

## **SBU History, Background and Function**

Motorcycles have been a major part of Hawaii's motoring history since the Second World War and earlier. There have always been motorcycle riders enjoying the winding coastal and mountain roads, year round warm tropical climate and beautiful scenery that makes Hawaii one of the premier motorcycle riding and touring locations in the world. However, as motorcycling grew in popularity in Hawaii, local riders recognized an increasing need for an umbrella organization, which could represent their rights and interests on a variety of political, legal, public and social issues.

In 1972 the concept of a motorcycle rights organization was first publically discussed by Lou Kimzey, editor of Easyriders magazine. In California and approximately 32 other states across the nation, ABATE (American Bikers for Awareness, Training & Education) grew out of that idea. At the same time motorcycling was also growing in popularity in Hawaii, and local riders recognized an increasing need for an umbrella organization, which could represent their rights and interests on a variety of political, legal, public and social issues. However, local riders wanted an organization that was unique to the Hawaii its people, culture, traditions, local politics and aloha way of life.

In 1972 a group of local riders gathered in a motorcycle shop next to Honolulu Community College. They agreed to create a motorcycle rights advocacy organization they formally named Street Bikers United Hawaii, Inc. (commonly known simply as "SBU"), which embraced the ABATE concept while remaining a wholly independent "Hawaii only" organization. The founders included Ike Purdin (1<sup>st</sup> President), Ike's girlfriend known only as Carm (Secretary), Bob Stafford (State Lobbyist), Ray Datzman, Pat Thiele (Photographer), Norman Chung and Gregg McKee. By that time there were already many motorcycle clubs in Hawaii, representing a variety of regions, areas and diverse groups of riders, but SBU was never intended to be affiliated with any particular motorcycle club. Instead SBU was created with the specific mandate to represent the rights and interests of all motorcyclists in Hawaii regardless of their club affiliations, if any, or the type of motorcycle they chose to ride.

### **SBU Motorcycle Rights Advocacy**

From the beginning SBU's initial mandate was primarily focused on protecting and expanding motorcyclists' rights and freedoms. The earliest challenge was the repeal of the existing mandatory helmet legislation. The Hawaii Mandatory Helmet Law was first enacted in June of 1967 in response to the Federal Department of Transportation's State Highway Funding initiative that tied "special" federal DOT highway grants to those states that promulgated mandatory motorcycle helmet laws satisfactory to the Federal DOT policy makers. In 1976 the Coalition of States successfully lobbied Congress to repeal the "special" federal DOT highway grants. SBU spearheaded the lobby to convince Hawaii law makers to repeal the Hawaii Mandatory Helmet law as it applied to adult riders thereby recognizing their "right to choose" the riding equipment and apparel that best suits road, weather and traffic conditions. In 1977 the State of Hawaii, partially repealed the Hawaii Mandatory Helmet Statute so that it only applies to minors under the age of 18 years ("Youth Riders").

Over the years since 1972 there has been numerous attempts by State law makers (almost annually in fact) to pass comprehensive mandatory helmet laws for all motorcyclists. Although SBU has always supported mandatory helmet laws for Hawaii Youth Riders, SBU has staunchly maintained and defended adult rider's freedom of choice. Similarly, there was and continues to be annual proposed bills attempting to regulate equipment modifications (e.g. after-market exhaust pipes, mufflers, mirrors, handlebar length, suspensions and frame modifications, etc.) as well as "exhaust noise violation" legislation that has and is still being challenged as "safety issues" by SBU State Executives and legal advisors. Protecting Motorcyclists rights and interests also involves SBU's consultation with State and County Policing Officials, Traffic Management Departments, Highway Safety and Design Departments, Private and Public Healthcare providers and Insurance Organizations.

### **Membership and Representation**

For Forty years SBU has remained a nonprofit organization, which seeks to represent the rights and interests of its members and all motorcyclists in the state of Hawaii as well as persons involved in the motorcycle industry, motorcycle enthusiasts and their respective Ohana.



