

WORDS: KOZ MRAZ

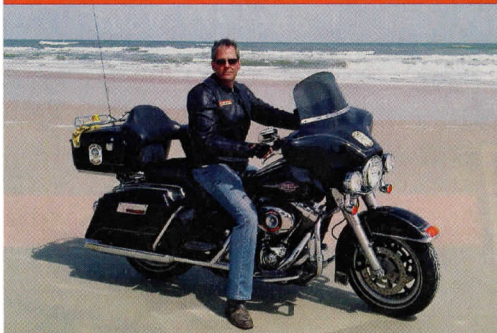
PHOTOS: KOZ MRAZ AND RUSTY CHILDRESS



## HOKA HEY 2010 WINNER

# WILL BARCLAY THE MIDNIGHT RIDER

Not gonna let 'em catch me, no Not gonna let 'em catch the Midnight Rider

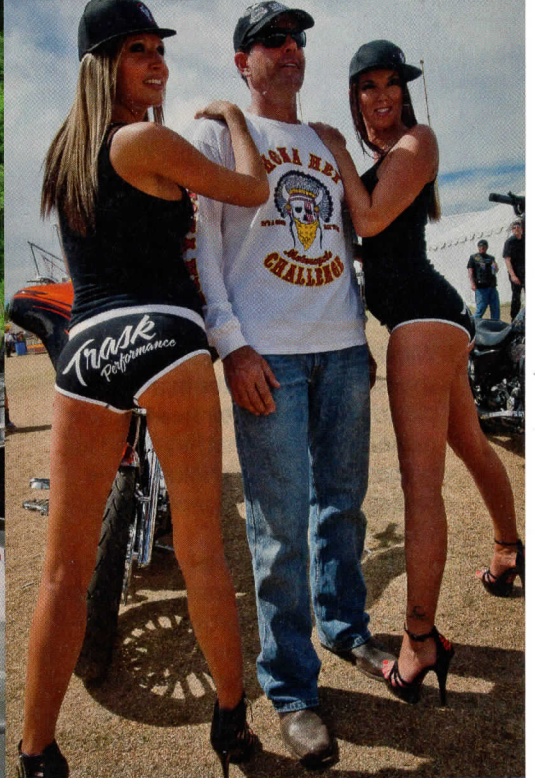
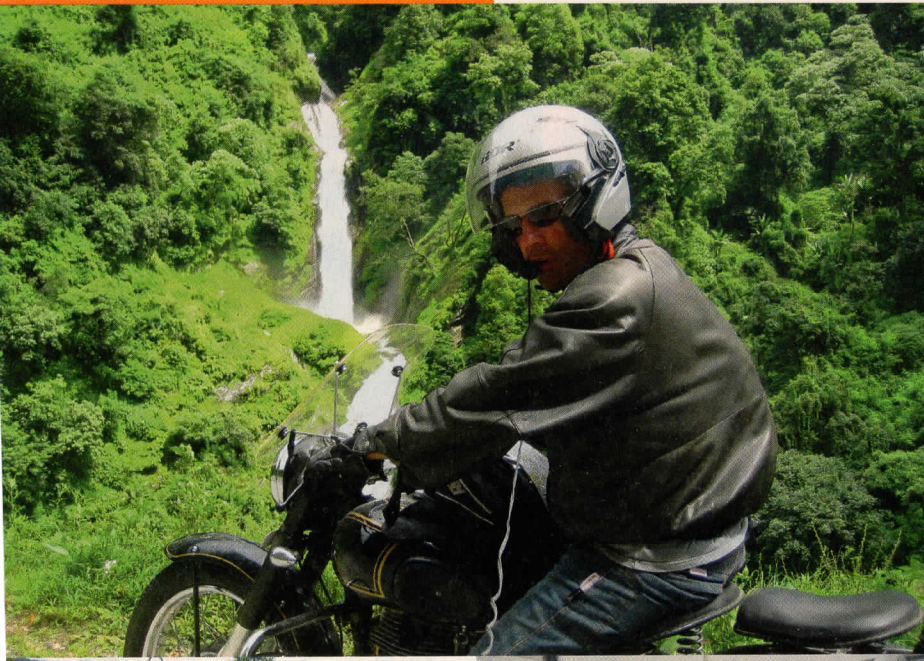


**W**ill Barclay won what may be considered the most demanding motorcycle ride of the decade. The Hoka Hey Motorcycle Challenge tasked riders to 8,500 miles of secondary roads from the Florida Keys to Homer, Alaska. Although he started dead last, Will crossed the finish line almost a full day ahead of the pack winning the half-

million-dollar payoff. It took him 194 hours and only 10 of those hours his wheels weren't turning. Hoka Hey once again challenges riders to another epic ride and Will is the man to beat. What's his secret, what makes this 51-year-old private jet pilot so indomitable?

