

Michael Fisette Annual Bicycle Ride Update: Ride Starts Tomorrow

Friday, June 17, 2016. Tomorrow, I begin my ninth year of long-distance riding. For those of you who are new to us, for the last 8 years I have ridden a solo bicycle expedition from Carnation, WA to Pawtucket, RI, which is where I grew up. These 8 years were all about my desire to pedal across the United States; to see, smell, and touch the land, and meet the people. Rather than do it in one trip, I decided in 2008 (when I turned 50) to break it up in week-long annual segments.

As in previous years, I'll do my best to send updates every evening. Having finished the cross-country route in 2015, this year I will ride south from Rhode Island to Coast Guard Training Center Cape May, NJ, from which I graduated 40 years ago. Then, I'll head north from Cape May to Philadelphia to fly home. Here is this year's 431-mile itinerary, which is the most leisurely pace yet:

1. Saturday, June 18: Cumberland, RI – New London, CT (72 miles)
2. Sunday, June 19: New London, CT – Commack, NY (65 miles)
3. Monday, June 20: Commack, NY – Jackson Heights, NY (42 miles)
4. Tuesday, June 21: Jackson Heights, NY – Stafford Township, NJ (66 miles)
5. Wednesday, June 22: Stafford Township, NJ – Atlantic City, NJ (48 miles)
6. Thursday, June 23: Atlantic City, NJ – Cape May, NJ (46 miles)
7. Friday, June 24: Cape May, NJ – Millville, NJ (46 miles)
8. Saturday, June 25: Millville, NJ – Philadelphia, PA (46 miles)

On Friday, June 24, I'll attend a recruit graduation ceremony at Cape May in the morning.

For those who did not receive my previous year's bike ride blogs, here is a recap:

2008: Carnation, WA - Spokane, WA. I fell quite a bit short of my goal of reaching North Dakota. This was one of those experiences where you learn how unprepared you really are. The Cascade Mountains kicked my butt, and I got beaten down by the heat and ran out of water at Stevens Pass. My right hand went numb because I compressed the ulnar nerve, was badly sunburned, and didn't eat for 3 days due to no appetite. I was doing 110 - 120 miles a day, which was way too much.

2009: Spokane, WA - Whitefish, MT. Once again, too many miles in a day. The first day was 110 miles, and I was so tired I could hardly sit up straight to eat dinner that night. Guess it didn't help that I got up at 2 AM to drive from Carnation - Spokane, so I could start riding from Spokane at 8:00 AM. This leg too was cut short due to concern about pain in my left shin.

2010: Whitefish, MT - Havre, MT. The train from Seattle - Whitefish left 5 hours late, and arrived 5 hours late. Instead of departing Whitefish at 8:00 AM, I found myself getting on the road at 1:30 PM, and terrified I was going to get caught going over the Rocky Mountains in the dark, without a headlight. Fortunately, I made it over the Rockies and arrived in East Glacier by

dusk. Because of mechanical difficulties, I had to return home from Havre, MT, and not North Dakota. Oh, way too many miles each day again. Look up “slow learner” in the dictionary, and you’ll see my face.

2011: Havre, MT - Minot, ND. Success! I completed the entire planned course. Welcome to the middle of nowhere, home of the North Dakota oil boom. Minot had just gone through a very bad flood, which wiped out much of the town. Miles and miles and miles between towns.

2012: Minot, ND - St. Paul, MN. Talk about Nowhere, USA! The state tree in ND is the telephone pole. 100+ degrees every single day. Thought this leg would never end, but then I got to see the Mississippi River and reached St. Cloud, MN. First city since Spokane that I’ve enjoyed good food in a very long time.

2013: St. Paul, MN - Chicago. Perfect weather (70's) every day. Small towns were much closer together than in Montana and North Dakota. Wisconsin was a beautiful (but hilly) state, and riding south along the bike path in to Chicago felt like a victory lap.

2014: Milwaukee, WI – Buffalo, NY. Another year with great weather. Started out by taking the ferry across Lake Michigan to Muskegon, MI, and started pedaling from there. Michigan was not the industrial state I expected; very rural and horrendous road conditions. Spent 2½ days riding through Canada, which was very rural also. First year to use Air B&B, on which people advertise rooms for rent in their houses. First time to see Niagara Falls. Some neighborhoods in Buffalo through which I rode have severe urban decay; abandoned houses literally falling down.

2014: Buffalo, NY – Pawtucket, RI. More great weather as I rode along the Erie Canal for almost 400 miles, then through Massachusetts and into Rhode Island. For the most part, there was great food all along the route, and nice places to stay. The economic decay from the closed factories was evident in many New York and Massachusetts towns. After riding almost 3,000 miles from Carnation, I had my first ride-ending mechanical breakdown in Schenectady, NY. Guess I had the luck of the Irish because there was a repair shop 2.65 miles away.

Michael Fisette 2016 Bicycle Ride Day 1: Cumberland, RI - New London, CT

Saturday, June 18, 2016. It's now 4:00 PM, and I'm lounging in the shade at a B&B at which I'm staying tonight in New London, CT. It's called "The Big House." It certainly ranks right up there with the best places I've stayed since this odyssey began in 2008, although New London appears to be a bit of a rough town. I arrived at 2:50 PM.



After spending yesterday with my parents, sister, brother, and brother-in-law, I woke this morning around 4:30 AM. Like at home, the birds come alive around 4:00 AM this time of year, and it starts getting brighter shortly thereafter. I hit the road at 5:17 AM, and took a picture of the beautiful sunrise on Abbott Valley in Cumberland, RI, by my sister's house.



