

Albuquerque, New Mexico to Saint Augustine, Florida

Day 1, Friday, May 10, 1991

On May 10, 1991 at 4:00 PM I left my home in Albuquerque with a fully loaded bicycle for Saint Augustine, Florida. This is my final summer before graduating from electrical engineering collage at UNM. I finished spring semester at UNM two days before departing. At the completion of this trip, I had cycled from Alaska to Florida in three summers (Albuquerque -> Durango/ Durango -> Alaska and now Albuquerque -> Florida). The first day I had a late start and only made it to the other side of the Sandia Mountains. I slept within barking range (A dog was barking as I set up camp and again in the morning when I was packing up. I never saw the dog) of a house near Chilili, New Mexico. (Daily bike miles 29 miles; Total Miles 29)

Day 2, Saturday, May 11, 1991

The following day was very windy. I saw several dead snakes and dried salt beds. While listening to the radio the emergency broadcast system interrupted to warn the public of tornadoes in the area. That night (not far from where I was) a house in the panhandle of Texas was destroyed by a tornado. The people survived by getting down in their basement (I heard this news on my radio the next day). I slept on the Koontz ranch (in a field next to the road) that is about 13 miles west of Fort Summer, New Mexico. (Daily bike miles 138.9 miles; Total Miles 167.9)

Day 3, Sunday, May 12, 1991

In the morning, I rode through the town, Fort Summer, where Billy The Kid was shot and killed by Sheriff Garrett in 1881. One can even see Billy the Kid's grave near this town. I arrived in Texas at 2:33 PM, 252.9 miles from my home in Albuquerque. Between the flat farmland and the lack of trees, I had a tough time finding a place to camp. Two times I thought I found a place to camp and then I heard dogs barking. At about 11:00 PM near Tulia, Texas I found a truck stop and camp near the parking lot. That day I traveled more miles than any other single bike touring day in my life, I covered 160.9 miles. (Daily bike miles 160.9 miles; Total Miles 328.8)

Day 4, Monday, May 13, 1991

At Quitaque, Texas I finally got away from the flat farmland and came to a hill. At a store I stopped for Gatorade and found myself sitting next to a tarantula. Outside town a man in a Texas highway maintenance truck stopped me to see if I was the same man that passed through town on a bike two years previously (of course not). We talked for a while and he gave me a beer. All the roads in Texas are great for cycling, they have car length shoulders and not very much traffic. Listening to the radio in Childress, Texas the weatherman kept warning that severe thundershowers were in the area. There were thundershowers all around but none on me. I slept half the night in a

baseball dugout and the other half on a picnic table at the park. I washed up at a water hydrant (spigot) at the park. (Daily bike miles 107.5 miles; Total Miles 436.3)

Day 5, Tuesday, May 14, 1991

I made it to Oklahoma at 12:10 PM, 466.6 miles from my house on May 14, 1991. I meet some friendly people in Oklahoma. I asked one man if there was a store in the nearby town, which sold bike tubes and he replied that he might have an old tube that I could have free. He searched his rat-infested old truck in his junky backyard, but could not find the tube. So, I ended up buying a tube in town at the store the man told me about. I slept under a bridge about 30 miles west of Layton, Oklahoma. That night a tornado destroyed a couple of mobile homes about 80 miles north in Tulsa, Oklahoma. (Daily bike miles 90.1 miles; Total Miles 526.4)

Day 6, Wednesday, May 15, 1991

In the morning, it was very humid, it actual felt like a fine rain under the bridge. East of Layton, I finally came to some nice wooded areas with oak trees, small rolling hills, turtles and armadillos. That night was the first night that I did not see thunder showers in the horizon (I still had not been rained on). When it started getting dark, I saw several fire flies and had a tough time finding a place to camp. First spot had dogs in barking distance and then I decided to ask people if I could camp on their land. No one would let me sleep on their land even the man at the truck stop said no. I ended up sleeping at the truck stop anyway in a grassy area in the corner away from the trucks a couple of miles south of Pauls Valley, Oklahoma near highway 35. (Daily bike miles 110.9 miles; Total Miles 637.3)

