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My Backyard

A column by Lil' Rich

The English call it a fortnight but us Americans are stuck with a boring old two weeks. It's been anything but since Preacher and I finally met and decided that I needed to start documenting my wanderings as a member of the Free Rider's Press staff.

The weather was the kind you dream of on those cold Wisconsin winter nights, eighties and a better chance of rain in the desert.

We headed out to shoot Kurt's bike for the September cover and on to Kimmer's for bike night. What we found there was one of those break your neck head turners that have us hard core throttle twisters caught between two worlds. One head has me loading my jeans over the dual Makunis, asphalt dragging design and custom everything. The other side has me wondering about the biker pedigree of the owner considering the obviously fat wallet the monster entailed. I tend to hold to the old school point of view that it takes more than a bike to make a biker. I come from the days when Harley dealerships had dirty showrooms loaded with bikes and parts, and the only t-shirts were on our backs or used to swab up the oily mess that seemed to follow us and our machines around. Biking was more than a matter of machines, but rather a state of mind and soul. More often than not dinner at my bro's house was relegated to the living room because the dining room table held a disassembled carburetor or some other project.

I kept my verdict in check as the owner came out wearing obviously custom made leathers. My misgivings were soon dispelled when we toured Kurt's property and I found the inevitable projects and that seemed to grow from the very soil. I also saw and heard in his carriage the unmistakable signs that sixty weight flowed in those veins too. The final confirmation that I had found a kindred spirit was confirmed with his insistence that a ride was required to complete the shoot. I have never found a better measure of a mans true worth, at least in my book, than to feel the throbbing heartbeat of our machines as we soak in life side by side.

The ride ended much too soon as we pulled into Kimmers for bike night and the pounding exhaust was matched by a persistent migraine that seemed immune to anything and had me tempted to cut my head off to find relief. Damn old bones letting me down again, couldn't be all those years of sleeping on the cold ground, or all those nights of having so much fun that it won't all fit in my head consequently some of



it spills over and is lost to the ether the next morning. Almost makes you envy the yuppies who take the cream of motorcycling with their chase campers and dealer serviced rides....naaaah

Anyway I called it an early night and left the cams and six over camaraderie for the only thing that always seemed to cure the most deeply entrenched troubles of body and mind, I rode. Heading back toward the quarters next to the garage that houses my bike I let her have her own head. I always seem to have the most enjoyable rides when I get to the point where I am lost but don't care and that night was no exception. Heading generally east I picked the roads not by the directness of the route but the scenic potential they offered. Sunsets peeking over lakes and deer feeding peacefully under the full moon put my aches and cares into the proper perspective.

Friday afternoon was one of those mixed days you sometimes wish you could hit the rewind button on. In what seemed like the area's best kept secret Preacher and Animal got a gig going at the Merryland Ballroom featuring Wigglestick doing some kick ass bluesy stuff along with Paradise City who could step in for Guns and Roses any day. Those of us who found their way out there were treated to one of the best live shows I have seen in quite awhile.



Big Todd's Memorial poker run on Saturday was watched over by the biker gods. Riding solo for quite awhile now, I get a little anxious with group rides. The organization for the ride was exceptional. The pacers and road guards understood the dynamics and maintained a tight group with very few gaps developing. The hot rodders held them selves in check and the inexperienced riders gained valuable advice and experience. And



the route and weather, well you had to be there it was ideal. Ending at Rusty's Backwater Saloon the food, music and raffles put to rest a perfect run with a lot of money raised for a good cause.

My friend Kathy had been anxious for a day ride ever since I told her about my favorite Wisconsin route. Taking the back way we headed out of Point early Sunday morning. As

we left the flat potato country behind the scenery became much more interesting and the rolling kettles and twisting byways were a welcome relief from Tommy Thomson's old hometown of Elroy south. Hugging the Wisconsin River for a ways gave us a taste of the treats in store as we headed toward Prairie du Chein. Arriving at the Mississippi my riding companion's spirits did not sag as the hard passenger seat took a toll on her tender bottom. I assured her that more frequent rest stops were in store as we headed north on the Great River route.

One spectacular vista after another greeted us as we wound through the bluffs overlooking the big muddy. Moderate temperatures, the perfect mix of clouds and the echo of exhaust off the cliffs brought a smile that reaches to the core of my being. Waysides, pull offs, and scenic overlooks provided welcome rest for the soul and body. One particular overlook stands out particularly due to my partners amorous ministrations, but that is another story for another forum. Dave's mini cycles outside of La Crosse forced another stop to check out the unique machines. We planned to make it to Prescott but were full to overflowing by Maiden Rock where we stopped for a wonderful repast at the Gypsy grill and a soul searing sunset over the river.

Continued on page 17

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