

# Cross-Country

*A Journey in Words*



*Key West → Los Angeles → The Grand Canyon*

50 Miles a Day

# The Florida Chapter

*Key West to the Panhandle · ~1,000 Miles*



— MIAMI / KEYS AREA —

**Day 1** · *Friday, February 27, 2026*

*Key West American Legion Post 23 → Marathon American Legion Post 154*

Friday. The 27th of February. Got the trailer signed first thing — Dan, the Vice Commander of American Legion Post 23 out of Key West, put his name on it. An endorsement. His way of saying he believed in what I was doing. That meant something.

Rode down to the Atlantic and dipped the tires in. Couple of strangers nearby, good folks, agreed to record the thing. Felt right to have witnesses at the start of a thing like this.

Found a breakfast place after. Four-point-seven stars, they say. Eggs Benedict. The man at the door didn't quite know what to make of me or the rig. Took a spell to get seated. Once I was in, I told a few of the patrons what I was about. Word travels in a room like that. Before long one of the waiters was leaning over asking questions about the ride.

Rode ten miles out and met Omar at our agreed starting point. That's how we do it — leapfrog the truck forward, ride together, part ways, reposition. We put in twenty-five miles side by side from there. Had to learn his rhythm, and he mine. Little banter at the start, then we just rode. The sun was full and merciless — no cloud cover, no mercy. Had an SPF 50 vegan-friendly lotion in the bag. Rationed it like water, applying every couple of hours, making sure it lasted the day.

The terrain offered no resistance — flat and wide open, sea level all the way. Florida doesn't ask much of the legs in terms of hills. What it asks for instead is resolve against

the heat and the humidity, both of which showed up in full on day one. Herbie handled the weight of Giselle well for a first outing. No wobble, no drama. The rig rode true.

Said my goodbyes to Omar at mile thirty-five. He pushed on — his fifty to finish, a camp to make for the night. I turned back to fetch the truck and move it up the road. That's the way of it. Sixty-two miles on my own legs by end of day. Landed at the Marathon American Legion, Post 154. Met Kindra, the treasurer, who made me feel the place was already expecting me. Good people there. Felt the same warmth as Key West. Something about this organization — they show up for a man on a mission.

*#Anticipation #Ritual #Brotherhood #Momentum #Resilience #Surrender #NewWayOfLife #Grit #Curiosity #Beginning*

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## **Day 2** · *Saturday, February 28, 2026*

*Marathon American Legion Post 154 → Key Largo American Legion Post 333*

Day 2. Met Omar at the start of the Path — the Path, I call it — and rode twenty-five miles together. At the turnaround stood a restaurant. Said goodbye to Omar there. He wanted to press on. I went in.

Cuban sandwich. Mashed potatoes. Fell into conversation with the patrons about riding across the country. Good conversation starter, that.

The heat had no mercy. A blister opened up on my lower lip somewhere along the way. Sun's doing. Stopped at a dollar store — Family Dollar, Dollar General, one of that breed — and picked up SPF 100. Reached for three bottles. Put two back. A nomad travels light. Still learning that.

The land stays flat — sea level country with no hills to speak of. But flat doesn't mean featureless. There's surf to the side, salt air, palm trees lining the way. It's a beautiful stretch of the world to ride through. The sun and humidity are relentless, but a man could do worse for scenery. The body is starting to find its rhythm. Beginning to understand what this life asks of it.

Fifty miles by end of day. Pulled into Key Largo and camped next to Post 333. Met Trish behind the bar — the kind of person who makes a stranger feel like a regular. Key West. Marathon. Key Largo. Three posts, three nights, three sets of good people who didn't need much convincing to believe in this ride. The trifecta. If the rest of the country is half as welcoming, this'll be some journey.

[#Resilience](#) [#Minimalism](#) [#Brotherhood](#) [#Grit](#) [#Adaptation](#) [#Solitude](#) [#Curiosity](#) [#HeatOfTheLand](#)  
[#NewWayOfLife](#) [#Momentum](#)

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### **Day 3** · *Sunday, March 1, 2026*

*Key Largo American Legion Post 333 → South Miami American Legion Post 31*

Day 3. Drove up to South Miami and found the American Legion, Post 31. John was the man there — got around on a golf cart, knew the place like the back of his hand. Got permission to set up camp. Settled in, then headed back out for a forty-mile run — out to the port of Miami and back. Arrived at camp a little late, but arrived.

The heat was oppressive. No other word for it. Made it over a couple of tall bridges, the kind that make you earn every pedal stroke. The bike took it all without complaint. Seems to be finding its legs.

Then the sky opened up. A downpour of epic proportions — the kind that doesn't negotiate. Found shelter in the small atrium of a Catholic church. Sat there a while, made some calls, waited for it to abate. There are worse places to wait out a storm.

First real test of the rain gear. It held. Protective bags over the panniers and the basket — everything came out the other side relatively dry. Good to know the kit can handle what the sky throws at it.

Boogalieu Bear rode in the basket as always. Silent companion. Doesn't say much, but he shows up every day. Can't ask for more than that in a partner.

One thing needs tending. The solar panel sits mounted on the trailer, charging cable running up to the bike — good setup in theory. In practice, the connection keeps jumping loose on the road. Rattles free, loses the charge. Something to sort before it becomes a real problem. The trail has a way of turning small nuisances into large ones if you let them ride.

No mechanical failures otherwise. No mishaps. Just the heat, the storm, the bridges, and the miles.

[#Resilience](#) [#Adaptation](#) [#Solitude](#) [#Grit](#) [#Brotherhood](#) [#Momentum](#) [#HeatOfTheLand](#) [#ProblemSolving](#)  
[#NewWayOfLife](#) [#Gratitude](#)

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## **Day 4** · *Monday, March 2, 2026*

*South Miami American Legion Post 31 — Home Base*

Day 4. Omar had pulled into Post 31 the night before. We rolled out together early, heading north through downtown Miami. Didn't last long as a pair. Omar wanted the sidewalk. Giselle doesn't fit on a sidewalk — too narrow for the trailer. I found a bike path on the opposite side of the road and took that instead. Downtown swallowed us both up in traffic not long after, and that was the last I saw of Omar. He headed north to put in his miles. I had other business.

Turned off to pay a visit to Vivex. Potential sponsors. Rita, the administrative assistant, met me at the door and took the time to hear me out. She introduced me to one of the executives on site — not the decision maker I need, that person's out in California — but the visit mattered. Rita sent me back out into the heat with Gatorade, a hug, and something that felt like genuine belief in what I'm doing. That kind of thing carries a man further than the Gatorade does.

The sun was brutal on the way out. By the time I turned back toward Post 31, it had eased off some. A cooler ride home. Good thing, because the day had already taken its toll.

Sixty point zero nine miles on the day.

One small fix along the way — a zip tie holding Herbie's flagpole snapped. Nothing more than that. Had spares in the supply bag. Back in order inside of a minute. Marcus and Cleopatra were waiting at Post 31 when I got back. Home base. Weary head, met pillow. That's enough.

*[#Resilience](#) [#Momentum](#) [#Adaptation](#) [#HeatOfTheLand](#) [#Curiosity](#) [#Brotherhood](#) [#Gratitude](#) [#NewWayOfLife](#)  
[#ProblemSolving](#) [#Connection](#)*

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## **Day 5** · *Tuesday, March 3, 2026*

*South Miami American Legion Post 31 → Duffy's Sports Bar — Home Base*

Rest day. The body said so, and there was no arguing with it.

Found a First Watch along the route and settled in. Had a gift card from another First Watch location — a send-off gift before this journey began. Put it to good use. Eggs, coffee, and a table with an outlet. Spent a good stretch working on the Roll for Veterans

website. A cause worth building. Answered some critical emails while I was at it. The ride doesn't stop just because the wheels do.

Made a stop at an urgent care clinic along the way. Right ear had been giving some trouble — pressure, a little pain. Nothing dramatic, but enough to warrant attention. Doctor took a look and sent me on my way with a clean bill of health. One less thing to carry down the road.

Called the Ford dealership in Stuart to set up an oil change and tire rotation for Marcus the next day. Spoke with Serena, who told me to ask for Marissa when I arrived. Said Marissa would take care of me. A man tends to his horse before he tends to himself. That's the way of it.

Ended up at Duffy's, a sports bar with a parking lot and a manager named Dennis who didn't bat an eye when I asked to camp there for the night. Chicken fingers and tater tots for dinner. More computer work over the meal. When it was time, Cleopatra was right outside waiting. Bed had never been closer.

Sometimes a rest day means no rest at all.

[#Resilience](#) [#Adaptation](#) [#Gratitude](#) [#ProblemSolving](#) [#NewWayOfLife](#) [#Momentum](#) [#Connection](#)  
[#RollForVeterans](#) [#Solitude](#) [#Grit](#)

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## **Day 6** · *Wednesday, March 4, 2026*

*Duffy's Sports Bar → Stuart Ford Dealership — Home Base*

Day 6. Dropped Marcus off at the Ford dealership in Stuart first thing. Talked to Marissa and Mike, the department manager, about where to put Cleopatra while the work was done. Drove her around back myself and parked her in the stable with the vehicles waiting for repair. Nobody touches the wheel without my say so.

Donned the gear, mounted Herbie, hitched Giselle, and headed out into Stuart.

Hadn't gone far when I came across three youngsters outside a Walmart. One of them — Zavior — had just graduated high school and was heading into the Marines as an MP. Two others still in school. We recorded a little video together for YouTube, talking about life and its purpose. Good kids asking the right questions. Zavior's got the right bearing for what's ahead of him. The Corps will do fine by him, and he by them.

Stopped into the local bike shop and met Frank. Frank was from France. I floated the idea of company on the road west. He indicated, with the particular clarity of a Frenchman, that he had neither the time nor the inclination to cross the country with me. Fair enough.

Climbed two solid hills over the causeway and spent the day cycling through a pleasant stretch of islands and sandbars, pushing toward Fort Pierce State Park where Omar was planning to bed down for the night. Didn't make it that far.

