

Bob Zubaugh

On June 17th, 2010 Sherryl and I set off on a ride of a lifetime. As I would often say, it wasn't the ride, it was the journey. I was one of two Hoka Hey challengers that was authorized a passenger. Sherryl and I left for Key West on the 17th. A week earlier Sherryl had purchased a ticket to fly from Key West to Melbourne. She was going to see me off and return home. But a few days later I convinced her to ride with me. That decision changed our lives forever.

We left Key West with well over 400, but much less than the 1,000 challengers we all anticipated. Several hours into the Challenge, I was leading a small group of riders when I missed a turn and reversed my direction. Two riders went down in front of us trying to reverse their direction. We stopped, called 911 and provided aid until the sheriff arrived. Fortunately for us, that was the only accident we saw firsthand during our journey. That's pretty remarkable since we rode almost 17,000 miles. Sadly, we later learned that two challengers, both from Florida, died in separate accidents and at least 30 riders went down between Key West and Homer.

The first checkpoint was at Destination Daytona, a Harley dealership in Ormond Beach, FL. We rode back and forth, east to west, through rain showers, made the first checkpoint and then headed on to the second at Southern Thunder in Southaven, MS. My passing lamps went out shortly after leaving Southaven and riding at night quickly became too hazardous. The next checkpoint was quite a ride – 2,700+ miles to Flaming Gorge Harley in Rock Springs, WY. This was by far the best dealership on the entire ride. Just good people. Although not identified as a checkpoint, the fourth was at Chief Oliver Red Cloud's home in Pine Ridge, SD. Quite a few riders missed this checkpoint (guess they couldn't find BIA-32) and when Sherryl and I rode in, they were amazed that Sherryl did not get off and walk down the washed out road since many riders dropped their Harley's trying to navigate the numerous deep ruts. They took our pictures – LOL, those ruts were nothing compared to what lay ahead. We thanked the Chief for opening his home and rode off to the next checkpoint in Missoula, MT. We later learned that numerous riders went down and the first fatality occurred around Douglas, WY.

It was now getting cold so we bought heavier gloves and chaps before entering Canada on our way to checkpoint six in Fairbanks, AK. Our first day in Canada was uneventful. Just lots of traffic and, of course, terrible roads. I was also fighting a sore throat and cold, which had started the second day out of Key West and was really bothersome by now. We stopped in Fort St. John for the night, and during dinner I asked Sherryl to marry me. Sherryl said yes and I was thrilled. I later checked the marriage requirements in Alaska and found a three-day waiting requirement. We wanted to get married during the July 4th celebration, so once again we were up and on the road early. We rode into some freezing rain and we were forced to stop south of Whitehorse, when the rain came down so hard I couldn't see the road. We stopped at a fish camp and got a cabin for \$110. It was primitive with a single baseboard heater. We finally rode out of the rain as we neared Fairbanks. The roads in Canada were a mixture of frost heaves, mud and gravel. We heard that many riders went down. Quite a few were able to bend things back enough to

continue the ride. Some were not as lucky. We saw quite a few bikes at the Harley dealerships in Alaska being repaired and/or crated for shipment home. We pressed on – riding 22 hours straight from that cabin to Fairbanks and then south through Anchorage on our way to Homer. It was dusk for two or three hours and the rest of the time it was daylight. I finally got so tired that I was having trouble staying awake. We stopped at another fish camp and Sherryl convinced me to stop for a few hours; two to be exact, and then we were back on the road.

We arrived in Homer on July 1st shortly before noon as the 46th rider(s) to finish. After checking in at the finish line, we went to the County Clerk's office and placed a motion before the court to waive the three-day waiting period so we could get married during Sunday's July 4th Hoka Hey Party. It was granted and we were married Sunday evening. We purchased custom-made rings from a local craftsman. Jim Red Cloud was my best man, his wife Beth was Sherryl's maid of honor; Whittany, the Hoka Hey Girl, was Sherryl's bridesmaid. In Alaska, anyone can be appointed by the court as a Marriage Commissioner. We asked Judge Sharon Gleason to appoint our friend Dale Galbraith and that was also granted. That was sweet because Dale was a Hoka Hey challenger that went down on his Screamin' Eagle near Douglas, WY and subsequently flew into Homer for the Challenge's conclusion. Dale performed the ceremony against a backdrop of Alaskan glaciers.



We are very happy, yet truly saddened by the many riders that went down and the two deaths. We left Homer on July 6th and took a short ride down the California coast and those magnificent Redwoods. We stopped in Redding, CA and Salt Lake City, UT to visit my friends and then in Bowling Green, TN to visit Sherryl's daughter on our way back to

Florida. This was truly the ride of a lifetime and something Sherryl and I will cherish for the rest of our lives. We hope this gives you a glimpse into our experiences. You should beware because we will be talking about this journey for a very long time. Just ask us!
LOL

Hoka Hey!!

~ Bob and Sherryl Zubaugh, FL