

1981

***Double Transcontinental
Record Attempt***

by Lon Haldeman

1981 Double Transcontinental

AN UP CLOSE VIEW

Introduction by Ed Haldeman

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

1981

Double Transcontinental Record

by Lon Haldeman

My first cross country ride was in June of 1981. To get ready I wasn't just preparing for a coast to coast ride, but for a 6,000 mile adventure from New York City to Los Angeles and back to New York. The record was 36 days set by Victor Vincente in 1974. I was hoping to do it in 28 days. I was naive about what it took to cross the country. Being naive was probably a good thing. I would not have attempted the Double Transcontinental Record had I known what I was getting into. This was my Kon Tiki event of similar to getting on a small raft and crossing the Pacific Ocean. I knew where I was heading, but I didn't have any idea of what I would encounter along the way. My enthusiasm made up for my lack of knowledge.

I grew up in rural northern Illinois just five miles from Wisconsin. I had been to Colorado, but not any further west than the Rocky Mountains and not any further east than Ohio. I visualized riding the mountains of Pennsylvania by training on the 50 foot high rolling hills near my home. Most of them could be climbed in 20 pedal strokes. I didn't have any idea of what it took to climb a mountain for miles at with a 9 percent grade.

At the riding pace I would need to maintain, physiologists calculated the effort being equivalent to doing a full Ironman Triathlon everyday. In simpler terms it would be similar to climbing 102 flights of stairs to the top of the Empire State Building 40 times per day (that's about 4,000 flights per day in

Fit-Bit terms). My riding would not be totally mindless plodding for mile after mile. Together with my crew we would need to deal with the changeable weather, road conditions, navigation and other logistical challenges. This record attempt effort was similar to a marathon runner climbing a slippery mountain slope nonstop for a month. Since I had never done an Ironman Triathlon, run a marathon or been to the Empire State building I didn't know what I was getting myself into. Like I said before, being naive was a good thing.

I had been thinking about trying to break the transcontinental record since I was a teenager in the mid 1970's. When I was 12 years old I started taking longer and longer rides out into the farm fields that surrounded my hometown of Harvard, Illinois. It was the perfect place to ride a bike and explore the grid work of roads laid out in neat one mile squares. I had a bike with coaster brake and wide tires. I expect 10 mph was a good cruising pace for me. The closest town of Chemung was three and a half miles away. It was another four miles to the town of Capron and another four miles north to the village of Sharon and then eleven miles back home. By taking a variety of routes between these towns I could make a nice 25 mile loop. As a twelve year old I thought I had ridden around the world. Every few weeks I would explore a little further from home. Each time I conquered a new distance of 30 miles, 40 miles or 50 miles I thought I had set a new record (which I had for me).

One time I saw a group of other riders in my hometown. They didn't look like the other boys I usually rode with. These were adult riders with fancy bikes that had multiple gears and skinny tires. They had ridden to Harvard from the distant city of Rockford located 30 miles away. I had been to Rockford in a car with my parents but I considered it too far to ride to by bike. I talked to the alien riders and asked them about their bikes and equipment. "Why did they wear black shorts? Why did they have straps on their pedals? Why did they have metal slots nailed to the bottom of their shoes?" "Why did their shoes have stiff soles". The riders were patient with me and helpful as they explained the advantages of their equipment. I was excited to learn so much about cycling in just a few minutes.

I knew I had to learn more and improve my equipment. I went home and cut off my black dress pants I wore to Sunday School. Now I had black cycling shorts. Then I traced the soles of my feet on a piece of thin aluminum and cut out the pattern to make stiffer insoles for my tennis shoes. My grandfather had found an old Hercules (Raleigh) "English Racer" bike in a dumpster and gave it to me. It was missing shift cables and brake shoes. I made new brake shoes out of wood. I shifted the rear derailleur by stopping and putting different size sticks in the pivots of the rear derailleur. The shifting process slow, but it was positive. The Hercules bike was better than my coaster brake model. I didn't have much money so I started to upgrade my equipment a little at a time with lawn mowing wages. Now I had to get myself in shape.

Over the next several years I rode further and further from home. I was racking up the miles by riding a few hundred miles per week. During my high school years I was considered a little bit odd by spending so much time on my bike. When I was able to get a drivers license I didn't go to the DMV to get my license until months afterward. I finally took the test because I was told I was going to have to take drivers education again if my paperwork expired.

During my teenage years I had three different bikes. My first 10 speed was a white AMF "Scorcher" I bought from the local hardware store for \$69 that came unassembled in a box. When I had worn out the bearings several times in two years, I then bought a yellow "Azuki" for \$189. That was my first bike with aluminum rims and cotterless cranks. I rode that bike on my first Century ride when I was 15 years old. When I graduated from high school my parents said they would help me buy a better bike. I wanted to get a silver Schwinn "Voyager" for \$369. My parents thought that was a lot of money for a bike but I convinced them it would be worth it if I saved on gas by riding 50 miles round trip to the junior college for the next two years. I didn't learn much at college those years but I was riding over 600 miles per week including a double century on the weekend. It was perfect training for the longer events to come.

During those years I began riding longer rides that lasted into the night. There were not any organized long distance events in my part of the country. I had to make up long weekend rides and planned my own events. I started

riding a fixed gear bike with a 42 x 15 gear to help my spinning. That was the bike I used on my longer events that summer. For my first triple century, I started riding at 3:00 AM by going out and back on a desolate ten mile section of highway near my house. When the sun came up I did 50 mile loops and came back to my house to refill waterbottles and grab a snack for my pocket. By sundown I had ridden 300 miles in a little under 18 hours. My first 400 mile ride in under 24 hours was ridden in a similar way. At night I rode on the farm roads with a "Wonder Lite" which would barely shine a yellow beam of light on the road fifteen feet ahead.