I had the roads pretty much to myself for the first hour or two, which is good because Rhode Island drivers have overtaken Boston drivers as the most aggressive. (Forget New York City; they have nothing on Boston and Rhode Island.)

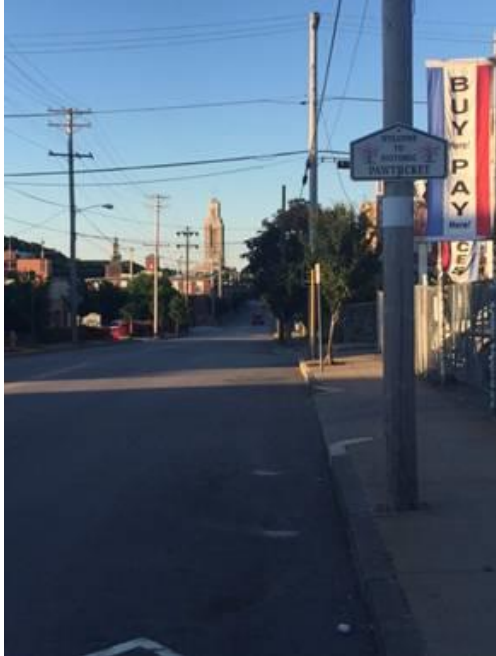
I passed the Wyatt Federal Detention Center in Central Falls, RI. My mother used to do prison ministry here. We tend to take our freedom for granted, so here's a reminder of the alternative.



Of course, most of the textile mills are still standing, and many looked operational (although they're certainly not producing textiles any more).



Coming into Pawtucket, RI, which is where I grew up, I saw city hall. It also reminds me of the Los Angeles City Hall, which they used to show at the beginning of Dragnet.



And then I passed the Old Slater Mill, also in Pawtucket on the bank of the Blackstone River. This is where the industrial revolution began in 1793.



Soon thereafter, I was in downtown Providence. Urban legend has it that the old Industrial National Bank Building, which I believe is now vacant, served as the inspiration for Clark Kent's Daily Planet building.



I was pleasantly surprised to find that there was a bicycle path which started in Providence and went for around 20 miles.



Gypsy moths have done a number on the trees in Rhode Island and Connecticut. I remember we had those in the late 80's/early 90's, when we lived in Virginia. On many trees, the foliage has been totally eaten.



I figured today would be the toughest of the eight. It was 75 miles, but had 2,267 feet of climbing. The weather was perfect in the high 70's, but was just 55 when I started out. I had pretty bad leg cramps at Groton, CT, with about 10 miles to go. I bought some PowerAde, which I think helped a bit. I stopped at a convenience store to buy a strawberry shortcake ice cream bar, and could barely walk to the cashier. I rested outside for a bit, and found a Hilton hotel a few miles up the road. They had tables and chairs with umbrellas set up outside, so I sat there for around 30 minutes and fell asleep.



Once I got back on the road, I arrived at The Big House for a nice shower and relaxation time.

Tonight, it's Italian Food at "On the Waterfront," which is a few blocks away. Ironic, because this trip is supposed to undo the excess pasta I've eaten over the past year.

I have reservations tomorrow morning for the 8:00 AM ferry to Orient Point, NY, which is the easternmost point on Long Island. I hope to catch the 7:00 AM ferry instead.

Michael Fiset 2016 Bicycle Ride Day 2 Orient, NY - Commack, NY

Day 2: Orient, NY – Commack, NY. I managed to catch the 7:00 AM ferry from New London, CT – Orient, NY this morning. The crossing took around 1 hour. There were a couple of nice lighthouses along the way.



Eastern Long Island was exactly as I imagined it would be. It reminded me of the Rhode Island coastal towns. The roads were in great shape for most of the day, and there was a nice wide shoulder on which to ride. The weather today was perfect; not a cloud in the sky, low 70's and no humidity. There was vineyard after vineyard along the road for the first 25 miles of so. If the business wasn't a vineyard, it was either a plant nursery or roadside vegetable stand.





Either the priest at this Mattituck church is really good, or the wall street hedge fund managers, with beach houses, are repenting for their sins. The parking lot was full, so they were parking on the street too. Not something you see too much of anymore at Catholic churches.



Later in the day, I found this nice shaded area behind a fire station in East Shoreham, which was a nice place to take a break.



When I rode through East Shoreham, I was surprised to see Nicola Tesla's laboratory on the site of the road. I remember watching a TV show about him. He worked with Thomas Edison, then went off on his own to perfect alternating current (AC) electricity. He was quite the visionary and inventor. Unfortunately, his lab now looks run down.



I got off course by a few miles, and of course it was in a hilly area. I lost internet reception, so I could not use the map on my iPhone. When I stopped to ask for directions, I noticed my rear wheel was not moving freely. As a matter of fact, it was hardly moving at all. This explained why the last few miles seemed so tough. Sure enough, I broke a spoke. I let out the rear brake, so the wheel would not rub. The brakes are that important; I'm more concerned with moving forward than I am with stopping. Thanks to the "Around Me" app on my iPhone, I was able to find two bicycle shops within 2.5 miles. The first one I called was closed, but the second was open, and closing in 1 hour. I rode to the bike shop where the owner, Rob, was able to find a replacement spoke that fit, take the wheel apart, and get me back on the road again in around 45 minutes. Rob was a lifesaver.



Tonight, I'm staying in an absolute pit of a motel. I made a reservation 3 months ago, and sure enough they couldn't find it. I was none too pleased, as I was pretty much out of gas for the day. The parking lot was mostly empty, so who knows what the big deal was. The wife calls the husband to come to reception to figure it out. Amazingly, he finds me a room. It is an absolute dump and reeks of cigarettes, but it has to be home for tonight. Check out the classy price list on the reception window:



I still don't have much of an appetite, but I'll see if I can find something small for dinner. This is normal, and my appetite usually returns on day 3.

