

## **Biking Argentina 1997/1998**

### **Day 0, Saturday, December 6, 1997**

On Saturday, December 6, 1997 my roommate took me to the airport with my bike and bike gear. As I was waiting at the airport for my flight to Buenos Aries, Argentina, I started reading about the distance from my round-trip flight (Buenos Aries) to my one-way flight to Ushuaia. The original plan was to bike from Ushuaia to Buenos Aries and I had already bought my plane tickets. But as I was reading, I found the most direct route was a little over 2000 miles. That route would not be through the Andes, which was important to me and this meant that I needed to figure out how to get from point A to B when I arrived in Ushuaia. I was never much into planning out details, but this time I felt I really out did myself. I should have bought a second plane ticket, maybe Rio Grande to El Calafate. I was also still trying to learn Spanish as I was waiting for my plane. I was trying to learn how to ask for a plane ticket. My first flight was from Detroit to Dallas, then the long flight was from Dallas to Buenos Aries, Argentina. (Start total bike miles 5231.5)

### **Day 1, Sunday, December 7, 1997**

I arrived in Buenos Aries and took a ride from the first ride service man (a man in a normal car), this guy helped me get out of the airport (it was very crowded). He ended out charging an outrageous \$45.00 to my motel in town. As we were driving, I had my first opportunity to practice trying to speak Spanish to a Spanish speaking person. It seemed difficult to communicate. I stayed at the Best Western near the main downtown area of Buenos Aries, it was a very expensive \$96/ night (\$79 + 21% tax). According to the sign in the room it was supposed to be \$108/ night + 21% tax. The room was small with a small TV. I believe that 3 of the TV stations were from the US and were in English with Spanish captions. The elevator was very small too, the man at the desk ended up taking my bike and box of equipment up the elevator separately from when we went up to the room. I assembled my bike in the room and I could not fit it into the elevator, so I carried it down 9 flights of stairs. I started biking around town and was not paying attention to where I was going, I do that all the time. I think that my sense of direction is really good, but yet about 30% of the time I am wrong and get lost. Well, I got lost in Buenos Aires, at one point I stopped to see if I could figure out where I was on my little poor quality map (small map in my lonely Planet book, not many roads). As I was looking at my map, a guy came up and I thought he was going to help me find my way back to downtown. He would not point in a direction and I think he was asking for money to get me back to my car. I told him later and took off. After a while, I realized I was just getting more lost and stopped at a gas station to ask for directions and they ended up helping a lot. The map I had did not show the street that I was on, I was actually on the outskirts of Buenos Aries. At about 7:45 PM I finally found my Motel and then biked to the port. Then I brought my

bike back to my room (up 9 flights of stairs) and repacked it in the bike box. I watched a little TV and then went into town at about 11 PM. There were a lot of people walking around town. (Bike miles 40.2; total miles 5271.7)

## **Day 2, Monday, December 8, 1997**

In the morning, I tried to take a hot shower and found out that there was no hot water, so I took a cold shower. After my cold shower, I took a close look at the funny thing in the kitchen, the thing said something about lighting it for hot water (I think that is what it said, I found some of the words in my Spanish-English dictionary). It seems like for such an expensive motel, that they could have at least lit the hot water heater. I also found out that the water knobs were labeled F = cold (frio) and C = hot (caliente). I then walked around town and then to a park near the capital buildings. Next, I went back to the motel and packed my gear. The man at the motel was asking me for my credit card again and asking if I only stayed for one night. He did not seem very organized. I kept thinking that he might have charged me for 2 nights, but it ended out that he only charged me for one night. The man at the motel called me a cab and told me it would be \$11 to the airport. The guy that came to pick me up had a very small car and they could not figure out how to get my bike in it. I could see that it would fit, if they rolled down the windows and tried to tell them, but they did not understand me. It took them a long time to figure out how to get my bike in the car. When they finally got the bike in the car, the passenger seat was tilted forward (not very comfortable for me) and one of the windows was rolled down. I think if they would have rolled both back windows down, they could have saved a lot of time and I could have ridden more comfortably. The guy ended up charging an extra \$1, for the bike. When I was waiting for my plane, I went walking along the Atlantic Ocean and stopped at a gas station to get something to eat. I gave the girl a US dollar and she explained that she only excepted Pesos. This was the first place that I went to that did not except dollars. Earlier I went to an ATM and found that you could get either dollars or Pesos and I selected to withdraw 100 Pesos and the machine gave me a 100 Paso bill (that is equal to a \$100 bill). I tried to get smaller bills at the airport, but could not get anyone to change or accept the 100 Paso bill. I was hungry, but could not buy anything to eat. I then Flew to Ushuaia and found an ATM at the Ushuaia airport. The ATM had a Cirrus link and I was able to get some smaller bills, I withdrew 90 Pesos (one 50 and four 10s). I did not leave the airport until a little after 10 PM (it arrived in Ushuaia around 9:30 PM). I left the box that my bike was packed in at the airport (it was the same box that I bought in Anchorage in July a year earlier). I biked to town to get some food. I felt a little scared (I was not adapted to South America yet!). I bought some sandwiches, candies and sodas (it seemed very expensive \$10+). I then biked towards the National Park (Tierra Del Fuego) and it started getting dark. At one point, I hid from a slow-moving car and then decide to go

into the woods near a sign to camp. A little after setting up camp a car stopped and the people in the car got out and made noise for about 30 minutes. It sounded like they were trying to chop down the sign (in the morning the sign was still there, I do not know what they were doing). (Day miles 11.4; total bike miles 5283.1)

### **Day 3, Tuesday, December 9, 1997**

I woke up at 4:30 AM and tried to go back to sleep. I then biked to the first campground at the Tierra Del Fuego National Park. I took a picture of the Beagle Channel. The entrance to the park was only about 100 meters from where I camped and I was also camped right near a Polica Camera sign. The park was not opened until 8 AM, so I was able to get in for free. Then I rode into Ushuaia and started looking for a grocery store. A man that was cleaning the streets said something to me. I replied that I did not speak much Spanish (no Hablo mucho Espanol). Then I asked him if there was a grocery store nearby (donde est un supermercado). I only knew a few Spanish expressions and did not understand the direction he gave me. He was very friendly and tried very hard to explain things, he repeated his explanation and I tried to go on what he said. He also told me that the store was not opened until 9 AM (it was only 8 AM). Then he gave me direction to another place and said something about 1 Paso. My guess is he was telling me where I could go until the store opened. I then look for the store and could not find it. Next, I looked in my Lonely Planet book and found a map to the local tourist office. The book said that there are often people at the tourist office that speak English. I then went to the tourist office and there was a girl that understood very little English. I was able to get a map and have the girl circle the 2 local grocery stores. It did not seem like the girl liked speaking in English. I went to one of the grocery stores and it did not open until 10 AM and a man in a taxi came over to me and tried to communicate. We had a lot of difficulty and I am not sure what he was saying. I went to the other store and it was open. I bought a lot of groceries and then left town. I think I already had 20 miles on my bike before I left town. The road was paved, then dirt, then paved, then dirt for a long way and it became paved again a little before the town of Tolhuin. I biked about 10 miles on the paved road and then found a spot with a big ditch on the side of the road. I took my bike into the ditch and pitched my tent to camp for the night. (Day miles 93.09/ total bike miles 5376.2)

### **Day 4, Wednesday, December 10, 1997**

I sleep very well and did not wake up until 8:30 AM to immediately start biking. I saw a fox, some cool birds and a couple of llamas. I meet 2 bikers from Switzerland that biked through Europe then went to Alaska and where on their way to Ushuaia. After we departed, I started thinking that maybe they were biking around the world the long way (north to south ends). A little before I arrived in Rio Grande it started lightly raining and I felt depressed. I thought about going to the airport to get a little closer to

Buenos Aires (I was still a little concerned about making it back to Buenos Aires in time for my flight home, it was too far to ride in the amount of time that I had). When I arrived in Rio Grande a family of 4 drove up and the father asked me questions about my biking trip (We sort of communicated he spoke mostly Spanish and me mostly English). I asked him where the grocery stores were and he gave me directions. When I was close to where he said the store was, I asked a second person where the store was and he pointed to the store. At the store I had to tell the girl at the register that I did not speak much Spanish and I also asked if she accepted dollars. When I handed the girl a \$20 bill, she had to call her supervisor to approve the bill. I continued biking and met a biker from Germany. This guy had met the people from Switzerland that I met earlier and he told me that he had biked from Santiago, Chile. He said he had been biking for the past 2.5 months and covered 3000 km (that did not sound like a lot to me). He commented on how tough the roads were and how difficult it was to find camping in Patagonia. He said that he had been snowed on in the Andes and that he had lots of head winds. He was happy to almost be done with his ride. He was hoping to get home for Christmas, but said that his flight was not until January. He also told me that he had called the airline to see if he could change his flight, but they said that there were no seats available on flight before his flight home. I was planning on camping before the border to Chile, but was unable to find a camping spot. As I was leaving Argentina a small dog was biting the back of my tennis shoe. At the Argentina border the border patrol asked me questions, stamped my passport and the guard said something about money. I handed him my Spanish-English dictionary (after telling him I did not understand) and he could not find the word that he was looking for, then another one of the border patrols said something and they decided to let me go to Chile. A little way down the road there were sheep all over the road and I noticed a diesel truck had to honk its way through a herd of sheep. About 5 more miles and I came to the border to get into Chile (the first border was to leave Argentina). At this border a big man pointed in the direction to go through customs. I went to station 1 and got my stamp. Then I went out to get on my bike and the big guy stopped me. He then explained (it took me a while to understand what he wanted) that I needed to get stamps at station 2, 3 and 4 also. Every station was confusing, the guy from station number one helped me get through the other stations. I noticed a couple of backpacks inside the border patrol room (this became significant the next day, Israel hitchhikers). After station 4, I was pointed to the cashier, I could not figure out what she was saying. I think she wanted to know what type of vehicle I was driving (there were taxes to drive in Chile, different prices for car, and trucks). After a bit she pointed me to the big guy and he took me outside to welcome me to Chile. I did not need to pay any of the road tax. It was a nice calm night (I believe it is not common to be without wind, it was windy earlier in the day) and I continued to bike. After about 12 miles I found a spot to camp, there were no trees for miles, I happened to find a ditch on the side of the road where I could hide from the traffic. It was a nice night

with a full moon and it started getting a little cold when the sun went down. (Day miles 124.96; total bike miles 5501.2)

