

Part 15 and 16

Our crew checked into the fancy hotel in downtown Santa Monica. The price in 1981 was about \$250 dollars a night. My mom said it was the best hotel she had ever been in. She was upset that we would not even get a full night's sleep. We only booked one room for six crew members and me. I would be able to take a shower and go to bed while the rest of the crew traded time in the shower. The crew had ordered some pizza to be delivered to the room. By the time I showered and ate it was 10:00 PM. We all needed to be awake by 2:00 AM and get ready to ride by 3:00 AM.

The alarm went off and I was a little disoriented about where I was. I had been used to sleeping in the motor home and this was my first night's sleep in a real bed since leaving New York City. The reality of the situation gradually sunk in. I needed to get back on the bike and ride 3,000 miles back to New York. The trip here took 12 days and 18 hours. The one-way record held by John Marino's was 12 days, 3 hours. If we were going to set the transcontinental record we needed to do it on the return trip.

I leaned on the wall as I rode the elevator down to the lobby. I was still tired and my thoughts were a mixture of anticipation and dread. Could I go faster across the country? How would I feel after another 12 days of riding? The elevator stopped. I was wearing my cycling shoes and cleats as I stepped out of the elevator and clicked my way across the marble lobby. Outside on the hotel steps the crew was waiting. Our hotel was a couple blocks from the Santa Monica City Hall so we walked down the street. At

the city hall the representative from the USCF was waiting for us. He had been sleeping in his car since when we had left him at 9:00 PM. I think he was glad we returned promptly at 2:45 AM like we said we would.

Crew member's Dean Dettman and Jon Royer had assemble the new Specialized Allez Bicycle for me. The frame was bright red with silver Campagnolo Super-Record parts. The bike had 27 inch wheels which were still common in 1981. It had Turbo clincher tires which Specialized was promoting as the first raceable clincher tire. Remember this was 1981 and 99% of all racing tires were sew-ups then. The crew had installed the Cool-Gear saddle off my TREK bike I had ridden most of the way from New York. I got on my new Allez bike and tested the saddle height. Everything felt good. The USCF Rep. gave us a count down. It was 3:00 AM when we started our return trip 3,000 miles back to New York City.

Last night at 6:00 PM the streets that were clogged with stop and go traffic. Now at 3:00 AM the same streets were now deserted. The traffic lights were flashing yellow. I cruised block after block at 22 mph. It felt good to be over halfway done. Each mile heading east would get me closer to New York City. The Dodge Omni support car followed 30 feet behind me and lighted the way. I needed to get at least 50 miles across Los Angeles before rush hour traffic started heading to work. We knew the roads and turns now. I made good time getting through the potentially busiest parts of the city. By 5:30 AM the sun was making a glow in the eastern sky ahead of me.