

Back sometime around 2004, I caught up with YETI Founder, and MTB Hall of Famer, John Parker.

- 1) So, we know your name, Please tell us what makes John Parker get up in the morning?

I was raised in Southern California. As a small child growing up in the 50's and 60's, I grew up in a world of cool cars, motorcycles and surfing. The music, the beaches, car and motorcycle racing, artists, machinists, welders; people that made things with their own hands had a great impact on me. I still love So-Cal. It's a lot more crowded and polluted and crimes a drag but where else can you go surfing everyday and ride your motorcycle? I still greet everyday with a love for this life I live. I look forward to learning something mechanical, technical or spiritual everyday and try to do something nice for other people when I can.

- 2) One of the last times we spoke, you were enjoying your Motor Cycles, and organising some Hot Rod shows, how's all that going?

Now that I have retired from Local 44, my union that I worked for in Special Effects in Hollywood I was a member for 27 years, I have a good amount of time on my hands. My wife Jenny and I travel to lots of Hot Rod shows and Antique motorcycle rally's. In 2003, Jenny and I started promoting Hot Rod, Kustoms and motorcycle shows. We do two shows a year. The first show, called "Back to the Beach" is a surfing themed car show with Woody cars, tiki carvers and live surf bands playing. The second show is called the "West Coast Primer Nationals", it got its name from the primer paint you use while your car is under construction. Some Hot Rod shows won't let your car in unless it's painted and the interior is finished. Our show is to reward people who work on their own cars or have cars still under construction. Jenny and I have had our chopped 1951 Ford business coupe since 1999. It's been in primer and under construction since we bought it! The Primer Nat's is a hard core Hot Rod show with great live Rockabilly-Blues and surf bands, 150 artists and kustom culture vendors as well as 800-1,000 cars and motorcycles along with an attendance of 10,000 people for two days. It all takes place at the Ventura Fairgrounds right on the ocean. Check out [www.Backtothebeachventura.com](http://www.Backtothebeachventura.com) or [www.primernationals.com](http://www.primernationals.com)

- 3) On to Yeti, you are well known for having an eye for Talent, you helped make big names of Missy Giove, Myles Rockwell, John Tomac & Juli Furtado to name but a few, how was it working with these people?
- 4) I'd imagine you have some fond memories, and great stories of your time running the Yeti team & Factory, can you share any with us?

Andrew, #3 and 4 are good questions. It deserves a little background as it leads itself to what Yeti's heart and soul was all about. In 1970, Mert Lawwill wore the AMA's #1 plate as the 1969 Grand National Champion. Bruce Brown was making his movie "On Any Sunday" at Ascot Park Raceway in Gardena California. I was eighteen, had just been released from a boy's home over in Hawaii. I took out an A.M.A novice license to race flat track in District 37 at Ascot. As luck would have it Kenny Robert's, who would go on to be the three time World 500cc Grand Prix Motorcycle Champion, had to start his career somewhere and that somewhere was in 1970 at Ascot. Our careers went in two different directions. Kenny won the 1970 Ascot novice title on his Suzuki. I got hurt and didn't finish the season. In 1971 Kenny was the National Junior Champion, now racing for the Yamaha Factory. Roberts Factory Bikes were prepared perfectly. Kenny's incredible talent and fierce fire inside him drove him to many wins, titles and championships. I was in aw of his factory

race bikes, Kenny didn't always win. There was Mert and the Harley wrecking crew, however once in awhile what we would call a privateer, someone with no factory support would win! I also would see some of the most incredible craftsmanship and innovativeness on the privateer's bikes. With their limited budgets they overcame the factories with innovation and burning the midnight oil. I was always a privateer, long after Mert and I stopped racing. I was still very influenced by Mert as an owner-tuner, and as his revolving door of great riders on his race bikes were beating the factory's with 1/10th the budgets of the factory salaried racers. In our hearts the Yeti team was a factory team but lack of sponsorship dollars said otherwise. What we really were... were the kings of the privateers that gave the other factory teams a fit for awhile

Yeti never had the budget to compete at the level we did, like I said, I was very influenced by Mert. Our bikes were cutting edge racers. Great Yeti geometry, awesome welds, turquoise paint and in need of some talented racers. When we were lucky enough to race with Juli, Johnny, Missy G., Miles and Jimmy Deaton it was a given fact that all these great racers were great human beings that were all on their way to the top with their various World Championships. For the short time each of them raced at Yeti, we would travel together, room together, and race together. By the time Gravey came on board we were a tribe of great racers that punched other racers tickets at will!

