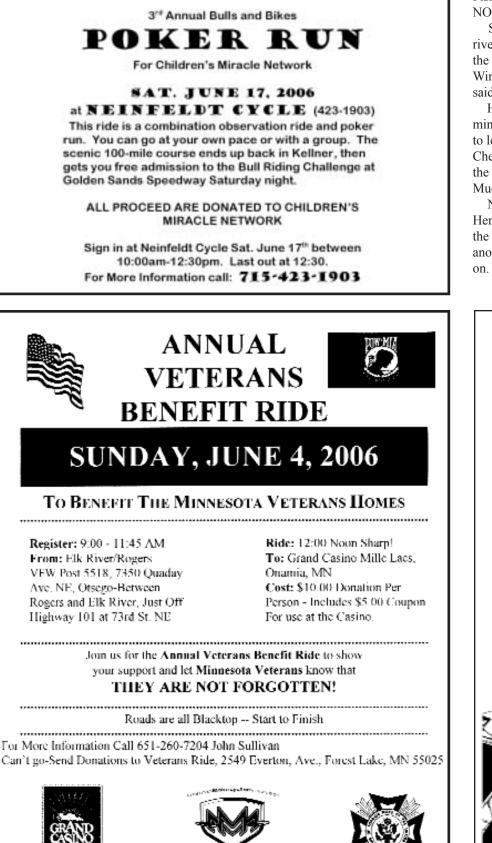
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## **A Few Words From Winona Bob**

Gather 'round kids and you'll hear the REAL story of the great Winona flood of 1965. Stories are told of bands of itinerant bikers pouring into the city to sandbag and save the little town that could - WRONG! I worked on the dikes thru the entire dilemma and never met a biker. They mighta been there and I missed 'em - but I grew up here and knew 'most every dikeworker so I doubt it. Story's told as well of the little town that pulled itself up by it's bootstraps - WRONG! There was plenty of valiant struggling and many brave boys risked life and limb (divers going into the storm sewer system to insert "plugs" to keep the river from seeking it's own level ) but in the end, three local neer-do-wells, some sticks of dynamite and a small boat were what stood between the city and watery doom.

My hero Smokey Yunick says in his book, "... now I'm old and I mighta forgot a few details but in the main my story's the way it happened. You may disagree and you got



the right to your opinion but I'm writin' this here piece so it's my opinion your're stuck with.'

Now a little backstory. Mighty Mississippi's not a misnomer - this durn river's BIG! Today's paper (Mar.28th.,2006) has the flow at 35,100 cu.ft. per second at Lock and Dam 5a. Normal day; normal flow -lotta water, right? April 1965's flow was 162,400 cu.ft, per second and that's like we said - at the dam. Now you gotta realize water's a lot like electricity -takes the path of least resistance. So a whole lot more water is going by that didn't even bother checking in at the official checking station. Farmland, swampland, roads -anywhere water can get to - water is going.

I was working way on the north end of the Prairie Island dike directly across from the dam dumping truckloads of anything to keep the dike from hemhoraging. I'm telling you that dike felt like standing on a pile of pudding - it wasn't gonna last another 8 hours much less another week. Winona city officials pleaded with the Fed to let the river flood into the newly-created Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge. As kids growing up we knew this area as the Delta Fish and Fur farm. NO GO ! Said the Feds.

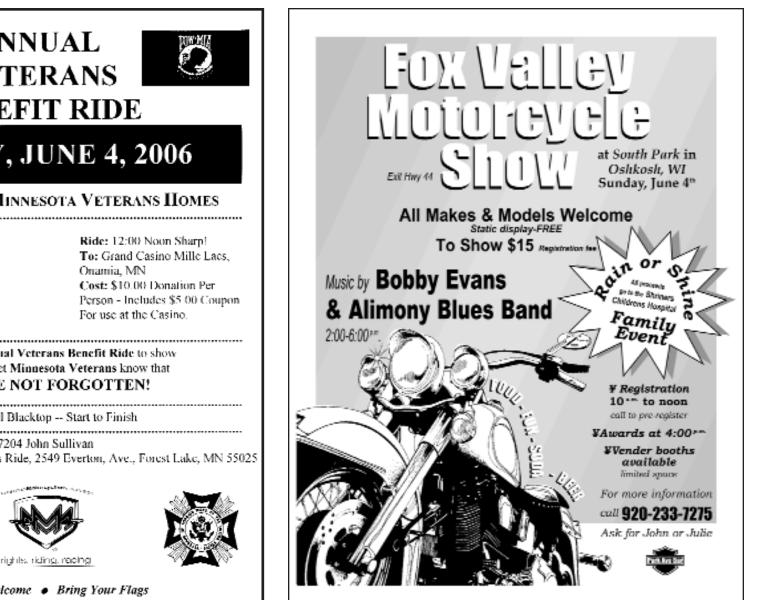
Swampland acts like a big sponge, soaking up and spreading out the clout of the river. There's lots of swamp, woods and low-lying farmland all around and south of the refuge -miles and miles of it as a matter of fact. Ixnay said the Edfays. Goodbye Winona, goodbye adventurous bikers, goodbye brave citizens or as Bill Cosby's God said to Noah, " ... how long can you tread water?"

Here is where our unlikely heros enter stage left. Fresh from a tooter at .... wait a minute ... I know the place, I know the names but I think it's more " urban legend " to let them be anonymous - right? Right! Into the Batboat Robin! Got the dynamite? Check! Got the matches? Check! It's off to save the helpless and hapless denizens. To the Burlington RR dike; light the fuse - WHOOOMPH! Winona is saved and Big Muddy floods thousands of acres from Marshland, Wi. to Brice Prairie, Wi.

Now you know, as Paul Harvey is fond of saying, "the rest of the story."

Hence the twice-yearly commemorative Flood Run. Strange how Winona never took the bikers into their bosom after they saved them! That's a whole 'nother story for another time. See you on the Flood Run. Keep the shiny parts skyward and motor

Your faithful scribe, Winona Bob.



All Bikers Welcome • Bring Your Flags