

We crossed the 540.2 miles of Florida in 10 days of riding and one layover or 11 days. The average cycling speed was 10.3 mi/hr. We did the rest of the trip, 2450 miles in 42 days of riding and 4 layovers or 46 days at an average riding speed of 10.0 mi/hr. That looks the same as training in Florida except that Florida is flat and this was not.

NOTE: The number before the name of a town, it is the Adventure Cycling map number. D is the detour for which there is no AC-map

It was too cold at home to train for this ride which has to start before it gets too hot in the south, especially too hot to cross the desert. We wanted to do it westbound so the sun would be on our backs in the early morning instead of in the eyes of drivers overtaking us. It seems that the winds on the ground are more from the east out west even though the winds up high are always from the west. Local winds always are getting sucked into low-pressure areas which can send it in any direction. But also, out west, it seems like there might be sort of an eddy-current at the ground like are the banks of rivers.

Saturday, 3/6/21

We drove to St. 109-Augustine, Florida and spent 2 nights in a KOA cabin.

Sunday, 3/7/21, Walking tour of St Augustine, FL

We spent our first day visiting St. Augustine and learning a little of its history. One of the old houses had an enormous live oak in its yard, with bees buzzing in and out of the beehive in its trunk. The houses had lots of plaques with very interesting history. Then we found a nice Greek restaurant. There seemed to be two kinds of diners, people like us who just wanted to eat a great meal and those who bought something with big flames. Of course the most important activity of this first day was the drink from the Fountain of Youth, to get our octogenarian cyclists prepared for their ride across the U.S. The park with the fountain had lots of historical displays with costumed curators giving demonstrations, some more accurate than others.

Monday, 3/8/21, 29.4mi, 11mi/hr 109-St Augustine, FL -> 108-Palatka, FL – Bartram Inn

The first day's ride was only some 35 miles to Palatka, where we stayed at the Bartram Inn, run by Linda Crider, a cyclist herself, who had ridden the Southern Tier with her then 12-year-old son. The inn was named for Billy Bartram, son of John Bartram who was “the father of American botany” from Philadelphians in the 1700’s. After accompanying his botanist father to Florida on a mission for King George III, Billy Bartram became enamored of Florida's flora and fauna and wrote detailed descriptions and drawings of what he saw here. We had lunch at a Subway next to the 1932 diner and a delicious fish dinner at Musselwhite’s on the other side of the river.

Tuesday, 3/9/21, 62.4mi, 10mi/hr 108-Palatka, FL -> 106-Gainsville, FL – Travelers Inn

Linda got on her bike and led us out of town on safe, back roads onto the bike-path system. It was a very pleasant cycling day. The bike path terminated in a large park with many other paths and lots of college students on bikes. All of the streets had a N or S or E or W and the zero addresses were at the center of the university. We had no clue how to get to the motel and the locals were of very little help. My little GPS paid for its price and its weight that day! The Traveler’s Inn had some nice Indian ladies but the Indian restaurant was further away than we wanted to go; we should have gone.

Wednesday, 3/10/21, 47.0mi, 10.9mi/hr 106-Gainesville, FL -> 104-Ichetuchee Springs - Ichetucknee Canoe and Cabins

I started with a flat which seems to be a theme of this trip. The riding in Florida is very pleasant but it is not a photo op. From the photos you might assume that it is all rivers but they were the only things to photograph. This is Trump country with flags but no masks. We had lunch at Bev's in High Springs, lots of locals. The stream in the park was quite beautiful and the cabin was very cozy.

Thursday, 3/11/21, 68.3mi, 10.9mi/hr 104-Ichetuchee Springs -> 102-Madison, FL – Super-8

We left at 7:30, had breakfast at the Wellborn Café and supper at the Smakin' Lips Diner. The spectacular huge tree beckoned to my camera as did the Suwanee River. The Super8-internet was broken which is not good when you are trying to book accommodations. If we were to do this again (which Kris will not) we would bring a wifi hot-spot and we would not only have service, but it would be secure.

Friday, 3/12/21, 47.8mi, 10.8mi/hr 102-Madison, FL -> 100-Lloyd, FL - Econolodge

Nancy's Tupelo Bakery in Monticello was really special and the town was very pretty and inviting. Kris photographed us arriving at the Econo-Lodge and we had supper at the Subway supper next door. It was lovely at the picnic pavilion outside the hotel in a bank of solar panels

Saturday, 3/13/21, 43.2mi, 9.4mi/hr 100-Lloyd, FL -> 99-Quincy, FL - Holiday Inn Express & Suites

We left at 8:00 for another nice ride in Florida. The event of the day was watching the hot-air balloon come down and get packed up. The air goes in different directions at different elevations and that is how you steer it. How else would we get an east-bound or west-bound head or tailwind on the ground when the wind up high moves the weather patterns from west to east? We all had lunch at Moe's which was maybe a southern version of Chipotle. Holiday Inn Express gave us an extra-big room; maybe the handicapped rooms weren't filled. Chinese take-out for dinner.

Sunday, 3/14/21, 50.1mi, 10.3mi/hr 99-Quincy, FL -> 97-Marianna, FL - Residence Inn & Suites

We changed time zones and to daylight saving time at the same time and they balanced out. We started at 9:00 and there was a motorcyclist traveling with some friends who was also a cyclist and impressed with our distances. It was an uneventful day cycling in Florida. As usual, we asked about an Indian restaurant and there was one! Well it was Indian/Mediterranean, it was good, but we had to get over there before they closed. When we got there they had closed an hour early, but they recommended a Japanese restaurant. The Japanese restaurant was first class, even after hopes for Indian.

Monday, 3/15/21, 58.9mi, 10.7mi/hr 97-Marianna, FL -> 94-DeFuniak Springs, FL – Super-8

A Florida cycling day, Alligator Creek and the Choctawhatchee River and we left the real world and entered DeFuniak Springs, the Florida Chautauqua Resort/Campus. It looks like something from another time and another place.

Tuesday, 3/16/21, 75.4mi, 10.9mi/hr 94-DeFuniak Springs, FL -> 92-Milton, FL - Holiday Inn Express & Suites

We started at 8:00 and a light rain started soon after. My mirror was rainy and my glasses were also a little messy so I didn't see when Carl dropped off and didn't hear him and he didn't phone me to stop. When I finally wiped my mirror and he wasn't there, I had no idea how far back he was and if it was a medical situation. The rain seemed too light to put on my raincoat, so the microphone in my phone was wet. When I

called Kris, she couldn't understand me so I went to a house and borrowed a phone;^) When she found him, a bungy was wrapped into his cassette. She brought him to me and we got it straightened out so she took us the 20 miles back to bike mess-up and we almost finished the day. Almost because we didn't realize that we were only a couple of miles from the 331-turn to the motel when I had a flat and then it was getting too dark to ride so Kris picked us up and dropped us back there in the morning. She had to drive us back and forth on 331 anyway.

Wednesday, 3/17/21, Layover

Carl and I did shopping while Kris finished out taxes. I bought a new pair of tires as I hadn't put on new tires before the trip. We had dinner with Josiah Leonard which was wonderful including the history of AL building the bridge in exchange for FL giving them a chunk of beach and other great stories.

Thursday, 3/18/21, 57.7mi, 8.9mi/hr 92-Milton, FL -> 90-Gulf Shores, AL - Beachside Resort

We had troublesome headwinds all day. We took a little bit of a shortcut, not because it was a little shorter, but because it was in sheltering trees instead on the open shoreline. It was not only boring but also had no shoulder and we were wondering if we had made a mistake until we got out into the open and the wind. The AL welcome sign was small with a car in front of it but some college girls offered to take the photo without being asked. We should have taken their photo or better put most of them in our photo. With the steepness and the wind high up, I think I walked the bridge. We finally met Kris in the parking lot of a church by AL-161 and she drove us to the touristic hotel. The restaurant across the street had a long wait but very good food and the ice cream shop on the hotel side finished it off just right.

We had several crises which brought us home after cycling across N. FL into AL. So in order to cross the desert before it gets too hot, we flip-flopped and are on our way to Dan Diego to start there and come back to FL. Fortunately the crises of my cycling buddy Carl's carotid artery happened then in Roanoke and now I am cycling alone with Kris's car support.

Friday, 4/09/21, 19.4mi (10 miles out and back), 9.4mi/hr 1-San Diego, CA – Super-8

We arrived in the mad-house traffic of San Diego and checked in. The GPS was a requirement for getting around. We tried to use the map to drive small roads to the starting point which was Dog Beach where a lot of surfers hang out, but we made a wrong turn and found ourselves on a ramp to a bridge to Never-Never land. We guessed at an address and the GPS took us near enough. This demonstrated that riding bikes there from the hotel was not an option for tomorrow. We had enough time to start at the dog-beach point and do the greenway for the first 10 miles. Eventually, it being the worst greenway we had ever seen, Kris finally elected to sit it out and get picked up later. Actually it is not a greenway, it is a bikeway, just a way that is possible to get from here to there, not a concept we need at home. I continued on to get 10 miles out of the way and have an easy-to-locate starting point for today.