Tomorrow, I was hoping to sleep in as it will be just a 42-mile ride. However, the cigarette smell will probably force me out early. Tomorrow, I ride to the Big Apple. On the way, I'm going to try to swing by Flushing Meadows, the site of the 1964 World's Fair.

Michael Fisette 2016 Bicycle Ride Day 3: Commack, NY - Queens, NY

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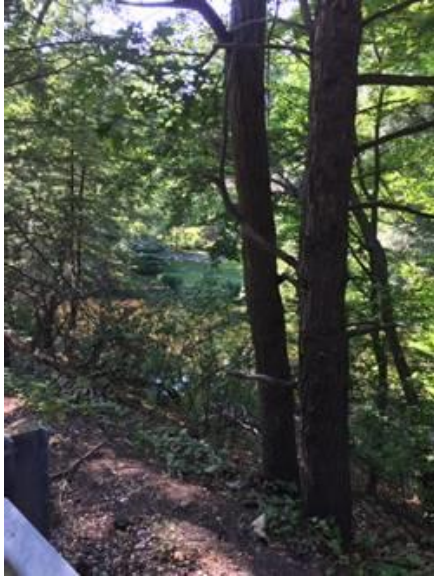
Last night, I woke up every 15 minutes or so smelling cigarette smoke. While I planned to sleep in today because I had fewer miles to ride, I awoke at 6:30 and was on the road at 7:21.

I ate dinner last night at Sal's Ristorante, which was a half-mile walk from the dump in which I was staying. The waiters were really friendly. One told me he was a volunteer EMT, and was working to become a policeman. When I told him where I was staying, he said that was "Section 8" housing, and that he had to "go into one of the rooms for a call," so he knew what I was talking about. I had an antipasto, one meatball, one sausage and a glass of Chianti, because my appetite was still absent. I hardly touched the antipasto, and drank less than half the wine, but I did manage to eat the sausage and meatball. Great sauce! As I was leaving, another waiter brought me a glass of Limomcello, which I had to drink to be polite.

After riding for around an hour, I stopped at this nice looking place called Kerber's Farm in Cold Springs Harbor. Still craving just protein, I ordered plain chicken salad and a cup of coffee. Turned out to be just right.



I rode through some hilly, yet bucolic country, which surprisingly was just 25 miles outside of New York City. The houses were very large and on large properties. This picture was taken in Laurel Hollow.



Around 11:15 AM, and I had a craving for pizza. Yes, the appetite is coming back, right on schedule. Just take a look at this beauty; there's nothing tastier than New York pizza!



My Google Maps soon thereafter seemed to route me onto a freeway. I paused as I'd made this mistake in the past, but after studying the map, I edged down the on-ramp. It looked too dicey, so I knew there had to be a mistake. Just as I was turning around, a NYC police car stopped to ask if I needed help. He directed me to a road running parallel to the freeway, and told me there was a bike path nearby called the Brooklyn-Queens Greenway. I soon found the

path, and averted a freeway disaster. On the path, I went over a bridge and confirmed I wasn't in Kansas anymore.



Somehow, I kept losing my way on the trail, and found myself on busy roads. I took this picture of row houses, which is quintessential Queens.



As I was making my way through the streets of Queens, a couple of things became apparent. One was how it was so different just a few blocks away. One area seemed very rough, and I figured I'd better keep this svelte target in spandex moving, which just a couple of blocks away, it felt much safer.



Another thing I observed was two people, each pushing ice cream carts down the sidewalk and ringing their bells. It never ceases to amaze me how everyone finds their niche in life, and how to make a living... well, almost everyone. I sure have a lot of respect for someone who makes a living selling ice cream out of a cart they're pushing. Reminds me of the old days (before my time) when produce sellers used to push carts through city streets.

I arrived at the site of the 1964 World's Fair, where the Unisphere is still standing. I was 6 years old when my family went, and we stayed in a basement in Queens, just like I am tonight. That was probably my favorite vacation ever, as everything at the World's Fair was futuristic. Amazingly, admission was \$2 for adults and \$1 for children. Sure there's been inflation, but in today's dollars that's equivalent to \$15.26 and \$7.63, respectively. There sure aren't any deals like that around anymore. Disney

Flushing Meadows Corona Park is now a run down, litter-strewn area. I found it very depressing. Most of the pools are empty, and the observatory towers are now a ruin. Space park, however, is still there.



I arrived at the AirBNB home at which I'm staying tonight around 1:45 PM; the distance was 46 miles. It's a really nice place. I have the entire basement apartment to myself, and it is spic 'n span. The aroma of curry drifts through the house, making me hungry. It's off to Italian food again tonight, right around the corner, and then a good night's sleep.

Tomorrow morning, I'll ride 7 miles into Manhattan to catch the 8:00 AM ferry from E. 35th St & FDR Drive, which will take me to Atlantic Highlands, NJ. From there, I'll ride 65 miles to Manahawkin, NJ. This will be a long day and it will probably be late afternoon before I arrive.

