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Wandering Wheels Newsletter

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Wandering Wheels Newsletter, December 1999

Wandering Wheels

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Wandering Wheels

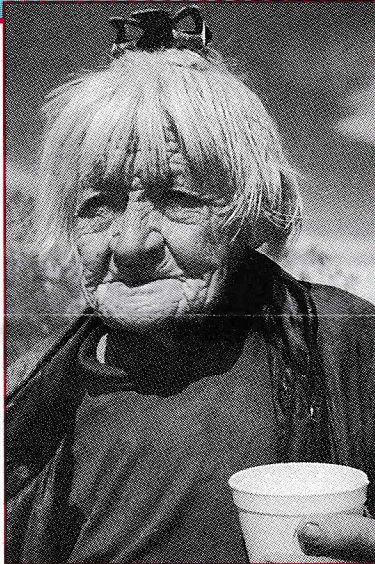


DECEMBER 1999

SINCE 1964

NEWSLETTER

STILL WANDERING



I'm always impressed with the year-end editions of major magazines. They show the year's top pictures and share stories that were not only memorable, but life changing and moving (wars, floods, earthquakes, tornadoes, airplane, boat, and vehicle accidents, record-breaking events, famous people falling or rising, and on, and on). On a daily basis our bike tours expose the riders to maybe less noteworthy events, but the momentary, deeply moving encounters, are the ones that, for days following, leave an impact on them.

On a recent tour to Las Vegas we spent two days riding locally and then headed for the Colorado River. Hoover Dam, always a spectacle, was en route. Another day led us down wonderful desert roads south to Bullhead City and the Laughlin area, still in Nevada. About the fifth day out we bused the team toward Kingman, Arizona, in order to ride a stretch of Old Highway 66. What a great ride! It's hard to believe 50 years ago semis, cars, and trucks were negotiating these narrow, twisting and turning lanes. The desert was alive with

cactus and flowers.

The muted colors of rock and sand ever changing with the cloud cover and different position of the sun told you why the *Arizona Highways Magazine* will never want for enough copy. Many of us chose to ride the switchbacks up the mountain. There are still some active mines in the area, as well as a vista around every corner and a need to linger on each ridge just to take it all in, not to mention the high-speed coast down the mountain! The route took us into Oatman, Arizona, a restored mining community, now a major tourist trap.

Janech and I were about a mile out of Oatman when we spotted someone walking up ahead, slightly hunched over and moving at a snail's pace. The closer we got the more tattered the clothes appeared to be. We coasted quietly up close, not wanting to frighten whoever it was. The worn, beaten, slow-moving figure turned out to be a gal about 78 years old. She was camping up in the hills with nothing but a sleeping bag and the clothes on her back. She had a pocket full of rocks and a lifetime of stories. We didn't want to infringe on her territory, and as tactfully as we knew how, introduced ourselves. Her name was Melinda Larson. Hard to believe, she had been a Marine in WW II. She married an engineer who died young. Gradually, her wandering became a way of life. She is a legend in the Kingman/Laughlin area. People throw money out car windows, bring her food and clothing. Her present stint was simply sleeping out in the open on the hillside and enjoying the fabulous night skies of the desert. She waxed like a poet about the joys of the night sky and the solitude. She was quite a talker and desert philosopher. A lot of what she



shared made sense. Her feet were knurled, shoes literally tied to her feet, no socks. The heel portion of one shoe was gone and her bare heel was hitting the pavement. She handed me a small polished rock, said

that she had hand rubbed it smooth. (Who knows? I still have the stone.) She said that people leave her alone, she leaves them alone. She had a warm feeling for the Almighty and God knows she has earned her stripes for communing with Him. There was something about not being able to put a finger on what it was that made her so mysterious and yet so welcoming. There was also something in the way she said, "God bless you!" Often I think of her all alone on the desert hillside being lulled to sleep by the pitch black, star-studded sky. I guess we all need people like her...it's like seasoning your life..."I need a teaspoonful of the desert lady!" We did cross her palm with some bucks and Janech is sending her a package of usable clothing and sandals.