Saturday, 4/10/21, 35.2mi 6.3mi/hr 1-San Diego CA -> 2-Alpine, CA – Ayres Lodge

Kris dropped me off at 8:00 where I had turned around on Friday. Today I rode 30-some miles and gained 3,000 feet. One of the first things in the trip was the Father Junipero Serra Trail. This has to be one of the highlights of the trip the way we left the clamor and entered peace, It is tucked between two peaks to follow a stream before coming back to reality, and reality here was actually rather nice. Although when I walked my bike across a big street, traffic started coming. I started to run with the bike to move things along, but the cars really came fast. One of them passed in front of me as I was running. THAT was a near-death experience!

When we left the park and trail we also left San Diego. The crazy part where we had started was actually surfer land. The route now went through lots of pretty scenic suburban neighborhoods with some cool, friendly shopping. I stopped for a second breakfast at 10 or 11 of scrambled eggs, fried red potatoes, OJ and coffee. When I was closer to Alpine, our hotel "town", I stopped at a barbeque place and had ice cream & coffee at the bar. As I was getting closer and closer to Alpine, the climbing became relentless. I got to Alpine at about 2:00 and joined Kris for some Chinese lunch. I was really beat but by 3:00 I was ready to hit it again. Alpine is at 1700 feet on the old pre-I-8 route. Not only does it not have the grade improvements of the newer I-8 but it had to make some bad grade choices where it came close to where the new road usurped the old route. I was riding the old route after lunch with really fast and long dips which we then had to climb back out of in addition to continuing the relentless climbing. At 2000 ft I entered I-8 and rode the shoulder, which is well designed for cyclists (the highway rules are different out west). (I will continue to ride I-8 deviating from the Adventure Cycling route where possible.) I finished at a scenic overlook five miles past 2000 ft and now at 3000 ft where we will take many more pictures with the morning light that did not show well in the evening light. We had microwave GF Mac&Cheese and kale & blue cheese dip.

Sunday, 4/11/21, 28.7mi, 7.4mi/hr 2-Alpine, CA -> 3-Boulevard, CA - Back Country Inn

Kris dropped me off at the scenic overlook with few or no pictures because everything was in the shadows of the mountains. Five miles later I was at 4000 ft. Now it just dropped off and came back up to 4000 feet many times. The last few miles were mostly down and I got to Boulevard in time for my 4:00 EST congregational meeting. I wanted to go back out after the meeting but I was too beat. A tailwind would have been nice, but it was all downhill to the next exit with the special gourmet Subway, so no tailwind would be needed. It will wait until tomorrow where there is one smaller wicked hill and then it becomes more like normal cycling for quite a while. I will do the wicked hill on I-8 and then spend more time on the Adventure Cycling route. After Bob's meeting and a nap, we drove ahead on the Adventure Cycling route so we could photograph the border fence at a point where it looks like they may be making it higher. In the photo you can see the fence, a typical-looking hacienda, and lots of wind turbines which must be in Mexico. We went on to the one store (a convenience store at a gas station) for miles around to get a Subway supper, and it was super busy on this Sunday evening. We seem to be in a food desert here.

Monday, 4/12/21, 56.7mi, 12.0mi/hr 3-Boulevard, CA -> 4-Calexico, CA - Best Western John Jay Inn

I rode out of the motel at 7:30 and back onto I-8 and resumed the downhill. It was 5% or 6% down for about 10 miles down to the exit for Route-98. We weaved through the rocky hills, some of them primarily of VW Beetle-size rocks. It would have been a nice 30-40 m/h coast but the gusty wind slowed me mostly 25 m/h and down to 20 m/h where the shoulder was narrower. We had signs [Elevation 2000] and then [Elevation 1000] on the way down. At the bottom the land was FLAT desert. Eventually there was a sign [Elevation 1]. It was rather awesome looking back at the mountains I had just crossed. I was a good boy today, going onto Route-98 into Calexico where Kris had booked a hotel. Mostly it was a really pleasant ride with a nice shoulder, some little 20-foot hills to "climb" and the desert which was protected. There were about 33 more miles to Calexico and, after looking for many miles, there was a rock almost big enough to sit on. So I sat and had an orange and a lot of water. As I was packing up, Kris stopped for a chat. Closer to Calexico there was a wall of palm trees on both sides and the scent of animal fertilizer. On the other side of the tree wall, the irrigation began. The color green was only where it was irrigated. The joy diminished when the shoulder ended and I had to take the lane. This was a 70m/hr-road and a few drivers had a problem with my not being on the shoulder which wasn't there. There were two major irrigation canals and the New River. (There was no white-water rafting or bungee-jumping from the bridge). All along Route 98 we kept seeing buckets with lids held on by rocks, each

one marked by a red-blue-red vertical striped flag. Kris couldn't resist peeking inside and in fact inside were bottles of water! Who put them there? What are they for? Google answered the question: a non-profit called WaterStations.org provides them "to prevent people from dying of heat and dehydration while crossing the desert areas in the hot summer months". They don't specify migrants; it could just be a motorist stuck with a flat tire. But they could save someone's life. In Calexico we had a big, delicious lunch in a fish-oriented restaurant. Being bilingual is quite normal here. At one table the conversation just kept switching from English to Spanish and back. We did some wash which is hanging on a clothes line stretched around the room. The desert should be the place for this.

Tuesday, 4/13/21, 63mi, 10.6mi/hr 4-Calexico, CA -> D-Yuma, AZ - Coronado Motel Inn

I left the hotel at 6:45 on the frontage road that was so rough that I didn't notice my front tire was flat until the intersection about ½ mile away. The valve stem came out a couple of times which was a real drag, the mini floor pump worked great, and I was on route-111 at 7:30. I went up 111 only to I-8 and then rode I-8 all the way to Yuma. It was the right thing because it was 63 miles and it totally whipped me. One reason it whipped me was that there was one piece of concrete to sit on and have a banana and water, one big bush protruding through the fence which offered the illusion of privacy and one latrine in a rest stop that Kris & I pulled into together. There were no tables or benches, only the latrines. A second breakfast, an ice cream, and even lunch would have been kinder on the body. I don't think the longer way had any services either, so the shortest and most level was the appropriate way for me. We started out irrigated farmland, and soon there were sheep for miles. Then there were square-bales of hay. We crossed a nice irrigation canal and then it went back to desert again with spread-out bushes covering about 10% of the landscape. This went on for a very long time before it became the Sahara with huge drifts. Previously there have been many black or charcoal lizards that would run off the shoulder from the bike. In the Sahara there were similar lizards, only sand colored. When we got closer to Yuma, the desert returned to "normal" desert. There were no safety-water flags and drums filled with jugs of water like had seen in the last couple of days. We were still close to the border wall and there was a border officer slowly cruising on I-8. CA and AZ are separated by a river that I-8 kept crossing so there was no state-line sign to photograph. Yuma just doesn't feel like a town as it is strangely spread out and a good part is only open in colder weather. After lunch/dinner we took a walk in the park by the Colorado River and continued to feel very fortunate we live where we do! It was nice and all but.

Wednesday, 4/14/21, 53.9 mi, 10 mi/hr D-Yuma, AZ -> D-Wellton, AZ - Desert Motel

Last night's "motel room" was the greatest ever with even a small kitchen. Tonight we are in a pleasantly funky motel in Wellton, AZ. Don't look for it on the globe. On the third flat of the day, Kris was there with the car and found the little piece of wire going through the tire. We started the day by going back into CA and then later into AZ where we will be for a while, but no sign to photograph. Maybe we will get the back side of the sign into NM. Today had a lot of very rough "pavement" which not only beats up the hands and the shoulders but really slows riding down. We did see the date-palm orchard, many irrigation canals, the crummy roads that some people have to live on and some of the US Army Yuma Proving Ground. (So what have they got to prove?) It turned out to be a very hard day for a lousy 50 miles! Tomorrow is a straight 88-mile shot to a crazy motel that we loved on the car ride here. Plan A is for Scotty to beam me up, but who knows, maybe I will have a great tail wind ;^)

Thursday, 4/15/21, 90.0mi, 13.2mi/hr D-Wellton, AZ -> D-Gila Bend, AZ - Best Western Space Age Lodge
Today's route was supposed to be on and off I-8 from Wellton to Gila Bend. I had a tail wind and stayed on the wonderful shoulder of I-8. In about 15 miles I got off I-8 and went a couple of miles to the Whistle Stop Café

for a 2nd breakfast of eggs, potatoes and orange juice and had her pack the bowl that I had brought with chili. In Dateland I had a date shake. Further down the road Kris figured correctly that I had stopped in a rest area and she tasted my chili. The distance from where I turned off I-8 to go north into Gila Bend to the Space Age Motel was longer than I expected and, afraid that I had passed it, I was thinking of turning around when it came into view. We had supper in the really nice Italian restaurant almost across the street and hit the sack. I am writing this a few days later. 90 miles did not leave much time for writing, but it was a lovely day!

