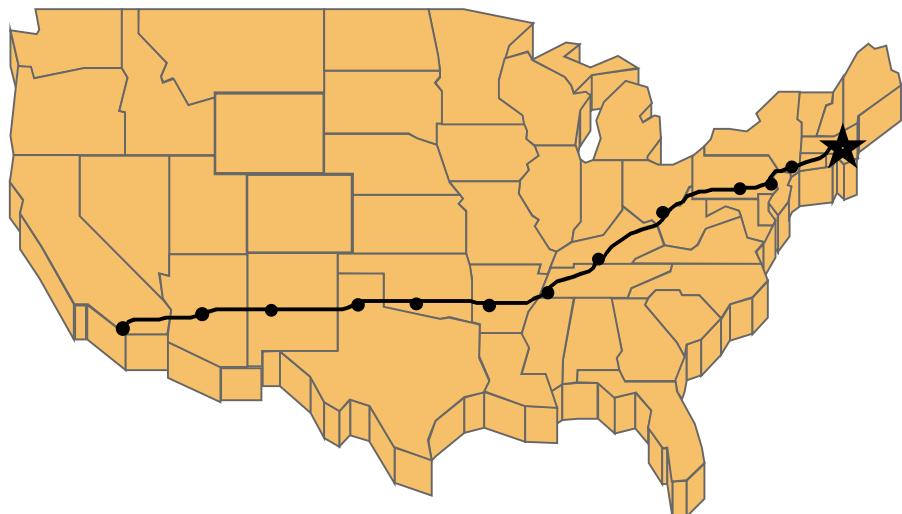


ALICIA & KEVIN'S GRAND ADVENTURE

Cross-Country bicycle Trip

May 13, 1996 - July 9, 1996



San Diego - Scottsdale AZ - Pie Town NM (mmm!)
Tulia TX - Lawton OK - Hot Springs AR - Memphis TN
bowling Green KY - Marietta OH - Three Springs Pa
Delaware Water Gap - The Gunks - boston

8 weeks, 2 days: 3,209 miles bicycled

Fortunes from Chinese take-out on May 10th, two days before we left for our Great Adventure.

Kevin's:

"Plan for many pleasures ahead."

Alicia's:

"You are about to embark on a most delightful journey!"

Authors' Note

This reflection and account provides two perspectives of a "Grand Adventure". It describes the cross-country bicycle trip we took from May 13, 1996 thru July 9, 1996. Yeah, it's taken us two years to get up the nerve to write about it and finalize the whole thing.

What follows is a two-part undertaking, written from different perspectives.

We each undertook to write about our experiences, feelings, observations, and general views of the trip. Alicia's part of the story is a "real-time" account and reveals her observations and reflections during the trip. It is based upon a journal that she kept and added to as we traveled. Kevin's part reflects his view of the trip from his recollections and was written after the trip was completed and we were home for a while. So what you get is a detailed account and a not-so-detailed account (probably reflecting the authors' individual personality traits!)

We have each chosen to recount the trip in our own way, and we have decided to keep the accounts separate and freestanding. For a while, we didn't even read each other's story. We obviously knew what we did, but thought it would be fun to see it from the other's viewpoint. So the two stories may contain some inconsistencies (mainly Kevin couldn't remember details) which we hope the reader will overlook.

Between the time that we completed the trip and now, we have obviously discussed the trip amongst our friends, our family, and ourselves. Alicia's story is a direct transcription of her journal, so the passage of time has not altered it at all. Kevin does not believe that his account has been altered based upon telling and re-telling of individual stories. If alterations did creep into it, we are sure that they only enhance the beauty of the story.

Some of our friends actually believe that we never really did undertake the trip because we haven't shown our slides yet – we've just done a lot of talking about it. Well, hopefully this starts to change all that.

So, here are our two stories. We leave it up to the reader which one to read first.

Enjoy!

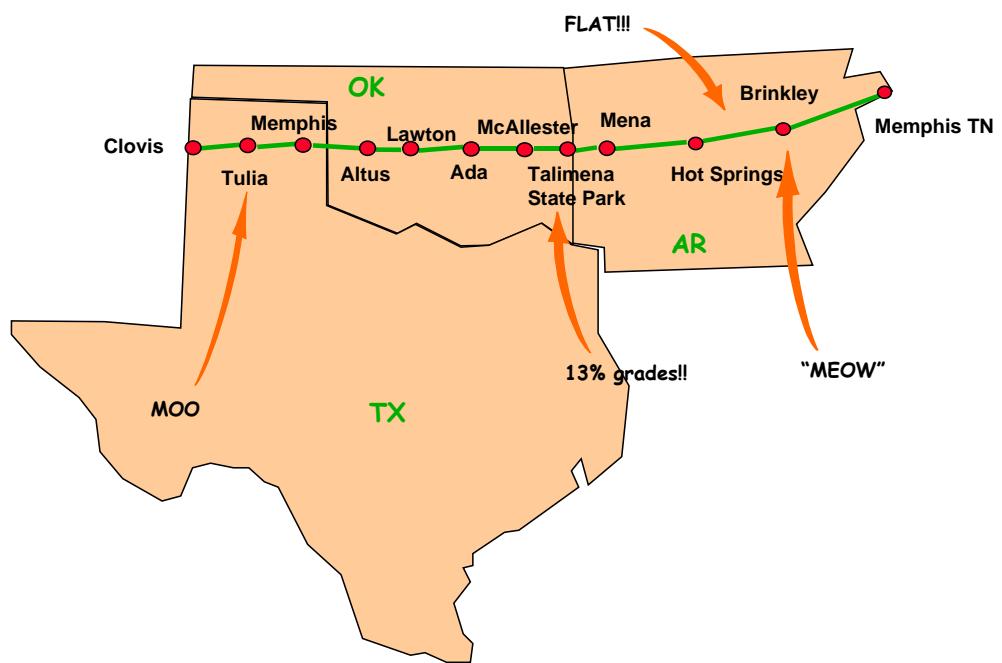
Kevin and Alicia
July 23, 1998

Kevin's Story is presented first, Alicia's begins on or about page 50

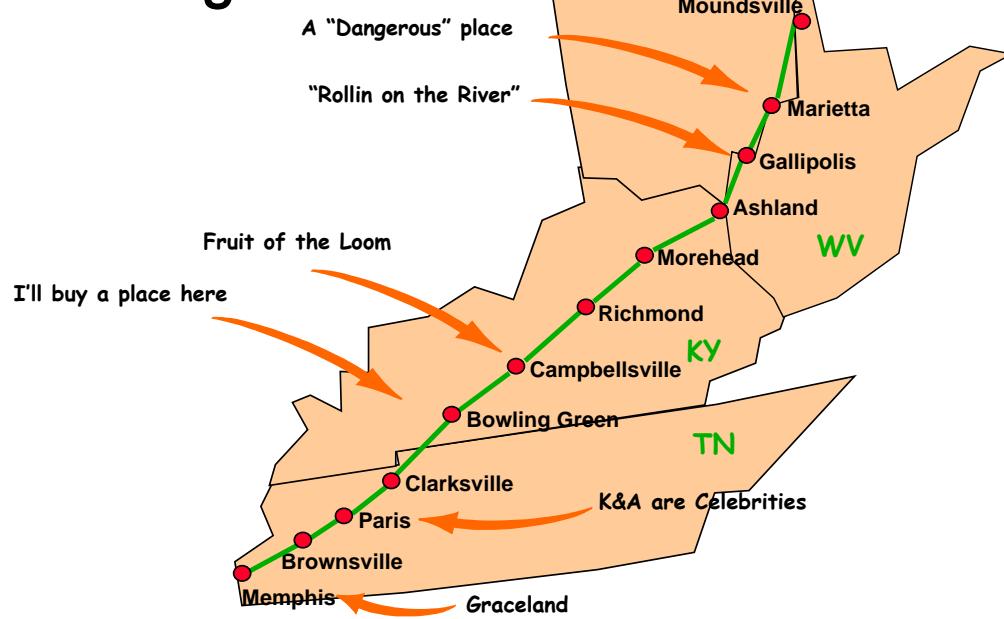
"Miles from Nowhere"



“Cows and Catfish”



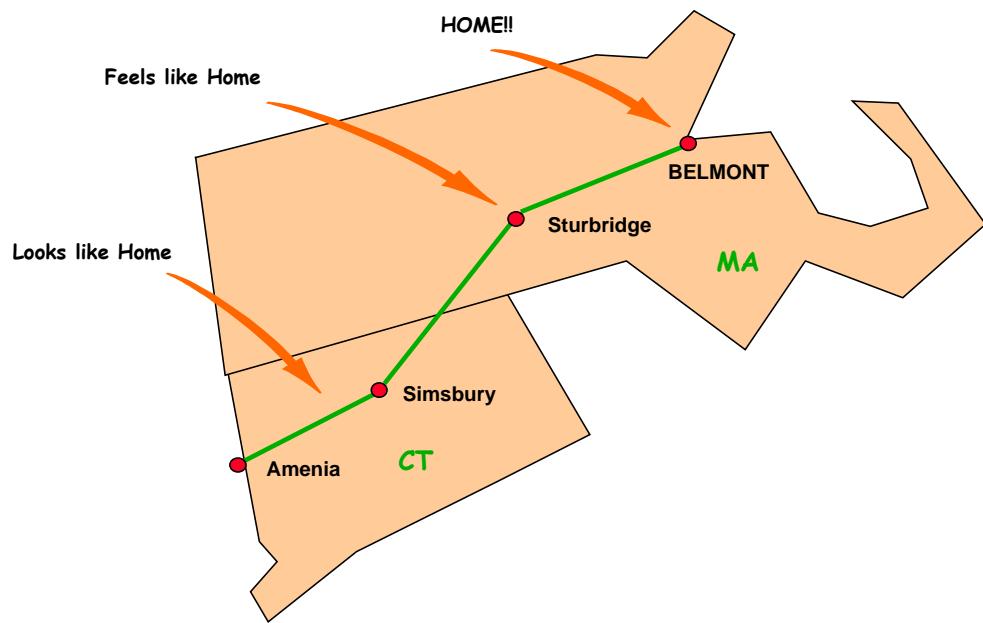
“Bluegrass and Barges”



“Ups and Downs”



Home At Last (...Fast!)



Kevin's Story

A LONG ROAD AMONG DREAMERS

PROLOGUE

I started riding my bike to work in 1973 or so, and continued to do so for about 5-6 years. I'd get out early in the morning when it was still cool, and dew was present on the lawns of the houses that I'd pass. My ride would take me through the Boston suburbs and onto the Paul Dudley White bike path along side the Charles River. This bike path, which was one of the first in the nation, offered a ride unimpeded by car traffic. From this vantage point, I pedaled alongside rowing crews from local Cambridge and Boston universities, training in early morning practices. It was serene, and a long way from the craziness of a frantic commuter route into downtown Boston.

Commuting in this way offered the time to reflect on the upcoming day, develop plans for conducting business, and how to deal with the issues of the office. It also offered time for "mind doodling" and reflecting on more personal issues. I really enjoyed the freedom of riding, the coolness of the fresh air, the passing beauty, the serenity, and the pleasure of being outdoors doing something that I liked - even though I was going to work.

I'm pretty sure that it was then that I began to think about how I'd feel if, instead of turning towards the Boston Common, I would just keep going. Would it continue to be serene? What was it like elsewhere? I began to think about a grand adventure - biking across the country.

Way in the back of my head was a memory of my parents letting me bike from Boston to Needham (about 10miles) to visit a friend for the weekend; I was probably 12 or 13. I knew where I was going, because my parents had always taken me. But I thought that my parents were crazy to let me go, because this was going to be fun.. I can still remember the excitement that I felt when I went off into my first adventure.

Many soon-to-be yuppies had begun to take a deep interest in biking and by 1975, the new bike craze exploded on the US. I was particularly interested in an upstart group in Montana promoting a bicentennial Bike Across America. I wrote for information and devoured the literature, as I sat in my cubicle devouring a tuna fish sandwich. Oregon to Virginia - hmm!

Two weeks of vacation time, and career interests of both my wife and myself limited our opportunity for a cross-country bike adventure. However, before hanging up our bikes in favor of the ropes and hardware of mountaineering and rock climbing, we were able to put together two wonderful bike trips; one 3-week trip to Ireland and a 10-day Tour of



Northern New England. During those trips we did find serenity, plus we developed a cycling style that became known as the "tortoise and rabbit". Yup, Alicia proved to be a slow and steady tortoise, basically operating at one speed. She just kept going and going. I, on the other hand, would dash up a hill, test my manhood, try to catch my friend Marshall, or try to impress anyone who would look at just how cool I was.



Other adventures ... climbing in Colorado

Throughout the next 15 or so years (wow, it's been that long), both Alicia and I have been on many other adventures as we traveled the country in search of rocks to climb and mountains to scale. But, always lingering in the back of my mind was that old dream of biking across the country. Every so often, when Alicia would ask, "What do you want to do for a vacation?", I'd answer "Bike across the country". She'd roll

her eyes and two weeks later we were back in our cubicles. It was becoming clear

that we couldn't figure out how to pack an 8-week trip into 2 weeks of vacation. Oh, well!

Well, "Things change", or "Good things happen to those who wait", take your pick. So, in 1997, when Mercury aligned with Mars and circumstances created an 8-week "window of opportunity", we jumped at the chance. Oh, by the way, we figured we could do it "off the couch". You see, I was hampered throughout the previous summer with back problems and ultimately had back surgery in October. Although I did try to get back into shape, neither of us did much for about a year, nor had we biked seriously in about 15 years. But, we were adventurous, knew how to manage outdoor issues, and were generally in touch with our bodies, so we figured we could do it. What the hell, we can always fly home!!

Hell, we were going to bike across the country - and fulfill a dream. Yup, we decided to bike across the country on the "spur of the moment" - what the heck!

Getting Started:

We are not types of people that prefer organized trips. We prefer to "take the road less traveled" and to see and find out things for ourselves. Sure, it may have been easier to have someone show us the way, carry our food, possibly cook for us, fix mechanical problems, etc., but we decided that we could do that just fine. So, we undertook the trip just ourselves, and decided that we would figure things out along the way.

Well the first thing we had to attend to was our bikes, they were about 20 years old. Alicia went right out to buy a new one, while I hemmed and hawed wondering if I could upgrade mine for the trip (and save some money - what a cheapskate!). I was strongly advised by my old friend Marshall not to try to cross the country on 10 speeds. After more hemming and hawing, he quipped more strongly, "WHAT ARE YOU CRAZY?!". So, we bought two new road bikes six weeks before we were to go. Alicia was able to get a couple of hundred miles under her belt to test her new bike. My bike was in the shop being fixed for 2-3 weeks, and was ultimately replaced with a different one. I got about 40-50 miles on my new bike before

leaving. With this serious amount of training, Alicia and I were able to get "reasonably well-honed" before we embarked.



The "BOB" trailer worked out great

The only thing interesting about the bikes was that they had 21 speeds and click shifters. These were interesting because it made a BIG difference in the level of comfort throughout the trip. I chose to forgo panniers and went "new age" with a towable trailer (a BOB). Alicia stayed traditional and used panniers. Alicia summed up the final comparison when she said, "If we ever do this again, I'm going to buy a trailer!"

Route Planning:

Route planning was undertaken at the dining room table with the assistance of every map imaginable - mostly from AAA. We chose not to follow prescribed bicycling routes, since we wanted a fresh experience, we wanted to "sneak up on people". We didn't want to be someplace that sees cross-country bicyclists on a daily basis. We wanted to see the country, not other bicyclists. We wanted to talk with people along the route, not other bicyclists. We wanted our own experience, not someone else's.

(This proved to be great for us, since on the one occasion that we had to bike on a prescribed route we were astonished by the "bicycle related" trash that was thrown on the side of the road and by the less-than-friendly store owner who has already seen or heard from hundreds of bike travelers. I felt extremely embarrassed that "environmentally friendly" bicyclists would litter as much as they did.)

Picking a route starting point is easier than you think. Firstly, we wanted to bike home - so it was easy to pick west to east (also a good choice because, *(in general, ha ha)* the prevailing winds are south and west to east. OK, where can we fly to on the West Coast? San Diego, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Portland, or Seattle. OK, Think about it! LA is definitely out - who the hell would want to bike there? SF sounds good. How do you get out? Through Nevada ... what, no roads or 5 days on the Interstate - don't think so! Who would ever want to bike 5 days on the Interstate? OK North (Seattle) or South (San Diego); rain or heat? Well, it's May, so it will rain a lot in the north, and the temperature will be reasonable in the desert. Bingo! San Diego. Ah, that was easy.

There were a few criteria that we highlighted. We planned to do a combination of camping and cheap motels, plus some "fancy" hotels in large cities during rest days. Some additional criteria were: Find places with hot tubs (me), use ferries to cross rivers (me), find places with cappuccino (Alicia) – complete yuppies!!

OK from San Diego, where to? Well to tell you the truth, there aren't that many roads in southern California, Arizona, and New Mexico that go east, so that was easy. Remembering the criteria - find places that have hot tubs - we selected Hot Springs, Arkansas (hot springs = hot tubs). That sounds good. Draw a straight line - that fixed Texas and Oklahoma. Where

to cross the Mississippi? Memphis (have to go to Graceland!!). Now where? Oh, the Blue Ridge Parkway looks good, then the Gunks (more on this later), and Home. DONE.

At this point, you may be thinking that we should have taken a lot more effort at route mapping, planning, collecting Chamber of Commerce info and brochures, getting info off the Web, you know - doing a lot more *planning!* Heck, this is supposed to be fun, if we planned more, it would have been a job - UGH. Oh well, we can always fly home.

Some interesting things have to be considered in route planning (some obvious, some learned):

- Where and how do you cross rivers, especially big ones like Colorado, Mississippi, Tennessee, Susquehanna, Delaware, Hudson, and Connecticut? Most of them are only crossed by big bridges, interstate highways, etc., which have signs that say "no bikes". In some cases the answer is: you cross them illegally. Crossing rivers has not been made to be "bike friendly".
- We had another interest: find places to cross rivers by ferry. That would be fun and would lead to much smaller and safer crossings. Besides, what can be more Americana than taking a ferry across a river? Besides there actually aren't many left. I thought it would be great. In fact, in West Virginia, we took a ferry just because it was there and re-crossed the river at the next bridge!
- What happens when the only road is the interstate? You ride on it - in most cases, legally! In the west, at times, the interstate is the *only* road that will take you where you want (need) to go. In New Mexico, the *only* north/south route is I-25. Before we left, we knew that a southern route would require that we ride on the interstate in Arizona and New Mexico. And we really weren't looking forward to it. Like I said, why would you ever want to ride on an interstate??
- Ah, if you happen to do your own "well planned" route mapping, look for railroad tracks next to the road. You see railroad tracks are generally flat, and in general, when the road is next to them, so is the road. "Choo-Choo" is train talk for flat. Happiness is hearing "choo-choo" in the distance.



Waiting for the ferry in Sistersville, WV



Railroad tracks mean FLAT!

- Also, some "sign language" translations may be helpful as you read ahead:
 - Scenic = hilly
 - Scenic with Vistas = real hilly
 - Old Route "X" = hilly
 - Blueberry Hill Road = yup, hilly
 - State Park =hilly
 - National Park = really hilly
 - Slower Cars Use Right Lane = long hill (pronounced "heel" in many parts of the south)
 - Continental Divide = top of the hill
 - Grade = a five-letter dirty word
 - 13% Grade = shout dirty words as you push your bike uphill
 - Trucks Check Brakes = put a smile on your face - you're going down!
- Whatever you do, DO NOT look at a topo. It will only make you sick and increase your anxiety about how many hills there are. Looking at topos in Arkansas will be okay.

Leaving on a Jet plane:

Well, back up a couple of days. Instead of putting our bikes and gear on the plane, we chose to take the safer route and have the bike shop ship out the gear via UPS early and have it waiting for us in San Diego. Even better, since we had chosen to spend the first road night at a bed and breakfast (with a hot tub!), we would send all of our camping gear ahead to them - brilliant!! So, we had our bikes in San Diego and our camping gear 60 miles away. At least we would start the trip with minimum weight to pull. Well, it was a good idea – but.....

Four UPS packages were shipped, only three arrived - but we knew this on Saturday and we were leaving Sunday. So, we ran back to our local bike shop, Wheelworks in Belmont, MA, and fortunately they helped us replace each item in the fourth package. We headed out from Boston with replacement gear and a big question of where the other package was. Wheelworks was really helpful and we thank them a lot. So, we were "well-honed", had a good route planned, had our gear organized, were off-the-couch, and were on our way.

By the time we were over Utah, we had been on the plane for 4 hours. Soon thereafter, looking down on Tuba City AZ, I had a slight wince and said something like "Boy, this is a big country". I think Alicia looked at me curiously.

San Diego:

We had decided to organize our gear, assemble our bikes and get started from La Jolla, a town a little north of San Diego that looked like a small coast town on the map. NOT! La Jolla is the heartbeat of yuppie-dom in southern California. Boy, did we feel at home! Went to the "Spike and Mike Animation Festival" (Go Wallace and Grommit!), had some California wine, watched the Porsches and Beammers, drank cappuccino - the whole nine yards! But the lost package never arrived.

Because Wheelworks had replaced all the gear for free, we felt compelled to see if we could track down the lost gear, which we did, to no avail. As a result, we didn't get started until

11:30am. Our earlier brilliance was beginning to fade. We had 60 miles to go and had to reach Julian in the mountains at 4220 feet. We dipped our tires in the Pacific and we set out - uphill. Within 7 miles, I had my first flat - ouch! Our enthusiasm was waning. To get out of San Diego you have to stop at 87 lights, or was that 88? Anyways, San Diego took its toll on time.

Our route took us through the Miramar Air Base, where the Top Guns are trained (like the movie). I glanced up as two fighters swooped the skies, my eyes glazed and I said to Alicia, "Wow. I'd love to do that. I'd give anything to do that. Why can't I do that?" Little did I know how prophetic that statement would be and how it would set into motion the "Long Road Among Dreamers."

Our late start got us out of San Diego and into the foothills, unfortunately at rush hour. We found ourselves on our first significant hill climb out of Poway, on quite a narrow twisty road, with little, if any, shoulder, and with hordes of cars going about 50mph. They wanted to get home - fast. It was safer to walk than to deal with our loaded bikes and speeding cars about one foot from us. So we walked. Our initial mistake of getting a late start was compounded many times, and as a result, we were 15 miles-of-hill-climbing short of our destination, and it was getting dark soon. We were informed that the roads were narrow, winding and without shoulders and that the last 7 miles were the steepest. I decided that we should camp where we were and continue on the next day. However, in our brilliance, we had shipped the camping gear where it was safely secured 15 miles ahead! Hmm, there were also no hotels. WE WUZ DOOMED. Well, we tucked our tails between our legs, called the B&B and asked them to come get us. Which they did.

If this was a rock climbing route, we knew that some of the hardest moves were right off the ground. We grabbed the sling! Ah !@##@!!

Off to the desert:

Well, we told our B&B hosts our story, had dinner, went to the hot tub and prepared for the next few days that would take us across the desert. I wanted to get started at 7:00am so that we could get a jump on the 90 miles that we needed to do the next day. Alicia wanted to take advantage of the inn and have breakfast. We left at 10:00am - I was concerned. In early May, the desert temperature are "normally" in the 80's-90's. We were unlucky to be there in an "abnormal" condition, and found ourselves in temps of 100-110. We noticed that it was raining in Seattle.

By the way, as we sped downhill into the desert heat, we left behind our "rescuers" who had made bets to our success. We later found out that one of our rescuers was quoted as saying "Those people haven't got a clue!". In later reflecting on our situation at that time, I suggested that I probably would have said the same thing if I saw a similar couple, and I would have taken the bet, too. We subsequently sent them 4 postcards noting our progress and were later informed by our hostess that she "was living vicariously through our post cards". As she participated in our dream and thought of how it might have been, her husband lost money.

Our entry to the desert was quick - from 4200' back to 0' in about 15 miles. We left behind trees, shade, hills (yea!), traffic, and virtually everything else as we embarked on a 75-mile day. These first few days were notable in so much as they were pretty much "had to do".

That is, we "had to do" 75 miles one day, then we "had to do" 95 miles the next day, and so on. It was required since it was 40-50 miles between towns, there was no camping, and there was pretty much nothin' in between. (We could have camped along the side of the road if necessary, but reasoned that to be undesirable. We've been camping for 25 years, and although we enjoy our tent, we have grown to demand a little more. Like shade!). Based on all of our previous travels we full well realized that if the map said there was nothing there - there was nothing there. This proved to be true whenever we consulted our maps.

We had entered the California Anza Berego desert in mid-May, just after the blooming season. The only remaining color was from some fading ocotillo - even they gave way to the heat. Maybe this was an omen, because as we crossed the open roads of the desert, the sun began to take its toll on us. Fortunately, we had a reasonably strong tailwind, which both



Entering the Anza Berego desert, California

helped push us along and gave some cooling effect. Our plan to travel west to east had been validated. We chose west to east due to the prevailing Southwesterlies occurring throughout much of the country at that time of year. It's always nice to have the wind at your back. We did load up on water and carried in the order of 3 gallons, plus Gatorade, orange juice and other liquids, plus lots of food, including Power Bars - which don't hold up to 105-108°F; nor taste that well.

All in all, our first day in the desert didn't turn out so good (so what else is new!). Due to a late start, we were on the road in the middle of the day, the sun was bearing down, it was REALLY hot. We had biked in hot weather before, but this was something else. As we were about 8 miles from our destination, Alicia began to feel the effects of the heat. We came across a road construction crew who looked at us like we were ABSOLUTELY CRAZY!! At this time, Alicia didn't look so good. She had to stop every couple of miles to get her senses back. Definite heat exhaustion! A construction worker looked at us and asked if she could help. We thought for a while, thinking that we had screwed up again. Alicia didn't look so good - the construction worker drove us the last 8 miles.

You could imagine how we felt - a little depressed (actually, a lot depressed). Two days in a row with problems, and we had two months to go! Could we have overestimated? OK, time to stop being yuppies and get with the program!

In assessing the situation later, Alicia felt that she had had enough water, but probably didn't eat enough. Well, that led us to the one place in the world, that for some unknown reason sucks us in whenever we are need of a lift - Kentucky Fried Chicken. Yup, Kentucky Fried Chicken. Many years earlier, after a multi-day mountaineering trip in Rocky Mountain National Park, we came out of the backcountry and, through a sixth sense, willed each other to make the comment "I need to go to KFC" and we did. Well, here we are again. We ordered the most food you could get, drank as many Coke refills as we could, had dessert, and looked around for any leftovers. We found a cheap motel, turned the AC on, and sat in the tub. We felt a little better, talked about what we had to do, and got serious.

The next day's route was a "had to do" 95 miles, and the temperatures hadn't changed. I suggested to Alicia that we leave at dawn, around 5:15am. Alicia quickly agreed (I was glad). We packed the trailer with more fluids and better food, and left the Power Bars behind. (This is where I started to see the advantage of the trailer. I couldn't imagine how to put two gallon-jugs of water on the bike. But with a trailer, one jug goes on the left, one on the right – real nice!) We started out just as the sun was rising in the coolness of a 70°F morning. It was bliss. The angle of the sun at that time of day enhanced the scenery and settled us. It was serene, and it felt nice. No cars, no people, cool, but no rowing crews. As the day bore on and the temperature increased, we didn't seem to notice. We were ultimately to go through about 6 gallons of liquid this day.

We had now taken to pouring water over ourselves to cool our bodies, and to wash the sweat from our eyes. The insides of our helmets were constantly dripping sweat, our sunglasses were constantly getting dripped on, the sweat ran down our foreheads, and when we stopped, small pools of sweat would accumulate on the street. And we didn't care.

