

Biking Mexico 2003/2004

Day -1, Monday, December 22, 2003

I slept through my alarm on Monday, December 22, 2003 after 2 weeks of only getting about 5 hours a night of sleep. The previous night I finished cleaning my house for my dad's visit. The only time my house looked better was when I first bought it. I also finished most of my packing for my upcoming Mexico bike trip. After work my dad, Gloria, Suzie and Jay came over to visit. We all went to my favorite restaurant the Tie Orchid for dinner.

Day 0, Tuesday, December 23, 2003

I woke up at 6:00 AM, took a shower and dropped my gear off for my Mexico trip at Andrea's house. I went to work and everything was going slow. I ended up leaving work around 4:15 PM and since I was running early, I stopped at Jenson beach for shopping. It took me about 45 minutes to get out of the parking lot. I then drove to Jay's place and was a little late. No one said anything, so I didn't mention getting stuck in shopping traffic. I celebrated Christmas with my dad, Gloria, Jay, Suzie, Kate and Nick. I left Jay's place around 11:30 PM and drove to the airport to pick up Andrea.

Day 1, Wednesday, December 24, 2003

I picked up Andrea at the airport around 12:30 AM. We drove to her place and I sealed my boxes for my flight to Mexico in the morning. It seemed to take forever to get ready. I slept for about 7 minutes and had to wake up to go to the airport. My flight to Mazatlán left at 5:45 AM, we left Andrea's place around 4:00 AM. My bike cost \$80.00 to ship on the plane. On my flight to Tucson, I had a seat change. They said my seat was broken and they gave me a first-class seat. Too bad I was so tired; I slept through the first-class perks. I arrived in Mazatlán a little after 1:20 PM. I went outside of the airport and unboxed my bike, assembled it and loaded my panniers on the bike. The taxi drivers at the airport watched me assemble my bike and asked questions. Since I do not understand Spanish it was tough answering their questions. One of the taxi drivers wanted my bike box, so I gave it to him after I emptied it. I decided that I really wanted to make it to Arizona before Andrea arrived, so I did not stop in Mazatlán. The day's ride was uneventful and I did not eat all day. I wanted to stay at a motel, but did not see one near the highway. I was following highway Mex 15, it started out as a nice road with a great shoulder and then it forked off to a toll road. I figured I would not be allowed on the toll road, so I took the other route. That road had no shoulder and a lot of traffic. Most of the traffic gave me plenty of room, but when cars were in both lanes (south and north bound) of the highway the vehicles would get very close. It was not a great place to ride when the shoulder disappeared. I came to a sign that pointed to a hotel towards the east. I biked a short distance and saw a sign that said 5 kilometers. I looked on my map and found the

hotel was on a dead-end road in El Quelite. I didn't know if the hotel would even be open, so I decided not to bike out of the way. I continued biking north on Mex 15 for a few more miles and found an arroyo next to the road and camped for the night. I set out my tent and put my thin fleece sleeping bag into the tent. I was very tired and went to sleep around 6:30 PM. I could hear gunshots nearby for a few hours and occasionally I could hear loud music and talking. I think the gunshots were people hunting and I believe the music was related to very slow-moving vehicles on the nearby highway. I was only about 300 feet from the highway. (Daily bike miles 38. 74 miles; 38. 74 Total Miles)

Day 2, Thursday, December 25, 2003

I woke up around 6:45 AM it was colder than expected. I did not bring a lot of warm stuff to Mexico; I was expecting it to be mild even at night. My thin sleeping bag and short sleeve shirt was not enough, I ended up putting on my fleece coat in the middle of the night. I left camp around 7:00 AM. I was hungry and stopped for breakfast near the corner of Mex 15 and D-6 (near highway to S. Ignacio, 148 Kilometers south of Culiacan). I had Carrizo and water from my water bottle. I bought some bottled water, a coke and some cookies at the restaurant store. Before paying for the water, I examined the cap to make sure it had not been refilled. It looked OK. However, after buying the water I noticed it was too easy to remove the cap and believe the water bottle had been refilled. I decided to keep things safe, so I add water-purifying tablets to the water. I ended up getting a flat just before I entered a very small roadside town 60 miles south of Culiacan. Someone pulled up to a restaurant with Oregon license plates. There were a few people in the car and I asked if they came from Oregon. The lady in the car said the driver was the only one from Oregon. I talked to the driver and he told me he was from Bend and now he lives in Mazatlán. As I fixed my flat at one end of town, I found a leaky patch caused the flat. I ended up using a new tube and patching the old tube to use latter. In the small town, I bought a gallon of water and 3 pops. It was not a very interesting day and the scenery was boring. My legs have never cramped up before this day. On this day my legs cramped up about mile 35 and mile 60 so I raised my seat. My legs only cramped up one more time (about miles 70) that day and did not cramp up again on the entire ride. I guess the low seat caused my legs to cramp up. Maybe my legs cramped because I was too busy to get into shape before my trip. That afternoon was rather hot and the traffic was heavy without any shoulder. The vehicles often came very close and occasionally blew their horns as they passed me. The horn often startles me to a point were I almost swerve into the road. Not great riding condition, but an interesting cultural experience. I wanted to stay in a hotel, but did not want to bike all the way to Culiacan, so I found a nice arroyo to push my bike up. I went about 2/3 of a mile up the arroyo and noticed mosquitoes. I decided to setup my tent and it took me a while to figure out how to fix the broken tent posts. The tent was my old beat-up Gore-Tex one-man tent. I didn't

