

Summary:

The trip started at the Pacific Ocean (Ocean Shores, WA) and ended at the Atlantic Ocean (Far Rockaway, NY) taking a somewhat indirect route dipping southward through the Colorado Rockies. The route stayed mostly on or near major cross-country routes to allow for maximum choice of accommodations, although in some stretches, this still meant 100 miles plus between possible stops. I had to weave my work schedule into the trip, and as a result, the full trip was done in four time-disjointed rides. The first was a one and a half day ride from Ocean Shores to Seattle; the second, and major portion of the ride, was a 21 day trip from Seattle to Hermitage, Pennsylvania (near Pittsburgh); the third was the 3 day trip from Hermitage to Parsippany, New Jersey (just outside of New York City); and finally there was a half-day trip from Parsippany to Far Rockaway.

For equipment, I used a Specialized TriCross 21 speed aluminum frame bicycle. The key features of the bike were its wide tires and long back-stay to accommodate touring panniers. I chose this bike for its durability, not its weight, and, in general, it performed admirably. The tires which came with the bike were inadequate for touring, but otherwise, the reliability of the bicycle was good. The bike was also very stable, even at high speeds. I carried two rear panniers, with a combined loaded weight of 15 pounds, on a standard Blackburn rack. In general, most of the weight was in the form of tools and spare tires and tubes. I carried two water bottles, using a third cage on longer stretches.

The overall stats:

Ending Location	Date	Dist	Avg	Max	Temp	Weather	Winds
Elma, WA	6/7	73	13.9	37.5	40-70	Cloudy	+++
Bothell, WA	6/8	121	13.1	31.5	40-70	Pt Cld	++
Yakima, WA	6/13	154	14.9	45.4	50-80	Pt Sun	++++
Pendleton, OR	6/14	127	12.8	36.6	50-80	Sunny	+
Baker City, OR	6/15	99	12.0	40.4	40-80	Sunny	++-
Boise, ID	6/16	138	13.7	35.6	40-90	Sunny	++-
Burley, ID	6/17	160	14.7	34.8	50-100	Sunny	+++
Tremonton, UT	6/18	113	13.6	35.7	60-90	Sunny	++
Heber City, UT	6/19	122	12.8	35.9	60-90	Sunny	++
Vernal, UT	6/20	127	10.9	37.3	40-90	Sunny	--
Craig, CO	6/21	123	12.0	34.7	60-90	Sunny	0
Granby, CO	6/22	124	11.1	36.2	40-80	Sun/Cldy	+++--
Brighton, CO	6/23	111	11.8	40.9	30-80	Cldy/TS	+/-
Ogallala, NE	6/24	199	14.6	31.7	60-90	Sunny	++-
Lexington, NE	6/25	116	10.3	22.1	60-90	Sunny	---
Columbus, NE	6/26	145	11.7	29.1	60-90	Sunny	--
Walnut, IA	6/27	126	13.6	38.5	60-100	Sun/TS	+++
Grinnell, IA	6/28	154	14.4	36.1	60-80	Sun/TS	+++++
Geneseo, IL	6/29	156	13.6	34.6	60-80	Cldy/Rn	++
Orland Park, IL	6/30	136	12.8	28.2	60-80	Sunny	++-
Columbia City, IN	7/1	136	13.7	25.6	60-80	Sunny	++
Clyde, OH	7/2	148	13.7	25.2	60-80	Sunny	++++
Hermitage, PA	7/3	141	12.1	44.0	60-70	Rain	++

Clearfield, PA	8/30	143	12.7	43.4	60-90	Pt Sun	+
Bloomsburg, PA	8/31	126	12.2	40.5	40-90	Sunny	-
Parsippany, NJ	9/1	128	11.9	35.6	50-80	Sunny	+/-
Far Rockaway, NY	9/6	69	12.8	32.4	70-80	Cloudy	+/-

Total	27 days	3515		130/day	45.4		30-100
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June 6: Ocean Shores to Elma 73 miles Avg mph 13.9 Temps: 40-70 Cloudy Winds: +++

I got an early morning start in darkness, returning the rental car at SeaTac and caught the 5:35am bus to Lakewood. Instead of waiting for the Olympia bus, I chose to do an early morning 20 miles mostly on the I-5 freeway to Olympia. There was a wide shoulder with long stretches of down and up. Upon arriving in Olympia, I wandered downtown, finally finding a large bar-like breakfast place. I enjoyed a long breakfast while awaiting the 10am bus to Aberdeen. I had trouble fitting the bicycle onto what was a shortened rack on the bus, but the other bicyclist, a homeless guy on the move, helped me wedge it in. The ride took me through big-time logging country, with lots of babies on the bus and whole families riding together. There was occasional rain while I was on the bus and more when I got off in Aberdeen. There, I caught the shorter bus route to Ocean Shores, where the temperature was cool and the wind was strong.

I walked the bike to the Pacific Ocean on a hardened windy beach – and quickly dipped the tires in the Pacific Ocean without getting much sand on the bike. There were horses and cars on the beach, but certainly no swimming in the 50 degree temperature with overcast skies and strong winds. This was the official start of my cross country journey.



The beach at Ocean Shores, Washington

Riding back to Aberdeen I had a strong tail wind through light rolling hills and one large climb just before town. Since I had taken the early bus and had arrived early back to Aberdeen, I decided to change my hotel plan to Elma, to a hotel I saw from the bus in the morning. The ride had small hills, but the tail wind continued at my back. I was just 4 miles from Elma when I got a staple in my rear tire. I used patch kit instead of using one of three spare tubes - not sure the patch would hold. It was nice to arrive at the Micro-Hotel – small, but very efficient - looked like hotels I had seen in Sweden. There was really no food nearby so I did take-out dinner at "Toad's" gas station.

June 7 Elma to Bothell 121 miles Avg mph 13.1 Temps: 40-70 Partly Cloudy Winds: ++

The day started off cold and cloudy with an empty divided highway and a 12 mile gradual climb through the pine forest. I got an early start just before sunrise hoping I could get into Seattle earlier in the day. After dropping back down into Olympia, I got a bit lost after exiting the freeway and ended up

climbing some bigger hills. I nearly bonked on the east side of Olympia before breakfast where I went to a rather eclectic restaurant with gun shots in the window. This was followed by a 20 mile freeway ride on I-5 with some rolling hills. After being forced off the freeway in Lakewood, I took some roughly paved narrow shouldered Tacoma cross-streets through a hilly section leading to the smaller town of Payallop. In trying to head north out of Payallop, I took two separate diversions because of freeway exit restrictions, so I decided to follow the back-roads instead. These routes were flat for miles on end and eventually led to a bike path. The bike path continued for many miles through the industrial area between Tacoma and Renton. I ate a light snack at a Wendy's along the path.

Along the bike path two women whizzed by, although I later caught up (not sure why they slowed down) so that I could ask them if this path led to Seattle, which it turned out it did. The path dumped right into downtown, passing King Street station, the stadiums, and the Space Needle. A short ride later, I was at the Performance Bike shop in the University district where I bought a really fancy pump, to supplement the travel pump I already had. With the fancy pump in my pannier, now I wouldn't get a flat for sure.

A quick ride through North Seattle, Kenmore and finally Bothell brought me to the hotel where I caught the bus so I could go to the airport, drive back and get my work clothing (stored at work), and get ready for the work-week ahead.

June 13 Bothell to Yakima 151 miles Avg mph 14.9 Temps: 50-80 Partly Sunny Winds: ++++

The day started off cool and cloudy, although this was a big improvement over the weather of the past few days. It had snowed earlier in the week at Snoqualmie Pass (record late snow). Per a suggestion from somebody at work, I took the diagonal state road across from Redmond to North Bend, after following the Burke Gillman bike trail from Bothell to Redmond. The road was really nice with few cars and a smooth shoulder. Near North Bend I climbed to Snoqualmie Falls – it was huge with tons of misting – the bike actually got fairly wet. I stopped in North Bend at a mom-&-pop cafe and grabbed a very small breakfast snack.

I got on I-90 to start the climb up to the pass; overall a nice road with the real climb starting about 15 miles in. I was fairly tired reaching the top (3022 ft) and there was construction (clearing landslides from the snow earlier in the week) to make it more exciting. It was a four lane (each direction) super highway going up, but an oldish two lane interstate on the downside. The road followed an enormous lake for quite a few miles, finally dumping out towards Easton and then the town of Cle Elum, where I ate at a hamburger stand. There I met a BMW cycle driver who had gone to Boston (by motorcycle) last April to run the marathon - he finally qualified by being over 65.



Snoqualmie Pass - snow from recent storms to the right

Just before then and even more after lunch, the tail-wind kicked in. I did 26 miles in 75 minutes with top speed on the flat at 38 and top speed on the downhill at 45. If this was the tail-wind for the rest of the trip, it would be a pretty stress-free ride. I got off in Ellensburg, where I followed the BMW biker's advice and took the back road through Yakima canyon instead of I-82. Good thing, since I-82 went up a 1000 foot climb right

outside of Ellensburg.

Yakima canyon is a complete unknown to everybody, it seems. It's 26 miles long with lots of birds but no people. I met two West Seattle bicyclists coming the other way who told me they saw a bald eagle. The wind had stayed somewhat favorable, although the twists of the canyon brought sporadic headwinds. I climbed out at Selah leading to the freeway where there was major construction which tore up the road. After going through Yakima on the freeway, I went to the Wal-Mart to ask for directions - turns out the Super-8 was in the next town south - Union Gap (a good thing since I actually wanted to get further and still had time). The next town south of Union Gap had no hotel availability. I walked to Outback for take-out dinner and got to bed - before the sun was completely down.

June 14 Yakima to Pendleton 128 miles Avg mph 12.8 Temps: 50-80 Sunny Winds: +

I got an early start in the cool but very clear morning out on to the gritty freeway. In less than four miles I heard clicking on the front tire only to see the glass sticking in. I guess I would use that pump now. The change went fast (as it was the front), but I didn't try to patch the tube - the patch on the back was still holding. Breakfast was at McDonalds about 25 miles later in Zillah. The area was an irrigated valley with gold mountains on the sides. The freeway was quiet and a bit on the rough side for paving. For a while I could see both Mt. St. Helens and Mt. Rainier in the distance. I stopped in Prosser, which was a great town - very friendly and much nicer than Yakima and some of the other towns (the day before in Yakima, I had gone through a neighborhood with several boarded up houses). A lady at the town vegetable sale gave me good directions to the road to Patterson.



On the opposite side of the bridge across the Columbia River - the Welcome to Oregon sign is in the background

The road was a curvy trip up the hillside for about an elevation gain of 1000 feet, dumping onto a rolling plain of green fields for as far as the eye could see. There was green and a ribbon of two lane road and not much else. This went on for 26 miles with nowhere else to stop - I stopped and ate the food I bought at McDonalds while I took in the landscape. I was fighting a dull headwind all the way to Patterson, which had zero commerce (still in business). I actually had a full-up headwind going along the Columbia River, even though this would seem impossible. I ran out of water 4 miles past Patterson, just making it to the bridge to Oregon.

This was the place where I was crossing paths with my prior Billings-Pacific trip, going over the I-82 bridge where Roberta almost got hit by a truck 24 years ago. They've now built a second bridge and closed the first one to bicycles, forcing me to go a circuitous route through a closed tunnel and over the bridge on the "wrong" side.

