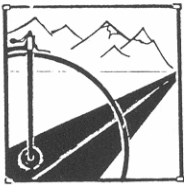


ACROSS AMERICA SAN FRANCISCO TO BOSTON

by Jim Ogland

On June 6, 1989, Minnesota Wheelmen State Captain Jim Ogland rode through the streets of Boston to the Atlantic Ocean thus completing his transcontinental ride from San Francisco to Boston. His solo trip began 45 1/2 days earlier in San Francisco on April 22, 1989, (same departure date as Thomas Stevens, 105 years earlier). Paralleling Stevens' route, he rode an 1887 54" Victor Light Roadster and logged some 3,358 miles, and averaged approximately 75 miles per day.

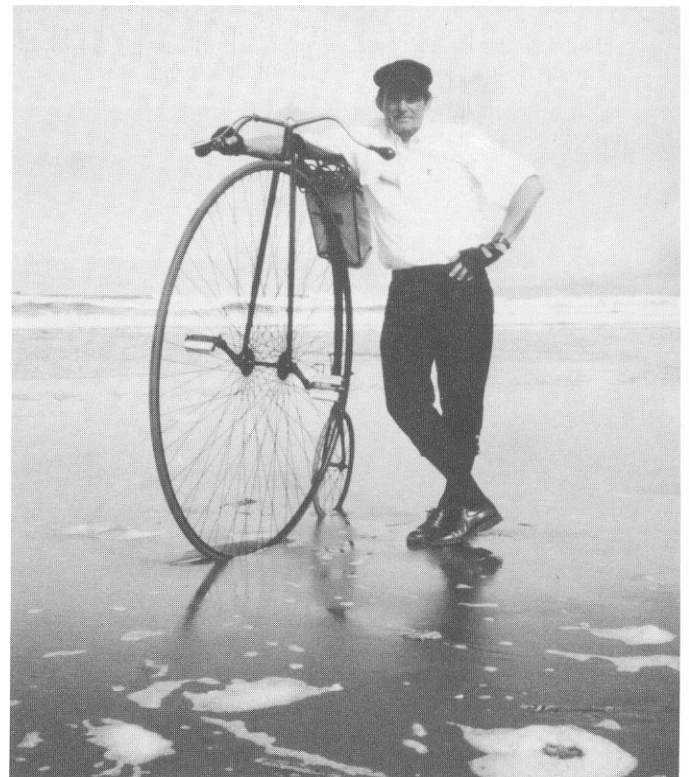


I leaned back in my seat, stretched out and relaxed. I was on the noon flight headed for San Francisco. My thoughts drifted to Thomas Stevens, (the first cyclist to ride across the United States), and how he might have felt so many years ago. My route would parallel his. I would leave 105 years later on the same date, from the same place and at the same time. Never in his wildest dreams could he have imagined that I would be at 35,000 feet cruising at 600 miles an hour, and that I would arrive in San Francisco from Minneapolis in less time than he could have pedaled 30 miles. A short time ago it would have been equally difficult for me to imagine that I would soon be riding a 100 year old "highwheel" bicycle 3,000 miles across America. A flight attendant handed me a cup of coffee. It was hot and tasted good. I worried about my bicycle in the cargo bay. The ground crew had assured me that it would be just fine, but the possibility of heavy boxes being piled on top of its fragile big wheel worried me just the same. I would feel a lot better when I had it back in my possession. This was it. I was finally on my way! Was I ready? Were my legs going to be good enough? Would my bicycle hold up? I was excited, ready to go.

The bicycle was from another time, a wonderful Victorian time, the Gay 90's. The huge front wheel measured almost five feet high, and the rider was even higher when riding it. This particular bicycle was made in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1887, by the Overman Wheel Company. They manufactured the Victor bicycle and were among the premier bicycle manufacturing companies in the United States. This model was appropriately called a "Light Roadster." It was considered a fast and durable lightweight bicycle that was on the leading edge of 19th century technology.

These high wheel beauties, "steel steeds" as they were often called, first appeared in the United States in the summer of 1876, when an English model was exhibited at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition. There it was seen by an alert businessman, Colonel Albert A. Pope. Realizing its potential he quickly acquired the necessary patents and knowledge, and in the spring of 1878 began manufacturing the

"Columbia" highwheel bicycle. It caused a sensation in cities throughout America. Bicycle clubs were formed. They rode in parades. There were Sunday outings and there was a new freedom.



Jim Ogland, the Pacific Ocean, San Francisco

Highwheel bicycles have various names. In England they were and still are, called Penny Farthings. They associated the wheel sizes with their small farthing coin and the large penny. In America they were soon referred to as "ordinaries" presumably because they were so ordinary, and were ridden by ordinary people. It was the first time in history that man could actually propel himself without walking or riding horses. It was the dawn of a new era.

The larger the front wheel, the faster and farther they would go. There were however limits, and the maximum was a wheel of about 60 inches in diameter with the most popular being 50 to 54 inches. They are surprisingly comfortable to ride, and can actually go quite fast, at times up to 20 mph. Their main disadvantage is that whenever the front wheel is stopped by an obstruction, the rider is instantly thrown over the handlebars and can take a dangerous fall, called a "header." Because of this, their popularity didn't last long, and they were manufactured for only about 20 years, from 1871 to 1892. They reached their peak in both popularity and technology in the mid 1880's. It has been said that there never has been a bicycle since, that was as elegant, responsive and exhilarating to ride as the "ordinary." During this period there were a number of manufacturers. A great rivalry developed between the principal ones which were the Columbia Bicycle Co. owned by Colonel Albert A. Pope, the Overman Wheel Co. which made the Victor bicycle headed by Albert Overman, and a third company, Gormully and Jeffery of Chicago. Also about this time (1885) a bicycle called a "Safety" began to appear. It was very similar to today's bicycle. Gone was the big front wheel, and in its place were two wheels of equal size, driven by a chain to the rear one. This was a major step forward and far safer to ride, (thus the name "Safety"). They were less expensive, and both men and women could ride them. The highwheel bicycle was history and America rolled into the Gay 90's.



Thomas Stevens

On April 22, 1884, Thomas Stevens departed from San Francisco on a highwheel bicycle for Boston, Massachusetts. One hundred and three and one half days later he became the first person to ride a bicycle coast to coast across the United States. He was a hero of the times and wrote about his adventures in "Outing Magazine" and eventually rode his Columbia highwheel bicycle around the world. His travels are well chronicled in his book, "Around the World on a Bicycle." Something about his remarkable coast to coast ride whetted my own appetite for just such an adventure. I began to consider the possibility of a cross country ride, and the thought of retracing Stevens' route made the prospect of it even more appealing.

At the time I owned three rideable highwheel bicycles, one being a huge completely restored, full nickel, 58 inch 1886 Columbia Expert. By adjusting the pedal cranks to their maximum distance and by stretching on my tip toes I can ride it surprisingly well. It definitely, however, would not be a bike to ride coast to coast on. I also had a 54 inch 1887 Gormully and Jeffery, basically in original condition, partially restored and a good easy riding bicycle. It probably could make the trip. The best prospect, however, was my 1887 Victor, a solid, somewhat restored 54 inch Light Roadster. The bicycle is pretty much all original with the exception of a new leather saddle (seat), handlebar grips and pedal rubber. As I was later to discover, the original rusted spokes would be the weakest link, and would plague me the entire ride. The small rear wheel spokes were the first to go. The rear wheel carried all the extra weight of my pack, toolbag, water bottle, etc. and it goes around many more times than the large front wheel, thus it takes the most punishment. The entire bicycle was painted black with no nickel parts. All unpainted metal, (handlebars, pedal cranks, etc.) were given a coat of clear lacquer to prevent rusting. I felt good about the Victor and was certain that it was capable of going 3,000 miles from San Francisco to Boston.

