

the
rotarian

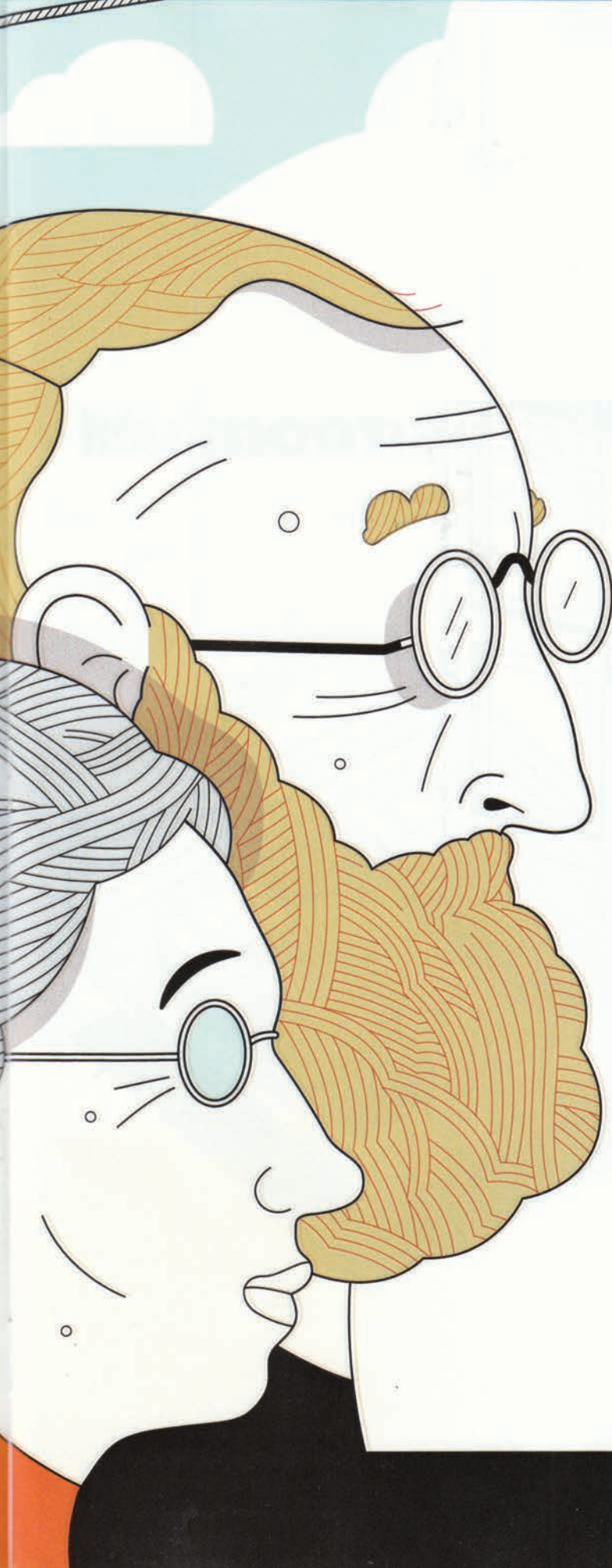
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EXIT INTERVIEW

**UN Secretary-General
Ban Ki-moon on 10 years
of challenge and change**





illustrations by **HARRY CAMPBELL**

**Ordinary
Rotarians
can find
themselves in
extraordinary
circumstances.
In their
own words,
they tell us
what it's
like to...**

ride a scooter across the Sahara

AHMAD ELZOGHBY

Rotary Club of Alexandria Cosmopolitan, Egypt

BACK IN 2011, NOT MANY PEOPLE were riding scooters here. But the car traffic where we lived in Alexandria was insane, so I and a few friends started to ride scooters as an alternative means of transportation.

One day a friend recommended that we do a tour around Egypt, from where we live in Alexandria to Sharm el-Sheikh, which is 450 miles away. And I said, why not? A few days later, I thought, why not go from the very north of Egypt to the very eastern border, then go south and visit all the tourist sights? Egypt depends mainly on tourism, and at this time tourism was

We started in October from the Plaza of the Library of Alexandria. We rode to Cairo and Tahrir Square, where the revolution started. After Cairo, we rode east to Suez and crossed into the Sinai Peninsula. We saw the Sinai Mountains, the Red Sea, the canyons, amazing sights. You would be riding in the middle of nowhere and there would be a Bedouin walking with two camels, and you would wonder, where is this guy going, where is he coming from? Why is he walking in this heat?

Next we went by plane across the Red Sea to Hurghada, then through the Eastern Desert to Luxor. This is a very tough desert. It's all rock formations and a huge mountain range. The farther south you go, the hotter

we were very lucky and had zero accidents. But in some years we have had accidents. In the second year, we were riding in the Western Desert near the end of the trip. We had gone about 1,800 kilometers and I was behind the group trying to make arrangements with escort vehicles. After I finished, I was speeding to catch up with the group, and suddenly I saw the road was under construction. There was a 3-inch difference between the dirt and the asphalt. The last thing I remember was kissing the asphalt. I dislocated my collar bone; the injury is slightly visible even now.

Everywhere we go, people stop us and talk to us. Egyptians are very friendly. They invite us to their house to drink coffee, to rest, to

suffering because of the recent Egyptian revolution. So we thought we would do this to tell the world that Egypt is still a safe place to visit: We can tour the country on scooters and still be safe.

I spoke to my Rotary club and they were very excited. They gave me the go-ahead to put this together. Three months later on 1 July, at the beginning of the Rotary year, the Cross Egypt Challenge was born. In that first year, there were only 14 riders – from Egypt, the United States, and Mexico. In 2015, we had 75 riders from 12 countries.

it gets. During the day it's 100 degrees Fahrenheit. The most difficult part is keeping yourself awake. People get tired easily in the heat, so their concentration is reduced.

From Luxor we rode on to Aswan and ended at the southern border of Egypt, at one of the Abu Simbel temples that were saved by the United Nations when the Aswan High Dam was constructed in the 1960s.

There is always risk involved when you are on the road with two wheels. In 2015

eat lunch. The best thing is that you get to see not only the tourist places. You're diving into the culture. You're diving into Egypt.

– As told to Frank Bures



Interested in riding with Rotarians?
Visit crossegyptchallenge.com
or learn about the International Fellowship
of Motorcycling Rotarians at ifmr.org.