



FREEWHEELER NEWS

Newsletter of the Morris Area Freewheelers Bicycle Club Special Edition August 24, 2014

Biking with Lili

“From Sea to Shining Sea”

Part Three

Our Wonderful Parks



June 19, Fairplay, CO. to Breckenridge, CO. (continued) 25 miles

Total trip miles 2739

Well! Here we are up in the teeth of the Rockies! The pearly white teeth! They are awesomely beautiful and since we are at the highest elevation of this ride, the rest should be all downhill, right? No, of course not, but hey the next 10 miles or so, are entirely down! Besides this pass, I really do feel like we have conquered some of our biggest problems though and things should be a lot better now. My bike has a little less weight to carry and my new back wheel has only had one broken spoke since I got it in Hazard, KY. Oh, and that terrifying, awful noise in my front wheel is gone too! I never mentioned what that turned out to be. It is something I never ran into in my entire cycling career before, or since. In order to create the proper bike condition, take a pair of tightly laced wheels, put about 30 lbs. in each of your four panniers and strap your camping stuff on top of that. Now ride your bike through pouring rain, muddy puddles, sand, salt, etc. for a couple of months. Eventually the spokes may start to make noises from the places where they cross (your knees might too). The reason is simple! The grit that will collect there, even on stainless spokes, is creating friction. Instead of the spokes sliding freely against each other, as the weight in the saddle bags swings around, they bind as they rub together and make lots of horrible, scary sounds! The friction is something like a rosined bow on a fiddle string, only much more unpleasant than that. I cleaned the grit off, by passing an oily rag through the places where the spokes cross. End of problem! A simple thing like that, took me a long time to figure out and it was driving me nuts, because it sounded like the wheel was going to collapse any minute. So it was a major problem, that I do not have to worry about anymore..... Lili's bike is rolling along nicely too, so we have no bike troubles at the moment and our overall condition is great. We are looking forward to the Grand Tetons, Yellowstone, Glacier Park, and many more scenic splendors!

We started down the mountain to Breckenridge and stopped three or four times to take pictures and to let our brakes and rims cool off. We pulled into town around three and called Jeff Bergeron. Jeff is the son of my good friend, old neighbor and old riding buddy, Al Bergeron. When Jeff was just a lad of 9, his dad used to bring him and his sister Shelley on century rides, as I did with my kids, who are the same ages. The older old boys got to do the 100 mile rides on their own single bikes and the younger 7 yr. old daughters, got to ride stoker on our tandems. That was when we lived back in Sparta, NJ in the 80's, now here we are in '97 and Jeff is living in Frisco, CO and making custom ski boots, etc. Frisco is the next town after Breckenridge, so we called him and told him we would like to stop by for a visit. Breckenridge is pretty high up, at about 9600 feet and it is surrounded by beautiful mountain peaks that tower all around it. The Blue River tumbles down through the center of town and like they say, trout do live in nice neighborhoods. Although the town was originally a dusty old mining town, it is now a high end ski resort. Being on a 4 month bike trip does not allow our budget too much room for high end lodging, so we went over to the very nice hostel (now unfortunately closed). We got our accommodations squared away and headed on over to see our old neighbor/bike buddy Jeff, from another time and place. We met Jeff and his girlfriend Jennifer in the park, went over to their place and then out for dinner. The restaurant had mind boggling mountain views that defy description, but I was spellbound to say the least. For dessert, Jeff treated us to ice cream and we sat by the beautiful Blue River talking about old times, and the scenes from our memories flew by in high speed rewind. Before we knew it, it was time to say good-night and head back to the Fireside Hostel. Because of the altitude and very noisy guests coming in at all hours after partying, I had a very restless sleep, but with some difficulty we got down to the scheduled eight o'clock breakfast. I had bacon and eggs and pancakes and got apologies from a young female party animal, who had come in at 3 A.M. raising hell (somehow, she had gotten up for breakfast too)! As we were eating,

who walks in but Jeff. He tells us that he would like to ride with us at least part of the day, if not all of the day. So we made a date to meet him at his shop in Frisco.

June 20, Breckenridge, CO. to Kremmling, CO. 51 miles

Total trip miles 2790

We got packed up and got on the bike path that goes between Breckenridge and Frisco and then some. On the path the first riders we saw were the "Ride the Rockies" tour group that had pulled in to their scheduled stop just north of town. The next thing I noticed was that this bike path is really awesomely beautiful! It swooped down along the river gorge and then flew up mountainsides and dove through giant groves of aspen and soared like a mountain eagle. It never failed to show us the beauty and grandeur that is here in the Rockies and it energized us, like a tank full of high test. I had to remind myself that we were not alone though and not to be gawking non-stop, like a tourist (Well like a what, then?) Since there is no divider, head-on crashes can be a real threat. If one is not careful of other speeding bikes, they can come at you out of nowhere and fly past you inches away, in a flash of sharp aluminum, carbon fiber spears and over a hundred pounds of hurtling flesh and bone. The seven miles to Frisco went very quickly, even though I stopped to take pictures and talk to some of the tour group. When we arrived in Frisco, Jeff showed us his shop and I had a flat to fix and that's another thing bike paths are good for. Then we shopped for camera batteries and food and it seemed like we were never gonna get going. It was after twelve when we finally started down the bike path again. Before long we passed beautiful Dillon Lake and spied some lovely picnic tables, looking out on the lake. We had only done a few miles, but here were these nice tables with beautiful views, so in keeping with my rule, to never pass a picnic table, we stopped and had our lunch sandwiches and three pork chops that Jeff had provided. After eating and chatting a bit more, we finally started off together toward Kremmling, some 51 miles or so from Breckenridge. The road was mostly downhill and we had a pretty good pace going, so the miles went quickly by to the Green Mountain Reservoir, which is a dammed up part of the Blue River. We had a little pit_stop there and ate a pop tart or something. Jeff thought it was time for him to head back home to Frisco. I felt a sad pang as we said goodbye and headed off in the opposite direction. It's hard to explain, but there were just so many memories of past lives, my first 30 year marriage, Jeff and my young children riding centuries together, so much life history riding away, it was very emotional for me.



Jeff & Jack

Also we were on our own again, but Lili and I had been trail hardened by some pretty tough times, so we were used to that. The scenery which had been spectacularly gorgeous, soon became much less so, as the white caps slowly faded in my rear-view mirror, along with Jeff's shadow. In fact the rest of the road to Kremmling was not very nice at all. It was gray and windy, traffic was bad and we were glad to get there and find us a cheap motel, another safe island to rest up on. Tomorrow's leg over Muddy Pass is over 60 miles, with **no** services!

June 21, Kremmling, CO. to Cowdry CO. 74 miles

Total trip miles 2864

We stocked up with food, plus 2 liters of extra water and pulled out of the Rustic Motel, room 12 at 9 A.M. I first rode back a mile to drop some cards off at the post office and then rejoined Lili and we got going over Muddy Pass to Walden. The road was a little hilly, but Muddy Pass was not so much a pass, as a gradual gain in elevation for 4 or 5 miles. It did not even require my granny gear, but that was OK with me. We turned off Rt. 40 and took so-called highway 14, which was a smaller road. It was lunch time, but although we were surrounded by vast forests with little or no habitation visible, everything was fenced off with barbed wire, right up to the road. We were getting quite hungry, but there wasn't even a rock to sit on! We finally turned onto a small dirt road and found a little traffic island that had no fences, so we seized the opportunity and

stopped for some peanut butter and raisin sandwiches, while clouds gathered overhead. The rain passed us by and before long the sun was out, bright and shiny again. Typical mountain weather! We pulled into Walden around 4, but could not find any reasonable motels. One place we tried was nice enough to call a fishing camp for us. It was up the road in Cowdry, about 10 miles distant. They said their rooms were full, but they offered to rent us tent space. So we biked up the ten miles to the "Cowdry Trout Camp". It was in the shadow of Wyoming, so-to-speak. The camp was full of trout fishermen at the moment, but we were assigned a place for our tent. It was actually a little piece of grass in front of the long bunkhouse. To my eyes, it was a small green island in an otherwise dry ocean of arid brown badlands. I pitched our tent, then sat and reflected on the past day. In spite of doing almost 75 miles, it had been a fairly easy day. (We must be getting stronger). We are on a high plateau and there are no big mountains close by, although there are plenty to be seen off in the distance. Tomorrow looks like more of the same because this is big, big country out here. The views are long and look like they go on forever. I feel like we are really in the wild, woolly west, but actually, we are now back on the eastern side of the Divide again, so that makes the second time we have crossed it.

June 22, Cowdry, CO. to Saratoga, WY. 58 miles

Total trip miles 2922

Sunday morning we woke up to nice sunshine. While we broke camp and got packed up, some guys were getting ready to go out on the Michigan River trout fishing. Normally I would have been envious, but the road was now a bigger lure for me and I was anxious to see new wonders just over the hill and around the next bend. We left our trout camp and headed on down Colorado 125 toward Wyoming. Just before we got to the state line, we were over-taken by some riders that were traveling unloaded. They stopped to chat with us, as we were putting bug stuff on. The mosquitoes were absolutely horrendous, so we only talked briefly and then took off together toward the state line. Lili and I had been taking pictures at every state sign we passed, so we stopped again at the "Entering" sign. It has appropriately enough, a bigger than life cowboy on a bucking bronco, like the small ones the Wyoming vehicle license plates have also. The other group stopped with us and we got to find out a little about their trip and they did about ours. They were from Oklahoma, on a two week trip. I can't remember what they were doing about their clothes and gear, but I think someone was driving sag for them. The lone woman in the group, Mona, gave us some banana nut bread and snapped our picture under the state sign. Then they headed back east into Colorado and we entered a new state for us, Wyoming, which proved to be very, **VERY** windy! Fortunately not always a direct head-wind, but blowing 20-25 m.p.h. mostly from the side, with some gusts of unbelievable strength, particularly from the edges of the buttes and mountains that we passed, often while trying to descend a hill. At such times, it was often necessary to slow down to way under 10 m.p.h., or risk getting blown over. The one good thing about it was that the mosquitoes got blown away. So while we were really suffering last night with a plague of mosquitoes, it took one bad thing to alleviate another bad thing. Now if mosquitoes ever learn to fly in gale winds, I don't know if I could stand it. About three miles outside of Riverside we were over taken by another rider. It turned out to be a German fellow who had slept in Walden at the town park, while we camped at the trout camp. By the time the three of us got to Riverside we all were totally wiped out from our war with the wind. The German guy wanted to go immediately to the town park and camp. Lili and I were too hungry to think about anything but food, so we went into the "Mangy Moose Saloon" and I ate chili and hamburger, while Lili had roast beef and peas. It was a lot of food and I left feeling stuffed. We sat around on the front porch, letting our food settle down a little, before we started riding. We left the café and Riverside's three or four other buildings, mostly catering to the fishermen, and headed out to Saratoga. Immediately when we got going in that direction we had more of a tailwind and for the remaining 18 miles, we felt like we were tumbleweed blowing in the wind. When we got into town, we checked out a couple of motels that wanted 40 bucks, so we decided to go check out the camping at the city pool. We found out the camping is not at the pool at all, but about three miles outside of