So, another year and thousands of similar encounters by various team members that provide the fuel for 36 years of ministry!

"How much longer are you going to work? Who's going to take over when you leave? Had enough?" I guess the recounting another year of seeing and feeling God in our mix is enough to keep us looking forward to yet another year!

FLORIDA



The Franklin gang.
We biked it, beached it, camped it,
plus bused it (about 2,500 miles).

We opened 1999 with our Franklin High School gang. They have been making a Florida run with us for several years now and always with good results.

We jump from a bunch of teenagers in early January to greeting our mature bikers in the middle of the month. The adult crew cycles from Cocoa Beach to Key West. It's pretty laid back with good fellowship around the camp fire and catching up on the last twelve months.



Janech sharing her lunch with dolphin on the Florida coast.

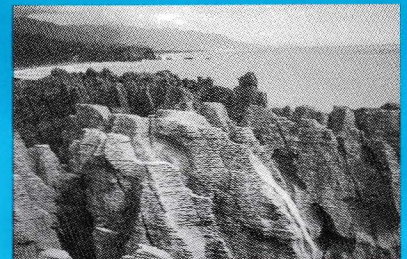
"Dairy Queen. God, I dream about Dairy Queens."
--Greg LeMond



NEW ZEALAND SOUTH ISLAND



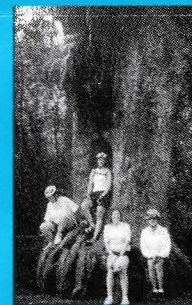
South New Zealand, big island!



Like a big national park.



I mentioned "caring" and "hands on" in New Zealand. This sign is an example.



New Zealand's answer to our giant redwoods.

We scouted it out earlier by car, weren't all that impressed. Boy, what a difference slowing down to 12 to 15 miles an hour on a bike makes! It was like New Zealand multiplied itself several times over in beauty at a slower, more personal, pace. Not only is it richer scenery on a bike, but the PEOPLE have a better "feel". Most of the businesses are owner operated. There is a hands-on feeling in New Zealand. The people running the motels or campgrounds own them. What a difference that makes. It reminds you of the U.S. in the 50's. It seemed strange to cross over to the other side of the equator. The night skies were new to us. Of course, winter is summer and so on.



We took in a sheep sheering demonstration.

Getting accustomed to driving on the opposite side of the road is dangerous. Stepping off the curb and looking the wrong way can send you to the hospital. Food options are about the same as in America. Eating out is a little

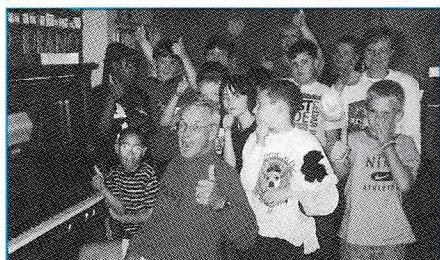
more expensive. There still isn't any place like America for getting a "good deal"! Their language has a nice twist: chap/girlfriend, mate/boyfriend, bowl on over/to go, bloody bugger/bad guy, not a problem/okay, going bush/camping, a cookup/cookout, a wee while/just a minute, I'll give you a bell/will phone, clean out the coffer/break the bank, judder bar/speed bump, metal/gravel, bush/forest, chillybin/cooler, windscreen/windshield.

There seems to be a kind of truth about the place--a fairness and caring!

The weather was good with only a fair amount of predicted rain. The daily beauty was never ending. We saw sheep and sheep and more sheep! The market is changing and

cattle are becoming more numerous. I must admit that once there, there is a wonderful tug to want to return. By the time you receive this newsletter, in fact, another team will have just returned from New Zealand.

"THUMBS UP"

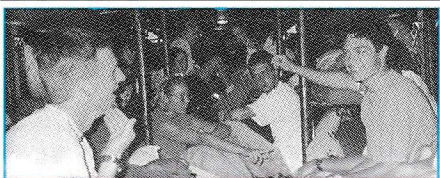


Muncie kids offering a "thumbs up" for a great overnight.

