



# FREEWHEELER NEWS

*Newsletter of the Morris Area Freewheelers Bicycle Club Special Edition March 7, 2013*

## *Biking with Lili*

### *“From Sea to Shining Sea”*

#### *Part Two*

*“The greater the difficulty, the more glory in surmounting it. Skillful pilots gain their reputation from storms and tempests.” Epictetus*

*May 19 Elk Garden Methodist Church, VA to Breaks, VA      25 miles      Total trip miles 839*

We were not even warmed up yet and had to climb a three (ugh) mile hill, but then we shot down the even steeper western side. We thought about our retired friend Sue Miller, who had climbed this monster when she was coming West to East back in her riding days. We hit some tiny towns like Council, Davenport, Bee and Birchleaf and eventually I broke another spoke. ***This has got to stop!!!!*** We stopped to repair the spoke and meantime the thunder started rumbling and the clouds rolled in and before we started up again the rain came down, so we only went down the road another two miles or so. We stopped for a break while the rain passed us by and saw a couple delivery guys unloading their soda truck. One of the guys asked, “Would you like a pop?” We said sure! So people were generous to us and outside of the few retards that tried to run us off the road, they all seemed pretty nice. After we finished our “pop” we started off again. The brief storm had passed and the sky had cleared up, so we didn’t need our raingear any more. Also there was no wind to speak of, as we started down the road towards ***Breaks Interstate Park***. The first bad thing I noticed was the noise in my front wheel was back again, and it was worse than ever this time! I thought, maybe if I just ride it longer, the thing will just break completely and then the problem will be obvious. It sure was invisible now, even though it sounded like it was ready to collapse. I swerved off the road to get out of the way of a car just as we started climbing, then I got off to walk the steep part. At that moment a big truck went by and we heard ***POW!*** Lili said, “I hope that was the truck!” But it wasn’t the truck, it was my rear tire blowing out! We looked for a place to change it and we couldn’t see anything immediately, so we started hiking up the hill. The left side of the road was all crummy with garbage and the right side was piled high with garbage too. Actually the whole area was sadly and dramatically much poorer than the days before. We were now in the

heart of Appalachia coal mining country and it's a shocking, depressing thing to see. Garbage all over and packs of dogs running everywhere and the creeks all yellow with mining waste. It felt like we had somehow been instantly transported to a third world country. A very poor third world country! Anyway, we finally found a place to change my tire. The sun was streaming down as I turned the bike on its side. I couldn't find my spare tires and had to turn the bike over again after I realized they were in the bag on the other side. I fought with the tire and the wheel for a while and finally got the folding tire back on. The tire that had blown was the one I had bought in Lexington, VA. It was a K-Mart special for 16 dollars and it had blown out next to the bead. But actually it was a pretty strong tire and if that thing blew out on the edge, I don't know what kind of tire wouldn't. I figured it's just a matter of too much weight. Anyway, I took off the rear wheel and put the other tire on and then turned my attention to the front wheel. I loosened the cones a little, but of course it didn't make the creaking and groaning any better. We finally got started after putting everything back in the saddlebags and hiked up to the top of the ridge. The noises that were coming out of the front wheel made it sound like it was going to break any second. I was afraid to go down hills at anything over 5 mph and going up it wasn't any better.

We got up to Breaks Interstate Park, which is a very interesting rock formation between KY and VA, that has very sharp knifelike rocks sticking up into the sky and down into the valley below. We would have liked to take a closer look, but unfortunately we were very tired and I didn't have the strength to go down into the park and we were looking for indoor accommodations anyway, so I could work on my bike again. So we went over the hill and down the other side and just as we were reaching the bottom of the hill, we found a motel called the Gateway Motel. It was rather decrepit, but it still looked pretty good considering the alternatives. It did rain and we were very happy we were inside. We hung our riding clothes up and then went across the street to eat at the grill. It was a combination restaurant, ice cream bar and pool hall/local gathering place. There was only one guy playing pool and two young women working the kitchen. I had chicken nuggets which were very good and Lili had a small steak. Feeling slightly better with our full stomachs, we started back to the motel and noticed that there was a store up the road. We walked up there and found it was a combination liquor/ grocery store with a sideshow snake pit out behind the place, 50 cents to look at the rattlesnakes. Well, we passed up on that and got a half gallon of milk, a can of peaches, a box of oatmeal cookies, some bananas and apples etc. and then went back to the motel. I conked out with my clothes on and Lili went to sleep in the other bed. I woke up around 12 o'clock and got undressed and tried to fall asleep under the covers, but I was so totally exhausted my body would not relax. I was still riding up-hill and lots of thoughts were going through my head about having to call for wheel parts and other bike parts later. There certainly were no bike stores in this remote area.

**May 20 Breaks, VA to the woods of eastern KY 77 miles**

**Total trip miles 916**

We woke up to a wet street and cloudy skies. It seemed to suit this depressed area of Appalachia more than sunshine. I noticed a lot of the people here are the lean tall Appalachian Mountain type people, who are very polite and very quiet and quite true to their stereotype image. They all have old pickup trucks and they all have lots of dogs. They all hunt and fish and a lot of them wear those tall black ten gallon felt hats. Some of those hats even had holes worn in them, from going through the woods.

I started making a list of the stuff that I would order from the BN people. I figured I had to take my front wheel apart again to check spoke length and try to actually see what was wrong with the thing, why it sounded like it was falling apart. First I took a close look at the rim. It seemed fine, even at the joint, which is a rare, but

sometimes problematic area. It seemed fine, so I took the hub apart and found very little sign of wear and tear there either. It was mildly dirty, but the thing that I did notice was that there was very little room for the 11 ball bearings squeezed into each race. They did fit, although they fit tightly. Too tightly I thought, so my effort today was to clean everything and reduce the number of ball bearings to 10 on each side. Coincidentally, a funny thing happened. I was using a drinking cup, putting the ball bearings in there to hold them so they wouldn't roll onto the floor. I was down to the point where I had reassembled the hub and there were two ball bearings left in the cup, as I wanted. I had wiped the cup out carefully with a greasy rag, because there had been some milk down at the bottom of it, and it was sitting on the table. Before I saw her do it, Lili came over and poured herself more milk and drank it down! Fortunately she didn't swallow any ball bearings, but she probably had a little of the grease in her milk. I hoped she wouldn't get the runs from it. Anyway, that's the kind of thing that happens when you're working in a poorly lit motel room.

Then we started pulling everything out of our saddle bags, sorting out everything, large or small that we could send home. We had to lighten our load, or I would just keep blowing tires, no matter what kind of wheels I had. The first thing that had to go was the 14 lb. air mattress. Each item we added to the pile seemed to increase our frenzy. So we had sort of a party, sorting out all our stuff, and everything we put on the pile to go back home made us a little happier. By the time we got done there was quite a big heap of stuff. We finally left the Gateway and rode down to Elk Garden City to find us a post office. Elk Garden City sits down in between some very tall sharp peaks in a big ravine, down on the Russell Fork River. It is a very rustic backwoods mining town. We found the post office and the man gave us a box and some packing tape and we packed up our stuff and sent it all to my daughter back in Blirstown. We went back outside and I rode my new lighter bike and felt like a new man!

There was a slight mist hanging over us, more like a fog, as we headed up toward Ashcamp. We made a right turn and took the so called gravel alternate. No gravel, since it had been newly paved, but it was a very narrow, maybe 10' wide, long steep hill and we were passed by a lot of traffic, mostly coal trucks. We were trying very hard to stay out of their way on this super narrow, steep, winding hill, but it was extremely nerve wracking to say the least. There were many switchbacks and even though my bike was 20 lbs. lighter than yesterday, it was all I could do to make it. We were in an even poorer part of Appalachia now, no houses, just trailers and shacks with cars and trucks all turned upside down, missing half of their parts. There were dog crates everywhere imaginable. Dog crates every where there could be dog crates! Up on top of cars, trailers and even outhouses! But most of the dogs were not in them! They hung around in packs and came at us with blood in their eyes. I had to pepper spray our way through the canine gauntlet, or we would have been gladiators in with the wolves. When we finally got to the top of the hill, we looked for a place to take a much needed break and of course there wasn't any place that did not have garbage and weeds ten feet deep. We decided to keep on going and were descending the hill slowly on the pot-hole road. I looked in my rearview mirror and what did I see, not a pack of dogs or any big blue coal trucks, but another bike tourist catching up to us!

