

AMERICAN RANDONNEUR



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COVER—RUSA invades Rambouillet!

PHOTO DAN DRISCOLL

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President's Message

Promise is in the Air

With the new year, if you're like me, you've been perusing event calendars, thinking about your local season, and eyeing some big events farther afield.

Our RBAs have calendared 684 events so far for 2020. That includes 15 1000k's and eight 1200k Grand Randonnées, which ties the record. Five of these 1200k's are new. Two visit Canada (New York - Montréal - New York and the Lap of the Lake 1200). All are diverse and visit contrasting areas of the country.



There is an allure to riding an inaugural big event. You're not following in anyone else's footsteps. Everything is yours to discover. I rode the inaugural BMB and it was a special experience.

Established events have their allure, too: there's plenty of advice to be had from veterans, and the routes vary and improve ... based on experience from the earlier riders!

The Life of an RBA

RBAs put together their schedules with several things in mind: adapting to the seasons, helping riders achieve their goals (R-12, Super Randonneur, etc.), exploring new geography ... and last but not least, gauging the supply and durability of volunteers!

However, that event schedule is a two-way street. A couple years ago, I asked our riders what new things they would like ... with the proviso that I would be happy to schedule additional rides if there were committed volunteers to lead them. The suggestions came flooding in ... along with enthusiastic volunteering! We were able to add brevets for an R-12 opportunity each month, including Colorado's winter months, plus a brevet week, and fall 400k and 600k brevets.

The 2019 survey evoked a desire for more mountain brevets. My friend Catherine answered by supplying a challenging Cottonwood-Monarch Pass 300k route, and a commitment to lead it.

You don't have to wait for a survey to offer an idea (and your help). A few

years ago, folks here said they'd like to try a Dart. This was mid-season. I added a fall Dart to the schedule, and one rando stepped up to coordinate the teams. Remember that non-ACP events can be added in the course of the year, if the demand and volunteers are there.

No matter how much help an RBA has, every event is work for her or him. So be nice to your RBA while thinking up all those ambitious plans!

Not Quite Adieu Yet

This should be my last Prez Message. RUSA presidents have typically served for three years, which seems about right. I certainly feel at ease transitioning.

These past three years have had plenty of challenge and reward. In this column, I have enjoyed sharing my thoughts with you. I feel that RUSA has never been in better hands among all its volunteers or more accomplished in what it provides. A heartfelt thanks to my colleagues on the 2019 Board: Deb Banks, Cap'n John Ende, Nigel Greene, Lois Springsteen, Tim Sullivan, and Dave Thompson, plus Jake Kassen earlier in the year.

And to you, I hope your new year is starting out on a promising note!

—John Lee Ellis
RUSA President
president@rusa.org

Post PBP recovery ride in Colorado.

—PHOTO JOHN LEE ELLIS

From the Editor

Readers of *AR* might have anticipated that this issue would feature stories of 2019 PBP adventures...and that assumption would be correct. Following friends who did the ride, talking to people when they returned, and reading the stories in these pages, I gather that this was a windy edition of PBP, and that some were “lucky” enough to face headwinds in both directions. Although the headwinds and cool night temperatures were undoubtedly challenging, such conditions make for good stories... I hope you enjoy this issue of *AR*.

Every PBP participant’s experience is different, and the stories gathered here delightfully demonstrate that truth:

- Matt Vining, relatively new to randonneuring, revels in the excitement of being at PBP.

- Also a PBP newbie, Betty Jean Jordan describes her first PBP and first 1200, coming up with creative ways of dealing with the cold and the need for a roadside nap.

- Chris Newman rode this edition with friends Nigel Greene and George Swain and the luxury of motor home support provided by her brother and nephew.

- George Swain began the ride with Chris and Nigel but decided to withdraw when overwhelming fatigue could not be bested. Since George had hip replacement surgery less than year ago, and for the sake of safety, he decided to stop before something happened due to falling asleep on the bike.

- Mary Gersema and tandem partner Ed Felkerino returned to PBP where Mary relearns the joy of PBP in...of all places...a noisy sleep room at a control.

- Michele Bougher somehow completed PBP even though experiencing lasting side effects from the



Riding "little" PBP
(Princeton-Belmar-Princeton).

—PHOTO DAWN ENGSTROM

previous PBP and additionally riding with a broken leg for the last part of this event. She also captures aspects of the ride particular to woman riders.

- John Capn Ende and Mark Thomas proudly achieved an Adrian Hands Society finish while managing a backyard picnic along the way with a French family.

- Mike Dayton amazingly returns to PBP after being run over by a motorist in 2016; he rode a good part of the route with friends Capn and Mark although he withdrew when he reached his limits. Still he judges that he is fortunate just to have been able to participate in the event.

- Bill Bryant describes the experience that he and Lois Springsteen had as volunteers at the Fougères control. In my experience, being a volunteer for a ride is more exhausting than riding... it certainly seems true in this case.

- Damon Peacock, well known for his PBP and other videos, offers some thoughts on PBP as an event where the organizers, riders and spectators all contribute significantly, where individuals become part of something bigger.

Stories of success and stories of courageous attempts. Showing up to the start line is already huge...whatever happens after that, a great deal has already been achieved. Congratulations to all PBP participants. And thank you to the volunteers and others who supported riders.

Other articles in this issue include the third piece in a four-part series by David Buzzee. Wei Sun presents a ride report in the form of song lyrics set to Eagles tune “Take It Easy.” And Steven Graves thinks about the randonneurs trekking across France in August while he has, almost inexplicably, stopped doing randonneuring events... even though randonneuring is a sport he loves.

Finally, next year will be a great year for 1200km adventures at home, and the RUSA website already offers some basic information for next year’s events. In this issue there is a short description of one new 1200, the Iron Porcupine 1200. For the March issue I will try to have descriptions of additional new events.

Please be safe out there.

—Janice Chernelkoff
Editor, *American Randonneur*
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PBP 2019—A First Timer's Perspective

BY BETTY JEAN JORDAN

Wow! Paris-Brest-Paris! Hands down, this was the most physically challenging thing I have ever done, but I'm so glad I got to do it. Not only was this my first PBP, it was also my first 1200km. My husband Robert went with me, but he ate croissants while I rode.

During my ride I came up with a succinct description of PBP: slow-motion suffering with lots of highlights. PBP is like one long day that ebbs and flows. The sun rises, and the sun sets, but the snatches of sleep at odd hours make it hard to keep track of time. So, instead of trying to tell about my ride chronologically, I'll describe it by topic.

I was in the 90-hour group. Before my trip, I created a pacing spreadsheet. I knew my brain would be too foggy to do serious rate/time/distance calculations during the ride itself. I referred to my spreadsheet often, and it gave me a sense of calm about staying on track.

Enter Sandman

The hardest part of PBP was sleep deprivation. I thought I had somewhat of a feel for what this would be like from the 600km's I had done, but PBP was much more difficult. I slept a total of about eleven hours, most of this in stretches of 1 to 1½ hours. Later I discovered that I was a relative Rip Van Winkle. Some riders got three or fewer hours of sleep total.

My first sleep was at an Airbnb. By the time I arrived there, I had been awake about thirty-six hours. I took a much-needed shower, rinsed out my kit to put back on during my return

visit, and lay down. Just then, I got a text from Robert. He was outside the Airbnb! He was staying fairly nearby in Rennes and had ridden his rental bicycle to see me! The timing was perfect even though I only had a few moments to say hello. I was too tired to get out of bed, so I texted him back and told him to let himself in. He came upstairs and gave me a kiss before I fell asleep. It was like a fairytale.

The route frequently went through villages, which usually had cathedrals. During the second night, I was getting really sleepy and thought to myself, if the next town has a cathedral, I'll stop there for a nap. Sure enough, the cathedral in the next town had an enclosed courtyard. I propped my bicycle against a tree and lay down on a bench with my emergency blanket. That was the first real sleep I got; I didn't awake until my phone alarm went off an hour and a half later.

I took another roadside nap soon after I left Brest on Tuesday morning. I found a small roadside park with a copse of trees that offered a little privacy. I lay on the ground with my emergency blanket wrapped around me. I woke up before my phone alarm went off, about an hour later. As I awoke, I felt a few drops fall on me. At the same time, I became aware of a terrible odor. My first thought was that the city park employees were spraying pesticide on me. Then, I realized that the drops were probably dew from the trees, and the terrible odor was me!



Breakfast at Airbnb.

—PHOTO BETTY JEAN JORDAN

Photo Op at Villaines-la-Juhel.
—PHOTO BY A KIND PBP VOLUNTEER

My last sleep was around midnight on the final night at the control in Mortagne-au-Perche. That was one of my lowest points of the ride. Tired and cold, I parked my bike and said loudly to no one in particular, “Will someone please just shoot me now?” No one obliged, but I got the feeling the sentiment was shared. I joined the throng in the cafeteria. Bodies were lined along the entire perimeter of the room. They looked like battlefield casualties. I found about half a space on the hard floor and curled up into a ball so that my legs wouldn’t block the walkway. I laid my head on my rolled-up jacket and covered my face with my reflective vest. I set my phone alarm for one hour but again woke up before it went off, about forty-five minutes later. When I awoke, I heard the guy next to me snoring. He sounded like an airplane taking off. As I became more alert, I saw another guy standing near me, checking his phone. We looked at each other and both started to laugh.

Cold as Ice

A close second with regard to PBP difficulties was the nighttime cold. I had checked the forecasts for Rambouillet and Brest. Both indicated highs in the 70s and lows in the 50s (Fahrenheit). I was prepared for temperatures in the 50s: base layer, arm and knee warmers, long-fingered gloves, and an ear warmer headband. In reality, overnight lows were in the 40s or maybe even the 30s. I nearly froze.

Although just about any conditions are rideable with the appropriate clothing and gear, I’ll take heat over cold any day. Having come from temperatures in the 90s at home, the nighttime cold during PBP was a particular shock to my system. I simply had to make do with what I had and keep riding. It came down to mind over matter, particularly the last night.



I think a lot on long rides, but it was different on PBP. The intensity and duration reduced everything to an almost primal mind-body connection. Somehow, I had to keep myself from focusing on the cold. The only thing that helped was singing out loud. I don’t remember most of the songs I sang, but a self-imposed rule required all songs to be classic rock. One of the few songs I do remember singing was Summer of ’69 by Bryan Adams. From now on, whenever I hear that one, it will remind me of riding across Brittany in the middle of the night.

Ain’t No Mountain High Enough

I had been told that the terrain on PBP is mostly rolling hills. Therefore, I expected PBP to be somewhat like the roads I regularly ride in Middle Georgia. It wasn’t. The eastern portion of the route was relatively flat, but there was pretty serious climbing in Brittany to the west. Grades were often 4% or more for a half-mile to a mile at a time. I’m a good climber, but I didn’t expect them to be quite as long as they were, over and over.

And Bad Mistakes...I’ve Made a Few

I made several mistakes during PBP. Thankfully, none were catastrophic.

The worst was...I lost my brevet card! I must have left it on the table when I was taking one of the few pictures of my ride, the flags at Fougères.

When I got to the next control, Tinténiac, I realized I didn’t have my card. This was a major panic because according to the rules, you’re disqualified if you lose your card. I thought I had read that official times were being taken from our timing chips and that cards were just a backup, but I still thought I might be disqualified. I told the volunteers at the control. They were so nice and said they could make me a new card because, sure enough, they could pull up my electronic times on their computer. They said to give them a few minutes, go get something to eat, and come back. When I returned, they gave me back my original brevet card! Someone had found it and turned it in. *Merci beaucoup!*

My next worst mistake was missing the return control in Carhaix-Plouguer. Fortunately, I hadn’t gone too far when I realized it. I backtracked to the control and lost only about thirty minutes total. I reconstructed in my mind what had happened. I took a wrong turn from a roundabout because just before the roundabout, someone had called out to me that my jacket was

hanging down off my bicycle. It had been secured under bungee cords on top of my bike bag but had come loose. In my flustered state from fixing that issue, I must have missed the proper exit from the roundabout.

Food

I've pretty much decided that there is no bad food in France. Even the food at the controls was quite good, and it was very reasonably priced. I ate a lot of sandwiches, croissants, and pain au chocolat and drank many Coca-Colas. I got fresh fruit as much as possible and discovered a delicious caramel yogurt. Soup, spaghetti, and fish were warm and filling. I even ate tabbouleh, paella, and beef bourguignon!

Convenience stores are nonexistent in rural Brittany. However, it's easy to find a café, restaurant, or patisserie in most towns, at least during the day. Additionally, the French people who live along the PBP route are legendary



for their hospitality. Many offer food and beverages to the riders, sometimes even for free. I availed myself of their generosity a number of times. One of the most memorable stops was on my last night. This was during one of the worst stretches when I had to fight the cold so hard. I knew I needed food. I came to a village, but nothing was open in the middle of the night. However, the kind residents had set up a tent with refreshments. I had a cup of soup, some prunes, and a few pieces of dark chocolate. That might sound like a weird combination, but it tasted so good!

The most memorable thing I ate during PBP was in a tiny village during my last full day of riding. I saw a patisserie and stopped for a treat. What to get? The eclairs looked good, but I had already had several of those while I was in France. Interestingly, all the eclairs had chocolate filling as well as a chocolate glaze. They certainly were delicious, but they didn't have the custard filling I was expecting. At this patisserie I chose a delectable looking, cream-filled pastry. I can't remember or find the name of it now (it wasn't a Paris-Brest), but it was round and made of light, flaky choux pastry. Best of all, it had that elusive custard filling. I sat on the sidewalk outside the patisserie, relishing my unknown-name pastry. I thought, "This is what I came to France for."

I've Seen All Good People

It was a huge thrill to ride with more than 6,000 other cyclists from all over the world, including all six inhabited continents. Because I couldn't communicate verbally with most of them, I mainly just enjoyed observing the vast array of countries represented.

One afternoon I was riding down the road and heard a woman's voice call out several times in a foreign language. Yes, she was talking to me. My first thought, am I doing something unsafe

Heading to the start.

—PHOTO ROBERT JORDAN



or using bad cycling etiquette? That wasn't it at all; she had noticed my jersey, which read Audax Atlanta, Georgia Randonneurs. As she rode past me, I saw her Ukraine jersey and heard her say "Georgia." I called out, "USA! The other Georgia!" We both laughed.

Thousands of volunteers make PBP possible. They point the way at intersections, stamp our brevet cards, serve food and drinks, and wake us from naps. On the second visit to the control at Villaines-la-Juhel, they treated us like rock stars! Dozens of people—maybe hundreds—cheered for me as I rolled in. I parked my bike and headed toward the restaurant. A girl who was about twelve years old asked me if I spoke English. I said yes, and she told me to follow her. Skeptically, I did so. Was she some kind of hustler? I was embarrassed to realize I could be so cynical. It turned out she and scores of other young people were there simply to serve us riders. They guided us to the serving line, held our trays, and led us down a red carpet (literally) to the dining tables. I thought they were the rock stars for showing us riders such extravagant hospitality!

I remember so many kindnesses the French people offered along the



Italian riders with jersey pockets filled with sandwiches.

—PHOTO BETTY JEAN JORDAN

way. Paulette, the owner of the Airbnb where I stayed, was so accommodating of my strange hours. Also, she and her husband prepared a delicious breakfast for me before I left on the inbound trip. A young boy guided me late one night when I almost made a wrong turn. A man played a bagpipe on the side of the road in Brest. A woman somewhere on the route played French music on an accordion.

I had been a little concerned about not being able to speak French, but I found that *bonjour*, *merci*, and *pardon* got me a long way. All along the route, I was surprised that most of the riders didn't acknowledge the many French people cheering us on. I made a point

to wave or say "Bonjour!" or "Merci!" It was the least I could do to thank them for making the effort to come out and see us. Besides, it gave me energy to interact with them.

This set the stage for one of my funniest experiences of PBP. It was about 2:00am. I heard a couple of people clapping for me and a few other riders nearby. I couldn't see these dedicated fans, but I called out into the darkness, "Merci! Merci!" Then, the clapping got louder. Why were these people chasing me?! Suddenly, a pony was running beside me! I was hearing its hooves clack on the pavement. It soon turned off onto a side road. I laughed and said to whoever was riding near

me, whether they could understand me or not, "I thought that was people clapping for us!" A man responded in accented English, "Memories."

