

Table of Contents

REF: Quotes & Stories	1
A Chat With A Whitebeard - An Epic Tale	1
Mosey's '85 Sportster	2
Mosey's Tale Begins - - - Part One	4
Mosey's Tale Continues - Part Two	14
Mosey's Tale Continues - Part Three	29
Mosey's Tale Continues - Part Four	46

[Go To Technical Menu](#)

REF: Quotes & Stories

A Chat With A Whitebeard - An Epic Tale

This is a story told by XLForum member Mosey. It's about a chance meeting that turned into tales of dare and doing.

Mosey relates in his own gripping style the fantastic stories of Ray, a white-bearded motorcycle lover.

The XLForum thread is here:

<https://www.xlforum.net/forum/sportster-motorcycle-forum/sportster-motorcycle-era-specific-and-model-specific/ironhead-sportster-motorcycle-talk-1957-1985/167837-a-chat-with-a-whitebeard?t=1802273>

The thread starts on July 25, 2014 (thru June10, 2015). As of January, 2020, it has 85,541 views.

In order to be able to link into the middle of the story, it has been (arbitrarily) headered into sections.

[Part 1: The Tale Begins](#)

[Part 2: The Tale Continues](#)

[Part 3: The Tale Continues](#)

[Part 4: The Tale Continues](#)

Be sure to look for the part of the story where Ray competes at Bonneville and meets Burt Munro, rides one of Craig Breedlove's streamliners and builds his own to go 520mph, where he races at Daytona & Riverside

with Cal Rayborn, the times he raced up Pike's Peak and the day Arthur Davidson came to see him.

Mosey encouraged others to reveal their own stories encountering older riders with tales to tell.

Click here for the '[Miscellaneous Tales of Meeting Interesting Characters](#)' page for more stories.

REALLY SAD NEWS On November 9, 2023, around 6:40 p.m., a fatal traffic collision took place between a 1992, White, BMW, traveling at a high rate of speed, and a 2008 Harley-Davidson motorcycle that was ridden by Mosey. He was pronounced dead at the scene. The perpetrator was caught days later trying to escape into Mexico.

[This XLForum thread](#) has the notification we received from XLF member 'Kanthaka'. Below is a picture of Mosey & his 1982 Ironhead which [he posted to the XLForum](#).



Mosey's '85 Sportster



Mosey's Tale Begins - - - Part One

Life is short and brutal. Ride free...

I write those words every time I post, it's not a cut and paste kinda thang. I really mean it when I type that life is rather sharply truncated in the perspective of universal time. So y'all better believe me when I write that ya gotta ride free while ya still gots the chance... (Mosey)

A Chat With A Whitebeard

Had the day off so I went to deal with my local banker. I pulled the old Ironhead into the lot, rode to the far corner and parked up in the shade of a large tree. As I pulled off my helmet a soft voice from behind me said, "Damn, that's a nice machine."

I turned to find a pair of gleaming, dancing eyes above an impish grin that was surrounded by a long, white beard. A fence separated us but, even through the fence, it was easy to spot a fellow motorcyclist. Instant recognition of a kindred soul.

We shot the breeze there for a few minutes, he asked about my Sporty and commented on how nice it is to see an old machine in use. He was more surprised when i told him it was my daily rider. I stuck my hand through the fence and introduced myself as we shook hands. His voice may have been soft and a little shaky, but his grip was solid.

I asked him about what machines he rode and this is where the story gets interesting. Now, just so's y'all know...the fence separates the bank parking lot from an elder/convalescent home, The fella' with the happy eyes and the easy grin musta been close to, or over, the eighty year mark. In spite of the years he had a vital, youthful air about him.

Well, dear reader, when your humble narrator inquired of this two-wheeled veteran as to his favorite steeds he proceeds to tell me, in a very understated way, about his years as a motorsickle racer in the Fifties and Sixties. He tells me about Baja 500s and Mint 500s and Baja 1000s and the Sacramento Mile and Ascot in Gardena and banging elbows in the turns with Dave Aldana and...

Holy crap! This guy is a gold mine of motorsickle lore and legend. We chat for a while about desert racing and sponsors and Triumphs and KHKs and KRs and...well, you get the drift.

I asked him if it would be possible to visit him sometime and talk more about his exploits and experiences. His eyes lit up and he proclaimed that he would look forward to my visit. He promised tales of twisting the wick and roosting the dirt. I am planning on dropping by to say hi to him next week. He said that any of the nurses would point me right to Motorcycle Ray!

I guess I'm relating this day's episode in my life to ya so all y'all remember that ya never know who the stranger next to ya really is...until ya ask. I've heard the Ironhead called "An Old Man Magnet" cuz old dudes walk up to yer bike and say sumpin' like, I used to have one back in the day". So maybe the next

time someone comments on yer bike, you just might take a minute or two and listen to their FTW tales.

I hope to update this thread in a week with more in-depth reporting on Ray's riding days. Maybe even get a pic of Ray with my motorbike if possible. BTW, just before I rode off, he mentioned that he still has quite a few old race bikes. Hmmmmm.

Life is short and brutal. Ride free...

26th July 2014

(<https://www.xlforum.net/forum/sportster-motorcycle-forum/sportster-motorcycle-era-specific-and-model-specific/ironhead-sportster-motorcycle-talk-1957-1985/167837-a-chat-with-a-whitebeard#post4921711>)

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For the last couple weeks I haven't been able to get to hang with Ray, but i saw him for a few minutes this morning. The last couple times when i stopped by on my day off, the nurses said that Ray was either getting a procedure or wasn't feeling up to visitors.

But today I stopped off to try and see my new buddy. Lo and behold, as I'm walking up the sidewalk towards the entrance of the assisted living facility, the door opens and out walks Ray! What a pleasant surprise. He's looking sharp and I tell him so. He grins and we chat for a couple minutes.

We arranged to meet up this coming Tuesday. I told him to prepare to tell me all the dirty details of any race that he happened to remember. he laughed through his beard and replied that he remembered EVERY race and EVERY competitor. My answer that I couldn't wait to hear his tales brought a grin to his weathered face.

I think I'm gonna have a good time hangin' with old Ray. His is an indomitable and inspiring spirit.

I'm glad so many of you took the time to read my thread. I only hope that I can accurately relate Rays reminiscences of past racing adventures. He intimated that he's gonna tell me about desert racing in Mexico when we meet up. I can't wait.

Life is short and brutal. Ride free...

16th August 2014

(<https://www.xlforum.net/forum/sportster-motorcycle-forum/sportster-motorcycle-era-specific-and-model-specific/ironhead-sportster-motorcycle-talk-1957-1985/167837-a-chat-with-a-whitebeard/page2#post3593856>)

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Well...today was a really bitchin' day!

Not only was the weather awesome - eighty-five degrees after a long stretch of high heat and high humidity. So today, dry and cool, was a genuine corker! After cleaning, lubing and adjusting the chain on the Sporty I went for a little ride up Big Tujunga Canyon. The road was clear and twisty, traffic sparse, and I felt like the King of the World. Screw Leo and the Titanic. Gimme a Sportster any day...I don't need no stinking ship!

So me and the Ironhead had a great time up in the hills above the beautiful San Fernando Valley. After using a tank fulla fuel riding the asphalt and dirt roads, I turned the machine back towards civilization and headed for the best stop of my day.

As I rolled into the assisted-living facility there were several elderly residents sitting out front enjoying the balmy breezes. All eyes watched as I parked up the old motorbike and dismounted. With a wave and a howdy to the watchers, I headed inside.

Ray was sitting in the lobby area, grinning like a demented jack o' lantern at me through that wild, white beard. "Goddamn, it's good to see ya!" he exclaimed and stuck out his big, calloused mitt. We shook hands and I sat down in the proffered chair.

As we chatted, several of Ray's fellow lodgers wandered by and Ray took great care to introduce me as his "motorcycle ridin' friend", lemme tell ya I felt honored to be named as such. I said hello and shook hands with some real interesting characters. Some of those folks looked like they have lived a full and interesting life. I'll bet there's an enormous wealth of tall tales and life experiences in that one building.

Ray talked a little bit about the times that he raced up Pikes Peak. His descriptions of the events curled my toes and gave me a shiver or two as well. Imagine tearing up that mountain at seventy and eighty miles per on a steep one lane dirt and gravel road that hangs precariously off the side of a precipice and yer sliding sideways. Now realize that there are no guardrails so if you miscalculate, yer going over the side in a rather spectacular fashion. Holy moly. I'm scared just thinkin' about it!

Ray said that his last run at Pike's he did the 13 miles in under 11 minutes. That deserves a tip o' the helmet, eh?

We talked about his years as a service manager at a Honda dealership outside of Portland Oregon and his years working at the Harley-Davidson shop in San Diego. The man got around and did a lot of living, plus he rode a helluva lot of motorcycles! We talked about the Triumphs that he raced and the 1954 Vincent Black Shadow that he loves and still owns. He said he still has a lot of his old race bikes stashed away down in Sandy Eggo.

The old folks started getting up and shuffling off down the hall. Ray said it was time for dinner and his stomach wasn't just growling - it was barkin' and howlin'! We said our adios and shook hands again. We made our plans to hang out again. I gathered up my helmet and gloves, gave old Ray a grin and started for the door.

"Hold on a minute." he said and I turned around and went back. With a twinkle in his eyes he said, "Next time I'm gonna tell you about racing K-models on dirt tracks."

Now I've got sumpin' to look forward to. Later days, faithful reader. I shall return with more two-wheeled tales as related by my new best friend. Thanks for being so damned cool, Ray. I owe ya one.

Life is short and brutal. Ride free...

20th August 2014

<https://www.xlforum.net/forum/sportster-motorcycle-forum/sportster-motorcycle-era-specific-and-model-specific/ironhead-sportster-motorcycle-talk-1957-1985/167837-a-chat-with-a-whitebeard/page3#post3596679>

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ecampbell, thank you for adding to this thread. Your adventitious meeting and return visit are exactly in the spirit of this thread. I hope that anyone with similar experiences will feel free to add their words and pics. With everyone's input this could be an "Epic Thread"!

I asked Ray if he would pose for a pic with my bike at our next meeting and he agreed with one of his signature, sly grins. I hope to show all y'all that toothy smile and wild beard and twinkling eyes with my next update. That should be soon...real soon!

As far as recording him, well I will broach the subject eventually. Like many unique and spiritual people, Ray is kinda like a feral animal - ya gotta go slow and gentle until that bond of trust is there. I'm pretty sure that he will be overjoyed to know that his memories will live on and be enjoyed and appreciated by a vast group of hard-ridin' scooter tramps like you, Faithful Readers.

It warms the black hunk of cold rock that is my heart to know that so many of y'all are reading this and caring about my new friend, Ray. He's a good feller and I hope one day to show him this thread and all the responses. Lotsa good folk hangin' out and swappin' tales around the digital campfire that is the XLF.

Life is short and brutal. Ride free...

<https://www.xlforum.net/forum/sportster-motorcycle-forum/sportster-motorcycle-era-specific-and-model-specific/ironhead-sportster-motorcycle-talk-1957-1985/167837-a-chat-with-a-whitebeard/page4#post3597213>

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Tales of Ray and the Isle of Man and High Speed Getoffs!

A Prelude

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As the rear wheel spun, I watched the sprocket engaging the chain. The chain was riding a bit close to the left-hand side plates. A quick adjustment had the chain running true on the sprocket and I sat on the concrete behind my Sporty and just spun the wheel a few times.

Damn, a clean and well-lubed chain spins so smooth and free! Reduce friction - go faster! Faster! That thought, the thought of two wheels and un-bridled speed, turned my mind to my upcoming visit with Ray. "If you don't fall off, yer not going fast enough!" That's what Ray has said to me proolly a hunnerd times during our talks. Its his mantra. Om mani padme om...no effin' way! That hippie mysticism just ain't Ray. "If you don't fall off, yer not going fast enough!" Repeat that to yerself several times during this chat with Ray and you will get a better idea of my conversation.

I got my ass off the concrete (I am lucky enough to have a nice motorcycle lift table, but there are some things that ya just need to get down with the machine and sit on the floor, Or in the dirt. Y'all know.) and took the bike off the lift. Rolled it into the brassy SoCal sun. Locked up the Mosey Compound, grabbed my gear and started up that trusty lump of iron.

As she warmed, shaking enough to blur my vision, there was a feeling of anticipation, like a bell ringing so far away that you can't hear it...

Life is short and brutal. Ride free...

23rd August 2014

<https://www.xlforum.net/forum/sportster-motorcycle-forum/sportster-motorcycle-era-specific-and-model-specific/ironhead-sportster-motorcycle-talk-1957-1985/167837-a-chat-with-a-whitebeard/page5#post3598457>

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Preview - Tales of Ray and the Isle of Man and High Speed Getoffs!

Concerto

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“The time has come,” the Walrus said,
“To talk of many things:
Of shoes-and ships-and sealing-wax-
Of cabbages-and kings-
And why the sea is boiling hot-
And whether pigs have wings.”

Lewis Carroll

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The sharp eyes looked at me and the words filtered through the wild, white beard, “So, whattaya do for a living?”

When I answered and showed him my latest work injury he laughed and said that I proly deserved it and I agreed. “Looky there.” Ray directs my attention to a pretty, young, dark-haired, sloe-eyed nurse walking past. She's a cutie! Ray leans in close and whispers in a stage voice, “That there is my new girlfriend.”

“Now Ray, you know I'm married.”

“That don't make no never mind to me.”

“You be good Ray. Your friend there looks as disreputable as you.”

Ray and I both laugh.

“You boys be good now. Okay?” and she sashays off in her white uniform. That was fun.

So he then proceeds to tell me about a couple unusual pets that he owned (Or did they own him? Hmmm.) in years past. Interestingly enough, we both had cared for orphaned raccoons. Sometime I will have to tell Ray about the porcupine that I found and bottle-fed. Someday...

I turned the conversation to the two-wheeled adventures of my compatriot. I never know what he's gonna tell me so, for now, it seems best to just let him ramble. Later there will be time to ask specific questions but, for the present, I'm interested to find out the depth and breadth of the overall story. Go crazy Ray! Let it all hang out.

He starts talking about his trip to the Isle of Man in the Sixties and my eyes light up and I sat up straight in my chair. It felt like getting hit with a cattle prod. Whoa doggie.

Phrases like “Airborne at Ballaugh Bridge” and “Kate's Cottage” and “Sideways through the corner at Governor's” peppered his tale. He told a little about putting his race bike on a ship to send it across the ocean. How it took two months! Collecting it at the docks, getting through customs and finally on to the track and race prep. He learned the course and I dreamt of what that must have been like - the sounds of full on race machines, the smell of Castrol R, the sight of people lining the course. Hell, back then the

spectators were practically standing on the track and racers tore past sometimes inches away. Damn!

And then he talked about being timed at a hunnerd and sixty in the TT and I could hear the pride in his voice. He started wandering away from the TT and the Manx GP and off we go across Europe to the French Grand Prix, on to Hockenheim and the Sachsenring and a host of other Continental tracks. Exotic locations, but to Ray they all were just another place to twist the wick and go hunting apexes.

And then we were back in the USA and Ray's tellin' me about gettin' highsided on a corner near the bottom of Pike's Peak. he was sideways in a curve, caught traction and the bike spit him off on the far side of a hunnerd miles per. He laughed as he remembered being filled with adrenaline. How he jumped up and ran back, hoisted his still running machine back on two wheels and took off.

