

# *Freewheeler News*

## *Special Edition October 2024*



### ***Biking with Lili***

#### ***"From Sea to Shining Sea"***

#### **Part Four**

***July 18 – July 24, 1997    R & R @ Fairchild AFB Spokane, WA***

What a happy accident that out of all the places in the world my wonderful son Frank and his loving wife Carol could be deployed, the Air Force has stationed them here in Spokane, Washington! We sorely need a rest, and a rest with loving family will be like an IV of TLC! We have ridden across the continent, except for the final state. The problem is that I have become weary. Not weary of mountains, miles, wind or rain. Those are all nothing compared to the idiot dump truck drivers on torn up Route 2 in Northern WA. Their deadly game with us was a murderous game of chicken, to see if they could scare us off what remained of the bumpy under construction highway into a parallel ten-mile-long gaping drainage ditch, half filled with large jagged, sharp rocks two or three feet below our frail skinny bike tires. Those moron cowards forced us to ride on the brink of disaster as they roared by us at frightening speeds inches away, blasting their air brake tanks. They were so close I could feel the greasy heat of their smelly oil burning diesels. For sure if we lost our balance or nerve and crashed into that gaping drainage ditch, it would have been a trip to the hospital, or more likely the morgue, for us, but for the convoy of idiotic dump truck drivers, it would have just been a hyena laugh over their beers. The extremes of creatures in this world never cease to amaze me. The many good souls that would be overjoyed to help you any way they possibly could, to the few goons that would kill you for a laugh. I find it totally ironic that the best things on this trip are the great people we have met and talked to every day, but unfortunately, the few bad things are also people related. The contrast between the wonderful and the wicked is so vast, it is hard to believe they are from the same planet, or even the same species. Fortunately, there have only been very few bad ones, but of course it only takes one and, on a bicycle, you are an easy target for mentally sick cowards. To me it's an outrage that they can even exist in our otherwise wonderful trip with all the great people we have met. From the moment we rode down Dakota Ave. and I saw Frank and Carol standing out there in front of their house at Fairchild AFB, the tension started pouring out of me, like the Grand Coulee dam had just burst open wide and my blood pressure was plummeting back to normal. We were safe again, although I think sweet Lili was just so happy with this whole trip, she refused to acknowledge anything at all

bad or negative about it. Nasty thorns just do NOT exist in Lili's rose gardens, but for me there was no way I could deny the truth, no matter how much I wanted to. For the most part this trip was great! I know it would not be the way to go for everyone, but personally it's by far the best experience I've ever had in my long and varied cycling career. It's true we've had days of vicious relentless headwinds, dozens of broken spokes, more than a few blowouts, some rainstorms of biblical proportions and occasional dark clouds of vampire mosquitoes. I can shrug off all those nasty things as just being part of long-distance bicycle touring, that were more than compensated for by the joys and beauty of the trip. But those unbelievable jerks that thought they were perfectly justified in using their 25,000 lb. diesel mega monsters, to try and scare us into a death ditch, were just too much for me. I needed time to rest and recover!

In the next five days Frank and Carol did everything they possibly could to make our R&R perfect and slowly but surely, I forgot ..... almost. I would much rather remember all the great people we met, than give any thought to a few rotten, unhappy idiots. There were birthday parties for both me (slightly belated) and Lili right on her day, July 23rd. Trips down to the beautiful Spokane city park, where we rode on the exquisite antique hand carved carousel, walked through the lovely arboretum, and watched people catching trout from the bridges over the Spokane River, as its sparkling waters cascaded over awesome waterfalls. We ate great home cooked meals and had enough restaurant dinners out to make all of our cold oatmeal breakfasts and peanut butter lunches become a distant memory. Frank had a beautiful inboard speed boat that he towed with his nifty jeep. We visited three or four of the crystal blue lakes in the area and I might have even caught a fish or two. We zipped along under the big western sky, completely surrounded by volcanic mountains. I could not help thinking that being stationed here in this gorgeous area and being able to live in a house and keep jeeps and boats, etc. is pretty nice duty, if you can get it.

We also did a little shopping, and I picked up a new pair of biking shoes, one size bigger. My old ones were falling apart and stunk so bad from wet weather, I would not wear them inside any place decent. And on a more somber note, we got our flight tickets home for Sept 1st. and that made us realize that this trip of a lifetime was sadly, slowly winding down. BUT the road doesn't end here, there is still a lot more to see and a powerful magnetic force is once again pulling us and urging us onward to that other ocean. We finally said good night and goodbye to Carol who would be going off early to work and then turned in around eleven.

**7/24/97      Fairchild AFB to Grand Coulee, WA      79 mi.      Total trip mi. 4534**

Next morning around 8 AM Frank hopped on his bike and rode with us out past the big tank with its giant cannon pointed right at our heads and out through the Fairchild AFB gate. We said our heartfelt thank you's, waved goodbye as Frank rode back in past the tank to his air force life, and we headed down Route 2 west to find the Pacific Ocean. I had many emotions as we parted. First of all, I was happy to be doing this great trip! And very happy to have been able to find Frank and Carol just when I really needed them! And of course, extremely happy to be riding with such a pleasant companion as Sweet Lili! The miles went quickly by and when we pulled into Preston for a lunch stop, we had already done 45 easy ones. We found some lonely unused picnic benches behind the town hall and had our lunch exactly at twelve noon, again showing us the value of an early start. We ate lunch and headed out to Grand Coulee and got there around 4:30. We went down to the dam, took a few pictures of this very impressive concrete wonder and got back on Route 174. Later when we came to an RV Park we decided to stop for the night, and it proved to be one of the better RV parks we have been to on this trip. Naturally I much prefer a wooded streamside camp rather than an aluminum parking lot, but you can't always find what you want, where you want, and for nine bucks we had a good warm shower and a nice picnic table. All the comforts of home, at least when you're bike camping. Lili picked us a bunch of wild raspberries right next to our tent, so there was an element of nature, even here in tin city. I had to reposition my rear panniers, because my new shoes are size 14 and the old ones were only size 13, so my heels were now rubbing on every pedal stroke. Little things are sometimes great big things on a bike trip. I also raised the seat and handlebars about ¼ in. and I'm ready to roll! Roll on down to Lake Chelan tomorrow to decide if we want to take that \$22 boat trip on the day liner. We have been riding in the Columbia Basin, and the terrain since we left Spokane has been fairly flat, considering that this state is studded with volcanic mountains. It has also been very dry, almost desert-like in some places, since we are in the eastern rain shadow of the Cascade Mountains.

We slept well despite being surrounded by high tension transmission lines from the power dam. There was a constant, slightly ominous, subliminal hum, and I could only imagine the magnetic field we were in, but it did not seem to bother us too much. We rolled out of the RV Park at eight-thirty and started climbing West Mountain on 174. We climbed a mile and a half and turned off onto a road that went to the Crown Point view place and then zoomed down steeply back another mile and a half to the actual point. We were painfully aware we would have to climb this sucker yet **again**, on our way back up to the main route. I was able to get several good pictures of the dam, which is the largest cement structure in the world. If you built a highway out of the cement, it would go from coast to coast! There was also what I would describe as a sort of temple to the cement gods. It was done in classic Greek styling and was very nice, although as far as I could see, it is not the least bit utilitarian or necessary. Actually, back in the 30's and early 40's many people felt that way about the dam itself! It was the biggest cement thing on earth, but some felt it was not needed and for sure, it ruthlessly took away the salmon and lifestyle of the native people here. When I thought I had used up enough film, we hit the road again and began to climb the rest of West Mountain. At first it looked like the top was six miles from the campground and pretty steep most of the way too! But even after struggling up six miles, we continued to climb and when I last checked my odometer, we had done 14 miles and were **still** climbing intermittently. About then the wind started up in our faces and it didn't take us long to realize we would rather be climbing a long **West Mountain** than fighting a never-ending **Headwind Mountain**. The area around here had now become a no man's land and was almost completely devoid of any sign of habitation, in fact in the next 30 miles I saw just one ranch! If it wasn't for the occasional car on the road we could have been on a remote island, or even on a far distant planet, billions of light years away. After bucking the wind for hours and hours through wide open, lonely fields of waving grain, we finally came to the town of Bridgeport and went into a food store. We wouldn't dare pass this place up, there might not be another for days, or so it seemed. But as it turned out, 6 miles down the road there **was** another town called Brewster and **it** even had a McDonald's! We immediately pulled in there, of course! The map said we now had approximately twenty-five miles to Lake Chelan and it was almost four PM. It was downriver, so it might even be downhill. And it **did** turn out to be slightly down at that, until the last 8 miles back up to the lake. We made it with daylight to spare and rode on down the main street. There were dozens of motels, but every one of them had a bright neon sign shouting out, **NO VACANCY** in the fading light. Chelan is a resort town and there are many events to keep the visitors busy. There are music festivals and the many wineries in the area are always having parties of some sort. So, we continued on down around to the South Shore of the lake, crossed a little bridge over the lake's outlet stream and pulled into a parking lot to check our map. While we were turning sharply Lili's foot hit her lightweight plastic front fender, which buckled onto her front tire and caused her to fall. No damage to Lili from this, her third minor spill of the trip, but I sure hoped that there wouldn't be any more. Even a minor spill can break bones if you happen to land wrong. Some passing kids told us where the Tour Boat docked, and we hurried over to their office. The Lady at the desk told us we could leave our bikes in the storage building tomorrow and said our best bet for a place to stay tonight was the city park. The park was jammed full of weekend party people and the chain link fence that surrounded the entire perimeter seemed to bulge outward and throb from the pressing crowd of people inside. But since we had no car and bicyclists are usually given any opportunity possible, they let us put up our small tent on a little piece of unoccupied grass that we somehow managed to find. Even in that overflowing crowd of fun seekers, we fell asleep immediately, if not sooner!

