

RAAM Relay: Ed K Crosses the USA

By Steve Fentress and Ed Kohler

The Race Across America this year went from Oceanside, California, to Annapolis, Maryland. It is run in the heat of Summer and has categories for solo riders and 2 or 4 or 8 person teams. It is an around the clock epic endurance fight to get to the finish line ahead of the competition in your class. For some, just finishing is a win.

The Stockton Bicycle Club has the peerless Seana Hogan as a member. She is universally hailed as the Winningest Rider in RAAM History due to her numerous wins and records over many years. But WAIT! We have a second member now, Ed Kohler, and this report is the result of an interview/interrogation and his experience. VERY few clubs have a RAAM veteran, much less two. Here is his story.....

How did you get into cycling and then go to the extreme of RAAM?

For about 6 years I was a bicycle patrol officer in downtown Stockton. I loved it. I am a retired Stockton Police officer. Several of my fellow officers talked about doing RAAM and about 5-6 years ago decided to do it. But Stockton filed Bankruptcy and the others moved down to Oceanside and became police or fire officers there. Well, we said Let's Do It and this was the year it came together.

How Fit Was Everyone?

Hah! I was 53 during the race and the second oldest. Three were in their late 20's and one was a Cat One racer, one was a Velodrome Racer, and the general fitness level was about a Cat Two. But I wasn't the slowest!



Tell Us About The Team Setup and Finances and Equipment

One of the team members had a relative with assets and connections. Since we were in the 8 man team event we had two large Nissan NV vans and two cars so the team had two halves - four men to a van with driver and mechanic and a support car with Navigator and communications. The vehicles were donated and we had a budget of \$35,000. We used \$15,000 on the race and the rest - plus donations - went to Children's Hospital Oceanside, hence our name Team Oceanside.

Strategy and Tactics?

Here is the way we did it - one rider at a time goes out and goes full tilt for about a half hour. Then the next rider comes on for a half hour. So, one van with its four riders is on the course and running Redline Warp Speed and does this for about 10 hours

Big Ed at the Start: 3000 miles to Go!

or maybe a bit more. So you can see that in every two hours you will personally ride a half hour. Repeat. Repeat. Repeat for 10+ hours till the other van with the other four members relieve you.

Our primary nutrition while in the van racing was Subway sandwiches.

The van that is not riding with its racers, crew and support car leapfrogs ahead, finds a restaurant and has a good meal, then look at the map and make a Scientific Wild Ass Guess (SWAG) where the changeover might be in about 8 hours and drive way ahead, find a motel, sleep for about two hours, get up and find the other vehicle and hand off and get in the race. Repeat for almost a week, around the clock.

Incidentally, when one rider hands off to another the Rules require both riders to be moving side by side before the retiring rider can drop back and stop.



Team Oceanside Ready to Roll!

Was it hot in the Desert? Any rain? Any pretty spot that burned into your fatigued mind? Wind on the Great Plains?

The team rolled at high noon out of Oceanside. Three hours later we were out of the Coastal Range and into the Mojave Desert. That day it was 105 in Lodi, where I live. I don't know how hot it was but we all went full throttle and came into the vehicle pouring sweat and water and shaking. It was about all we could stand before serious medical issues would arise.

Great friends. Thanks Ed for FINALLY making it!! 🙌



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16 Comments

We got rained on once and that was an all-nighter of rain in the Appalachians but the temperature was 70 degrees so not too bad.

The prettiest spot was in Missouri. The area looked like Valley Springs but only incredibly lush and green; and this was before the real high levels of humidity arrive.

We had some luck with the wind across Kansas. In fact, rather than a headwind it was more of a very slight quartering wind from the South West.

What equipment did you use? Any interesting stories?

Each of us had two bikes, a regular road bike for climbing and a Tri bike for use on the flats. Most of the riders wound up using the Tri bike almost exclusively.

One interesting story - TWICE in the race, inside the van, the rear most rider looked back and said something like Hey, how many bikes should be back here?+A quick count and one would be missing! One fell off alongside the road and one was dragged for an unknown distance. The mounting straps broke, both were brand new carbon bikes. The missing one was recovered but both were trashed.

WE MADE IT!!

The Ride Zone

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How did you get across the Rockies?

The classic climb up Wolf Creek Pass. And on this climb we handed off each rider after a quarter mile full power sprint. All the way up to the top.

We found the Appalachians had lots of steep climbs but most weren't too long - but still leg burning steep.

Did your mental state change in the race?

Yes. At first it was leg shaking fatigue, what am I doing this for, to later We Can Do This, to Euphoria at the end! It was a real high point to realize you raced across all 3,000 miles of the USA. I am glad I did it.

Anything you would do different?

Yeah. Start training in JANUARY!!!

Thank You, ED!

Here are the 8 man team results

1. Team ViaSat 5 days 17 hours 21 minutes (22.4 mph)
2. TruePatriotLove 5 days 17 hours 55 minutes (22.3 mph)
3. Team Oceanside 6 days 3 hours (20.9 mph)
4. GermanG8tors 6 days 9 hours 25 minutes (20.0 mph)

Note the fierce battle between the US ViaSat and the Canadian TruePatriotLove - a cliff hanger 34 minutes over 3,000 miles! Oceanside went back and forth with GermanG8tors but put on a push in the Appalachians and edged slightly ahead and - most important - kept that lead to the finish, thus earning a third place spot atop the Podium!