About halfway up the mountain his right shoulder starts to hurt and gets worse with every jolt. It hurts from his neck to hand just to maintain a hold on the bars. Ray's grin tightens visibly through the beard as he recounts grimly hanging onto his Triumph's grip and keeping it twisted wide-effin' open all the way up the goddamned mountain!

"Excuse me. I'm sorry to interrupt." A different, older but still sweet-faced nurse leaned in and put a gentle hand on Ray's shoulder. "Ray, it's time for dinner."

Ray says, "I pay her extra to make sure I get into the chow hall first. I wanna get my food while it's fresh and hot."

"Yes, Ray does like it fresh and hot." She says this with a subtle, Mona Lisa smile on her beatific face.

"Just the way I like my women!"

"Now Ray, you be good." I have a feeling Ray hears that phrase a lot. Just like I hear him say, "If ya don't fall off yer not going fast enough!"

Now I'm not one to get in between a hungry man and his dinner. I like my appendages. Ray and I shook hands and I asked, like a gentleman, if next week would be a good time to visit. He showed me a full set of white choppers that split his beard. "You bet! I'll be waitin' right here."

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The old Ironhead sounded particularly good - deep and resonant with a good dose of healthy crackle as I got on the throttle. Damn, ya gotta love a sweet-runnin' motorsickle...

"I weep for you," the Walrus said:

"I deeply sympathize."

With sobs and tears he sorted out

Those of the largest size,

Holding his pocket-handkerchief

Before his streaming eyes.

Lewis Carroll

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Life is short and brutal. Ride free...

26th August 2014

(<https://www.xlforum.net/forum/sportster-motorcycle-forum/sportster-motorcycle-era-specific-and-model-specific/ironhead-sportster-motorcycle-talk-1957-1985/167837-a-chat-with-a-whitebeard/page5#post3600852>)

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BTW, I forgot to mention that the reason his arm was hurtin' was because he had broken his collarbone!

If you have ever busted that particular lil' piece of calcium well, ya know how much it hurts just to lift yer arms...let alone twist a throttle and hold on to a bucking bronco of a motorsickle pounding it's way up a steep and unforgiving mountain.

Life is short and brutal. Ride free...

26th August 2014

(<https://www.xlforum.net/forum/sportster-motorcycle-forum/sportster-motorcycle-era-specific-and-model-specific/ironhead-sportster-motorcycle-talk-1957-1985/167837-a-chat-with-a-whitebeard/page5#post3600876>)

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After doing a little online research, I think that I know exactly who Ray is. By using a few clues and doing a little hunting I found that the old boy is quite a respected competitor. When I asked Ray about posting a picture here for y'all, he adamantly replied in the negative. I respect the man's need for privacy so a lot of details and dates are purposely being left out of the story. Too much info and all y'all could track him down the same way that I did.

So now ya know that I will continue to be a little fuzzy on the dates and places. I won't tell ya everything, but I'll definitely give youse guys the bird's eye lowdown on the caper. You will get the meat and potatoes but no side dishes, appetizers or dessert.

I can't wait to go see Ray in a couple days. Who knows what I will be regaled with? Perhaps we will speak of hot shoes and left-hand turns, bangin' elbows and dirt berms. We will see.

Life is short and brutal. Ride free...

26th August 2014

(<https://www.xlforum.net/forum/sportster-motorcycle-forum/sportster-motorcycle-era-specific-and-model-specific/ironhead-sportster-motorcycle-talk-1957-1985/167837-a-chat-with-a-whitebeard/page5#post3601155>)

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So today was a rather short visit due to my schedule, but we found a few minutes to sit outside in the shade and shoot the breeze. I have such a good time talkin' with Ray and I find myself counting down the days until we meet again. I know that one day, far too soon, he will be finished with his medical treatments and surgeries and will go back to Sandy Eggo. It will be a bit more of a commitment to see Ray when it means a three hundred mile round trip as opposed to a mere ten miles.

Ray wanted to talk about his time in prison, how he got there and how he spent his time in the hoosegow. Thirteen years is a long time to keep a man locked up in a cage for getting in a fistfight with an off-duty cop. I'm sure that he woulda gotten a lighter sentence if the cop had won the fight!

He talked about getting shipped all over the state of California, from prison to prison, and how he saw the

way a man can become an animal when inside the system. He vowed that he would keep his humanity no matter what...I think he did a helluva job. I would trust Ray with my money and my motorsickle. But not my women! No way!!

"So tell me Ray," I asked when the conversation lulled. "What did ya do when you were younger - ya know, before ya started racing motorbikes and going to prison?"

"I went to MIT."

"You went where? MIT? Are you kidding me?"

"Back then I wanted to be a nuclear physicist."

Two years he attended the most prestigious technical school in the US until his Dad got sick, the money ran out, and he had to return home to care for his family. I could hear the catch in his voice as he told of those years. I think if things had turned out a little differently old Ray woulda been racing rocketships around the Milky Way galaxy and beyond. Apollo woulda gotten to the moon a LOT faster if Ray had been on the team. And they prolly woulda slid in sideways, full opposite lock, to boot!

Well I left my friend with the promise that I would return and bring him a cigarette loaded with a little black hash. He said that he never really like smoking cannabis but a chunk of hash would always make him happy. When I told him that a Nepalese farmer taught me how to make hashish, his eyes lit up like a kid seeing the Christmas tree and all the presents.

"Hell yes, I'll smoke that! Just a little bit in a coffin nail so the nurses don't catch me and I'll be as happy as a dog with two dicks."

(Ray has a rather colorful way of talkin' but I think all y'all can handle it, eh?)

"Okay Ray, a loaded cig it is. Would Tuesday be good for you."

Ray grinned that warm, infectious smile of his, we shook hands and parted ways.

C'mon Tuesday!!!

Life is short and brutal. Ride free...

29th August 2014

(<https://www.xlforum.net/forum/sportster-motorcycle-forum/sportster-motorcycle-era-specific-and-model-specific/ironhead-sportster-motorcycle-talk-1957-1985/167837-a-chat-with-a-whitebeard/page7#post3603292>)

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For the record - when I first met Ray I was kinda skeptical about his exploits. I mean really, who has that kind of a life? Some fictional character? Some scroungy-looking old dude that I met in a parking lot? Really?

I don't trust easily but there was sumpin' about Ray that I found impossible to deny. He never bragged about anything and most of the info I had to pry outta him. He's gotten more comfortable with me and the words flow out a little easier, but he still has that understated way of approaching a subject.

On my second visit Ray mentioned that he owns a grip of houses in San Diego and I thought, "Yeah right. I find it hard to believe that this scruffy character that is always dressed in the same shitty windbreaker and old trucker hat has two nickels to rub together"

But when one of the nurses told me that Ray's sister mentioned that Ray owns around a hunnerd and twenty houses...well, I about fell over. At that point I had to reassess this guy and what he was tellin' me. Can all this be real?

I don't think that the old guy is jivin' me. I think he lived a life that will burn across the fabric of time. And I hope that you will read this with an open mind cuz old Ray has a LOT more to tell. I just hope that I can keep up. Thank you, Faithful Reader, for coming along for the adventure.

Life is short and brutal. Ride free...

29th August 2014

(<https://www.xlforum.net/forum/sportster-motorcycle-forum/sportster-motorcycle-era-specific-and-model-specific/ironhead-sportster-motorcycle-talk-1957-1985/167837-a-chat-with-a-whitebeard/page7#post3603333>)

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"Well, I was out riding my bicycle one day - I was maybe thirteen or fourteen at the time - and I heard this Gawd-awful sound. It was really a roar. It made the hair on my neck stand up when I heard it and I went looking for the source of the noise."

His hands wandered absently to his beard and smoothed the long white whiskers. His fingers twirled the ends of his mustache into even points as his mind traveled back through the years.

"I rode my bike around through this industrial area. There was a bunch of ramshackle little buildings fulla machinists and auto shops and muffler places. Ya know what I mean." He glanced up and continued.

"So I turned the corner and there it was," Ray paused for effect.

"What?" I blurted out.

"This car. Well, not really a car...a dragster. It was big and mean looking with that huge motor and those slicks on the back. It had these little bitty wire wheels up front. I rode up and got off my bike. I think I just dropped it - forgot all about the kickstand - and walked around that car."

"I was thrilled and scared at the same time. That thing looked like it wanted to kill me. But I knew then and there that I wanted to drive that car. Or sumpin' like it. Sumpin' fast!"

Old Ray flashed that slightly maniacal grin and went on, "When the guys in the shop saw me eyeballin' their car they came out and talked to me. That was scary too. These bad-ass grown men, dirty and greasy and everything that my Mother warned me about were actually talking to me."

Ray's eyes glazed over a bit and he fell silent. I wondered what he was seeing, proolly that dragster sitting in the sun on that street on that long gone day.

"So I would go over, hang around and sweep the floor. Sometimes I got to put tools away or clean parts. Later they showed me how to bend tubing and weld. I learned a lot at that place."

"Where was this?" I asked.

"Down in Carlsbad (a little town outside of San Diego) and the shop was called Dragmasters."

"Dragmasters?"

"Yeah. They built a few cars."

"They built a few cars?" I was flabbergasted. "They built almost every top contender on the West Coast. I don't know squat about drag racing and I know about Dragmasters. They were the shizznit back in the day."

"The what?"

"Oh sorry Ray. That's some slang that I picked up from Snoop Dog."

"Snoop? I really like that "Gin and Juice" song of his."

Ah Ray, you blow my mind. You da man!

We chatted about the Thing Two (a twin-engined drag car built in that shop), Dode Martin, and the Dragmaster Dart until it was time for me to leave. I gathered up my helmet and gloves, shook hands with Ray and walked to my bike.

I climbed on the old Shovelhead (Sorry Faithful Readers, but yer Humble Narrator doesn't always ride an Ironhead!) and went through the drill. Petcock on, check for neutral. I feel the rockerboxes and decide not to use the choke or any prime kicks. Swing out the kicker and bring 'er up on compression.

Out of the corner of my eye I can see that Ray is watching along with ten or so other elderly residents out enjoying the evening breezes. I know I gotta make it good.

So I reach down and turn on the ignition. "C'mon ya old girl, Let's give 'em a show."

I cracked the throttle a bit and turned to grin at Ray as I gave the kicker a whack. Boom! The old Shovel lit off with a growl that proolly shook a couple windows in the old folks home and maybe rattled a denture or two.

Ray smiled broadly and shook his fist. "Hell yeah! That sounds good!!"

"Thanks Ray!" I hollered. "Not bad for a Harley, eh?"

"Not bad at all."

"I'll see ya later, Ray"

"Alright. Remember, if ya don't fall off--"

"--yer not going fast enough," I finished.

We both smiled.

A couple of the watching elders shook their heads in disapproval but most of 'em were smiling and nodding. One sweet old lady was clapping her hands in delight. I was kinda overwhelmed and pleased at their reaction. Kickstarting a motorsickle can be rewarding on many levels.

=====

I stopped by my friend's house on the way home. We burned a doob as we sat on his couch.

“Mosey, why you grinning like that? You been smiling since you put yer kickstand down. What gives?”

“I just came from seeing Ray.”

“That old guy in the nursing home? There must be something special about him.”

Yeah, there's sumpin' special about Ray.

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Life is short and brutal. Ride free...

12th September 2014

(<https://www.xlforum.net/forum/sportster-motorcycle-forum/sportster-motorcycle-era-specific-and-model-specific/ironhead-sportster-motorcycle-talk-1957-1985/167837-a-chat-with-a-whitebeard/page8#post3611618>)

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Mosey's Tale Continues - Part Two

Is This Really The True Story of the XLCH?

After getting home from work and typing those words about the birth of the fabled and beloved XLCH, I realized that I had to find out more or I would spend the weekend wondering. So I jumped on the Sporty, my favorite 'round town steed, and rode up to the convalescent home.

When I got there Ray was enjoying a smoke in the gazebo. I parked up and joined him in the shade.

Damn hot, ain't it?” Ray asked as I walked up. A hunnerd and five and freakishly high humidity here in SoCal. Yeah, it's hot. “I wasn't expecting to see you today. wasn't you here just last Tuesday?”

“Yeah, but I just couldn't stop thinking about what you said about the XLCH.”

“You do like your Sportys, doncha?”

I grinned sheepishly. “Ya got me there.”

Ray proceeded to tell me about the day in 1957 when he was in the local Harley dealership and saw the coolest Sportster that he had ever seen sitting in the service area. It was stripped to the bone - the heavy

battery gone, with a magneto ignition and the big tank replaced with the iconic Hummer tank.

He asked about it and was told that it was a prototype for the new Sportsters made just for the California dealers. Ray said that the Cali dealers were certain that there was a market for a leaner, meaner Sportster. The Factory mandated a minimum number of machines and apparently a group of California dealers bought the minimum order.

“So the Factory inserted the letter C into the XLH to denote the California models. Then the rest of the country wanted in on the act and suddenly they were everywhere.”

“But I heard that the C stood for Competition.”

“I dunno. I can only tell ya what I saw. That was a bad-ass Sporty. I wouldn't have minded riding one but I got into Triumphs for desert racing. The C model Harleys were pretty damned good.”

=====

So there ya have it. Take it or leave it, this is as good as any story that I have heard about the beginnings of the XLCH. As I put my motorsickle away I couldn't wait to share this with all y'all. Ray wasn't a Sporty rider but that machine sure made an impression on him. That musta been cool seeing that bike on the distant day. I wish I had been there...but I wasn't even born yet!

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Life is short and brutal. Ride free...

12th September 2014

<https://www.xlforum.net/forum/sportster-motorcycle-forum/sportster-motorcycle-era-specific-and-model-specific/ironhead-sportster-motorcycle-talk-1957-1985/167837-a-chat-with-a-whitebeard/page9#post3612047>

=====

I mentioned a couple pages back that I know who Ray is by doing a little research with race dates that he provided. He didn't want me posting his pic at present so i figures that he wouldn't want his name bandied about on the internet.

Just wanna protect the man's privacy so I have not mentioned specific dates or places that might help someone dig up Ray's identity. I'll tell ya this: His real first name is Ray and he's a seriously cool old dude.

I cannot vouch for the veracity of any of his stories but when I hear him talkin' I can't help but be drawn in and hang on every word. I believe.

Life is short and brutal. Ride free...

<https://www.xlforum.net/forum/sportster-motorcycle-forum/sportster-motorcycle-era-specific-and-model-specific/ironhead-sportster-motorcycle-talk-1957-1985/167837-a-chat-with-a-whitebeard/page9#post3612071>

=====

“I can always tell when yer comin' to visit.”

I glanced up. “Whaddaya mean?”

"I must hear a hunderd bikes pass by each day and yer like the only one that downshifts properly."

"Oh, you mean the blip?"

"Yeah that twist of the throttle means a whole lot to me. Little things like that separate the guys that know their machines from the ones that just don't get it. When I hear that I know this guy is tuned in to his bike."

I grinned a little thinking of the "Do you blip when you downshift" thread on this forum. All those pages of folks arguing back and forth about whether or not to blip and here it's validated by good old Ray.

"When I hear ya shifting through the gears and that V-twin howling I know it's time to get moving and get my brain in gear. I came outside so we could sit here in the shade. You don't seem to be the kinda fella' that likes being cooped up inside."

"On target, Ray. Ya got me pegged. I can't stand boxes. We live in boxes and then most people drive a box to work. Then they go inside and work for eight hours in another box, drive the box back to the box they sleep in."

Ray laughed heartily, his face flushing.

