

# 2006 American Lung Association of Maine Ride Results

by John Fischer

Fund-Raising 11th Anniversary

A Roasting, sunny, productive, challenging, corn-filled, entertaining, aerobic and successful ride from Seattle, Washington to Washington, DC



Eastern Washington State  
Complete with Sagebrush and 100° heat

The 2006 ride was multifaceted and extremely challenging. It was not easy. There were many moments during the ride when I felt threatened by nature, by drivers, by lack of support on the road, by lack of decent and edible food and by lack of shade. As many of you may already know, there was a fatality on day 4 of the ride which overshadowed the rest of the experience.

This is not to say that the ride was a total loss. It was a phenomenally successful fund-raiser. I raised \$27,500



*Improving Life One  
Breath At a Time*

and rode 3,100 miles. There were 369 sponsors this year. I met many wonderful people along the way. There were moments of breathtaking beauty. The stark contrast between the sunlight filtering through the trees and the accompanying

ing shadow in some of the wooded sections of Pennsylvania still remains vivid in my mind. The deep aroma of pine in the Rockies and the ubiquitous fragrance of sage

in the plains remain strong sense memories. Meeting so many interesting characters along the way, even the driver who questioned, "What's the matter? You afraid of riding a real bike?!" was an integral and inspiring part of the adventure.

Yet, the difficulties posed by key aspects of this ride were never far from my consciousness. There were 40 of us who rode together as a united group only once during the entire trip—on the very last day when we processed alongside the Reflecting Pool in front of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC.



Harlowton, Montana Rodeo - Bronco-busting

Immediately after the finish of the ride, one of our computer-savvy cyclists opened an on-line Yahoo Group where we could share our post-ride reflections, photos and issues. As quickly as we posted photos, so too, were detailed, heartfelt letters of deep concern and complaint (including my own) to the Board of Directors of Adventure Cycling Association added to the on-line site. As it turned out, 75 percent of the participants wrote letters to the eight board members recounting our dissatisfaction, displeasure and disappointment at what was supposed to have been an historic commemorative event for the organization: the 30th Anniversary Ride.

I participated in that letter-writing campaign by submitting a five-page missive addressing the concerns we all ultimately shared: lack of mechanical support, inadequate food and water, inappropriate and often dangerous cycling route design, substandard cycling route research and preparation, and inadequate safety precautions.

Some of the letters were emotive; one person reflected feeling as though her summer had been stolen from her. I person-



The Continental Divide at MacDonald Pass (6,325 ft)

ally felt threatened often. One example was the night in Kadoka, South Dakota, when we found ourselves in the middle of a very violent lightning storm when a 3 a.m. siren sounded for which we didn't know the reason. My first thought was TORNADO, of course.

Another was when we biked 40 miles on Interstate 90 in Washington State with giant



Approaching Badlands National Park, South Dakota - 106°

trucks and cars whipping by at 70 to 80 mph. This was inexcusable route "design" flaw on the part of ACA.

The board did respond surprisingly quickly. Indeed the board members were taken totally by surprise by the strength and intensity of the participants' responses. I suppose that in itself is indicative of the communication

problems that plagued this ride from the start. They have taken pains to admit their mistakes and have thoroughly apologized. These remedies haven't removed the pain of the untenable situations in which we found ourselves, but it showed they care.

This organization has been one of the premier bicycling advocacy groups in the United States for 30 years. All the riders have been mindful of this and of how important ACA has been in promoting travel by bicycle. No one, despite the risks they imposed on us, has displayed a desire to threaten its existence. In other words, no one spoke seriously of class-action



Scenic, South Dakota Bar

suits or any such potentially disastrous legal action that would destroy this important non-profit organization.

The board promised further remedial actions as regards trip organization and oversight. The riders' reactions, as evidenced by the "chat-ter" on the Yahoo! Group site, have been positive, grateful and mostly surprised.

This difficult journey didn't mark the end of my fund-raising bike rides, though. This year will be a repeat performance of the cross-country ride from 3 years ago. I hope the temperature hovers between 60 degrees and 80 degrees Fahrenheit with no rain, lightning or humidity - in other words, "The Way Life Should Be." Besides, I need another shot at Logan Pass.

