



ISSUE 3 — AUGUST 2026

BON SCOTT & AC/DC

FIRST FANS TO HEAR “HIGHWAY TO HELL”

After Pushing the Tour Bus with Bon Scott and Malcolm Young

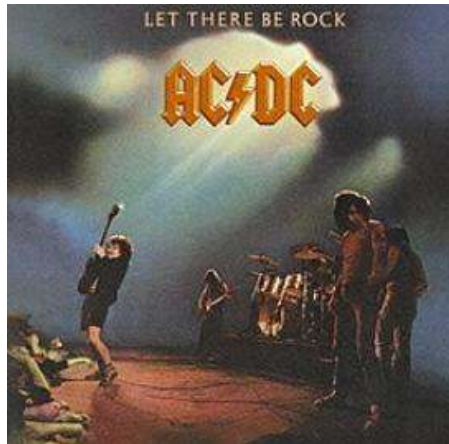


Angus Young, Wade Brooks and Bon Scott — Springfield, Illinois, May 18, 1979.

A FIRSTHAND MEMORY BY WADE BROOKS

BON SCOTT & AC/DC

May 18, 1979 — Springfield, Illinois



AC/DC — Let There Be Rock

The album that changed everything for me was Let There Be Rock. The first time I heard it turned up on a stereo, it was the heaviest record I had ever heard “all killers, no fillers.” It changed my life. To this day, it remains tied with Judas Priest’s Stained Class as one of my all-time favorites. Both came from the same late-1970s explosion. I suspect many future heavy metal musicians felt the same impact; they took the next step, bought equipment and formed bands of their own. Once I heard it, I began searching for every AC/DC record, import, photograph and magazine article I could find.

I even made my own AC/DC shirt because there was no official merchandise available in St. Louis. Using liquid embroidery, I painted the red AC/DC letters and yellow lightning bolt on a plain white T-shirt. It may have been homemade, but in 1979 it identified me as a fan of a band most people in America had barely discovered.

I found AC/DC’s Springfield, Illinois, date in the tour listings in Circus magazine. That told me when and where the band would be playing, but I still wanted to know where they would be staying.

My father, Jerry Brooks, was co-owner of Brooks Furniture and Appliances. Our store carried Spring Air mattresses, whose headquarters were in Springfield. I asked Dad if he would contact someone at Spring Air and see whether they could find out where AC/DC was staying and get three tickets. We were fortunate: a woman in the Spring Air office learned that the band was booked at the Bel-Air Motel.

That information changed everything. Before we ever left St. Louis, I knew exactly where to go.

On May 18, 1979, my friends Trace Rayfield, Mark and I made the approximately 100-mile drive from St. Louis to Springfield. AC/DC was appearing with UFO at the Illinois State Armory. It was our first real rock-and-roll road trip. The concert was sold out, but the Bel-Air Motel gave us another way to meet the band.



Angus Young and Wade Brooks outside the Bel-Air Motel. Wade is wearing the AC/DC shirt he made by hand.

The Bel-Air Motel Parking Lot

The Bel-Air was an old two-story motel with exterior walkways and room doors that opened directly outside. We waited in the parking lot until AC/DC's old tour bus arrived. Bon Scott, Angus Young, Malcolm Young, Phil Rudd and Cliff Williams stepped off. There they were—the band we had driven from St. Louis to meet.

Everything was signed right there in the parking lot on the hood of the car. Bon, Angus and Malcolm signed every album I had brought, along with my homemade poster. Cliff and Phil went directly to their rooms, so I knocked on their doors and asked them to come back out and finish signing. They did, and then returned to their rooms.

Angus was the next to leave. He went upstairs to a second-floor room with a woman who had long blonde hair. Bon and Malcolm stayed outside with us.





