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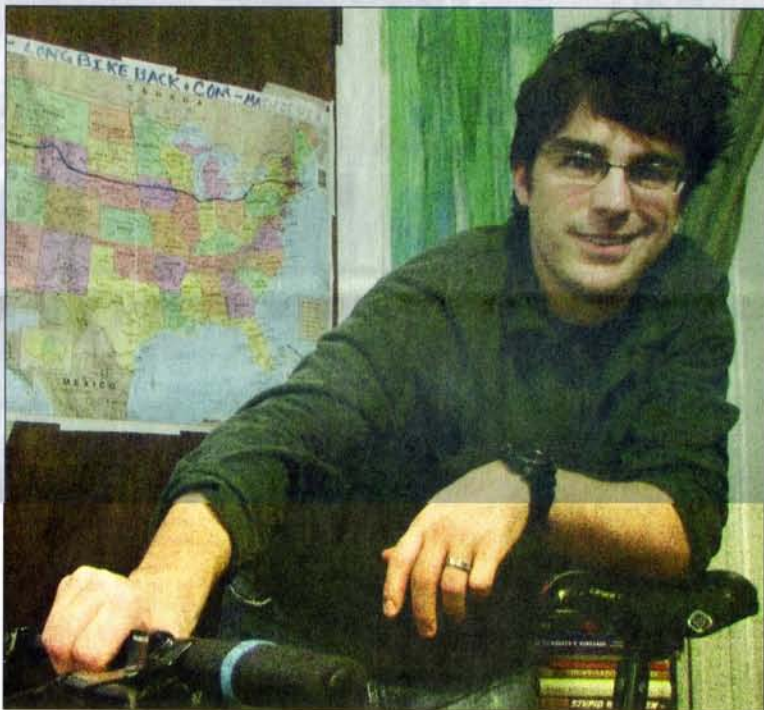
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GOING PLACES INJURED CYCLIST'S TREK FOCUS OF DOCUMENTARY



Meghan Sheridan

Cyclist and Pelham resident Pearson Constantino, left, rides with his brother, Peter, near the Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve in Idaho during their 3,688-mile, ocean-to-ocean bike ride, which took them from Oregon to Cape Cod, Mass. The brothers made the trip to promote bicycle safety.



Matthew Brown/The Journal News

Pearson Constantino suffered severe injuries when he was struck while riding his bicycle in Greenburgh two years ago. Though he's still in pain, he was well enough to make the cross-country journey, which started in August and ended in October, with his brother. Constantino shared his experiences during an interview at his home in Pelham.

Ocean to ocean, biker takes ride of his life

It would be impressive enough to hear Pearson Constantino's tale of the bicycle trip he and his older brother, Peter, just took across the United States. But consider this: Pearson made the trip two years after he was plowed off his bicycle in Greenburgh by a sport utility vehicle that crushed a vertebra, shattered his hip and gave him a concussion.

It left him with searing back pain that is still with him — and that accompanied him on the 3,500-mile journey he and his brother took from Newport, Ore. to Massachusetts' Cape Cod. After 51 days on the road, they completed their trip Oct. 3.

Constantino's back pain was only one of the troubles he faced.

"I had 20 flats," the musician and lifelong cyclist said in his fifth-floor walkup in Pelham. "I fell off my bike seven times."

In Iowa, he was struck with food poisoning, but kept going, and 20 miles outside Dubuque, he fell, spraining his wrist and shoulder.

"I rode that day — 98 miles that day," he said. And the next, they rode an additional 80 miles, all of it in rains brought by Hurricane Ike.

"He was holding on with one hand for about two states, and he was beat up," said Peter Constantino, 36, of Glens Falls.

Constantino's June 29, 2006, accident remains unsolved. It's a crime to leave the scene of an accident when someone is injured, but no one has ever been found and arrested in this case, said Greenburgh Police Chief John Kapica.

