

## DAY 1 Update

September 9, 2007

At 6:00am on a colder than expected morning on the Santa Monica Pier, the riders of the Bucknell-Penn Alumni Race began their intrepid journey across America. While all the cyclists had a chance to log some time on their bikes, a vast majority of the mileage for day one was covered by the team members over fifty. Leading all riders was Dr. Walt McConnell, age 75, who managed to race sixty-five miles from the Santa Monica to Riverside. Frank Arentowicz was at his side for much of the ride and managed to cover fifty-eight miles. While the support van was following Frank, the crew lost sight of Walt and began to worry that had fallen behind. After a few miles of backtracking by one van, the crew got a call reporting that Walt was out sight because he was actually way out in front! Frank eventually relinquished sole riding duty to Walt, who continued on from the streets of South Central L.A. to the meandering trails of Orange County RV Park. While on the trail a group of young women bragged to Walt that they had run eighteen miles then asked him how far he was going. Suffice to say they were surprised to hear "to Atlantic City" as his answer.

Later in the day, as the crowded cityscape gradually gave way to the quaint orchard-lined streets and low hills, Bruce Lederman and Mike Shockro took over, logging forty-one and forty-three miles respectively. Mike was quick to win the dubious honor of first flat tire, which he sustained only a half-mile into his ride! By reaching such high individual mileages the senior members of the team set a strong precedent for recent Bucknell graduates Pat O'Malley and Kyle Rosendale, each of whom managed to spend a brief time on their bikes later in the afternoon. At midday the temperatures soared high into the nineties and eventually it reached the low hundreds, making trekking up the rugged, sandy hills of Gilma Springs a daunting task. Later in the afternoon, Team Bike Mechanic Nir Tal contributed some tough miles of up-hill riding and by 5:00pm all the riders reached their first checkpoint in Indio, CA.

While the heat was oppressive, the riders were energetic and highly motivated, not only by their passion and excitement, but by the company of many friends from the Los Angeles area. Several members of Frank and Bruce's bike group, the Silverbacks, served as riding companions throughout the day. Group-members, Naty Saidof, Darrell Burstein, Pat Benzak, and Alan Wilkin were proud to show their support of good friends and a great cause. In addition, several of Frank's co-workers, David Shladovsky (and friend) and Thuc Tran (and friend Jay) contributed to the entourage that accompanied the group throughout much of the first leg of the trip. Propelled by the overwhelming amount of support, the team of core riders was able to put forth a fantastic effort for the first day.

In a stroke misfortune, Frank's bike was clotheslined off of the roof-rack as a support van pulled in under the hotel's entryway. Luckily, damages to the bike were easily repaired. After showers and a large dinner the Silverbacks bid the race team good luck and a fond farewell before heading home to L.A. The core members of the Alumni Bike Race retired early with a lonelier, hotter, and hillier day ahead of them. One day down, eighteen more to go.