necessary.
11. Check that the clutch and throttle controls work smoothly. Lube cables if necessary.

After all the checking is done, take it out for a short ride to ensure that everything is working right. Even with all these precautions, the one thing that will take time to adjust is you. You haven't ridden for a few months, and your reflexes are not what they were last fall. Take it slow the first few days until your mind, and body are attuned again with the bike. Then ride safe, and enjoy!

Like to find a new spot to stop on your run/event?  
Look no further...

We have the best biker friendly places in Wisconsin looking to help make your event a success...


## Do you put on a

- Run
- Benefit
- Fund-raiser


## Do you need a

- Hall
- food/catering
- beer/soda
- bands

Stop in and talk to any of our advertiser and see what they can help you with.



**HANCOCK HOTEL BAR**  
113 S. Main Street  
Hancock, Wisconsin 54943  
Owners: Terry & Dick Werner  
Phone: 715-249-DICK (3425)  
**\$.25 off for members of ABATE,  
HOG and all veterans**  
Veterans always welcome



**Custer's Pit  
Stop**  
Wiensers 10th Annual  
**Motorcycle Poker Run - May 25th**  
Open 12:00-Close 2310 Custer Rd  
Closed Mondays Custer, WI  
715-592-4238  
Judy Sopa & Wiener



**Venus**  
Gentleman's Club<sup>uc</sup>  
Tuesday - Sunday 7pm-Close  
Sunday's are amateur and  
Open Dance night  
132 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue South Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54495  
(715)423-0220



**Fuzzy's**  
Auto Repair • Welding  
Snow Plowing  
(715) 453-8524