

RECYCLED ROOMS
WEB SITES LET NEIGHBORS BORROW, TRADE FURNITURE | 1D



■ PARENTS OF PREMIES MARK MILESTONES | 3A
■ CYCLE ACCIDENT CAN'T DETER BROTHERS' TRIP ACROSS COUNTRY | 1B

WESTCHESTER FINAL



■ RAY RICE ADJUSTS TO LIFE IN THE NFL | 1C
■ NIGHT LIFE PHOTO GALLERIES ON METROMIX



The Journal News

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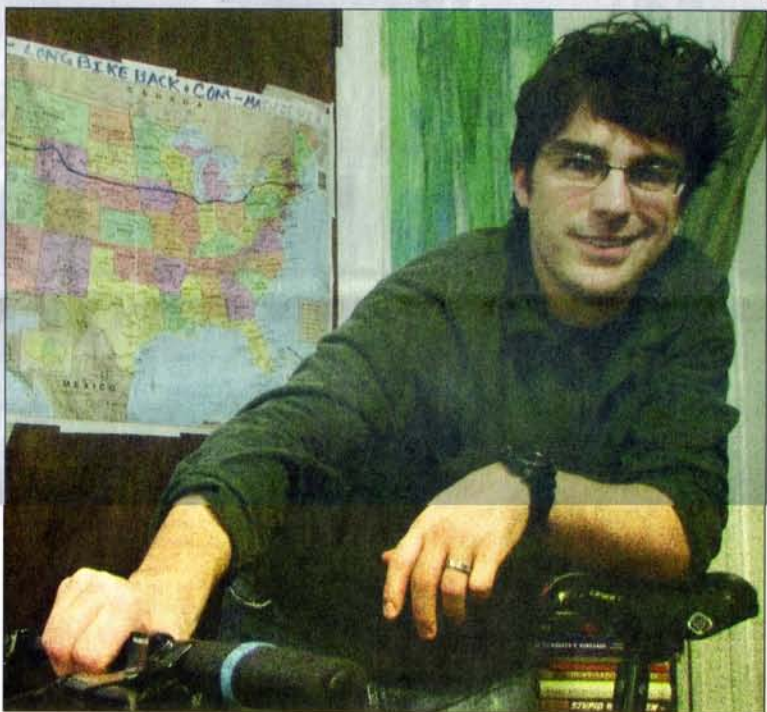
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GOING PLACES INJURED CYCLIST'S TREK FOCUS OF DOCUMENTARY



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

"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."

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.

SKANEATELES JOURNAL

www.skaneatelesjournal.com

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COMMUNITY

Brothers to ride cross country

Journey to be filmed
along with the tale
of one man's recovery.

John Turner
Skaneateles Journal

Brothers Pete and Pearson Constantino have been riding bicycles since they have been old enough to reach the pedals.

As teenagers, the Skaneateles natives completed the trek from the village all the way to Cape Cod, Mass., and have since ridden on numerous journeys throughout the country.

As the pair grew older, they began tossing around the idea of undertaking the awesome quest of cycling across the United States on U.S. Route 20, a 3,400-mile journey that would take them from Oregon to Massachusetts.

But in 2006, before their plans were solidified, the Constantinos' preparations for the trip were put on hold.

On the morning of June 29 of that year, Pearson, now 29, was riding his bike to work in Westchester County,

See BIKE, Page A3

Bike

Continued From Page A1

where he relocated from Skaneateles in 1999, when he was struck by a hit-and-run driver and thrown under a parked vehicle.

The accident shattered his hip, broke his back and caused a severe concussion, and Pearson spent weeks in the hospital, enduring two surgeries to repair his pulverized body.

Even so, Pearson Constantino is back on his bike again.

Astoundingly, he and his older brother, Pete, 35, have continued with their plan to ride cross-country on Route 20, and are set to begin the three-week journey in August.

What's more, the trip will be filmed and made into a documentary that also includes the amazing story of Pearson's recovery, which is still ongoing.

"The Long Bike Back" will be produced and directed by Pearson's wife, Julia Wrona, who has for the past several years headed up a New York City-based production company called Ailujon Films.

"It's Pearson's courage that makes this all possible," Pete said in an interview last week.

Though the pair discussed the cross-country trip before Pearson's accident, the near-fatal injury solidified their plan, Pete said.

"When (Pearson) got hit, I drove 90 m.p.h. to the hospital (in suburban New York), and I stayed round the clock for six

ON THE WEB

To learn more about the film and the Constantinos' journey, visit www.longbikeback.com.

days," he recalled.

"One night about 3 in the morning, when Pearson was getting his medication from the nurse, I said, 'When you get back on your bike, we have to do it,'" he said, referring to the Route 20 journey.

COURAGEOUS RECOVERY

From that moment on, Pearson Constantino has never looked back.

Though Pete said his brother is in nearly constant pain when he rides, he is slowly returning to touring form, having progressed from a shaky few pedals up and down the street, to trips around the block, and now to daily rides of several miles.

But despite the incredible amount of pain and suffering he has endured, Pearson has the integrity to think of others first.

"We want to do this — the ride and the film — to inspire other people not only to ride (bicycles), but to think about bike safety when they drive," he said last week when he and his wife were visiting Skaneateles.

Three people died in bicycling accidents in Westchester County in the few months before and after his accident, Pearson said.

After seeing "The Long Bike Back," he continued, "hopefully, when people ride their bikes, then drive their cars, they'll real-



Pearson Constantino hits the bike path again after extensive recovery from his injuries caused by a hit-and-run accident.

Photo provided

ize what riding is like, so they'll drive more safely. It's really important to me that this doesn't happen to anyone else."

His wife, Julia, the film's director, agreed.

"We want to spread the word about road safety," she said. "We're hoping that (the film) will make drivers more aware of pedestrians."

A small film crew will follow the brothers when they begin their journey on Aug. 12 — which happens to be Pearson's 30th birthday — in Newport, Ore.

The trip on U.S. Route 20 will take them through 12 states before reaching Boston, and they will travel through what the brothers both called "Main Street America" in separate interviews.

"Growing up, Route 20 was the main street in Skaneateles. ... If you look at a map, it's the main street in a whole bunch of places," Pearson said.

According to the upcoming

film's Web site, the trip "will illustrate the history and culture of America, of cyclists and of the Constantino family."

Sometime in late August, the brothers will have a "homecoming" of sorts, as they plan to ride through Skaneateles before reaching Boston on Oct. 1.

LEND A HAND

Wrona said the film will be edited in the months after the men complete the trip, and will be released sometime in 2009. Julia met Pearson in college at the State University of New York at Purchase College in 1999.

She already shot some scenes for the film, including those showing Pearson's rehabilitation, have already been shot, and is using

HOW TO HELP

To make a donation, visit www.filmforum.org/sponsorship.html and choose "The Long Bike Back" from the drop-down menu. "The Long Bike Back" has non-profit status through New York City-based organization The Film Forum, so all donations to the film are tax-deductible.

Checks can be made payable to The Moving Image with "The Long Bike Back" in the memo section, and mailed to:

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that footage for publicity.

"We want to present the film, what we've shot of it, to folks in the (Skaneateles) area to raise funds for the project, and maybe bring awareness about legislation regarding safer roads," Pearson said.

To celebrate National Bike Week in late May, Pearson and Julia will return to Skaneateles, and he and Pete plan to take a ride around Skaneateles Lake to raise funds.

"The goal of the fundraiser is to 'turn up the stink,' if you will, so we can make more progress," Pearson said.

Bicycling brothers promote safety

SEAN KIRST

POST-STANDARD COLUMNIST



Pearson Constantino considered himself a safe bicyclist. He wore a helmet. He was accustomed to heavy traffic.

He had covered countless thousands of miles on a bike, beginning in his childhood in Skaneateles, where, as a 12-year-old, he joined his father and his brother, Pete, on a bike ride to Cape Cod.

Caution was not enough to help Pearson on June 29, 2006. He was 27, a young musician living in Westchester County. He went for a morning bike ride along a trail that tied into Central Avenue in Newburgh. Pearson made a routine turn onto the avenue. He had no time to react to the silver sport utility vehicle that smashed into him.

The SUV hit Pearson with such force that he was thrown into the side of parked Ford Explorer, then ended up wedged beneath the vehicle. His pelvis and part of his spine were shattered. The femur broke in his left leg. A sharp plastic object pierced the outer shell of Pearson's helmet, leaving him with a concussion and a 7-inch gash in his head. That points to a conclusion anyone who rides a bike should know:

"Without his helmet, he'd be dead," said Pete Constantino, who stayed with his brother for days in the hospital, often rubbing Pearson's feet when they grew cold at night. Before long, Pearson knew he faced a simple choice: He could rage from his hospital bed against a hit-and-run driver who was never caught, or he could find some higher reason for confronting the pain and surgeries that stood between him and recovery.

The answer came through long discussions with Pete and Julia Wrona, Pearson's wife and a documentary filmmaker.

On Aug. 12, Pearson's 30th birthday, he and Pete will leave Newport, Ore., to begin a bicycle trip across the United States. Julia will drive behind them, filming the trip, which she'll turn into a film titled "The Long Bike Back." They plan to reach Skaneateles in late September, and to end the journey Oct. 1 in Boston.

The idea is to celebrate the remarkable recovery of Pearson — who couldn't walk for three months after the accident — and to send a passionate message from the Constantino brothers.

"People can share the road," said Pearson, who with Pete is



Courtesy of Julia Wrona

PEARSON CONSTANTINO (left) and his brother Pete are filming a documentary "The Long Bike Back" to raise awareness of bicycle safety.

Cars, bikes and safety

Pete and Pearson Constantino — a pair of brothers raised in Skaneateles — will begin a cross country bicycle trip in August to promote awareness that might keep bicyclists safe. Read more at www.longbikeback.com. What are your thoughts? What could be done to build empathy and cooperation between bikers and motorists? E-mail columnist Sean Kirst at skirst@syracuse.com, visit his blog and forum at www.syracuse.com/kirst or write to him in care of The Post-Standard, Clinton Square, Syracuse 13221.

Brothers riding for new legislation

BROTHERS, FROM PAGE B-1

busy raising money for the trip. "These accidents are purely avoidable."