We had also taken to eating much more often, but were still unable to escape the sun. However, we were enjoying the scenery, the dunes, the Glamis "beach", the Chocolate

Mountains, the turtle habitat (in the middle of the desert??) and our first encounter with traveling along-side the railroad tracks. After about 60 miles, we began to "feel like ourselves". We were well-hydrated, well-fed and feeling great.



At this time, we met a truck driver moving produce from southern California to Missouri. He was very interested in what we were doing. The conversation went something like this:

The "Cantaloupe Man": ARE YOU CRAZY?!

Truck Driver: WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

Kevin and Alicia: Boston.

WHERE?! (eyes showing astonishment)

Boston.

ARE YOU CRAZY?! (head shaking)

No, just trying to have fun.
 IN THIS HEAT?! (quizzically)
 Yuh, guess it's a little hot.
 HOW LONG IS IT GOING TO TAKE YOU?
 60 days.
 60 DAYS ON A BIKE?!
 Yuh.
 ARE YOU CRAZY? (head shaking again)
 Maybe you might like it.
 OH, I DON'T THINK SO.
 It would be a challenge
 WELL, MAYBE IT WOULD BE NICE...
 Where are you going?
 MISSOURI ... ARE YOU *REALLY* GOING TO BOSTON?
 Yup!
 ARE YOU CRAZY?!? (head shaking again)

The conversation went on like this for about 10 minutes as we enjoyed our ice creams. He then went to his truck, opened the back, took out two cantaloupes, and gave them to us. We thanked him and asked him to keep a look out for us on the roads. We watched him return to his truck, shaking his head (they must be crazy!). By the way, cantaloupe became a favorite food from that time forward, and meeting people and having similar conversations became a favorite pastime.

On this day, while on a well-defined bike route, we also met our first cross-country bike tourer - a Brit. Over various periods of time, he had biked from Seattle to Bar Harbor, Maine, then from there to St. Petersburg, Florida, and now from there to San Diego and back to Seattle. When we met him on the road, he was carrying only two bottles of water - that was it! After we asked him about this, he told us that his wife was up ahead in the motor home. We had mixed emotions; we thought he had it easy since he could stop anytime in air conditioning, but then we smirked because he was pedaling into a 20+mph headwind. We debated this motor home approach all the way across country, and finally concluded that it was a pretty good idea. (Not bad if you can get it.)

We developed a respect and thankful appreciation for long-haul truck drivers. They know the road, seemed to know how susceptible we were to danger, and always gave us the right of way. On smaller roads, as we both approached a blind hill crest, we could hear them power down, or on narrow roads with minimal shoulders, see them take a wide pass. Although we felt like bugs, they seemed to treat us with

respect. I later returned the favor by juggling for them on the windy shoulder of I-10 in Arizona. The juggling scene caused quite a stir on both sides of the highway. Imagine seeing a guy on a



Juggling for the truck drivers on I-10, Arizona

bike on the Interstate in this heat - a little crazy. Now imagine seeing this guy juggling pins on the side of the road on the top of a hill on the interstate! The audience response, in the way of truck horns, was deafening - from both sides of the highway.

Motor home drivers on the other hand

I considered my juggling pins to be essential gear and carried them the entire way, even though other "less essential" gear was shipped home at other times. I was happy to entertain people in exchange for something special, and of course to impress them with my prowess!

Upon reaching Blythe, we stopped at the post office to retrieve a package of music tapes sent to us via mail by our friend Paul, finished our 95-mile day, and pulled into the campground at the end of the day - HAPPY! No disasters, no problems, no issues. It was at this time that we began to feel much better. We had just completed a very severe day, had set up camp early, and were sitting under tree shade, with our cantaloupes. Life was good.

OK, we had made some stupid mistakes, but what the hell. We stopped treating this thing casually and started to take it a bit more seriously. This particular day not only restored our confidence, it began to mellow us. The solitude of the desert, the nothingness, the starkness of the scenery, the straightness of the roads, and the wide expanses all have the effect of calming you. We had begun to experience the "Zen of Long Distance Bike Touring." This newly found Zen, coupled with the two cantaloupes, truly established a new foundation for the trip that was to last all the way to Boston.



Early start ... up at dawn

With this new enlightenment, we got up at dawn (there was now never a question from Alicia!) and made our way onto I-10, crossing the Colorado River, leaving California and heading into Arizona. Traveling on the interstate was the only way to cross the river. With really wide shoulders and a good smooth surface, we thought that the 25-mile stretch that we had to travel would be uneventful. Then, we encountered the rumble strips in the shoulder. These weren't cute little strips, they were surface cutouts 4" wide by 3/8" deep, spanning the entire shoulder width at 10' intervals. We tried riding across them but soon realized that we would either destroy our bikes or lose our fillings. We were confined to a 4" space between the roadside white line and the ends of the cutouts. Needless to say, we were treading a fine line. Thankfully, traffic was light in the morning and was mostly 18-wheelers (our buddies!). We kept right on the line, thinking to ourselves what the drivers were thinking as the whooshed by. "Get the hell over", "Why don't you ride on the shoulder", or just plain "Damn idiots". All we wanted to do was to tell them why we were so close to the travel lane, and that we didn't want to be there either. Alicia just "plugged in" the newly-acquired music and let most everything pass her by. As I said earlier, the truckers gave us room and I juggled. The music was soothing - we thanked Paul a lot then and throughout the trip when the music was the thing that got us over the "rough spots".

Off the highway and back onto long stretches of solitude, sun, dust devils (little swirling sand tornadoes - one hit Alicia and almost knocked her off her bike!) and motor home parks. We quickly realized that, if motor homes did not exist, this part of Arizona would not exist either. One entire town consisted of just a motor home park!

My desire to do what the Top Guns were doing came back into the picture really quickly and pretty much changed our perspective once again. And we were only out 4 days. We stopped into Quartzsite, a reasonably good-sized town (at least for Arizona) and went into the supermarket. I stayed outside to "guard the bikes" (something that we abandoned pretty much altogether after our faith in our fellow Americans was confirmed). While waiting I engaged in an on-going conversation with a fellow whose job was to "shag carts" from the parking lot. The conversation started out pretty much the same: "Where are you going, etc.". The conversation continued off and on as the fellow collected carts and returned them to the store. As he passed, he'd ask more philosophical questions, like "Why are you doing it?" It was apparent that this craziness was making the fellow think. As we were leaving, he approached us and said "You know, I've been thinking about what you're doing. And I figure, that if you can bicycle across this country, then I can get in my car and drive back home to Mississippi and see my relatives who I haven't seen in years". We hope he made it safely.

I had expressed my desire to be like the Top Guns in San Diego. Throughout our trip, I reflected on the fact that people that we met wanted to do what we were doing, that we were "inspirational", that our adventure reflected their own dreams. The word "inspirational" is not offered lightly. Indeed, it wasn't us who first used the word; it was offered by a person we met who found something in him- or her-self from our chance encounter. Quartzsite was a strong impulse along the "Long Road Among Dreamers." We never considered that what we were doing, or who we were, was special. But we found that what we represented to others was special to them. In effect, these people echoed my own dream comment at Miramar - "Wow. I'd love to do that. I'd give anything to do that." Gives you kind of a funny feeling.



The Arizona utility workers thought we were crazy, too!

all laughed as I started to gobble.

One "town" that we passed, Gladden, actually made me "sadden" because the only thing that was there was a motor home park – absolutely nothing else. The next town was Hope -

We stopped along the way at a store (the only thing for about 30 miles) and got some insight into the heat. A trio of utility workers were taking a break at the same time, sitting in the shade as we arrived. "Pretty hot to be bicycling" one said. "Where are you going?" asked another. Boston. "ARE YOU CRAZY?!" (By now this was becoming a standard response.) The conversation reflected on the heat, and it

was noted that "at least it's a dry heat" (a phrase which we previously heard from friends in Tucson) to which one replied: "Yuh, but they cook turkeys in dry heat". We

not much there either. We had begun to encounter "living ghost towns" with not a lot of hope. Small towns, with boarded-up or closed shops, few people, a gas station, mobile home park and not much more. This section of Arizona had been "bypassed" by I-10, leaving it to crumble without the lifeblood of traffic needed to sustain vibrancy. This observation of small towns being dramatically affected by both new and old bypasses was something that we would encounter throughout the remainder of our trip. It is one cultural or social phenomena that stood out as we crossed the country at 12mph.

Well, at the end of that day, after pedaling through Hope, AZ, we pulled into a motor home park in Harcuvar and put our tent out along-side a couple of motor homes. The park owner told us that this was the best place around because it had trees (a couple) and, with a twinkle in his eye, proclaimed that his location was "just beyond Hope". Looking around, we silently agreed with him and wished him good luck.

Back on the road and off to Wickenberg, AZ, stopping along the way to get some beef jerky from a side-of-the-road jerky truck. We passed a set of signs indicating "Jerky Ahead" but only decided to stop after the fourth hand-written sign that boasted: "Best Jerky Anywhere - Really". We were once again nearing civilization; we could tell because all the other traffic on the road was some sort of truck pulling some sort of boat. We figured we were near water. Wickenberg to Scottsdale - another 90+ mile day at 100+°F. Yeah, the heat never let up. We think we had to bike about 20 miles though the urban/suburban portions of Phoenix and Scottsdale (*THAT'S A BIG SPREAD-OUT CITY!*), and landed at the Radisson (off season rates, hot tubs, and massages really caught our eye on that one - besides no camping on our first rest day). We thought it would be funny to see what reaction we would get. So, we dropped off our bikes with the valet parking attendant. He looked at us kind of funny, kind of confused. We all smiled when he realized that he was being had. "Where are you going?" he asked. "Boston", we said. "OH" he returned (we could see his brain adding "WHAT ARE YOU CRAZY?!", but he was well-trained in the art of customer service.) This was a rest spot in which we met our friends from Tucson, Bob, Pat and daughter Kate, had massages, drank cappuccino, tried to straighten out our legs and prepare for the next leg.

We became the "talk of the town" at the Radisson and received special treatment. The concierge staff became our personal servants. They would drive us anywhere, get us stuff, etc. Kind of nice. From there, we were heading uphill into the mountains ... and into cool weather and pine trees!! We altered our course slightly after we were informed that our chosen route had some of the steepest grades in Arizona. It was at this time that we began to question our route planning. "Maybe we should have gotten information on the grade and elevation changes of the route" Alicia said. I replied that that would take away all the adventure. We never did seek out information on elevation change or grade or such. It remained an adventure - and then some.



Our "personal servants", The Radisson, Scottsdale, AZ

Leaving the pleasures of cappuccino for the second time, we took off into the mountains. Guess what time we started? Yup - 5:30am. Hey, we were starting to figure this all out.

We were planning to bike from about 1200' to about 5500' on a road that, we were told by the local cycling shop, had quite a bit of services. He was off just a little: it had no services. Even the towns noted on the map didn't seem to exist. And better yet, every time we gained 1200 -1500' of elevation, we lost it as we descended into the next valley. Ultimately, to gain the 4000' of elevation that day we had to gain probably over 7000-7500' due to terrain. Because of the lack of services, we virtually had to break into a US government agriculture field station to get water (a great relief at the time) and had to fix our second flat toward the end of the day. But, having overcome stupidity and 90+ mile days in 100+ temperatures, and gained enlightenment, this day was seeming reasonable.

Toward the end of the day, we crossed paths with a guy returning from fishing. He spotted us, got out of his truck, and instantly offered to give us all his remaining water, and any food we wanted from his cooler. He told us that he was a bicyclist and all he ever wanted to do was to bike across country, he dreamed about it. (I thought of Top Gun again and the "Long Road Among Dreamers"). We encountered our first ever bicycle junk yard, with bikes, scooters, trikes, banana bikes, everything - really. It was quite amusing. We settled into beds among the pines, having put on long sleeve shirts for the first time. The heat had been dry, but these turkeys were not cooked.

The next couple of days we stayed in and among the pine trees of the National Forest, cycled during cool temperatures, started off at more reasonable times (7:00-8:00am), and generally took our time. We enjoyed picnics and rest stops, fun general stores, more conversations, and a relaxed mode. As we biked, we would go up, then down, then up, then down This time people would ask "Did you just bicycle up that hill?" Yup. "ARE YOU CRAZY?!" (Everybody now wanted to give us rides up to the tops of passes or to where it



On the road again



Beer on ice ... so nice!

By this time, we knew all the questions that people we met in casual encounters would ask, and we refined our responses to make it easier on them. A conversation might go something like this:

Where are you going?

Well, we are bicycling to Boston and started in San Diego (x) days ago. (This answer cut down the number of questions by two.)

Wow, how long is it going to take you?

About 60 days. We'll be home just after July 4th. (This also cut down the number of questions by one.)

Wow, How many miles do you do in a day?

Anywhere between 50 – 100.

Have you had any flats (or how many flats have you had)?

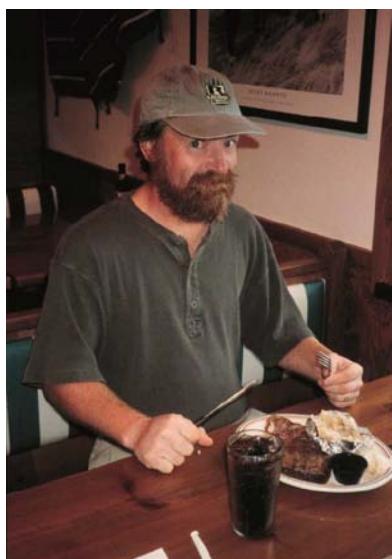
We told them how many.

A few other questions, a lull, some pensive thinking (probably trying to figure out how to tactfully ask the next question) and then, in mostly a quick, astonishing, quizzical blurt...

What do you DO for a living? (with a strong emphasis on the second "do")

After a conversation of that type, it was always nice to have people ask if they could drive us someplace. We would think briefly and then say "No thanks!"

It was also about this time that we started to realize that if we kept buying Gatorade at the rate we were drinking it, we would own the company. We found Citrus Cooler to be the best and paid anywhere from a low of \$1.09 to a high of \$2.09 (in NY) for the same sized bottle. It tasted absolutely fine at all temperature from 40-110°F. Gatorade subsequently became a common drink at home - I'm drinking one now!



All you can eat ... MEAT!

The whole issue of food is rather interesting. It became apparent that our bodies would desire something and tell our minds what they wanted (and what they didn't want). We would be in the store getting supplies and one of us would announce something like "Chocolate Milk!" and the other would reply "Absolutely". Thus began the regimen of weird food choices and a search for the "best of kind". We found Hershey's chocolate milk to be superior to Yoohoo, liked Little Debbie's granola bars best, had smoked turkey slices with Triscuits as a lunch snack, and of course, always had cantaloupes (which ripen to perfection after two days in 90-degree weather). As I said earlier, energy foods such as power bars simply didn't make the cut. Of course we ate as much of anything as we wanted, at any time. Prepared Chinese food from a can - delicious! Well-done chicken fried steak with white sauce - scrumptious! All you can eat buffets for \$5 - hallelujah! When we discovered that we could have a full dinner for

two for less than \$10, including tip and all the refills you could drink, the camp stove rapidly found its way to the bottom of the bag. We discovered diners that overcooked food the same way our mothers did (sorry moms), ice cream stands that made "black and white" milk shakes the same as Alicia had as a kid, and all you can eat buffets in which most of the people in the place looked like they had never left. It became apparent that, no matter how much we ate, we would lose weight (I dropped from a portly 172 to 158 or so). Because of continuous waist reduction, we recommend pants that have a drawstring or elastic waist - otherwise by the end of your trip you'll end up looking like one of those teenage kids whose pants crotch is at his knees and whose pants bottoms drag 6" along the ground.

We were also constantly in use of the "national public restroom system," and to boot they served food! All we did was look for a gold M, shaped like an arch, unload and then load up. Alicia became obsessed with breakfast burritos. Two breakfast burritos and she was good for 50 miles.

Well, we were still in the Arizona mountains and the winds started to pick up - severely. We chose to crash at a bed and breakfast after struggling most of the day. At breakfast, Alicia wondered if we "really needed to bike that day", so we took an earlier-than-planned rest day. Well, with time on our hands, we decided that we wanted to drive out to the Painted Desert and to see what was left of Route 66. So we asked Steve, the owner, where we might be able to rent a car. He replied "Take mine!" We were stunned at his response, but then again, we had begun to see the trustworthiness in people. Americans are not what you are led to believe from TV. We returned after putting over 300 miles on his truck. Afterwards we realized that being back in a car changed the pace at which we were operating and made us feel unusual. After that, we chose not to drive at all on our rest days.

After a rest and some good food (no hot tub), we finished the climb over the mountains, gaining our highest elevation of the trip at 9200'. The winds were howling. Thankfully, on this day they were generally behind or beside us. As we were cresting the height of land, the winds were gusting at what we estimated to be 30-40mph. At one time, Alicia was tilted at an angle of about 15 degrees, moving

forward, but not falling over. All the animals in the fields were as close to the ground as they could possibly get or were hiding behind a tree. The tall grasses were horizontal. Alicia's bike tended to sail and get pushed around more than mine since she had panniers and I was using a trailer. We both recommend a trailer instead of panniers since a trailer has many more benefits. As we were to find out, wind can be both your friend and your enemy.

Signs:

During the ride through the mountains we came across the sign that we thought was the best of the trip. (The first runner up was a sign for "Little Hope Baptist Church". We thought, why would you ever go there?). The winner was actually a series of signs



Kevin streamlined in the wind

separated by maybe 1/2 mile each - kinda like the old Burma Shave ads. When we came across the first one we wondered what it meant. By the time we read the second we were in a state of heightened enthusiasm for more. It read:

Elk are large
(½ mile)
In herds they run
(½ mile)
Across the road
(½ mile)
Don't hit one. (we placed strong emphasis on hit)

Problem was, we never even saw an elk, or for that matter any other wild animal, even though other signs, that continued for 4-500 miles, advised us to "Watch for Animals".



Making friends with a "Harley Guy"

We finished Arizona in Springerville on the New Mexico border, where we met up with a trio of motorcyclists on their way to a ride. They looked a little scary with black leathers, rough beards, etc. Alicia was a little squeamish. After a bit of encouragement, we greeted them, only to find out that these guys were dentists! In them, we had found kindred spirits who were seeking the adventure of the road. They were sporting American flags

on their bikes, and we knew right there that we needed some. (We looked everywhere for the right size American

flags, but incredibly didn't find them until we reached Marietta, Ohio!!). In much the same way that we became enamored of big rig drivers, we now had a fondness for motorcyclists. Thereafter, we always found ourselves exchanging greetings as bicycles and motorcycles passed each other on the roads.

An early morning start on a 90+ mile day saw us into New Mexico, which we were to find even more desolate than what we had done to date. This was the start of Memorial Day weekend, and we found ourselves in the middle of a weekend bike tour of about 80 people. We were peacefully making our way through the openness when all of a sudden we were passed by three guys in full cycling clothing (where the hell did they come from???), then two more, then three more, etc. We caught up to them at their sag wagon and food station and soon joined them in eating their food. In exchange for the free food, I juggled for them!

Later, we figured that they were a bunch of wusses. Hell, they only did 50 miles, didn't carry anything, and had people set up to give them food. We were off the couch, hauling 40 pounds each, doing 90 miles, carrying our own food, etc. while these guys looked like they were in the Tour de France.

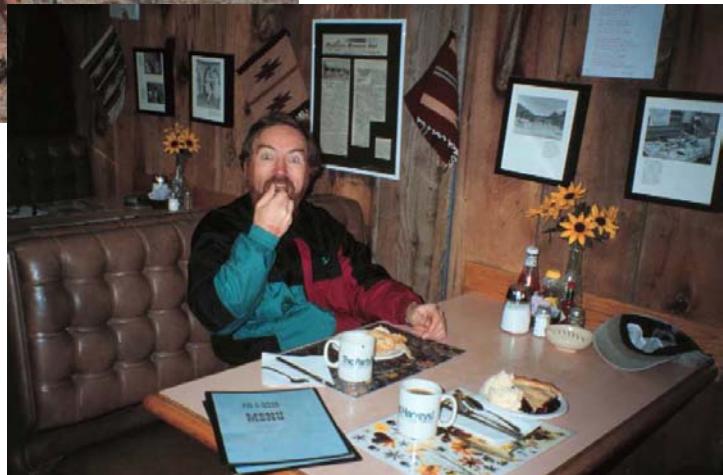
New Mexico did prove to be pretty desolate - 30-50 miles between towns, open barren landscape, few people, not even cows! We continued to watch for animals - none. However, New Mexico does have Pietown! Yup, Pietown!

During my "extensive route planning effort", I noticed a town named Pietown, and made every effort to assure that the route went there. I figured with a name like that, I'd want a piece of apple with vanilla ice cream. Even at the dining room table, with all the maps laid out in front of me, I was thinking about pie. I had gone so far as to give Pietown a prominent spot on our "big picture" map of the route (copies of which we carried with us). Days ahead of arriving at Pietown, visions of apple pie danced in my head. Alicia, noticing that New Mexico wasn't a thriving metropolis, tried to soothe me and prepare me for the worst. She even went so far as to suggest that there may not be any pie in Pietown. I would have no piece of that (get it?).

Pietown is located on top of the Continental Divide and was so named because a fellow back in the 20's made pies there (Duh!). After some trouble trying to convince the government that Pietown was a good name, the original town legally changed its name to Pietown, for the obvious reasons. As we approached Pietown, a small speck of color started to loom at the side of the road. It increased in size as we came nearer. It was a sign ... and we could make out something ... it said "PIE AHEAD". I turned to Alicia with the biggest "shit-eating" grin that she had ever seen! Dreams were ready to be fulfilled.



Although pies had not been made in Pietown for the last 5-10 years, a Texas couple opened up the old general store (the only store in town) and started selling pies just a few months earlier. (When the Zen is with you, you're living big.) "Grandma" was the pie chef.



Enjoying pie in Pie Town, New Mexico

Grandma's Apple Pie! Yup, we stayed there, ate apple pie with vanilla ice cream, listened to the country and western theme song "There Ain't No Pie in Pietown", gave them a copy of our route map with Pietown noted in prominence (which they told us would be hung on

the wall) and took more pie with us to have in camp that night. Because they fulfilled my dreams, I juggled for them.

The next morning (Memorial Day) we awoke to snow (we were at 7000' elevation) and went back to bed. Ultimately we rode the short distance into Datil and had breakfast - eggs, bacon, home fries, pancake, OJ and coffee - \$1.29. While eating we looked curiously at people at the next table, and thought that they kind of "had that look to them" - they looked like us. They were "honed" and athletic, and really stood out because they didn't wear cowboy hats. They were definitely not locals. Hot damn, they were rock climbers getting an alpine start (an inside joke referring to the need to get an early start for long routes). They were there to climb at Enchanted Tower, a rock climbing formation just outside of Datil. The conversation lead to the "who do you know" and we found that they knew or had climbed with many of our friends. It is a small world after all.



The Plains of St. Augustin in New Mexico

Just after Datil we came across the Plains of Saint Augustin, an area that is 22 miles of absolute flat and absolutely straight. Because of our extensive planning, we didn't realize that one of the biggest astronomy installations in the US was located there – the VLA (Very Large Array). There are about thirty 40-foot round, dish antennae located right in the middle of this barren environment. It was quite a sight. Strange and eerie. Is there anybody out there?

Other than Pietown and Datil, there was not much excitement in New Mexico. As if we weren't already getting mellow, New Mexico was a major boost to mellowdom (or is it mellowness). We encountered 10 towns in New Mexico and only one larger than 20,000 people. Not much to see or do, not much to stimulate us - oh, I forgot about the wind!

In Mountainair, we stayed in what one couldn't even call a "no-tell mo-tel". We stayed there because we didn't want to stay in the "campground". The shower walls were a true mosaic of left-over bathroom tiles - quite an art statement. A true experience of a different kind. We ate dinner at the local restaurant in which every man in the place had a hat on. Lucky for me, I did too!

Oh, yeah. In New Mexico, the wind changed direction and blew from the east (directly at us) for three or four days - at about 15-20mph. Our plans for doing 120 miles on generally flat terrain were tossed out the window. At times, we struggled to maintain a 5 to 7-mpm pace. As the winds continued without relief, we once again started our days early in order to bike before the winds really picked up.

It's fascinating to realize how pissed off you can get at an inanimate object (is the wind an object?). We might be yelling at the wind, giving it the finger, calling it names (not Mariah), etc. We each lost it once. The constancy of the wind, the noise, the pressure around your face, all contribute to basically driving you crazy. Most bicyclists fortunately consider this response to be normal, and tend to laugh about it well after the wind has passed.

The landscape of New Mexico is mostly dry and brown. It supports some cattle and sheep, but not much vegetation. As we crossed this landscape, I began to see it as analogous to an ocean. After traveling for 30 miles or so, we would see, way off in the horizon, a small spot of color - green. We would put our heads down and, in

a few more miles, the green loomed larger and then larger. It would take some time for this to

develop as we were travelling at about 10-12 mph. "Landing on the shore," we would arrive at this green island oasis and find a town nestled into the trees. What structures still standing would once again suggest that this was a "living ghost town". We'd pass the post office, maybe a convenience store/gas station (sometimes the post office was in the convenience store), a boarded up church. I think the phrase for these places is "hard scrabble". We might stop briefly, but shortly leave the town on the other side - back into the barrenness. I felt as if I was sailing between islands, exploring briefly and then onto the next island miles away. We would turn around and watch as the spot of green gradually diminished in size. We would then look ahead across the vast expanse and begin to search for the next island.

So, we had been out for 13 days and 1000 miles and had experienced brutal heat, dust devils, snow, high winds and sore butts, as well as cantaloupe, pie, bad beer, nice people, and roadkill. Hell, WE WERE ENJOYING OURSELVES! Where we could, we would keep a close eye on the weather channel and kept noticing that it was still raining in the northwest. That even made us happier.



Enjoying the ride and the scenery

Cows and things:

We crossed into the West Texas panhandle and saw COWS - millions of them. If you have ever had a steak, it started here. We considered these to be "tough cows" and not to be



Ghost town, somewhere in New Mexico

confused with the "sissy cows" that we saw later. These cows stood out in the middle of a plain, in 90+ temperatures, little water, and a long walk back to somewhere. These cows (probably better known as beef critters) had a hard life! It appeared that the cows also knew that they were tough guys, because they all had each ear pierced, sometimes more than once, and had jewelry everywhere (in reality - cow tags). Cows in Oklahoma, on the other hand, had pools to keep them cool when the temperature went above 80°F. Cows lounging in swimming pools - wuss cows.

The first town that we crossed to get into cow country was BOVINE – enough said.

We began to call West Texas "The Friendly State". EVERYBODY said hello, waved from his or her car, honked, etc. By the end of the day, our hands were tired from waving and grins were stuck on our faces. Oh ... did we say that there were a lot of cows? There were no signs in Texas that said "watch for animals"; they watched you.

Meteorologically, the New Mexico-Texas border is the region of the country where the dew point line is and where the weather changes from dry heat to wet heat. When we reached Bovine, we entered the humid zone. The change in dew point seemed to happen dramatically, in a matter of about 50-60 miles. Where before people would suggest that we must be crazy to be out in this heat, now they would suggest that we must be crazy to be out in the heat *and* humidity. But no one said anything such as "They steam turkeys in wet heat". The next place we felt low humidity was somewhere in Pennsylvania - on a cool day.

In Dimmitt, Texas we met the ladies who run the Chamber of Commerce (we would regularly go to C of C's to get information). We stayed for quite a while, talking about everything, and eating their candy. Our only regret of the trip was that we didn't stay in Dimmitt and take them up on their offer to take us to the fair. At that time, we had already lost a couple of days and expected to lose a few more as we got further east and closer to higher chances of continuous rain. At least I juggled for them.

