

AMERICAN RANDONNEUR



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The visit to Dr. Vince's practice was very exciting for me. His holistic inputs, explanations and advice were very helpful for me. For example, we checked the foot position on the pedals. Adjusting the rotation of the lower leg and more activity with the tibialis anterior muscle already resulted in more watts at the same RPM. At the RAAM 2023 I implemented them directly and managed a successful performance. In addition to all these tips, the top adjusted infinity bike seats also helped me. I use 3 different models. All from the Elite Series, the E3 for the flat with my TT bike, the E2 with my all-round bike and the E2X with my mountain bike. Thanks to the Infinity Seats I had the right points relieved in every position and was able to concentrate fully on my race.

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AMERICAN RANDONNEUR

Editor: Corinne Warren

Copy Editors: Ed Felker, Mary Gersema,
Roger Hillas, Betty Jean Jordan

Data Collection: Eric White

Design: Mary Humphrey

Advertising: Dan Driscoll

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Submissions: editor@rusa.org

Advertising: dandriscoll1@me.com

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president@rusa.org

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COVER — Yonnel Gardes riding
Colorado High Country last June.

PHOTO BEN SCHAULAND

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President's Message

We've, collectively, been busy! Are you interested in some statistics?

Together we've ridden 1,653,758 kilometers through mid-year 2024, in all kinds of weather, well over 1 million miles! That doesn't even count the kilometers ridden by members "off the books," so to speak, on non-RUSA rides.

Broken down by month this is interesting. In the table below, a ride completed in 10 hours is one rider-day; completed in 26 hours is two rider-days, etc. You can see how the events ramp up as the weather gets better.

We've also ridden a lot of gravel. Early this year we started counting kilometers of gravel for Permanents, adding to our ongoing accumulation for Events. It will be interesting to see how that trends in future years.

Stay tuned for climbing numbers! The Web Team is working on the mechanics for accumulating climbing numbers. Unlike gravel kilometers, which can be counted, devices will report different climbing numbers on the same route on different days. RidewithGPS is our best reference but it isn't always correct, as we are finding out.

As you know, volunteers keep RUSA going. We organize ourselves into Committees, with many members contributing to more than one. You'll

find the members listed on the RUSA website under Officials and Volunteers (some of these are individuals, vs committees) – The Board, RBA Liaison, Brevet Coordinator, Incident Liaison, SR600 Liaison, Insurance, Magazine, E-Newsletter, Awards and Store, Awards Review, Membership, Permanents Program, Permanents Audit, Rules, Team Events, Web Site, Audax Events, Gravel, Financial Audit, Marketing and SR600 Permanent Administrator. Add to that all the Regional Brevet Administrators and their volunteers and you literally have hundreds of volunteers keeping the lights on. :)

If you haven't considered it before, join in the fun as a volunteer.

In addition to day-to-day work, our various committees have been busy with projects.

The Web Team is always active, the only one of our committees that holds weekly meetings. Almost every Monday at 8 p.m. Eastern time, you will find them on a Zoom call. Thank you to Don Bennett, Osvaldo Colavin, John Lee Ellis, Paul Lieberman, Charlie Martin, Linda Springsteen, Lois Springsteen, Man-Fai Tam, and Kevin Williams.

The Rules Committee is another that I have to commend because in 2024

they have undertaken an end-to-end review of our rules and procedures. It's long overdue and with the changes introduced by ACP (e.g. not enforcing intermediate control times), and technology (e.g. the electronic proof of passage option), it was time for a complete review. Bill Bryant and John Lee Ellis have spearheaded the rules review and updates but the entire team is involved in the work – a big thanks to Bill Bryant, Daniel Diehn, John Lee Ellis, Susan Otcenas, and Tim Sullivan.

Adapting our technology and rules to present times is important. Just as important is reviewing the data that we store and share, in particular our collection, reporting and sharing of gender data and other personal information. We need to be more inclusive and we need to re-think the privacy of data on our website. We are reviewing that now. By the time this edition of American Randonneur is in the mail, we may have more to share, so stay tuned!

Some of the privacy initiatives depend on you. We'll need to put some of our data behind a member sign-on. Members riding Permanents since 2020 have had to sign-on to our website to register for rides. Expect that sign-on requirement to encompass more information in the future.

One last shout out – July 2024 marked the 3 year anniversary of our E-Newsletter. Between Controls is Dawn Piech's initiative. I can't imagine a RUSA life without it. Please join with me in thanking Dawn for her brainchild. It's a huge commitment of her time and energy.

—Dave Thompson
RUSA President
president@rusa.org

Month	Event rider-days	Permanents rider-days	Kilometers
January	531	1,422	170,653
February	671	822	206,054
March	1,050	755	329,985
April	1,013	707	318,849
May	1,046	797	396,501
June	1,102	845	402,369
TOTAL	5,413	5,348	1,824,411

About to climb the highest paved road
in the state with my home club.

—PHOTO JASON KAMINSKI

From the Editor

As I sit down to write this letter to you, it is pouring rain outside, and what a welcome rain it is. This month has given us the highest temperatures on the Palmer Divide in Colorado's Front Range that I have seen in my 24 years of living here at 7,500'. The pine trees are stressed; thousands of pine cones litter the yard in unprecedented abundance. Even my xeric plants are withered and others are actually sun-burned. And our normally vibrant lot of native grasses is looking brown and crispy. Times are changing and I have to change how I care for this bit of land I have custodianship of.

What is also changing with time is my body and my abilities on the bike. To put it plainly, I am getting older and I am not getting better. I just finished a new 360k brevet this past weekend, a ride I have been lobbying hard for. One that showcases the most beautiful parts of Colorado down in the San Juan Mountains, and includes plenty of long, mid-grade climbs over high mountain passes, the kind of climbs I love. Seven years ago, with a little grit and a lot of luck, I set the women's record on this course, part of the Colorado Triple Crown. This past weekend, then, was a bit of a shock, as I rode the same route almost five hours slower than last time.

What was wrong? Well, both everything and nothing. Yes, it was cold at times – it's often cold at 10,000' at 4 a.m. in the morning – and yes it was hot – I was lucky it was only 98 degrees in Durango. Yes, my feet hurt – I have lost the fat on the soles of my feet, my physical therapist told me last visit. My



hands hurt a little and my butt did, too, but none of these small issues stood out as being overwhelming. I was just slow, probably a consequence of time.

Once I finished the ride (54 minutes to spare with a 21 hour time limit) I sent several texts. I backed out of a brevet, canceled a bike packing trip, and told a friend I might bail on a ride with him in the fall. I wanted to cancel these things before I changed my mind, before randonesia set in. I no longer felt myself capable of delivering on promises I had made – to other riders or to myself.

Then, as I was working on this issue, I read George Swain's review of *Other Ways to Win*. And about his struggles recovering from back surgery. I started to have doubts about the rashness of my texts. This compelled me to reread Colin Allen's rumination on his DNF from High Country, which started me thinking: what do I want out of riding, now that I am no longer at the top of my game? I have to admit that I thought about Tibor Tamas' article on being the lanterne rouge and his unflagging enthusiasm plenty of times during last weekend's long ride. That's something I don't share at the moment, because my relationship to cycling is undergoing change.

So while I am not sure what I want from cycling going forward, I keep

coming back to this idea: everyone must go through this sooner or later. In fact, I'd wager this is completely normal. You eat right, cross train, put in the work, but still you begin to slow down, your muscles just not able to deliver the power they once could. I have to learn to adjust my expectations, both in my garden and on the bike.

I realize not everyone reading this can relate. Yet. For you, the joy of improvement is still to come. Relish it. This ascendance perhaps provides an opportunity for those of us on the descent to meet in the middle, cross-pollinating enthusiasm on one side with experience on the other. And that may also reflect the direction that RUSA is moving in . . . invigorated with ideas from our newest members while under the guidance of riders who have been around a while.

I feel a little uncomfortable talking about this, but that is where my head was last summer. Trying to determine what I value in cycling when PR's are in the past, and the people I enjoyed riding with pull ahead. I have yet to figure this out, but maybe acknowledging my struggles might help someone else going through the same thing.

—Corinne Warren
Editor, *American Randonneur*
editor@rusa.org

Colorado High Country: Volunteer Thoughts

COMPILED BY JOHN LEE ELLIS

At the start of every Grand Randonnée, all organizers dream that the weather will be perfect and everyone will finish. While that is the hope, reality rarely goes the way we wish. We had a great group of 27 riders and a good finishing rate of 83% on this year's High Country. But the sunny and dry weather originally forecast held only in the mornings. A shower the first evening, a series of blustery and windy storms featuring hail the second and third afternoons, and a brief welcome-home shower at the finish line were what riders actually had to contend with. In other words, the weather was entirely typical for the Rocky Mountains in summertime. Everyone showed grit and perseverance in getting through, however, and for two riders in particular – Matt Bell and Bill Watts – the second time was the charm as they came back from DNFs in 2021 to finish successfully. Hats off to all the participants and to our wonderful volunteers, who shared their thoughts here. — *John Lee Ellis*

hours. This year as we were discussing the event on our long drive home, my husband said, "I wish you'd had some ice on Gore Pass." I said, "I did have ice on Gore Pass. You didn't ask for it." This conversation evolved into the suggestion of having a poster board list blue-taped to the vehicle with all the items available to the cyclists. I enjoyed my time exploring new vistas while supporting the randonneurs.

Beverly Weigel ("Across the Snowy Range") — What a great group of riders! Day 2 featured a little over 200 miles, 10,000' of elevation gain, heat, strong winds, rain, hail, and a road construction delay, yet the riders were so appreciative that they didn't have to fix dinner and were excited about a burrito. They talked about how beautiful the Snowy Range is, geeked out about their equipment, and discussed the dead moose they saw on the side of the road. It was fun to see how much they enjoyed being in each other's company and sharing this adventure that few riders can accomplish.

Beth Long (half of the team with Brent) - The Joy of Paying It Forward! — On June 23rd Brent and I, along with Pam Wright, John Lee, Pat, Beverly, and Kyrsten, all gathered in Walden, Colorado to be the support crew for the High Country 1200. Some may wonder why we would do such a thing. The answer is simple. We wanted to pay it forward.

Brent and I have had many volunteers help us in our careers of distance riding. I am sure the same is true for Pam and John. Beverly, Kyrsten, and



Brent Myers and Beverly Weigel at the overnight control in Walden.

—PHOTO BETH LONG

Kyrsten Bell — I have twice traveled from Idaho to volunteer for the Colorado High Country 1200k. DNF was the result three years ago when altitude and other factors ended my husband's participation one day early. This year he finished. I am a cyclist but not at the level of randonneurs. I found volunteering required some "out-of-the-box" thinking. I ran out of water in a very lightly populated area and started knocking on well-spaced doors until I found someone who was willing to refill our container. In 2021 I was at Gore Pass Summit (10,009 feet) during a heavy rain storm. Riders were coming up the pass so cold they couldn't get off their bikes. I started the engine, and my vehicle became a seven-passenger warming station for the next couple of



Pat have seen the support their loved ones have gotten and wanted to give back also.

The riders varied from excited newcomers like Conner [O'Brian] to an experienced RBA, Bill [Watts, from Indiana]. Their abilities and approaches to the ride were also widespread. A group of riders from Seattle stuck together and had a group mentality. They helped each other through the tough weather and the tough road conditions. The solo riders made their way with concentration and intestinal fortitude.

Pam and Kyrsten were the "Road Rangers." They helped the riders at the difficult points in the ride each day and offered them smiling faces, encouragement, and nutrition.

The rest of us provided breakfast, dinner, and snacks at the "home base" in Walden. It was our job to make sure we were awake, alert, and happy no matter when the riders came in or left.

With the variety of start and finishing times, we split our resources, with Brent, John Lee, Pat, and me doing breakfast and early dinners and Beverly valiantly staying up until the last rider was in.

I do believe we served the riders well and fed them, both their bodies and their spirits. We made sure everyone was well cared for and tried to make their experience as pleasant as possible, considering it was a 1200k.

The beauty of Snowy Pass was unexpected and delightful.

—PHOTO BEN SCHAULAND

We had fun as a group, got to know each other well, and were almost as tired as those doing the ride.

This is a case of the "joy of paying it forward." You should try it...it's a blast!!! 🚲

John Lee Ellis and Pam Wright squeezing in a 100k in North Park between volunteer shifts.

—PHOTO JOHN LEE ELLIS



High Country Ride Report

BY BEN SCHAULAND

Yonnel Gardes and I did our first brevet in Colorado last year at the Front Range 1200k. Our first experience had the extra challenge of elevation and the heat that is Boulder in late June. Each morning we had a nice climb into the foothills of the Rockies along canyon rivers — the highlight of each day. We heard about the High Country 1200k offering that and much more, so we decided then and there we'd be coming back for it this summer.

We both came a couple of days early this time to try to get a bit more acclimated to the altitude than we did before the start of the previous year's 1200k. This seemed to help very little, but still, it was nice to get a couple rides in before the all-day pedaling began.

We started day 1 at 5 a.m., or 4:57 to be exact. The group quickly took off and immediately stretched out, which isn't something I've seen much of on brevets, especially the first day of a 1200k. Yonnel and I like to be with the front of the group, so we quickly took off after these two sprinters who were pushing the pace way beyond what we had planned for. It took us a good 30 minutes to get with the front rider, who turns out was training for another ultra event, hence why he wasn't trying to ride with the group at the start.

Yonnel and I stuck with him, which may have been a mistake as temps quickly reached the 90's, and we were averaging over 20 mph.

During our long climb up Poudre Canyon, Yonnel and I got separated. We normally stick together on these rides,

but since he was adamant I continue without him, I went on with the small group at the front. It was hot, and we were not acclimated to the heat or the elevation. Even so, I pushed on ahead at my own pace over the rest of the climb, which took over two hours but gifted us with beautiful views and cooler temps towards the summit. After cresting the summit at Cameron Pass, we had a spectacular descent of about 2,000 feet into a slightly downhill stretch of headwinds to the finish in Walden, our home base for the next three nights. We immediately had a flash thunderstorm, which was a wake-up call to the weather we'd be dealing with in the mountains and the regret that I didn't pack a rain jacket.

Lucky to find this mailbox for shelter; Yonnel hid inside!

—PHOTO BEN SCHAULAND





Yonnel and I set out on Day 2 again at 5 a.m. with the plan to stay together this time. We paced ourselves at the start with a tandem from Salt Lake City as our engine for the first 75k. Then we reached our big climb for the day up and over Snowy Pass. It was evident to me that again Yonnel wanted me to go ahead at my own pace, so I tackled the climb solo and took in the views at the top with surprise and amazement. I had no idea we were going to be cresting such beautiful mountains, probably the highlight of the trip for me.

The descent was another story. Road construction brought traffic down to one lane, so cars had to queue up to be led down by follow trucks. The flaggers running the show told me to go ahead of the cars. I was a bit confused with the whole situation but went ahead as they told me, quickly accelerating to 50+ mph and taking in this amazing descent with sweeping views from the mountaintop. All of a sudden, two trucks were coming directly at me. There was a bit of a shoulder, so I hit the brakes a bit and jumped over. The

trucks gave me as much room as they could, but it was still a very close call. I assumed these were the follow trucks headed up to lead down the group of cars behind me, so I carried on descending, enjoying the straightaway bombs and hugging long curves on the hillsides.

It wasn't another five minutes or so when a huge line of traffic appeared in front of me, charging up the road, this time with big, oversized loaded trucks and on a long corner. I jumped into the shoulder again, but the traffic didn't give me much room this time. I literally froze and tried to slow down as much as I could, looking off the shoulder into the rocky hillside for a place to bail if needed. The couple dozen vehicles didn't even seem to acknowledge my situation, flying by me almost hugging the shoulder I was trapped on. I managed to stay on the bike and not get clipped, but that was a close call. I had trouble getting back up to speed for the remainder of the descent, but once I made it down, I gave an earful to the flagger at the other end: "People could

Hiding out in Cowdry waiting for the storm to pass.

—PHOTO BEN SCHAU LAND

die up there! Tell them not to send cyclists into oncoming traffic!" He seemed to begrudgingly get the message.

The rest of the day was a solo slog back to Walden through a couple of thunderstorms along the way. With about 9 miles to go, I was getting blown off the bike but luckily managed to find some shelter in a post office, the only thing in the small town of Cowdrey. After about 20 minutes or so, the storm passed, and I was able to close out the day. Emergency crews were out in downtown Walden, cleaning up some massive fallen trees. That was quite the storm!

Day 3 was the day that Yonnel and I actually stuck together. There were three main climbs with plenty of services along the way. It was the day with the most distance and elevation gain for the entire brevet, which is usually the first day of a 1200 —



Yonnel and I finished together.

