



## The Rothberg Interview

Doug Rothberg is a name that is known all across Missouri and Illinois. In addition to being a popular guy, he was also the Kirkwood HOG Director for 10 year. I wanted to get him to share some of his thoughts and stories, since he has a lot of each. He invited me to his house and we conducted an interview in his basement at his Coronado Bar. He ended up with this piece of history from the Coronado Hotel in downtown St. Louis, Missouri The bar that dates back to 1924. Back in 1986 he knew the people that were going to gut the building. They ended up giving him the actual bar.

### What is your history with motorcycles?

*The first bike I ever rode was when I was about 14 and*

*it was my neighbor's. It was a moped that had the pedals to get it started and had a centrifugal clutch. So, I got familiar with being on two wheels, with a motor. The first motorcycle that I ever owned was a 1968 Honda Scrambler and, knock on wood, (Doug knocked on the bar) it is the only bike I have ever laid down. My next bike was a 1948 Springer Panhead, jockey shift, suicide clutch, with ape hangers. It had a lever on the right side of the handlebars that wasn't connected to anything. I actually hated that bike. When it was cold it would kick over on the first kick. When that bike was hot, you couldn't find a hill big enough to pop that thing on. Had a few more after that, and then went to a 1990 Springer Softtail. Now I have a 2000 Springer.*

### What motorcycle clubs or groups have you belonged to?

*In the early days, before HOG even existed, I never really belonged to any particular club. In the Mid 60's I would hang around a group that the "old timers" would recognize. It was called the "Bone Shakers" they would party at a bar in West County (St. Louis) called Rainy Days. I still remember some of the guys, there was Legs, Shadetree, Worm, Animal, and Bull. If there is anyone that remembers those names, you know who I'm talking about. I did ride with the Warlords and on the weekends we would go to a hill climb out on Gist Road in Bridgeton, Mo.*

### How long have you been a HOG member?

*I joined in HOG 1994, so about 13 years.*

### I understand that HOG officers are either voted in by the members or appointed by the sponsoring dealership. What is the benefit of each?

*There are two different ways for a person to become an Officer for a Chapter. HOG allows for either a general election, where the members vote in an officer or they are appointed by the sponsoring dealership. The Kirkwood HOG Chapter, which sponsored by Doc's Harley Davidson, has always believed that Officers should be appointed. This goes back to Ralph Schneidewind. The reason that he wanted to do that was that he did not want an officer position to be a popularity contest. He would rather find a person himself that was suitable for handling that position. He always maintained that control of being able to appoint the officers*

### When did you know you wanted to be a HOG Director?

*I never knew I wanted to be a HOG Director. I was a member for about two years and at that time not too many people even knew who I was. When the current Director announced he wanted to retire, so Ralph started looking around at the members at who was capable of handling it. He asked me if I would be interested. I knew it would take a lot of time and commitment. Thinking this would be a tremendous challenge and I would be more involved with the Chapter, I accepted it from Ralph and took it on. That went on to be 10 years.*

### What were your first goals as HOG Director? How did that turn out?

*The previous Director was retired and had the time to do it all himself. I had a full time job and did not have that luxury. So my first goal was to build a committee so that I could delegate responsibilities to different people to run the Chapter. I found the right people that I could rely upon to organize rides and events. This was the Ride Committee and it still exists today. It also*

*brings the members closer to the Chapter by becoming more active and more of a participant in what is actually going on. The next goal was taking a look at the Road Captains and getting that organized. When you have the rides, you need the road support to make the rides successful and safe. After that was established, the Road Captains have been called upon for anything from our own Chapter events to parades in the City of St. Louis to assist the Police Department.*

**HOG Chapters are structured like a business. Are they actually incorporated?**

*It is up to the Chapter itself if it wants to be incorporated or not. HOG National encourages it, primarily for the liability aspect. This removes the liability from the members and the officers.*

**What is the main purpose of a charter for a Chapter?**

*The charter sets the foundation for which the Chapter runs. Anytime there would be a question on how to handle a certain situation on how to deal with a liability issue, accounting, or whatever, the answer is always in the charter. The charter spells out everything that affects the chapter and it has the answer.*

**How much influence does the Harley Davidson Motor Company have on how each Chapter's activities?**

*It is not really the Harley Davidson Motor Company that has an influence on the Chapters. It is the Harley Owners Group National that has the influence. HOG National tends to take a "hands-off" approach on dealing with the Chapters. They really only restrict the Chapter on trade mark usage and printing where there are logos involved. They will want you to submit the layout for their approval. The reason they do that is to maintain that high quality image of HOG.*

**What is the responsibility of a HOG Director?**

*To keep everyone from killing each other.*

**What is the hardest part of being a HOG Director?**

*To hide the bodies... The hardest part is that everybody has their own ideas on how some things should be handled. So there are always the conflicts of ideas. Really it is trying to bring everybody together to see a common direction that you want to take something*

**What is your greatest accomplishment as Director?**

*Bringing the members closer to the Chapter and getting more members involved and how the Chapter functions.*

**What are your most honored awards you have received?**

*The plaque I received after 10 years as director. That was a real nice presentation. It mentioned on the plaque not only for the accomplishments for the Kirkwood Chapter but for HOG overall. In the Primary Officer Training (POT) courses that I have attended I would meet other Officers across the country. That was a chance to share ideas. Some of the things we were doing, other Chapters had never heard about.*

**What organization most benefited during your years as Director?**

*The March of Dimes. We not only helped with the monetary support but also with the people that volunteered for helping with the parking, ride safety, and even the route itself. It is just a huge success. We have received credit for the raising the most money for a number of years. Also have the most number of riders participate in the ride.*

**Now that you are not the Director, what are you going to do with all your free time?**

*For the past year it is more or less falling back and recuperating. There are always new options and new things that develop. To give you a little hint, now I am working pretty tightly with the Hartbauer McBride Foundation. I am seeing how we can stimulate their growth.*

**Have you ever thought of getting another motorcycle? What would it be?**

*It would be either a Springer or I hate to admit it, possibly an Ultra Glide*

**You have a lot of stories to tell, would like to have a reoccurring article about places you have been?**

*Well there is a possibility for that. There are a lot of places that I have been that are totally off the beaten path. There are places that not many people would discover on their own. I think it would be fun to highlight stops, locations, and different rides that would show people some place that you would probably never believe. Man I have thought about that, possibly named "The Roads Less Traveled, Could be Down the Road"*