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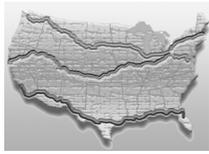
# Bicycle

from Sea to Shining Sea

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# The Rides

I love bicycling! There are so many different ways to enjoy the sport. Some race. Lance Armstrong's seven consecutive wins have made the Tour de France known to Americans. Some explore the far reaches of wilderness on mountain bikes. Some enjoy nature with their families on converted rails to trails, safe from motorized vehicles. Some tootle about meeting and greeting their neighbors and seeing how others keep and adorn their homes. Some ride tricycles, some of which are low-slung aerodynamic machines. Some sit on lounge chairs atop recumbent bicycles. Whichever form and whatever way, many are enjoying a fabulous sport. Some take a week's vacation to pedal across a state. Some of us pedal from sea to shining sea across the United States on our bicycles.

Bicycling at a zippy twenty-five miles per hour is a tremendously joyous feeling. The movement is not only in the forward direction, but also surges me up, floats me down, and sways me from side to side. At these zippier speeds, my body often experiences weightlessness as the road crests, then drops away. As the wheels swiftly roll into dips in the road surface, then in a flash, abruptly rise up to me out of that dip, my bike leaps into my arms. Leaning through turns is freeing. When a sudden and alarmingly sharp wind surges from the side, animal instincts maintain my upright balance. Those physical sensations invade my psyche, calm my mind's chatter, and soothe my soul.

At that quick twenty-five mile per hour pace, I can easily bicycle

one hundred miles. In bicycling speak, one hundred miles is “a century”; thus I would pedal a century in four hours. I can be continuously on the bike, in the saddle, for two hours before I need to rest and allow my muscles a change of activity. At those twenty-five mph speeds, on a century ride, I have to stop only one time, fifty miles into the ride. At my next stop, I have completed cycling one hundred miles.

I really treasure those days. They may be every day occurrences for racers. I have had only a few stretches of such experiences. The downhill routes just do not continue downhill long enough. The days with strong winds are rarely continuously going the direction of my route. Truth is, without descents or strong tailwinds, my riding abilities move me along at a pokey, yet joyous, average pace of ten to twelve miles per hour. Some mornings with flat, smooth roads and no headwinds, I start out strong and enjoy spinning along quickly. About twenty miles into the ride, I am worn out and return to my normal ten to twelve mph pace.

There are an incredibly large number of industry-supporting bicycling enthusiasts who are not motivated to be racers. I am one of them. I love bicycling. I love exploring an area on my bike, and there are always new areas to explore.

!\*\*\*\*\*!  
!\* Picture – Map – USA – 3 crossings \*!  
!\*\*\*\*\*!

I have bicycled across the United States, from sea to shining sea, three times. Each coast-to-coast crossing was with a different bicycle touring organization. In 2002, at the age of forty-seven, I bicycled across the southern coast-to-coast route. In 2003, I bicycled across the northern tier on “The Big Ride Across America.” When events presented themselves that I would have time off from work in 2005, I impulsively jumped at the opportunity to experience the central

## Why We Ride

Why do we bicycle across the United States? There are so many answers. For some it is the mountain; it is there. It is an excellent way to meet the local people across the country. It broadens one's horizons by experiencing the land that others live in, seeing their homes, communities, and way of life, and by meeting and talking with these people.

Some people have to set a goal and prove that they can achieve it. Michelle Sahle, from Glen Oaks, New York, cycled across the country to prove to her boss that he was wrong. He said that she could not do it. In 2004, in defiance, Michelle bicycled from the Pacific Ocean to the Atlantic Ocean. Her boss was wrong. She did it.

