

was born and raised in a small town, population 550. It was one of those towns where everyone knew everyone. It was one of those towns that most of time goes unnoticed; that is unless you have something worth getting noticed for. Well, we did and it would draw in nearly two million visitors every year. Mammoth Cave. It's the longest cave system in the world. Sure, it was special to the millions of visitors, but for me it shaped my life. If it weren't for that cave, I never would have known there were other worlds that existed.

Being the daughter of a truck driver and surrounded by tourists daily, all around me were people who were always going somewhere, this sparked a deep curiosity in me about places unknown. I grew familiar with the unfamiliar and as a result developed a restless heart. Before long the word 'traveling' was synonymous with the word 'home' and as soon as I got my drivers licence I started venturing out and seeing the world on my own. Fast forward a few years, tons of miles, many places left to explore, and a friend with the same penchant for adventure and 'Lost Latitudes' was born.

My friend Kristen suggested us hitting the road and exploring small towns seeking adventure. To me it seemed like common sense. What started as simple "Let's go for a ride on our Harleys" quickly turned into an extensive trip traveling from the farthest southeast to the farthest northwest in the contiguous forty eight States of America. We would travel over 10,000 miles exploring the expanse of the United States, camping and visiting small towns along the way. The goal was simple, follow back roads visiting forgotten places in the hope of discovering the lost and true history of America.

Planning a trip like this was far more intense than I had thought it would be. It's taken months, and there are still thousands of miles to plot, gear to account for and parents with nerves that need to be calmed. We used a combination of four different atlases, online mapping sites, history books and motorcycle guides. We also reached out to city officials of the towns we are visiting to get a better understanding of where we were going which would help us tell a better story about the places we visit. The more we kept planning, the more we started to discover and with each mile the stories we would tell started to unfold before our eyes.

Kristen comes from a long line of motorcyclists. Her grandfather was one of the original 'Wall of Death' riders and an accomplished mechanic. Her father is also a well respected mechanic and recently Kristen herself made the decision to follow the same path registering at MMI to become, you guessed it, a motorcycle mechanic.

At age seventeen she took the MSF course and the next week hit the road to the Sturgis show with her father. She even earned an 'Iron Butt' for riding over 1000 miles in a day which she said she had to if she was going to make it back in time to start her senior year of high school. The next year they rode the Tail of the Dragon, an eleven mile stretch of 318 curves in the Cherokee National Forest and Smokey Mountain Range. She crashed on that trip and had a long recovery. While she was healing, her dad rebuilt her bike and as soon as she was better they went and slayed the Dragon together. She's been taking trips like this with her dad ever since.



