

Smyrna Man Cycles Across the USA

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By Dr. Derek Conte

A few months ago, Irv Hoffman, an all-around fascinating man, decided to ride his bicycle across the country, from California to Georgia, by himself. Solo.

With his good looks and clear eyes set in a face of well-earned character-lines and a trim, sinewy build, wildish salt & pepper hair and beard atop it all, he reminds me of a naturalist photographer or a 19th century explorer who's primary life motive was not about marking time, but DOING. So when he told me of what he was planning I was impressed but not surprised. Irv is 79.

Irv has been a favorite patient with us for a few years now, never missing a monthly appointment. I asked him what he did to enjoy such excellent health and he gave me a list: 1) Good diet, mostly vegetarian, favoring rice, potatoes, corn and grains supplemented with vegetables. 2) Regular exercise, with tennis four times per week and taking long walks with his dogs about three miles a day. 3) Regular chiropractic care.

The diet Irv observes came from an experience in 1991. His wife was suffering from Crohn's Disease, an inflammatory affliction of the bowels. Searching for an answer, they heard a talk by Dr. John A. McDougall*, advocating a low-fat, carbohydrate-rich diet. "Both our lives changed", Irv said to me.

Irv launched his ride from Sunnyvale, California through Sacramento and into Nevada where he roughly followed the route of the old Pony Express. His rig included front-and-rear saddlebags, a tent, sleeping bag and other items weighing a total of 82 pounds, not including water and food which added no small amount to the total. When he was in more desolate areas and "couldn't find a cheap motel", Irv just camped out, a total of eighteen nights on his journey.

As he got into Utah, though, the elevation increased to 10,000+ feet and the air gets thin: "I just couldn't pedal anymore, so I rented a car and got back on the bike in Colorado"! He then pedaled the rest of the way, through Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, Mississippi along the Natchez Trace and, finally into Alabama and home on our very own Silver Comet Trail.

On the epic trip, Irv ate breakfast and dinner only and packed water, bananas and Cliff energy bars for snacks during the ride. Irv lost 10 pounds off his already lean frame, but he felt "tremendous strength and balance" as the result of his long effort's conditioning effects. And he made a discovery along the way: "We eat much more food than we have to". Let's let that one sink in for a moment. How much food do we really need?

Irv's journey took 54 days and covered a total distance of 3,400 miles --- 2,800 of it on his bicycle and averaged 61 miles a day with a maximum of 87 miles on one day. Though he provided me with beautiful photos documenting the many pretty towns, mountains and deserts he passed along his remarkable ride, I decided to include just one, taken in our office, up close, that showed only the man himself. The one who made a thought come to reality. Irv Hoffman is the type of man after whom men should model themselves. To me, he exemplifies self-sufficiency and adventurousness, and I am proud to know him.

*For the McDougall Diet see: <http://www.wisegeekehealth.com/what-is-the-mcdougall-diet.htm#didyouknowout>

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