

Chapter 2.

Day 2

August 15, 2006, Bradford VT to Fryesburg ME. 102 miles. 6.45 am to 6 pm



I had made good time in the morning, as the road was fairly flat. I was still a bit concerned about not having the security of my little pills but I entered New Hampshire anyway, crossing a small bridge that started the day's journey. The morning was quiet, fog just beginning to burn off as the sun rose higher. The road was level giving me the advantage of speed. There was a rubbing sound from the bike and I wondered what now, but I soon

discovered it was the fender on the wheel. That fixed I continued to Plymouth without much hardship.

I stopped there to have a bagel and coffee. I called my sister and we spoke again about my concerns of continuing. I always felt better after talking with her and Paul. I was able to continue with my quest, my ride, my life.

I was soon off on a route Steve had given me. Beautiful side roads following tree lined routes bordering lakes of varying sizes. And hills, lots and lots of them, up, down, up, down until that was all I saw. The beauty soon faded into just getting up the next incline. The cursing started to get into full swing. I asked God why so many up-hills only to thank God for the relief of a downhill. How this is so much like life in general. This went on for some time; in fact, it went on for the rest of the day. It took what felt like forever to get anywhere. Several times I wanted to just drop the bike leave it where it was, or throw it into the woods (like I could have lifted the thing to do that) and walk to the nearest rent-a-car. I didn't. I kept going...and cursing.

Loneliness began to set in, as well, this day. That surprised me. I thought I was pretty good being with myself, pretty good at being alone. One learns a lot about oneself on a solo ride, the road and my thoughts were the only company. I began to think it would have great to have someone to share this with, maybe made the ride easier in some way. I was on a solo trip though and I may not have learned what I needed to learn had someone been pedaling next to me. I started to think a lot about being alone on that road, more importantly, being alone in life.

When I was three I learned a profound lesson that affected me for a large portion of my life, however erroneous it was. People will leave you! They will die, not want you any longer or just disappear. How did I know this? My mother died of misdiagnosed breast cancer. Talk about anger and loss! It makes the world a very large and frightening place when your mom just disappears. This began the long road of worthlessness and self-flagellation. "How can I be worth anything if my mom went away?" "I must have been bad in some way for her to not want me anymore." These were the mantras just below the surface of consciousness. It took awhile to quiet the surface racket enough to hear the true issues, or even become aware of the true issues, going on behind the feelings. Feeling separated, feeling lost and mostly feeling angry.

Anger, despair, anger, despair, numbness, “Oh, look, isn’t that beautiful!” and more anger went the emotions as the road went up and down, up and down until it became this psychotic rollercoaster making me feel like I should have gone with one of those wonder pills. I tried, I really did try to take in the beauty, but after awhile all I could see was another hill looming ahead and the physical demand it put on me. I took it personally because each up-hill was a personal affront. Each crest presented another opportunity for anguish because I desired a flat open stretch and there was never one to be found. When one only has one’s own thoughts as company, everything becomes personal.

I kept going. I thought about stopping, but Maine just kept getting closer and closer. There was something important about being in Maine, like it was the Mecca and I was the pilgrim. I just didn’t want to spend the night in New Hampshire. It has nothing to do with the state; I just didn’t want to stop. Part of it was driving myself forward towards exhaustion so I wouldn’t have to think too much about being alone; about not having the security blanket I grew too accustomed to always having. Maybe this was how I was dealing with a lot of other things in my life. Ride until you drop and then you just don’t have to deal with the real issues.

I was so tired by the time I reached the Maine state line I didn’t even stop to photograph the bike near the state welcome sign. I just wanted rest, both physical and emotional. The physical is easy, it is the other which is harder to come by.

I got a room at a B&B since that was all there was to be had in Fryesburg. It is a very nice town, quaint and inviting. I showered in my room and dressed in the off bike look that didn’t look much different from the on bike look, shorts and a t-shirt. I went to the local market to see what I could scrounge for dinner. I had thought of eating at the B&B but the prices were too high, not that I didn’t think it would be worth it. Alone the dinner would have been bland and the same went for any other restaurant there may have been in town. I wound up purchasing a can of spaghetti o’s and a bag of chocolate chip cookies, and of course a gallon of water.



I had my panniers in the room, the bike I was able to store in the garage of the B&B. They were very accommodating. I had my supper but was not hungry, so I called Paul back as he had called me earlier during my foraging. We spoke for a while as I sat in the backyard watching the sunset and a painter painting the event. I was really battling a depression. I had expected to be exhausted yes, but I somehow expected to have a huge amount of endorphins floating around the old system. I had regained some energy and just felt really sad and alone and anxious. Paul helped quite a bit. I also spoke with Trish, this time she was not as helpful as Paul but it was still good to hear a voice of someone I care deeply about.

It seemed there was a certain theme appearing: sadness, loneliness, and maybe a little depression and of course, anger. Yea, I know, it concerned me too. I really started to take a look at me, after all it was what I was suppose to be doing out there. I would need to address this issue seriously when I returned home. Some people just do not make

enough serotonin, the body's wonder drug of happiness. I might just be one of those. I know a few people who are like that, it is not a bad thing but I think it is misunderstood. There are the serotonin rich group who like to tell the serotonin poor to cheer up and get over it; they mean well, they just don't understand. I have tried many things short of medication such as meditation, which helps. I never thought medication was the answer unless under extreme circumstances with no other solution. Too many side effects to warrant use of pretty much the majority of prescribed medicines. I think homeopathic solutions can help in a vast number of cases as a first cure. Exercise and nutrition is key. As they say – garbage in, garbage out.

Which brings me back to dinner. A cold can of o's and cookies, (talk about garbage in). Doesn't help the mood any, especially eaten alone. It was pretty bad. I still wasn't hungry so it didn't really matter.

I turned on the television for that connection to people. I flipped from one channel to the next not focusing on any one show. It was the people I was watching not the shows though I was amazed, in a year plus of not watching television, I cannot say enough about how it has gotten worse. I did finally feel tired enough to sleep though I woke at 4 am feeling very close to a panic attack. I thought of calling Trish, but I worked through it and slept on into the morning. It is the little miracles we thank God for.

Aches and pains: Everything! Back, legs, the bottom of my right foot was numb, both feet hurt, legs hurt and arms.

Food: Cliff bars again, turkey jerky, slice of pizza, nuts, spaghetti o's, chocolate chip cookies, some other things I forget but not a lot more though there was a lot of water and Gatorade.

Weather: Beautiful, sunny, not too hot or humid. Maybe mid 80s