

AMERICAN RANDONNEUR



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Flat Earthers Pummeled by the Shenandoah 1200k — REGAN & GERMAINE ARENDSE

New York-Montreal-New York DNF — BEN SWARTZ

Preparing for Your First 1200k Brevet — SAMUEL THOMPSON

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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.

*Comments RAAM 2023 Overall Winner
Isa Pulver*

- ♥ Review X-rays and MRIs
- ♥ Bike Fittings: Inhouse and via Zoom
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COVER — Lael Wilcox (middle) after her record-setting ride around the world, with a group of randonneurs from Chicago and Indiana.

PHOTO CHUCK JUDY

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President's Message

Going Long

Full disclosure — I borrowed the "going long" term from Phil Fox, who has been using it in presentations to prospective members.

When you first heard about riding some of the distances that we ride, did you think that the whole thing was silly and impossible? Has a video of Paris Brest Paris been the "hook" to getting into randonneuring? Something new on your bucket list?

Completing a 1200+ kilometer ride is an achievement that a very small percentage of cyclists will do. Yes, there are thousands who complete PBP, but consider that fewer people will complete a 1200k in their lifetime than will complete a marathon.

One of the things that will make PBP more fun for you is knowing, for certain, that you can do it. I effectively started in our sport in 2009 so I had a couple of years before the next PBP. In that time frame, I rode some other 1200k's so that I knew what I was getting into, and how I would cope with the physical and mental demands. I had fun at PBP even though I'm not a fast rider.

In 2025, RUSA ride organizers will offer eight 1200k's. It's quite a menu, when you get right down to it, of dates, formats, difficulties, and levels of support. You really should consider clearing your calendar, and making plans to "Just do it."

Mar 22 - FL:Northeast Golden Falcon is an ideal early season training ride, with a cloverleaf format. This third edition of the ride ventures into Georgia on the third day.

May 3 - VA:Northern Another "party ride", come join the inaugural **Endless Flat**, exploring the eastern parts of Virginia and North Carolina in a modified out and back.

May 29 - NJ:NYC and Princeton The Garden State 1200k is a four-leaf-clover

ride. Each 'leaf' takes you in a different direction to explore a distinct area of New Jersey, as well as New York City.

Jun 19 - CO:Boulder Come experience the canyons and high country vistas of the **Colorado Front Range 1200k**. A slightly altered route from last time, this event remains a convenient clover-leaf design.

Jul 19 - CA:Humboldt Running from Eugene, Oregon, down the coast to end in Petaluma, California, the **Humboldt Coast 1200k** is a point-to-point event, taking in both mountains and the sea.

Sep 6 - CA:Davis The **Gold Rush Randonnee** is a beautiful and demanding 1200k in the Norcal Sierras. With loops based out of gravel mecca Quincy, there are shorter options on tap as well.

Sep 8 - WA:Seattle A 1700k point-to-point from the Space Needle to the Golden Gate Bridge, this unsupported ride will be an unforgettable trip through Washington, Oregon, and Northern California.

Sep 24 - PA:Eastern The **Endless Mountains Liberty Bell Randonnee** offers a challenging tour of Eastern Pennsylvania with plenty of climbing.

Read on in *American Randonneur* for more information about these rides. Reach out to the organizers and see what will work for you, whether you're new to this or an old hand. First timer? Don't wait for PBP to get some 1200k experience. Old hand? Continue to experience what our ride organizers have to offer!

RUSA Bylaws Update

The Board has updated the RUSA bylaws affecting our annual election for regular board positions as well as the RBA Liaison. The changes clarify how vacancies would be handled in the midst of the election and allow for the RBAL position to be filled by

acclamation. We have traditionally held an election for the RBAL even when there was only one candidate, in spite of the fact that the old bylaws did not even specify that there would be an election for the RBAL.

The new bylaws are available on the RUSA website: rusa.org/pages/bylaws

The Brevet Routes Team

Another of the committees that makes the sport we love possible and which most RUSA members have never heard of or dealt with is the brevet routes committee. This small team works with the RBAs to ensure the routes we use on our rides follow the rules set by the ACP. In addition to this minimum standard, they also check to ensure cues are accurate and that a rider can successfully navigate the route using either the RidewithGPS route and a GPS or a cue sheet.

Thus far in 2024 the brevet routes team has reviewed and approved 215 brevet routes from 38 different RUSA regions. This includes the relatively new 8k600, which has necessitated several additional process steps since RUSA routes are developed using RideWithGPS and the ACP requires the distance and elevation for an 8k600 to be verified in OpenRunner — and they often don't match! A brevet route that has 8,000 meters of climbing in RideWithGPS might have fewer or more when uploaded into OpenRunner, so there might be several iterations before a route meets the specified distance and elevation.

The brevet routes team is Greg Smith (chair), Eric Peterson, Doug McLerran, Roger Hillas, Mike Fox and Gary Kanaby.

—Dave Thompson
RUSA President
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From the Editor

The end of the year and in many places in this country, the off season for cycling, affords us the chance to look both backwards at what we have accomplished, and forward towards new adventures and goals. I love each season for different reasons. In winter, its because the pressure to perform is off, and this is when I make a list of my achievements, which gives me a deep sense of satisfaction.

I try not to ruminate over the things I didn't get done – Land of the Sky, which I had to bail on because of a death in the family. Instead I celebrate the things I achieved – three SR600s, although I only finished two of them under 60 hours.

Many of the contributors to this issue were also looking back and telling the tales of their accomplishments throughout the year. The story by Regan and Germaine Arendse, of their journey during the Shenandoah 1200k, would have been compelling enough if it were just the story of two Canadians from the flatlands riding a grand randonné in the mountains. But with all the additional challenges they met and conquered, it reads as a real adventure story and perhaps the crowning achievement of their year.

A different kind of challenge is related in the story by Emily Ranson and Bill Beck, who endeavored to ride all the Maryland-start permanents

governed by RUSA. No small task, this quest sent them on several adventures along with helping them to fine-tune the permanent program in their state so that others riding in Maryland will have a better experience.

Jonathan Fey is in a wistful state of mind as he has moved from his longtime home in Colorado to New York, ruminating on life as he rides and gathers in his new surroundings. Hopefully exploring new dirt roads will provide him with stories and adventures for the coming year.

And in a brief essay, frequent contributor Tibor Tamas reflects on his ten years as a randonneur with many kilometers covered and many corners of the country explored. With his tenacity, there's no telling what his future holds.

This issue is meant to encourage you all to set a goal for yourselves in 2025 and go all in. For a lot of us, that big goal in any given year is a grand randonné. Our domestic offerings are outlined in the 1200k Roundup to give you an idea of which to choose and what to expect, and cycling coach Samuel Thompson has an article outlining how to go about preparing for such an event.

So as you look back on 2024, I hope you find some satisfaction in what you have achieved. And as we anticipate the new year, challenge yourself! Give one of those rides you have always wanted to do a try. You may surprise yourself.

—Corinne Warren
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On the first day of the TriState SR600 just after coming through West Point. L to R Andrei Fluerasu, Chris Dilallo, Corinne Warren, Darren Bartels, Andrew Nichols, Lotte Birnbaum.

—PHOTO ANDREI FLUERASU



Glacier 1300k – Fire & Ice

Climate change has the world's glaciers receding and the battle between fire and ice was on full display during the 2024 edition of the Seattle International Randonneurs' (SIR) Glacier 1300K. The event was dominated by a heatwave gripping the Pacific Northwest. On the morning of the ride start, I received a notification from the New York Times bearing the unwelcome title, *Pacific Northwest Braces for a Blistering Heat Wave Over the Weekend*. Yikes, now what was that refund policy?

The ride's title – Glacier 1300K – is taken from the finish destination, Whitefish, Montana, which serves as the gateway to Glacier National Park. It also serves as a reminder of how much ice would be required to prevent riders from spontaneous combustion: a glacier's worth. Four of the five days saw temperatures over 100 degrees. Ice socks were de rigueur. Insulated bottles, mandatory. Every bit of exposed skin required a covering. When the Garmin reads 122 degrees, you are in survival mode.

I first heard about the Glacier ride held as a point-to-point 1000k run by the Oregon Randonneurs in 2007. I've been interested in it ever since. SIR has also run the Glacier ride as a 1000k but this was the first time it was offered as a 1300k. The ride actually weighed in at 1389k, but who's counting?

This would be my first point-to-point Grand Randonnée. The format is uncommon as it produces logistical challenges, and only a small backpack could be transported in the drop bag vehicle. How do you get a bike box from the start to the finish? Fortunately, Amtrak runs from Whitefish back to Seattle, so that was an option to return

rider and machine to the start. I chose to mail my bike using Bike Flights to the start and then had Glacier Cyclery in Whitefish do the same, sending it back to my house after the finish. My part was just to get the bike from Seattle to Whitefish on time. I flew from Whitefish back to Charlotte after the ride. Logistics can be sorted.

SIR is blessed with a stockpile of experienced volunteers and it shows during their events. They countered the heatwave with roving support and added manned stops identified by the pre-riders, who also had to deal with hot conditions. They even handled a late first day rerouting due to an unexpected pass closure with aplomb. The only issue with the rerouting was that Day One was now 426k instead of 347k, so the start was moved to 4 a.m. and the riders were sent off into the dark.



John Morris with Mount Rainier in the sun.

—PHOTOS JOHN "CAP'N" ENDE

SIR refuel stop on the bank of the Snake River.

The Day One re-route took the course south and to the west of Mt. St. Helens and by the time we hit Lane Road up and over Green Mountain, I almost erupted. Green Mountain is a punchy climb of 2.9k averaging 9.1% but with many steeper grades suitable for walking. Once the course hit Longview we turned to the southeast and into Gifford Pinchot National Forest. The hour was getting late and no services were open. Enter volunteer Peg Miller who had set up her camper oasis next to the course in Cougar, Washington. Peg offered seating, hot and cold snacks and lively conversation. It was a much-needed refueling before tackling Oldman Pass. I thanked Peg for her time and her effort in marking this as a SAG stop. She had multiple traffic cones along the road with blinking Christmas lights. I said it was a welcome sight and impossible to miss. Everyone's attention turned to a rider (name withheld to protect the guilty) who had just ridden by without stopping and had to be chased down. So much for impossible to miss.

Eventually, I reached the overnight in Carson after one complete revolution of the earth. 24 hours is a long time to be on the bike! Despite the grueling first day, an early alarm was set as Day Two was expecting a high temperature of 107 degrees. The more riding that could be done early, the better.

When I was first reviewing the course with someone familiar with the area, Day Two was highlighted. I was told that the prevailing winds up the Columbia River Gorge would likely produce one of the fastest 200ks that I had ever ridden. Unfortunately, the god of wind decided that morning to be a bit of a contrarian and slam us with an all day block headwind. The headwind, in combination with the high



temperatures, produced one of the unholy riding days that I have ever experienced. The Columbia River Gorge is beautiful, but NOT shady. For the love of God, would someone please plant a tree? I was creeping into the blowing furnace and then there it was, a tree. Not exactly what we would call a tree back in North Carolina, but still a live plant with leaves providing a bit of shade next to the road. I stopped and sat down in the shade. I was joined shortly by Karel Stroethoff. Karel decided it was time for a ditch nap and I didn't take much convincing to join him. A few minutes later we were awakened by a concerned passing motorist who stopped to check on us. We were fine, weren't we? The driver was not convinced and would not leave until we took a few bottles of water from him. When I remounted my bike I saw that the temperature was the proverbial 99 degrees in the shade! We received some much needed roving support that day from volunteers and good samaritans. One guy found me leaning over my bars and pulled over just to let me sit in his car for 10 minutes while he directed all air conditioner vents my way.

It was definitely an epic day, and I don't use that term lightly. I bought a bag of ice at every stop, a pattern

that would continue for the rest of the event. I used an old tube sock to fill with ice and then drape around my neck. Others used ice-filled zip lock bags with a few holes packed under their jerseys on their upper backs. I wore the Voler arm and leg sleeves and they worked flawlessly. Despite the biblical conditions, I did not suffer a single millimeter of sunburn.

Mercifully, the sun gave way to a beautiful red moon. I witnessed the moonrise directly over the Columbia River as I was nearing the overnight in Umatilla, Oregon. It was spectacular. Sadly, I did not have the energy to stop for a picture.

Day Three was predicting even higher temperatures! What planet is this? Oh well, the earlier to bed the earlier to rise and the easier to beat some of the heat.

The third day we left the Columbia River behind to continue our battle with the formidable sun. We ventured into the rolling wheatlands of eastern Oregon. We rode through miles of golden wheat fields swaying in the breeze, and this time the wind direction was working with us. Massive open grain piles stood under chutes. The open piles are replacing the antiquated grain elevators due to lesser regulations,



The lanterne rouge, Pierre Moreels, receives his medal from Miss Adrian Hands.

larger capacities and lower cost. This confirmed for me that no rain would be encountered. Who would leave millions of pounds of wheat out in the open if rain was coming?

Second breakfast was a hearty homemade sandwich on a bench outside the grocery in Athena. I multi-tasked, filling all necessary ice-holding devices. We would, for the first time, be turning towards the north and heading across eastern Oregon, with expected highs well above 100 degrees again. Many of the locals in the small towns that dotted the farmlands were curious about our ride. After all, what kind of mad people would be out riding bikes in this heat? These locals were genuinely concerned about us and often offered help or advice. The more desolate the location, the more involved people are with the safety of others. I call this the opposite of the “bystander effect.” If they might be our only chance for assistance, they don’t hesitate to offer.

In Dayton I stopped at the local Mercantile hoping to secure a Subway sandwich as they had the classic sign outside. I couldn’t find the Subway but

what I did find was even better. The Subway had closed but the mercantile had taken over that shell and was serving made-to-order sandwiches. Mine was made by a local high school senior who peppered me with questions about our event. I told him we were headed for Colfax for the night. He said that wasn’t too bad since it was only about an hour away. I reminded him that I was pedaling a bicycle and 100k was difficult to cover in an hour. We laughed and I went on my way. As I rode down main street I noticed giant banners honoring the local high school seniors. There featured on one banner hanging from a light post was the kid that just made my sandwich! I was only there for five minutes and I already knew someone.

The wind continued to push us to the northeast and eventually across the Snake River. SIR had a support station set up near some silos next to the Snake River crossing. It was a beautiful sight, backlit by a ruby twilight. I had a ginger ale, chips, a pickle and a pickle shot and began the lumpy bits up to Colfax. I ended Day Three in Colfax gobbling watermelon and cantaloupe in the big conference room that served as command central. The food and drink were plentiful and the varied choices much appreciated.

Highlighting Day Four would be a 103k segment on the Trail of the Coeur d’Alenes, a well-maintained paved rail trail spanning the panhandle of Northern Idaho. Much of the trail follows the Coeur d’Alene River and the shoreline of Lake Coeur d’Alene. I’d never seen a moose on a brevet, probably because they don’t know how to ride bikes, but I spotted three along this segment of trail. Even though the trail was very enjoyable, it still was hot and many sections were exposed. I must have gotten dehydrated while moose watching because by the time

we exited the trail in Wallace, I had lost all power in the engine room and was also feeling a bit woozy. Something was definitely wrong and yet there was still 100k more riding with two significant passes before reaching the overnight in Thompson Falls, Montana. I took an extended break in Wallace with a sit down dinner at the Chalkboard with Greg Cardell. Greg carried on and I stayed behind resting further at a gas station. I resupplied with ice under a giant “Kratom Sold Here” sign.

Satellite trackers were mandatory for this ride. Everyone could see anyone’s position. It was around this time that I began receiving texts of encouragement. I’m sure friends were concerned that I was the lanterne rouge by over an hour and still had a tough 100k to go before sleep. The messages really picked up my deflated spirit. I drank four bottles of Pedialyte, ate a few Tums and eventually set off to tackle Dobson (9.6k, 445m) and Thompson (20k, 738m) Passes. I was pleased to make it up and over Dobson Pass still in the twilight but Thompson would be done in the dark. Thompson



Pass was longer and more difficult, but I haven't met a grade that I couldn't walk. Eventually, I reached the top and began the long, dark descent into Thompson Falls. Animals were everywhere! I saw my fourth moose of the day, and this time it was on the road! I went around the moose and not a mile later a bobcat darted into the road and then did a 180 right back to where it had come from. I also saw owls and herds of deer. I heard other animals scurrying in the rocks and I did my best to scurry into my cabin at Thompson Falls just before 2:30 a.m. Plans had already been made for a 7 a.m. breakfast at Minnie's Montana Cafe.

