Bridge to Bridge 2003
A Trip by Bicycle
July 24 — August 3

History by
Rob Beezer
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Preface

This is an account of a 10-day bicycle trip along the Oregon and Northern California coasts. Seven years ago, a group of fourteen riders departed from Gig Harbor, Washington, near the Tacoma Narrows Bridge, and ten days later cycled onto the Golden Gate Bridge into San Francisco. Ever since, they have gathered each summer for a long bicycle tour, always doing a different route. Five of this year's riders were on that inaugural trip.

This summer, they decided to repeat the original route, only shorten it some by starting near the Astoria Bridge in the extreme northwest corner of Oregon. It was my first year riding with this group, having been invited the previous February by Alf Gunn. Once underway, Alf asked if I might be the group “historian,” a role I accepted with pleasure, and this is the result.

This year’s route was 806 miles long, with 43,000 vertical feet of elevation gain. I have tried to capture here the memorable moments, the nature of the tour, and the joys of traveling and living with a group sharing a common goal. This is not a personal account, though it will undoubtedly be colored by those events I witnessed first-hand. I am grateful to those who contributed stories each afternoon and the corrections and additions to my original drafts. The individual photos of the riders come from Mike McLean and the vast majority of the other photos are by John Hornby.

I hope that friends and relatives of the riders enjoy this account, that the riders and support crew find it a unique souvenir, and that anyone contemplating cycling this route finds some of the descriptions helpful for their own tour.

Robert A. Beezer
Gig Harbor, Washington
August, 2003

Figure 1: Your editor at work, Russian Gulch State Park
Figure 2: Oregon Coast

Figure 3: California Coast
Chapter 1

The Cast

In the order of their appearance one afternoon while this rider typed away at a campground picnic table:

**Pat Harrington, Sue Ebreo**  Sue is Pat’s daughter. Jim Harrington (Pat’s husband, Sue’s father, and a five-time rider) had to stay home for radiation treatments. This is Sue’s second year riding, following one year as support. Pat has ridden six years. Sue works part-time in accounting at Tacoma Screw Products and Pat is a psychiatric nurse who occasionally facilitates business training and team retreats.

**Rob Beezer**  First-time rider, maintainer of the Crankers email list. Group historian. 44 years old, mathematics professor at University of Puget Sound.

**Bryan Smith**  First-time rider. 51 years old, mathematics professor at University of Puget Sound.

**John Hornby**  Routemeister. Webmaster. 58 years old, IT management consultant.

**Chris Staehli**  First-time rider. 55 years old, mechanical engineer for marine vessels. Has the oldest bike on the trip, with friction shifters and the widest tires in the group (28C).

**Dave Larkey, Margaret Larkey**  Dave is a five-time rider. 47 years old, technology teacher in Franklin Pierce school district. Margaret is a six-time rider. 42 years old, software architect at Weyerhauser. Margaret is Vicki Betterbed’s sister.
Lori Jowers, Dennis Pollett  Lori and Dennis are tentmates. Lori is a special education administrator in the Franklin Pierce School District, fifth-time rider and 40 years old. Dennis is a first-time rider, business manager at Microsoft, and 41 years old.

Mike and Joan McLean  Mike is driving support this year, Joan is riding. Fourth year for both. Mike is a retired pilot for United Airlines, Joan is a part-time (one day a month) dental hygienist. Joan just turned 60, Mike is 61.

Bob, Gerrye and Robert Peaslee  Bob is 45, Gerrye is 41, Robert is 16. Bob is between careers, Gerrye works for an orthodonist (Dr. Quinn), Robert will be a junior in high school and a freshman at Tacoma Community College. Bob and Gerrye are both fourth-time riders, though not the same four trips. Robert is a first-time rider.

Dave Mumper  Age 60, retired Weyerhaeuser executive.

The Stewarts  Leelee (40), Marsden (44), Emily (11), Colter (9), and Gracie (2) form the Stewart family. Most days, one of the parents rides, and the other parents and drives. Leelee is an internist and Marsden is an anesthesiologist. Both are fourth-time riders.

The Betterbeds  Tom (48), Vicki (46), Tommy (16), Elizabeth (14), Claire (12) form the Betterbed family. Tom is a seven-time rider, Tommy is doing the whole route for the first time, Elizabeth and Claire are riding parts of the route. Vicki is an integral part of the support team — on the road and in camp. Vicki is Margaret Larkey’s sister. Tom is group leader *uber alles*. Vicki is a mathematics teacher at Gig Harbor High School, while Tom works in the Puyallup School District as Assistant Director for Special Service and Programs. Tom has ridden across America, northern route.

Louise Pettie, Helen Wilkie, Joe Mullan  Louise and Helen are the heart of the support team. Louise drives the camper and Helen drives the supply and gear truck. Joe is 13 years old, grandson of Louise and a part of the support team.

Fred and Andy Root  Andy (26) drives our main on-the-road support vehicle, complete with snacks, water, Gatorade and 10,000 MP3’s. His father, Fred, is the group mechanic, in real life he evaluates repairs on Navy turbine engines. Fred is a six-time rider.

Julia Howatson  Julia is 17 years old and was planning to ride with her mother. Unfortunately, Mom injured herself before the ride and could not come.
**Nancy Driggs**  Nancy is a first-time rider, mother of five and a natural athlete, hailing from Las Vegas. Friend of the Stewarts.

