

## DESTINY

Funny thing about destiny, you might not think about it much, but when you least expect it, it comes up and bites you in the.....well, I'm getting ahead of myself. Let me start all over.

Destiny caught up with me on July 7, 2002, at 3:20 p.m. on State Highway 76 in Robertson County, Tennessee. It was a sunny day, with the temperature in the mid-nineties. My speed was somewhere between 45 and 50 miles and hour and the radio was playing some good tunes. I was stretched out with my feet on the highway pegs, when all of a sudden I noticed a deer looking at me through my windshield. A hundred and thirty nine feet later, that's right a 139' later, I was laying in the road trying to figure out how I got there. Now, after reading what I just wrote, you might be thinking "you idiot you hit a deer and crashed, that's how you got there" and you would be right, but there is a little more to the story.

I'm new to Chapter W, so many of the members have not yet met me, so let me give you a little background information about me. I'm not trying to brag, its just this information is important to know when you get to the moral of this story.

I have been riding about 22 years or so. I have ridden in 49 states, Mexico, and most of Canada. I routinely do endurance rides, and I am a member of the Iron Butt Association. My average mileage on trips is anywhere from 700 to 1000 miles a day. 12 years ago I met two individuals in the old defunct Chapter P where some strong friendships were formed, and ever since we have been regular riding companions. We do

a number of trips a year, and most are in some way cross-country. We try to find the most out of the way places to go, and see if the bikes will make it. We regularly push the endurance of our bikes and ourselves. I have never kept any records of how many miles I have ridden. Some time ago when a friend asked me how many miles I thought I have ridden, it got me to thinking, and based on the mileage of my former bikes when I got rid of them, I figured I have ridden somewhere between 400,000 and 500,000 miles. Yes, that does average out to more than 20,000 mile a year, and that is about right. Some years it's more, some it's less.

In all the miles I have ridden I have been down only 3 times. One was totally my fault, the second was a deer strike, and third, well you're reading about it now. One funny thing about this accident is that it was only about 30 mile from where I hit the last deer.

Now, let me get back to the story. The ride was originally planned to go to Gastonia, NC to an Iron Butt Association ride to eat. I planned on going by myself, but when my two friends found out I was going, they decided that I might need some help eating some Bar B Que. I left Houston on the morning of July 5 and rode to New Waverly, where both of my friends presently live. After meeting up with them we headed north to Interstate 20, where we headed east to Interstate 59, until we decided to stop for the night in Fort Payne, AL.

The next morning we rode up through Chattanooga to Cleveland, where we

started heading east through the mountains, ending up in Gastonia around 1:00 p.m. We stayed at the Bar B Que until about 6:00 p.m. then headed out and found a motel in Morganton, NC. The following morning we planned on heading to my hometown of Clarksville, TN, stay the night at my Mom's place, and then head back to Houston via Arkansas the following day.

Everything was going as planned until just outside Clarksville. This is what happened. We were heading west on State Highway 76 from Adams, TN to Clarksville. I have ridden this road numerous times since I was a kid. The road has numerous curves and in the past has been very scenic. I noticed as we headed down the road how built up it had become. I also knew I was in deer country, but due to the urbanization, time of day, temperature, and traffic, I figured there was a very low risk of deer running in the area. Well, I figured wrong.

I was the lead bike, and I had just started coming out of a small curve when all of a sudden there was an impact, and at the same time I saw a deer looking at me through my windshield. I don't remember anything from that time until I was rolling down the road. Funny thing was, as I was rolling I was thinking that if the bike didn't kill that deer I was going to do it when I stopped. I finally stopped rolling where I ended up on my right side looking back at the direction I had come. The first thing I noticed was a motorcycle tire headed straight for my head. I quickly became concerned that my day was going to end by being struck by a motorcycle. It turned out to be one of my friends who was trying to get to me as soon as possible.

As I lay there I was having trouble breathing, so I figured I had the wind knocked out of me. After I caught my breath, I could see my other friend was on the cell phone and I felt fairly sure he was calling for an ambulance. I then started moving various parts of my body, legs, arms, hands and such to make sure everything worked. Everything was working, but I knew something was wrong with my left shoulder and side. By this time one of my friends was next to me telling me to lie still, but if you have ever been lying on pavement in 90 plus degree temperature, then you would know that is a difficult suggestion to follow.

