

CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE AT WWW.FREERIDERSPRESS.US



It's spring today, officially I guess that is, and this weekend it even started to actually have that "feel" in the air. You know what I mean. Spring.

I backed Betty out of the garage on Saturday, my 98 Heritage Softail, and she fired right up, which was a surprise and a good thing, sometimes in past years, she gagged, choked, sputtered and coughed something fierce the first time out each spring, and needed a little helping snort of starter fluid sprayed directly into her carbure-

tor to coax her to life.

How to describe the familiar rumble of the engine, the straight pipes, and yeah, even the smell of her exhaust... all I can say is: I am beyond glad. It's going to be a good year.

On New Year's Day, lots of people make resolutions, most of which are blown off and forgotten in short order. I have also learned in the last few years, how fast life can get. And if you don't make the time for balance in your life, life can go screaming past you, without a second chance.

I don't know about you, but I'm always fighting to have balance in my life. I'm a single mom, and run a small business, as well as a homeowner. Sometimes all of my responsibilities run me ragged. One of the few selfish pleasures that I enjoy entirely just for my own enjoyment is my motorcycle. I don't belong to any clubs, I don't do a lot of organized rides. I don't even own a lot of clothes that come from dealerships, or try to put on a "biker chick" image. I just ride.

I bought Betty in June of 2000. I had never ridden a motorcycle before. At the time, I was going thru a divorce, and originally actually was going to give the bike to my now ex-husband, from whom I was separated from at the time, a move that in retrospect makes me doubt I had my all my marbles. About 24 hours after I bought the bike, I changed my mind (Actually, regained my sanity is more like it!) and decided to keep it for myself, a move that totally stunned my family, and at first was a great source of humor. (Haha, Mom, the Biker Chick!) My plan was that I would just teach myself how to ride, just so I could say I knew how, and then I'd sell it (I had bought the bike at a fantastic price) Let's just keep it simple and say that it only took one afternoon in a parking lot teaching myself how to ride that big twin that I fell in love. Hard. The bike is still in my possession six years later, and is never going to be sold, or replaced with something newer. I've been across eight states on it, and some of my best memories have been made with that bike.

So here it is, Spring, 2006. The prospect and promise of warm weather, and a wonderful summer with many new memories to be made is almost here. I just had a conversation with the electrician that's working at my home. He excitedly says, "You ride a bike? Me, too!" Turns out he's got a 2005 Road King. A brand new bike. And he put on 100 miles last year. I look at him, flummoxed. "100 miles for the whole season?" I repeat, sure I've heard him wrong.

He sheepishly grins, and tells me how busy he was last year. Now, I know busy. I know it better than you can imagine. But it got me to thinking. In the first five years I owned Betty, I acted like I was in some kind of contest to see how many miles I could rack up in a riding season. One year, I hit 14,000. I was also a real smart ass about people who spent big dollars on a Harley Davidson motorcycle, and then only rode a few hundred miles only to fill the classifieds the next spring with their For Sale ads, after the novelty had wore off. These same people never looked beyond the "cool factor" that they envisioned owning a motorcycle held, to understand and truly appreciate what it does to your soul to have the day's pressures and responsibilities melt away when you're heading down some little country road by yourself or with a friend without any particular destination in mind or time frame to get there. A lot of people haven't enjoyed being in that frame of mind since they were kids. Remember? When was the last time you enjoyed that feeling of absolute carefree enjoyment? We used to call it playing.

One of my happiest memories was a hot summer day sitting on the curb next to my bike outside of a gas station in Montello, drinking a cold root beer and just watching people go by. The whole day had been spent with two of us just farting around the country side seeing the sights on our motorcycles. There wasn't one thing fancy or pretentious about that day, and yet, it goes down in my book as an awesome memory of a perfect day.

When I bought my motorcycle, it was during an extremely difficult time in my life. Money was really tight, too. I was driving a gray 1987 Ford F150 called "Grandpa" which had just had its entire motor and transmission replaced. To spend the

kind of money that my Heritage Softail cost was just insane, any way you could look at it. But. That bike saved my life that year. And yes, it was the same year I sat on the curb in Montello with my root beer, my friend, and two dusty motorcycles next to us.

Like I said in the beginning: it's a new year, and today is Spring.

And now a shameful confession: Last year, I accrued my personal lowest miles ever on my motorcycle, only about forty five hundred. I was really busy, too. And the riding season ended before I realized it. I also know that I had more stress and pressure than I've had in years. Not good.

So my resolution this year is to remember how short summer is, and to remember not to get too caught up in responsibilities and work to not take time to enjoy the things and the people that truly make a difference in our lives and our happiness.

Balance. How many miles you rack up on your bike- that really doesn't matter. What does matter, though, is, whatever it is that you call your passion, whether it's gardening, golf, fishing, or your motorcycle, don't forget to take time for balance. Time to recharge, and feed your soul. Be a kid again. And enjoy that cold root beer that's waiting.

It's going to be a good year.

C.Hill

• HUGE SELECTION OF REPLACEMENT, CUSTOM, HI-PERF & RESTORATION PARTS 1936 TO PRESENT HARLEY DAVIDSONS
 • COMPLETE HARLEY SERVICE CENTER
 • CHROME PLATING
 • TIRE SALES & SERVICE • TOP BRANDS AT LOW PRICES, TIRE MOUNTING, BALANCING & WHEELS LACED & TRUED

KOKESH MOTORCYCLE ACCESSORIES AND PARTS

8302 Highway 65, Spring Lake Park, MN 55432
(763) 786-9050 Fax (763) 786-9194

COMING SOON!

Cruizin' fur Critters

POKER RUN

To benefit the Lincoln County Humane Society.

Saturday, June 17

Pre-registration Party w/live entertainment; Fri. June 16, 6-8pm, Office Bar, Schofield.
 Registration; Sat. June 17 at Wausau Harley-Davidson from 9-11am. Ride ends at Rock Island Resort, Merrill w/live entertainment.

Call the Humane Society for more info, 715-536-3459 or check out our website at www.furrypets.com
 For lodging, dining & area activities, call the Merrill Area Chamber of Commerce, toll free at 877-867-2737 or visit www.merrillchamber.com



COME OUT AND JOIN US AT OUR ANNUAL SUMMER BASH!!

Live Music All Day
Black frog
Tuck Pence
3RD Band TBA

BURN-OUT PIT,
FREE BEER & SODA, FOOD ON SITE,
VENDORS, ROUGH CAMPING & AND
MUCH MORE!!

\$15.00 DONATION AT GATE.....MUST BE 21
NO KIDS, FIRE-ARMS OR FIREWORKS!!

VENDORS WELCOME ...PLEASE CALL
RAY @ (920)779-9933 OR JODI @ (920)779-6877