**Mike Blondin**  Three-time rider, 48 years old, marketing coordinator for Metro Transit King County. Riding a new bike this year, and “loving it.”

**Alf Gunn**  Routemaster Emeritus, Alf still is involved in the daily route discussions. 61 years old, he is a retired FBI agent and six-time rider.

**Steve Skibbs**  Six-time rider, 54 years old, owner-broker Windermere Real Estate. Has ridden across America, southern route.

**Katharine Haag**  Second-time rider, 45 years old. A speech-language pathologist and early childhood coordinator for White River School District.
CHAPTER 1. THE CAST

Tommy Betterbed

Sue Ebreo

Bob Peaslee

Chris Staehli

Dave Larkey

Tom Betterbed

Robert Peaslee

Rob Beezer

Mike Blondin
CHAPTER 1. THE CAST

Katharine Haag

Julia Howatson

John Hornby

Lori Jowers

Pat Harrington

Gerrye Peaslee

Steve Skibbs

Marsden Stewart
Chapter 2

The Ride

Day 0 (Thursday, July 24, 2003)

Miles: 0
Elevation Gained: 0
Start: Assorted locations
Finish: Fort Stevens State Park, Astoria, Oregon

Riders assembled through the afternoon and evening (Mike Blondin was the last arrival around 11 P.M.). Various support crew, family members and other hangers-on rounded out the assembled crowd. Hamburgers and hot dogs for dinner were followed by a group meeting with introductions.

Miscellany  Two cuts (one with a knife, the other inflicted by a dog) were expertly handled by Dr. Leelee Stewart. Mike McLean gave us each a short section of hot pink survey tape (“tails”) to affix to the back of our seats, so that the support crew would have an easier time spotting us.

Day 1 (Friday, July 25, 2003)

Miles: 77
Elevation Gained: 3,221
Start: Fort Stevens State Park, Astoria, Oregon
Finish: Cape Lookout State Park, Netarts, Oregon

The day dawned grey and overcast, but not cold, as twenty two riders (minus late-arrivals Pat and Marsden) rolled out of Loop O together. There was a scenic detour into Seaside to see the Lewis and Clark salt cairns, followed by a mass rest stop in Cannon Beach at the bakery, where we were greeted by the “Mayor” and “City Manager,” a couple of retirees holding court on the benches outside. At Nehalem,
we left the coastal route to follow a wooded inland valley. Lunch was to be along this road, at Barnsdale, a place unknown to locals and never found by the riders. Reorganization resulted in a lunch stop where the valley road rejoined US-101, on the shores of Tillamook Bay, near Garibaldi.

Fresh ice cream at the Tillamook Creamery was too great an allure, so most everybody dropped in for a cone, souvenirs and the self-guided tour. A strong head wind, and the smell of the dairy farms greeted the riders as they left the town of Tillamook, heading west. Quickly the route turned south, turning the headwind into a tailwind for the 6 mile run into the Cape Lookout State Park.

Our campsite was close to the beach, so some took an afternoon swim, while others waited to visit the beach for the sunset after dinner.
Punctures  Tom en route, Joan’s exploded in camp.

Day 2 (July 26, 2003)

Miles: 123  
Elevation Gained: 6,745  
Start: Cape Lookout State Park, Netarts, Oregon  
Finish: Honeyman State Park, Florence, Oregon

No marine layer today, the morning was bright and clear. The day began with an 850 foot climb, and then back onto US-101 after about 10 miles. With an early start (7 A.M.) and since it was Saturday, it was 45 minutes before this rider experienced the first car passing in his lane. That would soon change. At Mile 26, we cut inland onto Slab Creek Road, which became Forest Road 12, and a beautiful wooded climb and fun descent. Lunch was chili dogs at the Boiler Bay Wayside, just shy of Depoe Bay at Mile 53.

After lunch, Gerrye Peasley set out for the next leg, only to encounter a teenager’s remote control car whizzing around the parking lot and under her front wheel. Down she went. The result: a broken right radius (arm) and a trip to the emergency room in Newport with Bob at her side. Her ride is done, but as usual, she’s taking it with a smile, and Bob should still be able to continue with the ride.

Figure 2.3: Still smiling!

The remaining 70 miles alternated stretches of relatively flat, straight roads with twisting climbs and wild descents around headlands. Mercifully there was a fantastic
tailwind all afternoon, shooting us through the gaps in the headlands. Otter Crest Loop was especially scenic, and the north section was closed to cars and had new pavement. We detoured through Lincoln City, including some 17% grades among the beachfront communities. The detour through Newport was better, but culminated in the Yaquina Bay Bridge. With Saturday traffic mid-afternoon, some choose to walk the sidewalk for a half-mile or so. Two other bridges on the route today, one out of Florence with a steel grate deck, which was very passable on a dry day.

![Figure 2.4: Oops! That way is north! (Bryan, Nancy, Marsden, Alf, Rob)](image)

Andy met us at the lookout near Cape Perpetua at about Mile 95 with water, Gatorade and Cheez-Its. Shortly thereafter, we encountered the second tunnel of the trip, at Heceta Bay. The warning device wasn’t working, and two groups were pursued by jerks who blared their horns all the way through the tunnel. One motorist later apologized for the behavior of the others at subsequent viewpoint. Margaret was overwhelmed by the roar of a motorcycle, and so tried to walk her bike. For her caution, she ended up taking a tumble into the wall, putting some nasty scratches into her beautiful Cannondale Saeco with the glossy red finish, and giving herself a couple of scratches. And as she said later, “The body is used, but the bike is NEW!”