Friday, 4/16/21, 71.0mi, 10.8mi/hr D-Gila Bend, AZ -> 15-Phoenix, AZ. – Days Inn

Today was the last day of the less-than-worthless instructions for the detour. If I had not taken the link to the map and blown up each section, taken screen shots, and made detailed maps, this whole detour section would have been a disaster! Gila Bend is on Old-80. The instructions start out north on old-80 for 8 miles. But you immediately come to a choice: AZ-85 to Phoenix or another big road to Tuscon. From Old-80, Woods Rd is supposed to take us over to AZ-85 so to choice of leaving on AZ-85 is clear. There are many on/off ramp, instruction for AZ-85/Phoenix Bypass, but Phoenix Bypass does not appear on any sign leaving confusion about whether there is a parallel route to be using. But the important facts: After crossing the Gila river, turn right at the STOP LIGHT onto MC-85. No mileage markers for the towns of Buckeye and Liberty but instructions for Lower Buckeye Rd which is MC-85. Nothing about the airport or crossing the river before left onto Avondale. No clue that there is no sign for the beginning of the New River Trail nor does it look like a trail there. All kinds of L, R, instructions for riding the trail, but no clue what to do at a Y. At this point the cue sheet is over 200mi long so recognizing the Ys from the miles is not reality. And no simple instructions like ride on the north or south side of the canal and take the underpasses rather than crossing the busy roads. I was lucky, a runner showed me where to get on the trail and Kris had ridden her bike back from the parking lot where we were getting off for the motel. And how she remembered how to get back I will never know. She did have a trail map coming my way but had to remember all the choices that would have left me lost without her. The parting shot from the detour will come tomorrow when I did not know where the match-line was for map 15.

Shabbas, 4/17/21, 60.5mi, 10.5mi/hr 15-Phoenix, AZ -> 16-AZ-87 and Bush Hiwy. - Topaz Inn & Suites, Apache Junction

Today Kris delivered me back to the trailhead so I could ride into Phoenix and get off onto the roads through Phoenix. On map 15 it looks like the New River Trail ends, but the New River Trail is just an overlay on the Arizona Canal Path. The mileage cue was not useful without having the match-line or any other reference. Holy Temple was not noticed. So I continued to have a nice ride along the canal. It was starting to look too residential, when I came to a really shmaltzy part with restaurants and pretty buildings. I kept having a nice ride for a while longer until I stopped at a Baskin Robbins/Dunkin Donuts for mint-chocolate chip and coffee and asked where I was. Well the canal veers north and whatever choice I made, and easy 40-mile day to Apache Junction was not one of them. I decided to get over to AZ-87 and take it to the point where the Bush Hyway of the Adventure Cycling route merged with it. There were two food stops, each with a quart bottle of OJ and had a LaraBar with my ice cream and coffee. Forget about the rye-bread motor, my bike was powered by the OJ motor. It was a continual challenge trying to pinpoint where I was not on the map. A map from the Arizona Canal Path to AZ-87 would have made this the perfect best way to go. I met a father & son or grandfather & grandson cyclist with orange as bright as mine. They were NOT experienced riders and were out just to see how far they could go and I guess they will go back on Sunday. All they knew about our location was that we were out on AZ-87, but they were fun to engage with! It was after 5:00 when I could accurately tell Kris where I was which was ten miles from Bush Hiway. She met me there, we loaded up and drove back to Apache Junction when the Alpen glow was lighting up the very beautiful route that I was going to miss on

my bike. The route had sharp blind bends with no shoulder and grades far beyond my strength. I was very happy to see them from the car instead of the bike! And I will see them again when she drives my back. I had not been aware that I had been climbing all day after leaving phoenix. Our motel "room" is almost a little apartment and

Sunday, 4/18/21, layover day to do things like write this diary for the last few days, read some email, do our laundry and get some needed rest in this wonderful old motel with lots of space and a real kitchenette, and lovely cactus gardens.

Monday, 4/19/21, 52.3mi, 7.0mi/hr 16-AZ-87 and Bush Hiway -> 18-Tonto Basin, AZ - Tonto Basin Inn
Kris drove me 20 miles to the last intersection and I started riding at 6:30 am. There were a lot of real cyclists on Usery Pass Road even at 6:00 am; it must be a good place to train for climbs, but there were none between there and the intersection. One of the main reasons to buy the Adventure Cycling maps is to make sure you don't take a dangerous route like Bush Hyway to AZ-87, but seeing that route while driving to the place I left off was horrible to look at. Carrying on where I left off, AZ-87 was a wonderful ride, quite difficult but beautiful and I took a lot of pix. It was actually a little beyond my capabilities and eventually I did a lot of walking. I wonder if I would have walked less if I had started walking sooner but after a while I was beat to a pulp. It was still a glorious day watching how the giant cactus became more and more prolific as I went up in elevation but then I eventually got above the "cactus line".

Tuesday, 4/20/21, 46.6mi, 7.2mi/hr 18-Tonto Basin, AZ -> 20-Globe, AZ - Travelodge
Today started out easy riding to and along the lake. I even had thoughts of cycling past this motel. The lake was beautiful and seemed like it would go on forever. Then it started to climb at 5% & 6%, sometimes down to 4% or up to 7%. I think that continued relentlessly for about 20 miles. Eventually I was alternating between walking and riding. I did take lots more pictures and found a couple more tools. Our Travelodge hotel is on top of a hill (one more to walk up) with a great 360-degree view. Kris took me on a tour of a local village of a group of Indians who inhabited the area from about 1250 to about 1450; archaeologists are currently working on this site, called Besh-Ba-Gowah, or "place of metals", even though these people seemed to work in turquoise and shells, not metal. They apparently got the name from a current Apache word, this being an area where copper was mined (much later than when these Indians lived there). We ate supper right across the street in a restaurant where all the pizzas have a cauliflower crust and are thus gluten-free! Kris had pizza but my catfish was perfection. Route-60 that we entered when we entered Globe is really big & busy so I hope it works well for tomorrow. Tomorrow starts out on 60 and then soon goes to 70. Then it will go back to climbing and I have to work on some new strategy to pace myself better.

Wednesday, 4/21/21, 73.0mi, 9.6mi/hr 20-Globe, AZ -> Pima, AZ - 23-Comfort Inn in Thatcher
OK, last night I was concerned about my abilities after beating myself up two days in a row. Was I developing a physical problem? Then this morning I realized that I needed to change my attitude. Before starting this trip we allowed for 3 months which would be 40 miles per day. We have been doing a lot better than that so I need to relax and stay comfortable. I didn't mean to leave as late as 8:00 but I did want the sun to be out of people's eyes before I started as the beginning of the day had me riding in the lane of a four-lane road with no shoulder. I did have some up and down but I didn't try to make the hills without walking. Instead, when it slowed me down, I gave my butt a rest and my legs some variety and walked to the top, sat down and had some orange juice, and resumed riding. I was stopped by darkness not by tiredness. This was just plain a very beautiful day. At first I was not taking photos because I had similar photos, but then the photography started. It was almost

lunchtime when I came to an Apache gas station – snack shop – restaurant. It was really nice having lunch there and Kris made an appearance for ice cream. Then I stopped in a little Apache shopping center that did not have a restaurant but did have a couple of Klondike bars and a cup of coffee. And then I had a very bitter-sweet phone call: an offer to play a very nice job. I am not programmed to say NO to that! Kris arrived again and suggested a restaurant ten miles down the road for supper. When it was five miles, I asked her to order for me which worked perfectly. I had had bad side winds all day which limited the downhill speeds that I could safely do and they slowed me down for a while after dinner. Then they died down but I had taken my headlamp off the bike when removing actually heavy stuff so I had to quit 6 miles short of our hotel and Scotty had to beam me up. But was a most wonderful and enjoyable day and totally reset my worry index!

Thursday, 4/22/21, 49.8mi, 8.9mi/hr 23-Pima, AZ -> 25-Duncan, AZ - Simpson Hotel

Kris beamed me back to where she had picked me up last night, but the day was still only about 50 miles. The day got more difficult as it wore on. It was pretty much a no-event day, more of the same desert with features except for some horses who never posed very well from a distance and finally got spooked and left. The hotel here in Duncan is rather unique, an old hotel with a lot of modification history now owned by a couple who seem to need all its walls to hang their art collection. This one probably gets this year's award for the most delightful places to stay!

