

Veteran 'Sleepy-Eyed Bob' died

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IVN Contributing Writer

Robert "Sleepy-Eyed Bob" Earl Sisson died Feb. 27 after reaching the age of 78. He was born March 17, 1938 in Providence, Rhode Island to Victor Sisson and Bertha Keane. According to his lifelong friend, Wayne Vautier, Sisson, "Grew up poor and had a rough time." Affected by a hereditary eyelid disease, which was eventually corrected by surgery, Sisson received his nickname in the biker community because he had to tilt his head back while riding his motorcycle so that he would be able to see the road. Sisson has been living in the Illinois Valley since 1994 and before that lived around Big Sur in California where he maintained campgrounds, cleaned carpets and met Vautier.

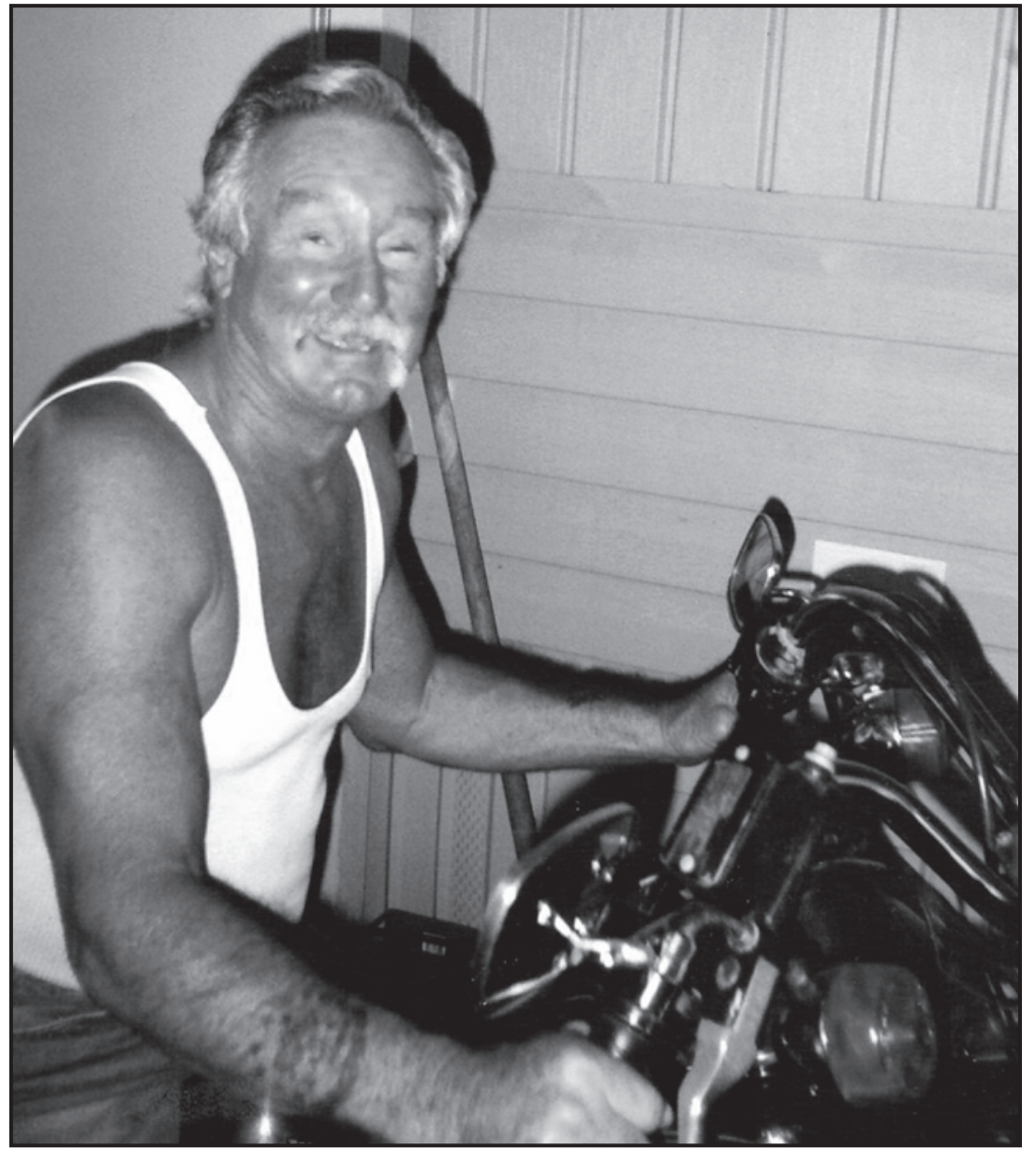
After moving to Oregon Sisson was completely retired and spent a great deal of time on his motorcycle. "He always rode his motorcycle. Whenever it wasn't raining he was on his bike," Vautier said. Sisson is remembered by the biker community as an amiable guy who hung out with them frequently at Dos Gringos in Cave Junction when it was still in business.

