

True Colors: Cops Vs. Bikers

"Nowadays, officers also have to worry about lawsuits when they pull over a 'one-pcenter'," reported the Philadelphia Daily News in response to a civil rights lawsuit claiming profiling and police harassment, adding that "Biker gangs might have a well-deserved reputation, but one local attorney who represents several clubs says that 'reputation' isn't a valid reason for a traffic stop."

"Some of this tension between the cops and the bikers is because the cops hassle them ALL the time," said Aid to Injured Motorcyclists (A.I.M.) Attorney Boyd Spencer, who represents the Eastern Pennsylvania Confederation of Clubs.

Spencer is representing three bikers in a civil-rights lawsuit stemming from a July 30, 2009, traffic stop involving six motorcyclists, two of the defendants are Pagan's M/C members and a third defendant was a Tribe M/C member.

According to the complaint, the bikers were ticketed for not having approved helmets and were told to remove their "colors", the patched jackets members wear. The whole traffic stop, which lasted more than an hour, was captured by mounted cameras in the police cruisers.

"Now you're all going to take your jackets off, because on this highway, these are the only colors," one of the state troopers, referring to State Police blue and gold, told the group after nearly 50 minutes had passed.

The bikers didn't budge. None of them took off his colors. The helmets were later found to be legal, and a prosecutor dismissed the charges. Spencer, who said the demand to take off their colors was out of bounds, chalks up the traffic stop to harassment.

Spencer said he always hears about bikers getting harassed. "I've got a guy in Upper Darby who gets pulled over every time he goes out on his bike," he said.

Upper Darby police Superintendent Michael Chitwood Sr. told the newspaper that bikers get pulled over if they break traffic laws, like anyone else. Police keep tabs on them, though. "These operations have become very sophisticated. They know what their rights are and what the police can do," he said.

Fact Or Fiction: Motorcycles Are Eco-Friendly

In the popular belief that since motorcycles get better mileage they must be greener than cars, "People are trading in their cars and driving motorcycles instead because they believe that's the more environmentally friendly choice," said "MythBusters" television host Adam Savage in the season opener of the popular Discovery Channel show. "The logic is because motorcycles are generally more fuel-efficient than cars, they burn less gas and thus they must be better for the environment."

As the MythBusters have done with each of the show's previous seven seasons, Savage and his co-host Jamie Hyneman set out to test the theory, and the Los Angeles Times recently reported on the show's findings.

The MythBusters duo selected three motorcycles and three cars that were common in the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s and put the undisclosed vehicles through a 30-minute, 20-mile real-world course, 75% of it consisting of highway driving and 25% city driving.

Savage drove all three cars while Hyneman trailed him on the bikes, each one equipped with portable emission-measuring systems that tracked exhaust gases from a probe in the tailpipe and collected engine information from the engine control unit to determine each vehicle's fuel economy and emissions profile.

The upshot of the experiment was that the newer two-wheeler was indeed 28% more fuel efficient than the comparable car and emitted 30% less of the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide, however the same motorcycle emitted 416% more smog-forming hydrocarbons, 3,220% more oxides of nitrogen and 8,065% more of the toxic air pollutant carbon monoxide.

The MythBusters' conclusion: "At best, it's a wash. Motorcycles are just as bad for the environment as cars," Savage said on the show. "At worst, they're far worse."

But emissions are only one factor in the equation that measures a vehicle's true impact on the environment, and as LA Times columnist Susan Carpenter concludes; "Despite the MythBusters' findings, emissions are only part of the story of a vehicle's true greenness. According to the Motorcycle Industry Council, motorcycle manufacturing requires thousands fewer pounds of raw materials than automobiles. They require less fossil fuel, so they require less energy to pull that fossil fuel out of the ground. They use fewer chemicals and oils than cars. And motorcycles produced today are 90% cleaner in California than they were 30 years ago. Note to MythBusters: How about a cradle-to-grave life cycle assessment for cars and motorcycles for the Season 9 opener?"

Bikers' Rights To Health Care

Akin to some Unions that have negotiated lower health care costs by excluding insurance coverage for so-called "risky" behavior such as horseback riding, skiing and riding motorcycles, the state of Georgia may soon exclude motorcyclists from their healthcare benefits.

The chairman of a House study committee looking at Georgia's health benefit plan said the state might require employees to disclose dangerous activities like skydiving and riding motorcycles.

State Rep. Carl Rogers (R-Gainesville) said that the panel is looking to bring down sky-rocketing costs in the state health plan. Earlier this year, lawmakers were forced to scramble to fill a \$300 million budget hole for the health benefits.

Rogers told the Associated Press that state employees who take part in risky activities might eventually pay higher premiums.



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