Day 7, Thursday, May 16, 1991

A police officer stopped me for a routine ID verification in Paul's Valley, Oklahoma. This is the first time in my career as a long-distance cyclist that this had happened, maybe I was pulled over in relation to the dead bodies that were found in a barn near Paul's Valley (according to the next day's headlines). Nice scenery creeks, lakes, rolling hills and large oak trees. That night I slept in the woods about 4 miles west of McAlester, Oklahoma near someone's house (I saw their car headlights and heard their dog barking). (Daily bike miles 114.2 miles; Total Miles 751.5)

Day 8, Friday, May 17, 1991

The following day started with rolling hills and then west of Talihina, Oklahoma the mountains started. I stopped at the campground at the top of the foothills where I meet some people on motorcycles. These guys gave me a beer and invited me to stay for their goat roast party. They were expected on having more than 200 people arrive on motorcycles. I left but kept thinking that I should have stayed. The guys on the motorcycles told me that the road was very steep for the next 53 miles. A few miles up the road I came to the scenic route to Arkansas. A sign at the base of the mountain

said, "Trucks Warning; grades of 13% next 21 miles". The road had some tough up hills and great down hills (I coasted down one hill at 43 MPH). It was a beautiful ride along the top ridge of the mountain. At one spot I saw a mountain lion or maybe it was a bobcat running into the woods. That night I camped in the forest near the top of the mountain. (Daily bike miles 79.5 miles; Total Miles 831.0)

Day 9, Saturday, May 18, 1991

At 8:50 AM on May 18, 1991, 841.0 miles from my home in Albuquerque, New Mexico I made it to Arkansas. I was rained on for the first time of the trip on that day coming down from the mountains. That night I stayed in the Shamrock Hotel in Hot Springs, Arkansas. Across the street from the motel, I went to the "Bottoms Up Topless Entertainment Club". The club cost \$5.00 to enter and did not serve alcohol, but you could bring in your own liquor. The bar had about 5 men drinking and two women dancers (topless entertainers). It seemed really strange when an ugly overweight man came into the bar both women sat in his lap and started kissing him. I decided it was time to go back to the motel and get some sleep. (Daily bike miles 108.6 miles; Total Miles 939.6)

Day 10, Sunday, May 19, 1991

In the morning, I visited Hot Springs National Park and looked in the windows of all the abandoned hot spring motels. The National Park consists of a row of old closed down mineral bath/motels on a street in Hot Springs, Arkansas. When I was riding through lower Arkansas I went through miles of flat, flooded land (I thought it was swamp land, but apparently the water was due to several days of heavy rain). One farm that I passed I saw a man canoeing from his front door to the mobile home next door. This part of the country seems eerie; strange noises, thick vines, very moist and I even saw a couple of deer darting through the jungle. I call the forest there a jungle, because it was a lot thicker than the New Mexico forest. Most of the land near Princeton, Arkansas is leased to various hunting clubs. In Fordyce, Arkansas I stopped at a park to replace broken spokes and found that I also had a broken my rear axle (no big deal in Canada I rode 1000 miles on a broken axle). At the park a woman was at the playground with her kids. When she saw me, she went over to her car and stared at me for about a half-hour, it appeared that she was afraid of me. Then three men pulled up in a truck and she pointed at me. They all looked at me for a few minutes and then started talking to the lady. After a while they left, I finished fixing my bike and started biking again. The whole park situation seemed a little scary. That night I camped in the flood lands east of Fordyce. I heard lots of strange noises; I guess most of the noises were different kinds of frogs and bugs. (Daily bike miles 87.5 miles; Total Miles 1027.1)

