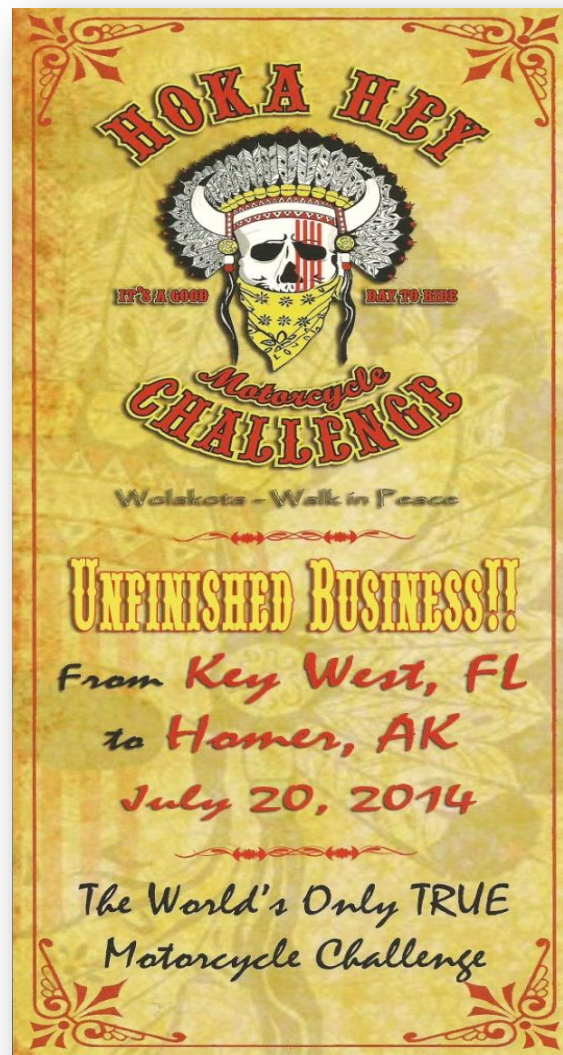


HOKA HEY MOTORCYCLE CHALLENGE 2014

Key West, Florida to Homer, Alaska



Challenger No. 781, Richard Rutherford, aka "Hogdog"

A Note to the Reader

As an avid motorcycle enthusiast, and having completed four of the Iron Butt Association's endurance events while advancing reluctantly into the later years of a life filled with mild adventure, it seemed fitting that this author chose to take part as a challenger in "The Toughest Ride for the Toughest Riders on Earth". As a test of one's stamina, endurance, integrity and determination, the ride through two-lane back roads from Key West, Florida to Homer, Alaska would serve as the summit event of my personal challenges. Drag racing, sky diving, exploring some of the grittier parts of Brazil, light plane piloting while navigating the Yucatan Peninsula, cooking competition, small business ownership, mountaineering, multiple wives; Having undertaken these challenges in younger years, none would match the mental and physical fortitude needed to run the Hoka Hey Challenge.

Although electing not to continue the Challenge through Canada to Alaska, I rode from Key West to Kettle Falls, Washington. Having ridden a round trip diagonally across the lower 48 states (including riding from South Dakota to Key West and returning from Kettle Falls), a total of 8, 600 miles, I exceeded the distance of the Challenge by 1,000 miles.

Being self assured and tending to over analyze, I over-thought the written directions on two occasions, resulting in an unnecessary 300 miles to back track on missed routes. Torrential rains, thunderstorms and lightning, 104 degree heat, bone chilling cold, and lack of sleep all tested my endurance. When in Washington State I became aware that my reaction time and judgment were beginning to diminish, the wisdom of age prevailed and I turned toward home.



Near Home in the Black Hills

Although not completing the entire Challenge, I possess the coveted Challenge Coin and proudly wear the Hoka Hey patches on a leather vest. None of which can be purchased without accepting the challenge. One must earn the right to own them. I have done so. Following is the story of my Challenge.

Richard (Hogdog) Rutherford

Introduction

The words “Hoka Hey” are an English language translation of an expression derived from a Native American war cry in the Oglala Lakota Sioux dialect. The cry, a call to action, was used much like the U. S. Cavalry command of “Charge!” It is most commonly attributed to the widely known war chief, Crazy Horse. The man accredited with writing the previously auditory only Lakota Sioux language is Eugene Buechel. In the 2002 edition of Buechel’s Lakota dictionary the word is “hokahe”.

The Hoka Hey Motorcycle Challenge was founded in 2010 by Elizabeth Durham and her husband, Jim Red Cloud Durham. Jim Red Cloud is a member of the Oglala Lakota tribe and a direct descendent of the war chief Red Cloud. Inspired by the Iron Butt Association, the Durham’s wanted to begin an annual motorcycle endurance event which would try the resolution, integrity, courage and endurance of the toughest motorcycle riders on Earth. With net proceeds intended to benefit residents of the Pine Ridge Reservation, the ride was designed to simulate some of the conditions encountered during the Lakota Sioux treks forced by U.S. Treaties and while following the bison herds in the high plains of Nebraska, Wyoming and South Dakota. With minimal directions rife with ambiguity and uncertainty, the rule to sleep beside your motorcycle, and with a deadline testing your abilities, the Hoka Hey Challenge may be “The Toughest Ride for the Toughest Riders on Earth.” The facts stated above are as I understand them, and have not been verified or approved by any officer of the Hoka Hey LLC, so I apologize for possible errors.

