

The 508 Team "Rottweiler"

0700 Saturday, October 7, 2006 to 0102 Monday, 9th

42:02:12 31st out of 60 male solo racers

David Hunter-Inman, Crew Chief; Ralph Jacobson, Racer; Steven Jacobson, Crew; Bruce Moore, Crew

The Discovery

- On a Spunky Canyon (40-mile) ride in Oct 2005, I was passed by dozens of cyclists on Bouquet Canyon Road. I asked a person taking pictures on the side of the road what the ride was. It was a detour of the 508 because of San Francisquito Canyon Road being washed out the winter before. Because of the route of my weekend ride at the time, I never would have seen the race if there wasn't a detour. I never would have known about The 508.
- For some reason I thought it would be cool to do the ride. 46 years old. 230 lbs at least. Cool.
- Kept watching the website for entry application.
- It said the apps would be available in March 2006.
- They finally appeared in May
- Entered the race at that time. It filled up quickly.
- No racer numbers are used. Animal "totems" are used instead to add some personality. My wife, Jackie, picked the totem, "Rottweiler". Of course. We have two.
- I actually wrote a letter to Chris Kostman, the race Director, begging to use the totem. I couldn't believe it was available, so I assumed they wouldn't allow it because it was a "dangerous" breed.
- There was no problem getting the totem.

Getting ready

- The rules stated the support vehicle could not be wider than 78".
- Jackie has an Acura MDX SUV. The website said it was 77, however we had fender guards installed which added at least three total inches.
- I panicked and emailed Chris again, but he said it was ok.
- I printed out his response in case I needed it during the vehicle inspection on the day before the race.
- The crew was the next issue.
- I assumed Jackie would be on it, however something a rider I met said to me on Elizabeth Lake and Route 138 (approx) months before who had a 508 jersey made me think twice. The guy said "Do not have your wife on the crew". So I didn't push it when she said, "how can I do that? Follow you for 48 hours? Take off work? Board the dogs? What about our twelve-year-old, Alex?" OK. I got it.
- Then I asked Manny, my BMW friend who is a pilot for JetBlue Airlines. Bottom line, he couldn't commit based upon his changing schedule.
- I asked Steve if anyone of his buddies would do it. No dice.
- I started to panic and asked a business colleague if she would do it, because she showed interest in biking. I really didn't want to have to depend on her, though.
- I then asked Kevin, my best friend from Chicago, and he said yes. Got him award tickets on United. Then his ex-wife, with whom he is still very close, Sharon, got sicker with cancer two weeks before the race so I told him to stay home.
- Therefore, I posted on the 508 bulletin board for crew.
- David was the first to respond. He is a combo 4th and 5th grade teacher in Victorville. Turned 49 on the day the race started. Married for as long as me with no kids. Big-time endurance biker in the past. But never crewed. He wanted to experience the 508 so he would know what it took because he wanted to do it for his 50th birthday next year. He had taken massage lessons and knew every part of the 508 route except stage one. He knew about nutrition, training and cycling. A GREAT find.

- Then Bruce volunteered. Retired school teacher. He had crewed the prior year on the 508 and many other times in other races, I think. 60 years young. Knew bikes and crewing well. Very enthusiastic. A GREAT find.
- I actually got three or so additional volunteers via that post later that I didn't need.

