

Shootin' the Breeze



by Bummer

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I have a good friend from Dayton named Vicki Billhimer. She's a pipefitter and rides her own dresser. She's also an ABATE member and told me how active in ABATE the Dayton area is. THAT brought to mind that my son Ben is also from Dayton and is a new member. He's looking to become active down there and thanks to Vicki I can hook him up. [Why did I say 'DOWN there'? Man, I'm not just asking myself questions now, I'm writing them to myself!! C'mon Spring!]

Although all our chapters TRY to offer what they can for their members, many are at a loss due to what they assume is an unsupportive membership. If that's the case in your chapter, just remember that like any other relationship, whether it's a working partnership, a marriage or yes, a local ABATE chapter, it's all in what you make of it. One of the problems might be simply finding out exactly WHAT it takes to get people active and motivated....what they need and want. Taking care of the buisness end of things after that is relatively simple, if ya have the experience. To get this experience we of ABATE of Ohio have had for many years, a state seminar at the beginning of each calender year to educate the new officers in the ways this organization works and how to perform tasks like holding meetings, having events and all of the many other things ABATE needs to run efficiently.

Unfotunately this is the first year in many years that this is not gonna happen due to budget cuts. Perhaps something can be done down the road, but for now it's been declared that the seminar just isn't feasible. Speaking for myself, I'm gonna miss seeing old friends and seeing just how much we can trash a motel over a weekend! [just kidding....we're not THAT bad.] For now, all you can do is utilize your officers to the best of THEIR ability. As a member, if ya have a problem with any aspect of ABATE contact your officers and bring it to their attention. If you ARE an officer and have any problems whatsoever, contact either your regional director or the state office if necessary. Keep the faith people, and we'll ride this money nonsense out just like we always have in the past, enabling us to do the good work we're known nationally for. Hell, just in the past few months we've made a very considerable impact on a very important house bill [406] that could have been a lot worse without our efforts, and is far from done. We're making progress and we ARE effective, and we're not goin' away!

Now, enough of all that! Speaking of progress.....

I was talkin' to my friend Pappy about social and cultural progress, and all the things that he's seen come down the road over the years...

"You have a computer there at 'The Home' Pappy?"

"Yup. Most of us just use it for fun though.. But Myron lost his privileges lookin' at porn."

"What do YOU do with it?"

"Well, not too much now that Myron got busted."

I laughed and got him some more coffee.

"What do you think are some of the most important advances made since you were born? What are the biggest changes? You were born in 1916, right?"

"Yup....Well, I don't remember much of anything before 1920 of course, but I remember a lot of folks didn't have electricity out in the sticks. My aunt and uncle had a farm in New York state and just used kerosine lamps for light and a wood burning stove for cooking and heat.

"My folks lived in a town right outside of Pittsburg so we had electricity. I remember sitting around the radio and listening to all the different programs in the evenings. My favorite was Andy Hardy, but The Shadow was another good one."

"What did your dad do for a living?"

"He was a cooper. Made barrels for the breweries. Of course they also made barrels for a lot of other things, but the brewery barrels and winery casks were the ones that had to be made airtight and were the ones that required a cooper....that was considered a highly trained skill back then. When they enacted the Volstead Act and the country went dry he got out of that and became a truck driver.

"We were one of the first on our block to get a car. It was a Ford Model T of course. That was the only car most people could afford. Everyone from the milkman to the police got cars eventually, but I do remember horses pulling wagons in the street when I was little."

"So you remember the Roaring Twenties?"

"Oh yeah! I remember Al Capone was in the papers all the time. And Lindberg's trans Atlantic flight."

"Do you remember Orson Welle's 'War of the Worlds' broadcast?"

"Indeed I do! It was Halloween, 1938. I was stayin' at the farm with my uncle and aunt again in New York state. I did that off and on. I remember they had just put electricity in to the house that year. One of the first gadgets they bought was a big consol radio outta the Sears catalogue.