### **Day 5, Thursday, December 11, 1997**

It was calm all night and then in the morning it got a little windy and started lightly raining. Since Tierra del Fuego has a reputation for high winds, I decided to get up immediately and start riding (before the wind got worse). I ended up getting on the road at 5:30 AM. For the first 60 miles I had light rain and some head winds. About 30 miles into the ride, I started getting depressed and stopped to eat. While I was stopped a couple of young people (she was 18 and he was 20) from Ushuaia stopped to talk and ended up introducing me to a tea, called Yerba mate. This is a social drink that people all over Argentina drink with their friends. The guy spoke some English and with my some Spanish we were able to find out information about each other like; our ages, where we were headed, his vacation plan and he suggested places that I should go. We also exchanged addresses. After that I started feeling less depressed and it helped me feel more comfortable with being in South America. A little farther down the road I saw a couple of hitchhikers on the side of the road. I decided to go over to them and see if they spoke any English. One of the guys spoke good English and he told me that they were from Israel. While I was talking to the guys a truck stopped and gave them a ride. The next 20 miles I had good tail winds. I saw one fox and about 6 wild Llama (also some domestic Llamas). As I was waiting for the boat to cross the Straights of Magellan a couple of trucks pulled up for the boat. Then two hitchhikers got out of the truck and one of them came over and started talking to me. He said that he saw me at the Chile boarder the previous night and told me that that they were stuck in customs all night. The guys were from Israel and they were not the same hitchhikers that I met on the road earlier from Israel. I told the guy about the other 2 hitchhikers from Israel and he said that they had met them. The boat to cross the Straights of Magellan was free and I saw 2 black and white dolphins following the boat. I ended up camping a few miles north of the ferry stop on the side of the road. I was in plain sight of any passing traffic. The boats only run from 8 AM to 9 PM (not sure the exact time) and the road only goes to the boat dock to cross the Straights of Magellan. There was no traffic until 4:30 AM the next morning. (Day miles 90.52; total bike miles 5591.7; average speed 6.7)

### **Day 6, Friday, December 12, 1997**

At 4:30 AM the first vehicle of the night, was a small truck that stopped and backed up, then it honked and continued. I think they saw my reflectors and went back to see if everything was OK and when they saw me moving, they then decided to continue (my guess). After that I decided to pack my gear and start riding, it was morning dusk. I saw a large bird (I think it was an ostrich) wondering through a field. The road to Argentina was a one lane paved road with vehicle moved in both directions at high

speeds on the same lane. There was also a dirt lane on the highway, but it was only used to avoid head on accidents and for passing. There was very little traffic, but to me it still seemed dangerous. I even noticed a large diesel truck driving on the wrong side of the road. The truck stayed on the wrong side even when it crested a peak (I think if a vehicle would have been going the other direction, it would have been difficult avoiding a head on accident). The road turned to dirt and at one point I saw a rock about the size of a basketball (the plow that was smoothing out the road, left it in the middle of the road) in the middle of the road, so I moved it off the road (road hazard). I had about 20 miles of head wind and then it changed to tail winds. I was able to go very fast to Rio Gallegos when the tail winds started. Before entering town, I saw a sign that read "Policia Caminera" and then I saw a police officer in the middle of the road and he waved me by. This was the first time I had seen this, but I saw the "Policia Camera" sign followed by a police officer in several towns after that. I guess its not free travel like in the US. I was glad he waved me by, because I was concerned that I could get in trouble due to the fact that I lost my traveling papers (I think they accidentally took them at the Chile boarder when they took the Chile travel papers). I planned on doing lots of stuff in town, but it looked like a scary town. I ended up asking a man at the YPF (gas station) where the bus station was. He did not understand my Spanish, so I showed him the question in my Spanish phrase book. Then the guy told me to follow him and he led me to the bus station. The man was just being real nice, because after I followed him to the bus station he took a U-turn and went back in the direction that he came from. I then bought a bus ticket to Comodoro Rivadavia. The bus station had all the different bus companies, the first company I asked said that I would not be able to take my bike, then I asked a second bus company and they said they could take me and my bike. I had several hours to wait for the bus. I ended up biking back into town and this time it did not seem as scary. I stopped at a park near the Atlantic Ocean and started getting prepared for the bus ride. After a while I realized that the bus left at 8 PM, for some reason I was confused and thought that it left at 10 PM. It was about 6:30 PM and I forgot exactly where the bus station was. I ended up biking in the direction I believed the bus station was in and when I knew I was close I asked for directions (That's not easy, since I spoke very little Spanish). At the bus station, I tied all my gear together and tied my bike together (removed front tire and handlebars). A man came up to me and said something in Spanish and I asked him if he knew any English. He was from Australia, so his main language was English. I talked to him for a while and he told me he had been in South America for 3 weeks and that he was staying there for another 5 weeks. He was traveling with a Lady from Australia. He told me about his bike rides in Europe and Tasmania. I also talked with his girlfriend a little. I had not taken a shower since I had been in South America and decided it would be a good thing to get cleaned up before getting on the bus. I asked someone if there were any shower and they said no, but pointed to the rest room. I then went in there and washed up, put deodorant all over

and changed my shirt. When I left the rest room, I think the Australian couple noticed that I got cleaned up in the restroom. A kid that wanted to take his bike on the bus asked me if it needed to be tied like I tied up mine. I said that it was not necessary (the thing to understand is that I don't understand Spanish and when I say we talked, it usually requires a lot of guesswork on what people are saying and what they understand me as saying). He ended up tying his bike up like mine. I suggested that he protected his derailleur and he tied the bike up like I showed him. When the bus arrived; the bus driver did not seem to want to put the bikes on, but the other guy with a bike, communicated to the bus driver and he put the bikes in the language area. It was probably a good thing that I helped that guy tie his bike up. The countryside in Rio Gallegos looks a lot like New Mexico. The funny thing is that it seemed hot and people had on coats. Also, it seemed like the town had a strong military influence, army base and all. From the bus I saw a man fishing using a fishing line tied around a can (I also saw kids fishing with a can and string in Buenos Aires). The bus seemed like a great deal for \$32, I got a spaghetti dinner, a movie (Dick Tracy in English with captions in Spanish) and a place to sleep. The bus ride was a little more than 400 miles (my guess, from looking at the map). (Day miles 87.47; ride time 10.31 hours/ total bike miles 5679.2)

### **Day 7, Saturday, December 13, 1997**

Comodoro Rivadavia seemed like a nice city. I stopped to get groceries at the YPF and they did not accept dollars. I gave them Pesos, but I was starting to get low on Pesos, oh no! On the way out of town, I stopped at a fast-food restaurant and tried asking if they would accept dollars. At first it seemed like they said no, then a man in the store tried helping me, he asked me to show them what I wanted to buy, then they took my dollars (US money). I think at first, they thought I wanted to exchange money. I then started biking towards Esquel, it was my toughest road yet in South America. It was steep, loose gravel, construction (only one lane opened) and windy. After making it through the construction zone a man stopped and offered me a ride (he was only going 5 KM). I decided to take the ride, it was not very scenic. The man spoke some English and told me that there were no trees all the way to Esquel, just the New Mexico type of desert land. It was at least 400 miles to Esquel. The man gave me some water and told me that I could sleep on his land for a while (just to take a break). I went to where his house was and it was like a very small community (It could have been all family, uncles, brothers, etc.). The interesting thing is that from the road it only looked like an oil drilling spot. There was one oilrig out front. I walked around a little and it looked like there was a church and a soccer court on the land. The man spoke some English and it was easy to communicate with him. I felt a little funny there and decided to go back to the highway to start biking again. I biked a few more miles and then a man in a red truck stopped to offer me a ride (the thing to keep in mind is that I was just biking along and not hitch hiking, people are just very friendly

in Argentina). I decided to take the ride, he was with his mother, wife and baby boy. The guy seemed to be driving a little crazy to me. I guess that it seemed normal to his wife and mother. He was driving very fast and then he would tail gate and quickly pass. It did not seem like the double yellow lines meant much to him. He was also drinking beer and gave me a couple of beers. He told me (he spoke some English) that he was a wood worker (doors, fence posts, etc.) and that he had been to New York for a wood worker convention. He was a very friendly man, he gave me about a 75-mile ride and then at the gas station where he dropped me off, I offered to give him gas money. He refused and then I also offered to buy him more beer, but he also refused. He ended up buying me a map and showing me all the good places to see in the Andes (I ended up following his recommendations). He also asked the man at the gas station to help me get a ride to Esquel. I was planning on taking a bus if no ride came through. It was dessert for the next 300 miles and I did not want to bike through the dessert. I was at the gas for only a couple of minutes when three people in two Diesel trucks came over and asked me where I was headed (they spoke no English). I told them I was looking for a ride to Esquel, by saying "Esquel" and putting up my thumb (like hitch hiking). They gave me a ride and we started driving north and then after about 15 miles both trucks stopped and 2 trucks that were going south also stopped. They all got out and started talking. They were comparing gas bills and then the men that were coming from Chile were taking supplies (pots, pans, oil, money exchange, etc.) from the men that were returning to Chile. My guess is that they all must have been working for the same trucking business in Chile. I could not understand anything that they were saying, they were speaking very fast in Spanish. A few more miles down the road we came to a branch and the man I was with was looking for his friends in the other truck. We could not see them in either direction, the north route went to Esquel and the west route was another route that the man could use to go back to Chile. I was happy that he decided to take the north route. He was very concerned about finding his friends, he stopped a truck that was going in the other direction to see if they had seen them and he asked people working on the side of the road. Apparently, no one had seen his friends, this seemed to make the man sad. We stopped at a town, I thought that he wanted to get something to eat. I got out of the truck and he stayed in there for a while, then the men in the other truck pulled up. Apparently, they were stopped somewhere and we went passed them, my guess is before the fork in the road. We shared some Yerba Mate at the small town. The man I was with spoke no English, but was determined to talk and we ended up having some interesting conversations for about 300 miles. He pointed at objects as we were driving and told me how to say them in Spanish, I would repeat what he said. He asked all the standard questions (age, name, occupation, etc.). At one point he asked where I slept and I told him camping. His reply was shaking his head no, then having his fingers crawl up his arm, then he pinched his skin, then he ran his hands from his stomach to his mouth and the final motion was to run his finger across his throat. This



was the type of communications that we did, to me this meant that there were deadly bugs and that it was not a good idea to go camping. He also asked me about the quality of the roads in the US by bouncing up and down in his seat while pointing at the road. He also would add Spanish words to his gestures and I was able to understand a small percent of the words. He dropped me off at the turn off to Esquel and I slept in the desert near the highway. (Day miles 23.98; total bike miles 5703.2)

