Wandering Wheels Newsletter, March 1985

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Dear Wheels' "family",

We're headed into our sixth week of the "Circle America - Perimeter '85" Tour. Wow! One tenth of the tour is over. Or, better yet, we have ninety percent of the tour yet to experience! At six weeks we have pedaled over 1,500 miles! So much has happened thus far.

The second day into the trip Sandy, one of our "munchkins", slipped on wet railroad tracks, fell and broke her hand. This brought sadness to the group, but we put her on the tandem with her boyfriend, Al, and now the mending is complete. By the end of the first week another rider had a girlfriend problem and headed home to offer support, but after two weeks of absence was able to come back to us. He missed 300 miles of riding and is in the process of making up the miles so that he can say he rode the whole distance. If he is to receive a coast-to-coast medal for the "Lauderdale to San Diego" segment of the trip, he needs to make up the miles. This should give you some feeling for the spirit in camp. Another gal had a knee pop out on her (a non-bicycle related problem) and is still on the mend. She asked if she could drive the follow-up van in place of riding a bike. It's a good feeling to sense their drive to stay together. Once again, the feeling has been "community" and friendship and I love the vibrations!

In these six weeks the "Circle America" group has given nearly twenty programs and has collected about the same number of solid newspaper articles, along with having done several television shots. They were very well received cycling around the coast of Florida. Oh, the envy they created on the part of the senior citizens down in the sunny south! The semi-trailer collects a following from scores of people wherever it goes. This fifty-
person bunkhouse has been mistaken for a horse carrier, giraff hauler, and you name it! It seems old-timers have felt a special spirit in what we are doing which probably goes back to the corn huskings, barn raisings, et cetera, of their day. Anyway, we have not had a gimmick prior to this create this much stir! It has been called an "ark" among other things, but as of this time we do not have an official name for it. That will come, I'm sure!

In West Palm the semi was parked next to a day-care center. When the parents came to pick up their kids one of the little guys insisted on his dad coming over to see the unit. The nursery gang had had a personal tour earlier in the day. Well, this boy's dad was a real sharpie. He had a gold necklace with medallion around his neck and wore a Mercedes sports jacket to match his car! The child and father, with the child leading his father by the hand, made their way to the semi. I introduced myself and then the boy took his pop into the unit and came out ten minutes later. The dad was really floored! In so many words he said that that was the most amazing rig he had ever seen! He took a brochure and walked away, but both were jabbering about the bicycle gang and the semi! It has been that way ever since we hit the road.

We attended the opening of the Billy Graham Crusade in Fort Lauderdale. Graham is such a powerful guy and really rings true.

The weather during the first days of the trip was so helpful in finishing up the details on the equipment. Visiting churches along the way that were introduced to Wheels in past years has been another plus. The growth of the Wheels' program is a real source of encouragement to the people who knew us way back when.

Hand in hand with the churches' responses to the gang is the number of individuals that have come to visit us--Wheels' vets from years past! They seem to slip from out of the woodwork. I received a note from a young man who came to see us who had actually ridden with us twelve years ago. It simply said, "Thanks for the good start many years ago. My life and business are built around the Christian thoughts offered while on the trip." And then there are all the young couples who have greeted us and reminded us that one or both of them were with us and that it is now their dream to have their children ride with us! It sometimes is a little overwhelming!

It is good we are out of Florida! We had so many friends greet us and all of them wanted to take us out to dinner. I'm afraid the pounds gained would have severely challenged the bikes! One cycling group was greeted by a business man. When he found out the nature of the tour he invited the six cyclists into Denny's and fed all of them breakfast! Boy, will
that story be repeated!

Alabama greeted us with our first hills. Whew! We surprised a Baptist Church one Sunday morning coming in unannounced. This was a big, big First Baptist Church! They invited us to sing the benediction. This was in the town of Pascagoula, Mississippi. We asked about "the squirrel" and they all laughed! (If you haven't heard the song, forget the above statement!)

Then it was New Orleans and several days of Louisiana. So far this state has been very enjoyable. We had our longest day of ninety miles coming into New Orleans. The weaker riders were really "pooped", but we need days like that to sharpen us. Some of our best "love stuff" happens when we are hurting. In fact, the devotional for that morning was taken from Romans 5. It's funny how many times you can read Scripture and only every now and then does it really click. Well, Romans 5, verses 3 through 5, were clearly meant for us that day! "...Suffering or tribulation works perseverance, and perseverance character, and character hope. And hope makes one unashamed..." Pushing the team into some of these tough situations really leads them into feelings about God they can get no other way. They radiate God better as a result of the suffering!

A gal from the church where I'm writing this letter just walked by and commented on what a wonderful group the Wheels' kids are. I just smiled!

I'm enclosing a sample of some of the news clippings from the tour, trusting it will inspire you. I regularly request church groups to pray with us. YOU, our friends on the mailing list, be encouraged that I never lose a dependence on YOUR prayer support! In fact, take the whole last page and pin it up somewhere as a reminder! Get out your old newsletter and post the route! If you need specific information about finding us en route, contact the office. We will never tire of visiting with Wheels' friends throughout this trip.