town at a lake. There were no facilities (such as showers, etc.) so we nixed that idea. Anyway the spa is free, so we went over to use it and were very happy that we did. The hot springs come up out of the ground, maybe 50 feet from the river. If you have the constitution for it, you can soak in the thermal hot springs and then jump in the North Platte River to cool off. Since it's 50 degrees colder I didn't try that, but Lili (brave soul) did! Then we decided to come back and get the first motel that we had checked the price of and that's the way the day went.

June 23, Saratoga, WY. to Lamont, WY.

80 miles

Total trip miles 3,002

After breakfasting at our motel we started off down Rt. 130. There was only light traffic and the good shoulder was nice and wide. We had that for 20 miles to Walcott, where we had expected to find something, but there really wasn't much at all, just a ramp to Rt. I-80?? Since there were no other choices, we had to get on the shoulder of the interstate. Somehow we had a tailwind, even though the wind was out of the west. And to make it even better, the west-bound side of I-80 was closed to cars, since it was being widened. The cars were all being routed over to the east-bound side that had been temporarily converted to two way traffic with those portable concrete barriers. We asked if we could ride the shoulder of the west-bound side that was being worked on and were told that we could, as long as we watched out for trucks and equipment. So we went another ten miles on the west-bound shoulder without any car traffic at all. We got off I-80 at West Sinclair and headed towards Rawlins and were soon in fast food land again. We stopped at Mickey D's for lunch and our afternoon break and actually sat there for a couple of hours, while we wrote post cards and enjoyed the free drink refills. When we got back on the bikes again, we found we still had pretty much of a tailwind and it soon blew us out into the wide open spaces of Wyoming, which defy imagination! The sage and sand and barren treeless hills looked so much like moonscapes, it was easy for me in my Zen-like state of mind, to wander off on subliminal side trips. There was not much sign of habitation, just barren, arid, rolling hills that went on and on forever..... BUT there **were** fences on both sides of the road! These fences are to keep the cattle and wildlife off of the road, but we came upon an antelope that was between the road and the fence. He first tried to out-run us, which of course, he had absolutely no trouble doing. After running miles and miles in our direction, he decided to cross over to the other side of the road. He then ran back past us and continued on between the road and the fence on that side till we were long gone. It seems that although antelope can run a long way, very fast, fences will stop them cold! So they will run and run, just to find a place where they can scoot under the wire, or go around an opening in it. Cattle are not very good fence jumpers either (duh), so they too are stuck with the grass on their original side! We continued on mile after bleak mile of desert wasteland and finally crossed the continental divide again. This makes the third time, so far. There was no change in elevation and if there were no sign, you would not even know you had crossed it. But we're on the west side again, heading towards Lamont, which was according to our bike map, a full service town. I jokingly said to Lili, it's probably a ghost town by now! When we got to the little green town sign it read, **Lamont Pop. 3!** The broken down building that used to be a grocery store had no windows, no roof and the boards were all falling off it. You could just barely read "grocery" on the front and as we rode past it, the side said "Beer - Motel". So this was the full service town our map had told us about? However, there **was** another building that said "Grandma's". It was almost as dilapidated as the falling down motel/beer store, but not quite. It was such a dumpy looking joint that we rode on down to see if we could find anything else. Five miles later we came to a sign that read Barr Oil. It was off the route and seemed to be just an oil well out in the middle of nowhere and a pretty smelly one too. It was getting late and we didn't want to waste time riding down a gravel road for twelve more miles, to a smelly oil well, so we turned around and went back to Grandma's dump to see if we could get some food.

We opened the creaky, broken screen door and saw immediately that it was a smoky truckers' café. We sat down at the bar and ordered some turkey sandwiches and asked Grandma if we could camp in the back. She said, "Yep for three bucks you can camp in the back". I felt the cold eyes of a few seedy truckers staring silently at us, while we ate our sandwiches, wrote a couple more post cards and then went out back to see what the

camping situation looked like. It was totally ***weird!!*** Right out of a Steven King novel, or some old Twilight Zone episode, that I somehow missed!!! I thought, this has to be the product of some crazy writer's imagination! It cannot possibly be real! In this wide open expanse of wild, wild desert, we find ourselves in this little cluster of wind torn, falling down, ramshackle buildings and behind these buildings there is a sprawling junk yard of old trucks and cars lying half apart, askew all over the place. The centerpiece of all this surrealistic beauty, is a wildly painted hippie bus, that is winking at us, out of its one remaining headlight!!!!!!!!!!!!!! We hurriedly pitched our little tent and covered our bikes and saddle bags with our plastic drop cloth as the moon started to rise. It was a $\frac{3}{4}$ moon that was very bright, like the rest of the mind boggling, zillions of stars and celestial bodies one sees on clear desert nights. The wind was blowing our plastic tarp around and the rustling noise was easily mistaken for a marauding animal or ***person?????????*** Trucks sat idling their noisy, smelly diesels and Barr Oil smelled like it was much closer than 15 miles away. I guess it took me awhile to fall asleep, but I remember hearing a coyote howl once or twice and the next thing I knew it was morning.



Lamont pop. 3

June 24, Lamont, WY. to Sweet Water Station, WY. 77 miles

Total trip miles 3,079

We got up and put the tent away, got packed up and went over to Grandma's for breakfast. It was both good and large! We took our time getting out on the road and eventually started out on what we thought was going to be a 96 mile day to Lander. The wind was not too bad and we did fairly well for the first 20 miles. We thought we would stop for a bite to eat at a historical marker, at a place called Split Rock. We were actually following in

the path of the wagon trains of the pioneers. Believe it or not, there are still places where the deep wheel ruts of thousands of long bygone wagons are still plainly visible. Split Rock was to them an unmistakable landmark out here in a land that had few things to guide them. Incidentally, Sweet Water was a place where a mule carrying large sacks of sugar, stumbled into the river.

We pushed the bikes across a cattle grate, past the nicely made stone/concrete restrooms and sat down at a matching, beautiful stone picnic table. We were immediately set upon by millions and millions of mosquitoes! Myriads of the bloodsucking beasts began draining our life's blood to the point that we literally ran for our lives. I looked down at my bare legs and there had to be more than 25 on each leg! We got back on the bikes as quick as we could, brushing the bloody-beasts off as we tried to outrun them! We knew we had to find a place to eat inside, but a quick look at our map showed only Jeffrey City some 15 miles away. You can't bike very far on an empty tank, so we stopped on the shoulder and without getting off the bikes, shoved some graham crackers and raisins into our mouths. Quick as we could, we started pedaling again as fast as we could, drinking water to mush up the dry crackers, while all the time trying to keep from choking on them. When we got to Jeffrey City we were really looking forward to getting into some nice bug free cafe, but Jeffrey City proved to be nothing but rows of oil operation Quonset huts! The lone building that called itself a café had a screen door that was hanging open and had a big piece of screen that was completely ripped out. There were almost as many mosquitoes inside as there were outside! We still managed to eat a large lunch, because out here you don't know when the next place will be. We left and Lili stopped to mail cards at the post office. While I waited outside a fellow walked over to me and introduced himself. He and his entire family were Mormon re-enactors and they were **pushing** a wagon from Nebraska to Salt Lake City to commemorate the Mormon march led by Brigham Young 150(+) years ago. They were walking about 25 miles a day **pushing** this thing!! He told me there was a wagon train of 3 or 4 hundred wagons up ahead of us! He said the push carts started after the ox drawn wagons, because people walk faster than oxen and would overtake them soon! On the original march, many a Mormon father pushed his cart or wagon, loaded with his wife and children and meager belongings, until the day he died! Sort of made our trip look like a walk in the park! I left a much humbler and wiser man.

We had only been stopped for an hour and a half, but in that time the wind had more than doubled in intensity. It was almost impossible to ride against the gusts of thirty five or forty miles an hour and the rest of the time it blew no less than fifteen to twenty. We pushed on and on and knew we would not make Lander, but headed to Sweet Water Station instead, although we were not too sure about the camping there. We had been told that the campground was very boggy, right by the river and the mosquitoes there would eat us alive. There really wasn't any other choice. We could not make any place else in daylight and we were tired from the headwind battles we had already fought. We put on lots of **Deep Woods Off** and then put on long pants taped at the ankles as well as hooded sweat shirts. We put the tent up and were able to eat before going inside for the night. Once inside we used our flashlights to locate and exterminate the bloodsuckers that had come in with us, as they flew up to the mesh of the tent top. Watching through the tent screens we could see clouds of the vampires being gobbled up by hundreds of swallows that lived in the hanging houses attached to every campsite table. The birds were in a noisy feeding frenzy, but it was a welcome noise and soon all was quiet and we fell into our usual nightly catatonic trance.

June 25, Sweet Water Station, WY. to Lander, WY.