"Alls I'm tryin' to do is get outta those damned boxes, Ray. Ridin' is my way out of the box."

"I do know what ya mean. I never felt so free as when I was all alone out in the desert on my motorcycle. Man, I felt alive!"

His eyes glittered and narrowed as he remembered, his mind and heart seeing the wide open of the arid landscape. The gnarled, old hands sitting in his lap fluttered and tightened as if gripping the bars. A slow grin spread across his face and he just drifted for a long moment.

The time drew out in a wordless expanse until Ray snapped back to the here and now. The lids of his eyes lifted and he turned his gaze back to me.

"Yer a good guy. Don't ever let those bastards corner ya and stick ya in a box."

"I won't Ray. At least not 'til I'm dead." We both laughed, sharing our little joke. "Hell, maybe not even then."

We talked for a while about off-road four wheeled vehicles. He was really into those wild tube-framed dune buggies. He sure wasn't referring to a Manx dune buggy. He laughed a derisively when I mentioned Manx. "I ain't talkin' about street buggies. I'm talkin' off road, waaay off road."

He started with VW power but soon switched to Porsche motors. Talkin' about Weber carbs, crazy cams and homemade headers got Ray animated, his hands describing the proper slide through a long corner and the correct attitude for a desert jump.

He spoke of working with his friend, Parnelli Jones!, to develop suspension for their off-road buggies. How they finally got Fox shocks to build exactly what they wanted. How the whole sport changed once their machines got some decent suspenders.

I told Ray a dirty joke and we both laughed. "You sure are a happy guy, Mosey. I'm glad ya take the time to come visit me." He looked at me with squinted eyes. "Why does a guy like you bother to visit an old man like me?"

"Cuz I like ya, Ray. And I enjoy the time I spend with you. It's just that simple."

"Well you sure are a bright spot in my week."

I shuffled my boots in the dust. "Same for me, Ray, Same for me." Looking up, I stuck out my hand. "See ya later, buddy."

We shook on it, I gathered up my helmet and gloves, fired up the Sporty and rode out, giving Ray the high sign. His wave followed me down the road for a long, long time.

Life is short and brutal. Ride free...

30th September 2014

(<https://www.xlforum.net/forum/sportster-motorcycle-forum/sportster-motorcycle-era-specific-and-model-specific/ironhead-sportster-motorcycle-talk-1957-1985/167837-a-chat-with-a-whitebeard/page10#post3622351>)

=====

"Can I have a gander at that?"

He reached out a hand across the table, the fingers long and strong, the skin like parchment paper but without a trace of shakiness. I dropped a chunk of hash the size and shape of a goose egg, but as black as my heart, in his palm. Those long fingers closed over it like the jaws of a wolf trap.

He looked long and hard at the resinous bit of goodness. From his expression you woulda thought he was regarding an incredibly large and valuable diamond. He sniffed and his wrinkled face broke into a toothy show of appreciation. "This takes me way back. I ain't seen nuthin' like this in a long time!"

"Tear off a chunk and then you can really appreciate the aroma."

The well-aged fingers squeezed the hash and his smile broadened. "This is soft." He held the hash to his nose. His eyes widened. "Spicy! This is special, like the gold seal hash that we used to get. It came with eagles and elephants and strange writing all stamped in gold leaf on the outside. Really special stuff."

I nodded. "Yeah, I saw that a few times."

"So where is this from? Lebanon? Morocco? It looks and smells like the sheesh we got back in the Sixties and Seventies."

"It ain't from Morocco or Lebanon or India. Nope. I made it in my kitchen"

He looked up from regarding the hash in hand. "No way!" He saw the expression on my face. "Yer not kidding, are you?"

"No way, Ray." I said. "I wouldn't kid about sumpin' that important. I made it from plants that I grew in my backyard."

"Now I'm really looking forward to trying it. Ya make yer own hashish? Damn. Yer an unusual feller, Mosey."

"Well Ray, I would hafta agree and the best part is I really don't need to work at it. It just comes natcherly."

Ray handed back the hash, a bit reluctantly, and a couple fresh cigarettes. I tore off two pieces and rolled them into long snakes of hash. Using my Leatherman tool, I inserted the hash into Ray's cigarettes and handed them back. Ray's eyes twinkled merrily as he tucked them into the pack of Pall Malls.

"I'm gonna really enjoy these. Thanks for being so nice to an old man."

"Shut up Ray. I didn't come here for thanks, I'm here to hear you talk about the Isle of Man, dammit!"

"Whattaya wanna know?"

"Well, like how did ya even get to go? From what little I know, it's really hard to even get a chance to ride there."

"Yeah, those Brits don't really like letting outsiders into their game."

"So? Make with the facts, wouldya?"

"Okay, okay. I was wrenching at the Harley dealership in San Diego. I has been racing a lot and winning most of 'em. Dirt, roadracing, whatever. And one day old man Davidson was in the shop and he came up to me and said, 'I hear yer a pretty good racer. do you want to race for us?' I about fell over, but I somehow managed a yessir!"

"Are you kidding? Arthur Davidson?"

"Yep. So after a couple years on the Factory team, I qualified for my International Racing License and I got sent to race on the Island."

"For some reason I thought you were a privateer and running a Triumph."

"Naw, I was riding a K-model."

I blurted out, "A K-model?"

=====

We need to pause for a moment, Dear Reader, as your Humble Narrator got a little freaked out by the next couple sentences that Ray uttered. I have never heard this tidbit of HD lore and I truly hope that Patrick or one of the other resident K-model experts will chime in as to the validity or ridiculousity of Ray's next statement. Now Dear readers, back to the narrative...

=====

"Yup. And they weren't regular K bikes. To compete with the Triumphs and BSAs, the rear cylinder was removed and covered with a blanking plate. The front was bored and stroked to 650 cc."

I was incredulous. "A 650, one-cylinder K-model? Was it faired in?"

“Nah, just a open bike. It was a lot of fun to ride but hard to start. Damn that thing was a bitch to start.”

Ray's attention wandered to a pretty nurse that was walking past. We chatted for a while longer about Ray's aluminum-bodied AC Cobra (He yanked out the original 289 and shoehorned in a 427 just for kicks!) and his old Cheetah with a small block Chevy 350. It sounded like old Ray really loved both those cars. That old dude really digs his toys - and the faster the better!

I could tell that Ray was getting tired so I bid him a fond farewell and rode my old Shovelhead outta the parking lot. After a couple miles I pulled off the road and just sat in the dirt next to my old Harley smoking a fat joint and thinking about how lucky i was to have met Ray. Life is good.

=====

Well, Dear Reader, we also talked about Bonneville...

but that's for the next installment.

You ain't gonna wanna miss that, lemme tell ya!

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Life is short and brutal. Ride free...

12th October 2014

<https://www.xlforum.net/forum/sportster-motorcycle-forum/sportster-motorcycle-era-specific-and-model-specific/ironhead-sportster-motorcycle-talk-1957-1985/167837-a-chat-with-a-whitebeard/page11#post3629153>

=====

I'd play the Red River Valley
And he'd sit out in the kitchen and cry
And run his fingers through seventy years of livin'
And wonder, “Lord, has ever' well I've drilled run dry?”

We were friends, me and this old man
Like desperados waitin' for a train
Like desperados waitin' for a train

=====

The old man was watching me intently as I rode across the parking lot. The Sportster was feeling kinda frisky and maybe, just maybe, I was going a little fast for the conditions, but...what the hell? Ya gotta live a little, right?

As the bump in the driveway approached I stood up on the pegs and goosed the throttle. The Ironhead motor purred and gathered herself under me like a responsive horse, muscles bunching, preparing to jump. The front wheel hit the bump and followed a predictable trajectory. My little silver Sporty was airborne! Just for a moment, but what a glorious fraction of my life.

Without conscious thought, my right hand feathered the throttle and the tires hit the ground almost in unison. I grabbed the brakes hard and slid to a stop in the dirt. I flashed my best Tom Cruise/Risky Business megawatt grin and Ray answered back with a war whoop. Maybe a rebel yell, I dunno, but it was an expression of pure joy, lemme tell y'all. That old man was grinning bigger than I've ever seen before. Like to split his weathered, leathery mug from ear to ear. It makes Your Humble narrator smile just remembering it.

I put the kickstand down, turned off the petcock, gave her one last rev and shut 'er down. His sharp, blue eyes followed every move I made. He was sitting in a heavily upholstered chair carefully placed in the shade of a towering eucalyptus tree, stroking his long, white beard and watching me walk toward him.

=====
He's a drifter and a driller of oil wells
And an old school man of the world
He let me drive his car
When he's too drunk to

And he'd wink and give me money for the girls
And our lives were like some old western movie
Like desperados waitin' for a train
Like desperados waitin' for a train

From the time that I could walk he'd take me with him
To a bar called the Green Frog Cafe
There were old men with beer guts and dominos
Lying 'bout their lives while they'd played

And I was just a kid
They all called his "Sidekick"
Like desperados waitin' for a train
Like desperados waitin' for a train
=====

"So whats the fastest that you've ever gone on a motorcycle?"

"I'm not really what you would call a fast rider. Aggressive in traffic, but not really fast."

"Aw c'mon Mosey, I saw you ridin' into the lot just now. I know for sure that you've gone for it."

I told him about a time that I rowed through the gears until there weren't any left and kept twisting the throttle until I pegged the hunnerd and forty mph speedo. How I felt as if the slightest twitch, a rock or a crack in the pavement and instant mechanical oblivion would follow leading to instant death or gory dismemberment. How although I loved the rush of pure speed, I wasn't sure how long I could endure that rarified atmosphere.

Ray was smiling and nodding while I spoke. The gears turning in his head were audible from across the parking lot, so I asked, "Tell me Ray, what's the fastest you've ever gone?"

His eyes got cloudy and distant as he leaned back in the big, comfortable chair. The grin faded a bit, a shadow of concentration passed over Ray's sun and his hands instinctively wandered, a tad shakily, up to stroke the long whiskers, smoothing the wild hairs as the breeze ruffled across him.

=====
One day I looked up and he's pushin' eighty
And there's brown tobacco stains all down his chin
To me he's one of the heroes of this country

So why's he all dressed up like them old men

=====

“Fifteen.”

“In a row?”

“Yup. Fifteen years in a row I went to Bonneville, Run the salt. See how fast I could go.”

“Yer talkin' fast! Real fast. The kinda fast that I don't have the balls to experience. Don't have the wallet neither.” We both laughed a little. “So now it's your turn Ray. You gotta tell me how fast you done.”

“Well, imagine sliding yourself into a metal tube, laying flat on yer back with a motor screaming a couple inches behind your head and watching the world through a little bitty screen between yer toes. It's amazing what a man will do if he really wants go fast.” With nicotine stained fingers, Ray lit a Pall Mall and took a long drag.

“The first couple years, I rode regular motorbikes. Ya know, ones that I done a lot of hop up work on, but still regular motorcycles. Then I got bit by the streamliner bug. I was working with a guy you might have heard of, his name was Breedlove.”

I looked at Ray and interrupted. I blurted out, “Craig Breedlove? The fastest man on earth? Uhhhh, yeah. I've heard of him.”

Ray chuckled. “I got to drive one of his early machines and once I felt the power and possibilities of that streamliner...well...it was a done deal for me. I hadta have one of them things. So I went home and started building. Planning and building for next year and the next year. And the next year. It just never stopped. It was sumpin' I just hadta do. And it ended up with me going five twenty.”

What the hell?!“ Astonished I stared at this quiet, unassuming, gentle and slightly worn by the passing years man, a man walking tall in spite of the weight of the years bearing on his shoulders. “Five hunnerd and twenty miles per hour? Are you pulling my leg?”

“Aw hell, Mosey. That wasn't even a record setting run. It didn't get my name in any record books but it set a record for me. I never became famous or nuthin' but I sure had a helluva lot of fun.” He grinned pensively and I knew he was back in that flying cigar tube, smelling the hot oil and fuel, hearing the howling motor, experiencing the world at frequency and pitch that few could understand.

=====

Drinkin' beer and playin' Moon and Forty-two

Like desperados waitin' for a train

Like desperados waitin' for a train

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Poetry courtesy of Guy Clark

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Life is short and brutal. Ride free...

26th October 2014

<https://www.xlforum.net/forum/sportster-motorcycle-forum/sportster-motorcycle-era-specific-and-model->

specific/ironhead-sportster-motorcycle-talk-1957-1985/167837-a-chat-with-a-whitebeard/page13#post3637034)

=====

As I pulled in the clutch lever to downshift for the railroad tracks, I felt more than heard the pop as the ferrule on the end of the cable gave up the good fight. With the lever flapping uselessly against the left grip I firmly nudged the gear selector down and felt second gear engage. Double bump and the tracks were behind me. Open road ahead. The old Harley gearbox accepted my upshifts without a complaint. Vroom, snick, vroom. Oh yeah.

Let's see...my clutch cable is busted, I live in the middle of the heavily trafficked San Fernando Valley, riding a motorsickle is dangerous enough when everything is working the way it should...hmmmm. Should I go home?

Hell no! I'm on my way to see Ray!! A stupid broken clutch cable isn't gonna stop me. Not now. I'm more than halfway there...ain't no way I'm going home. Like any self-respecting idiot, I decide I'll figure out what to do later and I continue riding my Sportster.

By carefully timing my approaches I'm able to slip through every single traffic light without coming to a stop and before too long I'm pulling into the parking lot of the convalescent home. I get real lucky and somehow ease the old dog into neutral. Whew...that wasn't so bad...but I'm really not looking forward to the ride home.

The area under the trees is fulla old folks out enjoying the warm November afternoon. They sit on their chairs and I run the gantlet. By now, most of 'em are used to my visits and they look up greeting me with nods and handshakes. I take a moment with each one, "Hey Dave, hows the hip feeling?" and "Marge it's good to see ya out here!" and, "Gus, you shouldn't be smoking. You know it'll stunt yer growth, dammit."

After making my way down the line finally I get to Ray, sitting in the gazebo, stroking his luxuriant beard and looking for all the world like a potentate on his throne. Like a regal old biker holding court. I grinned at the old man and he motioned me closer. I drew up a chair and sat down with my friend.

=====

So, we'll go no more a roving
So late into the night,
Though the heart be still as loving,
And the moon be still as bright.

=====

"Been a while."

"Yeah. I'm working double shifts right now."

"What the hell would a good looking young feller like you be working that much? You should be out chasin' skirts." Ray's beard contained the secret smile of a man that's done his share of romancin' the fairer sex. "Ya gotta have some fun while yer still on this side of the dirt."

"Well, if it makes ya feel any better about my work schedule Ray, I'm doing all this for a woman." Ray's eyes brightened visibly.

"My Mom." The devilish grin softened and became an expression of maternal longing. Hell, even an eighty-five year old man misses his mother sometimes. "She needs a little help and I'm glad to do sumpin' for her for a change." I motioned at the Ironhead parked on the concrete apron. "Busted the clutch cable on the way here."

"No shit? Where did it happen?" He shook his head and whistled softly. "You rode all the way here like that. Most guys woulda rode back home. Hell, most guys would called a tow truck. How ya gonna get back home?"

"I been thinkn' about that. I got a couple ideas. We'll see..."

= = = = =

For the sword outwears its sheath,
And the soul wears out the breast,
And the heart must pause to breathe,
And love itself have rest.

= = = = =

After a while Ray sez, "So I was out riding my Black Shadow..you know what a Black Shadow is Mosey?"