The breakfast did not disappoint. We left Thompson Falls with fuel gauges pegged way past full. On the final day I had a posse. Ian Hands, Chris Graham, John Morris and Charlie Martin would not let me out of their sight. Ian's job was to pull across the flats and to periodically spritz me with a mister bottle held behind his back. Charlie accepted the position of climbing sherpa, staying with me on all climbs despite the fact that he could



Chris Graham and Ian Hands flying the colors just past Lonepine, Montana on Day 5.

have done them much quicker without his charge. As the day was heating up Charlie mentioned that it would be a good idea if he could bomb me with cold water balloons periodically. I thought that was something I hadn't seen or experienced on a brevet but yeah, I agreed that would be good. It wasn't just some pipe dream for Charlie, mentioned as a vague possibility never to be acted upon. For Charlie, this became a mission. In an amazing moment of serendipity at our next convenience store stop he found the grail. The grail of water balloon filling efficiency that is. I didn't even know such things existed but basically 20 water balloons can be prepared simultaneously with one attachment to a hose or sink and then the balloons are self sealed with small rubber bands as they are pulled off their stems. Charlie then packed balloons into his feed bags with ice and the extras into his tail bag. The supply of 60 balloons would last him until the end of the ride. While not every balloon reached its target or exploded on impact, enough did their intended job to keep our engines running cool until the finish in Whitefish.

Another late change made to the course at the suggestion of the pre-riders

was to get riders off of Highway 93 as much as possible towards the end of the course, and this was accomplished with a series of side roads and bicycle paths. This change was much appreciated by the riders and by the pick-up drivers of Montana who don't seem to enjoy seeing bicycles on the roadway.

We finished before sunset and began the important task of the telling of tall tales. There was a common room for napping and showers and we celebrated with beers and burgers. As the celebration was winding down, the *lanterne rouge*, Pierre Moreels, rolled in to cheers from the remaining crowd. Like everyone else, Pierre had his finishing medal presented by Miss Adrian Hands. It was an enjoyable moment for me since I had shared many kilometers with Pierre and even though he hasn't completed a PBP with a time of 88:55 or greater, he rides with the spirit of Adrian Hands for certain.

A huge shout out to the volunteers who made this event possible: Rose Cox, Greg Cox, Mark Thomas, Peg Miller, Jeanene Williams, Jan Acuff, Carl and Susan Lind, Andy Sapuntzakis, Elizabeth Mills, Doug McLerran, Keith Moore, Matt Close, Bob Brudvik and John Morris. 🚲



Karel Stroethoff single speeds into the rolling waves of amber grain.

Capulin Volcano Ride Report

BY JAKE KASSEN

There are three types of RUSA Permanents: basic fitness routes, local highlight routes, and destination perms that are worthy of a special trip. The Capulin Volcano 200k perm in New Mexico is one of these rare destination perms. I had been eyeing it for years, in part because it's one of the few perms in New Mexico. (New Mexico hasn't had an active RUSA region since 2016 and only has five active perms.) I wanted to take one last trip before work got busy in mid-August so I found a flight from Boston to Denver, about a three-hour drive to the start.

There are two important stipulations of the Capulin Volcano perm. First, there are few or no services along the rural route. Secondly, the road to the peak of the volcano cannot be ridden until after the National Park Service has locked the gate to cars around 5:30 p.m. This means needing to wait until mid-morning to start lest you run down the clock just waiting at the base of the volcano.

The route starts in Raton, New Mexico – a small town about 10 miles south of the Colorado border. I booked two nights at the Robin Hood Motel, a cheap but well-maintained 1960's roadside motel. There are remnants of independent restaurants and

interesting stores in town, but at this point most of the downtown is vacant.

With such a late start, I had time to burn in the morning so I took an enjoyable hike up the nearby "Climax Canyon" (insert sophomoric joke)

and got coffee at "Sage," a nice little indy coffee shop not far from the motel. Finally, it was late enough to start riding.

The first 15 miles of the ride is an out and back to the Colorado border up a small mountain. The air was cool with a heavy mist at the turnaround. If continuing into Colorado, it would be on a nice-looking dirt road, but sadly that was the extent of gravel on the route. By the time I descended back to the highway, the mist was gone and it was beginning to heat up.

I'm not accustomed to riding in that part of the country and found the climbs to be more strenuous than on the east coast. The grades are not as steep but the climbs *look* nearly flat so it feels painfully slow when your legs and eyes disagree. (This was true for

The New Mexico/Colorado border at the first spur north.

—PHOTOS JAKE KASSEN





most of my Colorado riding as well, in the days that followed.)

There were almost no cars along Highway 72. True to the description, there are no towns and no stores either. In Folson the route heads north for a spur to Branson, Colorado. As I was warned, the pavement wasn't great and there was nothing in Branson except a long broken water spigot, an aging chemical toilet, and a few faded pages of town history stapled to an information board. According to the sign, the town was thriving in the 1920s, spurred by the completion of the nearby railroad. But it all ended with the Depression and Dust Bowl. Now the population is a few dozen residents. It's said that for those willing to travel 50 miles for groceries, it's a nice place to live.

I made it back to Folson, and found the small museum that I had read about online when researching the route. This isn't listed in the RWGPS description or cue sheet. A few volunteers have converted a long-closed

mercantile building into a town museum. There are otherwise no stores in Folson. The museum and their friendly volunteers made for an excellent stop. They have a small refrigerator with bottled water and soda for one dollar a can. Sometimes if you are lucky, they have ice cream bars as well. The building is packed to the gills with historical artifacts such as a collection of early barbed wire designs (a surprising variety), early radios, and the original bank vault which had copies of the local newspaper account of JFK's assassination, among other interesting objects. I was most thankful for the cold water and opportunity to stop and chat with locals for a bit. It's worth the stop even if you don't need a drink.

From Folson, it's about eight miles to the National Monument and I made it to the visitor's center shortly before they closed. The RWGPS description notes there could be soda machines in the parking lot but I saw nothing. There is a bottle filling station inside the visitor's center so I made sure to

The view from the top.

arrive before 5:30 p.m., as there's no opportunity for water in the park otherwise and it's another 40 miles to the finish without services.

I watched the ranger lock the gate which meant I could start my ascent – at least after heaving the bike over the tall barrier. The climb isn't too steep and it's fun knowing there's no possibility of cars on the road. There's no guardrail and the view is terrific. Once at the top I took a short walk to the center of the volcano and was joined by a pack of deer and hundreds of small lizards. The best way to visit the monument (and most parks) is by bike.

Apparently in mid-August it's common for there to be daily afternoon and evening thunderstorms in the mountains of northern New Mexico and Colorado. I was lucky that the sky was clear for my trip up the volcano but there were ominous storm clouds



in the distance in the direction of the Raton finish.

The route soon joins US 64/87 for the final 30 miles. The cue sheet mentions a potential store at the intersection near the volcano but it was closed when I rode by at 6:30 p.m. I was glad to have gotten water at the museum and park visitor's center as there was nothing until the finish.

The ride back to Raton went quickly although it's not as serene. The highway has a 75 miles per hour speed limit and occasional large trucks. The shoulder is mostly wide enough except for the final few miles when it becomes uncomfortably narrow given the speed limit. I rode this distance quickly. There were lightning strikes on the mountains I had crossed earlier in the day and the storm getting closer was a good incentive to keep riding hard to the finish.

Looking forward to my next ride in the land of delicious peppers!

So concluded my first time riding in New Mexico and with RUSA credit obtained for two large states. Only twenty more to go until the completion of the American Explorer award.

Postscript: After the ride I noticed there might be a soda machine outside the Branson public school, off route but not far from the turnaround.

In downtown Raton.

At this point I've ridden in all but a few states, but didn't think of riding RUSA events or perms at the time. For the record, there are many nice places to ride in the U.S. but New England is by far the best overall. 🚲



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Week 1: Historical Week: March 8th - 15th, 2025
Week 2: Century Week: March 15th - 22nd, 2025
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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.

SUBMISSIONS ARE WELCOME

Flat Earthers Pummeled by the Shenandoah 1200k

BY REGAN #15473 AND GERMAINE #15474 ARENDSE

Germaine and I had a premonition that we would struggle to complete the Shenandoah 1200k in Northern Virginia, but exactly how difficult it would be for us was beyond our imagination. You see, we're Flat Earthers. Not the cult type, but folks that live on one of the flattest parts of the world, the Prairies of Saskatchewan, Canada.

The average elevation gain in our province is 25 meters per 100k, and with the 1300m per 100k planned for the Shenandoah we realized that we would have to put some effort into the event if we wanted to complete it

within the allotted time. However, our event organizer, RBA Hamid Akbarian, probably appreciated our predicament and preemptively obtained special dispensation to extend the cut off time from 90 to 99 hours, just one of the

many gracious acts that we would come to experience at Shenandoah.

We lined up at the start line at 3:00 a.m. on the 30th of May 2024, filled with anxiety and excitement. With the passing of our fellow randonneurs Peter Grace and others in mind, Perry Wilderson said a prayer for our safe journey. We then raced through the quiet streets of Sterling, Virginia, straining to keep up with the trail of red lights of the lead riders that chaperoned us to the bike path that took us out of the suburbs. The only other creatures awake at the time were the deer, rabbits, and possums who scurried across the bike path out of the radius of light generated by our dynamo



Sleeping in the sun outside a
Sheetz in West Virginia.

—PHOTO GERMAINE ARENDSE

powered lights. Tree debris littered the bike path as a testament to a huge storm that had passed through earlier that day.

We didn't have to wait very long before our first mishap. We came across a tree that had fallen across the bike path, with branches and foliage completely obstructing our way. In our defense it was quite confusing; the bike path ended suddenly and was replaced by a mass of dense leaves. It took us a few seconds to realize that a tree had fallen and completely blocked the path. But those few seconds were all that we needed to misjudge the situation and have our first crash. Germaine followed closely on Ed In (our fellow Saskatchewan Prairie Randonneur) and my wheels, and she braked just a little too late, with the consequence that she rode directly into the tree and recorded the first of many crashes for the event. Thai Nguyen, Charlie Martin and Ed (our fellow cyclists for this portion of the event) helped Germaine to extricate herself and her bicycle from the branches of the felled tree and remount to continue cautiously with the journey.

I suspect that Germaine may have picked up some debris in that accident with the fallen tree as later in the day, many miles later, she reported that she had a flat rear tire. Our strategy is to ride as a team and to take precautions to minimize time not riding. One strategy was to have identical bicycles that would allow any damaged components to be swapped between the bikes and thereby keep us moving forward as a team. So as soon as Germaine became aware of the flat tire, we stopped, swapped my rear wheel with hers, and



got her back on course while I tried to repair the puncture and catch up with her at the next control point. While I was in the process of replacing the inner tube, Charlie and Ed rolled up and once again provided invaluable assistance. The first tube we tried to fit had a pre-existing puncture. So after unsuccessfully trying to reinflate the tire, Charlie had to change the inner tube again, replacing it this time with a new orange-coloured TPU inner tube. Ed demonstrated a neat little electronic pump that inflated the tire within seconds, and with that, we were back on course, losing just a few extra valuable minutes. We caught back up with Germaine and her companions at the control and then headed off to Harrisonburg, our overnight control.

Harrisonburg would serve as our base in this cloverleaf-designed course. We arrived just after 1 p.m. with the intention to rest, refresh, refuel and then depart at 6 a.m. on Day Two. The next morning we enjoyed a sumptuous breakfast and had a chance to chat with some of the other riders in the breakfast hall. Almost on schedule we then set off on another 300k plus ride.

Our first major challenge of Day Two was to cross the Shenandoah mountain range north into West Virginia. I didn't feel so good and struggled on this climb. I think I had probably caught a cold, in retrospect more likely COVID19, in the days leading up to Shenandoah. Handicapped by the cold, I slowly lumbered up the climbs, and we as a team lost

A babbling brook in the
Goshen Valley of West Virginia.

—PHOTO REGAN ARENDSE

precious time. Germaine, in contrast, appeared to have found her calling as her power-to-weight ratio was ideally suited to spinning her cranks up those long and steep climbs. I vaguely remember seeing a road sign bearing the name Shenandoah Mountain Road at the summit and was relieved to find Ed and Germaine waiting for me. We then descended a steep and winding road that set off multiple alerts on our GPS units which had been programmed in by Hamid. After what seemed like an eternity we finally rolled into the Town of Moorefield, West Virginia. I tried to get some rest and slept in the sun outside of Sheetz, a sure sign that not all was well.

After the snooze in the sun we proceeded south to Monterey, a quiet little town at the foot of the Shenandoah mountain range. Here we grabbed a few pizza slices for dinner and were joined by Charlie Martin and Misha Heller. The temperature started to fall, and we donned a few warm layers. Then we started the climb back across the Shenandoah range with its endless ascents. The final descent was exhilarating and a great relief from the effort of climbing. We rapidly descended to the town of Churchville, where Hamid had left a generous supply of water and bananas to refuel. From here we wearily made our way north via Summit Church Road and then dropped down onto the Lee Jackson Highway to return to the overnight control in Harrisonburg.

That spell of illness and struggle on the climbs on Day Two came at a time cost, and we left the overnight control much later than planned on Day Three. We headed southwest to the George Washington National Forest and ascended a series of climbs that lead to a short gravel section that Hamid

Band-aid patch kid, after the rail tracks crash.

—PHOTO REGAN ARENDESE

What was supposed to be a comfortable run to the finish was anything but that.

had alerted us to. It was on this section of the course, and probably due to a combination of grinding a heavy gear up the steep climbs, carrying too much weight personally and on the bike, and the rough road that we suffered our second mechanical failure. It was as I crested the gravel summit that I suddenly heard a loud snap and my bike ground to a halt. I immediately stopped pedaling, got off the bike and found that I had broken a spoke and created a substantial radial crack in the rear carbon rim at the hole of the broken spoke. My heart sank as I

immediately thought my ride was over. While I could theoretically replace the spoke, repairing the carbon rim was beyond my capabilities. Without much choice I gingerly rode down the mountain to a gas station at the exit of the forest to assess the damage.

I first gave Germaine the option of continuing with the ride alone while I found a ride back to Harrisonburg to purchase a new wheel but she declined the offer. She proposed we swap rear wheels, as her weight is substantially less than mine, and there may be less of a chance of extending the fracture at



the rim. We lost valuable time debating how to proceed, calling Hamid and Wayne King to explain our predicament and consulting with other riders on the road including the ever present Charlie Martin, who swept the tail of the event. Charlie was super helpful and provided us with a flexible spoke repair kit in case the wheel wobble deteriorated and even managed to source us a replacement wheel from Misha Heller if our broken rim finally failed. Armed with this support we proceeded on the course, stopping frequently to avoid extension of the crack and the severity of the rear wheel wobble. However these frequent stops cost us precious time and soon we were hours behind our intended schedule.

With the anxiety generated by imminent catastrophic collapse of our broken carbon rim, it was difficult to appreciate the beauty of the Goshen Valley as we traveled south to the town of Buchanan, Virginia. We stopped once along a small babbling brook to apply some lidocaine to tender pressure points and then catch up with some much needed sleep. The scene was idyllic and we almost forgot our precarious situation. But the hands of time marched on, and we were forced to face reality and remounted our bicycles just in time to reach Buchanan at sunset. We layered up against the creeping cold and started the final push back to Harrisonburg.

The route took us to the Lee Jackson Highway, where we made up some precious time. However, just as we thought we might cruise all the way into Harrisonburg, we were detoured onto farm roads near the town of Staunton. The winding rural roads took their toll on us mentally and physically, as our pace slowed and we continued to lose precious time. We finally rolled into the overnight control in Harrisonburg at about 9 a.m. on the morning of Day Four, exhausted and severely sleep deprived. We arrived just in time to check out of the hotel, hand over our drop bags to Shab, Hamid's better



half, and Wayne. We received some much-needed service on our bikes and the most reassuring advice from Wayne that he thought our broken rear rim may likely hold until the end of the event. And with that we tackled the final day and last 200km of the ride.

