**ANOTHER GREAT YEAR**

From a small book that discusses the joy of walking and meditating comes the following: "Most of the time, we are lost in the past or carried away by the future. When we are mindful, deeply in touch with the present moments, our understanding of what is going on deepens, and we begin to be filled with acceptance, joy, peace and love."

**IS THAT YOUR PLACE?**

We have cycled the same route on the summer coast to coast for several years. Predictably you can plan on arriving in Billings, Montana, 12 days after leaving Seattle, Washington. It's a tough 12 days with four mountain passes, miles and miles of open terrain, and only one major city, Spokane, Washington. By the time we ride into Billings we're like a bunch of battle-worn veterans who have been on the trail and looking forward to a rip-snorting time in town!

On one of our recent summer crossings Janech and I were on a normal replenishing mission for the next leg of our 3,200 miles. Billings has all the standard shopping zones. Wal-Mart was first on our list. I decided to stay outside and watch the bikes and let Janech shop. It was Saturday morning and a steady stream of shoppers were making their way into the store...ranchers and townspeople mixed.

I sat down in front of the store and leaned up against a bright yellow swing set. I was wearing tight nylon pants, a fancy cycling shirt, a "Space Age" helmet that had a mirror attached, and state of the art cycling shoes. To many of the shoppers I must have looked like a space alien. I was entertained by the fact no one seemed to notice me--maybe afraid to make eye contact. Janech was taking longer than expected. I passed the time by looking at people's shoes and trying to imagine what their faces looked like. After several minutes of shoe watching I noticed a father walking across the parking lot with his son in tow. As they got closer I realized the son was a Downs Syndrome child whose attention you could keep for a milli-second. I thought to myself, "What a task!" I really couldn't imagine the challenge of raising a child like him.

After nearly 40 minutes of shoppers walking in and out of the store, no one had so much as given me a glance. The father and son finally got about ten feet away and all of a sudden the Downs Syndrome kid made eye contact with me. Still holding his dad's hand, he asked me, "Is that 'your place'?" It hit me like a ton of bricks! That little guy had been told all his life by a parent, teacher, or whomever, "That's 'your place!' Don't move!" I'm sure the sanity of his caregivers had to do with the kid staying put. There I sat and he could relate. "Is that 'your place'?" And then he said, "Do you like it?" Boy, that hurt! I'm sure there were a lot of times when he wanted people to ask him, "Do you like 'your place'?" I responded right back and said, "I love 'my place!'" He smiled and moved on.

All summer long I rehearsed this little guy's question. I couldn't help but realize how BIG 'my place' is...the whole world! For most of the people I deal with 'their place' is the whole world. This chance meeting with the Downs Syndrome kid has helped me celebrate life! "Thank you, Father, for this wonderful encounter!"

**GREETINGS 1997 NEWSLETTER SINCE 1964**

I guess that is what keeps fueling us here. We really have learned to live in the present. All our trips are hourly celebrations. We made it over that mountain...everyone made it to lunch...it didn't rain or the wind wasn't as bad as it could have been...the ambulance that passed wasn't carrying one of the team members...there's joy in meeting strangers who become immediate friends! The year 1997 added its unique flavor to our 33-year history. We continue to look to our Heavenly Father for guidance and do not lose sight of His protective hand!
SPRING COAST TO COAST
CRAZY OR COURAGEOUS
by Shirley W. Blau

"I just can't do this! Can't or won't?" I would ask myself; then pull my tight lycra cycling shorts, look around the church to see how warmly others were dressing and join the group for our Wandering Wheels breakfast.

"I just can't do this! Can't or won't?"

We were already across California into Arizona, and I still was not having the fun I had anticipated when I began planning this trip in early 1997 after riding with WW on the China trip. "Am I crazy to continue this?" I also asked.

Net only was my enthusiasm high as I trained for this 1997 Spring Coast to Coast, but I had turned it into a fund raiser for two hospices raising $60,000, created postcards to mail to donors and lettered Pedalin' Petaluma on my bicycle and duffel bags.

No one was more surprised than I when, a month prior to our departure from Oceanside, CA, I was suffering from a painful knee and, even more "painful", a severe depression. When I alerted Wheels that I wanted to cancel my ride, Coach Janoch and Rohn assured me that if I was willing to try the staff would do everything possible to get me across the country...and they did.