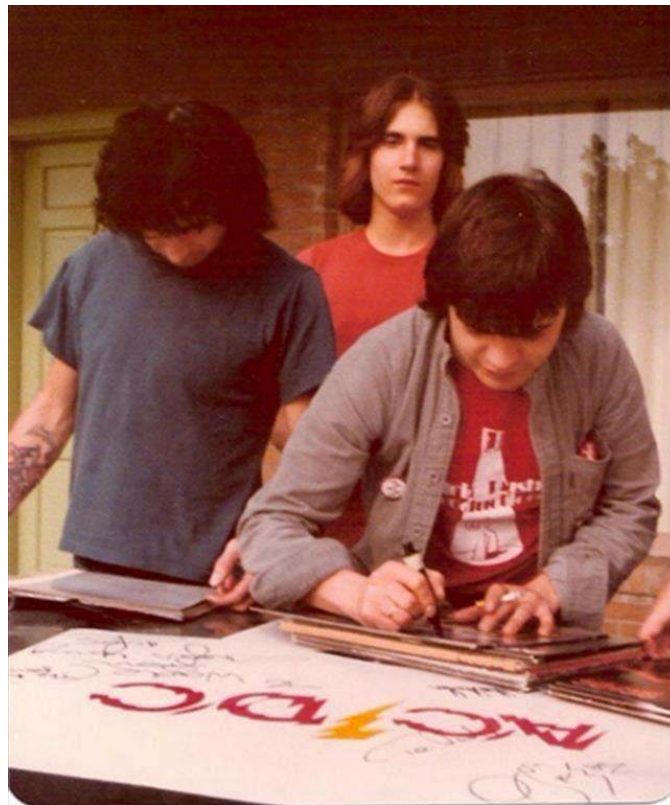
Wade Brooks with Bon Scott at the Bel-Air Motel.



Gary, the bus driver; Bon Scott looking through Wade's AC/DC scrapbook at the Bel-Air Motel while Malcolm signs Wade's albums.



Bon Scott looking over the collection in the parking lot. I love that smile!



The band examines Wade's homemade AC/DC poster.



Angus was so surprised we had the Australian imports.

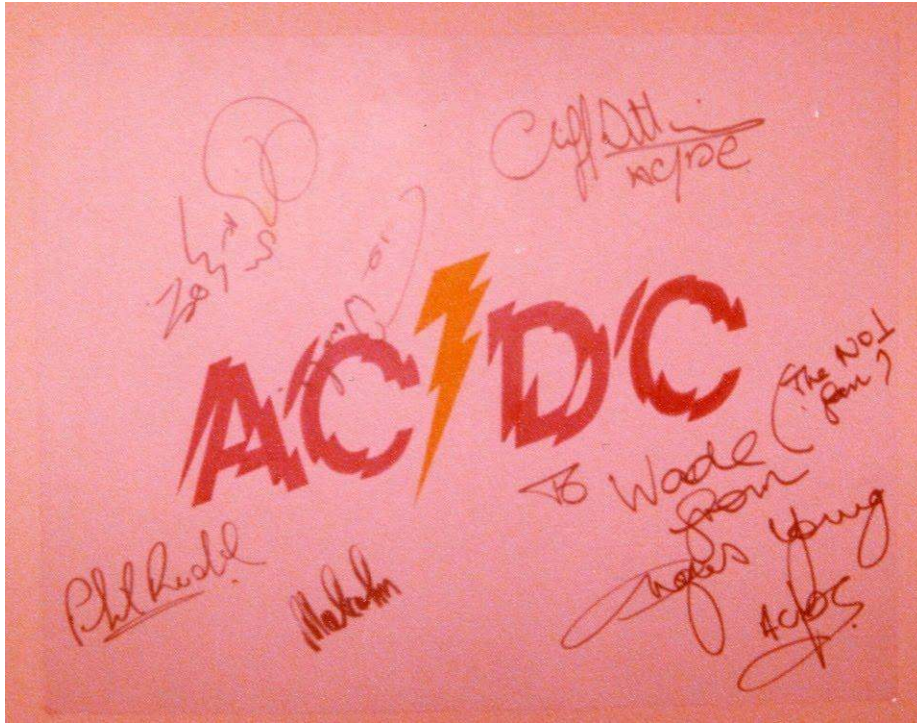


Malcolm with the Marlboro Reds in a hard box shirt pocket



Malcolm was so kind to us RIP brother





The hood of the car became the signing table as every member of AC/DC autographed Wade's albums and poster in the Bel-Air parking lot.