What was supposed to be a comfortable run to the finish was anything but that. Hamid had warned us of dangerous diagonal rail tracks just a few kilometers into the last 200k of the ride. He had even highlighted it on the cue sheet. However, our excitement at being close to the finish, as well as the fatigue that had accumulated over the preceding 75 hours, impaired our judgment when negotiating the rail tracks. Germaine led the way at a good pace assisted by a helpful tailwind towards the tracks. I followed closely behind and watched helplessly as tragedy struck. While riding at a good clip, Germaine caught her front wheel in the rail tracks, jamming her front wheel and catapulting her over the handlebars. She hit the road with her arms, chest and face, and slid, causing abrasions and lacerations to all parts of the body in contact with the road. Once she had ground to a halt on the jagged surface of the road, she lay motionless. I rushed towards her, expecting the worst. I cradled her head in my arms, looking for signs of life. It seemed almost an

Joe Todd would describe us as human baked potatoes.

—PHOTO REGAN ARENDE

eternity before her eyes opened and when they did open she had a look of severe disappointment. Disappointment that we probably were going to have to withdraw from the ride due to injury to the body and damage to the bicycle.

With the help of some anxious bystanders we managed to get Germaine to the side of the road and straightened her battered body into an upright position. I did a quick assessment of her orientation to place, person and time to determine if she could continue with the ride. She had not lost consciousness and passed her mini neurological assessment. We declined the offer to call 911, choosing to accept the offer of many bandaids to dress her facial and peripheral lacerations. Her right elbow was bleeding and her right shoulder tender, but it did not appear dislocated.

A quick look at her bicycle revealed that the handlebars had also taken a beating and had to be realigned. The remainder of the bike was in general working order, save for a few new scrapes to the paint. We thanked the concerned but supportive and helpful onlookers for their assistance and to

their utmost amazement slowly limped on our way.

The first 80k section of the final 200k was relatively flat, and we had the assistance of a gentle tailwind. This allowed us to regroup and take stock of the damage to body and bike. By the time we encountered the rolling hills, Germaine was starting to feel the consequences of the crash. She reported increasing pain and stiffness in her right arm, and had difficulty supporting herself on the handlebars. It appeared the injuries to the right elbow and shoulder were probably worse than initially assessed as they had presumably taken the brunt of the impact. We stopped to purchase and apply some anti-inflammatory cream

to the affected areas which brought her temporary pain relief. However, as the long shadows led us to dusk, her body stiffened, and we slowed to a crawl and inched our way through the rolling terrain.

At just before midnight on that last night we stopped for a rest on the manicured lawn of the local bank in the Middleburg, Virginia town center. Germaine's bandaged face and bloodied clothing partially covered by the emergency medical blanket soon drew the attention of the local police cruiser. I explained our situation and, satisfied although not entirely convinced we were mentally sound, the officer allowed us to rest on the pristine lawn. I could just hear my

friend Joe Todd describe our appearance as human baked potatoes wrapped in our reflective emergency blankets.

An hour later, we gathered our belongings and trundled through the sleeping town only to be confronted by bright lights and the roar of heavy machinery. It soon became apparent to us that the road we had to follow was undergoing construction. We were not prepared mentally or physically to reroute and proceeded to walk on the verge of the road much to the amusement and probably irritation of the construction workers. After what seemed like an eternity, we were finally able to remount our bicycles.

Hardly had we done so when Germaine screamed with concern that she was not able to hold her head upright. The muscles of her neck had lost strength, and she was not able to look ahead. She was concerned she may have had a stroke as she had lost head and neck control. I assessed her, and sure enough her chin had slumped onto her chest.

I had seen this once on the Cooley Challenge in 2022 when one of our fellow riders had the same type of issue. He solved it by propping up his chin on a tower of toilet paper rolls strapped to his handlebars. He called it Schermer's neck and said he had experienced it previously while riding the Race Across America (RAAM).

So we first tried creating a cushion under her chin with our jackets rolled into buns but they didn't provide enough support. We then recalled that in a YouTube video a RAAM competitor had created a harness that was effective for Schermer's neck. So I tried to replicate this harness by tying the arms of my long sleeve jersey in a figure eight across Germaine's shoulders as you would for a fractured clavicle. Then I tied my leg warmers to the back of her helmet and anchored the leg warmers

Bloody and bettered, we returned to the finish in Sterling, Virginia.

—PHOTO REGAN ARENDESE



onto the jersey strapped to her shoulders. This effectively pulled her helmet backwards, and her helmet chinstrap hoisted her chin just enough to allow her to see in front of her. And with the makeshift harness in place we continued on our way.

We calculated that we had five hours to complete the final 29 kilometers, reassuring us that even if we walked the entire distance we probably would complete it in time. So we decided to ride for just a few kilometers and then stop to rest and assess Germaine's neck. By now we had been awake for so long that our minds began to play tricks on us. Every shadow cast by our headlights turned into a human face and form. We heard voices of other riders following us, while fully aware that we were alone on the road. But the strangest experience was sharing mutual *déjà vu* as we rode through a wooded area with unpaved roads on the outskirts of Sterling. We were both

convinced we had been there before which we knew was not true.

The final five kilometers of the last day were the toughest as we slowly wound our way through the business center of Sterling searching for the illuminated sign of the Fairfield Inn and Suites. Every so often we would be illuminated by the headlights of a motor vehicle either on their way to an early morning work shift or returning from a very late night out. With faith in the white line on the shoulder of the road, our reflective vests, and dynamo powered lights we proceeded through the early morning hours.

And then just when we thought we would never see the end of the route, we turned into the parking lot of the hotel at 3:30 a.m. that morning, completing our ride in a total of 96.5 hours. Our joy knew no bounds, and we embraced in relief and happiness at being able to complete our most difficult 1200k to date. We quickly

forwarded a picture of ourselves outside of the hotel to Hamid so that he could sleep for the first time during the entire event, too. Then we checked into the hotel and promptly fell asleep.

We would like to thank Hamid and Shab for creating and managing this incredibly beautiful but difficult event. Thank you to Wayne for supporting us during the ride and providing invaluable mechanical and logistical support. Thank you to Charlie, Ed In, and Mishka for providing mechanical support on the road and encouraging us at our lowest points. Thank you to all the other randonneurs for your thoughts and prayers as we slowly made our way along the course. A special thought goes out to our fellow randonneur Eli Winer who sustained severe injuries in an accident on the second day of the event. We wish you a speedy recovery and hope to see you at a future event. Thanks to everyone for joining us Flat Earthers on this amazing journey. 🚲

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

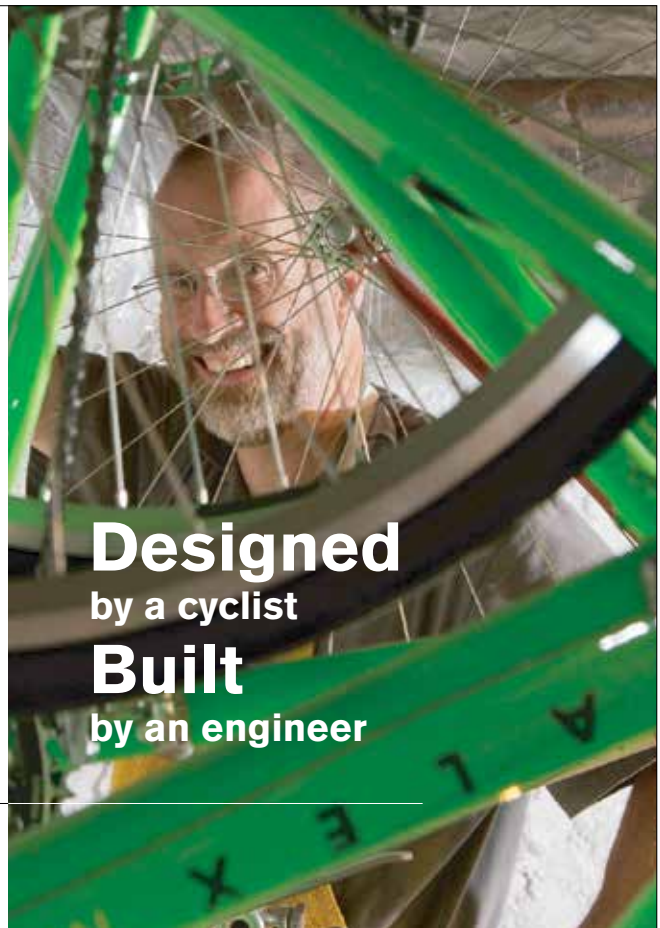
It begins with the right questions; by learning the needs and desires of the customer. I listen to the experiences that led you to me: your riding history, your cycling dreams, and what you want your next bike to be.

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The green tube of leaves gives way. Illumination of leaves, the microscopy of photosynthesis, how these things, once iron, will return to earth and become iron again. Slow processes. It gives way to plain air, in the painterly vernacular (plein air). The senses are absorbed: a farm. More precisely, a barn, a silo, grasses in varying shades of grass, stalks of corn (tall), then beyond all this, some trees, dark green. The sky is the most sky-colored sky. Imagine sky; that's the color. Slow moving clouds, and only a very few of these. Pastoral. Windows XP.

Now come back to earth. It's the end of a love affair with bicycle riding in Colorado's Front Range and the Central Rockies. This is how I worded it on my Strava post:

Morning Ride

Some of you all may know that I am in the twilight of my long affair with Denver and Colorado. If you want to slap hands, say hi/bye etc., I will be riding Lookout on Tuesday and Thursday of next week at 6:45 am (Thursday's ride may stretch out into the mid-morning). Additionally, Saturday the 27th, I will be riding with some friends, doing a final lap through Deckers via Deer Creek, Foxton, and Stony Pass. It's a challenging ride. We'll gross 11k ft of elevation over 130 miles. message me for details. We're going to drink micheladas at the Deckers corner.

I turn left off the pavement onto a steep dirt road, Reagan Hill Road. This is just a few latitudinal minutes, maybe

even less, on the southern side of the New York/Pennsylvania border. It's steep, just off the main road, so I've lost a good head of steam. Compounded by recent road grading, my speed is what you might translate as a swift jog. Soft dirt and loose rock are everywhere. I pass a small, farm-style structure and adjacent house. A medium-sized dog torpedoes across the grass ditch, the dirt, and then toward my ankles. The rush of adrenaline buries this memory in a fold of gray matter. What I remember is that I made it out of there. Most of them wouldn't know what to do with an ankle if they did get hold of one, although I've had a dog's tooth sunk into my ankle before, not quite to bone. It happens on occasion.

The road surface becomes firmer eventually. The gradient shifts from about three to ten percent and back for a while. I suppose that I chose this road while route building, tapping away on RidewithGPS, because it is so obviously

a back way, dirt, and secluded. I'm sort of regretting it now as the road gets unbelievably steep. Garmin says something like 18 percent. But now the gnarly oak-trunks crowd in. The leaves start to block out the sun. It's still very warm, but the heat is a little more bearable.

The reason I'm here is neither vocation nor vacation. I've followed my partner to New York's Southern Tier so she can pursue a PhD, and I am going to Figure It Out (an update on that later). The Southern Tier is situated on New York's south-central border, but for the kind of riding I like to do, I cross the border into northern Pennsylvania as frequently as possible, where they're less likely to pave their county roads. Someone reports to me later, "New York State loves paving roads." Bummer.

This particular ride is my first ride here. I've just dropped off the moving truck in Elmira, New York and have taken the main road that follows the Susquehanna for a while before I peel off to the south to enjoy the quieter back routes. The same processes that shaped Niedecker's Lake Superior have worked mineral and hydraulically on these hills. These valleys sit at the lower end of the glacial flows below the Finger Lakes. What that means, though, for those of us traveling by human power on two wheels, is that the terrain is very bumpy.

Since leaving the main valley, I've logged a little more than a thousand feet of elevation per ten miles. This steep road passes a game preserve. It's unbelievably quiet. Except for the dog



and the road grader at the bottom of the hill, the main signs of human life are signage, fences, stone walls, and driveways. Much of that signage reads: “NO TRESSPASSING, NO HUNTING, VIOLATORS WILL BE PROSECUTED.” These yellow postcards are nailed into tree bark: repeat, repeat, repeat.

Later, I’m looking for a Coke. Nada. At the post office in Little Meadows, Pennsylvania, the attendant gives me a bottle of water. There’s a lot of it out here, in streams and rivers, but not so much for sale.

I have maybe twenty miles to go.

.....

Another diversion in my train of thought: someone once asked me if a gravel bike should fit differently than a road bike.

Let’s cleave the two purposes as I see them. On one side of the valley: fit as it pertains to ergonomics, power efficiency, injury prevention, and comfort. On the other side of the valley: fit as it pertains to how a bike

might handle on a given terrain. Let’s tackle the latter.

Simply, I do not think a gravel bike should fit dramatically differently than a road bike. In contrast to mountain biking, riding on most gravel surfaces does not require frequent dramatic shifts in body weight to keep the bike from sliding out from under the rider.

I bring this up to address the first of the two considerations and to challenge a commonly held assumption, which is that a gravel bike should have a more relaxed fit than a road bike. As a bike fitter, when I am setting a rider’s position, I think about balancing that rider’s body weight across the available contact points. This is (a) in the fore-aft plane (x axis) primarily and then (b) in the vertical plane (y axis), at the front of the bike. A rider’s weight distribution balance will correspond to their mobility, core stability, neck flexion range of motion, injury history, forward pelvis rotation capability, etc., but crucially, to their average power output, especially at “top-dead-center” in the pedaling

The dirt climbs on this route were so much steeper than I anticipated.

—PHOTOS JONATHAN FEY

motion. A rider generating power at 12 o’clock is balancing their bodyweight on their foot. The more weight borne on the foot, the greater amount of weight the rider can cast forward over the bike, and the farther forward in space the handlebars should be set. Upper and lower bodyweight proportionality has ramifications in this regard. I may decide to set a broad-shouldered rider’s saddle further back from standard to keep that rider from falling onto the front of the bike.

Consider, then, a rider producing a relatively low amount of average power through the pedaling motion, as one might on a grand brevet. This rider will want to balance more weight over the saddle, given that less of their weight is being loaded on the pedal, so the handlebars will usually come upward in space.

Neither of these considerations (which are paramount to the rider's overall comfort) correlate to riding surface. Rather, they correlate to a rider's average power capability over a given time and other contingencies related to their physical condition. Further consideration should be given to rider preference within an acceptable range.

A side note regarding rider preference: some riders might want to ride slightly wider handlebars on their gravel bike than their road bike because it gives them greater leverage to resist line-diverting rock strikes. But, given that riders have the most control over the bikes with their hands in the drops, most gravel handlebars, with their flared drop sections, can satisfy the competing priorities of comfort and control.

.....

So, these are some of the things that I am thinking about as I ride back to a new home in new terrain. Many uncertain things unfold and sort themselves out but not without some precarity and innovative thinking. I've managed since then to land contract work as a bike fitter in Brooklyn. I'm lucky to continue to do bike fits, actually. I think it's secretly the best job in the world. If you find yourself in New York, look me up. I'll be spending the rest of my time trying to link together the intricate networks of northern Pennsylvania's gravel county roads. Maybe we'll meet out there, too. 🚲



The weather here has been nothing to complain about.

A New Feature in our e-newsletter

Have you noticed our new section in **Between Controls** titled "Here, There and Everywhere" that highlights members and regions in the news? This can be a hyper-link to an article, a video interview, or anything where we are exposed outside of our internal RUSA tent. Will it be every month? If we have ongoing content, yes, or it will pop up periodically as things are shared via our multiple Google groups and/or Instagram, etc. We hope you enjoy this new feature in our e-newsletter.

In Memoriam – J. Martin Shipp

BY ROBERT BINGHAM

Upon receiving the news that Martin Shipp had been killed in a hit-and-run incident, I felt as if the wind had been knocked out of me. Martin had registered to ride permanent # 2818 Raleigh – Berea – Raleigh. He rode his bicycle to the starting location about half a mile from his residence and then started the ride around 5:30 a.m. on August 30, 2024. Less than an hour later, he was struck head on by a vehicle passing on a double yellow line and was killed. The driver fled the scene but was arrested later that day.

