

Buffalo Soldiers ride with pride

Members of the motorcycle club are carrying a legacy and keeping alive the memory of the first black Army regiments.

By Chick Jacobs
Staff writer

William Johnson and Vic Wooten feel the stares.

Like most of the 65 other riders in the Buffalo Soldiers Motorcycle Club, they're used to it. History leaves lingering impressions on people, and the image of biker gangs roaring into town in leathers won't be easily erased.

But the Buffalo Soldiers ride with an entirely different sense of history - one of pride, or service to their country, or overcoming bitter racial divides.

"We're committed to keeping the memory of the Buffalo soldier alive," said Johnson, president of the Fayetteville chapter. "That means the people who ride with us carry that legacy.

"You'd be surprised how many people see these black guys riding along on their bikes and decide we're a gang. We're coming to drink liquor and raise hell, they think. And we know it. That's why we're very careful about how this club is seen in the community."

"We like to have fun when we ride," added Wooten. "But anything we do, you could bring the whole family and enjoy."

The Buffalo Soldiers were chartered nearly 10 years ago with 14 members. They now have more than 120 members and associates.

Honor

The group rides to honor the memory of the original Buffalo Soldiers, the first black Army regiments who served in the West in the late 1800s.

In time, the name was associated with all black



The Buffalo Soldiers Motorcycle Club of Fayetteville held a Pony Express Ride and breakfast in April. The event raised funds for the club's community service projects.

soldiers who fought in segregated units.

"I grew up in the South, and I knew troubles," Johnson said. "But what these men went through, it makes you forget your troubles. They fought for freedom, fought for our country. If it wasn't for their sacrifices, it might have been a far different military we came into."

Members of the club speak at schools about the Buffalo Soldiers and help proctor at local schools. The club's recent Pony Express Ride raised funds for several activities in the region.

"This isn't a club where we donate one or two things a year, have a toy drive and leave it at that," Wooten said. "This is a commitment to the community and the history of the Buffalo Soldier."

Johnson agreed.

"Every penny we raise goes to the community," he said. "Our dues take care of operational costs. "Every dollar we raise goes back.

"I like to say that they made the history, and we carry it. It's an honor to be part of this group, and the guys who ride as Buffalo Soldiers continue to serve."

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