

## 5,000 HITS by H. Mergard

Do you ever think about the events in your life that lead you to motorcycles and the rebel lifestyle usually associated with two-wheelers? You know the different things that happened to you when you were growing up that changed your way of thinking.

Back in 1969, like everybody else, I went to the movies to see Easyrider. I was, of course, blown away. I had seen The Wild One, as a little kid, and all the biker exploitation films of the sixties, with their violence and rebellion to authority. I remember seeing most of them at the local drive-ins, while enjoying a case of my favorite beverage with my friends. As we all now know, the thing that was different about Easyrider, is that it wasn't just another biker flick. It was about two guys on the road. It showed freedom, restlessness, a sense of adventure, and great riding scenes. They seemed to be going no where in particular, traveling west to east, and wind up somewhere down south around New Orleans.

Since I had grown up in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, I had not been exposed to the warm weather lifestyle of Southern California, and thought that the choppers Captain America and Billy rode, were the coolest bikes I had ever seen. Come to think of it, they're still not too shabby today. For the next year, I wanted to get out on the highway and look for adventure. I just didn't have a motor to get running. Someday, I knew, I was going to have that chopper. I figured that two out of three ain't bad. I wasn't going to let it stop me. So, I hit the road.

The time was summer, 1970. Hippieism was at its height, and in a couple of years would give way to the Disco secean. The place was the deep, deep South. To be exact it was U.S. Route #10, which runs along the gulf coast of Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida. Ted and I had been hitch hiking from Galveston, Texas and were on our way to Daytona via New Orleans. Then, up to Jersey. We had heard that if you showed up at Tulane U. Medical School, you could sell them your body, upon death, for medical purposes. You sign some papers, and they would give you \$500 now and tattoo something on the bottom of your foot, so that they could claim the cadaver later, when you died. Now, you have to remember that \$500 was worth a lot more back then. A six pack was \$1.20. So, we're talking about a \$3,000 corpse. Big bucks back then for nothing.

We had done five days in jail at Lake Charles, Louisiana for hitch hiking. The official charge was, 'Trespassing on an Inter-State Highway'. We weren't too happy about the jail time, but it did give us a chance to rest up and eat steady for a little while, and teach everybody in our cell block to play pinnacle. Ted and I both gained about five pounds during our stretch, eating grits for breakfast, beans for lunch and peanut butter sandwiches for supper. We, of course, were broke and had been sleeping on the ground before we had been arrested. When we were released, we celebrated by buying a six pack with a couple of bucks we had panhandled from our last ride before we were pinched. Next to the liquor store was a cemetery. We drank the beer in the cemetery as we sat among the gravestones.

We were a little nervous about being down South back in those days. We were always expecting some red-neck to stick a shotgun out the window of a pick up truck as they went by. We spent about 24 hours, on some God forsaken back road next to a swamp, trying to hitch a ride. I believe, we would still be there today, if we had not cautiously headed back up to the Inter-State. Usually, we didn't have to wait very long for a ride on Rt.10. We figured, we had to take the chance.

We didn't have to wait all that long. Two guys in a VW Micro Bus stopped to pick us up. Now, being in a VW Bus back then, in that part of the country, was like being in a cop magnet, but after spending the previous night in the swamp we were glad to be on our way. We got to talking to the two guys occupying the bus. Both were in their early twenties. We told them about how we were going to New Orleans to sell our bodies then party with the money we got. Everyone knows that New Orleans is a great place to blow some bread. Before we knew it, they were in. They must have been as crazy as we were.

I remember suggesting we stop some place, like a bar, so that I could call the Medical School and get some information and directions. They liked the idea. We stopped at the next roadhouse, and they bought us a couple of beers and gave me some money for the phone. I called telephone information and got a number for the school. I dialed it up and talked to a woman about the body buying deal. She informed me the school no longer paid for bodies. They were now supplied by the city morgue, who gave them unknown and unclaimed bodies. She did mention, however, that I could come in and donate. Ya, right. I was a little bummed out about the bad news, and went over to tell Ted and our new companions. Everybody took the news well. The two guys with the little van said that they were going nowhere in particular and would take us Daytona, then up to Jersey. We said, "Cool", had another beer on them and then we loaded back into the mini-bus for the long ride home. Home didn't really exist though, because neither Ted or I actually had a place to stay once we got there, however, we never mentioned this to them, as we felt it might be a deterrent, and we knew that something would probably come up.

Now, we were all great friends and traveling companions, having known each other all of about two or three hours. The guy in the front passenger seat turned around to us and asked if we know anybody back in Jersey that will want to buy some LSD. We were not the brightest bulbs on the tree, but we realized that these guys were carrying, what was considered, especially in the South, hard drugs. In Texas you could get life for a joint, and Louisiana wasn't much

better. He then tells us, they have 5,000 hits of this stuff. Ted and I just looked at each other. Well, we were both thinking to ourselves, let's just get away from these guys. Neither one of us wanted to spend the rest of our lives on a chain gang. We'll make up some excuse next time we stop, or just disappear when they are not looking. By this time, Ted and I had spent so much time together we did not have to talk to each other to communicate.

continued on page 14

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