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July 1979 to February 1980: Man About Town

“Get Familiar with the Thrill”

Slogan for Harley-Davidson motorcycles

The same day Clint Riley hired Patrick McCullough as his assistant, the young man retrieved his meager belongings from his girlfriend’s apartment, parked his motorcycle outside the Yankee Yacht Carpentry Shop, and moved in with his boss. At first things seemed to go well, although the living arrangements proved less than ideal. The quarters were cramped, and both men were careless housekeepers. Meals were haphazard, often eaten out or ordered in, as evidenced by the empty pizza boxes and Styrofoam containers left on the counters. Articles of clothing were strewn about, frequently unwashed, and the beds, separated from the living area only by a sheet strung on a line, were often unmade.

In spite of that, Patrick was pleased to have a place to stay. He and Lancer soon became fast friends. Sometimes Clint sent Patrick in the van to pick up supplies, and Lancer would ride along in the passenger seat. As time went on, Clint began to resent that the dog seemed to prefer Patrick’s company to his own.

In the shop, Patrick demonstrated that he was fairly adept with tools, but slow to understand exactly what was expected

of him. Clint became increasingly frustrated with having to stop work frequently in order to explain to Patrick how the work should be done. Clint's wife, Marilyn, was more patient with Patrick and frequently served as a buffer between her estranged husband and his assistant. She found it hard to resist Patrick's ready grin, his Teddy Bear appeal, and his undeniable sexuality. But when Marilyn was not on hand or when Clint had been drinking or was suffering from a hangover, Patrick bore the brunt of his boss's irascible temper. Worse, he was forced to endure Clint's practical jokes and his making fun of Patrick's deafness in front of the shop's customers. Hurt and humiliated by Clint's teasing, Patrick would retaliate with vulgar gestures or by slamming tools around, then stalking out of the shop.

As winter approached, the situation between Clint Riley and his young helper grew ever more tense. Clint was always slow about paying Patrick, and Patrick became increasingly frustrated with having to repeatedly ask for his wages. The Social Security disability check he received monthly was usually gone by the time he had gone barhopping, bought gas for his Harley, and paid for his meals. Often weeks passed before Clint doled out a few dollars. By the time the New Year rolled around, Patrick's resentment was intense, and several times he and Clint would have come to blows had not Marilyn interceded. After such blowups, Patrick would leave the shop to go tearing off on his motorcycle, often not returning until late a night.

In the meantime, Patrick had become a familiar figure around Annapolis. Speeding along the historic town's streets on his noisy motorcycle and wearing his cowboy hat, he drew lots of attention, especially from young women. He was rather vain about his appearance and was not unaware of the impression he made, giving off a certain James Dean quality. Men were impressed, too, by his extraordinary strength—when Patrick had been living with his girlfriend, Cindy, several

people had seen him regularly carry his heavy motorcycle up all three flights of stairs to her apartment.

Some of the attention Patrick gained was not so positive—several times the police waved him over because his motorcycle lacked a muffler and made too much noise. But when the officers realized he was deaf, they generally gave him a warning instead of a ticket and waved him on.

Patrick came to view some of the officers as his friends, and they, in turn, adopted a sort of paternal feeling toward him. Captain Stanley Malm of the Annapolis Police noted that Patrick would sometimes kid around with the officers, walking up behind them and tapping them on the back to see if they were wearing their bulletproof Kevlar vests. Patrick even enjoyed a bit of a hero status with those officers who remembered him from the time when he was living on State Circle with his girlfriend Cindy and had spotted a fire in the city marina office. Patrick had become a temporary hero when he rescued an old man who was sleeping in the building. There was one officer, however, whom Patrick did not regard as a friend—Captain Albert “Yogi” Baer of the Annapolis Fire Department. Captain Baer kept asking Patrick if he had set the fire, and warned that he was keeping an eye on him.