Preparations: I thought the key to a successful ride of this magnitude centered not on how many hours or miles a day I could ride, but rather on how to minimize the time that I was not riding. Therefore, I packed meals for a 10 day run based on hiker’s energy bars, gel packs, beef jerky and Gatorade. My intent was to eat while riding, stopping only for gas, to use a toilet, or to sleep.

The rules did not allow GPS or help from others, so with the route unknown, I packed maps of the contiguous 48 states, the Canadian provinces, and Alaska. For sleeping, my logic was that since I would be warm with leathers and multiple layers beneath while riding, I could sleep in them with only a minimal pad and a homespun waterproof bedroll of lightweight canvas duck. Unfortunately, I did not consider the fact of a hot motorcycle motor and exhaust between my legs and the warmth it would not provide while I attempted sleep. But more on that later.

The bike, a 2009 Harley Davidson Street Glide, went to the shop for a complete tune-up including new tires, spark plugs, a fresh battery, new oils and filters and a thorough checking of all things that could come loose. I packed a 12v air compressor and flat tire repair kit and a replacement headlight bulb as well as tool kit and service manual for the bike.

Equipped, rested, hydrated, determined and optimistic, I was ready. Never mind that fact I am 72 years old.



Day 1, Wednesday, July 16, 2014 882 Miles from Spearfish, South Dakota to Columbia, Missouri:

Pulling the bike out of the garage, the sun was just awakening, tinting the deep blue of night with light grey. Jane and my neighbor, Chuck Rummel, were in the driveway to see me off and I had a wistful moment, thinking of the lonesome road ahead.



Sunrise

Starting out was a motivational challenge. Now that I was actually rolling and envisioning the hours and miles ahead, I wondered if this was such a good idea. As I traveled the forty-five miles to Rapid City the temperature was continually dropping, which I had not anticipated. I pulled over at the Ellsworth AFB exit and put on another layer of clothing. The sun had now turned the eastern horizon golden and with the light came warmth. Soon a comfortable temperature returned.

Traveling at 5 miles per hour above the speed limit, I flew along at 75 or 80 miles per hour most of the day. Stopping for fuel every three hours or so presented a welcome chance to stretch my legs. Between Rapid City and Sioux Falls, South Dakota, there are only a few small communities. The only significant geographical feature appeared as I crossed the Missouri River. Aware that the water beneath the bridge would flow southward until merging with the Mississippi River and then on to the Gulf of Mexico at New Orleans gave thought to the power and tenacity of nature. Nothing during the rest of the day was particularly noteworthy except my surprise at seeing the extent of gambling casino hotels in Omaha, Nebraska. Across the river I could see big name Nevada joints like Harrah's and the Riverboat! Also of interest was the well planned and engineered Rte 485 bypass around Kansas City. That stretch of highway made getting by the KC urban mass a breeze.

The discovery in Columbia, Missouri of a new (to me) hotel chain named Drury Inn beckoned me. Great room, rate and service! Crossing the street to a Ruby Tuesday's restaurant to enjoy four ounces of Tennessee whiskey, Caesar salad and a grilled pork loin, I returned to my room for six hours sleep. Before sunrise, I was rested and again ready to roll.

Day 2, Thursday, July 17 658 Miles from Columbia, Missouri to Kennesaw, Georgia:

I rolled out of Columbia before daybreak, heading East through St. Louis to Mt. Vernon, Illinois where I turned south on Rte 57. Crossing over the Mississippi River at St. Louis, I looked both ways, with images of Mark Twain and Huckleberry Finn in mind. I stopped for a necessary break at a rest area near Rend Lake, IL and got the local history from a nice attendant at the stop. I learned the importance of Rend Lake to the area water resources and associated tourism. It was a pleasant place for my 15 minute stop. Further on down the road, I learned a good lesson about Nashville, Tennessee. Don't go there unless you are flying in and have a limo to the hotel! It was midday, with no construction or accidents, and yet took me about 2 hours to get through town. So much stop and go that my left hand was cramping from grabbing the clutch! I did wave a friendly hello to Willie Nelson, but I don't think he was aware. After passing through Chattanooga and nearing Atlanta, the day was approaching the commuter

hour, so I decided to avoid Atlanta tonight and hole up in a Best Western I saw from the highway in Kennesaw, Georgia. Some more Jack Daniels (this time about 6 oz) and a New York strip steak and I slept well for another night.