We Are the Champions

Sunrise was approaching on the final morning. I had about forty miles to go. Even at my slow PBP pace, about 13mph, I calculated that I would make it to Rambouillet in about three hours, well before my 11:45am cutoff.

I did it! 86 hours, 32 minutes, and 48 seconds. Woo hoo! Robert found me almost immediately. I kissed him quickly and went to get my brevet card stamped one last time. An older French man put a medal around my neck. Then, he smiled at me and gave me a big hug. That was one of the best hugs I have ever had! I'm so honored and thrilled to have successfully finished PBP with all its punishments, joys, and traditions.

I went into this planning for it to be my only time doing PBP (unless I become independently wealthy). It's a huge commitment of time and energy. Also, Robert was super supportive, but it will be a long time before I ask him to make such an effort on my behalf again. Knowing that this was probably my one shot at PBP was also a great motivator to finish successfully.

A legitimate question is: why would someone voluntarily do something as challenging as PBP? A few days post PBP I pondered the question and here is my answer;

PBP is tough and gritty. It gives you satisfaction when you persevere and overcome setbacks. You get to share the journey with fascinating people. You give and receive help and love along the way. The scenery is beautiful. There is joy. It's a microcosm of life in ninety hours.

Ride on! 🚲



Naptime in Cathedral Courtyard.

—PHOTO BETTY JEAN JORDAN

The Last Control

BY STEVEN GRAVES

At this writing, the worthy are gathered 4,792 miles away, making ready for the course westward to Brest. While they are there to enter their mark in the Great Book, countless others, including me, are left to contemplate the greatest ride never attempted. Every cyclist reading this remembers their start as a randonneur. But as the years pass and the flame falters, what record is left of the fall? Birth announcements are welcome, obituaries less so. Here are both of mine..

PART I—THE END

The finish came much the same as the beginning, unforeseen and unexplained. Pat and I made the long climb over the Mississippi finishing his St. James Infirmary 200, and by the time we reached his house, 108 consecutive months of brevets came to an end. Had I hit a car at twenty-two

miles an hour and snapped a femur, I would have had a better excuse for breaking the string. Pat actually did break his leg early in our run, yet we did not end the string, although I had to lift him off a borrowed trike and hold him upright to answer nature's call. When the R-12's started he asked, "Why not R-60?" so on we rode. We were on a

mission then, but the mission for me ended. That was two years ago.

I wrote the following at the completion of my first long ride with the intention of sending it to *American Randonneur* as "Life Starts At 300." Never got that done. Here's a look in the rearview mirror.

PART II—THE BEGINNING

Back on a Bike

What does it take to get a guy riding again? For me it was Hurricane Katrina upon my return to my city of ruins. Faced with the uncertainty of raising a family here, and the challenge of reviving a business on the ropes, I spent Mondays through Fridays chasing work and breathing drywall dust, and on the weekends I rode. From one end of town to the other, traveling between one levee breach in Lakeview to the other in the Lower Nine, I'd look down at the end of the day to the odometer reading 50, 60, 75 miles. And I liked it. Shortly after, I poked my nose under the tent flap of distance cycling.

Yonder Stands a Randonneur

I backed unwittingly into my first 200km courtesy of an uncertain computer and an abundance of caution, pressing on just to make sure I actually did the century I set out to complete. It took forever, and after figuring the ride a true 126 miles, I felt like a champ. Had a mortal ever done such a thing?

Randonneuring round trip on the Trace. Left to right: Steve Graves, Dennis Horchoff, Michelle Williams, and RBA Pat Horchoff.

—PHOTO DOUG MORGAN





At the Lower Ninth Ward Memorial. The tallest post shows the Katrina high water mark.

—PHOTO STEVE GRAVES

B-52's. It was OCD heaven, from the convenience store card signings to the all-for-one repair of a fellow rider's double-pinch flats. At ride's end, Pat gave me a bear hug and a shiny RUSA pin for my jersey, and after standing alone in the dark parking lot for a minute, I did the only thing that made sense. I got back on the bike and rode another twenty-five miles. I figured if you can ride one hundred and fifty miles straight, well, a 300km is not much more than that, and besides, it seemed a shame to waste a great buzz. When I finally crawled in next to my wife, she squinted at the clock, shook her head, and unknowingly signed on for the adventure.

Go Long

Soon Pat started talking about more distance, with an eye on an October 300 in Italy, Texas. With only months to get ready, this RBA rode me ragged, including a grind during a heat wave that literally melted my plastic fenders. We suffered, which was good he explained, because to suffer and survive is the grit that will sustain you when it counts. My first 300 played like a first love. It had all the bells and whistles: a road trip to Dallas, the opportunity to line up with a sizable group of veteran cyclists, and the prospect of riding dark to light to dark again. I felt prepared, but as we loaded our bikes into the truck, I began to question whether I was ready for twenty hours in the saddle, actual hills, and who knows what?

Author and his Mondial.

—PHOTO PAT HORCHOFF

Looking back, I realize I was prime for picking. One day, at the far end of the bike path, I stumbled upon a randonneur in the wild. It was unsettling.

Seated on a long wheelbase recumbent, imposing he was, complete with computers and monitors, bottles of fluids, bags galore, a wicked gleam in the eye. He was finishing up a short ride he said, only 125 miles for the day, and I thought to myself, "Yeah, sure." Those familiar with RBA Pat Horchoff might figure why I was skeptical. Randonneurs come in assorted packages, and Pat is impressive, both in body and spirit. With a sly smile, this Buddha on a bike summed up the whole nature of the thing; just love riding, and the rest will care of itself.

First Blood

My first official 200km was a full-moon ride setting out from

Audubon Park in early afternoon along the banks of the Mississippi River before turning north on old Highway 51 to the far control in Ponchatoula. It turned home again along a levee path teeming with flying bugs the size of





Punctured on Spillway Bridge.

—PHOTO PAT HORCHOFF

guy whose biggest elevation change is typically climbing the Mississippi River levee, they took their toll. Added to that was this road surface called chip seal, notorious for sucking life out of forward motion. At the halfway point, we found ourselves flirting with danger.

Looking Up

We were so busy putting on lights and following turns, it was well past sunset when I finally looked up at the sky. Living in the city, with light pollution and all other distractions, I had forgotten how extraordinary a clear sky is. Stopping the bike as fifty years fell away, I was this kid again, gazing into the heavens, feeling all things at once: humble, inconsequential, yet connected to something grand. In the best of times, regardless of age, we are kids on bikes. And on this night, I figured out where all the stars are. They are here beyond measure.

Angels in Texas

We always figured to be lanterne rouge on this ride. It was technically still open, but the store where the control was set up had shuttered for the night. A few miles away we had seen a head lamp in the distance. Turning back with us, the rider said she was just trying out a new generator hub, and I figured her for some new recruit stuck in the middle of nowhere waiting on wayward sheep.

Had I been her, sitting for hours in a dark parking lot, I wouldn't have been nearly as cheerful. Yet she was, handing out double espressos, apologizing for the warm V-8, pumping us up for the final miles into Italy. Hearing that I was in my third month of randonneuring and struggling with my first 300, she acted like it was a pleasure to be there for us. By the time we left, we felt like we were the first guys through the control rather than last.

The Cult of LSR

We were going to ride with the Lone Star Randonneurs. Opening their website I found a group of fit and determined cyclists swooping out on the screen. Pat observed, "Good folks, great in number and fleet of wheel. We'll see them at push-off, and maybe for the first ten miles if we can hold 18 mph." Damn.

5:00am came early. The bikes were given a final check, and as we gathered in the parking lot with fellow riders, I wanted to crawl back in bed. As predicted, there were many, with every bike looking custom-built for the purpose. I looked down on my once-proud Trek 620 touring bike weighing a modest thirty-two pounds unloaded.

And at 56, not only was I an elder in this group, I was sure my bike was older than a few of the other starters. Suddenly, 187 miles didn't seem like such a sure thing.

The mass start boosted our spirits, but against our own good advice, we pedaled with the group's pace—too fast, too soon, a decision that would later come back to trouble us. The first ninety miles to the turnaround was an education. The rollers weren't what you'd call mountains, but for a



Laid out on the first 400—300 down, 100 to go. RBA Pat Horchoff behind Michelle Williams.

—PHOTO STEVE GRAVES



Author with hometown hero Louis Armstrong on the Mississippi.

—PHOTO UNKNOWN TOURIST

Midway through the first 400 on the Natchez Trace. Steve Graves left, RBA Pat Horchoff middle, and Michelle Williams right.

—PHOTO DAVID WILLIAMS



PART III— THAT WHICH IS LEFT BEHIND The Big Why

So, with the tale now told, this bears asking...what brought the end? Simple enough. I was moving slower, not faster. I didn't want to be the anchor hindering the group, the one waited for at hilltop or control. I always figured on a taper of sorts when I walked away, never thinking it would instead be a dead run. One day a long-distance rider, the next day, not. I am surprised still.

Now at least there could be weekend coffee with my wife. And phone calls with the daughters, long since raised and gone. And it settles in that this particular passion, this madness, does not merely ask for the occasional sacrifice, it makes the call again and again. And for what? Some ribbons and medals stuffed in a drawer marking the ordinary career of an average rando, one never to have gone longer than 600 kilometers, much less make the starting line in Paris? Looking back, it

In the Land of Giants

When we pulled into the parking lot we found a note on the windshield from the woman at the last control congratulating us on our finish and apologizing that she couldn't do so in person. Nice people, these volunteers. I mentioned this to Pat, who advised me that Sharon did the occasional ride, and maybe I should look her up when I got home. Yes, I found that Sharon Stevens did do the occasional ride. In the same year I completed my first

series, she worked her way through seven...yes, seven 200's-300's-400's-600's. For someone with those stats to staff a deserted control and cheer on first-timers in the dead of night is like finding Michael Jordan passing out towels in a J.V. locker room. RUSA has many fine citizens like Sharon, but I doubt they bake a pie as grand as the one she gave us in our hotel room when we finished our first 600 on a return trip to Texas. It didn't stand a chance.

wasn't all that much really. Only some of the best times ever, spent in the company of some fine people.

The Restoration

I rode today, starting down the river's west bank to the Chalmette ferry, crossing over, then up through the Lower Ninth Ward. There are signs of the recovery to be sure, yet Fats Domino's house still sits overgrown and abandoned, much as it was fourteen years ago. Looking up to the balcony from which he was rescued by boat, I step back to snap a picture of my current ride. It is not the skinny tire, speedy Ti Aero that carried me around the equator; instead it's a rugged Co-Motion single with fat tires for the potholes, steel for strength, and internal gears with belt drive for simplicity. I travel my hometown again, the return of the urban cyclist, and at day's end I look down to see the odometer read fifty miles. Not a bad beginning.



Author's Current Ride Outside Fat's House.

—PHOTO STEVE GRAVES

Coda

I'm standing at midnight in Convent, looking down a fresh path of asphalt that threads between Mississippi levee on the right and an unbroken expanse of field to my left. I've been here many

times before on this, on my favorite 400 route, as it winds its way to Baton Rouge and back home again to the Crescent City. The moon casts its soft radiance over miles of sugar cane dancing gently in the breeze, throwing my long shadow to the distance ahead. The temperature quickly drops ten degrees to announce the coming storm, and I instinctively search the horizon for the nearest shelter. As I calculate the time it will take to make safe haven, I look over and discover, to my amusement, that I stand next to a convertible roadster and not a bicycle. Refuge takes but ten seconds as I climb in, pull the top up, and consider a simple truth. You may choose the time you leave randonneuring, but only time will tell when the randonneur leaves you. 🚲

Building a bicycle frame starts long before the torch is lit.

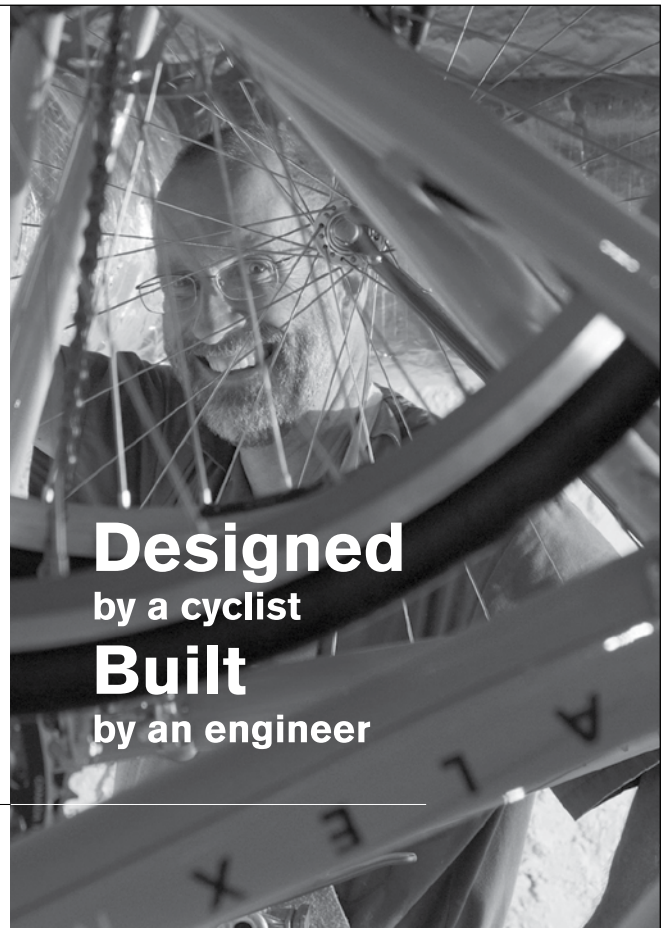
It begins with the right questions; by learning the needs and desires of the customer. I listen to the experiences that led you to me: your riding history, your cycling dreams, and what you want your next bike to be.

My goal as a designer and builder is to use my experience as a cyclist and training as a mechanical engineer to translate your vision into a beautiful steel bicycle

that will give you a lifetime of service and enjoyment, for less than you might expect.

Every frame I produce is completely engineered and manufactured by me. I do everything from working with you on initial measurements and selecting materials, to the intricate filing and metalwork needed to make a beautiful and unique frame.

To begin the process, visit my web site, then email or call me. I look forward to hearing your thoughts.



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Musings of the Ancient Randonneur: Part Three

BY DAVID BUZZEE RUSA #14

Following is the third of four articles in a series by David Buzzee.

I rode to The Jitter Joint for a midday cup of Italian roast. I had tried my first 400km, but it had not gone well. I dropped out at 300km. What had happened? Perhaps the old man, the Ancient Randonneur, could help me understand so that dropping out would not happen again.

My training seemed to go well. Perhaps the heat on the 400km had bothered me, or I had gone out too fast, or my food wasn't right for the ride. I just didn't know where to go or even if I wanted to try another brevet.

His old Torpado wasn't in the outside rack; he wasn't inside at his usual table. The barista didn't recall seeing him for several days. But as I was about to leave, he rode up, dismounted and walked in. I could barely wait for him to get his coffee and sit down.

"I trained well, rode intervals and long rides, got enough sleep before the ride, yet somewhere around 275km I seemed to lose heart. I slowed, became distracted, and finally quit at 300km. What happened? What did I do wrong?"

He listened as I reviewed my training. Then he said, "I have wondered about the balance between physical training and mental training. I rode a very difficult 1,000km brevet several summers ago. The temperature at the 4:00am start was already above 90. By the second control it was 95 and eventually reached over 100 degrees. Every rider slowed; everyone suffered. Finally that night, some 350km into the ride, perhaps a dozen of us stopped for dinner. Morale was low; we all were behind

our planned schedules, some were sick, some dehydrated, all discouraged.

After food, rest and discussion, more than half decided to drop out, get a motel for the night and call for a sag in the morning. But several continued riding and eventually finished the brevet. What separated those who stopped riding from those who continued? I later asked some of both groups. Those who dropped out lost motivation, lost direction, lost sight of their goals. Those who continued found their original motivation and continued: I was doing this as a memorial for my sick father; I had quit this ride last year and I wanted to finish it; and the pain of continuing would last only a few days while the disappointment of quitting would last for much longer."

