

Tom Saville
9 January 1947 - 10 August 2015



A Celebration of Tom's Life by Andi Sirninger and Ian Payne.

Home Life:

- Born in Essex England.
- Family migrated to Australia in 1949, initially lived in Fremantle then Melbourne from 1959.
- Had a strong Gypsy heritage, only started wearing shoes at age 14. Probably explains his wanderlust and love of adventure.
- Attended 17 different schools until he left at 14 to start work. Being the 'new kid' was always involved in fights but was only expelled once for throwing a teacher down a flight of stairs and breaking his arm.
- Was a keen cross-country skier and river kayaker.
- Enjoyed underwater diving and when younger could 'free dive' to 100 feet (30 metres).
- Passionate motorcyclist in both road and adventure riding. Had over 27 motorcycles in his life.
- Made his home in Doncaster.
- Converted their home into a stunning tribal themed residence with a magnificent rain forest garden that seemed to go on forever.
- Remodelled the single garage into a multi motorcycle workshop with mezzanine storage area.
- Converted to 'organic foods' well before it became fashionable.

Andi, his life partner:

- First met Tom in 1979 but didn't get serious until 1985.
- Also a passionate motorcyclist and has owned over 20 motorcycles so far. No 'Barbie dolls' for Andi, even as a 9 year old she was saving her pocket money to purchase a \$99 mini bike!
- Had the vision to transform their home into what it is today.
- Also a convert to 'organic foods' and a healthy lifestyle.

Motorcycle Clubs:

- Joined Motor Scooter and Cycle Association of Victoria (MSCAV, now MSR) in the early 1970's riding a Honda CB350 and then in a January 1977 article he has a Ducati 750 Sport.
- Awarded 'Club Person of the Year' in 1979.
- Served in multiple Committee positions and was made a Life Member in 1991.
- Was asked to race a Ducati and BMW motorcycle but declined as not having the patience to sit around all day waiting to race – wanted to race all-the-time!
- Supported the formation of the Ducati Owners Club and the BMW Motorcycle Club of Victoria.

Motorcycles:

- BSA Bantam
- Ducati 750 SS.
- KTM300, 640Adventurer & 950Adventurer,
- BMW R75, RS100, R80GS, K100RS & R100GS-PD
- Yamaha Triple, RZ500, FZR1000 (x3), YZF750SP, R1, FZ750, IT425 & 750 Super Ténéré
- Suzuki DR400, DR650 & TL1000,
- Honda CB350, XR200, XR250 & XR300.

Work:

- Did an apprenticeship as a textile mechanic.
- In the late 60's crewed on a yacht, a Gatwick ketch, for 7 months in the Whitsunday's but left after sailing through and surviving a cyclone.
- Was a miner in Mount Isa for 2 years.
- Did professional tree lopping and underwater welding.
- Helped catch crocodiles for a croc farm.
- Operated a window cleaning business that specialized in high rise and multi-story buildings; introduced abseiling techniques to the industry, and, after many attempts, finally had them approved and certified by the relevant government authorities.
- After selling the window cleaning business, Tom went into semi retirement and worked part time with Andi at her family business, Overlander Hats, maintaining the machinery and doing all manner of production and millinery tasks.

Motorcycle Trips (Too many to list but some highlights below):

- Rode to Perth, then through the Kimberleys and returned to Melbourne with Andi as pillion.
- Cape York (3 times) including detours to Cape Melville and Princess Charlotte Bay.
- NE Northern Territory, Arnhem Land, the Gulf Country and Mount Isa.
- Criss-crossed Tasmania on both bitumen and dirt.

- Put their bikes on the ferry and rode around both Fraser and Moreton Islands
- South West Queensland and the Channel Country.
- Rode along the southern Australian coastline from Ceduna in SA to Cape Leeuwin in WA following the Old Telegraph Line along disused tracks.
- Traversed the Great Dividing Range on dirt tracks from the Victorian High Country to Sydney.
- Rode from Eden on the NSW coast to Woods Point in Vic, all along dirt tracks.
- Took the road bikes over to South Australia and did all the 'good' roads in the Adelaide Hills. Also did the same in NSW.
- Rode around Alice Springs and the Finke River Gorge.
- Crossed the Simpson Desert and did the Canning Stock Route; this was an unsupported bike trip with food and fuel arranged and dropped off prior to the trip.
- Explored the Vic/NSW High Country well before GPS.

