

# MIDNIGHT RIDER ON A GRAVEYARD RUN

## FORWARD:

My name is Koz Mraz, I'm a moto-journalist writing a story about the eight million Americans who work the graveyard shift. I was intrigued by these night shifters and graveyard tanker yankers. Where do midnight riders eat and sleep while traversing the dark tarmac at witching hour. This story is about Truckers, men and women delivering precious cargo. And of course there are the outlaws, hijackers, thieves, prostitutes and last call for alcohol desperados drunk driving one eyed blind. Finally, the legions of highway patrol protecting innocent travelers. I was on a mission to write their story but the longer I rode the deeper and darker the story became and what I found horrified me. What is this bloody trail of brutally murdered women called the Corridor of Death? 500 women murdered along Highway 40. Who is abducting 2000 people a day, half a million people in the U.S yearly and what are the motives? These questions, and many more, I never knew existed now haunt my dreams.

## BECOMING A MIDNIGHT RIDER

Just how does one prepare to become a Midnight Rider on motorcycle? I asked two-time Hoka Hey first finisher and friend Will Barclay. The consummate Midnight Rider, Will Barclay rode 8,500 miles of secondary roads from the Florida Keys to Homer Alaska and crossed the finish line almost a full day ahead of the pack winning the half-million-dollar payoff. He did it in 194 hours and only 10 of those hours his wheels weren't turning. What does Will Barclay do to prepare for all night rides?



## WILL BARCLAYS 10 TIPS TO BEING A MIDNIGHT RIDER

- 1. Light Up Your Ride:** Get accessory running lights, side lights, low lights HID lights, reflectors. Add any pair of HID lights and you will own the night.
- 2. Carry Small Flashlights:** "I started The Hoka Hey with half a dozen small led lights tethered to my coat, as zipper pulls on my tank bag, and in my pockets. I finished with one. I particularly like the dim ones so that I can examine an instrument or a map without as much damage to my night vision" Will stated.
- 3. Wear Reflective Clothing:** Today's technology affords good looking gear that lights up like a Christmas tree when hit by headlights.
- 4. Expect the Worst Weather:** Its gonna get cold, if you need heated gear get it, especially for your hands.
- 5. Be Mentally and Physically Prepared:** Reset your internal clock by staying up all night and sleeping all day.
- 6. Have Food and Water Accessible:** Keep a tank bag of easily opened snacks and water always easily accessible when riding. "I carry MRE's. Meals Ready to Eat, also an apple does more to wake you up than does a cup of coffee" stated Will.
- 7. Plan Fuel Stops:** Some fuel vendors close for the night. In some states it is unlawful for them to leave their self-serve pumps powered unless there is an attendant present. Carry a one-gallon fuel can in a saddlebag.
- 8. Clear Field of View:** "Make sure that you can look over, not through your



windshield. crazed, cracked, pitted or dirty windshields that are acceptable in daylight can be a true hazard at night, especially if it rains. Make sure you can look at the road 50 yards ahead and I carry a microfiber cloth to wipe and clean the top few inches of the windshield while riding" Will said.

- 9. Full face Helmet and Earplugs:** Full faced enhanced aerodynamics, enables phone communications and protects from inclement weather. Earplugs further reduced noise and stress.
- 10. Use GPS Tracking:** Will suggests using US Fleettracking. Their GPS system was used in the last Hoka Hey Motorcycle challenge. It tracks speed and location in real time and is an amazing tool for riders safety and time confirmation. Plus truckers use the CB (Citizens Band) regularly and suggest I get one for the trip. Pretty cool, "breaker breaker see any smokys Bandit"! I can eavesdrop on the trucker chatter for weather and Smokey's. He also suggests a deer whistle.

## WHERE DO MIDNIGHT RIDERS SLEEP?

Hotel/Motels cater to 9 to 5ers, so where will I sleep in the daytime during my six nights of travel? It's called *Early Check-In* and hotel/

motels can only accommodate you if they have a room that wasn't booked that day. Legally they cannot re-book a room within a 12 hour cycle. They'll only know the very night you need your room if it's available and will alert housekeeping so you're not bothered during the day. Carry good earplugs and an eye mask. Midnight riders lose housekeeping services if you stay more than one night. You better know your route, potential motels and have their phone numbers in your cell phone.