Now I was in Umatilla, Oregon, where I stopped at a truck-stop and watched my bike carefully while a traveling homeless guy searched for something (not sure what) in the outdoor plants. I got beef and gravy and filled up. The headwind had turned around to be a favorable cross-wind although the temperature had now climbed into the low 90's. I hit the town of Hermiston where there was a real drug

store with a soda fountain. They directed me a few blocks away to a nice bike store where I re-stocked with two more tubes, increasing my spare supply to four. The bike store guy gave me the scoop on the bike shops along I-84 to Idaho. The I-84 shoulder was kind of rough, and it was a long slow climb to Pendelton, until the last two miles where there was a massive down and then a large upgrade. The whole trip on I-84 featured a huge panorama of endless rolling fields. The hotel was near the top of the rise. Another guy checking in told me I made good time, having passed me on the highway near Hermiston.

June 15 Pendelton to Baker City 99 miles Avg mph 12.0 Temps: 40-80 Sunny Winds: +-+

Given there was a pass to cover and nearly 50 miles with no civilization, I decided to have breakfast next to the hotel. I left at about 6:30 into a slight head-wind, gently climbing out of Pendelton. Then came Cabbage Hill, going upward for about 10 miles at a steep grade. The highway was divided by about 1 mile with a total u-turn switchback on one side. Deer peered from lone trees on the top of the grassy hills as I slowly climbed. At the top of the rise, I passed Deadman's Pass, stopping at a rest area describing the perils of the Oregon Trail. A lady driving a van checked her GPS to indicate there was no commercial activity for miles. I proceeded on the highway again (rough paving) generally up for about another 5 miles when another flat (rear) came on. In spite of the third flat in just four days of riding, I remained upbeat - I simply and quickly changed out the tube, finding the small piece of wire that caused the puncture. I used the opportunity to strip down, removing the balaclava, but keeping the gloves on even though the temperature was hot. I was trying to protect the backs of my hands which got burned the day before.



After fixing the flat, a few miles later I passed Blue Mountain Summit (4233 ft), where I could see snow covered mountains beyond the wooded areas. It was mostly a downhill affair to LaGrande where now I hoped I'd find a bike shop to buy a tire. The counter guy at the Burger King went out of his way to help me out, bringing me a Yellow Pages - no bike shop listed - but there was one in town - but it was closed on Sunday. I had a stiff headwind going through the canyon to LaGrande, but as I left the dusty town, it turned into a tail wind.

Blue Mountain Summit - along I-84

There was another hot and steep climb, although not as long, getting me into more wooded areas. From there it was a sharp down into a totally flat green valley 35 miles across and 15 miles wide. On each side were snow covered rocky peaks in the 8000 foot range - spectacular. With the tail wind I made it all the way to North Powder before stopping to refill the water bottles. Twenty miles later I hit Baker City, which was at the end of the valley, a biker (not bicyclist) town, with two bicycle shops, one closed, and one I never found. I ate dinner at the Safeway across from the hotel.

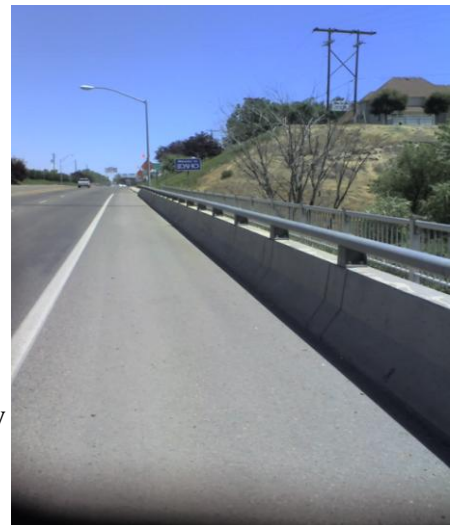
June 16 Baker City to Boise 138 miles Avg mph 13.7 Temps: 40-90 Sunny Winds: ++-

Having filled up with food the night before, I didn't stick around town for breakfast, even though there was a long grade right out of town. I packed some of last night's dinner just in case. The climb out of town was into a very different landscape - green covered desert hills, leaving behind the snow-capped peaks of the valley. As the sun rose, I crested the hill after about 5 miles, dumping me into a long gradual downhill that would go on sporadically for nearly 35 miles. The shoulder improved with a small paved strip over the rumble strip "due to construction." There were very few vehicles on the road. At about mile 22, I stopped at the only establishment in the first 40 miles, the Red Neck Cafe, where I had the usual full breakfast. Shortly after leaving, I crossed into the Mountain Time Zone.

After finding nothing but closed bike shops yesterday, today I was determined to buy a new tire so that the next time the rear got a flat, I would change out this debris magnet of a tire. The first opportunity for that would be at mile 75 in Ontario. The road from breakfast continued downward through canyons and larger still green hills of brush, until hitting Huntingdon truck stop along the very blue Snake River. I stopped here to refill water, as the temperature had gone up quite a bit. Both the waitress at the Red Neck Cafe as well as the woman at the truck stop told me I'd be facing "3 Mile Grade." To the latter, I said, "Oh, is that big?" She said it was. I said, "How long is it?" She just looked at me (duh).

So, I started back on the highway, which followed the river for about another mile before turning upwards. And it was 3 miles up. Then it was 2 miles down, and 2 miles up again. Nobody told me about the apparently lesser known but additional "2 Mile Grade." On top of the rising temperature, my rear wheel felt a bit soft when leaving Huntingdon. A quick check with the fancy pump revealed 30 lbs (ugh). It was a slow leaker in the rear. Now I was really motivated to make it to Ontario without changing the tube. I stopped to refill the tube about 15 miles later - soft again. The shoulder had deteriorated now, and was nearly gravel, making the situation that much worse. I got off at the first Ontario exit, about 20 miles from Huntingdon in search of the bicycle shop. "Oh, it moved," said the clerk in the jewelry store. I went the additional 2 miles to the new location.

Here I bought a Specialized Armadillo (28mm) to replace my Specialized Pick-up All Freeway Detritus tire. I also bought 4 new tubes, 1 being used to replace the slow leaker - increasing my supply to 6 spares and one patchable. I kept the old tire so now I had two spares. This new one was not the best tire size, and I wasn't crazy about Specialized again, but that was all they had. I changed the tire in the air-conditioned shop.



Crossing the Snake River - the Welcome to Idaho sign is in the background

Leaving Ontario, I detoured onto US 30 through Fruitland to cross the Snake River into Idaho as there was supposedly construction on the freeway bridge. Little did I know that the Snake is fairly narrow at this point so the bridge was not much to speak of. My odometer, which otherwise has been flawless, read 104 degrees. I think it was more like 95 - still hot.

I got back on the freeway 3 miles into Idaho, starting a long slow and gradual climb to Caldwell. The temps were really starting to go up. The landscape was rolling farmland, with a mountain range way to the north that was visible through the haze. I had to stop at the Stinkers Truck Stop about 15 miles in to

douse my head with water - which got me to Caldwell. In Caldwell, the library was open, and after waiting my turn for an Internet connected computer, was able to spend some time catching up on this trip log. I spent about an hour out of the heat.

When I got back on the bike, it was still hot (still 95+ at 5:30p). I stayed off the freeway following the main street (one way for a while) through Caldwell and Nampa. It seemed like Boise was just around the corner, yet a nasty headwind was now slowing me down. I followed a main street in Boise that came way out west to farm country - I stopped twice to refill water and push down 2 sandwiches. I traveled through the whole length of Boise, finally arriving quite exhausted at the airport at about 8p. The rear tire had held for 60 miles - so far, so good. I got dinner next store without changing, ate, showered, and went right to sleep.

June 17 Boise to Burley 160 miles Avg mph 14.7 Temps: 50-100 Sunny Winds: +++

Knowing it would be hot again, I got an early start. I had planned on either going 125 or 160 miles, trying for the longer distance to make the next day's ride more manageable. I looked longingly at the Southwest jet leaving the airport - what a way to travel. The sun rose as I left the very short Boise suburbs. I was in rolling farm country, mostly irrigated with an otherwise desert feel. There were mountain ranges in the distance, especially to the north for most of the first 60 miles out of Boise. It was already up to 60 degrees by 7am.

The first town would be Mountain Home about 42 miles from Boise. And except for one truck stop, there was nothing in between. I didn't stop because I wanted to reserve the "cool" time for riding. I arrived at Mountain Home at about 9:30 where I ate not-so-great food at the BK Lounge and then went on into town. I waited for Tony's Bike Shop to open so I could rejuvenate my tires with a real floor pump - I went to the Albertsons and cleaned-up my packs while I waited 10 minutes for Tony to arrive. He didn't have a floor pump (!), but he used his air hose for my tires. They hadn't lost that much (rear:70, front: 70) according to his air gage.

I left Mountain Home and climbed to the freeway. There it was like the Dream Highway. The rough shoulder had given way to smooth concrete blocks and the tail-wind kicked up. I flew for 20 miles, reaching the Snake River canyon where the hills started up. Then the shoulder became rough again and the dream was over. I stopped in Glens Ferry for water fill-ups and hoped that when I got back on the freeway, the shoulder would improve. It did, for a while. Along the way I went into and out of the Snake River valley a couple of times, making for some hot climbs. I stopped at an underpass to cool off in the shade, and ate a packed sandwich. I also crossed a very deep narrow canyon that fed into the Snake River - with spectacular waterfalls on the canyon walls.

When I hit Bliss, I stopped at what was the dirtiest truck stop restaurant I've ever seen. I filled up with water and bought some packaged cookies, but passed on the food. There I met a brother pair (21 years and 7 years) who gave me advice to stay on the freeway instead of taking the (very hilly) scenic road. At this point I was tiring of the variable and sometimes rough gravel on the shoulder.

I was stopping about every 15 miles or so to fill up with water and get out of the blazing heat - I had late lunch at Wendell at the Farmhouse Restaurant. In general, there was not a lot on this highway at the exits - at best every 15 miles - and in the heat, that was a long way. I saw two other bicycle touring people on the other side of the freeway fighting the strong afternoon headwind, the flags on the rear of their bikes bending backwards. They each had at least 50 lbs on the bike, and they were wearing cowboy hats.

I finally reached Twin Falls (my 125 mile destination) but my condition had deteriorated - I flopped into the Subway shop, which was the only shop at the exit, and it was 3/4 mile uphill and against the wind to get to it. I put ice on my head and waited for sanity to return. I didn't fully recover from the heat until nearly 7:30p when the temps finally started to drop.

It would be 9, 6, 6, 7, and 7 mile segments to get me to Burley, I discovered on the map. The 9 mile segment had the dream shoulder again, so it went easy and fast. Then the gravel set in, so I sought to take the frontage road. It's a nice road, but it's hard to know if it goes through from exit to exit - sometimes it turns to dirt - sometimes it just ends with no way out. I asked a Mexican-American family for advice along the road - they had no idea what I was saying. When I asked others, some knew, some weren't so sure. Eventually, I arrived at Burley, mostly on the freeway. I grabbed turkey and all of the fixin's at the truck stop next door to the hotel. Happily, no flats today, although I lost one of the handlebar end-caps while the bike was subjected to the 45 miles of vibration on the rough shoulder. Maybe tomorrow would bring smoother roads and cooler temperatures.

June 18 Burley to Tremonton 160 miles Avg mph 13.6 Temps: 60-90 Sunny Winds: ++

This was one of the days I was concerned about. Between Burley and Tremonton, there were no motels at all, and not much else, so in the heat, water and food might be a problem. I ate breakfast across from the hotel, although I was not really that hungry.

I started off taking a slightly longer route to go through Burley and avoid the rough freeway shoulder. The quiet road took me along the Snake River, which at this point has very gentle banks. Four bicyclers separately passed the other way for their morning exercise rides. The road became a bit hillier and very rural as it climbed into grassy hills of cattle grazing. Mountains were now close by, some of them snow capped. I had indigestion from breakfast - ugh.