Michael Fisette 2016 Bicycle Ride Day 4: Queens, NY - Stafford Township, NJ (72 miles)

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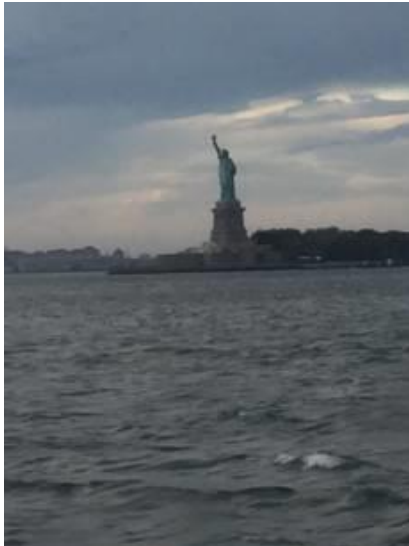
My basement apartment in Queens was fantastic. It was a little warm, because they had a portable air conditioner, but did not vent it outside. So the cold air coming out the top was negated by the warm air coming out the back. Other than that, all was well. They had several fans in the apartment. For dinner, I had chicken parmesan, pasta, chicken noodle soup and a glass of Chianti. I was the only person in the Queens restaurant, but it was delicious. They gave me a 20% discount if I paid with cash. (That's the underground economy which doesn't get captured in the GDP figures, and the behavior that excessive taxation causes.) I went to bed around 7:45 PM, and awoke at 5:10 AM, so I could catch the 7:00 AM ferry to Atlantic Heights, NJ from Manhattan.

It was a 6.5 mile ride to the ferry dock, so I headed out at 5:37 AM. I figured it best to leave before there were too many cars on the road. I rode across the Queensboro Bridge to Manhattan, as it has bicycle and pedestrian lanes. Even at this early hour, the bridge was packed with cars, and there were lots of bicyclists and joggers. It was a bit demoralizing when this runner passed me going uphill on the bridge.



I made it to Manhattan, and rode a way south on second avenue. It was disconcerting with all the aggressive drivers and traffic volume, along with trucks blocking the right lane for deliveries and garbage pickup, forcing me into traffic. Nevertheless, I made it to the ferry terminal around 6:30 AM. There were lots of people sacked out for the night on benches, and dried vomit on the ground around where I'd have to sit. Can't beat New York City! It started to sprinkle, and the skies looked threatening. The ticket booth was closed, and the ferry was supposed to depart at 7:00 AM. At 6:50 AM, I asked someone where you buy tickets if the booth is closed. He told me to buy them on the ferry; glad I asked. The ferry arrived at 6:55 AM, and there couldn't have been a half dozen passengers. The crew was very helpful with telling me where to keep my bicycle and trailer. On the way to Atlantic Highlands, NJ, we passed Manhattan, the

Statue of Liberty, and Governors Island. Governors Island is a 172-acre island right off Manhattan, accessible by ferry. It was a defensive position dating back to the Revolutionary War, and served as a major Coast Guard base from 1966 – 1996.



There was a slew of people at the Atlantic Highlands ferry terminal, waiting to make the daily commute to Manhattan. Right outside the ferry terminal, I saw a man backing up his car to parallel park. The lady behind him was screaming bloody murder out her window, because she was being inconvenienced. Welcome to New Jersey! Pretty much the only significant hill of the day was right when I got off the ferry. Apparently, they named it Atlantic Highlands for a reason. The New Jersey Coast was a beautiful place to ride. For the first 10 – 15 miles, I rode right along the ocean.



This was a nice shot looking north towards New York City. You can see the weather was a little dicey.



The houses along the Jersey shore (this one in Long Branch) were nothing short of mansions. This is also the area that got hit by tropical storm Sandy.



Just a couple of miles from the ferry terminal, I hit some sort of pothole, which was pretty jarring. Sure enough, it caused a flat (pinch flat) in my rear tire. A policeman stopped to ask if I needed help. Fifteen minutes later, I was back on the road; no big deal, just an inconvenience. A couple of miles down the road, however, I once again had that feeling that the rear wheel wasn't turning freely. Sure enough, another broken spoke. It was just 8:30 AM, so the first bicycle shop I found didn't open until 10:00 AM. I loosened the rear brake again, and moved forward with a wobbly wheel. I could probably ride quite a distance like that, but the rear wheel loses its structural integrity when all the spokes are not equally supporting my big behind.

A little after 9:00 AM, I stumbled upon an open bicycle shop. The gentleman who runs it was in his 70's, but he kept talking to himself and saying things like "oops" and "now where did that part go" as he was taking all the gears apart on my rear wheel. I wasn't getting warm fuzzies that this was going to turn out well, but he got me all fixed up and on my way. I'm glad I purchased extra spokes two days ago. He charged me just \$20 (better known as a double-sawbuck in the northeast) for what was probably 45 minutes of labor. I insisted he charge me more, but he wouldn't hear of it, so I gave him an extra \$5 (or a "fin" as they say here in wise-guy country).



It's nice having my appetite back, because the food around here is so good. I stopped for a small pizza and salad for lunch in Brick, NJ around 12:30. As usual, a good part of the pizza landed on my clothes (anybody who has ever eaten with me will understand). Here's a picture of me before I started riding the bike.



Google Maps is usually very good, with the exception of the few times it put me on freeways. Today, it put me on dead-end streets twice. The second time, a water utility truck with two guys in it pulled up to the side of my bike, and asked me if I knew the street I was on turned into a dead-end a way down. That saved me a couple of bonus miles. Also with Google Maps, when you select bicycle as the method of transportation, it tries to keep you off the busiest roads, often times routing me through neighborhoods and trails. Today it put me on an unpaved trail. I like to stay off unpaved trails, but I got on it (that is, right after I sat on a bench to finish my two pieces of uneaten pepperoni pizza). After a couple of miles, the trail dead-ended and I found myself riding on a path through the woods in Bayville.