We were up, had breakfast, camp broken, with bikes and gear stored for the day in the Chelan Boat Company's warehouse by 10 of 8. The boat was pretty empty on our trip and since we had more warm clothes than many of the other passengers, we went to the open forward decks where we could better enjoy the stunning views of the long winding fjord like lake. Up on the steep slopes of the shoreline cliffs we saw lots of waterfalls and here and there some hard to pick out, in spite of their whiteness, mountain goats. There were also some glaciers and always the awesome towering walls around Lake Chelan cradling our little canoe. Actually, "The Lady of the Lake" is **not a**

*little canoe* by any means. It is a rugged all metal ship that can carry up to 285 passengers at 15 MPH. It's built to withstand gentle beaching and does so to let people on and off at various places along the long lake. Some locations had primitive homemade docks, but at just as many others, the captain kept the engine running and just nosed her into shore and held her there. It must be a very rugged ship to withstand all of those repeated groundings. We sat up front on the top deck and had a lovely time just relaxing in the sunshine. Every 10 miles or so, our boat would point her bow toward shore, and we would pull into some tiny rickety landing to let a few passengers off and/or perhaps take on a few new people. As we got further down the lake the surrounding mountains started getting prettier and prettier. We could see orchards up on the top slopes with cherry trees and a few scattered houses. Soon the houses started to peter out and there did not seem to be any more roads. Actually, there may have been some little dirt roads hiding in the forest, and there definitely were some glaciers of frozen snow oozing downhill through the woods on their slow, relentless journey to the lake.

Lake Chelan is a little over 55 miles long and varies between 1 and 2 miles wide. It is 1500 feet deep of gin clear, glacier fed water. We continued down to its end and docked at Stehekin. There was a real dock there and as we walked up the boardwalk from the lake, we came upon a cute little cabin with a sign proclaiming it to be "the house that Jack built". It turned out to be a gift shop which we browsed but resisted in honor of our already overloaded bikes. The boat ride was about 4 hours each way and the layover here was another hour and a half. The ride back was equally beautiful and in addition had lots of wave runners coming out to join us and jump our wake 4 or 5 thousand times. They tried everything possible to outdo each other and made it plain to see why that type of watercraft has so many accidents. Fortunately, there were none on our trip.

When we got back to Chelan, we disembarked and retrieved our beasts of burden. The day's short bike jaunt took us mostly downhill to Entiat, a small town on the Columbia River. We got the next to the last picnic table at the campground. They were having their annual fair, and we were lucky to find a campsite. After we got set up, Lili went over to a food stand and got us some Vietnamese noodles and chicken. There wasn't much else to do and the long breezy boat trip had tired us out, so we called it a day and crawled into our sleeping bags. We were happy that we had done the boat trip. It was a beautiful day to be out on the water and it was a nice change for us to relax awhile and travel by boat instead of heavy bikes that need to be pedaled. Now we are rested and ready to cross those Cascade Mountains that are looming over us.

**7/27/97 Entiat to Blewett, WA**

**52mi.**

**Total trip mi. 4692**

The breakfast chuck wagon was not open yet, so we left and found ourselves in Wenatchee, where the only restaurant open before 10 am was an all you can eat buffet place and we ate much more than you *should* eat. After our breakfast/lunch pig out we went out on Route 2 and left the river to start climbing the Cascade Mountains. We spent a lot of time in the touristy, but still pretty Bavarian look-a-like village of Leavenworth, nestled at the foot of the mountains. Flower boxes were overflowing everywhere in joyous color, but not so joyously, I ran over some glass and had a flat on the rear tire. I then spent an hour replacing the tube and digging out all the glass fragments from the tire. We finally started our long climb over Blewett Pass, but shortly came upon a really nice private campground on the banks of Peshshastin Creek. We couldn't resist its charm and got a perfect site right next to the little babbling trout brook. It was early for us to stop, and we had not even begun what promised to be a long hard climb. But we just could not pass up this special resting place and after pitching our little one and a half person Eureka we went for a swim in the camp's pool, did some laundry and had a nice little supper. Then we called my old Sparta, NJ friends the Bergerons, the parents of Jeff Bergeron, who we had visited on our way through Colorado. Al and Carol were now living in Mukilteo, WA, a little north of Seattle. Al was very happy to hear from us and said that he wanted us to stop at their house! I explained we were on the other side of the Cascade Mountains, and I wanted very much to go over Mt. Rainier, but we could work a visit in later, on our way to the San Juan Islands. Al, a captain for TWA, said he was currently on the off cycle of his flight duty. He said he would be off for a couple more days and it would only be a two-hour drive for them to hop over the mountains and meet us and then drive us to their new home in Mukilteo! Now Al just *might* be the most persuasive person I have ever met, but *for sure* I have never known any man that I respect or admire more. It was Al who recycled me when I moved into his Sparta, NJ neighborhood and saved my terribly out of shape bacon in the process. So, I not only respect and admire the guy, if it were not for him getting me back on the bike, in all likelihood, I never would have survived the very high stress life he pulled me out of. And if he had not gotten me riding again, I would have never met Lili. Yeah OK, I guess I was also a

little proud of our trip and wanted to "tell all about it" to the very guy that had "recycled" me. Al continued with his persuasion, and we finally agreed to visit them, **if** we could be returned to the exact place we were picked up at. It was agreed and we picked Snoqualmie Falls as the meeting place.

**7/28/97 Blewett to Cle Elum, WA 40mi. Total trip mi. 4732**

The next day dawned bright and warm, so we just bathed in the sun beams that were streaming into our little green tent/love nest. We were as naked and free as the birds in the trees and all the other creatures large and small, twirling through space on this blue and green rock we call Earth. Listening to the elemental music of our happy little brook as it bounced by us 10 feet away was just so wonderfully relaxing, we didn't get up until the sun was high up on the mighty mountain that was glaring down at us with smug contempt. Its trees seemed to be whispering, "climb me if you can, with those ridiculously overloaded bikes of yours." Fortunately, our sweet stream side interlude had left us with a full tank of high-test determination and renewed spirit, so we left and started attacking the pass. We pedaled hard for what seemed like an hour, but every bend in the road just revealed more monster mountain to climb. The bigger pools of our tumbling trout stream started looking, "lovely dark and deep," but we "had miles to go and promises to keep." In an abstracted musing born out of struggle and sweat, I became a darting trout swimming over rocks and in between boulders, flashing up through the rips and runs and sucking all the strength and cooling I could squeeze out of the clear tumbling water alongside us. Fifteen long hard miles later, we cleared the top and began flying down the other side. When a pay phone finally appeared, we called Al and Carol again and agreed to meet near Rt. 90 in Cle Elum. We had a quick bite to eat, then rode up towards the interstate and got there exactly as Al and Carol's van came off the exit. Talk about perfect timing! After a warm extended greeting we loaded our bikes and bags in the back of the van and headed out. Al suggested we stop to see the falls, since we were already right there. So, we pulled off Route 90 and went to see the very scenic Snoqualmie Falls, took a few pictures and then started up to Mukilteo in the van. It was really great to be with the guy who was, in no small way, responsible for me being back on a bicycle and doing this great trip..... probably even responsible for me being alive!

**7/29/97 In Mukilteo and Seattle, WA 0 mi. Total trip mi. 4732**

Tuesday, we took a van trip with Al and Carol down to Seattle, walked around past the "Space Needle," saw some unique private homes and then walked downtown and went through the famous farmer's market. We watched the equally famous fish throwing method used to move large fish, as long as four feet, between the trays of cracked ice. I suppose this crazy throwing system has the dual advantages of minimizing time off the ice for the fish and maximizing entertainment for the customers. Back at Al and Carol's house, the proud grandparents showed us pictures and videos of their first granddaughter and gave us a tour of their lovely home and its beautiful gardens. The spectacular panoramic view out of their living room picture window was of Puget Sound and the San Juan Islands, where we will be heading the next time, we come this way.

**7/30/97 Cle Elum to White River (Mt. Rainier) CG, WA 44mi. Total trip mi. 4776**

On Wednesday morning at quarter after six we headed down to Sea-Tac airport with Captain Al. We told him we would be seeing him again, after we reached the Pacific and were headed out to the San Juans to rest up and chill out. Al walked into the TWA terminal wheeling his flight bag looking tall, sharp and very Captainish. We pulled away and Carol drove us back to Cle Elum where we had been picked up two days ago. We put our bikes and bags back together, said our goodbyes and thank you's, and before long we were on our way up to Mt Rainier National Park. Route 410 was a steady gradual climb that followed the White River and wandered slowly up toward the immense mountain that was playing peek-a-boo out of her fog blankets. We turned into Sunrise Park Road and passed the gate and ranger station and continued up, up and up. There were lots of switchbacks and the climb was very long and winding. We eventually crossed the river again and saw a campground slightly below our road, so we coasted down there to have a look. Our struggle with the climb was rewarded by a rare fog-less, perfectly clear view of Mt. Rainier, an awesome, stand alone, looming, white giant. We began searching for a nice place to set up our

tent and selected a site that was right on the Wonderland trailhead. We thought a hike tomorrow to the visitors center might be better than trying to climb 2,000 vertical feet in 11 miles, on the twisty Sunrise Road with our overloaded bikes.

**7/31/97 Mt. Rainier Sunrise Visitor Center 7 mile walk**

**Total trip bike mi. 4776**

We got up and put on hiking clothes instead of biking clothes and prepared to start up the Wonderland Trail to the Sunrise Visitor Center, approximately 3½ miles up through winding wooded trails. It was pretty easy going, even for legs that were hardened for biking but were now being asked to do something entirely different. It was also lovely to walk through the multicolored alpine spring flowers, just starting to emerge from their long winter nap under their deep snowy blankets. They were sprouting up to shafts of bright sunbeams streaming down through the very tall, old growth forest. Truly a beautiful painting that had come to life for us to feast our eyes upon.

The center sits at the top of the highest road in the park and has a commanding view of the Edmonds Glacier. Inside, in the middle of the room was a large table that had a 3D scale model of the mountain with the entire surrounding landscape, complete with roads and trails. On this raised, approximately 25' long highly detailed diorama, it was very easy to see our route coming into Sunrise and some horrendously long climbing loops, around a vast canyon that we will have on our way over to Paradise. It looked dauntingly awesome!