The scrapbook caught their attention. AC/DC was still fighting for recognition in America, and some of the American press clippings I had collected were things the band members had not seen before. This was long before the Internet. Finding information about a band required effort. I searched record stores and newsstands and saved everything I could find. I remember asking Bon about Angus being 16. He replied, "He is 21. The record company made that up."

Pushing the Bus—and Hearing the Future

Malcolm asked if we would help push the bus. He told us that afterward we could hang out aboard the bus and listen to AC/DC's new album.

Picture it from left to right: Bon Scott on my left, then me, Malcolm Young, Trace and Mark—all of us pushing the bus while Gary, the driver, sat behind the steering wheel.

Bon yelled, "Gary, get your fat ass out here and push, and I will steer!"

Once the bus was moved, Malcolm kept his word and invited us aboard. He put the cassette into the deck and told us, "You ARE the first fans to hear our new unreleased record."

We did not hear only the title song. We listened to the entire unreleased Highway to Hell album while sitting on AC/DC's tour bus. For much of that time, we were there mostly by ourselves. Malcolm popped back in while Trace took a photograph of Mark and me aboard the bus. That is the cassette playing in the deck: Highway to Hell.

Today, Highway to Hell is one of the most famous rock albums ever recorded. At that moment it was simply AC/DC's new record, playing from a cassette deck for a few young American fans who had just helped push their bus.



Aboard AC/DC's tour bus while the unreleased Highway to Hell plays on cassette.



Pete Way of UFO chatting with Malcom having a Lays chip with Cliff & Bon



Bon, Penthouse Centerfold & me having the time of my life.

The Best Seats in a Sold-Out Armory

The concert was sold out, but we had backstage passes, so I asked Bon where the best place to sit would be. He pointed toward the packed crowd. I looked at the PA system at stage left and asked, “Can we sit up on top of the PA?”

That is exactly where Trace, Mark and I sat—high above stage left, looking down on both AC/DC and UFO.