Day 3, Friday, July 18 899 Miles from Kennesaw, Georgia to Key West, Florida:

Hitting the road again just before daybreak, I was afforded a beautiful drive through Atlanta. The highway goes through the middle of the City, but at that hour there was no traffic and the building outside lights were still lit, illuminating most of the high-rise structures. It presented interesting architecture and lighting. Reminded me a little of the sight of San Francisco at night, without the hills. Smoking along the Interstate, I stopped at a rest area (another necessary!) near Gainesville, FL and met a disabled Vet who was selling military ball caps and other memorabilia for a local disabled Vets charity. He had some caps appropriate for a non-military patriot so, of course, I bought one and threw in another \$20 for the cause. I ride these highways, enjoying my freedom and security, because of folks like him.

I took the West route through Florida, which led me across the Everglades National Park in the waning daylight hours. After many alerts for Panther Crossings which included some lighted warning signs supposedly indicating wildlife on the road, I was disappointed not to see a panther. "Black" panther (4 legged!) came to mind, but I believe the panthers in that area look similar to the Cougar or Catamount of other USA locales. Anyway, boogying on down the road, I crossed Key Largo at last light, looking all around expecting to see Jimmy Buffet or the ghost of Bogart. Another disappointment. Route 1 through the Florida Keys is no fun at night. Imagine 120 miles at 35 mph with heavy traffic. Danged tourists!

I pulled into the Marriott in Key West at about 10:00 PM, local time. Too late for dinner, but 3 Jack doubles and some beef jerky from my bag and I was fine!!

Day 4, Saturday, July 19 Key West, Florida:

This Marriott must be one of their highest rated hotels. Marble tiled floors, a firm yet plush bed, and thick bathrobe and towels pampered me. The next morning, registration with the Hoka Hey staff was a pleasant experience. Beth Durham welcomed me as her "South Dakota rider", had me sign the necessary liability release forms and gave me the patches and decals. Lastly, she shook my hand passing the cherished Hoka Hey Challenge coin from her palm to mine. Hoohoo! Now if I can just do the ride.

Since for me it was unimaginable to visit Key West without stopping by the Blue Parrot bar to see if I could get a glimpse of the ghost of Ernest Hemmingway, I went down to the garage to head the Harley downtown. As it happened, there was a Hemmingway Festival in full swing this weekend and parking on the narrow streets anywhere near the Blue Parrot was not possible. I did get to give a salutary wave to the ghost as I passed by. This little foray to Key West old town confirmed that, unless you are a boater, Key West is good place to visit just once.

Returning to the Marriot parking garage, I met riders Newton Pereira and Stan and Debbie Kistler. All had ridden the Hoka Hey before, so their comments and ideas were welcomed. "NewTONE" was most interesting as he is an immigrant from Brazil. Having live there years ago, I could still remember a few words and phrases in Portuguese. "NewTONE" is the Brazilian pronunciation of his name. And therefore, his nickname "Tone". Later on we rode together for a while, experiencing a nasty night in torrents of rain and lightning. Again, more on that later.

That evening the Marriot lived up to its reputation as having the best restaurant in Key West. The Venison Osso Buco from New Zealand Red Deer and a bottle of Argentine Malbec would have delighted the palate of a gourmet, much less that of a South Dakota Black Hills boy.

Despite the creature comforts of the sumptuous room, sleep was fleeting. Anticipation of the start at 6:00 AM made certain of that.

Day 5, Sunday July 20, 775 Miles from Key West, Florida to Panama City, Florida:

Arising at 5:00 AM I showered and shaved, knowing that this may be my last chance for 8 to 10 days. After the little remaining packing, I carried the bags down to the bike, and then went to the hotel registration desk to check out. Afterwards I rolled the bike out into the departure lineup of about 60 motorcycles. Beth Durham passed out the direction sheet to the first checkpoint in Lawton, Oklahoma and we all waited for the police traffic control to get us out on the highway and rolling.

By the time we pulled out the sun had not yet jumped above the horizon, but lit up the Keys enough to see the surroundings. The light rain falling was only sporadic and served to cool, rather than hinder. It soon stopped as we rolled. I had taken the instructions and the philosophy of this Challenge to heart. We were directed to obey all laws and speed limits and warned that a speeding ticket would be a disqualification. Traveling at 5 mph above the speed limit, I almost got off the Harley to see what the matter was. The other riders were passing me like I was standing still. I had not checked the Florida panhandle weather forecast or I would have understood why they were speeding. A front was approaching and would hit the Pensacola/Panama City area around 9:00 PM.

Thru the Everglades once more, looking for panthers, I eventually rolled onto US98 and headed north and along the panhandle toward Panama City. At about 10:45 PM I pulled into a gas station to refuel and found Newton and the Kistler's. We all decided to take a rest and lay down on the pavement next to the station building, away from the pumps. Just after dropping off to sleep a diesel tanker pulled in about 10 feet away from us to unload. Okay, fine. He finished and pulled away just as the rain began. We snuggled up closer to the building under a small eave and tried once more to sleep. Fat chance! The rain turned torrential and the lightning thunderous. We moved our bikes and ourselves to the pump islands under cover of the canopy to stay dry. Imagine trying to sleep, seated with your butt on concrete and your back against a gas pump. Needless to say, it was not possible. We talked about riding on, but the rain was so heavy and the runoff accumulating so fast that it was really unsafe to attempt to ride. Back up against the pumps again!