My longest event of the summer was a 407 mile route from northern Wisconsin starting at Lake Superior and going south across the state to Illinois. The whole experience of riding point to point and dealing with the logistics of being on the road was fascinating for me. A friend was going to support me along the way with his van. When we drove north to the start his van over heated several times and we would need to wait for over an hour before we could drive for another hour. We didn't arrive at the starting town until after midnight. There were no motels so I slept on the ground in a state park and my friend slept in his van with his dog. I was awake most of the night because of excitement and mosquitos. At 5:00 AM I was ready to go. At sunrise we went down to the boat dock on Lake Superior and took a farewell photo of me at the pier and a photo of my bike cyclometer. I got on my one speed bike and settled into my steady 18 mph pace. I was using a 42 x 14 gear (82 inches) with the hope that the headwinds would not be too

strong today. In the summer the winds usually blew from the southwest and I would have a quartering headwind most of the day.

My friend stayed behind because he wanted to go fishing for a few hours in Lake Superior. I was basically riding on my own with two water bottles and pocket full of granola bars. After 75 miles my friend caught up to me and I refilled my bottles and pockets with supplies. I was making good time and maintaining my 18 mph average. I met my friend a few more times during the day for more supplies. My parents had agreed to meet us at sundown and drive behind me at night with their Ford station wagon. It was good to see them and this was their first time driving support at night and the first time for me riding with the car headlights which were 100 times better than my Wonder Lite. The winds died down and it was nice to ride in the coolness of the night. We continued on smaller farm roads until sunrise. I arrived at the Illinois state line in the little town of Big Foot having ridden 407 miles in 23 hours and 7 minutes on my one speed bike. I was happy with the experience of riding all night and going somewhere. I knew I wanted to try more long distance rides.

I was becoming more and more fascinated with attempting the United States Transcontinental Record. I collected all the articles I could find in Velo-News, Bike World, and BICYCLING magazines. In the mid 1970's what caught my interest were the Kvale brothers from Minnesota who had ridden together across the country in 14 days averaging a little over 200 miles per day. They were good nationally known racers who had fun on their cross country record

by sprinting each other to city limit signs. They slept all night and ate in restaurants. It sounded like something I could do.

Part 2

In 1978 a fellow named John Marino raised the intensity of the Transcontinental Record when he crossed the country in 13 days. His pace was considered humanly impossible to maintain across the country. I knew I had to improve if I had a chance at going any faster. In 1979 four guys riding two tandems shattered the record again by crossing the country in 10 days, 21 hours. Pete Penseyres, Rob Templin, Bruce Hall and Brooks McKinney had averaged almost 275 miles per day. Even though they were drafting each other on tandem bikes their pace showed what was possible. In 1980 John Marino broke his solo record again and lowered the individual time to 12 days and 3 hours. That was the goal time that I wanted to beat. All the previous records had been set riding from west to east. The winds were supposed to be more favorable going that way. I was starting my record attempt by riding from east to west. If I didn't break the one way record heading to California I was hoping I could go faster on the return trip to New York. Either way I had to finish in under 36 days to break the round trip record which was set by Victor Vincente in 1974. These were the pioneering days of long distance cycling. Everything we learned was by trial and error and the learning curve was pretty fast as we had many failures.

The logistics of riding multiple days was something I needed to learn. As a test I planned to ride 310 miles south to the town of Litchfield, Illinois where they held their annual Double and Triple Century events. My father would drive the support car outfitted with flashing lights for night riding. I was joined by two friends who would get out of the car and ride with me occasionally. We made it down to Litchfield in about 18 hours with enough time to get some rest in a cheap motel. The next morning the event began with a mass start with over 100 riders trying to set their personal best for the 200 and 300 mile distances. The midwest was warm that year with the afternoon temperatures nearing 100 degrees. I was able to finish the 300 mile event in under 15 hours and get to bed before 10:00 PM. My crew repacked the car and got a few hours of sleep also. Then we were back on the road at 5:00 AM and heading for home. I arrived back at my house after sundown having completed riding 920 miles in less than three days and still sleeping at night. It was a good simulation of what I imagined riding across the country could be.

A few months later I had heard of a new event called the "The Bicycle Across Missouri" (BAM). It was organized by my friend Bob Smelzer who had ridden Paris-Brest-Paris the year before. He came back to organize a similar event in the United States. Although "BAM" would be only 540 miles it would be the longest nonstop event I had ridden so far. My dad and I drove to St. Louis, Missouri over Labor Day Weekend to see what riding across the state and back would be like. Breakfast in the predawn darkness was at a Denny's Restaurant. I noticed a cute dark haired woman dressed in bike clothes was

sitting at a table with a bunch of guys. I was wondering if a woman was going to ride BAM.

There were about 36 riders who started the ride and one of them was my boyhood hero Kevin Kvale who has set the Transcontinental Record with his brother five years earlier. I wanted to see if I could keep up with him and the collection of other serious long distance riders who had come to Missouri to join the ride. The pace was spirited the first 100 miles through the hilliest section of the route. I was with a group of six riders who were riding strong up the hills and I was barely hanging on. I rode my black TREK bike that was unique because in the late 1970s TREK was hand building frames with Columbus tubing in the United States.

