

# This and That

By Janine L. Kock, Times Editor and Publisher

Most of you are probably aware of the fact that RAGBRAI will be passing through Carroll County on July 24...you know, that "little" bike ride that is making its way across Iowa from west to east for the 50th time? Well, the 50th-anniversary route has the bikers staying overnight in Storm Lake on Sunday night, July 23, and in Carroll on Monday night, July 24. On Monday, the route takes the participants -- an estimated 25,000 or so -- heading southward through Early and through Lake View and then through both Breda and Mt. Carmel before continuing on to Carroll.

It's been a busy few weeks for me, as I've been helping to prepare a four-page special section about Breda and Mt. Carmel's vendors, activities and landmarks. Those four pages will be in The Observer next week for subscribers to enjoy, but we are also going to print 5,000 of the sections and are recruiting volunteers from the community to travel to Storm Lake that Sunday afternoon to pass them out in the campgrounds so the riders and their accompanying crew members have a chance to prepare a bit for their visit.

Hopefully, that will encourage the thousands of visitors to eat, drink, check out the beautiful churches in both towns, and make donations toward both towns' special RAGBRAI projects. The folks in Breda are designating their profits to new lights and grandstand improvements at the city's Memorial Park (the grandstand was originally built in 1946), while Mt. Carmel is going to use its profits for maintaining their church building and beautifying the town.

In 2006, RAGBRAI went through Arcadia, and we did a similar section, which we distributed in Ida Grove the night before they passed through the area. As we made our way through the campgrounds, those relaxing near their campers were very appreciative of the information, and Arcadia had a successful visit the next day. In the years since that time, the number of riders has grown considerably, so hopefully some preview information will make them more likely to spend their money in Carroll County or even return to the area again in the future!

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In the time between now and the bike ride's visit, I'll be off to Washington D.C. for a few days -- our first CJD Foundation Family Conference held in-person on Capitol Hill since before COVID changed the world. In 2020, 2021 and 2022, the conference was held virtually, so it will be great to meet up with friends, see in-person reports from researchers, and meet with folks in our legislators' offices about the need for continued funding for research and prion surveillance in the future.

My friend Vickie from Nebraska will be traveling with me, and we'll spend a couple pre-conference days sightseeing at the Smithsonian, one destination which I've never visited in the years I've been attending the conference. I'll return next Monday night to finish up next week's paper before Tuesday afternoon, and I'll write about my experiences, too.

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I was interested to read this week that Iowa's U.S. Highway 20 has been ranked the "26th Most-Feared Road Trip in America." A survey asked 3,000 travelers which routes they fear breaking down on the most in their summer road trips, and the No. 1 response was U.S. Route 285 in New Mexico -- a very remote highway with limited access to service and amenities as it passes through arid desert regions of the state with extreme temperatures. No. 2 was California's Death Valley Road, and No. 3 was Texas' U.S. Route 90.

So, what makes Highway 20 rank 26th? "One of the primary concerns when breaking down on U.S. Route 20 is the heavy truck traffic it experiences," creating hazardous conditions for stranded motorists and making it important to exercise caution when pulled over on the side of the road. Since the route passes through a lot of rural areas, immediate assistance is hard to find and drivers have to wait for help, they say. (Not to mention, there aren't even many easily-accessible restroom facilities...it is advised to "take care of business" at the intersection with Interstate 35, as it can be a long 2 1/2 hours to Dubuque if you don't!)

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If you know your Star Trek trivia, you know that Riverside, Iowa, is the "future birthplace" of Captain James T. Kirk. Lo and behold, The News, the newspaper which covers Riverside, had photos and information about "Trek Fest 38," which was held last week. A front page photo showed seven people dressed head to toe in polyester, some with pointy ears, and all doing the Vulcan Salute!

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We don't see a lot of attention for the dairy industry here in our area, but during June Dairy Month, I saw one story about a huge dairy farm in the Spencer/Ruthven area and then this week another feature about Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Mike Naig visiting at Dutchland Dairy at Rolfe, making a visit as part of his 99-county tour for this year.

The Rolfe dairy is home to 1,900 dairy cattle, and the Deutscher family, who operates the business, highlighted how the milk in Pocahontas County is used for drinking and also used for making award-winning specialty cheeses at Caves of Faribault in Faribault, Minn.

The dairy started with 250-300 animals and has expanded over the years. It now employs almost 30 people. They send out two tankers of milk one day and three tankers the next day. If the milk doesn't go to Faribault, it might go to Prairie Farms cheese plant in Luana, to a liquid milk factory in Dubuque, or to a plant in Sioux Falls.

The family told Naig that they would like him to work on changing school food guidelines so schools can once again serve two percent milk. Kids don't drink as much milk when they're served skim milk, they said, and higher fat milk can lead to healthier kids, they said.

The story pointed out that Naig took notes on a variety of topics for which the family had opinions and input, and that is a valuable visit!

