

Locals trek across America by bike

By **Jodi Schneider McNamee**
Correspondent

David Miller of Sisters, a cyclist who loves sharing the roadway with friends, hit the road for an adventure of a lifetime on April 1. Along with three other cyclists, he would trek across America.

Three years ago, the 66-year-old RE/MAX Broker and a friend cycled down the Oregon Coast from Astoria 363 miles south to Brookings.

The cross-country ride covered nearly 3,000 miles over 40 days.

The three other cyclists, Marlin Ard of Sisters, Rich Lehman of Albany, and Brent Kaufman of Lebanon rented an RV in Sisters and headed south to meet Miller in San Diego to begin their cross-country route.

“Our plan was to have a driver that would scout 20 to 40 miles ahead of us for places to eat, take a break and sleep,” Ard said. Loren Roth, a friend from Lebanon, Oregon, drove the RV as far as Scottsdale, Arizona. However, his mother became ill and he had to fly back.

From Scottsdale, the four bicyclists took turns driving in 15-mile increments, switching drivers until they reached Alexandria, Louisiana where another David Miller (same name — different role) took over as driver after flying in to Louisiana.

Miller (the cyclist) organized the “Southern Tier Ride Across America” several months ago knowing that Ard had already cycled the same route across America a few years back.

The Southern Tier Bicycle Route from San Diego to St. Augustine Florida is the shortest cross-country route and offers a route rich in

culture and history.

Bicycle touring is an excellent way to see new places. And with a variety of terrain, vegetation and climate to look forward to, the four eager cyclists kicked off their ride in good weather and high spirits.

“Coming out of San Diego we were raring to go, but it was all about the elevation,” Miller said.

The first part of the trip through California, the four riders had an incredible workout after climbing east from San Diego and topping out at 3,800 feet.

“We went slower, geared it down and took our time,” Miller told *The Nugget*. “Some of the downhills were fantastic. One time Brent got up to 45 miles an hour until the next grade started. We just kept in mind that maybe 40 miles down the road the RV would be there and you could have some Gatorade and rest a little bit.”

Averaging 70 miles a day through some rugged terrain and highways they ran into obstacles.

“We had our share of flat tires,” Ard said.

However, Kaufman, an avid cyclist who has ridden in several marathons, was an amazing tire-changer.

“Brent could change a tire really fast and without a tool,” Miller explained, laughing. “He brought along 27 inner tubes. The rest of us just looked at each other thinking we’d never use them all. We were wrong. We used them all and then some.”

Being a retired track coach and sports enthusiast, Lehman was very efficient making bike adjustments.

“He made adjustments to my bike that I would never have noticed,” Miller said.

“Everyone brought something special to the table. We all had our little niche.

“Our goal was to help all of us succeed together,” added Miller.

In Arizona, they rode along Interstate 10.

“You really had to focus and stay very visible to vehicles,” Ard said.

Texas dominated their route, taking up an entire third of the mileage. When they hit Texas their perfect riding weather began to change with storms on the horizon.

“Three times in the evenings it rained on us. Lots of clouds and thunder. We rode through some flooded areas,” Ard said.

They went south toward Del Rio, Texas, and ended up along the border of Mexico.

“There is a partial wall with gaps in it,” Miller said. “We talked to the border patrol and some other folks and we found that not too many were in favor of putting up a big wall.”

The riders had a theory: Once they rode through Texas they would be on easy street.

“Marlin told us it’s all downhill to Florida, but the only problem was, once we got into the next state of Louisiana, I looked at the map and there still was a thousand miles to go,” Miller added.

But they kept on cranking. The southern hospitality stood out when they stopped in Stonewall, Louisiana, at an eatery called the Sugar Shack.

“The owner loved



PHOTO PROVIDED

Cyclists and their driver at their destination in St. Augustine, Florida.

bicyclists and he told us to help ourselves to the buffet at no charge,” Miller said.

The group stopped in Alexandria, Louisiana to pick up their new volunteer driver.

“I flew out to help these guys in need,” said driver David smiling. “My first night with them in the RV, a major storm hit Louisiana. The next day, my first day driving, we went through flooded country where people were stranded in their yards. This was north of Baton Rouge. Yet the cyclists still kept going because the roads were mostly dry.

“For a most of these guys it was a dream of a lifetime, it was an amazing adventure,” David added.

After 2,900 miles

riding through storms, flooding and flat tires they arrived at the oldest city in the United States, St. Augustine, Florida.

“Our goal was to ride and not really do much sightseeing, although we saw spectacular sights,” Miller said.

When they finally reached their destination on the beach in St. Augustine, each cyclist picked up his bicycle, walked across the sand, popped the champagne, and took photos.

The group stayed in St. Augustine for a day, then turned around and drove the RV back to Sisters.

“It’s the thrill of the ride,” said Ard. “As a cyclist, you’re able to filter out all the distractions and just focus on the one task of the day — riding.”

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