Day 6, Monday, July 21 349 Miles from Panama City, Florida to Jackson, Mississippi:

At 5:00 AM it was still raining, but light enough to ride so we took off in search of a coffee shop for some much needed sustenance and about a gallon of strong coffee. At 6:15 we stopped at a Waffle House for 30 minutes then off again, sleepless but with warm food and coffee inside we were ready to continue the Challenge. At 8:00 AM we stopped in Magnolia Springs, Alabama for gas and all agreed that we needed a power nap to be able to ride safely. With a bench for a bed and the spread of Magnolia trees for a roof we slept for 40 minutes. Riding on, we crossed the bay into Mobile and there my odyssey for the day began.

I was leading our little pack of four Challengers when I misread a sign and took a left turn, watching in the mirror while the others turned right. "Wonderful". Okay, I'll speed ahead, find a place to turn around and rejoin them. What a joke! My wrong turn took me onto a freeway in a large City on roads I did not know with reconstruction projects and detours everywhere. After about 15 minutes of frustration trying to find my way back, I turned on what I thought was the right way only to find myself heading into a tunnel and over a bridge with no off ramp before being back across Mobile Bay into Florida. By the time I got turned around and stopped to review the directions, the others had continued on and were now over an hour ahead of me. "So long, pals". "Good luck and ride safe", I thought as I headed north, correctly on US 98. Here, the odyssey deepened.

Going through Mobile on a business route portion of US 98, I noticed a motorcycle behind me. "Another Hoka Hey Challenger" I thought and rode on. Soon a red signal light stopped me and the bike pulled alongside. I looked over at a beautiful Black Pearl Harley Ultra Glide with all the bells and whistles and black braided grip lariats hanging down. Astride the Harley was a woman to match the bike. If Vogue magazine cover was ever to feature a biker, there she was. "I've heard about you guys" she said, referring to the Hoka Hey rocker displayed on my vest. "Where are you going?" I replied, "Alaska, want to go?" and roared off as the light changed. Caught again at the next light, she said, "I'd like to hear more." I told her I'd be stopping for gas in an hour or so and we could talk then, if she wanted to tag along. This time I opened the throttle hard all the way as I took off. "I'll be damned", I thought as I watched in the mirror while she stayed right with me.

Somewhere near Hattiesburg we pulled into a gas station and both fueled the bikes. I told her about the Challenge. She seemed to like all she heard except the part about sleeping on the ground. "I can't do that", she said. "I need a motel." I told her that I needed to stop at a Harley dealer in Jackson and we could talk some more there. She rode well, and hard when I hit 90 to get around some trucks. We stayed together, into Jackson and she used her GPS to get us to the Harley dealer. I confirmed again that a motel was not an option for me and that she wouldn't be able to keep up if she checked into motels. I left her thinking as I went into the shop to solve a gas cap seal issue. As I took care of the bike, I was curious of what the next step would be. When I came out, ready to ride, she was gone. Having ridden about half the length of Mississippi together, the "Mysterious Temptress" had gone her own way without a word, as mysteriously as she had appeared in Mobile. Well, I thought, "Good luck and ride safe, lone ranger." "Keep the shiny side up!"

By now, it was 7:00 PM and I had made only 350 miles and that with only 30 minutes sleep since the day before and 1,100 miles ago. I needed to lie down. Driving alone around Jackson, Mississippi at dusk looking for a safe place to sleep, I became acutely conscious of the degree of my weariness and my decision not to pack a sidearm. Was I imagining things or was my concealed carry permit burning a hole in my wallet? After riding around for about an hour searching with no luck for a safe place to sleep, I was about to head back to the Harley dealership when I thought, "To hell with it." and checked into another welcome Drury Inn. I must confess that I did look around the parking lot, curious about that Black Pearl Harley. All is well. It was not there.

Day 7, Tuesday July 22, 743 Miles from Jackson, Mississippi to Lawton, Oklahoma:

While the motto of the ancient Scottish clan of Rutherford is "Nec Sorte Nec Fato" meaning "Neither by chance nor by fate" it was nonetheless easy for me to think that my fate for the day was due to an outside influence of some sort. Had I not stopped for rest I would have gone through a beautiful section of the Challenge route in the dark. Leaving the Drury Inn outside of Jackson at about 8:00 AM I entered the Natchez Trace Parkway. This is a highway reaching from Nashville, Tennessee to Natchez Mississippi, following early trails first set by bison and other game as they moved with the seasons in search of grazing sites. Later traveled by Native Americans and settlers it eventually became a paved highway and preserved by our National Park System. It allows no thru truck traffic and has only a few points of access along the way. Riding under a canopy of trees stretching from both sides of the road the morning sun cast intriguing shadows. With virtually no traffic and the unlimited scenic views I seemed to be following the "trace" of the bison astride a thundering stallion. Magical. The Natchez Trace Parkway should be on the bucket list of us all, and I am thankful to Beth Durham for establishing the Hoka Hey route along its way.

