

## Jist Remiscin'

Heard tells how an old friend of mine, 'Freewheelin' Frankie French upped and lit out from his lodgings the other day. Where he was exactly heading, he didn't say. But that has always been his way. Some say he went north. Up in the High country. But that's only rumour; and not much attention can be paid to that. He got the handle 'Freewheelin', 'cos of his habit of not liking to stay in one place for too long. Many people just call him, 'Frenchie'. There are those who know him only as CJ, but there aren't that many of us left. Frankie doesn't talk much. He's seen a lot. Heard a lot of hard stories. Been through even more. He's a vegetarian nowadays. Said he'd seen enough blood spilt in 'Nam to last him his lifetime. So now he doesn't eat meat. I first met him in 'Frisco, or was it New Orleans? Can't remember myself too well. It was a long time ago now. We were two young bucks together starting out back then. We were gonna change the world, weren't we? And maybe we did. It's fair to say the world is a different place for us having been here. The promises we made, the booze we drank, the dope we smoked, the men we fought, the women we laid. Yeah, we have certainly left our mark on the places we've been, and that's no mistake.

I haven't seen CJ in many years now. The last I heard of him was that he had been involved in an incident in a bar in Louisiana. One of those little out-of-the-way places that are so prevalent down that way. Some reports say it was all over an argument about a woman, some bar-room belle, a Cajun queen. CJ always was a hit with the ladies. Others tell it was about the sudden appearance of a fourth ace in another player's hand at the card-table. The cardsharp had a gun and had drawn it first. Frenchie only had his knife, but those who were present said the blade had done its deadly work three inches into the man's heart before the cowboy could pull the trigger. Witnesses proved it was self-defence on CJ's part. Frankie not guilty of anything. Case found done and dusted, a

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fter it was all

As I said, I haven't clocked CJ face-to-face in many, many moons now, but I'm willing to bet my entire poke that he is still sporting that big Sam Elliot style moustache! He saw the actor in a couple of films, Roadhouse and Mask, and was so impressed by the characters that Sam portrayed, CJ decided to mould himself on them, moustache and all. And I can just see that constant old doggie of a cheroot stuck in the middle of his mouth, fixed to his bottom lip by dried saliva, suspended as if by magic, as he speaks in that sprawling Southern drawl of his. What wouldn't I give for just one more ride on that old hog of his, 'American Eagle', the wind whistling through my now receding hair line. That was never a problem for Freewheelin'; he had his head shaved when he had that drawing of a Bald Eagle, captured in mid glide, tattooed on his head. There's no saying now of course that he hasn't let that rich thatch of red hair, a throwback of his Irish descent, grow back, I suppose. And I guess he'll have that hankering to down some of that 'ol' Tennessee sipping whiskey' in cupfuls jist to prove that he still can.

He'd have to be dead, which I know he isn't, to be parted from that bike. His 'lean mean freedom machine' he calls it. Powered by that old '49 Pan head, that he bought in a basket or was it a box of bits from a garage sale for just a few dollars. Some guys seem to have all the luck, don't they? As I said, maybe it's the Irish in him. And I'd bet that he is still wearing that old brown leather flying jacket. It's rumoured that it hasn't be off his back for more than ten minutes a time since he first got it issued to him in '69, when he was stationed in 'Nam. It was a story he told me about the death of