



Sue Davendonis

BY APRIL CYPHER



“I LIKE SEEING PEOPLE COMPLETE SOMETHING THEY DIDN'T THINK THEY COULD DO OR HAVE WANTED TO DO FOR A LONG TIME.”

Riding or running, this tour leader is on the move

→ If you are stranded on the side of the road with a flat tire or a broken freewheel, cross your fingers and hope you're on the same stretch of pavement as Sue Davendonis. After 30 years in the Air Force working in aircraft maintenance, Sue knows a thing or two about keeping her cool and finding solutions on the fly. She retired at the senior enlisted rank of Chief Master Sergeant; chiefs make up one percent of the enlisted force. With Sue, you're in good hands.

Sue also knows that on a bike tour, what feels like a terrible situation at the time can often make for the best memories. Take for example her 2001 cross-country tandem ride with her then-13-year-old son, Josh. They had booked a tour with a small company, but when they arrived in California along with 37 other riders (including other parent-child duos) they found a single support van, the company owner, and two assistants.

“He was going to serve us three meals a day and check the routes. Ha! There's no way,” said Sue. Within a few days, heat exhaustion and inexperience whittled the group down and forced the remaining riders to face the reality that this would not be the supported tour they signed up for. “It was mutiny on the *Bounty*,” said Sue. And yet they reorganized and pushed on. “In spite of that, or probably because of it, we became a lot closer. We do reunion rides every year — without the tour leader.”

With an Adventure Cycling membership card dating back to the early 1980s, Sue became a life member

four years ago. “I believe in the mission,” she said.

In six years of guiding trips for Adventure Cycling, the thrill of watching bike travel transform people never gets old. “I like seeing people complete something they didn't think they could do or have wanted to do for a long time,” she said. “When they figure out they can do it, it's neat to watch. People have told me it's life-changing.” On Sue's 2014 Southern Tier tour, the heat and long, hard days forged a bond between what started out as group of strangers. The friends reconvened in 2015 for the Cycle Montana Tour and are looking at dates for a 2016 reunion tour.

Leading tours occupies most of Sue's saddle time, but that doesn't mean you won't see her traveling down a long ribbon of asphalt, miles from the closest town. She recently returned from Tulsa, Oklahoma, where she ticked off her 23rd state on the road to completing a marathon in all 50 states. In Tulsa her daughter ran with her. Her Montana marathon was a family affair with her husband taking on the half and her daughter and son-in-law running the 10K. “The Fifty States Marathon Club,” said Sue. Not an easy club to get into.

Keep an eye out for Sue on the road. If it's summer, expect to see a string of happy cyclists around her. If it's winter, and she is on foot, then she's likely in the process of crossing your state off her marathon list. **AC**

April Cypher is Adventure Cycling's development coordinator.

COURTESY SUE DAVENDONIS

LIFE MEMBERSHIP

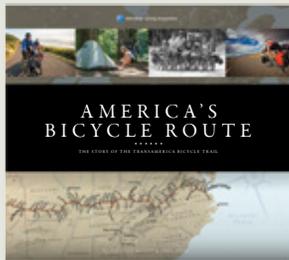
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Funds from the Life Membership program are put into a special account to provide long-term support for Adventure Cycling Association. In the past, these funds have helped us purchase and update our headquarters building, saving us thousands of dollars in interest payments.

If bicycle travel is an important part of your life, please consider making a lifetime commitment by joining as an Adventure Cycling Life Member. To find out more, visit adventurecycling.org/membership or give Julie Huck a call at 800.755.2453 x214.

Thanks to these new life members who joined in October, November, and December, with their support:

- Martin & Nancy Bernstein, Long Beach, CA
- Derek Blakeslee, Winter Garden, FL
- Larry Brock, Cumberland, MD
- Martin Cohen, New York, NY
- Robert Colvin, Chicago, IL
- James & Wendy Core, Kensington, MD
- Alan & Karen, Crossley, Madison, WI
- Travis Dye & Megan Ashton, Missoula, MT
- Kevin Fink, Fairfax, VA
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