



Adventure of a Lifetime

Summer of 1972

Family Bike Trip Across the United States

PROLOGUE

On Monday July 3, 1972 seven members of a young family of eight awakened early in the home of friends in Eugene, Oregon and quietly and without fanfare drove their VW bus and U-Haul trailer seventy miles to the Pacific ocean. In the U-Haul trailer were four bicycles and other gear that they had towed across the country from Ithaca, NY.

One might wonder what aspect of the human ego that is most gratified by a shore to shore bicycle ride: identity and the desire to be just a little different, unusual; plus the usual cliches, "it's there", it's a (surmountable) challenge, certainly enter in. But two aspects of our family of eight were most influenced in propelling us to take positive action. One, we were physically active folks and the one or two not so inclined were socially and service active; two, we were a closely knit group and had always vacationed as a family in the past. During the school year we went in eight different directions and with the passage of time, the eight ways became increasingly divergent. So what could be better than the kind of challenge that was

abundantly physical, had a specific common goal on which to focus and demanded unity, harmony and selfless serving for its success than a bike ride across the United States.

As we approached the Pacific, I could not know what was going through the minds of our little group. For myself there were many things to be apprehensive about. We had done virtually no prior conditioning. The bikes were brand new and all but untried. We knew little about them mechanically. We hadn't even practiced changing a tire. How were the two twelve year olds going to hold up? I had done some biking in my youth and recalled the limitations of boys that age. I was glad I had insisted on one bike for the two of them and having them alternate pedaling days although at the time of the decision in early Spring there had been not a few tears. And what about the 43 year old (myself)? Friends in all sincerity had questioned the advisability. And what about those family members not directly involved, my wife, Sue and daughters Leslie and Marilyn? This last question was resolved in a fairly satisfactory way. I hired Leslie to drive the VW bus. She, together with Matt and Drew alternating days became the support team for the bikers. That team was augmented in the first three weeks by Sue and in the third week with Marilyn as well. Marilyn had been at camp in Colorado and then joined us in Idaho. Sue and Marilyn also accompanied us on the segment from Ithaca, NY to Hampton Beach, NH. The support team had serious responsibilities and were kept busy throughout the journey. The routine for each day was pretty much fixed. Each evening Leslie and I would figure out (with the help of a map) the next day's destination, hopefully no less than eighty miles, no greater than 120. If we were camping, the boys had two pup tents for sleeping, the girls slept in the VW. At daybreak we were up and the bikers would have a quick breakfast (cold cereal, fruit, milk) and be on our way. The support team would break camp, pack the VW and follow. When they overtook us, usually 30 miles and 2 hours later, we would settle on our destination. Weather, terrain etc... would influence the final decision. Then the team would be gone and we would be out of contact until the end of the day. Occasionally they would backtrack to report on anything unusual up ahead.

Other things were troubling. We had driven non stop to Eugene in 66 hours but even though that was a relatively short time, the distance seemed immense, the desert unfriendly, the sun unrelenting, the wind, fickle. The road was all two lane. Was there enough room for two cars passing each other at 50 mph and us all in the same space? The bikes were ten speed touring bikes and so new we didn't feel we had good control in tight situations. The bike's saddle was extremely uncomfortable for me. After one hour the numbness and pain were barely manageable. I was hoping with time that the tender region would become calloused or reshaped. Fortunately this was not a problem for the children. In fact as the Pacific coast loomed ahead they became more and more excited. We put the rear wheels of the bikes in the Pacific ocean and the time for fretting was over.

THE ADVENTURE OF A LIFETIME

Thursday June 29, 1972

As the Schlaepfer family (all but Marilyn who was at camp in Colorado) packed themselves into the VW bus and trailing a U-Haul loaded with four bikes and assorted gear exited the driveway on Bostwick Rd, Ithaca, NY, culminating months of talk and weeks of planning. The seed had been planted when the children learned of their Dad's misadventure when attempting to ride his bike across the Continental United States in late summer of 1949. He failed miserably having thrown in the towel after just 400 miles. He did his share of rationalizing i.e. a three speed bike (which after all was two more gears than any bike he had ridden previously), a bike loaded with all his gear including tent and sleeping bag, and falling behind 20 miles a day on his very tight schedule to be home to begin his junior year at Cornell. There were enough stories within those 400 miles to peak the kids interest and imagination, and this led to someone's suggestion that we should do it as a family. The suggestion took root and the drumbeat began and continued off and on thru the winter of 1971-72 and I finally realized that Leslie and Phil would be high school seniors next fall. So it was now or never for the family as a whole. With Sue's concurrence we began the planning and the preparation.

The plan was to travel from West to East to take advantage of prevailing winds. We also knew that the Rocky Mountains and the passes through them were of lower elevation in the North of the US so we chose our route across the higher and cooler latitudes.

Our destination this date was Eugene, OR where friends Dick and Annette Ragatz and their children lived. Dick was a professor at the University of Oregon and I believe his field was City Planning.

Our goal was to drive straight thru to Eugene. We had four licensed drivers after all. The first indication of progress this day was when we passed out of range of the WTKO radio station. We took the New York Thruway to Buffalo, picked up Route 80 and stayed on 80 all the way to Salt Lake City, UT.

Friday June 30, 1972

Chicago at 12:30 am, breakfast in Des Moines, IA at 8:00 am. Took a wrong turn for 25 miles and had to retrace. Continued thru Iowa, Nebraska and arrived at the Wyoming border at 9:00 pm. Weather clear and dry. According to the map we had to have passed through North Platte, NE the terminus of my abortive trip in 1949.

Saturday July 1, 1972

Crossed the Continental Divide at Rawlins, WY at 1:00 am and had breakfast in Ogden, UT. Tough headwind all day. Called the Ragatz' and decided to push on. These three days are a blur in my memory. Thank goodness I have a few, if brief, notes in my very limited log.

Sunday July 2, 1972

We arrived at the Ragatz's home at 12:20 am. When we got up in the morning we went for a short bike ride, to church and spent the afternoon at the 1972 Olympic track trials being hosted by the University of Oregon. It was very exciting and a real privilege to watch the best track athletes in the US competing for a berth on the US Olympic team. I still remember the steeple chase which I had never seen previously. I also remember the walk race and I'm wondering if it is still an Olympic event. I believe that walkers must have one foot on the ground at all times. In order to achieve speed they use their hips a lot and look like waddling ducks, but they are fast.

