

## Taking a Left at the Two Lane

After motorcycling all day through the “real Mississippi,” I finally pulled into New Orleans, Louisiana. I was tired and looking for a hotel near the French Quarter. After driving around for a while I could find neither the French Quarter nor any decent hotel or motel. Finally I saw a man standing at an accessible corner so I pulled over and asked him where I could find that for which I was searching. He pointed down the street and said, "You go down to the two lane and turn left. Hotels be up bout half mile. French Quarter just around the corner from there."

The street I was on and had been on for a while was large, four lanes in each direction. I drove my motorcycle on down the street. Nearly all the streets I passed were two lanes. Very confusing. Thinking perhaps he meant the street I was on eventually turned into a two lane street I drove, and drove. Knowing this couldn't be right I turned around and drove back. I happened to hit most of the street lights on green, but I hit one on red. As I was sitting there I happened to look at the sign for the cross street. It was Tulane St. TULANE ST. I had spent nearly an hour looking for a two lane street that made sense, and here was Tulane St. about three blocks from where I asked the man.

As I was going the other direction, I turned right and soon came to all kinds of hotels. The first one I pulled into had a room which I took. I unpacked my bike and took my gear up to the room. I watched TV for a while to relax, took a shower, then decided to go to the French Quarter for one of the famous New Orleans dining experiences I had always heard about. I got a list from the concierge and walked around the corner.

As I got nearer the French Quarter I discovered the area to be extremely crowded. I soon found out that the homecoming game for Tulane against Loyola had been held that afternoon, and this evening most of the participants were downtown.

As I was crossing Canal Street I was surprised to see a person I knew crossing toward me. It was Dr. Obrien, a psychiatrist I worked with at Sutter Hospital in Sacramento. On each arm was a very attractive woman, and in his left hand was a bottle of Jack Daniel's. Now Dr. Obrien is a barrel of a man who likes his drink and obviously not adverse to accompanying beautiful women.

When I said "Dr. Obrien?" he handed his bottle to one of the women and gave me a big bear hug right in the middle of the crosswalk. Turns out he and his companions were heading for dinner and insisted I join them.

We walked about half a block then proceeded through a door that had no indication of accessing a restaurant. OB had to check his whiskey with the maître d. I'm not sure what we ate that night but it was good I think. I sort of lost track between the third and fourth glass of wine. The rest of the evening was a blur of clubs and music.

Somewhere we got caught up in a group of Tulane cheerleaders, male cheerleaders who entertained us and anyone else on the street by doing handstands and flips. I seem to remember a fight of some kind. I believe fisticuffs may have been involved. I don't know what part I played if any as I bore no sign of injury. I do know the hotel I woke up in the next morning was not mine.

The girls turned out to be stewardesses my new best friend OB had met on the plane to New Orleans. They were gone, an early flight to somewhere. OB and I had a quiet breakfast at the hotel, neither of us saying much.

After breakfast I made my way back to my own hotel with plans to leave in the early afternoon. It had started raining and I was in no shape to ride to Texas so I stayed an extra day until the rain let up a little. The next morning I packed my bike and headed west.

A couple of months later I went back to work at Sutter. I would see Dr. Obrien occasionally, either on the Psych wards or around the corner at the Fireside bar where a lot of Sutter employees would go after work. OB would sometimes regale the bar with our exploits in New Orleans. I would smile and nod as if remembered and cherished every moment of that lost evening.

Just before moving up to Washington I had a visit with Corinne who was our nurse in the day treatment program and my second mother. She said she saw Dr. Obrien in a nursing home she visited. She said he was a patient there and was losing the battle of dementia, secondary to severe alcoholic dependency. My last memory of Dr. Obrien was of him sitting in a booth at the Fireside, by himself.