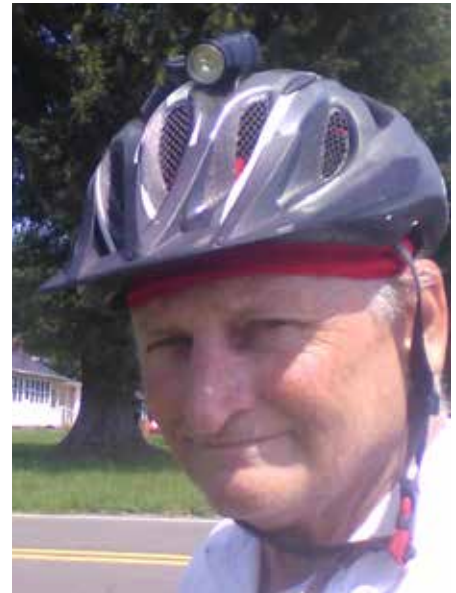
Martin was a careful rider and used lights and reflective gear. Ironically, he had ridden a permanent two weeks prior to his death and stated in an email to me, “I won’t be doing that again -- by which I mean starting at 11 a.m. on a weekday.” He then went on to describe the very bad traffic and concluded “I’ll stick with starting at 5 a.m., or 6 or 7 (or 8 at the latest) on a weekday.” I have ridden with Martin more than 30 times on the stretch of New Light Road where his death occurred, and Martin has been on it close to 175 times. (Permanents # 2259, 2818, 1795 all use that road.) Unfortunately, nothing can protect even a seasoned, safe rider from a reckless, irresponsible scofflaw behind the wheel.

Martin and I joined RUSA early in 2010 and met each other that spring while participating in the Raleigh, NC brevet series. We soon discovered we were both “back-of-the-pack” riders, and this led to riding many permanents and brevets together. Prior to picking up randonneuring, Martin was a distance runner and recreational cyclist. He volunteered as a ride marshal for the MS150 events held in New Bern, North Carolina and organized an informal group of friends (named the “Bay Leaf Irregulars”) who rode in the Raleigh area and beyond. (One gath-

ering was a multi-day tour on the Blue Ridge Parkway.) Some of those riders subsequently joined RUSA at Martin’s urging. He managed to balance randonneuring and non-randonneuring events, keeping interest alive for both.

Within three years after joining RUSA, Martin was plunging into volunteering as well as encouraging other members to create permanent routes. Martin used his extensive knowledge of Raleigh and the surrounding area to help plan routes and aid in the use of RideWithGPS. His volunteer work included handling registration, providing drop bag support, pre-riding courses, picking up DNFs, and simply giving words of encouragement to flagging riders, whether the event was a 200k or a 1200k. Martin also served on the RUSA committee responsible for reviewing new brevet routes.

Martin did ride a lot (as can be seen by checking the RUSA website “Results” tab), but his focus was more on helping others to achieve their goals. This came into sharper relief as he began to shoulder more and more responsibilities from longtime Raleigh RBA Alan Johnson. This ensured a smooth transition when Martin became the RBA in 2023. In addition to retaining the long-used routes of Alan’s SR series, Martin added several new routes



A selfie taken two weeks before his death.

and promoted the new Rouleur award by scheduling events needed to obtain the award.

Statistician and actuary that he was, Martin never tired of analyzing data related to RUSA. He also maintained his own detailed blog of rides (<https://irregularveloadventures.blogspot.com>) which is a good source for those interested in learning more about him.

Martin will be sorely missed by many people. His tragic death leaves a big hole in the Raleigh cycling community, especially for randonneuring. As I write this, the case against the hit-and-run driver has not gone to trial. The driver faces five separate charges. Whatever the outcome, Martin is gone from us, and for that we sorrow. 🚲

Postscript: *The driver who hit Martin tested positive for marijuana and accepted a plea deal. She was given the maximum sentence for both charges, felony death and felony hit and run resulting in death, and will serve the two terms consecutively, for a minimum of 132 months in prison.*

New RUSA Members

| RUSA# | NAME | CITY | STATE | RUSA# | NAME | CITY | STATE | RUSA# | NAME | CITY | STATE |
|-------|----------------------|------------------------|-------|-------|-------------------------|------------------|-------|-------|---------------------------|----------------|-------|
| 17389 | Bembenek, Irene | Anchorage | AK | 17492 | Nguyen, Henry | San Jose | CA | 17447 | Carran, Spencer | Chicago | IL |
| 17356 | Schnell, Bezy | Anchorage | AK | 17494 | Nguyen, Tai T | San Jose | CA | 17510 | Cordero, Katie R | Bolingbrook | IL |
| 17385 | Spurkland, Jan | Homer | AK | 17339 | Nguyen, Trang T | Santa Clara | CA | 17509 | Cordero, Rafael A | Bolingbrook | IL |
| 17460 | Ribbens, Dave T | Chandler | AR | 17503 | Nguyen, Tuan M | Brentwood | CA | 17451 | Evans, Chris John | Chicago | IL |
| 17507 | Miller, Matthew | Sahuarita | AZ | 17362 | Pechner, David | Oakland | CA | 17388 | Hamann, Rick E | Evanston | IL |
| 17338 | Lesy, Nico | Mortsel | BE | 17500 | Pham, D | San Jose | CA | 17412 | Hinton, Rachel | Chicago | IL |
| 17501 | Andreeva, Vera | Santa Clara | CA | 17399 | Pittman, Merri | San Francisco | CA | 17439 | Lillard, Leo K | Chicago | IL |
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New York-Montreal-New York DNF

BY BEN SWARTZ

At the end of 2023, I considered my randonneuring plan for 2024. My brother Noah and some friends were planning to do the New York-Montreal-New York 1200k, and another friend Mimo DeMarco was planning to do the Waterfalls 1200k. Having missed the deadline for NY-M-NY and after Mimo's plans changed, I resigned myself to doing a Super Randonneur series, setting my sights on the Hokkaido 1200k in 2025.

In July, Iwan Barankay from Pennsylvania Randonneurs invited me onto his team for the New Jersey Randonneur's Dart. After a fun, leisurely, hot, and sticky 130k, we arrived at a park. The RBA Paul Kramer was standing around, wearing a New York-Montreal-New York T-shirt. After chatting with Paul about the upcoming event, he mentioned, "I have three spots left for the ride. If you want a spot, just let me know."

The idea tumbled around in my brain as I headed back to DC. How crazy would it be to do 1200k? Could I get the days off? Was my bike ready? Was I ready?

The thoughts continued to tumble as I got back to work on Monday. I knew that I was long overdue for a vacation. Would a 1200k be a good break from work? Maybe, but it certainly wouldn't be relaxing.

I messaged some friends, asking for advice.

Misha Heller said, "You should go for it! I believe in you!"

Claire Mirocha said, "My thoughts are moooooostly all on the pro side for you! The only con is that your FOMO

will turn into FOP (fear of participating)."

Mimo said, "You can physically do it for sure, but you need to have strong self-motivation."

When I called my brother Noah, he agreed. Despite my original plan to hold off, this ride was tempting; the course was relatively easy and fully supported, and friends would be with me.

I decided to make the call; I sent Paul an email to secure a spot.

As the ride approached, my nervousness grew. I worried about packing, logistics, and my ride plan. I knew that once I got on the bike, I would be fine, but the anxiety was agonizing. I made myself a "mood board" to keep in the top of my rando bag, so whenever I was in a "mood," I could look at it and center myself.

Coincidentally, the Wednesday before the ride was my birthday. Noah and Claire brought me a cake and got a card signed by all our friends. After celebrating, I went to bed and, surprisingly, slept through the night.

The hotel lobby buzzed with riders' anxiety and excitement. Just before 6 a.m. we gathered outside, and Paul delivered the pre-ride speech. Soon, we were off.

I knew that I wanted to take things slowly to begin with. Riding through the suburbs, I saw kids getting on the bus for their first day of school, mirroring my nervous excitement. After crossing the Hudson, I reached the first control in Fishkill.

Riding mostly alone, I encountered other riders occasionally. Iwan rushed



The day before the ride started was my birthday.

—PHOTO NOAH SWARTZ



Sunrise over Lake George.

—PHOTO BEN SWARTZ

past me, having started late. The sun came out, and the day warmed up. After I left the second control in Red Hook, I felt the heat intensify. A while later I got a cryptic message from Noah with a picture of a dent in his frame. Worry was all that was on my mind until I learned that Noah had run into Claire pacelining, that they were both alright, and that while Claire's wheels were destroyed, Len, a volunteer, happened to have a perfect replacement.

The next stretch was a little lonely. As darkness fell, I linked up with a few other riders. After a quick stop at the final control with just 25 miles left, I felt good. We zoomed along. Ten miles later, I hit a pothole, causing a flat tire. By the time I realized it and stopped, the others were far away. Alone in the darkness, I slowly replaced the tube. As I finished, Andy Gorman pulled up, and we rode together, making it to Lake George just before 1 a.m.

Day Two was the longest day, at 400k, so I got an early start at 4 a.m. An incredible sunrise over Lake George welcomed me. I rolled into the first control tired but feeling good. I continued and leapfrogged June and Ryan

until we got to the next control in Tupper Lake.

As I ate, another rider I had never met sat down and introduced himself. Sleep-deprived, I was only partially listening. His name sounded very fanciful, maybe British. As I headed out, I was happy to have a new friend, Abernathy. I think.

A little bit later my friend Soph, who was volunteering, checked in. I said that I was with Ryan and June and that "Abernathy is still behind." Soph responded, "Is this a person?" and then later, "What's his first or last name?"

Around this time I was getting pretty tired and found a nice place to take a nap. As I lay down, Abernathy rolled by and asked if everything was okay. I told him my intentions and slept for about 15 minutes, feeling much better afterwards.

I continued onward but hadn't seen anyone on the roads since Abernathy rolled by. As I pulled into Saranac Lake, the clocktower tolled five times. "Oh no," I thought, "It's 5 and I still have 200k to go." I put on some music and began to book it. In no time I caught up with Ryan and June. We rolled into the control at Saranac, filled our bellies, and rolled out into the darkness on our way to the Canadian border.



The Mood Board I created for self-motivation.

—PHOTO BEN SWARTZ

Noah and Claire!
—PHOTO BEN SWARTZ

When we arrived in Rouses Point around 11 p.m., we were in pretty good spirits. We fueled up and took our obligatory pictures. I was feeling okay. Tired, sure, but there were just 57 flat miles left. “We’ll crush those in like four hours, and I’ll actually get decent sleep tonight,” I thought.

As we crossed the bridge into Vermont, it was as though I had entered a waking nightmare. It was pitch black on the islands with no cars in sight. It felt like we were making no progress, and we were all going through it in different ways. June was swerving, and Ryan had a portable speaker playing a mix that sounded like the Diablo 2 soundtrack, adding to the hellscape vibe. I had overdosed on caffeine, and my heart began to physically hurt.

At one point I felt like I needed to pull off to rest my eyes for a couple of minutes. June and Ryan went on ahead. After about five minutes of rest, it all hit me: I was alone in the dark. I raced to catch up with them. After pushing myself, I still saw nothing in the darkness. Eventually, I saw two red lights – a car’s brake lights. I rushed ahead, but the car was going faster than me. I pushed and pushed, and finally, I caught up; it was them riding two abreast! I was relieved but also extremely tired. Ryan’s music was still playing, and it felt like any help that rest did was lost.

After a lot more pedaling, we came to a small overpass. On my right I saw a man wearing a dark black suit,



a white button-down shirt, and a black hat. He was walking toward me! His legs were moving, his lips were moving, but I couldn’t hear what he was saying. I pedaled harder to get away, but his speed kept increasing. What does he want with me? Why is the man in the hat out here in the dark??

Logically, there was no man in a hat. My sleep-deprived mind hallucinated him. It was likely just my shadow reflecting against the overpass. But he looked so real; my brain had filled in all the details perfectly. I steeled myself and thought, “I need to get off these islands.”

Another eternity passed. Ryan started playing “Truckin” by the Grateful Dead, which gave me some energy but also made me think that’s exactly the song Charon would be playing while ferrying his charges across the River Styx. We crossed a

pair of bridges and were finally off the islands and into Burlington.

“Finally,” I thought, “10 miles until a nice bed, 10 easy miles.” Based on the elevation map, I expected things to be flat. I was sadly mistaken. As soon as we got off the islands, we encountered many steep rollers. I began to feel woozy on the descents. I was tired but too close to stop and rest my eyes. The week before the ride, my mom joked that I should model my perseverance on the Little Engine That Could. I began chanting to myself aloud, “I think I can, I think I can, I think I can.”

By the time we got in, just past 4:30 a.m., the volunteers had begun making oatmeal for the morning. I showered and set my alarm for 7:45.

I awoke just two hours later. I still felt woozy, but I knew what lay ahead of me. As I pushed off, my whole body began screaming at me. Every rolling hill felt like hell. I started to feel shaky on the descents; I needed to spend all my energy staying focused. I noticed I was barely going 10 mph. I began to cry. I thought about how I decided to do this ride in part because Noah and Claire were going to be on it. But the last time I saw Noah and Claire was at the starting line – would I even see them at all this ride?

The week before the ride, my mom joked that I should model my perseverance on the Little Engine That Could. I began chanting to myself aloud, “I think I can, I think I can, I think I can.”

At mile 10 there was a gas station. I stopped, sat down, ate something, and considered abandoning. I really didn't want to quit, but I felt like I needed five hours of sleep. I began calculating. If I kept puttering along at this rate, I would no doubt get in after midnight. I looked at my mood board and read Paul's words over and over: "Nobody quits on my watch!"

I didn't have it in me. I called the organizer. Before I knew it, Len appeared in his van to take me to a rental car. Then, as we were progressing past houses, I hallucinated a parked car jumping right out into the street. Any second guessing I was doing about DNFing got wiped away for a brief moment. "I'm glad I wasn't on a bike for that," I thought.

After picking up a car, I drove to the first control just in time to see friends roll in. As I checked the online tracker to see who was coming next, I realized that there was no rider named

"Abernathy"— his name was Robert Sexton. Ryan and June rolled up, and I cheered them on before hopping in the car and heading down the road.

Len called, asking if I could go to the second control and see how riders were doing there. I obliged, and when I rolled up, I saw Noah and Claire!

They seemed to be doing okay but were cold and wet. I saw them off and waited for more riders to come up. It felt good to help out and see everyone. I continued to the overnight and saw Noah and Claire in before going to bed myself.

I woke up the next day and headed back to New Jersey. Reunited with my car, I raced to the last control before the finish. I bought Munchkins for riders and made sure they were doing well. Before long, Len joined, and I headed off to the finish, where I got to cheer for all those who accomplished what I could not.

In the end I think I made the right

decision, but with rose-tinted glasses I feel like maybe I could've finished. I know that I was still hallucinating, but with a week of rest, it's easy to forget how bad I felt in that moment, and easy to think that it wouldn't have been so bad – a new form of randonnesia.

I want to thank the organizer Paul and the volunteers, namely Soph and Len, who made the ride so much more enjoyable. I cannot imagine doing a 1200k without support. Just having a familiar face at each control gave me additional power for the part of the ride I did do.

As I drove my car to my planned vacation in Vermont, I saw a number of familiar roads and controls. Passing by these places at the speed of a car felt different; the inherent beauty of these places whizzed past me. Though my legs were sore and my body and mind were tired, I yearned to be back on a bike, taking in the landscape at a more relaxed pace. 🚲

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The Perils of Not Paying Attention

This past August, as I was pedaling alongside my dart teammate Ron, he casually mentioned that he had registered for the Pennsylvania Grand Canyon 200k to be held two weeks hence. He shared that he had previously enjoyed the ride which included a bit of gravel and was partially routed along the Pine Creek Trail in north central Pennsylvania.

I had ridden the full length of the Pine Creek Trail a few years ago with Janice and remembered it as being quite pleasant and not too challenging in the climbing department. Ron would be driving up the night before and sharing a room at a local hotel with our friend Nigel, who was also registered.

This sounded like great fun and a chance to ride a new route, which added a touch of adventure. I registered on-line and booked my hotel room. I

briefly looked at the map while downloading the route to my Garmin and wondered why it was a loop instead of the out-and-back I expected since it followed the Pine Creek Trail, but the significance of this discrepancy didn't really register at the time.

