

Silence

12-1-2014 by Harry Zirkelbach

When you are overwhelmed by the sound your own breathing, silence is near.

Someone said that seriously, once. And again, today, more than ever before, we are in need of serenity, quiet, contemplation, thoughtfulness.

The anthesis of silence in mobility, the motorcycle. The chosen vehicle for these comments. I have lifetime romance with this two wheel motor propelled menace. Loved them for transportation, speed, independence, not to mention the feel of wind in the face, that same wind threatening to remove me from the vehicle at ultra speed. The noise is not attractive, hints at the danger in speed.

Began at an early age. Brother had a BMW bike. Expensive. Fast. Would't let anyone else ride his bike. When I learned to ride, bought my own cycle, we'd race.

My bike empire expanded to include an automobile, Needed a larger garage to keep these vehicles I enjoyed riding. Then moving to Phoenix to attend a Technical College for four years, one motorcycle. The drive between Denver and Phoenix became routine a journey each way. Knew where to get the best coffee, sandwich, gasoline, rest spending the least time at each stop. Gotta' get to the destination in record time, either way. Record the cash spent, hours on the road. Reduce the time and money spent, a punishing challenge to body and mind,

A preferred section of the route, half the driving distance, was on US-160 between Cortez, Colorado and Flagstaff, Arizona. Somewhat direct, no curves or hills, seldom used by others on this Reservation land, no cities of significance between the two mentioned towns. Plus both good and bad, seldom patrolled for speeders or break downs.

On the journey in mind, I was retuning to Denver for a holiday, the usual Arizona gift trinkets in a saddle bag. I had left Flagstaff after midnight, knew I could drive at ninety to one hundred miles an hour over the next 270 miles northwest to Cortez. Head down, night clear, no vehicle on the road but mine, pegged at just below the three figure of the speedometer, believe I have my wits about me, when suddenly there's something unlighted on the roadway ahead. Slowing, no way to avoid this bulk which just before the collision, I realize is looking at me. The bike and I separate noisily, enjoy a long noisy slide. I get up. No injury, Scuffs on my leathers, legs, hands, arms. Nothing destroyed. Go to the bike. It has no notable damage. But won't start. Search, find bike missing one spark plug.

Check on what was struck.. My last-second glimpse was right, I had hit head-on a large brown steer. It was dead. A careful exam, showed my missing spark plug imbedded in the head.

Using the small tool box that comes with the Motoguchi, I extract the spark plug from the steer; behold ,it can be screwed back into the cylinder. In less than ten minutes, I am motoring, slower now.

Because the last thing I need, is to attract attention around Kenyata the only significant town before Cortex. I have the instinctive knowledge, I have killed the prize steer of the Indian Reservation, and that payment would far exceed any fine Arizona police might level for speed and the accident.

I can smile as I ride now, for in this solitary stillness, I'm alive, have another story to tell the family.