

The Shadows of Holy Hill

By: Terry R. Miller

Hello, my name is Terry Miller and I am a Harley rider. Now that we have the introductions out of the way let me tell you how my ink landed on this page.

While sitting in my "office" at home paging through the August 2006 issue of American Iron Magazine for about the fourth time I noticed a request from the Editor Chris Maida. I had not noticed this request before, which is precisely why I read every issue at least four times. He was asking for some written words by us, the readers of this great magazine, about our favorite day trip destinations. So begins my story.

I am thankful for many things in my life, but among the top 10 is that I live in a state as beautiful as Wisconsin, and more specifically in a city as great as Milwaukee. We all agree that Harley owners around the world take a lot of pride in their machines and the brand, but I have to tell you that Harley owners fortunate enough to live near the home of American made, and Wisconsin born Harley-Davidson hold their chins a bit higher, and let their beer bellies hang just a bit lower. With that said there are countless great rides in and around the city. Heck with the three B's, (bars, beer, and brats) you really cannot go wrong, but on my trip we will head north to a "higher calling" if you will, into the shadows of Holy Hill.

Heading West out of Milwaukee on Interstate 94 you will find Hwy. 45 North, and this is where our ride begins. As you ride north on this highway you notice a quite literal breakdown of urban surroundings. Although this ride may begin with tall buildings and tight traffic, mile after mile you will see the buildings get shorter, as the space in between them expands in perfect proportion. From city to suburb, from town to village the traffic eases up giving you some much needed engine guard room. Then suddenly you find yourself on open highway with only forest and farmlands on the horizon, and you will find yourself no knowing exactly what town you are in, and that's alright because then and only then do two-wheeled adventures begin.

About the time it takes for Free Bird to sooth you into a man and machine hypnosis, or about 25 miles for you purists out there, you will come across Hwy. 167 West, A.K.A Holy Hill Rd. More often than not this exit is passed up by traditional motorists looking for an exit with more to offer, and a mentality of no McDonalds = no way! This suits me just fine as this exit isn't made for them, it is made for us.

Head West along 167, and the next 10 miles will take you through scenery as Wisconsin as cheese curds, (and if you haven't tried this Wisconsin creation I suggest you do). Along this route you will see fellow bikers who may be on their 10th, 20th, or even 100th trip through this area for this is a ride only a fool takes once. On the way hidden over the next hill or turn you will see small brown signs with yellow lettering exclaiming "Rustic Road". These are true Wisconsin gems, and I strongly suggest you veer off the path to explore one of these along the way. As with many things in life those who are willing to adventure down these roads will be rewarded. A virtual roller coaster ride on two wheels awaits, as these twisted roads and rolling hills not only beckon you to test you skills, but also beg of you to slow down and take it all in. There are abandoned farms where the only produce now are the ghosts of your imagination, and if you ride through these forgotten roads long enough you just might see Bill Harley and Arthur Davidson resting in the shade on their single-cylinder bikes.

Once you find your way back, (I'll leave that for you to figure out!), follow the signs, and keep your eyes on the horizon for Holy Hill church. Now I am about as far from a man of the cloth as you can get. I even married a beautiful wiccan-woman who

has been known to creep into the backyard on full moon nights to cast spells on all sorts of things, including this man's heart. But Holy Hill is a church of such beauty that if the devil himself took this ride he would bow his head in humble respect. Once there take some time to stretch out you legs and walk around. There is some amazing scenery, cliffs, and views to be seen here if you open your eyes and look around. Shake a few hands, and take the time to talk to the bikers and non-bikers alike, after all the congregation of bikers is always welcome to new converts.

Around this time you may hear a deep rumble, but you quickly realize your bike is parked in the shade. Looks like your stomach is telling you to saddle up because its time for chow. Throw a leg over and head back to Hwy. 167 West until you hit County Hwy. K. Head due North on this little country road for about 6 miles until you come to Hwy. 60 in the town of Hartford. The Mineshaft restaurant, which is the largest restaurant in Wisconsin is located here, but I like the out of the way places best. Head East on Hwy. 60 a short distance and turn right on High Rd. Down this road you will find both Pike Lake and the Pike Lake House Bar and Grill where they serve a hamburger that will not only stick to your ribs, but also to every artery in your entire body. It all starts with five different slices of pure Wisconsin cheese, slammed together, breaded, and deep fried. This is then placed on a monster all-beef patty worthy to wear such a crown. For you lighter eaters have no fear if that doesn't appeal to you as they have something for everyone on a menu intended to keep no one from walking away hungry.

On your way out don't forget to get caught at Hook-Line-and Sinker, a lake bar that always has some hogs in the pig pen. This place is very biker friendly, and a great place to recap the day with friends before heading out.

I find myself taking a ride like this both to loose something, and to find something. What I hope to loose is the person I sometimes am, but don't want to be; the husband who argues with his wife even when he knows she is right, the father who looses his temper with the very angel who gives him purpose in the world, and the man who looses sight of what is important in this life because he is blinded by the stress and endless worry that comes with being an American today. But as the miles roll on I will also find pieces of the person I want to be. The person who feels the rumble of the engine, and is brought into the camaraderie that can only exist among bikers. The person who sees the world through a two-wheeled telescope, and realizes as all five senses are being saturated with experiences that THIS IS LIVING! This is the very act of grabbing life with every ounce of what it is to be human and experiencing it right here and right now. After all is said and done I will return home a better person than I was when I left. So go ahead and take a day trip of your own to find some things, and to loose some things. Who knows, maybe we'll see each other in the shadows of Holy Hill.

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