Training

- This was somewhat of a joke, bottom line.
- I never really dieted seriously. Never anywhere near what I did when I starved myself in 2002 and lost 45 lbs. in 45 days. I kinda ate well, but fell off the wagon plenty with Krispy Kremes, BK, etc.
- Riding was very sporadic the first half of 2006, even though I committed to doing the race in 2005.
- In January, Manny was gonna do it with me. I went on one Bouquet Canyon ride with him. He used Steve's Cannondale Saeco. He de-committed after that ride.
- I did my Hot Laps (5-mile loops with some good climbs. Usually only do two before work) in the mornings that I was home. Skipped several weeks entirely due to laziness.
- I tried to do Spunky (40 miles), Elizabeth Lake (50 miles), etc., but was not diligent.
- Discovered Camp 9 (40 miles, huge climb) with Roger's group. Roger owns Newhall Bicycle Company, my primary bike shop. Fell in love with the ride.
- Still, was not diligent until about June 11 when I drove the M3 with the bike on a tarp in the back seat to Rosamond and rode to the end of Stage One in California City. (about 70 miles round trip)
- I skipped several weeks prior to that.
- Did a couple Mt. Pinos / Frazier Park / McGill Trails on the MTB and once on the road bike. Died on the climb on the road bike, though coming back from a road that Stan, the chiropractor, suggested. I forget the name of the road. Not Mt. Pinos. That was easy.
- Started doing Beverly Hills consistently. About 65 miles round trip, with two mountain ranges. Sweet ride. Plenty of water sources.
- Skipped almost three weeks in July, though. Just lazy.
- Never worked out seriously on the road while traveling. Ran some fire escape stairs in hotels, but not much. Just lazy.
- August I started to ride for real... somewhat.
- Did an overnight ride on a Saturday starting at 11pm to Cal City and back. Got lazy and got picked up on San Fran 10 miles from home. Didn't need to. That was the longest ride on the saddle I ever did before the race.... 13 hours and about 140 miles.
- Did one more Stage One ride from home starting at 7am. Went past Cal City 20 miles. Past two guys in polka dot 508 Jerseys going the other way on red Rock / Randsburg Road. Didn't talk to them. Turned around at 106 miles out and headed back. Was too hot. Had to ration liquids. Uphill on Neuralia Road back to the 76 Station in Cal City. Totally panicked and called Jackie to pick me up in Mojave. Died. Too far without liquids.
- Had too many situations where water was a factor. Even got two additional bottle cages strapped on with Velcro, used the camelback, but still not enough.
- From then on had to stick to civilization so water was not an issue. San Fernando Valley, etc.
- Steadily lost weight during all this time. Got down to a consistent 205 lbs. Good, comfortable number. The weight I graduated High School. Even though I really didn't eat like a dieting / training fanatic.
- Broke a spoke on two rides, and panicked when I saw my Mavic Kysyrium Wheels were splitting at every spoke.
- Roger got in two demo bikes. A Bianchi Pinella Boron Steel Alloy. Nice bike, took it on Camp 9, but the all-Celeste Blue frame didn't turn me on. Stopped at New Leash On Life ranch on Placerita Canyon Road where Jackie was working and showed off the bike. She felt pressured to say, "yes, I could get it" in front of her co-workers. Nice move, actually unintentional... really..., on my part. I didn't mean to even ask if I could get it. He also had a new bike, a 9*2*8 Carbon Coast to Coast Bianchi. One guy rode it the day before. I loved the way it looked. Very unique. I took it up Camp 9. It was not as quick steering as the Pinella, but I wanted it anyway because it looked so darn

cool. I told Roger to get it ready for me. This was September 11 when I made the decision to buy the bike. It came with Shimano Integra and junky, bottom of the line Kysyriums. I chose to go with Campagnolo Centaur (3rd down from the top of the line) because Campy Chorus would have added about another \$1k and Record another \$1k on top of that. I decided to put some money into the wheel set instead. I got Campy Euros, top of the line strong and light. When I first rode the bike with the new stuff on it, it was honestly transformed. A completely different bike. It rolled faster than my Specialized S-Works aluminum. I had to brake where I never had to before. I was in love.

- Now I had the right equipment, so I had no excuse not to finish the ride. It was all on me now. \$3500 out the door. This race was now FAR over budget.
- I bought a \$500 headlight. \$200 in nutrition. \$220 in shoes. \$80 helmet. \$100 Newhall Bicycle Company outfit. (Roger split the price with me, at least) New chain and cassette two months prior for the S-Works (\$160). Etc, etc. Went to the swap meet to try to mitigate some of the expense. Perfect \$3 sunglasses. Look like Oakleys. Other odds and ends. Didn't make up for the other stuff, though.
- Got serious the last three weeks before the race. Did almost 300 miles one week at the peak. Tapered down to a couple hot laps by the week before the race.
- David Hunter-Inman, Crew Chief, and Bruce Moore responded to a plea on the 508 bulletin board for crew members. God Bless them both.
- David and I had met three weeks prior at a Pizza hut in Palmdale. We talked there for three hours. He asked, and I agreed to assign him Crew Chief. He could see I was intimidated with Townes Pass, the steepest, tallest climb of the race. 3000 feet elevation gain in 10 miles. I also told him my goal was to finish in 46 hours.
- We decided to meet the next week to do the climb on a training ride.
- That next week, two weeks before the race, we met in The City of Mojave at 5pm on Tuesday.
- We left David's truck at the McDonalds and took Jackie's MDX to a few miles past where I had turned around on my own the time I died in Cal City.
- We got out past the RR Tracks, pulled over and I got suited up, and he followed me starting around 6:30 or 7pm.
- We started 105 miles before the peak of Townes Pass. David stayed about 20 feet behind me in the MDX the whole time.
- The first 10 miles or so were terrible. I couldn't get comfortable. My cadence was erratic. Everything sucked. I figured at this time David was regretting choosing me to crew for.
- Then I settled down and settled in. I'm sure the fact that someone was watching me from behind was intimidating me to some degree.
- The cadence became strong and I started to hammer. We stopped about 25 miles out to rest and he said my pace was good. It was dark now.
- Before the destitute City of Trona, a car passed and shouted "Good Luck". Cool! Very cool. This must be the biggest thing to happen in this town all year. David always drove with the flashers on. A race rule.
- We stopped in Trona (bombed out rat hole of a town) and I was on a 6-hour century pace. Nice.
- I saw a yellow scorpion on the road after Trona that I missed by inches.
- Really started to move now coming up to Townes Pass. Made the right at the fork at the base of the climb and stopped. Had 10 miles to go. All uphill with no leveling off to rest. A sign saying "Turn of A/C to avoid overheating" didn't help my confidence at this point.
- I had done 95 miles at a strong 6-hr century pace.
- Quickly went to granny gear and started to settle in for the long climb.
- What a monster climb. Period.
- About halfway we passed a radiator water tank stop. I didn't stop, wanted to keep going, wanted to just get to the top... and finally, TWO HOURS later, reached the almost 5000-ft summit. Geez. 3000 feet in 10 miles.
- We turned around and drove home.
- That 6-hr century ended up with the last 10 miles taking two hours. 5 MPH. Ugh.

