

A holiday tale about me and pop.

When I was 6 years old, 1970, I asked for a bike, any color with big ass handle bars and a way laid back seat. It was what I really wanted.

So in 1972, when I was 8, I was excited that a combination of my good behavior, flawless grades, a little luck and some dedicated Sears and Roebuck layaway options might lead to me cruising down the road on those swanky new wheels.

As Christmas approached, I kept in mind that life was often unfair, Santa was a total and complete fraud and my mom and pop could be fairly cheap, on occasion, like most occasions.

A few days before the big day, I descended the basement stairs to retrieve down laundry when BOOM, I spot a large box that says only bike bike bike on it!!!

But wait, whoa, the old man hadn't had the damn thing assembled. This kind, gracious, overworked, tired cheap saint was gonna put this damn thing together himself.

Ok, patience is a virtue I possess, so I chilled.

Of course, my nerves were on edge by Christmas Eve, the excitement was bubbling.

I did all my alter boy service commitments, 3 straight masses plus all the holiday shenanigans

and extra prayer shit, UGH!!! Get on with it , I gotta get home and to bed, (dream sequence) quick!!

swoooooosh!!!

flying down the street on that double-barreled road rocket !!!

About 1:20 am, after the midnite mass ,hundreds of communion wafers and the super extended re- mix version, my head hit the pillow.

3:15 AM or so I wake up.

Just can't sleep.

I start roaming

around, gonna catch Santa red handed, take his wallet and rifle thru his big ass bag of shit, right?

Well I heard something, tiny clanking clanking clanking, no!!!

No, just pop, solo style in the basement, struggling to complete the masterpiece.

100% cold busted by me !!

He laughed, I laughed and we completed the job together, side by side, with our hands.

It was lame but it really meant a lot, then and now and in hindsight, it was precious.

Cheap fucker still figured how to show his love. He looked tired and worn out when we were done with the last wrench turn. He seemed relieved and I felt proud, of both of us.

I suck at tools and stuff but I loved that bike.
I really miss my pop.
Merry Christmas
Happy Holidays

On turning 50

(10 days out) Michael D. Schultz 8/11/64

It has occurred to me that turning 50 has had a much greater effect on my psyche as I had imagined it ever could or would. My lovely, patient, wife, Karen had humorously mentioned, more than once I might add, that a mid-life crisis may be occurring and maybe I should take a step back and examine my true feelings. Frank- ly, I felt above it and I still kinda do. Fuck it, right? Having delivered this pathetic precursor and equally lame set-up, I have some observations on the subject.

First, I never expected to live this long; let me explain. (slow down Schultz, it's all better when you move slow) As a boy, I was quite reckless and suffered many stitches and broken bones, crashed into a lot of stuff, had numerous illnesses, allergies and rashes as well and frankly, I fell down a whole bunch. Off bikes

and trees and walls and the ground and just about everywhere, generally, I was a physical wreck. Secondly, I truly felt as if, like many punks of a certain age and black men of any age, I would stomp my way into my forties maybe, and either the drugs, the booze, or the Man would take me, kicking and screaming the entire way.

But, I was pretty wrong and fairly stupid as well as completely viewing it all with a narrow lens. The children (Megan, Ian, Jennifer, Michael, Sebastian) and my beautiful K, my enormous mixed-up family, all of my amazing friends, the cats, film, television, music, art, words, AA, loss, experience, and time have changed the way I feel about my life now and more importantly, my future. I want to commit the next 50 years to kicking more ass, stomping louder and harder, husbanding the crap outta every husband and fathering the best anybody ever even tried to, delivering the best art I can, from my soul, directly to your face, screaming louder, and thinking clearer than ever, loving more, forgiving more, caring more and being more. Does it matter that I am a little tired, a lot annoyed, frighteningly cynical, desperately jaded, brutally real, painfully sad, fiscally challenged, financially roller coastered, socially sideways,

randomly and intermittently cursed with a brain full of lucrative, brilliant ideas and a head full of mysterious and unfamiliar voices saying all kinds of crazy shit about all of y'all, while remaining ever excruciatingly and genuinely frustrated with each and every one of you idiots? Basically, it just seems as if every minute of my time is wasted on some shit that doesn't really matter.

My crisis is not so much that I am turning 50, but I find myself wondering if I have said, done, lived as I wanted to. As well foolishly, of course, I struggle with feeling as if the number of days I have left to "do and say exactly what the fuck I want to" is rapidly diminishing. I find myself impatient and agitated by not having my way, exactly my way. I am sick and tired of waiting for you and your agenda, I am sick and tired of being ordered around and sick and tired of my voice, opinion and method being ignored. I am tired of getting shit and drama and baggage. I am tired of people telling me I am wrong and changing the odds away from my requests and desires. I am fed up with authority and each and everyone who doesn't recognize my brilliance, and I am pretty fucking pissed about my world and my diminishing control of it. I think I have been a fairly good guy these first 50,

and I am angry about where I stand. It's selfish, and lame and impractical but it's real, for real. I find myself wanting to fall into a life of selfless charity work, simply to purify myself of these feelings of rage and selfishness. Maybe I can commit myself to complete unselfish poverty in service of others? It's some scary shit in my head, believe me.

Have I spent my life compromising for the best of the family and friends and colleagues? Have I just been an asshole the whole time?

Have I been real and true to my art?

Have I been a fairly decent husband and father?

Am I a good friend?

How will I be remembered?

Do I have enough time to fix all this shit?

Do I even have a slight miniature clue as to what happiness might be? DOES IT MATTER?

Argh!! See what I mean, totally fruit bats belfry style, right? Happy fucking birthday to me.