—PHOTO PASCAL LEDRU

Once the storm passed, we continued along and enjoyed the canyon leading into Hot Sulphur Springs. We stopped there quickly, just to top off, as this would be the last water stop of the day before we pushed on towards our final big climb up Willow Creek Pass. A long, false flat followed the first kick up the pass, and the 2021 Troublesome Wildfire devastation offered little to no shade. It was still an enjoyable climb, though, and once we got up to the last few miles where the grade picked up, we reached a treed area once again, which gave us some shade for the remaining slow grind.

As we started the long descent into Walden, we could see a storm on the horizon. We still had 30 miles to go, and the headwinds were picking up. Again the flies were attacking, even while we pedaled hard into headwinds. With about 12 miles to go, we found ourselves in unrideable cross winds, and the rain began. We came across a ranch gate that had a small mailbox-type shed near the road and propped ourselves behind it, which offered a surprisingly good shelter even though we didn't have covering over the top of us. The wind was so strong

another challenge that the High Country presented. We took a breakfast stop in Steamboat Springs after our first climb of the day and linked back up with our buddy Matt Kreger, who we had started off with that morning. The headwind picked up, and we pushed on to our next stop at Yampa, making it quick as we still had two big climbs to go and weren't even half way through the day yet.

Yonnel pushed the pace up the climbs as usual, and we relished a long descent from Gore Pass down into Kremmling, our third stop of the day. Yonnel enjoyed some pizza, and I found a bag of jerky and a bottle of Coke to be the ticket. Tom Lewis, also from Seattle, joined us, and we snacked outside while the mosquitoes did their thing. At this point I should have figured out that the bugs usually come out right before the rain starts, but I completely missed the signal.

Yonnel started off before me, and by the time I got going, the storm had arrived. I caught up with Yonnel just as he was pulling his bike off the road to hide under some sparse trees. I noticed the bridge nearby looked to offer some shelter, so we switched gears and crawled under it just before the real downpour began. It was a bit cramped, but it was nice not to be getting drenched.



A bridge provided shelter from yet another storm.

—PHOTO BEN SCHAULAND

that the rain just blew over us. We enjoyed the cramped position as much as we could and took videos of the lightning surrounding us. At one point Yonnel crawled into the lower shelf of this shed for some added warmth, but I couldn't fit in the upper shelf so stayed huddled outside.

After the majority of the weather passed, we were greeted by sunlight pushing through the remaining mist, and we had a good laugh at our sheltering situation as Yonnel crawled out of the mailbox. We were delighted to see Tom flying by and quickly jumped back on our bikes to join him. While we were catching up to him, I turned back to see the most magnificent rainbow I've ever seen with Yonnel riding directly underneath it. This quickly turned into a photo shoot, and all of a sudden another rainbow appeared on top of it! Yonnel hammering on a glistening mountain highway underneath a double rainbow: it was a moment I'll never forget.

We finally caught up to Tom, and the three of us pushed the last few miles into Walden together, which was great since we had been leapfrogging each other all day. Unfortunately for Tom, he didn't have a mailbox to hide in, so he had ridden through the entire storm and was freezing from being soaking wet. He upped the pace to stay warm, and we flew into Walden going about 30 mph, which is always a fun pace to hold after a 200+ mile day with over 11,000' of climbing. We all enjoyed a big meal and went straight to bed after that.

The final day was mostly downhill back to Boulder with an early morning climb up and over Cameron Pass, the same way we had come on Day 1. We took the opportunity of the shorter day to sleep in a bit and set off around 6 a.m. After a couple of hours to the summit, we were greeted by some unexpected headwinds coming up the canyon. They didn't slow us down too much, though, as the grade kept us

moving swiftly down from the summit.

We stopped in Rustic for a big feast of a breakfast and were joined by about six others by the time we set off again. Yonnel and I pace-lined the remainder of the canyon descent, pulling 2-3 miles each before alternating. We reached the Front Range by about noon, which left us with just 60 flattish miles to go. The temps would prove to be hotter down here, so we took a couple breaks along the way. However, we held a steady pace and arrived just before 4 p.m., which was the target we had set that morning. Yonnel and I had another 1200k in the books!

A huge thank you to all the volunteers who came together to plan, support, and make this event happen. It was such a gift to start and finish each day with amazing home-cooked meals and smiling faces eager to share and hear stories. I hope to be able to do it all again at the next Colorado High Country. 🚲

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SCAN ME!

Growing from the Lows of High Country

BY COLIN ALLEN

It's easy for us to talk about our successes, the times when our preparation was adequate, when our confidence was brimming, when the wind was at our back and things went our way. What follows was not one of those times. This is a story about failure.

I have a complicated relationship with sports. At the faintest whiff of success, it's easy for me to take a sport way too seriously. Over time, I tend to obsess over arbitrary performance metrics and constant improvement, losing sight of the reasons I was drawn to the sport in the first place.

Growing up, I played golf competitively and saw some success. I had

aspirations of playing in college and hopefully making a career out of it. But as my talent grew, so too did the self-imposed pressure to perform. Each good round I played solidified the standard to which I held myself, each bad round was proof that I wasn't working hard enough.

My relationship with golf didn't start that way though. A love of the

game runs deep in my family. When I first picked up a golf club, I didn't dream of winning tournaments, it was a way to bond with my family, my dad and grandpa especially.

In the past 15 years, you could count the number of times I've set foot on a golf course on one hand. A part of me thinks that's a shame. How could something that was such a huge part of my life now be relegated to memories? People can grow out of hobbies, of course, but that's not what I did. I drove golf out of my life due to unchecked ambition and a lack of emotional maturity and mindfulness.

Cycling didn't enter my life until later. I rode a bike around my neighborhood as a kid, and I rode a bit in college as a way of getting around, but it wasn't until my mid-twenties that I would find a passion for cycling. It started as a way of losing weight and getting healthier, but what struck me immediately was the intoxicating sense of freedom and adventure I had upon my bicycle. I could go anywhere I wanted, and the only things stopping me were my legs and my will.

My interest in randonneuring came later still. After a few years of being pulled towards performance-focused road and gravel riding and racing, I was jaded, tired of clique-y and sometimes elitist social culture that made me more inclined to ride alone. With my history of taking sports too seriously, I was

In one of my good moments.

—PHOTOS COLIN ALLEN



Cameron Pass is high, but it's not the only 10,000 foot pass on the ride.

vigilant to avoid environments – and people – that fed into that tendency.

In contrast, at my first brevet, I appreciated how welcoming everybody was. Riders went out of their way to introduce me to other riders, to learn about my cycling history, and to recommend other rides and events to me. The inclusiveness was immensely refreshing, and so too was the diversity of the riders themselves. Some were there to go fast and challenge themselves physically, others were there simply to enjoy a day on the bike in the company of others. I finished that first brevet with this thought: “I think I’ve found my people.”

The Colorado High Country 1200k was to be the crowning achievement of my 2024 season, as well as my first grand randonée. The route begins and ends in Louisville, taking riders over the Rocky Mountains of Northern Colorado, into the high valley of North Park. The town of Walden serves as the launching point for two successive loops, the first going north through the Snowy Range of Wyoming, the second going southwest into Steamboat and the northernmost part of Middle Park. Finally, riders head back over the Rockies, returning to where they began several days earlier.

The recommended stages break the ride into four days with Walden being the overnight checkpoint, but I, ever the overachiever, formed a plan to tackle the route in three days. The first day would take me to Saratoga, Wyoming,



a distance of 255 miles (410k); Day 2 would end in Kremmling, Colorado after 264 miles (424k), leaving “just” 225 miles (362k) for the return to Louisville on Day 3, all while slowly accumulating approximately 36,000 feet (11,000 meters) of elevation gain, the majority coming in the first two days.

Why approach my first 1200k this way, foregoing the convenience of a consistent place to sleep and the company of my fellow riders? Following the four-day schedule would make Stage 1 the second shortest, and I was inclined to get more distance under my belt on that first day. The next logical overnight stopping point beyond Walden is Saratoga at around the 400 km point, situated relatively low in altitude and shortly before the long climb up the Snowy Range. My brain gravitated to the symmetry of a 400/400/400 breakdown of the course, with Kremmling serving as my overnight on Day 2, also well-positioned between two of the

route’s more noteworthy climbs. It seemed as though it was meant to be.

If I could summarize the first day of riding in one word it would be “anxious.” Conscious of the pace I needed to maintain to adhere to my schedule, that anxiety tainted my every decision. At the start, I agonized over whether I should stick with my fellow riders, or tear off on my own. I opted, regrettably, for the latter. At our first checkpoint in Platteville, where I should’ve indulged in a more substantial breakfast, I sped out of town as quickly as possible, as if five extra minutes would’ve derailed the entire day. Later, despite seeing riders stopped at a convenience store that I could’ve joined up with, I rode right past, only to get caught and dropped anyway.

This pattern continued all day. My obsession with pace blinded me to the poor decisions that were unknowingly contributing to my downfall. Milestones that should’ve been marked with a sense of accomplishment and pride, like finally reaching the summit of Cameron Pass, came and went with little appreciation, my mind immediately looking ahead to the next significant waypoint.

Mother Nature even tried to intervene to show me the error of my ways. As I was about to leave Walden

My obsession with pace blinded me to the poor decisions that were unknowingly contributing to my downfall.



The Poudre River runs the length of the 58 mile climb.

for the final stretch to Saratoga, thunder rumbled overhead, delaying me by over an hour. At the time, I was annoyed, aware that every minute spent stuck in Walden was another minute I wouldn't be sleeping in Saratoga. But, that extra hour to rest, eat, and hydrate led to perhaps the most pleasant 100k of the entire journey, a fact that was lost on me in the moment.

I rolled into Saratoga a little after 9 p.m. After an exceptionally underwhelming dinner of assorted convenience store snack foods, I cleaned myself up and wound down for the night. Before drifting off to sleep, I

remember feeling vexed that it had taken nearly two hours from arriving at my hotel to my head hitting a pillow. Even sleeping was polluted by my preoccupation with pace.

My alarm chirped me awake at 4:00 a.m. and I was on the road again shortly after 4:30 a.m. I was pleasantly surprised to find that my first gentle pedal strokes weren't as painful as I feared they might be. I didn't feel especially powerful, but I was at least moving.

The climb up Snowy Range was stunning, but it revealed the true extent of my exhaustion. My legs were

heavy, my heart rate pitiful, and my motivation waning. The view from atop the climb boosted my morale slightly, and I allowed myself a few minutes to stop and enjoy a snack before bombing downhill toward Centennial.

A tailwind quickened the monotonous stretch between Centennial and Laramie, but during that time, all I could think about was the impending turn back toward Walden, at which point the friendly tailwind would turn hostile. I also couldn't help but notice my progress for the day: four hours and barely 50 miles ridden. I stressed about how much further I had yet to ride to reach Kremmling.

The return to Walden from Laramie is where the wheels fell off.

Laramie to Woods Landing is a 20-mile false-flat, and with the wind, I struggled to maintain any momentum. I spiraled into frustration, watching my pace continue to slip. I tried to eat, but was utterly disgusted by the assortment of snacks I had left. I put in earbuds – something I only do in dire circumstances – but found little distraction from my rapidly deteriorating emotional state.

From Woods Landing begins the next substantial climb on the route, brief in comparison to Snowy Range, but the absolute last obstacle I wanted at that moment. I gave up hope that I could maintain any semblance of speed, resigning myself to a painfully slow ascent. I stopped frequently, not to catch my breath, per say, but to get momentary relief from pedaling. And what was my reward for finally finishing this climb? Rain and hail.

The final stretch to Walden is technically downhill, but peppered with rolling hills that I, again, was not emotionally equipped to cope with. I remember acknowledging the beauty of the scenery around me, and being

totally unmoved by it. With around 10 miles remaining to Walden, I stopped at the side of the road to just... think. What am I doing? Is this the experience I wanted to have? What is the value of continuing like this? I think I knew then where this train of thought was leading me: my ride was going to end today.

I eventually rolled into Walden, tired, hungry, grumpy, and feet soaked from the aforementioned storm. Our angelic volunteers brought me bread with butter and a Coke. I tried to project a positive attitude, but I felt defeated in a way that was unfamiliar to me. I called my wife to take comfort in her unwavering love and support. Corinne Warren called me and talked me through various options to avoid DNF'ing, but also to assure me that there is no shame in doing so. The volunteers urged me to rest and reconsider, but also acknowledged that my decision had to be my own.

I weighed my options for a while, but ultimately, the inescapable reality was that I didn't want to continue. I was not having fun, and I was not confident that I could get back to a state where I was having fun. And so, I not-so-proudly proclaimed my decision to scratch, cleaned myself up, and headed home.

So there you have it, the tale of my first Grand Randonée and first DNE. It's a bit of a bummer, but I hope it doesn't read as overly self-pitying. I wanted to share this story because I believe it's important to talk about our failures. Failure is how we grow, and talking about failure is how we can help each other grow. I can wholeheartedly say this was one of the most meaningful experiences in my cycling career, and honestly, my life, and it's because I failed.

In recounting the course of these two days, my biggest mistake is obvious: my 3-day schedule and the unsustainable pace that resulted from it. But there were other mistakes that are more subtle: discarding the company and support of my fellow

randonneurs, neglecting to sufficiently look after myself, and most importantly, not taking the time to actually enjoy the experience.

I'm not proud that I DNF'd, but I am proud of my decision to DNE. A past version of myself might have stubbornly persisted, not for joy or for adventure, but for ego. Maybe I could've gotten away with it... this time. Or, maybe I would've failed in a more catastrophic way, causing lasting damage to my relationship with this sport. I'm glad I didn't have to find out which outcome it would be.

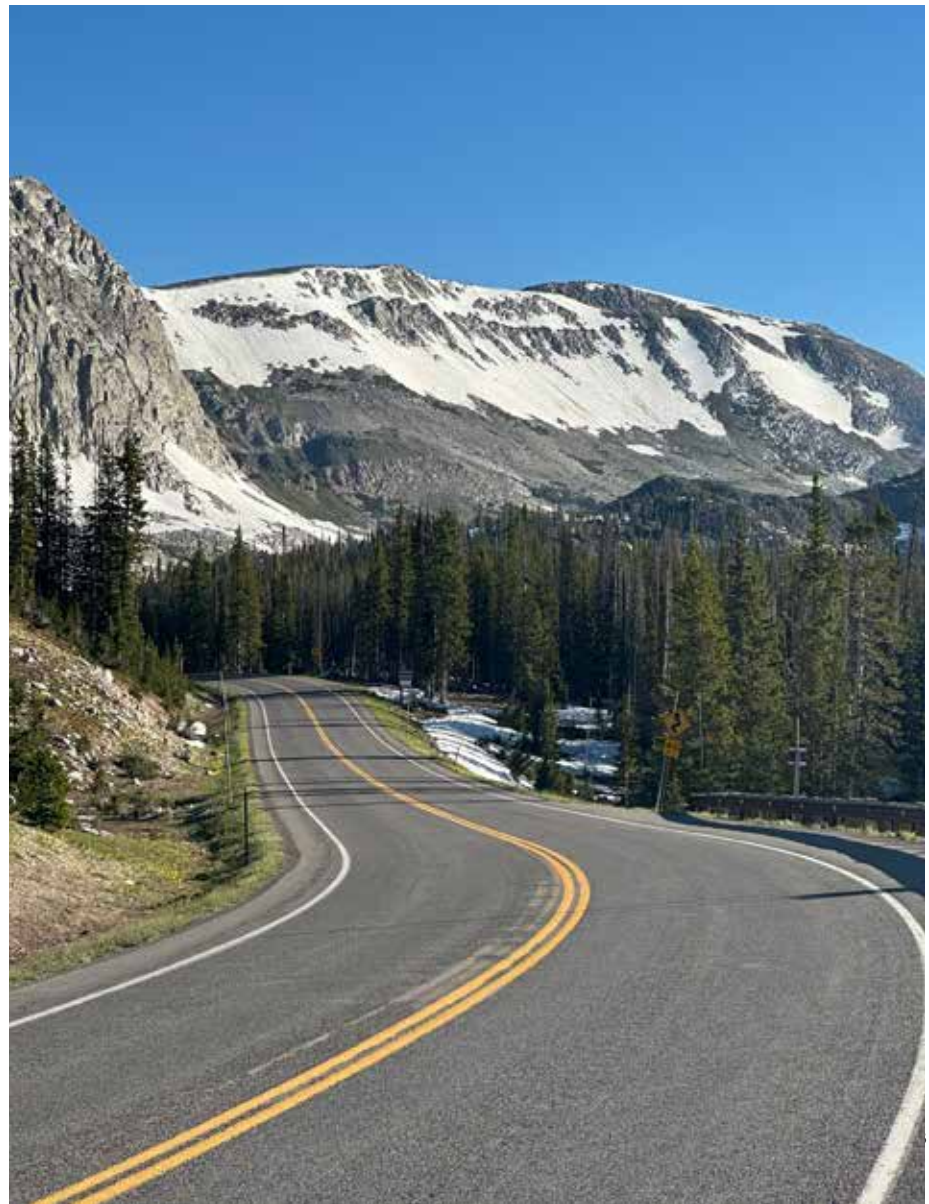
"Why do I do this?" is a question I'm sure we've all pondered at one time or another. This experience has forced me to really confront that question, to step back and take stock of what's most important to me. I love riding my

bike, for adventure, for nature, and for fitness. And I do like to push myself to see what I'm capable of, but I never want that ambition to rob me of joy, as it has in the past.