Whenever we could we would consult the gurus on the Weather Channel as to possibilities of rain, thunderstorms, tornadoes, floods and stuff. Every time we watched we were told to expect heavy afternoon thunderstorms, or were advised of tornado warnings. We watched the skies for evidence of these and pedaled a little harder when we saw blackening clouds. It was in Texas that we began to realize that weatherwise, we were in Camelot. If it rained, or if there were tornadoes, it only happened at night, or after we finished for the day.

East Texas panhandle is completely different from the West. In the middle of the panhandle, there is a geological formation, a rift, that rapidly shifts the elevation by about 1500'. (However, because of our "extensive route planning", we didn't know anything about it.) This change also introduced much more vegetation and was the place along our route that started the change to greener landscapes. More importantly, after we dropped that 1500 feet, we didn't have to deal with the wind any more. Yup, the easterly winds had picked up again across Texas and slowed our progress. Just before we dropped down, we had taken 5 hours to do 25 miles. We kept thinking, this wind has got to stop sometime - it did, at the Caprock Escarpment. Thereafter, we never again had to fight the wind!

Because we had chosen to have an adventure rather than over plan the trip, we often did not know what was coming next. Kind of like real life. Just before Caprock, we once again

found ourselves somewhat demoralized, since the ever-present wind was having much more of an emotional affect than the hills or heat. At this time, we were entering our 4th or 5th day of headwinds. After sitting in one spot for a while reflecting on our situation, Alicia said "It's got to get better" so we got off our butts, put them on our bikes, put our heads down, and in about 12 miles, we were coasting down into green fields and no wind. We could see the rift on the map, but didn't know it was the opening to Eden. Combating emotional trials such as these and finding that something better is virtually around the corner - but out of site - was an interesting reflection on life in general. On this particular day, a day in which we really thought that we would not get to our planned destination, we finished just a little later than we had hoped to.

In assessing the overall trip, we were to come to find out that this adventure was every bit as much of an emotional challenge as it was a physical one - maybe even more so.

Into The Heartland And Onto Graceland

The weather channel kept identifying "locations of severe thunderstorms", "tornado warnings" and "tornado alerts". It was bad, and we were entering Oklahoma with only one goal - to see the movie "Twister." Hey, we figured, what better place and time to see it?

It was flat and calm as we entered Oklahoma, but the weather was becoming unsettled. We had to find a movie theater, but were out of luck in the first town even though it was somewhat large. We pressed ahead after hearing the weatherman talk about tornadoes touching down a couple of counties north. In Lawton, we were discussing our plight with a group of restaurant workers when one of them kindly suggested that she could drive us to the theater. The movie was fun. And as we exited the theater the skies became "wicked" black, the wind started to howl, it began to thunder and lightning and then rained cats and dogs. It was ominous. We thought that in Oklahoma they just kept the movie running, but outside.



Missing tornadoes in Oklahoma

We took refuge in a local bike shop where the store owner stated "Boy, I'd love to do what you guys are doing" (I thought again of my own dreams of Top Gun). He then proceeded to take us back to his house to discuss the rest of the trip, and then drove us back to our motel room.

Overall, most of Oklahoma wasn't memorable nor did we find it to be "bike friendly". We also kept avoiding weather. It was either behind us, ahead of us, or just out of our way. We were threading a needle. However, getting out of Oklahoma was to prove quite memorable.

It was also at this point in time that we began to realize how little camping there was in the heartland, something that we noticed in our route planning, but thought "It couldn't be that bad". Although there were campgrounds near lakes and state parks, we weren't near them.

Nor did we want to go "north 6 miles, east 2 miles and down the dirt road for about 1 mile" to get there, and do the same thing to return. But on the other hand, "no-tell motels" averaged around \$30-35 a night (which we thought wasn't terrible) and proved to be kind of funky.



We had set our sights on the Talimena Scenic highway, a 60-mile parkway through the 2000' Ouchita Mountains. The magic word here is "Scenic" - (see dictionary at beginning). It is a wooded parkland with excellent views and meandering roads. There was also camping available, and by now we wanted to be back in our tent. We pulled into town to get supplies before embarking on to the park, and we spoke with some locals. In addition to the standard questions, we told them that we were off to Talimena. They stopped talking, raised their eyebrows, looked at us kind of funny, and said "It's kind of hilly" and proceeded to identify other possibilities. Hey, we had just done the Rockies, what could this be? Besides, we thought that it would be a good test piece for the Blue Ridge Parkway, which we had marked out on our route plan.

We camped near the entrance to the park and set off the next morning, arriving at the park entrance to find a sign that said: "something, something, something ... expect to encounter 13% grades over the next 22 miles ... something something ..." Those words stood out so much that we didn't even notice what else it said. (At this time please refer to dictionary.) We looked

at each other and assured each other that this meant that there were some places that the road was really steep.

Within 1/4 of a mile we were off our bikes and pushing them up a steep hill. OK, that was steep, BUT IN OKLAHOMA?! It took us about 1 hour to do the first 5 miles. The sign should have said "Every hill for the next 22 miles is 13% grade and there are hundreds of them". Four to five hours and 22 miles later, we reached another sign that said "something, something, something ... 13% grade for the next 20 miles ...". Now, the scenery was beautiful and the views were grand, but this was ridiculous. At this speed, we would be lucky to get to the campsite before dark, and the tornadoes were someplace nearby. Luck for us, an intersecting road leading down offered an alternative - we bailed out.

A great choice! Down, down, down, into the valley and beside the railroad tracks. We were saved! Alicia was having a derailleuer problem and, at the state line (actually right on the state line), we came across a real shit-kicker bar. Alicia looked at it and refused to go in. I did, found that the bartender was a neighbor of Alicia's (well, he was originally from New Hampshire), that it was air-conditioned, and that we could use the phone. Alicia reluctantly came in, and over the course of about 1/2 hour, became quite happy at being inside this



"Scenic" Talimena Highway



now "unusual place" in which you drank in Oklahoma and pissed in Arkansas (it being a dry state). (Half of the building was in one state, the other half in the other state!) The phone had no numbers on the dial pad, which must make it quite difficult for the drunks to phone home. But we used it to call ahead to look for a bike shop - which closed in 20 minutes.

The bike shop owner chose to drive out to get us, then took us to his shop, dropped off our bikes, took us to a motel, made sure we knew where we could go for dinner, and then left to fix the bikes and brought them back to our motel room later that night. He kept saying "Boy, how I wish I could be doing what you're doing" and we talked at length. Another stop along the "Long Road Among Dreamers."

Maybe we were a bit lucky that we weren't camping that night. We sat outside the motel watching one of the most tremendous storms that we had seen in quite some time. Although tornado warnings were everywhere, we didn't see one. Deep down, I get real excited by weather-related incidents like hurricanes and big snowstorms, and I really wanted to see one. We kept missing storms, as they would go by us, or as they would only happen at night - we wondered how long that would keep up.

The bailout of the Talimena Scenic highway started us thinking about the Blue Ridge Parkway and how "scenic" it was. If it was as "scenic" as Talimena, it might prove a bit taxing. And, given that camping or accommodations were generally 60 miles apart, we wondered how the "scenic" road might create a problem. We decided to put off thinking about it until later - right now it was just too scary to think about.

Well, we had chosen Hot Springs, Arkansas for our next rest day, since it was along the way and because it had hot tubs – and, we hoped, good food. We realized that if we weren't on this trip, we would most likely never ever have gone there. It was in Arkansas that we started to notice that the cows had pools and on this day, around high 80's, that they all were just standing in them. Unlike the New Mexico and Texan cows, who stood out in 100+ heat, these guys were poolside, had green grass and someone who brought them food. We

called them wuss cows or just plain sissies. We passed a lot of sissy cows on our way to Hot Springs.



On the road to Hot Springs

Hot Springs ended up being much more than we thought. In the 1920's or so, it was the center of health for many people who came and "took the waters" or who needed to relax and get away from it all. These days people go to spas like Canyon Ranch.

What remains from that period is Bathhouse Row, a collection of turn-of-the-century bathhouses, one of which is still in

operation. So, as they say, "When in Rome do as the Romans." We each "took a bath" (literally not figuratively), and, turning the clock back, imagined ourselves in the 1920's. It was great; the only thing missing was the elixir salesman.

We chose to explore a bit and came upon what appeared to be a trendy restaurant - right up our alley. We chose to have dinner there and found that the reason it looked trendy was - because it was. It had been recently started by two Italian guys from New York City. Ah Italiano! We practiced our very bad Italian. We enjoyed it so much we returned the next day for lunch, and then again for dinner. Did I say that we liked it? We don't have a clue why two guys from NYC would move to Hot Springs and open a trendy restaurant where most of the diners used balsamic vinegar like ketchup. Hugs and kisses, a present of a box of hazelnut chocolates (now trendy everywhere) and we were off. Hey, Ciao et Gratzi Santo!

By now, we were mellow, rested and well-fed.

While in Hot Springs, we also met the local bike shop owner who was helping us with the best route through Little Rock. He thought the best thing was to have us meet his partner Al just outside of Little Rock, and Al would escort us. Hey, a riding partner: that sounded



Our Little Rock "escort"

pouring not more than 5 miles up the road. He was a firefighter, build like a fireplug, who had been a Division I bike racer who loved criterions. His legs were huge! Well, he had figured that we would prefer to avoid being soaked and had replaced his bike with his car and dry towels, since he was absolutely sure that we would be drenched. In the car, we kept asking Al if he really owned a bike, as we rode with him for about 40 miles in bright sun and clear skies. Although we felt odd driving through Little Rock, rather than biking - we did enjoy Al and his stories.

From Little Rock to the Mississippi River it was flat, dead-cat flat, absolutely flat, put-a-level-on-it-and-it-wouldn't-move-flat. Yep, it was flat - and we had a tail wind. Miles flew



Buckstaff Baths

great. The area around Western Arkansas was rolling farmland and quite pretty, and we ultimately reached the outskirts of Little Rock in search of Al. At this time we put our rain parkas on for the first time; the skies looked ominous and we felt some drops. We met up with Al, just south of Little Rock - but ... he didn't have a bike ... he was in his car!? He told us that it was absolutely pouring cats and dogs when he left, and was still

by. Alicia's odometer was singing and we were too. We had come to find out that this part of the country produced lots and lots of rice (I hadn't known that) as well as minnows and catfish. We passed rice fields, minnow ponds, and catfish ponds, and unlike people that have asked us "when do the deer turn into elk", we chose not to consider



Crossing the Mississippi ... "we're going to Graceland!"

know that she could finish the trip. After that, she could relax. But I was fretting about getting across the bridge safely. It was the interstate, it was over a mile across, it had almost no shoulders and, what it did have, had so much crap and sewers on it that a small misstep could have lead to a big problem. As I was considering other possible options, Alicia had already taken off, humming --- "Graceland, Graceland, Memphis Tennessee, we're going to Graceland" and, as I chased her across the bridge, she wiped away tears of joy and we crossed the Mississippi and we were headed home.

Later, Alicia would explain that after crossing the Mississippi, she entered into what she called "the cow to the barn" mode. Now, nothing was going to stop her. Where before she was determined, she was now completely at ease and anxious to continue. Next stop Boston, but first, we were going to visit Elvis.



The gates to Graceland

the minnow-catfish connection. As we neared Memphis, visions of Graceland danced in our heads and Paul Simon was playing on the cassettes. Crossing the Mississippi was an emotional experience for Alicia. All throughout the trip, she knew that if she could just get "half way", then getting home would be no problem. This was

her Dream. If she could get to the Mississippi River, she would have achieved a great deal and would

Although, we had taken a rest day just a few days earlier, we had to visit Elvis. So we stayed in Memphis and enjoyed the newly renovated downtown area, the "world renowned" Peabody ducks (definitely kitsch), the sun setting over the Mississippi, and Beal Street. By this time, we knew to trust everybody. So, as we were waiting for a bus to take us to Graceland, a guy asked if we wanted a ride there - sure and we hopped in. The guy

told us that he picks up as many people as possible and drives them to Graceland. He said that he has driven people from all over the world there. After he told us that people tell him he's crazy for picking up strangers, we told him that people had told us we'd be crazy to take rides from strangers. Kind of odd, the difference between perception and reality.

After going to Graceland, we are pretty sure that Elvis is still living on the second floor. Graceland was definitely a tourist attraction, but surprisingly, it was very well done and rather welcoming. Things we found out along the way: Graceland was the name of the place before Elvis bought it; he liked the name so he kept it; Elvis really liked televisions, they are everywhere in the house; he was quite philanthropic; people are still crazy about him.

It was also in Memphis that we chose to avoid the Blue Ridge Parkway. We figured that crossing the country was enough of a challenge and we didn't need to compound it by adding more "scenic" roadways. We had also realized that we would have much less likelihood of finding camping along our newly chosen route, and, as a result, we packaged up all the camping gear and shipped home 35 pounds of no-longer-needed stuff. But we did add a couple of pounds of cheap motel directories.

Although we had chosen to avoid the Blue Ridge, we knew that we would have "to pay the piper" at some time and cross the Appalachia. Less because of our "extensive route planning", and more because of our general knowledge of the area, we realized that crossing the Appalachians at 2000-3000' would most likely be more difficult than the Rockies. You see, in the old days they put the road in straight over the mountains, rather than around and about them. So, having never been to Kentucky, we chose to head northeast, and with a big gulp, decided to cross the mountains as far north as we could, in Pennsylvania.

We had definitely left behind the desert and its desolation, the high plains and its wind and many cows. But we were taking with us a developing set of memories. Alicia took the time in Memphis to send postcards back to many of the people that we had met in order to fulfill their request to stay in touch. Ahead was a bit more familiar terrain, bigger population centers and hopefully many more good memories.

We pushed off from the city of Memphis with a goal of avoiding any more "big" cities until we reached Boston. It was on the outskirts of Memphis that we met our second (and last) person on a cross-country tour - a New Zealander. He was also on a prescribed bike route from Los Angeles to Atlanta. We rode with him for a bit and he told us of a tandem recumbent that he had been riding with earlier. (Two people on one bike in chair-like positions ... hard to explain). Now that was a bike that we wanted to see!

We met only two cross-country bike tourers during our whole trip. These two chance meetings were on sections of prescribed cross-country bike routes - roads that we had purposely tried to avoid since we didn't really want to be in a crowd. We wondered how



Messages from devoted Elvis fans

many bike tourers we would have met if we had stayed on a prescribed route the whole way, and whether our trip would have been better or worse. At this time, it was fine for us to be "special", and as such, not be burdened by those who may have been there ahead of us.



Second level of Zen – "just bicycling"

As the roads and scenery began to look a little like home, and as even the back roads were rather well populated, we began to enjoy "just bicycling". It's a bit hard to explain. We felt comfortable, Alicia was "on her way home", we were mellow, we had gone a long way, and still had a long way to go. But things were becoming easy. After reaching the first level of Zen in the desert, we now reached a second level of Zen - "just bicycling". It was during the next 7-10 days that we really made progress with a string of consistent 75 to 90-mile days. It

was as if we were shot from a cannon. We knew the game, we knew the territory, and we knew we could do it. Yup, we were "honed" and happy.

We pulled into Paris TN in mid-afternoon, found a motel, and had a great laugh with two guys who were putting a 24' ladder into their room just to make sure no one would steal it off their truck. I told them that I had heard of guys sneaking women into their rooms, but ... this was different - must be a southern thing.

Within about 15 minutes of our arrival at the motel, Alicia received a phone call in our room asking her if we would mind being interviewed by the local paper. Apparently, someone had noticed us, realized that we were crossing country, and immediately called. Our interviewer said that no one could ever remember someone biking through Paris on a cross-country tour. The next day we were the front-page item (in color!) in the Paris, Tennessee Post-Intelligencer. Our 15 minutes of fame!!

The weather channel said there would be an 80% chance of thunderstorms.

As we pulled into Clarksville Tennessee towards the end of the next day, we were in a bit of traffic and heard a horn starting to blare. We looked up to see a 24' ladder hanging off the back of a truck and two good ol' boys waving their arms out the windows.

We were in farm country with rolling fields and well-kept homes. We noticed that everyone had a sit-down lawnmower and it seemed that only women were allowed to drive them - must be another southern thing.

We crossed into Kentucky and it was BEAUTIFUL! Lush fields, really nice roads, barns and silos and antebellum porticos. We hadn't been in the state for more than 60 miles and I had decided that I was going to be a country gentleman: "... pack up Alicia, we're moving here!" We had begun to notice the every house had a 4-column portico covering the entry of the house - not just the big houses, every house, including the mobile homes. If it didn't come with the house, you put one on it.

Of course, tobacco fields dominated. Most appeared to be small farms nestled in and among other crops. Old Mail Pouch billboards on barns were ever-present, and we noticed that the color of every barn that we saw was the same chocolate brown color. Color became an interesting feature only when, 150 miles up ahead, we realized that all the barns were now green. It would be interesting to find out what anthropological choice lead to these regional color differences. It became even more interesting when we realized that the barns in Pennsylvania were red!

The people that we talked to in Kentucky kept asking us "How could you have been biking in all that rain?" since it had been raining there pretty much steady for two weeks. They pointed out the tobacco fields - some were planted and some not. The planted fields had two weeks of growth, and they were now waiting for the other fields to dry out a bit so they could resume planting. We said "What rain?"

Rain was not predicted for the next day.

The riding in Kentucky, and for that matter, the rest of the trip was more an observation of cultural, speech, architectural, and societal change - unlike the terrain, open space, and desolation that we observed out west. We began to wonder at what point the phrase "Y'all" would begin to disappear, at what point would begin to feel the influences of the East Coast, or why the barns changed colors as we got further north, or where porticos would not be found on every home. And since we had not been rained on yet, we began to wonder when we would.

Throughout Kentucky, we stayed mainly on the smallest roads possible and passed through some very wealthy and some very poor areas. We only entered the bigger towns to find lodging. On the small roads, dogs started to become annoying. What is it about dogs? They seem to know when a bicyclist is coming and when to start barking. In fact, we were able to estimate the distance between us by the amount of time the dog started barking at the first of us, the pause, and when the dog started to bark at the second of us. One small pleasure was to hear the barking, the metallic clink of the chain, and then a "grump" when the dog reached the end of its chain at full speed. Dogs got to be pain in the ass.

We drank "Ski", a local Mountain Dew-like soda made and sold almost exclusively in Greensburg, Kentucky, and passed the Fruit of the Loom and Casket plants in Campbellsville. I guess everybody in this region drank Ski as they either made underwear or caskets! I wondered what they "get laid out in" when they get buried.

Religion:

From what we saw, people in the US are very religious. Churches were prominent, and each town's greeting to you was made in conjunction with a greeting from the local religious denominations. In many places, we would be bicycling through small towns on Sunday, and the streets would be clear of cars. We came to see that they were all parked at church services. On Sundays, most stores were closed and we had a hard time finding places to buy food. We mention this because the presence of religion really did stand out from the overall background. We also noticed how cemeteries, mostly located close to churches, would be exceptionally well maintained and every stone was flush with flowers. We witnessed this "cemetery respect" for quite a long time. It may have been a regional or cultural thing, but as we got further east this cemetery practice

was less noticeable. The prominence of religion seemed to melt into the background as we proceeded east. This might simply be because of the density of population and property in the east. But, it was also notable that the town greeting signs change from religious to secular (Rotary, Elks, etc) further east.

We were cranking out miles something serious in Kentucky. These were great days. With the lack of rain, we had no delays, and began to wonder if we would be getting home earlier than expected.

Side Trips:

Throughout the trip we would stop at the oddest places, museums, historic houses, etc. If we weren't cycling, we likely would never have considered going to most of them. In Fort Sumner, New Mexico, we visited the Billy the Kid Museum – definitely unusual! We visited Graceland, of course. And in Bowling Green we stopped at The National Corvette Museum - \$250,000 for a 1953 mint condition convertible. A guy place to be for sure - although Alicia liked it too. She's kind of a guy.

It was somewhere in KY that we had our first encounter with real rain. It poured for about 30 minutes from a late afternoon thundershower. We basically waited for it to pass and continued on.

It was also in KY that the issue of ghost towns and the affect that bypasses have on a community really hit us. Throughout the trip, we had constantly seen the effect that bypasses have. We had seen old roads giving way to new roads, and new roads giving way



One of many Ghost Towns, Lesley TX

to Interstates. We had seen how the shifting traffic patterns had created ghost towns and near ghost towns in the west.

Now we began to see something new here. We had been riding a course that, in general, paralleled an interstate and had gone through or stopped in numerous small towns. At the

end of each day, we would now be in search of lodging (since we had given up the camping scene). Stopping in at the Chamber of Commerce in Morehead, Kentucky, home to Morehead State University, and with a population of 10-15,000, we inquired about local lodging. We were told that there was none, that the bed and breakfasts were shut down



Character-less "strips" ... Generica

and all lodging was out at the interstate. To get there, we would have to take the "Bypass". The bypass was 4 lanes at 55 mph, and a wide shoulder full of crap leading to what might have been called "New Morehead". Although we had been to many of these "new communities" throughout the trip and didn't relish them much - this was the last straw! Morehead was pretty, nestled into the foothills, and, although small, seemed to contain some interesting buildings, as well as the school. The "New Morehead," on the other hand, was stark, cold, devoid of character, screaming out to everyone "to look at me" or "I'm bigger than the other guy". It attracted people who stayed in look-alike motels, who didn't get out of their cars, who ate from a variety of fast food places that had exactly the same food from exactly the same looking building located in exactly the same kind of stark, cold, characterless location 50 miles up or down the interstate. Personal interactions seemed to be strained in this and other "bypass towns". Too many people passing through or working in these non-personal bypass communities seemed to trivialize all the good and wonderful things that we had come to know were the best parts of the country.

I felt robbed of the "better lifestyle" which we had come to know from our interaction with small towns and small-town people. I felt kind of sick and angry. This is progress? No one had bypassed Pietown, or Pinetop AZ, or Datil NM, or Dimmitt TX, or Mena AK, or Paris TN. They had soul. The soul of Morehead seemed to be at risk, or maybe worse. It would be interesting to see what cultural anthropologists would think of the evolution of the effects of bypasses on the soul of a community or the character of the country.

It was at this time that we decided to avoid "bypass towns" as much as possible and to seek out places which were more personal, which had character and personality, and offered a bit of uniqueness that made them special. We had reached our level of Zen or mellowness and want to savor it as long as possible. Bypass towns didn't help. We will be bypassing bypass towns.

I had been thinking that there must be a name for these "bypass towns", something that fit the feeling. It wasn't until after the trip that I heard someone else mention the same feeling and called those places "Generica". Generic America. Yup, perfect.

Up and through Kentucky (a truly beautiful state) and into the Ohio River valley. Hey, we had learned to follow railroads out west, and now we learned to follow rivers in the east. It worked most of the time, but not all of the time. We were still cruising - in auto mode - following the river, passing farms and fields, large industrial plants, dams and flood controls, barges, barges, and barges, coal - center of commerce. Ashland KY, Gallipolis OH, a quick trip on a ferry into West Virginia (when available, jump aboard), back into Ohio and on into Marietta, OH. By now, it was beginning to feel very much like home except we still had 700 miles to go.

Del and Alf were our bed and breakfast hosts in Marietta, our rest day. We arrived in mid afternoon and by 5:00, sitting on the porch rocker, were in the midst of a near tornado that blew sideways, pelted the streets with $\frac{1}{2}$ " rain drops, and toppled trees - all in a matter of 5 minutes. I was once again excited by the showing of nature's force and in jest, deemed it "dangerous". This occurred only a short time after we had told our hosts of our otherwise quite dry trip. They lost power to the house, so we were grateful when they suggested that we all go out to eat. Marietta is a quaint town, on the rise as a trendy, antique-store-type town, within a short day trip from other places. Del and Alf had made sure that they had prepared the hot tub for our arrival. However, due to the excitement and lost power we were not able to use it :-(. We rested the next day and completed our plans for getting through Pennsylvania. We had done so many miles in the last few days and picked up so much time, that we decided to go slowly through Pennsylvania and to take more short days.

Del and Alf became so enamored of our plight that they suggested that we eat out with them the next night too. After finding many things closed due to the power outage, we ended up at what we called "The Feeding Trough" otherwise known as the "\$5.95 all-you-can-eat buffet" with 20 or so food stations. Man, were the people in this place LARGE. They all seemed to be getting 3-4 servings of plates full of stuff. Of course, we had 4-5 plates full - but hey, we were fat burners. This place was huge, and crowded. Food everywhere. And to top it off, all you can eat soft-whipped ice cream. We left after a couple of hours and waited for breakfast.

We followed the river up as far as we could go and turned more easterly toward Pennsylvania. Our plan to go as far north as possible was to avoid all the big urban areas of Pennsylvania, as well as New York and Connecticut. After we had been home a bit, we read a Cape Cod paper story about another fellow who had crossed country staying on Route 6 the whole way. We laughed with amusement when this fellow was quoted as



Beautiful countryside in Pennsylvania



-40-

... and lots of hills!

saying: "After 2500 miles I almost gave up in Pennsylvania. I couldn't believe the hills. Nothing like the West." Yup, been there, did that.

Yes indeed, Pennsylvania was hilly, right from the start -- and it didn't stop.

Uniontown, PA was our worst day of the entire trip. Bad roads, no shoulders, lots of crap on the road sides, people giving us the finger, and ending with two flat tires within 5 minutes of each other. But, in our elevated state of karma, Zen and mellowness, it passed quickly. Outside of Carrollsville, PA, we started the pay back for the easy hill climbs out west. We were into the Alleghenies and heading into the Laurels. First thing - 5 miles up hill at a never ending 10-11% grade. As we rode and walked and rode and pushed we would hear the groan of trucks as they labored up the same grade. When we looked behind the entire valley was opening up below us. As we looked ahead, no top in sight -- and these were only 2500-3000' old beaten down mountains. Up up up. We were impressed by the steepness and were surprised that these "honed" cyclists had to get off and walk. Alicia was determined to ride these hills, but when I was walking as fast as she was pedaling, she changed her mind. The rolling countryside in Pennsylvania meanders through state forests, farms and fields, alongside streams, past Mennonite-style farm structures, and past swimming holes. But the one thing that it does consistently is - - it goes

up and down: 9% grade for 2-1/2 miles, 7% grade for 5 miles, 10% grade for 2 miles, and everything in between. It topped out at 14% grade for 1-1/4 miles, but grades seemed to ease off as we got farther east. (Bicycling starts to get little testy at about a7% grade.)

We were beginning to feel pleased that we had decided to slow down and take shorter days for a while. I had also begun to reflect on that decision to avoid the Blue Ridge. Maybe it wouldn't have been so bad after all - Jees, what could be worse than this? Well, up and down, and up and down, and up and down, we traversed Pennsylvania, finding a host of "no-tell" motels that were unusual, personable, different, and by all accounts every bit as good as what one could find in "bypass town". Awfully pretty country.

We stopped in Three Springs looking for a place to stay and were directed to a B&B "just down the road". Our host had told us that the house was "about 1 mile down a road that was mostly paved".

The story of Billy:

Later we were to find out that Billy "never really paid much attention to how far things were", but as we went down (yes down) the road, it turned to gravel. After about 2-1/2 miles of down and dirty, we were getting somewhat concerned since the quality of the local housing stock was, shall we say, "losing value" and there were no signs of the B&B. I was getting a little "pissed" since it was the end of the day and going back up was going to take quite some time. Just about when we were ready to give up and turn around - there it was. Billy greeted us, as I fumed, muttering something like - "he better drive us outta here". Alicia took over. With this as an introduction and with Billy's accent, we thought he was a "real hick". We thought: "Oh sh.... !