Made it to Frederick Douglass Park and Beach. Took the shoes off. Walked down to the surf and let it find my feet. Met some good people out there. Jon, who'd spent time in Germany assisting the chaplain when the wall came down in Berlin. Janet and Louise, down from Allentown way for some Florida sun. Then a pair stepping out of their car — Rosemary and Bill. Had a fine conversation about the state of affairs of the union and the mutual understanding that watching the news does a man no good.

Got a call from the dealership on the ride back. Told Marissa 5:30 wasn't looking likely. Fatigue had started to settle in, the kind that turns miles into something heavier than they ought to be.

Then a man passed me on his bike. Steady. Maybe thirteen miles an hour. Not fast — just relentless. I worked fifteen, maybe twenty minutes to close the gap, then tucked in behind him for a couple of miles. Caught him at the turnaround and told him what he'd done for me without knowing it. Gave him my card. He inspired me more than he'll ever know. Probably won't hear from him again. That's alright.

That little chase lit a fire. Pushed through barriers I'd thought were fixed. Hit a few red lights. Took a wrong turn. Pulled into the dealership at 5:30 exactly, breathing hard and feeling satisfied.

Fifty point zero one miles on the day.

Settled up with Marissa and Serena. Left them a Roll for Veterans carabiner to share. Team Bravo, both of them.

On the way to hook Cleopatra back up to Marcus, passed a man named Francis washing a Ford Expedition in the wash bay. Got to talking. Mentioned I'd like to get the road grime off Marcus. Francis offered to do it himself. Took him up on it. Helped him dry when the dirt was gone. We talked about life and its complexities. Gave him a carabiner before I left. A true Team Bravo member.

Went to hook up Cleopatra and realized nobody had noticed me back there. The dealership had locked up around me. So I made camp right where I stood and enjoyed a quiet night in Stuart, Florida. Come morning, I was gone when the gate opened.

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— SPACE COAST —

**Day 7** · *Thursday, March 5, 2026*

*Stuart Ford Dealership → Melbourne, FL — Big Mike's Field / American Legion — Home Base*

Day 7. Drove up to Melbourne wearing my hat from Australia — a gift from my sister Ally. Her way of coming along for the ride.

Stopped at the American Legion first. Nobody there who could help with what I needed. Noticed an empty field across the street. Asked around and learned it belonged to Big Mike, owner of the Burger Inn. Moseyed on over and introduced myself.

Mike said yes without much deliberation. The man runs a tight, loyal operation. While I was there I had the Elvis burger — bacon cheeseburger with peanut butter. Sweet potato tater tots on the side, the kind that make you reconsider everything you thought you knew about a tater tot. Two of Mike's employees pulled me aside and told me how Mike had come into their lives when they were struggling. That kind of loyalty isn't bought. It's earned over years. They mentioned a classic car show the first Thursday of every month. Filed that away for another life.

One last observation on the Burger Inn — Big Mike's son works there. His name is also Mike. A coworker goes by Mike as well. Three Mikes under one roof. Maybe it's a prerequisite for employment.

Donned the gear and headed out toward Cape Canaveral. Over the causeway again, down the sandbar. Didn't quite make it. Got as far as a service station, refilled the water, and turned back. Rolled into Mike's field quite late, then relocated Marcus and Cleopatra over to the American Legion for the night — they had water and electricity. Plugged everything in to charge up for the next day. Boogalie Bear, firmly positioned in his basket as always.

Went to bed around midnight. Worn out. Satisfied. Starting to get a feel for this life.

The ride was sunny and hot. No rain. Herbie is performing well, tires holding strong. One thing to note — the trailer mount on Herbie is spent. Ordered a replacement through Amazon, to be delivered to Daytona. Ralph, my point of contact there, offered to have things sent directly to his house. Good man.

Fifty-two point seven two miles on the day.

They'd mentioned the car show earlier in the day and I'd been looking forward to catching the tail end of it when I got back. Rolled in around nine o'clock. Everything was closed up tight. The Mikes had gone home. The cars were gone. Just me, the field, and the dark.

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## **Day 8** · *Friday, March 6, 2026*

*Melbourne American Legion → New Smyrna / Edgewater — Elks Lodge 1557 — Home Base*

Day 8. Left the American Legion early. Slipped a carabiner and a note for Big Mike into the door of the Burger Inn on the way out. Wished I could've sat down with him, recorded a proper conversation — the man has a story worth telling. But timing is what it is. Sometimes you leave a note and move on.

Headed north toward New Smyrna and Edgewater, looking for a place to set up camp before meeting the Daytona chapter of Team RWB the next morning. Team Red, White and Blue — a health and wellness organization for veterans that's meant a great deal to me personally. The chapter is led by Ralph Papineau, and they do a regular Saturday ride out of Rotary Park.

Thought it might be worth stopping at the airfield along the way. About a mile from the park. Filed it away and kept moving.

When I pulled into Rotary Park I spotted an Elks Lodge right next door — Club 1557. Drove over. Sign on the door said closed for the weekend. But there were cars in the lot, so I waited. Eventually a woman named Marty came out. She knew the club's leader — a man named Michael, a firefighter out on Cape Canaveral. Marty texted him on the spot. Within minutes Michael called, authorized me to park in the lot, and asked me to send him some pictures of the rig. Fine setup — water, electricity, bathroom in the park right next door. Team Bravo, both of them.

Intended to get a ride in. Sat down at the computer instead. Then Ralph showed up unexpectedly and we spent the better part of the afternoon talking and getting to know each other. Good man. The miles will come — sometimes life has other plans and you just follow along.

Sixty-three and a half miles on the day. Good miles. Flat terrain as always down here at sea level, but the sun and humidity extract their toll regardless. Herbie performed without complaint. Some days the ride is the easy part.

One thing weighs on me from the day. Ralph's car got hit by another vehicle while he was driving around trying to find me. Hard not to feel a hand in that. He was out there because of me. That sits a certain way.

He mentioned a yoga class nearby and I rode Herbie over to join it. Led by Shushana, who clearly knows her craft. First time I felt like I was actually starting to understand yoga — not just going through the motions. At the end she rang a bell. Some kind of harmonic resonance came off it that moved through my whole body like a current. Stayed with me a while.

Rode back to home base in the dark. No moonlight, no street lights — just trees pressing in on both sides of the path and whatever was ahead in the beam of my light. A man gets to appreciate good lights in a moment like that.

A week out of Key West. In some ways it feels like a lifetime. In others, like only a few hours have passed. Time is funny when you're out on the Path.

Got back late. Took a shower. Hit the rack.

— DAYTONA / NORTHEAST FLORIDA —

**Day 9** · *Saturday, March 7, 2026*

*Elks Lodge 1557 — Rotary Park, New Smyrna*

Day 9. Joined the Daytona chapter of Team RWB for their regular Saturday ride, starting out of Rotary Park. Good group. The path was wide and accommodating — a proper trail, the kind that gives a loaded rig some room to breathe. Took an overpass and cut through a busy intersection along the way.

The crossing of the causeway bridge was another matter entirely. The phone routed me onto a narrow sidewalk on the wrong side of the cement barrier — maybe a foot of clearance on either side, cars moving past at speed, and the wind doing its level best to make decisions for me. Kept the wheels straight and the camera rolling. If you're going to have a moment like that, you might as well let people watch.

Rode about nine miles out and turned back early. Wanted to make it to the park before the fast movers in the group returned, so folks would have a chance to sign Cleopatra before they scattered. Cleopatra isn't just where I sleep — she's the tribute trailer. Two large posters on her sides, open space for signatures, notes of encouragement, well wishes for Team RWB. Every name on those panels is a piece of the mission riding west with me.

On the way back met a fellow named David on a street bike. Said he had several different kinds of bikes and was just getting back into riding. Told him about Roll for Veterans. He listened. Met a few other older riders at the trailhead when we stopped for a break.

Back at the park the two fast movers had already come and gone. Missed them. But Ralph signed the trailer, along with Dianne, Doreen, and Marcelle. Every signature counts.

Then it was over to Dairy Queen, where the group was gathering for a post-ride treat. I had more miles ahead of me so I kept it practical — chili cheese hotdog, coleslaw on the

side, and a Reese's peanut butter shake. No apologies. Met a few more Team RWB members at the table — Don and Anita. Good people doing good work for veterans.

Also met a man named Alvin and his two sons, Matthew and Mark. I asked if they were apostles. Turned out the father's name was Alvin. That's where the biblical references ended.

It's bike week in Daytona. Motorcycles everywhere you look. In the Dairy Queen parking lot on the way out I got to talking with two riders from Ohio — Ben and Bill. Bill launched into a story about a man who'd ridden around Florida on his bike for years. Just when I thought he was about to tell me the man would be perfect to ride with, Bill said he'd quit a couple years back and swore he'd never get on a bike again. Some stories don't end the way you hope.

Met a few more riders in the area — Ziggy, a fellow from France named Constantine, and a woman named Edie, all on motorcycles and wrapping up bike week before heading back to California. They said kind things about the ride. Different road, same direction.

One thing I know about myself out here — when someone wants to talk, I make time. Even if it means getting back to home base after dark. That's just the way of it.

Stopped at a laundromat to tend to the dirty clothes situation. Computer and detergent both safely stowed in Giselle. Got a couple of calls from friends while the machine ran — didn't get much work done, but sometimes that's what a laundromat is for. Folded up the clothes, headed back out and put in another five miles before turning toward home base.

Sixty-three miles by end of day. Got to bed around 0100. Sent a message to Libby before closing my eyes — my best friend's birthday. Some things don't wait for morning.

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**Day 10** · *Sunday, March 8, 2026*

*Elks Lodge 1557 → Ormond Beach — Home Base*

Day 10. Packed everything up at the Elks Lodge before heading out. Herbie and Giselle had been sheltered in the dumpster enclosure — made a fine garage for the night. Got the back of Marcus sorted to make room, then loaded Herbie up where he belongs for transit. Everything secured and road ready.

Spent some time updating the Roll for Veterans website before heading out. Added miles, added details, and added names to the air support team — the people working behind the scenes to keep this mission moving. Every expedition needs ground crew. Mine just happens to operate from a distance.

Then it was on to Ormond Beach for the main event. The Daytona chapter of Team RWB gathered at the Ormond Brewing Company — the first chance to meet the group at large after a week of smaller encounters on the Path. Ten members showed up. Lani, Ralph, Archie, Michelle, Lisa, Steve, Flavia, and Flavia's husband JT. Good people, every one of them.