Now, I look forward to new cycling challenges with a refreshed perspective. I'm sure I will continue to pursue ambitious goals, some that I might fail to live up to, but I'll do so with this experience to remind me to prioritize joy.

I encourage you, reflect on why YOU ride, and whatever those reasons might be, stay true to them even in the face of adversity. 🚲

There's still snow on the peaks
when you get up high.



Together We Ride. Together We Inspire.

BY DAWN PIECH, JENNY ALTON, ROSE COX, AMY RUSSELL, JOHN CERCI,
JOHN LEE ELLIS, AND DAN BLUMENFELD

The 5th annual International Women's Day Together We Ride event on March 8th through March 11th was another celebration on bikes throughout the Randonneurs USA community in recognition of the 113th anniversary of International Women's Day.

It truly is inspiring to read how regions organized their rides to pay homage to the women who have established their legacy in their respective communities and regions. In addition to Randonneurs USA members recognizing the day by riding and the collective efforts of members as well as groups and individuals outside of our organization, we were able to purchase four Buffalo Bicycles via World Bicycle Relief and also donate to Project Mobility to build an adaptive bicycle for a girl with special needs. This was made possible via purchases of patches, stickers, and Empowerment Packages as well as donations made to Inspyrd

Movement. Inspyrd Movement is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit with the mission to inspire individuals to elevate diversity, equity, and inclusion through the act of movement.

The following are shared memories from both members and Regional Brevet Administrators:

Jenny Alton, San Diego Randonneurs (California)

After a February notable for heavy rainfall in San Diego, the spring sunshine on the morning of the International Women's Day Populaire was a good omen. This was only the second populaire I'd participated in – the first

being the San Francisco Randonneurs IWD Populaire in 2020, the weekend before the pandemic shut the city down – and it felt like a fitting return to RUSA for me. This time I was on the back of a tandem with my husband. The day's route paid homage to influential San Diegan women and began in Balboa Park at the statue of botanist Kate Sessions. We rode up the coast before cutting inland to the statue of architect Lillian Rice. From there we visited the memorials of friend-to-animals Helen Woodward and journalist and philanthropist Ellen Browning Scripps. The whole ride was so absurdly pleasant – catching up with friends and crossing paths with riders from the Blind Stokers Club throughout the day – that it really did feel like a celebration. The turnout was wonderful with 25 riders total, including several joining for the first time. As for me, there's nothing like riding a tandem: communicating through every shift and climb, barreling down hills, and providing a nice draft for friends over windblown seaside flats. At the picnic afterward, everyone chatted and ate and drank, the satisfaction of time well spent palpable on the spring breeze.

Rose Cox, Seattle International Randonneurs (Washington State)

Seattle International Randonneurs celebrated International Women's Day Together We Ride by hosting our season opener populaire. Many thanks





to rider organizers Nicole Truesdell, Kristie Harrigan, and Elizabeth for welcoming over 45 current SIR & RUSA members – all genders, LGBTQ+, non-binary, agender individuals, all religions, all worldviews, all political views, all cultures, all countries – who participated on a typical soggy Northwest day.

The route started from Diva Espresso with some easy flat riding and bumped up a bit with some typical Pacific Northwest climbs. We ended at Stoup Brewing for beers and to chat about how great we are.

Amy Russell and Jeff Newberry, Heart of Texas Randonneurs/Hill Country Randonneurs (Texas)

Hill Country Randonneurs hosted a Woman’s Day ride out to the Regency Suspension Bridge on the Suspend Belief 400k.



John Ceceri, Adirondack Ultra Cycling (New York)

We had a great 100k RUSA populaire on March 8th, and the weather couldn't have been better. It was a great group, but unfortunately, none of the women who registered were able to make it. We dedicated our ride to women everywhere and made a stop at the Tang Teaching Museum at Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs (named for Skidmore alum Frances Tang, whose family helped fund the museum) and wound our way around Saratoga Lake and along the Hudson River/Champlain Canal. We did have one flat, but we enjoyed pizza and schmoozing at the finish and ice cream during the ride.

Dan Blumenfeld, Pittsburgh Randonneurs (Pennsylvania)

While attendance was quite low (due to all-day drenching rain), I’m happy to report that we did hold our 100k on Saturday the 9th, using a route primarily based on the trail system near Pittsburgh.

It was not a classic “bluebird skies and gentle breezes” kind of ride, but there were nonetheless moments of somewhat bleak industrial beauty (standing in stark contrast to the low-70s-and-sunny weather on the checkout ride a few days prior).

Amy Russell with a furry friend.

—PHOTO AMY RUSSELL

Many RMCC riders gathered for the International Women’s Day populaire.

—PHOTO JOHN LEE ELLIS

Maitram Giske and Jenny Alton bookend a statue of Kate Sessions, the pioneering horticulturist, in Balboa Park.

—PHOTO WEI SUN



John Lee Ellis, Rocky Mountain Cycling Club (Colorado)

We promoted the connection between our March 10th Populaire and your initiative. While that was well received and we had a good turnout, there were three women (two regulars and a relative newcomer) among the riders. Maybe the relative newcomer was nudged by the initiative, which would be nice to think.

For some of these riders in attendance, this was kind of a social kick-off



Damp weather couldn't stop the smiles on the faces of the Pittsburgh Randonneurs.

—PHOTO DAN BLUMENFELD

Day Together We Ride will be Saturday, March 8th through Tuesday, March 11th, 2025. I hope you and your region will consider joining us to celebrate the 114th anniversary of International Women's Day by hosting a populaire, brevet, and/or get together and celebration. Additionally, we also recommend a few additional ways to get involved and celebrate next year's International Women's Day, as well as being on your bike, including:

- Support a women's owned bike shop.
- Support a women's owned business.
- Support a women's shelter in your area/region.
- Support a women's owned organization in your area.

In closing, always Pedal Forward + Ride Inspyrd.

Questions, comments, suggestions: feel free to contact Dawn at iwdbike@gmail.com or visit www.inspyrdmovement.org. 🚲

to their rando season, while our core group had already been through January and February 200k's.

Thank you to all Randonneurs USA members and Regional Brevet Administrators for their support and for hosting events in 2024 in addition to the previous four years. It's been a great, wonderful equity and empowerment ride with you all over the past five years.

As we look ahead, the dates for the 6th annual International Women's



Holly Diop gives Bob Brudvik a hug.

—PHOTO ROSE COX

The men of Adirondack Ultra Cycling came out to show their support for women.

—PHOTO JOHN CECERI



Building a bicycle frame starts long before the torch is lit.

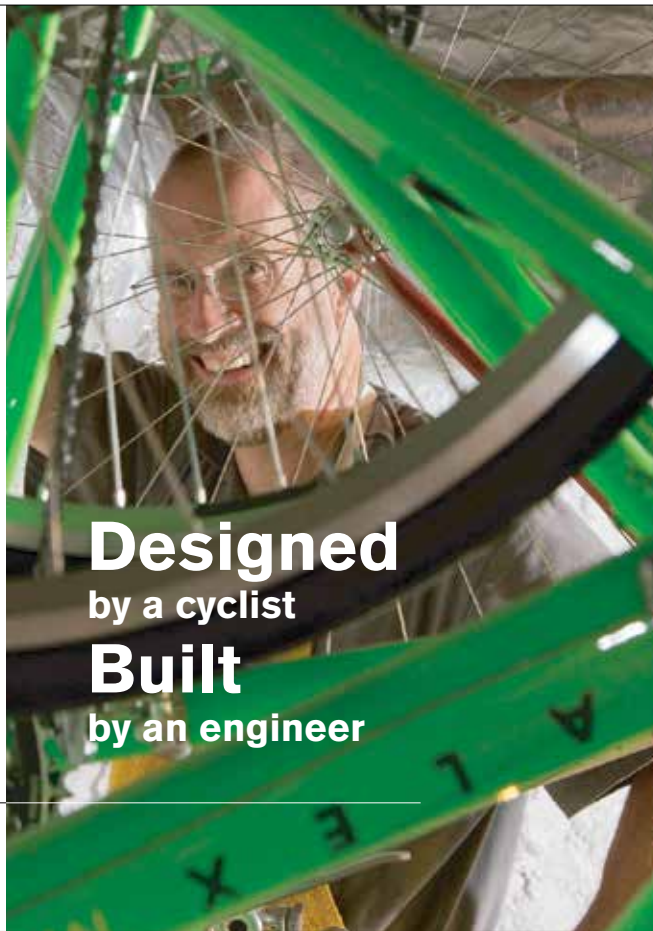
It begins with the right questions; by learning the needs and desires of the customer. I listen to the experiences that led you to me: your riding history, your cycling dreams, and what you want your next bike to be.

My goal as a designer and builder is to use my experience as a cyclist and training as a mechanical engineer to translate your vision into a beautiful steel bicycle

that will give you a lifetime of service and enjoyment, for less than you might expect.

Every frame I produce is completely engineered and manufactured by me. I do everything from working with you on initial measurements and selecting materials, to the intricate filing and metalwork needed to make a beautiful and unique frame.

To begin the process, visit my web site, then email or call me. I look forward to hearing your thoughts.



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SUBMISSIONS ARE WELCOME

SUBMISSIONS should be up to 2,000 words, include photos or other visual elements, and be saved as a Word file. (No PDFs, please.) Please send photos as separate files.

The editor reserves the right to edit submissions for clarity, brevity, and accuracy.

SUBMISSION DEADLINES:

Spring issue – December 15

Fall issue – June 25

Summer issue – March 25

Winter issue – September 25

QUESTIONS? Please contact Corinne at editor@rusa.org.

Making a Mess into a Mixed Surface Tour of the West (Part Two)

I'm called back by the looming threat of Civic Duty. Dream visions (nightmares) of a jury summons on my fridge, that night, falling asleep in the plain air with dusk on the scabby face of Mount Diablo. The following day unfolds like a bizarre roller coaster farewell to cycling in the Bay Area. I don't have enough time.

But of course, this column is ostensibly about randonneuring and gravel. There's a gravel path in or near Moraga, as I recall, that I ride for a while, before making my way over to Pinehurst Road, which is incredibly scenic. It's starting to heat up, but there's ample shade, which is nice. A few tight uphill switchbacks. My legs are heavy from three hard days of riding. I drop into the East Bay via Tunnel Road. The temperature falls, becoming reasonable again.

And so I am heading to the Marin Headlands, since I'd meant to see them sometime on this trip. I suspected I'd been there as a kid, but I'm not absolutely sure.

I stop at a bike shop/cafe in Oakland called Lucky Duck on my way to the train station. I'm badly in need of some chain wax. I buy a tee shirt. I drink a beer. It's worth the visit.

When I step out of the train station in San Francisco, it's cooler still. I take the short, hilly route across the peninsula toward the Golden Gate

Bridge, cross it, and take the tunnel toward the Marin Headlands, where I ride around a little while, stopping at the overlook at the bottom of Hawk Hill. A boa of fog drapes itself across the water. This is not *not* novel, to me, at least a little bit, given that I am a child of the arid Intermountain West.

Later, I roll into a hotel in Emoryville, having resecured some of my gear from the Amtrak station nearby.

I walk across the parking lot to the Trader Joe's, buy a four pack of beer, some bagels, peanut butter. The shower in the hotel rids me of days and days of sweat and dust. The blackish mixture snakes its swirling path to the drain. I sleep well that night.

The following day, I'm – you guessed it – on another train. The California Zephyr carries me through Sacramento and Auburn. As we slowly traverse the foothills' narrow sluises, the gray snow of a nearby forest fire falls softly outside the train's windows. The sky darkens, orange and gray. My head hurts as the cabin's oxygen is choked out. Welcome to the future of smoke.

The next day, crossing Eastern Nevada there's a lucky swath of cell phone service in a valley. I send an email to the jury officiant, requesting

Heading into it.

—PHOTOS JONATHAN FEY



The golden hills of the Bay Area.

to be excused due to my absence. Later, I receive the instructions to reschedule my required attendance. It's on the day before I'm supposed to be back.

These days are disjointed. The few events shuffle and unshuffle themselves. I'm tired and don't sleep very well.

It's mid-morning, rolling into Grand Junction, Colorado. The sky is bright, clear, blue and pocked just barely with high cirrus clouds. The return of dry heat. I roll into a USPS with a few things I won't need for the next phase of the trip wrapped up tightly in a backpack: shoes and some casual clothes, some odds and ends. I put it in a box and send it back to myself. I ride north out of the neighboring town of Fruita, but not until I eat an egg and cheese bagel at Main Street Bagel. What's funny about trips like these is how much down time they give you. I'm not in a rush.

I stop in a coffee shop called Best Slope and use my phone to build the route for the day. I'll be meeting a few friends in Glenwood Springs, joining them on an informal, annual trip we call One Way Ticket. (Guess what, this also involves taking a train somewhere and riding back home).

I stop at REI in Grand Junction and buy some nylon webbing for the purpose of helping to stabilize my front handlebar bag. It works, sort-of, but as the trip begins to incorporate more dirt roads, this becomes a little bit problematic.

I fuss with that stuff for a little bit too long, but eventually make my way through Palisade, past its rows of peaches and grapes. Peach season is just about over. I don't see any stands at which to buy one.

Instead, I pilot the bike up a winding canyon toward the top of the



Grand Mesa. It's a long one. Familiar. I'm accustomed to the long, winding roads designed by the Army Corps of Engineers. Contrast this to some of the steep, narrow passages of the old mule mining roads in Northern California.

The sky is blanketed evenly with the brainmatter of clouds. It's temperate. A few stray dots of precipitation on my neck and shoulders. The road dumps back down into the I-70 corridor. The remainder of the ride is somewhat unremarkable: interstate frontage road, gas station, the vastness of the shallow valley.

In Rifle, I consider stopping in front of Lauren Boebert's bar-be-cue restaurant called "Shooter's" for a photo. I decide not to. (Shooter's has since shuttered its saloon doors.) Between the town of Silt and Glenwood Springs, a young black bear runs across the road ahead of me. In hindsight, I should have backed off the pedals more, in case a protective mother was nearby.

I roll into Glenwood Springs, after riding about 200k. My friends Jeremy and JP are at the hotel waiting for me. We push the bike inside and head

out into the night for tacos and beer. There's a storm rolling in.

The following day: rain. We start out in the early morning with a couple coffees and an easy pedal down a long bike path in the Roaring Fork Valley, through Carbondale. It's comfortable and quiet. We trade pulls. It's the start of the trip for my companions, so the anticipation and excitement of uncertainty feels electric. Shadowy clouds, off in the direction we're heading.

The mix of mountain town commercial strip and light residential gradually gives way to dense pine forest. We're following a small river. There's a natural hot springs off to the left where we don't stop, although it sounds nice. It's getting cold. It helps that we're climbing.

By the time we make it to McClure Pass, we've been going for hours. The rain is spotty, cold. It's foggy, down-valley. The way the clouds move over our heads feels methodically slow. Still, it's beautiful. Sopras Mountain towers over our left shoulders.

We descend McClure's west side into a moderate headwind. The hard

pedaling helps keep us warm. It's a while before things really level out. Near the bottom, we wait for a construction traffic stop. They've got one lane closed and are holding up traffic for 15 minutes at a time, alternating directions. We take turns eating from the depths of my Trader Joe's peanut butter jar.

A little later, after a turn off the main road, we warm ourselves in a tiny convenience store with tea, coffee, hot chocolate. It's cold outside, and there's a long way to go to get to Crested Butte. Eventually, we head into the spitting cold. The pavement disappears and we pedal through brown soup. Here and there, rocks are set into the road. It's a road I've been on a couple times before: Kebler Pass. The last time was about two-thirds through an RMCC "Triple Crown" double century ride, Kebler Kamikazee.