Those who continued had a specific purpose, and attached to themselves some motivation that let them continue. For your 400 it seems that you had trained your body to ride long, to climb well, and to roll without effort. But how had you trained your mind? Before the 1,000km brevet, the successful riders had rehearsed their motivational mantras. When fatigue, heat, illness, or hunger distracted them, they called to mind their own personal



David at work at REI where he spends half-time as a bike mechanic.

—PHOTO COWORKER

motivations: the memorial; the desire to complete an unfinished ride; or to avoid later regrets. Perhaps if you discover a motivation which will work for you, memorize and rehearse it. Then you can retrieve the motivation when your mind is clogged by sleepiness and your body slowed by fatigue. Find your motivation and rehearse your speech so it becomes automatic. Then follow your motivation to complete the ride."

I lost myself in memories of my failed 400km brevet. I had treated it as any other ride and never thought about what drove me to try ever longer rides. I had had no source of inspiration when I despaired.

When I awoke to the real world, I saw the Ancient Randonneur through the window as he mounted his old Torpado and rode away. 🚲

To Finish or Not to Finish, that is the Question

As I pedaled west on the long descent into Brest and saw the iconic bridge come into view, I was overwhelmed with emotion. Tears streamed down my cheeks. I'd made it to the halfway point. The road and the sidewalk were filled with riders and locals out for a morning stroll. Thousands of photographs are captured at this location every four years to document this epic accomplishment.

My path to Brest in 2015 and my return in 2019 were anything but linear. When I saw that bridge, though, it occurred to me how terribly fortunate I was to be alive and riding a bicycle in western France at that moment. It had been a long four years since I had stood in this spot, complete with surprises and crooked roads, but I had done it. I was breathing that precious salty air again and my hip felt just fine. To explain my surprise, I need to start at the beginning.

My randonneuring career began in

2007 and I was immediately caught up in PBP fever. While entering the event that year was not practical, I committed to riding in 2011 but was stopped in my tracks in August of 2010 on the Endless Mountains 1000km. Hit from behind by a distracted driver, I broke 27 bones and had to undergo four surgeries and spend six weeks in the hospital before I was able to start on the long road back to fitness. Needless to say, I was unable to ride in 2011, but set my sights on 2015, and following three years of steady gains, I selected

the 84-hour start. While I made it back to St. Quentin en Yvelines in 82:30, I was eager to experience a more “full value” ride complete with cheering crowds, friends and strangers by my side, and even a few ditch naps the next time around.

Six months after PBP, however, I would get some disappointing news. In December of 2015, I was diagnosed with *avascular necrosis*, a slow degenerative condition in my left hip as a result of damage following my 2010 femoral neck fracture and subsequent surgery. In other words, it was a matter of *when* and not *if* I would be needing a total hip replacement.

After another three years of riding at an increasingly slower pace, I scheduled a total hip replacement for October 2018, which I hoped would provide me with enough time to prepare for PBP the following August. The surgery went beautifully, but the recovery was much slower than expected. Apparently, some of my muscles had atrophied, while others engaged to do work they were not designed to undertake.

When it came time to register for PBP, I decided to enter the 90-hour start in search of the full PBP experience. A bonus came in the form of an invitation from my friend Chris to join her and our friend Nigel in the use of a support vehicle piloted by her brother, Pete. This would be perfect—a final insurance policy against failure. We would ride with “The Bulge” without suffering on long lines in search of food



George, Chris, and Nigel.

—PHOTO PETER NEWMAN



Left, randonneurs!

Below, George on the Bridge.

—PHOTOS GEORGE SWAIN



and beds. I would even have a safe port in the event that my body gave out.

From the very start, PBP 2019 felt different from the 2015 edition. The organizers moved the start from St. Quentin to Rambouillet which left the former, where we stayed, feeling a bit like a ghost town. The location of the start in the shadow of a gorgeous medieval castle, on the other hand, felt regal in more ways than one. The start in the waning afternoon sun could not have been more picturesque. Standing in line, I encountered dozens of riders I've met over the years, and even Claus, the star of the German film *Brevet*, who seemed tickled to be recognized on the road. It was a storybook start that surpassed my expectations and filled me with excitement and warmth.

The nighttime roads filled with red taillights were even more magical than I anticipated. It really did feel like we were all part of some long sentient being making its way across Brittany. Contrary to what I had seen on the 84-hour start, the roadsides were lined with cheering supporters, the cafes bursting with hungry cyclists, while beds and controls were jammed to overflowing with riders from around the world. The support vehicle allowed us to enjoy the former while generally ignoring the latter.

On the way back from Brest following an amazing stop in Sizun for coffee and pastries as the sun began

its descent on the third night of our journey, my body felt strong, but the lack of sleep was finally starting to take a toll on my mind and my spirit. As we began the arduous job of rando mathematics to calculate riding speed and sleep breaks in order to finish on time, it was starting to look like our leisurely full-value approach to the event might not be successful after all. Later that night, I also had an epiphany on the road as I watched cyclists weave their drunken slalom down hills in the dark while others dropped like ski jumpers straight down the mountain. With several near misses, it seemed like disaster lay around the next corner. While Nigel and Chris were determined to finish, I was so sleep deprived, having slept only two hours in the first 54, that I could not see a path forward which did not involve me falling asleep on my bicycle. This was not an outcome I could risk either for myself or my family; I determined that the Loudeac stamp would be my last.

Here is a randonneuring riddle to consider: which is better, not starting an event or not finishing one? In all of the dozens of brevets and permanents I've ridden over the past twelve years, the only ride I did not finish was the one at which I was removed from the course in an ambulance. And yet those three letters—D. N. F.—haunted me like a specter. To guard against this outcome, I never started a ride unless

I was confident I could finish. Looking back, was my decision to abandon PBP at the 2/3 mark a devastating failure or a surprising success?

While life is about risk and each of us continually makes calculations, most of us realize as we age that there is precious little time to waste on achieving perfection. If I had stayed at home until I was *certain* that I would complete the ride, it would still be an open question and I would have missed all of the excitement and joy I experienced in 2019. I am confident that I made the right decision to ride this year. Most importantly, my failure to complete the event taught me that the world doesn't end just because a long bike ride does.

In the months since PBP, I have continued to heal and become stronger on the bike. I still retain very positive feelings about the event despite the disappointment of not finishing with my friends. In short, I feel grateful and even lucky. In fact, a few weeks after returning from France, I entered the preregistration lottery for London-Edinburgh-London and miraculously won a spot in that event for 2021 along with Chris and Nigel, which provides a wonderful, concrete training goal and an opportunity to get the band back together. For what more could I ask? 🚲

Arizona Randonneurs' "Standin' On The Corner" 300km

BY WEI SUN

Sung to the tune of "Take It Easy" by the Eagles

Well we're riding down the road, tryin' to stay on the go
There are seven randos in a line
5 from Arizona, 2 from California
All have Paris on their minds
Take it easy, take it easy
To ride a bike for miles and miles isn't crazy
300k is what we plan
Don't even try to understand
We'll get to Leupp just so we can
Take it easy

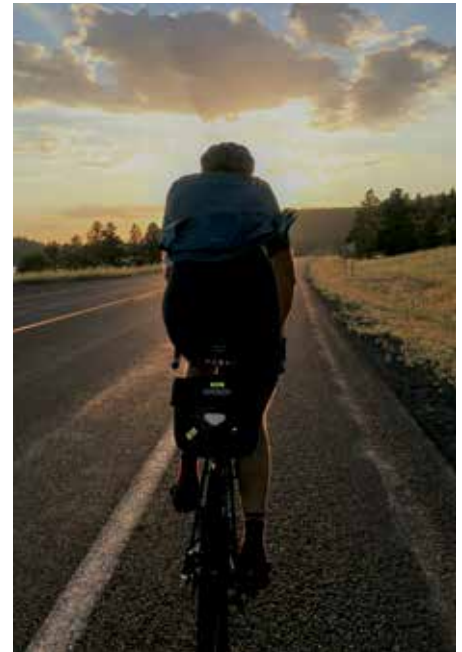
While I'm standing on the corner, in Winslow Arizona
Such a fine sight to see
We're on bikes, oh Lord, not in jacked up Fords
They're not slowing down for you and me
Keep on bravely, the heat betrays me
I gotta climb to Happy Jack before thirst claims me
We'll ride fast or we'll ride slow
But to Mormon Lake we will go
Return to Flagstaff then we'll know
To take it easy.





Sushi dinner at the finish in Market, Flagstaff, Wei Sun, Zac Karman and Jennifer Moore.

Into the sunset toward the finish in Flagstaff.



Well we're riding down the road, on brevets through rain and snow
 Got the thought of Paris on our minds
 Rides homologated, ride times formulated
 To get to Brest in time
 Take it easy, take it easy
 Don't let the sound of creaking bike parts drive you crazy
 Come on baby
 Don't say maybe
 We'll be back in Rambouillet in time
 And take it easy



Nearing sunset by Lake Mary.
 —ALL PHOTOS WEI SUN

"Such a fine sight to see!" From left to right, Jennifer Moore, Roger Peskett, Mike Sturgill, Zac Karman, Wei Sun, Catherine Dickson and Steve Atkins.

Take Me to the Bridge

BY MATT VINING

Yep, spend all kinds of time and money just to snap a picture with a suspension bridge in the background. Heck, I could have ridden to San Francisco for that. But of course there's more to Paris Brest Paris than a quick snapshot for social media. The entire ride is a constant stream of Kodak moments and snippets of interactions with an international cast of characters. The leading role belongs to the people along the route, from the volunteers to the folks on the corner with coffee, water and an encouraging word. They are simply the best, and I could not have finished without a cup of hot chocolate to revive me on the way to Dreux.

It was a chilly night and I was nodding off while bombing down the hills towards Paris. The scariest night of my cycling life, I was out on the edge with speeds exceeding conditions. It felt like all of us were on the edge that dark, foggy, and cold night with one thousand kilometers in our legs. I had to step off the crazy train for a spell and the locals' welcoming lights drew me in like a moth to a flame. I grabbed a chair and closed my eyes for ten minutes. The drive to continue kicked in and I started to get chilled. I threw my leg over the bike, no balance to speak of, and I laid it down in the ditch across the road. I hoped nobody saw that, and I played it cool. I walked back to my chair for another fifteen minutes of rest and got back to my feet for a little more cycling fun. Monsieur Le Host hit me with the warm and the sugar-charged beverage that got me going for the rest of the night.

One thing sticks out to me about the nineteenth edition of PBP. There were some darn chilly nights and mornings. I started late on Sunday and the first night wasn't too bad. But that morning was straight up cold as we traversed a picturesque river valley on the way to Villaines-la-Juhel. My GPS recorded a low of 36 degrees during the ride, which was a shocker for me when I looked at the post ride data.

I witnessed plenty of suffering from the back of the pack and it only got grimmer after the turn in Brest. Getting to the halfway point is a huge accomplishment but the reality

of riding back hits like a slow leak in the rain when you see the route signs emblazoned with your final destination — "PARIS."

My emotional high was at the top of the Roc'h on the return, and I even managed to ride with a group most of the way into Carhaix. It was getting chilly again and after a bowl of pasta I made the executive decision to call it a night and get some sleep. Probably not the smartest move and it doomed me to a marathon ride all the way back to the Bergerie Nationale in Rambouillet. I woke up in Carhaix with another bowl of plain pasta, tiptoed around the prone bodies in the cafeteria and said hasta to sleep for the next thirty-six hours.

Another early morning and once again I was searching for the elusive reflective triangles in the dark. I rode with a Belgian although we weren't much for conversation and it was too cold to talk anyway. We blew past a left onto a country lane and a local farmer in his minivan just happened to be chilling at the next corner. He waved us over and told the Belgian in French to whip it around to get back on course. Merci beaucoup. The oddest part is that it was 4:00am and the farmer was the only person we saw until we got to the Secret Control.

I concentrated on all the kind words of encouragement delivered by friends and family and doled out by the young and old along the route.

There were still people on the outbound route; I felt sorry for them because it was Wednesday morning and I was bringing up the rear. This trend worsened as the day wore on. There was a sadness out on the road as the clock ticked down for the remnants of the 90-hour riders.

Wednesday turned into a blur. The usual tailwind didn't really kick in until late in the evening. It was absolutely gorgeous out and I kept cruising. Running low on water, I popped into an old folks' home and they hooked me up with the filtered stuff. Down the road a few more hours there was an impromptu sag stop at a minimart on the route. I realized that I was now in the midst of the 84-hour riders and was watching my time and mileage in ten-hour increments. My sister sent a text; she was following the Live Track online along with her friends in Texas. Later that night, RBA Kerin Huber sent a message of support. How cool is that?! Heck yeah to the information super highway.

As the day turned into the last night on the road, I got real efficient at the controls and blasted through them with a quick stamp and a shot of water. This worked well until the temperature dropped later in the night and it was white-knuckle time all the way into Dreux. I developed a gangster lean overnight, with a heavy listing to the right as I hung on for dear life. It was another freezing sunrise; I kept the long sleeves and warmers on for most of the morning. Another text, my girlfriend had landed in Paris and she was on her way to Rambouillet. I had four hours to get there. Things were looking good as I rolled into the final control. But I couldn't roll right up to get a quick stamp and discovered that my feet were super thrashed when I dismounted my bike. It was a long walk and I had to dig deep to get back on the machine.

Almost there, almost there, just a few more revs and I can finish my first Grand Randonnée. It was a tough 20 miles and they weren't flat, but the



Literal high point of the ride, ecstatic on the return to Carhaix.

—PHOTO MATT VINING

day turned out to be warm and sunny. A young lady blasted by me; she was time trialing it to the finish with a look of desperation. Hopefully she made her cutoff. I was in my own struggle; I concentrated on all the kind words of encouragement delivered by friends and family and doled out by the young and old along the route. Bonne Route! Bon Courage! Not that I was in a huge hurry, my significant other was still making her way to the finish line.

Couple more hills just for kicks and I made the final turn to the finish. It was a bit chaotic and I spent the last few moments dodging pedestrians and previous finishers between the banner and me. I saw the finish line, spotted Mary Jane and pointed the bike towards her. I got a quick kiss and a volunteer excitedly ran over to inform me that I needed to cross the chip reader to record my final time. Oui oui and after a few feet of cobbles and gravel, the deed was done with an hour to spare. Viva PBP! 🚲

Finishing whilst listing, ready to take a little break from riding.

—PHOTO MARY SPELLMAN



PBP Story 2019

PBP. DNF. Those two terms sound odd next to each other, kinda like terms “pretty ugly” or “shotgun wedding.” Unfortunately, DNF describes my latest PBP result, and it’s humbling to have that staring me right in the kisser.

I know I’ll never be able to erase that blemish on my record. But I’ve decided to turn that lemon into lemonade or lemon cake. I’ve taken a hard look at my missteps. I’ve reflected on the steps I can take in the future to avoid a repeat performance. And to ease my pain, I’ve worked up a gratitude list of the things that went right in France this year.

PBP: Randonneuring Milestone

Paris Brest Paris has been the cornerstone of my randonneuring history. In 2002, my first year of randonneuring, I learned that PBP was the crown jewel of our sport. The 2003 event served as my initiation into all 1200-kilometer events. I came, I saw, I fell in love.

I’ve since traveled around the world in pursuit of other 1200kms. But none has the magic draw or the mystic appeal of Paris Brest. PBP is where I learned to suffer through pain and agony on my way to the final control.

PBP is where I have drawn encouragement and strength from the “Bonne route!” of cheering spectators. PBP is where I have basked with friends in the sheer joy of a successful completion.

Next Stop: La Société Adrian Hands

Several of my PBP attempts have been with riding buddy John Capn Ende. He’s the guy who finished the rain-slogged event of 2007 even after a debilitating kidney stone sidelined him for several hours. In 2015, Capn Ende, several other friends and I struggled

through a nearly sleepless assault on the PBP course. We eventually posted a finish time just under the 90-hour cut-off. That earned us a precious spot in La Société Adrian Hands, a club founded by Capn to honor the memory of a North Carolina rider. The club’s motto is: “Every ride should be enjoyed to the fullest.” To earn membership, riders must complete PBP in a time equal to or greater than Hands’ 2003 finish time of 88:55.

Several of us planned to ride the 2019 event with a finish time that would qualify for the Society, and Capn was among the participants. Also on board: Spencer Klaassen, an enthusiastic and focused fixed gear rider from Missouri; Seattle randonneur Ricky Blacker, the group’s oldest—and potentially wisest—rider; and Mark Thomas, arguably the world’s greatest rando planner.