Set up the rig outside — flags flying, Herbie and Giselle on display, Boogalie Bear firmly in his basket. Gave tours of Marcus and Cleopatra to anyone who wanted one. They enjoyed it. Truth is, I probably enjoyed it more.

The trailer got signed and I was able to record testimonials — exactly the way I had envisioned it from the beginning. Hard to even get inside the building at one point. Too many people with questions about the ride. That's not a complaint.

Then there was the Englishman. Wouldn't say much about what he did for a living. Couldn't have his picture taken. Spoke in careful terms. But he sat down and gave me more useful guidance about the Roll for Veterans website and how to make this mission successful than anyone has to date. Sharp mind, generous with his knowledge, and gone before I could learn much more about him. Sometimes you meet someone and wish the road had more time in it for them. This was one of those times.

After the social I got on Herbie and headed out. Ralph met me midway on the Path — he'd gone home to retrieve an Amazon package and come back out to find me. One of the two LED magnetic light strips I'd ordered had arrived. The other hadn't made it in time. I told Ralph to keep the second one when it came — a memento of the friendship. He'll put those lights to good use in his own way.

Rode over the causeway onto the island near Ormond Beach and found bike week still very much alive. Cruised up and down the strip with the motorcyclists for a while,

taking in the characters and the noise and the spectacle of it all. Somewhere along the way I stopped to photograph a building lit up in blue, found a structure with red lights, then hunted down some white fluorescent lights to round it out. Red, white, and blue. Seemed right for the evening.

Cool night, just a t-shirt, a little humidity working up a sweat. The kind of riding that reminds you why you're doing this. Fifteen miles, starting around 2000 and finishing around 2230.

Got back to home base and met a raccoon in the dark. Came right up close, no fear at all, looking for something to eat. We regarded each other for a moment and went our separate ways.

Was getting ready for a shower when I noticed the train tracks about fifty feet from where I'd be sleeping. A train rolled through not long after. Then another in the night. Fell asleep to the sound of it.

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## **Day 11** · *Monday, March 9, 2026*

*Ormond Beach → Saint Augustine VFW — Home Base*

Day 11. Started early, reorganizing Marcus — food moved to the left side of the back seat, charging equipment and computer gear to the right. Small thing, but out here efficiency matters. Every minute saved in the morning is a mile earned by evening.

Was loading up to leave the Ormond Brewery when I noticed the warehouse door across the way standing open. Went to investigate. Inside were JD and Les, two men who tend one of the most extraordinary private car collections I've ever laid eyes on. They didn't have to invite me in. They spent an hour and a half doing it anyway.

Shelby Mustangs. A Sunbeam Tiger — British body, Carroll Shelby's touch, Ford engine under the hood, a wolf in English clothing. A pace car. Trucks. A Jeep with 700 horsepower. Porsches — 911s ranging from vintage to nearly new. And then there was the Cord. A prewar American luxury car so rare and so beautifully strange that most people have never heard of it. There were two of them in the first warehouse, plus a performance variant. Three Cords in one building. Then JD took me next door and there were more. We played a round of golf in the golf room. They made me feel like

family. Men like that — generous with their time and their treasures — are rarer than the cars they keep.

One car stopped me cold. Same model as the one John F. Kennedy rode through Dallas. A Nash taxicab with mohair seats. History sitting still, waiting to be noticed.

Departed Ormond and followed JD's recommendation north toward Saint Augustine. Stopped at Captain's Barbecue. Good call, JD. Introduced Boogalie Bear to the staff and a few patrons. Met Kevin outside, who signed the trailer and handed me ten dollars toward lunch without being asked. Used every cent of it. Made a few friends inside and spread the word about the ride.

Found the VFW on the outskirts of Saint Augustine. Mark, the post leader, said I was welcome to stay. They even threw in a bag of ice for the refrigerator. Team Bravo.

Unloaded Herbie and Giselle and headed out for a fifty-mile ride into the city. Saint Augustine is the oldest continuously occupied European settlement in the United States, founded by the Spanish in 1565. You feel the age of it on foot and on a bike — cobblestones, old stone buildings, centuries pressing in from every direction.

Stopped outside the Catholic Basilica in the old town and fell into conversation with a man named Jeremiah. We talked for the better part of half an hour. The kind of conversation that slows a man down in the best possible way. Found a family over by the Castillo de San Marcos — the oldest masonry fort in the continental United States, built by the Spanish between 1672 and 1695 from coquina, a shell-stone native to the area so soft it absorbs cannonballs rather than shattering. Never captured in battle. Still standing. There's a lesson in that somewhere.

Encountered a dog on the beach after dark. On a tether, but a long one. He made a wide circle around me before the leash pulled taut — caught my left foot and lower leg on the way through. Left some abrasions. One more thing to keep an eye on.

One physical note — the middle toe on the right foot started making itself known on the ride. Probably the toenails getting long enough to bite into the neighbors. Something to tend to before it becomes a real problem on the road.

Fifty miles felt like a struggle today. Starting too late, spending too much time on other things before getting on the bike. The math is simple — more time on Herbie, less time on everything else until the miles are in. Something to correct going forward.

Got back and went to take a shower. The water heater tripped the circuit breaker. Not the first time, but this time it didn't come back. Less than two weeks in and the hot water situation has become a creative exercise — microwave and propane stove, heating it up in stages. Got the water warm enough, then the pump battery gave out mid-shower. Ended up dumping the rest over my head to finish the job. Does that make me a wimp for not wanting a cold shower? After fifty miles in Florida heat, the answer is no. A man has his standards. Lesson learned on the pump — when it hits twenty percent, charge it immediately. It drops fast from there.

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[#Curiosity](#) [#Momentum](#)

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## **Day 12** · *Tuesday, March 10, 2026*

*Saint Augustine VFW — Home Base*

Day 12. Mark, the VFW post leader, swung by in the morning and signed the trailer. Got a picture with him. Met Ron, who was doing maintenance work on the building. Good people at every stop.

Spent part of the morning hunting for a replacement water heater. Came up empty. Made a practical decision instead — signed up for a Planet Fitness membership. Christine set up the account and showed me around. Showers, workouts, hydro massage. Best of all, the membership follows me across the country. Problem not solved, but managed. That counts for something.

The Samsung phone is still missing. It has things on it I need. Keeping an eye out.

Headed out for what was meant to be a fifty to sixty mile day. Made it about twelve miles before the Lions Bridge had other ideas. It's a drawbridge, and where the sidewalk narrows there's a plate of metal set vertically against the side — just the right height and angle to slide in behind Giselle's wheel and hit it hard. Bent the axle slightly. Still functional, but the tire was wearing unevenly and the math wasn't good for another forty miles. Turned back, loaded Giselle into Marcus, and finished the day on Herbie alone. Ended up with a little over twenty-six miles. Not what was planned, but the wheels kept turning.

Met some good people along the way. Laci stopped to talk while the drawbridge was doing its thing. She'd lived aboard a schooner for years — the kind of person who understands what it means to make a moving thing your home.

Bill came riding by on his own bike while I was unloading Herbie — equipment loaded on the back, a traveling merchant of sorts. Makes his living trading and bartering. Hard to say how much of what he carries has value to anyone else, but in his world it all does. He talked about coming to Florida, ending up in jail, losing everything, and having to learn from scratch how to live this kind of life. Watching him ride off, I looked at my own rig and thought — I still have way too much stuff.

Over at Planet Fitness, met Jen, who had battled her way back from meth addiction to become a functioning, successful member of society. And David, who had gone through stage four lymphoma, endured chemotherapy, and come out the other side in remission. Two people who had stared something down and won. You meet people like that and the bent axle starts to feel like a minor inconvenience.

Getting to bed too late again. The miles suffer for it. Need to find a way back to discipline on the schedule. The road doesn't wait for a man to sort himself out.

[#Resilience](#) [#Adaptation](#) [#Grit](#) [#Connection](#) [#Inspiration](#) [#Brotherhood](#) [#ProblemSolving](#) [#NewWayOfLife](#)  
[#Gratitude](#) [#TeamBravo](#)

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## **Day 13** · *Wednesday, March 11, 2026*

*Saint Augustine VFW / Planet Fitness — Home Base*

Day 13. Woke up in the Planet Fitness parking lot and found a whole community already awake around me. Turns out this place serves as a kind of home base for travelers — people showering, working out, passing through. Met Jake and Megan, a long distance running couple living out of a Pontiac Flex, all the way from Ohio. Hard to imagine two people sleeping in there together, but they seemed to have it figured out. Left bracelets on their windshield wiper and a business card before heading in. Met Noah behind the counter, washed up, indulged in a hydro massage. Ready for Saint Augustine.

Five miles in, passed ANR Auto Electric. Stopped to talk to Tony — owns the place, rides a Harley. Asked him about options for connecting the water pump electrically. He listened, but didn't have much new to offer. Still looking for a solution.

Spent the day moving through historic Saint Augustine, recording content, meeting people. Eventually made it back to the Castillo de San Marcos. Decided on a whim to circle the fort in under three minutes for a YouTube short. Six, maybe seven attempts — the camera kept shutting off or flipping to the wrong lens. Finally got it done. On the way out, hit a deep patch of sand. The bike stopped instantly and I went down on my left side. Prefer the left — less equipment to damage. The bracket holding the entrenching tool bent, mirror needs repositioning, right shin took a knock. Nothing serious. Got up, checked Herbie, kept moving.

Didn't feel like stopping at twenty miles so I kept going. Started playing a game — right turn only. Every intersection, turn right. Keeps the momentum and leads a man somewhere unexpected. This time it led through an opulent neighborhood where a stranger gave me water right when I needed it. Said he ran some kind of environmental business. Didn't catch his name, but the water was appreciated.

Then the right turns led me into a small trailer court — oval shaped, two pointed ends, like an eye seen from above. Went around once and spotted an older woman who seemed to be struggling with something. Went around again and stopped. Her name was Linda. She invited me in and we talked for a while. Then she suggested we go get sushi with her friend Kim.