Friday, 4/23/21, 37.3mi, 11.6mi/hr 25-Duncan, AZ -> 26-Lordsburg, NM - Hampton Inn

Today I rolled the bike out to find I had a flat tire. It was a small pinhole that didn't seem to have a cause. That means that my difficult riding yesterday may have been due to riding a tire going flat. I fixed the tube but I must have crushed it reassembling the tire so then I started with a new tube. At 10:00 the day started out a little discouraging, a little rough pavement, a little uphill, a crosswind, and 7 – 8 mi/hr. Then the wind shifted, the pavement changed at a county line, the grade was flat or even down, and I was cruising, for a while at 27mi/hr ;^) The tailwind had gotten substantial, so when I got to the right turn for the last three miles into Lordsburg it became a crosswind. A light crosswind is benign but a strong one tries to knock you off the bike and take a toll on pedaling. We went out for a very nice lunch and checked into this snazzy hotel. Our laundry is now hanging on a maze of line across the room. We were hoping to get a picture of the back of the Entering-NM to use for the Entering-AZ photo but that was not to be, so we have no proof we ever came here :- (

Saturday, 4/24/21, 65.0mi, 11.9mi/hr 26-Lordsburg, NM -> Deming, NM - Holiday Inn Express

Today Kris drove the Adventure Cycling route through Silver City and up to the top of Emory Pass and took pictures of the stuff that was too steep for me to ride including Emory Pass. I started at 9:30, Today was a straight shot on 10 from Lordsburg to Deming. For the first 12 miles the shoulder was dreadfully rough and quite littered. But my gut feeling that this was temporary was good and the shoulder became 1st class. The difference in speed on the two surfaces was substantial. I stopped for a drink of OJ and there was a car behind me, it was Al Kuelling. After hugs we decided to stop for lunch at the next rest-stop. I dined on banana and crunchy peanut butter, Al on cucumber and peanut butter. Later I stopped for coffee and a pint of Cherries Garcia and phoned Al so he could come and finish off half of it. Al was here early for our Monday layover day in Las Cruces having driven down from Denver. It is so great resuming our conversations as we have not seen each other for a few, a few too many years.

Sunday, 4/25/21, 57.4 mi, 14.1mi/hr Deming, NM -> Las Cruces, NM - La Quinta hotel

I left at 8:30 and rode with a tailwind from Deming to Las Cruces. I arrived at the Quinta Inn before Kris & Al. They couldn't take me so early so they put my bike in a store room. When Al & Kris arrived we went out for a

very relaxed lunch at the Village Inn, just a few blocks away. It has been so nice both days cruising along looking at the steep mountains on each side.

Monday, 4/26/21, Layover Day!

We slept a little late and then went for another fun breakfast at the Village Inn Restaurant. Al & I went shopping for some bike parts, had some ice cream and then a nap. Mine was frozen custard with mango and pecans, radically good! While Al was still napping I washed and lubed my chain. Meanwhile Kris was attempting to hike the trail shown on the map. It was a great day for Al & me, with a whole lot of talking about the meaning of life, the future of the world, and everything else that is important. Then back to the Village Inn to have fun with the staff or for them to have fun with us. Al & I were ordering a milkshake to share and couldn't decide what flavors to combine so we told the waiter they could make whatever they wanted. When he brought it out he said we could have it free if we could guess the flavors before tasting it. We kept guessing and got it by the process of elimination, so we got it for free.

Tuesday, 4/27/21, 52.8mi, 9.5mi/hr 32-Las Cruces, NM -> 34-El Paso, TX - Americas Best Value

Said good bye to Al and started at 9:00. The day was overcast and chillier so I had my vest on all day. It was a great EB wind, but we were going SB with a crosswind. I don't know how my average speed came out to 9.5mi/hr as I was expecting 8mi/hr. The cross-wind does make controlling the bike more work but didn't slow me down as much as I thought. At times I had been working for 6mi/hr. The first half of the day was pecan groves in various phases of preparation. Some were flooded, some just a skim of water, one in 6 or 8 inches. The flooded one showed how flat and level the ground is. Some were sticks in white tubes and some looked like grafts onto older trunks. Then I noticed that the bottom four feet of many of them are painted white. Some bug must not be inclined to climb white trees. The ground underneath them was incredibly clear as if they were going to sweep up the nuts after they fall. Next came the bike path. There was no sign for it until after you went through a gate and walked over 30 feet of gravel, and that was all in the Adventure Cycling instructions. The road crossings were good but there were no signs for which road you were crossing. At the first crossing I stopped for a cup of coffee and a couple of ice creams. The path was very well constructed and very nice to ride. It is on the flood plain of the Rio Grande which is not so grande, but it must be at some times because they had constructed dikes at the edge of the floodplain they had designed. Today the air was so clear you could see all the way to the bottom of the Rio Grande which was flat, dry, white sand. (The air was not clear enough to photograph the very rugged mountains we were next to.) These mountains make the Blue Ridge look like a lawn. The bike path came to an end in the middle of a field near the road. There I walked a difficult stone path to the top of the dike, the dike was barely rideable to near the road, and then a difficult scramble down to Country Club Rd, with no sign that it was CC Rd until I rode it to the next intersection. Country Club Rd to TX-20 has NO shoulder and places with one lane in each direction with a curb on both the right and left sides of it. TX-20 also has no shoulder but has two or three lanes in each direction, so I took my lane. This worked but requires chutzpah. The right turn on Oregon put me riding parallel to trolley tracks, that is in the second lane from the right, but there was usually a center turn lane so drivers sharing the lane with me had wiggle room. I left the route to take Texas and then Alameda to the hotel. The staff recommended Carlos & Mickey which was better than delightful in every way. Tomorrow I will take Alameda to the Adventure Cycling route.

Wednesday, 4/28/21, 87mi, 12.3mi/hr 34-El Paso, TX -> 37-Sierra Blanca, TX - Historic Sierra Blanca Lodge

Today was quite a day. It had just stopped raining when I started at 8:30 and it looked like the wind was not going to be good. I took the shortest route to get back on the Adventure Cycling route to Fort Hancock.

Sometimes there was an adequate shoulder and sometimes not. After getting away from El Paso businesses it was pecan orchards again. Only some of them paint the bottoms white. I stopped in a gas station for ice cream and coffee and just sat on a carton. After the pecan orchards the terrain went back to desert showing what would happen to all of this without irrigation. The wind was good and I was making good time until the road surface became rough the last 12 miles. Roughness slows the bike and also beats up the hands and shoulder. I went into Angie's restaurant, the only restaurant across the street from the only hotel. Kris called from that hotel parking lot to ask where I was, so we had some lunch together. It was only 1:00 and the wind was quite strong and I decided to try to go another 40 miles on I-10 to Sierra Blanca after lunch. The first 20 miles I was flying, mostly between 20 and 27 mi/hr. I encountered more desert, some looking like the Bad Lands where nothing at all can grow. Then the wind slowed down and then I hit the long climb. It is hard to read the clinometer when pedaling hard and the bike is lurching around, but it seemed like about 5%, yet they later added a truck-climbing lane. But the climb was OK. After the climb was a picnic area where Kris met me for a snack. Then the ride to the Sierra Blanca Historic Motel was super easy. We had some nice Mexican Food in the only restaurant open at this time.

Thursday, 4/29/21, 34mi (No speed; Computer battery died) 37-Sierra Blanca, TX to 40-Van Horne, TX – Motel-6

At 9:30 there were beautiful, photographic, puffy clouds. Plan A had been to cycle the 32 miles to Van Horn and then take 90 south as far as I could go where Scotty would beam me up back to the Van Horn motel. Well halfway through the skies got darker. Then all of a sudden it was much darker and someone turned on a strong headwind. Then came the thunder up there. There was no lightning striking the ground anywhere. Then I could see the heavy rain ahead coming my way. There is no place to hide out here. If there were lightning I would lie in a low place, but there was none. This is the first time I have ridden in a hail storm. The hail stones were small and didn't hurt much, but I was drenched. The desert looked like it was under a couple of inches of water during the storm. When it stopped, Kris was by the side of the road so I could sit in the car and finish the bottle of OJ and get out some warm gloves. It was still rumbling on and off at 2:00 when I got to the Van Horne Motel-6 and I bagged it for the day. We dropped the bike in the hotel and went for take-out lunch. We unloaded the car before eating, just before another rain. The mountains that the route weaves between are majestic to the eye, but there is no way to capture it in a photo. We bought a computer battery at Dollar General and had supper at RJ's across the street.