I had the good fortune to meet up with Will at Chester's Harley Davidson in Arizona, launch point for the sec-





and Hoka Hey on August 5, 2011. "I had been training for Hoka Hey unintentionally," Will states. "I enjoy motorcycling the Himalayas and India solo on my Royal Enfield and regularly encounter every possible scenario. At 18,000-foot altitude you develop stamina and endurance. When it's time to stop, I just pitch a tent, sleep a few hours, and continue on. There are no road signs so an intuitive sense of direction is critical. As a pilot, I ride between flights so timelines keep me focused and unrelenting, Hoka Hey was a natural." Sleeping several hours a night for days on end may be natural for Will Barclay but I dare say serious contenders beware. Typically he wouldn't even take his helmet off, just lay down for 30 minutes and recharge. The bar is set and riders from around the globe will partake in what may become the world's most famous motorcycle ride. ➤







With Harley-Davidson as this year's sponsor and Barclay the man to beat, participants had better step up their game. When I ask what he's doing to prepare for this year's Hoka Hey, he replies, "Come by tomorrow and we'll chat for a bit."

Its 10 a.m. by the hotel pool and Will, at 6 feet, 1 inch, wearing shorts, a white Hoka Hey T-shirt, and H-D sandals greets me with an iced tea in hand and beams, "Welcome to my home." We sit in the cool Arizona shade as bikini-clad women sun themselves. As I settle into a lounge chair one of the bikini-clad beauties introduces herself

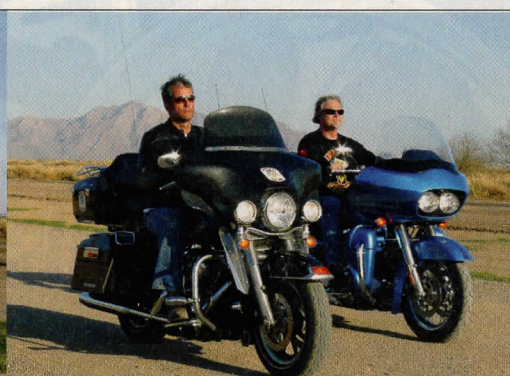
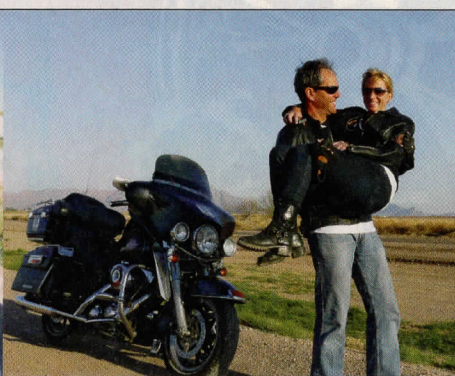
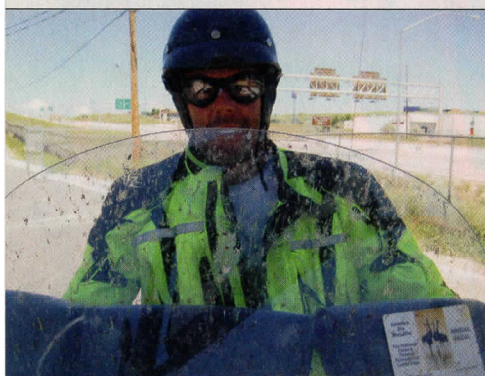
as Eliza, Will's girlfriend. We cordially chat, exchanging pleasantries. Both work in the private-jet industry and travel extensively for their profession. They've learned that wherever you are, you are at home. Both radiate a warmth and friendliness that made me feel completely at home. Subtly trying to pry Will for some insight into his extraordinary Hoka Hey win, we discuss his profession. "I have an uncanny internal time clock and am in Dubai one day and Hong Kong the next. There really is no designated time to sleep or eat." He pilots Gulfstreams, considered the most advanced business jet and clients run

the gambit. Will flew the Pitts around Asia while filming the movies *A Mighty Heart* and *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*. "I was taking Angelina Jolie to Delhi and had to serve as captain and head of security." Brad and Will watched the sunrise while filming aboard a small boat in the Ganges. The sun burned off the morning fog and revealed the human remains that had been entrusted overnight to the sacred river in Varanasi. ...his tone turns serious as he discusses the takeover of the Taj Mahal Hotel in Mumbai by commandos in 2008. "I was there with clients when the commandos took the hotel. They were sweeping the hotel for foreigners and shooting them. I secured the private-jet crew in a room under an East Indian name. The security had abandoned the hotel. I dressed in black, did a recon in the dark, commandeered a hotel car, and stripped it of its markings getting everyone to the airport and flew out at first light. We barely got out with our lives, 150 people died there." With a long pause he continues, "I travel a lot and if I told you some of my experiences you just wouldn't believe me." I begin fantasizing a jet-setting Bond-esque lifestyle, gallivanting the globe, sipping Martinis when Will stops cold, looks me in the eyes and says, "I am freelance, just like you. Everyday's a new day and a new job."