The road intersected the freeway at about mile 20, leaving the rest of the trip on I-84 all the way to Tremonton. The shoulder was variable, with about 20 miles or so in bad shape with the rest in relatively good order. I stopped at the Idaho state rest area - these have to be the nicest and cleanest public rest areas anywhere - air conditioned, some with private bathrooms. I filled up with water and moved on - it wasn't very hot yet.

I stopped at the one store along the way where I paid 19 cents for ice. The lady there was very nice, but gave me completely inaccurate advice for hills and water stops. There were now very large mountains (>9000ft) off to the sides of the road with wide valleys. With a modest tailwind I reached the next Idaho rest area at about noon. Just before the rest area, I had climbed Sweetster's Summit (5523 ft), and had a long down to the rest area. I almost slipped on some loose sand in the shoulder - that would have been a trip-ender. While hanging out in the air conditioned area of the stop, I met a couple in their 80's on their way to Flaming Gorge Wyoming. I was asking if it was near Heber City and what they knew about it - they didn't. I hung out a bit longer - then they returned, to bring me a map so they could show me where they were going in relation to Heber City. Another guy at the rest-stop asked me if I had run into any rattlesnakes - I said I hadn't. He said, "Well, just don't take out food while resting in the shade" - like under an overpass - hmmm.

I left the rest area to go mostly downhill to the Utah line where a better shoulder awaited me. I arrived at Snowville, the one town that had a restaurant for the entire 110 miles of the trip. There I had a tasty Rattlesnake Steak sandwich - Sirloin that is. I filled up with water again, and asked about the next stop for water - 33 miles, in Tremonton, said the waitress. She also said there were three big hills - and there were. I left at 1:30, climbing the first of the hills. At the top, the couple from the rest area was waiting for me on the side of the freeway to see if I wanted a cold Tomato Juice - amazing! I thanked them, but I had just filled up at the restaurant.



Welcome to Utah - near Snowville on I-84

Each of the three hills was big, but the biggest was the last, and there was a rough side wind. The bad news was that I was going very slowly due to the wind. The good news was I remained within temperature control despite 90 degree weather because of the natural air-conditioning. The first part of the 33 miles had construction, so I had a lane to myself for about 8 miles - mostly up. The last 15 miles had the type of shoulder with rumble strips 3/4 of the way across, so it was difficult to ride at times.

I arrived at Tremonton at about 4:30p, a nice early finish. Sure enough, this was a fine hotel, but it was so fancy for me, it may as well been the Four Seasons. It had a flat screen TV, Jacuzzi tub in the room, which I used to wash my stuff, and a computer for catching up on email. I ordered in pizza, caught up on this log, and IM'ed with Heather, who is in the midst of final exams for 11th grade. No flats today, and overall, a good day for one that I thought would be much tougher.

June 19 Tremonton to Heber City 122 miles Avg mph 12.8 Temps: 60-90 Sunny Winds: ++

The early morning news reported that Snowbird would be open for skiing on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Wouldn't that be cool to bike to Salt Lake City, rent some skis, buy some pants, and go skiing (by bus) for the next three days!

Oh well, back to biking. I left with a very light breakfast with a surprise north to south tailwind. I went through the somewhat struggling downtown Tremonton before turning south through farm fields on a small road paralleling the freeway. After a while I stated to worry that the road would die off, so I got on the freeway - it was the Dream Highway again with a smooth shoulder and a tailwind - until a Utah State Trooper ended the dream, telling me that since an alternate existed, I need to exit, "Just keepin' it safe." OK. So I climbed into the foothills at Brigham City which was a bit more vibrant. I rode through tree-lined streets merging on to US89 south following the Wasatch front range. This was a rough road which only improved when I got to the outskirts of Ogden.

In the north of town I found the first of four bike shops I would see on this street. Well, this one wasn't exactly a bike shop - it was a sport shop. I immediately noticed tall stacks of tubes - lots of types and many of them - wait, those aren't tubes, they're bullets. Then I realized I was surrounded by rifles and handguns - yes it was bikes and guns - interesting combo. They lent me their floor pump - camouflage colored off course - which I used to pump up the tires again. A bike shop 15 miles later gave me an end cap for the one I lost off of my handlebars.

On the way I thought about re-planning the next portion of the trip - I could save a day-plus of riding

by simply going through Wyoming instead of the high passes of Colorado as I had planned. At the top of a long up hill (about 4 miles) I found the AAA where I secured a map of Wyoming and a list of lodgings. As I ate breakfast, I re-planned and within 45 minutes had a new route with lodging through Wyoming – wow, that was easy.

As I descended on US 89 back into the canyon to get on I-84, a sign midway down indicated that the road was under construction and closed to bicycles and wide loads. At the bottom there were no stores, so there was no one to ask for alternates. I got on the highway onto the side of the divided highway that was closed - it was newly paved, while the traffic had been diverted onto a narrow single lane on the opposite side. After about a mile I reached some construction workers, who told me they didn't care if I went on the new (but closed) road, but that there was a bridge out about a mile up. I went about another mile and spoke to some other workers who told me there was no way I could make it through (unless I could jump the 100 foot chasm) - and there were no alternate routes (less than 30 miles out of the way). I went back down the canyon heading back to the intersection where I started, without a plan for success. On the way I ran into UDOT worker on the new road in a pick-up truck.

I asked (begged) him for a ride past the missing bridge - he obliged. I put my bike in the flatbed, and 4 miles later, I was back on the road - phew. On the way I explained (proudly) that I was on my way to Wyoming (having just re-planned the trip). He said, "Oh, that's really boring country, just sage brush, with lots of wind."

As I rode the next 10 miles to Morgan, I started thinking about the 40 miles of desolate riding to Evanston Wyoming and then the 4 additional days of dry and apparently "windy and boring" riding. At the 7-11 in Morgan, I reversed course again, re-making all of the reservations and holding on to the original Colorado plan. Now Evanston seemed distant while Heber City seemed nearby. (Heber was actually further away, but I felt better about it.)

Leaving Morgan, I-84 was under construction again, but this time, I had an entire lane to myself for most of the trip to Henefer. I was feeling good, so I passed by figuring I'd go to Coalville. But it was quite a climb to Coalville. Along the way, I passed incredible rock formations - mostly red rock cliffs and spires. There was one formation which was two vertical slabs that ran the entire top-to-bottom of a mountain.

I limped into Coalville where I had lunch at Debbie's Home Plate, which was more like Debbie's home - when I washed my hands I walked through their kitchen to their personal bathroom, careful not to trip on the bathroom scale. I had an enormous double burger.

I would need it. The climb continued slowly from Coalville all the way to the outskirts of Park City. For some of it, I took a hilly side road, and for the rest, the freeway which was also quite scenic. I could see the beautiful panorama of the Wasatch Range with ski areas spread across the peaks. US 40, which starts here (2263 miles to Atlantic City) is quite busy. It was about a 4 mile climb to the top, then a 6 mile steep down and 6 mile not as steep down all the way to Heber City. My hotel was at the end of town, right where US 40 heads to Daniel's Summit, which would be tomorrow's start. I ate on the light side at the Arby's across the street.

June 20 Heber City to Vernal 127 miles Avg mph 10.9 Temps: 40-90 Sunny Winds: --

This was going to be one of the most challenging days - a pass out of the start with 68 miles before the first town. It turns out it that it was tougher still because of a nasty headwind that lasted most of the

day.

The morning was cold with temps in the 40's. I got out to an early 6:15 start working my way up Daniel's Summit in about 2 1/2 hours. It was a nice ride gradually getting steeper at the top. The road shoulder was narrow, and there were lots of trucks out early. Deer scampered away as I approached. The open fields gave way to forest which then gave way to open fields with some pines.

I ate breakfast at the top at the Daniel's Summit Lodge - a Yosemite lodge copy of sorts. A headwind had now sprung up, but I figured it wouldn't last long. The road followed a beautiful lake surrounded by small mountains and snow covered peaks to the far north. The road itself remained rough - and it rolled up and down for miles on end. I stopped at the one gas station at about mile 40, with 28 to go to Duschane. This was a tough 28 miles, even though it was slightly downhill, due to the now hefty headwind. I passed the Starvation reservoir where a bridge crossed the large blue lake - quite nice.

I crept into Duschane and had lunch - turkey with gravy - at the local cafe. The flags were pointed directly in my face, and I got discouraged. I moved on, (what choice did I have?) riding the next 15 miles to Mayton, a really small town with a gas station - the trip there was along the Mayton River. In general the terrain had become much more desert like with most trees (except near the river) disappearing. The road from Mayton to Roosevelt was deplorable with a poor shoulder and numerous trucks (where did they come from?). Once in Roosevelt the road improved dramatically through this quite large town. For about 10 miles the wind had died down while a cloud passed overhead (a first since being in Seattle). I stopped for a quick snack, but by the time I came out the wind had picked up again.

For 22 of the remaining 30 miles, it was a total struggle, each mile a victory over the wind. I found myself pedaling downhill to reach 10 miles an hour. Finally, with about 8 miles to go at 6:45, the wind subsided. The final 8 miles were all uphill, but it was a pleasure to be able to ride wind free. Six miles out of Vernal, I saw a runner coming towards me - good, I thought, I can't be far from town now. I asked her if she was running from town - "No, I'm running from Virginia Beach." She had started on April 1, and was running across the country ending in Santa Cruz. All of a sudden, my headwind woes seemed less painful.

My mood improved, and I rode swiftly up the hill into the final approach to Vernal. A quick dinner stop, then shower and bed. Looks like the same headwinds will be there for tomorrow - at least I'm used to it.

June 21 Vernal to Craig 123 miles Avg mph 12.0 Temps: 60-90 Sunny Winds: 0

This was the day that was most intimidating to me during the planning stages of the trip. According to the map, it was 82 miles of nothing between Dinosaur and Craig. And after yesterday's headwinds, it seemed like this could be challenging.

The day started off cool with a very slight tailwind. I took the shortcut through Vernal so I missed downtown - I soon was on a four lane US 40 headed south out of town. The road narrowed as I headed for Jensen, but it was a slight downhill for nearly 15 miles dropping to the Green River valley. After crossing the river, it was a gradual uphill for nearly 15 miles climbing with the Dinosaur National Monument canyon to the left. This was basically dessert, and the road had become much less traveled. Prairie dogs were everywhere alongside the road, with whole families standing by their "homes" watching me go by.

Near mile 30, I came to the Colorado border where the road surface improved. Three miles later I came upon the town of Dinosaur, where I went to the cafe. It was a one-man show, although sporadically people from another table would get up and do some waitress-like thing like bringing over napkins. I had the world's largest chicken-fried steak, although it took a while, and I was uptight about the time given the long stretch ahead. In speaking to the people in the cafe, it turned out that there was a bar in Masadona (20 miles away) and a store in Maybell (57 miles away), but I brought a full extra 32 ounces with me just in case (thus, my total was 100 oz).

The road to Masadona was rolling but the wind had remained almost completely calm. The landscape remained dry and desolate, but the road was equally quiet - maybe a vehicle every 5 minutes or so, and prairie dogs everywhere. At the bar, I filled up my one empty water bottle and got word that the upgrades would now start - and they did. It was quite hilly with 1000 foot climbs the norm - over and over again for nearly 37 miles. At one point I crested to about 7000 feet

where one could see for miles in both directions. Right near there, I met a bicyclist coming the other way - he was traveling from Buffalo to Portland over a number of months. His rear tire had a beading problem, but I was certainly of no use to help debug that - certainly not here in the middle of nowhere - better to wait till he got to Vernal.

The trip to Maybell was hilly, hot and tiring. I went through all of my water, and I ate the extra bacon I had snagged from breakfast at the hotel. I finally reached the store, but there was no food - I used the microwave to heat up some questionable chicken nuggets that remained in the store freezer.

