

## Tom Lex on *Why I Ride*

When Rachael asked me to write a several hundred word article on why I ride my first reaction was why are so many words needed. I really only need nine (9) words: "I ride because I feel good when I do." After further consideration I realized I needed to add more substance to my reason for riding.



As a child and into my early teens I spent many hours on my bike. Unfortunately other priorities and interests took me away from the thing that gave me immense enjoyment. Other than periodic vacations when I did some beach cruiser riding I did not do any road bike riding until 5.5 years ago. It started with my selection of a mountain bike from my company's gift catalog in recognition of my 30 year employment anniversary. The realization of how much I enjoyed being back on a bike motivated me to purchase a road bike.

Within months of my road bike purchase my employer sent me out to New Mexico on a one year temporary assignment. The first thing I loaded for my trip was my road bike. As a result of what turned into a 2.5 year "temporary assignment" I met many avid and experienced cyclists who took me under their wing and got me totally hooked. Through their influence I even got into some racing in such events as the Tour of the Gila (Silver City, NM), Iron Horse (Durango, CO) and the New Mexico Road Series. I learned from this that attempting to get into bicycle racing at the age of 58 is tough and very humbling but the training routine got me hooked on spending many hours in the saddle. Because of this I was fortunate enough to experience riding in not only New Mexico but also Colorado, Texas and Arizona. I know I saw more of New Mexico from my bike than many people who have lived there all of their lives actually see.

At the end of my "temporary assignment" I retired and returned to my home in Aiken. I continue riding 4 to 5 days a week and log over 9000 miles a year. I do this because I am motivated to stay fit so I can continue my enjoyment of riding and riding as many mountain centuries as I can.

The following are my top ten reasons for being motivated to continue riding for as long as I am able:

10. The sound of gears shifting and wheels rolling as the pace line accelerates on newly paved road.
9. I never have to worry about having something to do or a new objective to set.
8. I can stay fit and do not have to worry about going on a diet.
7. The feeling of accomplishment crossing the finish line of a tough mountain century.
6. The feeling of relief and the satisfaction of the objective being met at the top of a long mountain climb.
5. The thrill and exhilaration of a fast technical mountain descent.
4. The feel of wind in my face and the sights, smells and sounds of the natural surroundings experienced on a bike.
3. The camaraderie of fellow cyclists on long group rides and the opportunity to meet new cycling friends wherever I ride.
2. The opportunity to explore new areas from my bike.
1. I ride because I feel good when I do.

Enjoy the ride and ride safe!