



## Tribute to Captain Ron Wednesday, August 18, 2010

Good afternoon. I'm Dan George, part of the biker lunatic fringe that Ron belonged to.

First, because this seems like such an appropriate place to do so, I have a confession to make. I'm afraid that I have to admit that it was me who hung the nickname of Captain Ron on Ron Schmidt. It was from the movie of the same name. In truth, the main character was a bit of a pirate, but I think that Ron liked it so much because he liked being compared to a guy as good looking as Kirk Russell.

I would like to thank Becky and the rest of the Schmidt family for allowing me the honor of saying a few words here today; and I take this responsibility very seriously. So when I was thinking about what I was going to say, I thought back on some of my experiences with Captain Ron, and found myself grinning. . .

There was the time, just before RAGBRAI, when I walked into the store where he and Mike (Kelley) worked. In the back, it looked like an REI store. There were multiple tents set up, bikes all over, cots and sleeping bags everywhere. Captain was trying to decide what to take to Iowa, but I learned something that day—he explained to me, “it’s better to have it and not need it than to need it and not have it”.

There were the times I found he and Mike at breakfast at the Griffin, having a great time. . .and there were times I found them at “lunch” at Arcadia, although I never actually saw any food.

But my favorite Captain Ron memory was a few years back on RAGBRAI. It was, I believe, the last day and it was really pouring down rain. We all should have been building an ark instead of riding, it was coming down so hard. I came up on Captain, and he was dressed head-to-toe in this clear plastic rain suit; and since we all know Ron, we know that he probably paid most of a dollar for the whole suit. All I could think of was that if you could walk up to a giant vending machine, pay your money and push the button that said “shrink wrapped cyclist”, Ron would have popped out of the slot. And I learned something that day, as well, because Ron explained, “you have to keep your feet dry if you’re going to be comfortable riding.”

All of this led me to think about, “how do we measure a man’s life, especially one that ended too soon, as Ron’s did”?

And maybe, and I **really** believe this, it’s as simple as when we think of one who’s gone and a smile comes to our face, that life was a success. And that may be as good as we can do. But Captain’s life was this, and more. He had a wife and a family that he loved and who loved him. He had—and look around here today—a great number of friends who cared a great deal for him.

So, his life, while too short, was very successful. He left this world better than he found it.

So. . .

Goodbye, Captain Ron. We’ll miss you. We won’t, however, forget you. And, when we think of you, we’ll smile. . .and thank you for that.