

CAST IRON RIDE '09



You know that old saying about "Old Bikes and Old Whiskey," and how they only get better with age? Well, even if you're not a seasoned whiskey drinker, there's still no reason a person can't appreciate an old bike. That's why a group of folks get together every year for the Cast Iron Ride. The idea was simply to take a daylong ride with fellow antique motorcycle enthusiast, all riding pre-1984 bikes. For anyone that's not up on the timeline through Harley-Davidson's history, 1984 was the first year that the company offered the Evolution motor, so anything pre-'84 would be Shovelhead, Panhead, Knucklehead, Flathead, and Ironhead. Yeah, pretty much any Harley motor with a "head" in the nickname was pre-Evo. Although, I'm sure somebody out there is correcting me with calling the Evo a "Blockhead," which is true also, but they are most commonly referred to as the "Evo." Ok, yeah Twin-cams have also been referred to as "Fatheads," but *Twinkle* seems to stick better!

Now with history class over, Earl and Julie Reichmann were to brains behind the idea for the Cast Iron Ride, which celebrated its 6th annual running the weekend of September 12th and 13th. This year they changed things up a bit and made it a two-day event, with 2 different rides. Both days turned out to be absolutely beautiful on two wheels, which are starting to get few and far between this time of year in the Midwest. The ride is nothing like a poker run, where the best hand wins untold riches, it's simply a "go at your own pace" ride, at no charge, with good folks out to enjoy the ride.

Things got started on Saturday morning when everyone met at the Iron Horse Social Club in Savanna, Illinois. The ride crossed the Mighty Mississippi River into Iowa, where the first stop was at Jim Long's shop in Bellevue. Jim's well known for restoring old Harleys, and has been at it for 30-some years. So needless to say, the man has perfected his art! Jim opened his doors for folks to check out all his projects and antique motorcycle memorabilia, and offered up some impromptu Q&A sessions, which felt more like a shop classroom with a lot to be learned.

But when you get so many old bike lovers in a place like Jim's, it's hard to leave, but eventually everyone was pulled away and the ride continued north along the river, with a stop in Balltown, Iowa for some lunch. Balltown is

the highest point of elevation in Iowa, which isn't much compared to other parts of the country, but still makes for some beautiful scenery along the river.

Just north of Balltown is the Cassville Ferry, which crosses the river into Cassville, Wisconsin. So everyone filled the ferry with old bikes, and only left enough room for one car, which just happen to be the chase vehicle. You never know what might happen with the old bikes, so Dawg and Animal sat it out in the truck all day. But the ferry didn't have an open bar, so someone had to haul some cold refreshments!

Once in Wisconsin, the last stop was at New Diggins General Store, which is a well known biker hot spot, and they just happen to serve New Glarus brewery's Totally Naked beer, which is some tasty brew! As the night rolled in, the ride continued back to Savanna for a 16 ounce steak dinner at Hog Dogs, that Fat Jack totally worked his magic on for only \$10 bucks, then everyone wondered back to the Iron Horse, where local favorite Ron LaPuma and his band were cranking out some killer classic rock tunes. For some folks, the party continued well past midnight, but the second leg of the journey left Savanna at 8:30AM Sunday, so some folks, wisely, called it an early night.

Unfortunately due to prior commitments with work, I couldn't make the ride on Sunday, but Earl tells me that the 200-mile ride on Saturday was the "real ride" anyway. Sunday's ride met at the Vintage Spokes Museum in Rockford, Illinois, with stops at Prairie Pub in Garden Prairie, Illinois, and Clausen's in Union, Illinois. Sunday's ride was only about 65 miles, but for folks who left from Savanna that morning, it turned out to be about 113 miles.

Earl and Julie were extremely happy with how the weekend turned out, and Earl also wants to mention that all the folks riding on both days were some of the kindest and most respectable people they've ever rode with. Although no exact date is set for next year yet, the Cast Iron Ride will most likely take place again in September, and is always open to all makes and models of motorcycles. Only thing they ask is that all post-1984 bikes ride at the back. For more info, check out www.castiron-ride.com or feel free to give Earl a call at 630-464-0189

NATE ULLRICH (www.natonic.com)