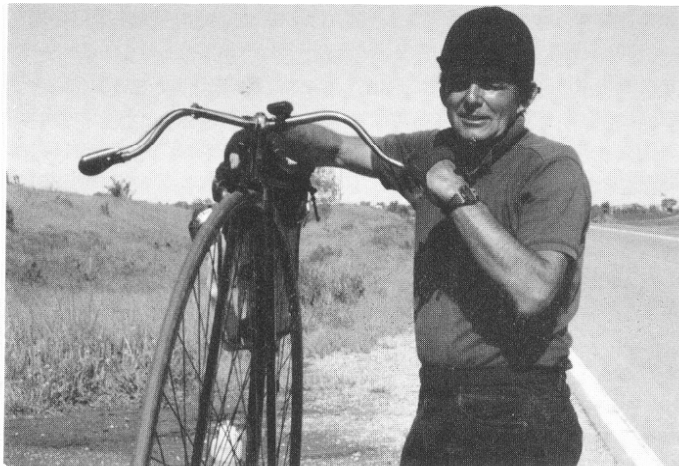
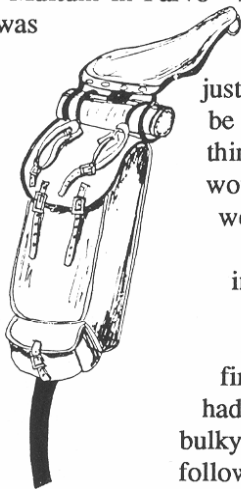


If I was to retrace Stevens route it would make it more interesting and historical for me if I could leave on the same date as he did. This would make weather conditions, temperature, wind direction, etc. approximately the same as he would have experienced. I decided to depart April 22, 1989, exactly 105 years later. Stevens took 103 1/2 days to complete the journey. In many cases he had no roads, had to wade across rivers, slept under the stars and at times avoided hostile Indians and wild animals. Hopefully these were obstacles that I would not encounter. I poured over his notes and studied his route. I figured that I could average approximately 60 miles per day and complete the ride in 52 or 53 days. As it turned out I averaged 75 miles per day and rode 3,358 miles in 45 1/2 days. I decided to ride by myself with no support vehicle and not to camp out. There simply was no way that I wanted to carry bedding on a highwheel bicycle. This meant I had to plan my daily destinations quite carefully as it would be essential to arrive before darkness in a town that had both lodging and food. Sometimes the towns were too far apart (especially in the western states) and often they were not spaced right to make a good day's ride. At times weather and terrain would significantly affect my daily mileage. Strong headwinds and rain were unpredictable, as were

hilly and steep terrain. Iowa and New York were unexpectedly grueling as were the strong headwinds of Nebraska. I was unprepared for the constant headwinds and had actually anticipated westerly tailwinds at this time of the year. Riding so high in the air, head and crosswinds have a devastating effect on bikers and at times would be too strong to ride against.

I did not wish to pack anything on my back such as a knapsack or have anything bulky in my jacket or other pockets. This meant that whatever I was to bring along would have to be on the bicycle. I experimented with a small zipper bicycle bag that attached to my handlebars. This turned out to be an undesirable location as it restricted my view of the road, and also prevented putting my legs over the handlebars for long downhill coasting. In addition, it put extra weight up high and forward thus increasing my chances of a header (going over the handlebars). The problem was solved when I got to San Francisco where I acquired a prototype MIP bag. MIP is an abbreviation for "Multum in Parvo" which translates to "much in little". It was

made of heavy canvas with leather trim and attached just behind the saddle. It turned out to be very compact, but perfect for everything that I needed to carry with me. It would be my suitcase for the next several weeks. The contents would end up being unexpectedly heavy and would initially change my center of gravity and upset my balance point. As a result I fell over sideways several times the first few days. Some of the items that I had brought along to California were too bulky and had to be sent home, but the following I considered to be essential and somehow managed to fit into the MIP bag: 35mm camera, maps, tools, shaving items, flashlight, lightweight rain suit, a windbreaker jacket, compact down vest, soft wheelmen cap, white shirt and black wheelmen knickers, change of socks and underwear, leg reflectors and padded riding gloves.



I felt that wearing a helmet was important, but available bicycle helmets were either uncomfortable or their appearance seemed inappropriate for an antique cycle rider. I compromised with a black equestrian jockey helmet which I felt gave me

the head protection that I needed and yet did not look too bad. The huge jumbo jet would soon be on the ground at the San Francisco Airport and California Wheelman Karl Edwards would be there with his vehicle to meet me. We loaded my Victor, box and all into Karl's pickup truck and drove a short distance to his home. After dinner we were joined by Captain of the California Wheelmen, Jerry Grulky. Karl and Jerry decided we needed to fine tune my bicycle. While Karl re-rivited the saddle, Jerry formed, filed and adjusted the brake lever. The brakes had never worked this well before, and I would be forever grateful to Jerry for having brakes that actually worked. We installed the MIP bag and it was wonderful. Karl felt that I needed a water bottle, so we installed a bracket for the bottle on the backbone just above the rear step. I found out later that this was an absolute essential. I drank a lot of water while crossing the deserts of Nevada and Utah, actually everywhere along the ride. Jerry also installed a cyclometer on the big front wheel. We used two pickup magnets, instead of one, to fool the computer into thinking it was a standard 27 inch bicycle wheel. It worked perfectly. This was the only modern equipment on the bike and proved invaluable. Its digital readout allowed me to not only know how fast I was going, but displayed my average speed, and recorded how many miles I had traveled. Average speed showed me what a tremendous effect headwinds and tailwinds had on my daily mileage. I adjusted my front wheel bearings and greased everything as Jerry heated and tightened a number of front spokes. I was fortunate to have these two working on my bike. Jerry is an absolute genius when it comes to "tweaking" and tuning. Finally about 1:00 am we were done. I felt deeply indebted and grateful to both Karl and Jerry. I fell asleep knowing the Victor light roadster was as ready to go as we could make it.



Karl Edwards & Jim Ogland at Golden Gate Park

Karl woke me at 6:15 am. It seemed like a very short night. We planned to meet several members of the California Wheelmen for a brief early morning ride together at the Polo Grounds near Golden Gate State Park. When we arrived several Wheelmen were already unloaded and riding around the area. They looked very authentic in their uniforms astride their highwheel bicycles. We formed up in pairs and rode several



California Wheelmen at the Pacific Ocean

times around the Polo Grounds track before heading for the Pacific Ocean where I dipped my front wheel into the pounding Pacific surf. It was great to have all these Wheelmen to see me off and to share this moment. Thomas Stevens would have been impressed. He wrote the following: "So eight o'clock on the morning of April 22, 1884, finds me and my fifty-inch machine on the Oakland pier. With the hearty well-wishing of a small group of Oakland and 'Frisco cyclers who have come, out of curiosity to see the start. I mount and ride away to the east."

I bid goodbye to my new friends and accompanied by wheelman Mark Handlas, who riding a 1909 G&J chainless bicycle, had agreed to escort me north to the outskirts of Oakland. We rode together several miles to the foot of Pig Farm Hill. It was the first of many steep and unrideable hills that I would dismount on and walk to the summit. I thanked Mark and rode on alone, finally on my way. Riding on secondary roads I rode 35 miles in the late afternoon sun and arrived in Martinez, California, at 7:15pm. I was tired and sore, but it had been a wonderful and exhilarating day. Awake early the next morning I re-packed the MIP bag and met Jerry Grulke at 7:00am for breakfast at a local restaurant. We both had biker pancakes and Jerry gave me specific directions for my ride to Sacramento. All travel in California seems to be on freeways and bicycles are not allowed. So getting to a destination riding on secondary and back roads can be both frustrating and add significant miles to your route. I was glad to get the shortcut directions from Jerry. I thanked him for all his help and gave him my yellow radio which was much too large for me to take along. About an hour down the road the sky became very black, almost like night and the wind began to really pick up. Rain would not be far off. To keep it dry, I put a plastic garbage bag over my new MIP bag, then dug out my rain gear. It didn't last long, but because of the wind and lightning, it was real scary. After riding a few more miles I confidently dismounted and pushed my cycle across the Antioch Bridge. I hoped I would not have a problem as there are only a few places to cross the Sacramento River and this is one of them. Often times bridges do not permit pedestrians or bicycles to cross over. The Martinez Bridge that I had decided not to use would have required me to cross over in a truck. I pushed up, over and down the other side without incident. The countryside became lush and green as I rode alongside the

levees containing the Sacramento River. The river traffic was heavy and I enjoyed watching the pleasure boats going up and down the river. The highwheel rolled along smoothly and steadily, and I began to develop a comfortable cadence. I counted the pedal revolutions and compared them to my new cyclometer. It was incredible that I could look down at the cyclometer mounted on my left handlebar and know exactly how fast I was going. Cyclometers are not new, in fact many wheelmen of the 1880's had cyclometers hanging from their front wheel axel. Antique cyclometers are now rare and hard to find. They are considered a real prize and are sought after by wheelmen who collect them along with other antique bicycle memorabilia.



California Wheelmen Richard Katz & Randy Mitchell

There were no towns or motels along my route so it was a long solitary ride (83 miles) to Sacramento. My bottom was sore, my legs were stiff, and it was quite dark when I finally checked into a motel. A hot bath was going to feel very good.



California State Capitol at Sacramento

In the morning I rode to the California State Capitol, circled it once, then stopped and took a picture of it with my bike in the foreground. This is the building in which Governors Jerry Brown and Ronald Reagan had spent so many years. I stood in front watching people pouring into the city to go to work on a Monday morning. They looked at me in amazement as most had never seen an antique highwheel bicycle up close other than perhaps in a picture or in a museum. Sacramento was a difficult city to get through. I got lost twice and had to back track to get on the correct route. I also fell over sideways twice before I realized that I couldn't go quite so slowly while threading my way through city traffic. To minimize getting off and on when approaching a traffic light, I would try to time my arrival at the intersection for the instant the light turned green. This often meant balancing an extra moment if the light stayed red longer than I anticipated. The increased weight of my water bottle and the MIP pack mounted high on the backbone had changed my balance point and if I rode too slowly I simply tipped over sideways. This was more embarrassing than dangerous, but I could have gotten hurt. Fortunately I figured out what was happening, and I then dismounted before this could happen again. Later in the ride this was no longer a problem as I had gotten used to the additional weight.

