

3,000 miles already covered

Bicyclist stops in Hills on trip across nation

By Mary Rodriquez
staff writer

Mark Tucker has been travelling across America since June 1 and he doesn't give two hoots about the price of gas or the air traffic controllers' strike.

Tucker, 23, was in Farmington Hills this week visiting his family, with 3,000 pedal-powered miles of his 4,000-mile solo bicycle trek behind him.

Off his 15-speed Nishiki for a few days of rest and bicycle repair work, Tucker talked about the reasons which prompted him to leave his Laguna Beach, Calif., home for life on the back roads of rural America.

"The challenge of riding over 4,000 miles, the fitness/exercise aspect, and photographing of panoramic scenes —

basically those are the reasons I chose to do this trip," he said.

Tucker's step-mother, Marge, remembers him talking about it last September when he came home for his sister's wedding. Opportunity presented itself when Tucker was laid off from his job at the U.S. Department of Commerce, where he microfilmed government documents.

The trip also would enhance his freelance photography work, he reasoned. In Laguna Beach, a resort and artist community 75 miles south of Los Angeles, Tucker and his twin brother, Dean, package audio/visual shows.

WITH 55 POUNDS of gear and \$450, Tucker set off through the Santa Ana mountains on his \$1,000 bicycle. Admittedly unprepared, his only two-wheel

journeys prior to the trek were a trip to L.A. and cruising in Orange County, his home territory.

His cross country route wound through the Arizona desert, across the state to the Grand Canyon, then through Colorado, Nebraska, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana and Michigan.

He intends to continue through Ontario into New York, and finally Connecticut's Atlantic Ocean front by Sept. 1.

Dressed appropriately in a "Breaking Away" T-shirt, Tucker worked on his disassembled bicycle the way a musician finely tunes an instrument. Along the way, the bike suffered a dozen flat tires and seven broken spokes.

Tucker fared better: he fell just once, and then received only elbow and knee scrapes. More serious was recurrent

knee pain and calloused hands. Some fingers have lost all feeling for days at a time because of the constant pressure — that despite wearing a pair of riders' gloves and padded handle bars.

"People were so receptive and helpful," he said. "They were extremely hospitable, genuinely friendly and interested. It gave me a better sense of America, the humanitarian aspect."

Hospitality turned into free food and lodging at many points along the way.

"The most challenging part was climbing Mount Evans, 28 miles south of Idaho Springs in Colorado," he said.

"IT'S THE HIGHEST auto road in the world: 14,260 feet. I began at 9 a.m. and got to the top at 5 p.m. It was raining and sleeting. The wind was biting cold."

"The roads were bad, I was constant-

ly avoiding bumps and potholes. They weren't easy to see in the fog. I was in the clouds and it was hard to watch for traffic. When I finally made it to the top, it started snowing."

"I came right down again. The view was supposed to be nice, but it didn't present itself."

Tucker averaged 68 miles a day. He crossed the mountainous Continental Divide three times because of his winding route.

"I got involved with the scenery and the continuity of peddling. It was beautiful."

His schedule included peddling from sunup to sundown. Evenings he slept in a sleeping bag covered with mosquito net screening and wrote in a journal about his travels.

A vegetarian, he lived on fruit, vege-

tables, granola and trail mix he purchased en route.

"I never ate so much in my life. I was burning it (energy) up quickly."

The \$450 ran out by the time he reached Denver. He spent double that amount by the time he reached Michigan — mostly on food. He also carried three containers on his bicycle providing a gallon of drinking water.

THE WORST PART of the trip was peddling through the desert.

"No matter what people said about it, it was worse. It was so intense. The minimum temperature was 115 degrees."

"I never experienced anything like that before. I almost didn't make it. I

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Mark Tucker displays his fully loaded bicycle that he will use to finish his cross-country trip.



Mark Tucker explains how he survived the desert.

'People were so receptive and helpful, they were extremely friendly and interested. It gave me a better sense of America — the humanitarian aspect.'

— Mark Tucker



Staff photographs/RANDY BORST

Using his parents home in Farmington Hills as a rest stop, Mark takes some time to clean and repair his bicycle before starting the final leg of his trip.

INSIDE ANGLES

KUDOS TO TWO Farmington Hills youths for their stamina in making a trip to Little Rock, Ark., Aug. 1-2. Gregg Heinrichs, a North Farmington High School senior, competed in the Teen National Championship Powerlift competition there and placed in the top 10 nationally in his weight division (145 pounds) for lifting 910 pounds. His friend and fellow powerlift enthusiast, Paul Smith, a June graduate of Harrison High School, accompanied Heinrichs. The culmination of the trip was a 22-hour bus ride home thanks to the air traffic controllers strike which was responsible for cancellation of a flight between Little Rock and Memphis, where the two were to catch a connecting flight to Detroit.