As for the occasional warnings about the Harley’s lack of a muffler, Patrick saw them as little more than an annoyance. He loved revving the engine and feeling the Harley’s power as its vibrations penetrated the smothering blanket of silence that isolated him from the world. With the Harley under him and the wind in his face, he could forget about his fights with Clint. He was twenty years old now, a man, and he was free to go where he wanted, and as fast as he liked. No more being locked up . . . no more somebody always telling him what he could do, what he couldn’t do.

Fred Hechlinger, a veteran sailor and historic ship restorer who was a friend of Clinton Riley’s, commented on the

impression Patrick gave: "Patrick was not well educated. He knew mostly basic signs, and was only able to carry on a conversation at a very primitive level. However he was tall and handsome with an imposing physique, and extroverted manner, which helped him get by."

Hechlinger felt that deafness added in a way to Patrick's boyish appeal, particularly with hearing people. "Lots of folks felt a need to befriend and help him," Hechlinger said.

Occasionally when Patrick was in one of the local bars, someone would make fun of him on account of his deafness, but they soon found that embarrassing Patrick could be dangerous. When Patrick was provoked, his strength became the equal of any two men, as his tormentors learned to their sorrow. Neill Burke, a veteran officer of the Annapolis Police Department, responded to an incident in Marmaduke's one night when Patrick insulted a girl who had broken up with him, and she responded by throwing an ashtray at him. At that, Patrick went on a screaming rampage and began breaking up chairs and tables. Burke, a powerfully built man himself, had to physically wrestle Patrick to the ground in order to prevent more havoc.

Despite the occasional bar fights—or, in some cases because of them—Patrick remained a popular figure. Often in bars he demonstrated his strength by arm wrestling with challengers, after which the men would clap him on the shoulder and buy him beers.

There were usually girls in the bars, too, and they flirted with him. Patrick was well aware that his good looks and athletic physique drew their attention. His deafness lent him an aura of intrigue and, oddly enough, enhanced his sexual appeal. Girls felt important when they learned to exchange a few signs with him. Or perhaps it was because their ability to hear gave them a sense of control over him—whatever the reason, Patrick used whatever advantages his deafness gave him as part of his come-on.

One night as he entered Marmaduke's, he spotted a slender young woman on one of the barstools. She was pretty, with long dark hair, olive skin, gorgeous legs, and a tall, attractive figure. He smiled at her, slid onto the adjoining stool, then tapped the empty glass in front of her to suggest he wanted to buy her a drink. The half smile she gave him made her seem receptive. "I buy you beer?" he said.

At first she drew away, taken aback by the strangeness of his voice, which came out as in a hoarse, gangster-like tone. The bartender leaned over and said something to her. At that she turned back to Patrick and smiled. "You are deaf?" she said, shaping her words carefully with her lips so he could understand.

Patrick nodded and indicated to the bartender to bring them both a refill. The girl, again articulating carefully, said, "I was friends with a deaf boy in my high school. He played football." She pantomimed throwing a football. Seeing Patrick seemed puzzled, she took a pencil and paper and wrote the word *football*.

Grinning enthusiastically, Patrick imitated her move with the football and said, "I play football at deaf school."

The girl reached over and felt his biceps. "You are a strong man," she said. "What is your name?"

"Patrick," he said, and made the sign for his name. "Your name?" he asked.

She wrote *Rosamund Witty*. He fingerspelled the name on his hands and mouthed the letters for her. She carefully imitated what he had done.

After a moment she picked up the pencil again and wrote, *How do you sign "motorcycle"?*

Patrick's eyes lit up and he immediately imitated the hand motion of revving a motorcycle engine, the sign for motorcycle, then took the pencil from her and wrote, *Have motorcycle. You want ride?*

Rosamund wrote back, *Maybe later. First teach me more signs.*

For the next half hour or so Rosamund wrote various words, and he made the appropriate signs for her to imitate. Sometimes Patrick would sign back to her one of those he had taught her to see if she remembered. Rosamund was an apt pupil. Later they played several games of shuffleboard, all the time laughing together and teasing each other as Rosamund learned to put together simple sign sentences.

They returned to the bar, and after several more rounds of drinks, Rosamund pointed to her watch to indicate that it was time for her to leave. When Patrick made the sign for motorcycle and gestured in a way that indicated he was offering to take her home, she signed *Yes*.