- Still, it was very encouraging to do the hill without stopping, just so I knew this was supposedly the worst hill of the ride. I was pumped.
- The next positive mental boost was a group ride with Roger out to Agua Dulce. Strong Santa Ana winds. Pulled a calf muscle the day before in the same winds. That day (Friday) I did 90 miles. Both Camp 9 and Spunky. Was concerned about the pulled muscle on Saturday with Roger.
- I felt the muscle, but concentrated on not pushing on it too hard.
- The Agua Dulce ride was OK. Finished about 5 or 10 minutes behind the leaders on a 40-mile ride. But those guys are good. Half my age or half my weight or both.
- BTW, my heart rate monitor never worked properly on my new carbon bike. Never used it on the race. Rats.
- The real boost to my ego came the Saturday before the race. Big Time.
- Roger was going to do Spunky up San Fran, just like the start of the race. He wasn't there on that ride, though, but all the fast were.
- I went out like a rabbit and led the pack for about 10 miles. Then bonked, only a little though.
- I caught them at the Green Valley Market rest stop.
- Then going up Spunky toward Bouquet I started keeping up with them. Then topping the Bouquet Reservoir, it happened: A seven-man Time Trial just came together.
- A couple old guys (me included) and all the fast young dudes. Hammering big time down Bouquet for 20 miles.
- I don't think we ever dipped below 28 MPH.
- We drafted and peeled off like the Tour De France. I was pushing like there was no tomorrow. What a rush. Flying.
- I peeled off at Haskell to go home and felt like a million bucks. I just kept up with the best riders in town.
- Now I pulled back the rest of the week and just maintained.
- I pulled out the corny movie, "Vision Quest" and watched it three times. Loud. I cried.
- I knew this was going to happen now.
- It *WAS* a "Vision Quest". It was bigger than me now. It was bigger than all of us.
- Let's Rock 'n' Roll!

Friday, the 6th. Race prep. Day

- David Hunter-Inman, Crew Chief met Bruce Moore and Steven and me at Hertz in town at 1pm.
- Bruce actually rented a car one way because he lives in Twenty-nine Palms at the finish line. What a guy. For the love of the sport. He had not even met me yet.
- David brought his supplies, tools, etc. to be sure we had enough. Very generous.
- He made Rottweiler signs for the MDX. He made a great "Caution Bicycle Ahead" sign to attach to the bike rack. Perfect.
- I bought three spare tires and tubes at Rogers the day before. I took his own battery for a spare for my light. Nice guy.
- We went on Friday to check in at the hotel for the race.
- They inspected the car, bikes (I brought the S-Works only for catastrophic mechanical failure) and me. I had a mugshot taken, as well as an audio interview. They are posted on the508.com website under "Webcast". I checked my crew in. Got a goodie bag. All systems are go.
- On Friday I decided to buy an extra chain. Just to be sure. I never had broken a chain, but surely didn't want it to happen on the race. Roger didn't have one, so we went to Fred's
- I saw Fred and Kurt there. Good to see them both. They wished me luck. I introduced Fred as "Roger" to my crew. Ooops!
- We had to move along now for the pre-race meeting on Lyons Ave. at 6:15pm.
- I really never planned on going to the pre-race dinner because the last thing I wanted to do was to sit with a bunch of Lance Armstrongs before the race and get psyched out.

- Bottom line, we ran out of time for dinner anywhere else, so we went to it. No big deal. I didn't get scared. Alex came with. That was cool to have him be a part of it.
- Went to the meeting in the next room. There was a stage with a big screen and about 400 people there. They went over some rules and called all the athletes up on stage. I thought the stage would collapse.
- Chris Kostman, the race director, called out each animal Totem. There were men and women solo racers. There were two recumbents, and several 2- and 4- person relay teams. There was even one fixed gear man and a woman. She had the gear ratio shaved into her head: "42 X 16". What a nut case. That is just stupid abuse to the body. Single-speed bike to climb 35000+ feet. What a maroon! They did both end up finishing, though, to their credit.
- When Chris called out Rottweiler, my crew barked. Nice touch.
- Went home. Loaded the car (Acura MDX) and hit the pillow about 9pm.
- Then all Hades broke loose.
- I read my usual car magazines. Typically I read two pages and pass out. This time, I just keep reading. And reading. AND READING. Jackie goes to sleep. I lay wide awake.
- I see virtually every hour of the night on the clock.
- If I got one hour sleep, I'd be surprised. Oh, God, please help me.