We introduced ourselves and it turned out this fellow's name was Tom. He was from Ireland and had been living in NYC since October. We found out Tom is actually a US citizen because he was born in NYC and had moved to Ireland with his mother when he was very young. He had started this bike trip in the beginning of May, the same as us. He told us he was doing this trip to decide what part of the US he wanted to live in. Being sort of a bike nut, the first thing I noticed immediately was Tom's bike. It was one of the worst junk bikes I had ever seen! A totally trashed J.C. Penney with most of its parts falling off! The stem shifters hung off to the side

and the corroded shift cables were wrapped around the handlebar extension, obviously not working. The handbrake levers were falling off, the plastic bar tape was trailing along in the breeze and his pump hung precariously out of the torn bag he was using as one rear pannier. It threatened to fall out on the road any second. The other rear bag was really a duffel bag, obviously pressed into this service on short notice and just tied onto the bike frame with bailing wire. The half flat tires were full of cuts and the tubes actually protruded from herniated cords in several places. From his handle bar dangled a Windex spray bottle loaded with the all important bleach/water dog protection. On every pedal revolution, there was a calliope of frightening sounds following this junk-mobile down the road. And I thought I had bike problems? I have actually seen better bikes than this one out for clean-up week! The amazing thing was that he had already ridden this catastrophe from NYC! As he went down the road on this piece of junk, he swayed back and forth, because he was always in the wrong gear. But whenever we came to a hill he was the first one up! Being a young man and carrying much less weight than us, he could climb the hills much faster, in spite of his terrible bike. Of course going down, or on the flats he didn't have a chance to stay with us. But we were lonely for fellow riders and Tom had lots of Irish charm, a bit of the Blarney as they say, so we rode together the rest of the day. When we found out he was from Lough Mask, we told him we were over there the previous September ('96). His immediate reply in his heavy Irish brogue was, "**NO ye weren't!**" We said, "Yes we were." And he demanded, "**Well, then where did ye go?**" We told him we went to the village of Cong. He said again, "**No ye didn't!**" We said we did and stayed right across from the Abbey. He said, "**Do ye mean the B&B with the blue shutters?**" We told him that was the place and he said last September he rode there, "**almost every day because, I wanted to remember Ireland as she was.**" We said we were with a large group of fifteen or so riders. He said, "**Well I never saw ye!**" We laughed and finally stopped for a little break and had an ice cream soda. We started off again and headed towards the hostel at Pippa Passes, which was still 25 hilly miles distant at that point. It was soon obvious we were not going to make it before dark. We figured we had to find another place, but where in this third world garbage dump would we go? I stopped to ask a couple of cigarette smoking teenage girls if they knew a place we could camp for the night. They giggled toothlessly and said, "Well, U'all could camp in the cemetery if U want, He-he." I figured that would make us easy targets for funsters, or even serious nut cases. So we went on toward the big black mountain on the horizon. When we got there the sun had already gone down on the other side of this very steep black hill. As we were climbing in the dark, Tom suddenly pulled over to the side of the road and said, "**Well this is me home for the night!**" He lugged his bike off the road and up into the woods! I looked at Lili and asked, "What do you think?" She said she thought it was the best alternative. So we hopped off the road as quickly as possible, so as not to be seen by anyone passing by (on this deserted road), and tried to lug our bikes up the very steep overgrown hillside. Lili the eternal woods scout, soon found us a gravel washout that led up the hill and made it possible, still with much effort, for us to get through the jungle of weeds and undergrowth with our monster bikes. We got far out of sight and dog smelling range from the road and then she actually found a place that was almost flat enough for two tents. We pitched the tents, had our supper and hung our food supply up in a tree, crawled into our sleeping bags and it was a rather restful night. There was a beautiful full moon and the pointed saw-tooth mountains poked up into the clear night sky. I almost expected to see a wild boar, or a bear, or maybe *Snuffy Smith\**, but I saw nothing and heard nothing and nothing bothered the food that we had tied up in the tree.



***Irish Tom***

***May 21 Somewhere in the wild woods of Eastern KY to Hazard, KY 45 miles Total trip miles 961***

In the morning, after my breakfast of uncooked oatmeal, water and sugar, we dragged our bikes back out of the woods (downhill was much easier) and got started up the mountain road, Lili walking, Tom and I riding. It was only 8:30 and when we got to the bottom of the western side we talked with Tom to tell him our objective for the day. Lili and I planned to go off the route a little to a bike store in Hazard to pick up at least a tire or two and hopefully spokes, both of which I was clean out of. In view of our remote location we decided to call when we were closer, to make sure they had the right size tires and spokes before we went off route to go to this backwoods bike store. At one point in time I noticed that Tom had fallen way back. He caught up to us when we stopped to look at the map. He showed us his pedal that had fallen completely apart, forcing him to ride using just the axle or spindle. He asked, ***“do ye think they would have a pedal in the bike store?”*** The pedals on Tom’s bike were just the common ½”, cheap department store bike variety and I told him they were widely available. I had even seen them in hardware stores; of course there were no hardware stores around here either. I said, “Keep a look out for a bike in the junk along side of the road. There most likely will be one soon. You might be able to take a pedal off a junk bike that will fit.” So we continued on and around one or two o’clock we were ahead of Tom and we pulled over to stop for a sandwich. He came cruising by and just waved and that’s the last we saw of him. So we don’t know if he’s ahead or behind us. We made a phone call to find the bike store and find our way into Hazard. It was appropriately a very hazardous road, by the way. We got into town and found the bike store. It was “manned” by a nice looking blond young lady named Renee, but she

looked more like Daisy Duke\* or Daisy Mae Scragg.\* Her husband was not due in till 6:30, and she let me look through his supply of spokes, but they didn't have any 295's. Then she showed me some wheels in a back room! I found a freehub 700c wheel with a fairly wide rim, 36 spokes and it was marked \$75, but it had 135 mm spacing. I said I would buy it, if we could change that to 130mm. She said, "No problem, when my husband gets home he could straighten it out and make it a 130." I said we would go look for a place to stay tonight while we waited. She said, "Well my mother has a couple of cabins down the road and one of them is not rented. Its \$7 a person per night and it's completely furnished." So what happened was, we went across the street to the Pizza Hut and had a salad. Then came back and after a little while the husband Paul, came home from his job as a driller in the coal mine. He took a look at my bike and assessed the situation and started to modify the wheel I found. He changed over my gearing and re-trued the wheel, mounted my tire and everything and didn't want to charge me a penny for labor. Then I bought some spare brake blocks, some spare spokes, a tire, a set of ball bearings for the front wheel and he's sending home the old wheel too, all for the sum of \$120. It would be a good deal at twice the price, if I don't have anymore trouble with spokes.

Anyway we're here in the cabin now. It's not a spacious place and it looks like the rest of the local area around here, but it is clean at least. Lili just went down to the store for some milk and oatmeal. So without a doubt the last few days have been interesting and adventurous to say the least. From the Elk Garden Church; the stay at the Breaks Gateway Motel; to our free camping in the woods on top of the mountain; to the bike store and this cabin, it all has been very interesting. The people we have met have also been what trips like this are mostly about. Pastor Sherry, Irish Tom, Renee and Paul from the 12<sup>th</sup> Gear bike store are all people we will never forget. Paul told me, "You know when you're in Eastern Kentucky, 'cause we're the only place that has Pamper Trees" I looked puzzled and he continued, "The folks around here are poor and some just throw their garbage over the creek banks. When it rains the creeks rise and the pampers get stuck in the trees." The sad thing was that this was all too true. I don't know if we'll run into Tom again on our travels, but I expect we might. I hope so.....

