Dear Wheels' friends,

The following pictorial of the first Wheels' trip to China should give you some idea of the impact it made on the team! The China run was 100% successful—everything rang true! All our expectations and more were met. As a result, more China tours are being planned.

The miracle of air travel still amazes me. The 747's are like small hotels. The mixing of many nations in one 500-person compartment is always intriguing to me. Mothers taking children home to grandparents, business people making last minute calculations and tourists all blend into one community. A transcontinental plane ride is still one of America's best deals for entertainment. To think how you can plop down in China after 15 hours of flying boggles my mind. It is such a simple trip to make nowadays.

were kept busy watching a panoramic view of China as we rode along. We rode off-road, all-terrain bikes which proved to be an excellent choice. They required virtually no maintenance. They were bright red with nice shining rims and handlebars and multiple gears (10 speeds)—something seldom seen in China! We were a spectacular sight to the Chinese; but probably even more spectacular to us was the sight of them riding their bikes! The loads they carry on their bikes is mind boggling...pigs, ducks, lumber, metal, 3 and 4 people at a time...it was simply overwhelming!

Our guides referred to our cycling team as "ducks"! The reason, we discovered, was obvious. They felt much like the guy in this picture herding his ducks! The China Wheels' gang had a bus out in front marking the corners, there was a bus limping along behind nursing the stragglers, and behind the second bus was an empty truck that never was used for its intended purpose, that of picking up "pooped" riders. Our guides were a little perplexed that we insisted on riding
The team flew in and out of Hong Kong. While in Hong Kong we were housed by Youth With A Mission. The people there are very sensitive and caring. We made many friends there at YWAM (pronounced Y-WAM—like "shazam"!!).

During our actual tour of "the Mainland", the Chinese government did an excellent job of hosting the team through an organization called China Youth Travel. Our guides became our friends. We were in the People's Republic of China for 16 days and all of our travel there was via bicycle.

The prospects of things to do in the future with the Chinese are limitless. The possibility of bringing Chinese to America to cycle coast to coast greatly interests me. Wouldn't it be exciting to mix Chinese with American church families for eight weeks? Think of the prospects of having hundreds of "Believing friends" involved in the lives of the visiting Chinese! Wow! How the letters would sail back and forth after that! What about a Wheels'-type Kitchen-Retreat House in the Canton area? Or what about sending work teams over to spruce up some of the churches? The story and facts of Jesus could fast become reality!

A typical day for us included 35 to 50 miles of cycling. The riding was very enjoyable. The traffic was cordial. Although initially intimidating, we found that the people drive small vehicles and blow big horns! In fact, most of our riders got into the swing of things by purchasing bicycle bells! About 30 per cent of our travel was on dirt roads which, in the end, provided us with some of our best experiences but which also made the riding quite demanding. We spent the day in 100 degree temperatures so most of us were wet all day long just from body perspiration. Our minds all the miles mapped out for us. They told us that so many of the other groups cut their biking short and want to go to the hotel to disco and drink beer. I really believe our gang left a very impressionable mark on our guides and drivers.

Back to the beginning part about the ducks, we saw men leading herds of them down the highway—hundreds upon hundreds of them. What a sight that was! The Pearl River Delta area in which we were riding seemed to be half water, so raising ducks makes sense because they can be raised cheaply as a result of the natural water habitat. Many of the hotels served duck as an entree.

Speaking of food, we really were not sure what we were being served half the time. Chinese do not serve chicken legs, wings, breasts, et cetera, they just chop it all up and you take what you get—bones, splinters and all! That is not really a complaint. We had nine course meals every meal!

Such pretty faces! It is hard to differentiate between nationalities when you simply compare a smile or a curious look. These gals could very well live just down the block from where you and I live. They were so close, humanly speaking, that it hurt to think that politically we are worlds apart. I wonder what would happen if common people from different lands could mix more and more? Would we have to come to blows? I could not imagine ever wanting to kill, or to be responsible for killing, any of these so-called communists. I'm sure that they had the same feelings about us.

