

Detroit Hate-In

Tom Yates

1967

The Hate-In was staged by the Nightriders Motorcycle Club June 3 & 4 in Detroit's Rouge Park, to protest a proposed city ordinance which would ban motorcycles from the city parks without a special permit.

A secondary purpose of the Hate-In was to demonstrate to straight people and the police that the different clubs could get together and not cause trouble. In this aspect they were quite successful as there was only one scuffle, and you can get more than that at an average family get together or wedding.

Activities at the Hate-In consisted mostly of discussing bikes, renewing old friendships, smoothing out some minor previous misunderstandings, and Olympian feats of drinking. The only hate even vaguely demonstrated was an apparent hate of sobriety. But we all have our own bags right? We used to call the same thing a beer bust a year or two back.

One of the participants took out the FIFTH ESTATE I was selling and threw them on the ground and stamped on them, saying, "You're not selling those papers here. This is for bike riders only, not hippies. We don't want any hippies here. I hate the FIFTH ESTATE. You guys blamed the riot at the Love-In on us."

I explained to the man that I was there to cover the story from their side because we felt as they did that the ordinance was unfair. He apologized and the rest of the time I was there I had little trouble except for one or two other uninformed cyclists who are down on hippies for the same reason.

Among the colours I noted at the Hate-In were: the Henchmen of Redford and Taylor, the Nightriders, the Filthy Few (recently moved from Florida), the Iron Mustangs, the Wanderers, the Drifters, Satans Angels, the Renegades, the Forbidden Wheels, one of the Losers from Monterey, the Road Jumpers and the Iron Angels.

Also well represented were the forces of law and order. They led the field of participants with at least four TMU cars, five squad cars, fifteen mounted officers, three freeway patrol cars (???), and a riot tank at the park maintenance building, a couple of Sherriff's patrol cars, and one Dearborn Heights squad car (at a Detroit park???) .

I asked Inspector John Ware of the Special Investigation Bureau about how many men he had in the area.

He answered, "About 4500" which is the approximate number of men on the Detroit Police Department. (ED. NOTE: Ware is quite a jokester. See his remarks at the Louie Love-In.) Later I heard that there were about 240 officers in the area.

The police tended to outnumber the cyclists the majority of the time. The largest number of bikes I can recall counting at any one time was 60, which gives a maximum of 120 cyclists in one place at one time. That means about 2 to 1 odds, right?

Good for the police; better safe than sorry. Other people showed up in cars but the number of people actually in the active area never exceeded 300 at the very most. Observers and passers-by raised the number of people in the area to six or seven hundred or more at one time or another but generally the crowd was small.

At six o'clock someone broke out a portable TV and some of the cyclists had their moment when they saw themselves on the tube. They were deeply interested in how the press would treat them and they were relieved and happy with the coverage they received.

Some have spoken to tell me that on Sunday things went much the same as Saturday. That is until one cyclist fell off his bike while “showing off” (the term was used by a cyclist to me) for the news cameramen.

As soon as he hit the ground the Beat and Bitch Boys began to move in and clear the area of all “dangerous” people except the straight zoo watcher types.

Two scenes were seen on television. In one scene a leather jacketed young man apparently was not moving fast enough for the police, so they naturally clubbed him to the ground. In the other, a cyclist on his bike came up behind the police line and the line moved around him and clubbed him off his bike to the ground, then dragged him off the street.

If you are moved by movie scenes of sweeping cavalry charges or lines of combat ready troops moving in to meet the enemy, skip the movie. Hell man, just stage a Love-In or Hate-In.

fifth Estate

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<https://www.fiftheestate.org/archive/32-june-15-30-1967/detroit-hate-in>
Fifth Estate #32, June 15-30, 1967

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