



No. 4182



## Riding with Angels

PHOTOGRAPH BY DEREK GALLAGHER STORY BY MADELINE MCKIDDY

→ WHEN GARY HAVAS left his home in San Luis Obispo, California, last summer, he was planning to take Adventure Cycling's Southern Tier Bicycle Route to St. Augustine, Florida, a plan which grew into a circumnavigation of the U.S., and a journey which totaled 9,632 miles. "Shipping my trike back would be troublesome at best," Gary explained when asked about the evolution of his tour, "so why not pedal it back? Sure, and while I'm at it, see both coasts!"

"How can you do this?" Gary said this was a question he was asked all along the route by cyclists and motorists alike. "I'm the most fortunate man I know," he answered, "I have angels. They come in many forms and do many wonderful things that grease my life's workings. They follow me in clouds of merriment and mirth. I live very frugally and concentrate on simplifying my life. I have great health and motivation to explore my abilities and this country's offerings. In return I got something I'm finding difficult to express that amounts to a new appreciation for serendipity (angels, if you like) and an ability to see the fortunate side of things."

The flag pictured above became a talisman for Gary during the journey; he called it the Flag of Signatures, because he had nearly all those he met along the way add their name. "Originally, it had been a whim. What it turned out to be was a vehicle for meeting friends and sharing the tour or the idea of the tour, or both. As the journey progressed and with much flapping in the wind, these signatures faded and some were lost, only to be overwritten with new well-wishes."

Of course there were hard days and setbacks, but each time frustration started to get the best of him, Gary would be met with a bit of luck — whether in the shape of a roadside pub he'd have passed by or a hidden gem of a road he'd have missed if all went according to plan. "It took a little while to develop the appreciation, I'll admit," he said, "but, with repeated exposure, it became an adventure and not a chore when expectations went unmet. This is, of course, a very transferrable life skill. It's my shtick. By whichever method one chooses to sit back in wonder at the goodness one has, use it. I use a trike and angels. That's how I did this."

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