

# AMERICAN RANDONNEUR



VOLUME 28 • ISSUE #3 FALL 2025

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

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**COVER** — Vernon Smith, Paul Foley,  
and Mike Turek on the Grand Mesa, part  
of next year's Colorado Fruita Loops 1200K.

PHOTO UNKNOWN

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# President's Message

*The times they are a changin'*

—BOB DYLAN

Anyone else see *A Complete Unknown*? I wasn't one to listen to Bob Dylan, but I've discovered a new found interest in his music. So many of his songs were made popular by other groups, but I'm probably showing my age!

That said, this particular theme certainly applies to our sport. Many of you have been around longer than me. I only got seriously into randonneuring in 2009 when I did my first series and my first 1200k. Proof of passage was usually with brevet cards though postcards worked, too. Today, however, postcards are semi-useless because those tiny post offices don't stamp the location anymore.

When I joined the board, there was a big push by Nigel Greene and Susan Otcenas for Electronic Proof of Passage, or EPP. At the time, it only applied to permanents. With the pandemic, I checked with the ACP, and they were okay with applying the concept to brevets. GPS tracks and photo controls

started to appear in events, with brevet cards always an option. As pandemic era restrictions were lifted, we didn't all go back to brevet cards only, since that genie was out of the bottle. We still want brevet cards to be an option for events and perms but I'm wondering whether any of our riders are actually using them for perms. Perhaps I'll take a poll and check. Does anyone NOT carry a phone with them these days?

Along with the means of proof of passage, there have been changes in bicycle technology among the rando crowd. Some are visible, some not. Disc brakes (I'm a recent convert), electronic shifting, tubeless tires, more gears, and better tires have made some aspects of randonneuring smoother. But some behaviors will never change in our sport, like the obligatory stop at the convenience store, to get a snack, signature, or receipt, and to queue up for the restroom.

World wide, organizers are getting more inventive regarding proof of passage. Photos are used a lot for the smaller events. Photos wouldn't work for events with hundreds of riders, but for a few dozen, they work quite nicely. In Greece, they only looked at the card at the overnights; you took selfies for the other controls and those were only for double checking oddities. I don't know if the organizer even had to ask anyone for their photos. On the Lithuania 1400 recently, there weren't many opportunities for short-cuts, since the route took a full circuit around the country, so photos were used exclusively – yes, you have that right – no brevet card at all. The intermediate controls – all six of them – were selfies at the town sign or similar feature. To make things more useful and interesting for the organizer and riders, participants posted their proof of passage photos on a closed Facebook Messenger group during the ride which

allowed everyone to see the other riders' progress. We had a lot of rain on that ride, and on those days (three out of five), I mostly kept my phone in a sandwich-sized Ziploc and could operate the phone and take pictures through the Ziploc. The phone is water resistant, of course, but I didn't want to have to resort to the wireless charger.



Above you'll see a selfie with Robert Newcomer at a huge sundial that was an intermediate control, along with another familiar sight (lower left) – a Circle K! One thinks of big oil companies as being world wide, but not Circle K's.

By the way, have you ever thought about riding in Lithuania? I would highly recommend it - decent roads, polite drivers, nice people, good food, and beer! What's not to like? The ride started on June 25, just after the longest day of the year. The sky began to lighten not long after 4 a.m., and twilight lingered until 11 p.m. That was wonderful! Of course it's rando, so weather – rain and wind – made it tough. BTW, my wallet never came out of its Ziploc the entire ride. Everywhere, down to the smallest c-store, took payment using my phone. The times really are a changing!

—Dave Thompson  
RUSA President  
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# From the Editor

Until recently, I had never heard the adage “A camel is a horse designed by a committee.” It’s funny that I have now heard it three times in the last several weeks. And simultaneously, I have been on a committee to hopefully put together a new 1200k here in Colorado. While I am not so sure how I feel about the adage (is a camel necessarily inferior to a horse?) I do think that working as a committee to craft a ride results in a better outcome, as more eyes on a problem identify solutions that one person alone might not come up with.

I have been lobbying for a mountainous climbing ride in the Rockies almost since I started randonneuring. A climber at heart, I love my adopted state of Colorado and want to share the verdant vistas, snow capped peaks, fields of wildflowers, and abundant wildlife sightings with other riders who appreciate nature at her finest. From about May to mid-October, I take every chance I can get to get high – Summit County, the Roaring Fork Valley, Rocky Mountain National Park, the Gunnison area, our two paved 14,000’ mountains. Most of the climbs are low grade and long – four miles on the shorter side, 50ish if you start from the Front Range and just head west.

The very idea of spending hours climbing can be daunting, but in so many cases, the scenery makes the challenge worth it. And to look at it differently, while some people equate climbing with hard and flat with easy, I beg to differ. For a climber, those flat rides are as difficult as the bumpy ones are to the power riders. We need the work and rest cycles provided by hills, requiring different levels of exertion. Not everyone has the sheer power needed to lay down for long, unbroken stretches. So while some people see climbing rides as difficult, others see the flat routes as hard, requiring different muscles and smooth, consistent



output we don’t have. Different strokes for different folks I guess.

Speaking of different strokes, we have a variety of stories for you this issue: Noah Swartz recounts a very tough *flèche* this year, one where the wind nearly derailed him. Bob Dye created his own adventure on the Empire State Trail, and Thomas McHenry drove a whole lot of hours just to ride a 100k – but four states in one go! Phil Fox details another world record ride, and relates his success back to his rando community in Chicago. Chris Newman muses on the gear we all accumulate in this equipment intensive sport, and George Swain reviews Lael Wilcox’s book detailing her round the world record breaking ride.

As it turned out, the 1200k we ended up with is not what I wanted.

Vacationing in the Grand Tetons.

—PHOTO CORINNE WARREN

As much desert as mountains, it isn’t the high altitude tour of the Rockies I had hoped for, but it does have some interesting scenery. Remember *Hell of the West* in American Flyers? That was filmed in the Colorado National Monument, part of the course. There’s one good, long Colorado-style climb as well – the Grand Mesa, the largest flat-topped mesa in the world. Some people may see this new route as a horse, and others as a camel. Neither of which are bad, and in fact, the camel might be the better suited animal in this instance.

—Corinne Warren

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P.S. Just a reminder that this publication is a showcase for your stories and experiences, a place for you to share your adventures on the bike with your fellow randonneurs. Please send them to us! We accept photos, too, if you prefer to express yourself that way. Stories should be between 1,000 and 2,000 words, and photos at least 3MB files.

## Do Brevets Help With Babies?

After five years of randonneuring and two successful completions of Paris-Brest-Paris, I set off on a new adventure into the unknowns of sleep deprivation and making decisions under the duress of heightened emotion and exhaustion: my wife and I had our first child.

While we were planning and during my wife's pregnancy, I couldn't stop wondering how the skills and experiences I've acquired through randonneuring would translate into parenthood and help me be better equipped as a new father.

Would taking 15-minute ditch naps in the atrium of a French bank at 3 a.m. help me to find and seize limited opportunities to recharge? Would figuring out how to secure a loose dynamo light in the dark well enough to last until a proper fix in daylight help me stay calm and work through unforeseeable challenges? Would the tumultuous highs and lows of descending through a near-freezing mist followed by arriving at a hotel with a hot meal give me the perspective to recognize and navigate my own emotions while my baby is crying inconsolably?

Surprisingly similar to sleeping in the post-partum room at the hospital.

—PHOTO NICK MCCURRY

Ollie was born in February 2025, putting my questions about readiness to the test. In case you noticed the timing, we intentionally waited until after the 2023 PBP to start the IVF process. I'll caveat this ride report with the recognition that as a man, I had the far easier experience during pregnancy, childbirth, and early babyhood, and I also think that PBP logistics, notably around bathrooms,

were simpler, so my comparison is inherently limited in scope.

As it turned out, most of my expectations about which skills would be transferable were proven entirely wrong before our new family even left the hospital. While sleep deprivation is common to randonneuring and new parenthood, the specifics are different enough to make the challenges completely distinct. Sitting in the post-partum hospital room and later in my own house, the world around me was largely calm, quiet (depending on how the kid was doing), and comfortable, inviting me to sleep at all times even if Ollie was preventing me from doing so. On the bike, the constant sound of tires rolling over the pavement, the movement of my legs to turn the pedals, the attention focused





More heartwarming but less restorative than a ditch nap.

—PHOTO JENNIFER ALTON

on navigating to the next turn, and the changing temperature on my skin kept me alert through the night.

The quality of sleep itself is entirely different between being at home with a child and out on a long ride. On a brevet, I know that I'm going to have a limited window of sleep, and I tend to fall asleep quickly and deeply,

surprised by how refreshed I can feel after a 15-minute ditch nap and how well a helmet can serve as a pillow in a pinch. With a newborn, my sleep was shallow and alert. A new part of my brain turned on that made me acutely aware of every small noise coming from my baby — all of his grunts, tiny movements, and gentle breaths. Every time they changed, I found myself half-awake trying to work out if he was okay or needed attention, breaking up even long periods of rest into small portions of real sleep.

Aside from sleep, my hopes of readiness to navigate new challenges while exhausted were quickly revealed to be fanciful. The world of problems to solve on a brevet is fairly contained. Do I need food, water, rest, or sunscreen? What do I want to eat at the next market I find? Am I ready to fix any likely mechanical issue? How can I anticipate any of these needs to minimize time off the bike? Similarly, brevets are well-structured with a clear view of how long it is until the next control or marketplace. Randonneuring provides a departure from day-to-day



Prepared for PBP, but maybe not parenthood.

—PHOTO JENNIFER ALTON

living, giving focus and intensity to the challenge of completing the bike ride.

Having a newborn, on the other hand, is entirely unstructured and additive to day-to-day living. There is a world of possible challenges and directions that are hard to anticipate and hard to navigate with a lack of sleep, and I still had all of the same responsibilities, relationships, and hobbies to try and maintain. Even something as simple as figuring out when and what to eat became difficult when my concepts of night and day disappeared despite access to a full kitchen and complement of take-out restaurants. Add to that the brand new activities like organizing a nursery so that it's functional and not just



Brevets don't help with figuring out why a baby is unhappy.

—PHOTO JENNIFER ALTON

photogenic, making surprise trips to the store because only a few weeks ago I would have laughed in anyone's face who told me how many diapers my baby would go through (26 in one day!), taking the dog we got the month after PBP (I assume this is a standard experience for anciens) out for regular walks, and keeping all of my friends and relatives supplied with a steady stream of photos. It's a dizzying amount of activity on top of figuring out new routines like feeding, bathing, the fun game of "Why is my baby crying?" and all of the challenges are novel and change week by week. There's no equivalent to a 200k brevet to help sort out gear and processes.

The areas I found I could rely on my randonneuring experiences the most weren't obvious beforehand. When my wife tried to articulate that she wanted a cup with a straw by repeatedly gesturing bringing a cup to her her lips while saying, "I just want this", I recognized the same exhaustion



that led my PBP riding partner to break our silence riding through the dark with the unprompted and alarming question, "Are those real?" (It turns out he thought he saw stone statues of giants, but it was just a farmhouse.) An overnight brevet with a newer randonneur who battled cold and fatigue helped me interpret my wife's look of confused desperation and uncertainty when we struggled with

supplemental feeding the day after we took Ollie home. Understanding the signals of fatigue, hunger, and mental exhaustion in myself and in my wife has clued me in to when it's time to pull into the front riding position and take over decision-making to give my partner a break and help us both make it to the next overnight control or resting place safely and sanely.

Ollie is four months old at the time of writing this article, and the biggest similarity that I've found between riding a 1200k brevet and having a child is that I stepped into something totally unknown and outside of my normal day-to-day experiences. You can take steps to prepare for such a large event in your life, but you'll never be able to anticipate the lived experience of it. 🚲

Measuring growth by comparing to a 175mm crankset.