A character-ful "no-tell" motel
The Reilly Motel, Moundsville WV

Let's just say that, at first look, the place was UNUSUAL. Situated right on the river, stuff was scattered everywhere, the refrigerator was outside, as was a whole host of other household items. And, in the midst of this, Billy was undertaking some kind of construction project. With a bit of trepidation, we were shown to our room -- one might say it was UNUSUAL - cluttered with numerous stuffed "theses" and knitted "thoses", of every color in the rainbow - more kitsch than Cape Cod! Although the bed springs squeaked, it was comfortable and outfitted with nice comforters. By this time, we were here and we were not going back up that dirt hill.

We had told Billy that we needed a place to eat, and although his B&B didn't serve dinner, he suggested that since they had to eat, that they would just set two more places. Billy told us that the reason the place was such a mess, was that just two months earlier, the river had risen about 15 feet and washed him, his mother, and his son out of the house! What they could salvage was put outside. He and his mother went on to tell us about all the times that they had been flooded, but this one was the worst. "Wow", we thought.

Billy's construction project was a new kitchen to replace the one that was washed out. Billy was a professional chef in the French style and served the local community through his catering business which he ran from the house. The catering business was washed away and was on hold until Billy finished building the new (high as hell) kitchen. "Wow", we thought.

At dinner, Billy's mom told us how Billy had completely rebuilt the house himself, how his wife had walked out on him, and how he had lost all his self-made "reenactment garments" in the flood. "Wow", we thought. By this time, we were beginning to see Billy in a whole new light.

After dinner, Billy returned and offered to provide us with a movie to watch. "I've got some good Shakespeare plays on tape" he said. Having recently been to productions of Hamlet, we discussed the various character assessments of Hamlet as well as Macbeth. "Wait a minute, this guy's not a hick". The warmth of the house seemed to envelop us, and we began to shed the "funny feeling" and enjoy this unusual fellow and this unusual house.

After dinner, in the midst of a conversation, Billy recited hilarious passages from a book by Farley Mowat with all the bravado of a Shakespearean player. We asked him to drive us out in the morning and he agreed. "It might be a little late though", he said, because "I have to go to work". What? "Yeh, I work on the railroad." (We looked at each other - ??????). "I work on this restored railroad. We are trying to



Our room at "Billy's"

keep it alive for the benefit of the community. I have to get up at 3:00am so that I can light it off in time for everyone to ride it. I should be back by 9:00." We looked at our watches, it was 11:00pm . "Wow", we thought, a true renaissance man.

Billy drove us out to the road the next morning, after "Gramma" cooked us breakfast. He turned to Alicia and commented lightheartedly, "See, it's not as scary as it looks." Alicia and I soulfully reflected on how easy it is to misjudge, and how warm and kind the whole experience had been.

Upon departing, both Alicia and I individually were feeling all kinds of things; embarrassment, astonishment, sense of one's convictions, "can't tell a book by its cover", but most of all, respect. Billy turned to us and said, "You guys have made my week".

No Billy, you made our trip – talk about a Dreamer! Good luck!

Ok, by this time we had been on the road for a while, and we had been observing the general flow of things. We could now make a definitive statement about what were the 3 most consistent things we experienced across the country. The envelope please ...

1. Cows. If an alien landed, it would have a hard time figuring out whether to try to communicate with cows or with people since there appears to be an equal number of both - just distributed differently.
2. UPS trucks. God, these things go everywhere - and they are all brown!
3. Budweiser delivery trucks. Need I say more?

We thought that we would see lots of yellow school buses, but we hardly saw any.

Also, one of the most unique things that stood out:

We crossed paths in NM with a woman pushing a baby carriage. We passed her in the middle of absolutely nowhere at a time when she was being approached by a car. We had thought that it was a family dispute and chose to continue on our way. It was odd since the baby carriage contained no baby and little in the way of clothes or anything else. We were going in an opposite direction from this woman so we ultimately met others who had seen or talked to her. Most everyone thought she

was crazier than we were since she had told them that she was *walking* from Minneapolis to San Diego!



Lucky to catch the ferry to Millersburg, PA

In our extensive route planning, I had noticed a ferry crossing at the Susquehanna in mid-Pennsylvania, so it became a focal point at this time. As we got closer, we realized that it might be smart to check and see if it was running. We stopped at grocery stores and asked about it - "Gee, I don't know. I thought they closed down";

at police departments - "Don't know"; called the ferry - and the phone rang; called the state police - "Don't know, it may be closed". The long and short of it was nobody knew, even as we got as close as 2 miles away. You see, it was a little important because we would have had to detour 40 miles around and through populated urban areas on real bad roads. Alicia was thinking, maybe we can swim across. I was thinking, we would thumb a ride from a boat. Well, we didn't know what to expect as we neared the ferry ramp. Thumbtacked on a nearby post was a sign - CLOSED UNTIL JUNE 14th. Lucky for us it was June 15th! We rode a flat-bottomed, stern wheeler across the 1-mile-wide and 3-foot-deep Susquehanna. If the ferry wasn't running, we actually could have walked across!

We continued through Pennsylvania, up and down, and up and down, and up and down.

Animal stories:

By the way, did we mention that in our scientific analysis we determined that armadillos can't swim? Definitely not. We came across a lot of roadkill along our way - frogs, turtles, rabbits, snakes, various household pets, and millions of armadillos. Armadillos were everywhere, in every state, in every stage of flatness or decomposition, on both sides of the road. Get the picture? Well, what happened was, we crossed the Mississippi, and after about a day or two it dawned on us that we weren't seeing any dead armadillos. Considering this in depth, we then concluded that armadillos can't swim.

I did remove a turtle from definite "squash city", while Alicia skillfully avoided a rabbit while screaming down a hill at 40+mph. I swear that the bunny went right between the tires! If the rabbit hit the spokes it would have been julienned! And Alicia would have been hurting big-time.

Following admonitions from the signs in the west, we kept watching for animals. We really didn't see many, so, after a while, we started to look for zoo signs.

Back to Pennsylvania -- up and down, and up and down and past fields, farms, even more cows, in and out of small towns now displaying July 4th trappings, and meeting a local bicyclist with whom we rode for a while as he exclaimed, "Boy I wish I could be doing what you guys are doing". Another Dreamer.

We had been looking forward to getting a tour and free beer at the Yeungling Brew House in Pottsville Pennsylvania - the oldest brewer in the US. But when we got there, it was closed :-(.

By now we had begun to really take it easy, with "short" 30 to 40-mile days -- but no rest days. Well, until we went to Jim Thorpe. To get to Jim Thorpe you descend about 6 miles into a portion of the Lehigh Valley. Yup, you guessed it - it was also about 6 miles up to get out. For our entire stay in Jim Thorpe, we stared at the ascending road that left it - then plied ourselves with Yeungling beer during rest days, enjoyed this "quaint" town", visited the coal baron's house, and then took off for more hills.

Later, after the trip and around Christmas, we received a package. Not expecting this surprise package, we opened it to find two Yeungling T-shirts sent to us by the fellow we met on the road outside of Jim Thorpe!!

We could smell home, but were going slow so that our friends could meet us when we arrived - you see, otherwise no one would be home when we got there, since it was Fourth of July weekend. We biked eastern Pennsylvania and it was feeling a little less hilly. Onto East Stroudsburg and the Poconos. Across the Delaware on the Appalachian Trail and into the Delaware Water Gap - a great place for biking, resting, and taking it easy. We were now on our way to the GUNKS.

The Gunks, or Shawangunks, is a major east coast rock climbing area where Alicia and I have spent a great many weekends. We weren't home, but this felt very much like it. We were in very familiar territory now, knew what was around the corner, looked for the farm stands and smiled a lot. We were only a four-hour car ride from home! But four more days of biking.

Crossing near the Hudson, we clocked mile 3000.

The Gunks!



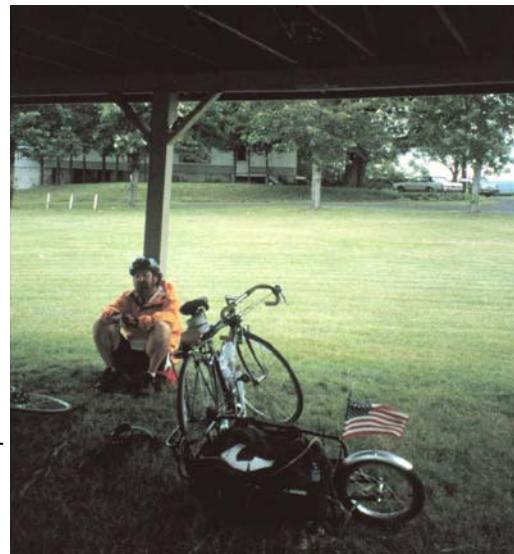
Almost home!

Our minds were somewhat frantic. We were so close to home, but we had "scheduled" 4 more days to get there. We began to consider if we should just go for it and get home. But Alicia was aware that people were expecting us on Tuesday and we just had to cool our jets. The number of photographs taken began to diminish as we focused on enjoying the ride through familiar scenes. Boy were we anxious. By now, we would crank out miles as if it was nothing. We were honed, tanned, light, carrying light loads, carefree, and looking forward to Coffee Connection's Frappacinos. We crossed into Massachusetts from Connecticut and gasped, home but not home. It wasn't flat, but we were cranking.

The day before arriving home we were on our way to Sturbridge, Massachusetts (only 60 miles from home) and cranking. We both thought that we should just bypass

Sturbridge and continue onto Belmont. However, we then found that there are hills in Massachusetts too! One big long one about 7 miles long and 7-8% grade. We took it as a message and stopped in Sturbridge, as planned.

Rain:



Throughout the trip we were always expecting rain, but our Camelot luck held out. Not once did we have to bike in the rain. In 58 days, it never rained for a full day and only rained at night. Although we sense weather all around us at times, it never got in our way. We had what we called "rain delays", kind of what happens in the middle of a baseball game. And we only had three of these, each lasting between 15 minutes and an hour. We were lucky in most cases since we were able to find great shelter. During one, when it absolutely poured, we were in a small convenience store in Ohio and watched a time-and-temperature sign as the temperature dropped about 17 degrees in 40 minutes. Another time we took cover in a campground after having been caught in rain for a few minutes. Lucky for us, they had laundry dryers right there, so with nice dry clothes we proceeded along our way after the rain let up.

However on this last day (we took no pictures on the road), we took off and FLEW towards Boston, so fast though that we would have arrived well before our welcoming committee. We slowed a bit, but continued toward home.

Along the way, and just a short distance from home, my sister passed us with her car full of balloons. She spotted us and leaped from the car - we were too early she said! Go back or slow down or something. So we did what Alicia had promised she would do, we stopped in at the Belmont Coffee Connection and had Frappacinos (before we went home). As we sat at the store window, Alicia's sister and mother drove by and spotted us in the store. They yelled at us that we were too early and that we shouldn't go home for 10-15 minutes. We left the store and were greeted outside by people interested in our bikes. They began to ask the standard set of questions.

However, this time the conversation was a bit different:

Rain delay, Broadheadsville PA

Where are you going?
Nowhere, we just got home!
From Where?
San Diego
REALLY?!

So, we bicycled the last 1/4 mile to home and as we did, tears started to well up. It was over. WOW. We had biked across the country, challenged ourselves, fought with our emotions, struggled with terrain - but never struggled with each other, met some great people, learned a lot about our country and about ourselves. WOW. It was over. Now our biggest question began to arise - what are we going to do tomorrow?



EPILOGUE:

After drinking champagne and reuniting with friends and family on our return, our thoughts turned to questions such as: Would you do it again? What was it like? These were new questions, ones that we had not been prepared to answer. But we have thought a lot about them since completing our trip.

So, would we do it again? Initially, say for the first few months, we thought no, based on the thinking of how could we repeat the experiences, the people, the newness, the things you find out, etc. After having done the trip, we thought that it was a once in a lifetime trip, totally unique, not to be equaled again. After thinking more about it, we decided that it was a once in a lifetime trip, totally unique, not to be equaled again. But after hemming and hawing about it, we decided that yes, we would do it again. Yes, it would be similar, but it would also prove to be unique in its own way. Maybe we would have rain, maybe we would stop in Dimmitt, and maybe we would inspire someone else to do something that they have yearned to do. We would do it the same way, no motorhome, a little bit of route planning, but with less stuff, and more time.

So, what was it like? Well, we both agreed that, for us, the trip was more of an emotional challenge than a physical challenge. Although we did not train for the trip, our bodies held up real well all along the way. Yeah, we had aches and pains, but they went away or were relieved with lotions. We stretched when we could, but we were not really ever able to take that long rest that could have rejuvenated our legs.

It was the emotion that was truly interesting.

At first, due to our own stupidity, we felt embarrassed at ourselves (for being so stupid), yet we persisted and everything improved.

Traversing the desert was an exceptional experience with stress relief. All cares seemed to wash away as we spent hours upon hours on desolate roads, mostly caught up in our own thoughts. It was a true mellowing experience. The expanse, although beautiful, was quite repetitive and serene. It did not offer rapid change or something new hidden just around the next bend. As we rode, I was thinking about how terrain or environment may affect one's outlook in other ways. More specifically, in the East Coast, "new" things may be discovered when you turn a corner or crest a hill or reach a vista - a new house or a different view or an unexpected river. I thought that "New" things aren't as prominent in open terrain and wondered, "Does the act of *discovering* new things in different ways affect culture, society, wonder?" Does environment affect how and why people look for new things, in business, astronomy, research? If I lived in the desert instead of on the east coast, would I be different?

However, the one "new" thing that we did discover was inner fortitude. When the sun was bearing down and it was 110, we biked. When the road went up for 20 miles, we biked. When the winds blew at 20-30-40 miles per hour, we biked. And, when at times we didn't want to bike, we biked. We developed resolve, and a determination that when things got bad, something would happen and, yup, it would get better. The sun went down, the temperatures dipped, the hill flattened out, or the winds stopped. It was surprising that these changes seemed to happen at just the right time. When we thought that we might have had enough, things changed. The resolve, developed in the desert and desolate areas,

set the tone for the remainder of the trip. The trip became easy. It was also apparent that dealing with environmental conflicts that tested resolve completely minimized any potential personal conflicts. We just looked at each other and shrugged or hugged. If something was irritating between us, it was just too trivial when compared to the "bigger picture".

Somewhere in Pennsylvania, Alicia suggested that the best route was "over there" and confirmed this on the map. After about an hour, it was apparent that we were going in the wrong direction, certainly not where we wanted to go. I became somewhat irritated and Alicia became somewhat concerned. However, we both independently realized that this issue, which could have been a "Real Big Problem", was just not worth getting upset over. It was just a pain in the neck that we both realized was a small pain in the neck compared to all the other things that we had already been through. In the big picture, it was not a big problem, it wasn't even a problem, just a bump in the road. We had reached a level of mellow that was refreshing, relaxed, easy, and just plain fun.

So, what was it like?

We never set out to be inspirational or to have others "live vicariously" through our trip. We did not set out to "find ourselves" or to work out problems. We did not set out to prove anything to anybody or to ourselves. All we wanted to do was "just bicycle across the country" - which we did. Along the way, we did learn new things, met new people, asked new questions and more than anything else - had a great time.

It was a Long Road that proved to pass through many different places, many different people and many different Dreams. We were stunned that we may have influenced the lives of a few people that we met. We never Dreamed that that would happen.

It was great. If you have a dream, go for it. It could just be the time of your life!

Alicia's Journal

SUNDAY, MAY 12th

9:00 AM
Somewhere in the Friendly Skies

Well, we're on our way! United airlines flight 897 to Los Angeles, then a short hop to San Diego. Yesterday afternoon Maureen had a going-away (Bon Voyage?) party for us. Kevin's family was all there, and Ma, Gwynne and Bobby drove down for it, too. Lorraine came over to our house afterwards and spent the night and drove us to the airport bright and early this a.m. for our 7:30 flight.

I'm writing this on the plane while I'm waiting for my breakfast ... I'm starving! It's nice to know that for the next two months I don't have to worry too much about calories and fat grams! (Well ... maybe a little ...)

We have a two-month trip planned, bicycling through California, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas pan handle, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Tennessee, North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, New York and finally, Massachusetts. I hope we'll be able to bike the whole thing ... I think we will!

We shipped our bikes and "stuff" to La Jolla last Thursday to meet us at the Inn where we will be staying tonight (The Bed & Breakfast Inn @ La Jolla). And since our first day will be all uphill (0' to 4000') and we're staying at Orchard Hill Country Inn in Julian, CA at the end of the day, we shipped all of our camping gear there. (A brilliant idea on Kevin's part ... why lug it all uphill?)

The camping gear made it to Julian, but only three of four boxes made it to La Jolla. At this point, we don't know where the fourth box is. Wheelworks shipped everything for us but did not record the tracking numbers. Kevin spent most of the day Friday trying to track it anyway, but UPS was not helpful at all.

Fortunately, Wheelworks was great about it, recognizing it was their fault that we do not have the tracking number. So yesterday morning we went in to Wheelworks and they replaced everything that was in the "lost" box: the B.O.B. (trailer), panniers, bike shoes, water bottles, CamelBacks. We checked it all as luggage this morning. Tomorrow morning, we'll check with Wheelworks and UPS to see if the fourth box has been located. If it has, and if it will be delivered on Monday, then we will slip our schedule a day and wait for it ... and we'll ship all the brand new stuff (unused) back to Wheelworks. This is what I'm hoping will happen! We've already checked with the inns, and La Jolla can accommodate us for a second night, and Julian can slip our reservation to Tuesday night. David at La Jolla and Kim at Julian have been especially helpful.

Kevin is planning to trail a "B.O.B." – a one-wheeled trailer that attaches through the rear wheel hub. I'm going the classic panniers route – front and back. The B.O.B. is a relatively new item that is getting good reviews. Kevin figured he could carry a bit more weight with the B.O.B. and keep my load "fairly" light. (What a nice guy!) I'm convinced, though, that the reason he got B.O.B. was that he couldn't figure out how to fit his juggling pins in the panniers! (Some things are essential on a trip like this – Kevin has his juggling pins and I have my hair dryer!) We also brought a kite (kites don't weigh anything!) but right now it's "lost" in the fourth box.

So what else do we have with us? About 100 lbs in all, including the B.O.B. and the panniers. We have a minimal tool kit, extra spokes, a tire, 2 tubes, duct tape. Camping gear: tent, therma-rest pads, down sleeping bags, pillowcases, 2 towels. Lots of sunscreen. Cooking kit (I'm very proud of this): I can't cook for 2 months with camp-kit type pans! So I bought two T-Fal saucepans – a 3-qt and a 2-qt – took the handles off so they nest, and did not put the handles on the lids, so those nest too. The nested pans were put on top of 2 white plastic plates of about the same diameter. Inside the pans are 2 Rubbermaid containers (with one lid) that will serve as bowls, a Peak-1 lightweight stove, and matches. On top of all that are the 2 pan lids. It's all strapped together into one neat, compact package. Granted, it's heavier than a backpacking cook kit – but it's so much more civilized!! Now I can continue my gourmet cooking away from home. My good friends and relatives all know how important this is to me!

The rest of my kitchen is in an REI medium size black net bag and includes: a Swiss army knife (for the corkscrew, bottle opener, and can opener); two high-tech frosted clear plastic cups that will work equally well for water, beer, and wine (purchased at Placewares); two light-weight plastic utensil sets (fork, knife, teaspoon, soupspoon); a small plastic "camping" spoon, and a wooden spatula; a fluorescent flashlight from Brookstone's that's free-standing and can serve as a light for cooking or "atmosphere" for dining; campsuds and sponge; a potholder; two dishtowels to serve as placemats and two facecloths to serve as napkins. And my good Henckle tomato knife (small serrated edge knife). It all makes for very civilized roughing it!

Also – a small container of olive oil and a small container w/ mixed spices (thyme, basil, rosemary) – I'm hoping to get these re-filled along the way via the courtesy of strangers in campgrounds and B&B hosts.

We have a lot of black net "ditty" bags from REI for organizing things. There's a "miscellaneous" bag that has extra batteries (one set for flashlight, one set for camera, one set for am/fm/cassette radios – to be available as soon as the batteries that are now in the devices go dead, then replaced the next time we find a store); an indelible marker; 'can't remember what else right now!

A first-aid kit with antibiotic cream, hydrocortisone cream (for bug bites), A&D ointment, and small selection of assorted bandages; small sewing kit; cord.

We each have a "toiletries" bag - of course mine is bigger than Kevin's - but minimal, none-the-less.

Other than that, there's clothes. Basically, we each have 2 pairs of biking shorts, 3 T-shirts, a lightweight synchilla vest, 1 long sleeved poly-pro, tights (mine are somewhat loose - the cross-sport pant from Title 9 catalog, and will also serve as casual pants - in fact, I'm wearing them now on the plane), 2 pairs of biking socks, 1 pair of rag socks, Teva's sandals, Stegman wool felt clogs, rain shell, warm hat, light-weight gloves. For "dressy" clothes, Kevin has "wrinkle-free" cotton chinos and a couple of nice polo shirts. I have very thin, loose, off-white silk pants (DKNY) that are washable and look fine if they're wrinkled, a silk-knit ribbed tank top, also loose-fitting (from The Territory Ahead catalog) and some very thin flat sandals. Also, a light-as-a-feather knit black dress from the GAP (short-sleeved & A-line short skirt) with a very light brown and black printed silk scarf. Also an off-white silk-ramie (light-weight) sweater. (My dressy clothes all fold up lighter and smaller than Kevin's, and are packed inside 2 ziplock bags to protect them, even though it sounds like a lot.)

We've only been planning this trip for about a month and a half. Kevin has always wanted (not passionately, but desirable just the same) to bicycle across country. He owns his own business and business has been slow, and one night about 2 months ago, he came home and remarked that this might be a good time for him to bicycle across the country. Coincidentally, I had been thinking that I really needed some time off and had very quickly and somewhat vaguely envisioned the bike trip. Since I've been at my job for 5 years and hold a senior management position (vice-president), I thought that my boss might consent to letting me take an unpaid leave of absence for the trip. I approached him with the idea around the beginning of April, and although he thought the timing was terrible (we were in the middle of launching a new product and also trying to raise some more money), he allowed that he was not totally against the idea and to give him a proposal to show how things would be covered while I was away. This was fairly straightforward since I have a really good and dependable crew working for me, whom I am sure can take care of things while I'm away. I also promised to check in at least once a week (we have a cellular phone with a solar powered battery!). Ultimately, needless to say, I got approval.

A trip such as this takes a lot of organization - and money. I have one week vacation to use for the trip. The other 7 weeks are unpaid leave. During that time, I also have to pay what the company usually contributes for my health benefits - about \$900. But it will be worth it.

Organization-wise: I do the books for Kevin's business, so I had to make sure everything would be covered while we're gone. Most of the expenses are fixed so it wasn't too difficult to write checks in advance for the bills that will come in over the next two months. Also prepared the quarterly reports that will be due at the end of June. Gwynne has the stack of envelopes with dates when to mail them.

Home-wise: our mail is being held at the post office and Karen and Craigen have authorization to pick it up. I gave Karen a list of all anticipated bills and a bunch of blank checks (with a bunch of money in the checking account) and she'll pay the bills while we're gone. Craigen will take over when Karen goes on vacation at the end of June. (Sounds easy here but it was many hours of planning!)

Multiple friends and relatives will stop by and/or stay at the house while we're gone, so there's lots of little notes with instructions for how to water the lawn (with the "automatic" sprinkler system); how to use the programmable thermostat (it was 40 degrees when we left home this a.m. but it will be full summer when we return – consequently, Kevin had to put up the awnings before we left, even though this normally wouldn't be done till June); what chemicals to put in the hot tub, etc. etc.

We expect that sometime during our absence, two couples will independently show up at our house for a nice private dip in the hot tub – and will surprise each other! Our friends joked that we probably should have circulated a sign-up sheet!

Organization-wise: I also have a small notepad where I recorded addresses of friends and relatives and other useful info (AAA number, insurance phone numbers, Cellular One customer service, etc.). There's a "who to contact in case of emergency" card in my handlebar pack.

Kevin planned the whole route while I was doing all the organizing. We made great use of our AAA membership and got all the maps and tour books that we needed. There was never any question about which way to go – west to east was the only choice because we wanted to bike home! So then it was just a question of north, middle or south route. We've driven the northern route, and we've spent a lot of time skiing and rock climbing in Colorado, Utah and Wyoming. Kevin was very interested in doing the Blue Ridge Parkway and Skyline Drive. So in order to end up in a position to do that, we had to take a southern route. We know it will be really hot going through the desert – we'll bicycle early morning or evening if we need to.

We plan to camp a lot – probably 5 days out of 7 every week. And there's a rest day about every 7 or 8 days. First one will be Scottsdale, AZ next weekend and we've already booked in to the Radisson Resort there. The prerequisites for where we stay for rest days are: 1) hot tub, and 2) masseuse! Some of our

planned rest days are Hot Springs, Arkansas and Memphis, TN but we have not booked anything there yet. That will all be done a few days ahead when we're sure of our scheduled arrival. We are planning to go to Graceland!

Kevin has cut up the maps and tour books so we're only taking the parts we need.

We bought new bikes for this trip - TREK 520 touring bikes. When we first started to plan the trip, we were not planning to buy new bikes. But when we really stopped to think about it, we realized that was STUPID! - given that our bikes are over 15 years old. We're both glad that we bought new bikes. The new shifting mechanisms alone are worth it. And of course the gearing is better.

Did we train for this trip? Do we do a lot of biking? NO! We're both 46 years old and in good overall shape. We've just finished a season of telemark skiing so our legs are pretty strong. Kevin did have back surgery (herniated disk L4-L5) this past October - but he's recovered well from that. I put about 120 miles on my new bike in the past two weeks before we shipped them out to California; Kevin biked about the same. And we roller-bladed. We easily biked 30 miles in a couple of hours. We realize that we'll have loaded-down bikes and we'll be biking anywhere from 60 to 100 miles a day for days on end - but we'll have ALL DAY to do it. And we'll get into better shape along the way.

Friends whom we haven't seen in over 15 years are driving from El Toro today to pick us up at San Diego airport, take us to the inn at La Jolla and spend the afternoon with us. We're really looking forward to seeing Jack and Lynn again!

Others we may rendezvous with along the way:

Peter and Hillary: they're spending their early June vacation flying across country in their plane. We'll talk to them a few days before they leave and figure out where to meet.

Lorraine and Michael: are going to drive the Blue Ridge Parkway for their 6/16-22 vacation.

Bob and Pat may drive up from Tucson to meet us in Scottsdale.

Paul Nager is going to send us tapes for our listening enjoyment!

And numerous friends and relatives may greet us on our doorstep when we arrive home. Ma wants to meet up and maybe bike the last 10 miles or so with us.

We have a great support system of friends and relatives! Friends Harvey and Val gave a party for us last weekend – all our friends were there to wish us off!

My hand is tired from all this writing – but I thought it was important to record all the background for "Alicia & Kevin's Grand Adventure".

I am mentally ready for this trip! Hopefully, I'm physically ready too.

Monday, May 13th

La Jolla, Ca to Julian, CA

Day #1

~7:00PM

Ramona, California

Day's mileage: 36.8 Trip: 36.8

We're waiting at the Bank of America in Ramona, 22 miles from Julian, for a kind person from Orchard Hill Inn to come and "rescue" us. In retrospect, we probably made the wrong decision this morning. I'm feeling disappointed ... but safe.



At Bank of America in Ramona, CA, waiting for "rescue"

The fourth box never showed up and UPS still couldn't tell us where it is ... even though this a.m. we got a tracking number from UPS. So we decided to use all the new stuff and get started today. We left the B&B Inn @ La Jolla around 11:30, thinking we still had

plenty of time to do the ~60 miles to Julian.

Seven miles out of La Jolla, Kevin got a flat. The good news is that it was only a short distance from a bike store that we were planning to go to anyways because I needed to have my derailleur adjusted, and the valve on one of my tires broke yesterday when Kevin was fiddling with it and was a walking (riding) time bomb. So we got my derailleur adjusted and 2 tires changed - very friendly and accommodating guy working there. Also grabbed some Thai noodles with chicken for lunch (very good - hit the spot) - bike shop was in a little shopping area with several food options.

