

OEF/OIF Veteran honored during Chick Ridge Bike Rally

By Pat M. Fuqua

(Iraq).

Vietnam veterans Jim Soeder and Curtis Ryans re-

met Mike Baker at the local

when they all got home they wanted to see the country they were "bleeding and dying for". The group made a pact to purchase motorcycles and ride from coast to coast. Baker was the only one of his team to come home alive.

With the help of Bryan & Wendy Haas; Gene Bennett; Pippa Soeder; Tommy & Missy Dowell; Peggy Smith; Bobby & Lora Bennett; Gary Galloway; Scott Troxle; Teddy Stewart; Joe Uhlig; Breck Co Area Technical Center (vocational school) 2012 seniors and teachers Tom Thompson and Chris Basham; John Waxler; Justin Magness; Frankie Adkins; Cody Baker; Pizza Tonight staff; James Smith; Jeff Thomas; Joey Armes; Gene Armes; Denny Schamore;



Mike Baker sitting on the bike he was presented with at Chick Ridge Bike Rally.

member the detriment war causes but even more the after effect of the treatment they received upon their return home. The two swore that they would create a testament of love and appreciation his 10 tour years. He would



Tommy Dowell presents Baker with a book containing pictures of the steps taken to finish the trike.

for the "young guys" coming back after participating like a lifetime ago." He told

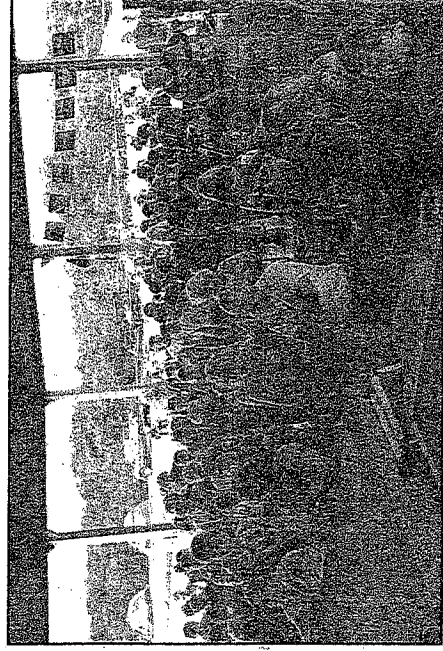
in Operation Enduring Freedom (Afghanistan) and of his 'team members' talking about the work the kids

at the vocational school did pulled it all together."

The testament came to fruition on June 2, 2012 at the Chick Ridge Bike Rally. With a crowd of over 1800 rally attendees gathered, Baker mounted the stage and stood wondering why he had been asked to address the group.

The crowd parted and Jim Soeder, accompanied by Baker's wife, Dawn, rode a VW trike up on the concrete pad in front of the stage. Tears and cheers brought the young veteran to the realization that this military themed custom was a tribute to his service.

"When I met this young man, he was a prison term waiting to happen. He told me that he wanted a place to fit in and had found that feeling in the brotherhood



A moment of silence was held during the presentation of the bike.

Jim Baker; Paul Brown; Rick Askins; Bob Daugherty; Paul Fuqua; Kenneth Eskridge; Joe Bennett Plumbing; Kevin Bennett; Panhead Fred's - Owensboro; Steve's Cycles; Mark's Metrix; Cardinal Machine Shop; Bob Johnson of Scorpion Cycles; and VFW Post 5831, a journey of honor began.

Over a period of four months, Soeder and Ryans worked on gathering parts. This brought together many bikers, veterans, business owners, family and friends by Soeder's shop. Each time someone came by to see the progress, something new would come through. A suggestion here, an offer of a part or service there. This project

took on a life of it's own," said Curtis Ryans. Jim Soeder added that "the work the kids

for the "young guys" coming back after participating like a lifetime ago." He told

in Operation Enduring Freedom (Afghanistan) and of his 'team members' talking about the work the kids

Because his life he gave his head and offered up silent way...so very far away...for gratitude and remembrance you to say, "outcast, loner, biker, riff-raff."

The man I see is me. Mike Baker, 2012

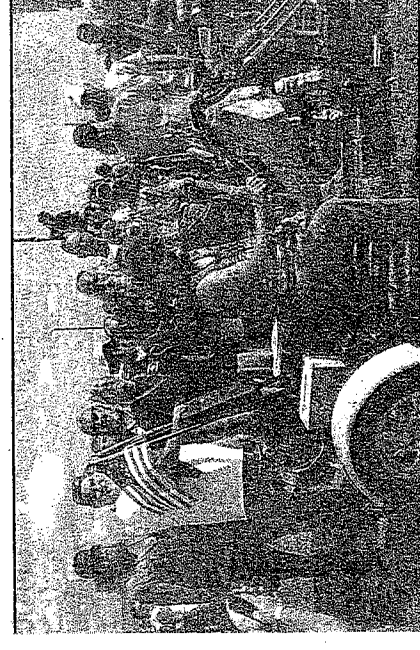


Baker offers up silent gratitude and remembrance for his alien brothers.

Soeder then instructed Baker to "Go try it out man! And always enjoy the ride".

The VW powered trike is a full custom machine. Painted black and desert sand, the bike features several "tools of the trade" of the weapons specialist. Ornamental M16 rifles adorn the sides, says "There's no greater love than this, that he lay down his life for his friends." This is how I feel. I have met people who truly care and un-

derstand. I plan to uphold the pact I made with my fallen brothers. I never had closure from their deaths. I plan to ride coast to coast and stop by each of their graves. And in times to come, I will strive to honor the next generations of troops when they come home from war."



Baker with several of the sponsors that helped make the presentation possible.

renade (inert), and a Vulcan mini gun are also featured. Two MK19 ammo boxes fill the role of saddle bags, and a 3 colony American flag and OW/MIA flag fly from the rear. As Baker looked over each intricate feature, machined by the BCATC students, he ripped to one knee, bowed