



NCOM REGION 1 MEETING

Maybe it's time

High water can't keep activists away

by Irish McKinney

PORTLAND, ORE., OCT. 17—It was raining. Not little drops, but big, fat monsoon drops. The driveway was full of standing water and couldn't get any fuller. But I had committed to doing this thing and wasn't about to back out. We were going to Portland for the Region 1 National Coalition of Motorcyclists (NCOM) meeting and seminar, and come hell or high water, we were riding. It looked like we were going to get the high water.

I actually had on all the rain gear that I usually just roll up and tuck into a corner ('cause if you have it, you don't need it) and left a little early so I could take my time in getting to the pack-up point at The Gimp's in Puyallup. The rest of the crew would be Jaybird and Mikey; all of the rest of them being members of the Rebels, and me just being a friend they liked to drag along to this kind of stuff. Once I hit the road, it became apparent that no matter how fast or slow I went, I was going to get wet; so I might as well get it on and get where I'm going... which I did.

By the time I hit The Gimp's, the rain had let up some and I had enough time to dry a little and loosen up before the rest of the guys got there. It was pretty warm for a wet day, so cold wasn't much of an issue. When we rolled out I thought we would turn left and head up the hill for Highway 512 and skirt around Tacoma, but instead we went right out to River Road where we would catch I-5 right in the middle of the downtown Tacoma mess—Gimp was Big Dog today, this was his territory and he knew best.

As we got on River Road it was Gimp in the Big Dog position with Mikey as wing man, me behind Gimp and Jaybird beside me. Traffic was fair, but seemed to be moving well. As always, you do this scan up and back; there was this pickup truck crossing traffic at a place and in a

way that just shouldn't be. I slowed and looked for outs. The Gimp starts to move left toward center lane and so does the vehicle in front of him. Gimp hits his brakes and starts to slide. He compensates and goes sideways. I see him whip the bars around and his Road King does a 180 the other direction—



Rankin Johnson, attorney with Oregon A.I.M., gave advice on roadside encounters with law enforcement

he's broadside to me now. I hear someone yelling "Stay up... Stay up... Stay up" and realize it's me. I've been mentally holding him up. He finally comes to a stop. We all take a breath and ride around the accident that caused all this. The Gimp later shows me the bruises on his belly caused by his bars hitting him as he compensated for the slide.

I-5 is stop and go until we pass Ft. Lewis and the rains come again in Olympia. At one point the water on the road is so bad, Jaybird's bike starts sputtering. Luckily we're coming to a rest stop and I follow him in. The Gimp and Mikey don't know we're gone. We sit in the rest stop in ankle-high water as Jaybird runs his bike. Eventually it smooths out and we catch up to the other two by the side of the road near Centralia. I lag back so I can hear what Jaybird's bike is doing and eventually we roll into the hotel in Portland.

We pair up for rooms and I draw Jaybird. We end up on the eighth floor just a few doors down from the



Mikey, Irish, Gimp, and Jaybird, ready for a rainy ride

hospitality suite, where we spent much of the evening, meeting and greeting. It

ended up being a fairly early evening, because we knew the following day would be long and filled with information.

In the morning it takes forever to get breakfast and we miss the symbolic ride in from the first rest stop north of the Columbia River on I-5 in Washington State to the hotel, which is the first exit south of the river in Oregon off I-205. But, the important part of the day will take place in a windowless room where we have no idea about the weather outside.

Sarge brought us to order and after the Pledge of Allegiance and blessing, introduced "Doc" Reichenbach from Florida, a nationally known motorcycle rights activist, lobbyist and president of ABATE of Florida. Doc's message of involvement and activism, presented in an off-the-cuff manner, said in a nutshell, get to know your legislators and lawmakers. When issues come up that affect you, be the one they come to, to educate themselves. Don't just vote, become involved.

"Doc" Reichenbach was followed by Attorney Rankin Johnson, an Oregon A.I.M. lawyer, speaking and taking questions on legal issues of the road. The ongoing theme of his presentation being, keep your mouth shut and don't give consent. What you do on the side of the road can affect everything that comes after. Being courteous (as opposed to aggressive) does not mean you should give up your rights as a citizen, and asserting

your rights does not mean you have something to hide.

After the lunch break Professor Jim Hernandez led a rather scholarly discussion on the Federal Gang Bill and how that issue has grown from an initial attempt to control Los Angeles street violence to being used to profile group associations at all municipal levels. While the discussion was one more of social than legal impact, it gave a glimpse into potential future repercussions if the issue was not addressed.

The final presentation before the afternoon break was Sam Hochberg, Oregon A.I.M. attorney, on the status of the Federal case against the Mongols Motorcycle Club and the attendant trademark seizure. Progress is being made. As with all things judicial, it just takes time.

The rest of the afternoon was taken up with region-specific reports: the regional NCOM meeting co-chaired by Chris Dulas and Jeff Rabe, a presentation of the Washington Defenders program by the Lieutenant Commander of the program Lucky Les of the Bandidos MC, Confederation of Clubs regional meeting chaired by Ol' Poop of the Outsiders MC and a Christian Unity Seminar to finish the formalities of the day.

The evening finished with much lively discussion throughout the hotel, and regardless of how heated that discussion got, that is what it stayed—discussion. We came from all over the Northwest to share common concerns, the ride to get there was wet, the material at times dry, but the need to come together inarguable. Regardless of backgrounds, there is a common cause, and maybe it's time. ♣



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