

Blue Knights Motorcycle Club

Changing the image

By LINDA KIRBY
Champion Reporter

Motorcycles are something Sgt. Tom Sinkovich practically grew up with in his hometown of Vienna, Austria.

The Halton Regional Police sergeant, who is president of the local chapter of Blue Knights Motorcycle Club, estimates he has been riding bikes for about 30 years.

When he joined the Metro Toronto Police Force, he was assigned to the motorcycle unit and for seven years was a full-time riding officer.

He later joined the Halton force, and that spelled an end to his career on a bike.

It was his son Wolfe who got him back into the seat of a bike almost 13 years after he had stopped riding and encouraged him to purchase his current 750 BMW.

"My son got one and said, 'Dad why don't you buy a bike as well,'" he said.

"I guess it is in your blood, because that is exactly what I did."

He joined the Blue Knights several years ago to become involved in the fellowship and to help promote a better image for bikers, he said.

He feels the club can be instrumental in creating better public relations with the public.

"I would like to see the attitude change that only unsavory types ride motorcycles," he said.

"The most important part of our club is the community involvement," according to Louis Agostino, treasurer of the local chapter and a Milton officer with the Halton Regional Police force.

"Any group that needs our help—we are there," he said.

A non-profit organization, the Blue Knights volunteer their bikes and manpower to assist with parades, walk-a-thons, bike-a-thons and various rallies.

"The public is welcome to come on a ride with us, as well," he said.

Members offer this opportunity to citizens not only to provide a ride on a bike, but also to demonstrate the proper method of riding motorcycles.

"Too many do not realize that a machine that can be a lot of fun can also be a tragedy if not properly handled," he said.

Members are concerned enough about safety that they will, on occasion, stop another biker if they feel the driver is being careless or negligent.

"I joined the Blue Knights a year ago because of the work they do and the fact they were doing something for the community," said the 25-year-old officer.

He and his wife, Elaine, both enjoy riding their Honda 750 (10th Anniversary Special Edition), but the arrival of their son Ryan has meant fewer outings for the couple.

To say that Ray and Shirley Walsh of rural Milton enjoy travelling is an understatement.

The couple, who own a motorhome in addition to their car and motorcycle, love to travel.

But, more recently it has been touring via their Honda Goldwing.

Although Ray Walsh, a parking by-law officer in Oakville, rode bikes many years ago (he owned a 1949 Royal Infield 500) he had given up riding until recently.

Two years ago they bought their bike and joined the Blue Knights. Today they travel Canada and the United States on it, along with their steady companion, family pet dog Tammy.

"You meet a great group of people," said Shirley, referring to Blue Knights' gatherings and meetings.

The couple were among 700 people to attend the 1982 Blue Knights Convention in Windsor last month.

Rob and Pat Appleby of Oakville met through their love of bikes over a year ago.

Pat, a "meter maid" in Oakville, has been riding motorcycles for the past eight years.

It all began, she recalled, "when I bought a moped that just didn't go fast enough."

For husband Rob, the joy of riding comes from the feeling of the wind in your face and the sense of power.

"There is a certain feeling of freedom riding on a bike," he said.

There may not be as many women bikers in the organization as there are men, but the number is

growing.

His wife is one of those who has graduated to larger bikes over the years and where affordable, many husbands and wives have their own bikes.

"You notice a lot more women riding these days and they aren't riding mopeds, they are taking to larger bikes."

Bill Norman, a 62-year-old auxiliary inspector with St. Catharines OPP, is perhaps one of the most devoted bikers in the local chapter.

He had been riding on and off for about 45 years (most of it done during his army days, he said) but only recently decided to get back into it.

"It just seemed the natural way to go to join this club," he said with reference to the Blue Knights.

He likes the social gatherings, the rides and he enjoys assisting with various charity activities.

Recently, he took part in a parade of "retreads" (bikers over the age of 45 years) and there were no less than 100 who turned out to take part.

Individuals wishing more information on the Blue Knights or interested in joining should write to: Blue Knights, Box 104, Oakville, Ontario.

Knights help handicapped

By LINDA KIRBY
Champion Reporter

The Blue Knights Club was formed less than 10 years ago when a policeman by the name of Ed Gallant from Brewer, Maine, decided it was time to clean up the image of motorcycle riders.

Known as the father of the Blue Knights, he met with several fellow bikers one evening in a restaurant called The Black Knight.

The result of that meeting in 1974 was the organization of The Blue Knights Law Enforcement Officers Motorcycle club.

Today, the American-based group, which boasts a membership of 5,196, has 127 chapters across the United States and Canada.

There are 23 chapters in Canada alone and new chapters are being established in Switzerland, Germany and France—making the organization the only international bikers' club of its kind.

But, these are not just bikers who enjoy cruising the highways and showing off their sleek machines.

The club mandate includes improving the image of bikers, offering safety tips to other motorcycle riders and promoting fellow and family biking.

More important, however, the organization is dedicated to helping the handicapped and assisting with activities such as bike-a-thons and walk-a-thons.

The Terry Fox run is one example where members volunteered their time to assist with the run.

The Blue Knights have also established a name for themselves with their annual "toy rides."

Although sponsored by the Knights, the rides are open to all bikers, the only requirement being they bring a stuffed toy.

The toys are then turned over to the Salvation Army for distribution at Christmas.

The Toronto chapter holds one of the largest rides each year, attracting bikers from as far away as Ohio, Wisconsin, and New York.

To become a member of the Blue Knights, one must be an active or retired member of a law enforcement branch (police department, immigration, correctional services, Crown Attorney offices, sheriff's office, etc.) and own a motorcycle.

There are nine chapters in Ontario.