It's becoming a tradition. Remember the story we shared a newsletter ago about the elementary kids from Muncie, Indiana? Their visit continues to be a yearly occurrence. I was introduced to the kids at Ivanhoes Ice Cream Parlor. One little guy insisted that the group offer Grace for the ice cream treats.

I was impressed with the supervisors and their love for the kids. I invited them to an overnight, on the house, at the Wheels' Kitchen-Retreat House. They keep coming back and loving it. Next time around we'll have the pool and will really "wow" them!

TAYLOR-MACKINAW



For years we have been supplying bikes and transportation for the Taylor dorm counselors. We leave by Possum bus late Thursday night and 400 miles later arrive in Petoskey, Michigan. We cycle the beautiful Lake Michigan shoreline to Mackinaw City and next day ferry to Mackinaw Island for another day's ride. It's back on the bus for an all-night return to Upland. A real whirlwind tour, but, it works. The counselors are primed and ready for their charges.



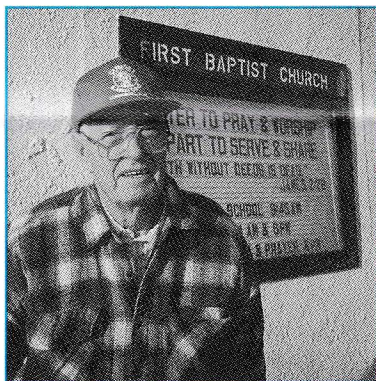
No loose cannon here. The dorm counselors will be ready for the loose cannons on their dorm floors.

COAST TO COAST SPRING

This trip continues to get easier and easier. The stretch from Carlsbad, California, to Brunswick, Georgia, is like our backyard. We know the territory.

There is one leg of the 2,500-mile journey that is about as desolate as any in the U.S. with not a whole lot to look forward to. When we leave Phoenix, we pass through Superior, Arizona, population 3,000, and go up the mountain to Globe, Arizona, population 6,000, and when we come down the other side we stay in Safford, Arizona, population 7,000. When we leave Safford it's about

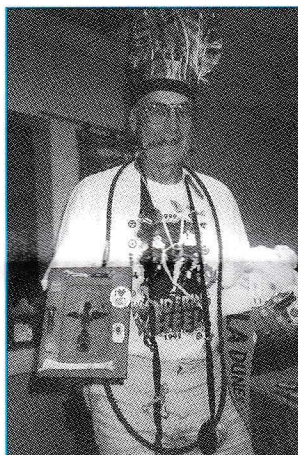
100 miles of nothing. Oh, there's the little village of Duncan, population 600, but no donuts! Until we get to Lordsburg, New Mexico, and it's always a tough ride, the area is void of all the prettiness of past days' rides. Lordsburg is an old railroad town kept alive by the interstate traffic.



Homer, our friend in Lordsburg, New Mexico.

The highlight of this high desert plateau town is Homer. Homer is a gentleman about 80 years old with a book full of jokes. He literally writes down all the good jokes that he hears and shares them with people like the Wheels' groups.

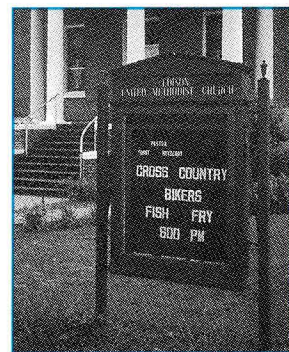
He retired from the railroad as a telegraph operator. After our 100-mile



Coach and "road kill" presented to him on his 40th crossing of the U.S.

long, desolate journey we pull up to the Lordsburg First Baptist Church where we're greeted by our faithful friend of many years, Homer! He has a great drawl, a halting sort of speech, that makes him that much more interesting to listen to. After he shows us where the light switches are and how the thermostat works, the odds and ends in the kitchen, and tells us the time of the evening service, and all about the new pastor, we are again officially family. This small church changes

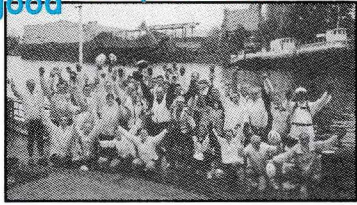
pastors yearly or even sooner than that. He takes a special interest in everyone and hangs around until the lights go off...better than Motel 6! Guys like this are great anticipation material. We cross people's paths on a daily basis who remember our teams from years past. A local resident remarked to our group, "You're a week late!" That made believers out of the riders that the locals kinda set their calendars by the Wheels cycling through their areas.



