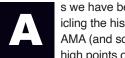


FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CEO

THE 1990s: CLOUDS ON THE HORIZON

BY ROB DINGMAN



s we have been chronicling the history of the AMA (and some of the high points of motorcy-

cling) 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.

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 ON THE PRO-RACING SIDE...

government relations staff.

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

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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