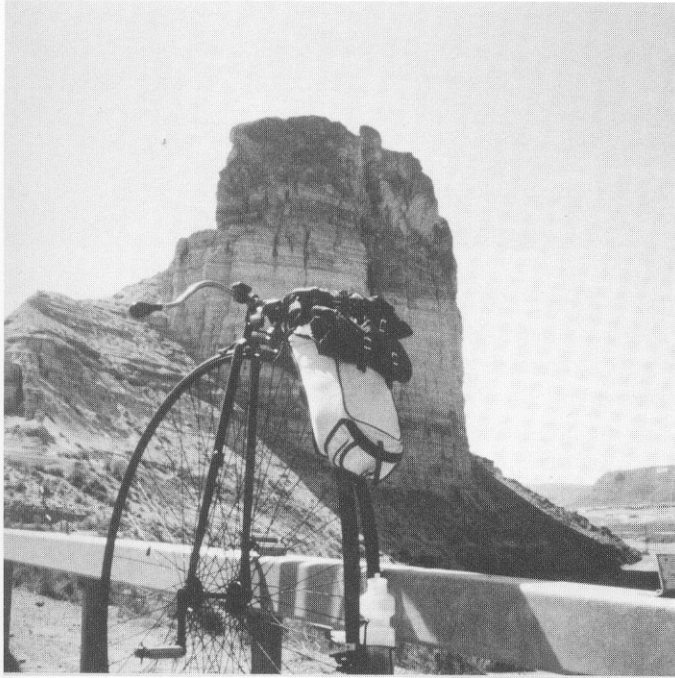
Today my legs seem slow. Perhaps it is because it is an all day uphill ride in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains and although the grade is steady, it is often unperceivable. By days end I have ridden 58 tough miles and I am glad to reach Colfax just as a cold light rain begins to fall. For a dollar the motel owner lets me use his washer and dryer. It feels good to have all my clothes clean again. There is a major spring snow storm brewing in the mountains north of here. I turned in early, worried about tomorrow. Early in the morning I rode north into the High Sierras. It was snowing hard and the Highway Patrol advised me not to proceed. The illuminated highway signs indicated "chains required"! I waited awhile for it to quit snowing, then walked and rode over the summit at Donners Pass to the town of Truckee. I was very wet and cold. To stay warm I put on all the clothes that I had, then coasted and walked the 32 miles down the mountain to Reno, Nevada. After my bike was tucked safely away in my motel room I went to the casinos for a bit of gambling. I won fifty dollars and decided that it wasn't such a bad day after all.



In the High Sierras

Reno to Lovelock, Nevada 101 miles: I wanted to be as visible as possible while riding on the highways so I decided that red was an easily seen color. My limited wardrobe consisted of a red short sleeved polo shirt, a long sleeved red shirt and a red wind and rain jacket. I wore one or all of these shirts everyday depending on the weather. My riding pants were black full length jeans and I wore lightweight black Rockport shoes. In my bag I had a white dress shirt, black knickers and black knee-high socks which I wore to the laundromats while I washed and dried my clothes. I got a lot of funny looks wearing my knickers down the street in small towns. Today would be my first century ride of the trip (a century is riding a bicycle 100 miles in one day). The grade remained reasonable most of the day and I rolled along in the warm desert sun. It was good to get back on flat land again as highwheel bicycles do not go up steep hills or mountains easily. The first service area was thirty-three plus miles away. (5) I was glad to have the water bottle as the distance between

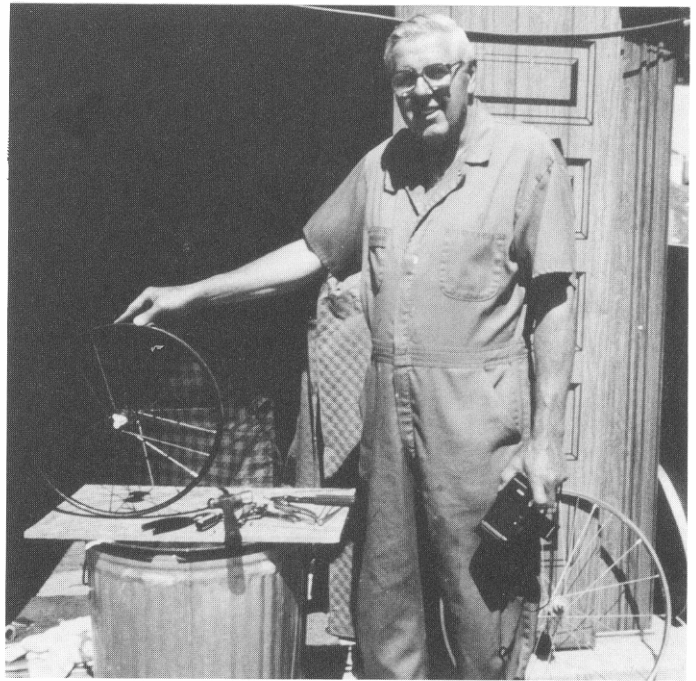
towns and service areas is becoming further all the time. There is a very large black cloud ahead in the northwest. It looks like it could be a tornado developing so I kept an eye on it most of the afternoon. The winds picked up and became quite severe. They are too strong to ride against so I walked and pushed the bike as best I could. Finally the wind eased up and the black clouds blew by me. I was glad to see them go and I rode as fast as I could trying to make up for lost time. When darkness arrived I was still eight miles from town. It is too dangerous to actually ride at night so I pushed the bike along the shoulder and used my flashlight to light the way and to alert passing cars. I found a nice motel and fell asleep with my clothes on. It had been a long day!



Glad to have the water bottle in the desert

The next morning I had an early breakfast at Sturgeons' Restaurant and got ready to ride to Winnemucca, an important covered wagon stop that was named for a famous Paiute Indian Chief. Thomas Stevens stopped in Winnemucca. As I packed the bike and checked it over I noticed a broken rear spoke, then much to my dismay I discovered seven more broken spokes. This was catastrophic and I wanted to go back to bed and cry. I showed the problem to Bob Schmidt, the motel owner, who offered me whatever tools and help that I might need. Together we drove to a nearby hardware store to see if they might have spokes that I could somehow use. They didn't and there was no bicycle shop within a hundred miles. We drove to a general purpose welding shop to see what help they might be. They had nothing that would be of any help. Back to the hardware store where I purchased an entire bicycle front wheel, rim, spokes, etc. We set up a vise and a workbench in the motel parking lot and cut eight spokes from the new wheel. With Bob's help I rolled the hard rubber tire off my rear wheel and removed the broken spokes. We cut the new ones to length and bent one end into a U shaped hook. This end was then hooked into the rear hub and the threaded nipple into the rim. It worked like a charm. I reinstalled the wheel back on the rear

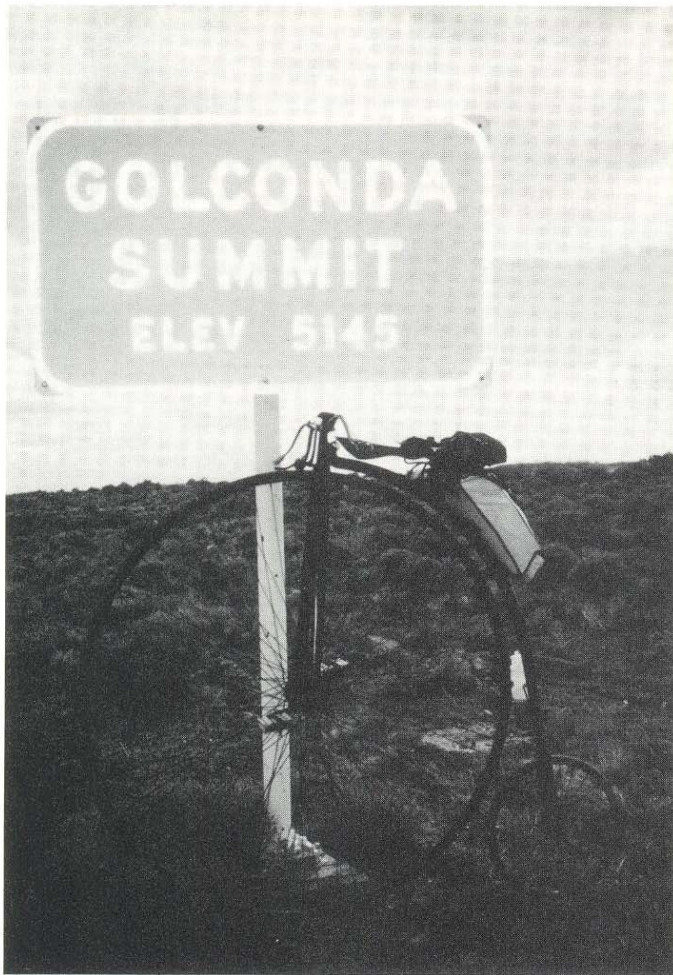
fork and with the bike upside down aligned the wheel as best I could. We cut out ten more spokes which I took along as spares. I was grateful to Bob Schmidt for all his help. It is nice to know that there are still people around who jump right in when they are needed. We greased both axles and the front head pivot, and I was ready to go.



