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Wandering Wheels Newsletter

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# Wandering Wheels Newsletter, December 1985

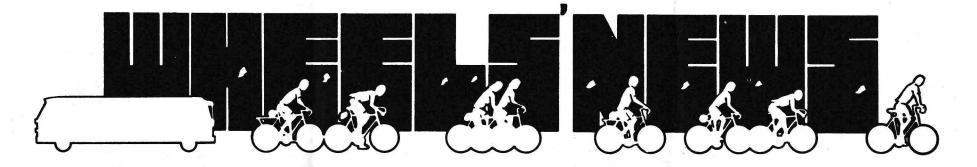
Wandering Wheels

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### DECEMBER 1985

Dear Wheels' friends,

How do you say that it's over after thinking about it for years? Our Circle America group took in so much that our cup really did run over! It will be several years before total recall will take place and then maybe not even in this lifetime!

Try to imagine moving 15 miles an hour for 11,450 miles over a 10-month period! Better yet, imagine the joy of stopping wherever your heart desires! Think of the hundreds of strangers you speed past while riding in a car, but on a bike the nod of the head, a smile, a "hi", or simply stopping to talk help make strangers friends! Oh, the <u>E N C O U R A G E M E N T</u> offered by the Circle America gang! Flags flying overhead and cyclists hurrying down the road created a feeling of "mission" to the viewing public. It can never be measured monetarily, but I know that America is a better place because 60 Wandering Wheels' cyclists gave 10 months to bask in the greatness of this land and its people. They announced back to those listening via newspaper, radio, television, and along the road, that America is a great place to live!

Each rider has a different story to tell. For some of us, the agricultural miracle of America is beyond belief.

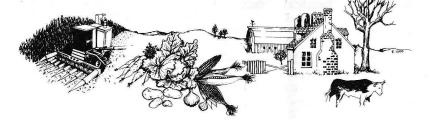
Delicious apple became as common as the orange is in Florida. Continuing through Washington the whole team responded to the amazing wheat and barley fields located high on a mountain plateau reaching from Waterville to Spokane. The thousands of acres looked like an ocean of wheat and barley.

The "king" in Idaho is the potato. Wheat and alfalfa keep the economy going throughout the Dakotas. The presence of dairy farming is felt almost immediately upon entering Minnesota and Wisconsin. The crops are aimed at feeding livestock. Silos reach into the sky like church steeples.

I am sure there are more silos per capita in those two states than anywhere else in the world. Fruit became more common around the coastal areas like the Great Lakes, so once again peaches, pears and apples were prevalent. One interesting crop that caused the riders to dismount and ask, "What is that?" was ginseng. It's an herb grown in Minnesota and exported to Asia.

In Michigan a group of riders stopped for a morning snack at an apple orchard. The owner of the orchard was in need of some pickers so the group picked apples for a couple of hours, labor free, leaving the owner several picked bushels of apples richer. He was really impressed. I can just hear someone asking him, "Who were those guys?" His possible response: "I don't know. They said something about being Christians--Jesus freaks, I guess!"

Corn and soybeans, how boring! But that was Indiana, Ohio and, believe it or not, most of New York! From Lake Erie east through New York state the Concord grape covered the landscape. Such a vast assortment of food crops makes for interesting farm equipment. They have invented a grape picker which was new to me. Man's mind just doesn't stop. When they invent a strawberry picker the migrants will really be in trouble.



In the movie, <u>The River</u>, the banker says to the farmer, "If floods don't get you, drought will, and if those two don't get you, then over production will." What a paradox! Nearly everywhere we turned there was something growing. In the few places where it was bare, there was good reason for it. Thousands of acres were fenced for just a few struggling steer. Florida is into year-round truck farming, not to mention its hallmark--citrus. From Alabama west through Texas and Arizona cotton, corn, soybeans, grain, sugar beets, and pecans were common crops. Curiosity gets the best of the riders when a strange crop shows up. Take asparagus, for example. I asked a field hand what it was. He cut some fresh stock and I, along with others in my riding group, nibbled on fresh asparagus while cycling down the road.

