

Personal Insights from the Old Pueblo Group

Sharing our world with you.

Bikes and Cams

On the Hog – Scooter Grubb

I was born in the mid 50's and raised in a very small, rural farming community in northeastern Ohio and could not be more grateful. Growing up then was so much different than anything you would find today. We were the kids that parents kicked out of the house after breakfast on Saturday morning and told that dinner would be at 7pm and not to be late. We grabbed our BB guns and our bicycles, with the banana seat and high monkey bars, and headed to the woods to protect our families and friends from the unimaginable perils that awaited them were it not for us guardians of the neighborhood. Yes, we drank from the hose, swam in the pond, built forts out of scrap wood and tin, from which we could guard our kingdoms. We fancied ourselves as young Evel Knievel's when we would make ramps out of dirt and lumber found in the neighborhood to see who could jump his bicycle over the most friends. Growing up in the farm country in the Midwest is one of the true blessings in my life for which I will always be grateful.



Working on the Bonneville Salt Flats requires three very important things: The right equipment, massive amounts of sunscreen and a trusty bandana.

After high school I developed an obsession for motorcycles. Those chromed steel horses, works of art that represented freedom and adventure, appealed directly to my soul. The summer following my last year in high school started it all. My best friend Dave and I decided, in a moment of divine inspiration, to use all our available funds and each buy a motorcycle. My choice, a 1969 Kawasaki 500 H1 Mach III, aka 'The Widowmaker', which was, at the time, the fastest production bike available. It was slightly used and had been repainted green with a raked front end putting the handlebars roughly at the height of my forehead. What about Dave? Well, as only a true friend does, he got the same thing except his was in the original white & blue livery. After learning how to almost kill ourselves, our biker gang of 2 loaded up and spent then next two months riding from the farmland of northeast Ohio to the white sandy beaches of Key West, Florida.

Remember, this was a time where your scope of the world came down to local newspaper articles and Funk & Wagnalls encyclopedias. So, you can only imagine how wide my eyes became coming from a sheltered life in a small rural community and ending up in the bustling cities of Miami and Ft Lauderdale. It was truly a serious shock to my system! A good shock, but still a shock, and to add to the drama we really had no money. To get by, we slept on the beach, ate coconuts to hold us over, and tried to find odd jobs to keep gas in our bikes, wind in our hair and food in in our stomach. Mind you, this was the early 70's, so it was a time when you could still knock on someone's door, ask for a little work and not worry about getting shot or chained up in in a psycho's basement. It was one of the greatest adventures of my life, and as a result, cemented my obsession with

motorcycles and the open road. To put that obsession into context - I am still riding, 52 years later. In fact, I purchased my current motorcycle 5 years ago on my 65th birthday in North Carolina. It was a beautiful Black Harley Road Glide, with the big engine, and all the fancy trims. I bought a one-way airline ticket to pick it up and spent the next 10 days and 3500 miles on the road to bringing it home to Tucson. Along the way, I got to visit old friends and family, ate at my fair share of local diners and big truck stops. I even stopped in Ohio to visit my mother and she, at 87, was the first person to ride on the back of this bike as we went across the lake to the local Dairy Queen.

This leads me into my second passion, photography. This one began in college. I was on a trip to a rugby tournament in Baton Rouge, LA. I remember during that trip, we were driving thru Kentucky and I had brought with me an Argus C3 camera, a gift handed down to me from my grandfather. I wasn't too familiar with the interworking's of this gadget but enthusiastically took pictures of this trip. As we were cruising down the road, I decided to put on my best Ansel Adams impersonation, and snapped a frame of the vans shadow against a highway median full of spring wildflowers. When we got back home, the film was developed at the local drug store, which back then easily took a few weeks to process. I was eagerly waiting to see the fun photos of me, my friends, and Baton Rouge. And frankly, I had forgotten about that image I had taken from the van. But when the prints came back, there it was! The perfect sharp shadow of the van against the blurred colors of the wildflowers whizzing by, captured in amazing detail. I was mesmerized! I did that? I did that ... I wasn't sure how I did that, but I definitely did that! That image started my quest to find out how I did that. I was so determined to figure out the "how", that it took me to the library where I spent countless hours looking through photography magazines, books, etc. Anything I could find about photography, I read. From F-stops, ISO speeds, film types, to lenses, filters, lighting, distance and more. I was learning and absolutely loved it!

It was years later, thru an odd sequence of events, that I discovered I could turn these two avocations, motorcycles and photography, into a sort of shadow career. Feeling pretty good about my camera skills, I had contacted a few motorcycle magazines about doing freelance photography for their publications. The effort paid off one morning when I got a call from Thunder Press magazine who asked me if I would go to Douglas, AZ, to shoot an event at the historic Gadsden Hotel. About 20 couples, all bikers, were renewing their wedding vows on Valentine's Day in one large group, bikes, and all. Excited for my first paying "gig" I of course said yes. The editor then informed me that when I submit my images, I need to include about 400 words for the article. A little taken aback I told him that I would do the photography but that I was no writer. He replied, "Can you type?" I said yes. He then asked, "Can you spell check?" Again, I replied yes. His response, "It's a biker magazine, you're a writer." I was paid \$0.04 per word for the article and \$5.00 for the one picture that they used for a grand total of \$21.00. And so began my side hustle as a "paid" moto-photo-journalist. It was the opening I needed to enter this world, and I have since authored coffee table books on motorcycle racing and biker events, worked for a dozen or so major magazines in the industry over the years and have been a contributing photographer and editor to a countless number of photo books around the world.

The accumulation of that work led me to become the lead photographer for the Bonneville Motorcycle Speed Trials (BMST). For the past 18 years I take off the last week of August, load up my camera arsenal, and head to the Bonneville Salt Flats in southern Utah. For six days, I hang out on the white salty flats where I get to photograph the fastest motorcycles in the world from a dozen different countries and the men and women who



Capturing a speed bike traveling over 225mph at Bonneville.

build and race them. Motorcycles that can travel the nine-mile straight line course at speeds up to 370 miles per hour. The ingenuity and creativity of these record chasers is truly amazing, and I take absolute care in capturing the emotions, mechanics, and speed of their efforts. My images from that event are published in magazines and coffee table books that are sold and distributed across the globe.

When I reflect on these two passions, and where they took me, I find myself truly in awe of what I've been allowed to capture in my lens. I have photographed fast motorcycles, celebrities from Bob Dylan and Kidd Rock to Hells Angel legend the

late Sonny Barger as well as some of the most beautiful people and places on this planet. And the discovery never ceases, for lately I have been sitting in bars and photographing aging bikers. These are individuals who wear their whole lives on their faces. For them every sunbaked wrinkle, slaty skin and craggy scar has a story. These biker portraits have now become my current project. Its amazing how these two passions have come full circle, and for that, I am truly appreciative and thankful.

In short, I have had a very full life, and I haven't even talked about my wife of 42 years, Carol, three daughters, four grandkids, three horses, two dogs and the Gila monster colony that lives in our family compound! I'll save that for some other article down the road. But in reflection of it all, I have been blessed well beyond my wildest dreams and expectations and I could not be more grateful for the life that has been granted me. Fortunately, with two wheels still rolling under me, and camera slung across my shoulder, the adventures are not over yet!!

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