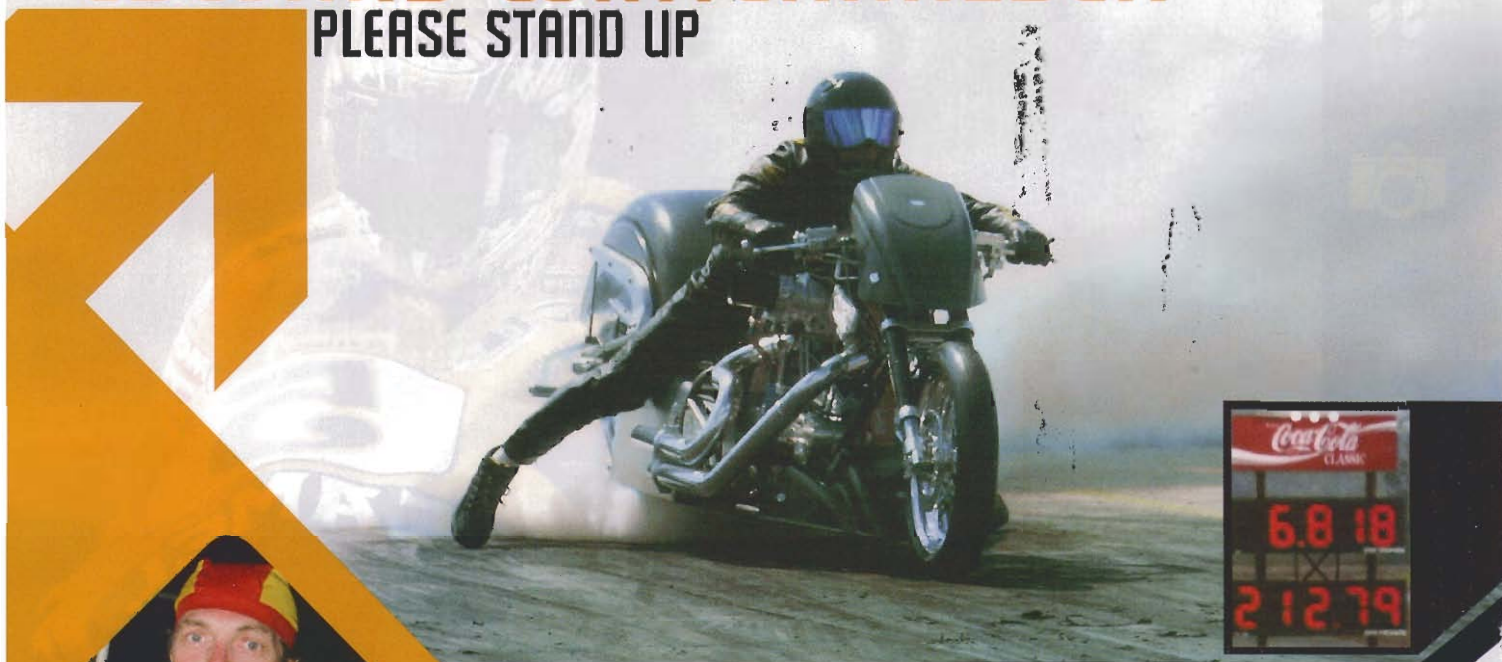


# WILL THE REAL EDWARD WINTERHALDER PLEASE STAND UP



By Wil De Clercq



**W**hen Edward Winterhalder was born 51 years ago in Hartford, CT they broke the proverbial mould. In a world bent on labelling people, Winterhalder defies typifying. Over the years, Winterhalder has worn many hats including farm labourer, motorcycle builder, musician, construction contractor, drag race promoter, writer and outlaw biker to name a few. Winterhalder, however, likes to think of himself as an entrepreneur; his eclectic background just happens to be the raw material that helped shape him into the operator of a small American business empire.

Since 1997 Winterhalder has been president and CEO of Owasso, OK-based Blockhead City, an umbrella company that is home to no less than seven individual businesses including Blockhead City Construction; Blockhead City Music; Blockhead City Motorcycles; Blockhead City Press; Blockhead City Real Estate; Blue Collar Financial Group of Oklahoma and Blue Collar Financial Group of Texas.

But Winterhalder is perhaps best known for his past exploits as a 1%er biker — close to thirty years worth — and a former high ranking member of the Bandidos Motorcycle Club. Winterhalder was the man who launched the Bandidos' Oklahoma chapter and spearheaded the establishing of a Bandidos presence in Canada, something he accomplished by assimilating Montreal's Rock Machine into the fold; and this to counter the Canadian expansionism of the Bandidos' archrivals, Hells Angels.

As a full 'patch' member and national officer, first with the Rogues Motorcycle Club and then the Bandidos, Winterhalder was a key figure in the secretive world of hardcore biker gangs until his exit from the

Bandidos in 2003. During his nearly 20 years as an associate or member of the Bandidos Motorcycle Club, he was never charged with committing any criminal activities, something society perceives all so-called outlaw bikers to be guilty of.

"Sure, there is a segment of 1%er club members that are involved in criminal enterprises, but by and large probably 60 to 70 percent of active Bandidos these days are decent family men who hold down real jobs and basically keep their noses clean," said Winterhalder. "Another 15 or 20 percent might be househusbands whose spouses can make more money than they can or they're guys on some kind of pension. The remainder are the type of people who'll do exactly what they want to do. This is just a reflection of our society as a whole, for there are loose cannons in every segment of society.

