

# Pedaling for a cause

Summer is the season of road trips, and mishaps always seem to be part of the package. A wrong turn, a flat tire, a food poisoning episode. These are no fun in the moment, but they make for great stories back home.

Well, anthropology professor Paula Holmes-Eber and aeronautical and civil engineer Lorenz Eber, of Bainbridge Island, Washington, raised the bar several notches when they decided to take a road trip around the world by bicycle.

The trip was taken together with the pair's adolescent daughters, Yvonne and Anya. It was also taken despite the fact that Paula had contended with asthma since childhood. But as they began to contemplate the idea seriously, Paula's chronic disease became the motivation for the journey. And that year-and-a-half-long road trip is the subject of their new book, "Breathtaking."

The family realized that by circling the globe using a carbon-free mode of transportation, and having so many face-to-face encounters along the way, they could raise awareness about the link between the world's declining air quality and the fact that asthma rates have doubled since 1980. Around the world, more than 1,000 people per day die from asthma. Other respiratory illnesses linked to air pollution kill over seven million people annually.

With the help of friends, the Ebers formed a nonprofit called World Bike for Breath. They developed partnerships with three asthma organizations, garnered six outdoor corporate sponsors, learned how to ride tandem bikes and remortgaged their own house before all the pieces were in place for a journey that would take them across North America, Europe, Asia, the South Pacific and Australia.

Along the way, they had wonderful encounters with farmers, monks, students, other cyclists

## This week's book

'Breathtaking,' by Paula Holmes-Eber and Lorenz Eber

Falcon – 360 pp – \$24.95

and — less positively — Russian drug smugglers. They dealt with an earthquake in Taiwan, a broken foot in New Zealand, a potentially lethal insect bite in Tonga, rain storms, blizzards, heat waves and a tornado. This all while Paula had to contend with her asthma.

Yvonne and Anya kept up their studies on tropical beaches, in alpine meadows, in their tent at night and on the side of the road when their dad had to fix the occasional flat tire.

But the world itself was an open book. These travelers saw the Parthenon, the Great Wall of China and the Bolshoi Ballet. They watered camels in Mongolia, rode elephants in Thailand and dealt with monster mosquitoes in Montana. These were probably ancestors of the same insects Capt. Meriwether Lewis once found very troublesome when the Corps of Discovery camped in the same area more than 200 years earlier.

The group of riders were interviewed by media outlets around the world and also reported on their adventures through a blog. Now, this book gives space for each family member to share their thoughts about the journey.

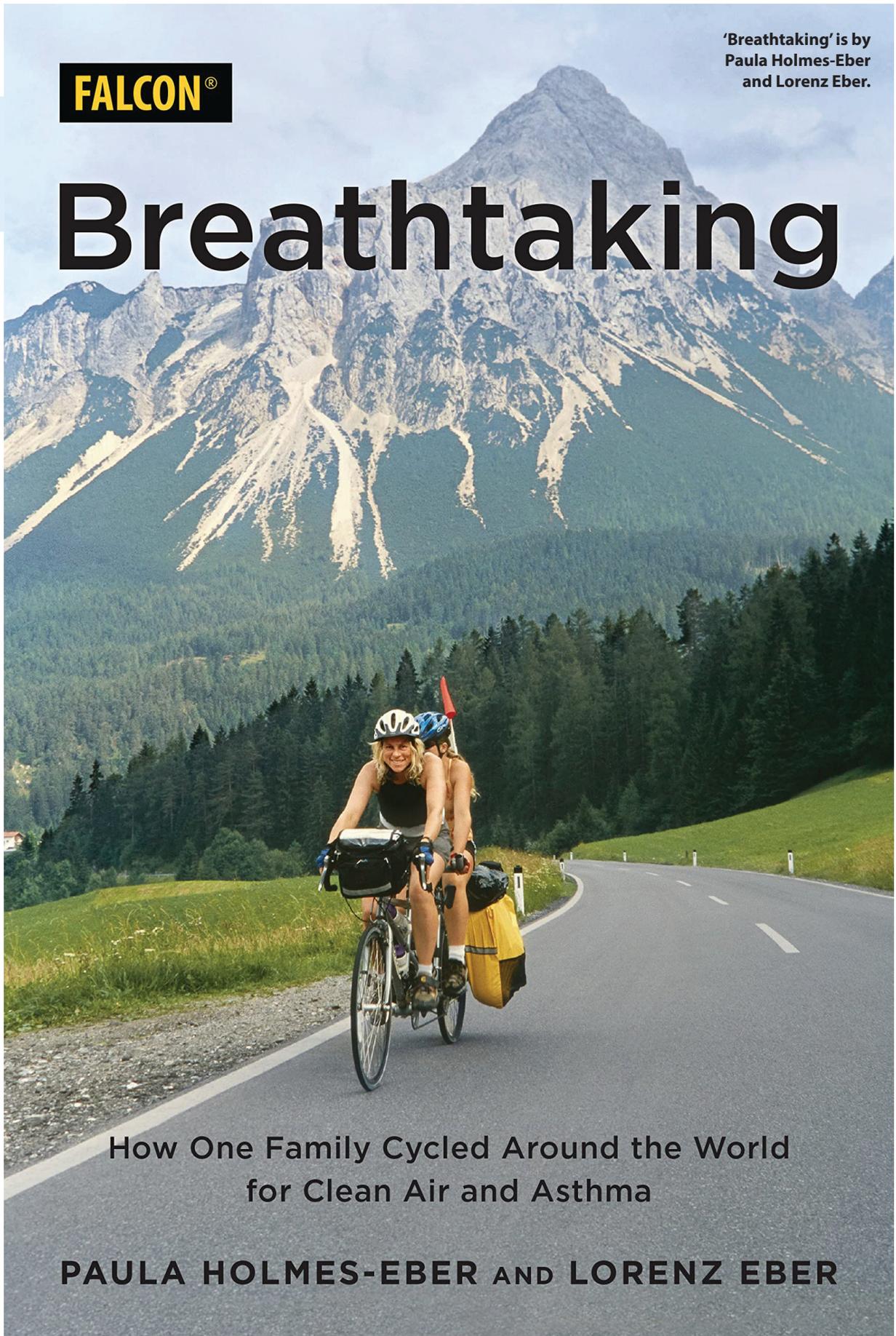
A smattering of color images and some rudimentary maps accompany the text, leaving readers wanting more. But the adventure-stuffed narrative delivers so much to think about. What these four accomplished is, undeniably, breathtaking.

*The Bookmonger is Barbara Lloyd McMichael, who writes this weekly column focusing on books, authors and publishers of the Pacific Northwest. Contact her at [barbaralmcm@gmail.com](mailto:barbaralmcm@gmail.com).*



# Breathtaking

'Breathtaking' is by  
Paula Holmes-Eber  
and Lorenz Eber.



How One Family Cycled Around the World  
for Clean Air and Asthma

PAULA HOLMES-EBER AND LORENZ EBER