

## Shogging with the Founders

Several years ago I was in our nation's capital to interview Brian Stafford, a Mount Union alumnus, who at the time was the director of the U.S. Secret Service.

This was pre-9/11 and I was awestruck by the immensity of his job. He correctly predicted that the biggest threats to U.S.

security were terrorism and cyber attacks. He told fascinating stories of intrigue as he worked his way up to become the top dog in an agency which understandably few people know much about (there is a reason "secret" is in its name).

At the end of the interview, I mentioned that I might go for a shog the next morning and I asked him if he had any suggestions. He said he didn't know how far I wanted to go, but that the trek from the Capitol building down the mall (not exactly like Carnation City Mall) past the Washington Monument and White House to the Lincoln Memorial and back would be scenic and challenging.

I took him up on his suggestion and it still ranks as one of my favorite all-time shogs. I started the journey at about 6:30 a.m. and with hardly anybody around, I imagined myself in the presence of our nation's founders as I glided past the monuments that have been erected to commemorate our history. I was struck by how quiet things were and how few people were around in a city that never seems at peace.

A little more than a week ago I had the chance to re-create my shog since Kathe and I spent a long weekend in Washington, D.C., to try to take in some of the sights we had not visited before. I told her that one of my hopes was that I could take that morning shog from the Capitol to the Lincoln Memorial. So, early Saturday morning, I was on my way but this time it was very different.

Whereas I was virtually alone several years ago, this time there were runners of all shapes and sizes and lots of bicyclers too. I longed for the serenity of that morning years ago as I dodged oncoming traffic and juked around slower (believe it or not) joggers. Anyone who doubts that there has been an increase in the number of runners and cyclers needed to be with me that morning.

As if the congestion wasn't bad enough, as I made my way past the White House, I noticed there were snipers on the roof. I was fairly certain they didn't have their scopes on me, but I made sure to avoid anything resembling a grassy knoll. Continuing down the mall, I thought I was getting delusional until the horses I thought I saw circling turned out to be a merry-go-round. I thought to myself, "A merry-go-round? What the heck does that have to do with our history?" I was still fuming about that when I got back to the room where I was reminded that George Washington rode horses. Nice try — merry-go-rounds are the first step toward turning pristine areas into commercial amusement parks.

Perhaps most disappointing was my approach to the Lincoln Memorial. Thinking I might run up the steps and sit in Abe's lap, we were detoured by what seemed like hundreds of patrolmen to a lengthy perimeter and warned that we needed to stay on the designated sidewalk. I learned later that first, Abe had been splattered with green paint by vandals the day before, and second, that President Obama was going to speak to Korean War vets in front of the memorial later in the morning. (That may have explained the snipers).

The detour around the memorial took me by the Potomac River and circled us back in front of that dreaded merry-go-round. While the shog ended uneventfully, I was less impressed by this run than the one I had taken several years before.

Several hours later, while waiting in line to get into the National Archives, I was still pondering the events of the morning shog. It occurred to me that two things were different — there were definitely more people up early exercising, probably to relieve the stress of being in D.C. in the first place. And, in this post-9/11 world, things seemed edgy — it didn't feel like I was in the land of the free.

Later that morning, after a 30-minute wait to get into the National Archives, there was an even longer line just to file by the original Declaration of Independence. And then it occurred to me. A lot has changed since 1776 when the signers put their pens to parchment in Philadelphia. None of the landmarks that I shogged by had even been built. But if those guys in their wigs and robes had not had the courage and foresight to endorse that document the world would be a different place and artificial horses on the mall would be the least of our worries.

Harry Paidas chairs the Department of Communication at the University of Mount Union and writes a monthly column for The Review revolving around his passion for shogging (shuffling and jogging).

He can be reached at paidashp@mountunion.edu.

Harry PAIDAS

Jogging & Jotting

Special to The Review



# One last ride

Alliance Community Hospital therapy dog Bear retires motorcycle, passes it on to nephew

By SHANNON HARSH  
The Review

The tiny long-haired Chihuahua who rode his remote-controlled Harley into celebrity took his final turn on the bike Monday morning. After nine years, Bear, the "Dog on a Hog," has retired from riding his bike for the amusement of patients, visitors and staff at Alliance Community Hospital (ACH).