Enough of the future... reflecting back on 2006 there were many humorous incidents that inevitably add spice to a bicycle expedition. One happened while I was trying to find my way out of

Spokane, Wash- ington, on Day 6. After reach- ing a dead end street when I was under the impression that I was well on the way to Sandpoint, Idaho, I thought it would make sense to stop at a gas station to ask for direc- tions. The first worker I spoke with wanted to

know where I was headed. When I told her, Sandpoint, Idaho, she insisted that I should keep going east on the road we were on. I tried to tell her that I was with a group and that we were supposed to follow a specific route, but she couldn't accept that. She said that she always went to Sandpoint the way she was telling me and that was the correct and only way to go. Her co- worker wasn't much more

helpful. They didn't agree on how to get me back on the route I tried to describe to them. Neither of them could actually show me on a map where exactly the store was where we were standing. It must have taken 20 minutes for them to argue about the importance of taking this or that route. Finally a man arrived who seemed to be the owner of the business. So I began explaining to him the route I was trying to get to, he said that it should take about 10-15 minutes to get there. I then told him that I was on a bicycle. It was then I got the most unusual reaction I've ever had while doing these long rides. He said, "You're on a bicycle!" This was followed by an incredulous look on his face and loud cackling laughter. I'm not sure that I instilled in him much faith that I possessed much sanity. But, in the end, he was helpful in getting me back to the pre- determined route.



Crazy Horse Monument Near Rapid City, South Dakota



Madison, Wisconsin Cow Parade Participant

There were many interesting business signs, for example, at a concrete and dry wall business, "This mud's for you."; at a pizza place, "We toss 'em, they're awesome."; at a closed business that had wild animals to look at, "Never mind the bear, beware of the owner."; at a campground in Montana, "Drive slow or die fast!" This text was next to a picture of a Colt .45.

There was a bar in Parkman, Wyoming selling t-shirts that said, "Parkman, WY - Where Custer Should Have Stopped!" They were also selling license plate frames that said, "Parkman, WY - where the whole world meets."

There was a memorable moment in Minnesota, just after leaving New Ulm. We were riding along on a relatively deserted country road not paying much attention to what was behind us except for any vehicles coming our

way. At some point, I thought it was getting even darker than it had been all morning. I looked around behind me and I was shocked. The entire horizon and sky were black with an ominous cloud bank. Car

lights were the only thing we could see in the distance. It was so dark that some lights that farms were using to illuminate their driveways at night came on. Not only was this cloud bank threatening, it was approaching us rapidly. It looked like it would swallow us up. Michael had his dark sunglasses on and I told him to remove them and have a look behind us. He, too, was dismayed.

I suggested that we speed up to try and make it to the next rest stop which was about 4 miles away at that point. This cloud bank brought with it fierce winds that, thankfully, were at our backs so

we were going 25 miles per hour trying to reach a safe spot. Unfortunately, heavy drops of rain began falling and I thought it most prudent to seek shelter. We had just come upon a farmhouse where there was construction going on. We sought shelter in a large metal shed with some shirtless locals who were pouring a concrete foundation. It was difficult to have much conversation because of the loud thunder.

There were two stores in Chaseburg, Wisconsin: Pa's Meats and Taxidermy and a bar across the street. For a different experience, I went to Pa's. This was unique in itself. Inside the store there was a section of used children's clothing and toys. Another section was some old furniture. There were old-looking deer that had been served by a taxidermist lying around. The room was dark and it was hard to make out what all was in there. There was an old sewing dummy. I went up to the counter and



Noon-time Outside St. Peter, Minnesota



Amish Wheat Shocks in WI, IN, OH and PA

the vast coolers were absolutely devoid of any merchandise whatsoever. I asked the guy behind the cash register if he had pop (I thought it might be wise to play “native” and not call it “soda.”) He said that he thought he might have just a couple of cans of Coke. That was fine by me. I asked if I could use the rest room first. He sent me up an unlit stairway covered with carpet from at least the 1950s. On the way up the stairs there were a few large stuffed birds lying around. There was a deer head that had seen better days. The rest room was something to write home about. It was actually something to write to the Health Department about. It was filthy with no sign of paper towels anywhere. There was an old stained Playboy on the window sill from 2002. I wended my way back down the stairway surrounded by dead animals and picked out a Coke from the cooler. It cost 50 cents, so I gave him a dollar bill. He opened the register and said, “Oh, I

don’t have any change. Why don’t you just take it?”

Many people along the way certainly made a vivid impression on me. There was the caterer in Kendallville, Ind., who was

working for us at a mosquito-infested campground. He wore a button that said, “Cancer Sucks!” It was only after talking to the man who was visiting him (who also gave me a ride during the violent rainstorm to the only hotel I stayed in during the entire trip) that I discovered why he was wearing that button. His wife was at hospice at that very moment in her last days or hours of life.

