

# 2004 American Lung Association of Maine Ride Results

20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Trek Across Maine

9<sup>th</sup> Year of Fund-Raising for ALA-ME

by John Fischer

February 9, 2005

Dear Valued Sponsors:

I've included in this newsletter some very select photos of the trip. It's virtually impossible to do justice to an 85-day ride in an 8-page newsletter. So I encourage you to go on-line and examine the trip journal and the photos. Both of these items are accessible at the ALA-ME web site.

The bike route traveled through 11 states (Washington,

## The Northern Tier 2004 Anacortes, WA - Brunswick, ME



Courtesy of Adventure Cycling Association - [www.adventurecycling.org](http://www.adventurecycling.org)

Idaho, Montana, North Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan [both Upper and Lower Peninsulas], New York, Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine) and 2 Canadian provinces (Alberta and Ontario). Through the tremendously well-planned organized tour with Adventure Cycling Association, there were 14 of us who began

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**ALA-ME still:  
"Fighting big  
tobacco, bad air,  
and the asthma  
epidemic"**

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on May 28<sup>th</sup> in Anacortes, Washington. The official trip ended in Bar Harbor, Maine. The trip originally was not actually going to go through Brunswick on the way to Bar Harbor, but at about the halfway mark, it was indeed rerouted. So, to facilitate coverage by the local newspaper, The Times Record, and to make it easier for the Lung Association to be at the finish line, I moved my termination of the ride to Simpson Point in Brunswick.

I have to admit that it was a stroke of good luck to have decided to end in Brunswick, because the riders who continued on experienced some of the worst rain on the whole trip the next day. There was 5 inches of rain on the way to Camden. According to Orris, one of the two 70-year-olds on the trip, the rain was so intense that the water was "flowing up the down hills!" The total distance was still 4,304 miles for me.

Almost six months after successfully traversing the North American continent, I'm still responding now and then to people's inevitable question: "How was it?" Just as it is difficult to answer that question with any depth in



The whole group: Back row-Simon Steel, Tanya Peterson, John Steel, Oris Barber, Gretchen Schauss, Michael Senn, Katie Frato, Al Foster, Charlie Farr, Doug Kirk, me. Front row: Fran Rulon-Miller, Nigel Backwith, Bernt Förster

a ten-minute conversation, so, too, is it a formidable challenge to write a narrative for this newsletter that can summarize the value, importance, impact and meaning of having completed this odyssey. An equally wonderful and warm chorus of "Welcome Home" has accompanied this recurring question! People have been supportive and encouraging since I've returned. This, of



The 2004 rig fully loaded

course, just eggs me on to do more wild rides. People who kept track of the

2004 ALA-ME Ride

Total amount I have raised in 9 years:  
\$88,369

Average per year:  
\$9,819

2004 number of sponsors:  
350

2004 average pledge:  
\$65.15

**My fund-raising history**

1996 \$1,100  
1997 \$3,300  
1998 \$5,400  
1999 \$10,050  
2000 \$10,431  
2001 \$10,230  
2002 \$12,032  
2003 \$13,026  
2004 \$22,800

Total amount raised by all trekkers in 2004:  
\$1,2 million+

Total raised for the 20 years of the Trek:  
\$10.2 million+

**Your 2004 Pledges**

\$ Amount	# of Pledges
≤ 20	69
≤ 30	99
≤ 40	31
≤ 50	84
≤ 100	41
> 100	25
\$22,800	350



2004 ALA-ME Ride

progress of the ride, people from home, relatives and friends have all been welcoming and eager to hear about all the goings-on for the three months of the tour.

I've created a slideshow, which I've shown at First Parish Church in Brunswick and at the Highlands in Topsham. I'll be presenting it, as well, to the Outing Club at Bowdoin College. The plan at this time is to present it to the Board of the American Lung Association of Maine and to the trekkers at the



The Cabinet Mountains in Western Montana

21<sup>st</sup> Trek Across Maine in June. You may also see many of the photos on-line.

