

## Part 14

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 way.

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 15

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 of 12 days, 3 hours. I would have to go faster on the return trip.

#### Part 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.

## Part 17

By the time I got to San Bernardino the sun was up and I was cruising toward San Timiteo Canyon. We didn't get lost on Rt. 66 this time. The morning was still sunny and cool and I felt as fresh as a club cyclist going on a morning breakfast ride. The climb back up the Canyon was a steady 3% grade and I made good time getting to the towns of Banning and Beaumont at the summit. The crew needed to stop for gas and groceries and they said they would catch me in a few minutes. What neither of us realized is that I would pick up a whipping 30 mph tailwind in combination with the 5% downhill to Palm Springs. I was spinning out in a 54 x 13 gear as I headed

down Interstate 10 into the desert. My new Specialized Allez bicycle felt good at 40 mph. After 20 minutes I had traveled over 12 miles.

The cool morning was getting hotter and hotter the lower and lower I dropped into the desert. Where was the support car? I wasn't worried about getting lost. I knew the route because I had just ridden these roads yesterday. I was getting concerned about my water supply. I had drunk both my water bottles. After another 10 miles I was entering Palm Springs. I was getting really hot. My tongue was dry and I was starting to look for somewhere to get some water.

I pedaled past country clubs and noticed their lawn sprinklers and fountains. I saw an imitation waterfall near the front gate of a fancy resort. I rode my bike up to the pool of water and dipped my water bottle in the pond. I poured a bottle over my head and soaked my jersey. It was now over 100 degrees. I filled my water bottles and started riding again. I didn't want to drink the fountain water but I was getting pretty cooked. I didn't have my wallet or any pocket money so I couldn't buy anything cold to drink at the corner gas station.

It was now over an hour since I had seen my support car. Within a few minutes the crew came up from behind me. They had thought they missed me and they turned around when they couldn't find me after 20 miles.

We had a few words. I said "From now on, for the rest of the trip, we need to make a plan if we are going to split up and make sure I have a full water bottle". The incident made everyone realize how much we needed to keep working together. We could not get sloppy with our focus or our planning. We had crossed the country once and made a few mistakes. Now we were supposed to know what we were doing. There would not be any more time to make mistakes if we wanted to set the record.

## Part 18

We continued across Palm Springs and Indio. Yesterday I had ridden from Indio to the Santa Monica City Hall in fifteen hours. Today I covered the same 150 miles in less than eight hours. Getting out of town and missing Los Angeles traffic was a big help. The tailwinds didn't hurt either. Behind us was the Pacific Ocean. Ahead was 250 miles of desert. I climbed back up Chiriaco Summit on Interstate 10. The afternoon temperatures were a toasty 115 degrees. The good thing was I was feeling pretty strong. The crew was giving me a cold water bottle every 15 minutes and I was dumping another bottle over my head. I was averaging almost 18 miles per hour for the day. By the time I reached the town of Blythe we had crossed California in 14 hours. The crew took a photo of the bank clock and thermometer at 5:00 PM which read 111 degrees.

The town of Quartzite, Arizona was 25 miles away and that was our goal for the day. The sun was still high in the sky when we arrived at the RV park. We had traveled 265 miles today which was what we needed to do everyday

to set the record. My new Specialized Allez bike fit perfectly and I felt like I had been riding it for years.

We had a picnic dinner at the Quartzite RV Park. I went to bed before sundown and got a good night's sleep. These were the days before the Race Across America and all night rides. The next morning the sun was coming up when I continued east on Interstate 10. I only had to go about 25 more miles before getting off I-10 and getting on Rt. 60 toward Prescott. It was nice to be away from the traffic and heading across the desolate desert. I was feeling okay this morning except for some saddle sores. The long flat interstate didn't allow me much time to stand up and change my position.

By late morning the desert was getting hot. The climbing to higher elevations started at about noon in the small town of Congress, Arizona. The grade up Yarnell Hill is deceptively steep at the bottom. The grade looked flat but I was going slower and slower...16 mph...12 mph..10 mph. Was I getting weak or did I have a flat tire? Out of frustration I made a u-turn and started riding back west. My speed immediately went to 20 mph just coasting. The grade was steeper than I thought. Satisfied I was really going uphill, I made another u-turn and continued east. I needed to climb another six miles up and out of the desert. Every mile was several degrees cooler. By the time I reached the town of Yarnell the temperature had dropped from 100 degrees to 85 degrees. It was nice to have the hottest part of the desert behind me.

## Part 19

The 30 miles before Prescott, Arizona is one of my favorite areas of the route. The road climbs through scrubby pine trees with dozens of hairpin curves. Even when you are going slow it feels like you are moving because the scenery changes every 100 meters with new views around the next corner. On my way west I had ridden this section during the cool morning. Now the sun was high overhead in the early afternoon. The lighting change today made the route look different. For the rest of the trip I would always be comparing the road and scenery to when I had traveled this route heading west two weeks earlier. I always tried to remember if the flags were blowing the same tailwinds for me now as when they blew headwinds for me before.

I rode through Prescott to a scenic public rest area on the north side of town. My motor home was waiting there. I stopped to use the toilet and I could not resist laying down on the bed. I told the crew I needed a 15 minute nap. I am sure I was asleep in thirty seconds and slept more than half an hour. When I woke up there was a 30 mph tailwind blowing north. My route for the return trip would be to take Rt. 89 north to Ashfork instead of Rt. 89-A over Mingus Mountain through the town of Jerome. We estimated the longer flatter route on Rt. 89 was better than going over the mountains again. Our calculation paid off now with the great tailwinds. I got back on my bike recharged from my nap. I was cruising at a respectable 20-25 mph for the next 55 miles to Ashfork.