Monday July 3, 1972

=Day 1 - 69.1 miles=

Up at 6:30. Breakfast, drove to Florence and the Pacific just beyond. Unloaded bikes, dipped rear wheels in the ocean and began pedaling East. Drew pedaled the first half of day 1 and Matt the second half. The first 14 miles in the first hour felt good. Coastal weather was cold and foggy. Stopped for lunch along the road and in the shade (which by then was welcome) around 11:30. Cyndy was becoming uncharacteristically tired. When we checked her bike we found a brake pad rubbing on one of her wheels. No wonder! We had gone approximately half way for the day and other than Cyndy all were doing well. We had traveled about half way and were looking forward to tomorrow, July 4 which was to be a rest day. We used the moment to remind ourselves that a big goal is most easily achieved by breaking it into a series of small goals. We already had done 30 miles so all we had to do was repeat the process another 120 times and we'd be at the Atlantic ocean. I did not delude myself that the last 30 miles of a 100 mile day is the same as the first 30 miles. We crossed the coastal range and arrived at the Ragatz' around 4:20. Weather had been beautiful but hot.

Tuesday July 4, 1972

=Day 2 - Rest day=

Our only scheduled day of leisure. We drove back to the coast, swam in the ocean, played on the beach, had a picnic lunch. This evening was our last with the Ragatzs with whom we had been good friends in Ithaca and in Eugene, had been such very gracious hosts.

Wednesday July 5, 1972

=Day 3 - 68.5 miles=

The bikers said goodbye to our friends and started East and up, carrying with them happy memories of our time in Eugene. We traveled on Rt. 126, paralleling the McKenzie river, a fast flowing and crystal clear mountain stream. The grade was gently up most of the day. We had a tail wind so we never really felt the grade. It was decided that Phil would lead and that I would take up the rear but that lasted for only a little while since he set such a torrid pace and none of us could keep up. So he and I changed places. Everybody could keep up with me and Phil became the buffer to other road traffic passing us. By afternoon Rt. 126 had turned North leaving the McKenzie but before that we had stopped for a swim, but the river was too cold. Evening found us at Trail Bridge campground, our first night dining and tenting under the stars.

Thursday July 6, 1972

=Day 4 - 84.2 miles=

On the road by 7:45. Continued North on Rt. 126 to where road tees into Rt. 20. Turned East on Rt. 20. Climbed up to Santian Pass (4817 ft) where the Pacific Crest Trail crosses. Looking South along the Crest Trail we could see the Three Sisters all over 10,000 ft. Road takes us down to Sisters where we again turn East onto Rt. 126. Lunch at Cline Falls continue thru Redmond and Princeville (road became Rt. 26 at Princeville) and on to Ochoco reservoir where we camped for the night. Everyone holding up well. Our team of three providing great support and good meals.==

Friday July 7, 1972

=Day 5 - 40 miles=

Up early today and on the road by 5:40. Left camp set up at Ochoco reservoir. Climbed thru Ochoco pass 4722 ft, beautiful country, tall trees in open forest. Passed thru an area that had had a flash flood the day before. Coasted 15 miles into Mitchell where we parked our bikes at a garage and joined the team in the VW bus for a side trip to Crater Lake National Park. The drive was about 150 miles but the scenery was worth it. Crater Lake had once been a volcano that collapsed into itself. The rim is about 6500 ft. so it is a steady climb up the side of a mountain that has no top. When we reached the rim, the view to the lake several thousand feet below us greatly exceeded my expectation. It is at the same time beautiful and dramatic, the water tourquois. We had no time and little interest in hiking down so we headed back to camp at Ochoco reservoir, stopping in Bend for dinner.

Saturday July 8, 1972

=Day 6 - 83 miles=

Up early at Ochoca and hitched a ride with our team to Mitchell where we picked up our bikes at 6:50 and climbed out of Mitchell for seven miles then a few miles level and then 14 miles

downhill along the John Day river to Dayville and just beyond where the road crosses the river we had lunch and rest and a swim. Had our first flat tire (Phil) which we fixed in 15 minutes. Continued on thru Mount Vernon to John Day where we swam in the municipal pool and went another 13 miles to Prairie City where we stopped for the night. Don't remember the campground.

Sunday July 9, 1972

=Day 7 - 37 miles=

Up at 7:30, climbed thru Dixie, 5279 ft. then down and up thru Blue Mountain Pass and down to Unity lake where we stopped for the day, rested, swam, all of which was needed and appreciated. Sun warm, breeze cool, wonderful.

Monday July 10, 1972

=Day 8 - 86.5 miles=

On the road by 6:50. Climbed thru El Dorado Pass, 4673 ft. followed by two long down hills runs and 30 flat miles over rough road into Vale. Lunch behind a gas station and on to Ontario. A restaurant dinner and a motel overnight (The Stampede). The valley is segmented by three rivers (the Willow, the Bully and the Matthews) before they join at Ontario and dump into the Snake river. The rivers provide irrigation water for intense vegetable and fruit production. I believe the area was populated with Japanese internment camps during WWII. Today we passed into the Mountain Time Zone. Progress.

Tuesday July 11, 1972

=Day 9 - 34.3 miles=

Rest day. Left the motel around 11:00, crossed into Idaho (progress) and biked to the first campground, Mann Creek Recreation Area. A treeless pristine lake with great swimming and surrounded by purple hills. We are now headed due North on US Rt. 95.

Wednesday July 12, 1972

=Day 10 - 72.7 miles=

On the road at 6:40, climbing up several long hills and then down again on our way to our destination at New Meadows. This is "high meadow" country, dazzling with tall pines, open meadows, sparkling streams. Had lunch with our feet in a brook. Stayed at Zim's a privately owned campground with a hot water pool. At 2:00 pm we all piled into the VW and drove to Boise to pick up Marilyn who flew in from Colorado. The support team now had its full compliment and Sue and Marilyn would stay with us another five days, the family reunited. Back to Zim's and in the sack by midnight.

Thursday July 13, 1972

=Day 11 - zero new miles=

Today was a rest day in the celebration of Les and Phil's 17th birthday. We drove north for 30 miles to make arrangements for a power boat excursion on the Salmon river. Back to Zim's, picked up the kids and drove west to Seven Devils Mountains scenic area. Had lunch while we absorbed the gorgeous view. Stopped at a salmon fish hatchery on the way back to Zim's

for a birthday dinner.