Dinner will be turkey, with all the trimmings. Yumm. A long, hard day for most everybody, but we’ve got 40 miles in the bank.

**Miscellany** Mike was omnipresent as usual, and even attracted the attention of the Florence police for doing 43 in a 30. Nancy was sprayed with water by a motorist. Dave M. was passed by an approaching motor home as one of its windows broke loose,
shattering on the pavement 20 feet in front of him. Sue, Joan, Tommy, and Dave M. all achieved personal bests for mileage in a day.

**Punctures**  Nancy in Lincoln City (blew a sidewall on a new tire), Katharine (two!), Sue.

**Day 3 (July 27, 2003)**

Miles: 70  
Elevation Gained: 3,403  
Start: Honeyman State Park, Florence, Oregon  
Finish: Bullard State Park, Bandon, Oregon

Another bright clear morning, as we turned south on US-101, expecting an easier day. Alf, Nancy and Leelee all departed early to attend church along the way. Two 300-foot climbs brought us into Reedsport. On a street corner, an older gentleman hollered to me, “Lance Armstrong won!” Ten miles later, we encountered a stretch of road construction along the dunes. Ten miles of brand-new asphalt was only spoiled by the lost security of the as-yet-unpainted fog stripe. The road works brought us to North Bend and Coos Bay, fronted by another ominous bridge. As Dave M. crested the center of the bridge, a woman passed him, slowed up, and paced him down the span. “Sir, sir, sir, . . . , please use the sidewalk.” Sue dropped her chain at the top of the bridge, catching it beneath the chainguard that was suppose to prevent such
CHAPTER 2. THE RIDE

Figure 2.6: On the road, Day 1

Figure 2.7: On the road, Day 9
mishaps in the first place. No lunch stop was planned since Louise and Helen went to mass. North Bend and Coos Bay are not tourist towns (but rather they appear to be dying), but a few folks found a fabulous Chinese food restaurant for lunch, belying its exterior appearance. The detour through town ended with a friendly bridge across the South Slough and the town of Charleston. Seven Devils Road had just one devil, another big climb with 12% grades, taking us up to a wooded (or clearcut) plateau at 450 feet. The marine layer reestablished itself for 10 miles or so. What goes around comes around, and Whiskey Run Road was a nice descent. A few more miles, a couple back on US-101, and we arrived at the evening’s campground. About 30 miles left in the bank, having made a 10 mile withdrawal today.

Fred was kept busy with Skibb’s brakes, his own blown tire sidewall and peeling tread, and Bob’s reconstruction. As Bob departed camp this morning, his chain broke, wrapped around his derailleur and snapped it off, bending the dropout in the process. Into the truck with Gerrye for the day, as a hunt for an open bike shop on a Sunday was futile. Right now, he’s cannibalizing Gerrye’s bike for parts. Rob popped a spoke just before Charleston, and replaced it back in camp employing Fred’s truing stand.

Gerrye’s father lives in Brookings, near our next evening’s camp, so she’s been picked up and is heading that way in hopes of finding an orthopedic surgeon on Monday. To replace her, Pat Harrington arrived in Coos Bay at the airport, met by Mike McLean. Having discharged her familial obligations, she was able to get in some riding this afternoon — into the saddle just half an hour after landing.

**Punctures**  None.

![Figure 2.8: John Hornby, Robert Peaslee, south of Crescent City](attachment:image.png)
Day 4 (Monday, July 28, 2003)

Miles: 89
Elevation Gained: 4,592
Start: Bullard State Park, Bandon, Oregon
Finish: Harris State Park, Brookings, Oregon

Another nice day, and more cruising down the coast. We deposited 9 miles, bringing our account up to about 39 miles. Lots of undulations, rarely flat.

We left camp, and crossed another bridge into Brandon, immediately taking a detour along the water. One wrong turn caused about 15 of us to spin through a waterfront community, but overall the detour was worth it. 8 miles later we were back onto US-101. The topography has changed — the hills are browner, and the tall grasses are drier. Saw more cattle today than logging trucks. The route was inland until about Mile 35, where there was a mass espresso stop in Port Orford. Bryan discovered a popped spoke, nearly identical to the one Rob had yesterday. A quick and dirty true, and he was back on the road.

Lunch was at about Mile 52, the Ophir rest stop, with a panoramic view of the ocean and a scrumptious rerun of Saturday’s turkey dinner. Bryan discovered yet another broken spoke — same wheel, same side, about a quarter way around. Better to sag in than risk further damage to the wheel.

Some backtracked 2 miles to take a scenic detour to the Rogue River, some kept up the forward progress down 101, taking the Old Coast Road detour north of the river.
The Squaw Valley Road was “miles of smiles” as John reported zero car passings. The bridge crossing over the Rogue River was easy, since there were flaggers routing traffic around some construction, and then we coursed through Gold Beach. A few miles later, we hit the biggest climb of the day — 700-foot Cape Sebastian. More undulations brought us the 25 miles to camp. Many stunning scenic views today, seastacks and rugged cliffs leading down to sandy beaches. We crossed the highest bridge in Oregon, at 345 feet above the outlet of Thomas Creek emptying into the Pacific.

