

**Subject:** Dispatches from the Subcontinent V

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## ***We've Got a Man Down!***

Our departure from Keylong went smoothly with blue skies and sunshine. Our destination for the day was the Sarchu camp village. This is another gathering of tent lodges for travelers on the road to the mountains of Ladakh. We found ourselves on a great new blacktop that criss-crossed the ascent to the 13,050' Rohtang Jot. At a resting stop we looked down and saw far below bikes stopped on the road and people milling about. Bill from Florida passed around his binoculars and we came to the conclusion it was one of ours.

Anu grabbed Lara the EMT and they road two-up down to the crash site. Soon afterward the luggage truck with Dr. Suju arrived to tend to Chuck from Dallas. Chuck is one of the best riders among us. He told me later that he was riding on a very clean piece of asphalt when he saw a glimpse of the rock in the road that broke off his shifter and sent him flying like a rag-doll. When he came to his recollection is opening his eyes to see all these brown faces trying to talk to him.

If that wasn't enough, Anu's sweep rider Aju (who we are calling French Dip) was following close and had to lay his bike down to avoid hitting Chuck. No injury there.

After some time Chuck was checked out and loaded into the luggage truck. The initial diagnosis was he had a contusion to the back of his rib cage. They continued on over the rough rocky roads to the Sarchu camp. After we caught up, we got to give him a few words of encouragement. He had an IV from Suju and said he was comfortable. He actually apologized for "wrecking our tour". The owner of the camp agreed to take Chuck and one of the crew to the hospital in Leh. Chuck's transfer from the truck to the owner's car was painful and heard throughout the camp. We think he got medical attention around 1:30 am that night.



That night was another adventure in camping. After our wagers for how many minutes it would take the the bonfire to collapse and a bit of Royal Stag, we headed off to our tents. Knowing how miserable I was 7 years ago, I suited up in my Freeze-Out thermal longies, two pairs of socks, a balaclava, and sleeping gloves. Over that was a horse blanket and a duvet. These rustic provisions and 30 degree temps made for little sleep until our 7:00 am coffee time.

On a trip like this there are are long periods without communications and even in a small group of a dozen, rumors are rampant. Chuck's condition went from OK - no fractures, to 2 broken ribs, a hip fracture, and a deflated lung. He came into this as a very fit 58 year-old with a plan to hike to the Mount Everest base camp after this ride. He was in the Leh hospital for a couple days, and although he transferred to our hotel and will have dinner with us, his tour is over. He thinks the night ride with the thin air over the 16,000' passes to Leh aggravated the lung puncture. At the hospital they drained much fluid. His plan is to rest at the hotel and fly out with the rest of us on Sunday. We all accept riding is a dangerous activity. Sometimes bad things happen.





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**Our mailing address is:**

Clay Bastian  
100 E. English  
Wichita, KS 67202

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