—PHOTO JENNIFER ALTON



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# Four Corners Loop – Permanent #3423

BY THOMAS MCHENRY

I never thought I would be called a “bad ass,” but the woman standing next to me at the Four Corners Monument who politely offered to take our photo called us that! And then she asked if we had really ridden our bicycles all this way to this remote location. She and her husband had seen us in the pre-dawn darkness leaving Montezuma Creek, Utah 30 miles away to start our ride. We commiserated about the several miles of rough and painful roadbed still under repair and her husband claimed he could see our blinkies five miles away. Sure, why not?

For me, this four-state loop would bring my RUSA total up to 25 states (and the province of Quebec on BMB), but my riding buddy on this permanent route, Eric Adair, was a RUSA newbie on his very first permanent, getting credit for riding in four states to boot. He comes to RUSA with a long biking history, including double centuries and the 508 route through Death Valley.

## Genesis

Like all semi-insane biking adventures, this one started innocently. “Wouldn’t it be fun to ride around Four Corners this spring?” I knew Eric might be a sucker for this adventure – he had

family in Utah and would be intrigued by the challenge. He also shares my love for road trips and listening to country music. We tried talking the accomplished RUSA rider Kerin Huber into joining us, as she had steered us to this permanent route. Kerin passed

on joining us, probably because the mileage wasn’t long enough.

We thought there was only one other RUSA permanent route that touched four states (turns out there are several.) It’s one I designed that starts in Carlisle, Pa., and drops south through Maryland, passing the cabin where John Brown and his crew hid out before their raid on Harper’s Ferry in 1859. The route passes through West Virginia and Virginia and then hooks back through the Antietam battlefield before returning to Pennsylvania.

## Preparation

To get to Four Corners, if you live in Los Angeles, is a 10-hour car drive, causing my wife to inquire: “You are driving 10 hours to ride for six hours and then drive home for 10 more hours?” The answer was yes.

We managed to arrange some conference calls on the drive out where a 5 a.m. start avoided LA’s famous

Roadside stand in the Navajo Reservation.

—PHOTO TOM MCHENRY





A foot or hand in each state!

—PHOTO ERIC ADAIR

traffic and delivered us to Bluff, Utah, the gateway to Bear's Ears National Monument, in the late afternoon. This was time enough for a walk around the little town and a visit to the fort established by Mormon settlers who lowered their wagons down cliffs to get to this outpost from Salt Lake City in the mid-1800s. An early dinner at the local restaurant of soft tacos, black bean veggie burgers, and homemade cornbread prepared us for an early start the next day.

### The Ride

Hoping to avoid (we didn't) the predicted afternoon winds gusting to 30 m.p.h., we left the Sinclair gas station in Montezuma Creek a little after 5 a.m. and suffered through several miles of torn-up roadbed. While still pitch black, we were startled by the sound of loud barking and claws beating on pavement. It was a dog. It was chasing us. But we could not tell how close it was, how big it was or whether it planned to sink its teeth into our

ankles. We never learned, thankfully, as we pressed hard on our pedals; this was very good for increasing the heart rate.

Then, cresting a ridge in southeast Utah, the sky turned shades of light yellow and pinkish red. We could start to make out the massif of the mountains containing Mesa Verde National Park rising to the northeast in Colorado and a sign told us we were entering the Ute Mountain Reservation. There was a little traffic, mostly pickup trucks, but politely driven as they pulled all the way over to the other lane – was it the strength of our powerful blinkies seen from miles away?

This was open range country, with an occasional dirt road leading off into the middle of nowhere. Eric and I joked that if we took one of these roads, we might just disappear forever, or be forced into joining a cult: "Eric went away for a weekend bike ride, but didn't come back for 10 years..."

The road surface was generally good and some portions even had a generous shoulder, though you had to



At the trading post, but not for mutton!

—PHOTO TOM MCHENRY

watch for the little evenly spaced divots the highway department installed to remind drivers they were drifting off to sleep. Only the last Utah stretch north to Montezuma Creek was in poor condition and dotted with rim-eating potholes.

The scenery was outstanding throughout: faraway mountains still holding late March snow and the flat-topped mesas revealing themselves in shades of red, blue, and gray as the sun came up. The barbed wire fences



Tom at the Sinclair station in Montezuma at 5 a.m.

—PHOTO ERIC ADAIR

stretched to the horizon and we passed small groups of black cows – Angus? My wife reminds me that western convention is to call them “cattle,” but I am from New York and to me they looked like cows.

Sadly, the longtime American tradition of tossing your empty beer cans out the window of your car remains. We had thoughts of applying corporal punishment to these litterbugs. Based on our informal visual survey, Bud Light was the littering favorite, followed some way back by Corona, then Coors and an occasional Old Milwaukee. Do those who drink craft beer not throw their empties out the window? And does anyone out here drink soda?

We passed a few horses, perhaps wild ones, including one that slipped across the road right in front of our bikes. Also a very satisfied looking coyote, big fat raucous ravens, turkey vultures that were “kettling” in a circle high in the sky, a possible eagle too far way to clearly identify, and a beautiful

yellow breasted meadowlark who sang to me from his perch on the barbed wire when I stopped to take a photo of the Welcome to Arizona sign. His intentions appeared to be amorous, as this was spring, but I was not on his dating app. Best of all in the critter

department were a set of four various-colored sizeable ranch dogs who spotted us almost a half-mile away across a huge field and sprinted to the fence edge challenging us to come closer. You could read their thought clouds: “We showed those bicyclists who was boss!”

Highlights were several. Best was putting a foot and hand in four different states at one time, even if we knew that this tic-tac-toe geography was a mapping construct. As usual on a longer ride (“long” to ordinary mortals, “beginner” to RUSA members), after the scenery, it was the food and the people that were memorable: slices of watermelon and homemade pie sold from a card table along the roadside, the satisfying chill of a Gatorade taken directly from the cooler at a Sinclair



Eric entering Colorado at dawn.

—PHOTO TOM MCHENRY

Entering New Mexico.  
—PHOTO TOM MCHENRY

station mini-mart, the remains of last night's cornbread warmed in a backside jersey pocket. We passed on the fresh mutton that was advertised for sale, and were pleased with the regular spacing of Sinclair service stations. Their mini marts provided all the typical randonneur treats: fresh water, energy drinks, and the universal biker food of Reese's peanut butter cups.

Having learned from the master Kerin Huber never to take more time than absolutely necessary when stopping, I was able to explain to Eric what "phaffing" was and that his lengthy clothing, lighting and eating adjustments made him a "master phaffer." He retaliated by proposing to design a t-shirt: "Phaffers Unite!" or "Phaffers Anonymous."



Among the notable conversations was one with the Navajo woman taking tickets at the entrance to the Four Corners Monument (\$8 to enter and only after the opening time of 8 a.m.) who expressed disbelief that we weren't cold. We explained that climbing the hills warmed us up and the temperature was only in the mid-40s. Also instructive was the Navajo man who patiently explained to us how to pronounce the confusing name of the trading post at the halfway point that reads Teec Nos Pos but is pronounced: "Cheese Noss Pass!" We also discovered that we were riding in New Mexico on the Navajo American Women Veterans Highway.

"Lowlights" were, fortunately, few and limited: unanticipated hills, narrow road shoulders and a stretch heading almost directly west which was not supposed to have any wind at 10 a.m., but was gusting hard enough to push our rims from side to side and force steering correction. This was a reminder that almost every ride has one point where you wish it were already over, and you have to put your head down and just keep pedaling.

The wind was behind us as we turned for the last 15 miles on Red Mesa Road heading north back into Utah. The last five miles were a blissful descent past oil-drilling donkeys, popping up here and there, and a variety of evangelical churches with names like Jesus Revival Church and the New Evangelical Full Bible Church (none of that "half-bible" nonsense.) We spotted some hogans off the road, round mud-colored structures typical of the Navajo, healthy looking horses that might be partially wild and every shape, form, and tint of red rock.

This route is highly recommended, but only in the shoulder seasons of spring and fall. It would be no fun on a hot summer day and in the winter, you would expect snow and ice.

And if you want to learn more about the complex and painful history of this Navajo region, Hampton Sides' *Blood and Thunder* is a good start. 🚲



## Lael Rides Around the World

If you missed the opportunity to follow Alaskan ultracyclist Lael Wilcox in real time on her recent attempt to break the world record for the fastest trip round the world (by a woman) on a bicycle, you're in luck. Sponsor SRAM recently released both a film and a book entitled simply *Lael Rides Around the World* to share this remarkable journey with a wider audience, and you won't want to miss it.

Lael Wilcox has become a fixture on the ultracycling circuit, accomplishing great feats over the years. Bursting onto the scene in 2015, she broke the women's record on the Tour Divide Race, which was only her second ultra race after the Fireweed 400 the year

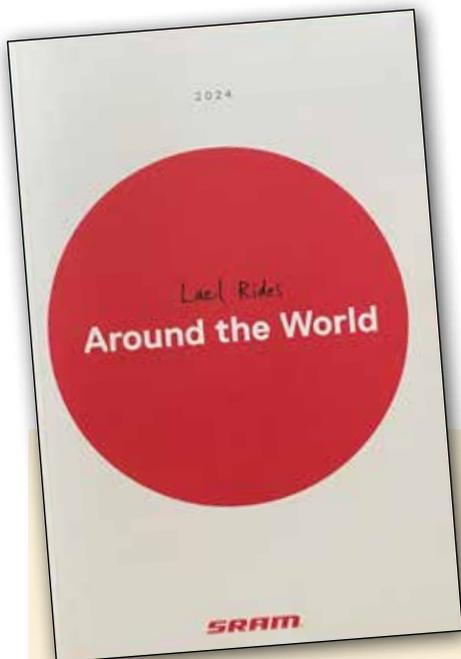
before. Lael's career has paralleled the rise of ultracycling itself as it has expanded to include new self-supported bikepacking-style events such as the Transcontinental in Europe and the TransAm in the USA, which she won outright in 2016.

In addition to her seemingly endless reservoir of strength and determination, Lael brings a quality of warmth and inclusion to all that she does. In fact, on her recent world record attempt, she literally invited the world to join her on her ride around the world by posting the route and invitations, and quite a few took her up on the offer. Along the way strangers, acquaintances, old friends, family, and even a few cycling celebrities joined

Lael. Discerning viewers will even notice a few RUSA members in the film, and Lael notes in the book that while in Paris she rode with a group that included "some really nice folks who had ridden Paris-Brest-Paris."

The Guinness World Records organization certifies world record attempts like this one, and it also established the ground rules. Guinness forbids only drafting and requires that you pass through two antipodal locations and cover a minimum of 18,000 miles, cycling continuously in one direction under your own steam. The rules are agnostic on "support," and riders may interpret this standard independently so long as they do not literally draft behind other riders. Former World Record Holder Jenny Graham, for instance, chose not to ride with anyone else or even to receive mapping and route advice from others because she interpreted these as support. Lael's approach, however, seems designed to suit her own style. Inclusive, public, and social, her *intention* was to share the ride directly and indirectly, and she's masterful at it, as these two accounts of her round the world project illustrate.

Lael is part of a generation of riders who use social media effectively to document and share their accomplishments with the broader world. Her Instagram account, for instance, has over 159K followers. Not only that, her wife Rugile (Rue) Kaladyte is a professional photojournalist and filmmaker who documents Lael's many accomplishments with fidelity and élan. The film is not really a documentary but rather feels like a video scrapbook



### Lael Rides Around the World

BY LAEL WILCOX AND  
RUGILE KALADYTE

SRAM 2024



Lael Wilcox in Chicago.  
—PHOTO PHIL FOX

as it follows Lael's journey sequentially, and it does not provide tremendous backstory or analysis. Friends and family are featured as they appear en route to support her but so are strangers who distinguish themselves and contribute to her success in equal measure. Seeing "trail angels" waiting with provisions to support Lael may remind others a bit of what mere mortals can experience at PBP with cowbells and random acts of kindness from roadside fans.

