

The Viola Grace Expedition



A Bicycle Trip Around Lake Michigan

July 11 - July 19, 1987

By John Strain

Preface

The Viola Grace Expedition was the idea of my brother Jerry Strain. We talked about making a plan together shortly after the death of our father. Our mother, Viola Grace Strain was excited about the idea. With the winter coming on, we set the date for the following summer. Our mother's health was not very good, especially with the recent death of our father and she passed before our expedition. So Jerry thought to dedicate our expedition to our loving mother, Viola Grace Strain.

Lake Michigan is one of the five Great Lakes in North America. It is the only one of the five that is located entirely within the United States. It is slightly smaller than the US state of West Virginia. It is bounded by four US states of Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Illinois; in order of our travel. Lake Michigan's surface area is 58,000 square kilometers (22,400 square miles) making the fifth largest lake in the world.

This writing tries to capture what an 8.5 day bicycle trip around the scenic Lake Michigan would be like for two brothers in the summer's heat in July. It covers some of the physical and mental parts as well as some silly stories about the people we met and the places we visited. In the 8.5 days we travelled 889 miles or 1,431 kilometers.

Day 1 – July 11

LaPorte, Indiana – Holland, Michigan

110 Miles -177 km

We got up at 5:00 a.m. so we could get an early start on a hot summer's day in July. We had a light breakfast and departed by 6:30 a.m. The send off was great by Jerry's wife, Linda, Their son Luke, our sister Jeanette, her son Nigel, and my fiancé' Gayle. We had a future wedding date in three weeks (August 1). I think Gayle was a little nervous of our trip, with the wedding date so close. Jerry's neighbor also got up early to see us off. I think he was still a little buzzed from a late Friday night of drinking.



I had slept on the floor last night and did not sleep very well. My back ached too. I was hoping I did not push a vertebrae out of place like I had done before. It would take a chiropractor to put it back in position. I was lucky that after hours of cycling, it loosened up and was okay.

Jerry had planned the stops on the east side of the lake. I had planned the stops on the west side. Our first destination was some friends of my brother, Rich and Leslie. We arrived at their place around 9:30 a.m. They made a special energy breakfast for us including whole wheat pancakes, fresh strawberries, cantaloupe, and some Hawaiian coffee. After the first three hours of riding, I was wondering if this was such a good idea. But after the second breakfast, I was beginning to think it wasn't such a bad idea after all.

Most of the roads around the lake are very scenic. However from time to time we had to take more dangerous roads. One of which was the Blue Star Highway. It was a narrow road busy with traffic. It was this road that a pickup truck came very close to hitting me. I wavered with panic after I saw the truck go by, nearly striking me. I was very happy when we got off that road. I didn't tell my future wife that I almost got killed on our first day. On this day Jerry got our first flat tire. When we stopped to change it, we realized how tired we were.

We had brought a tent, sleeping bags, and some bicycle tools for our trip. However, we arrived at our first day's destination, Holland, Michigan, too late and too tired to set up our tent. There were *No Vacancy* signs all over. A local resident referred us to a bed and breakfast place.

It was a little hard to find for two very tired cyclists having already traveled 110 miles on a hot summer's day. The extra mile or two really hurt. We also wondered how the host family would receive two dirty, hot and sweaty cyclists.



The name of the place was the Witt House, Bed and Breakfast. They were really good people. They were a cycling family, so they took us right in. They told us that their son owns a bicycle shop that carries Trek. Trek is an American bicycle manufacturer. The brand of our bikes is Trek. Their son also took 2nd place in the Michigan 24 hour race.

After chatting with them, we showered, made phone calls, and reviewed our first day of a hot 96 degree F, 110 mile day with tailwinds. It was time to sleep but it was still hot in the room. There was no air conditioner, only a small antique fan. I sneaked turning the fan toward me when Jerry wasn't looking. I didn't think he would notice since it was stuck on slow. We told some stories and jokes and then tried to sleep.

Day 2

Holland, Michigan – Pentwater, Michigan

102 Miles – 164 km

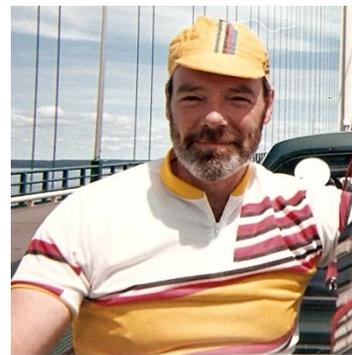
We left the Witt's at 6:15 a.m. after a good breakfast including muffins, sliced salami, eggs and fresh juice. The ride out of town was on the very beautiful Lake Shore Drive. It was cool and shady. This was a very tough day for me. However there was enough warmth from people and humorous events that gave me strength. People were very friendly and helpful by giving directions for a more scenic route.

The day was a blistering, hot 99 degree day. We were on a blacktop road at high noon. I couldn't take any more heat. We had to pull over. There didn't appear to be any shade, but over in the high weeds was a narrow road. We walked down the narrow path to a beautiful shaded area with a cool breeze coming off the lake. It seemed like heaven. The people that lived there came out of their house. They were very friendly and gave us some cold water. We took a thirty minute nap in their yard and then back to the hot blacktop.