California is a veritable garden. Name it and it grows, but that can also pose a problem for one of the leading crops is marijuana. The world's largest producer of artichokes is in the Ventura/Oxnard area. Strawberries, and other berries, were growing by the hundreds of acres, as well as grapes. Sunkist still has a corner on the "bestoranges-in-the-world" market. The Imperial Valley in the south and Monterey in the north produce most of the lettuce, onions, celery, carrots and other assorted garden vegetables for the major cities in the United States. Avocados, pomegranates, dates, plums, apricots, and a huge assortment of other exotic fruits all grow here, not to mention a wealth of nuts (the non-human type!). Lumber is the trademark of northern California and Oregon.

I had never seen a cranberry bog before the trip. Sure enough, what looked like a mess of little red marbles floating on top of the water was cranberries. These kinds of things aroused a child-like curiosity. I don't think man can ever exhaust all the pleasures God has planted out there for us.

Wood and more wood was the theme as the bikers continued north through Oregon. The Portland area was heavily covered with fruit trees. In fact, the Washington Delicious apple is my all-time favorite as a fruit and I felt like I'd reached the fruit Mecca of the world when the Washington If the outer edge of this country is that exciting agriculturally, think of the middle of the U.S. and what is produced there! As a people we need to stop every day and thank God for our single greatest gift and that is FOOD and the ability to grow the greatest variety and quantity the world has ever known! There is not an item we produce more glorious than our food. Automobiles, computers, weapons, airplanes, creature comforts...nothing else comes close to taking first place. Food is our greatest God-given gift!



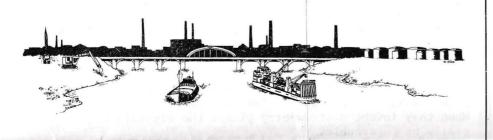
The American church story in many ways rivals the agricultural one. What an amazing revelation as we visited hundreds of churches. Denominations and independent religious groups compete so furiously that they often cancel each other out in the eyes of the multiple millions looking on. America needs a "flag waver" for the church. Wheels views the church from the most basic level. We celebrate her soft rugs which provide better sleeping, her kitchens, and yes, even her restrooms! Some churches even have showers! The church is still a steeple high in the air, a well manicured, conservatively designed architecture. It is a place to go when in trouble, or to marry or to bury our dead. Even the hardest core citizens submit to its being the best place for so many necessary activities. What a platform the combined church of America has provided for those who want to speak out. The civil rights leaders were trained by her, the early suffrage movement, the conscientious objectors' stand, the anti-abortion and countless other causes have found a platform within the church, be it rank liberal or meddlesome conservative.

Boy Scouts, jazzercise classes, anti-pornography supporters, and others involved in the latest town issues all find a common ground for expressing themselves at the local Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, Catholic and Lutheran church. The latest wave of parochial schools uses the church building for its classroom. There are many reasons for running from the public system, most of them justifiable. What a beautiful freedom! The church allows the grounds for fighting the "big guy". Secularism and simply bad teaching are countered by using the church. Morality and goodness, tools for combating evil, radiate from her walls. There was hardly a church the Wheels' team visited that didn't have a week-day nursery option. With people running scared from the secular system, small wonder they turn to the church for work-a-day help.

Wandering Wheels found a real friend in the church of America. No place did we feel a lack of welcome from the church family. Oh, sure, some were busy and didn't have time to get involved with us, but always we could sense a prayerful spirit. The frosting on the cake to all this is that for a few hours each week these same churches are teaching, preaching, and loving a congregation. These congregations turn out new generations of pastors, missionaries, youth workers, and lay people. Combined with other churches they will build seminaries and colleges. America and the world will continue to experience salvation because of this wonderful mix of man loving man in the name of Jesus Christ.

