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ON THE COVER

MERRY CHRISTMAS

FROM THUNDER ROADS® MICHIGAN!

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STAFF

THUNDER ROADS®



THUNDER ROADS® MICHIGAN MAGAZINE

STATE OWNERS / PUBLISHERS
RJ & ALY
Po Box 1782, Midland, MI 48641-1782
RJ Cell: 989-948-4644
Email: RJ@ThunderRoadsMichigan.com
Email: Aly@ThunderRoadsMichigan.com

ADVERTISING SALES/DISTRIBUTION
Ben Weirauch / 989-332-1372
Ben@ThunderRoadsMichigan.com

Chloe Monville / 989-860-9640
Chloe@ThunderRoadsMichigan.com

Eric Kruer / 231-613-2819
Big-E@ThunderRoadsMichigan.com

Jen Dabrowski / 989-316-8079
Jen@ThunderRoadsMichigan.com

Samantha Talbot / 313-492-0563
Samantha@ThunderRoadsMichigan.com

LAYOUT & DESIGN
Meredith Hancock / Art Director / Thunder Publishing

WEBSITE DESIGN
RJ Calles

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS & PHOTOGRAPHERS

Hot Rod Beaton, Sharon K. Harvey "Red",
RJ Calles, James Shibley,
Jon Aka Smoke, Merry Garrett Aka Rabbit,
Dean "Charlie Chaplain" Titus, Greg "Johnny" Denay
Eric Kruer Aka Big E

NATIONAL FOUNDERS

Toni McCoy Shearon & Brian Shearon
Thunder Publishing, LLC Offices: 615-792-0040
e-mail:thunderroadsfounder@gmail.com
www.thunderroadsmagazine.com

LETTER FROM THE OWNERS

*Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays,
and Ho-Ho-Hold My Drink
While I Write This Note!*

Well, we made it through another year full of great rides, killer events, questionable weather decisions, and at least three moments where we thought, "Yeah... probably should've worn the warmer gloves and brought that extra layer." But we wouldn't trade a single mile of it, because sharing the road with this wild, wonderful biker family is what makes it all worth it.

Before we roll into the new year, we want to send a huge THANK YOU to every one of you who reads, rides, shares, waves, supports, and occasionally laughs at our bad jokes. You're the reason Thunder Roads Michigan Magazine® keeps rolling, and we can't wait to see your faces, bikes, and to hear all of your stories in 2026.

And now, a gentle holiday reminder (picture us saying this with a Santa hat and maybe one too many cookies):

Please, please, PLEASE support the businesses that advertise in this magazine.

They're the only way we can put this thing out every month. Without them, we'd just be two people sitting around saying, "Remember when we used to print a magazine?" and nobody but a few want that.

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We hope your Christmas is filled with time and a nice meal with family, friends, and maybe the sound of a V-twin firing up if the weather cooperates, oh and that Santa is good to you.

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!
We'll see you again in 2026, ready to roll, caffeinated, and probably already behind schedule.

RJ & Aly

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CHAPLAIN CHARLIES CORNER: GIFTS FOR THE ROAD: WHAT THE WISE MEN STILL TEACH US ABOUT THE RIDE

BY CHAPLAIN CHARLIE

The holidays have a way of sneaking up on bikers. One minute we're squeezing in those last cold-weather miles, and the next minute winter hits us so hard we're wondering if heated grips can be retrofitted onto our recliners. But even in December, when most of our machines are tucked under covers. We riders understand Christmas differently than most. We know something about journeys, purpose, faith, and what it means to follow a light through dark places.

So, when the old Christmas story brings up the wise men and their long ride across the desert, we get it. These weren't three guys wandering through a greeting card, they were travelers. Road warriors of their era. Their bikes just happened to have hooves.

What they carried with them, and why, still speaks to anyone who knows what it feels like to follow a road that calls to you.

The Ride to Bethlehem

Those wise men didn't just ride across town. They likely traveled hundreds of miles through rocky terrain, desert winds, unpredictable weather, and roads that made Michigan potholes look civilized. But they kept going because they believed something meaningful waited at the end.

Riders understand that mindset. Sometimes you follow a road not because it's easy or logical but because something in your spirit says, "This is the way." You trust the light, the gut feeling, the direction God nudges you, even when the route looks impossible on the map.

Gold: Honoring the King

Gold was the first gift they laid down. Not a financial tip, not a souvenir, gold symbolized royalty. Authority. Identity.

As riders, we understand honoring someone worthy. We respect those who've led the way. We nod to every biker we pass. We stand tall for those who've sacrificed.

Gold reminds us that Jesus is King, on the road, in our homes, in our struggles, and in every mile marker of our lives. It means your past roads don't disqualify you. Your scars don't define you. You ride with purpose because you ride with the King.

Frankincense: The Gift of Presence

Next came Frankincense, a symbol of worship and divine presence. Ancient priests used it in the temple, and it meant, "God is here."

Every rider knows something about presence. Not just being alive but feeling alive.

That moment when the wind hits just right. When the sun paints the tank with gold. When a long stretch of asphalt becomes a prayer without words.

More than once, I've had clearer conversations with God on two wheels than inside any building. The road strips away noise. It leaves space for truth.

Frankincense reminds us that God isn't far away. He's not waiting for you to clean up your life first. He's right here in the garage, in the storm, in the quiet miles, and in the struggles, we don't talk about out loud.

Myrrh: The Hard Roads

Then came myrrh. A strange gift for a newborn, because myrrh was used for burial and suffering. It symbolized sacrifice, specifically Jesus' mission to save.