I have been a RUSA member since 2006 and when I first started, I had checklists to help me remember what to pack. I would print off the cue sheet to familiarize myself with the route

and I would angst about long rides for days ahead of time. As the years have passed and the kilometers have accumulated, my preparations have become, shall we say, less exacting. In fact, my preparations have become so lazy that the name, Pennsylvania Grand Canyon, didn't even really register as a vital topographic clue.

I have a 100k permanent with approximately 4,000 feet of climbing that I had been avoiding for most of the year since my stamina had taken a hit after a bout of Covid-19 last fall. My last real "climby" ride was the New Jersey spring 200k brevet, a painful sufferfest, so I was looking forward to a relatively flat course.

But that loop must have been rolling around in my subconscious so one day, a few days before the ride, I revisited the map and the PA Randonneurs info page. It had 72 km of gravel. Hmm. That's a lot. And 8,700ft of climbing. WHAT?!? That's about the same climbing per 100k as my route which I had been intentionally avoiding all year.

My inattention to details, to any detail really, was going to have painful consequences.

The route starts in Jersey Shore, Penn., about a three-hour car trip. I am not sure why I didn't research the weather at the start locale, choosing only to check the weather at home, where I would not be. But it was August



Part of the story I forgot:
my shoes fell apart on the ride!

—PHOTOS CHRIS NEWMAN

The area was beautiful but the conditions not so much.

in New Jersey and the weather is reliably hot and humid. I packed my lightest jersey and three water bottles but did decide to throw my clip-on fenders in the car at the last minute.

Ron had generously offered me a ride and we arrived in Jersey Shore just in time to join Nigel and a few other adventurous randonneurs for a high calorie dinner at the local Italian restaurant. My memory is that I learned at dinner the forecast for the following day was rain, plenty of it, and heavy at times. Good thing I packed my lightest jersey and left that rain jacket behind!

Dinner was followed by a trip to the dollar store and then the local supermarket where I scored a plastic rain poncho that was big enough to cover both me and my bike with room to spare. Very aerodynamic!

Saturday morning dawned cloudy but dry. I packed the poncho and installed the fenders but I was still hopeful that the rain would not materialize. And for the first 30 or so miles to the first control we remained dry. A cinnamon roll and coffee at the control fortified me for the gravel and serous climbing which were just around the corner. Cue the rain: plenty of it, heavy most of the time. The truism I always remember is that once I am thoroughly soaked, I really can't get any more wet. At least my fenders kept me from getting muddy as well.

The route proved to be very scenic and the climbs were challenging and kept me warm in spite of the weather. I do not routinely ride on gravel and I found I had to concentrate to keep the wheels steady and the bike upright on both the steep uphill and downhill. This need to focus prevented me from dwelling on the double-digit grades or how unprepared I had been.

I was lucky enough to happen upon Jan from New Hampshire at a mid-way control and we ended up



riding together as we neared the small, typically shallow stream we would need to wade across as per the organizer's instructions. As we pedaled we could hear the rushing water of what sounded like a river.

It seemed possible that our crossing might be affected by a powerful storm which had passed through the week before and had washed away a different part of the original route.

We were a short way from the crossing when Andy, a local in a large pick-up truck, coming from the direction of the crossing, informed us he had just ferried a few cyclists across the stream and advised us to turn around as the level was continuing to rise.

He filled our head with visions of floating downstream – he literally said this was likely to happen – so when he offered us a ride back to a work around route we gratefully accepted. We picked up several more riders on our way, saving them from the river as well. The workaround added about eight miles and a massive climb but hey, we would live to ride again.

We eventually rejoined the original route where we encountered Bill, the ride organizer, who informed us that he had just traversed the stream and had helped another rider across by carrying his bike. Neither one had drowned or been swept away. It seemed that Andy, our friendly local hero, was a bit over-cautious in his evaluation of our stream crossing skills.

The storm which changed the stream to a river also washed out the original downhill finish. The reroute included some of the steepest climbs all day. It was a slow slog up these hills after all the gravel and the rain and the detour. My lack of hill conditioning had me pedaling near the end of the pack while Ron, who was in great climbing condition and had survived the stream crossing, waited very good naturedly for a long two hours for me to complete the ride.

In spite of all the challenges and my pathetic preparation, I loved the ride and would do it again. And next time, I will brave the creek crossing no matter what the locals say! 🚲

The All-Maryland Challenge – Riding Every RUSA Permanent That Starts in Maryland

BY EMILY RANSON AND BILL BECK

Randonneurs are famous for our love of pursuing silly and made-up goals, and so we decided to attempt what we called the All-Maryland Challenge. Born out of curiosity — how many of Maryland’s permanents had we ridden so far?

This question quickly morphed into the goal of riding every permanent that starts in Maryland, although at the beginning it seemed like it would be a lifelong goal, always just out of reach. As Emily encouraged her friends to join her on various new-to-her permanents, Bill opted to join the challenge. Bill, however, is much more of a completionist, and so the race was on.

We adopted the following rules:

A. – “All permanents that start in Maryland” means all permanents that you could register for at the RUSA website. This excludes the Big Savage SR600, which is administered by Provence Randonneurs and requires separate registration through the route owner.

B. – If a club brevet or populaire uses the same route as a permanent, riding the brevet or populaire counts as riding the permanent.

C. – We also excluded routes that are a subset of another longer route. For example, since we rode permanent #4688, which is the entire C&O Canal Towpath, we didn’t re-ride shorter permanents that are smaller sections of the C&O Canal Towpath. And finally, some longer loop routes have a shortened version that isn’t an exact subset

of the longer one, but if the shorter one had less than 15% that was different from the longer one, we excluded it.

Maryland is a geographically small state, but it has a large variation in topography, ranging from the pancake-flat Eastern Shore, through the rolling Piedmont area where we live in the middle of the state, to the steep Appalachian Mountains in the western end. So, our routes ranged from the #3320 Underground Railroad route, which passes many sites associated with Harriet Tubman and climbs less than 1500 ft over 208 km on the Eastern Shore, to #3627 Doctor DeMento’s Defibrillator, which packs over 12,000 ft of steep climbing into 206 km. The shortest routes that we rode were exactly 100 km and the longest was #4619 ARDNER 300K. Fortunately for us, there were no 400 or 600k Maryland permanents on the books that we had not already ridden as a club brevet.

There were several routes in western Maryland that we probably would have never ridden without this challenge. The furthest one away, #4782 Deep Creek Diversions, was actually one Emily created to ride while at Maryland’s popular vacation spot,

Deep Creek Lake. We also did a lot more southern Maryland riding than we had ever done before. This is a flatter part of the state, but unfortunately has seen significant urban sprawl along the state highways that likely once were lovely to ride.

We also were responsible for the deactivation of several permanents. Many of the permanents have not been ridden in years. Riding #3872 Berkley Springs Odyssey, we discovered that construction of a new highway cut off the route (Surprise! New highway!) and we had to go back down the big hill we had just climbed to find a detour. On other routes, we found bridges that were out and roads that were



Emily reacting to the 18% grade on Doctor DeMento's Defibrillator.

now permanently closed. Although annoying at the time, we feel like we did quite the service to permanents in the state, updating cue sheets with information on current services and finding necessary detours.

Memorable Rides

Which rides stood out? Dr.

Demento's Defibrillator would have to be on that list because of the beautiful mountain views and relentless climbing, some on gut-buster slopes of more than 18%. We were worried about the time limit, so minimized stops, but ended up finishing with about an hour to spare.

In high school, Emily really wanted to ride the C&O Canal – 184 miles from DC to Cumberland, MD – and Great Allegheny Passage (GAP) – 150 miles from Cumberland to Pittsburgh. She had not yet done so until the challenge pushed her to finally get them done. Riding the C&O on #4688 Canal Towpaths Are for Donkeys was pretty easy. The train leaves DC in the late



afternoon and arrives in Cumberland early enough for dinner and a good night's sleep. We completed the ride in late April, a good time for cool weather riding in Maryland, when bluebells are blooming along the trail. We got into DC around 10 p.m., which was great until we realized that we couldn't remember how to enter the garage where we parked! Oops!

Riding the GAP was not as straightforward. The route that we actually needed for the All-Maryland

Challenge was #4957 Cumberland to Pittsburgh (GAP Trail) because it started in Maryland. But this route does not actually use the full GAP trail. Instead, it takes very hilly roads for the shortest distance between the two cities. While this did make for a nice round trip (we rode #4957 to Pittsburgh and took the GAP trail back to Cumberland on #4692 Dusty on the GAP Trail), the ride out was clearly one of those permanents designed for someone's specific trip. The roads were trafficky and the route started and ended at particular hotels rather than the trail heads. Technically, the #4692 permanent back to Cumberland on the full GAP was a Pennsylvania, not Maryland, start. But it was definitely the highlight of the weekend. It's pretty easy to get spoiled by trails like the C&O Canal Towpath and GAP, where you can ride all day without dodging motorized traffic!

Then #4446 Michaux Ironmaster made us very, very nervous, and we had many spirited discussions about whether or not it should count as a Maryland permanent by our rules. This



Emily and Bill at the Eastern Continental Divide on #4957 – Cumberland to Pittsburgh (GAP Trail).

—PHOTOS BILL BECK

Emily lifting her Gunnar into the bike car on the train from DC to Cumberland, MD.

route is largely gravel, and a lot of the roads are very steep. Some of the roads weren't even roads but instead single track over rocks. Neither Emily nor Bill are mountain bikers, and while we ride on gravel on brevets and permanents to avoid roads with heavy traffic, we do not seek out gravel routes. Nobody else had ridden the route since the route designer rode it once in 2022.

We ultimately decided that a permanent would only be included in the list if we could complete it on equipment we owned. Unfortunately, since Bill could slap on 48 mm tires and Emily 38 mm, we decided that the Michaux Ironmaster should count. On a lovely Friday after several days without rain, we tackled this route with our frequent ride companion, Bill Smith. For most of the ride we were flirting with the cutoff (okay, we were behind the cutoff pace), even with the extra time allowed for the gravel, but the terrain was not too difficult ... for the most part. Bill Smith and Emily did have to walk a section of very loose shale that absorbed their tires, while Bill Beck's wider tires let him float on the top. And the "road" was sometimes blocked by fallen trees. But with the help of a long descent at the end, we finished with 58 minutes to spare.



Completing the Challenge

It is important to note that a challenge like this has goal posts that keep moving! New permanents are being activated and deactivated all the time. At one point, we knew that we only had two routes left to complete and aimed to finish them before Emily left for a two-week trip. It was hot and humid (Maryland in the summer, after all), so we started the first route #1884 Over the River and Through the

Woods, at 9:30 p.m. and rode all night to complete it, only to find out the next day that a new Maryland permanent had been added, so we were back to two again! It definitely became a race to ride the permanents faster than they could be created or reactivated.

As a consequence of the moving goal posts, the challenge can only be defined as having completed all of the Maryland permanents at a particular moment in time. In our case, that moment was 4 p.m. on August 15, 2024 when we completed #5190 Ye Olde Sugarloaf Circumnavigation Classic Century, and checked our phones to verify that no new permanents had been added while we were riding. We were done! New Maryland permanents have been activated since then. And we will probably continue riding them as they get created, but the race is no longer on. 🚲



Emily and Bill with a cannon in chickory on Seminary Ridge at Gettysburg.

Reflections on 10 Years of Randonneuring

BY TIBOR TAMAS

On August 9, 2014, I rode my first rando route — Spanish Fort 209k. All of those riding with me that day are still riding today: S. Hazelton, S. Stevens, M. Metcalfe, and B. Barnell.

Ten years. A decade. 76,109 kilometers. A time frame that encapsulates a significant portion of one's life. For me, it marks a journey of countless miles, hours, and memories on a bicycle. It is the time I've spent immersed in the world of randonneuring, a pursuit that has transformed not just my physical capabilities, but my mental fortitude and my perspective on life.

The first few years were a steep learning curve. Each ride was a lesson in endurance, equipment, nutrition, and mental toughness. There were moments of exhilaration as I conquered hills and rode through breathtaking landscapes. But there were also moments of doubt and fatigue, when the mind questioned the sanity of undertaking

such endeavors. Yet, with every completed permanent or brevet, my confidence grew, and my desire to explore further intensified. Thank you to all who stuck with me on those early rides. You know who you are!

Randonneuring is more than just cycling. It's a journey of self-discovery. The solitude of the road provides ample time for introspection. I've learned to appreciate the rhythm of my pedaling, the cadence of my breath, and the symphony of the world around me. The challenges encountered on the road have mirrored those of life, teaching me resilience, problem-solving, and the *importance of perseverance*.

Beyond the physical challenges, randonneuring has fostered a deep

connection with nature. Witnessing sunrises and sunsets from the saddle, experiencing the changing seasons, and exploring diverse landscapes have cultivated a profound appreciation for God's natural world. It has also introduced me to a remarkable community of like-minded individuals who share a passion for the open road. The camaraderie and support of fellow randonneurs has been invaluable, making the journey even more enriching. Over the years, I have ridden with many of you on epic rides, day and night, in heat and cold, rain and rough roads. And let's not forget the dog chases!

The past 120 months took me around the country — 48 states and Washington D.C. — through stunning scenery, and I have met friendly people all over the U.S. I have both created and updated many routes for all of us to enjoy.

I have ridden all over the beautiful state of Texas, from the Great Plains to the beaches of the Gulf Coast.

As I reflect on a decade of randonneuring, I am filled with gratitude for the experiences, the friendships, and the personal growth it has brought. While the physical demands may increase with age, the spirit of adventure remains as strong as ever. The road ahead promises new challenges, new landscapes, and new opportunities for self-discovery. And as long as my legs continue to turn the pedals, I will be there, embracing the journey, one kilometer at a time.

Here's to the next 10 years! 🚲

Chilly temps riding Quiker Quickie to Granbury.
—PHOTO TIBOR TAMAS



Preparing for Your First 1200k Brevet

BY SAMUEL THOMPSON, ACIER COACHING & CONSULTING

Traditional cycling training advice is often geared to the demands of more historically established events, such as road races and time trials, which naturally attract more attention from researchers and form the basis of many generic training plans. However, if the demands of your event differ from these more traditional disciplines, then one must take a more nuanced approach. This undoubtedly applies when preparing for a 1200k brevet, which we can justifiably define as an ultra-distance event.

My goal here is to impart advice and knowledge gleaned from evidence-based research and on-the-job experience to place you in the best possible position to complete your first 1200k brevet. The first step when undertaking any endeavor is to understand what you are up against. I will therefore run through the specific demands of a 1200k brevet, including the physiological and

logistical considerations, before offering guidance on structuring effective training and preparation, adapted from key underlying principles.

THE DEMANDS OF A 1200K BREVET

Physiological: Some take the view that ultra-distance events are more of a mental challenge than a physical one. However, you can be as mentally tough

as you like, but without turning the pedals you aren't going to get very far. Although psychological and logistical factors are hugely important in a 1200k brevet, if the body isn't up to the job, then completion of the event will be beyond reach. Nevertheless, having faith in one's physical capabilities can undoubtedly have a huge positive knock-on effect to self-confidence and belief, hence feeding back to the psychological piece in a virtuous circle.

With this in mind, the diagram on the next page illustrates the key physiological considerations for ultra-distance cycling and particularly how these compare and contrast with some of the shorter, more traditional disciplines.

The highest demands are identified as fat oxidation and endurance, followed by fractional utilization. Having a high aerobic capacity (VO₂max) is crucial for any endurance discipline as it effectively sets an upper limit to aerobic capabilities (Joyner & Coyle, 2008), but to really maximize performance one should aim for the highest sustainable percentage of VO₂ max for the given duration of the event. This is the fractional utilization.

For events of such a long duration as a 1200k brevet, this fractional utilization concept is closely linked to the first lactate turnpoint (LT1), frequently termed the Aerobic Threshold. Beyond this threshold the body shifts from primarily metabolizing fat as a fuel source

Because we are all unique, our training and preparations must be as well.

—PHOTO @MITTELGEBIRGECLASSIQUE



towards relying more on carbohydrates. This intensity can theoretically be maintained forever, given adequate fueling (until other factors intervene). The break down of fats is preferable for this lower-intensity activity as it is a more readily available fuel source (carbohydrate storage in the body is limited to around 2,000kcal, whereas fat stores can provide 100,000+kcal), is a more concentrated source of energy (9kcal/g versus 4kcal/g for carbohydrates) and, contrary to carbohydrate, does not produce fatiguing by-products when metabolized. Being able to effectively metabolize fat thus provides a crucial advantage in ultra-distance events.