Soon I felt everyone's support, especially after I risked being honest about my depression during a self-introduction time. What encouragement I received from my usual riding companion, "Indiana Janie" Noblit and Vic Stockman helped me through my first two weeks and five flat tires. Then my "Sweep Team" mates, Rosemary Skidor and Bob Pipe, accompanied me from Texas to the Atlantic. I knew our unique lunch stops and daily Dairy Queen Blizards lifted my spirits as well as theirs.

There were also wonderful surprises at the end of my riding days when I reached our destination late and discovered that staff and/or co-riders had already set up my tent; a good spot had been secured for me in a church room or my roommate, Millie Murray had carried my bags to our motel room. And what would I have done if Marilyn Lehman hadn't laundered my sleeping bag after a sick night?

A turning point came when I realized that it mattered not if I arrived at two o'clock in the afternoon or at five o'clock in the afternoon...I was making it! FUN finally entered my vocabulary as we attended a lively Gospel Choir concert; enjoyed a messy but colorful crawfish feast; shared s'mores, stories and singing around campfires; received and gave entertainment with caring church people and, though I can't believe I'm including this, even as we rode in rainstorms. My heart was touched during a storm by Gladys who clothed us in all shapes and sizes of plastic bags at Hardee's where she was employed.

Varla Mieck, one of our strongest, fastest riders, not only verbally encouraged me throughout the entire ride, but she will never know how meaningful it was that she chose to cycle with me our last morning into Brunswick, GA.

If I arrived at 2 or at 5 it didn't matter...I was making it!

Since none of my California friends are cyclists, I'm some what of a curiosity and they admit they don't know whether I'm "crazy or courageous". I just know that it was one of the greatest growth experiences of my life.

Whenever I'm asked to describe this accomplishment, my answer is, "I learned so much about myself; 2) bicycling is the southern part of our United States and, above all, 4) God's faithfulness."

The best lesson was that God didn't just remove my problems. He enabled me to complete the ride through the helping hearts and hands of others AND the inner strength I discovered within myself.
JANECH TECH

J anech spends a lot of time on the phone, in journals and magazines trying to stay on the cutting edge of the latest in bike technology. Over the years, the “big sell” has been the weight of a bike. How much weight can be taken off the bike and still make it safe? The people who measure success by grams and split seconds swear by lightweight bicycles. On the flat every gram saved, saves you .007 seconds over 40K. On a 900-foot climb over 120K, a three-pound weight saving can save you one minute 25 seconds. When Wheels first started cycling we rode what we considered to be the best bikes available. They were 30 to 35-pound, ten-speeds. They did the trick. You can purchase “out of the box” touring bikes now that weigh under 20 pounds. In fact, some of the World Class tri-athletes are riding bikes that weigh 15 pounds. Our bike tips come from Craig Turner, owner of NYTR0(760/632-0006), a specialty bike shop in Southern California. Craig goes on to say, “Your bicycle and wheels can take over 30% of your energy to overcome their aerodynamics drag. A good aero position, aero frame and wheels can save as much as three minutes over 25 miles of racing.” Most of the time saved that Wheels’ riders gain in high tech is lost at Dairy Queens!

Bicycle frames used to come in fancy and not-so-fancy steel tubing. They now come in titanium, exotic aluminums, carbon fiber and state of the art lightweight steels. It’s not hard to spend $5,000 on a custom bike. That’s about $333 a pound or $20 an ounce—4 times more expensive than silver—more expensive than the Lone Ranger’s Silver!

Another interesting fact Janech noted is that the aeroplane industry has trained so many machinists who deal in CNC aluminum that there is a glut of highly trained people on the market. Boeing has cut 16,000 employees in 12 months. The highly trained machinists and sub-contractors are applying their skills in bike parts manufacturing. Look at the after market section in any bike magazine and see the goodies.

VOLUNTEER STAFF

O ur original staff was made up of young college graduates who received a modest salary plus room and board. They worked in order to have fun and

Some help drive, some help cook, some do a little of everything.

Exiting this past year. Our nest is empty. Chip and Dana carry most of the weight that the younger staff used to handle. Two full-time old salts knock out a ton of work.

We are developing quite a crew of part-time staff. These are people who have been Wheels’ regulars over the years and are now trading staff input for trail fee perks. They are able to combine continued interest in traveling and cycling with part-time work with Wheels. Some help drive, some cook, some do a little of everything. We like this relationship!
NEW BIKES

We have worn out our old Schwinn's and are replacing them with a nice multi-track Trek 720. These have friendly upright handlebars with double springs in the seat. We're trying to recycle the bikes about every three years..."Old bikes for new."

