

Ike Lockridge

Alan Paul "Ike" Lockridge was born August 30, 1947, at the family home near Russell, Iowa, which is a small town located in the south central region of the state. His parents, Alva L. and Hazel Dinsmore Lockridge, lived at the time on the 160 acre farm homesteaded by Ike's great, great grandfather. To clear up the point of where the nickname "Ike" came from, notice that he was born soon after the end of World War II. His father had served in the military during the war, and he had a great admiration for General "Ike" Eisenhower. Any child of that era would be pleased to be called Ike.

The farm where Ike was born was the epitome of a 1940s family farm. It was 90% tillable and maximum use was made by his father. He grew corn, beans, oats, and hay. The farm included milk cows, beef cattle, and chickens. The sale of milk, beef, and chickens, as well as some of the proceeds of the field crops, afforded a cash flow to the family, but most was used by the family itself.

Ike's role in the farming operation seemed to be to pester his half sister Jean, who was seven years older than he. Incidentally, Ike has an older half brother, but he was not a part of his immediate family while Ike was growing up. One memorable episode with Jean, when Ike was about five, stemmed from his mischievous habit of throwing dirt clods at the cows being milked by her. When one cow reacted violently, the milk was spilled, and the cow's tail took a good swipe at her. Enough being enough, Jean chased after Ike and cornered him in the milk house. She gave him a good thrashing, which might have ended such pranks, but when asked if he stopped pestering his sister, he said, "No." Later, Ike learned first hand how dangerous the farm animals could be. He entered the barn to take care of the family pony. The pony kicked him in the face and knocked him out.

Ike's mother was a graduate of the University of Missouri. This was a distinction not held by very many women of the era. She made use of her education by teaching in a one-room school, since that was the norm at the time in farm country. Ike attended a one-room school through the fifth grade. He said the school had from fifteen to twenty students most of the time. He found that a schoolyard could be dangerous when a fellow student jumped on one end of the school's seesaw and the other end hit Ike under the chin knocking out two teeth.

When Ike was fifteen years old, his father, who had begun working on road construction projects, modified a 1944 school bus as a camper so Ike and his mom could travel to jobs with him. He did this because he didn't like being gone from home so often without them. Ike's dad attached a food box and a drink box to a 1949 Chevy pickup truck so Ike and his mom could provide catering service on the construction sites. They sold hamburgers and drinks at noon to the workers. Ike remembered one near tragic accident for himself and his mom. They were traveling about forty miles per hour on the newly paved road to the work site when he, while looking up the hill to see where the workers were, ran off about a ten inch drop at the end of the pavement. Fortunately, the truck did not turn over and the two occupants were not hurt, but the food and drinks were destroyed and all the debris plastered the inside of the truck. They had to start over on that enterprise. One happy outcome of Ike's helping with the catering service was that he was able to use the money he earned to purchase his first car.

When he was thirteen, he began his life-time interest in bikes by purchasing a 1947 Cushman scooter. His father restricted where he could ride the scooter. He could ride it on the country roads but not on pavement. After about two years with the Cushman, his next bike was a Honda 50 with electric start. He liked that bike, but it is significant that one of his current restoration projects is a Cushman very much like his first two-wheel bike. For a while, he also owned a 1948 knucklehead Harley Davidson motorcycle he bought for \$125. He sold the Harley when he married Carol.

Ike was sixteen when he purchased a teal green 1955 Ford two door sedan, but it was his bike he was on when he went to visit a local beauty by the name of Carol Dawson to sell her family tickets to the school play. It was fateful because the two youths started dating and began their life journey together. It is Carol who glowingly describes the beautiful teal green Ford so it is assumed that the car had to have been a part of her attraction to the young man. Ike turned seventeen on August 30, 1964, and they got married on September 5th. When they applied for a marriage license in Iowa, they discovered that Ike was too young. Ike's dad said they would go to Missouri where marriage laws were less restrictive. They married in Missouri and two days later repeated the ceremony for friends and relatives at the Church of Christ near Confidence, Iowa. Most of the people were not aware that Ike and Carol were already married. By the way, they just recently celebrated their 50th Anniversary.

Ike dropped out of school in the eleventh grade when he and Carol got married. Now, he knew he needed to provide for himself and his wife. He entered barber college in Des Moines, Iowa, and earned his license. He began what might have been a lifetime career as a barber, but some things happened...the Beatles came to America and the hippie movement arrived. Hair styles changed so dramatically that barbering in Davenport fell off disastrously. He was a barber from 1965 until 1970.

From 1970 to 1977 he built cabinets for the booming housing industry in the Davenport area. He partnered with Max Anderson, a brick mason, to build spec houses. The special skills of the two men complimented each other in the very successful enterprise, but again, fate would change things by the early 80s. The national economy took a nose dive at that time with agriculture and its related industries hit the hardest. This was significant in that the Davenport area had lots of agri-related industry, no less than having been a major manufacturing area for John Deere implements. The plants' production slowed and an economic recession began.