actually use the bug screening. It cooled down and the mosquitoes went away. My camp was about 18 miles south of Culiacan. I think I was close to a farm, throughout the night I heard gunshots, music, and people talking. I thought I was a long distance from civilization, I guess I was wrong. I kept hearing this strange loud knocking noise. It was either a large woodpecker or maybe the people that were shooting the guns. I think they were hunting and the knocking might have been them trying to scare birds out of trees. A couple of times I heard shots right after the knocking noise. It was my second day of very light eating and I went to sleep hungry. I can eat less when I exercise more. I saw a shooting star that night and it got very cold. (Daily bike miles 91.62 miles; 130.36 Total Miles)

Day 3, Friday, December 26, 2003

I work up around 6:00 AM and left camp by 6:30 AM. I was hungry and biked a few miles before finding a gas station. I bought a pint of water, chips, a Fanta and 3 cans of tuna for 66 pesos. I handed the lady a 200-peso bill and she said something. I'm pretty sure she wanted to see if I had a smaller bill, I wanted to get rid of my big bill and said in Spanish that I did not understand. That's one of the few things I know how to say in Spanish. She ended up having to get another lady to give her change for the 200-peso bill. Since I currently work for Freightliner, I was always looking to see how many of the diesel trucks were Freightliner, most of the big rigs are Kenworth. When I arrived in Culiacan, I continued straight on the highway hoping it was a straight shot through town. I came to a tee in the road and decided to go right and then I took a left and continued until I made it to a river. At that point, I didn't know which way to go. I asked some people near a truck. They couldn't see my map. The one guy was driving with really bad eye site, a little scary. I then asked a military man behind a nearby fence and he pointed towards the left and I followed the river for a short a distance. Then I was not sure which way to go and asked a man sweeping the road near an overpass and he pointed to the road overhead. I then biked on the overpass road and it was the highway I wanted, Mex 15. I biked a short way and found an open bank. I decided to try getting rid of my 500-peso bill and asked about exchanging it for smaller bills. I'm not sure she understood me, but somehow, I was able to exchange my 500 Pesos bill for 10 50-peso bills. I used those 50-peso bills throughout the rest of my trip. About 15 miles north of Culiacan, Mex 15 (the highway I had been biking on since I left Mazatlán) turned into a toll road. At the tollbooth, I tried asking how much it cost for bikes. The lady at the tollbooth kept saying no Bycileta, I assumed that meant I was not allowed to bike on the toll road. I then tried asking about taking the bus. I wasn't doing very good with my communications, so I took out my phrase book and showed her the phrase for where is the bus station and she pointed south with her hands way far apart. I assumed that meant a long distance in the wrong direction. I then put my thumb up like hitch hiking and she shook her head yes and pointed a little north of the tollbooth. I assumed that meant I could hitch hike, so I

started trying to hitch a ride. After about 50 trucks didn't stop, I saw a bus and tried flagging it down. It stopped and I asked how much to go to Los Mochis and they said 100 pesos. I actually figured it out using my limited Spanish. I kept looking out the window of the bus and seeing people biking along the highway, I couldn't figure out why I was not allowed to bike past the tollbooth. I started assuming that maybe the lady at the tollbooth was actually telling me that there was no toll for bikes and not that I was not allowed to continue biking. At a bus stop in Guamuchil, I bought peanuts, chips and a Fanta. While on the bus it was stopped at several roadblocks, one of them military people that checked a lot of the luggage under the bus and searched some of the stuff inside the bus. It didn't look like they checked out the stuff in my bike panniers (they were under the bus and I never saw my stuff on the table where they searched luggage). On the way into Los Mochis, I noticed a couple of motels, so I paid close attention to our path into town. It was an easy ride back to the motel and I went to the one that had a sign saying 120 pesos 1 X 2. I tried asking how much for a night in the hotel. I assumed from our talk that the 120 pesos were based on staying for 2 nights. The price for one night ended out being 200 pesos. I biked into town after unloading my gear in the motel and ate dinner at Kentucky fried chicken. I then started biking towards the ferry after about 7 miles of biking it was getting dark and I saw a sign saying 10 kilometers to Topolobampo. It was getting dark, so I looked at my map and found out the ferry terminal was in Topolobampo. At that point, I decided to bike back towards the hotel. On the way back I saw 2 kids walking their bikes and stopped to see if they needed any help. One of the kids had a flat. I wanted to help him, but I forgot my pump at the motel. I got back to the motel around 6:45 PM and started watching TV. There was an interesting advertisement where a man in a wheel chair was trying to cross the road. A car pulled out in front of the man in the wheel chair and stopped to talk to a policeman. Then the guy in the wheel chair backed up when the street sign said no walking. The guy in the wheel chair ended out getting run over the lady and police officer never noticed. Strange advertisement!!! Another channel had X-rated stuff, so I watched it for a while. I ended out going to sleep around 8:00 PM. At about 9:00 PM someone in the motel started playing loud obnoxious music. At 3:30 AM I could hear people talking very loud outside my room, it was a rough night of sleep. (Daily bike miles 62.39 miles; 192.75 Total Miles)