We walked over to the large picture window that looked out on the over-powering peak that was looming impossibly close. Climbers perhaps a ½ mile away were very, very tiny colorful dots that gave, at least, a small amount of perspective to the massive giant, but it was still unbelievably mind boggling huge. Mind boggling and beautiful beyond any overworked superlatives I know! It was wonderful to have this experience with the lady who had biked across the country with me and a fitting stage to ask her to marry me. Of course we had been together a long time already. "For then what's to be the reason for becoming man and wife?" (The Wedding Song – Peter, Paul and Mary) Well for one thing in my old-fashioned mind, it's the right thing to do. And if we could get along on a trip like this, over mountains and through deserts, sometimes in relentless wind day after day and sometimes in torrential rain (even snow once) well then, we might just be marriage material. To be sure, there were also many long days of glorious warm sunshine under big blue skies and some sacred desert nights, under a mind boggling vast deep purple dome studded with a trillion-billion bright diamond like stars, so if anything, we were closer for sharing all the beauty as well.

Lili said "yes" and the walk back to camp and our tent was more like floating than walking! Somehow it seemed like a lot of heavy questions were off my shoulders and my feet barely touched the ground.

**8/1/97 White River Campground to Riffe Lake, WA**

**73mi. Total trip mi. 4849 (corrected to 5,000 mi.)**

We packed up and said goodbye to our camp neighbors whose names I don't think I ever really knew. Lili and I always had referred to them as Lily's people, because we did know their dog's name was Lily. They gave us some fruit salad to help us on our way and waved goodbye as we headed out of the White River Campground and around the mountain towards Paradise. We had a long downhill back to 110 and it made us realize how much we had climbed on our way up to our camp. It had started to get hot already and I was feeling pretty weak from our unaccustomed 7 mi. round trip hike up to the Visitors Center yesterday. I regretted the downhill we were having now, because I knew we would have to regain any elevation lost when we started to climb up to Paradise. Steven's Ridge was out in the full sun and I could feel myself starting to bonk. I needed some of my Mt. Dew "hill medicine" badly, but my supply had been swallowed up many days ago. I plugged on, and on, digging into every bit of biking memory I could squeeze out of my frazzled brain. But finally, just before crashing, I had to pull over and wobble to a shaky stop. Looking far across the gaping abyss called Steven's Canyon, I could see the road we were on, winding relentlessly upward, perhaps 10 miles ahead of us. It was a very intimidating sight to this dehydrated and very weak bicycle rider. I asked Lili what she thought might help me, because I was never going to make it around this awesome canyon on a road that was clearly aiming for the sky. Now Lili is a great person to have along on a bike trip in many ways. First, she is always positive and never looks on the dark side, because in her mind there is no dark side. Also like a good girl scout, she is always prepared for any emergency. She took one look at my sorry wiped-out face and

and started to mix me up a potion. From her kitchen stuff she pulled out a plastic lemon she kept for any serendipitous fish dinners, that just might happen to swim our way. From her first aid stuff she pulled out some ancient sodium/potassium pills and mixed it all up with a large amount of sugar and water. I drank it down like my life depended on it, because it really did. In ten minutes, I was a new man! It was like magic medicine for me, truly a miracle drink and I had no trouble with the rest of Steven's Canyon or the final ascent to Paradise. We pedaled strongly and climbed steadily, each revolution of our cranks bringing us closer to the summit. We passed a lake called Reflection, but there were none that I could see. There was also a final loop that would have taken us nearer to the glacier, but there were not likely to be any better photo ops and since it was now going on to 5 PM, we decided to roll on by. To say going down was a welcome change would be the biggest understatement I can think of. Sort of like saying Mt Rainier is a big hill. As it started to accelerate, my truck bike was like rollin' thunder and the wind blowing through my hair and over my sweaty body was my heavenly reward for our long hard climb to Paradise. We flew past Cougar Rock but decided to stop in Longmire where we had dinner at the National Park Inn. After we got going again the miles continued to fly by, but so did the time and when I checked my watch it said 7:30. We stopped and put our flashers on, because the black forest night had overtaken us and smothered us up with his big black scary blanket. We passed very few places to stay and the few we did pass all had obnoxious bright red neon no-vacancy signs shouting out their lack of hospitality to weary bike riders. Riders who were now becoming very worried, because it was just too damn dark to be out here riding a dumb bicycle. The town of Elba was not really a town at all, just a little railroad junction/truck stop more or less. The only thing we saw there were some train cabooses that called themselves the Hobo Inn and we decided not to check it out. Maybe we should have.....

We came out to Route 12 and just beyond the crossing highway saw what appeared to be a dammed up river, with rising muddy water slowly engulfing the lowlands around it. There were leafless dying flooded trees along the edges of this new impoundment and way, way in the back of the hollow, I thought I spied what looked like tents. We rode in a long dirt, bumpy path to get a closer look at what dim light was left. It didn't take me long to have a strong feeling that we did not want to be here. This place did not look like a real campground at all, but more like a dump where squatters, druggies and homeless bums hung out. My first instinct was to get the hell out of there, but it was totally dark, we had ridden 73 hard miles over a very big mountain, were tired and it certainly did not look like motel city would pop up anytime soon. We rode in carefully surveying each crummy encampment we passed. There were lots of boom boxes blasting out all kinds of very loud, raucous non-music and everywhere possible to put one, were old broken-down campers, or some sort of junky tent trailers, etc., etc., etc. I was frightened to be in this spooky place, but the alternative dark, busy, high speed highway roaring by, was even more frightening. This place, as bad as it was, seemed like the lesser of two very bad evils..... maybe.....

I also figured it was at this point, better for us to keep a low profile, so I hopped off my bike and pulled it into the dense undergrowth. Lili followed me in, fighting her way through the tall, thick weeds and swampy woods. As we struggled through the jungle, it was very obvious there was no place at all to put up a tent in this dense tangle, not even our little green pup tent. So, we worked our way back over toward the messy clearing where all the squatters were piled up in mass disarray. We came out of the thicket next to a beat up, junky old Winnebago, sitting there quietly, seemingly deserted. On the edge of the clearing in front of us, was a ring of rocks that had been someone's campfire ring, but it was now devoid of any so called "campers," so I figured it was Ok for us to hide our little tent up close to the edge of the dense willow woods behind us.

**WRONG! WRONG!** I got the tent up and we had only been in our sleeping bags for a short time when two guys started a fire in the stone ring, we were 2 feet behind. I watched the sparks fly up and land right on our nylon tent fly and hoped they did not set fire to our little house with us in it. Before I could ask them to please move, our campfire pals decided to leave on their own and their fire immediately started to die down for lack of attention. No sooner had our firebug friends left, than our other lovely neighbors in the Winnebago wreck started yelling and screaming at the top of their lungs. "I want my f---n stuff", (probably drugs) yelled the woman, her profanity punctuated by crashing pots and much broken glass. It escalated violently from there to threats of bloody murder by both!! Vile cursing, loud screaming, glass smashing, the likes of which I have seldom heard. More violent even than the bloodiest barroom fights I was ever witness to, during the crazy wild drinking days of my misspent youth. And since their old camper wreck was right on top of us, we heard all their wild ranting and vicious threats like they were right in our tent. It was so bad, I seriously considered going up to the road to flag down a passing car and have them call 911. After enduring this screaming terror rampage for over an hour, we decided that it would not be a great loss if they actually did kill each other. It certainly would not have been smart for me to bang on their door with any

demands that they shut up. Likely they would have both turned their furious wrath on unarmed me. I knew they had knives, maybe guns too and of course I had to be concerned about Lili's safety, so there was not much I could do. It was a very long night, and I don't think I actually got to sleep till after 3 or 4 AM. The first vague glimmer of daylight came sheepishly tiptoeing into our scary hollow soon after and we packed up in record time and got the hell out of there. We pedaled carefully but swiftly, out the bumpy dirt path we had come in on, dodging as many potholes, puddles and rocks as we could and blasting through the rest. The silence was creepy, the boom boxes were finally silent and not a bird, beast or man disturbed the cool morning air. We got back out to Route 12 and started down the now lonesome highway. We were tired and hungry..... but at least we were alive.

**8/2/97 Riffe Lake, WA to Aberdeen, WA**

**101 mi.**

**Total trip mi. 5101**

We had more fortuitous downhill, but it was 26 miles before we found anything resembling food. That was in a gas station/coffee joint where I ingested 1500 calories of milk and crummy donuts (Lili maybe 600). We continued blasting along with beautiful views in our mirrors of Mt. Rainier and beautiful forward views of Mt. Olympus. The multiple inspirations of these lofty giants and the knowledge that we were getting very close to the Pacific Ocean inspired and supercharged us and we ground out some serious miles. We had done over 50, when we came to the Junction of Routes 5 and 12 around lunch time. There were many fast-food choices, but if last night was at all typical for this area, keeping an eye on our bikes was a top priority. We settled for the Dairy Queen's hamburgers and hot dogs. and ate outside quickly. As we were preparing to get going again, a couple came out and asked about our trip. They had recently sold their house and were planning to buy a 45' sailboat to live on. The woman had been a schoolteacher in Wyoming and was by my guess about 45 yrs old. We talked to Gail and Nick an hour and a half and there was still 50 miles to Aberdeen when we left around quarter to four. Talking to people is one of the things that we have enjoyed a lot of, but this time we had overdone it. 4 PM. is just too late in the day to start doing 50 miles on overloaded touring bikes. It did turn out that the terrain and the wind were kind to us and the miles flew nicely by on the wide shoulder of busy Route 12. Unfortunately, 12 became too much of a limited access, high speed highway and we had to get off and find parallel smaller roads. There was a good deal of nasty traffic, but we got to Aberdeen in fading daylight, around 8 PM. The first motel we saw was called the Flamingo. It was a tawdry looking, godforsaken dump and no doubt it was populated by hookers, pimps, drug dealers and other choice citizens/aliens. But darkness had, once again, completely engulfed us and was putting us in real danger of becoming bloody hood ornaments, so we grabbed a room in the seedy Flamingo. Anything had to be better than last night's adventure in Needle Park! We went out and had Kentucky Fried, the fast food mega caloric champ. But we needed mega calories and then some. We came back to the smelly room and called Captain Al to tell him where we were and try to predict our ETA to Mukilteo. By the time we were ready to get into bed I was pretty damn tired. Just then there were loud sirens and flashing red and blue bubblegum machines right outside our window! **What the hell???????????** It turned out that the guy in the next room had been in a bar fight and pulled a gun at his opponent. The cops were now ransacking the guy's room to find the missing gun. I could not believe we had bicycled across the whole continent without any real incidents, until the last two nights in a row!! It took a while for things to settle down, but eventually they did, and we fell into sorely needed catatonic sleep.

