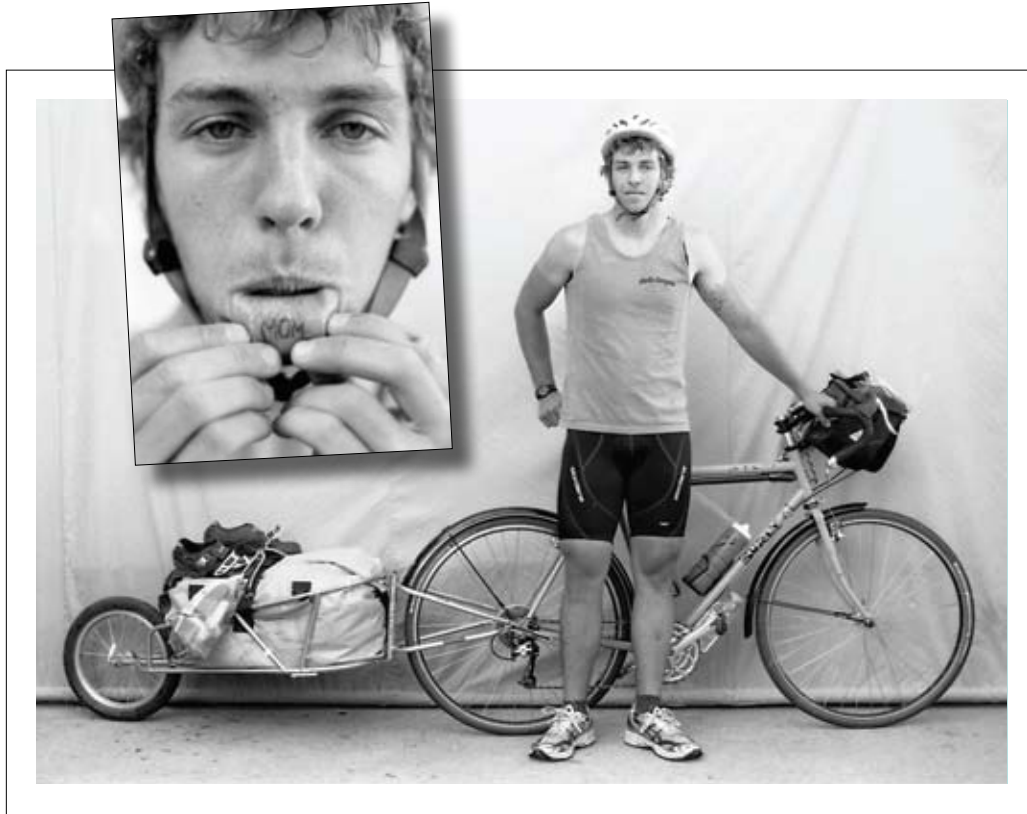


CHAIN GANG

by Sarah Raz Photograph by Greg Siple



FOLKS WHO STOP THROUGH OUR OFFICE WHILE TOURING AMAZE US with tales of human compassion — complete strangers offering up meals, shelter, and encouragement. Adam Tremper, who completed his ride from Arch Cape, Oregon to Richmond, Virginia in 47 days, met with some unexpected kindness as he crept up Lolo Pass at the Idaho/Montana border, exhausted and hungry.

Adam was pedaling slowly and contemplating his lunch options when he was approached by a small man wearing an orange vest. Expecting to be ridiculed for his tan lines or funny clothes, he was surprised to be invited to dine with a group of roadside workers. He sat with the crew a bit, comparing tattoos (of which Adam has an impressive array — see his smallest in inset photo) and stories of adventure. “I asked them what they were up to,” said Adam, “and they mentioned that they were cutting down trees for 70 cents an hour. I realized then they were a group of inmates on a work detail.” Pretty soon the prisoners had to get back to work, and, since none of their lunches had been entirely consumed, Adam was gifted with six box lunches including 12 peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, six bags of corn chips, a few carrots, and one partially eaten cookie. Fueled by both the prisoners’ enthusiasm and crunchy nut-butter, Adam cruised onward, marveling at the contrasts life occasionally presents: liberty versus confinement, virtue versus vice.

“They were prisoners,” said Adam, “while I was pretty much as free as I could be. I think they were pretty excited for me, though, and they were the nicest people I met on my entire trip.”

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