

Sweet Ride through Sweet Home

By Kenn Hartmann

By time Preacher, our intrepid Editor hit Sweet Home his '86 bagger was running on one lung & Chicago commuters were in the clutches of gridlock. All the Illinois Harley techs had gone home – winter hours. In the cold, dark urban parking lot, Preacher's was the only bike, except for mine. I had just bought an '08 Road Glide that afternoon, a nice step up from my blazing Trumpet – a strumpet with a stubborn clutch. Preacher had coil problems, a recurring malady. Jim Egizio, our performance specialist said 'I don't do electrical problems, but I'll look-see.' While Preacher was in service, I called my wife to tell her I bought a bike. 'You did what?' I bought a bike. 'You did what?' Say, is there a problem with the phone? Egizio fixed the coil problem & left Preacher with advice, 'check your ground wire & quit using that cheap aftermarket crap.' Preacher & I went to the Salerno's on Roosevelt for pizza. I flashed back to my old Harley habits. Park the bike where I can see it. Sit in the restaurant at a table near the window. I wondered if I'd miss that grimy, English Strumpet. This was to be the inaugural run with my new steed. We descended on the eastbound Ike & joined the traffic already in progress. Normally, I bob & weave lanes like an old school boxer in a shadow bout. With Preacher in tow & my lack of familiarity with the new machine, we eased downtown in surprisingly light traffic. I thought we'd bail at Racine to avoid the usual Dan Ryan interchange backup but we wound through smooth & throttled onto the Ryan amidst a resounding crush of cagers who drive like they've been drinking wine & running moonshine with Nascar.



Turn-about is fair play. A month earlier I had followed Preacher & Lorie on a chilly night ride through the north woods. We had stopped at one of those remote woodland stores & voiced my concern about midnight deer darting into the roadway. Lorie said, 'forget the deer, Kenn, look out for bear.' Preacher kept pace as I hammered through – trucks rolling along one side, the Red Line El screaming on the other. When we finally reached the Bishop-Ford, I signaled Preacher adieu & as he barreled by I laughed at how he had bundled up against the chill. He looked like a round, burly

ball on a motorcycle. So there I was at 130th & Torrence sitting at a light. Next to me idled an old black guy in a big-ass Buick. He looked 1950's in his velvet suit & Stetson hat, big gold-tooth grin as he gave me thumbs up. Normally I'm home by 8:30 after work. It was after midnight. My wife let me crawl into bed but made me get up to go see the Road Glide in the garage. She said, 'I thought you wanted to get a Cross Bones.' Damn baby, I didn't know you were listening.
-Kenn Hartmann
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