The brothers say there's an urgent need for greater education on biking safety, for bicyclists and motorists. According to federal statistics, 773 bikers were killed in U.S. traffic crashes in 2006, including 45 deaths in New York. The typical age of those bicyclists was 41, matching the age of Michele Duprey, an Auburn teacher from



Marcellus. An avid biker, Duprey died June 21 when investigators say she turned her bicycle into the path of a motorcyclist on Orisco Valley Road. It wasn't that far from where the Constantinos grew up. Pete and Pearson said Duprey's death is powerful reinforcement for their trip.

At every stop, they hope to emphasize biker safety. Watching his brother fight through recovery has made Pete intensely aware of what needs to be done. When he's out riding, he said, he often stops bikers who aren't using a helmet, simply to ask if they understand the statistical risk of that decision.

The dangers, Pete said, are only going to get worse. The spiraling cost of gasoline will inevitably cause more Americans to turn to bicycles, which in many ways is a choice to celebrate. But the new wave of biking comes at a time when U.S. drivers are increasingly distracted inside their cushioned and sound-proofed cars by elaborate stereos, cell phones, iPods and text-messaging.

Without education, Pete said, expect more deaths and crippling accidents.

"We want everybody biking because it's great for your health and great for the environment," he said. "But let me ask you this: If you're a cyclist, and you look at the statistics for deaths and injuries, why in the hell isn't there some kind of pedestrian-biking-related test on the road test? Wouldn't it be a good idea if maybe we got (young drivers) thinking about other things than parallel parking?"

Sending that message to state legislatures is one reason for the ride. The brothers are also calling for new laws that would mandate a three-foot cushion between bicyclists and motor vehicles. And Pearson, who still endures headaches from the crash, plans to remind anyone who asks of the way his helmet saved his life.

Pete even hopes to make teenagers and other young drivers think twice about an obnoxious behavior we've all witnessed.

"I ride every day," Pete said. "I don't know of anyone who rides who hasn't had the experience of... some kid who pulls up close behind you in a car and then screams or yells. It doesn't matter how often it's happened, it still startles me. Sooner or later, when that happens, it's going to throw someone off." The trip will be worth it, he said, if a few driver's education instructors start speaking forcefully about the dangers of what teens see as a joke.

The brothers emphasize that bicyclists also need to respect the law because careless or arrogant biking only generates more rage. All of that, to the Constantinos, makes this the right moment for Americans to reflect on cars and bikes — which may be enough to keep someone from getting killed.

Sean Kirst is a columnist with The Post-Standard. His columns appear Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Call him at 470-6015.

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Cyclists to raise safety awareness with ride across country this year

HAGERSTOWN

by **ANDREW SCHOTZ**
ndrews@herald-mail.com

Two years after a sport-utility vehicle knocked him off his bicycle, Pearson Constantino is planning to pedal, with gain, across America.

He and his brother will ride about 3,500 miles, from West Coast to East Coast, to promote safe co-existence by bicycles and motor vehicles.

Constantino said the person who hit him on June 29, 2006, near his upstate New York home drove away. He spent nine days in a hospital for treatment of a broken left femur, crushed lumbar vertebra and head trauma.

Before the crash, Constantino and his brother, Peter, thought about a cross-country trek. Now, they're plunging ahead, using the ride to educate the public and raise money for bicycle safety.

Constantino and his wife, Julia Wrona, who is filming the adventure for a documentary, were at the Oasis Hookah Lounge & Café in Hagerstown on Saturday to talk about the project.

Wrona said her connection to Hagerstown is her father,



By Colleen Helf/Staff Photographer

Pearson Constantino talks Saturday at the Oasis Hookah Lounge & Café in Hagerstown about his recovery after being hit by a car while he was riding his bicycle. Constantino and his brother plan to bicycle across the country to raise awareness for bicycle safety on the roads.

Len, who moved here a few years ago for work.

Pearson, 29, and his brother, Peter, 36, plan to cycle from Oregon to Massachusetts; they expect the trip to take about seven weeks. They'll follow U.S. 20, which Pearson described as a scenic spine of a resilient country.

They expect to contact bicycle

shops and groups during their drive west to start their ride.

Pearson Constantino, who was wearing a helmet when he was struck, said his back hurts every day and he gets headaches and vertigo, but he won't let that stop him.

He quoted Ernest Hemingway, who said, "It is by riding a bicycle that you learn the

contours of a country best. ..."

However, the roads can be dangerous.

Constantino, a musician, said his crash was one of more than 5,400 in New York state in 2006 involving bicyclists. Forty-five bike riders were struck and killed.

See **CYCLISTS**, B2

Cyclists: As more people ride, safety gains importance

Continued from B1

Each year, about 45,000 bicyclists are struck in the United States and almost 800 are killed, Constantino said.

He's urging motorists and bike riders to learn the rules of the road and be considerate of each other.

Although some bicyclists are guilty of infractions, "when has it become a crime that's punishable by death?" he asked.

Constantino said bicycle safety and etiquette will become increasingly important as soaring gas prices make it more expensive to drive everywhere.

He praised Hagerstown for

the bike lanes it has set up throughout the city.

Wrona, who has worked on other documentaries, is calling the story of her husband's turnaround "The Long Bike Back." She wants to make a feature-length film.

She said the inspirational aspect of her husband's comeback is a universal story.

"It could be about anything," she said. "It just happens to be about cycling."

Constantino and Wrona, who got married in September, have formed a nonprofit organization to accept donations for the ride, which should start in August, and the film. Information is available at www.longbikeback.com.

Pelhamite Plans to Bike Cross Country to Raise Awareness for Cycling Safety, Make Movie

By Amanda Kaufmann

On the morning of June 29, 2006, Pelham resident Pearson Constantino was having his regular morning bike ride when he was struck by an SUV on Central Avenue in Scarsdale. The driver didn't stop and Mr. Constantino was left unconscious under a parked vehicle with a broken back and

hip. He spent the next nine days in repeated surgeries to set his leg with a rod and to reconstruct his L2 vertebrae. He has been in physical therapy ever since and still experiences daily migraines, nausea and fatigue.

But he has also been training. Contrary to what most people would think he would do, Mr. Constantino has be-

come more determined than ever to get back on his bike. His goals are to ride 40 miles a clip and 100 miles a day. "In training, I've climbed mountains I couldn't have done before," he said in an interview. "I feel fresh and different about being on a bike. It's taken on a new identity."

Mr. Constantino's ultimate goal, though, is a cross country trip with his brother, Peter, from Oregon to Massachusetts in order to raise awareness for bicycle safety. While traveling, Mr. Constantino plans to stop in various towns and talk to schools, local ride clubs, and citizens about road safety and the importance of drivers to be aware of cyclists. He will also try to encourage more people to ride bikes.

The trip, which will begin this coming Aug. 12 on Mr. Constantino's 30th birthday, will be filmed and turned into a documentary entitled *The Long Bike Back*. The cyclists will be followed by a small crew of two cameramen, one sound man, and the driver as well as

Mr. Constantino's wife, Julia Wrona, a filmmaker and the documentary's director. Mr. Constantino has been fundraising for the project for the past year and the film has been given 501c3 non-profit status through the Film Forum in New York City. He has additionally reached out to the state and federal Departments of Transportation.

Eventually he'd like to use the film to lobby Congress, saying that these accidents happen more often than people realize and citing that in the same month that he was hit, three cyclists were hit by cars on Houston Street in the city. "I know it's bold for me to say, but I hope people will be inspired and encouraged to think about cyclists," he said.

To make a tax-deductible contribution to the film, send a check payable to "The Moving Image" to Julia Wrona, 125 Fifth Avenue, Pelham, NY 10803 or to donate using a credit card, visit www.filmforum.org/sponsorship.



Pearson Constantino (left) and his brother, Pete (right)

The Citizen.

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SINCE 1816, THE NEWS THAT HITS HOME

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Taking the long bike ride home

JOHN TURNER
The Citizen

U.S. Route 20 is a 3,400-mile highway which crosses 11 states, that stretches from Newport, Ore., all the way to Boston.

Built in the early 1900s, the historic road passes through numerous communities both gigantic and tiny and is considered by many the "main street of America."

Starting next month, two Skaneateles natives will discover for themselves exactly why the highway was given that nickname.

On Tuesday, Pete and Pearson Constantino will begin an epic six-week bicycle ride across the entire length of Route 20, starting in Oregon and ending Oct. 1 in Boston.

And that's not even the remarkable part of the story.

In 2006, Pearson, 29, was riding his bike in Westchester County, where he relocated from Skaneateles in 1999, when he was struck by a hit-and-run driver. The accident caused severe head trauma and numerous broken bones. Pearson endured a lengthy hospital stay and 22 months of intense rehabilitation.

But Pearson's iron will and fierce determination are strong. Stronger, even, than the carbon-alloy frame of his brand-new Raleigh Cadent FC bicycle, one of two bikes donated to the brothers earlier this month by Raleigh Bicycles USA.

"Raleigh is going to sponsor us for the ride," Pearson said in a telephone interview from his Westchester County home.

The main purpose of the ride, he explained, is to increase bicycle safety among motorists.

"Hopefully, when people ride their bikes, then drive their cars, they'll realize what riding is like, so they'll drive more safely. It's

See SKANEATELES, A2

Skaneateles natives to bike entire length of Route 20

Continued from A1

really important to me that this doesn't happen to anyone else," he had said earlier this year.

As they make their journey cross-country, a film crew will accompany the Constantinos to shoot footage for "The Long Bike Back," a documentary depicting Pearson's recovery and the brothers' ride that is produced and directed by his wife, Julia Wrona.

Wrona heads up a New York City-based production company called Ailujon Films.

"There will be what's called a 'chase van' following us to film some shots," he explained, noting that he will be wearing a camera, as well.

"That'll give (viewers) our point of view, and just what we see during the ride," he added.

Though Pearson was hesitant to name the exact financial cost of the ride and subsequent film, he said that donations have been steady, and they are still accepting financial contributions.

"We could always be doing better with that, but at this point we're doing pretty good," he said.

The brothers' daily itinerary, listed on the film's Web site, has them traveling between 60 and 100 miles per day.

"I average about 22 miles per hour on my bike," he said. "So if you've got some pretty flat land, each day is not as grueling as

How to help

To make a donation, visit www.filmforum.org/sponsorship.html and choose "The Long Bike Back" from the drop-down menu. "The Long Bike Back" has nonprofit status through New York City-based organization The Film Forum, so all donations to the film are tax-deductible.