"Of course. The Vincent is one of my top three bikes. Gotta love the frameless, hotrod motorcycle. And that gigantic, frying pan for a speedometer. Classic."

"Well, it musta been 1964 or '65. I was riding and I stopped to help out a guy sitting by the side of the road with a motorcycle. Turns out he didn't need any help. He was just taking a break on a long ride. We shared a joint and shot the shit for a while 'til he says to me. "That's one of them Vincents. I hear they're fast. Wanna trade bikes for a couple miles?"

"Lemme tell ya Mosey, I don't usually let people ride my bikes, especially strangers. And this guy was a real character. Long hair, big beard, kinda scruffy, riding a kinda beat-looking chopper. But for some reason...I said yes."

Ray wasn't looking at me any more. His eyes were distant as he relived the memory. " We rode along for prob'ly twenty miles or so. That chopper looked like crap but it ran pretty good. For a Harley. I was having fun! We swapped back in a gas station and went our separate ways."

Ray paused to light a Pall Mall, working hard to get a flame against the quartering breeze. He puffed contentedly and continued. "Flash forward to the next summer and me and my girlfriend are relaxing in a campground. We're sitting by the fire planning where we're gonna take the dune buggies the next day when we hear motorcycles approaching. Harleys. A lot of 'em."

"Forty or fifty bikes pull into the campground and set up next to us. My girlfriend is kinda freaked out when she sees that they are Hell's Angels. I tell her to be cool. Well, within a few minutes bikers are walking into our campsite and taking firewood and chairs and stuff. My girlfriend is holdin' onto me and I'm thinkin' that I'm way outnumbered and I'll get my ass handed to me if I say a word. But if I don't do sumpin' they're gonna take all my stuff and prob'ly my girl as well. Kinda in a bit of a predicament."

The ember glows as Ray inhales. He slowly blows out a thin stream of smoke through pursed lips. "So about the time that my blood was starting to boil a couple more bikes, followed by a pickup truck and a

couple cars, pulled into the campground. I heard some shouting and a couple minutes later the same bikers that took my stuff started returning it, mumbling sheepish apologies, before heading back to their camp."

"Another biker walked up and as he got close to the fire I saw that it was the guy I swapped bikes with like a year ago. He started apologizing saying that his boys were a little outta hand and that they had no right bothering anyone. In the middle of his apology he suddenly realizes who I am and we start shaking hands and talkin' shit. My girlfriend is looking at me and him. She couldn't believe our luck."

"Well after a little while, he goes back to his camp and a few minutes later, two Angels walk over and give us a couple big T-bone steaks and a cooler fulla beer. Now that was an ending that I sure didn't expect."

"So Mosey, what are ya gonna do about that clutch?" I snapped back to the here-and-now, leaving that dark campground fulla dirty, hairy bikers on a warm evening back in the Groovy Sixties. Yes, Dear Reader, it was 2014 and I was smack in the middle of SoCal dreading a clutchless ride home through heavy traffic.

A pile of trash, some of it broken auto parts and what appeared to be metal shelving was visible in the dumpster of a nearby muffler shop. I wandered over and asked the attendant if I could do a little dumpster diving after explaining my plight.

"Ya ain't gonna find any clutch parts in there," the guy scoffed.

"Yeah, I know. But I might find sumpin' that I can use. Thanks."

A little digging rewarded me with a piece of metal about sixteen inches long with a hole in it four inches from one end. A car mirror gave up a couple strips of duct tape that had been used to hold it onto the car. I walked back to Ray carrying my prizes. The guy from the muffler shop watched as I got to work on my bike.

"What the hell ya gonna do with that?"

I stripped the sheathing off and threaded the cable through the hole in the metal bracket, then slid it down until it was almost touching the adjuster where it enters the primary cover. After kinking the cable so it wouldn't slip back through the hole, I taped the cable onto the metal. I put the last piece of tape on the primary where the improvised clutch lever would touch - I didn't wanna scratch up my nice aluminum!

Now I had a lever with which to activate my clutch. Crude and difficult to use, but it would work. By pushing forward on the lever, the cable would pull out, the ramp would rotate and the balls would do their magic dance. Yee haw! Of course, I would hafta lean forward and down to use the clutch but I don't mind a little fancy riding. Whatever does the trick, right?

Ray shook his head. "Mosey, I gotta hand it to ya. That's damned inventive and all from a trash pile. Yer alright."

Now that was a true compliment. I managed a wry, little smile but inside I was beaming, proud, fit to bust. Ray says I'm alright! Aw shucks.

Ray watched as I tested it out in the parking lot. Not easy to use, downright difficult to be honest with ya Dear Reader, but manageable. I pulled up by Ray and with the motor idling and the front wheel dancing in the dust, we said our farewells. I dropped the trans into first using my improvised clutch lever and Ray clapped me on the back. "If ya don't fall off..."

"...yer not going fast enough!" I finished the sentence with a laugh and Ray joined in. He was still laughing as I pulled away. The guy in the muffler shop stood in the doorway, shaking his head. He waved at me and I gunned the motor and headed for home.

=====
Though the night was made for loving,
And the day returns too soon,
Yet we'll go no more a roving
By the light of the moon.

Lord Byron

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Life is short and brutal. Ride free...
17th November 2014

(<https://www.xlforum.net/forum/sportster-motorcycle-forum/sportster-motorcycle-era-specific-and-model-specific/ironhead-sportster-motorcycle-talk-1957-1985/167837-a-chat-with-a-whitebeard/page14#post3653030>)

=====

Ya ever have one of those days?

Ya know the kinda day when you're on yer feet all friggin' day. movin' every minute and flat out bustin' yer ass for every dollar. The kinda day that when it's finally over and ya look back, do a little figurin' and realize that yer further behind than when ya started. The kinda day that just makes ya say, "Eff it all. I don't need this shit!"

Man, it was one of them kinda days fer sure. I felt beat and disgusted with it all - I just wanna get a break dammit! What the hell am I gonna do?

I'm gonna go see Ray!

=====
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"Mosey! Good to see ya. Pull up a chair and set a spell."

We shot the breeze for a few, how-ya-beens and whatcha-up-tos, watched the nurses change shift and enjoyed the sunshine after a couple days of rain. Ray reached across the table and tapped my arm. "I remembered a story that I thought you would like to hear. Now this happened a long time ago, but I'm sure that you'll dig it."

"Hell yeah! Hit me Ray."

It was in '67 or '68 and I rode up to Oregon to see this hippie chick that I met in San Francisco. She was livin' in a cabin up in the mountains and had been writing me letters telling me how cool it was - all green

and mountains and streams and everything.”

“I got to thinking that a break from the city would be just what I needed so I strapped a sleeping bag to my Shovelhead and hit the road. I was bored on I-5 mosta the way north, but once I hit Eugene and headed up into the mountains I was really enjoying the ride. Twisting through Douglas fir trees and following this wild, river...”

“That would be the MacKenzie River. I know it well.”

“Really?”

“Yeah. My old stomping grounds. I've fished up and down that river. Salmon, steelhead, trout. Good memories, Ray”

He chuckled through his beard, pleased to have mentioned sumpin' that made me smile. Leaning forward in his chair, he continued his tale.

“Took a while, lotsa wrong turns up dirt and gravel roads, but at last I found the girl. Like she said, she was living in this cool old log cabin way up in the woods and there was a stream running past about fifty feet from the door. I could see the fish in the clear, cold water just waiting to be caught. She showed me the hot springs that had been dug out and lined with rocks. perfect for soaking the ache from my motorsickle-weary muscles. The air was crisp and clean smelling. The sun shone down, the girl was beautiful in her little hippie dress and bare feet, smiling an invitation at me. You know what I'm talkin' about...the kinda invitation a real man can't refuse. Wink wink! Man, I was in heaven!”

“And then all her damned hippie friends showed up. A battered old Volkswagen van bumped up the rutted, rocky excuse of a driveway and a bunch of dirty, hairy people climbed out. Are you shittin' me? The damned girl forgot to mention the other weirdoes living there - I thought it was gonna be me and her, naked in the hot springs, running around and effing anywhere we wanna. But no!”

“You hate hippies, doncha Ray?” I laughed.

“Well, let's just say most of 'em ain't worth one hard-working real man. After a couple days of those freaks smokin' dope and running around naked, well I had about had as much as I could take. Ya ever seen a naked, hairy hippie that hasn't showered in a week? It ain't pretty lemme tell ya.”

“I was planning on spending a week or ten days just hangin' out in the Oregon woods, fishing and ballin' the little chickie but I had enough after just a few days. I packed up my junk, kissed the girl, and hit the road for home.”

“Didn't make it too far.” Ray paused to light a coffin nail. With tendrils of smoke playing about his beard he regarded me. I was listening with an expression that told him I was there ridin' next to him. He grinned like a kid.

“I found a bar in a little town just down the road a piece. It was a crazy place fulla my kinda people: lumberjacks in those boots with all the spikes in the soles - I think they call 'em “cork boots” or sumpin' - choker setters and fellers and guys that ran the donkey engines. There was a buncha guys that were building a dam somewhere upstream and then there were the local folks that called this little tavern home. Lotsa money being spent, the whiskey and beer were flowing, I was as happy as a puppy with two

dicks to lick.”

I smiled inside thinking about Ray's strange fascination with double-dicked dawgs. Crazy old coot!

“Well I hung out with these good old boys and gals until they closed the bar and threw us all out. We stood in the parking lot for a while passing around a bottle but eventually everyone wandered off and I kickstarted my bike. I was feeling a little frisky so I remember peeling out in the parking lot and slinging gravel as I left. The warm, summer night air felt good as I headed outta the dark little town and turned onto the highway.”

“Ridin' through those mountains at night was friggin' incredible. The road was clean, smooth asphalt - nice and wide - with lotsa banked turns between tree-lined straights. I was lovin' it, rollin' along, slightly drunk and not a care in the world. I was ridin' high, no doubt about it, Mose.”

Old Ray leaned back in his chair and stroked his beard. “It was going great and I was makin' good time back down that hill, headed for Eugene, civilization, and points beyond. I was lookin' forward to a good night's sleep in a clean motel room when I heard that familiar sputter and a half a mile further the Shovel sputtered and coughed again, so I reached down to turn the petcock to the reserve position. No problem, reserve will prob'ly get me to the outskirts of Springfield...I can get gas there.”

“Except for one thing: My stupid drunken ass had turned the petcock to Reserve instead of On and I was really and truly outta gas. The motor died and I pulled in the clutch and let the old girl coast along. Hey! This isn't half bad. besides the rushing sound of the warm night air and the crisp sound of rubber on pavement, it was quiet. I'm rolling along, coasting downhill, at about twenty and not a car on the road with me. I shut off my lights and just enjoyed the ride.”

“Until I came to an uphill section and I had to get off and push. It wasn't very steep but it seemed to go on forever. It was prob'ly only a mile but I felt like Sisyphus pushing that damnable rock.”

Now lemme tell ya Dear Reader, I was not expecting a Greek mythology reference in the middle of a good motorsickle story. Ray always brings a surprise or two.

“So when I pushed that heavy machine around a corner and saw that the road was downhill, I practically fell on my knees in gratitude. Well...that and sheer exhaustion. I jumped in the saddle and let 'er rip. As it rolled along it gained some speed until I was tearing along at ten or fifteen miles per but after pushing it felt like flying.”

“The stretch of road was different than what I had been on before. I previously had the mountainside on my right and the river visible on the left, but here the road veered away from the river and cut through a stand old tall, old-growth Douglas fir trees. The trees were tall and black and the road ran dead straight through them to emerge in the moonlight about a mile distant. It was kinda strange riding through the blackness between those two hunderd foot tall trees. They blocked the moonlight completely and it was eerie rolling silently along.”

“At the far end where the asphalt was bright with moonlight i saw a figure standing in the middle of the road. 'What the hell?' I muttered. Why is someone standing in the middle of the highway? Maybe there a broken down car or an accident or sumpin'. As I got closer I realized the person was wearing a heavy coat and I wondered why they needed a coat on a warm summer evening. Hell, mine was rolled up and strapped to the handlebars.”

"Now at this point I should figured sumpin' was up but when I gots a snootful I can be kinda slow. It wasn't 'til I was about a hunnerd and fifty feet away that I finally realized that this ain't a man in a heavy coat...it's a gawddamned bear! And I'm headed straight at him!"

"My mind clicked into overdrive and ran through my options. There weren't many and they didn't seem good. If I stopped the bear would be on me in a flash. If I tried to turn around I wouldn't get very far coasting uphill. Hell if I abandoned the bike and ran I wouldn't stand a chance of beating Mister Bear in a foot race. And if I kept going the way i was it was like hand delivering myself as a late night snack. Aw sheee-it!"

"My drunken fog was receding as fast as the bear was approaching. He looked ten feet tall standing there and he drew himself up even taller as I got closer. Oh God I don't want to end this fine evening with a bear knocking me off my Harley, dragging me into the woods and gnawing on my skull. Puhleeze God, I ain't never asked for much but for the sake of all that is good and holy please save my scroungy ass from that there bear!"

"I couldn't have been more than twenty feet away when my brain spat out the answer. Still coasting I jerked the bike hard to the left and heard that beautiful sloshing sound as forgotten fuel splashed over the tunnel. In a flash I flicked the key on, yanked in the clutch lever and kicked 'er into second gear. I popped that clutch praying like dying sinner. the bear was so close that I could smell him all rank and dirty. I almost laughed when i thought he smelled slightly better than yer average hippie."

I laughed out loud. Ray shot me a sidelong glance and forged on.

"The bear was reaching for me so I feinted, swerving the bike toward the right. Old Mister bear followed right so I swerved back to the left and popped the clutch. The bear let out a grunting bark and lunged at me paws extended when the Shovel motor caught and roared to life. I could clearly see the claws, long and deadly, swiping through the air just outta reach of my face as I flashed past. With his rank breath in my nostrils I shifted into third and would 'er out. I ran 'er as long as the gas lasted and the bear was far behind. Well...not far enough to keep me from checking the mirror as I coasted almost all the rest of the way to Springfield. I was sure that Mister Bear was hot on my trail, mad as hell and hungry from my flesh."

"I even woke up in the middle of the night in my motel room absolutely certain that the bear was in the bathroom waiting to eat my heart. I've dreamed about that incident many times over the years. it was a night ride that I will never forget."

"And now I won't forget it either. That's a helluva a story."

Ray dug a cig outta the battered pack of Pall Malls and, with hands that trembled the tiniest bit, he stuck it in his piehole. I lit a match and leaned in close, holding the flame as he puffed away. "That was a great story Ray. Thanks"

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Well, Dear Reader, that's alls I got for now. Stay safe and warm, hope ya have good things to smoke and drink and loved ones to share them with. All y'all be good and don't forget...if ya don't fall off, yer not going fast enough!

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Life is short and brutal. Ride free...

14th December 2014

(<https://www.xlforum.net/forum/sportster-motorcycle-forum/sportster-motorcycle-era-specific-and-model-specific/ironhead-sportster-motorcycle-talk-1957-1985/167837-a-chat-with-a-whitebeard/page15#post3669488>)

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Mosey's Tale Continues - Part Three

If anyone would like to send Ray a Christmas card, drop me a PM for my address and I'll see to it that he get's yer holiday well-wishes. He would be pleased as punch, I'm certain.

Life is short and brutal. Ride free...