The event rules were similar to a brevet where we had to stop and get our card signed every 75 miles. At about 150 miles our group came into a checkpoint and we made an agreement to depart in three minutes. I waited while we filled our waterbottles and grabbed some pocket food. After five minutes the other riders were not ready so I left figuring they would catch me on the hills ahead. After an hour I was still by myself. It would have been nice to have some company to ride with during the night but I wanted to try and ride the 540 miles nonstop and I didn't want to prolong the ride by waiting around. I didn't know where anyone else was behind me. I continued to the turn around point near Kansas City and started backtracking to St. Louis. After 30 minutes I saw the next rider coming toward me. It was Kevin and then several other riders. I figured I had about a one hour lead

and I had still planned to ride nonstop through the night. I kept thinking the group would catch me the next day.

After riding 500 miles I was so tired that the final 40 miles took over 3 hours. I finished in mid afternoon in about 32 hours. I was completely exhausted and BAM was another good test for me of just how hard it would be to ride across the country in 12 days. Riding BAM was a life changing event for me which I didn't realize it until several months later.

A week after BAM the organizers send us a list of the results and a short biography with the hometown and address for each rider. Less than half of the entrants had finished. The last rider to finish before the 60 hour cut-off time was a woman. Her name was spelled Susan Notorangelo but I couldn't pronounce it. I decided to write her a letter and ask why she had decided to ride an event as difficult as BAM. I told her I was planning to try to break the transcontinental record the following year and I was interested in what motivated her to set goals. When Susan received my letter she took it over to her boyfriend's house who was an avid cyclist. He encouraged Susan to ask me about joining my crew for the record attempt. During the next few months we exchanged long letters and even had some phone calls about getting ready for the Transcontinental Record.

Sometime during that winter the Los Angeles to New York Record was expanded to the Double Transcontinental starting from New York. I still hadn't

met Susan in person but she said she had time during the summer of 1981 to go on the whole record attempt.

In mid May of 1981 I was doing a 24 hour track record attempt at the Northbrook Velodrome near Chicago. It would be my final tune up ride before the Double Transcontinental. Susan wanted to see the track record so she rode her bike 350 miles from St. Louis to northern Illinois a few days before the track ride. I was impressed that she was that spunky to ride back and forth from St. Louis.

Susan arrived a day before the track record attempt and she helped me get the final details ready for the ride. By this time I think she has broken up with her old boyfriend and we hit it off well. At that time in my life I could have had any girl I pleased, but I didn't please anyone so Susan was my first girlfriend. Our relationship would continue to grow in the months ahead with many stressful and emotional experiences during the Double Transcontinental Record Attempt. We had a lot in common physically and mentally and I relied a lot on her organization and motivational skills. The 24 hour track record went okay considering it was a cold rainy weekend in May. I was riding my 1960's chrome Raleigh track bike with a 42 x 13 gear. The previous record was 369 miles. I did 392 miles in 20 hours and felt it was a good effort to get ready for the cross country ride two weeks later. Now I had to get my head ready for the racing across the United States.

During the final months before the record attempt my thoughts ranged from feeling invincible to wondering what I had gotten myself into. I had a friend

named Jerry Powers who was 40 year old and owned some successful businesses in town. He started calculating how much the Double Transcontinental would cost. He added up all the costs for motorhome rental, gas for three vehicles, some food for the crew and various other supplies. The record attempt was going to cost at least \$10,000. Two weeks before we were scheduled to begin the record attempt we had about half of the funds we needed. Jerry started talking to his friends with business around town to collect more money for the trip mostly as \$50 to \$100 donations. We had a meeting with the crew and we decided to start riding from New York and see how far we would get.

We also had some equipment sponsors. There was an upstart company called SPECIALIZED that wanted to promote their new line of tires. They were willing to give me 30 tires and tubes for the event. Also Bob Shaver was starting a company called ShaverSport which made clothing. He made me a dozen jerseys and shorts. I had two bikes which I got while working at a bike shop for two years. Most of my other equipment was a mix of other things I had collected. My arm warmers were made out of wool tube socks. I had two pairs of shoes and one pair of tights. All my cycling clothing for the record attempt would fit in two milk crates.

Part 3

The day finally came when we had our vehicles and equipment ready to start our drive from Illinois to New York City. Several of the neighbors stopped by to see what all the activity was about. When we finally got on the road I had

a feeling of relief that we were finally getting started. It would take us two days to drive to Susan's Aunt Mary's house in Staten Island, New York. There we set up our base camp for two days before we started the Record Attempt from City Hall in downtown New York City. During our two days of preparation at Aunt Mary's house I am sure we caused quite a site with ice coolers and bikes spread out all over the front lawn. The crew did a great job of sorting and getting everything ready to start. The amount of work expanded into the amount of time to get it done. The days were busy but everything was finally packed. We were planning to start Saturday night which was really Sunday morning at 3:00 AM. We figured that was the quietest time to leave the city.

Aunt Mary prepared us several meals and we had one last evening dinner together. After dinner I tried to get some rest which was difficult because of the excitement and trying to go to bed early. At 1:30 AM the support van and little car needed to drive over the bridge into downtown with me and four crew members. We needed to plan our departure from City Hall without a lot of extra time waiting around because of limited parking. The motorhome would drive ahead and meet us on the road further out of the city. I barely slept that night while waiting for my dad to give us the okay to start driving. We arrived at City Hall and were met by a U.S.C.F. official. The paperwork was limited and we waited for the count down to 3:00 AM. I had time for a quick photo of me straddling my bike on the steps of City Hall. After five years of serious preparation we were finally going to begin.

