Larry Wilkins (top) – known as a “gentle giant” – had a passion for fast cars and loud motorcycles. Wilkins died at age 41 of non-Hodgkin lymphoma, a form of cancer that originates in the body’s lymphatic system, and some believe his health problems can be traced to a 1966 train derailment near downtown Horse Cave (above).

Larry Wilkins was a proverbial mountain of a man. He stood about 6-foot-6 and weighed in at 400 or so pounds. The bearded behemoth rode motorcycles to add to his often imposing appearance.

But as is often the case, looks were deceiving. Even though he had no children of his own, Wilkins would do an extra large Santa Claus suit to spread cheer to local children, and more than one friend described him as a “gentle giant.”

And just like Wilkins, the train derailment in 1966 near downtown Horse Cave was fundamentally different than it appeared to be on the surface.

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