

Baby Bikers

I never had a motorized bike until I became an adult. My mother wouldn't hear of it. It seems that her favorite nephew, Tommy, had been a biker. Tommy had an old '46 Harley - well it wasn't that old in 1949. Anyway, Tommy was coming home from work one day when a car turned left right in front of him. Tommy almost died, and lived the rest of his life with scars and disabilities, which reminded everyone - and my mother - just how dangerous motorcycles were. The best I could do was my J.C. Higgins two-wheeler with playing cards clipped to the fender braces with clothes-pins. Most of the time, I thought Higgy was a Harley; at least it was the baddest bike on MY street. Our "gang" was a biker club that thought we owned the 12 blocks from Ash Street to Kamala School. We were blessed not only with asphalt, curbs, and gutters, but we also had 11 alleys to buzz in and out of, and lemon groves on each border. Our little 1950's world was as close to heaven on earth as we would ever get.

I remember getting Higgy for my fifth birthday. She was too big for me, but my ex-Marine dad didn't believe in pampering anybody. The Christmas of my fourth year, he got me a basketball to play with, and built a backboard and basket in the back yard. I was going to be a star just like he was in high school. The problem was that he set the basket at regulation height - ten feet - and a four year old kid didn't have a prayer of EVER making a basket. The only way for me to ride Higgy was to stand on the back porch, straddle the seat, push off and pedal for all I was worth. The only way I could stop was to lay the bike down, hopefully, going slow enough to not break anything in the fall - like an arm or a leg. After a while, I got to where I could ride Higgy like an expert, and she was a fast bike in those days. Like I said, the only problem I ever had was the dismount. A couple of illustrations might help people understand why I'm like I am today, remembering that we didn't have helmets or other safety equipment in those days.

One afternoon, a bunch of us, including my little sister on her tricycle, decided that we would put on a neighborhood race, to see who had the fastest bike. The idea was to circle our block and cross the finish line first. We would begin on "C" Street, turn right on Fir, go down to "D" and turn right, cross the alley, make a right of Elm, and sprint to the finish line at the stop sign on "C." We lined up for the start: Ready! Set! Go! Although I wasn't the oldest, or the biggest, I had the biggest and baddest bike on the block that day. I set the record for speed around the block, and for skid marks at the finish line. We forgot that "C" Street was a main street with a fair amount of traffic. As I hit the finish line/stop sign, I noticed cars were bearing down on our speedway. I hit the coasters, but the only way I could stop was by laying the bike down. I did. I experienced my first case of road rash that day. All the other racers saw what happened and stopped in plenty of time, except my sister. As I lay on the ground in pain, she ran over me with her tricycle. Then she screamed for mother, knowing that she must have killed me.

Just a couple of years later, I had finally grown into Higgy. With size came more ability to make her go fast, and that was my passion. On the last day that I was ever to ride Higgy, I decided that I would break the record for the downhill slalom course on our street. Starting from the top, the course ran in one driveway and out the next, then in the next and out, and so on to intersection at the bottom of the hill. The point is to ride it as tight and fast as possible, cutting every corner. When you get to the end of the street, you circle the block and start again at the top. I was doing great, and Higgy was fast that day, as we made run after run. My lines were good and each pass was quicker than the last. My concentration level was at an all time high as I prepared for what would be my final run of the day. We began: Out! In! Cut that corner! In again! Faster now; closer yet! In! Out! BANG! The next thing I knew I was landing in the middle of the street on my head. Road rash. My eyebrows became a hat brim. I did not realize that a neighbor had come home and parked their car on my slalom course. I was concentrating on speed and line, and I didn't see it until I was flying over it. I survived, but Higgy didn't. She was never ridden again, and became a pile of rust out behind the garage.

There are some things that haven't changed through the years, like riding habits. The machine is bigger and more powerful, but the same mentality is still doing the riding. My wife says I am still an accident looking for a place to happen. But that's the way life is. We just can't take the easy way. If there is no risk, there just isn't as much fun. For that matter, if there isn't any risk, there isn't much reward to anticipate. Let's go one step further, and say that if there is no risk, there is no need for faith. The Bible says that we are supposed to live by faith, and that assumes that there must be some kind of risk in life. This is where it gets interesting. Many people think that trusting in God is too great a risk, because, after all, you can't really be sure if he is there. But if we are willing to consider that the Bible may be true, we find that the real risk is in NOT trusting God. Life is full of things we can't see or anticipate. We, or those we know, experience accidents all the time. Life is risky. Life without God is TOO risky. When our lives are fast and furious, we need someone who can see ahead, in whom we can trust. He has promised to guide us through perilous times, and stay with us, even "through the valley of the shadow of death." Yes, there are risks we face everyday, but the one who puts his faith in Christ will live to see a brand new day. The risks of this life will not keep him from the certainty of "Eternal Life, through Jesus Christ the Lord."

Pastor Sam

To respond to this in any way, positively or negatively, e-mail: 1. fbcaf@netscape.net

Write: P.O. Box 557 Adams, WI 53910 Phone: 608-547-8198