***\*Snuffy Smith; A comic strip created by cartoonist Billy DeBeck. Snuffy Smith, was introduced in 1934 and is now the comic strip's central character. The feature is titled Barney Google and Snuffy and it still currently appears in 21 countries and 11 languages. The strip portrays the hillbilly, shack dwelling people, as moonshine making/drinking, lazy, but very comical poor souls. In truth there is nothing funny about this area of Appalachia. It is nothing but shamefully tragic. The shame is on the coal mines.***

***\*Daisy May Scragg; a famous comic strip beauty, has always been hopelessly in love with L'il Abner.***

***\*And more recently; Daisy Dukes from " The Dukes of Hazzard" is another famous blond stereotype of TV sitcom fame.***

**May 22 Hazard, KY to Boonville, KY**

**58 miles**

**Total trip miles 1019**

9:15 A.M. We have roughly taken 20 days to do the first 1,000 mi. Now ***if*** the wind stays calm and ***if*** we have fewer mechanical problems (two big ifs) we should soon be able to do more miles per day, since my bike is a little lighter now and we should be getting out of the wicked Appalachians In a couple of days. We started out



of town on busy route 15 and were passed by many, many vehicles on this high speed road. I didn't like riding on the tiny shoulder one bit. We survived and about 10 miles out of town, got off on a side road which of course was hillier. We stopped at a store in Chavies and I picked up a liter of Mt. Dew. My "Dew habit" was now about one liter per day, maybe two liters on an extremely hilly day. The trailer parks have started looking a little neater now and things are a shade less impoverished, compared to yesterday and the day before. It sure was cultural shock to go from the beautiful, lush green hills of VA to the mining waste lands of Eastern KY, so it is a relief to see any improvement, no matter how slight. After Chavies we started up a 6 mile climb to Buckhorn Lake and the town of Buckhorn itself. Unfortunately the camp at Buckhorn was only 32 mi from last night, so we plugged onward. We descended into a valley and crossed the middle fork of the Kentucky River, then climbed again up to the village of Booneville. The Presbyterian Church in Booneville had a big, "**Welcome Cyclists**" sign out front. We pulled in to investigate and found around in back of the church, a nice grassy fenced in area, all bordered by rhododendrons. There was a little raised pavilion with, believe it or not, a cold shower and out across the field there was an outhouse, all in all, much better than camping in the woods.



Lili phoned the pastor who turned out to be a native son of Plainfield, NJ. Later on he drove over and introduced himself and it turned out that he originally went to law school, but I assume did not like it and so



became a minister. He is now the pastor of three congregations. They happened to be some of the poorest parishes in the state and it was very moving to me, that these folks who have so little, fixed up this nice resting place for us.

Before starting out this morning I had changed Lili's granny gear from a 30T to a 26T and she was able to climb all the hills today. It was such a tremendous improvement, we are sorry we hadn't done it earlier. I guess my bike problems were just too worrisome to me. I had bought this chain-ring way back in Downingtown, not knowing that I already had a 26. It had been lost and forgotten in the bottom of my pannier that held our spare parts. We had supper out here on the pavilion on the nice picnic bench. We had watermelon, spaghetti and meatballs and a nice salad that Lili fixed for us. I rotated her tires front to rear. At least they will both wear out evenly. It's getting dark now, and we're listening to the bob-whites calling their fellow birds of a feather to covey up for the night. That's giving me the idea to crawl into my own sleeping bag.

**May 23 Booneville, KY to Berea, KY**

**50 miles**

**Total trip miles 1069**

Well another day has dawned and I woke up quite stiff, from sleeping on the hard ground with no air mattress. The other night in the woods, we had no mattress either, but the deep piles of leaves in the woods were a lot softer than the hard compacted soil of this field. Oh well, we might have to get a lighter foam mattress, or something. I packed up, took a couple of pictures out by the Welcome Cyclists sign and after our breakfast we got on the road again. We started climbing immediately, but the hills we had today turned out to be fairly gentle. I can see there are still some pretty steep mountains around, but the roads seem like they are winding



around them, whenever they can. Even though today's hills are not as steep, Lili is quite worn down from the previous days of monster hills and I'm waiting for her quite a bit. The area has become more agricultural instead of mining and we have not seen any crazy drivers lately. Lunch today was probably on the tallest mountain we went over. We stopped at a cemetery on top of the hill and walked our bikes down to the back. We found a nice bench and sat in this peaceful place having our lunch while listening to the quail and reading old headstones. It was very sobering to read how young most people were when they passed away. Many women died during childbirth and many children died of diseases we have long since forgotten about. We're coming into Berea where we will probably camp tonight. Berea is a college town and it's amazing how different it is, compared to the surrounding area. When coming into town I had the feeling we had been lost for awhile and all of a sudden we were coming into another world. We rode through the town traffic and checked out the two camps just beyond. We liked the second one a tad better than the first, so for eight bucks we pitched our tent, got hot showers and did our laundry and thought perhaps we might go to hear a bodacious blue grass concert advertised for later.

Well we were too tired to go into the concert, so we just sat outside on the pavilion. We met some nice folks that had a Scamp Camper and who claimed to be bicycle enthusiasts too, but it turned out that they had his & hers gold wing motorcycles. They also carried a stuffed monkey in a side car. Nice Wing Nuts! BTW, today was the third day in a row with no bike problems for me.....waiting to exhale.

**May 24 Berea, KY to Lexington, KY 58 miles**

**Total trip miles 1127**

Today we wanted to get to Lexington, to see Lili's nephew Jeff. Since it was only 42 miles away, we left leisurely late, around 10:00 A.M. We started out on the cross-country route and it was a great morning, with us sailing proudly along. The "route" actually bypasses Lexington, so we soon turned off, onto so called, "highway" 39. It was actually a lovely, small, shady road and its new blacktop seemed to spiral down and down on terraces of hills for miles and miles. There was a nice creek on our left, with contented cows up to their necks in the cool water. It was the kind of road that you hope will never end, especially after so many less than nice roads in the past week. So when we came to the fork and the small hand painted sign that said, "**No outlet**" we both said, "that can't be us, this road looks too well travelled". We thought it must mean the little cow path that we saw there also? So we rolled down and down, with the slope getting steeper and steeper and finally dead ending at the Kentucky River! **No bridge and no ferry!** The ferry man had died and so far had not been replaced. So we started trudging back up the hill and were startled to see two giant white dogs walking down the middle of the road toward us! They were huge! Fortunately their owner was trotting along behind them. She said, "Don't worry, they won't hurt you". That was good news, because I'm sure they could have, if they wanted to. We got talking and she told us the dogs were Great Pyrenees and males can weigh as much as 120 lbs! She told us the female had just had pups. She couldn't have been more excited if the puppies were grandchildren, and she told us we had to stop by and see them. So Lili and I decided that this was one of those unplanned things that happen on bike trips, that you should not pass up. So we trugged up to their lovely log home and saw the eight cute little white fur balls in the barn. They were beautiful sleepy eyed, roly-poly darlings, already around twenty pounds, or so! Who wouldn't love them? We played with them for awhile and she insisted we have some ice tea and then she insisted on bringing out snacks too. She went into her house and returned with a great big tray with fancy dip and everything and we sat there with their daughter and the daughter's boyfriend and her father. He had been a recent victim of corporate down sizing and was now



planning a new career. He was thinking about a Peace Corps type operation. The good looking daughter was going to Kentucky U and said she wanted to be a physician. So we had a great two hour interlude, as we sat and talked with these very nice people. Eventually we had to reluctantly go out and climb the hill. We not only climbed that hill, but several more that were even worse. We finally wound up on highway 27 which took us towards Lexington. We found 27 to be a very busy road with narrow shoulders for the most part, but as we got closer to town we got on some nice smaller roads that took us through prime horse country. We were on Man of War Blvd. and the horse stables were nothing short of palatial. I was saddened by the irony and contrast with Eastern Kentucky's shacks and shanties, in the rural slums of the coal mining area.

Man of War Blvd. took us right to Jeff's apartment. We went in and found he had left us towels in case we beat him home from his classes. Jeff was an English major and a part time professor at the University. We had our showers and when he got home we ordered a pizza. We talked about our trip and some of our experiences and Jeff told us a little about what he is doing in school.

**May 25 Lexington, KY to Harrodsburg, KY 34 miles**

**Total trip miles 1161**

Today is Sunday, we got up around 8:30 and Lili cooked us pancakes and bacon and we sat around with Jeff eating and looking at maps and stuff. He had a very interesting little book that I started reading. I want to get a copy for myself to have. It is called *Kinfolks the Wellgus Stories* by **Gurney Norman** and it's about people from the area of Appalachia that we had just biked through. Its fiction, but I can believe it's true to life in these parts. I highly recommend it to anyone reading this journal. Jeff had to go to work and Lili was doing e-mail while I read Kinfolks. It was darn near 3 o'clock when we left. I was kinda hungry (as usual), so we went to the Boston

Carver and had sandwiches before we hit the road. We were going down through the horse country when it started to rain. We splashed on down through Nicholasville and the sun peeked sheepishly back out, so we had to take the rain gear off. We worked over to Rt. 68 and found it a decent road that seemed to me to be mostly downhill. Maybe I'm getting stronger? Unfortunately, before we got to our destination of Harrodsburg the rain started up again in a furious downpour. It was blinding and the riding was scary, hard and **VERY DANGEROUS!** We took a motel in town and Lili immediately conked out on the bed, too tired to shower or eat. I went out and brought food back, but she was too tired to look at it.