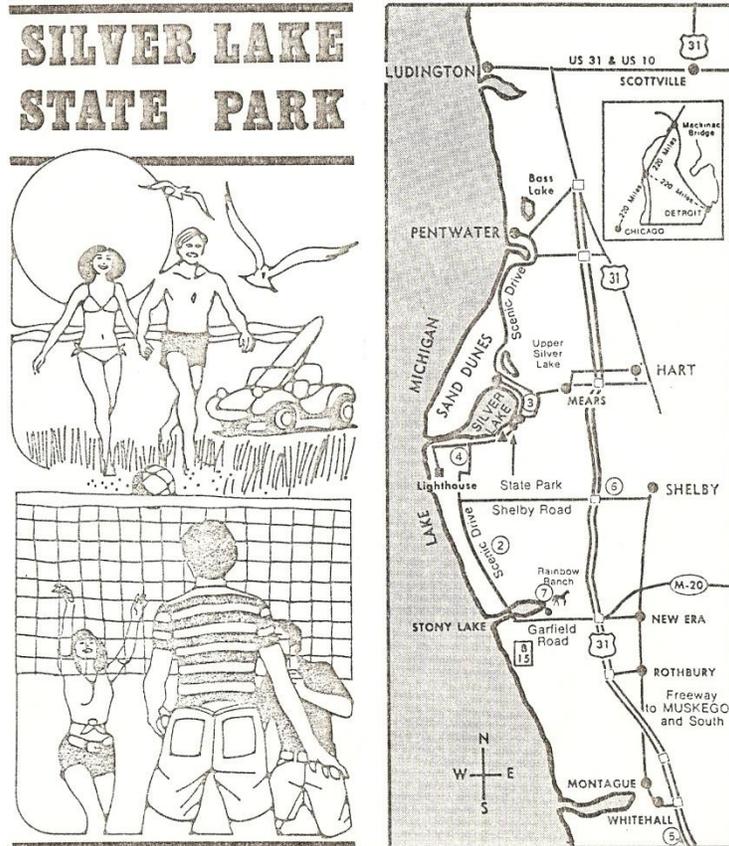
It was so hot that we could only ride about thirty minutes before needing to pull over again. We made an excuse for pulling over so quickly. It was to check the map. While we were stopped, a man pulled up in his car. His first words were “Hi Fellows. Can I be of any assistance to you? I’m a biker too.” His name was Lyle L. Leeke. He was a politician and owner of the *Old Channel Trail Golf Course*. He had maps, brochures and bullshit. He asked us if we would write to the governor and tell him what a great time we had while riding around Michigan. He asked us to mention his name to the governor too, of course. The bullshit label was because of all the talk about himself. We will remember him as Lyle #1.



Our next memorable moment was just after eating lunch at McDonald’s in North Muskegan. Both Jerry and I were wearing our Coolmax cycling jerseys. They looked a lot like McDonald’s uniforms. Since Jerry always received such positive feedback when asking local people for directions, I thought I would give it a try. I approached a Mexican that has just pulled his truck into the parking lot. He parked away from other cars. I guess he wanted to protect his nice looking truck from the other cars. As I walked toward him, I asked him while pointing to another direction, “Is that 120 over there?” He put his truck in gear and quickly and angrily drove away. Jerry and I looked at each other with a puzzled look. We later figured out that he must not have spoken English and thought that we were McDonald’s workers telling him to move his truck over there. We laughed about that event for days; almost until our thighs exploded or stomachs cramped.



We traveled onward to a State Park in Sliver Lake. The weather was changing and it looked like a storm was brewing. We chatted with an old friendly park ranger. He told us that there were tornado warnings in the area. We liked it because it was cooler. We waited only twenty minutes or so. The friendly ranger gave us updated weather reports, directions, and some information about Michigan state law that would prove beneficial later on. The law was that hikers and cyclers may not be turned away from any state park, even if the park is full. This was a sigh of relief because of us riding up at the end of a day exhausted and the next place to rest miles away. It was the prime vacation season.



We arrived at our next destination, Pentwater, Michigan. It was early enough to set up camp leisurely. As we approached the Pentwater ranger, I again decided to take charge. My older brother had done a lot in the planning so far and I wanted to make sure that I did my part. So I approached the park ranger to request a camp site. After all, the Silver Lake Park ranger was very friendly. It's fun to talk with friendly people. I had hoped that I would have a better outcome than when I tried to ask the Mexican man back at McDonald's.

The camp grounds were full. However, I remembered Michigan law. So I asked for a campsite with confidence. The park ranger took my money and directed us to our camp site. The site was only 20 meters downwind of a fisherman's gutting station. It was a place for all fishermen to clean their fish. There was a slight breeze coming off of the lake that brought the smell of the old fish remains to our site. The smell was bad and it was getting hot again.

We found a place to pitch our 2-man tent to minimize the smell of the decaying fish guts. The spikes that came with the tent were not quite long enough for the sand on the beach. So the already small text was reduced in size. I called it a 1 ½ man tent. We put the rain cover on to keep any possible rain out. Unfortunately, it kept the heat in.

Since the tent was set up, we decided to shower and go downtown for some dinner. I took the first shower. I expected no hot water because camp grounds were noted for running out of hot water quickly. I was right. The water was very cold. I advised Jerry that he might

want to fill a couple of water bottles and put them on the warm sidewalk for his final rinse. He said he could take the cold water. He took a long shower. I thought how tough he was to be able to stand the cold water for so long. He informed me that the warm water worked fine and you had to turn the handle around twice for hot water.

Oh well, we were now clean and ready to go downtown for dinner. We were starved. We decided to eat outside at a little street-side pizza restaurant. It was still hot but hotter inside. As we were eating a car pulled up and waited right in front of us. He left the car running. The tailpipe was emitting exhaust too close to our pizza. I got up and walked over to his car to politely ask him to turn his car off. He too must have had a hot and exhausting day, because his response was to his wife, "Let's get the hell out of here! Everyone in this town is crazy!" Then he drove off in anger. We just chuckled and finished our pizza.

We got malted milk shakes for desert. We drank them slowly as we walked our bikes back to camp. Jerry had put his cycling shorts over his bicycle seat to dry. We would wash our cycling shorts by hand at the end of each day. When we got back to camp, his shorts were not on his bike. He thought someone had stolen them while we were eating pizza. My theory was they had fallen off on his bike while he was giving his full attention to his malt.

