

June 19, 2015

Heartland STEAM Report

Thursday morning, May 7, I left town bright and early; maybe not so bright, it was cloudy...and pretty cool. I rode all day in cool and even had rain gear and long johns on for part of the trip; it was snowing in Bozeman. In Billings I meet up with Paul and Susan Reiss to stay with old friends, the Mclauphlins.

The next day, Friday, I had just about as far to go to Bismarck, ND so was on the road early again. It was still cool out but I rode without event into the Ramada in the afternoon. As I was checking in, Jiggs Cressy, ABATE of South Dakota Coordinator and friend, came up behind me and said, "I can't believe you rode." I said, "You didn't?" He said, "Have you seen the weather report?" I said, "Oh, shit!" I kept my eye on the weather every time I had a chance.

After registering, I went in to view the auction items and get acquainted. We brought along some items for their silent auction and I wanted to make sure they were on display. We brought gifts from N ID: a Buck knife, a huckleberry gift set and ABATE of N ID t-shirts. I told them if ASI shows up they will bring a bag of potatoes but our stuff is made in North Idaho! I can't over-emphasize how well we were welcomed to ABATE of North Dakota.

The general session started at 7 with an address from Hardtail Willard, President of the MRF. He addressed: Losing Numbers (members) and asked; Do we have control? Do we really speak for riders? Loss of Focus; Don't erode our mission with trivial issues. Quit eating our own. The MRF's #1 focus is Crash Prevention: if we don't crash, they have nothing to fight us with. He said it's about Brotherhood and Sisterhood. "Our organizations will be as strong as our actions allow them to be."

This was followed by a panel discussion of alternate vehicles like the Polaris Slingshot and the Elio, etc. North Dakota has already tackled this and named these Unconventional Vehicles.

The State of the States messages followed and they asked Idaho to go first. I spoke about Idaho's alternate vehicle discussion and that at this time we are calling them Motorized Vehicles and will be writing new transportation code for the next session. I also mentioned our new temporary permit legislation. We were followed by Minnesota: motorcycle specialty plates w/a safety message and allowing 4 headlights on a motorcycle; Wisconsin also is working to get 4 headlights legal, alternate vehicle legislation, black box legislation and right of way legislation. They told us they have great relationships with their legislatures; Illinois: alternate vehicle/insurance policy confusion, they killed ethanol bills and are working on poker run and lane splitting laws; South Dakota: the heroes of the event because ABATE was able to change the handlebar height restrictions, is working on electric bikes, bike rental issues, perceptions of others (non-riders); Iowa: motorcycle safety testing and they were visited by Norway so that country could get an idea how to run grass-roots lobbying efforts; North Dakota has 2000 ABATE members; beehives close to roadways and share the road issues. They also run their states' motorcycle safety program and have a healthy relationship with their transportation dept. They send postcards to all 37,000 riders in their state; Nebraska: almost every state legislator they supported got elected, they are fighting their helmet law and their membership is improving.

Saturday started with a presentation of colors by the Vietnam Legacy Vets. The first half of the day was spent with Dick "Slider" Gilmore who presented "The Diabetic Rider." This was outstanding.

We also heard from the National Motorists Assn. Foundation who deal with issues about roads, bridges, property rights and much more. They can be seen @ motorists.org.

We heard from Jeff Hennie, VP of Government Relations, MRF. He talked about motorcycle-only checkpoints, ethanol, black box (whose property is it?), telematics (smart vehicles and smart roadways), highway bill (probably will include a gas tax), auto cycles, Governor's Highway Safety Assn.-our number 1 enemy, Fatality Accident Reporting System FARS, motorcycle safety \$, MSF safety study, road design, Driver Privacy Act, EPA-noise issues a much smaller issue now, 2014 elections, and Bikers in the Beltway-the MRF's legislative day.

I attended a breakout session titled Crisis and the Media, Managing One Means Managing Both. Marci Narum, the presenter, talked about managing before a crisis by creating and maintaining relationships with the media through a reporter. She talked about managing during a crisis and now to deal with the media-what you should and should not do. She also talked about managing after a crisis with follow up and continuing to foster the relationships through communication and transparency. She asked us not to forget; "The story is the reporter's masterpiece. Handle things directly and handle them with care." This was a very good session and I have more notes and information from Marci available.

I attended a breakout session on Leadership presented by Dave "Chubby" Charlebois, Executive Director of ABATE of Wisconsin. ABATE of WI has 7000 members in 36 regions (chapters to us). He talked about what makes an effective leader and how the skills needed relate to working with groups within our organizations and our daily life. This was an outstanding session.

We then got a real treat: an address and question and answer session with U. S. Senator John Hoeven, former governor of ND for 10 years. What a guy and what a great representative for that state! We left this session wishing he was our guy. In a sense he is because he is on Capitol Hill and he represents and listens to motorcyclists well.

The day was wrapped up with a banquet and live entertainment from a guy I can only describe as "Unique" (with a capitol U), Mylo Hatzenbuhler, "The Strasburg Superstar." He had me in stitches. They presented the silent auction winners and help a live auction for the MRF.

I was back to watching the weather before I went to bed and hoping I could get out on Sunday morning. I geared up and bundled up and hit the road early in a spitting drizzle but was out of it before 10 miles. I got back to Billings without event and home the next day to some actual hot weather. What a great trip and what great experience! I hope to repeat this STEAM event again. Thank you ANI for your support.

Respectfully submitted,

Dan Ertz

Coordinator, ABATE of North Idaho.