

A BICYCLE BUILT FOR TWO

By Pam Knepper

Biking isn't just something that Bob Goldberg does because it is good for him; he does it because he truly loves it. An avid rider for the past 40 years, biking has taken Bob across the United States, helped him raise thousands of dollars for medical research and made the dream of a man named Floyd come true.

Originally from New Jersey, Bob moved to Washington State in 1961. Boeing had hired him right out of college at the University of Michigan, and he immediately fell in love with the area because of the lifestyle and the variety of outdoor activities. Enraptured so much, he went back to New Jersey, married his college sweetheart Carole, and came back to Washington. They were without a family, but were soon "adopted" by a wonderful family in the area. This family was part of an extended family, in which two were members at the Bellevue Club, so Bob joined the Club as a charter member.

One of Bob's first loves in Washington was skiing, which led him to join the Ski Acres Ski Patrol. But when ski season ended, Bob and his friends on the patrol would ride their bikes to stay in shape.

In 1984, Bob's enthusiasm for biking was upped a notch when he decided to sign up for a bike ride called the Seattle-to-Portland (STP).

"The STP is a two-day, 200-mile bike ride that takes you from Seattle to Portland. When I found out about it, I knew it would test my abilities on the bike," remembers Bob. "It was a bit intimidating at first riding with so many people. But as I got used to my surroundings, I relaxed and the remainder of the ride was very enjoyable. As soon as I crossed the finish line, I knew I would be back the next year."

Along with his love for biking and skiing to stay in shape, Bob also

ran on his lunch hour at work. These workouts gave him the confidence to sign up for several local fun runs and eventually his first triathlon.

"I loved to bike and run, so I thought it would be great to take part in an event that allowed me to do both, and get some swimming in too," says Bob. "So I joined a triathlon training group at the Club and several months later completed my first triathlon."

Bob continued to train and compete in triathlons until 1990 when he developed plantar fasciitis and was forced to stop running. Instead of remaining inactive, Bob did the opposite and decided to focus all his attention on bike riding.

"During the week, I rode my bike from my home in Bellevue to my job at Boeing in Everett and on the weekends I took long rides around Lake Washington," explained Bob. "For many years this training schedule kept me in good shape so I could keep participating in local rides like the STP."

Over time, Bob's involvement with the STP had branched out to include not only riding the event every year, but also being a member of the race committee. In 1999, his role took a strange, but important turn when he met Beth Clark.

"I was handing out packets at the STP headquarters when Beth walked



in one day and started telling me about her husband Floyd," remembers Bob. "At first I thought she was trying to get his STP registration money back but, as it turned out, she wanted something else."

Beth explained that Floyd would not be riding the STP that year because a few months earlier he had suffered a heart attack and died. She described how much Floyd had loved biking, how he had completed eight STPs, and was looking forward to riding his ninth when tragedy struck.

"She then handed me a film canister with a picture and an obituary on it. At first I wasn't sure what to say, but then Beth told me the picture was of Floyd and the canister held some of his ashes," remembers Bob. "She asked me if I could carry the canister with me on the ride, so Floyd could experience his last STP. I quietly told her I would."

Wanting to keep her wishes private, Bob didn't tell anyone about his conversation with Beth, not even his wife, Carole.

During the race, Beth phoned Bob's home to check on his progress. The call came as a surprise to Carole, who later told her husband, "You're the only guy in the world that would do something like this."

Bob remembers the race going well and the weather being perfect; dry days and comfortable tempera-



tures. Somewhere along the way, Bob says he started talking to Floyd and telling him about the wonderful weather and the scenery.

“Even though you are riding with 6,500 other people, you feel alone,” said Bob. “Floyd provided companionship for me.”

Soon after successfully completing the 1999 STP, Bob contacted Beth to give her back Floyd’s ashes. But when the opportunity came to do so, Bob surprised himself and asked Beth if Floyd had ever done the RSVP—the Ride Seattle to Vancouver and Party event. When Beth told him Floyd hadn’t, Bob asked if Floyd could join him. She anxiously agreed. And again, the weather was perfect.

“It was amazing because the officials for the RSVP told me they had never had a ride without any rain,” remembers Bob. “I attributed the good weather to Floyd.”

