

“If You Can Dream It, You Can Do It.”

--Walt Disney--

Interview and Article by Debbie Watson

Meet Bill MacKenzie who took a retirement trip of a lifetime – on two wheels. Bill fulfilled a life’s dream of pedaling from coast to coast (literally). You may remember Bill from Intel, where he worked for 15 years as Communications Manager in Oregon and is a 2013 retiree. Bill is one of the early participants in the [Encore Fellowship Program](#) – a subject for a follow-up article in a future News Flash. But for now, read about his biking adventure, as [published in the Hillsboro Tribune](#), and reprinted here with permission. We’ve taken the liberty of adding pictures that document portions of his incredible journey. Want to discuss this amazing adventure with Bill? He can be contacted via email at whmaken@gmail.com.

Going cross-country on two wheels

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Bill MacKenzie is finally home in Oregon after what he characterized as “a grueling, but fun, 3,459-mile bicycle ride from Los Angeles to Boston.”

As he relaxed and savored his recently completed cross-country bike journey, MacKenzie – who worked for 15 years in Hillsboro as Intel’s communications manager in Oregon – said he well knows the United States is a very big country.

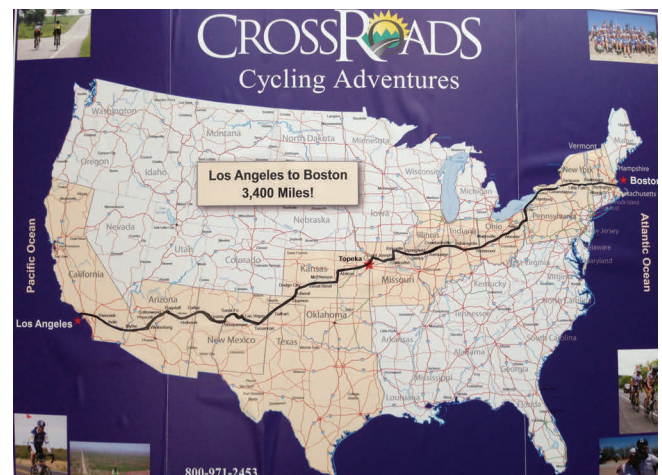
“But ever since I was a kid, when my parents gave me a shiny black English three-speed bike, I’ve wanted to cycle across the country from sea to shining sea,” he said.

MacKenzie decided to make his dream become a reality early this year as he neared his Feb. 1 retirement from Intel Corp.

“I thought about it for years,” he said. “I created a poster for my gray cubicle wall. It was a map of the U.S. with a line drawn across it to show a bike route and the words, ‘If I can dream it, I can do it.’”

Even with endless determination, however, MacKenzie, who lives in Lake Oswego, knew training was also essential.

“I trained vigorously, either riding my bike outdoors on 25-mile to 100-mile trips or indoors on a trainer at Club Sport in Tigard,” he said.



Our route across the U.S.

MacKenzie also located a company called Crossroads Cycling Adventures that specialized in assisting cross-country cycling expeditions.

“They said they would carry our bags, have vans on the road to keep us safe, arrange our meals and put us up in hotels along the way,” MacKenzie explained. “I’ve done one-week camping rides before, but had no desire to do it all across the United States. The company’s leader assured me I didn’t need to be an Olympian to do the ride, so I made the leap and signed up.”

MacKenzie said he made sure he had all the necessary bike upkeep and travel items and kept it all within the 30-pound weight limit set by Crossroads Cycling, which is based in Littleton, Colo. After that he arranged for Lakeside Bicycles in Lake Oswego to ship his two-wheeler — a U.S.-made Trek road bike — to the starting point in California. And then he booked a flight to L.A.

West Coast launch

There were 25 riders in MacKenzie’s group. The youngest was a 22-year-old woman from England and the oldest was a 76-year-old man who had once climbed Mount Everest.



We rode on Route 66 at various times, frequently through towns that have been decimated by the shift of traffic to interstates.

“We launched at Manhattan Beach, Calif., on May 11, after dipping our rear wheels in the Pacific,” MacKenzie recalled.

According to MacKenzie, the group of cyclists bonded as they traveled through 117-degree heat in the California desert; across never-ending hills in Missouri; and in daunting thunderstorms in New England.

“Our route taught us history lessons every day,” said MacKenzie. “It took us through desert in California, over the Continental Divide in New Mexico, along historic Route 66, to Dorothy’s house at the ‘Wizard of Oz’ park and the Dalton Brothers’ hideout in Kansas. We rode the Lewis & Clark Trail in Missouri, crossed the swiftly flowing Mississippi River into Illinois, rode alongside the Erie Canal in New York and pedaled through historic Concord and Lexington in Massachusetts.”

MacKenzie said the trip reaffirmed his own sense of optimism and pride in the country.

“Every single day of our trip was an adventure,” said MacKenzie, “and no matter where we went, American flags were flying, reflecting American pride in our past and faith in the future. Flags lined the streets and flew from just about every home, enveloping you in good feelings.”



The Erie Canal in Little Falls, New York

‘You’re in Kansas’

In Kansas, the team of bicyclists — most of whom came from urban environments — learned a bit about cultural differences when faced with their own preconceptions about city life as contrasted with life in a small farm town.

“One day a rider commented in a restaurant that he’d parked his bike near a window so he could watch it in case somebody tried to steal it,” said MacKenzie. “A man in a nearby booth overheard his remark and said, ‘Son, you don’t need to worry about that here. You’re in Kansas.’”

Not every town offered a positive feeling, however. Ironically, MacKenzie said he believed a town that had been celebrated in a classic rock song from the early 1970s had lost its way.

“There was Winslow, Ariz., made famous by the Eagles song, ‘Take it Easy,’ along the old Route 66,” MacKenzie explained. “A dying town, it seems to continue only so it can showcase its mention in the song.”

Residents of another town put their sense of humor on display. In Hillsboro, Ind., MacKenzie and his fellow bikers got a good laugh out of the banner townspeople had set up to greet their arrival.

“Hillsboro had a large welcome sign at the town’s border saying, ‘Home of 600 happy people and a few old soreheads,’” he recalled.



Dipping my front wheel in the Atlantic after 3,459 miles. We made it!

On June 28, after 49 days of traveling on two wheels, MacKenzie’s band of bicycle adventurers arrived in Boston, where they engaged in a celebratory “front-wheel-dipping” ceremony in the Atlantic Ocean.

“In a downpour, of course,” he said. “I got a lump in my throat and a few tears rolled down my cheeks as I realized we’d finished. It was truly the trip of a lifetime.”



Standin' on the corner in Winslow, Arizona (from the Eagles song)

"Nothing happens unless first a dream".

--Carl Sandburg--