At the top of one of the last climbs of the day, Mike spotted a family of cyclists repairing a flat by the side of the road and stopped to offer assistance. Parents with two girls, 9 and 11 years old, all riding their own bikes. Mom had crashed a few miles back having hit one of the several severe bumps along today’s route. Her road rash looked pretty severe, but she preferred to make her way to camp before fixing it up. They had done the coast trip three times before as a family, last time Mom had broken her elbow. Dad’s bike weighed 100 pounds with all the camping gear, so they were doing just 25 to 40 miles a day.

Gerrye Peasley’s father, Ron, owns the Tea Room in Brookings, so tonight he and his wife, Frances, hosted us for dinner. We caravanned into town in cars and had a sit-down meal, giving our cooks a break. Dinner was fabulous, lots of beef and chicken, baked potatoes, and numerous desserts (their homemade specialties). Joan was surprised with a cake and a card on the occasion of her 60th birthday.

Miscellany Robert had a low-speed crash in a parking lot, with a road rash totaling about a square millimeter, of which he is very proud. He swears thhe new pedals were not to blame. Tommy Betterbed is riding strong, sisters Claire and Elizabeth rode
CHAPTER 2. THE RIDE

Figure 2.11: Emily and Colter Stewart at the Tea Room, Brookings

Figure 2.12: Betterbeds at the Tea Room, Brookings
the last 20 miles. The mother-daughter act of Pat and Sue put on a stunning roadside display for descending riders. Lots of road kill today, leading Sue to query, "Why did the chicken cross the road?" (Answer: To show the possum it was possible.) Katherine sighted a perrigrine falcon with a good-sized fish in its mouth, circling while he tried to decide just what to do with it.

**Punctures**  None.

**Day 5 (Tuesday, July 29, 2003)**

Miles: 64  
Elevation Gained: 3,338  
Start: Harris State Park, Brookings, Oregon  
Finish: Prairie Creek State Park, Klamath, California

Foggy this morning as we went along the beach out of the campground and through the town of Brookings. California State Line was crossed at about Mile 8 (no agricultural inspections today due to budget cuts) and we detoured off US-101 onto Ocean View Drive through Smith River and into busy Crescent City. Lots of Easter Lily farms along the way, it being the Easter Lily Capital of the World. Many folks stopped at the Good Harvest Cafe in Crescent City, though the sudden influx of business brought the service to a standstill. Rob had popped another spoke (front wheel this time), so that was an excuse for several folks to visit a bike shop nearby for a replacement.

Out of Crescent City, at Mile 31, the road tipped upward for several miles to a height of 1200 feet. Shoulders were non-existent in places, and there were log trucks and chip trucks and motor homes. Fortunately there were two lanes going uphill and traffic was light. There were times when there were no vehicles in sight, and climbing through the magnificent redwoods was very serene. At the top, the road plateaued with a few ups and downs, and then emerged from the woods at the ocean. There must have been 800-foot cliffs down to the water, but the fog reappeared and obscured the view.

At the bottom of the hill was the town of Klamath and the Trees of Mystery, complete with monstrous replicas of Paul Bunyan and Babe the Blue Ox. About 10 miles later the flats ended with a 400-foot climb as US-101 transformed into a full-blown limited-access freeway. The road turned downhill, and up appeared the exit for the state park, suggesting the end of the day’s ride. No luck — 7 more miles to the campground, and the first part was severely upwards. About 5 miles from the campground the road turned down again, through a magnificent grove of huge redwoods and continued with an easy, freewheeling descent through the stately trees right to the elk meadow outside the campground.
“Best finish to a ride anywhere in the world.” — Alf Gunn

Our campsite had lots of open, sunny areas, so everybody took this opportunity to dry out their gear. We’ve had no rain, but the warm bodies in tents, and the cool marine air leads to wet sleeping bags, tents and sweaters every morning when we pack up. Joan lounged on her air mattress in the sun, later joined by giggling Sue and Pat.

Miscellany  Robert had another close call with his pedals. Katharine’s arm has swelled up, minute-by-minute on riding tomorrow. Bob and Robert went looking for Bob’s “lucky” 13 from the first version of this trip, but could not locate it.

Punctures  Betterbed’s van — discovered at 7 A.M.

Day 6 (Wednesday, July 30, 2003)

Miles: 103
Elevation Gained: 4,001
Start: Prairie Creek State Park, Klamath, California
Finish: Burlington Campground, Humboldt Redwoods Park, Fortuna, California
An early rising (in the dark) owing to the long day ahead. Straight out of the campground there were several elk sightings. Bob, Rob and Bryan slowed up to let four bull elk cross the road to the meadows. Further down the road, herds of elk were seen grazing in the meadows. After 20 miles or so we left US-101 (which has now mostly become a limited access 4-lane highway) to a scenic detour through Patrick’s Point and Trinidad, with spectacular views of sea stacks and the California coast at its best. North of Arcata, the Hammond bike trail initiated another detour. Lunch was in the south part of Eureka, at the Fort Humboldt Monument.

Steve befriended Hank, a 31-year-old civil engineer from Washington DC, riding from Portland to Sacramento. They rode into lunch together, and for the rest of the day. Steve refused to let Hank, hauling a trailer full of gear, pass him on any of the climbs. We passed a father and son combo pulling B.O.B. trailers several times, and Bryan made the acquaintance of Grant, a 20-year-old local from Scotia riding the last portion of today’s route.