Friday July 14, 1972

=Day 12 - 34 miles=

Pedaled downhill to Riggins, 30 miles in 1:35. Took Glenn Schubert's one day jet boat ride up the Salmon river. The Salmon river is a tributary of the Snake river and flows into the Snake another 40 miles north and the Snake in turn dumps into the Columbia river. The Salmon is a roiling river flowing down a canyon with steep and high cliffs on both sides. The trip upstream thru huge rollers requiring a powerful engine to counter the rush of water. It was exciting, colorful canyon walls, new vistas around every corner. We stopped for lunch at Glenn's Ranch and we met and spoke with Buckskin Hart, "the last of the mountain men". Saw Glenn's power plant and air strip. See February 1970 issue of National Geographic which features a segment on this very same area. A truly memorable day, we all agreed.

Saturday July 15, 1972

=Day 13 - 92.6 miles=

Up early and refreshed. Continued down along the Salmon to White Bird where the road abruptly leaves the river and climbs steadily from 1600 ft. to 4420 ft. in 15 miles via a long series of switch backs to Summit pass from which we dropped abruptly to a vast plateau and to Grangeville. Shortly after Grangeville we plummeted in a few miles to the bottom of a canyon where we stopped for lunch. We continued following the creek to Kooskia where we turned East again on US Rt. 12 climbing along the Clearwater river to Wild Goose campground right on the river, a beautiful spot, cool and refreshing swimming.

Sunday July 16, 1972

=Day 14 - 85 miles=

Fixed a flat tire and were underway at 7:55. Climbed along the Clearwater river almost all day. Except for about 40 miles of old burn area it was all pine and spruce along both sides of the river. Pulled Lolo pass (5123 ft.) at the end of the day and were tired. Top of Lolo pass is Montana border (progress). Glided five miles to Lee Creek campground. Had hot shower and hot swim at Lolo Hot Springs.

Monday July 17, 1972

=Day 15 - 50 miles=

Downhill to Lolo and level into Missoula. Stayed at Agevine Park along the Big Blackfoot river. Stayed near Missoula to get a stone out of Matt's ear and to make arrangements for Sue and Marilyn to travel home to Ithaca. They boarded their bus at 10:50 pm sans any money. I had all their money and we both forgot about it until she was gone. I know it was an unpleasant experience for both of them - no money, no credit cards, no cell phones, no email, a real set back in an otherwise incident free adventure.

Tuesday July 18, 1972

=Day 16 - 72.5 miles=

Up at 6:30. Leslie and Andrew's first day of being fully in charge. Climbed up and down

towards Rogers pass and the Continental Divide. Huge open meadows, lots of ranches. Winds from the East began to pick up and became very strong after lunch. The climb plus the headwind made the last 20 miles really tough. Arrived at Aspen Grove campground at 3:30. Leslie and Andrew waiting for us. Put up canopy before the heavy rain hit us. Leslie had prepared a chicken dinner with noodle salad which we downed with relish as we shivered in the rain. After dinner we all drove back to Lincoln and found a cafe which provided warmth and hot chocolate. Sitting in the booth we looked out and saw that the rain had turned to snow. This was the last straw. We crossed the parking lot and checked in at the Blue Sky Motel. Camp with the bikes and all our gear was seven miles East and the Continental Divide another eleven miles from there.

Wednesday July 19, 1972

=Day 17 - 0 miles=

Woke up to a wintry day. Four inches of snow on the ground, windy, snow flurries, rain. I believe Rogers pass was closed for a while. We drove around a little but spent most of the day keeping warm and playing cards. I don't remember dinner but I do remember washing dishes in the bath tub of one of our rooms.

Thursday July 20, 1972

=Day 18 - 82 miles=

Slept in until 7:00, had a cafe breakfast. Weather cold and bleak. Drove to Aspen Grove, picked up bikes, still bucking strong headwinds. Climbed Rogers pass, took a quick picture, snow on the ground but none falling. Shortly after an initial downhill we encountered rough terrain, long steep up as well as down, 15 mph headwind, rain begins. Steady, hard rain from Bowmans Corners all the way into Great Falls. Changed some of our clothes at lunch time, stayed dry for a few miles. After Simms the road flattened out. Motel stop in Great Falls. Leslie cooked dinner in the room. Called home. Laundromat stop.

Friday July 21, 1972

=Day 19 - 112 miles=

Rain stopped after breakfast. Wind was pretty much at our backs. Averaging 17-18 mph when moving. At Fort Benton we looked down on the Missouri river from the bluffs. Rolling wheat country, mountains on the horizon. At the end of the day we intersected US Rt. 2 which soon will run adjacent to the Missouri river and the Lewis and Clark Trail. We stopped at Havre on Rt. 2. Canada is less than 40 miles north.

Saturday July 22, 1972

=Day 20 - 110 miles=

On the road by 6:25. Good, level going with help of strong tail wind most of the day. Some really rough roads as well. Stopped in mid afternoon at Sleeping Buffalo Recreation Area situated on the Nelson reservoir, a beautiful lake. Impossible to enjoy however because of the millions of mosquitoes the size of dragon flies. Found an indoor hot springs pool which we soaked in for a couple hours and had dinner in a pavilion. Back to our campsite early, scrambled into our tents and envied the girls in the VW bus. Found out after the fact that because we were in the middle of a Sioux reservation, spraying mosquitoes is prohibited.

Sunday July 23, 1972

=Day 21 - 124 miles=

Left Nelson reservoir and the mosquitoes by 6:40. Made 84 miles before lunch in Rawlins thanks to level going and some tailwind. Met Leslie at Wolf Point where we had planned to stay at the Municipal campground. The entire area was packed with Sioux Indians attending a major gathering. We were advised by local people that it would be unwise to camp anywhere near because things tended to get a little wild at night. We wisely made an unplanned hotel stop, a brand new place, the Motel Sherman. Before settling in we pedaled on to Poplar and left our bikes in safe keeping at a gas station.