It was time for us to try to get some sleep. We had only finished 2 of 9 days of our trip. It was a breezeless hot night inside the 1.5 man tent. I actually thought that I would suffocate. It was so hot, I started sweating profusely just by climbing inside the tent. Once I got in and settled, I laid motionless. I was making mental plans to save enough oxygen to exit the tent before death. Anyway, I remember that from some movie some time ago. What a poor, hot, sleepless, night's rest. This encouraged us to take a shorter third day.

Day 3

Pentwater, Michigan – Buellah, Michigan

75 Miles – 120 km

We got up early again in order to get a good part of our cycling in before it got too hot. It was always fun to review our day before we went to sleep or early the next morning. Pentwater gave us a smelly camp site, one cold shower, carbon monoxide pizza, lost cycling shorts, and a hot, poor night's rest. The only good thing about Pentwater was leaving. We always laughed about these silly stories. I'm sure our sense of humor was quite different than normal with the 2 days of long hours on our bikes in the hot summer heat.

As we were leaving Pentwater our luck turned for the good. I found Jerry's cycling shorts on the same street in which we had our milk shakes. We must have been very tired and missed them while looking last night. Or maybe Jerry was right. Someone did steal them and then threw them to the street when they realized what they were. Anyway, our luck changed even further. We had some cool morning air and a canopy of trees for an hour or so of riding.

The positive mood from the cool air was needed because we were tired while beginning our third day. We even talked about taking a ferry from Ludington to Milwaukee, Wisconsin. That would have cut our trip in half. We were really just kidding but we did discuss how we could fake our phone calls each night while partying in Milwaukee. Milwaukee was a city famous for beer and bratwurst hot dogs. We talked about how we could reach for a brat with one hand while riding through the boardwalk; Then again for a beer. We laughed about the idea. We would often sweep our hand through the air while riding, imagining we were grabbing a brat. We called it *the brat sweep*. Anytime we got hungry along our trip, we would do the brat sweep. A few miles before we reached Ludington we changed our shorts in a pretty country cemetery. The cool breeze felt good on our sore asses.



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Well, we passed Ludington. We now knew that we were in it for the duration. I really don't remember much of this day. We did take a little ferry crossing a narrow river. We were not sure if it would be a good idea or not, but it worked out perfectly.

We had a great lunch at the Peppermill in Manistee. It was a neat old town. Many of the places and towns around the lake were full of people on vacation enjoying the lake and the quaint towns around it. Manistee was one of those places. We stopped at the Chamber of Commerce to help us plan where to stay. Clara was very helpful. She gave us two choices, the Honeymoon Inn or the Pine Knot Motel in the next town. Both were on Highway 31.

We move on to the next town. What a beautiful ride downhill into the town. It was almost like a freefall. We could control our speed by tucking in an aerodynamic position or by exposing our chests to catch wind like a sail. As we coasted into Buellah, Michigan, we looked for a place to stay. We did not feel like camping. We stayed at the Pine Knot Motel. We got a kitchenette that was for fisherman, so we got carry out food and ate in our room. We had pizza, chicken and beer. It was good to take an easier day of only 75 miles. My ass was killing me after 3 days of riding. I actually took a bath with my cycling shorts on at first so they would come off more easily. A bad rash was developing that would need attention with 5 days to go. As we reviewed our day the great ride downhill into town was mentioned. What we noted was *what goes down, must go up!*

Day 4

Buellah, Michigan – Petosky, Michigan

103 Miles – 165 km

We climbed uphill out of Buellah. It seemed that every day started by a climb out of the city in which we stayed. We had a new goal for today; let's make it to Traverse City. There was a large bicycle shop there. I needed to buy a Spenco bicycle seat. It was the same shape as my conventional seat but padded. We also needed to buy some extra inner tubes in case we had several flat tires. Well we made it to the bicycle shop with ease. It was good to stop and shop. The seat worked great. It actually helped my ass heal from the deepening rashes. I remember not caring how much the seat cost. The inner tubes, however, ended up having the wrong valve type (Schrader instead of Presta). We didn't know it until the end of the trip. So the false insurance still gave us peace of mind.

On this day we met another interesting character. Since he too was full of himself, we named him Lyle #2. He was remembered for his great bicycle tip. His advice was to "go like hell on the down-hills so you can coast farther up the hill". I felt kind of good at first, since I had been doing that. Jerry on the other hand kept an even pace and always passed me toward the top of the hill and was always fresher than me. Who was this out of shape old guy with the rather large beer belly giving us cycling tips? He didn't really impress me as knowing any hi-tech information about cycling. I decided that I had better change my hill strategy to Jerry's and just power up the hill like him. We did repeat Lyle #2's tip though on all of our down hills from then on, along with a good laugh "Go like hell!"

It was a good day of cycling even though the head winds were strong. It was cooler and one of Jerry's strongest days. Training effect was taking place as we were getting stronger. We were still tired and sore. As we entered Petosky we saw a sign saying *Holiday-Inn at the top of the hill*. We both agreed it would be a real treat to stay in a Holiday-In for one night. However we wondered what *at the top of the hill* meant???

We ended up taking a room only half the way up the hill at a Best Western. We nick named it 90-10, because that's how much it cost (\$90.10). We didn't care about the cost. Maybe we would die from this trip and what good would money be then. The pool, hot tub, steam room, tub with jets, and weight room all sounded good. We didn't swim laps or lift weights.



We went out of the hotel for dinner to a nice restaurant called Villa Italia. We had fettuccini and Beck's beer. It was delicious. After dinner we went back to enjoy the hotel a bit

and then to bed. We needed a good nights sleep. And the good news was, we got to go down the hill in the morning.