Day 4, Saturday, December 27, 2003

I didn't want to wake up in the morning and took my time getting up. I left the hotel around 7:00 AM and bought groceries at the gas station on Mex 15. I decided to bike off the beaten path, since I was not sure if I was allowed to bike on the highway. I was planning on biking to El Fuerte and then through Alamos. The ride to El Fuerte followed a less traveled road with interesting small towns and interesting. I was very hungry so I stopped next to the road to eat lunch. Before stopping I noticed the rear end of my bike felt wobble. While eating I noticed one of the screws holding my rack

was missing and I had some loose spokes. While I was fixing my bike a truck pulled up. A couple of the guys went in the bushes for about five minutes each (not at the same time). I assume they were taking shits. I finished biking to El Fuetre and asked several people in town for directions to the road to Alamos. I saw a sign with a question mark and assumed it meant there was a visitor center. So, I tried asking a police for directions to the information center. He didn't understand my questions. I even pointed at the question mark sign. I biked to the town square and saw a man that didn't look Spanish. So, I asked if he spoke English and he said yes. He was from the Netherlands and told me there was not much in town and that he was pretty sure there was no visitor center. Since I don't speak Spanish the only person, I really understood was the man from the Netherlands I was not able to get directions to Alamos. I looked at my map and it appeared there would be a turn towards Alamos a little East of town, so I continued biking east. The road east had light traffic and the vegetation was limited to shrubs and cactus. There are a lot of roadside bus stops in Mexico. The bus stops are near small villages, at the end of dirt paths, small roads that seem to lead nowhere and some out in the middle of nowhere. In fact, if there is not a bus stop you can flag down a bus. Since most people don't have cars the bus transportation is great in Mexico, but most buses are crowded. After biking several miles east of El Fuerte and not seeing a road going towards Alamos I decided to stop at a small bus stop near Santa Ana to look at my map. I wasn't sure where I was and asked someone at the bus stop. There was a bus stopped and the bus driver pointed to Santa Ana on my map. From my map I realized I had passed the turnoff to Alamos by a long shot. The bus driver told me I could take a bus up the steep pass to Choix for 5 pesos. Then a not very crowded bus pulled up and the other driver waved me over. I asked the other bus driver if it was 5 pesos to Choix and it sounded like he was not going to charge me. They loaded my stuff in the bus and we headed towards Choix (about a 12-mile bus ride). A friend of the bus driver ended up taking my 5 pesos. They asked me where I wanted to go in Choix and I told them a motel. They stopped at the bus station and pointed in a direction and put up 3 fingers. I assumed that meant 3 blocks, so I biked a few blocks and saw signs pointing to hotels. In town, I found a hotel and tried finding someone inside. No one was there, so I biked until I found another hotel. The second hotel seemed a lot nicer and I asked how much for a room per night. That is one of the few things I can say in Spanish. However, I did not exactly understand their response. They pointed to a sign posting the cost for their rooms. It was 300 pesos per night. I asked if they would accept US money (something I can sort of say in Spanish) and they said no. I then went to the nearby bank and made an ATM withdrawal. ATMs are all over Mexico and all the ones I tried accepted my bankcard. The hotel was not as nice as the one I stayed in at Los Mochis. No TV, AC or free bottle of water and it cost 50% more. On my ride to Choix and in Choix I saw several police trucks with 4 officers. There were 2 in the front of the truck and 2 in the back with high-powered rifles. Seems a little scary, but it probably makes it safer. I biked around town. Then I

walked around looking for something to eat. The first place I stopped and asked about food (something I think I can say in Spanish). The lady said something and then sat down and ignored me. I decided to see what else I could find. The next 2 places I looked at did not look very appetizing. I ended up finding a place with a nice lady and tasty looking chicken. I ordered a meal with a coke. It was a great meal and I even ate the lettuce (it is recommended that you don't eat lettuce in Mexico - it was not a problem for me). It was a great meal that consisted of a ½ chicken, a coke and some lettuce. I went back to my room and it sounded like there was loud music in the room. I couldn't figure out how to turn off the music. I walked around the hotel and found that a house right behind my room had speakers pointed out their door and the loud music was coming from their stereo. What bad luck, right behind my room. Luckily, they only played the loud music until about 9:00 PM. I took a close look at my map in the hotel; I was hoping that I could bike to Creel, the stopping point for Copper Canyon. My map revealed that all the roads leaving Choix lead to dead end roads. At about 7:00 PM I went to the store across from the hotel to get some snacks. A drunken man in the store was bugging me and my lack of Spanish got me some weird looks in the store. The town seemed like a resort area for Mexicans. It seems like people get a little rowdier at nights, normally I was not out after 7:00 PM. I think it's smart not to be out late in Mexico. The motel was not very crowded when I went to sleep and I could hear noises outside the hotel until about 3:00 AM. (Daily bike miles 85.47 miles; 278.22 Total Miles)

