You go to scooter rallies, you end up with friends all over the place. Some are random weirdos that are fun to drink with, some are great humans that you never get to know as well as you'd like, and some of them become friends for life.

It's a weird friendship, but a great one. You only see each other—if you're lucky—two or three times a year. You always have a place to stay if you're in town. Your kids get along. You chat every day in a decades-old depreciated Yahoo group. You swap stories, scooter parts, books, and records.

Matt and I have been friends for half of our reasonably-long lives, and I’m pretty sure I ended up with the bigger share of his parts, books, and records. But if he’s seething inside about what a cruelly friend I am, no one would ever know, because he’s such a danged good guy. The couple times I’ve seen him lose his temper, it’s been well beyond the threshold where any normal human would lose their patience, and it was hard not to laugh, because it was so out of character. The word “nice” is overused in general (and especially to describe Minnesotans) but thesaurus be damned, there’s no better word for Matt DeVries. He’s the nicest.

As people meet other people, it’s common to think “oh, they’re the X of X,” as in “this person is like this other person I know, but in a different location or context.” I’ve heard more than one person describe me as “the Matt DeVries of Chicago.”

Knowing what a great person Matt is makes that just about the biggest compliment I can even imagine. I’m not even really sure what it means to be the “Matt of Chicago,” and maybe it wasn’t even intended as a compliment, but if anybody thinks as highly of me as I think of Matt, that makes me pretty happy. Happy birthday, Matt!