

AMERICAN RANDONNEUR



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COVER— Debbie Bush riding the
High Plains Peddler perm #4261.

PHOTO MIKE TUREK

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President's Message

The end of the season is upon us, and it is time to ride some winter brevets and populaires. It is also a good time to look back at a busy season of randonneuring. As happens every four years, a lot of American randonneurs and randonneuses were focused on riding Paris-Brest-Paris during August and there ended up being 453 riders in our group. I'm pleased to report that the US contingent was the fourth largest of all the countries. Final results have not been released at this writing, but RUSA members did well in an unusually hot edition of PBP.

Along with all the energy around PBP, we also had several domestic 1200k events and lots of brevets, team events, and populaires, as well as countless permanent rides, too. For RUSA's 25th Anniversary, it was a very good year of randonneuring. We've



come so far since 1998 and I know RUSA's founders are smiling.

Aside from permanent rides, the people most directly responsible for all the events on our national calendar are the hard-working Regional Brevet Administrators, or RBAs. Like the many volunteers toiling away behind the scenes at RUSA HQ, our RBAs are the unsung heroes of our sport. They organize all the events for RUSA members to ride and it is hard work. Since they are all volunteers, this work is being done in their free time. Too often it comes at the cost of their personal cycling time, but such is their love for randonneuring that they are willing to make the sacrifice for us.

Turnover among RBAs is normal. Just like in a pace-line, the leader takes a turn pulling the peloton for a while, then they drop back and let another person take a turn at the front. Most RBAs stay four to six years, others longer and some shorter, but all of them are making an invaluable contribution to our sport. Chapeau!

RUSA was founded in August of 1998 and our first season of brevets started in January of 1999. Two of our longest-serving RBAs are pulling off the front of the pace-line this year and I want to send them special thanks. Alan Johnson, the RBA for Raleigh, North Carolina, has stepped aside. Alan was an RBA before there was Randonneurs USA and has been serving American randonneurs since the old International Randonneur days – wow! On the other side of the nation in Portland, Oregon, Susan France is also handing over the reins to her region. Susan has been hosting brevets since 2005. We thank

Alan Johnson



Susan France

them both for their many years of service and send our best wishes as they enjoy some time on the weekends to do whatever they choose to do instead of spending countless hours planning and hosting events, route-scouting, and processing event results.

John Lee Ellis of Colorado, Dan Driscoll of Dallas, Texas, and Don Podolski of western Massachusetts are the last RBAs from the “class of ‘99” and are now our longest serving RBAs. To these three stalwarts, and all our other RBAs, I send our best regards and sincere thanks of appreciation for all they do and have done for our sport.

—Bill Bryant
RUSA President
president@rusa.org

From the Editor

I thought it would take more time to pull stories together from this year's PBP, but tales of the French adventure are what rolled into my inbox this past fall. This issue has accounts of riders young and old, the experienced and the neophytes, as well as an interview with one of the most celebrated American riders in Europe in 2023 – and I am not talking about Sepp Kuss.

One thing everyone seems to share is a reverence for this hallmark event of randonneuring. PBP is seen as much more than just another bike ride, but as a life experience. And it's the people that make this so. The volunteers who work diligently to make the ride run smoothly, the riders who come together from around the world to participate, and the people of France who line the streets to celebrate and cheer on the randonneurs, are all part of what makes this event so special.

My own journey to becoming an *ancienne* was long and a bit bumpy. I first signed up for PBP in 2015, a year after joining the Rocky Mountain Cycling Club. Three weeks before the event, I was in an operating room getting a pain block from an anesthesiologist who told me "You're not going to Paris." I realized he was right, it was impossible with the pain I was in. I would go on that fall to have a nine-hour bilateral hip surgery. Got the jersey, will never wear it.

In 2019, my friend Mark Lowe and I traveled to France together for our first attempt. Just 20k into the ride, I found myself in the middle of a seven-man crash, and even though I

didn't get hurt, that was in essence the end of my ride. I got dropped, my mental state began a downward spiral, and when Mark went from two hours ahead of me at Brest, to five minutes behind me (because of knee pain) at Carhaix inbound, my ride ended for real. Got the jersey, have never worn it.

I didn't even want to go in 2023. It would not be the same without Mark and I didn't have anyone to travel with. However, a rider I met last year at Treasure Cove 1200k, Andrei Fluerasu, convinced me to reserve a spot. Over the winter and spring he tried to persuade me that it was a good idea. Long story short, it wasn't until my renewed passport showed up during the summer that I got a plane ticket. This time, in an attempt to thwart fate, I did not buy a jersey. Better to finish without one than to get one and not finish, I joked.

There were ups and downs like on every long ride. When I reached Carhaix outbound and the woman who stamped my card marveled that

the first rider had just come through on the return, I asked her who it was. She looked it up on her phone and said, as she turned it to show me, "Nick DeHaan." I threw my arms into the air and let out an uncharacteristic whoop of joy. Hearing that my Treasure Cove roommate was meeting his potential on the biggest rando stage there is was a burst of inspiration that got me through many low points, of which there were more than I'd like to admit.

So I am joyous not only to have finally finished, but also to have been there when a dedicated and deserving athlete, who happens to be a very nice guy, shattered a long-standing record. PBP 2023 – don't have the jersey, but finished what turned out to be a very special edition.

—Corinne Warren
Editor, *American Randonneur*
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l. to r. Dan Hedrick, Perry Wilderson, Patrick Chin-Hong, yours truly, Andrei Fluerasu, Georgi Stoychev.

—PHOTO LISA WILDERSON

The Velomobile – Curiosity or Contender?

BY JIM HOWELL, RUSA 11847

The sport of randonneuring requires personal fortitude and physical fitness, along with equipment capable of conveying its rider reliably and with as much comfort as can be had when pedaling for endless hours. Survey the bikes at the start of any brevet and you'll see the entire spectrum of possible bike styles, storage bag options, gearing combinations, tires, and other accessories, each carefully selected by their rider for maximum utility and comfort.

Some go 'old school', with the classic rando setup that includes a large handlebar bag, downtube shifters, fenders, and larger tires for a smoother ride. Others opt for using a svelte road bike and one or two accessory bags to keep things 'light and fast'. Some ride fixies, while most rely on a standard derailleur setup. Frames of steel, titanium, aluminum, or carbon fiber, set up for road or gravel – all will likely be represented. There is also the occasional recumbent. There are as many combinations as riders. However, what you likely won't see – at least in the US – is a velomobile. Why is this, and are you missing out?

For those unfamiliar, a velomobile is basically a three wheeled bike enclosed in an aerodynamic shell. In most countries, including the US and Canada, they are considered bicycles. The most popular layout is the 'tadpole' configuration, with two smaller 20-inch steered wheels in the front

and one larger 700C drive wheel in the rear, although one velomobile, the Quattrovelo, has four 20" wheels, much like a pedal car. In all these cases the rider sits in a reclined position, with pedals positioned at the front. In order to optimize aerodynamics and improve handling, velomobiles sit very low to the ground and strive to place the overall center of gravity of rider and machine as low as possible. Most of

the newer designs utilize a monocoque construction, where the body and frame are one assembly. They can come equipped with enhanced safety features, including battery powered lights, turn and brake signals, and a horn.

As you might imagine, placing the rider in a reclined position – and then wrapping them in a shell – will significantly reduce aerodynamic drag. Typically, the drag coefficient of a cyclist ranges from around 1.1 for an upright commuter position to around 0.8 when riding in a racing position, while velomobiles can have drag coefficients at or below 0.1. Throw in some additional benefit of reduced aerodynamic wheel drag for velomobiles with fully enclosed or faired wheels, and take some back for the rolling resistance of the third (and perhaps fourth) tire, and the total benefits settle in around an 80% reduction in

There's no blending in with the crowd when riding a velomobile!

—PHOTOS JIM HOWELL



drag over an upright bike. This means that in a velomobile, headwinds are no longer the soul-crushing obstacle they tend to be on uprights, and long boring flats turn into a challenge to see how fast you can get through them. Downhills are invigorating, with even slight grades resulting in speeds faster than many are comfortable going, often without the need to pedal. Twisty mountain roads can be a challenge, given the lack of aerodynamic drag and the possibility of overheating the brakes to maintain a safe speed. For the majority of riding conditions the reduced aerodynamic drag equates to a significant increase in average speed.

Many of you have likely heard reasons to discount riding a velomobile: that they are heavy, hot, noisy, hard to see by drivers, unstable, terrible at climbing, hard to transport – and expensive. These are all valid concerns, but maybe not deal-killers. Let's look at them one by one.

Velomobiles *are* heavier than upright bikes, but maybe not as much as you might expect. Almost all velomobiles are highly engineered machines that make extensive use of carbon fiber composite to create strong but lightweight structures. As an example, the Bülk Mk 1 velomobile, one of the lightest and fastest velomobiles available, quotes an empty weight of around 24 kg (53 pounds). That's not light by upright bike standards, but close to the same weight as my fully loaded, self-sufficient steel Ritchey at the start of PBP in 2019. You might be saying, "Yeah, but once you load the velo with all your gear, it'll add a bunch more weight, turning it into a tank." But ... at least some of the gear carried on the upright isn't necessary for the velo, such as raingear (who needs raingear when you are inside an enclosed shell?) or extra layers. Will the velo still be heavier? Yes, especially if you carry a lot of stuff, but not as heavy as one might expect.

Being wrapped inside a carbon fiber cocoon can either be a blessing or



a curse, depending on the season. In the winter, protection from the cold air and wind eliminates the few extra pounds of clothing necessary to stay warm on an upright, and use of a full cover, (known as a race hood) completely encloses even your noggin – and improves aerodynamics even a bit more. In warmer months, being enclosed makes things hotter, although velomobiles like the Bülk have integrated inlet ports for allowing extra air to come in, as well as a lot of cockpit cover options that provide a wide range of opening sizes to allow more or less ventilation, depending on the temperature. One thing that is for sure, you're going to sweat – a lot. Based on my experiences, I'd say the *amount* of sweat is similar to when riding an upright, but it just doesn't evaporate as it would when fully exposed to airflow, so it feels like a lot more.

If you are a social rider who enjoys whiling away the miles telling bad jokes, singing songs out of tune, and solving the world's problems with your riding mates, or a soloist that enjoys the sounds of chirping birds, mooing cows, and rushing streams while

A humbling reminder that patience is a virtue when it comes to climbing in a velomobile.

riding through the countryside, the velomobile may be problematic. On most roads it's noticeably noisy. Road vibrations are translated into acoustic noise, which seems to get amplified by the strong but thin carbon fiber body. Larger, lower pressure tires might help reduce road noise and make the ride a bit smoother, but some type of noise attenuating ear plugs are almost mandatory. For the social folks it might also be possible to rig up some form of wireless communication with your riding mates, much like motorcyclists do. But suffice it to say, velos are noisier than uprights.

In urban settings, the low profile of a velomobile can make them hard to see by drivers, especially when riding on streets with parked cars or at intersections with obstructed views. The Bülk and several other models offer a top-mounted front and rear light installed in a nicely faired housing that is attached on the top of the body above the rear wheel. This happens to be around the same height as lights on an upright bike, making them much more visible to drivers. On the open road, visibility isn't really a problem, since people usually slow down and give a wide berth while passing, as they try to figure out what that little car thing is.

Stability in a velomobile can be an issue under certain circumstances, like taking a turn too fast or swerving violently to avoid something, which can result in rolling the bike. However, the front wheels have a built in camber to help with cornering and provide some additional track width to allow reasonably fast turns. A surprising hazard is loss of traction on the rear wheel when going over rumble strips. There are online accounts of velomobiles fishtailing and rolling due to this, and it is something that has been significantly reduced on newer

velomobiles by implementing a more responsive rear suspension, but it is something that requires mindfulness. Side winds are also a concern, but just like on an upright, slowing down in heavy crosswinds helps maintain a safe and stable track. Overall I have found that I can usually corner faster in the velomobile than on my upright, but I definitely watch out for and avoid rumble strips.

Climbing. Well, I won't lie, climbing is, in my opinion, the biggest negative of a velomobile, but it isn't all doom and gloom. I'm not a climber, and I find sustained climbs on grades above 4% or so in the velo are around 5 MPH slower than I typically do on an upright. On grades less than this, I think the speed is the same or perhaps faster. In a velo there are no opportunities to stand and mash the pedals, so you need to just accept that uphill will be slow, knowing that the downhill will be fast, really fast.

Want to take your velomobile to PBP, or even to that brevet or grand randonnee across the country, or even across town? You'll have a logistics issue to figure out, but it isn't insurmountable. Unlike upright bikes (or even recumbent two-wheelers), a velomobile cannot

be disassembled to fit into a carrying case. For U.S. domestic transport, there are options that include a special velomobile roof rack for your car, towing it in a trailer, renting a small van, or hiring a trucking company that specializes in transporting motorcycles. For international trips there is at least one airline which will treat your velo as checked luggage for a surcharge of around \$100. You'll need to live near a U.S. hub of this airline and choose the closest destination hub, then figure out the logistics of getting to and from the hub airports. Doable, but not easy. Or, you can always choose the more expensive but least troublesome option and have your velo sent by air freight. So yes, velomobiles are hard to transport, but oh-so-fun once you get there!

I'm sure everyone agrees on this: cycling in the U.S. can be expensive. The equipment that randonneurs like and need are often made in small production runs, and even mainstream parts like wheels and drivetrains are pricey. Custom frames promise the best fit possible, but usually at a premium price. Velomobiles are no different. Each one is hand-made and contains a myriad of custom and stock parts. The majority

of velomobiles are manufactured in Europe, so exchange rates and shipping can also impact overall cost. A velomobile well-suited for randonneuring will cost about as much as a domestically produced custom titanium upright bike with top-end components, or a pro-class upright racing bike. Not cheap, but not out of the realm of possibility for a dedicated rando-nut.

What about maintenance? One really nice feature is that the entire drivetrain is inside, essentially eliminating wear normally caused by exposure to road grime and water. Drivetrain parts can last two to three times as long. Changing flat tires requires a little more effort than on uprights, especially for velomobiles like the Bülk with fully enclosed wheels. In these cases the velomobile is tipped on its side and the tire is accessed in the area below the body line, and the wheel is rotated as the tire is dismounted. It is a bit slower, and requires a soft surface or a lightweight pad so paint isn't scratched when the velo is tipped on its side, but it isn't too bad.

It may seem like velomobiles fall into the cycling curiosity category for randonneuring, but some really great



The cockpit of the Bülk is functional, comfortable and surprisingly spacious.

reasons to reconsider include safety, functionality, comfort, and for some, a way to continue randonneuring as your body ages.

Upon first glance, velomobiles might appear to be less safe than upright bikes, due to their aerodynamic shape low to the ground; however, they may actually be safer. Consider the body of the velomobile itself: it is basically a protective layer for the rider, absorbing some of the energy from a crash and acting as a built in roll bar if there is a rollover. In the event of a frontal collision, the feet forward position provides added protection from head trauma. And you'll never go 'over the bars' and become a human projectile.

The unsupported nature of randonneuring requires riders to be self-sufficient, which means different things to different people, but in general all agree that some basic tools and clothing are the minimum gear that should be carried, along with adequate liquids and food to sustain one between controls. Velomobiles have ample room inside to store everything a randonneur could need, with enough nooks and crannies to accommodate everything for a multi-day grand randonnee without need for a drop bag. The cockpit of my Bülk has ample room for water bottles, GPS, phone, and gear. Additional storage is available behind the seat. Tiller steering works just like a mini-sized upright handlebar and contains shifters, a horn, and a turn signal switch. A 12 volt lithium-ion battery provides power for dual headlights and tail lights, turn indicators and horn. The same battery has a USB power output for charging the GPS and phone.