Motel owner Bob Schmidt helping replace spokes

I repacked my things, thanked the Schmidts and got started for Winnemucca. It was a beautiful day with virtually no wind and I made good time. Normally bicycles are not permitted to ride on Interstate Freeways, but on I 80 which runs through Nevada, Utah and Wyoming bicycles are allowed as there are no secondary roads on which to ride. Most of I 80 has wide concrete shoulders, however they often have "noise bars" every 40 feet. These are grooves cut into the cement shoulders to warn motorists when their vehicle leaves the highway. I frequently was unable to avoid riding over these grooves and as a result I think they contributed a great deal to the breakdown of my rear spokes. I stayed at the LaVilla Motel and had a good dinner at the Casino across the street. I bought a small pocket radio with an ear plug that fit easily into my shirt pocket. From now on I was able to listen to the news, weather and Country Western Music. It seems that America likes Country Western. I also purchased a small pair of pliers to help with spoke repairs. The tools that I had along were carried in a tube shaped leather tool bag mounted within the round coil springs that supported the saddle.

April 28th....Winnemucca to Battle Mountain: This is a beautiful part of Nevada and I enjoyed the day very much. However, I had a long (4 mile) walk pushing the bike up and over Golconda Summit. I walk uphill at about three miles per hour and my average riding speed is between 8 and 10 miles per hour. This depends greatly on head and crosswinds of which there always seems to be some. I sometimes ride at 12 to 14 mph, but this for me is really spinning the pedals.



Golconda Summit

My destination, Battle Mountain, was named for an 1857 skirmish between a road building crew and a band of Shoshone Indians. It was also a stopover for Thomas Stevens on his crossing of Nevada. I was hungry when I reached Valmy, a small service area and restaurant stop. There were a number of motorcycle riders having lunch and celebrating a morning wedding. They were interested in me and asked a lot of questions about where I had come from and where I was going. I enjoyed the time with them, it seems there is a bond between biker people. My tires were covered with gooey fresh tar that I had gotten from a highway construction project a few miles back and it looked impossible that I would ever get it all off. The truck driver that had sat next to me in the restaurant saw my plight and came over with a rag that he had dipped into his diesel fuel tank. The two of us wiped and wiped on the tires and wheels until finally we got every bit of the tar off. I thanked him and rode on to Battle Mountain. The motel had a hot tub and as soon as I could, I was in it. I was always amazed that these towns were here over 100 years ago and that Thomas Stevens had stopped here also. The next morning at the Owl Restaurant and Casino I had breakfast and also had them pack me a lunch to take along as the towns were now few and far apart. The lunch was one of the best bargains of the trip. For \$2.75 the cook packed a turkey sandwich, a hard boiled egg, an apple, a banana, chips and three cookies. I was glad that I had the bag lunch as the first stop was Carlan and it turned out to be over 53 miles away.....a long ride.



Truck Driver helps wipe tar off tires

Later I walked almost five miles up and over Emigrant Pass. It was a nice ride down the other side. Lots of people have taken my picture, but today a couple in a car interviewed me with their video camera as they drove along side me on the highway. Despite the headwinds it was a beautiful clear day and the distant mountains were spectacular. I walked and rode eleven hours and covered 73 miles arriving in Elko, Nevada, at 7:15pm. I took a bag lunch again as I am uncertain of where restaurants might be, if any. Often there are no stops and I must study the maps carefully to determine how far I can go each day. The mountains make this determination difficult as I am never sure of the grade ahead and how long it will take. I must ride the 52 miles to Wells, Nevada, then to Wendover, Utah, tomorrow as it is too far for a one day ride. There are beautiful snow covered mountain peaks ahead and it seems to take a long time to get to them. There are lots of trucks today, and they cause considerable turbulence when they meet each other while passing me. Often it causes me to ride over the noise bars on the shoulder and I wonder if I will break more spokes. The side of the road seems rougher than usual. Not wanting to ride too many extra miles looking for lodging I stayed at a motel along the edge of the freeway. I played the quarter slot machines (which are everywhere) without much luck and decided to turn in early.....Utah tomorrow!

Day 10, Wells, Nevada to Wendover, Utah, 59 miles

I always remembered that Wendover is where the B29 crew for the "Enola Gay" trained (they dropped the first atomic bomb on Japan). The weather was great again, warm, sunny and not much wind. Wind was my big demise and I was grateful for each windless day. Normally the wind blows from the southwest in the summer (which I had counted on to push me along). I must have been a month or more too early as it blew at me from the east and southeast most of the trip. The winds so far, however, were nothing compared to what I would encounter in Nebraska. From the valley floor I walked up to

the elevation of 6967 feet and over Pequop Summit. I had an awesome ride down, a four or five mile coast. Going down the backside of some of these summits is quite an experience. It is almost impossible to keep your feet on the pedals when coasting at over 20 miles per hour, and you can never get them back on once you take them off. Highwheel bicycle pedals, in that they are attached directly to the front wheel, keep turning when you coast. You must either just hang from the saddle with your legs spread and let the pedals fly, or you can drape your legs over the handle bars and let it go. Either way it seems like you are no longer in control. My cyclometer registered 46 miles per hour while coasting down an especially steep hill. This is very dangerous and I never let it happen again. On steep downhill grades I would move back and position my left foot on the step with my right leg still more or less up on the saddle. In this way with most of my weight to the rear I could apply the front wheel brake without fear of a header. I could also, if necessary step down on the tire of the rear wheel using my right foot as a brake. This was a very effective way to negotiate steep downhill grades.



Serious downgrade for an ordinary

The other alternative way was to walk down and play it safe. Often because of curves in the road it was impossible to see to the bottom of a hill, thus I was constantly concerned that there may be an unforeseen hazard ahead. At the bottom of many hills there quite often are bridges and they always seemed very rough and sometimes had drain grates that my slender wheels could slip through. Tomorrow's ride to Salt Lake will be a

long ride, perhaps the longest of the trip...no stops, all desert. I decided to pack a lunch and carry extra water. I greased and adjusted both wheelbearings and went over the bike more carefully than usual. I did not want any problems in the desert.

Day 11. Wendover to Salt Lake City, 116 miles.

I was on the road at 5:00am and as it began to get lighter the view of the Great Salt Lake was incredible. I was surprised at how white the white salt looked. The day was perfect with a slight tailwind as I flew along through the Bonneville Salt Flats. The grassland looked just like it did in Nevada. I was also very surprised to see sailboats on the Great Salt Lake as I somehow had thought of it as being very shallow. As I rode along the edge of the lake I passed a large pavillion that had a "Russian onion mosque" look to it. I wondered what it might be? The ride was flat and I rolled on making good time, and despite riding a century I felt very good. My legs were strong now and I could feel the power being transmitted to the pedals. A friend, Michael Justin, had arranged a complimentary room for me at the Quality Inn. It was near the highway and I found it with no problem. I took a longer than usual shower, and as a reward for the longest ride of the trip, I soaked a bit extra in the tub. After some great Mexican food at the motel restaurant I walked up to Mormon Temple Square and looked at the Mormon Temple and world famous Tabernacle. It was all lit up and very beautiful at night. I passed a small cemetery and was reminded of a Mormon epitaph on a tombstone. "He was the father of 29, would have had more, but ran out of time." I walked past Brigham Young's home and back to the motel. Another long, but very exhilarating day. At 7:00 in the morning Roly Pearson was at my door with his vintage chainless bicycle. We rode together to his home which was just a few miles away. Roly is the fellow that made the MIP bag that was on my bike. This was a prototype bag that I had gotten from Karl Edwards, and I was certainly giving it a good field test. We had a wonderful breakfast of Roly's special pancake and topping recipe. A reporter from the Salt Lake paper "Deseret" came to the house and interviewed me and took several pictures. Roly rode his chainless and escorted me ten miles through Salt Lake City to the freeway on the eastern edge of town. Salt Lake is nestled right in the mountains and as a result has many steep and extremely steep hills. On some of these Roly would ride behind and, alongside of me, putting his hand on the backbone of my bike and literally push me right up the hill. It was like having a jet assist. I wanted to take him along on the rest of the ride. It was however, soon time to say goodbye. This area is home to many famous ski resorts, including Snowbird. The uphill grades were very difficult to ride. As a result I walked and pushed the bike the next twelve miles over Parley Summit. I arrived in Coalville with very tired legs. The last five miles had been against strong headwinds and I actually had to pedal downhill. Tomorrow will be another century ride to Little America and into Wyoming.