On the way to the restaurant, spotted two school buses and a car that stopped me cold — painted in color, covered in dragonflies, bumblebees, and rainbows. The man behind it was Hollywood. Puts out social media content — singing, dancing, entertainment — all to benefit homeless people. Said it was his church, something called 11/22. I'd actually asked about that church a few days back when I rode past it. Now here was the man himself. Met his son Sky. Did a quick three minute short with Hollywood, got his number, and rode on to the sushi place.

Had a lovely time with Kim and Linda, talking about life and its complexities. The service was slow and the waiter was finding his footing, but the company more than made up for it. We parted as friends.

Rode back to Planet Fitness as the light was going — no lights on me, didn't want to push it. Back at Marcus, met two more neighbors from the nomad community. Mark, who lives out of an Astrovan and travels the same kind of life. Amy, who drives a larger camper van, works at a pizza and wing place, and handed me a chicken wing without being asked. Invited her to sign the trailer.

Going for the lights, found a note tucked on the driver's side door. Jake and Megan. They thanked me for the bracelets and said they loved them. A small thing that landed well.

Lights on, back into Saint Augustine one last time. Heard hammering and found two men setting up canopies for a musical event starting Friday. They spoke Spanish, not much English. We made it work. Their names were Amado and David — names from another chapter of life that stirred up something on the way back.

Got a strange phone call on the ride home. A woman, not making a lot of sense, said someone had given her my card. Long conversation that didn't go anywhere in particular. The card gets around.

Sixty point four two miles on the day.

[#Connection](#) [#Resilience](#) [#NewWayOfLife](#) [#Curiosity](#) [#Gratitude](#) [#Brotherhood](#) [#RollForVeterans](#) [#TeamBravo](#)  
[#Inspiration](#) [#Grit](#)

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— GAINESVILLE / NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA —

**Day 14** · *Thursday, March 12, 2026*

*Saint Augustine → Gainesville, FL — Planet Fitness — Home Base*

Day 14. All driving. No miles on Herbie today, but the rig needed attention and Gainesville had what I was looking for.

Called ahead to the Trek bicycle shop yesterday. Walked in and met Laura at the door. She went and got Rob, the man I'd spoken to on the phone. Rob did what he could, but the derailleur was giving him trouble so he called in the mechanic — Bennett, a younger guy who rode a lap or two around the shop on a bike before asking how he could help. Once he got the picture he got to work. Rob sorted out the front tire while Bennett tackled the shifting. I worked on Giselle alongside them, straightening the axle with a big Crescent wrench. Got it to what I think is pretty good — straight enough to steer and bear loads with grace. She's a bike trailer, not a precision instrument, and sudden impacts don't help. A true team effort. Bennett got the shifting back to normal, Rob got the front tire sorted, I got the trailer back to something like herself. New friends made in the process. That counts for something.

Drove over to look for Monster Press, a screen printing place. The address on Google led nowhere — looked like they may have moved. Wasn't a lead I felt strongly about to begin with, so I let it go.

Headed to Planet Fitness. Met Ken — yellow lens glasses, impressive afro, and the ability to solve a Rubik's cube. All the colors, fully aligned. Thought that was a lost art. Spent some time on the computer updating the website, working on videos, replying to emails. Said goodbye to Ken.

Back at the rig, decided to wire up a longer extension cord to connect the truck and trailer properly. Settled into the camp chair, put on some music, and worked through the Girl Scout cookies I'd bought from Rob at the truck store. A man earns his cookies.

Getting ready for bed when Ken pulled into the spot right next to mine. Hadn't planned it that way. Got him to sign the trailer. The circle, as they say, was complete.

[#Resilience](#) [#Adaptation](#) [#ProblemSolving](#) [#Connection](#) [#Gratitude](#) [#TeamBravo](#) [#NewWayOfLife](#) [#Momentum](#)  
[#Brotherhood](#) [#Grit](#)

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— TALLAHASSEE / PANHANDLE —

**Day 15** · *Friday, March 13, 2026*

*Gainesville — WrapSpot → Tallahassee, FL — Planet Fitness — Home Base*

Day 15. Another Friday the 13th. Two weeks out of Key West. In some ways it seems like a lifetime. In others, the blink of an eye.

Another day off the bike, but not a day wasted.

Headed to WrapSpot in the morning — the vehicle wrap shop that made all the graphics for the rig before the ride began. Met them on the way down to Key West and never expected to pass through Gainesville again. Glad I got the chance.

Garrick runs the place, along with Justin and Dominic. And Holly — Garrick's wife, who has memory problems. But she remembered me. That meant a lot.

Spent the better part of the day there. Fixed a misspelling — benefiting had been wrong on the graphics since the start. Covered a QR code that wasn't linking right. And added a WrapSpot logo to the truck as a partner. A real milestone. These people believed in this ride before it started. Having their name on the rig feels right.

Said my goodbyes and pointed Marcus toward Tallahassee. New strategy taking shape — instead of driving fifty miles and riding fifty miles every day, drive a hundred and fifty miles and ride three days in a row without breaking camp each time. More efficient. More miles. Less time managing the logistics and more time on the Path. Maybe even enough breathing room to catch up on everything else that's been piling up.

On the drive to Tallahassee, my mind turned to partnerships. Planet Fitness has been more than a shower stop — it's been a community, a home base, a constant across the changing landscape. Called ahead to the Tallahassee location hoping to reach a manager or franchise owner about a potential partnership. No managers on weekends. Spoke to an employee named Ken instead.

Ken likes Rubik's cubes.

The Ken I left behind in Gainesville also likes Rubik's cubes. Two different men, two different cities, two different Planet Fitness locations. They don't know each other. Maybe they're supposed to. I don't believe in coincidence.

Pulled into the Planet Fitness parking lot and met the security guard — Army veteran, recon. Had a retired Army partner in the nearby lot. The three of us stood there a while, old soldiers talking the way old soldiers do. Good company at the end of a long day.

Decided to stay put tonight, but move to a different Planet Fitness location in the morning — one with more relaxed parking rules. Better for the rig, better for the ride.

Beat. Ready to hit the hay. Tomorrow the Path continues.

*[#Momentum](#) [#Gratitude](#) [#TeamBravo](#) [#Adaptation](#) [#Connection](#) [#RollForVeterans](#) [#NewWayOfLife](#) [#Resilience](#) [#Brotherhood](#) [#Inspiration](#)*

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**Day 16** · *Saturday, March 14, 2026*

Day 16. Started nicely — hydro massage, washed up, brushed teeth, got the day organized. Before driving over to the other Planet Fitness, said goodbye to Tamaya and Reymon at the counter. Both of them signed the trailer and posed with Boogalie Bear. Encouraging people. The kind of send-off that sets a good tone.

In the parking lot met the security guard. His name is George Harrison. Junior. He knows a great deal about the Harrisons — the history, the lineage, even the coat of arms. Saw the trailer and launched into some of his own adventures over the years. Got his signature and some pictures. Promised to send an email to his boss up in Alaska on his behalf.

Drove over to the other Planet Fitness and met Gordon — an employee who was in the middle of dealing with a drunk and an altercation when I pulled in. He handled it well, articulate and calm, talking to the cop while I sat nearby and gathered my thoughts. Once things settled we talked for a while. Friendly, outgoing, positive. Good energy.

Unloaded everything, introduced myself at the pickleball court, then mounted Herbie and rode out to meet Omar — about thirty minutes away. He seemed relatively happy to see me. That made me happy. We sat down to a large burrito. Enough fuel for the Path ahead. Talked to a few patrons about the ride before saying our goodbyes.

Headed out almost due south on one of the finest trails I've ridden yet — wide, flat, and open. Twenty-two miles of it, ending at the Saint Marks National Wildlife Refuge. Met MJ there, a student working at the discovery building. We recorded a podcast episode together. A couple of families wandered in and I told them about the ride. Met Dan and Irene, who were out on their bikes as well. Then a couple from Minnesota, there to photograph birds with lenses the size of small telescopes.

Made good time heading back. Thirty-three miles out, thirty-two back, circled a few times to hit sixty-five miles even. A productive day.

Back at the truck, a man named Cory pulled in, got out, and immediately locked onto the trailer. We started talking before he'd taken three steps. He's a dentist between gigs. Sometimes all you can do is hope.

**Day 17** · *Sunday, March 15, 2026*

*Tallahassee — Planet Fitness → Florida / Georgia Border — Home Base*

Day 17. Woke up around 0600 with an unusual amount of energy. Still dark outside — earlier than usual. Made a vow to keep at it, go to bed earlier, get up earlier. The late nights working on the website have been costing miles.

Decided to head north today since yesterday was south. Georgia is only about twenty-five miles from Tallahassee. Prepared for hills and two-lane highways with no shoulder. The wind, however, was an uninvited guest.

The morning was cool enough to warrant layers — a welcome change from the relentless heat of the Keys. Stopped at Goodwill to replace a missing shaker bottle and pick up a new honey pot — the old one disappeared somewhere between the two Planet Fitness locations, probably bounced out of an open door along the way. The road claims things.

The phone routed me through town and onto side roads heading toward Georgia. The side roads had ideas of their own — aggressive hills. Hills and wind in the morning. Just the way we like it.

Eventually the curves and climbs resolved into a straighter two-lane highway with a canopy of trees arching overhead. No shoulder, but the cars were accommodating. Nobody seemed to get overly upset about sharing the road with a man and his loaded bike. A good sign.

Made it almost to the Florida-Georgia line before pulling over at an AM/PM for water. Met Adrian there — had a good talk, finished up with a three minute YouTube short together. He took off just as I went inside, where I met Danny, who either owns or works the store. He's from India, super friendly, and handed over some money for the cause without being asked. Dave, a patron heading out the door, did the same. Strangers showing up when it counts.

Pushed on, took a wrong turn, and eventually found the Florida-Georgia border. Rode over to the convenience store on the Georgia side. Inside, met Jordyn while she was paying for her gas. Told her what I was doing and she lit up. We went back out together and met her husband Mike. Recorded a YouTube video with them both. Then turned back toward Tallahassee.

That's when I noticed the wind. Headwind on the return, hills that had been manageable in the morning now feeling like something else entirely on tired legs. Kept pushing through.

Had the family Zoom call today. Mom, Janelle — who made Boogalie Bear with her own hands — Gavin, and Ally. Everybody seems to be doing well healthwise. Always good to hear their voices. Gavin and I stayed on late to talk about an AI project. Good conversation.