### **Day 8, Sunday, December 14, 1997**

I woke up at 8 AM and biked into the town of Esquel. I bought stuff at four different places. The main grocery store was not opened and the small stores only have limited supplies. Two of the four stores I went to took dollars, one of the stores only took Pesos and the other store I just gave the man Pesos (I was only buying a couple of Pesos worth of fruit there). I broke my chain in town and a young kid picked it up and handed it to me. Another man stopped while I was fixing it and tried to talk to me, he only spoke Spanish and I was not familiar with any of the words he was using. I then started biking to Los Alerces Nation Park, the road was paved to the turn off and then it was loose dirt with lots of traffic. I was still in a desert like region without trees (except near a river) and finally trees started to appear at the branch in the road that went to Trevelin. At this branch the road turned from dirt to pavement. At the entrance to the National Park, I saw a couple of people with their camping gear on their bikes. I stopped to talk to them, they only spoke Spanish and it was tough to communicate. The road became dirt again in the National Park. It was a nice park with lots of big trees and lots of people camping. I found a quiet place without people near a waterfall (Cascada Irigonyen) on the side of the road. As I was sitting there eating lunch, a family of about 10 people came up and started communicating with me. There were 3 of them that spoke some English (that was a treat). The one lady told me the correct way to say I spoke little Spanish (I was saying "No Hablo, Mucho Espanol", she told me the right way to say it was "Habla Poco Espanol", the other way was probably OK, but from that point on I used her way). The Lady also showed me some nice places to go on my map. After everyone left, I cleaned my hair for the first time since Buenos Aries, I shampooed my hair in the stream. After that some people parked up the hill from my quiet spot and started playing music. They left after about 15 minutes and then shortly after that I decided to continue. I stopped at a second waterfall (??Cascada Ida Noto??) for a short time. It was a nice day. I spent a lot of time enjoying the outdoors. I ended up getting very dirty from all the dust created when cars went by on the dirt road. I found a nice quiet spot to camp near the road (a little North of Arrayenes campground). I noticed and replaced a broken screw on my bike rack. The rough roads and all the weight (lots of water and the normal gear/ total 60 pounds of excess weight) was beating up my bike. (Day miles 58.04; total bike miles 5761.2)

### **Day 9, Monday, December 15, 1997**

I was on the same road as the previous day the only thing is now it was a weekday and the traffic was very low. It was a very scenic ride; mountains, big trees and big lakes. I ran out of water and ended out getting some out of a stream, it looked like safe drinking water, because you could see that it was coming from a snowfield up the mountain. Later that day, I got a real bad stomach cramp, I thought that it may have been the water. When I arrived in a small village, La Bosla (L. Rivadavia), there was no full sized grocery store only a very small store. I went to the small shop and was able to buy Ice cream and 2 cokes, there was not much in the store. At the turn off to a town, Cholila, I found another store and was able to get more supplies. I then biked on the wrong road and ended up back in Cholila, it was about 2 miles out of the way (4 miles round trip). The town seemed real quiet all except one park had at least 100 people at it (maybe a rodeo or something). It was a very small town. I believe most of the people at the park must have come from nearby ranches. I then went biked on the correct road and kept meaning to stop for lunch, but could not find a nice place (just treeless desert). I came to a branch in the road (to Lelequel) and the dirt road turned into a nice paved road with large shoulders. I finally found a nice quiet place near a waterfall to stop for lunch. I opened my can of tuna fish and at that time a car pulled up and a family of 6 pulled up in their truck to eat lunch. I ended up talking with them and we sharing some Yerba Mate. A little after that I started getting stomach cramps and got the runs (I felt fine after that). Then I continued, to El Bolson and found a nice \$5/night campground, "camping La Chacra". I was able to take my first nice hot shower (low water pressure) since I was in South America. I biked into town and looked around until about midnight, it was a very nice town (it reminded me of Santa Fe, New Mexico). I saw a sign at one Pizza store that said, "Welcome here we speak English". (Day miles 81.58; Max. speed 28.9; total bike miles 5842.8)

### **Day 10, Tuesday, December 16, 1997**

I biked into town in the morning, I sent my post cards and bought some groceries. Back at camp I meet a couple of Optician from Argentina and they shared some Yerba Mate with me. One of the men spoke good English and told me that he had been to New Mexico. He thought that the people from New Mexico were not very friendly and that seemed to surprise me. I packed up my gear and started biking. When I was in town, El Bolson, I stopped to take a picture of the artists setting up their booths. A nice-looking artist lady saw me taking the picture and then she took a picture of me with my camera. As I was biking towards Bariloche, I stopped at a waterfall and a man with his parents also drove up. The man had a NYPD hat on and wanted me to follow him to the base of the falls, so we could take pictures of each other with each other's cameras. I guess it was too tough of a hike for his parents. A little farther up the road I meet a biker that was from Scotland, he was biking to the Southern tip of South America. I told him about all the desert and he told me he was planning on

going through Chile. I think that would be more scenic, but it also might mean more rain. This guy had a seasonal job and was able to take 3 months off every year to go on long distance bike rides. He was planning on visiting his brother in New Zealand after he biked to the Southern tip of South America. The ride to Bariloche was hilly with more uphill than downhill. On the way to Bariloche, I stopped at a store in El Foyel to get a coke. There were these 2 young men buying sandwiches and we started talking. It seemed like they were getting a good laugh out of our conversation. They were in a Mercedes bus and I asked if they were camping. They laughed and said they were working. When I arrived in the outskirts of town, it looked like another scary place (lots of poverty). When I went downtown and followed the lake it was a very nice town. I stopped at a store to get a drink and some food. When I was sitting there some students (they were from Cordoba) on vacation started talking to me. They seemed very excited about meeting someone from the US and they called all their travel buddies over (They were staying in a building across from the store). I would guess that there was close to 50 students and they all wanted to take pictures of me. I then decided to get out of Bariloche to find camping, I biked for about 5 miles (or more), then I stopped at a junction (to Vo Mascardi) to see if I could figure out where I was on my map. When I looked at my map, I realized that I was going in the wrong direction. Then I biked back towards town and went to a campground. The campground had excellent showers and only cost \$5/night. The campground was in someone's back yard and even had a pool. I decided to even wash my shirt in the shower (only had 2 shirts with me). I was trying to figure out some of the signs in the rest room with my Spanish-English dictionary. A man on his honeymoon from Buenos Aires came in and told me what the signs meant in English. He spoke a little English and he told me that he just got married and came to this campground for his Honeymoon. There were a couple of dogs around the campground. That night I left my food outside my tent and it was gone in the morning. (Day miles 87.56; Max. speed 29.2; total bike miles 5930.4)

### **Day 11, Wednesday, December 17, 1997**

I took a shower, packed up my gear and biked through town. I found an ATM to get some Pesos (ATM with Cirrus link). I saw a nice T-shirt at a store and went into the store, but I went into the chocolate shop, not the T-shirts store. Then I went out and looked at the shirt again and noticed it was in the window of a very small shop next to the chocolate shop and the store did not open until 10AM. Well, I did not want to wait, so I continued my ride. As I was heading out of town, I was looking for a supermarket, I saw a lot of small shops. When I was getting towards the end of town, I decided a small shop would do for groceries. I went in this one small store and they had a small selection. All I bought a bag of cheese thinking it was chocolate. That was the last shop before leaving town. About 10 miles out of town, I found a small store where I was able to get more supplies. They had T-shirts and I asked the lady if they

had shirts that said Bariloche. She did not understand my question, when she was trying to guess she showed me undershirts, underwear, pants and socks. It was tough telling her I did not want any of it. I did however buy Ice cream, water, cokes and asked for bread (pan). She said she had no bread and then a truck pulled up and brought her stock of bread. So I bought a long loaf of good bread (Europe style bread). Then I continued riding and a man in a car stopped me (at the turn off to Nahuel Huapi National Park) to ask directions. I told him I did not understand much Spanish and showed him my map. He was not interested in the map and he ended up waving down the next passing car. I started biking again and a little later the man honk (a friendly honk) his horn as he passed me. It was the guy that asked for directions. I stopped at a nice spot near a large lake that I was biking along. My bike had been skipping gears a lot since the previous day, I took off the bike tire and dug all the grease out of the gears and adjusted the rear derailleur. I also noticed that the center ring on the front set of gears was badly worn. All this took about 2 hours and it seemed to help the skipping a little (but it was still really bad). In La Angostura, I found a grocery store and bought some more supplies. I also bought a T-shirt. As I was leaving town, I noticed that I had lost part of my food. I biked back to town and found my lost food on the median in the middle of the road. To keep my gears from slipping, it seemed to work the best if I stayed on the largest ring on the front gear set. As I was leaving town, I saw a couple of camping bikers moving quickly into town, I did not get to talk to them. Another 5 miles down the road I stopped to take a picture and 3 bikers with camping gear from Buenos Aries pulled up. They did not speak English, but they were able to tell me that it was very nice camping in the national park. The road was a very nice paved road all day until I came to the branch in the road that went to either Chile or San Martin. Then the road was dirt with very tall trees all around. The vegetation also seemed to get thicker. It seemed like a lot of traffic for a dirt road on a weekday. I found a side road to go camping. I also built my only fire of the South America trip. (Day miles 69.54; total bike miles 6000.0)

