



# ADV MOTO

DUAL SPORT NEWS  
ADV MOTORCYCLE.COM

## conquering Fears, Emerging Victorious

U.K. to Nepal on a Classic Metisse

15 PRACTICAL TIPS!  
BIKE REPAIR IN A FOREIGN LAND

### SOUTHWESTERN VISION QUEST

3 Weeks Solo in Navajo Country

### MASTERING TRACTION

Becoming Weightless

### Ride for Peace

An "Impossible" Journey Spurred by 9/11



Carson Valley Rendezvous  
High Desert, Mountains & Legends

Meet Rene Cormier  
Motorcycle Vagabond & Author

March/April 2014

Scan for a FREE digital back issue!



\$5.99 US / \$6.99 CAN



## Behind the Scenes at Giant Loop

by Alisa Clickenger



**GIANT LOOP**  
giantloopmoto.com

**H**arold Olaf Cecil hasn't said that he believes in destiny, but if you take a look at his life, it's clear that everything he's done has synchronistically brought him to where he is now. Throughout his career he's accumulated the sales, marketing, business, and media skills to be an entrepreneur, although he didn't set out to be one. His family is thriving, he has created jobs in a downturned economy, and he has built a successful motorcycle luggage company: *Giant Loop*.

The company started in Bend, Oregon in the fall of 2008. The "Giant Loop" was a product of Harold's own riding. "It started out as two guys who just liked to ride dirt bikes in the Oregon desert with camping gear; it's now evolved into quite a different proposition. We have people from around the world using our gear to do some of the most extreme adventures anywhere. It's so inspiring," says Harold.

The "two guys" were Harold and Dave Wachs. The two have been friends since 1997 and Dave was the person who got Harold into dual-sport riding while Dave was experimenting with designing motorcycle luggage. He developed an ingenious horseshoe-shaped design that wrapped the weight of the luggage around the motorcycle's sub-frame. "It basically eliminated all the deficiencies we saw in other motorcycle luggage systems," said Harold. "We wanted to ride hard and fast in the Oregon desert and not have our luggage impede us. We didn't want our bikes to handle like tanks."

Dave tried to sell the idea to several companies, but nobody jumped to invest in the innovative design. Harold wanted to help his friend, so they decided to go into business together and launch the product themselves. They began with a single product and a website. Dave and Harold learned a lot about running a lean company; the recession had just hit and banks were tightening their lending practices, so they could not get financing. In a time when many motorcycle dealerships were closing, the

GL's dealer sales manager Dustin Cary tearing up single track near GL's shop in Bend, Oregon.



*Left* Tiffany Coates' sister, Abi joined her for part of her Madagascar adventure. The sisters rode two-up on Tiff's 350cc dirt bike through Madagascar.

*Below* "Selfie" of Harold Olaf Cecil on a solo camping trip in the Maury Mountains of eastern Oregon in 2013.





World traveler Tiffany Coates riding in Madagascar. She flew to the African island nation confident *Giant Loop's* adventure proof packing systems would fit virtually any bike.

two men saw enough potential in the product that Harold poured his savings into building the first prototype and getting the company off the ground.

What really helped was the international market. Harold has a marketing background, and they pushed the product in an intelligent way. Europeans went crazy for the *Giant Loop* and within a few months they had international distribution. With the help of *Adventure Moto* in the Australian market and *Adventure Spec* in England the product caught fire and soon they hired their first employee, a packing and shipping specialist who still works for *Giant Loop*. The Internet also helped by driving sales of the unique product.

*Giant Loop* products are made in the U.S., with the exception of some straps imported from Canada. Designed, prototyped, and tested in Bend, Oregon, their products are sent to a contract sewer in southern California. Fulfillment and customer service is done out of the Bend office.

Within a few months of the company's launch, *Giant Loop* introduced a second product, and then a few months after that redesigned the *Giant Loop*. "It just instantly took off from there," said Harold. Now, five years later, *Giant Loop* has expanded

their range of products and just published a 24-page catalog.

Harold bought out his partner last year, and *Giant Loop* continues to grow. The company now has five full time employees including a full-time product designer. As I interviewed him, Harold was on his way to catch a plane to *EICMA*, the *Esposizione Internazionale Ciclo Motociclo e Accessori* (the *Milan Motorcycle Show*), an annual trade show in Italy. It's one of the largest motorcycle trade shows in the world.

"I feel like the luckiest guy alive. I'm getting to make my living in motorcycling. Motorcycling is something I've done my whole life anyway. I didn't even own a car until I got married! I'm getting to travel and see a bit of the world and it's awesome. I am truly blessed," said Harold. The *Giant Loop* team can often be found at trade shows, overland expositions, and motorcycle travelers' meetings.

"Motorcycling is actually a pretty tight-knit community, and with the Internet it is globally connected. Even though we can reach people via email and the web, there's no substitute for face time with customers. Getting out there and riding with people, getting their feedback, having an opportunity to hear their



Harold, age three, sitting on the front of his dad Gary's 1966 Honda CB77 Superhawk. He still owns this bike and keeps it in pristine running condition.

concerns, answer questions, and build friendships is what those events are all about for us," says Harold. "We love what we do and we love meeting other people who share that same passion. It's what inspires and drives our company to keep innovating and improving what we're doing and continue to fill the needs of people out there doing world class adventures."

He still owns his first dual-sport bike, a 1998 *Honda XR600R*, which he rides with the original *Giant Loop* saddlebag. In fact, everyone in the company rides, including their bookkeeper. *Giant Loop's* product developer Brian Frankle has even ridden the Trans America Trail solo on his 650 *BMW*. *Giant Loop* the company officially owns a *BMW F800GS*, *KTM 500EXE*, and an *XR100* child's bike that now serves as a pit bike at motorcycle shows and for stress relief at the office.

Do Harold's children ride motorcycles? The answer is yes. They have ridden pillion for thousands of miles with their father. Son Blake celebrated his thirteenth birthday at the *Horizon's Unlimited Travelers Meeting* in Cambria, California in 2011. Maybe riding motorcycles and giant loops around the world on a motorcycle will one day become his destiny, as well. **ADV**



Brian Frankle, *GL's* design director, in the in-house prototype sewing shop.

# Giant Loop

Giant Loop LLC

63025 OB Riley Road, Suite 17  
Bend, OR 97701

GiantLoopMoto.com