Monday July 24, 1972

=Day 22 - 109 miles=

On the road at 7:20. Encountered East winds which got progressively stronger during the day. After 20 miles Phil's bike began to vibrate violently. Checking, we found 3 broken spokes on his rear wheel and all the rest in various degrees of loose. Put the saddle bags on my bike and continued to Culbertson, 3 miles, where we tightened the remaining spokes, had Drew ride Phil's bike, Phil ride Cyndy's bike and Cyndy ride Drew's bike. Crossed into North Dakota at 1:15 (progress) and into the Central Time zone, (also progress). Lunch at 1:30 (hadn't set our watch ahead yet). Drew was having trouble reaching the pedals on Phil's bike, so we changed their rear wheels and put them back on their own bikes. Continued to struggle against vicious headwind. Reached Williston at 5:00 and Ray at 7:30 (8:30 Central Time). Just before Ray, Drew had a bad spill. We patched him up. Met Leslie in Ray and drove a few miles South to Lewis and Clark State Park on Lake Sakakawea, where she and Matt had a beautiful camp site and a steak dinner which we consumed around 10:00 pm. Still daylight with the time changed and at this latitude. Toughest day! Lake Sakakawea is a huge reservoir, one third the length of North Dakota fed by the Missouri river in the West and drained into the Missouri river in the East. This was our last day on the Missouri and the Lewis and Clark Trail.

Tuesday July 25, 1972

=Day 23 - 0 miles=

The wind had been wild all night long. We awoke at 5:45. We broke camp in 15 minutes just ahead of a violent thunder storm. Drove to Ray, had breakfast in a cafe and waited for the weather to clear. Finally we decided to leave the bikes and drive 90 miles to Minot where friends of our family, Leon and Fionna Bekkens lived and spent the rest of the day with them. (I don't remember how we knew of the Bekkens, but I do remember that they were delightful people and we very much enjoyed our stay with them.)

It was in Minot that our adventure got its first publicity as reported in the Minot Daily News: "Biking Family Overnight Minot Visitors. The Walter W. Schlaepser family of Ithaca, NY, were overnight guests in Minot during their return from the west coast on a bicycling trip. Staying with the L.E. Bekkens, 612-17th St. SW, were Schlaepser and his children, Phillip and Leslie, 17, Cindy, 16, and Matthew and Andrew, 12. The family drove from Ithaca to Florence, OR and from there began bicycling home. Leslie, Phillip's twin, drives the camper bus and sets up

camp each day for the cyclists. Andrew and Matthew who are also twins, alternate days on bike riding. Preceding the other members of the family home were Mrs. Schlaepser and daughter Marilyn. When the family arrives in Ithaca they will have biked through Oregon, Idaho, Montana, North Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin, a portion of Canada, Michigan and New York."

Wednesday July 26, 1972

=Day 24 - 92.2 miles=

Got up at 5:00. Drove back to Ray and started peddelling at 7:30. Heavy fog for two hours. Finally lifted some. Rolling country, marshland, lots of ducks. Back at Bekkens we worked on bikes, Phil's spokes in particular. Went to church where we met Air Force Captain Howard Robinson from Minot Air Force Base. In those days Minot was a major SAC base. Stayed up late visiting with our hosts.

Thursday July 27, 1972

=Day 25 - 55.3 miles=

Was tired this a.m. so when we got up at 7:00 we decided to take up Captain Robinson's offer to visit a missile launch simulator. We had a most interesting tour at Minot AFB. I think the kids enjoyed it. No doubt everyone got an earful of Dad's own Air Force experiences. Had lunch at the Bekkens, said our good byes and started out at 1:15. Stopped for the day at a rest area eleven miles short of Rugby, ND. Rugby, ND is the geographical center of the North American continent.

Friday July 28, 1972

=Day 26 - 136.7 miles=

Near flat going all the way, headwind til noon, tailwind to 3:30, headwind for last 25 miles. Pretty tired. Stopped at Turtle River State Park. Great swimming, pool, showers.

Saturday July 29, 1972

=Day 27 - 92.3 miles=

Another early start. Crossed into Minnesota (progress) at Grand Forks. Missed the "welcome" sign so didn't get a picture (I wonder where all those pictures are?) Very flat around Grand Forks. After 45 miles Cyndy sick. Waited for Leslie to catch up and put Cyndy and her bike in the car. I don't remember the incident or how long it lasted. I'm sure Cyndy can help with this. After lunch, began gaining altitude, gentle grade, headwind changing to tailwind by the end. Stopped at Bagley Municipal Park. A beautiful spot and great swimming.

Sunday July 30, 1972

=Day 28 - 92.3 miles=

Up and on our way by 6:00. Light tail wind most of the day. Passed thru Bemidji and went by Paul Bunyon Statue and Lake Bemidji which is the headwaters of the Mississippi River. Stopped two miles short of Grand Rapids and camped at Pokegama Recreational Area, another lovely spot and went swimming two miles away at School Craft State Park. IT HAD BEEN A HOT DAY. We were very fortunate that today was Sunday because of what we

encountered the following day.

Monday July 31, 1972

=Day 29 - 132.4 miles=

The background for what we encountered today was a treaty or document in which the US had sold to Russia untold amounts of wheat and US Rt. 2 into Duluth was filled with a continuous stream of trucks carrying wheat to Duluth for shipment to Russia and another continuous stream of empty trucks going west to reload. Trucks both ways were traveling at least 50 mph and Rt. 2 was two lane. It was the most dangerous day on our whole trip. The trucks didn't slow down for us and there were several times when we got blown off the road. Fortunately it only lasted for 80 miles and we were in Duluth by lunch time. After lunch we crossed into Wisconsin at Superior. Mr. and Mrs. Eric Torrance and son John, parents and brother of Ken Torrance and his family who are our friends in Ithaca overtook us on the road to Iron River. The Torrances who live in Minnesota had apparently been tipped off on our adventure. We had a Coke with them and they brought a chicken dinner which we ate in camp that evening. We stayed at Bruce River State Park.

Tuesday August 1, 1972

=Day 30 - 110.9 miles=

Ran into a headwind early and it got really tough around Ashland but subsided later in the day. Crossed into Michigan at Ironwood and had lunch in Wakefield and continued on to Watersmeet where we camped at Marion Lake Campground. Hilly all day. Tired!