Friday, 4/30/21, 76.4mi, 9.0mi/hr 40-Van Horn, TX -> 42-Marfa, TX - Riata Inn

Today we left I-10 onto 90 southward to start crossing the high desert. We got up at 6:00 but I didn't leave until 8:00. It started out with a brisk tail wind and I would occasionally be cruising at 20mi/hr. Between 5 and 10 miles were more pecan groves but not as productive looking as the previous ones. Then the irrigation stopped and everything reverted to desert. The pavement started out perfect with a smooth shoulder. Space and surface like I-10 but no traffic. This was the safest and most pleasant so far. After 20 miles we entered Jeff Davis County where they had destroyed that surface somehow, slowing down the bike and jarring the rider. In the middle of the desert is a block building with a display of Prada shoes and handbags! There we met two women cyclists in a car and chatted for a while. We also passed a border control blimp. Maybe it was 30 miles out that the tailwind changed to a side wind. Forty miles out was Valentine. Valentine had only a sign and a library a little bigger than the old one in Pembroke. The rabbi texted me wishing me Shabbat Shalom. I texted back that maybe the sidewind should take a little Sabbath rest and she concurred. The wind seemed to have listened and slowed down. But soon after it turned again and became a strong headwind. I spent a lot of time at 5mi/hr, sometimes down to 4. Then I met Kris along the road where I could sit in the car, eat, drink, and decide

whether to beam up or continue. I would not be able to continue at 4 and 5mi/hr. I held out a neckerchief to gage the wind before my rest and after and could see that the wind was much less so I got back on the bike and continued. After a while the wind picked up again. But then it started to rain and that sucked the life out of the wind. I have never welcomed a rain before! I walked the last two miles to Marfa rather than try to fix a flat in the cold and rain. Actually I had no idea that when I had the flat entering Marfa that it would be two more miles before the Riata Motel on the far side of Marfa. But tonight we had another gourmet dinner at Al Campo, a Chilean/Argentine restaurant right here in Marfa. A young lady in a pretty hat asked Kris how long we had been married. It was their sixth anniversary and she had seen us hugging earlier in the day. After supper we went to Dairy Queen and didn't get back until 10:00.

Saturday, 5/1/21, 57mi, 11.1mi/hr 42-Marfa, TX -> 45-Marathon, TX - Desert Air Motel in Sanderson
With sleeping and tire fixes, I didn't leave until 11:00. The first half of the day was more endless desert, no life, no features, mountains so far away no change is noticed. We crossed into Brewster Co and the road became perfect. And when they four-laned it, the shoulder was not eliminated, it was narrower but still comfortably rideable. Then the road took an S turn and there were trees and bushes in the S. There was a vulture feasting on a black pig beside the road. The land went back into desert on the way into Alpine. We had some nice Chinese on the porch of what is normally Panda Buffet and then ice cream for Kris and a gelato mix for me and back on the road. The desert was changing. Sometimes we saw dried grass. There was a deer playing dead next to the road. Well maybe it wasn't playing, but the two antelope were playing. Later there were a couple of deer playing hide and seek in a patch of trees, yes I said trees. And later there were more deer less able to hide from the camera. Kris was waiting for me in Marathon where we ate in an exquisite Mexican restaurant before driving to Sanderson because a big wedding had filled the Marathon motels. Scotty will have to beam me back in the morning. We tried to photograph more deer -> on the way to Sanderson and did photograph a bull elk. (Actually the elk photo apparently failed.) We also saw grazing cattle, so the bleak desert is finally over!

Sunday, 5/2/21, 53.7mi, Ave 16.7mi/hr, Max 32.4mi/hr 45-Marathon to 47-Sanderson - Desert Air Motel
Kris dropped me off in Marathon a little after 9:30 and I started out a little slow planning to make it an easy day. There was a light tailwind and the day was slightly downhill. Before long my speed really picked up and it felt good to move right along so I pedaled where I might have just coasted on another day. I rode where the right-tires of cars go as that was much faster than the rough shoulder. Most motorcycles are quite friendly and most wave. But one pair passed, one on the left side of my lane and the other on the right-side shoulder. Oh well, I hope that made them feel big and brave and not just incredibly stupid. At one point I was pedaling a steady 26mi/hr and a car pulled up, riding next to me, and asked if I wanted any water. Maybe he just wanted to clock me; he had a bike in the car. I did stop to talk to another cyclist in the other direction who had started in St Augustine and was pulling a baby-trailer with his little dog inside. The trailer was big enough for the dog to get lots of exercise. Many tattoo artists had used his body for scratch paper. I also stopped for a few photos. I'm glad that we took the same road by car after dinner last night as the elk was not likely to be out during the bright daylight. By the time I was approaching the Desert Air Motel in Sanderson I was being hit by some gusty sidewinds that made it difficult to stay on the bike, especially going fast. On the way I had stopped only to drink OJ so I ate my lunch at 1:15 in the hotel, had a nap and took a shower and then another nap. The plan is to start very early tomorrow; the motel in Del Rio is 120mi away and I hope to have Scotty beam me up as short as possible. Kris got back from hiking after my nap and she is trying to figure out what motels to book. I'm sure she took some good photos and I can't wait to see them.

Monday, 5/3/21, 90.4mi, 10.3mi/hr 47-Sanderson, TX -> 50-Comstock, TX - Best Western in Del Rio

My plan-A was to cycle the 120mi from Sanderson to Del Rio. It looked possible, there was a downward trend and the wind was favorable. When I got to Langtry at 61mi I was crushed that there was no store or restaurant and that there had been a store on 90 but I was not going to take the steep climb back up to it. There was a shaded picnic table outside the museum where I ate my lunch. Then Kris arrived and we agreed that she would beam me up whenever I texted her and that she would get me more OJ. We did have a bit of a misunderstanding as to how soon. Then we had many more misunderstanding because my phone said I had no voice service and I assumed that my texts were getting through. I was finally at a bridge with a visitor lot at 79mi ready to give up, so I texted Scotty. I waited and waited and finally, while trying again, I noticed that all my texts were stacked up waiting to be sent. I got on my bike to ride, but then walked up the hill from the river. It is a mistake to ride past when you are having fun! But I had no choice. We drove to Del Rio to spend the night, as Comstock has nothing. That name, like the canned pie filling, sounds like it should be so nice, but my mother taught me I should say nothing at all about Comstock.

Tuesday, 5/4/21, 62.1mi, 11.9mi/hr 50-Comstock -> 53-Brackettville (skirting motel in Del Rio) - Best Western, Del Rio

Today Kris dropped me off early in Comstock. The wind was right. Soon I was on perfect, clean, new shoulder, then a short return to old crummy shoulder before loop-79 and more perfect shoulder. The difference in speed on different surfaces is amazing. A grade that has me coasting 20 or 25mi/hr on a good surface can require me to really pedal at 15mi/hr on a bad surface. I think we are finally out of desert. Many creeks had water in them. I saw big rabbits or hares and sheep grazing. Kris beamed me back to Del Rio where we mapped and located motels for our cheating route back to the Southern Tier route!

Wednesday, 5/5/21, 43.4mi, 8.8mi/hr 53-Brackettville -> Uvalde - Holiday Inn Express

This is where the Adventure Cycling route leaves 90 to take the steep climbs over the mountains which not only do not seem like a bunch of laughs to me, they don't seem possible for me. (Actually I am very thankful for what I can do. The art of doing everything you can do but not what you can't do is knowing the difference!) So we are taking Route 90 beyond Brackettville, and we thought that we knew how to get around San Antonio to rejoin the route in Bastrop. I rode to Uvalde (pronounced ooo-VAL-day) and decided that was enough after 42 miles, so we had lunch in a rather unusual Mexican restaurant – didn't I tell you this has turned out to be a gourmet restaurant tour? This had been relentless hard work on rough pavement all day; I'm glad the length was short.

Thursday, 5/6/21, 79.9mi, 9.0mi/hr Uvalde, TX -> Leon Valley, TX (E-90, N-410) – Days Inn

I knew it was far and I also expected another headwind day which I got. I left Uvalde at 6:00 with the tail-light on. The bridges had VERY narrow shoulders and then a low wall that you could flip over to your death, so I walked these which is where I found the monster 27mm wrench which I carried all day. (25.4mm=1inch) Most of the day I rode the smoother right lane only going to the shoulder when needed, but some places had great shoulders. At 29mi I stopped at a restaurant that was hidden behind the old abandoned original restaurant: 2 eggs, potatoes, refried beans and 2 glasses of OJ plus coffee. At 40 miles I had my OJ and dried fruit in a Dairy Queen and then a banana split. I stopped for more dried fruit and OJ around 60 miles and had just OJ many other times, so I never ran out of gas. Kris warned me that getting onto 410 was impossible, so I got onto the frontage road next to 90 and then onto a ramp over the bridge before the 410 ramps. Then I followed my nose to a place to get under 410 and onto the frontage road to the hotel. The frontage roads are quite difficult, the sidewalk is quite difficult, and I walked a lot for safety. We had to walk quite a way to a Panda Express

because driving just is too complicated. I stayed up past midnight using Google-maps to make a cue sheet to get to San Marcos

Friday, 5/7/21, 65mi, 9.3mi/hr Leon Valley, TX -> San Marcos, TX – Days Inn

I didn't start riding until 8:00, using my Google bicycle route-made a cue sheet along with my little GPS. There were no photographs all day. There were some places where the shoulder was smooth and wide enough, but it was a lot of white-knuckle riding with cars and trucks too close, the bike too bumpy to make any speed. I did get ice cream twice so the route did have some nice features. Along the way we were able to connect at a Subway and discovered a wonderful ice cream shop way back in a shopping center called Michoacan bel something, run by a Mexican and only been open for 4 months. I do hope he succeeds, because the ice cream is wonderful. Around New Braunfels, the German heritage is very much evident: they have an annual Wurtzfest, and many street names are German, like Altgeld Rd. In San Marcos there is a wonderful park right at some rapids, but designed so that people can body-surf the very fast chutes. It was full of people enjoying the water and having picnics. While we stood there watching, a man beside us named Javier struck up conversation. (He wanted to know how long we were married.) He's 50 and has lived nearby all his life and has enjoyed the river during many changes. The chutes were actually designed to be safe—not so when he was a child. He even took a picture of us. As we were leaving, he picked up his bike—so we had that in common, too. We had supper in a Thai restaurant (keeping up the gourmet tour). The woman who owns the restaurant is also on the board of a Thai temple outside Bastrop. Ready or not, willing or not, I am crashing now.

