

'When I'm riding my Harley, I don't feel 46. I feel like a kid'

Written by CAROL POMEDAY
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<http://www.ozaukeepress.com/images/082913/harleySM.png>

That's the feeling D.J. Dawson of Port will have this week as he and his wife Michelle hit the road on his Electra Glide Ultra Classic to celebrate Harley-Davidson's anniversary

Their wives say they're like kids waiting for Christmas.

If that were true, D.J., which stands for Danny James, Dawson of Port Washington and his patrol partner on the Brown Deer police force, Dan Hansen of Greenfield, would be hoping for a bright new Harley under the Christmas tree.

The big event they're so excited about is Harley-Davidson's 110th anniversary bash this week that's drawing Harley owners from around the world to Milwaukee to revel in the mystique of the powerful machine that's gone from outlaw to mainstream status symbol.

"What I'm looking forward to is meeting people from all over the United States and different countries and talking about bikes," Dawson said.



"When you hear of people shipping their bikes from Germany to California, then riding them to Milwaukee for this, it's something," Hansen said. "This is one of the events that there are a lot of people coming, but nobody is here to cause any problems."

The men and their wives plan to attend as many area events as possible, including Port Washington's Rock the Harbor Fest from 3 to 11 p.m. Friday.

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"We plan to lead a group of friends from Milwaukee to Port," Dawson said.

"What I'm looking forward to in Port is the street set-up. They're going to shut the street down and there will be all these bikes parked that you can see, walk around and talk to the owners."

He's invited friends to stay overnight at his house, inside if there is room or they can pitch a tent in the back yard.

"Nobody's going on the road if they don't pass my sobriety test," Dawson said. "We have a two-wheel rule — one drink per wheel if you're driving."

The couples purchased tickets that allow them into Henry Maier Festival Park, known as the Summerfest grounds, every day where more than 60 bands will be playing on various stages. They bought tickets to only one headliner act, Toby Keith on Thursday night.

"My goal is to put on at least 500 miles, just nonstop riding, hitting event after event," Dawson said. "We want to go to as many dealer events we can."

On Thursday afternoon, they will participate in the Ride for COPS (Concerns of Police Survivors) from the House of Harley to the Milwaukee County Sheriff's Department's training academy in Franklin. The proceeds will help families of fallen officers.

The highlight, they said, will be Saturday when they ride on I-94 from a Kenosha dealership with thousands of other bikers to the Summerfest grounds.

"We're told people will be on all the bridges and along the streets waving and cheering," Dawson said.

Dawson and his wife Michelle will be on a 2009 cherry red Electra Glide Ultra Classic that his wife bought as a Father's Day gift that year.

"She took me into the dealership and we looked at a couple of bikes. She went to the bike and asked, 'How would you like this one?'" Dawson said.

"I told her, 'I'd love it,' and she said, 'It's yours.'"

Michelle said she knew her husband wanted that bike, but wasn't sure if he preferred a red or black one. The cherry red sparkles in the sun.

She didn't ride with her husband until last year. This year, she said, she's having the most fun.

"It's his passion and I'm learning to enjoy it," she said. "I just put my trust in him."

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She has no desire to drive the bike, but their daughters Danielle, 17, and Brianna, 15, would like Harleys that are smaller than their father's.

Dawson started riding motorized dirt bikes when he was 16. While he was in the Navy stationed in Hawaii, he raced Yamaha motorcycles.

"I rode Yamahas until the early 1990s when my father asked if I wanted his Harley, a 1972 Sportster that was my father's original bike," Dawson said. "He was in his 60s and couldn't ride it any more for health reasons. It was the last year Harley made bikes like that. I had to promise never to sell it.

"We still have it covered up in his garage. It will always stay in the family."

Once you ride a Harley, feel the power and hear that distinctive deep rumble, you're hooked, Dawson said.

He had been telling his partner that for years, but Hansen preferred riding Yamaha and Honda racers, just as his father did, until last year.

"He bought his first Harley last April when he was 60," Hansen said. "I drove his and the feel was unbelievable. There's something about the rumble it makes, the design."

He was hooked and bought the same model Harley as Dawson's, but his is black. He added red, white and blue running lights that cast a patriotic glow when it's parked.

Dawson and Hansen ride their Harleys to work every day until about mid-November when it gets too cold, when they reluctantly put them away for the winter.

"Our jobs are very stressful," Dawson said. "It's the best stress reliever. I can have the worst day, get on my bike and by the time I get home, I'm smiling."

He and his wife prefer riding on winding country roads enjoying the beauty of Wisconsin.

"I love to ride on country roads, turn on country music and sing as loud as I want," Dawson said. "When I'm on my Harley, I don't feel 46. I feel like a kid."

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WITH HIS Electra Glide Ultra Classic ready to roll, D.J. Dawson and his wife Michelle of Port Washington (left) plan to cover 500 miles celebrating Harley-Davidson's 110th anniversary. Dawson's buddy and police partner Dan Hansen (right) is joining them. Photo by Sam Arendt