Some bicycling enthusiasts dream for years of cycling coast to coast. They truly want to pedal their bicycles continuously, every inch, from sea to shining sea. When Neil Sardinas from King of Prussia, Pennsylvania, was a teenager, he wanted to pedal across the country with some high school friends. Instead he went to college. After college he longed to join college friends setting off to pedal the crossing. Instead Neil got married. Now with his two exceptional, intelligent daughters in their teenage years, finally Neil made his dream, since his teenage years, come true. He had procrastinated long enough, and he was ready for his turn. In 2005, when he was fifty-something, Neil rearranged his life and made the time so that he could pedal his bicycle every inch from the Pacific Ocean at San Francisco, California, to the Atlantic Ocean at Portsmouth, New

Hampshire.

A few people have taken on the challenge as a means of losing weight. That can be very dangerous. The day after day physical demands of the body burn huge volumes of calories and definitely build great muscle mass. The danger is in not sustaining a sufficient amount of nutrition for the body's accelerated needs, thereby risking weakness and sickness.

Andy Hiroshima of Sacramento, California, commented that some use the cross-country experience as a way to get away from something. Perhaps they are trying to make sense of, adjust to, accept, and overcome a loss, sadness, or tragedy in their lives. Bicycling is excellent therapy. Certainly it is a way for a person to clear their mind.

Some people bicycle coast to coast simply to see this vast nation. For some it is that sense of freedom and independence – the American spirit. Stirred by vicariously living as the cowboys on television that they grew up with, it can satisfy that frontier spirit. It can fulfill a sense of rugged individualism. Being out there on a bicycle powered by our own physical capabilities settles restlessness. Bicycles provide autonomy and mobility. Things Americans love.

## Other's Crossings

Bob Morgan

The tenth day of cycling across the Northern Crossing,

## Adversities

Our average daily bicycling distance was eighty-five miles. With the day after day, week after week of cycling, saddle sores developed where we cyclists never had problems before on one-week tours. Muscle pains got relief from acetaminophen, naproxen sodium, or ibuprofen, but until the tour was completed, our bodies never got the rest required to recover those hard-worked muscles.

We start bicycling very early every morning, but because of the long distances that we must cover, the energy-sapping heat cannot be avoided. The sun bakes and burns our skin and dehydrates our bodies. Climbs slow us, and if we push ourselves too hard, knee problems force us off of our bikes for days. Even flatlands beat us up by our being in the same gear and in the same seated cycling position for hour after hour after hour. Headwinds slow us, keep us out there longer, and contribute to dehydrating us.

In the high altitudes over the mountain ranges, cold rains sap our energy, our progress, and our enthusiasm. Mornings of thick fog bring us danger as delivery trucks cannot see that we are there. Rough road surfaces pummel our upper bodies and destroy our momentum of spinning and rolling swiftly. Rumble strips pound our arms and shoulders. Drainage grates menacingly lurk in the blacktop like Jaws in the ocean waters. Bitter drivers subject us to their insanity.

The gypsy life of, every day, packing all of our belongings into a duffel bag and pushing on to another destination is wearisome, even without the extreme physical, bicycling demands. In two month's

## Headwinds

I do not know where the term predominant westerly winds came from. They do not exist! On all three of my eastbound, coast-to-coast tours, we crossed the plains states biting into strong headwinds. As I write this, we are on our eighteenth day of pushing into headwinds. Ok, I exaggerate. We did have one day with tailwinds pushing us. It was a “short” day – only fifty-six miles. We were able to enjoy being in, off the bike, and having time to do laundry. Yup! Laundry! That is what we were all excited to have time to do. The Laundromat was one block from the motel. We had been on the road enough days that we all had plenty of dirty clothes. With the tailwind on this “short” day, we were thrilled not only to have the joy of so easily pedaling fifty-six miles, we were thrilled to be doing laundry!

On my northern crossing, we had a particularly challenging, continuous, direct, fifty mph, headwind for thirty-five totally straight miles of our route across South Dakota. Even the fast, strong cyclists could average only six to eight miles per hour into that nonstop gale. For me, it required an extreme effort to maintain five mph into that unrelenting infinite blast. It was going to take about seven hours for me to cross that thirty-five mile stretch.