Each year on the spring crossing the Edison (Georgia) United Methodist Men prepare a wonderful southern cookout for the coast to coasters.

SUMMER COAST-TO-COAST

A good complement of younger riders gave the '99 summer crossing some of its old flair.



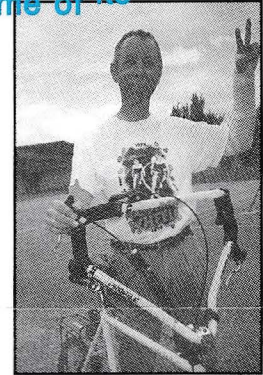
The 1999 coast-to-coast team.



Our two 75-year-olds, John Wessels and Bill Glazier.



Julie greeting kids on the reservation in Lame Deer, MT.



Dr. McLane with Janech's re-designed handlebars.



Coach with Luke's cross generation of riders.



Team stopping at the 1,000-mile mark.

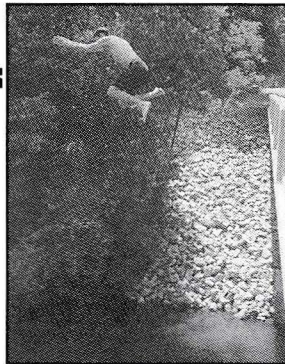
can't get up, the adults are guzzling coffee at daybreak. The kids stop and play along the way, the adults keep on riding. On and on it goes. We had some interesting combinations: father/son, sister/sister, mother/son, husband/wife, friend with friend, etc.

Two of our men celebrated their 75th birthdays during the summer. Our youngest rider was 14. Who would have ever dreamed that men and women would be into this kind of activity at the age of 75? I didn't even know a 75-year-old when I was growing up,

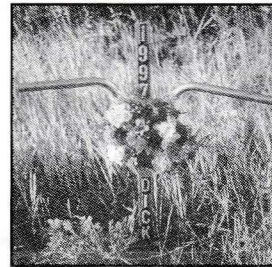
When you mix 14- to 19-year-olds with 45- to 75-year-olds you get some interesting contrasts. The kids don't go to sleep early, the adults do. The kids come in late, the adults are asleep early. The kids are not used to snoring, the adults can cope. The kids



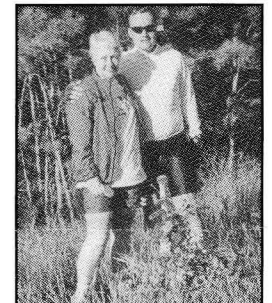
John Stout, coast to coast '74, and his wife with Coach. John lives in Circleville, OH. He found out we were in town and treated the team to pizza!



One of our riders, Luke Williams, jumps off a 50 ft. bridge just west of Parkersburg, WV. This is a Wheels' tradition.



Cross made out of bicycle handlebars.



Lois and J.R. Brown stand near the spot where husband and father passed away in 1997.

A combined link with the summer concerns Rosemary Company. Rose is a long-time Wheels' vet with multiple thousands of miles to her credit. She was involved in a major bike/ car accident during the summer

crossing. She was hit by an older couple, no fault of hers. She had several breaks and was hospitalized for weeks. Fortunately, her daughter lives near where the accident took place and was able to be with her during her

We were reminded that he died doing what he loved to do. It's moments like these that deeply impact the touring members. Most of us agreed that we went up a notch or two, spiritually, and much of it was because of a moment like this.