52 miles

Total trip miles 3,131

We got up to another clear day and best of all, there were no mosquitoes. Too cool for them in the morning I guess. We went up to the camp store, they only had a few bags of junk stuff, but we grabbed up what they had. The specter of running out of food or water was the same as running out of gas in one's car, out here in no man's land. It could prove to be very dangerous, or possibly even fatal. The two John Steinbeck characters in the store spoke volumes about life in this remote, bug infested, campground. The woman from the camp was dragging herself around like she was about ready to collapse. I could tell that she had once been attractive, but

now had the weight of the world on her shoulders. Her dull, weary eyes, probably once bright and young, told many sad stories of her long struggle with the hostile land and perhaps too many drifting cowboys. She claimed to have an eighteen year old daughter, as well as a two year old son. She herself was probably less than thirty five, but in the harsh light of the bright morning sun, looked to be double that. The owner of the store was a grisly old cattle rancher, who at first was quite unfriendly to me. After I got talking to him about cows and the price of hay, he started warming up and eventually got to be quite the conversationalist. But just one look at these two local people, said more than an entire Steinbeck novel of life in these parts.

Lili and I eventually got on the road and immediately were blessed with a six mile long downhill. The sign said 6% and the red rocks glowing in the bright sun were sublimely beautiful! I was glad we had not pushed on last night, as we probably would not have had the opportunity to appreciate the views (especially when under attack by Wyoming's state birds). Rt. 287 took us all the way to Lander and we found a hotel there that had camping in back by the Big Popo Agie River. I soon found out that it was a trout stream and we grabbed a tent site. I set up the tent, took off my bags and rode into town a couple of miles down the road. I picked up a one day fishing license, came back up to our camp and proceeded to catch our supper almost right from the tent. It had begun raining slightly, but if it had been pouring, I would have been able to fish right out of our tent! I caught six brown trout and kept three for supper. I also lost one that was easily eighteen inches, or possibly bigger. Lili cooked them and we had fresh caught trout, right on the bank of the stream at our picnic table. The showers were in the hotel and they were first rate. I finished up the day fly fishing the evening hatch. It was a great camping spot and we had it all to ourselves. We turned in and had a restful night. There seemed to be almost no mosquitoes here.

June 26, Lander, WY. to Dubois, WY.

75 miles

Total trip miles 3206

We got breakfast in Lander and I grabbed some Mountain Dew for the road. It was after 10 when we started riding and that was bad, because we had a 77 mile day ahead of us. I figured, it should not be too big a problem, unless the wind kicked up in the afternoon (of course it always did). We started down the road and the scenery was Wyoming red-rock cliffs, buttes and such, but I soon found out, there was very little in the way of stores on the route. Evidently I had misunderstood Lili and we had passed the last one..... It got to be around 1 P.M. and I was starving, so we just pulled into a deserted side road, sat down right on the road and had our usual peanut butter/jelly lunch. There were no people anywhere near, so sitting right on the road was safer than going into the brush with rattlesnakes, scorpions, and spiders. We started off again toward Crowheart which was the only town that was listed on the map, before Dubois. It turned out to be not a town at all, but just a gas station/grocery store, out in the middle of nowhere. We ran into two bikers headed east and they told us that the scenery up by Jackson and Yellowstone had been absolutely breathtaking. They also told us about a lot of places to stay when we got up to that area. So we tried to give them the same info about the places we had been to further east. This kind of meeting was always going to take a half to a whole hour, so it was a way to break up the day, as well as get some good info about the trail. Of course if there were too many passing riders, we would never get anywhere if we stopped for everyone. So the next two riders (a man and a woman) just got a wave, as they coasted past us downhill. The wind came up and we had to slug it out against a steady hot blast. It was fortunately not directly in our faces, but it wore us down just the same, till we got to the Crowheart Exxon station/grocery store and had some ice cream. It was so cold I had to take a long time eating it, otherwise it froze my mouth and gave me a headache. The next place did not pop up out of the desert till we were only fifteen miles from Dubois. It was a campground/motel with a restaurant/bar attached. The time was about 6:30 P.M., so we had a complete dinner of sirloin steaks that were huge and delicious! I asked the waitress if it was local beef and she said that it was. I could just imagine some local rancher cutting it up in his barn. It was absolutely and positively a great meal! Twenty-one dollars for the both of us and was worth much more. Then we had a big decision; we couldn't make up our minds whether to stay here at the campground, or go the last

15 miles into the wind, to who knows what in Dubois. The hour was getting kinda late and we were tired from the wind. It seemed funny that even though it was only fifteen miles, we still couldn't decide whether to go on or not. That tells how difficult this Wyoming wind is. They don't call it the Wind River for nothing. Wind River Mountain, Wind River Reservation, Windy Hill, Wind this and Wind that, you name it! Whatever you can think of out here starts with Wind and for a good reason. Lili finally said that she could do the last miles to Dubois and so we headed out into the sunset and made it into town about quarter to nine. We started checking out motels and figured they were pricey, because of their proximity to the parks. Then I spied some nice looking log cabins. We went into their office and it was beautifully done up with western decor and found out we could rent one for thirty five bucks. Being so close to Yellowstone, we had expected to pay at least double that, so we were glad to get it! Since we were well fed, we didn't have to do anything but go to bed. The bunk was a little saggy in the middle, but other than that it was a first class little cabin.

June 27, Dubois, WY. to Brooks Lake Falls, WY.

30 miles

Total trip miles 3236



Since Dubois is our designated mail drop, Lili is off this morning picking up our mail. We haven't had any mail for a long time now, but we do phone home at least once a week. It looks like another late start today and we have a pass to climb as well. Togwotee Pass looks like a 25 mile gradual climb on our side and then a nice long downhill on the other side. Our map says there's a biker campground just beyond the pass and it looks like a motel just beyond that, so who knows where we will wind up today. Before we left town we found a café and had a very big breakfast. We knew we would need it, if there was going to be a 25 mile hill in our future.

No food allowed in tent

Lili wrote some post cards and after sitting in the café for at least an hour and a half, we sort of reluctantly took off and headed for the pass. We were late getting started and the wind came up as usual. As the day wore on, the cabins and motels we passed all looked very seductive, but we toughed it out and slowly wound our way up the long climb. Eventually we came to a state park along the Wind River and decided to take an afternoon nap, in the windy sunshine. We pulled out our drop cloth and lay down for an hour and then feeling somewhat better after our short power nap, took off again up the rest of the mountain. The scenery was no longer semi-arid, but had become lush green, thanks to the river and all the little streams flowing down to it. We stopped on a bridge and looked down on one of these beautiful streams. It was rushing down, over rocks and fallen trees, around bends with undercut banks and deep dark mysterious holes, and pools just begging to be fished. I decided we had, "miles to go and promises to keep," so upward we climbed. Off in the distance I could hear the roar of a mighty waterfall, but so far we had not seen it.

Finally we saw the sign for Falls Campground and just as we pulled into the primitive camp, another bunch of riders coming from the west, pulled in at the exact same time. Lo and behold we found out that they had left Seattle and were headed to the New Jersey Shore! We told them we were doing the exact reverse of their trip and so we had a lot to talk about. They were a group of five college age young people, whose names were Christy, Becky, Liz, Derek and Matthew. I believe they said they were seminary students, who spoke at churches to raise money for their school.

This camp is right on the brink of Brooks Lake Falls and is not a spot I would recommend for anyone who sleep walks. However the views, both of the falls cascading down the vertical precipice below us and the valley way, way off in the distance are stunning to say the least. Wyoming has vast tracts of wilderness areas and geological wonders that are far beyond my ability to fully describe. These may be overworked superlatives, but it sure can be breathtaking, awesome and wild! We walked back from the view point and set up our tents. Lili and I had the closest tent to the falls. We discussed the bear situation with the others and we all hung up our food from trees, so far out on the limbs even a brave, adventurous bear could not get it. In fact one of the guys tried to climb over the bank of the falls to overhanging tree limb. He had us all frantic that he would not be able to get back up, or fall off, probably to his death in the rocky gorge below. After securing our food we sat around the picnic table talking about our opposing trips and what not. We turned in around 9:30 and in spite of the hypnotic, mono-toned roar of the falls, I had a rather restless, fitful night of sleep. Forest service campgrounds are not usually blessed with showers and sleep is difficult when you feel like a sticky bun. When dawn finally came we all got up and broke camp, ate breakfast and wished our friends, "happy trails and a safe trip". Our five mirror image friends rode east and we rode west. No golden spike or anything dramatic like that, just a nice incident of kindred spirits passing in the night, to paste in our memory books.



The Grizz let us pass

June 28, Brooks Lake Falls, WY. to Jenny Lake, WY.

61 miles

Total trip miles 3299

We continued on westward toward Yellowstone and had to decide whether to go there first or to go south towards Jackson. One look at the Grand Tetons was all it took to make up our minds! We had heard that Jenny Lake was not to be missed, but to get there from where we were, we had to go south to the small village of Moose and then swing back north to Jenny Lake. We stopped in little rustic Moose and got some groceries and Lili mailed a post card to a business associate, whose name is Harvey Moose. Then we continued the 7 or 8 miles to Jenny Lake where we found the German tourist Alex, whom we have been running into since Riverside, WY. We had recently met him again in the little village of Hatchet, back near the Yellowstone gate. Incidentally the burger that I had in Hatchet was the best burger I've had on this trip, maybe the best I've ever had PERIOD! Half a pound of excellent beef!! Totally made me forget those Kansas feed lot smells! The campground at Jenny was full, but the biker only campground, which was in an equally, if not even more lovely spot, had plenty of open sites. We had a perfectly drop-dead, gorgeous view of the Tetons that were looking right down on us. Breathtakingly beautiful mountains with jagged peaks, fingers of forest and green grass going part way up ravines, with yellow balsam root, Alpine sunflowers and tall green spruces at the base here. It is just a fantastic calendar-like picture! And Jenny Lake looked like a crown jewel in a diamond tiara right here on our doorstep too! I knew immediately I did not want to rush away from this beautiful place! We have been riding every day, rain or shine since Downingtown, PA. Not even one full rest day, but now I was sure glad we had been saving them up! We pitched our tent right next to Alex and another guy over here that works for the park service.

