

**Moonshine in a Mason Jar**

By Kenn Hartmann

In July's FRP, a letter to the editor from J. Rogers made outlandish accusations about our beloved rag. Rogers said it painted bikers 'as grungy, crude uneducated foul mouthed and depraved nincompoops.' Well, at least one writer at FRP is grungy, crude, uneducated, foul-mouthed and depraved; not one is a nincompoop. Besides, anyone embracing the dreaded 'N' word, 'Nincompoopery' as a put down should lick cat-o'-nine tails and spit barbed wire and rusty nails. Talk American. And be specific.



As for grunge, not Kurt Cobain's Seattle scene, but the wild style that bikers aspire. A pack of rebels all dressed in leathers fresh off the rack. Bikers love to mentor uninitiated neophytes with fashion tips. Like summer wind, bumblebees and a racing heart. Of course the real goal of any true biker is to become grim beyond grunge and into toxic.

And crude? Dude, that's lewd. Uneducated? The result of twenty years of state run education – twenty years, that's tenth grade twice. Foul-mouthed? Don't they teach the F-word in elementary school? Depraved? If that's what you call best behavior. You know what's weird? I can hear my loyal readers bitching 'Get to the moonshine part of the story.' What'd you expect? Lester Bangs? I learned to read in line at the checkout counter. I saw enquiring minds of my generation satisfied at Best-Buy. What celebrity cart wheeled naked through the angry streets at dawn before bursting into flames? Man, I want to know, but never mind, never enough time in the checkout line. I guess if a gas rag can spontaneous combust why not a celebrity?

So I'm at the Smiling Skull Saloon in Athens, Ohio and Professor Longhair cranks on the jukebox. I turn and shout 'who put Professor Longhair on the jukebox?' The college kids freeze. Like, 'oh fuck, the biker's gone insane.' But this biker named Terry McVay way across the bar hollers, 'I did because I read your story in the June Free Riders Press about Tipitina's in Na'lins and wanted to see if you'd recognize Professor Longhair.' I just can't believe it's on the juke. Check out FRP (Oct 2004) for my review of "Slummin', Boozin' and Cheatin' Death" about authors Craig and Jay's Rudderville Run to parlay with owner Chris 'Detroit' Wolf. Seems a reputation travels faster than a bike. However, that October 2004 issue actually hangs on the wall of the Smiling Skull. Honestly, I rarely notice décor. The Saloon began as outdoor beer garden but Detroit added walls and a ceiling to keep it open year round.

Earlier that day, somewhere in the wooded hills above the Ohio River Valley, I entered a local tavern in a tiny coal town. Passed out FRP's to the patrons, one the local historian; the other the mayor. Before introductions had settled, I learned the history of the coalminer's union and the significance of moonshine as a way of life. The historian, named Gator took me to the mineshaft while the mayor called the local moon shiner, an old timer who ran his model-T on White Lightning. He showed up in his jalopy, opened an old shed and proudly displayed his still. Nothing cooked, but was coiled up and ready to fire. Gator whispered. 'Don't fret; I can gitcha' sumthin' special.' So special it came in a mason jar wrapped in a sugar sack. A very smooth, warm taste at first but then felt like lighter fluid and a lit match. Taking a swig was easy, exhaling involuntary.

Now an illegal still emits a peculiar aroma, pungent and memorable. Later, while twisting the sweet throttle of my bone shaking, bastardized Trumpet on back roads through a ravine that same smell wafted from dark shadows of a cool hollow. Well damn man; people got to earn a few bucks somehow because gas ain't cheap. Even the govern-

ment expects folks to pump homemade hooch and sing Hi-Dee-Ho. It burns your tummy, don't you know?

When I travel, I pass out FRP's like high school counselors pass out condoms. Do counselors really do that? I hate to sound naïve but when I was a kid you just snatched a quarter off the bar for the rubber machine above the urinal. All over Chicago, people tell me Free Riders Press is their favorite biker rag. They like the diverse cadre of writers. It has the look and feel of real biker experience. Last month, Pat Hahn describes the physics of riding a motorcycle. Terry Miller believes a bike ride's higher calling is to return a better person than when you left. Gery Schemel reveals where to get a burger for a buck in the

Quad Cities. Michael Kerr studies the 'Sturgis Factor' in political process. Skypilot writes a consistently good column about the men and women who defend our great nation. He's brought me to tears more than once. Listen; if you must criticize the paper, that's fine, freedom of speech is essential to societal evolution. However, please, never again use the word 'nincompoop' or you're gonna get slapped upside the head with an unabridged Funk and Wagnall's.

-Kenn Hartmann- [www.chicagobikerbars.com](http://www.chicagobikerbars.com)



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**What is a Harley?**

**By: Big-T**

At first glance appears rubber, metal, and chrome  
 Fuel injection, six speeds, and new gadgets you're shown  
 Some say it's a sound, that earth shaking rumble  
 Or wild paint designs, that are anything but humble  
 I've heard it's an attitude, if explained you won't understand  
 A ridden rebel way of sticking it to the man  
 Some claim it's a nuisance that doesn't belong on the street  
 Ban all those damn bikes and take away their keys!  
 You may say its pure American, patriotic as pie  
 A part of any real parade on the 4th of July  
 Some say it's customized, "no one looks like mine"  
 A never ending investment of money and time  
 I have heard that each bike has a personality all its own  
 Dependable and hardworking, or lazy moody with engine blown  
 Some say it's not a bike, it's an experience to behold  
 Knees in breeze, bug in teeth, and endless open road  
 Some say its old friends and new characters you meet  
 During poker runs, pig roasts, and local swap meets  
 To some a memory, my uncle owned one I think  
 I'm told he was crazy, and loved women and drink  
 To some it's an escape from an endless workweek  
 Problems just seem smaller after 100 miles in the seat  
 It can be a bond of two people, something they both like  
 But it's wrecked a marriage or two," she got everything but the bike"  
 With everyone a different answer, but all share a common goal  
 A real Harley is that which talks to your soul  
 Required is two wheels, the rest is your to behold

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