



Phelps S. "Scratcher" Moore Jr.



Phelps S. "Scratcher" Moore Jr., 74, of Auburn, died Sunday, December 29, 2013, in Upstate University Hospital at Community General. Born in Auburn, Scratcher lived in Alabama for several years. He retired as a truck driver for Robinson Concrete and was a former member of the Army National Guard. He was past president of ABATE of Syracuse, a founder of Road Runners MC, a member of RODEO Riders, Syracuse HOG, Finger Lakes HOG, life member of Harley Owners Group, and a 25-year member of AMA. He was predeceased by his parents, Phelps and Rhonwyn Moore and his sister, Rhonwyn Hannig. Surviving are his wife, Michele Thornton Moore; four daughters, Shawna (James) Burke of Port Byron, Beth Rabuano of Auburn, Becky Caza, and Tina Mabbett; three grandchildren; brother-in-law, Joseph Hannig; brother-in-law and sister-in-law, Michael and Marian Thornton; nieces and nephews.



ABATE of Onondaga



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When it comes to motorcycles, there are not many things to which Bud "Scratcher" Moore can't say, "Been there, done that." Scratcher began his life-long passion for two wheels in rural Cayuga County with a Cushman motor scooter. He was 15 years old at the time and rode everywhere. As far as a license, "At



15 you can't get a license to drive anything." The issue of registration was also taken care of with a bit of creative ingenuity. "We made license plates out of cardboard to look like real ones." No helmets, no licenses, no worries, the police never bothered them. When motorcycle operator licenses began in New York State, you could receive a waiver on any testing by proving that you had owned and operated a registered motorcycle for three years. A motor vehicle operator license was not required. It was some time later that the system of adding a motorcycle endorsement to your operator's license was put into effect. Scratcher's first Harley was what was called a 45 by 45. It was a 1945 Army bike, model WLA, with a 45 degree, 45 cubic inch engine. The bike previously belonged to a neighbor. He also had a Yamaha bike for a while. This was an all-weather, ride it year 'round, machine. Snowmobile trails were a favorite in the winter however after a lot of grief from snowmobilers, he traded the Yamaha for a sled. The Panhead, pictured, is a 1953 that Scratcher purchased in either 1965 or '66. He found it in a chicken coop and took it home for \$150. It was originally a police department bike. The difference being the police bikes had foot shifters and the machines sold to the general public were still using a hand shift-lever. The police bike also had a larger capacity electrical generator. Gleaming paint was only a dream at the time. The bike's restoration finish



was Allis-Chalmers orange tractor paint. In earlier years, there was a category for Panheads in the annual chapter mileage contest. Scratcher won more than once with between 1500 and 2000 miles. Scratcher is one of the senior members of HOG, relative to time in the organization. He is a Life Member having joined in June 1988. In addition to membership in the Syracuse Chapter, he belongs to the Finger Lakes Chapter where he previously served as road captain. The only current members ahead of Scratcher on the Chapter seniority list are: Carol and Bob Anguish, Linda and George Fields, Bob Hurwitz, and Debbie and Dave Sedlack. When he joined HOG, his primary ride was a 1986 Liberty Edition Harley. It was produced with and 80 cubic inch engine. After getting his doors blown off by those he rode with, he increased the stroke to where the engine had 92 cubes. He put more than 100,000 miles on that bike. With all these miles comes some practical techniques you won't read about in company literature. When riding his chopper, he wore spurs. If he leaned over too far, the spurs would drag and he would know that was the limit. While this worked fine on his bike, it wasn't as effective if he was on his brother's Low Rider. An aggressive ride resulted in dragging parts of the bike on the pavement. In particular, it was tough on the two exhaust pipes on the ride side; reshaping them from round to oval. Scratcher developed a technique of using a

broomstick handle to work the metal back into its original shape. In more than 25 years as a member of Syracuse HOG, Scratcher has seen many changes in the Chapter and motorcycling in general. He remembers meetings being held upstairs at the Western Ranch motel and then the Bridge Street Tavern in Solvay, prior to moving to the new Performance H-D building. At the beginning, members elected all the officers. Meetings did not begin with the Pledge of Allegiance. There were far fewer Chapter rides. Among the "senior" members he has had the pleasure of knowing, Scratcher fondly notes Ron and Rose DePeyster, Peg and Walt Nowakowski, and Carm and Shar Rinaldo. Scratcher was also very instrumental in the formation of A.B.A.T.E. chapters in New York State. For 11 years he was state coordinator. In that role he oversaw the growth from one chapter on the east coast - Syracuse - where they first met in member's homes before moving meetings to Jumpin' Jacks Tavern in East Syracuse; to an organization of more than 2,000 members in 23 chapters. "I was out on the Panhead every night organizing and I can remember riding to Albany, in the snow, for the annual helmet ride. About every five years, I'd have to rebuild the engine. Probably put 200,000 miles on the



bike," he said. Scratcher has more than 200,000 "official HOG miles" and many thousand more on various machines. During the more than 50 years Scratcher has been riding, he has seen a significant change in the local motorcycle world. "There has been a transition from "bikers" to many more motorcycle enthusiasts. The Swap Meet, now held at the fairgrounds was started by Bob Stonecypher and held in the basement of the Onondaga County War Memorial. Stonecypher was a full patch holder of the local motorcycle club, "The Eliminators." Among other local

clubs of that era were: Stalkers, Road Runners and Klansmen. Scratcher was president of the Roadrunners. "Brotherhood was the most important thing if you belonged to a club," he remarked. If the president called and needed six members for something, that was what you did. It wasn't a matter that you might have other plans. "Friday nights were for bar hopping and stopping to shoot a round of pool. On a Sunday ride you didn't stop at any bars. "Fights between members of different clubs were to be assumed. "I came home more than once, pretty beat up. You could only fall through a window so many times, so a visit to a hospital wasn't always an option. You learned to do what you had to do. I became pretty good and sewing up my wounds; the ones I could reach." Bud "Scratcher" Moore is a fascinating guy with a million great stories. He's the real thing and has ridden more miles than most of us can only dream about. Above all, he's a Biker at Heart.