I soon came to a parking lot and asked a couple of guys how to get back on the main road. It was at this point that it started raining hard. I rode a few more miles until the sky opened up. It was pouring and hailing. I consulted my bicycle rider's handbook to see what to do in such a situation, and it said to pull in for a slice of pepperoni pizza, which I did. Ken, the pizzeria owner in Lanoka Harbor, and I had a nice talk about bike riding and how he one rode up to the area where New York, Pennsylvania and New Jersey intersect. He made it a point to come out from behind the counter to pose for the photo. It was a great slice, and just \$2.00. Food is so much cheaper on the east coast.



I was starting to get cold because I was wet and the pizzeria had the air conditioning running, so I figured it best to hit the road. It felt good going back outside to the warm air. I could see lightning up ahead, but fortunately that moved out to sea before I got there. This was my last stop of the day, so I powered on to Manahawkin, where I am staying for the night in another AirBNB rental.

The owners texted me that they would not be home when I arrived, but the key would be under the little Buddha statue by the front door. I was to be careful not to let the two cats out. Oh, and the husband forgot to feed the cats, so if I could take the half a can of soft food in the refrigerator and mix it with a spoonful of dry food, that would be appreciated. When I got to the front door around 5:15 PM, I saw one loud and hungry cat looking out the window.



Well, it's been a very long day and I'm ready for bed. My legs are feeling good; the lactic acid in my quadriceps has finally been cleared out. I make sure to drink lots of Gatorade fruit punch. My room tonight is just fine, and I have a private bathroom. They're going to cook me breakfast in the morning. I'll sleep in tomorrow morning, as I only have to ride around 50 miles to Atlantic City. It's not exactly a direct route by bicycle, because I cannot ride on the Garden State Turnpike. Rather, I have to ride several miles to the west to cross the Mullica River.

Tonight, I walked 2 miles round-trip to dinner. It was a wonderful restaurant called Manera's. I had a bowl of chowder and chicken francaise. The chowder was more of a bisque, but the chicken francaise and angel hair pasta were fantastic. I ordered a glass of wine, but the waiter told me the restaurant is BYOB. I asked if that was because the liquor license was so costly, and he replied that is the case. I told him I heard stories of them costing \$100,000; he replied that was on the very low end. It really irks me that the Government does this to small business owners, whose profitability would be so much higher if they could serve liquor. I understand there's not much profit margin in food. A table adjacent to mine heard that I couldn't purchase a glass of wine, so they insisted I take a glass from the bottle they brought with them. See, people are usually pretty nice, even in New Jersey. As tonight was the restaurant's 1-year anniversary, they were giving 15% off. My great dinner cost \$17 with tax... unbelievably inexpensive! I made sure to give an over-generous tip.

Until tomorrow...

Michael Fisette 2016 Bicycle Ride Day 5: Stafford Township, NJ - Atlantic City, NJ (51 miles)

Day 5: Stafford Township, NJ – Atlantic City, NJ (51 miles)

Last night's accommodations were excellent. The bed was comfy, it was quiet, and there was no cigarette smoke. For what more could I ask? I had to leave the bedroom door ajar, because the two cats wanted to visit me throughout the night. I hope my cat, Sally, does not see this picture of the black cat rubbing on my foot. She also wanted me to keep my arm around her in bed.



I slept in until 7:40, which felt really good. Greg, one of the homeowners, made me poached eggs over toast with diced onions and tomatoes. It was a very good, fancy breakfast for me. Greg is also a bicycle rider, so he gave me some tips on which roads to take to avoid traffic.

I got on the road at 9:23 AM. As mentioned in yesterday's write-up, I had to head inland to get to a non-freeway bridge to cross the waterway. The wind was pretty strong out of the west, so I faced a headwind for half the day, until turning south and then back east towards Atlantic City. The sun was very strong, and the sky was clear.

Most of my day was spent riding through the area known as the Pine Barrens. Greg was telling me the Pine Lands were first settled by the Hessians, after the Revolutionary War. The Hessians were German soldiers hired by the British to fight against the American rebels. Being as this area is still sparsely settled, they sure picked a good place to lay low. The roads were very straight and went on for miles, with gentle hills. The pine trees can't be more than 20' tall; our Douglas Firs, Cedars and Hemlocks would laugh at such poor specimens.



Once again, Google Maps tried to route me onto a 2-mile path through the woods. I made a U-turn, as nothing good would come of that route. I just missed running over a snake, and stopped to take a picture of this sun turtle. I was going to pick him up to move him to the other side of the road, but I wasn't sure what direction he was trying to go. Better just to let him be.



I did cross a couple of scenic rivers. I stopped to talk with one man who was walking his dog by the water, and asked him how bad that area got hit by Sandy. He said several houses were destroyed.



I rode for 4 hours and stopped just once to enjoy a bottle of lemonade on a shady bench. I stopped for lunch at 1:30, with just 10 miles remaining. Once again, I had a salad and small pepperoni pizza. It was hard to get up, but eventually I had to get back on the road. Around an hour later, the casino hotel towers of Atlantic City appeared in the distance. Shortly thereafter, I arrived at the Trump Taj Mahal, which is where I am spending the night. It sure feels good to have a nice hotel room for the night.





I plan to look for something simple and flavorful like chicken wings for dinner tonight. There should be plenty to choose from.

Tomorrow, I'll sleep in again as the rise is just 46 miles to Cape May, NJ. It looks like I may be facing a bit of a headwind, and there is an 80% chance of severe thunderstorms for most of the day. On the bright side, I'll be riding along the coastline, so that should be nice. I'll probably need to turn the strobe lights on again though.