Eliza has a parallel storyline. As an executive jet hostess she also is freelance; neither have steady jobs. Eliza

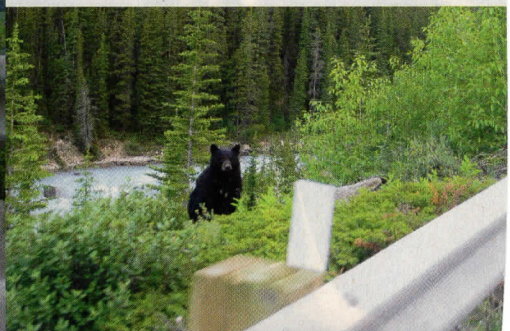






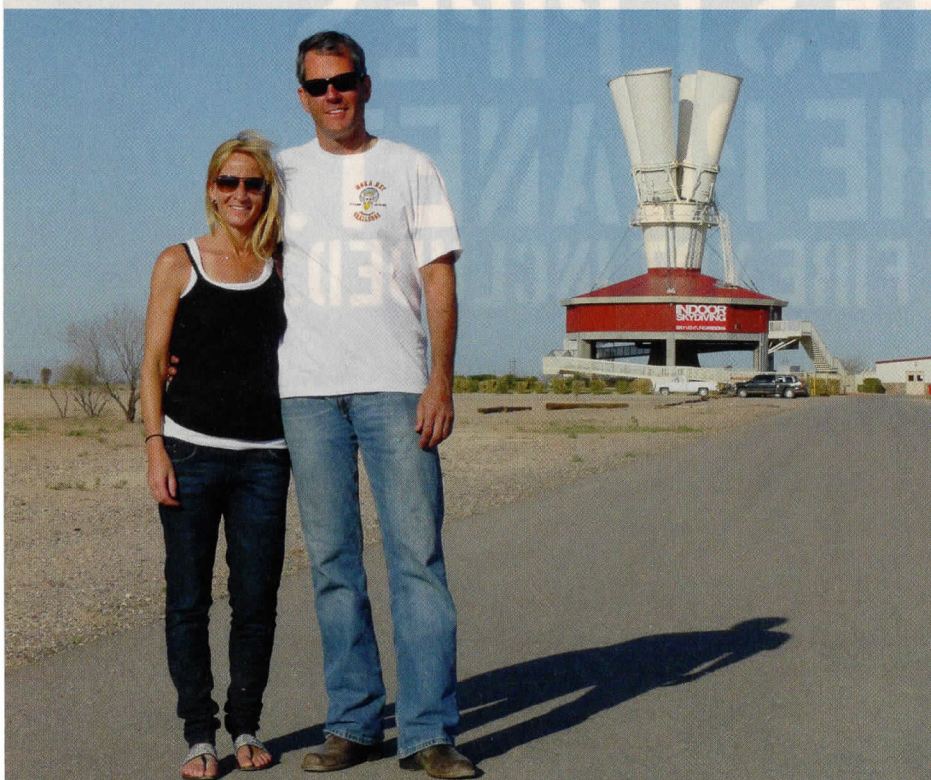
tells me she plans to take Will to a drop zone in Eloy, Arizona. So passionate about skydiving, she lived and worked there for a year so she could skydive daily. Clearly they both attack life with the exuberance of 20-somethings, and if that's what keeps them both so young, I subscribe. "We're riding there, do you want to go?" Eliza asks. Will smiles wryly behind his shades, the Jacuzzi bubbling at his feet. "When are you going?" I respond. A long pause allows the laughter of splashing of children to resonate the hotel air. "Right now," she purrs. I am beginning to understand these two. Will Barclay is not super-human, he's just not afraid to take chances; impossible is just not in his vocabulary. They both seem to absorb the moment so fully that abrupt transitions to completely different experiences occur seamlessly. . . I like this.

I'm ecstatic to be riding with Will and Eliza, trailing the Hoka Hey winner on the '08 H-D Electra Glide Classic that faithfully carried him safely to the Alaskan finish line. Excalibur, King Arthur's magical sword, is the moniker Will has given the Electra, yet this lofty pseudonym is literally slathered in bugs and dirt. I remind myself that Will just rode to Arizona from upstate New York, 2,500 miles, in three days. He was leaving for Las Vegas the next day, then back to Arizona to San Francisco then back to the East Coast. He





## Will Barclay: The Midnight Rider



probably puts more miles on his bike in two weeks than most do in a year. As we travel Arizona highways through tepid March air, cirrus clouds give way to barren landscape and languid roadways. On a lonely two-lane road the shadow of a small plane flying at low altitude drifts over me then settles over Will, Eliza, and Excalibur and for a moment, they have wings. It's unbelievable, this pilot even flies on land. Eliza points skyward as I yell out loud, "Hoka Hey!" It's a good day to ride.

