



June 14, 1989

## LETTER FROM THE ROAD

On May 19, at 6:00 a.m., as dawn was lighting the Pacific surf, Lucian and Willy headed out on the first leg of their long journey. About a half mile from the beach, Lucian and Willy passed several employees coming to work at the power plant along the Santa Ana river. They stopped and asked Lucian, "Where are you riding from?" "The beach" said Lucian. "Where are you going?" With a straight face Lucian replied, "New York." As Lucian and Willy walked on he heard them say, "I think he's serious!" Lucian smiled, Willy snickered.

Hello everyone and welcome back to Ride Across America. So much has happened since we last wrote you, its hard to know where to start. First, thanks to Mary Harris, the owner of the Huntington Beach Equestrian Center for her hospitality, and to Javier who made our life easier in a thousand ways during our stay there. Big hugs to Don Patch and Mary Carpenter and Berniece Toy-Pohlmann who welcomed us like family, loaned Sheryl horses to ride and generally made our stay there the wonderful experience that it was.

On that first day, Lucian and Willy were met about halfway out by Alan Coward and Bob Smith, distance riders from Riverside who helped guide them to our first night's stopping point at Prado Dam. Alan spent many long hours in the saddle and on his motorcycle picking our route for the first three or four days of the trip. There is no question that his support and boundless energy made getting through the concrete jungle not only "doable" as Lucian would say, but safe and enjoyable as well. The only glitch came when Willy, who will walk in the ocean or stand blowing bubbles in a lake, refused to step across a trickle of water, thereby causing Lucian to cross eight lanes of traffic and on another occasion, walk through the parking lot of Anaheim Stadium. Lucian, sitting on Willy, reading his street map and waiting for the light to change, must have been a startling sight for those L.A. commuters at 8:00 a.m. on a Friday morning.

Our other faithful friend for the first part of the trek was Joe Wheatley, a retired Navy pilot from Orange County, who also rode the

**RIDE**  
*across*  
**AMERICA**

1989  
BOARD OF  
ADVISORS  
Leslie Barclay  
Richard Hancock DVM  
Bob Harvey  
Randall Hayes  
Mrs. Wm. Randolph Hearst  
Congressman Jim Kolbe  
Roberta Ladd  
Patty Phelan  
Marie Ridder  
Lucian Spataro  
Ed Squires  
Bazy Tankersley  
Angie Thieriot  
David Trexler  
Mark Weisbart



first leg into Prado and then joined us again through the Morongo Valley and up into Joshua Tree.

On May 20, thirty riders accompanied Lucian and Willy into the lovely Reinhold Arabian Ranch which sits on a bluff overlooking Lake Matthews and the eastern portion of Riverside County. Since our normal starting time is 5:00 a.m., about eight of the riders got up at God knows what hour to meet us at our campsite in a secluded canyon of one of the last of the old ranches, Rancho de la Sierra Vista, to ride the whole leg. Happy days, Eskild Reinhold loaned Sheryl the raffle horse so she got a chance to ride out also, after parking the rig at the Reinhold Ranch. The party that night was wonderful and it was with great reluctance that we headed out the next day. Thanks to the Greater Lake Matthews Trail Association, who organized the party, several thousand dollars were raised for R.A.N.

The next day, who should pop up out of nowhere as Sheryl was knocking on the doors of various dairy farms, but Alan and his wife Melanie. They just wanted to "make sure we were O.K. and that we found a good place to camp." By the way, did you know that the San Jacinto Canyon, through which the Ramona Expressway runs, supports an extensive dairy industry?

The following three days of travel were spent in the shadow of San Jacinto and San Gorgonio Mountains. San Gorgonio is the highest peak to the north of I-10. Its mate, San Jacinto, sits to the south of I-10 right outside Palm Springs. Even the rush of traffic on I-10 did not diminish their presence. San Jacinto in particular, because it sits so close to the highway, seems to sit like a sentinel over the entire valley. And a windy valley it is too! The winds are unrelenting. The natives joke that "this is nothing, sometimes it blows so hard we change zip codes!" Riding from Cabazon up into the town of Morongo Valley, Lucian and Joe Wheatley encountered winds gusting between forty and fifty knots along the ridge where the windmill farms sit. Finally, the last climb up into Yucca Valley and we were in the California high desert.

While scouting that route the day before, Lucian and Joe decided to try and contact the ex-mayor of Palm Springs, Frank Bogert, a long time horse enthusiast. A quick visit to the mayor's office at city hall, now occupied by Sonny Bono (yes, of Sonny and Cher fame), and they had Frank's phone number. After reaching him on our Fujitsu Cellular phone, Lucian and Joe ended up spending several hours with him at his home talking about the event. At his request, a number of brochures were left for



27

him to pass on to his friends (Barbara Sinatra among other Palm Springs notables.)

