

## EVENT RECAP

## THE STRIKING VIKING LIVE

*Moshe K. Levy*

Imagine a lone American motorcyclist venturing into some of the most dangerous regions in the world, and finding universal hospitality. Envision the fifty-two thousand mile ride of a lifetime, the course of which transforms one's philosophical outlook, and shatters long-held convictions with every moment. For Glen Heggstad, such a fantasy recently became a reality.

Heggstad, also known as the "Striking Viking" by his fans and judo students, has already amassed more roles than a boatful of Hollywood's finest in his madcap 54 years. From former Hell's Angel to formidable martial arts instructor, from international hostage to triumphant motorcycle adventurer, from poignant author to stirring lecturer, and now... a Goodwill Ambassador to those at home.

In 2003, while decompressing from a South American sojourn gone awry (as detailed in his book *Two Wheels Through Terror*) Glen found himself still trying to reconcile the complicated geopolitical events unfolding in a post 9/11 world. Terrorism, which he had already experienced firsthand at the hands of the ELN in Colombia, was a festering assault on the senses. Each day, it seemed fresh lines were being drawn in the

sand, and resulting perceptions of new enemies in foreign lands were being formed in the minds of the timorous public.

Was the propaganda true? Could the cynicism and fear pervading the world in the wake of global terrorism be justified? An idea was brewing in Heggstad's mind as he grappled

earthly possessions and loading up a BMW F650 Dakar on loan from Southern California dealers, Heggstad boarded a flight to Tokyo, Japan. From there, he crossed the Sea of Japan via ferry to Vladivostok, Russia, navigated through Siberia and the Mongolian Gobi Desert, then onto the Middle East, India, Southeast Asia, and finally to Africa.

Almost two years later, Glen returned from his odyssey in April 2006 with thousands of vivid photographs and spirited narratives concerning interactions with those he encountered. Since returning, he's toured the US presenting a dramatic two-hour, multimedia presentation as his reputation as a true moto-adventurer grows through word of mouth.

With little publicity, news of Glen's November 4th east coast appearance at Cliff's Cycle Revolution in Danbury, Connecticut spread through New England. Fans who followed his travel blogs on adventure websites

(such as [advrider.com](http://advrider.com)) were finally getting the chance to meet Glen face to face, and anticipation was running high. The evening of the show, a capacity crowd of two hundred curious spectators crammed into the dealership's 5000 square foot showroom to witness Heggstad's show.



with these issues: To ride alone exclusively through developing nations, look at its denizens squarely in the eyes, offer a smile and a handshake, and prove his axiom: Although governments may not get along, people do!

The idea soon morphed into careful planning, and in June 2004, after selling all of his



Not only did the presentation exceed expectations, it created an appetite for more. Glen's infectious passion for motorcycle travel, booming voice, and charisma kept us entertained on edge, only to continue into the night at a local pub. Although some attended for logistical information (like what to do when an F650's subframe bolt shears in the middle of nowhere,) most came for the simple pleasure of absorbing images gathered from around the developing world. Each had its own compelling story to complement the whole of the adventure.



A particularly moving slide was picture of a young Mongolian child offering Glen a pail of goat's milk, even though she was obviously scared of the hulking blonde motorcyclist and his strange two wheeled contraption. Nearing hypothermia in Siberia, Russian Buryats insisted that Heggstad scoff down the last of their meager food supply, while Bedouin Arabs provided him with late-night sanctuary while



crossing Middle East deserts. Time and again, in different countries and cultures, Glen Heggstad learned compassion from people the media portrays as uncivilized adversaries. His axiom was ringing true.

Which is why Glen Heggstad's soulful lecture mainly addressed the individuals he had met, not the exotic places he had been. Ancient architecture, archeological treasures, and captivating scenery were certainly expected on such a voyage, but more powerful still were tales of unbelievable kindness from strangers in foreign lands.

The unassuming hospitality bestowed upon him by those of the developing world, Heggstad contended, was indicative of populations which remembered what should be innate. Call it basic humanity, or unvarnished kindness, but the folks Heggstad encountered in desolate conditions still remember that benevolence towards strangers requires no expectations.

Far from a staged tear-jerking documentary, the presentation was Glen's visually compelling and emotionally sincere awakening to the pulse of humanity. With well-honed skill, he drew his audience in, giving each an intimate connection to those people and places he experienced. As he spoke, he made us feel as if we were there ourselves: Sensing the thick tension in the air during Palestinian Parliamentary elections in Gaza, toiling in the lush jungles of Borneo as the bike got stuck in deep mud, gazing through tears on the former killing fields of Cambodia, and fixing the 15th flat tire of the day in Ethiopia. For those two hours, the mundane aspects of our daily lives were suspended. We were there too, riding alongside Glen, rooting him further onward.

In every sense, the show was an inspirational experience stimulating further introspection. If you get a chance to catch *Earth Ride 2006* in your area, make a plan to jump on your bike, and just go! As a motorcyclist, as a traveler, or even as a citizen of the world, you will be profoundly moved.

Visit [www.strikingviking.net](http://www.strikingviking.net) for all photos and text of Glen Heggstad's journey.