

News For Thought

Regent pays Half million for Leno's Harley

It wasn't for the prestige of owning a motorcycle once owned by late-night TV host Jay Leno, or the 78 celebrity autographs inscribed on the bike, but for charitable convictions. Southeast Missouri State University regents president John Tlappek said he submitted the highest bid on E-Bay for Jay Leno's Harley-Davidson - a half million dollars -- because he wanted to help people. All of the proceeds went to the American Red Cross hurricane relief fund. "I thought it would be a good thing to do what I could do to help those who were negatively affected by the tragedy in the Gulf region," said Tlappek, who already owns two Harleys.

Tlappek, a private equities investor, appeared on "The Tonight Show" on October 5 and talked with Leno for a few minutes. "He seemed like a real nice guy," Tlappek said.

Tlappek, who regularly donates to charities, said it took him a while to figure out the celebrity signatures. Luckily, the show sent him an instructional video.

Bill Cosby and Arnold Schwarzenegger wrote their names on the gas tanks. Geena Davis, Shaggy and Jessica Alba scribbled their names on the saddlebags. Matthew McConaughey and Jennifer Love Hewitt autographed the front fender.

As far as the motorcycle, Tlappek said he doesn't have any plans for it right now. For him, that's almost beside the point. "I just have always felt like it was important to give back to the community," he said. "That doesn't have to mean a donation of dollars. It can be a donation of a person's time or talents. It's just important to give back." www.ON-A-BIKE.com

"Dicing to ride"

Tijuana police discovered a passenger aboard a motorcycle involved in an accident was in fact a corpse which the driver had been carrying through the rough border city strapped to his back.

The motorcycle driver lost control and skidded in the downtown area; when a policeman approached to investigate the mishap, the driver fled on foot. The police officer checked the passenger, who had been seated behind the driver and found it was the corpse of a man who had died at least six hours earlier. The corpse was wearing a helmet and beneath it his head had been wrapped in a towel and bound with tape, apparently to keep blood from dripping from a head wound. The corpse was also wearing a lifejacket the straps of which had apparently been used to tie him to the driver.

Police said the dead man had wraps of methamphetamine in his pocket and an unkempt appearance, which led investigators to believe the killing was drug related.

"We think the killer was trying to take the body to a more deserted area to dispose of it," said Francisco Castro, a spokesman for the Baja California state police's homicide division. www.ON-A-BIKE.com

Here's a blurb that will surprise ya. According to the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles annual Traffic Crash Statistics Report for 2004, motorcycle RIDERS WEARING HELMETS were MORE LIKELY to sustain an injury or suffer a fatality than their non-helmeted counterparts! 20% more NON-HELMETED riders are likely to walk away from accidents with fewer injuries than those wearing lids. Of the 388 people killed on bikes there, over 51% were wearing lids. According to my read of the ARTICLE about the study, riders without helmets are more able to react to adverse conditions than those who are covered. I gotta get ahold of that study and show it around a little! AIMGUNNY@aol.com.

The state Supreme Court here will hear arguments in former Congressman Bill Janklow's request to regain his license to practice law. The state Bar's Disciplinary Board has recommended Janklow regain his law license on February 15th. If the Supreme Court agrees, it would mean Janklow's license would be reinstated about a year before his probation ends for second-degree manslaughter and other convictions in an August, 2003 crash that killed a motorcycle rider. MY feeling is he should NEVER see that license again, nor should he EVER legally sit behind the wheel of anything motorized. AIMGUNNY@aol.com

Bikers shield Mourners

One side rides motorcycles to fight what they believe is an abuse of free speech. The other side uses words and posters that, for some, seem to stretch the boundaries of First Amendment freedoms, but to them are their God-given right. In August, a group of bikers became outraged when they heard that Fred Phelps and members of his Westboro Baptist Church in Topeka, Kan., were planning to picket and protest U.S. soldiers' funerals, claiming that God is killing soldiers because He hates America, so the bikers formed the Patriot Guard, a grassroots organization that's quickly gaining momentum. Composed of veterans' motorcycle groups, motorcycle enthusiasts, Christian motorcycle groups and people who simply consider themselves patriots, the group provides a human barrier at funerals to protect mourners from hearing and seeing the protesters. So far, the riders have attended three funerals. The first was Staff Sgt. John Dole's funeral in Chelsea, Okla., on Oct. 11; 40 riders from Kansas participated.

The second funeral was for Army Spc. Lucas Frantz in Tonganoxie, Kan., on Oct. 17; 120 riders attended that one. In early November, more than 150 cyclists participated at the funeral for Sgt. Evan Parker in South Haven, Kan. For the Oklahoma funeral, the group revved their cycles' engines; in Tonganoxie, they recited the Pledge of Allegiance; and in South Haven, they recited the pledge and revved their engines to drown out the protestors' chants. The Patriot Guard would like to see laws changed either prohibiting people from protesting funerals or restricting the area or hours where protesters can be heard. www.ON-A-BIKE.com

CHP, Aptos man square off over state's motorcycle helmet law

by daniel lopez

Sentinel staff writer

WATSONVILLE - The case that has an Aptos man and the California Highway Patrol squaring off in a legal battle over the state's motorcycle helmet law will be heard by the state's Sixth District Court of Appeals.

The appellate court in San Jose issued a stay Thursday on a ruling made by a Santa Cruz County Superior Court judge stating that traffic tickets issued to Richard Quigley, 61, for riding his motorcycle without a helmet are correctable violations. And the court agreed to hear the case. The CHP disagrees with the lower court's ruling that the violations are correctable. On Oct. 6 they filed an appeal of Judge Michael Barton's decision handed down in May.

Deputy Attorney General Karen Huster, who is representing the CHP, said Monday the two questions at the heart of the matter are whether a helmet law violation is ever correctable and whether a correction could apply in this case. Quigley, who has been issued at least nine tickets by the Watsonville Police Department and the CHP for not wearing a helmet, has until Nov. 28 to file a reply with the court.

Instead of strapping on a hard-shell helmet, Quigley has for years elected to ride with what he considers suitable headgear - a baseball cap and sometimes nothing at all.

The tickets issued by Watsonville police have been signed off leaving just those issued by the CHP in question. Because the CHP does not consider the helmet violation correctable, it has declined to sign off on his fix-it tickets.

Quigley, who has been diagnosed with terminal lymphoma, said Monday that he will consult with attorneys in Los Angeles and locally before making his next legal move. "This is a vital interest not just to me but to other motorcyclists," said Quigley.



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