

Riding High in July

By Kenn Hartmann

There's a meme floating around Facebook that goes something like this, "you can be a hater or you can be a speller, but apparently you can't be both." I don't know what that means, exactly, but I do know if I ever wrote a novel I wouldn't mix parameter with perimeter, but that's just me, finicky when it matters least, an inveterate word-slinger from way back who frequently loves to bandy words bouncing around like beach balls at a Nickleback concert. By the way, there's no way you're guessing which biker flick the "beach balls at a Nickleback concert" quote got swiped from.

I only bring this up, maybe because it was in some weird way bugging me, having read it in FRP and then reminded again this morning listening to Johnny B on 'GN when Buzz Kilman, Johnny B's cohort and erudite accomplice (the faithful companion role falls to Hector, the sound engineer, producer, voice in the other room) mentioned establishing some parameters (meaning perimeters) in the thought process he was trying to convey to the host, to lay it down succinctly for Johnny B to understand. Or maybe I didn't hear it on the radio. Oh yeah, I did, come to think about it. They were talking about the frightening descent of the Chicago Public Schools into the cesspool of contemporary language skills as taught by high-priced ne'er-do-wells masquerading as teachers. As reported by Huffington Post, local high school Paul Robeson (named after the legendary singer as Buzz so deftly pointed out) had a prom theme called "This Is Are Story." If you don't know what's wrong with that, all I can say is, stay with me on this, though I've never been to prom and wouldn't have a clue as to what prom's about, other than maybe the movie "Carrie" I must ask, "wad da fug ya doin' reed'n m' shtt?"

You could be reading or reciting Door's lyrics "Out here on the perimeter there are no stars...Out here we is stoned...Immaculate." Yes indeed, we is, we is. Now I'm sounding like Bugs Bunny, when Bugs was cool.

I'm riding my motorcycle to work, the air is perfect - whether it be weather or not, it be perfect! I'm living the dream, another day in paradise. I work at a motorcycle shop at 334 W Grand in Elmhurst wedged between a couple major car dealerships and surrounded by industrial bliss. Folks ask me, "Hey Kenny, wha'chu' ride?" And I tell them, "Whatever ain't locked when no one's around." That's a little line I picked up during my freight hopping days from my old pal Roger Miller. Well, I never met Roger or anything like that, but when I was a little kid I bought an album by some third-rate musician who covered all of Roger's songs. I didn't know any better. Caveat emptor. I should have paid closer attention to the title: Joe Shit the Rag Man plays the Roger Miller Song Book. Live and learn. But it did have all of Roger's hits, like King of Kansas City - Kansas City Star, that's what I are. And Dang Me, they oughta take a rope and hang me. And You Can't Roller Skate in a Buffalo Herd. But you could be happy if you've a mind to. And that ditching school and drinking moonshine song, what was it called?

Today's sunny like California in the 1960's, and it's hot like a Mexican alley in an old biker flick from the 1970's and the car guys next door are blasting some Spanish pop from their backdoor garage bay and I'd love to introduce them to Flaco Jimenez or Freddy Fender. Eddie and George, the master techs at I-Motorsports who are up to their elbows in oil changes and carb cleaning are blasting some heavy rap (Eddie keeps turning the transistor dial to classic country but George keeps twisting it back) and I'm slipping in between buildings on a Kawi KLR, dreaming of jamming off-road on the Trans-Wisconsin Adventure Trail, aka T.W.A.T.

I'm not sure how I'd fare off road - I've always been partial to pavement and maintain a fine relationship with the Macadam. In fact, this morning I tried a little off-road jaunt with my Harley Electra Glide on the grassy berm that divides the parking lot from Grand Avenue and I fell over. I moaned, "I've fallen and I can't get up!" Not really, although, I really couldn't lift the beast, profanely uttering a taut string of expletives that even I wouldn't dare print in this fine rag. Lucky for me, two Sport Bike devotees, Jason (in sales) and Frankie (the detailer and photographer) came to my aid and got me upright.

So I've reached the lower perimeter of the page and whether or not I've unlocked the parameters of any mathematical equations in my story line is up to my faithful followers to decipher, but I'm ready to shake out from the stake out and shimmy down the long, lonesome highway to where the horizon meets the infinite sky on a hot July and after a slice of apple pie and a shot of whiskey and rye say bye-bye to your suit and tie.



Eddie

Frankie



George



Jason

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