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Dominick Balletta, general manager

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you might think."

The pair will travel through Oregon and Idaho before entering Yellowstone Park in Wyoming on Aug. 24. After that, they will traverse the Midwestern states before reaching Buffalo on Sept. 22.

"And we'll be in Skaneateles Sept. 24, where we'll stay for a day," he said. While there, the brothers have tentative plans to speak to some school students, possibly including those in drivers' education classes.

Pearson's fifth-grade teacher, Janet Fagal, is organizing the talks.

Auburn, NY

From the front page, left column

Biking bros. begin journey in Newport
By Jake Schubert Of the News-Times
Aug 13, 2008



Pearson Constantino, left, and Pete Constantino began their cross country journey in Newport Tuesday morning. They plan to end their trip in Boston, Mass. on Oct. 1. On their trip they plan to advocate for bicycle safety and awareness. (Photo by Jake Schubert)

Pearson and Pete Constantino grew up by transcontinental U.S. Route 20 in the New York Finger Lakes. Like most kids, their bikes were their freedom, their mode of transportation and a great source of fun. Unlike most other kids, the Constantino brothers remained passionate about cycling even as they grew older. One summer, as teenagers, Pearson and Peter rode with their father along Route 20 from their home in Skaneateles, N.Y. to Cape Cod, Mass. The ride inspired them of a dream ride across the country on Route 20. As adults and still avid cyclists, they were preparing for their cross country trip in June 2006 when their plans were derailed. Pearson, on his way to work, turned off a trail and onto a busy suburban road, as he had many times before. This time was different.

Three-hundred yards later he was struck on his left side by an SUV. He landed, unconscious, under a parked car, suffering a shattered hip, broken back, and a severe concussion.

The driver fled the scene, and a passerby helped Pearson. After two surgeries and nine days in the hospital, Pearson made the decision not only to get back on his bike, but also to complete the cross country trip he had been planning for.

Pearson and Pete began their cross country journey in Newport on Tuesday. When asked for final thoughts the day before the ride, Pearson said, "I'm kind of sad to leave the coast since I just got here (Sunday). I think it is absolutely stunning. I've

dreamed about coming to the Oregon coast for years, not just to do the bike trip, but also just to be here.

"I'm not too worried about the actual riding yet," he continued. "I think I will be tomorrow (Tuesday) around an hour or two after I'm on the ride."

"We drove here from Corvallis on the route that we'll be on tomorrow - there's some good climbs, so we're going to hit the ground running," Pete said. "I'm anxious to do the first big hill. That's what I've been thinking about for three or four months."

Pearson and Pete are not on this journey alone. Documentary filmmaker Julia Wrona is chronicling their journey in a film dubbed "The Long Bike Back." As part of their trip, the brothers plan to speak to the public about bicycle safety. Pearson said the year he was injured, he was one of thousands injured in bicycle-car accidents.

"Hopefully, through inspiring people to try and ride their bikes and drive safe, we can help prevent future accidents and increase bicycle safety," Pearson said. "The more we can do, if we can save some lives or save some injuries, then I think we'll be meeting our goal."

"The point of this ride is to raise awareness that this is an epidemic," Pete added. "It is a real issue in this country."

"Bike lanes and bike paths are important and great, but I feel that they allow drivers to not think about bikes because drivers feel like bikes have their own place to ride, and they have no business on the road," Pearson said. "But that's not true. Bikes are considered a vehicle. We transport ourselves to work, to the store, and now there are so many more people who are buying bikes to ride because of gas prices."

Those interested can follow Pearson and Pete's journey at blog.longbikeback.com.

Gazette-Times

WEDNESDAY

AUGUST 13, 2008

WWW.GAZETTETIMES.COM

PAPER

A long and healing road

Corvallis, OR

Brothers bound for East Coast by bike to celebrate recovery

BY MATT NEZNANSKI
GAZETTE-TIMES REPORTER

Pearson and Pete Constantino may have picked the best for first.

The New York-raised brothers rode from Newport to Sweet Home on Tuesday, completing the first leg of their 3,400-mile cross-country trek that they expect to complete Oct. 1 in Cape Cod, Mass., to raise awareness for bicycle safety. They made a short stop in Corvallis for a bite of lunch and an interview.

Resting in the lobby of the Holiday Inn Express around noon, the Constantinos praised Oregon's commitment to cycling, including the official state bicycle manual, many streets with bike lanes and courteous treatment from log trucks on the coastal stretch of Highway 20.

"The things you folks are doing needs to be spread to every state and municipality," Pearson Constantino said. "And we need to spread the word to drivers so they can feel what it's like to share the road — and what it's like to get squeezed out."

The pair plans to ride as far as 100 miles a day. It's more than a long ride; it's a comeback for Pearson, who was seriously injured when a hit-and-run driver struck him in 2006 as he was riding his bicycle near his home in upstate New York. His injuries included a shattered hip, a crushed lumbar vertebra and severe head trauma. He endured two surgeries and nine days in the hospital. He credits his helmet for keeping him alive.

The driver who hit Pearson was never caught.

With gas prices prompting more people to take up cycling as basic transportation, Pearson said, it's the right time to encourage more drivers to watch for bicyclists.

"Cycle awareness is really taking shape in the country right now," Pearson said. "The more people who are out riding, the safer the roads will be."



Pearson Constantino, left, and Pete Constantino ride on the path running along Highway 20 near Country Club Drive on Tuesday as they begin their trek across the country.

Accompanying the Constantinos along their route is Julia Wrona, who is making a documentary film of Pearson's recovery and the cross-country ride. The brothers chose Highway 20 in part because they grew up along it in Skaneateles, N.Y., in the center of the

state.

Despite constant aches in his back, headaches and vertigo, Pearson so far is enjoying the ride and looking forward to taking in mountain views in the next several days.

"You won't get that same sense of the Earth from your



For more on the brothers' trip: www.longbikeback.com

'The more people who are out riding, the safer the roads will be.'

PEARSON CONSTANTINO
CROSS-COUNTRY BICYCLIST

car," he said. "There's an element of pain. I happen to like it, and my brother does, too. That's why we're doing it."

Matt Neznanski can be reached at 758-9518 or matt.neznanski@lee.net.



CASEY CAMPBELL | GAZETTE-TIMES

Julia Wrona films Pete Constantino, right, and Pearson Constantino, center, as they head into the Holiday Inn Express for lunch. The pair rode their bikes along Highway 20 from Newport to Corvallis on Tuesday morning and continued to Sweet Home in the afternoon. The two are riding their bikes across the United States on Highway 20, from Oregon to New York, to celebrate Pearson's recovery from a previous bicycle accident and to help promote bicycle safety and awareness on the roads.

[Long road ahead](#)

Posted on August 20th in [Feature Story](#), [News](#)

Cyclist hopes his own tragic experience will raise awareness

By *Debbie Raney*
Burns Times-Herald

While bicycling near his home on June, 2006, Pearson Constantino of upstate New York, was hit from behind by a sport-utility vehicle. The impact knocked Constantino off his bike and broke his left femur, crushed his lumbar vertebra and left him with head trauma. The driver who hit him fled the scene, leaving Constantino unconscious under a parked vehicle.

Two years and hundreds of hours of physical therapy later, Constantino and his brother, Peter, are traveling from the West Coast to the East Coast to promote safe co-existence between bicycles and motor vehicles. Constantino said that while recovering he has, “dreamed of that irreplaceable sensation and freedom that comes with riding. I willed myself to heal faster.”



On Aug. 12, Constantino’s 30th birthday, the brothers left Newport on their cross-country trek to Cape Cod, Mass. The trip is expected to take approximately seven weeks, following U.S. 20 about 3,500 miles. Along the way, Constantino hopes to share the story of his come-back with schools, cycle organizations and communities through 12 states.

The trip is also being filmed by Constantino’s wife, Julia Wrona, and will be made into a documentary. Wrona has chronicled Constantino’s recovery and training, and will be with her husband every mile across America. The project has been given 501c3 non-profit status through the Film Forum in New York City.

Constantino said he would like to use the film to lobby Congress, saying that accidents such as his happen more often than people realize. In 2006, 44,000 cyclists were injured by motor vehicles in the United States. Of the driver that hit Constantino’s, he said, “I want him to know his habits behind the wheel that morning forever altered my life. But I am using anger as motivation to ride, to share my story and to work to change the driving culture of our roads.”

On Saturday, Aug. 16, the cycling brothers and their two-person film crew, made their way through Harney County, reaching Juntura by evening. During the long pedal across the desert between Bend and Riley, the brothers said there were very few motorists who were not respectful to the cyclists. “There’s usually one or two a day,” said Constantino.

For more information on Constantino’s bicycle trip, and the film, go to:
www.longbikeback.com.

« [Vohs resigns from Burns City Council, won’t run for mayor Tuesday, September 2](#) »

This entry was posted on Wednesday, August 20th, 2008 at 9:45 am and is filed under [Feature Story](#), [News](#). You can follow any responses to this entry through the [RSS 2.0](#) feed. You can [leave a response](#), or [trackback](#) from your own site.

Times News Twin Falls, Idaho

Story published at magicvalley.com on Friday, August 15, 2008
Last modified on Friday, August 15, 2008 8:55 AM MDT



Photo courtesy of Meghan Sheridan
Pearson Constantino, right, and brother Pete Constantino, both of New York, ride their bicycles between Newport and Corvallis, Ore., this week. The brothers began cycling cross-country Tuesday and will end the ride Oct. 1 in Boston, Mass. On Monday, they will stop in Boise before heading to Fairfield and on to Yellowstone.

Biking America

New York bicyclist stops for three days in Idaho during 3,000-mile, cross-country trip

By Andrew Weeks
Staff writer

America is a beautiful country, and Pearson Constantino is going to see a lot of it.

Constantino, of West Chester, N.Y., is riding his bicycle across the United States and plans to spend three days in Idaho. In fact, on his way to Newport, Ore., where the bike ride began Tuesday, he stopped overnight in Jerome and said he was impressed with the small city.

"In Jerome, Idaho, there were bike lanes," he told the Times-News. "I was so impressed by that."