Shreveport, Louisiana, had 300 churches in a city of 200,000. The ratio is even higher in other places. <u>I</u> don't care how you cut it, there is an uncanny relationship between the church of the United States and the freedoms we experience. It can be felt! Jesus Christ placed so much importance on the individual, especially considering the time of His message. Gospel story after gospel story relates to the individual. It's hard to imagine traveling 11,500 miles anywhere in the world and not being denied or seriously challenged concerning the travel. Our speaking privileges here in America are a miracle compared to what it would be like in the rest of the world.

There has never been a time in history when so many people, literally millions, have lived on so large a piece of geography with so much freedom as the citizens of the United States. I feel this has more to do with the church than any other factor. The Circle America tour opened my eyes to this more sharply than ever.





People...they are the bottom line! Talk about all our assets as a nation and they still come down to people. What a sea of faces we encountered! The "little guys" still have a special place in my heart, especially the small store owners out in the middle of nowhere. They don't just sell groceries, they want to know, "What's happening? How ya' doin'?" I felt like the traveler of old who was the magic link with the outside world for people like this. The truth is these slow, laid back, out-of-the-way, seemingly unimportant people were our link with the real world. What a breath of fresh air they were to us! I have a hard time passing up the "bag ladies" or the downtrodden. They have a way of bringing hope. For me there is a strange Jesus touch. Maybe they amplify the Beatitudes. Louis Evely in A Religion for All Time says, "Proverty is the front door of Christianity." In the book, Second Ring of Power, the author, talking about a poor Mexican lady, says, "She's lost everything already. When one has nothing to lose one becomes courageous. We are timid only when there is something we can still cling to."

Is that the draw? These struggling people are really heroes, spiritual giants, who unwittingly have touched a sweetness that so many of us keep running past. So many of my brave moves are thwarted because I don't have enough backup systems. That was one thing about the perimeter gang, many of them threw caution to the wind in order to join the team--brave folks, many of them!

The black and white mix in the South, or the Mexican/ Anglo mix of Texas west to California, provided a rich experience--California, with its unbelievable mix of everything, not just races, but cultures. Wheels felt the plight of "the new kid on the block", the Vietnamese. We saw them in Mississippi struggling to make a living as fishermen. Many other parts of the U.S. had small pockets of Vietnamese. In California many of the liquor stores were bought by Vietnamese families. It brought the early immigration story of the Jews, Poles, and Italians into fresh focus. Having just seen <u>West</u> <u>Side Story</u>, the Vietnamese situation is a bit of an update. The Northwest, from a little west of Seattle and east to Minnesota, is free of major racial dealings. Oh, there are a few Indians The work force of America is still another phenomena. The Wheels saw it all. The team rode with the early morning traffic going to work and helped congest it on the way home from work.

Small industrial complexes dotted the road side. Retail stores were so numerous that we grew tired of still a better deal. Some stores seemed to be built and opened with a closing sale in mind. Remington Rifle is stuck smugly in a cozy little New England community still employing thousands. Life Savers and Beechnut Gum treated the team in Canajoharie, New York. Boeing Aircraft was refurbishing the Presidential 747 in Seattle. Olympia Brewery, along with hundreds of other bottlers (Coke, Pepsi, etc.), showed up all around the country. Goodyear and Firestone provided the industrial clout in Akron, Ohio. In Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, the steel industry is the major power but a pale of death hangs over the industrial giant. The shipyards on the East Coast from Portsmouth, New Hampshire, to Norfolk, Virginia, were a real surprise for most of the gang. The Trident sub, over 300 yards long, comes out of the New London/Groton, Connecticut, area, and is responsible for hundreds of jobs. Upon entering Suffolk, Virginia, hundreds of family-type vans passed us. I had to stop and ask one of the men who had just stepped out of a van about the unusual sight. He told me that the Newport News, Virginia, shipyards employs 10,000 workers and that these were privately owned vans that provided the transportation for the workers in the form of a van pool. He said that each man pays \$25 a week for the 50-mile-a-day round trip. What energy is represented in just going to work and coming home again. The teeming millions of vehicles represent still another product that employs so many. It seems the greatest number of service related jobs have to do with the auto industry. Of course, the Japanese cars create another wrinkle. California gave good evidence of the inroads the Japanese have made as one after another distribution center showed up. Dallas is becoming the major headquarters for displaying new products for buyers. Its skyline looks like a foreign planet with all its glass buildings. Neenah, Wisconsin, is one of the leading tissue paper manufacturers in the U.S. I never knew that!

