

(top)
MOTORCYCLISTS venture to Sturgis not only to attend the rally, but also to ride the hills, as this motorcyclist does on the road between Sturgis and Deadwood, S.D. The week-long rally at Sturgis draws an average of 200,000 bikers.

(bottom left)
MAIN STREET in Sturgis is ground zero for all the week's activities, including several parades of bikers from all over the world.

(bottom right)
PASTOR CECIL and his dog, Harley Girl, of Oklahoma City, Okla., watch the bikes pass on the Strip at the 57th Annual Sturgis Rally and Races. Cecil said he had attended the rally for the past 17 years.



Rally Time

Story and Photos by Daniel Luedert

When the sun beats down and the only way to escape the heat is to come out of our caves, the gypsy heart takes flight. With a thunderous rumbling the bikes roll over the hills in streams of light.

The 57th Annual Sturgis Rally and Races has begun.

Motorcycle enthusiasts from the world over, from China to Poland, converge on a small town in the Black Hills called Sturgis. It was started more than 50 years ago by motorcycle enthusiasts and dealers in what were referred to as Gypsy tours. These gypsies, or bikers, are still alive today. The only change has been the size; the ever-growing rally expects to see an estimated 200,000 bikers this week.

The locals of Sturgis have no complaints, except for the "racket," local resi-

dent Bob Weizorek says.

"They don't quiet down until three in the morning."

There have been some interesting stories passed down from previous rallies. Bikes have been stolen, women have been left behind and the casual fight may happen.

But as Weizorek says, shrugging his shoulders: "About 95 percent of the bikers are nice people, there are always a few bad apples in a bunch."

As one makes way through the locals, having to park in the residential district and walk to the infamous four-block Main Street, the number of people is astonishing. Bikes are parked with barely a breath between them and the people move in snaking lines down the sidewalks.

A biker puts his arm around a young girl, no older than 13. His beard rubs her shoulder and he pulls up her blouse. Her blue eyes show innocent fear as the biker makes his way farther down the street.

There is an adrenaline that rushes through the veins as the Harley Davidsons send their exhaust into the air. Bikes in all forms, from the Classic Indian to the Harley Davidson Boss Hoss, are streaming across the interstates and highways making their way to Sturgis.

The rally will continue through the weekend, eventually winding down with a professional wrestling match featuring Hulk Hogan on Saturday.

And on Sunday these wayward gypsies will end their wanderings, or move on to warmer climes.