They, like we Americans, like to dress up; to work hard; to have free time to enjoy each other; to party; to spend a lot of time shopping. I'm sure that they would have enjoyed sharing ideas with us if only we could have spoken their language.

Can you see the ribbon in the Chinese lady's hair? It was placed there by Barbi! It really brightened up her very plain, black pajama-type outfit.
The "pop" stand could be compared to the neighborhood kids' lemonade stand here in the USA. The pop was being cooled in tap water. By the way, it was one rung below Kool Aid, but we were happy for just about anything! She was such a gracious lady! She wasn't going to charge us.

This village was off on a dirt road and, according to our guides, the people living there had never seen Americans before. It gave us a little bit of an idea of how a circus freak must feel.

The hint of free enterprise is showing up all over China. The people who sell with a profit motivation seem to be so much more interesting. They smile and really want to serve the foreigner. Our guides said that the contrast between government stores and privately owned stores is significant enough that the government is allowing more and more creativeness on the part of the merchant.

My first impression when the water buffalo and plowman came into view was simply one of seeing a beautiful picture.

The buffalo is such a humble animal. The temperature was easily 100 degrees during most of the working hours and yet the buffalo and man were as one plowing the fields. My mind could hardly comprehend the relationship. The animal obviously had no options, but the man spent all day walking behind the plow calf deep in mud. What were his thoughts? Money could not be his major motivation. Perhaps providing food or trying to get ahead were some motivating factors. All these thoughts and more went through my mind. Why the uncanny drive to plow a field and care for an animal? Go home to what? Receive thanks from whom? Look forward to what? I pitied him and envied him all at the same time. The care he demonstrated for his work was so obvious.

One scene that stuck me as being so caring was the owner of this bike is taking a fish home from the market. There is no sack for the fish, just a string to attach it to the bike. Nothing goes unused or is wasted and there are few frills. Private lawns and gardens are virtually nonexistent. There are private cars, and there are a lot of bikes—bikes by the thousands, in fact! However, even owning a bicycle takes some serious budgeting. There are numerous places one can travel to around the world to experience poverty, but the Chinese of the Guangdong Province have a beautiful attitude toward their lack of material blessings. They just get on with life! So much of the posture God would have the Believing Community assume is, in fact, being lived out by these dear people who have been "slugging it out" for thousands of years.

Chinese children always seemed to be well kept and well mannered. There was a gentleness about the Chinese people that truly ministered to me. The word "meek" often came to mind as I mingled with the crowds. Jesus, when He shared the Beatitudes, must have been dealing with the same kind of people that we saw in China!

How basic can you get? The owner of this bike is taking a fish home from the market. There is no sack for the fish, just a string to attach it to the bike. Nothing goes unused or is wasted and there are few frills. Private lawns and gardens are virtually nonexistent. There are private cars, and there are a lot of bikes—bikes by the thousands, in fact! However, even owning a bicycle takes some serious budgeting. There are numerous places one can travel to around the world to experience poverty, but the Chinese of the Guangdong Province have a beautiful attitude toward their lack of material blessings. They just get on with life! So much of the posture God would have the Believing Community assume is, in fact, being lived out by these dear people who have been "slugging it out" for thousands of years.

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One scene that struck me as being so caring was the afternoon cooling of the animal when the plowman would let the animal rest in deep water. If that wasn't possible, he would pour water over it to cool it. Honest appreciation on the part of the man toward the animal was so obvious. Often you would catch the plowman resting in the Oriental squatting position sipping tea while the animal grazed. None of us would look forward to a daily routine such as this, but seeing it firsthand and experiencing this part of the Chinese farming tradition put some colorful touches on my appreciation for the whole of life. The world would be a sad place if we should lose these reminders.

