

Bikers complete international journey on way to Reunion ♦14

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For the seventh time, a group of Alfred University alumni - who also happen to be avid bikers - has cycled its way to campus for the annual early summer Reunion activities. But the 2014 riders are the first group to make the journey an international trip!

The core group of Jim Randall &77, who hails from nearby Bath and organized this year's event; Dave Perry &61 from Oconomowoc, WI; Dave Conrad &76, a resident of Putnam, CT; and David Holleb &77, from Gladstone, NJ, set off from Toronto, Ontario, Canada Sunday, June 1, arriving at their final destination, the King Alfred statue on campus, on Friday, June 6, the beginning of alumni weekend. Jim provided a chronicle of their trip.

This core group of riders arrived in Toronto May 30. While in town they were invited by Janan &79 and Paul Chandler for Saturday brunch at their home in Mississauga, a Toronto suburb. Jay Yedvab &56, a Toronto resident, participated in brunch and also made it to Reunion Weekend. Following the meal, the group attended a Toronto Bluejays baseball game, "followed by shopping by the gals (who accompanied the riders) and pub hopping by the guys."

Two support vehicles driven by Rita Conrad and Regina Holleb set off along with the four bikers early Sunday morning, headed for the first night's stop at the Casablanca Winery Inn, Grimsby, Ontario.

"We followed the Waterfront Trail along Lake Ontario which runs all the way to the Niagara River in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario," wrote Jim. "On our second day we rode through wine country on the Niagara peninsula and stayed at the historic Riverbend Inn."

Day three brought rain, so they portaged their bicycles to Niagara Falls, Canada, took in the sights, and next portaged their bikes to the suburbs of Niagara Falls, NY where they were able to ride out of town towards Lockport and then Batavia for the third night.

The sun shone on Day 4 and the riders headed to Mt. Morris and the north entrance to Letchworth State Park. Just outside the park the traveling group stopped for lunch at a diner and rendezvoused with Bob Wade &64 and Kathy, who brought another support vehicle to the mix. Bob and Kathy had come all the way from Bozeman, MT to take part in the alumni ride and attend Bob's 50th class reunion. (Bob also ran in the 5K race Saturday morning of Reunion Weekend and took first place in his age group!)

Following lunch, the group headed from the north end of the park to the Glen Iris Inn at the south end for the fourth night's stay. Following the ride and some sightseeing, Jim hosted a cocktail party in his Glen Iris suite where Ed Law &58 from Perry, NY, the group's sponsor-at-large, presented each support vehicle driver with a sum to bolster their operating budgets.

Day 5 began with the promise of a 75-mile trip and increasing inclines on the way to the Southern Tier and Corning. All made it into town where, at dinner, two new riders "signed" in: Richard Rygiel &76 from Almond, and Stephen Barton &13 from Port Allegany, PA. Also joining the group for dinner were John &74 and Donna Wagner and Daryl Murray &78.

There were 40 more miles to cover on Day 6, through the Chemung and Canisteo river valleys on the way to Hornell. Peter Stull (aka The Bicycle Man) &75 rode from Alfred to Canisteo and escorted the core group of riders into Hornell. There they met up with Steve Crandall &76, AU dean of libraries and director of Herrick Library; Dave DeGraff, associate professor of astronomy; Anne Cornell, director of research for University Relations; and Drew McInnes (spouse of Mary McInnes, AU professor of art history and past member of the Alfred Village Planning Board) for the remaining 10 miles to Alfred. At the Almond Dam, Garrett McGowan, AU professor of chemistry,

joined the ride. Following a celebratory lunch at “The Jet,” Ed, Bob, and Dave Perry, the group’s Golden Saxons, led the contingent on its “victory ride” up the hill to the King Alfred statue.

Jim added that two highlights of the trip, for him, were “having one of my oldest friends, fellow soccer player Richard Rygiel and our youngest-ever (rider) Stephen Barton join us on the bike ride.” It “meant a lot to me and shows the closeness of the Alfred community is multi-generational.”

David Perry, who has taken the AU bicycling journey for the past four years, noted: “We have made new friends on each ride, as well as renewing friendships with other riders who have been on previous rides. We have been accumulating memories and talks of past rides and adventures along the way. There are always problems of route directions and conditions, weather changes and equipment to resolve, and observations and insights shared along the way that increase the bonds among the riders and the drivers providing support. The camaraderie reaches heights during the post ride social hours and dinners.

“Not surprisingly, the days in Toronto and Ontario were truly special,” he continued. “We had a beautiful ride from Toronto to Niagara-on-the-Lake for two days on the Waterfront Trail along Lake Ontario and then visited the Niagara and Horseshoe Falls, which never fail to inspire awe. Falls as the highlight was furthered by our stay at the Glen Iris Inn in Letchworth State Park located right next to the falls that one of our group noted are as impressive and more beautiful in their setting.”

David Conrad agreed with the special quality of relationships and memories made.

“The camaraderie is just great. I have become friends with new Alfred ‘people’ and the ride and after ride ‘festivities’ brings the bond of riding and Alfred even closer...”

“I think the highlight of this year’s ride was coming in from Canada and staying at the Glen Iris Inn (something I always wanted to do but never did until this ride). Looking forward to next year, and hopefully more new souls to join us,” he remarked.

“They say that if you want to get to know someone well play golf with them for four hours. I think that if you bike ride with someone for six days that you will have a friend for life,” said David Holleb. “... Biking 300 miles together with fellow alums is a great way to stay connected with those great memories of Alfred. This year we tweaked the ride to be able to stay at places like Letchworth State Park and Niagara-on-the-Lake.” And he predicts, “Next year’s ride will be even better! So fellow alums, come join us next year!”

Richard noted “The reunion ride was very nice for me meeting new people with an interest in riding, and also for making Randy (Jim Randall) happy that I finally joined the group.”

He too spoke of the camaraderie that “grew from this ride to hopefully a friendship to continue through the year and next reunion.”

The “highlight was riding in the back, talking with and about each other, our families, and how much we really enjoy them. Also the dinner in Corning was really great and meeting people. The lunch at the Collegiate was also nice.”

The youngest rider, Stephen, found the 2014 bike ride “was a great opportunity to meet fellow alumni and share stories about past college experiences and to hear what people are doing now. For me as a recent graduate and first-year rider, it was great to feel the welcoming and support from the group. Everyone was very happy and excited to have new riders join the tour and it is something I hope to take part in for many years to come.”

Stephen said the highlight for him “was just being able to be a part of the tour for the first time this year and riding with the group from Corning to Alfred. It was great to make new connections and friendships and I would strongly recommend other alumni who enjoy cycling try the tour sometime, even if it’s for just one day or the whole trip.”

