

## **ON THE SOFTER SIDE**

**By: Cam Blevins**



### **Where Do You Find Courage?**

**Where do you find your courage? That all depends on who you are, what your desires are and what holds you back from accomplishing them. I've had several gals tell me they admire my courage for being able to ride a motorcycle. For me I guess I was lucky because I grew up riding with my Daddy and was on my own two wheels before I really understood what fear was. When I was 11 I had a guy on the back of the bike with me who was quite a bit bigger than I was and I ended up having a wreck. Even though I knocked out my front teeth, lost half of my face and had a severe concussion (thankfully the guy behind me only got minor scraps and bruises seeing as he landed on top of me**

**and rode me down the asphalt hill like I was a sled) I still didn't have any fear of getting back on a bike. In that instance, it was my Mom that was looking for the courage to let her baby back on the thing that almost killed her. But like I said I was 11 so I had the attitude that I was just like Wonder Woman, invincible. But I did lose two things during that time of my life that I still haven't been able to find so if you or someone you know has found my invisible jet or my golden lasso I would be very grateful if you could return them to me. I think I need all of the special powers I can get now more than ever. But here's the thing, I didn't have any fear of the motorcycle even after the wreck so I didn't need courage to get back on it. I remember thinking the motorcycle didn't do anything wrong, I did, and my only fear was that my parents would be mad at me for wrecking it (don't worry they weren't mad, just scared). In the end I did learn a valuable lesson, never try to out ride your own abilities.**

**We all go through things in life that make us feel more courageous and we all go through things that take all of our courage away from us. Fear is like guilt, love, hate and every other emotion we feel. We are all born without any emotions and with the help of our parents, teachers, friends and personal experiences hopefully we develop our own set of emotions. Sneak out of your parents house one time, get caught and punished and I guarantee you will learn fear and if you got the right lecture you will also learn guilt. Being the Mom of a beautiful eleven year-old daughter I get the privilege of watching my daughter and her friends develop their own emotions. At this stage in their lives they have more courage than fear so this would be the wrong time to tell these "tweens" to go jump off a bridge. Not only would they do it they would be fighting over who got to jump first. If you have any fear about what other people think you could never have the courage to be as creative with clothes and makeup as my daughter is. Although I'm constantly trying to teach my daughter to be courageous, to stand up for herself and to be her own person, I'm still the one who is teaching her fear. Having a certain amount of fear helps keep us safe. I teach her to be scared of strangers, of taking off in crowded places where she could get lost, of not completing her homework and failing a class and in certain cases I teach her to be scared of the unknown.**

**That's one kind of courage, then there are the situations that you are forced into and you have to find the courage to live through them for however long they last and then to go living after they are over. In most cases these are the tragedies in life that we all have to live through. This kind of courage generally applies to a death in the family, being the victim of a crime or just being the "nerd" in high school who gets picked on everyday and has to live through 4 years of h\*\*\* just to graduate.**

**And then there are the exceptions. There is no amount of teaching or experience that can prepare you for what you will have to live through to get the gold ring in the end. After being told my whole life I shouldn't even try to have a baby I finally accepted the fact that I was never intended to be a mother but something unexpected happened, regardless of the fact I was taking birth control pills, I got pregnant. Unfortunately after only 9 weeks I had a miscarriage and if that wasn't bad enough I had to have surgery the next day. Despite all of the warnings from the medical field I knew I could have a baby and live through it no matter what the odds. I knew I would rather have 15 minutes of pure happiness than a lifetime of "what if". Somewhere in the back of my mind I knew I could die but what I felt was I wouldn't (most people call that blind faith). Thankfully within a few months I**

was pregnant again. The pregnancy was hard and it seemed with every month there was a new complication. And when I thought things couldn't get any worse another love of my life (my brother, Bill) was hospitalized for an ear infection? Being 8 months pregnant and sick all of the time I got to spend a lot of time in Bill's hospital bed with him (we had a great time taking naps together). Within a week everyone started realizing he was slowly dying (he lost most of his motor functions, the ability to carry on a conversation, knowing where he was, how to tell time and eventually things as basic as his own identity). After an ambulance ride for Bill (the rest of us in cars chasing the ambulance) we checked him into Barnes Hospital who had a team of doctors waiting for him. Within 12 hours they knew Bill had meningitis and gave us a time-line of 24 hours to identify the type or my doctor would have to deliver my 1lb baby girl, who probably wouldn't make it, and start treating her for meningitis if she did. By the grace of God, nine months and 4 lbs later I got to welcome into this world a 5lb. 1oz. baby girl! As if we didn't get enough time to bond with the medical world while she was in my belly we spent the next couple of years of her life bouncing in and out of ER's and hospitals. My Momma has always said, "That which does not kill us only makes us stronger" but by this point in my life I was wondering "Do I really need to be any stronger than I am right now?" But once again, my Momma must have been right, my miracle baby is now 11 years olds, almost as tall as I am, was blessed with beauty, an artistic eye and most important a compassionate heart. And my brother although he was in the hospital for several weeks and then spent several years trying to get "back to normal", other than some memory lose he got the honor of being an irreplaceable brother, uncle and a very young grandpa. And once again this was another period in my life that I didn't need courage, life just didn't give me another choice.

But I have to be honest these are examples of my courageous moments in life that I didn't know I was being courageous, I just didn't have another option. And when I decided my daughter was old enough for me to start riding again I'm sure I needed a certain amount of courage but what I had was determination and passion. My passion was for freedom and the key to my freedom was back to my youth, back on a bike. I'll be the first person to admit I was a little shaky the first couple of times on the bike and a lot shaky the first few times riding with people I didn't know (by the way that is another thing I found odd, this was the first time in my life I didn't know almost everyone I was riding with whether it was a group of 5 or 50).

I would love to say I was courageous for getting back on a bike by myself after being off for 10+ years but in reality my life sucked and I felt like I had lost control of everything so in a desperate attempt to find, at least part of, who I used to be I didn't need courage, I needed determination. I'm a firm believer in "if you aren't happy with your life, change it" and so I did, at least a little bit. For me, everything comes in "baby steps". I believe life is like Mount Everest. It's a challenge, it's a lot of hard work, you're going to slip and fall, you're going to get lots of bumps and bruises, there will be set backs but in the end you'll get to stand tall, reminisce about all of the things you've accomplished and in the end hopefully you get to say "It was worth the trip".

So where do you find courage? Considering I'm not sure how to find my own courage I'm pretty sure I'm the wrong person to ask. I think courage is one of the words that can get lost in translation and it's a word that has a lot of different meanings for everyone. I know for a fact that the one person I want to believe that I'm courageous is my daughter. I don't want to tell her I was courageous. I want her to know that when it came to her there was no mountain I couldn't move, no ocean I couldn't swim or no star I couldn't reach. Considering the fight I had to have just to meet this beautiful person the least I can do is be courageous for her.

But here are the facts when it comes to riding a motorcycle. Riding a motorcycle is a learned skill. Just like riding a bicycle, driving a car, working on a computer or flying a kite someone has to teach you. And there will always be some people who have more natural talent than others. But I do believe you have to have passion and determination! So my best advice is you'll know when you feel ready to take the leap. And if and when you are, take the classes and always remember safety comes first!!

So until spring gets here and I stop whining it's to cold for me to ride (no matter how many clothes I put on I end up getting the shakes) I'll have sweet dreams of warm days, afternoon rides on winding country roads and the freedom that awaits me in just a few weeks!

Have fun, be safe and enjoy the ride of your life,  
Cam