The Halton-Lakeshore chapter, known as Ontario Seven, includes Hamilton, Burlington, Oakville, Mississauga, Milton and Halton Hills.

Started just four years ago, it has a membership of approximately 30 devoted bikers.

Last month the 1982 International Convention was held in Windsor, attracting over 700 members from across the United States and Canada.

A ride consisting of approximately 350 bikers crossed the Ambassador Bridge, parading through the downtown area of Detroit and Windsor before returning to Windsor University where the convention was being held.



Riding again is Bill Norman, a 62-year-old auxiliary inspector with St. Catharines OPP. The Stoney Creek man began riding motor-

cycles 45 years ago, but more recently bought a bike and joined the Blue Knights Motorcycle Club.

Absenteeism report kept quiet at Manor's request

By ROBERT ASHE
Special to The Champion

At the request of the administrator of Halton Centennial Manor, a report on Regional employee absenteeism is being kept confidential although it shows Halton's rate to be "below the national average."

Administrator Richard A. Kautman feels if statistics showing the manor's high rate are released, problems at the facility will be harder to solve, according to Regional personnel director Dennis Cam.

The report was debated in camera at Wednesday's administration and finance committee meeting. Mr. Cam said it showed the Region with an absenteeism that was "quite stable," then quickly noted the Manor was "showing improvement."

"The Manor situation was improving with 'the co-operation of staff and administration,'" he added.

"I asked that the matter be settled in this way (in camera) so the matter wouldn't be brought out again for public comment," Mr. Cam told committee.

Mr. Cam said the situation at the Manor was "very sensitive," but "settling down nicely."

Last May it was made public that the Manor staff of 226 took a total of 3,822 sick days in 1981, at an average of 16.9 days per employee.

At that time, it was announced a part-time occupational nurse would be hired in mid-summer by the region to examine and help cure the ill between staff and administration.

According to Mr. Cam, the nurse may not be hired at all should the Manor's rate of absenteeism continue to decline. The nurse has not yet been hired because the Region was awaiting additional funding from the province.

Halton chief administrative officer Dennis Perlin cautioned the statistics shown in the report were drawn from 1981 figures, and did not reflect recent improvement.

"They still stand out (in the report) as very, very significant," Mr. Perlin said of the Manor's rate. He said administration was starting to work on the problem, and that the report was kept confidential because "it only highlighted one group"—Manor staff.

"It (the Manor's rate) is a hell of a lot higher than any other group in the organization," Mr. Perlin told reporters at an impromptu press conference following the committee meeting.

Acton, Milton, Georgetown in one federal riding?

By GORD MURRAY
Special to The Champion

Acton, Georgetown and Milton could well be back together in the same federal riding after the next election.

Halton MP Otto Jelinek predicted changes for the three ridings of Halton, Brampton-Georgetown and Burlington if redistribution takes place after the next election—expected in 1984 or 1985. He says he and many other MPs are opposed to any riding changes though.

Currently, Halton riding consists of Oakville, Milton, Acton and part of Esquesing while the City of Burlington is another federal seat, Burlington. The rest of Halton Region, Georgetown and part of Esquesing is in the Brampton-Georgetown riding.

Mr. Jelinek said redistribution plans aren't expected to be completed before the late fall or early winter.

However, with Brampton-Georgetown, Halton and Burlington ridings all having considerably more population than the average riding size he can see changes coming.

While he has no knowledge of how the seats will be rearranged, he said what he can see being done is Brampton and Oakville becoming separate seats and the Burlington riding shrinking to just the area between the Queen Elizabeth Way and Lake Ontario. What would be left, Acton, Georgetown, Milton, Esquesing and north Burlington to be lumped together as a new seat, very similar to the existing provincial Halton-Burlington riding.

Since the chief electoral officer received 1981 census figures from Canada's chief statistician, law required his office to now "upgrade the number of seats by population distribution," Mr. Jelinek explained.

Based on a formula set by Parliament some time ago the number of seats in the House of Commons would swell from the present 282 to 310, an additional 28 seats, 10 of which will be in Ontario.

The average population of a riding should be 82,143, Mr. Jelinek said.

He noted Halton riding, with a population of 116,628 is 42 per cent bigger than it should be under the law while Brampton-Georgetown, with a population 171,431, is 109 per cent larger than it should be. Burlington riding has a population of 114,853 and is 40 per cent bigger than the average.

Boundaries for new ridings are being drawn now and "if there are no new instructions from Parliament the current seats won't exist after the next election."

An all-party committee is looking at the redistribution question now and considering recommending to Parliament that no seat changes be made and the law requiring redistribution be amended.

"I'd prefer not to increase the number of seats and I'm not alone. Many MPs, Liberals and Progressive Conservatives are opposed."

If the number of seats is increased Mr. Jelinek says they should be limited to as few as possible.

He notes it will cost hundreds of thousands of dollars to create new seats. MPs wages, he says are a small expense. There's also office space, staff, equipment, etc.

Also, many MPs are opposed because already the individual backbencher doesn't have enough input into the Parliamentary process and adding 28 more MPs will only make the situation worse. Mr. Jelinek added the Parliamentary reform committee is looking at this concern.

Redistribution last took place after the 1974 election and before the 1979 vote.

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- population information needed for other municipal programs.

The enumerator must record such information as the name, age, property status (e.g. owner or tenant), school support and residency of all members of the household.

This year in certain areas the enumerator will also ask if you would like your name included on a list of electors for French-language schools.

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If you are not home, a Notice will be left for you. If changes are necessary, please make them and mail the Enumeration Notice, as soon as possible, in the pre-addressed postage prepaid envelope accompanying the Notice. For any additional information, please contact the local assessment office.



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