Riders know something about hard roads. We've lost friends. We've seen pain, both physical and emotional. The holidays are joyful for some, but for others they stir up grief and memories.

Myrrh speaks right into that. It tells us Jesus understands suffering, not from a distance, but personally. He stepped into a broken world to heal broken people.

Myrrh means: **There is hope for those riding through pain.**

Why These Gifts Still Matter

When you look at gold, frankincense, and myrrh through a biker's eyes, here's what they say:

Gold → You belong to the King.

Frankincense → You're never riding alone.

Myrrh → Your pain has a Savior, not just a story.

Those gifts weren't random. They were prophecy wrapped in saddle bags. A message that the Savior understood kingship, worship, and sacrifice before He even spoke His first word.

A Christmas Challenge for Riders

Your bike may be parked. The roads may be icy. But your heart can still ride strong this Christmas.

The wise men didn't arrive empty-handed, and neither should we. Bring the gifts only a rider can offer:

Honor → Live with integrity.

Presence → Show up for people who need you.

Compassion → Look out for the lonely and the hurting.

Those gifts might not smell like Frankincense, but they'll change lives all the same.

Final Miles

Whether you're stringing lights around the garage, staring longingly at your winterized bike, or squeezing in one last ride before the big freeze, remember the lesson from those ancient travelers:

The greatest road ever ridden led to the One who rides with us today.

Ride safe. Ride with purpose. Ride with hope.


Merry Christmas, brothers and sisters.



Ride safe, ride blessed and keep your eyes on the One who rides before you.

Chaplain Charlie
Chaplain Dean Titus (Charlie)
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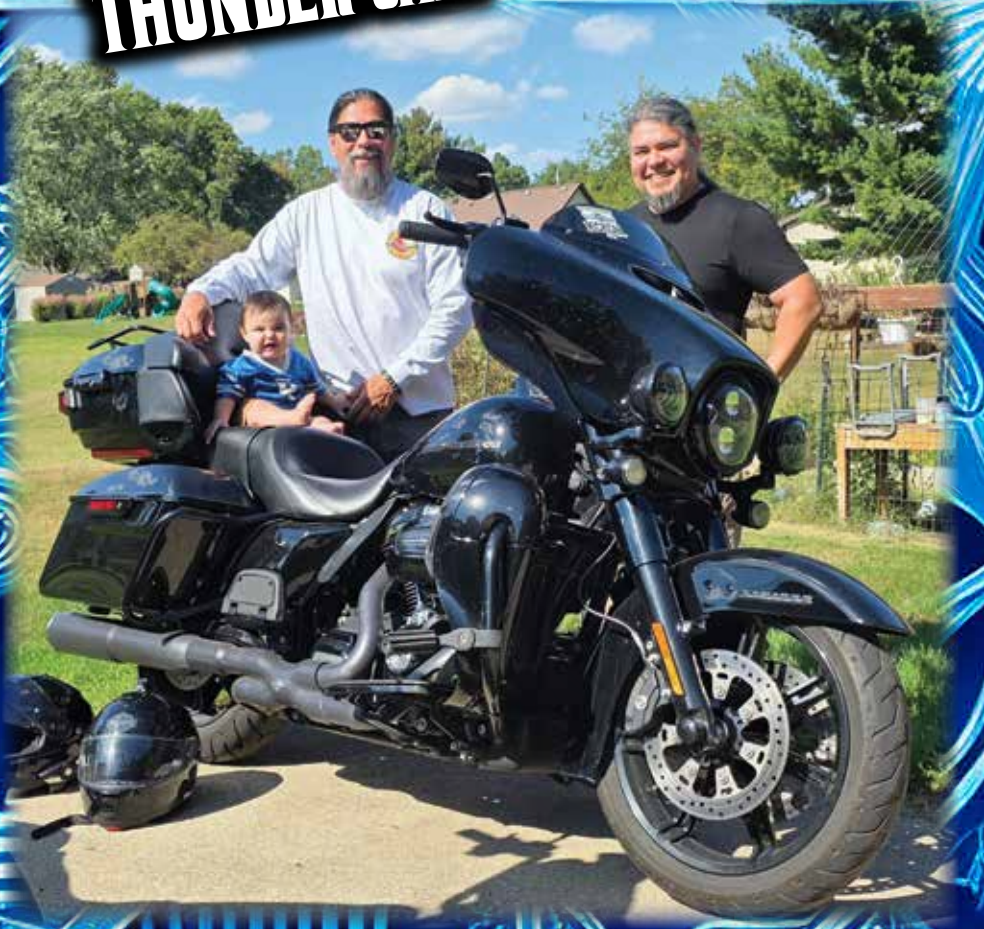
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Smoke N' GearZ

BACK IN THE SADDLE

It is good to be back in the saddle and in the lab with a pen and a pad. I had to step away for a few months to knock out some personal things and get back to doing what I love...riding my iron horse. I was finally able to make the ride to Maine with a Good Brother and Great Friend; this was a 2.5 season process. While I did not reach the goal of 15K miles this year, I enjoyed every moment and mile I had on the blacktop.

I would be remised if I did not say thank you to RJ and Aly for accepting me as I am and keeping me motivated to use this pen. A huge thank you to Detroit Randy of the Detroit Antique Motorcycle (D.A.M.) Show for encouraging me to keep the pursuit of being a modern-day griot. Pronounced (Gree-oh) This term comes from Africa and the definition in Webster states...a highly respected oral historian, musician, poet, and storyteller who preserves a community's traditions and knowledge through music, song, and spoken word. These inherited roles also serve as social commentators, diplomats, and cultural custodians, connecting the past with the present through performances.