### **Day 12, Thursday, December 18, 1997**

I left camp at 9AM (it was a nice clear day), I stopped to take a picture of a big lake with cows and noticed that I had lost my food again. I turned back and found it in the road (it was a short distance back; 1/8 mile). It was a very scenic area, the road had loose gravel and lots of dust (about 15-cars/ hour traffic). There were big lakes, rivers, waterfalls and nice mountains along the road. I stopped at a campground on a large lake for a long lunch and while I was there, I saw a family of 4 come up on bikes loaded with camping gear (They were a long distance away and I did not talk with them). I did not talk to anyone until I bought 2 cokes (\$2/each) at a bar (it was a nice slow day) in a very small town at Lago (lake) Hermosa. There were antlers (looked like elk antlers) in the bar and the man told me they were from that area. He also showed me a local puma (mountain lion) skin on the wall. When I arrived at the

branch to route 63 the road became paved and I broke my chain 2 times going up the hill. At the top of the hill there was an 8-mile downhill stretch to San Martin. In town, I found a bike shop and bought some chain grease and the guy gave me several free chain links (I was trying to get him to sell me a chain, but could not figure out how to ask for one). Then I went to the ACA (Automobile club of Argentina) campground and paid \$5/night for camping. At the campground there was a lady that spoke excellent English, she said the English was handed down from her ancestors. She also told me that in that town there were several English-speaking people. She commented that there were even more English-speaking people in Bariloche (I did not meet any of them when I was there). I set up my tent, went to the rest room and when I was returning, I saw a small black animal dart off with my food. I biked around town and a drunken man asked me something. I told him that I did not speak much Spanish and he gave me a funny look (not a mean look). I bought some fruit and then went back to camp to sleep. (Day miles 65.29; total bike miles 6065.3; Maximum speed 28.5)

### **Day 13, Friday, December 19, 1997**

In the morning, I went to town bought groceries, a T-shirt and then went back to camp. I packed up my gear and started biking. There were some good downhill and tail winds, the scenery was turning into desert. I saw a couple of trees on the side of the road and decided to take a break. It was muddy getting into the tree and I laid down and read my Argentina book, I wanted to see where I should go next, it seemed like I was not going anywhere nice at that point! Sometimes I wish I were better at planning my trips. I continued and before a branch in the road a truck came up to me. The driver asked which direction I was headed and they said it was a lot of uphill (I think they were going to offer me a ride, but they were taking the other branch in the road). There was about 10 miles of uphill, then it was hilly or flat for the rest of the day. At the top of the long hill, I could see a Volcanic (I think it was named Mirador La Rinconada/ I saw a take a photograph sign with that name on it) looking mountain to the west. It was an easy riding with a tail wind. As I biking by a bar, I saw 2 bikes parked outside with camping gear. I decided to turn around and go into the bar to meet the bikers. One of the guys was from Rosario, Argentina and the other guy was from Holland (I think Amsterdam). The guy from Holland spoke good English and we talked. The man from Holland wanted to take pictures, so we all went outside and a gaucho (cowboy) that was in the bar took our picture. I told the gaucho to get into the picture and he went and got his horse and we took more pictures. I continued and it started getting dark, I had trouble trying to figure out where to camp, no trees. I saw a small dirt road and started biking towards it and then a kid on a bike came down the road (bad luck). He came over to me and I asked about camping nearby. He said no camping around and none all the way to Zapala. At any rate I think that is what he said (whenever I say I talked to someone I am usually only guessing on what they are

saying, also I am not sure if they understand my Spanish). Then I started biking towards Zapala and I kept looking back and the kid on the bike was behind me. After about 5 miles he rode up to me and said I could sleep near his house. Then we biked for about another 5 miles and went to a building near the highway. He pointed to a building, to let me know that I could sleep in the building then he gestured that he was going to his home. It looked like a small church inside. The church was about 4.8 miles south of Agua Del Overo. (Day miles 113.04; daily maximum speed 35.6; total bike miles 6178.3)

### **Day 14, Saturday, December 20, 1997**

I left the church at about 6 AM and heard a dog barking. I looked over at where the dog was and a man outside his house looked towards me and I waved, he waved back. The man was not at the same house as the kid that invited me to sleep in the church. I felt a little awkward leaving the church when the man was watching, but I do not think it mattered to him. A small fly looking bug bit me and my finger became very swollen for about 2 hours. I did not have much water and rationed it all day. I finished my last swig of water about 5 miles before getting to Zapala. It was a hot dry ride to Zapala and I decided to take a bus out of the desert, I selected to go to Mandoza. I could not find the bus station, but I was able to find the information center. I asked the girl at the information center where the bus station was so that I could take a bus to Mandoza and at first, she told me how to bike to Mandoza. After a while, I was able to get a map to the bus station. It cost \$15 for my bike and \$45 for me. I packed my bike up and tied all my gear together. Then the man at the bus station put my gear in a back room. The restroom at the bus station had the low-cost type toilets, no seat, just a hole in the floor. I then walked around town, I ate a lot of ice cream and drank several cokes. I stopped at a fast-food place and bought a burger. A nice-looking young lady working there spoke some English, she asked me about my travels and the bike riding. She seemed very friendly and provided excellent service. I found an ATM in town and was able to withdraw money. This was the only ATM that did not have an English option, I am not sure how I was able to get the money, but it worked. My bus seat was next to a young man (18 years old), Carlos Antonio Rodriguez and he was very nice. He used my Spanish-English dictionary to ask me questions. I asked him about getting bike parts in Mandoza. We stopped in Neuquen on the bus and Carlos bought us donuts, he also helped me get bike parts (front chain ring) and he invited me to his house in San Juan for Christmas Eve. I was not planning on going to San Juan, but I really wanted to spend Christmas with other people, so I decided that I would go. The bus served dinner and a snack for breakfast, they also had a movie, Mission Impossible (with Tom Cruise/ English with Spanish captions). (Day miles 42.8; total bike miles 6221.1)

### **Day 15, Sunday, December 21, 1997**

When I got off the bus in Mendoza, I fixed my bike at the bus terminal. I put on the new front chain ring that I bought in Neuquen, I did not want to leave Mendoza till my bike was fixed. I then took a bus to Uspallata. The bus cost \$4 for my bike and \$8 for me. It was very crowded, when we left Mendoza there were seats available. The bus stopped at every little stop and picked up people. At first, I sat in a seat then at one stop a couple got on the bus and I had to get out of their seats (assigned seats, first to buy ticket receive a seat, then standing room). After a few stops all the seats were full and there were about 30 people standing in the bus aisle. After a while people started getting off, the bus stopped anywhere that someone wanted to get off. About 1/2 way to Uspallata there were seats available again and I sat down. It was raining really hard and the bus stopped, by my request. They stopped where ever you asked them to stop, I had to ask where the campground was and they ended up having to ask a girl on the bus where the campground was located. It was the municipal campground in Uspallata that they ended up dropping me off at. I could see a bike race was going on in the rain near the campground. I then set up my tent and went to check out the race, it was over by the time I got there. I had all my cool rain gear on and I noticed that people were looking at me a little funny. I went back to the campground and felt a little worried about leaving my gear there and was not sure if I was suppose to pay for camping. I ended up asking the person that was at the house near the campground and he told me that it was \$5/night. I gave him the \$5 and he told me if I had any troubles to tell him (It made me feel better about leaving my stuff, but I think it was supposed to be a free campground). The campground seemed really run down, no hot water and no showerheads. The rain ended and I then started biking up the mountain towards Aconcagua (highest mountain in Western Hemisphere, 6960 meters/ 22,620 feet). A little west of town, I saw what looked like a nicer campground. I only went about 18 miles. It was a boring ride and I did not think I would be able to see anything if I kept going. It was cloudy and without a hiking permit you are not even aloud to hike in the park at the base of the peak. I stopped at a tunnel that was the old highway and then I headed back to Uspallata. In town, I bought some supplies, the lady did not seem very friendly (my guess is that she was not fond of people that spoke English). At the campground I meet a man from Austria in a VW bus (he brought the VW from Austria. It had Argentina license plates). He supposedly had been traveling for about a year. He traveled all over North America; Alaska, Canada, the Pacific Northwest, Michigan, etc. He said that he thought Alaska was not as nice as Canada and that his favorite part of the US was the Pacific Northwest. He told me about his mountain climbing experiences; MT McKinley last summer and several others. He was planning on going to Mendoza to get a hiking permit (he said it cost \$100) to climb Mt. Aconcagua and then he would climb the mountain. The man from Austria said that it was a nice campground for free (I

decided not to tell him that I paid some man \$5 to stay there). The weather had cleared up and you could see the top of the 20'+ mountains from the campground. I am pretty sure that the biggest one I could see was Mt. Aconcagua. I started feeling lonely and wanted to go home. As I was biking in town earlier, I could hear people listening to some sporting event on the radio. Later that night, I could hear a lot of honking and fireworks. My guess is that they were listening to a local soccer (popular sport in Argentina) game and the team that everyone was rooting for won. I noticed a lot of dogs running around the campground, so I made sure to keep an eye on my food. There was one big dog that kept following me around. (Day miles 44.23; total bike miles 6265.3)

### **Day 16, Monday, December 22, 1997**

It was a nice clear day, I could see all the high mountains from my camp. I went into town and sent my post cards (The ones that never made it to the US as of February 16, 1998). I saw the man put the stamps on the post cards and he put them in the mail. I went back to camp and washed my hair in the sink at the campground. Then I packed up my gear and started cycling the back route to San Juan. The road was a flat dirt road through a dry, hot, treeless region. However, it was a nice scenic ride along mountains that were about 20,000 feet high. The first 10 miles of the dirt road was very tough riding (Rocky and loose gravel), then the road smoothed out. When I arrived in the desert National Park, El Leoncito, the road became poorly paved. I noticed that some of the light traffic (1 car/ hour) traveled on the dirt shoulder instead of driving on the pot holed paved road. I enjoyed the paved road, because it was easy to miss the potholes on my bike. This part of Argentina reminded me a lot of the Indian Pueblos in New Mexico. Most of the houses were adobe. I ended up going about 1 mile beyond the town of Tamberias and about 1/2 mile up an arroyo to set up camp. It was a very nice quite place with a nice moonlight. (Day miles 93.16; daily maximum speed 30.8; total bike miles 6358.5)