Saturday. The 7th. Race Day

- At 4am I said "The HECK with It" and got up.
- David was also awake at that point.
- We got ready and woke up Steven and Bruce.
- I was a little panic-stricken thinking I now had to be awake for not just 48 hours, but 72. Oh, oh.
- We drove to 7-Eleven to get ice and went to the Hilton Garden Inn for the start of the race.
- We were probably the last to get there. That was fine.
- I never wanted to warm up prior to the start, since I had 508 miles to do that. I would be starting out very slowly. Not burning out too fast.
- There was an HD TV-type cameraman there. Don't know for sure if it was for a real TV Show or not. A colleague later told me she saw something on the race on the news in San Francisco.
- We sang the National Anthem.
- Chris counted down from 10 on a megaphone.
- We lined up at 7 am and we were off



Stage One. Santa Clarita to California City. 82.25 miles

- There was no support allowed in the first 25 miles. Until Elizabeth Lake / Johnson Road where all support vehicles waited for their racers.
- I heard from Roger after the race that a guy from Finland broke his seatpost. He had met a lady from Finland at the pre-race dinner who passed him by in a car. Saw he was stopped. Went to a bike shop to buy a seatpost. And got him disqualified for helping him in the first 25 miles. Geez.
- Roger said his group was gonna meet us at San Fran and cheer us on. They got there too late, but saw the relay teams who left two hours later than us.
- I felt cold and weak due to butterflies and very cool weather. I couldn't get warmed up.
- That's me in the green jersey, white helmet. Looking weak.



- This ride went up San Francisquito to Johnson which dumps down into the Antelope Valley (Palmdale, etc.) We pass Willow Springs and Edwards Air Force Base.
- Climb up a long climb past the thousands of windmills. It was very cool to pass these windmills at night. Could only hear the whooshing of the blades. Neat. Then have a great descent into Mojave. I love the windmills.
- I had now ridden San Fran 200 times on my own over the past four years and this farther part three times or so. I knew it well.
- As we climbed up the windmill hill, I passed a big guy. I told him I weighed about 210 and he said he was about the same. Cool. He was "Red Tailed Hawk".
- Another rider, "Fast Rabbit" (That was the brand name of her custom, but old bike) was a chatter box. She would ride to my left in traffic talking. Two different times, two different race officials asked to her to ride single file. Nice person, though. I don't mean to be rude.
- She ended having a cheering section out where she lived near Trona. That was really the only roadside cheering we had in the race. The again, who would stand in the desert waiting for hours to cheer on a bicyclist? Like I said, this was a big event for some of these towns.

- I got warned once on San Fran to stay back at least 12 meters from the rider in front of me. No drafting allowed. I thought the chatty chick said 12 FEET, so that's was I did. I should've remembered the rules better.
- I stopped at the 25 mile mark where my crew was waiting.
- I peed and ate some Paydays.
- I had been using Balance Bars. Target had the best prices. David said, "try Paydays". He didn't have to say that twice. I have loved Paydays since childhood. Nicer, easier to chew than any energy bar. All the key ingredients, protein, salt, etc. Actually, a pretty healthy candy bar.
- I got several bags of snack size Paydays. Perfect time of the year. On sale for Halloween! \$2 / bag
- Other foods we took for me were Bananas (only ate about three, bought way too many), soft mini bagels (only ate about three of those, too), Fig Bars (ditto). Bottom line. Paydays, Energy drink powder (Perpetuem, big-time stuff), Gatorade Rain (very light-flavored, but still too sweet for 500 miles. Perfect for a century, 100 miles, though) and water for two days.
- Stage one was about 82 miles. Santa Clarita to California City. I stopped at the first Time Station in Cal City and maybe two times before that.
- During the first day, the rules stated that the support vehicles had to "leapfrog" the racers until nightfall at 6pm for safety reasons since some racers were close together. At that point they could follow continuously for the rest of the race, even during the day on Sunday.
- My thoughts on this were for my crew to drive ahead of me until they can barely see me and pull off the road and stop. Then as I pass them, they wait until they can barely see me, start driving again and pass me and repeat the process.
- I felt they drove WAY too far ahead where I could not see them. I was thinking I'd get a flat and they would never know it. They swore after the race that they could always see me. Hmm. Right.
- They were great during the times they stopped, though.
- I would approach them and one of them would have an energy drink bottle, another would have something else, like a Payday, or banana, or even a wet sponge to cool off.
- They would start running on the side of the road facing ahead, with their left arm outstretched. I would drop an empty bottle on the side of the road. Then I would grab whatever they had to offer.
- Also, I did have electrolyte capsules in a small pouch and energy gel available. I took the capsules regularly, but rationed the gel for the end. I only bought one bottle of it because it was \$26 and we were so overspent at that point. I'm so cheap. Next time, buy more gel. It works.
- Stopped at Time Station #1 in Cal City, checked in with the officials and headed out. I was about 30 minutes slower than my training times to that point. Then, again, I still had more than 400 miles to go, so we were OK.
- I found out later that the crew had a secret expected pace for me of 9-hour centuries. I was on pace for a 7-hour one, so they were stoked.
- Before the race I planned on five or ten minute stops. That was too little time. For me, anyway.
- I took off my shoes, put on new socks (THE BEST THING OF THE RACE. New socks gave me a whole fresh new feel). We stopped there at 82 miles for 25 minutes, maybe.