-In conversations with our readership and the local/national set, I have been

given permission to share stories and highlights of individuals and groups. With the creative rights of sharing their chronicles, I have a renewed interest in writing and storytelling.

Along with that, I



have some new content with "Smoke's Rare Finds." If you have an antique motorcycle or know someone that does, share it with me, I would love the opportunity to

share it further. How it was purchased, who were/are the owners, what is unique about that sled, and what are the plans for the future for it.

Thinking about the cycling season, take a moment to give someone their flowers and take the time to smell the roses as some did not make it. I have personally lost two family members, a damn good friend, and several riding Brothers this year. I am sure you knew someone or heard through the



grapevine of someone that transitioned into the afterlife as well.

So, here's to a moment of silence, removed hats, raised throttle hands, and holla.....Shhhhhiiiiidddddd!!!

Closing out the year, keep watch for the 2026 Calendar by Lit Lenz on Instagram, you

will see some familiar bikes that were nominated and won respective months. Calendars are available for purchase and make great gifts for motorcycle enthusiasts and stocking stuffers. Thank you for continuously supporting all of us at Thunder Roads Michigan and requesting for Smoke N' Gearz return.



Keep them wheels turnin and those cigars burnin!

Smoke

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YEAH, OR MEH?

Product: TechMount Tech Gripper 4

Also known as: The Biker Gripper (available through the Law Abiding Biker Store or on Amazon)

Reviewer: Big E – Mid Michigan Biker Podcast

Rating:★★★★☆ (4 out of 5)

When it comes to mounting a phone on your motorcycle, there are plenty of choices out there. The trick is finding one that actually holds up to real-world conditions — Michigan roads, vibration, and weather included. For me, that's been the TechMount Tech Gripper 4, also known as the Biker Gripper when purchased through the Law Abiding Biker Store.

I first discovered this mount while following Ryan Urlacher, the YouTuber and podcaster behind Law Abiding Biker. After watching his videos and hearing how highly he spoke of the mount, I decided to give it a shot. That was four riding seasons ago, and I've been using one ever since.

The Tech Gripper 4 offers a few mounting options. You can go with the handlebar clamp, or my personal favorite — the perch mount that attaches right to your handlebar controls. It's a clean setup that keeps your phone accessible without cluttering your bars.

My Samsung Galaxy S23 Ultra fits perfectly in the mount, and even after thousands of miles, I've never experienced vibration damage or the dreaded phone flop. The spring-loaded grip system holds the phone rock solid — you'd have to work to get it out by accident.

After about four years of use, the ball swivel on my original mount began to loosen up. It still held my phone tight, but the head would sag over time. That's something worth noting for riders who log a lot of miles. This year, I replaced the mount head, and it's back to working perfectly again.

Bottom line: the Tech Gripper 4 is built to last, delivers a strong and stable hold, and has earned its place on my bike. Whether you grab one from Amazon or the Law Abiding Biker Store, it's a solid investment that's proven itself season after season.

Pros & Cons

Pros:

- Holds phone very securely, even on rough roads
- Adjustable perch or handlebar mount options
- Compatible with a wide range of phones, including large models like the S23 Ultra
- Long-term durability; replacement head available if ball swivel loosens
- Simple, clean design that doesn't clutter handlebars

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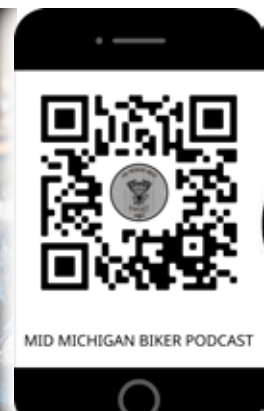
Cons:

- Ball swivel may loosen after a few years of heavy use
- Open cradle leaves phone exposed to rain or road spray
- Slight bulk from perch mount may interfere with tight handlebar setups

Final verdict:

Yeah. The Tech Gripper 4 has earned my trust. Even after four years of use and one replacement part, it's still my go-to mount — and I don't see that changing anytime soon. It just plain works.

Life is short bikers, so get after it.



THUNDER ROADS® MICHIGAN MAGAZINE DECEMBER 2025 13

The Real Michigan Red Rider: A SANTA'S SUMMER TOUR

The bike was a beautiful, magnificent disaster. Under a thick coat of road grime, lake dust, and a fine layer of fried onion rings, it was impossible to tell that the custom cruiser was painted in a deep, glossy, "Dirty Sleigh Red." Its rider, an imposing figure whose name patch on his custom-made leather vest—secured with heavy chain extensions to accommodate his growing girth—read "Red Rider," was equally unkempt. His great white beard had grown wilder and longer over the summer, now permanently stained with coffee and Coney sauce. And his belly, usually quite prominent in his traditional attire, was now gloriously expanding beneath the vest thanks to a relentless consumption of Michigan-made craft beer and deep-fried pickles.

The Red Rider's summer road trip was a necessary, though highly unconventional, mission. He needed to log miles on his powerful cruiser—a crucial part of pre-flight testing—and, more importantly, conduct his annual, on-the-ground reconnaissance, secretly updating his legendary list. The people he met had no idea that the greasy, jovial biker was the actual Santa Claus.

"Gotta check the inventory," the Red Rider muttered, pulling his filthy, studded cruiser into the gravel lot of a roadside pub in the Upper Peninsula. He dismounted, pulling a small, heavy leather-bound journal—his secret ledger—from a saddlebag. The journal was separated into two sections, clearly marked with stylized cursive: *Nice* and *Might Need Coal*.