We spent several days in Hong Kong. I dare anyone to be in Hong Kong very long and not be drawn to the streets. It's a shopper's paradise! I believe most of the team members felt this city was as fascinating as any in the world. It seemed to be a "place" in the middle of millions of people where free enterprise was at its best—wheeling and dealing, so to speak. I don't understand all the tax structure, but the system makes it an ideal shopping arena for both shopper and merchant. There are at least three McDonald's located in Hong Kong, along with a Pizza Hut, a Häagen-Dazs icecream shop, and stores carrying all the major brands of clothing. Anything in the camera line can be found there. A few of us had suits custom made. Silk ties cost less than a buck. The streets are jammed until late at night. I asked a merchant from India about his plans once Hong Kong is given back to the Chinese Government in 1997, and he said he has already made plans to move his operation to Singapore. You can feel some of the tenseness related to this future problem. It was common knowledge that construction was down and not expected to get any better due to the change in government scheduled for 1997.

One of the real surprises of our stopover in Canton (Guangzhou) was the visit to a Protestant church. We insisted on visiting this church although I am quite sure our guides could not believe we actually wanted to see a church. We have since learned there is also a beautiful Catholic church in Canton.

As we were visiting the Protestant church, the wife of the pastor, who spoke excellent English, stepped forward to talk to us. She was a real joy! We learned that Easter and Christmas are their two biggest services. Does that sound familiar? Their attendance is good throughout the year. They have started a seminary and next year's enrollment will be 25. We prayed in that building and then "passed the hat." The group gave about US$200 to help with the work there. I'd love to return in the near future and actually help work to restore the church. Wouldn't that be
The team is seated in front of one of the many fine hotels in which we stayed! I had better tell you now that this Wheels' team lived "high on the hog"! China Youth Travel, the organization that packaged our tour, absolutely insisted that our accommodations include lodging at FIVE STAR hotels and nine course meals. Never in Wheels' history have we "camped" so well! (I won't mention the air conditioning, television, and private telephones that were a part of our hotel accommodations!)

The spirit of the team was tops. Most were veteran riders; in fact, eight were Circle America I vets. They really were a good, gentle group of people with no complaints. Our guides commented several times about the spirit and attitude demonstrated by the riders.

The following is a warm paragraph taken from a letter we received from our guide, William:

"How did you enjoy your tour in Hong Kong? River and I miss you all very much. Of all bicycle tours that our travel service has guided so far, your group is the toughest one in riding and complained the least about the foods and accommodations. This made us guides' work much easier. We found not only you all learned a lot about our country and people, but also we learned a great deal from you. It was our idea that Americans were self-centered, not caring for others' business. But we found we were guiding a group of people who were so united that it became every one's duty and responsibility to help each other, and when anyone of you fell sick, all others would pray for her recovery like sisters and brothers. So for my first time I learned something beautiful about Christianity."

I came away from China feeling the world could be changed, but I would be hard pressed to comment on what that change might be! I left China also feeling people could live happily together—not just people within a single country, but people between multiple nations and, yes, even between people of different faiths. It was a great experience—to spend quality time making this building a showcase?

San Clemente to St. Augustine

Two coast-to-coast trips were successfully completed last summer. One was short and fast while the second one was the traditional six-week long tour. In case you are keeping count, we have now completed 29 ocean-to-ocean tours since the first one in 1966. Our 3,000-mile runs continue to be magic. You just haven't lived until you've ridden coast to coast on a bicycle!

San Clemente to Saint Augustine was the route for the first trip of the summer. It is interesting to note that both cities are named after Christian saints. On this trip Bob Luce was the oldest and yet the youngest—54! On the second crossing from Lincoln City, Oregon, to Rehoboth Beach, Delaware, a married couple, ages 62 and 58 (Bill and Joan Rorabaugh) set the record and were front runners all the way! Both teams had the good lacing of professional people, families, young kids wanting to try their wings, and our solid college age riders who normally make up the bulk of the tours.

The highlight of the 28th crossing was that it was nearly letter-perfect! Many old friendships were renewed along the way. It is a real joy to say "thank you" back to people who have befriended you in years past.

I asked Ted Bowers to give me some "good stuff" concerning the 29th crossing. Many letters have come in from his team members and most commented on the fact that they came to ride a bike but got a lot more than that out of the trip.
country, but people between multiple nations and, yes, even people between Communist and Free World countries. Prior to visiting China I would not have felt that way. Once there, however, I was very impressed with the feeling of friendship on the part of the Chinese. There seemed to be a genuine reaching out to us. What a great thing it would be if more people in the mainstream of life could mix! I can't imagine wanting to harm any of the hundreds of thousands of people that we saw while biking in China.