I'm also considering another means of sharing the meaning, purpose and experience of the ride. It seems to me that a book might be an appropriate form for this. There certainly were rich characters and phenomenal scenery as well as worthwhile reflections to share with readers.

Images of the vast plains, the snow-capped peaks of the Cascades and the Rockies, the myriad lakes of the Midwest, the silence of the less-traveled path, the variety of wildlife and the infinitely



May 28<sup>th</sup> Ceremonial Rear Wheel Dipping Anacortes, WA, on the West Coast

interesting characteristics of people of all kinds along the way fill my mind and memory.

The very first day of riding was actually a "shake-down" ride which would encourage anyone who had too much stuff to mail it home before beginning. I was thoroughly "shaken down." I ended up sending back 18 pounds worth of equipment. There were probably some bad decisions in that process, for example, I sent back my spare tires. Another rider stated that I would probably be fine without

them. This, of course, led to major headaches and adventure in Eastern Montana when my front tire blew out. When my wife, Susan, told a walking friend on the Bike Path that I had been training by loading



Logan Pass in Glacier National Park - Continental Divide (6,664 feet), Montana



En Route to the Canadian Rockies in Alberta

phone books in my trailer and then I sent back so much weight, his response was ,”Wha’d he do? Forget to take out the phone books?” Imagine this dialogue with a Maine accent.

Three days later, on my birthday, at the first summit of the tour, Rainy Pass, I was standing with Fran, our leader, when two young women clad only in bikinis jumped out of their pick up truck and started taking videos and pictures of

at 8:30am. I had just passed through town about half and hour before, when a pickup truck passed me and pulled over to the side of the road. The driver got out and asked me in a very strong “cowboy” accent, “I got jes’ one question fur ya. How in the heck did ya git out here so gall-durned fast?!” He was incredulous at my biking seven miles in half and hour.

We had a pleasant conversation.

People along the way were mostly all supportive of what we were trying to do. I handed out Maine lobster pins and potato pins to people whom I met along the way. I was careful not to hand out any potato pins in Idaho!

Weather, of course, was always a concern. There were only 18 days of rain out of the total.

That’s only 21% of the time. Interestingly when it rained, it seemed that time slowed down. There must be a scientific explanation.

Another source of encouragement to keep going was the group itself. Though we had some challenging disagreements, overall, people wanted to push each other onward. We were on a primal challenge and we were rooting for

each other to go on. Days of headwinds on the plains were exhausting, but we helped each other cope.

Humor was probably the most important tool we had along on the trip.

An aspect of “fun” that we faced at least until Wisconsin was trains.

There were several nights when

there had been more than a couple of trains going by. You could throw a stone from the campsite up to the Amtrak line that went right by. On one particular night it must have been an annual train reunion convention. There were trains going by about every half hour. They wouldn’t pass quietly; no, they would sound their train whistle with all the joy of an eight-year old boy on Christmas



Prince of Wales Hotel, Waterton Park, Alberta

morning.

Initially, I wasn’t sure if I should send material back to The Times Record every day. I made a decision to wait until we had completed 1,000 miles. I would then feel some certainty that I might actually finish the ride.

An on-going activity, of course, was to track our progress. We were always excited about crossing state lines. We tracked major milestones, for example, 1,000



White Pelicans in Waterton Park, Alberta

each other in the snow. Like many other moments when there was an opportunity to photograph wildlife, there was not enough time to get the camera out and capture the moment.

Throughout the tour, there were countless interesting encounters with people. There was the man in a pickup truck outside of Eureka, Washington



The Plains of Montana



Sunset in Chester, Montana

miles, 2,000 miles, halfway, and the like. We discussed them as we approached them.

As the tour wound down, I felt a definite melancholy combined with a tremendous sense of accomplishment.

