

Getting in touch with my inner biker

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He Said

In a world where people like Dick Vitale and Howard Stern demand your immediate attention, it's sometimes tough to hear the still, small voice of the Lord.

Lately I've had difficulty hearing the Lord tell me it's time to buy another motorcycle, which is surely what he's saying.

Once or twice upon a time, not so long ago, I had motorcycles. They were big, beautiful shiny chrome road rockets, symphonies of sound and power. It's enough to make flaming heterosexual write Shakespearean sonnets when he points that sucker west and rolls that power on. All his troubles are blown away as he streaks through the landscape at well above the posted speed limit.

There's not a Real American Guy alive who hasn't boasted, "I could get everything I owned on the back of a motorcycle," as all the other guys smile and nod approvingly. Followed by "then I got married." All their eyes would be downcast and they'd nod knowingly, and then order another beer.

All Real Men want a motorcycle.

I have a perfectly good mid-life reason for getting a motorcycle, besides proclaiming in a strong, steady and manly voice that "I'm an American man with above average credit and I want one."

He said ♂ ♀ She said

I'm celebrating a "special" birthday this week. I've now reached my extremely late 30s, still young enough to dream and old enough to know how to make them come true. Put another way, I'm too old to slam dunk, but too young to have made the Nixon Enemies List.

The actual number is an "F" word, and we ain't talkin' 14. OK, we ain't talking 40 either. I went around that bend already.

My Reason for Living asked what I wanted for my birthday, besides to leap tall buildings in a single bound.

She suggested new golf clubs, since mineweremintedduringthefirstyears of the Eisenhower administrations.

She also suggested a gravesite, so I'd always have a place to dance.

I looked her straight in the eye, "I'd really like to have a motorcycle."

She smiled, and I'm certain I married her for this moment, and said "OK."

We've tried to buy me motorcycles before, following the rules for American capitalism.

1. Save up your money.
2. Go downtown to see The Man who has what you want.
3. Give The Man your money.
4. The Man gives you what you want.
5. You're happy because you have what you want. The Man's happy because he has all your money.
6. Everyone's happy. Happiness is your friend. It's your constitutional right to pursue happiness, and you should pursue it on a motorcycle.

But while you're stacking up the cash a bunch of life happens and the money runs away like it's escaping from prison.

We used to have a 1969 Cadillac Coupe de Ville show car. It was 22 feet of American glory powered by a 472-cubic inch V8 engine. It could pass everything on the road except a gas station and was like driving a Barcalounger. We hardly ever drove it, so she once said that if I really, really wanted a motorcycle we could sell the Caddy and buy one.

A few days later, at the top of Vail Pass, the Caddy burst into flames and died a horrible death. No Caddy, no sale, no motorcycle.



My friends come down in two basic camps when I describe the incident and sing the Burning Cadillac Blues:

- Some of my spiritual friends say God was keeping me from killing myself on a two-wheeled road rocket.
- Other friends say I was merely being tested and tempered by the fires, and that it was a clear sign I should get a motorcycle as quickly as possible.

She Said

A landmark birthday for my life's partner was coming up and I was wracking my brain to think of something significant to do for him. This is the person who once told me that men never mature, so I should marry him for his "forever young" qualities and great sex.

If you list all of his special "likes" in life the top 10 includes playing with his children, 24 year old Scotch, single batch Bourbon, golf (a sport that includes drinking), water skiing (a sport

that includes drinking), snow skiing (a sport that includes drinking), world travel (as long as it includes drinking,) vintage cars, and motorcycles.

For those paying attention, the above list totals nine. The thing he likes best in life is not specifically on the list, but there's a really big hint in the first paragraph.

Following the process of elimination, after the kids are out of college, and therefore on his 70th birthday, I plan to take him on a tour of all the distilleries in Scotland and Ireland. World

travel will just have to wait. Besides, he has a sister in northern Kentucky who keeps him pretty well supplied with boutique bourbons and he gets to Denver often enough to keep a supply of Highland Park on hand.

He doesn't ski nearly as much as he used to, so the skis he got three years ago are in pretty good shape. He just got new boots last year and new ski gear is just not something he's mentioned lately. What he would really like is for our daughter to stop stealing his gloves and put a price cap on her resort charge, but that ain't gonna happen.

He really does need a new set of golf clubs, but between the kids various summer sports (his No. 2 favorite activity in life) he doesn't get out on the course very much at all. Maybe after the kids graduate from college, we could combine a trip to St. Andrews for his 70th since we'll be in Scotland anyway.

The last vintage car we had was a show condition 1969 Cadillac Coupe de Ville that was larger than his apartment in Vail, but got worse gas mileage. I longingly perused the classicars.com website, but honestly, I'm still pissed about him burning up my caddy on Vail pass back in '92. We'll get another classic one of these days, but he'll be buying it for me.

I realize that it has been 15 years, but I'm Greek and we have the ability to hold a grudge. (See Ancient History of the Middle East 101.) At this point in the elimination process we've narrowed the choices to two – a motorcycle or a ski boat.

His brother has the "family" boat back in Indiana and every time we go home we get the boat out and spend wonderful days out on the lake teaching the kids how not to ski. No, I said that just to push his buttons. He really is very good at water skiing.

As for the motorcycle, we went down that road once before. He said that was what he wanted for the last "F-word" birthday, and I was a pretty good sport about it. I said "yes" and immediately called our lawyer, who's been a family friend for about 20 years.

I asked Kevin if I could be charged with pre-meditated murder if I bought Randy a motorcycle. Kevin, being the good lawyer that he is, replied that he would have to do a little research and get back to me. Kevin called our District Attorney, the Sherriff, and a District Judge, all of whom have known Randy for about the same amount of time. They agreed that while it was a legitimate question in this case, they would probably let me off.

One quick call to our life insurance agent to double the coverage on him and off we went to the motorcycle shop. We took the truck along with tie-downs and a checkbook.

I'm pretty sure that the all-too-eager sales person with a really big smile on his face and a plaid shirt (I am not making this up) didn't know about the checkbook, the life insurance or my deal with the law, but he took one look at the truck and tie-downs and knew he was going to have a good day.

His only question was, "What kind of motorcycle do you want?" Randy's only answer was, "Red!" The smile on the sales man's face hit 1,000 watts.

I went back to the truck, ate half a bottle of Bayer aspirin, speed-dialed our insurance agent to double the coverage again, and lay down until the sick feeling subsided.

He sold that motorcycle a few years ago and got an honest-to-goodness Kentucky Thoroughbred, which was a mistake. Randy had learned a few things from his last motorcycle crash, which made the legendary motorcycle movie "On Any Sunday" look like a tricycle accident, and his "BIG RED" motorcycle never went down.

That Kentucky Thoroughbred tried to see how far he could fly pretty much every time Randy threw a leg over him. The only horse Randy ever wants to own again is inside a can of Ken-L-Ration.

So as far as I'm concerned a ski boat, somewhere about a thousand miles closer than the one in Indiana, is the only choice for this particular birthday. However, I did find a Triumph Bonneville last weekend.

And, it's red.