### **Day 17, Tuesday, December 23, 1997**

In the morning, I started biking towards San Juan, just South of Calingasta there was a policeman in the road stopping traffic. I was worried about getting stopped without my traveling papers, but after I had this encounter with a Police officer, I realized that they were probably not familiar with the travel papers and not even with passports. I showed the policeman my passport when he stopped me. He just looked at all the stamps. I think it was amusing to him. He would not let me pass. I really wanted to continue, but he would not let me. He was showing me a sign and I did not understand it, I handed him my Spanish-English dictionary. He started looking for things in the book. After I concentrated on the sign and looked up words in the dictionary, I was able to see that traffic was closed to downhill travel until 3 PM. I guessed that I would need to wait there until 3 PM (I even sat down next to the sign), but the Police officer



was trying to tell me that I could go a different route. I then biked back to Calingasta and tried going the other route (through Puchuzun). I ended up getting good pictures of homes, people traveling in the back of trucks (I noticed a lot of people doing this, often I saw dump trucks with lots of people in the back) and desert mountains. I looked at my map and realized I had a long way to go and very little water. In Puchuzun I found a store/ motel and bought a gallon of water. Then I started biking up the hill, it was a long steep, uphill on a tough dirt road. After biking for several hours, I took a close look at my map and realized if I went back to Calingasta and then to San Juan, it would be shorter and probably easier than continuing the present route. Also, I had not seen any vehicles since I left Puchuzun, so I figured if I went back I could at least hitch hike. I ended up turning around, the step downhill (and rough dirt road) broke one of the screws that was holding my front luggage rack on. I fixed it with wire and continued. I needed to hurry up because the sign for downhill travel from Calingasta said 3 PM to 6 PM and it was already about 4pm and I had a long way to go. I figured I could hitch a ride, but did not see any traffic until about 9 miles before Calingasta. I stuck my thumb out and a truck stopped and gave me a ride to Calingasta. The man spoke a little English and he told me that the next day at about 4 PM he would be heading towards San Juan and would give me a ride if he saw me. I needed more water, but I figured if I stopped for water that I would not make the 6 PM close time for downhill traffic. I made it on time. I had biked about 60 miles since I was at that same spot (the spot where the Police stopped me and would not let me continue) in the morning. I ended up running out of water and food. It was getting dark and I was getting dehydrated. Apparently the 6 PM deadline did not mater, because I still saw an occasional car going down the road. I ended up trying to hitch a ride, the second vehicle gave me a ride all the way to San Juan. When they were loading my gear, one of the man's sons (the driver) asked me if one of the bags that was hanging from my handlebars was trash and I shook my head yes, then I noticed that he dumped it on the side of the road. I normally carried a plastic bag with my trash hanging from my handlebars and another bag with food. I noticed that littering was common in Argentina. It also seems like cleaning up in front of your shop, house and even street cleaning was common. The people that gave me a ride only spoke Spanish and were very nice. The one kid (name = Fredrica /my guess about 20 years old) was driving, there was a young kid (probably about 10) and then what I would have guessed to be their father (name = Carlos). They were telling me about all the sights (It was dark so I could not see them) as we were traveling down the mountain. They also stopped and showed me the dam near San Juan (they stopped at 2 different places). Then they stopped at a restaurant near the dam and sold the man in the store supplies (bread, cookies, etc.). When we arrived in San Juan, they stopped at an outdoor barbecue to eat. I think it cost a couple of dollars for food, but they were friends of the father and did not charge. I gave Carlos a 10 Peso bill and he would only take 5 Pesos (I think he said something about the coke we drank, I don't think he

really wanted any of my money). We looked for a campground, but had no luck, then he took me into town and helped me get a cheap motel. They found one that was \$10/night, but they would not allow bikes. So, we went to a second motel and they charged \$15/night and let me put my bike in the room. I tried to phone home in town, but could not figure out how to use the phone. (Day miles 84.28; daily maximum speed 24.2; total bike miles 6442.8)

### **Day 18, Wednesday, December 24, 1997**

In the morning, I tried calling Carlos, but could not figure out how to use the pay phone. I then went into a nearby motel to see if anyone could help me with the phone. A man from the motel dialed the number and I talked with Carlos until my change ran out. Then I was immediately cut off. It was tough talking, since I do not understand much Spanish, but in the conversation, I did tell him that I was on the corner of Espanol Street and Metre Street. I decided to take care of some stuff in town. I biked across the street to check out the train stations and some guys shot a bottle rocket at me, it blew up next to me. I then called my parents (I ended up having to leave messages), got some money from an ATM and then I looked at Carlos's number. I noticed that I could not read one of the numbers (I am not sure what the guy dialed at the motel, but he got it right). I stopped at the visitor center and I looked through a phone book at the phone numbers to all the local Rodriguez's and could not find any numbers that look similar to Carlos's number, I could have missed it there were several pages of Rodriguez in the phone book. I also asked where the bus station was and then started biking towards the bus station (I wanted to see where and when I could go). I was going to try to call Carlos after the bus station, but on the way to the bus station a police car pulled me over and asked if I was this guy. He showed me a piece of paper with my name on it. Right away I knew that Carlos must have asked the police to look for a person on a bike with camping gear. I was probably the only person in town with camping gear on my bike (although there were hundreds of bikes, lots carrying some sort of gear). Actually, San Juan is a large city of about 300,000 people. I was very lucky, the police officers gave me a ride to Carlos's house, I think it would have been very difficult for me to get there otherwise. When I arrived at Carlos's house, I asked the Police officers if I could take a picture (I pointed to the phrase in my Spanish phrase book). Carlos's dad's name was also Carlos and they told me it was traditional to name your first son after the father. To distinguish between the 2 Carlos's, dad went by Juan Carlos and the son went by Carlos Antonio (he was the one I met in the bus from Zapala). Juan Carlos taught me a lot of Spanish words and went over how to pronounce the entire Spanish alphabet. Also, when I showed him my passport, he told me that my name was Edwardo Jose in Spanish (Edward Joseph Stagnone on my Passport). Up to that point in my trip I told people that my name was Ted. After that I started telling people that my name was Edwardo Jose. The whole family helped me learn more Spanish. At lunch we ate some

excellent homemade Ravioli, drank tea and talked a lot. We spent most of the afternoon talking and drinking beer. They all helped me fix my bike; the odometer sensor was broken (it broke in the police car) and they fixed it with black tape (it worked fine for the rest of the trip). They also took the wire off my front luggage rack and put a screw in place of the wire (it worked fine for the rest of my trip). I think they did some sort of repair to one of my pedals, I am not sure what was wrong with it. Throughout the day people were in the kitchen preparing a Christmas Eve feast. Throughout the day and during dinner people were coming and going, I think most of the people were relatives. I imagine I meet about 50 people during that night at the Rodriguez house. One of the relatives that came by was a big-time bike racer, he wanted to buy my bike pump, but I still needed it for the rest of my trip (and I was glad that I did not part with it). I went over to his house and checked out his nice racing bikes, some of his pictures and his trophies. For dinner we ate beef rolls, chicken, ham slices (mixed with egg or something) potatoes and much more. It was an excellent meal. At midnight, a lot of fireworks were going off and everyone wished each other a merry Christmas and the ladies all walked around and had the guys give them kisses on the cheeks. We also drank Sidra (its like an inexpensive apple champagne) with our meal. At the beginning of the night everyone would say solute when simultaneous raising their glasses before drinking, I told them that in the US we say cheers. By the end of night people were saying cheers as much as they were saying salute. We ended up talking, dancing and drinking until 5 AM (at any rate that was when I went to sleep). I went to sleep in Carlos's bed and when he came home (he went to town at about 3 AM and returned about 7 AM), I tried to give him his bed back, but he shook his head no and got in the same bed as his cousin, Mauro. (Day miles 6.93; total bike miles 6449.73)

### **Day 19, Thursday, December 25, 1997**

Everyone slept until about noon. Then we all talked for a while and watched part of a Robin William's movie. Then I went for a bike ride with Mauro, we went to the big lake near town (it might have actually been within the city limits). It was the same lake that I went to with the people that picked me up hitch hiking the previous day. Mauro took a lot of good pictures of me with my camera while we were riding. Then when we returned, I started packing my bike for the bus trip and one of the guys told me to get the bike ready for the bus and they would give me a ride to the bus terminal. I was glad that he said that, because I did not want to ask, but at the same time I did not want to go through the trouble of trying to find the terminal. They all helped me pack my bike for the bus ride. Then we went out to the front of the house and took some family pictures. After that they took me to the bus station. It was probably one of my nicest Christmas's ever. I ended up trading hats with Carlos Antonio and Mauro gave me a nice key chain from San Juan. The bus to Cordoba was not very crowded.

