

From the Desk of P.R Guy "Chubby"

The issues that confront us have changed very little in the last thirty five years and sometimes it is disheartening to realize that the onslaught of rules and regulations just may never end. Tough economic times don't make me feel any better about the pursuit of my beliefs, and the exponential growth of our government sometimes makes me want to throw in the towel. So, you may ask, what makes me continue on? What fuels the fire in an otherwise beaten down soul? Well, it all becomes apparent when I attend events and meetings throughout the state and it is the thing I like best about being a biker besides that sense of freedom the road brings to me. It all can be summed up in one word actually; Brotherhood. Brotherhood is the glue that binds us and the fuel that keeps the fire burning strong in our hearts. I don't think Webster does justice in the definition of the word and maybe the actions of my comrades' better defines it. Brotherhood is not exclusive to men or to bikers for that matter. But, bikers sure seem to define the word by their actions. What does brotherhood mean to you?



I began riding motorcycles in my preteen years by taking turns with my fortunate friends whose parents didn't deem them as "too dangerous" for us to enjoy. When I became old enough to ride on the street legally I bought my first bike which I regretfully had to hide from my parents at a close friends house. Learning to ride on the street was far different from the dirt and at the time riding instruction classes were expensive and difficult to get into. So how does a teenager become a proficient street rider? I rode with my friends. We headed out in groups of up to ten bikes during lunch hours at school, after school, and on weekends to carve up the nearby Kettle Moraine in a somewhat safe manner. Looking back at the support and mentoring I received from more experienced older riders in that group really was my introduction to brotherhood. No body was allowed to do stupid things that may have jeopardized the groups' safety or their own and pit stops included conversations about technique and ability as much as we talked about what direction to head next. These days roads are plagued with significantly more traffic than back then so maybe the new scenario should include a basic rider course, but there is no doubt that mentoring from my "brothers" was an integral part of my learning experience. Do you have less experienced riders in your region? It sure doesn't cost anything to take them under your wing and show them how a biker takes to the road and the payoff of creating an educated, proficient biker is priceless. Brotherhood is the key.

All ABATE regions in the state have experienced their ups and downs over the last thirty-five years that our organization has been around and although I have a pretty well rounded view of the history of ABATE of WI, I feel most comfortable singling out some regions in my corner of the state as great examples of brotherhood. When I first joined ABATE of WI over ten years ago I went to meetings in Region 1H (Washington Cty) which was run at the time by our current Executive Director Greg Rodd and often had over seventy people at monthly meetings. With a group that size, it was easy to get volunteers and run events. In contrast, nearby regions 1F(Waukesha) and 1A(Milwaukee) struggled to stay alive and were lucky to get a dozen people involved. I don't think this was from a lack of leadership or passion from their reps but may have been more attributed to the view of the region people got their first time out not seeing much support at meetings and not seeing much of a need to come back. I don't know if

it was intentional or not, but the members in 1H along with some change in leadership did a lot to change the growth and "feel" of the other regions meetings when their members decided on their own to start attending meetings outside their region and rode as a group to do it. Brotherhood brought change. It wasn't long before both 1F and 1A grew their meetings to a level where they had support to get things done on their own, but the message didn't go away. Together, we could get things done. To this day, I regularly attend all three meetings in my area and I'm not alone. Region events are supported by regions closest to them in the district and quite often have at least a few members from every region in the district in attendance. Of course the proximity of the regions down here makes it easier than in for example District 6 (NW corner of WI) where one region may be the size of all three down here, but you can't take away the fact that there is one common recurring factor in regional success, brotherhood.

At our officer training I had the opportunity to attend all but one district meeting that occurred. Members in all the meetings that I attended were giving input in a variety of areas that supported the mission and growth of our organization. The struggle to run a profitable event was a common theme in many of the meetings and there were different reasons for that struggle. The economy seemed to be the biggest reason for declining numbers but selfishness and personal agendas often had a part in it. It was very interesting to see a common theme to the projected way to make these events successful though, brotherhood. Although raising money to help with the seemingly never ending struggle that we are all in together should remain on the priority list, there is no price you can put on the main thing that keeps us going, brotherhood. Although at the state level we all compete to see who can raise the most or have the most successful event, it sure wouldn't hurt things to step back and make sure you're not missing out on that one thing that carries us further than money, brotherhood. Who cares if you have to cut the entertainment and pop a few cd's in the stereo instead. Is the lack of free beer or a free dinner going to keep people away from and event? Does it keep you away? Soon the weather will be prime for putting some miles on your scoot, maybe it would be worthwhile to head out for a visit to a nearby regions event and help them make it a success by sharing the one thing that costs us little but is worth the most, brotherhood.

Every now and then a female member brings up the fact that the word brotherhood isn't necessarily fair to them because after all wouldn't they be sisters? I've repeatedly stated my argument that women are an important part of our brotherhood and I could just as well replace the word brotherhood with family. I just don't think "A Family Against Totalitarian Enactments" has as much zing to it and face it, the acronym sucks. But I do believe our brotherhood is very much like a family and of course with many families this means kids too. Many of our members bring their children to events and some even sign them up as members much like I have done. The most important member of my public relations team, my wife Lisa, has repeatedly mentioned to me that although we bring the kids to many local events, there isn't many events throughout the state that are geared towards the whole family.

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