The control in Villaines-la-Juhel. (l-r): Mike Dayton, Ricky Blacker, John Ende.

—PHOTO MARK THOMAS



Riders at a creperie in Fougères.
(l-r): Graham Ross, John Ende, Spencer
Klaassen, Ricky Blacker, Mike Dayton.

—PHOTO MARK THOMAS

Before our small peloton could shift a single gear—presto!—“the Pope” (aka Mark) had taken care of all things large and small: our hotel accommodations, lodging for our sleep stops, our bag drops, and on and on. Mark had even arranged to have Ricky’s better half, Barbara, serve as our de facto sherpa. Barbara agreed to transport our drop bags to each sleep stop.

In short, all the pesky PBP details had been handled. Now all we had to do was ride our bikes. Piece of lemon cake!

My Randonneuring History

Now back to a little rando history: in 18 years of brevets, randonnees and permanents, I’d only had one DNF before this year’s PBP. As many folks already know, the other DNF was a doozy.

In February 2016, three other riders and I were 95 miles into a 200km when we were struck by a careless motorist. All of us suffered injuries. Most of those were physical—broken bones, deep road rashes and the like.



As pour moi, the physical toll was relatively minor—a few cracked ribs here and there. However, I also happened to have banged the gray muscle between the ears. The collision brought an abrupt end to my prized “century-a-month” streak, while the resulting injury sharply curtailed my riding. I went from 10,000km of events in 2015 to a paltry 449km in 2017.

Ready To Go In 2019

Flash forward to 2018, when I began riding the longer brevets again. True, I was riding slower. True, I was riding less often. But I was back in the rando saddle. Slowly, I turned my attention to 2019 PBP.

In preparation for that event, I made sure I had all my ducks in a row:

Qualifying rides. Hats off to Mark and Capn for dragging me out on a 600km in the riding season prior to the PBP. That allowed me to pre-register at an early date. I then completed the four mandatory brevets. In April, when I completed a 300km, I became a qualified entrant.

Training. I made doubly sure I was physically fit and ready to go by completing two separate training plans. One buddy recommended that I climb aboard my bike for seven days straight. That I did, putting in at least a 100km on each day. I capped that series off with a steep uphill ride to the top of Mt. Mitchell, the highest peak in the

eastern U.S. (elevation: 6,683 feet). Another training buddy recommended back-to-back 200kms. Mission accomplished on that front, too. By the end of those training sessions I’d wager I was in better physical shape for this 1200km than any of the other ones I’d completed.

Bike prep. I also made certain my Coho bike was shipshape. A local mechanic installed a new chain, new cables, a new headset, and even new handlebar tape. As a final touch, I installed a pair of fresh Continental 5000 tires.

Packing Bags. I spent a week rustling, and wrestling, through a cluster of bags. I sorted my drop bags with riding shorts and jerseys as well as gels, spare tubes, extra batteries and gloves. I carefully inserted a freshly printed Adrian Hands Society jersey in the bag for Day 4.

Ready, Set...

I now felt I was physically ready for PBP. Also ready were two of the other cyclists hit in 2016—Joel Lawrence and Chris Graham. Both had overcome their injuries and successfully completed PBP. Unfortunately, I still held on to lingering effects from my injury, and that, combined with physical exhaustion, did me in.

The start time for the “J” badges was at 6:15pm. That meant the 90-hour clock for our small group would run

In past PBPs, I'd always been able to keep the pedals spinning until my mood shifted. But not this time.

out at 2:25pm on Thursday. We hoped to finish no earlier than 11:20am on that day.

To reach the starting line, we edged our bikes past the cheering crowds of friends and families and through a throng of fellow cyclists. A few minutes after 6:15pm officials stamped our cards at a narrow chute and we were off! The official ride had finally begun.

We rolled out through the quiet roads around Rambouillet with our fellow riders. Our speed was brisk in the sharp evening light, but as darkness fell we transitioned into a relaxed pace. Our night riding was broken up by short stops in Mortagne, then Villaines-la-Juhel, both familiar stomping grounds from past PBPs. We went through food lines, chowed down and chatted at tables in the dining hall. We made sure to refill our water bottles.

At 306km we reached Fougères. That's where I encountered two RUSA friends, Bill Bryant and Lois Springsteen. I'd seen and ridden briefly with Lois on two previous PBPs. She was not riding this year but instead was there with Bill as a volunteer.

Our goal on Day 1 was to ride just under 500km at a measured pace. Our planned sleep stop was a few miles past the 445km Loudéac control. In the afternoon on Monday, our peloton began riding with more purpose. I watched with envy as my buddies sprinted ahead to catch and ride briefly with old friends. There was no sprinting for me; I was doing my best to hold a constant pace up and over the course's many hills.

Late in the afternoon, my legs and lungs started to feel the miles. On several uphill sections I slid off the back, and I became acutely aware that I was moving at a slower pace than my

riding mates. The back of our peloton became the ideal position to wrestle with my fears and insecurities. They were tucked neatly away in the back of my mind, ready to take over at a moment's notice. I recalled that I hadn't done a ride this long in... in four years, since the last PBP. I soon questioned whether I'd really done enough training. I questioned whether I had the perseverance to last three more days. I was dragging now; I could not climb even the smallest hill without a rest stop.

In past PBPs, I'd always been able to keep the pedals spinning until my mood shifted. But not this time. My doubts began to put cracks in my confidence. Those darker emotions, combined with my physical exertion and lack of sleep, finally got to me. I started to feel wobbly and unsteady on the bike. In one of my lucid moments I realized I was putting my safety at risk. I did not want to crash and harm myself. Nor did I want to cause harm or delay to any other rider.

Game over. It was time to stop.

My mind seized on Loudéac as the control where I would throw in the towel. That became my primary focus. I was aware that Capn Ende had begun to wait for me, coaxing me along. I was grateful for his encouragement, but mentally I was done. In Loudéac I hunted my buddies down and announced I was finished. Reluctantly, they accepted my decision.

When I finally called it a day, I immediately felt better. In fact, I was almost...giddy. Go figure. The weight of my mental struggles was instantly lifted from my shoulders. Ironically, I had a hard time announcing my intention to a PBP official. I explained in English that I was through and wanted to DNF. I could tell the official

and I had a language barrier; he was unclear about what I was telling him. Then, on a nearby table I spotted the word that cleared up all the confusion.

"Je suis abandonné," I said.

"Aaah," he replied. Now the official understood. He took my PBP booklet and wrote "abandon" over the Loudéac box, then recorded my name and number on a list with other riders who had also pulled the plug.

As it turned out, riding buddy Ricky abandoned shortly after Loudéac. A stomach condition brought a premature end to his ride. He became physically ill and could not continue. As for me? Psychologists and other trained professionals might disagree, but I'll chalk up my untimely finish to physical exhaustion and a temporary mental illness. Try as I might, I failed to overcome my physical and mental struggles. But the experience has been an invaluable life lesson. I've vowed to never again fall victim to the excuses my mind dreams up.

Thursday's Finish

On Thursday I cheered as I watched my buddies finish in a time worthy of La Société Adrian Hands. I secretly wished I'd been with them. Back at home, I've been playing the "what if" game. What if I'd continued on until my positive energy returned? What if I had taken a short nap in Loudéac? What if I had gone to Plan B and ridden on by myself and at my own pace?

I've tried to keep my focus on the positive aspects of my time in France. A PBP finish would have been icing on the lemon cake. But I take comfort in the belief that my latest attempt was a success even before I started. I had the good fortune to be riding my bike again. I had the good fortune to qualify for the ride I love. I had the good fortune to hang out with my RUSA friends before, during and after the event.

And I had the good fortune to have a loving wife with whom I could share a few extra days in Paris.

Life is good. Let's ride. 🚲

Attention Members

The RUSA newsletter is mailed via third class mail to the address on file of all current members. It is critical that you inform the membership office of any change of address, so that your newsletter will reach you in a timely fashion.

Update your address online at:

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The Women of Paris-Brest-Paris

BY MICHELE BROUGHER

I was originally asked to write an article providing a female perspective of PBP. In the end, it was impossible to distinguish my experience from the female perspective. PBP, for all its grandness, is not a feminist hotbed. Generally, only 6-8% of participants are female. While that number seems really low, it is fairly representative of the sport. In the immortal words of Kerin, a close randonneuse friend, many randonneurs are just not that smart. Maybe the average female is just too smart to consider riding a bicycle for hours and days at a time in inclement weather to be fun.

This was my third PBP; over it loomed the huge shadows of a severe brain injury sustained in my second PBP back in 2015 and a cracked pelvis from a dog attack this past May. I came back to PBP in 2019 because I love France and I love my bike. When you do things you love, nothing else really matters. I wanted to finish, nothing else.

However, 2015 left me with some lasting impacts, notably prosopagnosia—the inability to recognize faces. I can only barely recognize myself in mirror. Recognizing old friends on the road was not in the cards.

At the start, I looked out across a sea of lycra and wheels. I spent quite a few minutes watching riders line up single file to get cards signed. Perhaps every tenth rider was female? After what seemed like a year, I finally got started.

I rode alone for an hour or so before stopping for water at a family of spectators. At the same time, another woman pulled up. Her name was Sara and we exchanged pleasantries for a bit and then rode together for several hours. “I’m having much more fun now,” she said at one point. “I was alone in my head for a bit long.” There is a certain camaraderie that comes from riding with another randonneuse. Those few hours were really nice ones, perhaps some of my favorite on the ride. I lost her on a climb in some tiny town after a bad shift dropped my chain and then I rode alone for

the next fifteen hours or so. The big pacelines would pass me with inches to spare, which was scary in a way I didn’t expect. I would occasionally wonder if anyone I knew was on the road.

At Tinteniac, I finally stopped for a meal with about 4½ hours in the bank. As I entered the cafeteria, a woman waved at me. It turned out to be Sara, who was with a mutual male friend. “You look like crap,” was his response to seeing me. Perhaps my own fatigue prevented me from picking up on a bad joke, but the words stung and there



Exhausted people at nighttime controls—endlessly staring.

—PHOTO MICHELE BROUGHER

was a very uncomfortable moment. He and Sara departed together about five minutes later, clearly paired up for the long haul. I left alone.

I had also been in my own head for too long, and that phrase just swirled around as I pedaled towards Loudeac, bringing a lot of fear and defeat with it. After a long climb in heavy traffic and a number of close calls with tired riders and pacelines, I got to the top and it was too much. Visions of the accident in 2015 kept flashing before my eyes. I got off the bike, sat on the steps of a church and cried for what seemed like hours but was really only minutes.

At some point, a bike pulled up next to me. It was another woman, Kelley, from my club, Great Lakes Randonneurs. She sat on the steps with me for a few minutes and offered to ride with me for a while and keep the pacelines away. Over the next ten miles to Quedilliac, just being with a fellow randonneuse washed away all the

I would never have finished riding for myself. Instead I thought of all the volunteers and people who had helped me along the way and did it for them.

fears of 2015 and in many ways cleared a huge load that I had been invisibly carrying. I can honestly say that I would not have continued if it hadn't been for her. We never know sometimes what a huge impact our words and actions can have on others, the negative or positive, so we should be mindful of what we say.

After Quedilliac, the next 600km were spent with my friend Paul, with whom I finished PBP in 2011. I appreciated the male company in

many ways—especially in the night at controls. With fatigue setting in, a crowded control can be slightly odd for a single female.

On the return, I arrived in Villaines and sat down briefly for coffee. Across from me was a French-speaking woman with her own cup of coffee. My face was crusted with salt. I dipped my napkin in my coffee and washed my face with it. She burst out laughing; it might have been one of the most uplifting moments of the entire ride.





Me at the finish—fortunately you can't see the left side. It's all I can do to attempt to smile at this point—I have fractures in both my left hip and femur sustained 200k earlier.

—PHOTO BY A VOLUNTEER

After Villaines, major disaster struck. On the rise out of one of the big rollers, that pesky chain, which had dropped a few times earlier, sucked into the spokes of my rear wheel. After the best crash-landing I could muster, I wound up lying on the road where four French riders ran over me seconds later. They cursed until they saw who I was: “Une femme! Alors!” Anger became assistance; they stopped and vainly tried to fix the bike, but eventually settled me in the ditch and left with many apologies. I dug into my bag for an emergency pain

killer and tried for the next hour to get the chain out of my spokes. Eventually my friend Keith, a fellow GLR member, spotted me and helped fix the chain so I was able to get rolling again.

At Mortagne, the mechanics took the bike and I went to the medics. They offered me some salve for the swelling. Next to me was a woman who said she was going to sleep for a while—it turned out she was the very same one I'd seen in Villaines. “Watching you wash your face with coffee has kept me up for many miles,” she said.

Michele Brouger at Brest.

—PHOTO PAUL BACHO



I left Mortagne trying to stay awake. I finally realized that I needed to 1) take my last pain killer and 2) not be riding my bike while giving it a chance to take effect. I pulled over and slept sitting up for about thirty minutes, waking up to a cold sun. The pain had abated but I had leaned my bike next to a thorn bush and the front tire was now flat. My left hand was numb and torn up, so I was unable to change it.

At this point, another randonneuse intervened. I never got her name, but she was young and British. She got off her bike and offered to fix the tire. The rim was so tight she couldn't get the tire on. "We need a man here!" She picked up the wheel, turned around on the side of the road, lifted it into the air and at least a dozen guys stopped dead in their tracks to help out. The tire was fixed and on the bike in about one minute. I thanked her profusely.

I got to Dreux looking absolutely horrible, probably due to the pain.

The female volunteers and controllers made sure I was okay and encouraged me to finish regardless of time. My painkillers were gone, and I had twenty-eight miles left.

Those miles were the longest, loneliest, and most painful I will ever experience. I would never have finished riding for myself. Instead I thought of all the volunteers and people who had helped me along the way and did it for them. I got to Rambouillet unable to lift my leg over the top tube to dismount the bike. The medics were fairly sure my leg was broken which eventually turned out to be accurate. I went to the hospital directly from the finish control courtesy of Monika, a GLR member and volunteer who had a car. I got some great crutches and a lot of new painkillers.

The epilogue to this adventure came a few days later in an email to my address as RBA of Great Lakes Randonneurs.

Hello Michele,

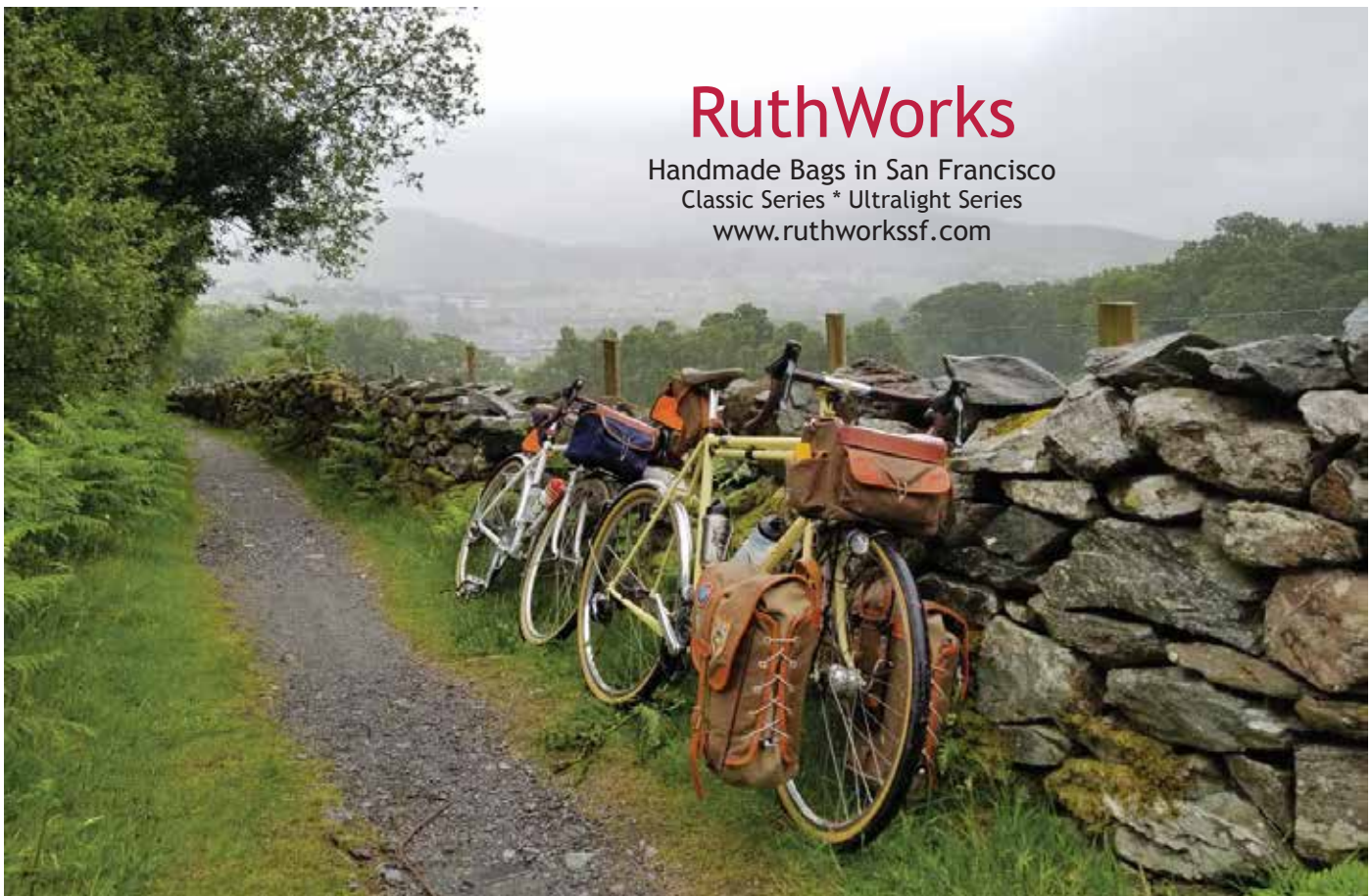
We met briefly at the Control in Villaines, and we saw each other again in Mortagne at the infirmary. I saw you later at the finish line, not looking very well... I hope, you could come back home healthy.