June 29, Jenny Lake, WY. Rest Day

0 miles

Total trip miles 3299

We got up early to get the morning light on the mountains. Walked right up to a mule deer and Lili and I went down along the shore of the lake, snapping pictures everywhere we looked. It was hard to decide just what was a scene that had to be captured, because if you snapped everything you wanted, you would soon be out of film (remember this was pre-digital days). But I couldn't resist spending a couple of frames on images of the Tetons, reflected on the glass smooth morning lake. As soon as the sun warms up the water and land, the wind driven waves would make this picture impossible. We walked around to the outlet that was rushing through the meadows and got very close to an antelope that posed nicely for us, maybe 30 yards away. We made sandwiches and went down to the boat dock to wait for a little skiff that would ferry us over to a trail-head on the far side of the lake. There were three boats that could only fit four passengers each and there were a surprising number of people waiting. The more aggressive, less patient people started to crowd out onto the floating dock, to try to make sure they were going to get aboard the next boat, even though the small boats were only 2 minutes apart. The little floating dock was rocking violently and started to tip over, threatening to dump the pushy people in for a polar-bear swim. Luckily they managed, although just barely, to shift their balance and keep the dock upright. It was close and of course the snow-melt water would have been shockingly cold! Maybe even dangerously cold!! The short boat ride across the lake was beautiful beyond description, but I was reminded of Emerson..... ***"Though we travel the world over to find the beautiful, we must carry it in our hearts, or we find it not."***

When we got over to the trail head there was a roaring snow melt cascade coming down off the mountain. We crossed it on a little rustic bridge, climbed further up to another hidden falls, took more pictures and then climbed about a mile up to Inspiration Point, which it truly was! We sat out on the point and looked over Jenny Lake, the Snake River Valley and the mountains we had crossed on our bikes getting here. We played with the ground squirrels and a large hairy marmot, that were all begging and trying to get us to give them bread, as so many people before us had done. We sat and let this panoramic view sink into our hearts and souls while we ate our lunch. It's hard to express the joys that were ours, just to gaze upon all this beauty. How do you describe the moon and stars, on a blue black desert night? And how can you even begin to relate the pleasure that we had getting here under our own power, like the four winds and the birds in the sky? Just take my word, everything we had been through was well worth it. We were very, very happy, quietly proud of our accomplishments and eager to go further.

Eventually we went back down the trail, boated back across the lake and walked back to our tent. There was time to do a few repair jobs, so I replaced the spoke that's been out of my bike since Kentucky I think. Well I forgot where it broke.....It was way before Kansas I know that. So I replaced that and oiled a few things on both bikes, took a ride on the path that goes around the lake, came back and fixed a zipper on the tent. And after these few minor repair jobs, I took a little nap (after all this is supposed to be a rest day) and now we're having supper.



Jenny in the morning

June 30, Jenny Lake, WY. to Lewis Lake, Yellowstone National Park, WY. 50 miles Total trip miles 3349

It's Monday morning and we woke up to another bright sunny day. We ate toasted grilled cheese sandwiches looking at the beautiful Teton Mountains, finished up eating, packed up the tent, and said good-bye to Alex. He left for Grant Village and we said we would probably see him there later. Eventually we headed out of the camp and went down along the lake as far as we could. We didn't realize it, but we were on a one way road, going the wrong way. So we turned around and rode back a mile and came out to the main road. That gave us an extra mile of beautiful views. Every once and awhile we had to stop, because each bend in the road, or each little turnoff gave the mountains an entirely different look. Finally after riding about an hour, we pulled off at a little cove in Jackson Lake and just sat there trying to fill up our senses with these mountains, that we were reluctantly pulling away from. We knew the wonders of Yellowstone were just up ahead, so that did make it a little easier, but it was still sad to leave the beautiful Tetons.



Hiking in the Tetons

We headed north to Colter Bay where we got some film, a pair of glasses and some food. We had been told by a biker that the camping at the Lake Village was not too nice, was crowded and besides was not free. They said the primitive tent sites at Lewis Lake were free to bikers and hikers, but there was no potable water there. We entered the park and proceeded to climb a very long grade. It was a steady, relentless climb, but we finally stopped near the top to look down on the very impressive Snake River Gorge, way, way down below. The mighty raging river was primitive and powerful and gave one a glimpse of the true nature of this place. In spite of the throngs of people viewing the thermal wonders from the relative safety of boardwalks, this park is still a huge, essentially wild place, where wolves and grizzly bears roam free. If a tourist was stupid enough to wander down into this canyon, it might be a very serious mistake. We continued on, but I did not like riding on the park road at all. There were absolutely no shoulders and the sides of the road went steeply down into a huge ditch, to plow the deep winter snow into. If you went off the side into that 20'+ ditch, you were really going to get hurt badly, if you were lucky enough not to fall off some cliff, that is. In which case you probably would not have anything to worry about ever again! The other omnipresent danger was motor homes, many of which were driven by old men, who had most likely rented these big rigs and had very little experience in driving them. Their rear view mirrors hung out at least two or three feet to the side of the already too wide, house on wheels and threatened to decapitate the unwary, or just plain unlucky biker. When I saw one in my rear view mirror, I slowed down to a crawl and prayed there would not be anything coming towards us for a while. It was harrowing to say the least and it didn't allow us much freedom to rubberneck in the park. We pulled into the Lewis Lake Camp at 7,000

foot and found the section for bikers and hikers. We quickly found a densely wooded site and although it looked like it could be a moose trail, we set up there anyway. We ate our supper and then went down to the lake to see what was going on and to watch the sun set.

As we headed back to our camp site we found a couple of bikers that had started their trip in Idaho Falls. They had been having a very rough time of it, mainly because it was the woman's first bike trip. When we told them they could camp here, they were overjoyed that they did not have to go up hill another 12 miles to the camping place they had been heading to. They had been mostly walking, since the woman was afraid to ride down the hills and they weren't strong enough to pedal up them either. We showed them where to camp and they are probably going to head out in our direction in the morning.

July 1, Lewis Lake, Yellowstone Park to West Yellowstone, MT. 66 miles

Total trip miles 3415

It's Tuesday morning, July 1. Guess what? It's snowing!! Great big fluffy, white flakes have covered our tent and the forest all around us is a silent white winter wonderland. This is the first July snow storm I have ever been in and it really is spectacularly gorgeous, but of course it's also cold and wet. I crawled outside with the camera and took some pictures of our snow draped touring bikes and our little green tent with its 1 ½" snow covered roof! Bizarre but very beautiful!!!! Last night I heard the wind blowing real loud and heard sleet. Woke up this morning and there was this fluffy white blanket covering everything. I guess we're snowbound!



Lewis Lake July 1st



Old Faithful

We had three cups of tea, took some pictures and Lili decided to make us some toasted cheese sandwiches. We stood around the picnic table while we ate, because it was too wet to sit. In spite of the warm food we still got cold and had to put on some more clothes, over in the bathroom. We came back and procrastinated, but finally decided to break camp. We rolled up the wet tent, packed up and headed out towards "Old Faithful" about 9:35 A.M.

The road was OK to start off, but as we went lower, we had to endure rain, sleet and all kinds of stuff. There was also the omnipresent nasty park traffic to put up with. We got down to Grant Village and met two riders who were doing the north/south trip along the Rockies. They had not seen Alex or anybody else either. We talked to them for a while and tried to give them as much info as we could about the road ahead to the east, then said "goodbye" and headed out towards "Old Faithful". We stopped at some smaller thermal things first and watched mud pots boil, etc. and then went on to the main attraction. While we ate the sky got very dark and hard rain started to fall and then in two minutes it cleared up and got nice and sunny again. We got up to the railing to watch the performance of "Old Faithful" and it was right on schedule. It was so wonderfully precise I had the impression that "maybe" there was a hidden fire hose pump that was turned on every 45 minutes or so. This is not true of course, but this geyser is a true wonder and almost unbelievable! After snapping the obligatory pictures, we headed out of the park and covered 66 miles into pricey West Yellowstone. We finally found a reasonable log cabin type place, took it and went next door for a Chinese dinner and didn't get to bed till about 10:30 P. M. Yellowstone is truly an awesome place, but it is certainly not my favorite place to bicycle, that's for sure! There was an almost constant stream of huge motor homes, that often passed us inches away, while we were trying desperately not to slip off the shoulder-less, very, **very steeply** crowned road. It sometimes was a real balancing feat to avoid a catastrophe. No wonder I am tired. Between the weather, the road, the hills and the traffic, it was a very hard day!

July 2, West Yellowstone, MT. to Beaver Creek USFS camp, MT. 28 miles Total trip miles 3443

We got up and left our cabin and went down to the bike store. The owner was a real interesting guy who built tandems from two old bikes he welded together, etc. He even had a side-by-side double there he had built that way. I bought a seat off him as mine had over the past month or so, become more and more unfriendly to my butt. Then we went next door to the café and had breakfast. We were talking to all the breakfast people there and the waitresses, who wanted to know all about our trip. After we finished our breakfast, I went across the street to the West Yellowstone Fly shop, while Lili went and got groceries. I found out a lot about the world famous Madison River that we would be right next to soon. Tomorrow would be my 60th Birthday and I thought what better way to spend it, than fishing a world class trout stream! I picked up some local fly patterns the owner recommended and got a two day license. I told him we were traveling by bicycle and that I had a fly rod, but no waders and asked if he knew a place that I might be able to fish from the bank. He recommended Quake Lake, which is a lake that was formed when an earthquake dammed up the Madison River on August 17, 1959. He said we could camp at Cabin Creek. I thanked him for his kind help and we started riding out of town and first circled around Hebgen Lake and then perhaps 10 miles further, found Quake Lake. We pulled into the Cabin Creek camping area and immediately saw a large orange warning sign that declared this as a bear attack area and now closed to camping! It was a sobering reminder we were in grizzly territory and we quickly pedaled out of deserted Cabin Creek Campground, back to the road! The next camping area run by the Forest Service was Beaver Creek. It was down closer to the Madison anyway, so we rode into this lovely area that also seemed to be almost vacant of campers. But as we cruised around on the shady little roads in the camping area, I saw a guy cleaning some huge rainbow trout! I thought, this looks like the right place all right, so we found a perfect camp site and set up our little green home in the woods. After I finished pitching the tent, I grabbed my fly rod and started on down a well-used path, to the Madison. I had to wait for a bull-moose to get out of my way, but eventually I got down to where Beaver Creek empties into the beautiful Madison River. On one of my first casts an eighteen inch rainbow grabbed the woolly worm I was using, like the feathers and floss were filet mignon. I played him out and decided he would make a good meal for the two of us. Since it was already supper time, I started walking back to the tent and was just totally stunned by all the beauty around me. Everywhere I looked there was a scene worthy of the canvas of a master painter. On his palette would be cobalt blue for the sky, titanium white for the few puffy clouds, and Windsor green for the grass. The rugged surrounding mountains created a beautiful Baroque frame. It was indeed a masterpiece! I saw eagles, deer and the bull-moose that I gave a wide berth to. Moose are usually pretty docile creatures, but bulls have been known to charge anything,

even locomotives during their mating season and cow-moose with calves are said to be one of the fiercest mothers in the animal kingdom. Even though this was early July and moose mate in late fall, I didn't want to push my luck. They are big and dumb, so like most of the local wildlife, better observed from a safe distance.