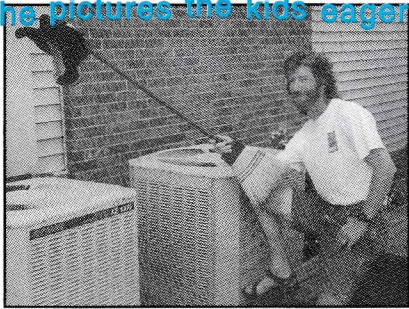
From a book about horses comes the following statement: "If your knees hurt too much, If they both hurt, your stirrups are just right." The same holds true for bike riders. You

COAST TO COAST

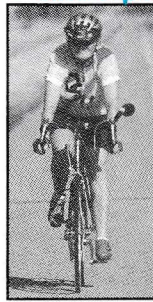
see by some of the pictures the kids eager faces anticipating another full day's ride (hal hal).



Williams, his grandson.
ing made for a third
coast to coasters for Coach!



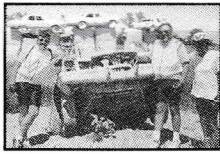
The laundromat must be closed or Kim ran out of money!



Rosemary looking good before her unfortunate collision 5 days before the trip ended.

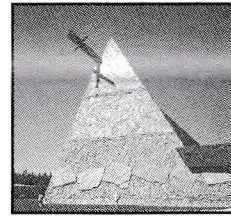


Our 14-year old, Jeff Burns, broke his seat. He found this hubcap and placed it on the seatpost and finished out the day!



"Car Hinge", Alliance, NE.

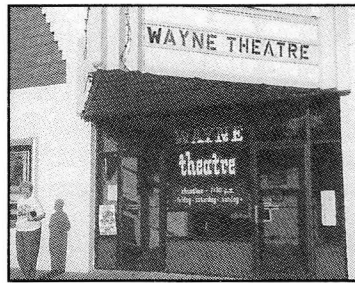
suffered a heart attack and died at the top of this hill. Now two years later his wife, Lois, and son, J.R., stood with us in a memorial service. This was a kind of closure for the family. Chip Gosnell and I fabricated a cross



Beautiful chapel at St. Labre Indian School in Ashland, MT. Great home for our summer crossing team.

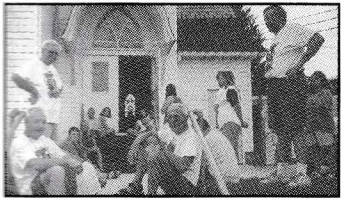
much less one who would ride a bike all day long with me.

A significant point in the trip occurred when we gathered at the top of a steep hill just out of Keystone, South Dakota, near Mt. Rushmore. Two years ago Dick Brown

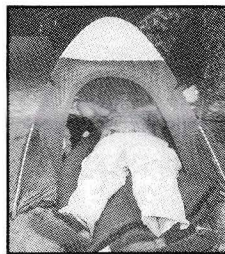


The Wayne Theater owners in Corydon, IA, open up and give us a first rate viewing. Popcorn is on the house.

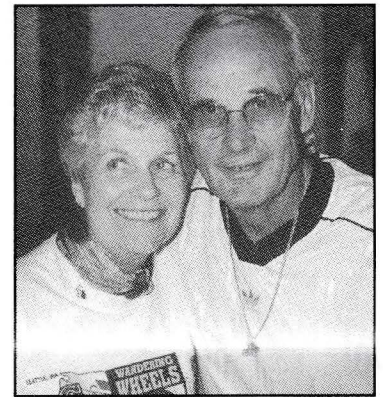
out of a bicycle handlebar and a solid piece of aluminum. We drove it into the ground marking the spot where Dick had passed away. The whole team stood with the family and paid tribute to Dick and his zest for life.



Wheels taking advantage of warm, wonderful hospitality at the St. John Lutheran Church in Red House, MD. They feed, house, entertain, and spoil us!



"Joey, you shouldn't have put the tent in the dryer!"



Coach and Dot Thoroughgood. Dot takes the lead on our stay in Rehoboth Beach, DE. She's a special lady...was just recovering from major surgery.

recovery. It was quite a "happening" due to the number of people who visited her or called her while she was hospitalized! It all speaks so warmly of the "family" feeling and response.