Saturday, 5/8/21, 42.4mi, 10.3mi/hr San Marcos, TX -> 63-Bastrop, TX, (NE-21) - Tropicana Motel

We got to Bastrop in good time. I went through a construction site because otherwise I would have been lost. The road was all dug up and I was walking around heavy construction equipment. It was by or in a golf course and I had to ask some guys on a green for help. There was more German heritage in evidence and a very touristic park and a “general store” with mostly useless stuff but also ice cream. Our motel, a very nice one but tricky to find. It's run by an Indian family, and the 12-year-old son is the one who got the wifi running. Nearby we found ice cream at the Sugar Shack, which has every conceivable thing made of sugar for sale, including Harry-Potter-themed candies. I had a long winters nap and then we walked over to an Italian restaurant. It was prom night but they managed to seat us and we had a nice meal. On the way back to the hotel, the wind was blowing the trees and us and I was beat. I even suggested to Kris that with this wind, maybe tomorrow could be the layover day. But we have rooms booked ahead and Tuesday the weather is supposed to be bad. We didn't get to bed until midnight.

Sunday, 5/9/21, 50.0mi, 10.1mi/hr 63-Bastrop, TX -> 64-Round Top, TX - Coyote Station

I woke up at 5:45 and got ready to go not knowing if there was a howling headwind. It was calm and cloudy, as in not blistering sunny, and I took off on 71, the big road, to La Grange. If this was the flat route, I don't want to know what the hilly route was like. Kris rode the hilly way in the car and confirmed that I don't want to know from experiencing it. La Grange was a quaint old town except it looked like it had just been killed. The café looked so inviting until I got closer. I left the old town on 159 and when it crossed 71 there was a travel station with a quiet place to sit down and have a couple of ice cream bars and a cup of coffee. I had covered 30mi and had only 20 more to go. The smaller 159/237 was less fun than 71 but was still good. It was rolling farm land almost as pretty as home. There were a couple of “towns” along the way, like Nace and Lithia and the towns in Sweden that were just names on a map. During the last third of the day I was developing a new pain in my lower left leg which was getting scary. Five miles from Round Top was a place with picnic benches where I could wrap it with the ace bandage from the first aid kit Kris shamed me into carrying and that fixed it

;^) About the same place was the first antique shop. Then there were antique shops, antique farms, antique barns, antiques out the wazoo, whatever that means. Round Top was decidedly NOT a mountain, more later. Then in this cutesy town there was a tiny café with people all over the tiny porch. I went inside and asked if they could feed me. She said they could make take-out which I said I could eat in my bike. She asked if I was alone and said I could sit at a little counter if I liked. Then they served a WONDERFUL little meal and we had great conversation! I went on to the Coyote Station, a shop for antiques and fine creations and also our fancy motel. Round Top got renamed because the stage-coach drivers would see the funny building with a round roof and call out “Round Top Next”.

Monday, 5/10/21, 52.8mi, 9.2mi/hr 64-Round Top, TX -> 66-Navasota, TX - Best Western

The world of Antiques went on for a long way and gradually tapered off. The land reminded both Kris & me of Botetourt county but everything, the distances, the wavelength of the rolling hills, were bigger. It was a pretty day but nothing special to photograph except Kris photographed our first Long Horns. Navasota has two sections, the original town and the new stuff closer to the highway. We had lunch in the Early Rock Café, or something like that and ice cream across the street in the old part. Then we finally learned how to navigate frontage roads after finally finding our hotel. We had supper in a great Mexican restaurant on the RT-6 frontage road called La Casita.

Tuesday, 5/11/21, Layover Day We did a lot of schedule planning selecting the towns that led to good hotel-to-hotel separations and booked a lot of hotels. Then we met Christine when she arrived on her bike. She prefers camping but stopped in the hotel because of the weather reports. Riding in the rain is one thing, camping is another. She works in a ski shop in Boise, Idaho, in the winter and just cycles in the summers. We all had supper at La Casita.

Wednesday, 5/12/21, 70.3mi, 9.0mi/hr 66-Navasota, TX -> 69-Cold Spring, TX - Coldspring Inn

Goofy me got on RT-6 for 2 ½ mi before waking up, returning almost to the motel, resetting the trip meter and starting again. It was a welcome cold, dank day as it has started to get rather hot. What was different from Monday was the Sam Houston National Forest. There were really big pine trees and lots of ordinary forest like home. I just felt slow today, not beat and destroyed, just moving slowly. In addition to the forest was also the immense reservoir, but the gloomy light did not inspire a picture. Kris was riding her bike and met Christine in Cold Spring where she spent the night in a nice campground with a lakeside site showers and even wifi for only \$10. The gourmet tour continued this evening, with pizza and grilled veggies at Joe's, where ALL his pizza is made with a gluten-free crust.

Thursday, 5/13/21, 63.4mi, 11.1mi/hr 69-Coldspring, TX -> 71-Kountze, TX - Relax Inn

I rode with a faster cadence which seems to work well. I stopped at the supermarket 10 miles out for the restroom and outside was a guy really impressed with my cycling. He had a bike shop so I asked if he had a 9-speed derailleur. He said he had an off-brand, I asked how much and he said \$15 and I sent him to get it. He returned with a slightly used old Shimano which makes me happier. I did have a tailwind for a few miles until the road turned east. There was a headwind which came and went all day. It was more, nice farm scenery with rolling hill which got smaller as the day wore on. I had a pair of Mexican things for lunch which are wrapped in foil to keep the contents from falling on the floor. You open the foil over the table to keep the contents from falling on the floor, but they were good food with coffee, a small ice cream and my OJ. The last ten miles was straight and flat with 20 feet of mowed grass on each side and then woods. There were patches of “rejuvenated forest” to quote the 1984-speak Swedish term for clearcut. The hot weather we had a few days ago has been

replaced with very comfortable, almost cool, weather. I wore my fleece vest all day; it is too hot when stopped but nice when pedaling a breeze. The Relax Inn was very nice, my idea of efficient perfection. I installed the derailleur at the motel, replaced the chain because I didn't have the chain-wear gauge, and replaced the fraying gable which may have been the sole problem.

Friday, 5/14/21, ~~64.5~~ 75.3mi, 10.9mi/hr 71-Kountze, TX -> 74-Merryville, LA - museum cabin

This was kind of a bad start. Turn left at 5th St. into Silsbee should have said turn left at the sign to Silsbee as there is no sign about 5th St. I assumed that the 5th St. turn was further on. I think the directions suggested it was further down the road. So I got a free tour of Lumberton, no extra charge! Route-96 had good shoulders and bad shoulders. The bumpy ones that have been destroyed by chip-seal hit the oil in the clinometer with every bump you hit making it look like everything is downhill. Rt-96 went on forever in straight, almost level lines. I stopped in Buna at the Subway for lunch. The motel in Kirbyville looked rather humble; I wonder what it was like. I didn't see a lunch place there. Kris stopped along the way and fed me sugar snaps, I stopped a few different places along the road for juice & bars, and stopped in a general store, a very general store in Bon Weir for ice cream. The Merryville cabin turned out to be a better choice for distance spacing and also because Christine was camping here so we could have dinner together again! Even in Texas, the streams were so far out of their banks, going through the trees, that it was not apparent where the normal stream was. When we crossed the Sabine River into Louisiana, the flooded part through the trees was immense and the main stream was obvious and also huge.

Saturday, 5/15, 57.5mi, 9.6mi/hr 74-Merryville, LA -> 76-Oberlin, LA - Crossroad's Inn

Day-two in LA put to rest any thoughts about LA being the state of wide, shoulders! I wanted to tell Kris where I was having eggs & potatoes in DeRidder but still had no phone service. (Kris beat me into submission to wifi-chat with Ting and got it fixed.) It was a long day of headwinds and rough roads but don't confuse that statement and think it wasn't a blessing to be out pedaling, watching the world go by, in a beautiful day of cycling. Oberlin is pretty depressed and we had to drive about 10 miles to a restaurant that specialized in catfish and we had a truly excellent meal. The quality of the only motel in Oberlin reflects the whole community, the first room having no hot-water faucet handle, the sink plumbing connected to the sewer line without a trap and the sink light fixture working, but just hanging by the wires. The second room was a smoking room.