Sky Dive Arizona is Disneyland for skydivers. It's an oasis with plenty of grass, trees, and a swimming pool in the midst of an otherwise barren desert. The facility has offices, aircraft manifesting, classrooms, an indoor packing area, equipment sales, food, a shower and laundry facility, camping area, and recreation hall. The wind tunnel is astounding, floating, gravity-free. Watching the Ariel ballet of choreographed group skydiving is truly amazing. Typically they would have 45-60 seconds of freefall to practice these complex maneuvers but the wind tunnel allows for minutes on end. I realize that the phrase "get in the wind" truly applies to skydivers; they can reach speeds well in excess of 200 miles an hour. Will and Eliza head to the hangars to check out the Super Otters and Skyvans, capable of taking 23 skydivers to 13,000 feet in 15 minutes.

I return to the bikes, this is my chance to scrutinize every detail on Excalibur: bone-stock Electra Glide Classic, some Hoka Hey stickers on the saddlebags and faring, and raggedy yellow Hoka Hey bandana hanging off the trunk. A TC96 power plant, extra seat pad, additional saddlebag brackets, stock handlebars, 10-inch windscreen with windscreen pouches, tank bag... what's this handwritten saying taped inside the tank bag, and what the heck is that little voodoo doll attached to the handle bars? "I put 27,000 miles on her in three months," Will startles me. I point to the adage on his tank bag. Will tells me that Eliza gave him that before Hoka Hey. "It reminds me of my mission," he states. I point to the little doll. "That's an Indian prayer doll. She gave me that too. She got it from her mother. It's my totem. She named him GoGogetem."

We leave Sky Dive Arizona and this ➤





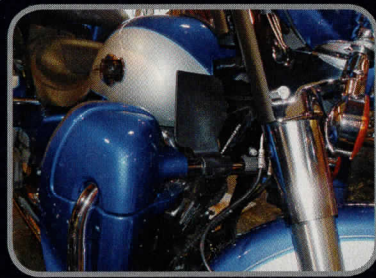


tiny road in the middle of nowhere ends at a T. Will sits idling as if pondering whether to turn left or right then suddenly darts across the hard road and rumbles up a dirt road towards the distant mountains. I follow. Dirt and gravel; it's not too bad, but not my choice to pilot a half ton of Harley and rider. The scene is spectacular: endless freshly plowed dirt rows and not a human in sight. I hear his stereo playing a song by the Allman Brothers Band, "Midnight Rider." No, I'm not gonna let 'em catch me / no, ain't gonna catch the Midnight Rider. Will seems to need this space to ride. I can't begin to imagine what motorcycling through the Himalayas alone must be like. The dirt road ends and becomes, well, just dirt and in the distance a beat-up truck approaches. We stop and greet. "Howdy," smiles

a weathered old farmer. "Enjoyin yer ride?" Will says it's a great road and asks where it goes. "Pretty much nowhere but you feel free to ride all of it son. This is my land, and I don't reckon ever seein' a big bike on it." They laugh and wave goodbye.

Will, Eliza, and I stop for a while and chat. Will is more comfortable on his motorcycle than anyone I've ever met, and he seems at home no matter where he is. I get the feeling these two live fully in the present and fearlessly embrace the future. It was out here in the desolate desert we discussed philosophy, life tenets, and his beliefs. He also gave away one of his riding secrets (see sidebar). On the dirt road back a large hawk flew low alongside us for the longest time as if even he was surprised to see such large hogs traversing his terrain. Yes, Will Barclay gave me insight into what it takes to win. Winning anything requires training and practice. His machine? Basically bone-stock, much like the man, a bone-stock human named Will Barclay. He is going for it again. Hoka Hey 2011 now challenges riders to 10,000 miles through all 48 contiguous states and Canada to Nova Scotia. What makes him think he can win again? Probably the same tank bag mantra that this Midnight Rider has been chanting since day one: **B**

**Winning is having faith and faith is believing something is real that hasn't happened yet.**



#### BARCLAY'S SECRETS: #1

Will saw I was riding an '11 Road Glide Ultra, and he showed me his FLTR Wind Deflector Kit (PN 57000063), designed especially for the Road Glide. Will had a set on his Electra Glide; by redirecting rushing wind from below the rider he felt it changed the aerodynamics and reduced buffeting. Enough so that it was a valuable addition to his Electra Glide and it easily snaps on and off without tools.



#### HOKA HEY!

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Check back at [baggersmag.com](http://baggersmag.com) for more of Will's riding secrets.

