

October 14, 1989

Letter From The End of the Road

We did it. We completed the Ride Across America at a beach in Maryland at 1:00 P.M. October 15th. It took us exactly 150 days and we rode just over 2,900 miles. If you do not calculate in the days off, our actual riding would average 25.66 miles per day. The Department of Transportation will verify the mileage from our daily logs.

The Ride is over but our friendship and work together need not be. Because of all the interest and support you have shown, I have arranged a fantastic 8 day river trip through the Guatemalan/Mexican rainforests. I'd like you to join me next March to hike through the forest, ride the river, see the macaws and monkeys and discuss the issue further. Enclosed is a brochure on the trip. I hope you'll take the opportunity to join me in the rainforest.

It's a hard feeling to describe but I thought it would be a lot different in the end. I am happy because I, the people on the team, and the horses have literally been through it all. We've seen very dangerous situations when it could have gone either way, every weather condition except snow (close in West Virginia), very personal confrontations with each other and ourselves. Through all of this, we kept our objectives foremost in our mind.

What drives anyone to do the things they do. Someone once told me that no man can avoid what he is meant to do at the moment he is meant to do it. I still feel that we were meant to do this ride and if we touched the mind or motivation of a dozen people along the way then that was a good reason for doing it.

The three most frequently asked questions on the ride were WHY are you doing this event, WAS IT WORTH IT and last, the most commonly avoided question by the experts and most commonly asked question by the newcomers, CAN WE SAVE THE ENVIRONMENT? I'll try to answer these as I did on the road.

WHY? Because of the challenge both mentally and physically, the cause as we progressed further across the U.S. and a personal commitment I made to many and to myself to keep going.

WAS IT WORTH IT? Personally yes I feel it was, it brought me to a new mental and physical plateau in terms of understanding and also stamina. We had the opportunity to speak directly with about 50-75 people a day or about 10,000 people over the duration of the event. This personal contact provides the opportunity to answer questions and address concerns. It is the best way to convince someone of the issue's importance. They understand that you are doing something that is important to you and I truly believe we convinced a large number of those people to become involved. In addition, we reached another 5-6 million people through local and national media with articles on CNN and several stations along the way and over 100 articles in newspapers and magazines.

CAN WE SAVE IT? It took me a long time to find the proper answer to this. We can. I firmly believe if it is going to happen it is going to have to happen in this upcoming decade. But in reality it doesn't matter, you see we must try. We simply do not have the right to not try. By making that decision conscious or otherwise we have agreed to allow future generations to inherit an intact ecosystem that is not what it could have been and much worse than what it should have been. You see we have everything to gain by trying and everything to lose by not.

I've been wondering if I should pass on to you all a dream or recurring nightmare that I have been experiencing for about a year. It goes as follows. It is the year 2031 and I am in my 70's. I am in a house that is very cold and dank, the lights are on but it seems very dark. I'm reading a book and in walks my grandson. As he comes into the room he enters through a vacuum transition chamber of some sort. It seems in the dream that each room is purified prior to someone entering or exiting. He has a magazine with him that he has been reading and he wants to discuss an article with me. A look of concern and maybe anger is on his face. The magazine is Time and the article is WE LOST THE ECOSYSTEM, HOW?

The article is a chronology of environmental and economic decisions both good and bad over an 80 year period. The article goes on to state why these decisions were made. In

retrospect they were all economic or political and fueled by a growing population and a disposable society. It goes on to mention that in the 1980's and 90's the environment became a trendy issue and many actors and actresses became involved. People worked very hard and some of the events that people would take on to bring attention to the issue were mentioned. Several people walked across the U.S., petitions were circulated and there were sit-ins and protest marches. One person even rode a horse across the U.S. The article goes into greater detail about the symptoms that were apparent to every one, acid rain, global deforestation, ozone depletion, global warming, etc. And my grandson asks me when all of this was going, what did I do and he was very mad. I said I rode the horse, he looked at me and said is that all. Is that it. I got up from the chair and went to the window and looked out. There was a crow sitting in a dead tree. It was Spring and it was about 1:00 p.m. It was dark out.

That dream scares the Hell out of me as I'm sure it would scare you. It also tells me that this event cannot be the end of my involvement or that of the people that helped and became interested in this issue as a result of this ride.

Many people helped me complete this event and they have all had a part in its success. Mrs. Tankersley told me when I began that in this event to finish is to win. I think there are a lot of winners here. This was truly a team effort. There is no way we could have accomplished what we did without the support of many. These included RAN staff, our board of directors, the team on the road, the staff at Al-Marah and the many, many people along the way who helped. There are several people who have been instrumental in our success. Mrs. Tankersley whose move ahead attitude and ongoing commitment and unwavering confidence in our team was always there. Randy Hayes whose support and confidence was constant. Then there is the team. Brad and Joyce Braden and Bob and Bea Shepard who tackled a host of logistical, horse, people and PR problems on a daily basis. This team held together over a very long period of time which is a credit to their commitment to the event, themselves and the issue. Francesca Vietor who handled logistic and media outreach from our base in San Francisco. Our outreach success was due largely to Francesca's work on the phones. We had several other people who were great moral support including Leslie Barclay who probably got at least 20 phone calls from me over the span of the event. Dr. Hancock who worked with us during the ride, Sharon and John Winnicki and my parents. Early on there was Alan and Melanie Coward and Joe Wheatley who kept us company through some of the roughest riding in California. And last but not least were the horses Sweet William, Sea Ruler and March Along.

I will never forget these people, these horses or this ride.

Lucian

P.S. Don't forget for those interested, I will be travelling to the rainforest on several trips sponsored by the Rainforest Action Network in conjunction with Caiman Expeditions. These are educational expeditions and are also partially tax deductible. Enclosed is a brochure.

P.P.S. We have put together a collection of forty articles on The Ride. Ride videos and T-shirts are also available. If you are interested in the trip or products please fill out an order form. All donations are tax-deductible as a contribution to the Rainforest Action Network.