(<https://www.xlforum.net/forum/sportster-motorcycle-forum/sportster-motorcycle-era-specific-and-model-specific/ironhead-sportster-motorcycle-talk-1957-1985/167837-a-chat-with-a-whitebeard/page16#post3670811>)

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Thanks again to everyone that responded to the Cards For Ray idea. Everybody give yerselves a pat on the back and a big slice of raisin pie! I'll let ya know about the visit with a sackfulla yer cards.

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(<https://www.xlforum.net/forum/sportster-motorcycle-forum/sportster-motorcycle-era-specific-and-model-specific/ironhead-sportster-motorcycle-talk-1957-1985/167837-a-chat-with-a-whitebeard/page17#post3672730>)

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Thought all y'all might like to see what Old Ray is gettin' from me for Xmas...



Kinda crude but whaddya expect from a guy with a hammer and a nail? The plan is to make a belt to go with the buckle. Gonna tool the logos from the different factory teams that Ray rode for: HD, Kawasaki, Suzuki, and his favorite bikes: Vincent, BSA and Triumph.

BTW, the friend that gave me the piston said it was from a three cylinder Trumpet racing motor. Just seemed perfect for Ray.

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(<https://www.xlforum.net/forum/sportster-motorcycle-forum/sportster-motorcycle-era-specific-and-model-specific/ironhead-sportster-motorcycle-talk-1957-1985/167837-a-chat-with-a-whitebeard/page16#post3670676>)

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Mosey's Christmas Ride

Like a freight train a hunnerd cars long, fully loaded and ballin' the jack at eighty miles per, the wind

funneled through mountain passes and roared down across the Los Angeles basin. It's a cold wind that shakes the walls like an earthquake and pulls at the shingles, ripping at the earth and tossing the palms trees to and fro. It's a mean wind that makes men think dark thoughts. It's a bitter wind that has harried housewives fingering the edge of their carving knife as they eye their passionless husband's throat while he sleeps. It's a wind that Los Angeles know well.

I woke feeling restless, the wind clawing at the walls of my shack, and by the weird blue glow of my bedside alarm clock I could see it was four AM - hours before I needed to be up and at 'em. I rolled over and remembered my task for the next day - go visit Ray, play Santa and deliver a buncha cards from my motorcycling brothers. Cards from folks that he's never met. Cards fulla good wishes and season's greetings. Cards carrying generous thoughts to a timeworn old man.

I smiled, pulled the covers a little closer and drifted back to sleep knowing what the morrow would bring. Let the wind howl and moan, I'm gonna dream my two-wheeled dream.

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The wind was still playing cat and mouse through the suburban jungle as I rolled the big orange Harley into the noonday sun. I eased it onto the jiffy stand and stepped back to eyeball the scoot. The old Shovel sure looked good, it's chrome and polished aluminum winking in the bright Christmas sunshine, the decades old Competition Orange paint gleaming in spite of the years. I smiled and went in the house. I gathered up my leathers and helmet, grabbed the worn leather saddlebags fulla cards and locked up the compound.

Slinging the bags over the rear fender, I climbed into the saddle and kickstarted the old machine. The boom of internal combustion echoed off the concrete walls and razor wire surrounding the SFV headquarters of the Mosey empire. I grinned maniacally listening to the waves of sound roiling around me. Today is gonna be a good day.

=====

"Wow! You look like a movie star!!" I stood aside and held open the lobby door as an older lady, dressed in her Sunday best to honor the holiday, walked out. She smiled broadly, flattered by a genuine compliment and blushed, her cheeks reddening slightly. I'd seen her before, a faded reminder of the gorgeous youth that she had once been, and had been impressed by her grace and girlish charm.

"Oh you." She took my hand. "You sure know how to make a girl's Christmas."

Now it was my turn to blush a little as this octogenarian batted her blue eyes at me. She reached out, laid her palm on my cheek and said, "Your lucky there's no mistletoe around, little boy, or you'd be in big trouble."

Just then the convalescent home director, and affable Asian dude named Jim, strolled up and saved me from the tender clutches of my elderly movie starlet. "Phyllis, they need you in the music room. It's time to start the Christmas carols and they need your soprano."

Movie star Phyllis gave me a quick peck on the cheek. She smelled of lilac perfume. "If I only had some mistletoe..."

"Come on Phyllis." Jim lead her away gently and handed her off to a nurse who escorted her down the hall toward where I imagined the Music Room would be.

"Let me call Ray for you. I think he's in his room."

"If he's resting don't bother him, I can come back later."

"No, You wait right there, I'm sure he would want to see you. Jim turned and headed for the office. Over his shoulder he said, " He would be upset if he knew you were here and we didn't call him. Your his best friend."

I stood there in the lobby between the grand piano and the potted ficus tree feeling humbled and honored by Jim's last remark. Wow! It's cool that anyone thinks that I might be Ray's best friend. I've just moved a couple rungs up on the ladder. The view is a lot better from up here. Hope I don't get all light-headed from the thin air.

A short time later the elevator doors opened and Ray shambled out into the wood panelled hall. "Mosey!" His rheumy eyes brightened and he stuck out his hand as he spotted me. My leathers creaked softly as he pumped my arm enthusiastically. Damn, the old fart sure has a solid grip!

Ray, shuffling slowly, walked me over to a pair of chairs in a quiet corner and we settled in. Old folks drifted past us to congregate in the lobby in groups where they dispersed to parts unknown within the large building. Apparently there is always sumpin' going on to keep the residents occupied: poetry readings, singers, dancers, music lessons and group chorus, and Ray has spoken of his enjoyment especially with the long-legged dancer that comes in twice a month. Ray sure get's a happy look on his wrinkled, hairy mug when he's describing her performances!

We talked about the usual things - how'd ya like the big wind, how's the motorbike runnin', are ya gettin' any, have ya gotten any extra special sponge baths - ya know, the usual questions that we all ask each other. I noticed that ray was answering a little slowly and, in a five minute conversation, he asked me the same question three times.

"So what's the fastest you've gone?"

"I dunno for sure Ray. When I was much younger and a little dumber I buried the needle on a hunnerd and forty mile per hour speedo one time. so I guess maybe a hundred and fifty or so."

"That's nuthin. Try five hundred miles per hour. You make a mistake at that speed, you have a mechanical failure, whatever, and it's gonna get crazy. Sliding outta control across the salt a little scary."

"Damn Ray, I can only imagine how that would feel, but my ass is clenchin' just thinkin' about it."

Ray's eyes got a vague, faraway look as he stared out the window. I'm sure he was seeing far expanses of shimmering salt baking in the relentless sunlight of Utah instead of the well-manicured lawns and carefully pruned eucalyptus trees outside the glass. I'm certain that he was listening to the howl of a well-tuned motor at max revs instead of the low mutter of an old folks home. We sat in silence for a long ,o,emt.

"Mosey, tell me," Ray looked up brightly. "So what's the fastest you've ever gone?"

A little caught off-guard I replied, "Uhh, a buck fitty, a hunnerd and fifty maybe. Why do you ask?"

A moment of silence as Ray looks down. He lifts his head and smiles. "So how ya been?"

I pull out the saddlebag and we proceed to go through the contents. As each envelope was opened and Ray examined the contents, turning them over in his gnarled hands, his smile got bigger and bigger. He would hand each to me asking me to read it to him. he wanted to know where each and every letter and card was from. "Are you kidding me Mosey, a card from London?"

"Well, it's from London, Ontario. Up in Canada."

"Well, that is damned cool!" Ray said with a boyish grin. I grinned as well thinking about Iron Mick dropping that selfsame card in the mailbox.

Ray opened envelopes with return addresses from all over the world - the USA made a great showing and so did some far flung points of the globe. Ray got cards from Germany, Australia, the Philippines, just to name a couple.

He looked at me with an obvious sense of amazement and asked how I kept in touch with all these people.

"I use my home computer. It's easy with the internet to let people all over the globe know what yer up to in an instant."

"And all these people wanted to send me cards?" Ray's voice wavered a bit. "How am I ever gonna say thanks to all these fine people?"

"Aww Ray, I don't think you need to worry about that. I'll let 'em all know how much you enjoyed getting their holiday wishes. I know that none of 'em are expecting anything in return, they all just did it to share that good feeling ya get at the holidays. I got a buncha really cool friends."

"You sure do, Mosey. You sure do." Ray's eyes were a little misty as he leaned across the table and squeezed my arm. "You tell 'em that Motorcycle Ray says thanks. Okay?"

"I'll do that Ray." He looked down at the pile of cards and envelopes laying on the table. I could tell that he was tickled pink when he saw that every single damn one of 'em was addressed to Motorcycle Ray. I'm certain that a little detail like that sparked a warm glow in an old man's heart. then the outpouring of well-wishes fanned the flames. Ray shook his head in amazement.

We talked about how nice it was that there were still so many good people in this mean old world and that motorcycles, simple machines that they are, have magical powers to bring folks together. I told ray that most of the really good people I knew rode motorsickles. Ray nodded sagely, muttering sumpin' about the brotherhood of danger. We sat for a long moment listening to the throb and hum of the populous building around us.

"So. What's the fastest you've ever gone?"

"Not that fast Ray. Not compared to you."

"Well, lemme tell ya what happens when you crash. Yer sliding, spinning around..."

A nurse came up and laid a gentle hand on Ray's shoulder. "They are putting out Christmas dinner, Ray. Let's go down there now and get you a good seat while there is still plenty of mashed potatoes."

"And gravy! I love that damned gravy!" Ray grinned happily at the thought, mounds of fluffy potatoes drowning in rich, steaming-hot gravy and Ray with a fork in his hand.

I gathered up the cards and handed them to the nurse. Ray stood there turning over a Zippo lighter adorned with a large G in his hands. "This is beautiful. And to think someone in Georgia sent it to me. I don't know what I did to deserve this."

"Don't worry about that. You just enjoy knowing that a lot of people are wishing you a merry Christmas. And me too, Ray." I stuck out my hands and he took it. We shook hands.

"Merry Christmas Ray."

"Merry Christmas Mose. Now you go get you a good piece for New Year. Knock one off for me, okay? Wouldja do that?"

I laughed heartily. "I'll sure give it a shot. You take care and I'll be back in a couple days. See ya soon."

"Yer a good fella. Thanks again. And thanks to all yer buddies. Alright?" The nurse took Ray's arm and guided him slowly down the hall.

"I'll let 'em know, Ray. Enjoy that Christmas dinner."

Ray stopped and shook his arm loose of the nurse's grip. "Hey Mosey. What's the fastest you've ever gone?"

"Well, uhh..."

The nurse again gently tries to steer her charge in the direction of the dinner hall. Ray says, "I just wanna tell Mosey what happens when you crash."

"I think you already told him that Ray."

"Well have you ever gone five hundred and twenty miles per hour?"

"No Ray, I haven't"

Their voices faded as they moved off down the long hallway. Other, faster moving residents, were also headed for the dining area and Ray was soon lost from view.

=====

After kickstarting the old Shovelhead, I sat in the parking lot listening to the reassuring heartbeat of the old pushrod motor at idle. I twisted the throttle and listened to the exhaust crack and boom. "That's for you Ray." The thought rolled through my mind followed by, "Never seen Old Ray moving so slowly." And then, "It don't seem good, him askin' me the same question. Each time like the first time. Aww man, I hope it's just a bad day and he's better next time I see him."

I cracked the throttle one more time. "Here's to you old man." I wiped roughly at my eyes with a leather-gloved hand.

Then I pulled in the clutch, kicked the dog into gear and rode off into that cold, winter wind.

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Life is short and brutal. Ride free...

(<https://www.xlforum.net/forum/sportster-motorcycle-forum/sportster-motorcycle-era-specific-and-model-specific/ironhead-sportster-motorcycle-talk-1957-1985/167837-a-chat-with-a-whitebeard/page18#post3675562> & <https://www.xlforum.net/forum/sportster-motorcycle-forum/sportster-motorcycle-era-specific-and-model-specific/ironhead-sportster-motorcycle-talk-1957-1985/167837-a-chat-with-a-whitebeard/page18#post3675564>)

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Santa Rides Again

The blade on the well-worn Buck Ranger clicked into the cunningly designed locking mechanism and I pushed it across the table, handle first, toward Ray. The warm California sunshine glinted on the steel blade and caressed the rosewood handles and brass bolsters. Memories of times that piece of wood and metal came to my rescue made me smile a small, personal grin. 'Good old knife. Saved my hide more than once. It's a good thing to have for, lo, these many years.' And then followed the thought that old, well-used things are worth keeping. Hell, sumpin' like that is worth cherishing.

I looked across the table at Ray. He picked up the pocketknife and slit open the first card. "Holy hell Mosey," he said looking at the envelope, "this is all the way from New Zealand." He took out the card and turned it over in his big, wrinkled mitts. "Par Avion, I guess that means Air Mail in New Zealandish." He looked at one side with a furrowed brow, then flipped the card to the other side. His face lit up in a flash. "I know that guy. That's Burt Munro!"

He looked up with a wild-eyed, maniacal grin plastered on his weathered mug. "I was running my machine at Bonneville, working on it when this guy comes up and starts telling me about some fella that needs a couple bucks to run and he's from New Zealand. I said to myself that if the guy came that far he oughta be able to run the course. So I gave him five bucks."

"Later, I met the guy and thought he was a pretty nice fella. I was glad I gave him the money. And then I was surprised when he went and set a Gawd-damn record. I guess I bet on a winner that day."

I sat there, looking at Ray as he stared at the pics on the card. I shook my head slowly, finding it hard to believe what I had just heard. "Read me what the fella that sent this wrote, wouldja Mose?"

As I read the kind words on the card I imagined Ray, a strapping youth wrenching on his machine in the flat relentless sun of the salt flats, handin' over the cash that helped create a modern legend.

"Hey Ray, have ya ever seen The World's Fastest Indian?"

"What's that?"

"A movie about Burt Munro and his Bonneville record."

"No way! They made a movie about that? Just goes to show that ya never know, do ya?" Ray ginned, impishly, "They shoulda made a movie about me. But it woulda been X-rated!"

"Well buddy, I'm gonna hafta find you a copy of that movie and let you watch it. I know you'd enjoy it." I

picked up the next card and handed it to Ray. As I watched the grizzled old dude wielding my Buck Knife and smiling like a kid on Christmas day, I thought how lucky I am to get to experience a moment like this.

=====

And my thoughts turned to my friends, compatriots, brothers and sisters that made this happen. I sent a massive vibration of thanks out to all that responded at that moment. So, if today around three o'clock all y'all, Dear Readers, felt sumpin'...it was me. Thanks again.

Ray was amazed as he opened card after card and i read the sentiment contained within to him. he scratched his head, replaced the Kenworth cap and asked again how it was that I happened to have so many cool friends. I told him that it was a complete mystery to me as well and we both laughed.

I wish y'all coulda been there to see his face as he opened a package containing a badass Shovelhead tee shirt and a scale model Shovelhead touring bike. "Good gawd Mosey, even the freakin' kickstand works on this thing! This is going on my shelf!" Ray's eyes gleamed with gratitude.

Wish youse guys coulda seen the look on old Ray's mug as he pulled out a Shovelheads Forever sticker from an envelope and the tear in his eye as I read him what everyone wrote. Some of y'all are friggin' poets! Got a catch in my throat as I was reading a couple times, lemme tell ya. Damn you for making this old biker feel something approaching a human emotion! Damn you Dear Reader! It's all yer fault.