For those of you who have never been to the high desert towns of Yucca Valley, Joshua Tree and Twenty-Nine Palms, GO! On second thought, stay home and we'll go back. Despite intense winds which kept up until we were almost all of the way back down to the Colorado River and the Arizona border, the high desert was achingly beautiful. In the 1920's and 30's, the route we took from Cabazon up onto the plateau was the Spring/Fall trail of major cattle drives. The Yucca Valley/Joshua Tree area once grew a foot high grass that served as summer forage for huge herds of cattle. Since about WWII, for whatever reasons of climate changes or man's intervention, that kind of grass no longer grows and no longer supports cattle. For you history buffs, we found a wonderful book called Fox Song-100 Years of Cow Ranching in the San Bernadino Mountains/Mohave Desert by Kendall Stone (Sagebrush Press P.O. Box 87 Morongo Valley) which describes all the country we came through. (Now if only Lucian would give me back the book so I can finish reading it!)

Our stay in the high desert was made memorable by our wonderful friends at the Hitchen Post, a Tack and Feed Store in Twenty-Nine Palms, Al Cox, Gene, and Art Parker. Not only did they donate hay and grain, entertain us for hours debating the relative merits of real horses, i.e. Quarterhorse vs. Arabian, drive supplies to us out in the desert, provide us with a place to stay (thanks Art and Diane) and discuss every stretch of the road from Twenty-Nine Palms to the river, but perhaps best of all they introduced us to Larry Hobbs.

Seventy-three year old Larry Hobbs, who still rides four to five hours a day, spent thirty years of his life as a rodeo cowboy. During his heyday, he was known as the "Cyclone Kid"-ring any bells? Because it turned out there was no place to pull the rig off the road between Twenty-Nine Palms and Rice, we spent several days at Larry's, trailoring out into the desert and then back at the conclusion of each day's leg. During the 1950's, Larry ran a ranch which stretched from Skyline Blvd. to Half Moon Bay on the Northern Californian coast and was owned by an ex-governor Rolfe, Jr. (California). Sheryl has spent many hours riding and driving those hills just north of Monterey Bay, so his stories were a special treat for her. She narrowly escaped becoming part of the story when Larry proposed that she become wife number fourteen. Said Larry about his thirteen wives, "They all wanted to marry a cowboy, but when they got him they didn't know what to do with him." Before we left Larry took us to his favorite restaurant, an old inn in the high desert that is still a favorite



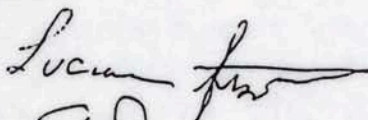
spot for Hollywood valuables. Sworn to secrecy, we will reveal the whereabouts of this wonderful place only to the highest bidder (all proceeds go to R.A.N. of course).

Alan made it out not only to visit us at Art Porter's place in Joshua Tree (he rode his motorbike up from Riverside!), but he and Melanie and the kids came out to Larry's one Sunday to ride with us in the desert. Introducing Alan to Larry was like watching The Man From Snowy River time warp and span two generations. It was a real special occasion. Goodbyes sure get tough on this trip.

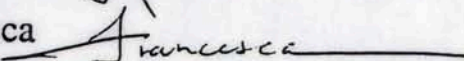
From the junction of Highway 62 and 177 to the river is pretty bleak country. Thanks to the folks at the crossroads known as Vidal Junction and the even tinier Rice for their encouragement and help. Finally on June 3, after a quick trip all the way to Flagstaff and back to get new shoes put on Willy, we crossed the Colorado River into Arizona at Parker. One state down, thirteen more to go.

One of the easiest ways for everyone to help us is to encourage your friends and neighbors to fill out a pledge card and send it in. We've included several for you in this newsletter. We are now about eighteen percent of the way across the country. When we hit Albuquerque we will have completed twenty-five percent of the trip. The response along the way has been tremendously positive and pledges are beginning to roll in. We now have over five hundred people that receive our Letter From The Road. We ask that you take these pledge forms and recruit 3 more people each. As we reach the mid-west we would like to have several thousand people on our mailing list. We can always use help along the route to help with fundraising, media and logistics.

As you've been reading this Letter From The Road, an area of rainforest the size of metropolitan Los Angeles has been lost to us forever. The tragedy of this loss makes the Ride Across America all the more crucial. With your support we will stop the destruction and save the rainforests.

Lucian 

Sheryl 

Francesca 

Willy 