

# The Cyclist

Newsletter of the Capital City Cyclists

Volume 26, Number 5

September-October, 2006



## The Triplet of Dordogne

### The Sossong family tours a historic French region on a pedal-powered RV

by Kevin Sossong

My wife Susan (with whom I have been “going steady” for over half of my life), my seven-year-old son Dominick (who has been on bike tours since he was 2½), and I toured the Dordogne region of France during June of 2006. We had three weeks, which sounds like a lot, but really seemed way too short. One day was lost at each end to travel between Tallahassee and our starting town of Les Eyzies. We lost an extra day waiting for some missing luggage to arrive from Paris. Of course, our clothes and toiletries were in one of the missing bags, but Air France presented each of us with a little toiletries kit that included a clean t-shirt. We thought that it should say “AIR FRANCE LOST MY LUGGAGE AND ALL I GOT WAS THIS LOUSY T-SHIRT.” In time, we all headed to the train station for the final leg of our trip to Les Eyzies. We love using the extensive train system. On previous trips, we have even used the trains to hop across the country with the fully loaded bike and trailer.

We have a triple bike with S&S couplings made by Rodriguez Cycles in Seattle, and we pull a Burley Solo trailer for the camping gear. It takes us about 3 hours to put the bike and trailer together and to organize the gear, which isn't as long as it sounds. Dominick has gotten to the point where he is a real help and is also a great reminder of when it's time to eat. The rest of our gear has been fine-tuned over 20 years of touring, with an eye toward smaller and lighter equipment. In some cases, we have even made or modified some equipment. An added goal is to not be too obvious as American tourists. We don't bring riding jerseys so we look more “normal” in the small towns and markets. Since we carry so little, our clothes need to work on the bike, around a campsite, and while touring a castle.

If you don't count the cost of the three plane tickets to Europe, a self-supported bike tour is a very economical way

to travel. After subtracting the costs of souvenir purchases, Susan figures that we spent about \$80.00 per day for all of our expenses. Campground fees are usually based on a site fee plus a per person charge. Typically, a night costs around \$20.00. However, we stayed at one place in the middle of nowhere for only about \$6.00. Yes, that included nice warm showers. We are also not counting the cost of the bike itself, which is worth every penny for the shared experiences it provides. It is something that we use most weekends and expect to use until Dominick's legs get too long for the center section. Even then, we can turn it into a tandem. We have been thinking of it as a “dollars-per-mile” cost. We are almost to the point where our rides are costing us about ten dollars per mile. Our goal is to get it down to about fifty cents.

As always, our division of labor is clearly set. Susan provides all logistical efforts. She does most of the pre-planning, research, route selection, map work, and she has developed passable French language skills. Without her, we would wander aimlessly and probably go hungry. Dominick is now providing a noticeable percentage of our collective pedaling force, he helps with the set-up and break-down of the campsite, and he makes our lives better for every minute that we spend with him. My utility is mainly that I have the highest level of testosterone and can carry heavy objects. This is useful when we are hauling the luggage around and also when the bike needs to be man-handled.

Almost every morning was the same. After a breakfast of a baguette with jam, fresh fruit, and pain aux chocolate (a highly addictive treat), we would leave the campground for another gorgeous, sunny day of riding. A rut we enjoyed getting into. Ours was not a high-mileage slog. We got out most mornings after 9:00 am and rode around 30 miles each day. Lunch would be picked-up along the way and usually eaten in a field by the side of the road. Dinner was often bread and cheese with more fresh fruit. Sometimes, we would eat at a restaurant near (frequently in!) the campground or in the town if it was within walking distance.

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French campgrounds are way nicer than America's rustic offerings. Most are very clean, there is never a doubt about having hot water for showers (although toilet paper is always a question), many have hedges to create individual sites, and most of them have swimming pools. Most also have fresh bread and croissants delivered each morning, which you can pre-order and pickup to start your day. Apparently, the post WWII government dictated that each region/town have a campground, in part to provide a minimal form of housing for the many people displaced during the war. The result is an abundance of campgrounds, seldom more than 10 miles apart and some towns had several to choose from. We traveled during June which is their early season. In a few campgrounds, there were only a few other campers to contend with. Others were filled with campers from Northern Europe, especially the Netherlands.

