

## Jamie Smilie

Jamie Royal Smilie was born on May 25, 1957, in Eureka, Kansas. He was several weeks early and was the first baby to use the hospital's new incubator. He has been early everywhere he goes ever since

Jamie's father, Melvin Royal Smilie, was a boiler maker. On Jamie's twelfth birthday, he got to go to the top of a smoke stack his father helped build in Kansas City. As early as when he was five years old he remembers putting bolts on his dad's Harley Davidson motorcycle, in places where his dad's big fingers couldn't reach. This was only the beginning of all kinds of mechanic work on cars and various machines for many years to come.

The family moved a few times from Wichita to Kansas City, finally settling in Pittsburg, Kansas, where all the grandparents lived. Over a nine year period he acquired and pretty much took the reins of three little brothers, as both parents worked. It is likely that's where he developed his character of sharing and taking care of others.

Jamie's great grandfather, Bill Gooch, worked as a machinist for Kansas City Southern Railroad. Mechanics, welding, and machining runs in Jamie's blood. When he was fifteen years old, his father got hurt and was off work. Jamie worked all summer at Smith's Junk Yard taking parts off cars to help support the family. He also worked in a garage as a mechanic changing transmissions on Pepsi trucks.

He learned body work and painting from one of the best, Randy Vilela, who expected perfection. When he was sixteen, he bought a 1951 Ford automobile and rebuilt the motor for it. He also customized it with a tilt front end.

Jamie did have some fun. He enjoyed roller skating and swimming at the city pool or the nearby abandoned coal mining pits. He also very seldom got beat at billiards. Oh yes, he also enjoyed dancing. So did Debbie Davis. They met in late summer of 1976 at Tower Ballroom in Pittsburg. It was love at first sight. They were, and still are, each others best friend. The 1970 GTO they drove around in and later took on their honeymoon, July 1, 1977, is now sitting, awaiting resurrection, in the garage.

In 1979, after having a few years experience machining, Jamie took on one of the most memorable jobs of his life. While he was working in Lamar, Missouri, for Gerald Shaver on farm equipment, Gerald bought an early Minneapolis Moline steam engine. It was rusted and not running. Jamie, Gerald, and another mechanic named C.W. found all the parts needed and after a few months had it running and painted. It wasn't just beautiful, it was a work horse. It pulled up trees like nothing and cleared a field. In September of 1980, they drove it in the Barton County Fair parade with rubber cleats on the wheels (see photo). Jamie had to keep jumping off and putting down blocks every time they came to cables crossing the road from the carnival that was set up. They also pulled a sled full of people at the tractor pull that night. Oh, the sound of that awesome steam whistle and the excitement of the crowd! This engine was sold and now sits for many to enjoy at Euro Disney in Paris, France. It was certainly "The Little Engine That Could."

During the first four years of their marriage, Debbie worked as a seed analyst for Iantha Seed Co. When she was offered a job with Ferry Morris in Mountain View, California, they decided this sounded like an opportunity they should not pass up. Debbie loved working with flower and vegetable seeds and in 1983 she got certified as a Registered Seed Technologist. Jamie enjoyed his work as a machinist for Pitcher Drilling Co. He repaired and made new parts for the drilling equipment. One of the parts

he has a fond memory of was a manhole cover he built that was placed in the Golden Gate Bridge. There were a lot of wonderful sights in the Bay area, especially the Redwood Basin, which they visited often.

Of course, the greatest two things to come out of California were their sons, Nathanael and Aaron. After the second son was born, Jamie and Debbie wanted to move to the Tulsa, Oklahoma, area so Debbie could work at home and be with the boys. Debbie's prayer was answered when a seed testing lab came up for sale. She is in her twenty-fourth year of working at home in Inola, Oklahoma, for Frontier Seed Lab of Tulsa.

Importantly, both boys acquired the mechanic gene. They graduated from Spartan College of Aeronautics in Tulsa. Nathanael works on Air Force spy planes at L3 Communications in Greenville, Texas, and Aaron is supervisor over Tulsa County Parks at La Fortune Golf Course.

Jamie has gained a lot of experience from working in several different machine shops in Tulsa. He always paid special attention to the older and wiser men who gave him tips on the best way to tackle certain projects. He believes every part should leave perfect and clean. He is a precision manual machinist.

Jamie and I came to know of Tired Iron of the Ozarks through club members Herman and Mary Ann Hoppe (see Tired Iron Newsletter July/August 2007). Jamie and Herman Hoppe, years ago, met at Debbie's mother's home one summer in Iantha, Missouri. (Debbie's mom and Mary Ann's dad were brother and sister). When Mary Ann's mother, Anna Mae, had problems with her Buick overheating, Jamie helped Hoppe repair it. They bonded!

The Hoppe cousins invited the Smilie cousins to the 2006 Tired Iron Fall show. They stayed all day and loved it. They stayed as guests for pot luck and went home members. It wasn't long before Jamie was interested in the club sawmill. He learned, and is still learning, many things from the men who ran it previously and old sawyers who stop by. He was taught how to hammer out a blade and sharpen and replace teeth. He has enjoyed the experience of working with the early 1900 planer and the cross cut saw and helping Orville with the band saw. Most of all, he enjoys the friendship of the members and the visitors who stop by to tell stories. The kids gave him a 1942 Farmall tractor for Christmas. It needs work. That makes it official, right? He's a Tired Iron Man.

Jamie adopted the club's 1947 Case LA tractor. If you need to be pull started or pulled out of the mud, the Case will do it! He's so glad he got to play in the tractor games with the Hoppes. Herman Hoppe, who has passed away and is missed by all who knew him, was like a big kid when he was on his Cub tractor. We should all have that attitude.

Jamie was voted to be on the board of directors. He enjoys working on the grounds and seeing improvements. It takes everybody with their unique talents to keep this wonderful collection of the past in shape to allow generations of families to come see and enjoy.