In 2006, Constantino was hit by an SUV while riding his bicycle in White Plains, N.Y.

The accident, caused by a hit-and-run driver, left him unconscious and with a broken pelvis, femur and damage to his lumbar vertebra. His helmet saved his life, he said. Similar accidents left three other bicyclists dead in New York that same month and more than 4,400 injured across the country that year.

"But it's not just about cars," he said in a phone interview Thursday. "It's a two-way street. Cyclists need to respect cars. But at the same time, cars can do a lot more damage than what a bicycle can do."

The accident, from which Constantino is still recovering - he was in physical therapy just a week before beginning the cross-country trip - prompted him to make the more than 3,000-

mile bicycle ride. It is being filmed by Ailujon Films, owned by his wife Julia Wrona, a documentary filmmaker.

Filming began shortly after Constantino's accident, during his recovery and now the ride.

"It is about his recovery, his resilience and about him helping others," Wrona said.

The film, called "The Long Bike Back," is also about bringing road-safety awareness to drivers and bicyclists - especially since high gas prices may cause more people to turn to their bicycles for transportation needs - and about the beauty and resilience of America. It will document Constantino's ride and his many stops across the country, including Idaho.

A release date for the film has not yet been set, but post production will take a few months after filming. The goal is to have it wrapped up by spring or early summer 2009, Wrona said.

Constantino, whose brother Pete joins him on the journey, will travel U.S. Route 20 from Newport, Ore., to Boston, Mass., and end on Oct. 1. On Monday, he'll stop in Boise to rest before heading to Fairfield. He plans to hit Yellowstone National Park by Aug. 24.

"I'm so impressed with our country, more so than I was before," Constantino said. "If more people would get out of their shells and go see it ... it'd do all of us Americans a great service. It really is a fantastic and special place. Each town is unique." And Idaho, he said, "is a beautiful state."

"If a little town like Jerome, Idaho, can have bike lanes, well, that's a good thing."

Andrew Weeks may be reached at 208-735-3233 or aweeks@magicvalley.com.

Bike schedule

To view a schedule of Constantino's cross-country trip, to donate to the cause or to learn more about the film, visit www.longbikeback.com.

Cross-country trip promotes bike safety

Wednesday, September 3, 2008

Robert J. Taylor

Day nine of Pearson and Peter Constantino's cross-country bicycle trip brought them through Mountain Home on Aug. 20 as they made their way across the country on Highway 20.

For the brothers, it's a trip more than two years in the making. The two started planning the trip a month before Pearson was hit from behind on his bicycle on June 29, 2006, in Greenburgh, N.Y.

The hit-and-run accident broke his L2 vertebrae, femur and pelvis and left him unconscious. He spent nine days in the hospital and still struggles to deal with the pain today.

Within days, Pearson decided he hadn't taken his last bike ride and started planning for the trip again. The two began in Newport, Ore., on Aug. 12, Pearson's 30th birthday, just four days after his final physical therapy appointment. They expect to finish in Boston Oct. 1.

The brothers ride alone while a two-person documentary crew follows close behind. The film, "The Long Bike Back," is expected to be out next spring or summer. Director/producer Julia Wrona said the film is a story about inspiration to achieve anything and overcoming obstacles.

Peter calls his brother inspiring and said he has a hard time keeping up with him. The two have been riding together since growing up in New York, where they both live in different cities today.

Understandably, bicycle safety is a big issue for the brothers.

"Every day we hear about the person who went on a bike ride and never came back, that almost happened to my brother." Peter said. "That's why we got behind this."

Pearson's bicycle safety motto is, "loud is cool." He encourages bicyclists to be as verbal and loud as they can, to wear bright clothing and to be obvious with their intent so drivers know what they are doing.

"It's really important to give a wave and to make eye contact, let them (drivers) know what you are doing," Pearson said, who was hit from behind by a vehicle. "Drivers don't know what bikers are doing, let them know."

Peter encourages riders to anticipate what is coming ahead. He said bicycling has become more dangerous with the increased number of cars on the road and the number of distraction in those cars.

Tony Haberland, owner of Tony's Bicycle Shop, said he hears of car-on-bike accidents from his customers that are minor and may not have been reported to the police. He isn't sure how many occur a year but knows that accidents do happen in Mountain Home.

He echoed the Constantino's thoughts on wearing visible clothing and being obvious to traffic.

Jim Patterson, community affairs officer for the Mountain Home Police Department, acknowledges accidents have occurred in Mountain Home but said they are not a problem in town.

He said the public has to be aware there are an increased number of bicycles on the road as the school year starts and drivers turn to bikes as a result of high gas prices.

"Just be aware around schools and there are more people on bikes with gas prices being high," he said. State laws require a white light that is visible to oncoming traffic from 500 feet away and a rear reflector be equipped on bicycles being operated at night. Haberland encourages the use of a red tail light, although it is not required by law. He also endorses the use of a helmet, which also isn't required by law.

Under state law, riders: are to ride only two abreast on the highway; may not carry any packages, bundles, or articles that prevent them from operating their bike with at least one hand; and are required to yield the right-of-way to pedestrians and "shall give an audible signal before overtaking and passing a pedestrian or another bicyclist when traveling on sidewalks."

Bicycles should shall not be used to carry more persons at one time then the number it is designed and equipped to carry and riders may not attach themselves to any vehicle while in motion.

Riders should give a hand signal of their intention to turn right or left not less than 100 feet from turning, unless the hand is needed to control the bicycle. When approaching a stop sign, riders shall slow down, and if required for safety, stop before entering the intersection. After slowing to a reasonable speed or stopping, the rider shall yield the right-of-way to a vehicle in the intersection or an approaching vehicle that crossing would constitute an immediate hazard.

A person operating a bicycle approaching a red traffic light must stop before entering the intersection, except they may make a right-hand turn, or a left-hand turn on a one-way road, without stopping, after slowing to a reasonable speed and yielding the right-of-way if required.

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Story URL: <http://www.mountainhomenews.com/story/1457862.html>

Feature

U.S. bike tour promotes bicycle safety

Bicyclists are becoming a more familiar site along the roadways as gas prices continue to drive people to look for alternate means of transportation. It may seem inevitable, then, that there will be accidents involving motor vehicles and bikes.

Pearson Constantino is a victim of one such hit-and-run accident. The New York resident is a life-long cyclist, learning bike safety at the hands of his father and older brother. He'd racked up tens of thousands of miles on the seat of a bike when he was struck by an SUV in June 2006. The accident threw Constantino into the side of a parked SUV, where he became wedged underneath it. He suffered multiple severe injuries, including a shattered hip, crushed lumbar vertebra and head trauma. The helmet he was wearing saved his life.

Two years and two surgeries later, plagued by constant pain, Constantino is riding again and has undertaken a new challenge with his brother, Pete. The pair began a 3,500-mile cross country trek in August. The journey began in Newport, Ore., and the brothers traveled from Lusk, Wyo., to Chadron Tuesday. They plan to spend today, Sept. 3, in Chadron and head to Valentine tomorrow.

The journey is about more than reclaiming his favorite pastime; the brothers hope to encourage others to discover the joys of biking and to educate motorists and bicyclists alike on how to share the road safely. The Constantinos are traveling along Highway 20 from West to East coast, ending the trip in October in Boston, Mass.

Despite the ever-present pain he endures, Constantino is determined to recapture the sense of freedom he has always felt on the seat of a bike. The brothers chose Highway 20 because they grew up near the route in the New York Finger Lakes area. As teens, they and their father cycled Highway 20 from their home in Skaneateles to Cape Cod, Mass., which inspired them to someday cycle the entire transcontinental "Main Street of America."

Along the way, Constantino has spoken to schools, cycle organizations and communities about his experiences and bicycle safety to raise awareness of the issues. The trip is also the subject of a documentary film, "The Long Bike Back."

For more information on the Constantino brothers and their journey, visit www.longbike-back.com.

Bicycle Safety Tips

Tips for Bicyclists

- Obey traffic signs and signals
- Never ride against traffic
- Don't weave between parked cars
- Follow lane markings
- Don't pass on the right
- Keep both hands ready to brake.
- Never ride with headphones – Wear a helmet
- Use hand signals
- Ride in middle of lane in slow traffic
- Choose the best way to turn left – like an auto or like a pedestrian
- Make eye contact with drivers
- Avoid road hazards
- Use lights at night
- Keep bike in good repair

Tips for Motorists

- Reduce your speed when passing a cyclist
- Don't blast your horn, it could startle them
- Recognize situations and obstacles that may be hazardous to cyclists (potholes, drain grates) and give them room to maneuver
- Do not pass cyclists if oncoming traffic is near. Wait as you would with any slow-moving vehicle.
- In bad weather, give cyclists extra trailing and passing room, just as you would any other motorist.
- Give at least three feet of passing space between the right side of your vehicle and the cyclist.
- After passing, check over your shoulder before moving back over. Many experienced riders are going faster than you think.
- When turning left at an intersection, yield to oncoming bicyclists just as you would to any other motorist.
- After parking check for cyclists before opening your car door.
- Children on bicycles are often unpredictable – expect the unexpected.



HIGH-TECH HEALTH

■ PRECISION TREATMENT FOR PROSTATE CANCER PAGE B1

LONG ROAD

■ CRASH VICTIM TO BIKE THROUGH WATERLOO ON NATIONWIDE RIDE CEDAR VALLEY PAGE A3



STRAIGHT SETS

■ USE OF TWO SETTERS HELPS C.F. BEAT WEST SPORTS PAGE D1

WEDNESDAY
SEPTEMBER 10, 2008

THE COURIER

TONIGHT'S LOW: 54
TOMORROW'S HIGH: 76

Waterloo, IA

Cross-country safety trek brings cyclists to area

By TINA HINZ
Courier Staff Writer

WATERLOO — Pearson Constantino is geared up for "The Long Bike Back."

The lifelong New York cyclist and his brother, Pete, will pass through Waterloo during their 3,500-mile ride across America. It's part of a documentary of Pearson's recovery from a hit-and-run accident in June 2006.

Filmmaker Julia Wrona, Pearson's wife, will capture their effort to inspire more bicycling and safer roads. Following U.S. Highway 20 east, they're set to arrive in Waterloo by 7:30 p.m. today.