All through New Jersey we were reminded of the cosmetics and finely tooled items that come from this part of America. Yea for the chance to have respectable jobs and pay and an equal chance to spend it on the prettiest things imaginable! but there is no threat. There is nothing but white faces and tough country up there. It takes a different breed of cat to even want it year round.

The people of the good, old Mid-west, with its farms and small towns, seem to offer a down-home stability, even though they are two or three years behind the times. That buffer of a few years to change, however, is a comfort.

We found the people of the East to be a major surprise. I'm not sure why, but they seem to be more informed and to have a better touch with history. Their questions are more probing. They hang on to the old traditions. Second Avenue, on Manhattan Island in the Big Apple, does the greatest justice to showing off the "faces of America". I prepped the team for a war-like confrontation on the streets of New York City and then off we rode on our bikes. Three hours later we had made it the whole length of Manhattan Island without one hitch. In fact, I was a little embarrassed because I had anticipated a hostile reception and it was anything but that! There was a circus-type atmosphere about the area--the place was jumping! I was amazed at the gentleness of the New York cabbies. They nudged us along like mother whales with gentle beeps of the horn. The mean, hurrying people had been replaced by a gentle force. Barbi wanted every stop light to turn red so that we could stop and people could talk to us, and talk to us they did! Everyone from Puerto Ricans selling nicknacks to Wall Street-types were soaking up the outof-doors on their lunch hour.

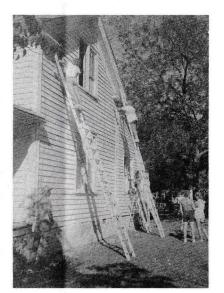


The work projects gave the team some of their best contacts with the people of America. I've shared in previous letters concerning some of the projects. They took on quite a variety.

The house paintings were the <u>splashiest</u> (no pun intended)! A great deal of satisfaction was felt after completing a house painting. One recipient of our Wheels' day-of-labor was a 90-year-old gal. Story had it that the house had not been painted in 50 years. The people of Williamston, North Carolina, kept a steady flow of traffic moving past the house while 35 cyclists "busted their bottoms" scraping, mending and painting. The locals bought soft drinks for the team, loaned ladders, et cetera. All

A WORK PROJECT





1) Meet the lady of the house, 90 years old and in need of loving.



 One of our models offering a pose! Not really, just caught Jane in the act of trimming.



2) House had not been painted in 50 years; Wheels gang attacks the problem.



4) Custom work by the boys. Curt trims out window; Snowball replaces rotten window casement.







11) Our link with the outside world.

12) One of many wonderful alumni groups that came out to see us and wish us well.

In Portsmouth, New Hampshire, the bikers moved huge amounts of clothing and furniture from one location to another. <u>Operation Blessing</u> was the name of the program recently started by a lady who simply fell lot to helping other people. Her husband left a lucrative job in order to assist her. Together they were clothing, feeding and providing, at no cost to the needy, unusual amounts of help. By the end of the day what would amount to a small warehouse full of clothing and furniture had been relocated. The couple told the Wheels' gang that it would have taken them a month to do what we had done in a single day!