=====

I thumbed the lock and flicked the razor-sharp blade back into the handle. I reached across the table. "See ya in a few days bub. Okay"

Ray grabbed my hand and shook it vigorously. "Sounds good to me. Tell yer friends I said thanks, wouldja? Hell, who woulda thought I'd get Christmas twice in one year?" Ray smiled his best toothy grin and I couldn't help but return it.

"I'm a lucky man!" I thought as I walked across the parking lot to my old Harley.

Life is short and brutal. Ride free...

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On my way home from seeing Ray, I stopped by to see a girl I know. Now she isn't the motorcycle type - she doesn't know a Harley from a Honda and doesn't care - but she does enjoy riding pillion once in a while.

As I was telling her about Ray and Burt Munro she said, "That sounds familiar." After a little prodding she remembered seeing the movie a few years back and really enjoying it. Even she, with her little knowledge of motorbikes and even less about Bonneville, was amazed to hear of Ray's connection to the world's fastest Indian. Now she wants to meet Ray! I don't know if I wanna let her be swayed by Ray's charming way with the ladies. I'm worried that my pillion would be empty on the way back. I'd prolly hafta ride off seeing her sitting on Ray's lap in my rearview mirror.

Now, Dear Reader, I'm a man and you KNOW that could never happen. Cuz I can't see nuthin' in my

mirrors with the motor running!

Thanks again for joining forces and making a Christmas that Ray won't soon forget.

Life is short and brutal. Ride free...

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Mexican Hat Dance

The gazebo is an octagonal, roofed, wooden structure set across the parking lot, about two hundred feet from the front door of the convalescent home. On the wooden decking inside is a table surrounded by four Chippendale-style, upholstered chairs. Ray was sitting in one of the chairs and an immensely fat black man sat in one of the others. The fat man struggled to his feet as I approached, the poor chair groaning and creaking as he levered his bulk up and onto unsteady legs.

As he tottered past me, I smiled and held out my fist. The old black man grinned and bumped my fist. "What's up?" "Nuttin'." "Hang in there, sumpin's bound to happen." Rolls of fat formed on his face as he broke into a smile. Never forget, Dear Reader, that a smile, given freely, is returned many times over.

I sat in the chair opposite Ray after a warm handshake. That old fart sure has a strong grip! Not the kinda handshake that grinds yer bones, but the type that conveys a sense of controlled and restrained power.

"How ya been?"

"Not bad. Feelin' pretty good."Pause. "Of course not as good as in the old days. Ya know, I used to love fighting? Slap fights, fist fights, wrasslin', whatever. Put up yer dukes and let's get to it. let's see who's got what, ya know?"

"Yeah, I gotta pretty good idea what yer talkin' about. I grew up with three older brothers and fighting was an early learned skill in my family. Fight or perish."

"Exactly Mose! ya gotta be tough." Ray looked off into the distance."Man, I used to think I was tough. hell, invincible and bulletproof. I didn't think nuthin' could hurt me. And even if it did, I could laugh it off, get up hurtin', and continue trading punches. Nuthin', and nobody, was gonna stop me from doing what I wanted to do. Back then, it was do whatever it takes to get 'er dun."

"I really don't think you've changed much Ray."

His blue eyes sharpened their focus and he shot me a look like a falcon spotting a rabbit.

"I ain't half the man that i used to be, and I know it! Lemme tell about back when i was a tough S.O.B."

Ahhhhh. Now this is the moment, Dear Reader, that makes it all worthwhile. This is the moment when I lean back in the chair, relax, and listen close knowing that a Ray tale is about to unfold. I listen close so I can bring the words back for your perusal.

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(The picture is at the beginning of this story)

That pic has a lot to say. The bike is the one that caused old Ray to say, "Hey." The asphalt is the same bank lot that I was in when I met Ray.

And if ya look, you can see the gazebo...

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"Now I think this was the third year that I ran the Baja - things get kinda fuzzy when ya get this old - proolly around '69, I think. I was riding a Triumph with high pipes. I remember that bike well. It had high pipes and the only thing between yer thigh and a burning hot pipe was this little wire thing. We called it a barbeque grill. There was this Limey mechanic that worked for us and he always called it the 'chip basket' - ya know, fish and chips."

"I was doing pretty good. I'd passed a lot of vehicles that day and i was feeling pretty good about my standing. Maybe I was feeling a little too confident, a little too cocky, cuz i was hard on the throttle. It didn't matter, I was holding that throttle open, sliding through the corners and getting airborne off every hill. I was having a blast! It was like my perceptions and reactions were perfectly in tune . i was on top of it, lemme tell ya. My mind was zooming ahead of my bike plotting and planning every single move way, way in advance."

"It was like perfect."

Ray paused and fumbled through the pockets of his rumpled windbreaker. He pulled a Pall Mall out of the battered pack and, using a Zippo lighter emblazoned with a Georgia logo (Sent by one of all 'y'all to Ray at Christmas!) he lit his coffin nail and drew the smoke deep into his lungs. The smoke drifted out past his beard and moustache. He looked pensive for a long moment, took another drag and made me wait for the rest of the story.

Oh Dear Reader, I had to bite my lip. So many questions were rattling through my empty skull, but I knew that i had to let the story unfold in it's own way.

"So, I've got the throttle pinned and I come over this ridge. The road runs right next to this ravine and is filled with these little hills and whoop-dee-dos. I'm railing along and I come over this hill - man, the jump was perfect and I landed it like nuthin', just set 'er down easy - when outta nowhere this friggin' cow comes out of the bushes next to the trail and slams into me! Ka-pow!!"

He smacks his fist into his open hand for emphasis. Ray grins steadily as he reaches with nicotine stained fingers and pulls the butt from his lips. I wait.

"It was like two planets colliding. That gawddamn cow came outta nowhere and hit me while i was doing proolly ninety miles an hour. Somehow I held onto the bars. The bike went off the road, I hit the berm at the edge and the bike went airborne. Man i was really flying!"

"Next thing I know, I'm waking up with a motorcycle on top of me. I don't know how long I laid there, but I got the scars to prove it." Ray stood up, the legs of his chair scraping on the decking as he rose. He lifted his windbreaker and shirt to show a long, curving mass of twisted flesh across his stomach and chest. Exactly the same tight curve as hi-pipe Trumpet.

"I dunno how long I was there, but even after i woke up it took a while to realize that I was laying in a

thicket of mesquite bushes with a hot motorcycle on top of me. It was balanced so that every time I moved the exhaust pipe would come down on me, burning me more. I finally got my courage up and, in one quick motion, threw the bike offa me."

Ray took the last puff and ground out the cig on the heel of his Converse All Stars. He dropped the butt in his pocket and continued with his story. "So there I am. I start checking myself and I'm not happy with what I find. Best I can tell, my arm is busted - the left one - and my leg is definitely busted. I can feel the broken bones through my suit. But the other leg is okay. I can't feel any pain on that side. Actually I can't feel much of anything on that side at all."

I find a stick and, using it as a cane, I pull my self to my feet. Okay! I'm on my feet, I'm gonna make it! I look around now I can see over the bushes I was laying in. I can see that where the road is. It's maybe two hundred yards away. Up a really steep slope covered with rocks and brush. I realize that the other racers aren't gonna be able to see me down here and I gotta get up there somehow."

"So with my walking stick I try to take my first step. As my good foot came down my leg buckled and down I went. It turned out that I had a dislocated hip. That thing was completely outta the socket - just flappin; around. But I had to do sumpin'. So I started crawling. I crawled up that gawddamned hill as far as I could. I passed out a couple times, but when I woke up I just kept crawling."

"I got to a point where it was just too steep to go any further. I tried but I kept slipping back. That is so disheartening, to crawl up and then slide back. I laid there and looked at the sky."

Ray stared off above the treetops. "I don't wanna die here in this stinking desert. Hell, I don't even wanna spend the night here. I could be in town with some sweet seniorita at the cantina drinking mescal. Eff that! I'm damn well gettin' out of here."

"So what did ya do?" I couldn't keep my mouth shut any longer.

"I took off my helmet and waited until I heard a motor. I waited until the right moment and threw my helmet as hard as I could. I couldn't see if it actually made it as far as the road and my heart sank as i heard the motor continue on. Oh shit! Now what?!!"

"Suddenly the motor cut and within fifteen minutes another motorcycle rider was at my side. I told him if he would just help me get my bike back on the road, I could finish the race. He laughed and told me that he was going to get help."

"Well, I spent a few nights in a Mexican hospital room and had a great time pinching senioritas butts with my good hand!" Ray grinned that familiar grin. "It took me a little while longer in the hospital back in San Diego, but I was back pretty quick. I hated being stuck in bed. all I could think about was racing. Well...that and the ladies!"

Ray and I sat there in the gazebo sharing a laugh and watching the sweet Cali sun sink past the treetops in the west. Ray lit another Pall Mall.

Life is short and brutal. Ride free...

<https://www.xlforum.net/forum/sportster-motorcycle-forum/sportster-motorcycle-era-specific-and-model-specific/ironhead-sportster-motorcycle-talk-1957-1985/167837-a-chat-with-a-whitebeard/page19#post3700163> &

(<https://www.xlforum.net/forum/sportster-motorcycle-forum/sportster-motorcycle-era-specific-and-model-specific/ironhead-sportster-motorcycle-talk-1957-1985/167837-a-chat-with-a-whitebeard/page20#post3700255>)

The Hand That Writes and Quickly Moves Away

It was, Dear Reader, a hot night in early June. The concrete sidewalk radiated the day's heat through the soles of my worn boots as I stood in front of the Troubadour on Santa Monica Boulevard. Music drifted out in bits and pieces as the door to the club opened and shut. I stood there absorbing the energy of the city around me.

I had just arrived in Los Angeles from the backwoods of the Pacific Northwest with four of my best friends ready to make our mark on the world of rock. We spent the week finding a crib, a rehearsal space, a gig, women, and good bud. It was a busy week!

Come Friday night we headed to Hollywood That's how I found myself standing there in the middle of Hollyweird, knowing not a soul in town (besides my bandmates, and they don't count...at least the drummer could count to four!) and wondering what the hell I was doing there. Had we made a big mistake leaving our comfortable round of paying gigs in rural bars, playing cover tunes. Was this city gonna digest us and leave us like the piles of dog shit in the alleys?

Within five minutes I was sitting at the bar with the singer of a world famous, arena rock band, drinking a beer he bought me and marveling at the two bodacious blondes he had hanging on his arms. He had accosted me on the sidewalk in a case of mistaken identity and, in an act of apology, dragged me inside the Troub and now I was partying with a friggin' rockstar, fer gawd's sake!

Within a few minutes we were joined by the guitarist from his band and a well-known movie actor. The party swirled around me and I sat there on my barstool wondering at it all.

Now, Dear Reader, you may be wondering what the hell all this rock-n-roll nonsense has to do with motorcycles and, more specifically, with Old Ray. I can understand yer consternation. Well...lemme tell ya, this tale is about serendipity. Synchronicity if you choose. Whatever ya choose to call it, it's about the strange twists of fate that the universe has in store for us mere mortals.

Recently a kind feller from Merry Olde England that goes by the handle of Maddog sent a couple videos for Ray to peruse. The two titles he so generously sent were On Any Sunday and The World's Fastest Indian. The two vids have been languishing in my possession for a couple weeks now. I have snuck away from my crazy busy work schedule a couple times to see Ray, but unfortunately one time he was at his doctor and the other he was napping.

Finally, this week I knew i would have a full day off and made plans to hang with the crazy old coot. I was stoked to think about how happy he would be at the thought that someone would send him these movies to enjoy. I knew he would be pleased as a puppy with...well, you know. If you know anything about Ray...you know!

So, the other night when I finally got outta work I boogied straight to the grocery store to pick up some odds and ends before they closed. I leave the Sporty in the parking lot, wander the store, get my foodstuffs and as I'm standing in the checkout line I notice the scruffily dressed dude in front of me has a

motorcycle helmet in his shopping cart.

Now this isn't a shiny new helmet but a dirty, scuffed and beaten helmet with mud spatters on it. I immediately know this guy is alright so I strike up a conversation with him. He tells me that he was a stadium motocrosser but has been outta the biz for a few years. He's riding a dual sport that I noticed in the lot as I parked because of the heavy duty aluminum saddlebags and topbox. We chat about the terrors of the urban streets and then I tell him about my upcoming visit to Ray. As I tell him about the movies that I'm delivering to Ray, the dude's eyes light up.

"On Any Sunday? Are you kidding me? I'm in that movie!"

Visions of the guy as a young man on a motorbike leaping through the air, his front wheel all crossed up and roosting it in style pass through my mind's eye. Instead he tells me that he was just a little kid out with a couple friends on their Schwinn Sting Rays just foolin' around when a guy asks them if they wanna be in a movie. They ride their bikes around for the camera. "It's the scene in the very beginning and I'm the kid riding the bike with the padded crossbar on the handlebars. Man, that was a cool day." The dude looked kinda wistful for a moment, then gathered up his groceries. We shook hands and parted ways.

So today as I sat across from Ray, I reached into my pocket and pulled out the videos, I told Ray about my previous night's encounter with the dude in the grocery store. "Dammit Mosey, I saw that movie a long time ago and I kinda remember that. We're gonna hafta look for that kid when we watch it."

We made plans for me to bring a laptop next time. Ray said that they prolly wouldn't let him watch a motorcycle movie on the community DVD player. So next week Old Ray and me are gonna be sitting outside in the shade watching the movies that Maddog so kindly sent. Here's one to Maddog. He's a helluva guy... even if he does ride a Shovelhead!

So, Dear Reader, there is my tale of serendipity. Fate moves in mysterious fashion and brings us moments of strange entanglements. If I hadn't hurried to the store I might have never met the dude. Hell, if I had merely chosen a different checkout lane I wouldn't have this story to relate. It's a strange life on this planet spinning through the illimitable cold vastness of eternity.

Life is short and brutal. Ride free...

(<https://www.xlforum.net/forum/sportster-motorcycle-forum/sportster-motorcycle-era-specific-and-model-specific/ironhead-sportster-motorcycle-talk-1957-1985/167837-a-chat-with-a-whitebeard/page20#post3712002>)

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Too Fast to Live, Too Young to Die

The old man sat regarding me with a thoughtful expression. Sunlight, filtered through the trees above, dappled his worn face and white beard. He absentmindedly played with a Zippo lighter as he spoke.

"Ya know one of the main reasons that I'm here is because I been havin' a lot of trouble with my memory. The docs say it isn't Alzheimer's, it's sumpin' that they don't know exactly what's causing it. Them docs look at me like some kinda curiosity, there's always a bunch of 'em talking and whispering. Makes me crazy."

He flipped open the lighter and put flame to the cig dangling from his mouth. "Ya know Mose, as I hear

yer motor fading away after one of yer visits, I immediately start thinkin'. Thinkin' about what piece of my past I can still remember that maybe you would like to hear about. When sumpin' occurs to me, some little bit of memory, then I start really thinkin'. Sometimes I think about it when I can't sleep or while I'm smoking out here."

"I think about it and try my damndest to remember every-damn-thing about that moment. Ya know: what I was doing, who I was hanging with, what the weather was like, what I was wearing, drinking, riding..ya know, everything. And ya know what?" He looked up with a devilish grin. Without waiting for an answer, he continued.

"Them docs say I'm getting better. And I tell 'em it all Mosey's fault!" He chuckled and took a long drag. "I told 'em that I been trying to remember the old stories about my motorcycles and they think it's made an improvement in me."

Now it was my turn to grin.

"The last time you was here you asked me about any wild road stories. I got some stuff I been thinkin' about but one time stands out real clear. Ya wanna hear about it?"

