

Lon Haldeman's

1981 Double Transcontinental Record

Part 10

It was late afternoon as I turned on to I-40. The shoulder was wider than on Route 54 and there was plenty of room for my support car to travel on the shoulder. Up ahead I noticed a semi truck pulling over and park at the crest of the hill. As I rode up the grade the driver got out and walked to the back of his truck. He must have weighed 300 pounds and he stood with his arms crossed at the back of his truck. It was hard not to miss his imposing bald head, biceps and belly. He looked serious and I thought I'd better stop and talk to him instead of swerving around him.

He asked me what I was doing riding on the interstate with my support car behind me. I tried to talk fast and condense my past eight days into three sentences. He was impressed I had traveled 2,000 miles in a little more than a week. "Well" he said. "That's pretty neat. My boy rides bikes. Can I have your autograph". I signaled to the support car to get one of the photo flyers we had made for the record attempt. We gave him an autographed copy. The truck driver shook my hand and got back in his truck. He must have started talking on his CB radio and told them about the record attempt because for the next 800 miles the other trucks would beep their horns and flash their lights at us as they passed us on the highway.

Before sundown the billboards for the Club Cafe in Santa Rosa had coaxed me off the interstate. These billboards of the famous fat man cartoon would become Route 66 icons when the Club Cafe would close its doors ten years later. The Motel-6 was

at the first exit ramp entering Santa Rosa. I slept there for about four hours and now it was now almost midnight. Jon Royer and Dean Dettman would be crewing in the Dodge Omni support car tonight. The air was cool enough I needed a windbreaker jacket. We left the motel and follow Old Route 66 through the main street district of downtown. After about three miles we were on the west edge of town and merging back on to Interstate 40. The shoulder of the road was better here or maybe I couldn't see the rough pavement in the dark. I seemed to be standing a lot when riding and struggling to maintain 15 mph. I began to listen to the noise of the trucks on the interstate. The trucks coming toward me were coasting while the engines of the trucks going west were working harder. In the distance I could see the outline of rocky peaks against the stars in the sky. I was heading into the mountains tonight and my first real climbing since Missouri.

Each of the interstate grades seemed to get steeper and stair step climb for the next 30 miles. Billboard signs for "Clines Corners 25 Miles...Worth Waiting For" reminded me of the Hillbilly billboards in Missouri. These signs every mile would be my gauge tonight as the road climbed 2,500 feet in the next 50 miles. As the Greyhound Buses passed me I noticed their diesel exhaust smelled sweeter than other trucks. I could always tell a bus was passing by the smell of the exhaust. I asked my crew if they noticed any difference and they said a diesel was a diesel and there wasn't any difference. I think there is difference and 26 years later I still think the buses have a sweeter smell.

It took me almost three hours to ride the 40 miles to Clines Corners. Most of it was uphill. I was getting sleepy again at 3:00 AM. We had crested the grade and my pace exceeded 25 mph as I began to coast and soft pedal down the hill. The easier terrain made it more difficult to stay awake. The mountain air was brisk and

I was getting cold. Finally I motioned to my support car to pull over. I told them I needed a nap. There wasn't much room in the car but we had a foam pad in the back seat. I took the pad and walked into the desert on the side of the road. Jon and Dean said I couldn't sleep here and that the motor home was just five miles ahead. I said I only needed to rest for ten minutes. I laid down and closed my eyes. I probably fell asleep in two minutes. Jon tapped me on the shoulder and said it was time to go again. I got back on the bike cold and shivering and just as tired as before. We continued the next five miles near the town of Moriarty. The motor home was parked off an exit ramp and everything was dark inside. I was the most tired I had been the whole ride. It was now almost 5:00 AM. I leaned my bike against the motor home and went inside. My mom, dad, brother and Susan woke up when I went inside. "I really need to sleep" I said. "Don't wake me up until I wake up on my own". I wasn't in a good mood and everyone kept their distance from me. I collapsed in the back bunk still wearing with my clothes, jacket and gloves. I am sure I was snoring in less than a minute.

As I slept I had a dream. I was in a movie theater seated next to Susan. I had an aisle seat. During the movie a guy came into the theater with a bicycle and a set of rollers. It was the guy I had seen in Missouri trying to break the cross country record. He put his bike on the rollers in the aisle beside me. He started riding and said "I am still a good rider"... "I am still a good rider". "Do you want to buy my bike" he said. "Do you want to buy my bike". I looked at the bike he was riding on the rollers. The white frame had bubbled paint and looked burnt. I said, "No thanks, your bike is burned, I'll keep my own bikes".

Just then I woke up from my dream. I felt very alert. I looked around the inside of the motor home. There was enough sun light that I figured I must have slept all

day and it was almost sunset. I looked at my watch. Was it 7:00 AM or 7:00 PM?. Was the sun coming up or going down? It was cool outside so it must be morning. I had only slept 90 minutes. The rest of the crew was sleeping and figuring I was going to be in bed for at least six hours. I got out of bed and woke up Susan. "I feel great and I am going to start riding" I said. "Catch up with me down the road". I took an apple and some cookies from the motor home kitchen and put them in my jersey pocket. I went outside and my bike was still leaning against the motor home. The sun was warming up the morning and I was feeling very fresh today. I rolled down the entrance ramp onto the interstate and saw a sign; Albuquerque 15 miles.

I rode solo this morning down the interstate shoulder. I ate my cookies and apple and started wondering what was keeping the support car from catching me. I had reached the downhill of Tijeras Canyon that drops the final 10 miles into Albuquerque. I was feeling good and enjoying my gradual 30 mph descent. Just then the red Dodge Omni support car rolled up beside me. Susan was in the passenger seat and asked how I was doing. I didn't have a chance to tell her about my dream and my new found enthusiasm. She said she had been on the phones talking to Velo News Magazine and Michael Shermer who was working at a different industry cycling publication. Susan said she had some news about about the guy trying to set the cross country record. "Yeah what" I said. Susan said "He made it to Indiana but he had to stop when his motor home started on fire". I did a double take and asked for more details. All Susan knew is what she was told by the magazines. I told Susan, "You won't believe the dream I had"!