Day 12. A Century

I started very early as I am uncertain of the grade and this of course has a direct affect on my miles per hour. Almost immediately I had to walk and push the highwheel up a very steep grade. There is just no way to ride some of these

mountains. It seemed like I walked forever. Near Evanston a newspaper reporter parked his car and chased after me on foot for perhaps a half a mile before I heard him yelling at me and stopped. I talked with him for longer than I should have, but after running so far he really deserved it. Later on this same stretch of highway I met Bernie Torberg and his wife. They were driving to California and just before leaving Minnesota had read an article about me and my planned coast to coast ride in our local newspaper. They were so surprised to see me pedaling along a Wyoming highway that they turned around and stopped to chat. It was good to see them. I had three long uphill walks, for a total of perhaps 20 miles while crossing an area known as the "Three Sisters." It was a beautiful day and I sat at the top of one of the summits and ate my lunch, basking in the warm noon sun. I was starting to get quite tan. Late in the afternoon I caught a wonderful tailwind and flew along at 15 to 17 mph. The extra push really helped make up for the earlier long uphill walks. When it started to get dark I still had a long way to go, and walked the last five miles in the dark. My red jacket has bright reflector strips across the back and on the arms. I also had reflectorized velcro straps that I fastened around my ankles. I carried a small flashlight and hoped passing traffic could see me. I never liked being on the highway at night and avoided it whenever possible. My cyclometer read 103.89 miles and I arrived the latest ever at 10:45pm. The motel was just great, an older unit that had obviously been well cared for. I drew the hottest bath possible and soaked for a long time.

May 5, 1989 I now had to pick my stops carefully as the towns were not spaced quite the way I would like them. This was a very warm day and I got quite sunburned. It was the first day that I wore a short sleeved tee shirt, and as a precaution I bought sunglasses and #15 sunblock. More major hills and tough riding. As I departed a small town, I was apparently going too slowly while balancing on a cattle grate and fell over sideways, breaking off my left handlebar grip. I also put my foot through the front wheel, breaking one spoke and bending a few others. All the small towns had "cattle grates" across the roads as you entered or left town. These grates are several feet wide and are made of what appears to be railroad track rails. Their purpose is to contain cattle. The handlebar grip was shattered, and I searched on my hands and knees for all the pieces. I carried two part epoxy glue with me and now I really needed it. I jammed a lag bolt into the open end of the handlebar and cemented the broken pieces around it. After it had set, I wrapped the whole thing with friction tape and hoped it would hold (it did, for the entire trip). I found a welding shop and had the long front spoke heli-arc'd back together. I noticed also that my front tire is getting loose and worn. I rode 63 miles in very strong crosswinds to Point of Rocks, Wyoming.

Today I crossed the Continental Divide at 7,000 feet and have now put over 1000 miles behind me. The area I am in is called the Red Desert Basin and is a wide expanse of sagebrush and a few oil wells here and there. The sun is very hot again today and my lips are beginning to feel sunburned. I don't like sun block, but I put it on anyway. I am discovering that Wyoming is very mountainous and has strong winds. Thanks

to epoxy, the handlebar grip seems solid. I call it a day after 82 miles to Rawlins, Wyoming.

Century Ride to Laramie

Up early, as today will be another century ride to Laramie. I wore my long sleeve shirt as I am beginning to get somewhat concerned about my sun burned arms. I decided I'd better cover up as best I could. There was a lot of highway construction and I rode among the orange and white construction barrels as if they were a slalom course. I had a good tailwind all afternoon, it really helps. I pedaled 105 miles and arrived in Laramie tired all over. For the first time since leaving Lovelock, Nevada I noticed two broken rear spokes. The rough roads must vibrate these old rusty ones until they finally break. I still have ten spares so I rolled off the rear tire and replaced the two broken ones. The wheel is difficult to true up as I can only adjust the new spokes and not the rusty original ones. I also adjusted the saddle as the leather was beginning to stretch. The front tire is still ok and I hope it hangs in there.



Crossing the Continental Divide

Day 17 Today will be a milestone day and an almost century as I ride 91 miles through Cheyenne and on to Pine Bluffs. It is a milestone for me because I will now leave the Rocky Mountains behind and ride into the flat Great Plains of Nebraska.

It started to rain late in the day and it was raining hard by the time I arrived in Pine Bluffs. I found out that my expensive rain jacket was not that good. I was cold and soaked through to my skin. Thomas Stevens mentioned Pine Bluffs in his book as it was a stopover for the great cattle drives from Texas. Later that evening I received a call from Martha Thompson, a "historic" reporter for the Cheyenne newspaper. She had seen me ride into town and wanted a story for tomorrow's paper. Hardly a day went by that I didn't meet with a reporter. After supper she and her husband came to my motel room and it turned out to be an interesting interview. I hoped that it wouldn't be raining in the morning. It is one

thing to get rained on later in the day, but it is difficult to start out in the rain.

May 9, 1989. Day 18, early start, 7:00am It is not raining, but overcast and cold (I wore my jacket all day). I lifted my bike over the barbed wire fence and onto Highway 30. I now officially left Interstate 80 and the Rocky Mountains behind me. For the next two thousand miles I would be on side and secondary roads. US 30 was at one time the major east/west highway across the United States, but as the need for better and faster highways developed, Interstate 80 replaced it. It is suddenly very flat and so different from the mountains that I have been riding over for the past eighteen days. US 30 despite its obvious lack of maintenance is a very much used road across Nebraska. It parallels, and is at times, right alongside the Union Pacific Railroad tracks. The trains are very frequent in both directions and the engineers wave and blow their whistles. The rain is gone, but I now have significant headwinds which I struggled against all day. My average speed is reduced to six miles per hour and I am afraid that Nebraska is going to be a tiring state. Despite my early start I arrived late in Sidney and covered only 58.5 miles. This is not what I had envisioned for the flat land of the prairie. Sidney was the site of an historic frontier fort and was the crossroads of the Oregon Trail and the Black Hills Trail. My right arm is blistered and hurts from the sunburn that I got a few days ago. I mailed my Mother's Day card and wrote in my journal that it was a tough day.



Welcome to Nebraska

Sidney to Ogallala....70.3 miles. Headwinds again today, blowing from the southeast and gusting to 30mph. It's a warm day with lots of sunshine and the warmth of it feels good on my back. It is very green alongside the highway and there are wheat fields in all directions. More and more cattle are starting to appear. Black Angus cows seem to be the most abundant. They are curious, but run away as I approach. Late in the afternoon I got a cramp and pulled a leg muscle in my

right leg. Perhaps I should do more stretching exercises before I mount up each morning. Typically I just get on the bike and go. I have never been certain of exactly how to pronounce Ogallala. Should it be Oh-ga-la-la or is it Og-a-la-la? I still don't know. I soaked in a hot bath longer than usual and had a wonderful Black Angus steak for dinner.

To North Platte, Nebraska, 50 miles....Day 20 It is almost impossible to ride, strong headwinds gusting to 35 miles per hour. This is totally unanticipated. I had expected tailwinds and thought I would just fly across Nebraska. I walked a good part of the day (unable to ride) pushing the bike ahead of me with my head down bucking into the wind. I had looked forward to seeing the Buffalo Bill Ranch, but I arrived too late. It closed at 5:00pm. I was surprised at the size of North Platte. It's a big city with a population of 20 to 30,000. I used my Visa card for the first time and was amazed at how easy it was to get cash from a local bank. Close inspection of my rear wheel revealed more broken spokes which I will have to replace. It is nice to have spares in my MIP bag.

North Platte to Lexington...a very wet day I was up early, but there is no nearby restaurant (I usually like breakfast right away before getting started). As I approached the outskirts of the city I realize there will be no breakfast this morning. The next town is a long ways away and the thought of no breakfast, not even a cup of coffee is hard to take. I should have ridden back into town, but decided to keep going. I never like to back track if at all possible. About four miles out of town an airport suddenly appeared and I wondered if they might have a coffee shop. I turned in and rode to the terminal. There are those that say a good Norwegian can always sniff out a cup of morning coffee. I was in luck. They had a wonderful lounge and I had perhaps, one of the best breakfasts of the trip. As I departed it began to rain and with the strong winds it was a very cold 51 degrees. Cattle along the road are always very curious and often run to the fence corner to look me over. I always moo and wave goodbye. Thomas Stevens often commented that as he rode alongside the Union Pacific Railroad tracks, the engineers would wave and acknowledge him with their whistles (they still do). It rained all day and I arrived in Lexington soaking wet. After a hot bath I hung my wet clothes on all the lamp shades and even on the back of the warm tv set to dry them out. This was a ritual that I did a lot. I bought a red plastic poncho and hoped that another layer would somehow keep me dry.

78 miles to Grand Island, over half way now I waited for the rain to let up a little. Then with my new poncho on, I took off in a real downpour. It rained hard until about 10:00am and then suddenly quit and remained overcast, but dry the rest of the day. The headwinds were also gone, what a relief. I rode past the halfway point marked by the 1733 Ranch. This is a famous ranch that has been here for many years and has the distinction of being located exactly 1733 miles from both San Francisco and Boston. A fellow in Odessa bought my lunch and later a Police Officer bought an ice cream cone for me. This happened a lot. People seemed to be astonished by what I was doing and seemed to want to treat me. I rode hard and fast (14mph) the last 24 miles to arrive in Grand Island before dark.

