

Day 4:

August 17, 2006, somewhere on route 201 ME to Belfast ME. 78 miles, 7:50 am to 6 pm.

The early morning left everything dew draped. The tent was soaked as was the bike and the few bits of clothing I had left hanging over the frame. I couldn't wait for the sun to reach above the tree line to dry the things that needed to be packed. I packed the wet things away and started to walk the bicycle up the hill (big surprise, didn't see that coming did you?) to the main road. Some settled in campers were up and as I passed one couple they wished me a safe journey.

I didn't come across anyone who was unfriendly. I believe most people are good or good intentioned. People sometimes need a reason to rise to the occasion. I didn't always have this belief. It took some time to achieve through a lot of inner work on myself. I didn't necessarily believe people were bad but more they just didn't care, maybe just out for themselves. Maybe I was seeing something in myself, maybe I just hadn't cared. I think I cared enough though to make some changes. I recognized my fears, but didn't always know what to do about them. The world can be a big scary place sometimes and I was wearing pain and sadness on my sleeve that was the loss of my mom. Well, a lot of people have lost someone close. I was just another such person, another link in the chain. We all heal in time.

God puts lots of guideposts in our life and it is up to us to recognize them. A number of years ago a close friend had passed away when his daughter was four years old. I stayed in touch with his family over the years and when she was about 12 or 13 she shared her poetry with me. It was like reading my own writing. She wrote about the same feelings I have had all these years. Again perspective shows up to tell me I am not the only one who feels lonely and scared and lacking trust. Losing someone, especially a parent at a young age, affects one like nothing else. A child is introduced to the fragility of life, the feelings of not being good enough or at fault. I was not alone though I see. How many others are out there who have buried the same feelings way, way deep? The unreasonable ways people act sometimes are not understandable until you understand where they came from and what is buried deep. If that becomes known then one goes ah, and the heart opens to them. It is all perspective.

My perspective this day was to travel the miles ahead to Belfast. The three miles down back to the AC route were quick. My legs were starting loose strength and it was taking me longer to get up each successive incline. Again, I am in beautiful countryside heading towards route 1 and the ocean. Newcastle will be in view soon, and smell of ocean, and I am looking forward to being there.

By now swearing and asking God why She is so mean has become a regular routine. Sometimes I gripped the handlebars so tightly in frustration while other times I had actually resorted to minor temper tantrums picking the front of the bike up by the handlebars and slamming down several times gritting the teeth and swearing to beat the band. One time I actually let out an animal like guttural grunt loud enough to cause a dog in a nearby yard to bark, it had not known I was there otherwise. I tried to laugh at myself for such theatrics but I was too involved in my angst. Now I can find the amusement but then "the plays the thing" that caught the child acting out.

Then I suddenly came to point on the route, and there was the smell of the ocean. The smell of ocean, the seaweed, the sand, the fish and clams and that sort of thing we

associate with the ocean. It was sudden too. There was no occasional hint of ocean on a breeze. Just coming around a corner and there was the smell of the ocean, from the sights of farmland country to oceanfront in a heartbeat. In some sense I felt like I had made it even though there were many more miles to go yet.

I wish I had more time to explore Newcastle, and I suppose I could have, as there wasn't any real time frame. It seemed like a very nice quaint, in the touristy way, little town. I say little as it seemed little but the amount of activity would have made it seem otherwise. People were in full tourist mode, walking about or driving in the slow gawking manner we have all done at least once. I started to walk through town, I needed to stretch a little and walk off some aches. I was stopped by a man with his children who told me about his touring days now become mountain biking because of family obligations. Things change, we make choices and things change. This was a day for families.



By now I knew I was not biking back to Vermont. The physical and emotional drain was becoming too much. I now question whether I should have stayed longer on the road. At the time it seemed like enough. We all make the best choices we can for the situation. Trish, Paul and I had made plans to meet at Bar Harbor. We would camp out for a couple of days and return home together. We are family, and it was a time of realizing how important family is, that connection to family and people in general. I wanted to reconnect with the family I had not seen in awhile, and that was my new plan. I realized too the work VCAS does is not just some nice thing they do for families but how important it is to nurture the best family life possible. Sometimes that means disbanding one family to create another. We need to be able to see what the highest and best good is for all, not what we want to make happen because of some belief or ideal. Connection to people, and often that means family in one definition or another, and helping people is what gives our lives meaning.