I feel sorry, because I wasn't able to help you in Mortagne. After living LEAVING? the infirmary (I had pain in a leg), I slept a little and drove straight to Dreux and Rambouillet, forgetting to look after you and your bike... Did the mechanist make a good job?

I am looking forward to see you again on the road, maybe in the USA.

*Bises d'Allemagne,
Anne-Laure*

I never gave her my full name; she must have figured it out from the conversation or my clothing. I can't recall her face, but we randonneuses stick together, especially at PBP. 🚲



PBP—It’s a Family Affair

I don’t remember exactly what my thoughts were at the finish of PBP 2015 but I am reasonably sure they were not, “I cannot wait to come back in four years and repeat this epic foray into pain and sleep deprivation.” That year, my brother Pete was at the finish line along with his wife Jenny and my wife Eileen. He exhibited the excitement of a well-rested, pain-free, and overly enthusiastic fan when he declared his intention to return in 2019 and support me by driving a camper van and acting as my soigneur.

I believed his passion would fade over the ensuing four years, but I was proven wrong when he started asking questions about support logistics in 2018. And so in 2019, my friends George S, Nigel G and I would have our own tour manager shepherding us through France.

Pete, his son Brad, and the camper van, hereafter referred to as the Mother Ship, arrived Friday night. We decided Pete would drive us to our bike inspection the following day after which we would head to the Carrefour to procure food for the ride. The three of us passed bike inspection, received our packets, and finally located the vehicle registration building where we were handed two ID stickers for the van and absolutely nothing else: no directions, no helpful parking hints, no rules, nothing. Pete would have to figure this out on his own.

Sunday dawned grey and cold with a pounding rain. The weather promised to improve and there was nothing to be done so we set about packing and re-packing. We all had departure times around 6:00 p.m. but we wanted to arrive early to park close to the start. Once we had our bikes readied, George and Nigel headed to the official PBP lunch and Pete and I wandered into town where we enjoyed an unofficial lunch. We reconvened at the Mother Ship and then rode over to the start; George would leave first followed fifteen minutes later by Nigel, and then me when I clipped in at 6:15. The plan was for Nigel to slow pedal while I would fast pedal and we would meet up on the road, catching George at Mortagne where Pete would have a hot dinner waiting.

I caught Nigel pretty quickly and we settled into a sustainable pace as we contended with a considerable head wind. The villages were lined with locals loudly offering encouragement and in many cases water and snacks. We stopped several times to fill our bottles but otherwise kept a steady pace to Mortagne where George had apparently been scarfing down all available cookies while he patiently waited for dinner to be served. Mortagne was loud, neon-bright and chaotic, with riders walking and pushing bikes and volunteers gamely trying to direct the unruly

The team is all smiles at the start of PBP 2019.

—PHOTO BY PETE NEWMAN



traffic; it was a shock to the system after riding in the dark and quiet of the French countryside. We wove through the crowd and out of the control to a small parking lot where Pete had parked. It was around 11:30 p.m. when we arrived and Pete had dinner waiting for us as well as two sandwiches each that would sustain us until our next control in Villaines. There was no line, no waiting, great food, a clean bathroom and a chance to swap gear. I gave Pete a giant hug, "This is so great, I love you!" (I'm all for the full PBP experience of the crowded controls but having done that a few times, I planned on enjoying the luxury of personal support.) Nigel later told me that he was understandably unsure of what to expect from Pete, who was not a cyclist and had no experience with randonneuring, but once he saw how thoroughly Pete handled that first control, he was all in, unloading anything from his bike he

wouldn't need, trusting Pete to meet us according to plan.

We arrived in Fougères a little behind schedule but determined to enjoy the hour of rest we had allotted ourselves. We ate a lunch of fried rice and lardons while Pete filled our water bottles and packed our sandwiches. I took a shower and George and Nigel readied their bikes for the ninety miles to Loudéac where we scheduled a two-hour break. The climbing on the route to Tinténiac, the next control, was relatively gentle but the constant headwind made it a slog. And then I flatted in a small village in front of a small house. As we removed the tire and unpacked tools, the homeowner came out to chat and offered us coffee. As she returned with the three mugs a local gentleman pulled over, got out of his car carrying a tube and a floor pump, both of which he generously offered. As we fixed the flat, we learned

he had completed several PBPs and he was now driving along the route helping riders in need. The generosity and hospitality of the French people is one of the aspects of PBP I treasure most. These two folks made a usually aggravating task quite pleasant and I was most grateful.

.....

We left Loudéac in the dark, discussing how our spouses were quite relieved that we were riding together when George and Nigel disappeared down a hill as my front tire flatted. Damn. Well at least it was the front tire. I was in the middle of nowhere with no coffee or good Samaritans in sight and as I fixed the flat I wondered how long it would take my friends to notice I was missing. My phone rang as I packed up my tools with Nigel wondering what had happened. We regrouped at the base of the climb and arrived in Carhaix at 4:00am, and after a short break we got back on the bikes and headed to Brest in a blinding fog.

We quickly got separated with George suffering from stomach issues and needing to slow down. Nigel and I arrived at the iconic bridge together and snapped the requisite photo before tackling the final city miles to the control. George arrived a few minutes later and we decided to split up while they ate and I started back. We planned to meet in Sizun, a lively town near the top of the climb where we could eat and rest a bit. That plan fell apart but I found another friend Patrick C and we rode together most of the way back to Carhaix. Once I located Pete, I had dinner and a shower and studied our schedule. I realized that I had gotten to the control just before closing and Nigel and George would arrive after closing time. I was too exhausted to freak out but I could not determine how we could finish the ride and sleep enough to remain awake while doing so. I was concerned that our ride was over—or at least the chance for an official finish. When the others arrived,



Registration was soggy.
—PHOTO PETE NEWMAN

I explained our situation and the four of us dejectedly agreed our situation seemed dire, but we decided to continue because none of us could quite believe we were in this predicament.

We attempted sleep and reluctantly returned to our bikes where we discussed the randonneur math we had all been silently engaged in instead of sleeping. Nigel's plan made the most sense and most importantly included hours of rest. We blew through the secret control at Saint-Nicolas-du-Pélem, stopping only to get our cards stamped. It was now late and we were revisiting the endless hills enroute to Loudéac. We had trouble staying together since I would bomb down the hills, heedless of the danger the dark posed while George and Nigel took a more reasonable approach. Eventually I came to a small village where Nigel joined me but George did not. We waited but eventually decided to press on to Loudéac where we would sleep for four—four!—hours.

By the time we arrived, George had texted his plans to abandon due



to extreme sleep deprivation. At that point, we had ridden almost five hundred miles and had managed about two hours of sleep. Wednesday morning was a few hours away and the last good night's sleep any of us had had was Saturday. George was napping on his bike and then riding and repeating that over and over. He arrived safely as Nigel and I slept, and he slept as Nigel and I pedaled out for a 300km day that would take us to Mortagne, where we planned to sleep again before the final push to Rambouillet.

The four hours of sleep was a game changer; my legs felt fine and Nigel powered up every hill as though these were the first miles of the ride. The headwinds were over, the weather was perfect and we were riding through France! We found the famous crêpe stand and enjoyed several crêpes and coffee and handed out pins and took photos with Patrick when he arrived on the scene. We had the usual hero's welcome in Villaines where we shared banana Nutella crêpes with Patrick and found a rested and smiling George. Nigel, Patrick and I started out together but became separated when Nigel had a chain issue. I was savoring the downhill and the hot air balloon and the fields of sunflowers just as the sun was setting. We regrouped and then lost touch with Nigel as he sped up a hill and I stopped to take off a layer while Patrick fought off sleep. We came together again just as the long climb to Mortagne began. Pete loudly greeted our arrival, took a video and then a photo of a very depleted looking pair of randonneurs in front of the PBP banner.

We arrived at Dreux at 8:15am and ate breakfast with Jim V from New



PBP 2019 featured a new starting location.
—PHOTO PETE NEWMAN

Jersey, a very speedy rider attempting his first PBP. His ride had not gone completely as planned and he was delaying his departure in order to arrive in an Adrian Hands' time of at least 88:55. We were dawdling at the control for the same reason and after an hour we left Dreux in perfect weather for the mercifully flat final twenty-seven miles. We ambled along taking photos and practicing the triumphant finish Nigel envisioned. The cobblestones at the edge of town and the uphill penultimate mile through the parking lot slowed us a bit but didn't diminish our excitement at having arrived at the end of our remarkable adventure. A few hundred feet from the finish Nigel and I, hands joined and raised triumphantly in the air, crossed the finish line of PBP 2019 while Pete, Brad and George cheered like madmen. We got our cards stamped for the final time, collected our medals, and posed for congratulatory photos.

We called home and shared the news of our success with our families who had supported us during this ride and all the rides leading to it. We climbed into the Mother Ship for a post ride beer and mini-celebration. We took silly pictures of Nigel who immediately fell asleep on the table as soon as the van started moving. The next day Pete returned the van and he and Brad and I toured Paris until early evening when Nigel met us for dinner. We told stories of the ride and the van and our plucky comic relief, as Brad had become known. We assured Pete if he started now he could qualify for PBP 2023 and explained how he would need to buy a bike first but we would drive a support van for him and George, who was already talking of returning. We ate and drank and laughed and realized how lucky we were to have such supportive friends and family, to have accomplished our goals, and to be sitting outside on a warm summer night in a Paris café planning our next adventure. 🚲

American Randonneur

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

We welcome submissions of interest to readers of *American Randonneur*. Articles with photos or other visual elements are particularly welcome. While the focus of AR is on randonneuring events held in the U.S., articles on international events are also published.

Types of articles include but aren't limited to the following:

- Ride reports
- Ride promotional articles
- Technical articles
- Gear articles
- Training, health, nutrition articles
- Humorous articles
- Collage articles incorporating tweets, facebook quotes and/or short quotes from blog posts
- Reprints of blog posts (occasionally. Material not printed elsewhere is preferred, however, exceptions may be made.)
- Reports on non-rando long-distance/endurance events of interest to randos
- Letters to the editor
- Book reviews
- Cartoons
- Sketches

Length of articles: articles of up to 2000 words would be appropriate. There is no minimum length requirement, but please contact the editor if you wish to write more than 2000 words.

Photos: must be high resolution and unaltered. They can be submitted as attachments to email messages. Other options are available and can be discussed with the editor.

How to submit articles: articles should be sent as Word files (no PDFs, no links to blog posts) to editor@rusa.org or jchernekoff@yahoo.com. Send photos separately; do not include them in articles.

The editor reserves the right to edit submissions for clarity, accuracy and brevity.

Paid advertising: is available. Please contact Jim Poppy (jpopy55@icloud.com) for details.

Submission deadlines:

Spring issue — December 15 Fall issue — June 15
 Summer issue — March 15 Winter issue — September 15

Questions? Please contact the editor at editor@rusa.org.



PBP Bénévoles

BY BILL BRYANT, RUSA #7

Last spring Lois and I were disappointed that we couldn't qualify to ride Paris-Brest-Paris. Disappointed is probably an understatement, and we moped around during late May. We had our non-refundable airline tickets, so what to do? Normally we would have gone for a ten-day cycle-tour instead of riding PBP, but injuries were making that idea a no-go. Instead, we wrote to our friend Daniel Lemoine in France. Like Lois, Daniel is a seven-time PBP *ancien*, but lately he has been volunteering to help the Audax Club Parisien to set up the PBP start/finish facilities. We asked Daniel if he knew of any controls that might need two more volunteers. He emailed all the control captains with our query and word quickly came back from Fougères: "We need English-speakers here."

We were soon in touch with the Fougères chief, Daniel Manceau. He asked us if we could help on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, and if so, that would be greatly appreciated. We signed up for daily shifts from 6:00am to 6:00pm. Daniel (Lemoine) took good care of us by arranging our lodgings in Fougères, only a ten-minute walk from the control. We soon had a rental car lined up and were all set.

We flew to Paris without our bikes, the first time in ten trips. Soon ensconced in St. Quentin-en-Yvelines and surrounded by the familiar pre-PBP hubbub, we spent three days doing touristy daytrips instead of putting bikes together and doing shakedown rides. We also texted our friend Daniel (Lemoine) and asked if he needed a

hand on Friday afternoon before the rider check-in began on Saturday. "Yes," he replied, "please come."

It was interesting to visit the new PBP start/finish in Rambouillet, and we could see ACP had things well in hand. We helped move and arrange a few things as the ACP team put the final touches on the control. Daniel also gave us a tour and explained how things would operate during the next few days and nights. The ACP team had been working hard for five days, stopping only briefly for some sleep each night. Happily, the *Bergerie Nationale* had a dormitory and the volunteers didn't have to travel back and forth from home in the awful Parisian traffic, as happened in the past when using St. Quentin-en-Yvelines.

Eventually we asked if there was anything else we could help with before departing. As it turned out, Daniel said, there was one area of concern: would we be able to help with bike inspection tomorrow? There weren't enough volunteers for that task and, with over 6,000 riders expected the next day, he was worried. We were happy to help our ACP friends, but there was a minor hitch in the idea: we had planned to drive west to our lodgings in Normandy in the afternoon. "No problem with that," Daniel replied with a smile and a wink. "I will call the owner of the B&B to say you will have a late arrival." We all laughed since we were staying with Daniel's daughter Valerie, herself a PBP *ancienne*. "I am sure she will understand that you are late from helping to make PBP a success."

Our shift at bike inspection lasted from 8:00am to 5:00pm. It was interesting to see so many participants and the different ways they chose to equip themselves for the test that lay ahead. Lois and I were assigned to one of the eight chutes riders were funneled through on their way to retrieve their documents. We also had a local *bénévole* named André to work with, yet another PBP *ancien* volunteering to help the ACP. Our job at bike inspection was to, one, look for adequate lighting, and two, try to spot anything that might rattle off their bike or be unsafe. The vast majority of entrants came ready to ride with good lights, back-up lights, reflective gear, and reliable-looking bikes. A few of them, however, did not pass muster, usually from sub-par lighting. André said they must have eyes like cats if they used just such

feeble lights to get through their 400km and 600km brevets...but they technically passed. A few did not. One randonneuse came with just a dim little LED light swinging from her rear rack and pointed downward, held loosely by a skinny zip-tie instead of being mounted securely. Other riders tried to come through with dead batteries in their headlamps and seemed rather miffed that we sent them back to find fresh ones. The worst was a rider (from the US!) who came to bike inspection with no headlights at all! They were, he protested, back in his hotel being recharged—I nearly fainted. Happily, gaffes like this were small in number and most of the day went by fairly smoothly. By mid-afternoon we were reassigned outside in the line for

recumbents and other machines too large to fit through the chutes inside. That was a little more difficult as it rained the entire time, and the ACP was not well organized for the outdoor check-in. After that we still had a four-hour drive west in the evening. Sunday was spent touring the Calvados region and before we knew it, we departed during the wee hours of Monday to get to Fougeres by 6:00am.