**8/3/97 Aberdeen, WA to South Beach, WA**

**72 mi.**

**Total trip mi. 5173**

We got on the road with one thought. Today we would be getting to that other ocean! This has been such an epic and mostly wonderful trip, getting to the Pacific will just be the icing on the cake. I guess it's true; it is really about the journey and not so much about the final destination. We started up 101 and had only gone 25 miles or so, when we came across a beautiful picnic bench. It was only 11 AM but we followed our rule of not passing up scarce picnic tables and stopped, because this one was especially nice. It looked down on our happy little winding blacktop road and seemed to say, come sit and smell the roses (or in this case, the lovely smelling, warm pine woods) When we continued on our way after our early lunch, the miles floated by like a beautiful dream. It was a quiet sunny afternoon, and our rolling ribbon of blacktop through the fragrant pine forest was just perfect for not hurrying. I was letting this ride, this whole day fill up my senses, so someday when I have grown too old to bike, I will still have this memory.

Even though our little winding road had only gentle rollers, there were awesome towering white caps all



around us. It was as though the high peaks had gathered around just to witness our grand ocean arrival, or just to be a spectacular background for our eyes. Having these lofty beauties all around us, I was (we were) once again, very happy we had ridden east to west, despite our many struggles with the evil wicked wind witch of the west! After we had done 70 lovely miles and no ocean had appeared in the distance, I began to wonder just where a very big ocean like the Pacific could be hiding. I saw a guy walking along towards us and asked him, probably sounding pretty foolish, how far it was to the water. He assured me it was only down the next hill and so we rolled down and down through a long corridor of giant conifers, with the snowcapped Olympic Mountains looking over our shoulders. In a heartbeat or two we emerged out of our shady tree tunnel, and there were blue waves rolling up on an unbelievably beautiful wild beach.

Lili and I embraced and just stood there silently watching the late afternoon sun shimmering on the Pacific Ocean, because we could not find any words that were grand enough to say what we were feeling. Over 5,000 miles through 14 states, 3 Canadian provinces, at least 5 national parks and dozens of state parks and forests, and many, many great people along the way. Mountains, rolling hills, prairies, big towns, small towns, deserts, forests, proud wide rivers and little babbling trout streams, wide windy lakes and quiet little beaver ponds, we had endured and enjoyed, suffered and delighted more than words could ever tell!

While I was putting up our tent right on the edge of the bluff overlooking the largest and deepest body of water in the world, Lili rode three miles up the coast on 101 to the little village of Kalaloch. She found a small store that had wine as well as Rain Forest Ice Cream and some nuts, for a little victory party. So here we were, sitting next to our little Eureka pup tent, looking out on the shining Pacific Ocean, eating Rain Forest ice cream. It just doesn't get any better! **BUT WAIT!** We still had to eat some real food, so Lili popped open a can of (almost real) Dinty Moore's Stew and put it on the stove. I uncorked the wine, and we celebrated to the music of distant surf and seagulls. We celebrated our ride, we celebrated life, and we celebrated love, until we fell asleep, wonderfully exhausted, in each other's arms.

**8/4/97 South Beach, WA to Forks, WA**

**39mi.**

**Total Trip mi. 5212**

We woke up to the same primordial sounds that pleased our ears as we fell asleep. It was like waking up in the middle of a beautiful dream and my senses and soul were saturated with ocean smells, sights and sounds. In a million years, I never would have thought that our arrival to the Pacific Ocean would be so perfect. AND there wasn't another human in sight. Here was the most gorgeous wild beach I have ever seen in my whole life and there wasn't another person or car in sight! At this moment, we actually had this wonderfully idyllic place entirely to ourselves! I must admit, I was so emotionally overwhelmed, grateful tears were rolling down my cheeks in heartfelt appreciation.

Truly, we could never have found a more beautiful spot for our Pacific arrival, but there was one flaw in this unbelievably magnificent gem. South Beach as far as the eye could see, north or south, had a huge horizontal forest of giant logs that had washed up all along the high tide mark and had been collecting there forever. This timber blockade was piled up 50 feet high against the bluff and in places double that, almost covering the wide flat beach and into the surf that never stopped delivering an endless supply of giant logs. In order to get down to the water, one had to climb down the steep bluff very carefully, squirming over and sometimes under huge logs and then weave through a jungle of assorted smaller dead trees. It was dangerous and difficult with two free hands, but impossible for us to get our overloaded bikes to the ocean to do the obligatory front wheel dip. So when we finally rolled out of our sleeping bags, we left our bikes by the tent and carefully climbed bike-less down through the huge timber blockade to the flat beach below. We walked along the ocean's edge in both directions looking for souvenir seashells. There were interesting tidal pools, but not one seashell could we find! I did find a perfect roofing hatchet sticking up out of the sand. So, what's another couple of pounds when you're doing a cross-continent, self-contained, bicycle tour? Back up at the bike, I tied the souvenir hatchet under my rear top pack. By the time we got the camp broken and everything all packed up and had said our good-byes to several people, who had been asking about our trip it was, "Oh my god after 12!" There was of course no real hurry to leave, but we finally went off in search of a beach that was more bicycle accessible, so we could do the all-important, "Pacific Front Wheel Dip!"

We started up 101 and stopped at the little convenience store that Lili had ridden to yesterday when she got our celebration-party stuff. We looked for ocean beach access there but could not find any. There was a large tidal pool with a lot of people enjoying it, but no place that we could see to dunk our wheels in the distant ocean.

We sat in a pretty gazebo having chocolate milk, taking pictures and spent another forty-five minutes there. Eventually we ambled down the road again in search of a beach with bicycle access to the Pacific. It was like taking a victory lap in the Indy 500. We had done it, we were victorious, but not quite. Our wheels were not yet anointed with the Pacific Ocean waters, and we searched desperately for a beach where we could get our bikes to the surf. We had exhausted almost all the beaches on 101 before it turned away from the ocean, when we came upon Ruby Beach, the last possible place. There was still a steep hill down to the water, but there was a path (sort of). It twisted in between the always present, immense towering log jam, but we were able, with quite some effort, to lug our heavily laden bikes down to the sea. People were looking at us like we were some kind of crazy nuts, and we had to explain, of course, what we were doing. Everyone wanted to know where we had been and where we were going, and it was another hour before we got our cameras set up and photographed the all-important front wheel dip. I must say the beach could not have been any prettier, with a rocky point covered with conifers framing the north side. After we had finished taking enough pictures, we got ourselves and our bikes back up the hill and there were some German tourists on bicycles, who also asked about our strange doings. We had lunch, I replaced a frayed rear derailleur cable on Lili's bike and by the time we got going again it was about 4:30. We headed to Forks and found a budget joint on 101 called the Far West Motel. It looked pretty dumpy, but when I spied a burger place across the road it started looking better.



***Ruby Beach, Washington. The obligatory wheel dipping ceremony.***

Today we headed toward Port Townsend, and 101 made a lovely turn to the East. It had been so long since we had enjoyed a tailwind, we had forgotten what a difference a little push from behind can make. We also had nice inland scenery, and we stopped at Crescent Lake to rest and enjoy the beauty. Crescent Lake is nestled in between a flock of green mini mountains, has a rugged shoreline, and appears to be deep and very clear. As we were leaving, we read a sign that warned in no uncertain terms, that 101 was a twisty road with very little shoulder, limited sight distance and was not safe for bicyclists. Attached to the official sign were a couple of added flyers stapled on, offering to transport (for a fee) the endangered biker by van, if he or she called the provided number. We thought we would check the road out first. We did and of course found it to be no worse than a lot of roads we had crossed the country on. I guess the van people think scare tactics are perfectly OK, because there is always a remote chance of being hit by a car. In reality though, most bicycle accidents do not involve cars. Unfortunately, those that do can be, and often are, deadly. So, we kept a sharp lookout in our mirrors and as always, kept as far to the right as we possibly could. We went through Port Angeles without stopping, since the town near 101 was not all that attractive and continued toward Port Townsend. We had to turn off 101 at Fairmont onto Rt. 20 to get there, but every time a road sign appeared, it kept telling us we had ten more miles to go and after we did those ten, there was another sign that said ten more. I didn't think we were ever going to get there, but we finally did and even had some daylight left. We checked out some nice old wooden sail boats that were being worked on, took a few pictures and headed over to the ferry dock. We just missed the 7:30 boat, but the next boat was only a half hour later. We used the time to have a sandwich and put some warmer clothes on for our short, but probably chilly boat ride. As we crossed the sound, the sun was setting and when we docked it was pitch black. Our map had told us there was camping at Fort Casey Park on Whidbey Island, so as soon as we were off the ferry we started searching for the park. We found a short cut and got over to the camp quickly, but a ranger told us it had been full since 3PM and we would have to use the overflow area. It turned out to be just as nice as the main camp, but without showers. The overflow was empty, so we put up our tent and were just about to fall asleep when I heard a commotion, like someone putting up a tent right next to us. That was kinda strange, since we were the only tent in this entire large overflow area and the new arrival had his choice of the rest of the whole place. I figured whoever it was, was making far too much noise if they had any bad intentions and I drifted off to sleep.

