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Wandering Wheels Newsletter, December 2017

Wandering Wheels

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www.wanderingwheels.org

December, 2017

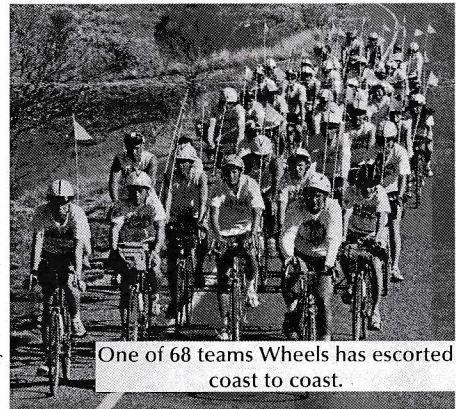
Dear Wheels' Family,

It was in the Spring of 1963 I experienced an epiphany, a spiritual encounter, while driving back to Upland from St. Louis. I had just finished a whirlwind speaking tour. I was exhausted after telling my stories about UCLA football to several audiences.

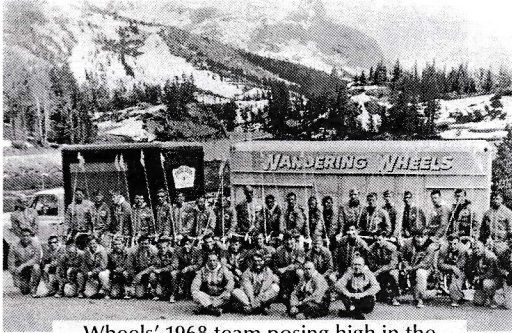
From 1957 through 1980 I was on the road driving 40 to 50 thousand miles a year. Having made All-American two years in a row, 1954 and 1955, gave me a strong platform as a Christian motivational youth speaker. I was burning out! Driving back to Upland, about 100 miles east of St. Louis, I heard a voice, clearly someone (God) speaking to me in an empty car! "Bob, give me your summer." I responded, "The summer is Yours!" This was my first and only such "out of the blue" spiritual encounter.

The following months I shared my spiritual encounter with several groups, and in the summer of 1963 committed my summer to the Winona Lake Bible Conference Grounds. I was placed in charge of 50 conference "kids" working for the summer. I discovered I could serve with little pay and still come out at the end of the summer months financially in good shape.

My 1963 "summer-of-God-encounter" started me down a path of developing several youth-related programs aimed at putting a sparkle in youth ministry. Long-distance group cycle touring was the first brainchild. Two 1,000-mile tours led to coast-to-coast cycling. Wheels has completed 68 transcontinental tours involving over 3,500 riders.



One of 68 teams Wheels has escorted coast to coast.

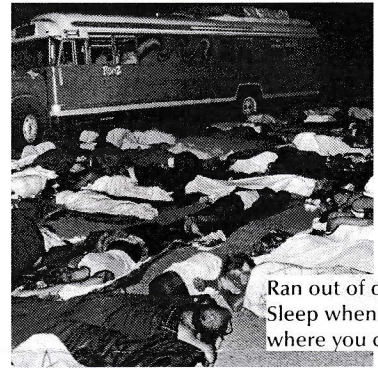


Wheels' 1968 team posing high in the Western mountains.

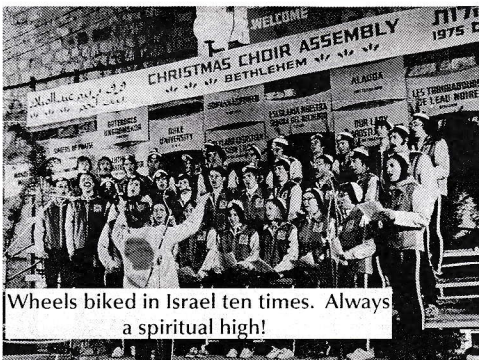
Over the years, hundreds of shorter tours have been conducted, overseas as well as tours of virtually every U.S. National Park. We continue to receive a steady stream of praise letters from our former participants.



One of our early teams, 1965, sharing in song. The cycling teams put on as many as three programs a week.



Ran out of daylight. Sleep when and where you can.