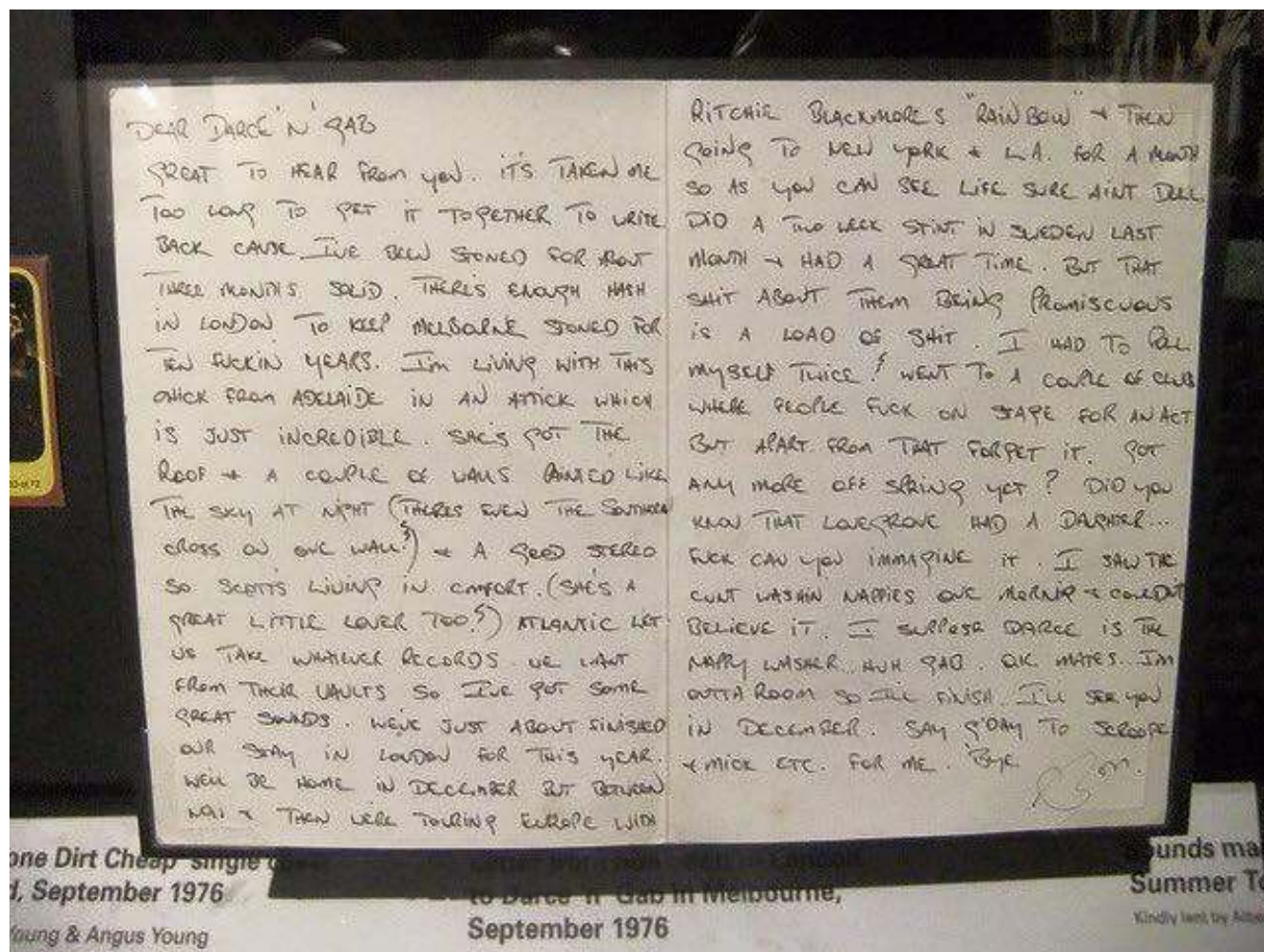
During UFO’s set, guitarist Paul Chapman repeatedly walked offstage and vomited onto a towel that a roadie had placed on the floor. Later, when we returned to the motel to meet up with Bon, Chapman was so wasted that two roadies were dragging him toward his room. I remember thinking, “What a joke. Those are hard shoes to fill after Michael Schenker.”

AC/DC Joints and Bon’s Red Address Book

Before the trip I had rolled some joints and written AC/DC across the papers with a red Flair pen. Back at the Bel-Air, we passed one around from me to Bon, then to Bon’s girl, Mark and Trace.

As the joint burned through the lettering, Bon kept track of our progress. He would take a toke and announce, "We are getting down to the C," and then later, "the D," as we smoked our way through the AC/DC name.

I cannot honestly recall the details of our conversation that night. What I do remember clearly is Bon taking out his small red address book. He asked for my name and address and wrote them down. That simple act meant a great deal to me. Bon Scott wanted to remember how to reach me.



I saw this image online and saved it because of the memory of Bon's handwriting in his red address book.