Wednesday August 2, 1972

=Day 31 - 129.2 miles=

Got a late start because bikes were locked in a garage. Had a tailwind almost all day. Country is rugged wilderness. Iron mines. Ski resorts. Iron Mountain at noon. Lunch with Leslie in Norway. Road becomes level as we finish the day in Escanaba. Staying at municipal campground. Hot showers.

Thursday August 3, 1972

=Day 32 - 66.2 miles=

Cold front passing thru this a.m. We bucked a north headwind for 12 miles, then turned East again. After a few more miles we encountered road construction which we had been anticipating. Gravel road and pot holes. After six miles a pickup truck driver took pity on us and gave us a lift for the next five miles. At Manistique the road turned North and back into the wind. From Thompson to Manistique the road is right on the shore of Lake Michigan and very beautiful, but the headwind is killing us. Elected to stop early and take half a day rest and clean bikes and VW. Found the Dreamland Motel two miles west of Blaney Park.

Friday August 4, 1972

=Day 33 - 121.4 miles=

On the road by 6:00, mostly level, some headwind. Beautiful scenery along the shore of Lake Michigan and Lake Huron. We reached the Mackinaw bridge at 11:40. The bridge is two miles

long and bicycles are prohibited. People at the toll booths generously offered to drive us across in their vehicle. Leslie had gone ahead to Mackinaw City, but we both got lost looking for each other when we got there. Finally hooked up and were on our way on Rt. 23, the first time we had been off Rt. 2 since Havre, MT on Day 19. (Progress) We were now on Lake Huron shoreline. This is very much a Midwestern vacation land, scenery is beautiful, the sandy beaches are clean and the weekend traffic is heavy. We stopped at Hoeft State Park campground just north of Rogers City. It was nice, but crowded. Hot showers.

Saturday August 5, 1972

=Day 34 - 106.5 miles=

On the road at 6:40. Rt. 23 continues to follow Lake Huron shoreline. The lake and the beaches are beautiful. Heavy traffic. Motorists most inconsiderate. The worst we experience on the entire crossing. Lunched on the beach at Harrisville. Strong headwind for last 30 miles. Camped at Tawas State Park campground. Crowded in like sardines. Swam in Lake Huron. Hot showers.

Sunday August 6, 1972

=Day 35 - 99 miles=

Started early from E. Tawas. Rt. 23 takes us South to Standish and becomes Rt. 13 which takes us further South to Bay City where we continue South on Rt. 15 and then turn East on Rt. 46. Rt. 46 is due East and cuts off the top of the thumb of Eastern Michigan. It's been raining steadily all morning and the wind in our faces and getting stronger. We finally give up at the intersection of Rt. 46 and Rt. 24 where we leave our bikes and drive North to Caro where we find rooms in the Caro Motel.

Monday August 7, 1972

=Day 36 - 115 miles=

Pouring rain in the morning so we sleep in for a while. Drive South to get our bikes around 9:00. Quartering tailwind and intermittent rain. Make it across the "thumb" to the Huron coast again and turn South to Port Huron where we cross into Ontario at 2:00 p.m. Another 45 miles to the Bambi Motel at the intersection of Rt. 22 and Rt. 81.

Tuesday August 8, 1972

=Day 37 - 124.2 miles=

Started slowly but got some helping wind and not too much rain. All farm country, tobacco, grain, hogs. The Canadians are friendly, gracious. Stopped at Dunnville. Stayed at the Grand Motel. Cooked supper at Provincial Park. We're getting close to home, we can almost taste it.

Wednesday August 9, 1972

=Day 38 - 102.5 miles=

Best tailwind yet. Crossed the Peace Bridge into New York at 11:00. Lost a little time in Buffalo, but finally found Rt. 20 and made it to Avon which is due South of Rochester. We left our bikes in Avon and went to Tom and Mary Halpin's to spend the night. Excitement growing.

Thursday August 10, 1972
=Day 39 - 85.3 miles=

Picked up our bikes at 8:00 and headed home. Rt. 20 to Waterloo, Rt. 96 to Trumansburg, back roads to Bostwick Rd. Had helping wind, but took our time arriving in mid afternoon to a wonderful receptions awaiting us - banners, ticker tape, friends and refreshments. Hugs all around.

Friday August 11 - Monday August 14, 1972
=Days 40 - 43 - 0 miles=

A long weekend of rest, some work at home, some work at the office, visitors and visiting. We must have celebrated Cyndy's birthday, but I don't have any recollection. Whole family posed for a picture that made it to the Ithaca Journal together with an article about us. We talked about not finishing, but nobody liked that idea.

Tuesday August 15, 1972
=Day 44 - 111.0 miles=

On the road at 6:00, down Bostwick hill across the west side of Ithaca with a long climb up Rt. 13 by-pass thru Dryden, Cortland, DeRuyter to Rt. 20 at Cazenovia. Phil lost a derailleur wheel and Sue brought us a new one catching up to us at Cazenovia. Rt. 20 takes us thru beautiful farmland in upstate New York. Thanks to the Thruway a little further north, the car traffic is light, though lots of long ups and downs. We stopped at Richfield Springs and bedded down in a rooming house. Richfield Springs was quite familiar to me. I had worked as a hired hand on a large dairy farm there for two summers (1947, 1948). That experience is a whole other story which we need not get into for this trip.

Wednesday August 16, 1972
=Day 45 - 114 miles=

Fog and steep hills all along Rt. 20. Breakfast after 20 miles. Met family including Sue's sister, Jane Martin at Westmere just west of Albany. Interviewed with Albany press. Had lunch at Carrolls. Pushed on Rt. 155 to Rt. 7 which became Rt. 9 as we crossed into Vermont. Camped at Woodford State Park campground. Whole family together again. Bennington is a quaint town. Hills around here are steep.

Thursday August 17, 1972
=Day 46 - 86.5 miles=

Very hilly, scenic country. Some great down hills. New England and its quaintness will always have a place in a corner of me. Crossed into New Hampshire about 10:30. Took Rt. 101 at Keene. Rt. 101 will be our road to Hampton Beach. Stopped for the night in Milford - The Milford Motel.

Friday August 18, 1972
=Day 47 - 56 miles=

LAST DAY! Cloudy and cool, up and down. Arrived Hampton Beach around noon. Front

wheels in the Atlantic Ocean. Hugs and handshakes all around. Roberta Gibson and Jill were the reception committee. Had a lobster dinner which took all afternoon to be served. Rented a U-Haul. Loaded it with bikes and gear and started for Ithaca, somewhat weary, elated with our achievement, a feeling of let down that it was over. Got as far as Brattleboro, VT.