One small complaint is that the campgrounds are mostly used by Europeans who arrive in their motor homes, fifth-wheel trailers, or by car. They have been trained to bring their own folding tables and chairs. In four trips, we have had the luxury of a picnic bench only once. This means that

all of our cooking and eating is done very close to nature. On the plus side, most of our fellow campers have been very friendly to us and we try to provide them with "positive" American experiences. Very few Americans tour on their bikes and even fewer stay in campgrounds. Most Americans who visit Europe segregate themselves into three and four-star hotels. Not only is this needlessly expensive (since the star ratings reflect certain features like the size of the lobby or if there is an elevator) and not how nice a place really is, but it also deprives them of a more interesting experience. After all, the goal of a bike tour is not the destination, but the journey itself.

Our journey had a little glitch in Sarlat. We dropped the chain from the granny gear and managed to damage something. Fortunately, there was a nice bike shop in town that was owned by someone who knew what he was doing. Although Susan still believes that all we needed was a new chain, the owner proceeded to disassemble the rear Phil Wood hub. Much to our shock, he took it all the way down to its bearings! Our vacation was in his hands as he spent about

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## Executive Board & Appointed Officers

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*Editor's Note: opinions expressed in The Cyclist reflect the viewpoint of the writer and not necessarily those of the Capital City Cyclist's executive committee or other members. Columns, articles and photos pertaining to cycling are welcome and encouraged. Submit yours to [dave@cccyclists.org](mailto:dave@cccyclists.org)*



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two hours attempting to remove this little screw that had sheared off deep inside the works. The broken screw caused the wheel to slip and would have only gotten worse with more use. I would like to say that it was an afternoon well spent getting us on the road again, but our nerves took a real beating as we watched him work. Amazingly, he only charged us for the cost of a new chain and not a single Euro for his considerable time. We sent him a nice thank you note when we got home.

The first week was a bit hot, with temperatures spiking around 102 degrees. Only our last day of riding was spent in our rain jackets. We rode 400 miles in a loop from Les Eyzies, north-east to Montignac, east to Rocamadour and St Cere, then south to Figeac, west to Cahors, then back to Les Eyzies. This is a great area to ride with kids. Nearly every day had some type of tourist attraction to visit. We saw the recreated Lascaux cave paintings in Montignac. They spent eleven years building and painting an exact replica of the main cave, saving the original for scientists and conservators. We toured the troglodyte villages at Site de la Madeleine and Roque de St. Christophe, and we spent a morning touring the pilgrimage city of Rocamadour. On a day “off,” we made the steep climb to the *bastide* (fortified town) of Domme, and on another we canoed down the Dordogne River.

One of our favorite sites was the Font de Gaume cave, where we stood mere feet from original paintings created by incredibly talented artists around 25,000 years ago. After confiscating all of our belongings from our group of six (to prevent careless damage to the paintings), our guide described in halting English how the artists positioned their paintings on the concave and convex shapes of the stone surfaces to accentuate the 3-D qualities of each animal. The feeling was comparable to how I felt visiting some of the medieval churches in the area. Another highlight was the boat ride on the underground river in Gouffre de Padirac. It was a little kitschy, but the rock and mineral formations were incredible.

With few exceptions, the route we took was great. We had some steep climbs, most of which we were able to ride up, though we did need the occasional rest. Some, however, were just too much for us to handle in the heat with all of the weight we carried. This is when I earned my keep. Several times, the smell of burning brake pads would hit us at the bottom of a hill and the drag brake would be hot enough to burn at the touch. In one case, a downhill was so steep that all of us walked down it, with Dominick applying the drag brake whenever my hands started to cramp from squeezing the brakes.

As we neared the end of our trip, we all agreed that chucking work and school to continue riding was tempting. It takes several days to get into the proper rhythm of waking, packing, riding, seeing, eating and sleeping. Once you get into the groove, it would be sweet to just keep going. Of course, as responsible people, we know that we need to return to the start. Since we rode in so little rain, the bike was very clean and the packing went by quickly. Thankfully, the trip home was uneventful and a day’s travel found us in our own beds. We assembled the bike the day after our return and the next weekend found us heading east down Old St. Augustine for our usual ride.

