



News staff photo by Tommy Stevenson

The Brothers, MC: (L-R) Rick, Larry Bigham, Robert

'Brothers' are bikers, not outlaws

By TOMMY STEVENSON
News Staff Writer

Let's get one thing straight from the start:

If you were broken down on some lonely country road late one night and your car was suddenly approached by the bright lights and thunder of a dozen chopped Harley-Davidsons ridden by the likes of the gentlemen pictured here, there would be no cause for alarm.

Oh, there might be if it said "Hell's Angels" or "Devil's Disciples" on their backs, but not if the denim jackets were emblazoned with the proud colors of the Brothers Motorcycle Club of Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

Chances are, in fact, the bikes would grumble to a halt, assistance would be offered and you'd be on your way in no time—"We've got some of the best mechanics in town in our club," says Robert Bryan, 24, once and future (next September) law student and club president.

"And we do what we can to help people out if they need it—we're not an 'outlaw' club at all."

Elaborates Rick Lindsey, 31, past-president and one of the founders of the two-and-a-half-year-old organization: "We're not out to terrorize anyone or strike fear into anybody's heart.

"Oh, the 'macho trip' is there, it's evident all right, but we don't play it up, we just shrug it off," he adds, shrugging

So, with the popular myth of the rabid, knife-wielding

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chain-swinging biker (see Marlon Brando, "The Wild One", circa 1954) out of the way, who then are the Brothers and what are they doing staring at you from the front page of your Sunday News?

"Well, we are just a group of guys interested in motorcycles and in helping each other who got together and formed a club," says Rick. "We've got students, factory workers, electricians, a miner, all in our club.

"We're just a part of the community like everyone else and we are here to stay."

And indeed, in hearing Rick and Robert tell it, the Brothers do sound much like any other fraternal organization, albeit one perhaps not yet quite as accepted as the SAEs or Toastmasters. They talk of club parties, dues, fund-raising events, even the possibility of charitable endeavors ("disaster aid, giving blood—something like that; I wouldn't be opposed to that," says Rick).

Adds Robert:

"Our long-range goal is to become as self-sufficient as we can. We want to have our own houses, own our own property and not have to depend on too many outside people.

"Eventually we'd like to have our own motorcycle-related business," he says, adding with an ironic smile, "you know, the democratic, free-enterprise system—something that doesn't create more hassles than it takes away..."

Rick says the club was formed one day when a few guys interested in motorcycles and the motorcycle life were sitting around The Chukker, a refreshingly-stark downtown bar that still serves as a sort of informal headquarters and where Rick works, and were talking about how nice it would be to have a club.

"So we did it," he says simply. "We had 12 original members (of whom eight are still Brothers) and now we've got 14. I can see us going on forever—this is not something we just do to pass the time; we're committed to it."

Both Rick and Robert say the club has by-laws, rules of behavior—"so as not to embarrass the rest of the club"—and even bike regulations sometimes more strict than local and state ordinances.

Still, there have been problems since the club's inception, but both men trace those problems more to the "bad press" motorcycle clubs have in general than to anything any of the Brothers have been involved in personally.

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"It was tough getting accepted by the law at first," Robert says. "It used to be we'd be picked up just on general principles and charged with all kinds of things we didn't do."

"But things are cool now, at least locally, and I've even had a state trooper stop me and tell me our colors were the only one ones they'd honor."

"He (the trooper) told me he stopped me just to be sure I was a Brother and not a member of some other club."

Ironically, Robert says the corner was turned in the club's relationship with local police in the courtroom, where cases were thrown out for lack of evidence.

"I think they finally realized that we were not around to step out of bounds and weren't all that bad after all."

"Now we try to just keep a low profile and not bother anyone," Robert says.

There is, however, still one change Robert says he would like to see in the attitude of local officials and that is in regards to other motorcycle clubs whose members may come into town "to party."

"Some time we invite other clubs into town and it always seems they get a lot of heat," he says. "I wish people would realize that our friends are not going to cause any problems if they are here to see us."

The Devil's Disciples, a notorious Birmingham-based club, are not numbered among the Brothers' friends, however, and both Rick and Robert indicate that the Brothers and the Disciples are not on the best of terms. ("They've caused a lot of problems for all of us," Rick says.)

But both men would rather not talk about such negative matters; indeed, accentuation of the positive seems to be a Brothers trait. In fact, the very name of the club attests to that:

"It took us a long time to come up with a name when we started," Rick remembers. "We debated about it for a long time, we really did."

"Then I just came up with the name 'Brothers' and it seemed to fit," he says.

"And that's what we are," Robert adds. "Brothers: we back each other and stick together.. "