Stopped at the newer Planet Fitness for the cryo bed — alternating cold and warm zones. Strange and wonderful. Haven't found it at any other location so far. Worth seeking out.

Swung by the grocery store on the way back. Pulled into the Planet Fitness parking lot and met Taryn while putting Herbie away — encouraging, kind, exactly the kind of person you want to run into at the end of a hard day. Spotted Cory the dentist again too. He liked the cut of my jib, he said. The feeling is mutual.

Inside the gym, met DJ — new employee, deep voice. Hard to miss.

Fifty-five point eight miles on the day. Florida touched Georgia today. That counts.

[#Resilience](#) [#Grit](#) [#Connection](#) [#Brotherhood](#) [#Gratitude](#) [#NewWayOfLife](#) [#Momentum](#) [#RollForVeterans](#)  
[#TeamBravo](#) [#Inspiration](#)

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## **Day 18** · *Monday, March 16, 2026*

*Tallahassee → Destin, FL — Home Base*

Day 18. Woke up to rain in the wee hours, and it only got darker and more ominous as the morning wore on. No riding in that. Went to the gym, took a shower, and headed to the Canopy Road Cafe for breakfast. Nicole seated me, Casey served me, and Cassi was working the floor. All three of them took pictures with Boogalie Bear. Left them a five star review on Google. They earned it.

Stopped at a locksmith before leaving — two copies of the trailer door key. Four dollars each, which felt a little steep, but it's done. No more relying on a single key out here.

Called Caliber Collision in Destin and set up an appointment for the next morning at 10 AM. When my truck was stolen back in June and repaired, the camper shell wasn't resealed correctly. There's a gap letting rainwater into the bed. Time to fix that properly. Decided to drive to Destin today rather than risk any morning complications.

As I drove west the sky began to clear. Stopped at a Lowe's for gas and a Subway sandwich. Fifty-three degrees outside despite the billowy white clouds and bright sunshine. Met Amp — short for Anthony — behind the counter. New to the sandwich making process, but we made good conversation while he figured it out.

On the drive, called Adrian — the fellow from near the Florida-Georgia border yesterday. We got to talking about finding a driver for the cause, and he mentioned the homeless shelter in Pensacola. The idea took hold. People in a shelter don't have a car or a house tying them down. Maybe one of them has the freedom and the grit for something like this. Called the Waterfront shelter in Pensacola and was forwarded to the chaplain — a man named Palmer. Told him what the endeavor entails, pointed him to the website, made sure he had my number. He said he'd ponder it and be in touch tomorrow. Good conversation. I don't know what might come of it. But I don't know what might come of any of my conversations and interactions on the Path.

Also spoke with Ralph at Team RWB and with Adam Dreyer — a volunteer who found the ride through the website and has been working on my behalf, contacting bike shops and media outlets along the route. Good man to have in the air support team.

Stopped in a town called Niceville to take a picture in front of the sign. On the way over I spotted a man working on a utility box and asked him if it was really as nice as it sounded to live there. He looked up and said — snarky as you please — I'm on the phone, dude. Not very nice, for Niceville. Went into the Marriott nearby to use the bathroom and met three very pleasant people. So on balance, I think they're mostly nice in Niceville.

Got to Destin with enough daylight left for a ride. Got the bike out, opened the trailer to change — and found the thermos had tipped over on the bed. Soaked the sheet, the sleeping bag, and the mattress. Hung everything up on the truck to dry, fastened the mattress to the trailer. Then turned around to grab the lights from the charging container, and Herbie fell over. Right onto the wet mattress. Fell on his better side — less damage that way — and the mattress broke the fall. But the suspicion of a hole in the mattress is hard to shake.

Went out anyway. Rode over to Caliber Collision to scout the location for tomorrow. Twenty-five point two miles. Came back sweaty, which meant sweaty clothes on top of wet clothes on top of wet blankets. The panniers got wet too. A lot of things need to dry out. Hoping for sunshine tomorrow.

But the day ended better than it deserved to. Getting dressed after the shower, a young man came up and said good luck on your ride. Asked him how he knew about it. He said he'd seen me on TikTok. His name was Rakeem, a junior in high school. We went out to sign the trailer and he brought three friends with him. Four signatures. Got to talk to some young humans standing right at the edge of things, about to graduate and step out into the wide open world. That felt good.

[#Resilience](#) [#Grit](#) [#Adaptation](#) [#ProblemSolving](#) [#Connection](#) [#Gratitude](#) [#RollForVeterans](#) [#TeamBravo](#)  
[#NewWayOfLife](#) [#Momentum](#)

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## **Day 19** · *Tuesday, March 17, 2026*

*Fort Walton Beach, FL — Caliber Collision — Home Base*

Day 19. Morning at Caliber Collision in Fort Walton Beach. Unloaded everything from the truck bed into the trailer so the technicians could get to the clamps holding the camper shell. Cleared everything off the roof too — couldn't have it too heavy while they worked. Bobby was the man at the counter.

They fixed it properly this time. More gasket material between the camper shell and the truck, the way it should have been done back when the truck was repaired after the theft. The gap is closed. The bed stays dry. That's one less thing to worry about on the road west.

Got a ride in starting around 1:30, finished around 4:30. Thirty miles. Flat panhandle terrain, the Gulf not far off.

Went back to say goodbye and found a couple of kids in the parking lot working on a car. Nick and Chloe — good friends. Chloe works at Caliber and was helping Nick put a wrap on his Civic. Looks black straight on. Catch it from the side and it goes red. The kind of thing that makes you stop and look twice.

On the advice of the mechanics, headed over to AJ's — a local seafood place. She crab soup, garlic bread, and grits loaded with cheese and bacon. Spotted Bob and Sharon at a nearby table and asked if I could join them. They said yes. Turned out to be genuinely good karaoke singers — recorded them doing I Cross My Heart together, dancing like

nobody was watching. The copyright police had other ideas and killed the footage. Made my rounds before leaving and got up to tell the room about the ride, then sang Sweet Caroline. At another table, someone stopped me and said they'd started following me online. Found me by googling Roll for Veterans. That's the mission working.

Back to the gym to put the bed back together and get ready for a cold night. A couple of chair massages, a hot shower, and said goodbye to Lonnie, who works nights behind the counter.

[#Resilience](#) [#ProblemSolving](#) [#Momentum](#) [#Grit](#) [#Connection](#) [#Gratitude](#) [#TeamBravo](#) [#NewWayOfLife](#)  
[#Adaptation](#) [#Brotherhood](#)

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## **Day 20** · *Wednesday, March 18, 2026*

*Fort Walton Beach → Pensacola, FL — Alan's House — Home Base*

Day 20. Cold night in the Planet Fitness parking lot. Waited until around 0730 for the sun to come up before moving. Washed my face, got a couple rounds in one of the massage chairs, then hit the road.

Found a First Watch on the way to Pensacola and stopped to eat. A woman at the neighboring table asked about Boogalie Bear. Told her what I was doing. Her name was Barbara, and before I could finish the story she'd paid for my breakfast. Got a picture with her and Boogalie together. My server Hannah got one too. The bear has a way with people.

Then it was on to the Waterfront Rescue Mission. People in wheelchairs lined the block around the building. People on bikes, people with bags. A lot of people with nowhere else to be. Palmer, the chaplain I'd spoken to on the phone, was in a meeting. Walked around and talked to whoever would talk back.

First person was Randy — a coach from Tennessee, down with his track and field team for a competition and to do some volunteer work. Interviewed him and his assistant coach Brooke. Something about seeing that many young people devoted to good work stops you in your tracks.

Met Tess, a woman on a bike who turned out to have been quite the athlete in her day. Interviewed her too. And Rhonda — who expressed real interest in driving the support truck for the expedition. A name to remember.

Eventually got in to see Palmer and another chaplain named Sparky, who handles veterans specifically. Talked to several other chaplains as well, and a maintenance man named Rusty. Laid out what I was looking for, asked them to think about anyone who might be a good fit. Left the door open.

Then headed to find Alan Como — chapter captain for the Pensacola Team RWB. He made me feel at home right away. Started unloading, getting laundry going. A neighbor named David walked by and we talked for a while about veterans and trailers and the road ahead. Met Mark, another neighbor, before long.

Then Alan, Xena his very lovable dog, and I headed out to the Brown Bagger — burgers, fries, good conversation. Met Ivan there, a man very much into cycling who was stuck behind a computer all day as an accountant and lamented every minute of it. He had a small girl with him, three or four years old, who spent most of the meal feeding Xena french fries. Nobody complained.

Also spoke with Gloria, the state coordinator for Team RWB. Good to have that connection in Pensacola.

Took Xena home and rode around Pensacola with Alan. Visited a beautiful park by the bayou and rode past Sacred Heart hospital — a building that looks like a castle. Met a couple more neighbors on the way back.

Back at Alan's, locked Herbie in the backyard, started a load of laundry, and got to work on the phone and computer. Finished updating the timeline on the website. Going to bed at midnight again. Some habits are hard to break.

Five point seven miles on the day.

[#Brotherhood](#) [#Connection](#) [#Gratitude](#) [#RollForVeterans](#) [#TeamBravo](#) [#Inspiration](#) [#NewWayOfLife](#) [#Resilience](#)  
[#Community](#) [#Momentum](#)

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**Day 21** · *Thursday, March 19, 2026*

*Pensacola, FL — Alan's House — Home Base*

Day 21. Got up a little late — we were up late the night before. Alan took Xena for a walk while I stayed back and learned how to use Repurpose.io, a tool for pushing video content across platforms automatically. When he got back we got ready to ride, but the

morning felt rushed and I don't like starting that way. Left without my extra lights. Noted.

Alan and I rode out to Pensacola Beach, passing through Veterans Memorial Park on the way. A place worth coming back to. There stands the National Memorial to Missing Children — a sculpture of hands reaching up toward the sky, right in front of the ocean. Something about it stopped me. The hands reminded me of the Songseeker hands. Beautiful and quietly heartbreaking at the same time.