The trip from Maybell to Craig was much flatter with long very gradual upgrades and a few steep ups and downs just before Craig. The wind had occasionally kicked up, but still this was the calmest wind day so far - good thing, this day would have been much harder if yesterday's winds kept up.



The Colorado state line - just west of Dinosaur on US 40

June 22 Craig to Granby 124 miles Avg mph 11.1 Temps: 40-80 Partly Cloudy Winds: +++--

This was clearly the most exciting day of the trip thus far. It had a bit of everything - dry hills, resort towns, mountain passes, alpine meadows, giant valleys, snow capped jagged peaks, sheer canyons - not to mention strong head winds, thunder and lightning, micro burst winds, strong tail winds, rain, and heat.

The day started off early and rough. I left the hotel at sunrise as the day would be long, and right off the bat, there was a significant headwind. I slowly trudged through a quiet downtown Craig to come out to a slow climb to Hayden. There, I opened the only bar, and had a nice breakfast. Getting back on the bike I faced an even stronger headwind, and as I climbed through the narrow river valley. I could barely keep the bike moving forward.

As I approached Steamboat (mile 44), the road became wider, and the wind started to die down. There was a really nice bike shop there, where I filled my tires and got the scoop on Rabbit Ears Pass. Apparently, it was only 11 miles to the top, the last 7 at 7%. I stopped at the Wendy's just outside of town and got some sandwiches to pack and also got some extra liquid at the gas station - it would be 57 miles to the next water stop.

I now had a tailwind taking me quickly to the bottom of the pass. And there it was, 7% for 7 miles. At about 2 miles up, I passed the run-away truck lane; at 3 miles up, I stopped for a rest - the elevation (now about 7800) and heat (now just under 90) were starting to take their toll. At 5 miles up, I found some cinder covered snow piles which I used as a heat sink to remove the heat from my body while I drank down the second of my water bottles. By the time I reached the summit (or what I thought was the summit at mile 7), the temperature had dropped by 30 degrees. There I asked a stopped SUV driver for some water - I still had 41 miles to go, and only one bottle left. Looking very sorry for me, she gave me a fresh 12 ounce bottle. She, like nearly one third of the cars that passed me, had bicycles hooked onto the back of the car. I pedaled onward, but not downward - the road stayed in an alpine meadow wandering up and down for about another 4 miles - then I was at the top (9500 ft) crossing the Continental Divide to the Atlantic side.



Rabbit Ears Pass - the first pass over the Continental Divide

The trip down was fast and furious - a few minutes later, I passed Muddy Pass back over the Continental Divide to the Pacific side, although it was simply downhill - no climb, that is. The road then became significantly narrower with no shoulder to speak of. The downhill continued in a roller coaster fashion for the next 20 miles; the views from this stretch were simply unimaginable - long valleys with snow capped peaks in the background. A mixed wind had kicked up as threatening clouds were everywhere. At one point the wind simply stopped me in my tracks going downhill - then it shot me forward equally as fast. As I approached the reservoir above Kremmling, microburst winds nearly took me off of the bike. Lightning strikes were shooting into the valley like a Vandergraff generator. The rain started and I fortunately found some shelter at a storage garage (in the middle of nowhere). One of the garages was open, so I went inside as the heavier rain started. Before the rain stopped, the renter of the shed asked to me to leave so he could put his motor boat in - apparently both me and the boat were not going to fit. I pedaled on as the rain died off. It was now mostly downhill with a side wind to Kremmling.



Muddy Pass - back towards the Pacific - along US 40, with a storm moving in

Upon reaching Kremmling, I could stay there, do the 38 miles to Dillon (the original plan) or go towards Hot Sulfur Springs. The 38 miles to Dillon had no services at all, and dark clouds covered the roadway snaking between the peaks - although there was a strong tail wind in that direction. I decided instead to call ahead to Hot Sulfur Springs for hotel availability. The woman at the Kremmling convenience store did that for me, and there was room.

I rode to the east on US 40 following the Colorado River, making the slow climb with a headwind towards Hot Sulfur Springs - wind-wise, the day was ending just like it started. About 12 miles later, I hit the magnificent (and unexpected) Biers Canyon - the color of the partial sun made the towering canyon walls a perfect Ansel Adams photograph. In the canyon I met a mountain biker name Guy with whom I rode past Hot Sulfur Springs all the way to Granby - a tail wind had now kicked up as well. Guy explained why there were numerous dead trees on the mountain sides - pine beetle infestation due to lack of cold weather. He spent his summers here and his winters on a farm in Costa Rica (wow).

I arrived at the motel in Granby - no phone, and no cell service (yikes). I had a small cramp in my hamstring just before eating, but it never returned. I got dinner at the bar next door and quickly went to sleep - a great day indeed.

June 23 Granby to Brighton 111 miles Avg mph 11.8 Temps: 30-80 Partly Cloudy Winds: +-

This was the day to go over the Continental Divide for the last time, climbing through Berthoud Pass. The day started early as the analog alarm clock I had borrowed went off at 4:30. Soon after 5am, I was on my way in the cold morning (34 degrees). I made the slow climb towards Fraiser with calm winds. Just before Tabernash, the climb became steeper as the road left both the railroad and the river - my extremities began to get cold. Then the road surprised me with a long decline towards Fraiser. The ride down froze me - I became hypothermic as I could see the town about 5 miles in the distance. Hanging in the valley was a hot air balloon. I struggled into the middle of town and found a cafe that opened

early. I spent nearly an hour there trying to warm up, putting my arms under the food heat lamp after I was done eating breakfast and drinking tons of coffee.

The people at the cafe told me the climb up was about 11 miles from there. I put on my extra jacket (along with balaclava) for the climb through Winter Park. Nearly 5 miles later, I was plenty warm and could strip back down. Going up, the climb was mild past Winter Park and Mary Jane - then it turned up through switchbacks - quite spectacular. The elevation was definitely noticeable. Well, it was more than 11 miles - more like 16 - but it was a great climb getting just above tree-line.

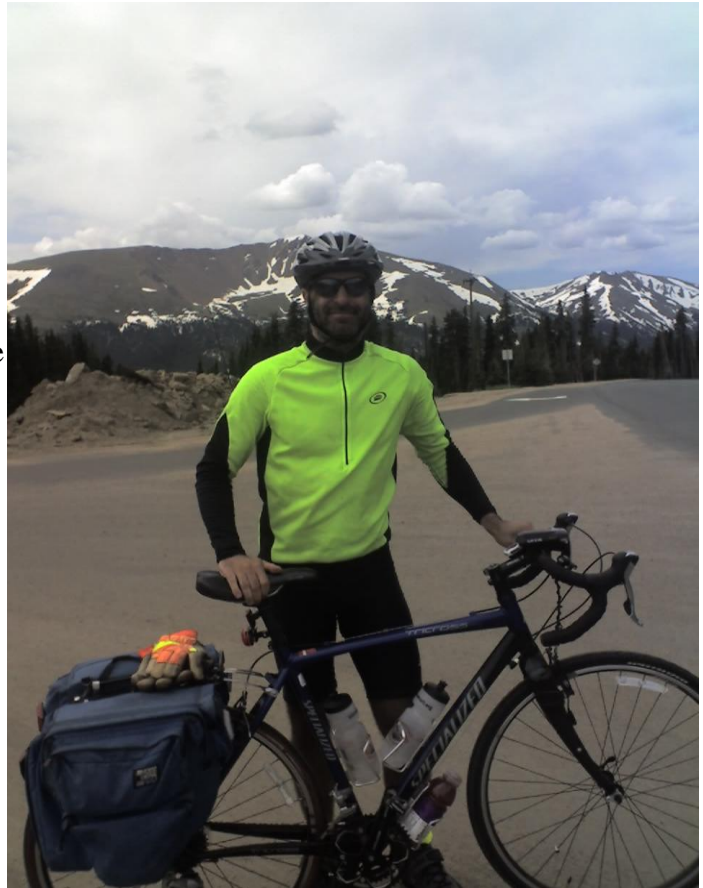
About 1 mile from the top, a woman joined me as she was climbing the pass and going to her home in Denver. I knew it was complicated to get to Denver negotiating sections of I-70, so I questioned her on directions. She figured I'd accompany her - no chance - I'm too slow going up, and too slow going down! She waited for me at the top and gave me the lengthy (and accurate) explanation of the way to Denver by bicycle. She took my picture (the only one of me) at the pass. I waited there to attend (by phone) a meeting for work as I could watch a panoramic view at 11,300 ft - a great way to mix work and play.

I cut out of the meeting early as dark clouds were now approaching the pass. I started down - a quick one at that, down an amazing set of switchbacks. Better than half of the drop was on the switchbacks all within view of the pass. I shivered near the top but warmed up as the air heated with the lower elevation. I continued downward through Empire dumping onto a bumpy and hilly service road for I-70. A strong headwind was slowing me down the hills. I went slowly through Idaho Springs stopping at the McDonald's to refill my water bottles.

From Idaho Springs, there was a meandering bike path that avoids the freeway - it was a bit bumpy and twisty - but it ended where US 40 begins again. The climb up Floyd Hill and then to Lookout Mountain on US 40 were significant. There were also drops on US 40 and some very quiet areas in the woods - amazing considering just how close the freeway was. The dark clouds moved over me producing some light rain.

There's a short stretch on the freeway - then there's the final drop to Denver - nearly 2000 feet in about 7 miles - along the way, there are great signs next-door on the freeway telling truckers there's still a lot of downhill to go! At one point one can see back to the Continental Divide to one side and out to the Great Plains the other.

I snaked through the Denver suburbs, continuing to drop in elevation - I found a bike shop and then the AAA office where I tried to find accommodations for the night. The furthest northeast of Denver I



At the continental divide at Berthoud Pass

could find was in Brighton - not as far as I would like - but it would have to do.

At first I took a meandering bike path, but it soon was blocked due to high water. I then rode over a number of small hills through neighborhoods in the northern Denver suburbs. I eventually ended up on US 85 with a great tail wind and a great smooth shoulder. The 15 miles or so to the hotel went very fast. I ate dinner at the Sonic drive-in next door to the hotel.

June 24 Brighton to Ogallala 199 miles Avg mph 14.6 Temps: 60-90 Sunny Winds: ++-

The Weather Channel predicted that there would be an early morning tailwind turning to a strong side wind at about noon. I left early, trying to get out in the tailwind as soon as I could.

I left in relatively calm winds crossing the city of Brighton. The Denver skyline - which I did not see the day before - was clear behind me against the backdrop of the Rocky Mountains. I followed the service road for I-76 for a few miles until it ended and I was permitted on the freeway. At about that point, the tailwind kicked in providing a smooth easy ride for many miles. I was going to stop at Henderson, but I decided to go on with the favorable winds. The freeway shoulder started off in great shape, but gradually deteriorated with rumble strips going the full width of the shoulder. I got off on the now parallel US 34 through the very nice town of Fort Morgan and the less fancy town of Brush. I passed on breakfast because the tailwind continued. I got back on the freeway after Brush, but the shoulder was now impassable. I quickly got off and onto US 6.

This very flat road was nearly empty going from small town to town. I was running out of both water and energy - fortunately, I finally arrived at a town, Merino, that had an open bar. I had gone nearly 95 miles before breakfast. In this town, there was a single factory that produced carnival rides - and the one bar was there to serve the workers. After I ordered, the plant owner came in and we talked shop. He told me about his newest carnival ride buyers - in Pakistan.