Day 5

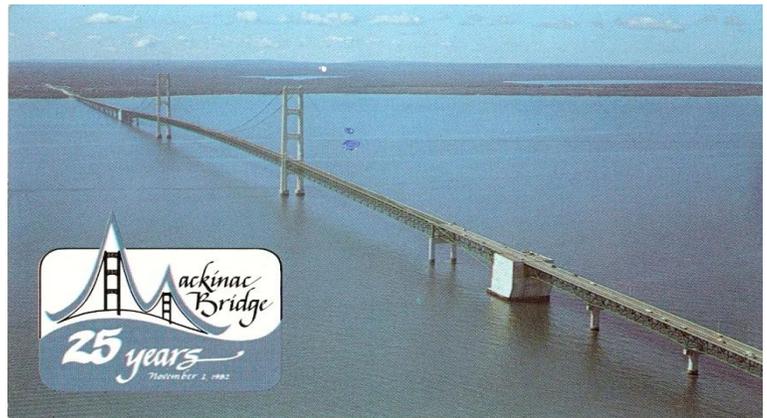
Petosky, Michigan – Gulliver, Michigan

115 Miles – 185 km

This was a really good day despite many delays. Maybe I should have said it was a good day because of the delays. We got a late start out of 90-10. Do you blame us? We had three flat tires between us, did laundry, and had to wait to cross the Mackinac Bridge.

While in Macinaw City we met Rick Vorick and his friend Howard. They had just cycled up fro Monticello, Indiana. They told a story of stopping in a LaPorte, Indiana bike shop, where someone messed with their bikes. LaPorte is Jerry's home. It's a small world. They told us the most scenic part of their ride was up Highway 119 out of Petosky. We declined that route because of heavy traffic and Highway 31 was shorter.

The Mackinac Bridge is the third largest suspension bridge in the world. It connects Mackinaw City to the upper peninsula of Michigan's St. Ignace. It is 26,372 feet (8,038 meter) long. Its nick name is Big Mac. We did have to wait to cross the bridge. The state workers were on their lunch break. When they were finished, they put our bikes in the back of a pickup truck and we crossed.



Crossing this bridge was a milestone not only for its beauty but because it meant we were on our way home. We took a lot of photos of the spectacular view. However, photos do not do it justice. We figured out that we had only one more day heading into the headwinds coming from the west. And then we would head south. South is down hill and we could probably coast the entire way to Sycamore. Well, that's the way it looked on the map!

Riding west in the Upper Peninsula (UP) sure was beautiful. We saw hawks and owls, the weather was cool, and we were headed home. The headwinds were tough though. I remember one stretch of about 20 miles that we kept up a pace of about 20 mph into the headwinds. We would take turns pulling or leading the other to break the wind for three minute segments. Jerry began and it seemed to be a fast pace. I had a



hard time keeping on his back wheel and he had all the wind. I remember coming around him for my turn leading thinking, how am I going to lead, I could hardly keep up. Well I did. It hurt but I pulled hard and pretended it didn't hurt. I even tried to lose him by increasing the pace.

When it was his turn again, he came around me fresh as a daisy saying "Nice pull." I don't know if he made me feel good or bad. I wondered if I could keep up with him this time. I had hoped I didn't make him mad. I struggled to stay on his tire to maximize the draft. I even pretended to be fresher than he by coming around to take my turn 30 seconds early. I pulled hard again trying to lose him again. He came around me when it was his turn fresh as a daisy again. He told me nice pull again too. I was hoping he would say, let's stop and look at the map or drink some water, or even rest. Hell, I was even wishing for a flat tire. But no, we kept that pace up for about an hour.

We finally pulled over to rest. We reviewed our progress on Jerry's cycling computer. We felt a real sense of accomplishment. We chatted and rested as Lyle #3 turned up. It was another know-it-all cyclist. His real name was Dr. Ylvenclocken. He and his friend gave us some advice on passing trucks. He hated to see trucks. We couldn't understand why because we loved to see them. We would pick up a little speed as the trucks approached us from the rear and enjoy the pull from the displaced air. The only thing we could figure is that he was riding on the wrong side of the highway. Lyle #3 was remembered for the worst cycling advice.

We had reached our destination for the day after 115 miles. It was the farthest we had traveled in one day. We had built a little strength and the cooler weather really helped. We pulled into Gulliver, Michigan in the U.P. It was a town of about 10.

Our humor had gotten away from us at this point. The over weight woman clerk at the motel had food stain all down the front of her sweat shirt. She also had a spotty complexion. I named her the spotted lady. Jerry called her the Bon-Bon Lady. We asked her how much it was for a room. She said 20 for a single, 24 for a double. Jerry said we'll take the single, gave her 20 bucks and off to our room we went. We wondered why she had such a puzzled look on her face when she took the 20. I guess that maybe she thought one of us was going to sleep outside. We had a lot of laughs on that one.

Today, Gulliver is thriving with a small collection of not-very-old buildings, two groceries, two gas stations, a bank, a lumber yard, a car repair shop, and some churches near the blinker light on U.S. 2 where CR 432 turns south. CR 432 goes out to Seul Choix Point, the beautiful Seul Choix Lighthouse and museum, and Port Inland limestone quarry. The road passes between 1,000-acre Gulliver Lake and McDonald Lake (nearly 2,000 acres).



CONTEL

While making my nightly calls home, I temporarily forgot Gayle's number. It could have been exhaustion. I finally remembered and made the call from an antique phone booth along the highway. It was full of spider webs and spiders. I felt like Indiana Jones in Michigan while making the call as spiders dropped down from above.

