

Bike trip 2002 - On the road from Haverhill to Provincetown (June 19-21)

Day 1:

After the first couple of weeks of the spring, most of us anticipated a wet ride this year, but that was not to be. I think we rode on the nicest three days of the year so far (as has been the case on all our trips up to this point – am I jinxing us?). As the consolation ride, (we bagged the trip to Ithaca for the more sedate ride to Provincetown at the last minute) Dominic made up for not doing the hills of NY by setting a breakneck pace for the ride to P-town. We knew we were in trouble early when he showed up at Carlo's house with the "Merlin" and a camelback pack as his only "luggage". This was a trip of lighter loads as we decided to spend the first night in a motel and the second at Dominic and Dan's houses on the Cape (no camping this trip, much to Carlo's delight). The four of us (Dan, Carlo, Dominic, and me) left Carlo's at 8:30am for the 20-mile ride to Bob's house. Showing up at Bob's an hour later (after a few missed turns and some backtracking), he provided us with bagels, OJ, and some basketball.

Leaving Bob's house we were treated to a beautiful ride through Harold Parker State Forest eventually ending up on Route 125. We proceeded through Wilmington to Rt. 62, eventually making our way to Concord MA. While in Concord, we decided to visit some local historical sites. We wheeled into Minuteman Park. We found the Old North Bridge (site of our only two photos) and got a very thorough history lesson from Ranger Tim on the significance of the bridge in American history.



Ranger Tim also gave us some suggestions on lunch, which we followed. He suggested the Country Kitchen near the railroad tracks, and an excellent choice it was. Bob's quizzing of the woman behind the counter with "What's the best thing on the menu?" and "What would you suggest?" got us some awesome turkey sandwiches (with all the fixin's – cranberry sauce, stuffing, etc.). After lunch we cranked through some very bucolic stretches around Sudbury and Wayland arriving on the outskirts of Natick before we had our first of 2 flats on the trip. Dominic tried one of Bob's glue-less patches without success, and ended up putting in a new tube that only served to lighten his load by 83 grams (that's all we needed). We had two other minor nuisance problems during the trip that were quickly fixed, my noisy brakes and Carlo's squeaky chain (or maybe it was his cassette, but a little oil took care of it). Outside of Natick we stopped for a few minutes to visit one of Bob's friends and encountered the steepest climb of the trip (short, but steep). From Natick to Walpole the ride was on rt. 27 with a wide shoulder & light traffic. A wrong turn here and there and we made to our roadside Motel (Motel 8) in Sharon around 4pm. We got two rooms, and put Bob on the floor in Dan and Dominic's room (he must have longed for the camping experience of sleeping on the ground). Some walked and some biked the two miles up a very busy Rt. 1 for dinner at the Ground Round. The day's mileage on my odometer (we all had different mileages since we all started from our homes) came in at 91 miles.

Day 2:

We started the day with a rather nice breakfast (breakfast #1) at the Motel 8. They had the typical fare, but also had pancake batter and a waffle iron so you could make your own. We pulled out of the Motel at 7:00am, a little later than our normal "campground" departure times and headed for the working class town of Brockton under an azure blue cloudless sky. We skirted the main roads for a complicated, but more scenic ride through Sharon, Stoughton, Brockton, and Abington without a single wrong turn. Eventually we made our way to Marshfield where we decided that breakfast #2 sounded good and stopped at local bakery. They had a list of trivia questions on a board. The woman waiting on us was quite impressed that Dan and Bob answered each of the questions correctly, even asking for an explanation of one (How many calendars would be needed for a perpetual calendar: Answer, 14 – ask Dan to explain it to you). From Marshfield we rode hugging the coast, coming to a beach parking lot with a connecting road to a bridge we needed to cross to Duxbury. The road was sand and designated for 4 wheel drive vehicles only. Dominic decided to walk while the rest of us rode slowly. I believe this was the only time in the trip where all of us were in front of him! We took a walk down to the beach to check it out, waiting for Dominic. We crossed a long wooden bridge over a bay as we proceeded to Duxbury. Riding the coastline through areas of beautiful homes (where does all that money come from?) we arrived in Plymouth. An ice cream break was in order here as we sat on the waterfront on another incredible day in New England.

