

# Shootin' the Breeze



by *Bummer*

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I got mail from a friend who's now in Florida named Pat Pecorelli the other day. He sent me a link to a friend of HIS named Rogue. Rogue was one of only two people [the other being from Britain] who were inducted into the Sturgis Freedom Fighters Hall of Fame at last years Sturgis Rally. If ya have a computer check out his site at <http://www.bikerogue.com>.....He's a bike builder who's also been a featured writer for national bike publications for years and has been at the very heart of the national biking scene. He's included the national history of ABATE on his website. If ya go there, hit on 'Articles', then 'Biker Rights', then 'History of ABATE'. Rogue has the further distinction of being one of the charter members of the National Custom Cycle Association [NCCA] formed in 1971, which a year later became ABATE, A Brotherhood Against Totalitarian Enactments formed in 1972 by the magazine Easyriders. This spawned all of the state ABATEs throughout the country, some of whom changed the meaning of the acronym to be American Bikers Aimed Towards Education. [Personally I prefer the old meaning...it sounds more kick ass! But I'm sure that's why some states, including ours, changed it. And I guess it DOES sound a little too radical to be productive.] A few years ago Doug Clark, the editor of the Outspokin' back then, ran a series of interviews with members of ABATE of Ohio detailing the history of ABATE here. I still have all the old magazines [I never throw anything away 'cept wives who bitch about it] and maybe someday I'll pull 'em out and rehash it for all the newer readers.

A good friend of mine, Buffalo who, with his woman Bobbi are representatives for Cycle Source magazine, was also one of those first people to sign up over 34 years ago. We sat around talkin' about the old days.

"Buffalo, I noticed that the yearly dues to belong to the national ABATE was only \$3.00 in 1972!"

"Well Bummer, when ya stop to think about it that was a Hell of a lot more money back then. Hell, that was just about ten gallons of gas! Or a carton of smokes! The dues now are still relatively similar when ya compare what a dollar could buy."

"How did you sign up? I tried to find something locally back then but couldn't."

"I just sent in my three bucks to Easyriders. Still got the original card around here somewhere. Back then we never even had meetings around here 'cause there was so few of us."

I remember how hard it was for me to connect when I joined....Throughout the 70's the state was a whole lot more empty regarding ABATE! "I didn't join until 1986. Jeez, that was twenty years ago! But compared to you I'm a rookie in ABATE. Later in 1989 was the first time I heard of something going on in my neck of the woods, so I hooked up with Animal, Bonny, Bill Wilson, Curly and the others as soon as I heard they were gettin' it together and we formed Region Zero."

"Damn! I got fourteen years on you!!"

"Well, it ain't how long you've been a member, it's how much of a member you've been." Then I gave him a &%^\$ eating grin. "You guys have been so involved in 'Cycle Source' and other stuff that I guess I'll forgive ya, but yer re-upping or I ain't gonna quit naggin' ya!! I remember back in '72 I was ridin' an old '65 Triumph Bonny. What were you on?"

"Back then I had a Bonneville too! Then I got an old '55 Harley Pan hardtail chopper later that year. They didn't call 'em "suicide" shifts for nothing. That bastard tank shifter just about killed me a few times! Took that out to California when I moved out there in early '73 and opened my shop."

"What was it called?"

"Wild Bill's Scooter Fixin's. We did a lot of custom work. Back then they had even MORE laws about choppers than they do now, if you can believe it! I remember you had to have at least 5" minimum ground clearance. Tombstone taillights were illegal and the law even went so far as to state that the surface of the taillight had to have at least 6 or 8 square inches of reflective area. Headlights, exhausts, handlebars, front brakes, fenders and especially front ends were all issues."

"Is that where ya met Bobbi? I know she's from California."

"Yup. Met her in LA in '81 and decided to keep 'er. She worked for Touring Bike Publishing Company in the early 70's and was one of the first state reps for Harley Woman Magazine. She started dirt riding when she was a kid and we both had a LOT of bikes until '83 when I got a new Tour Glide. She started street riding in '84 when I got her a '71 Sporty

XLCH. I gently laid it down in our front yard and told her if she could pick it up and kick start it, it was hers. Before I could even pour myself a cup of coffee I heard that old Sportster haulin' ass down the road! Then we moved to Boulder, Colorado in '92. Had a hard time leavin' there! Well, you said you've been there. I'm sure you understand. Anyway, we moved back to Ohio in '98 and next she got her '02 Superglide. Now she has the '05 Softail Deluxe and I have the '00 Road King. Ya know, this is kinda weird being asked questions for a magazine! Usually I'm the one doing the asking!"

"Well I thought it would be cool to ask a few questions of one of you old timers, one of our founding fathers so to speak."

Buffalo just gave me the finger. Ya know after all these years I STILL don't know what the Hell that means!

Some time ago Deeter, our regional director, appointed me the unofficial historian of our region, probably because I have an interest in the somewhat confusing tale of how we've evolved as both a region and as a state motorcyclists rights organization [MRO]. One thing I've noticed over the years is that many people who were valuable members have opted to let go perhaps because they've become frustrated with things or because they've simply become burned out in their enthusiasm. We need to connect with these people and not only recognize their past contributions, but utilize their experience. Though many things have changed in the way we conduct buisness [sometimes out of necessity] we still NEED these former members to remind us of who we are and what we should or should not be doing. Like I've said in the past, I miss the old days when we could have an event in some farmer's field with a flatbed trailer for a stage and a garden hose for a shower. But due to legality, we now need all the permits, zoning approval and code compliances that are required and sometimes a lot of the actual FUN gets taken out of things.

Next time somebody says to ya, "I used to be a member way back when.", urge that person to get back into ABATE and tell 'em that we need them. There's no argument that we need everyone we can get, but these veterans are especially important. ABATE is one of the few organizations where it simply doesn't matter what age you are, what kind of bike ya ride, how ya ride [street, dirt, racing or touring], what kind of music ya listen to, whether yer born again, republican, democrat, ethnic, vegetarian or even kinky [did I just say that out loud?]. We need to get our collective asses in gear people and start growing as an organization or pretty soon the politically correct majority will be deciding how ya ride, what ya ride and even IF ya ride.

With the tremendous growth of motorcycling in recent years there's absolutely no excuse for our not expanding our numbers to the point that we have literally tens of thousands on our state roster! It's such a no brainer that every biker we see on the road should want to join our ranks, that I'm at a loss to understand the reason why we aren't flourishing. If every one of us took it upon ourselves to sell this organization, the thousands would rapidly turn into the tens of thousands. Our MOST valuable resource for getting new members is YOU the individual. Hell, if you don't wanna talk 'em into it then have them call me, Bummer at 330 872 1198 any time before midnight and I'll give it a shot! Now THAT'S called puting yerself on the front line! Help yourselves out here a little people!! [Note: Curly, I said BEFORE midnight!]

Way back in '72 Rogue and the others who formed the NCCA did so to battle the anti chopper factions that were so abundant in California. The NCCA actually hired engineers to blueprint and safety test a few of the bikes that custom bike builders manufactured to prove that a raked neck, an extended front end and a custom frame wasn't the dangerous highway hazard that the government claimed they were. Once they accomplished that astonishing feat they became ABATE and moved on to our other issues. In memory of what they started and accomplished let's not let the ball drop now. Our work will never be done as long as there are those who think they know what's best for everyone else....In other words, we'll be busy for a long long time.

See ya next month,

**Bummer**