Sunday, 5/16, 69.6mi, 10.5mi/hr 76-Oberlin, LA -> 78-Bunkie, LA - Knights Inn 5.5 miles west of Bunkie
I left at 6:30 and the light was really beautiful and there was plenty to photograph. Kris thinks that all the flooded fields are for growing rice. Christine saw some wheat the first day in LA and we have seen a little corn, but rice would explain all the grain storage that I photographed. Many of the flooded fields have lines of what look like little buoys which were traps. I guy came along in hip boots, pushing a little boat, and emptying the traps onto a mesh on the boat and then scooping the contents down into the boat. Christine spoke to the guy later and he said he was catching all kinds of things which he sold to various people. Evangeline Parish apparently does not waste money on repaving roads so every inch in that parish was torture. Mamou was really humble, with a donut shop in someone's home and nothing else for breakfast. I stopped in a gas-station shop, that even had tables, for coffee and a pint of Breyers Natural Vanilla. The bathroom was locked because of Covid. Ville Platte was even more depressed than Mamou! Rt-3042 took us into park and fancy homes. I stopped to ask a couple for assurance that I was where I thought I was, which I was, and we talked forever. He is an engineer, but not an artistic one. There was a bench and a bathroom. While I was eating bars and juice, Christine came by but she didn't hear me. Fortunately I missed the turn off 2042 into the park. Unfortunately I

also missed the turn onto 115 as my brain was just sure that we would go into St. Landry. That was just a 4-mile mistake. RT-115 was also in Evangeline Parish and that punishment of their roads took away from the lovely scenery as well as slowing me down. But everything added together, it was a lovely day of cycling and Rt-2034 became smooth at the end to start tomorrow's ride.

Monday, 5/17, 72.5, 72.5mi, 9.7mi/hr 78-Bunkie, LA -> 80-New Roads, LA - Best Western

I left Bunkie at 6:30 in a light rain and it rained all day, from light to a driving rain. It ended with very heavy rain and Kris wanting to sag me in because of the Dunder un Blitzen. From Hamburg I was supposed to get on Old LA-1 but decided to take regular LA-1 which would have better pavement. Even though the road was broken up and terrible, it was a good choice because Kris looked for OldLA-1 and never found it. I took only one picture and that was from the first death-defying bridge but probably didn't capture the grandeur of that river. That bridge was very high and steep with 8" shoulders. My first impression was that it would be hard to control my bike well enough with it so steep. Then I got closer and saw how narrow the shoulders were and decided to walk on the left side, to the left of my bike. Past the bridge there was no shoulder and a grass median and I just kept walking to my turn onto 418. Then there was a long ride in the most remote area between the dyke and the farms. When it came back out to 417 there was a little store with a woman and a couple of kids for a cup of coffee and a candy-bar. (I remember the redbeans and rice, but I don't remember where or when.) She was very kind and gave me some paper towels to use in salvaging my maps by separating the papers while they were still drenching wet before they stuck together. Later the route crosses LA-1, winds around some, then gets back onto LA-1. In the rain, I was less interested in what I would see in the winding-around part and I just got on LA-1 which was nothing like the broken-up, tedious part of LA-1 earlier in the day. This was smooth pavement on a full, wide shoulder. After passing where the route comes out onto LA-1, the shoulder started getting narrower and narrower, as if to train you for what was to come. Eventually we came to a bridge or causeway that was a couple of miles long. The lanes and shoulders were just wide enough that I was comfortable enough to walk my bike on the left side unless cars were coming from both directions at once. Then I would climb up on a concrete ledge with only my bike on the shoulder. I am a brazen guy who takes my lane, but you can't take the lane for a couple of miles on a very busy and very fast road. Christine rode this and the bridge without complaint.) As I got closer to home, it was as if the weatherman repeatedly said "Oh, you can take that? Well let's see if you can handle this! Eventually Kris REALLY wanted to sag me in, but the lightning is not too close, and the drowned rat came in on my own. We passed Christine's motel on the way to ours.

Tuesday, 5/18/21 and Wednesday, 5/19/21 – Two layover days because of predicted rain and thunderstorms. I drove to the Mississippi-River Bridge, parked, and walked both ways taking photos and throwing trash off the shoulder. I photographed the slots where David Palmer took a quick trip to the ground. On the shoulder there was a steel plate attached at just one end to slide over the slots but David was in the car-lane passing other cyclists. On both sides the water was in the trees quite a ways, almost to the dyke or levy. From the death-defying causeway the river had looked like an ocean with patches of trees protruding from the water. I was hoping to see all that from the bridge but it was too far away. A tug came by pushing 28 barges, four wide by seven long. Another down the river was coming up with five by five. I was nearing the end of the return walk when a bridge truck pulled up and asked if I was OK. A few minutes later the sheriff did the same. Another vehicle was behind the sheriff, not an ambulance but maybe something similar. If their objective was to prevent me from jumping off the bridge, they were a little tardy. We have just decided, since there will be more thunderstorms and 20mi/hr headwinds, to layover a second day. It is now raining again with thunder so it is good that I took the photos earlier. I don't mind riding in the rain, and I can handle a downpour, but lightning

and 20mi/hr headwinds are showstoppers. We had a delicious supper with Christine at Morel's, right on the False River with a waterfront view as we ate. It's called the False River because it used to be the Mississippi, but when the river moved, this became a lake.

Thursday, 5/20, 86.2mi, 10.2mi/hr 80-New Roads, LA -> 83-Amite, LA - Holiday Inn Express

I didn't get rolling until almost 7:00, and then I was rolling on a flat. It was raining so I went back to the cover over the motel door. At one point the headwind was blowing the rain in and I had to move to the other edge. I was the rear tire and I looked and looked but didn't find the cause and finally just put in a new tube. The wind kind of let up for most of the day, but the rain just vacillated between gentle and blitz. I was a couple of miles from the bridge when the front went flat. I had been planning to replace that tire with a new one I had been carrying because that one it too hard to mount. So I used the tire I had been carrying in my trunk bag, but I couldn't fold this old one small enough to put it back and had to cram it between the elbow bars and the front bag. I was just wrapping it up when a nice guy jumped out of his car, put up his umbrella, and offered all sorts of help. I was operating on a cue sheet with no maps. In the middle I came to a convenience store that had food. The one thing that was GF was roast chicken along with coffee and an ice cream bar. The chicken was something to dream about. That guy told me how to pronounce "A"meet. The water had been very high, sometimes just a foot below road level. I followed the directions into the series of price road. On the first Price Rd, water was sometimes running a few inches deep across the road. On the third Price Rd, the "pavement" did not inspire confidence. I stopped to ask a lone passing car if I was where I thought I was and he confirmed it, and then recanted and gave me a bunch of misinformation based on how he goes by car. Later I was in the middle of the road, having flagged someone down for advice, and the oncoming car buzzed me very close to intimidate. Some later well-meaning bad advice added some more miles. But despite the rain, the wind had been mild all day. The third flat came later in the afternoon in a rare break in the rain. I used a puddle to find and mark the leak to identify where the problem was in the tire. Again I looked and looked, felt and felt, and again I found nothing and eventually replaced the tube. A young man's mother has seen me and he came out to help, but he knew nothing. Near the end of the day the wind picked up to tell me how lucky I had been up to then.

Friday, 5/21/21, 51.4mi, 7.7mi/hr 83- Amite, LA -> 84-Bogalusa, LA - Traveler's Rest Motel

Today was just a little shpritz of rain, but a strong headwind all day. After yesterday I wanted the simplest route which was LA-16 to LA-10. In Franklinton I had lunch at the Sugar Shack, where I never would have eaten because of the name without the recommendation. It was like a well-oiled machine pumping out great food, and also the ONLY place along the way. The headwind of this day just beat me into the mud. I needed Kris to guide me to the hotel, indicating I was a bit blitzed. We had dinner at Raimi's and Christine joined me with blackened catfish for the first time and found it delicious. Kris had shrimp in spaghetti with a light cream sauce which was also wonderful.

Saturday, 5/22, 50.5mi, 9.0mi/hr total, 25.2mi, 84-Bogalusa, LA -> 85-Poplarville, MS & 25.2mi, 87-Vancleave -> 88-Pascagoula - Jerine's wonderful little guest house, Poplarville

Today we entered Mississippi!