I got back out on US 6 and pedaled towards Sterling - there I stopped at the market to get more liquid. Shortly after Sterling the wind changed - and so did my pace. I went slowly in the blazing heat from town to town - each one had a perpendicular cross street that formed "downtown." Most had one bar and a bunch of abandoned storefronts. One had a wide dirt road for the main street. I stopped at Sedgwick in the bar to cool off with a cold soda. There I found out from the bar patrons that three other bicyclists had passed through a few hours earlier.



Welcome to Nebraska, a rail line on the left followed the route for nearly the entire state

I moved on to Julesburg where I had hoped to stay for the night. When I arrived, the headwind had now

picked up quite a bit. But the town itself was not in good shape - and the hotel on the highway was three miles out of the way. So, I passed, deciding to move on to Nebraska - although I was very low on water.

I soon passed the Welcome to Nebraska sign and continued on the now narrow, but traffic-free road. I was now headed directly into the wind, trying to get to Big Springs so I could get water. When I arrived, I saw two of the bicyclists - they were camping and were likely going to stop there or nearby. They had started in San Diego and were going to Minnesota. While I spoke to them, the market closed! I went across the street where a local man filled my water bottles while Max, his black Labrador licked the sweat off of my arm.

I climbed out of the valley while I spoke on the phone to my family as they were on their way on an Israeli family visit. When I got to the top, I moved onto a nearly abandoned US 30. The road went through barren hills high above the valley eventually dropping down along the railroad tracks. As darkness came on and I turned on my flasher, I entered Ogallala - a steep overpass took me over the railroad, over the Platte River, and over the freeway to the hotel. Exhausted after nearly 200 miles, I ate across the street at the Wendy's, and quickly went to sleep.

June 25 Ogallala to Lexington 116 miles Avg mph 10.3 Temps: 60-90 Sunny Winds: ---

This was the toughest day of the trip thus far. It was characterized by strong direct headwinds - all day.

I left in darkness back over the freeway, river, and tracks. The ride to Paxton had a light headwind as the road followed the railroad. Each town along the road was 7-12 miles apart, and the tall grain elevator would usually become evident about 6 miles in advance. The roads all day were nearly perfectly flat.

At breakfast, the waitress convinced me not to order the extra pancakes - they served big portions, she said - she was right. After eating, I got back out on the road to a very strong headwind. After about 10 miles of fighting to get speeds above 10 mph, I decided to put on my iPod - a first for me. I pedaled the next 30 miles in about 3.5 hours as each town and grain elevator went slowly by. Trains continued to go by - more rail cars than vehicles passed me on the road.

By the time I reach North Platte, it was very hot - I stopped at the store to refill bottles - I had removed the iPod when I reached town. I decided I would try to get to Brady about 22 miles away where there was a restaurant. Birds would follow me - some just above my helmet - not sure why. I struggled to get to the lunch spot, but finally made it. This was the first place that I found on my trip that had a salad bar!

I left lunch, headed to Gothenburg and then Cozad. In Cozad, I stopped at the supermarket to cool off again and rest my weary legs. As I left town, the headwind slowed to a modest level helping to get to Lexington at a slightly faster clip. Kids were playing with fireworks in the neighborhood as I went the extra few miles back to the freeway to the hotel. I purchased a barbecued chicken and I re-stocked sunscreen and toothpaste at the Wal-Mart and went to bed hoping for less wind tomorrow.

June 26 Lexington to Columbus 145 miles Avg mph 11.7 Temps: 60-90 Sunny Winds: --

As I woke up, the weather channel predicted more headwinds, but they would be a bit more from the

south. So I modified my route to turn a bit northward past Grand Island.

The flat road (US 30) continued with not much of a change in scenery from the previous day. The distant grassy hills had given way to a wider valley of corn crops. The heat and headwind continued, although at a slightly lesser pace from the day before. Moving the bike at 12 mph on this day made it feel like I was flying!

I had breakfast about 20 miles in again, this time in Elm Creek where I had the rather large breakfast special. I sat next to a guy who had toured cross country (east to west) in the 1970's. After eating I moved on to Kearney, home of an impressive University of Nebraska campus. The road became more industrial with a bit more traffic - construction soon made the road a bit rough. The road became one lane for a while, requiring a "pace car" to escort people in both directions - fortunately, the flagman let me pass un-escorted.

As I approached Grand Island, the wind had died down a bit, allowing me to progress a bit faster. As I left downtown Grand Island, the temperature was 98 degrees and the headwind featured major 20+ mph gusts as I crawled towards Central City. There I stopped in the library to cool off and make my hotel reservation in Columbus.

Fortunately, by the time I started the ride to Columbus, the wind had more of a southern component making the trip a bit easier. A 14 mile construction site had gooey tar making my tires pick up tons of debris. I put on my gloves so I could continuously rub the tires down to remove the rocks and stones. The pace car was in action again helping to keep the traffic in packs rather than a continuous stream. A full 10 minutes would go by between each 1 minute pack of cars. The temperature cooled down as I approached Columbus - the roar of engines from the nearby auto track, featuring Thursday night racing, drowned out any road sounds.

My hotel was on the far end of town, where I quickly got showered and went to bed after this rather late arrival. Predictions for tomorrow were for a change to the weather pattern which had now been present for nearly a week - bringing cooler temperatures and favorable winds.

June 27 Columbus to Walnut 126 miles Avg mph 13.6 Temps: 60-100 Sunny/TStrm Winds: +++

Finally, the front creating all of the heat and the headwinds would move through today. The Weather Channel had a few 'W's here and there in the wind direction!

I got an early start, eating a quick dry waffle and bagel at the hotel. The morning was warm and the winds were not favorable. Then about 3 miles out of town, the wind kicked in. The road opened up and I was able to take off. It was a divided highway with lots of room and a variable quality shoulder, but there was little traffic to speak of. I cruised on deciding to put off breakfast as long as I could, finally stopping at mile 46 in Fremont. I had a slow but big breakfast, getting back out on the road, now with a bit less room and a bit more traffic.

After Fremont, there was the usual Nebraska pace car construction which left me with the road mostly to myself. Now there were small hills, something I hadn't seen since Denver. The temperature was going up as I pulled into Blair where I filled the water bottles. Shortly thereafter, I crossed the Missouri River and entered Iowa.

There was a big change. The road was much narrower - and for about 11 miles I was squeezed onto a small shoulder while trucks negotiated around me. Once I hit I-29, the trucks disappeared. I would be staying off major roads in Iowa, I decided.

I stopped in Missouri Valley to refill the water bottles (again). A detour led me on a dirt road to the road I wanted, which was a county road cutting through back to parallel I-80. This was a change also. There were hills - lots of hills - steep ones! But there were no cars at all, and the peace was very

nice. I stopped to re-sunscreen as the sun was strong and temps were well above 90. I soon wore out coming to the top of the hill in Beebeetown. There was a burned out school building, a few houses, and a bar. There I had a cool drink and burger - although the staff was quite surly (a first for the trip).

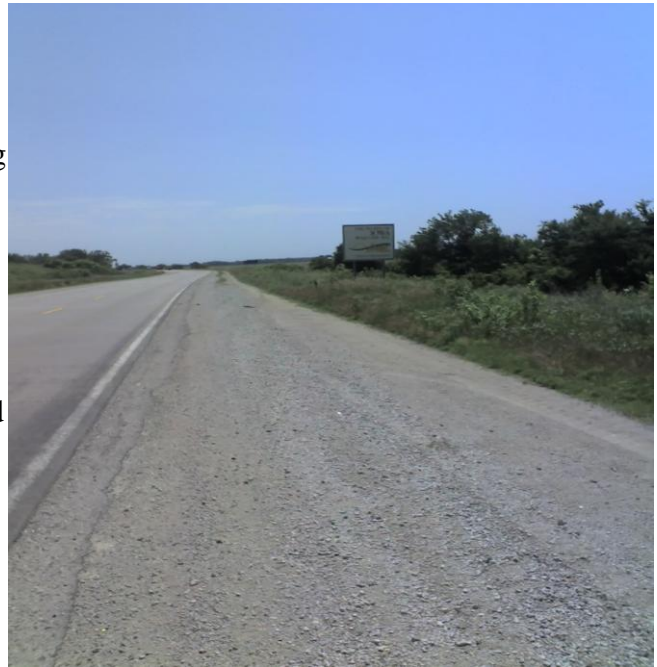
I pedaled on, following the county road (F66). One comical note was the sign markings. First off, these very quiet roads were very well marked. I came to numerous intersections in the middle of nowhere with signage - 335th St. and Munsen Avenue - sounds like someplace in Yonkers. It certainly didn't look like Yonkers.

On a not so comical note, the pavement soon ended at an intersection where all of the roads were unpaved. I struggled for 5 miles to find a way out, climbing and descending very slowly on the gravel roads with 7+ percent grades. In one case, I simply had to walk the bike, as I could not get traction with my rear wheel.

I finally hit a state road and backtracked to go to Neola and then Minden. These steep hills continued, requiring me to stop for water again at the store in Minden. The good news was that the store clerk had an Iowa state map which showed all of the *paved* roads. One other thing I noticed was that Iowa roads do not have shoulders. The convention is that one rides in the middle of the road - cars come to a stop if necessary to pass.

I continued on towards Avoca, and then to Walnut. These Iowa towns were very quaint - often with a wide brick downtown street. Every town seemed to have a barber shop with a red white and blue pole. As I left Avoca, the clouds were looking very dark. It was only a few miles to Walnut, so I proceeded ahead climbing the hills in a race to beat out the storm.

When I arrived in Walnut, I decided to take shelter - at Glenn's Pub. It was a small town, but a lively scene in the bar. The TV's were tuned to the local news which had non-stop coverage of the storm. Everybody waited in this 100 year old bar, waiting for the storm to pass (looked like a scene from the



The Iowa state line - next to the Missouri River on US 30

London Underground during the blitz). I ate a burger and a tenderloin. The owner told me to bring my bicycle inside while the storm passed.

We watched, ate, drank, and waited while the storm passed by. Unfortunately, there were some fatalities in Council Bluffs, and significant damage there and in Omaha. A tornado was spotted, but quickly disappeared.

Once things calmed down, I rode the 1 mile up to the hotel, passing the antique houses that lined the main street of Walnut. The sun came out just as I arrived at the hotel.

June 28 Walnut to Grinnell 154 miles Avg mph 14.4 Temps: 60-80 Sunny/TStrm Winds: +++++

I grabbed a small breakfast at the hotel hoping to get some miles in before the real thing. I left climbing back through Walnut, passing the pub from the night before. The wind was relatively quiet, coming from the side. The hills continued as I drifted away from I-80 on back roads towards the town of Atlantic. After each rise, there would be a long view of the ribbon of road going over numerous hills and valleys in the distance. I was tired and the constant climbing was taking its toll.

I reached Atlantic and ate at the downtown cafe. Whenever people saw me in my garb, the talk in the cafes turned to RAGBRAI, the ride across Iowa, which was going to come through these towns a few weeks from now: "He must be training for RAGBRAI..."

After having the usual full breakfast, I set off through Atlantic. The wind had now picked up, and it was in the right direction. After reaching Anita, the road finally started to get a bit flatter - and with the tailwind, I really started to move. The road crossed through multiple towns: Adair, Casey, and Dexter. One of my favorites was Stuart, where the sign said, "Welcome to Stuart, Home of 1600 Good Eggs - and a Few Stinkers."

The wind had really picked up - as the road bent northward, I was going very slowly - but when it turned eastward, I flew - I really flew. It was easy to maintain 20+ mph, and 30 mph was common on the more downhill sections. The road rolled up and down, although the closely packed steep ups and downs had disappeared.

I covered the White Pole Road from end to end - apparently it's a historic highway built by farmers. I continued through Redlands and then to Adel, where I met two other bicyclists who gave me tips on where to find bike shops near Des Moines. I continued on US 6 as the sea of corn shimmered in the roaring wind. I actually heard the wind howl.