Pearson is still plagued by constant pain since suffering a shattered hip, crushed vertebra and severe head trauma two years ago. But the irreplaceable sensation and freedom of bicycling, he said, is comforting and has helped him heal.

"It's like the more active I am, the more I don't recognize the pain until I stop," Pearson said. "The off days are really bad — waking up in the morning from just being stiff all night is not good either. It does take me awhile to get warmed up, about a good 20 miles or so on my bike."

Since crossing into Iowa on Sunday night, they've been impressed with its beauty, its endless rolling hills and the largest wind farm Pearson's ever seen. The Hawkeye state



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Pearson Constantino, left, and his brother, Pete, are riding across the United States to promote safer roads for bicyclists. They are following U.S. Highway 20, a 3,500-mile journey from the West to East coasts.

contrasts with Wyoming's barren and desert landscape, he said.

The route cutting through Iowa on Tuesday, however, lacked road shoulders, so Pearson and his brother couldn't ride their usual side by side.

"It's making the going quite treacherous," Pearson said Tuesday. "Cars are still going by us about 65 (mph) or they're probably going about 70. We've had a couple of run-ins with some nasty drivers who refused to give us room."

As gas prices soar and bicycling gains popularity, motorists should be on alert and learn to share the road, Pearson said.

"We were clipped almost by a truck that was beeping his horn and wouldn't give us any

room," Pearson said. "To have a huge truck passing you about two or three inches away from your hand is kind of scary.

"It makes me feel completely insignificant and makes my life seem not worth it to that person."

The brothers have had a cross-country trek on the back burner for years, Pete said. They chose to travel Highway 20 because it cuts through the center of Skaneateles, where they grew up in the Finger Lakes in upstate New York.

"There's huge folklore to this route, being that it is the oldest and the longest transcontinental route, and it's still used as a major trucking artery," Pearson said. "It's main street America."

Pearson and Pete left Rock-

well City — about 120 miles west of Waterloo — this morning. They'll stay at Candlewood Suites in Waterloo tonight and head to Dyersville on Thursday.

They started their journey in Newport, Ore., on Aug. 12 and are on pace to arrive in Cape Cod, Mass., on Oct. 1. They've scheduled speaking events throughout the journey, although none in Waterloo.

Pearson was among 44,000 cyclists injured by motorists in the United States in 2006.

For more information or to make a tax-deductible donation, visit www.longbikeback.com. About \$30,000 has been raised for their mission.

Contact Tina Hinz at (319) 291-1484 or tina.hinz@wccourier.com.



September 13, 2008

SATURDAY

172nd year, No. 257, 4 sections, 28 pages

TRI-STATE: Brothers take 'long bike back' / 3A

SPORTS: Cascade, Wahlert, Hempstead win / 1B, 3B ▶

RELIGION: Widowed mother now Presentation sister / 1D

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TH: Jessica Reilly

Director/producer Julia Wrona films her husband, Pearson Constantino (far left), of Westchester, N.Y., and his brother Peter Constantino, of Glens Falls, N.Y., near the Field of

Dreams in Dyersville, Iowa, on Friday. The brothers are riding across the country to promote safer roads for cyclists and drivers. **Video at THonline.com.**

Brothers take 'long bike back'

N.Y. cyclist, once badly injured, pedals across U.S. to promote bicycle safety

By **MICHAEL SCHMIDT**
TH staff writer/
mschmidt@wcinet.com

DYERSVILLE, Iowa — The only buffer between life and death for Pearson Constantino was a helmet.

Constantino, a lifelong cyclist, was riding along the highway in Greenburgh, N.Y., in June 2006 and was struck from behind by an SUV, leaving him with multiple injuries, including severe head trauma, a damaged lumbar vertebra and a broken pelvis and femur.

Fighting to recover, Constantino and his older brother, Peter, made a promise to each



Pearson Constantino



Peter Constantino

other in a hospital room: They would ride together again.

The Constantino brothers stopped Friday in Dyersville during their five-week trek from the Pacific to Atlantic oceans to promote bicycle and motorist safety, taking a rest day for a stop at the Field of Dreams.

Their coast-to-coast jaunt along U.S. 20 also is the subject of a documentary titled "The Long Bike Back," produced and directed by Pearson Constantino's wife, Julia Wrona.

The documentary is set for

release in spring 2009, Wrona said.

"It made sense to ride across the United States and to talk about how we can share the roads better, as cyclists and drivers," said Pearson Constantino, who resides in Westchester, N.Y., outside of New York City.

"We need to work together to make sure that this doesn't happen to anyone else. It's completely avoidable."

Constantino promotes wider shoulders on the highways to accommodate cyclists and to avoid accidents with vehicles, something he's noticed the state of Iowa lacks.

"There isn't much of a shoulder, if any, on the roads," Constantino said. "We need a couple of feet. Cyclists need to be a little more obvious about what they are doing, if they are going to turn left or right, at a stop sign. Drivers need to give us space, and that is crucial."

"This is life. Your car can kill

"This is life. Your car can kill us in an instant."

PEARSON CONSTANTINO,
about bicycle/motorist safety

us in an instant."

The Constantino brothers started the trip in Newport, Ore., on Aug. 12. Their final stop is slated for Cape Cod, Mass., on Oct. 1.

Pearson Constantino still fights pain in his lower back and other ailments from two surgeries and months of rehabilitation. He admits he's not in ideal physical condition.

But it's the journey that matters, Peter Constantino said.

"It's totally inspiring," he said. "I can't say it loud enough. We've always been really close. To see what he's had to go through, to get into the shape he's in to ride, is amazing."

SEPTEMBER 15

MONDAY

2008



Mostly sunny, then
mostly clear skies

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FORECAST, A8

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The JOURNAL- STANDARD

YOUR NORTHWEST ILLINOIS NEWS SOURCE SINCE 1847

CYCLING FOR A CAUSE

The long bike ride back: Victim of hit and run rides for safe roads

BY CLAIRE O'BRIEN
co'brien@journalstandard.com

FREEPORT — Almost three years ago, Pearson Constantino was riding his beloved bicycle near his home in upstate New York when his life changed forever — and in an instant.

Constantino, then 27, was struck by a hit and run driver and thrown violently from his bicycle, landing under a car. He has a dim memory of trying to pull himself out, but he couldn't, because his leg bone was shattered and he had a serious brain injury, along with a broken vertebrae.

Throughout his hospital stay and long rehabilitation, Constantino was determined to ride his bicycle again, although for months he couldn't even walk. What's more, he vowed that he'd ride across the entire country.

And that's what he's doing.

Saturday night, the young

man from New York pedaled his bicycle through the pouring rain into Freeport, accompanied by his older brother, Peter. Ahead of them in a van rode a very small film crew. They'd come all the way from Oregon, cycling across mountains, deserts, and the Great Plains. And when they reach New York next week, the brothers Constantino will indeed have completed a long ride back.

Pearson's wife, Julia Wrona, a young filmmaker, has been making a documentary about her husband's long recovery and ride. Wrona rides in the van, which is driven by friend Meghan Sheridan, often leaning out the window to shoot the two brothers as they pedal along.

Pearson is riding to celebrate his recovery, but he and Peter also have a serious message, and they want the world to listen.

"Drivers need to take the

BIKE RIDE, page A8

BIKE RIDE

continued from A1

responsibility for sharing the road with cyclists. They need to move over when they pass us, and be careful and aware," Pearson said. "There were 4,400 cyclist deaths last year, and those deaths were entirely avoidable."

Pearson said that many drivers get annoyed when they see bicyclists, and some are even aggressive, not realizing that the law grants cyclists the right to use most public roads. He and his brother want to see that attitude change, and that's the reason for their cross-country trek. They want to increase public awareness of the vital need for bicycle safety.

"More and more people are riding bikes, and as gas prices continue to climb, there will be more and more," said Peter. "Drivers need to be aware of just how vulnerable cyclists are, and how easily they can be killed or seriously injured."

Pearson said that he has still not fully recovered, and that he continues to suffer from pain, dizziness, vertigo and memory loss. He is happy to have made so much progress, and thrilled to be back on a bicycle, but he's frustrated at the slow pace of change in public awareness.

The Constantino brothers hope that the film Wrona is

making will help change a lot of minds. Although this is her first film, she has worked in the industry doing post-production, and had been planning to make a documentary.

"When Pearson and Peter decided on this trip, I realized what a great film it could be, so I decided to do it," Wrona said. "Most documentary filmmakers don't have this kind of access or this kind of relationship with their subjects, so in some ways it is a plus, but I also have to know where to draw the line — and on the other hand, sometimes to keep on filming even when I want to stop."

Wrona hopes that her film, which she has titled "The Long Bike Back", will be picked up by a bigger distribution company, and that schools will use it to help teach bicycle safety.

The film's title soundtrack is written and performed by the Constantino brothers' band, Losinko, which plays what they describe as "new day folk". And the entire trip is also documented in a blog, which may be found at thelongbikeback.com

The brothers began loading up the van, preparing to get back on their bikes. They were on their way to Chicago in the pouring rain, and life was fine. Finally, almost three years after Pearson nearly lost his life, they were on the last leg of the long bike ride back.



JOE TAMBORELLO / THE JOURNAL-STANDARD

Bicyclists Pearson Constantino of New York City, left, and Peter Constantino of Glens Falls, N.Y., along with filmmaker Julia Wrona of New York City made a stop in Freeport this weekend during their biking trek across the country.

The Advertiser-Tribune

176th year, No. 245

TIFFIN, OHIO SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2008

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PHOTO BY JIM SHOBE

Geared to go

Pearson and Peter Constantino prepare themselves for the road after unloading their bikes from a chase vehicle Friday, with Cleveland being the day's destination. They said the 85-mile ride, with the wind at their backs, would be a nice trip.

NorwalkReflector.com Front Article

ONLINE EXCLUSIVE - Bicycling safety focus of cross-country trek

By [MARY LISA BOOSE](#) - Reflector Staff Writer

Monday, September 22, 2008 1:09 PM EDT

MONROEVILLE - When Rob Duncan met a man who almost suffered the fate of his oldest son death while cycling at the hands of a hit-and-run driver it was an emotional moment for both.

Daniel Duncan, 18, a 2008 graduate of St. Paul High School, was killed earlier this month by a drunk driver while practicing for the cycling team at West Virginia Wesleyan College.