The majority of the people in the Guangdong Province are farmers, or "peasants", as they are called in China. They are deeply dependent on physical labor and do not have much in the way of machinery. Mechanization will come eventually, but right now it is definitely fundamental, raw bone, hand-to-hand farming. The animal is the tractor while the men and women are the planting and harvesting machines.

It was rather refreshing to see people making it without all the fancy equipment. Oh, I don't deny the unbelievable importance of technology, but what a good feeling to see people making it simply by the sweat of the brow. I guess that is why I can watch an Amish farmer by the hour. There is something spiritual about men and women working with their hands. It is reassuring to know that if all of man's cuteness were lost he could still make it without selling his soul to technology.

One thing that was very noticeable to us was that there were very few heavyset people in China and only a few more in Hong Kong. Americans with all their pluses end up being preoccupied with clever ways to lose weight. I am reading a book about China in which the author tells about a Chinese greeting. Rather than asking, "How are you?", they ask, "Have you eaten?" It is a bit of a paradox that the Chinese, by virtue of a necessary lifestyle, take on the look we Americans so desperately want but cannot seem to attain. I am sure, given the luxury edge we have, the Chinese would, in fact, succumb to our national problem, too. Even so, it was good to be reminded by such a delightful people that a desirable body size is the result of a good hard day's work and simple diet.

For at least a few months out of every year our Wheels' teams experience to some degree, at least, what we saw in China. What a springboard to Jesus stuff—the simple lifestyle! Hey, folks, that's the way it is!
Kent Merrick, Phil Hand, and Ken Fink all picked up their silver medals this time around. I completed my 20th crossing while Galen is fast catching up having completed number 14!

Snowball is putting the finishing touches on some new "Possum Experience" T-shirts. Boy, do we ever sell a slug of these during the course of a year! They're all printed here in our shop. The shirt is a great item around which people can talk about their trip.

Galen is putting some custom touches on most recently purchased Possum 7. This bus has been slow in coming around, but it has already been put to good use. It should be completely customized soon.

The Alaska Possum tour was repeated and was a success! Another tour is planned for '87.

This year we have had a couple of groups using our Possums as models for building their own custom buses. Many more would do the same if they had the finances and time to do it. The Possums really capture the imagination of people. On many weekends there are three buses on the road and often four are out simultaneously. That's a lot of people being loved by a steel cocoon and a staff of four per bus!

Two of our drivers were recently asked to travel to Ohio to console a family and community of people. A young man had taken his life—suicide! Word had it that one of the most positive things to happen in his life was a Possum trip. Bobby was the typical "the last person I'd suspect" type of kid. His death really threw the community into a tailspin. His father asked Dave Nonnemacher what had transpired on the trip to give his son such an "up" feeling as a result of the 4-day/5-night encounter. That's a hard question to answer, but a normal response from any of the staff could be, "We played with the kids. Listened to them."

Two marriages have taken place since "Circle America - Perimeter '85" ended last November. Jackie Brookes (Julie Dyson) and Dave Engle were married September 6 in Chicago while Kurt Udseth and Mary Gross were married August 15 in Indiana but now are residing in San Francisco. All were members of the "Circle America I" team. There are rumors of still other weddings in the offing coming out of this group of people.

"Circle America II" will be winding up preparation for its departure in early January. THERE ARE STILL SOME OPENINGS for this tour and there are also "guest rider" openings. The route will be much the same. However, we are cutting off the southern portion of Florida and the Upland swing. We anticipate riding a total of 10,000 miles in eight months! The work projects and academics will be much the same as on the "Circle America I" tour.

Five new guys have joined Wheels since the first of the year. All of them are key men. Much of what we do is predicated on a healthy turnover. It's the nature of the beast. It is always good to have new blood on staff.

Brian Carter is a Wheels' vet from years past. He has spent quality time in the computer field. Wheels is ever so gently slipping into using some of the "high tech" stuff. Chances are good that the mailing of this newsletter will be done via computer. One thing you can rest assured of is that we won't lose the personal touch. We appreciate Brian's touch in getting us on track in the computer field.