I brought the cleaned fish up to camp and sat on a picnic bench while Lili fried it up and fixed our supper. As I watched her, she suddenly was staring up at the wooded hill behind her and I saw her mouth drop wide open! All at once here comes Bullwinkle charging down, running **right** by Lili and **just** missing our tent!!!!



Quake Lake

I watched him run over toward some small lily ponds a few hundred yards away and hoped he wouldn't come back. Perhaps he was attracted by the smell of our supper cooking, but I think moose really prefer aquatic plants for dinner. Maybe it was a warning? A bluff charge? A territorial thing? Who knows? But anyway we kept a sharp lookout for him for a while. Lili finished cooking our fish and we had an elegant freshly caught trout dinner.

July 3, Beaver Creek USFS camp, MT. to the west fork of the Madison River, MT. 15 miles Total trip miles 3458

Well today is my 60th birthday and I plan to spend it fishing and just enjoying this idyllic place. So Lili and I went down to the river (well Quake Lake actually) and the trout were very cooperative. We had a great time catching

them and since we did not need any for food, just releasing them to grow older. These were really beautiful wild rainbows and I named one fat 23 incher Walter* and wished him a long life as I let him go. With a quick flap of his giant tail, he was gone in a flash! He was at least 4 pounds! Some fish got off by breaking my leader and I can only guess at their size. But Lili and I said we would come back to Montana and try to catch Walter again (just to say hello old friend). This place is really special! There are wildflowers all over, little ponds with blooming water lilies, deer roaming around the campsite and just about anything you could imagine to make it a Garden of Eden. Lili fixed me a birthday cake out of a generic, packaged, "bearclaw" pastry that she stuck a candle in. She gave me a card and a big hug and kiss and I had the best birthday I could ever wish for.

About noontime we left and slowly headed down the road again. We passed the scene of the 1959 earthquake and pulled into the viewing platform. There were pictures under glass of the devastating flood and the mighty bulldozer work it took to open a channel again. Nothing ever stays exactly the same for too long, but I sure love the way this place is now!! We left and followed the river downstream about 15 miles and came to the West fork. It looked very inviting with another national forest campground sign and a lovely vacant campsite right on the pristine tiny stream. It was tucked in under some giant spruces about five feet from the babbling brook. As I set up the tent I could see small trout rising in the riffles at the tail end of our little pool. The water was clear as gin and only a few inches deep. I knew these small native fish would require a very delicate approach. The least little disturbance would send them darting away to a safer retreat. However this was a great resting place for body and soul to just relax and enjoy the music of the brook, the soothing greenery and just let my 60th birthday come to a peaceful end.

*** Walter Crawford (See my 1st 60 years of Biking) was the man who loaned me his beautiful chrome track bike, started me riding and changed my life forever!**

July 4, West Fork Madison River, MT. to Twin Bridges, MT. 80 miles

Total trip miles 3538

In the morning, we started off down the long valley and eventually climbed an 8 mile mountain at its end. We took a leisurely two hours or so to climb it, including our long lunch stop about half way up, looking out at some beautiful snow covered peaks far off in the distance. Near the top we were joined by a car tourist couple who took our picture in return for our taking theirs, with the white caps looking back at us. Back in the saddle we crested a false summit or two before starting the long descent to Virginia City. Ah, the joy of descending in the Rockies is something like a wonderful recovery drink to restore tired climbing muscles. We breezed into Virginia City, but to me it looked like a Hollywood recreation of an old mining town. I half expected to see a movie crew or cardboard gunfighters, but none appeared. I guess the modern cars, paved roads, and throngs of tourists kinda spoiled the illusion and Virginia City wound up having about as much credibility as Wally World. Nevada City was just down the road and it was more of the same there. Recreated buildings of the gold rush days with those false two story fronts made from "sort of" weathered barn board. But it wasn't all recreated. There were actual mine shafts and traces of diggings along the road as well. I really had no trouble visualizing rugged mining life here during the Montana Gold Rush of the 1860's. It sure looked very hard and extremely dangerous, but of course a lot of men will do anything for gold. Before the gold rush era this route had long been an Indian trail and then later a stage coach route as well. Those so often repeated movie scenes really did take place on the very land we were now traveling on.

We got down to Sheridan and thought we might stop there for the day, but decided to push on 10 miles further to the next town. At Twin Bridges we got a nice room at the Kings Motel for 35 bucks. It was run by a friendly couple who made us feel very welcome. He was also a trout guide and I quickly got a lot of fishing info that I probably won't have time to use on this trip. Someday we will have to come back and do some fly fishing here. Eventually we went out to get some food and found the only place open was a chicken joint. While eating there we met a transcontinental cyclist named Don. He had started in San Francisco and first went north to Florence, Oregon where he got on the Trans America Trail, biked it down here and will ride it all the way to Virginia. He is 63 years old. Wow that's three more years than me! We were talking in front of the chicken place so long, I said "why don't we go back to our motel and sit at our picnic table?". I picked up a bottle of "Dew" and Don got a can of ice tea and we went up to our nice

table to resume telling each other what to expect up (and down) the road. As we sat there talking, the owner of the motel brought us out glasses of ice for our drinks. We thanked her for that and she promptly brought us out a big plate of melon slices, bananas and grapes! She even made a nice cream dip for us! People are what make this trip special and I think arriving on a bicycle is the key in getting to know them. Everyone you meet wants to know all about your trip. We also made phone calls to my daughter Wendy back in NJ and my son Frank two or three weeks' ride away yet. We told him we would call next Saturday morning to tell him our ETA. Tomorrow is another 80 mile day scheduled, but there's two or three passes to climb, so we'll see how we do.

July 5, Twin Bridges, MT. to Jackson Hole, MT. 77 miles

Total trip miles 3613

We ate our breakfast out at the picnic table and said goodbye to the very kind proprietress, chatted with her quite awhile before leaving and had a late start as usual. Finally we headed out into a beautiful sunny Big Sky day and I had the feeling we should put on a few miles, or we would **never** get to that other ocean. But we had only gone about fifteen miles when we met a group of three riders, two men and a woman, who were actually traveling to different places. The woman was headed to Pueblo and the men to Salt Lake City. We talked with them almost an hour and it turned out that one of the riders knew Lili's cousin in Chicago, in fact was best friends with him, another instance of "the small world we live in." We finally proceeded northwest to Dillon and stopped at Mickey's for lunch. We met more interesting people there and chatted with them for a while too. People just kept coming up to us and telling us we were really something to be riding all the way across the country on bicycles. It really did not seem too extraordinary to us, especially since there were so many others out here doing the same thing. From Dillon to Jackson was another 40 miles or so, with a couple of long passes to climb. The first was 8 or 10 miles long, gradual at first, but then it became very hot and very hard. We stopped many times to wipe sweat out of our eyes, but we plugged away with our monster bikes and made it up in about 2 hours counting our sweat stops. Breezing three or four miles down the mountain was sweet, but too short to fully recover. Then we started up the second long pass. It too started off slowly (as if to warm us up for the main event) and sure enough it culminated in some serious climbing towards the top. The views were long and spectacular! To make it even more spectacular there was a thunderstorm out across the valley. From our lofty road, we could see the lightning and dark shafts of rain storms off in the distance, but we only got a few scattered drops until we got right near the top. Then I had to stop and put my dry laundry inside a plastic bag for fear it might get wet. I also put on my windbreaker, since the rest of the way to Jackson was all cool downhill. The Big Sky was purple velvet and we rode under a gorgeous rainbow. It was just fantastic to be riding out in this great big wild, open high country and I was happy that we were strong enough now to enjoy it. Riding into Jackson Hole with the snow-capped mountains behind to the west was similar to Jackson, Wyoming, but not quite as spectacular as the Grand Tetons, of course. We had done a 77 mile day, climbed a double headed pass and needed a rest. We came to the Hot Spring Lodge and saw they had a variety of accommodations. You could get a room in the Lodge itself, or you could have a palatial cabin with a fireplace, *or* there were tiny modest baby bear cabins, *or* there was camping too. The little cabins were only 8' by 10' and there certainly was no room for any bicycles, or anything at all, besides two very tired bikers in one pretty small bunk. The camp ground was about the same price as the baby bear cabins, so we took the tiny cabin and splurged on dinner. It was kind of a birthday dinner for me, so I had Prime rib and it was wonderful, just like all the beef out here in the West. There is just no comparison to the meat we get back east. In spite of that, Lili had a German pork dish that I could not pronounce let alone spell. We enjoyed our meal in the large pine paneled dining room, with its huge stone fireplace and game mounts from the surrounding area all looking down on us, and ate as only hungry bikers can eat. Went back to the cabin and I collapsed into bed with my clothes on. I had to get up later though to get under the covers properly, because it was getting quite cool.