Earl Wilson Hawaii, 1942

SBU equally embraces all races, colors, creeds, gender and political persuasions as long as a member displays an understanding and appreciation for the fundamentals of island riding, which includes: extend aloha to all fellow riders, respect for other motorists and a commitment to safe, lawful, and courteous riding. Young and old, SBU has members in all walks of life (from trades to military, politicians, police officers, public officials, dentists, doctors, lawyers, school teachers and care givers). SBU Members ride sport bikes, cruisers, trikes, choppers, and yes, even some scooters (which unlike mopeds are defined a “motorcycles” under HRS §286-2). Some of members do not even have a motorcycle; it does not matter as long as you embrace our principles.

SBU has members state-wide on Kauai, Oahu, Maui, Molokai and the Big Island of Hawaii. SBU currently has active chapters on Oahu and Maui, is building a Chapter on the Big Island and aspires to someday have a chapter on Kauai. It has a membership roster of over 1,100 members that it actively represents, but SBU’s influence extends well beyond its active members, to their fellow riders, club members and Ohana. Essentially SBU is the sole consolidating voice and representative for the rights and interests of the approximately 50,000 motorcyclists in Hawaii. None of the SBU State or Chapter Executives are paid, all are volunteers.

### **Mandate to Represent Motorcyclists on Political, Legal, Public and Social issues**

SBU is actively involved in promoting motorcycle safety, education and enjoyment. Through its monthly meetings, its newsletter, website, and by other means; SBU updates and advises its members and the Hawai’i motorcycling community about technical information relating to road safety, motorcycle equipment and gear. SBU also actively advocates Hawaii State sponsored motorcycle licensing and training programs, which promotes and enhances motorcycle operating skills and rider safety consciousness.

SBU actively liaises with law enforcement and DOT personnel on issues related to everything from crimes involving motorcycle theft to highway safety and design matters; related to road surfacing, driver awareness, motorcycle visibility and share-the-road signage programs.

SBU provides its members with advice, policies and programs designed to assist and support victims and their families from loss and injury due to careless drivers and motorcycle mishaps. SBU also obtains preferred rates and discounts for its members from many Hawai’i businesses including vendors of a motorcycle related products, services and insurance policies.

SBU is politically active as an advocate against laws, legislation or government policies designed to restrict the freedom of choice and the rights of riders to lawfully enjoy motorcycling.

SBU actively promotes and supports its members and the motorcycle community participating in a variety of annual community services and charitable events, including but not limited to: rides and fund raisers for veterans, back-to-school supplies for keiki’s-in-need, meals-on-wheels for the aged and disabled, special fund raising events for injured motorcyclists and their families, and of course the Annual Toy Run that SBU coordinates with the US Marines Toys-For-Tots program and The Salvation Army communities services, which provide new toys and other assistance to thousands Hawaii’s homeless and disadvantaged keiki and their families at Christmas time and other times of the year as needed.

### **The Oahu Chapter SBU’s Annual Toy Run on the first Sunday in December Each Year**

With approximately 5,000 motorcyclists that regularly participate from all parts of the State, the US Mainland, Canada, Europe, Guam, Japan, Australia, and elsewhere, there is an armada of colorful and entertaining people, costumes and machinery to see and enjoy as it winds its way along the parade route, through downtown Honolulu and Waikiki.

The reward for SBU Members and participants is the joy on the faces of thousands of Hawaii’s most deserving keiki on Christmas morning, when the approximately 8,000 toys are opened as presents.

### **SBU’s Recognition for Public Service**

SBU’s record of public advocacy for motorcyclists’ rights, freedom of choice, road and traffic safety initiatives for motorcyclists, technical advisories, public service activities and its many philanthropic endeavors, it has been honored with numerous accolades and three separate Certificates of Public Service Recognition from the Hawaii House of Representatives 2012, Hawaii State Senate 2013 and the City and County of Honolulu 2013. SBU is proud to be a part of Hawai’i motorcycle history and culture.