Non-Motorcycle Trips:

- 8500 km campervan tour of New Zealand.
- Walked the Inca Trail in Peru, South America.
- Travelled to Germany, Vienna and China for cancer treatment.

Memorable Recollections:

- The Yamaha YZF750SP had Ohlin's suspension so was a great handling bike but the 'flat-slide' carburetors made it a temperamental road bike. Tom's solution was to retrofit the engine from his FZR1000 road bike into the frame of the 750! Not the easiest of projects but in the end Tom succeeded and had a sensational handling 1000cc road bike.
- During the epic Kimberley trip in 1990, a wild bull collided with his R80GS at Marble Bar. The bike suffered extensive damage but Tom managed to ride it to a nearby cattle station where he borrowed the welding gear and repaired the bike so they could continue on for the rest of the trip.
- Tom did a trip to Brisbane in just over 17 hours flat from Melbourne GPO to Brisbane GPO, two up, on his K100RS. Although unverified, those that knew him have no doubt that he did it in that time.
- The Ducati 750 SS was one of only a handful that came to Australia. He got it in 1975 and it went extremely fast around corners, but was not too good around right hand ones as he scraped the header pipe lifting the front wheel off the deck. He got the pipe modified and didn't have a handling problem after that. Reliability though, was another issue. Tom rode that bike around Tasmania in the summer of 1976/77 trip with the MSCAV.
- Tom always had a very good 'feel' for the handling of a motorcycle and through this reputation entered into an agreement with the Chiodo brothers (Peter Stevens Motorcycles) where they would supply tyres for his bike and he would provide feedback on that brand of tyre. Unfortunately this agreement was terminated when the brothers accused Tom of using their tyres on the racetrack as they believed the extent of wear could not be achieved by road riding! I guess they didn't know Tom that well!
- Through Peter Stevens, when the Village People toured Australia, they were offered a motorbike trip along the Great Ocean Road and Tom was asked to pillion '*Phillippe*' the Red Indian, who was as mad as a hatter. In pouring rain and on the back of Tom's bike at a steady 160km/h between moving automobiles on the way home between Geelong and Melbourne, he wanted more. Trouble was, Tom's bike couldn't go any faster but he still had a great time and said "*he'd be more than happy to get behind Tom again!*"

- As Tom and Andi's trips became more extensive, Tom was always looking to eliminate riding to the start of their adventure. After exploring trucks and having their bikes shipped interstate, he eventually bought a large commercial van and then remodelled it into a self-contained motorbike transporter with inbuilt sleeping and eating areas.
- Long before 'track days' were fashionable, Tom convinced the MSTCV Committee that we should hire a racetrack and conduct our own ride days. This we did and over several years enjoyed Winton, Sandown and Phillip Island.
- Tom was convinced that off-road riding improved your skill levels and through his prompting many road riders took up this enjoyable pursuit. He organised trips for these novice riders to Cape York, through the Alpine National Park and Alpacutya in the Big Desert.
- When Tom devised a Club ride it always encompassed 'something for everyone' with great roads for the rider and also a destination or activity for all to enjoy, like; visiting King Crystal Mines, caving at Labertouche, abseiling off Noojee Trestle Bridge, visiting and climbing all over the massive gold dredge at Eldorado and roll racing down Mount Buffalo or Mount Baw Baw.
- Once while riding on his own through the Snowy Mountains on a tight right hand bend, he encountered a large bread van taking up the entire road. Manoeuvring to the right to avoid a collision, he was then confronted with a sheer drop-off. So, with his left shoulder hard up against the side of the van, he managed to ride down the length of it, around the wrong side of a white post and pull the bike back onto the road and around the bend! After regaining his composure and finding a place to turn around, he was off to 'kill' the driver. Much to his surprise the van was stationary where he had first encountered it with the driver frozen in his seat, convinced that there was no way the rider could have remained upright but had gone off the road, down the ravine, and was dead!
- Back when a good rider on a fast bike could out-run the Constabulary, Tom had done a runner while riding through outback NSW. On approaching a town, he could see in the distance flashing lights where a roadblock had been erected. Catching up to a large cattle truck, he manoeuvred himself to the left of the truck and rode alongside it on the edge of the road. As he suspected, the waiting policeman waved the truck through. Tom maintained position until into the town centre where he stashed the bike and motorcycle clothing and waited until the coast was clear.