

# Riding Against Hunger

By **MARTIN J. KIDSTON** - Independent Record - 07/08/09



His Jeep is for sale, along with his trailer. He will sell his guns at auction, along with everything else. The things he will keep include the shirt on his back and his 1982 Suzuki motorcycle, which he will ride across six continents, 200 countries and 24 time zones in an effort to put an end to hunger.

It is a plan so ambitious that it almost sounds outlandish. But when you talk to Chris Sorbi, the man behind the Transcontinental Humanitarian Expedition, it starts to make sense.

“I grew up in Iran — I grew up in the middle of a war,” he said Tuesday. “When you grow up in something like that, with no water, no food, a lack of education and utter disease, you begin to understand. When you throw a banana peel on the ground and someone eats it, that’s hunger.”

Sorbi, 29, immigrated to the U.S. with his family about 11 years ago. He found himself in Helena after his car broke down near Townsend. He earned his citizenship in 2008 and got a job with UPS. Now he wants to give something back for the good life he says he has lived.

“Becoming a citizen was probably the biggest story of my life,” he said. “It’s really been a land of opportunity for me here. I want to give something back. I don’t have a wife. I don’t have any kids. I can do this.”

“This,” as he tells it, is a trip around the world that will begin this August in Helena. The first leg of his journey will go as far north as possible with hopes of reaching the Arctic. He will return south along the Pacific Coast and, if all goes well, cross into Mexico before he turns 28 years old.

From there, Sorbi admits, it becomes a guessing game. He will motor south on that 1982 Suzuki until he reaches Argentina. He will catch a boat to either Asia or Africa, working for his crossing fair. It may take a year to cover each continent. That is six years of travel. At that rate, Sorbi will return home at the age of 36. But when he does, he will bring his stories with him, knowing he did his best to eradicate a problem that has plagued humanity since it came into being.

“Hunger is something that’s overlooked — it’s everywhere,” Sorbi said. “The solution is simple, and I can provide that. I can lobby for it. I can raise funds for it. I’m not a researcher. I’m not a doctor. I can’t cure heart disease. But I can change hunger.”

The number of people undernourished in the modern world is so large that it is almost hard to comprehend. According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, as many as 854 million people worldwide don’t get enough to eat, or nearly 13 percent of the world population.

Sorbi takes the UN statistics further. As a result of starvation, he said, one person dies each second. That is around 4,000 people every hour, or 100,000 people each day. By the end of this year, 36 million people will have died for lack of food.

To put it another way, that accounts for every person in the states of Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada, Utah, Washington and Oregon combined.

Support has started locally with a growing line of businesses backing Sorbi’s cause. Armed with persistence, determination and a flexible plan, Sorbi will turn his shaft-driven Suzuki north, then south, then east and west, to fulfill a dream and ride for change. If one hungry person eats because of his journey, he will have accomplished something big.

“I was planning to go around the world for a long, long time, and I was just hating myself for not doing it,” Sorbi said. “As far as supporting myself goes, I’ve already sold everything I have. It’s all gone into the project already.”

Sorbi will host a World Hunger Banquet and Live Auction at the Lewis and Clark Fairgrounds Exhibit Hall on Saturday, July 11, at 5 p.m. To find out more about the Transcontinental Humanitarian Expedition, the auction, or to donate, log on to his Web site at [www.motorcyclememoir.com](http://www.motorcyclememoir.com).

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