It cost \$25 for the bus and \$8 for my bike. This bus had a movie and 2 large cookies as the meal. (Day miles 20.27; total bike miles 6470)

### **Day 20, Friday, December 26, 1997**

When I arrived in Cordoba, I put my bike together and packed my gear. Then I bought some maps (one to get out of Cordoba, one for the district roads of Cordoba and one for the district of Buenos Aries) and biked around the large park that was near the bus station. I then started biking towards Santa Fe, route 19 was very busy and did not have a good shoulder. I stopped at a gas station a little distance out of town and got something to eat. There was a man at the store that asked where I was from and when I told him the US, he started asking how much money I had. I told him only a small amount in my pocket and that I used an ATM card when I needed more money (he understood me and showed me his ATM card). He was saying that he thought everyone in the US had lots of money (this whole conversation was in Spanish and a lot of what was said is assumed). I continued biking and stopped at another gas station to get a pop, I noticed a drinking water sign and got some water. When I was getting water a man in a truck started talking to me. I guess he asked where I was biking to and from (I always assumed this was what people were asking). So, I told him from Cordoba to Buenos Aries. At the beginning of the trip, I would tell people about the stretches of biking and buses, but it started getting confusing, so I started just telling people about only one stretch of my trip. At a town, Rio Primero, I turned onto Highway 10 and the traffic became a lot lighter. It was a very hot and humid day. A little north of Santa Rose Del Rio Primero, a couple pulling a trailer stopped to offer me a ride. The car was a small Japanese car and the man bungee corded my bike to the top of his trailer. I think on this ride my derailleur got bent, because my gears started slipping even more than they already were and I noticed that my derailleur was bent. They gave me a 30-km ride to La Puerta. They ended up giving me a ride to the road that left town, then they turned their vehicle around and went back into town. The scenery was boring farmland, I came to Laguna Mar Chiquita and saw a campground. I asked how much it was for camping and they said it was free. They even had free showers. The guy that was running the campground brought me a light on an extension cord and he also gave me a free 1/2-liter of orange Fanta. I offered him 5 Pesos and he would not take it. I decided to reorganize my gear and while I was reorganizing 2 nice looking young ladies (probably about 20 years old) said hi (hola) and I said hi (hola) back. There were lots of bugs around (cock roaches, misquotes, etc.). That night, I went over to the restaurant at the campground and bought a beef dinner. The 2 young ladies (the ones that were walking around the campground) helped me order my meal, they used my Spanish-English dictionary to tell me the beef was roasted. The meal was very good; for \$5 I received 2 salads, 5 ribs, and 5 dinner rolls. Seemed like a great deal. I felt a little nervous about having all my gear near a group of what seemed to be rowdy people, I thought that they could be going through

my stuff. As I was returning to my tent, the kids that I was I nervous about called me over. I went over and they offered me steaks, cow intestines, Sidra (apple Champaign) and wine. I ended up eating and drinking with them for a while. We were trying to get the girls to come over, but they would not get very close. Then you could see a thunderstorm coming, everyone got excited and they packed up all their stuff and rapidly left. The man that was running the campground told me I could stay in the rest rooms while the storm went through, but I decide to stay in my tent. It rained very hard most of the night. The rain helped cool things down. (Day miles 92.67; total bike miles 6562.7; daily Maximum speed 20.8)

### **Day 21, Saturday, December 27, 1997**

In the morning, I was dehydrated so I quickly opened my bug fly on the tent and grabbed my water. About 5 misquotes got in my tent in the 10 seconds I had it opened. I took a cold shower and then packed my gear. I left the campground at about 9:15 AM. I stopped at a town to get groceries. The lady (blond with a great body) that ran the store was very interested in my bike trip. I talked with her for a while and then continued my bike ride. Next stop was a YPF station, the people that were running the gas station were very interested in the US and we talked for a while. They gave me free cold water (the tap water was always free, I usually bought bottled water) and let me use their rest room to clean up. They also had me write my address in an address book. As I was biking, I saw hundreds of white butterflies. I also saw a couple of very large dead lizards (one of them was about 2 feet long) in the road. The scenery was boring farmland all day. I took a short cut, by going through the town of Sunchales. It was probably only a couple of miles further on the highway. I thought the town was going to be small, but it ended out being a rather large town (guess about 30,000). I went right into downtown and there were not any signs I just followed the flow. I thought for sure it would be tough to find my way out of town. I came to a branch in the road and then asked a man for directions and he pointed down one of the roads. It ended out being a straight shot from there to the main highway (highway 34). Highway 34 was very busy and it was starting to get dark. I saw some trees on the side of the road, I waited until no cars were coming and then I went into the trees and set up my tent. My camp was behind a big tree about 20 meters from the highway and 3 meters from a barbed wire fence and I could see a farmhouse about 1 mile away. I make it a rule never to camp on the other side of a fence, even if it means sleeping in plane site of traffic. I kept hoping the traffic would slow down, but it was heavy traffic all night. (Day miles 96.14; daily maximum speed 15.2 MPH; total bike miles 6658.8)

### **Day 22, Sunday, December 28, 1997**

I left camp at 6 AM and biked along more farmland. About 12 miles before I arrived in Esperanza I stopped at a store across the road from a milk and cheese factory to get a coke. After I bought my supplies from a lady in the store (I had to tell her I did not

understand much Spanish), I went outside to eat the ice cream and drink the pop that I bought. When I went out there a man came from the store and started talking with me. He was the owner of the shop and he lived there. I told him my name was Edwardo Jose in Spanish. He gave me a calendar and wrote something on it in Spanish (Para e amigo/ feliz and nuevo/ s mi decco es que hejues bien atu casa / beto/ feliz 98). I ended up taking a picture of the man next to my bike in front of his store. I bought one more coke and then biked off. When I arrived in Esperanza, the streets were empty, it was a little after noon and that is siesta time (in Argentina people take naps (siesta) after lunch, they close most of the stores). I took some picture and ate lunch at the municipal park. The park was very big and nice for a small town. There was a nice playground, fountains, neat bridges and even a display of several old tractors in the park. I then completed my ride to Santa Fe. It was a long ride from the outskirts of Santa Fe to the downtown area. I stopped at Parque Juan De Garay and took a picture of all the people swimming in the fountains. At that point, I was having trouble-finding downtown Santa Fe. I looked at the map in my Lonely Planet book and found the names of the roads where I was and I was able to get to the bus station with the aid of the Lonely Planet book. At the bus station, I tried to buy a bus ticket to Puerto Iguaza (the jungle with the waterfall that is the size of Niagara Fall; near Brazil). The man at the Bus Company (the only Bus Company that went to the falls) said they had no seats available on the bus to the falls. That was the first time in Argentina that I had any trouble getting a seat on a bus. I still had my camping gear on my bike and I rode to a small park near the bus station. Someone yelled to me from a window, I am not sure what he wanted, I ended up just shaking my head no (I thought he might be selling something) and going into the park to try to fix my bike. My gears were slipping really badly ever since the bike went for the ride on the trailer near Santa Rosa. I had no luck fixing my bike, it still works OK if I left it in the highest gear on the front gear set. I was walking my bike on a road and I looked at this guy with a beard, then he started harassing me. I have no idea what he was saying, but I could tell he was mad at me (maybe for looking at him). I ended up shaking my head and walking away from him. A man that was watching said something to me and I told him I did not understand Spanish. I think I was getting really tired of trying to talk to people in Spanish (I did not know very much Spanish, but somehow, I could communicate if I really wanted to and the other person wanted to). I then saw a motel, Apollo, across from the bus station and asked how much it cost. The lady said it was \$10/ night and I could put my bike in the room. I ended up getting a room. The first thing I did was unload all my camping gear and then I started biking around town. I saw lots of nice old buildings in town and another park, Parque Manuel Belgrano, with people swimming in the fountains. I also noticed that quite a few people at the park had horse drawn carriages. At one point, when I was biking around, I even saw a cow in someone's front yard. I was biking in town and tried to accelerate my bike through an intersection and banged my knee good on my handlebars when the gear (I

hit my handlebars with my knee often when the gears slipped and it sort of hurt) slipped. The traffic is a little funny, most of the intersections have no stop sign (either direction) and it seems like you go unless there is a reason to stop. I ended up biking an extra 5 miles that night, just so I could have a 100-mile day. (Day miles 100.09; daily maximum speed 20.3 MPH; total bike miles 6758.9)

### **Day 23, Monday, December 29, 1997**

In the middle of the night, I was getting several mosquito bites, so I set my tent up in the motel room (the tent has a mosquito net). I then started sweating too much (hot humid night), it was a tough night of sleep. I still think I got most of my 8 hours of sleep. The next morning, I went to the bus station to try to get a bus to the falls, but there were still no seats available (I really wanted to go to the falls, but I really did not have enough time, so no seats was probably a blessing). I packed up my gear and left the motel. I biked along the walkway of avenue Costanera. I noticed that some very nice-looking ladies were jogging on the walkway. I took pictures of some statues and a neat church. I saw an observatory that had a model of the US space shuttle. I then started biking to Parana. I stopped at the Wal-Mart, it was huge and had a lot of security. I was not worried about leaving my bike and gear locked up in the parking lot (there were several security guards watching the parking lot). I noticed when I left the Wal-Mart a couple of the security guards watched me, I felt that it was a very safe place. I stopped at a YPF gas station to get a better map, the people at the station told me that I would not be able to bike through the tunnel. They said that I needed to take the boat to Parana. As I was riding, I was looking for a sign that said something like no bikes or tunnel, but did not see a sign. At one point, I saw a boat ramp, but did not think it was the boat, because there were no signs. Soon after that I arrived at the tunnel and went over to the tollbooth and they told me (with great difficulty) that I needed to go back and take the boat. I then went back and found out that it was the ramp that I thought was not the correct ramp. While I was waiting for the boat it started raining. The boat was free and arrived near downtown Parana. I ended up biking for 13 miles with several turns (good signs for turns). When I was almost out of town, I saw a man said something to me and I asked him if I was going in the correct direction to Viale (next town west of Parana). The signs were good, but did not tell you which way was east and which was west. The man ended up drawing me a map and I was able to get most of the way out of town with his instructions. His instructions did not exactly follow the signs. When I came to one intersection (I was just barely out of town), there were no signs, so I asked the people at the nearby YPF station for directions. They pointed out the way and I was finally on the highway going east. I was glad to finally get out of Parana and started biking fast. It was getting dark, so I stopped at a store to ask if there was any camping nearby. The man said there was a campground 5 kilometers to the east (I think that was what he said). After about 2 kilometers I found some trees where I could camp, it was the first place that I had seen

with trees in several miles. I decided to camp there, because I was not sure that I would be able to find the campground that the man at the store told me about. I was about 20 meters from the road, between trees and a fence. I could see a lot of lightning in the northern horizon, it did not rain where I was camped. That night, I did a minimal camp, I only took my tent out and slept without my sleeping bag (it was hot and I did not need the sleeping bag). (Day miles 73.78; daily maximum speed 21.6 MPH; total bike miles 6832.7)