There was Bob in Custer, South Dakota, who was greatly pleased that I was doing something constructive for the Lung Association which was helping him with all his respiratory problems. He was greatly interested in hearing about the ride up to that point. He expressed great gratitude that I was doing something that was benefiting him and his family.

There was Mr. Weadum in Midland, Pa., who was thoroughly impressed that I was fund-raising and biking such a long distance for this important cause. At a point on the far side of town, he caught up to me and was curious about how far I was riding. His response, when I told him, was “Man! You’re tough!”

There was the owner of the only laundromat in Confluence, Pa., who came late to close up (this was fortunate because I was late getting my laundry finished). He was extremely generous in giving me a ride back to the campground after dark. It was people such as these along the way that made this ride survivable and enjoyable.

Many of the participants on the ride were supportive and encouraging to each other during the trying moments. Matt, from England, often said that it was “the journey, not the destination” that was important.



Early Morning Ride in PA State Park



Approaching the Finish in DC

He also suggested, though, that it might have been wise to prepare for the ride by turning on the oven at home, leaving the oven door open and trying to sleep right in front of it. Often, humor was the best support people could provide.

Of course, there was plenty of awe-inspiring scenery in many places. I do regret giving Illinois short shrift; I wish I could have reported more positive things there. I'm not hesitating to cross the United States again by bike. It just would never be the route we "chose" last year.

The idea of crossing Canada still intrigues me; I suppose

that broiling heat wouldn't be the primary concern for such an expedition. I'll close this article, and wish you all a happy spring while sending you a resounding thank-you for all your support.



Your 2006 Pledges	
\$ Amount	# of Pledges
≤ 20	53
≤ 30	109
≤ 40	27
≤ 50	99
≤ 100	53
> 100	29
\$27,500	369

**My total funds raised in 11 years:**  
\$134,869

**Average per year:**  
\$12,261

**Number of sponsors in 2006:**  
369

**Average 2006 Pledge:**  
\$74.52

**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
2005	\$19,000
2006	\$27,500

**2006 Business Sponsors Total Donations: \$5,474**



At the finish - By the Reflecting Pool in Washington, DC

## ALA-ME 2006 Accomplishments...

### Asthma and Other Lung Disease

- Successfully advocated for an income tax check-off that will provide funding for lung disease research, benefiting Maine people.
- Worked with a team of lung health educators to develop a set of guidelines for pulmonary support groups for people living with lung disease in Maine.
- Continued to expand efforts to promote lung healthy lifestyles for all ages through educational activities like the bicycle Trek Across Maine and the web-based walking program, Step-n-Trek, a companion to the Trek.
- Provided training for 50 Asthma Educators, 24 professionals and 25 students through the revised Asthma Educator Institute bringing the totals trained to date to 150 professionals and 50 students. 23 of the 150 professionals are now nationally certified asthma educators.

### Special Events and Mission-Based Fundraising

- Raised **over a million dollars once again** from the 2006 Trek Across Maine to support research, education, advocacy work and continuing efforts! This event attracted over 1600 riders, thousands of supporters, many dedicated sponsors and 300 volunteers. This event continues to be the premiere cycling event in the national Lung Association family.
- Raised over **\$150,000** through Golf Privilege Card sales. This program annually attracts nearly 100 sponsoring golf courses and driving ranges in Maine, New Hampshire and eastern Canada.
- In January 2006, implemented the first annual Research Dinner-Gala and auction. Raised over **\$25,000** to support research efforts benefiting Maine people.

### Tobacco Prevention and Control

- For the first time, The American Lung Association gave Maine straight A's on their "Tobacco Prevention and Control Report Card." Maine was the only state in the country to receive straight A's for its smoke-free air, tobacco prevention spending, cigarette tax and restriction of youth access.
- Successfully assured that Maine's Tobacco Settlement money continues to support the health improvement programs in the Fund for a Healthy Maine and maintaining Maine's position as the nation's leader in per capita spending on tobacco prevention and treatment.
- Continued efforts with the Center for Tobacco Independence training and certifying tobacco treatment specialists. Maine is one of five states currently sponsoring this program to provide support for those wanting to quit smoking.

### Healthy Air

- With the release of the American Lung Association's "State of the Air" report, the American Lung Association of Maine launched its Healthy Air Campaign which addresses energy efficiency, conservation and increased reliance on clean fuels, including solar, biomass and wind. The campaign focuses on advocating for healthy energy and transportation systems.
- In 2005, the American Lung Association of Maine initiated a multi year research project with the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health and the Maine Department of Education. The purpose of this project is to develop tools that can be used to assess the impacts of school environmental quality on the health and performance of building occupants.