Back on the trail - the hills (8% grade on Poway Rd) were much tougher than we anticipated. At one point it was faster to walk than ride and that's what we did - for a mile and a half maybe. Lots of fast traffic on Poway Rd and not much room for bikes. We finally reached the top of the hill and then had a reasonable 9-mile ride into Ramona. Got here around 5:00 p.m.. It's 16 miles to the next town - Santa Ysabel, then 7 miles uphill to Julian. We contemplated trying to make it to Santa Ysabel and called the Inn to see if we'd be able to get a cab to pick us up in Santa Ysabel but found out there were no cabs in Julian. Also found out that there were a few killer hills on the way to Santa Ysabel. So - we decided to ... (our ride just arrived!)

Tuesday, May 14th

Julian, Ca to Brawley, Ca

Day #2

~9:00aM
Julian, California

We're sitting on the terrace of the Orchard Hill Country Inn having breakfast. What a beautiful place. Probably the nicest place we've ever stayed. But I'll come back to that later. I'm way behind in my journal-writing and have a lot of catching up to do!

Continuing with last night's entry: We decided to try to get a taxi from Ramona to Julian. But guess what? There's no cab service in Ramona! We finally went to the sheriff's office to see if maybe they knew someone who'd take us to Julian for a fee. No. But they did call a San Diego cab company and identified themselves as law enforcement people and so that cab company agreed to come out and get us as long as we were paying cash. So we thanked the deputy and went to wait for the cab in front of the Lucky supermarket. Then Kevin decided to call the inn again and see if they knew of someone we could hire to pick us up. As it turns out, they had all been talking about our dilemma since my first call, and they said they'd come get us. We graciously accepted and told them we'd pay whatever they thought was reasonable. The owner of the inn, Darrell, and his brother Dennis (visiting from Bentonville, Arkansas) came and got us. We had a nice talk with them on the way to the inn. Finally arrived at the inn at 8:00. Too late for the dinner reservation that had been made for us but at that point we really didn't care. We met Darrell's wife Pat and Dennis's wife Carol. Both very nice people. Pat was so accommodating. She had already put the hors d'oeuvres we had missed in our room with a half bottle of wine. And she found us another full bottle of wine that we could buy, and made us up a basket with a delicious homemade tabouleh, bread rolls and a round of Gouda cheese. With the raw veggies and dip and pita-cheese toasts that were the hors d'oeuvres, it was exactly what we needed and far better than any restaurant meal would have been. After eating the food and enjoying the wine, we filled the Jacuzzi and had a very nice relaxing soak. We slept like babies in the big comfy bed with soft plump pillows, and fresh air coming in. I remarked to Kevin that it was so nice to be physically exhausted for a change instead of emotionally exhausted!

Its 9:30 a.m. and breakfast is over and we have to be on our way to Brawley - zero feet elevation. Plan to do about 74 miles - most of it should be downhill (I hope!)

A note: our camping gear was awaiting us at Julian. We packed up one of the empty boxes to send home: Steggman's, pile vests (we don't think it's going to be cold enough for them!); little black dress and silk scarf, some other things that I can't remember now.

Still lots more to write about La Jolla!!

**12:15pm
Ocotillo, California**

Rest stop (and shade!) at the ranger station at the Motorized Vehicle Recreation area. We set out at 10:00 a.m. – have done 32 miles so far (almost half way!). A really nice ride - lots of downhill (I hit 45 mph!) and then just rolling flats. It's getting hot – probably 100 degrees plus but there's a breeze and we have lots of water. Stocked up on some dried banana chips with dried cranberries and currants at the inn this a.m. and those are going down very well!

Anyways – back to La Jolla!! Jack and Lynn picked us up at the airport and drove us to the Bed & Breakfast Inn at La Jolla – a very nice place. Lynn and I shopped for beer, wine and lunch while the guys assembled the bicycles. We all ate lunch in the garden courtyard – very civilized. Jack and Lynn couldn't stay long so our visit was too short, but it was great to see them anyways. It had been a long time.

Sunday evening in La Jolla we went to Spike & Mike's animation festival at the Center for Contemporary Art. It was great. Saw Nick Parks' all new Wallace & Grommit adventure "A Close Shave" - the best one yet!

Breakfast in the garden courtyard on Monday morning after latte and cappuccino at Starbucks! And a ride down to the beach to take the picture with the tires in the water of the Pacific Ocean.

We biked through Mira Mar and saw the Top Gun jets flying!



Tires in the Pacific Ocean, La Jolla, CA

~8:15pM
Brawley, California
Day: 61.93 Trip: 98.8

We're in a Travel Lodge in Brawley. After our rest stop in Ocotillo, things got really hot. Around 2:00 we stopped at the "Blu-In" (40 miles to there) rest stop and rested an hour in the shade, had lots of water and Gatorade, and chips and salsa. The heat was really bothering me. At the rest stop, it was 100 degrees in the shade. After the long rest, the winds really picked up



Trying to cool off & rehydrate at the "Blu-In", somewhere in the Anza Berego Desert, CA

(thankfully in the right direction) and the next 11 miles to a weigh station took only ½ hour or so. We rested in the shade of the building and set out again. This time I only made it 4 miles before I had to stop again. After another short rest, we set out again. After 7 miles I had to stop and was not feeling too good.

We still had 13 miles to go to Brawley. A woman construction worker stopped with a pickup truck

and asked if we'd like a ride to Westmoreland, the next "town" 4 miles away. I had to accept. Along the way we mentioned that we were heading for Brawley, and she said she lived there and was going home (it was ~5:00 p.m.) and could give us a ride all the way to Brawley. Kevin left the choice up to me, and I reluctantly accepted - I was feeling pretty wimpish. It was the right thing to do though. I think I didn't eat enough today and just ran out of fuel. Hydration-wise I was fine. So we checked in here - a dive, but it's got A/C and a shower. Took a cold shower and felt instantly better. Picked up breakfast food and water at the supermarket. Ate chicken, mashed potatoes and gravy, coleslaw and biscuits at KFC - yum! The mashed potatoes in particular hit the spot. We laughed as we devoured our meals, knowing that we would never eat a meal like that at home!

It's 8:30 p.m. now and we're going to bed. Alarm is set for 4:30 a.m. - daylight is at 5:00 a.m. We're going to try to get most of our miles in tomorrow before it gets too hot. 'Heading for Blythe.

Wednesday, May 15th

Brawley, CA to Blythe, CA

Day #3

9:15pM

Blythe, California

Day: 95.6 Trip: 194.4

Goodnight! A long day that I'll have to write more about later. A good day, though - we finally managed to meet a daily goal without having to get rescued! We started at 5:40 a.m. – as soon as it got light. Finished in Blythe center at 3:00 p.m. Started out with 4 gallons of water, 2 liters of Gatorade, and 1 quart OJ. Along the way, bought another liter of Gatorade and 4 quarts of water. We're still working out how to eat enough to maintain energy - today we decided that liquid calories were good. Also determined that pouring water over your head, neck and shoulders as you're cycling helps tremendously with the heat and is probably just as important as drinking enough fluids.



Early start out of Brawley, CA

I was very happy to finally have a successful day of cycling! I'm developing horrendous tan lines. We've already gone through our tube of #30 sunscreen - in less than 3 days! (Picked up 2 more today!)

'Want to write more about the Brit we met and the truck driver who gave us cantaloupes but that will have to wait. I'm too tired!

Thursday, May 16th

Blythe, CA to Harcuvar, AZ

Day #4

6:25pM
Harcuvar, Arizona
Day: 56.6 Trip: 251.0

Up at 5:00 a.m. and on the road at 6:40. Hard to get going this morning – when the alarm went off, I just wanted to roll over, hug Kevin, and go back to sleep. But I knew we had to beat the heat.

Most of today was uphill, but a gradual grade so not too bad. We're still having problems with what to eat in the morning. Today at 5:30 a.m. I didn't feel like

eating anything. Forced down a yogurt and an OJ and a couple mouthfuls of a muffin. When we hit Quartzsite (~ 18 miles) I was hungry and knew I had to get something in me or I'd never make it. Stopped at MacDonald's (!!?) thinking of getting some pancakes 'cause all we've been eating is fruits and liquids. MacDonald's had a "Breakfast



On the way to Hope, AZ

wrapped around scrambled eggs, cheese and chilies. It was actually quite good and really hit the spot – we each had two. Those and a small Coke got us through the next 40 miles. I've realized that we really need to eat some stuff that will "stick".

While we were at MacDonald's a truck drove up with a flatbed trailer carrying a custom-built car made to look like a 57 Chevy. Kevin talked with the guy who was driving the truck. The car is a one-of-a-kind and worth \$400,000! They were hauling it to its owner in Phoenix.

In Brenda, we talked with 3 guys who worked for Arizona public service. We were at a little rest stop / store where the lady running it was not very friendly. I guess they get a lot of bicyclists through there and for some reason she seems to think they're all slime (even though she probably does a good business off of them). Her greeting to us was to tell us to move our bikes off the patio (and shade) into the sunny parking lot because "people have to walk through here". Well – May is not a busy time in Brenda and there was no one walking through. But of course we complied politely with her orders, because – hey – we're nice people.

The 3 guys from Arizona public service were real nice. We chatted with them for almost a half hour while we (minus bikes) enjoyed the shade on the patio. They were interested in our trip and one of them had lots of questions about how do you get 2 months off? How much is this trip going to cost you? Another had a lot of good jokes. Regarding "but it's a dry heat" - " they roast turkeys in dry heat".



Chatting with the guys from Arizona Public Service in Brenda, AZ

Brenda to Hope was hot! (so what else is new?) But continuously dousing your head with water is a lifesaver. You just have to make sure you have a lot of water!

I forgot to mention that the first 30 miles or so today was all on the interstate (I-10). Trucks roaring by. And awful rumble strips on the shoulders. We listened to the tapes that Paul made for us (which we picked up in Blythe yesterday) as we road the interstate. Listening to the music takes your mind off the roar of the traffic - more so than I would have imagined. The tapes from Paul were a lifesaver today!

Now we're at the Desert Gem campground in Harcuvar. Not great but it's got some shade. And it's very windy so it's actually quite pleasant sitting here.



Desert Gem Campground, Harchuvar, AZ

But I'm hoping the wind will die down when the sun sets so that I can light the stove and cook dinner! So far we've been noshing - crackers and cheese, cucumber and tomatoes. Fine wine (Inglenook Chardonnay - \$4.99/bottle); not bad when that's all there is and you pour it over lots of ice! Kevin had a Coors!! Our friends at home will never believe it.

(Last night he had a Miller Genuine Draft!). Dinner is going to be some reheated frozen burritos.

The owner of this campground, Dwayne, is very friendly and talkative, as is his wife. We had a nice visit with them when we checked in. They bought this place last October and have big plans to fix it up. I hope they succeed. Dwayne drove us the 2 miles into Salome to get groceries. A very welcome offer because Salome is 2 miles downhill from here, which of course means that we

would have had to bike back uphill against this horrendous wind. I don't think that I could have handled that. Kevin observed that Dwayne's hospitality was every bit as appreciated as Darrell and Pat's in Julian - it's just different styles, that's all.

So back to yesterday - it was a long day! But we biked through some beautiful country, including some spectacular sand dunes (do they call them sand dunes in the desert or is that just at the beach?) We wished we had our skis!

(Oh - forgot - Kevin entertained passing truckers today by juggling on the side of the road while he was waiting for me to catch up. Truckers on the other side of the road were beeping at him!)

Back to yesterday - we also passed through lots of irrigated fields of vegetables. 'Not sure what though.

I'm running out of steam again - so here's just some tidbits from yesterday:

Passed a tortoise sanctuary and later found out it was really a gold mine - from the border patrol guards.

In Ripley we talked with a truck driver who wavered between "Are you crazy?" and "That's neat!" when he found out we're biking to Boston. He was hauling cantaloupes to Missouri and gave us two before he left.

Along the road we met Miles Roddis from Britain. He's biking from Louisiana to California and then up to Washington. Previously he has biked Washington to New York, New York to Florida.

Back to today - I got hit by a dust devil! I never want to get any closer to a twister than that! I was biking along and heard something and looked to my right to see a big piece of tarpaper blowing towards me. Immediately the wind gusted and sand flew at me. I would have been blown over if I had not quickly gotten off my bike and thrown it down on the ground. I was about to do the same thing with myself - when - it was all over! The whole thing was probably 5 to 10 seconds. Up ahead of me, Kevin never knew that anything had happened. That's how localized it was.

Another note about Dwayne and his plans for this campground - this area has lots of deserted stores and service buildings. It's because the interstate went in and no one drove through here anymore. You hear about this stuff happening, but it's kind of eerie when you actually see it.

Big news! I just put on a long sleeved shirt 'cause I'm getting cold!!

Friday, May 17th
Harcuvar, AZ to Wickenberg, AZ

Day #5

7:55aM
Roadside Table 16 mi. out of Harcuvar

All uphill but a gentle grade along the railroad tracks (there goes a train now). We started at 6:40 a.m. and have been blessed with cloud cover! The biking has been comfortable so far today. It does get monotonous though – as far



Telephone poles & desert, for as far as the eye can see ... Arizona

ahead as you can see it's all the same. There are no milestones or destinations to single out. Beautiful though!

9:30pM
Wickenberg, Arizona
Day: 58.39 Trip: 309.4

Arrived in Wickenberg at 1:00 p.m. – an early day! Headed for the tourist info center and were directed to the Best Western in the center of town. A really nice place. \$65 got us a spacious room by the pool with plenty of room for our bikes and gear. Nice and cool inside too! Went to Anita's Mexican restaurant and had margaritas and a Mexican pizza – mmmmm! Really hit the spot! Then we found iced cappuccino (!!!) at Pony Espresso. Came back to the room and crashed till 8:00 p.m.. Went back to the Mexican restaurant and each had a chicken burrito and rice. Funny how now a margarita had absolutely no appeal. I'm really wiped out and ready for bed.

It's nice to be in a cool room!

The biking today was relatively easy even though uphill. A gradual grade continued all day. And miles and miles of the same thing. The cloud cover stayed with us almost all the time we were biking with a few occasional breaks. It's amazing how much the sun slows you down. With the cloud cover today we went through much less water – Kevin ended up carrying two 1-gal. jugs of water all the way from Harcuvar to Wickenberg.

Wickenberg is a big town, parts of which seem to be moving towards "upscale". We were amazed and thankful to find iced cappuccino!

At the info center we met a couple from Malden! At the Mexican restaurant, our waitress ("born and raised in Wickenberg") recognized our accents and told us her boyfriend was from "Dawchester" (she probably never heard it pronounced with an "r"!). She's going to Boston with him in September and is worried about being too cold. Kevin told her to ask her boyfriend to take her on the swan boats, but also told her that her boyfriend would probably turn his nose up at the idea.

I really feel good about the biking today – I was apprehensive when we started out this a.m. 'cause I knew it was all uphill – but the uphill turned out not to be too bad.

Hey – guess what! UPS delivered the "fourth box" on Tuesday to the B&B Inn at La Jolla – the day after we left. So now it's safely back at Wheelworks and we'll sort everything out with them when we get back.

Saturday, May 18th
Wickenberg, AZ to Scottsdale, AZ

Day #6

4:45pM
Scottsdale, Arizona
Day: 71.91 Trip: 381.5

A harder day than we expected – off to get massages!

SUNDAY, May 19th

Rest Day in Scottsdale, AZ

Day #7

9:05aM

Coffee Plantation, Scottsdale AZ

We don't have to bicycle today!!!! We're sitting outside the Coffee Plantation in the "Borgata" sipping cappuccino and latte and eating orange-currant scones and life is good. We figure this will be our last taste of yuppie-dom until we get home so we're enjoying it for all it's worth!

Immediately after arriving at the Radisson yesterday, we each got a Swedish massage - my first ever. Mostly I enjoyed it, knowing it was good for me - but it really hurt when she did my upper back and shoulders. The hand massage felt wonderful. It's funny - when you think about bicycling, you think about sore legs and rear ends. But for me, I'm having the most trouble with my hands, wrists, arms and shoulders. My hands are really sore. Kevin let me use his gloves yesterday because they have more padding than mine. I will buy some new ones today.



Real Cappuccino! The Borgata, Scottsdale AZ

The bell staff at the Radisson has been very friendly ... we've been talking with them a lot and they've been giving us rides to where we want to go. It's like having your own private limo service. As Kevin commented: how come we always seem to make friends with "the help"?

Last night we had dinner at the Café Terra Cotta. I had been to the one in Tucson and I have the cookbook and have made a lot of the stuff in it. I was very happy to find that there was a Café Terra Cotta here in Scottsdale! We had a great meal - appetizers of duck quesadilla and a corn risotto (excellent - I'll have to see if that's in the cookbook). Kevin had pork tenderloin for dinner and I had a goat-cheese and lobster (?) stuffed ravioli in a broth with corn, chilies and black beans. Yum!!!

We went to bed at 9:30 p.m. and didn't get up till 8:00 this morning!

As I mentioned in my short entry yesterday, the bicycling was tougher than we expected. I was expecting about 50 miles and a long coast into Scottsdale. It ended up being 71 miles and a long rolling hill on the Carefree Highway that seem to go on forever. Then we made the right turn onto Scottsdale Road and fought wind and traffic all the way to the Radisson - about 12 miles. Six miles

from our destination, I was really starting to fade – it was about 1:30 p.m. (?) and it was HOT and bright sun. Kevin's thermometer recorded 105 degrees in the shade. Kevin made me stop at a grocery store and we drank a liter of Gatorade and ate some grapefruit and an orange, and doused ourselves with cold water. Then I was able to finished the last six miles.

We found out that the temperatures here now are 10 to 15 degrees above normal for this time of year!

Our plans for the rest of the day are to visit with Bob and Pat (who should be arriving within the next half hour); get to the bike shop; do laundry; buy a long sleeved shirt for me (my right arm has developed a sun rash that I do not like – despite going through two tubes of #30 sunscreen in 6 days!)

Well – time to call our "limo" for a ride back to the resort!

9:30pM
Radisson Resort, Scottsdale AZ

'Had a great visit with Bob, Pat and Kate. Lunch at Hops (brew pub). We've changed our itinerary based on conversations with several of the locals at 3 different bike shops. We're NOT going to Show Low via Globe – apparently there's a steep climb to Globe, then steep descent to Sand River Canyon, then you get to do the steep climb all over again.

Instead we're going to Show Low via Payson – more miles but not as steep a climb and you only climb once.

My right arm is developing a bumpy rash – I'm sure it's from the sun (despite my #30 sunscreen). I bought a light weight long sleeved white cotton shirt at CP Shades at the Borgata – to protect me from the sun.

'Sent more stuff home today – 3 (of the 6) juggling pins; 1 pan and 2 plates; placemats; padded underwear (useless!).

All packed up and ready for an early day tomorrow.

Monday, May 20th

Scottsdale, AZ to Payson, AZ

Day #8

8:55pM

Holiday Inn Express, Payson Arizona
Day: 69.19 Trip: 451.0

Kevin hadn't planned to go all the way to Payson today, but ...

We left Scottsdale at 5:45 a.m.. It was about 15 miles down Shea Drive (no kidding!) to get to the Beeline Hwy (Rt 87?). Then all uphill from there with occasional downhills meaning you just had to regain the elevation.



Hills & hot ... another normal day ... on the way to Payson, AZ

we were low on water and food since we had expected to find services all along the way. We stopped to rest under a shady tree and fortuitously it was next to a work area for the Tonto National Forest and Kevin was able to find a water faucet. So we consolidated all of our drinkable water into the CamelBucks and filled all the water bottles from the faucet - this water kept us cool for the rest of the day (today was only 90 degrees and it actually felt quite comfortable most of the time).

About 4 miles outside of Rye we were stopped and hosing down, and a small sport utility vehicle pulled up and the young guy driving it asked where we were headed. So we talked with him for a little while and Kevin was asking him questions about the road ahead and told him how we'd really been caught unprepared due to bad info. Turns out this guy is a biker too and understood exactly what we were dealing with. He was on his way home from a weekend at Roosevelt Dam and had a cooler in the back of his vehicle and he gave us cold water and granola bars. The granola bars were a lifesaver - all we had with us for food was fig newtons and beef jerky! The guy was really sorry he couldn't give us a lift to Payson (the 10 miles between Rye and Payson, he said, were killer hills) but his car was absolutely chuck full. We thanked him for the food and water and he was on his way.

About 5 miles and an hour and a half later, we finally made it to Rye. Kevin got a flat tire on the way and he had to change his rear tire!

Kevin decided to hitch a ride the final 10 miles to Payson. Some locals in two trucks gave us a lift - one truck took us and the other took the bikes. It's hard to judge terrain when you're driving, but we don't think the hills were any worse than what we'd already done. However, it probably would have taken us two hours to do the 10 miles and there was no way we would have had enough food and water. So hitching a ride was the right thing to do.



Changing a flat, on the way to Payson AZ

In Payson, we went to the Manzanita Cyclery bike shop and they checked out Kevin's tire repair and made a few adjustments. Nice guy there and Kevin got a lot of info about the road to Show Low. Because of the high forest fire danger, a lot of the National Park campgrounds are closed! So we may be staying in a hotel again tomorrow night.

The guy in the bike shop recommended a Mexican restaurant (right next to the hotel!) and we had a very good and much-needed dinner of chicken and beef fajitas.

The terrain today was quite beautiful. We are out of the desert and into high country and trees. It's cool outside! The next few days should be quite comfortable weather-wise for biking.

Tuesday, May 21st

Payson, AZ to Forest Lakes, AZ

Day #9

7:05pM

Canyon Pt Campground, Forest Lakes, AZ

Day: 36.5 Trip: 487.5

'Cookin' dinner at the finest campground we've ever been in. It's a National Forest Service campground at ~7700 feet. Full of Ponderosa Pines. Our site is huge, private and quiet. And it's cool - I have on long pants, my polopro top and my Fitigues sweatshirt! Just had a wonderful shower. Dinner will be chicken tacos and chicken rice-a-roni (not much of a selection at the local store) and we have Ben & Jerry's Cherry Garcia ice cream surrounded in ice inside one of my front panniers - makes a great cooler! Used it to chill our 4 Red Wolf beers. (The only wine selection was a jug of Carlo Rossi Chablis!)



Happy camper @ Canyon Pt Campground,
Forest Lake, AZ

We had to stay in this campground - it reminds us so much of home. It's like being at Blackwoods Campground at Acadia (only more private). We're even in "B" Loop! Campsite #91.

'Not many miles today 'cause all uphill. Cool weather though - maybe 70 or 80 degrees? Our legs are so tired. In

Christopher Creek an older couple offered us a ride to the "top of the hill". We'd already done ~22 miles of uphill,

and it was tempting but we declined. It's OK to take a ride when your safety is at issue, but this would have been a cop-out. It was then 8 miles of solid up - about a 7% grade. Tough but doable. The couple who offered us the ride told us about this campground; I'm glad they did!

The campground is owned by the National Forest Service but is "managed" by a private contract company. The "hosts" are an older couple who are as nice as can be. He gave us fuel (unleaded gas) for our stove to save us from pedaling an extra mile to the store that has gas. As it was, we biked 1 ½ miles from the campground to the store and then back - uphill !! Our legs were dying.

Anyways, this couple basically runs the campground. They have an RV parked here and are "hired" from May till October or so. They have a house in Phoenix and they are thinking of selling it and just retiring in a "fifth wheel". Real nice couple.

We pedaled through Sitgreaves National Forest all day. It has the largest spread of Ponderosa Pines in the world! It's really pretty and made us feel like we were in New England.

The forest fire danger here is extreme. All open fires and even smoking outside have been banned. The NFS is talking about closing a lot of the forest over the Memorial Day Weekend.

It's so quiet and peaceful and comfortable up here; it's really nice. My god! I just had to put a hat on. I'm actually getting cold!

Wednesday, May 22nd

Forest Lakes, AZ to Pinetop, AZ

Day #10

**10:40aM
Doc's Rim Café, Heber AZ**

A great night's sleep in cold, fresh air. We slept in this morning; didn't get up till 7:45 a.m.. It's nice not having to get up to beat the heat. We had 18 easy miles to here, through Ponderosa pines, with the wind graciously assisting us. Now we're actually sitting in a little café having breakfast – just like normal people! About another 37 miles to Show Low and it should continue to be easy pedaling. It's going to be a nice relaxing day.

After we got to the top of the hills yesterday, we saw an amusing series of signs a la the old Burma Shave road-side signs:

- #1: Elk are large
- #2: In herds they run
- #3: Across the road
- #4: Don't hit one

**9:35pM
The Meadows Inn, Pinetop AZ
Day: 67.09 Trip: 554.7**

The day got MUCH harder when we left Heber. We fought strong head and cross winds all the way to here. "Here" is Pinetop, about 12 miles outside of Show Low. The terrain was "rolling" and would have been a piece of cake if not for the wind ("unusual for this time of year" – getting to be the story of our lives!). It was 52 miles to the city limit of Show Low then another 8 or so to the city. We got to the local bike shop around 4:45 p.m.. We had had every intention of camping tonight – 2 miles from the bike shop – but I had to get out of the F---'n wind! Tom at Cycle Mania recommended this place. It was 7 miles against the wind from the bike shop. I'm glad we did it. I turned from the tortoise to the cow heading for the barn. I don't know how my legs got me here. They are so weak right now.

The Meadows Inn is very nice and we enjoyed a wonderful meal in their dining room, served by Angela, who has a sister in Clovis NM and says we should call her when we're there.

'Too tired to write anything else ... Oh – except – lots of pretty flowers along the road today. We took pictures.

Thursday, May 23rd

Rest Day in Pinetop, AZ

Day #11

7:35aM

The MEadows Inn, Pinetop AZ

We're sitting in the breakfast room waiting for our breakfast and wondering how much sleep we have to get to not feel tired! Nine and a half hours was not enough.

The wind is still howling and we have lots of hills to do today. Right now, I'm not looking forward to it.

9:25aM

We've decided to take a rest day! We're staying here another night. Steve (the owner) is letting us use his Suburban for the day! I'm feeling wimpy and worried about "making it", but at the same time I'm relieved that we get to rest today and stay in a nice place again tonight.

8:30pM

The Meadows Inn, Pinetop AZ

What a great day! We drove out to Eager and Springerville and previewed tomorrow's ride. It is a lot of uphill but it looks like a good grade with no elevation loss. And after about 10 or 20 miles, the winds should be favorable. We reserved a room at a motel and stashed all of our camping gear and some other stuff there so we don't have to haul it tomorrow. Also bought groceries for Saturday night 'cause we know we'll be camping. I feel a lot better about the ride tomorrow now. And Saturday - once we get into New Mexico - should be easy, especially if this wind continues.

After previewing tomorrow's route, we drove up to the Painted Desert and Petrified Forest - really amazing territory. The pictures will never do it justice.

On the way back from the Painted Desert, we drove on some of old Route 66. That was cool!

I feel so much better than I did this morning!

Tonight at dinner we met John and Jean Ruksnaitis who are from Mesa and "summer" in Show Low. They are an older couple who was celebrating their 34th anniversary - second marriages for each. Her first husband died at age 39 in an auto accident (how tragic!). He was born and raised in Worcester! And was a cop for the LAPD - retired in 1974. They are a very nice couple. He carves birds now and sells them at an art gallery in Sedona; apparently quite a

lot of them. They took our picture and are going to send it to us. We took theirs, too and said we'd send them postcards along the way.

We want to buy something for Steve in appreciation for him letting us use his truck today. We're thinking either something from ChefWear or a couple months of Beer-Across-America.