The team gave 175 programs! That's right! That was better than one every other day. That was a tough schedule considering that for some it meant riding a bike, going to school, and giving one day a week away in labor! The programs were typically Wheels' stuff--nothing fancy, but honest "gut level" sharing. The audiences became our allies. Their prayer support and response to our story were deeply encouraging. Their thumbs were always up saying "go for it". We could feel the spiritual push from our brothers and sisters who fed us, housed us, and prayed for us.



Some quotes from those who sat in the pews:

Ludington, Michigan - "Especially tell the team how much their singing means to just ordinary people. I can't even write about their singing without tears of joy."

Kalamazoo, Michigan - "I don't know whether it was 'good', 'Great', or 'AWESOME'. From the many comments

that I have heard in the faculty lounge and from the atten-

5) Getting close after 8 hours of scraping, mending, and painting.

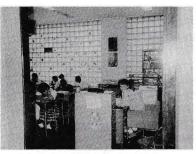
6) One little touch left. Add up the hours given to this project and the number of people involved and you have a gift of over \$4,000.

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in all the perimeter gang painted over 20 houses and every house painting job was a story about getting to know people.

Philadelphia, the City of Brotherly "Shove", I mean, "Love", was the scene of an inner-city work day. This turned out to be a real muscle-building job. We moved super heavy tables into one room and then pushed them out a two-story window. What an explosion when the tables hit the asphalt! To carry them down two flights of stairs would have taken too much time and energy. They were going to be sold as scrap anyway. Some of the gals served as substitutes in the classrooms while four guys built a backstop. This was one tough scene. The school was completely fenced in with double locks on all the doors. The houses across the street were part of the major drug trafficking in the area. We left that work project realizing a part of our America lives in a real war zone, but they are making it!

#### **DAY-TO-DAY HAPPENINGS**



7) Jan is the substitute teacher. This is our inner-city scene, tough but good.



 Headed out on a well-deserved day on the town.



8) Getting fence ready for unloading boxes out of warehouse windows - Farrell and Eugene.



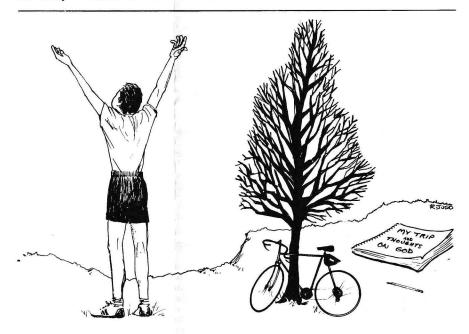
10) If you ever have questions about a missionary call, try by practicing cooking breakfast for 60 bikers – every day for 10 months!

that I have heard in the faculty lounge and from the attentiveness of the kids during chapel I would say the Wheels were greatly accepted and appreciated."

Belle Fourche, South Dakota - "I wanted to tell you how much I wanted to thank the group of young people that did such a great job."

Jacksonville, North Carolina - "I think it's great! Praise and Glory to God for what they are doing and have done for the Lord, their witness and testimony and hard work."

Elkhart, Indiana - "The witness of faith was loud and clear as they worked in our midst."



In 1966 after finishing our first Wheels' coast-tocoast tour, I remarked to Barbi, "I'll never do that again!" I was so awed by the narrow escapes and toughness of the tour that I felt like we had made it through by the skin of our teeth. In 1967, instead of not doing it again, we took two teams across America! It had taken me about 6 months to reconsider after the first trip; however, I needed only a few minutes after the close of the Circle America trip to consider whether or not I would do it again. The answer? Yes, I would! In fact, I would only need a few weeks recuperation time. My right-arm gal, Suellah, said, "No way!" I shared with her that for me there is no better way to encourage the general public concerning Jesus Christ than by being on a bike with a team of riders. Yes, the trip was that good! How do you close a tour of 10 months? Is there a benediction? These were heavy thoughts for me. There are not too many new rabbits to pull out of the hat after that much time together.