The brothers had long planned to make the trip, but this setback only firming their resolve — and gave it the mission to promote bicycle safety. Pearson's wife, budding filmmaker Julia Wrona, and a friend drove along in Wrona's mother's Honda Odyssey (of all appropriate names for a vehicle on the trek.) They took more than 20,000 photos and more than 200 hours of video as the brothers followed U.S. Route 20, pedaling in Oregon desert heat soaring past 100 degrees, through torrential downpours and past a forest fire that forced Pearson Constantino to breathe through his shirt rather than risk triggering his asthma.

They began Aug. 12, the day Pearson Constantino turned 30, dipping their tires in the Pacific Ocean at Newport, Ore., and then pedaling east. In many communities, they met with television and newspaper reporters interested in their trek. Wrona is fashioning a full-length documentary of the trip, with a shorter version focusing on bicycle safety for schools and



Ken Valenti

Going Places

I didn't want to stop riding. It literally felt like we ran out of road.

Pearson Constantino, on the conclusion of the cross-country bicycle trip he made with his brother



Meghan Sheridan

Please see GOING PLACES, 2B



Meghan Sheridan

Pearson Constantino ascends a hill in Oregon while his wife, Julia Wrona, captures the moment on film. Pearson spent two years recovering from a devastating hit-and-run accident before riding across the country with his brother Peter. Their journey will be explored in an upcoming documentary, "The Long Bike Back," directed and produced by Wrona.

Film to feature cyclist's journey

GOING PLACES, from 1B

other educational uses.

Raleigh bicycles donated two road hybrid bicycles that allowed Pearson to sit more upright, which was more comfortable, he said. He also carried two mountain bikes for rougher terrain.

Along the way, they marked several occasions, including Pearson Constantino and Wrona's first anniversary on Sept. 1. On that day, the brothers rode 140 miles across Wyoming, from Casper to Lusk. Places to celebrate were scarce.

"The only thing open was a truck stop, so we had chicken fried steak," Constantino said.

Five days later, on Sept. 6, they celebrated Wrona's 27th birthday at another gas station restaurant, this one in Randolph, Neb.

Before he could make the trip, Constantino had to wait for his recovery to advance. In spirit, he was ready to go last year, just one year after the accident.

"My doctors said 'Absolutely not,'" he recalled.

The ride online

A preview of the film, as well as a timeline of the Constantino brothers' journey, can be viewed online at www.long-bikeback.com.

After another year of recovery and physical therapy, he was ready, keeping in touch with his doctors. He did extensive stretching exercises to limber himself up for the rides. Still, it hurt, but Constantino said, "Cycling is pain, though there is a joy aspect to it."

Wrona, who has worked on several documentaries, said recording her husband for a movie was a challenge, particularly when he fell or became upset.

"It's difficult to know when to shut the camera off and when to keep shooting, even though I want to shut the camera off," she said. She plans to have the documentary, titled "The Long Bike Back," ready to submit to film festivals in late spring or early summer.

On a mission to promote safer

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Documentary maker Julia Wrona, wife of cyclist Pearson Constantino

cycling, and motorists' awareness of bicycles, the brothers stopped and gave talks at schools. Outside Cleveland, they met with a man whose 18-year-old son had been killed on his bike by a drunk driver two weeks earlier. Later that day, Constantino was struck by a woman in a car who cut him off, he said. His brother, riding behind, rammed into him. They weren't hurt.

In Lima, N.Y., they passed a Ghost Bike, a bicycle painted white as a memorial to someone who was killed while cycling.

They had help from sponsors.

Canari and Fox bicycle clothing companies donated clothing. Rack & Go of White Plains donated a Thule bike rack.

When they reached the end of Route 20 in Boston, they continued on other roads to Marconi Beach in Wellfleet, Mass., where Constantino, on a whim, rode straight into the Atlantic Ocean, up to his thighs.

"I didn't want to stop riding," he said. "It literally felt like we ran out of road."

His wife and brother said his trek was an inspiration.

Peter Constantino said his younger brother was in better shape than he was, and started out the trip pulling ahead of him like it was a race. He could see how the pain affected his sibling, but he could also see him fighting it.

"He's tougher than I thought he was," he said.

"Going Places" runs Mondays. Send your ideas and comments to Ken Valenti at kivalent@lohud.com or 914-696-8255.