I felt good about the days ride, but tired, and my legs are sore. I had some great halibut for dinner and later fell asleep sitting up....no journal entry tonight. I will have to replace more rear spokes in the morning. It looks like the entire rear wheel will ultimately have all new spokes before I am finished with the ride. I am getting quite proficient at spoke replacement and it has become part of my evening routine. Front tire still is ok.



The famous 1733 Ranch

Grand Island to Osceola.....Mothers Day Late start, 11:00am, had to replace three more broken rear wheel spokes. It is becoming more difficult to align the rear wheel as the old spokes are not adjustable. I am hoping that the rubber tire will not begin to rub on the rear fork. Finally, the sun is shining. It has been almost a week of rain, wind and overcast skies. I rode the first twenty miles with no headwinds and then the wind began to increase steadily to 15 to 25mph and became a direct headwind....terrible. Ahead there is construction on highway 30 and I decided to detour east onto highway 92. This seems to be a mistake as the hills are incredible roller coasters and in the next four hours I have ridden only 15 miles. A very tough 50 mile day to Osceola

Day 24 Osceola to Wahoo There is no doubt that highway 92 is very hilly and I am convinced that the wind blows continuously in Nebraska. I quit early as the next town is over 40 plus miles away. I stayed at a neat little motel on the edge of town. I had my own tiny white cabin with a tiny tin shower. The bed was high off the floor and very soft, perhaps

it was a real feather bed. I walked into town to the laundry and to dinner wearing my Wheelmen knickers. I am sure that people wondered about me in the land of ten gallon hats and cowboy boots. When I returned, the motel owner took pictures of me and the bike. I always brought the bike into my room with me. I didn't sleep with it, but it was more secure and I could make any necessary repairs. Tonight it was crowded, but cozy. The rear tire is skinned on one side. It apparently has rubbed all day on the fork. I wrote in my journal and said a happy goodbye to Nebraska.....Iowa tomorrow!

Day 25. To Iowa I had an early morning interview with a reporter from the Wahoo newspaper. It took longer than I thought and I finally got on the road at 8:30am. The road was not as bad as I had anticipated. I rode most of the hills and made good time (maybe I was getting used to the short steep grades). I arrived in Omaha and it was like stepping from the 18th to the 20th century, freeways, thousands of cars, noise, huge buildings, fast food and big hotels. Whoa! I found a bicycle shop and bought a spoke wrench and some Locktight. The owner gave me eighteen new spokes for my rear wheel. They were exactly the right size and were some that he had had for a number of years. I rode across the Missouri River Bridge into Iowa and left windy Nebraska behind.

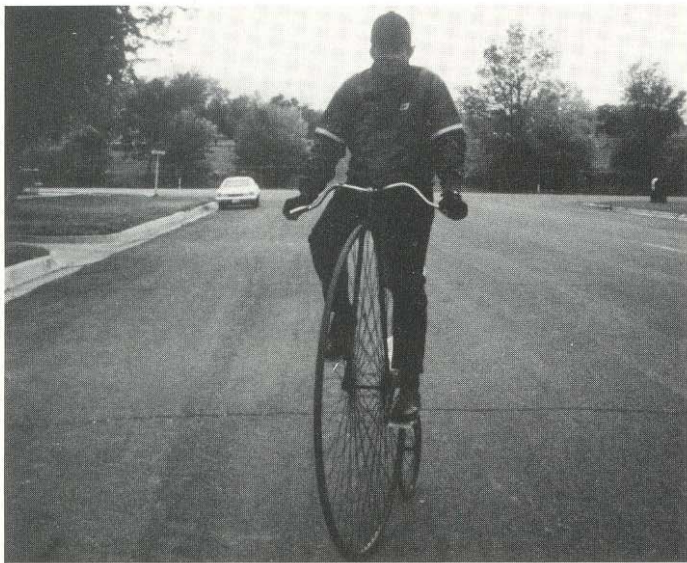


Goodby Nebraska

Council Bluffs, Iowa to Griswold, Iowa, May 17th I'm beginning to have much greater appreciation for Thomas Stevens and his ride across America. Considering the lack of roads, restaurants, lodging, etc. his 1884 journey was remarkable. I was so happy to be in Iowa as this was probably as close to home as I would get and it seemed almost like home. I soon changed my mind as the day turned into perhaps the worst day of the trip. I had always heard about the gentle rolling hills of Iowa and had envisioned an easy ride through green fields and pastures. Instead the hills were incredible, no flat areas at all and to make matters worse I bucked high headwinds all day. I seemed to be on the leading

edge of a severe storm (25 to 35mph winds). Because of the wind, I covered only 40 miles and had to pedal downhill much of the time. Much of the day I walked or pushed the bike. I ended up very tired and discouraged. The motel owner must have sensed this as he gave me the keys to his car and I drove to town for dinner. I felt a little better after I phoned home and wrote a few post cards. Throughout the entire trip I sent a postcard home each night. A third grade class was following my progress and keeping track of me on a large map across the wall of their classroom. They had a small highwheel bicycle and moved it on the map each day. It was a great geography lesson for them as I wheeled across America.

Day 27 I left early in the morning determined to make up for the last few days. The hills seemed much better and the severe headwinds were gone. Later in the day I caught a wonderful tailwind and flew along a concrete highway at 17-18mph. Whoa! This was more like it. I covered 63 miles and rode to Winterset, Iowa. The motel owner, Bob Pierson was extremely nice and had all my clothes washed and dried. It was great to be all cleaned up. He drove me to a nearby restaurant and joined me for dinner. People like this reinforce your faith in our American way of life. I was in touch with a Des Moines television camera crew that wanted to meet me in the morning for a spot on the evening news. They followed me most of the day and got some great shots which I saw on the late news.

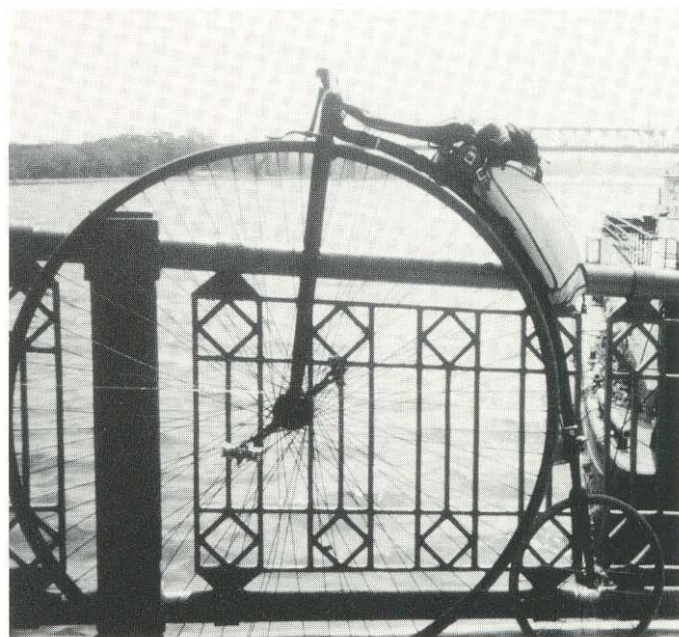


Early Start

May 19, 1989 My mother and brother arrived at 7:15am from Minneapolis to have breakfast with me. It was so good to see someone from home. We visited over coffee and I got back on the road at 10:00am. During the day I lost my long sleeved red shirt. It had been tied in a roll on top of the MIP bag. No headwinds today, what a relief. I rode seven and a half hours and covered 51 miles, finally stopping in Knoxville, Iowa. The motel owner offered her car to me to drive to a restaurant for dinner. I readily accepted as walking to town was a long walk.

Knoxville to Washington, Iowa 80 miles I had a roll and coffee in my room as no restaurant was nearby. I was on the road at 7:00am, no wind. Later in the morning a car stopped

and wanted to talk, they gave me a cup of coffee from their thermos. It hit the spot. I was really pushing it down the highway when a private plane buzzed me a couple of times and flew off. It turned out to be Wheelmen Peggy Skay and a pilot friend who flew from Minneapolis to join me for lunch in Oskaloosa. We had chowmein at a Chinese restaurant and they gave me a new red polo shirt. Mine was getting very faded from everyday in the sun. It was great seeing people from home two days in a row. We took some pictures, said goodbye and I rode hard to get to Washington, Iowa. It was an 80 mile day. Because of today's freeway system, motels in small towns are often located on the edge of town and cafes are still downtown. This is a problem and often requires walking from the motel to the cafe for dinner. This night the motel clerk called the local ambulance and they picked me up and took me to the downtown cafe. When I had finished eating they picked me up and returned me to the motel- pretty nice!