**8/6/97 Keystone, WA to Mukilteo, WA 33mi.****Total trip mi. 5353**

The next morning, I looked out of our tent window and saw some guy sleeping on the picnic table right next to us. I recognized the guy as a weirdo we had seen when we were back at Port Townsend. He made jewelry and was trying to sell it and hemp products to tourists, while bumming around on his bicycle. We packed up and headed out of Fort Casey toward the other end of the island some 22 miles distant on our route. About 10 miles out we ran into road construction and were advised by the crew to take the longer, alternate road. Since we did not have any time constraints, we decided that would be OK and headed off to Clinton. It turned out to be 35 miles to the Ferry that would take us over to Mukilteo on the mainland. When we got there, we zoomed on through a long line of cars waiting to board and jumped right on the ferry since there are no tickets needed. It was about 1 PM when we rode off the boat, and since we were our usually hungry selves, we found a place right on the dock called Buzz In and had a couple of hot dogs. We then headed up the long hill to Al and Carol's house. We got up the hill, but found we had to go partway back down again until we found their street. When we finally found their house, there was no one home and we felt really dumb that we hadn't called first. But they got home shortly and the first thing Al asked about was my bandaged hand. I had taken to wearing a gauze glove with some antibiotic ointment on it. My hand looked awful, and it hurt badly, and I did not really know what the hell it was. My skin was peeling off in large thick chunks and it looked like terminal leprosy. Al thought I should get it checked out at the clinic right away. I agreed and we immediately got in his car and drove there. The resident doctor said there was indeed infection and gave me a prescription for real antibiotics and some stuff I was supposed to bathe the wrist in three times a day. Evidently the dead hand tissue was caused by low blood circulation while climbing in the hot sun. The result was gangrene which had become infected.

We went back to the house, and I was surprised to find Al's mother Chanyce there. I asked her if she remembered our day over in France when she rode with me on my tandem. She said, "Of course I remember! It was the finest day of my life!" There was nothing but truth in her sparkling blue eyes and I remembered that day like it was yesterday. In 1984 I had built a tandem to make it possible for my non-bike-riding first wife Jackie, to come along on the Morris Area Freewheelers first overseas trip to England and France. In all fairness I must say Jackie tried very hard, but one does not become a bike rider, able to do big hills day after day on a two week vacation bike trip, even if it is in beautiful France. So when we bumped into the Bergeron family, as we were leaving Mont San Michel, and Al's mother Chanyce, expressed an interest in a tandem ride, Jackie jumped at the chance to get a ride in Al's rented car and I had a new stoker on the back seat. My new, very enthusiastic tandem partner and I pedaled through the beautiful French countryside under glorious sunshine. We stopped and visited Carnac and saw the ancient stone monoliths similar to Stonehenge in England. Later, quite late in the day, when we were faced with a long ride around a very large bay to get to the group's previously chosen campground, we opted to get on a fishing boat for an absolutely enchanting evening boat-ride short cut. To make this beautiful boat ride even more special was the fact that two of our club mates were avid gourmets, and they came running down to the boat, just as we were pulling out from the dock. They jumped on board with bottles of great French wine and colanders of freshly boiled cockles. It was pretty damn nice I must say, but to hear Chanyce say 13 years later; "it was the finest day of my life", made it mine too.....

Carol cooked us all a fantastic pork roast dinner and afterward their neighbors from down the street came over to visit. The husband, a doctor, and his wife, a longtime friend/schoolmate of Carol's, were very interested to hear about our adventures biking across the continent. It was just impossible for the woman to comprehend anyone riding a bicycle that far. Even though her own husband had done some biking at some point in his life, she was in total shock and disbelief that anybody, especially us, who were obviously not young athletes or something, doing such a thing. We told her that we had met literally dozens of other people who were doing similar trips and a lot of them were retired folks, because that group was the most likely to have the time and money to do such a long trip. I could not tell if the woman thought we were making it all up, because she thought it was too hard for any one our age to physically do such a thing, or if she just could not believe that any one in their right mind would really want to. It was plain to see that even with the help of Al's repeated confirming assurances, the astonished woman was not at all ready to believe us.

**8/7/97 Mukilteo, WA @ Al & Carol's 0 mi.**

Al had to go to St. Lewis for training, so Carol took him to the airport. We said goodbye to him around noon time and wrote postcards while we waited for Carol to return. Later, after she got back, we went out to the Buzz In for supper. We stopped in at the neighbors we had met last night and had a quick visit before we went back to Al and Carol's place and said good night.

**8/8/97 Mukilteo, WA to Cranberry Lake State Park 53mi. Total trip mi. 5406**

Next morning Al called and said his training had been postponed and he would be returning home. He tried to talk us into staying yet another day, but we declined, and after taking a few more pictures and having a long goodbye with Carol and Chanyce, we rolled down the driveway around 9:30 and headed for the ferry to Whidbey Island. After stopping at the post office and mailing off the cards we had written yesterday, we got our tickets and boated over to the island.

My first impression was that Whidbey looked similar to islands I have been to, off the New England coast. Some of its cedar sided houses were cottage size, while others were very large full-size year-round homes/estates, but they all shared the same weathered split cedar shakes. This sameness caused the island to resemble one huge retirement community. Also, like other retirement places, I did not see many people and the deserted quietness gave me the feeling that a lot of the wealthy residents had other homes as well. At Coupeville, we stopped by a long pier that reached far out into Skagit Bay. I took some pictures and then we rode off, hungrily looking for new islands to conquer. We biked quite a way on Rt. 20 and later found ourselves camped at Cranberry Lake State Park. We were pretty close to the bridge that goes over "Deception Pass" and tomorrow we cross it and head to Anacortes. Then we will grab the ferry to Lopez, our first San Juan Island. Although there are 172 named San Juan Islands only

San Juan, Orcas and Shaw have ferry service. The best part is that pedestrians and bicyclists only need to buy one ticket and can use it to visit as many of the San Juan's as they like and as many times as they like. Wow!

**8/9/97 Cranberry Lake State Park to Lopez Island**

**21mi. +ferry**

**Total trip mi. 5427**

Had to walk the first hill out of the park today. It was way too steep for early morning legs. It was probably too steep for our overloaded bikes even after a warm-up. We had nice views from high on the bridge, but the road was narrow, and traffic was heavy, so we walked over the bridge too. Walking gave me the opportunity to take some pictures of the pass far below, the lovely mountain scenery and the various boats and kayaks that were way down on the blue water far below us.

Route 20 to Anacortes continued to be hilly and had too much traffic, so we found some smaller side roads to escape. Much better, except that we made a left instead of a right and had to climb the last steep hill twice. Because of that, we just missed the ferry and had to hang around 45 minutes for the next boat to Lopez. So, we sat next to the ferry office and had sandwiches. While we were waiting in line, we started talking with a biking couple who were just going to visit Lopez for the day and wanted to hear all about our trip. Their names were Dave and Cindy. Dave was quite an interesting guy, and he talked to me about mountains that he had climbed, including Mount Baker and Rainier and a bunch of other ones. He was also a woodworker and liked wooden sailboats. So, we spoke quite a bit about them. And before we left them, they gave us their phone number and said if we were ever in Bellingham, stop in and have dinner with them. We got on the ferry and because we were talking, the time flew by, and soon we were docking at Lopez. From the boat we biked up the hill toward the campground. Twelve miles out we missed the turn to the park and had to come back. We met a couple on bicycles who were summer residents of Lopez, and they told us all of the campgrounds were heavily populated in the summer and we should call ahead. At the camp office we heard about biker sites that were down closer to the water. After much wandering around and traveling up and down little paths, we found an unoccupied site in the main campground. So, Lili sat on it while I went down to finish checking out the sites by the water. I found one down there that was unoccupied, but it had been reserved, so we settled for the site that Lili was sitting on. This site happened to be right next to a noisy family. The people weren't rowdy people, just making the usual family kind of noises, kids yelling, and stuff. We offloaded our tent and camping gear and got on our lightened bikes to check out all the possibilities before setting up. The outcome was we found #43 adjoining the campsites on the beach. It was secluded and it had a nice view of the beach. Sunshine was filtering through hemlock trees and there were boats anchored out in front in the quiet harbor. The site was steeply elevated from the path so there would be a climb on the way out, sort of like our climb out of Ruby Beach, but that was no big deal. We moved our camping stuff to this place and then proceeded to ride our relatively unloaded bikes around the island. For starters we went into the town of Lopez. There were a bunch of small modern looking stores that were more ordinary than quaint, so we checked out the little dock at the end of the street. There was, of course, a beautiful drop-dead view, just like almost any place in the San Juans. Next, we wandered over to a place called Agate Beach, where we found a country store, grabbed a sandwich and then proceeded to try and find a good place to eat it. We lucked out and found a lovely picnic table at the waterfront near the boat harbor.

After our lunch we rested up for a while in the sunshine, then went down to the shore and collected some of the polished rocks they call agates, the namesake of the beach. About five or six o'clock, we headed back to our campsite. When we arrived, it was still sunny, so we decided to go down to the water's edge in front of our tent. Lots of beautiful sailboats were anchored out in the peaceful cove, while on shore there were dozens of rabbits and many kinds of birds all over the place. There seemed to be a population explosion of rabbits, and I guessed perhaps they might be blessed with less predators here than usual. It sure looked like a rabbit paradise. Eventually we went back up and had our camp supper on a log out in front of our tent. It would be a short stay on Lopez Island. Next, we plan to head for Friday Harbor on San Juan Island. Since we can travel between islands without any additional charge, we will check them all out, then pick the one we like the best, and come back to it and relax.

**8/10/97 stayed on Lopez still at Spencer Spit State Park**

**34mi.**

**Total trip mi. 5482**

We got off the boat in Friday Harbor, San Juan Island dock and hit the information place. Lili came out with a map, but despite it, we wound up going the wrong way. Eventually we got oriented and back on the trail towards the campground at San Juan County Park some 11 miles away. We stopped on the way over to watch a school (pod) of orca whales that were pretty far off, but mighty impressive anyway. When we pulled into the county park campground office, we were told much to our surprise, there was a campsite available. We anxiously pulled into the given site, and were awe struck! It was not just any site, but it was the premier site of sites! It was the furthest campsite out on the grassy bluff overlooking Puget Sound. There were white-capped mountains across the sound over on Victoria and off to the left were the snow caps of Hurricane Ridge on the Olympic Peninsula. On the water there were boats of all sizes and shapes swimming past. Everything from great big container ships out in the shipping lanes to frail stiletto-like kayaks closer in. There were seals and various birds including lots of noisy crows and seagulls. We spent the whole afternoon just sitting at our lovely picnic table enjoying paradise and doing absolutely nothing. This was our time to rest, reflect and savor and what a perfect place to do it. Supper was toasted cheese, eaten as the sun set in a splendorific display. Kayaks paddled silently by in the twilight's awesome afterglow, and it was an enchanting evening I will never forget.