## 2006 Business Sponsors

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[www.summitenv.com](http://www.summitenv.com)

Temple Beth El  
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Tire Warehouse  
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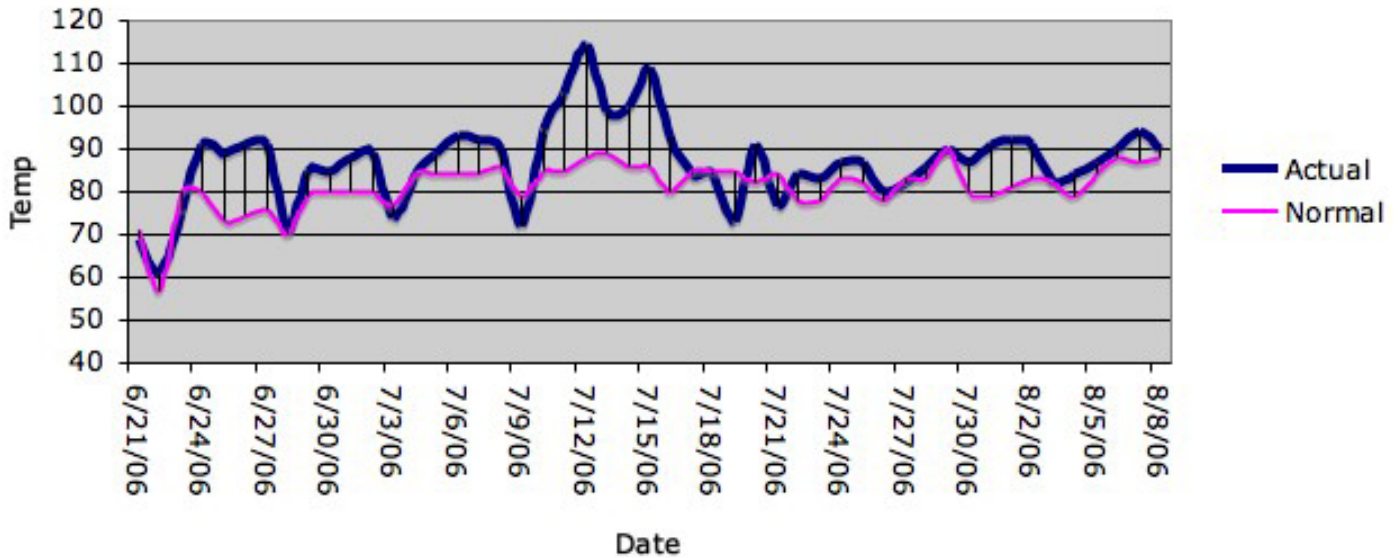
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Be sure to patronize these  
businesses and mention that  
you saw them in this newsletter.

Thank you!

## 2006 Temperatures



## 2007 Ride Plan

I will participate in the unofficial 20th anniversary running of the Northern Tier ride. This will be my second expedition using this route and it will be my third transcontinental ride with Adventure Cycling.

The ride is still a self-contained one, which means that riders must carry all their own gear. There is no support vehicle. So packing carefully is *de rigueur*. As many of you may remember, this was a hard but well-learned lesson from 3 summers ago.

Anacortes, Washington, will mark the start of the ride on June 2nd. It officially finishes in Bar Harbor, Maine, on September 2nd. My finish line will be at Simpson's Point in Brunswick on approximately August 30th.

The route will go through Washington, Idaho, Montana, Alberta (CA), North Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Ontario (CA), New York State, Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine. Total distance will be approximately 4,300 miles.

Average mileage will be about 55 miles per day with one rest day weekly.

My fund-raising goal for 2007 is \$30,000 and 400 sponsors — a record on both counts.

I hope I can still count on your support this year for an important health cause.



2007 Northern Tier Map  
Courtesy of Adventure Cycling Association  
([www.adventurecycling.org](http://www.adventurecycling.org))

## How You Can Help

- Sponsor me directly:
  - § Make a check out to ALA-ME and mail it to me, or
  - § Pledge on-line at [www.mainejung.org/pledgejohn.htm](http://www.mainejung.org/pledgejohn.htm)
- Refer me to people who might be willing to sponsor my ride
- Collect sponsorships from coworkers for me at your workplace
- Let me know if you can't/don't wish to contribute this year

Email: [johnfischer@suscom-maine.net](mailto:johnfischer@suscom-maine.net)  
ALA-ME Website: [www.mainejung.org](http://www.mainejung.org)

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.