EPILOGUE

Thirty five hundred miles on a bike, seven miles in the back of a pick up truck. Thirty nine days of pedaling, seven days of rest. Ten states, one province. A side trip to Crater Lake, a side trip on the Salmon river. Oregon, Idaho, Montana mountains, Montana summer snow storm, Montana mosquitoes, Montana Indians. A day of Midwestern wheat harvest thundering across Minnesota on its way to Russia. Most days filled with hard work, much fun, stunning scenery or wide open spaces or American heartland agriculture. We ate well and I remember having no trouble sleeping. We were never bored, never discouraged. The apprehension and uncertainties that I entertained before we began, gradually receded as we became preoccupied with the weather, the terrain, the scenery. The only niggle for me was the stand off between my butt and the bike saddle which never improved throughout the journey. It doesn't hurt today and I feel that it had minimal impact on my appreciation of what we were doing and the fun we were having.

Our support team functioned superbly. Their many responsibilities - locating a site for us to stay, setting up and taking down camp, preparing meals, grocery shopping, doing laundry, driving with care enabled the bikers to focus on biking. As the team leader, Leslie took charge and exhibited leadership, creativity and enthusiasm for her job. I'm still quite proud of that performance. The fact that Sue and Marilyn were involved in the beginning and end completed the circle of a "whole family" undertaking.

Three thoughts dominated my consciousness when it was over: one of fulfillment because we had achieved our goal, one of let down because there was no more to do tomorrow, one of gratitude because we had come all that way without serious incident or injury. I think we all had a sense of satisfaction with a job well done, if not the exhilaration of winning a ten second hundred yard dash or a seven minute crew race or even a sixty minute hockey game. I attribute the feeling of let down to an awareness that for 47 days I had been able to suspend most of the other aspects of life, the office and the need to continue to earn a living, the day to day domestic issues, the home and the yard. The former was covered by Evelyn and the latter by Sue while my 47 days were totally uncomplicated and enjoyable. So that having to return to "the grind" and to resume my other responsibilities and catch up on "things" was a less than attractive awakening.

Finally as special and as fun as the trip was no "sea change" occurred in the lives of any of us. The kids values were well grounded. They were balanced, self assured and already headed in the right direction. The trip surely reinforced the good that was already there and gave us a common thread to bind us together. All of them went to college and excelled and all of them became upstanding and outstanding adults. We lost Marilyn the year she graduated from Principia. We miss her still and grieve in our own private moments.

Mom, Marilyn, Buddie, Grandpa Fred and the Bike Trip

One night at dinner we were just visiting when Dad decided to tell about his bike adventure when a college student. He had worked that summer for the Forest Service in Colorado and decided to ride his bike back to New York. The first day out of LA he pedaled 60 miles to San Bernardino and began climbing over the coastal range toward Victorville, CA. The road took him over Cajon Pass and the vultures were circling. He told the story very dramatically and the kids were on the edge of their seats. He told them how he made it through to Victorville. The next day he shipped his bike and duffel to Denver on the train and bused himself to Denver where he retrieved his bike and began to pedal East. He made it to North Platte, Nebraska where he terminated that adventure. He put his bike on the train and travelled by rail back to New Rochelle. He had always regretted that he hadn't succeeded in making the trip by bike from coast to coast.

The seed had been planted!

Through the next few years the topic kept coming up and finally the idea of really biking from coast to coast took root. It might be possible to make it a family event, mightn't it? Dad's job gave him flexibility, the kids and Mom were out of school for the summer, we had relatives willing to help on the home front... Possibilities became more possible, and then arranged, logistics were worked out, and the idea moved forward. The summer of 1972 appeared to be the best choice of times. Les and Phil would be off to college the end of the next school year, Matthew and Andrew would be old enough to participate actively, recruits could be found to help out at home, bikes could be purchased, travel plans could become definite. Leslie was willing to be hired as chief camp maker and breaker, grocery shopper chef, launderer, and driver. So the possibility became a reality in the making and 1972 had to be the year!

This summer was a year of serious floods in Elmira and before we left on the trip the older kids went down to help with recovery efforts. Marilyn was packed off for her planned session of camp in Colorado at the AU Ranches. Uncle Dunc was very ill and Aunt Roxa and Uncle David were about to have a daughter, Dawn. It was also Buddie and Grandpa Fred's Fiftieth Wedding Anniversary year.

Buddie and Grandpa Fred had been at the Farm to see us off and take over the care of the animals and the garden. Some of these chores like past times for them!

An unexpected working out was receiving an invitation from Dick and Annette Ragatz to stay with their family in Eugene, Oregon, and make their home a base for beginning the trip. We were delighted!

As Dad's journal records, we arrived there, were warmly welcomed, and were so happy to be at the end of the almost non-stop drive from Ithaca.

The Ragatz had planned some things for us to do during our visit with them. It was a beautiful drive from Eugene to the Pacific Coast. None of us but Walter had seen that rugged beauty before. The kids collected starfish and seashells which later would remain with the Ragatz's. There was a wonderful ice cream place that was all red, white, and blue and had a wide variety of ice cream creations. The atmosphere was very festive and we picked Phil & Les as the ones who had the closest next birthday in the group to be sung to! It was quite a

production and a lot of fun. The Olympic trials were being held in Eugene in field and track and we were able to see some of those events.

However, the main push was to get started on THE BIKE TRIP. The bikers dipped their wheels in the Pacific and began their trek.

We rejoiced with Cyndy when they got to Eugene. She had been ready to quit already since she was having such a hard time pedaling up the first steep slopes. It was discovered on inspection at a rest stop, that she had been pedaling with her brake partially engaged. What a relief for us all!