The morning was overcast, but the afternoon was warmer as we worked our way south through the dairy farms around Loleta and Ferndale with their Victorian farmhouses. Many chose Adventure Cycling’s scenic and flat farmland backroads of the Waddington Road route out of Fernbridge, only to be sapped by killer hills on the Blue Slide Road into Rio Dell. From the heights of these hills, it was a clear view down into the river valley to see the uniform grade of US-101 following the Eel river and it gave one pause about the wisdom of abandoning the highway for the scenic routes, especially knowing that many of our group had chosen the highway route.

Some folks made a rest stop in Rio Dell for milk shakes. Just south of town...
was the elaborate Pacific Lumber company town of Scotia. The day finished with a spectacular 15-mile run through the shady and cool redwoods on the “Avenue of the Giants.” We’ve been following the Eel River most of the afternoon, and should follow it most of tomorrow also. On Christmas Eve of 1964 a “thousand-year” flood swept through this valley after heavy rains fell on an early snowpack. The high-water mark in Weott was 35 feet above the level of the town’s sidewalks.

**Miscellany**  Our campsite is just off the Avenue of the Giants, surrounded by large redwoods. Dave M. left us to visit his mother and head back to Gig Harbor to prepare for his next trip (motorcycling in Alaska). Leelee had her eye swell up due to an allergic reaction during the ride — seems to be OK now. Julia had her derailer fall apart and get mangled in her spokes — she got it replaced and installed in Fortuna for $35. It was a “Bob Day” — he covered 100 hilly miles in 5 hours 48 minutes.

**Punctures**  Dave near Fernbridge.

**Day 7 (Thursday, July 31, 2003)**

Miles: 49  
Elevation Gained: 2,633  
Start: Burlington Campground, Humboldt Redwoods Park, Fortuna, California  
Finish: Standish-Hickey State Park, Leggett, California
A short day, to most everyone’s delight. 15 more miles on the “Avenue of the Giants” started the day. Some stopped in Garberville for smoothies and a visit to a store. There’s a big festival happening nearby — “Reggae on the River,” so town was full of aging hippies, rastafarians and dreadlocks. It seemed that the town had its share of counter-culture folks normally, anyway.

After departing Garberville, we started up a long, straight uphill grade, graced with a third lane for slow trucks. Near the crest, two nearly identical trucks, loaded with lumber on their double flatbed trailers, approached a group of riders. The truck in the middle lane began to overtake the one in the shoulder lane. The truck in the shoulder lane started to slide left to pass the riders, only to be hemmed in by the truck in the middle lane, who seemed unwilling to yield any room. One truck blasted its horn continuously for several seconds, and then they passed the riders safely. However, from a few hundred yards back it appeared the two trucks came perilously close to each other, and the riders were not given much room to maneuver. And it was never quite clear who blew their horn or why, nor was there an explanation of the behaviour of the truck in the middle.

Further on down US-101, with a couple of detours on Benbow Drive and State Route 271. Just after SR-271 ended, there was construction along an uphill section of two-lane US-101. All of us on bikes were required and pleased to ride up a steep hill in the pilot car with our bikes in the back of the pilot pickup truck. A big slide had moved the road 5 inches towards the river. The slide resulted in a 4-acre fissure in the rocks above, that could give way again at anytime.
Some stretches of US-101 were narrow and winding two-lane near Richardson Grove and the Humbolt/Mendocino county line, busy with reggae fans arriving for the weekend festival.

Camp is right off of US-101 (as usual), but there’s a great swimming hole down below in the Eel River, complete with high rocks to jump off, where the extended Betterbed family did their Acapulco cliff-diving impressions.

**Miscellany**  New road kill today - a rattlesnake. Katharine’s arm was well enough today for her to ride.

**Punctures**  Fred (and the repair pump in Mike’s car failed, so he had to ride on low pressure the last 15 miles).

**Day 8 (Friday, August 1, 2003)**

Miles: 53  
Elevation Gained: 4,106  
Start: Standish-Hickey State Park, Leggett, California
A fitful night last night for most. The reggae crowd was up late, complete with bongoes. One camp accepted some very late visitors, they struck out loudly around 4 A.M. It rained around 3:30 A.M. causing a brief panic as folks collected clothes drying outdoors and zipped up tent flaps. We departed under clear skies to the only turn on the route today, the departure from US-101 onto the northern terminus of California State Route 1 in Leggett, a mile down the road. One last river crossing and we left behind our companion of the past 48 hours, the Eel River. Somehow, Julie and Fred missed this turn and bombed down US-101. Eventually they took Highway 20 over the coastal range, picking up some extra miles and hills. The published route took us up the “Leggett Hill,” which Leelee and Marsden had previewed the day before. About 1400 feet of elevation gain to a summit at 2000 feet. Smooth new asphalt, almost zero traffic (only Andy passed this rider on the ascent) and perfect climbing weather made for a great start to the day. The descent to sea level brought us close to the ocean again. The 14-mile descent was fabulous — smooth pavement, zero traffic, and tight turns signed at 10, 15 and 20 MPH for cars, but all possible at about 10 MPH greater on the bike. A bit of dampness from last night’s rain was the only condition to give a rider caution. Flats and another 700 foot hill brought us to a dramatic shoreline on the Pacific. This rider counted just 4 cars passing over the
first two hills, some 20 miles. It was a great start to the day.