A huge farm tractor came by going in my direction. I mustered energy to pick up my pace and slid in tight behind it. Immediately the sounds of the continuous winds in my ears subsided, replaced now with the sounds of the diesel engine and the clanging implement being towed. I do not know what piece of farm machinery it was, but it was BIG! – South Dakota plains size. Big! It vastly occupied the entire vehicle lane. Na na na na na nah to the wind. The implement it was pulling was some kind of rake. The many hard thick metal tines rose up vertically from their mounts then made about an eighteen inch arch downward to the ground. As the tractor zipped down that South Dakota road with me closely in tow, the trailing implement

# The Joys

Bicycling coast-to-coast with an organized tour company allows our minds to be free. We connect with, delight in, and harmoniously integrate into nature. The crossing transmutes our bodies into the best shapes. The experience broadens our minds and ignites our spirits. As the journey awakens all of our senses, we experience the joy of aliveness. We attain an incomparable appreciation for the vastness and variety of this rich nation. Sharing the journey with others, who also experience the trials and tribulations, heightens and extends the joy and ecstasy of the accomplishment. From college students to baby boomers to the seventy-something's, we are inspired by others who we cross and bond with.

## Our Minds Are Free

As they do all of the work, the tour company makes the crossing a vacation for us. We are removed from having to plan and schedule the day, the week, the next week, and the many weeks after that. We eat, we sleep, and we ride wherever the tour company tells us. It is not a dream, but a true removal from our stress-filled, day-to-day lives; it is a real vacation. These crossings become fifty consecutive days for grown-ups to be young at heart, go out, and play.

We do not have to handle money or other payment. In the

opens my perceptions. The dirt devil, dancing left and right and forward and back with its patter as it sweeps closer, seems to be enticing me to come dance with it. With my eyes closed, I feel that lively devil as it crosses over and around me and dusts my sweaty, sun-screened body with true grit. After it passes, I giggle of having been swept by the dancing devil.

We flow into and with the fragrances of the rose bushes along the property-line fence rail. The damp, earthy, pine-infused redolence of the Pacific Northwest seems to permeate into our blood. The thick salt air along the coast seems to cleanse and heal even our mental and emotional wounds. The sweet scents of honeysuckle lighten our heads. The dry southwest air with its subtle auras of rock and tumbleweed accentuate the earthen colors in the 360-degree views of vast, rugged, open, unpopulated, and glorious earth.

### Easier Than Walking

A great benefit of bicycling is that with very little physical exertion, we can roll. Even if our bicycling is slow, we are making progress toward our destination. I can bicycle one hundred miles just about any day. I think it is much easier than running, hiking, or walking ten miles. Many of my friends have taken on the challenge of walking twenty miles a day with the 3-Day Walk benefiting the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation. With walking, if I do not pick up that foot and press on, through blisters or foot, ankle, knee, or leg pains of the previous day's endeavors, I will not make progress toward the current day's goal. On my bike, I press that pedal a little and roll a lot.

Another benefit of bicycling compared to walking is that I am not pestered with bugs biting my skin and sucking my blood. There is

Looney and Astrid Berg, both of Seattle, Washington. They each provide inspiration to all of us.

### You Can Do It

There are few other countries of the world that are as vast as the United States and are also covered by so many smooth and wide road surfaces. When Andy Hiroshima of Sacramento, California, told his friend that he was going to bicycle across the country, his friend suggested that he might want to choose a smaller country.

Bicycling coast to coast is for those people who live an active lifestyle and desire an active vacation. Although it is very challenging, it is way more rewarding than many other kinds of adventures. Engaging and physically demanding the performance of your body rewards your mind and soul. The experience will be more memorable because of your achievements. You will develop tight bonds of friendship with your cycling tour companions as you overcome the adversities together. Give thanks for your health, your abilities, and your physical gifts, which you have, and use them.

Should you choose to venture a cross-country ride, be confident that you can do it. Determine if your goal is to do as much as you enjoy or every inch. One of the wonderful things of bicycling is how you will be able to just keep rolling a little bit further. Even easy pressure on your legs and pedals will keep you progressing along. This is your chance to take delight in your health and your blessings and experience wherever you currently are in this great nation. Think of what history the area has to tell.

