

### 40th Year For Davenport Antique Bike Meet

By John Gunnell

Just got back from the 40th anniversary meet of the Blackhawk Chapter of the Antique Motorcycle Club of America. I'm still feeling out this meet for the best way to attend and have fun. My first meet in 2008 everything was new. My second year I went mainly in search of things to write articles about. Last year I went with the idea of spending some money in the swap meet. And this year I hauled a bike down in a trailer to put it in the show.

Actually, I had two bikes in the trailer-my 1940 Indian Chief to show and my 2001 Kawasaki Drifter to ride around Davenport, Iowa. The Drifter wanted to tip over from the time we loaded it, so I worried about that from the time I left on Thursday until when I got home on Labor Day. A big block of wood held in place with bungies took care of the problem, but not the worries.

When I say I was showing the Indian, I was not going for the bacon. My bike is a "period custom" and they don't usually judge that type of bike for awards (but more on this later). The bike was brought to Davenport for "exhibition only" and I had a good time sitting by it and talking to folks.

I met a man from Argentina who has a similar bike and we're going to keep in touch now. I also met a man from Grand Rapids, Michigan, who knew about my old saddlebags being made by Reverend Kaiser. The "Rev" was a character who sold his bags at New England swap meets years ago and rode around on an old Indian Chief with a bearskin rug over it. I have a set of his bags on my Kawasaki, too.

The good part about being an exhibit only bike is that it doesn't cost anything. The scouts ask for a donation when you first come into the Mississippi Valley Fairgrounds where the show takes place. They put a yellow dot sticker on your headlight and you don't have to pay anything else all weekend long. Of course, swap spaces, tent sites, motor homes and food do cost a bit, but you get a lot for a little money. The weekend includes motorcycle movies with free popcorn, historical and technical seminars and a great chance to look at rare bikes or pick up parts for them. There are races on Friday night with separate admission and a Saturday banquet that's well worth the \$15 they charge.

The swap-one of the largest motorcycle flea marts in the country-seemed to have it all from bare frames that were 50 years old to modern motors that looked just like old ones. Mike Tomas of Kiwi Indian brought a brand new Indian he made for Billy Joel and one of the show bike exhibitors brought his "Then Came Bronson" Scrambler for the second year in a row. This bike was the co-star in that late-1960s TV series.

It was sweltering hot on Thursday and Friday while Saturday started out OK and became a monsoon. By Sunday it was sunny and cool as a late fall day. Great weather . . . if you mixed all four days together and took the best six hours of each. Sometimes these shows seem like they do go 24 hours around the clock, especially when you're unloading and loading trailers in hundred degree temperatures.

I ran into a number of people that I knew from Wisconsin and two of them rode from Manitowoc to Davenport on their vintage Indians. Others who rode in said they like to do the show for a day or two, then bike along the Mississippi for another day or two, before heading north again. Maybe I'll try this next year. If nothing else, I'll save a lot on gas.

On the other hand, maybe I'll bring the Indian back because it is going to fit right in one of the 2012 themes: "Period Customs." Now, that's more my speed. And the second theme - "Bobbers of all Types" should prove interesting, too. To learn more about the 2012 antique bike meet, monitor the Website for the Black Hawk Chapter AMCA or the Mississippi Valley Fairgrounds Website.



Two-tone '47 Indian Chief with sidecar.



Silver Triumph Thunderbird was another Badgerland bike.



This '72 Harley FLH from Wisconsin had original purple paint.

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