"I met Bob when I first moved to California. I worked with one of his cousins at an auto repair," Vautier said,

after mentioning that he originally hailed from New Jersey. They've been friends ever since with their relationship having started in 1982. Vautier moved to the Illinois Valley the same year that Sisson did.

Sisson spent 20 years of his life working in the air-sea rescue division of the Navy where he rescued military personnel via helicopter. While in the military Sisson attended the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba and after leaving the military he was outspokenly opposed to violence and weapons of any sort. "He didn't like handguns too much, weapons and stuff," Vautier said of Sisson's harrowing experience in the military, "I guess they landed a helicopter and some Cuban nationals were rushing the helicopter and I guess they had a .50 caliber machine gun and a few of the Cuban nationals got cut in half." According to Vautier, Sisson was, "just a really nice guy and a good person," and that he was the kind of guy who would, "give you the shirt off his back if he had it."

On the matter of family Vautier stated, "I'm the closest thing he had to family," and that he is, "over the crying stage. I did all my crying when I took him into the hospital and when he died because I wanted to be there for him. Nobody should die alone. Bob had nobody."



The Archive Zone: by Hillary Mohr from the Illinois Valley News archives

Instead of turning the clock forward this week, we turn back the hands of time to Sept. 27, 2000. After numerous decades of being turned down, the Valley finally helped to approve a sheriff levy that would once again provide safety and security for the community. Get ready to see history made as the first, and last known, "thumbs up" for a sheriff levy is passed in this week's Archive Zone.

Sheriff Dave Daniel sighting on a full patrol with voter approval of funds for fiscal year. Four months after turning down a general fund levy that resulted in severe personnel and service reductions, Josephine County voters gave a thumbs-up on Tuesday, Sept. 19 to a \$1.96 million sheriff's office levy and a \$370,000 district attorney's levy. Measure 17.76, a local option tax for sheriff's

office operations during fiscal year 2000-2001, that will begin on July 1, passed by a 59-41 margin, fulfilling the double-majority law that requires 50 percent voter turnout. The district attorney's levy, Measure 17.75, also passed, but just barely: 50.4 percent vs. 49.6 percent. Sheriff Dave Daniel was forced to lay off 41 employees after the general fund levy failed on May 16. Last week's victory, he said, will mean those positions will be filled again. "A number of people are available to recall and bring back to work," said Daniel, "and in fact, we sent out the recall letters" the day after the vote-by-mail election. Daniel said that during the sheriff's office cutback, 15 positions for the new jail were filled with laid-off sheriff's office staff members. He will have to replace those people at the jail in order

to recall them back to patrol duty. "I have to get the jail open as well as get people back on the road," he said. "It's a double-priority. I just hope people have a little bit of patience, as it takes time to hire and train." Daniel said that although he lost a few staff members to the Grants Pass Dept. of Public Safety, Springfield Police Dept., and five officers who took early retirement, all 41 positions eventually will be filled. The sheriff's levy was worded as a one-year option tax in the official election ballot. If federal legislation (S.1608), the O&C replacement funding bill, is signed by President Clinton, the county's general fund will receive \$3.5 million more each year during the next six years. "With this extra money and when it comes time to set departmental budgets," said Daniel, "I hope

the county's budget committee and the board of commissioners take a look at the May and September levies and realize that the general fund levy failed, but that people wanted the sheriff's office funded above other agencies." Daniel said that he wants "Cave Junction to get its share of our resources, and in fact I've already assigned a Major Crime detective to the Valley." Plus, "Deputy Keith Hubbard is back in Selma, and Sgt. Stephen Clarke is in charge of the substation. I think we have stability through year 2006, and hopefully, the O&C replacement money will continue further on down the line," the sheriff said. * Sheriff's levy: 15,323 "yes" vs. 10,573 "no." *D.A. levy: 12,986 "yes" vs. 12,796 "no."

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