I would like to pedal across the United States again. I would take more time to stop and talk with local people along the route. My being able to bicycle a bit faster may allow me stop longer and try to

Michael Whelan and give him a special twenty-first birthday present.

### Deluxe Camp Food

After friends, family, and staff took many group photos on tax day, Monday, April 15, 2002, we pedaled away in a cool California rain westward to the Pacific Ocean. For our next two nights we tented at campgrounds along the coast. Our dinners these nights were not like anyone would expect of a camping night. TK&A hired Randy Abbers to prepare the meals at the campgrounds, and this man knows how to please hungry bicyclists. Mouth watering aromas of grilled chicken and grilled beef spread through our camp area as we set up our tents. There was no shortage of chicken, beef, broccoli, cauliflower, potatoes, salad, and for carbo-loading aficionados, spaghetti too. It was all deliciously seasoned.

Out of his humble pickup camper or the modest trailer in tow, Randy constructed his kitchen and catering facilities. He set up an industrial-sized, propane-fired grill for the chicken and beef. Another industrial-sized camp grill steamed the fresh broccoli and cauliflower, boiled the water for the spaghetti, and had another burner to heat the sauce. It was the sound of the gas-powered blender, however, that pulled our attention to Randy's cooking area. How many campers do you know that carry a gasoline-powered blender? Out of the carafes poured perfectly frothy margaritas. Wahoo! Party! We were cycling with a group that likes to have fun. It was a wonderful accent for enjoying our Pacific Coast campground and a perfect way to begin our Southwest experience.

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!\* Picture            Blender & Randy's food

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heat. In those areas, I needed to seek water to cool my body temperature. I stopped once to soak myself in a cattle trough. Another time, I found a meager trickle of a stream where I could get wet and cool down. It was along this stretch, when I was exhausted and dehydrated, that Forrest Roberts of Los Angeles was assisting me by allowing me to draft him. At one weary time, I stopped concentrating on my cycling, and in that brief nanosecond, I rolled up on to Forrest's wheel and was thrust over my handlebars. On the way through the air, in my tumble, my ribs rammed into the right break hood of my handlebars. Ohhhh, the pain. I had not broken ribs, but the pain was intense – for weeks. Have sympathy for anyone who bruises his or her ribs. It truly hurts to breathe. And do not make them laugh – that hurts even more. Do not expect a speedy recovery either. It takes many weeks to begin to feel any relief of that pain. Yet with the marvel of modern painkillers, I continued to ride and treasure the sights and experiences of Washington, Idaho, and Montana.

Having worked in a start-up company developing products enabling high-speed Internet access over the electric power lines, I was thrilled to see the monument to our modern development when we bicycled into Grand Coulee, Washington. The Grand Coulee Dam, the largest concrete structure ever built, is the largest producer of hydroelectric power in the United States and is the third largest hydroelectric facility in the world. Built on the Columbia River, its construction began in 1933 for purposes of controlling irrigation to the otherwise arid, high desert, for eliminating flooding, and also for generating power. In 1942, power generation became its top priority, supplying electricity to the Northwest aluminum industry for the nation's needs in support of the Second World War. Upstream, the dam forms Lake Roosevelt, which extends 150 miles to the Canadian border. We bicycled by massive electric power distribution switchyards as we approached from the hills west of the dam. The

switchyards are supplied from the dam's generators by hundreds of five-inch thick lines with one and a half inch thick oil-impregnated insulation. The eleven 230 kilovolt and the five 500 kilovolt transmission lines leaving the switchyards deliver power to most all of Washington and much of northern Oregon.

