

On Mass Mutations & Intoxication

By Kenn Hartmann

'Carmel-by-the Sea ain't the same' the old-timer from San Jose laments. He remembers a quirky enclave of artisans long before the opulent corporate swank of Mayor Clint Eastwood. He straddles a vintage Matchless single cylinder racer so I'll take his word. I had visited Carmel as a teenager and few Bentleys, Hummers or tour buses vied for vehicular supremacy in Carmel 1970. Back then granola, hippie beads and hitchhikers littered the landscape. Today, I enjoy killer calamari in a trendy Vietnamese café wedged between Starbucks and an artsy wine gallery attended by overzealous sommeliers. I'm on a borrowed crotch-rocket and twist the throttle of destiny. The old-timer suggests the sunset cruise down the coast to quaff intoxicating Pacific vistas.



Every biker I see looks like Wild Hogs, the movie. They sport matching outfits, complimentary stock bikes, and parade in precise riding formations. Some weird west coast vortex ignites a mass mutation of helmeted movie extras on migration. I wear my usual raggedy shit, like a beach bum, tattered trousers cutoff below the knee, sleeveless t, and flip flops, which I discard after purchasing a cheap pair of Keds. The shifter was tough on my toes. My helmet is a full faced garage sale monstrosity with Sun Volt rocker graffiti plastered over abrasions, road dust and the aroma of mildewed cat. Just south of Carmel, I stop to sniff the salt stench of ocean kelp and dip my feet in icy surf only to dance away from the frigid breaking wave. On the road, I throttle, brake and lean. I cruise over the Bixby Creek Bridge, immortalized in 'Then Came Bronson' opening scenes.

It's impossible to catch more than a swift glimpse of sun and surf since the hard turns and deadly precipice presents a very real phenomenon. I stop at a scenic overlook only to discover the planetary invasion of Wild Hog mutants is real. Tourists from around the globe flock like gulls to California. They rent the biker dream, stateside Harley style. No wonder they look cloned, they rent from the same shop. I meet riders from Germany, Australia and England who slam down 3,000 miles through Utah, Arizona and California on rental bikes. It's dark by time I arrive at Big Sur, the redwoods, campfires and literary haunts of Jack Kerouac, Arthur Miller and Gary Snyder, a Zen sanctuary during the golden age of beatnik hippiedom. Well, for Kerouac it sucked; he couldn't get enough booze and drugs to ward off delirium. For me it's just a stop for gas and soon I'm the only vehicle creeping down the coast. No other headlights, no streetlights, engulfed in the vast universe surrounding my mortal insignificance.

Tied to a two wheeled speed machine, racing along the cosmic brink of Earth, Sea and Stars on a ribbon of asphalt known as California's Highway One, I embrace catastrophic visions of mortality and enjoy exhilarating grace. I worry about overshooting my headlights on a hairpin turn. Even a slight miscalculation could hurtle my carcass into the great abyss. I travel a hundred miles; the first real light is the Hearst Castle. In Morro Bay I stop at a juke joint and happen to catch the King of California Roadhouse Blues, Dave Alvin blast out American Roots music. His band is called the Guilty Men. I talk to him in the alley after the show; he's coming to Chicago in February. I jump on the bike and get a rickety oceanfront motel in Pismo Beach. In the morning, from the pier I see whales and dolphins on migration. I guess I can say 'been there, done that.' Anybody wishing to attend the mid-winter Dave Alvin show at Old Town SOFM can contact me. On November 9th, we're having the Iron Horse Ranch & Raunch party on North Avenue and Addison Rd in Villa Park. We'll be presenting the Best Damn Biker Bar Hopper trophy to winners Barb & Larry Burrows.

-Kenn Hartmann

www.chicagobikerbars.com

IMMEDIATE PRESS RELEASE

Chair That You Can Take With You On a Motorcycle

Anamosa Iowa – October 1, 2007

If you have a motorcycle, you can now take chairs with you. A few years ago, frustrated when arriving at hillclimbs, ballgames, or even rallies; an engineer decided to do something about it. He designed and built a few functional chairs that would collapse to a size you could put in a saddlebag. After several prototypes a comfortable and workable unit was showing up where ever he and his wife took his softail.

Soon others wanted chairs and through the next year, he built several dozen with help of a local tool & die business and canvas shop for friends and family. It wasn't long and the demand was overwhelming. Now thousands are manufactured and sold through distributors throughout the USA like J&P Cycles, www.jpccycles.com (item 830-549) and direct via Blue Max Enterprises www.bluemaxinc.com

The chairs are tough, built from tubular steel, and then powder coated. The seat and backrest are doubled with Denier 600 with a unique breathable mesh design. The chair closes like a typical quad chair and then is reduced in size again with the same concept as most camping tent frames. Each chair has a heavy-duty nylon zippered carrying case. Once in the case, they fit in most saddlebags. Don't have a saddlebag; you can strap it on the bike. Two heavy-duty handles on the case will work. Pricing starts at \$25.99 plus shipping.

Blue Max Enterprises, inc. 18346 120th Street, Anamosa, Iowa 52205



We all know that the riding community is a diverse group of people. I enjoy the time spent with all of the different groups, including my friends Al & Kathi of B.T.G.O.G. (www.ridefreeforever.org). You may have seen them at many of the bike events. They are dedicated to their beliefs and are always there for those that want to chat with someone. As with all the Christian riding groups, I say thanks for being there for us.

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