



FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CEO THE 1990s: CLOUDS ON THE HORIZON

BY ROB DINGMAN

As we have been chronicling the history of the AMA (and some of the high points of motorcycling) decade by decade over the last handful of months, I have learned a great deal about the history of our organization. We have now reached the decade to which I can most relate, the 1990s, as it is during that decade that I first became involved with the AMA.

I first became aware of the AMA when I joined the government relations staff of the Motorcycle Industry Council (MIC) in 1990. It was during my initial year on that job that I first traveled from the Washington, D.C., area to the AMA's headquarters, then in Westerville, Ohio, to meet the AMA's



Rasor noticed the job I did on behalf of the off-highway vehicle community in this effort, and as part of a departmental restructuring in 1994, he asked me to join the AMA's government relations staff as Washington representative. And so it was 30 years ago, shortly before I came to work for the AMA, that I first joined the Association as a member in 1994.

New York for an opportunity in state government, I continued to maintain my AMA membership, as I was still an avid motorcyclist and continued to firmly believe in the need for a strong AMA.

For the rest of the 1990s and into the next decade (which we'll cover in these pages in next month's edition), I continued to advocate for motorcyclists in my position with New York State. I oversaw the implementation of the then-newly-legislated state motorcycle safety program, and facilitated the issuance of custom picture license plates for motorcycles, including an AMA-themed license plate featuring the AMA logo that's still available today. Prior to my involvement, custom picture plates were only available for cars — and not for motorcycles.

I would return to the AMA staff in the fall of 2006 as AMA president, and would become president and CEO in the spring of 2007. What I found upon my return was an organization in a bit of crisis, one borne of good intentions but also a mix of misguided planning and over-confident execution on the Pro Racing side of things during the 1990s — which you can read more about on pages 46-47.

That, however, is a story for another column next month about the first decade of the new millennium.

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This was the first time that I met 2024 AMA Motorcycle Hall of Fame Inductee Rob Rasor, who was then serving as the AMA's vice president for government relations. Over the next nearly five years I would have the opportunity to work closely with Rasor and his staff on a range of issues for the benefit of motorcyclists.

In my role with the MIC, my focus was on land use issues. I ultimately became involved in and played a key role in the effort to enact what was then called the National Recreational Trails Fund Act, now known as the Recreational Trails Program. I also co-founded the Coalition for Recreational Trails, which still exists today, to advocate for the Recreational Trails Program and increased funding for it.

I thoroughly enjoyed representing the AMA in our nation's capital. It was during that time that I came to understand the power of the AMA as a grassroots organization, and how critically important the organization is to protecting the future of motorcycling.

I must confess that since I worked out of the AMA's Washington, D.C., office and would only travel periodically to the home office in Ohio, I was only tangentially aware of the many and varied facets of the AMA. My work for the AMA then was primarily in the area of rights and advocacy, and I consequently had limited exposure to racing and therefore the many racing controversies whose origins can be traced back to the decade of the 1990s.

Although I left the AMA staff in 1998 to return to my home state of

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