



**Tribute to Ron**  
Wednesday, August 18, 2010

On behalf of the family, I would like to express their deep appreciation for your outpouring of love and support for our dear friend Ron. Many of you have known him and his family for years, and others for only a week during the summer. Whatever your connection, though, I will bet the house that you remember him with a smile on your face.

**Posted by one of Ron's St Pete Bike Club friends:**

" A sad day today for St. Pete cycling; Ron Schmidt lost his battle with cancer and passed away this morning. With his infectious smile, Ron made friends with everyone he met, and we're all going to miss him. RIP, Ron."

Last week, Beck asked if I would say a few things, actually "nice things" she said with a smile, about Ron. I was very honored, and excited about all of the things that I had to say. But, when I sat down Monday eve, I found it to be a very daunting task, to come up with a way to adequately express the value, the joy of life that he lived and brought to others, the words to leave you with a sense of the person he was over a lifetime, and do it in only a few short minutes. So, I will share some of my memories, read you the words of others who knew him, and somehow pull this together at the end.

It is interesting in life how one can have a chance meeting with someone, and ultimately take you down a path that one may otherwise never venture

1. In Jan 2001, I went out on my bike one Saturday morning to go on my normal ride with the SPBC. I was a veteran rider of this insane cycling event in Iowa called Ragbrai, and I wore a Ragbrai cycling jersey that day. That morning, I see this guy wearing a jersey that I recognized from Iowa. You know, these yellow ones with pink pigs, some stupid saying about forks and pork, and he is wearing a bandanna and these god-awful shiny pink shorts. This guy looked really "different". Well, we chatted that morning about Ragbrai, and every Saturday over the next couple months we would ride together, and share our stories. One morning, it came up that my 16 year-old son John and I were going to do Ragbrai again, and Ron insisted that we ride with his club, The Whiners. Well, I still wasn't sure about this guy Ron, or if his club was really something that I wanted to expose my son to. But Ron insisted, and after talking to The Boss – Dan George, I decided that John and I should give The Whiners a try. And so it is, that through Ron, John and I are here today to pay tribute to a close member of our extended family. And knowing Ron as I do, I am sure many of you could tell a very similar story.

2. Within the Whiners, Ron was affectionately known as Captain Ron. If you were with Captain Ron, you were going to have a good time. With him, fun was contagious. It WAS the order of the day. If you stopped with him for just a few minutes, you might sip a beer, you might just start dancing out of control, or succumb to the urge of a whiner line dance followed by a group hug, or if you are reserved like me, just hang around, sway back and forth, sip that beer, and take it all in. In any event, however, you **were not** going to just stand still. It just wasn't possible. Ron was going to have fun. And if you were there, **you** were going to have fun. And when the time had come to get back on the bike, he would gladly pull you on to the next town, and do it all over again...
  1. **Facebook posting:** "On my first Ragbrai captain Ron dragged me home after a big afternoon drinking fosters ... I will always remember him looking over his shoulder saying how is that speed Aussie..."
  2. I need to make a confession - I hated disco when disco was king. I hated disco after disco had died, so I thought. But Ron would show up in every year in Iowa with his makeshift boombox straddled around his waist or somehow wired to his bike, and as soon as the first pedals cranked, he would lead us down the road with the tunes of KC and the Sunshine Band, soon to be followed by Donna Summer, then the Village People, then every other song that you would want to forget, **UNTIL NEXT YEAR**. Where almost everyone carried spare tubes on their bikes, Ron's pockets were loaded down with "D" batteries. The show had to go on.
  3. **From another Whiner:** "... I too was the beneficiary of Capt. Ron's legacy - I too had my day where he hauled me to the finish during Season 1, allowing me to **"rest"** at the roadside stop hosted by Team Cockroach. In Season 2, his disco music kept my pedals turning for many miles. I am grateful to him for making RAGBRAI such a great experience and know that he will be missed. I do wonder what St. Peter is thinking about those pink cycling shorts. No doubt he is thinking that Ron had an amazing sense of style... **OK, let me stop here. THIS BRINGS ME TO ASK A QUESTION THAT HAS LINGERED FOR YEARS: MRS SCHMIDT, DID YOU HAPPEN TO DRESS RON IN PINK SHORTS WHEN HE WAS GROWING UP?????**
  4. A few years ago, Ron and Beck purchased a small house in St Petersburg, Fl. Ron was constantly undertaking one project after another. No matter the magnitude of the project, Ron was always up for the challenge, sometimes enlisting his friends (usually Monrico, or Ernie, or occasionally myself) to help out or provide technical/management advice. At times, I remember thinking "Oh man, he is going to get himself into big trouble". On one such occasion, Ron decided that the kitchen needed to be remodeled, and where else to start than re-wiring the entire electrical circuit. So, he started. And one Saturday afternoon, I decided to stop by and see how he was doing. I walked in, and My God, it looked like a CIA Cold War Experiment chamber from the late '60's with wires running just everywhere. I mean, it was scary. Beck, I am sure you remember this. After watching him work for awhile, Ron sets down his tools, and says "I think this should do it - I'm going to turn the power on". He disappears for a moment, then I hear his voice yell "Are you ready?" I remember stepping back as far and as fast as could, and thinking he was about to light up the neighborhood. And as the single light bulb came on, and nothing else happened, Ron just lets open with a huge grin... but I know he was sweating bullets inside.
  5. Over the last week, there have been a number of remembrances among Ron's cycling friends. At last Saturdays SPBC ride, Ron was recognized with very kind words, followed by a moment of silence. Local Whiners wore their Whiner jerseys, and met for breakfast at The Dome diner to laugh, share stories and reflect on so many fond memories with him. Similarly in New England last week, there was a commemorative ride for The Captain. Others have emailed, literally, from halfway around the world to share their thoughts and stories. And of course, here in Michigan today, the Whiners are here in force. And the circle of friends extends well beyond the Whiners.

