Wandering Wheels Newsletter, May 1983

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May 1983

Dear Wheels' Family,

I'm a little sensitive about the ol' Wheels' Newsletter. Paul Jenks, rider on coast to coast '70 and Europe '71 trips, sent a newsletter from the mountains of Thailand where he and his family are missionaries. Wow! Our news seems simple when compared to his! I get excited about a beautiful building we are finishing and then I discover the people in Paul's world are excited about finding enough twigs with which to build a home! I'm sure their minds are less on tomorrow than ours ever hope to be. Plans, plans, plans! Dreams, hopes, wishes! Well, enough for the guilt trip.

In spite of all the problems in the world, our little world of Upland, Indiana, moves on and one of the hottest items in town is the Wheels' Kitchen. The Kitchen has had enough care go into it that it is almost human--it has a pulse! The building is at the stage where one would call it finished, but, in all reality, it will never be finished!

The most recent finishing touches are tile for the floor of the cooking area and carpet for the major floor space. Additions like these always reflect friends and special gifts. I just learned that if the carpet design is remembered after being in a building it is out of place. Funny, but the big heavy duty rug we have is so simple and neutral that one doesn't remember anything about it. The shiny tile floor next to it is a real compliment.

The variety of activity that takes place in the Kitchen is amazing! The most consistent activity, however, is the families' "thing". This happens Monday or Tuesday night of each week. The crowd averages about sixty--sometimes we have as many as ninety and as few as forty. You would be pleased by the pace. It is , and downright real. One mom, a single gal, said that this is the only night out for her and the kids. Another said that the family night helps her have some clout with her kids. If they don't behave, then they don't come to the family dinner. It is fun to be a part of a gal's life that way. Oh, there's also the little girl who asked if she could bring a friend. Boy, is that crucial! Here'a a kid who probably has nothing to brag about, no prestigious item to serve as a plus in a relationship, and bang! Can I invite my friend? That really makes the building bigger than life. Mothers sit together and discuss things that they have in common while the kids run all over the place. How do you spell "relief"?
Wheels has made many new friends as a result of the Kitchen. I rode my bike to the hardware store to get a rake, recently, and I waved and said "hello" to more people than I can ever remember waving and talking to before. Everett Ross, a new friend and just recently out of the hospital, stopped me. He gave me an update on his condition and said that he missed the gang at the Kitchen. Everett is retired, a widower, but still very much on the go. He has become the "granddaddy" at our family dinners. He has a custom fishing pole business and keeps all of us entertained with his stories. He even shares his soup recipes and entertains us with playing musical bones. I'm sure he still has some surprises up his sleeve for us!

On any given night at the Kitchen there might be a slumber party; a party (spare me!); an class; a bridal or baby ; or a reunion of whomever and whatever. There have been weddings and receptions and I wouldn't be surprised if our first funeral won't soon be held here. Really, it would be a great place for a funeral service! A local church group came recently to see about copying the building for a similar ministry. Hopefully, it will always serve as a catalyst to encourage people in their walk with Jesus Christ.

Groups who come on weekends have become the big users of the building. Let me describe what we call a "weekend retreat". The group may number from ten to sixty. They arrive around eight o'clock Friday evening and stay through Sunday afternoon. Friday night is "get acquainted" time and usually includes a classy snack, games, and a movie, all of which, hopefully, will tire them out! Our TV is equipped with a device that allows us to show movies. Hollywood really does come up with some great movies that can be used not only as entertainment, but also as a springboard for devotions. Champ is a real tear-jerker. It helps the kids feel, or better understand, levels of loving and giving. Encounter of the Third Kind speaks rather directly to the point of believing. There are many good ones that we have used.

Weather permitting we ride bikes on Saturday. We have about eighty well kept bikes for such purposes. Normally, we go about thirty miles. It is long enough to give them some "war stories". Devotions are spliced in a couple of times throughout the day. Saturday night we slow things down, go to Ivanhoe's, and take in another movie.

Sunday everyone gets to sleep in! Yea! We have become friends by Sunday and now wish we had a few more days together with the gang. The "biggie" on Sunday is our junkyard church service. It is becoming more and more a kind of salvation (salvage) yard. Carl and May Miller, the owners of the "yard", are dears and teach us a lot. After a good lunch it's time for goodbyes and new friends are tucked away in our hearts. Many good letters come back to us in response to the love and attention the staff has given during a weekend retreat.
**ZEBEDEE**

Our old fisherman. We bought him in Santa Barbara. He's redwood, which makes him our memento from California. We tell people Zeb is watching his two sons walk away after having announced they were going to become "fishers of men". Zeb is a little ticked off. "Hey, guys, what about the fishing business?" We need to rejoice when people "split" to follow Jesus.

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**PORCH SWING**

Notice the fish design in the railing. Much of the building has this kind of symbolism in it. The swing is a gift from David Bear, Wheels '73 and '81, handmade in his workshop. The other "fishy" part is catching Julie studying!

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**STAINED GLASS**

This is one of eight windows made by Carolyn LeMaire and given to us for the Kitchen. Her daughter, Sandy, was close to Wheels while a student at Taylor. We receive some beautiful comments about the windows. The colors are bright and create a good mood for our devotional times.

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**CHURCH CORNER**

The windows can be seen behind "yours truly" during one of our devotional periods. They really make a super backdrop and, hopefully, put peoples' minds on "things above".
PLAYER PIANO

The piano continues to be the most entertaining piece of equipment in the building. It meets the needs of young and old alike. The playing rolls have the words on them so sing-alongs are common. The staff guys did an unusual job of refinishing the piano.