But the last time, it was dry. This time, our bikes start to squeak and scream out at us. It's a long, long dirt road, gradually rising and leveling out and rising again through a behemoth of an aspen grove.

Eventually, we crest the top, pass a small reservoir, and fly down the short southern side of the pass into Crested Butte.

One of our first goals is to spray the bikes off in the car wash. Someone is washing his brand new Ford F-150. It's taking a while. It takes so, so long. He's being thorough. He's still doing it.

So eventually, we're able to spray the bikes down. We pedal over to the Airbnb, stash the bikes, meet up with our friends Rowan and Jamela, and head out to get pizza at The Secret Stache.

It's very cold in the morning on the following day. We ride in relative quiet through an icy fog south from Crested Butte toward Gunnison, and make a left turn on Jack's Cabin Cutoff Road, which turns to firm dirt and rises and



falls for a while. Eventually, the sun burns off the fog and it starts to warm up. The road rejoins a paved road. We turn left onto that one, which then turns to dirt again. At times it's loose and dusty. It follows a narrow, steep stream, with small cascading cataracts.

Jamela and Rowan peel off eventually. Jeremia, JP, and I make a turn, crest a hill, and begin to fall through a series of long, sweeping switchbacks toward the Taylor Reservoir. The road is rippled with long stretches of washboard that rattle my eyes in my skull. I try to relax, carry speed, and float through them.

We push hard into a slight headwind as the road flattens and begins to turn south. Vacationers are setting up pop-up trailers in the open sage fields around the reservoir. Their large trucks kick up rocks and dust as they pass us. The road rises and falls before we join the paved road which will take us back toward the major highway.

One consequence of yesterday's muddy ride is that my rear derailleur cable moves stiffly in its housing.

It starts to rain lightly as we follow another winding tributary. I'd ridden this road once before, on a solo bike tour in 2016. We stop for some snacks at a sort of combination recreation-cabin restaurant compound thing. Some coffee – we're cold. We play a game of pool in the other room, stomping around in our SPD shoes on the wooden floor.

The sun comes back out for a little while as we fall toward that highway. We turn left onto it, heading south and away from Crested Butte, toward the dirt road which will take us to Ohio Pass. There's a long drag through some open range toward the bottom of it. It begins to steepen as we climb a few switchbacks through a stand of aspens embedded in the larger forest of ponderosa and fir. Very few of the leaves have yellowed. The dirt road is mostly smooth, but has some embedded granite rock and a little bit of loose gravel.

On the fast descent back into Crested Butte, we drop Jeremia. At the bottom of the pass we wait for him for what feels like a little bit too long.



Eventually, we see him rolling down the last few turns toward the bottom of the pass. He's broken the carbon rim of his rear wheel. There's sealant spitting at the crack in the outer layer from a rock impact.

The next day, it's a new combination of riders: JP, Rowan, and me. Jeremiah will try to borrow a wheel from someone, but there's a lot of logistics to figure out. We take the main highway from Crested Butte toward Gunnison, just like the day before, but pass Jack's Cabin Cutoff and instead turn left, east toward Taylor Reservoir's south side. This is the road we came down yesterday.

The climb is steady. It's cold, but not as cold as the day before. We stop at a small convenience store where the road turns to dirt before heading toward the hamlet of Tincup. The air thins out. The road steepens. Loose rock, washboard, and fine dust compose its surface. I'm tired, but I try to muscle through some of the upper switchbacks. We're nearing treeline, close to 11,000 feet. We'll need to climb another

thousand feet to get to the top of Cumberland Pass. When we finally do, we stop to eat bagel sandwiches and split a beer. There are people riding dirt bikes and side-by-side's. It feels good to hit the high point of the day, but we have three more dirt road passes ahead of us.

The south and east side of Cumberland Pass is very bumpy. My front handlebar bag chirps on my tire as I plow through some of the rougher parts of the road. I stop to pull on the nylon webbing holding it up off of the tire. At the bottom of the pass, there's a very small town called Pitkin where we stop for hamburgers. It's gotten hot, even though we're still at a relatively high altitude. Large flies pester us.

Back on the bikes, we climb the smaller Waunita Pass, which doesn't go over treeline, then down to the open sage and prairie in a valley toward the foot of Black Sage Pass. The back side of Black Sage is rough and loose. A hawk swoops down through the pines over our heads. At the valley floor, the chalky limestone road follows a narrow stream toward the foot of Old Monarch Pass. We're all tired, and ride the pass, each at our own pace. The top of Old Monarch is windy and open, above treeline again. It's on the Continental Divide. We take the pavement on the east side of Monarch down toward Salida.

I meet Jeremiah at the brewery in town. Through a miracle of friendship he was able to borrow a wheel and a car, and rode an abbreviated route over Cottonwood Pass. I eat another hamburger and fries. This one's better. JP and Rowan arrive and we make our way to a friend's house in town. We have another meal, and nod off to sleep.

The following day I split off from the group, since I need to make it home in time for my jury summons the day after. I'll have to go 185 miles today, so I leave early. I wake up at 3:30 a.m. By 4 o'clock, I'm on the bike, heading up highway 285 toward Buena Vista. It's quiet out. I stop at a gas station for

coffee, then turn toward Highway 24 and Hartsel. The sun comes up slowly as I crest Trout Creek Pass. Traffic begins to increase, so I'm glad to turn off the main road after Harstel.

I push on along a dusty, flat dirt road toward Eleven Mile reservoir. Old, wind battered barns punctuate the open prairie. At Eleven Mile Reservoir, the road turns back to pavement, before climbing and descending toward Lake George.

Heading north from Lake George, I'm happy to be back on the dirt. This is a stretch of road I've ridden a few times before. The road climbs sharply. It's composed mainly of decomposed granite. It's mostly firm, but there are places where it's loose and sandy, especially after I crest the top and make my way down toward Trout Creek.

I turn off the main stretch and climb a narrow, dusty limestone double-track road which then rejoins another major county road. It rises and falls before falling, plummeting really, toward the small town of Westcreek. Hitting Westcreek, I'm back on pavement. The road falls again toward Deckers. I'm in a familiar zone again. I drink a Modelo, eat some chips and salsa.

The rest of the route is one I've ridden many times, along the south fork of the South Platte River, on North Platte River Road, where it then turns to dirt, then becomes broken pavement where the river's forks come together, to the bottom of Foxton Road, which climbs gradually, then kicks up and over to Deer Creek Canyon and, thus, the greater Denver Metro area. I'm glad to coast down the long descent. The last bit of bike path toward a large burrito is not as tedious as I would have initially thought.

Even so, I'm happy to be done. I'd covered more than 800 miles in the ten days, and seen huge chunks of California and Colorado, stitched together by trains, dirt roads and paved roads.

My number wasn't called for jury duty after all. 🚲

Why a Lanterne Rouge Still Rides

BY TIBOR TAMAS #9902

In the world of randonneuring, the concept of the *lanterne rouge* takes on a profound significance that resonates deeply with both participants and observers. While the term originates from competitive cycling, where it denotes the last-placed rider in a race, its essence transcends mere ranking to embody the spirit of endurance, perseverance, and the human quest for personal triumph over daunting challenges.

Randonneuring pushes riders to their physical and mental limits. Participants traverse vast distances, often across varied and demanding terrain, facing unpredictable weather conditions and encountering

unforeseen obstacles along the way. In these grueling tests of stamina, the *lanterne rouge* symbolizes the courage to venture into the unknown and the determination to persist through adversity. While all riders have roadblocks to overcome, it is the *lanterne rouge* who has to work the hardest, as their journey is the longest.

Unlike traditional races where the focus is on speed and competition, long-distance bicycling fosters a community spirit rooted in mutual support and shared experiences. Riders bond over shared hardships, forming alliances that transcend individual achievements. The *lanterne rouge*, while technically the “last” in terms of timing, embodies the camaraderie and collective spirit that define these endurance challenges. They are celebrated not for their position in

the rankings, but for their resilience and unwavering commitment to completing the journey.

There have been many brevets and permanents where I was the last one riding, long after the rest of the group left. But I really enjoy the company for the first few miles and the occasional brave soul who decides to slow down and ride with me. There is not much that beats an overnight ride in the middle of summer, with or without company. I love randonneuring because it takes me to places I would not otherwise visit. It allows me to test myself and to push to finish and make the control times, regardless of when others get there. And yes, I will continue randonneuring even if I will do so by myself.

The *lanterne rouge* embodies the transformative power of endurance sports, where each pedal stroke becomes a testament to resilience and the human spirit's capacity to overcome obstacles. I would encourage other slower-than-average riders (you know who you are) to not give up, to come out and ride, to enjoy and find other slow(er) riders! Embrace the concept of being the *lanterne rouge* yourself, focus on the journey and not the destination. Remember that each ride, no matter how challenging, holds the potential for growth, self-discovery, and the celebration of the human spirit. Don't let your speed hold you back from what you love to do.

Ride long & ride safe! 🚲

Don't tell me you can't. You can.

—PHOTO TIBOR TAMAS



New RUSA Members

RUSA#	NAME	CITY	STATE	RUSA#	NAME	CITY	STATE	RUSA#	NAME	CITY	STATE
17255	Brooks Sr, Curtis E	Birmingham	AL	17254	Falkenberg, Tim	Chicago	IL	17208	Stamey, Ryland J	Portland	OR
17269	Funkhouser, Owen	Madison	AL	17306	Frydrychowicz, David	Geneva	IL	17262	Ash, Brendan	Philadelphia	PA
17336	Sullivan, Terri	Hoover	AL	17333	Meyer, Brett	Edwardsville	IL	17225	Brunner, Stacie L	Philadelphia	PA
17248	Chapple, Josh W	Tucson	AZ	17308	Schaefer, Mason D	Edwardsville	IL	17240	Elsasser, Mark	Philadelphia	PA
17214	Yui, Erika	Scottsdale	AZ	17331	Strahm, Loren	Glen Carbon	IL	17251	Lexie, Graham	Glenside	PA
17197	Jackman, Patrick	Vancouver	BC	17319	Flinn, Tabatha M	Terre Haute	IN	17264	Lo, Jasen	Philadelphia	PA
17296	Chao, Victor	Oakland	CA	17243	Marra, Jeff	Kokomo	IN	17221	Maistrenko, Kostiantyn	Willow Grove	PA
17200	Davis, N U	Berkeley	CA	17270	Tomioka, Yasuhiko	Kawagoe-shi Saitama-ken	JPN	17266	Prosser, Jacob	Philadelphia	PA
17236	De Martelaere, Bram	San Francisco	CA	17288	Combs, Huston B	Lexington	KY	17267	Rowan, Leah	Philadelphia	PA
17298	Del Ponte, Jacob	Edwards	CA	17328	Chauvin, John	Kenner	LA	17261	Stewart-Castner, Jack	Philadelphia	PA
17217	Eames, Jason	San Jose	CA	17204	Jensen, Per	Lexington	MA	17307	West, Brendan	Shillington	PA
17232	Early, Julian	Oakland	CA	17252	Moore, Rebecca	Sterling	MA	17303	Saillant, Kathia	Montreal	QC
17231	Fassett, Camille	San Francisco	CA	17287	Skurla, Jerry	Bedford	MA	17253	Freeman, Regan G	West Columbia	SC
17235	Gyetvan, Kobi N	San Francisco	CA	17292	Hoopengardner, Thomas	Bethesda	MD	17244	Wright, Ryan S	Columbia	SC
17216	Harris, Bill	Menlo Park	CA	17295	Bauer, Katie	Yarmouth	ME	17318	Taylor, L M	Stanmore	UK
17284	Jensen, Stephanie F	San Francisco	CA	17329	Boston, Steve	Lakeland	MI	17256	Cosimano, John M	Alexandria	VA
17265	King, Dorian	Mill Valley	CA	17205	Carter, Chris	Greenville	MI	17268	Wong, Anastasia	Alexandria	VA
17294	Lam Sr, Nam	Milpitas	CA	17327	Johnson, William A	Sterling Heights	MI	17300	Katz, Jason Lee	Burlington	VT
17241	Lee, Clinton F	Piedmont	CA	17293	Osier, Michael Ryan	Lansing	MI	17207	Anderson, Ben	Bremerton	WA
17226	Lund, Yvonne M	Morgan hill	CA	17291	Potter, Tim	Okemos	MI	17212	Ban, Radu	Bellevue	WA
17210	Malarkey, Lucrecia	Santa Barbara	CA	17305	Arjara, Gabriel J	Moorhead	MN	17215	Baumeister, Todd A	Redmond	WA
17277	Monahan, Colleen Rose	Berkeley	CA	17302	Biehn, Erich S	Saint Paul	MN	17325	Benson, Alexander	Seattle	WA
17238	Mowris, Ransom	La Honda	CA	17304	Canning, Christopher D	Richfield	MN	17227	Bliss, Lisa	Ellensburg	WA
17237	Murphy, Kate	San Francisco	CA	17245	Gormley, Michael	Minneapolis	MN	17273	Cange, Laurie	Shoreline	WA
17312	Murray, Steve	Culver City	CA	17203	Lemons, Joshua Scott	Chaska	MN	17309	Dale, Jeffrey K	Nordland	WA
17289	Rogers, James D	Inglewood	CA	17313	Mattner, Sean	Minneapolis	MN	17299	DeShaw, Paul A	Seattle	WA
17279	Rosenberg, Mark	Los Gatos	CA	17198	Gewin, Leslie S	St. Louis	MO	17228	Englund, Tim	Ellensburg	WA
17301	Ross, Ted	San Francisco	CA	17199	Rougeux, Francis E	Londonderry	NH	17281	Fawcett, Conrad W	Bellevue	WA
17274	Saenz, Max Eduardo	Aliso Viejo	CA	17326	Fulton, Erin	Whitehouse Station	NJ	17316	Giraud, David	Seattle	WA
17334	Smith, Jason A	Oakland	CA	17220	Clanet, Jeffrey R	Brooklyn	NY	17224	Ketchum, Charles Richard	Maple Valley	WA
17201	Snead, Shelby	Oakland	CA	17234	Feruta, Cornel	New York	NY	17315	Koshar, Jonathan	Issaquah	WA
17276	Solis, Michael A	Castro Valley	CA	17249	Gillespie, Brad	New York	NY	17259	LaMont, John	Bellingham	WA
17297	Speer, Joshua Brook	Oakland	CA	17272	Holbrook, Chris	New York	NY	17229	McGregor, Mark M	Seattle	WA
17246	Spurgin, Daniel	San Fransisco	CA	17257	Nisbet, Todd	Brooklyn	NY	17222	Modine, Gary W.	Yakima	WA
17285	Wasterlain, Justin	Campbell	CA	17209	Smith, Alexander W	New York	NY	17311	Moss, Sean R	Seattle	WA
17320	Ainapure, Rohit	Denver	CO	17219	Song, Hosun	New York	NY	17324	Picardal, Nicole	Seattle	WA
17323	Gallagher, Chris	Arvada	CO	17218	Song, Kristen	New York	NY	17322	Robillard, Sarah	Issaquah	WA
17271	O'Brian, Conor	Boulder	CO	17283	Vanroyen, Anne Sophie E	New York	NY	17263	Rosemurgy, Stuart Cecil	Olympia	WA
17247	Tse, Matt	Arvada	CO	17260	Ball II, E Michael	Berea	OH	17321	Seebeck, Max	Issaquah	WA
17310	Zartman, Teresa Dionysia	Denver	CO	17280	Davis, Christo	Columbus	OH	17211	Shaffer, Mark	Wenatchee	WA
17290	Fortner, Erin	Suffield	CT	17213	Main, Craig D	Granville	OH	17223	Short, Justin	Spokane	WA
17239	Ayers, Steven Michael	Tampa	FL	17206	McNamee, Krista J	Cleveland	OH	17230	Stanley, Brian	Bellevue	WA
17275	Krepley, Brayon B	Saint Augustine	FL	17202	Schwan, Timothy Joseph	Hiram	OH	17282	Sweeney, Brendan Paul	Seattle	WA
17332	Lee, Jun	Tallahassee	FL	17317	Wachs, Evan	Cleveland	OH	17250	Tickman, Spencer T	Sammamish	WA
17278	Cohen, Adam L	Decatur	GA	17330	Zhou, Stanley	Markham	ON	17314	Wood, Daniel N	Bothell	WA
17233	Fuller, James	Decatur	GA	17286	Lee, Seung Jun	Portland	OR	17258	Wilcox, Susan M	Hartland	WI
17242	Gillis, Peter A	Dunwoody	GA	17335	Norseev, Lev Y	Portland	OR				

Bike Lust

BY STEPHEN WASMUND (#7562)
AND AMY ANDREWS (#15105)

SHEPEDALSHESTEERS

When Amy and I put PBP 2023 on our bucket list we knew we'd need to add a new bike to our stable. We wanted something that was comfortable and fast enough on long paved roads that could also handle the gravel roads we love. We knew we wanted to include the beautiful square-taper tandem crankset re-invented by the modern Rene Herse AND reliable, repairable, and traditional bar-end shifters and a 10 speed drive-train. This precluded any of the nice off the shelf builds from Co-Motion. Full bike-lust it was!