The diagram to the right illustrates where LT1 lies in a 3 zone model, with blood lactate concentrations used as an indirect marker of fatigue (note that lactate is not necessarily the cause itself of fatigue).

When considering the endurance element, parallels can be drawn with a concept which is currently receiving a lot of attention across many disciplines and which has sparked a number of recent research studies, namely 'durability'. Durability is defined by Maunder et al. (2021) as:

'the time of onset and magnitude of deterioration in physiological-profiling characteristics during prolonged exercise.'

As the length of the physical effort required extends, performance is therefore not solely a function of physiological status when fresh, but related to the resistance to deterioration when in a fatigued state. The cause of fatigue in long events is multifactorial and not yet fully understood (Jones, 2023), but the main reasons are likely to include the ability to use fats for fuel (linking back to fat oxidation), resistance to muscular damage, and resistance to central nervous system fatigue.

BEYOND THE PHYSICAL

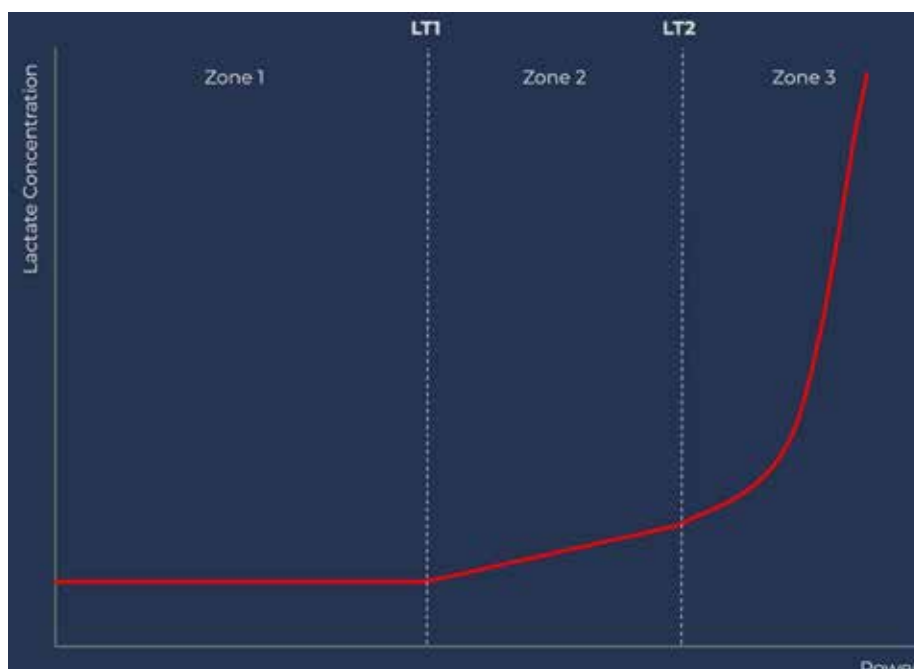
In addition to the physiological demands, we must not forget that completing a 1200k brevet is more than

ULTRA-CYCLING DEMANDS VS. TRADITIONAL DISCIPLINES

| | Aerobic Capacity | Fractional Utilization | Lactate Buffering | Anaerobic Power | Neuro-muscular Power | Fat Oxidation | Endurance |
|----------------|------------------|------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|----------------------|---------------|-----------|
| Ultra-Distance | Moderate | High | Moderate | Low | Low | Very High | Very High |
| Road Racing | High | High | High | Variable | Variable | High | High |
| Time Trial | High | High | High | Low | Low | High | Variable |
| Cyclocross | High | Moderate | High | Moderate | Moderate | Moderate | Low |
| Track Sprinter | High | Low | High | High | High | Low | Low |

—PRODUCED BY SAMUEL THOMPSON/ACIER.CC

POWER OUTPUT TO BLOOD LACTATE IN ZONE 3



—PRODUCED BY SAMUEL THOMPSON/ACIER.CC

just a case of turning the pedals. The following considerations are thereby also key for a successful outcome.

Night Riding: There are only a certain number of hours of daylight each day and in order to finish your 1200k within the time limit, you are going to have to ride in darkness for significant periods of time. This requires an effective lighting system and some habituation to the sensations associated with riding in darkness.

Sleeping: Few people will (or should) complete a 1200k without sleeping. Sleep is the most important and effective means of recovery so should never be viewed as 'wasted time'. What is crucial is ensuring that

quality of sleep is as high as possible. Whether you will be relying on sleeping indoors (at checkpoints or hotels) or outdoors, your setup must reflect your personal needs and tolerances, as well as the expected conditions.

Setup: You should be comfortable and familiar with how your bike feels to ride when all the equipment you need is loaded. Having an effective system for where each item goes will save time and reduce the risk of misplacing or losing important pieces of equipment.

Efficiency: Whenever you are not moving, or performing an essential activity (eg. sleep, resupply, fixing a mechanical) you are effectively losing time. Unnecessary stopped time can



An effective lighting system and habituation to night riding are important.

—PHOTO @BITE.OF.ME

For a 1200k brevet however, if you were to follow this principle to the letter your training volume would likely be at an unsustainable level and leave little room for recovery and progression. Therefore a balance must be struck between training specifically and sustainably. Increasingly longer rides are a crucial part of preparing to ride such a distance, but with limited time for training, one must be smart about how this time is employed.

Part of this involves shorter, high-intensity training which can be very time efficient. Improving your Aerobic Capacity can enhance your ability to work aerobically and consequently bring up your Aerobic Threshold (effectively raising the aerobic ceiling, similar to the rising tide lifting all boats concept). I endorse a reverse periodization approach, where this higher intensity preparation is emphasized at an earlier stage in the preparation phase, before moving on to prioritizing volume.

Those longer rides can also be used to simulate challenges you are likely to face on your 1200k, without having to replicate the distance. For example,

quickly add up, and can prove impossible to make up, however fast you pedal. The numbers speak for themselves – if you are riding at 20kph and take a 15 minute unnecessary stop, you will have to ride at 25kph for the next hour to make up that ‘lost’ time. Which may well prove to be an unsustainable speed over the duration.

Nutrition: Ultra-distance events are often described as ‘eating competitions on wheels’. And not for no reason as the body requires a huge amount of energy to fuel the millions of muscle contractions required to pedal such a distance. A study by Geesman et al. (2016) reported an average energy deficit of 5,554kcal amongst cyclists participating in Paris-Brest-Paris. Consideration must therefore be given to ensuring that you are regularly taking on palatable fuel during the event, and that your gut is effectively prepared to be able to process the vast number of calories required to keep moving.

So, what is the best way to overcome these challenges? Practice. Specifically, specific practice. That word cannot be overemphasized. To get better at night riding you need to

practice riding at night. To understand your tolerances for sleeping outside in certain conditions you need to get out and sleep in similar conditions. This principle of specificity is one of the key training principles that we address next.

KEY TRAINING PRINCIPLES

Now that we know what we are up against, we can address how best to prepare body, mind and bike. This can be framed through following four fundamental training principles, namely specificity, progressive overload, reversibility/recovery and individuality. All this while applying these principles to overcoming the specific demands of a 1200k brevet.

Specificity: Specificity may well be the most important training principle. Put simply, if you want to become good at something, you must practice doing that thing. This becomes more important the closer that your goal event becomes, with your training more closely resembling the demands of that event.

Your fuel choices should be palatable to ensure you consume enough calories.

—PHOTO @MITTELGEIRGECLASSIQUE



incorporating riding at night, sleeping out so that you are practicing deploying your sleep setup and back-to-back longer days to test your durability.

Progressive Overload: In order to make physiological improvements, a training stimulus must be applied above and beyond what the body is familiar with. The body responds to the stressor by adapting with more tolerance to the specific activity, and improved performance. This occurs at a greater level than that demanded by the stressor and has been termed 'supercompensation' (Lorenz & Morrison, 2015).

There are three ways this can be accomplished: increasing intensity, duration or frequency. For a 1200k brevet, the ability to ride long distances over multiple days should therefore be gradually applied to your preparation. There soon comes a point when doing ever more becomes impractical and unsustainable so progression must be balanced against the other training principles. I would also add in here the importance of consistency. Forming good habits with your training, including establishing a routine that fits around the rest of your life commitments, will assist with this progression and ensure that your training is a sustainable pursuit.

Reversibility/Recovery Without adequate recovery time, the body will not have the opportunity to adapt to the training stimulus, causing fatigue in the short term and potentially burnout in the longer term should the situation persist. The principle of reversibility, however, implies that the opposite also occurs if there is not enough of a training stimulus, leading to detraining.

In the context of preparing for your 1200k brevet, this concept is particularly important to bear in mind when scheduling your longer training rides. These require extended periods of recovery, where additional stress too soon would prove unproductive. Trying to fit in ever-longer rides each weekend allows inadequate time to recover and

build in quality work during the week, hindering progression. I therefore advise that the longest rides are spaced by 3-4 weeks so that a 'reload' week can be programmed immediately afterwards and permit the beneficial physiological adaptations to be absorbed.

Individuality We are all humans with similar physiologies, but there is a large variation between how we each respond to training. This may be due to genetic factors, as well as our training history, lifestyle and nutrition (Henchy & Carter, 2012). As we are all unique, our training and preparation must therefore also be this way. This implies matching your training plan not just to the demands of your event, but also to your distinct characteristics for it to be most effective.

When applied to the multifaceted demands of a 1200k brevet, the individuality principle goes well beyond physical preparation. We all have different tolerances, requirements and preferences. These must be reflected in your setup and dialed in through practice and an element of trial and error. Researching the kit lists and setups of others who have successfully completed similar events can be a helpful starting

point, but to truly understand what works for yourself you need to get out there and practice on your own rides.

CONCLUSION

Successful completion of a 1200k brevet requires firstly a comprehensive understanding of the demands of the event. These include the physiological aspects, with important determinants highlighted as being fat oxidation and endurance, followed by fractional utilization. Above and beyond the physical factors we must also consider challenges such as night riding, managing sleep, efficiency, setup and nutrition. To overcome these challenges, training and preparation should be structured with reference to four key principles: specificity, progressive overload, reversibility/recovery and individuality.

I don't promise this process to be easy, especially as the greatest rewards are gained through the most demanding challenges. Nevertheless, by following these guidelines you will be well prepared to not just complete your 1200k, but do so whilst enjoying the journey. After all, we ultimately do this for enjoyment and we should never lose sight of this. 🚲

THE AUTHOR

Samuel Thompson is an ABCC Level 3 cycling coach who, via his coaching & consultancy enterprise Acier, specializes in preparing cyclists for ultra-distance, self-supported events. He has over 10 years experience in randonneuring, including 3x Super Randonneur Awards and is an accomplished ultra-distance racer, achieving notable results such as 2nd at The Trans Pyrenees Race in 2019, 2nd at GBDURO 2022 and 8th at Transiberica 2024

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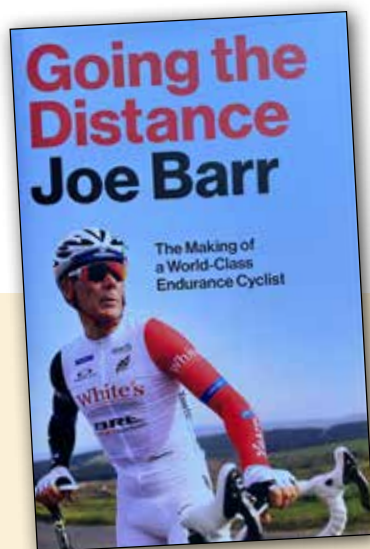
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Cycling Pioneer/Going the Distance

Fully supported ultra-distance cycling overlaps with randonneuring in some, but not all ways, as the authors of these two memoirs make clear.

Determined to cycle to an extreme destination in the absolute shortest amount of time possible, riders in the late 1970s and early 1980s began to organize individual and group time trials with the support of crews and follow vehicles with greater frequency and for longer and longer distances. Two seasoned racers within this discipline have written personal accounts in recent years to provide a window into how this all works.

In *Going the Distance*, Irish cyclist Joe Barr paints a picture of his evolution as an ultra-cyclist that stretches back to his early life in northwestern Ireland through to the early 2020s.



With roots as a journeyman bike racer in Ireland and continental Europe in the early 1980s, Barr tells the story of what came next after he found himself at the dawn of a new millennium at age 40 without a team, a race contract, or even very much of a professional career. His discovery of “sportifs,” as day-long amateur charity rides are known in parts of Europe, and semi-professional gran fondos held his interest for a short time, but he was soon in search of greater challenges. As a self-described highly competitive individual, it was not long before Barr was drawn to more extreme races that did not require team membership, but through which he could continue to challenge himself to achieve outcomes that pushed him to the absolute limits of his performance ability. It was the inaugural Race Around Ireland in his own back yard in 2009 that really sealed the deal and paved the way to RAAM and other races.

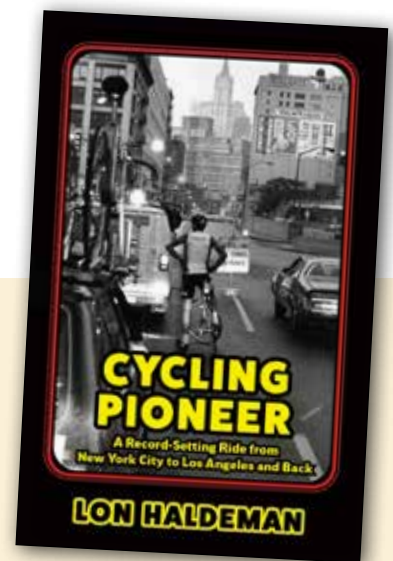
Going the Distance

JOE BARR

Gill Books. 2021.

263 pages.

COVER GAVIN CONNOLLY



Cycling Pioneer

LON HALDEMAN

Self-Published. 2024.

153 pages.

COVER JOHN SCHUBERT

Barr makes clear that while he approached ultra racing as an individual sport, it is far from a discipline that can be won without the support of others. He acknowledges the many people throughout his life who contributed to his success as a bicycle racer from family members to romantic partners to friends and fellow competitors. Barr is a people person, and this affability clearly contributed to his success on the bicycle. So serendipitous was his discovery of supported racing, though, that one wonders how his story might have been different had he stumbled upon one of the self-supported events such as the Transcontinental Race and the TransAtlantic Way that launched just a few years later and have become increasingly popular in Europe and beyond.

While something as iconic as RAAM may seem like it's been around forever, it's only actually been on the annual race calendar since 1982 when it launched as the Great American Bicycle Race and included just four

cyclists, Lon Haldeman among them. In *Cycling Pioneer*, Lon Haldeman does not write an account of that race, but rather his solo attempt to beat the double transcontinental cycling record riding from New York City to Los Angeles (and back again!) in 1981. A high school football star from a small Midwestern town, Haldeman explains that his love of extreme cycling stretches back to his preteen years when he dreamed about riding his bicycle across the country the way some people imagine climbing the world's tallest mountains. As his training distances increased so did the likelihood that his dreams would someday become reality and in 1980, he enlisted the support of his father to map out a route and provide logistical support for his first cross-country record attempt the following year. In the pages that follow, readers are treated to an engaging play-by-play account of this attempt told with humor and a remarkable level of detail.

As many of you know, Haldeman and his wife Susan Notorangelo -- who herself makes an important appearance in *Cycling Pioneer* -- went on to develop a unique and highly successful training and touring operation known as PAC Tour that has had a profound and lasting impact on thousands of cyclists of all stripes, including many randonneurs, from across the globe. While we are not privy to much of this later story, *Cycling Pioneer* illustrates how an extraordinarily driven young man got started down this unique and distinguished path.

These two books, while different, will likely appeal mostly to riders with an existing interest in the details of fully supported ultra racing or who know or want to get to know the authors more deeply as individuals. These memoirs provide a compelling view of ultra cycling at two distinct moments in time. Devoid of broad and sweeping generalizations about human nature or of cycling in general, they are idiosyncratic and mostly focused on the racing itself and feel a bit like time capsules.



