

Booze, blues lead to talk with hooker

We're bound for Chicago, but Jesus left for New Orleans. I want to know why. Chicago has everything. Booze, blues and babes. Well, booze and blues anyway.

Jesus done left Chicago, 'cause it's too damn silly cold.

The windy, rainy, cold crap sent him down to New Orleans.

And the music he grew up on, wailing steel guitars, didn't sing.

Imagine a dozen Zoo Bars within a few blocks of each other. My own lost weekend. A half-dozen blues masters and a two-day drunk. It was an obvious, appealing alternative to a suburban thrash festival.

I hadn't been to a city of over a million (or even close) since I left New Orleans, too soon after my birth. The first hour was anti-climactic. We had to drive through an endless sprawling post-industrial

wasteland, like an Omaha of nightmarish proportion.

Dark, overcast, misty, rainy, cold crap. More beautiful weather could not have been ordered. Besides,



Gary Longsine

the gloomy, nasty, whole-sky depression was well matched to the miserable string of events that I call my existence.

I was standing by the edge of death, the edge of violent anger, the edge of sanity. From moment to moment, no one around me was quite sure which side I was on.

At times, I was pretty sure I was on the wrong side. I could feel the edge slipping away behind me, as

I sunk further into despair.

"Cold, cold, cold. Walk, walk, walk," I thought to myself as I leaned over and shivered down the sidewalk.

I walked into the first bar I found with blues spilling out the door. I don't know what it was called and don't know where it was at. They end sentences with prepositions in Chicago, too.

Smoke burned my eyes, and the demon with her long gentle fingers around my heart was squeezing so tightly that I thought I might pass out from the memory. And I was chilled to the bone.

I ordered a double shot of vodka and a vodka sour chaser. The blues flowed down the floor from the stage, brushing past my feet like a friendly cat. In minutes I began to feel warmer, relaxed and much less hostile.

See **BLUES** on 13



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Flat tire, Iowa drive make trip to Chicago memorable for tourists

I road-tripped to Chicago once. The longest part of the trip was driving through Iowa. It's so flat there.

My friends and I drove there in a car we called "Mad Dog." It was a generic automobile. I'm not even sure what kind of car it was, but it carried a personality of its own.



Anne Steyer

Mad Dog made it to Chicago in just under eight hours. We started out early, so we made it there with plenty of time to experience the night life.

We drove into downtown Chicago to eat and go to Second City, the comedy club that propelled many of its comedians out into the late, great land of SCTV and Saturday Night Live.

The show was fine but the fun began on the way home. In the middle of a dark, dirty and dangerous-looking neighborhood in downtown Chicago, Mad Dog hit a pothole of enormous proportions.

We had a tire as flat as Iowa, which turned out to be exceptionally bad news as the spare wasn't exactly filled to capacity. At least the spare didn't have a puncture wound.

There didn't seem to be any relief in sight, nor any gas or service stations nearby. There were four of us so we decided to split up. Two of us went one way with the spare, the other two stayed behind with the crowbar.

We walked about five blocks to a convenience store, hoping to get directions to the nearest gas station. Unfortunately, the clerk spoke

little-to-no English and was unable to help us. The phone booth from the pay phone was missing the cord bolting it to the wall, dangling.

Discouraged, we left the store and strike out on our own mission impossible. We were approached by two people in the parking lot, one asking for money, one offering help.

The second directed us to a nearby station that was a few blocks down and around a corner. We managed to arrive there without an incident, filled the tire and returned to Mad Dog safely.

Our friends were inside the car with the doors locked. Behind them was a huge car, music blaring with two gentlemen inside. Apparently they had pulled in behind Mad Dog just as we left on our quest for a filled tire.

I told my friends they shouldn't have worried. After all, they had the crowbar.

The rest of our trip was uneventful. We did all of the tourist activities, visited the Art Institute, shopped at the Water Tower, saw the Sears tower. I love tourist activities. Most people will not admit it, but I will like being a tourist.

The one attraction we missed was Mother's. We tried to go, but they didn't open until late. So we had drinks at Trader Vic's instead of a Tiki-Puka-Puka.

It came in a giant glass — an exotic drink with an indiscernible taste. The drink list said it would come with a gardenia floating at the top. It didn't. The bartender heard me lament over the absence of a flower and sent the server over with a folding paper flower.

That drink was one of the highlights of the trip. That, and the flat tire. And the trip through Iowa.

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