ITEMIZED LONG-DISTANCE CALLS

NO	DATE	TIME	MIN	TO PLACE	AREA NUMBER	P	T	C	AMOUNT
#0001	07-06	04.28PM	1	ST CHARLES IL	312 584-6588	D	1	01	.31
#0002	07-08	04.38PM	1	DIR ASST	815 411-0000	D	1		.00
0003	07-12	07.34PM	1	SYCAMORE IL	815 895-5355	E	2	01	1.74
0004		CALLING CD		FROM PNTWTR MI	616 869-9217				
0005	07-12	07.37PM	2	SYCAMORE IL	815 895-9287	E	2	01	1.14
0006		CALLING CD		FROM PNTWTR MI	616 869-9202				
0007	07-13	12.58PM	3	BAYFIELD WI	715 779-5111	D	1	01	.86
0008	07-13	06.37PM	6	SYCAMORE IL	815 895-9287	E	2	01	1.76
0009		CALLING CD		FROM BEULAH MI	616 882-9943				
0010	07-14	07.32PM	4	SYCAMORE IL	815 895-6956	E	2	01	1.50
0011		CALLING CD		FROM PTOSKY MI	616 347-9187				
0012	07-14	09.09PM	11	SYCAMORE IL	815 895-9287	E	2	01	2.67
0013		CALLING CD		FROM PTOSKY MI	616 347-3925				
0014	07-15	08.23PM	3	SYCAMORE IL	815 895-9287	E	2	01	1.33
0015		CALLING CD		FROM GULLIVR MI	906 283-9391				
0016	07-16	09.10AM	3	SYCAMORE IL	815 895-9287	D	2	01	1.61
0017		CALLING CD		FROM GARDEN MI	906 644-9298				

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CONTEL

We had pasty and beer for dinner. Pasty was the local treat, a giant pot pie. We chatted about our trip and watched the All Star Baseball game on a little TV in our room. Our maximum speed for the day was 37.3 mph (60 kmh). We biked 7 hours, 41 minutes at an average speed of 15 mph (24 kmh).

ITEMIZED LONG-DISTANCE CALLS

NO	DATE	TIME	MIN	TO PLACE	AREA NUMBER	P	T	C	AMOUNT
0018	07-16	08.44PM	9	SYCAMORE IL	815 895-9287	E	2	01	2.23
0019		CALLING CD		FROM MENOME MI	906 863-9282				
0020	07-16	08.54PM	1	SYCAMORE IL	815 895-6956	E	2	01	.99
0021		CALLING CD		FROM MENOME MI	906 863-9282				
0022	07-17	08.55PM	10	SYCAMORE IL	815 895-9287	E	1	01	2.38
0023		CALLING CD		FROM KAUKAUNWI	414 766-3731				
0024	07-18	07.07PM	3	SYCAMORE IL	815 895-5355	N	1	01	1.16
0025		CALLING CD		FROM EAGLE WI	414 594-8935				
0026	07-18	07.48PM	10	SYCAMORE IL	815 895-6956	N	1	01	1.91
0027		CALLING CD		FROM EAGLE WI	414 594-2329				
0028	07-20	09.17PM	1	STEAMBOSPG CO	303 879-5154	E	1	01	.21
0029	08-03	08.11PM	4	SYCAMORE IL	815 895-5355	E	1	01	1.50
0030		CALLING CD		FROM BAYFIELWI	715 779-3906				
0031	08-03	08.16PM	3	SYCAMORE IL	815 895-9287	E	1	01	1.33
0032		CALLING CD		FROM BAYFIELWI	715 779-3906				
0033	08-04	12.07PM	4	SYCAMORE IL	815 895-6956	D	1	01	1.93
0034		CALLING CD		FROM BAYFIELWI	715 779-3906				

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Day 6

Guliver, Michigan – Cedar River, Michigan

102 Miles – 164 km

It was day six and I felt strong. We got up early to beat both the heat and the traffic. It was dark and cold, 4 degrees (39 F). At the beginning of the trip I had packed a stocking hat but Jerry told me I would not need it. I sure wish I would have had it now. We wore a pair of socks for gloves. On our way out of Guliver, the town of 10, we couldn't help but laugh at the "Taking the Single". The Bon-Bon Lady must have been as confused as the two weary cyclers. We pedaled 14 miles to Manistique for breakfast at Hardies. I was so happy Jerry liked junk food. With all the calories we were burning, it didn't matter what we ate. We found a seat with the sunshine coming through the window. With the hot coffee, it felt great as it was a cold morning.

Our map was not very good for showing some of the little roads that hugged the lake. One wrong turn could have taken us miles the wrong direction. We did take one wrong turn and went a bit out of our way. We were supposed to go on Highway 2/41 and then take Highway 35 but we remained on Highway 2/41 into Bark River. We took a short nap in a park playground area before moving on. It's always mentally hard to back track on a bicycle.

When we saw some people, we asked them for directions. They were very friendly but the group of three could not agree on which the best way, for us to go. One of the members wanted us to go down a road to the BMW Show. I guess not much goes on up in those parts and they didn't want us to miss anything. We took in all their suggestions and decided to take the advice of a woman at the grocery store that called her husband to get directions for us. He used to deliver mail in the area. We figured he knew best. We left the other three still arguing about which was the best way. Friends and family will argue about just about anything.

Escanaba was nothing beautiful. Traffic from Gladestone to Escanaba was like Chicago's Dan Ryan Expressway. We both hated that short, dangerous stretch of highway. We ate at Wendy's in Escanaba. That is where we got our Jazz caps. We rode a bit farther before we stopped a nice little bar and grill. Dinner was great. We had cheeseburgers and a beer. The view out the picture window looked like a Hamm's Beer commercial. As the commercial said; *from the land of sky blue waters*. I have seen many Hamm's Beer signs of the moving picturesque screen of a beautiful outdoors setting; and there



is was in real life, right in front of us. We enjoyed the view, ate, had a laugh at the family giving us directions and planned our next stop.

Our next stop was two miles down the road at the J.W. Wells State Campgrounds. It wasn't like Pentwater at all. We had a beautiful campsite. It was cool, no fish smell, I even took a warm shower and the tent was back to a two man tent from the 1.5 at Pentwater. The tent looked like it did in the catalog. We were both so pleased. All in all, we had a good day despite two flat tires and a wrong turn. We got a great night's sleep. It was to be our last.



Day 7

Cedar River, Michigan – Kaukauna, Wisconsin

102 Miles – 164 km

This leg of the trip would take us to Wisconsin. Ah, closer to home. We thought of brats and beers, cheese. We left our campsite early and headed to Marinette for breakfast. Before arriving we stopped at a scenic area to take some photos. I took one of Jerry in a deep shadow. He knew it would not turn out because of the shadow, so he asked me to take another. He was laughing at my photo techniques, so I got a shot of him laughing at me.



