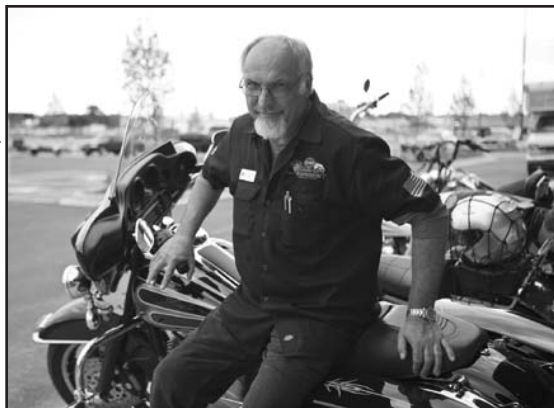


Happy Birthday to Me

By Kenn Hartmann

Everybody is out on a run tonight, the heat's on; Nato's in town, and everyone is about to boogie down. My brother Charlie is having a motor-suckle Pub Crawl that winds up or wends its way through Demito's new Double-D Saloon in Villa Park. Ace mechanic Buster from Illinois Harley invited me to Dell Rhea's Chicken Basket on original old Route 66 to listen to



our buddy and new Harley owner Harry play some solid Chicago blues. I got a personal invite to smoke some Green in Schiller Park under the Eastern flight deck at O'Hare with a cadre of off-duty Homeland Security buffs and watch sunset over new runway expansion. There's a rip-roaring party at the Westside Clubhouse in Elgin. It's hotter than hell and I'm ready to roll but I get an email from Preacher our fearless editor at FRP and he says I got a deadline of tonight for my June story. Duuuude! Wot am I be'an punished fer not doin' my homework during 20 years of schoolin'? (I went through tenth grade twice.) To be philosophical, or not to be, but to quote Cyrano, "would you have me love more to make a visit than a poem? No thank you!" Ah the sacrifices I endure for all of you loyal readers, and the inspirational vices - a taste of aqua vitae, in this case from Bardstown, Kentucky, appropriately named since this easily could be nectar of the Gods of Poetic Grace. I'm talking Michter's single-barrel bourbon here, bro. Surrounded by the mystical spirits in my cellar vault at my writing desk, let me tell you about the coldest motorcycle ride I ever took.

It was late fall 1970, gas prices were 25 cents in St Paul and I borrowed a friend's 350 Honda for the weekend. I wasn't specific on my intentions for the ride but he figured it involved a girl and of course it did, and in fact it was a girl who previously in High School had taken advantage of my willingness to be taken advantage of - at least, that's how I figured it. Her experiences far exceeded mine in the art of seduction, but I was a willing student and now, six months later, as a wiser and I presumed more astute young man of the world, I skipped out of college class on a cold Friday and blasted down to Tulsa for little rendezvous. Minnesota to Oklahoma on a 350 in late October, what was I thinking? Hmm, huh? Ha! It was cold and it snowed and the twelve hours I calculated it'd take to get to Tulsa turned into nineteen. The gas did go down to 15 cents a gallon in Missouri. It was a few years later that gas stations artificially created shortages to jack up the price and they've been doing that ever since. I kept my teeth clenched me teeth to reduce the rattle of the road and the shivering of my bones; it was that night that I learned not to follow taillights on a dark ribbon of highway. Well after midnight I met a few hippies at a roadside rest who had a quart of beer and a slim joint and that caused some minor delay. They were in an old 56 Ford that had an 8-track blasting a Beatles song, "Here Comes the Sun" and that became my mantra the rest of the trip. Or maybe the song just stuck in my head.

I hooked up with the girl at her dormitory, her giggling roommates ceased their gaiety long enough to cast disapproving frowns at my shoddy, unshaved, longhaired appearance, cold and dirty clothes, black leather over a sweatshirt hoody. She was going to a soiree that evening, for Southern Belles and their Okie beaus, she told me of one she liked who had good prospects with the Post Office and they could grow old together and retire to a golf course community on the East Coast and decorate their perfect house with balustrades, light fixtures and photos of their own making adorned to kitchen refrigerators. That's just fucking lovely, baby, I couldn't be happier for you. After that, I never saw her again, although we talked once or twice over the next year or two, pay phone to pay phone and she said she still loved me for my restless, mysterious, albeit dangerous habits but I wasn't suitable to guarantee her creature comfort. If the ride down to Oklahoma was tough, the ride back to Minnesota was brutal. I stopped at a truck stop; pointing at the menu I asked the waitress, what are grits? "It's what the Indians ate, hon," she said. She had a strong countenance; her nonchalance seemed to hide secret venom, like she could kick a customer's ass if they stepped out of line. She was older than me by only a few years, but reminded me nothing of the coy little cheerleader coed I left in Tulsa. After riding most of the night, I woke up that morning in a field of corn stubble in Iowa, the hard ground and my sleeping bag lightly dusted with snow.

Hey, check this out: Preacher's Annual Birthday Bash is coming up June 28th through July 1st, and there ain't no snow forecast! I'm turning 60 on June 30th and July 1st is one year since I got splattered on the highway so I'm going to be celebrating the wonders of biker life up at the FRP headquarters in Wow Wow Wautoma. Camping out I figure - sleeping on the ground? Oh man, my aching bones. Also, July 13 and 14th, Benny & the Boys are having their 6th Annual Barnyard Boogie in Monee, IL. It'd be an fn travesty to miss it - an old school Kulture Fest! It's for a good cause.

Kenn Hartmann- www.chicagobikerbars.com

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Saturday, September 1, 2012

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Ride registration from 8:30 - 10:45 am

Ride leaves at 11 am (RAIN or SHINE)

Early registrants receive door prizes on day of ride

Cancer Bug Splat Contest + "Blot-Out" Cancer

LIVE auction + \$500 CASH raffle and other prizes

Pancake breakfast in the park sponsored by Friends and Family Cancer Foundation

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