At a construction zone a large group of riders gathered waiting for the pilot car, and then cruised into Westport for a coffee and smoothie break at the Lost Coast Inn. A bullet hole in the glass behind the bar betrayed its past as a rough-and-tumble spot.

The route followed the shoreline, turning left into downhill stretches descending into gullies, with tight turns traversing small streams, then ascending back up to the shore, repeatedly. Fort Bragg was busy and several folks stopped for food, entertainment or visits with old friends. The North Coast Brewing Company was reported to be an excellent lunch spot. Rob, Nancy and Alf tracked down their forgotten apparel at the landromat. Steve broke a spoke on his Cosmic wheels and spent a few hours waiting for the bike shop to fix it, with limited success (got a spoke, but they had no tool to true it with).

**Miscellany** Robert ran into a “druggie” on a mountain bike, and a low-speed crash earned him a scraped elbow. Lots of folks visted Mendocino, some for lunch, some for
shopping, since its just a mile beyond our campsite. Russian Gulch is indeed down in a gulch, underneath a highway bridge for the SR-1. Mike fell off the road while climbing the Leggett Hill in a moment of inattention.

**Punctures**  None.

**Day 9 (Saturday, August 2, 2003)**

Miles: 100  
Elevation Gained: 6809  
Start: Russian Gulch State Park, Mendocino, California  
Finish: Bodega Dunes, Sonoma Coast State Beach, Bodega Bay, California  

Very misty this morning, to the point where it might as well have been raining. The water vapor condensed on helmets, jackets and handlebars as we plowed through it and fell off in droplets. By late morning, conditions had changed and it dried up,
though we would never know if the sun, or our changing location, was the cause of
the relief.

Today’s route review: Follow a flat road along the coast, turn left, and head
inland. Descend 75 vertical feet, rocking the bike gently from side to side to playfully
negotiate some gentle curves. Spy a sign that says “Narrow Bridge.” Curve right
hard into a tight tight turn across the bridge. Shift way down and climb back up out
of the gulch, stealing glances at the rocks in the cove to the right. Turn left at the
top of the climb and resume on the flats. Repeat... again and again and again.

This routine was only interrupted by the “Jenner Grade,” just north of the town of
Jenner, at about Mile 85. The road heads upwards, cut into the seaside cliff, gaining
600 feet of elevation. California buzzards soar on thermals to the oceanside, rising
in spirals, passing your eye-level just a few feet to your right. On an intermediate
descent, free-range cattle gather on a triangle of land, just a few hundred square feet
in area, bounded on two sides by a 300-foot drop to the Pacific, and on the third
side by a sweeping turn of the road, with no fence to keep them from entering the
roadway. Past the high-point the road switchbacks down the ocean again at the town
of Jenner, where the coastline becomes a playground for surfers.

![Coastline, north of Jenner](image)

One particularly abrupt gulch had a tortuous set of curves on the way out, with
grades of 15%. Traffic forced Steve to stop his bike, and subsequently walk it up.
Katharine heard a friendly toot from a support vehicle and unhesitatingly shot her
fist in the air, abandoning for the day. Rob and Bryan were fortunate to just reach the top curve’s wide shoulder as a double-trailer of hay crawled up the curves, consuming both lanes with each switchback.

Outside of Point Arena, the camper began to act up and Louise had to bring it to a stop by the roadside. Fred and Andy did what they could (requiring Vicki and her girls to take over as primary sag wagon), but it eventually required a tow into Gualala to wait for a diagnosis on Monday. Chris stayed back with Louise through all this, making his arrival in camp much delayed (though to loud approval from the dinner crowd). Helen pushed forward with the supply truck and put on a very nice lunch just south of Gualala.

**Miscellany**  Yesterday and today we have met, and passed on the road, a young Swiss couple riding the same coastal route. They are fully loaded, complete with plastic milk jugs of emergency water tied on the top of their loads. John invited them to dinner, so we had fun getting to know them, and they enjoyed heaping portions of potato salad and chicken. They even enjoyed the evening meeting. John had another group of visitors, a friend from his childhood, and his two sons. They brought us some fine organic corn-on-the-cob for the evening meal. Another traveler in camp tonite is walking from Newport, Oregon to Palm Springs, California. At about 20 miles a day, he expects to arrive September 15.

**Punctures**  None.

![Figure 2.22: Swiss self-supported bike tourists, Mattias Sieber and Corinne Aeberli](image)
Another rough night for some. For the first time, our campsites are not contiguous, and some of us were up against a very boisterous group of hard-drinking campers. Eventually some other campsite called the police and they came out to break it up, robbing the riders of even more sleep.

The route began today with a repeat of yesterday — more gulches. However, we quickly turned inland into the cow country around Tomales. For part of the way, we ran counter to the Marin Century Ride as groups of serious cyclists were always present on the other side of the road. For their entertainment, Pat, Sue, Katharine and their buddies danced beside Andy’s truck, which was blaring — “I, I’m hooked on a feelin’, I’m high on believin’, that you’re in love with me.”

We hit the coast again at the oyster fields of Tomales Bay and then everybody regrouped at Point Reyes Station (about Mile 30) to pick up the wooded bike trail into Samuel P. Taylor State Park. From there we followed Sir Francis Drake Boulevard for 10 miles through Marin County to Fairfax — a street that has not improved since the first ride six years ago. We regrouped again, with a cookie break taking the place of lunch. From here the route passed through the towns of Larkspur, Mill Valley and Sausalito.

