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By **CLAIRE CONRAD**

Britney Brimhall has never seen *The Motorcycle Diaries*, the famous biopic depicting Ernesto "Che" Guevara's consciousness-raising journey through Latin America on a clunky motorcycle. But Brimhall is in the midst of a similar journey.



Britney Brimhall and Jonathan Manley

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Brimhall and fellow adventurer Jonathan Manley are bicycling their way to Panama--for charity.

"We've been saving up money for about a year straight ... (and) gave up our apartments," Manley said. "All of my stuff is in storage outside of Payson."

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The pair began their journey on Nov. 15, leaving from Phoenix. The 3,500-mile ride twists from Phoenix down through the narrow waist of Central America; the two hope to reach Panama by February.

The journey will raise funds for the [100 Club of Arizona](#), which provides immediate financial assistance to families of public-safety officials who are killed or injured on the job. Brimhall chose the 100 Club of Arizona because of her background in law enforcement. She used to work for the Phoenix Police Department and had gone through officer training before leaving to pursue a publishing opportunity.



"In the summer, a Phoenix police officer was killed, and that's when I decided that I wanted to ally with the 100 Club," Brimhall said. "Right when I finished the proposal and sent it in to the 100 Club, the very next day, another Phoenix police officer was killed. I felt it was the right choice to ally with them; I wanted to be able to do something to help the families."

Brimhall's ambitious goal is to raise \$50,000 for the charity through donations made [online](#).

The "100 club" concept began in Detroit in 1952, when a local businessman challenged 100 businesses to donate \$100 to the family of a young police officer who had been killed. The 100 Club of Arizona began in 1968 after the death of a Phoenix police officer, said Matt Janton, the 100 Club's Southern Arizona representative. Since its establishment, the 100 Club has provided benefits to more than 750 families.

"You never know what the needs are, but the fact that there's cash in the bank so they don't have to worry about that immediately gives them a little peace of mind," Janton said.

For Brimhall and Manley, their little bike ride is about more than the charity.

"We're doing this for charity, but we're also doing it ... not even so much (for) a vacation, but sort of a reassessment of life," Manley said. "We keep talking about the concept of 'reset'--just reset what you think you need to live on; reset what you value; reset what's important."

Brimhall and Manley met while studying German at Arizona State University; they both graduated in 2004. As Brimhall went through police-academy training, Manley became a business banker for Wells Fargo and eventually relocated to Seattle.

While Manley liked his job, he didn't feel it was his calling. He started looking for a change and was thinking of applying to law school when Brimhall sent him an e-mail



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asking if he wanted to come along on the bike ride.

"I remember I had just gotten to Seattle, and I said, 'Britney, I'd really like to go on this ride, but it's just not the best time,' Manley said. "She's like, 'No, it's really the best time you really have in your life.'"

Brimhall is no stranger to long rides. She has climbed Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania and did a practice ride from Tucson to the Sea of Cortez and back. Manley is also comfortable on a bike, even completing the 220-mile Seattle-to-Portland ride, but he takes a different approach to training.

"I was living in downtown Seattle. ... I would ride up Capitol Hill, then ride 25 miles out to the Redhook Brewery with my brother. We'd get a massive plate of nachos and have like three beers apiece, and then try to ride home. ... I'm really hoping that's good practice," Manley said.

The two hoped to cover an average of 35 miles a day, covering the distance in about 3 1/2 months. They planned on spending about two months working down through Mexico, and taking a week in Guatemala to study Spanish. They also left some flexibility in their schedule to explore anything they found interesting.

As of Jan. 1, the two had covered approximately 2,229 miles and reached Acapulco. They're preparing for a rough ride ahead.

"We hear the hills in Guatemala are brutal," Brimhall said.

Safety is something for which the two have prepared. Manley used to teach assault- and rape-prevention classes, and Brimhall has her police training. They also have collapsible batons and pepper spray. Mostly, they planned on avoiding potentially dangerous situations by sticking together and being aware of their surroundings.

With camping gear and a portable stove, the duo was prepared to spend nights outdoors. They were also hoping to stay with local families and get the flavor of the towns they are passing through.

"You go by bike through a little town, and you learn what the people are like, and what they're interested in, and what the smells are like," Manley said. "It creates a whole different way of experiencing things."

Their ride will officially end at the Panama Canal, and they already have a celebration planned. The two plan to stay at Luna's Castle Hostel, a funky backpackers' outfit in Panama City. They have not ruled out continuing their bike ride into South America.

"A lot of people spend their whole lives going, 'Oh, I'm so afraid of risk and dying; I don't want to go somewhere different, because I might get shot. I don't want to take a chance and ride a bike,'" Manley said. "You can live a long, long life, and never live, and that's a worse death than to die doing what you love."

To follow Brimhall and Manley's journey or to donate, visit herosquest2008.com.

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