“Boogie woogie, woogie ... You can't see it. It's electric. Boogie woogie, woogie ... Ooh, it's shocking. It's electric. Boogie woogie, woogie ... You can't hold it. It's electric. Boogie woogie, woogie ... You can't do without it. It's electric. Boogie woogie, woogie.” (Bunny Wailer, *Electric Boogie*)

### Going to the Sun

The northern crossing route organized by TK&A took the cyclists through Glacier National Park in Montana and on the Going to the Sun Road, a truly exceptional route. The date was June 14, the last day until fall that bicyclists would be permitted on the narrow, twisty road after 11:00 am. We started on the western valley floor and cycled along the crystal clear, deep glacier waters of Lake McDonald. This route rises from 3,153 feet at the lake to 6,646 feet at Logan Pass. We looked up at long majestic waterfalls descending from the mountains in the mist far above us. We pedaled on, along switchbacks to the left and right and left and right and through tunnels cut into the mountain rock. By mid morning we viewed the waterfalls from their centers. Thunderous water was coming from above and crashing far, far below us where we had been that morning. Along one area of the road, named the Weeping Wall, the water showers over the cliff wall on to the edge of the roadway. We pedaled parallel to it and played and cycled in and under it. As we made our ascent, we occasionally stopped to pull on another layer of

to pay a dentist to renew my sophisticated smile.

### White Turkey

We bicycled 367 miles across Ohio in four days. Much of our route followed the Cardinal Trail Bike Route (CT), which traveled through farmland on low-traffic, back roads, skirting by most all of the towns. There were times when the communities were too avoided, when we needed a convenience store to restock our hydration or a deli or restaurant for substantial food. Sports or energy bars, trail mix, and snacks just do not cut it for lunch when we are cycling eighty-five miles day after day after day. We need real, solid food! Just one mile before we crossed into Pennsylvania, we got the best reward for that Ohio crossing when we came to the White Turkey Drive-In in Conneaut. Eddie and Marge Tuttle's family business was raising White Holland Turkeys, and in 1952, they also opened their White Turkey Drive-In. This preserved gem is one of the original Richardson's Root Beer stands. Richardson's Root Beer originated in Rochester, New York, in the 1940's. This original, All-American drive-in is now owned and operated by their son, Gary, and his wife, Peggy. They continue to raise White Holland Turkeys, which keep them busy through the winter months with preparations for the delicious turkey sandwiches served during the busy summer season. The root beer floats were another specialty that we enjoyed, as we sat at their cheery, brightly painted, fun, and clean, original outdoor counter, reliving the 1950's era as songs, such as "Blue Suede Shoes," "Blueberry Hill," "No Particular Place to Go," and "Be Bop A Lula" completed the perfect atmosphere. If it is summer and you are traveling Interstate-90 across the Pennsylvania-Ohio border, I highly recommend that you take exit 241, north to U.S.

Route 20, and savor a feast at the White Turkey Drive-In.

## New York

On our forty-fifth day, we bicycled a nearly flat eighty-two miles along Lake Erie from Erie, Pennsylvania, to Hamburg, New York. We quickly showered and put on our street clothes. Our America by Bicycle staff was driving us in the vans to visit the Pedaling History Bicycle Museum. If you get anywhere near the Buffalo, New York, region, be sure to visit this place. Displays show numerous automotive innovations that were initially developed for bicycles. The first rack and pinion steering system was developed for a bicycle. The first differential drive system was developed for a bicycle. The museum has originals of these and many other mechanical marvels. An Irish veterinarian desiring to make his bicycle ride smoother created the first pneumatic tire for a bicycle. His name is Dunlap. In 1880-1890, the League of American Wheelmen lobbied for better roads for their high wheel bicycles. This organization evolved into what is now the American Automobile Association. The displays of the many intricate functioning machines created by comrades of Wilbur and Orville Wright show the ingenuity of the era.

We bicycled across the northern side of the Finger Lakes region. Glaciers augured these lakes to incredible depths. Although averaging only two miles wide, Lake Seneca's depth is more than 630 feet, with 180 feet below sea level. It has been the sight of testing U.S. submarines and submarine radar. The great depths can easily be imagined when it is time to pedal east or west up from the lakeshore. The steep grades that make these narrow lakes so deep extend out of the waters to the mountains on their sides. Immediately we are geared into our lowest granny gears, very slowly struggling to the top.