I started the Double Transcontinental from the New York City Hall exactly at 3:00 AM. I rode through Harlem and remembered there was a song about "A Rose from Spanish Harlem". That was all I knew about Harlem. I hummed the song as I rode out of Manhattan with a fair amount of excitement and anticipation about the next 6,000 miles.

Good bike lights were rare in 1981. I needed a light for my bike even though I had the support my Dodge Omni car following me. For a bike light I had a large plastic camping flashlight taped to my top of my handlebars that used six D-cell batteries. Within a few blocks from the start of the ride I hit a manhole cover. The lens popped off the headlight and all the batteries spilled on the street. Within two seconds I could hear the crunch of the support car tires smashing the lens and batteries to pieces. So much for having a headlight.

I rode for about an hour through Brooklyn and came to the Varazano Bridge crossing into Staten Island. It was still plenty dark when I reached the start of the bridge. I could not ride a bike on the bridge because of the six foot long expansion joints with two inch gaps. My support car said they would meet me on the other side of the bridge and I could walk on the sidewalk. The Varazano Bridge is a huge mile long bridge over the New York Bay similar to the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco. I started walking and pushing my bike along the guardrail. I would have ridden on the sidewalk but it was really dark and I wasn't sure what other curbs and joints were hidden in the shadows. I missed my big camping headlight. A few homeless people slept

along the massive towers and beams and didn't notice me walking by. I remember looking at the lights of city and oil refineries in the distance. It was really a beautiful night for a walk. I thought how strange it was to start a 6,000 mile bike ride with a 20 minute hike.

Finally I arrived on the other side of the bridge in Staten Island. I met my support car and we continued into New Jersey. By 5:00 AM the sky was getting lighter as we headed into the first of the eastern hills. A misty rain was starting which delayed a brighter sunrise. I was riding my Austro Daimler bike with 13-21 six speed Suntour freewheel and 52 tooth single front chainring. This was my favorite bike back home in flat Illinois. It was painted pale yellow and made with Reynolds 531 steel tubing. I had ridden it on a sub nine hour double century a few weeks earlier. It wasn't so fast in the hills of New Jersey. I remember stalling out on one of the first of many climbs that day. I had a spare black TREK bike on the support van roof with 42-52 chain rings and 13-21 freewheel. I got on the TREK and rode all the mountains in a 42 x 21 low gear. I was learning what mountain grades really were. I asked the crew to go to a bike shop and buy some lower gear freewheels with a 13-26 combination. It was Sunday and the bike shops were closed.

I made pretty good time riding through Allentown and Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. By the end of the first day I had ridden 275 miles by 8:00 PM. Our motor home went to a campground to park for the night. I ate dinner in the RV and went to bed. I would start riding again at sunrise. It never

occurred to me our our crew to ride into the night. We were all naive about lay ahead for the next 5,700 miles.

Part 4

Day 2

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 Dajavu. 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 about 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 was awoke by my support car stopping by the curb and yelling. They thought I had been hit by a car. I

said I was fine and showed them the tire. We put on a spare wheel and I was riding again with new energy after my nap.

The crew had found a 13-26 freewheel 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. I had only ridden 190 miles today from 5:10 AM to about 8:00 PM. I was really tired wanted to get out of my wet clothes and sleep in a dry bed tonight. We continued to Morristown, Ohio just across the state line.. I had ridden 202 miles by 9:00 PM.

Day 3

I started riding at 5:40 AM. As I entered into Ohio the worst of the mountains were behind me. I continued on Rt. 40 toward Columbus and I was looking forward to the 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 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.

Part 5

We made our share of mistakes but by the fourth day we were now in a good routine. Getting back on the bike each morning was the toughest part of the day. The aches and pains of just sitting on the saddle was a tender area. I was using an original Kool Gear Saddle and a Brooks Professional Saddle. I had not started using the Brooks B-17 model seats that would save

me on many future cross country events. I was still learning what equipment to use on multi day races.

My knees were not used to getting out of bed and turning 175 mm cranks. My legs were stiff for the first 20 miles each morning until I got warmed up. Fortunately after 50 miles I was usually feeling pretty good until sundown. The middle nine hours of each day were my most productive and I tried to knock off 150 miles between late morning and dark.

My father had arranged for police escorts across the major cities. This took a lot of work and coordination to arrange and predict my arrival times. About 30 miles or two hours before we arrived at a city my father would confirm my arrival time with the police. I remember entering Indianapolis as six police motorcycles waited for me. They immediately sent two motorcycles to the next traffic light. They stopped the cross traffic as me and my support car and the other four motorcycles maintained a 23 mph pace. Then two of the remaining four motorcycles leapfrogged to the next traffic light and stopped cross traffic again. Two of the original police bikes stayed 50 yards in front of me. The other two police bikes who were left behind us sprinted to the front again at the next light. This leapfrog escort support was repeated for over 50 traffic lights across the city. I had been riding at a comfortable 17 mph before I got to the city. Now I was sprinting through every traffic light to stay with the 23 mph escort. The whole process was quite exciting but very tiring to maintain for 10 miles on tired legs. As I reached the far side of Indianapolis I waved goodbye to the police escort. I

was relieved to continue at my 17 mph pace again. The mental rush of the escort would stay with me for several hours.

I was making good time riding across Illinois on Route 36. The cement road was flat and straight heading west into the horizon. As we neared the state capitol in Springfield our route merged onto the interstate. We needed to find another way across the city. I stopped on the entrance ramp with my support car and we looked at a map. Just then a police car arrived and made sure we didn't get on the interstate. We ask what were our options and he suggested a route on side streets through town. These were the days before google map so the officer tried to make a rough sketch of the streets we needed to take. The whole delay took at least 30 minutes before we were on the road again.