Pearson Constantino survived when a hit-and-run driver left him for dead on a New York roadway. Now he and his brother, Peter, are riding their bicycles on a cross-country trek on U.S. 20 to promote cycling safety. As they traveled through Huron County last week, they stopped in Monroeville to meet with Duncan.

Duncan thanked the brothers for their efforts.

"Keep it up," he said. "We talked to the cyclist team at my son's school just yesterday and they said the people in the town are much nicer to them since my son's accident . . . now they're slowing down, giving them the right of way. They're seeing some very positive things in that community."

Constantino understands Duncan's emotions. He was cycling in 2006 when an SUV smashed into him, leaving him with a broken femur and pelvis, shattered vertebrae and a severe concussion. A passerby found him minutes later and called for help.

Two surgeries and months of painful rehabilitation later, Constantino and his brother resolved to fulfill a dream they had of a cross-country cycling trip. But now they had a new mission raising awareness for safety on the roads and highlighting the epidemic of hit-and-run drivers.

"When I was in the hospital, I realized what happened to me was completely avoidable," Constantino said. "What I want drivers to do is slow down and give us a few feet when they come around us."

He said cyclists also have some responsibility on the road.

"Cyclists need to wear bright-colored clothing and always wear a helmet and be very, very cognizant and obvious," he said, including clear arm signals to show whether they are turning or going straight.

Constantino said he and his brother experienced several close calls on their trek from Oregon to New York. He said some drivers seem to aim for cyclists.

"It's malicious," Constantino said. "They think screwing with us is their right."

"Iowa was pretty terrible to us," he said. "Pete was run off the road by a tractor-trailer."

Constantino said they also had problem with trucks as they rode through the Gary, Ind., area.

"So far, nothing too bad in Ohio," he said.

Peter Constantino is grateful for the chance to cycle cross-country with his brother.

"Cycling has always been kind of a link in our lives," he said. "After the accident, it seemed like a really great time to promote an initiative to make the roads safer.

"What happened to Pearson changed all of our lives and we wanted to make a stand to bring change."

He said 44,000 cyclists are hit by vehicles each year and 800 are killed.

The trip is being chronicled for a documentary by Pearson's wife, Julia Wrona. The two were engaged when he was hit. Since she has worked as a documentary filmmaker for several years, she is traveling along with the brothers in a van with extra bicycles on the roof to tell their story.

"I think that Pearson's story to get back on the road is inspirational," she said. "I also think it is important for people to know what to do when they encounter cyclists on the roadways."

The trip is funded by "personal donations and a lot of self-finance," Wrona said.

Pearson Constantino is willing to do whatever it takes to spread his message.

"I'd like to see more people out riding bikes as long as they're doing it safety," he said. "The more people that are out riding, the more used to it drivers will be.

"Cycling is a great way to get around. To do that, no one has to pay with their life. There's no excuse for that."

The Post-Standard

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PAGE B-2 THE POST-STANDARD Tuesday, September 23, 2008

LOCAL NEWS

Brothers hit hometown on cross-country ride

Skaneateles natives travel 3,400 miles to raise bike safety awareness.

By Paige Dearing
Contributing Writer

Lying in a hospital bed after he was hit by a sport utility vehicle while riding his bike, Pearson Constantino wanted to ride across America more than ever.

His dream — to follow Route 20 across the country with his older brother — had entered the final planning stage when a hit-and-run accident on June 29, 2006, left him with a shattered pelvis, crushed vertebra, broken

leg and kept him from attempting his 3,400-mile journey.

More than two years later, after 20 months of physical therapy and a medication regiment, Constantino will ride through his hometown of Skaneateles Wednesday, marking the 44th day of his 51-day journey that will end Oct. 1 in Cape Cod, Mass.

"It will be great to see familiar faces," Constantino said. "Townfolk have really gotten behind us, more than I ever expected."

Constantino, 30, and brother Pete Constantino, 36, started

If you go

Pearson Constantino will talk about his accident, cross-country trip and bike safety at 7:30 p.m. Thursday at Skaneateles Public Library, 49 E. Genesee St., Skaneateles. The event is free. Refreshments will be served. He also will visit State Street Intermediate School and Skaneateles High School on Thursday.

their adventure Aug. 12 in Newport, Ore., with the intention to emphasize bike safety and see the country along the way. They

bike an average of 90 miles a day.

Pearson's wife, Julia Wrona, has been filming the trip with the help of a photographer and a driver. The three-person crew trails the brothers in a van, which has a bumper sticker advertising the project's Web site longbikeback.com. They also travel ahead sometimes to set up shots, she said.

"They can ride much faster in traffic than we can drive, so big cities can be a challenge," Wrona said.

She said the documentary film, which they've titled "The Long Bike Back," will hopeful-

ly be finished by summer 2009 and released nationally.

Both Pearson and Pete have had close calls during the trip. Pearson was cut off by a woman in Cleveland, forcing his front wheel back and handlebars into his stomach. He also took a fall in Iowa, which injured his wrist and shoulder. Pete encountered his own problems in Iowa.

"There aren't really shoulders on Route 20 in Iowa and this kid was giving (Pete) hell," Pearson said. "He really wanted to knock Pete off his bike."

Despite some rough patches, Pearson said he has been

amazed at the power of people and the good that is out there.

"Just Friday we met a man that lost his son just two weeks prior to a drunk driver while (his son) was on his bike," he said. "That was just an emotional period for me. This man was willing to share some really personal information with me."

He also said a Nebraska woman paid for one of his prescriptions at a pharmacy.

Pearson said he plans to meet many more people in the future.

"Let's just say we plan to bike the whole world," he said. "But I won't tell you what's the next country."

Cycling Siblings Cross Nation



Pearson Constantino biked into his hometown of Skaneateles on Wednesday, pedaling one town closer to the end of his 51-day, cross-country journey with his brother, Peter, that will end in Cape Cod, Mass., on Oct. 1.

Constantino planned since 2006 to embark on the trip, but a hit-and-run accident with a sport utility vehicle that June postponed the start date until Aug. 11 this year, Pearson's 30th birthday.

Skaneateles stands just shy of the 3,000-mile mark on the brothers' 3,400-mile adventure. They depart Friday for their next stop along Route 20: Waterville in Oneida County.

— Staff report

Li-Hua Lan / The Post-Standard

PEARSON CONSTANTINO (left), of Pelham, Westchester County, and his brother, Peter, of Glens Falls, Warren County, bike Wednesday along Route 20 as they enter the village of Skaneateles.



PEARSON CONSTANTINO (right) and his brother, Peter, hug their parents, Peggy and Peter (left), of Skaneateles, after they arrived Wednesday in Skaneateles. Pearson's wife, Julia Wrona (far right), is filming the trip as the brothers bike from Oregon to Cape Cod, Mass.

Li-Hua Lan / The Post-Standard

timesunion.com

Life-changing crash sparks ride for awareness

Message is that cyclists, drivers must share road

By [ALAN WECHSLER](#), Staff writer

Click byline for more stories by writer.

First published: Thursday, September 25, 2008

It all happened on Route 20.

In Cleveland, a woman didn't see the two cyclists while she was making a left turn into a parking lot and talking on a cellphone. She crashed into Pearson Constantino's front wheel, damaging the bike and throwing his midsection into his handlebars.

Then there was the truck in Idaho that tried to run Constantino's brother Peter off the road. And the woman in Western New York whose dog lunged through the car window at them as they biked by.

"She gave us the finger and threw a bottle cap at us," recalled Pearson Constantino, referring to the driver, not the dog. "Generally people tell us we shouldn't be on the road."

But that's what the Constantino brothers' cross-country trip is all about. The two have followed Route 20 from its western end in Newport, Ore., and plan to take it to its eastern terminus on Cape Cod. On Saturday, they'll be in Albany to preach the message that bicyclists have a place on America's roads and should be treated more respectfully by drivers.

"We've both had some close calls, no doubt about it," Peter Constantino said during a phone interview. "It's very frustrating. We're trying to educate drives and cyclists alike — we have rights, as well."

For Pearson, 30, a musician from New York City, and his brother, 36, a business owner from Glens Falls, the message is quite personal. On June 29, 2006, Pearson was biking in Hartsdale — training for a planned cross-country ride — when he was struck on the left side by a passing SUV. The impact threw him under a nearby parked car, and broke his pelvis, femur and back. The driver, who didn't stop, was never found.

It took more than a year for Pearson to heal and recover his strength. Even today, he suffers from constant pain and memory loss from the impact, which also gave him a concussion and a huge gash in his skull.

But the brothers, avid cyclists since childhood, decided the crash wouldn't keep them from their dream of cycling from coast to coast, a 3,400-mile trip.

Only now, they had a cause.

"The whole point is about getting people to share the road," Pearson said. "I was in an accident that was completely and utterly avoidable."

Since leaving the West Coast with a support vehicle on Aug. 12, the two have held press interviews and met with cyclists in dozens of cities. They'll be doing the same on Saturday, when fellow riders join them for 15 miles, followed by a 5:30 p.m. presentation at the Upstate Artists Guild Gallery in Albany.

At the event, footage from a documentary about the ride will be screened. The film is being made by Pearson's wife, filmmaker Julia Wrona. Its working title: The Long Bike Back.

Saturday's event is sponsored by the New York Bicycling Coalition, an Albany-based advocacy group. Jennifer Clunie, program manger for the group, said 44,000 riders were injured by motor vehicles in 2006 nationwide.

The group is sponsoring legislation that would require cars to give bikes three feet of space while passing.

Locally, cyclists take part in an annual Ride of Silence in memory of those killed while riding. White "ghost bikes" are left at locations where cyclists are killed — reminders of the dangers on the road.

Clunie, who was struck by a car while biking as a child, said she was inspired by Pearson's story.

"He refused to let fear control his life," she said. "He is going to reclaim his rightful place on the road."

Alan Wechsler can be reached at 454-5469 or by e-mail at awechsler@timesunion.com.

Meet the bicyclists

Pearson and Peter Constantino are riding cross-country to generate awareness of cycling safety.

4 p.m. Saturday: Local riders are invited to join them — helmets required — as they ride to Albany. Meet at the corner of Dunnesville Road and Western Avenue in Dunnesville.

5:30 p.m.: There will be a reception and movie screening at the Upstate Artists Guild Gallery, 247 Lark St. in Albany. Donation: \$10.