Coming up on US82, I turned westward to travel across Mississippi, Arkansas and Oklahoma to the first checkpoint at the Harley Davidson dealership in Lawton. Another 60 miles or so along the US82 and I stopped for gas in the town of Winona. After filling the tank and a brief stop in the station I was swinging a leg over when a voice behind me said "How far you riding?" I turned and there was a BMW rider with the square tin saddlebags and enough padding to be road racing. We talked for a bit and I learned that Robert Wimer was riding from Georgia to Santa Fe, New Mexico. He was very much interested in the Hoka Hey Challenge and we wound up riding together until I turned north in Texarkana. The BMW is a finely engineered motorcycle but he had the decency to follow behind my American-made icon, so I forgave him his European iron. As I turned into Texarkana proper, another brief odyssey unveiled.

While stopped at a light, a car pulled alongside on my right. A very large guy with long braided hair and about a gallon of tattoo ink stuck an arm the size of one of my legs out the window and asked, "Where you from?" Immediately judging it unwise not to answer, I said "South Dakota". He waved that massive arm, indicating that I should pull over. I followed him onto a side street and pulled up at the back left of the car, staying on my Harley with the motor idling. You know, fast getaway if needed. He got out of the car and said "Riding alone and wearing a 3-patch vest of an unknown MC is not a good idea around here." I educated him on the Hoka Hey Challenge and told him "Hoka Hey is not an MC and

this is not a 3-patch vest. Take a look, there are 3 rockers and a Native American Deaths Head.” If that intimidated him any he didn’t show it. Anyhow, he softened up, advised me he was with the Hells’ Angels, told me to “watch my back” and beware of “brown” clubs from this area. I suppose he was referring to the Banditos or Mongols MC, whom I didn’t think had clubs in Arkansas, but I didn’t belabor the point. Incredulously, he then thanked me for stopping as I let out the clutch and pulled away. I also was not intimidated, but I did look around a bunch until I was well along on AR32 west. I also began to wonder if wearing the Hoka Hey patches while riding alone in some venues was such a good idea.

I rode on, pulling into Lawton, Oklahoma at about 2:20 AM, Wednesday; I rode around for about 20 minutes on bad directions, looking for the Harley Davidson dealership which was the first checkpoint. Finally, I pulled alongside a cab and asked the driver where the dealership was. I was only about 2 blocks away. It had been a long day again and getting the kinks out of my knees and the legs to straighten took more than a few steps.

Day 8, Wednesday July 23, 444 Miles from Lawton, Oklahoma to Oakley, Kansas:

The Lawton Harley dealership is a class act. A mechanic, the parts manager and a store manager were on duty to sign off the Hoka Hey riders as they came in during the night. I asked them to look at the gas tank cap seal issue which had not been solved in Jackson, and to check the tire pressures. They took care of these at no cost. They pointed out a plush leather sofa in the store to sleep on if I wished. Looking at the check in log, I saw that Newton was only about 4 hours ahead. After a sandwich and a couple of cups of coffee I told them I’d take off. They pointed to a guy sleeping on the sofa and said he wanted to ride together with me. They had earlier estimated my arrival, based on the USFleet tracker. These GPS transmitters were equipment required by the Hoka Hey rules. I took one look at Chuck Marble, Hoka Hey rider No. 85 asleep and looking bushed. I decided to catch a power nap myself and crashed on the adjoining sofa. Two hours later I woke Chuck and said “Screw it let’s ride!”



Me, Chuck & My Ride

We rolled out of town around 5:30 AM, riding through the wildlife preserve northeast of Cache, Oklahoma just after sunrise and were rewarded with bison nearby and a flyby attack on Chuck of a turkey. I was trailing and got to see the event. What a hoot! I thought Chuck was in for an early Thanksgiving dinner! The directions were misleading (or maybe just wrong) on OK54W and we headed down a cow path, seeing motorcycle tracks in the dirt. They apparently had been as deceived as we were. We soon returned to the right direction and continued through the day.

Riding north on US83 we encountered about 20 miles of gravel in a road reconstruction. We managed to keep the rubber down, but it was challenging here and there. We later heard of a fellow Challenger who flipped his Harley somewhere on this stretch. We arrived in Oakley, Kansas at about midnight. Chuck showed off his bike-attached hammock, smiling as he swung into sleep. I grabbed a piece of asphalt with my bedroll and managed some sleep. This night I learned of my error on keeping warm on cold asphalt.

