

75th Birthday Celebration

Connecticut River Bicycle Ride June 21, 2008

PREFACE – Every five years since I turned 50 I have done a special physical event such as running the New York Marathon at 50, the Great American Adventure at 60, climbing the Cascade volcanoes at 65, and at age 75 doing a 188 mile one day bicycle ride. I cannot tell the story of this bicycle ride without first thanking my wife Lorelei for her continued support in allowing me to do these “stretch” activities. The following is my report on that event. Donald L. Kjelleren.....

Riders – Donald L. (Age 75) and Donald F. Kjelleren (Age 42)

Ride Support (SAG) – Lorelei Kjelleren

Route U.S. route 5 north to West Burke then 5a to Derby Center then back to Route 5 to Derby Line

The Ride – Departed the Massachusetts/Vermont State Line at 4:58 a.m. June 28, 2008

Arrived Canada/Vermont boundary line in Derby Line at 8:43 p.m.

Bicycling time – 12 hours and 31 minutes

Rest time – 3 hours and 15 minutes

Average Biking speed – 15 MPH

Distance traveled – 188.53 miles

BREAKDOWN OF RIDE

<u>REST STOPS</u>	<u>REAL TIME</u>	<u>MILES TRAVELED</u>	<u>BIKING TIME</u>
Mass Line	4:58 a.m.	0	0
Brattleboro	5:46	11.68	47:45
Putney	7:45	32.51	2:11:38
Ascutney	9:30	56.28	3:42:38
White River Junction	11:11	77.49	5:06:26
E. Therford	12:20 p.m.		
Bradford	1:15	105.45	6:50:54
Wells River	2:25	119.18	7:38:19
St. Johnsbury	3:57	140.20	9:03:26
Lyndonville	5:13	149.32	9:42:46
West Burke	5:54	157.67	10:17
West Charleston	7:00	169.35	11:10
Westmore	7:50	177.64	11:47
Derby Center	8:19	183.55	12:10
Derby Line/Canada	8:43	188.53	12:31

The Weather

- The start to about 9:30 a.m. 58-64 degrees with medium to heavy fog and no wind.
- 10:30 a.m. – 64 degrees cleared off, but a large black cloud overhead threatened a major thunderstorm, a very slight south wind.
- 11:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. Clear blue sky with beautiful puffy white clouds. 64 -75 degrees with light SW wind that every once and a while whipped up to 10 or so mph, and a couple of times

reverse to a slight headwind coming out of the NE . A few rain clouds passed by in the afternoon dropping just a few drop of wet stuff. All in all a perfect day for bicycling.

- 5:30 p.m. – 8:43 p.m. – Temperature dropped back to the mid 60's, clouds remained beautiful, with very light south wind.

The Terrain

I would categorize the ride as very hilly. We had perhaps an accumulated 40-50 miles of flat/flat along the river riding, but we spent a great deal of time spinning up many, many hills. Of course we also enjoyed the high speed descents!!

Road Conditions

With a few exceptions the road was in terrible shape. A dangerous 1-3" wide and up to 6-8" deep trench ran a foot or two to the left of paralleling the white line that separates the apron from the road. The trench ran for more than 100 miles, the road just separated to form this dangerous hazard. A wheel in this hazard would have ended the ride. There were many additional hazards, deep pot holes, very rough surface, inch or more wide road joints, and other poor road conditions. There were a few places where there were better road conditions with wide aprons, but most of the route the apron was about 2.5 foot wide, and some stretches without any apron. Riding in a pack on this route would be extremely dangerous. Even with only the two of us drafting each other the leader had to continually point out the road hazards. Many times there were only a few inches of space wide enough to safely travel. Riding out in the middle of the road where the conditions were a little better would have been equally dangerous as cars move very fast on this route, and come up to you without much warning leaving little or no time to move over. On the plus side there were many miles of no or low traffic. Some motor cycles went by us at over 60-70 mph trucks at 60+mph! We rode the white line or negotiated the white line and apron for most of the ride except for some of the high speed downhill efforts. People almost always gave us lots of room, we had no close calls.

