

Willie Stephenson

A native of north Idaho, Willie became interested in motorcycles and dirt bike riding while still in grade school and the motorcycling affliction has progressed to currently spending time, when available, riding around the northwest on a 2003 *Road King Classic*. Interest in the motorcycle rights movement became more of a center piece in life after spending many years following and reading about it in various popular "chopper" magazines of the day.

Becoming an *ABATE of Washington, Spokane Chapter* member in the late 80's and soon realizing that something similar would be beneficial to Idaho riders, Willie began work with much help and encouragement from chapter members, researching and gauging interest from north Idaho motorcyclists to determine the feasibility of starting such a motorcycle rights organization (MRO) in Idaho. With a handful of close friends and much hard work in 1989 *Kootenai District, ABATE of Idaho* was born. *Kootenai District* encompassed most of north Idaho at the time and Willie served as its first and only President.

After much growth and even more hard work and effort by those involved, *Kootenai District* became *ABATE of North Idaho, Inc.* in 1993. As a co-founder Willie also served as its State Coordinator until stepping back from the forefront retiring in 1996. Time, a continued involvement and membership in state and national MRO's gave Willie a deeper understanding and appreciation for the serious nature of the work and sacrifices required to succeed in the business of "protecting and preserving one's rights". While having the privilege of working alongside, meeting and observing talented and dedicated people it soon became very clear that, though certainly fun, one's rights were not protected by merely staging parties, riding in parades or frequenting social events but through many, many long hours of tireless, sometimes difficult and, in many cases, thankless work.

After assuming a more active role again in recent years and serving as *ABATE of North Idaho's* Budget/Finance and By-law Committee Chairman as well as State Webmaster, work began to make a reality the goal of many years ago of having an ABATE chapter in the Post Falls/Stateline area near Spokane, WA. Anxious to once again return to the original principles, priorities and values of years past with the tremendous help and support of dedicated friends and colleagues, including *all* of the original incorporators of *ABATE of North Idaho, River City Chapter* became a reality. Willie is currently serving as the Coordinator, Safety & Education Committee Chairman and Webmaster of this small but active chapter.

Understanding that issues affecting and of concern to motorcyclists were becoming increasingly influenced by those outside the borders of Idaho, as well, Willie has long supported the *National Coalition of Motorcyclists* (NCOM), became a charter member of the *Motorcycle Riders Foundation* (MRF) and also works closely with the *American Motorcyclists Association* (AMA) and currently serves as an *AMA* Field Representative for District 24 which covers Idaho and Montana.

The ever growing importance of understanding and involvement in the legislative process by motorcyclists at the state and federal level in addition to the ever increasing safety issues and concerns facing motorcyclists today has created a need for *BikePAC of Idaho*. Willie considers it a privilege to serve with its current Board Members and is committed to working in the service of Idaho motorcyclists through *BikePAC of Idaho* as long as both wish him to do so.