

Remembrances

Dave Bucher looks back at some little gems of experience from his 45 years of riding and writing.



A Yankee's Payback

Back in '90, '91 and '93, I took on the task of running three national motorcycle rallies per year for *Rider Magazine*. Too naive to know something of that magnitude couldn't be done...at least until Americade's Bill Dutcher advised me to that effect...I plowed into this task and, must say, did a fairly credible job. We visited places like Taos, New Mexico; Cody, Wyoming; Great Gorge, New Jersey; Richmond, Kentucky; and right here in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. And the stories I could tell are almost countless. But one of my favorites comes out of the '93 effort in Knoxville, Tennessee.

One thing I learned early on was to not fail to meet expectations. Not those of the attendees, nor of the vendors you were trying to attract. Ditto with those of municipal officials, police and service providers. The first time you bring a motorcycle rally to a town it's like you were asking if they'd mind being a test site for a new plague vaccine, after you first released the plague. And you have double the trouble when you're a Yankee trying to put on something like that in the South.

So I was on my best behavior when I went out looking for somebody to do the ritual barbecue dinner that was a fixture of these events. It was an extra-charge feature; we didn't need to worry about feeding all of the 10,000 or so people who came to the rally, just a couple of hundred. And it was prepay, so I could always give the caterer an accurate count. I asked my local contacts who the best barbecue people in town were and the unanimous recommendation was Buddy's.

Visiting Buddy's, they seemed like

great people. Mostly big guys, young and can-do. True to my credo of leveling with people, I kept warning them that our crowd, mostly mom and pop couples on Gold Wings, could really eat. And the worst thing that can happen at something like this is to run out of food (Actually, worse can happen, and did, one year in Cody. But that's another story). They just gave me that you-pathetic-Yankee look and assured me that they'd been doing this a long time. "Jes' take it easy little feller, we got this handled. We never run outta food!" On my way out, I still couldn't resist shouting back over my shoulder, "Remember, these folks can eat a lot!"

Well, we had a great time in Knoxville. My creativity paid off with the first ever "motorcycles only" night in their very cool "Old Town," and through my arranging a brief but spectacular fireworks display to cap our bike show.

When it was time for the barbecue, Buddy's came in force. The food looked great and, after their assurances and seeing their professional kit, I had every confidence that things would go well. But then I saw people starting to put two paper plates together and spooning on the meat and beans and cornbread until it was a foot high.

About midway through the event the head guy from Buddy's, the one who had so condescendingly assured me that they knew better, came running up to me, breathless: "We never seen anything like this. We had to go back three times for food and now they're coming for seconds and thirds. It's not fair!"

If only the phrase "Stay Calm and Carry On" had been current then. Instead, I just smiled and silently gave myself a guiltless "atta boy." You see, I was paying per person, not per plate.