**May 26 Harrodsburg, KY to Bardstown, KY 47 miles Total trip miles 1208**

We first went down to the Post office and Lili sent home another 2 1/2 lbs. I checked out the so called bike store. It was closed, but it was only a couple of garages where somebody evidently worked on bikes (sometimes) and sells used bikes, etc. We rode over to the Walmart and went in, but they had no tires to fit our bikes. We picked up a few staples; deodorant, wet towels, batteries for my tape recorder, etc. and headed out on a fairly flat route. There was only one notable climb of 2½ miles, but most of the hills were short. Some did go up in steps, but they were pretty tame compared to what we had done. This area is known as the Knobs Region. We ate lunch at a grocery store and the lady pulled two rocking chairs over for us to be more comfortable. Nice! Lili positioned hers over by a little broken rain barrel that had one lonely Johnny-jump-up. It was typical of Lili to always look for beauty, no matter how bad the road got. I do not know many men who would still be on this trip and even fewer women, but there was never a complaint heard from Lili. Back in Hazard a woman in a grocery store said to Lili, "You're every husband's dream wife," thinking that I had coerced her into this trip. Lili stopped her dead in her tracks, when she replied, "Oh no, this trip was my idea." We checked into a modest motel near Lincoln's birth place, but I had no desire to visit what appeared to be a highly commercial replica of Lincoln's log cabin. It's not raining right now, but the motel owner said it's going to rain the rest of the week with the possibility of severe thunder storms and in some areas, possible tornadoes! Well I don't mind getting wet, but I do draw the line at tornadoes!

**May 27 Buffalo, KY to Falls of Rough, KY 68 miles Total trip miles 1276**

This morning we did get up to rain again, but we wanted to get on the road fairly early, so we just closed our eyes to it, had some cold oatmeal in the room, got dressed and got out on the bikes. It was 8:30 when we started riding down route 61 in a fine mist heading towards Sonora. We were riding with the wind, the hills were very gentle, the road was a brand new black top, the bikes were rolling along nicely and we were in the heartlands of the country. Who cares if it's raining a little? From Sonora we travelled along Hardin Springs Rd, then got onto 401 which took us down to Falls of Rough. Actually since the Army Corp of Engineers got their bulldozers there, there are no falls and the Rough River is now a big flooded out lake with many convoluted fingers all over the place. We decided to check out the lodge. It was quite beautiful, but was catering to the affluent golfing crowd and there was an airport right there too. Down the road a little further there were plenty more motels. Our choices were to go another 40 miles to camp, probably in the rain, or take one of these motels. It was an easy choice, even though it was only 2:30 P.M.

**May 29 Falls of Rough, KY to Sebree, KY 65 miles Total trip miles 1341**

We are leaving Falls of Rough at 8:30 and are on our way to Utica and possibly Sebree, 65 miles down the road. As we got near Utica there was a long hill and a big traffic tie up. We rode through to see what the trouble was and just a little way up, saw that a giant earthmover had fallen off the flatbed truck that was hauling it and landed right smack on a car coming along in the other direction. Fortunately there were no casualties, but Lili and I wondered out loud, "What if we had been a little further along on our climb?" The accident was only three or four cars before us! We took a break in Utica and headed on to Sebree. We had been biking very strong and were headed for an early arrival. We stopped to look down off a bridge. There was a barge being pushed by a tug. All of a sudden I was almost flattened by a nasal attack. My nose and eyes

started running uncontrollably and showed no signs of stopping. It was so severe, I could not see where I was going. Somehow I trailed Lili up to an open drug store in town and got some allergy stuff that the guy said would not be a problem with my high blood pressure. Then we went into a cafe and had a hamburger, French fries and a milk shake (the all American lunch). I popped two pills and started feeling better almost immediately. The only motel in town turned out to be too dumpy even for us, so we looked for the camp ground our map spoke of. We found it on the other edge of town, by the baseball field, behind the swimming pool. Across the road the main sports field had lights blazing away on the game now in progress. We were in plain sight of the people there. I had a few doubts about setting up our tent, where a couple hundred people of unknown sobriety could see us. We went to the back of the area, set the tent up and nobody bothered us. But what did bother us was the ground, which had been spongy to walk on, but turned into a solid rock when slept on. We also quickly found out there were lots of trains in the area! Every fifteen minutes we were rudely blasted awake by train whistles that sounded as though they were coming right through the tent! The flood lights stayed on very late.....

**May 30 Sebree, KY to Cave in Rock, IL 64 miles**

**Total trip miles 1405**

In the morning we packed up and went over to the benches on the other side of the pool and had our breakfast under the pavilion. We took off and rode on down toward Dixon and were hailed by a local biker named Wayne. He told us where the cafe was and we stopped for some more breakfast. It turned out they only had about three things on the menu, but we still liked having something other than cold oatmeal. We ate and continued on to the town of Clay where Lili brought groceries, and we stopped later at Oakridge Cemetery for lunch. Like most cemeteries it was peaceful, but this one also looked out on vast rolling golden valleys and a few hundred head of grazing cattle. It did not affect my allergies (which I was told was probably caused by a chicken feather processing plant back in Sebree) and we just enjoyed the scene as we sat in the sunshine. Woody Guthrie got it right, ***"I saw above me that endless skyway: I saw below me that golden valley: This land was made for you and me"***. After lunch we continued on down past Marion and down to the Ohio River. The last hill in KY was a welcome sight and we coasted down the eastern side to the ferry, got on board and were surprised to find out there was no charge. We got over to Cave in Rock, IL. Lili got some post cards in the gift shop and then we headed down to the state park, where we checked out the camp grounds. It was very nice, but sans showers. Since we didn't have one last night either, we were about to see if the private camp on the other side of town had better amenities. Then we spied the very nice park lodge with adjoining restaurant. Each of the pleasant chalets looked out over the Ohio River and it all was picture perfect. The cost was \$48 per night, but we thought it well worth the little extra. The room was spacious, with a high vaulted ceiling and a skylight. This was a brand new facility, with a million dollar view from our nice deck. Every thing was 1<sup>st</sup> class, really nice! We had dinner at the restaurant, I had catfish and hush puppies, baked potato and it was really very, very enjoyable. I would say the most memorable meal and lodging on the trip so far. Lili stayed up writing post cards and watching barges go up and down the river to 11:30, or something like that.





**May 31 Cave in Rock, IL to Ferne Clyffe State Park, IL 64 miles**

**Total trip miles 1469**

We woke up this morning at seven and it looks like another cloudy day in the Ohio River Valley. We're going to go down to the cave right now and check it out. We walked down stairs cut into the rocks and  $\frac{1}{4}$  or  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile down came to the mouth of this giant cave. We walked inside and it was very easy to picture this as a hang out for river pirates. At various time there were drinking, gambling and women of disrepute, but typically as the settlers floated down river they would be shot and their bodies weighted down and sunk in the river. Then their raft with belongings would be taken up river to sell to the next would be settler. There was an endless supply of men who wanted to get in on the land rush, who lined up to buy these ready made outfits. They of course might suffer a similar fate as the previous owners had. Well we explored the cave, took some pictures and went back up to our lovely chalet. We packed up and are going to stop at the restaurant on the way out. The memory of the German chocolate cheese cake lingers in my mind. We ordered and ate and Lili was still writing post cards when the owner, or I should say the concessionaire, came over, sat and had a cup of coffee with us. Her name was Mary Clark and she certainly was an attractive lady. She was statuesquely tall and well dressed, but she seemed quietly sad to me. We had a nice chat for about an hour. She wouldn't let us pay for breakfast. She said it was on her and said sort of wistfully (I thought), that she enjoyed hearing about our adventures. We got on the road late as usual, I guess it was 11:30 when we finally started riding. Lili made a stop at the post office and then we proceeded out of town. We had a fortuitous tail wind (well actually, all tail

winds are good, but unfortunately not too common on this trip) that helped push us the first twenty five miles. Then we turned west again and there was a constant series of rollers. Sometimes we would start climbing and the world would suddenly disappear past the top of the hill, but when you got over the crest you could see the downhill and the next hill and the next and on and on. Sometimes it seemed the whole country was laid out before us, in a series of terraced roller coasters. We stopped for lunch at a small grocery store and ordered two fresh ham sandwiches on rolls. For the second time today we were not allowed to pay. It was very moving to me that the owner of this modest little backwoods store wanted to help us. This is heartland America. It has been a pleasure meeting these people! We continued on west and ran into our first eastbound tourist. He had started six weeks earlier in Billings, MT averaging sixty five miles a day. Well at this point Billings seems light years away to us and the thought that we might be that far west in six weeks really got Lili and me excited. Ken gave us some information about what to expect up ahead and said he was forced to hitch a ride from a truck to get through to Carbondale, because the road is so badly flooded out. We chatted with him longer than we should have and we still had 17 miles to go to our chosen camp site. From that point on it was plugging away, trying to get there before dark, which we did. Just as the sun was about to go down, there was a beautiful break in the clouds and brilliant shafts of sunlight rained down on our horizon, like a message from the gods. We arrived at the park, set up our tent, had dinner, went over and had showers and are ready to conk out.