### **Day 24, Tuesday, December 30, 1997**

I left camp at 6:15 AM, when I left the woods, I noticed that I was across the street from a house. There was a man working in his front yard when I came out from behind the trees, but he did not see me. I guess the previous night there were no lights on in the house (I would not have camped there if I knew I was near a home). I had been keeping track of the days and date ever since I started my trip. It was easy to verify the date by looking at my receipts. I started thinking about the number of days that I thought I had left and the date. The day-date did not add up correctly. I then started looking through my notes (I logged my days in a notebook, those are the notes I used to create this paper) and found out that I was off by a day. I thought it was Monday, but it was really Tuesday (I lost a day on Christmas/ my notes had Wednesday for December 24 and December 25). I recalled thinking that it was weird that everything was closed on Saturday in Santa Fe, well I was wrong it was Sunday when everything was closed in Santa Fe. As I biked from my camp spot, I was looking for the campground that was supposed to be 5 kilometers from the store (the one the man told me about the previous night). I saw no campground or anyplace to camp. I was glad that I camp where I did, if not it could have been a long night. The farmland was starting to get more interesting. I started seeing palm trees. Near the town of Va Clare, I saw some large cone shaped nests with green parakeets. As I was take a picture of the birds, a large group of bikers passed me. I also saw some neat ducks and a lot of little black animals that looked like guinea pigs (this was the second day that I saw several of the guinea pig type animals). I stopped at a store next to a YPF gas station near Jubilea and asked for directions to A. Baru (Arroya Baru). The people were very friendly, they asked me for my address and gave me a calendar on a card. The directions they gave were good, but a little vague. As I was getting ready to leave, they sent this blonde man over to talk to me; he spoke excellent English. He gave me real clear directions to El Palmer (that's where I was headed in the long run). His direction said to turn at the Virgin (I think that he meant the Virgin Mary in the glass case/ I saw several of these Virgins in Argentina) just pass the railroad crossing outside the town of Arroyo Baru. When I got to a spot that fit the description, he gave me it was too close to town to fit my map and it did not look like a main road. I wanted to pull someone over and ask them if I was headed in the correct direction, but no one passed. I ended up going by my map. A little distance down the road I saw a



man on a horse in the middle of a field. I whistled and waved him over to me. Then I showed him my map and asked for directions, he told me to go another 5 kilometers and then turn left. About 5 kilometers down the road, I saw a good road with a Virgin (no railroad crossing though). This fit my map too, but there was no sign and that bothered me. About 2 miles down the road, I came to a branch, it looked like it may have connected to the first road that I saw with a virgin and the railroad crossing. I continued on the main road, I was still not sure that I was on the correct road, a couple of times I tried to get trucks to stop, so I could see if I was going in the right direction, but they would not stop. After a while a came to a town and I could hear the highway, so I continued until I made it to the highway. At the highway, I was back on paved roads (it was not paved for the previous 25 miles/ since Jubilie). At the main highway, I stopped at a bar and asked for a coke, but they did not have cokes. I asked some guys outside the bar which direction it was to El Palmar National Park. They pointed in the direction that I thought it was. I arrived at the entrance to the National Park and there were people at the entrance that offered me water, but I gestured that I had enough water. I then biked towards the campground, it was getting dark and I had to go 6 miles down a dirt road. It ended out taking until 10 PM to get to the campground. I noticed a lot of big frogs and animals that looked like raccoons (Viscacha) at the campground. There were about 25 Viscacha watching me set up camp. I assumed they were looking for food. I also saw a lot of fast-moving glow bugs. I took a close look at the bugs with my flashlight and they were large glow beetles. There was a sign at the campground entrance that I think said it was a large fine if you did not pay for camping. I then went to the bar and asked about camping, the guy at the bar said to set up my tent and pay in the morning. (Day miles 117.14; daily maximum speed 20.1 MPH; total bike miles 6949.8)

### **Day 25, Wednesday, December 31, 1997**

I woke up at 6:30 AM and went bird watching. All the Viscacha were gone in the morning, they must be nocturnal animals. I saw a variety of neat looking birds; scissors tailed birds, some which looked like wild chickens, woodpeckers and several green parakeets. I went to the visitor center and noticed that in front of the building there was some of the big cone shaped parakeet nests (with lots of green parakeets around it). I biked to the historic buildings in the park, they were not that nice. Then I biked to Arroyo Los Loros and it was nice, but not much different than the campground area. I went back to the campground and the camp attendant were in the store, I paid for camping (\$2 /tent + \$4/ person), bought a T-shirt and bought some post cards. Then I packed up my gear and headed for the main highway. On the way to the highway, I saw a sign to Arroyo Las Palmar, it was 3 kilometers each way (round trip 6 kilometers extra) and I decided to take the detour. It was a very nice ride; lots of palm trees lots of parakeets and a nice river. It seemed like I was really dragging all day. I stopped at one river and went to sleep on a picnic table for a couple

of hours. There was a lot of traffic and it was windy. The shoulder on the road was only about 3 inches wide most of the time. I stopped at my first non-fast-food restaurant, since I had been in South America. I could not tell what the waiter was saying to me, I decided to make it my last non-fast-food restaurant in South America (it was too hard to order). It was good food, but I am not sure what I ate. It was New Years eve and I wanted to camp somewhere with a bar. I found a campground, Balneario Parque Ruins del Viejo Molino, it had a bar and when I was registering, there were some people that seemed interested in finding out about the US. There were also a couple of nice-looking ladies around. This was the place to camp. It was a neat historic (from 1884) place and it had a very nice campground. It seemed expensive for Argentina; it was \$10/ night. I set up my tent and it was starting to rain and get windy. I decided to get in my tent for a while and I was so tired that I ended up sleeping through the New Year festivities. I did at one point in the night hear a little bit on noise, but in general it was a very quiet New Years. It was very windy and rainy all night. (Day miles 56.11; daily maximum speed 17.5 MPH; total bike miles 7005.9)

### **Day 26, Thursday, January 1, 1998**

I woke up at 8 AM and the only thing awake in the campground was a dog (there were lots of people camping). I walked around and took a lot of pictures of the historic building. Everywhere I went the dog followed me. I then packed my gear and started biking. There was a lot less traffic in the morning, but the shoulder was still only about 3 inches wide. As I was biking a small truck turned around and drove over to me. It was the blonde hair guy from Jubilea that gave me directions to El Palmar 2 days earlier. He told me he was visiting his parents for New Years. He said that they lived about 10 kilometers south of where we were. He offered to give me a 10-kilometer ride, but I told him I did not need it. He told me that I was on a very busy road and it had no shoulder all the way to Buenos Aries. It ended out that I was lucky, because he was wrong about the shoulder. At the intersection of highway 39 and highway 14, was the start of the lane-sized shoulder. The shoulder had large rumble bumps that I could easily bike around and stay a very safe distance from the traffic. The shoulder continued most of the way to Celbas (there were a couple of small stretches which were either rough or no shoulder). When I stopped at a gas station in Celbas a group of people came over to me and asked about my bike riding (this often happened, it's too bad I could hardly understand very much Spanish). When all the people were talking to me a man that was driving an old Mercedes diesel truck came over to me and started talking. He told me to put my bike on the truck and he would give me a ride. At this point it was dark and the shoulder was gone. I was also getting closer to Buenos Aries and the traffic was getting heavy, so I took the ride. He was a friendly man and we tried communicating a little (he only spoke Spanish and I only speak a little Spanish). His truck was very slow, but it sure beat my bike. He gave me

a ride to the truck stop in Zarate, where I set up my tent near the parking lot to sleep. There were lots of trucks parked there for the night. (Day miles 89.63; daily maximum speed 15.6 MPH; total bike miles 7095.6)

### **Day 27, Friday, January 2, 1998**

I started biking towards Buenos Aries in the morning, I was going down this hill and my gears started slipping more than ever. At first, I thought, this is really getting bad. Then I realized there was no way I could get anywhere. I looked at my derailleur and I was missing one of the gears. I do not think I could have traveled anywhere with the derailleur like that, I figured the part must have fallen off on the hill. I spent about 45 minutes looking for the parts, I even went back to where I camped (about 1/4 mile back). I could not find the part anywhere and I could not ride my bike the way it was. I ended up walking my bike towards Zarate. I stopped a man on the bridge to town and asked if there were any bike shops. He said just ahead there was one (I did not understand exactly where he said it was). About 1/8 of a mile latter, I saw a bus with a picture of bikes on it. I looked and it was parked in front of a bike shop (the bike shop was named "Bicicleria El Amigo"). I showed the guy what I needed and he shook his head no. Then he asked the men in the bus (the one with bikes painted on it) and they went into the bus and gave the man the parts that I needed. While I was waiting to get my bike fixed a boy came to the bike shop with a flat and the guy whom owned the shop, signaled me to wait. And I signaled him no problem. I decided while I was waiting to make it easier, I took my camping gear off my bike and turned it over. Then when he came to help me, we worked together to fix my bike. When we were done fixing the bike, he had me go in the store and clean my hands with soap and sawdust. Then he only charged 1 Paso for the parts and labor. I thought this was awfully cheap and tried giving him another Paso, but he refused to take it. While I was putting my gear back on my bike, the man that owned the shop gave me some stickers. Two of the stickers were advertisements for his bike shop and the other two stickers had "Yo (a heart) Zarate" (I love Zarate) written on them. I then biked to Campana and I saw a sign on the highway that said no bikes. I went back to a gas station to see if there was an alternate route. They suggested that I took the train and then they gave me instructions to the train station. I ended up having to stop one more time for directions to the train station. I took the train to the Buenos Aries for \$1.95 (that includes the bike). The train took me about 50 miles, but it did not go into downtown Buenos Aries. I asking a man on the train; where the train stopped in Buenos Aries and he told me when to get off the train. When I got off the train, he told me which direction to ride in order to get into downtown. I could not figure out which way it was I asked for instructions a number of times. After a while I was able to find things on my map. I had a pretty good Buenos Aries provenance map, it had the bigger roads, but it was not easy to find road signs. I was thinking to myself that I had really good luck, because I had not had a flat on my entire trip. About 1 hour later