The Nice List: Good Deeds on the Open Road

The Michigan riding community was, overwhelmingly, one of the *Nice* variety. The Red Rider enjoyed scribbling down the details of selfless, anonymous kindness—the kind of good that never made the nightly news.

One name that received a gold star and multiple positive notes was "**Hammer**" **Hank Jenkins**, a grizzled veteran rider from Monroe. Hank earned his place of honor when the Red Rider witnessed him on the side of I-75 near Flint in a torrential downpour. Hank wasn't fixing his own bike; he was helping a college student who had hydroplaned and blown a tire on her little Vespa scooter. Hank not only changed the tire but refused payment, only taking a promise from the student that she would pay the kindness forward. The Red Rider's note read: "*Hammer*" *Hank. Selfless*



service to a non-combustible two-wheeler. Excellent grip strength. Full nice list clearance.

Another entry was for "**Mitten**" **Mary Sue**, a cheerful woman who rode a sparkling teal Harley-Davidson Tri Glide. The Red Rider met her at a bar in Traverse City. Mary Sue, a known organizer of charity rides, quietly paid the entire bar tab for a table of elderly veterans, ensuring the bartender didn't

reveal the donor. When the Red Rider asked her why she was so secretive, she just winked and said, "Some magic works better when nobody knows who's doing the trick, honey." The Red Rider wrote simply: "*Mitten*" *Mary Sue. Master of anonymous generosity. Requires extra sprinkles on her gingerbread this year.*

The Naughty List: Sins of the Summer

But where there is light, there must occasionally be a little darkness—or at least, a lot of silly selfishness. The *Might Need Coal* section was less about felony and more about petty, biker-specific annoyances that only a celestial gift-giver would bother cataloging.

The Red Rider flipped to a page where the ink was dark and the scrawl was agitated. The first name was "**Slick**" **Sammy**, who was definitely getting a sack of grade-A anthracite.

The reason? "*Slick*" *Sammy. Caught intentionally using his loud, modified pipes to wake up his wife's pampered poodle, Barnaby, every morning at 5:00 AM, just because the dog chewed his leather wallet. The wallet was cheap, the poodle is innocent. Coal.*

Next to Sammy was an entry for a rider named "Vague" Vinny, whose transgression was bafflingly specific: "*Vague*" *Vinny. Refuses to learn proper hand signals. When indicating a turn, he simply points vaguely in the direction of the turn, sometimes hitting himself in the helmet. A hazard, a nuisance, and a poor communicator. He gets coal, and a very detailed instructional poster on motorcycle hand signals.*

And finally, there was the damning entry for "Barbecue" Bart: "**Barbecue**" *Bart. Stole the last hot dog at the annual Charity Hog Roast in Muskegon. It was the only hot dog remaining. He knew other riders were still in line. Selfish. Delicious, perhaps, but selfish. Coal, and a lifetime supply of mustard.*

Salty and the Beer Pong Challenge

The Red Rider packed his journal away and headed inside the pub. The place was packed for the 2025 Thunder Roads Michigan Bike Night, the air thick with the smell of beer and frying fish. A section of the bar had been cleared for "Biker Games," and a lively game of beer pong was in full swing.

He spotted a woman with vibrant blue hair and a leather jacket adorned with numerous rally patches. This was Salty, a well-known regular at these bike nights, famous for her quick wit and even quicker beer pong throws. She was currently trash-talking her opponent into submission.

"Old timer, you just gonna watch all night, or are you gonna join the fun?" Salty called out, her voice cutting through the bar's din. She gestured towards the beer pong table, already setting up a fresh rack of cups. "My partner just bailed. Think you can handle a real challenge, or are your arms too stiff from riding that... unique machine out there?" She gestured dismissively towards the Red Rider's filthy cruiser in the lot.

The Red Rider, always up for a good sport, chuckled. "Unique, you say? That's character, young lady. And my arms are as spry as a squirrel with a fresh acorn. But I can only stay for one round, win or lose. What's the game?"

"Beer pong, grandpa. Simple rules: aim for the cups, drink the beer. Winner gets bragging rights and a free round. Loser buys a round for the house. And I don't lose," Salty declared, a mischievous glint in her eyes. "Especially not to someone whose beard looks like it's been through a snowblower."

The game began. Salty was good, infuriatingly so. Her throws were precise, her aim true, and her trash talk relentless.

"Oops! Almost got it, Red Rider! Did you forget your reading glasses?" she jeered as his first ball bounced off the rim. "Maybe you should stick to riding slower, safer routes. This game requires focus!"

The Red Rider, a thousand years of practice in patience, just smiled, his eyes twinkling. He made a few shots, but Salty was consistently pulling ahead. The crowd around them grew, enjoying the spectacle of the seasoned local giving the mysterious newcomer a hard time.

It came down to the wire. Salty had one cup left. The Red Rider had one cup left. The tension was palpable.

Salty took her shot. *Swish!* Her ball landed perfectly,

sinking her final cup. She threw her hands up in triumph. "YES! Told you, old man! I—"

Before she could finish her victory declaration, the Red Rider picked up his last ball. He took a deep breath, and tossed it with a gentle, arcing lob. The ball flew, hit the very front rim of Salty's now-empty final cup, and hung there, teetering precariously. The crowd collectively gasped.

Salty held her breath, leaning forward, willing it to fall out. The Red Rider just winked at her, a slow, knowing smirk spreading across his face—a smirk only a secret Santa could give.

And as if on cue, with a soft, almost inaudible *plink*, the ball slowly, majestically, toppled over the edge and dropped into the cup.