Alan had real estate business to attend to and peeled off. I kept riding. Met a family on vacation from St. George, Utah — Rick, Kim, and Caleb. Having lived in St. George myself, and knowing I'll be passing through on the way west, running into three people from there felt like something more than coincidence. Out on the pier met Thomas and Jill, also visiting.

Riding down the island I met Johnny, cruising in a golf cart. He offered Gatorade and gave me detailed directions to my turnaround point. Found a yard along the way that looked straight out of Dr. Seuss — a figure holding up the mailbox with one hand. Stopped to take a picture with him. Herbie fell over. Again. Met two Brazilian men working on the house — Fabrizio and Flaviano. Fabrizio spoke Spanish, so we talked for a while about our lives.

Near the turnaround met Jamie, who pointed me toward lunch and mentioned almost in passing that he's preparing to walk from Croatia to England. About three thousand miles. Made my own ride feel modest by comparison.

Ate at the Windjammer. Met Austin and his girlfriend Bella — did a podcast together, then Austin turned the mic around and interviewed me for his channel. Met NobleAnn, the server — one of the most unique names I've come across on the Path. The bartender was Kyle. Lots of tattoos, not much for chitchat. Coming off the pier on the way out, met Gil — Air Force, retired, loaded down with fishing gear.

The temperature was perfect — about 75 degrees, the kind of day that makes you forget you're working. A little briskness in the wind, which was fine going east. Turned around to go west and it became a different conversation entirely, especially climbing the bridge inclines. Had to make it back before sundown without the extra lights, so I put my head down and pushed through. No long stops. Just miles.

Rode straight back, thirty miles, didn't want to get caught after dark without the extra lights. Alan called and said pizza was happening, so I stopped at Publix for tomatoes and marinara. That's when things got interesting. Met Valerie on the way in — she wanted a picture and was genuinely excited about the ride. Coming out, got stopped by Deborah, whose brother is in rehab in Pennsylvania right now. She gave me a dollar and said she'd give more on the website. Then DK came over — just back from overseas, thinking about motorcycle overnights but said maybe riding along on bikes would be cool instead. Then somehow Deborah, DK, and Hudson were all there at once, all with questions.

I love it when that happens. Telling people about this ride is always a good conversation starter — but it's better when the curiosity comes from them first.

Got home, made plans with Alan for tomorrow and for the ride to Biloxi, Mississippi together next week. Pizza. Bed.

Sixty point eight miles on the day.

[#Brotherhood](#) [#Connection](#) [#Inspiration](#) [#RollForVeterans](#) [#Momentum](#) [#Gratitude](#) [#NewWayOfLife](#)  
[#Community](#) [#Grit](#) [#TeamBravo](#)

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**Day 22** · *Friday, March 20, 2026*

*Pensacola, FL — Alan's House — Home Base*

Day 22. Three weeks from Key West. Spent it in Pensacola in grand fashion.

Started toward Veterans Memorial Park around 11 o'clock. The morning had been slow and Alan had a few things to catch up on, so I headed out anticipating a solo ride. Then he appeared out of nowhere, dressed head to toe in cycling gear. A pleasant surprise.

Stopped at the park first and recorded two videos showing the world how good that place is.

At a sandwich shop we met Hale and Stephanie — locals who told us exactly why Pensacola is as good as it sounds. Got them on video for YouTube. Boogalio Bear found a table with a sign that said do not sit on the table. Bears, apparently, are not included in that rule. Got the picture.

Met Lani and Maggie, locals enjoying their city. Then Ival, an older character who identified the bird that had stopped me cold — a blue heron, impossibly close, standing there like it owned the place. Took a video. That's not normal behavior for a heron and I knew it.

Out on the pier met Al — a grandfather type, out fishing almost every day, eats everything he catches. He had a fish partially filleted on the rail and explained what cut bait is. I'd heard the phrase a hundred times and never knew. Now I do. Found Eric and Tammy on beach cruisers, locals just enjoying the day.

The route took us past a Navy ship and a couple of large seagoing vessels before we found a pickleball court. Kenny was running it. Turned out he'd downloaded the Team RWB app but hadn't done much with it. Didn't know we were there representing RWB until we told him. Alan and Kenny started talking about hosting an RWB event at the court while I circled it with the camera for YouTube.

Alan headed back to get ready for the evening. I kept riding. Needed a bathroom and backtracked to find one — ended up climbing slippery stairs in slippery shoes to a fish restaurant on the second floor. Used the facilities, talked to a man at the bar about Roll for Veterans, and got back on the road.

Crossed the bridge into the wind — a solid ten miles an hour pushing back the whole way. On the other side met Debbie and Dennis. Debbie is a long distance cyclist. Dennis was supposed to be her support vehicle for a cycling event. He watched a sports event instead. She said good support is sometimes hard to find. We both found that out the hard way.

At the far end of the bridge met Sally and Mark. Sally went inside to check in for a memorial — a mid-air collision between two military aircraft that killed over twenty people. Mark stayed outside. His license plate said I FLY P3. Thirty-two years in the Navy, a pilot. We talked about the memorial and what it means to carry that kind of loss. Then I turned back across the bridge with the wind at my back. Ten miles an hour pushing me home. Like flying.

Passed the cemetery on the way back. Quiet and still in the afternoon light.

Twenty-five miles on the day, but it took hours. Sightseeing and talking to people will do that.

Got home at 1615. Team RWB event at Alan's at 1700. Put Herbie and Giselle in the backyard, charged what needed charging, jumped in the shower, changed into clean clothes. People started arriving.

Gloria and her husband Mike. Jason and his wife Kelly and their daughter. Two of Alan's neighbors — Gina and Carla, one of them with a dog, one of them who looks after Xena. Three cyclists stopped by during the tour. Gave everyone a walk-through of Marcus, Cleopatra, Giselle, and Herbie. Boogalieu Bear got a little overlooked in the shuffle — something to correct going forward. Live streamed the whole thing for practice. Don't think anybody watched, but that's not the point yet.

Learned something too. From now on I'll tell people the bed folds down. I won't try to demonstrate it in real time with stuff in the way. Some things are better described than performed.

After everyone left, Alan and I talked for a long time. The whole day had a magical quality to it. A wonderful vibe from start to finish.

The ending to an absolutely best day ever.

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## **Day 23** · *Saturday, March 21, 2026*

*Pensacola, FL — Navarre Beach → Fort Pickens and Back — Alan's House — Home Base*

Day 23. Up early to make the start point for a Team RWB bike ride — Navarre Beach to Fort Pickens and back. About 56 miles round trip.

Around ten riders joined at the start. Jason and Kelly were among them. One by one they turned back before the full distance. Only Alan, Gloria, and I went the whole way.

The wind was in our face going out — eight to ten miles an hour, steady and unrelenting. The kind of headwind that doesn't let you forget it's there. When we turned around at Fort Pickens and pointed back toward Navarre, the whole equation changed. The wind became a partner instead of an opponent. One of those return rides that makes you feel like you've got something figured out, even if it's just the wind.

After the ride, joined a cross training event at Pensacola Beach for chicken and waffles with a good crowd. Then a proper lunch at Juana's Pagodas and Sailors' Grill — live music, tacos, burgers, pizza, all under one roof. Navarre Beach used to be a sleepy little town. A few years ago something changed. Now it's crowded and alive and has a lot going on.

Stopped by Gloria and Mike's on the way back to Alan's. Took a look at their RV — smaller than Alan's, nicely done. Saw the house and the swimming pool. Got to know Mike a little better. Good people.

Back at Alan's, started pulling things out of the truck in preparation for tomorrow's project — building shelves in the bed under the camper shell and running the wire for the water pump. Long overdue. Also talked to my mom, had a couple slices of pizza, updated the website. Then went out to the truck to get some medication and the door locked behind me. Spent the night in Alan's camper. Slept like a baby.

Pushed further today than I ever have before. Set some new personal records. No regrets.

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**Day 24** · *Sunday, March 22, 2026*

*Pensacola, FL — Alan's House — Home Base*

Day 24. A workshop day. No miles on Herbie, but the truck is better for it.

Made significant progress on the water pump situation — ran the wire from the battery to the pump. Still need to make the final connection to the battery and install a switch. Getting closer. Fifteen gallons on top of the truck will be worth the effort when it's done.

Spent most of the rest of the day building shelves in the back of the truck, modeled after the toolbox already back there. Got about eighty percent of the way through. Kitchen items will have a proper home — easier to reach, better organized. Tomorrow should finish it.

Alan and Gloria were out hiking most of the morning. Training for some kind of race. The house was quiet and I worked.

Had the weekly family Zoom today. Mom, Janelle, Nathan, and Randy all on the call. Everyone doing pretty well. Those check-ins matter more out here than they did back home.

Met Jerome in passing — an older gentleman making his way along with a walker, looking for the neighbor. Pointed him toward Mark, the neighbor, and exchanged a few words with him before getting back to work.

Worked outside most of the day. Applied SPF 100 twice. Still came in a shade darker than I started. The Florida sun doesn't negotiate, even in March.

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## **Day 25** · *Monday, March 23, 2026*

*Pensacola, FL — Alan's House — Home Base*

Day 25. Alan and I had planned a little overnighter today. With the pantry and the water pump still unfinished, we agreed to postpone. The projects had to come first.

Spent the entire day on both. Met Dylan along the way — an Australian, cool as you'd expect, riding a bike from the Netherlands with a 29 inch tire on the back and a 20 inch tire on the front, with a cargo platform above the front wheel. A unique setup. We talked for a while. The Path attracts interesting people on interesting machines.

The water pump got finished. Ran the wires through a watertight box, made the final connection to the battery, and installed the switch — the one bought specifically for this purpose. Alan was out there filming when I pressed it for the first time. The switch lit up green. The pump hummed to life. And the showerhead that was hooked up to it promptly exploded from the pressure. Alan got the whole thing on film. Probably the funniest thing that happened all day. The water works. The showerhead is a casualty of war. A small price to pay.

Then came the shelves. After painting them, the final assembly usually involves some amount of finagling — things that almost fit, adjustments, compromises. Not this time.

Everything lined up. Everything worked. The pantry in the bed of Marcus is done. It's the kind of moment that makes a man grateful for the small victories on a long road.

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— GULF STATE PARK, AL — BRIEF CROSSING —

**Day 26** · *Tuesday, March 24, 2026*

*Pensacola, FL → Gulf State Park Campground, AL — Home Base*

Day 26. A near perfect day.

