

THE TRANSAM TRAIL TATTLETALE

Tidbits from TransAmerica Trail News, a weekly newsletter distributed by the Bikecentennial office during the summer of 1976

SHOCKING NEWS FROM WYOMING

• Tom Johansing, TAEK615, had just crossed into Wyoming and was pedaling peacefully along when a sudden thunderstorm blew down out of the hills. Before Tom had a chance to seek shelter—indeed, even before he, his bike, or the pavement had gotten wet—the bike was struck by lightning.

Tom was wearing rubber-soled cycling shoes, riding a plastic seat, and had his handlebars wrapped with inch-thick foam. The only shock he received was to his right index finger, which was resting on his brake lever. In slightly more colorful phraseology than is our custom to print, Tom told us that he found the experience unsettling.

PLUM GOOD • At the Wintergreen Campground in Cambridge, Idaho, Haywood Moxley, TAEK602, won a case of beer by eating 50 plums in less than 30 minutes. Haywood has not been seen since, but says he'll be out in a minute or two.

STILL SWEATING • *Washington Post* reporter Cynthia Gorney has finished her 35-day, 1,400-mile ride from Astoria to Jackson, and is back in DC, where from she writes: "It would warm your collective hearts to see all the bikers whizzing around Washington here. Already I am told that the series [of articles she wrote for the *Post*] inspired three reporters' spouses to go out and buy 10 speeds. I have a nice bunch of letters from bikers and non-bikers alike, full of encouraging words for all the Bikecentennial people; many phone calls from parents of TransAm trippers; notes from old bedridden ladies and all manner of people. The paper's big cheeses are happy, the bike shops are happy, and I would be happy if only I hadn't had to come back to the dingy Turkish bath that is Washington in the summer. Alas."

A JULY FOURTH FEAT OF EATING • In Scott City, Kansas, a young woman rider won \$75 by eating 17 hotdogs (with buns, yes) in a five-minute period. With the prize came the stipulation that the money be spent locally. No stores were open, so the group celebrated with—you guessed it—a huge dinner, followed by a visit to the Dairy Queen. Then they went bowling. Aaugh!

STAY ON SCHEDULE, PLEASE • The (fairly) smooth operation of Bikecentennial's overnight accommodation system depends on a more or less even flow of cyclists. Donna Heller, Mitchell Bike Innkeeper [at the Mitchell Hotel in Oregon], had to house 54 riders one night this month. Donna's a good sport, but admits this was a little wearing. If you are forced off schedule by more than a day or so, be sure to notify Bikecentennial; if you're not going to make a scheduled Bike Inn, it's also a good idea to call ahead, to avoid having to pay twice.

S'NO JOKE • Unseasonably heavy snow fell on portions of Wyoming and northern Colorado, slowing or halting the progress of about five groups of cyclists, June 13 and 14. Some riders "holed up" in Bike Inns and other facilities, and one group was shuttled ahead for safety reasons; others, however, pressed on like the proverbial mailman, negotiating snow depths of up to 15 inches on Togwotee Pass.

REGISTRATION TOPS OUT AT 4,300

• There are only a few spaces remaining in scheduled trips at this time, and registration is expected to close at around 4,300 riders. This figure includes 2,200 cyclists riding the entire TransAmerica Trail. One thousand of these are independent riders, and over 300 are international visitors. Of the 3,300 signed up for group trips, 1,300 are staying in Bike Inns, and 2,000 are camping along the trail.

HOME HOSPITALITY • Just 1 and ½ days' ride east of Reedsport, Oregon, the Waggener family has set up a stand offering lemonade, iced tea, cookies, information, and sympathy to riders finishing the grueling, waterless Ox-bow Burn climb. "I honestly don't know why I'm doing this," Pat Waggener told us. "It's a nuisance and an expense, but ... well, there's a need, and the enthusiasm of these people is catching. Besides, I wasn't going to let half the world pedal past my door and not say hello to them."