- 5) I know you went to the Sea Otter Classic last year, did you enjoy it? and has MTBing progressed in the way you expected too?

The Sea Otter was ok, my golf game in Monterey got rained out on Sunday, oh well! It was great to see a lot of old friends, racers and ex-Yeti clan from my time. To the second part of your question, no MTB has not progressed in the way I had expected. Overall there is not a lot of new innovativeness rather just refinement of stuff we were doing years ago. I was saddened by war stories of independent bicycle dealers being slaughtered by big box retail stores selling imported MTB's made by companies that exploit their workers in some foreign country, I will say that they are nice bikes at very affordable prices but that doesn't pass the smell test with me. The reason I went there was to hang-out with the Millyards, Stephen and his dad Allan over from England with their traveling mate's Ollie and his dad.

- 6) Tell me about your latest find, Stephen Millyard, I know he races DH in the UK, and scored 6th out of 160 at DH in his Class at sea Otter?

You might say my latest find found me! In the years since I departed from Yeti, I have flown rather low under the radar. I have stayed friends with Zap and Jimmy Mac, Troy Lee, Gravey, Jeff Holt, Chuck Teixeira, Monkee, Kirk Vories, Mike Redding and my old partner Chris Hearting from 3D Racing. I have been an outsider looking in, but I have waited until now to see something totally original with out of the box imagination, engineering and workmanship akin to a formula one car team! Strong words, I know but let me tell you, Allan Millyard and his son Stephen are the real deal. Time will tell how Stephen does as a racer. He's young, hungry and devoted, whether a fire burns in him like a young Kenny Roberts only time will tell... I hope so.

I became aware of his father, Allan through his friendship with a friend of mind, Daniel Schoenwald. Daniel is a great guy that Owns lots of nice motorcycles including one of Steve McQueens Indians and several other Indians, so we ride together quite often. One bike in Daniel's collection of over 60 motorcycles really struck me hard. It was a Kawasaki H-1 two stroke 4cyl 1000cc. I had never seen a H-1 1000cc. I thought the 750cc triple cyl was the biggest H-1 Kawasaki made. To help me with my confusion, Daniel told me about meeting Allan at the Isle of Man TT Motorcycle Races over in the UK. Apparently Allan has a habit of cutting up three cyl motors and joining a donor motor together extending the crankshaft, welding the cases together with all work appearing to have been done at the factory! In 2006 I met Stephen and Allan at Daniel's for Christmas dinner. I was impressed with what a nice, cool kid Stephen was and how well connected

him, his brother and father were. I liked what I saw. Stephen's brother is into moto-cross, Allan and Stephen are into downhill MTB. Daniel had told them who I was and Allan told me he was going to build his son a MTB downhill racer. I told him I couldn't wait to see what he would make. To be honest I totally underestimated the genius I was dealing with. I had no idea what a creative mind and skilled machinist/designer/fabricator /welder he is!

His bike is the bike I have been waiting for the last 10+ years to finally come along. Internal gear box, enclosed chain, things Mert and I only dreamed about! The front half looked like a Nascar roll cage but the rear half was so exotic with this being the first bike he ever made. I love it! Now I hear he has started on bike #2 and I can't wait to see what this brilliant master craftsman comes up with.

- 7) I know you still have a Yeti road project & Crusier, but where was the last place your rode an MTB and what bike were you on?

Sorry to tell you I sold my road project to this kid that was going road racing, however he fizzled out and the bike just sits in his bedroom. What a waste. The last time I rode a MTB, I borrowed my neighbors Specialized to ride to the Liquor store for a six pack and some zig-zags.

- 8) Which MTBer do you admire the most?

Julie "the wild one" Furtado. Enough Said!

- 9) Would you like to be back making bikes again? or are you happy where you are?

Building bikes is a very honorable profession. It allowed me a good living with great friends and adventure along the way. However that was then and I live in the now and I am very happy living on the beach in Port Hueneme and riding my 1946 Chief to the Rock Store in Malibu. It's a good life.

- 10) Anybody you would like to thank or swear at?

Andrew most of all I would like to thank you for your friendship and your devotion to that Little Bicycle Co. from days gone by