

# Hell's Angels say they're not as bad as people think

**United Press International**  
**SAN ANTONIO**—The lush, green jungles of Vietnam became bloody battlefields for a generation of Americans in the turbulent 1960s. But it was not the love of battle that prompted Hell's Angels' leader Sonny Barger to volunteer his notorious motorcycle gang to join the cause.

The government denied the group's offer to fight as a separate unit in Vietnam, advising Barger, president of the Angels' California chapter, and his Angels to join the Army.

For Barger, that response typified the government's attitude then and now toward the Hell's Angels, which he describes as a principled, patriotic group painted black with misunderstanding and propaganda.

A lifetime of defiance has not mellowed Barger or New York chapter president Sandy Alexander, both of whom insist that the Angels believe in nothing less than the original American way.

"Our basic principles are what our country's (principles) are supposed to be about," Alexan-

der said. And he said those principles had changed for everyone except the Angels.

"The right to do as you please has been taken away from everybody but us," Barger said. "I'm

*Often tattooed and bedecked with leather and chains, the Angels ride their Harley-Davidson choppers in menacing packs, exuding rebellion and disrespect for mainstream American values.*

an American. It's just that something is wrong with the way the place is run."

But even Barger does not say the truth about the Angels is pretty. Often tattooed and bedecked with leather and chains, the Angels ride their Harley-Davidson choppers in menacing packs, exuding rebellion and disrespect for mainstream American values.

The Angels are hard drinkers and drug takers, and are not inclined to walk away from a fight.

Barger, 44, and Alexander, 40, do not deny the sometimes violent nature of the Angels. But they claim that government propaganda branded them with the image of fighting hoodlums and "baby eaters."

That is why they came to San Antonio promoting the opening of "Hell's Angels Forever," a new movie that Barger said "gives us a chance to tell our side."

"We're rough only with those who treat us rough," he said. "There is justice in our violence."

"We're a highly visible group, and there's been a lot of propaganda about us," he said. "That's been their (the government's) main tool. People who call me a criminal better look in their own backyards."

Angels become violent, he insisted, only when pushed or when someone violates the strict code of Angel justice.

Barger cited the slapping around of Aspen, Colo., author Hunter S. Thompson, who he said betrayed the gang after writing a book about them.

"He was beaten up. He had it coming," said Barger, who claimed that Thompson failed to buy the gang a keg of beer for cooperating in his research. Barger did not like Thompson's book, either.

"He admitted the second half of the book was written in one night with a quart of whiskey and an ounce of cocaine," Bar-

ger said. "He saw us from a coward's viewpoint. He couldn't fit in. But his book became the gospel."

The Angels have identified other enemies, including rock singer Mick Jagger.

But Barger dispelled the rumor that Jagger was targeted for death when he failed to support the Angels after an incident at an Altamont, Calif., rock concert in 1969.

One of the bikers, serving as bodyguard to Jagger and the Rolling Stones, reportedly killed a man in a scuffle near the stage.

"I never liked him (Jagger)," Barger said. "I didn't like him in '69. (But) that doesn't mean I'm going to kill him."

For Barger and Alexander, the sins of Jagger and Thompson were their lack of honor and loyalty — things they will not tolerate in an Angel or anyone else.

"Honor, loyalty and friendship, we insist on all those things in an Angel — somebody that lives by his word," Alexander said.

Barger and Alexander say they have paid for the right to do as they please. Barger served more than five years of a 15-year sentence for cocaine and heroin possession, and Alexander, too, has spent time in jail.

They both claim they would choose jail over giving up their right to act as men.

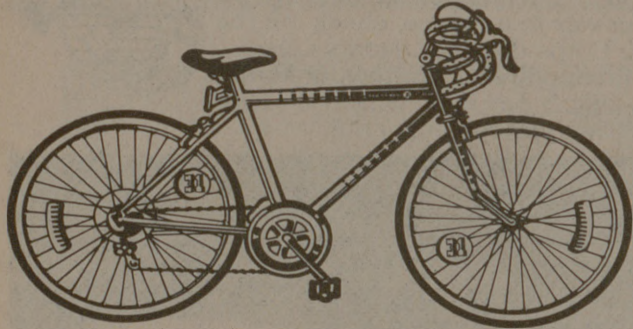
"They push us," Alexander vowed. "It's my right as a man (to fight back). I've been in jail and I'll fight for what I believe in."



"AAAAAAAggies!"

Reveille, illustrates the fact that she can also participate in Aggie yells. Reveille was caught in the act during the Elephant Bowl on Friday.

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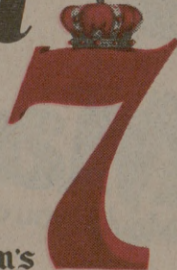
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