With a lot of advice from Mark Kennedy at Saturday Cycles in Salt Lake City, Utah, we pieced together the fully custom and unique gravel/randonneuring machine you see here, our GrandoRandoTando (GRTando? Still working on the name). 650b wheels seemed necessary to fit 42c tires with fenders or 48c knobbies without fenders for gravel on a frame/fork designed for 700x45 max. The rest of the parts seemed a balance of the quality, reliability, and beauty that make a bicycle real.

Our PBP adventure was all we could have asked for. Olivier Csuka, of Singer Cycles, admired our bike but told us the stoker compartment was too long (modern geometry). Amy politely disagreed. The GRTando also survived the relatively rugged 200-mile Stupid Pony gravel race across the Pony Express route of western Utah. I'm typing this just days after we enjoyed the grandeur of the Colorado High Country 1200k put on by the Rocky Mountain Cycling Club. The bike performed flawlessly again, suggesting PBP wasn't just beginner's luck. 🚲

THE BIKE: GrandoRandoTando





Put your bike 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.

On the Stupid Pony gravel race in Utah.

—PHOTO SAM RICE

FRAME: Co-Motion Kalapuya (aluminum, large)

FORK: Co-Motion Boost TA tapered carbon

HEADSET: Cane Creek 110

STEMS: Paul Components Boxcar (polished, 100mm; Captain); Co-Motion Max Adjust (Stoker)

HANDLEBARS: Nitto Noodle (48cm; Captain); Scott AT2-LF Bullhorn (new old stock; Stoker); Problem Solver shims for both bars

HANDLEBAR TAPE: Salsa gel (Captain;Stoker)

SEATPOSTS: Paul Components Tall & Handsome (polished; Captain); Cane Creek ee-Silk+ Carbon (Stoker)

SADDLES: Brooks C13 (Captain); Infinity (Stoker)

SHIFTERS: Microshift barend 10sp

CRANKSETS: Rene Herse Tandem (50-33; 30-30 for timing chain)

CASSETTE: Shimano XT, 10sp, 11-42

FRONT DERAILER: Campagnolo Racing Triple; braze-on with Co-Motion mount extender

REAR DERAILER: Shimano XT

CHAINS: KMC 10sp (Captain; Stoker)

BOTTOM BRACKETS: Phil Wood 145mm square taper (Captain; Stoker)

BRAKE LEVERS: TRP RRL-SR

BRAKE CALIPERS: Paul Components Klampers

DISK ROTORS: TRP 203mm

PEDALS: Look X-Track Race Carbon (Captain; Stoker)

WHEELSET: Astral built; Outback 650b alloy rims; SON28 Boost dynamo, 32h front; White Industries XMR polished 36h rear; Sapim spokes

TIRES: Rene Herse Babyshoe Pass 42c (smooth); Rene Herse Juniper Ridge 48c (for rougher gravel)

FRONT LIGHT: SON Edelux II (dynamo-powered)

REAR LIGHT: Busch+Muller Secula (dynamo-powered)

FENDERS: Rene Herse (when running 42c tires; remove fenders w/ 48c knobbies)

LUGGAGE: Broadfork custom frame bag; Broadfork Saddledown bags (x2); Chrome Industries Doubletrack Handlebar Sling front bag

“Going There”: Frank Recommendations for Conquering Saddle Discomfort

SARAH RICE (#9480), PT, DPT, PHD

Randonneurs endure saddle discomfort just like we endure weather, fatigue, and other aches and pains on rides. I’m a physical therapist who treats orthopedic injuries including pelvic injuries and pain. Riders with cycling-related pelvic dysfunction often ask me how much pain they should tolerate. My answer is none. Read on to find out how an optimized combination of bike fit, saddle, chamois, hygiene, and cycling routine can have you riding comfortably for 1200K or more.

A rider has three points of contact with the bike- our hands, our feet, and our saddle. We take our hands off the bike several times per hour and our feet are off-loaded for 50% of the pedal stroke. In contrast, our pelvic floor remains in constant contact with the saddle. Therein lies the rub. This area has sensitive skin and soft tissue structures, as well as nerves and muscles that are common injury sites. Compression of the pudendal nerve can lead to penile numbness or vulva pain. Skin irritation can lead to saddle sores. Overuse of pelvic floor muscles on the bike can cause pelvic pain and dysfunction. A majority of cyclists experience one or more of these problems.^{1,2}

I strongly advise cyclist patients not to tolerate persistent saddle pain. Lingering saddle issues can necessitate visits to the doctor’s office, time off the bike, or even surgery to excise a chronic saddle sore, remove a “cyclist’s nodule,” or to correct labial hypertrophy from

excessive saddle pressure. Riding with a saddle problem can also lead to other injuries. Cyclists will alter their pelvic tilt on the saddle to offload painful areas. This can lead to injuries like low back pain, neck pain, and hand pain that can be traced back to the saddle. It is worth spending the money to find the right combination of bike fit, saddle, chamois, and hygiene routine to sort these issues out.

The Right Fit

Getting a bike fit is worthwhile for endurance riders, and a good fit will find the optimum balance of pressure on the feet, hands, and seat for comfortable riding. A position that is too

aggressive puts more pressure on the hands and less on the saddle, but can cause a rider to sit on the part of the pelvis in front of the sit bones (ischio pubic rami) instead of the actual sit bones (ischial tuberosities, see figure). A position that is too upright places most of the rider’s weight on the saddle, so there is a balance to be struck to optimize saddle comfort.

The Right Saddle

There’s enormous variability in pelvic soft tissue structures that are clinically classifiable as normal and healthy.³ The variety of saddle options in the saddle market is therefore a good thing. Distributing saddle pressure over a wider area will generally improve comfort, but depending on your specific anatomy there may be areas that you need to offload completely. The trade-off is that offloading of sensitive areas increases pressure on other areas.

With regard to saddle width, the notion that women need wider saddles and men need narrower ones is an oversimplification. Pelvic width relates more to a person’s height than their sex, but there is enormous variability.⁴ You may be a man who needs a wide saddle or a woman who needs a narrow

I strongly advise cyclist patients not to tolerate persistent saddle pain.

Getting a bike fit is worthwhile for endurance riders, and a good fit will find the optimum balance of pressure on the feet, hands, and seat for comfortable riding.

one. A rider's position on the saddle is also critical. Pointing the saddle down can cause a rider to slide forward onto the narrower nose of the saddle, which can lead to problems even if the saddle "fits." Try this: Ride for a while and then place your finger on the most prominent part of your sit bone. Your finger should also be firmly on the saddle. This is important. The pudendal nerve that innervates the penis or clitoral/vulva tissue runs just inside the ischial tuberosities and ischiopubic rami that contact the saddle. If your saddle is too narrow or you're riding on the nose, the pudendal nerve can get compressed, leading to penile numbness or vulva pain (figure 1).

Saddle shape varies significantly, but generally saddles can be thought of as more flat (i.e. Specialized Power) or more beveled (Brooks B17, Selle Anatomica, Specialized Arc). Beveled saddles are designed to offload the hamstrings tendons that attach to our sit bones, with the tradeoff being more pressure on the inside edges of the sit bones as well as the soft tissues between them. Infinity seats are not just beveled but are curved from back to front, following the curvature of the pelvis around both the ischial tuberosities and ischiopubic rami. Infinity seats distribute pressure over a much larger contact area, but require very precise leveling. Many saddles have a central cutout that is intended to eliminate pressure on very sensitive areas, specifically the pudendal nerve and female urethra. To help you navigate the options, bike fitters may perform saddle pressure mapping to inform your choice of saddle, your bike

fit, and to suggest changes in your body mechanics to improve comfort. Finding your perfect solution is expensive but worth it.

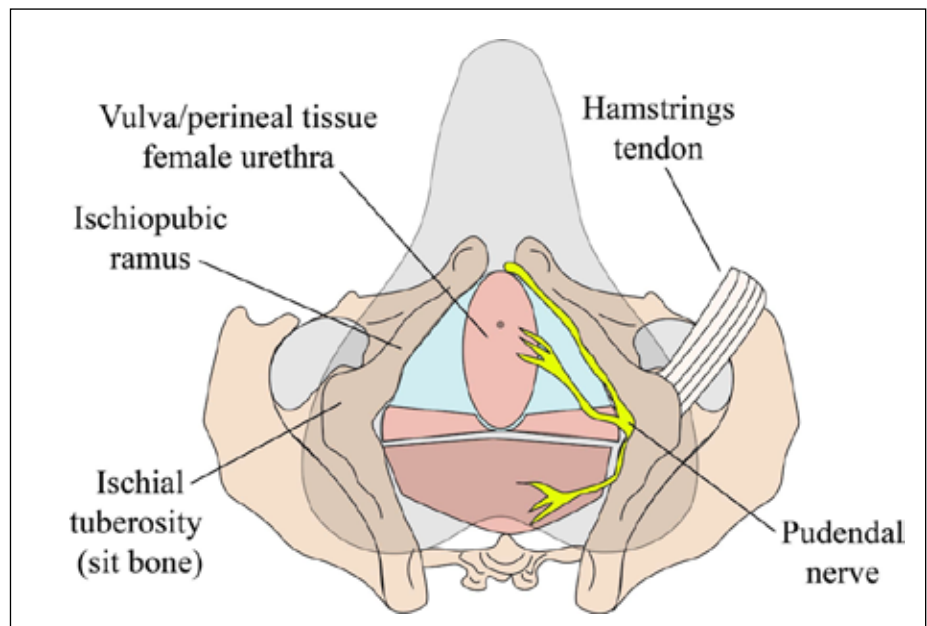
The Right Chamois

While there's huge variability in the saddle market, the same is not true of chamois. There are thinner and thicker products, but the vast majority of chamois in all commercial bike shorts are 19cm wide, only a few cm wider than the distance between the contact points of the ischial tuberosities. Cyclists like myself with wide sit bones may find that the outer edges of their sit bones fall on the seam of a standard 19cm chamois. Rick Smott of Elastic Interface gave me information on three products that use the 22cm wide Endurance Atomic Gem2 chamois: the Pactimo 12-hour bib and 12-hour cargo bibshorts as well as the Olaia Etxeondo bibshorts. It seems odd that while

we've got a choice of saddle widths and styles, the Endurance Atomic Gem2 chamois is the only one I am aware of that is significantly wider than the industry standard 19cm. I'm going to state the obvious here: the chamois industry has room to improve on product development. It makes sense to broaden the options, as the saddle market has done.

Hygiene

Hygiene is not "cleanliness," rather, it is a regimen that protects your skin against irritation and breakdown. Saddle sores may be infections caused by folliculitis or they may just be raw, chafed areas. Either way, the best prevention is healthy skin. Chamois cream and/or other anti-friction products can protect the skin of the perineal area and the genitals against friction breakdown. Read the labels of expensive, fancy chamois creams before you buy. Many chamois cream products are formulated to wash out easily in the laundry and contain ingredients like menthol, witch hazel, and essential oils. Your chamois cream doesn't need to smell fresh. You don't need to get every molecule of chamois cream out of your bibs every time you wash them. You absolutely do need an anti-friction cream that protects your skin even after your



bibshorts get sweaty. Menthol and witch hazel feel nice and tingly but these ingredients are skin irritants that can contribute to breakdown. Clinicians opt for petroleum jelly and lanolin to prevent and/or treat skin irritation, particularly in the perineal area where there is moist and delicate skin. There are several products that are marketed as diaper rash creams, skin protectants from incontinence, or severe dry skin creams that include lanolin, petroleum jelly, and topical antiseptic ingredients like zinc oxide, hydroxyquinoline, or benzethonium chloride.

Many long-distance riders use these instead of commercial chamois cream products with success.⁵ Consider trying Bag Balm, Desitin diaper rash cream, or Lantiseptic for prevention and/or treatment of saddle sores.

Below is a list of other recommendations that can prevent skin damage.⁶

Do These Things

Stand up: Stand periodically during your ride. It can reduce numbness or pain.⁷

Use gentle cleansers: Use a gentle, SDS-free product, such as Cetaphil gentle skin cleanser or unscented baby shampoo on your perineal area. Do not use harsh chemicals (salicylates, peroxides). Use water only to wash the vulva. It's self-cleaning.

Wash off salt: During long rides your bibs and your genital soft tissues can get salty. The salt is a skin irritant. Wash it off or wipe the area with a product like Dude Wipes, then reapply chamois cream.

Tuck and lift: Tuck or fold your inner labia inside the outer labia and/or pull external genitals up and away from the thighs to prevent chafing.

Buy new shorts: Throw away shorts that you have worn while fighting infected saddle sores. The bacteria are difficult to impossible to eradicate from the chamois.

Don't Do These Things

Shave: Shaving and/or waxing the pubic area irritates the skin and can lead to folliculitis as the hair regrows.

Numb the area with over-the-counter anaesthetics: Don't use menthol or over-the-counter yeast treatments. These may provide relief by desensitizing the area but they are skin irritants. Your doctor may prescribe a non-irritating analgesic such as EMLA (2.5% lidocaine, 2.5% prilocaine) for pain control.

Use strong antibacterials: Don't use salicylates, strong antibacterial cleansers, or triple antibiotic. Strong antibacterial agents kill bacteria but also cause dry, irritated skin that can worsen folliculitis. Throw your triple antibiotic ointment in the trash. Neomycin and bacitracin are among the top 10 causes of contact skin allergies.⁸ You will have better results by treating irritated areas with water and gentle cleanser and leaving them to air dry.

Delay seeing the doctor: Don't delay a visit to the doctor for a worsening saddle sore that lingers for more than a week. Practitioners in wound care clinics will be the most knowledgeable about saddle sore

treatment and general wound care.

Relieving Pelvic Muscle Pain

If you don't have saddle sores or numbness but you do have pelvic pain from cycling, it may be from overusing your pelvic floor muscles. The pelvic floor muscles help to rotationally stabilize the hips and support the internal organs, and many people tighten these muscles in response to pain or anxiety. Symptoms of pelvic muscle pain can vary from dull, deep pain similar to menstrual cramps to sharp, shooting pains depending on the source, and pain in these muscles can also affect urinary, bowel, or sexual function. Deep breathing and meditation can provide relief. You can also release the pelvic floor muscles just like foam rolling your IT band. Use a one-foot long piece of a pool noodle and gently roll it just inside your ischial tuberosity to release these muscles externally, or use a pelvic wand to release them intravaginally. If you have persistent pelvic pain, pelvic floor physical therapy can help.

My Own Experience

As a bike racer from 2011-2014, I never did more than 100 miles in a single ride, but had about twice yearly visits to the doctor with about a week off the bike due to infected saddle sores. I had severe saddle discomfort after about 60 miles of riding due to too much pressure on my hamstrings tendons as well as some pelvic muscle pain. Currently I ride 1200ks and have done over 300 miles in one shot with no issues. Here's what I did:

- Had a bike fit by Curtis Cramblett at the 2016 Medicine of Cycling Conference, during which he demonstrated to a room full of physical therapists that my sit bone was on the seam of my bike shorts and off the edge of my saddle. I currently use shorts with the Elastic Interface endurance atomic Gem2 chamois and an Infinity E2 seat, with a 6 degree upward tilt. The width of the seat where I sit on it is 15.5 cm and my urethra is in the

Symptoms of pelvic muscle pain can vary from dull, deep pain similar to menstrual cramps to sharp, shooting pains depending on the source, and pain in these muscles can also affect urinary, bowel, or sexual function.

center of the cutout.

- Changed my hygiene routine. I stopped shaving, stopped using commercial chamois cream, and stopped using harsh antibacterial soaps on my perineal area. I use lantiseptic as saddle cream, wash salt off my perineal area with water only on hot days, and reapply lantiseptic as necessary. I use Johnson's baby shampoo to clean my perineal area. I haven't had a saddle sore in 2 years.
- Occasionally I get pelvic muscle soreness. I release these muscles and do hip rotation and pelvic floor stretches for relief.

Acknowledgments

I'd like to thank Dawn Piech, PT (#10146) for advice on wound care, Dana Kotler, MD for our years-long cycling medicine collaboration, and the many randonneurs who have discussed saddle issues with me. 🚲

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Random Thoughts BY CHRIS NEWMAN

Adding Two More States

This past May, I planned a road trip to attend a weekend of live music in Florida by way of Kentucky and Louisiana. Since I live in New Jersey, this was certainly not the most direct route but it was one that might provide a small degree of adventure.