I ask you Dear Reader, does a drowning man gasp for air, does a starving man dream of food, does a bear shit in the woods?

"Of course I wanna hear about it!! Gawd dammit Ray, quit teasing me with all this bullshit and tell me the damn story already." I smiled my sweetest smile and the old man burst out laughing.

"Aw Mose you shore do make me laugh."

Ray took the butt, ground it on his heel and tossed it into a nearby ashtray. He paused and looked off at the hills in the distance for a long moment before he launched back into his tale.

"So I met this girl, I don't quite remember how, that lived way the eff out in Descanso (I had to Google that one Dear Reader. It IS waaaay the eff out in the middle of nowhere!) and she calls me up one Friday and tells me her folks are going away for the weekend. Now this girl was what I guess you would call a "fun" girl, so when she called I jumped on my bike and headed out to see her."

We will assume, Dear Reader, that Ray was riding an early Sixties, mag-fired, kick only, tin-cover XLCH out of respect to this fine forum. All hail the mighty XLF, the encyclopedic repository of all things Sportster!

Ray grinned a wicked smile as he recalled that time in the distant past. "I'm here to tell ya Mosey, that girl was hot. We was having a real good time." He leaned in close to elucidate the dirtiest of details.

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Now here, Dear Reader, I must restrain myself. Ray's "details" aren't really fit for print. He spoke of acts that would make a sailor blush. And, trust me on this, I would not be capable of properly relating his amorous adventures. It reminds me of a conversation between Samuel Clemens, perhaps better known as Mark Twain to the unwashed masses, and his wife.

Twain's wife Livy Clemens disliked his habit of swearing, and he tried to keep it from her. One day when he was dressing alone, he realized that his shirt was missing a button and went off on a blue streak. To

his horror, he realized that his wife was listening behind the door. In her prim voice, she repeated his words to him as a reprimand.

"Livy," he said, "did it sound like that?"

"Of course it did," she said, "only worse. I wanted you to hear just how it sounded."

"Livy," he said, "it would pain me to think that when I swear it sounds like that. You got the words right, Livy, but you don't know the tune."

In other words...I will leave it to your imagination Dear Reader.

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"So we're going at it and the damn phone starts ringing. It rings a buncha times and finally she says, 'I better answer that.' She's talkin' and I hear her say, 'Hello. ..oh..oh really, that's too bad...uh yeah, fried chicken would be fine...okay, I'll see you soon Daddy.'

"Now when she said that last word I freaked. She said that her Mom was not feeling good so her parents had come home early. I started looking for my clothes. I sure didn't wanna be there when her father got home. I've seen a couple pissed off dads in my time and I have a healthy respect for an angry dad. I was ready to hightail it outta there but she said it would be at least half an hour before they got home. 'C'mon Ray, we got time for one more.' Well, why not? I did say she was a fun girl, didn't I?"

"Anyway, I finally get dressed and outside. It's kinda cold - a spring night in SoCal can get chilly - so I put on my leather jacket. I get the bike started and she's kissin' on me and huggin' me while the bike is warming. All of a sudden she says, 'Wait right here.' She runs back in the house. I'm sitting there, revving the motor, expecting to see the headlights of her folk's car comin' up the road at any moment.

"It seems like I'm sitting there forever when she runs outta the house. She gives me a big kiss and wraps a long, white silk scarf around my neck. She steps back and says, 'Now you look perfect. I wanna remember you just like that forever.' I felt pretty damned good right then in my black leather jacket and her white scarf. I felt like a million bucks, lemme tell ya.

"One more long kiss and I headed down the road. Now her driveway was about two or three miles down to the highway. It was a rutted dirt road and I was having a blast sliding through the corners under full power in my best flatttrack style. I was having fun.

"So I came to the highway and turned toward home. I wasn't on the asphalt more than two minutes when I saw an old Studebaker station wagon. The same kinda car her parents drove. I couldn't have cut that much closer, eh? I laughed a little and gunned the motor. It was a beautiful night. The moon was bright and the stars looked so close, the night air felt good and I could smell her perfume from the scarf. Man oh man Mosey I was feeling good."

Ray paused to light another cigarette. With the bluish white haze hanging in the air, he resumed the story. Tendrils of smoke curled through his mustache as he spoke.

"That's the last thing I remember of that night. There I was ripping along, prob'ly doing eighty or ninety - hey I like to go fast, so sue me - enjoying the ride...and then...nothing. The next thing I know I'm waking up in a ditch.

"I'm laying upside down with my feet up the bank and my face a few inches from a trickle of muddy water in the bottom of the ditch. I hurt everywhere. The sun is high in sky above me and the first thing I think is, 'High noon.' Noon? The last thing I remember is last night. What the hell? Oh crap, I musta crashed my bike."

Ray looks at me and smiles. I dutifully say, "If ya don't fall off yer not going fast enough." Ray laughs and nods.

"Now yer getting' it kid."

"So what did happened. Why the hell do you always stop at the good spots? Yer a mean-hearted bastard Ray" I act annoyed but Ray knows I'm just kidding him.

He laughed. "Okay okay. I'm laying there, hurting all over. My neck hurts, my head hurts, my mouth is dry. I try to lick my lips and my mouth feels weird, numb, like I just left the dentist's office. My arms and legs work, nuthin's broken, so I struggle to my feet.

"I gotta find my bike so I wander around, stumbling like a drunk until I spot it. It's laying about a hunnerd yards down the hill. I just stand there, looking at it and I can see it's messed up bad - forks bent, handlebars bent to hell and back, the front wheel like a pretzel - it makes me sick to see it. I can't stand looking at it so I head back for the road.

"When I get to the road it's ten minutes or so before I see a car. Two cars! I start waving my arms but they both drive past without slowing. A couple minutes later a third car actually stops. As I limp towards the car I remember thinking, 'Cool a brand new Charger. I wouldn't mind a ride in a Mopar.' Strange what ya think of at a time like that.

"I get up next to the car and lean down to look in the window. There's this woman driving, kinda cute like a waitress or sumpin', and she takes one look at me, screams 'Get away from me!' and peels out. I remember feeling the gravel hitting my legs as she took off. I staggered off the edge of the road and leaned against a telephone pole.

"It seemed like forever until a car came along and stopped. There was this older guy inside and he smiled at me as I got in his car - a twenty year old Caddy, kinda beat but still a Cadillac, Jack. He asked me where I was headed. I told him I really wanted to get my bike fixed but I figured I should go to a hospital.

"He laughed and said, 'Good choice. That's where I was gonna take you no matter what you said. A motorcycle wreck, huh?' I thanked him for stopping and told him about the woman in the Dodge. He laughed again and said, 'You don't exactly look your best, young man. Here, take a look.' He reached across me, flipped down the visor and I leaned forward to look in the mirror.

"Holy effin' Toledo!! What did I do to myself? I stared at the monster in the mirror. My mouth hung open at a weird angle - I had a dislocated jaw - and my face was covered with dried blood. More blood matted my hair, sticks and leaves tangled in my hair and, worst of all, a large flap of my scalp was torn off and plastered back. The white, bloody skull was visible. My neck was horribly bruised and a bright red line went all the way around my throat. I looked like a walking disaster.

"I leaned back in the seat, closed my eyes thinking about that scarf that my sweet little honey had wrapped around my neck."

Ray fell silent. A sudden, warm breeze sprang up and freshened into a strong wind tossing the trees overhead. The leaves whispered their own stories. I let the moment draw itself out.

"The guy took me to the hospital - I never did find out his name - they cleaned me up and stitched my head back together. They stuck me with a buncha needles, told me I was lucky that I hadn't fractured my jaw, and shoved it back in place. I didn't feel so lucky right then. When they were done I signed myself out."

"AMA?" I asked.

"AMA all the way, Mosey. I can't stand those places." We shared a laugh.

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Oh Dear Reader, I'm sorry to keep interrupting, but I feel that I need to point out the AMA me and Ray are talkin' about ain't the American Motorcycle Association. Anybody that gets injured a lot and hates hospitals knows exactly what AMA stands for. And for those who don't... well, just Google it, bitches!

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"When I finally got back to my bike I found that damned scarf wrapped around the sprocket and wedged in so tight that I couldn't even turn the rear wheel. I used my pocketknife - well...it was a switchblade to be honest - to cut that thing outta there. And all the while I'm cursing out the scarf and the girl and myself for not noticing that the scarf was whipping out behind me.

"Me and a couple buddies got the bike out, dragged it home and a few days later I was back riding. That bike never felt right after that. I think the frame was tweaked a little. Eventually I sold the motor to some guy that was building a chopper and trashed the frame.

"For some reason, I never saw that girl again but I haven't forgotten her or that Gawd damned scarf. I walked around looking like I had escaped the hangman's noose for a few months, but I didn't care. I had a helluva good story to tell at the bar. I got more than a few free drinks by telling the story and showing the burn marks on my neck."

The sun had drifted across the sky while Ray talked. He flicked the Zippo and lit another coffin nail as we sat there. "That was awesome Ray."

"I'm glad you enjoyed it." He paused and glanced up, a little shyly. Have I mentioned, Dear Reader, that Ray has surprisingly blue eyes? "Ya know Mosey, I just can't figure out why you like listening to an old man babble...but I'm damned glad that you do. Every time I tell you one of my crazy stories it helps to cement it in my mind. I hope it stays there for as long as I live, but who knows."

"Well Ray, I will gladly listen to you babble any time. You name it and I'll be here."

"For a Harley guy, yer alright."

"For a mean old cuss, yer not half-bad either." I stood up and grabbed my brain bucket. "I see ya 'round, okay?"

"I'll be here."

We shook hands, his grip warm and strong as always. It sure is good having a friend like Ray.

Life is short and brutal. Ride free...

(<https://www.xlforum.net/forum/sportster-motorcycle-forum/sportster-motorcycle-era-specific-and-model-specific/ironhead-sportster-motorcycle-talk-1957-1985/167837-a-chat-with-a-whitebeard/page21#post3734859>)

(<http://xlforum.net/vbportal/forums/showpost.php?p=511821>)

(<https://www.xlforum.net/forum/sportster-motorcycle-forum/sportster-motorcycle-era-specific-and-model-specific/ironhead-sportster-motorcycle-talk-1957-1985/167837-a-chat-with-a-whitebeard/page21#post3734862>)

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Mosey's Tale Continues - Part Four

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XLForum member, Icefire, posts:

These stories about Ray are so good, I don't even care if they're true anymore. At this point, I kinda expect Mosey to let us all know Ray is fictional, or at least based on several people he knew.

But, that's ok... He's such a good writer in this style, he should write a book like this, true or not, and we can all sit in the house on rainy days and read it...

Keep it up, Bro, you've got all our attention...

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Do ya really wanna peek behind the curtain? Never mind the man busy working the controls...

I sit and talk to Ray outside under the trees or in a small gazebo. I sit there with this old man and we talk about everyday bs for a while and, when the moment seems right, I ask if Ray has any old stories for me. Then I sit and listen as he relates whatever adventure is foremost in his mind. Sometimes I am rewarded with a brand new gem but most of the time the old dude tells me a story that he has previously told...sometimes many, many times! I've heard the helmet story a LOT!

Ray will tell the story in a condensed version of the one I offer up for yer perusal. He parses his words but makes up for it with gestures and facial expressions. What he tells me in a couple hunnerd or a couple thousand words, I expand on to try and tell y'all the story as I saw it in my mind's eye while The Bearded One was yakkin' at me.

It sure ain't a word-for-word transcription, it's got a whole big bunch of Mosey's world twisted throughout. I'm glad yer enjoying it.

“Partly truth and partly fiction,
He's a walking contradiction.”
Kris Kristofferson

Life is short and brutal. Ride free...

(<https://www.xlforum.net/forum/sportster-motorcycle-forum/sportster-motorcycle-era-specific-and-model-specific/ironhead-sportster-motorcycle-talk-1957-1985/167837-a-chat-with-a-whitebeard/page22#post3746699>)

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Turn to the stainless steel rolling cart and double-check the layout. Pre-cut lengths of half inch and one inch adhesive tape dangle from the side of the tray and wait patiently their part in the proceedings. Gauze and cotton balls, sit at the far end, three catheters of various sizes lie nearby in their colorful plastic cases and the selected size cath - a twenty-four gauge - is at the near end. Scissors lay to the side.

Look at the patient. Unable to speak, imploring eyes do all the talking. "Please do something. Please." The eyes glance away, breaking the moment. Time to do the job.

The patient is severely dehydrated. This is not gonna be a cakewalk. Occlude the vein and watch it rise from the surrounding flesh. Trace it with gentle fingertip, feeling the soft, resilient spring of the vein wall. Feel the vein, know the vein, be the vein. The moment is always so...Zen.

Scrub the area three times, wiping with alcohol after each. Take the cath with the hep flush and remove the cover. Inspect the length from tip to hub and apply a little surgical lube. Don't want it to hang up on the dehydrated skin of the patient. Exhale. Take a deep, slow breath and let it out. Focus.

The everlastingly sharp tip of the catheter slides effortlessly through the skin. Feel the subtle resistance of the vein. Now is the exact fraction of a second that requires a sure hand. A dynamic move, like a samurai parting an opponent's neck with a katana, is needed to pierce the wriggly blood-filled tube. Push the cath down and forward fast enough and hard enough to trap and penetrate. It must be enough force to pass through one side of the vein, but not so much that the cath continues out the opposite side. Be the needle.

A red flash of blood appears in the end of the cath. Hold the metal stylet in place and push the hub of the cath forward, threading it into the vein. Remove the stylet and cap the catheter with a plug. A drop of dark red blood falls on the steel table. Tape the catheter in place. Remove the plug and insert the IV line. Open the valve allowing a slow, steady drip of fluid into the vein. Done. Exhale.

The patient whimpers softly. Lean in close. "It's gonna be okay, lil' guy."

The patient's eyes look directly into mine and he suddenly lifts his head and licks me on the cheek. "Your a good pup." I ruffle the fur on his neck enjoying the silky softness of puppy fur before turning back to my work. Another patient awaits. An old cat. It never stops. The sick animals just keep coming in the door. But I have tomorrow off and I'm gonna go see Ray. Grin.

Now get back to work Mosey, you lazy bastard.

Life is short and brutal. Ride free...

(<https://www.xlforum.net/forum/sportster-motorcycle-forum/sportster-motorcycle-era-specific-and-model-specific/ironhead-sportster-motorcycle-talk-1957-1985/167837-a-chat-with-a-whitebeard/page23#post3768374>)

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Downshifting, blipping, listening to the song of the motor, I swing the old Ironhead into the corner and stand up on the pegs anticipating the bumpy pavement that I know lies ahead. With bent knees I soak up the potholes and weave my way to the entrance of the convalescent home.

I scanned the area and saw, to my surprise, that the spot where the convalescent home's residents would congregate was empty. All alone, Ray sat in his usual place in the gazebo. Not another soul around. Ahhh, the perfect moment.

Correcting course, I turned away from my usual route to the parking lot and steered straight at the gazebo. Off the asphalt and onto the dirt the front wheel tracked straight and true. Stomping hard on the rear brake and ignoring the front brakes completely, the ass-end swung about to the right and I put down my left foot like a hot-shoe dirt jockey, sliding as I came to a stop. Dirt and gravel flew and the old Ironhead slid in BMX style.

Ray, sitting on a chair in the shade of the gazebo leaped to his feet faster than I have ever seen him move. He stood in the doorway framed by the wooden structure with his right fist firmly clenched and raised high in the air. He shook it and hollered, "Hell's bell's Mose! That's the way ya do it!! Yeah!"

