

# DEANNA MCMILLEN

*Lifelong cyclist and holographer supports Adventure Cycling*

*by Dan Schwartzman*

Deanna McMillen's first bike tour in Tennessee wasn't exactly a breeze. A cyclist since the age of three — and it's fair to say a cycling enthusiast at that young age, too — McMillen's first trek was a two-day affair — a class trip to Tims Ford State Park in Tennessee. After spending the night, the group headed back on the second day. "On the ride back, we had 30 to 40 mile-an-hour head winds the entire way and I thought

I was going die!" McMillen said.

A recreational rider, who nowadays likes to do a short tour about once a year, McMillen was undeterred. In fact, even while recalling her favorite bike-touring memory, a trip from Glacier National Park through Banff and ending in Jasper, Wyoming, McMillen embraced obstacles along the way. They have never discouraged her or even put a damper on her positive attitude.

"I've never been an athletic bicycle person — I cruise on my bike — so this whole going over the mountain passes for me was a real achievement, and it was just gorgeous." McMillen said. "The first day we rode Going-to-the-Sun Road. We had to be up there by 11:00 AM and I wasn't sure I would make it, but I did. Later, on the way to the hotel, a van stopped in front of me. I swerved, hit a pothole and flipped off my bike, and so I rode the next seven days pretty banged up. I figured I was going to hurt no matter where I was so I decided I might as well be on my bike!"

Now living in Austin, Texas, the holographer is a Joint Life Member with her husband, Mark Sims, who she met in a bicycle-touring-recreation class at the University of Alabama at Huntsville. Together, the couple usually sets out for at least a long weekend tour every year.



*Deanna McMillen and husband Mark Sims.*

These trips are McMillen's biggest adventures — other than renovating houses, which she does both for business and pleasure. In addition to cycling, Sims is an avid hiker and has trekked more than 340 miles of the Appalachian Trail, which he is carving up in multi-day chunks.

For McMillen traveling on a bike allows for just the right speed — faster than hiking and slower than motor vehicle travel, which she has done both in a car and on a motorcycle.

"In a car, you're closed in, you're not out there in the elements, the world. I've had motorcycles before and they go too fast. You don't see things. They're great for getting from Point A to Point B, but not for experiencing things," McMillen said. "Whenever I travel, I want to experience

where I am — I want to be in the place and in the culture. I've had longhorn bulls show up in front of me on a one-lane road!"

McMillen loves the open road — just not the traditional concept of experiencing it in an automobile. A driver of a 12-year-old car, she said she has no intention of upgrading. Instead, she prefers to spend money on her bicycle.

"There are some typical American values that I probably don't have, but I value my bicycle, bike lanes, supporting

the local cycling club, things like that are important to me — and have been since age three."

McMillen and Sims have been Joint Life Members for longer than they can recall. The pair would like one day to ride the Northern Tier Route across the U.S. from Washington to Maine. On that venture, McMillen said she would choose a long wheelbase recumbent. No doubt she would be well served to bring her upbeat outlook with her into the unknown.

"Adventure to me is when I go out and I don't exactly know what I'm going to get into." **AC**

*Dan Schwartzman is a certified Bikram Yoga instructor who recently completed a cycling/yoga tour down the Pacific Coast. He is also a valuable volunteer for Adventure Cycling Association.*