

# Double Transcontinental Record 1981

## Part 5

### Day 2

#### Entering Pennsylvania

The reality of riding across the country was starting to sink in by the second day. Even though I had trained by doing many fast double century rides and even some 24 hour events over 400 miles, I was not ready for the pounding pace of cross country riding. I got back on the bike the second morning and began riding up the hills on Rt. 40 through Frostburg, Maryland and Uniontown, Pennsylvania. These were the steepest and longest hills I had ever ridden. My 42 x 21 gear wasn't enough. It was now Monday morning and I asked the support crew again to go looking for a bike shop to find a 13 x 26 Suntour Ultra-6 freewheel.

A couple hours into the day our motor home was set up beside the road. It was time for breakfast. I stopped and my mom had made me a big plate of french toast. I welcomed the chance to sit down and eat. Most of my meals during the first week of the Double Transcontinental would be full plates of food eaten inside the motor home. It would not be until we had traveled almost 2,000 into New Mexico that we refined our pace and efficiency to eat most of my meals on the bike.

As I coasted into Frostburg, Maryland on Rt. 40 I had a strange sense of déjà vu. I felt that I had been there before doing the same thing. I then remembered a dream I had when I was about 16 years old. I had told that dream to my parents and Susan years later of how I got interested in cross country riding. In the dream I was on a cross country trip. I was coasting down a steep hill of the eastern mountains with one hand on my hip and my upper body turned slightly to the left. During the dream I remember that I was at total peace with the bike and the fact that I would be riding across the country many times. My bike was white in the dream. It was similar to that white AMF Scorcher 10 speed bike I had bought for \$69 in 1973. I always remembered that dream, even though most dreams disappear in a few hours. Riding into Frostburg made me realize dreams do come true. I was tired today but at peace on the bike. This was just the start of many more strange experiences that would evolve during the Double Transcontinental.

As the support car went shopping for a new freewheel at a local bike shop, I just kept riding on Rt. 40. We were pretty relaxed about keeping the support crew near me and they would catch up to me later. I was by myself riding through town when my rear tire punctured with a loud pop. I inspected the tire and found a large piece of glass had made a one inch gash in my tire. There was no way to repair the tire with even a boot or new tube. In a way I was relieved. I would use this opportunity for a nap. I took off the wheel and laid my bike down near the residential sidewalk under the shade of maple tree. I was comfortable on the soft grass and maybe fell asleep for a few minutes. I woke up by the sounds of yelling

from the support car which had stopped along the curb. They thought I had been hit by a car. I said I was fine and showed them the damaged tire. We put on a spare wheel and I was riding again with renewed energy after my short nap.

The crew had purchased two 13-26 freewheels and I changed wheels again. I wasn't riding that strong and I needed the lower gears. It started to rain in the late afternoon. We entered Wheeling, West Virginia and splashed through the flooded streets. It was nearing sundown I was thinking about stopping for the night. I wanted to maintain my goal of riding at least 200 miles each day. All three of our support vehicles were waiting at a wide spot on the side of the road in a residential area. The owner of the house where we had stopped came out and said he had been expecting us. We had no idea who he was. He introduced himself as the president of the local Lion's Club. He had heard about the Double Transcontinental Record from my local Harvard, Illinois Lion's Club. I had given a bike talk to them about my plans and we were using the Record Attempt as a way to raise money for the National Lion's Club eye glasses program. Wheeling is a big city and it was just by chance that we stopped front of the Lion Club's President's yard. We talked for 15 minutes and he gave us directions of an RV park just ahead in Ohio. I had only ridden 190 miles today from 5:10 AM to about 8:00 PM. I was really tired and wanted to get out of my wet clothes and sleep in a dry bed. We continued to Morristown, Ohio just across the state line. I had ridden 202 miles by 9:00 PM.

## Day 3

### Entering Ohio

I started riding at 5:40 AM. The worst of the mountains were behind me as I rode into Ohio. I continued on Rt. 40 toward Columbus and I was looking forward to the even flatter roads of Indiana. By mid morning a slight breeze started from the west. The drudgery of a headwind was slowing my pace as much as the mountains yesterday. I wasn't thinking about riding to California. I was just riding from town to town.

Navigating across the country was very basic by current Race Across America standards. Our crew didn't have a pre scouted route listing all the turns in each town. My dad had made an overview of the route with the turns listed only when we needed to get on new highway. My route was Rt. 40 to Indianapolis, Indiana, then take Rt. 36 to Springfield, Illinois, then take Rt. 54 across Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas to Tucumcari, New Mexico. Then get on I-40 to Flagstaff, Arizona to Rt. 89 south, then Rt. 60 west before getting on I-10 into Los Angeles. We were able to cross the remaining 2,500 miles of America with only six turns. Or so it seemed on our route sheet.

As it turned out our crew did a great job of following the road signs as each highway made dozens of turns and merges with other routes in each state. At times the lack of route details was a little frustrating, like the day against the headwinds in Ohio. I was standing and grinding against the wind wondering how far it was to the next town and a chance for some shelter from the wind. I waved the following support car up along side me. My

mom was navigating in the passenger seat. I asked her how far before I arrived at the next turn or town and to obtain relief from the wind. She began looking at our route on the AAA Map as the support car dropped back behind me. After ten minutes I waved the car up beside me and I asked my mom again how far it was to the next turn or town. She said "Oh...it's just a ways". That remark pretty much summed up our degree of route details across the country.

As we proceeded across the country I tried to memorize the route. I knew I would need to return on the same roads in a few weeks. I made mental notes of the intersections, bridges, direction of the wind on the flags and most importantly the distances between the towns. Our crew was also documenting new route notes for the return trip. During the whole westward crossing we would only be lost twice for about 30 minutes. On the return trip we stayed on the correct route the whole way. We were learning as we went of how to race across the country. By the end of our third day we arrived in Richmond, Indiana at 11:00 PM having ridden 703 miles since leaving New York.

End Part 5