"There's a storm across the valley"

July 6, Jackson Hole, MT. to Sula, MT. 63 miles

Total trip miles 3,676

Today is Sunday, another clear day in Big Sky Country and we're off on a 53 mile ride to Lost Trail Hot Springs. There are a couple of passes, so 53 miles should be enough. We headed out to Wisdom about 20 miles or so up Rt. 258, and had lunch there, since we had started pretty late. It was a nice place to eat, but we only had hamburgers because we had pigged out so royally last night. We got back on the route (after I almost went the wrong way) and headed up towards Lost Trail Pass. It started off very, very gradually, and was hardly even noticeable the first ten miles or so. We came upon an east-bounder on a lightly-loaded mountain bike. He had been doing impressive distances and had only left Seattle two weeks before, doing 70-90 miles per day. He wanted to get to Dillon tonight, which would give him more than a hundred today. We advised him to stock up on food and water in Jackson, because after that there is a 40 mile stretch to Dillon that has no services. We said good-bye and started up the pass again. Lili wasn't feeling too well and was kinda tired. That was bad, because it started getting **much** steeper and it took **a lot** more effort to get to the top. Going down the other side, it becomes Chief Joseph Pass and it is a long, ***long*** series of switchbacks, lasting 10 miles anyway. It is a very steep downhill that winds around S bends, U bends and every kind of bend you can think of. My fingers were getting cramps pulling the brake levers, so long and hard. My monster bike may not climb too well, but it descends like an overloaded runaway truck! Near the bottom we stopped at the Lost Trail campground, but the owner thought he had a high class resort on his hot springs there and wanted a fortune just to let us pitch our tent. Even though we were quite ready to stop, we said no thanks and went on down the mountain another 10 miles to Sula and found a nice free campground right on the Bitterroot River. Tomorrow Missoula is possible.

July 7, Sula, MT. to Missoula, MT.

87 miles

Total trip miles 3763

We headed down the East Fork of the Bitterroot along Rt. 93. It was mostly downhill all morning and some 53 miles later we had lunch in the town of Darby. Actually it was a bacon and egg brunch, because we had peanut butter/apple sandwiches for lunch/breakfast back in Sula. It really doesn't matter what you eat, it all goes in the furnace and everything tastes great. Sometimes as I am riding along, I think of what I would like to eat, but if it turns out to be the same old peanut butter raisin, or cheese with apple slices and ranch dressing, no matter it is still fuel for the monster bike. Without fuel, it cannot go.

We left Darby and the wind was kinda with us, so we were zooming along on Rt. 93 and reached the town of Hamilton, where we got on the less busy parallel route. The back roads wandered around and went a little bit up on the side hills, but there were no real steep ones, so we wound up getting to the Missoula hostel just before 7 P.M. We met Ernie the hostel host and were just getting settled in, when another newly arrived couple introduced themselves as Tom and Liz. They were flying a Cessna airplane and taking short rides on their folding bicycles, from the airstrips along their flight path. They had just been up in Glacier Park and were interested in our trip, so we went out with them to dinner. We actually had eaten earlier in Florence, but a little extra fuel in the tank is better than not enough, so we had a nice dinner with Tom and Liz while we looked out on the Bitterroot Mountains and swapped travel stories. We went back to the hostel and did some food shopping across the street, then came back and turned in. We were actually in the men's dorm. I probably would never have been allowed in the women's dorm, though, such is the double standard and/or testosterone being the wicked evil stuff that it is!

July 8, Missoula, MT. to Seeley Lake, MT. 57 miles

Total trip miles 3816

We woke up and did the chores we had been assigned to (as is typical hostel practice), had some breakfast and went outside where we chatted with our hostel host Ernie for a while. Among other things, he told us there was a bike store right across the street, so we went over and found out they had "Continental Top Touring" tires. These are the Cadillac of heavy duty bike touring tires, although they are not easy to find and are quite expensive when you can find them. Both tires on Lili's bike were down to the cords and although my bike had a decent tire on the rear, the one on my front was only a folding lightweight, so we brought four at thirty bucks apiece. These tires should get us through this trip and maybe another trip like it. So I guess we're all set for tires..... finally! I asked the shop owner if he would mind me installing them on the grass behind his shop. He said go ahead and while I was putting the tires on, I saw that Lili's brake blocks were almost gone too. I spent almost two hours replacing three tires and four sets of brake shoes, packing up and checking out both bikes. Lili's cantilever brakes were a real pain to get adjusted right, but I wanted to make damn-sure the brake shoes stayed away from the new tires. What a relief to finally have all good tires and three good spares as well. Of course if we had these very strong tires right from the beginning, it would have saved us an enormous amount of trouble and perhaps even a potential catastrophe. After dealing with the bikes, we went downtown to try and find Lili a new buckle for her helmet strap. We actually found one in an Army/Navy store and around the corner from that store, we found the Adventure Cycling Headquarters building too. Now we couldn't just pass up the opportunity to visit the home of our route maps, so we went in to say hello. Upon entering we checked for a bulletin board and found out, that they unfortunately did not have one. Lili (the great communicator) wrote out messages anyway and left greetings for the Adventure Cycle group we were leap-frogging with before Pueblo, and also for Sarabeth and Raoul, as she had done at the hostel too, in case any of them should stop here along their way. While looking around the headquarters I spied a picture that was for sale that I liked and a poster of Going to the Sun Highway up in Glacier Park, where we were headed next. The picture was of an old extremely overloaded transient biker, straddling his very heavy duty balloon tire bike and reading a newspaper he had probably found. He evidently was living out of his bike and had everything for his vagrant lifestyle in his large overloaded leather saddle bags. It sorta reminded me of the two of us in a comical overstated way. I thought it would be great to have it at home to laugh at once in awhile and be reminded of our own vagabond trip. The picture had been taken by Greg Siple, one of the co-founders of Adventure Cycling, which was called Bikecentennial when he helped start it back in 1973. He was out at the moment, so we decided to ride around town while we waited for him. We wound up at a lovely handmade carousel and Lili took a ride on it while I snapped pictures. She was laughing and smiling like a child who was having her first merry-go-round ride. I never stop being reminded how lucky I am to be with someone so pleasant and positive. This trip certainly has been hard at times, but Lili is always happy she is doing it. I am happy too and now we are almost across the entire North American Continent and believe me, that is something to be proud!

This is without a doubt the bike ride of our lifetime! It is **still** hard at times, but the both of us are much stronger now and the road is pulling us along by showing us never ending splendid scenes. There are lots of new wonders and promises of more to come just around the next bend and over the next hill. I am also **very happy** that we decided to ride west **into** all this beauty and not east away from it, although the prevailing west wind is charging us plenty for this choice!!

We stopped again at the army/navy store and then were on our way back to the Adventure Cycling Headquarters, when a fellow seeing our heavily loaded bikes asked us about our trip. It turned out to be Greg, the very guy we were waiting for, so we followed him back to the headquarters building. Greg requested to take our picture for the monthly magazine, and we had to sign a release to allow that. We were also asked to write down our cycling history, etc. Then as Greg was photographing us in front of a sheet background cloth, we happened to mention our good friend John Hathaway. We had met John while we were in France doing my second Paris-Brest-Paris event in 1991. I found out he is in the Guinness Book of Records many times for his extraordinary world bike tours. We later hosted him as he rode through NJ while he completed a long continuous trip that included every one of the continental states, Mexico and all of the lower Canadian Provinces in one convoluted loop. This was just a routine trip for this great bicyclist. When we told Greg we planned to stop in to see John at his home in Vancouver, he gave us the bad news that he had passed away from cancer the previous June. We had gotten a card from John at Christmas that never mentioned his illness. Greg told us John was diagnosed in April and died in June. Too bad, he was a great guy. He might have looked like a little Leprechaun, but he was in reality, a giant of a biker! Lili and I were stunned and extremely saddened.

We ordered the picture and poster from Greg (they were sent to our home, but I don't think our photo ever got in the magazine) and we didn't leave till after four o'clock! We ate quickly at a Burger King and headed out to Seeley Lake, some 57 miles north of Missoula. Not an easy ride in the time we had left! We plugged hard and didn't stop till we got to Clearwater Junction about 15 miles from Seeley Lake. There was a motel there but they were full, so Lili called a place at Seeley Lake and reserved a room there. We started pedaling immediately as hard as we could, because our day was fading and the forest was starting to close in on us. Fortunately the road had no big hills and the wind although not a tailwind, was not directly against us either, so we got to the motel before dark and checked in. We had hotdogs and large chocolate shakes and looked over our map to see what tomorrow looked like.

July 9, Seeley Lake, MT. to Big Fork, MT. 74 miles

Total trip miles 3890

We left Seeley Lake about 9:30 – 9:45 A.M. and light rain started immediately. To me, rain always seems worse in the morning. I guess it has to do with getting out of a warm dry room or even a tent, to a cold wet world, but today was made even worse by road construction. The mud started covering the bikes and us and like the weather, the traffic was particularly nasty. Trucks and RV's seemed to be delighted to splash as much mud on us as they could. After about two hours of this we started getting hungry and saw a very appropriately named restaurant called "The Hungry Bear." It turned out to be a very nice place to escape to! They brought us both papa bear bowls of hot soup, which was just what the doctor ordered to fuel our shivering, shaking bodies. After we got warm and refueled, we got back on the bikes only to find the road construction had gotten even worse! For the next ten miles we plowed through mud and more mud. The bikes were caked so bad, sometimes the wheels could not even turn. Needless to say, we were very, very happy to see the pavement come up. We stopped at Swan Lake at a small grocery store. Originally we had planned to not go any further than this, but it was still surprisingly early, so we could still put on a few more miles if we wanted to. It actually seemed warmer when we were riding and perhaps we thought the weather would get better up the road? But..... on the way out of the store we met a woman named Pat Bowers who told us she was crewing for her son and a group of mountain bikers. She also had ridden the Southern Tier Route with her husband, so we had an interesting chat with her. Of course the time was slipping by and we still had miles to go to our next possible camp site. We rode hard and there was still plenty of daylight left when we reached Big Fork and found a camp called Wayfarers and set up our little green tent. We had ridden 74 miles and it was still raining.....