Bülk Mk1 #61 pauses to enjoy an early spring view of the Rocky Mountains in the distance.



One of the key advantages of a velomobile is riding comfort. The reclining position is very comfortable and eliminates pressure points on the hands and perineal region. The back and neck are well supported, and arms lay in a relaxed position by your side. Shermers neck is not a problem. Neuropathy of the hands will not occur. Cramping of the arms, shoulders, and back are no longer an issue.

Joint pain and tendonitis may be reduced by the shorter crankarms (140 mm to 155 mm) used in velomobiles. Acid reflux and digestive issues are oft reported rando ailments, but these too seem to be reduced or eliminated in the reclined position. All these side effects caused by long hours riding an upright bike largely or completely go away, leaving body and mind to focus on forward propulsion and enjoying the view of the scenery zipping by. I'm sure many of you have experienced some or all of these unfortunate side effects of long distance cycling, and for some I suspect they

may be the reason you reduce your distances or stop randonneuring altogether, but the velomobile may allow you to continue enjoying the sport while staying within the boundaries of what your body will allow.

After all this, what is it like to ride a velomobile? It's comfortable, generally fast, and fun! During the ride the reclined seating position allows me to easily take in all the scenery, wave at curious passers-by, and relish the sheer joy of being out in the fresh air, cruising down the road at a brisk pace under my own power. Compared to uprights, speeds vary from around 5 MPH slower on the climbs, 30 or more MPH faster on the descents, and typically 10-to-15 MPH faster on the flats. I also find at the end of a brevet in the velomobile that I am noticeably less tired and achy compared to the same ride on an upright.

So, is the velomobile a curiosity or a randonneuring contender? For me it has definitely been the latter. Perhaps for you too? 🚲

2023 PBP Record Setter Nick DeHaan

RUSA INTERVIEW

This past summer at the quadrennial event PBP, an American surprised and delighted people all across France as he took the lead in Brest and held it all the way to Rambouillet. Being relatively new to randonneuring, PBP was only Nick's third 1200k, and the first time he had ridden a Grand Randonnée straight through. Not only did he finish first, but he broke the record for the fastest speed ever – an average of 29.18 kilometers per hour, for a total time of 41:46:30. Given his outstanding results and knowing little about him, we were gratified to sit down and chat with Nick once he was back in the states and mostly recovered from his efforts!

close to campus. After graduating, I moved to Montana, where my focus shifted primarily to downhill skiing. I did some mountain biking, too, but didn't find as much enjoyment in downhill riding as I did in cross-country, and the riding season was rather short with the long winters and snow sticking around for so long in the mountains. I got a road bike and started doing a bit more road riding to scratch that itch for aerobic activity and really came to love the sight-seeing aspect and going for long cruises.

In 2013 I moved back to Michigan and took an interest in triathlon. I set a goal of working up to the half iron man distance. After completing a few of those, I found my swimming ability was holding me back. Running was okay, but cycling was the part that I really enjoyed. So, I thought, "Why am I forcing myself to do these other things I don't enjoy as much?" Encouraged by a few riding friends, I went out for a criterium, and in my first race, a Cat 4/5, I rode off the front to take the win. My competitive side was awakened, and I discovered I could race, and I was not bad.

Then in 2016, a buddy told me about Strava. This is when riding became sort of an obsession. First, I started out with trophies, but those trophies turned into crowns, and I was hooked. Up to that point I had been memorizing my routes, so I kept them fairly simple or just did the same ones repeatedly. But when a friend gifted me his old Garmin 800, all kinds of new possibilities opened up. I started planning longer rides and exploring

American Randonneur: Nick, you are fairly new to the sport of randonneuring, but you definitely aren't new to cycling or the podium for that matter. Can you give us an idea of how you started out as a cyclist?

Like many, I grew up riding bikes. There was a lake near my house when I was a kid, and I'd ride laps around the lake. When I was 10 years old, I got a 10-speed and rode that until it got stolen one day outside of school. Then, I got a mountain bike and started riding in the woods on that. In my early high school years, I was just messing around on bikes. Only briefly did I try to be disciplined with riding and training, but that didn't last very long.

In college I gained the Freshman 15 (lbs), so to lose weight I purchased a new mountain bike and rode the trails

It's important to enjoy the ride!

—PHOTO NICK DEHAAN





new areas and always made sure to include a few Strava segments and KOM attempts.

Initially, I would take winters completely off the bike, but once cycling became a bigger part of my life, I found this to take a toll on my mental health. I tried fat biking, but it's a lot of work for only a few miles, and you can't go very fast in the snow. Getting a trainer and doing Zwift was another game changer for me. It eliminated the cycle of having to get in shape after the winter each year and led to big improvements in my overall performance, as I spent many hours building up a large base of endurance.

By this point I had done several centuries and knew I liked longer

distances. We have an iconic ride, the Michigan Mountain Mayhem, that's a 200k with 10,000 ft of climbing. The first year I did this, I rode it with some friends. The next year, I told them I wanted to ride with the fast group up front and try to compete for the win. I finished 2nd.

Now, all this time I had been riding solo, but then I started doing group rides. I discovered the beauty of drafting and pacelines – you could go 22, 23 miles an hour with so little effort! This was another aha moment, seeing how you could work in a group.

I consider myself a jack of all trades and master of none. I have a bit of a love/hate relationship with racing. I have high expectations of myself, but this

In the A wave mix at the start.

—PHOTO PATRICK DEHAAN

can bring with it a lot of unnecessary pressure and stress. If I am racing, I want to do well, and I focus on my performance. I enjoy competition to a degree, but I really love to ride just for the pure enjoyment of it. I love long days on the bike exploring new areas, riding through small towns, stopping at cafes, and soaking in the scenery.

The local racing scene here is mostly gravel. I was reluctant to try it at first, but since COVID there hasn't been much in terms of road racing here. Races can be highly variable depending upon the weather and roads. I prefer

With brother Patrick at the Villaines control.

—PHOTO WARREN DEHAAN

to have ideal conditions but have found it can sometimes work to my advantage and favor my style of riding when conditions are poor. Sandy or technical sections can actually make the racing safer, as they tend to break up big groups and slow down the ride. So, there are advantages to gravel, but I really do like road riding.

So, you've been riding and successfully racing for a while. But how did you come to ride PBP from that?

It was an evolving process for me. I found out about Wandrer.earth, which keeps track of all the new roads you've ridden, and started getting really into that during COVID, when group rides and racing were limited. After quickly exhausting all the roads in my area, I started looking for long rides elsewhere. That's when I first found out about the Detroit Randonneurs; I rode my first SR series with them in 2021. After completing the 600k with only a brief stop to sleep while waiting out a thunderstorm, I finished both physically drained and sleep deprived.

During the 2-plus-hour commute home that morning, I decided I didn't really like the 600k distance. Then, someone told me about the 1200k rides, and I just thought, "What the hell? When does it stop? That's crazy! No thanks!" not realizing at the time that they were broken up into stages, and you ate real meals and slept overnights during the ride. Once I looked into them more, they became much more appealing.

My first 1200k was Treasure Cove in Virginia, May of 2022. I loved it. So much so, that afterward I looked right away for another one and then went and rode New York-Montreal-New York in July. I really enjoyed these rides; my times were nothing special. On New York-Montreal-New York I met



Fred Tompkin, and he told me about his experience at PBP. Fred told me how he had taken it leisurely (ed. note: "leisurely" being 72:17) in 2019 but soon found he regretted not pushing himself harder for a faster time. He told me his plans to return in 2023 and ride with the fast guys up front. That resonated with me, and I knew myself well enough to know I wouldn't be happy unless I gave it a good effort. So, I was aware it's not a race, but I also knew that there is a group of riders who traditionally ride it fast. I was still a little on the fence about going to participate in PBP until a teammate of mine, who had taken notice of all the randonneuring I'd been doing, told me that it was a "once in a lifetime experience." Originally, I planned to do it unsupported. I came across a link to the story of Björn Lenhard's record-setting unsupported ride in 2015 on a Facebook forum after asking for advice on riding it fast while unsupported. I was hugely inspired and started dreaming of accomplishing something similar. As the event drew near, I kind of got obsessed, and it was all that I talked about. I found Strava files of past top-10 finishers and dug into them. What kind of watts were they doing? How long were they stopping at

the controls? Did they stop to sleep? I was highly focused on the ride portion, but all this time, the other planning and details were becoming a bit overwhelming – flights, transportation, accommodations, packing – and so I think my family realized how important this was to me and decided to offer to come along for support.

Your support crew consisted of your dad Warren, your brother Patrick, and your brother-in-law Kyle. Did they have experience with this kind of thing, or was this new to them?

Yeah, they hadn't really ever done anything like this. My dad had watched some of my races in the past and done simple things like bottle hand-ups but nothing like an ultra event where support crews are familiar with and can anticipate a rider's needs, allowing many things to go unspoken. None of them are cyclists, so I had to give them all a crash course in what it might look like and what I would need from them. They did the best they could, but with stops so brief, there was little opportunity for communication, and many things were forgotten in the chaos.

Looking back, I should have written at least some basic things down

for them. But it's so hard to know how things will go after 8+ hours, and I didn't want to make it overly complex. They knew how important this was to me and wanted to be there to support me both physically and mentally. Later, I heard that they really didn't sleep the entire time either. Most importantly, they were there at every control, and I never had to put effort into finding them. I could not have done what I did without them.

You are obviously fast and in great shape, but riding a 1200k, the riding part is only half of the equation. Fueling and nutrition are crucial and can sabotage the strongest of riders. What did you eat, and did you have any problems with this aspect of the ride? PBP does not have meals provided by Shab, sadly!

Oh man, yeah, wouldn't that be sweet? I did have a pretty solid nutrition plan, actually, and luckily tend to have a pretty tolerant gut, especially if I'm keeping the effort to low Zone 2. My target was to consume 400 kcal/hr. At the controls I tried to eat as much as I could as fast as I could. I figured I'd have a couple minutes at each control but was soon surprised how quickly others were rushing through them, at least initially. A couple of times I had to chase back to the front group as they all pedaled away while I was still eating.

My crew would get me sandwiches and pastries so I could have some real food – I really liked having fresh fruit – and I would gobble down as much as I could at the controls. The large piece of flan they had for me in Brest was probably the best thing I ate during the ride. Because eating can be tricky on the bike, I tried to get around half my calories from a drink mix containing

Gatorade with loads of added bulk maltodextrin; each bottle had about 500 calories. At every stop, I'd down a Coke or a Red Bull. On the bike I'd eat gels and candy. I love Haribo Tropicfruit gummies, and they're super easy to chew, so I was eating lots of those.

Calorie intake got hard at night, though; trying to feel around for the item I wanted without having anything else fall out of my top tube bag that was stuffed full was difficult in the dark. At times I tried to up the fluid calories so I didn't have to worry about eating as much. I had asked my crew to rigorously keep track of how many calories I had consumed, but among all the other things we needed to communicate about in the whirlwind of those quick stops, this fell by the wayside, so I was basically just going

by feel and my own rough estimates, which can be dangerous. I think I did a pretty good job overall, but that second night, things got really weird really quickly at one point. I could tell I was on the verge of bonking, so I hurried to eat a couple gels and slammed half a bottle of mix, and the feeling faded as quickly as it had come on. I really feel like I dodged a bullet there and resolved to do better about staying ahead of the nutrition from then on.

This was the first time that you have ridden a ride of this length through, right?

Yeah. I knew the second night was going to be hard. I had done a hilly 600k where I requested permission to start early because I planned to ride it straight through; I wanted to minimize



Gravel adds a sense of adventure to cycling.

—PHOTO PAIGE ONWELLER



Another reason to love France — they spell my name correctly.

—PHOTO PATRICK DEHAAN

felt a little off. It slowly got worse as the ride went on and eventually started causing pain. During the last portion of the ride, I was worried about it locking up or spasming, leaving me unable to continue. When I got to Villaines on the return, I actually told my crew, “I don’t know if I am going to be able to finish,” because it had gotten that bad. This was probably my low point, but I got through it.

Were there any other challenges for you on the ride? Things you had to work through?

Most of the time, the ride was awesome. The atmosphere was wonderful, people were cheering on the streets and in the controls, and the countryside was beautiful. All these things made continuing on relatively easy.

I do remember when I started dreading the hills. Sometimes riding at night has its benefits because you can’t exactly see how high up you have to climb to get to the top of a hill, but with a lead vehicle out in front of me, often way out in front of me, I would sometimes come around a bend and see lights that seemed incredibly high up on the horizon, and my heart would just sink.

There was also an incident where my phone almost died, and this was probably the low point for my crew. They were using it to track my location. I came into a control, and I needed a charging cable, but it was back in the car. One of them wanted to run and get it, but I said I didn’t have time to wait, so I set off without it. They considered driving onto the course to bring it to me, but my brother reminded them about the potential time penalty and how it could undo everything I had been working so hard for, so they

the time spent in the dark at the end, preferring to get that out of the way at the beginning, while the mind is still sharp. I started around 1 a.m. but ended up not being able to fall asleep at all beforehand, so by the end of it I had been awake since the morning of the previous day. With the 4 p.m. “A” wave start time at PBP, I figured I would be in a similar spot by the second night as far as sleep goes. I was hoping by the time I reached that point the excitement of a fast finish and lots of extra caffeine would pull me through. Plan B was to stop briefly on the return leg, maybe in Loudeac or Tinteniac, if I felt it was unsafe to keep going. So, I anticipated and thought through how that might go. What I wasn’t prepared for was having a problem with my leg.

The leg issue started slowly, when I was still riding with others in the first part of the ride. We’d get to a hill, and being a bigger guy, I’d slide to the back of the pack. I took that opportunity to rub the back of my knee. I wasn’t certain what was going on, but it just

decided against it. Thank goodness. I ended up rolling into the next control with just a sliver of battery life left and then got the cable.

Another rough part was after leaving Mortange-Au-Perche. My bottles tasted horrible. I guess my crew had run out of bottled water and had to use the publicly available tap water supplied to all the riders. I could barely drink it without gagging. In fact, I couldn’t drink the one that was only water. The Gatorade and maltodextrin mix masked the taste just enough. Still, I only drank half a bottle from there all the way to the finish because by the time I got to Dreux, I didn’t want to stop at all. I just wanted to be done.

Twenty years from now, what do you think you will take away from this experience? What do you think is the feeling that you will hold onto as you look back on your accomplishment?

That’s an interesting question. I think the trajectory of any ultra-cycling career I end up having will ultimately determine the answer to that. If I go on to be successful in future endeavors, then I will probably look back at PBP as the catalyst of it all. But even if nothing really changes as far as my cycling is concerned, I will still look back on it very fondly, especially the support I received from my family and how readily the French locals embraced me and cheered me on.

I don’t want to get too far ahead of myself, though. It’s important to me to maintain a balance in my riding and remember what it was that drew me to the sport in the first place. Sure, I strive to push myself to achieve, but ultimately, I do it because it’s fun. It’s important to remember to be grateful for every experience I’m able to have on the bike, which every so often leads to me slowing down to stop and smell the roses. 🚲

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Rando(m) Thoughts BY CHRIS NEWMAN

Virtues of the Flèche

By my count, there are 23 domestic awards that are potentially achievable by RUSA members. Some appear quite attainable – the single ride awards, for example – while others – Charly Miller comes to mind – are realistically attainable only by a relatively few, massively talented riders. Usually, earning an award takes some planning and at least a vague realization that the award exists. Every few years, however, RUSA establishes a new award, and, just like that, you're a winner!

At least that's what happened to me last week as I was going through dozens of e-mails after returning home from vacation. An e-mail from Dan Driscoll stated, in part, "RUSA has just made another worthy goal for your riding pleasure, the ULTRA Flèche Award, for any combination of 10 ACP flèches or RUSA arrows in a lifetime.