Spent the morning getting ready and hit the road with Alan toward Gulf State Park campground in Alabama. Not a heavy people day — most of it was spent riding, which was exactly right.

Dan at Florabama started a conversation about the bikes and where we were headed. He'd recently ridden from here to New Orleans himself — a couple of days' worth of road. Good to talk to someone who understands the flow of the Path.

Walking into Florabama, a group had a bingo game going. The woman calling numbers looked up and asked if we were there for the bingo or the senior citizens swimsuit competition. I said both.

Stopped at an ice cream place and met Michelle. Two scoops. Alan had one. No further comment needed. Had dinner at a Mexican restaurant — servers whose names didn't make it into the notes, but the food did its job a little too well. Ate enough to carry me through the rest of the evening without any interest in more.

Checked in with Roseann at the park. She was quite amazed about what I was doing. Said three things worth remembering — didn't write them down fast enough, but the look on her face said it all.

Set up camp when we arrived. Then rode another eight miles to get to sixty on the day. Collected some firewood on the way back — Alan wanted a fire, and so did I.

Got back, took a shower. Alan made himself some dinner. I passed — still full from the Mexican restaurant — but sat with some hot chocolate and called Sean Palmer. Met Sean when we became health coaches together at the University of Health Performance. Our paths have gone different directions since then, but he's coming out on March 29th — one month to the day from when I left Key West on this inaugural Roll for Veterans trip. He'll be driving support and riding alongside, a cook and a social media force in his own right. He may also make it for the 28th in time for a newspaper interview and pictures in Slidell, halfway between Biloxi and New Orleans.

The fire crackled. The day wound down. Near perfect.

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## **Day 27** · *Wednesday, March 25, 2026*

*Gulf State Park, AL → Pensacola, FL — Alan's House — Home Base*

Day 27. The last full day in Florida.

Started in Alabama, broke camp with Alan, and rode back toward Pensacola. We parted ways near Veterans Memorial Park — the same place we'd set out from the morning before. Alan headed home. I needed more miles, so I kept going.

Crossed the three mile bridge and found a nice bike path on the other side. That's when I saw them — three youths, each holding a tuba. Not something you see every day on a bike path, or anywhere else for that matter. Turned around immediately. Their names were Jaden, Trotter, and Carter. All go to the same high school. Not sure what the future holds for them, but right now they're out on a bike path playing tubas, which seems like a fine way to spend an afternoon. They played me a song. Got it on YouTube.

Rode back through downtown Pensacola to Alan's house. The traffic was about as unfriendly as city traffic gets. Made it through. Started organizing the truck when I arrived. Alan came back with cheeseburgers. He has been a genuinely great host — the kind of hospitality that's hard to repay and easy to remember.

Washed all the dirty clothes, took a shower, updated the website and fixed an issue that had been nagging at me. The mileage on the site now reflects Pensacola. Another

hundred miles needed to account for Biloxi. The Path keeps moving whether the website catches up or not.

Fifty-six miles on the day. Tomorrow, Florida is in the rearview.

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# The Mississippi Chapter

*Biloxi to the State Line*



— BILOXI / GULF COAST —

**Day 28** · *Thursday, March 26, 2026*

*Pensacola, FL → Biloxi, MS — Brewery — Home Base*

Day 28. Woke up relatively early and got to work. Several hours of packing, transferring videos from cameras to the hard drive, sorting through the truck. Got around to washing Marcus at about 1230.

Alan had work to get to. Said goodbye when he left — thanked him again for breakfast, for the hospitality, for everything. Hard to overstate how much that stop meant. Both Marks — the neighbors on either side of Alan's house, each sharing the same name — got a goodbye too. A strange coincidence that somehow felt right to note.

I don't like goodbyes. And after an extended stay somewhere, there's always a moment of anxiety or trepidation before getting back on the road. But as soon as the wheels start turning, the groove comes back. Every time.

Made a UPS stop to return some Amazon purchases, then hit Walmart for essentials. Breakfast sorted for tomorrow.

Arrived in Biloxi around 1700. Michael was waiting — Mississippi state rep for Team RWB. He'd arranged parking at the brewery that hosts a weekly fun run. Got Herbie ready to roll. That's when it hit.

Boogalie Bear was still in the bedroom at Alan's.

Called Alan right away. Felt terrible. He's only an hour and a half back, so the situation is recoverable — Saturday is the plan. But the ten miles I rode that evening weren't the same without him in the basket. The ride doesn't feel the same without him.

After the run, hung around with the Team RWB crew — Michael, Jason the brewery owner, Laura the bartender, Norma the chapter captain, Leslie the biologist, Jennifer, Ashley, and Greg the cyclist. Empanadas and tamales. Good people, good food, good cause.

Heated up water for a shower — and used the tank on top of the camper shell for the first time. Turns out if you're not in a hurry, the water siphons out on its own without the pump. Gravity doing what gravity does. Useful information for the road ahead. Inflated the bed. Ready for sleep.

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## **Day 29** · *Friday, March 27, 2026*

*Biloxi, MS — Brewery — Home Base*

Day 29. Woke up and started getting ready to ride. Met the second half of the Altered Reality Brewing partnership — another Michael, out back cleaning kegs with a pressure washer. Introduced myself. Turned out Jason had already told him about me.

Three firemen came by for a safety inspection. Got them to sign the trailer and took a picture with them. Their names are on the trailer — I'll have to look at the signatures to remember them.

Finally got on the road and started making my way through Biloxi. Small town vibe despite its size. Recorded some YouTube live footage riding the quaint streets.

One building caught my eye — turned out to be City Hall. Old, ornate, the kind of building that makes you stop. Went in and talked to Amber at the front desk. The two people who handle public relations and visitor interactions were both out. She gave me the email for one of them — John Mejure — and I sent him a note before leaving.

Rode across the bridge from Biloxi to Ocean Springs, destination Tri Hard — a bike shop I'd contacted on the way to Biloxi. The place was stretched thin, a triathlon coming up that weekend keeping everyone busy. But the mechanic, Chuck — who rides

in a wheelchair — said he could take a look at Herbie. Ended up recording probably a dozen YouTube shorts with him as he worked through the bike. Good energy, good material.

Bryan came in while I was there — an endurance cyclist, and we got to talking about RAGBRAI. The Register's Annual Great Bicycle Ride Across Iowa, the oldest, largest, and longest recreational bicycle touring event in the world — a seven-day ride across the entire state, drawing thousands of cyclists every July since 1973. I mentioned that Alan had done it five times. Bryan was impressed. Hard not to be.

Also met Randy, Anne, Russell, and Chris on the group ride. Chris had a very expensive and unique bicycle — the kind that turns heads even in a bike shop full of cyclists. He mentioned he'd be in California when I roll through. Maybe our paths cross again out west.

Thirty-one point six miles on the day.

Spoke with Sean Palmer in the evening. He confirmed he's heading toward Biloxi tomorrow, ETA in the evening. Having Sean join Roll for Veterans is going to be a game changer. He can drive the truck, he's a chef, a health coach, and he's my good friend. One month into this ride, the team is about to get stronger. I think we're going to have a lot of fun together.

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## **Day 30** · *Saturday, March 28, 2026*

*Biloxi, MS — Ocean Springs — Will's Boat — Home Base*

Day 30. Started with some returns at Kohl's, then stopped at the IP Casino to pick up some water. Met Gina and Mike there. Found my way to Newk's for lunch — chicken sandwich and tomato bisque soup. The kind of meal that makes you slow down and appreciate it.

Stopped at Goodwill and met Chris, who told me a great story about a bike ride he'd been on. Also found a green shaker bottle that fits the color scheme nicely. Small win.

Rode over to Ocean Springs — hadn't gotten a chance to ride along the water the day before, and that needed to be corrected. Found an art festival in the middle of town

and met Cynthia, the public relations representative for Ocean Springs. Turns out she's the twin sister of Cecilia, who does the same job for Biloxi. Two sisters, two neighboring towns, same calling.

Got the recommended potato donuts. No regrets. Then rode along the waterfront — shorter than I would have preferred, but enough to say I did it. Went up and over the bridge on the way back so everyone could see what Biloxi looks like from that vantage point.

Twenty-two point four miles on the day. Then it was time to pack up — because Lancelot was on his way.

Sean Palmer. I've given him the nickname Lancelot, and I plan to use it often. A reminder of how much I regard him as a friend. We met becoming health coaches together and our paths diverged for a while, but today those paths converged again on the Gulf Coast of Mississippi. He picked up pizza on the way in. I got gas. Fair trade.

Parked the truck and trailer and met Will while I was getting settled. Will is a boat captain with several vessels to his name. His wife Kerry is Michael's girlfriend — Michael, the Mississippi Team RWB state rep who made this whole Biloxi stop possible. Their daughter Juliana was there too. While Will and I talked about the rig, a gleaming black Toyota pulled up. Lancelot had arrived.

Pizza. Juliana drew a butterfly and a dragonfly on the back of the tribute trailer — a piece of art added to the mission. Will gave us a tour of the boat we'd be sleeping on and we sat together talking for a while. Juliana's younger sister arrived with her boyfriend — she had narrowly avoided dying in a horrific car accident not long ago, and her boyfriend is preparing to join the Coast Guard.

Before the night was done, I offered a toast. To Juliana, to Will, and to Lancelot. Got a little emotional. Some moments on this road catch you off guard like that.

Sean hasn't slept on a boat in a while. He's from Key West. Felt like the right way to welcome him onto the team.

Grateful doesn't quite cover it.

## **Day 31** · *Sunday, March 29, 2026*

*Biloxi, MS → Slidell, LA — American Legion — Home Base*

Day 31. Started on a boat. Lance and I did a few videos and pictures before saying goodbye to Will, his daughter, and a foreign exchange student from Poland who was staying with them. Before we left, Will told us about taking his children around the world on boats and trains and every mode of transport in between. I found myself wondering what it would be like to grow up like that.

Departed and headed to Waffle House for breakfast with Michael, the Mississippi Team RWB state director. Our server was Daisy. She told us that starting tomorrow she was quitting Waffle House, moving into her car with her dog, and heading into the woods to camp and travel. I wished her well, told her about the ride, shared the website. Two people at the same table, each about to go their own direction into the unknown.

