



DR SPROCKET'S COLUMN

RUINED FOREVER IN 1960S LOS ANGELES

My grandfather used to hammer weld over a coal fire in his back yard and my father was a fair wrench. It's not surprising I followed in their footsteps.

My dad always had "old cars". I remember him dropping me off at the Pan Pacific auditorium when I was thirteen to see a couple dozen custom cars, hot rods and a few motorcycles on display. A '49 Merc that Sam Barris had chopped blew my mind. Fast forward four years and while in high school I got to attend body shop classes half day at Long Beach City College for two years. Mr. Hansen would

only teach us lacquer and lead. Also in attendance were my partners Larry Whitmeyer who drove a Model A coupe and Rick Warren who drove a bright red channeled Model A roadster with a "full house" flathead installed. I drove a flathead powered '48 Ford sedan.

In later years Rick worked in the service department at Harbor H-D and Larry's stage three Honda 305 scrambler was the first motorcycle I ever rode.

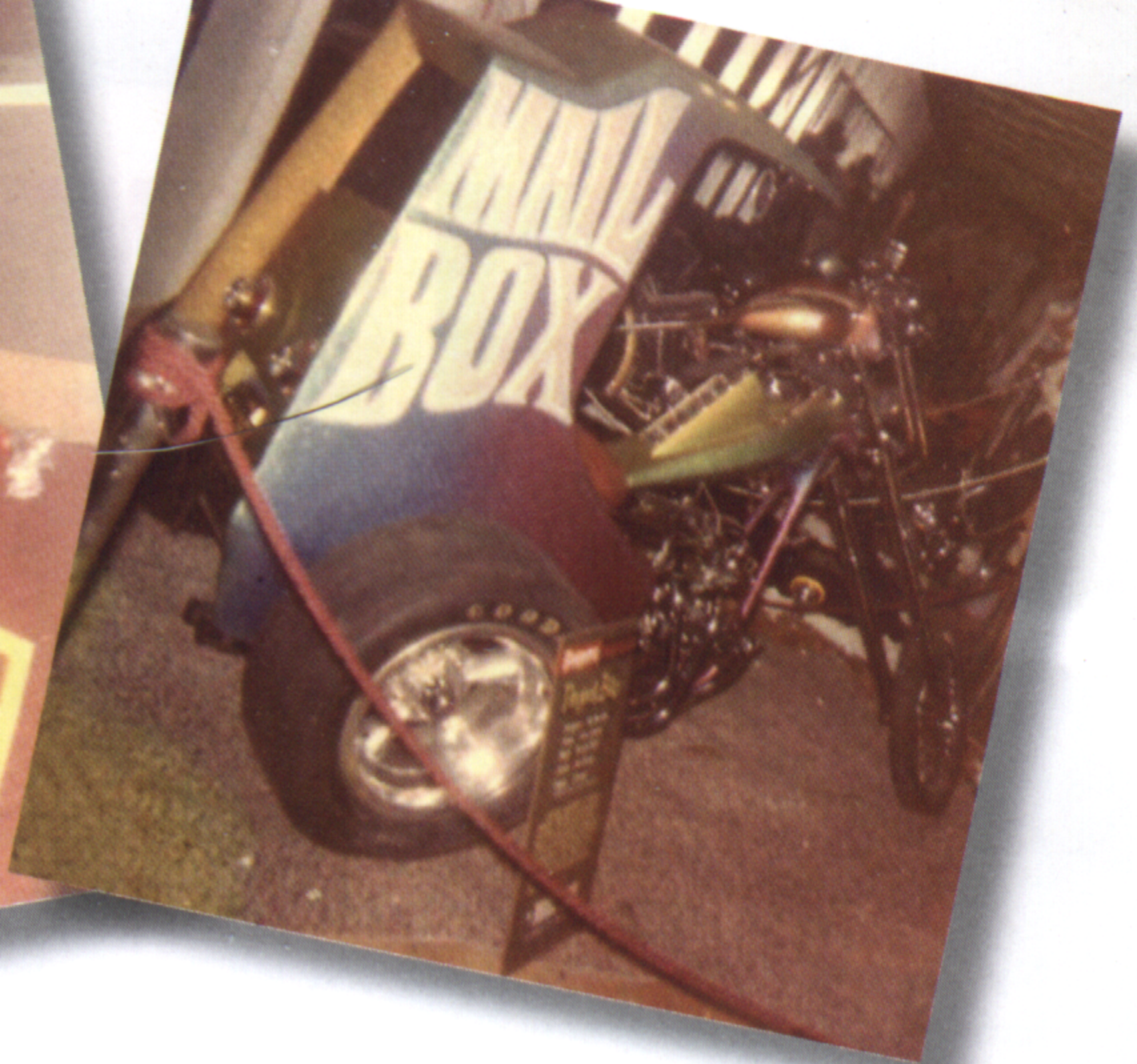
I was ruined forever the day my friend Russ's buddy let me ride his shiny new 650 Lightning BSA. It straightened out my