These are both 24hour, 360km events."

Seeing an opportunity to distract myself from less "important" e-mails, I headed over to the RUSA awards page and clicked on Ultra Flèche Awardees. I was surprised and delighted to learn I had won this award (while sitting at my desk!) but also a bit stymied as to why more folks had not. As Dan stated

in his e-mail, "For the overly motivated, it's possible to do more than one of these events per year."

The relatively small number of Ultra Flèche award winners may have several factors, including only a few arrow and flèche events being scheduled, the early spring timing of the traditional flèche, and a lack of understanding as to what this category of rides entails. I can't really do much about scheduling more group rides around the country, but maybe I can motivate those who have not jumped on the flèche bandwagon to give it a try next year.

According to the RUSA website, "There are three team events in American Randonneuring: the Flèches-USA, the Arrow, and the Dart. All events are for teams of 3 to 5 machines (bicycles), and each team designs their own route that heads to a common destination set by the event organizer. Teams must ride the specified minimum distance in the appropriate time period and finish together to get ride credit." The dart is a 13 ½-hour, minimum of 200k event, and so it would not count toward the award.

The time and distances are no doubt familiar to most experienced randonneurs; the "official" team aspect is what sets these rides apart. In a sport where self-reliance is both expected and celebrated, the esprit de corps required to successfully navigate the challenges



My 2017 flèche team.

—PHOTOS CHRIS NEWMAN



On the 2018 flèche, five bikes made for six team members.

of completing a 360k ride as a group is a welcome variation. Some of my fondest memories are of the adventures I have had with my flèche teams these past 11 years.

Before the fun begins, however, there are a few requirements for entering a flèche. First – the team. Similar riding skills, average speed, or years of experience are not necessarily requirements, but flexibility, tenacity, empathy, and a shatter-proof sense of humor are essential features of a worthy team member. I think every team I have had the pleasure of riding with has had an unwritten but understood “no whining” rule. Second – the route. You will be responsible for designing your own route that meets certain parameters, including distance, rest stops, and that common destination. Third – pick a team captain to organize the team, the route, and the application and to act as scapegoat when things inevitably go sideways! Fourth – pick a team name. This is where your creativity shines! Some of my favorites include Les Escargots Volantes (our team – The Flying Snails), Sinister Nuts (a fixie team) and of course variations on the event name itself: Just a Flèche Wound, Sins of the Flèche and Flèche Mob.

One of the great features of a flèche is the allowance to pick a start

time. When I rode with Les Escargots, we would pick a midmorning start that allowed for a leisurely carb loading breakfast of waffles, bacon, and coffee, courtesy of Janice and Jayne. We also designed a flat route that, as long-time team member Katie frequently reminded us, had an overall net decrease in altitude – it was downhill in all directions!

Maintaining a great attitude is the primary factor for team success. There will assuredly be problems along the way. My various teams have endured torrential, all-night rain; overnight flirting with freezing temperatures; unrelenting middle-of-the-night fatigue; multiple flat tires* and assorted mechanicals; and time-sucking stops at diners, bike shops, and crowded controls.

But we have also supported each other as a team, enjoyed group napping in a train station lobby, convinced locals in a bar we were raising money for a questionable charity, pedaled around a small NJ town in the middle of the night signing far too loudly for our skill level, and greeting the glorious sun that thawed our frozen fingers. And remember, what happens on a flèche, stays on a flèche – until you publish the photos to your social media pages!

Looking back, I had ridden a team event every year from 2012 to 2019. The pandemic squashed the event for 2020 and 2021, but 2022 and 2023 again saw teams with “interesting” names ready to take on this unique challenge. If you find yourself invited to join a team or are motivated to start one, I guarantee at least Type 2 fun and a constellation of unique memories!

(*One year I was on a very speedy flèche team led by Victor and Kate. The pace was seriously challenging. Fortunately, another team member Patrick was plagued by flats. Every time he flattened, I secretly celebrated the chance to rest for 10 minutes. I was not alone in this regard.!) 🚲



One of the leg-saving flats for which I was grateful.

New RUSA Members

RUSA#	NAME	CITY	STATE	RUSA#	NAME	CITY	STATE	RUSA#	NAME	CITY	STATE
16479	Smith, Shannon G	Coosada	AL	16514	Taylor, Steve J	Somerset	CA	16466	Whitson, Brent	Brooklyn	NY
16517	Galloway, Keith	Pell City	AL	16482	Somshekar, Ishan	Sunnyvale	CA	16467	Whitson, Carolina	Brooklyn	NY
16513	Fohner, Kelly	Elm Springs	AR	16518	Bhandari, Aditya	West lake village	CA	16536	Garry, Michael	Chester	NY
16512	Fohner, Mike	Elm Springs	AR	16452	Hurst, Christie	Denver	CO	16502	Simser Sr, Christopher I	Cortland	NY
16535	Glidden, Spencer	Cave Creek	AZ	16543	Lennox, Jeffers	Hamden	CT	16547	Green, Ian	Nesconset	NY
16563	Varela, Ray	Chandler	AZ	16529	Migliarese, Anthony	Watertown	CT	16490	Candelaria, Carinn	New York	NY
16491	Wirt, Tim	Glendale	AZ	16468	Hallman, Dan	Washington	DC	16430	Douglas Jr, Stephen B	New York	NY
16565	Cruz, R Antonio	Mesa	AZ	16561	Doulik, Jon P	Brooksville	FL	16520	Liu, Conrad Fu Xin	New York	NY
16542	Hughan, Brian	Phoenix	AZ	16540	Mottram, Chris S	Avondale Estates	GA	16464	Timmerman, Kyle L	Oxford	OH
16439	Christensen, Ellis G	Alameda	CA	16524	DeVincentis, Mike	Cleveland	GA	16498	Haskell, Henry D	Tulsa	OK
16496	Neil, Stacey L	Aptos	CA	16427	Eckmann, Kyle E	Savannah	GA	16515	Theofilopoulos, C G	Toronto	ON
16564	Kleinhample, Robert J	Bakersfield	CA	16477	Mason, Chad	Iowa City	IA	16488	Campbell, Sean B	Hillsboro	OR
16532	Keala, K	Benicia	CA	16487	Loesch, John	Villa Park	IL	16489	Ray, Taryn L	Hillsboro	OR
16428	Hexner, L M	Berkeley	CA	16432	Holland, Anne	Linwood	KS	16450	Haglund, David J	Hood river	OR
16431	Hexner, Luke M	Berkeley	CA	16433	Pellet, Craig	Ashland	MA	16508	Peterson, Mark D	Lake Oswego	OR
16421	Ty, Marie	Burlingame	CA	16465	McMurry, Jonathan Lewis	Boston	MA	16571	Chu, Ben	Portland	OR
16566	Seedang, Jiamjit	Castro Valley	CA	16486	Bart, Eric	Boxford	MA	16523	Plumb, Jason	Portland	OR
16470	Mendricks, P	Davis	CA	16451	Benning, Friederike	Cambridge	MA	16516	Vann, Drake D	Portland	OR
16493	Schaefer, Alexander	Fremont	CA	16526	Bevers, Matthew B	Sherborn	MA	16422	Gruner, Matthew D	Glen Rock	PA
16425	Verroya, Lilet	Hayward	CA	16504	Lee, Siyeon	Arnold	MD	16455	Pepe, Frank	New Paris	PA
16569	Galang, Eldrick	La Jolla	CA	16429	Carson, Dylan	Bethesda	MD	16471	Bonner, Marcus G	Philadelphia	PA
16530	Elward, Erik	Los Angeles	CA	16440	Mankowich, Tom	Frederick	MD	16575	Grose, Justin G	Philadelphia	PA
16549	Iakovlev, Val	Los Angeles	CA	16576	Stockus, Peter W	Hyattsville	MD	16546	Jokelson, Derek	Philadelphia	PA
16481	Bedi, Rishi	Menlo Park	CA	16511	Oskvig, Bryant M	Potomac	MD	16551	OBrien Jr, John	Philadelphia	PA
16519	Kashuba, David J	Monte Rio	CA	16509	Gauthier Jr, Rob	Springvale	ME	16556	Posmontier, Andrew M	Philadelphia	PA
16497	Wong, Ken Y	Monterey Park	CA	16454	Fredrick, Ariel	Wells	ME	16494	Weitekamp, Samuel Leo	Philadelphia	PA
16522	Aguilar, Rebeca	Nevada City	CA	16562	Jankauskas, Joseph E	Chesterfield	MI	16445	May, Donald	Mount Pleasant	SC
16555	Davis, James	Oakland	CA	16501	Vehse, Heymo	Pinckney	MI	16574	Sewell, Josh	Chattanooga	TN
16475	Mullen, Benjamin	Oakland	CA	16435	Levy, Doug A	Utica	MI	16533	Massey, Timothy M	Tallassee	TN
16538	Payne, Steve M	Oakland	CA	16505	Belverud, Dylan A	Big Lake	MN	16459	Gideon, Jeff	Park City	UT
16462	Piethe, Colin	Oakland	CA	16473	Sytsma, Jaye	Bloomington	MN	16550	Herbstein, Ignacio	Salt Lake City	UT
16449	Praspaliauskiene, Rima	Oakland	CA	16441	Houge, Claude G	Eagan	MN	16485	Ko, Mike	Broadlands	VA
16474	Shang, Yan	Oakland	CA	16446	Byrnes, Matthew Francis	Hillis Hopkins	MN	16437	Shah, Lalit	Reston	VA
16453	Zacherle, John	Oakland	CA	16476	Smith, Kaye L	St Paul	MN	16528	Stunkle, Ryland	Richmond	VA
16457	Grajzer, Przemyslaw	Rolling Hills	CA	16500	Catlin, Mark G	Wabasha	MN	16456	Storm, Ilya	Cornwall	VT
16531	Arps, James E	San Francisco	CA	16499	Heath, Linda S	Winona	MN	16557	Rosenbloom, Max	Kirkland	WA
16424	Barthur, Ashrith	San Francisco	CA	16541	Lee, Tommy	Asheville	NC	16436	Christie Sr, James L	Poulsbo	WA
16558	Bright, Jessica M	San Francisco	CA	16570	Sawdy, Jeffrey E	Black Mountain	NC	16503	Ronyai, Tamas	Poulsbo	WA
16442	Greville, Akin	San Francisco	CA	16568	Bolan, Shawn	Omaha	NE	16507	Roberts, Francine A	Redmond	WA
16560	Horner, Nicole	San Francisco	CA	16545	Barodawala, Azan	Jersey City	NJ	16506	Roberts, Travis A	Redmond	WA
16554	Joseph, Tracy A	San Francisco	CA	16534	Ploransky, Jonathan B	Marlton	NJ	16544	Breyfogle, Peter H	Seattle	WA
16461	Krewson, Kevin	San Francisco	CA	16573	Diffiglia, J	Oxford	NJ	16559	Chand, Rajat S	Seattle	WA
16521	Mac, Tony	San Francisco	CA	16426	Oppen, Matt	Babylon	NY	16572	Huelmann, Bert	Seattle	WA
16480	Mukhopadhyay, Trijeet	San Francisco	CA	16463	Fogelson, Gary	Brooklyn	NY	16423	Kelly, Patrick	Seattle	WA
16492	Sharpe, Elizabeth M	San Francisco	CA	16483	Gorman, Andrew C	Brooklyn	NY	16469	Moore, Marcus S	Seattle	WA
16525	Strachan, Alex H	San Francisco	CA	16444	Lenertz, Diane	Brooklyn	NY	16537	Robinson, Matthew S.	Seattle	WA
16478	Tran, Andrew J	San Francisco	CA	16438	Nachlin, James Morris	Brooklyn	NY	16510	Williams, A R	Seattle	WA
16484	Tran, Brian	San Francisco	CA	16460	Nebel, John W	Brooklyn	NY	16495	Collignon, G	Tacoma	WA
16447	Appleton, Chris	Santa Cruz	CA	16472	Patch, Nova	Brooklyn	NY	16448	Erickson, Elizabeth L	Tukwila	WA
16553	McWaid, Kelly	Santa Cruz	CA	16458	Tarlow, Sam E	Brooklyn	NY	16434	Sandee, Ben	Madison	WI
16552	McWaid, Tom	Santa Cruz	CA	16539	Tumas, Mark	Brooklyn	NY	16443	Schroeder, Jason M	Middleton	WI
16548	Shumaker Sr, Karl M	Sebastopol	CA	16527	Wardle, Josh	Brooklyn	NY	16567	Riis I, Allan	Charlottenlund	DK

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Isa Pulver*

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Register's Annual Great Ride Across Iowa (RAGRAI) meets Paris Brest Paris (PBP)

BY THERESA A. FURNARI

I had the pleasure of successfully riding PBP in 2015 and RAGBRAI in 2023. After riding both, I thought of the similarities and differences between the rides. I conclude there are many reasons for randonneurs to ride the two of them.

RAGRAI's inauguration in 1973 occurred when two writers from the Des Moines Register decided to ride their bikes across Iowa and write about their experiences. Over the years the ride has grown in numbers, but the theme remains the same, exploring life in the rural towns of the Midwest. RAGBRAI is an opportunity for the towns of Iowa to show off their wares and introduce a lifestyle that is new to a lot of riders.

RAGBRAI attracts a diversity of riders, who come from across the U.S.,

as well as some foreign countries, although the number of riders who were from different towns in Iowa was also noticable. There were younger and older riders. It was common to see a young child riding stoker on a tandem or riding his/her/their own bike. Most intersections were monitored by some kind of law enforcement. The days of riding included themes when riders were able to wear a shirt or outfit in line with the theme of that day. Regardless, varying outfits were common among the riders regardless of the theme.

RAGBRAI has been described as the largest bike touring event in the world. The route is always run in July and goes from one end of Iowa to the other. Described as 'Mardi Gras on wheels,' the event is huge. For the 50th anniversary this year, there were an estimated 28,000 riders registered. To add to the numbers, each day unregistered riders would join the fun, which could at times double the number of riders on the route.

The total number of miles for the ride averages from 400-511 miles. RAGBRAI is run over seven days and is held every year. The daily distances are between 55-86 miles a day, with a century option one day. Each year the route changes and the towns lobby for their town to be on the route or to be an overnight town. Being selected as a host town is not only a financial benefit, but also a point of pride to show off the amenities of your town.

The towns and the state take the ride seriously, as countless churches and firehouses along the route bake pies for the riders and the overnight towns pull out all the stops for those resting weary legs. What resonated the most with me was the appreciation and generosity the residents of each town showed to the riders. In each town we were greeted by residents and



Selfie on Day Six of RAGBRAI.

—PHOTO THERESA FURNARI



entertained with live music and an assortment of food and drink, most of which you paid for but routinely some free food and drink was also provided. Due to the heat, cooling stations were critical, and it was common to have a private house, a fire station, and/or a VFW hall arrange a sprinkler or hose and provide cool air for riders along the route.

Each day's riding ended in an overnight town. Although there were designated camp sites, it was common to see tents in people's front yards, on the grounds of a school, on a grassy spot behind a convenience store, or on the side of the road. Some riders stayed in hotels and others were lucky enough to stay in the homes of residents. At the overnight towns, there was a greater assortment of live music and activities.

Gardner Duvall and I chose to ride RAGBRAI for the first time in 2023 because it was the 50th anniversary of the ride. Although many ride solo, we were told it is better to get on a team, for the social and logistical aspects. We were fortunate to get on a team made up of 9 Severna Park Peloton riders

and 12 riders from several different states. Four of us on the team were PBP finishers. Our team's name was the "Ride of Kalkyries." Our mascot, Kal, was a lovely orange tabby who we all were able to meet in Iowa City.

