

IKE'S ON BIKES

This is a story of two Ike's on a bicycle trip in 1916. Severt Thomsen of Selma, Cal. and Edward Jepsen of Parlier, Cal. During 1915 and 1916 we made several trips to such places as Grants Park and Hume, by way of Neff's Mill (Pinehurst) and then to Shaver and Big Creek by way of the old closed Toll House Grade. A few people owned cars, but most of us, if we wanted to travel, had to use the train, a horse, or foot power. The following pages are from memory and from notes I made at that time, plus the pictures we took. These notes were made on a day to day basis, so I will continue in the same way. Our bicycles were single speed, coaster brake, with single tube tires. Severt had our bedding on his carrier, plus tire pump and reair kit. I had a telescoping metal box, made for my carrier with the name FRESNO stamped on the back, plus water bag and headlight. In this box ~~was~~ I had our necessities, such as jelly, sugar and tea. We also had tin cups, plates, knives, a can opener and a large knife for slicing our bread, which did not come sliced in those days. Last of all we had a half-gallon Karo syrup can, which we used to boil water for our tea. We always purchased our bread at the last place we came to each day. Anything to keep the weight down. Spare clothing was strapped on top.

First day

Early in Nov. 1916 we entered Railroad Ave. at Kingsburg, now Hiway "99" then pedaled to Goshen, where we encountered our first DETOUR sign to Visalia. From here it was south to Mooney Grove Etc. Towards evening we were near Ridnor (east of Delano) where we saw a stack of straw, a short distance from the road so decided to have a soft bed for the night. First thing was to make up our bed, which consisted of an extra heavy cotton duck blanket, with snaps and rings along each side. Inside of this we had a fleeced double cotton blanket. No Pillows. Sleeping bags were unknown at this time. As I walked around the haystack, I found some fire blackened stones, so I suspected that other bums had been here before. This was confirmed when I lifted a piece of tin and underneath was paper matches and kindling. After a meal of bread, jelly and hot tea, we gave our legs an alcahol rubdown, and then to bed. No other bums tonight.

Second day

Out of the blankets and after a cup of hot tea, we were on our way stopping at the first place for a breakfast of hotcakes and coffee. Now back to Railroad Ave where we crossed the Kern River at Bakersfield on a new concrete bridge, which we took a picture of, including a horse and buggy outfit, which was the only traffic on it. Automobiles were few and far between. The only concrete pavement we found was between Los Angeles and Anaheim, and the test strip between Roeding Park and

Herndon in Fresno County. We had our lunch at Bakersfield and when we reached what is now Greenfield, we found a small store on the east side of the road. There were no road maps these days, so we asked the store owner about the road over the mountains. He said that the road was bad, and it would take us about 6 days to reach Los Angeles, and to top it off no place to buy anything. We fell for his story and purchased six loaves of bread which we tied on top of by box.. By evening we had reached Rose Station, at the foot of Tejon Pass grade and here we made our camp for the night at the side of the road. Another alcohol rubdown and then we threw the bottle away, to cut down our load, We had a good night sleep, and no one came by during the night.