In Ashfork I needed to get back on I-40 for the next 500 miles. Although I hated the noise on the interstate I liked the shallower grades. The main problem in Arizona were the rumble strips cut across the ten foot shoulder. In 1981 these bumps were spaced about every ten meters apart and went from the white line to the grass edge. They were deep enough to shake a water bottle loose from its cage. Every two pedal strokes (bump) I would hit another one (bump) and that rhythm would (bump) continue for (bump) the next 300 miles (bump) across the state (bump).

By the time I reached Parks, Arizona on the west side of Flagstaff I had ridden 223 miles for the day mostly uphill and gained 7,000 feet of elevation. It was the 4th of July weekend and my dad was afraid we would not find a campground with any space available. These were before the days when riding all night in RAAM was considered normal. The motor home found a camp group off the interstate and I was able to get to bed before dark. I had another good night's sleep and woke up at sunrise for another day. During the first 500 miles I had already slept two full nights. For comparison a few years later RAAM racers would typically reach Flagstaff in 30 hours and not stop for their first sleep break until the 600 mile mark. These were still the pioneering days of cross country racing. I was still trying to find out what was possible. Except for researching and finding out what worked for John Marino during his record rides a few years earlier there was not a lot of information available.

When I departed Flagstaff the next morning the air was crisp and cold at 7,000 feet. There is a gradual downhill the next 50 miles toward Winslow, Arizona dropping about 2,000 feet. The downhill and slight tail wind made me feel strong this morning. My only concern was that I had an annoying saddle sore developing in my left side. I remember coasting down the grade and standing up on my pedals. I put my hand down my shorts and pinched the marble size boil. It broke with a squirt of puss on my fingers. That technique would be repeated several times per day for the rest of the record attempt. Things like saddle sores, numb feet and hands were all part of the ride. I was become more efficient at staying on the bike for hours at a time without stopping for any minor breaks. Even bathroom breaks were eliminated and I urinated off the bike every two or three hours.

Except for the bumps on the interstate shoulder the ride was going pretty well today. We had been warned by locals not to stop and camp along the road for the next 200 miles. We were in Indian Territory. I thought the warnings were a little over dramatic and the locals acted like our wagon train was going to be attacked if we didn't circle the wagons at night. We never did have any problems when we were stopped except for curious passers by who wondered why a van had so many spare wheels.

It was 775 miles from Santa Monica, California to McCartys New Mexico where I stopped for the third night. It was 9:15 PM when we pulled off the interstate ramp toward three dark houses which made up the whole town. I had ridden 280 miles in daylight which was my longest mileage day of the

trip. I was averaging 258 miles per day so far which was a little less than I needed to break the record of 12 days. I had to ration my riding speed while feeling the fatigue of the previous fifteen days. I was getting enough sleep to feel alert on the bike but I was definitely tired enough to sleep well at night.

## Part 20

Our crew woke up in the dark at 4:00 AM. We were going to try to ride across Albuquerque before the traffic got busy this morning. We had to ride 35 miles to the outskirts of the city. There are several big rolling climbs of three miles each on the west side of Albuquerque. Most of them I could climb in the big chainring and coast down at 30 mph. Once I got off Interstate 40 the route across Albuquerque was on Old Route 66 which is also called Central Avenue...“The longest main street of any town in America”. The final decent into town was down what the locals called Nine Mile Hill. The steepest part is about two miles long and it was possible to coast at 50 mph. (for comparison in 1986 Susan Notorangelo and I reached 62 mph with a strong tailwind during our tandem transcontinental record).

Central Avenue goes for 17 miles until it merges with I-40 again on the east side of town. My dad had arranged another police escort across the city. It had been my first escort since I had been in Albuquerque on my way west a week earlier. The two police cars leap frogged and closed the intersections as I rode across the city. The escorts are always exciting and I maintained a steady 20 mph pace. When I got back on the interstate I began the steady

climb up Tijeras Canyon. The thrill of the escort was over and now it was time for the long grade up to Clines Corners.

After the first 15 mile grade out of Albuquerque the terrain opens up to the wide plains near Moriarty. The winds were favorable and the climbs were manageable in the big chainring. The biggest annoyance in New Mexico was the chip seal shoulder on the interstate. I-40 had been converted from two lane Route 66 to Interstate ten years earlier. The new lanes were made to temporary standards without the good pavement that is common on interstates today. The four lane interstate was more like two parallel country roads with rough shoulders.

As I headed east it was encouraging to see familiar landmarks from my trip west the week before. The gift shop at Clines Corners still had billboards every half mile advertising moccasins and jewelry made from rattlesnake tails. The billboards with the fatman's face were still promoting the Club Cafe in Santa Rosa. The yellow Stukeys Restaurant signs tempted travelers with the nutritious breakfast of one egg, toast and jelly for 99 cents. I just kept riding. Our crew was in auto drive now. Everything was going smooth without any bike or vehicle troubles.

I reached Tucumcari, New Mexico before sundown and turned left on Route 54. It was good to finally get off the interstate. The noise of passing trucks was getting old. I would be on Route 54 now for the next five states until the middle of Illinois. Navigation was easy but this highway still had its

share of trucks who liked to drive fast. We learned to anticipate when two trucks were about to meet near us and we would get off the road onto the grass shoulder.

Sundown came a little earlier because we had moved further east. We stopped to sleep near Logan, New Mexico. I had traveled 270 miles today which was a little better than average. I was hoping the same winds that I had battled by riding at 11 mph on my way west would be helping me tomorrow.