

# Jeff Wynn's Last Ride

My name is Larry Savell. At the time of writing this, I've been a nurse for 31+ years. During my career I've had the pleasure and honor to care for those in their time of need or weakness. Not rewarding financially but gratifying. I've been drawn to the "The Golden Rule" "Do unto others as you have them do to you" (or something along that line).

I met Mr. Jeff Wynn Sr while working at a rehab center in Bremerton. Mr. Jeff had suffered a stroke and came to us after being transferred from the hospital in 2017/2018. Mr. Jeff was unable to swallow safely so he had a feeding tube in place for nourishment and medications. I cared for Mr. Jeff on the nightshift. One day, during the day, Mr. Jeff had an adverse drug reaction and was sent out to the hospital. Several weeks went by but Mr. Jeff never returned to that facility. I continued to work there until April 2018. I changed employment and started working at Stafford at Ridgmont Terrace in Port Orchard. After starting work, I discovered that Mr. Jeff was a resident. Mr. Jeff stayed in bed in his room most of the time. He was on continuous feeding from a feeding pump and had deficits in memory. Mr. Jeff would start talking and sometimes you just had to scratch your head to his responses, but he was happy most of the time so that was overlooked. Mr. Jeff's TV stayed on around the clock. I also spent plenty time looking for TV remote. As time passed, we started to bond. We did have some very interesting discussions while I performed treatments or medication administration. Lots of pictures were on the walls. I noted amongst the pictures was a Harley Davidson Sportster. I turned to Mr. Jeff and asked, "did you used to ride Harleys?" To which he replied, "hell yes I ride!" I then told Mr. Jeff that I rode a 2011 HD Ultra Limited. I showed him pictures of my bike. Each day I worked; he would always ask if I rode my bike to work that day.

Early 2019, I decided that since I wasn't getting any younger, to tackle a bucket list item and attend the Sturgis Bike Rally that is held yearly in August. I told Mr. Jeff of my plans to which he replied, "I want to go! I never got the chance to go but always wanted to." I told Mr. Jeff that the bike wouldn't be comfortable and there was nowhere to place the feeding pump. We both laughed.

Time passed. Mr. Jeff began to decline. During this time family and friends started coming to visit. I began seeing Jeff Jr more and had his number to call him if anything happened. Mr. Jeff went on Hospice for end-of-life care. During my time with Mr. Jeff, I looked forward to our chats about motorcycles. Seeing my friend in this state was torture. On the outside I was calm and professional, inside was a different story. Mr. Jeff's words kept replaying in my mind like a head tune. Jeff Jr was at his dad's bedside all the way to end. Jeff Jr approached me to check his dad. I pronounced Mr. Jeff deceased. Mr. Jeff passed April 2019.

A few weeks went by. I started putting together plans for my much-anticipated road trip. Then, an idea flashed into my head and got better the more I thought of it. I still had Jeff Jr's phone number, so I called. I told Jeff Jr that I had grown very fond of his dad because of mutual love of motorcycles. I then told him of his dad's words, "I never got the chance to go but always wanted to." I then made a proposal. I told him that if he could find something that belonged to his dad, a picture or something personal, I would place item in my pack and take it to Sturgis. Once in Sturgis, take pictures of item to show he had gotten there. Once I returned home, that would be Mr. Jeff's last ride. Jeff Jr became

emotional and couldn't believe I'd be willing to do this. I told Jeff Jr that it would be my honor to do this. I also added I didn't anticipate him taking up a lot of space.

Preparations continued. July 15<sup>th</sup>, I was off from work, it was beautiful outside, so I decided to go riding. I was hit from the rear by a F350 Truck. My bike was totaled. I suffered a slight fracture of the left femur and multiple rib fractures in my back. I was in St Joseph Medical Center for 3 days then discharged to home. I called Jeff Jr to tell him the news. He was shocked to hear of the accident. I apologized for having to cancel. I was off work for 4 weeks. I had no one assist, did everything myself.

March 2020, I resigned from Stafford and went back to the previous facility in Bremerton. Then came COVID. No one, and I mean NO ONE was prepared for what was to happen. Prior to this, I was financially in debt. Part of the reason for leaving Stafford was there were no extra hours available. Suddenly, hours were not a problem. During the first 5 months, I averaged 150 hours in a 2 week pay period. By fall, I was out of debt and suddenly money wasn't as much of an issue. March 2021, I went to the HD dealership and came home with a 2014 HD Fat Bob. Low milage and pretty, but no bags. A few days later I restarted my Sturgis quest. A few days after that, I reached out to Jeff Jr and told him the trip was on! Excitement drove me! I was on the bike as much as possible. Early May, I was in the HD dealership and noted a 2007 HD Road Glide. Low miles, garage kept, and beautiful. So, I traded the Fat Bob in and rode home on the Road Glide. Bike came with bags, fairing, and road pack. Early June, due to exhaustion and burnout, I resigned my position. Total focus went into Sturgis planning.