Good things happen to good people. With two children, Rick and Gayle, Ike and Carol knew they had to consider other options for employment, perhaps in another area of the country. Again fate played a hand. In 1984 Carol received a real-estate ad which read, "Come See Bella Vista." The ad included a three day, two night stay as encouragement. She thought this would be an interesting area to see and they needed a vacation anyway. They came to Arkansas and fell in love with Northwest Arkansas. They, with intentions to eventually relocate to the area, purchased a lot on Beaver Lake. The opportunity came in 1985 when an executive for the J. I. Case Company, who was moving to Arkansas, hired Ike to build his home at Bella Vista. Ike's excellent reputation he had earned as a builder in Iowa served him well. The client, knowing Ike would have to deal with untested employees in this new location, asked him how he could be certain he could put together top notch crews. Ike admitted that he did not know for sure, but the new workers would have to satisfy the requirements of the contractor before the client would have to be concerned. This was good enough for the man and Ike got the contract.

It is obvious that Ike succeeded in associating with good workers and subcontractors. As noted in an earlier Tired Iron newsletter (Vol. 16, No. 5), Tired Iron member Al Walkenbach owner of AAA Electric became the electrical contractor associated with Ike's Dream Builders Company. Early on, as Ike searched for skilled electricians, Al's name had been recommended over and over. The two contractors joined forces and worked well together until Al's retirement. Not surprisingly, the guys became great friends and remain so. Another plus for the company was that Ike's son Rick worked for Dream Builders. Rick learned the home construction business from the ground up, literally, and is now the owner of Lockridge Construction in Northwest Arkansas. Together, Ike, Rick, and Al built lots of homes in Northwest Arkansas. Rick continues the tradition.

Ike's interest in motorcycles came to the forefront when, in the mid-70s, he and Carol, along with friends, began taking their vacations by touring the country. The first big trip was a bike ride from

Davenport to New Mexico. The trip revealed that something was needed to support the riders on a day to day basis. Ike solved the problem by adapting a bike trailer from the running gear of a compressor trailer. He learned that the rectangular box he added needed to be more aerodynamic. When he cut the front corners off the box to create angled corners, it looked like a coffin, but it worked well. He knew that others recognized the possibilities for the box because, on his bike's CB radio, he heard lots of truckers make the comparison. Eventually, he purchased a commercial bike trailer, but that couldn't have been as much fun as the original. It was noted in Al Walkenbach's story that he and his wife Brenda rode with Ike and Carol on several road trips.

Ike's road trips are now taken on the most luxurious of bikes, a 2009 Honda Gold Wing. Recent trips have been to a swap meet in Portland, Indiana, to sprint car races in Knoxville, Iowa, and to the Mount Pleasant, Iowa, tractor and engine show. It should be noted that Ike also has a 1947 Indian Chief bike he is restoring. While Ike continues to enjoy his bikes and bike trips, something else has entered his sphere of interest...antique fly-wheel engines.

This new interest began innocently enough. Ike and his family had been attending and camping at the Mount Pleasant shows for years, but he said he had never really thought of collecting old engines. Then, Al Walkenbach's purchase of his first engine and his fun in restoring the engine made Ike alert to the possibilities. Next, on a trip to Colorado in 2009 to ride four-wheelers, he happened to notice a field full of what looked to be farm implements. He went to the closest home and learned that the owner had recently died and that the son was cataloging the items for sale. Ike called the fellow and asked if there were any fly-wheel engines in the collection. The man said that there were about sixty of them. The short of this is that Ike bought six on the spot. When Ike, Al, Rick, and another friend headed back to Colorado with a trailer to get the engines, Al and Rick bought five more engines. As can be imagined, this trailer load of rare engines attracted lots of attention on the trip back to Arkansas.

In the five years of collecting, Ike has added more engines than he can determine. His favorites among them are the vertical type engines. One of them is a nicely restored, throttle governed, Fairbanks Morse Special Electric, which is usually on display wherever Ike goes. A big part of the pleasure attained from these old engines is to take a rusted and broken engine and return it to running condition...a process that involves lots of searching for parts and even the casting of parts. Ike mentioned his luck in finding a collector with a Special Electric like his who removed a part from his engine, created a mold, and cast it for Ike's engine. Sometimes, it's the people met while pursuing the hobby which makes engine collecting really worthwhile.

Today, Ike is in semi-retirement, which means he still works with Rick's construction business quite a lot. Ike and Carol have three grown grandsons, Rick and Molly's sons Joey and Quinten and Gayle's son Justin Smock. Carol enjoys volunteering for worthy causes and is now a regular helper at Highlands Oncology Clinic in Rogers. Ike and Carol live in a stylish home, built by Dream Builders on Beaver Lake and, by their enthusiasm, show that they greatly enjoy life in general. Most important to Tired Iron of the Ozarks, Ike is a leader in the club and now serves as vice-president. Rick, who has become a serious collector of engines, and Ike are most generous in sharing their engines at Tired Iron shows, and anytime Carol can attend shows and dinners, she is delightful. Tired Iron is a better place with the Lockridge connection.