Riding on a team added to the riding experience. Most of our team members camped out each night. Each day, a rider volunteered to drive our rented van to the next overnight spot. Additionally, the driver had to scout out a good site and pick up any necessary refreshments for the evening soiree. The location of the camp site was texted to each team member. When riding during the day, we would often ride with some team members or see them in a town along the way. A day's riding ended at the camp site, where we would sit around and eat, drink, and share our experiences of the day. Depending on your energy level, the rest of the evening could be spent playing games, eating out and/or taking part in the entertainment provided by the town.

PBP, the older of the two rides, dates to 1891 and challenges the

The rolling hills of Iowa.
—PHOTO THERESA FURNARI

reliability of the bike and the willpower of the rider. Like RAGBRAI, the number of riders has grown over the years. PBP attracted about six thousand riders from all over the world when we were there in 2015. Both rides have maintained their storied status among the bicycling community, albeit with a different emphasis.

PBP is a grueling 1200 kilometer (750 mile) brevet that must be completed in a maximum of 90 hours and is run every four years. Although training is necessary for both rides, the training necessary to complete PBP should not be understated. Unlike RAGBRAI, where there is no required eligibility, PBP riders must complete a Super Randonneur series to prove their current mettle. And while RAGBRAI has rolling hills, PBP has some serious climbing.

PBP starts and ends in a suburb of Paris and travels northwest to Brest and back. Like RAGBRAI, riders are

Theresa and Gardner Day Two of PBP.

—PHOTO ANGIE WALI

A typical campsite for Team Kalkyries (below).

—PHOTO SCOTT MCCARTY

greeted and encouraged by the residents of the beautiful towns. When riding PBP, it was fun to experience the practice of the Tour de France, when some young children will hold out their palms to be slapped by the riders. Unlike RAGBRAI, PBP has controls, such that riders must have a card time-stamped both to ensure that they have completed that section of the ride and to ensure that riders are on pace to finish the event. In each town, there are designated venues where riders can get food and drink, but like RAGBRAI, riders on PBP can stop anywhere they want along the way.

RAGBRAI riders are expected to finish each day's ride by 7:00 p.m.,



allowing each rider 12 hours to finish each day. Many riders finish long before the 12-hour period. But we often whiled away time at stops and enjoyed the festivities offered by each town. This could compare to the riders who amble through PBP to obtain an Adrian Hands finish. However, there are riders who start RAGBRAI well before the 7:00 a.m. start and finish in well under 12 hours. I am not aware of any riders being pulled from the course, and riders

are able to obtain a lift to the overnight town anywhere along the route. Those arrangements are disqualifying at PBP, but anything goes at RAGBRAI, including e-bikes.

To successfully complete PBP in the allotted time, some riders ride through the night and during the day with extraordinarily little sleep. Because riders are often sleep-deprived by day three, a 10-minute ditch nap in a field, on the side of the road or any quiet spot, works wonders for the body and soul. Food and many cups of coffee also give the body the energy to keep going.

Before I rode PBP, I was told that the ride is secondary and to enjoy the people, the beautiful towns, and the experiences. This was the same advice I was given when preparing to ride RAGBRAI, and it was true. Both rides offered sincere exchanges with the residents of the towns, beautiful scenery, and memorable experiences with other riders. There were residents



Riding with this team made a wonderful experience even better.

—PHOTO SCOTT MCCARTY

cheering us on at all hours of the day and night on PBP. At RAGBRAI, the residents of each town lined the streets to welcome you to their town.

It is the exchanges with other riders that also add so much to the cycling experience for either ride. At RAGBRAI, Gardner and I met countless riders who were riding it for the 30th time or more. A family that consisted of a set of parents and two young adult children described riding it together for several years. And despite the number of years that pass, the mother shared with me the spirit of the ride lives on year after year. I also met a woman who was riding a 50-year-old bike, the same one her mother rode when she rode RAGBRAI. At PBP, we met riders completing the ride for the fourth or fifth (or tenth) time, who shared their



enthusiasm and excitement for the ride as if it were their first time.

PBP is revered in the cycling community. It is not for everyone, but with the proper training and mental outlook, every four years thousands of riders travel to France to test their stamina to complete this challenging ride. RAGBRAI is also not for everyone, but is experienced by those who seek

to ride their bike over beautiful rolling hills lined with corn and soybean fields without having to engage in strenuous training, but to be a part of a wacky world of cycling for seven days. Both rides have withstood the test of time and are enjoyed by cyclists young and old. I am happy to have experienced both and would encourage you to do so as well. 🚲

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PBP des Jeunes 2023

BY SALLY ROZELLE, #9965

On August 10, I went to my first day of tenth grade. When the bell rang for dismissal, however, instead of going to swim team practice like normal, my mom drove my dad and me to the airport. We were going to France to ride Paris-Brest-Paris. Dad would be riding PBP Randonneur for the 5th time and I would be the first American to participate in PBP des Jeunes.

Paris-Brest-Paris des Jeunes is a two-week long summer camp version of PBP-Randonneur organized by the Fédération Française de Cyclotourisme – the FFCT, which you may have seen referred to as FF Vélo. Like PBP-Randonneur, PBP des Jeunes starts in Rambouillet, goes to Brest, and then returns. There are some big differences, though, such as PBP des Jeunes is ridden in 13 stages, one of which is a rest day in Brest. And, while the Junior’s version of PBP is also held every four years, it is only open to kids ages 14-17 so you can only do it once. There are no PBP des Jeunes *récidivistes*.

I’ve wanted to do PBP-J ever since I first heard about it, which was when Dad got back from PBP in 2019. He mentioned that there was a youth version of the ride, and I was hooked. I wanted to live all the stories I’d heard about PBP: the adventures, the scares, the fun, and the friendships. As 2023 drew closer, I was still stoked to do it and so Dad emailed the organizers for details about how I

could participate. They were enthusiastic and we got started on the large amount of paperwork.

When we arrived in Paris on Friday afternoon, we grabbed our bags and bikes, which had been broken down pretty extensively to fit into the travel cases and somehow managed to fit everything in the rental car. We drove to La Bergerie National in Rambouillet, which was where the ride started, just like PBP-Randonneur. We were there a week before most of you reading this article, though, and Rambouillet was very quiet and nothing like it would be when we finished on August 24. In the parking lot, we assembled my bike and then attended le pot – a meet-and-greet with the other riders, parents, and chaperones. I got checked in, picked up my amazing swag (full des Jeunes kit, hat, reflective vest, rain poncho, musette bag, and t-shirt), met les encadrants (the adults who were accompanying us on the ride), ate some snacky things, took photos, and even did an interview with a journalist. The parents then bid adieu to their kids and

we ate our buffet-style dinner.

The dorm rooms at La Bergerie were either 1 or 2 to a room and even came with sheets for the mattress. I ended up with a single room and enjoyed the extra space. There wasn’t a big difference between American dorm rooms and the French ones. However, one thing I did notice in France was how there weren’t any screens in the windows. In Florida, if windows didn’t have screens, it’d be bugmaina the second the window was opened. I liked keeping the window open and having the breeze come in.

After dinner, I played cards with some of the other girls (there were six of us out of the 34 riders). Over the course of the trip, I learned three French card games, which is super neat; my favorite was *Le President*, a



An extra trip to Mont Saint Michel.

—PHOTO THIERRY BELLOIR

fast-paced game played without jokers. That night, I only played a couple hands because I was super jet-lagged and also had to repack my drop bag. I had packed for airport efficiency rather than cycling efficiency and fixed that by dumping all 15 kilos of stuff onto the bed and repacking it. It was surprising how much of that weight was just diabetes supplies – I have had Type 1 diabetes since I was 6 – and gluten-free Honey Stinger waffles, which I use for on-bike quick carbohydrates. I also have celiac disease and, since eating gluten-free in France can be tough, I brought my own snacks.

The next morning, and all the mornings after that (except for the one in Brest), we got up for breakfast at 0715. Breakfast was usually fruit, bread, cereal, and a bowl of hot chocolate. After breakfast, we shuttled our drop bags into the van and set our lunch bag (which had a plate, a bowl, a cup, cutlery, and anything else you wanted to have with you at lunchtime) with the lunch stuff. Then, we'd get our bikes set up: put things back into



our bags, cue sheets into clear pockets, pump up tires, and whatnot.

At the start, it was raining lightly, so we waited for it to die down, before we headed out. This was very different from the brevets I'd done, where you deal with whatever the weather gods throw at you and ride in all kinds of crappy weather. On PBP-J, however, it was much more laid-back, and we rode pretty much only when the sun was out.

The riders were split up into three groups: *rouge*, *bleu*, and *vert*. Red was the fast group, blue intermediate, and green rode at a more relaxed pace. Initially, the organizers established the groups by age, so I was in green because I was one of the youngest. At *le pot*, though, the organizers discovered that I had completed a full ACP brevet series which earned me a field promotion to *les bleus*. Each group had a couple of adults, and a JEF (*Jeune Éducateur*

Fédéral), who was a nationally-certified youth educator. The adults were there to help pull, sweep, and for logistics, but when it came to small bike mechanicals like flats and dropped chains, that was up to us kids to fix ourselves. Part of the experience of PBP des Jeunes is learning how to cycle safely, responsibly, and independently, which meant fixing our own flats. I got lots of practice right out of the gate: I had three flats the first day!

I was glad to be in the blue group because there were a couple of kids who had some pretty good English and Izoenn, who I'd made friends with the night before, had really good English. I enjoyed getting to talk with her about cultural differences, such as the sizing difference in water cups (American portion sizes are humongous).

After breakfast and getting ready, we would usually roll out around 9 a.m., and each day was, on average, a little over 100k. The longest days were about 140k and the last day – from Dreux to Rambouillet – was only 50k. The



Lunch stop on day three.

—PHOTO SALLY ROZELLE



Killing time at the beach on day six.

—PHOTO THIERRY BELLOIR

mornings were front-loaded, which was nice, so when we stopped for lunch, we'd usually have only 20-40k left to ride. Although we were stopping about every 25k to pee, stretch, and eat, we were never on the bike for very long, which was very different from most other rides I'd done.

Lunch was always picnic-style in a park, so we would spread out into a couple groups in the shade. We drank a lot of Coke, and in Bretagne, we had their special local brand of coke, called *Breizh cola*, which tastes way better than Coke, in my opinion. After lunch, we would head back out and ride to the overnight. Sometimes, we would have opportunities for side-trips. For example, on Day Three some of us, myself included, went to see Mont Saint Michel, while the others went back to the youth hostel that we were staying in that night. One day we went to an orchard and cider farm. As a Type 1 diabetic, I'm an apple juice expert, and this was the best apple juice I ever had. There were a couple other days where we rode out to the beach, and most of us rolled up our bibs so that we could wade out farther. Dad later told me that beach weather is not usual in Western France. The PBP-J route is

different than PBP-Randonneur; we rode farther to the North and got to see the English Channel.

Once we were done riding for the day, we would stack up the bikes into a room (or barn, depending on where we were staying) and retrieve our drop bags from the van. We were on our own to relax until dinner, which was usually at 7 p.m., so I would take a shower, organize all my stuff to make for an efficient morning, air out my bike clothes and shoes, and meet up with some of the other kids. We played cards, talked, and did typical teenagers-at-camp things.

In Brest, we stayed in a nicer youth hostel, so I roomed with two other girls – Adèle and Izoenn – both of whom were super nice. I was able to use the washing machine for some laundry,

but they weren't as lucky, so our room had all their wet clothes from doing sink laundry hung up all over the place. Our rest day was very relaxed, and we didn't really do much, though we did manage another beach day in downtown Brest, which was fun. Too bad I didn't bring a swimsuit!

On the return trip back to Rambouillet, our ride had more overlap with PBP-Randonneur, but we didn't get to see anyone until all the fast people caught up to us. I really liked being able to see some of the same route that the adult ride used, and later, the adult riders, because it made us juniors feel more included in the whole PBP experience. We made a point to cheer on the adults, which could get a little loud sometimes, but it was all really positive.

In Villaines-la-Juehl, we spent about an hour at the control and got a souvenir: a wooden cut-out of France with the PBP route engraved into it. We also ate dinner and breakfast the next morning at the Mortagne au Perche control, and went through the control in Dreux, too. Seeing these controls was interesting, because I wasn't expecting them to be so huge!

About 8k to the finish, we stopped



Back in Rambouillet, and we're done!

—PHOTO PAUL ROZELLE

so that we could reconnect all three groups together, and then we rode into the finish together. Green rode up front, blue in the middle, and red brought up the rear. The finish was super fun and I saw a couple people I knew, but Dad was about an hour or so behind us, so I didn't get to see him. Shab Memarbahi and also Susan Gryder, who was unable to ride this year due to an injury, were there, and that was really nice, because Susan has been super supportive of my riding for as long as I can remember. All 34 of us made it 1250k across France!

We rode up the road a little bit closer to the "sheep factory" as Dad referred to la Bergerie Nactional, and had lunch under this huge pavilion, so when it rained, we stayed dry. After lunch, we made our way to the stage where the mayor of Rambouillet and a number of FFCT dignitaries were there to celebrate our finish and award us our medals. They called up everyone by

which area of France they were from, and called me up last, because, well, I'm not French. That's when I saw Dad. After the ceremony and a bunch of pictures, we relaxed with some good friends and shared stories about our rides.

Our flight back home was on Saturday, so we had Friday to hang out in Versailles, pack all of our stuff ("toxic waste" is what Dad called the dirty bike clothes) to bring back home, had lunch (les gallettes, which are gluten free!) with Dave Minter and Judith Swallow, who Dad's been cycling friends with for a while, and dinner with some of our friends from Florida and Ohio, which was super nice.

I really enjoyed this experience, and it was 100% worth it to miss two weeks of school to ride bikes in the French countryside, because it was beautiful. Plus, I only get to do this once, though in four years, I'll be riding with all the rest of you.

If you are someone, or know someone, who'd be interested in riding PBP des Jeunes, I would highly recommend it because it is an active way to explore another country, meet new friends, participate in Paris-Brest-Paris, and grow as a cyclist. Having randonneuring experience was incredibly helpful and made this ride easier than it otherwise would've been. Knowledge about how to ride in a group, draft, climb and descend hills in a group, and what sorts of things to bring on the bike was super helpful. I could've benefited more from the experience if I had some more French. PBP-J was more of a bike tour than a brevet, which I'd never done before, so I enjoyed getting to do a different kind of cycling. I'm looking forward to riding PBP randonneur in 2027, and hopefully seeing an American des Jeunes rider or two out there on the road to cheer on. 🚲

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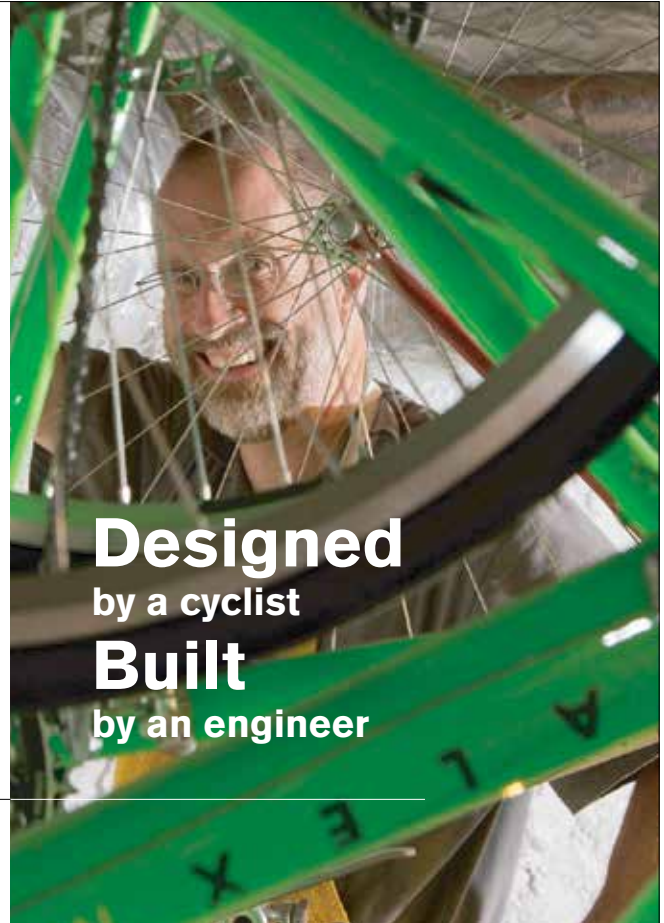
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Paris-Brest-Paris des Jeunes – A Parent’s Guide

BY PAUL AND SUSAN ROZELLE, #2955 & #3166

If your teen might enjoy riding 800 miles across rural Normandie and Bretagne over 13 days with fellow teens, here are some considerations to help plan for a successful PBP des Jeunes in 2027.