arms and it almost pulled the bars out of my hands when I nailed it.

We'd roll over to Atlantic and Del Amo Blvd. to visit Biker George who rode a cool candy purple 650 BSA chopper with a long front fork. He was older than us and had all the rooms in his house fitted with speakers blasting psychedelic music. They also contained florescent painted walls and posters with black lights lit all the time. This was way before the Summer of Love. The moment that changed my life was the day I met Paul Stokes who was a year ahead of me in school.

Left, Dave and Rick on Paul Stokes' '47 Knuck... it changed my life! Shot in front of our old high school. Right: my '41 Chevy, up the road from Biker George's place.





There it was! His rigid-framed, chromed stock springer-forked, '47 knucklehead-motored, gold metalflaked masterpiece.

After high school he opened a small shop in West Long Beach building choppers and selling parts. I reconnected with him after thirty-five years thanks to a blog on Oakland Max's 4Q site.

Most of the guys I hung around with in high school drove '40s and '50s Chevrolet fastbacks and hardtops that today would be called lowriders or bombs. They were scalloped, paneled, candied, pearled and or flaked. We hung out on Bellflower, Atlantic or Tweedy Blvd. most nights. Saturday mornings were spent over at Gene's muffler shop on Lakewood Blvd. just west of the Lakewood Drive-in.

We'd be having our front or rear springs torched to slam the car, exhaust manifolds split on our stovebolts, or twice pipes put on with Artesia curb scrappers/Bellflower tips on the ends.

Watson's custom paint shop was in the same complex. We'd walk over and check out the work in progress. Bad ass cars and motorcycles came out of those doors.

I remember the car shows at the Memorial auditorium in Long Beach as well as the ones up at the L.A. Civic auditorium in downtown L.A. in the late 1960s. I first saw Roth's Mailbox Crosley powered trike (now in the

...MY ROOMMATE WAS A PATCH HOLDER FROM THE OAKLAND CHAPTER...

Doering motorcycle museum in Newburgh, NY) there along with the fabulous Indian four cylinder custom "the Electric Chair".

By this time I was driving my slammed '41 Chevy coupe with outrageously loud duals while listening to Otis Redding, Smokey Robinson and Sam Cooke on my under-dash record

player. I graduated from Jordan in '66 with draft papers in hand. After a couple of years at Oxnard A.F.B. north of L.A. I shipped over to Southeast Asia. My final destination was a landing strip on the Thailand/Laos border with the Mekong River in front looking at the Ho Chi Minh trail. My roommate was a patch holder from the Oakland chapter named Tom Roberts. It was two wheels forever from then on.

When I returned to Travis A.F.B. for discharge in December of '70 Tom picked me up from the bus depot in Oakland on his chop and debriefed me at his house. We spent nights in the Oakland railroad tunnel stoned and days eating mass quantities of his wife's Mexican food. When I went home to Long Beach I was ready for civilian life. Tom and I found each other a couple years ago after forty years because of an article I wrote for a antique motorcycle magazine he just happened to read.

Life is like that.