

## **Dennis Yeager**

### The Hoka Hey Motorcycle Challenge: My Story

It all started by taking a trip over to the Harley Davidson shop in Galena, IL in mid-January 2010. I picked up a Full Throttle Magazine and saw the ad for the Hoka Hey Motorcycle Challenge. I then got online and looked up all the info I could find about the Challenge. The more I read about the Challenge, the more I wanted to be involved. I sent in my entrance fee of \$1,000.00 so I could reserve my place in the Challenge, and then I started to see if I could come up with some sponsors. Next I needed to get my bike up to Flying Eagle Motorcycle to check it out and make sure it would be able to make the run of around 14,000 miles. In late March, the bike made the trip to the shop for two new tires and a once-over. That "once-over" ran into a whole new motor and, lots of dollars later, the bike came home in late May. Randy Erdman put the break-in miles on the bike, and I put a few more on before heading out for Key West, FL on June 15th, 2010.

June 11th, 2010

Some of my friends came in from Toledo, OH to help me kick off the start of the Hoka Hey. We all had a little party at Poopy's Pub in Savanna, IL. A few other friends stopped in from around the area to see me off.

June 12th, 2010

The group rode up to the Beowulf M.C. LTD summer party in Darlington, WI, and another good time was had by all. Again, I got to see a lot of other friends that wished me well.

June 14th, 2010

Went through all the donations that were given to me for the Hoka Hey. It came out to be a lot more than I could have hoped for!! I thank each and every one of you that put something into the hat to help me along. (I'm sorry that I didn't make the whole trip, damn accident anyhow.) Some gave as little as \$5.00 and some as high as \$500.00. Thank you all again for your help on this ride.

Here is a list of everyone that gave me a donation, in random order:

Dan Foley, Lena, IL; Flying Eagle Motorcycle, Campbellsport, WI; Jeanette Yeager, Freeport, IL; Bethany Buisker, Freeport, IL; Eastland Motor Sports Inc, Lanark, IL; Dave T. Harlan, Phoenix, AZ; ABATE of Freeport, Freeport, IL; Alden Fehr, Freeport, IL; Brian Wing, Freeport, IL; Bush & Deb Meglitsch, Toledo, OH; John Chionchio, Grant Pass, OR; Lena Fire Department, Lena, IL; Little Johns Tap, Pearl City, IL; Pearl City Fire Department, Pearl City, IL; Polo Fire Department, Polo, IL; Sauk Prairie Harley Davidson, Sauk City, WI; Steinmann Stainless Fab, Inc. Monroe, WI; Titan Tire Workers, Freeport, IL; Uncle Jack Mellnick, Lewisville, TX; Virgil "Wolf" Schulenburg,

Sauk City, WI; Ronald "Trog" Spence, Cambridge, IL; Whitey Iron Horse Tap, Lena, IL; Al & Jayne Buisker, Freeport, IL; Bill & Deb Rosemeier, Pearl City, IL; Dave Bremmer, Dakota, IL; Marjorie Niesman, Pearl City, IL; Richard "Spoon" Lindburg, Cambridge, IL; Richard Westlake, Rockford, IL; Brain & Michelle Norton, Plano, TX; Bruce & Kim Haro, Freeport, IL; Bob & Jill Mellnick, Pearl City, IL; John Bradley, Sheffield, OH; Richard Wilson, Freeport, IL; Robbie Cook, Baileyville, IL; Bob Stewart, Cedarville, IL; Butch Thommen, Warren, IL; Randy & Nancy Pfile, Tripoli, IA; Scott Gerke, Freeport, IL. Along with all the ones that did a lot of praying for me too.

June 15th, & 16th, 2010

Took off for Key West, FL with three bikes loaded into my trailer. Joined by Bill Reynolds, another challenger from Woodstock, IL and Ray Mogensen, from Round Lake, IL who will drive the truck & trailer back home with the help of his wife who is flying into Miami on the 18th. We stopped in Mount Vernon, IL to pick up Terry Noffsinger from O-Fallon, IL. (Also a challenger). It started to rain around Effingham, IL and continued all the way to Nashville, TN. At times it rained so hard we had to slow down to 30 mph on the interstate. We drove straight through to Homestead, FL where we got two rooms at a motel for the night June 16th. The rest this night was needed big time.

