

50 States of Consciousness

Live Life To The Fullest: Make Your Dream Rides Come True

by DJ Jones

The motorcycle bug combined with my lifelong wanderlust in 1998, when I embraced motorcycling in a very big way. Ultimately, that merger turned me into what some have called a road warrior, a mile-monster and a downright crazy, extreme and extraordinary life force on two wheels.

For me, it has been all about living life to the fullest—which is how I came to hatch a plan for an unimaginable 50-state solo journey to raise money and awareness for heart disease and pediatric cancer.

On May 6, 2006, in Albuquerque, N.M., I couldn't have asked for a better send-off from my friends and the New Mexico State Police. After two years of planning and preparation, I rode into the sunset on my beloved motorcycle, Big Bertha, a 1999 Honda Valkyrie, to start my cross-continent journey. Not only would I honor both my parents, who died of heart disease, but also a young family friend who is a brain cancer survivor.

To my surprise, after a few days, I realized that raising money this way would be more difficult than I imagined. I revised my goals, because I was not going to surrender my plan. I made the best of every pleasantry. I managed to enjoy

the simple pleasures of an occasional mouth-watering home-cooked meal and heartfelt moments of sidesplitting laughter with friends old and new.

Over the course of my 169-day, 25,000-mile odyssey, there were bound to be a few unexpected challenges. For instance, sweat poured from my body as I traveled through the Deep South, while being eaten alive by insects. I survived a tornado in Wisconsin, a motorcycle accident in California, grizzlies in the Yukon Territory and the foreboding Alaska Highway. There were serious gut checks while riding through all kinds of weather and road conditions, as well as dodging large animals like bear, buffalo and moose.

On most days, a tent was my home, and an occasional shower was a luxury. I was challenged by mechanical difficulties and I dealt with all kinds of animals, both two- and four-legged. Through it all, I did my best to keep a positive attitude, stay in the moment and enjoy this ride of a lifetime.

In the end, I was able to successfully



complete my 50-state journey. When I rolled Big Bertha onto Hawaiian soil on Sept. 13, 2006, I could proudly say, "I did it." Thanks to God's blessings, the love of my husband and devoted friends, I accomplished what many said I could not do. For me, it was more than just crossing dotted

lines on the map. It was like I had ridden through 50 states of consciousness—there were so many lessons the road taught me during that challenging journey.

I encourage anyone with a dream ride to get out there and experience our wonderful country. With a multitude of roads to be ridden, sights to be seen and memories to be made, there's no time like the present to make your dreams come true. Life may not always be sunshine and rainbows, but what you live through will make you a better person and a better rider.

DJ Jones would like to hear from any other riders who have accomplished a solo 50-state feat on the same bike. E-mail DJ at ironbutt@aol.com.