Day 11, Monday, May 20, 1991

The ride through southern Arkansas was tough, no shoulder and lots of horn happy

logging truckers. I stopped in one town where a man asked me where I was headed. When I told him how much I hated all the truck traffic he told me a story. The man said, "One time a trucker kept on driving up to him very fast and then slowing down right on his tail. At first, he thought he was trying to pass him, but when he realized that the trucker was just playing games, he grabbed his shot gun and pointed it out the rear window. Then the trucker locked up his brakes and came to a complete stop". That is one way to stop a trucker. When I arrived at the Mississippi River, I found that I could not safely cross the river on my bike. I attempted to cross on a 1-foot cement sidewalk while pulling myself along the bridge with the handrail and kicking with one foot. I made it about 100 feet in a half-hour and decided it was too crazy (lots of traffic and no room). I went back to the bottom of the bridge and hitched a ride across the Mississippi River. This was very disappointing, because now I have cycled from Alaska to Florida minus the Mississippi River. Maybe someday I can go back and ride across the bridge at 3:00 AM. That night I stayed in the Alamatt Motel in Greenville, Mississippi, so I could get new spokes and an axle at a bike shop in the morning. (Daily bike miles 97.8 miles; Total Miles 1124.9)

Day 12, Tuesday, May 21, 1991

In the morning, I had my bike fixed and mailed my sleeping bag (it is too hot for a sleeping bag in the south) and other extra gear home. I did not notice many bicyclists in Greenville and heard one woman whisper to her child look at the bike and at the grocery store an elderly woman said to me that it was a good thing I was locking my bike. I did not get out of Greenville until about 11:00 AM and found that riding in Mississippi was very tough (no shoulder and fast-moving honkies). I stopped for lunch at a very nice State Park, Leroy Percy State Park. This park had a swamp, mossy trees and an alligator pit. In a small town, Anguilla, Mississippi several young school children pointed and laughed at me. In another small town a couple of men cruised past me several times and slowed down and looked at my bike each time they passed. It seemed very scary and I was afraid of being mugged or something. I arrived in Yazoo City about 10:00 PM and found the streets deserted in the downtown area. Away from downtown I saw several people walking the streets. That night I slept behind a church in Yazoo City, Mississippi. (Daily bike miles 89.4 miles; Total Miles 1214.3)

Day 13, Wednesday, May 22, 1991

The ride across Ross Barnett Reservoir Bridge was a very nice bridge ride over the middle of the lake. I stopped in a store on highway 35 on the way to Raleigh, Mississippi a man told me that highway 35 was the toughest driving road in the country and that school bus drivers train on that road. He may have been correct high-speed traffic, hills, lots of truckers and no shoulder. About 9 miles before arriving in Raleigh two women invited me into their house for a coke. They told me that their 2-

bedroom home rented for \$100.00 a month (in Albuquerque it would have cost about \$400.00 a month) and that they could have purchased the home on an acre lot for \$6,500 (about \$40,000 in Albuquerque). They said that was the typical price in the state of Mississippi. When a guy showed up at their house with magic mushrooms, I decided it was time for me to leave. Things are very inexpensive in Mississippi, I bought 2 bags of groceries for \$5.00. I wanted to camp legally that night, so I asked people if I could pitch a tent on their land, everyone said no. I ended up sleeping under a bridge between Raleigh and Bay Springs, Mississippi. (Daily bike miles 108.6 miles; Total Miles 1322.9)

Day 14, Thursday, May 23, 1991

In a town, Laurel, Mississippi, I took a short cut and rode around for an hour in a large circle. That day it rained a lot and there was a lot of heavy truck traffic which made for a tough day of riding. There was one good stretch of four-lane highway for about 15 miles. I arrived in Alabama at about 5:30 PM. I felt a little more at home here, because most of the people were white. Just before setting up camp, I crossed the Tombigbee River. This was a very wide, motionless river with a large tugboat docked on one side (probably for logging). That night, I camped near a locked fence in the lush forest between Coffeeville and Grove Hill, Alabama. (Daily bike miles 110.7 miles; Total Miles 1433.6)

Day 15, Friday, May 24, 1991

The ride to Grove Hill was beautiful rolling hills, tall trees, but the trucker traffic was a little on the heavy side. I crossed the Alabama River it did not seem as wide as the Tombigbee River. As I was riding along the highway a man (jerk) threw a bottle out the window of his car that broke about 12" from my foot. Later in the day a man stopped on the side of the road and handed me a beer and a ginger ale as I passed him on the road. It was like when a marathon runner is handed water as he goes past a rest stop. Finally came one of the most exciting moments of my life.