June 17th, 2010.

We are now in Key West, FL checking into area motels and camp grounds. Bill & Ray are in the Marriott where everything with the Hoka Hey will be happening. Terry is going to a campground and I am headed to the Quality Inn, which is just across the street from the Marriott. I took a little trip downtown to look around but forgot my camera. (Damn). Back to the motel and then back downtown again. I got to meet Joe Klan from New York City, who is retired from the NYPD. Plus, Arnie Olinger (Oley) & his wife, Sue, from Jacksonville, FL. And a few more people whose names we can't remember. Bethany called to say she made it to Stockbridge, GA for the night. She rode all the way from Freeport. She said she had a lot of rain from Paducah, KY to Nashville, TN also.

June 18th, 2010

Check-in time is 1 pm for me and my bike. There is a reception from 6-9 pm in the ballroom at the Marriott to meet and greet most of the other challengers. We have a mandatory riders meeting June 19th, 5 to 8 pm at the Marriott. Take off time is Sunday June 20th, 2010 with a line-up from 4 to 6 am to take off for Homer, AK. I had breakfast with Oley & his wife. Talked to a man from Cortez, CO. He is 70-years-old and riding all the way. I bought a ballcap from him that said Key West, FL to Homer, AK 2010 7000+ miles. I am seeing more & more & more riders coming into town. More & more names to remember and I'm not doing so well with this. A lot of talk of rule changes, no money, not going to be on TV. Just all kinds of shit. I hope the riders' meeting puts a little better light on things to come? Noon to 2:45 pm to get all checked in. Turns out that I'm #193 and I signed up in Feb. 2010 (I was thinking I was in the 500s or so since I signed up so late). I'm still not sure how many are on the ride yet, or signed up. Word has it only 500

to 850 riders?? Talk has it over 3,000 put in to ride and they would not take them all. I found out that if I would have been at the check-in door at 8 am this morning I could have a lower number to start out the ride, but I waited till 1 pm like I was told to do. Ran into another Chicago Land Rider and a young man named Angle just out of the USMC with time in Afghanistan. Also two men from Milwaukee, WI area. Bethany should be in at anytime now. She got into Key West around 10:45 pm and has ridden in a lot of rain on this trip so far. We were all told that our sign-in number would be our starting number. Well that was not the way it happened; instead it was first come, first served.

June 19th, 2010

Bethany & I went downtown to take some pictures at the southern-most point of the USA. I will be taking some more pictures along the way and in Homer, AK too. Eight to ten days and 8,000 miles later I hope to be in Homer, AK. (Mileage for the ride was anywhere from 8,400 to 9,500 miles). The Riders meeting was just like I thought it would be!! Long and a lot of B.S. The same question over and over again. Some rule changes that I knew were coming down the line. We need to keep all our gas receipts and they need to be turned in at each check point. (It didn't happen that way.) I need to be up by 4:30 am and over to the starting point between 5:00 and 5:30 am.

June 20th, 2010

We are off and running at 6:34 am. We are on a common sense run for the money!! Five hours into it there were two bad accidents. Not sure who or what was in the accident, but it blocked all roads for about one hour. Hotter than hell, and I have been lost a few times. Bike is acting up again. Battery cable came loose, or bad gas, or both. Wrong – the front plug wire came off and it was just setting on top of the plug. I think I have it fixed now. I am way off the trail and I hope I can find my way back to it soon. I am off the trail yet again, it's hard to read and drive at the same time. No mileage on map. Just turn left or right. Roads not marked but I think I'm starting to understand the set up? Made the first check point at Daytona, FL Harley Davidson. I keep losing my riding friends because of being too slow or pulling off for gas, pulling over to read the map or missing the road sign. Maybe two hours sleep last night? 2 am to 4 am in a gas station parking lot.

June 21st, 2010

Picked up about 10 bikes to ride with for a few hours. Yet another accident right in front of us. I didn't see him go down; I know he was trying to slow down to make a right hand turn. Talk has it five accidents and seven bikes out. Six other bikes out due to problems. Pulled into a gas station for gas. Set up camp for the night. It's midnight. It's an old car wash not being used anymore.

