

# HOULTON PIONEER TIMES

VOL. 155 NO. 46

HOULTON, MAINE, PIONEER TIMES WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 2012

22 PAGES

ONE DOLLAR

## Bishops bike trip is bonding time

In only 10 weeks, Tim and Debbie Bishop, who were in their 50s and single, moved from a marriage proposal to a wedding.

Tim Bishop, a Houlton native, retired from Dead River Company in Bangor and embraced his newly married life.

In 2010, the couple went on a cycling tour and just this summer, they decided to honor their mothers bicycling from Florida (where Debbie's mother lives) to Maine (where Tim's mother had lived before her death in early 2012).

"On our first tour, we were newlyweds so part of our challenge was to learn how to get along after being single for 52 years," explained Debbie. "We've grown as a couple since then. The best thing about this summer's trip was how close I felt to Tim. I have grown to respect him more and recognize all that he puts into a trip. His navigating and his protection of me helped me feel secure, loved and cared for. The trip was physically demanding at times, but we were in it together."

The Mom-to-Mom tour was originally inspired in 2011 as a follow-up to the coast-to-coast tour in 2010, said Tim.

"A blood clot that I contracted in the winter of 2011 put that dream on hold," he said. "A year later, our circumstances seemed to allow for this adventure, so why not? The blood clot alone suggested that time is awasting, that one should be about getting life done before it gets you done. Having now enjoyed another tour, Debbie and I consider our effort and expense to be an investment that will continue to pay us back for years to come."

The Mom-to-Mom Tour started on July 10 and finished Aug. 25 in Houlton. The couple wrote their thoughts and what they were learning in a blog along the route, along with publishing a book about their mid-life marriage and a bicycle trip across the country in "Two Are Better: Mid-Life Newlyweds Bicycle Coast-to-Coast."

"During our 2010 campaign, our mothers were our most ardent backers," noted the couple in their press release. "Their encouraging blog posts and continual interest in our endeavor were strong reminders of the special role mothers fill in one's life, and just a small sampling of their love and care in our lives. Whether it is nurturing, encouraging, motivating, correcting, modeling, or simply loving, a mother's love and presence are heavenly gifts."

The Bishop's book compels readers to identify what is preventing them

from achieving their dreams or becoming all that they were meant to be and experience life to its fullest.

"This tour had its challenges. I suppose they all do," said Tim. "We were cycling in a degree of humid heat that we had never experienced from the seat of a bicycle. We had swapped cooler temperatures for flat terrain. We faced some stiff climbing — not long mountain pass climbs, but rather small, steep ascents in rapid succession. With a built-in deadline to push us on daily mileage, we passed through many areas that warranted further investigation. We'll need to leave that for another time."

"And as with any bicycle tour, we experienced some soreness and fatigue, but nothing major," he added.

Riding through Maine was nostalgic and unforgettable. As we approached Bangor and Houlton, the touring seemed to take a back rack to saying goodbye and looking forward to what lies ahead. I spent so many years in these locations, knew them like the back of my hand, and have dear people there who I don't see or talk with as often as I'd like."

With the Bishops settled in Marlborough, Mass. where he and his wife will continue as volunteer "Hope Coaches" for TheHopeLine organization. Debbie will also continue her literacy coaching position in a Framingham K-5 elementary school.

Though Tim is reminded he may not see his friends as often, he feels "a deep sense of appreciation for what I've been allowed to experience and who I know. Enjoy what God has given you, don't take things for granted and be thankful for blessings you have."

The Bishops have the places and interesting spots embedded in their minds. From the Florida coast, the southern pine tree farms of Georgia, the cotton fields of the coastal Carolinas, the beautiful evergreen forests of Virginia, lovely little New Bern, N.C.,

"A bike path leading right to the Lincoln Memorial, strikingly green and well-groomed horse pastures in Maryland, the beauty of the fields of Amish country in Lancaster County, Pa., bike paths around Philly and New York and the Maine coast. And lest we forget the Haynesville woods," added Tim.

"Once we crossed into Maine, I noticed a more relaxed and happier husband," said Debbie. "He was in his home state, on familiar ground with a lifetime of wonderful memories that helped shape the man I love and adore. Growing up in Maine, and

Houlton in particular, is something that Tim treasures and talks about frequently. After biking with him throughout the state over the years, I can see



**HAPPY COUPLE** — Tim and Debbie Bishop take a break from their bike trip for a self portrait. *Contributed photo*

how special this place is."

"I know these parts well after years of traveling between Bangor and Houlton," added Tim. "This is a road of legend, brought into the national spotlight in the '60s by Dick Curless with his top-five hit "Tombstone Every Mile."

In the early days, the Route 2 and 2A stretch was the only connection to the "outside world" for cars and trucks. The railroad was a significant factor in travel back then, too.