Once we found our way across town we were heading out past the flat cornfields again. We were going to cross the large Illinois River at Pittsfield, Illinois. My dad had heard that the bridge was closed and under construction. He went ahead with the other two support vehicles and made arrangements for me to have permission to walk my bike across the long 100 meter bridge while the vehicle drove around the 30 mile detour and caught up with me on the other side.

The problem was that neither me or my support car heard the plan for me to walk across the bridge. These were the days before cell phones. When we arrived at the closed bridge and saw the detour signs we turned north and

started following the detour to the next bridge crossing which was 15 miles away. My dad was waiting on the other side and couldn't understand what was taking me so long to walk across the bridge. There wasn't anyway for either support crew to contact each other. By the time I rode 30 miles on the detour it had taken me over two hours. Everyone on both sides of the river was upset about the lack of communication. It was our second long delay for the day. We all learned a lesson and tried to keep our focus on moving west.

As I neared the Mississippi River into Missouri the flat lands were now behind me. The rolling hills of the Ozark's lay ahead. I was really tired and sore. Fortunately I had traveled the first 1,000 miles in less than five days. Some of my stiffness was going away. I tried not to think about how far I had to go to reach the Pacific Ocean.

Missouri was probably one of my favorite cycling states. The thick forests and rolling hills made for interesting and beautiful riding. As I neared the town of Mexico, Missouri on Rt. 54 I was met by some friends from my midwest cycling events. I was surprised to see them and it was the first time I had met any riders on the road. We had known each other from riding the Litchfield Double Century since 1977 and riding the 540 mile Bicycle Across Missouri event in 1980. It was great to see them and chat a while as we rode about 20 miles until sundown.

We said goodbye that night and I continued riding into the night. The traffic was light and the humid midwest air was cool and refreshing for a change. I pedaled until 10:25 PM and slept in the motor home parked in a desolate supermarket near Kingdom City. We were refining our daily schedule and I was learning how to stay on the bike longer during the day. After five days I had traveled 1,158 miles.

Part 6

Crossing Missouri

I headed across Missouri the next morning. I started at sunrise riding on the divided section of 4-lane heading 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. They just thought I was local hick 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 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 for 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 provide me with some of my best cross country memories. I only regret we didn't have a video camera or some way 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 lukewarm interest when Susan contacted them. I used their snub as motivation to on my return trip east.

Part 7

As I left the rolling state of Missouri I was looking forward to some flatter roads in Kansas. I didn't really know what to expect as I traveled further west everyday. Kansas does have some good rolling hills and lots of trees in the eastern half of the state. The area is really quite scenic and I was enjoying my riding toward Wichita. As we neared the middle of the state I even got back on my six speed bike with one 52 tooth front chainring that I hadn't ridden since the first day leaving New York City. I remember I picked up a rare east tailwind for about three hours one morning and cruised at over 25 mph for the first time since the start of the trip.

I had been following Route 54 since entering Missouri. I would stay on it for the next 400 miles across Kansas. Our route card said the next turn was three states away in Tucumcari, New Mexico. Route 54 was just a cement slab barely wide enough for two semi trucks to pass. It wasn't a great road for cycling and we spent lots of time pulling off the road as trucks approached our support vehicle from the rear. For comparison most of Rt. 54 has been resurfaced and widened in 1995 and now has a good six foot shoulder.

As we neared Wichita a police escort met me at the city limits. I was ready for a similar police reception I had received crossing Indianapolis. The Wichita Police whisked me along at 23 mph again. The mid day temperatures neared 98 degrees. By the time I reached the western side of town I was pooped and hot. I wanted to stop and rest but I had a deadline for another teleconferencing call at the next available pay phone 20 miles up the road and only an hour to get there. I continued to time trial until I arrived at the pay phone inside a small gas station. Susan had the interview in progress when I arrived. I was dripping wet with sweat and panting hard when she handed me the phone. I talked for about 10 minutes and gave a report of where I was today and how I was feeling. After the interview I went back outside and got on my bike. The afternoon sun was still hot and a westerly wind was starting to blow in my face. The terrain was changing with fewer trees and long flat roads. The next two days would be some of the longest and most brutal of the whole record attempt.

Part 8

The afternoon wind continued to gain force as I pedaled toward Pratt, Kansas. Cattle truck were more common now. The wind was from the front left and occasionally a passing semi truck full of nervous steers would spray me with a mist of bovine piss. As I rode toward the western sunset the wind seemed to gain strength. I was used to the wind dying down at night. Not tonight. The flags in front of the local post office flutter straight out of the southwest.

Each of the towns were spaced a consistent eleven miles apart. A 200 foot tall grain elevator tower was the most prominent landmark on the horizon. A flashing red light on the top of the tower was my guiding beacon. Each hour I pedaled eleven miles to a new town. Each town was four blocks across. Then I rode out the other side of town and had 59 minutes to concentrate on the next grain tower eleven miles away.

I was starting to ride longer into the night hoping to miss some of the west headwind. After one week on the road I had arrived in Meade, Kansas having traveled 1,692 miles. Our crew had stopped in the vacant parking lot of the closed Pizza Hut. We all decided to stop and sleep a few hours. We set up the small tent on a patch of vacant lawn. The wind fluttered the nylon tent like it was being pitched on the side of Mt. Everest. I went in the motor home and crawled into the bottom bunk bed. The wind rocked the motor home as I dozed off for a few hours sleep.