Stage Two California City to Trona 70.25 Miles 152 Total 5 Hr 39 Min, 82.25 miles ridden to this point, Time Station #1

- Went on Neuralia Road where I died coming back on a training ride.
- Past a Honda Motor Proving Ground facility. Have to check that out sometime.
- Flat for about 20 miles, then a slow gradual climb.
- Now, we're out in the desert.

- Straight roads. Slow climbs. For miles and miles.



- Somewhere around Mile 125:



- The race officials took pictures. Chris took many of mine.
- This was the crowd cheering on the chatty "Fast Rabbit". She had a very similar pace with me for most of the race until she slowed at the end.



- The weather was a deciding factor for the race. It very easily could have been blistering hot and Santa Ana windy. A week prior to the race I actually got rained upon on Sunday during my city ride. David brought his rain gear for me just in case.
- For both days the weather was as perfect as one could hope for.
- Very little head wind. Some good tail winds at times. In the 80's and maybe 90's. Not bad at all. I was not afraid of hot or cold. Only wind. They have had bad races in the past where the wind never let up. That may have stopped me.
- On to Trona, Time Station #2.
- We stopped for probably 45 minutes in Trona.
- David gave a massage. Felt great Had 152 miles in at this point.
- Bruce lubed the chain.
- Steven got gas.
- I tried to poop but only peed. I never pooped on the entire ride. No wasted food!
- Trona is a pit. Crime. Burned out houses. People live there.
- They actually have a bike path pacing along the road. It was so rough, I would need my mountain bike to use it. We all stayed on the road, of course.
- Feeling fine at this point. Nothing hurts.
- Still familiar territory, having done this part with David.
- Taped on the headlight on the bike handlebars. Used a LED one from David for all the night riding, except put on my killer one on my helmet for big descents.
- Getting dark now. Switching to clear night glasses. \$3 at the swap meet. Cool.

Stage Three Trona to Furnace Creek 99.2 Miles 252 Total 10 Hr 45 Min, 152 miles ridden to this point, Time Station #2

- Out of Trona, heading toward Mountain Section Four, then down into Panamint Valley. Some rough roads ending at the T intersection at Route 190. Just Passed the "Death Valley National Park" Sign.
- Dark now, and Steven pulls around me to make the right turn to face Townes Pass climb. Officials yell at him for passing me at night. Must stay behind me.
- Stopped right after the right turn and handed them my clear glasses.
- I took them off and stuffed them in my shirt halfway up Townes Pass with David last time, so just went without them this time.
- Drank a boat load of Perpetuem and gel to fuel for the climb.
- Started pedaling.
- Dark now.
- I now saw the most awe-inspiring, and intimidating sight of the ride: Townes Pass at night with a full moon. The training ride with David had no moon. Now, with the full moon, I could see the massive outline of the mountain against the night sky. And worse, I could see a string of flashing taillights winding its way up the climb. The lights climbed up to the moon. Up to Heaven. Holy God. I did this climb in training??!! No F***** WAY !
- OK. Swallow hard and get your butt moving.
- Past the "Avoid Overheating, Turn off A/C" sign on the 1.6-mile flat leading up to the climb.
- Although there are a ton of racers ahead of me on the hill already, I turn around to look behind us and there is an even longer line of headlights going on forever on the road I just turned off of. A virtually solid white line of cars and bikes. Lots of relay teams, too, heading our way. Most of whom will catch us eventually.
- OK, at the base of Townes Pass. Shift to granny gear. Pacing myself. Not knowing how much I'll have left for the 300 miles to go. Feeling good, now, though.
- In first gear, small chain ring. Wimp, I know. I just wanna make it to the finish.
- I try to keep some sort of cadence. Not happening.
- Photo heading up Townes Pass:



- Looking and feeling OLD:



- Reached Radiator Water turnoff, about halfway up the 10-mile climb.
- Stopped. Really wanted to.
- They pulled out the chair. Felt good to sit. Didn't stop long. Got back on the bike.
- Made it up to the top and raised my arms to celebrate. Almost 5000 feet. 3000 feet elevation gain in 10 miles. Knocked about a half an hour of my training ride time! Only 1 1/2 hours up this time!
- Stopped and put some warmer clothes on. Started to feel a little chilled, but took off down the 17-mile descent into Death Valley.
- About a mile or two down the hill, the handlebars started to wiggle violently. I couldn't stop them from shaking. It was me. I was freezing. I was going 50 MPH at this point, so stopped quickly so I didn't crash.
- I told the guys to turn the heat on in the car. I was getting severely chilled all of the sudden.
- I hopped in the passenger seat just to get warm.
- The guys threw on my heaviest winter gear. Full thermal bib long johns from Switzerland. Shoe covers. Thermal undershirt. Jacket. Gloves. The works.
- Stopped shaking. Got back on the bike and headed down the rest of the long hill into Death Valley, Stovepipe Wells and Furnace Creek.
- Had the light on my helmet for the first time in the race. Worked great. Could turn my head to show the road before the car's headlights would show it. Super bright. Cool.
- Got to Time Station #3 next to Chevron in Furnace Creek. Middle of the night now.