Lael explains that she designed the route she followed with the help of friends and acquaintances who served as local experts. The resulting route included both stunning and monotonous sections; some were objectively idyllic, like the vast path network in the Netherlands but cursed with terrible weather, while others were quite dangerous, such as the tunnels she needed to share with cars and trucks in Turkey but blessed with lovely weather. Fortunately, she avoided catastrophe despite questionable route segments and some terrible weather, but I might have been a bit angrier with the guy who sent me through those death tunnels with only a modest warning.

The film and the book tell interrelated but somewhat different stories. The book is large and filled with glorious full-color images largely taken by Rue. Accompanied by transcriptions from the contemporaneous podcast Lael and Rue maintained during the adventure, it has a fresh, linear, and spontaneous tone that keeps you on the edge of your seat and curious to know what's next. It feels like a scrapbook and diary in one.

We all tell the stories we want to tell. This is, of course, the prerogative of the teller. As a randonneur and fellow ultradistance cyclist, I enjoyed the book and film very much, but I was also left curious about some of the untold bits. For instance, the logistics required to make a physical accomplishment like this all work were a bit opaque. I wanted to know more about the boring details like where did she stay, how did she handle meals and kit changes, did she ever struggle or doubt her success? What was it like to pack up each morning? "I've spent a lot of days pretty solo," she writes, which was surprising because readers and viewers are treated to none of these moments.

From her accounts it seems like one big rolling party. I would be very interested to hear about these solo efforts and the thoughts she had at those times.

I happened to stumble upon a talk Lael delivered at TedX Anchorage in 2022, which supplied some important details that were missing in the film and book. Here she spoke eloquently about what riding meant to her and how she sees her efforts contributing to the sport and to the public's perception of women in sport more generally. Lael Wilcox is the real deal, and we're fortunate to be living in this time while she's out front as not only a cyclist, but also an ambassador for a world that is made better through cycling. According to Lael, completing this challenge was about more than breaking a record. She concludes, "I think that the fact that I invited people to come out and ride with me—and they showed up, and we shared so much—that's what really made this experience special." I suspect that more comprehensive documentaries on Lael Wilcox will appear in the future. Until then, I hope you enjoy these two recent contributions. 🚴

# New York State of Mine: The Empire State Trail Called my Name

BY BOB DYE - RUSA #6438

I'm a proud New Yorker and New York State is a wonderful place to ride a bike. We've got the Hudson Valley, the Finger Lakes, and the Catskill, Adirondack and Allegheny Mountains. There's the Long Island shore, Champlain Valley and even New York City. And now we've also got the Empire State Trail – a route that follows the Erie Canal from Buffalo to Albany with another branch from Manhattan to Canada. Most of the route is on traffic-free bike paths with some roadway riding in between. A trip from Buffalo to my home north of New York City topped my cycling bucket list.

Research commenced, plans were made, and dates circled. I would drive a rental car to Buffalo, bike east to Albany, hang a right and pedal until home. This would be a credit card ride because I'm no bike-packer. I splurged for the luxury of soft beds, showers, washing machines, breakfast, and power outlets.

After extensive map study, I booked hotels across upstate New York, each about 115 miles apart.

Before starting, I did a shake-down ride on the Trail from home to Battery Park on the southern tip of Manhattan. My bike was loaded with everything I would bring to Buffalo. This proved

worthwhile as I made a few adjustments afterwards. With this shake-down ride, I could claim the entire EST distance from Buffalo to Battery Park, about 560 miles.

The adventure continued in western New York on a cold May morning. I loaded up on the 6 a.m. hotel continental breakfast and hit the trail. Early on, it goes through downtown Buffalo. As a former Buffalonian, I loved seeing the awakening city from a bike saddle in the early morning light. The trail then meanders north up the Niagara River to the start of the Erie Canal. Much of the next four days were spent on lovely canal towpaths, where donkeys once pulled barges loaded with grain headed to the Hudson River, New York City, and beyond. This was the flattest long ride I've ever done.

It was easy to spot the long-distance riders by the loads on their bikes and I had some interesting conversations with cyclists from far-away places. At the first lunch stop, I met a 60ish couple who had come from Europe to ride the EST. They took a train from New York City to Buffalo and were bike-packing back to Manhattan on fully loaded cruiser bikes. Impressive.

The second day took me through downtown Syracuse where I must have offended the weather gods. They served up rain and cold temperatures for the next 2 ½ days. I rode hard to generate



Battery Park.

—PHOTO BOB DYE



I had locks with my bagels.

—PHOTO BOB DYE

George and Bob high above Rosendale.

—PHOTO GEORGE SWAIN



body heat and get to a warm, dry place sooner. Days three and four were a soggy collage of beautiful countryside vistas and small towns built around the canal locks and drawbridges. After traversing the heart of Albany, I crossed the Hudson and turned south, headed to home in the Hudson Valley.

The highlight of the trip was connecting with super randonneur George Swain for breakfast in Kingston.

His was the first familiar face seen since I said goodbye to my wife 5 days earlier. We rode 20 miles together immersed in easy conversation due to our love of all things bicycle.

On that final day, the sunshine reappeared, and I crossed the Hudson for the sixth time, happily arriving home in Nyack. Looking back, I'd say New York State and I got to know each other pretty damn well. 🚲

**If you're considering a trek on the Empire State Trail, here are some suggestions based on my experience:**

Don't rely on the road signage. There are plenty of EST markers along the route but there are also construction detours. Getting back to the trail was mystifying at times. Find a recent GPS file to download or make your own based on the NYS government maps.

Most of the trail is paved or smooth gravel. However, there are some rough stretches. Skinny tires (under 28mm) wouldn't be good.

Since much of the route is adjacent to water, there are many territorial geese. Give them a wide berth. I was chased by one that bumped me in the shoulder. No harm done but the adrenaline surged.

I left the bike shoes home and wore sneakers instead. This was the right choice as I was often off bike for sightseeing, tracking down food and taking a break to walk around a bit.

When someone stops for a selfie, offer to take the picture for them. This is a good icebreaker.

The Erie canal has some fascinating history. Read up on it before you go.



Does your trail have a bike rack like this?

—PHOTO BOB DYE

## A Surfeit of Toys?

Last fall at the Philly Bike Expo, I had some free time to wander around and visit the vendors. One of my favorite aspects of the bike expo is the chance to check out new equipment and discover the wares of the many small manufacturers who do not typically sell in retail stores. It is rare to leave the expo without making a purchase or two.

Last fall I came home with a new frame pump. Although I did not realize it at the time, I already owned 5 frame pumps, all in working order. But they each had limitations, and this new one had a very funky, multi-colored handle which would complement my bike perfectly. Sold! Purchasing this pump out of much-less-than-necessity got me thinking about the mountain of equipment I have purchased since joining RUSA in 2005. A few days ago, I inventoried my current equipment and decided I should recommend a new RUSA award based on how many “toys” members have accumulated over the years. Of course, I want to earn the award immediately so there would be categories based on what I currently own: multi-tools, pumps (frame, floor and other), lights, (front, rear and headlamps), saddles, bike computers, bags (front, rear, frame,) and of course, bicycles. I’m still workshopping names and although the most accurate option might be “Newer, Better, Faster, Lighter” my current favorite is “Equipment Accumulator” with a rider who meets certain goals achieving “Super Equip-

ment Accumulator” status. The details need to be worked out and I’m not sure of the minimum number of a certain item which will be needed to qualify. Five seems a bit low but ten seems....worrisome.

Sometimes, when buying repeat equipment, there are sound reasons. My search for the “perfect” saddle was ongoing until I actually found it. Saddle searches are always the result of riding many miles on an uncomfortable saddle with the resultant pain and sores. I don’t remember the first saddle I used for long rides, but the second one was a Brooks in a limited edition color that I am convinced to this day, rendered it almost unrideable. Not that

I didn’t use it extensively – I did. And I suffered the results in ignorance of the fact that a Brooks should not take years to break in. And I tried repeatedly to break it in. A professional cyclist who ran a bike camp I attended explained his break-in method which included the application of Neatsfoot oil followed by “baking in the oven” and finally beating the tar out of it with a baseball bat. This did not work but I did enjoy the baseball bat part as I had grown quite frustrated with the saddle’s resemblance to a tiny boulder. A Brooks of a different color was the short-term solution. The longer-term solution was another brand that I liked so much I purchased them in many colors and whenever they were on sale, hoarding them against some imagined future demise of the company. This ensured that I had several spares which I gave away when, years later, I discovered the holy grail of saddles which I still use today. I am still fearful that this small company may cease to exist, but the price tag prevents hoarding. (Just checked the website – still making saddles!)

A multi-tool is not something worthy of much thought until it is. I discovered this on my only attempt at a Super 600 when I had a mechanical which reduced the bike to a single speed. If my multi-tool had more leverage, we could have fixed the problem but the little Swiss Army-like design prevented that from happening. My search for the perfect tool began and I found one relatively quickly. But

*A multi-tool is not something worthy of much thought until it is.*



then, at a different Philly expo, I found another. And this one had a tiny ratchet set which was both practical and adorable. What to do? Buy it, of course! I like them both so much that I can't decide which one to pack so sometimes, when there is room, I take both. Ridiculous. Maybe someday, if I ever need to use it, I will figure out which one is better. Right now, they just act more as talismans against mechanical disaster than as functional tools.

I am not really sure why I have so many frame pumps. Once again, I suspect it is the search for the perfect pump – one that inflates quickly with minimal effort. I am aware that most riders would call that choice a “CO2 inflator” and I have many of those as well. The problem is I am afraid to use them because I am quite sure I will explode my inner tube. I know I should practice at home but that uses up a cartridge. Again, ridiculous. I am

sure I purchased at least one or two of these tiny tools on trips where I had forgotten my pump but that does not completely explain the pile of pumps at my disposal.

I do think that in some cases, regular upgrades are defensible. Lighting falls into this category. My first generator hub-powered headlight seemed blindingly bright until I bought a newer one. And that one seemed incredible until I upgraded to an even brighter light which could also power my computer or phone. At the expo I briefly flirted with buying the light I already own in a color that was not previously available but that was too much, even for me.

The ultimate repeat purchase is, of course, another bike. This, too, I think is the constant search for the machine which makes our rides more enjoyable, more comfortable, and perhaps faster. I started randonneuring on a Litespeed

You can never have too many pumps, right?

N + 1 applies to headlights as well as bikes.

—PHOTOS CHRIS NEWMAN



which at the time was fairly new and my pride and joy but I quickly realized I wanted a bike specific to the sport and was lucky enough to have a custom steel bike made in time for PBP 2007. That bike served me well for fifteen years, when I decided I wanted a lighter bike to attempt London Edinburgh London. My bike shopping days are over as this custom bike feels like an extension of my body, but you never know what I might find at the next bike expo! 🚲