Day 5, Sunday December 28, 2003

At about 4:00 AM I could hear roosters and I packed up my stuff to start biking back to Los Mochis. The people that ran the motel were still asleep, so I opened the curtains and put the key on the room's table. I left the hotel at about 6:30 AM. My plan was to bike to the place where the bus picked me up the previous day and take a bus to Los Mochis. Well, I quickly biked back to the bus stop and everything was very quiet so I decided to bike back to El Fuerte thinking there would be more buses to Los Mochis from there. In El Fuerte, I decided not to go into town and stopped at the first stop outside town. The first bus that passed I tried flagging down, but they did not stop. I then decided to continue biking towards Los Mochis. About 10 miles from town, I stopped at a bus stop and flagged down a bus. They did not have room for me with my bike. Throughout the day I biked and tried flagging down buses. No buses would stop; I guess they were all too full. I should have stopped at the bus terminal in El Fuerte!!! I had about 40 miles to Los Mochis and decided to bike the rest of the way back. I stopped to eat lunch behind a big tree and an old lady walked from her original location (about 500 feet east of me) and walked past me to put a single stick in the bushes. Then she walked back to her original location. I looked at the stick and it made no sense since what she was doing. I think she made the walk to see what I was doing in her domain. On the way back to Los Mochis, I passed a baseball game when

someone hit a foul ball. The ball missed me by about 50 feet and hit the grill of a van from Minnesota. The van kept going. At one small village I heard a young boy that was looking at me excitedly yelling to his parents Gringo, Gringo!! When I arrived at Mex 15 near Los Mochis I started biking north. It was windy, the road had a dirt shoulder, lot of traffic and I was not sure if I was allowed on the highway with my bike, so I decided to stay another night in Los Mochis. I stopped at a gas station and picked up a 50 pesos phone card it cost 63 pesos. I guess the extra charge was taxes. I went to the motel next to the one I stayed in before going to Choix and asked how much per night. They held up 4 fingers, I assumed that meant 400 pesos. I shook my head no and went next door. I asked how much per night at the motel I previously stayed in and it was 170 pesos (30 Pesos less than the first time), so I stayed for the night. I could have checked out other motels that I saw on the north end of town. I took my gear off my bike and left in the hotel while I biked into town. I found a McDonald's and ate a chicken sandwich. On the way back to the motel, I stopped at the bus station and was trying to figure out the schedule. I wanted to see about taking a bus to Guaymas. I biked around the terminal to see if I could find a place to lock my bike. I saw a rack with a bunch of bikes and noticed a man that looked like he was picking a lock. He might have been just unlocking his bike, but it looked like he was picking the lock. I decided I didn't want to park my bike there. I went back to the bus terminal to see about the schedule and the security guard tried talking to me. I tried explaining that I wanted a schedule. Then he gave me the feeling he wanted me to leave with my bike. He pointed at my bike and shook his head no. Then he pointed at his security patch, so I decided to leave without finding out about the bus schedule. I then started biking back to my motel and stopped at a store to get a beer. The beer freezer was locked, so I assumed that beer was not sold on Sundays. I continued biking back to the motel and saw a beer store. I stopped and bought a 950-milliliter Tecate beer. I went back to the hotel and tried to open my beer. I couldn't open it with a coin. Normally I can open beer bottles with a coin, but my hand was still hurt (from the fall I had on my bike 2 weeks before leaving for Mexico) too much to open the bottle. I then looked in my tool bag and found a bottle opener on my multi-use bike tool. I didn't know that was there. The tool also had a can opener; I had left a can of tuna in the motel in Choix the previous night because I didn't have a can opener. I could have kept the can of Tuna. (Daily bike miles 93.02 miles; 371.24 Total Miles)

Day 6, Monday, December 29, 2003

I wanted to get an early start; I looked at the clock and thought it read 5:30 AM. So, I stayed in bed. I didn't think I went back to sleep, but the next time I looked at the clock it said 6:45 AM. I immediately woke up and packed my gear. I left the motel at about 7:10 AM. I started biking north on the toll road and came across a toll stop. I kept seeing bikes on the highway, so I decided not to ask about bikes and slowly biked past the tollbooth a little to the right of all the cars. No one even looked at me.

