

**And the Battle Rages On!**

Last month I talked about all the articles that Gannett Media published in their newspapers and the news stories they put on their television stations trying to paint ABATE of Wisconsin in a negative light. They posted online polls, videos and published articles throughout the whole state and even into Minnesota. They flooded all their newspapers with editorials about how many lives would be saved with a mandatory helmet law as well as public polls about helmets. And when the poll numbers didn't go their way and they didn't get the responses to the articles that they had hoped for, they started to attack ABATE of Wisconsin. As I pointed out though, even through the biased comments in the article, the truth still came through... ABATE of Wisconsin is the best motorcycle rights organization in the country!

I heard a lot of comments from some members who were concerned that the newspapers portrayed us as reckless heathens of the highway who had no regard for our own safety as well as them calling us a "single-issue" organization. But in true ABATE of Wisconsin fashion, our members sprang into action and answered the call to battle! We had quite a few members who called their local television stations to voice their disapproval of these stories as well as many of our members who took the time to write letters to the newspapers. I try to track down and refute all the biased information circulating out there but I'm only one person. We truly would not be able to do it without all of us having each others' backs and charging to the rescue. I'd like to give a huge "Thank You" to all our foot soldiers who go that extra mile!

So, things quieted down for a little while but I knew it wouldn't be for long. Shortly after all the articles, they came out with a news story of a young man who was in an accident who credits his life being saved to the fact that he was wearing a helmet. They interviewed him, his father and the hospital doctor all repeating the same mantra: "He would be dead right now if he didn't have a helmet on." I was amazed how all three of these folks could foretell the future and make such bold statements. But more importantly, I knew that the battle was back on again. Gannett had decided to make a poster-child of this poor guy and use him to push their agenda. It would have been easy for us to rush in and enter the helmet debate, AGAIN for the 39th year! But that's exactly where Gannett wants us. They want us with our backs against the ropes trying to defend our position because that keeps us on the defense. That keeps us on their playing field instead of doing what we do best - promoting motorcycle awareness and crash avoidance. One mark of a great soldier is that he fights on his own terms or fights not at all. We could have gone on the attack and dug up dirt on this young rider and tried to dis-

credit him. But that's only a temporary fix. Like I said, he's just the poster-child for their agenda and any attempt to smear him would have resulted in Gannett moving on and just finding someone else to represent their ideology.

My brothers and sisters, our enemies and our battle field have changed over the years. So why do we keep trying to fight the same kind of fight as we did 30 years ago? Do you think our enemies aren't wise to how we've been doing things for the past three decades? Some of the strategic maneuvering we've been doing over the last month or so may be a bit foreign to some of you but this is a different type of conflict. Our opponent is temperamental and arrogant so we should seek to irritate them in order to keep them off their game. If they look like they are going to be taking it easy, we give them no rest. We not only must attack them where they are unprepared but also appear where we are not expected.

It's a different type of fight folks. Gannett has nothing to lose but their pride - something that they hold near and dear which they won't give up without a fight. (Especially not to a bunch of dirty bikers!)

It's time to lead, follow or get out of the way!

Dean "D-Day" Bartosh-Director of Public Relation/ABATE of Wisconsin

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**FROM THE DESK OF JOE WEIGEL:**

Thinking of the Black Hills and Sturgis? We have Black-Hills-Sturgis maps free to our friends. I keep one on my desk all year round so when I take "time out" I can look at the map and re-live the great Black Hills rides including Spearfish, Boulder, and Vonacker Canyons. Penny and I have been going out to Sturgis every year (lately the week before Sturgis) to cruise the Black Hills for over 20 years. If you want a map of the Sturgis-Black Hills area, call (414) 342-1000 and ask for Sue; who will mail a map to you. Or pick one up at the law firm booth at one of the swap meets.

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