

'Casey's Journey' honors drunk driving victim

■ Two friends begin a bicycle trip across the country, during which they will speak about the dangers of drunk driving

By Chris Ryan
for the Emerald

About 20 people gathered in the Comfort Suites parking lot in Springfield Friday morning to watch Bobby Nichols and David Dearth depart on a cross-country bicycle ride.

The ride, dubbed "Casey's Journey," is in honor of their friend Casey Beaver, who was killed by a drunk driver near Goodman, Mo., in August. The three friends, originally from Kansas, had planned to ride cross-country together this summer to celebrate their college graduations. Nichols and Dearth have decided to continue with the trip to spread the word about the dangers of drunk driving.

"We just wanted to speak from the heart and tell Casey's story," said Dearth. "He was the perfect best friend."

With the help of Mothers Against Drunk Driving, the pair will speak in major cities along the way about the hazards of

drunk driving.

"It's overwhelming how much support we've had," Nichols said.

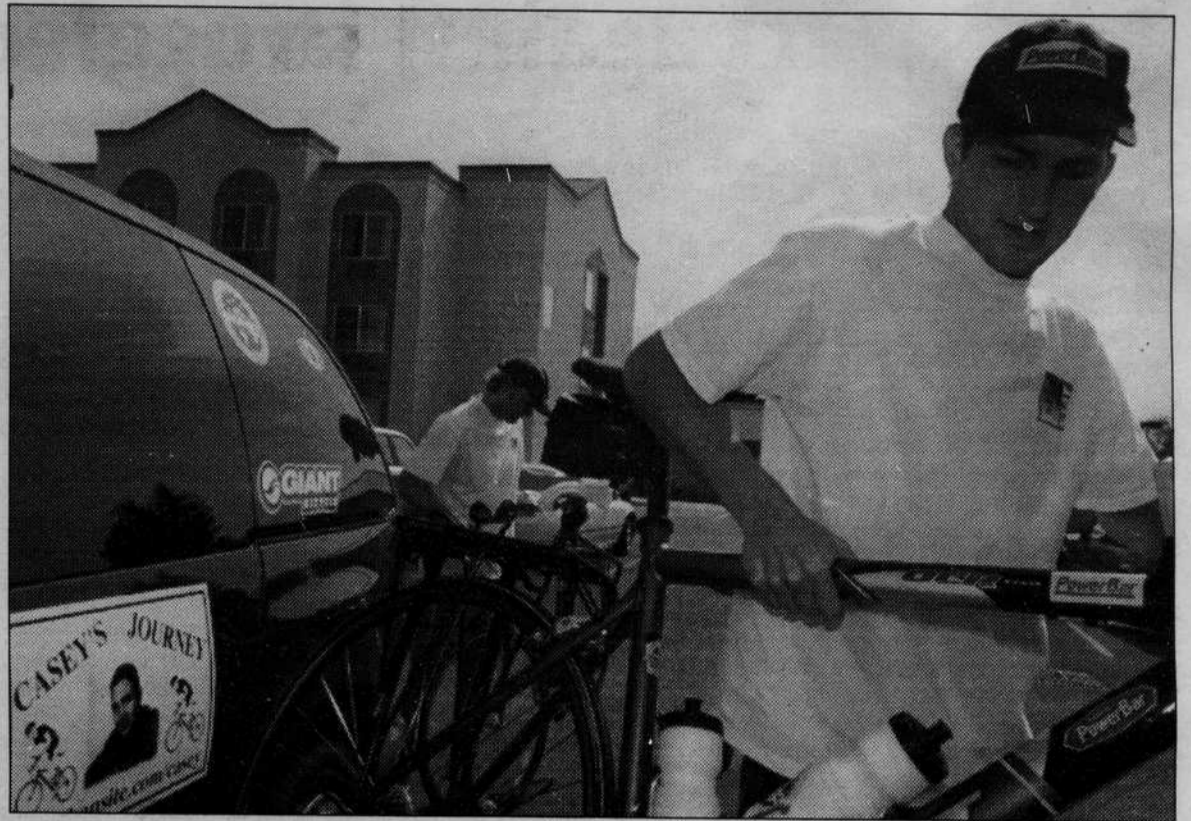
Nichols and Dearth stood behind a booth decorated with information about "Casey's Journey" and talked about the trip. Danita Derr, Lane County Chapter President of MADD, said it's timely for the pair to be starting their trip on Memorial Day weekend.

"Memorial Day is the second deadliest holiday," Derr said.

Nichols and Dearth are asking for stronger drunk driving laws because the man who killed Beaver had eight prior convictions for driving under the influence of alcohol.

"Casey's Journey" will end in Washington, D.C., and Nichols and Dearth estimate that the trip will last 49 days and cover roughly 3,000 miles.

"We're trying to stay positive," Nichols said. "We know he'd do it for us."



R. Ashley Smith Emerald

Bobby Nichols and David Dearth, left, ready their bicycles Friday morning before they begin a ride across America in memory of their friend Casey Beaver, who was killed by a drunk driver. The three planned the trip before Beaver died, but now Nichols and Dearth are completing the endeavor to tell the story of their friend's death to people across the United States.

News brief

Veterans group presents monument to gay soldiers

CATHEDRAL CITY, Calif. — A gay veterans group unveiled a monument to remember gay service members killed in combat.

The Sunday ceremony was attended by veterans in uniform, the mother of a Navy serviceman beaten to death at age 23 for being gay and a color guard carrying the rain-

bow banner that symbolizes gay pride.

The activists who pushed for the monument in this desert city just south of Palm Springs say it is the first of its kind.

"It's a turn-of-the-century event," said Dennis Palt, a former Air Force staff sergeant who served in Vietnam. "I had hoped for this, but you could have never thought this would become a reality in the 1970s, 1980s or '90s. It's fabulous."

The Associated Press



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