Departing from Plymouth, we again peddled the shore roads as long as we could, eventually returning to route 3A. At White Horse beach, we decided to check out the "Quonset Hut" owned by Mari Anne's family (the Princiotta's). It was the best looking place on the block! We can't wait to be invited down for their next party. After one more wrong turn, we continued down route 3A, and encountered our first road rage incident. You would think it would be from some irate driver wanting us off the road but in reality it was between Bob and Carlo. Carlo had bumped Bob earlier in the day moving in front of him to get back in line and hitting his front panniers, and now it was Bob's turn to return the favor. Some comments were exchanged about traffic law etiquette (Bob

stopped at red lights, Carlo sometimes blew through them) and the next thing I knew Bob had forced Carlo's bike into a traffic cone where he had to come out of his pedals. Throughout the rest of the trip I was waiting for the next reprisal, but it never happened. One wrong turn and a little backtracking and we reached "the bridge". The mighty Sagamore Bridge loomed before us and we had to walk our bikes on the sidewalk. That is one tall bridge. Even though you can't fall off of it with its suicide fences, it was still quite scary as 18-wheelers hit you with their "wave front" as they passed 6 inches from the narrow sidewalk we were on. And then just like that, we were on the Cape!

We were now on Dominic's turf and after tooling down route 6A for a little bit we took a very pleasant detour to Heritage Plantation coming out in Sandwich Center. After 15 or so miles of busy, but scenic, Route 6A we came to the cut-off for Centerville. Bob who was experiencing low blood sugar levels, was trailing at this point and we waited a few minutes for him to join us. It was about 2:30pm, and we hadn't eaten since breakfast #2 in Marshfield, so Dan and Carlo split off as we came into Centerville with our sandwich order. Bob and I followed Dominic to his house and the sandwiches showed up a ½ hour later. These were some of the biggest sub sandwiches I've seen. As big as they were, we were able to consume just about everything that came our way, including all of Dominic's beer (and most of Dan's as well). Few things taste better than a turkey sandwich with an ice cold Smuttynose after 90+ miles on a bike! We showered while Dan cut the grass, and decided to hit the beach before dinner. A short ride to a beautiful and deserted Long beach topped off a great day. We ordered out for Chinese Food for dinner. But, before the food came Bob developed a major case of the "munchies". He was eating anything and everything that he could find. We knew how desperate he was when he asked me to get my stale GORP from my bike to get him through till the food was delivered. The food did arrive to save Bob, with plenty for all. We finished the day with everyone falling asleep in front of Dan's TV. Bob, who had a bed at Dominic's house, decided that he was just fine spending the night on Dan's couch. We finished the day (including our trip to the beach) at 97 miles.

Day 3:

We decided to start the day at 7:30am to give us time to watch a little of the World cup game between the US and Germany. Unfortunately we discovered the game didn't start until 7:30, so we decided to head out at 7:00am. Dominic found us a great breakfast spot on route 6A somewhere around Dennis named Grumpy's. I couldn't believe Bob could eat anything else after his food binge of the night before, but he still managed a full breakfast. Back on the bikes we continued through the rolling terrain of route 6A by salt marshes and ocean views till the road remerged with route 6. It became quite busy with car traffic on this stretch until we turned at the Cape Code visitor center. We then took the 1.6-mile long Nauset bike path to Coast Guard Beach for a short break. One historical item I was unaware of was that there was once a 500-car parking lot with several buildings close to the beach near the station. The blizzard of '78 completely obliterated everything. Today no trace exists of the buildings or the lot. I guess it's tough to compete with Mother Nature at her worse.

We left the station on back roads cruising by Nauset light house (it was moved back from the beach to protect it) and eventually back to route 6. The pace for the next 25 miles was blistering. We averaged 19 to 20 mph (fortunately we also had a strong tailwind) over this stretch of rolling hills and wide shoulders all the way to Truro. We rode in two groups, Bob and Dominic, and the rest of us. Bob's infusion of food must have fueled a maniac desire to keep Dominic honest. He did a good job of it until mile 42.

Once Carlo saw that Dominic had dropped Bob, it became a race until we had caught and also passed Bob. Shortly after, we returned to route 6A for the remaining 10 miles to P-town. And what a beautiful 10 miles it was. Great views, great weather, a tailwind, and a great ride right along the water made this stretch a delight. We cruised right into the heart of a very crowded Provincetown around noon, journeys-end for three of us.

All of us ate lunch at a beachfront restaurant and we said bye to Dan and Dominic who were heading back to Centerville (against the wind) for a 110 mile day. You can read more on their return trip from Dan's report. The three of us went to buy ferry tickets back to Boston, but found the earliest didn't leave until 4:00pm. With some time on our hands, Bob and I decided to do some sightseeing. Carlo stayed behind, in the center of town, to people watch, or so he said. Bob had never climbed the pilgrim monument so that was a must see. As I waited in the parking lot it took him all of 10 minutes to climb the 300 or so stairs to the top and back down again. Afterwards, we decided to do the bike path to Race Point beach, which proved to be harder than we thought (lots of small steep hills and sharp turns on a narrow path). We saw the sights and returned to find Carlo where we left him.