## NIGHT ONE: THE LONELY ROAD LONG BEACH CA TO LAS CRUCES NM -762 MILES

I leave Long Beach at 8:00 PM and plan an 8:00 am stay in Las Cruces New Mexico, 762 miles away for my first days sleep. I will eat all meals and gas up at truck stops, my motorcycle is locked and loaded and leave on a full moon to soak up heavens fluorescence. I pass Palm Springs in a blink of an eye... nothing but open desert. My first gas stop is in Coachella T/A Travel Center 226 miles, 3.3 hours and 5.2 gallons later. Gas up, have a bite to eat at coffee and a smoke and peruse the scene around me.

Truck stops are small cities solely dedicated to road nomads with laundry machines, men's and women's showers, TV and movie rooms, wireless internet access, copies, fax machines, driver's lounges and trucker stores. They sell every kind of fuel and take every kind of credit card. I walk around astounded at how many people are here.

Back on the road m thoughts turn dark and I feel out of sync, like a prop in some bizarre Salvador Dali painting. People die on these deserted highways every day and I am completely alone in this darkness. It's a dangerous place for many reasons. One momentary lapse of concentration and the motorcycle is hurled into some unknown abyss completely undetected. It could be weeks, months before my body is found. The ever impending possibility of traffic accidents and the unforeseen shadows my thoughts.

**BENSON ARIZONA:** Officers found the body of

a man who had been struck and killed on Interstate 10 near Benson this morning.



**SPARKS NEVADA:** Police identify a woman killed by a semi-trailer truck at a truck stop on Interstate 80 but still seek the offender.

**WHITE PINE, TN:** Two truckers were killed in separate incidents at a Tennessee truck stop during a four-day span. Both incidents reportedly happened at the Pilot Travel Center at exit 4 on Interstate 81.

And there's a killer on the road. In 2009 the Highway Serial Killings Initiative (HSKI) was formed after an analyst from the Oklahoma Bureau of Investigation detected a crime pattern: the bodies of murdered women were being dumped along the Interstate 40 corridor in Oklahoma, Texas, Arkansas, and Mississippi, it was branded by HSKI as the Corridor of Death. A bureau database has grown to more than 500 female victims, most of whom were killed and their bodies dumped at truck stops, motels and other spots along popular trucking routes crisscrossing the U.S. Often, the victims are prostitutes, hitchhikers and stranded motorists abducted in one state and dumped in another. On October 5th 2010 USA Today did a feature story on Highway Serial Killers.

And who are the killers? Authorities say they have 200 suspects; almost all are long-haul truck drivers. To date, the FBI says it has helped local authorities arrest at least 10 suspects believed

to be involved in more than 30 of the killings. Investigators speculate that the mobility, lack of supervision and access to potential victims that come with the job make it a good cover for someone inclined to kill. Truck stop prostitutes are the primary victims. "You've got a mobile crime scene," one investigator said. "You can pick a girl up on the East Coast, kill her two states away and then dump her three states after that."

The truckers call the prostitutes "Lot Lizards". Dallas Texas: in a monthly roundup of prostitutes vice police have identified more than 1,300 prostitutes working four truck stops that serve more than 2,000 big rigs a day. "Truckers were conducting counter-surveillance for prostitutes," Dallas police Sgt. Louis Felini said. "They let them use CB radios to advertise prostitution and drugs. As soon as a squad car entered the lot, every truck driver knew how many cops and where they were." Arresting prostitutes accomplished little. Many considered going to jail part of the cost of doing business and were back at the truck stops within 48 hours, Felini said.

What began as an intriguing Midnight Rider Run has become the Highway to Hell. The endless tunnel of darkness that is Arizona is totally mind-numbing. There is no escape, just keep moving forward... fast. As the winds kick up ghostly shadows dance across the white stripes as unseen hands punch and push at me, pummeling the speeding motorcycle across lanes. There are long sections of highway where I am completely alone and push 110 mph in a pathetic attempt to get to the next patch of distant lights. Racing towards the glow of the next safe haven only to pass again into the complete blackness, this is where the weak falter: or tough get tougher. Will Barclay's tip #5 becomes clearer than ever; be mentally and physically prepared.

Then my lights go out. All my lights go out, the bike is still running but the dash, the running lights, headlamp, taillights and HID accessory lamps...out, dead, nix, nay, nada. The demons of darkness now caress the hairs on my neck...

Read the rest at Amazon Books, at <http://amzn.to/1Z1009b>