A little past the both I saw a security guard holding a powerful small rifle (looked like an Ozzy). He gave me a funny look and grunted. I grunted back and slowly continued biking like I knew what I was doing. Nothing happened so I continued biking along the highway. I came to a residential stop; it was near the border of Sonora/ Sinaloa. At that stop the man at the security post smiled and waved me through. I continued biking and came to a major military run security check. They were stopping every vehicle and searching a lot of them. They stopped me and searched everything on the back of my bike. They even opened my vitamin bottle. The funny thing is they did not check my front bag and I was a little concerned about my camera. Some countries don't like people taking too many photos. After the security check the back of my bike felt very wobble. I didn't want to check it near the security area, so I continued biking. I assumed the wobbling was because my stuff was not properly packed after the check. After biking for about 5 miles the wobbling did not stop and I found a nice bridge to go under to repack stuff. Under the bridge I inspected my spokes and found I had 3 broken spokes. It was tough getting the tube off my rim. I looked closely at my rim and found that it was cracked all the way around the outside of the rim near the valve stem. This is the 3rd rim that I have broken on a bike tour. It took an hour to fix the three broken spokes. I continued biking north and came to another tollbooth, no one even looked at me, so I biked on through. I arrived in Navojoa by dusk (5:50 PM). At one hotel, I stopped to see how much it cost for a room and the lady wrote down 160 pesos or 230 pesos. I pointed to the 160-peso room and she scrambled through her keys and shook her head no. I shook my head no and pointed towards the nearby hotel. Then I started to leave and she went through the keys again and found me a 160-peso room. I wanted to check out the room and took the key and tried saying be back in Spanish (Asta la Vista). I think I used the wrong term she was right behind me, I think she was worried about if I was coming back. I'm not sure why she was worried my bike was in front of her office. The motel did not look very crowded at that point; she probably had more of the cheap rooms. I also had to give her a 40-peso key deposit, which I got back in the morning. I then went to the nearby superstore (like a Wal-Mart) to buy supplies and dinner. I returned to the hotel and then biked through town looking for the bus station. I biked by the bus station and then back to my hotel. On the way back to the motel I noticed this guy walking around holding a torch. He had something in his mouth and when the light turned red, he blew the stuff out of his mouth and onto the torch. The result was a fireball the size of a car coming out of his mouth. After the show he tried collecting money from people waiting for the traffic light. Some people gave him money. The next time the light turned red he performed his show again. An interesting way to make money!! I stopped to buy a pop and ice cream at a store. The lady range up my stuff and it came out to 75 pesos. I looked at the register and the prices were correct, but the total was wrong. I pointed at the prices and she had to call for assistance. They ended up re-ringing up my bill and that time it came to the correct price of 29.5 pesos. At the hotel, I examined my

spokes and found another broken spoke, so I fixed it. While fixing the other broken spoke I examined my rim and found that it has 2 layers the outer layer was cracked all the way through and the inner rim looked OK. I started thinking it might be time to give up my bike ride. I watched a couple of movies at the hotel. They had English movies with Spanish captions, cool!!! I ended up watching the happy day's movie and Escape from New York while I fixed my broken spokes. (Daily bike miles 107.48 miles; 478.72 Total Miles)

Day 7, Tuesday, December 30, 2003

I left the hotel around 6:30 AM. The office was open, so I was able to get my 40 pesos key deposit. One of the things I enjoy when biking in a foreign country is looking at how people live. In Mexico, I saw a lot of houses that appeared to be made from scrape material. I called Andrea around 10:00 AM from Ciudad Obregon and she did not answer so I left her a message. My phone card was only good for 10 minutes, so it was a great way to use up 2 of my minutes to tell her where I was and give her some time to decide if I should take the bus or if she wanted to try to find me in Mexico. I figured she would have too much trouble finding me in Mexico. In the message, I said I would call her in a couple of hours. About an hour into the ride, I saw the last phone before a long stretch without any services. After biking about 30 miles past Ciudad Obregon I found a phone and tried calling. The first 2 phones I tried didn't work. Then I found some more phones and was able to call Andrea. When I called her, she started asking me about the weather and I told her I only had limited minutes on my calling card. Then I was able to find out that she wanted me to take the bus to Nogales. The total phone call only used up 2 minutes. I still had 6 minutes left in my phone card. I went through one military checkpoint and tried sliding past all the military people. I almost made it, but a couple military guys near the end of the roadblock stopped me and searched some of my gear. I was very helpful and removed my rear bag opened it up and started opening my panniers. The guy shook his head no when I started opening the panniers. The funny thing is that as we tried communicating, he attempted to look into my panniers. He was interested in my trip, so I mentioned Mazatlán and Nogales. The guy also wanted to know what was in my pockets, he gestured for me to turn my pockets inside out and when I did, they noticed I had some small Mexican bills and change. Probably only about 200 pesos. It looked like a lot of stuff was in my pockets; I think they could see the bulge from my passport in my shorts. One of the military guys was very friendly and smiling a lot. The other guy kept giving me weird looks; I guess he thought I was up to no good. Then I finished biking to Guaymas. When I first arrived on the highway near Guaymas I asked some people for directions to the bus station (I pointed to the phrase in my phrase book. They told me which way to go and how many blocks and then pointed in another direction (actually they pointed down a road and held up all his fingers one time followed by 4 fingers, then pointed in another direction. - to me that means 14 blocks down that road then