Nebraska rest area.



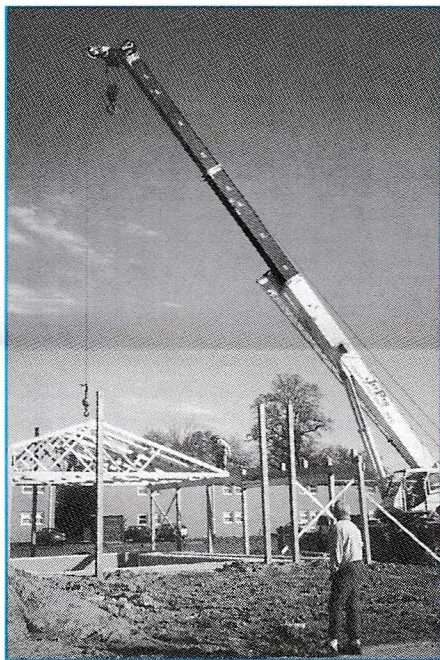
Dr. Rogers McLane broke his arm early in the tour. He and his son, a coast-to-coast vet of 1989, were doing a long anticipated coast to coast together. Janech, "Mrs. McGuyver", re-designed his handlebars, braking system

and shifting levers which allowed him to continue. His doctor told him to go home! No way! So, Rogers' determination and Janech's ingenuity, along with in-flight adjustments, made it possible for his successful crossing!

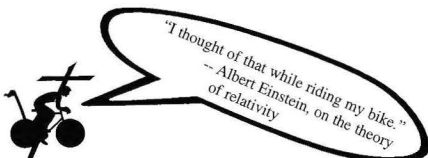
your stirrups are too short. If your tail end hurts too much, your stirrups are too long. I will find it is always easier to walk if there is a bike between your legs.

THE POOL

In my travels some communities have swimming pools in every back yard, some even enclosed. In fact, in our rural Indiana it is not uncommon to see in-ground pools dotting the landscape. So, what's the big deal about our long-awaited indoor pool with 82 degrees water encased in a nice building? One, it's going to be a wonderful compliment to the Kitchen-Retreat House which is fully booked through late spring. The warm water pool is only 3 1/2 feet deep, allowing for safe play for everyone. You can swim or rough house. We'll have a volleyball net for water volleyball. Two sets of windows, 8' high by 16' long, will fill the south and east walls. They will be charmers. I guess the thing I like is that the pictures and woodwork in the Kitchen speak so clearly about Jesus. No matter who comes to visit the building or pool, they will go away impressed with Jesus being the inspiration for the facilities.



Workers busy getting the pool enclosed.



"I thought of that while riding my bike."
-- Albert Einstein, on the theory of relativity

FALL BREAKAWAY



The Fall Breakaway cyclists...
"We are family."

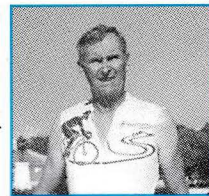
Hopefully, the accompanying picture will give you a feel for our Fall Breakaway bikers. They are 98% veterans of years past. This is one of the friendliest tour groups you could ever expect to meet...they get real close to being FAMILY! We toured Door County, Wisconsin. If you haven't driven or cycled Door County, you're in for a real treat when you do...it's flat!

Tom Makovic, a regular rider, took a spill and was hospitalized a couple of days. The whole team went in shifts to visit him. Over 50 team members traipsed through the Sturgeon Bay Hospital to visit one of their wounded. After a while the nurses recognized us in our biking outfits and simply pointed... "Down the hall!" Tom wrote a nice note: "Just had my final medical checkup. The lung and ribs are healing fine. Thanks for the prayers and concern. Wheels' people are the best! See you next year!" (Signed, Tom Makovic)

At one of our devotionals we closed by taking up an offering...wound up with about \$80. We looked all over for several days for a recipient. Normally, waitresses are deserving candidates. Door County takes care of its own. The last night of the ride I decided to go find someone "in need". No one showed up. I passed a small Catholic Church, the priest was eating in the parsonage. I knocked on the door and much to his surprise there stood a stranger offering him 80 bucks. I finally got my story out and the priest gave me a big hug! Mission accomplished! Father Cotter sent a note of thanks: "Dear Friends, the children of our Parish thank you for your gift. They say thank you with their prayers. We have some children whose parents find it hard to make ends meet. These are the children who will benefit from your kind donation."