## Tour D'Afrique 2023: Malawi and The Evil Eye: How I Lost My Sense of Humor -- The Rest of the Story, Conclusion.

To summarize The Rest of The Story up to this point, on day 55 of our ride, we rode into Lilongwe, the Capital of Malawi, to celebrate the halfway point of our Tour D'Afrique. It wasn't a bad ride, though construction and city traffic made the last dozen miles pretty nerve-wracking. We rode only about 83 miles, and I maintained a leisurely pace, taking me slightly over 6 hours. But little things were beginning to get to us all.

The day before, we had a strong ride, with the first half in the rain. Then an afternoon thunderstorm hit before all riders were in camp. I had just completed setting up my tent when Jane arrived at camp. She is an avid cyclist in her 60's from Cambridge, Mass., and to say she has 1% body fat would be an exaggeration. She could have used more. Jane was cold and wet on arrival in camp and shivering so much that she couldn't hold or eat the hot soup waiting for her.

Similarly, Alex is a young woman celebrating the waning years of her third decade by riding a bike the length of Africa. She is a prosecuting attorney from Regina, Saskatchewan, and is one tough cookie. Alex is an attractive young woman but practices what she calls her "CBF" -- chronic bitch face. She says it's useful at work or when she doesn't want to be bothered. Did I mention she's also pragmatic?

But this evening, the look on Alex's face was one of fierce determination. Having just arrived in camp, she sat shivering with rain water dripping off her brow into her dinner plate as she ate, not because she was hungry, but because "she needed the calories." I made a mental note then and there that if I was ever struggling, I would seek out Alex and feed off her toughness.

As I said, little things were beginning to get to me. The night before, I had my extra inner tube and multi-tool stolen from my under-seat tool kit. I only recognized that I was without a spare inner tube once I was far down the road. Luckily, after the heavy rain, the weather was good, and I got through the day without a flat, but my morale was beginning to concern me. My left hip was hurting more, and I was using more and more Tylenol and Ibuprofen these days. In addition, the "road rash" on my right calf was getting more inflamed instead of healing. Worst of all, I complained about many things, especially the food. And I was tired.

On our rest day in Lilongwe, no rooms were available in our camp, and all my camping gear was wet. So, I got a hotel room in a different lodge a couple miles away and didn't go to the "Halfway Celebration." I rested my hip and dried my tent and sleeping bag instead.

After leaving Lilongwe, we set out on a particularly grueling trek of nearly 900 miles in 9 days with only one rest day. The first 100 miles, including the border crossing into Zambia, was relatively easy though the frustration of getting phone SIM cards and ATMs brought us back to the reality of Africa. Zambia looked much like Malawi, except the DeKalb and Pioneer test plots were replaced with tobacco fields. And it was in Zambia that the kid's constant chorus of "How are YOU?" became so annoying.

About this time, I fanaticized about trading my bike for one of the ox carts we shared the road with; I was beyond tired. Mary, who we will talk about in another writing, had a better idea.



Finally, after about 300 miles and 30 miles short of our Luangwa Bridge Camp in Zambia, I surrendered to the "dog box" and accepted a ride into camp. I was exhausted, lost my appetite, had difficulty getting enough calories in, and was probably dehydrated too. That night was when the pain in my abdomen started. We discussed this in the last column, so now we're up to date.

In two days, we were scheduled for a rest day in Lusaka, the Capital of Zambia and one of the fastest-growing cities in central Africa. After giving it a try on the first day, I realized I needed a new plan. Besides, many riders approached me to tell me how bad I looked. It was a great confidence builder! That's when Yosy and I came up with Plan B.

Yosy, I think his real name is Joseph, but we never called him that, is an Israeli living with his family in Miami. He's probably about 60, is a character, and tough too. He tells a story of being left for dead during the Yom Kippur War, but a medic who was also his friend noticed that he still had a faint pulse and saved his life. Yosy was no match for a motorcycle, however. Earlier in the tour, he rode his bike while a car followed, waiting for a safe chance to pass. A kid on a motorcycle exhibited no such caution and passed the car but didn't see Yosy on his bike. When the motorcycle pulled back into the right lane, he

clipped the bike and sent Yosy flying.

Yosy spent the next few weeks nursing leg lacerations and a bruised back. Plan B was to hire a taxi to take us into Lusaka ahead of the team, giving us an extra day's rest. I hoped that would be enough time for the antibiotics to do their job.

When the taxi arrived, it was the oldest Toyota I had ever seen and a model I didn't recognize. I think it was about 100 miles to Lusaka, and the fee was \$90 -- each. Somewhere, about 2/3rds of the way, the rear left wheel began imitating my hip. We weren't sure what was wrong, but it sure was complaining. The driver stopped a couple times but could find nothing. Nevertheless, going on was obviously senseless. So, there we were. In the middle of Africa, stranded, seemingly without friends, but not for long. The driver called a buddy, and in an amazingly short time, we were in another old Toyota and delivered safe and sound to our hotel. The relief driver, another of my new best friends, refused any payment or tip.

Two days later, I did an easy 90 miles and felt good. The antibiotics worked. The hip was another matter, it didn't bother me while on the bike, but walking and weight bearing were sometimes severe.

Nevertheless, we were all excited. We would have a 3-day rest period in just three days to explore Livingston and Victoria Falls.

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