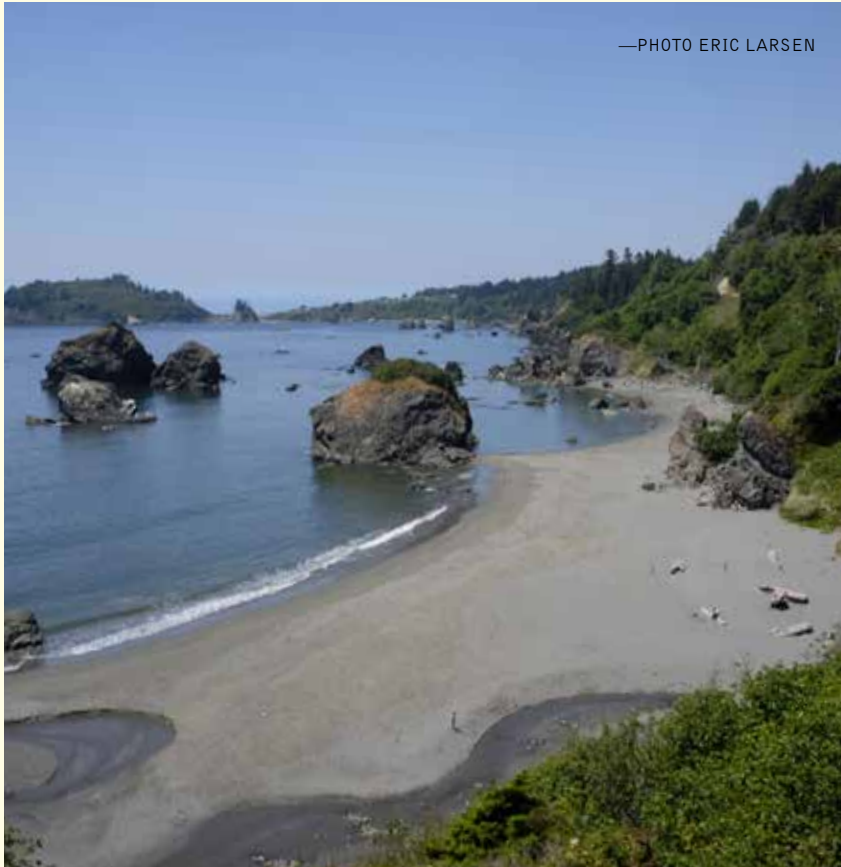
In fact, I'm left wondering after reading these books whether the golden age of fully supported ultra cycling is behind us. The extreme cost of these endeavors and the necessity of sponsorship dollars and the carbon impact of flying and driving riders and full crews between and across continents may help to explain the proliferation of unsupported ultra races in recent years. While the Transcontinental Race often sells out in minutes, for instance, the Race Around Ireland has not been run since 2019. Haldeman's book is a bit rougher around the edges than is Barr's, which was written with the assistance of a ghost writer named Robin Sheeran. As a result, *Cycling Pioneer* has the authentic energy and intimacy of a tale told late at night around a campfire by one of the great masters.

On the other (read: slow and deliberate) end of the ultra-distance spectrum are those awards which are granted not for speed but rather to commemorate distance milestones –

Lon with his support team 240 miles from the Pacific Ocean.

for getting something done, but not necessarily with any haste. This fall, I finally earned my Mondial Award for completing 40,000 kilometers of domestic brevets and permanents. Starting out nearly twenty years ago in 2007, I thought I'd maintain a pace that would place this treasure on my shelf in far less time, but as so often happens, life got in the way. Accidents, injuries, celebrations, and deaths may have conspired to extend this time frame, but in early October I crossed this long-awaited threshold on one of my most beloved routes through the resplendent Catskill Mountains at the peak of fall foliage season with a group of fine friends I've made along the way. While I do not see any supported ultra cycling in my future, I'm glad to still be here and ready to take on the next 40,000 kilometers. 🚲

1200K Round Up



—PHOTO ERIC LARSEN

Humboldt Coast 1200k – July 19-22 – by Eric Larsen

Building on its successful 1,000k randonee EP1K Coastal, Humboldt Randonneurs will offer a 1,200k point-to-point RM starting in Eugene, Oregon and finishing in Petaluma, California. The route will follow minor county roads over Oregon's Coast Range out to the coast and then follow the Pacific Coast bikeway south to the first overnight at Gold Beach.

The route continues south down the Oregon coast into California, skirts around Crescent City to visit the old growth redwoods of Jedediah-Smith State Park, then continues down the rocky cliffs of the Northern California coast and coastal redwoods through Trinidad and on to Arcata.

The route then departs from the Pacific Coast bikeway and follows Humboldt County roads over the very steep, challenging, and remote region of the Lost Coast, continuing up the Mattole River through Petrolia and Honeydew before a big climb over Panther Gap and amazing descent back into the Giant Redwoods of Rockefeller Forest.

Then up the Avenue of the Giants to Garberville and on up to Leggett before turning west on CA-1 to return to the coast. With an indicated 15,500 ft. of elevation gain, riders will find this third day quite challenging, rewarding and awesomely beautiful. Rest will be well found in Fort Bragg before the final day down the Mendocino and Sonoma coast before finishing in Petaluma, California. 🚲

Garden State 1200k –

May 29-June 1 – by Paul Kramer

New Jersey Randonneurs' "Garden State 1200K" is a clover-leaf event based out of a hotel in the very middle of the state.

Day 1 is a very flat, skinny 400k loop down through the cranberry bogs and blueberry farms of the Pine Barrens to Cape May, in the southeast corner of the state, and back.

Day 2 is a moderately hilly, circular 300k loop, north and east to the Jersey Shore, where you can view Manhattan from the highest natural elevation on the Atlantic seaboard from Maine to the Yucatan, then south along the highest concentration of ocean boardwalks in the US, and back.

Day 3 is a long, narrow 300k loop south, through the Pine Barrens to the Philadelphia suburbs in the southwest corner of the state and back.

Day 4 is a hilly 200k loop that heads northwest in the direction of the Delaware Water Gap and back, through small towns and farms reminiscent of New England.

This is an unsupported ride, but you will never be more than 200k from your room at the hotel. There is no rider limit.

Look for information on this and other rides, plus contact info, at njrandonneurs.org. 🚲



—PHOTO ROBERT BARNES



—PHOTO MISHA HELLER

FL: Golden Falcon – March 22-25 – by Misha Heller

Northeast Florida Randonneurs is launching its third edition of the Golden Falcon Grand Brevet to kick off the rando season here in the United States. On March 22, 2025 randonneurs will gather in Jacksonville, Florida for a fun “party ride” with a core group of randos. It’s a great season opener to dust off the winter cobwebs and get back into biking fitness while all your friends are still suffering under piles of snow and ice back home. The route is flat and is also a good option for randos aspiring to finish their first 1200k. The cloverleaf format makes logistics easy for riders to stage out of their hotel rooms and restock every night as they venture across the state of Florida and into south Georgia on the third day. Consider adding this one to your calendar to get a good dose of Vitamin D and hang out with seasoned randos and newbies alike. Check out www.cyclingforever.com to sign up for this and other great brevets! 🚲

Endless Mountains 1234K – September 24-27

– by Chris Nadovich

Why do you ride a 1200k brevet? To face a physical challenge? To visit significant historic sites? To experience the natural beauty of the rural countryside? To ride along rivers? Up mountains? Through farmland? Within cities?

The Endless Mountains Liberty Bell 1234K grand brevet has all these things, and has them in abundance. The course covers a variety of geological regions, including the Delaware Valley; Pennsylvania Highlands Water Gap, and Poconos; New York’s Southern Tier; and back in Pennsylvania the Pine Creek Gorge, the Juniata River, and of course, the namesake Endless Mountains. Along with plenty of climbs, there are a similar number of descents, and everywhere an endless supply of interesting landmarks and varied scenery in both town and country.

The brevet starts at Chamounix Mansion Philadelphia, a National Historic site, now outfitted as a hostel, serving as a spacious and inexpensive rider lodging before and after the event.

Your adventure starts with a warm-up tour through the historic city of Philadelphia, early in the morning with traffic near absent. You pass modern skyscrapers and 300 year-old homes where the United States was born. You pause at the Liberty Bell, Independence Hall, Constitution Center, Art Museum, and Rocky Statue. Then the route takes you north out of the city, through the suburbs along the Delaware River, and into rural Pennsylvania. As the sun rises you enter the so-called Endless Mountains region, where the hard work begins in earnest. There will be myriad climbs and descents with spectacular scenery. Your experience with these “endless” mountains ends as you reach their northern border at the overnight in Vestal, New York.

The next day you’ll follow the Susquehanna River and

ride into the “Wilds” of Pennsylvania. This remote, sparsely populated area features deep canyons, including Little Pine Creek and “big” Pine Creek gorges, the “Pennsylvania Grand Canyon”. At night, these are some of the darkest skies in the Eastern USA, with spectacular stargazing.

Day three traverses yet another geological zone, the ridge-valley Appalachians near Penn State University – with two pairs of distinct crossings of sharp Appalachian ridges, interleaved between beautifully relaxing valley rides.

On day four there is one more big climb and descent, leading you to yet another region, Pennsylvania Dutch Country. Finally you’ll reach the Schuylkill River trail which takes you on an easy, flat ride along the river, back to the Chamounix Mansion in Philadelphia.

Is the Endless Mountains Liberty Bell a difficult grand brevet? Indeed it is. But it’s also a very rewarding brevet, providing a variety of riding experience unequaled by any other 1200 in the USA. 🚲



—PHOTO BRAD LAYMAN

Seattle to San Francisco 1700k – September 8-13 – *by Rose Cox*

SIR is “hosting” a point-to-point brevet from the Space Needle to the Golden Gate Bridge. This ride is still in development, but a tentative route has riders heading into the Cascade Mountains to start. After, the route makes its way to the Astoria bridge, and then will pretty much will follow the coast south.

In true “audacious” spirit, the ride will be completely unsupported. This means riders are on their own for food/resupply, lodging, and bike box transport. Some 1200k experience or permission from the organizer is required to participate. The ride fee is TBD, but will be low reflecting the lack of support from SIR.

Right now, the route is 1720k with approximately 18,000m of elevation gain over the six days. 143:20 is the current time limit given the route as it stands. Both the route and the time limit are subject to revision.

This promises to be a truly epic adventure. Registration details will be on the SIR website in early 2025. In the meantime, an interest list is available at forms.gle/586Vxi46hozizY7q7. 🚲



—PHOTO ERIC LARSEN



—PHOTO MIKE TUREK

—PHOTO MIKE TUREK

Colorado Front Range 1200 – June 21-24 – *by John Lee Ellis*

Picture gazing out at mountain vistas from the Peak-to-Peak Highway, climbing the steeply-carved Poudre Canyon, descending the twists of Lefthand Canyon, and gingerly transiting Devil’s Gulch switchbacks ... all in the virtual shadow of the Continental Divide. Those are some of the treats in store on the Colorado Front Range 1200. For this second edition, we have some new route segments and some new (but still manageable) challenges. We hope this appeals both to new riders and Front Range 1200 ancien(nes).

The Colorado Front Range is the swath of mountains bordered by the Eastern Plains and foothills on the East, and the central Rockies on the west. These mountains rise dramatically from the plains. The climbs, typical of many in the Rockies, are on the long side, but not all that steep. That makes it easier to relax and enjoy the scenery, and ride together. Max altitude for the event is just over 9,000 ft., lower than on the Colorado High Country 1200, or the major Rockies climbs, which can exceed 12,000 ft.

The route is four loops of roughly 350k, 300k, 300k, and 250k emanating from Louisville, CO, just outside of Boulder. This makes it logistically simpler for both riders and volunteers. The start/finish locale has a variety of lodging close by, plus restaurants, supermarkets, a bike shop, and other stores, many in walking distance.

These canyons and other climbs are the ones we use on our local brevets. For our inaugural event, we got enthusiastic turnout from local riders, which is an endorsement, as the CFR 1200 was not a “ride of discovery” for them. These riders clearly just liked the route.

We hope you will too! 🚲

Gold Rush Randonnée 2025 – September 3-6 – by *Deb Banks*

The 7th running of the Gold Rush Randonnée (GRR) will be held September 3-6, 2025. It is a beautiful and demanding 1200k that traverses the Northern Sierras of California. It includes cycling through alpine ecosystems and the plains of the Central Valley. The GRR was revamped two years ago, changing it from a point to point to a set of loops.

Day 1: Riders depart Davis and wind their way up the American River Parkway to Folsom and then up around horse ranches to Auburn, and the outskirts of Grass Valley. Continuing north, riders access the Yuba River and make their way to Quincy over Yuba Pass for the first evening's rest. With just over 17,000' of climbing, it is the toughest Day One around!

Day 2: Riders head to Indian Valley and meet up with the old GRR route, which climbs up to Antelope Lake and over Janesville Grade to Susanville. From there, riders pick up the highly acclaimed Bizz Johnson Rails to Trails and then the Feather River Highway, circling back to Lake Almanor and Greenville, returning to Quincy.

Day 3: Staying at 6000' in elevation, riders depart Quincy for a loop around the Sierra Valley crossing Gold Lakes Road (the high point of the ride) and visit both Lake Davis and Frenchman's Lake before returning to Quincy.

Day 4: Heading back to Davis, down the beautiful Feather River Canyon, riders will spill out into the Central Valley, winding their way around Sutter Buttes and back to Davis.

Gold Rush will also host a 1000k, 600k and 200k. But that's not all. Quincy and environs have excellent gravel and is home to the Lost and Found gravel event. We'll offer a few days of gravel populaires within the dates of the 1200k. Adventure seekers can come up and spend time with us in Quincy, volunteer for the 1200k, and ride some gravel too! Finally, we are excited to announce that Chef Gary Parsons will be on hand once again to provide extremely great (not just good) cuisine. More details will be released in early 2025. GRR 2025 is not to be missed! 🚴

—PHOTO DEB FORD



VA: Endless Flat – May 3-6 – by *Misha Heller*

Northern Virginia Randonneurs will host a new, never-been-riden 1200k starting on May 3, venturing a little outside of our usual territory that is west of the nation's capital. Departing from Richmond (easily accessible from RIC airport), we'll explore new parts of eastern Virginia and eastern Carolina for another flat "party ride." Riders will enjoy quiet back country roads, friendly services, great camaraderie, and will be hosted by Hamid Akbarian, his wife Shab Memarbashi, and their usual fun cadre of volunteers. Riders will be allowed a small drop bag which will be shepherded along the route for access at the overnight controls. You will ride past cotton fields and historic Jamestown and have

occasional coastal waterway views. If you haven't yet traveled to the Midatlantic to ride one of Hamid's famous rides, this is another great opportunity to check off a 1200k, ride with great pals, and explore new, quiet roads. Check out www.cyclingforever.com to sign up for this and other great brevets! 🚴

—PHOTO ALISON CAREY



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 |
|-----------------------|----------------|----------|
| Greg Cardell | Valencia, CA | 9/10/24 |
| Dzung A Dang [2] | San Jose, CA | 10/12/24 |
| Adam Hunt | El Cerrito, CA | 8/16/24 |
| Mitch Ishihara | Issaquah, WA | 9/4/24 |
| Pierre Moreels | Los Gatos, CA | 7/29/24 |
| Sarah E Rice (F) | Chicago, IL | 9/25/24 |
| Frederick J Tompkin | Savannah, GA | 8/1/24 |
| Lydia Ellen Trott (F) | West Point, IN | 9/25/24 |

Randonneur 5000 Award

| NAME | CITY, STATE | APPROVED |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|----------|
| Matthew D Close | Woodinville, WA | 8/14/24 |
| Andrei Fluerasu | Setauket- East Setauket, NY | 9/17/24 |
| Mark A Harrison | Naperville, IL | 9/28/24 |
| Sean M Keesler | Ithaca, NY | 8/25/24 |
| Jonathan Levitt [4] | Bronx, NY | 10/7/24 |
| Doug McLerran [3] | Aurora, IL | 9/27/24 |
| Philip J Neff | Seattle, WA | 9/27/24 |
| Daniel Park | Kirkland, WA | 8/14/24 |
| Frederick J Tompkin | Savannah, GA | 7/9/24 |

Galaxy Award

| NAME | CITY, STATE | APPROVED |
|-----------|------------------|----------|
| Rob Welsh | Apple Valley, MN | 8/19/24 |