turn right). I biked in the direction he pointed to the main road, turned right and then started looking for someone else to ask. I showed another man my phrase book and he pointed down the road held up 6 fingers and pointed in another direction. I went about 10 blocks while looking down the roads for the bus station. I couldn't see a bus station, so I asked someone else and they showed me that it was back 2 blocks and right. With his directions I found the bus stop back 1 block and then 2 blocks down. I disassembled my bike at the bus station and went to see about getting a bus ticket to Nogales. When I asked about the bus, the man at the ticket counter pointed to this guy next to me. I talked with him and found he was also trying to get a bus to Nogales. He already knew the scoop and spoke English. It turned out the guy (Josh) and his girlfriend (I forgot her name) was from Albuquerque. Josh and his girlfriend had spent time in Thailand. We ended up talking about Albuquerque and Thailand. Luckily Josh spoke Spanish and was able to help me figure out how to efficiently get to Nogales. He told me they had problems with buses being canceled and suggested that we take the first available bus to Hermosillo. I would have waited for the 11:00 PM bus, but it might have been too crowded or cancelled. I decided to tag along with Josh and his girlfriend. I called Andrea to tell her that I had no idea when I would be in Nogales; I told her I would call when I knew. I only used 3 minutes on that call; I still had 3 more minutes on my 10-minute calling card. Josh decided to take the 8:00 PM bus to Hermosillo, so I decided to tag along. Well, the bus driver never showed up and therefore there was no 8:00 PM bus to Hermosillo. The next bus was a 9:00 PM and that one showed up and we went to Hermosillo. When we arrived in Hermosillo with the help of Josh, we found a bus to Tucson and I called Andrea to tell her I would be going all the way to Tucson. I used up my last 3 minutes and all she could tell me was to start biking towards Old Tucson when I arrived in town and not to call until at least 8:00 AM. The bus to Tucson arrived in Nogales at around 4:00 AM and Andrea didn't have her rental car, that's why I decided to go all the way to Tucson. (Daily bike miles 125.01 miles; 603.73 Total Miles)

Day 8, Wednesday, December 31, 2003

I arrived in Tucson around 6:30 AM and assembled my bike. I got directions to Old Tucson from the guy behind the greyhound bus terminal. As I was putting my bike together outside the bus terminal a man wrapped in a sleeping bag came over to me and started talking. The guy seemed a little strange and when he asked me for \$.50 cents, I told him no and he went into the bus station. The directions to Old Tucson from the bus station were very clear, but apparently not the easy way to go on a bike. I biked out Congress to Silverbell and stopped at a Circle K at Speedway for breakfast. Two times on my way to Old Tucson I asked people for directions and both times people said you're going to bike all the way to Old Tucson. I biked up the hill towards Old Tucson. I left the corner of Silverbell and Speedway a little before 8:00 AM. Therefore, I had not called Andrea yet. The ride was a long ride up a steep hill over

Gate Pass. I didn't see any phones. At a rest stop near the top of the hill I asked some people if they had a cell phone and they told me their cell phones did not work in the hills. Since Andrea told me they were before Old Tucson and I didn't see any trailer courts between me and the other side of the hill. I didn't know if I should bike back or continue towards Old Tucson. I figured at that point I was mad because Andrea never told me about the big hill and no phones. But I wasn't sure if I went way too far and decided to continue, because I did not want to backtrack and then have to bike back up the big hill. I was also curious about Old Tucson and figured I could see it this way. On the way down the hill, I had a blow out and used my spare tire and tube. Good thing I had the spare tire!!! I found a phone at Old Tucson around 10:00 AM and didn't have much US change. I decided to try calling the number Andrea gave me for her aunt Gwen. Luckily it was the number of the place where Andrea was staying and I was able to talk with her. I chewed her out for not telling me about the hill and lack of phones. I then got directions to Gwen's place from the maintenance man at Gwen's place. Apparently, everyone thought I biked the easy way without a hill and lots of phones. Oh well, I guess the guy at the bus station gave me directions the hard way. I biked to Gwen's and followed the instruction given to me by the maintenance man. Well, the maintenance guy left out a turn and I didn't find Lazy S Street. However, there was a street Lazy something else and I biked down that road to Gwen's address and found out it was not her place. The guy I asked seemed to think that was the only street name Lazy anything around. I started biking back to the nearby Circle K and Gwen and Andrea found me. I followed them to Gwen's place. I unloaded my biking stuff, took a shower and changed cloths. Then we ate lunch and went to the Desert Museum and the Saguaro national park. Leaving the park, I took a wrong turn and ended up about 7 miles from the park and in the wrong direction. We called Gwen, but she didn't know where we were. We drove back towards the desert museum. We found the road back to Gwen's, bought beer and wine. We arrived at Gwen's just in time for dinner. Art and Natalie (Andrea's Uncle and cousin) were there too. We had a great dinner with Chicken, Fish, Steak, salad and goodies. The first real meal since I left Portland. We played poker and Natalie was having back problems and returned home before New Years. I was winning at poker when we quit for the night. Too bad we weren't playing for real money. We then played Cribbage through the New Years. Gwen and Andrea teamed up against Art and me. They won 2 of the 3 games we played. All the games were very close. We ended up going to sleep around 1:00 AM. (Daily bike miles 18.12 miles; 621.85 Total Miles)

