

# Dr Spracket's Column

## DICK ALLEN



shop that most people remember at 1900 Arista Blvd. in Redondo Beach in 1968.

I've been writing this Greasy Culture column for close to ten years. I believe it was Irish Rich Ryan who originally filled this space... and one of his early pieces discussed the products Dick developed, so I won't go into detail about them here.

My friend 'Bob' (the statute of limitations may not yet have expired) went to Dick in 1969 and had him build a 1949 Panhead that early in 1971 became my first bike. It had one of Dick's narrowed Harley springers extended to 24 inches over using Model A front radius rods and it was chromed. It was a sight to behold. This was just after Dick started making his own chromoly springer in 1968 because narrowing Harley forks was too time consuming.

Around 1970 a young man with the moniker Sugar Bear wanted one of Dick's chromoly forks for his own machine but because the seat was too long he went home and developed his own; you know the rest.

Back to 'Bob' and his '49 Pan; it had a wishbone frame with a huge neck, rake and a Hip Jones peanut tank with the sides dished in. The paint

was a gorgeous sapphire candy blue with the tank indents in pearl white. It cost 'Bob' \$3500 to have his Pan dropper built back then... you can imagine what it might cost today.

Of course 'Bob' couldn't leave it alone so he sold it to me for \$750 two years later after he had added six inches to the front legs and four inches to the top bar.

*He also painted it butt ugly green; not to mention the swastika foot controls and a dildo for a hand shift.*

Even today 'Bob' can't be used as a 'bad excuse'.

Dick was a big man; over six feet tall and 250 pounds. Friendly, with absolutely zero ego. He built bikes to ride long miles and look good while they did. He was a long hauler himself and rode with a lot of patch holders — but was never a joiner. He started the 'South Bay' style machine.

*Dick started working in a machine shop in 1950 when he was only 13 years old. He joined the navy in the mid-fifties as a machinist and in 1960, after his discharge, he lived in Bakersfield with his second wife. She was also a machinist and they both worked out of a small shop behind their house.*

In 1965 Dick moved to Lawndale in Southern California; he opened the

with the four bar sissy bar because it was needed to store all the equipment he needed to ride to the midwest and back — including an extra gas tank.

That's also why he started using spun aluminum Centaline rear wheels and the ten spoke mag style fuel altered drag car wheels; because wire wheels require too much maintenance. It's also the reason he created one of the first primary belt drive set-ups; it dispensed with vibration (no need for a front damper), chain adjustment and oil mess. Phase Three, Primo and BDL soon followed and Dick lost the battle for production rights, even though he was the first.

At least he was able to sell licensing rights to FMS for the manufacturing and sales of his two-into-one exhaust header pipe and muffler. He developed the set-up to create lower end torque and for ease of maintenance. He also was one of

the first to champion the use of disc brakes on Harley's — a couple of years before the factory itself realized their great potential.

It's cool that my 1981 FXB Straps (second year, last of the AMF machines) has aluminum spoke wheels, a two-into-one exhaust (styled much like Dick's), triple disc brakes, a sissy bar out back, drag bars up front and dual belt drives. The factory's first real custom! Dick was ten years ahead of his time; he incorporated most of his ideas in his beloved motorcycle 'Loco Motion'.

Around 1970 Dick and Leon Daly (a great fabricator who later moved to Texas) started construction of Dick's first V8 trike. They built the drivetrain and chassis and Dick had Ed Roth build the fiberglass body. A few of these were built and are highly prized today. They were a handful to ride, as you can well imagine.

*Dick lost a lower leg and suffered a bad head injury in a nasty bike v car accident in 1981. In 1983 he passed due to lingering issues relating to it; gone at the early age of 46.*

He was one of the main innovators of motorcycle products we riders take for granted today; so next time you roll out space a thought for those who came before you and made a lot of the equipment you now enjoy possible.

I want to thank Joe Hurs' and Bruce Parrish for the use of their photographs; Joe used to work around Dick's shop and Bruce painted bikes down the street. Both rode Dick Allen styled bikes. See you down the road...



**Top:** Dick Allen on the road. **Middle:** 'Loco Motion', Dick's beloved custom bike which was covered by a number of different motors over the years. **Bottom:** V8 trike... and a leopard cut!

**Above:** Dick's V8 trike with fiberglass body designed by Ed Roth. **Right:** Inside Dick Allen's shop, with a V8 drivetrain in progress.