

Veteran Embarks on Cross Country Bicycle Journey for Nonprofit

One Man on a 3,000 Mile Ride to Raise Funds for Wounded Warrior Project

JACKSONVILLE, Fla., (September 14, 2015) – When Randy Horton hit the road from Newport Beach, California, it was an exceptionally hot and sunny day. Starting on the wooden slats of the Newport Beach Pier and armed with nothing but camping supplies, his bicycle, and the grit to go the distance, the 64-year-old veteran has been peddling his way across the American Southwest. Heading east, he has been averaging 100 to 120 miles per day. So far, Randy has traveled over 1,200 miles of his 3,074-mile journey to raise awareness and funds for Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP), whose mission is to honor and empower Wounded Warriors.

“I’m passionate about supporting to our nation’s injured service members – the few who fight to protect the freedom of this great country,” said Randy. “Many come home with wounds you can and can’t see, like a missing limb, combat stress, or depression.”

Since his cross-country journey began, Randy has managed to raise over \$5,100 in two weeks. Despite facing a heat index of 125 degrees at times, uphill climbs from California into Arizona, and hailstorms in Texas, Randy’s spirits have stayed high according to his main supporter, Marilyn.

“He’s been doing very well! It’s been a lot of travel, and he’s been getting up around midnight to avoid the heat and busy roads,” Marilyn said. “He’s had some very interesting encounters. He’s roughed it, and he’s stayed at nice places with amenities. One night he stopped for a steak dinner, told a woman what he was doing, and ended up getting two steaks!”

Randy was stopped in Vanhorn, Texas when he explained that there have been many unique encounters on this cross country trip. After he left California, one such encounter made a particularly lasting impression.

“As I was riding through Arizona I saw a lot of signs for an ice cream shop, called Taylor Freeze, so I stopped in to get a cone. Evidently it’s where all the cross-country bike tours go,” Randy said. “They took a picture of me; the owner thought it was great I was doing this alone. As we were talking, a gentleman who was sitting nearby asked if I would join him for dinner. I did, and we started talking. I had no idea who he was. He said to me ‘up ahead I have a house and if you happen to stay in that area, give me a call and I’ll put you up for the night.’ My route took me through that area, so he and his brothers came and picked me up. Turns out he was part of the Shoen family, founders of U-Haul, one of the very first supporters of Wounded Warrior Project. I thought, ‘what are the odds? It’s incredible.’”

While Randy reflected on the astronomical odds of such an encounter, he remarked that this trip is very personal to him and that he was inspired by his feelings and experiences as a veteran. Most notably, according to Randy, was that the veterans who came back from Vietnam were treated very differently than the ones who return today; a hostile environment and a distinct lack of services and care was what greeted Vietnam Veterans upon their return.

“It’s time to give back... not everyone can do everything, but we need to do something,” he said. “I’m a fairly active guy. I said ‘you know, I’m going to ride across America, alone.’ It’s how I felt when I came back from Vietnam. Alone. That’s the motivation behind the whole trip.”

It's a feeling and experience that many veterans, past and present, have faced upon their return to civilian life. With the vision of WWP being to foster the most successful, well-adjusted generation of wounded service members in our nation's history, it is fitting that WWP's logo is of one warrior carrying another. It serves as a reminder to veterans that they are not alone in their recovery. Most importantly, that there are resources available for those who seek help and that others have been through what they have.

Randy has taken being alone on this journey in stride, even though the trip hasn't been without its challenges. With a thunderstorm booming around him, cutting out the sound of his voice over his cell phone, Randy quipped that when you embark on a trip like this, you have to abandon a sense of schedule as delays will happen.

"I've had two flat tires. I've gotten caught in storms. The heat was unbelievable at the start. I had a highway patrolman come up and ask if I was okay because some people had passed a crazy person on a bike peddling through the desert," he said with a laugh. "One day I was on the bike for 18 hours, over 200 miles that day and there's only so many ways to get comfortable on that seat. But I'm having a ball... I'm telling everyone I meet about Wounded Warrior Project. Everyone has been so receptive and supportive of me and Wounded Warrior Project. That's really what this is about."

Randy's planned route will take him through the southern states across Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and the Florida panhandle on to his final destination of St. Augustine, Florida, where he hopes to arrive by the end of the month.

"I am proud to be raising awareness and funds to support Wounded Warrior Project, as they have a big, audacious goal: to foster the most successful, well-adjusted generation of wounded service members in our nation's history," said Randy. "I'm challenging myself to help them reach this vision."

Those interest in supporting Randy and donating to WWP can do so by visiting

<https://communityfundraising.woundedwarriorproject.org/>.

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About Wounded Warrior Project

The mission of Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) is to honor and empower Wounded Warriors. WWP's purpose is to raise awareness and to enlist the public's aid for the needs of injured service members, to help injured servicemen and women aid and assist each other, and to provide unique, direct programs and services to meet their needs. WWP is a national, nonpartisan organization headquartered in Jacksonville, Florida. To get involved and learn more, visit woundedwarriorproject.org.

<https://newsroom.woundedwarriorproject.org/2015-09-14-Veteran-Embarks-on-Cross-Country-Bicycle-Journey-for-Nonprofit>