**June 1 Ferne Clyffe State Park, IL to Carbondale, IL 27 miles**

**Total trip miles 1496**

We woke up to the all familiar sound of rain drops on the tent. I think it's been raining most of the past week and I am pretty sick of it. It's not quite as bad as the headwinds we had at first, but nothing can defeat a bike rider like the elements. I thought about that for a minute and came to the conclusion that some of my greatest pleasures are elemental too. More about that later.

Last night we had a visitor at the tent. A raccoon was bound and determined to get the food in Lili's pannier. She got up and put the food bag over in the rest room. Well, we started to pack up this morning and were going to move on, but the rain increased in force, making us doubt our sanity. We ducked back in with our clammy rain gear already on and hung around for three and a half hours! The tent had gotten soaked through the floor and it was now getting hard to stay warm. We had a couple of quick sandwiches, but I knew that this would not hold us too long. We did not want to leave even this clammy, wet uncomfortable tent, to go out in that downpour and face the flooded roads to Carbondale. Our bikes were already packed except for the tent, but we were still prisoners of the storm.

At 1:15 we finally bit the bullet and pedaled out of damp and dreary Camp Swampy. We were told by the camp host that the best way to get to Carbondale was 148 to route 13 and that the bike route we were following was definitely way under water. We headed carefully out and made it down to Goreville and had some chicken. It was not too good, but at least it was warm food, which we surely needed, if we were going to ride in this drenching rain. The wind was blowing very hard, so the rain came down in sheets, from all angles, but mostly horizontal. Visibility was extremely bad and I worried about the cars not being able to see us, as they came blasting along, spraying huge rooster tails behind them. We had our flashing lights on, but they were pathetic nothings in this vile, dirty weather. There was still almost 25 miles to go, to get to the promised land of "the motels of Carbondale". With much determination and eyes glued to our rearview mirrors, we eventually found a Comfort Inn and sailed our boats into this very welcomed port. There was a very nice Indian type manager/owner, who never raised an eyebrow when we wheeled our dripping bikes to our room. It turned out to be a very comfortable place and the shower was probably the best of the trip. Hot showers on a

bike trip are wonderfully elemental things too. We went next door and had a little bit of dinner. Today had been very rough, but we had survived. Maybe we are being tested? After supper we went to Walmart and brought two very bulky foam pads to insulate us from our tent floor. We will keep them rolled up and inside plastic garbage bags, on top of our rear racks. They are only a couple of pounds, but they will add greatly to our already way too large, wind resistance.

**June 2 Carbondale, IL to Farmington, MO 95 miles**

**Total trip miles 1591**

It was after 10 when we got on the road, but we had had a good rest and got a lot of our smelly wet clothes washed too. We took 13 out of Carbondale and continued through Murphysboro to find Rt. 3. After that it was pretty wide open spaces with gentle rollers until we got down to the Mississippi River valley, where it was dead flat for about twenty miles up river. At Chester we got to our Mississippi River bridge! I was somewhat disappointed by its size. It wasn't much bigger than some of our local bridges in NJ. We got across over to Missouri with minimum difficulty and stopped to have a peanut butter sandwich at an old abandoned Citgo station. There were vast cornfields all around, but in the distance we saw Ozarks! Lots of Ozarks!! It was a busy road with no shoulder and we had to jump off of it a few times, when being passed by trucks, especially when one passed us at the same time as one coming towards us (which always seems to happen). We rode less than 10 miles and we met another tourist coming east. This was the second one coming east that we had met. Could that mean we're half way across? No, this Milwaukee guy had started in Pueblo, Colorado and was only going to Berea, KY. I suppose he does a little of the trail every vacation. He told us he had started in Farmington, MO in the morning and had ridden 40 some miles, so far today. We had already come 51 miles from Carbondale, let's see, that would add up to 90 something? We half heartedly started off in the direction of Farmington, not thinking that we would really make it, but we rode pretty good actually. The Ozarks were many, not too severe in size yet, but they were one after the other and it was seldom flat. There was beautiful scenery though! It was hot at first, but it started to cool down rapidly, as the sun started getting lower and we were just puttin' on the miles! We got to Farmington and passed up a bunch of motels, as we looked for the campground. It turned out the one we were supposed to go to, was back ten miles before town. So we looked for the other one that was supposed to be on the west side of town and didn't find it till almost dark and wound up with 95 miles for the day. I set up the tent, which was still soaked from our soggy stay in Ferne Clyffe State Park two nights ago.

**June 3 Farmington, MO to the Ellington Motel, MO 63 miles**

**Total trip miles 1654**

We slept good except for the noise of some animals fighting loudly outside. I don't know what kind of animals they were and I didn't go out to find out. Maybe bobcats, or maybe raccoons, or possibly just stray feral house cats, but whatever, it sure sounded like they were fighting to the death. Our new foam pads kept us comfortable and by morning the heat from our warm bodies had dried out the tent. Well it's not raining this morning, but it is still very gray. I will pack up and we'll see what the day brings.

We found our way down to the main road, I think it was 32 and traveled out to route W, then 10 and eventually 21. The hills were all roller coasters, one after the other, with almost no flatland in between. We were going up a hill on Rt. 21 and I saw a guy on a mountain bike coming towards us on the opposite side of the road. He was motioning for us to get over and at first I could not see why, but we did anyway. It turned out there was a very wide prefab house being hauled up the hill behind him. After it passed, we got talking to the guy and I figured him to be a man about 70 years old. He told us his name was Don and since he had nowhere special he wanted to go, he followed us down 21, almost to Ellington. He stopped before the downhill into

town, because he said he didn't want to climb it needlessly. He said we were coming to "The mother of all hills." (I can't wait.....) We went down into town and found us a cheap motel on the west side. Then we went to the nearby eatery for supper and took a seat amid the local colorful people. Later Lili went food shopping and while she shopped I busied myself outside by checking her bike. When you look for trouble, you often find it. I found a broken spoke in her rear wheel. One broken spoke is not too bad, but looking closer I saw that there were many more spokes on her bike's drive side with damage from her chain. I figured it must have happened way back on our way out of Lexington, KY, where I remembered her chain coming off, after she missed a shift. These damaged spokes were definitely not going to go the distance, so I vowed to myself to make sure I got enough correct length spokes, before it became a real problem. I shouldn't mention this, but I have ridden twelve days now without breaking a spoke on my own new rear wheel. I know now that all of my spokes broke because of that cheap secondhand hub I had foolishly brought back in Downingtown, PA. *A wheel is only as strong as its weakest part.*

**June 4 Ellington, MO to Houston, MO 71 miles**

**Total trip miles 1725**

We left the hotel around 10 A.M. and proceeded towards Owl's Bend. The hills today seemed to be triple terraces and although not quite as steep as the Appalachians, they sure had us grunting and groaning. The trick was to be in a low gear before the bottom, because the next uphill started immediately, if not sooner. There was no rest for the weary and as the day wore on, we wore out. I have often heard it said that the Ozarks are the worst mountains in the country. I don't know if I would go that far, but what they lack in length, or height, they make up for in numbers, so you wind up working just as hard as any other mountain range that I know of. But about ten miles before Summersville, we noticed that the mountains were starting to be less frequent and less steep. We rolled into Summersville with a fairly nice tailwind. I was talking to a young boy (4 or 5) who wanted to know everything about the bikes. As I was explaining things to him, a woman came over and asked us if we wanted to stay at her house nearby. We said thanks very much, but we wanted to get to Houston, still 24 miles down the road. We left and found the road was quite flat compared to what it had been. There were one or two little hills, but for the most part, it was just rolling. We came into Houston and spied a Mickey-D's and went over for supper and then went over to Walmart to check out the camping gas. They did not have any. We then went to the Houston Motel and found it was neat and operated by a nice Chinese woman. I lost a sock down the shower drain trying to wash my riding clothes while showering and told the owner, who thanked me for telling him and said, no problem. Lili called her son Lee and we talked to him for quite awhile and then we hit the sack.

