

Start Part 7

Crossing Missouri

by Lon Haldeman

I headed across Missouri the next morning. I started at sunrise riding on the divided section of 4-lane going toward the Lake of the Ozark's. This section is similar to an interstate with a divided median filled with trees and untouched cliffs of native limestone rocks. The wide shoulder was made of natural Missouri red granite chip seal pebbles. I was making good time this morning coasting down the mile long grades and standing and pedaling on the long 6% climbs back up the other side. My support car had stopped for gas and I was enjoyed the solitude of riding by myself in the early morning.

It was on this section I noticed a cyclist coming toward me on the opposite shoulder of the divided road. Through the gaps in the trees and rocks I could see the cyclist and a motorcycle traveling together on the shoulder. As they came past me I waved across the median. Neither the motorcycle or rider responded to me. Maybe they just thought I was local cyclist out for a morning ride. A few minutes later I saw a large motor home come toward me with a Lotis Bicycle banner on the side. The rider and motorcycle I had seen was Jim Black who had started in California about a week earlier and was attempting to break John Marino's one-way Transcontinental Cycling Record of 12 days, 3 hours. I had heard about his record attempt from some friends in California. They said he had a 60 tooth chainring for the tailwinds in the desert. I was interested because I was also going to try and break Marino's one-way West to East Record on my return trip to New York. When my support car joined me a few miles later I told them I had seen the other rider riding eastward on Rt. 54. My support car made a U-turn at the next crossover and went to say hello. I continued on alone for the next 10 miles toward

the over commercialized area of the Lake of the Ozark's. I was calculating his Record Attempt pace. Would he break Marino's Record? Would I need to go faster on my return trip? This was turning into more of a race than a tour across the United States for me. As I rode the hills of Missouri the competition was helping me stay focused. I needed to ration my enthusiasm.

I tried not to think about riding back from California. I still had 1,600 miles to go before I would see Santa Monica. For now it was best for me to ride for the moment and enjoy Missouri. I read all the bill boards that were on display every half mile during the final 50 miles before the Lake of the Ozark's. Hillbilly font signs with the words "Walnut Bowls...Factory Seconds" dominated the landscape. Signs promoting wax museums, Elvis impersonators and Fireworks made rural Missouri seem like Las Vegas. I was enjoying my cycling today. My legs were feeling better and I was looking forward to Kansas.

The conditions were good tonight and I rode into the night covering 286 miles today and not stopping until Neal, Kansas at 1:20 in the morning. We had completed 1,444 miles so far averaging 240 miles per day.

Our crew for the Double Transcontinental would be made up of six people. My mom and dad had just turned 50 years old in 1981. They had been very supportive of me for the past 10 years as my interest in longer distance cycling took us to new places. My younger brother Ken had just graduated from high school and this ride across across the country was a big road trip for him. Jon Royer and Dean Dettman were two 20 year old mechanics from the bike shop where I worked. They were the "Jack of all trades" type guys who could drive vehicles and repair them too. Our sixth crew member was Susan Notorangelo from St. Louis. She was

a nurse and an accountant. We had become friends the previous winter and only met in person a few weeks before the cross country ride. Everyone brought special talents to the event.

Crossing the country twice and being in motion for over 30 consecutive days including travel time was very stressful for everyone. Everyday had dozens of adjustments and changes to the daily plan. It was great to have my parents and brother along who knew me well. It was also necessary to have the perspective of new friends. Considering what we were trying to accomplish without any previous example to follow, we did a pretty good job of inventing the wheel of nonstop cross country cycling.

For support vehicles, we had a 25 foot motor home, a small Dodge Omni chase car and a full size cargo van. Two crew members were assigned to each vehicle. They would rotate between vehicles everyday to get a chance to sleep for a few hours in the motor home or follow me in the chase car. Since I was taking long sleep breaks at night everyone usually tried to get some sleep when I stopped between midnight and sunrise. I remember we even had a tent the crew would set up sometimes when sleeping space was cramped.

Jon Royer and Susan took lots of photos. I didn't fully appreciate their effort to document the Double Transcontinental until years later. Some of the photos they took still provides me with some of my best cross country memories. I only regret we didn't have a video camera or someway to record interviews along the way. I did stop and do many interviews with local radio stations but I don't have any copies of those. A hometown company called DAROME was an innovator in teleconference equipment at the time. They helped sponsor my record attempt. Everyday we did

a 15 minute interview that was broadcast nationally on a telephone call-in chat line. Newspapers and radio people from across the country could call and ask questions. We had several stories posted by Associated Press newspapers. As the record attempt continued across the country the following by the media increased. I sensed many newspapers and television stations we contacted on our way west thought the record attempt was going to fail. They would only give us luke warm interest when Susan contacted them. I used their snub as motivation on my return trip east.

End Part 7