As I approached Clive, the road became quite smooth (something I hadn't experienced in Iowa yet) and the ride was magnificent. Passing under the interstate, the road deteriorated again, so I went onto the lesser streets finding a bicycle shop on the way. The shop guy checked my bottom bracket to see if that was where a clicking sound was coming from - seemed OK - he gave a slight adjustment to the derailleur's hoping that would make it go away - I think it did. I refilled my rear tire and moved on to University Avenue passing by Drake University campus. I ate at a funky dinner where all of the staff had major tattoos. I also stopped to buy a new phone charger as I had left mine in Nebraska.

My errands completed, I was on my way out of Des Moines, passing by large hospital complexes, and other buildings still with sandbags near the river, and a few streets that still had muddy remnants of the recent flooding. The climb out of Des Moines was gradual but long. I ended up in Altoona, where I

used the library to look at maps and check out lodging. They had a rigorous Cyber checker - I tripped it by going to Expedia. The guy next to me said he got zapped by going to Yahoo.

The wind was still roaring behind me as I continued at a quick pace through the outskirts of Des Moines. The road got gradually hillier, and the winds started to die down a bit. When I hit the town of Newton, I stopped to make my hotel reservation for Grinnell.

The road from Newton to Grinnell was closed - a detour took drivers to the freeway, which wasn't going to work for me in Iowa. A driver told me that the road was open, but was being repaved - all of the bridges were in (remembering that Utah experience). I rode on the sometimes rough, sometimes smooth paving, making my way closer to Grinnell. About 5 miles from the hotel, the rain started. The wind kicked up as a strong side wind, making the last few miles quite the challenge. I ordered in Italian food for dinner (the only choice). Overall, today I bicycled in perhaps the greatest most sustained tailwinds I've ever experienced in 30 years of long distance bicycling.

June 29 Grinnell to Geneseo 156 miles Avg mph 13.6 Temps: 60-80 Partly Cloudy/Rain Winds:++

The day started off with clouds, wind, and light rain. I had a very small bite at the hotel and started off back to Grinnell. The wind had now turned opposite from last night and was once again difficult going back to town. I stopped for a quick picture at Grinnell College and continued, now with a favorable

side wind, eastward on a very empty US 6. The road had increasing hills, but they were gently sloped. There were very few towns along this road and no food to speak of. I stopped at about mile 20 to go into by "bonk stash" eating peanut butter crackers.

By mile 46 I had reached Marengo, and I was ready for food. I fought the wind to get into town where I ate at Deuces Cafe. The people were helpful in giving me directions back to US 6, where I continued with a side wind towards Iowa City.

When I reached Coralville, I was once again looking for food and I was on University of Iowa campus. But wait, all of the commercial establishments were closed - in fact, they were all flooded. Sandbag levees were everywhere, and leftover mud covered the roadway. The soccer fields closer to river were still completely under water. Much of the U of I campus was spared, being up on a hill, although some was closed off. The central buildings look just like the main buildings of MIT's campus in Cambridge - same architect?



Grinnell College – on a rainy morning along US 6

With no food to be easily found, I continued on past Iowa City towards West Liberty. The road had improved and the ride was pleasant. When I reached West Liberty, I stopped at the ice cream and hamburger stand, passing up the Subway. A police car was there - all the cops eat here, so it must be good, I figured. When I stepped inside, the owner was eating at one of the tables with the policeman. "Have they decided whether they're going to cancel RAGBRAI?" she asked. Given my garb, I was an obvious authority on the subject. "Why would they cancel?" I asked. "Because of all of the roads being closed." Now, I had seen sandbags, damage, and flooding, but not a single road closure.

It turns out that all of the roads eastward out of West Liberty were washed out. The policeman called to somebody named "Gene" to find out how I could get to Davenport. "Unless he has a helium balloon, he's not getting there." I asked if he was sure it was impassable even for a bicycle. He said there's likely waist deep water.



Flood damaged road in eastern

So now I was in for 15 mile detour, and that one was questionable and under construction - could be the detour would be 38 miles. After a quick burger I pedaled southward out of town passing each closed road. When I reached the final road, supposedly the least damaged, I decided I would need to learn more before accepting an outrageously long detour.



Entering the Land of Lincoln - IL 92 just past the Mississippi River Crossing

At that moment, from the closed road, came Louis and Wilma, two of the county's fine senior citizens, driving a large Chrysler. They informed me I'd have no trouble on a bicycle, there was no water on the road, and that they had just driven it in their car! Thanks to them, I was able to take the road less traveled, enjoying it mostly to myself for many miles. I say "mostly" because other cars and motorbikes were there also using the "closed" road. The damage was significant, with big and total washouts from underneath the road, but it certainly was passable on a bicycle. I was disappointed that the policeman and Gene were not more helpful.

After crossing the bridges over the river I landed in Muscatine along the Mississippi. The town had seen better days, but it was the gateway to crossing of the big river. I was soon in the Land of Lincoln.

Illinois was also the land of better roads.

While there wasn't a generous shoulder, there was something - and the paving was far superior to most roads in Iowa. I followed IL route 92 along the river, although it climbed up and down the banks a few times with not insignificant hills. A bicyclist with a nice Trek bike coming the other way turned around to ride with me for a mile to find out about my trip. He said many cross country riders came this way, as Muscatine provided a "natural" crossing of the river.

The road soon descended to the river bank, following it for many miles. I stopped for a quick soft-serve (coffee flavor with chocolate). When I came back out the rain started - a big downpour, and everything (including me) got soaked. As I approached Rock Island and Milan, things started to dry out, although my shoes remained wet for the rest of the day.

The wind had become somewhat unfavorable as I pedaled very slowly on a rough road towards East Moline. Once past the I-80 intersection, the road became well paved and quiet. At about 7 miles from Geneseo, the wind kicked up hard and the clouds looked very threatening. I didn't want to get soaked again, spending all night to dry out. I tried to move as quickly as possible against the wind racing both the clouds and darkness. I finally reached the hotel, just as the threatening clouds started to dissipate. I quickly ordered pizza, as it was late and I needed to get to bed.

June 30 Geneseo to Orland Park 137 miles Avg mph 12.8 Temps: 60-80 Sunny Winds: ++-

I left Geneseo early hoping to get breakfast in the next town. When I reached Atkinson, the person at Casey's convenience store told me there was nothing until Princeton, at mile 42. Oh well, on to Princeton. Five miles later in Annawan, there was a cafe, where I had the usual fare.

US 6 rolls up and down and then has long stretches of flat. Corn fields surround the road and go off into the horizon in every direction. The sky was clear and cloudless today. A stiff side wind, somewhat favorable, blew through the corn fields for most of the morning.

When I reached Princeton, I left US 6, opting for a diagonal US 34 heading northeast. I took a small county road to cut over to US 52 which would take me to Joliet. When I reached the town of Arlington, the roads were not marked in an obvious way, so I went into the one bar in town (it was 10:45am). There were many patrons, all eager to help me find my way to Troy Grove. They argued over the best way, "That's a gravel road!" "Send him back to the US 34!", until finally, a woman took me aside and gave me the complicated directions, "...go to the stop sign, then after the curve, you cross the tracks, then...." Her directions were right on, but there was a gravel road. Now compared to Iowa, it was a nice gravel road - firm, flat, and only 2 miles long. I stopped in Troy Grove at the bar there for a bite to eat, but there was no water to be had - "too much iron."

I traveled along US 52 for nearly 50 miles, and it was mostly quiet. At one stop, I needed more liquid, and there was a Gatorade vending machine, basically, in the middle of nowhere. The road was mainly flat with an occasional dip into a valley. The last 12 miles before Joliet became excessively rough and also heavy with traffic. The wind was now in my face, and I longed for the housing developments I could see in the distance. No politically connected builder would let roads like this near their new developments. Sure enough when I finally reached the neighborhoods, the road became smooth as silk.

This was the edge of Chicago civilization, and the usual suburban type activity was evident. I stopped at a real estate office to find out where the AAA office was. About 30 minutes later, I was at the AAA office getting new maps and water (which they served to me!).

After a quick bite to eat late in the day, I moved on to cross the main canal which runs through Joliet. As I approached, the sign said that the bridge (a big one) was closed. The detour would be costly, especially this late in the day. I stopped by a used car lot, where the salesman forcefully using his hands told me, in his broken English, "You, on a bike, you go over." That was good enough for me. It turns out that it was just a surface repair job, so I rather enjoyed going over the bridge having all lanes to myself.

The trip from Lockport to Orland Park was a struggle. The wind was a direct head wind, and the road was awful - full of pot holes, heavy traffic, and occasional construction. It took me nearly two hours to go the last 17 miles.

I arrived at the Comfort Inn - what a reception! They gave me a first floor room and grabbed me multiple cans of cold Diet Coke to take back to the room - wow. I spent the rest of the evening in the business center re-planning the remaining hotel stops for the trip.

July 1 Orland Park to Columbia City 136 miles Avg mph 13.7 Temps: 60-80 Sunny Winds:++

I started off through the suburbs of Chicago's south side. I pedaled southward to get well below Lake Michigan, hoping to avoid the very industrial area along the coast. As I came to a rise, I could see the Chicago skyline, the Sears Tower standing prominently away from the other buildings. I passed by an enormous used car auction site, taking a short cut to US 30, the Lincoln Highway.

I passed through Chicago Heights and Ford Heights. The first town in particular was in rough shape. Many of the lots were empty, and of those that remained, many houses were boarded up. A car crept up slowly behind me on the road, refusing to pass me on the four lane road - it was a Chicago Heights police officer, probably wondering what I was doing there - he stayed behind me for most of the length of town.

I soon entered Indiana, but I didn't even know it, as I didn't see the sign - not sure there was one. The scenery soon became the typical more upscale suburbia with strip shopping centers, malls, and office parks. I stopped at a round-the-clock family restaurant for a very good breakfast.

Since entering Indiana, the road had a wide and well paved shoulder. This was to last with mostly good (but varying) quality for the entire day. The suburban landscape soon turned to farming with - yes - corn in every direction. I no longer saw ethanol offered at gas stations, however. I also saw my first Dunkin Donuts and CVS of the trip - I must be getting closer to the east coast.

I was getting tired, and today I would lose an hour for the time zone change. I stopped in Valparaiso for ice cream and then again for more food in Plymouth. My tiredness went away as a favorable wind helped propel me eastward. My tires were low, so I refilled using my pump - yikes, only 30 lbs in the rear tire - we'll see if that's a trend. After leaving Warsaw, I noticed a staple in the front tire - I craftily pulled it out - no leak - at least not yet.

It was an easy ride from Warsaw to Columbia City. I made a quick stop at Wal-Mart for take out dinner and drinks, and then retired to the Quality Inn, where a confused clerk finally was able to check me in.

Of all of the days of the trip thus far, today's was the most mellow, partly because of the simply magnificent road and weather conditions - light favorable winds and wide high quality roads.

July 2 Columbia City to Clyde 148 miles Avg mph 13.7 Temps: 60-80 Sunny Winds:++++

This was my first morning waking up in the Eastern time zone, so it was dark when I got started. The road to Fort Wayne had a wide shoulder, continuing along US 30, the Lincoln Highway. The first 20 miles went quickly and I pulled into the Liberty Restaurant for breakfast at the I-69 interchange. There was a giant poster of the Statue of Liberty by my table - I wondered, would I be seeing it for real in a few days?