KITCHEN RETREAT HOUSE

Our phone rings and on the other end of the line is a stranger wanting to rent the...and then there's a lull. They call it by numerous names: the building, the lodge, the cabin, the religious building, the party house, the retreat building or the building across from Wandering Wheels. Needless to say, "it" gets used.

This past year we put in air conditioning and as I write, after 15 years, new rug and tile are being installed. Two new electric stoves were put in place. The insurance rates were higher with gas, plus the insurance company wanted us to put in a $3,000 fire extinguisher for the gas stove. Our old 24" TV was replaced with a new 36". (Yeh, like kids need more TV! Adults do need championship games!!)

GMC TRUCK

GMC is the name of a Chevrolet-type truck, but it well could stand for "GOD MUST CARE"! The GMC was a state of the art rig we had spent one month "tricking out". It was fabricated to carry 22 assembled bikes, as well as pull our cooking trailer. It would be the heart and soul of the Best of the West and future bus and bike tours. Chip was ferrying it back from Muncie, Indiana, after having put the final touches on it before our 11,000-mile maiden voyage. Fifteen miles from Upland, home base, two teenagers in a car plowed into the front of our big, beautiful hand-groomed truck. Bang! We were out of business! Chip wound up in a ditch, TRUCK TOTALED! Thankfully, the driver in the other car was not injured and his passenger received only minor injuries! (It had the potential for being much worse!) We had one week to buy another truck and reconfigure it. (Oh, Chip was pulling the cooking trailer at the time. It came out unscathed, as did Chip!) The following Tuesday we were at the auction with hopes of replacing the GMC. Hundreds of vehicles were sold, but our replacement wasn't one of them.

A car dealer friend had just purchased some gas company utility trucks and said that we could have one at cost. We checked them out Tuesday afternoon and headed home with a 1991 one-ton Dodge with a great utility work-box on the back. We had killed Cinderella and had replaced her with one of her ugly sisters! We had 3 days to turn our Dodge into a working piece of equipment.

Long story short, the Dodge performed wonderfully. "I think I can, I think I can..." and it did!
MORSELS FROM YOU

I receive letters all year long from you, our support team. You send morsels that enlighten us here at Wheels.

"We act as though comfort and luxury were the chief requirements of life, when all we need to make us happy is something to be enthusiastic about." (Charles Kingsley)

"Dear Lord - So far today, God, I've done all right. I haven't gossiped, haven't lost my temper, haven't been greedy, grumpy, nasty, selfish or even over indulgent. I'm very thankful for that. But in a few minutes, God, I'm going to get out of bed. And from then on, I'm probably going to need a lot more HELP! Amen."

Even if you're on the right track you'll get run over if you just sit there." (Will Rogers)

BUSES

"OH PLEASE DON'T LEAVE US, MR. LINCOLN. WE'LL BE GOOD!"

We are down to two Possums. When we started the bus program our staff was composed of college age men who were "foot loose and fancy free"! We had more drivers than we had program! Most of our bus runs left on a Wednesday night and returned late Sunday or early Monday. What was work with a vacation perk became labor intensive. Our insurance carriers do not want anyone younger than 25 years of age driving the buses. Most of this age group now are married with children. No way can they get away for four days and five nights. On top of that are the required CDL (Commercial Driver's License) and drug testing.

Bob Lincoln continues to be the driving force, no pun intended, behind the Possum program. Coordinating drivers, even finding enough drivers, is a weekly chore. Many well intended drivers have to back out at the last minute making for extra stress. Keeping the buses on the right maintenance schedule is yet another neck tighter. Just keeping the equipment washed on the outside and cleaned on the inside takes the better part of a day. The government is always updating regulations and, before you know it, Bob has yet another form to fill out.

Leaving Upland on a Wednesday night, picking up 30 junior high schoolers, driving all night, cooking breakfast and then a full day of activity, make for a short life. Then you do the same thing Friday, Saturday and Sunday and arrive back in Upland late Sunday night or early Monday morning. The biggie is trying to recuperate Monday and Tuesday and get ready for another trip the following Wednesday night! We have tried to cut back on some of the scheduling for the buses. We could run twice the number of bus trips if we had the manpower. Hats off to Bob and crew!

We receive very encouraging mail from participants in the bus program. I can't tell you the number of Possum-type programs that have sprung up over the years. People are always kind and push the compliments our way. Wheels has always been on the cutting edge with ideas.
SUMMER OF 1999

The summer of 1998 will not have a Wandering Wheels’ U.S. crossing. We’re taking a break and making a big push for 1999. Our ‘99 crossing is being designed to encourage young people to join us. We are providing scholarship help and additional help in a bicycle purchase or use of a Wheels’ bike. We’re aiming at making the trip available to high schoolers, freshmen through senior high, at half the price of a normal trail fee. There will also be opportunity for younger riders to put together fund raisers or other means of generating funds to help in raising their trail fee.