The crowd erupted in noise. Salty stared, her jaw dropping, then she slammed her hands on the table. "ARE YOU KIDDING ME?! A TIE?!" she shrieked, before bursting into genuine, roaring laughter. "Alright, Red Rider, you're either the luckiest man alive or secretly magic! I'll take the draw!"

Despite her harsh trash talk, Salty's laughter was infectious, and she clapped the Red Rider on the back. "Good game, Santa-beard! You actually pulled it off!" She even gave him a congratulatory hug, a warm,

friendly squeeze that surprised him.

The Red Rider, rubbing his still-smarting back, just smiled. He pulled out his secret ledger. He flipped to the Naughty list, hovering his pen over where Salty's name might have gone for her relentless teasing. Then, with a satisfied nod, he turned to the *Nice* list and carefully, with a flourish, added Salty's name.

"*Salty. Excellent competitive spirit, though a bit mouthy. But a good sport and a genuine hugger. Definitely earned extra candy canes this year.*"

The Red Rider smiled, content with his final observations for the summer. He noted that the pub had the best cheese curds north of the Mackinac Bridge. A few days later, the Red Rider, the dirtiest biker in Michigan, was back home. After a thorough scrub and a polish that revealed the sleigh-red luster beneath the grime, the bike was ready for its next job. And as the Red Rider began his long preparation for the winter rush, he knew one thing: Michigan bikers, from the generous 'Hammer' Hank to the spirited Salty, were definitely going to make Christmas a great ride.



HOW HARLEY TOOK ITS SOUL BACK: The Real Story Behind November 1990

WRITTEN BY ROB NORTON, AKA
“BIG YETI” HOST OF RIDE WITH PURPOSE

Most people talk about Harley Davidson like it has always been this unbreakable symbol of American grit. Truth is, there was a stretch of time when the Motor Company was bleeding out on the shop floor. The late seventies and early eighties were rough. Riders loved the brand, but even the loyal ones were carrying drip pans and praying their bikes made it home.

Then November of 1990 showed up and everything changed. That month marked the moment Harley took full control of its future, tightened the bolts on its identity, and proved that American steel still had something to say.

Let's dig into the moment Harley grabbed its pride back and punched its way into a new era.

The AMF Hangover

AMF bought Harley in 1969. At first people thought it would be a good thing. Big money, big backing, big future. By the late seventies that dream was about as stable as a bike with the axle only finger tight.

Production was fast, sloppy, and held together by luck. Mechanics joked that every Harley came with two warranties. One for the engine and one for the oil stains in your garage. Riders stayed loyal because the brand was in their blood, but the frustration was real.

The Buyback and the Rebuild

In 1981 a small group of Harley executives pulled off a buyback. They basically said, alright enough of this circus. They took the reins and started rebuilding the company from the inside. It was not sexy. It was not instant. It was a grind.

This crew poured themselves into improving manufacturing, training workers, listening to riders, and tightening every single part of the process. The Evolution engine had already shown promise in 1984, but it was November of 1990 when everything clicked.

That month marked the true heartbeat of the Harley turnaround. The company rolled out a refined lineup powered by the Evo and built with a level of care the brand had not seen in a long time.

Why November 1990 Mattered Dependability Finally Arrived

The new Evo powered bikes were smoother, cooler running, and far more reliable. Riders were hitting highways with confidence instead of fear. For the first time in a while, you could roll out for a weekend trip without packing a full set of gaskets and a lucky rabbit's foot.

American Manufacturing Got a Big Win

Harley upgraded every part of its production process. New machines, better training, tighter tolerances. It was a full commitment to earning trust back. For a lot of riders this moment felt like America itself had straightened its spine. It said we can still build something that makes the rest of the world pay attention.

Riders Returned in Force

Word spread fast. Harley is back. Dealerships got busier. Riders who had jumped over to Japanese bikes started drifting back. The culture swelled. This was the decade that shaped modern Harley culture. The patches, the clubs, the rallies, the pride. It all got a major shot of adrenaline right here.

It Saved More Than a Brand

This is the part people forget. If Harley had gone under in the eighties, cruiser culture as we know it would not exist. The entire American V twin identity would look different. No Road Glides, no Dynas, no Softail Fat Boy rolling into Terminator 2. No sound that makes your chest vibrate. No shared language of chrome, leather, and loyalty.

November 1990 kept the heartbeat alive.

What That Means Today

When you ride a Harley now, you are riding the result of a comeback story that almost did not happen. Every rumble, every ride, every mile traces back to the moment the company decided to take its soul back and rebuild it with pride instead of shortcuts.

It is not just motorcycle history. It is American history. It is a story about refusing to die, fixing what is broken, and proving everyone wrong.

I believe we are in the midst of something similar again. I believe the MoCo future is bright. Young people are coming back into the culture. The scene is changing for sure, but it's molding into something new and that's good to keep the torch lit.

Us grey beards don't need to “get it.”

As long as the rumble of that engine roars on, the culture will survive.

Drop me a line and tell me what you think.

In your time, how as the scene changed? What influences have you have? What made you want to be a part of the culture?



ABATE UPDATE

YOU'RE INVITED TO ABATE OF MICHIGAN'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY SEMINAR CELEBRATION!

Get ready to rev your engines and rewind the clock! Join the many members of ABATE of Michigan for the ultimate milestone event: our **50th Anniversary Seminar Celebration** this January!

