

Therapy Build

Evolution and survival through craft

MERRIAM-WEBSTER DEFINES EVOLUTION AS “a process of continuous change from a lower, simpler, or worse to a higher, more complex, or better state.” For George Holland, the process of evolution has been a pertinent and sustained element of survival. “Evolution,” he says, “I like that word.” And in his ever changing circumstances, George, otherwise known as Dutch (see: Holland, George), embraces his own evolution with resounding resiliency, as the ever-unforgiving, unpredictable universe hurled an all-too familiar fate in his direction: cancer.

From the very first time Dutch straddled the saddle, he strived unapologetically to be the baddest, most domineering rider amongst his friends and peers. Although starting out on a small displacement Japanese bike, he immediately felt the urge to go bigger, if for nothing else but to one-up his buddies, first by upgrading to a Suzuki 250, then to a Norton 750. His commitment to foreign brands remained until 1971, when he had a run-in with the law. No, not that kind of run-in. “In Downingtown, Pennsylvania, I bought my first Harley from a police officer. A 1971 Shovelhead FX,” Dutch remembers. Not that his American epiphany would stop there.



“In 1979, I sold the ’71 Shovel and bought my very first new Harley-Davidson, a red and black Shovelhead FXEF. Rode that bike for 26 years.” At that time, Dutch was living in Atlanta, building his metal fabrication business, specifically constructing billboard structures. A long way south of Pennsylvania, he felt himself getting closer and closer to his final goal: Florida.

While building a motorcycle from scratch had always been a lifelong dream of George’s, he often found himself too wrapped up in other projects such as completely restoring a dilapidated marina that he purchased in Nokomis, Florida. “One of my favorite sayings is ‘If you can dream it, you can achieve it,’” he says. The restoration and subsequent success of the marina turned into his passion (well, second to, you know, riding). He repaired and dredged all boat slips and developed a tiki bar that was



renowned for being the only tiki bar to host a recurring bike night. Enter Tammy.

Tammy frequented the bike nights George's marina hosted, with her attendance eventually leading to their introduction. As their affections began to materialize in a very real way, George found himself facing a decision that seems as though it wasn't as tough as it sounds. "I wanted to get Tammy a diamond," he says. "That red Shovelhead? It sold very quickly, for three times as much as I bought it for. And I've never regretted selling it." Their meeting and eventual marrying is an important aspect in the development of George's dreams. "In 2006, we bought the new Softail Deluxe and modified it with a Stage II kit, bringing the Twin Cam up to approximately 1500cc." He notes this as one of the many stages in his own evolution, as he moved into a new phase of his life, with his new wife and his new

motorcycle (they still ride the Softail), he now had a pairing of the two loves at the forefront of his life.

In 2012, Dutch retired and needed a way to keep busy. He credits his friend Hank for giving him the scoop on a 1967 Shovel that he owned and would sell to George at a reasonable price. George completely restored the bike, turning it into his "bar-hopper bobber," complete with a suicide shift and foot clutch that he fabricated himself. It was during this time, however, that George began to feel his voice fade into a raspy shell of itself. "It was the first signs of cancer growing in my throat. Then I was down, on and off radiation and operations for a couple of years."

Undergoing daily treatment for seven weeks, George remained steadfast in his approach to riding and to living. "During the treatment I was still able to ride my bike to the appointments, at least until the last couple of weeks," he re-



calls. "Then, it simply became too sore." As the radiation therapy came to an end, his doctor brought the news George wanted to hear. They beat the cancer to a pulp. And, as an apparent silver lining, the doctor told him that he'd come out "sounding like a rock star." As time went by, however, his throat remained sore and, as cool as it was supposed to be, the raspy voice never alleviated. During an unscheduled return to the doctor, all signs pointed to the cancer's return, wracking George's throat with a vindictive vengeance in the form of Stage Four larynx and vocal cancer.