Paradise Found

On a high grassy bluff beside the Sound  
 With snow-capped mountains looking down  
 We sit by our tent and watch with awe  
 Orcas cavorting with giant fins tall  
 They roll and jump with mighty grace  
 While fleets of watchers cheer and chase

Leviathan freighters also swim by  
 To roam 'round the world on seven seas high  
 Until they die and turn to rust  
 While dry land mortals turn to dust  
 But life is beauty on Puget Sound  
 And here we sit in paradise found

Like whales and ships the day swims by  
 And the sun sails over a clear blue sky  
 Till finally the mountains across the Sound  
 Catch fire and spread the splendor around  
 And the sky is ablaze in an afterglow  
 To end the day with a heavenly show

Tuesday morning, I woke up to the sound of people out on the water. I looked out of the front window of the tent and rubbed my eyes. Oh, myyy god, there were a big bunch of Killer Whales sticking their huge dorsals out and bobbing up and down like porpoises. (Well killer whales *are* related to porpoises.) Some were jumping right out of the water. I leaned over and yelled, "Wake up Lili! Wake up! There's whales right outside the tent." They were frolicking right in front of us for over an hour. It was a magnificent show! I was so enthralled and beguiled I forgot the camera. After the show, we had some breakfast and took the unloaded bikes to do some sightseeing around the Island. We rode north and stopped at Snug Harbor. It was basically just a little marina. There was a small convenience store that only had a meager selection of snack food items, but since we wanted to use their picnic tables, we bought some pretzels and sat down. While sitting there we watched a couple in kayaks that had very young kids with

them. They told us they had been kayaking and bicycling all around the island. We had to wonder about the sanity of this and watched them very carefully. Happily, it was plain for us to see that the parents were totally in control and these lucky kids were going to be just fine.

We left Snug Harbor and rode north to English Camp which is a remnant of the occupation of 1859 when there was a dispute over the ownership of the San Juans. After spending some time there, we left and rode all the way north to the far end of the island and checked out another place to camp. It seemed very nice and did not have too many people, but of course, there was absolutely no reason to give up the perfect place we already had. We knew our site on the grassy brow overlooking the water was one in a million, but we looked around anyway, then continued down towards Friday Harbor and arrived there around 4:30. We cruised down to the waterfront and watched the boats coming in and out. We checked out the showers and they looked pretty decent for four quarters. Since it was pretty near supper time we pulled into a hamburger joint and had ourselves some hot food. After our great burgers we went over to the homemade ice cream shop and had dessert. Then we went shopping at the food store and finally headed back to our campsite. We got there just at sunset and found most people were leaving. For some reason it had not been as gorgeous as most of the sunsets there are. We sat in the darkness at our picnic table and had tea, cookies and applesauce, and then retired to our little green cocoon. I lay in my sleeping bag stretched out on my back. I thought how lucky we have been in finding these gorgeous places. Our South Beach ocean arrival place and now this beautiful island paradise to just wind down and enjoy. I lay there thinking, if I tried a hundred years to find nicer places, I wouldn't succeed. Then I drifted off to peaceful dreamland.

**8/13/97 biking in San Juan at San Juan County Park 26mi. Total trip mi. 5537**

Another bright sunny day. Our first stop was at Lime Kiln Lighthouse, a whale watching spot. There weren't any whales to be seen, but there were great photo ops at the lighthouse and breathtaking scenery. Then we traveled down to the most southern point of the island to the American camp. On our way back to our camp we stopped and picked some wild blackberries.

**8/14/97 staying all day at San Juan County Park 0 mi. Total trip mi. 5537**

This morning, I slept pretty late and when I got up lots of fishing boats were gathering out in front of our tent. Apparently, they must wait till a specific time when they can check their nets. There were more boats up north as far as we could see and every once in a while, one of them would speed back to port, presumably to offload its catch. All the way over on the opposite shoreline, the fog bank would sometimes be touching the water and sometimes it would be suspended over it, with just the tops of the mountains poking up into a clear blue sky. We just hung around the campground all day, wrote postcards, relaxed and chilled out. We ate quite a bit and went to bed totally stuffed.

**8/15/97 biking in San Juan, camped at San Juan County Park 32mi. Total trip mi. 5575**

We hung around for the morning, talked to some people and actually didn't get out of camp until about noontime. We phoned Wendy, finally left camp and biked south again, all the way down to the end of the American camp. From there we went down to the lighthouse point. Lili walked on the beach, a typical log strewn beach with pebbles and sand. While she walked, I looked at my map and enjoyed the day. We strolled down towards the lighthouse and walked out on to Carrol point and then we decided to head back to Friday Harbor to get some groceries. We didn't get back there until it was almost 6 o'clock and found our old hamburger place again. We had some of course before heading back down to the homemade ice cream place for dessert. Lili then went food shopping while I helped a guy fix his bike that had lost the nut from the front skewer. He was trying to find a bike store, but I pointed out that there was an unused skewer on his roof rack. We put the skewer nut on his bike, and he was on his way. Lili came back with our food supply, and we headed back to camp, eleven miles away. We had very little time to get there before dark, but we moseyed right along and shortcutted over the construction site. It was a little bumpy, but they were not working on it at that time of night and actually we got into camp just after sundown. We had been enjoying the sunset while we were riding back over the mountain. And when we pulled back into camp, the hiking couple from Colorado were sitting at their table and they offered us some cake which we accepted.

We contributed some of our applesauce and sat there talking about the different places we had been to and some of the things that we'd seen. It was after 10 o'clock when we went to bed.

**8/16/97 biking in San Juan, camped at San Juan County Park 21mi.**

**Total trip mi. 5596**

There was a lot of excitement at 11 o'clock and cries of "the whales are coming the whales are coming". Sure enough, the whale watching boats were motoring right toward us and it wasn't long before we could see a pod of orcas coming up from Lime Kiln Point. They were jumping and rolling with their usual wild abandonment, much to the delight of two or three boatloads of cheering watchers. So, we sat there for almost an hour watching the show getting closer and closer. It was like a totally wild version of "Sea World", only there were dozens of performers, not just one or two. From up here, looking down on them, maybe a quarter mile away, they looked deceptively cute, but of course they are anything but. In reality they are fierce predators and eat anything they can catch, including tons of salmon, seals, and even a polar bear now and then. It's after 12 now, so we'll probably have a bite of lunch, before we leave for town. We stopped on the way to town and filled two water bottles with beautiful wild blackberries. We also stopped at an antique barn, and I bought myself a solid brass pointing dog belt buckle. (I still have it.) We went to the homemade ice cream store and sat on their porch eating homemade vanilla with the blackberries we had collected in our water bottles. Then we sat down on the dock for a while before we headed back to camp. We had no schedule, so we just followed our whims. It was our time to enjoy ourselves without the need to travel on and we had chosen a perfect place to do just that. We got back to our camp after dark, but since we had eaten in town, we didn't have to cook anything. What a life.

**8/17/97 staying all day at San Juan County Park**

**0mi.**

**Total trip mi. 5596**

We hung around camp just sitting and really not doing much. The whales came by twice, the last time was around 5 and shortly after a young girl named Heather and her father Steve came over to our table to ask us if we knew where there were any food stores on that side of the island. We told them we didn't know of any and since they didn't have any food, we invited them to eat with us. Lili worked her camping magic and fixed us all a great meal out of our own meager supplies. Heather and her dad were very grateful that they didn't have to go to sleep hungry and we four chatted into the evening, relating some of our adventures while crossing the country.

**8/18/97 San Juan Island to Moran State Park, Orcas Island 44mi.**

**Total trip mi. 5640**

Woke up this morning and started getting ready to break camp. We said goodbye to Heather and her father, and they left for the Pedal Inn campground. At 10:30 or so we headed out ourselves after saying goodbye to the campground host or should I say hostess and headed on down the road towards Lime Kiln. When we got there the whales were very close to the shore and we watched them doing all kinds of tricks. One was standing on his head probably eating stuff off the bottom and they were jumping, rolling and cavorting like crazy as we watched from a couple of hundred yards away. We watched for a while but then left to catch our ferry. We got down to the ferry dock and spoke to a couple of young people going to Vancouver (their home was in California). After a nice passage we landed on Orcas and after a phone call to Doe Bay campground we had directions on how to get there. It turned out to be a long hilly ride. When we finally arrived, there were several nice little sailboats anchored in the bay, but the campsites were disappointing, all bright sunshiny out in the open and not very attractive. We wanted a nicer place especially after our beautiful site over on San Juan Island and went down to the office and told them we were not staying. Then we biked on down to Moran Park and picked out a wooded hillside site. It was not really very special, but at least it was shady, so we checked in.

**8/19/97 biking on Orcas Island**

**12mi.**

**Total trip mi. 5642**

We unloaded most of our packs and started up Mt. Constitution Road and found it to be quite a hard climb even with our bikes mostly unloaded. It took about an hour to get to the top and it was quite steep in parts, but we made it and rode right up to the tower on top. We talked to some interesting people including one young fellow who worked for Backroads touring and lived in Texas near Dallas when he wasn't working. He took our picture with



Mt. Baker peeking out of the fog in the back. Then we went to a picnic table and met a couple riding a Rodriguez tandem, but not actually up the mountain since they were car camping and had elected to drive up. The next people that came and sat at our table were a family from NJ. They were very intrigued at meeting people that had biked over what they had just flown over. The woman kept asking us if we had a car some place and we said yes, back home in NJ. We stayed around two hours before heading back down to Mountain Lake where we ate some of our sandwich stuff. Then we biked all the way down to check the message board at the pay station. We found that Al had left us a message that said next Monday would be the first time he could get off. We called back, but they weren't home. So we went across to the beach, had some hot dogs and then lay down in the sun on a nice grassy spit sticking out into the water. We stayed there an hour or so and then rode back to our camp, had supper and then turned in.