It was very revealing just how lucky we are in Maine in regards to tobacco policy. Most states and both



Mackinaw Bridge, St. Ignace, Michigan

provinces had no policy whatsoever. Returning to Maine made me appreciate that fact and that I'm lending a hand by fund-raising for ALA-ME. You're lending a hand by sponsoring my rides.

Often, in my experience, people come back from these kinds of intense, lengthy experiences with resolve to start life anew and change directions; they've gone on a deep journey of self-discovery. For me, I would say that it has been less a journey of self-discovery than one of self-acceptance. Of course, there are some things I hope to do differently, but overall, I'm still the

2004 ALA-ME Ride

same person as before I left.

Nature did her best to thwart my progress in many ways: rain, sleet, wind, pitiless sun, snow (in some small measure), persistent and innovative insects, exhaustion, the threat of carnivorous animals (though never fully experienced!), and steep slopes. I

would never state that I conquered Nature for that would just tick her off, but rather, with the help of group support and inner spiritual resources, I was able to continue and finish THIS time. Some people have called this the experience of a lifetime. At times it seemed like the ride was lasting a lifetime; at other times, it whisked by in an unbelievably rapid kaleidoscope of changing vistas and faces. In one way, this trip has been the experience of a lifetime, for sure. If people were

to ask me if they should do such a thing, I wouldn't hesitate to encourage them especially if they were going to



Mississippi Headwaters, Minnesota

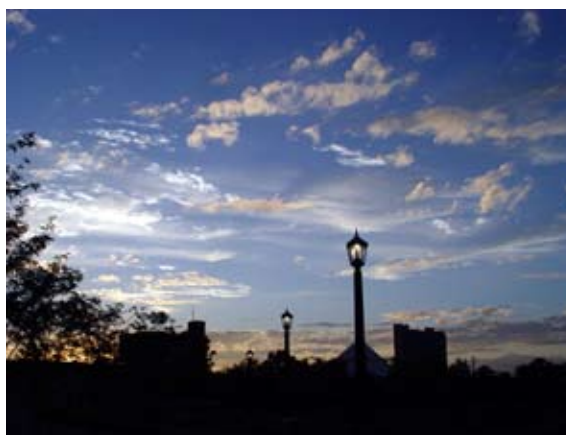
do it for the American Lung Association of Maine. If someone were to ask me if I would do it again, I would hesitate. It has been a challenge (that might be an understatement) to me personally and to my important relationship with my wife. At this point, I wouldn't want to be



Tunnel of Trees, Western Michigan Mainland

gone for such a long time. This year, though, I will do the Trek Across Maine in celebration of my tenth year as a fund-raiser for the American Lung

Association of Maine. I will preface the Trek itself with a Trek AROUND Maine. See the Plan for 2005 on the last page of this newsletter. Having said this, I should probably reveal that I'm thinking about a long ride again next year. There is a group of people who is researching the possibility of a Trans-Canada tour for the Lung Association there. My idea for this would be to still



Sunset, Niagara Falls, Ontario



Black bears, White Mountains., New Hampshire

expression of its impact. I will certainly continue to share my reflections on the trip by writing.

Again, I thank all of you who sponsored, supported, encouraged, e-mailed and cheered me on, thereby helping me to complete this epic journey. I hope you're as excited as I am to see what this year's adventure will bring.

raise all the funds I normally raise for Maine and somehow have my participation in the event be of some use to the Lung Association in the provinces the trip traverses. Of course, that's next year. So let's focus on 2005 for now!

This narrative is certainly not the last word in summing up the experience. Just as the trip itself was a process, so, too, is the



August 20<sup>th</sup> Ceremonial Front Wheel Dipping  
Simpson Point, Brunswick.  
Greeting by Ed Miller, CEO, ALA-ME



## 2004 ALA-ME Accomplishments

### TOBACCO PREVENTION AND CONTROL

- Worked with their partners to protect the Tobacco Settlement funding of health programs including tobacco prevention and treatment—no money was taken from the Fund for Healthy Maine for the first time since it was created.
- Documented a remarkable 50% reduction in youth smoking in Maine since 1997.
- Smooth transition to smoke free bars, restaurants and bingo halls. Maine now has some of the strongest and most protective smoking laws in the country.
- With the Center for Tobacco Independence certified 12 tobacco treatment specialists. Maine is one of two states currently sponsoring this program to provide quality assurance for those wanting to quit smoking.

