

## MILE MARKERS

Change Often Starts Small



By Rob Dingman

The subject of this issue's cover story, stuntwoman and Hall of Famer Debbie Evans, played a significant role in the creation of the Motorcycle Hall of Fame exhibit we enjoy today on the campus of the AMA.

The funny thing is that she probably doesn't realize it.

Shortly after I became AMA president, Debbie was on hand for the dedication of a previous exhibit called "MotoStars: Celebrities + Motorcycles," a collection of motorcycles associated with a wide variety of famous

people. Debbie was kind enough to loan us some bikes from her collection for the exhibit.

While at the event, Debbie wanted to have her picture taken in front of her Hall of Fame plaque with her friend, actor and current AMA Board member Perry King. I was happy to oblige, and I took Debbie's camera to get the shot for her. At the time, the Hall of Fame existed in a small section on the bottom floor of the building.

Debbie's plaque was Velcroed about 2 feet off the ground to a carpeted wall alongside other plaques honoring Hall of Famers. I had to climb over a barricade protecting the bikes in the exhibit, wedge myself between two bikes, squat down and invite Perry and Debbie to do the same so that I could get the two of them and her plaque in the shot.

To say that this was an embarrassing situation would be a big understatement. From that moment, I knew we had to elevate this remarkable resource—both figuratively and literally—to the main exhibit hall of the Museum where it now resides.

The Hall of Fame exhibit as it exists today is a major step forward. Over the years, the main exhibit hall of the Museum has hosted some terrific exhibits, from "A Century of Indian," to "Heroes of Harley-Davidson," to "Motocross America." Now, fittingly, the Museum's entire main floor pays tribute to the men and women who built the foundation upon which motorcycling now stands.

Another positive change is taking place at the American Motorcycle Heritage Foundation (AMHF). As you know, the AMHF was established nearly 30 years ago to raise money for the Museum. For years, the Foundation Board of Directors operated as a governing body, not always in sync with the wishes of the AMA Board. These days, thanks to its members' vision, hard work and dedication, the AMHF Board is doing truly impressive work and now functions as the fundraising body it should be.

One area of success brought about by the AMHF's renewed focus is a significantly enhanced annual Hall of Fame induction ceremony. It's now a part of the AMA Visa Card from Capital One Legends & Champions Weekend—which also includes the Motorcycle Hall of Fame Dave Mungenast Memorial Concours d'Elegance and the AMA Visa Card Racing Championship Banquet—taking place Nov. 18-20 in Las Vegas, Nev.

Where the ceremony was once held in a tent outside the Museum, the gala weekend event now attracts icons from the sport, lifestyle and business of motorcycling—and hundreds of fans—every year to bear witness to the induction of some of the



greatest contributors to motorcycling. Today, the ceremony is befitting of the achievements commensurate with induction into the Motorcycle Hall of Fame.

Just as the Hall of Fame has changed for the better, there are several ways the AMA has seen positive change. Most notable among them is the Association's re-dedication to its mission of advocacy and the dedication of greater resources to that effort. With the recent passage of legislation to fix the "lead law"—a ridiculous federal law that banned the sale of youth-model motorcycles and ATVs—we demonstrated that the AMA represents a powerful grassroots force that can protect motorcycling.

AMA Board Chairman Stan Simpson frequently talks about the potential for what he calls a "meteor strike"—governmental action that would devastate motorcycling. The lead law could have been that meteor strike. If kids weren't able to enjoy riding motorcycles, and grow up to become both off-road and street riders, the loss of an entire generation of motorcyclists would have been a crushing blow. This misguided law had the potential to negatively impact both road and off-road motorcycling because so many street riders got their start in the dirt.

Make no mistake, getting out from under the lead law was a major legislative victory, and your efforts played a significant role in making that happen. If you doubt that, consider one simple fact: There were many industries that spent millions of dollars in an attempt to get out from under provisions of the lead law, and the only categorical exemption granted was for motorcycles and ATVs.

In the end, other industries were trying to piggyback onto the support you had generated in Congress for fixing this dumb law.

The improvements in our government relations capabilities are beginning to snowball. Over the last few years, we have been able to attract some very talented staff to our Government Relations Department, including the most recent addition, former two-term U.S. Senator Wayne Allard. Sen. Allard now heads up our effort as vice president for government relations.

Many of the recent improvements at the AMA have largely been behind-the-scenes. In the same manner as that chance realization that started with Debbie Evans and resulted in an enhanced Motorcycle Hall of Fame, these kinds of changes tend to go unnoticed until they bear fruit.

During my tenure at the AMA, it has been my strongest desire to continue to strengthen and improve this organization. There's no question that there is a long road ahead of us, but mile markers such as these are clear indications that progress is being made.