

## FDNY Tribute Bike

### An interview with Chip Hawkins

Chip Hawkins has created a truly beautiful tribute to the firefighters that were killed while trying to rescue the victims of the tragedy of the twin towers on 9/11/2001.

His brother, Lt. Scott Hawkins, is one of the firefighters from Ladder Company 128 in Queens, who survived the collapse of the second tower. He is now with Engine 220 in Brooklyn.

His tribute bike and his website [FDNYtributebike.com](http://FDNYtributebike.com) are dedicated "In Loving Memory To My Brother's Brothers"



**FDNY Tribute Bike photo from "Foster's Daily Democrat"**

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Chip started with a base bike of a Harley-Davidson Sportster. The bike was created in two phases. The first phase, the bike was fitted with Trike fenders and the main graphics. Tom McNeil of Bonehead Designs was the artist behind these amazing graphics. This first stage of

the bike was completed in February of 2003. Chip entered it in a bike show and won 2nd place in "Custom" and 2nd place in "Best of Show".

During the second phase, Chip added a custom front wheel and rotors, which had originally been designed for the Orange County Chopper "Fire Bike", with slight color changes to match his the color scheme on the bike. Chip fabricated part of the bike himself adding fire nozzles for the highway pegs and flaming tailpipes. At this time more graphics were added to show the total of the firemen who had perished. A striking helmet was created that features a picture of Osama Bin Laden with a Halligan tool going through his skull and exiting his eye.

Chip has truly created a wonderful monument for those who gave their lives to help others.

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**Here is the interview with Chip:**

**1. Does your brother motorcycle with you?**

We have ridden once together. That being a charity ride for the Bridgeport Pediatric Burn Foundation put on by the Connecticut Shoreline Chapter of the Red Knights. He came up from NY and I came down from NH. The Red Knights had seen my bike at Americade. They had invited me down for the ride on August 8th.

**2. Did your brother work on the bike also?**

No, just encouraged me. I emailed him pictures of the paint when it was done, but it was a surprise to him till then.

**3. Are you a firefighter?**

When I lived in NY, I was a volunteer for a Ladder co. in Oceanside NY.

**4. Do you ride your bike, or is it just for shows?**

I ride it also. It needs to be seen so people won't forget.

**5. How do people react to your helmet - The picture of a terrorist with a Halligan tool.**

Everyone loves the helmet. He never looked so good!!!

**6. What is a Halligan tool normally used for?**

It is used for gaining entry into a building or vehicle. The pike pole through his ears is for pulling down ceilings.

### **7. What gave you the idea of using the trike fenders?**

Trike is a brand name of fender out of Drag Specialties. They helped detract from the traditional Sportster look.

### **8. Did the new fenders have to be altered to fit and have the look that you wanted?**

They did have to be altered but I enjoyed doing that as my part of my contribution to the build.

### **9. Has OCC seen your bike?**

I sent OCC pictures of the bike along with a granite plaque with their logo on it at Christmas of 2003 as thanks for their inspiration. I never heard from them.

### **10. Do people question your choice of a Sportster as a base bike?**

Just hearing your question tweaks a little sensitivity, but you know what? 9/11/2001 was the one year anniversary of a quadruple by pass for me and the day I almost lost my brother, and the fact that I have always wanted a Harley. Life is too short and a Sportster was all I could afford at the time. But I think it shows all other Sportster owners that you don't have to have a \$40,000.00 + chopper to have an eye catching bike.

### **11. How did you find such talent as Tom McNeil?**

Has he done OCC work? Tommy was the third painter I interviewed for the job. His enthusiasm for the project and his portfolio was what sold me on him. No, he has not done any work for OCC.

### **12. What was the total cost of the customizing?**

I am really not done with the work on the tribute bike. I keep receipts but have hesitated to add them up. It's not about money now that I have started. It is about sacrifice, tribute, courage and fortitude. I am passionate about the cause. And as a veteran, I am passionate about people not forgetting. This bike will never be sold so I am not worried about the law of diminishing returns.

**13. Are you going to do any more customizing of this bike, or any others?**

I have several ideas in the works for the tribute bike but they are not yet ready for publication. Tommy has since done one other project for me, "the Creamcycle Bike" and we are still in the process of putting it together. It is another Sportster. It shall be posted on the website at sometime. I did it for my fiancée, Janet, who built the web site and encouraged me to keep coming up with ideas for the bike.