The Adventure Cycling route was rather nice, but the mapping, I would say the mapping of the entire Southern Tier, was not up to Adventure Cycling standards. Just before unmarked Old Camp Road, a Kentucky dog, with a more timid partner, came out. She was a pretty big dog and I was afraid she was going to run in front of me and cause a wreck. Then a four-wheeler came racing out and she ran for cover. With all that, when I looked at my odometer, I had missed the turn. I went a little farther to make sure I had missed it and then came back to

what I thought was the right place to a road with no sign. (If there is no sign it should say “unsigned Old Farm Rd”, but I just luckily assumed that was it.) This choice was confirmed only because there was another road to turn on at the next right distance. But it all worked out perfectly and was a nice morning. (It didn’t work so well for Christine!) There were several houses sending a message by flying the old Mississippi flag with the Confederate battle flag in the corner whereas public buildings were flying the new flag with a magnolia blossom. I stopped for lunch in Poplarville at a combination grocery/restaurant/deli/gas station where I ate lunch and Kris came to join me. Then we loaded my bike on the car and she drove me all the way to Vancleave, dropped me off, and went on to the hotel in Pascagoula. I rode that section which made it a 50-mile day so I would not have to go 90mi tomorrow. And we did it this crazy way so tomorrow and the next day I can start by leaving normally and ride away before Kris would be able to shuttle me anywhere. This was also a very pleasant ride with nice photos and good roads. The part of 57 with no shoulder was not busy and pleasant and, except for the park, everything had a fine shoulder and I took lots of photos including a road-kill alligator. There was a headwind, or sometimes angled mix of side and head, but much milder and did not whip me, so it was another lovely day! We then drove back to Poplarville, where we stayed in Jerine's Guest Cottage, a lovely little yellow house with all the amenities, even a complete kitchen. Christine was staying there, too, and we found her sweating out reservations for the next few days. That's the big advantage to an organized bike tour: someone else makes the reservations!

Sunday, 5/23, 71.7mi, 9.8mi/hr 85-Poplarville, MS -> 87-Vancleave, MS - Hilton Garden Inn, Pascagoula
This was probably our last time seeing Christine this year and it was so great sharing than little house with her, so we gave our goodbye hugs. She was headed to Perkinston to camp putting her a day behind us. The only “water” I packed was two bottles and the thermos holding ½ gallon of OJ, but no extra water. The cycling for the first 35mi was rather perfect. Not a photographic day as, for the most part, it was in the trees with the wide, mowed sides like 26 and no shoulders like 26. The difference was the traffic which, except for one car, was quite well behaved. The exception was blowing his horn so that I would know to stop riding and get off his road. Finally he stepped on the gas and came as close to me as he dared. Mississippi has the same 3-ft law as VA but the value of that is all in the enforcement. I did take some photos of people in a stream, but the pool that many cars had come for was further downstream and I didn’t capture it. There were some homes along the way but not one store. There was a turn on map 86 that said something about take the right of a “Y” onto Perkinson-Silver Rd. It was not a Y; it was a soft right turn and the road sign was for Old 26. So as I continued straight, but my compass told me I was going in the direction of Old 26, so I went back and took Perk-Silver. When I was confident I had done the right thing I texted Christine but found out later that I was too late, she had already added miles to her trip, which was shorter than mine. (The Adventure Cycling maps should reference what is written on the signs, not what is written in the courthouse.) The day was starting to feel quite weary, like I was working but just not making any time. And it got worse and worse. I just plain was feeling tired and it was worrying me. Finally, about 20mi from the end, the rear tire started to make a little bit of a flat-tire sound. The tire still had air, but it was quite soft. So I had been struggling not knowing that I had a slow leak and the tire had been losing air all day. And because I had been moving slower, I had used up my OJ. Being out of water is gets really terrible and I phoned Kris and begged to buy me some lemonade and I started to fix the flat. After telling several cars that I was fine, I started to ask for water. One guy apparently giving his son driving lessons was teaching his son more than just driving and had a small bottle of water. I think I finished it before they left. He told me that if I were still there when he came by next time he would stop again. An older couple stopped while I was lying down trying to peel the clear plastic off the patch I had applied. She repeatedly asked if I were OK while he got a bottle with mostly ice from his cooler. She was greatly relieved when I got up for the water. When Kris got there the tire was pumped up and the bike was ready to ride.

Luckily I had been given water because the lemonade had too much sugar to drink! The worry at that point was for getting to Vancleave before dark. To do all that shuttle work last night and then have to drive all the way back in the morning would defeat a lot of that effort. But now I had air in my tires, water in my body, and had had a rest while fixing the flat so I made great time getting to the restaurant in Vancleave, as in I was flying low. And while doing that I felt much better about the functioning of my body, if not about the functioning of my brain for not checking my tire pressure and for not carrying extra water. So now my bike has two new tires as I never found the reason for two previous flats and should have just replaced the tire last night but my crazy shuttle had kept us up too late for that. We spoke to a family at the Mexican restaurant in Vancleave. I spoke to the mother first and one thing she asked was what would make me want to do something like this? I said "If you have to ask, you will never know". That flip answer was really the answer she needed to hear because she was really asking why her husband wanted to do something like this and she has to accept that, even though she is not able to understand, she has to respect his need to go. He was really interested in everything and one thing I advised him was to do one of the prettier tours than the Southern Tier.

A local told Christine that Gautier is pronounced "gosha"

Monday, 5/24/21, 44.9mi, 9mi/hr 88-Pascagoula, MS -> 89-Dauphin Island, AL - 90-Gulf Breeze Motel
Not very far from the hotel in Pascagoula, I photographed two paths into the bayou from a bridge. Then I looked down and there was a lazy alligator. I had photographed a road-kill alligator 2 days before when I was riding from Vancleave into Pascagoula; I had never heard of a road-kill alligator before. I soon passed into Alabama and later crossed over the long bridge onto Dauphin Island, a very nice beach resort. The main road, Bienville Boulevard, is tree-lined and has a separate bike path beside it the entire length. Dauphin Island was really rather nice, as in very touristic but not a tourist trap, just really pretty and real. The price of the motel was a little high, location-location-location, but it was also rather nice. Then we met Craig who was on his way to New Orleans. He didn't know anything about Adventure Cycling and just liked to tour on his bike. This was a rather civilized tour for Craig as he had also toured in Viet Nam and India. After breaking away from Craig, he was starving and heading on his bike to whatever restaurant he could find and we headed to the beach for our first swim of the trip. The beach was extremely gradual and I had to walk a long way out for it to be deep enough to swim. The breakers were so far out that I didn't go out past them, which is my favorite thing, but there were no lifeguards and rip-tide warnings. Then it was very hard finding a restaurant that was still operating and open on Monday. We went to a new one where they were trying to close, but hungry people kept coming in. We had nice fish baskets which we ate on the tables outside, watching a pelican perched on a post out in the water. When we got back to the hotel, Craig had never found an open restaurant and we don't know what he ate.

Tue, 5/25, 30mi, 9.3mi/hr 89-Dauphin Island, AL -> Route-161 & the Church near Gulf Shores, AL
Kris drove to the 8:00 ferry across Mobile Bay while Craig and I rode together to his turn to the bridge and Pascagoula, but while talking, we not only missed his bridge turn, but when we got to Kris waiting on the ferry line, I thought she was waiting for construction or something and was ready for us to keep going. We hope Craig emails us as we don't have his address. It was a fun ferry ride, with plenty of birds flying around the boat looking for the fish it stirred up. The oil rigs were far less scenic but I have a nice photo of pelicans gathered for a meeting on a post. I slipped a little with my cleats coming down from the deck and dislocated my left shoulder again, the third time over the years, but just as it dislocates easily, it also goes back easily. At first the road from the ferry was totally quiet, and then got a little traffic as we passed some housing on the long spit of land. Then there was a paved bike path off the road on the left. When we got to 59 and then 180 turning north,

I continued on the path. Everything seemed peachy until there was a little parking lot and the path had a dead-end sign. Feeling totally lost I asked a ranger for help and he insisted on leading me out of there. Then I backed up and tried again landing in the same place so I went past the dead-end sign and kept going east. Somehow, from the map, I hadn't expected to just be in a state park with no main road. I just kept taking the trails that headed east and ignoring signs. I went through a section that was thousands of RVs, through another sign to not continue, more nice trails to ride east, and eventually the trails were signed with names and then a trailhead at LA-161. Kris has parked near our endpoint church and been riding backwards towards me and we actually were quite near each other but eventually we met at the car. On most trips there is a beginning, like we had with the photos in St. Augustine and then an end point like the second start at the point in San Diego, and a celebration dinner. But this one just stopped in the middle of nowhere. And there are always mixed feeling, including in this one, of "Oh boy, I'm done" mixed with "Do I have to stop and go home?" But I was ready to stop. It was a wonderful trip with many vivid memories and also a new understanding of the land we live on. Kris was surprised that I was not jumping up and down but I am not a jumping up and down person. I am totally surprised at what I was able to do and totally thankful that this life has been given to me. In the Mexican restaurant where we later had supper, one of the staff struck up a conversation by asking how long we have been married. When he learned we were from Roanoke, he said he had been to Roanoke once on business and seemed proud that there was something to connect us! He was the third person on the trip to ask how long we have been married. The love that we share must be noticeable to others as well as to me and I am not only thankful that she would give up to much of her time to shlep for me, but really thankful that we have each other to share our lives. But right then it was just time to load up the bikes and drive home.

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