Stage Four Furnace Creek to Shoshone 73.6 Miles 325 Total 19 Hr 14 Min, 252 miles ridden to this point, Time Station #3

- Now at the bottom of the world. 200+ feet below sea level. Still in the winter wear. Now I'm burning up. 80 degrees here in Death Valley at 2am. Had to stop again to strip off the long johns, etc. Kept a jacket on.
- This was what seemed to be the longest century. Mile 300-400. Through Death Valley.
- About 3am the lack of sleep from Friday started to catch up... with a vengeance. I started to fall asleep while riding. I don't know if the crew noticed if I was weaving on the road, but I quickly realized I was gonna crash if I didn't stop.
- Therefore, although I was feeling good, I was just too sleepy. I hated to stop right now. I felt we were making great time.
- I know David was worried. Not sure if he was worried about my safety or losing the time if I slept. His first concern was always my health, though. That is for sure.
- So, he blew up a small air mattress, laid me down on the gravel shoulder of the road at Badwater, literally the lowest point in Continental North America, about 250 feet below sea level.
- David covered me with a jacket and blanket.
- It was windy, but still warm.
- I don't remember telling him how long to let me sleep. Maybe we did discuss it.
- I was asleep in less than a minute. No worries about the scorpions, coyotes, or other creatures we saw.
- David told me later he watched my eyes for R.E.M. movements which he saw. I was instantly in deep sleep.
- After 30 minutes, David put his fingers on my neck to feel my pulse.
- My eyes popped wide open.
- He asked if I knew where I was.
- I replied, "Yes."
- He then said, "Do you know why you're here?"
- I said, "The 508."
- He said, "Then let's get going!"
- David told me about this discourse. I remember NONE of that conversation.
- We packed up and headed off.
- The guys made a pact not to tell me how many people passed us while I was sleeping if I asked.
- As soon as we were off, we started passing most of the crews who were riding at our pace. They must have seen we took a nap, so they figured they could. We passed about five crews/racers.
- Steven later told me five racers passed us.
- We then passed each one of them. Cool.
- Now about 5am, I can begin to see the morning twilight over the mountains.
- At mile 300, we start to climb Jubilee Pass. 1000 feet in five miles. It is now daylight.
- I pass a couple male racers. One said he was dying. He was on a relay team.
- One mile descent, then back up Salsberry Pass, 2300 feet in 9.5 miles. This one was tough. Endless.
- Was this the one that David told Steven that we only had a quarter mile to go to reach the top.... And then five miles later I was still climbing???!?!!
- I got a little peeved. David's crewmanship was great... except for his concepts of distance.
- This also was the climb that Steven later told me he dozed off in the back of the car for an hour when I was climbing, and awoke to find me still climbing the same hill. He said to himself, "Oh, my God".
- I exchanged places leading and following a lady rider on this hill. I finally pulled away from her. Personal pride sometimes gets in the way.
- This stretch kinda sux.

- The climbs just go on forever.
- As we passed the 300-mile mark, I now was thinking, "OK, we only have one-hundred something miles to go!". All of the sudden, 180 miles seemed like NOTHING. That's right, 180 miles on a bike. It was ONLY *ONE*-hundred something miles to go. Hoo Wee!!!!

Stage Five Shoshone to Baker 56.3 Miles 381 Total 26 Hr 44 Min, 325 miles ridden to this point, Time Station #4

- Now at Shoshone. Mid-day.
- Lots of BMW Motorcycles. Must be a club meet. Middle of nowhere. Where do these guys come from?
- We walk across street from the Time Station to a café to see if they had some soup for me. No luck. I didn't want it that bad. Tried to poop again, no luck again.
- Steven called his ma. Got fairly choked up, she later told me. She said he couldn't believe this was his dad doing this. He had a whole new perspective of me. Maybe a little respect?!
- Let's get going. On to Baker. Had a good clip going after a relatively small climb. Strong pace into Baker.
- Passed a sign to Las Vegas, only about 70 miles. Whew! We are OUT There!
- Don't remember much more about the stage.
- The crew was able to follow me for the rest of the race, without leapfrogging, now that it is Sunday and the racers are more spread out.
- Got into Baker. Seemed like about eight or so racers there. Stopped for a nice rest.
- The crew got supplies and gassed up.
- The Mad Greek Restaurant was there. God forbid I ever get out here when I'm not in a race, I'd like to eat there. Looked great. Actually pretty busy with locals or tourists or?