Our Biking Strategy

We attributed our success by using good judgment on our speed and excellent sharing of pulling (drafting). We did not push hard at any time especially on hills where we spun at 7-9 mph on the steepest longest hills to a little faster on easier hills. On a lot of the flat areas we drafted each other for 2-3 miles and then switched. We did these stretches at 18 -22 mph. We also stopped enough times to get revitalized by getting off the bike, drinking water and energy drinks and eating plenty of food. We prepared a plan where we were to start at 4:30 a.m. and arrive at the finish before dark. We chose this date as it is the longest day of the year. We left about 30 minutes later than plan and then had a delay of 30+minutes changing a tube; also we were slower with the fog. Fortunately we were in pretty good physical shape and made up the lost time by riding faster than the original plan. Our legs held up much better on the hills than I would have thought really helped especially over the final hour.

Body Condition

What do you worry the most about when doing a long bike ride, you guessed it, the rear end.... Neither of us had a problem what so ever. Only near the end of the ride did some fatigue start to settle in. Don F. had some back stiffening and my arthritic, past broken collar bone right shoulder provided some occasional pain. Lorelei's massage and a cold patch cured the problem. We both surprising to me felt reasonably fresh with good legs throughout the entire ride, even near the end of the ride where we had a pretty steep and long climb. I did a great deal of training for this event (months of 40 – 50 and even 60 miles daily rides.) Still I was quite surprised to be riding well as we passed 150 miles and on to the finish. Amazingly the next day after the ride we both were more fatigued than usual, but other than that we were in pretty good shape. I had a little stiffening in my legs, but nothing to complain about.

Scenery and Other Comments

Except for the road conditions this was a spectacular bicycle trip! The scenery was top notch, gorgeous river scenes, farms, green green pastures, mountains, and all the beauty that Vermont is known for. Lake

Willoughby near the end of the ride was an unbelievably outstanding sight. I have ridden century rides in all 50 states and I think this ride was as gorgeous as any. We passed many activities; being a Saturday there were yard sales, flea markets, farm markets, family gatherings, barbeques spewing out mouth watering rib and steak odors.

Some other notable things:

- There were a lot of bikers going south; we only saw a few going in our direction.
- Going from town to town worked out nicely for “facilities”, rest stops, etc. We saw lots of beautiful old white pillared churches, old and interesting architecturally interesting town halls, homes and other buildings. There were perfect distances between towns to make the ride interesting and to have reasonable goals to shoot for.
- The “construction” hill or I should say wall in White River Junction was a terrible experience... I’ll leave it at that...
- The route was very well marked, and even though there were some very surprising turns they were all marked in advanced. Lorelei had no problem following the route and was always ahead just where we planned.
- We could not wear glasses for the first two hours as they fogged up in the fog.
- In the final hour and a half sun glare made it very hard to see. (Part of route where 5a goes westerly) I was particularly concerned about a car coming from behind that could not see us. I totally lost visibility coming down a hill at probably 20+ mph into West Charleston where the route took a sharp left hand turn. I rammed on my brakes and prepared for a collision, Don who was following a short distance back almost crashed into me and I almost hit a man standing on the road. This was the only bad moment on the entire ride.
- We pressed a little distance wise to get to St. Johnsbury by five p.m. (about a 30 mile stretch) to make sure we would have adequate daylight to complete the ride. (We did have helmet headlamps in case we had to ride in the dark.) We took a long break in St. Johnsbury at a Mickey – D’s where we rested and fueled up for the final 48 miles.
- This was the longest bike ride either of us has ever done. (Previous for Don was 105 miles and I had done a 120 mile ride in the past.)
- At no time during the ride did we even come close to thinking about stopping.

CONCLUSIONS

This was a fabulous experience for two guys who love bicycling. It was a perfect day and a wonderful accomplishment especially for the 75 year old! It goes to prove that no matter your age your dreams can come true, and older folks can still do some pretty physically demanding and exciting activities.

We greatly appreciated Lorelei giving us support without which we could not have done this ride.

Doing this ride with my son was especially gratifying. Together we have done mountain climbing, NY marathon, and other sporting events. Don F. is a great motivator for me, and I am really pleased that he is willing to do these activities with his dad.

As I mentioned earlier I have done some major physical event every five years. This ride was celebrated my 75th birthday (June 1). Just like in the past Lorelei asked, “what do you plan to do for the next fifth year excitement (80th)?” She asked, “If I planned to do this ride again?”

I replied, “No, now that I can ride this far I think I will do a ride across the USA.”

Lorelei did not appear to be amused at the idea... We packed up, had dinner and drove home. What a great day!!