"In as much as you have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me." This verse of Scripture kept bouncing back into my head. It finally dawned on me that Jesus had been in our midst. Why? Because these team members had, in fact, responded to one another in honest Christian love. Oh, none of us was real consistent, but there were beautiful spurts of Christian acts and concerns all through the tour. No one was without showing off Jesus in some way as we lived together. In the closing chapters of Matthew Jesus gives an illustration of this when He said, "I was hungry, you gave me meat; I was thirsty, you gave me drink; I was a stranger, you took me in; naked, you clothed me; sick, you visited me; I was in prison and you came to me."

The men who had been running with Jesus for several months had the high privilege of the Saviour's company. We on the Circle America tour had the same high privilege. We did feed one another. We did offer drink. We befriended many along the way. We participated in programs that helped clothe others. We cared for our own when sick and in some ways we encouraged those in bondage. JESUS WAS IN OUR MIDST! He was our teacher, a part of us. Most of us didn't need more teaching, we needed people in order to let that which we already knew spill over on one another. The work projects were an invitation to experience Jesus. Not a day went by but what somebody in the camp didn't participate in Matthew 25.

I shared the thought above with the team the closing night of the trip just before our communion service. I was amused as I read The Last Supper story in the 14th Chapter of Mark. I could just hear the two disciples talking as they walked away looking for a guy carrying a water jug. This guy with the water jug would take them to a house and there the guy in charge would take them to a room where a meal would be served. Their moves had to be ones of simple faith. The thought struck me, what if they had met 5 guys with water jugs? I am confident an element of doubt preceeded many of their moves in response to the God-man commands. I reminded the Wheels' people that we should be encouraged because we are like the disciples of old in the doubting department. As you know, the feed took place and it was probably a rather practical time of eating. Can you imagine the damper Jesus put on the meal when he stood up and tore His break into pieces and said. "This is my body.



personal and between each of us and God. Did it become His body? As we did the same with a healthy swig of wine, did it become His blood?

We closed out our tour with one of the highest acts of BELIEVING available to the followers of Jesus Christ! What each of us did in that beautiful moment in time was very personal. All through the trip we had experienced miracles. Think of the single miracle of 60 people riding 11,500 miles with virtually no serious accidents! If one were to include all the guest riders in the statistics, we traveled a combined total of <u>three quarter million miles</u>! That's miracle stuff! Jesus was our teacher and we probably were no less doubting than "The Twelve" who sat and listened to Jesus the night of the Passover Supper.

I am ever so confident that the rippling effort of the riders' lives will be felt in community after community in years to come.

Another kind of benediction was in store for me after the communion service. One of our younger men needed a ride to the airport. Although it was late and the airport was 70 miles away, I drove him to Jacksonville, Florida. This young man and I had had our bouts during the trip. Like a lot of young fellows working things out, there were times when I thought it best for the team that this one hang it and tore His break into pieces and said, "This is my body, eat it." Then He took the wine and let them drink and said, "This is my blood." Wow!

What our team did at that communion service as we ate the piece of sweet bread, a good chunk, by the way, was



Please excuse me for not giving more information about the "meat and potatoes" of the whole program. Over the years the bulk of our newsletter material has been concerned with the basics. Suffice it to say the leadership that took over while the cat was away did an excellent job. The cycling phase of the program kept normal pace. The buses were busier than ever and the

Kitchen-Retreat House received good use.

We have bought another bus--Possum 7! We got a deal on a good used piece of equipment out of Auburn, Indiana. Don't think we are treating this step lightly. It will be a real asset to the program. Wheels continues to grow in the bus trips department and we need a quality backup piece of equipment.

The bus mechanics just put a like-new engine in Possum 5. Our men are real pros at this. Along with this Possum update, Ted Bowers and company put a new coat of paint on Camel I (support vehicle), and it looks as good as new. Oh, they also put a new tranny in it, too!

By the time you receive this letter a Bible Lands tour will be underway. We will also have our traditional Southwest interterm trip in California and Arizona taking place then. There really is a special and warm feeling about the solid high yield of a trip like this.