My plan was to visit good friends in Louisville, head south to New Orleans to visit my nephew and then drive the relatively short distance to Florida's Gulf Coast. Coincidentally, or maybe not, I had not yet managed to participate in any RUSA rides in Kentucky or Louisiana.

My previous attempt to add Kentucky to my list of states had ended with my abandoning the ride for a variety of reasons. This time I chose a different permanent route, one that would traverse Kentucky horse country. The Louisiana route, New Orleans and Roundabout, was on the outskirts

of the city along a multi-use trail which hugged the Mississippi River.

Last October, I began my new, improved, semi-retirement work schedule of being in the clinic only one day per week. This allowed me to plan a 10-day adventure and only miss one day of work, a routine I hoped to repeat in my quest to ride in all 50 states.

This quest provides the perfect reason to travel to parts of the country I might not otherwise visit. Happily, it also provided an excuse to acquire a roof top tent for my car, a purchase I would have a very difficult time justifying if I

didn't so obviously need it to provide lodging in all the potentially remote regions I might be visiting!

My plan involved driving to Kentucky and camping out the first night close to the start of the Grazing in the Bluegrass 129k permanent.

I practiced setting up and taking down the roof top tent and jammed my car with camping equipment, my bike and associated gear, and assorted used furniture and cookware I was planning on gifting to my friends' daughter. The "gifts" would be replaced with suitcases when I picked up my wife and our friend at the airport in Florida.

My drive to Kentucky was uneventful but I arrived at the campground later than I had planned. It was the first weekend in May and the Kentucky Derby after party was in full swing. Although the site was crowded with campers and RVs of every size, my private little campsite was right on the bank of the Kentucky River. I woke up early the next morning to a Prothonotary Warbler sitting on my picnic table, singing his heart out. This camping thing was working out well so far!

The permanent started in Frankfort, the capitol city of Kentucky and home of Buffalo Trace bourbon distillery. The first several miles of the route traversed the Kentucky Bourbon Trail, and the many distilleries filled



You can't have too many sno-bliz stops in the Louisiana heat.

—PHOTOS CHRIS NEWMAN



My tent worked well as long as it wasn't too hot.

the air with their unique scent. At that early hour there was minimal traffic and the route was shady and only slightly hilly. Distilleries gradually gave way to horse farms and more sunshine but the traffic was still minimal and the route was absolutely lovely. I finished in a reasonable amount of time, disassembled and packed the bike and pointed the car west where dinner and a shower awaited me.

Two days later I was headed south to New Orleans, facing the prospect of a very steamy bike ride the following morning. When I arrived at the campground in the early evening, the temperature was still just above 90. I had a two-night reservation which was seeming a little ambitious considering the oppressive heat. I was assured I could cancel my second night before 11 a.m. the following day so I set up my tent, headed out for a local seafood dinner and "enjoyed" a not completely miserable night in the tent.

The permanent was an out and back which I started in the middle since it was directly across from the campground. The Mississippi River Trail, a paved, multiuse path, comprised most of the route and the scenery varied from back yards to refineries to downtown city blocks. The day was very hot and humid and the wind seemed to be always in my face. Still, it was an interesting ride, I was excited to share

the path with a flock of black-bellied whistling ducks (a bird native to the region and a new bird for me!), the bike path ensured it was safe, and I visited an area I would never have ventured to were it not for randonneuring.

I kept my campsite, which I used as a midpoint control to cool off, get water and ice and eat lunch and so I could shower and rest a bit after the ride. Camping another night in

the 90+ degree heat, however, was more adventure than I needed. After a fabulous dinner with my nephew, I left New Orleans to spend the night halfway to Pensacola in a lovely, air-conditioned hotel.

The adventure continued the next day with a visit to the Mississippi Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge where I was the only visitor and had an unplanned crawfish boil lunch in Pensacola while waiting for a delayed flight.

One of my favorite aspects of randonneuring is the opportunity it affords me to challenge myself to travel beyond my comfort zone and the familiarity of home. I have "officially" ridden in 32 states and am excited to visit, ride and camp in the remaining 18. 🚲

Lots of horses in Kentucky.



To The Moon! On a Bike!

BY STEPHEN HAZELTON

Gary Gottlieb made RUSA history on July 4th when he hit the 400,000 kilometer mark in completed RUSA events. That's a bit over the average distance from the earth to the moon – a quadruple Galaxy, an Ultra Mondial. We might just call it a “Moondial Award!”

Gary hails from the Fort Worth area in north Texas. He has been riding with Lone Star Randonneurs since 2004. Most commonly, he will be found riding a tandem with his wife, Dana Pacino, who, coincidentally, is well past the double Galaxy mark herself. In north Texas, the summers may be hot and the winters cold, but both are still generally rideable, so randonneuring is very much a year-round activity.

Gary has hit a number of randonneuring and personal riding goals along the way to the “Moondial.” One was completing 10 Super Randonneur (SR) series in a single year in 2015, with a lifetime total of a hundred or so. Since perms don't count for an SR series, this required riding every Lone Star Randonneurs event, plus numerous weekend road trips to hit every brevet in Houston, Austin, or Midland.

Another goal was the “most RUSA Ks in a year” effort, ramping up from 20,000+ in 2009, to 30,000+ in 2010 and 2011, and finally hitting 40,001 (a full Mondial) in 2012. On his 2010 effort, Gary and Charlie Fenske finished off the year by riding the same 200k route ten times in a row. And not just any old 200k route, but Elm Mott Trot, a route especially notable for chipseal, flatness, headwind, and a total lack of scenery once the corn is harvested!

Gary has dabbled in ultra-racing to keep things interesting. After being inspired to get into “Scary Gary” shape several years back, he won the Texas Time Trials 500 mile solo ultra-race two years in a row, and then he and Dana won the tandem division (and set a course record) on the 500 mile race the third year. Gary then stepped out of racing and worked as a volunteer at the same event for several years thereafter.

We local riders have spent many hours trailing along behind that tandem in wind and cold and heat and darkness. Dana tends to be quiet, but Gary makes up for it, so you'll eventually get educated on politics, cycling gear, computers, or any number of other topics, some best left unmentioned. At controls, “Who wants to ride bikes?” is his call to mount up. At the 600k overnights, “Five hours off the

Gary, Dana, and Dan Driscoll on a 1000k in Texas.

—PHOTO UNKNOWN



Gary and Dana on the day he hit the 400,000k mark this year.

—PHOTO DAN DRISCOLL

bike!” became the rule, which worked surprisingly well.

Gary believes in giving back to the sport, through route creation, route editing, hosting darts and other rides, and so on. He is quite often the informal leader on local rides. Since Gary does his own mechanic work, he’s a very handy co-rider to have along on a ride, and he’s always willing and able to help other riders.

These days, Gary and Dana primarily ride closer to home and usually do day rides of 200k or less. Although still working full-time, he and Dana generally manage to ride RUSA rides three days a week. Both are (of course!) on track to get their K-Hound or Hound-and-a-half for 2024.

Having ridden to the moon, the ride back now begins! 🚲

An advertisement for Dill Pickle gear. The top half shows a light blue bicycle with two blue panniers mounted on the rear rack, parked on a wooden deck. The bottom half features the text 'Dill Pickle.®' in a stylized green font, with a green pickle illustration to the left. Below this is the slogan 'Gear for the extra mile.' and a list of features: '• Lightweight', '• Customizable', and '• Functional'. At the bottom, the website 'www.dillpicklegear.com' and '• Designed and built by RUSA #3597' are listed.

Dill Pickle.®
Gear for the extra mile.

- Lightweight
- Customizable
- Functional

www.dillpicklegear.com • Designed and built by RUSA #3597

Interview with Ultra-Distance Cyclist Wiebke Lühmann

BY IWAN BARANKAY

Wiebke is a German rider from the picturesque town of Freiburg in Breggau, who one day was curious about what might happen if she just kept on cycling. That curiosity led her to do exactly that by going north as far as possible until she reached the North Cape after 30 days and 2,200 miles.

Now she is on another epic route, but this time she is riding – you guessed right – south all the way to South Africa: first across France, Portugal, Spain, and then via ferry to start her route along the western shore of Africa. As I talked to her for this interview, she was in Guinea at the halfway point of this epic journey and kindly agreed to answer some of my questions via email.

You have done many styles of cycling in the past before you started to do ultra-distance, self-supported solo



rides. Randonneuring, by contrast, is relatively “safe”- you have a route given to you, you know exactly how long it is, and after a while, you know exactly how to prepare for a 300k, 1200k ride, etc. Why do you choose to do these long solo rides?

I love to see the world — and to feel free at the same time. That is why I chose the bike. I have done triathlon and road cycling before I started bike touring. Once I discovered that bikes and travel can be combined, I was hooked. The bike allows me to be fully self-supported and flexible at the same time.

How do you prepare physically?

I don't. I enjoy endurance sports a lot, which is why I am in good shape and always active. I love to push, love to feel my body and see my progress. The “right shape” for what I am doing comes along the way naturally, so I usually do not train before a bike touring trip.

Good coffee has been easy to find.

—PHOTO WIEBKE LÜHMANN

How do you prepare mentally? Are you driven by goals or milestones, or are you driven by curiosity or a sense of power/independence/freedom?

I'm driven by curiosity and the sense of independence. That's it. Every day is super rewarding, different, and exciting. Traveling by bike never gets boring, and challenges are part of the fun. The miles, the hours, the days fly by. I like to keep stats, but it's not all about them.

I am sure you get this question a lot, and I am trying to figure out how best to ask this, but many women (and even men!) would be hesitant to take on a ride like this across Africa for fear of known and unknown risks. What can you tell us about that hesitation and how to overcome it?

I totally understand. I have also had these thoughts. And even more so because many people (online and offline) have questioned my plans and my ideas. I had to explain, justify, and often also give detailed answers to very broad questions like “Isn't it dangerous?” Yes, there are risks. But Africa is a huge continent, and I will be crossing 22 countries. So far, all the countries and the people especially have been very welcoming. I take it day by day. So far, every day has been very good, and I am slowly overcoming my “fear of the fear,” which is this abstract, subconscious, and non-evidential fear and all the prejudices that most white people have about Africa.



In Morocco.

—PHOTO WIEBKE LÜHMANN

The dessert was actually quite enjoyable.

—PHOTO JULEIN SOLEIL



Since you left Germany, what have you learned about the things that you thought would be important but turned out not to be (in terms of logistics, equipment, physical, or mental preparation)?

The water and food supply in the Sahara was by far not as hard as I thought. Crossing the Sahara was actually the easiest part so far for me. It was beautiful and stunning, with great roads and lots of tailwind, so that I could really enjoy the long days on the bike.

What things did you not anticipate but turned out to be important in terms of what makes the whole experience worthwhile and keeps you going?

Senegal, The Gambia, Guinea-Bissau – my first West African countries after the Sahara have surprised me with amazingly beautiful places, great food, and friendly people. For some reason I did not expect that I would enjoy these

places so much. I often thought, “Oh, this is probably the last nice place/food/person I will meet in a long time.” But there was always the next nice place, and as a tourist, you can really experience the beautiful sides of Africa easily. This keeps me going at the moment. Wild camping here is great, and it is fun to cross these countries by bike.

A specific question raised by other Randonneurs: how do you deal with wildlife (not just dogs) during the ride and at night?

Since Senegal, dogs are not a problem anymore. People here have fewer dogs and more livestock like cows, goats, and pigs. Other wild animals are very rare to see. I wish I were able to see more. I saw dolphins twice. :) Dangerous animals are not a problem at all here. Maybe later in the south, there will be elephants. I might worry about that in 8,000 kilometers.

What did you learn about nutrition for rides like this? There is all this talk about carbo-loading for performance or eating fats for endurance. Do you pay attention to your nutrition other than ensuring it does not make you sick, or are you just taking in what you can find?

I don’t really pay attention. The intensity is low, and the rides are not super long all the time. So, I just eat what I feel like. The local food is great, and it is also part of experiencing a country. I have oats in the morning; the rest changes.

Is there a story, event, or experience that stuck with you on your journey so far?

Not just one, but many. Recently, the beautiful wild camping spots on hidden beaches in Mauritania, Senegal, and Guinea-Bissau. But also the Sahara crossing. Or the Atlas mountain crossing. It is really hard to pick one.

Thank you, Wiebke, and Bonne Route! 🚲

The Gamblers 1000K

PROLOGUE BY ERIC LARSEN (#7247) AND
RIDE REPORT BY ANDY LIEBERMAN (#14857)

I first rode through Death Valley in 2013 with the Pacific Coast Highway Randonneurs on the Las Vegas to Los Angeles ride created by Willie Hunt. It was a challenging but phenomenal ride, so a couple years later when Willie asked if I'd be interested in riding another of his point-to-point routes – the Eastern Sierra 600k starting in Reno and finishing in Lone Pine, California, in early May – I was in. Point-to-point routes present logistical challenges, of course. At the end of this ride, I rode 400k back through Death Valley under 100 degree skies, to finish at 3 a.m. in Las Vegas, just under 75 hours after the start in Reno.

Thus began my work drafting the entire route as a single 1000k with plans to run it a little earlier in the year for more manageable Death Valley temperatures. However, while Terry Hunt was reviewing the route, he realized that some of the roads on the first day around Mono Lake in the Eastern Sierra, which were above 8,000 feet, would not be open until May 1st. So I began looking at options to go

east earlier, and NV-50, 'The Loneliest Highway,' offered a viable option. With that I developed the first draft of Gamblers 1000k and put it on the calendar for 2019.

Due to some blasting and a highway closed to bicycles, I had to revise the route and skip Tecopa Hot Springs and Pyramid Lake to go north through Pahrump and into Las Vegas on I-95. We had 22 start and 22 finish in 2019.

Even with the revisions, the route was amazing. And even I-95 was amazing due to a triple tanker load of paint that had tipped over, shutting down the freeway to all except cyclists for some 30 miles!

The opportunity to run the original route arose in 2024, and I set the rider limit to 22 due to very limited lodging available in Austin, NV. The ride sold out on the first day! But then I learned that Death Valley National Park would require an ambulance for an event with more than 20 participants. We sorted this dilemma out by Tony and myself opting to pre-ride.

My other problem was supporting the ride. Much of the route is extremely remote, with stretches of 50 to 80 miles between services and no late night services at the overnight controls of Austin or Beatty, NV. But surprisingly, I got a mysterious text in January: "I can help with Gamblers." It was Brian Koss, who had ridden in 2019 – he would do bag drops. Then Kevin withdrew from the roster and offered to ride in the support vehicle with Brian. Terri Boykins from Pacific Coast Highway Randonneurs also volunteered. She would meet us in Goldfield, sweep back to Beatty on Day Two, help in Death Valley, and sweep all the way to Las Vegas.

Tony and I pre-rode unsupported two weeks ahead. I mailed drop bags to the hotels, but otherwise we were on



Claire Mirocha, Noah Swartz,
Paul Liu, Andy Lieberman, and
Mirko Montanari at the finish.

—PHOTO PAUL LIU



You know there is a stiff headwind when you see randos in a paceline.

—PHOTO PHOTO PAUL LIU

our own – even on the 80 miles out of Death Valley from Furnace Creek to Shoshone. We were challenged with temperatures in the low 20s on the first night and the risk of snow over the pass after Austin, but were graced with 20 mph tailwinds the entire 200 miles to Beatty and on through Death Valley. We soaked happily for a short break in Tecopa after the tough 80 miles and were stunned by the crystal lights of Las Vegas as we descended from Mountain Springs to our finish.

Our riders two weeks later would have something of a different experience.

Rolling the Dice on the Gamblers 1000k by Andy Lieberman

With a couple of successful 600k events under my belt, I decided to raise the stakes and try a 1000k. I set my sights on the Gamblers 1000k because I love the desert, and this ride would let me experience it in a way I never had before, and a way that would be difficult and dangerous without organized support.

Phil Fox summed it up well: “Reno to Vegas. 1000k. Highway 50. Toiyabe Forest. Death Valley. For a flatlander from the midwest, I couldn’t think of anything more outside of my comfort zone. But 1000k is my favorite distance. And to do it one-way with hotels and drop bags? Can’t beat that.”

The late April timing made it a good training event for longer events

in the summer. However, as Brook Henderson notes, “Train and plan well. This ride was significantly more difficult than it looked on paper.” However, it is hard to do that when, as Richard Andrew noted, “The ride was entirely dependent on the weather conditions. You just have to roll with what you get.”