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Jan. 23-24, 2026

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Breakout sessions
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RC meeting Friday
PAC games Friday
Live/silent Auctions
Region Raffles
Voting for new and improved bylaws and board members on Sunday morning

LOOK TWICE - SAVE A LIFE
MOTORCYCLES ARE EVERYWHERE
ABATE OF MICHIGAN

Merry Garrett 7346529739
Pam Fischer 3133104888

We're just over a month away, so have you found your inner 70s vibe yet? Dig out that hippie outfit or start blasting the music you danced to all night long!

What to Expect at the Celebration Weekend:

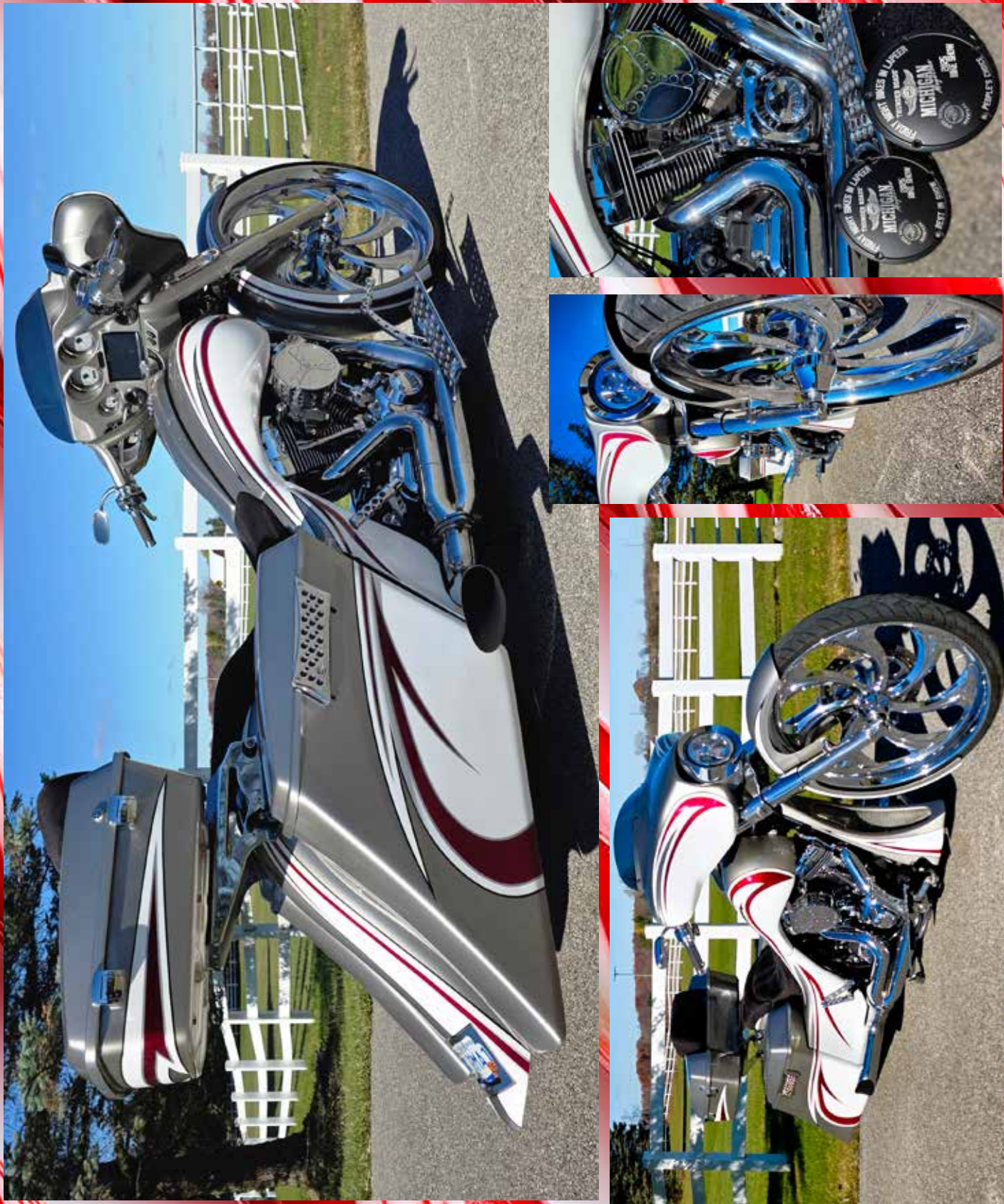
- **Friday Night Fun:** The festivities kick off with our lively **PAC Games**, guaranteed to be a hit with everyone! Regional Coordinators will also gather for a meeting and pick up tickets for our exciting **new cash raffle**—something fresh and thrilling for all regions!
- **Saturday: Knowledge and Celebration:** Gear up for a day packed with invaluable knowledge! Enjoy great breakout sessions featuring the return of the wise **Jay Jackson**, a session by **Dondi**, and vital discussions on **recruiting and retaining younger members**. We'll also cover awareness, ABATE history, and crucial legislative updates.
- **Saturday Evening Gala:** The fun continues with a **silent auction, a live auction, raffles, and music!** We will proudly recognize our outstanding members with the **Awards Ceremony**, celebrating Region Rockers and Member of the Year. We will conclude the evening with our deeply moving **bell-ringing ceremony** to honor members who have received their wings.
- **Sunday:** The weekend concludes with our important **voting session**.
- Your full itinerary will be ready for you upon arrival at the hotel. We can't wait to dance the night away and share this milestone with you!

Questions? Please don't hesitate to contact Merry at **734-652-9739**.