ENTRY – Event dates for this year’s ride were published on the FFCT website (<https://ffvelo.fr/>) in early 2023 and entry was required by April 30. There was a ride cap of 30, but 34 juniors started.

COST – Participation in 2023 came to 700€, which included all meals and lodging, a cycling kit, and a ton of swag.

QUALIFYING – The prerequisite was completion of a 100km ride, but most participants had much more experience, whether from racing, touring, or recreational riding. Several were children of parents who were riding PBP-Randonneur and had “grown up with” PBP in families that cycle together regularly.

TRAINING – Sally did not “train” for PBP des Jeunes *per se*; she just rode a lot. PBP des Jeunes is an audax-style ride – everyone stays together, with adults at the front and rear to ensure no one gets dropped – so the ability to safely draft other cyclists is important. Sally “highly recommend[s] being comfortable with back-to-back 100km rides and experience riding in a group. The more saddle time, the better, but you don’t have to do really long rides.” The terrain is the same as PBP-Randonneur – many short, steep hills – so experience climbing is important, too.

PARLEZ-VOUS? – PBP des Jeunes is a cultural experience that requires more than basic facility with the French language. Sally had two years of middle school French and one year of high school French. This was the bare minimum, according to her. Sally reports: “I could understand what was going on and have a simple conversation, but I wish I knew more French and felt more comfortable speaking it.” Dad’s rudimentary French was similarly overtaxed. Everything is in French: the rules, the forms, the 90-minute parent meeting, the meet-and-greet, and the WhatsApp group. *Les études commencent maintenant!*

BIKE AND GEAR – Any road-style bike in good working order is appropriate. Sally used a small handlebar



View of the countryside on Day 10.

—PHOTO SALLY ROZELLE

bag and a 9L saddle pack to stash diabetes supplies and gluten-free snacks, but most cyclists rode with no more than they would carry on a club ride. Ensure your kid can change a flat and make basic adjustments to the bike. While they'll get help if they need it, self-sufficiency is part of the PBP des Jeunes ethos.

PACKING AND DROP BAGS – The organizers provided a detailed packing list which equipped the riders thoroughly for a safe, enjoyable event. The weight limit is only 15kg, so pack efficiently, keeping in mind that there is an opportunity to do laundry in Brest on Day 7. If she had it to do again, Sally says, "I would have brought more snacks for on the bike and not as many jerseys. Three was plenty, although we definitely weren't the best smelling bunch of kids."

THE START – Staying in Rambouillet enables you to see your child off on Saturday morning and, if you are riding PBP-Randonneur,

you then have a week to relax before your ride.

BUREAUCRACY – Sign-up required significant paperwork. We had to join the FFCT, complete a detailed medical questionnaire, provide an immunization and vaccination record (including proof of Covid-19 vaccination), and proof of medical insurance, and repatriation insurance. Copies of prescriptions are required, as well, and children cannot possess any medication in pill form, not even those you can buy over the counter. (Medications are carried and stored by the medical director, as required by national law.)

We had to obtain a sign-off from Sally's pediatrician, which may sound familiar to those who rode PBP in 2007 or before. We also had to certify that we would retrieve Sally within 24 hours if she DNF'd. Ensure you and your teenager are comfortable with how medical and dietary issues will be navigated while they're on their own in France for two weeks.

SCHOOL – Sally's sophomore year commenced August 10. PBP des Jeunes began August 12 and ended August 24, which meant she missed 11 instructional days. We began working with administration the previous school year on how she would manage to make up all that missed work and integrate into her classes when she returned. Sally is on the swim team, so we also talked with her coach about practices and meets she would be missing. In addition to academics and athletics, be prepared for the impact that attending PBP des Jeunes will have on other planned activities like summer camps, trips, work, volunteering, and social life.

INTANGIBLES – PBP-J requires more commitment than almost anything else your child could do with those two weeks, but in the process, it cements a generation-spanning love of audacious adventure and exploration. 🚲

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Bike Lust

BY ROGER HILLAS

I rode PBP in 2003 on a Merlin Extralight with DuraAce 9 components. Great bike, it still fits me like a glove, but the criterium racing geometry was not ideal for the long haul of PBP, and the 39-27 (38 gear inch) low gear was a lot for my knees to push in the latter stages of the ride.

So after PBP that year, I switched to the short-lived Campagnolo Record Triple 10. In late 2006, I asked Seven to build me a custom randonneuring bike with stable handling, stiff drivetrain, and as much vertical compliance as they could manage. Their default at that time was still a tight racing geometry, so I asked them to lengthen the chainstays and thus the wheelbase. They resisted some but eventually did what I asked and did it brilliantly. Hats off to Alan at Spokes, Etc. for doing the measurements, Fred at Seven for walking me through the custom process, and Stef for doing the welding.

I was riding the Seven to work that June when the rear derailleur jammed, went into the rear wheel, and took out my right seatstay. Back to Seven went the frame. It returned only a few days before I left for France. 2007 was a famously wet edition of PBP, but more so for the 80- and 90-hour groups than it was for the 84-hour start I took. There were more issues with the Record Triple 10 on the ride, but the rest of the bike worked wonderfully.

By 2011, I had replaced the recalcitrant Record Triple 10 with the Chorus Compact 10 drive train I rode on this and the two following editions of PBP. 2011 was the year that the 84-hour group got pelted by wave after wave of thunderstorms on Day 1. I entered the ride with very few miles in my legs after fracturing my hip the previous November. But the weather

THE BIKE: My Five-Time Paris-Brest-Paris Finisher, a Seven Alaris



improved and I got stronger as the ride went on. A brisk tailwind on Day 3 didn't hurt.

In 2015, I switched to homebuilt 3-cross wheels matching a generator hub in front and Record hub in back to tubular rims shod with Paris-Roubaix tires. The front light became an Edelux SON. A fizik Aliante replaced the Turbomatic saddle that had melted in 2011's rain.

At this point, I was done tinkering, except for buying extra gears in 2023, more for riding locally than for PBP. Steven Bilenky did a superb job installing S&S couplers in 2018. The bike remains as stable and true as it ever was.

Would I change anything if I did it all over now? Not much. A sloping top tube would make it easier to attach a modern saddlebag to the seat and post.



Clearance for 30 mm tires would be nice, but 27 is good enough, and I'm not sure I would trust hydraulic disc brakes given the difficulty of servicing them in the field. But otherwise, I'd tell Seven to make the same bike all over again. 🚲

Do you think your bike should be in the spotlight?

Send one photo and a brief description of what is special/unique to your ride, to editor@rusa.org. If your bike is chosen, you will be contacted for more information. Not all submissions can be published due to space constraints.

FULL BICYCLE SPEC:

All components are Campagnolo unless otherwise noted.

FRAME: Seven Alaris (straight gauge titanium) custom (2007-23)

FORK: Seven (2007-15); Enve (2019-23)

HEADSET: Chris King (2007-23)

HANDLEBARS AND STEM: Seven (2007-15); Ritchey (2019-23)

HANDLEBAR TAPE: Cinelli Cork Gel (2007-23)

SEAT POST: Chorus Carbon (2007-23)

SADDLE: Selle Italia Turbomatic (2007-11); Fizik Aliante Versus (2015-23)

SHIFTERS: Record Triple 10 (2007); Chorus 10 (2011-19); Super Record 12 (2023)

CRANKSET: Record 53/42/34 (2007); Chorus 50/34 (2011-19); Record 50/34 (2023)

CASSETTE: Record 13-26 (2007-15); Chorus 13-29 (2019); Chorus 11-34 (2023)

FRONT DERAILLEUR: Record Triple 10 (2007); Chorus 10 (2011-19); Chorus 12 (2023)

REAR DERAILLEUR: Record long cage (2007); Chorus 10 (2011-19); Chorus 12 (2023)

CHAIN: Record 10 (2007-19); Chorus 12 (2023)

BRAKES: Several iterations of Chorus / Record caliper

PEDALS: Time

WHEELS: Mavic Ksyrium (2007-2011); Schmidt dynohub front, Record rear hubs laced 3x to Ambrosio Nemesis rims (2015-23)

TIRES: Michelin 700C x 25 clincher (2007-2011); Challenge Paris-Roubaix tubular (2015-19); FMB Paris-Roubaix tubular (2023)

FRONT LIGHT: Cateye battery (2007-11); SON Edelux (2015-23)

REAR LIGHT: Several iterations of Cateye battery

GPS: Garmin Edge 1000 (2019); Edge 1040 (2023)

BAGS: Berthoud (2007-11); Revelate (2015-19); Apidura (2023)

WATERBOTTLE CAGES: King Cages

An Unimaginable Journey to PBP

BY VIJAYSHREE SUNDARAM

Many of you might remember me from the spring edition's "An Unimaginable Journey" and my goal to participate in Paris-Brest-Paris 2023 and be a PBP ancienne!! It's time to share how that journey played out with an epilogue that I am immensely proud of.

PBP was my first Grand Randonnee, and the path leading to it was literally and metaphorically paved with lots of ups and downs. Months of strenuous training, painful injuries, hours of physiotherapy, sacrifices of time with loved ones, and logistical nightmares made me question my goal. But through

it all, I found an inner reserve of strength, confidence, and sheer bull-headedness to keep chipping away at my goal.

When I ventured into randonneuring in February 2022, pace was an issue for me. I completed an SR series, but making the cutoffs was always a push.

So, in February 2023 I started training with a coach, Kabir Rachure, a three-time RAAM finisher from India and one of my biggest cheerleaders. He provided me with a structured indoor training plan along with actionable advice on hydration, nutrition, pacing, and how to handle the low points that are a given on any long ride. His experience as an ultra cyclist served as a fount of wisdom from which I could draw. I wish one day to take the start line at RAAM alongside my coach!!

The first order of business was the qualifiers. I got my 200k and 300k out of the way, and next in line was the 400k. It had been an unusually wet start to the riding year here in the Bay Area, and the Santa Cruz Randonneurs (SCR) 400k in early March was one for the ages. An atmospheric river had hit the area that weekend, and it rained for 18-20 hours of the ride. The Pajaro River had breached its banks, so the RBA had to modify the route in the middle of the ride. This added unexpected elevation, headwinds, and no real dinner stop during the ride. Huge thanks to Manni Brahman, who drove the roving SAG that night. My right knee had started to hurt around the 200k mark, and seeing my two other friends DNFing the ride, I was inclined to do the same. But my riding partner Nitin stood firm, and we rolled on into the darkness of the night. Towards the end I was in real pain with every pedal stroke, but Nitin helped me



At the PBP start in Rambouillet.

—PHOTO SONALI SAMBHUS

Team Asha group photo at the start.

—PHOTO UNKNOWN

with painkillers and accompanied me to the finish.

A few days later I was diagnosed with ITBS, iliotibial band syndrome, which forced me to take a break from training. Because I still needed a 600k to complete my PBP registration, I started intense physiotherapy for six weeks, and by early May I was able to finish the SCR 600k without any pain.

PBP seemed more real now; I wanted to spend the time I had to improve my pace on the bike. The daily grind of indoor training sessions continued. I signed up for a 300k+600k as part of the NorCal brevet week in mid-June. It was my first 600k+ ride, and I did the 300k without any of my Team Asha friends. I finished the two rides with a combined elapsed time of 64.5 hours. That day I felt confident that I could finish PBP.

August came around, and the preparation for the trip was in full swing. Coach Venki hosted a bike packing session at his home, Coach Mihir laid out the plan for the ride from start to finish, Shriram and Saravana helped with bike-related issues, a logistics team booked our accommodations, and Anantha booked a bus to royally transport us from the airport to Airbnbs. Harsha was always there to help me with everything else. Jack Holmgren from SCR always motivated me to train hard. Rob Hawks, SFR RBA, put all his effort into making sure everyone qualified for the event, so a big shout out to him. Bill Bryant, SCR RBA, shared his immense knowledge of PBP with Team Asha on a Zoom call, so a big thanks to him as well.

Landing in Paris felt like the dream was starting to come true. We put together the bikes and took them out for shakedown rides around the countryside. I ran into a rider who



identified me from the *American Randonneur* writeup, making me feel happy. I was getting primed for the ride.

The evening of August 20th, I was getting my bike ready for the start and found that the front tire valve had clogged with sealant when I tried pumping air into it. The tire pressure was not too far off from what I wanted, so I didn't try to fix it. My bike was fully loaded and ready to roll, but now the saddle bag was a bit too big to maneuver around. I generally swing my leg over the saddle to mount and dismount, which seemed risky now. It took a few attempts to learn to do it from the front over the top tube, but I decided this was the safer course of action. I wouldn't try to get off the bike unnecessarily until Mortagne-au-Perche. I was nervous about the start and was hoping everything would go right.

The PBP start at Rambouillet was a festival with thousands of riders from different countries lining up for the epic ride. It was a huge picnic with people standing, sitting, clicking pictures, and looking for rando friends in the crowd. Thanks to Sonali Sambhus and her daughter, who were there to cheer for Team Asha and made beautiful videos of us crossing the start line into an epic 90-hour journey.

We were told that what makes PBP special is the hospitality and kindness of the French people and their love

for the event. I can attest to this. They turned out in huge numbers for the 1200k, handing out water, cookies, strawberries, chips . . . anything that a rider might need. Kids and grandparents alike, cheering "Allez" and "Bonne Chance;" cars parked on roadsides with open trunks; tables with fresh crepes in front of the houses; coffee at night . . . the welcome was heartwarming, and I would do the ride again just to experience this.

I bounced from control to control on well-marked roads with PBP arrows, rolling up and down the hills, fighting sleep and fatigue, ditch napping in between, and visualizing the finish. Most of the time I rode with Nitin, and when I was alone, I always found myself in the company of other riders. Sometimes we would talk, sometimes quietly ride together, trying to get to the next control. The endless queues of tail lights and reflective vests were a vision.

By Wednesday morning I was in the throes of sleep deprivation, having slept only a couple of hours in the previous three days. I started nodding off on the bike but somehow reached Tinteniac and found myself trying to nap on a bench in a tent. The nap helped 'til afternoon, but I was again losing my grip on the bike, so I took another 20-minute ditch nap. This was a common scene during PBP; riders could be found sleeping everywhere –



on grass, on sidewalks, along roadsides, inside controls ... any place that would be safe to nap.

I started from Mortagne-Au-Perche and headed to Dreux around 3 a.m. on Thursday, feeling fatigued but determined. However, I found a new wave of energy in the wee hours of the morning, entering Dreux and witnessing a beautiful sunrise. I made the final push to Rambouillet, wanting a strong finish and crossing the arches on the château grounds with 3 hours and 22 minutes to spare. I was welcomed by smiling faces, clapping hands, and a cheering crowd. A wave of emotion swept over me as my husband, Gagan, and son, Amay, rushed to hug me. They had sacrificed enough weekends to see me live my dream of finishing PBP, and I had done justice to their sacrifices. The celebrations and emotional release would continue for a few more hours as more of my teammates with whom I shared this journey rolled across the finish line.