# 10,000 MILES TO GO

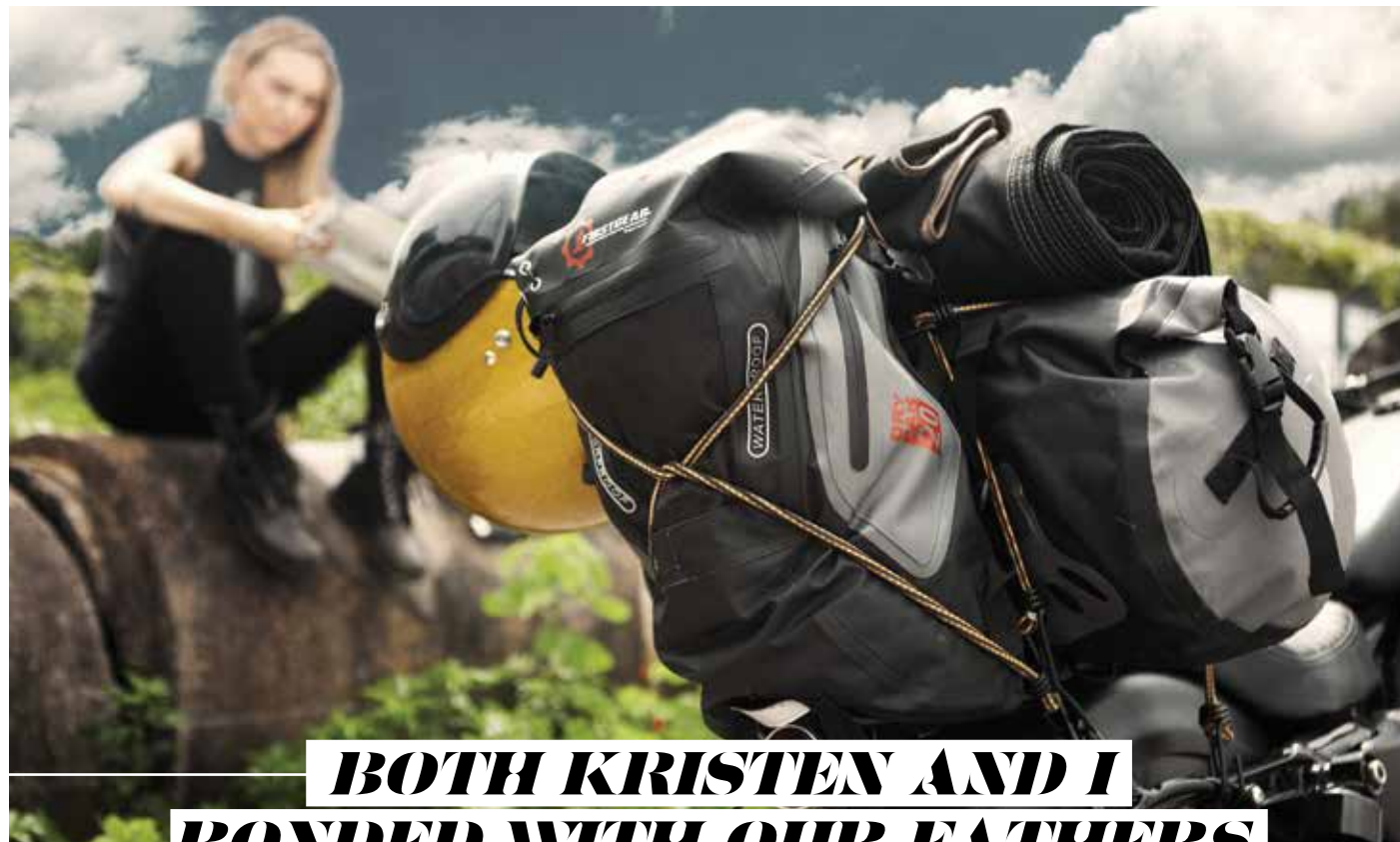
The Lost Latitudes  
Story *Leticia Cline* Photography *Christopher Rank*