That was the beginning of what Patrick felt was the perfect romance. Being with a girl who could hear made him like everyone else, not different. A hearing girl who knew sign language was best of all. With her, he could order in a restaurant without having to point on the menu, and she could tell him what movies and TV shows were about or what other people were saying.

He'd had lots of hearing girlfriends before, but they never lasted very long. Sometimes girls started out being nice and saying they were his girlfriend when they didn't really mean it. His previous girlfriend, Cindy, had told him he was taking up too much of her space and said she wanted him to get out of her apartment. He'd shown her, though. She was plenty mad when she found out he'd burned up her dress and put all her shoes in the toilet.

And there was Amanda back in Crownsville. After they broke up, he killed her dog. His foster father Brent got mad at him about that. But that dog wasn't nice like Lancer, and besides, Amanda had lied to him. She told him she really liked him and then she went out with that Mark guy when she ought to have known that she was his girlfriend and nobody else's. But that was all past now. He had his motorcycle and Rosamund Witty was his new girlfriend and she would always

be his and nobody else's. Rosamund said she liked him a lot, and she wouldn't lie to him.

By the end of January Patrick's Social Security stipend had run out, and he had no money to go to the bars or to get gas for his motorcycle. He'd worked hard, but Clint hadn't paid him for over three weeks. He confronted Clint, but Clint kept saying soon as the money came in from the big job on the *Kioloa II* yacht, he would give him his pay. He told Clint he needed the money now. Clint said Patrick would just have to wait, that he didn't have any cash to give him. Patrick grabbed a piece of paper and scribbled, "Write me check."

Clint shook his head. "No money in the bank," he said. "No money in the checking account. You have to wait."

Furious, Patrick stomped about the shop slamming tools around, banging the door, and yelling at Clint that he had better pay him the money he owed him or he was going to be sorry. Finally, Marilyn handed him a few dollars and said he should go buy himself some lunch at the deli and to bring her back a sandwich.

Although Marilyn deplored the way Clint treated his young shop assistant, she realized that the business was in a financial bind. They had just finished up a thirty-thousand-dollar renovation job on a yacht's interior. The owner had paid Clint two-thirds of the money up front. That had covered the cost of Clint's supplies and salaries for Patrick, Marilyn, and an occasional additional helper. But he was having a hard time collecting the balance, which represented his profits for the work. Although Riley still had ten thousand dollars of the original payment secreted in his Philadelphia bank, he was afraid to withdraw it while his former wife was suing for child support. As a result, the three hundred dollars in his checking account was all that was left of his operating funds.

Meanwhile Patrick grew increasingly angry as he sat waiting for his sandwich at the deli counter. He was convinced that Clint was lying to him. After all, Clint had plenty money to

spend at the bar every night, and lots of times he bought drinks for his friends. The longer Patrick sat there, the more determined he became that if Clint wouldn't pay him, he'd get the money some other way. Finally, he devised a plan. One time Lancer had run off and Clint had to pay the pound a sizable fee to get him back. Patrick decided he would hide Lancer somewhere and then say that he'd found him at a dog pound some place far away from Annapolis and had to pay to get him back. Then Clint would have to give him money.

Convinced his plan would work, Patrick went to where his friend Floyd lived on a boat at a marina farther down Spa Creek. He told Floyd that he was playing a joke on Clint and wanted to hide Lancer on Floyd's boat for a couple of days. Floyd agreed. Next evening when Clint was at Marmaduke's, Patrick slipped out of the shop with Lancer and took him to stay with Floyd.

The following morning both Clint and Marilyn were distraught that Lancer had run off again. They made a thorough search of the surrounding neighborhood. Patrick also pretended to look for Lancer. When Lancer couldn't be found, Clint called the pound, but they said the dog wasn't there.

Two days later, Patrick decided it was safe to bring Lancer back. That afternoon he said maybe Lancer had gone farther away than they thought. He asked Clint if he could borrow the van and go check some other places where the dog might have gone. Clint agreed, and when Patrick returned several hours later he had Lancer in tow. He explained that he had located the animal at a pound in Glen Burnie, some twenty-five miles away from the marina. "I had to pay fifty-five dollars to get him back," Patrick told Clint in his note.