# New RUSA Members

RUSA#	NAME	CITY	STATE	RUSA#	NAME	CITY	STATE	RUSA#	NAME	CITY	STATE
18171	Braniff, Michael	Anchorage	AK	18216	Ward, Tj	San Juan Capistrano	CA	18292	Alburez, F	Boston	MA
18226	Kellam, Cade W	Fairbanks	AK	18239	Watts, Philip M	Los Angeles	CA	18278	Anderson, Martina S	Boston	MA
18259	Krolick, Darrell A	Anchorage	AK	18217	Manarin, Barbara	Parker	CO	18313	Bennett, James J	Cambridge	MA
18270	Lohr, Noah	Anchorage	AK	18221	Silvestri, Lorenzo	Evergreen	CO	18234	George, Erin K	Jamaica Plain	MA
18287	Hardwick, Andrew	Huntsville	AL	18223	Deveau, James M	Washington	DC	18291	Hanson, Jacob	Boston	MA
18305	Nugent, Samuel	Phoenix	AZ	18212	Truong, Lawrence Nam-Long	Washington	DC	18312	Knollmann, Felix	Somerville	MA
18295	Armstrong, Valerie	Roseville	CA	18233	Magalhaes, Marcos F	Pembroke Pines	FL	18311	Lu, Chenyue	Somerville	MA
18269	Calicdan, Jonas F	Laguna Niguel	CA	18230	Rodgers Jr, William	Holiday	FL	18293	Querubin, J	Everett	MA
18187	Chilson, Eric C	Roseville	CA	18268	Szymanski, Jacek	Safety Harbor	FL	18310	Sarvary, Katherine	Conway	MA
18192	Dooley, Kristen E	San Francisco	CA	18232	Zarasvand, Josh F	Palm Harbor	FL	18277	Seligsohn, Andrew J	Boston	MA
18237	Golshan, Nathan	Oakland	CA	18222	Lickwar, Anthony	Atlanta	GA	18294	Tabares, A	Everett	MA
18175	Hastie, Elizabeth	San Diego	CA	18284	Edge, Ryan J	Rexburg	ID	18231	Valadie, Luke Grayson	Cambridge	MA
18180	Hayes, Mitchell William	Eureka	CA	18301	Anderson, Will	Peoria	IL	18276	Judd, D R	New Carrollton	MD
18210	Hays, Jodi W	Encinitas	CA	18282	Beck-Winchatz, Bernhard	Chicago	IL	18194	Parks, Joshua	Fruitland	MD
18182	Izen, Jonathan	San Francisco	CA	18306	Ding, Xun	Chicago	IL	18207	Taylor, James Z	Yarmouth	ME
18177	Klimek, Alexander C	San Francisco	CA	18198	Espiritu, Paul Y	Chicago	IL	18254	Truslow, Alex	Windham	ME
18283	Ko, Nathan	Mountain View	CA	18314	Floro, Eric	Maryville	IL	18245	Wassmann, Karl G	South Portland	ME
18262	Lamas, David	Aliso Viejo	CA	18290	Hwang, Ashley	Chicago	IL	18227	Cato, Cary C	Lincoln Park	MI
18281	Mac, Tom	San Jose	CA	18174	Kuppan, Senthilkumar	Chicago	IL	18218	Sexton, Grace	Grosse Pointe Woods	MI
18274	Ramesh, Bharadwaj V	Sunnyvale	CA	18202	McCoy, Sam V	Chicago	IL	18219	Conway, Ryan	Minneapolis	MN
18279	Schwarz, Martha R	Berkeley	CA	18205	Meyer, Aaron	Chicago	IL	18179	Sust, Paul W	Rochester	MN
18308	Talley, Kevin	Bakersfield	CA	18191	Sweeney, Wes E	Channahon	IL	18189	Holthaus, Chris	St. Louis	MO
18253	Tomcho, Michael	San Diego	CA	18304	Kwon, HyoJae	Hanam-si	KR	18318	Knight, Katia	Marlow	NH
18176	Vance, Ethan	San Diego	CA	18307	Min, ByoungKug	Seongnam-si	KR	18260	Watanabe, Ayako	Jersey City	NJ
18261	Vignet, Anna	San Francisco	CA	18203	Adolphson, Odin	Pittsfield	MA	18196	Aibel, Claire	Saratoga Springs	NY

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 Week 2: Century Week: Mid-March, 2026  
 Week 3: Mountain Tour: Late March, 2026

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RUSA#	NAME	CITY	STATE
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18195	Aibel, Sam	Saratoga Springs	NY
18255	Akst, Nicholas	Jackson Heights	NY
18251	Allen III, Doug	Brooklyn	NY
18267	Bell, Jordan	Brooklyn	NY
18215	Blair, Jonathan B	Brooklyn	NY
18243	Bowden, Sarah	New York	NY
18238	Brueckheimer, Rainer L	Brooklyn	NY
18258	Cardona, Michell Johanna	Bronx	NY
18265	Cavalluzzi, Abby Jacques	New York	NY
18302	Deich, Aaron	Brooklyn	NY
18242	Doucette, Gabriel	Brooklyn	NY
18193	Feal-Staub, Celia Isabel	Brooklyn	NY
18186	Holloway, Kyle D	Brooklyn	NY
18209	Jones, Michael Raymond	Oswego	NY
18256	Khanis, Stephanie	Brooklyn	NY
18213	Kim, Tomas	Brooklyn	NY
18288	Klein, Tucker	Brooklyn	NY
18250	Kovar, Susan	Brooklyn	NY
18317	Lee, Dianna	New York	NY
18225	Lemus, William	Bronx	NY
18263	Li, Mucong Collin	Brooklyn	NY
18257	McNeill, Mike	Long Island City	NY
18173	Messmer, Callie	Lansing	NY
18172	Messmer, David	Lansing	NY
18246	Negless, Daniel A	Brooklyn	NY

RUSA#	NAME	CITY	STATE
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18275	Olson, Sophia	Brooklyn	NY
18252	Planet, Nicolas O	Brooklyn	NY
18264	Rao, Varun S	Ithaca	NY
18235	Reuter, Jordan Ryan	Brooklyn	NY
18272	Soler, Emma	Brooklyn	NY
18299	Whiteside, Trina	Brooklyn	NY
18201	Hausknecht, Erik	Portland	OR
18289	Lippert, Jacob	Salem	OR
18309	Robison, Kayna M	Eugene	OR
18188	Suratt, Cory A	Eugene	OR
18236	van Dyk, Paul	Roseburg	OR
18247	Abernethy, Russell D	Philadelphia	PA
18249	Carpenter, Covey L	Philadelphia	PA
18208	Dalvano, Nick Kang	Philadelphia	PA
18229	Gemmill, Aaron A	Philadelphia	PA
18315	Noonan, Johanna	Philadelphia	PA
18266	O'Brien, Dan	North Wales	PA
18248	Plunkett, S	Philadelphia	PA
18211	Goldberg, Brian	Providence	RI
18200	Cooper Jr, John P	Nashville	TN
18286	Nguyen, Luan	Conroe	TX
18181	Shotts, Doug R	The Woodlands	TX
18184	Geisler, Taylor	Sandy	UT
18197	Hall, Rachael	Salt Lake City	UT
18185	McKerrow, Andy	Salt Lake City	UT

RUSA#	NAME	CITY	STATE
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18214	Smith, Grayson M	Ogden	UT
18190	Wilson, Steve	Salt Lake City	UT
18206	Hankins, Dennis B	Springfield	VA
18273	Sevilla, Elijah David Devaras	Fort Myer	VA
18316	Bruner, Jaime	Seattle	WA
18224	Buzzell, Daniel J	Waterville	WA
18244	Di Jasio, Lucio	Bellevue	WA
18271	Dotd, Catherine Marie	Bellevue	WA
18296	Eby, Chris	Seattle	WA
18228	Grealish, Sean W	Bellingham	WA
18300	Horwitz, Frank	Seattle	WA
18280	Howard, J	Sedro Woolley	WA
18241	Hugo, Eryn K	Kennewick	WA
18298	Machuca Moreno, Ivan	Kenmore	WA
18183	Marsh, Evan	Seattle	WA
18285	Mayer, Rich	Auburn	WA
18240	McCammon, Chad	Monroe	WA
18204	Moss, Marilyn	Seattle	WA
18178	Webber, K J	Spokane	WA
18297	Wentland, Lael	Kenmore	WA
18199	Campbell, Sean R	New Berlin	WI
18303	Farin, David L	Shorewood	WI
18220	White, Ben J	Madison	WI

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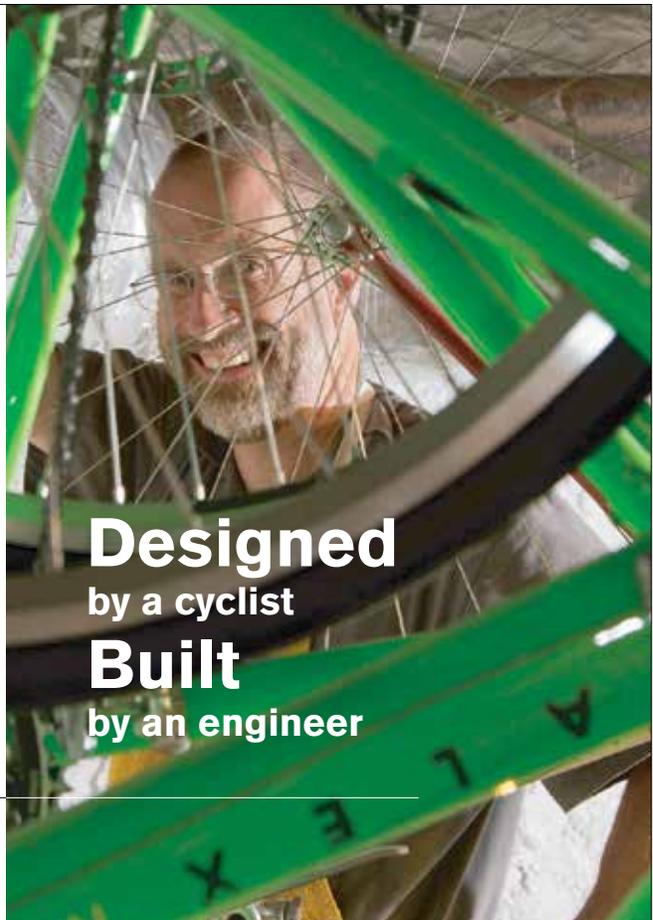
It begins with the right questions; by learning the needs and desires of the customer. I listen to the experiences that led you to me: your riding history, your cycling dreams, and what you want your next bike to be.

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

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

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



**Designed  
by a cyclist  
Built  
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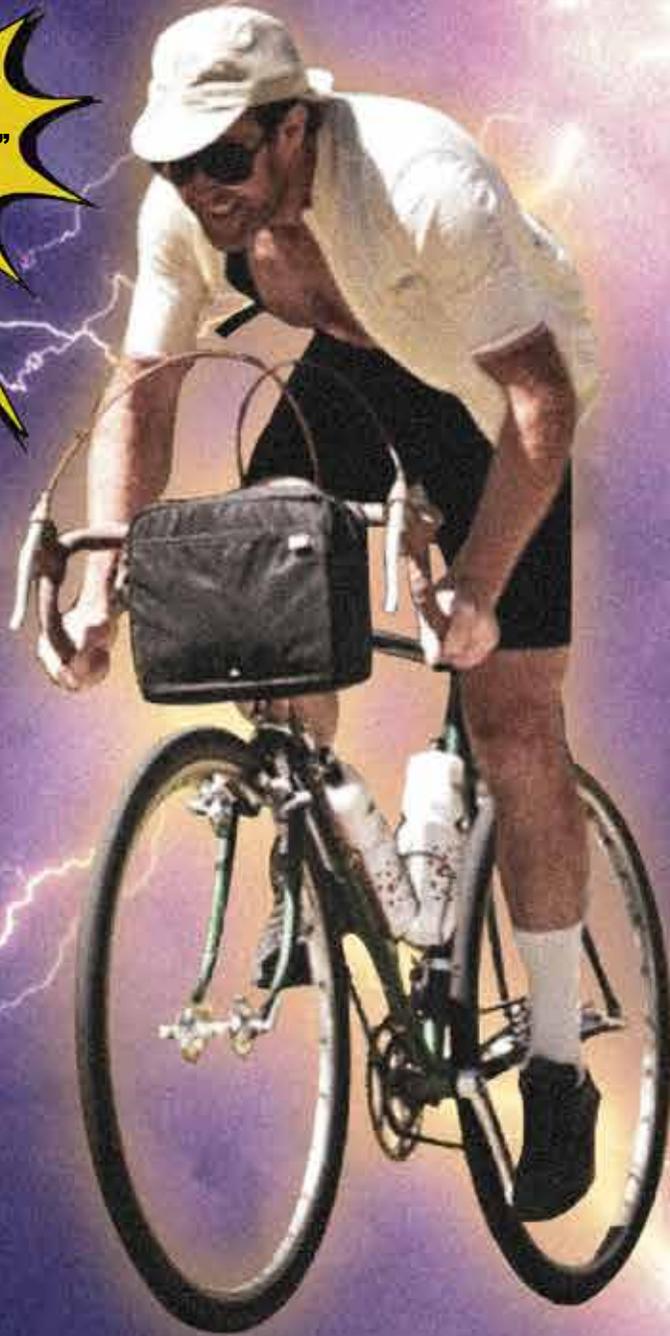
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# LIGHTNING BOLT

## CANTI-LIGHTNING BOLT



The Canti Lightning Bolt is a lightweight road/ randonneuring focused bike. Tig welded, heat treated chromoly construction, and designed to flex and feel like you're actually floating millimeters above the road on top of Dynamic clouds. This planing sensation will leave you feeling like you're the star of the Brevet, leading everyone into a marshmallow and ice cream victory meal. The Champagne, Lilac and Light Sea Green frames feature our new Gran Trajet Fork Crown. The Gran Trajet fork crown fits a 48b tire and is designed to perfectly mimic the arch of a fender like the Honjo Smooth 62, leaving a seamless look. The newer fork also features Imperial Oval fork blades, which are believed to provide the optimal passive suspension. This leads to greater over all comfort and speed, making the bike they're attached to a true randonneuring machine.