Day 9, Thursday, January 1, 2000

We woke up around 10:15 AM, had sex and then Gwen took us to pick up our rental car. Andrea had originally reserved the rental car with Avis. When we went to pick up the car, we found out it was going to cost more than expected. Their price was \$45/day plus \$0.35/ mile. We then check out Alamo and found a car for \$33/day plus

\$5/day for an extra driver and a \$35 drop off fee. The drop off fee was due to the fact that Andrea's flight left from Phoenix, which meant we picked up the car in Tucson and dropped it off in Phoenix. After getting our car we went back to Gwen's place and ate lunch. Then we went to Sabino Canyon and took the shuttle to end of the canyon. We hiked up the hill for about a mile then back to the shuttle parking lot. We ended out missing the last shuttle back to the main parking lot and had to hike out. On the way-out Andrea told me to look at this animal, it was dark and she thought it was a javelin. I looked at it and said no it's a skunk and took a photo of it. We made it back to the car around 6:30 PM (in the dark). Then we drove to Natalie's (Andrea's cousin) for dinner. We arrived at her place around 7:00 PM. They were serving dinner as we showed up. Art and Gwen (Andrea's aunt and uncle) also joined us for dinner. We ate lasagna, spicy chicken legs and salad for dinner. We left Natalie's around 10:00 PM. We ended out getting to sleep around 11:00 PM at Gwen's. (Hiked 6 miles; Daily bike miles 0 miles; 621.85 Total Miles)

Day 10, Friday, January 2, 2000

We woke up around 7:00 AM and I took a shower. Then we drove to Natalie's. On the way to Natalie's, we stopped at Circle K to get money from the ATM and get some snacks for the day. We arrived at Natalie's around 8:05 AM (5 minutes late). Natalie's friend Peter was not there yet, he was running later than us. Peter showed up shortly and we left Natalie's place around 8:30 AM. Our first stop was San Xavier Mission where we checked out the church for about an hour. Peter was born and raised in Tucson and had never visited the mission. The mission is very close to Tucson and is a major tourist attraction. Peter and Natalie both felt visiting the church was a spiritual experience and said they would return. I was told about the church from Josh and his girlfriend in Mexico. They are the ones I met in Guaymas that helped me take the bus to Tucson. They told me that one of the steeples on the church was not finished because every time they worked on the steeple someone died. It turns out that all the photos of the church have the one unfinished steeple and I could not find any literature telling why the one steeple was never finished. I guess I will have to believe that it was cursed and never finished. We continued to Nogales and arrived there around 10:45 AM. We first visited the duty-free store and I bought a bottle of Jose Cuervo Especial tequila for \$12 USD. The purchase was for export only and we all (Natalie, Peter (Peter doesn't drink so his bottle was for Natalie), Andrea and me) bought one bottle of liquor (our maximum was 1 bottle per person). Since it was for export only the Duty-Free security had to make sure we entered Mexico with our bottles. The security guard escorted us to the border and after arriving in Mexico we turned around and went back across the border to put our purchases back in the car. The border was not crowded and it was a quick process to enter and exit Mexico to get duty free liquor. After putting our liquor purchases in the car, we immediately went back into Mexico to do some shopping. We all bought a lot of stuff in Mexico.

We even had our photo taken on a donkey cart. I started the day by buying a nice woven rug. Then I bought a Tecate beer and a Chicken Chimichanga. We shopped all day. I bought a blanket, drum and gourd instruments. Then we ate dinner at Elvira's. I had chicken Enchiladas and a beer. The bill for the 4 of us (Peter, Natalie, Andrea and me) came out to \$80.00 USD. For some reason I split the bill with Andrea. I figure it was worth it to pay for Peter and Natalie's bill since they gave us a great tour of Nogales. They showed us where to shop in Nogales. It was a very fun day of shopping. We drove back to Natalie's place in Tucson and decided to spend the night at her place. We watched the movie "Race to the Moon" while eating cheese and crackers for dinner. Then we started watching a Kevin Spacey drama; Natalie and me both fell asleep soon after the movie started. Andrea watched the entire movie. Then we went to bed. I don't think I ever fully woke up between the couch and the bed. (Daily bike miles 0 miles; 621.85 Total Miles)