Michael Fisette 2016 Bicycle Ride Day 6: Atlantic City, NJ - Cape May, NJ (53 miles)

Day 6: Atlantic City, NJ – Cape May, NJ (53 miles)

Last night, I walked down the famous Atlantic City boardwalk to dinner at Kelsey's Restaurant. Kelsey's was a few blocks west of the boardwalk. The neighborhood immediately west of the boardwalk is seedy at best. In fact, the northern part of the boardwalk, where I stayed, was the low-rent district. Women barked out calling for me to come in for a massage; somehow, I managed to resist.



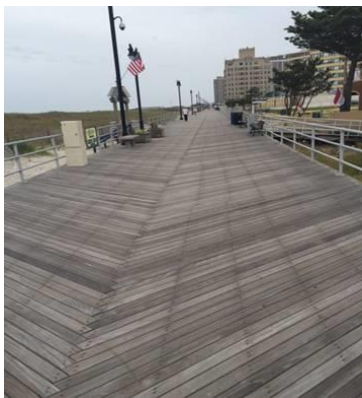
Kelsey's was a soul food restaurant, which was a first for me. There was a live jazz band playing. The waitress encouraged me to order the "turkey chop." I'd never heard of such a thing, but she said it's like a pork chop, only much better. She was right on. The batter on the turkey chop was perfectly seasoned, and it was smothered in onions and gravy. I also had an appetizer of calamari with marinara sauce. Delicious!

If you recall from the Day 3 summary, I commented on how most everyone finds a way to make a living. On the Atlantic City boardwalk, they still have men push people-carriages along the boardwalk, just as they did around 100 years ago.



I got to bed pretty early, and planned to have a great night's sleep in my king-size bed. Then, around 10:00 PM, a woman with a Jamaican accent in the adjacent room started screaming at the top of her lungs in some foreign language at the little children in the room. I could hear their little voices, and then her screaming some sort of pig Latin. After about an hour of that, I called security. The front desk lady laughed and said she'd sent security up. Sometime after 11:15 PM, it suddenly quieted down and I got back to sleep.

I awoke around 7:30 and caught up on CNBC for a little bit. Looks like a good day market-wise. I got on the road at 8:40 AM. I rode along the boardwalk for several miles, and found that the further south I went, the less run-down it was. In fact, there were some nice houses on that part of the boardwalk. I was amazed how the boardwalk went on for miles and miles.



Although the weather forecast called for thunderstorms throughout the day, I only got rained on for the first hour. The rain was steady, but light. Then, all of a sudden the rain stopped and never started up again. I also had a pretty strong headwind for the first hour, but then that subsided.

I got to ride along the coast for most of the day, which was nice. I crossed several small two-lane bridges, which had a toll booth on the top of the bridge. The toll was \$1.50 for cars, but apparently did not apply to the kind and gentle people on bicycles (or me).



Google Maps routed me down back streets and through alleys. And then, I heard a ping, sort of like the sound of a piano string snapping. That's right, a third broken spoke. Unbelievable! I had to again let out on the rear brake, so the wobbly wheel would continue turning. It was 15 miles to the next bike repair shop. After around 10 miles, I ran into a bike shop at Seven Mile Island. Once again, the repairman took me right in and disassembled the gears on the rear wheel. He said the freewheel (gears) were not on tight. As I mentioned two days ago, I had a feeling the last repairman may not have reassembled everything correctly, but it worked nonetheless. He had the wheel repaired in around 15 minutes, and told me it was no charge. I insisted he take \$20. As I keep saying, there sure are a lot of nice people out there.



Shortly after getting back on the road, I stopped a couple of miles later for my daily slice of pepperoni pizza and lemonade; it was heaven! Thin, crispy and oily. At around 1:30 PM, I arrived at Coast Guard Training Center Cape May. I rode my bicycle around the unrestricted areas of the base. I could see my old barracks in the distance, and rode toward the back of the base to the firing range. The thing that struck me was how peaceful everything was. What happened to the days of company commanders screaming at the top of their lungs? Maybe everybody was inside attending classes. I sure don't remember it being peaceful.



I stopped into the exchange to buy more sunscreen, Gatorade, and an orange. That orange was delicious.

Tonight, I'm staying at a nice Cape Cod style house in Cape May. It's air conditioned and the room and bath are great. I'm looking forward to a good night's sleep without any Jamaican screaming.



Tomorrow morning, I'm going to have a personal tour of the Coast Guard Training Center at 9:00 AM. Then at 11:00, I'll attend a graduation ceremony. I hope to be on the road shortly after noon. The weather looks sunny and in the 70's; perfect. I now need to head back north to Philadelphia, so I can catch a flight home Saturday night. Tomorrow afternoon, I'll ride 46 miles to Millville, NJ, where I'll spend the night. Then, on Saturday, I'll ride another 46 miles to Philadelphia, where I'll box up my bike to ship back to Rhode Island on Amtrak, and then figure out how to get to the airport to fly home. As I won't be arriving in Millville until around dinnertime tomorrow, I'm not sure if I'll be able to send out an update tomorrow night.

Michael Fisette 2016 Bicycle Ride Day 7: Cape May, NJ - Millville, NJ (45 miles)

Day 7: Cape May, NJ – Millville, NJ (45 miles)

Last night, I had dinner at The Ugly Mug. It was a ½-mile walk from where I was staying, and located on a quaint pedestrian street of shops.



The waiter, who was probably around 19 years old, kept addressing me as “boss.” I’m not sure where boss ranks compared to “Ace” or Slick,” but I’ll take it as a compliment. I ordered the clam chowder, calamari with marinara sauce, and chicken wings. The chicken wings were too much, but the chowder and calamari were excellent.