Day 9, Thursday July 24, 563 Miles from Oakley, Kansas to Hermosa, South Dakota:

After biscuits and gravy at a Flying J truck stop (Heaven!) we headed north again on US83 as the day began to soar to near record high temperatures. Rolling through Kansas and into Nebraska, we had no idea what we would encounter about 25 miles from South Dakota. We refueled at Thedford, Nebraska and rode towards Valentine. About 5 miles before Valentine, I spotted Hoka Hey logo on a guy leaning against a trike alongside the road. Pulling over, we found Garry, rider #619, out of gas, a disabled trike and in the later stages of heat exhaustion. We got him to drink some Gatorade, hooked a ¼ inch nylon line wrapped 4 times from Chuck's bike to the trike, and with me riding shotgun we towed him to Valentine at about 5 mile per hour on a 2 lane road with dirt shoulders. Need I say, I hate trucks, big trucks?! In 104 degree temperature, we made it to a service station with a food mart and got Garry inside. The



Helping Garry

folks were very concerned and helpful. We put ice on his neck and water down his throat and he began to recover. I believe he had been just shy of full blown heat stroke. We stayed until we were certain that Garry was okay and that he had resources and a tow rig on its way to take him to Black Hills Harley in Rapid City, South Dakota to fix his trike.

Flyin' down the highway, as the truckers say, we rode on up US83 to SD44 and turned left headed for the Pine Ridge Reservation. We rode on, getting rained on, dodging lightning, stopping to get gas (Sure glad we had Hoka Hey logos showing. Some of those young braves looked like they might consider getting even for their great grandfathers!) We stopped to visit the Wounded Knee memorial and continued on into Hermosa, South Dakota. Grabbing a hammock (Chuck's wisdom) and another piece of cold asphalt for me, we attempted to sleep.



Wounded Knee Memorial

Flyin' down the highway, as the truckers say, we rode on up US83 to SD44 and turned left headed for the Pine Ridge Reservation. We rode on, getting rained on, dodging lightning, stopping to get gas (Sure glad we had Hoka Hey logos showing. Some of those young braves looked like they might consider getting even for their great grandfathers!) We stopped to visit the Wounded Knee memorial and continued on into Hermosa, South Dakota. Grabbing a hammock (Chuck's wisdom) and another piece of cold asphalt for me, we attempted to sleep.

Day 10, Friday July 25, 442 Miles from Hermosa, South Dakota to Dubois, Wyoming:

Up at the crack of dawn (I wonder how the phrase originated) and after a Flying J shower we headed on up the road. Through Keystone, a roadside stop for pictures at Mt. Rushmore, and through Custer, we arrived in Newcastle, Wyoming for a welcome coffee break with wife Jane. She had driven up from Spearfish to meet us and show support. Bless her heart! We headed on to Casper, WY by way of Wright, and missed a frontage road turn about 25 miles north of



Jane & I in Newcastle

Casper. Stopping for gas in Casper, we discussed the missed frontage road and elected to go back to find the road to comply with the Hoka Hey directions. The first of 300 unnecessary miles of re-tracing our steps! Ugh!! Heading for Great Falls, Montana we rode west on WY26 to Shoshoni. At about 9:00 PM we were thinking of rest and came upon a rest area a few miles before the Idaho State line. While Chuck hung his hammock (the dog!) I looked for a place on the soft grass to bed down. Seeing sprinklers and not wanting an unscheduled shower, I was walking back to the parking lot for another asphalt mattress when I found a deer foreleg lying next to the sidewalk. Chewed off at the knee, the leg made me think, "Wonderful, now I've got to watch for a hungry wolf in the area". I pushed the thought to the back of my mind and slid into my bedroll, armed with my can of bear mace. This was another time I regretted my choice not to pack a sidearm!

The nights were getting colder and restful sleep less plentiful. Not to mention, I was longing for a full blown air mattress. Excuse the pun!

Day 11, Saturday July 26, 406 Miles from Dubois, Wyoming to Great Falls, Montana:



Cold Riding

Up in the morning before sunrise with the air cold enough for a balaclava, we headed towards the Tetons. Through that iconic park and into Yellowstone we stopped at the Old Faithful Geyser. By now we knew that we were nearly at the back of the pack, and Chuck had never seen the geyser. Both agreeing that this should be his chance, we stopped. I was drifting off to sleep while we sat on a log to watch Old Faithful and I knew this was a sign to nap. Chuck fiddled with his iPad, or whatever electronic communicator gizmo he had while I caught 40 winks. On our way once more, we admired Mammoth Hot Springs caldron as we passed out of the Park's north entrance. We stopped in Gardiner at a hot truck diner for the best shredded beef tacos I'd ever tasted. I licked my fingers clean, drained a can of lemonade and we raced on down the road again. So much for my beef jerky! The rest of the way into Great Falls, Montana to the Harley checkpoint was uneventful and we pulled in about sundown to find the dealership closed and deserted. Those guys need to get a lesson from their counterparts in Lawton! Anyway, after sending Beth a text message, she was able to roust an employee who showed up to let us in to sign the checklist and get the new directions to the checkpoint in Prince George, British Columbia. We were given access to a fenced-in area with a wooden stage to sleep on. It was a bit better than concrete and asphalt, but still not enough to write home about! Another fitful night of restless sleep. The effect of the accumulation of sleeplessness had not yet peaked and I mentally followed the route ahead as I tried to sleep. With four days of averaging only 463 miles per day, I was way behind schedule. With this fact in mind, and the degree of tiredness affecting me, a positive attitude was difficult. Oh well, sunrise brings a new day and the Harley is running strong. I thought, "Quit your sniveling, Hogdog, and let's ride!"