**8/20/97 at camp with a bit of biking**

**5mi.**

**Total trip mi. 5657**

Light rain had us in our tent trying to figure out where to head. Maybe head to a very small campground out on the north side of the island or possibly back here for the night, .... very unlikely. Then the next place was Shaw Island and if there isn't any camping there, we may go back to one of the other islands where we've already been, possibly San Juan again, because it's so very beautiful. The rain continued and the day wore on and we didn't go to East Sound, and we were late getting down to re-register our campsite and when we tried at a quarter to two somebody else had gotten our site. We didn't want to move, especially in the rain and thought perhaps the person that had gotten our site wouldn't be too particular, but he definitely was and insisted on our site. So, we had to pick up everything in the rain and move. We actually found a better campsite right next to water.

**8/21/97 Orcas Island to South Beach Campground, Shaw Island**

**27mi.**

**Total trip mi. 5684**

As far as Orcas Island is concerned, I didn't like it much. There were just too many people. There are some nice views, but a lot of the roads seem to go inland and after riding up Mt. Constitution and seeing the great view from up there, there wasn't much else on Orcas that I really wanted to see. I would have liked a nice little quiet cove where we could have pitched our tent, but there just wasn't anything like that we could find. So, around noon time we decided we should go over to Shaw, and we took off to get to the 2:40 ferry. We got on the boat which was running late and only had a short ride over to Shaw. There was a lot of trouble getting into the ferry slip, in fact the captain had to try four times, before getting safely pulled into the slip. Incidentally the ferry dock was operated by the nuns who own the property. Immediately after getting off the boat on Shaw, we ran into folks that were just leaving the island. There were 7 kids with them. And they were all on bicycles. Two bikes had Burley trailers, and one bike had a kid back trailer on a woman's step thru bike. It was quite an accomplishment for these novice bicyclists that hadn't ridden much before, but they were in total awe of our trip, and we talked to them for the better part of an hour. Finally, we left the ferry slip and started up to the road and had only gone about two miles when we saw a sign that said camping. We found an unoccupied site right on the water and immediately grabbed it. We knew we could get groceries down at the store and stay here a couple of days if we liked it. It seemed like a nice quiet island compared to Orcas. We ate and had wine with our supper, and it was a nice turnaround from the way I felt last night.

**8/22/97 biking on Shaw Island**

**8mi.**

**Total trip mi. 5692**

Friday the 22nd we went down to the store as we were out of a lot of things. After shopping we talked to a woman who lives on the island named Rebecca Wolf and she invited us to her gorgeous big hilltop house, but sadly we never got around to it. Friday we also went down to the library and museum.

**8/23/97 biking around Shaw Island**

**9mi.**

**Total trip mi. 5701**

Saturday morning, we went to the museum right off the bat and it was very nice with a lot of island history, stories about the lighthouse keeper and some interesting period artifacts. After our visit, we turned left at the corner and went up a hill and down a dirt road that we hadn't been down before. The camp host had told us about a beach that was not used by the general public, where we could swim privately, if we wished, so we walked out to this nice point on a sandy road, sat down and had our lunch. A man there using a backhoe said, "no bikes, no bikes". He said there were already two people out there and we would overload the environment. When we later told the camp host about our encounter, he was quite upset and knew the man in charge of the project, who he said had an attitude problem. We went back to the store, got more food, came back to camp and spent a nice leisurely evening, before going to bed.

**8/24/97 day trip to Friday Harbor and back to Shaw Island to camp**

**4mi.**

**Total trip mi. 5705**

Didn't get up till quarter to 8 in the morning and saw a guy walking down the road towards the ferry. He turned out to be from Moran and had decided to go to Friday Harbor and asked would we like to go with him. So, we all left, and he walked while Lili and I rode our bikes to the ferry dock. At Friday Harbor we had ice cream and took showers. I enjoyed the shower, but realized we were lucky the weather had not been warmer or more humid. We would have certainly needed more than one shower.

In Friday Harbor a guy with a big knapsack came up to us and told us he had been hearing about our great trip from lots of people as he traveled around by foot. We too hear people saying how they admire us and it's quite gratifying. Tomorrow, we plan to boat to Friday Harbor and take the Sidney Ferry and we will have one week on Vancouver Island before heading home.

**8/25/97 Shaw Island to Friday Harbor/McDonald Park, Vancouver**

**6mi.**

**Total trip mi. 5711**

Today, Monday, left camp at 10 or so and rode to the ferry dock and got on board the earliest boat. We checked and are actually arriving 2-1/2 hours earlier at Friday Harbor than we expected. As we were getting off the boat, who did we see but Eric, so we hung around with him, went into the t-shirt store and got ice cream. We sat under a patio roof eating it since the weather was lightly drizzly. A boat owner came by in a slicker and asked if we would be interested in seeing his boat. We said sure, so he took us down to the dock where he had a 26-foot Balboa with a Honda four stroke outboard. He told us he actually owns a barn where he keeps the boat when he's not sailing it. He showed me his remote steering rig and explained how it works. All he must do is use a remote control to change the position of the tiller so he can steer from any place in the boat while he is setting up his rigging. He brought all the lines to the stern so that he could trim the sails pretty much from the back while he is on the boat by himself. For a trailer boat his 26-footer appeared to be quite large, but he claimed that it is very manageable. We were offered a sail, but unfortunately did not have nearly enough time for that. Lili had called her son Lee and found out that he was planning to pick us up from Newark Airport when we get home. We said goodbye to Eric as our ferry came in and we got on board and headed for Vancouver. I felt sad to be leaving our wonderful islands, but my sadness was mitigated a little by thoughts of new adventures that might await us over the horizon.

We landed in Sidney Harbor, Vancouver, and after map checking found McDonald Park, our home for the night. Located on busy roads and not then fully completed, it served only as an easy place to start our little Vancouver ride from. We plan to go to Butchart Gardens tomorrow morning.

**8/26/97 McDonald Park to Butchart Gardens & Brentwood Inn**

**16mi.**

**Total trip mi. 5727**

Unfortunately, today was not the kind of beautiful day you want for a visit to a beautiful place, but our days are numbered and precious few, so we left the park and pedaled down the cloudy damp road to the famous gardens. When we got there, we were just so completely overwhelmed by all the beautiful sights, sounds and smells that the light rain seemed to be just a pleasant morning mist to sprinkle every thirsty flower.

We were handed nice clear umbrellas, and they seemed to fit right into the Victorian atmosphere. First, we stopped in an entrance cafe and had some good hot dogs and then proceeded down a long hill to the actual gardens. To say they were awesome would be a huge understatement. Back in the early 1900 the Butcharts arrived here from Ontario and began quarrying this site for its rich limestone deposit. Then they built a plant that made cement out of the limestone. As the deposit became depleted Jennie Butchart envisioned landscaping a sunken garden in place of the nasty scar that she was forced to look at every day. It would transform the property for her family and visitors for generations to come. Many loads of topsoil and many years of adding more and more beautiful areas, each with its own special motif, have created this fantastic masterpiece. It has remained a family run business and each generation has added something new, so now it is a world-famous travel destination.

We visited the sunken garden, a rose fountain, Japanese and Italian gardens, gorgeous beds of many kinds of dahlias, all the while hearing live music from an orchestra. When we stopped for a bite to eat in one of the various restaurants, the place was filled with hanging baskets of many kinds of blooms. The whole experience was all together splendid! My camera was working overtime, and I wished I had more film. Sometime during the day, we decided we did not want to go all the way into Victoria City tonight, so we went into the gift shop and sure enough they had a visitor bureau that listed all the local places to stay, so we called the best one on the list. It was called the Brentwood and although it was right on the waterfront, it was very reasonable. So we reserved a room, pulled ourselves away from Butchart's beauty, retrieved our bikes and headed on over to the Brentwood. I felt like I did the first time I visited the Louvre in Paris. I was just completely overwhelmed, and my brain felt like it just could not absorb any more. I thought that to do justice to the gardens, one must visit many times. Adjoining the Brentwood Inn was a nice little cafe that had 1.99 hamburgers, so we went there for supper and came back to the motel and had a long friendly chat with the interesting owner who was from Djakarta, Indonesia. She was there when Lili's parents were there back in 1959-1963.

**8/27/97 Brentwood Inn to Fountain Inn in Victoria      13mi.      Total trip mi. 5740**

Headed down to Victoria fairly late, weather was not too bad considering yesterday. We found the road with the most motels on it and after a half dozen or so we found one for 40\$, not a bad deal for city lodging.

**8/28/97 walking around Victoria and back to the Fountain Inn      0mi.      Total trip mi. 5740**

The harbor was bustling with cute little water taxis scooting here and there, loads of interesting people doing interesting things, but the one thing that immediately drew me away from all other side shows was a large old wooden schooner tied right up next to the edge rail of the harbor. Her captivating beauty was something like a beautiful long haired young woman in a white sun dress, pretty sun bonnet and all. I was awestruck, smitten like an adolescent boy who had stumbled upon a real-life goddess. She was a former Grand Banks fishing schooner and was now owned by an organization called "SALTS" that ran discovery cruises for troubled young men and women. The schooner tied up at edge of the harbor was now in the process of being stripped, so that her lines could be copied. She had finally come to the end of her sailing days, which in fact had actually lasted twice as long as they would have, if it were not for the fact that to protect her lumber during World War II, it was stored under mud out of sight. That fortuitously made her timbers even more able to survive the rigors of her life as a Grand Banks fishing queen. Now she was serving as a template for the rebirth of the Robertson II. Lili and I were led down to the huge boat house that was giving birth to the next generation Robertson. We were awestruck at the enormity of the effort. The keel and ribs were laid in place, but planking had not yet been started. Even in her bare bones she was a thing of exquisite beauty. We asked for the forms to become supporting members of the "Sail and Life Training Society." It was a worthy cause, so we joined up. Maybe it was an attempt to be sailing on this beautiful boat, if only just vicariously.