And a final comment. These team events are not a cake walk. Yes, they have good support but when the rider is on the pavement he is on wide open, full throttle, all ahead FULL, and the suffer meter is pegged at max. No easy minute for any reason for any occasion all the way across the US in six days. An epic effort by any standard!

Editor's Note: Ed Kohler (aka Big Ed) has been riding with the Stockton Bicycle Club for a long time now. His friends know him to be a really good guy and a fine, strong rider. His RAAM Relay odyssey is a real achievement for a 'recreational cyclist'

After his epic RAAM ride, Steve Fentress and I bought Big Ed lunch and 'interrogated' him for about an hour. Steve and I scribbled notes furiously, and 'Fentress' kindly agreed to write up the interview. The material was so good that rather than cut anything I simply added a page to The Ride Zone: since virtually all recipients get an electronic version that is possible. If you have read this far I'm certain you will agree that it would have been a shame to leave anything out. Subway Sandwiches! Who would have 'thunk it'?

RIDE SCHEDULE – October 2017

Helmets required.

Rain or 'serious' threat of rain cancels. Follow Stockton Bicycle Club Facebook page for updates on ride status.



Rides may be amended and additional rides may be scheduled via the Stockton Bicycle Club Yahoo! Group. (details below).

A ride: 20+ mph, paceline riding, few if any regroup. **B** ride: 16-20 mph, experienced rider, regroup at major intersections, turns.

C ride: 12-15mph, regroup, no drop ride. MPH is based on a flat ride

For questions or to list a ride of your choice, please call or email Roberta Hoffman at nikehoffman@comcast.net or 763-2807

New Riders Note: There is a rest/refuel break about the middle of the ride. Unless otherwise stated, all rides are recreational in nature and intended for the enjoyment of all. **Terrain:** F=flat, R=rolling, H=Hilly, VH=very hilly

Date	Time	Miles/ Terrain	Start Location	Description	Leader
Tue	8:30	35-45 R/H	Wallace S. Camanche & Wallace Lakes Dr.	Fixed Route: So Comanche Rd/ Burson Rd Olive Orchard to COMMON GROUNDS	
Thu	8:30	35-45 R/H	Wallace Tri-Lakes Church 8021 Wards Ave.	Show and go	
Sun 1	8:00	24/32 R	Eugene Milton/Sonora Rds	24: Sonora Rd., Knight's Ferry- Break - return 35: Morris, Orange Blossom, Rodden, 28 Mile Rd.	
Sat 7	8:00	30, 63 F	Stockton Michael Faklis Park 5250 Cosumnes Dr.	Giro d' Barkada Tour of Friends – 11 th Annual Donations benefit Crohn's and Colitis of America www.bikesignup.com	
Sun 8	9:00	39 H	Buena Vista Store	39: Jackson Valley, Brubeck, 5 mile, 124, Sutter Ione- Andrae's Amador City – Turner, SC, Ione https://ridewithgps.com/routes/24702160	
Sat 14	8:30-B 9:00- A	38/51 H	Starbucks (ValleySprings) Mar-Val Shopping Ctr	38: Pardee-Stoney- Jackson Break - out and back (3900') 51: Loop up Butte Mtn and down Clinton Rd.	
Sat 14	See website	63/100	Knight's Ferry	Golden Hills Century and Metric www.Stancobike.org	
Sat 14	See website For details	30/80	Oakdale 445 East F St.	Spoketoberfest at Oakdale Bike Shop Donations benefit Bikes for Kids http://www.eventbrite.com or Facebook	
Sun 15	9:00	40-45 F	Woodbridge Meet Lower Sac and Augusta St.	Loop out to Clement's Ridge– Acampo Rd, Dustin, Orchard, Elliott, Peltier, Collier – break at Clements Ridge -	..
Sat 21	9:00	40-48	Tracy-Raley's Tracy Blvd&Valpico	Schulte, Patterson Pass, Flynn Route TBD	
Sun 22	9:00	38-42 F	Clements Fire Station	Mackville, 88, Atkins, Brandt, Tully, East on Eight Mile, Baker – Break at the Fruit Bowl.	
Sat 28	8:30-B 9:00- A	40 R/H	Wallace Tri-Lakes Church	42: Hogan, Silver Rapids, Olive Orchard (3100') Coffee(drinks) on the Club at Common Grounds	
Sun 29	9:00	40-45 F	Woodbridge Meet Lower Sac and Augusta St.	Thornton, Walnut Grove Any Sandhill Cranes?	

For changes/additions to the ride schedule, participate in online discussions or for other club news, join our Yahoo! Group at groups.yahoo.com/group/Stockton_Bicycle_Club or send an e mail to [Stockton Bicycle Club-subscribe@yahoo.com](mailto:Stockton_Bicycle_Club_subscribe@yahoo.com). Also, see our Stockton Bicycle Club Facebook page for ride changes, and comments.