Third day

Up early and very cold, blanket was covered with frost and we learned that cotton blankets are not as warm as wool. I had left a small amount of water in my tin cup the night before and now found that it was frozen. Hot tea, bread and jelly, and we were good as ever. We pushed our bikes up the grade to Lebec, from early morning to eleven o'clock. There was a strong gusty head wind, and we would duck our heads each time as it drove the gravel particles down on us. This part of the road was partly ~~gravelled~~ but had few bridges, so we crossed and recrossed Grapevine Creek many times and thankful that there was no water in it. After a good meal at Lebec we moved out past Castaic Lake, sometimes called Soda Lake, After passing Gorman, the road turned east, past Quail Lake, Old Sandberg's, and Forest Inn.. This was the old Ridge Route, still under construction, most of it graded dirt, some oiled but none paved. On the sharpest turns a light wooden rail would be erected to guide you on thr road. While pushing up the grade after leaving Quail Lake, we met a stage which had passed us the day before near Bakersfield. A stage was a 1915 Dodge Touring car which had been lengthend so that an extra seat could be installed. The driver stopped and asked us where we were headed for, as he had seen the FRESNO sign on my bike the day before. When we told him we were headed for Mexico he just shook his head and grinned. When we reached Forest Inn, we found a road construction camp, so decided that this would be a good place to spend the night as it was still about 50 miles to Los Angeles. It was getting colder by the minute, so we tried to rent a room for the night but nothing was available, the lady cook informed us. After a good meal in the Cook Shack, we unloaded our bedding in a sheltered spot and crawled in. In about 20 minutes we could feel the cold creeping up thru the blankets. We then realized that we would be frozen stiff by morning, so packed up again, ready to walk all night to Los Angeles. The Cook Shack was still, open so went in for a cup of coffee before starting. When we told the

lady what we were planning to do, she said, I have no rooms available, but if you want to spread your blankets on the screen porch floor, then you' are welcome to it. The porch was closed in with canvas and our luck was still holding.

Fourth day

All down hill or level today, and after another good breakfast, everything was rosy. Now the front spring on my saddle broke, but I found a rock of the right size, and by using one of the straps from my box, I managed to strap the rock in place. Now the rear tire on Severts bike pulled a valve stem, so that the tire slipped around the rim. This tire when it was made had evidently been made with a very small air opening to the valve stem, as the neverleak in the tire sealed the opening completely so that no air escaped. More about this tire later on. Now out of the hills and into San Fernando, with a sign, Speed Limit 7 miles per hour. With a strong wind on our backs, we unbuttoned our jackets and holding them wide in our hands, like a sail, we just sailed thru town above the speed limit. Next was Burbank, just a railroad stop with 3 section houses but no station and it was surrounded by scrub willow tree's et. Then the bridge over the Los Angeles river. This was a steel bridge of the times, with 4 inch planks laid cross ways. All trucks had solid tires on the rear and some also had them on the front. We met one of this kind on the bridge, and he was going much too fast. I can still hear the noise from those planks as they bobbed up and down. Los Angeles was a small city at this time, so we rented a room in the center of town, on South Main St. Now we found a bike shop where Severt told the owner that he would like to have a new valve stem installed in the rear tire, as he had pulled the stem without loosing any air pressure. The poor fellow must have thought we were nuts, as he said this was impossible. After examining the tire and a little head scratching, he offered to install a new tire, no charge, if he could have the old tire. His offer was accepted and we left our bikes overnight.

Fifth day

Boarded a street car and traveled to Venice, where we rode the largest and fastest scenic railway on the Pacific Coast. It was called " Race Thru The Clouds ", Anything for a thrill.. We spent the day along the beach and then rode the car back to Los Angeles over the sand dunes.

Sixth day

Got our bikes out of the shop and we were on our way to Anaheim, on concrete pavement, what a change. It turned cloudy by evening and we were afraid of rain, so we spread our blankets under a bridge, south of Anaheim..

No rain, except the sand and dirt that rained down on us, when a car would pass over. Had to sleep with our jackets over our heads.

Seventh day

Off again on an oiled road to Capistrano, where we went thru the mission. Then up the Torrey Pines grade, which was short but steep. Entered San Diego in the afternoon.

Eighth Day

Rode a bus to Tia Juana, Mexico. Very disappointed, so filthy, just a tourist trap. Returned to San Diego, satisfied that we had been outside the United States.

