

Member Spotlight

Al Hancock & Claire Nybro

Once upon a time, in a frozen land far up north, there lived a handsome fellow who was a manservant of the Kingdom's City. One cold December day, he met a fair young lass who worked as a maid-servant for the Kingdom's County. The manservant rode a golden colored iron pony (which, as it turned out, was part of the young maiden's attraction to this fellow). In time the handsome fellow and fair maiden would marry, and live happily ever after.

Okay, that was the shortened fairy tale version of our story. Here is the "real world" version:

AL(BEFORE CLAIRE): I was born and raised in Minnesota, the youngest child and only son with 5 older sisters. After I graduated from high school in Ogilvie, MN, I persuaded my parents to let me join the Air Force when I was 17. I did a tour of duty in Vietnam in 1968, came home in 1969 and started working as a Minneapolis police officer that year. I always had a motorcycle, starting when I was 15; my first bike was a 90cc Indian. Other motorcycles I have owned were a Matchless 250 Scrambler, a Honda Super Hawk 305, a Triumph Bonneville 650, and Honda 700. I had a 1985 Gold Wing 1200 Limited Edition when I met Claire on Christmas Eve, 1989. (Claire's note: Al doesn't remember laying eyes on me prior to meeting me in a bar that Christmas Eve, can you believe that??)

CLAIRE (BEFORE AL): I was born an Army brat in Ft. Monmouth, NJ, #3 of 6 siblings. My dad was a Lutheran Chaplain in the Army, so we moved around a lot when I was growing up – places like Ft Lewis, WA, Ft Benning, GA; Wurzburg, Germany, and Ft Sam Houston, TX. The only person in my family who owned a motorcycle was my oldest brother Phil; (I think it was a Honda 300). Phil would sometimes give me a ride on his motorcycle when I was about 11 or 12, until my mother put the kibosh on that. I graduated from Theodore Roosevelt High School in San Antonio in 1976. I moved to Minneapolis, MN, in 1988, and started working at the Hennepin County Attorney's Office as a legal secretary in 1989. That's where I first saw Al. He was working undercover narcotics as a Minneapolis police officer, and I was assigned to the Drug Unit, so I would see him when he would drop off his cases for prosecution. Boy, sometimes he looked pretty grubby, like he lived in the gutter. I'm talking REALLY down and out. But he didn't always look dirty and unshaven, and I knew he was a "diamond in the rough."

On Christmas Eve 1988, a friend and I decided to have a celebratory drink together before we went home for the holidays, so we went to a local bar across the street from the Government Center, which happened to be a cop bar. And guess who was there that night?



AL AND CLAIRE AS A COUPLE: Our first vacation together was on Al's 1985 Gold Wing 1200. We took off from Minneapolis in June 1989 and headed for the Black Hills in South Dakota. It was raining the first morning of our vacation as we were ready to take off on the Wing, and Al said we could wait until the rain stopped. I said, "Heck no, we're burning daylight!", so we put on our rain gear and off we went. Al told me later that he knew I was special when I said that! We had the best time on that trip, although I will never forget the ride home from Rapid City to Minneapolis. It was SO HOT and windy – about 101° and cross winds from the south of about 40 mph. Even coming very close to heat exhaustion on that trip didn't stop me from loving to ride on the Gold Wing. We had a lot of good times on that bike: a 2-week trip to Glacier National Park, and Banff and Jasper Parks in Canada; trips along the Great Lakes into Michigan and Wisconsin, and long rides just to eat (some things don't change!). Alas, we sold that motorcycle in the early 90's, and didn't get another one until August 2008. We found Al's 1996 Gold Wing 1500 SE on the Internet and flew to Jacksonville, North Carolina, to pick it up and then we rode it home to Paige, TX. We joined GWRRA as soon as we got home with our new motorcycle.

We got married in 1990, and Al retired from the Minneapolis Police Department in 1992. We continued to live in Minneapolis until 1997, when we moved to Ladysmith, WI, into the house that Al built. We sold everything we had in 1999 and hit the road in our motor home. We were fulltime RV'ers for 5 years until we bought our house in Paige in October of 2006. I have a daughter from my first marriage, her name is Shannon and she lives in Reno, NV. Al and I have no children, only a dog (our 11-year-old German Shepherd, Elsa – she barks at all the animals on TV).

At Chapter O's Bluebonnet Rally in April 2009, I bought my first motorcycle online through EBay. Al had found the perfect motorcycle for me, and the bidding came to an end during the rally. I frantically borrowed Linda Poullard's computer to close the deal. I was the proud owner of a 2004 Honda Shadow 750 Aero before I knew how to ride! I took the MSF Basic Rider Course through Bastrop Motorcycle Training at the end of April 2009, passed the course, and got my license the next day. By now I have logged several thousand miles on my bike and every time I ride it, I become more confident and assertive. But I'm sure that every once in a while you will see me on the back seat of the Gold Wing, because I still love to be a co-rider!

One of the best things we ever did was to join GWRRA. We love the camaraderie we share with our GWRRA family and look forward to many more years of riding in your company.