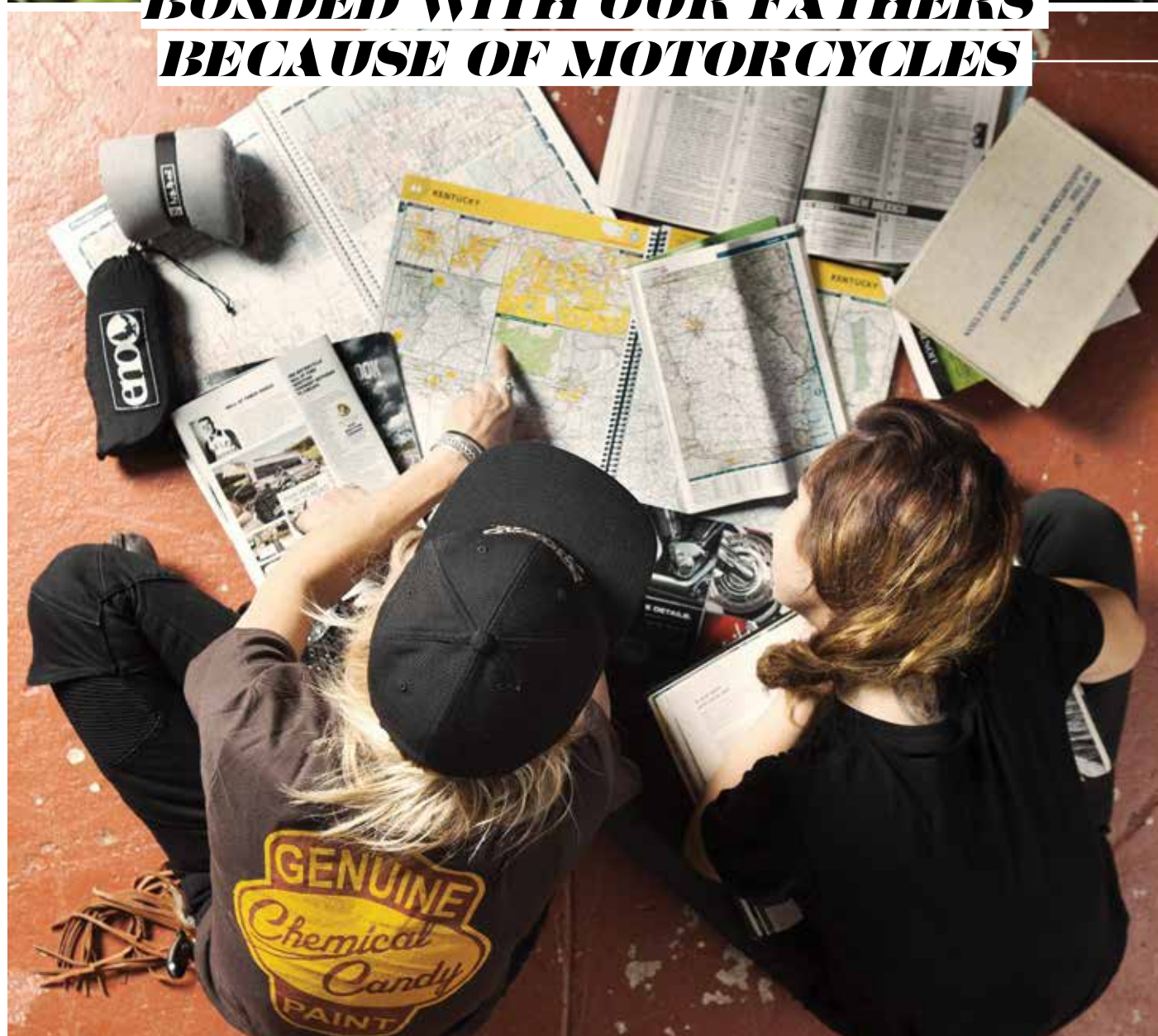
FLORIDA KEYS UNITED STATES







## BOTH KRISTEN AND I BONDED WITH OUR FATHERS BECAUSE OF MOTORCYCLES



I started riding basically when I started walking. My father used to build bikes in the living room of our house and taught me to ride shortly after holding my first wrench. But as much as we shared that common thread we never got to take any long distance trips together. He had a heart attack a few weeks before we were to leave on a cross country journey. I rode his Heritage Softtail to the funeral, parked it and didn't ride again until six years later. I picked up a bike again last year after an overwhelming feeling of being lost in life. I had spent all my time traveling and for the first time, I felt different about it. I started to wonder where I was going.

Both Kristen and I bonded with our fathers because of motorcycles. Both of us came from small towns, we both had the same bike and we both had a family heritage we wanted to carry on. Most importantly though, we both have an overwhelming desire to create our own legacies. A trip like this would not only allow us a chance to discover what those legacies would be, but we hope that it will serve as an example for others to make their own mark in the world. From strangers to my son, I wanted to be an example that when you live a life honestly and full of passion then you can truly reach happiness.

Our journey begins in the Keys of Florida and ends at Cape Alava, Washington before heading back to Florida with a hundred more stops in between. The list of places is too great for this article, but to highlight some of my favorites I would have to say Hugo sits at the top. It's where circus performers live in the winter and is home to the largest Circus cemetery, consisting of all performers. Everything and everyone from monkeys to strong men included. It also is known as Little Dixie because of the Choctaw Native Americans and their slaves who were displaced after the 1830s Indian removal policy. Another is Bay St. Louis Mississippi where we're going to the 100 Men Hall, a place established in the 1800s as a blues and jazz performance centre to raise money for the African American community. Many great performers got their start here including BB King and Etta James. In 2005 when Hurricane Katrina hit it destroyed the hall and as a result it was set to be demolished. That is until the Loya family took control of rebuilding it back to its original glory. Currently, they host shows there daily. When we reached out to the Loyas, we found out that the wife, Kerrie used to work for Honda Motorcycles. Naturally, we had a long conversation about bikes and the excitement and anticipation of our visit grew even more. The process of discovery and the world of motorcycling is an amazing combination. I would have never imagined that I would have found a fellow rider who not only shared a common interest in blues and jazz but also resurrected an historic icon.

We still have a few months before we head out, but the levity has already started to sink in. As excited as I am I can't help but be nervous. There're nights filled with anxiety. Endless moments of thoughts filled with "Is this something I should do as a mother?" Ultimately, I feel like leading by example is one of the best qualities I can exude to my son. However, I am setting out on a journey with no guarantee of a safe return. I worry about missing him, my husband, mother and my dogs. I also worry if this will solidify my boredom with mundane cereal choices in the grocery aisles and therefore set me on a never ending path of pushing the limits and never being still.

To be continued... 