I got a flat. It was tough to find a good place to fix it. I stopped next to a store and fixed it. Then I took off and it immediately went flat again. I fixed it a second time, that time I used a new tube. Then I took off and it went flat again. I looked at the 2 flats and they were on the same spot on both tubes. I tried to find something wrong with the rim or tire and they both looked fine. I then decided to replace the tape inside the rim and put on my new tire. Then I put the tire back on and it held air for the rest of my trip. After a while, I found if I stayed on the main roads, there were signs to all the suburb towns (extended city). I then decided to go towards the airport and find a motel. I select the town of San Justo, to get a motel. When I got to San Justo, I found that none of the motels would rent rooms to singles, all the rooms were for couples. They had rooms that you could rent for 3 hours (\$20) and they had rooms with mirrors all around, but they would not rent me a room. After trying about 4 motels, a man running a motel told me I would need to go either to downtown Buenos Aries or back to the town of Moron. I decided to go for downtown. I biked for a long time, through lots of smoggy, honking, traffic. I thought I was getting close and I stopped at a magazine stand to see if they had any city maps. The man only had a large book of maps and I was not interested in that. I then asked if he could point me in the direction of downtown. He did not understand my question and another man that was listening thought he understood my question and pointed in a direction. I then started biking in the direction that he pointed. I looked on my map and found the road, I was on and figured I was either going into downtown or back to San Justo. Well after a while I was back in San Justo. At that point, I knew how to get to Moron, so I biked there. When I got to Moron, I could not find a motel. I had to asked direction 5 times (I wrote down my question in Spanish and showed it to people when I was asking direction, it seemed like a lot of the time people did not understand my limited Spanish), before I found a motel. I went to the motel and asked if I could put my bike in my room. The man said no, he said I would need to lock it up outside. I did not like that idea, luckily the lady in the motel sided with me. Then they decided I could keep my bike in their supply room. That sounded OK, so I asked how much. I figured after paying \$97 my first night (my first night in Argentina) in Buenos Aries that it would be quit expensive, but to my surprise it was only \$25/ night. I liked the room better than the \$97 Best Western that I had stayed in that first night (night 1 of my trip). The room even had a hot shower that was ready to use. In my room, I started looking at my airline ticket and noticed that it said if you were originating in a Latin American country, that you should confirm your flight 72 hours in advance. Well, I only had about 50 hours till my flight. That night, I walked around town and ate a \$3 cheese pizza for dinner. (Day miles 46.88; daily maximum speed 18.9 MPH/; total bike miles 7142.5)

### **Day 28, Saturday, January 3, 1998**

In the morning, I tried calling American Airlines to confirm my flight, but could not

figure out how to use the phone. I asked for help and the maid in the motel made the call for me. There was a recording that said they were only opened 10 AM to 5 PM on weekends (it was Saturday) and it was only about 8 AM. The motel included breakfast, so I ate donuts and coffee. There was a man that lived in New York, he was originally from Argentina, at the motel and we talked during breakfast. He told me he paid a little more than \$700 for his flight to Argentina, I thought he was talking about round trip prices (I am pretty sure he was thinking the same way I was, price for round trip air). It sounded like he got a great deal, I paid about \$1600 (I bought my ticket about 6 months before departure) for my round-trip airfare to Argentina. I thought I got a deal, the previous year I priced the flight and it would have cost about \$3000 (That year I priced the flight about one month before departure). After breakfast, I decided to pay for a second night at the motel. Then I started biking towards the airport, I wanted to plan my escape route. There was a lot of traffic, but it was not difficult to bike. At one point, I had to ask for directions, the guy did not understand what I was asking and found someone to help interpret my question. Once they figured out where I was going, the first man gave me detailed instructions, I did not understand his spoken words, but he provided good visuals (raising his hands for bridges and turning the direction his hand was moving for corners). From that point I had no problem finding the airport. However, the main highway to the airport, had a sign that said no bikes. I then stopped at a gas station and asked if there was another route to the airport, that allowed bikes. The man at the station said, it was OK to bike on the shoulder of the highway. Once on the highway I noticed several other bikes also biking on the shoulder. At the airport I went to the American Airlines ticket counter to see if I could confirm my flight. There were a couple of people there, but they did not work for American Airlines, they said someone should be there in 10 minutes. I then went and bought some post card stamps. I returned to the American Airlines desk and some people were setting up ropes, I waited for about 1/2 hour and they were still not opened. I could tell they were getting ready, but I did not feel like waiting, so I went and called in my confirmation. There was a phone call room at the airport, its the easy way to make a call. You just make the call directly and then you pay the person at the desk (no operators required/ this is the way I called my parent when I was in San Juan on Christmas). I was concerned about not confirming my flight 72 hours in advance, but it ended out not being a problem. On the way back to Moron, I stopped in the woods to go to the restroom. I was near the Air force base and all of a sudden, I heard sirens. I looked and a truck was chasing horses with its siren on. They said something to me over a loud speaker, but I could not understand and moved my shoulders up (to show I did not understand). They just continued chasing the horses and I went back to the highway to ride back to the motel in Moron. I saw another no bicycles sign on the highway and I could see a police car on the side of the road in front of me. As I biked by him, I noticed that he just barely glanced at me, I guess it is OK to bike there. I stopped at the super Wal-Mart on the way back to the

motel. I ended up talking with the bike security guard before going into the store. It made me feel less worried about my bike when I talked to the security guards. I bought a new bike chain at the store. Then I went back to the motel and dropped off my rain gear. It was just excess gear and it did not look like it was going to rain. I biked to the town square and replaced my bike chain, I thought this would stop the gears from slipping. It seemed to help a little, but the gears were still slipping badly. I then started biking towards downtown Buenos Aires. I think I might have made it into the city limits when I decided to turn back. I had biked for several miles worth of busy streets and it was getting late, I did not want to get lost. I biked back a slightly different way, I followed roads that were on my map. I had no trouble finding my way back to the motel. I then biked around town and to the superstore, Carrefour. The bike security guard at the superstore looked at the way I locked my bike and pointed out that I did not lock it to the rack. I then re-locked my bike and went into the store. I walked my bike through a marked place in Moron and bought a duffel bag (a \$10 bag) for my trip home. I put my gloves on my bike rack and continued walking the bike. A lady tapped me in the shoulder and handed me one of my gloves that had fallen off the bike rack. The other glove was still there. I brought my bike back to the motel and then walked around town. I decided to buy one more duffel bag for my trip home, it was a \$5 bag. I needed a way to store my gear for the plane flight home, on most of my bike rides I box my gear for the plane. It is sometimes hard to find boxes and I gladly paid \$15 for gear luggage. I then started heading back to my motel, it was about 1 AM. I was walking on a dark road and a police car stopped and the police officers frisked me. I handed them my passport and they wanted to know where I was staying. I then handed them a receipt for what I thought was the motel I was staying at. It did not seem to help, I then looked at the receipt that I handed the officer and noticed that it was not from the motel. I could not find the correct receipt, but was able to show them my room key, with the hotel name. They then let me go and I went back to the motel to sleep. (Day miles 72.83; daily maximum speed 20.2 MPH; total bike miles 7215.3)

### **Day 29, Sunday, January 4, 1998**

In the morning, I asked the man at the motel if it was OK to leave my gear at the motel until noon. I wrote my question in Spanish on a piece of paper and handed it to the man in the motel. This was the way I asked question occasionally. He said it was OK, the people that ran the motel were very friendly and pleasant. I walked around a little, then I got my bike and rode around for a while. At noon I went back to the motel and put my gear on my bike. On the way to the airport, I stopped at the Wal-Mart and bought some food and aluminum foil for my film. My roommate Patrick told me that the airports X-rays can ruin film and that if I wrapped my film in aluminum foil it would protect it. I never had problems before, but did not want to start having problems, I had some good pictures to protect. I talked to the bike

security guard, before going into the store (that way he would remember me and watch my bike). I then biked to the airport, the man at the airport entrance (the guy whom helps people with their luggage) talked to me about my bike trip (we sort of communicated). I then took the luggage off my bike and put it into my new duffel bags. I also removed my front tire and handlebars from my bike. After that I tied all the parts of my bike to the bike frame. When I was packing my gear a man from Malaysia asked me how to use the phone. I tried to tell him that he should go to the co-operative phone, but he ended up trying his luck with the pay phone. I could never get the pay phone to work. I found that the co-operative phones were easy, you just went into a little room and made your phone calls, when you were done you paid the guy at the co-operative phone desk. The Malaysia man ended up losing his money and going to the co-operative phone. After he called his office, he came back to me and told me that no one was in the office. We decided it was because it was Sunday. He then asked me how much it cost to go to downtown, I told him it cost me \$45 the day that I arrived, but I thought there was probably a bus to town for a couple of dollars. After I packed all my gear I went into the airport and paid \$12 to get my bike wrapped in plastic wrap. Most luggage cost \$6 to get it wrapped, but it took 2 guys and extra plastic to wrap the bike, so they charged for 2 packages. There was no one at the American Airline package check-in yet, so I found a seat and wrote post cards till I could check my luggage. Then I checked in my luggage and wrote some more post cards. My plane did not take off until about 10 PM. A storm rolled in a little before the plane was supposed to take off and they ended up having to delay the flight by about 1/2 hour. (Day miles 22.58; daily maximum speed 19.1 MPH; total bike miles 7237.9) My total trip miles was 2006.4 miles (end miles (7237.9) - start miles (5231.5) = 2006.4).

I arrived in Miami about 3/4 of an hour before my connecting flight was supposed to depart. I had to go through customs in Miami that means that I needed to get my luggage, show people my passport and then check my luggage for my connecting flight. Well, I kept telling people that I needed to hurry and things probably went as fast as they could, but when I went to check my luggage in, they told me it was too late to catch my flight. I then went to the American Airlines ticket counter and they tried to find me a flight home. All the flights to Dallas and Chicago were booked, they could not find a flight out of Miami. They put me on standby for Chicago, I think I was number 5 on the standby list. They had no trouble getting my flight from Chicago to Detroit. I went and waited for my standby flight and I think I may have been the last person to make it on that flight. I called my house from Chicago to leave my roommate a message, telling him that I would arrive in Detroit at about 5 PM and that I was going to call and see if he could give me a ride home. In the message I also mentioned my flight number. When I arrived in Detroit to my delight my roommate was at the airport and he gave me ride home. I also found out that while I was gone,

he found a new place to live. That was OK, because I wanted to work on the house and get it ready to sell.