Nineth day

We spent the day visiting Balboa Park and the Zoo. Towards evening we rode down near the pier. looking for a place to eat. Found a small lunch room where the cook was also the owner. while we were eating we noticed a wall poster advertising the low prices for sailing on a ship from San Diego to San Pedro. This would be something new as we had never been on anything larger than a Ferry boat before, and this would not be riding the same road twice. The cook interrupted our conversation and said that if we would ride down the street two blocks, then we would be on the pier where the ship was now loading and it would leave in about four hours.. So on Nov. 15, 1916, we bought tickets on the steamship " Governor " Room # B-112 Berth #3, and I still have my ticket stub. Our tickets covered our bikes which were listed as baggage, and they also included a light breakfast before we reached San Pedro at 9:00 A.M. We were not used to light breakfasts but this should take care of us until we reached San Pedro, where we would then have our regular breakfast, We watched the Loading of the ship until 9:00 and then turned in for a good nights sleep.

Tenth day

Up again at daylight, waiting for the dining room to open, where we were first. An old gray haired man was our waiter and when I explained to him that we were on a bike trip and did not have too much money, so we only wanted what we could get on our ticket. After a slight hesitation, he said that we could order any thing on the menu and if it was not covered then he would tell us. Then he took over and asked if we would like a hot cerial with cream, which of course we agreed to. He then suggested bacon and eggs, with a side order of hot cakes. When he assured us that this was also on the light breakfast, we agreed again. We later found out that there was no limit, as long as you could eat it. We sure enjoyed this breakfast but I believe that the waiter enjoyed it just as much. We landed at San Pedro and then off for Los Angeles. First we stopped at

the side of the road to tighten a strap, when a truck came by at about 10 miles per hour, so we pulled alongside and asked if we could hook a ride. The answer we got was, "you darn kids keep away from here". we then dropped back and Severt lifted a coil of rope, hanging on a rear corner post. After uncoiling this, we each had a 25 ft. tow rope. Trucks in these days had no rear view mirrors, and his rear window was covered so he could not see back. Upon reaching Los Angeles, we coiled the rope and hung it back in its place and then rode up and thanked him for the ride. We did not hear what he said, as we speeded up and left him. In Los Angeles again, where we rented a room, then purchased new clothing and sent the old ones home by mail. Next to an all-night bank to cash a travelers check. After something to eat, we left our films at a studio and asked that the prints be forwarded to Solvang, Calif. More later about the film. Now to bed.

Eleventh day

Left Los Angeles and rode out thru Hollywood to Santa Monica and then onward to Oxnard, where we slept in a stack of bean straw.

Twelfth day

Leaving Oxnard, we stopped at Carpenteria, to see the worlds largest grape vine, which has since died. Left Santa Barbara at 4:00 P.M. after an ice cream cone at a grocery store. Decided that it was too early to buy our bread for the night, as there was several towns ahead, according to our railroad map. We passed Goleta with the same decision, which was a mistake, as the next two towns were only a sign on a post. Short supper tonight, hot tea and no bread. Slept in a stack of bean straw again.

Thirteenth day

Breakfast of hot tea and we were on our way again, not much of what you could call a road, with few bridges. We crossed one of the streams on a railroad trestle. On another I removed my shoes and socks, and then carried Severt and the bikes across. At about 10:00 A.M. we were both tired and hungry, when we came to the Gaviota Oil Pump Station. A car was coming up from the station, so I jumped off and opened the gate for him. It turned out that he was the superintendant of the station, who asked me what bikes from Fresno were doing so far away from home and he also wanted to know where we were headed for. I told him we were headed for the nearest place where we could buy a loaf of bread and I told him of our mistake of the day before. We found out later that we were less than a mile from the Gaviota Store. This man then pulled out a note book, wrote something in it, tore out the page, folded it several times and gave it to me.

He said if we would take this note down to the cook shack, where he came from, he was sure someone would sell us a loaf of bread. We thanked him found the cook, who read the note and asked us to rest for a few minutes as he was busy. We never did find out what was in that note, but it was not very long before we were called in for a breakfast of Ham and Eggs, with hot cakes. No charge. This was an old custom of always feeding anyone who was hungry. On again over the old Alisal grade into Solvang, where we stayed in a cabin at Atterdag College, which was demolished in 1970. Severt's sister Esther was here at this time. We now received our pictures from the Los Angeles Studio. In the package was this note " for the IKE'S on bikes ". Deposit 80¢. Prints and postage 78¢. Refund 2¢. I have never been able to find the expression of IKE'S in any dictionary but I believe the name is as good as any for two young travelers. Therefore the title to our story.