We had planned ahead that I would travel with the biker group until Idaho and then we would meet Marilyn, take a couple of side trips and then the two of us would travel back to Ithaca from Missoula, Montana, to relieve Buddie and Grandpa Fred of their duties! What we had no way of foreseeing in our trip planning was that the airlines would go on strike, the trains (our back up) would be booked solid for weeks, and Marilyn and I would have to travel by bus! A three day and three night journey! We decided we would be able to get off the bus and stay overnight along the way if we wanted to do that, and so it was with high hopes for a pleasant adventure that Marilyn and I boarded the bus. N

Alas, appropriately used here, not too long after we were under way, we came to realize that Dad had forgotten to give me the money we had drawn from the bank to fund our food and maybe lodging, along the way! We added up our resources and had a few things to read, a couple of snacks and \$20 and change! It would be a non-stop journey! These were the olden days before such things as credit cards and cell phones. Either of these would have solved the problem. We couldn't just go to a bank and cash a check. That required a letter of credit from the home bankers. We had only got one for Dad and he had used it, as planned, to get cash for Marilyn's and my trip home. Knowing it would be a challenge to manage our money, we carefully tucked away a dime to be sure we would have it when we got to Ithaca so we could call Buddie and Grandpa Fred to come pick us up at the bus station. Our diet was restricted to the menus in the bus terminals. Apart from the moment when we realized we were going to have to make the trip with very little money, probably the only drama was when one of our bags with some food and reading material in it was left behind when we had to get off the bus so it could be cleaned. It was swished away with the trash. We even went to the dumpsters to see if we could spot it amidst the rubbish, but no luck. We soldiered along, eating weirdly, sleeping on the bus, walking for exercise around the bus terminals when we could, and making the best of it all. I couldn't have had a better companion!

It was such a relief to be met by Buddie and Grandpa Fred at the bus station in Ithaca and head home for showers, clean clothes and our beds!

Marilyn and I said goodbye to the grandparents a day or so later, and took over the farm sitting duties!

While Marilyn and I were enjoying our time alone on the farm, we weren't just doing chores but caught up with friends and on the goings-on around town. Dad called frequently to let us know where they were (not much about what incidents took place, like the snow and mosquito attack) and that they were doing well. We saved up a list of happenings around town and about friends we thought they would like to hear about for Dad to relay. Later we

found out that he wasn't the best at passing these on to the kids. Enough to know that everything was OK on both ends.

As the time approached for the Bike Trip to get to Ithaca, our Fresh Air Kids arrived from New York, Bruce Bobbitt and Eleanor Johnson. They were very excited to be there when the bikers pulled in.

The Ithaca Journal sent a reporter and photographer to record the event of their arrival in Ithaca and the scope of their journey.

Marilyn and I stayed behind when the troop left to put Eleanor and Bruce on the bus back to NYC. Marilyn and I followed along as Buddie and Grandpa Fred stepped in again at the Farm. We met up with the gang in Albany, where the newspapers covered the story. And then, on to the coast with the trippers remarking that the hills and mountains in the West might be bigger, but the grades in the East were steeper!

The wheels were dipped in the Atlantic and we all went home to enjoy the rest of the summer.

Leslie's memories of the bike trip

My memory of the bike trip was that sitting around the table talking about it I thought they were all nuts!! I remember Matt and Drew wanting their own bike to ride every day. Again nuts! Ha! Once we started they could not wait to be with me and not have to ride. I knew I was not going to do it but Dad talked me into being the driver, cooking the meals, setting up and taking down camp and.....he paid me! I had wanted to get a job for the summer so I now had one!

I was amazed when I would pack up camp after the bikers took off at how far they had gotten. When we caught up with them, Dad and I always confirmed where our camp was going to be for that night and I would give them their lunch and off Matt or Drew and I would go. They would crash in the back of the VW bus, sleep, and be thankful they were not riding! We did not have cell phones so Dad and I had to be certain of our meeting up again. My job was also to find a place we could all go swimming and where we could get ice cream each day.

I also remember the logging trucks and how they scared me passing while I was driving and thinking of the bikers being so thankful I once again was not on a bike when they went by! I also remember driving over dead animals trying not to think about them and then shuttering miles down the road.

Believe it or not no one wore helmets then. I remember how in shape they were all getting so I started running and riding a little around the campsite. I have a vague memory of riding for a little on the highway and one logging truck went by and that was it for me! It blew me off the road! ...could have been a dream or for me a nightmare. Once again being amazed that they all made it everyday.

Cyndy's memories of the bike trip

My memories of this trip start from when we started talking about planning this trip. It started with a conversation of Dad remembering his bike trip he started during one of his

summer's when he was in college, and then us deciding that we would take a trip across the country as a family.

On the trip out on our way to Oregon to start the riding, we drove through the night, and keeping Dad awake through Chicago, and driving some then too. Our bikes were in a U-Haul.

Getting to the Ragatz, we found their house with trees growing through the deck. We did a bit of bike riding on the day after we rode from the coast. I remember tooling around a bike path, and crashing at some poles that were in the middle of the path and going to the Olympic trials. It was the Olympic trials when Jim Ryan and Steve Prefontaine were running, and I wonder if we saw them run. I also remember the steeple chase, and thinking it was weird that they had to try to jump over a water hole. It was like they were stepping onto a balance beam, and then into a water hole.

The first day when we were climbing up the road from the ocean before lunch, I did have trouble keeping up. We were pedaling up a very steep hill and having trouble keeping the bike going, and was glad that we stopped. We stopped at a gas station and were heading inside to get a soda. When we stopped for lunch Dad pulled my bike, and the wheels weren't turning - my brakes were stuck on the wheel. There was also some problem with the ball bearings in the pedal part of the bike, so we got those fixed too. Dad bought me a soda at lunch from a Texaco station where we'd stopped for lunch. And everything was easier after that.

After the first day of bike riding we hung out at the Ragatz place before heading out on the trip.

Three Sisters was our first mountains that we biked, it was really pretty there. When we were still in Oregon we took a side trip to Crater Lake. It was amazing, so large and beautiful. We did a little bit of hiking. And I remember how we were hanging off trees over ledges for cool pictures.

In Idaho, we took a power boat ride up the Salmon River. We saw a hermit - or at least the shack he was living in. When we were at the eating place for lunch, we went swimming, and I remember the current was very strong.

Random thoughts: I was writing to Scott Publicover that summer and he and his brother were riding their bikes in California from south to north.

When we were in Lincoln, MT we had a campsite in the middle of big pine trees - it reminded me a little of the pine trees we slept under at Bostwick Road, out in the woods. Anyway, we took the VW bus back to Lincoln after we arrived at the campsite and got some hot chocolate in a cafe and when we were there the rain turned to snow. We walked across the parking lot and got rooms in a motel. We spent the next day at the motel because we were snow bound. The following day there was still a little bit of snow on the ground, but we rode anyway. Our ride was over the continental divide, and then down hill most of the day!