Day 1 – Reno to Austin, NV: 200+ miles of high desert joy

We rolled out right at 6 a.m., and cruising under the famous Reno arch, I settled in with a nice group led by seasoned randos Tak Noguchi and Juliayn Coleman. Thanks to their strong and steady pulls, we made great time to Fallon at mile 93, where rider Greg Janess grew up. His mom even stopped by the mini-mart parking lot to say ‘Hi,’ which Noah Swartz later cited as one of the highlights from the ride.

I wanted to keep the stop in Fallon short and take a longer break at the next control, so I pulled out with Paul Liu, Mirko Montanari, and Pierre Moreels. I was pleasantly surprised to get to Middle Gate (mile 142) and see that the fast riders were still there, enjoying burgers, fries, and live music. Richard reminisced that “The whole experience was really enhanced by the locals. Everyone we met was super friendly and curious.”

Fueled up and rested, Paul and I took off together and enjoyed the climbs, descents and photo ops as we

made our way to Austin, NV, getting in earlier than expected, tired but elated by the experience of riding through long stretches of wide open high desert scenery. As Eric had told us, going through on a bicycle gives a totally different perspective of distance, size, and majesty than you can ever get from a motor vehicle. Throughout the day, I must have said twenty times, “This is what I signed up for!”

Day 2 – Austin to Beatty via a 150-mile wind tunnel

According to the odds-makers, we should have had a tailwind, but the Rando Gods decided that would be too easy, so they gave us a headwind instead. Any rando knows that a brevet will have some sections that you have to slog through. What made this ride different is the sheer length of each slog and the lack of respite.

A bunch of us left at 5 a.m., enjoying the first 60 miles riding the Tak-Juliayn-Claire Mirocha train. But then the winds started kicking up. Paul Liu and I ended up slogging it out together for the next 150 miles of riding straight into the wind. At times we traded pulls and rode along with others, but riding in a paceline for multiple hours at a time is mentally and ergonomically tiring, so we also just rode together and chatted. Other times we rode in silence. We knew that after the lunch stop at mile 117, there weren’t any services until Beatty. There was even a highway sign that ominously warned, “No gas, next 93 miles.” Eric set up a control at mile 146, which let us top off on water and food. Those last 54 miles of the day got really tough with the winds making us work even on the descents. There was also a lot of 80+ mph traffic, separated by a wide shoulder and rumble strip, but it added to the stress.

I knew it was going to be a grind, and it was. However, the views were epic, the camaraderie with the other randos was uplifting, and the support from the organizers was comforting. Not a day I would want to repeat, but one I am proud to have under my belt.

Day 3 – Beatty to Las Vegas via Death Valley

Eric had told us repeatedly that this would be the toughest day and that we needed to get rolling by 4 a.m. at the latest to beat the heat and winds.

Paul and I rolled out right at 4 a.m. with Mirko, Noah, and Claire. We had a nice climb under the full moon out of Beatty, and we started the descent into Death Valley as day was breaking. That was truly magical! Once again, I found myself gushing, “This is what I signed up for!”

We cruised into Death Valley’s Furnace Creek (mile 41) before 8 a.m. in high spirits. We fueled up and started along the valley floor to Badwater (mile 58, elevation: 200 feet) Both the winds and heat were stronger than expected and getting worse. Claire is a super strong rider and went ahead. The rest of us went into self-defense mode and were riding our own ride.

Badwater to Ashford Mills (mile 86) was brutal: unobstructed strong

winds and high temps for hours on end. Progress was slow, and I was getting demoralized knowing how far we still had to ride. Fortunately, the support team provided roving water. As I suffered, I admired the epic views and gained a whole new appreciation of the size and beauty of the Death Valley salt flats.

Eric set up a control at Ashford Mills that gave us a little bit of shade and lots of cold drinks and snacks. I felt alright but was getting nervous about the 120 miles that lay ahead. I wasn’t mentally or logistically prepared for 3700+ feet of climbing in fully exposed sun. It was only 4-5%, but I was struggling to keep moving. Paul, Mirko, Noah, and I were all leap-frogging each other in slow motion.

We had until 9 a.m. to get to Vegas, so in theory there was still plenty of time, but I was pretty deflated and wondering if the wind and heat would ever die down, especially given that there wasn’t any way to escape them. Quitting was starting to cross my mind!

I was about halfway up and really starting to doubt myself when Terri Boykins appeared in her van and asked how I was doing. I replied, “Pretty bad.” Terri instantly and expertly got me hydrated and cooled down. Most importantly, she got me on the right mental page. I asked her how everyone

Eric Larsen (r.) and Brain Koss (l.) maintaining the awning in the wind at the Ashford Mills control.

—PHOTO GREG JANNESS

else was doing and if anyone had dropped. Her answer was something to the effect of, “No one yet, and no one is going to drop out on my watch!” After that, I basically knew I could and had to push through and finish, even though it wasn’t going to be easy.

I finally got to the summit as the sun was starting to set and descended into Shoshone in the twilight. It would have been a fast and fun descent if I were feeling good. Instead, I just kept my speed in check and focused on the road.

I caught Paul and Mirko at the Shoshone market (mile 115). Now that it was cooler, I was feeling better. I washed the sunscreen, salt, and dust off my face. After a quick Cup o’Noodles and Gatorade, I headed on to Tecopah (mile 122) where Eric had set up a control. I got there just as Noah and Claire were heading out. Mirko was getting ready to head out.

The Tecopah control is special because it is located next to a famous hot spring. I had been planning on taking a ditch nap, but Claire, Eric, and volunteer Kevin Williams convinced me that the hot springs would be more rejuvenating, so I dashed over, caught Paul still there, and took a quick shower and soak. I am glad I listened to them!

When Paul and I got back to the rest stop, Eric served us grilled cheese sandwiches and potato leek soup. We scarfed those down and got rolling. By this point it was close to 10 p.m. and we’d been awake since 3:15 a.m. with 83 miles to go, including some substantive climbs and descents. Also, there would be no water or other services for the next 63 miles.

At least the winds had generally died down, but progress was still slow

After the obligatory shot of the Reno arch, the group was excited to hit the road.

—PHOTO ERIC LINSER





due to fatigue, darkness, and some bad roads. We caught Mirko, and at some point later caught up with Noah and Claire. The big climb along the highway felt pretty safe because of the wide shoulder separated from traffic by rumble strips. Even with a lot of caffeine, I was feeling sleepy and struggling to eat and drink. It also got chilly (high 40s), and I had left my leg warmers and other heaviest layers in my drop bag. The cold helped keep us moving and pushing harder. We finally got to the summit and then had an 11 mile descent; I kept my speed in control and felt concentrated enough to be safe.

Around 5 a.m. we got to the gas station (mile 186) that would be the last chance to warm up, rest up, and fuel up. The woman working there had been on her shift since 9 p.m. and eagerly gave us updates on the other riders who had stopped by earlier, starting with Brook Henderson around 11 p.m. After another Cup o'Noodles and a breakfast sandwich, I was feeling better.

An ominous sign, no doubt.
—PHOTO PHIL FOX

The only place to sit was where they had a few slot machines. Since it was the Gamblers 1000, I put in a \$5 bill, played twice, and almost doubled my money. I quickly cashed out and used my winnings to buy a gallon of water that I shared with the other randos who had now joined us. It was now Mirko, Claire, Noah, Tak, Juliayn, and Renato Arnoco.

The eight of us headed out together around 6 a.m. We had 20 miles to go, with one climb, and then a descent into Vegas. The sun was back up, it was

warming up, and the end was in sight, but I was fatigued and not feeling great.

We stopped for photos at Red Rock Canyon and got to the hotel casino finish line control at 7:20 a.m., for a 27:20 day, and a 73:20 total time. What an adventure! What a challenge! The ride exceeded my expectations in every way, and I feel an eternal bond to my fellow riders, including the ones I failed to mention by name in this writeup. I am especially grateful to Eric, Brian Koss, Kevin, and Terri for supporting the ride. 🚲



Other Ways to Win

Many roads lead to success in ultra distance cycling. In Lee Craigie's case, these roads began in the mountains of her childhood in the Scottish Highlands and passed through a period when she worked as an innovative therapist for marginalized youth and then through a successful career as a competitive mountain bike racer. In *Other Ways to Win*, Craigie shares this circuitous journey with us while making several engaging pitstops along the way.

Like many of us, Craigie was introduced to cycling early in life and brings this spirit of freedom and adventure into her adult relationship with the sport. This book reads like a

collection of interconnected stories rather than a single narrative memoir which she explains felt "self-indulgent at best and megalomaniacal at worst." Across these pages we learn about her childhood, her life as a young teacher, her time as a professional mountain bike racer, and some of her more gonzo experiences in ultra-distance cycling such as the Tour Divide Race, the Silk Road Mountain Race and several other off-piste adventures.

Throughout these stories, the values of friendship and cooperation run deep. Ultra distance cycling can be a particularly isolating and individualized discipline, but it's clear from these pages that Craigie seeks out the collaborative opportunities in these adventures as much as possible. She takes on several of these races and adventures with partners and even full teams as we see in the Tour

Other Ways to Win

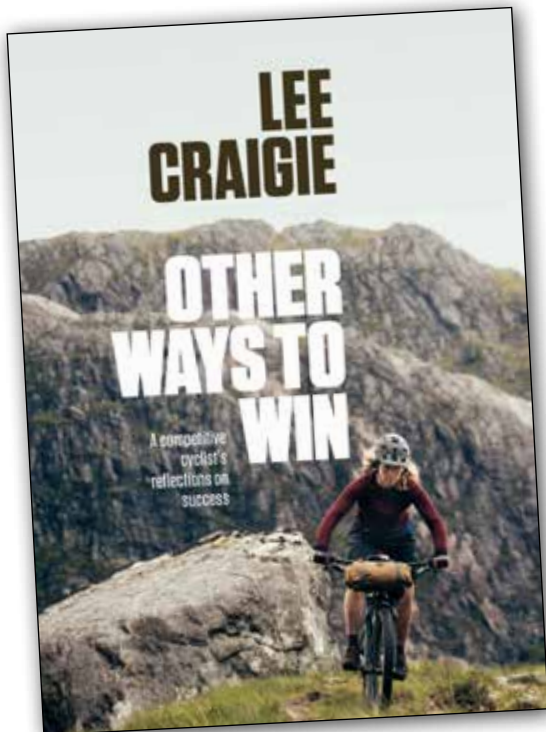
by Lee Craigie

Vertebrate Publishing.
192 pages. 2023.

Divide, the Silk Road Mountain Race, and the North Coast 550. As you might expect, not all her adventures end as planned, which was certainly the case on the Tour Divide race that also became the subject of a prize-winning film she and her partner made entitled simply "Divided."

Service has also been an important feature of Craigie's life, so when she loses faith in the mainstream cycling industry after some frustrating experiences, she pledges to use these experiences as well as her perspective and privilege to create more equitable and just opportunities for others. Teaming up with several like-minded cyclists, such as Emily Chappell and Jenny Graham, she founded The Adventure Syndicate, a nonprofit organization devoted to supporting women and promoting their stories in endurance cycling. While this unique organization's work is not examined in great detail in these pages, more information is available on their website.

Though Craigie never writes about experiences with randonneuring or audax events directly – she seems to have made the leap from competitive mountain bike racing to competitive bikepacking racing without a stop in





our noncompetitive corner of the cycling world – I suspect randonneurs will find much to relate to in these pages and that she would, in turn, find much of value in the world of permanents, brevets, and organized noncompetitive team events. Like randonneurs, she understands that success is all about managing and compartmentalizing pain while at the same time continuing to do the very thing that is causing the discomfort.

While her successes as a bike racer reflect a fierce competitive spirit, Craigie is keen on the fact that there are other ways to win and to do so with others as either a coach or a teammate is to respond to a higher calling. As she writes in the preface, “there is no definitive way to win. My only hope is that these stories inspire some sort of personal reflection on what winning means to each of us, but also what it means to us as part of something much bigger and wilder and timeless.” The stories certainly had that effect

on me, and I hope they will on you, as well. Craigie is a strong storyteller with compelling stories to tell.

On a personal note, I’ve learned a few valuable lessons about patience, aging, and healing this year. Following back surgery in February, I slowly returned to some measure of cycling form, but it has taken far longer than I would ever have imagined. It turns out that nerve damage heals somewhat differently than muscle and bone damage does. It is not as linear or predictable and takes far longer. Closing in on 60 doesn’t help and what once might have cleared up more quickly now seems to hang around without resolution for much longer. All these factors demand a new approach to problem solving than one I have previously employed.

Instead of throwing myself into a high volume and intensity of training, I listened to wiser voices who convinced me that with patience and determination, progress and long-term

Lee Craigie photographed by an anonymous three-year old Kyrgyz child (during the Silk Road Race.)

Book cover on facing page.

—PHOTO MACIEK TOMICZEK

improvements would be more likely. As a result, rather than somehow squeeze a full Super Randonneur series into the late spring, I slowly ramped up from a series of flat 100k perms to my first 100k gravel grinder and most recently a 200k brevet. In addition, I’ve built a consistent stretching and strengthening practice I hope to continue into the months and years ahead to ensure greater back health and endurance over the long haul. While this injury may have set back the clock on a few of my big goals, I learned a few things, made a few changes, and now have greater confidence that 2025 will be a biggie! 🚲

The Challenge Lepertel Award

BY PAUL FOLEY

At its general assembly in 2019, Les Randonneurs Mondiaux (LRM) adopted the new Challenge Lepertel Award. The award recognizes riders who complete a 1200km or longer event (LRM event or PBP) in each of four consecutive years, but not all in the same country.

This award commemorates former Audax Club Parisian (ACP) President Robert Lepertel, who reinvigorated Paris-Brest-Paris and was instrumental in the founding and early development of Les Randonneurs Mondiaux.

THE MAN

Robert “Bob” Lepertel was born in Bégard, in northern Brittany, in 1924. During World War II, he lived

and worked in the suburbs of northern Paris, riding his bicycle to and from work. However, in a previous interview with American Randonneur, he said his involvement in cycling came around because of dancing. “During the war there were limits on what we could do, and the authorities did not allow large gatherings since they were afraid of resistance movements developing. A group of us wanted to organize dances

and social gatherings, but one of the few things possible in those days were sporting clubs. So, we became a ‘cycling club’ under the banner of the Federation Française de Cyclotourisme (FFCT, the national French touring league). This got us our permit, and with that we could rent halls. Our club was named the Sporting Association of Errant Companions. Out of our 110-120 members, perhaps four or five of us actually did any bicycling. Our ‘cycling club’ had no regular ride schedule or rules, but a handful of us rode little rallies on Sunday mornings. It was fun.”

Monsieur Lepertel rode his first ACP 200 km brevet in 1943. He became very active as a rider and organizer founding the Cyclo Camping Club in 1947, and numerous bicycling events that drew hundreds of participants. He also helped organize the FFCT’s Cyclo-Camping section, and worked to promote cooperation among cycling clubs in the 1950s in the Paris region as president of the cycling league. Shortly after the ACP merged with Vélo Club de Courbevoie Asnières (VCCA) around 1964, at a time when both clubs were struggling, he helped organize the 1966 edition of Paris-Brest-Paris (PBP). M. Lepertel was the ACP President from 1972 to 1983, and organized seven editions of PBP from 1966 to 1995 (excluding 1991). He oversaw the growth of PBP from about 173 participants in 1966 to over 2800 participants in 1995. He always gave great credit to



Atop the beautiful Crater Lake in Oregon.

—PHOTO PAUL FOLEY



the assistance and support he received from his wife Suzanne, and club members who appreciated his efforts.

Robert became the first President of Les Randonneurs Mondiaux (LRM) when it was founded in 1983, and later took on the duties of treasurer. In honor of his passing in 2013, and his tremendous contributions to randonneuring, LRM adopted the Challenge Lepertel Award in 2019.

THE AWARD

Riders achieve the Challenge Lepertel Award by completing four different events as follows:

- A 1200 km or longer event in each of 4 consecutive calendar years.
- Eligible events are Paris-Brest-Paris, or any event sanctioned by Les Randonneurs Mondiaux.
- Not all four events may start in the same country.
- The first event can be in calendar year 2019 or later.

Although some adjustments had to be made for the disruptions caused by the global coronavirus pandemic of 2020, the first international group of 71 awardees were recognized in 2022. This group includes 23 members of RUSA and one additional one from 2023. A hearty "Chapeau!" to all these riders.

The award application can be found on Les Randonneurs Mondiaux web site (https://www.randonneurs-mondiaux.org/50-Challenge_Lepertel.html), and should be submitted to RUSA for processing.