When I could speak I asked my friend if anything was sticking out of my body, which he replied no, but to lie still anyway. The next thing I asked him is if the deer was dead. I could see him looking around for the deer and as he was looking he said he didn't know. I told him if it wasn't dead, then to go over and kill the...., well I guess I need to leave that part out.

As I was lying there waiting for the ambulance I kept trying to figure out how I screwed up and missed that deer coming out of the woods. I'll get to that later on. I was transported to Gateway Hospital in Clarksville where I later was told I had broken my left collar bone in three places, broke six of my upper left ribs and bruised my left lung. Now I know why I had trouble breathing. I also had road rash from head to knees. I did have a helmet on, and there is not doubt it probably saved my life, but it was a flip helmet and since I was in a low risk area I had the chin bar up.

I ended up going to intensive care for a day for observation because of the lung. Now if I was going to have an accident it probably couldn't have happened at a better place. I was discharged from the hospital and went and stayed with my mother for the next week until I was able to travel home. I couldn't fly because of the lung, so I had to be driven back. My brother drove me to Little Rock, where one of my friends met us and took me back to Houston.

After getting back to Houston and seeing an Orthopedic Doctor for a follow up examination I then learned that I had also broken my right hand and three more ribs.

Since the accident I was able to speak to both of my friends and this is what they told me happened. Neither of them saw the deer come out of the woods. Dick, who was riding behind me, said he didn't know what happened until I came off the bike, and then he saw the deer. Chuck said he saw a blur but didn't connect what it was until I hit it. They both said after I hit the deer, the deer went under the bike. At this time I was still in the saddle. They said the bike with me still on it went down on its left side. They then said I was somehow able to get the bike back up. I still like to know how I did that trick. They said when the bike came back up I then came off the bike. The bike continued for 300 more feet where it then ran off the road and hit a tree.

A few weeks later I rode with Chuck back to Clarksville to get the bike. At this time I wasn't sure if the bike was totaled, but if it wasn't, I would rather have it rebuilt by my dealer. I made arrangements with my insurance

company to have the bike towed to my mother's house, and I would get it back to Houston when I was able.

When we went back to get the bike we went to the accident site and this is what we found out. The tree line on the south side of the road where the deer came from was only four to five feet from the pavement. This I already knew and it was one of the reasons I was only going 45 to 50 mph. What I didn't know is at the tree line the ground sloped down for about 100 feet. In other words if the deer was standing 10 feet off the road we would never see it. Now I know deer are quick, but there is no way that deer was moving that fast if it was standing or laying just off the road, so we figured something spooked the deer and when it came up the hill it was at a full run. That is why I never saw it.

Now, you're probably wondering what is the moral to this story. Well it simply this. In the saddle bag of my wing was \$1,000 worth of safety riding gear. I had a padded Aerostitch jacket with shoulder and elbow pads and padded riding pants. I elected not to wear it because it was too hot. Hey, at least I was wearing a helmet, gloves and boots. By the way the jacket and pants survived the accident without a scratch.

There is no doubt in my mind had I had on my riding gear I probably would have walked away from this accident. At the very least I wouldn't have had to deal with all the road rash. I probably wouldn't have put my wife through hell for a week wondering if I was really all right, even though I was talking to her several times a day by phone. My elderly mother would not have had to wait on me hand and foot for a week,

though that wasn't such a bad deal. I wouldn't have missed four weeks of work. I wouldn't be missing all the riding I could be doing right now. The list goes on and on.

Before this accident I figured my experience would keep me safe. I never gave any thought to an accident where I would have no chance of taking some type of defensive action. Now I know I was wrong. The doctor says I won't be able to ride until November. So I will be buying another Wing in October. My next trip, which is to Death Valley, is planned for November 8<sup>th</sup>. What will I do differently? I will buy a warm weather padded riding jacket and wear it. I will buy padded warm weather gloves and wear them. I will wear my riding pants.

We all make a decision to ride a motorcycle. I am not turning into some type of safety guru, so don't worry about me walking up to you and lecturing you on proper riding gear. I have always prided myself on learning from other's mistakes; so don't make the mistake I did. When you think about not wearing or buying some good safety gear, or wearing shorts instead of riding pants, think about what I, my family and friends have gone through the last several weeks because it was too hot.

Ride Safe and FAR

Fred Boothe