

When Riders and Clubs Rise to the Occasion



Tamela Lives Full Throttle

MOA member shares her support for breast cancer research with her book Live Full Throttle.

By Rebecca Clark #133802

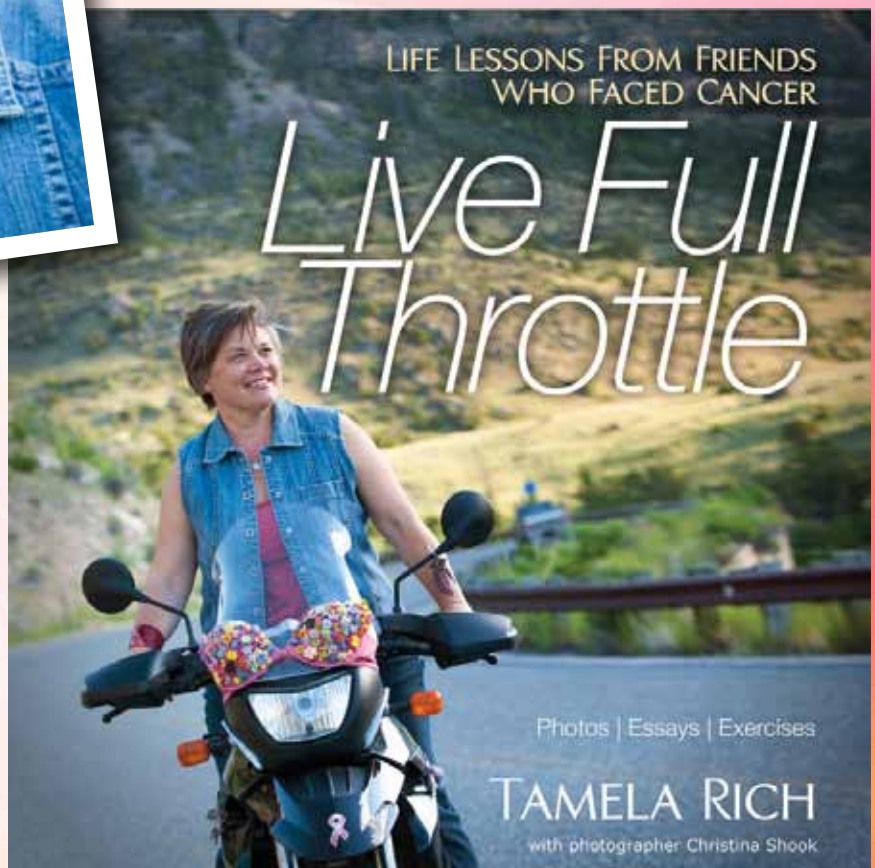
PHOTOS BY CHRISTINA SHOOK

Tamela Rich is, among many things, a ghost writer, speaker and adventurer. She's also one of the 50 some odd motorcyclists who joined together in Shell, Wyo., for a weekend of breast cancer research fundraising in July 2011, that raised \$15,000.

Tamela's story begins in 2010 when she first learned to ride a BMW motorcycle and rode from Charlotte, N.C., to Bend, Ore., where she was working on a book project that summer. Before leaving, she wanted to find a cause to champion along the way. That is when fate led her to Tannis Florence "Flo" Fuhr and her Women Who Ride Rock (WWRR) group. The WWRR group would be on their annual Conga Ride to raise money for breast cancer research in Wyoming at the same time Tamela would be there, so Tamela joined their cause and participated in her first Conga Ride. Needless

to say, Tamela's life changed forever.

I had the pleasure of talking to Tamela to see what inspired her to create this labor of love, and how she began her relationship with BMW motorcycles and the larger motorcycling community.



Rebecca Clark: *What made you decide to travel on a motorcycle to Shell, Wyo., and create the book Live Full Throttle?*

Two years ago, I was going to Bend, Ore., on a business trip. I had always wanted to

learn how to ride a motorcycle, and so I decided that instead of flying or driving to Oregon, I would learn to ride a motorcycle and ride back and forth. I believe in a life of service, so I wanted to find a cause to join up with. So, I went on Facebook and found the Conga Ride. It just so happened that they were rallying in Cheyenne, which was right on my way, and it was just like a hint of God or something. It fit perfectly. So I went to Cheyenne that first year. I pulled in and I was bombarded by a sea of pink bikes. That's the moment where my life really changed forever, because that's when I started hearing all these stories about people and cancer, either their battle, their mother's, their sister's, their co-worker's, whoever. That's when I really became energized with the work and about cancer. I did not have an appreciation for how much cancer there is and how many lives are touched.

That experience the first year convinced me that I would do another trip. Flo asked me would I please write a book about the Conga. She didn't know what she wanted and I didn't know what was going to come of it, but I knew it would be very visual. I



Flo

hired photographer Christina Shook and she asked me what the book was going to be about. I said I don't know, but I advised to get a picture of every single person there. We worked the weekend and then flew out to Billings. Christina asked me again what the book was going to be about, and I said I don't know (laughing). At one point we thought maybe we'd make a yearbook kind of thing out of it, like a souvenir book. But obviously that's not what happened.

I wanted it to be a meaningful book for people who had never ridden a motorcycle, who had never been out West and who never had dealt with cancer. The best way I conceptualized the book was through my own lens of someone who stumbled upon this little microcosm of motorcycling and cancer. It had profoundly affected me and the way I looked at life – having heard all these stories – and I wanted to bring that to people who had not had that same experience that I had.