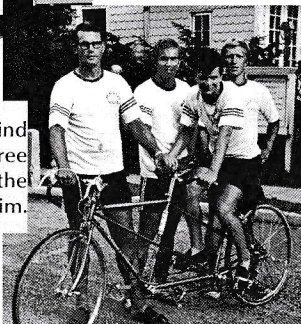
Wheels biked in Israel ten times. Always a spiritual high!

Riding in Russia.



I never stop thanking God for the protective cover received while shepherding our 3,000 riders coast to coast!

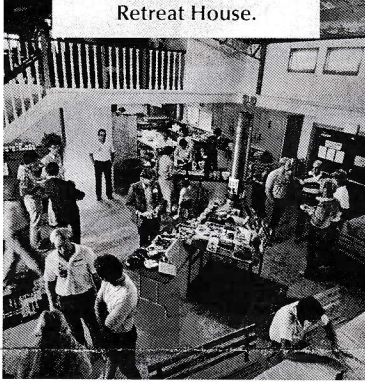
Wheels invited Doug Hassan, a blind rider, to cycle coast to coast! Three Wheels' staffers took turns riding the tandem with him.



The Possum bus program, another brainchild, originated out of Wheels. The program started with a red 150 Ford pickup equipped to carry six kids plus three drivers. The idea was to drive all night, reaching Surf City, New Jersey, by early morning. The kids had never been to the ocean. They had the time of their lives. Within a few years Wheels was the proud owner of several Greyhound-type buses designed to sleep 30 riders, traveling the whole of the U.S. The Possum idea caught on with dozens of off-shoots popping up across the U.S.



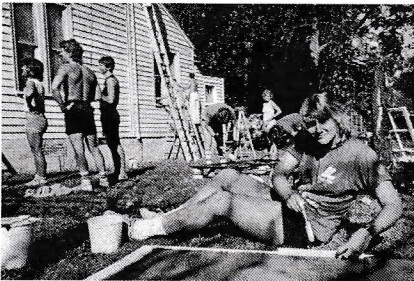
Interior of Wheels' Kitchen-Retreat House.



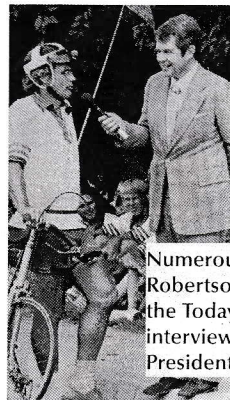
Wheels built a retreat facility, the Wandering Wheels' Kitchen-Retreat House, to serve as a home base ministry. The building is equipped with numerous game stations, bunks for sleeping 30 people, and plenty of outdoor game areas, plus a heated indoor swimming pool. (One of the recent retreat groups used the pool for a baptismal service.)

Following is a quote just received from a church youth pastor: *"I want to express our appreciation for providing an atmosphere where the teens could interact and make some great memories, while also experiencing Christ in an impactful way! The pool seemed to be used even more this year and was a great way for teens to blow off energy since it was colder outside! The fall retreats our youth group does have become a staple in our youth ministry at our church. Thank you for providing us a place where our group can escape daily routines to find spiritual renewal!"*

Like the Bike program and the Possum program, the Retreat House has served as a model for other groups.

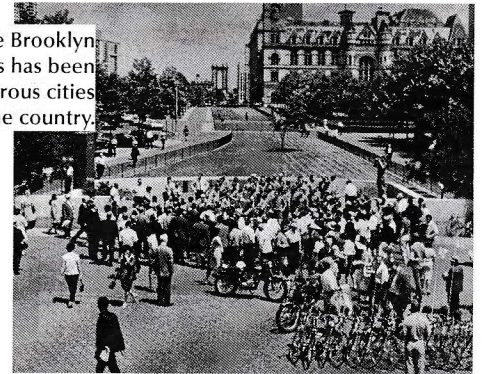


Circle America team in the middle of one of their once-a-week "sprucing up community" projects.

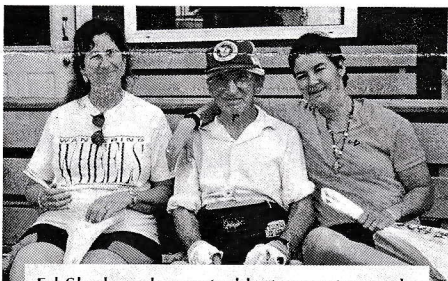


Numerous interviews; Here Pat Robertson doing an interview. We made the Today Show, along with several local interviews. We had an audience with Presidents Johnson and Truman.