One day after mentioning to one of his biking buddies that he took Floyd with him on rides, Bob was bombarded with calls from the local media.

“All of a sudden the *Seattle Times* and National Public Radio were interviewing me wanting to know about Floyd and our unusual friendship,” recalls Bob. “They and others found it very interesting that I never knew Floyd, but I would talk about him like he was my best friend.”

Determined to keep riding with Floyd, Bob decided to take a cross-country biking trip during the summer of 2000.

“Several years before I had heard about an organization called Cycle America, which takes people on biking trips across the United States,” remembers Bob. “It had always been a dream of mine to take one of their trips. So when I retired, I signed up and got ready to hit the road again with Floyd.”

Starting out in the middle of June, Bob, along with 47 other people began a ride that took them from Everett to Boston. Averaging 75 to 80 miles per day, Bob says as time went on his riding improved dramatically because he was forced to ride the bike several hours a day, every day.

But while his riding did improve, Bob says there was one part of the trip that caused him some anguish.

“Climbing over Teton Pass in Wyoming was the hardest thing I have ever done,” remembers Bob. “The last four miles were excruciating, but once we reached the summit it was a blast going back down!”

Bob recalls one of the greatest things about the ride was the chance to see the United States from the seat of a bicycle.

“Our country is truly amazing,” says Bob. “I was able to gaze upon scenic mountains, lakes, streams and wildlife that would take your breath away. It was truly an amazing experience for me.”

One of the funniest tales of the trip occurred at Niagara Falls when Bob sent Floyd over the falls in a bottle cap.

“I took a few of his ashes, placed them in a bottle cap and threw it into the falls,” remembered Bob. “Most people, if they are crazy enough, do it in a barrel. Not Floyd. He did it in a bottle cap and I have the witnesses to back me up.”

Blessed with only four days of rain during the entire trip, Bob again attributed the good weather to Floyd.

“Ever since Floyd joined me on my rides, the weather has always been wonderful,” says Bob. “He is my good-luck charm.”

When he was not in the saddle, Bob amazingly found time to play a round of golf in every state he traveled through during the cross-country trip.

“It was fun completing my riding each day and then playing some golf,” says Bob. “At first I didn’t think I would have the energy, but I surprised myself and found I could do both.”



Knowing he would probably never do a cross-country bike ride again, Bob decided to make his adventure really worth the effort. For years he and Carole had been involved with the City of Hope, a

comprehensive cancer center dedicated to the prevention and cure of cancer, HIV/AIDS, diabetes and other life-threatening diseases. Bob thought this ride would be the perfect chance for him to raise some much-needed money for research. So a few months before the ride began, Bob composed and sent out a pledge letter to 300 people.

“I figured if I could raise \$5,000 that would be a nice donation to give to the City of Hope,” remembers Bob. “I ended up raising \$18,000. It was truly a miracle.”

For his efforts, Bob was invited to City of Hope’s headquarters in Duari, California, where he was presented with a special plaque.

“When I went to the headquarters, I was going to give them a check for the money I raised,” says Bob. “Never did I think I would be honored in such a special way. It made all the time in the saddle well worth it.”

After Bob successfully completed his cross-country trip, he and Beth decided it was time to lay Floyd to rest. For the internment, Bob gave Beth his own bike helmet and inside she placed a box with Floyd’s ashes in it. When the internment was over Beth gave Bob back the film canister with some of Floyd’s ashes in it.

“Beth told me she had purposely held back some of Floyd’s ashes from being interned and placed them in the canister to give to me,” remembers Bob. “She told me she knew Floyd and I had bonded, so she wanted a part of him to always be with me. It was one of the nicest things anyone has ever done for me.”

Looking to the future, Bob says he will continue to ride with Floyd at his side.

“While I don’t ever plan on doing another cross-country trip, I am looking ahead to smaller trips around the Pacific Northwest,” says Bob. “Regardless of where I go, I do know biking has given me a way to visit some great places and help some wonderful people. If you don’t think so, then just ask Floyd.”

LEFT Bob and Carole Goldberg.

OPPOSITE PAGE, BOTTOM Floyd’s wife Beth Clark comes to see Bob off on his cross-country bike trip.

OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP Bob proudly displays a sign on his seat bag, which reads “Bob and Floyd”. The bag holds a canister with Floyd’s ashes in it.