Stage Six. Baker to Kelso. 34.90 Miles. 416 Total. 30 Hr 20 Min, 381 miles ridden to this point, Time Station #5

- This is the stage where we'll cross 400 miles. OK, 400 miles on a bike. Without sleeping more than 30 minutes.
- I saw "Picachu", who had been exchanging leading with me take off out of Baker. He, 39 years old, had the Audi Allroad as a crew vehicle. His crew complimented my bike in Shoshone. Steve told me we got at least six people making comments on my bike throughout the ride.
- Time to get going. Picachu was about a half mile ahead of me.
- I felt great, actually. Started to pick up the pace.
- We came to a cattle crossing and it rattled my bike.
- When I came to the next one, I stopped and walked my bike around it. I hated to hurt my new bike, I thought.
- Got passed by some relay team nutball going about 100 MPH on his bike. Flew over the cattle crossing.
- I started to catch Picachu. I passed him.
- I was now approaching Red Tail Hawk, 36, who was also exchanging leads with me. Big guy. The guy who I bugged at the windmills who said he weighed about what I weighed.
- He was dying now.
- For the first time of the ride, amazingly, it was getting hot. Really hot. A parched stretch of pavement.
- The heat seemed to only last a few miles, and then was very doable after that.
- I came up to Red Tail Hawk's crew van way up ahead of their racer and asked if they knew they could stay behind their racer now. They said yes, but I told them he was low on liquids. They hopped in the van to meet back with him. That was the last time I saw him. He didn't finish that stage.

- Short stage, but a grueling 20-mile, 2500-foot climb in the heat.
- However, we figured we passed the 408-mile mark at this point. I FELT GREAT.
- The key here was this: I now had less than 100 miles to go. A quick century, right?! Let's pick it up!
- Then a killer descent over the worst pavement of the ride.
- This road was chunks of gravel, seemingly set into the asphalt road just to create havoc, mayhem and destruction of vehicles. Terrible. I'm gonna break my new bike!!!
- I weave all over the road to find smooth paths. There were none.
- I was going 30 MPH+.
- I slow down to tell the crew to break out a spare tire and tube... just in case. It would be a miracle if we didn't get a flat.
- I actually latch on to the center yellow line, but it wasn't solid all the time. It was smooth when it was, though.
- This road sux.
- Flying into Kelso, we stop at the Time Station. What a dust bowl ghost town.

Stage Seven. Kelso to Almost Amboy. 33.8 Miles. 450 Total. 34 Hr 00 Min, 416 miles ridden to this point, Time Station #6

- This is the most depressing Time Station. Period.
- I asked the guy whom he ticked off to get this spot. He said he loves this place. WTF? I guess it takes all kinds to make the world go round.
- There was a lady there with him. OK, I guess I could figure out something for them to pass the time.
- Somehow Picachu caught us. Huh? I'd swear he got a lift in that Audi. I was haulin' butt down that ratty road. Just kidding. I'm sure he didn't get a ride. I'm the old guy dragging my butt.
- No problem. Let's get going.
- Just a short 33-mile stage. I am feeling great.
- David would massage me at every Time Station. I changed socks. Felt great.
- And we're off!
- Getting to the end of the daylight.
- Started the long climb out of Kelso, 2000 feet in 12 miles.
- Felt a squishy rear end... and it wasn't MY rear end.
- A flat! On the rear tire. DARN IT!
- Slow leak. Lucky the crew had the tire and tube ready.
- I wanted to keep the new Campy Euris Wheels on the bike, so they took off the flat and put on a new tire and tube on the same rim.
- Steven and Bruce did it in two minutes flat. An F1 Pit Crew!
- No problem. Only one flat in 400+ miles of mostly rotten road.
- Made it over the hill. Night was here.
- Chose not to wear the helmet light. Wrong decision. Too fast. Too curvy.
- This was the most fun part of the ride, though. A long, 15 or so mile downhill. A fairly slow decline, but enough to keep up a blistering 25-30 MPH pace.
- Coming up to two cattle crossings while going under Interstate 40. Remember the ones that I stopped to walk my bike around?
- Was going at least 30 and "Bunny-Hopped" completely over both of them. Cool. I know others do that all the time, but I never did.
- Came flying in to Time Station #7

Stage Eight Almost Amboy to 29 Palms 58.2 Miles 508 Total 36 Hr 55 Min, 450 miles ridden to this point, Time Station #7

- Although this pic was taken in the daytime when the fast racers got there, we got there Sunday night.