I then returned to the house where I was staying, and settled in for a good night’s sleep. Around 10 PM, the smoke detector outside my room started chirping. Better than a screaming Jamaican woman, but still annoying. Apparently, the battery needed to be replaced. Fortunately, it stopped chirping after around 15 minutes.

I awoke around 5:54 AM to a rainstorm. It was pouring outside, in spite of the forecast for clear skies. I went back to bed and eventually got up around 6:30 AM. The rain stopped. I turned on CNBC and, like everyone else, was surprised to hear Great Britain voted to leave the EU. Fortunately, I know Erica will be sending a communication to all our clients. As much as Erica and I are in communication all week, it’s still nice to know she’s fully capable of running the shop. Once again, the “smart money” was not so smart and the genius prognosticators knew nothing more than anyone else. Best thing to do on days like this is nothing; not the first, and won’t be the last.

I arrived at Coast Guard Training Center Cape May at 8:30, a half-hour early for my scheduled tour. At 9:00 AM, my tour guide, Coast Guard Auxiliarist Pat Dempsey, arrived. He is a retired 30-year Philadelphia police lieutenant, who enjoys supporting Coast Guard activities. Pat was a great tour guide, and showed me all around the base. The recruits snapped to attention when we walked by. They must have thought Pat was some sort of admiral, and I’m sure they didn’t know what to make of me with my biking clothes. We then joined the graduates’ families in

watching a movie about the recruit training experience, and were addressed by the commanding officer and command master chief. Interestingly, of the 73 recruits who started out 8 weeks ago, only 45 graduated on time. Others were reverted for medical, disciplinary, swimming or physical fitness reasons. These newly-minted seaman apprentices were very impressive. It's exciting to know how much potential lies ahead of them.

Pat and I then attended the graduation ceremony. I was surprised to hear the commanding officer tell those present that I was in the audience, and that I had ridden my bicycle back 430 miles after having graduated 40 years ago. He asked me to stand up to be recognized. Needless to say, nobody else there was dressed quite like me. I'm glad I decided to wear regular shorts over my spandex bib shorts. At least I had some semblance of decency; not much, but some.

After the graduation, I got on the road at 12:21 PM. There was a pretty strong headwind for the first 15 miles. I need to head to Philadelphia to get a flight home tomorrow night. I'll stay tonight at the half-way point between Philadelphia and Cape May, which is Millville, NJ. Once again, Google Maps routed me off the beaten path. It put me in a rather run-down neighborhood in Cape May Courthouse. According to the map, there wasn't going to be many places to stop on the way to Millville, so I decided to get some fried chicken from a fine-looking soul food restaurant, Mama D's. Looking as tough as possible, I sauntered into Mama D's in my spandex, just like any other customer.



It seems Mama D cooks to order, so I had to hang around outside for around 20 minutes. I put the chicken wings in my waterproof bag, and hit to road to Millville. Approximately the next 10 miles were on a paved bicycle path. It was good pavement, but a very boring ride. I later stopped for lunch in Southville, and ordered roast chicken, stuffing and mashed potatoes and gravy. I figured I'd keep the chicken wings for dinner. The sky was getting very dark. Just as I left the restaurant, the rain started. A few miles up the road, the sky opened up. It was raining

so hard, I could hardly see with all water in my eyes. Then the thunder and lightning started. At first, it was in the distance. Then, it was right overhead. I quickly turned off the main road and invited myself onto the covered porch of a house where it appeared nobody was home. They had a rocking chair on the porch, so I sat there for close to a half-hour until the storm passed. I figured this was a good time to take a selfie. You can see the water pouring off the roof.



About a mile from the end of the ride, I stopped for a chocolate milkshake. Eventually, I arrived in Millville at 5:57 PM. I'm staying at Country Inn & Suites. It's a decent place, but Millville is an economically depressed town. Not much to see here, and no place close-by to get dinner. Thankfully, I have my Mama D's fried chicken wings for dinner. Not bad!

Tomorrow morning, I'll be in no big hurry to get on the road. I think Country Inn & Suites provides a free breakfast here, so I'll take advantage of that. The ride to Philadelphia is around 46 miles, so I should arrive early afternoon, plenty of time to ship my bicycle on Amtrak, roam around a little, and then get to the airport for the flight home. I've had enough, gotten it out of my system again, and am ready to return to a normal life.



Michael Fisette 2016 Bicycle Ride Day 8 and Final: Millville, NJ - Philadelphia, PA (47 miles)

Day 8 and Final: Millville, NJ – Philadelphia, PA (47 miles)

Last night, I had a good night's sleep. King-size bed, quiet, cool and clean. These annual rides really make me appreciate these things that are all too easily taken for granted. I awoke around 7:45 AM, and took advantage of the complimentary breakfast the hotel provided. I had a bowl of oatmeal with milk and brown sugar, coffee and orange juice. For the last time, I assembled all my clothes which had been hung to dry for the night all around my hotel room. I sure won't miss having to wash my nasty clothes in the shower every night, and hoping they're dry the following morning.



What a luxury that there was an ice machine down the hall to fill my four water bottles. There is no greater treat or pleasure on the road than ice. I'd take ice over food while bicycling any day. I was on the road at 8:49 AM. All systems go for the last 47 miles. My body has now acclimated to this new reality.

I pedaled non-stop for the first 37 miles. For the first third of the ride, while heading northeast, I encountered a headwind. Once I made the turn to the northwest, the headwind was no longer a problem, and I started making good time. For the fourth time on this trip, I broke another spoke on the derailleur side of my rear wheel. I stopped to loosen up the rear brake and let out a little cable, so the wheel wouldn't rub against the brake pads. I'm not about to get it fixed today; rather, I'll take my chances that another spoke doesn't break, and then purchase a more heavy-duty wheel when I return home.