Team Asha has been the backbone of my randonneuring journey. This

was the first time riders from the team took part in PBP. A total of 14 riders qualified, 13 participated, and 11 riders finished, winning the epic battle of mind over body, a huge win for the team. The group had formed a Team Asha Cheering Squad on WhatsApp to cheer on the riders, and it was flooded with congratulatory messages. Family members, friends, athletes from other Team Asha groups ... everyone was elated. They had witnessed the unfolding of the team's 90-hour odyssey on an international stage.

Team Asha members with their families at the finish.

—PHOTO UNKNOWN

They say the journey is more important than the destination. I finished PBP on my first attempt in 86:37:22 and made some lifelong friends along the way. I would later learn that I was one of the 6.4% of the women who finished the ride and the first among a handful of Indian-origin women to finish it within the 90 hours. The journey taught me that mental resolve can trump adversity, that my double knee surgeries and the intramedullary nail that I still have in the right tibia are just mental blocks, and that I can achieve what seems impossible if I dedicate my time and efforts to it. For those reasons alone, Paris-Brest-Paris 2023 will always hold a special place in my life. 🚴



Vijayshree with her medal after finishing.

—PHOTO POONGODI

For more information on Team Asha's PBP journey and the cause we were riding for, go to

<https://ta.ashanet.org/siliconvalley/marathon/runnernet/public.php?2023TASVB1094>

PBP 2023: Midnight Meal of Stars

BY MARY GERSEMA #2965

Last light. The time for lights and reflectives signals its beginning and we pause to ready for the night miles. Vests and anklebands on bodies, head- and taillights powered up for the coming hours.

The heat of daytime fades as we ride within the snake of night riders. We're going faster now, I think. Truth radiates out of my little Garmin. No, it's just the pleasant deception of night rides. Still, the perception of speed animates my pedal strokes.

Stars join the sky one by one, until I look again and see them everywhere. Like glitter thrown across the sky. Life in the city I call home leaves little room for stars, but these rural roads have saved a space, just for them.

The captain's body obstructs my view so my vantage points are sideways and up. Everywhere stars! Hi stars, do you see us? How long does it take for our little lights to reach you? Surely they must glimpse this gleaming snake parade slithering through the cloudless night.

I take a big gulp of evening air, and the stars intertwine with my thoughts, as if I swallowed some of them too. My thoughts, the stars, and the moment churn.

Riders drift around us and everyone is quiet. On a normal night we'd all be in bed now, missing this midnight rendezvous with the sky.

My thoughts layer with stars and turn over and over, like our pedal strokes or the wheels on the pavement. I've never been so far into the epicenter of my mind.

We are one. The stars, Felkerino, these riders, me. It doesn't make sense, yet nighttime has its own subset of rules and I embrace them.

This is the pursuit of the midnight rider. The uncharted, enchanted quest for the moment when urges to sleep dissipate, when physical discomfort makes way for wonder.

Open eyes. Open heart. A body filled up with starlight.

I might burst with appreciation for what we've pedaled ourselves into. We are worlds apart. Yet after over 50 hours of exertion, boundaries dissolve and we converge with the celestial.

Tiny pops of silver and red from our collective bikes and cyclists glint into space. You see that, stars? We shine like you. We shine with you.

I came to PBP in hopes of this moment, not knowing what it would be or when it might happen. My quest is complete. Sated by my meal of stars we pedal on, midnight riders distilled down to our essence on the rural roads of Brittany.



PBP night ride.

—PHOTO MARY GERSEMA

Paris-Brest-Paris

BY STEVE WALKER

I used to be a swimmer. Long stuff. Suffering. English Channel, Irish Sea, Gibraltar, Catalina. Some swims in Iceland. I was pretty good at it, but that all ended about three and a half years ago. After celebrating my 52nd birthday, on Friday the 13th, I died.

I was clinically dead for about 20 minutes and I don't remember any of this. I was in bed, and my wife heard me breathing funny. She turned on the light and watched me die. She got 911 going and Ethan, my 16-year-old son, did CPR. The police were the first to arrive and they hit me with the automated external defibrillator (AED). The paramedics gave me a shot of adrenaline Pulp Fiction style on the way to the hospital. I had two more cardiac arrests in the hospital, but they fixed the problem – a clogged artery – with stents.

I wasn't supposed to swim alone after that. Drowning was a risk if I had another arrest. So, a month later, I started biking. I rode my first century in three decades and a few months later I got a nice road bike. Biking was now my new addiction. I decided to do Paris-Brest-Paris (PBP). I don't think I really appreciated the challenge, but I was an endurance athlete, how hard could a bike ride be? I reached out to someone named Betty Jean Jordan who had written an article in this magazine. She was very nice and encouraging, and I quickly found randonneuring a lot like channel swimming. I set about training and learning how to do long rides.

Rambouillet

After three years of learning to be a cyclist, qualifying for PBP, planning, not being sure if this was the right goal, and then refocusing on PBP, I was in Rambouillet on a Saturday afternoon in August. My ride would start Monday at 5 a.m. I'd trained hard.

Funny, to this point, I had thought Paris-Brest was a bike ride, but no, it

is a pastry, and oh, is it good! Its like a coffee éclair but with nuts and shaped like a wheel. Even if I didn't finish, the pastries I ate made the whole trip worthwhile.

As I entered the grounds of the chateau, I saw THOUSANDS of cyclists. My mind was blown. People like me. Freaks. All strangely confident, but nervous and anxious at the same time. In swimming, I was the weird guy that swam to distant shores and I only had a few people that understood me. Here, everyone was like me, although most were younger and skinnier.

I had seen Ed, a friend from Davis rides, getting on the flight at SFO and hooked up with him near the chateau.



We had lunch and compared notes. This would be his first PBP also, with the same time slot as me in the 84-hour group. He's a better cyclist than I am, but he said he wasn't feeling one hundred percent.

The fast 80 hour group left at 4 p.m. Sunday. Then, through Sunday evening, the 90-hour groups (the large majority of riders) left in groups at designated times until 10 p.m. Then there was a seven-hour break, and then the 84-hour groups (me included) left, starting at 5 a.m. Monday morning.

I got to the meeting point and things seemed to be happening in slow motion. My rear tire was flat. I made what I hoped would not be a fateful decision, and I just put air in it instead of changing the tube. I met Ed as planned, and after what seemed like hours, we took off.

Day 1, Rambouillet – Loudéac

I stayed right on Ed's wheel. I'd never truly ridden in a peloton before, and this group was about 125 riders. I'd seen them on TV in the Tour de France and ridden in small groups, but

this was a whole new experience. We averaged over 21 miles per hour (mph) for the first 25 miles. Ed had brought us up to the front of the peloton, maybe five riders back from the lead. We weren't pulling, but we'd also moved ahead of the majority of the group we'd departed with. I now understand the peloton and everything I'd read and experienced before now made sense, from courtesy to safety to speed. We covered 106 miles in 5 hours and 50 minutes (or just above 18 mph). I've never ridden that fast over any real distance.

By 106 miles, the peloton was finally starting to break up into mostly small groups. I'd lost Ed by this point, but I was still moving fast. I was feeling great, except my toes hurt a little. I'd kept my pace relatively high (16-18 mph) and was working with people when it made sense. The rest of the day, I stayed fueled and hydrated, and generally had no issues.

There were so many people cheering for us along the way, in groups of just a few to as big as 50-100. There were a lot of families, teenagers, old people, little kids, and everything in between. Young girls in cars honking, 12-year-old boys looking for a high-five as you rode by. People providing food, water, drinks, Coke, and sometimes coffee. I even saw more than a few people offering beer and wine. You can't believe this until you see it. This ride kind of restored my faith in humanity.

I got to Loudéac, grabbed dinner, took a shower (5 Euros), and got my cot (8 Euros). I'd traveled 250 miles, was tired and sore, but had no twitching or cramping. I fell right to sleep as planned. I had a best case 72-hour timetable, and a worst case 82-hour one, and I was well ahead of the 72-hour

one. I had a feeling that it wasn't going to work out like that, but it was fun doing the math.

Day 2 Loudéac – Brest – Loudéac

My alarm went off three hours later. I got up. Got changed. Got breakfast. Got my fuel and drinks. Replaced batteries. Dropped my drop bag and left.

I saw Ed and another guy, Alastair. I rode with Alastair, but Ed dropped back. Alastair and I grabbed an espresso about an hour into the ride (so incredibly good). Alastair is a great guy. We talked about all kinds of stuff. Like Ed, Alastair was also a strong rider, but we were taking more and longer stops than I would have liked.

By my bike computer, we had climbed 20,000 feet by the time we got to Brest. I hadn't used my first gear (34-34) much at all, although I had been standing up whenever possible, rarely using the small chain ring. I'm not sure of exactly what I ate in Brest, but the meals being provided were usually carbs (pasta, rice, mashed or roasted potatoes), gravy, demi-baguettes, croissants, Orangina, water, Coke, and sometimes juice. They typically cost 5-10 Euros.

I had to balance the want for Coke with the reality that I needed to titrate my caffeine intake over three plus days, and not overdo it in the first half of the ride. I also knew that I would need it most between midnight and 5 a.m. on the third night. Over the course of the whole ride, I probably had the equivalent of 20 Cokes and 20 espressos. The other "drugs" I used were Tylenol and Ben Gay. I had little pixie stick-like doses of Tylenol and used four. I also gave them to people I was riding with, and they were really appreciated.

The road out of Brest had a rough little hill – cruel right after lunch – but we got past that. The rest of the way to Loudéac was pretty and not too tough.

I got to Loudéac at around 4 a.m. Alastair was a little behind me. I was only an hour behind my 72-hour



People mulling about at registration before the ride.

—PHOTOS STEVE WALKER

schedule, but I'd given up everything I'd gained on day one plus an hour, mostly due to longer stops. I wasn't sure what the following day would bring. I started to worry that I was sliding, and I knew if we continued taking long stops, even finishing in 84 hours was not assured. My longest single effort ride to date had been 600km. I was now at 800km in. I showered, got food quickly, and slept for three hours.

Day 3 Loudéac toward Rambouillet

I got up, got changed, and got some breakfast. I was very tired, but mostly okay.

Just as I was about to leave, I saw Alastair getting ready to leave. We left a little after 9 a.m. At some point early Wednesday, we picked up a woman named Alla who only spoke Ukrainian. She used her phone to translate. Very nice, 34, two kids, living in Poland as a refugee. Alla was in the 90-hour group and was really worried because she had fallen behind. She was for sure in danger of not making it. She'd have to go as fast as us to make it, and we had been going a lot faster than she seemed capable of riding. She asked if she could draft, and we were happy to help her. It turned out that she was a very proficient rider, and she held our wheels perfectly for hours on end.

At one point in the afternoon, Alastair and Alla fell back a bit after we'd been riding all together for many hours. We'd often separate a bit, but we were generally going the same speed so would regroup just as easily. I knew Alastair and Alla would be fine with or without me, and they'd likely catch me at the next stop – maybe I could even nudge a quicker stop.

The weather had been really nice to this point (60-89F). Around 5 p.m. on Wednesday – while I was ahead – it started getting incredibly humid and miserable, but then it rained. Hard.

Not for a long time, but just enough to make it much nicer. The temperature dropped, too. This was around sunset, although it would still be a while before it got dark.

Early in the evening on Wednesday, probably around 7 p.m. (just over 2.5 days into the ride), there was a group of about 50 people cheering as riders were coming through their town. There was a small store on the right. I pulled over and got some Maison pâté, some mentos, some cheese, a liter of coke, two bags of potato chips, and a liter of citron ice cream. I sat down and started eating.

As I was finishing, Alla rode up and literally started screaming and hitting me. She was angry and shouting what I can only imagine were Ukrainian obscenities. In the coming few minutes, I found out that Alastair had crashed. I couldn't figure out what had happened. She said we needed to go to the next control to find out. She ate quickly, grabbed my wheel, and didn't let go until we got to the control a little over two hours later. We checked to see if there had been an ambulance sent, but none had been, and he had not DNF'ed. As we were talking to the officials, who walks up, but a bandaged-up Alastair.

Then I got the whole story.

The humidity caused his hand to slip off the handlebars. He was mostly okay, as was the bike. There had been a nurse cheering where he crashed, and she put bandages on him, but he was going to wait to tell his wife until after he finished.

We ate some dinner. It was now about midnight on Wednesday. As we were finishing, Ed walks up. He'd made up the time, mostly by really not stopping. Alla was falling asleep in her food. Our pace was faster than she was used to, and she really hadn't had much sleep. We knew she couldn't ride without sleep. Riding with us had exhausted her. We weren't sure if she was going to finish, but it was more important that she be safe. We pointed her to a place on the floor where she could sleep and told her to set an alarm for 1:15 a.m. (an hour later). We didn't know if she'd wake up, or if it would be enough sleep, but we were giving her the best chance possible.

At this point in the ride, I was looking at a 76-80 hour finish.

The Last Part

I'd tried to sleep at one point but failed, losing about 30 minutes. About



A selfie in Brest on the iconic bridge.

An assortment of classic bikes, including pennyfarthings, in Rambouillet.

an hour later, I stopped (they had coffee!), and reconnected with Alastair. Ed had stopped to sleep somewhere. The coffee was so good and very strong. No sign of Alla, but she was probably still 30-60 minutes behind us. I didn't know her well, but I really felt sorry for her. I hoped she could finish, but I wasn't really confident she would.

Overnight, we had witnessed a zombie apocalypse. There were bodies strewn everywhere next to bikes haphazardly laying on the ground. People riding were zombies, too. Not long after the coffee, I became a rolling zombie. My eyelids were heavy. I saw a body on the ground near a bike. As I approached, I slowed down. The person raised his head. I parked my bike in the grass. Then I became one of the zombies strewn on the side of the road.

I laid down on the gravel about six feet from the edge of the road. I was far enough from the street that a car really couldn't hit me (there was a tree and bushes they'd have to go through), but I wasn't far off the road.

I woke up 30 minutes later when a car went by at 50 mph. The wheels were about six feet from my head. I heard the sound of tires before I heard the engine. It scared the crap out of me. I actually felt rested after this nap, though. It was around 7 a.m. on Thursday morning when I started riding again. The next 95 miles were miserable, but I really don't remember them. My butt hurt. Legs, too. But I kept going.

I'd decided at some point in the morning that I was going to make it, but not in 72-hours, and I was good with that. I was at peace with the ride, and I was anticipating a nice long last control stop, some hot food, an hour of rest, and a leisurely ride to Rambouillet. I was also really enjoying riding with Alastair.

Just as we were leaving, Alla rides



up, tears streaming down her face. Google translated to us, "I've missed my time." We hustle her into the control, not knowing if they will stamp her book (technically she was outside the time limit). While she was inside, we figured out that she had about 2:20 and it was 45km (30 miles) to the finish, but almost all uphill. Not knowing how steep the climbing was, we thought she could probably finish in time, but only if we pulled her, and if there were no flats, no stops, and no issues.

She came back out (book stamped!) and we sent her off. Five minutes later, I took off chasing her and caught her about a mile down the road as we were leaving town. We started climbing and I put her on my wheel. Alastair had fallen back. I pulled her at 18 mph over the next hour, although I'd really been anticipating going less than 12mph. My legs had hurt so much at the last control.

I don't know where I found that 18 mph uphill in the rain after nearly 750 miles of riding. I think something about helping someone who really needed it gave me some super-human strength. I really couldn't feel it – I just didn't want to see her fail, and I knew she couldn't make it without me.