We decided to try riding again at 3:00 AM. I got back on the bike while Susan and Dean Dettman followed me in the Dodge Omni support car. We rolled out of town in the pitch black of the night. The rest of the crew would sleep until sunrise and then meet us 50 miles up the road. The wind was still blowing but the road was quiet with only a few trucks per hour passing us in the night. The support car behind me cast eerie shadows on the tufts of grass that grew between the cracks on the road shoulder. I slalomed down the chip seal shoulder dodging the clumps of grass and looking for the best pavement. I was tired now and looking forward to sunrise. I had ridden 250

miles yesterday. It would be difficult to ride that far today if the wind didn't change.

Part 9

We were looking forward to getting out of Kansas if for no other reason than to prove we were making progress west. The panhandle of Oklahoma would be our next state to cross and we would be in and out in only 60 miles. I remember seeing a sign in Pratt, Kansas as the "Home of the Miss Kansas Pageant". As we rode through Hooker, Oklahoma I was wondering what type of pageant they were famous for. I didn't think it would be much of an honor to be crowned "Miss Hooker".

The southwest wind continued to howl at a steady 30 mph. There was enough of a cross wind from the left to give me a blast from oncoming cattle trucks. As a truck came past I would need to put my head down and my mouth closed. The gusts almost brought me to a stand still.

Crew member Jon Royer sometimes got out to ride with me. My bikes had toe clips and straps so Jon was able to ride one of my bikes in his gym shoes, t-shirt and jean shorts. In 1981 a baseball cap was as good as a helmet so Jon wore his blue and white mechanics cap. Jon was a pretty good rider in 1981 and a few years later would be a USCF Ranked Category 1 racer making a living on the Pepsi Cycling Team. He was a wiry climber and a strong time trialist. The day he was riding with me in Oklahoma it was too windy to talk but I enjoyed the mutual suffering. As a semi truck approached we braced

ourselves for the blast. Jon's baseball cap blew off and tumbled behind us in the wake of the truck. Jon needed to make a U-turn on the shoulder and go find his cap in the ditch. This routine continued at least six more times during the hour Jon rode with me. It was amusing to me and frustrating to Jon. I couldn't help speeding up a little every time Jon lost his cap and make him work to catch up again since I felt he needed the training.

I was barely averaging 10 mph today. The towns were getting further apart and I had few landmarks to gauge my progress. By dark I was entering Texas and had Oklahoma behind me. The tracks of the Santa Fe railroad followed along the highway. In the night sky I could see the single cycloptic orbiting headlight of an oncoming train in the distance. The powerful beam was sometimes visible for at least ten miles on the flat prairie. I estimated if the train was going 50 mph and I was going 10 mph we should meet in about ten minutes. Every time a new train came toward me I played the game of estimating how far away the train was and when we would meet. Throughout the night we were only plus or minus one minute of my guess.

My daily routine had changed the past three nights to include more and more night riding. Partly to avoid the winds but I was getting used to spending 18-20 hours on the bike and sleeping less. My goal before the ride was to travel at least 200 miles everyday. By sunrise I was entering New Mexico with only few stops during the night. I had only gone 180 miles in the past 24 hours against the stiff headwind. I was getting discouraged and was losing track of how many days I had been on the road. The shoulder of the

highway was paved with golf ball sized rocks to act as rumble strips for tired drivers. On the bike the chatter broke my water bottle cages and made tender hands and seats feel even worse.

By mid day I had reached Tucumcari, New Mexico. Our map showed I had a turn coming up to get on Interstate 40. This would be our our first turn in 850 miles since the Mississippi River. I was really tired from skipping a sleep break the night before. The temperature neared 100 degrees. My crew agreed I should ride 60 miles further to Santa Rosa and go to sleep in a Motel-6 until sundown. The good thing was the wind had died down to a manageable breeze and I could ride at least 15 mph again. The bad thing was the rough chip seal shoulder continued on the interstate. New Mexico was still making the transition from Old Route 66 to new Interstate 40. There was a lot of road construction with miles of closed lanes and one-way traffic. Fortunately I was able to ride unsupported during the day and weave my way passed hundreds of orange traffic cones and road barriers. By the time I reached Santa Rosa it was late afternoon. I was tired and ready for a nap. I didn't know how tired I was until I got woke up to ride at 9:00 PM.

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 pull over and park at the crest of the hill. As I rode up the grade the driver got our 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 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 photos flyers we had made for the record attempt. We gave an autographed copy to the driver. 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 mile 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"!

Part 11

Reaching Albuquerque, New Mexico was a symbolic landmark in the Double Transcontinental. I felt that I had reached the old west from cowboy movies. The landscape and sky had a vast clearness unlike the terrain of the midwest. Albuquerque was 280 years old and it had a feeling of old and new as I rode across town on old Route 66. Central Avenue is 17 miles from end to end and claims to be the Longest Main Street in America. As I reached the west side of town I climbed up the ridge on Nine Mile Hill. The straight highway started at 5% and then tilted to 8% near the top.

By the time I left Albuquerque it was mid morning. I was back on I-40 again with the chip seal shoulder. The interstate rolled into the distance with shallow grades. Near Old Laguna I stopped at a highway rest area for a snack. There was an outdoor pit toilet there. I went in the toilet and noticed the pit was filled with crap all the way to the brim of the toilet. I lost my appetite.