RUSA Coast-to-Coast Award

| NAME | CITY, STATE | APPROVED |
|------------------|-------------------|----------|
| Alison Carey (F) | Ocean Springs, MS | 9/16/24 |
| John Capn Ende | Asheville, NC | 8/22/24 |
| Yonel Gardes | Bellevue, WA | 9/22/24 |
| Ken A Lanteigne | Gresham, OR | 10/16/24 |
| Pierre Moreels | Los Gatos, CA | 10/3/24 |
| Thai Nguyen [2] | Bothell, WA | 9/30/24 |

Mondial Award

| NAME | CITY, STATE | APPROVED |
|----------------------|------------------|----------|
| Joshua Crixell | Temple, TX | 9/22/24 |
| Shaun Ivory [2] | Woodinville, WA | 10/9/24 |
| John Jurczynski [2] | Box Elder, SD | 8/12/24 |
| Spencer Klaassen [4] | Saint Joseph, MO | 8/12/24 |
| George Swain | West Park, NY | 10/6/24 |
| Burnley R Willis | Anchorage, AK | 8/19/24 |

RUSA Cup Award

| NAME | CITY, STATE | APPROVED |
|-----------------------|-----------------|----------|
| Dave Brillhart | Orlando, FL | 8/12/24 |
| Patrick Chin-Hong [3] | Amherst, MA | 8/18/24 |
| Dan Driscoll [17] | Arlington, TX | 8/17/24 |
| Yonel Gardes | Bellevue, WA | 9/22/24 |
| Dustin B Harding | Loveland, CO | 8/29/24 |
| Adam Hunt | El Cerrito, CA | 8/16/24 |
| Jonathan Karpick [3] | Cleveland, OH | 9/10/24 |
| Doug McLerran [2] | Aurora, IL | 9/27/24 |
| John D Nguyen [4] | Seattle, WA | 8/22/24 |
| Daniel Park | Kirkland, WA | 8/14/24 |
| Gary Allen Parsons | Nevada City, CA | 8/4/24 |
| Sarah E Rice (F) | Chicago, IL | 9/24/24 |
| Noah Swartz | Oakland, CA | 9/9/24 |
| Kevin J Williams [2] | Carmichael, CA | 10/2/24 |

Attention Members

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

Update your address online at:

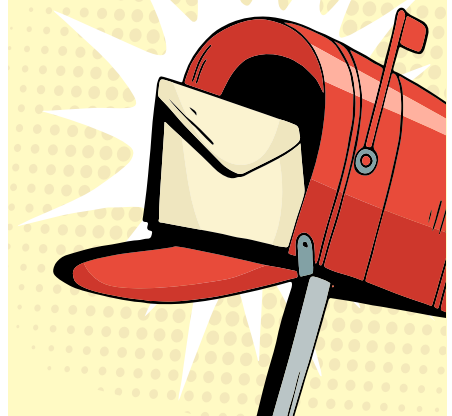
rusa.org/cgi-bin/memberaddresschange_GF.pl

And, don't forget to renew your membership!

Memberships run from January through December.

Renew online at:

rusa.org/cgi-bin/memberrenew_GF.pl



RUSA American Explorer Award

| NAME | CITY, STATE | TOTAL STATES | APPROVED |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|--------------|----------|
| Argo, Charles Christopher | Lake View, AL | 28 | 9/13/24 |
| Barankay, Iwan | Philadelphia, PA | 12 | 9/11/24 |
| Chin-Hong, Patrick | Amherst, MA | 35 | 10/17/24 |
| DiCarlantonio, Francis Aloysius | Crofton, MD | 14 | 9/27/24 |
| Dorobek, Russell | Austin, TX | 14 | 9/20/24 |
| Driscoll, Dan [1] | Arlington, TX | 26 | 9/20/24 |
| Ende, John Capn | Asheville, NC | 19 | 8/22/24 |
| Fambles, Millison D | Olympia, WA | 46 | 9/17/24 |
| Gardes, Yonnel | Bellevue, WA | 10 | 9/22/24 |
| Harper, David | Seattle, WA | 21 | 8/21/24 |
| Ivory, Shaun | Woodinville, WA | 16 | 8/29/24 |
| Lanteigne, Ken A | Gresham, OR | 19 | 9/11/24 |
| Martin, Charlie A | Sunnyvale, CA | 30 | 7/29/24 |
| Mathews, Craig | The Woodlands, TX | 44 | 9/29/24 |
| McDonald, Timothy Paul | Auburn, AL | 10 | 10/12/24 |
| McLerran, Doug | Aurora, IL | 47 | 8/12/24 |
| Moody, Kerry | Dumont, NJ | 11 | 8/20/24 |
| Perry, L D | Saint Joseph, MO | 22 | 10/14/24 |
| Rada, Mark Z | Kokomo, IN | 13 | 10/4/24 |
| Ranson, Emily [F] | Ellicott City, MD | 16 | 10/1/24 |
| Rice, Sarah E [F] | Chicago, IL | 16 | 9/24/24 |
| Schurman, Regina [F] | Lisle, IL | 28 | 9/1/24 |
| Sexton, Robert B | Nashville, TN | 35 | 9/10/24 |
| Stroh, John | Westwood Hills, KS | 12 | 9/9/24 |
| Torres, Bob | Carlstadt, NJ | 21 | 8/21/24 |
| Trott, Lydia Ellen [F] | West Point, IN | 14 | 9/25/24 |
| Wright, Pamela [1][F] | Fort Worth, TX | 7 | 7/29/24 |

**SAVE
THE
DATE**

Randonneurs USA will be at the **2025 Philadelphia Bike Expo on March 8-9th.**

We will have a booth in the expo as well as an interactive seminar. Check out the details for the Philadelphia Bike Expo and stay tuned to future Between Controls and announcements via all of our social media avenues.

RUSA Awards

Challenge Lepertel Award

| NAME | CITY, STATE | YEAR |
|---------------|--------------|------|
| John D Nguyen | Seattle, WA | 2024 |
| Yonnel Gardes | Bellevue, WA | 2024 |

Rando Scout Award

NAME (25-49 unique routes) CITY, STATE APPROVED

| | | |
|---------------------|------------------|---------|
| Bernardo, Marcevir | West Windsor, NJ | 9/22/24 |
| Gomon, Robert | Idlewyde, MD | 10/5/24 |
| Holdaway, Aaron | San Diego, CA | 10/8/24 |
| Leadholm, Samuel W. | Somerville, MA | 9/27/24 |
| Liu, Paul | Oakland, CA | 10/7/24 |
| Milbank, Aaron | Eagan, MN | 9/22/24 |
| Mirocha, Claire | Berkeley, CA | 10/7/24 |
| Picou, Bobby | Helena, AL | 9/21/24 |
| Rice, Sarah E | Chicago, IL | 9/9/24 |
| Svihura, Michael | Menlo Park, CA | 9/8/24 |

NAME (50-74 unique routes) CITY, STATE APPROVED

| | | |
|-------------------|------------|---------|
| Anderson, Randy T | Peoria, IL | 9/23/24 |
|-------------------|------------|---------|

NAME (75-99 unique routes) CITY, STATE APPROVED

| | | |
|-------------------|---------------|---------|
| Beck, William A | Woodbine, MD | 10/5/24 |
| McLerran, Doug | Aurora, IL | 8/19/24 |
| Stroethoff, Karel | Missoula, MT | 7/25/24 |
| Sun, Wei P | San Diego, CA | 8/18/24 |

NAME (150-174 unique routes) CITY, STATE APPROVED

| | | |
|--------------|--------------|---------|
| Huber, Kerin | Pasadena, CA | 10/6/24 |
|--------------|--------------|---------|

NAME (225-249 unique routes) CITY, STATE APPROVED

| | | |
|---------------|---------------|--------|
| Driscoll, Dan | Arlington, TX | 8/4/24 |
|---------------|---------------|--------|

RUSA Rouler Award

NAME CITY, STATE APPROVED

| | | |
|-------------------------|----------------------|----------|
| Randy T Anderson | Peoria, IL | 9/16/24 |
| Veronica Beagan (F) | Anchorage, AK | 8/12/24 |
| Robert J Booth | Madison, WI | 9/23/24 |
| Lynn Clark | Hudson, OH | 8/12/24 |
| Matthew D Close [2] | Woodinville, WA | 10/13/24 |
| Lou A Cuadrado | Moorpark, CA | 8/27/24 |
| Brian Enyart | Russville, IN | 9/17/24 |
| Ulf Georg Gwildis [2] | Kirkland, WA | 10/13/24 |
| Joshua J Haley | Canton, OH | 9/16/24 |
| Stephen Hazelton [4] | Garland, TX | 8/18/24 |
| Phil I Higley | Spring Lake Park, MN | 9/1/24 |
| Kerin Huber (F) [3] | Pasadena, CA | 8/27/24 |
| Greg Jones [3] | Moorpark, CA | 8/27/24 |
| Lisa Jones (F) [3] | Moorpark, CA | 8/27/24 |
| Jim Joy [2] | Minneapolis, MN | 9/22/24 |
| Gary Kanaby [4] | Salado, TX | 8/18/24 |
| Jonathan Karpick | Cleveland, OH | 7/29/24 |
| Hugh Kimball [2] | Seattle, WA | 10/13/24 |
| Ted Krischak | Terre Haute, IN | 9/17/24 |
| Hollie Long (F) | Bloomington, IL | 9/23/24 |
| David R Marsh | Apple Valley, MN | 9/1/24 |
| Charlie A Martin [4] | Sunnyvale, CA | 9/17/24 |
| Doug McLerran [3] | Aurora, IL | 9/16/24 |
| Michael Misner [2] | Dallas, TX | 8/24/24 |
| Thai Nguyen [2] | Bothell, WA | 10/13/24 |
| Tohma Nguyen | Bothell, WA | 10/13/24 |
| Dawn M Piech (F) [2] | Lombard, IL | 9/23/24 |
| Karl Reiche | Anchorage, AK | 8/24/24 |
| Alexander Riddell | Rochester, MN | 8/4/24 |
| Amy L Russell (F) [4] | Waco, TX | 9/7/24 |
| Hall Sanders | Minneapolis, MN | 10/6/24 |
| Glenn M Seager | Minneapolis, MN | 9/16/24 |
| Shai Shprung [2] | Encino, CA | 8/27/24 |
| Gregory H Smith [3] | Richland Center, WI | 9/23/24 |
| Thomas Southwood | Westfield, IN | 9/17/24 |
| Timothy J Sullivan [2] | Coronado, CA | 8/27/24 |
| Lydia Ellen Trott (F) | West Point, IN | 9/17/24 |
| Douglas A Whitfield [3] | St. Paul, MN | 10/6/24 |
| Burnley R Willis | Anchorage, AK | 9/1/24 |
| Howard S Young [3] | Kirkland, WA | 10/13/24 |

P-12 Award

| NAME | CITY, STATE | APPROVED |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|----------|
| William A Beck [11] | Woodbine, MD | 8/12/24 |
| Ward Beebe [3] | Oak Harbor, WA | 8/18/24 |
| Dylan A Belverud | Big Lake, MN | 9/16/24 |
| Robert J Booth [3] | Madison, WI | 9/24/24 |
| Carinn Candelaria (F) | New York, NY | 9/30/24 |
| Alison Carey (F) [2] | Ocean Springs, MS | 8/17/24 |
| Derrick Chau | Monterey Park, CA | 9/21/24 |
| Francis Aloysius DiCarlantonio [2] | Crofton, MD | 9/26/24 |
| Russell Dorobek [5] | Austin, TX | 10/5/24 |
| Brian Enyart | Russiaville, IN | 10/13/24 |
| Kitty Goursole (F) [8] | San Ramon, CA | 8/3/24 |
| Christine M Graham (F) [11] | Westerville, OH | 10/8/24 |
| Kyle A Greaves [2] | Everett, WA | 9/13/24 |
| Mitch Ishihara [9] | Issaquah, WA | 8/12/24 |
| Gary Kanaby [8] | Salado, TX | 8/11/24 |
| Matt Kreger [4] | Redmond, WA | 7/29/24 |
| John Pearch [6] | Olympia, WA | 9/20/24 |
| Mark Z Rada | Kokomo, IN | 8/13/24 |
| Nancy Russell (F) [2] | San Rafael, CA | 9/12/24 |
| Ron Selby [4] | Zionsville, IN | 9/2/24 |
| Elliott Sherburne | Bellingham, WA | 8/30/24 |
| Elizabeth A Smith (F) [5] | Redmond, WA | 9/23/24 |
| Ariel B Spiegelman (F) | Austin, TX | 9/22/24 |
| Sarah Stolz (F) [6] | Seattle, WA | 9/29/24 |
| Bob Torres [3] | Carlstadt, NJ | 9/5/24 |
| James Vajda [4] | Oxford, OH | 9/12/24 |
| Mick Walsh | Seattle, WA | 9/13/24 |
| Corinne D Warren (F) [3] | Monument, CO | 10/11/24 |
| Max L Whitlock | Nixa, MO | 9/3/24 |

R-12 Award

| NAME | CITY, STATE | APPROVED |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|----------|
| Chip Adams [13] | Severna Park, MD | 10/15/24 |
| Rory Aptekar | Oakland, CA | 9/2/24 |
| William A Beck [18] | Woodbine, MD | 8/12/24 |
| Greg Cardell [4] | Valencia, CA | 9/2/24 |
| Alison Carey (F) [2] | Ocean Springs, MS | 8/17/24 |
| Randy Carey | Shoreview, MN | 9/1/24 |
| Wai-Yin Stephen Chan [2] | Oakland, CA | 9/13/24 |
| Mimo DeMarco [2] | Arlington, VA | 9/10/24 |
| Francis Aloysius DiCarlantonio [2] | Crofton, MD | 10/12/24 |
| Norman Ehrentreich [8] | Shoreview, MN | 10/13/24 |
| Phil Fox II [2] | Chicago, IL | 8/14/24 |
| Kitty Goursole (F) [11] | San Ramon, CA | 9/15/24 |
| Aaron Holdaway | San Diego, CA | 9/21/24 |
| Chuck Hurley | Annapolis, MD | 10/15/24 |
| Shaun Ivory [2] | Woodinville, WA | 8/6/24 |
| Joe Landry | Dallas, TX | 8/26/24 |
| Tom Mankowich | Frederick, MD | 8/15/24 |
| Claire Mirocha (F) | Berkeley, CA | 8/15/24 |
| Jacek Nowakowski | Escondido, CA | 8/5/24 |
| Eric Peterson [7] | Naperville, IL | 9/30/24 |
| Christopher C. Slocum [9] | Toms River, NJ | 9/17/24 |
| Kevin J Smith [4] | Seattle, WA | 9/12/24 |
| Sharon Stevens (F) [18] | Richardson, TX | 8/21/24 |
| Noah Swartz [2] | Oakland, CA | 8/19/24 |
| Dan Swenson | Washington, DC | 8/12/24 |
| James C Taylor [7] | Cottage Grove, OR | 8/9/24 |
| Corinne D Warren (F) [7] | Monument, CO | 8/7/24 |
| Kevin J Williams [3] | Carmichael, CA | 9/19/24 |
| Tony Wittinger | Portland, OR | 9/20/24 |

American Randonneur Challenge Award

| NAME | CITY, STATE | APPROVED |
|--------------------------------|-------------|----------|
| Francis Aloysius DiCarlantonio | Crofton, MD | 10/3/24 |
| Doug McLerran | Aurora, IL | 10/15/24 |

Ultra Randonneur Award

| NAME | CITY, STATE | APPROVED |
|------------------|-----------------|----------|
| Mitch Ishihara | Issaquah, WA | 8/12/24 |
| Jonathan Karpick | Cleveland, OH | 8/8/24 |
| Keith Moore | Woodinville, WA | 7/30/24 |

Parting Shots



Jessica Rozek, Luke Heller, and Greg Obadia riding Yella Gap gravel perm in NC.

—PHOTO MISHA HELLER

Brand Tanner and Jacob Layer rest at the top of Lincoln Gap on the Northern New England SR600.

—PHOTO ROGER HILLAS

Mike Turek and John Mangin of Team Dartrek atop Sunshine Canyon on the fall dart.

—PHOTO CHRIS MURRAY



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.

PETER WHITE CYCLES

24 Hall Rd. Hillsborough, NH 03244

603 478 0900

www.PeterWhiteCycles.com/schmidt-headlights.php

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