Eric Jones is a Purdue man with multiple skills. He is an engineer. He does a super job with the kids on bikes and buses. He's a good man to have around to help with the building projects. Eric comes to us from the Madison, Indiana, area which has spawned so many Wheels' people.

Carl Bierdeman is a returning staffer. He, too, has come with good skills. He was Ted's right arm on the northern coast to coast and received rave reviews. What a joy when men come to serve! Carl is an engineer, also, and fills all those nasty little gaps that so many of us don't have the skills to handle.
staff could be, "We played with the kids, listened to them, did some hard things together, joked around, wrestled and talked about Jesus." It was just a pretty normal mix of whole-person stuff. Bobby pointed back to the trip and the impact it had on his life just days prior to his death. The Wheels' guys were gracious to take the day off to visit Bobby's family and his community. They came away a little shaken but also encouraged with a feeling that you never know how God is using you!

More and more we are involving volunteer staff people to help with the Possum trips. This, in itself, is a sideline ministry and the guest staff also bring some freshness to the trip. We have approximately 30 men and women on the volunteer driver and hostess list.

VERMONT

Curt Anderson got "home fire" duties for the summer which meant some bus trips and a token bike run in Vermont. The Vermont tour is a favorite! Most of the riders are those who don't have time for a longer trip. The shorter trip at least keeps the blood warm for that dream trip down the road.

The "Over-the-Hill" gang also went to Vermont but in late September. We are still trying to develop a cycling crowd composed of professional people, retired people, people in transition, et cetera. We have plans for a custom designed coast-to-coast trip for this select group starting in April of 1988. I used to think kids had a corner on the market for enjoying life, but the adults are proving me wrong!

A recent note from someone on our adult Vermont tour stated: "Communion in my church Sunday evening renewed the magnitude of GOD'S PRESENCE during the Wheels' communion service on the bus Friday evening. A milestone in a life-shaping experience at 70."

Please note, all you "Over-the-Hillers", our new name will be "BREAKAWAYS"!

Neil Boss rode coast to coast with Wheels last summer and then drove the Camel bus on the summer Vermont tour. He is a "Moody" man (and I don't mean his temperament!), and most recently he was a bell captain in Chicago. He came to us with a host of skills and is a real plus to the program.

Sam Hadley is an old face around Wheels but new as a staff man. His involvement with us goes back to the late 60's. He recently left teaching and pastoring and now has come to Wheels bringing with him a good feel for kids. He genuinely enjoys people. He is a Taylor grad and a bit of a legend. Pray with him as he shares with us and puts some loose pieces together in his own life.

The "Fat Tire Coast to Coast" film has a soundtrack now and is available on a rental basis. It tells the story of a team of men and women cycling across the United States on mountain bikes. One third of the trip was ridden off roads in dirt. It's a gutsy little film that is good for all ages, but especially for kids.

"Circle America" was premiered during the recent Parents' Weekend festivities at Taylor University. In producing this film we crammed ten months into 38 minutes! Obviously, it is a fast moving film that depicts well the whole 11,500-mile journey on bicycles. The work projects highlight the film. It is not ready for rental distribution yet, but it would be available for programs with a live narration.

The film on the China tour is still in the cutting stage, but hopefully it will be finished by the first of the year. We had the best cameras yet for shooting this one, so it should be as good as any we have done in the past.

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

In the "what's happening" department, things are fairly settled. Oh, we have the normal tension as a result of 20 some people combining their lives to represent a common cause. There are always some coming and some going and some wondering with the majority of us feeling pretty settled.
We have started the first phase of building in the old trailer court across the alley from Wheels. The starting project is a duplex. Hopefully, within a few years time the property will be a lovely living area for senior staff. Without knowing it, some of the men have been around here close to 15 years.