FORE Oakland Community College golf coach Roscoe Dann has scheduled a meeting for prospective golf candidates Wednesday, Aug. 19, at 6:30 p.m. in H Building on the Orchard Ridge campus, 1-696 and Orchard Lake Road. To be eligible to participate in golf a student must be enrolled for 10 semester credit hours at any campus of the college. Students who are interested but can't attend the meeting should call Dann at 476-9400, ext. 376.

CHERYL'S SCHOOL of Dance tip tapped to two victories in the American Youth on Parade competition at Notre Dame, Indiana on July 28. Four Farmington Hills girls are in the troupe from the Livonia-based school. They won gold medals for best juvenile dance line company and best juvenile pom-pom group. The dancers include 23 girls and 2 boys ranging in age from 8-11 years old.

TWO LOCAL TALENTS have new work titles: Suzie Bellinson and Robert H. Bowland, both of Farmington Hills. Bellinson has been placed in charge of public relations for the Detroit-based Attie Theatre. She previously worked as a public relations assistant for Oakland County Parks and Recreation. Bowland has been placed in charge of all degrees in communications and journalism from Oakland University.

Bowland has been recognized as being certified in production inventory management by the American Production and Inventory Control Society (APICS). He passed four of five written exams offered by the society's curriculum and certification council and administered by the Educational Testing Service of Princeton, New Jersey. APICS is a society of production and inventory control individuals.

SPACE LOVERS will have a field day when Channel 58 presents five days of special cov-

erage of Voyager II's close encounter with Saturn, along with a rebroadcast of Nova's look at Voyager I's journey, all beginning Monday, Aug. 24. It's part of Summerfest, Channel 58's public awareness and fundraising campaign, running Aug. 22-31. The five-part series (weekdays at 5 p.m.) follows Voyager II, which passes on the northern side of the ringed planet. Saturn's moon and satellites will be shown in close-up detail. In addition, background on the first trip to Jupiter and Saturn on the spacecraft Voyager I is provided and 'Resolution on Saturn' Tuesday, Aug. 25 at 8 p.m.

A GIANT WATER slide will accompany the wave-action pool next summer at the Waterford Oaks Park. Ground-breaking ceremonies for the giant slide were Wednesday, Aug. 5. On hand for the construction kick-off were Marjorie Walker, parks and recreation commission vice chairman; Lewis Hunt, chairman; Richard D. Helm, president of Richmar Construction, the general contractor; James C. Scott of Scott and Associates, Inc., the landscape architect; and R. Eric Reickel, parks manager. The slide is expected to open to the public next Memorial Day.

DEDICATION CEREMONIES for a new, 50-slip marina on White Lake is planned for Saturday, Aug. 22 at 2:30 p.m. Located at Goodrich Park at the east end of White Lake six miles from the entrance to Lake Michigan, the marina will serve the twin cities of Whitehall and Montague. Half of the 50 slips are reserved for visiting boaters. Following the dedication, the North Farmington marching band will perform. A fish boil and a parade featuring decorated local boats are also planned. The days events culminate with the Neptune Ball on the marina parking lot.

DID YOU KNOW The Farmington Public Schools lists these little ditties in a newsletter to parents. Farmington schools had more students inducted in Phi Beta Kappa in the 1980-81 school year than any other school district in the metro Detroit area. In order to achieve this honor, students must have a grade point average of 3.8 or better in math, science, English and social studies. And did ya know that since 1977, Farmington has been identifying students with IQ's at the 98th percentile for the intellectually gifted program. In a normal population curve, only 2 percent of a student population would be identified, but in the Farmington Schools, the number of students at the 98th percentile is 8 percent. All which makes for a sharp student body.



Glowing bigger and better...metallic accessories. Flashes of bronze, pewter, copper and gold on the hottest attention-getters of the season. Jewelry. Handbags. And belts. Everything they touch turns to dramatic...day or night. And all you need are a few burnished pieces to make a little dazzle go a long way. Shown, from our molten moods collection:

NAPIER's golden leaf bracelets, \$20. Also, matching necklace, 27.50 and leaf drop earrings, 17.50. Costume Jewelry.

Wide obi metallic belt from ACCESSORIES BY PEARL, in bronze or pewter leather, \$34. Fashion Accessories.

BILL DORF's shoulder strap metallic bag, with zip-top and tassels in bronze leather, \$44. Handbags.

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