Susan has started a language class on tape. Guess what language she is working on?

Touring is something that we have done for the past 20 years. If it sounds like something that you want to explore, feel free to e-mail me at [Sossong@architecturebydesign.com](mailto:Sossong@architecturebydesign.com).



# Cycling Half Way Across the U.S.A

By Jim Mann

“You’ll either be planning your next trip or putting your bicycle up for sale by end of this tour,” Chris Lacher said as I told him of Bill Perry’s and my arrangements for a self-contained ride from Anacortes, WA to Pueblo, CO.



*Bill Perry (left) and Jim Mann (right) encounter light rain as they approach the Cascades on the first*

*day of their five-week, 2,000 mile cycling adventure across America's largest mountains.*

On June 14<sup>th</sup>, having dipped our rear wheels into the Pacific the day before, we began our trip heading East toward mountains that slowly enveloped us. The light rain we briefly encountered surprisingly turned out to be the worst rain of the trip. Camped at Lake Diablo the second evening, we contemplated the following day’s 5,000 ft of elevation gain as we took on the first two of five Cascade passes. The climb proved difficult with chain problems limiting Bill to his middle chain ring. Snow covered the ground around Rainy Pass but a few miles further the landscape became more arid.



*Snow covered the summit of Rainy Pass for Bill (pictured) and Jim.*



*Jim (pictured) and Bill conquer mile-high Washington Pass in the Cascades.*

With four passes climbed we took a day off in Republic, one of several picturesque Cascade towns. A few days later in Sandpoint, ID, with the Cascades behind us, we talked of giant pancakes, slow ascents followed by long descents and flowering Catalpa trees among our encounters. Entering Montana, we found the next 190 miles to be hot, hard and more traffic than desired as we approached Kalispell. Trying out a bit of high life, we spent two nights at the Grand Kalispell Hotel enjoying continental breakfasts, which included four different kinds of homemade breakfast breads.



*Bill and Jim consumed massive amounts of fuel to help climb the big mountains. Here Bill tucks into plate-sized inch-thick pancakes at the Caribou Restaurant in Okanogan, WA.*

Out of the mountains we made good time on our way to Missoula, arriving June 29<sup>th</sup>. We dropped by Adventure Cycling headquarters and had our pictures taken by Greg Siple, an Adventure Cycling founder. I took this opportunity to present Greg with a sea biscuit encrusted in limestone to add to his state rock collection. While in Missoula we stayed with John and Sue, friends of friends of friends, who treated us like family. John took us to the Lewis and Clark enactment camp and then to the airport to pick up Jerry McDaniel, who arrived from Tallahassee to join us on our ride. Late that afternoon we hit the Bike Centennial 30<sup>th</sup>

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anniversary party where, after eating, we lay on thick green grass drinking Fat Tire beer and listening to a local band. King size sandwiches at the Bakery Café in Hamilton the following day fueled our tanks as we continued south.



*Jerry McDaniel (left) flew out to Missoula, Mt. from Tallahassee and rode with Bill (right) and Jim until Jackson Hole, WY. Here they celebrate crossing the continental divide on Chief Joseph Pass in the Bitterroot Range.*

A climb over Chief Joseph pass (7,241 ft) brought us into the Big Bowl, a high mountain meadow area. The Nez Perce were stopped here just short of the Canadian border by the U S Army. A motel in Wisdom, helped us survive the Big Bowl's large mosquito population that night. Over half way through our trip we arrived in West Yellowstone where a bike mechanic was nice enough to put off her lunch to fix my front derailleur problem. She got into this line of work when she walked into a bike shop with a flat tire and asked how to repair it. Yellowstone was pretty but there were too many people and too much traffic. We climbed a couple 8,000 ft. passes in Yellowstone while crossing the continental divide.



*Jim with the magnificent vista of the Grand Tetons for scenery on the day after leaving Yellowstone National Park.*

Camped in the Tetons we experienced our coldest weather with the temp going below slightly below freezing. At Moran, WY we thanked Jerry for all his campfires as he turned south for his flight, then we started the long climb up Togwotee Pass (elev 9,658 ft). We arrived in Lander, WY after 10 days of steady riding and took a day off to catch up on bike repairs and laundry.