I left the restaurant onto a busy IN 930 which at first had no room for bicycling, but later on gained a shoulder. There were no signs offering advice as to where IN 37 towards Hicksville was. I asked for directions in 4 different locations, getting varying results. I spent nearly 45 minutes wandering the suburbs of Fort Wayne winding my way towards the northeast. I finally found the road, a flat fairly narrow well paved affair leading through farm country. It appeared the Corn Belt was giving way, and other crops as well as more and more trees were staring to appear.

After about an hour, I crossed into Ohio, reaching Hicksville, and stopping at McDonalds for a large cooling drink and some fries for added fuel. The road to Defiance was smooth, flat and straight, paralleling the railroad which was about 1/2 mile to the south. The miles went by quickly as a component of the tailwind was behind me. Then, a detour sign said the road was closed - I asked in the nearby store - no problem. It wasn't. In fact there was one 100 ft section that had some cones - otherwise nothing.



Entering Ohio - corn was giving way to other crops and more trees were appearing

When I reached Defiance, I stopped to refill the Gatorade bottles - now my water bottles, and tinker with my night's reservation. Given the favorable winds, I pushed it out in distance a few miles, and this would save me those same miles plus about 5 more tomorrow. My new committed reservation was still 75 miles away, and I was getting concerned about the severe weather warnings issued for later in the day.

Leaving Defiance, I found OH 218 which was a flat and quiet road which went on for nearly 50 miles. Unlike US 6 just to the north, there are no commercial establishments for its entire length - just farms and a few very small towns. I feasted on Gatorade and peanut butter crackers for the many hours I continued onward in hopes of beating the storm. The crossroads are all on exactly a 1 mile grid, so every mile, one passes another cross-street. The surface varied by county. In Defiance County, it was perfect - in Henry County, it was awful - then it was better again in Wood County.

When I reached Wayne, I stopped at a cafe for a quick bite of real food. I had the attention of the entire waitress staff who were all interested in my trip. They gave me plenty of cold Diet Pepsi and got

me out of there fast. The weather warning alarm had gone off while I was eating my burger.

It was about 20 more miles to Fremont where I could take shelter if necessary. The road merges back with US 6 which had a rough narrow shoulder at first, but then after the town of Helena became much smoother. The road was much busier, and I missed my quiet Ohio back road.

The town of Fremont was a very upscale town, hosting the Rutherford B. Hayes Presidential complex. Many old Victorian homes graced tree-lined streets. At the edge of town, there was an excellent bike shop where many cross-country bicyclists stop - apparently it's marked on the Trans-America path. They insisted on giving me two new water bottles from their shop as "free advertising," so I chucked the Gatorade bottles I had been using to improvise.

A short climb out of Fremont led to the wider US 20 which led me to my hotel in Clyde. I ordered in pizza, as there were no other places nearby. The storm hit about 2 hours later, and was supposed to continue through till early the following day.

July 3 Clyde to Hermitage 141 miles Avg mph 12.1 Temps: 60-70 Rain Winds:++

As predicted the day started off wet. There was a light drizzle as I left in near darkness. US 20 had a wide shoulder leading towards Bellevue where I had breakfast at an old-town restaurant. When I returned to the road, the real rain started. I pedaled to Norwalk where I took the city streets - a very nice town with many historic buildings on the main street. The rain continued steadily for about an hour and then returned to the light drizzle.

As I joined US 20 construction tore up the roadway leaving me a very narrow, gravel covered shoulder for nearly 7 miles - it was very slow going. Finally, I reached OH 303 which would take me off of US 20 and onto smooth pavement. At that point, the rain returned, this time in earnest. The downpour continued for nearly 6 hours. The road became slightly more hilly, and there were now woods on the sides of the road on occasion. I stopped in the first town 15 miles later in Lagrange where I got macaroni and cheese to try to both fuel and warm up. I was completely soaked, through and through.

I stopped down the road in Valley City for a more complete stop, where I dried out while eating a hamburger. When I returned on the road, I decided (finally) to put on my rain coat, which kept my core much warmer. The traffic became more significant through the city of Brunswick - clearly I was in the Cleveland suburbs now. At one point, I rode on the sidewalk just to get away from the cars.

The road from Brunswick to Peninsula was very hilly. The grades were 10% plus and there were many of them (in Ohio?). I had a maximum speed of 44 mph on one of the downgrades, and that was with a low tire, heavy rain, and my jacket flapping in the breeze. This was faster than any hill in Utah, Oregon, or Colorado.

When I got to Peninsula, I was told by the Fremont bicycle shop guy to stop in the shop there. While there, I bought a new tire (Continental, happily). Not only did the repair guy install my tire, but he also tightened up my cassette and tightened my spokes. I left confident the rear tire could now make it to New York.

I was feeling confident and strong - the hills seemed to have invigorated me. I stopped for a bite in the fancy town of Hudson, and then in Streetsboro, where I extended the days ride to Pennsylvania, thus, shortening the hilly rides for the remaining days. I moved relatively quickly through the remaining

miles on OH 303, coming to the end where it meets OH 82. I had been on that one Ohio state road (OH 303) for nearly 74 miles. The last section of that road had become narrow and the traffic, while lighter, was still difficult - I was ready for the relative serenity of the new road.

When I reached Warren, the town was definitely in bad shape. But near the center of town was a Bike and Clock shop - go figure. I went in to ask for directions to Sharon - they were very helpful, but I didn't notice any clocks.

I stopped for a quick bite after a very bumpy ride in the outskirts of Warren. There were a few big hills, but the road remained smooth as I approached the Pennsylvania border.

Then, on a flat section after a long climb....POP.

It was a rear spoke on the derailleur side. It was 7:30pm on July 3rd. No bike shop would be open tomorrow - and there were no big cities in the next few days. Fortunately, the wheel still turned without hitting the frame; I released the rear brake, leaving me only a front brake. I continued onward to Sharon snaking my way through the back town streets to PA 18, which led me to the hotel.



Entering Pennsylvania - just west of Sharon

With no chance of fixing the bicycle and not feeling safe riding with one brake in hilly terrain, I decided to stop the trip, postponing the last part to the Atlantic coast for a future time. I also was concerned that any more stress on the wheel could turn it into a pretzel leaving me totally stranded.

I spent the evening at the hotel looking for a way out. A bus to Pittsburgh was just 12 miles away - but it wouldn't run again until Monday. I could ride to Pittsburgh - 65 miles - and then rent a car. But I wouldn't get there till later in the day. All of the local car rental agencies were closed for July 4th, so I decided I would pedal back to Warren Ohio tomorrow, stay there overnight, and then rent a car early on July 5th, driving back to Boston that day. It was a tough decision to stop, but I had to be back at work - I knew I would simply drive back, pick up exactly where I left off, and finish later in the summer.

Aug 30 Hermitage to Clearfield 143 miles Avg mph 12.7 Temps: 60-90 Partly Sunny Winds:+

The first 18 miles of the trip started in early morning damp darkness, retracing steps taken in July to get me back "on-course" at Hermitage from my starting point at the rental car return in Niles, OH. The ride was a somewhat bumpy rolling ride through the Youngstown, Ohio suburbs. Upon reaching the Pennsylvania line, the road became smooth and generally bike friendly.

The ride from West Middlesex (where the original spoke breakage took place) became hillier leading to the town of Mercer, which was characterized by a giant courthouse peering through the early morning fog. I stopped for breakfast at the only open cafe across from the imposing structure. Leaving Mercer, I had a slight tailwind approaching Grove City, which appeared to be a college town, with tall dorms, coffee shops, and lots of antique stores. Here I joined PA bike route "V", which I followed the entire rest of the day.

After Grove City the road surfaces remained friendly, but the winds came from the side. The hills became sharper, and generally led upwards, until a huge cork-screwing hill which dropped into the Allegheny River valley. There, the twisty road led to a narrow deep valley where the sun lit up the town of Emlenton. The town was mostly closed up except for a supermarket and gas station, the latter of which I used to eat an aged chicken sandwich. The pizza place, recommended by some ladies at the laundromat turned out to be closed. I needed the sandwich for the steep climb out of the valley, and the significant hills that led to Shippensburg, the end of Route 208, which I had been following since Grove City. The hills between Shippensburg and Clarion were large, and the heat of the day was now in full swing, with fairly high humidity. Clarion, another college town, provided a place for lunch with air conditioning.

The ride past Clarion included significant sharp valleys, one of which led down a steep descent to the town of Brookville - it was a nice downtown with old buildings and a wide main street, but it also had a large pot-hole in the middle of the street which I hit full-on. After climbing the hill out of town, I noticed my tire had become softer. I pumped it back up hoping it would retain the air. A few miles later, I found myself changing the tube, even though the leak was a slow one.

Beyond Reynoldsville, the heat was getting the best of me, so I stopped for a cooling off at the Burger King where I splayed myself down on a booth bench sipping soda from the fountain. It was nearing 4p as I headed off to the remaining hills towards DuBois. The biggest hills were yet to come. A few hours later, I stopped in Luthersburg, getting a large sandwich at what was the last stop between the pass between the Allegheny and Susquehanna River basins. The owners, a father-daughter combination, entertained me at the take-out counter with their conversation as I came back to life with the addition of food into my system.

The climb up the pass was mild, as I had already climbed most of it prior to Luthersburg, taking less than an hour; this was good, as I was concerned about the oncoming darkness. The ride down was a six mile gradual drop with nice paving and expansive views, bringing me all the way into Clearfield just as dusk was approaching. I stopped at a very busy gas station to ask for directions to the hotel, which was about 5 miles further just past a Dairy Queen, where I also stopped for a snack. I arrived at the hotel at full darkness.



A summit of steep pass just short of Clearfield, PA - US 322

The flat tire notwithstanding, this was a good, if not tiring day. It represented my "return" to the trip after the break due to the broken spoke. This was also the hilliest day since the Rockies.

Aug 31 Clearfield to Bloomsburg 126 miles Avg mph 12.2 Temps: 40-90 Sunny Winds:-

I left the hotel in Clearfield just as the first light of the day was barely visible. The temperature was chilly in the low 40's, but the road was almost entirely uphill, both gradual and not-so-gradual to

Philipsburg. Just before the town, PA bike route "V" turned off, leaving me on US 322 which I had been riding on for half of the day before. Shortly after leaving, I noticed that my tire was soft (again!) - I pumped it back up, and it seemed to hold the air (what was going on?).

Upon reaching Philipsburg, I passed the McDonalds at the entrance to town, electing instead to go into downtown to find a cafe for breakfast. There was no open cafe, and I soon found myself on the outskirts of town, with no food in sight. I stopped at a gas station to get some peanut-butter crackers to get me to State College, the place the clerk told me would be the next stop (nearly 25 miles away). I climbed the hill out of town hoping she was wrong (she wasn't).

When I reached the intersection with US 220, the road became a highway of sorts. I missed what turned out to be the last turn-off, as the full-fledged highway passed a couple of hundred feet over the "old" road. I figured I'd get off at the next exit, except there was no next exit. The highway climbed gradually up the side of a mountain winding its way up to the ridge on top. As I came around the bend, a police car had pulled over a car and was writing a ticket, but he was a good mile ahead in the distance, and at my speed that meant about 10 minutes away up the hill. I started getting my story straight as to how I ended up on the highway and not on the old road, hoping he wouldn't send me back the three miles downhill to the start of the highway.

The state trooper suddenly pulled out and away, just 100 feet in front of me, glancing at me in his rear-view mirror, and then speeding off to the next U-turn. Passing the other way, he glanced in my direction as I continued pedaling up the grade. He didn't return - and a few miles later the highway ended just as suddenly as it had started.

As I approached the outskirts of State College, the rear tire was becoming soft again, and I struggled to find my way through the suburban neighborhoods so I could avoid the on-and-off-again highway. Finally I arrived at breakfast, where I quickly ate tons of calories and also rejuvenated my rear tire.