Old Faithful

Day 12, Sunday July 27, 635 Miles from Great Falls, Montana to Eureka, Montana:

After a breakfast of energy bar, caffeine gel pack and Gatorade, we once more hit the road before sunrise. Enjoying beautiful scenery around Glacier National Park and into Flathead National Forest, with sunshine and moderate temperature, we gobbled up the miles. The mileage this day would be almost up to the schedule. Too damned bad that 250 miles of it was backtracking to cover a missed route! I didn't see it at the time, but this was a good example of the impaired judgment beginning to affect me. Thinking back, it reminded me of a time when I banked my Cherokee airplane to the left instead of correctly to the right. That time I was headed out over the Monterey Bay into the darkness of the Pacific Ocean at night until I looked back and saw the lights of San Jose illuminating the error. Over confident and tired, I had not turned on the navigational radios. Stupid? Nah! Had to be impaired judgment, right? I had flown all the way from Acapulco, Mexico that day and was fatigued. Today, I misinterpreted the directions and the map. An error in and of itself, but I missed a clue at a critical intersection and bypassed Flathead Lake instead of traveling around the lake. The error gnawed away at me as we rode, and I made another error. Instead of stopping to review the route, we went another 50 miles north to Eureka, Montana. Eureka is only about 9 miles from the Canadian border. Close enough that the local speech accent sounded like we had crossed the border.

Chuck and I then reviewed the situation. I thought that I was already disqualified as a "Finisher" of the Challenge by staying in a motel in Jackson, Mississippi, and was in favor of not returning to go around Flathead Lake, the largest fresh water lake West of the Mississippi. Chuck, who was on his 5th Hoka Hey Challenge after "finishing" all prior events, would not accept being disqualified by missing the route. He suggested that we call Beth to see about a dispensation for the Jackson overnight, thereby removing my assumed disqualification. After explaining the circumstances to Beth, she granted the exemption on the grounds of my honesty and that I had chosen the motel over the street out of a concern for personal safety. Fine! Back on the bikes and down to Flathead.

Getting back to Eureka around midnight, we stopped at the gas station where we had been earlier, before heading back to Flathead Lake. Chuck rigged up his hammock and I grabbed a piece of lawn for my bedroll. Damp but soft, it was a luxury. I had come to despise paved mattresses.

Day 13, Monday July 28 347 Miles from Eureka, Montana to Kettle Falls, Washington:

Today, I arose at 5:30 AM to thaw out. Chuck was sleeping so soundly in his hammock that I left him alone until 7:30 when I gave him a nudge and said again, "Let's ride!" Heading west along MT37 and my old favorite, US2, we rode through the Kootenai National Forest. Named for a Native American Tribe and pronounced "cootnye", the area has interesting historical facts left out of any school history book I ever read. Or did I just not read that chapter?? Possible. Anyway, we pulled into Bonners Ferry, Idaho then went south through Sandpoint and over into rural Washington as far as Spokane before heading north once more. Traveling through the Spokane Indian Reservation and passing townships

with colorful names like Tumtum and Wellpinit, we rode for nearly 100 miles along the Columbia River. Beautiful, but I was having difficulty concentrating and was constantly yawning. Not good! The accumulated effect of no sleep was beginning to bother me and I started to think of the wisdom of continuing.

As I rode on, I thought of the options. Stopping to get a night of sound sleep would give me the needed rest, but was not an option for being a "Finisher". At the temperatures this far north, a parking lot bedroom with a paved mattress wouldn't get the job done. While riding and contemplating the possibilities I thought of the errors in judgment the fatigue had caused. Suddenly, while rounding a curve at 60 miles per hour, the affect on reaction time jumped up to bite me. I had been riding through deer country always with the deer alert whistling. Installed for this trip, its function was to stop deer in their tracks while they considered the possible danger before jumping to run. Their danger? Hah! What about Hogdog and his Harley? Anyway, it worked. This mature doe stopped in her tracks broadside in the road. With the deer facing to my left, her butt was a big target straight ahead of me. No problem. Enough pavement to the right and with a quick hard push on the right grip I'd be around her. All good, except that my reaction time had slowed and by the time I began to react I had to put the bike in a slide to the right just to try to miss her. Almost. As I slowed, the doe stood, still no doubt trying to figure what the hell I was doing. The Harley was skidding, leaning to the right and about to go down when I bumped into her butt. I slammed into her with my left leg and the footboard taking the blow. It knocked her sideways but not down, and the impact righted the bike, pointing it straight down the road again. All in about 5 seconds. I had down-shifted 3 gears, hit the brakes, slid, and bumped the deer without killing the doe or going down. Sound good? Nope. I was two seconds too late. The next day the only evidence was the side of my left calf looking a bit like an eggplant. I had wasted 2 or 3 seconds before reacting. Disbelief of the sight ahead? Fatigue? Whatever, I was lucky!

