

1981 Double Transcontinental

Introduction by Ed Haldeman
(Lon's dad)

Listening to a weekly radio broadcast in the 1940's involved the thrilling adventures of the Lone Ranger and his trusty Indian sidekick, Tonto. It was a requirement for thousands of thrill seeking youngsters like myself to tune the radio dial following our return from school. None of us would have dared miss his latest episode and escape from some new peril. For thirty minutes our ears would be glued to the sound box as we listened spellbound to the adventures of the famous masked man. Each weekly lead-in would begin --"Return with us to Yesteryear.....". Today, these many years later, we return to experiences of a different nature.

Instead of listening enthralled to sounds of galloping hoof beats by the Lone Ranger's horse, Silver, emanating from some far off radio station, our ears in the 1970's and 1980's were tuned instead to the whir and purr of rolling bicycle wheels. Sounds changed as rubber encountered a variety of road surfaces spanning our nation.

During grade school years Lon Haldeman adopted a steed which rolled instead of clopped, squeaked instead of neighed, and which required devouring thousands of calories while moving instead of standing at a food trough filled with hay and oats. Saddles were mounted on each, one on a horse, the other on a bicycle. Neither were the most comfortable, but gradually were accepted as tolerable and efficient. Lon's obtaining such a strange beast would require strenuous personal effort involving propulsion. His efficiency was relative to seriousness of training.

Early involvement with the two wheeled creature may be categorized as having fun while exploring roads leading from our laid back country town of Harvard, Illinois. New sights were waiting to be discovered. Sometimes, strange dogs would be anxious to greet his approach. Not all would possess wagging tails. Lon's curiosity and adventuresome spirit were forming.

Covering ten miles on a bicycle as a youngster eventually doubled, tripled and expanded even further as experience and conditioning developed. A challenge of covering one hundred miles was successfully met. A double century mileage mark was surpassed. Later, it was followed by a triple century in twenty-four hours. What would the next challenge be?

In 1980 Lon made a surprise announcement to our family. He was considering riding across the length of United States! Wouldn't that be an interesting, exciting and worthy challenge? Doubling the initial shock was a proposal to ride it both ways, a round trip totaling approximately six thousand miles. Dream no little dreams! Questioning the proposal would serve no purpose. German resolution would prevail.

Issue decided, research into logistics commenced. What route would best serve our purpose? What type of terrain and weather should we begin to prepare for? Where would needed support personnel be found? What type of vehicles would be needed, and where could they be located? Crucial to success was the ever present question of - "How would necessary funding be obtained?" Even more important was concern that physical breakdown might occur at some point during the grueling transcontinental trek. The undertaking barely resembled any of his previous bicycling challenges.

Geographical knowledge required departure and arrival locations on our east and west coasts. But where? Correspondence with several known fellow cyclists residing between those two bodies of salt water soon followed. We were advised to contact the United States Cycling Federation of our intentions. Upon doing so, we were notified the official beginning and finishing locations were City Halls in New York and Santa Monica, California. It was a start. Provided the cross country journey could be completed, it was hoped the energetic effort might result in national records.

Contact with the Federation secretary in New Hyde Park, New York revealed no written regulations existed. He recommended we compile a travel log in which date, time and location approximately every fifty miles would be verified by witnesses. Upon completion, the log book must be submitted to Federation headquarters in Colorado Springs. Other than having a registered

official present at start and finish, the secretary could offer nothing other than best wishes. We were on our own.

Coordinating information from various sources eventually established a route considered doable. Necessary usage of heavily traveled roadways in the New York City area was calculated to create many anxious moments. Bicycling safety was of prime importance.

Recommendations for agency contact along the way to acquire needed permits proved valuable. Congested travel from the eastern seaboard was expected to be a nightmare. Contact with local offices, city and state police, Interstate agencies and New York Port Authority for permission to use tunnel and bridges provided an introduction to bureaucracy. Fortunately, a contact sympathetic to our dilemma offered assistance in accessing other government offices. Still, gray hair roots were beginning to form.

Projecting a time frame for possible completion of the entire double transcontinental was impossible. Known obstacles were listed. The unexpected was a different matter. Transportation to and from starting and finishing line in New York City, plus the journey itself could easily surpass a month on the road. Unknowns abounded.

One necessity, that of support crew, was partially solved when mother, Mary Jane, and younger brother, Ken, agreed to participate. Lon's bicycle oriented friends, Jon Royer and Dean Dettman joined the pioneering adventure. Susan Notorangelo, registered nurse and budding bicycling enthusiast, considered the challenge worthwhile and was included.

Arrangements were made to obtain three vehicles, hopefully adequate to service our expected needs along the way. One, a cramped camper, would provide sleeping quarters and food preparation facilities. Another, a service van, would carry bicycles, spare parts and offer storage space for a growing list of anticipated supplies and clothing for our rider and six person crew. Considered essential, a small chase or supply car was to be utilized for night time illumination and protection from rearward approaching traffic. Rotating crew personnel among the three vehicles for varied duties was expected to temper complacency as our "wagon train" proceeded day after day. Variable

scenery and experiences waiting around each new bend in the road would hopefully fuel enthusiasm.

An offer from relatives of Susan Notorangelo on Staten Island to provide quarters for event preparation was a stroke of good fortune. Their facilities, located within reach of City Hall in Manhattan, eased anxious concerns. Packing and rearranging equipment there under less stressful conditions was ideal.

Scheduled departure from New York in 1981 was 3 AM. Anxiety negated restful sleep the night before. Waiting for us near the City Hall steps were the required U.S.C.F. official and motorcycle riding New York City Police officers who would escort us through the mostly deserted city streets. Customary big city sounds were muted at that early hour. No bands or politicians were present for a rousing sendoff. Our small contingent from a little town in northern Illinois waited anxiously for the click of a stopwatch. The official's thumb moved. A downward push from cleated shoe on pedal started wheels moving. We were on our way! Ahead of us lay nearly three thousand miles of apprehensive excitement. More than that, it was the beginning of a lifetime experience.

Ed Haldeman 1981