More info: <http://longbikeback.com>.

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Skaneateles Press



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Home of Lia Batés

Nearing the end of the road

Constantino brothers bringing biking awareness across U.S.

By Anne Roth

The longest ride in a day was 137 miles in Wyoming after cresting the Continental Divide; the number of flat tires so far: 17; the worst day of the trip: 18 miles straight up in the Cascade Mountains of Oregon.

These memories and much, much more are the experiences brothers Pearson and Peter Constantino described Sept. 25 at the Skaneateles Library.

The title of their talk, "The Long Bike Back," is a tale of triumph over near death, the decision to cross the United States by bicycle and their mission – to raise awareness for safety on the road.

"We have seen too many white bikes along roads," Pearson said. White bikes, or "ghost bikes" are placed on the scene of fatal bike crashes. "Drivers need to give cyclists more room; cyclists need to use hand signals. We can both share the roads; no one needs to die."

The brothers began their 3,500-mile bicycle journey Aug. 12 in Newport, Ore.; the trip will culminate soon in Cape Cod, Mass. They chose Route 20, what Pearson calls the Main Street of America, for their trip. It is familiar to them since childhood, when they began cycling Route 20 with their father



LORI RUHLMAN

Pearson Constantino, left, and Peter Constantino speak to students during the day Sept. 25 at Skaneateles High School. The biking duo, natives of Skaneateles, is currently on their way to Massachusetts.

through their hometown of Skaneateles. Also because "it is the oldest continuous route in the United States that goes from east to west," Peter said.

They were preparing to make such a journey when tragedy struck Pearson in late June 2006, halting their plans. He was cycling near his home in Pelham when an SUV struck him in the back, the driver leaving him at the side of the road. He lay there with a severe concussion, shattered hip, broken back. A Good Samaritan came along and rescued him. Surgeries followed, as

did months of rehabilitation.

"I spent that summer in a body brace, had a second surgery in October; physical therapy helped me learn to walk again and in February 2007 I started biking," Pearson said.

The brothers made the decision to follow through with their dream to ride cross-country with a new purpose – to make a documentary film.

"We want it to be shown all over the world to promote driver safety," Pearson said.

A van, driven by Meghan Sheri-

Please see Bikes, page 8

Bikes

From page 1 dan, follows them while Pearson's wife,

Julia Wrona, films the action. After averaging 90 miles a day, the bikes go into the van; they spend the night at a hotel. Pearson described a typical day:

"Hotels often have a breakfast. I look at NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, a weather program) every morning to see what we will be faced with. We start riding at 9 a.m.; stretch first and break into the day the first 20 miles."

After tipping their tires in Newport they began their trek, riding along Route 20 heading east, the Three Sisters mountains – Mount Hood – in the distance.

Then it was on to the Bad Lands of South Dakota, reaching the halfway point in Stewart, Neb.

"This country is one incredible place; I'm so glad I got to experi-

ence this country and the people," Pearson said.

He told his listeners, "Truckers have been gracious to give us space. Three feet of passing space is good when you're in a car and passing a cyclist. Common sense is a big part. Cars and bikes can work together."

Raleigh, a bicycle manufacturer, sponsored the trip; a tire manufacturer provided tires. Peter, who lives in Glens Falls, graduated from Skaneateles Central High School in 1990, his brother in 1997. They are the sons of Peggy and Peter Constantino of Skaneateles.

They left Skaneateles on Friday.

"We have a little over 500 miles to go – no big deal," Pearson said. "A next trip is definitely being planned."

To learn more about the brothers, log on to longbikeback.com.

From the front page
October 1, 2008

SKANEATELES JOURNAL

www.skaneatelesjournal.com

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75 cents

COMMUNITY



Pearson and Pete Constantino listen as the audience asks questions about their bike trip across the country via Route 20, at the Skaneateles Library on Thursday. Behind them is a photograph of a white bicycle that stands as a memorial to a biker who was killed by a car.

Jill Connor / Skaneateles Journal

Enlightening journey

Brothers bike cross-country to bring awareness to bikers', drivers' safety, need to share road

Jason Gabak
Skaneateles Journal

SKANEATELES — Skaneateles natives Pearson and Peter Constantino already pedaled more than 4,900 miles when they rolled back home Thursday evening.

The brothers are in the midst of a cross-country ride that began in Oregon on Aug. 12. As of last week, they had little more than 500 miles to go before they reach their destination of the end of Route 20 — the Atlantic coast.

While the ride is one the brothers said they had often talked about as something to do for fun, the journey has taken on a much more momentous importance along the way.

In June 2006, Pearson, an avid cyclist, was injured severely by a hit-and-run driver while riding his bicycle. Pearson endured several surgeries followed by months of recovery and physical therapy.

All the while, he was determined to get back on his bike. With the support of his family, especially his brother, Peter, he was more determined than ever to make that ride across the country.

As the brothers trained for their long trip, they quickly decided it was an experience they wanted to share with others. The brothers are making a full length documentary about their travels with the help of film maker Julia Wrona.

"It is something we'd like to get into schools, drivers' education programs, everywhere we can," Pearson said. "I believe this is something we can use to do something good and I'm grateful for that."

When Pearson and Peter stopped at the Skaneateles Library, they shared more than Pearson's accident or the documentary. They wanted to speak about the incredible adventure they have been on for the past several weeks and the sites they saw and people they encountered along the way.

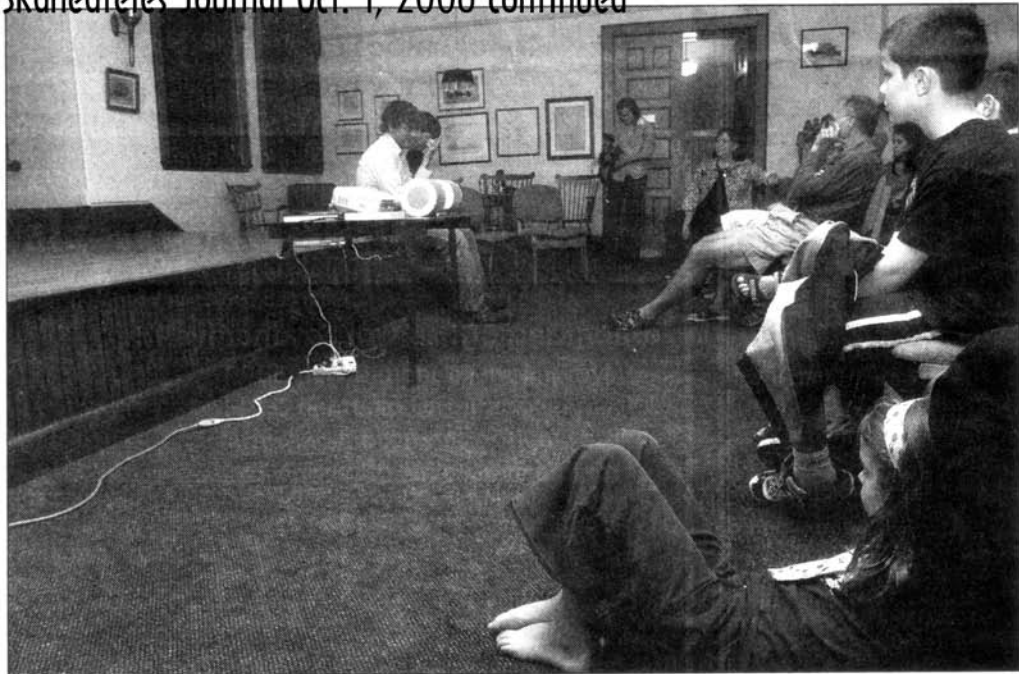
When they started their journey, the brothers dipped their



Pearson, left, and Pete Constantino listen as an audience member asks Pearson if he has been emotionally healed by taking a cross-country trip with his brother after he was struck by a car while riding his bicycle.

Jill Connor / Skaneateles Journal

See BIKE, Page A4



Adults and children listen to Pearson and Pete Constantino talk about their bike trip from the Pacific to Atlantic Ocean across Route 20 at the Skaneateles Library. They promoted biker safety Thursday.

Jill Connor / Skaneateles Journal

Bike

Continued From Page A1

wheels into the Pacific Ocean and started out through Oregon on Route 20.

"Route 20 is sort of Main Street America," Pearson said. "It goes right across the whole country and it is the oldest and longest transcontinental road there is and it runs right through town here, the town where we grew up."

While a great deal of training went into getting ready for this ride, the first few days out did present some challenges. Peter said the most difficult part of the ride thus far was a climb almost straight up into the high desert of Oregon.

Since then, they have passed through areas such as the Badlands of South Dakota, the Great

Plains through Nebraska and Iowa, where they have stopped to see the sites including the field used in the film "Field of Dreams."

They also have met many interesting people along the way.

"There are so many good people in this country," Pearson said. "It seriously struck me while we have been doing this just how many good people there are in this country."

But little compared to returning to New York.

"It is the most beautiful part of Route 20," Peter said. "It is the most fall-like to ride through."

And it was in New York, on Route 20 in Waterloo, where Peter got his first flat tire in almost 5,000 miles, making it one for Peter and 17 for Pearson.

"I was so disappointed," Peter said. "I wanted to make it the whole way without a flat."

The brothers said after their

long trip, the next 500 miles until they reach the end at the Atlantic coast doesn't seem that bad.

And while the trip was a mixture of fun, adventure and determination to meet a personal goal, Pearson does have the hope that everyone who uses the road can learn from their journey and film to be aware of other users.

"I just hope people on bikes can learn how to be safe and how to protect themselves," Pearson said. "And I hope drivers can learn that we all need to share the road."

RICHFIELD SPRINGS MERCURY



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50¢

Two brothers bike Route 20 cross country

By Janine Giordano

With just days away from finishing their trek across the country, brothers Peter and Pearson Constantino took a break in Richfield Springs, pausing beneath the historic landmark clock tower as they prepared for the next leg of their journey.

"We're biking across the country over Main Street, America to inspire people to ride their bikes with helmets and reflective (gear), to get drivers to pay more attention and give us (bicyclists) a few more feet," said Pearson, who turned 30 Aug. 12, the day he and his brother began their journey.

