

# In memory of Russ Vinnedge

## From the desk of the President

Let me tell you about a friend. A friend to all that knew him. Someone who needed to help others, someone who rose above the occasion to volunteer wherever or whenever he could, this someone is Russ Vinnedge. Russ is a life member of Abate of Florida Inc who dedicated his spare time to both his chapter and state. He did so much for his fellow man (and animal) that it will take a half dozen people to fill his shoes. He, touched people's lives in such a positive manner, you looked up to him. Russ was and always will be a true inspiration to all. His honesty and integrity, never questioned. Someone I called a friend and brother. Words will never be enough to do you justice. Rest in peace my friend, until we meet again.

Brotherly Love,  
Big Mike

This year is a bike week that most of us will never forget. It all started Saturday, February 21, 2004, we went to set up for the Abate campground during bike week. Brevard had a great turn out. I counted 12 members. Many people who wanted to be there could not make it. It was a good time fellowshiping with all the members from across the state. The following Saturday Brevard had their bike night at Captain Garo's with not much of a turn out April and I decided to head for the Abate campground to visit members already set up. When we arrived around 10:45, they were very short handed for guards at the annex. So, of course April and I volunteered the 12-6 AM shift. Ending up, we are so glad that we did. We had the privilege to meet and work the shift with Red Kings Son-in-Law Greg from Ohio. Russ pulled a double shift (no, you couldn't keep him from it) and stopped in periodically for a cup of hot coffee and a story. Red and Dan popped in on us to keep us company or (check up on us). We greatly enjoyed everyone's company and being able to volunteer some of our time to the campground. Once, our shift was over, April and I went for a bite to eat at the cook shack. French toast & bacon for breakfast, yum, yum. To our surprise, Russ showed up and ate breakfast with us. Although obviously tired, he was still witty and chipper. That was the last time either of us seen Russ...we sure miss him.

It was approximately 8 PM on March 03 and I was giving my students and exam when April's Aunt Debbie showed up at B.C.C. to tell me that Russ had just had another heart attack. No time to call a substitute so I rode it out until the test was over. When I got home, I got the news. My friend did not make it. We had to get to the campground-NOW-April already had a sitter on the way for our boys. "What a great woman (I'm a lucky man), as she knew I would want to be there. Although, I knew there was nothing I could do, I had to be there. We arrived around 11:30 PM; the mood was obvious (I'll not divulge the police situation). By now, most everyone knew his or her friend was gone. Four hours later, we headed home. I knew I would not sleep this night April was a great comfort as she knew all to well how much Russ meant to me, and also, to her as well.

I had a banner made up for Russ and took it to the campground with us Friday night. Bryan, our 2 ½ year old son, stayed with April's sister and the other three we brought with us to camp for the weekend. They were very much looking forward to this adventure. We arrived late Friday because of course I had to work that day. Luckily, April and Angie (Brevard Chap. Membership assistant) went up earlier in the day and set up our campsite. We kicked back and told stories of our lost friend. Everyone went to bed late, and of course having kids, the morning comes bright and early. Frank, Matt and Eric got a few rides with Doc on the gulf cart around the campground; now all they talk about is Doc and going back next year. They really took to Him. April and I decided to work the 12-6 PM shift. What in the world were we thinking, the hottest part of the day. Oh, well, other than the intense sun burns, we enjoyed every minute of it. Doc scheduled a memorial service for Russ at 6:30 PM Saturday evening and Red Dunkle, Brevard Chapter Chaplain led the service. It was a beautiful ceremony. Russ had several friends along with family members present. After the memorial, we went back to camp and grilled burgers and dogs. We had a special visitor join us for dinner, Lyn Lindeman (executor of Russ's estate). No one could do the job better than Lyn. After a couple of pots of campfire coffee, we all turned in for the night.

Sunday morning was time for packing up to head home. We were just getting started when Red King walked out of his van and shouted for everyone to get out of his campground. Was he kidding I wander? For me as well as others I am sure were not ready for bike week to be over and the closing of the