“I believe in a life of service”

RC: *Why did you choose BMW for your motorcycle?*

My brother J.J. (MOA member #148332) is a real motor head. So BMW was the machine in his mind. Whenever anyone in my family wants to get a new car or anything, they call my brother. So I have a great respect for his expertise. He's such a raving fan of the brand. So BMW was easy for me based on his recommendation.

My brother was very generous with me learning to ride. I took my MSF course and I went up to his place in Ohio. He had, at that time, a GSA and a Dakar. He also had a 450 dirt bike. He was trying to figure out what bike to put me up on to teach me how to ride. He was going to put me on the dirt bike because I could do so little damage to it. He looked at me and said, “How's your balance?” Now there are three things in any



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athletic endeavor: strength, flexibility and balance. I don't have great strength, I'm pretty flexible, but balance is where I really shine.

I said, "J.J. I'm really great at balance."

He said, "I'm going to try you on the Dakar and we'll see."

I said, "Wait a minute, this bike is too big for me!"

He said, "No, it isn't. Look; if you learn to ride with one foot, even one toe on the ground, you'll learn to be a better rider than one with both feet on the ground. Both your feet on the ground is a bad habit."

So I got up on the bike, and when he put me up on the pegs, I felt like I was home. I loved it. He was shocked to see how good I was.

I live an hour and a half from the BMW Performance Center in South Carolina, and I knew that they taught motorcycling. I called the Performance Center and asked would they sponsor me and teach me how to ride this bike I was going to do the trip on. They said yes! So I got two days of instruction at the Performance Center. One day was on-road and one day was off-road. They sponsored me with a G650GS. The brand has been so good to me. I love BMW. I've been so happy to be a part of the family.

“When he put me up on the pegs, I felt at home.”

RC: *What's your favorite kind of BMW bike?*

I am a dual sport girl. I really love being able to take my bike where I need to go. I'm not afraid of gravel; I don't have to worry about the chrome getting dinged. I'm sort of a messy person, and a GS doesn't care if it

has mud on it. It totally 100 percent suits my personality and my ergonomics.

RC: *What do you hope to accomplish with the book Live Full Throttle?*

I wanted the book to be something that would touch people and make them



re-think their lives. That was the intention for the book. Another part of the intention for the book was to present motorcyclists to the non-motorcycling world in a favorable light. Motorcyclists are usually seen through a pejorative lens by people who aren't motorcyclists. I had no idea how philanthropic motorcycle people are. Any day of the week you can go on a charity ride with a motorcycle interest group. Finally, I wanted a book that would give me a platform to speak to groups, and to continue writing as someone who puts herself in an immersion experience. I came into motorcycling as a rookie, I threw myself into a sub-culture I had never had any exposure to, I extracted some really valuable life lessons and now I'm sharing those lessons with other people.

RC: *Has this book brought more awareness to the Conga Riders and their cause?*

Definitely. People have started a Northwest Conga in Oregon, and when I was in Cleveland for the International Motorcycle Show I met two women at a book-signing event, hosted by BMW Motorcycles of Cleveland, who decided to start a Conga initiative in northern Ohio. Just this past week when I was in Seattle signing books at the Seattle Cancer Care Institute. Probably 15 motorcyclists came to the event and committed to doing a Conga event there this summer. When I was in Las Vegas, where I keynoted the Winter Nationals event for Women in the Wind, their president said, "Oh, I would love to have all of our chapters participate in the Conga!" So the short answer is yes.

RC: *Are there any future motorcycle journeys and written works on the horizon?*

I've got a lot of things I want to explore on the bike – cultures, travel abroad. One of the things I was thinking about doing is riding through the Holy Land and exploring many of the sites that are historical and/or sacred to Judaism, Christianity, Islam and the Bahá'í faith. I'm a Bahá'í, and our international headquarters are there. Four world religions are rooted in the Holy Land, and maybe I can ride with someone from each of those other three religions. We can all

ride our motorcycles together and visit these Holy sites. I think that would be a compelling experience.

I also have some new projects in mind. One of them is the whole relationship between vets [veterans] and motorcycles. The whole Patriot Guard is something my local BMW Club is involved with. A lot of people are coming home, and these vets are going to sink through our culture like a meal through a boa constrictor, affecting our culture and social services system. The Hells Angels got their start back in the Vietnam era when the vets came back and they were disenfranchised and took up motorcycling. So there is this interesting relationship between vets and motorcycles. This will be another immersion experience, to go in cold and throw myself in; listen, learn and write about it; and then tell people about it. Hopefully that will affect the way they look at other people and their own lives and how they make decisions about public policy. The human race is fascinating. There are facets that need to be brought to the fore, and I'm going to continue to do that. ☺



Tamela Rich is a ghost writer of books, articles, presentations and speeches for business professionals. Her book Live Full Throttle is available through her website www.tamelarich.com for \$25. You can also follow Tamela's travels at www.roadtrip.tamelarich.com.

Do you know someone who has done something unique, special or perhaps extraordinary? A BMW MOA member who has gone the extra mile to help others? A rider or club that has truly risen to the occasion? Please let us know. We'd like to share their story. E-mail us at rebecca@bmwmoa.org.



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