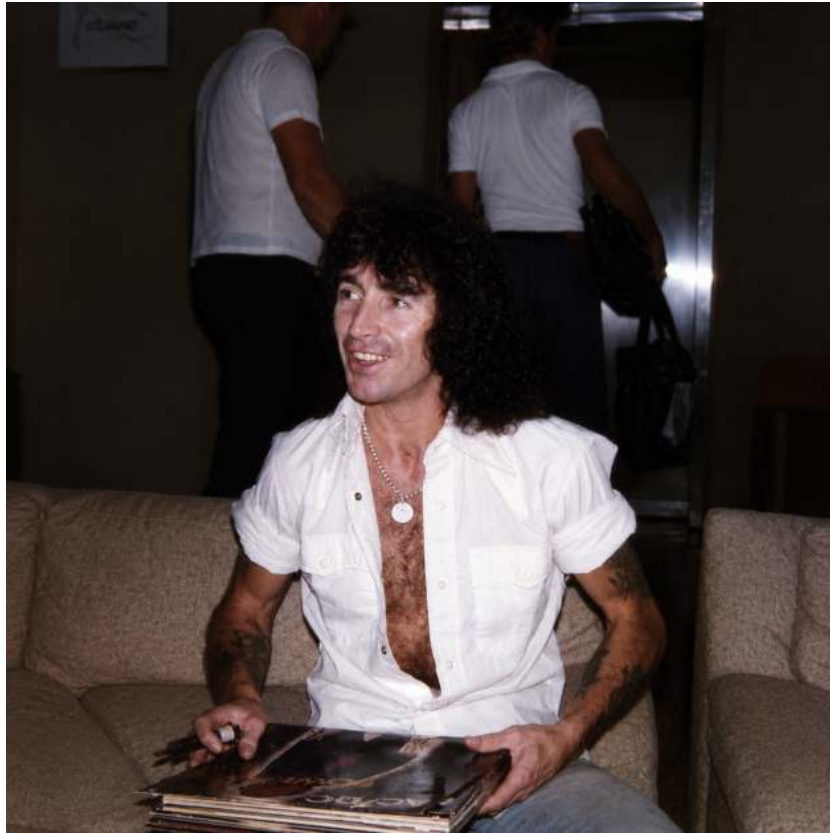
AC/DC Returns to St. Louis

July 1, 1979 — Kiel Auditorium

Less than two months later, AC/DC returned to St. Louis to open for Triumph at Kiel Auditorium.

When we reached the hotel, I went to the front desk and asked for Bon Scott's room number. I called the room. Bon answered and told me, "I just showered and I will be heading down." He remembered us.