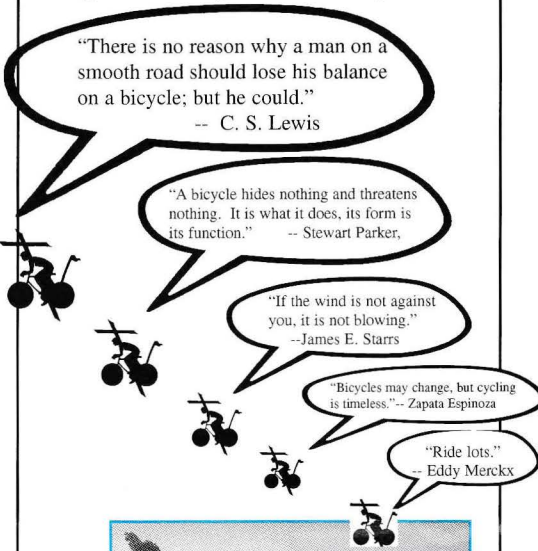
WALK ACROSS THE USA

In the spring of the year 2001 John Boyle and Rosemary Campany, both veterans of Wandering Wheels' tours, will walk



across the USA. They will walk 100 days at 26.2 miles per day with Sundays off. The 2,600-mile walking route follows Wheels' spring route.

SAG DRIVER NEEDED, full or part time. Duties similar to Wheels' sag: drive walkers to starting point and from ending point each day, arrange lodging, and provide water and food during walk. Sag driver's expenses will be paid.



"There is no reason why a man on a smooth road should lose his balance on a bicycle; but he could."

-- C. S. Lewis

"A bicycle hides nothing and threatens nothing. It is what it does, its form is its function."

-- Stewart Parker

"If the wind is not against you, it is not blowing."

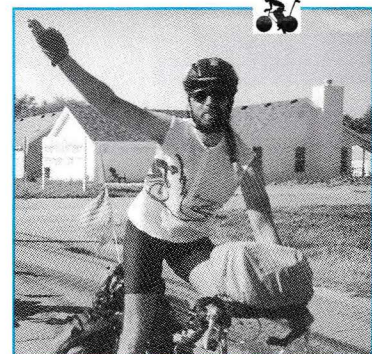
--James E. Starrs

"Bicycles may change, but cycling is timeless."

-- Zapata Espinoza

"Ride lots."

-- Eddy Merckx



Dave Hildreth, Circle America 1985, visited Wheels recently. He and a friend are circling the U.S. raising money for Breast Cancer Awareness. "Good job, David!"

2000 TRIP SCHEDULE

Start the next 1,000 years with another WHEELS' RIDE. The Wheels' newsletter goes to those of you who have ridden with us sometime in the last 35 years. Wheels doesn't plan on another year-long schedule like the one planned for 2000.

This would be a great time to take off a few days of work, or even months, to TAKE ANOTHER ride. There are several places in the year 2000 route where you could enter and exit the schedule. We will have the equipment to shuttle you a reasonable distance to and

from airports, train stations, or bus terminals. SAN FRANCISCO TO SAN DIEGO, California, would provide several options. SAN DIEGO TO BRUNSWICK, Georgia, with the best weather of the 2000 schedule, would have eight or ten good starting/stopping options. The East Coast leg from BRUNSWICK TO NEW YORK CITY is loaded with culture and history with several good opportunities to enter and exit the tour. The summer's NEW YORK CITY TO SEATTLE, Washington, route has Buffalo and

Niagara Falls, New York, en route, followed by a great ride across Ontario, Canada. The leg across Michigan will be capped off with a ferry ride across Lake Michigan. You could pick up in Green Bay, Wisconsin, or Minneapolis, Minnesota. A "real" ride would be to join us for the Montana portion out of Billings across to Seattle, Washington. Wow! If all that's not enough, meet us in SEATTLE and ride one of the most magnificent highways in America, U.S. Highway #1, along the Pacific Ocean south to SAN FRANCISCO, California.