Fourteenth day

Visited around Solvang.

Fifteenth day

Left Solvang and went north to Los Olivas, which was the southern terminus of a narrow gauge railroad that ended at San Louis Obispo. Some time later this railroad was discontinued and some of the rolling stock was sent to Alaska. We saw some of the cars in 1952 on the line between Skagway and Whitehorse. Matties tavern in Los Olivas is still an excellent place to dine. As we entered Los Olivas, we saw a sign which read " We cut rawhide to order ". Now I had an idea, this could be the answer to our trouble of keeping the rear tire cemented to the rim. Up to this time, Severt had had cemented his six times and I had mine five times. After a little discussion with the old man in the shop, he cut long strips of rawhide about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch wide, which we then wrapped around the tire and rim, after letting out the air. It was wrapped at every fourth spoke and then the two ends were tied together at the inner edge. After inflating the the tire, the raw hide was real tight and became still tighter as it dried. It stayed until we came home. Now on to Santa Maria, where we put our bikes in a garage for the night. Next something to eat and then we found that there were no rooms available as there was a carnival in town. Now back to the garage to get our bikes and blankets, but the garage was closed. We located a room in the Mexican quarter but it was next to the carnival. The Merry-Go-Round, was within 25 ft. of our window. It played one tune only, until near midnight.

Sixteenth day

On again and stopped at Arroyo Grande, which now has a 4-lane freeway. We found our main road just wide enough for two cars to meet, if they slowed down. I have a picture of myself, on this stretch..

Next stop at Pismo and then on to San Louis Obispo, where we stayed in a hotel.

Seventeenth day

We awoke to a cold and windy rainstorm, so purchased tickets to San Francisco on the Southern Pacific train. Upon arriving in San Francisco, we pedaled to the foot of Market Street, where we stayed at the Bay Hotel, accross from the Ferry Building. This was the same hotel where 15 of us from Parlier, had stayed while we visited the worlds fair in 1915. We saw a Charlie Chaplin silent film tonight.

Eighteenth day

Up early in the morning for our double order of hot cakes. This restaurant served its butter, one square to a butter plate. With our double order we each received for plates. Severt never used butter, so I had eight plates of butter around my platter of hot cakes. Now onto a street car and out to Golden Gate Park, where we spent the day. In the evening we saw two more Chaplin films and then back to Bay Hotel.

Nineteenth day

Again the hot cakes and then out to the Cliff House and Sutro Baths, Museum etc. Back downtown and saw two more Chaplin films. This made five in three days. There was one more that we missed, but we had had enough of Chaplin for a while.

Twentieth day

Leave San Francisco, for Oakland, where we stopped at Oakland Polytechnic School and visited with Elmer Jensen who was enrolled here. On to Livermore.

Twentyfirst day

A nice morning, then real trouble starts. Severts bike broke down so that it could not be repaired on the road. Then a man in a touring car with the top down, stopped and ended up by loading Severts bike in the back seat and Severt in the front seat, and taking both to a bike shop in Fresno. I pedaled along until close to Tracy, when I was given a lift to the repair shop in Fresno.

Twentysecond day

Back home in the morning, tired but happy. My total cost for the trip was \$54.00, which sounds cheap by todays dollar but we must remember farm wages were 20¢ per hour. Today the wages are \$2.00 (1970) ten times greater. The following prices are what we paid on the trip.

3 hot cakes.. 15¢ 6 hot cakes..20¢ Drinks extra 5¢ Ice Cream Cone 5¢
Street car..5¢ Room at Santa Maria 25¢ each Rooms other places 50¢ each

