

Ken Brewer, Founder and first President of Juneau ABATE, passed away in Juneau on Saturday June 2, 2007. Ken was teaching a Basic Rider Education class when he suffered an apparent heart failure.

Born on January 1, 1951, into the Blackfeet Tribe in Montana, Ken was adopted into the Tlingit Raven Moiety, Kiksadi Clan, in Sitka. He was known in Tlingit as Shaayigan.

While riding his motorcycle four years earlier Ken had a close call with a truck towing a boat on a trailer. Ken and Bob Valliant, a colleague and fellow motorcycle enthusiast, discussed the close call and decided that Juneau needed an organization whose focus would be motorcycle awareness and safety. In researching various organizations they decided ABATE could meet that need. So, in the winter of 2003, Ken, Bob and seventeen other like minded motorcyclists formed Juneau ABATE. Ken was elected President, and under his leadership the organization grew. Through his efforts Juneau is a safer community for motorcyclist. Nationally the month of May is designated "Motorcycles And You" month. In May of 2004 Juneau ABATE held the first of what has become an annual event, an open event aimed at making the public aware of motorcycles and to make motorcyclists, and future motorcyclists, aware of Juneau ABATE's purpose.



To bring the motorcycle community of Juneau together Ken instituted the Saturday noon rides. Motorcyclists, no matter what they rode, were invited to meet each Saturday at the Safeway parking lot for a group ride. Some days there were only a couple who showed up, some days there were more than a dozen. Rain or shine, if Ken's schedule allowed, he was there. With Ken's passing the local HOG chapter has taken over coordinating the Saturday noon rides, now calling them the "Saturday Brewer Ride" in his memory (all motorcyclists are always welcome to participate). Ken also endeavored to ride at least one day each month. I can remember a small handful of us joining up with him on some pretty cold winter days, just to get that short ride in. To get folks out in late November he started the Cold Turkey Society, where motorcyclists rode the Saturday following Thanksgiving in search of cold turkey and pumpkin pie.

Recognizing that there was a need to teach new motorcyclists basic riding skills and to improve those skills of experienced riders, Ken wanted Juneau ABATE to offer Motorcycle Safety Foundation (MSF) certified training. In the spring of 2006 five members of Juneau ABATE, one of whom was Ken, completed approximately 80 hours training and became certified trainers. Working with the Alaska Highway Safety Office, Ken secured grants for Juneau ABATE which provided the funding needed to get our rider education program started. Juneau ABATE now owns a dozen training motorcycles and all of the required equipment needed to provide MSF certified training. Since that first class in the spring of 2006, Juneau ABATE trains approximately 75 students annually; several of those students have since purchased a motorcycle and we now see them on the Saturday rides.

As you can see, Ken was a visionary. He knew that motorcycle safety and awareness wasn't needed just in Juneau. In the fall of 2006 he began discussing with the Alaska Highway Safety Office the formation of a motorcycle safety council to provide Alaskan riders a voice at the state level on motorcycle safety issues. Other interested motorcyclist from across the state met twice to form the foundation of the group, electing Ken as their chair. The momentum he initiated carried on and in early 2008 the Alaska Motorcycle Safety Advisory Committee was formed. This Committee, which advises the commissioner of the Department of Transportation & Public Facilities on motorcycle safety issues, is well on its way to improving motorcycle safety state-wide.

To recognize the efforts of Ken and the other founding members, the first Saturday of each June is designated as *Juneau ABATE Founders Day* and on that day we hold the *Ken Brewer Memorial Ride*.