

Heroes and Helpers #3

With the coming of the SL-70, we could see that there was plenty of room to improve on the minibikes we were riding. My Grampa could see it too. Oddly enough, our parents could not. The four of us, Grampa, my two cousins and I, quietly visited many local shops on the weekends. Back then there were lots of choices too. Each of us eventually had their own favorite bike, the one that would be the answer to all their prayers. But again, our parents did not share in our excitement.

One Saturday Grampa loaded us into the station wagon and headed to Jeffersonville. We went to Greenrose Sports Center and waded into the mass of shiny paint, leather, and chrome. Hondas! Yamahas! Bultacos! Pentons! Husqvarnas! This was sensory overload. We climbed on dream bike after dream bike. Our sound effects filled the showroom air.

Grampa disappeared into the back with a salesman, but we hardly noticed. Three young boys loose in a room full of dreams! New leather seats. Grips that beckon you to squeeze. The smell of new rubber everywhere. Yummy!

After what may have been an hour, Grampa came back into the showroom. "Let's go boys," he called. The other salesmen were visibly relieved to see us leave. We grudgingly made our way to the front door, tiny fingers dragging across exotic toys like we would never see them again. We piled into the Ford and all three of us started screaming to Grampa about which was their favorite. Grampa slowly eased the big wagon around to the back of the store. What was he doing?

As we rounded the back corner, we saw three bikes sitting outside the back door. The salesman he had spoken to stood among them smiling brightly. The red Honda SL-70, the brown Yamaha 60, and the maroon Kawasaki 100 were the most beautiful things we had ever seen! All talk ceased in the Ford. Had he really done it? We dare not ask.

"Let's load 'em up buddies!" Grampa urged, as he brought the wagon to a stop. Chaos ensued as the three of us clambered out of the car. We pushed and shoved to be the first on a bike. Somehow Grampa got the Honda and the Yamaha into the back of the Country Squire. We drove home with them in the back and me pouting because my Kaw had to wait for the second trip.

Soon enough we had all three home. Even though ***we knew everything*** about motorcycles, Grampa still wanted to go over everything with us before he let us loose. He showed us how to check and fill the gas and oil. How all the controls worked. How to shift the gears. And told us to be careful. As we were sitting there in the driveway, fidgeting on the new seats, my Gramma pulled up the driveway. She took one glance at the bikes and knew what he had done. And you did not have to be too terribly perceptive to know that she was none too happy about what he had been up to that morning. Somehow she was able to pass through all the lovely new bikes and happy, screaming, grandsons without getting caught up in all the excitement. Her stern gaze remained fixed on Grampa as she traversed the long sidewalk and entered the house. Grampa's beaming smile returned the second the door clicked closed. Then he was back to what brought him the most enjoyment, indulging us.

For the next couple of years Grampa took us riding and racing all the time. When parents were not available for one reason or another, he would haul us. He signed for us. He paid for us. He kept us in fuel and parts. He spent way too much of his free time and income keeping us mobile. Any unused land on his farm was fair game for riding. He built us trails and tracks. The only thing he ever asked of us is that we accompany him to church on Sundays. Grampa was the most positive example I can ever imagine. If he were alive today, I guarantee he would be knee-deep in the FCAMX, and we'd all be the richer for his involvement!