I switched off the ignition after one last twist of the throttle and kicked down the sidestand. I let the old XLH settle down and stepped off. I walked straight up to Ray and stuck out my hand.

"Gawddamn Mosey, I sure wasn't expecting that. You dun that just for me, right?"

"Well, mostly for yer sake, but a little was for me and the rest was for the motorsickle. She likes it when I rough her up a little. You know how some girls are."

"Ride 'er hard and put 'er up wet, like the cowboys say, eh?"

"Ya know Ray that I'm a cowboy at heart. You can take the boy outta the country but ya can't take the country outta the boy, can ya? I will always be a redneck goat-roper no matter how long I live in the city."

"Yer a good guy Mose, always smiling and having a ball."

"It sure is easier to have fun when yer riding a motorbike."

"Ain't that the truth! Sure have missed ya. I heard you been here a buncha times but we haven't crossed paths in quite a while."

"Seems like you been at the doctor every time I came by. I hope yer giving 'em hell and flirting with the nurses."

"Never miss a chance with the purty girls. I hope you been getting' some."

"I get my share Ray."

"I'll bet you do. With yer good looks and charm I'll bet you get your share and then some." I grinned, guiltily, as he continued. "Next time yer getting' some remember poor old me and bring me the leftovers, okay."

"Damn Ray, you are a dirty old man."

“Live long enough and you'll be one too. I guarantee that!”

We both laughed and Ray shook out a cig from his pack of Pall Malls. I grinned when he fished out his Zippo and lit it. I recognize that chromium-plated steel Zippo with the enameled letter “G” on the case. That's from a motorsickle ridin' fool way down in Georgia. He sent it up to old Ray for Christmas. Made me feel good to see the bearded one using it. I know the Georgia chopper jockey would be pleased.

“I been thinkin' about the old days cuz I know that's what ya wanna hear. Ever heard of Cal Rayborn?”

“Oh hell yeah Ray! I remember reading about him when I was a kid. That guy was a helluva racer, wasn't he?”

“Yeah, that boy could ride any-damn-thing, and he did it with class and style.”

My mind started firing and suddenly a pertinent fact popped out. “Oh yeah, Cal was a San Diego guy just like you.”

“Yup. He was a year or two younger than me. I met him at a race, I'm not sure where, and him and me became good friends. I did some wrenching at his dealership, Sun-n-Fun, when I wasn't working at the Harley shop. Working at his place was a lot more fun than the Harley dealer. Lotsa laughs and good times.”

“Goddamn Ray. Cal-freakin'-Rayborn! You sure had some interesting friends.”

“The first time I went to Daytona was with Cal. He invited me and I jumped at the chance. I drove the truck filled with our motorcycles. Cal flew out and we met up. I had a great time. Didn't place to well but at least I raced and finished. Of course Cal dun way better than me. Went back a couple more times with him.”

“Were you there for his back-to-back wins?”

“I was there in '68 to see him on the podium but I missed the second year. I think I was racing in Europe at the time. That boy sure flung that Harley around the track. He rode so easy and with so much grace. It was always easy to pick him outta the pack even without a number plate.”

Ray leaned back in his chair, took one last drag, and stubbed out the butt on his boot heel. “We had a good time out at Bonneville, too. Cal was perfectly suited for Bonneville.”

“Whattaya mean, Ray?”

“He was tall and lean, just like you Mosey, and fit inside them streamliners like a hand in a glove. Ya know you would prolly make a good pilot for a Bonneville run.”

I laughed. “I may be skinny enough but I'm missing one important thing. Well, two things actually.” I paused and Ray looked at me quizzically. “I don't think my balls a re near big enough and that aren't made outta brass like the rules demand.”

Ray chuckled heartily and leaned across the table to punch me on the shoulder. “I hear 'em clanking when you walk. You ain't fooling me Mosey!”

The old man turned his head and looked off into the distance. "I wanna tell you a story that sums up Cal to me. Me and him were riding in a TT race somewhere, for some reason I think it was at the old Riverside Raceway. Cal, of course, was up in the first row and I was way back in the pack. I seen Cal head into the pits in the second lap and I figgered his race was over.

"I was having a good race, the bike was running perfectly and I was really feeling it. Gaps in the pack seemed to open up in front of me and I was working my way toward the front. Man it felt so good and I was really on the line every damn time. I was racing like never before, passing riders left and right. I had a feeling that I could actually win if it kept on like this.

"The bike was running so sweet and landing so solidly after the jumps, I was in heaven. And then I heard it - this ungodly wail getting closer and closer - just before I actually saw it. It was Cal passing me. That son of a bitch was whipping past me...on one wheel! And to add insult to injury, that bastard waved at me as he went by!! I felt like a kid on a tricycle at that moment. Really I felt like I shouldn't be on a track with that kinda talent, I wasn't even in the same league as that guy. He was the best. Not only that, he was a true gentleman and generous to boot. A helluva guy, lemme tell ya."

Ray stopped talking, stroked his beard and pensively regarded me across the table. "And then came the day that he crashed in Japan."

Sadly, slowly, Ray shook his head and looked down. "That damned Suzuki. I told him that he was gonna hafta work that bike hard to win. It just couldn't keep up with the Yamahas in the straights so he was really gonna be pushing hard in the corners to stay in the race.

"Since Cal and me was friends I was the one that had to tell his wife and family. I remember riding out there that day to his house. It was tough riding out there knowing what I had to do but the ride home was even worse. I had tears in my eyes and had to pull over a couple times. That was a bad day."

Ray's hands were clenched into tight fists, the knuckles white with tension. Slowly the muscles relaxed and after a long moment the old man rose to his feet, "I'm sorry Mosey, but I'm all talked out today. Ya don't mind if we continue another day, do ya?"

"Nah Ray, you know I'll be back. No problem. You want me to walk to the door with ya?"

"I'll be okay Mose. You go home and tell yer dog I said hello. Bring him up sometime. I like dogs. Thanks for coming by. Yer a good man."

The old guy turned and shuffled off. I rose slowly, gathered up my gloves and helmet. Walking to my bike I watched Ray arrive at the door. He turned and waved as I fired up the Sportster. I returned the wave, pulled in the clutch lever and dropped 'er in first. Ray walked through the doorway into the cool dimness of the convalescent home.

I let out the clutch and rode home thinking about Cal and Ray.

(Special memories on this Memorial day.)

Life is short and brutal. Ride free...

<https://www.xlforum.net/forum/sportster-motorcycle-forum/sportster-motorcycle-era-specific-and-model-specific/ironhead-sportster-motorcycle-talk-1957-1985/167837-a-chat-with-a->

[whitebeard/page23#post3768376](#))

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It's always a special day when I get to update this thread. Between the visits when Ray just plain isn't there and the many times that he tells me the same stories, it feels extra good when Ray gives up a new gem. I will gladly go hang with the old dude twenty times to get one new story. Me and Ray get along like salt and pepper, like pancakes and maple syrup, like peanut butter and jelly, like...well, you get my drift.

One thing that I would like to emphasize is that I am not a fact checker. I just record the ramblings of an old man. Y'all gotta remember, these are the memories of a really old fart and most all this stuff happened fifty and sixty years ago. The intervening years have not been easy on him. He's done a heap of hard living between those faraway days and the here and now. Lots liquor, piles of drugs and plenty of wild nights have taken their toll. Ray was not afraid of living that's fer sure!

Don't get too hung up on the details, just try to take in the broad brushstrokes of a life lived in the fast lane. I don't think old Ray slowed down long enough to smell every flower, he just kept twisting the wick and watching the world go rushing past in a frenzied blur.

It's not my place to correct Ray. I just tryin' to let y'all sit next to me while the guy babbles on. Like I've said before, I don't know if any of Ray's stories are completely factual and I really don't care. I just enjoy his company and find him entertaining and enjoyable to hang with.

Thanks again for all yer comments and feedback. Don't be shy if you have sumpin' to add, post yer stories or comments that are in any way pertinent. And feel free to correct any discrepancies y'all find - I don't know enough about the old racing era to fill a thimble so this is all virgin territory to me - like Icefire's note about where Cal crashed. That's important info and it's worth knowing the true facts.

BTW, yes I work in an animal hospital and I love my job. I ride a motorsickle to work every day, rain or shine. I know sometimes the clients are surprised to see their little Fluffy being cared for by a greasy biker type with a ponytail hanging down to his black leather belt. It's what's inside that counts, right?

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Every time that one of youse guys asks me to give regards to Ray, I write it down in my notebook. The first couple times that I pulled out the book and said sumpin' like, "Iron Mick says Hello from Canada" well, it kinda freaked him out. Now when he sees the little book he smiles with anticipation, like a Pavlov dog, wondering what crazy screenname he will hear. He loves the nicknames and that folks he's never met care about an old man in a nursing home.

Ice, I will tell him you said, "Hey Ray!".

Thanks Buskit. Yer alright.

Wachuko, glad to have you on board. Ya never know where this ride is going. Lots of twists and turns. Maybe a few comfortable straight sections, but yer gonna hafta keep yer eyes on the road!

Thanks again for everybody's comments and ideas. I love this forum!

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The memories of a man in his old age
Are the deeds of a man in his prime.
You shuffle in gloom of the sickroom
And talk to yourself as you die.

Life is a short, warm moment
And death is a long cold rest.
You get your chance to try in the twinkling of an eye:
Eighty years, with luck, or even less.

=====

So I'm standing in line at the local grocery store, holding my cucumbers and avocados, behind a couple of thirtyish ex-Valley girls pushing their carts and chatting away.

"We should get together this Saturday."

"Can't. Have to take the kids to visit my Grandfather. He keeps bitching that he never gets to see them."

"Do the kids want to go?"

"Yeah they like Grandpa. But you know, all he wants to talk about is how he worked with his Dad on the farm. That and all those stories about airplanes and World War Two." She sounded bored and annoyed.

Like my sweet, sweet Cabo hearing a cat yowling in heat, my ears literally perked up. "Uh, can I come?" I spoke without thinking and was kinda surprised as I heard the words come outta my piehole.

Two mom faces swiveled and turned towards yours truly. Both of them were looking at me like I had three heads and two of 'em were on fire.

"What?" The woman spoke with ice dripping from her fangs.

"Excuse my interruption ladies, but yer grandfather sounds like an interesting man. I sure wouldn't mind a chance to hear those stories."

The other broad says, "Ugggh. Why don't you mind your own business and stop eavesdropping."

They immediately turned away and pushed their carts as far away from me as possible. I grinned in wry amusement that shifted to a sad feeling thinkin' about that Ungrateful Bitch's grandpa. All Gramps wants is an ear to bend. Gawd, what stories that old man has to tell. My only source of hope is that Ungrateful Bitch's kids sit at his feet listening raptly to his words. I hope so.

The two pointedly ignored me as they paid for their separate foodstuffs and exited the store ahead of me. I saw the Ungrateful Bitch loading the contents of the cart into her shiny SUV. Standing next to my Ironhead and filling the saddlebags, I waved across the lot at her. "Tell Grampaw I said hi!"

UB rolled her eyes and turned her pretty little head. Laughing at the mild distress I caused her and throwing a leg over the saddle, I rode out making sure to ride past her and giving my best Tom Cruise/Risky Business smile. She looked so pained!

It's good to shake people up a little. Hopefully she might take the time to reflect on the fact that a total stranger could find her kin fascinating enough to break all social conventions, interrupt a private conversation, and attempt to interject into her carefully arranged life. I hope she gets it.

As I turned out of the parking lot I thought to myself, "Oh well, I don't get to listen to Grampa's war stories but I've got Ray." Twist the wrist, roll the throttle, pull the cable, open the butterfly on the old S&S, dump in the fuel, mix it with the air and listen to the motor purr. Adios UB. I'm gonna go see Ray.

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"So tell me Mosey, what's the fastest you've ever gone?"

I answered Ray with my usual answer, "Prolly around a ton forty or so. I'm not positive cuz you know how optimistic speedos can be. I know that I've never gone as fast as you, that's for sure."

"What's the fastest you've ever gotten off at?"

"I'm a pussy. I don't go fast enough to fall off much. Why don't you tell me about your fastest get-off?"

"There was a time at Bonneville..." Ray's voice trailed off as he squinted into the hot, direct California sunshine. He looked back my way, "Did I ever tell you about my first race up Pike's Peak?"

"Tell me all about it Ray." I sat there listening to my buddy tell me for the umpteenth time about his ride to the top with a busted collarbone. And, just like the very first time, I hung on each word with delirious anticipation.

"When I got to the top I got off my bike and one of the officials came up and asked why my right shoulder looked so weird. It was only then that I figured out why I was hurting those last couple miles. But I just thought I sprained it. By that evening, I couldn't raise my right hand higher than my head and I realized that I had busted sumpin'. So I quit drinkin' - have I told you how much I like vodka? - long enough to get patched up in the hospital. Then we went right back to the party. There wasn't no way I was gonna miss a Pike's Peak party. Those boys knew how to have a good time."

Ray smiled and fished a Pall Mall outta a battered pack.

"Damn Ray, that's a helluva story. Race in the morning, drink all night. Repeat until ya have to put up with someone like me pestering you all the time."

Ray laughed heartily, "Haw haw haw!! Mosey, yer the best part of my day. I can't tell ya how much I look forward to your visits. Seeing your smiling face is sumpin' I look forward to every week."

"That goes both ways Brother Ray. I'm glad that you spoke up that day and said sumpin' about my

motorcycle." The bearded one nodded sagely. "Even if I was riding a girl's bike!" The bearded one burst out laughing.

"A Sporty ain't no girl's bike. It's the hotrod of the Harley world. Well, not compared to a XR750 but that ain't really a Sportster. I like that bike of yours, looks good, sounds good, and you ride it like ya know what yer doing. Now there's nuthin' wrong with that bike." He gestured at my Shovelhead. "It's a fine machine. But I can see you really ride that old Sporty hard."

"That's how I ride all my dirty girls."

We shared a laugh between men. The other residents of the home, enjoying the warm day outside, looked up at us, wondering what the joke was. Me and Ray enjoyed the moment and our little bit of humorous repartee.

A cute, slightly pudgy nurse in her white and blue uniform walked among the old folks telling them that dinner would be served in fifteen minutes. They wearily rose to their feet and began the long shuffle to the door of the home. Ray and I sat there for a couple moments.

"Gawd dammit Mosey, I can't stand those old farts. Most of 'em got no life left in 'em. Don't end up like them, okay?"

"Ray when I grow up I wanna be just like you."

The old man grinned and we walked up to the home, shook hands and he went through the door. "See ya later my friend." I said as the door swung shut. Ray turned and waved through the glass. "Yup. I wanna be just like you old man. Just like you."

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And who is the master of fox hounds?
And who says the hunt has begun?
And who calls the tune in the courtroom?
And who beats the funeral drum?

The memories of a man in his old age
Are the deeds of a man in his prime.
You shuffle in gloom in the sickroom
And talk to yourself till you die.

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Ray has a sister that visits once in a while. Never met her, but she must care. She has done a lot for Ray - stuff that I won't go into here - but it shows that she puts some effort into her older brother's medical treatment. He's not abandoned.

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Editor's Note -

And then Mosey's voice trailed off in the distance...

I wonder if Ray is anxiously waiting
the chance for another exciting word to say,
Or lying quietly still, with hands folded over,
calmly passing another peaceful day.

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