Thanks again,
Merry S. Garrett

*Proud lifetime member of ABATE
Board Member, State Events Chair, RC
Region 6 (covering Gladwin, Midland,
Bay City and Arenac counties)*



BIKE: 2011 STREET GLIDE | OWNER: MIKE DREWYORE | BIKE NAME: KARMA

DECEMBER 2025

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
30	1	2	3	4	5	6
				65TH ANNUAL MOTORCYCLE ICE RACE PRE-ICE RACE PARTY SCOOTERS BAR & GRILL		CHRISTMAS FOR KIDS TOY DRIVE 2025 THE WHISKEY JAR BROWN CITY
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
						PHOTOS WITH SANTA! HOLESHOT HARLEY-DAVIDSON
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
FIRST DAY OF WINTER			Christmas Eve	MERRY CHRISTMAS		
28	29	30	31	Happy New Year	2	3
			NEW YEARS EVE			



Alright ya two wheeled fanatics! Got some news from the Indian Motorcycles camp. They're dialing up the **Scout** lineup for 2026 with a couple of sportier versions: the **Sport Scout RT** and the smaller **Sport Scout Sixty**.

The New Kids on the Block

These aren't full-blown, built-from-scratch bikes, but they're cool updates to existing models, joining the refreshed Scout family we started seeing in 2024. This all happens as Indian's parent company, Polaris, is getting ready to hand over their controlling stake to a private equity firm called Carolwood LP early in 2026. As most of you know,

2026 Indian Sport Scout RT: The Big Dog

- This one's the heavy hitter, weighing in at **568 lbs wet**.
- It rocks Indian's larger **1250cc liquid-cooled V-twin** engine.
- Power-wise, you're looking at a claimed **105 HP** and **82 ft-lbs of torque**, all paired with a six-speed transmission.



- It comes in three colors—**Black Smoke** (starting price: **\$16,999**), **Sunset Red Metallic**, and **Chalk**.
- The RT's standout feature is the **rigid, locking saddlebags**, which are supposedly waterproof and offer about **37-38 liters** of storage. For a fun visual, that's roughly 10 gallons of volume—enough to hypothetically stash about 48 cans of your favorite beverage on each side! (Seriously, imagine the haul!). Just be ready for the extra 80+ lbs that full cargo would add.



- Finishing the look: a small front fairing, flat handlebars on 140mm risers, forward controls, and a 19-inch front wheel. Despite the "Sport" name, that setup screams straight-line cruising.



2026 Indian Sport Scout Sixty: The Starter Sporty

- This bike is aimed at folks who are newer to the riding game, with a starting price of **\$11,499**.
- It shares a similar chiseled style to the RT but differs with the **999cc motor**.



- You get a claimed **85 HP** and **65 lb. ft of torque**, hooked up to a five-speed manual gearbox vs the 6-speed on the RT.
- It weighs a bit less at **549 lbs.** ready to roll, and doesn't include the stock luggage bags of the RT.
- Both the RT and the Sixty share the same 41mm forks and adjustable shocks, plus the same size single front disc brake.
- The Sixty sits the same as the RT with its 25.7 in seat height.
- It's only available in Black Metallic unless you step up to their Limited model. Myself, I find a "blacked-out" bike super cool.
- Like the RT, it has a small front fairing and mini ape-hanger-style bars.
- Good news for tire enthusiasts: both Sport models come standard with Metzeler Cruisetec tires.



My Takeaway

Honestly, over the past couple of years I've purposely walked through more than one Indian dealership when given the chance. I've found myself seriously thinking about an Indian more and more. I'd like to think of myself as a Harley guy for life (no way I'm ditching my current rides), but man, those Pursuit Elite and Limited models are looking sweet!

Even though I'm not actively shopping for another cruiser, the 2026 release announcements have grabbed my attention. This month's head-to-head between the Sport Scout Sixty and the Sport Scout RT sparked my curiosity and also encouraged me to dig a little more into comparing them both to a couple of H-D offerings for 2026. Staying focused between the two bikes in this *Two Wheel Takeaway*, I'd just stick with the Sixty's "good enough" looks for the cost difference. If I were to push myself to the pricing of the RT, I'd have to seriously consider what else is out there in the market and do another *Takeaway*. Like the **Harley-Davidson Sportster S**, which seems like a more direct category rival.

~RJ

SOURCE: INDIANMOTORCYCLE.COM

VETERANS CORNER



Michigan Veterans Ride Through December

As December rolls across Michigan, most riders tuck their bikes away, trade leather for flannel, and wait out the long winter. But for Michigan's veterans who ride, the season isn't just about storage. It's about reflection, camaraderie, and keeping the spirit of the road alive through the cold months.

Riding Season Reflections

For many veteran riders, the motorcycle isn't just a machine, it's a form of therapy. The open road offers a kind of peace that's hard to find anywhere else. As the year comes to a close, it's a time to remember the rides shared, the brothers and sisters met at stops along Lake Michigan or the backroads of the Upper Peninsula, and those no longer with us. If you rode in charity events like the Veterans Memorial Run, Ride to Remember, or Toys for Tots Ride, December is a good month to look back at the impact those miles made. Every mile helps bring awareness, support, and healing to our veteran community.

Winter Prep and Safety

Even if you're not riding much this month, your bike still deserves attention. December is the perfect time for:

- **Winterize your ride:** Add fuel stabilizer, check antifreeze levels, and keep the battery on a tender.
- **Inspect your gear:** Replace worn gloves or boots and make sure your cold-weather layers are still roadworthy.
- **Plan next season's rides:** Whether it's the Michigan Veterans Motorcycle Association (MVMA) state rally or a solo trip to the Mackinac Bridge, map out your goals early.