With this thought in mind I called Trish there in Newcastle as I sat sipping coffee by an inlet (tide was out so it was not as oceanic as I would have liked). We talked and I looked forward to seeing her and Paul. I missed them both. They are my connection; they are family. All of us meeting at the end of journey seemed so right because it really has been a journey for all of us. Each of us seemed to be going through our own inner struggles. I needed to go out into the wilderness as it were and seek what I needed for the next part of life to come. Had I stayed long enough on this vision quest? For this one I deeply believe I had learned what I needed. There will be more quests out there but they will come when it is time.

I was on route 1 now and was going to stay on it for the rest of the ride. There was a turn on the AC route further down the road but looking at the map and the incredible mountain to my left that the route climbed into; I decided to stay on route 1. It was still up, down, up, down but it was tolerable, or maybe I was numb.

I made my first tourist stop at a place that said Camelot's something or other. I had ridden past it but turned around as the name intrigued me. I have always been drawn to King Arthur and the chivalry of the round table. I had to stop. The store contained

medieval apparel and trinkets that were all very cool but most too big to carry on the bike. I did eventually find an amethyst necklace for my sister.

On the road again I started to think about this one scent, other than the ocean, I had smelled for a while now. It was a sweet scent but not too sweet. I wondered if it was a woman's perfume wafting out a passing car window but I had smelled the same scent all along. My theory was either it was a wildflower blooming along the road or it was a spirit guide riding next to me. I liked the idea of the spirit guide so I stuck to that one, not that wildflowers aren't a good thing just that an unseen entity is so much more mysterious. I also noticed that some cars passing smelled more like gasoline than others. I began to wonder if they weren't tuned properly and were emitting unburned gasoline. I might have wondered this out loud; talking to myself was a regular thing by now. I wasn't sure if I was listening but I know I talked a lot.



I made it to Belfast with not much of my own gas left. But because there didn't seem to be much drama in my life that day, God mixed it up for me a little. The final leg to the motels listed on the map had a rather high bridge between them and me. I am not very fond of heights or bridges that span those heights. Bridges are ok most of the time because most are over low spots, or driven across so quickly there is hardly a notice. On a

slow bicycle one gets quite the view and it was a lovely view of the Belfast bay, but I was on a pedestrian walkway inches from being thrown over the side by some freak of nature wind which would deposit me in a pile of broken bones and flesh hundreds of feet below. I made it across in one piece and continued to the motel, so much for the drama.

I stayed at the Yankee Clipper motel across the street from a tourist shop and an out of business seafood restaurant A block back the way I had come was a quick mart, and I was in the mood for a turkey sandwich. After a shower and a change of clothes, I walked to the quick mart to find my turkey sandwich I knew they would have. I bought a bag of chips and a candy bar as well, rounding out the square food pyramid. I also bought a bottle of ginger-ale as heartburn was a constant companion since sometime midday Wednesday. Roloids accompanied the whole event as well.

As I sat outside my room, I kept feeling drawn to the shop across the street. It was a little after 6 pm. Wondering if it was still open, I finally decided to cross and check it out. The sign on the door showed business hours closing at 6pm but since someone was still there I asked if they were still open for business. The woman behind the counter, who appeared to own the shop, was very nice and invited me to look around. She was still closing up and would be there a short time longer; I was in luck or was everything supposed to happen as it did? I talked with her a little telling her about the trip and where I was from. I looked around the shop and came across an aventurine sphere. Aventurine being green in color is also the color of the heart chakra. Interesting I was drawn to it, to this shop, that it was



still open. There are no coincidences. God has a plan for all of us whether we think our plan is better or not.

I called Trish later that evening and once again felt better. I still had some feelings of sadness and was still feeling lonely but not as bad. The journey was nearing the end. I had shown myself I was stronger than I realized. I did not quit; I found the inner strength to continue. I think about it now and feel so much regard for those people who have accomplished so much more heroic deeds such as people who have healed from cancer, or people who have survived horrific tragedies, or people who give their lives to right injustices. It makes my little excursion pale. Not to take away from what I accomplished, it was a feat in and of itself, but humility has a special place.

Aches and pains: the usual - everything

Food: Turkey sandwich, chips, candy bar, nuts, Cliff bars, dried fruit, water and Gatorade. There may have been other small tidbits.

Weather: Sunny and warmer still, maybe high 80s low 90s