June 22nd, 2010

On the road at 5:00 am. Made it to the second check point at Southern Thunder Harley Davidson in South Haven, MS. I and a lot of the other riders are having trouble staying

on the trail. Roads not marked or not named right on the paper. Hot as hell!! Last night, slept a good 4 hours. This helped some with my riding. Picked up 6 other riders that don't like getting lost. They want me to be out in front leading. I'm not sure that was the best thing to do. I too miss a lot of my turns. Oh well, away we go. Jonesburg, AR. 105° in the sun. My bike overheated in town traffic and stopped running 4 times. Lost all the riders that I had picked up earlier today. Started to get a little smarter by picking up a map of AR. Sat down with a highlighter and read the instructions and tried to highlight the route on the map the best we could. Down to 3 riders, including myself, running highway 213 in N.W. AR. Turned right onto 74, slowed down and were discussing whether it was the right turn onto the right road, when the 3rd rider didn't see that we had slowed down and rear-ended me. This whole ride has been slowing down, doing U- turns, missing corners, making wrong turns. Everybody knew we were doing this but the 3rd party rear-ends my bike, knocking me down on my right side and giving me road rash from the middle of my forearm to the top of my shoulder, plus breaking my collar bone in two places. (I think). This happened between 7:30 to 8:00 pm on June 22nd, 2010. A lot of people stopped that were first responders; they called 911 to get medical help and the police. It was a 30-minute ride to the hospital into Harrison, AR. The hospital did not want me there. They took X-rays, but did not clean up my road rash and told me that my collar bone was badly broken. They said I was on my own as they couldn't fix it and that I should go home and see my own doctor. The local county coroner took me to the Quality Inn Hotel. He also owns the towing company that towed my bike & stored it at Yeager's Salvage. (No discounts for having the same last name – damn!) So Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday nights I'm staying in the Quality Inn getting better service and help with my injuries than the hospital ER provided. (More to come of this story.)

June 23rd & 24th, 2010

I made phone calls and got the ball rolling to get help down to Harrison, AR and to get me and my bike back home. Steve Jungen was the lucky one to drive my truck and trailer to pick me up. Steve asked Paul Kaufman to ride along to pick up Bethany in West Memphis, AR (she was on her bike in Dothan, AL at her sister Linda's place). They got into Harrison around 3:30 am Friday. My stay at the hotel was made better by all the girls that work there – Jan Harris, Maia Waters and Christine Miller to name a few. They cleaned up my road rash and put on new bandages. They also brought in food for me and picked up things I needed from Walgreens. Also, the Christian Motorcyclists Association stopped in with some food & fellowship. Trog's half brother stopped in also. Bob Werheye lives only 30 miles from Harrison, AR. A lot of thanks goes out to all of them.

June 25th, 2010

After sleeping a few hours, we loaded up the bike. Got a kick in the nuts from the towing & storage bill, which was \$700.00. Then I paid \$10.00 for the accident report from the AR State Police. We were on the road headed for home at 11:30 am, and were home around 11:00 pm that same night. I have talked to insurance people and my doctor. I have an appointment with him Monday, June 28th, 2010 to see if we can get my collarbone fixed. I will be making insurance adjuster appointments after seeing doctor.

June 26th & 27th, 2010

Home and resting, but in pain. Looking forward to seeing the doctor Monday morning.

June 28th, 2010

Well the doctor said he can't do anything to fix my collarbone. My collarbone is not broken in two places – just shredded in the middle. It will fix itself about 6 to 8 weeks. Back to see the doctor for more X-rays on July 6th. Phone is ringing off the wall from insurance people about every little thing.

July 2nd, 2010

I got a chance to talk to Leon Braden from Columbus, GA. This is the man that rear-ended me on June 22nd. He was able to ride to the hospital in Harrison, AR. He got a motel room for the night and then he rode home to Columbus, GA. This man is 73-years-old. He told me he was black & blue all over his body. He has been kicking himself about what he could have done differently or what he did wrong in the first place. I told him that shit happens. It's time to recover and move on with your life.

July 5th, 2010

Oley makes it into Homer, AK. He was number 25 and was in on Wednesday June 30th. Terry makes it into Homer, AK. He is number 40 and was in on Wednesday June 30th, too. Bill makes it into Homer, AK. Don't know his number, but the day was July 4th. I know that a few more made it in too. Only 110 to 180 made it all the way to Homer, AK. Talk has it that there were around 25 accidents with 3 deaths out of 800 riders?