Mostly we followed side streets and bike paths, but it was a narrow, curvy, steep climb up out of Larkspur. At the top Tommy slid off the roadway on the right, falling left. Bryan couldn’t avoid him, and he too took a tumble. Bryan earned a nasty scrape on his elbow, but otherwise they were both OK and able to continue riding since neither was moving very fast. It did cause some panic at the bottom of the fast descent to hear that there had been a crash someplace back up on the hill.

We made our way to the Golden Gate Bridge, but found the road underneath blocked by a children’s soap-box derby. We were able to walk around and climb back up to bridge level. There we were met by Sandy, a one-time participant in these annual rides, and a San Francisco resident. She was to be our guide the remainder of the trip. Everyone gathered for more route instructions and photos by the bridge.

The bridge crossing (our ultimate objective) was spectacular, as the weather was splendid. Still it was windy, and the many other bicycles sharing the western sidewalk demanded one’s constant attention. Joe mounted his urban assault vehicle (a mountain bike) and rode the bridge with us, and the remainder of the route within San Francisco. At the southern end of the bridge we weaved through the tourists, crossing under the roadway twice.

Now into San Francisco proper, Sandy guided us through the Presidio, south into
Golden Gate Park, then west to the ocean, to gain a bike path south along the Ocean Highway. Remarkably, the sun had burned off the ever-present San Francisco fog even along the extreme western edge of The City. We turned east again on Sloat, working our way on busy city streets to St. Francis Wood, a neighborhood of fancy homes. A couple more miles brought us finally to Balboa Park.

We met the support crew at a dead-end street and snapped up a late lunch. Sandy had arranged for us to use the showers at the pool, even though the facility would normally be closed. The showers were one of the oddest experiences of the trip, as they were designed merely to rinse swimmers. Exiting the locker room, the corridor made a right-angle turn and one was presented with a short, tiled hallway, about 12 feet long and 6 feet wide, opening out directly into the pool area. Each side of the hallway had 4 shower nozzles. All 8 nozzles were controlled by a single flush handle at the far end of the hallway, with a single “flush” providing about 10 seconds of high-powered sprays. It was not unlike being in a car wash. However, to lather up and rinse required one person constantly “flushing.”

Once cleaned up, we reassembled at the truck to once again thank our support staff and load the truck with non-essential gear and bikes. Then the cohesive and communal endeavor came to a crashing halt as riders and support crew scattered back to their lives in the “real world.” Dave M. had left us already; the Stewarts were continuing their vacation southward; the Peaslees were off with the supply truck to install siding on a parent’s house for a few days; Margaret, Dave L. and Steve had a rental car to drive back to Gig Harbor; Bryan, Rob, Katharine, Chris, Sue and Pat reconvened at the Alaska Airlines departure lounge in the San Francisco airport; Alf
and John had flights out of Oakland; Nancy spent the night in San Francisco with the Stewarts to fly out the next day; McLeans, Roots and Betterbeds had their cars along to drive home; Helen, Louise and Joe had to stay in town to check on the the lame camper at Gualala, now held hostage by an overworked service station mechanic and would rent a car to return home; Mike's family had been in San Francisco for several days already.

As the sun began to set for the day, this rider flew high out of San Francisco and could see the Pacific Ocean had returned the fog to again blanket The City.

**Miscellany**  Fred achieved his goal — he rode the entire route in his big chainring! Does this explain the 30-mile detour around the Leggett Hill? Tommy finished strong, having ridden the entire route — the youngest to do so.

**Punctures**  None.

![Figure 2.24: Journey concluded](image)
Chapter 3

The Support

A ride like this, at the pace we rode it, would not have been possible without a dedicated support team. We saw some self-supported riders along the route, and they rarely covered the kind of miles each day that we did. All our meals were provided, campsites secured, and there was always help and nourishment minutes away out on the road. Riders were left to doing the riding itself or recuperating in camp after a long day.

Louise Pettie and Helen Wilkie are the core of the support team for food and lodging. Louise handles many of the arrangements before the ride begins, collecting fees, reserving campgrounds, etc. Helen makes sure all the details are taken care of and keeps the kitchen humming. During the day, Louise drives her camper and Helen drives the Peaslee’s truck, containing all the gear and food.

Before the ride, they baked 115 dozen cookies — that’s almost 10 dozen dozen, or almost a dozen gross. (They were all gone at the end of the trip.) Each day when we pull into camp, out came the tables, coolers, camp stoves and propane tanks and a mobile kitchen was established around the perimeter of a couple of green tarps. Every morning it went back into the truck, and some of it would come back out for lunch. Our sites had running water nearby, but only sporadically electric power. Breakfast meant getting up at 4:30 A.M. (or earlier) and working by fluorescent lanterns. The quality of the meals was outstanding (and plentiful), and all the more impressive given the limited infrastructure.

During the day Helen and Louise would replenish supplies at grocery stores along the route, and choice campsites would be secured before the riders finished the day’s route.

Helen and Louise could not have done this without help. Joe, Louise’s grandson, was along to help with many of the chores. Vicki Betterbed was often seen helping with supplies and the cooking, or doing a load of laundry during the day. Emily Stewart, Elizabeth Betterbed, and Claire Betterbed also often helped out in the kitchen. Gerrye Peaslee provided a helping hand often (though just one).

