

# The Sunday Messenger

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Athens, Ohio



— Messenger photo by Doug Engle

ON THE ROAD AGAIN — Lucian Spataro rides along Route 50 Saturday on his way to Parkersburg after a stopover in Athens, his

hometown. Spataro is making a 3,000-mile Ride Across America to publicize problems facing

rain forests, and has already traveled about 2,500 miles.

## Rain forest rider has time for reflection

By V.P. CAPPIELLO JR.  
Messenger staff writer

It's 5:15 on a Saturday morning. The sun has yet to rise. There are few cars on the road, and most people are in bed.

Not Lucian Spataro, however. He already has been up and around for more than an hour, readying himself and his horse for another stage of Ride Across America — a five-month event in which Spataro, with the help of friends and relatives, will be riding to help save the vanishing rain forests.

Spataro is in his hometown of Athens this weekend, one of many stops he'll make during his 3,000-mile journey to educate the nation about the problems that he says are plaguing the national rain forests.

"What we want to do is make people aware of this issue," Spataro said Saturday as he and horse trainer Brad Bradin prepared the horse Sea Ruler for Saturday's 30-mile jaunt. Spataro and his horse rode east from Lake Snowden on Route 50, beginning at about 5:30 a.m. Saturday. He said it sometimes gets lonely, that "you've

got a lot of time to think." Often, he said, something happens that takes him and his horse by surprise.

"While we were in Indiana, we were going along a two-lane," Spataro explained. "A semi came by and forced us off the road.

"We went off the side and down an embankment. I fell off the horse and as we tumbled, he fell on top of me and I fell on top of him. But we just got up and kept going."

This was just one of the Spataro's experiences since commencing his journey in May. He said that while he was in Texas, riding the horse Sweet William, he encountered a pack of coyotes. Nearby were a few deer carcasses.

Spataro also told of wild horses and cows that found their way into the horse trailer in the camp Spataro and his contingent had set up on the Ganata Indian Reservation in Arizona.

"There was no hay or water on the reservation," Spataro said, adding that there was fresh hay in the back of his horse trailer. The horses and cows "just sat in the back of the trailer. We tried everything to get them out."

His travels on horseback give him a special perspective of scenery along the road. He said Oklahoma and Texas were "clean states," but New Mexico and California "were a mess."

With about 400 miles to go before he reaches the Eastern Seaboard, Spataro said he can feel that the end of his journey is near. He already had ridden about 2,500 miles on three different horses (the other being March Along). He compared his feelings to those of a runner who has completed 20 miles of a 26-mile marathon.

"I think we hit the wall in Missouri," Spataro said, referring to the psychological realization marathon runners have once they've reached the 20-mile mark. "Being in Athens, though, is a refresher."

Barring any mishaps the rest of the way, Spataro should complete his trip in about 4½ months. This would break a record of 10 months that has stood since the 1970s. Spataro also stands to set records for being the single rider on a single horse for 1,500 miles, and for riding a series of horses for about 650 miles on each mount.