It had always been a dream of the Constantino brothers to trek across the U.S. via Route 20. As they grew older, the dream remained just that until Pearson became the victim in a hit and run accident while riding his bike to work.

After being hit by an SUV and left to die, he was rescued by a pedestrian. As he recovered, Pearson vowed that one day he would take the trip with his brother. Now they had a reason to fulfill this dream, to teach people about bicycle safety.

"We're spreading the word in every town," he said. "We've been on the news a lot."

Their journey has not been without a few close calls, with their most recent coming as a result of "two guys drag racing." Even a mailbox or two seems to have it out for them, as Pearson noted he had fallen the day before, "when a mailbox came out and hit me," he explained with a chuckle.

Their day started at 7 a.m. Saturday, near Skaneateles, and was not going to end until they reached Albany. Just west of Albany, they were scheduled to

Continued on page 9



Brothers Pearson (left) and Peter Constantino took a break in Richfield Springs before continuing their trek across the country on bikes. The two are taking the journey to promote bicycle safety. They were scheduled to stop in Albany by 4 p.m. Saturday afternoon, and were expected to finish the trip in the next week in Cape Cod, Mass. (Photo by Janine Giordano)

Richfield Springs Mercury, October 2, 2008 - 9

Two brothers

Continued from page 1

meet with the New York State Bikers Coalition at 4 p.m., who were going to journey with them until they reached the city. At that point, there were receptions planned throughout the night, Pearson noted, beginning with a local artist guild.

They planned to rest Sunday, which is not the norm, then resume Monday.

Although it was drizzling with grey skies, the brothers said that inclement weather does not stop them. Neither does pain, as Pearson has been making the journey despite the residual pain in his back, knee and hip from his near fatal accident two years ago.

They plan to finish at Marconi Beach in Cape Cod, Mass.

"We dipped our tires in

the Pacific Ocean," Pearson said, and they plan to finish the trip by dipping their tires in the Atlantic Ocean.

"We want to see more kids wear helmets," said Pete. "My helmet cost me \$30 in a bike shop. I used to be guilty of never riding with one. Now I wouldn't bike without one."

The largest offenders of riding bikes without helmets are "teenagers to (people in their 40s)," Pearson said.

Kids wear helmets, "but so many people don't wear them. I am trying to work with companies," he said, to promote the use of bike helmets.

Some sort of campaign, like maybe giving away a helmet with each bike purchase, is what he is striving for, he said. "I just want to keep people safe."

2 New York cyclists riding cross country 'to promote and inspire road-sharing'

Posted by [dbshepar](#) September 30, 2008 14:47PM



Photo by Mark M. MurrayPearson J.

Constantino, left, and his brother Peter, both of New York, work on their bicycles on West Street in Springfield this morning, as they prepare to continue their bike ride across country on Route 20.

By **GEORGE GRAHAM**
ggraham@repub.com

SPRINGFIELD - The fresh 'road rash' spattered across Pearson J. Constantino's legs this morning as he pedaled along Route 20 served as a reminder of the dangers cyclists face every time they set out.

Not that the 30-year-old New York City cyclist, who is finishing up a cross-country ride, is in need of such reminders.

In June 2006, Constantino suffered crippling injuries that linger to this day when he was struck from behind by a sports utility vehicle while riding his bike.

"I was out for a ride and the next thing I knew I was being clobbered," Constantino said.

His injuries include a shattered hip, crush lumbar vertebra and severe head trauma. His helmet saved his life, Constantino said.

That day, Constantino became one of the 44,000 cyclists to be injured by a motor vehicle in the United States in 2006.

From that hit-and-run accident and the painful recovery and rehabilitation that followed, came the idea of the cross-country trip "to promote and inspire road-sharing," Constantino said.

Today, Constantino and his brother, Peter J. Constantino are on one of the final legs of their cross-country ride to do just that.

"It's an epidemic that nobody talks about," Peter Constantino said of the dangers cyclists face.

Their 3,500 mile trip began Aug. 12 in Newport, Oregon. It will end tomorrow as they pedal from Boston to Cape Cod where friends and family will be waiting to celebrate.

They have taken Route 20 the whole trip. Along the way the brothers have stopped at schools and appeared before cycling clubs to spread their message of safe cycling.

The message, the brothers said, is a two-way street. "We need to reassess our driving habits and our cycling habits," Constantino said. "A lot of accidents that occur are completely avoidable.

Drivers, the brothers said, need to be more aware of their surroundings.

For their part, cyclists should wear bright clothes and helmets and telegraph their intentions, via arm signals, to the drivers around them.

The message of awareness and safe cycling becomes all the more pressing as more cyclists take to the road due to soaring gas prices, concern for global warming and the need for fitness, the two men said.

Their trip, as illustrated by Constantino's legs and an even more vivid scrape bandaged on his arm, has not been without mishap.

Constantino said he was hit by a car in Cleveland that was being driven by someone who had no idea that he and his brother were on the road.

Constantino's recent scrapes came yesterday in the Berkshires when he hit a rough patch of road and dumped his bike.

Constantino's wife, Julia Wrona, is producing full-length film of the trip which will be called "The Long Bike Back."

Go to www.longbikeback.com for more information about the ride and the film.

Categories: [Traffic](#)

Comments

Footer

Constantino is all about safety

When Pearson Constantino regained consciousness, he was trapped under a parked vehicle with a shattered hip, broken femur, crushed lumbar vertebra and severe head trauma.



Mark
CONTI

Cycling

He was not aware of what had happened until he saw his mangled bike.

While riding along Central Park Avenue, a Westchester County bike route, in Greenburgh, N.Y., on June 29, 2006, Constantino was

struck from behind by an SUV.

The driver fled the scene, leaving Constantino helpless. Unable to extricate himself because of the injuries, he passed out from the pain.

After two surgeries — repairing his broken left femur with a rod and his L2 vertebra with a procedure called kyphoplasty — and almost two years of physical therapy, Constantino hit the road on a cross-country bike ride with a message urging greater safety on the streets. Cyclists need to be more visible, and drivers need to be more aware of bicyclists.

“We need to do more to protect ourselves. The whole idea is sharing the road, not reclaiming it,” Constantino said.

He said cyclists can protect themselves by wearing more colorful clothing, making eye contact with drivers and letting drivers know where they are going by using signals.

“I’m not anti-car, but I think people’s willingness to be oblivious needs to be addressed,” he said. “Cyclists need to be more aware and friendlier to drivers, and drivers need to be more aware.”

To that end, Constantino bicycled across the country, from the Pacific to the Atlantic, with his older brother,

Peter Constantino. The two traveled through Central Massachusetts on Tuesday before ending their 3,500-mile trek Wednesday. The trip began Aug. 12, Pearson’s 30th birthday, in Newport, Oregon, and concluded on Cape Cod.

Rolling into Central Massachusetts last week on his Raleigh Cadent FC, a full-carbon performance hybrid, Constantino broke his derailleur hanger and couldn’t find a shop in the area with a replacement. The steadfast cyclist — undeterred by injuries, an accident in Iowa and about 20 flat tires along the way — jumped on his 29-inch Gary Fisher mountain bike and completed the ride.

The two brothers, riding on U.S. Route 20, passed through Oregon, Idaho, Wyoming, Nebraska, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York and Massachusetts. Despite many days with rain, including the two through Massachusetts, and others with temperatures above 100 degrees, the brothers completed their longtime goal. Along the way, they talked to bicycle organizations, students at schools, young people getting their driver’s license about the importance of sharing the road.

According to Pearson, he was one of 44,000 cyclists injured by a motor vehicle in the United States in 2006. He said three cyclists were killed in New York the same month he was struck while riding.

While traveling through Iowa, Constantino was riding along the road and collided with a car pulling into a parking lot at a bank. Though Constantino had the right of way, the car turned in, knocked him to the ground and continued on her way. Constantino said they chased her down, and she said she didn’t see him, and she didn’t appear at all remorseful.

Some drivers, he said, just don’t realize the threat they pose to cyclists, a little bump from a vehicle could injure, debilitate or kill a cyclist.

“Though most drivers are respectful, I still don’t think

they know what they are doing,” he said. “I still see a need for awareness.”

After his accident in Greenburgh, which is near White Plains, N.Y., Constantino’s rehabilitation took him from a wheelchair, to a walker, to crutches and then to a cane. He still has some difficulty walking at times and cannot jog or run, he has some memory loss and back pain, especially when climbing during a bike ride, which still remains his favorite aspect of cycling.

A tougher mountain to climb may be getting motorists to understand cyclists’ concern.

“We can only hope that we’ve made a difference,” he said.

The 50-day cross-country journey was captured on film by **Julia Wrona**, Constantino’s wife, who has been working in documentary filmmaking for more than six years. The film will be called “The Long Bike Back.” She said she is very happy with the response she has received from distributors.

“Everyone I’ve spoken with has been interested. It’s a very strong story,” she said.

Editing of the film, which includes his recovery as well as the cross-country bike trip, will continue to next spring. She said she hopes to have the documentary in theaters, at film festivals and on television, maybe HBO or PBS.

For more information on the film and Constantino’s recovery, visit www.long-bikeback.com.

Ride features Wachusett

A 62-mile ride that includes a climb of Mount Wachusett will be one of three rides in the seventh annual Jackson Ride on Oct. 12.

The event, which also includes rides of 16 and 32 miles, will start at the Grove Street soccer fields across from Anna Maria College in Paxton. Registration will be held from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. and the rides start at 9 a.m. Presented by Team Bike Alley, the ride benefits the American Red Cross of Central

Massachusetts Adopt-a-Day disaster Relief Program.

The 16-mile route passes through Paxton and Rutland; the 32-mile loop travels through Paxton, Rutland, Hubbardston, Princeton and back through Holden; and the 62-mile Wachusett Metric Century, which includes the 16- and 32-mile routes as well as a Mount Wachusett climb and sections in Sterling.

The cost is \$20 per person, but those who pledge to donate blood to the American Red Cross of Central Massachusetts within 30 days ride for free.

The ride includes refreshments at rest stops, mechanical support and one raffle ticket per rider.

There will be music, a barbecue and a raffle drawing at 1 p.m. For more information, contact event organizer **Dan Delorey** at ddelorey@tech-container.com. Anyone willing to volunteer may call (508) 826-6543.

Mark Conti can be reached by e-mail at mconti@telegram.com.