- Expanded Not On Tobacco, the premier teen quit smoking program, to all the 31 Healthy Maine Partnerships.

### AIR QUALITY

- Organized an international conference to create an indoor air quality research agenda.
- Enhanced their first in the nation Respiratory Health Indicator web tool, produced their second annual report on lung health in Maine.

### ASTHMA AND OTHER LUNG DISEASES

- Provided training for 76 Asthma Educators through their revised Asthma Educator Institute, 7 of Maine's asthma educators are now nationally certified.
- Advocated with their collaborators to successfully pass a law that will allow Maine students to carry their asthma inhalers with them in school.

- Continue to actively lobby in Augusta to assure all Maine people will have access to quality, affordable health care, including preventive services and prescription drugs.
- Continue to expand their efforts to promote lung healthy lifestyles for all ages through educational and fundraising activities like the bicycle Trek Across Maine and their Asthma Walks.
- Raised \$1,2 million+ from the Trek Across Maine to support their research, education and advocacy efforts.



2004 ALA-ME Ride

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 Total Business Donations: \$4,304  
 Average Donation: \$70.00

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## Team Carp A Diem

The Friends' Team will reunite this year to vie for the title of highest average pledges. So far we have nearly 10 members and I'm the team leader again. It's such an honor to be the leader of such a fine group of cyclists who are so committed to helping advance the cause of ALA-ME in the state of Maine.

Our enthusiasm for fund-raising is overshadowed only by our bottomless excitement for biking. Our team goal this year is to raise \$25,000. I'm confident that we'll reach our lofty goal with your help and generosity.

## The Plan for 2005 1,500 miles around Maine

This year, I plan to do The Trek Across Maine again. Last year it was more of A Trek Across Maine. The ride will be in celebration of my 10<sup>th</sup> year of fund-raising for ALA-ME. To celebrate that milestone, I hope to raise \$20,000.

In addition to the actual Trek Across Maine, as you can see from the Maine map, I'm planning a Trek AROUND Maine first. It will be a circumnavigation of the state over a period of 19 days. Beginning in Brunswick, I'll head over to Gilead, down to Kittery. From there, up the coast back through Brunswick, on to Belfast, Ellsworth, and through Machias and Calais. Then it's on to Madawaska,

2004 ALA-ME Ride

## How You Can Help

- Sponsor me directly by:
  - § Making a check out to ALA-ME and mailing it to me, or
  - § Pledging on-line at [www.mrsnv.com/evt/e01/pldg/search.jsp?id=396](http://www.mrsnv.com/evt/e01/pldg/search.jsp?id=396)
 At that site, just type in my name to find me. It's easy.
- Ask your company to do a matching contribution
- Find out if your business would consider a business sponsorship
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- Collect sponsorships for me at your workplace from coworkers
- Let me know if you can't/don't wish to contribute this year

Home: (207) 729-1554  
Cell: (207) 522-1238

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My Web site: [www.suscom-maine.net/~jfischer/Home.htm](http://www.suscom-maine.net/~jfischer/Home.htm)  
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### A Sincere Thank You

I wish to extend a very sincere thank you to all my new and continuing sponsors for helping ALA-ME in their mission of improving life, one breath at a time.

Fort Kent, Millinocket, Greenville, Jackman, Rangeley, Errol (NH) and finally finishing in Newry. The trip will start on May 27th and end on June 16th. The Trek itself will start the next day. It begins as usual, at Sunday River and ends in Rockland. The following day I'll bike back home to Brunswick and have a good rest to get ready for the next adventure. I hope I can count on your support again this year for a great cause.