In 1981 I was 23 years old. I had fair speed and okay endurance for USCF type road racing. I wasn't really that good but I had improved from Category 4 to Category 2 the year before. I still liked riding long point to point events best. Some of the local racers asked me why I was wasting my time riding my self planned events of 200, 300 or even 400 miles in a day. These were the days when the club century in September was the longest organized event of the season. Real racers entered 30 mile criteriums on the weekends. The top 10 riders would win some really good prizes like a new chain, tires or clothing. I didn't win anything during my weekend tours across the countryside. I still liked planning and riding those self challenging tours. The local racers didn't like it when said I considered myself more of a tourist than a racer.

Side story.....RAAM Training Mileage Goals

In recent years there has been a trend toward riding less miles and adding more intensity. There are several advantages to shorter faster workouts at a higher speed. All the factors that are used to gauge fitness are usually higher among riders who train with shorter faster workouts. Better results are measured with higher VO2 Max, watts of power generated and more time off the bike to recover. These are all good laboratory training goals. However a lot of the success of RAAM riders depends on how they can handle the other abusive factors of the race.

The 1980's were some of the golden years for the Race Across America. Five years of television coverage by ABC Wide World of Sports made RAAM a

household name. Remember those were the years when household televisions only had five or six usable stations. ABC's Wide World of Sports was more watched than all the current cable sports programs combined. The 90 minutes of air time RAAM received each February wouldn't be totally appreciated until the coverage stopped in 1987.

The Race Across America probably would have happened regardless of the television coverage. The riders were not racing for recognition or prize money. Would better riders have been attracted to the Race if the financial rewards had been higher? Would the racers pushed themselves to go faster for more prize money? Interesting question. After I won the 1983 race, I remember one national famous racer saying he would not race RAAM unless he was was paid \$50,000. I said, "You could not pay me enough to race RAAM." It all depends on what motivated people.

I think it is interesting that some of records that were set in the 1980's still stand. The equipment used then was considered the best available. The most exotic prototypes raced in RAAM could be purchased from a basic bike shop five years later. I remember drilling blank rims to make our own 14 and 16 spoke wheels. How long would they last before my hub flange broke from the stress of an over tight spoke? Pete Penseyres and I experiments with different aerobar designs and spend hours fabricating crude prototypes from frame tubing, fiberglass and felt padding. The designs we built were cumbersome and basic. We needed a design that was comfortable and

strong. Ours worked well enough, but in a few years shiny, lightweight, adjustable aerobars were the standard on almost every RAAM bike.

Part 12

I had never been to Arizona and as soon as I crossed the state line I knew I was someplace unique. The landscape and rocks were as different here as New Mexico was different from Texas. We arrived in Sanders that night at 9:45 PM. We were warned by local gas station owners that we were entering Indian Country. The warning seemed more appropriate 100 years ago. I couldn't imagine people being any different in Arizona than they were anywhere else. We didn't have any problems with Indians or other locals during our ride across Arizona.

I was back on the bike before 7:00 AM. After riding for about 80 miles on the interstate we came to the town of Holbrook. The Wigwam Motel was an area landmark that had been over grown by weeds. The 15 cement tepees were an icon on Route 66 postcards. It would be another 10 years before this motel would be remodeled and return to its glory years of Route 66 fame. The next town west was Winslow. This was another town that had seen better days. The one-way divided main street was lined with closed stores and \$14 a night motels. The "Eagles" song of "Stand'in On a Corner In Winslow Arizona" was play'n in my head. The highlight was leaving town and seeing the snow capped peak of Bill Humphrey's Peak 60 miles away near Flagstaff. At over 12,000 feet this mountain is the highest point in Arizona.

The grade from Winslow to Flagstaff climbed another 2,000 feet. The mountain peak seemed to stay in the distance similar to the grain silos in Kansas. It would take me most of the afternoon to finally reach Flagstaff. A local television station wanted to do an interview there. We met just as I was getting off the interstate and heading south on Rt. 89-A toward Oak Creek Canyon. It was a fast interview and I was glad to be off the interstate for a while. I would ride straight south for the next 150 miles through some of the best scenery of the trip. The red rock cliffs and Ponderosa pine forests were a refreshing change from the interstate.

The corkscrew descent down to Sedona was a thrill as I out coasted my support car through the hairpin turns. The cool temperature was just right to need arm warmers but not tights on my legs. I crossed through Camp Verde at 3,500 feet elevation and started the climb up 7,000 foot Mingus Mountain. The motor home had driven ahead and called back on the CB radio about the town of Jerome just ahead. "You won't believe the narrow streets" they said, "We can barely fit the motorhome downtown". In 1981 Jerome was a run down mining town hanging on my it's teeth to the side of the mountain. Most of the stores were closed and remembered better days fifty years earlier. I was feeling good spinning up the grade 7% grade. I was feeling better than I had the entire trip. The routine of the crew was smooth and efficient. Everybody felt good about the progress we made today. Tonight I felt like I was on an after dinner social ride. Even racer crew member Jon Royer commented that I was climbing better now than in West Virginia. In

the back of my mind I knew my freshness wouldn't last. It would be dark soon and the fatigue of riding into the night would visit me again.

Part 13

I reached the summit of Mingus Mountain shortly after sundown. The next 40 miles were mostly downhill to Prescott. I could see the lights of the town across the grassy plains. I rolled into Prescott at 10:00 PM. The crew made camp in the parking lot of a supermarket. I woke up a sunrise and proceeded through town on mostly vacant streets. I met a local cyclist who was heading out for his morning ride. He knew I wasn't a local rider and wondered what I was doing riding my bike across town. I told him about trying to set the Double Transcontinental Record. He remembered seeing John Marino come through Prescott the year before during his solo record setting ride. The fellow said he rode with John for a few miles also.

