

# Notes from a Soccer Dad



## Hanging with the Big Dogs

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At a favorite trucker's stop enroute with Casey to my favorite southern town of New Bern, North Carolina. Wanting to share a few road stories with the big guys and ladies... They, of course, are the real deal, whereas, I have PRETENDER written all over my faded tee shirt and jeans. They politely nod and sip their coffee as I talk about the open road, our 16 hour nonstop drive and that long thin dawn...



OK., so one road story. Back in 1997, Casey, Matt and I were heading west on a camping trip starting with the black hills of South Dakota. This was supposed to include an afternoon visit to see Mt. Rushmore. We stopped for breakfast on the eastern side of the state at a diner interestingly called "Casey's Café."

As the hours passed on Interstate 90, we noticed a gradual increase in the number of bikers speeding by and heading west. They seemed to come in all stripes and sizes (from the Jackpine Gypsies to serious Hells Angels riders) wearing a mix of leather jackets, helmets, bandanas and the like as they raced along the highway. Our goal was simply to take in a few days at the Black Hills National Park that would include an afternoon visit to see Mt. Rushmore. What we didn't realize is that we were heading straight into the middle of South Dakota's famous Sturgis bike rally.

Let's just say that the town of Sturgis was over-run with motorcycles, parties and bike shows. Forget about trying to find a hotel for the night. The weekend Master Card and Visa bikers had already secured all the available rooms in town. We were forced to find a campground site some 40 miles west of town. Ah, the joys of nature... Nothing like setting up camp to the evening sounds of bikers deaccelerating their Harley Davidson engines, drunk campfire talk and the sweet smell of tainted motor oil. The perfect get-away setting for a husband, wife and their eight year old son.

The next day we experienced Mt. Rushmore in an altogether different way. There, before us, were hundreds of bikers - now on foot - criss-crossing the carved mountainside. I couldn't help but notice a number of them wearing leather jackets with various patches that might read: "Bob Fullman, Outlaws Motorcycle club, Chattanooga Tennessee. "How's it going," I said as I made my way forward.

The tattoo on his forearm said it all, "No Regrets." Bob was no doubt paying his respects to the original rough rider, Teddy Roosevelt. He gave me that same trucker's nod with a slightly perplexed look on his face. Maybe it had something to do with the cycling shorts I was wearing and the spanking clean white tee shirt that read *Bronson Hospital Corporate Olympics*. My ride at the time was a 21 speed Motobecane bicycle that had logged thousands of north American miles. I guess roadworthy depends on your point of view. Teddy Roosevelt stood fixed, stone faced looking at the crowds. Hanging with the big dogs indeed...