

**RIDING THE OPEN ROAD**

by **Kenn Hartmann**

April had two exquisitely fine motorcycle rallies. Although quite different concepts when compared together, each event reached deep into the psyche of Chicagoland bikers and drew them in droves. One was a full-blown Daytona styled bike fest at Austin's Iron Horse Roundup in Libertyville, IL that embodied the quintessential essence of any big-time bad-ass rally anywhere. The other, oddly eclectic and boldly conceived, headed into the heart of downtown Chicago to do a Discovery Channel style video on the new Wicked Women Chopper's tribute bike leading the pack on a "Be Strong" run from Soldiers Field up Lake Shore Drive to Joe's on Weed to raise awareness of breast cancer. What these wildly unique events had in common was Open Road Radio.

Open Road Radio is a Sweet Home motorcycling community institution. It can be heard on Sunday nights at 8pm on 105.9 FM all over Chicago. It's called "motorcycling the airwaves" and the weekly guests read like a Who's Who of national and local high end to hardcore biker scene. It's a solid hour packed with informative interviews, passionate commentary and intriguing tidbits of biker lore. Check [www.openroadradio.com](http://www.openroadradio.com).

Behind it all is Gina Woods, easily the hardest working DJ in radio. Being a woman may have made things difficult in the corporate world, but that has not deterred her quest. She inspires her crew to excellence on a weekly basis, plus raises the capital required to have access to the powerful transmitter at WCKG. She's brought in more revenue to that station than anybody. I think she should take the midday slot vacated by Kevin Matthews and really rip it up. Although the powers that be may worry about Gina on a microphone in that time frame might turn Chicago into the biker capital of the world. It'd be the best thing to happen to Chicago radio since the days of Bob Collins on WGN.

Also at Open Road Radio is Linda "Jo" Giovannoni who has been so involved in every aspect of the biker lifestyle that she was the fifth woman inducted into the National Motorcycle Hall of Fame. When my father died in 1983, I used the \$300 inheritance as a down payment on my first new bike at the local Harley dealer. The sales person was Jo. At the time I was into publishing chapbooks and producing records for my own label (back in the waning days of vinyl). So I was very intrigued when Jo started "Harley Women Magazine" which honestly inspired me in my own literary pursuits.



*Pete Jones, Movie Producer*

Producing a radio program takes a whole cast of folks, and one of the integral behind-the-scenes forces is Carolyn Rudolph. She's into the nitty-gritty, nuts and bolts of putting classic parties at different venues.

Of course, every Open Road Radio show draws a diverse cast of biker luminaries, from newspaper and magazine writers, like Ken Glassman from the Daily Herald to radio show personalities such as the infamous Freak. Author Biker Billy was at the Austin's show. So was Motorsports Unlimited TV host, Bill Wildt and also the girls from Biker Babe's calendar. At the "Be Strong" rally, movie producer Pete Jones prowled through the throng of bikes as a cool breeze wafted off Lake

Michigan. There's always an array of custom builders and chopper craftsmen to satisfy even the most die-hard attendee.

After a hard day's work covering these events for my editor, Preacher at FRP, I have to cruise to unwind and find that strange corner of the planet known as the biker bar, and I have two of merit to pass along. The first is JR's Broken Inn Saloon on 4500 Roberts Rd in Island Lake, IL just around the corner from the Broken Oar marina. The other is the Friendly Tap at 6733 Roosevelt Road in Berwyn, IL. JR's is in the country, the Friendly Tap is in the heart of the city. Both had a great live band jam while I was there. JR's had an old time rock and roll combo while Friendly's had an old time country bluegrass band, the opposite of what you might expect. But that's the key. Each as different as night and day, but both excellent pit stops as you pass through on that magical motorcycle ride, beneath the stars and deepest night, beneath the street lamps neon glow, on the way to transcendental "motor-tation" all across the biker nation.



*Robin at Friendly Tap*



*Jo and Jo's mom*

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[www.chicagobikerbars.com](http://www.chicagobikerbars.com)



*At JR's Broken Inn*



*Larry*



*Gina Wood from Open Road Radio*



*LAMA MC*

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