HOW I DID IT

Truth be told, I did not know I had achieved the Challenge Lepertel Award until Dave Thompson notified me by email. The news was like getting \$200 simply for passing GO! How could I achieve an award I didn't work for? This is one of my motivations for writing this article. News of this award must be spread far and wide,

Fulfilling a longtime dream to ride in Ireland.

—PHOTO PAUL FOLEY

Although randonneuring is certainly a niche sport, I have met many new friends around the country, and now in different countries, through this expansion.



R. to L. Paul, Vernon Smith, and Jim Howell at PBP in 2019.

—PHOTO UNKNOWN

not only to honor Monsieur Lepertel but also to motivate others to explore the numerous grand randonnées available throughout the world.

In general, I like the idea of randonneuring awards to help me set goals for my cycling, and to broaden the horizons in which I ride. I have been blessed to ride in many different areas of these United States, guided by the many available brevets and permanents offered by RUSA. I have also begun to expand my cycling realm through the many longer brevets offered by Les Randonneurs Mondiaux. Although randonneuring is certainly a niche sport, I have met many new friends around the country, and now in different countries, through this expansion.

My unconscious path to the Challenge Lepertel Award began in 2019 when I was able to complete Paris-Brest-Paris (PBP) and the Texas Hound Dog 1200k. This edition of

PBP fulfilled the requirement that “not all four events may start in the same country.” I rode PBP in 2019 with my “randonneuring spouse” Vernon Smith. Vernon and I have been randonneuring together since 2002, and this was our fourth PBP together. I have had more trips to France with Vernon than with my wife Nancy, but I’m working on correcting this discrepancy. We had the pleasure of intermittently riding with many fellow Coloradans on this edition of PBP, reunited with many RUSA anciens, and eventually finished with Jim Howell, who was finishing his first PBP.

Due to the COVID pandemic, I did not complete any 1200+km events in 2020, but the provisions of the award during this pandemic claiming period of 2019-2022 allowed me to substitute rides I completed in 2021 and 2022.

The Craters 1200k, which I rode in the fall of 2021, is an unforgettable, one-way ride through Washington and

Oregon, departing from the suburbs of Seattle, riding towards Mount Rainier, crossing the Columbia river, following the Oregon coast, and turning inland for a prolonged climb to Crater Lake. We started the morning after a significant storm that left downed power lines and fallen trees, and continued rains that initially hampered our progress. Once reaching the Oregon coast, we were rewarded with incredible views of the sea cliffs, beaches, and stacks. The climb to Crater Lake National Park is about 80 miles long and culminates in spectacular views of a volcanic-crater lake (hence the name) that is the deepest lake in the United States and famous for its deep blue color and pristine water.

Following my retirement in May 2022, I was able to ride two additional international events, the Mile Fáilte around Killarney Ireland and the Granite Anvil in Ontario Canada, thus fulfilling the Challenge Lepertel Award criteria.

I had long dreamed of returning to my ancestral homeland of Ireland for a grand randonnée, as I have always felt that bicycling is one of the best ways to experience new sites and scenery, and I was not disappointed. They do not call Ireland the “Emerald Isle” without reason, and the intermittent rains that we experienced certainly provided for the lush greenery of this beautiful country. However, the penultimate day of this ride around the Ring of Kerry and along the Dingle Peninsula were highlighted by beautiful blue skies and dry weather. The warmth and welcome of the Irish people enhanced my journey and made me feel at home, as did the sustenance of many a pint of Guinness. I was also privileged to meet many new Irish Randoneeur friends, whom I would see again in succeeding events, such as London-Edinburgh-London and PBP

The warmth and welcome of the Irish people enhanced my journey and made me feel at home, as did the sustenance of many a pint of Guinness.

2023. Unfortunately, my roommate on this ride (who shall remain nameless, but he knows who he is) succumbed to the effects of COVID, and he was gracious enough to share this infection with me, much to the chagrin of my wife upon my return home.

The 2022 edition of the Granite Anvil is memorable for many reasons. Vernon Smith, John Lee Ellis, and I road tripped together, making the 1,700 mile drive from Denver to Ottawa Canada for this ride, enjoying many a book on tape along the way. In total, eight Colorado riders started the ride, along with randonneuring friends I had previously met from Calgary, Arizona, and California. Although we had some torrential rainfall at the end of day one and beginning of day two, the beautiful forests and lakes were a highlight of this trip, and offset the extremely

challenging, and seemingly never ending steep rolling terrain. As usual, the excellent volunteer crew that Dave Thompson organized for this ride was vital to the success we enjoyed.

Grand randonnées of 1200+ km are an extreme challenge for even the strongest and most experienced riders, but they can have many rewards, physically, mentally, and socially. I hope this introduction to the Challenge Lepertel Award might provide some inspiration for those considering their next, or first, grand randonnée and lead them to consider an international event to complete this award's requirements. With the plethora of domestic grand randonnées available thru RUSA and LRM, it would only require one international trip. Yes, I know, much easier said than done!

Bonne route and bon courage ! 🚲

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



Challenge Lepertel Award

NAME	CITY, STATE	YEAR
Hamid Akbarian	Lanham, MD	2022
Randy T Anderson	Peoria, IL	2022
Robert Brudvik	Edmonds, WA	2022
J Andrew Clayton	Powell, OH	2022
Mimo DeMarco	Arlington, VA	2022
Dan Driscoll	Arlington, TX	2022
Paul A Foley	Golden, CO	2022
Misha Marin Heller (F)	Alexandria, VA	2022
Mitch Ishihara	Issaquah, WA	2022
Stephen P Kenny	Calgary, AB, CANADA	2022
Charlie A Martin	Sunnyvale, CA	2022
Vincent Muoneke	Federal Way, WA	2022
Jeff Newberry	Austin, TX	2022
Thai Nguyen	Bothell, WA	2022
Frederic Perman	Pierrefonds, QC, CANADA	2022
Vernon M Smith	Monument, CO	2022
Michael R Sturgill	Phoenix, AZ	2022
Bradford D Tanner	Concord, NH	2022
Mark Thomas	Kirkland, WA	2022
W David Thompson	New Smyrna Beach, FL	2022
Joseph H Todd	Decatur, GA	2022
John D'Elia	Middletown, CT	2023

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.

Randonneur 10000 Award

NAME	CITY, STATE	APPROVED
Phil Fox II	Chicago, IL	5/8/24

Randonneur 5000 Award

NAME	CITY, STATE	APPROVED
Greg Cardell	Valencia, CA	5/25/24
Brian K Feinberg	Cupertino, CA	5/29/24
Greg Janess	Berkeley, CA	6/7/24
Sandra G Myers (F)	Diablo, CA	5/14/24
Takahiro Noguchi	Berkeley, CA	6/16/24
Ioannis Sarkas	San Carlos, CA	5/20/24
Noah Swartz	Oakland, CA	6/10/24

RUSA American Explorer Award

NAME	CITY, STATE	TOTAL STATES	APPROVED
Adams, Charles J	Midland, TX	48	7/12/24
Anderson, Randy T	Peoria, IL	28	6/16/24
Brining, Doug	Galveston, TX	11	6/17/24
Cardell, Greg	Valencia, CA	10	7/25/24
Chernekkoff, Janice [F]	Lyon Station, PA	21	6/20/24
Chin-Hong, Patrick	Amherst, MA	32	6/13/24
Driscoll, Dan [1]	Arlington, TX	23	7/27/24
Evangelista, Michael H	Metuchen, NJ	10	6/11/24
Fambles, Millison D	Olympia, WA	42	6/20/24
Foley, Paul A	Golden, CO	49	5/24/24
Kanaby, Gary	Salado, TX	19	6/9/24
Lakwete, Angela [F]	Auburn, AL	15	6/22/24
Martin, Charlie A	Sunnyvale, CA	29	7/29/24
McHenry, Thomas	Pasadena, CA	21	7/24/24
Nichols, David Andrew	New York, NY	15	6/26/24
Nicholson, Jack	Arnold, MD	10	7/9/24
Peterson, Eric	Naperville, IL	24	5/6/24
Ray, Joseph	Bernardsville, NJ	20	5/27/24
Rodeghier, Richard A	Ivins, UT	17	7/27/24
Rogers, Jefferson	Wilmette, IL	21	7/28/24
Russell, Amy L [F]	Waco, TX	17	6/30/24
Tompkin, Frederick J	Savannah, GA	16	7/9/24
Turek, Michael Gerald	Longmont, CO	10	6/9/24
Williams, Kevin J	Carmichael, CA	10	7/5/24
Wright, Pamela [F]	Fort Worth, TX	50	7/17/24

RUSA Rouler Award

NAME	CITY, STATE	APPROVED
Dylan A Belverud	Big Lake, MN	5/14/24
Debbie Breaud (F) [3]	Arlington, TX	5/18/24
Mark Brogan [2]	San Jose, CA	7/8/24
Gregory Cox [2]	Seattle, WA	6/27/24
Rose Cox (F) [2]	Seattle, WA	6/27/24
Dragi Gasevski [2]	West Bloomfield, MI	7/8/24
Brian Leu	Hillsborough, NC	7/22/24
Lois Springsteen (F) [2]	Santa Cruz, CA	7/8/24
Nicole A Truesdell (F)	Seattle, WA	6/30/24
Rob Welsh [3]	Apple Valley, MN	7/17/24

RUSA Cup Award

NAME	CITY, STATE	APPROVED
Jon Batek	Batavia, IL	7/6/24
Greg Cardell [2]	Valencia, CA	7/25/24
Michael Fretz	Berkeley, CA	6/30/24
Ben Schauland	Seattle, WA	6/18/24
Frederick J Tompkin	Savannah, GA	7/9/24

Mondial Award

NAME	CITY, STATE	APPROVED
Mimo DeMarco	Arlington, VA	7/5/24
Russell Dorobek	Austin, TX	7/8/24
Norman Ehrentreich	Shoreview, MN	6/11/24
Gary P Gottlieb [10]	Aledo, TX	7/5/24
Grant McAlister [2]	Morro Bay, CA	7/4/24
Andreas Prandelli	Forked River, NJ	6/20/24
Geoff Swarts [4]	Mukilteo, WA	5/21/24

Ultra Randonneur Award

NAME	CITY, STATE	APPROVED
Christopher C. Slocum	Toms River, NJ	6/24/24
Mick Walsh	Seattle, WA	5/23/24

Rando Scout Award

NAME (25-49 unique routes)	CITY, STATE	APPROVED
Gregory, Scott D	Saint Paul, MN	5/16/24
Higley, Phil I	Spring Lake Park, MN	5/16/24
Jeter, Lukas A	North Bend, WA	6/27/24
Jones, Lisa	Moorspark, CA	7/1/24
Jones, Lloyd	Westminster, CO	5/14/24
Lewis, Thomas	Seattle, WA	5/21/24
Marsh, David R	Apple Valley, MN	7/17/24
McKenzie, Kyle R	Falls Church, VA	7/3/24
Mulder, Fred	Seattle, WA	6/27/24
Schauland, Ben	Seattle, WA	6/7/24
Stanis, Ryan J	Philadelphia, PA	7/18/24
Taylor, James C	Cottage Grove, OR	5/20/24
Vajda, James	Oxford, OH	5/20/24

NAME (50-74 unique routes)	CITY, STATE	APPROVED
Cazalas, Matthew L	El Cajon, CA	7/10/24
Karpick, Jonathan	Cleveland, OH	5/25/24
McGuire, Brian R	Phoenix, AZ	6/28/24
Olsen, Bob	Annandale, NY	6/3/24
Stolz, Sarah	Seattle, WA	5/31/24

NAME (75-99 unique routes)	CITY, STATE	APPROVED
Dembinski, Jan Peter	Woodstock, VT	6/17/24
Ishihara, Mitch	Issaquah, WA	6/3/24
Stroethoff, Karel	Missoula, MT	7/25/24
Walsh, Mick	Seattle, WA	5/21/24

NAME (100-124 unique routes)	CITY, STATE	APPROVED
Hazelton, Stephen	Garland, TX	6/29/24

NAME (175-199 unique routes)	CITY, STATE	APPROVED
Wright, Pamela	Fort Worth, TX	5/18/24

Galaxy Award

NAME	CITY, STATE	APPROVED
Gary P Gottlieb [4]	Aledo, TX	7/5/24
Gary Kanaby	Salado, TX	6/23/24
Christine Newman (F)	Skillman, NJ	7/3/24

RUSA Awards

P-12 Award

NAME	CITY, STATE	APPROVED
Randy T Anderson [5]	Peoria, IL	6/5/24
Wallace J Bigler	Houston, TX	7/13/24
Doug Brining	Galveston, TX	6/17/24
Sharan L Daniel (F) [3]	Seattle, WA	5/27/24
Gary P Gottlieb [12]	Aledo, TX	6/3/24
Christopher Heg [6]	Seattle, WA	6/21/24
Kerin Huber (F) [10]	Pasadena, CA	7/18/24
Shaun Ivory [4]	Woodinville, WA	7/2/24
Ken Knutson [11]	Tracy, CA	5/10/24
Matt Kreger [4]	Redmond, WA	7/29/24
Richard Lentz [4]	Vineland, NJ	5/22/24
Thomas McHenry [3]	Pasadena, CA	7/24/24
Doug McLerran [3]	Aurora, IL	7/8/24
Thai Nguyen [2]	Bothell, WA	7/4/24
Tohma Nguyen [2]	Bothell, WA	7/4/24
Dana A Pacino (F) [7]	Aledo, TX	6/3/24
Dawn M Piech (F)	Lombard, IL	5/31/24
Andreas Prandelli [3]	Forked River, NJ	6/6/24
Christopher C. Slocum [6]	Toms River, NJ	6/23/24
Lois Springsteen (F) [8]	Santa Cruz, CA	7/8/24

RUSA Coast-to-Coast Award

NAME	CITY, STATE	APPROVED
Dan Driscoll [4]	Arlington, TX	6/28/24
Charlie A Martin [5]	Sunnyvale, CA	7/25/24
Grant McAlister	Morro Bay, CA	7/4/24
Mick Walsh	Seattle, WA	7/25/24
Kevin J Williams	Carmichael, CA	7/5/24

Ultra Flèche Award

NAME	CITY, STATE	APPROVED
Jonathan Levitt	Bronx, NY	6/7/24

R-12 Award

NAME	CITY, STATE	APPROVED
Alex Bachmann [4]	Xenia, OH	5/31/24
Gary M DeNero [9]	Leawood, KS	6/2/24
Dan Driscoll [20]	Arlington, TX	6/2/24
Joe Edwards [9]	Glenwood, IA	6/28/24
Gary P Gottlieb [19]	Aledo, TX	6/3/24
Misha Marin Heller (F) [2]	Alexandria, VA	5/28/24
Spencer Klaassen [18]	Saint Joseph, MO	6/2/24
Christopher Maglieri [11]	Weatogue, CT	6/18/24
L John Mangin [5]	Loveland, CO	6/21/24
Nathaniel Nichols	Oakland, CA	5/20/24
Takahiro Noguchi [2]	Berkeley, CA	7/16/24
Dana A Pacino (F) [17]	Aledo, TX	6/3/24
Andreas Prandelli [2]	Forked River, NJ	7/18/24
D W Rodgers [4]	Becket, MA	6/29/24
Bill Russell [9]	Vineyard Haven, MA	7/28/24
Robert B Sexton [7]	Nashville, TN	6/9/24
Sharon Stevens (F) [17]	Richardson, TX	6/6/24
Frederick J Tompkin	Savannah, GA	7/9/24
Mick Walsh [6]	Seattle, WA	5/23/24
Kalten Walter	New York, NY	6/20/24
Eric J White	Madison, WI	6/3/24
Pamela Wright (F) [18]	Fort Worth, TX	6/6/24

Ultra R-12 Award

NAME	CITY, STATE	APPROVED
Dan Driscoll [2]	Arlington, TX	6/2/24

Ultra P-12 Award

NAME	CITY, STATE	APPROVED
Kerin Huber (F)	Pasadena, CA	7/19/24
Ken Knutson	Tracy, CA	5/10/24

SON Ladelux



Yup, Wilfried Schmidt went and changed the name!

The new SON Ladelux dynamo headlight adds USB charging, with a 1,200 mAh battery fully integrated in the headlight housing. The battery acts as a buffer for USB charging when the rider stops. It also powers the high beam. The optical design is the same as the Edelux II but the standard beam is brighter at 120 lux. The high beam is controlled by the handlebar mounted switch, which also incorporates the USB-C port. Production begins in late summer, 2024.

Don't worry. The Edelux II continues in production for those riders who don't need to be charging a mobile phone or GPS device, and who don't need a high beam.

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