He gave me a water bottle from a Prescott Bike shop. I gave him one of the 50 new Specialized bottles the crew kept for promotional use. We rode together about five miles up the grade leaving town. He warned me about the desert ahead. I told him I had been riding in desert since New Mexico. "No, the desert ahead is hotter" he said. We said goodbye to each other and he coasted back into town. I was alone again except for my leap frogging support car. The terrain and scenery was spectacular with over 50 twisting turns in the next 20 miles. The town of Yarnell sits on the edge of the mountain rim overlooking the expansive flat desert 2,000 feet below. I could

look out and see almost 100 miles of sand and scrub brush. I looked for the Pacific Ocean in the distance, but it was still 350 miles away.

As I dropped down Yarnell Grade the heat of the desert increased a few degrees every mile. It was a comfortable 85 degrees at the top. At the bottom it was well over 100 degrees and it was still midmorning. I took the highways of Rt. 71 and Rt. 60 southwest toward Interstate 10. Dust Devil mini tornados danced in the distance for minutes at a time before dissipating and then reforming a half a mile later. It was getting really hot now. The crew had been feeding me peanut butter and jelly sandwiches as I rode one handed. Before I could finish a sandwich the bread had become crunchy like toast. I had to chew with my mouth closed because the hot wind would make my dry lips and tongue stick together like licking a metal flagpole in winter. The smell of the desert was a cross between dried herbs and burnt toast. If hot could have a smell, it smelled like this desert.

It was near the town of Aguila that I motioned for the support car to pull beside me. Susan Notorangelo was sitting in the passenger seat and handed me an ice cold water bottle. I told her "You know a woman had never set a transcontinental record under 15 days". She said "There's a good reason for that. It's hot out there". That was the first seed that was planted getting Susan to start thinking about riding long distances. One year later, almost to the day, Susan would be racing from Los Angeles back to New York on the same section of road across the desert on her way to setting an 11 day, 16 hour Women's Transcontinental Record.

I eventually merged onto I-10 near the town of Quartzite. The sun was going down and offered some relief from the 110 degree heat of the afternoon. I rolled through Blythe, California on the perfectly smooth blacktop shoulder of the interstate. The heat still radiated off the shiny surface like a pancake griddle. I was counting down the miles to the Pacific Ocean. At the top of every grade I would stand up on the pedals to get a better view of the ocean ahead. I knew it had to be just over the next hill. I rode into the night and was starting to feel as bad as riding to Albuquerque two nights before. My thoughts were divided between anticipation of finally reaching the ocean and self doubt that I could make it through the night. I rode for almost 100 miles that night across the desert. At about 1:00 AM I reached the top of Chiriaco Summit. I started coasting down the grade. In front of me were a million lights of Los Angeles. I had made it across the country. It was all downhill from here. I confirmed my observations with the crew. They said "No not quite. The lights are Palm Springs. You still have 150 miles to go".

Part 14

The crew found a place to park the motor home in Indio, California at the base of the ten mile downhill. I slept for a few hours and was up again at sunrise. I got back on the interstate and bypassed most of Palm Springs. These were the days when riding the interstate was allowed through here or before any cyclists ever considered riding across the desert. I hadn't seen any other cyclists since Missouri or since the fellow I rode with the morning leaving Prescott, Arizona.

The west wind was starting to blow as I climbed from sea level up the gradual 30 mile grade to Banning, California. The total climb was only 2,600 feet but I was barely riding at 12 mph against the wind. On the other side of Banning was the downhill of San Timiteo Canyon. This road would become a famous climb for east bound riders during the Race Across America during the next 10 years. For me it was a welcome downhill going west. I was getting closer to Riverside and San Bernardino. My dad was in the motor home talking on the CB radio and told the crew we were looking for a specific route toward Los Angeles. It was probably Old Rt. 66 but in 1981 Rt. 66 had been decertified in California and no longer was posted with road signs. The follow car behind me told me to pull over and stop. The motor home was on the correct route and asking on the CB where I was. I was lost for the first time of the whole trip. The support car told me to load my bike on the roof and we needed to drive back several traffic lights to the motor home. The detour only cost us about ten minutes but added to the stress of finding our way across the city.

Once I was back on Old Rt. 66, which wasn't called Rt. 66 in 1981, I proceeded west. Every three blocks I waited at another red traffic light. Ironically several years later I would be leading tours on Old Rt. 66 and would be quite familiar with the neighborhoods. During the Rt. 66 tours one of the riders counted 314 traffic lights in 80 miles between San Bernardino and Santa Monica. As I continued west the traffic was getting heavy. I was

barely averaging 10 mph with all the traffic lights. The final 150 miles would take me almost 15 hours to cover.

I finally arrived at the Santa Monica City Hall, which was the official starting or ending points for USCF cross country records. It was just before sundown and the parking lot was fairly deserted of business traffic. I was met by the regional USCF official and Victor Vincente who had set the Double Transcontinental of 36 days several years earlier. I was really surprised he came out to see me. It was really an honor to meet him. There wasn't any celebration with the crew because we knew we were only half way done. Everyone was hustling around just like it was a normal sleep break. It was really a strange sensation to have ridden across the country and know we had to turn around and do it again in a few hours.

My East to West time was 12 days and 18 hours. I had missed breaking John Marino's one-way record by several hours. I would have to go faster on the return trip.

End Parts 1 to 14