On the road, Andy Root drove the primary support vehicle — a maroon Nissan
Pathfinder, loaded with five-gallon jugs of water and Gatorade, cookies and snacks. He did a masterful job of working the route and cruising by each rider frequently. His elaborate sound and video system meant you always knew that friendly toot of a horn behind you was Andy, since it was accompanied by a steady, pounding bass line.

Mike McLean was Andy’s equal on the route, helping with mechanical problems, keeping tabs on everybody’s whereabouts, and especially making sure everybody got into camp directly each day.

Vicki was also present on the road each day, taking Andy’s place on Day 9 when the camper pulled up lame.

Fred was the group mechanic, and some days he had a steady stream of riders needing minor adjustments after the day’s ride. At one point, he even took to servicing bikes of folks at other campsites.

John was responsible for preparing route instructions in advance and previewing (or adjusting) them at each night’s meeting, along with considerable input from Alf.

Tom had the hardest job all, discerning group consensus for each day’s breakfast time and lunch stop location.

Rob recorded much of this history each afternoon on John’s laptop, which was often recharged in the bathrooms.
Figure 3.2: Andy and Alf discuss the day’s route

Figure 3.3: Mike McLean - with the top UP!
Chapter 4

The Routine

Figure 4.1: Breakfast line, Honeyman State Park (Pat, John, Julia, Bryan, Rob)

Here’s an outline of a typical day on the road. Breakfast is usually at 7:30 A.M. or so, adjusted depending on how many miles there are in the day’s route. Most folks seem to rise about an hour before breakfast to dress, visit the restrooms, pack up their tent and luggage and prepare their bike. Coffee, tea, juices, cold cereal, bagels, yogurt and fresh fruit are available before the official start time for breakfast. That is followed by hot cereal, sausage or bacon, pancakes, and on occasion hash, scrambled eggs or other items.

Riders would leave camp about half an hour after breakfast, as they were ready, in groups of two or three. Some would routinely stop after about 20 or 30 miles for an espresso, while others were on the hunt for smoothies.

Andy would depart camp shortly afterwards, parking in a pull-out to provide water, Gatorade, cookies and snacks to anyone that came by. Andy was ever-present
Figure 4.2: Lunch, Eureka, California

Figure 4.3: Lunch, Ophir, Oregon (Margaret, John, Fred, Rob, Steve, Dave M.)
on the route, passing as he moved forward, waving as he worked his way back. Mike
would also be present for much of the route, depending on Joan’s plans for riding
that day, since some of her riding was curtailed due to problems with sciatica.

Lunch was variable — some days it was on our own, on short days it might be in
the next camp, but usually it was provided on the road out of the supply truck at
some wayside area. Fare included sandwiches, chili dogs, or reprises of some evening
meal that had not been consumed entirely. It was always a most welcome sight to
come around a bend and see the truck with tables full of food waiting for us.

Arrival in camp was also variable, depending on the rider and the length of the
day’s ride. Sometime between 2 P.M. and 5 P.M. was typical. Louise and Helen
would have secured campsites, numbering four to six and almost always contiguous,
and as riders and support vehicles pulled into camp they would distribute tents, cars
and people to satisfy the rangers’ limits on each site.

On arrival some riders would relax with a drink, some headed directly for the
showers (requiring quarters in California), others would prepare their campsites.

Dinner was usually 7 P.M., and always began with everyone joining hands in a
large circle (or at least what a mathematician would call a “simple closed curve”) for
an evening prayer and blessing, led by a different member of the group each night.
Dinner was followed by a meeting, led by Tom, but featuring John and Alf discussing
the next day’s route. By this time it was usually getting dark, and most turned in
for the night around 9 or 9:30 P.M.

Our lives revolved around sleeping, riding and eating, with eating being perhaps
the most important. So we finish with a sample menu out of the support team’s
notebook — the complete day’s menu for Day 3:

BACON
PANCAKES
HOT/COLD CEREAL
YOGURT
BAGELS/CREAM CHEESE SWEET ROLLS/MUFFINS
JUICE
COFFEE/TEA/MILK

SOUP OR SANDWICH—CHIPS—VEGGIES—FRUIT

SPAGETTI AND MEATBALLS
GREEN SALAD
GREEN BEANS
FRENCH ROLLS
DESSERT—CARROT CAKE
VEGGIE & FRUIT
COFFEE/TEA/JUICE
CHAPTER 4. THE ROUTINE

Figure 4.4: John and Dave M. relax at Bullards Beach

Figure 4.5: Relaxing at Prairie Creek Campground (Chris, Dave L. Rob, Elizabeth)
Figure 4.6: Setting up the kitchen, Prairie Creek Campground

Figure 4.7: Waiting on a shower, Bodega Dunes (Sue, Joan)
Epilogue

Gerrye discovered when she returned home that she had also broken her wrist. The camper was not repaired until a few weeks later — a broken timing chain was the culprit. Louise made another trip down south to retrieve it.

All in all, it was a great trip. Gerrye’s arm was the only injury of real note (outside of sore knees, sore butts, a few small patches of road rash). Not too many severe mechanical problems, excepting the camper. Lots of great scenery, great (and plentiful) food and good companionship. I’m sure most of us will be back next year for more...