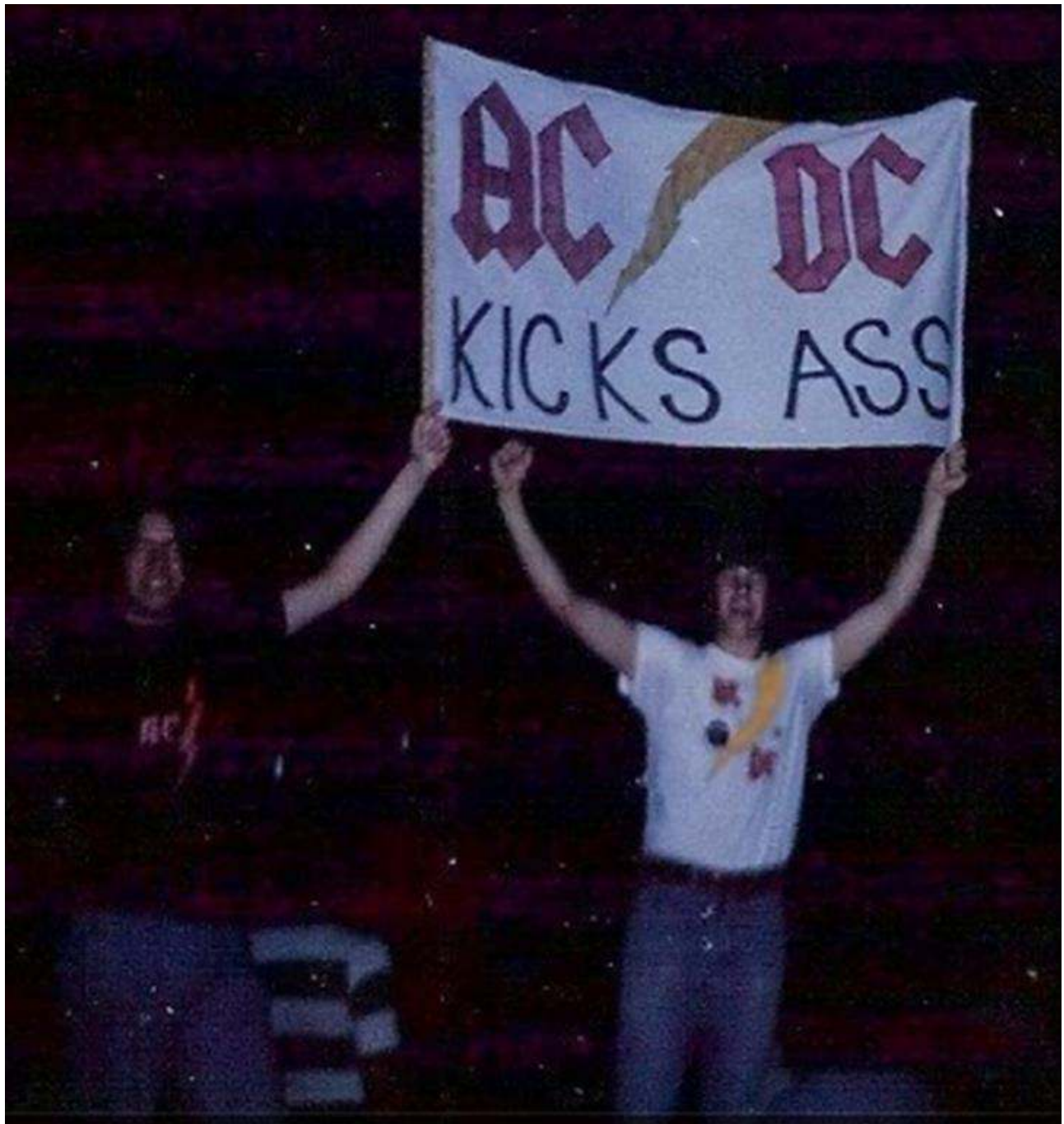
After the show, I called Bon's room again. Just as in Springfield, we had brought a cooler packed with ice-cold Busch beer. Bon invited us upstairs.



Bon Scott with Wade's AC/DC scrapbook in the St. Louis hotel before the show.



Wade's AC/DC scrapbook in the St. Louis hotel before the show. When I look at this photo Bon is listening to some story or question I had.



Trace Rayfield and Wade Brooks holding Wade's handmade "AC/DC Kicks Ass" sign at Kiel Auditorium in St. Louis, July 1, 1979.