Sturgis Rally 2021 started August 6<sup>th</sup>. Among all the reservations made were motel rooms on both ends on the trip and accommodations at the Buffalo Chip, a campground about 8 miles outside of Sturgis. My campground accommodations were at Camp Easy Ride. I had a reserved tent with air bed preset up. All that I had to do was show up, party, sleep, repeat, and then leave. I called Jeff Jr and we planned to meet at Walmart in Port Orchard. It was there that Jeff Jr handed me a SASE. We decided to mail the envelope from Sturgis, thus having a post mark signifying that it came from Sturgis thus meaning we had made the trip. That way there was documentation. We shook hands and parted.

### The Trip

Sunday August 8<sup>th</sup>. Left Bremerton at about 11am. Sky was partly cloudy starting out. By the time I reached the Cascades the sky darkened, and temperature dropped. Around North Bend I ran into a rain shower that didn't last very long. Once I got to the other side of the mountains the sky cleared and was beautiful. I stopped and stayed in Ellensburg. On both sides of the trip, I elected to ride just a certain distance each day, taking care to keep from wearing myself out.

Monday August 9<sup>th</sup>. Woke up excited, left at about 9am. Weather was bright and sunny. The further east I rode, I started seeing more and more bikes. Lots of wind therapy! Arrived in Missoula, Montana and stayed the night.

Tuesday August 10<sup>th</sup>. Woke up and got on the road by 10am. Stopped in a Walmart for a couple of things that I had not brought. The sky was slightly hazy due to wildfires in California, Oregon, and Washington. Temperature was nice and warm, not overly hot. Made it to Billings, Montana for the night.

Wednesday August 11<sup>th</sup>. Woke up this morning especially excited because later that day I was due to be in Sturgis. Left out around 0900 after washing clothes. Stopped at Little Big Horn Battlefield. Very



emotional. Air quality really changed, causing to wear a bandana across my face. The closer I got to Sturgis, more and more signs were apparent of the rally. Lots of bikes of all sizes, shapes, and colors. I took a detour and went to Devil's Tower and Spearfish Canyon. I then came up through Deadwood and Lead, South Dakota. Finally arrived at the Buffalo Chip about 5pm. Found my tent and unloaded the bike and rested. A short while later I walked around the compound, finally ending up at the amphitheater where concerts were held. It also was where a lot of vendors had shops. Bought souvenirs. ZZ Top was the headlining band that night but not due to start till 10pm. The end of July the Bass Player had died and there was fear they would cancel the concert. But they were troopers and played with a new Bass player that seemed to fit in without problem.

Thursday was spent resting and looking. Lots of shows and displays were everywhere. Even went to an area that had seating. Fortunate for me it was near where bikini bike washing was happening. Most aggravating 3 hours I spent.

Friday was spent riding to Rapid Falls to the HD dealership. I was totally amazed at the size! It was huge! I got a good deal on new seat with back support for the bike. OH MY GOD WHAT A DIFFERENCE!

Saturday, I went out riding again. Rode to the Badlands which was awesome. Buffalo, Big Horn Rams, and Prairie Dogs were seen. I kept thinking how wonderful this country, how diversified. The rest of the day was spent at camp with a few people I had met. Went to bed a little sad that all this was ending soon.

While at the rally, I did buy a lot of patches for my coats and vest along with T shirts. Due to there being approximately 700,000 bikes attending, the town of Sturgis is unpassable during the day. So, I made it a point to go through Sturgis early in the morning around 8am before everything was waking. That Sunday, August 15<sup>th</sup>, I woke up early around 0700. I had packed the bike night before, just a matter of putting everything together. I arrived in Sturgis around 0800. The rally had officially ended the day before, but there were still lots of booths and shops all through town. I located the Post Office. I took out the envelope, wrote a little note, placed a Sturgis 2021 patch inside and sealed it. I opened the mail slot and deposited the envelope. I took a deep breath, realizing I had fulfilled my promise. I texted Jeff Jr, telling him his dad was on his way home.

Conclusion. Rarely have I had the honor of doing anything remotely like this. When the trip was first planned 2 years earlier it felt good, but something wasn't. I guess Fate intervened and placed a roadblock in my path. I feel that added purpose and desire drove me. I had a mission and as far as I was concerned, I wasn't going to let anything get in the way. In retrospect, waiting the 2 years turned out to be a blessing. I was in a much better position financially wise. I had planned extremely well, finding that there was not much that I needed that I hadn't brought with me. 2 years earlier I didn't have the money and time. If I had went, it would have been miserable and not fun, 2 years made a huge difference. I'm the type of person that once I commit to something, I try my damnest to achieve it. And yes, I still miss my friend.