## SINGLE-SPEED LIGHTNING BOLT



## CANTI-LIGHTNING BOLT V1



The Single Speed Lightning Bolt shares the same geometry with the other Bolts, but opposed to having vertical or thru axle dropouts it has rear facing horizontal dropouts. It also has 120mm rear spacing to accommodate your typical fixed/ flip flop hub. It makes for a super fun Randonneur style bike, commuter, or all-around-do-whatever bike.

The Galaxy Black has a different fork crown, which means it fits a 42b tire perfectly, but a 48 is too close a squeeze in the fork. If you want to run fenders we suggest 38s. Like the other Lightning Bolts, the Galaxy Black is designed around a 650b wheelset.

# Flèche Report

BY NOAH SWARTZ

It's 11:48 on Saturday night. I see the three tail lights of my teammates just up the road waiting for me. As I pull up all I can say is "What the hell is this??" We're at the base of Patterson Pass, our last climb before 60 miles of flat across the bay and up to San Francisco, where we're aiming to be by 9:30 the following morning. Doug asks what our options are. I can barely hear him over the roar of the wind.

Over the last 5 miles the wind only seems to have grown in strength and intensity. Trees are flopping around like pom-poms, all the street signs are rattling against their bolts, and anything that could blow away long since has. The roar is deafening. It sounds like the GoPro audio of someone skydiving.

We briefly discuss going north to Altamont Pass or south to Tesla Road,

but decide those won't be any better. At least this way we'll be treated to a fast descent on the other side and maybe some gentler weather. Sometimes the only way out is through.

Kevin says we should try to stick together and stay on each others' wheels to lessen the effect of the wind, but when I get on my bike I can barely stay in the right lane, let alone on the

wheel of the rider in front of me. It's easily 30 m.p.h. sustained with sudden gusts of 40-50 m.p.h. knocking us back and forth. I tell them I'll see them on the other side and start the long walk up the 1,000 foot vertical pass.

Our plan to ride the flèche was initially spurred by Mike Fretz's desire to ride to San Francisco from Yosemite. But when he broke his collarbone a month before the event, we had to make sure we still had enough riders to form a team. While Kevin Williams agreed to join me, Claire Mirocha, and Doug Williams, we couldn't make the logistics of getting to Yosemite work. In the end we decided to modify Eric Marshall's route from the 2023 Davis flèche that went east from Sacramento and looped back through Manteca and Tracy. I had to cut out a lot of the more adventurous dirt his team had done, but this would be my first time riding to the east of Stockton so there were a lot of new roads for us to explore.

After a pleasant Amtrak ride we rolled into the Sacramento station early enough to gather before our 9:30 start time. I tried to lay out some ground rules: we'd stick together and support each other, try to stay safe and communicative when it got late and we got tired, and keep our overall focus on having fun. With that we were off, making our way to the American River Trail before heading south to pass by

If ever there was the right time for the Mountain ...

—PHOTO KEVIN WILLIAMS





Claire taking a much needed breather.

—PHOTO KEVIN WILLIAMS

the Sacramento Airport. We took a canal trail filled with triathletes testing out their aerobars and doing intervals, whizzing past us as we dilly-dallied our way south. Soon we were out onto wide exposed roads, hugging the shoulder as cars replaced TT bikes. Luckily, a few more turns and we were on a quiet road that gradually became gravel, bringing us to Ione.

A quick look at Google maps identified a nice looking cafe in the center of town serving fresh vegetable-filled organic sandwiches, seemingly out of place in this town filled with veterans' memorials, preserved railroad equipment, and saloons with tinted windows. We were happy for the excuse to get out of the heat and enjoy some air conditioning as we wolfed down our food after riding almost 40 miles non-stop.

It's 12:30 a.m. I can't tell if I've walked a mile or three. The wind is relentless, seeming to only grow in intensity as I climb. Every time I think it's about to calm down, a gust comes from the side and almost rips the bike out of my hands. I can hardly believe this is possible at all, let alone happening to me. Winds this strong feel like they belong in a movie. Knowing that this happens, probably regularly, just a short distance from

where I live seems almost impossible to accept. Mind reeling, I dutifully continue to put one foot in front of the other, the only thought rattling around my head being that this is probably not how most people would choose to spend the wee hours of Sunday morning on a holiday weekend.

From Ione we skirted the Pardee reservoir, riding across the top of the dam before rolling into Valley Springs for a resupply. Next up: a nearly 40 mile stretch through Milton and across the Central Valley before our next opportunity to get food or water. Knowing it was about to be the hottest part of the day, we stuffed ice into our water bottles and down the backs of our shirts, hoping it would keep us cool enough to make it across. Luckily the winds stayed in our favor and we flew across the sun bleached landscape, all smiles.

As we made the turn west towards Manteca I began to feel the fatigue set in. My ice had lasted about an hour, but the dry wind had sucked all the water out of me, and having only had a soda and a cookie to eat in the last 3 hours was starting to catch up with me. I pulled over at the side of the road to force down a bar before catching back up to my ride partners, who were waiting just up the road. We were about

8 miles from Rosetti's, a convenience store on an otherwise empty stretch of road that we were relying on for a water refill.

Rosetti's didn't provide much else besides that water refill, and the smell of industrial cow facilities nearby made me gag as I tried to get a little food down and rehydrate enough so that I could go back to laughing and smiling with the rest of the team. Instead of feeling instantly restored, I realized just how close I was to the edge. I was well cooked, but sunset was almost upon us and I was relying on the cooling temperature to help improve my mood and give me newfound energy.

We decided it was still too early for dinner, so we chose to ride on to Tracy, white-knuckling some traffic-clogged city streets but mostly riding a patchwork of service roads and bike connector trails. A group of friends driving back from a weekend of camping spotted us riding parallel to the highway and snapped a pic, a bunch of blurry dayglow dots with pinpricks of red tail lights shining out against the darkening landscape.

Realizing that we'd be passing through Tracy after 9 p.m. and having not already identified somewhere to eat we began to panic about whether anywhere would still be open. After some quick Googling we ordered a Mountain-sized pizza from a Mountain Mike's along the route that would hopefully be ready just as we rolled into town. Claire was excited, saying "When else will you have the opportunity to order the Mountain Size!?" We got there right as they were beginning to close, so we had a rando picnic on the cold and windy sidewalk out in front of the shop. The ambiance did little to tarnish our spirits. We had made it through the hottest part of the day and had just one more challenge before



Noah at a reflective moment.

—PHOTO DOUG WILLIAMS

some easy night riding. Why shouldn't we be smiling? Brimming with joy over how well our day had gone so far and with stomachs full once again, we headed out to begin our approach to Patterson Pass.



It's nearly 1 a.m., and I can't tell if I'm almost at the top or if I still have a mile to go. Everything is hazy in the inky blackness. My dynamo is useless at walking speed, and the sky is moonless. I just have the dim light of the stars and the far off blink of wind turbines to help orient myself. Every time a car passes I step off the road, surely looking lost, confused, and terrified. As their headlights blind me I wonder what they must be thinking. What possible explanation could they have come up with for seeing a wind battered stick figure decked out in reflective gear dragging their bike over a mountain in the middle of the night?

Finally, thankfully, I crest the top of the pass. For a second I'm worried that I'll have to walk all the way down if the wind doesn't let up, but I decide to mount my bike and give it a try. My hands are numb and frozen, and I lack the finger strength to put on my gloves, so I just grit my teeth and feather the

brakes to slowly make my way to a lower elevation where hopefully the wind will be calmer. Eventually I manage to pull one glove on, but I'm too tired to try to figure out how to get a jacket under my reflective vest. So in shorts, a t-shirt, and a single thick winter glove I press on to Livermore where I'm hoping the rest of my team is waiting for me.

I find them huddled inside the Donut Wheel, which amazingly is still serving up fresh donuts to an array of clientele. In the middle of which are three tired and battered randonneurs, heads down on the table waiting for me to show up. I walk in and we exchange shell shocked expressions, still in disbelief about what we had just gone through.

Realizing I'm the one holding the team up, and sensing some concern about timing, I scarf down two donuts and an apple juice and try to rally the troops. From here we'll head to Sunol and then ride down Niles Canyon before stopping in Fremont for another resupply at a gas station c-store.

On the way, Doug, who seems to be the sleepest of us all, decides to keep us all awake by singing sea shanties. He does his best to teach us the refrains and we do our best trying to sing even

vaguely in tune while still pushing the pace. But it works, and before we know it we're at Niles Canyon.

Niles Canyon is terrifying during the day with semi-blind curves, no shoulder, and cars in a rush to get between various places. I'm praying that no one is trying to race down it in the middle of the night, and I keep one eye pointed backwards the whole time, constantly looking over my shoulder for any sign of approaching headlights. In the end it passes quickly and without incident.

In Fremont we make friends with the convenience store clerk who seems happy to have some late night customers and is interested in our journey. He tries to convince us that we should really be sleeping, and we do our best to convince him that we know what we're doing, but honestly at this point we don't feel that convinced ourselves. As the team captain and the one who made the route, I'm starting to feel responsible for our successful completion and guilty for the boondoggle that it has become after losing an hour to the howling winds on Patterson. It's nice to see that the rest of the team is in good spirits and energetic, all things considered.

It's then that I remember that the ride up from Palo Alto to San Francisco takes a custom route, which is a patchwork of roads, bike paths, and bay trail sections seemingly at random. Easy for me since I've ridden it dozens of times, but probably impossible to try to follow on a GPS unit with zero hours of sleep. So I offer to go in front and guide the group. Despite my high spirits, within minutes of leaving the gas station I feel myself start to get tired both from

Chatting with a friendly c-store attendant in the wee hours.

—PHOTO KEVIN WILLIAMS

Our happy team at the end of the ride breakfast.

—PHOTO KIM FREITAS

lack of sleep and compounded fatigue. I stop to stuff down an energy bar with caffeine and calories, but it doesn't help. I have to stop again on the other side of the Dumbarton Bridge and eat more, begging forgiveness from the rest of my team.

I slurp down a Gu and do my best to keep a steady pace as we weave through the various corporate headquarters, golf courses, air fields, and construction zones along the bay up to Millbrae, where we pull over at a Safeway at 7:08 a.m., 22 minutes before we have to leave again to begin the last 25 km to the finish control. Doug and Kevin run across the street to get bagels, and Claire lies down in the stairwell of the Safeway to catch a nap while I'm left outside on bike watch duty.

The day before the ride I got a bike fit to try to fix some hand numbness I had felt with this bike. It helped in some ways but hurt in others, and my hands and feet have variably been going numb since the first hour. Sitting outside the Safeway I can feel both feet throb with an overwhelming intensity as blood slowly starts to circulate again. I'm overcome by the feeling and sit for nearly 5 minutes just marveling at it while trying to keep my eyes open. I slowly eat a little bit of food, but I've been feeling nauseous since the sun



came up a few hours ago. Trying to keep a stable pace has totally drained my reserves and I know I'm going to finish this ride having fully emptied the tank.

