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One Heck of Week At Sturgis 2009

What a week. We just got back from the annual Sturgis Motorcycle Rally in Sturgis, SD and I've got to say it was one of the most incredible weeks I've had in a long time.

Several months back, I got a phone call from my friend Christine Diers from the Sturgis Hall of Fame Museum to let me in on a bit of great news. Christine informed me that I was to be inducted to the Sturgis Motorcycle Hall of Fame in the Class of 2009 during this year's rally. Extremely excited about the news, we began making plans for the weekend right away.

As I'd never been to Sturgis before, I thought it'd be a great idea to bring a other first-timers with me. My son Matt and good buddy Myron were up to the task. Matt had already been talking with Mike Lichter, the world-renowned Easyriders photographer who has chronicled the Sturgis Rally for over 30 years, about helping with Mike's annual motorcycle exhibit, which would be held for the first time at the Buffalo Chip Campground and Event Center. Matt and Mike picked out some great motorcycles and memorabilia for the exhibit, and we knew it would be an honor to participate.



Fast forward to July 29th. The truck was packed and we were ready to go. We decided it'd be nice to take a bit of a detour, so we headed north to Milwaukee to check out the new Harley museum. I plan an writing about our experience there in the near future, so I won't get into too much detail, but the place was UNBELIEVABLE. My friend Bill Redencia showed us all around for the day, and let me tell you, the amount of history encompassed there is fantastic. Original paint bikes with zero miles, nearly 100 year old race trophies, original ads and artwork....I could go on and on.

Heading out of Milwaukee, I decided to throw a curveball at Matt and Myron, and ride my old 30" flathead the rest of the way into Sturgis. They told me I was crazy, but I went ahead and did it anyway. Kept the old speedo at 120 the whole time (which was really only 55 or 60...you know how some of those old speedos are). There's nothing like riding an old bike to your first Sturgis ever. I would recommend it to anyone!



When I arrived in Sturgis, a few days after Matt and Myron of course, we had a full week of fun planned, which would undoubtedly include some of that great Black Hills riding I've heard so much about.

First thing Monday, we all headed into Deadwood for the legends ride. Mike Lichter invited Matt, Myron and myself to participate in the Legends Ride as special guests, which is one of the biggest charity rides in the country. When the ride started, we found ourselves right out front. Turning down Highway 385, we headed out of town with a group of 500 or so, which would quickly turn into less. Let me explain... The plan was to ride about 15 miles down HWY 385 then hit a left toward Nemo, and then wind up the famous Vanhooker Canyon Road back into Sturgis. About 50 miles total. Well, about 21 miles down 385, we turned around and realized that the massive ride of about 500 people had diminished to less than 20. Realizing we missed our turn, the ride leader pulled us all over for a break. As we got off the bikes, none other than Steven Tyler from Aerosmith, who'd been riding out front the whole time, came back to check out the old iron. A few great photo opportunities (he evened bummed my last Backwoods Cigar) and we were back on the road. Since no one else had a map, Matt and I lead the ride back...which was a real treat.

Tuesday evening we all headed to Mike Lichter's Industry Party at his annual exhibit. This year's exhibit was titled "Rebel Rousers: Motorcycle Icons that Inspired us to Ride", and it was a first a first class show right from the start. Mike had spent the past six months gathering iconic machines, images, and personalities for the show, and it came together beautifully. Machines well recognized throughout the industry were featured, and a collection of iconic memorabilia lined the walls for an incredible ambience enjoyed by all. We brought a few key pieces as well: the 1970 Evel Knievel Iron-head 750, our Wall of Death Indian Scout and shipping crate, and of course, our original paint H-D World War II WLA...all great machines that, over the years, inspired so many of us to hop on two wheels and hit the open road.



The party was fantastic. People from all over the industry were there, from legendary builders, riders, and racers, to some of the industry's newest talent and icons. Matt and I even got a chance to catch up with good friends Pat Simmons from the Doobie Brothers and his wife Christine Summer-Simmons, who by the way, just released her new incredible book titled "The American Motorcycle Girls", which highlights women in motorcycling throughout the first half of the twentieth century.



Wednesday morning, Matt, Myron, myself, and a big group of vintage riders all headed out to the Annual Sturgis Hall of Fame breakfast in Rapid City. It was a big day for me, and although I don't usually get nervous, I felt the butterflies this time around. The ceremony was first-class, and it was an honor to be included with this year's inductees. Tom Lehman of Lehman Trunks was being inducted. Cookie Crum, the first female wall-of-death rider, and an inspiration to so many women motorcyclists was in the class of 2009 as well. James Clark of James Gaskets, Lou Kirmsey (founder of Easyriders Magazine), and Jack Kirchgiesler (long time Sturgis H-D dealer) also received the Sturgis Museum's top honor this year.

While the beginning of the week was jam-packed, Thursday and Friday offered a bit of a slower pace. We got in some great riding around the area, including Mt. Rushmore of course, and spent both afternoons hanging out at the Antique Motorcycle Club of America's booth right outside Competition Distributing. A perfect way to wind down from one of

the best weeks I've had in a long time.

For more information on Sturgis Rally, Mike Lichter's Rebel Rousers Exhibit, the Legends Ride, or the Sturgis Motorcycle Hall of Fame, please visit the following websites:

- www.sturgisrally.com
- www.mikelighters.com
- www.easriders.com
- www.sturgismuseum.com
- www.legendsride.com