It went like this: 5 miles, 4 miles, 3 miles, 2 miles, 1 mile (I was watching the green mile markers on the highway, then my attention changed to my bike odometer), .8 miles, .5 miles (A LARGE DOG STARTED CHASING ME), .1 miles, and then finally I made it to the Florida state line. I was 1525.8 miles from my house in Albuquerque. On highway 4 it rained so hard that the visibility was only about 50 feet and the cars kept honking at me. I found a dirt road in Blackwater River State Forest and a little off the road I set up my plastic cover between two trees as it rained like hell. I set my tent up under the plastic cover and went to sleep for the night. (Daily bike miles 105.6 miles; Total Miles 1539.2)

Day 16, Saturday, May 25, 1991

Friday of memorial weekend was not a good day to ride to Panama City, Florida. It seemed like everyone in Alabama was in a hurry to get to the beach and there were

heavy rain flurries all day. The roads have no shoulder and I found myself riding in the grass on the side of the road for about half the time. As I went through a road construction area, I was trying to stay on the white line next to the side of the road and fell into the ditch and broke 6 spokes. I repaired my bike on the spot in about a half-hour. I arrived in Panama City, Florida at about 9:30 PM and stopped at the circle K for a microwave burrito. At the store a fellow asked me where I was coming from and when I told him New Mexico He replied, "Oh my lord boy that is a long way, what are you crazy." That is a statement I will probably always remember. The lady in the store told me that all the motels in the town were full. When I came to the first motel in town it had vacancies. I really wanted to get a shower and sleep inside, so I quickly got the very expensive, \$50.00 per night room. (Daily bike miles 112.6 miles; Total Miles 1651.8)

Day 17, Sunday, May 26, 1991

I started the day with a swim in the Gulf of Mexico at Panama City Beach. Then I returned to the motel and packed up to continue my venture. In town, a man stopped me and told me that he saw me the previous night. He said, "It looked like you spent half the time off the road." I was riding on the grass shoulder when I saw car lights coming. I found that it was safer to bike in the grassy ditch, than on the shoulder-less highway. I probably spent about 50 percent of the time in the ditch. Luckily the riding in this part of Florida was much better. In Port St. Joe I saw some ladies hunting in the water (Shrimp or clams?). That night, I slept on a telephone pole service road about 5 miles west of Apalachicola, Florida. It was very hot and humid and I got several mosquito bites. I was in my tenting sweating and could not sleep until after midnight. It was a typical night in Florida. (Daily bike miles 72.7 miles; Total Miles 1724.5)

Day 18, Monday, May 27, 1991

The next day started by crossing a long bridge that had an excellent shoulder for riding. I was riding across another bridge when it started raining like crazy (50-foot visibility). On the other side of the bridge, I stopped for a couple of microwave hamburgers and a man with a bike on his car came over and told me how he once rode from New York City to Seattle, Washington. He gave me his address and said if I stopped in Tallahassee, Florida that I could stay at his house (I never went). On my way down a small dirt road, I saw two armadillos. I camped near this road which was about 10 miles west of Perry, Florida. (Daily bike miles 103.3 miles; Total Miles 1827.8)

Day 19, Tuesday, May 28, 1991

There was a nice park in Mayo, Florida where several youngsters played. One young girl said that her friend was in love with me. As I was leaving the town of Mayo, I saw a cyclist with a loaded down bike. He was the only long-distance cyclist that I saw on this trip. He was from England and flew into Jacksonville, Florida two days

earlier. He was riding to San Diego, California. In Bradford, Florida I went snorkeling in a spring near a park. The visibility was close to zero due to recent heavy rains. I child at the park told me to give him a call when I returned to Albuquerque to make sure I made it safely (the number was a 1-800 number, I think the kid was joking). All day I was looking for some spokes to replace the 3 broken ones that I had (none in Perry; wrong size spokes in Mayo; arrived too late in Lake City). It was a very hot, humid 97-degree Fahrenheit day. That night I slept at Osceola National Forest next to Olustee Battlefield. (Daily bike miles 101.6 miles; Total Miles 1929.4)