We made lots of phone calls "home" today. My work: "Prime beta" is moving along but was delayed due to hardware configuration issues. Gwynne's store is closing but she still has a job in Meredith. Bobby has been staying at the house and has found it to be "a zoo" - Craigen and the kids and Haydie and the dog. And then the Explorer disappeared! But then he found a note saying the Kenneys had taken it. At least our house doesn't look deserted! Karen picked up a week's worth of mail and found 28 catalogs! Also a package from Ran Glennon – anxious to see what that is. 'Told her to open it and let us know. Meaghan's prom night is tonight. Michael and Lorraine said she was the prettiest one in the group, and I believe it. Karen told me about a "tornado" that touched down in the Brockton area on Tuesday and caused millions of dollars in damage. Electricity is still out. National weather service is not calling it a tornado because all the trees that are down fell in the same direction. They're calling it a "down - " something. Karen asked me what the best part of the trip is so far, and I told her - all the nice people we've met. Kevin and I have a basic philosophy that people are nice, and we basically trust people. So far, it's working for us.

Friday, May 24th
Pinetop, AZ to Springerville, AZ

Day #12

3:10pM
Reed's Motor Lodge, Springerville AZ
Day: 48.76 Trip: 603.5

I'm so happy with how today worked out! The climb up to Sunrise (elevation 9120 feet) was not bad at all. Long, gradual, no loss in elevation. We did have to walk about a mile though because the road was dug up from construction. It's awful to see a "Pavement Ends" sign when you're on a bicycle!

The winds were very strong - 30-45 mph with gusts to 50 - but mostly they did not work against us (not really for us, either) so that was a relief. From the high point of 9120 feet, it was a 15 mile coast (virtually) into Springerville. Cross winds made it quite challenging, but doable.

Today we bicycled through Fort Apache Indian Reservation and Apache National Forest. After breaking out of the trees, we hit high prairie - lots of golden fields. Some of the views were quite spectacular. Too bad the camera won't do them justice.

We saw a herd of six or seven gazelles this morning. So far those are the only wild animals we've seen. Kevin's mildly disappointed 'cause we keep seeing signs that say "Watch for Animals", but we don't see any. What we have seen everywhere we go is UPS trucks, Pepsi trucks, and Budweiser trucks!

Kevin's back is bothering him a little. He says it feels really tight. We stopped several times today for him to stretch, and he's stretching here in the motel room. I hope he will be all right. Unfortunately the jacuzzi here is broken!

We had a nice send-off this morning from The Meadows Inn. Steve and Ruth and their two sons (ages 3 and 5 - the 5-yr-old has chicken pox) said goodbye and took our picture for the Inn's scrapbook. We took a picture of Steve with his Harley. He owns 5 of them. He says they're his bank account. We left the Inn around 9:30 a.m. feeling well-rested and relaxed. It was a great stay.



On the road to Sunrise, through Apache National Forest, AZ

By comparison: tonight's room cost \$32 and has red and gold shag carpeting and dark walnut furnishings. But, hey: it's clean, the people are friendly, and you get what you pay for.

Saturday, May 25th

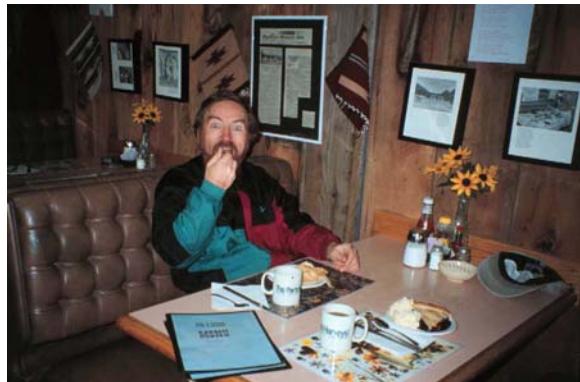
Springerville, AZ to Datil, NM

Day #13

**4:30pM
Pie Town, New Mexico**

There is pie in Pie Town!

Kevin's having apple pie with ice cream and I'm having blueberry pie with ice cream. Both heated. Beautiful homemade pies!



It's cold here - 62 degrees. Also: we changed time zones at the Arizona-New Mexico border (we just found that out!).

70 miles so far today - 20 more to go to Datil campground. Up and down hill all day. New Mexico is NOT flat!

Worth waiting for ... Pie in Pietown, NM

Ran into a group of 80 bikes from GABA (Greater Arizona Bike Association). They shared some of their food with us and Kevin juggled for them.

**9:45pM
Datil Wells Campground, Datil NM
Day: 92.36 Trip: 695.8**

Finished our pie in Pie Town and bought two more pieces to take with us for dessert tonight; just finished them after a scrumptious dinner of canned chicken chow mein. The important thing is that it was hot - because it's cold out here and we were chilled and depleted after our long ride.

The 22 miles from Pie Town to here still had some hills, then 10 miles down into Datil Canyon against a strong wind blowing up from the bottom. Thankfully, the overall strong winds have diminished somewhat, and we enjoyed a nice evening in our campsite.

Right after we pulled in, Steve from Albuquerque stopped by to say hi. He saw the bikes and was curious as to where we were going. He's a biker too, but here this weekend with his wife and their 6-yr-old daughter and her friend and their pop-up Coleman camper (pretty neat rig, actually!). Steve was extremely friendly and, at his offering, gave us a ride down to the local store to buy beer. Then told us if there was anything else we needed to feel free to ask

him. He used to be president of some biking group - "New Mexico touring" or something like that.

In Pie Town, we really enjoyed our rest stop. The Pie-O-Neer café is new. A lady and her husband opened it in November because "there was no pie in Pie Town". Her mother makes all the pies. An eclectic group of people was in there while we were there. An "old coot" (as Kevin says) who sat quietly drinking his coffee and taking everything in and occasionally contributing to the conversation or laughing at a joke. There was a young kid (teenager) and his girlfriend. He had passed us on the road earlier and was full of information about the area. Two guys in cowboy hats strolled in as we were leaving. Kevin juggled for everyone. And showed the lady who owns the place our map with "Pie Town (mmmm!)" written on it. She thought that was just the greatest thing, so we gave her a copy of the map. She's going to put it in her guest book. Until she saw the map, I don't think she really understood just how much Kevin was looking forward to getting pie in Pie Town, even though I had told her several times. All in all, it was a really fun stop.

"Pie Town" got its name from a guy who made pies around the 1920's who had settled the town. I forget what his name was and what he originally called the settlement, but due to the popularity of his pies, it became known as "Pie Town". In 1927 he applied for a post office, but the USPS said that "Pie Town" was not a dignified enough name to put on a post office. Anyways: he held firm and eventually he got a "Pie Town" post office.

I guess that pies have not been in Pie Town for many years. It's nice to see that this lady has revived the tradition. And it's nice to see that she's doing it so well.

We crossed the Continental Divide two miles east of Pie Town.

Sunday, May 26th

Datil, NM to Socorro, NM

Day #14

6:45aM

In our tent, Datil NM

It's snowing out! We're going back to bed!

10:15aM

Datil NM

Sitting in the local café in Datil waiting for breakfast. Walked in and met a group of five climbers. One is Bob Raker who lived in Lincoln and has climbed at the Gunks, Whitehorse, Quarries, Crow Hill - and knows Paul Duval, Steve Angelini, Eric Engberg and Ross Bronson. Also in the group was Russ Cloone from the Gunks. It's a small world!

'Said goodbye to Steve before we left. He's really interested in hearing from us after our trip. He said if we send him some info he'll publish it in the New Mexico Touring Society's newsletter. A really nice, friendly guy.

Breakfast special here was: one egg, one piece of bacon, one piece of toast, one pancake and hash browns - for \$1.29 !! How can they make money on that?

1:35pM

Evett's Café, Magdelena NM

'Having a Black & White frappe at this "old fashioned fountain". A quick 37 miles to here. This is another one of those comfortable little cafés where people seem to just hang out and talk with each other.

Ran into another group of motorcyclists - men and women. Told them to be sure to go to Pie Town.

Steve passed us along the way this morning and took some pictures of us cycling by. So far, those are the only pictures of us cycling together. 'Hope they come out well.

Rode by the "Very Large Array" - a set of moveable and configurable antennas used to "see" things in space. It picks up radio frequencies from stars and planets.

I forgot to mention yesterday ('don't know how I could have forgotten!) the lady pushing the baby carriage just outside of Omega. We saw her coming toward us out in the middle of nowhere but also saw a car driving off. We assumed she had had a fight with the guy in the car. It was a very weird situation, so we just said hi and kept on going. She gave us a cheery "hi" and a

comment about the headwinds, and I noticed that the baby carriage was full of "stuff" – no baby. In Pie Town, we found out that this lady is from New York and is "walking to the ocean". She walks about 20 miles per day and gets very upset when people try to give her a ride and won't take "no" for an answer. 'Don't know if she started in New York or not.

Mmmm-mmm! My Black & White frappe ("shake" here) tastes just like I remembered. I haven't had one in years.

Along the way this a.m. we took a picture 22 miles out of Datil, looking back, and had a nice little rest stop there. I'm recording it here so we'll remember that we took the picture to show what 22 miles looks like. So far today, New Mexico is flat (thankfully!) !

6:00pM
Holiday Inn Express, Socorro NM
Day: 65.39 Trip: 761.2

Max speed today; 40 mph!

An easy cruising day today. Pulled in here at 3:30 p.m. after starting at 11:00 a.m. from Datil. We're sitting in the hotel room enjoying Kendall Jackson Sauvignon Blanc and Pete's Wicked Ale – which Kevin got at the local supermarket.

Kevin's looking at a map he bought while he was out getting beer and wine to find the best route to Mountainair tomorrow. We are in for some more hills!

8:30pM

Had dinner at Coyote Moon Café in Lemitar, about 7 miles from here. Took a taxi there and back. The taxi cost more than the meal. The café was pretty spartan and not very busy, but the food was excellent. I had a chicken quesadilla with a side order of calabacitas. Kevin had one of their specials that was grilled marinated beef cubes sautéed with diced potatoes and served with chile and tortillas and two "accompaniments". Kevin got their rice and a spinach side dish with onions and pinto beans – very good! They don't serve alcohol so we just drank water. The whole meal cost \$10.69 !! (How can they stay in business?)

Monday, May 27th
Socorro, NM to Mountainair, NM

Day #15

1:50pM
Blue Spring Café, New Mexico

We're about 45 miles out of Socorro – almost over the Abo Pass. It's basically been a long gradual uphill since we left Socorro.



Somewhere outside Socorro, NM

The Blue Spring Café had a grand opening yesterday for their new patio. We're sitting on it now, waiting for lunch, sipping lemonade, and it is quite nice. It's warmer than yesterday – maybe 70 or 75 degrees? Warm enough to feel hot when you're bicycling uphill, but cool enough to be pleasant when you stop.

8:30pM
Tillie's Inn, Mountainair, NM
Day: 68.16 Trip: 829.4

More hills to here – I'm tired!

Mountainair is practically a ghost town. Lots of abandoned buildings, and then any occupied ones are closed 'cause it's Memorial Day. Outside of town we saw a sign for "Tillie's Inn" so we came here. It's basically an old run down motel – we did not expect much after our first glimpse of it. But the room is newly decorated and bright and clean, and for \$30 is totally adequate. You wouldn't want to be without earplugs, though!

**We ate dinner at the Kowboy Kafe $\frac{1}{2}$ mile from here – the only thing open.
Again – adequate.**

**Our mileage today included a $1 \frac{1}{2}$ mile side trip to Abo Ruins, an old pueblo
and missionary church. We spent about an hour doing the self-guided tour.**

Tuesday, May 28th

Mountainair, NM to Vaughn, NM

Day #16

3:00pM

Bel-Air Motel, Vaughn NM
Day: 67.59 Trip: 897.0

Sittin' outside our motel room sipping a couple of Coors Originals. A relatively short day that started out a little tough but then got easier. Breakfast stop at Dean's Grocery in Willard. Sat and talked with Dean for about 40 minutes while we ate a breakfast of lemonade, mini-doughnuts (!), butterscotch pudding snacks and granola bars! Then continued on past two "salinas" - salt lakes (no water, just salt). We're into warmer weather and rolling high-prairie terrain. Still quite windy but, thankfully, mostly beneficial. The winds tend to build throughout the day. Right now, for example, they are pretty strong. By morning they will have died down again. Kevin finally saw a wild animal today - 'not sure what it was - a gazelle maybe? A small deer-like animal. Also lots of pretty wild flowers and wild grasses along the side of the road. The grasses are really pretty in the sunlight.

Lunch stop was in Encino, another ghost town. 'Got a snack at the grocery mart in the Exxon station.

Vaughn is quite large compared to the towns we've been through recently. Probably a couple of miles long with several motels, restaurants, gas stations and grocery stores.

Kevin thinks that crossing the prairies today was like being a sea, with the towns being islands. We're just traveling from island to island. The vastness of it all is like the sea. The ranches that dot the landscape are like boats in the ocean, or maybe like small islands since they don't move the way boats do. Even the wind is like being on one continuous tack. If you were a sailboat you'd just put up the sail and off you'd go. It would be horrendous if you were trying to go in the opposite direction.

For the rest of today we will be preparing for a long ride tomorrow. We're hoping to make it to Clovis (about 118 miles) and make up one of the two days we've "lost". Buy some groceries, eat at the Ranch Café across the street and go to bed early.

Also today: most of the day we were quite close to the railroad tracks. Lots of activity. We probably saw a train every 20 minutes or so. I wonder what they were hauling.

6:55pM

Bel-Air Motel, Vaughn NM

Going through these small towns really takes you back. I find myself being constantly reminded of my childhood/early teens. There was the Black & White frappe I had the other day, and a vanilla Dairy Queen cone dipped in butterscotch topping. Tonight at the Ranch Café, we each had dinners right out of the '60's. I had grilled pork chops (very well done and dry, of course!) and Kevin had rib-eye steak (not tenderloin!). We each had a cup of beef-vegetable soup, and mashed potatoes and corn. Then not-homemade apple pie and ice cream. All served on a Formica table. And no clearing of the dishes in between courses. No new fork for the dessert either. It's definitely Americana. As Kevin says, these are the people who elect our president. Kinda scary.

Wednesday, May 29th

Vaughn, NM to Fort Sumner, NM

Day #17

1:50pM

Fort Sumner, New Mexico

Today would have been David's 40th birthday ... sigh! ...

We're definitely not making it to Clovis today. We were on the road at 7:15 a.m., but our good intentions were met with rough roads, rolling hills that seemed mostly up, and a head wind that started out as a nuisance and built steadily all day. It has taken us 6 ½ hours to cover 57 miles. There's a long downhill into Fort Sumner, but we fought the stiff wind all the way down it and could barely get above 10 mph. 'Not worth continuing.



Strong winds on the way to Ft. Sumner, NM

We did see lots of cute little baby lambs! And a porcupine asleep in the tree where we stopped for lunch. We left him some carrots.

6:00pM

Super 8 Hotel, Fort Sumner, NM

Day: 59.15 Trip: 956.2



Doing the tourist thing, Fort Sumner, NM

'Went to the Billy-the-Kid museum next door. What a classic! A few things about Billy the Kid, and a lot of other stuff – dishes, wood stoves, antique horse-drawn carriages, an old fire engine, tools. It's the owner's (Billy Sweet) private collection. Interesting how Billy Sweet is also the one who has notarized all the Billy-the-Kid artifacts as "authentic"!

Then went to Fred's Café for a beer and ended up having some nachos and a quesadilla and a couple of Dos Equis beers. That was dinner!

Now we're settled in for the night eating M&M's for dessert. Feeling disappointed that we couldn't make it all the way to Clovis today, but what can

you do? The wind didn't cooperate. Plan is to go to Clovis tomorrow; no point in trying to go any further 'cause it won't help to make up any days.

Thursday, May 30th

Fort Sumner, NM to Clovis, NM

Day #18

12:35pM

Randa's Café, Melrose NM

'Having lunch here. It's been a tough morning - strong head wind. 37 miles to here took us 4 ½ hours (including stops). The wind seems to have let up a little so hopefully the last 25 miles into Clovis won't be too bad. The terrain has been mostly flat and would have been a piece of cake if not for the wind. We've been following the RR tracks again and have seen lots of trains. Some of the engineers toot and wave at us. Also saw some cute little baby goats on a farm.

It's cloudy and overcast. We got sprinkled on just a little. 'Looked like it could pour but it didn't.

We had our first crash today. Of course it was me. I was drafting Kevin and I think my front pannier caught the B.O.B.. Anyways, I crashed. Scrapped my right knee and elbow and bruised my left shin. My shin is pretty sore. I'm OK though. I'm really glad I was wearing my long pants and windbreaker. Otherwise, I would have been hamburger.

9:20pM

Holiday Inn, Clovis NM

Day: 62.70 Trip: 1018.9



1000 Miles ... only 2500 more to go!
St. Vrain, NM

winds were easterly at 21 mph! Tomorrow the winds are supposed to be south to southwest. Let's hope!

The odometer hit 1000 miles at the St. Vrain post office. We took a self-timed picture of the two of us, and found a wooden nickel on the ground to commemorate the occasion.

After lunch in Melrose, we had about 10 miles of reasonable winds, then the head winds started

again with a vengeance. From the weather channel tonight, we found out that today's

We called Angela's sister Laura and found out that there are no "gourmet/trendy" restaurants in Clovis, and there is only one place to get cappuccino (too far away for us!). Laura did recommend Jaunitos for Tex-Mex dinner. About one mile down the street. We got a cab. The cab driver also took us to an ATM machine to get cash. Juanito's was good, but we're getting a little tired of Mexican food!

There were severe thunderstorm and tornado warnings here tonight till 9:00 p.m., but thankfully, nothing happened.

Our taxi driver would be right at home in Boston with the "Boston drivers".

The terrain changed today from farmland used for grazing to farmland used for crops – wheat? Lots of grain silos today.

A whole new set of wildflowers along the side of the road today, too.

Friday, May 31st

Clovis, NM to Tulia, TX

Day #19

3:15pM
borderline Restaurant, Dimmit TX

'Crossed into another state (Texas) and another time zone this morning. 55 easy miles to here, thank goodness! Once we got out of Clovis (where the road sucked!) we got smooth road, a wide shoulder, a light southerly wind. The cycling today has been a pleasure.

'Stopped at the Chamber of Commerce here where Kevin charmed all the ladies who work there. They were all very nice and very friendly. They recommended this place for lunch and gave us the names of some motels in Tulia - 30 miles away and today's destination. Dimmit is a nice little town. We're finally seeing some signs of wealth. Lots of big new houses with beautiful landscapes on the way into town.

This morning we rode past the Caprock stockyard. At first we thought it was a junkyard, then realized it was acres and acres of cattle waiting to be slaughtered. Kinda eerie. And the smell was so bad I couldn't breathe through my nose for miles.

The ladies at the Chamber of Commerce told us that one year ago today a tornado hit town. We'll pass the remains of the house it hit on the way out of town.

This county is the second largest producer of beef (and largest per capita) in the country.

9:25pM
Lasso Motel, Tulia Texas
Day: 86.65 Trip: 1105.6

We just had yet another Mexican dinner at El Camino, the restaurant that the Dimmit Chamber of Commerce ladies recommended. The Mexican restaurants all blend together after a while. The menus are pretty much the same, the food is the same. Same thing at this place. But - the dessert was different - "cinnamon crisps" - fried flour tortillas dredged in cinnamon and sugar. Mmmmm-mmmmm! The waitress put a whole huge plate of them in front of us and we thought sure we wouldn't finish them. But we did! And we ordered vanilla ice cream to go with them. Delicious!

As is usual, the wind picked up as the afternoon progress and it shifted direction a little. So our last 20 miles was a battle against a strong cross wind (so what else is new?). It was a struggle to do even 9 mph on the flats. So

**discouraging - I hate going that slow. But we made it, and at least it was only
20 miles.1`**

Saturday, June 1st

Tulia, Tx to Memphis, TX

Day #20

12:25pM

Martinez Restaurant, Silverton Texas

Almost four hours to do 28 miles on flat terrain against a stiff 20-25 mph head wind from the east. This sucks!

7:40pM

Best Western Motel, Memphis TX

Day: 84.8 Trip: 1190.4

We never, ever expected to make it here today under our own steam. But we did! After our lunch stop in Silverton, things improved. After about 8 miles we hit "the canyon" and had a beautiful 5-mile downhill coast into the canyon. We were also sheltered from the wind. Then lots of rolling hills – not too bad. The final 25 miles into Memphis was a chore because we were tired and there were a lot of long, steep rolling hills. It seemed like we did the same hill about 25 times! But we made it. Cloud cover helped tremendously. Now for showers and dinner.

... I'm glad we made it on our own.

Sunday, June 2nd
Memphis, TX to Altus, OK

Day #21

9:20pM
Best Western Motel, Altus Oklahoma
Day: 76.93 Trip: 1267.4

A good day – cloud cover, minimal wind. Rolling hills. Crossed into Oklahoma today. We've left the land of Mexican food and now we're heavy into barbecue ribs country. How I long for "trendy" – and a Frappacino!

Along the road today we saw turtles (2 dead, 2 alive), a snake (sleeping?), a frog (dead), and ostriches ("Texas Turkeys").

It's Ma's birthday today. I called her this morning. Tonight we called North Conway and talked with Paul, and then we called Haydie and Tom at home. Haydie had left us a nice message on Kevin's voice mail, telling us how much we are missed. It was nice.

Oklahoma is a land of 3.2 beer!

Monday, June 3rd

Altus, OK to Lawton, OK

Day #22

10:50pM

Enterprise Inn, Lawton OK
Day: 55.5 Trip: 1322.9

A good day – good road, slight tail wind (hot and sunny, though). Slept late and didn't get started till after 10:00 a.m.. Still made it here around 2:00p.m.

Interesting stuff to write about today (saw "Twister"; manager at Holiday Inn; guy at bike shop) but too late and too tired. Will write about it later.

Tuesday, June 4th

Rest Day in Lawton, OK

Day #23

9:25AM

Garfields Restaurant, Lawton OK

We've decided to do a rest day. Kevin could have gone either way but I really need a break. (We've been going straight out for eleven days now.)

After talking with Mike & Debbie Thompson last night (more about that later) about the "poor" roads in eastern Oklahoma, and being a little concerned about making our schedule and getting to the Blue Ridge area in time to see Lorraine and Michael, we started to think about renting a car here and driving to McAllester or Talihina. The car rental companies don't service either of those areas. But - I got the brilliant idea to call U-Haul. One-way rentals, right? U-Haul will let us drop in McAllester, so now we're waiting to see if they can find us a truck for today.

9:00pM

Holiday Lodge, McAllester, OK

We got a U-Haul truck and drove 189 miles today to here - 2 days worth of cycling. Lawton to Paul's Valley, and Paul's Valley to McAllester. With this added "rest day" and the driving, we are now one day behind our original plan instead of two, so we basically picked up one day.

The rest day was nice ... my legs really needed it, as did my head. Today we finally got out of the plains and into trees. The terrain was lots of rolling hills. The roads were, for the most part, narrow with no shoulders. Bicycling them could have been somewhat dangerous.

Back to yesterday: when we got to Lawton we found that the Holiday Inn was completely booked - the first time we've run into a no vacancy situation. We ended up staying at the "Executive Inn" next door - adequate. We went to have a drink at Garfield's at the Holiday Inn. I was finally able to get a glass of wine! We were chatting with the staff there and telling them what we're doing. They were all very nice. Cheryl Jones, the manager, ended up giving us a ride a couple miles down the street to the movie theater (she was very nice - we found out later that it was her first day in a management position; I think she'll do well.) We saw "Twister" - the 5:15 p.m. show. We and maybe 6 other people were the only ones in the theater! "Twister" was good. I definitely DO NOT want to see one in person! After the movie, we walked outside to thunder, lightning and, later, a downpour. It was eerie, given what we had just seen in the movie!

We then walked over to the bike shop "Mud, Sweat and Gears". Kevin wanted to get some info about the roads in eastern Oklahoma. We ended up meeting

the owner, Mike Thompson, who invited us to go back to his house with him to talk with his wife Debbie, a native of Oklahoma, whom he said knew more about the roads than he did. He also said he'd give us a ride back to the hotel afterwards. This sounded like another great, friendly experience so we accepted. Mike is a former motorcycle racer who is now into mountain biking. His wife Debbie was not at all phased that he had brought us home with him. Mike & Debbie pulled out a map of Oklahoma and basically told us that the roads are narrow, hilly, and no shoulders. (That's when we started thinking about doing the drive.) We talked with them for quite a while and then Mike brought us back to the motel. They want to hear from us along the rest of our trip. Really nice people.

Back to today – I feel like we're finally back into civilization. The "small" towns are getting bigger. There was a TCBY in Lawton! Maybe soon we'll find real cappuccino!

Today I was finally able to find color film for slides – at Wal-Mart. I bought 10 rolls so I won't have to worry about it anymore for the rest of the trip!

Wednesday, June 5th

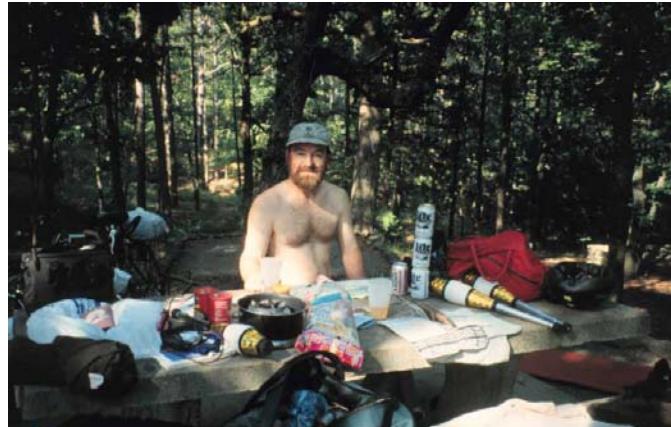
McAllester, OK to Talimena State Forest, OK

Day #24

5:40pM
Talimena State Forest Campground, OK
Day: 61.26 Trip: 1384.1

Sittin' in a nice campground all by ourselves drinking Miller Lite and Bud Light beers given to us by the host when Kevin mentioned that we'd appreciate a ride to a store to get beer if anyone was going that way. After a day of hot, humid, sunny weather, the shade of this campground and the cold beer (with the chips and salsa we bought in Talihina) are just what the doctor ordered!

Today's terrain looked and felt like bicycling in New England on a warm summer day – except for all of the dead armadillos squashed along the roadside!



Bad beer never tasted so good!
Talimena State Forest Campground, OK

I got my first flat tire today – we'd only been on the road for 2 miles.

We stopped to change the tube on the front porch of a mobile home sales place. The lady who runs it drove up and talked with us the whole time that Kevin was fixing the flat. She even offered to drive us to the bike repair shop (too early though – 8:00 a.m.). She went to high school with Reba McIntyre! Says Reba used to win all the 4-H singing competitions.

Seven miles from our destination I got another flat – a slow leak. We were able to nurse it along till we got to the campground by pumping it up every few miles.

We have decided that Oklahoma is not bicycle friendly – neither the roads nor the drivers.

Thursday, June 6th

Talimena State Forest, OK to Mena, AR

Day #25

8:55pM

Best Western, Mena Arkansas

Day: 42.5 Trip: 1426.6

Once again, the kindness of strangers helped us tremendously. Today did not turn out as planned ...

The plan was to do the Talimena Scenic Highway to Mena – about 54 miles. We awoke early to rain. Went back to bed and consequently got a later start (about 2 hours) than planned. One and a half miles from the campground to the start of the highway, where we were welcomed with the ominous sign: "13% Grades". We looked at each other, moaned and continued on. How bad could it be?



Bad! Within minutes we were walking our bikes because it was too steep to pedal. It was so steep it was even difficult to walk the bikes. And it was very warm and humid and very windy. Not much fun. We did get to ride some, but we also did a lot of walking. Four hours after we'd started, we had only done about 20 miles. At that point, there was an "escape route" to Rt 270 and

we bailed. All in all a good decision since we later found that the steep grades continued and that the road further up was under construction and things were pretty messy.