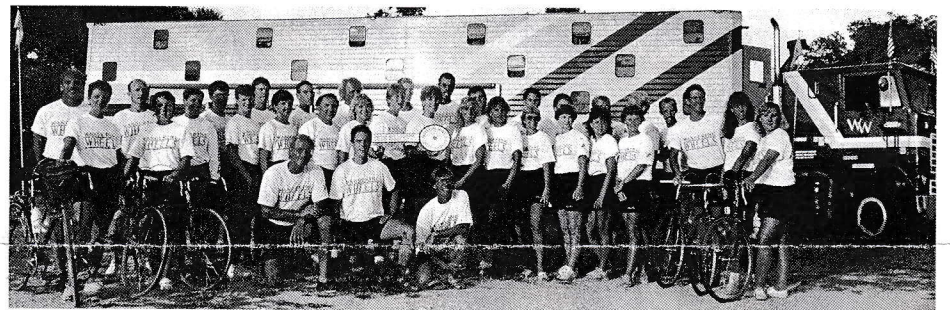
The 1968 team receiving the Brooklyn Key to the City. Wheels has been awarded keys to numerous cities across the country.



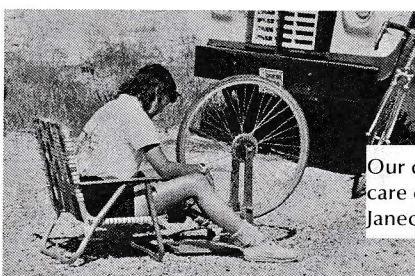
"Home" for ten months! A semi-trailer outfitted for sleeping 50 riders. A great "home away from home"!



Ed Slaybaugh, seated between two gals, has made numerous trips with us until he was 95! Passed at 102!



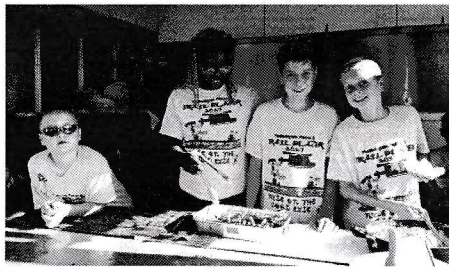
Wheels invited and financed 30 Chinese to come to America in 1988 to cycle coast to coast, 3,000 miles. They were ambassadors from China. When they returned to China, their stories of America made them ambassadors from America.



Our chief mechanic, Janech! She took care of us. "If you need it fixed, see Janech!" She has been a real gift!

Recap of 2017 -- THE END OF AN ERA -- the last official year of Wheels' major bike trips. We continue to bask in the good history God has given us!

2017 January Florida: the team was composed of veteran riders. We continued to use churches for our "overnights". The churches always lend a special touch to our mission, and I'm sure we provide encouragement by our visit. This was once again evident on the 2017 Florida tour.



2017 Trailblazer Ride: a family ride of 60 miles. Many of the kids rode BMX'ers. At the end of the day, the adults rested and the kids kept going!



2017 Fall Breakaway: which has become a "traditional" ride over the last 33 years, once again centered around Wheels' home base. As in the past, it was a 250-mile tour exploring the many yet undiscovered treasures in the surrounding area.

Wheels has had a 53-year history, and now it is time to "pass the torch", so to speak. Our normal pattern for generating operational monies would be through trip fees. We will no longer have this source. As we close out it is my wish to make sure we have enough funds to cover any lingering financial obligations and support some free short weekend tours for the next few years. The spirit of this letter is to offer a note of praise for years past and to lean on you for some financial help as we close out.

Any Help Will Bring A Smile

Sincerely,

Coach Davenport

NO LONGER WITH US...Over the past several years, as word has reached our office about the passing of a veteran rider, we have tried to pass the information along to you. In this letter we are remembering the following riders:

Paul Porter	1993 Coast to Coast
Dick Iselin	1998 Coast to Coast
Ed Slaybaugh	too many trips to mention, including several Coast to Coasts and Fall Breakaways. Ed turned 102 on 12/24/16 and died 1/12/17!
Sandy Pippin	staffed the 1987 Circle America tour
Jean Hand	cooking staff for many early Coast to Coasts