Operating was imperative, and George was on the surgical table almost immediately. Doctors performed a total laryngectomy, an operation that includes removing the larynx, vocal chords, lymph nodes, and partial thyroid gland. Post-op, he spent the following week in a self-reflective stupor, with resounding sympathy washing over him as he saw the suffering of those worse off than he. Not lost in the turmoil of the disease is George's attitude; he never delved into self-pity, refusing to say, "Why me?" In speaking with George, a sense of overwhelming humility seeps forth from his micro-philosophies.

George clearly has a knack for taking things that are seemingly hopeless and turning them into something powerful. And his wherewithal was certainly being tested. He admits that he began to feel seriously depressed during and after his two-year bout, as he and Tammy had to come terms with his new circumstances. "Tammy never left me during

my entire stay [at Moffit Cancer Center]. We both learned how to care for and get along with my new configuration and feeding tubes," he remembers. "For me, the worst part was the unknown. At home, the healing process was more painful, and I had to create ways to get things done."

Tammy arrived home one day with a check for \$1,200 and a note saying, "Go buy a frame and get started on that chopper you've been saying you always wanted to build." Her company had raised the money for George and, in turn, completely raised his spirit. "Tammy said, 'George, you gotta do it. You have the money, now get started,'" George says, "She pushed me to go, go, go." He felt liberated from the black cloud hanging over him ever since the operation, with his energy reinvigorated and concentrated on purchasing a frame. He purchased a Kraft/Tech frame from J&P Cycles, and he took the first step in the next step of his evolution.



"The theme for the build had always been an old school chopper," George says. "The [Kraft/Tech] frame was set up for Fat Bob tanks and had fender brackets, a seat, caliper stop bracket, exhaust brackets, etc ... All of that came off." The frame was built to accept a four- or five-speed transmission, so George redesigned it to accept a Rivera Primo heavy-duty Power Drive six-speed and chain drive. Up front sits a 12" springer with an additional 3-degree rake in the stem. As for the motor? Well, an Evolution, of course. "I have owned several Shovelheads and have been riding a Twin Cam. I thought I'd fill the gap with an

Evo.” He settled on a V111 S&S Cycle engine, with 4-1/8" bore and 4-1/8" stroke.

George’s “Therapy Build” rolls on a 90-21" Metzeler front tire and a 200-16" Metzeler rear tire. As for stopping the thundering therapeutic iron, he opted for Performance Machine calipers on the front and rear, and he fabricated a new caliper stop bracket on the frame in order to make it compatible. Getting the spacers right on both sides of the axle took some patience and a lot of trial and error. As we’ve come to know with George, however, no job is too much to overcome. Nothing proves that more than his learning to paint and clearcoat. “I practiced on garbage cans and a wheel barrow, but being a neck breather (post-op left a hole in his throat), I can’t wear a filter mask. So, I made tubes that connected to my stoma hole and ran up and out the garage.”

George pieced together the rest of the bike, slowly but surely, over the course of 18 months. He handmade the cherry wood mini running boards, even including a Tiki Bar Jolly Rodger as homage to his past. He sourced the brass headlight, fender, upswept exhaust, and gas tank from Paughco, and he had the brass ignition cone cover hand-carved by Lillian Rose Choppers in California. He got creative with his coil cover, converting his old flask (whiskey is forbidden, though he still throws backs a few beers) into another very personal touch on this motorcycle.

“Cancer sucks,” George bluntly says. “But with my mind



on this build, I stayed busy all the time. It consumed me. I wasn’t in the dumps thinking about adjusting my life with my new configuration.” He considers the build the best kind of therapy he could have received given his circumstances. And maybe “received” is the wrong word to use. He asserted himself, pushed himself, and seized the opportunity by the you-know-whats. He evolved into a more complex version of himself, having transformed a mere dream into reality, and through such an evolutionary process found himself surviving against all odds. “I would hope this story encourages others to get up and go. Positive thoughts create positive results.” **AIG**