I eased off a little. She stayed with

me for another 5km, but then slowly pulled away from me, and I just kept a nice pace through the last 10km, knowing we would both make it. It was still raining. I hit the gravel road into the chateau, then saw the start/finish. I got there, and Alla was waiting for me. She finished just a few minutes ahead of me and in just under 90 hours.

I finished a little over 80 hours. After my book was stamped, I laid down on the ground under the tent. When I got up, I saw Ed and found Alastair a few minutes later, too! The four of us had some food at the cafeteria tent. We exchanged contact info, and then split up to start making our way back to reality.

I picked up some Chinese food along the way to the train station, then picked up my drop bag and the car. Once I ate my Chinese food, I fell asleep in the car. Then I drove to Paris. The hour drive was tough. I was pretty sure I'd broken two toes on that first day (not sure how), but carrying my suitcase, backpack, and bag up from the 4th floor underground to the 5th floor of the hotel (no elevator) was the hardest thing ever.

By the way, fellow cyclists, Paris-Brest-Paris absolutely ranks up there with the toughest swims I've ever done. 🚲

Coffee First, Then the World

I first encountered Jenny Graham over the holidays last winter when I was working my way through cycling documentaries on GCN+ during an inconveniently timed case of COVID isolation. I remember being impressed with her warmth and good cheer as she cycled her way through the Outer Hebrides in Western Scotland (near her home turf it turns out). This good humor and positive attitude are also found in abundance in *First Coffee, Then the World*, a memoir that documents her attempt to become the fastest woman to circumnavigate the world by bicycle in 2018.

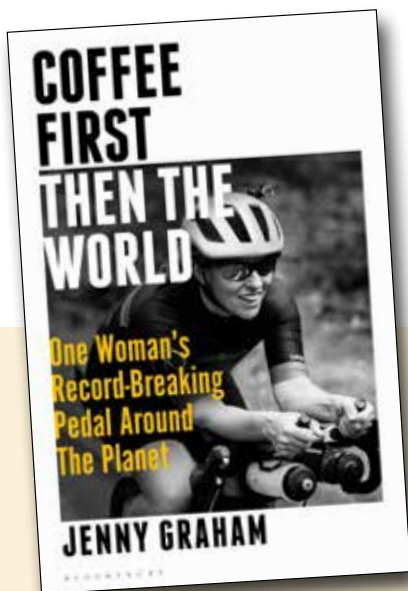
Jenny Graham came to long-distance cycling through an outdoor adventure training course she took that led her to discover the rising discipline of bikepacking and a powerful group committed to supporting and nurturing female endurance athletes known as the Adventure Syndicate. Fellow UK ultra-distance cyclists Emily Chappell, Julia Buhning, and Mark Beaumont

provided inspiration, guidance, and companionship to her along the way (*long-time AR readers may remember that books by the first two have been reviewed in these pages*). For someone who took on such an extraordinary self-supported individual challenge, relationships with friends, family, and even strangers seem to be very important to Graham and are featured prominently in this memoir. She is a great storyteller and, as you might imagine, her challenge generated more than a few zingers.

The Guinness World Record folks have established several essential rules to guide round-the-world record attempts. Riders must travel a minimum of 18,000 miles in one general direction without drafting, pass through two

antipodal points on the planet and through each line of longitude only once, and as in randonneuring – the clock never stops. Graham decides to start and end her journey in Berlin and covers long stretches of road in Russia, Mongolia, China, Australia, New Zealand, and North America before returning to Europe for the final leg from Portugal to Berlin. Guinness does not specify whether riders must be supported or unsupported, but for this challenge, Graham adopts a self-imposed rule around neutral support akin to what she's familiar with from earlier bikepacking adventures. She meets up with a few friends on the road and accepts a few remote tips from folks far afield but is cautious to manage and limit this contact so as not to invalidate her record attempt.

While this is not exactly a how-to book, Graham does provide many clues and tips for readers to employ on this or other adventures. She lists gear and



First Coffee Then the World

BY JENNY GRAHAM

Bloomsbury, 2023, 277 pages



—PHOTO JAMES ROBERTSON



—PHOTOS JENNY GRAHAM



other items she found helpful so that others may benefit from what she's learned. In addition to being materially helpful, this technique may have a more subtle impact on the reader. Unlike many adventure narratives, written from the "there's no way you could possibly do this amazing thing I just did" perspective, Graham seems to be implying just the opposite. True to her roots as an adventure leader, Jenny adopts an almost pedagogical tone that may just leave you feeling as if you're capable of more than you thought possible before reading the book. While the tales of dangerous Russian highways, endless Australian rainstorms, and abundant Alaskan grizzly bears may discourage you from completing this exact adventure, readers can apply these tips to accomplish goals a bit more modest and closer to home. As she reminds us, it helps to be "naïve enough to start, but stubborn enough to finish."

Jenny builds her written narrative around an audio journal she kept on her journey and includes brief transcriptions of selected segments in the book which adds a very interesting primary-source, "you-were-there"

feeling to the story. Many of these audio segments were broadcast while she was still out on the road and have also been edited into more formal podcasts such as the eight-part "Jenny Graham Round-The-World" podcast available on multiple platforms. She has also created a film of the adventure entitled "Eastbound" which may be streamed on GNC+. Graham's effusive good cheer and warm, evocative tone are a pleasure to experience in whichever medium you select.

As a personal aside, I took a break from writing this column last season as I was immersed in the mourning and organizational challenges that flowed from my mother's unfortunate death this spring. My mother was an inspiration to me and to countless others in myriad ways. As a young woman, she contracted polio which left her, an athletic teenager, without the use of her legs for the balance of her life. She never gave off the impression that she was bitter or felt sorry for herself, though, but rather adapted to meet the challenges ahead to live a very full and rewarding life. A writer, she was also the author of a monthly book review column throughout my

childhood that served as an inspiration to the one you're reading now. This one's for you, Mom.

I mention this not only to provide an explanation of where I've been and a context for why I found Jenny Graham's descriptions of family and specifically the role of her mother to be so touching, but also because Graham's entire epic journey reflects a "why not now?" mentality that aligns with the one I've found myself adopting more and more in the months following my own mother's death. We only live once, my friends, and there's no time like the present to think carefully and deliberately about the choices we make concerning how we spend our limited days on this planet. Jumping on a bike, pointing it east, and seeing if you can make it around the world faster than anyone else is just as good a way as any other. I suspect that randonneurs and non-cyclists alike will enjoy this special story as much I did. Buy a copy for yourself or someone on your holiday shopping list. You won't regret it. 🚲

How Many Times Can One Ride PBP?

BY DEIRDRE ARSCOTT AND JEAN-CLAUDE CHABIRAND

The long distances and non-competitive ethos of randonneuring often builds strong friendships among the riders. This past summer, two friends of mine set unique records for participation at the Paris-Brest-Paris and I asked them if I could share their stories with RUSA members. Jean-Claude Chabirand of France rode his first PBP in 1975 and Deirdre Arscott of Canada rode hers in 1987. Here is a brief look at what they accomplished. —*Bill Bryant, RUSA #7*

My Tenth Paris-Brest-Paris Randonneurs

Deirdre Arscott

British Columbia Randonneurs

My tenth Paris-Brest-Paris approached, and I was so lucky that Nigel Press, one of the fastest riders in our club, asked me to ride with him on his super-duper tandem. You've all heard the expression "teamwork makes the dream work." Well, riding tandem requires teamwork, and the team included our partners Bob LePage and

Cheryl Lynch who have had to put up with us being out training all the time during the last couple of years. Nigel had to use up most of his vacation to ride PBP, spending more time with me instead of his partner.

We are an unlikely combination. Nigel is like a high-powered machine. I call him the Ferrari engine, but on the back I'm more like "Thomas the Train," putt-putting away. There was excitement and trepidation in

Rambouillet as we crossed the start line but within an hour Nigel could not talk. Very suddenly he had a bad cold! Later his sinuses were filled. I don't know how he kept going. The Ferrari was not firing on all cylinders, but he was still putting out a huge amount of power. Nigel wanted to continue. He is a veteran of the rainy PBP in 2007 and not much will stop him.

The tandem caught people's attention. Titanium? Yes! Coupled? Yes! Fits in two suitcases? Yes! Timing belt instead of a chain. Nigel designed it with a bicycle version of AutoCAD and communicated with a factory in China to get the frame built. When we stopped, there was often a crowd of admirers around the bike. As we went through the villages the onlookers yelled "Tandem, Tandem! Bonne Route! Bon Courage!"

Obviously, I love PBP and it is the people of Normandy and Brittany who make this ride special. One evening, when his cold was really getting to him, Nigel suggested a quick nap on the roadside. There was no one in sight and we had barely laid down when a man came running up. Do you need blanket? A few minutes later he throws "the magic blanket" over us and sets his alarm to wake us up! Twenty minutes later we are on our way feeling totally refreshed!

I knew that I would probably have a little cry at the end of my final PBP, but I was taken aback when the tears

Deirdre and Nigel Press, her tandem captain for PBP 2023, her tenth.

—PHOTO COURTESY DEIRDRE ARSCOTT





started to flow about 250 km out! This would be my last time stopping at the crepe stand in La Tannière! At every edition of PBP since I started in 1987 Paul Rogue and his family have made crepes and coffee in their garage for the riders. In return, they ask for a postcard from the rider's hometown. I have seen them grow old... and I'm no longer that young woman for that

matter. The walls of the Rogue's garage are covered in postcards from the previous edition. My last time at PBP... my last time riding over the bridge where we placed some of Roger Street's ashes in the flower boxes. I also thought of each of the wonderful riding partners that I have had over the years. Also, the people of Normandy and Brittany who are proud that this event

has rolled through their regions since 1891. It brings out the best in them – my last time to experience their warmth and encouragement.

Yeah, we were quite the sight – Nigel sniffing on the front and me sniveling on the back! *Get it together!* I told myself. You're just wasting energy crying away. There were so many hills on this route, and we had headwinds in both directions, but it is the interactions with the people at PBP that stand out in my mind. We completed the ride in 77h39m. I was so happy to finish, and a little sad too. Thank you to all my friends, family, and clubmates for your encouragement and support over the years. It means a lot to me, and huge thanks to Bob, Nigel, and Cheryl!

My Thirteenth Paris-Brest-Paris Randonneurs

*Jean-Claude Charbirand
Randonneurs Cyclos de l'Anjou*

This 13th PBP went wonderfully well for me but at two times my participation seemed in doubt. I had an illness at the start of the year, and this affected my ability to train and do well on the qualifying brevets in spring. I overcame that and completed the Super Randonneur series successfully by June. Then in July came my DNF during a 1000 km brevet; at the



It's time for off-season training and good fueling remains as important as ever, indoors and out. Whether it's base miles in the snow or putting in time on the trainer, making sure you're properly fueled will keep you going all season.

Geluminati Endurance Drink Mix is a new fueling solution made by fellow Rando Andrew Adere (RUSA #13914). Unflavored and so light that it mixes clear, our drink mix packs 60 grams of carbs (240 calories) and 420mg of sodium into each bottle. We use **Cluster Dextrin™** – a unique complex carb – as our number one ingredient, which gives the mix its lightness and keeps it hypotonic so you'll stay hydrated for longer on less plain water.

Visit www.geluminati.com to order. Use discount code **RAND05** for \$5 off your order!

GELUMINATI

ENDURANCE DRINK MIX

Unflavored Hypotonic Cluster Dextrin™ Formula
240 cal per serving **60g carbs** **420g sodium**
fuel for flight



Jean-Claude with his wife Nicole, an eight-time ancienne herself, at the 2023 finish.

—PHOTO COURTESY JEAN-CLAUDE CHARBIRAND

947 km point I had problems with my night vision that caused me to stop. But thanks to the encouragement of my wife Nicole and son Olivier, and other friends, I regrouped, took careful account of my mistakes, especially on the 1000 km brevet, and rededicated myself to riding PBP.

I arrived in Rambouillet, ready for the big test. I had a support team of Nicole, Olivier, my nephew Eric, and

his wife Dominique to help me at the checkpoints. I also decided to ride as I liked, and not try to be part of a group. I wanted to ride “by sensation” and set the pace, or take rests, that was best for myself. My only goal was to finish while sleeping approximately four hours per night (except the first.) The time when I took 52 hours to do PBP in 1979 is long gone, but now, at age 76, to finish inside the 90-hour time limit would be just as satisfying.

And so, my PBP was uneventful and went quite well and I arrived inside the time limit. I never really suffered (a little in the buttocks, but almost no problems with feet or hands) and I was very relaxed throughout the ride. Having a support team allowed me to carry only a minimum of equipment on my bike, just enough for repairs and some basic necessities.

I met my goal of finishing in good condition and on time. Of course, I would be lying if I stated that holding the record of 13 finishes does not make me happy, but we all know that records are meant to be broken and that one day or another, this will indeed be the case for mine. Know that I don't take myself for a champion at all (as some have written); I'm just a guy who has always loved cycling long distances, and one who has been lucky not to have an accident or illness in the years of PBP, and one who benefited from a very favorable family environment. I have to say a huge thank-you to my wonderful support team (Nicole, Olivier, Éric, and Dominique) who put me in conditions ideal for making the 2023 project a reality. In the end, I was able to show that with motivation and good management of the different parameters, PBP is possible even for elderly cyclists, provided they do not want to break any speed records... . 🚴



Master the Art of Randonnée Cycling and Beyond!

For those passionate about long-distance cycling, the allure of randonnée is undeniable. It's not just about endurance; it's about the journey, the strategy, the camaraderie. At GPro Coaching, this passion is deeply understood, because I live it.

🚴 **About GPro Coaching:** Founded by Giovanni Prosperi, a professional ultracyclist with a deep connection to randonnée cycling. I bring firsthand knowledge of the intricacies, challenges, and rewards that this discipline offers.

🚴 **Personalized Training Plans:** Preparing for your inaugural 200km brevet, targeting a demanding 1200km challenge, or seeking to improve your times and stamina? I tailor the coaching to your unique goals.

🚴 **Bike Maintenance and Technical Guidance:** An optimized bike can make a world of difference in long rides. Benefit from my expertise as a seasoned bike mechanic to ensure your bike is ready for every challenge.

🚴 **Mental Fortitude and Strategy Coaching:** Randonnée is as much a mental game as it is physical. My programs emphasize building mental resilience, effective pacing strategies, and crafting efficient rest and nutrition plans for extended rides.

🌟 **Exclusive Discounts for RUSA Members:** To honor the dedicated community of randonneurs, I'm offering a **20% discount** on my monthly coaching fee and a **10% discount** on other packages (3 months, 6 months, 1 year) for all RUSA members. Dive deep into the heart of randonnée cycling. Understand the terrain, navigate challenges, and celebrate every milestone, no matter how big or small.

🌐 For more details, exclusive offers, and to begin your journey, visit <https://www.gprocoaching.com>



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RUSA Awards

For a list of requirements for each award, please see the RUSA website. Click on **Members** and then **Awards** on the drop down tab, where each award and the qualifying rides for it are listed.