"For me, as it is for a lot of guys, being a biker was about camaraderie and brotherhood, sharing a passion for motorcycles with likeminded people who aren't afraid to have a good time and be perceived as different from the mainstream, while essentially being regular type people. Some are white collar, some are blue collar and some are professionals. How much more mainstream or respectable can you get than a paediatrician, like the one I befriended in the Bandidos. Like these guys, I was either gainfully employed or running my own businesses in all the years I was a biker."

Winterhalder readily admits that the outlaw, macho image of bike clubs holds an attraction for many who join. He said that at the same time you're already dealing with a bunch of guys that are wild at heart and who probably suffered a dysfunctional



childhood. For a lot of these people, belonging to a 1%er bike club gives them a sense of family. It's also an ego boost, an empowerment that gives them a confidence they never had.

"One of the reasons I joined bike clubs, in addition to the brotherhood, was to develop business connections, legal connections as opposed to illegal. Being a Bandido or a member of the other clubs can open doors for you. It's up to you as to what doors you open," Winterhalter explained. "In my case, the many connections I developed helped lead me to where I am today. In the world of business, being a biker was never a liability for me but an asset."

### DRAG RACE PROMOTER

Among Winterhalter's many business interests is the promoting of motorcycle drag races, which he started in 2002 under the moniker 'Living on the Edge'. Adopting a grassroots concept, Winterhalter's drag races are open to anyone with a motorcycle. While insurance coverage is provided, the races aren't sanctioned and there are no prizes. The only thing the competitors get is a time slip at the end of their races. According to Winterhalter this greatly facilitates the flow of the event, allowing up to 75 races per hour; in 2005, over 500 participants hit the pavement during the one-day affair.

"I thought about when we were kids, blocking off the streets and racing muscle cars and just having a good time establishing who had the fastest car. It was about having fun, and this is what I envisioned for my Living on the Edge races, bringing back the fun to it. You just don't see these kind of informal

drags in the States anymore, they're all sanctioned meets and very serious," said Winterhalter. "I wanted to provide a professional venue for the regular guy who just wants to test his bike against another guy's, and provide this as inexpensively as possible. Advance tickets, which allow you to watch, participate or do both, were set at \$10. If you pay at the gate, admittance was set at \$20.

"I also wanted to bring together the Harley crowd with the crotch-rocket crowd and show them that it was okay to hang out together. Both groups tend to be rather cliquish in the real world and rarely mix. At the Living on the Edge races everybody learned to mix without any incident. Ultimately there is a common love for bikes and that's what it's really about."

Winterhalter hopes to see his low-key racing concept go nationwide and his intentions are to franchise 'Living on the Edge'. He is currently negotiating with a group in Arkansas and a national Christian-based motorcycle club to kick start the process.

### OUT IN BAD STANDINGS

In 2005, Winterhalter, who is one of the busiest men on the planet, self-published *Out In Bad Standings: Inside The Bandidos Motorcycle Club - The Making Of A Worldwide Dynasty*, a book he wrote about the biker lifestyle and his rise and fall within the Bandidos Nation. *Out In Bad Standings*, which chronicles the establishment and growth of the Bandidos in Canada, Europe, and Oklahoma, is the first book written about the notorious club and the first written by a bona fide insider.

*Out In Bad Standings* provides a rare look into the secret world of 1%er motorcycle clubs, allowing the reader a unique opportunity to ride along as the Bandidos become the dominant international force they are today. Not surprisingly, Winterhalter was accused in some quarters of selling out the club and exploiting his background to promote his own agenda, something he flatly denies.

"*Out In Bad Standings* didn't really start out as a book project and it certainly wasn't about pushing my own agenda or selling out the club. I wanted to set the record straight because I knew that things like changing over the iRock Machine into Bandidos were an important piece of history and I wanted to

preserve it," said Winterhalter. "Ditto for things that happened in the United States while I was a Bandido member. As the project grew, when I had some 150,000 words down on paper, I realized that it might be a good thing to go ahead and publish it."

Since its release in November 2005, *Out In Bad Standings* has become one of the best selling self-published hardcover books of 2006. It was recently ranked at No. 41 on the Barnes & Noble Bookstores' website. The book, which is available in Canada at Indigo/Chapters, is currently being considered by three major publishers for repackaging, marketing, and worldwide distribution.

### GIVING SOMETHING BACK

This past November, Winterhalter was invited as a celebrity guest to participate in the 23rd Annual Love Ride in California, the largest one-day event for motorcyclists in North America; more than 20,000 riders participated in the 35-mile procession in 2006. Along with such major Hollywood stars as Robert Patrick (star of the current CBS show 'The Unit' and the Clint Eastwood movie 'Flags Of Our Fathers'); Mickey Jones ('Home Improvement' star); 1960s biker movie icon Peter Fonda; and late night talk show host Jay Leno, Winterhalter rose to the occasion. He donated his name, presence, and signed copies of his book to the cause. The event reportedly raised more than \$1,000,000 for the benefit of multiple charities that includes the Muscular Dystrophy Association, Cure Society of America, and Operation Hope.

"I'm not a writer and I never professed to be one so the fact that the book has been well received is rather gratifying. But I certainly don't think of myself as some kind of celebrity, that's just a public perception," said Winterhalter. "If by attaching my name to worthwhile causes like the Love Ride, I can help do a good thing, then writing *Out In Bad Standings* has to be considered a win-win situation."

*Out In Bad Standings* is available at Barnes & Noble Bookstores and B. Dalton Bookstores in the United States; Amazon.com and eBay.com worldwide; Indigo/Chapters, Coles Bookstores and WhiteHots in Canada. More information about the book can be found at [www.blockheadcity.com/outbadbook.htm](http://www.blockheadcity.com/outbadbook.htm). **PRN**