**Work Project**

By the way, the work projects have been going well. They have served to unify the team. One was in a Christian trailer court and the supervisors were so impressed with the pace of the riders' work. Another project placed us in a
In closing let me welcome those of you who are "new receivers" of our Wandering Wheels' newsletter! As a result of your financial investment on behalf of one or more of the "Circle America" riders, we have taken the liberty of including you in this mailing. We would like to continue to keep you updated on the Wheels' program, especially throughout the "Circle America" tour and will plan to do just that unless, of course, your preference is otherwise. Please do feel free to tell us if the newsletter is of no interest to you. However, we look forward to a growing relationship with you just as we have with so many others who now receive our periodic newsletter.

I've asked Curt Anderson back at home base to briefly update you on the rest of the program which is under his leadership while I am away from the office. His information will close out this letter.

Love and warmest regards,

Bob Davenport, Director
Although the Perimeter Trip is receiving much attention, those of us here in Upland are as busy as ever with the "normal" things, bus and bike trips and kitchen retreats.

Kicking off the year with the Rose Parade and all the fanfare surrounding that event, our annual interterm bike trip combined the best of two worlds. After spending five days on the rugged but beautiful California coastline we continued our riding across the desert from San Diego to Tucson, Arizona. Our biology prof from Taylor University was certainly in his glory as we all experienced the beauty and variety of God's creation.

Having just finished our last of three spring break trips in Florida it is rather humbling to realize God's protection over and provision for us as 150 people traveled 250 miles in the heavy Florida traffic! Each trip was unique yet in His infinite wisdom God put the details for each trip together to meet the needs of the individuals on the trip. We're always anxious to see what serendipity experiences happen that will make the trip special and memorable in each life. Each trip had its share of interesting and exciting times and God used them to teach us and to demonstrate His love for us.

Naturally the buses are still rolling along with the next two months being particularly busy. However, we thank God for those many opportunities to share Him with individuals on each trip. We trust Him to use us and the buses in His own distinctive way in the lives of people.

SPECIAL NOTE: We still have a few openings on our Southwest Trip the first two weeks of June. Come join us—you won't regret it! Call the office for more information.
Cycling students to circle U.S. as college course

BY DENNIS O'SHEA
UNITED PRESS INTERNATIONAL

You could call it a crash course on America, though preferably students will get through it without major collisions.

Perhaps a better description of what Taylor University at Upland, Ind., is offering during the next nine months is a “fast-paced curriculum” -- 50 miles a day, in fact -- traveling by bicycle quite literally around the country.

More than 60 young cycling enthusiasts -- Taylor students, undergraduates from other schools and even college graduates who signed up just for the experience -- climbed on their 10-speeds near Brunswick, Ga., on Feb. 4 and headed south.

They won't stop pedaling until late November. By then, they will have circled the entire continental United States -- from Florida across the Gulf Coast to Texas, then north west up through California to Seattle, east through the northern tier states to Maine, and back down the Atlantic Coast.

In all, it's roughly a 10,000-mile journey -- complete with blisters, blown tires and 12,000-foot mountain passes to pedal through.

It seems like an awful lot just to pick up two semesters worth of credit and end up where you started, but these students think it's well worth the effort.

"Biking is the best way to see America," Janech Bryant, 23, said in a telephone call from one of the group's first stops, near Jacksonville, Fla. "You can see it, you can get off and taste it and feel it and smell it. It brings all your senses into it.

"You're out here and you can't change what you're up against -- the wind, the weather, the hills. You grow strong because you have to adapt."

The 24-credit-hour "perimeter trip" is sponsored by a bicycling club at Taylor, an evangelical Christian college.

The club, Wandering Wheels, was founded in 1964 by then-Taylor football coach and ex-UCLA and Canadian Football League player Bob Davenport. Its purpose is to combine physical challenges with spiritual development.

Besides the cycling and courses in photography, religion, geography, the biology of the Pacific Coast, history and psychology, riders on the perimeter trip are expected to devote time to spreading their faith.

They are also performing service projects in the towns along their route -- whether it's slapping a fresh coat of paint on a city museum in Texas or doing yard work for a home bound senior citizen in Idaho.

"As Christians, we do a lot of talking, but it's time for some action," said university staffer Ronald Keller, who is coordinating details of the trip for Davenport. "One day a week we're working for people across America, people who have needs and may not be able to have them fulfilled somewhere else."

Feeding five dozen or so ravenous riders and then putting them up on the road every night for 10 months is a little expensive -- unless you bring a kitchen and a couple of college dorms along with you.

Wandering Wheels converted a semi-trailer the size of a moving van into a 50-bunk portable hotel that follows the riders from city to city. Also on the road is a bus with 12 more bunks, storage compartments and a kitchen and a van with extra bikes, tools, repair kits and seating for the support staff and any injured riders.

"I've ridden a little bit, but not a whole lot," said Jane DeHaan, 20, a student from Houghton College in New York. "I'm coming at this pretty new. I feel this is a growing time for me spiritually. I feel I needed to do something to challenge me as a Christian."