When we finally left our seductive schooner, it was midafternoon, so we walked on over and brazenly went into the outrageously ostentatious Empress Hotel. We totally ignored any dress codes and sat right down in our biking clothes in their elegant dining room and had high tea!!!!

**8/29/97 Coho ferry to Port Angeles to Kitsap Memorial St. Pk. 60mi.**

**Total trip mi. 5800**

Checked out of the Fountain Inn and rode over to the Coho ferry with its massive sliding side door entry. We got our tickets and got onboard to Port Angeles. After docking back in the US, we had to ride the shoulder of 101 for a rather drab ride along old railroad beds down to 104. We crossed a floating bridge that only had narrow 18-inch-wide plates for bikes to ride on. The actual bridge deck was a slippery steel grating that would have been a nasty place to fall on in the event of straying off the narrow strip that bikes were expected to ride on. There were fences and posts that made the feat all the more difficult. Brushing anything with our over-wide panniers would have probably resulted in a nasty fall onto the steel grating. It was scary, but we made it over without any disasters. I must admit it felt good to get back on solid land though and find our way to Kitsap Memorial State Park. It had been a day filled with many mixed emotions. Sadness that our wonderful trip was coming to an end, joy to have been able to have done it, happiness that it worked out so well, excitement to realize that we were only two days from home and families, a brand-new granddaughter and my good old Tober dog who has been waiting faithfully for my return.

**8/30/97 Kitsap Memorial SP to Saltwater Campground**

**49mi.**

**Total trip mi. 5849**

We left the park and headed south via roads and ferries to find Saltwater Campground, our last campground, only 7miles from SeaTac Airport. The campground is actually south of the airport, but it could not be much closer without being right on a runway. It's pretty damn noisy as it is. We called Al and told him where we were and our plans to ride up to SeaTac tomorrow. He said they would love to visit and perhaps bring their pride and joy granddaughter Elisabeth for us to meet.

**8/31/97 Saltwater Campground to SeaTac Airport**

**7mi.**

**Total trip mi. 5856**

As we prepared to ride, we started worrying about finding bike boxes and having enough time to pack things up etc., etc. and of course we had little idea of the route to the airport and how much traffic we would encounter, so erring on the side of caution we left way too early. Of course, we did not see Al and Carol or their granddaughter, but we were not really sure they were coming to visit anyway so we left Saltwater and headed out to SeaTac. We had some climbing to do since Saltwater campground is at sea level and the airport, although only 7 miles away, was at 432 feet. I admired how well both of us were riding and realized we were in damn good shape. Well, we oughta be, and it felt really good. The bike route turned out to be very well marked and we breezed right up to the door and started our search for bike boxes. No problem, so we were all packed up and ready to board hours before our gate time. We called the Bergerons while we waited and found out they had gone to Saltwater, but because we had left early, we did not get to see them and meet Elisabeth. I felt awful and stupid for leaving so early. If we only had a cell phone, but we did not. In later years we were able to visit Shelley, Al's daughter, on the East coast.

## **On the airplane**

In one long night our big tin bird flew us back over the vast continent we had just spent four wonderful months bicycling across. We carried a lot of stuff on our bikes, but we never wished for anything else. We had everything we needed. I wondered why, then, we had to have so much stuff at home to make us happy. Stuff that we had to maintain and protect from the elements and theft. Do we own it, or does the stuff own us?

I started my cycling career way back when I was 13 in 1950. In my teens and early twenties, I was an amateur racer. Later I toured far and wide and I've been very fortunate to have done some mighty nice biking, but this trip has been the best of the best. It has certainly been the trip of our lifetimes!

My thoughts went back to dipping our rear wheels in the Atlantic Ocean at Sea Bright NJ and dipping our front wheels in the Pacific Ocean at Ruby Beach WA. I remembered our struggles with wind, mountains, rain, floods, broken bikes etc., but all that was washed away by the fantastic joys that we shared. For sure America is a beautiful country, but the thing that made this trip really special were the great people we talked to every day, people who mostly could not do enough for us. Like our dear old friend Dan Keefe. who took a day off from work and drove me to every bike store in a 25-mile radius to try and help me get parts for my tired old bike. Then there was Pastor Sherry at the Elk Garden United Methodist Church who took our wind torn, Clinch-Mountain-Weary, dead-tired bodies and literally resurrected us. By bringing us into her church and letting us read the logbook that was written by many, many other bikers and Appalachian Trail through hikers, who had been there before us, she renewed our hope and spirit. She fed our hungry biker bellies, gave us safe shelter for the night and would not take the contribution we so gladly offered. There was the former lawyer from Plainfield, NJ who decided he would be happier as a preacher man and in the large field behind his church in this dirt-poor Kentucky parish built a fantastic resting place for bike travelers like us. There was Paul the bike store owner/coalmine driller in Hazard, KY, who fixed me up with a bomb proof rear wheel and ended my plague of broken spokes. He also told us about "Pamper Trees", the native tree in poverty-stricken Appalachia. He didn't charge me half of what he should have. There were many other people who, although obviously were not rich, would not let us pay for our sandwich, or our breakfast, or whatever. The list is long, too long to write, but Katharine Lee Bates in 1913 said it eloquently in the hymn, "America the Beautiful". "And crowned thy good with brotherhood from sea to shining sea".

Sail on, sail on silver bird, we'll be home before morning. And there to greet us at the Newark Bird Port was Lee who drove us to a surprise celebration breakfast with transcontinental veterans Muriel and Sue. Everyone had a wonderful time sharing memories (the stuff life is made out of).

## **Epilogue 20 + years later**

More than 20 + years have gone by since we did this trip and fortunately I have it all on the tape recordings I made daily, but even without the tapes, I don't think I will ever forget the experience as long as I live. In the two plus decades since we rode there have been lots of changes in the people I wrote about. Some changes were good, and some were not so good and at least one was just terribly tragic.

In '98, a year after our bike trip, Lili and I drove out to California. We visited the canyons and some places we had not been able to get to when we were biking. When we got to Santa Barbara we got married at the beautiful Santa Barbara Court House. Its Spanish architecture must be seen to be believed. Terracotta floor tiles over an inch thick and huge heavy arched doors of massive solid oak, tile roofs and cost is no object lighting, hardware and furniture. In fact, I have never seen another public building that even comes close to its beauty. We got married outside in the equally gorgeous front gardens. Lili's parents were both there, as were her two sisters. It was a picture book wedding, and I am so happy that we did not wait longer. Both Lili's father and mother passed away less than two years later. After our wedding, we drove up the California coast, visited more relatives and then drove home on many of the same roads we had biked over a year earlier. We stopped at Quake Lake, Montana and I tried to catch "Walter" again, but only caught some of his cousins. They all had a strong family resemblance to Walter, and I asked them to give him our regards.

A year or so after our wedding trip we heard from Sarabeth, the 17-year-old we had met in Eureka, Kansas. When we met her, she was biking to her summer camp for "home schooled kids" in Oregon. She had met two very nice young men named Jeff and Wyeth. They called themselves "the turtle squad," because they stopped to help all the turtles, they found safely cross the road, so they wouldn't be squashed by the cars and trucks. Jeff and Wyeth were on their way to meet up with Wyeth's father and sister. Then that group of four planned to bike to Denver, but Sarabeth was headed to Oregon, so she had to sadly part with her two new friends and go on her separate way. It was quite some time after Sarabeth had gotten back home to NJ, that Jeff eventually got in touch with her, and they began dating. In June 2001 Lili and I went to their wedding at Rutgers University and last we heard they were living happily up in Massachusetts.

In 1999 we did a 4,000-mile trip up the east coast from Florida up to and partly around Nova Scotia then back home through the Catskills to NJ. I wrote up a short journal on that trip too. It was a totally different kind of trip and had lots of interesting people and places, but it would be pretty hard to top our '97 cross-continent adventure with its white capped mountains, whales and wonderful tales.

Lili and I are well into our 80's now and various body parts are starting to wear out and require maintenance. We both still ride often, but mostly it's day rides around home, although I still do a birthday ride equal to my age and sometimes, maybe once a year, I even do occasional organized 100 + mile century rides. But 6,000-mile trips are best ridden on a younger man's bike, with a younger man's legs, so I am glad we did this trip while we were just hitting 60. I am being treated for hypertension, diabetes, persistent a-fib, a bunch of hernias and I also have a flock of problems due to some benign brain tumors that decided to bleed in 2010. They caused me to have trouble with my eyesight, my hearing and my walking balance. I am still having balance trouble, both walking and on the bike. I am still riding a little and will continue to, as long as I can feel the wind in my face and feel the freedom in my heart and soul.

On July 30, 2005, we lost Al Bergeron to leukemia. I was devastated, as were all his many friends and loving family. Time has not made my grief any easier to bear and I must console myself with the fact that I was privileged to even have known him at all. Often when I am faced with a thorny problem to deal with, I ask myself what Al would do if he were in my shoes. I always know exactly what he would do. Trouble is, I don't always have his strength of character to actually do it. Come to think of it, I don't know anybody else who really **does**. Al will always be my ideal of what a real man should be.....I think of him every day.

Life is uncertain, but for sure, we're only here on this planet for a short time. Promote peace, enjoy life all you can, be kind to each other, take care of our earth and **ride lots!**

Jack Brohal

P.S. We have an old wood stove and on cold winter evenings, I ply her fire with the kindling I have split with my South Beach souvenir hatchet. My iron maiden heats up quickly and begins to comfort me with her lovely warm body. Myriads of memories begin to bike me back through time and times, "*AND ALL AROUND ME A VOICE IS SOUNDING, THIS LAND WAS MADE FOR YOU AND ME*" (Thank you Woody)



***Our granddaughter Haley, the little baby in her mother's arms (see photo in Part One as we were leaving on this trip), has grown up to be a tall twenty something beauty. She is over 6' now and played women's varsity basketball in Blairstown High School and for Susquehanna University, before she graduated. She loves dogs and horses and currently works for a solar energy company.***