Day 20, Wednesday, May 29, 1991

It took about 7 hours to ride from Jacksonville City limits to Neptune beach. I had a tough time finding a bike shop in Jacksonville for spokes. When I finally made it to the Atlantic Ocean, I had covered 2003.8 miles since I left my house in Albuquerque. I went for an excellent swim in the ocean and then proceeded by riding my bike on the sandy beach about 4 miles to Jacksonville Beach. I then rode along highway 203, which is a lovely highway that either follows the beaches or is near the beaches. The beaches here were mostly deserted, white sandy beaches on the other side of a hill. One beach on the way to South Ponte Vedra Beach had all men that seemed to be looking at me. I decided to get out of there, because I thought maybe it was a gay beach. I arrived at my final destination, St. Augustine, at about 9:30 PM and got a room for 2 nights at the local youth hostel for \$13.00 per night. I wished that I had about another week so that I could ride to Key West, Florida. (Daily bike miles 107.3 miles; Total Miles 2036.7)

Day 21, Thursday, May 30, 1991

I spent a whole day in St. Augustine at the tourist attractions. I went to the Old Fort, the Fountain of Youth, Lightner Museum, Flagler College and the country's oldest wooden schoolhouse. That night, I rented a car and ended my cycling portion of my journey at 2055.5 miles from my home in Albuquerque, New Mexico. (Daily bike miles 18.8 miles; Total Miles 2055.5)

Day 22, Friday, May 31, 1991

In the morning, I drove along beaches for about 150 miles, then I continued south on highway 95 to my Cousin Mary's house in Plantation, Florida. That night I ate homemade spaghetti at my cousin Nonie's house. (Daily bike miles 0 miles; Total Miles 2055.5)

Day 23, Saturday, June 1, 1991

I boxed up my bike and then went snorkeling at Fort Lauderdale Beach. I went away from the shore checking out the fish. The life guard and my cousins were trying to get me to come back closer to shore, but since my head was in the water, I could not hear them yelling at me. I looked up and saw my cousin waving me to come back to shore.

I went back to the shore as the life guard came out to get me. He was a little anger because he had to get in the cold water to rescue me. I thought the water was warm and did not know why he was mad. My cousins explained that I was from New Mexico and then the life calmed down. Cousin Mary and Uncle Joe spent most of the day in the hospital with my grandparents. The previous day to my arrival both of my grandparents went into the hospital and my grandmother was having hip surgery. That night Uncle Joe cooked steak dinner and then I watched Jacob's Ladder at my cousin Mary's house. (Daily bike miles 0 miles; Total Miles 2055.5)

Day 24, Sunday, June 2, 1991

In the morning, I loaded my rental car and drove to Jacksonville for my flight home. All flights to Dallas, Texas were being delayed by 2 hours due to rain in Dallas. Then it started raining in Jacksonville and we taxied on the runway for about an hour using up fuel. When we got to the skies of Dallas the rain was very heavy and you could see lots of lightning out the window of the plane. We could not land in Dallas and ended up going to Houston, Texas to refuel. When we returned to Dallas all the connecting flights were gone and I ended up sleeping on the floor at the airport. (Daily bike miles 0 miles; Total Miles 2055.5)

Day 25, Monday, June 3, 1991

I arrived back in Albuquerque a day late without my luggage and missed the first day of summer school. I ended up taking a city bus from the airport to work at the VA hospital. It was hard to work, since I was so tired! (Daily bike miles 0 miles; Total Miles 2055.5)

This was probably my least enjoyable bike tour yet. The roads were too narrow, it was too hot and humid, and a lot of the people made me nervous. But yet one of the most awarding feelings in my life was to know that I have ridden my bike from coast to coast (actually most of the way from Alaska to Florida in 3 summers). The only bummer is that in all these miles I had to get one ride over the Mississippi River. This trip started on May 10, 1991 and ended on June 3, 1991 after riding 2055.5 miles and visiting with relatives in Florida.