



Man's Best Friend... and Visa Versa...

The unmistakable man with the white beard and even whiter husky riding on the front of his Harley Davidson is still making waves in LA, more than 30 years after he first came to

town. His name is Jeremiah Gerbracht and he moved to Los Angeles in 1977 with his first dog, Jenny—who was able to break into Hollywood because of her impressive ability to climb trees. According to Gerbracht, she was also the first dog considered for television's "Bionic Dog."

Gerbracht is also an actor, but since he got his first ticket for riding with his dog on his motorcycle, he's been fighting for the rights of the disabled. "I'm a firm, no-nonsense advocate for the disabled with service animals," Gerbracht

says proudly. "They've been around for over 40 years. It's shocking how many businesses don't know [anything] beyond guide dogs for the blind."

Gerbracht says he fits into that group of disabled people with service animals because he is hearing impaired. He needs a dog to hear police sirens while on the road. When his canine gives him a nod of his head, Gerbracht knows that an emergency vehicle is coming and he needs to move to the side of the road.

Since the mid-1990s, he has made it his mission to challenge anyone looking to infringe upon his right to carry his service dog on the front of his bike or into any business. He's a lifetime member of the American Brotherhood Aimed Towards Education (ABATE), a group that advocates against leg-



islative actions that he says takes away people's choices.

"We believe in educating people about the rules of the road," Gerbracht says. "We are instrumental in fighting things like the helmet law and we are firm believers in freedom of choice."

It was this resounding belief in individual choice that helped him take on the LAPD...and win. Gerbracht says he was cited eight times for riding with his dog on his Harley, but he knew it wasn't a crime. Each time he took it to court and had the case thrown out. Eventually he got the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) to approve him for driving with a dog.

Now, his biggest problem is getting into restaurants and other businesses with his new dog, Sir Davidson. He says that one of the main mistakes law enforcement and business owners make is believing all service animals must always wear a vest.

"That's optional for two reasons," says Gerbracht. "One, it makes that person a target. If he's walking a dog, and the dog has a vest on, someone will rob that person with one hand and cut the dog with the other. The other reason is that if a person's disability is not visible, when others

see that vest on their dog they constantly stare at that person trying to figure out what that disability is."

Gerbracht has racked up quite a few lawsuits against businesses that refuse to serve him as long as his dog is present. There's even a flyer being passed around to local establishments warning them of lawsuits like his that can cost their business hundreds of thousands of dollars. But Gerbracht says it isn't about the money.

"When I take them to court," he says, "they pay attention to the issue." ●

— Editorial Contributor
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