

Biker Information Guide

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Biker Billy hosts a syndicated television cooking show

"Biker Billy Cooks with Fire"

That 70's Thing—Déjà Vu



Welcome to November 2008—strap on your riding gear or fasten your safety belts, because here we go again, folks. By the end of November, the 2008 hurricane season will have ended, and hopefully the election and the crisis at Wall and Main Streets will be settled. Since I write this column more than a month in advance, I sometimes have to be clairvoyant. I ain't got no crystal ball, but I do have rearview mirrors on my motorcycle, and the only thing I can be sure of is that the hurricane season should end by November 30th.

Hurricanes wreaked havoc with the Gulf Coast again this year—Ike was the third most destructive hurricane on record in United States history, causing major wind damage in the North and flooding in the Midwest. A mid-September event that I did in Ohio only got electricity restored a day before the event. Everyone I've spoken with during the past few weeks in the North was aware of the storms, but they were, for the most part, totally unaware of another crisis that was occurring in major parts of the Southeast.

Far from the tidal surges, hurricane-force winds, flooding, and devastation, Hurricanes Gustav and Ike still affected hundreds of thousands of people. What was the crisis? We were out of gasoline. While it doesn't compare with having your city devastated, it is still a nightmare. In my small part of the country, western North Carolina, almost every gas station was empty for weeks. The few with gas had lines of cars that sometimes stretched over a mile. Life and business ground to a halt—if you can't get to work, shop, or go out for recreation, the economy suffers. Pain at the pumps equals pain throughout your whole life. Modern society requires energy to function, and oil, and all that derives from it, is still the only real alternative today, even if the tree-huggers and politicians don't like it.

These last few weeks have reminded me of the 1970s. I was a new driver in 1973 when the first Arab oil embargo attacked America. Never before in my life had fuel been unavailable or rationed; that may have happened during World War Two, but that was history to me. The Arab oil embargo was a weapon used against America, Europe, and Japan by OPEC as retaliation for our support of Israel during the Yom Kippur War. For the record, the Arab nations were the aggressors who started that war. Domestically, Watergate dominated our political climate.

As the decade closed, we were hit with the second oil crisis in 1979. The Iranian Revolution cut world oil production by a small amount, and the panic that resulted sent gasoline prices soaring, creating long gas lines and short supply as folks ironically burned huge amounts of gas just idling in line waiting to buy more. Jimmy Carter was president then, and his administration began a deregulation of oil prices that led to the highest real price of oil in history—until it was recently surpassed. President Carter was also at the helm when the Iranian student revolutionaries took our embassy

staff hostage and held them for the remainder of his presidency. While Carter seemed a good change from the much-disparaged and ridiculed Presidents Nixon and Ford, he turned in a service record that, in my humble opinion, ranks him among the worse of all presidents.

All this history came into clear focus recently as I cruised past the gas lines on my fuel-efficient motorcycle. Those sights, combined with the world situation and the vitriolic presidential election process, made me relive that 70's thing all over again—like déjà vu. A very scary déjà vu at that. This is an interesting, and dangerous, moment in time. The Iranian president, one of the student hostage-takers by some accounts, freely talks of "wiping Israel off the map." Oil supplies are fragile, and our government won't let us really develop domestic oil or effective energy alternatives, thanks to a combination of environmentalists and Washington partisan politics. The Middle East is as unstable as it was during those 1970s crises. Our domestic political climate makes us a weaker player on the world stage, and we are in the process of changing leadership. There is an old adage that goes, "Those who cannot learn from history are doomed to repeat it." Well, no matter who is in the White House, or what the weather is, or whether the bulls or bears are running the economy, at least I have learned that a motorcycle is the most fuel-efficient vehicle available at this point in history. You know it, too, so go and teach it to your friends. Ride Safe!

Deal's Gap Slayer Corn Bread

1 stick butter
2 boxes Jiffy brand corn bread mix
2 large eggs
1 (8-ounce) container sour cream
1 (8-ounce) can creamed corn

Preheat oven to 350°F.

Place the butter in a 9x9x2-inch nonstick baking dish (I prefer my 10-inch cast-iron skillet) and put it in the oven to melt.

While the butter is melting, combine the corn bread mix, eggs, sour cream, and creamed corn in a large mixing bowl. Mix together until well blended.

Carefully remove the baking dish from the oven and pour the mixture on top of the melted butter. Return it to the oven and bake for approximately 30 minutes or until brown on top. To test for doneness, insert a fork in the middle; if it comes out clean, the corn bread is done.

Serve immediately—it is best if eaten warm.

Makes about 12 servings.