We ate breakfast at Hardees after pedaling through Marinette, Wisconsin. A couple of guys told us to take Old Peshtigo Road as it would be without traffic and it would be more scenic than the four lane Highway 41. As we pedaled down the road we heard a train whistle. It sounded closer as we looked around but we couldn't see anything. Then we heard it again and saw it. It was heading down Highway 41 along with the cars and trucks; or at least it appeared to be on the highway and not railroad tracks. For some reason we thought that was the funniest thing since me trying to get directions from the Mexican guy at McDonald's. Jerry laughed until his stomach cramped. As I laughed, the blood in my thighs seemed to swell as if my thigh were actually going to explode.

I was navigating now as to our pre trip agreement. The Wisconsin county maps were better and we still conferred with each other and asked the locals. With luck, I guided us around Green Bay, Wisconsin without any trouble. The blacktop roads were more cycling friendly. One of the best sections of the trip was riding through the Oconto Marsh. The marsh

was right up to the blacktop. There was little traffic, so the wildlife seemed abundant. There were many different birds. One particular flock of large birds looked like eagles. However after checking further, we found that they were a species of gulls. We coasted silently for miles though the Oconto March.



Once in Kaukauna we had to find a place to stay. There was an ice cream shop ahead. I warned Jerry to keep an eye on his cycling shorts. I shouldn't have teased Jerry about losing his shorts before. After all, he didn't tease me for my mistakes; like when I would follow him too closely as we came to a rest area and couldn't stop. One time I rammed his bike, knocked it over, and broke his mirror.

The owner of the ice cream shop was very friendly. He served us some ice cream cones, gave us directions to a motel, and gave us samples of his fried fish. He wanted us to come back for dinner. We thought that we would because the fish was good and we enjoyed his kindness. However we opted for the bar and grill next to our hotel. It was Friday night and the place was packed. There was a waiting list for a table to eat. So we had three beers and headed back to our motel for some junk food.

Upon returning to our motel we met some party animals. They were staying at the Fox City Motel too. They were trashed but friendly. They gave us a Wisconsin road map that was better than ours. We took the map back to our room and made our plans. The sight seeing was over. We decided to just try to make good time and go the most direct route. This meant that there would be more traffic than the side roads. So we decided to get to bed early for a very early start for day eight.

We got poor, nights sleep because of the sunken mattresses and the party animals next door. They kept going until 3:30 a.m. We got up at 4:00 a.m. As we left, Jerry turned our TV on a high volume on the shopping channel. Maybe those guys next door would want to know that it was on. I doubt it bothered them very much.

Day 8 – July 18

Kaukauna, Wisconsin – Eagle, Wisconsin

110 Miles – 177 km

We left early again. This time we tied flashlights to our bikes so any early morning traffic could see us. This was Jerry's worst day. I had thought he was hurting a little because I did most of the pulling in the morning. It felt good to put any extra into the trip that I could. After all, we were a team. I also felt that Jerry had done more than his share pulling already. He modestly disagreed. The strong headwinds, hills, heat and humidity made this day hell. Plus the fact that after building some strength in days 4, 5, and 6; we were now beginning to weaken on day 8. Jerry even told me that I would have to do most of the pulling.

We made frequent stops. One was at a little grocery store in Teresa, Wisconsin. It was much like mom and dad's Little Green Store. The worker was friendly as he talked about the financial troubles of a little store. He talked about the long hours too. We could relate to what he was talking about.

We were nearly exhausted when up ahead was a detour; a detour! The bridge was nearly all gone. They were working to restore the bridge. There was a crane, end loader, and a few jackhammers. We did not want to take the detour. It would have meant extra miles and we didn't know how many. Jerry asked a worker if we could cross. I couldn't believe it when the worker motioned us through. We squeezed between the end loader and the crane. It was a busy and noisy sight. It was a good move by Jerry.

Our next stop was another little grocery store down the road to Little Saumico. We told the owner of our good fortune crossing the bridge. He displayed anger at the county for blocking the road to his store. Imagine if cars thought it was too far to drive around; what about two tired cyclers?

I was now beginning to die. The extra pulling and heat was getting to me. We needed to eat and rest. We were even getting low on cash. Ahead was another little bar and grill. There seemed to be many around the lake. We had burgers and fries. I would have had three burgers if our cash wouldn't have been low. After lunch we took a nap in the front yard of the bar. Every where I laid there were ants. I think I was on an ant hill. I spent



my time moving around. Jerry rested comfortably under the shade tree. He must have had some ant repellent that he didn't tell me about.

Jerry had gotten his strength back. I was still dying. He pulled from here on out. If I ever took the lead, it was for a token amount of time. We now needed to take a four lane highway with no shoulder and lots of traffic. Bicycles were prohibited. We only needed to go a few miles, so we went for it. It was scary.

We ate another lunch about 3:30 pm. We took our time eating while trying to decide how much further to go. We had thought that if we pushed on another 20 miles to Eagle, we would be able to have an easy half of a day home on day 9. We decided to go for it. Our pace was slow in the high heat and heavy traffic. Jerry's strength and determination was very evident at this time. I hung on and followed.

We finally rolled into Eagle, Wisconsin. We were exhausted but were on a high because we knew we had an easy half of a day to home. We stopped at a grocery store for fresh fruit and information. The clerk informed us that there was only one motel and it was full. We didn't care. We were in Eagle for the night; either in someone's front yard or jail. I wondered if the jail took Master Card.

Jerry spotted a Catholic church across the street. Many people were coming out after a mass. We quickly went over to the church to take a rest in the lawn. The people moved on but the priest came over to talk to us. His name was Father Dick Grebasch of St. Teresa's Parish. He let us sleep on the school's basement floor. After a shower in his home, using his oversized, plush, soft towels, we chatted in his kitchen. His overweight body was munching on a salad mostly made of broccoli. Father Grebasch was from Chicago. He has a brother with 9 children in Ames, Iowa. Jerry gave the Father \$40.00 for his hospitality. He said he should have given him 90.10, but we were short of cash.