Day 11, Saturday, January 3, 2004

We woke up around 8:15 AM and drove into town to find a bike box. The first bike shop gave me a couple of small bike boxes. Then we went to a second bike shop to see if they had bigger bike boxes and they had several boxes in their dumpster. I took the biggest 2 and got rid of the boxes I got from the first bike shop. The biggest box was a little torn up. I ended up using the torn-up box to ship my bike. After getting the bike box we ate at Burger King and bought gas at Arco and drove toward Tombstone. We arrived in Tombstone around noon and checked out the gravestones on boot hill. We didn't recognize any of the names. Some of the people were historic names of people that died in gunfights at the OK corral in downtown Tombstone. We spent several hours shopping in the historic town of Tombstone. Before we left, we checked out the OK corral. They had it set up with manikins of the famous gunfight on October 26, 1881 where Doc Holiday, Wyatt Earp, Virgil Earp and Morgan Earp fought and killed the Clantons and McLaurys. Then we drove to Bisbee and just missed the last underground tour. We ended up doing a whirlwind walking tour of the town. Then we drove and checked out the open pit mine. It's interesting and a shame at the same time. The open pit mine is about a mile long and 1000 feet deep. Quite a whole!!! We then drove to the Electric Beer brewpub. I ended out getting a new pint glass full of beer. We sat next to this nice man that lived ½ the year in Wyoming and the other ½ the year in Bisbee. After the brewpub we drove back to Tucson to meet Andrea's family for dinner. We called Natalie to make sure that they still wanted to meet at the Steakhouse for dinner. It turned out the Natalie was very busy and never mentioned to Art and Gwen that we wanted to meet them at the Steak house. Well, it turned out Art, Gwen and Natalie already ate dinner. We decided to go to the steak house alone and it was a great meal. After eating we went to check out Art's new Trailer. Then I drove to the bus station with my bike. Between disassembling my bike, taping up the bike box, loading the bike into the box and waiting in the slow line at

the bus station it took about 2 hours to do my work at the bus station. There were only about 5 people in the line at the bus station, but it took about 45 minutes to get through the line. In fact the people working behind the desk were so busy answering phone calls that it took about 15 from the time I arrived at the desk. The lady that did the paper work for shipping my bike had no idea what to do. She ended up having to get help with the paper work. When I asked her how long she thought it would take to ship the bike she just laughed at me. I then said it was OK and I would call when I got back to Portland. Then I started driving back to Gwen's and made a slight error in my directions. I stopped to get gas and a very nice-looking lady asked me if I could give her a ride. She said her car broke down and was not sure how she could get home. She even offered me money for gas. I told her I was in a hurry and had to get packed so I could leave for Phoenix at 6:00 AM. After getting gas I had to backtrack to find the freeway and then I was easily able to drive back to Gwen's. Luckily while I was shipping my bike Andrea packed my stuff for our early departure the next morning. We went to sleep around 1:00 AM. (Daily bike miles 0 miles; 621.85 Total Miles)

Day 12, Sunday, January 4, 2004

I woke up around 6:00 AM, took a shower and then sang Andrea awake. We then started driving to Phoenix. A little before we arrived at the exit to Chandler, I saw a sign that said Indian arts and craft. I decided to stop to see if it was open. It was early on Sunday and we assumed that it would be closed. We drove up and there were no cars in the parking lot. The sign said opened daily at 8:00 AM. It was a few minutes after 8:00 AM and we entered the gift shop. I bought some sand paintings and a rattle instrument. Everything in the store was %25 off. On the way into the store, I saw the fattest man that I had ever seen, he was entering the gift shop's restaurant. I felt sorry for the guy. We finished driving to Phoenix and I dropped Andrea off at the airport. Then I decided to check out the University of Phoenix. I started driving west on interstate 10 and didn't see any signs for the University. I decided to pull off an exit and look at my map. I stopped at a K-mart and decided to go into the store. In the parking lot I looked at my map and didn't see any reference to the university. Since I knew the University was in Tempe and saw Tempe on the map I realized the school was a little east of the airport. I then backtracked to the university and hiked to the top of the butt behind Sun Devil Stadium. I did that hike in 1992 after interviewing for Medtronix. I remembered seeing Pictographs and could not find them. I hiked to the top of the hill and took a different trail back to my car. On the other trail I saw a sign talking about the nearby Pictographs and then saw them on a distant rock. The sign said to stay on the trail and to report anyone that gets too close to the rocks. When I visited to rock in 1992 it was OK to walk up to the Pictographs to take close up photos. This time I had to use my zoom lens to take photos. After my hike I filled the car up with gas and drove back to the airport. I ended up having time to walk through all the halls in terminal 4 of the Phoenix airport. The flight was on time and I arrived

in Portland 2 hours before Andrea. My flight was a direct flight and her flight stopped in San Francisco and then Seattle. I ate dinner at the Chinese buffet in the airport and then read my bike Mexico book while waiting for Andrea. Andors picked us up at the airport and we went back to Andrea's place. (Daily bike miles 0 miles; 621.85 Total Miles)