When Clint handed him the money, Patrick could see that his boss wasn't completely convinced. Marilyn was looking at him funny, too, but, happy to have Lancer safely home, neither of them said anything.

The next day, February 7, work in the shop came to a halt because some necessary supplies failed to arrive. Marilyn phoned to say she would not come in until afternoon, Clint was still sleeping off the previous night's binge, and Patrick decided to work on his motorcycle. Outside, it was freezing cold—snow was falling and Spa Creek had partially iced over—so he brought the Harley into the shop.

He had just disassembled some of the engine parts and spread them on the workbench when the odor of gasoline roused Clint from his hangover. He came roaring up out of bed. "Great God!" he screamed at Patrick. "Get that damned thing out of here before you blow us all to Kingdom Come!"

Patrick, not realizing that fumes from the vehicle's gas tank could cause an explosion if they reached the woodstove's open flames, reacted by shoving Clint away from the workbench. At that, Clint seized the motorcycle, flung it out the door, then grabbed all the parts from the workbench and threw them out as well.

Furious, Patrick stormed out of the building. Clint decided it would do the young man good to cool off, and he went back to bed. Sometime later he heard the motorcycle's engine start and figured that Patrick had somehow put his motorcycle back together and driven off.

Later that same morning, Clint went outside to get his cigarettes from the van and was shocked to find that all four of the vehicle's tires had been slashed. He called the police department to report the vandalism, and Officer J. M. Hollemann of the Annapolis Police Department arrived to investigate. The policeman checked and saw that there were footprints in the snow surrounding the van and that they seemed to stop in front of each slashed tire. Clint said he was pretty sure the prints matched those of the type of work boots Patrick wore, and Officer Hollemann noted that fact in his report.

By then, however, Clint was having second thoughts about accusing his violent young employee, possibly because he was aware that he had been paying Patrick under the table and had filed no tax reports on him. Or perhaps he was reluctant to get Patrick in trouble because of his deafness. Whatever the reason, he explained away the footprints to Officer Hollemann by saying that the van had not been moved for several days and that he had earlier asked Patrick to check it to see whether his missing dog, Lancer, might be inside. 'I'm pretty sure Patrick would not do a thing like that,' he told the officer.

Regardless of that explanation, Officer Hollemann remained skeptical. In his detailed report on the incident he astutely observed, "Since one of the passenger doors to the van was open, and it was not a window style van, I feel the usual way to check for a dog inside would be to look in the open door, not walk all around the vehicle stopping at each of the four wheels."

After Officer Hollemann left, Marilyn arrived and went with Clint to Sears, where they purchased four new tires to replace the ones that had been ruined. They mounted the new tires on the rims and stashed the old ones in the rear of the van, after which Marilyn left to return home, hopeful that the situation had quieted.

Patrick, meanwhile, had spent the afternoon with his friend Larry. Around six he headed to the local taverns, hoping to find sympathy from his other friends. But with the freezing weather, few people were out and about. Around nine, he returned to the shop. When he pulled in, he saw that Clint's van was not in its usual parking spot, which meant he was not yet in. He assumed Clint was either at the bars or was spending the night with one of his girlfriends. Still seething about the day's events, Patrick went sullenly off to bed.

Around midnight, Patrick was awakened by a noise outside. Glancing over at Clint's bed, he saw that it was still empty. Cautiously, he slipped off his cot, found his boots, and went

to check on his motorcycle, which he had left parked near the shop. The vehicle was missing.

Frantic, he ran back inside, dressed, ran back out, and managed to flag down a passing patrol car. He led Annapolis police officer M. P. Gibbs to where he had parked the vehicle. In the gleam of the officer's flashlight they saw the motorcycle's tire tracks leading to the end of the pier. They walked out on the pier, and the officer shone his light down into the water, but the darkness and ice made it impossible to determine whether Patrick's beloved Harley was submerged in the water below.