We went back to the grocery store make phone calls, get ham, cheese, chips, and juice. Things had been going well. We thought on several occasions that someone was looking over us. We had some good luck. Jerry's overall plan was great. I remember feeling so good that I ran up the hill, 150 yards, to return the school keys. I immediately started pouring of sweat. Damn, right after my shower. It felt weird to run. It turned out to be a mistake as I needed to save my energy and was already weak. I got hot. I don't think my body temperature ever recovered.

Day 9 – July 19

Eagle, Wisconsin – Sycamore, Illinois

70 Miles – 112 km

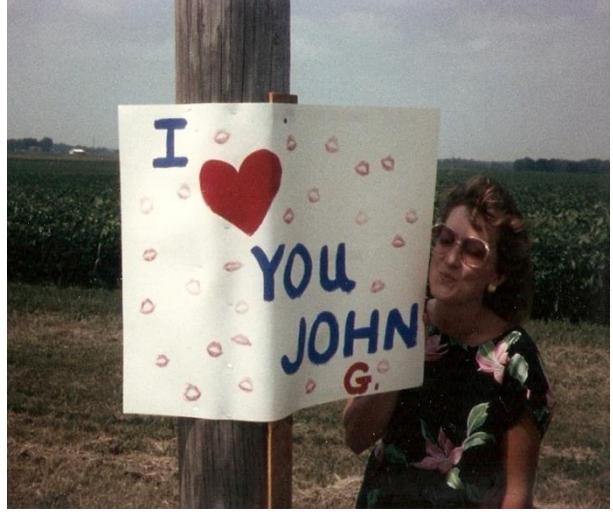
Well it was up bright and early again. We were going home. If that wasn't a motivator, there wasn't one. I was really dragging though; almost no energy. We stopped at the Country Kitchen. It was a buffet and they took credit cards. I called it a goldmine! We used Jerry's Visa and ate and ate and ate.



After some very hilly country roads we saw some familiar territory. Signs for Fontana, Harvard, and Marengo were all in our sights. We stopped frequently to make calls. I needed to take many breaks by this time. I remember keeping my head down while pedaling; only looking at Jerry's rear wheel as to not run into him again. One of the calls home, we were told to take our time. They were setting up a welcoming party and were not ready. That was good news to me. I was dragging. We stopped almost every 15 minutes. It was blistering hot. Genoa never looked so good.

Highway 23 was hard. There was no shoulder and no shade. Jerry saw large signs posted on poles along the highway. The signs were welcoming us home. They were made by Jeanette, our sister, Linda, Jerry's wife, and Gayle. Less than two weeks was our wedding. Don Johnson, not of Miami Vice, was Linda's father. He put the signs up. I would not had seen them if Jerry hadn't have pointed them out. My head was down. It was motivating for me to finish. We kept on at a nice easy pace.

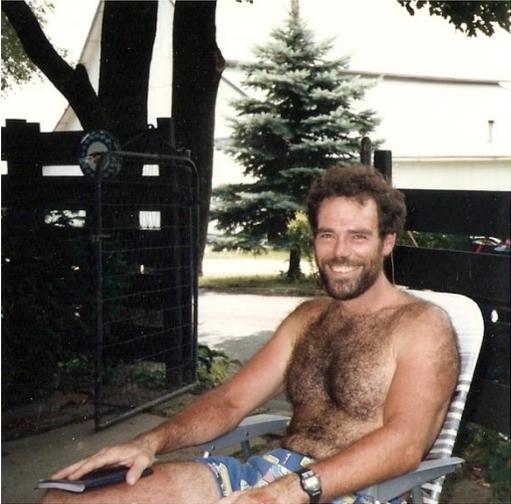
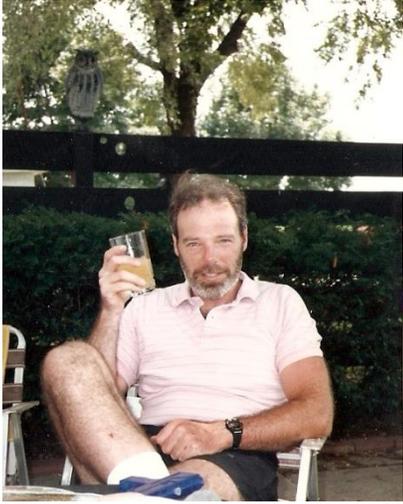




It felt really good riding into the Johnson Farm just a mile out of Sycamore. We were home. Suddenly all the pain had gone away. We could sit down, eat and drink, enjoy family, and tell stories.



There was a great picnic waiting for us on Don and Doris' Farm. There was lots of shade and a cool breeze. We celebrated with some wine. It was an amazing trip.



End Notes

This trip was an excellent experience. It took both mental strength and physical strength along with working together as a team. It was not a vacation ride around the lake to experience the many lake-side festivals. Although there were many festivals and the lake front property was beautiful, for me, the trip was about endurance. Could I make it?

This story and all of the photos can not do justice to the actual trip. I can not properly express the sights, sounds, and feelings. I can not express properly the extreme feelings of heat and tiredness along with the changes of training affect that also occurred. However I will always think back to this trip with a smile, even a chuckle while remembering some of the details. It was a fun project going back over my notes and putting them in a more readable form.

I have also included in these end notes a copy of a letter from Lon Halderman and his wife, Susan Notorangelo. I met Lon and Susan at a bicycle mechanics class I took at Kishwaukee College that his wife and he we teaching. I gave him a copy of my notes of our trip.

Lon holds many cycling records. I have listed two that he holds together with his wife, Susan.



Jim Lampley interviews Lon Halderman at the end of the Great American Bike Race.