July 10, Big Fork, MT. to West Glacier, MT. 59 miles

Total trip miles 3949

It's still raining, so we rolled over and honeymooned until after ten. Finally the sun started to peek out a little from

behind the soggy mountains, so we started to pack up and think about our direction of travel through Glacier National Park. Even though it seems wrong, we decided on West to East and left Big Fork, Flathead Lake and headed out to **West Glacier**. The road was flat all the way in spite of the looming mountain in our face and we even had a fair wind. Outside of the fact that Lili was kinda beat from yesterday's muddy struggle, we actually had a pretty easy day of it. As soon as we got into West Glacier, we found a motel right near the Park entrance that wasn't bad at all. That's always a nice surprise when you are near such a touristy spot. We checked in and then went next door and had decent hamburgers. We then shopped in their convenience store for the provisions we would need while riding in the park, which has little in the way of food stops. Of course we were a little apprehensive about tomorrow's ride with its 27 mile climb and the 11 A.M. to 4 P.M. road closure for bikes! Neither of us had ever been on "Going to the Sun" before, nor while climbing with our overloaded pack mules, had we ever been mistaken for Lance!! So we made sure the bikes were all set to roll real early and went to bed at 8 P.M. to get a good rest for a predawn start.

July 11, West Glacier, MT. to St. Mary, MT. 54 miles

Total trip miles 4,003

We got up at 4:30 A.M., ate and were on the road at 5:15 A.M. As we passed through the park gates, we noted the sign said no bicycles between 11 and 4. But as we rode on, that seemed to be less and less of a potential problem, because the first 12 miles were almost flat! However once we finally started climbing there was no let up, just one switchback after another on this very narrow "Going to the Sun (**Highway?**)" We were passed by several groups of riders who had camped at the "Avalanche" park campsite. I spoke to a young woman named Dawn, then a father and daughter passed us and in the morning gloom, I could see two more guys coming along. They were all traveling lightly loaded. I figured they probably had a sag wagon following up after eleven. As the last two guys got closer to us, I could hear them talking. One voice sounded very familiar to me and as they passed Lili I heard her exclaim. "Hey we know you.....you're from PBP.....Marshall!"

I turned and said "**RUBEN!**" It was indeed Ruben Marshall, a guy I had first met 10 years earlier, on another dark mountain but on a different continent, in Brittany, France. The story goes like this: **Paris-Brest-Paris is a bicycle marathon, held every four years in France (barring wars, etc.) and riders attempt to ride from Paris out to the city of Brest and then back to Paris in less than 90 hours. That is the time it took the first winner back in 1891, when the roads were mostly dirt or mud and bicycles mostly had solid tires. Bikes and roads have come a long way since then, so it should be relatively easy, right? Well first to get in this event you have to do a series of qualifying "Brevets" as they are called. They are 200K, 300K, 400K and 600K (about 375 miles); these Brevets are timed and there are checkpoints. If you do qualify, you go to France to ride day and night for 750 miles and if you ride fast enough, you get to sleep an hour or two, here and there. So in no small way, PBP is about riding back and forth across France over countless hills, day and night with very little sleep. So here I am in 1987 resting by the side of the road on Roc Trevezel. I am talking with Art Miller, my riding companion about our third partner's dropping out back at the halfway point. The sleep deprivation had just been too much for him and in spite of our lengthy attempts to change his mind, he had decided in no uncertain terms to abandon at Brest. As my friend and I sat there, riders were passing by us slowly climbing this steep mountain in the night. We would watch their little white headlights approaching, and some were weaving due to the steepness of the hill and some were weaving since they had already ridden over half of an ultra-marathon, it was now late at night and they were obviously very tired! But here comes a bike that is weaving so much and so violently, that I could see sparks from his pedals striking the road on every revolution!!!!!!!!!!!!!!**

I JUMPED UP AND YELLED, "This guy's gonna crash!" It is not totally unheard of for riders to actually fall asleep while riding and so I ran alongside of him and grabbed his bike. For a second I thought we were both going to land on the road, but somehow that didn't happen and he slowly managed to come to a wobbly stop while leaning on me. Now there were over 3,000 riders from all over the world in this event, so I was surprised to find he was an American. I told him he had to get some sleep, or he was going to crash. With much trouble and some near catastrophes, we eventually got down off the mountain and found a park bench next to a public phone. We said you better sleep here for a while, but we can't stay with you. Someone else will no doubt see you here and wake you up (the biggest fear in going to sleep, is just not waking up in time to reach the next control before it closes).

The story has a happy ending. I was lucky enough to finish in Paris, with 5 hours to spare and Ruben was awakened and he too finished in under the 90 hour time limit! That year about half of the American riders had to drop out, a lot due to hypothermia, since there was a soaking cold rain most of the time.....I was very happy to see Ruben again, we had 10 long years of catching up to do!

We all rode together and as the sun started to come up the views were just unbelievable!!!!!!! The narrow road was hugging the cliffs on our left and on our right there were 2' high blocks of rock forming a low, sort of primitive wall. The sheer drop off started immediately beyond these rocks and the valley below seemed to be many, many miles, far, far of all shapes and sizes all woven into a magnificent tapestry. The road never stopped climbing, climbing relentlessly into the cliffs and as the sun started to bathe these cliffs away. It was breathtaking, with a hundred shades of green, rivulets of raging white rivers and blue lakes of all shapes and sizes all woven into a magnificent tapestry. The road never stopped climbing, climbing relentlessly into the cliffs and as the sun started to bathe these cliffs they came to life in wonderful Technicolor. There were huge vivid horizontal bands of purples, blues, reds and white, wrapping each peak like presents for the mountain king. I feel so inadequate to come even close to doing justice to all this magnificence, I will only say; if you have not yet been there, you should by any means go! Hike or ride your bike if possible, then you will not just pass through as a passenger of a motor vehicle, but instead you will be **part** of this incredible natural beauty



Glacier Park

We kept climbing, climbing, climbing..... Logan Pass isn't all that steep, but it sure is long enough! Sadly the glaciers in the park have been rapidly shrinking and some predict at the present rate of melting they will be totally

gone by the year 2020.



Going to the Sun 27 mile climb

Even so, the plowed snow bank that lined the road near the summit was unbelievably high (see picture), especially since this was mid-July! We pulled into the visitor center, but found nothing interesting there and they had no heat or electricity either, so we piled on all the warmest clothes we had and started back down the long mountain towards Saint Mary. The side gusts were so crazy strong, we had to coast with our feet out of our pedals and our legs just hanging down to catch us when the wind blew us over, which it tried violently to do all the way down!! Anything over 5 m.p.h. was way too dangerous and I had to stop several times after a gust came close to taking me over the cliff! The wind was bitterly cold and we had to go through sleet and hail, till I was sure we would not make it down. Eventually though, we did get down and I breathed a sigh of relief and blew the hottest breath I could summon up on my hands, to try and bring them back to life. There was a place to eat, but there also was a fifteen minute wait, just to sit down. We went over to a little souvenir shop and got some junk food just to hold us while we continued on down to the town of St. Mary. We found the KOA camp that Ruben Marshall said his group would be staying at and pulled in, but there were no riders checked in yet. We didn't know where they were, so after waiting quite awhile, we decided to go on to the town of Babb and the Canadian border. On our way out to the main road we finally bumped into Ruben and his riding buddy Joe. They talked us into going back to camp at the KOA. We found that they had reserved cabins, but since there were no more cabins available we just put up our little tent on the grass right next to their place. Ruben kindly invited us to the group's supper and we had a nice catch-up chat and explained our reasons for doing the Eastbound side of "Going to the Sun" when we were really traveling East to West across the continent. It was great sharing experiences with the others, but it had been a long day (a long **BEAUTIFUL** day) so

we crawled into our snug little green cocoon and were fast asleep in seconds.



Logan Pass in mid-July

July 12, St. Mary, MT. to Pincher Creek, Alberta, Canada

73 miles

Total trip miles 4,076

Saturday morning we all got up and started packing up. It's a lot easier to get ready when you are not tenting, so Ruben's group was ready to go slightly before us. We said good-bye and safe trip in the camp and shortly were on our way out to the main road where they had turned right to go East, and we turned left toward Babb and then Canada. The tailwind was so blessedly fierce, it blew us along at 22 – 23 m.p.h., and we got to Babb in nothing flat! We had a great breakfast, mailed Muriel's letter, got some groceries across the street and headed up to the border. Crossing the border was no problem except that my dog repellent (pepper spray) was confiscated. We had not actually been chased by dogs since Appalachia, but we would be sleeping in bear country now..... Not far up the road we had to make a left turn, which unfortunately brought us more into the wind. Gradually our road turned even more, until we were faced dead-on with a fierce steady headwind. Forward progress was painfully slow as we climbed Chief Joseph Pass. When we got to the road that went into Waterton Lakes Park we stopped, talked it over and agreed that it just looked too bleak and windy to go out of our way to. We probably made a big mistake, I'm sure those grand old hotels up on the beautiful cliffs surrounding the lakes are magnificent, but right now we were just not feeling up to it. We plugged on and on and finally after a long windy battle, staggered into a motel at Pincher Creek. I felt more beat than if I had just climbed Going to the Sun two or three times in a row! With the great exchange rate (then) the room was only \$21! The hot shower was worth that and much more.

July 13, Pincher Creek, Alberta to Coleman, Alberta**33 miles****Total trip miles 4,109**

We had a nice long rest, but I was still tired when we finally left around 10:30 A.M. As expected the wind was not any better today than yesterday, so we put our heads down and used our grannies, even in places that were not uphill. When we got near the Town of Frank we came upon a local running event that was just finishing up. One of the organizers told us they had a lot of hamburgers left over and offered some to us. Even though we had been stopping to eat, drink and rest every few miles, we still said yes and had some cold dry burgers and a can of soda. It all goes into the furnace and this was no time to be picky about cold burgers. In order to fight this monster, we needed every bit of strength we could squeeze out of even a dried up old hamburger. By five o'clock we had only done thirty three miles! Even so, we were frazzled and decided to crash into the first motel we came to.