In State College, I roamed the downtown streets looking for a bicycle shop so I could buy more tubes, but the shop I was guided to was closed on Sundays. I pedaled on in the hills and the heat to the next town of Boalsburg, where I stopped at a McDonalds to both pump up my tire (again) and stop to cool off.

I was about to turn onto PA 45 which was a long lonely looking road leading for nearly 50 miles to the town of Lewisburg. Fortunately, the road ran the length of a valley, with lots of farms and the occasional small town. Finally, in the town of Millheim, I stopped for a full lunch, where I changed the slow leaking tube while my beef-and-gravy meal was being prepared.

After lunch, the road led upwards over the pass into the next valley, Climbing through the woods, I passed an Amish buggy also climbing the hill, albeit a bit slower than me. I had seen a number of these buggies coming the other way, some with one horse, and others with two horses and two passengers. The driver of this one assured me the top of the hill was just a few miles away.

The ride down provided a welcome breeze leading to yet another long valley. This one would prove hillier, until I reached the town of Mifflinburg, where I stopped for a very large soft-serve sundae at a drive-in ice cream stand. The towns were now becoming charmingly old - Lewisburg was one of the nicer college towns I had seen up to now, hosting Bucknell College. I soon crossed the west branch of the Susquehanna River, which was now significantly larger than it was in Clearfield.

The road on the other side of the river was not as high a quality but still remained rolling. After a rest-stop to reassess hotel plans, I had gotten a second wind as I proceed towards Danville. When I reached Danville, I stood in the strong late day heat at a phone booth to firm up my hotel plans in Bloomsburg which would be about 20 miles away. The ride from Danville to the far eastern edge of Bloomsburg where I stayed was nearly flat, something I hadn't seen since western Ohio. Bloomsburg was also a college town, although a bit more sophisticated than the others, housing many shops and even a Starbucks. I arrived to the quiet hotel and ordered gnocchi for my delivered dinner. My tire seemed still to be firm, so perhaps the new tube was finally working.

Sept 1 Bloomsburg to Parsippany 128 miles Avg mph 11.9 Temps: 50-80 Sunny Winds:+-

Leaving the hotel at first light, I enjoyed the still very flat US 11 following the east branch of the Susquehanna. I stopped in just a short 7 miles at a McDonalds in Berwick where I had a small snack in preparation for what I knew would be a tough climb out the valley.

After crossing the river at Berwick, the road indeed climbed upwards on two large upgrades. There were small downhills, but nothing in comparison to the long climbs which preceded them. I avoided Hazelton by taking some really small back roads which paralleled I-80. After crossing PA 309, and I-81, the road turned upwards again, with a particularly large three lane upgrade. About half-way up, I realized the my rear tire was once again going flat (this was getting old), and now I had only one tube left I stopped midway up the hill to pump up the tire, and the slow leaking tube seemed to hold the air.

I finally reached Whitehall, a small town which hosted a very busy authentic diner. The heat wasn't as tough today, but the hills leading to Whitehall had been significant. I had the usual beef-and-gravy, even though it was still in the late breakfast time-frame. I slowly rode towards Lake Harmony where I was greeted with the first really bad roads in Pennsylvania. The uphill continued until I reached Blakeslee. A bicyclist who had ridden about 100 miles from Philadelphia the day before stopped me as he was coming the other way. He noticed just how flat my tire was (it had almost no air at this point) He sold me (although he offered it for free) one of his spare tubes so I could have a bit more confidence in terms of not running out of tubes completely.

A stop at the Wawa for a drink and a tire pumping gave me a second wind to proceed toward the aptly named Pocono Summit. The road now was flatter and it was well paved again. Upon reaching I-380, the road started downward towards the Delaware River, and continued on a downward slope for nearly 20 miles. Except for a stop to pump up the slow-leaking rear tire, I moved right along into Stroudsburg.

I couldn't find the right way through Stroudsburg that stayed in the river valley, so I instead ended up climbing a large hill on PA 611



New Jersey line - near the Delaware Water Gap - less than 70 miles from Manhattan

just before the Delaware Water Gap. Once again, I had to stop midway up the hill to rejuvenate the tire. The steep downhill led me to the outstanding scenery of the Delaware Water Gap, where a well-paved but narrow road led me through the sheer cliffs.

Upon reaching Portland, I used the pedestrian/bicycle bridge to take me to New Jersey. The Atlantic Ocean was now feeling closer. In the town of Delaware I stopped at an ice cream stand for late lunch and tire pumping. I was now on US 46, the road that would lead me all the way to the George Washington Bridge. It had a great shoulder and a very gradual upward grade. Just before Hacketstown, there was a large climb and then a sharp drop to town where I feasted on an Italian platter.

From Hacketstown to Netcong, the road climbed up a large grade and then flattened out, although the nice shoulder had now disappeared. Soon, the shoulder returned and so did a tail wind. The miles from Netcong to Parsippany went by very quickly as darkness approached. I was a mere 34 miles from the George Washington Bridge, but if I wanted to finish in daylight (which I did), the Atlantic Ocean would have to wait for a different day of bicycling.

Sept 6 Parsippany to Far Rockaway 69 miles Avg mph 12.8 Temps: 50-80 Cloudy Winds:+-

The morning started off with a quick sprint to the train station, and a lengthy commuter train ride to get to Mt. Tabor, which is just southwest of Parsippany. The night before featured a 30 mile night ride through suburban Boston and a long bus ride on Fung Wah from Boston to New York as well as a very rainy ride up through Manhattan to my overnight sleeping quarters. The morning was surprisingly dry, with only wet roads to show for the oncoming Hurricane Hanna.

The ride through the village of Mt. Tabor took me past quaint houses and then a narrow path cut through a school yard simply to make my way back to US 46. It was nearly 9 AM by the time I got back on course where I had left off the week before. The road was busy but mostly flat, and the shoulder was well paved. Shopping centers, gas stations, and office buildings now lined the 4 lane divided highway.

The largest hill of the morning came near Montclair, as I moved on to NJ 3 off of US 46. The road was now nearly a highway with three lanes in each direction. Eventually, the traffic got a bit too heavy, forcing me off of the highway on to side streets in Nutley. As I crossed the Passaic River shortly thereafter, I stopped at a local bagel place for a quick breakfast, where the owner was kind enough to let me bring my bicycle inside. The promised heavy rain had still not materialized.



At the New Jersey side of the George Washington Bridge



Crossing into New York - the last state line crossing of the trip

After leaving the restaurant in Rutherford, I proceeded towards the Meadowlands, and the wide industrial expanse that makes up the flat space along the Hackensack River. Returning northward, I reached US 46, crossing the river on the only bridge which bicycles can use (a tough bumpy one) which then emptied out onto the large sprawling intersection of US 46 and the northern terminus of the New Jersey Turnpike. I exited US 46 to start the long steep climb up through Palisades Park. The climb, the largest of the day, was pleasant enough, going through quiet neighborhood streets, although the humidity was quite noticeable.

As I passed through downtown Fort Lee, the New Jersey side tower of the George Washington Bridge appeared through the cloudy haze. At the foot of the bridge, I asked a bystander to take a cell phone picture. At mid-span, I snapped one of the welcome to New York sign, my last state crossing of the trip.

Upon reaching Manhattan, I descended through Washington Heights, making my way through upper Harlem on St. Nicholas Ave, which is NY Bike Route 9. I reached Central Park a few miles later, and rode the western portion of the

park loop, the only one of the many bicycles on the road which had full touring gear.

I exited the park at Columbus Circle, making my way through Times Square, Herald Square, Union Square, and finally Chinatown. I climbed onto the Manhattan Bridge path, with a great view northward to Brooklyn and Queens and to the south of the new Brooklyn Bridge waterfall exhibit.

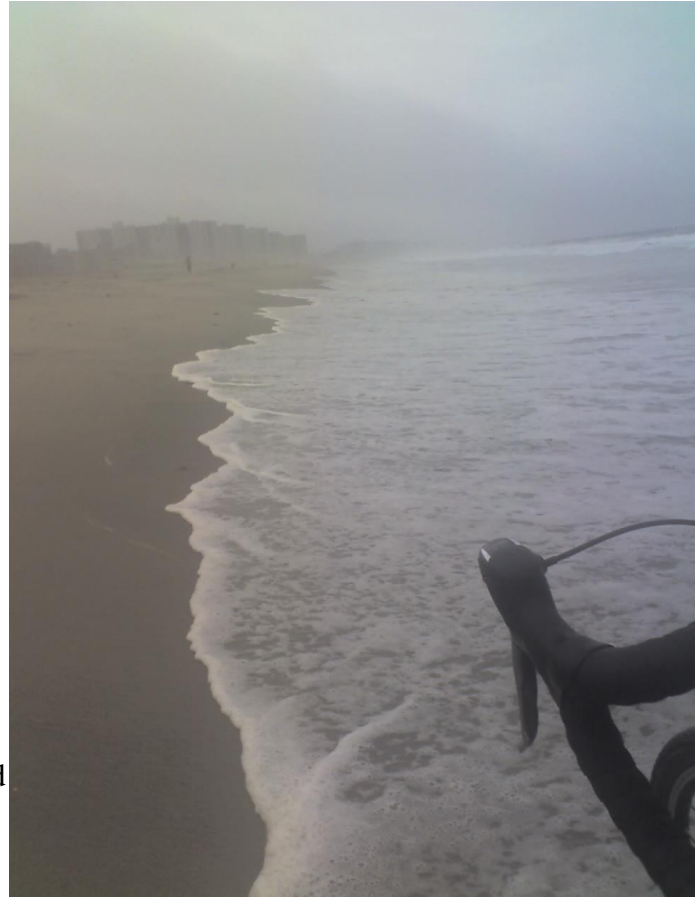
Upon reaching Brooklyn, I followed Flatbush Ave, triangulating on and off the diagonal street, depending on traffic conditions. As I reached the top of the climb to Prospect Park, I followed the park drive down the big hill towards Coney Island Ave, which I followed down to lower Brooklyn. I stopped at a KFC for water fill-ups.

I decided to head for Far Rockaway instead of Coney Island, as Far Rockaway beach was fully on the ocean and not on the bay like Coney Island. I took Avenue J back toward Flatbush, where the road had become more ride-able. As the road widened near the Belt Parkway, large yachts were on the bay - it wouldn't be long now. As I approached the Marine Parkway Bridge, the large "You Must Walk Your Bike" sign appeared through the dense fog. I simply followed the non-walking bicyclists in front of me to quickly cross the span in the thick mist.

Upon reaching the Far Rockaway barrier island in Queens, I rode directly south to the desolate area near the ocean. A bit to the east, I had another bystander take my picture in front of the now roaring Atlantic Ocean.

After riding a few miles eastward towards the subway terminus, I turned back towards the ocean, crossed the boardwalk, and walked my bicycle across a plastic tarp path that went out onto the beach. At the end of the tarp, I carried the bike to the ocean's edge, planted it in the water and snapped a picture along the coastline with my cell phone. A wave came in, completely soaking my shoes and socks and blasting the bicycle with thick sand.

I carried the bike off of the beach, and placed me and it under a public spray shower on the boardwalk, removing most of the sand from it and me. I had to wait in line behind two families that had just come off of the beach - they were puzzled as I took myself fully clothed and the bike under the shower. A few blocks away was the Queens Public Library, where I had hoped to write this summary - "No bikes allowed to be parked in the entrance-way," said the rather stern librarian. So I left without writing, and proceeded to the subway stop. As I entered the station for the train ride back to Manhattan, suddenly the rain started coming down, in buckets - Hurricane Hanna had arrived.



The bike taking on waves in the Atlantic - Hurricane Hanna is coming to shore