Chuck was out of sight around the next curve when this happened. Without physical evidence at that time, I chose not to tell him of the event. Perhaps out of embarrassment? Whatever! But in any case, I decided at that moment that I was done. A few miles further on we pulled into Kettle Falls, Washington. Both needing gas, we stopped at a station, and I put the exclamation point on my decision



Chuck & I at Kettle Falls

not to continue. I dropped the bike! I rode up a sharp incline intending to u-turn at the top to pull alongside Chuck. Turning slowly on the steep slope, the bike began to lean downhill into the turn and I put out my left foot for support. By the time my foot touched the ground the bike was too far over to stop the lean and down it went.

We stood the bike back up as I tried to hide my embarrassment. Then and there I told Chuck I was calling it a day! I knew that he would continue and I expressed my guilt feelings for his continuing alone. Although, why should it matter? He rode alone for the first two days. Anyway, I said "So, long. Ride safe" and went looking for motel.

Day 14, Tuesday July 29 356 Miles from Kettle Falls, Washington to Rock Creek Lodge, Montana:

I chose one of the two 1950's style motels and went looking for food and drink. These folks in Kettle Falls don't get out much, with good reason. There was but one place to eat. Good old café. Must be owned by the same people that own the motel. Anyway, I had some salmon, probably flown in from Alaska and a bit of good ole Jack Daniels. Back at the motel, I sprawled on the inner spring mattress and slept for 9 hours straight. After looking for a breakfast place with no luck, I munched a Clif Bar, sucked down a caffeine gel pack and hit the road about 9:00 AM.

Heading East on W20, the scenery was beautiful as I rode through the Colville National Forest and down the mountain to the Pend Oreille River. I followed the river on into Idaho and around Lake Pend Oreille. Pronounced "ponderay", the name means "hanging from the ear". The French gave the name to a local Native American Tribe who wore things hanging from their ear lobes, hence the name. Lake Pend Oreille resulted from massive flooding when the ice age began to melt and is still overwhelming today.



Typical Scenery

Following US200 around the lake and on down to Missoula, Montana, I found a route that should be another bucket list item. Following Lake Pend Oreille until it dwindled to become the Clark Fork River, the geographic scenery is continually changing, with really beautiful views along the entire route. Later, I was interested to learn that the river eventually feeds into Flathead Lake. Just north of Missoula, in the Rattlesnake Wilderness, I turned right on US93 for the last few miles of two-lane sightseeing I would enjoy.

I was tired and longed to get home. Were the 72 years of age catching up? At Missoula I rode onto Interstate 90 which would take me all the way to Spearfish. While traveling the Interstate at 80 miles per hour, I began to live up to my Iron Butt Association patch. Mile Eater! West of Missoula, near the town of Clinton (Poor folks. They must have been the butt of many a joke.) I began to see billboards advertising the "Testy Festy" at Rock Creek Lodge. The annual testicle festival there was just beginning. Featuring breaded deep fried calf gonads, sometimes called "mountain oysters", the Testy Festy reminded me of the Holtville Ball Fry 50 years ago in the Imperial Valley of California, and the annual Testicle Festival in Beulah, Montana that Jane and I had attended last year. The allure was too great. I pulled into the Rock Creek Lodge at about 7:00 PM to spend the night. The ball fry did not begin until the next day, but the cold beer and smoked turkey legs did just fine, and the good folks there gave me a camp site for the night at no charge. Thick grass for a mattress is almost as good as a real bed, when you are worn out.



Day 15, Wednesday July 30, 620 Miles from Rock Creek Lodge, Montana to Spearfish:

For this day, tired and homesick, and flying down Interstate 90, there is not much to write about. Butte, Bozeman and Billings, Montana and on into Wyoming. Sheridan, Buffalo and Gillette, Wyoming. Nothing but more towns to cruise through. Finally, Sundance and Beulah, Wyoming and I

could feel home approaching. Ten miles to the South Dakota State line and another 20 to Spearfish. Hooohooo! Pulling into the driveway at home, I was greeted by a huge banner across the garage door stating, "Welcome Home, Hogdog". The sight tugged at my heart strings for just a moment. I stopped the bike and sat there. Silence. No one in sight. I was about to get off, walk up and ring the doorbell, when Janie came out. She had been following me all along on USFleet Tracking and it showed me still in Sundance. No way! I was cruising 80 and twisting the throttle when I went by the Kid's place.



With the Hoka Hey patched vest on my back, the Hoka Hey Challenge coin nestled in my wallet, and 8,596 miles on the speedometer I felt I had met the Challenge. Not being a "Finisher" does not bother me. For those who may fault my achievement I say, "Wait until you are 72 years old. Get on a Harley and retrace the route I covered, averaging over 600 miles a day." Hoka Hey!!