And then it's 7:30 and we're off, aiming to cover 16 miles in 2 hours over various hills as we make our way into the heart of San Francisco to finish in the Haight at Crepes on Cole. Riding through familiar city streets on no sleep as people are just waking up to start their Sundays is a surreal feeling. As we coast down Alemany and then the Valencia Greenway I'm reminded of the times when biking 25 miles felt like a lot, and I wonder what compelled me to do this. But I know that's just the fatigue talking, and that after I get some sleep the hard parts of the ride will fade from my memory as the fun

moments, the smiles, the food, and the camaraderie rise to the surface. And before I know it we're at the finish control, ringing our bike bells, grinning like idiots, and looking like god knows what — proud of our accomplishment and ready to be through with it.

As we check in with the finish control volunteer, our weary expressions transform into smiles, and everyone seems happy and satisfied with the ride. I'm overcome with a sense of pride at how well my team handled it, not giving up or giving into panic. Even through the worst of it they stayed confident and strong. Seeing them dig deep for the strength and fortitude required to finish such a challenging ride inspires me, and I'm glad to be able to call them my teammates on a ride I won't soon forget. 🚲



## Mixed Surfaces, Mixed Feelings

Patchwork quilt of half-shades of green under a slow procession of small clouds. Thin stands of varied trees, primarily deciduous, sometimes in lines as dense as only single tree after single tree. They bisect plots of land, three or four or maybe as much as fifteen acres square. I assume the proper measurement for this kind of topography would be hectares.

It's been a slower start to the cycling season in New York's southern tier than I am used to experiencing on Colorado's Front Range, which, though littered with fits and starts of spring snowstorms, generally facilitates relatively high-volume early season riding. And anyway, the last six months have been busy with starting a new job, starting another job, quitting the first one to focus on the second one, and by the way there's as much travel involved in getting to work as there is work itself. I shouldn't complain, though.

The pitch of these roads creeps up on you, too. It's a not exactly great way to try to build your early season base mileage; there's almost nowhere to hide, unless you want to ride the surface (read: service) roads that parallel the

freeway, which, in turn, parallels the winding, wide, and slow river. Everything else kicks upward.

And if I was interested in pedaling to simply pedal, those service roads would be enough. Some days, it is enough. I used to say that there's no such thing as junk mileage, and I still believe that to be true. But I should qualify that statement. There is a continuum of higher and lower quality riding. There are a lot of things that contribute to the quality of a given ride: traffic, weather, road surface, training and conditioning, and certainly of course psychology (i.e. mood) plays a factor.

I know almost no one who rides bicycles recreationally who doesn't put at least a little bit of their *purpose in cycling* into the mental health column.

A big part of the head-clearing appeal of riding is the ability to ride in such a way, without distractions, that the rider can engage the environment without distractions: one moment flows continuously into the next, unpunctuated by the chaos inherent to life in our present moment.

So, surface streets: a necessary evil, a way to get to the higher ground, above that chaos. At least this is how I've generally thought about it. This logic, then, not incidentally, extends into my general preference to ride on dirt roads, rather than paved ones, whenever possible. This is not to say that there are no uncontrollable variables on dirt roads. Yard dogs, stray square rocks, a little bit of loose surface or some washboard under a fan of shade trees you didn't quite expect can collaborate to inject some chaos into the ride.

But I should be more explicit in what I'm really talking about, which is traffic. Drivers piloting a ton plus of hot steel, hurtling down the road at speeds the human central nervous system isn't made to coordinate. Of course, it's incumbent on the driver to pilot their vehicles responsibly. You can only do so much. It's almost a miracle that there aren't more vehicle-bicyclist incidents than there are. Even so, I know few cyclists who haven't had at least one or two close calls.

Close calls being what they are, warnings, shots across the bow. And yet we continue to head out into the world, taking up all necessary precaution, but

I'm not interested in a life without riding bikes  
outside, from my doorstep, on the road.  
I suspect you share my sentiments.

also taking on the yoke of those risks anyway. I'm not interested in a life without riding bikes outside, from my doorstep, on the road. I suspect you share my sentiments.

Still, many people have retreated away from riding out-of-doors into their cloistered caves of suffering. They supplicate at the altar of FTP. They put one foot in front of the other and go nowhere. And there is nothing wrong with this, either. It's an almost categorically different pursuit, in my mind.

Riding in groups is another buffer against the inherent dangers of riding on the road. A cadre of folks with bright flashing taillights will certainly grab the attention of drivers. One almost doesn't have to worry about the accidental bicycle-vehicle incident so much as the intentional one. A driver tarried by the instance of a row of cyclists might, impatiently, pass in spitting distance of their elbows in order to get around and on to their next important thing.

But we randonneurs can't file the lion's share of our mileage into group riding, unless we are very fortunate to be in a population-dense area with regular group rides mid-week. Even so, using these group rides to achieve structured training goals is a fool's errand; those of us who need to ride within a certain bandwidth of heart rate for at least some of our rides in order to achieve fitness goals may find it challenging to ride in groups that don't either stretch our faculties or leave us underexerted.

And anyway, I sort of prefer the solitude, which leaves me at what? I'm back at square one. Ride to the good stuff, stay away from the busy streets as much as I can. So this is what I do.

On the particular day in question, I go a little further east out of Binghamton's south side and push up against a lightly upwardly-graded paved road toward an encroaching ridge line. There are a couple turns and eventually, a very steep pitch punches you in the

Riding in groups  
is another buffer  
against the inherent  
dangers of riding  
on the road.

mouth, not so much that you taste blood, but close.

I'm tying in a back entrance to a dense network of gravel roads which converge on the town of Brakckey, Pennsylvania. I'm filling in the gaps, so to speak.

There are a couple more turns before I'm on that familiar ground. There's virtually no traffic. It's rained hard sometime in the last few days, so the dirt is mostly firm where there isn't loose gravel thrown on top. That is to say, it's not dusty and almost even tacky, so I take the corners about as fast I've ever taken them. Even still, I'm wary of leaning against the pronounced negative camber that features on a lot of these roads. The roads are designed to drain well, so half of your big sweeping turns fight gravity and you're best to check your speed. And, in contrast to many of the county roads in the Midwest, they're not laid out on a grid; you can't necessarily carry full speed like you might on those dead-straight rollercoaster roads in Iowa or Nebraska.

Truth is, I didn't feel great on this ride until 65% of the way through it; the fitness is only slowly coming along. One nice thing is not having to contend with the traffic you might encounter on rides that steer clear of those networks of gravel roads that otherwise put you out of the way of, well, basically any vehicles at all.

And that continues to be the case, for the most part, even as I rejoin the pavement.

Until it's not the case. In the last mile of the ride, I find my front wheel

sandwiched in the wheel well of a KIA who's driver made a quick left turn in front of me (from oncoming traffic). I am more like a cart of produce, the way I spill across the car's hood: apples, melons, onions, et cetera, in a tumble. In a last-ditch effort to slow my eventual rendezvous with the pavement, I reach back and grab the car's windshield wiper. This is something I do instinctively; I do not know why.

Sitting on the pavement with the car stopped in the middle of the road I initially thought I was okay. But the following day I touch down at the E.R. I'm incredibly fortunate – It's not even the gumbyishness of youth that's protecting me at this point, but just dumb expletive luck. I'm not a 25 year old any longer and I don't bounce like one.

This resets the incident counter back to zero days. It's been a long time since I've had a truly impactful interaction with a vehicle. The insurance company say's I'm 20% at fault, which is interesting, since the driver who turned in front of me was issued a citation, and I was just riding along with traffic. Anyway.

How this relates to riding on gravel I guess is somewhat only tangential; in effect, riding gravel as a way to avoid distracted drivers is a noble pursuit. There are no perfect solutions to this problem; I'm nursing a knee injury while I am trying to describe to the adjusters what an MCL is.

I suspect that the radtech who takes my imaging knows what to do, but, basically, who cares at this point. I'm in the hands of the insurance company. 🚲

# Chasing Miles, Finding Limits: From Brevets to World Records

BY PHIL FOX (#12365)

On June 5, 2025, I clipped in under the Blue Water Bridge in Port Huron, Michigan just after six in the morning. The St. Clair River was gray and dreary. The air smelled like wet pavement – a welcome change from wildfires blowing smoke over the Great Lakes in the days prior. It was exactly what you want when you're about to ride 1000 miles around Lake Huron.

The plan was simple: complete the first documented world record circumnavigation of Lake Huron under the auspices of the World UltraCycling Association (WUCA). I would ride clockwise around the entire shoreline, traversing the lower and upper Peninsulas of Michigan and back down through Ontario, Canada around the Georgian Bay.

My crew and I set out in the rain, knowing it would be at least three hours of steady drizzle before the roads dried out somewhere north of Bay City. I was layered up in rain gear, latex gloves under my cycling mitts, toe covers over my backup shoes – the usual ultra tricks.

There's something about rolling out in bad weather that sets the tone. You already know it's going to be miserable, so you don't waste energy hoping it won't be. You just ride.

By the time I pulled into Bay City, Michigan for a quick roadside wardrobe change, I'd banked my first hundred

miles in 5 hours and 22 minutes, with less than six minutes off the bike. Keep moving, keep eating, keep going.

At Harrisville I did a full kit change and enjoyed a few last coastal views before the sun went down and the world went quiet. From there it would be a lot of US 23: approximately 200 miles of unbroken shoreline road, no turns on the cue sheet, virtually no traffic, and Lake Huron somewhere out there in the dark.

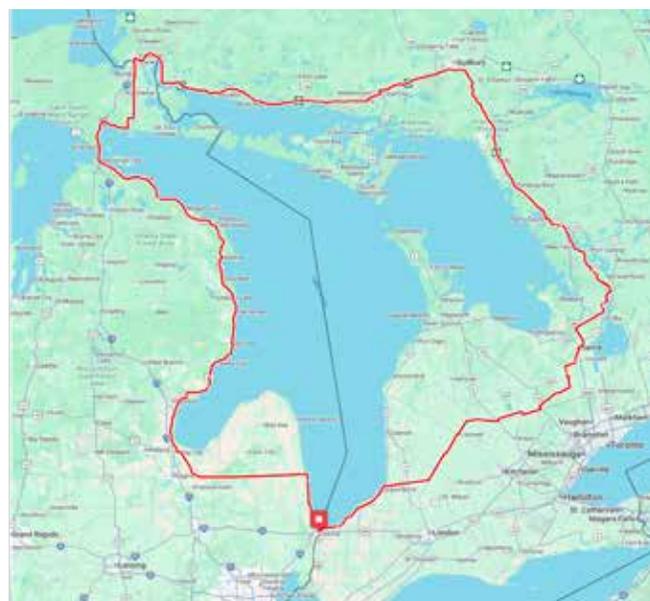
We shuttled across the Mackinaw Bridge in the dead of night as cycling

across the iconic bridge is strictly forbidden. We dropped into Michigan's Upper Peninsula before sunrise. The U.P. delivered as advertised: pitch black, empty, and just enough wildlife to keep you on your toes.

Twenty-four hours in and 400 miles down, we arrived at the International Bridge at Sault Ste. Marie. Right on our planned pace, we crossed over into Canada, rolling right through customs like it was no big deal. After our scheduled shift change at daybreak, I sent the crew to find the first open Starbucks.

Another shift and another 200-mile stretch. Between Sault Ste. Marie and Sudbury, the route follows Highway 17, a rugged stretch of the Trans-Canada Highway that winds through dense forests and granite cuts with long exposed rollers and almost no shoulder in places. I knew I probably could push through before my one planned sleep break, but it would be white-knuckle riding in spots, especially with rush hour traffic piling up ahead of the weekend.

*There's something about rolling out in bad weather that sets the tone. You already know it's going to be miserable, so you don't waste energy hoping it won't be. You just ride.*



Welcome to the world of ultra-cycling, defined by the clock, distance, and a distinct desire to test your mettle.

### The Bridge to Randonneuring

I would never have gotten here without randonneuring.

People think randonneuring and ultra-cycling sit at opposite ends of the endurance spectrum – one is a “ride,” the other a “race.” One is friendly and non-competitive; the other is about podiums and record times.