Rando Scout Award

NAME (25-49 unique routes)	CITY, STATE	APPROVED
Brogan, Mark	San Jose, CA	9/27/23
Elias, Robert L	Shoreview, MN	10/18/23
Gasevski, Dragi	West Bloomfield, MI	9/4/23
Goldenberg, Benjamin	Sacramento, CA	10/28/23
Hsu, John	Plano, TX	10/10/23
Penegar, David W.	Knoxville, TN	10/16/23
Quandt, Andy	Lake Mills, WI	10/18/23
Quibol, Rolando M	San Lorenzo, CA	8/9/23
NAME (50-74 unique routes)	CITY, STATE	APPROVED
Auremma, Philip J	Newark, CA	8/11/23
DeMarco, Mimo	Arlington, VA	10/10/23
Levitt, Jonathan	Bronx, NY	10/9/23
Richards, Owen	Seattle, WA	10/22/23
Walker, David	Fremont, CA	10/20/23
NAME (75-99 unique routes)	CITY, STATE	APPROVED
Breud, Debbie (F)	Arlington, TX	8/12/23
Chin-Hong, Patrick	Amherst, MA	9/16/23
NAME (125-149 unique routes)	CITY, STATE	APPROVED
Akbarian, Hamid	Lanham, MD	9/12/23

R-12 Award

NAME	CITY, STATE	APPROVED
Robert Scott Anderson	Coto de Caza, CA	10/23/23
Nicole Aptekar (F)	Brooklyn, NY	10/25/23
William A Beck [17]	Woodbine, MD	8/1/23
Greg Cardell [3]	Valencia, CA	9/26/23
Wai-Yin Stephen Chan	Oakland, CA	9/5/23
Scott Dalessandro	Seattle, WA	10/9/23
Gary M DelNero [8]	Leawood, KS	10/9/23
Francis Aloysius DiCarlantonio	Crofton, MD	8/6/23
Norman Ehrentreich [7]	Shoreview, MN	10/9/23
Phil Fox II	Chicago, IL	10/2/23
Gregory K Goebel [4]	Cypress, CA	9/29/23
Kitty Goursole (F) [10]	San Ramon, CA	8/6/23
Steven D Haskins [3]	Hartselle, AL	10/8/23
Shaun Ivory	Woodinville, WA	8/2/23
Greg Janess	Berkeley, CA	9/10/23
Phillip Renker Jones	Clinton, WA	9/13/23
Rashid Khan	Boulder, CO	10/9/23
Aaron Milbank	Eagan, MN	9/24/23
Sandra G Myers (F) [2]	Diablo, CA	9/13/23
Eric Peterson [6]	Naperville, IL	9/9/23
Andreas Prandelli	Forked River, NJ	10/9/23
Paul G Shapiro [14]	Princeton Junction, NJ	9/25/23
Kevin J Smith [3]	Seattle, WA	10/15/23
Sharon Stevens (F) [15]	Richardson, TX	7/31/23
Bryson Strauss	Gulfport, FL	9/3/23
Noah Swartz	Oakland, CA	9/14/23
James C Taylor [6]	Cottage Grove, OR	8/10/23
Joseph H Todd [10]	Decatur, GA	9/2/23
Kevin J Williams [2]	Carmichael, CA	8/31/23
Elly Winer	Shaker Heights, OH	8/5/23
Pamela Wright (F) [17]	Fort Worth, TX	10/2/23

P-12 Award

NAME	CITY, STATE	APPROVED
Tom Atkins	Ravensdale, WA	10/10/23
Brenda Barnell (F)	Dallas, TX	8/20/23
Jon Batek	Batavia, IL	9/3/23
William A Beck [10]	Woodbine, MD	8/4/23
Matthew D Close [2]	Woodinville, WA	8/29/23
Kelly DeBoer [13]	Avery, TX	7/30/23
Francis Aloysius DiCarlantonio	Crofton, MD	9/10/23
Russell Dorobek [4]	Austin, TX	8/5/23
Peter W Dusel [3]	Ontario, NY	9/23/23
Kitty Goursolle (F) [7]	San Ramon, CA	8/2/23
Christine M Graham (F) [10]	Westerville, OH	10/13/23
Kyle A Greaves	Everett, WA	9/7/23
Mitch Ishihara [8]	Issaquah, WA	8/1/23
Lukas A Jeter	North Bend, WA	9/5/23
Gary Kanaby [7]	Salado, TX	8/8/23
Christopher Maglieri [2]	Weatogue, CT	8/2/23
Paul Murray [3]	Redmond, WA	8/21/23
John David Page	Overland Park, KS	10/29/23
Craig Plesco	Harrison Township, MI	10/1/23
Andreas Prandelli [2]	Forked River, NJ	10/15/23
W Thomas Reeder [10]	Alexandria, VA	8/10/23
Graham A Ross [2]	Portland, OR	10/18/23
Nancy Russell (F)	San Rafael, CA	9/7/23
Ron Selby [3]	Zionsville, IN	9/28/23
Paul G Shapiro [11]	Princeton Junction, NJ	9/25/23
Sarah Stolz (F) [5]	Seattle, WA	9/30/23
James Vajda [3]	Oxford, OH	9/11/23
Matt Vining [3]	San Gabriel, CA	10/7/23
Corinne Warren (F) [2]	Monument, CO	10/21/23

Attention Members

American Randonneur is mailed via third class mail to the address on file of all current members. It is important that you inform the membership office of any change of address, so that your magazine will reach you in a timely fashion.

Update your address online at:

rusa.org/cgi-bin/memberaddresschange_GF.pl

And, don't forget to renew your membership!

Memberships run from January through December.

Renew online at:

rusa.org/cgi-bin/memberrenew_GF.pl



RUSA Awards

RUSA American Explorer Award

NAME	CITY, STATE	TOTAL STATES	APPROVED
Anderson, Randy T	Peoria, IL	23	10/15/23
Birdsell, Carl L.	St Joseph, MO	17	9/16/23
Counts, Robert	Bethesda, MD	15	8/17/23
DeMarco, Mimo	Arlington, VA	14	10/11/23
Driscoll, Dan [1]	Arlington, TX	8	10/23/23
Fox II, Phil	Chicago, IL	17	10/13/23
Fraser, Malcolm R	Boulder, CO	31	9/23/23
Hazel, Geoffrey	Bellevue, WA	23	10/26/23
McAlister, Grant	Morro Bay, CA	10	10/28/23
Prandelli, Andreas	Forked River, NJ	10	10/19/23
Rice, Sarah E (F)	Chicago, IL	10	10/22/23
Rogers, Jefferson	Wilmette, IL	20	10/8/23
Shapiro, Paul G	Princeton Junction, NJ	22	9/25/23
Taylor, Scott A	Austin, TX	35	8/19/23
Wright, Pamela (F)	Fort Worth, TX	42	10/24/23

Mondial Award

NAME	CITY, STATE	APPROVED
Timothy Argo	Sharonville, OH	9/26/23
William A Beck [4]	Woodbine, MD	10/10/23
John Lee Ellis [5]	Lafayette, CO	9/17/23
Misha Marin Heller (F)	Alexandria, VA	10/11/23
Roger Hillas [2]	Washington, DC	8/11/23
Jim Howell	Niwot, CO	9/28/23
John J. Marino	Irvine, CA	10/24/23
Douglas McLerran	Aurora, IL	9/26/23

Ultra Randonneur Award

NAME	CITY, STATE	APPROVED
Dan Driscoll [9]	Arlington, TX	9/17/23

American Randonneur Challenge Award

NAME	CITY, STATE	APPROVED
Hamid Akbarian [3]	Lanham, MD	9/22/23
J Andrew Clayton [2]	Powell, OH	9/22/23
Holly Diop (F)	Everett, WA	9/22/23
Dan Driscoll [4]	Arlington, TX	9/22/23
Yonnel Gardes	Bellevue, WA	9/22/23
Christopher M Gross	Washington, DC	9/22/23
Misha Marin Heller (F) [3]	Alexandria, VA	9/22/23
Francis Lim [2]	Sydney, AUSTRALIA	9/22/23
Charlie A Martin [4]	Sunnyvale, CA	9/22/23
Thai Nguyen [4]	Bothell, WA	9/22/23
Ben Schauland	Seattle, WA	9/22/23
Vernon M Smith [4]	Monument, CO	9/22/23
Kristie I Summers (F)	York, SC	9/22/23
Mark Thomas [7]	Kirkland, WA	9/22/23
W David Thompson [7]	New Smyrna Beach, FL	9/22/23
Kirsten H Walker (F)	Tres Pinos, CA	9/22/23

New Jersey Randonneurs

wishes to acknowledge the 130 riders who finished the 130 riders who finished at least one event during our 2023 brevet season, including the 54 bold individuals who tested themselves at PBP in August.

Ian Adelman
Michael Adler
Ash Arwood
Craig Baitinger
Rachel Bandi
Darren Bartels
Andrey Belikov
Michael Belotz
Marcevir Bernardo
Ed Bernasky
Andy Brenner
Razvan Buciu
John Budnik
John Buten
Leonard Capone
Sean Cassidy
Steven Castellano
Janice Chernelkoff
Patrick Chin-Hong
Rebecca Clark
Mario Clausnitzer
David Coccagna
Andrew Crooks
John D'Elia
Bryan Dalik
Gary Davis

Tyler Dellow
J Thomas Dermody
Stephen Douglas
Richard Durica
Matthew Dvoroziak
Robert Dye
Dylan Eberle
Dawn Engstrom
Boris Epshteyn
Rodrigo Escobar Nunes
Cuneyt Eviner
Ben Ferber
Albert Fin
Brian Fitzsimmons
Patrick Fleming
Andrei Fluerasu
Mary Foley
Darren Garnier
Anne Gibson
Jakob Gollwitzer
Nigel Greene
Vadim Gritsus
Leon Hilfstein
Austin Horse
Greg Jacobs
Paul Kellner

Jacob Klink
Yevhenii Kovalenko
Paul Kramer
Matt Kruth
Steve Lavoie
Jacob Layer
Drew Lee
Richard Lentz
Jonathan Levitt
Cheng-Hong Li
Samuel Litton
Christopher Maglieri
Keith Maldonado
Spencer Malunow
Kate Marshall
Mike Mauel
Sarah Mellies
Lucas Merchant
Derek Minner
Greg Misicko
Gerry Montague
Kerry Moody
James Moore
Paul Morrone
Rajesh Nayak
Brendan Neary

Christine Newman
Eric Nichols
David Nichols
Kate Nicholson
Dustin Niles
Bob Olsen
Chuck Opperman
John Park
Gary Pastirik
Nova Patch
Eric Pedersen
Dale Perzanowski
Todd Peterson
Althea Pineda
Michael Povman
Andreas Prandelli
Dzmitry Radushkevich
Joseph Ray
Joshua Rea
Tom Reeder
Michael Riley
Tim Rodriguez
Gary Rollman
Robin Rootkin
Matt Roy
Bill Russell

Lisa Sallee
Paul Shapiro
Christopher Slocum
Steve Smith
Erik Snow
John Squires
Jeffrey Stanton
George Swain
Mark Swier
Bradford Tanner
Mariano Torras
Victor Urvantsev
Herve Valentin
Nicolaas van der Kloot
Mac Vergara
Jim Vreeland
Kalten Walter
Nathaniel Watson
Christopher Wey
Brent Whitson
Carolina Whitson
Matthew Willet
Oitak Wong
Nao Yamada
Leonard Zawodniak
Oliver Zong



▶ A NY-M-NY Interested Rider sign-up list will be open from December 1 to 31, from which 50 riders will be drawn in January. Visit NJRandonneurs.org for a complete NJR 2024 Brevet Schedule plus more information about next year's NY-M-NY 1200K September 5 thru 8



RUSA Cup Award

NAME	CITY, STATE	APPROVED
John D'Elia	Middletown, CT	10/12/23
Mimo DeMarco [2]	Arlington, VA	10/11/23
Dan Driscoll [15]	Arlington, TX	10/10/23
Rashid Khan	Boulder, CO	8/28/23
Charlie A Martin [5]	Sunnyvale, CA	7/31/23
Jennifer Moore (F)	Boulder, CO	8/28/23
Jay Nadeau (F) [2]	Altadena, CA	8/4/23
Christopher Ngo [2]	Fresno, CA	10/7/23
Kiel M Safstrom	Bothell, WA	9/21/23
Mark Thomas [11]	Kirkland, WA	10/16/23
Pamela Wright (F) [7]	Fort Worth, TX	10/11/23

RUSA Coast-to-Coast Award

NAME	CITY, STATE	APPROVED
Pascal Ledru	Denver, CO	10/20/23
Eric Peterson	Naperville, IL	10/14/23

Galaxy Award

NAME	CITY, STATE	APPROVED
John Lee Ellis [2]	Lafayette, CO	9/17/23
Christopher Maglieri	Weatogue, CT	10/10/23

RUSA Awards

Ultra Flèche Award

NAME	CITY, STATE	APPROVED
Chip Adams	Severna Park, MD	9/18/23
Keith L Beato	Alameda, CA	9/18/23
Ward Beebe	Oak Harbor, WA	9/18/23
Rick Blacker	Olympia, WA	9/18/23
Crista Borrás (F)	Rockville, MD	9/18/23
Nicholas Bull	Arlington, VA	9/18/23
David Buzzee	Columbus, OH	9/18/23
Dan Driscoll	Arlington, TX	9/18/23
Peter W Dusel	Ontario, NY	9/26/23
John Lee Ellis	Lafayette, CO	9/18/23
Dawn M Engstrom (F)	Philadelphia, PA	9/18/23
William Fischer	Elmira, NY	9/18/23
Guy Harris	Belington, WV	9/18/23
Rob Hawks	Richmond, CA	9/18/23
Charles A Jonas	San Francisco, CA	9/18/23
Hugh Kimball	Seattle, WA	9/18/23
Spencer Klaassen	Saint Joseph, MO	9/18/23
Lynn Kristianson (F)	Arlington, VA	9/18/23
Joel Lawrence	Round Rock, TX	9/18/23
Chris Mento	Glen Burnie, MD	9/18/23
Wayne W Methner	Lake Forest Park, WA	9/18/23
Christine Newman (F)	Skillman, NJ	9/18/23
Emily O'Brien (F)	Medford, MA	9/18/23
Daniel Oldale	Arnold, MD	9/18/23
William M Olsen	Califon, NJ	9/18/23
Jerry L Phelps	Fish Creek, WI	9/18/23
Ian Shopland	Olympia, WA	9/18/23
Kelly Smith	Fairfax, VA	9/18/23
Mark Thomas	Kirkland, WA	9/18/23
Corey Thompson	Olympia, WA	9/18/23
Charles Wood	Rockville, MD	9/18/23

RUSA Rouler Award

NAME	CITY, STATE	APPROVED
Jan Acuff (F) [2]	Seattle, WA	10/22/23
Debbie Breaud (F) [2]	Arlington, TX	8/12/23
Randy Carey [2]	Shoreview, MN	10/11/23
Gary Cruce	Seattle, WA	8/3/23
Norman Ehrentreich [2]	Shoreview, MN	10/22/23
Dragi Gasevski	West Bloomfield, MI	9/4/23
Ulf Georg Gwildis	Kirkland, WA	8/3/23
Christopher Heg [2]	Seattle, WA	10/29/23
Mitch Ishihara [2]	Issaquah, WA	8/20/23
Betty Jean Jordan (F)	Monticello, GA	10/15/23
Douglas McLerran [2]	Aurora, IL	10/17/23
Eric Peterson	Naperville, IL	10/28/23
Martin Shipp [2]	Raleigh, NC	8/6/23
Gregory H Smith [2]	Richland Center, WI	10/28/23
Douglas A Whitfield [2]	St. Paul, MN	10/22/23
Pamela Wright (F) [3]	Fort Worth, TX	9/30/23
Howard S Young [2]	Kirkland, WA	8/3/23

Ultra R-12 Award

NAME	CITY, STATE	APPROVED
Joseph H Todd	Decatur, GA	9/2/23

Ultra P-12 Award

NAME	CITY, STATE	APPROVED
William A Beck	Woodbine, MD	8/4/23
Christine M Graham (F)	Westerville, OH	10/13/23
Ross Gridley	Pickerington, OH	9/18/23
W Thomas Reeder	Alexandria, VA	8/10/23

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