JAN 16 - JAN 26

**KEY WEST FLORIDA
START IN COCOA BEACH**

PRICE \$795

MAR 28 - APR 9

**WEST COAST LEG
OF CIRCLE AMERICA
SAN FRANCISCO, CA TO SAN DIEGO, CA**

PRICE \$1,100

APR 11 - MAY 21

**SPRING COAST TO COAST LEG
OF CIRCLE AMERICA
SAN DIEGO, CA TO BRUNSWICK, GA**

PRICE \$3,195

MAY 24 - JUN 15

**EAST COAST LEG
OF CIRCLE AMERICA
BRUNSWICK, GA TO NEW YORK CITY, NY**

PRICE \$1,695

JUN 18 - AUG 9

**SUMMER COAST TO COAST LEG
OF CIRCLE AMERICA
NEW YORK CITY, NY TO SEATTLE, WA**

PRICE \$3,495

AUG 11 - SEP 1

**NORTHERN WEST COAST LEG
OF CIRCLE AMERICA
SEATTLE, WA TO SAN FRANCISCO, CA**

PRICE \$1,680

SEP 15 - SEP 24

**FALL BREAKAWAY
"OHIO"!!!**

PRICE \$495

WANDERING WHEELS

newsletter 1999

page 7

“Keep ‘em Rollin”

We recently returned from a whirlwind bus tour to Washington, D.C., with a youth group from Muncie, Indiana. The youth leader had been on a Possum trip as a student years ago and wanted his group to experience a Possum trip. It was a good trip. An early morning breakfast across from the Washington Monument, Arlington Cemetery, Lincoln Memorial, Vietnam and Korean Memorials, The White House, Capitol and several museums

were stuffed into the day's schedule. On top of the sightseeing we had two nights of busing of over 1,000 miles. I shared briefly the meaning of SERENDIPITY, making accidental fortunate discoveries, pointing out this would be their teacher for the weekend. Late evening I changed the schedule and decided to run the gang north to The National Cathedral. This church is a tenth of a mile long and loaded with symbolism. We spent over an hour with a guide lovingly telling us of the 90-year history

of the church. The kids were drinking it in. At one point the guide shared with the group that much of the greatness of the building had to do with SERENDIPITY! You could have heard a pin drop! The kids turned to me as if to say, "You had this planned!" I never cease to be amazed at the SERENDIPITY within SERENDIPITY! I bragged about God, using fortunate discoveries to teach us, but I wouldn't have believed the word would get so wonderfully compounded.

"If the constellations had been named in the twentieth century, I suppose we would see bicycles." Carl Sagan



COACH'S CLOSING THOUGHTS

I suggested at the start of this newsletter how recounting the past year's stories seems to focus on tragedy and brokenness. In fact, I find myself focusing on similar accounts in wanting to share with you, our Wheels' vets. Reporting hurts seems more newsworthy. We had, as I said, our fair share of spills this past season, but nothing to compare to all the VICTORIES. Our bills are paid and 95% of the projects we dreamed of pulling off have happened. The letters we receive back from riders are all

positive and speak of time and effort well spent. There is a happiness amongst the Wheels' staff that is a plus to our day-to-day operation. Our equipment has run well with few maintenance needs. There is minimum heartache in our immediate families (mothers, fathers, children, wives, husbands, brothers, sisters, grandchildren and other relatives). Our overall well-being suggests nothing but giving thanks to the Father for allowing us to experience another full year of ministering to others!

Don't let it get old...we at Wheels consider you, our newsletter recipients, a key to our ongoing success! Your prayers, financial input and word-of-mouth sharing with others about the program make a measurable difference!

Warmest regards,

Bob & Staff

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WHEELS' NEWSLETTER

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