We want the summer of ’99 to be reminiscent of our early tours in the ’60s and ’70s. Hopefully, with some serious financial help on our end, more families can afford to send a teenager on a coast-to-coast tour.

SUMMER COAST TO COAST 1997

This past summer we completed our 52nd U.S. crossing. Chip Gosnell, along with staff, guided a 37-member team from Seattle to Rehoboth Beach, Delaware.

You always wonder if the magic of providing people with the experience of a lifetime will have the desired results. In the heat of battle, the U.S. crossing does not look like it will result in anything at all that will bring thankfulness and praise. Shortly after completing the crossing letters started trickling in from riders and they were all “smiley faced!” This indeed made the effort of the staff worthwhile.

I rode the way I wanted to ride, I appreciated the way the trip was organized such that I could be afforded this luxury.

Dear Friends,

by Lois Brown

When does it begin? Does it sneak up on us? I’m speaking about middle age of course. Do you just accept it or do you put up a fight? Dick Brown would not accept it without a fight. Some people bury things to make them feel younger. After Dick tried this route, he chose exercise. At first it was some running around the neighborhood, then he started to enter a few races. Since our family always did everything together, when Dick ran a race everyone went along. Soon the rest of us were running, too.

Even as Dick began his running program, he was aware that he was not invincible. With a history of heart disease on both sides of his family he was not surprised when he was diagnosed with heart disease, also. He believed that his running saved his life, because it alerted him to the fact that something was not right about his health. He then began a program of diet and medication along with his running. For most runners, lurking in the back of their minds, is always a challenge to try running a marathon. Dick always one to meet any challenge, decided to try 26.2 miles. He found that he liked it! This sent him on a trail of marathons that eventually led him to run one in all fifty states and D.C.

With that challenge met, bicycling became another passion. Since endurance exercise was his forte, distance cycling became his hobby also. Just as with running, there are always challenges to be met. First there is a century (100 miles); then across Florida (675 miles in one day); and then trips that lasted 2 or 3 days. Finally in 1995 he joined Wandering Wheels and rode with our son across the United States. If you ever heard Dick talk about that trip and how it really lets you see America the Beautiful—just like the song—then you would want to go too. So with a tandem bike we decided to go across America together. I found it to be everything that he said it would be. Dick told me almost daily that he wanted to ride across a third time with our daughter.

God had other plans for Dick. On a beautiful, cloudless day just outside Rapid City, South Dakota, he called him home. Dick died doing what he loved best, without pain or suffering, and in the company of wonderful, caring Christian friends. God always provides for us and he did on that day too. The end of Dick’s journey was peaceful and our family and friends are grateful for that. The wonderful memories he left us will endure forever.

Thank you, Dick.

Lois Brown
JOEL

California Highway 1 is a biking mecca. It's mile after mile of smooth, paved, roller coaster-type terrain. The Pacific Ocean on one side, cliffs and trees on the other. Touristy-type villages punctuate the route every 30 miles or so. We were three riding days from San Francisco and the close of our 8-week Best of the West tour. Just out of Fort Bragg, California, Joel Jelsema, son of Jim Jelsema, Vice President of Wheels, hit a high speed corner too fast and slammed into a logging truck! It seems like I've been holding my breath throughout 30 years of cycling, waiting for something like this to happen. I just knew he must be dead or seriously injured. He wound up under the bed of the truck with a badly scraped foot and ankle. When the driver heard Joel screaming, he said that it was the prettiest sound he'd ever heard! He was alive! The bike was wrapped around the front wheel of the truck like a shirt in a clothes wringer. Getting Joel home and receiving reports of the healing process have given me many hours of reflecting on how blessed we've been over the years—so few scrapes like this!

BEST OF THE WEST

“Can it get any better?” This was the general attitude of the eight-week cycling team on the Best of the West tour. Coasting from Flagstaff, Arizona, down to Sedona would be the first coating of pure geological splendor. The great variety of people from all over the world standing at the edge of the Grand Canyon seems to make this WONDER even greater. Zion and Bryce Canyon are back-to-back beauties. Bryce was the team's favorite. We hit Salt Lake and the Mormon Temple en route to Yellowstone. The scenery along the way rivals that of the parks. Glacier National Park was our final U.S. park before entering Canada. We bused from Glacier to Calgary (Alberta, Canada), picked up supplies and headed for Banff and Jasper National Parks. Nothing can prepare you for the Canadian Rockies! We would be encased in mountains for the next 200 miles—simply a panorama of raw grandeur! I'm a little embarrassed to think it's taken this long to finally experience this part of North America.