Hills & more hills, Talimena Scenic Hwy,

Shortly after we got on to Rt 270, I started having a lot of trouble shifting gears. I couldn't get the front up on the larger gears. And the chain kept slipping. We knew there was a bike shop in Mena but it was 3:00 p.m. and we were pretty sure we couldn't make it to Mena by 5:00 p.m..

At the Oklahoma-Arkansas state line, there was a hole-in-the-wall bar. So nasty looking that I wouldn't go inside. I sent Kevin in to get some sodas. After he went in, he came out and told me it was nice and cool inside (his way of telling me it was safe to go in). Inside, we talked with the owner (he was a young guy with a long beard who once lived in Hampton NH for several months while doing construction jobs in Exeter and Manchester) and a female customer. They laughed when we told them we had tried to do the Talimena highway. Anyways – he helped us out by letting us use his phone book, phone

and map of Mena to locate a bike shop. There were two. The first one Kevin called wasn't helpful at all. The second one - Ouachita Mountains Cyclery - was our lifesaver. The owner, Mike Kelsey, was extremely sensitive to our situation. Kevin explained we were on a tour from San Diego to Boston, that we were having trouble with one of the bikes and would like to bring it in when we got to Mena, would they be open? Mike said he would stay open till we got there. Then asked if we'd like to be picked up. Yes. He wasn't sure if he could come get us, so it was agreed that we would start out and if he could, he would meet us along the route. We had done about 5 miles when he met us. What a nice guy! He's an avid mountain biker and a real promoter of the sport and is very active in developing trails in this area. He drove us to his bike shop, where we met his wife Susan, an LPN Homecare nurse. Also very, very nice. While he worked on our bikes, she drove us and our stuff to the motel. We had a very nice visit with her and found out that Mike is a respiratory therapist at the hospital and works there 3 nights a week. The bike shop about breaks even but it's his real love.

Later in the evening, Mike brought the bikes to our motel room door - what service! We visited with him for a while and he gave us his address 'cause Susan told him to tell us to write and let them know how we do for the rest of our trip.

Based on today's experience, we are reconsidering our plan to do the Blue Ridge Parkway and Skyline Drive. If it's anything like the Talimena Highway, there is no way we'll be able to do 70-80 miles a day for 10 days! Kevin needs to gather more info, but I don't know how he's going to do that!

Tornado watches and thunderstorm warnings have been following us all across New Mexico and Oklahoma. Tonight, Talihina has severe storm and tornado warnings. Here, there are also severe thunderstorm warnings, and now (9:45p.m.) there's quite a lightning show going on. Kevin's outside watching it now.

The county we are in, as well as the four surrounding counties, are totally dry! No beer, no wine - no nothing.

Yet another "fine dining" experience at the all-you-can-eat buffet here - \$5.95. Actually, it wasn't too bad. Included lots of vegetables and broiled catfish. And great pumpkin pie!

Friday, June 7th
Mena, AR to Hot Springs, AR

Day #26

10:00pM
Park Hotel, Hot Springs, AR
Day: 80 Trip: 1506.6

Odometer broke - 'think we did about 80 miles today. A good day but too late to write.



Buckstaff Bathhouse, Bathhouse Row
Hot Springs, AR

Saturday, June 8th

Rest Day in Hot Springs, AR

Day #27

12:45pM

Belle Arti Restaurant, Hot Springs AR

I think we've discovered the only "trendy" restaurant in Hot Springs. We had dinner here last night and it was excellent. Now we're having lunch and REAL cappuccino, and tonight we'll have dinner here again. This place has been open about a year and it's owners/chef etc. also ran a restaurant in New York City. That explains why it's so good!

This morning we each had hot baths and massages at the Buckstaff Bathhouse, the only bathhouse on Bathhouse Row that is still operating. Talk about stepping back in time! Everything's original and old. The old bathtubs. Old waiting areas. Elevator. I'm glad we chose to go there instead of to the Arlington Hotel. I think we got the real experience by going to the historic place.

After our baths and massages, we toured the Fordyce Bathhouse - a museum now, restored by the National Park Service. It looked a lot like where we had just been! It was neat - took lots of pictures since I couldn't take pictures at the Buckstaff.

2:35pM

Parkside Cycle, Hot Springs AR

Waiting for my bike to be fixed. The adjustments that were made in Mena helped the derailleur problem but didn't totally solve it. I want to get it really fixed before we head out again. Also getting a new odometer.

Our lunch at Belle Arti ended on a fun note. We met the owner/chef Rosario and his cousin Santi who serves as manager (I think). They took pictures of us with them. I think we might end up in the local paper! They asked if I would give them a quote or a letter they could send in to the editor. I had told them it was great to find a trendy restaurant in Hot Springs and it was the first real cappuccino I had had since Scottsdale, AZ. We'll be going back for dinner tonight and they are going to save us a table with the "soft chairs" at my request.

Back to yesterday: the ride was quite nice. Rolling hills that you could coast down and get up enough speed to get part way up the next hill. No wind! Some cloud cover. Overall an enjoyable day except for the very trafficky 8 miles into Hot Springs.

We had a nice rest stop at a bubbling brook. It's amazing how good it feels to put your feet in cold water! Very refreshing.

When we arrived at Bathhouse Row, and were walking our bikes down it, a young guy with his son on his shoulders approached us to find out where we were from and where we were going. He was funny – he was so interested and thought what we were doing was just so neat and he wished/hoped he could do something like this some day. He had passed us earlier in the day about 30 miles outside of Hot Springs. He just thought it was the coolest thing that he met up with us.

The Park Hotel is an old, historic place that is actually quite neat. We have a "King Suite", which is a large corner room on the 16th floor with a king-size bed and a sofa and some chairs. Very spacious and very airy and bright. Three big windows on one wall overlook the trees in the park. Another window on the adjoining wall gives it the nice airy feel.

10:30pM

Our room @ Park Hotel, Hot Springs AR

We are now the proud owners of 30 hazelnut truffles. Belle Arti serves one with each cup of espresso. They gave us a few extra. When we were leaving, I showed Santi that we had 3 of them tucked away for our trip. He asked if we wanted more, so we said sure – thinking he'd bring us 2 or 3 more. He brought us a whole box! As I said to Kevin – "bicycle ready". What a great time we had at Belle Arti! I felt like I was in Italy again.

This afternoon at the bike shop Bruce helped Kevin map out a route to Little Rock. And Bruce called his partner Al Emerson who lives in Little Rock for assistance with a route through the city. Al is going to bicycle out and meet us tomorrow and escort us through Little Rock!

Hot Springs ended up being a great rest stop – especially because of the Belle Arti Ristorante and Bruce Hubbard at Parkside Cycles.

Late this afternoon I wrote a bunch of postcards while sitting on the porch of the grand old Arlington Hotel, enjoying a glass of wine and watching Kevin juggling in the park across the street.

All in all, a great rest day. I wish we could spend another day. The weather here was just perfect – 70's and dry. Really pleasant. We strolled along the promenade. Really neat.



Relaxing on the veranda of the Arlington Hotel
Hot Springs, AR

Sunday, June 9th
Hot Springs, AR to Brinkley, AR

Day #28

6:40pM
Best Western, Brinkley AR
Day: 80.0 Trip: 1587

Today was an ideal cycling day – about 75 degrees, not too humid, a little tail wind, a lot of cloud cover. The first 34 miles was over rolling terrain with lots of trees on a lightly-trafficked road with a good shoulder. The remaining 46 miles was FLAT – the flattest we've seen so far. We cruised it at 15-18 mph. Very enjoyable!

Al Emerson ended up meeting us in his van in Benton and driving us through Little Rock to Lonoke. It was pouring where he was, and he figured we'd be drowned rats. He even brought towels with him. But – we never got rained on! And by the time he picked us up, his rain had stopped too.

Anyways, we had a nice 2 ½ hr drive, visit and lunch with Al. A really nice guy. In the '70's, he was a Category 1 racer and competed regularly in the nationals. He's a firefighter in Little Rock.

Arkansas is the 3rd largest producer of rice in the world!

We seem to have settled into a routine – bike, find hotel, take showers, eat, sleep, bike ...



Typical end-of-day scene
Super 8 Motel, Fort Sumner, NM

Monday, June 10th

Brinkley, AR to Memphis, TN

Day #29

4:20pM

Comfort Inn, Memphis TN
Day: 74.08 Trip: 1661

We just crossed the Mississippi River!!!! Now I really feel like I'm on my way home. Bicycling over the river was really neat and even a little bit emotional. Ironically, though, bicycling and walking over the bridge (Rt I-40) are illegal. But how else are you going to get across? There are no other crossings for miles and miles.



Crossing the Mississippi River
"Halfway" Home!
Memphis, TN



I'm sitting in our room on the 12th floor of the Comfort Inn, overlooking a plaza and the trolley and "The Pyramid". It's quite a nice view. I know we've reached civilization again 'cause I see a helicopter taking off from one of the tall office buildings.

Today's ride was mostly flat and we did some nice cruising again. Kevin thought crossing the Mississippi on the interstate was a little scary, but I think bicycling into Hot Springs the other day and through West Memphis, AR today were much worse. At least the bridge had a narrow shoulder that was passable.

As we pulled into the hotel this afternoon, a guy stopped to ask where we were headed, etc.. Turns out he's the former bicycle coordinator for the city of San Diego. Currently unemployed, he's been on a cross-country search for work and is now on his way back to San Diego.

We manage to keep missing the rain. It's been raining here in Memphis for the last few days but now it's clearing.

Big news from home yesterday! Karen and Marshall are pregnant, and Mike and Jen are getting married. Wow!

Rest day tomorrow and time to work out a new route home.

Tuesday, June 11th

Rest Day in Memphis, TN

Day #30

~10:00AM
Corner of Monroe & Front Streets

Waiting for the "#13 Elvis Presley" bus to take us to Graceland.

Drinks last night at Sleep Out Louie's and found yuppies again. Asked for the trendy restaurant in town and we were referred to Automatic Slims. It was definitely trendy. We had: tuna carpaccio; seared yellowfin tuna salad; and coconut-mango shrimp. Asked there for a place to get cappuccino in the morning and were referred to the Peabody Hotel. We just had breakfast and cappuccino there - a grand old hotel in the style of the Ritz. They have a tradition of mallard ducks at their indoor fountain. We'll go back tonight at 5:00 p.m. for the "duck walk".

Kevin just asked a guy about the bus - he's not sure but he's going that way and volunteered to give us a ride ... sure!

3:45pM
Graceland, Memphis TN

So we've finished our tour of Graceland. Now we're waiting for the bus back. The guy who gave us a ride here (Charlie-something) says he's given rides to Graceland to people from all over the world. If he sees someone who looks like a tourist, he asks if they want a ride. Says some people think he's crazy to do it, but it's never been a problem for him, and it gives tourists a nice remembrance of Memphis.

Graceland was pretty neat. Not really tacky at all. Well-organized. Gives you a good history and perspective of Elvis's life, and an appreciation of him.

5:10pM
Corner of S. Main & Union Sts, Memphis TN

Just witnessed the "world famous march of the Peabody mallards" at the Peabody Hotel. What a riot. The most interesting part was watching all the people lining up to see it. The ducks are in the fountain, and on cue they walk out of the fountain down a special set of stairs (lined with red carpet) accompanied by the music of John Philip Sousa! Lots of pomp and circumstance.

Now we're riding the trolley down Main Street.

**6:40pM
Hotel Room, Memphis TN**

Kevin's fixing the flat I discovered on my bike this morning. Turned out to be a failure of the previous repair.

We're definitely changing course and not doing the Blue Ridge and Skyline Drive. So we just went to the Fed-X office and shipped home all the camping gear and my front panniers. 35 lbs total. It will be interesting to see how much difference the reduction in weight makes.

The guy who gave us a ride to Graceland recommended Ciao Baby Cucina for dinner, so we'll be headed there as soon as Kevin finishes with my tire.



Yuppies, again! Ciao Baby Cucina, Memphis, TN

Wednesday, June 12th
Memphis, TN to Brownsville, TN

Day #31

4:10pM
Holiday Inn Express, Brownsville TN
Day: 67.6 Trip: 1728

I feel like the days are becoming more do-able. Fairly easy terrain and good roads today (once we got out of Memphis). Hot and humid, though.

Came upon another tourer today just outside of Memphis. An Australian, going from Los Angeles to Washington, D.C. He started the day before we did.

Stopped in Millington and bought two new tires at Bikes Plus, so each of our bikes now have new front sneakers. 1677 miles on the old ones. Just before we got to the bike shop, we had stopped to double check the address, and an older gentleman pulled up in a Mercedes with a Trek 1000 in the back seat to ask if we needed any help. He's from Nashville and bicycles a fair amount. Gave us his card in case we're near Nashville and need any help.

Decided today to make an effort to start taking pictures of people who stop and talk to us. But you can't ... it's just too many! So many people interested in what we're doing!

Dinner last night at Ciao Baby Cucina was disappointing - undercooked, sticky, gummy pasta. But the atmosphere was nice and the wine was good. And we met a nice couple who took our picture for us - Jim Lamb from Alabama and Sonya McGee, of Memphis, I think. Jim took our name and address and says he's going to send us something when he gets back to Alabama. Wonder what?

Cocktail time - Kevin just got back with beer and chips. Nice to finish the day early enough to relax a little before dinner.

Thursday, June 13th

Brownsville, TN to Paris, TN

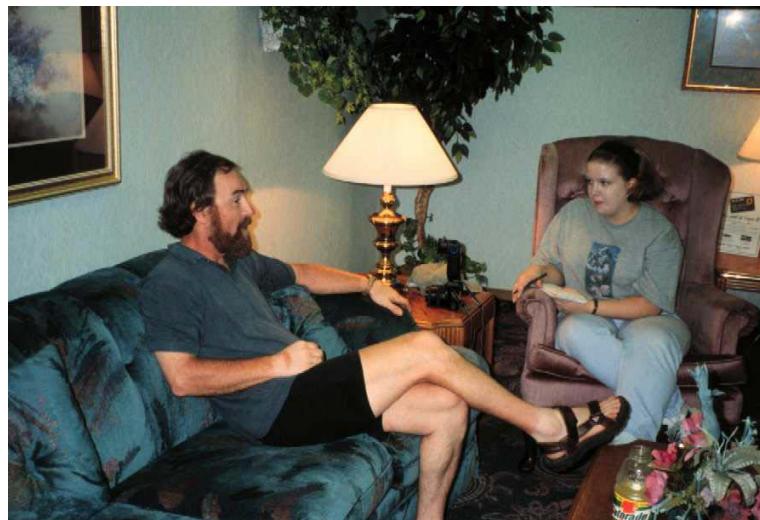
Day #32

7:05pM
Super 8 Motel, Paris TN
Day: 80.8 Trip: 1809

'Waitin' for the Domino's Pizza man!

We're going to be celebrities! No sooner had we pulled in here than a reporter from the local paper showed up to interview us! Someone called the paper to tell them we had just cycled into town – must have been either the lady who

checked us in here or the lady at the Best Western who referred us here 'cause the Best Western didn't have a guest laundry. We'll be in tomorrow afternoon's edition of the Paris Post Intelligencer. They'll send us three copies. Pretty neat.



Becoming a celebrity, Paris, TN

truck! They are right now giving Kevin a ride to the liquor store to buy some wine.

Nice terrain today but again very hot and humid. And a lot more traffic than we expected – lots of big trucks on a 2-lane road with no shoulder.

We got rained on today for the first time. It actually felt good. Scattered thunderstorms 15 miles outside of Paris.



First "rain delay", outside Paris, TN

Most frequently asked questions on this trip:

- Where are you going/where did you start?
- You're going to BOSTON!!!!
- How many miles a day do you do?
- How long have you been out?
- How long will it take you?
- Are you trying to set a record?
- What do you do for a living?

Kevin just returned with Zaca Mesa Chardonnay!! Fine wine and Domino's pizza – just like home. Now we just have to find Jeopardy on TV.

Friday, June 14th

Paris, TN to Clarksville, TN

Day #33

12:40pM

The Dover Grille, Dover TN

Lunch stop. A pleasant (but hot!) 31 miles to here. Nice wide shoulder. Stopped at Fort Donelson and watched the slide show about the surrender of the Fort. It's nice to be on a leisurely pace.

At Fort Donelson we had the good fortune to see a relief map of the U.S. So Kevin was able to get an idea of the best route through the mountains in Pennsylvania.

Tomorrow, we go to Bowling Green, KY and we meet Peter and Hilary, and take a rest day Sunday with them and go to the Mammoth Caves. I'm looking forward to it.

A story Kevin has told to a lot of people but I'm not sure if I recorded it at the time ... in Quartzite, AZ we stopped at a grocery store to buy some Gatorade. There was a black man rounding up the grocery carts and he started talking with Kevin and found out that we were biking from San Diego to Boston. He was from Mississippi. He was amazed at what we were doing and concluded: "If you can bicycle to Boston, then I sure can drive back to Mississippi." I wonder if he ever will?

Now that we've hit civilization again, we are encountering a lot of dogs. We've found the best way to deal with them is to just yell at them in a very loud voice "Go Back!" or "Go Away!". Kevin also finds that heading straight at them works too. Even the meanest sounding dogs turn into cowards pretty quickly.

5:50pM

Super 8 Motel, Clarksville TN

Day: 69.3 Trip: 1878

Lost our shoulder after Dover. The rest of the day was hot and trafficky but we made it. Going to the mall now and to the movies - we'll probably see "Spy Hard".

Lots of people mowing their lawns today. We decided that Friday must be lawn-mowing day, and you MUST have a sit-down riding lawn mower or you are nobody!

Saturday, June 15th
Clarksville, TN to Bowling Green, KY

Day #34

5:30pM
Best Western, Bowling Green KY
Day: 70.0 Trip: 1948

Very hot and humid today (90 degrees?) and lots of sun. But Kevin found us some nice back country roads and we cycled through some beautiful country. Crossed into Kentucky today and the back roads of Kentucky run through beautiful farms – corn fields on one side of the road, wheat fields on the other. Lots of nice homes along the way.

Now we're sitting in our room, waiting for Peter and Hilary to show up. Enjoying Moosehead beer and Woodbridge Chardonnay. And a chicken quesadilla from Denny's.



Corn fields & wheat fields, on the way to Bowling Green, KY

Enjoying a rest stop, on the way to Bowling Green, KY



Sunday, June 16th

Rest Day in Bowling Green, KY

Day #35

**9:10pM
Hotel Room, Bowling Green, KY**

Peter & Hilary never made it to Bowling Green. They encountered a lot of thunderstorms that put them way behind schedule for their cross-country plane trip, so they decided to bag it and head for home. Too bad – it would have been fun to meet up with them.

We rented a car (interesting side note: all of the car rental offices except National are close on Sundays! The only reason National is open is because it shares a building with a 24-hr cab company.) and drove the 82-mile "Duncan Hines Scenic Byway", and decided that what we bicycled through yesterday was much more scenic than anything on the drive today!

We went to Mammoth Caves and took the "Frozen Niagra" cave tour. Billed as "strenuous", it was simply a walk down a bunch of stairs and then back up. So not strenuous at all. But it WAS very interesting and we're glad we took the time to do it.

We also went to the National Corvette Museum, which was also very interesting. Kevin says I can buy him the '63 Split-Window Coupe. Now all I have to do is come up with about \$250,000!

Dinner at Hops Pub, a brewery. Quite good – we are now getting reasonable "east coast" type meals. For example, tonight I had grilled chicken breast with fresh tomatoes and basil, black beans, and yellow rice.

Very hot and humid today – it probably hit 90 degrees at least. I'm getting a little worry about the heat – it really zaps my energy. The sun is especially brutal.

Lots of rain in the forecast too. Our luck may be running out and we may be headed for some wet cycling. Actually, cycling in the rain isn't bad if you can stay on back roads with no traffic. Bicycling in the rain in heavy traffic is dangerous.

'Trying to figure out the new route home. At this point, we think we have 4 more days till we finish our trek across Kentucky. Then into Ohio for a little bit, then on to Pennsylvania.

Monday, June 17th

Bowling Green, KY to Campbellsville, KY

Day #36

7:50pM
Lakeview Motel, Campbellsville KY
Day: 75.45 Trip: 2024

Two milestones today: hit 2000 miles and crossed into the Eastern time zone (in Black Gnat, KY). Good cycling today. Still hot and humid (92 degrees) but somehow, it didn't seem so bad. I think the rest day yesterday and the back country roads with some shade helped.



2000 Miles! Black Gnat, KY

Kentucky has some really beautiful country and stately homes with well-manicured lawns. It's a pleasure to cycle through. I think Kentucky is probably some of the prettiest (if not the prettiest) landscape that we've bicycled through.

Right now, we're sitting outside of our motel in nice comfy lawn chairs in the shade, waiting for the

Domino's Pizza man. There's a slight breeze and it's quite comfortable (though our room is quite warm and I'm not sure the A/C is going to cool it off ...). From where we are sitting, we can see the lake across the street and several nice homes with lots of trees and beautiful lawns. It's quite nice.

We're in dry territory again - can't buy beer, wine or liquor. Apparently, most of Kentucky is dry. We've been surprised at how much of the country we've been through has been dry. Must be the Bible Belt. For a while now, every town we've been through has church signs to welcome you - "First Baptist Church Welcomes You!"; "United Methodist Church Welcomes You!". We've seen lots of Baptist and Methodist churches, a few Latter Day Saints, but only two Catholic churches. Most of the churches have their own cemeteries, and all of the grave stones have very brightly colored artificial flowers on them.

We stopped in Greensburg this afternoon, just 10 miles short of here, and went into the Kozy Kafe. It caught Kevin's eye 'cause it had a cool-looking logo stenciled on the windows and café style tables and chairs outside. The owner and his wife and their parents were the only ones inside and were very welcoming and friendly. They opened the restaurant in January and say it's doing quite well. It's considered "progressive" for the area. We had "Ski", a

soft drink made in Greensburg, kind of a Mountain Dew with a bite. Quite refreshing. We were told that the Fruit of the Loom factory in Campbellsville was just ending a shift and it would be best if we waited for traffic to clear before heading on. So we bided our time talking with them all and enjoyed one serving of their "famous" dessert: a baked apple dumpling with cinnamon-apple ice cream. It was delicious!

I'm getting anxious to get home. I want to sit on our back porch and enjoy our own view, and not have to get up and bicycle every day! I'm still enjoying our adventure though, but I am now looking forward to finishing it.

As I bike, I find myself thinking a lot about growing up in Fremont – probably because this countryside is so rural. Today I got a craving for Aunty Dot's chilled cucumbers in vinegar!

We've been eating food we never would imagine eating at home. But when you're burning off thousands of calories a day (and there aren't many choices), I guess it's OK. Some examples of things I've eaten that I haven't had in years (and that really tasted good!) are BLT sandwiches and Black & White frappes (called "milk shakes" out here). I think the frappes are satisfying my Frappacino cravings! The all-you-can-eat BBQ buffet at the Best Western in Memphis TX will undoubtedly go down in history as the single most unhealthy meal we have ever eaten (talk about grease!). On another note, though, we really have been enjoying MacDonald's breakfast burritos. And on-the-road our picnic lunches of choice have become some combination of bananas, cantaloupe, Gatorade (citrus-cooler flavor), granola bars (Little Debbie's oats & honey), and smoked turkey slices. And we ARE losing weight!

It would have been interesting if we had kept track of all the Gatorade we have drunk. It must be gallons and gallons.



Bicycling the backroads of Kentucky

Tuesday, June 18th
Campbellsville, KY to Richmond, KY

Day #37

9:10pM
Holiday Inn, Richmond KY
Day: 80.32 Trip: 2104

Today was a bit of a struggle. I started off slow – probably because I didn't get a good night's sleep because the room was too hot. Then there were a lot of hills and it was hot and humid again. But nonetheless, the countryside was beautiful (again) and we did travel some really nice little back roads.

We stopped at the post office in Mannsville KY this morning to ask directions and met the postmaster, Ed Bright, who thought what we were doing was pretty neat. We talked with him for quite a while and he made us some copies of a local map to help us find the back roads.

Wednesday, June 19th

Richmond, KY to Morehead, KY

Day #38

10:00pM

Holiday Inn, Morehead KY

Day: 79.86 Trip: 2184

Kevin thought today would be about 58 miles – guess I need to give him a little lesson in map reading!

Not a bad day, though – still hot and humid, but partly cloudy so there was some relief from the sun. Still lots of hills. Still beautiful countryside though.

Back in a "wet" city (dry county...), so we enjoyed some wine (Mondavi Chardonnay) with dinner here at the Holiday Inn.

Asked when we checked in if they had a guest laundry – yes. Did a wash only to find the dryer was broken. They graciously offering to have the cleaning staff dry our stuff in their laundry room. So of course I said OK. Tried to tip them but they wouldn't take it.

Spent some time on the phone tonight to home – talked with Craigen, and Haydie & Tom were there too. We miss our friends and families and are anxious to have everyone greet us when we get home.

Thursday, June 20th

Morehead, KY to Ashland, KY

Day #39

5:45pM

Ashland Plaza Hotel, Ashland KY

Day: 64.66 Trip: 2249

Riding into the cities at night to get to a hotel really sucks. Tonight's ride in was particularly terrible. We tried to take some back roads in but I think we actually found ourselves on the major "back way" during rush hour. I wish there were a better way.

Other than that, today's ride was pretty nice, though not as scenic as the last few days. Cooler temp (mid 80's?), a little cloud cover, fewer hills and fewer miles made for a relatively easy day.

9:10pM

Hotel Room, Ashland KY

Nothing trendy in Ashland. Had dinner in the hotel - not bad. Got to "dress up".

Made plans to stay at a B&B in Marietta Saturday and Sunday nights - rest day. The lady who answered the phone sounded really nice. I'm looking forward to "vegging out" and relaxing there.

Friday, June 21st
Ashland, KY to Gallipolis, OH

Day #40

7:00pM
Best Western, Gallipolis OH
Day: 59.24 Trip: 2308

Crossed the Ohio River this morning and entered the state of Ohio. "Short cut" to the route along the river was a nice back road, but LOTS of LONG STEEP hills - up & down, up & down. For some reason though, it didn't really bother me. There was some personal satisfaction in actually being able to pedal over all those hills (even if it was only at 3 mph!).

LOTS of dogs today. I thought sure Kevin was going to kill one. He's really fed up with the dogs!

We're both really beat tonight. Walked down to the city park and relaxed there for a while. Almost fell asleep! Now we're waiting for delivery of our Little Caesar's pizza.



Crossing into Ohio

Saturday, June 22nd
Gallipolis, OH to Marietta, OH

Day #41

3:30pM
Buckley House B&B, Marietta OH
Day: 69.26 Trip: 2377

An early start, relatively flat terrain, and a "cow heading for the barn" mentality got us here by 1:15 p.m.! We had a long visit with the owners, Del and Alf, and then showered and cleaned up. Kevin's out buying wine, and it's only 3:30!

This place is REALLY nice – a perfect place to spend our rest day tomorrow. Our room overlooks the beautiful city park and a river (not the Ohio). There are only 3 rooms in this B&B. There is central A/C, ceiling fans and a brand new spa (they just changed the water for us), and terry cloth robes hanging in the closet.

5:40pM

A very severe thunderstorm just whipped through here. I've never seen winds like it! It might even have been a twister! It blew their sign off, which hit the wrought-iron railing and knocked it down. A big tree in the back yard got up-rooted and crashed down on the fence. The electricity is out. A truck stopped across the street due to the rain, and got crushed by a falling tree branch after it stopped. There are big trees down all over the place!

