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North to Crandon Wisconsin

It was our first time to the "Potawatomi Gathering Thunder Biker Rally with Lucas Oil Pro AM TT Racing in Crandon Wisconsin, but I know it will not be our last. It was the weekend of June 8 - 11, 2006 and although it was the 4th year of this rally, it was our first time to it and boy, had we been missing some fun!

They expected thousands and although the turn out was less than expected the event was top notch and worthy of receiving thousands. Camping is ample and comfortable, the grounds are huge and the sponsors and organizers of this event spared no expense in providing great music, great fun, and great entertainment.

Famed rock n' roll band Steppenwolf, featuring John Kay, kicked off entertainment at Crandon Raceway on Friday evening, June 9. The event culminated Saturday night with a performance by the Ozark Mountain Daredevils. The event was underwritten by the Forest County Potawatomi as well as Lucas Oil, Coca-Cola, Indian Springs Lodge, Johnsonville, Miller Lite, Potawatomi Northern Lights Bingo - Casino, among others.

There was a poker run with a grand prize of \$2,000 and the winning hand was dealt by "Jake the Snake" to a woman from Milwaukee, Wisconsin Saturday at midnight. Funds from the Poker Run are earmarked for college scholarships to worthy high school students in the Forest County area including Laona, Wabeno and Crandon High Schools. The Crandon businesses kicked off the Potawatomi "Gathering Thunder" Biker Rally with a street dance in downtown Crandon Thursday evening, June 8. We missed that party but rolled in on Friday night to see Steppenwolf. New to the biker rally in 2006 was Lucas Oil Pro AM TT motorcycle racing. The race featured a \$3,000 purse and several classes. I was invited into the infield to shoot the races which were a real thrill for me. I enjoyed seeing the action from inside of the track to much that I doubt that I will ever be able to watch a race from the outside again!

Bikes of all varieties were on display at the Rally -- from vintage to late model to race and other specialty machines. Cook Custom Choppers, Big Dog, Boss Hoss, Harley-Davidson and Victory bikes were exhibiting at the rally. Mid-Cities Motorsports was on the track grounds all weekend and offered free dyno testing for rally goers on Saturday from 10-2. What a great gift to attendees!

The Raceway had also specially constructed a "burn-out pit" for Rally attendees to thrill on-lookers. They actually paid \$50.00 and gave a new tire to anyone who blew their tire! It was a noisy, smoky night.

Various skill games were conducted throughout the weekend including Hula Hoop toss, water balloon toss, tennis ball drop, rodeo barrel roll and a special "wiener bite" contest. A highlight to our weekend was meeting and partying with the Team X-treme Buell bike stunts riders. These guys are insane! Some of the best trick riding I have ever seen made to look easy by these skilled riders. A special "thank you" to Adam Chumita, Chris Nichols and Jim for performing and hanging with us. Check them out at www.stuntwars.com.

Also a tip of the hat to Digger's Den Tattoo Shop located in Elkhart Lake, WI. Digger's Den was on hand and was kept busy all rally doing great tattoo and piercing work.

You can reach Digger's Den on the web at www.diggers-den.com or by calling 262-723-4071.

Of course, your's truly was there doing motorcycle photography with my crew and our favorite "biker chick" Maranda. Dave Cook came along with a couple of his attention-getting machines to add to the fun.

The Potawatomi Gathering Thunder Biker Rally is located on U.S. Highway 8 on the western edge of Crandon, WI. Crandon is approximately 90 minutes northwest of Green Bay, 80 minutes northeast of Wausau, three hours north from Milwaukee, four hours east from Minneapolis and five hours north from Chicago. More information is available on the Crandon Raceway website at www.crandonoffroad.com. See you there next year! Colleen Swartz



Racers and rally attendees gather around campfires Saturday night after a great day of racing and entertainment.



The Ozark Mountain Daredevils on Stage



Maranda takes a spin around the track with a friend on Dave Cook's motorized Loveseat. Unfortunately, the end of the ride resulted in hitting a rock, flipping the couch, breaking his nose and giving poor Maranda road rash! Note to self, loveseats are not safe for off road racing.



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