**June 5 Houston, MO to Ash Grove, MO 117 miles**

**Total trip miles 1842**

We got on the road this morning at the very early time (for us), of 7:30. It was a beautiful, blue sky day with low humidity and light wind from the northeast. *The vast, rolling golden fields were interspersed with occasional small woodlots and there were long, long views, with cows grazing here and there. They were black and white Jersey cows with big red and white ear tags. The bob whites were whistling everywhere and wild canaries were flitting in and out of the buttercups. Pedaling through the sunshine, I felt lucky to be alive and even luckier to be here on this trip, in spite of all its hardships. The beauty was so moving, there were grateful tears in my eyes and "all around me a voice was sounding: This land was made for you and me."* We got to Marshfield at the 62 mile mark and that's probably where we should have stayed. It was plenty early though and we were feeling OK, since the terrain had been a little less taxing than it had been and there had been no head winds either. The only problem was the next place to stay was in Ash Grove, some 50 miles



distant. We had enough time to get there, but it would make for a 115 mile day! Being a little crazy we attempted it anyway. We plugged along and it got pretty gruesome near the end. There was another hill and another hill, and uncountable more hills, till we were very sorry we had not stayed in Marshfield. When we finally did get to Ash Grove, we called the fellow listed on our Adventure Cycling map as a hospitality house for bikers. He didn't answer his phone and the only motel in town was supposedly filled up. That only left us the city park as a possible camping spot. We thought it best to check with the police before just assuming it was OK. As we circled the town looking for the police station, we passed a woman who was outside having a garage sale. The second time we passed her, she asked us if we needed a place to camp. It turned out that her husband was a biker and they had hosted riders before. There was a bathroom connected to the garage that we were welcome to use. It was a very nice stay with Ann and Randy Willard and daughter Betsy, who was starting a job in Ridgewood, NJ soon. Since I once ran a gas station in Ridgewood, I knew the area well, so we talked at length about that. We also found out that biker husband Randy was once turned away from a church, when he tried to seek refuge from a storm, so this may have accounted for this family's willingness to offer us help?

**June 6 Ash Grove, MO to Pittsburg, KS 74 miles**

**Total trip miles 1916**

We left Ash Grove at 7:30 and headed down to Everton for breakfast and to pick up our mail. When we got to Everton the first people we encountered were the couple that we had heard was ahead of us. Their names were Alice and Dale. We sat down in front of their B&B and talked to them quite awhile. Lili went down to the post office and picked up our mail and by the time she came back Alice and Dale were ready to leave. They asked us where we were eating breakfast. It seemed the only diner in town wasn't open yet. They said the lady that owns this B&B isn't home right now, but she is such a nice lady, she wouldn't mind if you had some cereal and left her a couple of dollars to cover it. So that's what we did, we went in and helped ourselves to breakfast and left her a note to explain what we had done. This woman was also a friend of Ann and Randy Willard and I hoped she would understand. Now if we were not in heartland USA, I would never do such a thing, for fear of being arrested at gunpoint, but it's a little different out here. We didn't run into Dale and Alice again till lunch at Golden City, KS. They were pulling out, heading for Pittsburg, KS as we arrived. We talked to some people in town and one guy showed us his empty store front building and asked us if we would like to stay there, amid the junk and clutter. Of course it was too early for us to quit for the day, so we used that excuse. We also talked to another couple who were Mormons. They just wished us a nice trip and did not try to pitch religion to us (this is the Bible belt after all). It was at least an hour and a half before we got back on the road towards Pittsburg. We found the road comparably easy, but we were extremely tired from our 117 mile previous day. I guess it was 6:30 before we pulled into town. We looked for another hospitality family on Walnut Street and found the correct house only after we discovered that Walnut Street was interrupted by a park. We found the owner not home, but the woman next door came over and let us in. She showed us the laundry room and the shower and told us we were welcome to use them. Just as we were finishing doing our laundry the owner came home. She told us Alice and Dale had come by, but they did not stay, as Alice was suffering from the heat or something and went to a motel with A/C. So we never got to talk to Dale and Alice anyway. We spent a very interesting evening talking to Gerry and her husband Leon, so it's been **two** interesting days. The Forsyths offered us breakfast, but we knew they were just starting their vacation and probably had lots of stuff to do besides entertain bikers who just dropped in out of nowhere. We thanked them and said it was fun to meet such nice people as we travelled across the country. I had the feeling that they were afraid that Alice had thought their home too messy or something. We thought that these people had for no reason except kindness,

giving us a place to sleep on this four month trip of ours. The most important thing was, it was really nice to meet people and not just ride by. Old pictures of scenery in an album get wrinkled and faded, but memories of kind people do not fade. I was well aware by now that this trip was a lot about meeting people.

**June 7 Pittsburg, KS to Chanute, KS 62 miles**

**Total trip miles 1978**

We left and hit Mickey's for a couple of his *wonderful* ? breakfast sandwiches. Hey, it all goes into the calorie furnace and fuels the engine of my monster bike just fine. We headed out into the wilds of Kansas and found the dreaded Kansas wind was not a problem, unless you were going north. Most of the time we were going west, but when the road did bend to the north, we were almost stopped dead in our tracks. We very shortly encountered a local cyclist on a recumbent bike and being unloaded and streamlined he blew us off like the Kansas wind. After a half hour, he came roaring back the other way. I cheered, but I don't think he heard me. Lili was able to draft me today and it was a big help. We reached our destination of Chanute about 5:30 or so, even though we hadn't left this morning until 10:30. There were plenty of motels, so we started checking them out. We took one that was \$32.00 tax included and did not mind that their pool was not working at all. It was comfortable and clean and that's all we cared about. Went out to eat next door at an all you can eat pizza place and ran into the 8 Adventure Cyclists. They gave us the news that Dale and Alice were also in town. That means that there are 12 of us bikers altogether. Since we are all headed to the same place tomorrow, there may be a land-rush for tent space. Anyway, it was a nice day here in Kansas.

**June 8 Chanute, KS to Eureka, KS 70 miles**

**Total trip miles 2048**

As Lili and I rode out of town we were stopped by a nice old guy named Dick. He just wanted to talk to us about our trip and tell us that he had spoken to thousands of bikers in the last 20 years that they have been coming through town. As we were standing there Alice and Dale pulled up and we started talking about what we all had been doing since we saw them in Golden City, before Pittsburg, KS. We started riding and the first people we encountered were the Adventure Cycle people who had started out ahead of us. We went on down the road together and the miles went flying by and before we knew it we had fifty some miles on. We stopped to talk to east-bounders on recumbents. The woman was towing a "Bob" trailer that was carrying a passenger named Rose. Rose was a Jack Russell terrier! They said this was their third trip across the country. I guess they had it perfected pretty good by now. At the next town, we got stuff for lunch and started off again looking for a place to stop. Usually on a bike trip, when you are looking for picnic tables they never appear, so it became our rule to never pass a picnic table. Well today we found a huge park/roadside rest kind of place and we had a lovely spot for lunch. Alice and Dale came along and they stopped too. We took off for our destination of Eureka where Alice and Dale left us to visit Dale's cousin and we found the city park. Out by the lovely swimming pool we saw a whole bunch of biker tents lined up neatly in a row. Eight of them were the Adventure group and one of the others we had been trailing since Virginia! It was Sarabeth Matilsky who had stayed in the Elk Garden United Methodist Church back in Virginia, three weeks before us. She had met two nice young guys, named Wyeth and Jeff and they were having a great time just being biking friends. They called themselves the turtle squad, because any time they saw a turtle trying to cross the road, they would stop and help it over, so it would not get crushed by a car or truck. Because they spent so much time saving turtles they also moved along at turtle *speed* as well, so it was a good name for them. At any rate, it was nice to finally meet the person from Highland Park, NJ that we knew was out there ahead of us some where, but where in this huge country, we had no idea. We had a wonderful afternoon swimming in the pool and now Lili is cooking



## *Rose*

our supper on a picnic table here. So it's been a very fine day meeting all these bikers and also some nice local people too. BTW the camp site and pool here were completely free to us. ***This does not look like NJ, Toto.***

***June 9 Eureka, KS to Newton, KS 77 miles***

***Total trip miles 2125***

We broke camp at Eureka and the Adventure Cycle guys were the first to go down the road, Then Lili and I and Sarabeth left and finally Jeff and Wyeth followed up behind. We had a strong tailwind so we rode very briskly and it was kind of a major road. After about 30 miles we stopped for lunch at Cassoday. We were inside and had ordered our food, when Jeff and Wyeth walked in and sat with us. The Adventure Cycle guys left and informed us that they were going to do a century today, so we probably would not be seeing them again. We had a good meal and since this place was famous for their pies, everybody had at least one dessert, if not two, or three! We got back on the bikes and finished the 77 miles to Newton. Riding along with Sarabeth was fun, because she often started singing and she had a good young voice unlike Lili and me. i.e. Lili would sing something like; ***I love Kansas in the Morning.....Etc. Etc. Why oh why do I love Kansas, Because it's mainly flat.*** And she sang it flat as a board. But if I was asked what I liked most about Kansas, I know what I would say with no hesitation. The people are very friendly!!!! We found Newton to be quite a large town with many fine parks. The one we chose to camp in was the city's athletic park. We asked the police where we could set up and they told us, anywhere you want. We found a little grove of trees with a roofed bandstand and lots of

picnic tables. They evidently were being stored there. It was completely deserted except for us. There were bathrooms across the street and down the street, there was just about everything we needed, except a shower. Some people were going to sleep on the picnic tables under the pagoda, but I thought it was a little buggy for that, so we set our tent up outside. It would have been great, but there was a railroad roundhouse nearby and trains conversed in whistle language all night long.