Crossing the Mississippi

Day 30, Rode to Moline, Illinois - 76 miles I got an early phone call from the ambulance driver from the night before and he invited me to breakfast with himself and the local Sheriff, who was a bicycle buff. I rode to the cafe and met some very nice people. One of them mentioned a highwheel bicycle nearby being used as a flower trellis. I may have to come back here someday to check this out, could be a real find! Everyone in the cafe came out on the sidewalk as I left and waved goodbye. I crossed the Mississippi River and rode into Illinois, it felt good to be east of the Mississippi. I heard a ping and noticed a broken front spoke. This was more serious than the smaller rear spokes, some of the other spokes seemed loose as well. The day was calm and I made good time along the river. It was very scenic. Late in the day I stopped in a bar by a lake and ordered a coke. I found that "real" Coca-Cola in the late afternoon often gave me an extra burst of energy. As often happened when I rode up, the people in the bar had lots of questions, about me, the bike, where did I come from? where was I going? This time the fellows at the bar all wanted to ride the bike, and I had quite a time talking them out of it. (12) My legs felt very strong today and I hated to quit. I finally

stopped at seventy-six miles. Later with the bike in my room I decided to try epoxy on the broken spoke. I'd find out tomorrow if it would work. Overall the Victor had performed extremely well, and I was very pleased with it.

Moline to Princeton, Illinois Before leaving town I stopped at a gas station and got a grease job. I greased all the bearings and the front fork. I was now on Highway 6 and the road was very rough. Before long I had broken three front, big wheel spokes. This would require some serious repair as I would not be able to ride tomorrow until the broken spokes were fixed. I met a fellow at a convenience store who said he might have some stiff wire that I could perhaps, somehow use for new spokes. I was elated and took six wires along with me. I arrived in Princeton about 6pm and tried unsuccessfully to reach Wheelmen Henneberry and Russell, both of whom were in my Wheelmen directory. I had hoped that they could help me with the broken spokes. I decided to wait for morning and try again.

Day 32, late start, 2:30pm I reached Mick Henneberry at his Law Office and together we drove around town to bicycle and repair shops looking for a solution to my broken spokes. Mick had a 52" Columbia and I felt good in the company of another Wheelmen. No one had a spoke threader so the wire that I acquired yesterday was not of much use. On future trips I will somehow carry a spoke threader. I finally decided to have a welder weld a "new" short spoke onto each broken spoke. This worked well and I was able to adjust and get the proper tension on the big wheel. The solid rubber tire on the front was becoming dangerously loose and it could come off the rim, jam and cause a header. I called Wheelmen, Al Pohill, in northern Illinois and sought his advice. As a temporary solution he suggested that I wrap the rim with friction tape, thereby increasing the diameter of the rim. I rolled the tire off, wrapped the rim with tape and rolled the tire back on. It worked perfectly and the tire was tight again. I decided to ride on and left town at 2:30 in the afternoon. I rode 48 miles before dark to Marseilles with one more broken spoke. My room was on the second floor of a restored historic 1800's hotel. There was no elevator and as I climbed the stairs to check out my room I couldn't believe the tightening and feelings in my legs. It dawned on me that I had not climbed steps since leaving California and was apparently using a different set of muscles. What a strange sensation. The open staircase was beautiful with its varnished oak bannister and newel posts on each landing. Due to the two story ceilings it was a long climb to the second floor on my bicycle legs. It seemed inappropriate to push my bike up this beautiful staircase, so for the first time, I parked it in the lobby and would not have it in my room. I hoped it would be all right and that nothing would happen to it during the night.

Day 33, 80 miles to Merrillville I started in a slight drizzle and would end up wet, off and on all day. There are no shoulders on US 30 and with strong headwinds it was a difficult ride. I crossed over the Indiana border and arrived in Merrillville at 7:30pm. I called Al Pohill and told him the tape on the rim seemed to be working fine. He will call Lowell Kennedy in Defiance, Ohio, and advise him that I am about two days away, and hope that he can make some new spokes

for me. After dinner I made a few phone calls, replaced a broken spoke and turned in.

Merrillville to Bremen, Indiana I got an early start, but lost some time at a large shopping mall looking for a new red shirt. Now there are beautiful shoulders on the highway and with a slight tailwind I am making great time. About noon I pulled off into a wooded roadside rest stop. A highway department road crew invited me to join them for lunch and help them celebrate the retirement of one of their crew. They had barbequed hot dogs on the grill, potato salad and ice cold pop. It was a great lunch and a nice bunch of guys. I enjoyed the break in routine, and after a few pictures, waved goodbye and got back on the road. I now left highway 30 and headed north for highway 6, lots of curves and hills. My knees were sore when I arrived in Bremen. I washed a load of clothes and mailed several postcards. Tomorrow will be a century day!



Lowell Kennedy's Shop in Defiance, Ohio

Tailwind to Defiance, Ohio 101.6 miles I picked up a wonderful tailwind that stayed with me most of the day. At times I just flew at 15 to 16mph. I was going straight east heading for the Ohio line. The states are starting to roll by now. Quite different than the eight days that I spent in crossing Nebraska. The day was warm and sunny and I thoroughly enjoyed it. I stopped and called Kennedy's in Defiance. I wanted to advise them of where I was and when I expected to arrive. Lowell Kennedy and his wife are an important part of our antique bicycling heritage. For years they have been in the forefront of restoring, and repairing antique bicycles. They also have manufactured a number of "Kennedy" reproduction ordinaries and eagles. My Victor Light Roadster needed attention and I was glad that Defiance was not too far off my route. Late in the afternoon the tailwind got even better and I continued to make good time. This might turn out to be the fastest century of the trip. When I had about ten miles to go I called again for directions to their home and shop. I rolled along on back roads and a "short cut" around Defiance. As I passed through a suburban

neighborhood I heard a loud bark and out of the corner of my eye caught sight of a large black dog racing toward me. It was too late for brakes or an emergency dismount. I woke up a few minutes later in the middle of the road with the bicycle on top of me and the labrador licking my hand. My helmet and gloves saved me from serious injury. The left handle bar was broken completely off and several large spokes were bent or broken. I set about cutting out the twisted spokes and bending others. By now I was long overdue. Mark Kennedy came looking for me in his pickup truck. I was just finishing the temporary repairs when he drove up. We were only a mile or two away, so riding with only the right handlebar I followed Mark home. It was tricky riding and I was glad there were no hills. I wheeled the bike right into their shop and they immediately looked it over from one end to the other. I couldn't have had a mishap in a better place. My bike was in the hands of some real experts. After coffee and talking around the dining room table I packed up a few belongings and they drove me to the Holiday Inn. We agreed to meet for breakfast at 8:00am.

Day 36. The 27th of May We had a wonderful breakfast and I enjoyed the opportunity to talk with Lowell and members of his family. They must have worked like elves most of the night on my bike. When we got back to the shop it was indeed ready to go. They had replaced all my rear spokes, aligned the wheel, rewired the front tire so that it was now tight again. The handlebar was so expertly welded back on that I could hardly see where it had been attached. They made new long spokes for the front wheel, replaced all the bad ones and we taped a dozen spares to the backbone. I now had both long and short spare spokes. Before leaving, a reporter interviewed us and took some photographs for the local newspaper. I was grateful to the Kennedys for all they had done. We said goodbye and I was back on the road. I rode 81 miles through some marvelous countryside to Fremont, Ohio. It was the opening of the fishing season and Fremont is located on the Sandusky River, a great fishing spot. As a result every motel/hotel room in town was booked. This was the first time that I had faced no place to stay. It was approaching dusk and it was several miles to the next town so it was impossible to ride on. I met a fellow who wanted to take my picture with his granddaughter. He did, and upon learning of my predicament invited me to stay overnight at his home. I readily accepted and followed him home. I had my own room and bath and it was great. We sipped "Jack Daniels" until midnight.....slow start the next day!

Sunday. Day 37 We had breakfast at a nearby cafe, then returned to repair yet one more spoke. I departed Fremont having made some great new friends. I thanked Ken and Alice Meeks for their hospitality and headed for Cleveland. My legs were slow today, maybe it was the "Jack Daniels," more likely it was the severe headwinds that pushed me around all day. I rode past many wonderful old Victorian houses in Norwalk, Ohio, and arrived late on the edge of Cleveland at Elyria. I enjoyed a marvelous pasta dinner and worried about reports of severe weather (floods and tornados) ahead. It seems like I have been on the edge of a storm cell for much of the past month. I will try to book it tomorrow for Pennsylvania.

Memorial Day. Century Ride. 100 miles It seemed that I had the streets all to myself as I rode along on the still wet pavement. All along route 20 the early morning sun illuminated the many flags that were draped everywhere on the beautiful turn of the century homes. As I rolled along the lakeshore I caught an occasional glimpse of a sailboat on Lake Erie. I covered over one hundred miles and stopped for the night in Conneaut, Ohio. I met a young man who gave me a ride to and from the restaurant.



