

## FIFTEENTH ANNUAL MS TRAM July 25 – 30, 2004

Thank you to all of our sponsors. Through your generous donations Sarah and I raised \$710 for The Ride Across Minnesota in support of research for Multiple Sclerosis. We want to share a little of our adventure with you in what the accompanying Pioneer Press (7/31/01) reporter Beth Gauper called, “tougher than past rides,” a week “battling rain, wind, hail, grit and gravel.” Even so, Sarah and I had a great time!

Our trip began on Sunday when a bus ferried us from our final destination (St. Joseph’s) up to our starting point (Brainerd). They wrapped our bicycles in burlap and loaded them into semis. The three bags we stowed in the bus contained all we needed—sleeping bags, tent, a week’s clothing and toiletries. The tent seemed small and the sleeping bags felt hard as, anxious and excited, we finally fell asleep in our first “tent city.”



*Ready to board the bus at St. Joe’s*



*Our first campsite—back in the trees*

### **Monday: Brainerd to Park Rapids 85 miles**

A miscalculation added ten miles to the ride, making it the longest single regular day (and the first day no less) in TRAM history. Near the end about a mile of gravel road (tough riding for road bikes) caused three ambulance calls and dozens of scrapes. Everyone was tired. Sarah decided to up our 10 mile-per-hour average a few paces. She said, “I was so tired of sitting on the bike,” (what’s eight hours in the saddle?) “that I sprinted the last five miles. I wanted to get to the campsite.”



*Enjoying the ride ... all 85 miles!*

### **Tuesday: Park Rapids to Wadena 55 miles**

The day dawned sunny and we awoke seeing our breath in the crisp morning air. Thirty miles shorter than Day 1, this should be a breeze. It was... 15 to 20 mph headwinds. Sarah quickly learned to draft behind Dad and save her energy. Wind in our face all day; we even had to peddle downhill. It takes a lot out of you, especially when you’re ten years old. Sarah was the youngest rider on her own bike that we saw. Others her age rode tandem or a tagalong with a parent.



*Exhausted, Sarah took a cat nap at one of the rest stops, but was ready to go within a few minutes.*

*It's amazing what a little exhaustion can do to make a tent and sleeping bag feel like the comforts of home sweet home.*

**Wednesday:  
Wadena to Little Falls 76 miles**



*Wet, but still smiling!*



It rained all day, but at least there was no headwind. By now we could set up camp within minutes and slept like rocks on what had become a roomy, comfortable abode. Exhaustion works wonders.

*Sarah posed with one of the half dozen motorcycle escort volunteers who each put on about 2500 miles during the week roving back and forth to mother us through busy intersections and come to the aid of riders in distress. They became a much welcomed sight as wind, rain, flat tires and broken spokes took their toll. Fortunately, Sarah and I had no mechanical breakdowns.*



*We had to dodge a lot of things on the road—including houses. This one flashed by at 30 miles an hour!*



**Thursday:**

**Little Falls to Sauk Center 62 miles**

Hills and more headwinds greeted us but by now we were road-hardened and unstoppable. Burning about 5000 calories per day, we ate plenty at every rest stop—peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, granola bars, protein chips, bite sized candy bars and Gatorade by the gallon. For supper we ate all we wanted of hamburgers, spaghetti, pizza, turkey sandwiches and ribs. Plus dessert. And still we lost weight during the week.



*This was a tough climb—many got off to walk it. But Sarah took it in stride, her legs strong from training in the hills of Eagan.*

*This is the last rest stop.*

Sarah climbed a nearby tower to take a picture of Dad toasting her and everyone who participated, 980 riders ages 3 to 80+ and 780 volunteers plus farmers along the way who turned their farm yards into rest stops. Wonderful people, all.



*We made great friends along the road.*

**Friday: Sauk Centre to St. Joseph 46 miles**

All along Lake Wobegon Trail we rode with a smile even though rain started pounding the tent at 3:00 a.m. and we packed up everything wet. The rain stopped, the trail was dry enough to reduce the tire splash and we sped home—stronger, happier and pleased to participate in a great cause.

We rode for a cure for MS, for the camaraderie and for daze in the country. What a gift. Thanks for your help.



*Strong to the finish, we learned to keep pushing.*

*Sarah and Mom are thinking about doing TRAM next year.*

