

ABATE of Wisconsin: The Early Times

The history lesson in this story explained how ABATE of Wisconsin started. The way Tony put it, "the government did ABATE a favor in the 70's. It gave us a reason to organize."

I have said in the past that there is a few that have given so many the freedoms to ride in Wisconsin the way we do today. And that is in part ABATE of Wisconsin. Going back to the early seventies, our brothers and sisters have been fighting for what they believe in, the way of the freedom of the road.

On Jan 12th I attended the monthly meeting of ABATE of Wisconsin Region 4A that also included a presentation by Tony "Pan" Sanfelippo on the Early Days of ABATE of Wisconsin. I knew about biker life in Wisconsin, but I never knew even a small fraction of the information I heard that day.

A couple of interesting points learned...

- *Did you know that the first known mandatory helmet initiative was from one of the attending doctors neurosurgeon Hugh Cairns who treated Lawrence of Arabia in the 30's for brain trauma after a motorcycle accident. He had it required for all dispatch riders wear a helmet during WWII. Didn't know that, did ya?
- *Also in the 20's is when the MC's started. It wasn't till after WWII that the 1% clubs emerged.
- *"And the legend lives on". Did you ever hear the saying? Harley says it all the time, but they didn't create the legend, but instead it was the riders that bought their bikes that should get the credit.
- *US had a Federal Helmet Law
- *20 countries have helmet laws.
- * half the states in US have them.

The feuding of Wisconsin motorcycle rights groups in the early days. The rejections from society about our thoughts, the triumphs of our successes. We had some of the Freedom fighters give short speeches pertaining to their roles in the fight like, "Tattered and Torn" Dave Zien, Congressional Medal of Honor recipient Gary Wetzel, Long time freedom fighters Polack, Gator and Tick just to name a few. From the beginning all the way through present, there have been many non-stop go-getters never giving up on what they believed in. And that my friend's is the Freedom to choose, the education of motorcycle riders about their options and all the fights that some of the issues contain.

Many examples were given about the freedom fighters actions.

- *Combined resistance worked in California. First helmet law bill that was pulled in committee due to "show of togetherness".
- *Lou Kimzie of Easyriders Magazine in '71 started NCCA-then changed it to ABATE A Brotherhood of Totalitarian Enactments. Some state still use that acronym other changed to A Brotherhood Aimed Towards Education.
- *Dick Smith of the C.C. Riders started WBBA (Wisconsin Better Biker Assc)
- *Federation of Concerned Motorcyclists
- *Free Riders MC was the most active club pertaining to rights (Gotta love the name)
- *Sue Menard and the Alliance for Women Bikers.
- * September 4th was the last helmet rally before vote with Governor threatening veto. And how we got enough votes to override the veto in '78.* It was mentioned of distrust among different rights organizations like AMA. Just like anything there is always a power trip for some between groups.
- * Everyone mentioned some of the flashbacks of the day. State troopers par-tyn', really?

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Many items and effect from the past 40 years were on display. Talk about a blast from the past.



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