

Don't miss a single issue of the Free Riders Press SUBSCRIBE TODAY!!!

Continued from Page 7

"HIS FINAL RIDE"-By: Skypilot

These past nine days have been the hardest days that I've had to endure in a long time. You see nine days ago Wednesday April 12 at around 9:30 a.m. I was getting ready to go to the Veterans Hospital to have a pin removed from my foot from recent surgery (it had to be my shifting foot too). Back in 2000 an idiot ran me off the road and left me for dead, at the time the doctors worked on me to keep me alive and over looked my left foot, which had a mangled toe from me jerking my foot from under the Bike to get away from it. Anyway I decided to check my e-mails to find a Brother of mine who was in the hospital for back surgery had some complications, one of which they found was Leukemia, this was at 10:51 a.m. Tuesday. I'm not a religious man that attends church every Sunday by no means, but I do know there is a God, so as I always do when I heard the bad news I said a pray for my beloved Brother. I then headed up to get my foot worked on and another Brother was with me just for the heck of it, so we talked about him and another Brother who was having bad times. I got back home to start following the last of the doctor's instructions (basically sitting on my back side with the foot up in the air).

The next morning I got up and first thing got my coffee and went down to check my e-mails to see if there were any up dates on him. Nothing was on it so I sat around most of the day relaxing and talking to a few Brothers on the phone from out of state that knew him. Well that evening, Thursday April 13 at 10:35 p.m. I got a call saying "Skypilot, I'm sorry I have bad news for you. Brother Fireball has passed away this evening", at that moment I remembered how it felt to have my heart ripped out of my chest. I was so stunned I didn't know what to do except cry, and pray for God to except him with open arms. I sat there crying like a little baby until I finally cried myself to sleep.

Brother Fireball (Barry Alan Wilkins) was one of those people that if you could live five life times, he would be the one you would always remember. If you looked up words like Brother, Friend, comrade in the dictionary his picture would be there. This man was the type of person that he would do any thing for you, even give you his last dollar. I remember times just talking with him when I felt lower then snake tracks in the dirt, but by the time he left my spirits were picked up and I had a smile on my face. He was a MARINE who served his country with honor, went to Vietnam and I'm sure, even not knowing him then he was the same type of person to his fellow MARINES as he was to his Brothers in our club and everyone else he came in contact with. He was a lifetime member of the VFW post 1600 in Bellefonte, PA and a member of the American Legion in Millheim, PA and a proud member of the VIETNAM VETS M/C. This past Tuesday April 18 was his viewing in the town he was born, grew up and lived in with his wife Rebecca from 7:00 - 9:00 p.m. when my Fiancee and I got there about 7:50 p.m. they had run out of pages in the Guest Book and had to get another. The amount of people that were there blew me away. Brothers from our club, Bikers from other local clubs, Bikers from ABATE, members from his VFW and American Legion and just people from the area that knew him. My Dad always said "you could tell what kind of person and how they lived their life by seeing the number of persons that showed up at their passing".

Wednesday morning was the final goodbye and funeral. When the procession left the funeral home Fireball was escorted by well over 100 Motorcycles and countless cars. From the time we left till we arrived at his final resting place we did not have to stop or be held up for any reason. The local Police and some State Troopers had all the intersections blocked for us, they were great and I'm sure some of them knew Fireball also. After the grave side service his Brothers filled in the hole and each one said their final words to him. He has left a big hole in a lot of hearts, I hope each and everyone that is reading this has the honor in their life to know a person like MY BROTHER. I will miss him dearly, but when I am out on my Trike and feel the wind in my face I will know he is with me. I went out the other night when it was clear and found a star for him, so in times when I'm down and troubled, I will be able to look up and talk with him as I have in the past and be lifted with a smile on my face.

Remember when you run into a Brother, friend or relative when you greet them tell them that you love them, because it may be the last time you see them. Just two weeks before all this happen was the last time I saw my Brother alive and well. You never know what tomorrow will bring.

I won't say "goodbye" my BROTHER, but instead I will say "see you later, because we will meet again up in the heavens for another ride with our Brothers who have gone before us". "I Love You"!

Until next month be safe out there on the Highways and may the Great Spirit ride with you. Please remember our POW~MIA and their families, God Bless our Troops and Nation. "KEEP ON TRIKEN" .

Skypilot



Last Walk



Fireball Honored



Brotherhood



Procession

To our Vietnam and Vietnam-era Veterans:

You are cordially invited to attend our tribute to Vietnam and Vietnam-era Veterans during the 5th annual Reclaiming Our Heritage weekend event, June 3 and 4, 2006. This event is held on the grounds of the VA Medical Center, 5000 W. National Avenue, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. This is a free-admission, free-parking event so it may be enjoyed by all Veterans and their families.

On Sunday, June 4, 2006, at 10:00 a.m., reenactors from all prior military eras will lead a parade in your honor – with you, our guest of honor, walking or riding in trams. The parade will start at the Pavilion just to the west of Lake Wheeler on the VA grounds, and end at the north end of the grounds at the event's Main Tent. At 10:30 a.m., there will be a Jeep Field Mass, conducted by Fr. Norm Oswald, VA Chaplain. Mass will be followed by a patriotic concert by the Festival City Chorus, followed by selected readings from "Letters From Vietnam" compiled by author Andy Carroll. The Wilson Knights, a fine orchestra comprised of all World War II Veterans, will then pay their special music tribute to you. Following the Wilson Knights concert will be Close Enuf, who will play the best dance music of the 60's and 70's.

If you are able to join us, please come to the Pavilion just west of Lake Wheeler between 7:30 and 9:30 a.m. on Sunday, June 4, 2006, for BREAKFAST and parade lineup (see below).

***** Vietnam and Vietnam-era veterans who come to the Pavilion for parade lineup are asked to come to the registration table to receive a Reclaiming Our Heritage pin. This pin will identify you as an honored guest for the day, but it will also be your free ticket to an SOS breakfast at the Pavilion, served between 7:30 a.m. and 9:30 a.m. sponsored by the Marine Corps League, and the Young Marines. Family members and other non-Vietnam veteran visitors may also partake in this delicious fare for a mere \$6 per person, children 2 and under are free.

Although an RSVP is not required in order for you to participate in our parade, it will help in our breakfast planning if you do call the Reclaiming Our Heritage event line at 414-902-5599 and let us know if you plan to join us for the SOS breakfast. You can leave a message with your name, whether you are Vietnam or Vietnam-era Veteran, and the number in your group who plan to attend. If there is sufficient space available in the parade trams, family members may ride with you – otherwise we encourage them to take their place along the parade route and cheer as you pass! We suggest they sit somewhere near the Main Tent side of the grounds to make it easier for them to join you there.

For further information, or to request additional copies of this invitation to share with other Vietnam and era Veterans, please contact me at 414-384-2000, ext 42935, or leave a voice message at 414-902-5599, and we will return your call promptly.

Sincerely, Laura Rinaldi- Chair-Reclaiming Our Heritage