For the few who brave winter rides, remember Michigan's roads can turn slick fast. Layer up, ride slow, and watch for black ice. Visibility is life—reflective gear and working lights make all the difference.

Community Through the Cold

Just because the bikes are parked doesn't mean the brotherhood (and sisterhood) stops. Many veteran motorcycle groups host holiday charity drives, meet-ups,

and coffee nights throughout December. If you're feeling the winter blues, reach out—these gatherings are about more than bikes; they're about connection.

Check in with your local American Legion Riders, Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association (CVMA), or Rolling Thunder chapter. Whether it's helping a family in need or just swapping stories over a cup of hot coffee, you're part of a community that rides together—even when the engines are quiet.

A December Message

This season, take pride not just in your service, but in the roads you've traveled and the ones still ahead. The freedom we fought for is the same freedom we feel in the saddle.

So, as the snow starts to fall, remember: the road will thaw, the sun will rise, and spring will call us back to the wind. Until then, keep the spirit alive, look out for your brothers and sisters, and ride safe—whether it's on two wheels or just in your heart.



SHARON K. HARVEY
(RET) TSGT, USA/USAF
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Sharon K Harvey,
USAF (Retired)

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CHRISTMAS MULE

- 2 OZ. VODKA
- 1/2 OZ. FRESH SQUEEZED LIME JUICE
- 2 OZ. ALL-NATURAL CRANBERRY JUICE (100 %)
- 1/2 TBSP SIMPLE SYRUP (OMIT IF USING SWEETENED CRANBERRY JUICE)
- 4 OZ. GINGER BEER

1. In a copper mug or glass, pour in the vodka, cranberry juice, lime juice, and simple syrup.
2. Add the ginger beer.
3. Add ice
4. Garnish with fresh cranberries and a mint leaf.

Serve immediately





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JOKER'S WILD



Well, I'll never be asked to go caroling at the Psych Hospital again. In hindsight I guess singing "Do You Hear What I Hear" was not such a great idea.

My ducks may not be all in a row, but at least they're having fun! Your ducks probably dislike you for making them line up like that; Control Freak!

I used to be the total package, but shipping and handling did me dirty. Nowadays, I'm a scratch-and-dent model, sold as-is.

Literally am so jealous of people who know how to shut up. I shut up and subtitles come out of my face.

Attention Teenagers! Tired of being harassed by your stupid parents? ACT NOW! Move out. Get a job. Pay your bills, do your laundry, Buy toilet paper, toothpaste and essentials Do It Now, while you still know everything!!

My gf was going on about how Love At First Sight was an actual reality and gotta' say, she may be right, I mean, I experience and totally believe in Annoyed at first sight.

Nutritionist: You're eating wrong
Dentist: You're brushing wrong
Parents: You're living wrong
Wine Store Guy: Excellent Choice

Lil' Joey to Daddy, "What's a forklift?"
Daddy: "Food, usually."

Sorry I sprayed that WD40 in your mouth, but it DID stop that annoying noise you were making.

I simply love putting on warm underwear fresh out of the dryer. Plus, it's so much fun to look around the laundromat and guess who they belong to.

Back in my day, Mom didn't count to 3, She just went straight to your full name, and it was in that low and slow voice that literally sent chills thru-out your entire body.

How did ONE hour make it go from dark at 9pm to dark at 6pm? wth? Somebody is lyingyet another cover up!

TRUTH: Female octopuses will throw rocks at males they do not want to mate with. Dayyyyum Whatever happened to pointing down and shaking your head No?

A truck loaded with Vicks Vaporub overturned on the highway, amazingly there was no congestion for 8 hours.

My Dad showed me a 30 minute Powerpoint presentation on why one should Always wear a condom during sex. All the slides were just pictures of me.

My Therapist suggested I write letter to people who make my angry all the time and then bury them in the backyard. She didn't say what to do with the letters though.

#ANALBUMCOVER

I read it wrong too, that's why we're friends.

Did you know that Dammit I'm Mad spelled backwards is still Dammit I'm Mad.

Telemarketer: Hello, am I speaking to the head of the household?
Me, handing the phone to my cat: It's for you.

A blonde & brunette are having a drink and brunette mentions that Christmas falls on a Friday this year and blonde says, "Omg, I hope it's not the 13th!"

I am now at the age where picking up a Hottie at the Club means buying a rotisserie chicken at Costco.

MERRY CHRISTMAS from our THUNDER ROADS Family to Yours'. We truly love our Bikers. Thruout the holidays it's stressful and times are SO hard for so many, try and help out all you can, doesn't have to be big, it truly is the little things that mean the most - such as food. Sometimes we just have to be Grateful for all the troubles we don't have.

Joker's Wild composed by: Toni McCoy Shearon | thunderroadsfounder@gmail.com



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EVENTS



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MICHIGAN
Magazine

DECEMBER 2025

December 4

- 65th Annual Motorcycle Ice Race
Pre-Ice Race Party
Scooters Bar & Grill
6004 Torrey Rd.
Flint, MI
7:00 pm

December 5

- Sanford's Christmas Ball:
A Fundraiser for Toyz for Kidz
Sanford American Legion Post 443
2080 N. Meridian Rd.
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Check out Facebook for details

December 6

- 65th Annual Indoor
Motorcycle Ice Race
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More info www.dortfinancialcenter.com

- Christmas for Kids Toy Drive 2025
The Whiskey Jar Brown City
4397 W Burns Line Rd.
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December 20

- Photos with Santa!
Holeshot Harley-Davidson
4741 E Pickard St.
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JANUARY 2026

January 11

- 30th Annual Motorcycle Swap Meet
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