

# INTRODUCTION

## to the MRF White Papers Volume 4

*by Teresa Hepker, Editor*

During the years from 1988 through 1995, events in Washington, DC swirled around us, carrying us from hope to disappointment, and from determination to victory. The MRF as an organization has weathered roadblocks and storms to become stronger, with better focus on goals. "Focus + Unity = Repeal of Federal Helmet Law," by Wayne T. Curtin, documents the events and processes that occurred during that time.

All of us involved in the motorcyclists' rights movement played out our parts, some quite small, some very large, each act forming a building block that allowed us to take the next step up the mountain. The MRF's Washington office staff members and Board of Directors has consulted with the leaders of the State Motorcyclists' Rights Organizations (SMROs), set a course, and kept us all moving in the same direction, until we accomplished what few believed could be done: full repeal of the national helmet mandate, in just four years.

As we participate in these events, we are maturing. Here in my home state of Oregon and the neighboring state of Washington, I have watched the circle of motorcycling activists grow in both numbers and sophistication. This process is being repeated in many states across the nation. There are more of us, with better skills in communicating, strategy, planning and cooperation. We are influencing the political process at earlier stages, and in greater depth, than we were able to do ten years ago.

We have embraced technology. The fax machine, personal computer, e-mail and World Wide Web are new tools that help us compensate for the fact that we have to do our political work, for the most part, at home and in our "spare" time. What used to require many hours of telephone time and ground delivery of mail, can now be done in minutes, with better accuracy and immediate results. Technology that was once only in the grasp of large corporations is now accessible enough for average individuals to own and control.

Our success as motorcyclists in repealing the helmet law mandate in ISTEA has earned recognition both for MRF as an organization and personally for Wayne Curtin, MRF's Vice President for Government Affairs. Included in this volume are the nominations that lead to the MRF being awarded the American Society of Association Executives' "Excellence in Government Relations Trophy" and to Wayne's induction into the National Motorcycle Museum Hall of Fame.

There is a downside to every victory. The pace can be gruelling, and we are human beings. Joe Naiman shares his thoughts on why he decided not to run for a fourth term as a member of ABATE of California' Board of Directors, in "Education Begins at Home."

In his second article, "Lessons from the Potato Controversy," Joe invites us to look at the strategies and mistakes of others and apply what we learn to our own activities. During the last half of 1996, turmoil surrounding the existence and goals of ICOM and NCOM is affecting many individuals and groups involved in motorcyclists' rights. Opinions and emotions can get intense when individuals and organizations disagree. "Lessons from the Potato Controversy" was written before this controversy emerged, but Joe's comments on factionalism and infighting have application in our own movement.

Drew Avery returns this year with his "1996 Bibliography of Motorcycle Related Articles," an update and expansion to his contributions last year. Volume 3 contained 223 entries; this year, 396 entries. If you think you don't have enough to do, here's a reading list that will certainly help you make constructive use of your free time. It's also a powerful weapon. It contains the references you need, both pro and con, to educate and bargain with your elected representatives and state bureaucracies. Have fun!