Conneaut, Ohio thru Pennsylvania to Westfield, New York

At 7:00am Wheelmen Rex Little knocked on my motel room door. He had brought his highwheel bike and driven over 200 miles through the night to spend the day riding with me. We had breakfast and waited for a brief rain shower to ease up. Rex unloaded his bike and left his vehicle at the motel. We rode 65 miles together through picturesque vineyards and along the back roads of northern Pennsylvania to Westfield, New York. It was great to have someone to ride with and I admired Rex's stamina to be able to just pick up and ride 65 miles. The traffic through Erie was heavy as we made our way carefully along the city streets. It was a milestone to cross the stateline into New York and I found it hard to believe that I was actually here, and within a few days of the Atlantic Ocean. We had a few aches and kinks from the days ride, but we both enjoyed the day very much.

Day 40. 75 miles to Lancaster, New York I wanted to be in Orchard Park at noon for lunch with Carl Burgwardt so I said goodbye to Rex and got an early start, with breakfast in the next town. It began to rain very hard at Silver Creek. I

stopped under a bridge and put on all my rain gear, including my red poncho. It was always a difficult decision as to whether I should sit it out or ride on in the rain. Fortunately the rain did not last long and I picked up a nice tailwind to Hamburg. I would have to have it all the way if I was to keep my schedule with Carl. I didn't make it for lunch, but arranged to meet Carl and his daughter Melinda along route 20 in Orchard Park. Melinda had her ordinary with her and together we rode the twelve miles to Lancaster where I left my bike. I stayed overnight with Carl and Clarice and soaked in their marvelous outdoor hot tub. I enjoyed their hospitality and I had a good nights sleep. Somehow during the night Clarice washed all my clothes squeaky clean.



Rest stop with Carl and Melinda Burgwardt

Century Ride to Seneca Falls, New York Following breakfast with the Burgwardts I departed in an early morning fog and rode a tough century over some serious hills to Seneca Falls, New York. Thomas Stevens stayed in Seneca Falls and wrote of it in his travels so long ago. It drizzled off and on all day as I passed many nice old houses along route 20. The afternoon brought a nice tailwind and I finished the century at 7:15pm. A quick check of the bike revealed three broken front wheel spokes. It sure made things easier to have the spares along that the Kennedys had made for me back in Defiance. The tire was hard to roll off alone, but I was getting good at it and I had the new spokes installed in no time.

Day 42, June 2, 1989 It was raining very hard so I took my time with breakfast. My remaining supply of maps was dwindling, as I mailed them home as soon as I was through with them. This morning I reviewed the route through New York State and I was excited about the thought of entering the Finger Lakes Region. There is always something special about an area with lakes and this was no exception, the scenery was beautiful. The towns were picturesque and charming, but the hills were unbelievable and I encountered some of the worst hills I have ever ridden. It was a tough day and at one

point it took seven hours to go thirty-five miles. I hoped the rest of the day would be easier. The towns were wonderful. Skaneateles, LaFayette, Cazenovia. All were very old with interesting architecture and beautiful homes. Skaneateles was especially nice and I sat by the lake eating pizza admiring some large passenger steamer boats docked nearby. On one of the hills just outside of town I met Wheelmen Phil Duryea who lived in this area. He had spotted me while driving by and waved me to a stop. He later sent me some pictures that he had taken. It was fun talking with another Wheelman. It continued to rain all day and I was cold and soaked to the skin upon my arrival in Cazenovia.

June 3rd, A Century ride to Albany The major hills of yesterday were gone and I was grateful that they were. The sun was back and I got an early start. It turned out to be a perfect day with very little wind and the warm sunshine felt wonderful after the recent all day rains. The hills weren't entirely gone, but I managed to ride most all of them without dismounting. By now my legs were very strong and I was probably in the best condition that I had been in in years. It felt really good when reaching the top of an extremely steep hill knowing that I was able to conquer it. I was interviewed twice during the day by local reporters. One followed me for miles near Richfield Springs taking pictures for his paper. A picture that he took appeared that evening as an Associated Press Wire Photo in many newspapers across the United States. Later in the day I witnessed a terrible car accident at Sharon Springs. I heard this incredible noise and looked up to see an automobile cartwheeling end over end downhill towards an intersection. It finally came to rest upside down and almost immediately, I and others rushed to the car. Fortunately the two occupants had been thrown clear and were badly shaken, but with no serious injury. It was a terrifying moment that I will never forget. I rolled along the rest of the afternoon without incident. As it began to get dark I was still miles away from any motels. Whenever possible I tried to avoid riding after dark as it was extremely dangerous. I knew that it was often difficult for drivers to see me and in many cases there were no shoulders on which to ride. This meant I was literally riding the white line (if there was one) on the edge of the roadway. In the glare of the oncoming headlights one extra wobble or the wrong body English and I could find myself in the loose gravel on the side of the road. In the dark it would be easy to end up in the ditch. Tonight I had no choice as Albany was still a long ways off. I put on my reflective jacket and the reflective ankle straps. With the flashlight in one hand I illuminated the way looking for any obstructions that might be in the road. It was pitch black so I rode slowly for about an hour and a half until I saw some lights in the distance. I had become quite adept at spotting motel lights from a considerable distance. It was 10:30pm and even though the motel did not look too swift I wheeled right up to the office and checked in. I finished out the day with some great wine and wonderful Italian spaghetti.

Albany to Chester, New York 72 miles The brakes on a highwheel bicycle when wet become almost non-existent. The smooth hard rubber tire becomes shiny and slick and often doesn't respond at all to either the pressure of the brake spoon pushing down on it or the sometimes full weight of the right

foot on the rear wheel tire. In the Berkshire Mountains of western Massachusetts a gentle rain was falling as I made my way up and over increasingly steep terrain. I was aware of no way of stopping a run-away downhill bike with wet brakes. This often meant a judgment call at the top of the hill or mountain as to whether to coast or walk down the hill. I had made a pact with myself early on, that if I couldn't see the bottom of a steep hill (because of a curve, foliage or other obstruction) I would walk down pushing the bike until I could see that the road ahead was clear. This pact occurred because of a number of incidents earlier in the ride. At one time I very nearly bought it when a rancher pulled out with a tractor in front of me while I was coasting at over 30 miles per hour. I narrowly made it over a drain grate at a bridge which were often at the bottom of most long downhill grades. Coasting steep grades blind was dangerous to say the least. I decided to walk down some of these hills and I arrived safely in Stockbridge, Massachusetts (the home of artist Norman Rockwell) without a mishap. I had apple pie ala mode and coffee at the famous Red Lion Inn. It was a neat town and I enjoyed my brief visit to the Rockwell Museum. I rode on to near Chester and stayed at a "closed" motel. The caretaker gave me a blanket and opened up a room. I was grateful to be able to stay and not ride on. I called Wayne Colby, Captain of the Massachusetts Wheelmen and arranged to meet him the next day. Boston was within range and I was getting close to the end of my ride.



The final ride to Boston

Eighty one miles to Worcester, Massachusetts I was up early and rode five miles to breakfast (downhill all the way) at a wonderful smalltown cafe. It was right out of a Norman Rockwell picture with a Police Officer (with white socks) sitting at a lunch counter stool. I loved it! I rode hard to Westfield, home of the Columbia Bicycle Company. My front bearing seemed loose so I greased and adjusted the front wheel bearings. I also called Northwest Airlines from a travel agency to confirm my return reservations to Minneapolis from Boston. I splurged and bought three much needed new shirts for my arrival in Boston. Two white ones and a red one. I didn't have room for them in my pack so I tied them on behind the saddle. I hadn't gone three blocks when a delivery truck pulled me over and handed me my bag of new shirts, which had come loose and fallen off the bike. I was lucky! I met Wayne Colby along route 20 and we rode together for several miles. It was fun to see another highwheel out ahead of me. A reporter caught up with us at a rest stop in Palmer and interviewed us for a story in the local paper. An older couple bought my dinner and it was something that always surprised me. I stayed overnight with Marie and Wayne Colby. Boston tomorrow!

The Final Ride. 45 miles to Boston It was pouring rain as I started the final ride. It was raining so hard you could hardly see the road. Big drops, water everywhere. It is very wet, but I am anxious to ride on to Boston, so I donned my red poncho and got started. Wayne Colby planned to meet me later in the morning and escort me through the Boston Commons to the Atlantic Ocean. Despite the heavy rain I really put the hammer down and rode hard towards Boston. I was on the famous Boston Post Road which George Washington had also ridden on from Springfield so long ago. Wayne Colby caught up with me in Weston and together we rode into Boston and through the Boston Commons to Faneuil Hall in the Quincy Market Place. We made our way to the waterfront near where the USS Constitution (Old Ironsides) is docked and when I dipped my front wheel in the Atlantic Ocean the ride was over.

Cyclometer read 3,358.5 miles My cyclometer read 3,358.5 miles and on June 6, 1989 at 4:00pm, forty five and one half days after leaving San Francisco the ride was over. Wheelman Tom Maher was there with his pickup truck for the ride back to Weston, where I had arranged to stay overnight with friends. I said goodbye to Tom and Wayne and thanked them for all their help. My friends, Dan and Hisako Johnson had a Kindergartner and a fourth grader and had scheduled me to talk with their school classes the next morning. I met first with the Kindergarten class and during the question and answer period one little guy raised his hand and asked me, "How come you aren't going to ride back?" Next time maybe!