"But Interstate 95 was soon extended north to Houlton, the railroad died its slow death, and the Haynesville Woods became even more isolated, but for those in the logging industry who lauded its timber," added Tim.

As the couple pedaled their way on a gorgeous sunny day, alone, but together, among endless trees surrounding a solitary road, with a house springing up every once in a while and a refreshing silence.

"This is how to get away. There was nothing to interrupt the train of thought, the communing with nature, except for one another," said Tim. "We enjoyed the silence together for a time before resuming our inevitable rendezvous with life. Our Mom-to-Mom tour was accomplishing a purpose, if not its intended purpose, to recharge, enliven, or reawaken what might have become dulled through the vigors of everyday life and responsibilities."

While continuing their journey, the Bishops

climbed legendary Santa Claus Hill, named for the Christmas tree farm at the top of the hill.

"It also helps to be shaped in the form of an

ber their kindness and hospitality, all the way down to their daughter Sarah's welcome sign," said Tim. "The Harbisons are special people—community leaders with hearts of gold. They made our arrival and short stay in Houlton most meaningful."

The Bishops visited Tim's mother's gravesite. She had passed away after health complications.

"Other than some sod and a marker, there really isn't much to see at a gravesite," admitted Tim. "Nevertheless, it provided an appropriate setting and stillness to pause and reflect. I have so many wonderful memories of Mom. I feel as though she is really a part of me and I can take her with me wherever I go. I can't think of too many blessings in life that trump this one. Our parents are like that — you can't get away from them no matter whether you wish to or not."

The Bishops are not sure when they will get back to Houlton, but Tim is thankful for his time spent in and around the Shiretown.

"I owe you and your people more than I could ever repay," he said. "I will miss you, and I will miss them."

After 2,654 miles over 47 days, the Mom-to-Mom tour ended.

"Each new day was a chance to start over," recounted Debbie. "Each new day was a day to freshen up, perhaps even smarten up or grow up! And, in the end, all that hard work was really fun. The memories that are beginning to emerge confirm it. So the next time you are working your tail off, please bear in mind that some day you may well look back on it as one of the more enjoyable, if not rewarding, times you have ever had."

He added, "It made me realize that every day is a special occasion and that we need to live each day to the fullest. A day will come when we won't be able to do what we are doing now. What about you? What will you regret when tomorrow comes, and you no longer have the opportunity or ability to pursue a passion you have today? Take steps while you still can to prevent tomorrow's regrets."

The Bishops found life on the road became much simpler than everyday life—and better focused. On a self-supported bicycle tour, the couple traveled with all of the necessary gear on board—no more and, hopefully, no less.

"The same is true in life. Carrying extra items, whether physical, mental, or emotional, can really slow us down. Owning extra stuff means you must manage it, or at least work around it," explained Tim. "Stuff can be challenging

to locate (as can other items it smothers). We will eventually need to keep things cleaned and organized, and at some point, we must either move them or discard them. Wouldn't we rather discard them before it becomes the responsibility of someone else?

Carrying excess clutter in the mind challenges clarity of thought and focus of attention, which reduces our capacity to operate efficiently, think sharply, and dream creatively. And lugging too much emotional baggage can bind us and prevent us from experiencing and enjoying meaningful relationships, perhaps even life itself."

The Bishops discovered "cleaning the closet" a necessary step.

"Don't clutter your life with unnecessary things, thoughts, and feelings that only tie you down, said Tim. "Some clutter is more easily dispensed of than others, but don't let that discourage you from tackling a "closet" today."

As the couple biked coast-to-coast, they worked on their book project.

"Promoting a book is not something I have ever done, or ever imagined I would be doing especially a book about myself and my spouse," said Tim. "But Debbie and I feel God has given us a special story to share with others.. It was a privilege to share our story with random folks along our way, to hand out cards with contact information and to see the reactions of total strangers."

Now that the daily activities are back to normal for the Bishops, they miss the Mom-to-Mom tour and its freedom.

"To leave life behind and venture out to discover more of it is part of the allure of bicycle touring," said Tim. "There is so much to see in this big world we live in. Experiencing it at a slower pace, from a bicycle seat, stimulates the senses. Daily exercise in mega dosages cleanses the body and mind, and paves the way for deep rest. And being with Debbie all day long was a constant reminder of God's provision in my life."

"Our daily activities will change, but we don't intend to let "Two Are Better" and "Open Road Press" fade. We will continue to leverage the many lessons we learn on a bicycle — there are so many from the open road!"

To read the Bishops full blog on their Mom-to-Mom tour and to learn when their book "Two Are Better: Mid-Life Newlyweds Bicycle Coast-to-Coast" will be printed visit their web site at [www.openroadpress.com](http://www.openroadpress.com).

The Bishops are in the final stages of layout for their book.

"We will always remem-