- Yes, they actually gave me a plastic lei. Nice touch. Good to see some personality at this point.
- OK, 58 miles to go.
- Still feeling good.
- Headed out after a rest and made a wrong turn too early. Ooops.
- A guy at the gas station there asked how we were doing. This was pretty much the coolest thing that happens all year in most every town we passed.
- Made the left turn to head to Sheephole Summit. The Totally Demoralizing Climb of the ride. Period.
- At mile 472, the 10-mile, 1500-foot climb begins.
- I see flashing lights near the top of the mountain. It's got to be a rider. Seemingly miles ahead of us.
- I was actually keeping a strong pace on this climb. Had some real momentum going now. Just wanted to get home.
- I stop, for what reason I cannot remember. Maybe just winded. I ask David if we are into the bad part of the climb yet. He says, yes, we are six miles into it.
- That was a big boost to my energy level. We were going a great pace on the tough part of the climb.
- I was always looking down and just pumping the crank.
- I could see the tail lights ahead. They wouldn't crest the summit. Just weaving back and forth. Geez. Will this ever end?
- Now I could see headlights cresting what I thought was the summit. Cars coming towards us. What seemed twenty minutes later the car would eventually pass us. GEEZ. How high IS this hill??!!
- Now I see the rider ahead of us. I can make out the kind of SUV the crew has.
- I now raise my head and focus on the racer.

- David and the crew saw this.
- Steven turned on the camera. They knew what was about to happen....
- We caught the racer, a team racer, and literally blew by them going up the steepest part of the climb!
- Their crew driver said, "Hey! This isn't a race!"
- Huh?!! You bet your butt this is a race.
- Finally, after what seemed like a true eternity, we reached the real summit, after passing so many false summits. You think you've reached the top, when there's still more climbing to do.
- I stopped at the bottom of the hill and changed clothes. Put on my "Newhall Bicycle Company" Jersey for Roger.
- Got passed by the team again.
- Headed out. Maybe 17 miles to go or so.
- Slight incline the rest of the way. Passed the team once again as they were stopped. They never caught me again.
- Entered 29 Palms, and made some turns on some side streets.
- Just when I figured we were two miles from the finish, we started ONE MORE CLIMB.
- This is where I started to lose it.
- Steven has the video and audio of me saying things similar to: "Of course, there has to be one more climb. I hope this one is twenty miles!!!" "Nooo, they couldn't pick one of these hotels at the bottom of the hill. Let's pick the last one in town".
- These last hills were demoralizing. I actually wasn't hurting, I was just exhausted.
- Then, David shouted, "Three quarters of a mile to go!!!".
- I'm thinking he is miscalculating distances again. I'll kill him.
- On the left, in the distance, I see what appears to be a "Best Western" logo.
- I push it into the parking lot, and cross the tape in 42.02.12 at 1:02 AM Monday morning. 4 hours ahead of my goal of 46 hours.



- Me and Race Director, Chris Kostman



- I look hungry. I believe the only finisher who was photographed with his bike.



THE PERFECT CREW:



Epilogue

I am no athlete. I am only a fat, old man who likes to ride a bike. I paced myself until the last 30 miles or so. I did push it in certain spots prior to that, but was careful not to blow up. I was truly amazed as we got deep into the race at how good I actually felt. I rarely thought about any one thing for very long. I didn't think about how long I was riding. I made a comment to Steve at one rest stop that I had 27 hours on the saddle at that point. Again, I didn't dwell on that point. I thought about 30 minutes of sleep in about three days, counting Friday's lack of sleep. The halfway point wasn't important. As I mentioned earlier, for me it was the fact that we had less than 200 miles to go after we hit 300. "ONLY a hundred-something to go!". In the later stages, I thought about how many times I did 30 or 50 miles in training rides, and it was no problem. The last stage distance of 58 miles seemed like nothing. The killer in that stage was the relentless Sheephole Climb. AND the final climb to the finish. I just wanted to finish. In the end, I realized this race is 98% mental. Just think about what you'll do and say at the finish, not IF you'll finish.

I am a little embarrassed by my weak training program, relatively speaking. Top guys do over 400 miles per week at their peak. Do these guys have jobs?! I was a little surprised that there was no part of the race that I actually struggled to ride. I never bonked. No climb, no stage was truly painful. The crew and the constant nutrition were key, by all means. What that tells me, though are a couple of things. First, I paced myself. Second, if I get drunk enough to enter this race again next year, I'd like to trim at least two hours off my time. I can make it up on the climbs. I think I was too quick to use granny gear, and I could push a little harder in a higher gear to keep up the speed, rather than going 5 MPH. Bottom line, I could have done another century at the finish. That is a problem. However, this was my first time riding more than 150 miles, and I didn't know the route. Next time, we'll turn it up a notch.

I will never be on the podium, however I feel this is a race against my own time... with some racers to pass sprinkled in just for kicks. This has been a life event. Maybe it was a "Vision Quest". To see if I could actually accomplish something physically challenging, for real. I cannot stop thinking about this. I want everyone to take up bike riding. I cannot understand why they wouldn't. I am thankful I discovered this race. It has changed my life. It had changed my relationship with my son, Steven. I have made two new friends from total strangers who dedicated their time to my selfish, personal challenge. All for the simple love of the sport.

I think I'll do this again. David will be riding next year. Bruce has already told me he will be on my crew. (Cool!) Steven said he'd crew, but perhaps he may get the fever (with my constant pressure) to ride it. The 508 has a Hall of Fame for 5-Time Finishers. I'll shoot for 2010 to be inducted. Let's Roll!