

Iron Man™s last ride

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PGR bid their brother "farewell"

Story / Photos by Jamie Nash

The Patriot Guard Riders are usually on the outside of a church, lining the walkway with American flags, their motorcycles parked just beyond. They honor the men and women who served our country as they protect the sanctity of the services by using the flags and themselves to shield those who grieve. Their motto is "Standing for those who stood for us," but on Tuesday, January, 20, they stood for one who stood with them not so long ago.



They gathered at Mims Baptist Church in Conroe to bid farewell to their brother, Richard "Iron Man" Best. The 63-year-old Conroe resident and Patriot Guard Rider lost his lengthy and courageous battle with cancer on January 16.

He is survived by his wife; Rebecca Best, son; Jason Best and wife, Leanne, stepsons, Chris Shipman, Kenny Shipman and wife, Christina, stepdaughter; Michelle Gwynn and husband, Byron, ten grandchildren, and numerous nieces and nephews.

After the family was inside the church, the Patriot Guard Riders filed into the sanctuary, one by one, proudly wearing their colors.

Best was a member of the church and the message was delivered by Pastor Gene Kendrick, who recalled Best's faithfulness, even after he became wheelchair bound.

PGR members served as pallbearers, carrying his flag draped coffin to the hearse. The weather was cool and the sky was cloudless, with the wind blowing just enough to properly display the American flags that adorned many of the dozens of motorcycles as they escorted the hearse on Iron Man's last ride from Conroe to Pace-Stancil Memorial Rest Gardens in Cleveland. They were assisted by the Montgomery County Precinct 2 Constable's Office.

Members of Texas VFW Post 1839 met mourners at the graveside, where they saluted Best by firing rifles and with the playing of taps. There was also a flyover.

After the service, Lou "Bagger Lou" Freitas, Patriot Guard Southeast Texas Deputy State Captain / Road Captain explained how "Iron Man" got his name within the group.

“When he became too sick to ride a motorcycle and the doctors wouldn’t allow him to do it, he went out and bought a diesel truck – a big Ford, long body, and he came out as a support vehicle and that’s where he was, up to the day he couldn’t drive any longer,” Freitas said. “That’s why we call him the Iron Man – he just would not quit.”

Best joined the group after passing them as they staged in a parking lot, where he turned in to find out more about them, Freitas said. He already had cancer, but did all he could for as long as he was able and formed an unbreakable bond with the rest of the PGR during that time.

The convoy included Iron Man’s motorcycle, which was driven by his son-in-law Byron Gwynn, and the red pickup he used as a support vehicle for the group when he was no longer able to ride his bike. Freitas drove the pickup.

“He loved the PGR,” Freitas said. “He was so dedicated. He was a true brother.”

The ride captains for the mission were:

BaggerLou: Coordinator/Co-Lead

Windrider: Co-Lead

Boomer: Co-Lead/Road Guard Captain

P.J.: Second

Geezer: Glide FAST Lead

Santa Chuck: Grave site

To learn more about the Southeast Texas Patriot Guard Riders, visit their website:

<http://www.setexaspgr.com/>



