

My trip to North Carolina for the 2012 MRF Meeting of the Minds was a great but strenuous trip! I say this because it has been some time since I went 3 nights or more in a row on only around 4 hours of sleep each night. The mornings came too early and the nights ended late. I would say I don't know all of you do that every year and have a decade or more of age on me. But in reality I think I have a good clue on how. I believe it is the energy, excitement and endless topics of conversation available with our likeminded peers. This alone is a testament to all of the commitment and passion that roots deep to your core and gives you the drive and energy required to do the amount of work you all do. I guess you could always 'fake it till you make it' when low on energy too. Regardless, it is impressive and for that and all the former strengths, I commend you all. Clearly from the display of energy and passion that members exude, the MRF's format for the yearly conference is tried and true and need not be changed.

When I initially got back home from the conference, within a few days I posted some of my brief thoughts on my Facebook status. *"I learned a lot of good information at the conference. I just wish more people would become active in motorcycle rights whether it be your local ABATE, the MRF or AMA that are national orgs. We only have our freedom in all aspects of motorcycling because of the constant behind the scenes work people do every year in each state and nationwide."* Then weeks later I have time to pick up and read through some of the September / October MRF Reports. I read Hardtail's experience in the Midwest where he stated *"motorcycle riders taking advantage of our hard work and most not even knowing or understanding how these freedoms have been achieved or preserved on their behalf."* It became funny to me how quick we can absorb and share opinions of our peers. However it also struck me with a serious yet grave message on how widespread this problem is.

Sadly prior to the last year or two, I too was one of these abusers. I was ignorant to the 'underworld' as I am going to refer to it. It makes me wonder what the primary causes are of this inherent problem. I assume for me that it has largely to do with my lack of concern and interest in high school with American History, the political system, and current politics and events during that time. But for those that are educated and took interest in learning the system, what is the cause there? Is it disbelief that there are always people, interest groups, and government officials

constantly looking to restrict or remove our freedoms even in this day and age? Is it that no one told them we have to fight to retain our rights? Or is it possibly what I believe our society has become plagued with in recent years, people's selfish habits and self-evolved personalities? I don't have the answer but am quite curious.

From the conference I was able to take home some valuable information. The breakout session "All you ever wanted to know about politics but were afraid to ask" was very helpful for me to start filling in some of the informational voids I had on our government system. "Building a firm foundation for your SMRO" and "Motorcycles and mainstream media - how to get your message heard" has also added to the foundation I feel will be necessary to effectively work with the various groups. Meanwhile the "Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS)" was really unique and captivating because it stimulated some of my inner geek as well as giving an additional real world example why we have to always be working for our rights and not to mention a bit scary.

To bring this full circle; my hope is to take the information I have gained and pair it with the energy and passion that has been the kindling always inside of me that all of you have just recently lit. With any luck, this cycle of mine can be replicated to many others so cumulatively we can reduce the 'free-riders' (freedom free-loaders) and curb the ignorance to the motorcycle rights underworld.

Finally I would like to thank the MRF, the MRF A&E program, and all of the contributors to the MRF, for the experience, the scholarship and taking a chance on me. I have met a lot of great and fun people during the trip and would like to think that I have also started some friendships. Now stop reading my article, get off your butt and get out there and fight!