

Cleveland Brown

When I first heard about the Hoka Hey Motorcycle Challenge, I was at a place in my life where the time to participate was not something I could hope for. Fortunately for me, God had other plans. I tried to go one way and he sent me another by taking away all other options until I could see that I had no choice but to go on the journey from Key West, Florida to Homer, Alaska. What I once thought was a race has turned out to be an incredible journey through the human spirit and the path to love, honor and respect.

What made it so special were the hundreds of people I took it with. Although the numbers decreased by nearly three quarters along the way, everyone who made it all the way to Homer was a winner. They all got something out of it that was unique and, in many cases, life changing. In the beginning, they were a group of strangers from various parts of the globe who thought as I did, that they were about to begin a race. Each had their own reasons for being there and each paid a price for what they saw and learned along the way. Two of the riders paid the ultimate price with their lives.

The Hoka Hey taught something I may never be able to describe. It served to help me find my purpose for a brief time. Kelly from New Jersey put it best when I expressed a touch of jealousy for not getting to ride in the Hoka Hey. She looked at me with tears of joy in her eyes and said, "You have the most important job to do. You have to tell the story for all of us." My jealousy was immediately humbled away as I realized how much truth was in her words. It wasn't about me. It wasn't about her. It was about all of us doing something that none of us could do alone. My job is to help them tell their own story.

Jim Red Cloud and his wife, Beth Durham, put the Hoka Hey together to teach people about love, sacrifice, honor, respect, faith and doing more for other people. There were a few who accused them of being in it for less than honorable reasons. To them I'd say, "Bad on ya." After spending time with them and their people, I would say that there are few in this world with such a capacity for goodness. Anyone who takes the time to learn from them will walk away with a sense of duty to serving a higher purpose.

If you look up the meaning of Hoka Hey on the Internet, the most common translation you'll find is, "It's a good day to die." After witnessing it first hand, one can see that it has many meanings. Hoka Hey means: I respect you; let's ride; hello my friend, it's good to see you; prepare for battle; live with honor and die with dignity; and, always do the right thing.

There are people everywhere we look who are suffering and who need help. If we open our hearts, we can't help but to see them with our eyes. We are selfish, ignorant and lost as people when we close ourselves to the plight of others. No matter how well off we may become, there will always be something missing in our lives because we are missing the point. Jim and Beth understand these things and have started a ripple in a pond that has the potential to grow into a tidal wave. If you doubt them, ask the two hundred riders who actually made it to Homer.

~ Cleveland Brown (cameraman)
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