***Jeff                      Wyeth      &      Sarabeth***

***June 10   Newton, KS to Sterling, KS      59 miles***

***Total trip miles 2184***

Lili and I arose before anyone else and packed up as quietly as we could, so as not to disturb the late risers. We had our breakfast and were just about ready to leave when the others woke up to say goodbye to us. Jeff and Wyeth would be heading down to Wichita to meet Wyeth's sister and father and then bike to Denver, CO. with them. Sarabeth would continue her trip to Oregon and her Homeschooler camp. We would head up to the Grand Tetons, Yellowstone, etc. and did not know exactly where else after that. We wished everyone happy trails and with sad feelings, we left these three nice young people and headed our bikes west towards Colorado.



We had lunch about thirty five miles from Newton, sitting on a bridge guard rail over the muddy Little Arkansas River. Like I said, sometimes you can't always find a table when you need one. Just as we were getting started after lunch, a biker pulled over and started talking to us. He said that he and his wife had planned a long summer trip on their tandem, but had to cancel it when his wife stepped off a curb and broke her leg! So their trip will have to wait until next summer. Again I realized how lucky we were to be on this trip; the trip of both of our lifetimes. At about 3:30-4:00 P.M. we stopped at a café in Nickerson that turned out to be an early dinner. We got to Sterling about 5 and since we had already eaten, I took a nap on the bed. Lili went out and got some post cards. She came back with a couple of chili dogs and woke me up. We sat outside on the swing, eatin' health food (chili dogs and ice cream). We talked to the woman in the next unit, who was some sort of an Amway salesperson. She said she did a lot of traveling and was very interested in our trip. She said she was envious, but I silently doubted if she would like it. It wasn't right for me to assume that, just because she was an overweight smoker, but it was also something I saw in her eyes. I sensed that she didn't know if we were crazy or were on to a good thing. I guess either way she would be right. This trip is not for everyone!

**June 11 Sterling, KS to Larned, KS 55 miles**

**Total trip miles 2239**

In the morning when we woke up there was a storm going on, so we didn't feel the urge to jump out of bed. Finally we left about ten o'clock and headed into the wilds of Kansas once more. Lunch was on a bridge again, this one over Rattlesnake Creek at the Quivira Wildlife (duck) Refuge. We didn't see any snakes, but it wouldn't have surprised me at all, if we had. After that we hit a road that had been freshly tarred and graveled. It wasn't much fun to ride on, but in Kansas there are plenty of parallel roads, because it's so flat. Lili chose one that actually was a shortcut and cut off about eight miles. It was a nice road, except that we did have a pretty heavy side wind. After our shortcut, we were on our way to Larned and spied a tourist riding towards us. We pulled over and found out his name was Jeff and he was from Vashon Island out in Puget Sound. He had started on May 7, five weeks ago and was the first rider we had met coming from Seattle and probably the first rider from west of the Rockies. We rolled into Larned about 5 o'clock and Lili went to the post office before it closed at 5:15 and then we went down to the city park to see if there were any bikers there. There were none and since it was so long before dark, we decided to go scope out the motels. We found a place with two bikers staying there. A fellow named Glen going west and a guy named Albert on a recumbent was eastbound. So it looks like this is the middle of the trail. We spent the evening with them, discussing bikes and whatnot. We'll probably see Glen again tomorrow and Oh Yeah, he told us that the Adventure Cycle Club is here in town. They claimed to have put in a 180 mile day, but that does not compute. Tomorrow we'll see what's going on. The worst thing about Larned was the large feed lot just before town. The stench was bad enough to make you gag and swear to never eat beef again. The wind changed during the night and the smell got even worse. I just wanted to get the hell out of there.

**June 12 Larned, KS to Dighton, KS 96 miles**

**Total trip miles 2335**

The entire land had become a giant wheat field and grain elevators appeared on the horizon of this enormous bread basket, like the masts of tall ships approaching port. We would pass one behemoth and another would start to rise out of the distant nothingness. From a tiny speck, it would slowly grow- until maybe, a couple of hours later as we passed, it had reached skyscraper proportions. These monsters often blow up, because grain dust can be highly explosive and if it's fine and dry, it can go off like a bomb when ignited by a spark or flame. These concrete structures, many of them old, sometimes collapse too. In a forty year period there were over

600 explosions. Not all of them resulted in fatalities, but they are still not a place I would like to work around. We got on the road slightly after Glen and ran into the Adventure bunch again. We wound up riding with them 65 miles to West City and then we continued on to Dighton by ourselves for a 96 mile day. We had found out while riding along with the Adventure group, that it was indeed true that three of them had done over 180 miles (finishing at 1 A.M.) and then rested two days waiting for their group to catch up to them. Bob and Glen were interesting too. Glen did all the talking, because Bob was his trailer, who he referred to as a person..... well I guess he was lonely sometimes. The vast waving wheat fields were beautiful in a lonely sort of haunting way, but only very seldom did a "little house on the prairie" appear in the distant seas of grain. Here and there we saw old broken down windmills that spoke of farmers gone away, but mostly the prairies were lonely vast spaces, between the long straight roads and the lonely train tracks. We checked into the luxurious, somewhat pretentious, Dighton Motel and had a fireplace in our room and a very high ceiling also. Not you're typical tourist motel, but it was not expensive at all.



**June 13 Dighton, KS to Tribune, KS 73 miles**

**Total trip miles 2408**

We started off at 9 and proceeded west on Rt. 96. We stopped for an early lunch at the 30 mile mark at Mickey's. Ten miles after lunch, my back tire started bumping. I had just finished fixing it, when two east-bounders came along. They had started in Eugene, Oregon and had come 2200 miles, starting on May 11. So they had made pretty good time. They had no snow on the roads, but said there were banks of snow 10' high in the passes. We now have only one rider ahead of us that we know of and we may catch him tonight if he

stays in Tribune, which we imagine he will. The two east-bounders complained to us about the south winds that they had in Wyoming. They said they were very bad. If they are still from the south when we get there, we will have a tailwind and that's never a bad thing! We pulled into Tribune around 6 o'clock and had dinner at the Trail's End Motel and found that the rider ahead of us is Roel, from the Netherlands. We had heard about him from Sarabeth, Jeff and Wyeth. They said you will know him immediately, because he smokes and carries a saxophone on his bike! So when we met and called him by name he was surprised we knew it. He is undoubtedly faster than us, but he takes a lot of side trips (like the time he got a locomotive ride from a train engineer he had met in a bar). We'll start off tomorrow together anyway.

**June 14 Tribune, KS to Eads, CO 58 miles**

**Total trip miles 2466**

We got outside with Roel at 8:30 and found Lili's front tire was flat. It was one of those infamous Texas tacks (thorns). So we fixed that and straightened out her panniers a little bit and started out. When we got to Sheridan Lake we stopped for lunch and were promptly caught by the Adventure Cycle people again. The side wind was fierce and combined with the side blasts from trucks it was downright dangerous! When a truck passed it was necessary to hold on to your handlebars for all you were worth, or be blown right off the road! By the time we reached Eads, everyone was ready to stop. We all grabbed a motel, except Roel who slept in his tent. We were in Colorado now, but it still looked a lot like Kansas! The thing was, even though Kansas is pretty flat, it starts gaining elevation slowly as you go west. It is so gradual you don't really notice it. The wind is a much bigger factor, but we lucked out there, because it was mostly from the north and as I have said, the north wind mainly hurt us when there were trucks passing.

