

## A Glitch in Time

By Kenn Hartmann

Back in '83 (the 19 hundreds) Randy J on a chopped Triumph and I on a Sporty hooked up with this babe-licious dish named Robin outside the infamous punk club Exit on Wells in the Old Town neighborhood of Chicago. Blonde Robin wore a freaky pink mini-skirt with skimpy top as she straddled her matching Vespa scooter. Ah-hem, uh, nice scootah; want to go for a ride? We escorted her down to the Fullerton Avenue beach on Lake Michigan, our bikes throttled down to a pop-papa-ta-to un-syncopated putt-putt trying to watch traffic and still eyeball what a soft breeze does to a flimsy-ass mini-skirt. By escort, I mean exactly that. On either side, thumping sinister oil piston carbureted volatile voodoo drooling biker grunge, deftly maneuvering near a tantalizingly stinky pink possibility.

Tonight, (aught 7, the 20 hundreds) at Demito's in Villa Park, the place crawls with clubbers, casuals and a tasty assortment of eye candy. I run into Sponge, an ex-football free safety from the 60's; a Viet Nam era Recon Marine and former member of the Brothers, MC. He feels his subscription to FRP entitles him to a personal story. What am I supposed to say? 'Say how it is with some people. It doesn't matter how long since you've seen them last. Time is irrelevant.' A glitch in time, eh? F-that, I've already started my story about Blonde Robin on a Vespa. Plus, I promised Lydia, a 20-year old University of Wisconsin coed I'd thank her for using my FRP stories in her creative writing class. Sponge asks, 'a college kid that digs biker rags?' Well, not quite.

Lydia does ride a Vespa. So do thousands of other students in Madison. 'Cheap transportation, cheap gas and you can park on the sidewalk' said Lydia, who finished high school in Milwaukee post Katrina. Her family lost all their possessions in the hurricane and haven't been back to 'Lou zee ann.' She views the upheaval in her life thusly, 'when catastrophe strikes, you can't wait for the government.' Lydia admits to liking motorcycles but isn't a biker. 'Our assignment sought local authors in alternative media and your story about N'lins stirred poignant memories. Your writing works on many levels.' She said it surprised the class to find a hidden poem in my House of Blues story in the June issue. The class analyzed writing styles and exploded into a debate about family values, religious freedom and the danger of censorship from politically correct zealots who infest the universities.

Newspapers frequently are targets of self-appointed censor czars. Our constitution guarantees our right



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to Freedom of Speech and Freedom of Press from government tyranny. To this day, there's a reign of terror on Freedom of Thought on all reaches of the planet. Whether it's Afghan Taliban who actively destroyed artistic, intellectual and philosophical edifices that threatened their insane vision of virgins in heaven or mobsters in the Family Secrets trial currently in Chicago. Somebody's always trying to tell you what you can or cannot say. Homeland security targeted a few friends of mine. Their phone calls are recorded. 'It's damn time somebody writes down this shit I talk about. Save me from typing. I wish they'd publish it. Get it out there for all to see. Turn the world topsy-turvy and make it right.' My friend laments, 'they monitor every time I take a dump, can't they at least leave TP in the outhouse?'

Demito's rollicks. It becomes tribal. Rained all day and now the dark sky clears, the constellations above, a star studded triangle makes music in the spheres; the hawk chases a dove. Or a swan or so the story goes. Now all I need is an astronomy major telling me my sense of the night sky blows. Everyone's desperate to savor the last fleeting moments of summer. My brother Cheeze readies to leave so I boogie. As we pull onto Northbound Kingery, his Fat Boy peg scrapes the pavement, sparks fly and a single ember glows as I blow past. His wife Jan yells from the back of his bike 'happens every time.' They jump on Westbound 90 and I'm alone in my element. I breathe deep and let go the heartache; twist it out like Clockwork Orange incarnate. Not a cop in sight, ready to dodge all night. Asphalt joy. Acting the boy. A freak of nature on a cannibalized mutant toy.

-Kenn Hartmann

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## "Supersport" Motorcycles under fire from Insurance Institute

A recent media blitz by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, an insurance industry trade group, purports that so-called "Supersport" motorcycles are nearly four times deadlier than all other types of bikes and have the worst overall insurance losses.

The IIHS study, which basically reviews existing federal FARS (Fatal Accident Reporting System) data and calculates motorcycle fatalities by type of motorcycle, blames the growing popularity of racing platform cycles amongst younger riders in part for a dramatic increase in U.S. motorcycle deaths, according to a September 11 article in USA Today.

Motorcycle fatalities jumped 59% from 2000-2005, while overall U.S. motorcycle registrations climbed 51%, but Supersport registrations were up 83% and accounted for 28% of motorcycle fatalities while representing about 9% of registered motorcycles. So, while overall fatalities per 10,000 registered motorcycles went up from 7.1 in 2000 to 7.5 in 2005, Supersports were credited with 22.5 deaths per 10,000 registrations.

The "Sport and Unclad Sport Bikes" category of motorcycles, also noted for their speed and agility, posted a fatality rate of 10.7 per 10,000, while "Touring" motorcycles were 6.5 and "Cruisers and Standard motorcycles", which comprise the bulk of motorcycle registrations, were statistically under-represented at 5.7 fatalities/10M.

The study criticizes manufacturers for promoting the speed of Supersport bikes, noting that "speed" was cited in 57% of the Supersport fatal crashes and 46% of the fatal Sport and Unclad Sport Motorcycle accidents.

Supersport bikes also have the highest overall collision coverage losses among 2002 to 2006 model bikes, a figure almost four times higher than Touring motorcycles and six times higher than Cruisers. The bikes are also popular targets among thieves, stolen at a rate seven times higher than the average for all 2002 to 2006 motorcycles.

"Short of banning supersport and sport motorcycles from public roadways, capping the speed of these street-legal racing machines at the factory might be one way to reduce their risk," suggests the IIHS report on the study.

In the late-80s the IIHS convinced Missouri Senator John Danforth to introduce a bill in Congress calling for horsepower limits on all motorcycles sold in the U.S., but he withdrew his controversial "Super Bike Ban" following intense lobbying by motorcyclists' rights activists and the motorcycle industry. [www.ON-A-BIKE.com](http://www.ON-A-BIKE.com)

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