*Bill and Jim (on the right) met and began riding with three similarly-paced cyclo-tourists from Great Britain who were pedaling across the U.S. Since much of Bill and Jim's route was part of an official Adventure Cycling mapped route, encounters with other bike tourists were fairly common.*

Leaving Lander we met Andy, Margaret and Brian, three Brits headed our way who became our companions for the duration of the trip. Wind, sun and wide-open spaces were constantly with us through Wyoming.



*The wide open and windy spaces of Wyoming, where you can be in your lowest gear going downhill at 10 mph against a 35 mph all-day headwind. Jim and Bill were lucky with only brief headwind difficulties.*

Jeffery City, (pop 47) a booming mining town in its heyday, fortunately still had a motel and bar/restaurant that got our business. Near Saratoga, WY we met Bill Lowe, who was cycling from Tallahassee to Oregon. I'd talked with him prior to the beginning of our respective trips and figured we'd run into one another. The next day we used a fallen-down Colorado welcome sign as a back rest while Margaret made us tea, lattes, and snacks. Riding deeper into Colorado, the devastation caused by beetles to the pine trees was clearly evident.

Silverthorne, CO brought a chance meeting with Ralph Stair, a cyclist I'd met in Tallahassee. He invited us up to his condo for refreshments until a nearby storm abated. Earlier that day we'd met a young Brit who had

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started his bicycle trip in Argentina and was headed to Alaska. He told us about the Fire Side Inn, a B&B located in Breckenridge. We spent the night there with the five of us sharing the loft.



Bill (third from right), Brian from the UK and Jim (far right) atop Hoosier Pass (elevation 11,539 ft) in the Colorado Rockies, the high point of their trip. New British friends, Margaret and Andy are on the left.



Along with Jim, Bill and their British friends, a pair of Czech round-the-world bike tourists take refuge from the hail and rain storm in a cafe after descending Hoosier Pass.

The next day took us over our highest pass, Hoosier (11,539 ft). Since a storm was brewing we dropped a fast 1,500 ft down to Alma, where we took refuge in a coffee shop. There we met a Czech cycling couple who among their other tours had done a three year trip round the world.

The next day started the long descent towards Pueblo. It was nice to be flying down hill after so many hours spent climbing. On Thursday, July 20<sup>th</sup> we arrived in Pueblo, having ridden 1,959 miles. Saturday morning we all said good bye to Andy and Margaret, who continued on their Transcontinental ride. My wife, Jane Ann with grandchildren Pat and Matt, had driven out to Pueblo, to pick me up. On our way to show the grandchildren Colorado, we dropped off Bill and Brian in Denver so they could make connections for their trips home.

Chris Lacher had bet I would be thinking of another trip rather than putting my Bruce Gordon up for sale and such was the case.

## Bike Shorts



### Spaghetti 100 on October 7: it's not too late to register.

With a week to go before Spaghetti 100 on, one of the area's most beautiful, fun and well-run rides, there is some good news: it's not too late to sign up. Don't miss the great scenery, low-traffic roads and camaraderie of old and new friends. And this year, the post-ride feast promises to be something extra-special because it will be prepared by the culinary school of Kaiser College under the auspices of acclaimed gourmet chef and club member Mark Cross.

Then, bellies full, minds tranquil and at peace from a perfect day of bicycling, put a happy coda on your Saturday with the...

### BikeWalk Blues Fest, 2006

The BikeWalk Network kicks off its drive to help make the Tallahassee area a truly bike/ped friendly place with a great evening of entertainment and dancing. BWN hopes to raise funds for its efforts and have some fun in the process. The concert begins on October 7 at 7:00 p.m. at the Progressive Center 1720 S Gadsden, near the corner of Palmer Ave. The bill includes, live from Atlanta, Georgia, FL native blues and folk artist:

**Veronika Jackson** "Her music is described as folk & blues & gospel. In her soulful, loving style she just reaches out & pulls folks in. With Veronika you get to sing along. There's call & response. I challenge you to walk away from a Veronika Jackson concert without having a big smile on your face," says acoustic blues fan Gloria on her blog, [www.gloriamusic.blogspot.com/](http://www.gloriamusic.blogspot.com/). Plus, fresh from gigs at the Bradfordville Roadhouse and Beta Bar, popular boogie blues band:

**Bogazedi-** which plays "an earth-shaking brand of rock 'n' roll, blues and R & B." Experience what Democrat music writer Kati Schardl called the "glorious thunder" of Bogazedi. Swap your bike shoes for boogie shoes and prepare for musical endorphins.