The high-speed ferry arrived on time and we departed P-town precisely on schedule for the 90-minute ride to Boston. It was a bit choppy as we left the outer harbor, but things smoothed out on the open water. The boat was quite fast (35 knots) for its size and Bob made his way to the cockpit to question the crew on all kinds of operational details. We were treated to great views of Boston's harbor islands and lighthouses as we approached the city. We landed at the dock next to the World Trade Center feeling the 20 degrees temperature difference between P-town and Boston (P-town 70, Boston 90). A short ride from the dock (in traffic you could only imagine) brought us to Atlantic Ave where we said good-bye to Bob (he rode the remaining 30 miles home). The story of his ride home is also included here. Carlo and I then rode and walked to Margaret's office for a ride home in the pick-up truck. Thus ended this year's awesome journey. Day 3 mileage = 67. The total trip mileage (for me) was 255 miles at a 15.4 MPH average.

Highlight Recap:

- Dominic showing up on his Merlin with no panniers and the smallest water bottle they make.
- Without the weight of all that camping gear I'm starting to understand where Carlo is coming from on his anti-camping philosophy.
- Concord, MA – I have to go back and really see the place now.
- Perfect weather and great camaraderie really can make a trip great, independent of the terrain.
- And lastly, I want to thank Dominic and Dan for letting us stay at their place and drink all of their beer and soda. We did appreciate the hospitality!

The following text were emails from both Bob and Dan on the respective rides home after we parted:

Greetings,

I would like to thank Tony, Dan, Dominic and Carlo for a great ride! Thanks to Tony for the planning, Dan and Dominic for the hospitality and Carlo for the fun!

So, after leaving Dan and Dominic in Provincetown, Carlo, Tony and I enjoyed a lovely 90-minute high speed cruise from Provincetown to Boston. The boat really cruises

at about 35 MPH and it was really fun to see all of the outer harbor islands, Minot light and cruise into the harbor by the World Trade Center. There was a stiff, cool breeze most of the trip, but the temperature rise as we entered Boston Harbor was amazing. It was hot in the city. Carlo, Tony and I biked to the new Northern Ave Bridge, but we took the sidewalk on the wrong side of the road to avoid a half-mile long backup of Friday afternoon traffic.

I left Carlo and Tony on the Boston side of the bridge, and within the first 100 yards almost got taken out twice. One guy cuts across 3 lanes of traffic to the right shoulder to pass one car and almost hits me. As I speed up to get away from that idiot, a block later, a guy in a big pickup truck opens his door right in front of me. Thank God I saw the guy, and he saw me at the last second. I swerve, he stops opening the door and we look at each other in disbelief. Well, now it is time to forget the nice leisurely Cape Cod bicycling routine and get into Urban Assault Mode Cycling. Fortunately the ride through the North End is uneventful, and I cruise into Charlestown, to find Don and Christine's beloved Sullivan Square Traffic Circle filled with a lot of Friday afternoon commuter traffic that don't want to be there worse than I do. After avoiding some of it on the sidewalk, I look at the endless line of cars and bail out of the circle on Rt. 99 North. I jog a little west on Rt. 16.

I have no idea where I am going, but keep heading North and West, with the sun over my left shoulder. I cruise "Down on Main St." through Malden, Melrose and then into Wakefield when I pass the Subaru dealer we bought our car from. This is a good sign! I cruise by the lake in Wakefield and remember Don and Christine saying they take a road North from the traffic circle that REI is on. I jog East through the parking lot of Comverse at the North End of the lake to that traffic circle, and find Haverhill St. This sounds good! And it was! A straight, cool, wide shouldered, tree-lined shot through Wakefield, Reading, North Reading, Andover and right into Harold Parker State Forest by my house. I am riding through Wakefield when I see two racers closing fast. Thinking of Carlo, I try to keep up my RPMs to look respectable. As they pass I ask them if the road goes to North Andover, and they say 20 minutes straight ahead. I feel good about this. As I approach the turn into Harold Parker near my house, I see a guy is throwing out some bikes. A new child's bike for Benny in great shape! It is a few minutes more to home (1:30 from Boston), and I return with my car to grab the bike. Our family then goes out for ice cream.

A great end to a great trip.

Thanks guys!

Bob

Dominic and I had a good ride back to the cape house. I followed him the whole way, letting Dominic battle the wind. It was better when it hit head on rather than gusting from the side. A couple of stops for water and a blowout (mine 2 miles from the house) and we made it back to the house around 4PM. We averaged a little over 17 for the ride back and ended up with about 110 miles for the day.

Thanks to everyone for going and making it a fun trip and for those two women who pointed out the right direction for us to go.

Dan