When we were in riding along in Wisconsin, we came upon some road that was all torn up, so we were riding in the dirt - it was not fun. I think a truck came along and gave us a ride to the

end of the construction.

We also were not allowed to ride out bikes across the Mackinaw Bridge in Michigan that connects the Upper Peninsula and the lower one. We had to hang out for a little until they got a truck to put our bikes in and drove us across it.

In 1972 it was an election year, and when we were in Michigan we saw George McGovern at a hotel when we were in the same town. I think it was the day we stayed in a city park. There were so many trailers and campsites very close - nothing like we had camping out west.

When we left Ithaca it was fun coasting down Bostwick Road, but then some of the hardest pedaling of the trip was climbing up Route 13 out of Ithaca. I thought it was harder than the mountains out West. And the hills on Route 20...but it was exciting to be back on our bikes and heading to the Atlantic - so we would be finishing up our ride 'from coast to coast'!

Daily Riding Log

Date	Day	Odometer	Ride Time	Mileage	From and to or where we stayed
07/03/13	Monday	84.7 - 158.8	8am - 4:20pm	74.1	Florence, OR to Eugene, OR
07/04/13	Tuesday	Holiday		0	
07/05/13	Wednesday	154.1 - 222.6		68.5	to Trail Bridge Campground
07/06/13	Thursday	224.6 - 311.8	7:45am - 5:10pm	87.2	to Ochoco Reservoir
07/07/13	Friday	312 - 352	5:40am - 10 am	40	to Mitchell (Crater Lake day)
07/08/13	Saturday	352 - 435	6:50am - 5:15pm	83	to Prairie City
07/09/13	Sunday	435 - 472	7:30am - 11:30am	37	to Unity Lake
07/10/13	Monday	472.3 - 558.8	6:50am - 3:10pm	86.5	Ontario, OR
07/11/13	Tuesday	558.8 - 593.1	11am - 2 pm	34.3	Mann Reservoir Rec Area (Idaho)
07/12/13	Wednesday	593.1 - 665.8	6:40am - 2 pm	72.7	Zen's (private campground)
07/13/13	Thursday	Les & Phil's B'day		0	Riggins
07/14/13	Friday	665.8 - 700.0		34.2	Wild Grove campground
07/15/13	Saturday	700 - 792.6	6:20am - 4 pm	92.6	Wild Goose campground
07/16/13	Sunday	792.6 - 877.5	7:20am - 4:30 pm	84.9	Lee Creek Campground
07/17/13	Monday	877.5 - 927.5	7:30am - 12:00 pm	50	Agevine Park
07/18/13	Tuesday	928 - 1000.5	6:30am - 3:30pm	72.5	Aspen Grove Campground / Big Sky Motel
07/19/13	Wednesday	Snowbound			Blg Sky Motel
07/20/13	Thursday	1000.9 - 1082.5	8:05am-5:05pm	81.6	Motel in Great Falls
07/21/13	Friday	1082.2 - 1194.3	7:50am- 4:50pm	112.1	Havre, ND
07/22/13	Saturday	1194.3 - 1304.3	6:25am - 3:25pm	110	Sleeping Buffalo Recreation Area (Sioux Reservation)
07/23/13	Sunday	1304.4 - 1428.3	6:40am - 4:40 pm	123.9	Hotel Sherman
07/24/13	Monday	1428.3 - 1537.7	7:20am - 7:30 pm	109.4	Lewis and Clark State Park on Lake Sakakawea
07/25/13	Tuesday	Stormy day off			Minot ND visit Bekkens
07/26/13	Wednesday	1537.7 - 1630	7:30am - 3:15 pm	92.3	Tour Air Force Base
07/27/13	Thursday	1630.2 - 1685.3	1:15 pm - 5:30pm	55.1	Rugby ND
07/28/13	Friday	1685.4 - 1822.1	6:30am - 5:45pm	136.7	Turtle River State Park
07/29/13	Saturday	1822.1 - 1934.2	6:20am - 6 pm	112.1	Bagley Municipal Park MN
07/30/13	Sunday	1934.2 - 2026.5	6am - 2:10pm	92.3	Pokegama Recreational Area
07/31/13	Monday	2028.7 - 2160.1	5:55am - 5:30pm	131.4	Bruce River State Park
08/01/13	Tuesday	2161.2 - 2272.0	6:30am -6 pm	110.8	Marion Lake Campground MI
08/02/13	Wednesday	2272.0 - 2401.2	7:05am - 5:30pm	129.2	Municipal Campground in Escabana
08/03/13	Thursday	2401.2 - 2467.4	6:20am - 12:45 pm	66.2	Dreamland Hotel
08/04/13	Friday	2467.4 - 2587.8	6:10am - 5:20 pm	120.4	Hoelt State Park
08/05/13	Saturday	2587.8 - 2694.3	6:40am - 5 pm	106.5	Tawas State Park Campground
08/06/13	Sunday	2694.3 - 2793.5	5:55am - 3:30pm	99.2	Caro Motel
08/07/13	Monday	2793.5 - 2908.5	9am - 6 pm	115	Bambi Hotel ONT
08/08/13	Tuesday	2908.5 - 3032.7	7am - 5:45pm	124.2	Grand Motel near Provincial Park
08/09/13	Wednesday	3032.7 - 3135.2	6:30am - 4 pm	102.5	Halpins (bikes stayed in Avon) NY
08/10/13	Thursday	3135.2 - 3220.5	8am - 2:30 pm	85.3	Ithaca (home)
8/11 - 8/14	Friday-Monday	0			Were at home in Ithaca. Cyndy's 16th birthday on the 12th.
08/15/13	Tuesday	3230 - 3341	6am - 5 pm	111	Richfield Springs Boarding House
08/16/13	Wednesday	3341 - 3455.5	6am - 6:30pm	114.5	Woodford State Park Campground VT
08/17/13	Thursday	3455.5 - 3542	7am - 3:30pm	86.5	The Milford Hotel NH
08/18/13	Friday	3542 - 3598	7:50am - 12:30 pm	56	After Finish at Hampton Beach, NH, drove to Brattleboro VT, next day back to Ithaca.
			Total miles	3,501.70	