Tickets are \$10 and available at your local bike shop. Email [info@bikewalknetwork.org](mailto:info@bikewalknetwork.org) for more information. Check out [www.bikewalknetwork.org](http://www.bikewalknetwork.org) for more on BWN's goals for bicycle safety and improvements.

## Road Ride Schedule

**A=Race(>21) B=Fast(18-21) C=Medium(15-18)  
D=Slow(12-14) EZ=Easy rider(<12) YOYO=You're On Your Own**

**The Carruthers, Six Gap, Chaires and Cabo's rides are not official club rides; are not sagged, swept nor managed; and are strictly ride at your own risk and responsibility. Maps for most rides can be found on the Club's website [www.cccyclists.org](http://www.cccyclists.org)**

RECURRING RIDES	MILES/LEVEL	CONTACT/PHONE	START	COMMENTS
Every Tues 5:30 PM	30-45 A	Bob Carruthers 216-1873	Harvey's Supermarket (Park & Capital Circle)	Fast group ride. Distance depends on time, weather and circumstances.
Every Friday 6:00 PM	Easy-paced, family ride	Linda Vaughn 386-4318	St. Marks Trailhead, Woodville Hwy, just south of Capital Circle SE	Friday night social ride - Ride as far as you like, families are welcome!
Every Sat 8:00 AM	20/31/45 A B C	YOYO. A-ride info: Charlie Hofacker: chofack@nsns.com.	Chaires Elementary School (4774 Chaires Cross Road)	B & C riders roll out at 8:00 AM, the A riders leave at 8:30 AM.
Every Sun 8:00 AM	20/38/51 A B C	YOYO For information, call Peter Stone 942-9095	Cabo's Grill parking lot, corner of Apalachee Pwky & Magnolia	Cabo's Breakfast Ride B & C riders bring partner.
DATE/TIME	MILES/LEVEL	LEADER/PHONE	START	COMMENTS
Sun Oct 1 8:00 AM	24 C D	Jim Mann 422-0302	Wakulla Springs Pavilion	Annual CCC Picnic - Fee for entering the park is \$1.00
	42 ALL	YOYO with map provided		
Sat Oct 7 8:00 AM	100 M 100 K ALL	N/A	Micosukee Community Center	23rd Annual Spaghetti 100
Sun Oct 8 8:00 AM	ALL	YOYO	St. Marks Trail Head 5000 Woodville Highway	Post Spaghetti YOYO Ride
Sun Oct 15 8:00 AM	21 C D	Dave Beck 656-2797	Summit East parking lot, E Hwy 90 just past I-10 on right 7775 Mahan Drive	Summit East Ride
	31 B C	YOYO		
Sun Oct 22 8:00 AM	37 B C	Steve Wise 510-0164	Midway City Hall, Hwy 90 west of I-10 50 Martin Luther King Blvd	Midway-Quincy Loop
Sun Oct 29 8:00 AM	23 C D	Dick Durbin 668-4336	Jefferson County Public Library in Monticello 555 South Water Street	One Legged Turtle Ride
	36 B C	YOYO with map provided		
Sun Nov 5 8:00 AM	24 B C	Lee Berger 297-0448	Bruegger's Bagels, Carriage Gate Shopping Center. Use center of lot for parking to avoid interference with bagel customers. 3425 Thomasville Road	Bruegger's Ride - Short ride a moderately paced "civil cycling" ride.
	36 B C	YOYO with map provided		
Sun Nov 12 8:00 AM	TBA C D	Jack Howe 627-2888	Calvary, GA. North on Hwy 27 through Havana to Hwy 111 turn right, then 3 miles to flashing light. Turn left.	Calvary to Cairo with shorter option
	40 B C	YOYO with map provided		

For information on out of town rides, visit the Florida Bicycle Touring Calendar online at <http://www.floridabicycle.org/fbtc/>

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## Upcoming Events

- October 7 Spaghetti 100
- BikeWalk Blues Fest



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