MOVIE MACHINE

We don't use it for TV, but for specially selected movies. It looks like a one-eyed, monster. It allows us to settle the kids down in the evening. We can get three good movies for $10, which is a good deal.

JUKE BOX

Hey, you don't have to put any money in this. The "teeny-boppers" huddle around like it is a guru. Some old tunes on it make it enjoyable. The volume switch is controlled by the staff!

PINBALL

These are the guys that really attract the attention. It's funny, but many of the older ladies are the hardest to get away from the silly things! The pool table can be seen in the left corner. It is a good piece of equipment. We also have a ping-pong and some great games made out of all wood.
The hood over the stove has been dolled up with a very attractive bit of copper and wood work. We'll work on the "apostrophe" in Wheels' some day!

Good shot of the Monday/Tuesday night gang. We always introduce all the new friends. Check out the fireplace. What a "friend" it has become. It is all handmade by Wheels' people. The benches are also special--they came from a local prison.

It looks like we're just getting started on food. This is a pretty typical shot of a family gathering. Barbi and the gals do a great job of loving the people while feeding them.

Tom Thiery, our artist friend from Michigan, has delivered his first installment of several pictures that will make up a mural. The mural will depict the history of transportation with religiously symbolic thoughts woven into the pictures. This one is the last panel showing man's last journey--Earth to Heaven!
30-MILER

The backroads of Upland provide a million-dollar recreational area. Can you imagine what it would cost to pave 30 miles? Little or no traffic is terrific. The kids are nicely "poohed" after the run.

FARM AND COWS

Some of our city kids are simply overwhelmed with the farm animals. There are several good farms in the area. This is the Miller Purdue Farm and is often host to meeting our needs for visiting a farm.

CHURCH

What a joy to sit in an open field and feel God's Presence! The old '55 Chevy never had it so good! It has a wooden cross propped against it. The kids made the cross. It is quite an altar. That's a hubcap on the table—our offering plate!

SHOWERS

After all the riding and visiting the junk yard for church we're ready for a shower. The great thing about the showers is that they are handmade out of stainless steel from an old kitchen. They represent Rich Hartikainen's labor of love and are really pretty.
Excuse me for being the eternal optimist, but the inter-term trip this past January was tops! Things were simply GOOD! We arrived in California on the heels of a big storm, stayed three weeks, and then left just as the rain started falling again for the start of a second major storm. God doesn't put together weather systems just for sixty bike riders, but what a good feeling to participate in such unusual circumstances! The three weeks we were there were hailed by the Californians as three of the best they had had in years. I think I detected a wink from the sky and God saying, "Don't be so sure I didn't have you guys in mind!" Who cares! The blessing was ours!

The spring trips started with students from North Park College riding in Florida. This has become a tradition. It's an encouraging thing to be involved with a sister college.

Our Taylor gang was bused to Florida the week before Easter. You are right—it was a great trip! We had several good meetings. Most of them were unplanned, spur-of-the-moment things. The Taylor kids were really moved by a group of mentally handicapped people in Titusville. We stood on asphalt and sang; they sat in wheelchairs and listened. What a contrast! Many of them cried—many of us cried! It was a spontaneous emotional combustion!

Using the Possums we took two other groups down to Florida right in on top of the Taylor gang. As the Taylor students went home a Chicago youth group and Spring Arbor College students took their place. Don Ferris from Arlington Heights Evangelical Free Church in the Chicago area continues to bring his flock to the Wheels' staff, and it's a privilege to share in his ministry. Roger Varland and Denny Johnson, former Wheels' staffers, helped lead the Spring Arbor group. Denny is Dean of Students at Spring Arbor and Roger is a head resident there. It is great to see these men filling slots like these.

SUMMER 83 It used to be that all our work was in the summer, but now we see it as a reprieve from the pace of the school year. Memorial Day weekend will start the summer off for us when we take a small team on a National Park tour. The tour will run through June 19.

COAST TO COAST--Number 24--will leave Upland on the 11th of June. The team will start riding from Lincoln City, Oregon, on the 15th of June and will end the trip in Rehoboth Beach, Delaware, the 25th of July. The cross-country trips continue to overwhelm me.

August and Vermont—they seem to go together now. This will be our second summer in a row in Vermont. We'll conduct three trips there—they'll be short and sweet! So many who want to take a Wheels' trip are limited by time so we will do some short ones.

We'd love to see you en route on any of the summer trips. Telephone or write and let us know of your interest.
LONG Distance Dreams

'84 - two coast-to-coast trips: 1. a traditional tour
2. an all-dirt-tour on new, all-terrain-bikes

February '85 through October '85: a 10,000-mile, ten-month perimeter tour of the U.S.

By the time you get this letter and finish reading it we will be in need of all the prayer support you can offer!

Love and warmest Christian regards,

Bob Davenport, Director

BD/SS

P.S. or B.N. (BIG NEWS)

Steve Manganello, Wheels' man in charge of the Possum ministry for the past several years, has moved to another spot within the University. It's a step up for him, both in position and use of talents. He gets to wear a coat and tie to work each day—woo! Taylor's Advancement Department asked him to bring his talents to their department. It really is a good move for him and one where he can grow. He is leaving behind a very good history and one that has wonderfully marked thousands of people. He is still nearby and will still be a part of us. Barb Davenport and Mike Manganello are taking up the slack in that position.