We bused and biked across Alberta and British Columbia to the Pacific Coast.

One of our camping nights was on an Indian reservation about 200 miles from the Pacific Coast at New Hazelton, British Columbia, on the Skeena River. A delightful Indian mom ran the campground. We worked on her daughter's bike. The following morning an Indian man came into camp, drunk. He had a bucketful of freshly netted salmon, big ones, about 20 pounds a piece. We wheeled and dealt. He wasn't too drunk, he extracted 20 bucks from us for a couple of giant fish. What a feast!

We ferried north to Ketchikan out of Prince Rupert, British Columbia, just to say we went to Alaska! The Alaskan ferries are a real “happening”! You sleep on deck, check the whales out at 3:00 A.M. and pick up a coffee an hour later! We ferried 24 hours south to Vancouver Island. Don't miss Vancouver Island, if you have a chance to go there. It has great little towns, fun festivals and is slow paced.

We ferried back to the States, entering at Port Angeles, Washington, and then followed Highway 1 all the way to San Francisco. The marvel of Highway 1 is the way it is seemingly sculptured out of the cliffs along the Pacific Ocean. The whole scene is worthy of praise. “Thank you, Father, for eyes to see and a spirit able to soak up all to which we were exposed!”

FALL BREAKAWAY

This trip is becoming like a high school reunion. Most of the riders are repeats, some as far back as 1984. That was our first year. This year we rode from the northern portion of Maryland to the southern tip. We took in everything in between: Harpers Ferry, two days in D.C., Chesapeake Bay, Annapolis, etc.etera. Great trip!

The gang is never hurting for activity in the evenings... card playing, and plenty of reminiscing!

Next year we head from northern Florida in October.
GLADYS

Bundridge, Alabama, is one of thousands of small southern towns in the middle of nowhere located at the junction of Highway 231 and Highway 6. There's enough traffic off of Route 231 to justify a Hardee's Restaurant. Our spring coast to coast makes this a traditional stopping point. You can't beat Hardee's cinnamon roll with extra topping about 10:00 A.M. Last year it had rained all morning and we were wet and "hypothermic" cold. Thirty wet cyclists dragging themselves into any establishment can raise an eyebrow or two. We made a mess—rain coats hanging everywhere. Bare feet drying out... we looked like drowned rats! Enters Gladys! She is the hostess, about 50 years old, of Aunt Jemima's proportion and looks. She has on medium high heeled shoes and dressed like she's headed for church. I've never seen anyone dote on a group like ours the way she did! She made us feel like the prodigal returning home. She mopped at our feet. She brought us toweling and refilled our emptied cups of hot drinks. We all left with plastic bags for our freezing hands, plastic bags for our feet and even big trash bags to put over our boots! We couldn't have been better treated, not even by a family member. She was a highlight of the trip...maybe even an Angel! The team had been collecting loose change to give to someone special along the way. You guessed it! Gladys got our $50 gift. (She probably gave it away!)

HOLIDAY BLESSINGS

P.S. Just had a coast to coaster drop in, a youth pastor from up north. He was babbly and contagious about his '94 "Fat Tire" crossing. So many stories and good things...Another letter closed with "You guys, WW, the trip...mean more to me, to my sanity or perhaps 'my brand of sanity' is better, than any other thing in my life. It is 'church'...it is the 'body of Christ' with all his humaness thrown in..."

1998 TRIP SCHEDULE

**CABIN FEVER** JANUARY 18-28
GOODBYE ICICLES! HELLO SUNSHINE!

**COAST TO COAST** MARCH 14-APRIL 22
RIDE ACROSS AMERICA

**SPRING FEVER** MAY 14-20
FROM THE GULF OF MEXICO TO CANADA

**SPOKE-TACULAR** JUNE 23-JULY 19
BEST OF THE WEST

**LOBSTER CITY** JULY 31-AUGUST 9
SOOT UP THE ATLANTIC SEABOARD

**BIG TIME FELLOWSHIP** OCTOBER 16-24
BEAT OLD MAN WINTER TO THE PUNCH

WANDERING WHEELS

P.O. BOX 207
UPLAND, IN 46989

765/998-7490

www.wanderingwheels.org

NEWSLETTER