Our three days working at the control were interesting. Monday was a busy day with determined outbound riders, but with 300 kilometers completed, many of them were apprehensive about the persistent headwinds slowing their progress. Tuesday was a more relaxed day, mainly with speedy 80-hour group

riders headed east, back to Rambouillet and their finisher's medal. They tended not to stop long, nor did they need much from us. Wednesday was when the vast bulk of the 90- and 84-hour riders came through, now with over 900 hilly kilometers in their weary legs and not a lot of sleep along the way. Worse, it seemed the winds had switched and now the randonneurs were having periods of headwinds on the return trip. Ugh.

Upon arrival Monday morning, Daniel (Manceau) asked us to roam around and try to help English-speaking riders. He had similar volunteers with skills in Russian, Spanish, and other languages, and French, of course. With only focused 80-hour riders at the control at that point, there weren't many questions to be answered except where to find water, the WC, and was there a bike mechanic here at the control? After an hour or two Daniel found us and stationed us by the electronic timing chute to be sure riders did not go back through it the wrong way after getting controlled.

By mid-morning we started seeing the first groups of 90-hour riders and soon the bike racks were stuffed with hundreds of bikes. With many riders speaking at least a bit of English as a secondary language, Lois and I stayed busy from midday onward. By late afternoon the fastest 84-hour riders began showing up. We hopped about, answering questions about where the control was (right inside that door under the large "Control" sign), where the WC was (yes, just follow those signs), water (follow those big arrows), a bike mechanic (inside by the far wall, follow me). And we also kept



This page and next—Bill and Lois assisting with bike inspections.

—PHOTO MEGAN ARNOLD

a few riders from going back down the “up” chute. We saw many of our rando-friends as well; that was a lot of fun and helped the day go by. We did notice, with some apprehension, how some randonneurs were not moving with much urgency on their trip west. Lois and I are not fast riders and we don’t have any time to squander at controls during a brevet. Their behavior looked odd to us. Looking at the letter of their starting wave, we could tell who had plenty of time in hand, who was doing OK but didn’t have a lot of time, and we saw those who were uncomfortably close to their wave’s closing time so soon into the ride. A few riders were ill, some others were injured (mainly tendonitis), many were sleepy from pulling an all-nighter since departing Rambouillet, and a few, frankly, just seemed to be unenthused. We saw a surprising number of riders standing around the parking lot, using their smart-phones and social media when they should have been riding their bicycles westward. I remarked to Lois that this year’s PBP might have an unusually large DNF rate.

As mentioned, Tuesday was not too hectic from our point of view. Riders had been here on the outbound journey and there were fewer questions to answer. A few of them needed help and that kept us occupied. Happily, we had visitors, too—my former head of school had retired to France and he and his wife drove from the Brittany coast near Vannes for a visit. We had a pleasant dinner together Tuesday evening and before we knew it, Lois and I were getting up early for the “big push” at the control on Wednesday.

Daniel had warned everyone that the last day would be the hardest day and he was correct. Now on the inbound leg, the randonneurs still had a long way to the finish. There were



copious amounts of sleep-deprivation in evidence and riders often needed help with seemingly simple tasks. We also assisted some riders to the medical room. Most of the injured riders were given treatment and sent on their way, but four times I saw the doctor confiscate the machine of someone deemed unfit to continue. We also calmed a few anxious riders who couldn’t find their bike in the parking area. One weary fellow was standing about four feet from his bike as he told me what it looked like and would I help him search for it? I saw the rider number on his helmet matched that of the bicycle nearby and he was quite astonished, then relieved, when I pointed it out. Other exhausted riders simply fell asleep among the bike racks, on the asphalt or on the nearby grass lawn.

Eventually things came to an end about 5:20pm Wednesday, when the control officially closed for the final wave of riders. Thousands had passed through during the day, and in the late afternoon it seemed like quite a few of them (from all waves) were still with us, moving rather slowly. Noting their starting group, some of them were hopelessly outside time, others just by a little bit. They still had a hard ride east to Villaines-la-Juhel. Would they make it in time? Even though they were increasingly late,

more riders kept showing up and we kept processing them. Daniel said we would wait another two hours and would close at 7:30 in the evening. The flow of riders eventually slowed and by the end there was just a trickle. We eventually got the signal that there would only be a few more minutes. When a rider would struggle up the hill toward us, Lois and I would urge them through the timing chute before it was disconnected, and then hustle them inside for their stamp. Around 7:15pm we heard a big commotion and looked into the control room—every volunteer was lined up from the door to the controller’s table, enthusiastically clapping and cheering for each rider. It was very touching, and indicative of how the control workers wanted everyone to finish.

Eventually, some three hours late at a minimum, the last riders were sent on their way and the control gate was locked. We enjoyed a lively banquet at the control cafeteria with our fellow *bénévoles*. It was a swell way to end our time at the Fougeres control. There were over two hundred volunteers for Fougeres and we were proud to have been a part of their team. The next day, as we drove back to St. Quentin-en-Yvelines, Lois and I were a little sad about not having been PBP riders ourselves, but volunteering had been the next best thing. 🚲

The Mac & Cheese is done, on to the Iron Porcupine 1200km in 2020!

BY MICHELE BROUGHER

Last year was the debut of the very epic Great Lakes Mac & Cheese 1200km. Nearly as soon as the ride was finished, people started asking when it would be offered again. While it was fun and unique, many probably don't realize it was only *half* of the original route. Great Lakes Randonneurs is now running the Great Lakes Iron Porcupine 1200km in 2020 so that randonneurs can continue exploring the Great North Woods.

The Upper Peninsula of Michigan is a unique place. While the eastern half is largely flat, the western half is much hillier and is also home to great history. During the 19th century, the extreme northern peninsula was a bustling mecca of copper mining, immigration and culture. More people lived in Calumet, Michigan, than in Detroit. When the mines ran dry everything halted, frozen in time with the many towns slipping into "ghost" status. You still see them today. Just west lie the "Porkies," the spectacular Porcupine Mountains, as well as some of the grandest views of Lake Superior to be found.

These are just a few of the sites along the route. Much like the Gold Rush Randonnée, this ride is hilly with 25,000 feet of elevation packed into the middle 800km. This is not a route for the faint of heart with many steep climbs and very long stretches without services. Like the miners of old, you will earn your copper at the end.

Haven Falls on Lake Superior, Day #2.

Old mining equipment right on the route, Hancock, Michigan.

—PHOTOS MICHELE BROUGHER



The dates are August 13-16, 2020, with start and finish in Green Bay, Wisconsin. The fee covers shared hotel rooms, breakfast and dinner, lunch on two days, ride support, medals, and all the hospitality that the Mac & Cheese was famous for. Check out the website at ironporcupine1200k.org.

Registration opens Jan. 31, 2020, 6pm Central Time. Rider limit will be 50, and we anticipate it will fill quickly. 🚲



Memories of PBP 2019

Loudéac, outbound. On the table was a plastic yellow tray with a bowl of potage and a few scattered baguette slices. Teardrops were falling onto baguette crust flakes. In other words, it was a typical moment in Loudéac.

I was in tears and my riding buddy of fifteen years was smiling from ear to ear. In our time sharing so many roads, this was my first time seeing Superman Mike Dayton abandon. I was devastated. He was relieved. Even if this was his first abandonment, he handled it with grace and aplomb. He could teach a master course in abandoné. He made the right decision and now basked in contentment. This is the quiet lesson that I learned from this brief moment in the chaotic Loudéac cafeteria: make the correct decision and be happy about it.

This PBP was Mike's first attempt at a Grand Randonnée since a serious

crash involving a car taking out four randonneurs in 2016. He considers his participation at PBP a huge success and so does everyone that knows him. We could all learn from Mike's example. Everyone that participated in PBP 2019 should consider themselves a huge success. We sorted some details regarding Mike's Loudéac extraction. Barbara Blacker who was staying in a nearby hotel would meet Mike at McDonalds. Little did she know that she would be hauling away two riders and two bikes in a Citroen Aircross C3! Barb's husband Rick would also join team abandonnée as his stomach had gone on strike and decided to reject any added content.

Just like that, our team of five had been reduced to three and the remaining riders were no longer together. I had made a commitment to show Spencer Klaassen how I ride PBP slowly, but first I would have to catch him somewhere along the road to St Nicholas du Pélem as he had left Loudéac before me in hopes of a quick ditch nap. If RUSA ever decides to require CRE hours (continuing randonneuring education)

Lois Springsteen and Bill Bryant take a moment from volunteer duties at the Fougères control to pause with Mike Dayton.

—PHOTO JOHN ENDE

Spencer could offer a seminar in the art of the ditch nap. A few tips that I picked up: set the timer on your phone for 10-15 minutes (no chance to make the am/pm error), take a Vivarin as you lay down so it starts to take effect as you awake and if it's cold, nap at the bottom of a hill so that you warm up quickly on the restart. Pay attention to experienced randos to improve your skills. Also, ask Spencer to tell you the story of a ditch nap interrupted by the police who thought they had discovered a body rolled in a tarp under the bushes. More precisely, they thought they had discovered a dead body; much to their surprise, this one was very much alive and when Spencer yelled out a primal scream upon being hoisted, all present nearly died of shock!

At midnight, we would regroup in St Nicholas du Pélem. Mark Thomas,





Spencer and I would start the cold predawn trip towards Brest anticipating the sun on our backs. Still in the dark, Mark was sleepy but easily woke himself up by riding into a hedge. If there is any doubt as to why life exists on our planet, we are reminded each PBP as we await the rotation of earth into the life-giving rays from our closest star. The previous night of no sleep because

of the 90-hour start from Rambouillet, plus only three hours of sleep in St Nicolas du Pelem, added up to a recipe for “rando sleep riding.” Spencer and I decided to forego the dream riding and stopped for a ditch nap on our way up the Roc’h Trevezel. I’m always amazed what two minutes of sleep can do for the weary randonneur.

I love Sizon. Sizon is worthy of

My apprentice, Spencer Klaassen, Audax Kansas City aced the boulangerie lesson in Sizon.

—PHOTO JOHN ENDE

stops both outbound and on return. There is an amazing bakery tucked off the square near the ruins. In 2015, I had the Kouign-Amann; this time they were all out so I had the Breton Cake instead with salted caramel in the middle layer. Oh my! It would cost me fifteen minutes of sleep later on in the ride but the cake was worth every bite. On the return, we hit the crêperie just across the street from the ruins. There are worse things than eating a thin pancake covered with melted cheese and ham while sipping cider as a continuous stream of joyous riders pass by.

Of course, we stopped for photos on the Albert-Loupe Bridge over the Elorn River. We posed amongst the hordes of excited randonneurs with the iconic Pont de l’Iroise in the background. Although Brest is only halfway,

Midnight oasis between Loudeac and Tinteniac—2nd night.

—PHOTO JOHN ENDE



Mark Thomas, Seattle Randonneurs
heading for Dreux on the final morning.

— PHOTO JOHN ENDE



The children that help carry the trays at the Villaines cafeteria seek out the riders who seem to be most in need of assistance. I'm always identified as needing assistance.

— PHOTO JOHN ENDE

it somehow feels more than that. At the controle outside the restaurant I noticed a bicycle that required inspection. The name plate read Alain Collongues! I spoke with Alain briefly and wished him well. He was so kind and engaging. I later learned that he successfully completed his 12th PBP. Let that sink in for a bit, twelve successful Paris Brest Paris finishes. It would have been thirteen but he missed one due to his honeymoon. Jean-Claude Chabirand and Dominique Lamouller also recorded their 12th PBPs which stands as the current record for number of finishes. There were four RUSA members in France with the highest totals of finishes by Americans. Lois Springsteen of Santa Cruz did not add to her total of seven this year as she was volunteering at the Fougères control with husband Bill Bryant. Doug Kirby, Paul Bacho and Thomas Gee all rolled over the starting line with eight PBPs to their credit; unfortunately none of the three would attain their 9th. Ken Billingsley was able to finish and now stands tied with the above three with eight PBP finishes.

Have you ridden with Mark Thomas at a Grand Randonnée? At PBP 2019 someone coined a new title for Mark: the “pope of randonneuring” although US ambassador to the United Nations seems more appropriate. Mark knows

every fifth rider, and their place of origin on the globe matters not as he has ridden everywhere. After going fast in 2015 Mark decided to slow down and savor the crêpes complet with some friends. He also managed an entry into la Société Adrian Hands. Until this current edition of PBP there were no dual citizens in la Société Adrian Hands (>88:55) and Charly Miller (<56:40). Now there are four: Mark Thomas, Ian Hands, Tim Bol and Thai Nguyen.

The unofficial 27% DNF rate of PBP 2019 approaches the 30.1% of the very wet 2007 edition and gives one insight into how difficult the headwinds were, particularly on the way toward Brest. The predawn chill also surprised some riders although anciens are well aware of and well prepared for cool mornings in Bretagne. Many riders saw temperatures in the upper 30s!

Plans are nice but simply function as a point of reference. We had a hotel booked just past Mortagne-au-Perche inbound but couldn't make it due to fatigue. Spencer and I laid down in the vacuous Mortagne sleeping area with a 3:30am wakeup planned. At 3:00 my neighbor's iPhone alarm sounded, and I awoke while he hit snooze and went back to sleep. Now I was facing an ethical dilemma. Should I wake

up a soundly sleeping Spencer or just slide out into the night solo? I recalled my promise to show Spencer how I PBP'd and I couldn't really do that if he remained sleeping, so I woke him and we rolled out. We made it down from Mortagne in the dark cool air and were gathering a gruppetto by the time we rolled into Dreux. This is where we added Ian Hands to our group. Talk about next level insanity. Ian had successfully Charly Miller'd on a fixed gear, without support, then slept, took a train to Bretoncelles, ridden back up to Mortagne with Shermer's neck and a golf ball sized blister on his left hand just so he could ride in with us! We rode in together recounting stories of our hero, Mike Dayton, and shed a few final tears. We were joyous as we crossed the finish line and proceeded to the ceremony of collecting our final stamps.

In my five PBPs this is the first time that I've heard negative chatter on the interwebs about the event. I will never feel that it is my place to criticize PBP. The fact that the organizers can actually pull it off is beyond mind boggling. It could not be accomplished anywhere else on the planet. There is only one PBP and despite some questionable actions by participants it remains the pinnacle of our sport. Paris Brest Paris is not defined by the riders or their actions, it is the people along the course and behind the scenes.



Paris Brest Paris is the 8-year-old girl that carries your tray in Villaines-La-Juhel after telling you, "je suis forte" ("I am strong"). Paris Brest Paris is the control worker who patiently helps the weary rider with an infinite number of problems relating to man, woman, or machine. Paris Brest Paris is the roadside stand at 2:00am with coffee and cakes staffed by a family with a small fire to warm shivering riders. Paris Brest Paris is Paul Rogue's crepe stand in Tanniere open throughout the event and providing crepes avec sucre and coffee in exchange for a post card from home. Paris Brest Paris is the now

retired ancien who stamps cards at the final control. He peers deeply into your eyes as he shakes your hand offering the most sincere of congratulations. His eyes and handshake speak the unspoken, he knows what you have accomplished and that you should be proud of that achievement. I am, and so should be all participants. Bravo PBP, you did it again. You beat us up, you knocked us down, you picked us up and dusted us off, fed our bellies and souls, and stole our hearts. See you in 2023.

Below is an account from Mark Thomas describing one act of kindness that helps define PBP. 🚲

Paris-Brest-Paris is, in many ways, defined by the many kindnesses, large and small, shown to riders by volunteers, by other riders, and above all, by the people of the regions through which it passes. Over my six PBPs, the stories of generosity are among my favorite memories.