But the more miles I put under my wheels, the more obvious it is: these worlds overlap in all the ways that actually matter. They both reward self-determination. They both demand that you figure out how to eat, sleep, ride, and problem-solve under stress. They both remind you that the biggest obstacle is never the weather or the terrain; it’s that part of your brain that wants to stop or worse... stay home.

### Ask the Question

The table shows two worlds side by side with more similarities than differences. But the real connection is that quiet question in your head: Can I actually do this?

Randonneuring is where a lot of us find that out for the first time. You roll up to your first 200k and you’re nervous – maybe you’ve done a gran

fondo before, but you’ve never ridden through two meals and come home after dark. Then you finish it, and you see the next distance on the brevet calendar... and the next.

The jump to your first 400k is intimidating, but you do it anyway. Then one day you look up, and you’re plotting a 600k or a 1200k. Maybe you’re even standing under the Blue

Map of the Great Lakes and Lake Huron World Record Route.

—CREDIT PHIL FOX

Sault Ste. Marie International Border Crossing.

—PHOTO ANDREW DONSBACH





Lake Huron World Record  
Finish Line Crew Photo.

—PHOTO ANDREW WYTON

reassuring about being surrounded by other people who are just as determined (or crazy) to see how far they can go.

### What We Don't Know Keeps it Interesting

For weeks my crew had targeted a Motel 6 near Sudbury as my one and only sleep break. Getting to that 600-mile mark weighed on me the whole time. I kept running the math in my head: How fast can I get there? How much rest do I need to finish this thing? Will I even be able to fall asleep?

I knew I needed the break, not just for my legs but for my brain, but you can't exactly count on your mind switching off when you're wired. A quick shower, a quick meal, and straight to bed. I set the alarm for three hours, and before I could even hit snooze, the night crew was through the door and ready to go.

From Sudbury there were even fewer options heading south. Highway 69, a controlled-access highway, was the only paved way for the next 85 miles, and I was determined to be off it before daybreak. Strangely enough, after the white-knuckle sections the day before, it felt calmer: wide shoulders, almost no traffic, and the first hints of the sheer wilderness ahead. That stretch turned out to be some of the best riding of the entire route: empty forest, quiet lakes, and the crew on moose watch while I ticked off miles toward Parry Sound.

Of course, things got weird again near Barrie, where we rode straight into a full-on airshow. Streets were jammed, the follow car had to reroute, and I threaded through crowds and police barricades with biplanes looping overhead like I was part of the performance.

Chicago Randonneurs testing their limits on the Spotted Cow 600k.

—PHOTO SARAH RICE

Water Bridge at 6 a.m., about to circle another Great Lake because you want to see how much further you can push it.

### Randonneuring, Chicago Style

In Chicago our local club is in the middle of its second season, but I see it every time we gather at a start line: that same hunger to test our limits. We have randonneurs tackling their first double metrics, nabbing Super Randonneur medals, and graduating to straight-shot 600k's. We are popping up at Grand Randonnées across the country. And we'll be well represented at Paris-Brest-Paris in a few short years.

We had a 24-hour flèche team break 500 kilometers in the rain, gravel riders training for Unbound XL, and bikepackers pressure testing their rigs ahead of the grueling 1,121-mile Mishigami Challenge around Lake Michigan. We've got riders eyeballing Transcontinental, Trans Am Bike Nonstop, the Tour Divide, and the ever-present Race Across America.

Non-competitive? Sure. But don't mistake that for taking it easy. Randonneuring teaches you how to be your own best support crew. It trains you to handle yourself when no one else is watching – the skills that define who we are and what we are capable of.

The discipline doesn't matter as much as the questions that drive us. How far can we go? What are we capable of? That's the thing Chicago Randonneurs tapped into in just two seasons: people want to test their perceived limits. They want to find out what happens when you keep going. And the longer you go, the more you realize it's not about speed; it's about staying sharp when you're cold, tired, hungry, or frustrated. It's about problem-solving when the weather turns sour, detours pop-up, or your digestive system rebels.

It's about showing up again the next weekend because you know you're not done. And despite the focus on independence, there's something

ASPECT	WORLD ULTRACYCLING ASSOCIATION (WUCA)	RANDONNEURS USA (RUSA)
Founded	Founded in 1980 by John Marino, Lon Haldeman, and Michael Shermer – early Race Across America (RAAM) pioneers – to legitimize long distance ultracycling and help riders prepare for RAAM	Founded in 1998 by Jennifer Wise, Johnny Bertrand, and Bill Bryant – built on the earlier International Randonneurs (1983) to grow domestic brevets and help riders qualify for Paris-Brest-Paris
Focus	Competitive ultra-distance cycling; timed records and affiliated events	Non-competitive long-distance randonneuring
Events	Races are hosted by independently owned and operated organizations	Brevets are hosted by RUSA-sanctioned regional clubs
Routes	WUCA record routes cover point-to-point crossings, circumnavigations, or fixed-time/distance loops. Start location and waypoints are fixed and must be followed exactly.	RUSA permanents start at 100 km and are part of an established route library. Start location, direction, and timing are flexible as long as all controls are passed through in order.
Registration	Registration must be submitted at least 21 days in advance.	Registration can be done same-day with the RUSA permanent program.
Verification	GPS files, logs, photos, and officials required for record ratification	Electronic proof of passage or old school brevet cards
Recognition	Official state, national, and world records; European, North American, and World Champion; Race Results (WUCA Cup Series); Streaks (Year-Rounder)	Events completed (e.g. RUSA Cup); Distance completed (e.g. K-Hound); Streaks (e.g. R-12)
Support	Support crews are usually required for records & races; direct follow at night for safety	No follow vehicles; no crew support outside of controls
Community	Niche group of competitive ultracyclists and affiliated event organizers worldwide	Large national network of local randonneuring clubs
Record Keeping	Publicly searchable database of official world records & standings	Publicly searchable database of permanent/brevet results & lifetime mileage
Governing Body	WUCA is recognized as an accredited advisor to Guinness World Records for ultra-distance cycling.	RUSA (USA) under ACP (France) for international brevets



It was the same theme on repeat: no matter how much you plan, something unexpected is always waiting.

An aggressive farm dog turned one climb into an impromptu sprint on dead legs – just enough adrenaline to outrun him before he thought better of it. And somewhere in that delirious stretch, we rolled up on the actual Rosebud Motel from Schitt's Creek. Still ahead of schedule, we stopped for a quick photo and smashed some leftover pizza on the picnic bench. I got right back on the bike like it was the most normal thing in the world.

### The Finish

As we got closer to the Blue Water Bridge back in Point Edward, my speed started to pick up again. After riding into the wee hours three nights in a row, I started to feel the finish line pulling me in. A local photographer, who is also a fellow long-distance cyclist, found us on course to capture the moment.

For the first time the whole crew came together, joined by my parents and a couple of early-morning fishermen who probably wondered what the hell

we were doing out there with a camera and a finish banner hours before sunrise.

At 3:34 a.m. on Sunday morning, we completed the 1001-mile course after 69 hours and 33 minutes. It would be my fourth WUCA World Record circumnavigating the Great Lakes.

### The Invitation

But the real point is this: you don't stop riding when you set a record. You don't retire because you finished a Grand Randonnée. You keep going because Lake Superior is still out there. Maybe it's a longer loop. Maybe it's gravel. Maybe it's overseas. Maybe it's just helping a first-time rando, wondering if they're ready for their first 200k.

Whether you're chasing a world record, a new personal best, or just a long day on the bike... it's the challenge that ties us together. That's what I love about Chicago Randonneurs; we're still a young club, but we already have this culture of pushing past the limits we thought were set in stone. So come ride with us. Bring your doubts. Bring your big ideas. We'll be there to get you started and ask: *How far do you want to go?* 🚲

### So how does a WUCA record application work?

**Simple: ride the whole thing and prove you did it.**

WUCA verifies a wide range of records — from cross-state routes to full circumnavigations (like Lael Wilcox's ride around the world) and greatest distances within a set time frame, such as 24 hours, one week, or even a full year.

Records are also categorized by age group, gender, and bike type. Every attempt must follow strict rules; you submit your planned route for approval, ride every mile with no shortcuts, and keep the clock running even when you stop to eat, sleep, or fix a mechanical. Riders and crew sign waivers, and certified officials or witnesses maintain detailed time logs, verify your equipment (lights and reflectives), and confirm you stayed on course.

For supported road records, you must have a follow vehicle in direct-follow mode at night or in low visibility – no exceptions. The car stays right behind you with flashing amber lights, special signage, and headlights illuminating the road to keep you visible to every half-asleep driver at 2 a.m. The crew can hand you food and gear, but drafting is strictly forbidden; you must complete the course under your own power. For unsupported road records, the rules are similar to randonneuring, but no private assistance can be provided on course.

The entire ride is then verified with continuous GPS data, logs, and official testimony. Once it all checks out, your record is certified by WUCA and can even be submitted to Guinness for wider recognition.



The Rosebud Hotel from the TV series Schitt's Creek.

—PHOTO ANDREW DONSBACH

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# Bike Lust

BY IAN FLITCROFT



After twenty years my custom steel Dave Yates frame was retired when a fatigue crack was discovered in the seatstay. To replace it I turned to Alex Meade, who I'd met on a brevet in Tennessee and who had built frames for a few friends. I still wanted a lugged steel frameset with couplers for ease of travel, but decided to switch from long reach sidepull brakes to cantilever brakes and to use wider tires on 650b wheels. My Dave Yates had proved well-suited for rides such as PBP, but not totally satisfactory for touring with any kind of load. Adequate braking performance was the best I could hope for when touring in the mountains and I am now too old for the kind of thrills that come with poor braking performance on long descents. I specified mounting points for front and rear racks to make my new bike suited for both randonneuring and touring.

Alex provides a custom fit service as part of the process but we based the design on my Crust Lightning Bolt frame, with a slackened seat tube to provide some fore and aft adjustment for my Brooks saddle. The stays are 45cm long - this is a touring bike not a racing bike. A mix of oversized XL tubes

## THE BIKE: My Alex Meade



was Alex's preference, to ensure enough stiffness and guard against shimmy, especially when the bike is loaded.

Although I had found the 32 mm tires on my Dave Yates adequate, I'm happier with the greater comfort and security of 650b x 42 mm tires. I was not tempted by disc brakes, knowing it would complicate disassembly for air travel. Keeping simplicity in mind I also went for friction downtube

shifters from Rivendell.

I had hoped to use many of the parts from my Dave Yates but in the end only the saddle, rear rack and derailleurs made it across. Everything else either wouldn't work or was worn out. The crankset I was hoping to use was impossible to source from US distributors so Alex wrote to Sugino in Japan and had the company ship a crankset directly from the factory.



46/30 chainrings combined with an 11-34 nine speed cassette give me the range of low gears I need for multi-day brevets and touring.

I like shiny silver components and so chose the “polished” versions for the stem, wheel rims, brakes and seatpost. The frame has polished stainless dropouts that work with the connectorless version of the SON dynohub. No more fiddling with tiny

spade connectors. A Sinewave Reactor stem cap keeps my phone or bike computer charged, and the wiring for this and the front light is internal.