July 14, Coleman, Alberta to Elko, British Columbia**61 miles****Total trip miles 4,170**

We had breakfast in the motel and then started off toward "Crows Nest Pass" which was nothing much to climb, just a series of small ups and downs, but the wind had certainly not gotten any better! Not surprisingly, there were endless surrealistic wind farms up on the tops of the ridges and to reinforce what we already were painfully aware of, every one of the monster 15 story high props were all pointing directly at us! Whoosh, Whoosh, Whoosh x 100's. Very demoralizing, but it at least it does mitigate the huge coal mines, which also share this vast energy producing area. The wind is so severe at times, it frequently causes accidents on the highways, has flattened all the trees and even derails trains occasionally. If we pedaled hard downhill we might make 10 miles per hour.....but it was really hard work. We pulled into a shopping center at Sparwood where they had a huge mining dump truck on display. A lime green Titan Terex monster! Lili stood next to a wheel and its tire was twice as tall as her! This truck is only used in mining, since it is way-way too big for any road use. We ate our lunch sandwiches while we gawked at it. After lunch our road (the Crowsnest Highway) started to swing around back more to the south and mercifully our head wind became more of a side wind and we even started to make some miles. We had to go through a tunnel, but after that the road was quite beautiful, with the Elk River alongside and nice mountains going steeply up behind it. Oh, by the way we crossed the Continental Divide again today! This makes the 13th time (and maybe the last time) we have crossed it.

The Crowsnest River flows east to Hudson Bay and the Elk River flows west to the Columbia and the Pacific. We had an afternoon stop in Fernie at a Subway. Their meatball sandwiches were terrible, but we ate them anyway. Like I said, it all goes into the furnace and bad as they were, they still powered us down to Elko. Elko was just a truck stop and the only motel looked unfinished and dilapidated. We found a small public campground under the cliffs and pitched our tent. Someone is supposed to come around to collect ten dollars from us, but I don't know if he really exists.

July 15, Elko, British Columbia to Peck Gulch, Lake Koochanusa, MT, USA**53 miles****Total trip miles 4,223**

Well we will leave our bike map route today and head back to the good old US of A. We will be just picking our own route from here on, to the end of this trip. It should not be a big problem, because there are many roads and services in this part of the world (sometimes). Twenty three miles down the road at the Roosville Port of Entry, we cross back into Montana. We have only been in Canada three days, but it still feels good to be back in the US and only a few days away from my son and daughter-in-law, at Fairchild AFB. We begin pedaling with renewed power and determination. It will be great to be with family again.....

We headed down to 90+ mile long Lake Koochanusa, formed by a dam down in Libby, Montana. The long lake is actually a reservoir that stretches 50 miles down to the border and then 45 more to the dam at Libby. We found a beautiful totally empty forest service campground at Peck Gulch, but it was early yet. Trouble was that the next camp was a little too far, so we set up on a grassy knoll with a great long view of the windy waters. Even with the

wind it was quite peaceful as we were somewhat sheltered by the hill behind us. I thought of fishing, but since I had no license, I just relaxed and tried to soak up the view of rippled water and green mountains to make a big deposit in the Grande Vista Bank, in case of hard times down the road.



Too big for the road, thankfully!



Peck Gulch

July 16, Peck Gulch, MT. to Troy, MT.

66 miles

Total trip miles 4289

We broke camp at Peck Gulch and after some breakfast we climbed the ridiculously steep hill back up to the main road and started off south along the rest of lovely long Koochanusa. The road was scenic, but not always right near the shoreline. As we rode along, I thought of how Lili and I had survived our many trials and enjoyed the many rewards. Sometimes the rewards were quiet and sometimes they roared, but always the road seemed to pull us along, anxious to show us more. We came to Libby Dam at the beginning of the lake and stopped to eat our sandwiches and then continued on down to the town of Libby and had Dairy Queen milkshakes for dessert. We picked up some food and mailed some cards and letters and headed on down to the town of Troy. We passed a couple headed to Maine. She was out front about a mile ahead of him, but only he stopped to chat. He told us they intended to complete the "Northern Tier Route" in 6 weeks. I wished him luck, but silently thought, I don't think so! But later as I rethought it, I started remembering all those wind farms pointed east, right at us and all those days we had struggled to do 40 or even just 30 miles and changed my mind. But still, I would not want to rush through this experience. We are going plenty fast enough and I am still glad, **very glad**, we are going into beauty and not riding away from it. However, the road is not always pretty, in any direction. Sometimes weather and conditions make me doubt my sanity and I have to dig deep into the Vista Grande Savings Bank. (Tomorrow I will have to make a **very big** withdrawal!!)

July 17, Troy, MT. to Athol, ID.

93 miles

Total trip miles 4382

Rt. 2 had been torn up completely and there had just been a heavy rain storm, so mud soon covered our bikes and us

in goeey slop. But far worse than that, was the fact that there were absolutely no shoulders and the crushed rocks on the torn-up road bed were just plain awful to ride on. We tried to stay as far over to the right as we could get, but the dump truck crazies still sped past us inches away. They showed us no mercy at all and usually hissed their air brakes fiercely when right next to us. (Of course I had noticed for most of this trip, that trucks hissed their brakes at us, every chance they got, even when they were going the other way. I guess they wanted to tell us we were not welcome on THEIR road). Our sick trucker joke was, how do you tell a cattle truck from a lumber truck before you can see them? The lumber truck smells great, but the cattle truck smells like cow s--- just before one of them kills you. But this situation today was probably *the* most dangerous we had encountered on the entire trip! Considering the army of dump trucks roaring past us at top speed, considering the narrow, very rough place we had to ride on, or considering the result if we bailed out into the sharp crushed rocks that awaited us two foot below the edge of what used to be the road! It was nerve-racking riding, and if you lost your nerve, you would be most likely dead or at the very least, seriously injured. My knuckles were white and my savings account was close to being overdrawn, but I was determined to "Illegitimi non carborundum* !" The city of Sandpoint was despite its traffic, light years better than our 20 miles of hell on Rt. 2. We had done over 90 miles, so when we got to the village of Athol, we looked around for a motel and finally found one down on quiet Rt. 54 going toward Spirit Lake. I breathed a long sigh of relief, as it had been a very tough day!

****Pig Latin for, Don't let the bastards wear you down.***

The motel owner was a nice guy who told us about a bike path that would take us right into Spokane. For the most part, it ran along the Spokane River and best of all would be free of trucks, which I have come to hate with a passion! Actually I don't hate the trucks so much as the idiots that drive most of them. I also asked the motel owner if he had a hose we could wash down our muddy bikes with, so they would be clean enough to come into the room with us. He supplied us with a water hose and cleaning equipment and I soon had our mules looking better than they had been for many miles. Later we walked down to a café and had nice rib steaks for supper and then came back to the room and called Frank. He told us how to get to the base, but I wasn't too sure I could remember all the turns. I guess I figured if we could find our way across the country, we could find Fairchild AFB. Anyway, I slept like a very tired, but very happy biker, who would get to see my son and daughter-in-law tomorrow.

July 18, Athol, ID. to Fairchild AFB, WA.

73 miles

Total trip miles 4455

It appears as though we have about a sixty mile ride today, part of which will be in city traffic, then going out of the city it will be a climb going up to the base on Airway Heights and probably not on very nice roads (Rt. 2). It does look like a nice sunny day though. Lili went out for some milk and after breakfast, we're "on the road again."

We ate and got rollin', but didn't get that far, before we had to wait for a train at the first RR crossing. We then rode out to Spirit Lake, went left on smallish Rt. 41 and headed on down toward Post Falls to the reported bike path. After looking around for a while we finally found it winding around in back of the interstate, but later on it got down by the Spokane River and became scenic as well as utilitarian. We have really only used two bike paths on this entire Odyssey, but this one and the one out of Breckenridge Colorado have both been super nice and it really is a welcome relief to get away from the dump truck idiots for a while. At lunch time we fortuitously came to a nice bench right on the path-side, so we seized the opportunity and fixed our usual sandwiches. It might not sound as grand, or romantic as dining at some quaint little bistro, but on a long ride like this, it is a wonderful picnic that fuels both body and soul. It gives the needed calories for fuel and the time to rest, reflect and remember. It is one of life's simple little elemental pleasures that are so greatly magnified by cycling, like the scent of pine trees in the rain, the music of a babbling roadside trout stream, the smile of a friendly face, or the happy wave of a passing fellow biker. This bench that we found was placed so that one half was in Idaho and one half was in Washington State and painted accordingly, so I sat in Idaho and Lili sat in Washington and somehow we found that to be a reminder that we had ridden a long way together.....

But we still had a way to get to Frank and Carol's, so we headed west once more. Finally the path ended abruptly and dumped us on some small city streets, some of which were dirt with oil or tar. We got outta there and found that we

had passed the bridge that we wanted to cross on, so we angled back, crossed a different bridge and were at once surrounded by the tall skyscrapers of downtown Spokane. We cautiously found our way out of the city canyons and started climbing up to "Airway Heights" on Rt. 2. We pedaled as strongly as we could, because Rt. 2 is not our favorite road to be on and because we were anxious to get to see Frank and Carol. VERY ANXIOUS!!!! But we eventually did see the base emerging from the arid semi desert and pulled in through the gates, brazenly right past the tank cannon pointed directly at our heads. We called up Frank from the gate house, got directions to his house and started off, first in the wrong direction and then turned around and got going in the right direction. As we pedaled down Dakota Avenue, I saw Frank and Carol standing out on their street waiting for us. There was a great deal of hugging and happiness. There might have even been few joyful tears. We were on a safe island with our loving family and we would rest up here and recuperate before our final push to that other ocean.

!



Fairchild AFB

Ride lots, be careful, be safe, be well and be happy! Jack Brohal

Next Time:

We visit with son Frank and daughter-in-law Carol

Have a gorgeous boat ride on Lake Chelan
Have two wonderful visits with my old Sparta biking buddy Al, his wife Carol and his mother Chanyce.
Ride up through Mt. Rainier National Park
Up on Mt. Rainier, I have a hike and a talk with Lili
Reach South Beach, Washington and sleep right on the shore of that OTHER OCEAN
Ride up and around the Olympic Peninsula
Spend three weeks on the San Juan Islands
Visit Vancouver Island and Victoria City
Fly home from Sea Tac

To Follow:
Short Epilog