There has been just an incredible outpouring of support and love from so many other friends of Ron & Beck & their family. The calls, concerns, offers to help in any way possible. This guy with the big smile that we knew is still drawing us together today.

6. Ron had a love for life. He loved his family. He looked forward to getting better and going back out to the West coast with Becky to see his grandchildren. He wanted to go on another cruise, and even thought of buying an RV to see the country (although I am skeptical about this, as I think he was still looking for a way to justify him not having to sleep in a tent in Iowa). I remember those times when his sons Jeff, Eric, and Kevin would come to town, and Ron was just so proud to have them here, to sit around with them trying out new beers, or going out to catch a spring training baseball game. He and Beck loved to go watch the beach sunsets, or go out early Sunday evening to Woody's waterfront café with all of their friends – everyone was always invited. And Ron always ordered the Big Fish special!
7. I last saw Ron about 5 days before he passed. I had just returned from Iowa, and called the house only to find out from Beck that Ron had been hospitalized. I told Beck that I was going to stop by the hospital before I had to catch a flight the next morning. Ron was very private when he didn't feel well, and certainly did not want anyone to see him when he was down. When I walked into his room, he just looked at me, gave me his grunt of disapproval as I knew he would, and closed eyes to rest. We weren't able to talk, but **he knew I was there; he knew we were all there for him.**
8. He fought his illness with incredible strength and courage, the extent of which none of us could imagine. But he could not have made it this far alone, as the odds against him were just so overwhelming. But to be with him during this time, then you would know that:
  - His faith in God was very strong, and guided him through this particularly trying journey
  - His wife, family, and friends were so very important to him, and provided an indestructible foundation of support. Beck, you have been so incredibly strong through this, always there at his side, always doing whatever it took. I can't think of any sacrifice that you didn't make to help Ron through this. I know what it meant to him to always have you there by his side
  - His bike gave him strength and hope, for as long as he could pedal, he knew he could keep going
  - His smile kept **us** calm, and hopeful
9. I speak for the Whiners when I say "Thank You" Beck and family for sharing Ron with us for that one special week each summer.
10. For me, I remember the thousands of miles that Ron and I we rode together over the years, eating breakfast many Saturday mornings afterwards, talking, and sharing thoughts about almost everything imaginable. In the end, Ron is just one of those guys that, when you think back on it, you just shake your head, and smile, and laugh.
11. We will all miss you. Ron.
12. **I will miss you, my Friend.**