Said goodbye to Michael and hightailed it to Slidell, Louisiana. A reporter named Kevin was waiting — we think he writes for the Slidell Examiner. He took pictures, wrote down a lot of notes, and we had a good time with him. The pictures didn't come out well, so he texted later and asked to come back tomorrow morning for another shot. Fine by us.

Only a few casual miles on the bike during the photo shoot. Then we went looking for a place to stay. Found an American Legion with a large yard nearby. Went over and asked. The Commander wasn't in, so we went to get some food while we waited for word.

The American Legion folks recommended the Southside Café. Good call. Nice ambience, excellent food. Our server Alyssa talked about liking sports. I tried to share with her the importance of really going after what you dream about. Had a wonderful roast beef sandwich with gravy. While we were eating, Rich came in — he and his wife had come over to eat and brought the message that we were welcome to stay at the Legion. Got some pictures with Rich and Kerri before they headed off.

Back at the American Legion, we started setting up the tent. Ronnie, one of the bar's regulars, was sitting in his van watching the whole operation. Stayed for about an hour — laughing, talking, keeping us company while we figured out the tent. Good man.

Joined the family Zoom late, trying to be in two places at once.

Then Eddie showed up, and that's when the night got good. Eddie has built a camper van out of a Safari van — a proper rolling home, his own design. He liked what I'd done with the rig and we traded notes. He should be a stand-up comedian. He also has leukemia. He was a little guarded at first about sharing contact information, but once he realized we just wanted to be genuine friends, he came around. The kind of person you're glad the road put in front of you.

Lance and I talked for a while after everyone left. About tomorrow. About the blessings of the day. Then said good night.

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# The Louisiana Chapter

*New Orleans to the State Line*



— NEW ORLEANS / LOUISIANA —

**Day 32** · *Monday, March 30, 2026*

*Slidell, LA → Baton Rouge, LA — Brian's House — Home Base*

Day 32. Woke up in the parking lot of the American Legion in Slidell with Lancelot. The morning took on meaning quickly.

Tammy stopped by first. She runs a nonprofit that fills little neighborhood food pantries before work — the kind of quiet, unglamorous generosity that keeps people fed without fanfare. She loved what we were doing. Signed the tribute trailer, recorded a clip for her social media, took pictures with us. The right kind of start to a big day.

Kevin the reporter came back — the photos from the day before hadn't turned out. We took another shot at it. Then the post commander, Steve, finally appeared. We'd missed each other the night before and he'd still let us stay. I gave him a hug. Before we left he handed us two large soft military blankets — one Army, one Navy. A thoughtful sendoff from a man who didn't have to do any of it.

Drove into New Orleans before the ride, knowing the roads closer in were too chaotic for a clean start. Parked near the French Quarter, wandered into the market area. The first beignet place had a line that wasn't happening. Found another spot. Beignets and po'boys. Sean didn't care for his po'boy, so I took care of most of his along with mine and the beignets. A proper fuel load before the real work began.

The ride launched near Audubon Zoo. Used the restroom, said goodbye to Sean as he headed ahead in the support truck, and stepped onto the levee trail system. Miles and miles of elevated paved bike path with almost no traffic. Overcast sky, occasional

sprinkles, wind coming off the Mississippi from the left — manageable. The levee stretched out ahead and I just rode.

Then came the refineries. Refinery after refinery after refinery, the landscape going industrial and staying that way. Water became a real concern. The first critical refill came at a mobile home with an Easter bunny out front. A woman answered — suspicious, tense, yelling at her husband, who yelled back. I just wanted to fill my bottles from the hose. Instead he went inside and brought out three bottled waters. I poured them into my bottles, handed back the empties, thanked him, and got out of there. Sometimes kindness comes wrapped in discomfort. I was grateful either way.

Hours later, deep in the refinery corridor with nowhere to refill, I found a small Baptist church. Rode all the way around it until I found a spigot tucked into the corner of the building. Filled up. That water felt like a gift from the building itself.

The levee kept shifting — paved path to dirt road to street with no shoulder and back again. I bounced between surfaces, staying safe and keeping momentum. Somewhere in there I met Tyreek, helping mark the turnaround point for a youth running group on the levee. I rode up to the larger group, introduced the ride, and told the kids to keep getting outside, staying in nature, using their bodies. They listened.

Then a lucky mistake changed the whole ending of the day. I accidentally called my friend Brian Allen in Baton Rouge — only to find out he'd come home early from a trip and was actually there. He offered us a place to stay. Sean got the address and headed over. By the time I was in the final miles, Sean, the truck, Cleopatra, and Boogalie Bear were already waiting for me at Brian's. Camp was handled. Food was coming. All I had to do was finish.

That has become the emotional center of this ride — the gratitude of knowing someone is waiting. That the truck is safe, the trailer is parked, and all I have to do is turn the pedals and get there.

Physically, the first-ever 100-mile push was taking its toll in the final stretch. Right knee a little swollen — kept the gears easy, focused on spinning instead of grinding. Neck tight — put on music and nearly danced on the bike to loosen it up. A few moments of weakness and wobble, but I stayed on top of water, electrolytes, and pace.

I made it. Sean and Brian were outside waiting when I pulled into the driveway. Brian looked up — clearly past his bedtime — and said, hurry up, RoboCop.

One hundred miles. First century. Done.

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## **Day 33** · *Tuesday, March 31, 2026*

*Baton Rouge, LA — Brian's House — Home Base*

Day 33. Rain made the decision for us. No riding today. A maintenance and reset day instead.

Sean took charge of the kitchen setup — food, dishes, keeping that whole area organized and functional. I focused on the trailer and the truck. By end of day we'd opened up a lot of clear space in both. The kind of work that doesn't make for exciting footage but makes everything that follows easier.

Herbie got a proper cleaning and a few repairs on things that had broken along the way. The bike is ready. The rig is ready. Everything is positioned well for tomorrow.

Dinner was crawfish. Tried it again. Still not my favorite. The red beans and rice with good sausage, on the other hand — that was a different story entirely.

Quiet day socially. Brian and his girlfriend Dawn were around. The mail carrier stopped by and signed the tribute trailer, which felt like a very on-brand interaction for this journey. Otherwise it was just the work, the rain, and the road waiting on the other side of it.

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## **Day 34** · *Wednesday, April 1, 2026*

*Baton Rouge, LA → Ken and Kim's House — Home Base*

Day 34. April Fool's Day. The road had its own jokes to tell.

Up fairly early, packed everything — trailer, truck, bike setup. The big river bridges around here aren't safe to cross by bicycle, so Sean and I drove across first, recording a video about the day ahead as we went. On the other side, he found a paved roadside

spot to unload the rig safely. A couple of people stopped before I even got rolling and signed the trailer.

Got underway around 11:30. Partly overcast, slight tailwind, good cloud cover keeping the temperature manageable. One of those days where the riding just works. Stayed on top of sunscreen anyway.

First real stop was a community center — topped off water, used the bathroom. Met Brenda, who was cleaning, and her supervisor, Prince Edward Gray. Mr. Gray has spent years working in parish health, wellness, and youth activities, and he's still doing it despite some medical challenges of his own. Did a podcast interview with him. The kind of conversation that reminds you why you stop.

Rode into Livonia and pulled into a gas station for water and something to eat. Got a pizza. Told the cashier Lauren what I was doing — she pointed me toward the water fountain. Met Milton there, a young man in his twenties with a cast on his arm and stitches in his head. He'd been hit by a car on his bike just a few days earlier. Moving slowly, but moving. That conversation drove home the importance of staying safe out here in a way nothing else could.

The manager, Kylie, came out and we filmed two YouTube Shorts together. She talked about her work strengthening the sense of community in the area and helping neighbors connect more meaningfully. Same heart, different path.

Called Kevin the reporter to check on the story — he said it was scheduled for Thursday. Since it was April Fool's Day, I told him I didn't want to ride anymore, that I was quitting, and that I didn't want the story published after all. He got genuinely concerned for a moment. Then I let him off the hook. He thought it was hilarious.

Stopped at another gas station hoping for Wi-Fi to upload videos. No luck. Used the bathroom and got back on the road.

Picked up several roadside treasures along the way — bungee cords, a little dinosaur, a pair of pliers. While grabbing the last bungee cord, I turned around and found a man standing right behind me. He'd watched me stop and wanted to know what I was doing. After I explained, he warned me there was a four-mile bridge a couple hundred yards ahead — essentially impassable by bicycle.

His name was Paul. I accepted his offer to load the bike and trailer into his truck. During the drive across, we had one of those deep, searching conversations about life and its complexities. Mid-conversation, his phone rang — his friend Ken, an avid cyclist, who immediately got interested in what I was doing.

Paul gave me his address and we agreed to meet at 6:30. I arrived right on time. What followed was a tour of a house that felt like something out of a fairy tale — larger than life, beautiful, ornate, filled with remarkable things. Including mastodon tusks he'd found in Alaska. We walked the grounds, looked at the pool, and saw several small outbuildings. The kind of place that makes you stop and wonder about the life lived inside it.

Then we drove south to Ken's house, where Sean was already waiting. Paul had to leave before long, but not before I invited him to the end-of-trip celebration planned for the end of June.

Ken and his wife Kim showed us an impressive outdoor building — full kitchen, connected shop with a bathroom, serious cooking equipment, several beautiful Dutch ovens. Kim heated up leftovers from the freezer, made rice and corn, and it turned into a proper meal after a long day on the road. While we ate, Ken worked on building a Garmin route for the next stretch of the ride.

Before turning in, gave Ken and Kim a carabiner, and set one aside for Paul.

Fifty-three miles on the day. Four of them were in Paul's truck crossing a bridge that would have ended the day badly. Sometimes accepting help is the smartest mile you ride.

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# The Texas Chapter

*Coming soon...*



*[Entries will be added as you travel through this state]*

# The New Mexico Chapter

*Coming soon...*



*[Entries will be added as you travel through this state]*

# The Arizona Chapter

*Coming soon...*



*[Entries will be added as you travel through this state]*

# The California Chapter

*Coming soon...*



*[Entries will be added as you travel through this state]*