The spring will be filled with our standard Florida runs starting in late February and running into April.

. . . information from Mike Manganello;

A dream for many was realized this past August as we sojourned for the first time north to Alaska. Braving the Alaska Highway has to be the highest adventure possible in a 40-foot motor coach since Clint Eastwood's <u>Gauntlet</u>. Majesty, beauty and wildlife were the hallmarks of the 3-week adventure into America's last frontier. Using night for travel and days for sightseeing, we had a good taste of Glacier National Park, the Canadian Rockies and 1,500 miles of the scenic Alaska Highway. Fairbanks, Mt. McKinley, Anchorage and the Kenai Peninsula gave us the flavor of wilderness and urban Alaska. Cruising the inland passage aboard the MV Stardancer afforded our eyes leisurely viewing of more natural wonders while our bodies were subjected relentlessly to four-star dining, live entertainment, pampering by cabin stewards and repeated dunkings in the pool and hot tub (it's a miracle we survived!). Through it all we developed new relationships and enjoyed old ones as we fellowshipped together in the Word. His creation and love are awesome! As "Possum Experiences" go, this one was "primo" big time.

Hoping to make our Alaskan adventure an increasingly special event, we've added several stops to next summer's itinerary. Notable:

- \*\* Riding a specially designed bus on the Athabasca Glacier in the Columbian Ice Fields, Jasper National Park, Alberta, Canada
- \*\* Loading Possum 6 on a flat car and taking the Alaskan Railroad from Portage to Whittier, there connecting with the Alaska Marine Highway (ferry) and on to Valdez (southern terminus of the Alaskan Pipeline)
- \*\* Experiencing Expo '86 in Vancouver, British Columbia
- \*\* Touring the northern coast of California, seeing the redwoods
- \*\* Spending a whole day in San Francisco

when I thought it best for the team that this one hang it up. We just were not coming together. We had had some heated battles of the father-son variety, but when I said, "Goodbye," I could not have had warmer feelings toward him nor he toward me! It was situations like this that made it all worthwhile.

There are still a few berths available for the 1986 Alaskan Possum Experience - 3 weeks (August 6-17), 12,000 miles - everything, including pocket money, \$1,300 per person. If you're interested, give us a call right away...do it now!



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A WHEELS' FIRST...., call it what you will.....Executive Trip, Professional People's Bike Retreat, All Adult Tour, et cetera....we have put it on the calendar as a 10-day tour. We'll lave Upland via the Possum on April 25 and return May 4 and will tour Georgia from west to east, winding up on the Atlantic Ocean at Jekyll Island. The price will be \$250 per person and

includes quality food and camping. Riders can opt to ride some and bus some. You can ride as many miles as you want--no pressure!

Bike tours for the summer of 1986:

- \*\* Wheels' Traditional Coast to Coast, 120- to 140-mile days of cycling, June 14 to July 13
- \*\* Six-Week Coast to Coast, Portland, Oregon to Rehoboth Beach, Delaware, June 15 to August 1
- \*\* Vermont Tour, July 26 to August 10
- \*\* CHINA trip Dates not specific, but somewhere between July
  19 and August 10
- \*\* Second "Circle America" Tour January 1 '87 through August '87
   (more details later, but wanted to let you know now about it)

One of the staff men was saying "goodbye" to a friend and remarked that he was taking a gang of kids skiing. It seems so common for a bus to be headed for the Rockies, a gang going to California and yet another group leaving shortly for Israel. Several of us will escort groups to Florida this January, as well, and on it goes. It really boggles my mind!

Your prayer support is always appreciated! Sue informs me daily about letters and gifts that come from you, our financial supporters, and obviously, the impact of what we are doing simply would not happen without your help!

Love

Bob Davenport Director

P.S. Roger Judd, former staffer, filled in for Snowball on the art work this time around. Thanks, Rog!