Sunday, June 23rd

Rest Day in Marietta, OH

Day #42

10:10AM

The Buckley House B&B, Marietta OH

The electricity is still out – no A/C last night. We opened the windows and it wasn't too bad. Del went to her daughter's house this morning to make coffee for our breakfast!

Del & Alf joined us for dinner last night at the Levee Café (since they couldn't cook because no electricity) and we had a good time with them. When we got back to the house, there was another thunder/lightning/rain storm – no big winds though. It POURED! We sat on the porch and watched it. Kevin was quite entertained.



Our hosts Del & Alf
Buckley House B&B, Marietta OH

Monday, June 24th

Marietta,, OH to Moundsville, WV

Day #43

8:30aM
Buckley House B&B, Marietta OH

We're getting packed up and ready to go. Del cooked us a breakfast of waffles this morning and did a load of laundry for us last night (power came back on early afternoon yesterday).

Yesterday we walked around Marietta a bit, then came back to the room and took a long nap – I was beat! The rest of the afternoon we spent looking at maps and Del's B&B books, plotting our way home. We are really close now – only 13 days of cycling left. We will probably throw in 3 rest days 'cause we have the time. That will get us home on July 9th.

Really enjoyed our stay here at the Buckley House.



Ready to leave Marietta, OH
(one of the few pictures of us together!)

9:20pM
Reilly Motel, Moundsville WV
Day: 75.13 Trip: 2452



Our second rain delay...
Just outside Moundsville WV

took a ferry across the river to Rt 2 in West Virginia at Sisterville, but the road was so bad, we crossed back over the river on a bridge 10 miles later to get

Waited out a terrific thunder and lightning and rain storm just 10 miles from our destination. Temperature dropped 17 degrees in 40 minutes (from 89 to 72 degrees). We watched it fall on the Belmont Savings Bank (yes – really!) thermometer next to the grocery store where we waited out the storm. So we had about an hour "rain delay" today.

Other than the rain – a good day. Flat terrain all along the Ohio River. We

back onto Ohio Route 7. Then crossed the river again at the very end of the day into Moundsville.

We bought small American flags this morning in a flag store in Marietta that Alf had told us about. Kevin had been trying to buy a flag (of the right size) since Memorial Day. Now we both have them in time for the Fourth of July.

Tuesday, June 25th
Moundsville, WV to Uniontown, PA

Day #44

9:30pM
Heritage Inn Motel, Uniontown PA
Day: 73.21 Trip: 2526

'Just ate a Nutty Buddy - yum! Haven't had one in years!

Today was a long day. First 45 miles were great – back road, good terrain, really nice.

The last 28 miles really sucked. Lousy shoulder, lots of traffic, inconsiderate drivers. Ten miles from our destination I got a flat tire (a nail). Within 2 minutes of getting started again, Kevin got a flat. We didn't pull in here till 6:30 p.m.. I can't believe the number of inconsiderate drivers that we encounter when we get close to a city.

Along the way today we went through Masontown, where there is a power plant for which Kevin designed the cooling towers over 20 years ago!

We had dinner at a nearby restaurant and were pleasantly surprised - \$3.95 for a "chicken stir fry over rice" and it was very good!!

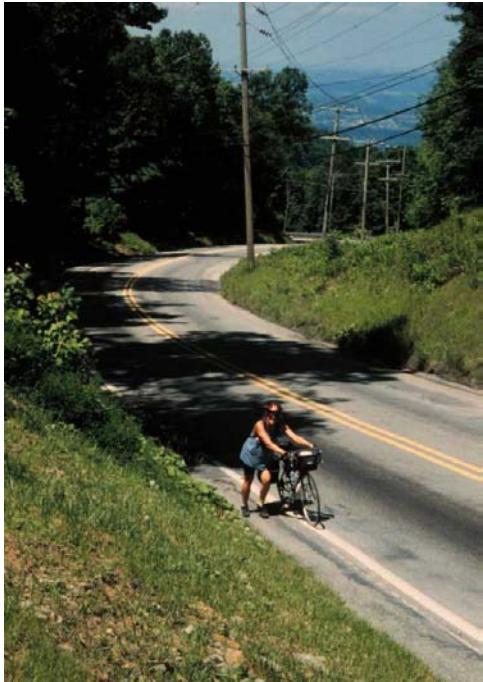
Wednesday, June 26th

Uniontown, PA to Somerset, PA

Day #45

7:25pM

Economy Inn, Somerset PA
Day: 51.07 Trip: 2577



Battling the hills in Pennsylvania

Lots of long, steep hills today – one was a 7% grade for 5 miles. Another was steeper than that and maybe 3 or 4 miles. We walked the last mile of that one. I'm so proud of myself for making the hills!

Cool day, sunny, dry – very comfortable cycling. Reasonable roads and traffic.

Nice lunch stop at Kooser State Park, about 11 miles from here.

We were going to go into the hot tub here, but discovered that we didn't have our bathing suits! Figured out we had left them at the Buckley House. I called Del and she's either going to mail them or deliver them to the B&B we'll be staying at Sunday night in Millersburg (they are driving to NJ starting tomorrow and could swing by Millersburg). As Del says: "Hey ... customer service!"

Thursday, June 27th

Somerset, PA to Bedford, PA

Day #46

3:30pM

Jean Bonnett Tavern & Inn, Bedford PA
Day: 36.32 Trip: 2613

Slept late. Had really good pancakes (and bacon and sausage!) at the local diner. Then had a flat tire on B.O.B. fixed at the local bike shop. Finally got on the road around 11:00 a.m.. A very leisurely morning. It was nice.

Got here around 2:45 p.m.
- a very pleasant ride out
Rt 31. Cool. A lot of steep
hills (up & down) for the
first 23 miles, then we
descended a 3-mile 9%
grade hill and ended up in
a nice valley, and had
relatively flat terrain the
rest of the way to here.
Some beautiful
countryside today.



"Here" is an old inn and tavern originally built in 1769. We have a 2-bedroom suite which is only \$45/night as long as we only use one of the beds. It has access to a porch with a swing. It's very nice (old and quaint) and a nice place to hang out on this "sort of" rest day. We're on our way to have drinks and a snack in the dining room.

A welcome sign in Pennsylvania!

Friday, June 28th
Bedford, PA to Three Springs, PA

Day #47

9:35pM
Aughwick House, Three Springs PA
Day: 52.05 Trip: 2665

A lot of hills again but really nice cycling once we got off Rt 30. Neat story about this place but will have to write tomorrow – too late and too tired to write more now.

Saturday, June 29th

Three Springs, PA to Lewistown, PA

Day #48

10:20aM
End of "The Road" @ Billy's

Billy just gave me a ride out to the main road. Now waiting for him to bring Kevin and his bike out here. Aughwick House is 2 miles down a gravel road! Obviously we didn't know that when we decided to stay there. Kevin was pretty upset by the time we got to the house yesterday afternoon, but he got over it and we ended up having quite a good time and staying in a very unique place.



Riding with Billy, Three Springs PA

Billy has a gourmet catering business – mostly French cuisine – that is temporarily on hold while he's building himself a new kitchen high on a hill above the house. His old kitchen got destroyed when the Aughwick River flooded in January. The basement, where the kitchen was, was completely under water and there was an inch in the first floor rooms. Hard to imagine!



"Gourmet dinner" @ The Aughwick House,
Three Springs PA

eat too. So we said, sure, OK. Dinner was salad and pot roast and roasted vegetables and homemade bread. It really hit the spot.

Breakfast was also cooked by his mother – eggs with ham and stuff mixed in, homefries and bacon and more homemade bread.

He lives in the house with his mother (it's her house) and his young son. His mother is very nice and we had fun talking with her about the January flood and the '72 flood and how Billy got into the B&B and catering business. She cooked dinner for us last night. When I called to see about staying there, I thought the gourmet food business was running and that we would naturally get dinner. But Billy said it was shut down – but they'd whip up something for us for dinner 'cause they had to

The place was kinda scary looking when we first arrived. Way down this gravel road with old dilapidated trailer homes along the way – what looks like a real poor area. Then there was "junk" all around the house and you kinda wondered what was going on. Later of course we found out it was because of the January flood.

The house itself is very rustic. Billy built all the guest rooms on top of the existing house.

Kevin's here ... more later!

9:40pM
Holiday Inn, Lewistown PA
Day: 50.91 Trip: 2716

Warm humid day but cloudy all day so at least we didn't have the sun. Rained tonight – wish it would rain some more (tonight) to really cool things off.

Rt 103 was a really nice back road along the Juniata River. Lots of hills, though, still. Parts of it felt a lot like being on the road along Lake Winnepeaukee near Ma's old camp in Alton.

Today was supposed to be a really short day – only 30 miles or so – but, again, it didn't work out that way. I'm still holding out well on the hills. I just keep thinking what great exercise it is, and try to crank through it. It's a lot easier when it's cool out though – the heat really does a number on me. Hard to get started this morning.

We stopped at a food and craft fair in Mt. Union. Not quite what Kevin expected – pretty small. But we did have some good sweet potato pie.

Kevin saved a turtle today! We saw a turtle crossing the street, very slowly of course. It would have gotten squished by the next car going by. Kevin picked it up and put it on the other side of the road. It excreted some weird stuff and then pulled itself into its shell, so I guess it was scared. But at least it's alive. I wish I had taken a picture of it – another lost moment.

Sunday, June 30th

Lewistown, PA to Millersburg, PA

Day #49

7:30pM
Victoria Manor Inn, Millersburg PA
Day: 54.37 Trip: 2770

I'm relaxing in the sitting room of our suite here at the Victoria Manor Inn. It's a very nice place. We've already eaten and Kevin is filling the claw-foot tub with hot water to soak his weary legs. It'll be an early night tonight.

Sue, the owner, told us that Del & Alf stopped by on Friday and dropped off our left-behind bathing suits. They also got to tour this place so it was probably a fun stop for them.

We're on the second floor of the Manor Gift Shop, actually across the street from the Victoria Manor Inn. There's just one suite here and we're the only ones in the building. The gift shop downstairs is totally open to us. I wonder if any guests will ever "take advantage" of that. I think probably not, but you have to admit, it's a lot of trust on Sue's part.

I did buy something in the gift shop – a bird house made by a woman in Hershey PA to put on top of the china cabinet in the dining room. So far it's the only material memento of the trip. Sue's shipping it home for me.

Lots of hills again today and very humid, but we're still managing to miss the rain. We took a ferry across the river to Millersburg – an old paddle wheeler.



We were VERY lucky because the ferry had been down for repairs and just re-opened yesterday!

Part of the trip today was very much like being in the Gunks. Kevin thinks it even smelled the same. Windy road with hairpin turns. Railing on one side, rock piles and trees on the other.

Ridin' the ferry to Millersburg, PA

Monday, July 1st
Millersburg, PA to Pottsville, PA

Day #50

8:40pM
Quality Hotel, Pottsville PA
Day: 46.25 Trip: 2817

This morning at breakfast we found out from Sue that there are two "Newtowns" in Pennsylvania, and our reservation for tonight was NOT in the Newtown we were going through! So we were lucky to find that out. We canceled our reservation and then considered what to do today: 1) stay in Millersburg, take a rest day, and then do a "long" day of 75-80 miles to Jim Thorpe on Tuesday, or 2) go to Pottsville. It was very tempting to stay at the Victoria Manor Inn for another day, but we decided to stick to our current plan of shorter days vs. rest days because we really don't know what the terrain would be. It turned out to be the right decision. There were still lots of hills, and today was very hot and humid. We were glad to have a "short" day and are looking forward to an even shorter day tomorrow.

We just had quite a nice dinner here at the hotel - poached salmon - a little overdone but not bad. And a good bottle of wine: Chateau St. Jean Fume Blanc. Kevin is now watching the Red Sox game - I don't know why he bothers!

Breakfast this morning at the Victoria Manor Inn was quite spectacular. A really good apple-cinnamon French Toast. It really would have been nice to spend more time there.

Only 8 more days to go! It's hard to believe that this trip is really coming to an end. It will be nice to get home. Going back to work will be tough, though. It's going to be weird having to think about what to wear!

I'm surprised at how well my legs are holding out. With all the hills - my legs didn't really hurt. And aerobically I'm in pretty good shape. I'm just over-all weary. And, as I've said before, the heat really gets to me! Today was about 90 degrees and very humid. Some thunderstorms are supposed to clear out some of this humidity. 'Hope so!

I've had a heat rash under my boobs since Mena Arkansas! I've given up trying to get rid of it. I'm basically soaking wet all day. Some dryer air would be really nice!

Along the way today Kevin found a great spring/waterfall. Ice cold, clear, clean water! We doused our faces and heads in it and it felt so good. I was tempted to strip and put my whole body in it, but the water was really cold, the waterfall was steep, and the rocks were slippery ... a little too "dangerous"!

Tuesday, July 2nd

Pottsville, PA to Jim Thorpe, PA

Day #51

12:30pM

The Inn @ Jim Thorpe, Jim Thorpe PA

Day: 31.63 Trip: 2848

We're already showered and changed and ready to go find some lunch. A nice short, casual ride today – not many hills compared to what we've had the last few days.

Met a bicyclist along the way, just out for a ride before he went to work – Tom Mayernik. Nice guy, very enthusiastic about our trip. He may come to Jim Thorpe tomorrow and spend some time with us. We had him take a picture of the two of us cycling.



On our way to Jim Thorpe, PA

We found out from Tom that the "hum" we've been hearing from the woods for the last two days is the seven year locust!

Jim Thorpe looks like a quaint little town that will be fun to spend our rest day in. Kevin thinks chances are high that we will find real cappuccino!

Wednesday, July 3rd

Rest Day in Jim Thorpe, PA

Day #52

1:30pM

The Inn @ Jim Thorpe, Jim Thorpe PA

Good timing on the rest day – it was raining this morning when we got up!

A leisurely day so far – took a tour of the Asa Parker Mansion. Packed up a few more things to ship home. Kevin's greasing the bikes.

Elissa at the Blue Mountain Bike Shop here helped us plan a route to Stroudsburg and stay off of Rt 209 except for going up the big hill at the beginning of the day. Turns out the new route goes right by the Stroudsmoor Inn, so we've made plans to stay there tomorrow night (we had been scared away by the advertisement "sits high atop a mountain ridge", but now we know we have to do the ridge anyway!)

Thursday, July 4th

Jim Thorpe, PA to Stroudsburg, PA

Day #53

9:10pM

Stroudsmoor Inn, Stroudsburg PA
Day: 42.42 Trip: 2891

'Watchin' fireworks on TV ☹ !

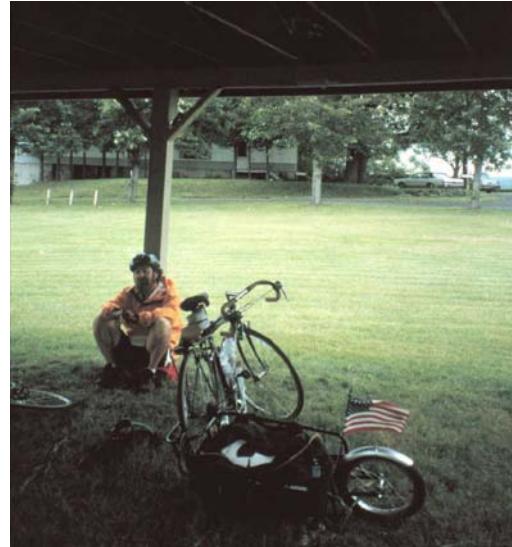
A very pleasant ride today on back roads, but we did get rained on. Took about an hour and a half break in Brodheadsville waiting out the rain. We thought it might last all day and were very happy that it didn't.

Got here around 3:00 p.m.. This place is WAY overpriced! \$99 for a very meager room – plastic cups! No shampoo. No remote control. But it's "in the Poconos" so they can probably get away with it. We did have an unexpectedly good dinner in the dining room. Also – good redeeming value – we won't have to bicycle into Stroudsburg, and there was a hot tub here.

We met a guy from Connecticut – William Goerbel – who was here with his wife and two kids, and his parents came to see him – and his father might be interested in buying Kurzweil Voice – anyways – he had GOOD BEER and he gave us some. We had fun talking with him.

I can't believe that a place like this doesn't have its own fireworks display!

Our room reminds us of Maine – screen door, rustic. It's neat! (but not for \$99!).



**Third (and last!) rain delay ...
Brodheadsville, PA**

Friday, July 5th

Stroudsburg, PA to Middletown, NY

Day #54

8:30pM

Super 8 Motel, Middletown NY
Day: 68.73 Trip: 2959

A really nice day. Crossed the Delaware River on the Appalachian Trail's pedestrian walkway along Interstate 80. Then spent about 40 miles in the Delaware Water Gap. That was great cycling – scenic back road, minimal traffic, sunny, warm and dry. It felt more like we were out for a leisurely ride than that we were really headed somewhere with a real destination.

Only four days to go – hard to believe!

Dinner at the Olive Garden – surprisingly good, and EXCELLENT espresso!

Crossed through New Jersey into New York today, but NO SIGNS! No photo ops! I guess New Jersey and New York don't "welcome you"!

Saturday, July 6th
Middletown, NY to Amenia, NY

Day #55

10:30pM
Hilltop B&B, Amenia NY
Day: 66.50 Trip: 3026

We are at another great B&B, totally by chance, with Rosemarie and Hugh.
Lots more to write about that tomorrow.

Crossed the Hudson River today and rode past the Shawangunks - really neat
to see familiar turf!

We hit 3000 miles today in Poughkeepsie.

Three more days to go ...



Entering familiar territory ... that's the Gunks in the background.
On our way to Poughkeepsie, NY

Sunday, July 7th
Amenia, NY to Simsbury, CT

Day #56

9:15pM
Simsbury 1820 House, Simsbury CT
Day: 62.13 Trip: 308

Hot day! Lots of hills. We're getting tired and anxious to be home. We're so close we can almost taste it!

This is a great old restored inn – once again we lucked out in our choice of accommodations. The hostess on duty – Anne – was extremely nice and very interested in our trip. We promised to send her a note when we get home, and also gave her a copy of our original map.

Crossed into Connecticut today – only one more state to go!

Back to yesterday – we pulled into Millbrook – a very trendy little place – and hoped to stay there but there weren't many places and what there was were full. Options were to continue on to Sharon and stay at a motor lodge (for \$115!) or continue on about 10 miles to Amenia to a B&B that was up a hill. After calling the B&B and finding out that it was "about ¼ mile up a very steep



Our hosts, Rosemarie & Hugh
Hilltop B&B, Amenia NY

hill", with no dining nearby, we hemmed and hawed about what to do. Finally, we decided to go there. But first to buy dinner in Millbrook. So we bought two bottles of wine, bread, smoked salmon, tomato & mozzarella salad, marinated mushrooms, black bean dip & chips (as I said – Millbrook was trendy!), and headed on our way to the Hilltop B&B.

What a great decision it was!
Rosemarie & Hugh were so

much fun – we sat on the porch with them while we ate our dinner and talked and laughed with them until ten o'clock! Rosemarie also let me use her washer and dryer.

Hugh used to live in Boston and knows the area well. He knows of Phania's father! He knows the guy who hired him to invent the fish filleting machine way back when – George Davidson of Atlantic Coast Fisheries. What a small world!!

We had an excellent breakfast of muffins, toast, bagels, English muffins, ham, cheeses, fresh fruit, juice and coffee – served on the screen porch. As we left, Hugh took our picture and may try to get us into the local paper. Kevin juggled for them. I almost forgot to pay for the room! Rosemarie had quoted me \$85 over the phone, but when it came time to go she told me to just give her \$50! (I gave her \$60 in cash). Another great experience!

Two more days to go – we're trying to find a nice place in Sturbridge for our last night out. Hard to believe this is almost over!



"Tasting" home ... somewhere in Connecticut

Monday, July 8th
Simsbury, CT to Sturbridge, MA

Day #57

5:30pM
Sturbridge Country Inn, Sturbridge MA
Day: 60.17 Trip: 3148

It's funny to be staying at a hotel so close to home! We were lucky to get into this place – the Brimfield Fair starts tomorrow and everything within miles around is booked beginning tomorrow night, and only a few rooms still available tonight.

We just enjoyed our complementary champagne splits in the jacuzzi in our room. We are totally relaxed now, after another hot day and more hills than we would have liked.

Only one more day! Tomorrow at this time we'll be HOME!

Tuesday, July 9th
Sturbridge, MA to Belmont, MA

Day #58

1:40pM
Coffee Connection, Belmont MA



The long-awaited Frappacino!
Coffee Connection, Belmont, MA

**WE DID IT!!!! We're here
having Frappacinos
(mmmmm! mmmmm!) and
killing some time before we
go home. I promised
Gwynne we wouldn't get
there before 2:30 p.m..**

**We left Sturbridge at 9:00
a.m. and made excellent time
– just about 60 miles to here
on Rt 20 all the way. Very
easy terrain compared to
what we've been
experiencing lately. A "cow
heading for the barn"
mentality didn't hurt either!**

**11:50pM
HOME !!!
Day: 60.40 Trip: 3209**

We're home! It's still hard to believe that we really did it!

Craigen and Haydie and Lorraine organized a big party here for us - it was great to see all of our friends and family again.

Not much else to say - we did it! And we're home. The best B&B so far!



Uncorking the champagne on our front steps
Belmont, MA

P.S. added much later:

As we were on the final approach to home ... travelling along Pleasant Street ... Lorraine drove by!! She had a car full of balloons! She was on her lunch hour and on her way to our house to decorate for our welcome-home party. She was pretty surprised to see us!

As we were sitting in Coffee Connection (with me enjoying my long-craved-for Frappacino!) killing time before we could go home, Ma and Gwynne came in! They decided to take the main route through town 'cause Gwynne wanted to stop and get an iced coffee. They were pretty shocked to see us sitting in there! We still had to wait, though, and let them go to the house and "get ready" for us. Later, as we pedaled the final few feet to the house, they took pictures of us arriving home.

When we pulled into our driveway and got off our bikes, I remember taking off my helmet, taking a deep breath, and almost bursting into tears. It was quite emotional ... the realization that we had "done it", and we were home.

EPILOGUE

SUNDAY, October 20, 1996
oCHARD hILL cOUNTRY INN
jULIAN, California

Sittin' in "our room" (The Roxbury) with a fire in the fireplace, some fine wine, and cozy slippers and an afghan. We're back here for some much-needed R&R!! It's been a little over 5 months since we began our "Grand Adventure" with our second night's stay here at the Orchard Hill Country Inn. When we were here in May, I knew that some day we would come back - it's the kind of place that you really want to spend some time at, and in May we didn't have the time - had to move on!

So now we're back! And I see this as the perfect opportunity to write our trip's epilogue!

The overall feeling about our trip is: what a great feeling of accomplishment! We were glowing for several days after we arrived home - and occasionally we still get that great feeling when we talk to new and old friends about the trip. Unfortunately, job pressures took away that glow pretty quickly. That's why we decided to come back out here - to try to regain some sanity and re-live the beginning of our trip. I think it's working!

The transition back to work was very difficult. It's hard to sit in an office all day with no exercise when all you've done for the last two months is to be outside all day long, bicycling your little legs off, and your biggest concern is where you're going to stay the next night.

We got home in great shape - we each lost 12 pounds, though it looked and felt like more because we were so fit! And I still have my sock-tan lines!

We ended up with 625 slides and we still haven't found the time to condense them into a reasonable slide show. Surprisingly, even though we took what seems like a lot of pictures, there are a lot of "holes" - stories for which we have no pictures; pictures we were certain we had taken but they can't be found anywhere. And overall, we're somewhat disappointed with the quality of the pictures. If we ever did a trip like this again, we would take SLR-type cameras with multiple lenses and filters, and we would each carry a camera.

The other thing I would do "next time" is I would trail a B.O.B. like Kevin did. He was so much more stream-lined than I was with my bulky front and rear panniers.

But would we ever do it again? It's hard to say: physically we certainly could. But emotionally ... I don't know. There's so much we know now that we didn't know when we started out - and it was good that we didn't. The naivete was

good. (For example: now we know how much biking into the cities really sucks, how bad and dangerous some of the roads can be.) And we only got rained on three times, and then only for an hour or so – we were extremely fortunate there. Who knows if we'd be so lucky again?

After we got home, we made postcards out of a picture of us toasting with champagne on our front steps, and we mailed them out to friends and family and all those people we met along the way.

We ended up making the front page – in color! – of the Paris Post Intelligencer on June 14th. We got copies in the mail after we got home. We made the Orchard Hill Country Inn's newsletter. And we got several notes of congratulations from people we had met, after they got our postcard. Jim Lamb (the guy we met at Ciao Baby Cucina in Memphis) sent us flashlights – the kind you strap to your arm and they flash so that cars can see you at night.

We've taken a couple of bike rides since we got home, but nothing major. One day I went out by myself for about 40 miles. It seemed so insignificant after what we'd done!

Mostly, we remember the great people we met and those are the stories we tell over and over and those stories keep the glow going. Our favorite stories are: Pat & Darrell here at Julian; Steve at Pine Top and how he just let us take his car for the day; the "cantaloupe truck driver" in Quartzite; the guy from Mississippi; Pie Town; Hot Springs; the guy who gave us a ride to Graceland; Del & Alf; Billy; Rosemarie & Hugh; and the Pennsylvania hills! (We saw an article after we got back about a guy who bicycled from Washington State to Cape Cod on Rte 6, and he said he almost gave up in Pennsylvania because of the hills!)

We got a wonderful welcome from Pat here on Saturday morning, complete with hugs and praise. She and Darrell are taking us out for dinner tonight!

Yesterday we drove to Brawley and took some pictures to fill in some of the gaps. Funny, now – the Travel Lodge in Brawley looks pretty good! But when we stayed there we thought it was the pits. Of course, at that point, we had no idea what was ahead of us. Your standards change pretty quickly when your choices are limited!

We learned a lot about our country and were "awakened" to how non-yuppie most of the country is. We were also very surprised to find out how much of the country is "dry" (no alcohol). We picked up "y'all" around Oklahoma and didn't lose it till Ohio.

A great trip, a great experience, a great accomplishment; lots of wonderful people. America is NOT what you see on TV!

Other things I remember:

- Slathering on #30 sunscreen every single morning and yearning for the day when I wouldn't have to.
- Being virtually soaking wet every day from Oklahoma till we got home, and learning to just live with it.
- How good Gatorade Citrus Cooler tasted.
- How great it was to find Hershey's chocolate milk drink around mid-morning.
- How great it was to be physically exhausted instead of mentally/emotionally exhausted.
- How good A/C and a shower felt at the end of the day.
- Two MacDonald's breakfast burritos and a large Coke were good for 50 miles.

July 9, 1997
Home: One Year Later

So it's been exactly one year since we completed our bike trip. Wow! Still hard to believe we did it.

A few changes since we got back:

- My sock-tan lines are gone.
- My bangs are grown out.
- I quit my job in January and have been "semi-retired" since February 1st – it's a great lifestyle if we can figure out how to afford it!
- We're NOT in as good shape!
- We now think that, yes, we would do it again!

The trip really changed my mental attitude about bicycling. I no longer think anything about going off for a "casual" ride of 50 or 60 miles! (... unfortunately, I haven't done that too often lately, but did just do 60 miles on the 4th with not a single sore muscle the next day!). And the heat doesn't bother me as much as it used to.

We're planning our 25th wedding anniversary celebration – a bit delayed. We'll celebrate in October, not August. We're doing a tour (car, not bike!) of the Southwest – Zion, Bryce, Grand Canyon, Santa Fe. Also planning stops at The Meadows Inn in Pinetop, Datil, and Pie Town. We'll be retracing some of our route.

We still haven't sorted out the 625 slides!!

I still have fun reading through my journals and remembering the trip. What an adventure!!

At Christmastime, our friends and families gave us lasting mementos: Gwynne had the Paris, TN newspaper article beautifully framed. And Haydie gave me a mousepad with our welcome-home photo on it!