I’ve been very pleased with my new bike. The frame clearly reflects Alex’s precision engineering approach to building frames. After one year of ownership, two tours and two 1000K+ brevets I can say it rides just as I hoped it would. 🚲

## SPECIFICATIONS

**FRAMESET:** Columbus Life/Spirit XL. Seat and chain stays are Columbus Zona. Candenzia lugs

**FORK:** Columbus SL

**COLOR:** Ford Kona Blue

**HEADSET:** Chris King NoThreadset

**BOTTOM BRACKET:** Sugino

**FRONT DERAILLEUR:** FSA clamp on.

**REAR DERAILLEUR:** Shimano Ultegra 9 speed

**CRANK:** Sugino OX2-901D

**SHIFTERS:** Rivendell Silver friction

**CASSETTE:** SRAM 11-34

**CHAIN:** SRAM 9 speed

**BRAKES:** Paul Components Neo-Retro cantilever

**BRAKE LEVERS:** TRP

**HANDLEBARS:** Rene Herse Randonneur 42 cm

**STEM:** Paul Components Boxcar

**SEAT POST:** Paul Components Tall and Handsome

**SADDLE:** Brooks B17

**WHEELS:** Velocity A23 rims, Sapim CX-Ray spokes. Front 28, rear 32, 3 cross. Front hub: SON 28 SL

**TIRES:** Rene Herse Babyshoe Pass extralight

**TUBES:** Rene Herse TPU

**FENDERS:** Velo Orange snakeskin.

**LIGHTS:** SON Edelux II front, various dynamo/battery rear depending on need

**BOTTLE HOLDERS:** Salsa Nickless

## Put your bike in the spotlight!

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

# 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.

## Ultra Randonneur Award

NAME	CITY, STATE	APPROVED
Mimo DeMarco	Arlington, VA	5/23/25

## Mondial Award

NAME	CITY, STATE	APPROVED
Terri Boykins	Los Angeles, CA	5/9/25
Dana A Pacino [6]	Aledo, TX	5/12/25
Christopher C. Slocum [2]	Toms River, NJ	6/20/25
Gregory H Smith [2]	Richland Center, WI	6/2/25
Wei P Sun	San Diego, CA	6/9/25
Tibor Tamas [2]	Fort Worth, TX	6/15/25
Ted Timmons	Grand Rapids, MI	6/2/25

## P-12 Ultra Award

NAME	CITY, STATE	APPROVED
Mitch Ishihara	Issaquah, WA	6/10/25

## Ultra Flèche Award

NAME	CITY, STATE	APPROVED
William Watts	Indianapolis, IN	5/9/25



Kansas City UAF 200k: a memorable ride for many, including two who hit Ultra R12. From l. to r., Dwight Larsen, Keith Gates, Gary DelNero, Rod Geisert, Joe Edwards, Spencer Klaassen, Greg Pottorhoff, and Karen Winterhalter.

—PHOTO UNKNOWN

## RUSA American Explorer Award

NAME	CITY, STATE	TOTAL STATES	APPROVED
Adams, Charles J	Midland, TX	50	6/15/25
Beck, William A	Woodbine, MD	12	6/16/25
DeMarco, Mimo	Arlington, VA	18	5/23/25
Driscoll, Dan [1]	Arlington, TX	35	7/19/25
Haley, Joshua J	Canton, OH	11	6/24/25
Hallman, Dan	Washington, DC	10	6/23/25
Hayes, Martin	Pepperell, MA	10	6/11/25
Hazel, Geoffrey	Bellevue, WA	29	5/11/25
Huber, Kerin	Pasadena, CA	48	5/27/25
Lakwete, Angela	Auburn, AL	16	6/24/25
Lippincott, Jeff	Levittown, PA	20	5/11/25
Minner, Derek	Medford, NJ	14	6/15/25
Newman, Christine	Skillman, NJ	34	6/30/25
Peterson, Eric	Naperville, IL	26	5/25/25
Rada, Mark Z	Kokomo, IN	19	6/6/25
Reeder, W Thomas	Alexandria, VA	29	7/11/25
Williams, Kevin J	Carmichael, CA	11	7/6/25
Winer, Elly	Shaker Heights, OH	11	6/19/25
Wright, Pamela [1]	Fort Worth, TX	13	6/16/25

## 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:

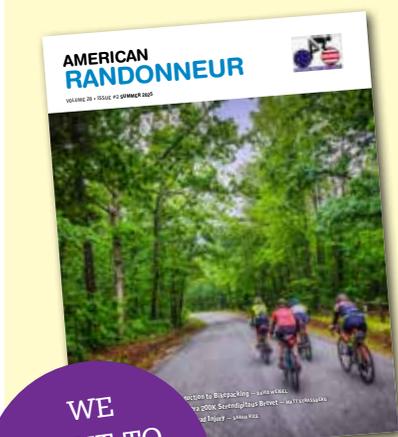
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**And, don't forget to renew your membership!**

Memberships run from January through December.

Renew online at:

[rusa.org/cgi-bin/memberrenew\\_GF.pl](https://rusa.org/cgi-bin/memberrenew_GF.pl)



WE WANT TO SHARE YOUR IDEAS

## Hey Readers!

We want to hear about your randonneuring tips or tricks!

**SUBMIT** a paragraph + maybe a picture.

**HAVE QUESTIONS?** Please contact Corinne at [editor@rusa.org](mailto:editor@rusa.org).

# RUSA Awards

## R-12 Ultra Award

NAME	CITY, STATE	APPROVED
Gary M DelNero	Leawood, KS	6/15/25
Joe Edwards	Glenwood, IA	6/10/25
Mark S Schenkel	Orlando, FL	3/4/25

## P-12 Award

NAME	CITY, STATE	APPROVED
Colin Allen	Longmont, CO	6/7/25
Randy T Anderson [6]	Peoria, IL	5/5/25
Wallace J Bigler [2]	Auburn, AL	7/4/25
Kary Conaway [4]	George, IA	6/24/25
Kary Conaway [5]	George, IA	6/24/25
Gary P Gottlieb [13]	Aledo, TX	6/8/25
Ross Gridley [12]	Pickerington, OH	5/7/25
Christopher M Gross	Washington, DC	6/14/25
Kerin Huber [11]	Pasadena, CA	7/6/25
Mitch Ishihara [10]	Issaquah, WA	6/10/25
Shaun Ivory [5]	Woodinville, WA	7/2/25
Jake Kassen	Medford, MA	6/2/25
Ken Knutson [12]	Tracy, CA	5/16/25
Richard Lentz [5]	Vineland, NJ	5/25/25
Brian R McGuire	Phoenix, AZ	5/3/25
Doug McLerran [4]	Aurora, IL	7/2/25
Josh Morse	Olympia, WA	7/14/25
Thai Nguyen [3]	Bothell, WA	7/6/25
Tohma Nguyen [3]	Bothell, WA	7/6/25
Jacek Nowakowski	San Diego, CA	6/1/25
Dana A Pacino [8]	Aledo, TX	6/8/25
Dawn M Piech [2]	Lombard, IL	5/19/25
Andreas Prandelli [4]	Forked River, NJ	6/16/25
James Pringle	Carlsbad, CA	7/18/25
Kalten Walter	New York, NY	5/13/25
Nathaniel Watson	Honeoye Falls, NY	6/27/25

## Rando Scout Award

NAME (25-49 unique routes)	CITY, STATE	APPROVED
Ambrogi, Bengé	Manchester, NH	5/4/25
Anderson, Robert Scott	Coto de Caza, CA	6/24/25
Brey, Alex	Portland, OR	6/16/25
Campbell, Mike P	Shakopee, MN	6/30/25
Christensen, Jerry	Eau Claire, WI	7/14/25
Evangelista, Michael H	Metuchen, NJ	5/4/25
Janess, Greg	Berkeley, CA	5/2/25
Kaiser, Kevin M	Augusta, GA	6/23/25
Kunsak, Steven	Coraopolis, PA	4/21/25
Monderer, R	Johnson City, TN	5/8/25
Rodgers, Tom	Arlington, TX	7/6/25
Winer, Elly	Shaker Heights, OH	6/9/25

NAME (50-74 unique routes)	CITY, STATE	APPROVED
Gardes, Yonnel	Bellevue, WA	5/16/25
Gross, Christopher M	Washington, DC	5/21/25
Nygaard VI, Jonas M	Minneapolis, MN	5/11/25
Prandelli, Andreas	Forked River, NJ	6/15/25
Rodeghier, Richard A	Ivins, UT	5/12/25
Sarkas, Ioannis	San Carlos, CA	5/27/25
Williams, Kevin J	Carmichael, CA	5/2/25

NAME (75-99 unique routes)	CITY, STATE	APPROVED
FHansen, Jason L	Seattle, WA	5/11/25
Ray, Joseph	Bernardsville, NJ	6/23/25

NAME (100-124 unique routes)	CITY, STATE	APPROVED
Donaldson, Paul H	Richmond, VA	6/4/25
Feinberg, Brian K	Cupertino, CA	6/24/25
Russell, Amy L	Waco, TX	7/6/25

NAME (125+ unique routes)	CITY, STATE	APPROVED
Kimball, Hugh	Seattle, WA	6/30/25

# RUSA Awards

## Randonneur 5000 Award

<u>NAME</u>	<u>CITY, STATE</u>	<u>APPROVED</u>
Phil Fox II [2]	Chicago, IL	5/27/25
Chuck Judy	Chicago, IL	5/9/25
Kerry Moody	Dumont, NJ	7/7/25

## RUSA Rouler Award

<u>NAME</u>	<u>CITY, STATE</u>	<u>APPROVED</u>
Joshua Crixell [5]	Temple, TX	6/8/25
Gary Kanaby [5]	Salado, TX	6/8/25
Leo K Lillard	Chicago, IL	6/9/25
Christopher C Ricker	Chicago, IL	6/9/25

## RUSA Cup Award

<u>NAME</u>	<u>CITY, STATE</u>	<u>APPROVED</u>
Dan Driscoll [19]	Arlington, TX	5/11/25
Christopher M Gross [2]	Washington, DC	5/18/25
Doug McLerran [3]	Aurora, IL	6/26/25
Jacek Nowakowski	San Diego, CA	5/9/25
Mark Z Rada	Kokomo, IN	5/18/25
Amy L Russell [6]	Waco, TX	7/7/25

## Galaxy Award

<u>NAME</u>	<u>CITY, STATE</u>	<u>APPROVED</u>
John Jurczynski	Box Elder, SD	5/13/25

## Randonneur 10000 Award

<u>NAME</u>	<u>CITY, STATE</u>	<u>APPROVED</u>
Doug McLerran [2]	Aurora, IL	5/11/25
Noah Swartz	Oakland, CA	6/7/25
Mark Thomas [4]	Kirkland, WA	5/13/25

## RUSA Coast-to-Coast Award

<u>NAME</u>	<u>CITY, STATE</u>	<u>APPROVED</u>
Doug McLerran	Aurora, IL	6/26/25
Tommy S Southwood	Westfield, IN	6/27/25

## R-12 Award

<u>NAME</u>	<u>CITY, STATE</u>	<u>APPROVED</u>
Nicole Aptekar [2]	Brooklyn, NY	6/7/25
Jeffrey S Cannon [6]	Los Angeles, CA	6/21/25
Gary M DeNero [10]	Leawood, KS	6/15/25
Dan Driscoll [21]	Arlington, TX	6/21/25
Joe Edwards [10]	Glenwood, IA	6/9/25
Gary P Gottlieb [20]	Aledo, TX	6/8/25
Joshua J Haley [8]	Canton, OH	5/5/25
Spencer Klaassen [19]	Saint Joseph, MO	6/9/25
Christopher Maglieri [12]	Weatogue, CT	6/13/25
L John Mangin [6]	Loveland, CO	6/14/25
Richard G McCaw [16]	San Jose, CA	5/6/25
Doug McLerran [3]	Aurora, IL	5/6/25
Takahiro Noguchi [3]	Berkeley, CA	7/14/25
Jerry Riccardi [5]	Prairie Village, KS	5/1/25
Kalten Walter [2]	New York, NY	6/5/25
Nathaniel Watson	Honeoye Falls, NY	6/27/25
Pamela Wright [19]	Fort Worth, TX	6/22/25

# Parting Shots

Pete Dusel riding Joe's Niagra  
400k shortly after sunrise.

—PHOTO MIKE FERRIGNO



Fall colors pop in the background  
in New Hampshire.

—PHOTO BRAD TANNER



Tour memorabilia in local  
bike shop La Bicicletta in  
Le Bourg d'oisans, France.

—PHOTO DREW CARLSON



Rob Hawks, Jasmine Wu,  
and Bill Brier Jr. atop  
the Tourmalet, used in this  
year's Tour de France.

—PHOTO JASMINE WU

# *SON Ladelux*



In Stock!

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 Edelix II but the standard beam is brighter at 150 lux. The high beam is controlled by the handlebar mounted switch, which also incorporates the USB-C port. The Ladelux is now in stock at Peter White Cycles.

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

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