Before the event this year, I friended a man on Facebook who lives in Tinténiac (about halfway from Paris to Brest), whom I knew only as a guy who had taken nice pictures of PBP riders past. I sent him a note suggesting that it would be fun if we could meet in person and say hello at the contrôle.

He countered that we should instead stop by his place for a coffee or whatever else we might need. That sounded lovely and we agreed.

After tracking us inbound, he met our little group of riders at the control, where he was readily identifiable by the professional-looking camera hanging from his neck. After giving us directions to ride to his place, he walked there himself to meet us.

At home, we met his wife. The most tired among us took them up on the offer of a place to sleep. The rest of us were ushered to a lovely quiet back yard.

A giant picnic began to materialize. Baguettes, a half dozen elegant local cheeses, and salamis and other meats. Soft drinks and local beer accompanied stories of the couple's life in Tinténiac and their time as aid workers in Africa.

Unbeknownst to us, this spectacular spread was only the appetizer course and steak and pasta were next out of the kitchen. After coffee and a proffer of granola bars for our jersey pockets, we somewhat reluctantly re-mounted our bikes in search of Loudéac down the road, but with full bellies and warmed hearts.

Thank you Annick and Jean-michel Bergougniou for making our PBP extra special.

Mark Thomas

The final stamp.

—PHOTO JEFF NEWBERRY

Musings about PBP

BY DAMON PEACOCK

It's twenty years since I first went to Paris Brest Paris, and inevitably I've observed a lot of changes in the event. I finished it in 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011. I also filmed it in 2015, having stopped as planned at Mortagne, and transferring to a motorbike. This year Heather and I decided to travel in a car, and film at well-known points.

It wasn't until we got back to the start in Rambouillet that I realized what we were doing. A rider from Germany, in the colors of the VC167 club, said he felt that PBP was a 'Gesamtkunstwerk'; a total work of art or performance. I'd extend that idea to remove the barrier between the riders and what might be seen as the audience around the course.

We were part of a loose association chronicling PBP 2019. It's much too large a subject for any single group to record more than a fragment. The participants were also actively involved in capturing the present for later consumption.

Forty years ago I was studying the sociology of the workplace, among other things, and there's a phenomenon

called the 'Hawthorne Effect.' Essentially people are more productive if they are being observed, especially if they are usually ignored. Audaxers are usually seen as eccentrics, who might just get a bit of attention from a bored yet sympathetic cashier at an all-night gas station.

At PBP they are the subject of intense scrutiny, with film crews, photographers and the general public displaying interest. The field surfs a wave of shouted encouragement and



France and China on the start line.

—PHOTO DAMON PEACOCK



Le Ribay, on the N12 road.

—PHOTO DAMON PEACOCK



St Martin des Pres 1am.
—PHOTO DAMON PEACOCK





Top, the barbecue at St Martin des Pres, 00.57 Tuesday.

The Hamiltons in Longny au Perche, Sunday 9.30pm

—PHOTOS DAMON PEACOCK

applause for over 1200km and up to ninety hours.

Our role during the event was to add to that wave at key points. In previous editions the press had been primed to pay individual attention to participants outlined in the information pack. This time we didn't get any prior

information. I witnessed a French TV crew enquiring about anyone of interest; they found some twins from Brittany, aged 37.

In some ways that lack of focus on individuals was very much in the tradition of the Audax ethos. It shifted the focus onto the entirety of PBE, which is why the idea of a 'Gesamtkunstwerk' resonated with me.

At Loudeac, I'd filmed the arrival of the leading group of three riders, including Mark Baloh, who I had met at London Edinburgh London. There was no special treatment for them; they were told to shift their bikes when they parked them close to the control, and they attracted little to no attention. I watched as Marko massaged his own feet while sitting on the tarmac. There was no attempt to glamorize or glorify the leaders. It struck me as essentially democratic, especially given the fuss that had been made about the Transcontinental race a few weeks earlier.

I've now got to do something with over fifteen hours of video footage; or do I? I've already served a function in observing, and therefore encouraging completion. I shall have to see how the muse takes me. 🚲

New RUSA Members

RUSA#	NAME	CITY	STATE	RUSA#	NAME	CITY	STATE	RUSA#	NAME	CITY	STATE
13355	Jorgensen, Lora R	Anchorage	AK	13373	Kline, Lisa L	Wichita	KS	13388	Horslin, Charles	Kitchener	ON
13341	Caron, James	Mc Calla	AL	13389	Sheffield, Pete L	Wichita	KS	13366	Baylor, Bradford A	Pittsburgh	PA
13395	Williams, Kevin J	Carmichael	CA	13338	Reformat, Derek Daniel	Boston	MA	13392	Rowe, Karen B	Simpsonville	SC
13398	Williams, Andrew	Concord	CA	13337	Garnier, Noah J	Melrose	MA	13391	Rowe, Richard A	Simpsonville	SC
13375	Wilson, David K	Davis	CA	13358	Gregersen, Morten	Chevy Chase	MD	13352	Boening, Steven L	Austin	TX
13346	Balle, E G	Long Beach	CA	13368	Soylu, Ali	Owings Mills	MD	13348	Beran, Steve	Dallas	TX
13353	Andrew, Todd	Oxnard	CA	13369	Borkowski, Adam	New Baltimore	MI	13378	Holt, Jim	Houston	TX
13336	Rolander, Tom	Pacific Grove	CA	13381	Haland, Ted	Afton	MN	13397	Richey, David	Kemah	TX
13384	Datbayev, Zhanibek	Palo Alto	CA	13351	Bruggeman, Jerry	Columbia	MO	13360	O'Brien, Amanda Lynn	League City	TX
13349	Oldham, Brian M	San Carlos	CA	13394	Volmer, Randall	Kansas City	MO	13359	O'Brien, John Timothy	League City	TX
13344	Schwesig, Carsten	San Francisco	CA	13364	Parker, Ron	Springfield	MO	13374	Neaville, Jim	Lyford	TX
13396	Walo, Corey J	San Francisco	CA	13371	Rusch, James	Gulfport	MS	13386	Cotton, D Scott	Midlothian	TX
13376	Ching, Carolyn	San Jose	CA	13345	Abdella, Edward S	Meridian	MS	13350	Whitlock, Max L	Midlothian	TX
13379	Robertson, John	Temecula	CA	13342	Bronson, Nicholas R	Durham	NC	13361	Lopez, Camilo	Arlington	VA
13362	Angst, Oz	Vacaville	CA	13390	Johnson, Chet	Raleigh	NC	13347	Brockton Sr, Nigel T	Fairfax	VA
13354	Posiak, Ashlyn	Oak Creek	CO	13382	Richard, Paul	Dover	NH	13365	Updike, Thomas	Falls Church	VA
13363	Ancona, Mitchell	Ridgefield	CT	13385	Levy, Emily	Cherry Hill	NJ	13383	Engelhardt, Michael David	McLean	VA
13357	Angeli, Edward	Southington	CT	13339	Afonso, Tony	Flemington	NJ	13387	Barrow, Robert R	Richmond	VA
13377	Dugger, Dennis	Pensacola	FL	13343	Fluerasu, Andrei	East Setauket	NY	13367	Maeda, Matthew	Kirkland	WA
13370	Shannon, Richard A	Decatur	GA	13372	Eisenhart, Bradley C	Livonia	NY	13356	Farber, Michelle	Seattle	WA
13340	Livingston, Edward S	Chicago	IL	13380	Grunauer, Andrew P	Columbus	OH	13393	Granger, Peter	Madison	WI
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PBP 2019—Overnight Serenade

Paris-Brest-Paris (PBP), third day. Around thirty miles to reach Mortagne-au-Perche and my watch says it's close to midnight. More than six hundred miles of pedaling has eliminated all pop in the legs. I've resorted to slogging.

We follow the rows of red taillights to town. Given the late hour, I welcome their company. Up, down, up down. Our feet make circles into the crystal clear night as we move among other quiet steady riders. It's a sedate, if slow, march to Mortagne.

The glow of city lights eventually appears. Finally, only seventy-five miles to go. The big days are done, and—ever since reaching the midway point at Brest with two hours to spare—we have pedaled well ahead of controle windows.

My tandem partner Ed, our friend Jerry, and I wander over to the gymnasium where the sleeping accommodations are. Three or four people sit behind a table with a chart of the "beds" available. They have a very organized system, and it looks like they have room.

I have no idea what anyone is saying. Next PBP, I'll learn more French. Helpfully, the volunteers have set out a map of the beds and a paper clock with moveable hands so I can indicate a six o'clock wakeup. One of the volunteers tells us our bed numbers and we follow the sleep manager to our respective spaces, which are basically thin yoga mats laid out side by side on the hard floor. The sleep manager points out my

spot and I set my watch alarm to vibrate me awake. One lesson I've learned in life—don't rely on anybody else to wake you.

The controle volunteers tell us that the showers are cold, but Jerry doesn't care; he takes one anyway and then tells Felkerino and me that the water is

warm. Sleep? Shower? Sleep? Shower? I weigh the two for a millisecond and then tell Jerry I am sleeping. A dirty sleep will do me good, and I can't wait.

Relief engulfs me. It took three straight days and 685 miles over constant rollers to arrive at this point on PBP. So much pedaling and effort! This is celebratory sleep, a dream-state prize for a dirty bike rider. We'll tackle the remaining miles soon enough, I tell myself, knowing that we would have taken a different tack if the last days hadn't proven so delightful and the forecast didn't look so promising.

We've had such a lucky PBP. Synced up with our friend Jerry early on and





stayed together. Hung out quite a bit with San Francisco Randonneurs Rob, Roy, and Anson, and spent three days leap-frogging with Chip, Gavin, and Bill, who we know well from D.C. Randonneurs. We met others along the way, but this was our rider pod.

Unlike grand randonnées in the U.S., the French people have overwhelmingly cheered our endeavor. Controles have been well-staffed with volunteers and we've encountered

roadside stands run by families offering us water, crepes, even wine and other treats.

No matter the hour, people have given riders support and encouragement. "Bon courage." "Bonne route!" "Allez! Allez!" Their generosity and enthusiasm melted me and I smile even now.

Yes, the first stretch entailed a 280-mile day complete with steady headwind to Brest from Rambouillet, but with so much sun I'll gladly take the breezes. The overnights turned cool and temps dipped into the low 40s—some said 30s—but winds subsided in the evenings and the moon rose like a delicious roasted marshmallow to illuminate our way and keep the constellations company every night.

An unwelcome clunking came from the headset the last two days—there's always something novel going on with our tandem—but it never impaired our progress and we had no flats. No flats! The sparkly green apple Co-Motion sailed up and over the rises like a champ. Our fit on the bike was excellent, and I guess the training miles paid off because I experienced minimal discomfort throughout.

Halfway. Brest with Roy Anson Brian and Ed.

—PHOTO MARY GERSEMA

Sunrise Day 2 with Anson and Rob.

—PHOTO MARY GERSEMA

We reached the iconic bridge at Brest—marking the midway point—in golden afternoon sun, after exchanging enthusiastic waves and hellos with fellow randonneurs heading back to Loudéac. The Brest controle closed the kitchen on us, but I didn't take it personally—mostly.

Wrangling rush hour traffic and climbing away from Brest, my mood faltered. While wondering how we would make it to Tinteniac, let alone Loudéac, an amazing U.K. rider suddenly appeared and pulled our flagging butts back over the Roc'h Trevezel, buoying my spirits in time with the gradual ascent and injecting verve into my legs. A million thanks to that guy, he saved my attitude on that segment.

Now at the Mortagne overnight, volunteers have placed wool blankets on top of our yoga mat beds. There are no pillows so I pull out my rain jacket. It substitutes perfectly for the job. With this move, I've used every piece of gear I brought with me. That's its own kind of victory and I close my eyes. I drift off briefly then hear somebody nearby snoring. I follow the noise and realize it's Ed.

Unlike regular nights he's too far away for me to poke at him to roll over,





so I accept his snoring as part of this late stage of PBP. Others snore, too, and I can't run around poking everyone. Someone lies down next to me and unfolds the LOUDEST SPACE BLANKET EVER. I take it in stride. These are the musical instruments of the PBP overnight, the space blanket nothing more than small cymbal crashes of the sleep stop serenade. As long as I'm off my feet it's pretty much fine with me, and I relax into the chorus of sounds.

For the last three days our actions have been so purposeful. Pedal to the controle, refill bottles, eat. Ride more, eat more, stop for a bathroom break, push to the next controle. Put on reflectives, turn on lights, don layers, keep going.

Settling into this stop is pure release from the perpetual pushing, and Mortagne's overnight noises play a nocturne serenade for us. Footsteps guide sleepy riders to their mats. Musical alarms bounce through the room. Some continue at length and my mind drifts along with their chirpy melodies.

The high ceiling of the large gymnasium scatters sounds and sends

them swinging gently about. "Beep! Beep! Beep!" Alarms ring from the beds. Intermittent snores carry through the space. Occasional whispers and hushed voices cascade around us.

Riders rustle themselves to sleep and hours later ease their way off the floor to patter their way out of the gym and start the next day's ride. More footsteps follow. Repeat. The songs of the night swirl, filling my heart and calming me in unexpected ways.

I'm happy we did not ride through this chilly evening and so grateful we had time in the bank to indulge in these three blissful hours. Hours pass and my eyes open before my alarm has a chance to buzz me awake. Languid, I lift myself off my rain jacket pillow and discard my blanket. I sit on my heels to stretch my feet, and see my neighbor, who I realize is Mr. Loudest Space Blanket Ever, doing the same thing. He moves quietly now, absent his crackly sheet of mylar.

I put on new cycling shorts for the final day—I have my dirty bike rider limits—and Ed, Jerry, and I join our friends Gavin, Bill, and Chip for breakfast in the cafeteria. It's a goofy morning, with all of us in various stages of readiness. Some guy walks

Mamers Overnight.

—PHOTO MARY GERSEMA

around the controle with an Eiffel Tower labeled PBP stacked on top of his helmet. I eat an omelette and instant mashed potatoes, and down a bowl of coffee—a classic PBP meal. Bill buys me a banana, Jerry drinks multiple bowls of tea, and Gavin reads the PBP Times. I'm not sure what Ed's doing, but I see it involves a breakfast Coke.

After about thirty minutes, we wrap up breakfast and head outside to our bikes. A rider is splayed out in what Jerry calls the starfish pose, and since he's passed out in a disability parking space, Ed wonders if somebody is going to ticket him. Three days of constant riding, and we think we're pretty funny.

The sun rises over the horizon. Our final day beckons. Fueled and rested from the sleep stop serenade, we roll out of Mortagne for our final seventy-five miles. Moments like these are the reason I keep coming back to randonneuring. Over the last three days I fell in love with this ride and, for at least a few hours, PBP sang for me and loved me back. 🚲



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RUSA Awards

RUSA American Explorer Award

The American Explorer Award recognizes the achievements of RUSA members rambling across the United States. The award is earned by riding events that cover at least ten (10) different U.S. states and territories.

This is an ongoing achievement program that recognizes continued exploration of additional states and territories. The maximum achievable number of states and territories will depend on the availability of routes and the member's desire to explore.

Award criteria:

- Rides must be of the following types:
- ACP brevets and flèches;
 - RUSA brevets, populaires, arrows and darts;
 - RUSA permanents and permanent populaires;
 - RUSA sanctioned Super Randonnée permanents;

- 1200km events held in the United States after 1998.
- Routes must pass through or be contained within any of the 50 states of the United States, the District of Columbia, and U.S. territories (Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, ...). Each state or territory through which the ride passes is counted and multiple states/territories can be achieved on a single ride.
- There is no time limit to earn this award.
- Only RUSA members may apply and each qualifying ride must be completed while an active member of RUSA.

Recognition

- A minimum of ten states or territories must be completed to receive initial recognition.