"Bear is getting older now," owner Ruth DeFranco said of the dog who will turn 13 in January. "He has a weak back leg, and I noticed when he rides, you can kind of see his leg go down. He used to sit up and ride, and now he kind of leans over."

"He's just tired. He needs to just be in the stroller and have a good time," she said.

Bear has had quite a ride over the past nine years, which has included appearances on Fox 8 news in Cleveland, ESPN, CNN and The Montel Williams Show and has taken him to New York, Canada, Kentucky and all over Ohio. The little dog even made appearances in two published books and won some meaningful awards for his therapy dog work.

"I was floored with how many people wanted to see Bear," DeFranco said of her little star.

DeFranco and Bear were one of the first therapy dog teams to walk the halls of ACH. DeFranco dressed the dog in Harley clothes and her dad, Dean Baker, carried him around to visit with patients. It was her son, Ryan Schaffer, who first suggested she teach the dog to ride a small motorcycle.

A year after Schaffer died while serving his country, DeFranco said she spotted a remote-controlled motorcycle at the store and decided to try to make her son's idea come to life. She altered the bike with training wheels and a special soft seat and began using cheese to train the then-3-year-old Bear, and the rest is history.

Michele Quinn, director of Volunteer Services at ACH, said Bear has been a big part of the Paws and Reflect therapy dog program, which started in 2002.

"When he rides his motorcycle, it's a big attraction. It really lights people's faces up," she said. "Everybody has fond memories of what he brought to the hospital, to the patients and colleagues."

Quinn said the crowd that gathered to watch his final ride Monday was proof of Bear's popularity.

Though he will no longer be riding his motorcycle, Bear will continue his job of being a therapy dog — something he has done since he was 1 year old and still very much enjoys. The pair visit at ACH, Auburn Skilled Nursing and Rehabilitation in Damascus and several schools for handicapped children and participate in Rodman Public Library's Tales for Tails program.

DeFranco said in addition to offering a ray of sunshine to others, Bear has been a source of therapy for herself. She said the little dog has been there through the most difficult parts of her life — especially helping her get through the loss of her only child.

"Bear has meant to me unconditional love. I know if I'm feeling bad, Bear's there for me. I have met so many great people through Bear, and I have seen how people respond to him. When we come to the hospital, you can see people just lift up, and for a minute they're happy; it's a nice diversion," she said. "For me, he saved my life. He got me going again and made me realize that life gives you hills, and you either climb it and go on or you stay at the bottom. That's all you can do."

One of those hills was the loss of her father in 2006 — the man who first controlled Bear's Harley. DeFranco chose Bear's final ride to occur on Monday because it would have been Baker's 95th birthday.

Just as Bear has honored the memory of DeFranco's son and father, so will his successor, Ryley Dean, a 3-year-old Chihuahua who was named after them. The great-nephew of Bear, the young dog, who DeFranco said has a similar temperament and personality to Bear, immediately took to the motorcycle. Ryley will continue the motorcycle tradition going forward, sporting a tiny biker jacket and hat and riding through the same halls Bear has owned for nearly a decade. "Hopefully Ryley will ride into people's hearts, too," DeFranco said.

For more information about Bear, visit [www.dogonahog.org](http://www.dogonahog.org).



Review Photos/Gayle Agnew



**ABOVE:** Ruth DeFranco holds her therapy dog Bear following his last ride out of Alliance Community Hospital. At left is hospital volunteer coordinator Michele Quinn, one of many people who came to watch. Though Bear is passing his motorcycle on to his great-nephew, Ryley, he will still be continuing therapy dog work. **LEFT:** DeFranco holds the remote control as Bear makes his final motorcycle ride. **BELOW:** Ryley Dean, a therapy dog owned by Ruth DeFranco, rides into Alliance Community Hospital on Monday. He is taking over the motorcycle from his great-uncle, Bear.