1983	Mixed Tandem with Susan Notorangelo, Transcontinental record	10d 20h
1986	Mixed Tandem 24-hour Record with Susan Notorangelo	432.4 mi

I have also included a copy of a newspaper article written by the sports editor, Bill Wesselhoff of the Daily Chronicle, Sunday August 2, 1987.

Lon Haldeman

800 Hayes Court P.O. Box 73

Susan Notorangelo

Harvard, IL 60033 815-943-3171

John,

Nice story about a neat
adventure. Sounded like you
had fun.

Hope to see you again at
some events this summer.

Lon + Susan

Strain brothers circle Lake Michigan by cycle

Newlywed John Strain of Sycamore, a youthful 35 years of age and renowned as a teacher, assistant SIS football coach and outfielder on Terry's High Flyers, faced an unusual challenge this summer. John married Gayle Dordand Saturday but only two weeks ago he found himself headed out of LaPorte, Indiana, riding a bicycle and loaded with 25-pounds of gear for what he and his brother Jerry expected to be a 1,000 mile trip around Lake Michigan.

Jerry, a prison counselor in LaPorte, and John planned the trip earlier this year. Their moon, Viola Grace Strain, encouraged them and helped in planning. When she passed away shortly before they started their ride, they dedicated the journey to her. They had shirts made that read "Viola Grace Expedition" and they wore them on the trip.

The Strain brothers didn't know the distance they were to travel but expected a ten-day excursion. Jerry's wife Linda would provide emergency backup on the east side of the lake as would Gayle on the west side. Sister Jeanette got involved by taking nightly calls from the two and keeping track of their progress. The first day, John was run off the road by a pickup truck.

"I went off on the gravel shoulder but I didn't go down," he said. "Really, cyclists own the road like anybody else. You can ride right down the middle of the lane or along the center line. But drivers don't know that. They think they own the road." Luckily, that was the only close call. John did get tangled in his gear and put his bike down several times

during the trip. When he got back, he took it to a bike shop to have it worked on. The mechanic thought it had been in a wreck. It served him well however and only five flat tires caused delays.

As things evolved, the brothers covered 693 miles from LaPorte to stops in Michigan at Holland, Pentwater, Benah, Patoskey and in Wisconsin at Kankama and Eagle through to Sycamore. It took 8 1/2 days to ride to a party awaiting them at Don Johnson's on North Grove Road. The first two days, the weather was hot, in the 90s. John lost 10 pounds the first day. The third day, a cold front arrived that would last the remainder of the trip. It also put the pair into a headwind that cut progress to about 14 miles per hour. Michigan's upper peninsula greeted them with muggy 99 degree temperatures when they arose one morning.

The two traveled light. They carried clothes, tools, shoes, a tent, sleeping bags and medical supplies but no food. They ate along the way buying fresh fruit daily and eating it while riding. Pedaling eight hours a day provided plenty of moving scenery. Still, people made us big an impression. "Most of them would either say, 'Hey, all right' or 'What are you crazy?' But everyone was friendly," John said. "On our last night in Eagle we had covered 100 miles a day for the last two days pushing it to get home. We were beat. We laid down along side the road. There were no places available. We were ready to sleep along the street when a priest from the Catholic Church came up and said, 'It looks like you boys could use some Gatorade.' My brother said, 'Father, we

need more than that!' He took us in and we showered and got a good night's sleep. It was great." The Fr. Dick Reboosh was one but typical of several very helpful people the Strains met along the way.

"The people we talked to were really great. We had to break away from them. Everyone was friendly. Everyone wanted to know what we were doing. Everything in general seemed to go well. When we had no place to stay we found one. We always got good directions," John said. "We never made a bad turn."

Other happenings

Recent DeKalb High School graduate Victoria Plental will attend St. Joseph's College in Hensselaer, Ind., this fall and play softball next spring. Plental, a shortstop-pitcher, was one of nine players from New York, Illinois and Indiana recently signed by coach Carol Cunningham. Closer to home, Sycamore grad Kris Malone will attend Aurora University to start her sports activities with the volleyball team this fall. Roy Lee of DeKalb, a Kishwaukee Kangar soccer player, will play for Aurora this fall when the school revives its program after a year's layoff.

DeKalb's Stephanie Boardman and Molly Carpenter, the tennis barns' number one singles and doubles players this spring before graduation, will attend Edinburg College to continue their play. Boardman, a four-year letterwinner, played first singles and cap-

Strains...

Continued from page 11

ween two brothers is an NCAA record. The fundraiser gala will also honor the Lions and Lionsess Clubs of District 1F and Alpha Gamma Delta Fraternal Race time is 11:30 a.m. For information or ticket phone 312-520-3868.

Eugene Grant of DeKalb was a medalist in 1986 season's U.S. National Senior Olympic Games in Louisville. As such he will be honored in open ceremonies at this year's Illinois Senior Olympics Springfield Sept. 24th. As a team, Illinois took second in total medals among 14 states and Canada 1 year... DHS's Anne Quinney was named second honorable mention in the Outdoor Writers Association of America Scholastic Writing Contest for her poem "Midwest December." The contest is administered by the OWAA in cooperation with the Isaac Wal League Endowment Fund.

Former Barb Met Owens of the Los Angeles Raiders recently ran with the bulls in Pamplona, Spain, during that city's annual celebration. Owens also visited Hong Kong and Rio de Janeiro during his summer vacation... Another NFLer, Shawn Dall of the Bears, attended "Dancing at the Palace" put on by the Ball Theatre Workshop at NUI's Gabel Hall this past week. Sportsvision has announced its fall football schedule. It includes live coverage of Northern's games v Lamar Sept. 12 and Toledo Oct. 10. The regional circuit network will also televise NUI's games with West Illinois Nov. 10 and with Akron Nov. 15 on taped de a Chicago Prep Game of the Week and all five II grid title contests.

Chronicle Sports