NAME	CITY, STATE	STATES ADDED	TOTAL STATES	APPROVED
Bernasky, Ed	Stockton, NJ	13	13	10/22/19
Bingham, Bob	Graham, NC	1	14	9/4/19
Blassl, Duane A	Worthing, SD	11	11	9/5/19
Chernekoff, Janice (F)	Lyon Station, PA	9	20	8/7/19
Chin-Hong, Patrick	Amherst, MA	28	28	10/6/19
Driscoll, Dan	Arlington, TX	1	31	9/1/19
Foley, Paul A	Golden, CO	5	39	9/19/19
Franzen, J Scott	Wernersville, PA	11	11	9/26/19
Fraser, Malcolm R	Boulder, CO	9	19	9/8/19
Geisert, Rodney D	Columbia, MO	24	24	8/2/19
Kanaby, Gary	Salado, TX	3	13	8/4/19
Lippincott, Jeff	Princeton, NJ	19	19	10/4/19
McCarthy, Jackie (F)	Springfield, MO	1	14	10/11/19
McDonald, David R	Apex, NC	11	11	10/15/19
Nutter, Karen E (F)	Scituate, MA	12	12	9/15/19
Stoychev, Georgi Emilov	Greenbelt, MD	1	11	9/18/19
Tamas, Tibor	Fort Worth, TX	5	49	9/9/19
Walker, David	Fremont, CA	11	11	9/23/19
Wright, Pamela (F)	Fort Worth, TX	2	18	9/2/19

RUSA Awards

R-12 Award Recipients

The R-12 Award is earned by riding a 200km (or longer) randonneuring event in each of 12 consecutive months. The counting sequence can commence during any month of the year but must continue uninterrupted for another 11 months.

Events that count toward the R-12 Award are:

- Any event on the RUSA calendar 200km or longer.
- Foreign ACP-sanctioned brevets and team events (flèches), Paris-Brest-Paris, and RM-sanctioned events of 1200km or longer, provided that these non-US events account for no more than 6 of the 12 counting months.
- RUSA permanents — a particular permanent route may be ridden more than once during the twelve-month period for R-12 credit. The applicant must be a RUSA member during each of the twelve months.

RUSA congratulates the latest honorees, listed below.

NAME	CITY, STATE	APPROVED
Armitage, Scott	Milpitas, CA	10/4/19
Bergeron, Robert D [8]	Raleigh, NC	9/18/19
Dawe, Nicholas D [2]	Austin, TX	10/7/19
Dembinski, Jan Peter [2]	Woodstock, VT	10/9/19
Ellis, John Lee [13]	Lafayette, CO	9/18/19
Erard, Julien	Portland, OR	9/18/19
Goebel, Gregory K	Cypress, CA	10/7/19
Gold, Tayler S [3]	Apopka, FL	8/17/19

Goldman, Gary	Los Altos, CA	10/26/19
Haddad, James R [4]	Manchester, NH	8/17/19
Hirschbruch, Estevam [4]	Weston, FL	9/1/19
Isaza, Rodolfo [2]	Plantation, FL	8/30/19
Kanaby, Gary [5]	Salado, TX	8/4/19
Lawrence, Penelope A (F) [2]	Cooper City, FL	9/15/19
Martin, Charlie A	Sunnyvale, CA	9/18/19
Mullet, Kathy (F) [5]	Corvallis, OR	8/17/19
Mullet, Ron [5]	Corvallis, OR	8/17/19
Muoneke, Vincent [11]	Federal Way, WA	9/24/19
Newberry, Jeff [10]	Austin, TX	9/15/19
Phillips, Calista (F) [6]	Frederick, MD	8/8/19
Povman, Michael D [2]	Sleepy Hollow, NY	9/9/19
Ray, Joseph [3]	Bernardsville, NJ	8/25/19
Readinger, Chris [2]	Alexandria, VA	8/5/19
Russell, Bill [3]	Vineyard Haven, MA	10/15/19
Sherman, Will [3]	Brooklyn, NY	9/9/19
Smith, Paul K [6]	Cooper City, FL	8/12/19
Snavelly, Henry J [5]	Centennial, CO	9/17/19
Stum, Richard [9]	Mount Pleasant, UT	8/15/19
Szmurlo, Len	Dillon, CO	10/10/19
Tamas, Tibor [5]	Fort Worth, TX	9/29/19
Thomas, Mark [12]	Kirkland, WA	10/18/19
Vargas, Luis [9]	Davie, FL	9/11/19
Winkert, George [13]	Highland, MD	8/30/19
Young, Michal [7]	Eugene, OR	8/6/19

Ultra R-12 Award

The Ultra R-12 Award recognizes the completion of 10 R-12s. There is no time limit; there may be gaps between any of the 12-month sequences that define each R-12.

It is likely that members will have applied previously for each of the ten component R-12 awards; however, it is not a requirement to have done so. A given month can only be used towards one Ultra R-12 award and one may

earn only one Ultra R-12 award during a ten-year period. The applicant must be a RUSA member during each of the 120 months included in the ten 12-month periods.

RUSA congratulates the riders who earned and applied for the Ultra R-12 award.

NAME	CITY, STATE	APPROVED
Newberry, Jeff	Austin, TX	9/15/19

RUSA Awards

P-12 Recipients

The P-12 Award is earned by riding a sub-200km randonneuring event in each of 12 consecutive months. The counting sequence can commence during any month of the year but must continue uninterrupted for another 11 months.

Events that count toward the P-12 Award are:

- Any populaire (100km - 199km) on the RUSA calendar.
 - Any dart of less than 200km.
 - Any RUSA permanent of 100km-199km.
- A particular permanent route may be ridden more than once during the twelve-month period for P-12 credit.

NAME	CITY, STATE	APPROVED
Beck, Tom	Sammamish, WA	9/1/19
Beron, Andrew William	Pasadena, MD	9/5/19
Bingham, Bob [7]	Graham, NC	10/10/19
Carsten, Ben [2]	Austin, TX	8/1/19
Crixell, Joshua [7]	Temple, TX	8/17/19
Daniel, Sharan L (F)	Seattle, WA	8/9/19
DeBoer, Kelly [10]	Avery, TX	9/15/19
Driscoll, Dan [11]	Arlington, TX	10/7/19
Ellis, John Lee [7]	Lafayette, CO	9/18/19
Foley, Mary (F) [4]	New Egypt, NJ	10/7/19
Fraser, Malcolm R [3]	Boulder, CO	9/8/19
Gridley, Ross [7]	Pickerington, OH	10/5/19
Hendry, Robert A [4]	Bainbridge Island, WA	8/9/19
Horchoff, Patrick A [10]	River Ridge, LA	8/18/19
Hutchison, George David	Springfield, MO	8/17/19
Loomis, Jeff	Seattle, WA	10/16/19
Loomis, Wendy (F)	Seattle, WA	10/16/19
Martin, Charlie A	Sunnyvale, CA	9/22/19
Methner, Wayne W [4]	Lake Forest Park, WA	9/9/19
Olszyk, Anita (F) [6]	Lacey, WA	9/27/19
Sammons, Jeff [4]	Brentwood, TN	10/1/19
Slocum, Christopher C. [3]	Toms River, NJ	9/19/19
Staats, David N [7]	Columbus, OH	10/5/19
Vincent, John [5]	Rochester, WA	10/19/19

RUSA Cup Recipients

The RUSA Cup is earned by completing at least one of each type of RUSA calendared event, comprising 5000km in total, within a two-year period.

Riders must complete, within two years of the first counting event:

- a 200k, 300k, 400k, 600k, and 1000k brevet
- a 1200k or longer Grand Randonnée
- a RUSA team event (Dart, Dart Populaire, Arrow, or Flèches-USA)
- a Populaire
- any other calendared events—including Populaires—to achieve the required 5000 km.

NAME	CITY, STATE	APPROVED
DelNero, Gary M	Leawood, KS	10/24/19
Dorobek, Russell	Austin, TX	10/7/19
Green, Bill [2]	Nevada City, CA	10/7/19
Karpick, Jonathan	Cleveland, OH	10/24/19
Keenan, Greg	Camp Hill, PA	10/10/19
Keller, Eric E.	Boalsburg, PA	10/10/19
Lanteigne, Ken	Gresham, OR	9/26/19
Martin, Charlie A [2]	Sunnyvale, CA	10/10/19
Mayr, Rudi [2]	Lawrenceville, NJ	9/16/19
Newberry, Jeff [8]	Austin, TX	10/5/19
Nguyen, Thai [3]	Bothell, WA	8/28/19
Peterson, Eric	Naperville, IL	8/2/19
Ranson, Emily (F)	Ellicott City, MD	10/10/19
Russell, Amy L (F) [2]	Waco, TX	10/25/19
Waggoner, Gary	Elkridge, MD	8/1/19

RUSA Awards

RUSA American Randonneur Challenge

The American Randonneur Challenge (ARC) is a special award given by Randonneurs USA to any RUSA member who successfully completes in the same season two or more Randonneur Mondiaux 1200-kilometer or longer grand randonnées held in the United States. The ARC award can be earned only by riding the event as a 1200k; riders entered to do it as a 1000k + 200k may not claim the award.

RUSA congratulates the riders who earned and applied for the ARC award.

NAME	CITY, STATE	APPROVED
Martin, Charlie A	Sunnyvale, CA	10/9/2019

Ultra P-12 Award

Whereas the P-12 award recognizes the completion of a sub- 200km randonneuring event in each of 12 consecutive months, the Ultra P-12 Award recognizes the completion of ten (10) P-12s. There is no time limit; there may be gaps between any of the 12-month sequences that define each P-12.

It is likely that members will have applied previously for each of the ten component P-12 awards; however, it is not a requirement to have done so. A given month can only be used towards one Ultra P-12 award and one may earn only one Ultra P-12 award during a ten-year period. The applicant must be a RUSA member during each of the 120 months included in the ten 12-month periods.

NAME	CITY, STATE	APPROVED
DeBoer, Kelly	Avery, TX	9/15/19
Horchoff, Patrick A	River Ridge, LA	8/18/19

RUSA Coast-to-Coast Award

The Coast-to-Coast 1200km award is earned by RUSA members who have successfully completed four different Randonneurs Mondiaux 1200km-or-longer randonnées held in the United States.

A member may earn multiple Coast-to-Coast awards. No event or different editions of the same event may be used more than once among multiple awards. For example, if Boston-Montreal-Boston 2002 is used in a member's Coast-to-Coast award, BMB'06 (or other edition) may not be used to claim another award.

The four events needed to qualify can be completed at any time and over any number of years.

RUSA congratulates the riders who earned and applied for the Coast to Coast 1200km Award.

APPROVED	NAME	CITY, STATE
10/15/2019	Russell, Bill [2]	Vineyard Haven, MA

EVENTS
2018 Coulee Challenge
2018 Great Lakes Mac 'n Cheese
2018 Florida Tip to Tail 1600
2019 Hound Dog 1200

APPROVED	NAME	CITY, STATE
9/10/2019	Wright, Pamela (F)	Fort Worth, TX

EVENTS
2013 Texas Rando Stampede 1200
2013 The Big Wild Ride
2017 Gold Rush Randonnee
2018 Coulee Challenge

RUSA Awards

Ultra Randonneur Award

The Ultra Randonneur Award is for RUSA members who have ridden ten (10) Super Randonneur series. The Super Randonneur (SR) series of brevets (200 K, 300 K, 400 K and 600 K in a calendar year) that are used to qualify for the Ultra Randonneur Award need not be in consecutive years, nor is there a time limit on how long it takes to accumulate the ten SR series. Note that it is possible to earn more than one SR series per year, making it possible to earn this award in fewer than ten seasons. Non-US ACP and RM brevets can be used provided that these non-US

events account for no more than 50% of the rides counted towards this award.

RUSA congratulates the riders who earned and applied for the Ultra Randonneur Award.

NAME	CITY, STATE	APPROVED
Bott, Linda (F)	Ventura, CA	9/24/19
Klaassen, Spencer [3]	Saint Joseph, MO	10/7/19
Peterson, Eric	Naperville, IL	7/31/19

Mondial Award

The Mondial Award is for RUSA members who have successfully completed at least 40,000 km in RUSA events.

The name “Mondial” comes from the French adjective meaning worldwide or global. The name relates to the fact that the circumference of the Earth is approximately 40,000 km.

This award can be earned just once by a member and is automatically awarded upon completion of the required distance (no application or purchase required).

The qualifying distance for this award is based on all events on RUSA’s calendar (ACP brevets and Flèches, RUSA brevets, populaires, arrows and darts), RUSA permanents, and 1200km events held in the United States after 1999. Foreign events (including PBB) are not counted.

RUSA congratulates the riders who have just earned this prestigious award.

NAME	CITY, STATE	APPROVED
Fitzsimmons, Lynne (F)	Portland, OR	9/21/19
Foley, Mary (F)	New Egypt, NJ	9/1/19
Kline, Greg	Newport Beach, CA	10/6/19

ACP Randonneur 5000

In 1961, the Audax Club Parisien created the Randonneur 5000 award to recognize finishing ACP and Randonneurs Mondiaux events totaling at least 5000km within a four-year period.

To qualify, the randonneur must complete:

- A full series of ACP brevets (200, 300, 400, 600, and 1000km) [longer brevets cannot be substituted for shorter ones];
- A Paris-Brest-Paris randonné;
- A Flèche Vélocio, or other ACP-sanctioned flèche (your team of at least three bicycles must finish officially); and
- additional ACP and/or RM events to bring the total distance up to at least 5000 km.

The qualifying events must be completed within a four-year period, beginning on the date of the first qualifying event.

RUSA extends its congratulations to the US riders who have received this special award.

NAME	CITY, STATE	APPROVED
Dorobek, Russell	Austin, TX	9/9/19
Ellis, John Lee	Lafayette, CO	9/8/19
Krishnamoorthy, Narayan	Kirkland, WA	9/2/19
Lawrence, Joel	High Point, NC	9/18/19



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2019 Tours are Sold Out

"Elite Tour Ridge of the Rockies"

June 15-28

Mexico (El Paso, Texas) to Canada

12 days, 160 miles per day

The Elite Tour is an intense tour intended for serious cyclists who want to challenge themselves with longer daily miles. The tour will start near the Mexican border and follow the Rocky Mountains north along many paved roads while crossing the Continental Divide several times. This Elite Tour is also a qualifying ride for the Race Across America. Full support with many rest stops, lunch and full support are provided each day. Lodging will be in nice motels with local restaurants nearby.

"Ridge of the Rockies Tour" July 6 - 26

Albuquerque, New Mexico to Canada

19 days, 95 miles per day

This Tour is the "Touring Version" of the Elite Tour. The route will begin in Albuquerque, New Mexico and follow the Rocky Mountains north to Kalispell, Montana. Full support with many rest stops, lunch and full support are provided each day. Lodging will be in nice motels with local restaurants nearby.

Cycling Across the Andes in Peru

September 23 to October 11

1,200 KM, 11 Cycling days

This is an epic tour starting near the Brazilian jungle and cycling back toward the deserts along the Pacific Ocean. We will climb 14 passes over 12,000 feet in elevation. Meals will be in local restaurants and we will sleep in hotels along the route. Several non cycling days are planned to visit the ruins at Machu Picchu and the Nazca Lines

Coming in 2020

Desert Camp in Arizona

Based from Tucson, Arizona - each week has a different theme for different types of riders. You can combine weeks to extend your cycling season in Arizona. Come join us!

Week #1 February 22 – February 29

Tour of the Historic Hotels 50 miles per day

Week #2 February 29 – March 7

First Century Week 60-100 miles per day.

Week #3 March 7 - 14

Chiricahua Challenge 75-90 miles per day

Week #4 March 14 - 21

Second Century Week 60-100 miles per day.

Week #5 March 21 - 29

Mountain Tour Mt. Graham 80-100 miles per day

Week #6 March 29 – April 5

Gravel Week in Arizona 40 miles per day

Cycling Route 66 (Eastern Half)

Amarillo, Texas to Chicago

May 28 to June 13 16 riding days 1,200 miles

The the tour will focus on the history of building the highway and the cultural changes that happened during the past 95 years. We will stay in many original motels and eat at the popular cafes and diners on the "Mother Road".

Southern Transcontinental

Mid September to early October

This will be a 27 day tour from San Diego, California to Tybee Island (Savannah) Georgia. Most days average 110 miles. We will cross the country through a variety of terrain and visit many historical sites along the way.

Going to Ghana Africa

Early November 14 days

This unique tour will ride a 320 mile loop of southeastern Ghana. Along the way we will meet and visit many local people of this beautiful country. Road conditions will range from good pavement to red dirt. Mountain bikes with 26" tires are recommended. The people of Ghana speak English. We will stay in hotels and eat in restaurants along the way.

Check out the PAC Tour website for dates, prices, registration information and a full schedule of available tours.

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