

One such example of fatigue was manifested on an isolated country road in the Columbia River Valley. Early in the day, we encountered a small hill with a steep grade. There was no sign on the grade, but it must have been over 12%. Debbie had trouble with the hill, which really made me wonder how we would do later. I knew she was very determined on physical endeavors, so I assumed she would use challenges as motivation. I suggested that I carry more of the weight, but she wanted to carry her own load, both figuratively and literally. Such is her makeup. I really thought she was carrying proportionately too much weight for her size, but I would let her come to that realization on her own.

Another incident that occurred in the Gorge demonstrated just how hazardous the road can be. We were cycling on Interstate 84. Interstate cycling is prohibited in most places, but not here. And according to our map, this was the optimal route on this leg of our journey. Debbie had a near brush with death, and riding behind her at the time, I saw it unfold before

### **Debbie says**

As we ascended the grade, we ever so slowly criss-crossed the entire road, first from right to left, and then back again, to reduce the climb's pitch. It was a very short hill, its top readily in sight. But it was so steep that my leg strength gave out as I struggled to propel the heavy bike. Suddenly, I lost it. The bicycle toppled. Frustrated, I began again, side to side. But again, I fell—and I cried. How was I going to do this? Surely there would be steeper climbs in the mountains. This was beginning to feel too much like work and not enough like fun. Tim, true to his nature, just continued along, seemingly insensitive to what was happening inside of me.

## Two Are Better

my very eyes. My suspicion is that adrenaline assisted in her Houdini act. I was amazed she was able to prevent the bike from crashing. It took superhuman reflexes and strength to right her slowly moving, unbalanced bicycle and power it out of the rumble strip. To this day, I still can't believe she saved it. Debbie enjoys extreme thrills, but this one must have been too much for even her.



Interstate biking in the shadow of Mount Hood

After my own adrenaline rush passed, we soon left the highway to safer places. When I consider what could have happened, it is a horrific memory. Here I was, a newlywed, coming to the realization that I could have lost the woman I had waited all my life to marry. I could only thank God he had spared my wife. There was

### Debbie says

On I-84, I was approaching a slow-moving maintenance vehicle on the shoulder. To the left of the vehicle, separating the shoulder from the travel lane, was a rumble strip with substantial depressions. Undeterred and daydreaming, I swung to the left, slowly passing the vehicle. All of a sudden, a precariously close, fast-moving tractor-trailer started to whiz by on my left. My heart began to race. When my front wheel struck one of the ruts in the rumble strip, the fork swiveled out of control jeopardizing the balance of the bike. Although the tractor-trailer was making a very cozy, high-speed pass, I thought it would never clear me. I was losing control of the bike. Somehow, I saved it.

comfort in knowing that He was watching out for us.

There are some lessons to be learned in a close call like this. The first is to acknowledge that potential catastrophes lurk, not only for a cross-country cyclist, but for all of us. On our trip, the vulnerabilities added significantly to the adventure and, therefore, the satisfaction of the tour. Facing challenging circumstances beckons resourcefulness and faith, which often lead to personal growth. Overcoming challenges reinforces one's confidence in both his ability to cope and the object of his faith. If you dwell too much on potential problems, you will never make it out of your driveway! Do not let fear and intimidation keep you from realizing your dreams. Be courageous and move forward. Break the chains that hold you back. Pursue freedom!

### The Desert Awaits

The hilly bicycling terrain of Oregon, even in the Columbia River Gorge, surprised us. Cycling close to a river, one would assume flat terrain, but for the past few days, this was clearly not the case. The Columbia River separates the States of Oregon and Washington. A few nights ago, we had walked a bridge over the Columbia after dark just to claim entry into Washington. Today, we would spent most of our day there.

### **Debbie says**

I love to downhill ski. The closer to the edge, the more thrilling the run. But I have to admit, dancing side by side with an 18-wheeler gave me a new appreciation for the hazards of the road. I like my life—there is too much to live for, especially now. The incident caused me to think and consider 'what if...' I became more aware of safety on the remainder of the trip. I decided to try a rearview mirror. And now I would never do another tour without one.

## Two Are Better

Another surprise came on this our fifth day of bicycling. Yesterday, the cool temperatures in the 60's had begun to change. Today, we would find ourselves in near 100-degree heat in the middle of a desert! How could this



Desert travel in Washington State



...in the shadow of snow-capped Mount Hood

happen in one of the northernmost states in our nation? After four days on the road, there was still uncertainty about how we would fare for the entire journey. We were tired, our bodies and behinds were tattered, and our mileage was modest. We continued to struggle with riding, our schedule, catching the blog up, and, at times, with one another.

We left the trucker's junction at Biggs, Oregon after a good night's sleep, crossing the Columbia River into Washington and connecting to Route 14, the Lewis and

Clark Highway. Adventure Cycling Association's maps in

fact referred to the first half of our entire planned route as the Lewis and Clark Trail. Their maps follow roughly the same journey, from St. Louis to Astoria, of the famous explorers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. We would follow this route into Montana, and then join the so-called Northern Tier route.

I've been chased by many dogs during my years of bicycling, but I've never experienced an attack by multiple dogs at the same time. After a frightful encounter early in the day, I thought about how defenseless you can be on a bicycle. Pepper spray is a logical defense, but it needs to be readily available. Even if I had had the spray in my bag, opening it while riding would have been tricky. After all, I was using my two hands to balance the bicycle. And even if I had had it in my hand, I would have needed a good aim to make a difference. Another school of thought is to spray water in the dog's face. However, even if I could have squirted it effectively with one hand, water was becoming a valuable commodity on this very hot day. I also wondered what might have happened if these dogs had gotten in front of me while I was traveling at high speed. In some circumstances, crashing could be the worst result. As in life, you never know when you will be ambushed. But you can't let that stop you from running the race.

Even without the dog attack, Route 14 proved to be one of the more

### **Debbie says**

Ten miles into our ride, three dogs raced out from a long driveway and swarmed Tim's bike. I was riding behind Tim with a front row seat to the horror show. I reached for our only can of pepper spray as the first and most aggressive dog lunged at Tim, circled his bike, and bit his rear right pannier. At first, I couldn't tell whether or not the muscle dog had ahold of Tim's leg. Nevertheless, Tim kept on riding, dragging the dog for several feet until it let go. I couldn't believe how calm Tim was. Thankfully, a passing vehicle herded the troublemaking canines, and we escaped unscathed despite our heightened pulse rates.