July 6th, 2010

Back to see the doctor for more X-Rays. I could not see any changes from the 1st X-rays taken on June 22nd, but the doctor said it was doing just fine. I will see him again in three weeks on July 27th for more X-rays.

July 8th, 2010

Took my motorcycle to Flying Eagle Motorcycle for an insurance estimate. I should know something in about a week or so. Now it is just going to take time to get back on my feet again, along with my motorcycle.

July 14th, 2010

I got the estimate back from Flying Eagle Motorcycles for what it will cost to repair the bike. (\$8,039.20). Now I wait for a phone call from the insurance co. to see what they are going to do.

Collarbone is doing better, but I still get a sharp pain when I move it wrong from time to time. Road rash is 95% gone now and I think it will not look all that bad in the long run. You might not be able to tell that I had any road rash when I'm all healed up.

July 19th, 2010

I got a call from Leon Braden's insurance company about taking a look at my motorcycle. It has been sitting at Flying Eagle Motorcycle for the last 12 days now. I am told that someone will be taking a look at it sometime this week yet.

July 22nd, 2010

I got a call from Leon Braden today asking me how I was doing. After talking to him for a few minutes, I found out this is his first accident in the 73 years he has been alive. Now that is a good driving record. (Sorry I was his first accident!)

July 27th, 2010

I went to see my doctor today for more X-rays of my collarbone. They said it is doing fine and that I can go back to work in three weeks. That will be August 16th. Now, if I only had a job to go back to?? ("LOL") The doctor told me that my collarbone pieces are just over one-half inch away from each other. To put it back in a straight line again, it is over one inch apart. I am told that it will fill in and be stronger than before. I can tell you this for sure – it doesn't look like it will fill in at all. I am moving more and more every day and that makes things better in my life too. Still no word from the insurance co. about my bike and what they will, or will not, pay for. I was making phone calls today to both insurance cos. and had no luck in talking to anyone, only got voicemail. I got a phone call late today from American Reliable Insurance Company. After talking to Dennis Connors about the motorcycle I will get a check for \$8,000.00 to fix the bike up. I need to get some paperwork signed by someone with a Notary Public Seal and then send it to Scottsdale, AZ to get the check on the way. Now I get to work on the medical part of the accident. More to come on this story later this year.

July 28th, 2010

Hoka Hey Motorcycle Challenge: William Barclay just took the polygraph in New York City. After hours of questions and yet again another drug test for sedatives, he has passed. William Barclay will receive a wire transfer of 500,000 dollars from Pioneer Bank and Trust of Rapid City, South Dakota directly to his bank account. So we now have a winner of the Hoka Hey Challenge.

August 2nd, 2010

Well I'm somewhat back to normal, whatever normal is anymore. I can still overuse my right arm, and it hurts in the collarbone area when I do overuse it. I will have some scarring on my right arm that will stand out some, but not all that bad. I'm hoping

sometime this week that the check for repairing the bike will come in and Flying Eagle Motorcycle can get started on the repair work. As far as any medical settlement, that will be on going for some time yet.

August 9th, 2010

Well the check to rebuild the bike came in the mail today. Now I need to get the money up to Flying Eagle Motorcycle to get them started on the rebuild job. All the other things are falling into place now. The right collarbone is getting better every day, but the weather is letting me know what is going on. I'm sure down the road in a few years, Uncle Arthur is going to kick my ass! Along with all the other stuff that has happened to me from all the other accidents in my life. Oh yeah, I have had a few accidents over the years. Just how many lives do I have left? Wonder if I'm like a cat with nine lives? I guess only time will tell. Until then, ride safe, ride free, ride happy and ride to live.

As far as the medical part of all this is, it is still in the works. If I see some kind of a settlement by the first of the year, that will be too soon. Life is good living it to the fullest!!!

Will I do the Hoka Hey Motorcycle Challenge again if they have one? I think so, but timing will be everything. I know that some of the things that I didn't like about this challenge will be changed for the next challenge. Remember this was a challenge and a challenge it was. When you think about it, what in your everyday life is not a challenge?

Hoka Hey it's a good day to ride!

Any day that I can throw my leg over my motorcycle is a good day to ride!

~ Dennis "Cleaver" Yeager, Freeport, IL