While on the road, I received an e-mail from Alaska Air notifying me I was upgraded to first class. Alleluia! After 8 days on the road, I get to fly home in comfort.

In Vineland, NJ, I came upon four of these birds. They looked tasty, and seemed very docile. They let me get pretty close to take a picture. My friend and neighbor, Matt, who is an avid hunter, identified them as guinea fowl.



About 10 miles from Philadelphia, I stopped for lunch at a Chinese restaurant. I had General Tso's chicken, wonton soup and Gatorade.

Shortly before reaching Philadelphia, I rode through Camden, NJ. I felt fortunate to have made it through Camden without getting mugged or shot. What a rough, run down, decrepit city. I feel bad for the kids born there; what hope do they have, unless someone intervenes in their life and shows them the way out?

As I approached the Delaware River, I had difficulty figuring out how to get up onto the Benjamin Franklin Bridge, which is part of an interstate highway. Finally, I figured it out. The

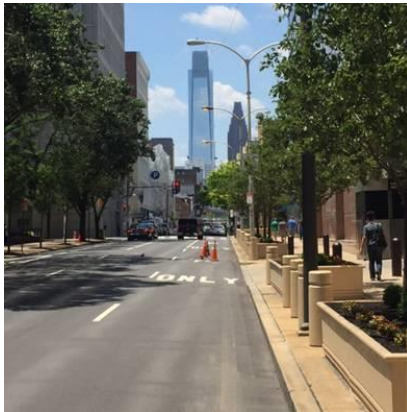
only problem is that I needed to climb a 3-story staircase to get to the bike/pedestrian trail. I made it up two stories, and then started struggling on the third story because my trailer wheel had slipped off the grated ramp. Keep in mind I not only need to support the bicycle, but also control the 40+ pound trailer with gear. There were a few cyclists on the top, waiting for me to traverse the stairs. One of them came down and manhandled the bicycle while I took control of the trailer. Success!



I then rode over the Delaware River, with Philadelphia being in front of me. Finally, I reached my ultimate destination, Philadelphia.



On my way to the train station, a taxi nearly hit me. For whatever reason, he figured he could cut from the left lane to make a right turn, and just go through me. Plenty of people turned to see what was going on as I screamed bloody murder at him. One more right-hand turn and the train station was in sight.



I wheeled my bicycle and trailer inside, with the cleats on my bicycle shoes echoing through the terminal's marble floors. Now comes the hardest part of the trip... dealing with the Amtrak agent. I explained to the lady behind the bullet-proof glass that I needed to ship my bicycle and trailer. She asked me if I had a bicycle box. After checking my pockets, I told her "no." I would need to purchase one of the 6' X 4' boxes. She said she wasn't sure if Amtrak could ship my trailer. I explained to her that I've shipped it all around the country on Amtrak, many times. Still, she had to consult her 3-ring binder and, sure enough, they could ship it. I just needed to purchase a second bicycle box. No problem.

I got the bicycle and trailer boxed up, paid my \$70 fee (which included two boxes), and proceeded to the men's room to change into more respectable airline clothes. I took my place by the homeless man shaving in the sink. I undressed and put on my mufti (civilian attire). See, when it comes down to it, we're all the same. Sure, some of us do better in life than others, but in the end I'm just another dirty, sweaty guy changing his clothes next to a homeless man shaving in an Amtrak men's room.

I then caught the train to the airport and had some onion rings and a beer while waiting for my flight. I'll get home around 10 PM tonight, after having schlepped for 8 days on the road. My Coast Guard credo, "Semper Paratus" (Always Ready), comes in handy to this day. On a ride like this, you always have to think ahead and be prepared for whatever may occur.

It sure was nice to go back in time 40 years, and see the young seaman and fireman apprentices. I know I looked like them at that time; gaunt, pumped-up, and ready to take on the world. I remember how my parents and Gina drove down from Rhode Island to attend my graduation, much as the graduates had their families in attendance from all around the country. How vividly I recall the ride home, with Gina and I falling asleep together in the back seat. We were to be married in a little over a month, yet we were both just 18.

Along with my 12 years of Catholic schooling, the Coast Guard put all the opportunities in front of me, which led to my success later in life. The key was taking advantage of those opportunities, rather than letting them pass by unclaimed. I wouldn't have made it if Gina weren't by my side to encourage me, as I encountered many setbacks along the way. She always was, and still is, my cheerleader and faithful companion.

As I was at the tail-end of my tour of the Coast Guard training center, my tour guide, Auxiliarist Pat Dempsey, and I saw around 20 young people dressed sloppily in civilian clothes, and walking in a not-too-military manner. Pat asked two of them what group they were with. They replied that they were being discharged from recruit training for one reason or another; some couldn't/wouldn't cut it, and some had medical problems. I felt so sad for this group of young men and women being sent home. What, if anything, awaited them? Compare that to the 45 graduates who have a world of opportunity awaiting them. They now walk proud, look others in the eye, and have the self-confidence to take on the world. Some of them will be piloting multi-million dollar search-and-rescue boats within a couple of years; others will be jumping out of helicopters, and still others will be boarding officers or marine engineers. What a great opportunity the Armed Services is for young people, especially the Coast Guard. With that being said, I wouldn't want to start over again for anything.

Well, another year's ride has come to a close. I'm glad it's over, but just as glad that I tested and pushed my limits one more time. It will be great to be home tonight with Gina and Sally (the cat). Tomorrow will be a restful day by the Tolt River with a glass of wine and a cigar. I appreciate you all following along.

Michael Fisette

Opinions expressed are those of Michael Fisette, and are not necessarily those of RJFS or Raymond James.