"Me and my uncle were workin' in the barn and my aunt came running out all excited 'bout something she heard on the radio. She was all google eyed and jabberin' some nonsense about how something 'landed' in New Jersey and she just about drug us back into the house to listen. At first I thought she was goin' INSANE, but I started getting worried when I heard people were gettin' in their cars and leaving New Jersey! EVERYBODY was goin' bonkers! I seemed to be surrounded by a whole world of crazy people!! We piled into the car and headed for town and everyone was milling around the town square with shotguns and rifles. Finally it was broadcast over the radio that it was all just a big put on for Halloween! I bet Orson Welles was getting kinda worried when they started talkin' about bringing him up on charges for creating a national panic!! Nowadays people just don't get too excited about things. Things were bigger then Bummer."

"What do ya mean bigger?"

"When 9/11 happened it roused everyone up of course, but back in MY time it seemed that almost everyday something happened that was remarkable. That's why so many people could believe the Martians were comin'. BIG things were goin' on. I remember hearing of the Hindenberg exploding and burning at Lakehurst. Of Hitler gaining more and more power in Europe. New records were set for speed and anything else you can think of. Every time you used to read a newspaper there was something incredible happening. But now, people don't hardly notice even when something big DOES happen, like men going to outer space again, or when a third world country is overthrown. The funny thing is the things most people DO get excited about nowadays is stupid stuff. Like who was wearing what at the Oscars or something happening on a TV show. People don't even pay attention to the really important things."

"Like what?"

"Oh, I dunno....Like new inventions. For instance I know they have a camera the size of a small capsule that you can swallow. It takes pictures of yer insides and ya poop it out! Then they can get a better idea of yer guts and stuff. I find stuff like that kinda incredible! Some of our advances are mind boggling!! But most people don't even pay attention to things like that. They care more about dumb stuff like new video game technology than they do about new inventions. And though everyone uses this new technology, do they really understand it? Like, do they understand even the everyday common stuff, like how a microwave or even a TV set works? Most people don't even understand the principles of radio transmission and reception, and THAT'S been around for over a century now. In MY day people were so amazed at anything new they WANTED to understand it. Every block had an amateur TV or radio repairman. Now they just chalk it off as being incomprehensible and move on. They're bored with mysteries probably because EVERYTHING is a mystery to 'em. The really sad thing is that though they can USE all this technology, they can't understand it. But at the same time they can't even do the simple stuff that people of MY time could, like everyday living without modern conveniences. Throw a bunch of people on an island and they'll never figure out how to generate electricity, though they've used it all their lives! Or would they even know how to make a sanitary latrine or store meat that they've hunted? It puts 'em all at a disadvantage if this technical world of theirs should ever break down. Hell, the only ones who would survive are the Amish!!"

"Ya mean we've become slaves to our own technology?"

"Exactly. In my day if something broke ya knew how to fix it, or could easily find someone who could for a reasonable fee. Nowadays people just throw it away and go buy another 'cause most things ain't WORTH fixing because buying a new one is cheaper."

As I listened I flashed back to the fact that everyday things like writing pens, cigarette lighters and even diapers were reusable when I was a kid. Disposable things like paper cups and straws were made out of biodegradable paper before anybody ever heard the WORD biodegradable. And the standard container for most liquids from soda to milk was a glass returnable and reusable bottle. NOTHING was tossed out that couldn't rot or rust away....now EVERYTHING is, simply because corporations don't CARE if it takes a gazillion years for plastic to disappear. It costs them WAY less to make a plastic jug than to clean and reuse a glass one. But since plastic is made from petroleum, and THAT is so expensive, why do they still keep doing things this way? Wouldn't it be better AND cheaper in the long run to maybe return to SOME of the old ways?

Later on in the evening I took him home and on my way back to my place I couldn't shake a longing for times past. We live in a time of genuine wonder....a time when so much is possible. I just hope that future generations get it all together and don't look back on our time as the age of waste and stupidity.

Bummer