• The Norman Parker family of Hebron, Colorado, described in a letter from TAEK516 as "very fine people," have also been providing cookies, iced tea, and comfort. We just got this note from them: "We're very sorry to be

writing this to you. All the bikers are terrific! We are starting the put up hay and the whole family is needed in the hayfield. Please ask bikers to continue to stop and sign our book. The water pump is in front of the house and the outhouse is behind the pink building. When possible, I will have cookies and tea set out for all bikers."

• Naturally, hospitality is a two-way affair. On the way through Montana, Yvonne Revy donated two pints of blood—one to a hospital, she reports, and one to the mosquitoes between Wisdom and Jackson.

PROTECTING THEIR FOOD SOURCE?

• Ernie Franceschi, Bikecentennial's Region 3 coordinator, tells us the hotel in Fairplay, Colorado, has raised its salad-bar price from \$1.25 to \$3.00. It seems a group of riders deliberately blocked other customers' access to the salad bar.

BIKECENTENNIAL STOWAWAY

Liz Snyder of Cincinnati, Ohio, writes that "conscience forces me to report a stowaway in our group. This passenger did not hide out in a pannier or a handlebar pack, and its true identity will not be known until the end of November. What I'm reporting to you is this: I started the Appalachian-Piedmont trip a little over three months pregnant."

Liz tells us that she really enjoyed her trip, and that "we" encountered no problems that couldn't be overcome. She's now wracking her brain, trying to come up with some bicycling baby names—any suggestions?

RECORDS SET • The Mongolian Mountain Mongers (TAWK615) have been scouring the land for beer cans, and have picked up 679 so far. Mike Brian holds the one-day record with 120 cans. During their search, the group also came up with what they claim to be the little toe bone of a Sasquatch, Montana's version of the abominable snowman. The toe, measuring 16 and ¼ inches in length, is now used to prop open the window in the Bikecentennial riders' lounge in Missoula.

Other groups across the country are setting records. Two groups passing through Wisdom, Montana (TAWB602 and OWWF619), together polished off eight whole pies. In

Carbondale, Illinois, an unidentified group finished eight large pizzas and 15 pitchers of an effervescent beverage.

ROADKILL DU JOUR • On two around-the-world bicycle trips, Lloyd Sumner has acquired many survival skills and tricks for economizing. As a Bikecentennial leader, he recently applied his knowledge: Observing a prairie chicken just struck by a passing car, Lloyd packed the bird to camp, plucked and cleaned it, and roasted it over an open fire for dinner. Mmmm.

BUILDING CHARACTER

• "It's young people like you that make America good. We need strong people to run things after I'm dead." *-Missouri farmer*

• "We have had over 200 stop and we have nothing but praise for these folks. We have yet to see one smoke, drink, or use harsh language, and we have never met a finer, nicer bunch of young people. Bicycling is such a clean healthy recreation and keeps a lot of the young folks out of trouble, and they learn a lot about their country and the kind of people in it."

-June Haven Curry, Afton, Virginia

• "Doug returned home a more mature, self-reliant young man. Being the youngest of three children, we had hoped Bikecentennial76 would do just this for him. We are delighted!"

-Marueen and Al Dymock, Oroville, California

• "I began and ended my last trip with a visit to my aunt in Portland, Oregon. At the finish of my trip, I asked her if I looked any different, expecting to get a compliment on my tan or something along those lines. She gave me a very strange look and said, 'I don't see any changes. Was it something important like losing your virginity?'"

-Claudine Campbell, Houston, Texas

HILL REACHES VANCOUVER • British cycling bronze medalist [at the 1936 Olympics] Harry Hill, who rode the TransAmerica Trail from Yorktown to Missoula in 29 days, writes from Vancouver, British Columbia, that he reached the Canadian border just five days later. "I have been very well received all along the route," Harry tells us, "and the enthusiasm of the people has been amazing." •