After the show - Back to AC/DC's Hotel

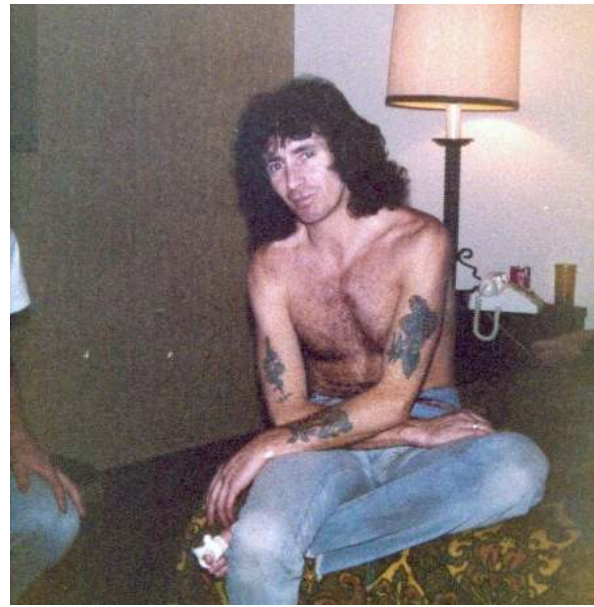
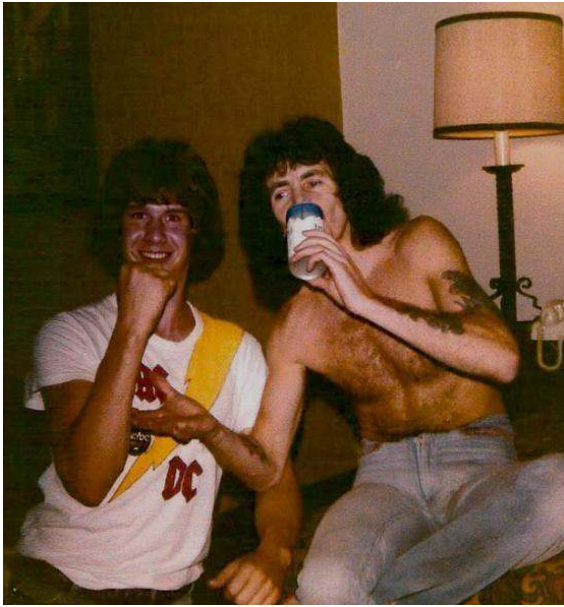
"Come On Up, Boys—and Bring the Cooler!"

We drank Busch beer and smoked pot with Bon again. At one point he asked, "Do you have anything stronger?" We did not. We had only our cooler of beer. Both Springfield and St. Louis we did not over stay our welcome.



Bon sat on the bed talking with us. His girl was at the head of the bed reading through my AC/DC scrapbook, while Gary, the bus driver, sat behind Bon. The photograph from that night captures the scene exactly as I remember it.

It was never about collecting a quick autograph and leaving. We were spending time with Bon Scott as a person. He welcomed us into his room twice, shared our beer and weed, looked through my scrapbook and wrote my address in his personal book.



A Memory for Life

We were not wealthy. We did not have industry connections, VIP packages or special credentials. We were determined young fans who researched where the bands stayed, traveled to the concerts and put ourselves in a position where something memorable could happen. Then we treated the musicians like people.

Bon Scott died on February 19, 1980. The news brought a sudden end to any hope that we would meet him again. What remains is the memory of his generosity toward a few young fans: the autographs on a car hood, the push-started tour bus, the first listen to *Highway to Hell*, the red address book, and the invitation to bring the cooler upstairs.

Rest in peace, Bon.

When we met AC/DC in May 1979, the band had probably sold somewhere around two million albums worldwide. That was substantial, but they were not yet the global superstars they would soon become. *Highway to Hell* had not even been released—we were sitting on their tour bus listening to the record that would change everything.

Photo credits: Trace Rayfield if I am in the picture, otherwise I took some and Trace took others.

A NOTE TO READERS

This is a fanzine. I do not charge for it. It is available at www.metalchild.com to read online or download. If you have a pdf, I encourage you to forward copies by email to old heavy metal friends. Get your own memories going with old mates. The memories, facts, photographs and corrections are mine; I supplied the story in segments, and ChatGPT helped organize them and recommend how to weave them into a readable narrative. I had a reality check in April with a heart attack. 99% blockage on one artery needed 3 stints 4 in all. I am retired, our daughter and grandkids live with us. Retirement has given me the time. Memories pour back. It is pretty easy to upload photos to ChatGPT and start telling the stories around them. Many hours of editing but it's a blast. Sincerely, Wade 'Metal Child' Brooks, my grandkids call me Opa and my wife Oma (I married a German)

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If you need to mail me, contact me and I will give you my current address.



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