Most of the shop activity is aimed at getting January "stuff" out the door. THREE big trips will be launched this January. There will be the ever faithful California bike trip which will be headed up by Curt Anderson. The China trip is go with Phil Sommerville and Barb leading it. This is exciting to us! I trust many of you will be able to visit China. "Circle America II" leaves in January, as well. Jim Gore is putting some finishing touches on the Camels (cooking rigs); Carl Bierdeman is bouncing between projects; Kent Merrick and Mel Callison are busy in the bike shop mending numerous wounds on the "work horses" (the rental bikes!); Larry Kleindienst is mothering the Poms. (The buses still remind me of B-29's flying in from sorties, getting patched up and flying back out again.) Dave Burns is tying the loose ends of "Circle America II" together.

Dale Patten, one of our tireless workers, is taking a few months off to work at a horse farm in New Jersey. You just can't take the country out of the boy!! Word has it that Scott Pugsley is looking at an Outward Bound type of program.

Ted Bowers is our utility infielder and wears a lot of hats—everything from sewing to painting! Office manager, Sue, and her staff, Amy Anderson and Jody Nonnemacher, fine tune all of our office-type material while Deb Vogler keeps the kitchen stabilized. It is so easy to take a big beautiful building like this for granted. The young kids beat it to death, the retreat weekenders settle in deeply enough that I sometimes wonder if they'll leave. Deb's is a thankless sort of job. Speaking of the "kitchen", I still have a lot of dreams for it and the way it can be used. Does anyone want to donate a pool??

Over the course of months we receive a real nice smattering of mail. If I get "turned on" by such helpful responses to the multiple of teams out on the road, why wouldn't they encourage you, too? So, for you some tidbits!

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Yes, Wandering Wheels, the "Mama" of nearly all Christian bicycling ministries and programs has given birth again. This new child is not incorporated, not born on a college campus, but has healthy vital signs and a biblical base of conception. I've enclosed a newsletter for your perusal.

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In 1974 I biked coast-to-coast. That trip shall always be a highlight in my life. As I look back, it is not just the agony and ecstasy that I remember, but my growth spiritually. I began to realize that Christ was not only found in church! I began realizing that he was everywhere—revealed in our world and in other Christians, especially you and your staff. He became a real, living and personal friend. Thank you.

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I want to thank you for making my spring book pick up on a bicycle. On a more serious note—The things that you can give away on a bike—Always amazes me. It's still "Wheels" best tool for your business—Expressing the Christ.
I wanted to thank you for making my Spring Break such a good experience. I'd been on a real low in my walk with Christ the past semester or so and I was feeling very negative as a result of it. Being involved in the Wheels Program and meeting the staff helped me feel Christ strongly again. It really opened my eyes.

Here is a brief listing of cycling trips coming in '87-'88:

- Circle America II - Dec. 30 '86-Feb. 3 '87
- China - Jan. 5-26 '87
- American Southwest - Jan. 2-29 '87
- Florida Spring Break - Feb. through May '87
- Coast to Coast - June 13-July 28 '87
- East Coast - Aug. 1-16 '87
- England - July 2-30 '87
- Breakaways ("Over-the-Hill") - Sept. 25-Oct. 4 '87
- Israel - Jan. '88
- Breakaways Coast to Coast - Apr.-May '88
- China - Summer '88

This mailing is the first one using our computer setup. We were able to speed up the time considerably using the new unit to address the envelopes. Hopefully, you won't treat this as just another step in de-personalizing the operation. NEVER! I am really slow to learn when it comes to the computer. So many of the Christian magazines sales are via the computer. In fact, I've received invites to subscribe to a fine Christian magazine several times and it so happens that I have been subscribing to it for years. It really makes you wonder! We don't want to let this happen to us. If we ever lose the "walk a mile" attitude I'll be very sorry!

Look for us on some of our many jaunts hither and yon! There really is a comfort in people seeking us out and letting us have "eye-to-eye" sharing with them. Your support never gets old or taken casually. You are like so much of our operation that is foundational and can, over the long haul, get treated like part of the family—we kinda assume you are always going to be there!

Wandering Wheels
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(Please Note Changes)

Love you all,

Bob Davenport
Director

In his love,

Bill
“Stepping from the ocean to the highway.”

Coast to Coast
Wandering Wheels