

Travel diary tells bike riders' travail, happiness

By DEVON JONES
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Syd Muzzy may have been nervous, but his far-fetched dream is paying off.

Leading a group of high schoolers on bikes across the United States is an awesome project. Muzzy, head of the Battle Ground Bike Club, which is on its way to Washington, D.C., told about his feelings the first few days on the road.

"I was super-nervous, sick and unable to sleep until about the third day on the 'trail'," he wrote in a letter home. "I couldn't believe just how nervous I got. I guess that's the way it is when a three-year dream becomes a reality."

The 16 travelers are less than a week short of their goal. Hoping to reach Washington, D.C. by Aug. 3, they were pedaling an average of 70 to 80 miles a day, with a record high of 133 miles in one day.

The bikers include high school students Nancy Ellertson, Tani Conner, Steve Dietel, Carl Garrison, Lon Allworth, Chriss Kellogg, Larry Barr and Brad Hochalter from Battle Ground, Kevin Faris from Vancouver and Doug Skites from Portland. Four adults are accompanying them, Butch and Ann Hill and Syd Muzzy on bicycles, with Judy Muzzy and their two preschool sons, Chris and Mark, following in a pickup.

Muzzy, writing on the run in short diary form, told of the adventures during the first few weeks.

"Along the way (fifth day, headed for Payette, Idaho), we met an old prospector who told us many stories of history about the area. Passed a stage rest home where stage coaches and Pony Express men changed horses. Nearby some of the same old 'ruts'

that wagon wheels made on the Oregon trail are still present. To think we are passing the same trail. You can just imagine — as the breeze blew in our ears we pretended we were on the wagon train.

"Sixth day, on to Boise, the Idaho capital and our two day layover. We got an early start, about 4 a.m. Pitch black out when 1,000 feet out of Payette we had a flat tire. So there we were, dark hours of the morning with flashlight beams flashing every direction.

"Then came a car. We had our safety vests on so all the driver was able to see was the stripes. Some of us started bouncing up and down and others turning sideways making the stripes seem to go off and on. Suddenly the car stopped for about 30 seconds about 300 feet away. Then he turned sideways in the road for another 30 seconds when Carl (Garrison) started walking toward the car in a monstrous type fashion. Then the car streaked back to town.

"Five minutes later, here came two patrol cars filled with sheriff's officers - flashing lights and the whole bit. They stopped and I walked up to their windows and said, 'Good morning, officer.' He said, 'What's going on?' I told him we were fixing a flat tire. He told me that he just got a report that there was a 'Boogey Man' or 'Space Martian' on highway 30.

"I couldn't stop laughing! We all still chuckle over that experience.

"Seventh day, Boise, and our rest day. We stayed in a church with a gym, so the boys played basketball. All of us spent a lot of time working, cleaning and repairing our bikes. The kids treated Butch and me to dinner as if it were Father's Day. It was very thoughtful of them.

"Eighth day, on our way to Fairfield across many mountains and deserts. Rattlesnake-infested area. We also hit locusts. They buzzed so loud even I could hear them. It was a constant roar for about 20 miles. It was really an eerie feeling.

"Ninth day, on our way to Arco, the first town to be powered by nuclear power. Only later to find out that the nuclear power only powered four light bulbs for about one hour. The cities will do anything to attract attention. Also picked up two other bikers named Steve and Brent — two super— guys headed for Canada. Visited the Craters of the Moon State Park. Walked into 800 foot caves with bats and the whole bit. Neat experience. We waited out a rain storm before we rode on into Arco.

"Tenth day, on to Idaho Falls. We fought a head wind the whole way. This also was our coldest morning. We froze, to put it lightly. Across the nuclear testing desert and into Idaho Falls. The big Teton Dam story was the big topic. We saw the damage it had done. Unbelievable. Mr. and Mrs. Morrow put us up at their house. We swam in their pool and she fixed us chicken. We ate seven of them. Super dinner.

"Eleventh day, on our way to Alpine and started up the Rockies. Beautiful country. Also our first campout. Slightly windy, but nice. No flat tires today.

"Twelfth day, on to Moran through Jackson, Wyoming, and the Grand Tetons. I can't even explain the beautiful scenery we saw today. I only wish I could stay forever here. Jackson was interesting and lively. Big rodeo going on. Camped out at Lava Creek and that's where John Dodge from the Reflector (north Clark County weekly newspaper) caught up with us to take pictures. Sure good to see familiar

faces again. Steve Dietel sprained his ankle.

"Thirteenth day, on to Dubois. Up-up-up and over another mountain pass. Climbed 3000 feet. From desert to beautiful mountains to desert. We played in the snow, had a snowball fight and went sledding with our safety vests used as sleds. Took us three hours to climb the mountain and half an hour to get down.

"Fourteenth day, on our way to Lander of Taft Campground. Straight across desert and nothing else. You can just see the Indians up on the cliffs above. The desert in the early morning was cool and quiet, although it didn't take long for the temperature to go up to around 90 degrees. We went through a Comanche Indian Reservation. Dead cows everywhere. We hesitated to drink the water and we didn't. The Taft campground was better than expected. It was an old ghost town. The campground showed old-time movies in an open air theater.

"Fifteenth day, across a desert of nothing. Zero — just hot — desert of nothing. Arrived in Jeffrey City early. Went swimming and fought off the mosquitoes. Uranium town with nothing but trailers. We were glad to leave. Very unpleasant stay.

"Sixteenth day, again a desert of nothing. However, out of nowhere came familiar faces. Kevin and Doug's grandparents. It was good to talk to them. They gave us cinnamon rolls. We arrived in Rawlins (Wyoming) around two o'clock and ate lots of Popsicles.

"I'll go ahead and mail this much, and will continue on later. If I seem scattered — I am. I am having a great time and so are the kids. We'll have a lot to tell when we all get home. We still have all of our enthusiasm. Syd."