**June 15 Eads, CO to Ordway, CO 64 miles**

**Total trip miles 2530**

There was a mirage out this morning and the Rockies were plainly visible, back to the northeast of us. That's crazy we didn't get to them yet! They seemed to hover like an alien spaceship, or something.....hmm. Yesterday we entered Colorado and the scenery changed from wheat fields and stock yards to sagebrush for awhile and then back into open fields of probably wheat and also a few rolling hills. As I said, we have been gradually climbing and our elevation now is over 4500'. I think that the higher altitude may account for some of my tiredness last night. So today was a pretty easy day and we stopped only once in Sugar City for lunch and Stefan caught up to us as we ate. He is a young, high-spirited German guy, who speaks good English and is fun to talk to. He had acquired a huge set of cattle long horns and had taped them on top of the flat handlebars of his mountain bike. On the rear of his bike was a big sign that said, "**Give me liberty or give me death**". All together, it was a very distinctive rig! We reached the famous \$5.00 a night Hotel Ordway around 2 o'clock and sat with the Adventure guys in the lobby talking. Eventually we got the ambition to go shower and go down to the crossroads and have burgers and fries. We came back to the hotel and sat talking again to the international riders, who we have been playing leap frog with, for the past couple of weeks now. After dark we went outside and listened to Roel play his saxophone over in the little park across the street.

**June 16 Ordway, CO to Lake Pueblo State Park, CO 61 miles**

**Total trip miles 2591**

Today is Monday and it looks halfway decent outside, the sun is not brilliant, but it's not raining either, so we're pushing on to Pueblo. As we got started the train whistles that one hears constantly in Kansas and eastern Colorado were still singing their mournful tunes. Lili and I were next to last to leave from the hotel and we thanked the owner for renting us such a nice room for five bucks (*a person*). We said goodbye to Roel, took his picture and said we'll probably see you down the road (it turned out we did). We only went about 11 miles and stopped at a little store. Lili was buying some bread and he came along not looking very happy. I think he

had read his mail and had gotten a *“Dear Roel letter”* from his girlfriend Claudia. Lili and I went over and sat in the park eating our peanut butter and raisin sandwiches and said to each other, how much we had enjoyed meeting Roel and how we hoped he would be able to survive this love affair that was seemingly over. Then we headed on towards Pueblo.....

When we got into town the first thing we did was head to the bike shop. It was a very large store and they said they could work on Lili’s wheel immediately. So we wheeled the bikes into the store and pulled her rear wheel out, handed it to the guy and he started to repair it while we watched. As we waited, Larry from the Hawaiian Islands walked in. He told us his group had already set up at the fair grounds. He said that the place was an enormous hall, suitable for about 500 people. A room with 500 cots didn’t sound too attractive to Lili and me. Larry left and then we did as well. As we were riding out of town we had a thunderstorm. This would be the third one today, so we thought it would be good time to go have supper. We ducked into a Pizza Hut and watched the rain as we ate. We saw Larry ride by again, but he didn’t see us. Since they planned a rest day here, and will eventually go to Oregon, this may be our last contact with these people, who we have been leapfrogging with the past two weeks or so. I am quite sure there will be others though, since our route seems to be the bicycle interstate of the country. We rode about 5 miles out of town towards a state park. As we were leaving town in traffic, an old fat guy in a big Cadillac brushed my rear pannier with his bumper. I had seen him in my mirror and dove over, but he hit me anyway. I was lucky I had swerved over, I think he would have just plowed into me as though I wasn’t there. He did not even seem to realize what he had done.

We found the state park up by the reservoir and it’s really spectacular, looking down on Lake Pueblo, with longer views to distant snow capped mountains. It’s very western looking, red rock terrain and that makes me feel like we have been suddenly transported to the wild west from the Kansas prairie. We are at a little over 5,000 foot here and I am thrilled beyond words. We have the entire camp to ourselves. What a pity the Adventure guys are back in some ugly hall and missing all this beauty.

**June 17 Lake Pueblo State Park, CO to Royal Gorge, CO      54 miles      Total trip miles 2645**

Tuesday morning and the sun came up in a big red ball. I don’t know if that means rain today or not, but it’s nice and sunny now. The mountains are shining out across the park here and in the distance we can see Pike’s Peak. It’s quite a sight! Getting ready to leave now; should be on the road in about 15 minutes.

We left our beautiful red rock camp ground and immediately started climbing. Not real steep, but pretty long! No problem, our legs are much stronger than when we left home. Bring on those Rockies! We rode around Pueblo Lake and we were surprised at how large it was and the other park entrance was much further away than we thought. We went past canyons and steep crevices and kept getting closer and closer to the mountains. Each bend in the road brought more snow capped peaks into view. It was a nice day, a little warm and a little head wind, but who could complain in the midst of all this beauty. Eventually though, the altitude and the rigors of the past days caught up to me and I felt very, very tired. When we got to Wetmore I was ready for a stop, but the only place in town was closed. But *fortunately* the next town of Florence had a full complement (?) of fast food places. But *unfortunately*, we tried the Hardees and had a crummy lunch. In the future we will avoid them whenever we can! Our next climb up Twin peaks was 6 miles long and it brought us out to Royal Gorge, where we got a camp site. I set up the tent and took a nap. We might be in a lot better shape than when we left home, but it’s still damn hard work to climb mountains on a 130 lb. bike! Even with all the climbing we did today, we did not gain much altitude, because there were lots of down-hills as well.

**June 18 Royal Gorge, CO to Fairplay, CO 69 miles****Total trip miles 2714**

We started off in the morning about 8 o'clock and had to work very hard, not only on the tough climbs, but also against the stiff headwind. It was a real tough day, with only a couple of short roadside breaks and one stop 18 mi. before Fairplay in W. Hartsel. All day we plugged slowly up and up and onward. Actually we probably would have done a lot more stopping, but there just were no stores! Not much of anything, up there, mostly just barren mountain. It was after dark, about 8:15 P.M. before we checked into the motel at Fairplay. Our altitude was around 10,000 foot and I could feel the loss of oxygen. It made me tired, like I had a 50 lb. sack of potatoes on my back all day. I was unable to get enough air, without over-breathing, which only made me dizzy and feel worse. Tomorrow it's Hoosier Pass, the highest point on this trail! Right now Fairplay seems like the base camp for climbing Mount Everest to me. I thought to myself, if today was hard, then tomorrow will be brutal! We met Tony and Chris from New Zealand, who were going not just across the US, but all the way around the earth! We wished them good luck but at this point, we were not really too envious, just filled with total appreciation for their strength and courage. They were very nice and like many New Zealanders, wanted us to look them up, if we ever got to NZ. I would love to go there someday, but for now I just want to get this bike to the Pacific Ocean! But tomorrow we first have to climb Hoosier Pass!!

**June 19 Fairplay, CO to Breckenridge, CO 25 miles****Total trip miles 2739**

We got up and ate a leisurely breakfast across the street and since we only had a short day of 25 miles to Breckenridge did not start riding till 10 o'clock or so. The road up to the first town of Alma wasn't too bad, but after that we started up a relentless grade that climbed 1500 feet in the space of 4 or 5 miles. There was also a vicious wind; sometimes it blew directly at us, sometimes it came from the side. And sometimes it was even a tailwind. Then it dawned on me, the wind wasn't changing by itself, it was mostly the road that had big switchbacks and made us change direction. But whatever, it demanded close attention and a good grip on the bars, or it could blow you out into traffic, or do something you would be very unhappy with. The roads out here in the western mountains are graded pretty easy for snow travel by trucks. What the mountains are however, is high!!!! We stopped several times, to take pictures and to try and recapture our breath. In this thin air, it was quite an exertion to climb even in our low-low granny gears. Each time the road turned it gave us the bad news that there was more and more coming..... As we neared the top, we became quite drunk, with the feeling that we had conquered the Everest of this trip! We hammered up the final half mile, ignoring our growing oxygen debt (Is that the theme from Rocky playing in my helmet?)

*“Trying hard now  
It's so hard now  
Trying hard now*

*Getting strong now  
Won't be long now  
Getting strong now*

*Gonna fly now  
Flying high now  
Gonna fly, fly, fly...”*



When we finally got to the top, we took pictures in front of the Hoosier Pass sign; 11,500 feet (that's on the road, the surrounding peaks are much higher of course). We then spread out our picnic blanket and had a couple of peanut butter/raisin sandwiches. We had some company from local chipmunks and aggressive blue jays (camp robbers). Lili spoke in French to a couple who were glad to find someone they could talk to, as they couldn't speak anything but French. Lili is multilingual and speaks 3 or 4 languages fluently and a smattering of some others. That's just one more thing that amazes me about her.



***Hoosier Pass***

***To be continued in Part Three***