

Things that could only happen to Peck.



Meeting Tom and Jerry

It was 1974 when Toni and I moved to Lafayette, Louisiana. We had just moved into a new house and my dirt bike was parked under the carport. My new neighbor Tom saw the bike and knocked on my door. We talked for a while, mostly about dirt bikes. Tom told me that he and his buddy Jerry were going woods riding north of Baton Rouge, and would I like to come with them? I jumped at the chance to meet new friends and go riding with them on Sunday.

Tom and Jerry picked me up early, and before we got out of town Tom lit a big joint. Jerry offered it to me, but I declined and said, "It is not a good idea to smoke and ride." Tom replied, "It makes us ride better!" I'm thinking, "We shall see about that."

I had a lot more experience riding than they did because I had been racing motocross for five years, and a lot of woods riding too. Tom and Jerry seemed to hit a lot of trees trying to keep up with me—they never smoked and rode again. We had a really fun time, and on the way back we stopped at a bar in Breaux Bridge. We were drinking a beer when some guy walked in and yells, "Whose dirt bikes are those out front? I'll buy a round of beer if somebody can do a wheelie in the parking lot!" Of course, my new friends said, "Peckenpaugh can do that!"

I do love wheelies. We took my bike off the trailer and I was delighted to show off my riding skills. I remember that the bar crowd was cheering me on as I revved up the bike. As soon as I released the clutch, I immediately realized my mistake and thought, "Oh Shit!" The bike spun over backwards in the gravel parking lot. I can still remember it in slow motion as I came down on my back, the 200-pound bike on top of me. I'm lucky that I wasn't hurt bad.

We got the free beer anyway, and I left some blood from my banged-up leg on the barroom floor. That was the beginning of some great times for the 10-years we lived in Lafayette. We started a dirt bike club in 1975, Acadiana Dirt Riders, and the club is still going strong today with over 100 members. Tom, Jerry and I raced Enduro's in four states. We earned A-Rider Status, which means you are going so fast that if you crash it really hurts.

I loved the fast part...the crash part, not so much.