

## Boston Montreal Boston

The morning was cool as we gathered under the Holiday Inn in Newton, (a suburb of Boston.) Mitch Lesack and I elected to start with the 6:AM group, as opposed to leaving with the 4:AM group. The start was fast, and I found myself working to warm up. The lot of us starting, stayed together for about 15 miles, or so, as we rolled past Wellesley College and some beautiful neighborhoods on the way to western Massachusetts, on the first leg of our journey north..

Mitch made the suggestion that some of us, in the front, rotate pulls. This way we could make some time while not becoming too beat-up. However, when we started doing this, some of us were pacing way faster than others, and I had to make a decision. I concluded that this was not the way to begin an 800 mile ride, and that if I were going to have any hope of finishing, I needed to back off. So I rode my own pace out to the first control, northwest of Salem. The terrain was mostly rolling, but there were several short crunchers that reminded everyone that he/she was still human! Massachusetts has some wonderful scenery, from the towns that looked like they should be on “Antique Road Show,” (and I am saying that to mean they resemble some of those treasures that people find that are from a long lost era, yet resemble something that was newly crafted, not those things that they find, in the attic, that are half disintegrated!) to the lakes nearby New Salem. (Mental note to self... If the weather is perfect on the way out, on the next BMB, pause and take a photo or two, because said weather will probably suck on the way back!) Riding through the countryside, through the trees, and looking out at the crystal clear lakes was a wonderful experience! We were greeted, at the farm, by some smiling faces who offered us water, food, and rest. I took exactly 12 minutes; this was enough time to fill my bottles, my camelbak, and to grab a sandwich on the way from the men’s room. On my bike I hopped, wishing everyone a wonderful day, and away I went.

After leaving the Farm, there were some flats, and then a long climb that lasted close to the whole trip into New Hampshire. Did I mention that the scenery was so beautiful that it really took my mind off of the pain I was experiencing? That being said, I must admit that one of my favorite sections was after that particular climb; however, the NH flats were, unfortunately, short lived. I seem to recall an intersection where we needed to take a right, and after I made the turn, I was wishing that the cue and the road markings

were wrong! The hill I found myself climbing, seemed to go on forever, but at the top, I was rewarded by a volunteer's smiling face as he said "How are ya doing?" I responded with "SHHHHHHHHHHHhhhhhhhhhh!!!!!" This was the site of the "secret control point," and ever since my training partner and I finished one particular brevet, in Pennsylvania, (where we missed one,) the secret controls have been a great source for making these sorts of silly jokes!

Several more miles up the road, the most sensible thing, for the trip, was done for me by a volunteer at the second official control point, Brattleboro. I removed my Camelbak, and, while I dined on chicken fried rice, one of the volunteers strapped it onto my aero-bars in such a way that I would still be able to drink from it. I realized, once it came off of my back, that I was suffering a great deal more than I should have. However, it still took some time to recover from riding with that weight on my back. I will say that for me, BMB was a huge struggle, all of the way from the starting point, to Ludlow, VT. I was feeling like I had no food/energy, and that bonking feeling stuck with me for 163 miles! Now, it is true that I felt much better without the pack on my back, my progress, to me, felt slow and plodding.

The climbing, on the roads between Brattleboro and Ludlow, were separated, for the most part, by some long flats where one could easily recover. That being said, the most notable climb, was the Andover Ridge climb. It was so long, that I made the assumption that I was climbing Terrible Mountain. Terrible Mountain was the climb that was supposed to be immediately before the Ludlow control, but having never done it, I wasn't sure what to expect. I looked at my odometer, and thought that I could be close enough to be climbing... (I was about 10 miles out.) If this was a climb out west, I would have been! Well, I came to realize, after I came down the other side of the ridge that I was still a couple of miles away from the final climb, so I started to prepare for it. Again, having never climbed it before, I found myself to be pleasantly surprised! It was about a mile and a half long at about 10% grade. I was happy until I started heading down the other side and realized that I was going to have to climb back up, on the way back! "BREATHE" I told myself. "Let's work on one hill at a time. Right now the control is on the descent, near the bottom. Try not to miss it!"

**Yes, I talk to myself on some rides! Got a problem with that???**

The Ludlow control was reached without any major problems, but I was feeling very hungry, and I needed to re-supply water... I caught and passed some of the 4AM starters earlier and along the way between Brattleboro and Ludlow, but I caught up to a mass of them here. Most were getting ready to leave as I was filling my 3<sup>rd</sup> plate of food, but I had a chance to chat with some of them in the mean time. I was not at all happy with my progress, and mentioned this to Laurent Chambard, one of my fellow NJ Randonneurs. (In fact the words “weak,” “feeble,” and “pathetic” crossed my lips when describing what I thought of my riding, up to this point.) He suggested that given how brutal the last section was that if there was any part of BMB for one to feel bad, about his/her progress, it is Ludlow! He also suggested that I will find that I will be able to make up some time up above Middlebury, and I wished him well as I watched him leave soon after that. I, on the other hand, continued to eat! My yakking skills were not unnoticed by others at the control point. When I was pulling myself together, in time to leave, I spent some quality time chatting with the control point volunteers for some time, about a wide variety of topics! Quickly, one last time, I took inventory of my equipment, my supplies, and was as happy as I could be with the results, and I soon got back on the bike and pedaled off toward Middlebury.

This section seemed quick in some places, dramatically slow in others, but the whole of it was very interesting! Shortly after leaving, I was passed by a guy on an evening training ride. He was obviously a racer, given the strength and form he displayed. After a few minutes, he looked back at me, and stated, plainly: “You guys are NUTS!!” I can’t remember my response, but it was something funny, because he laughed while shaking his head and riding into the distance. After climbing Killington, I rolled down a long stretch of relatively flat roads, at some speed. Darkness had swallowed everything whole, on the way up the climb, but I was moving rapidly through the night. About halfway between Killington and Middlebury Gap, I found a deli that was actually still open, and wandered in to meet a gentleman named Joe. I never got his last name, but he is an ultra-marathon runner, who ran from New York City to his house, which is literally around the corner from the deli, just the weekend before! Of course, there was much yakking involved at this little stop, while I ate a large sandwich. One of the questions I was asked was where I would be sleeping that night. I replied: “Boston..... By way of

Canada.” That got some looks, for some reason. After gaining some insight to regarding the climb, to the top of Middlebury, I headed off, and rode for what seemed an eternity, at speed, all the way to the turn into the climb. Here is where I got fowled up, for the first time on the ride. I was informed that the climb would be over, at 52 miles into the leg. So I rode accordingly, as my odometer closed in on 52 miles, so I pushed harder. I was feeling good, but I was also feeling like my ability to push would be definitely over once that magic number showed up, so one could imagine my disappointment when 52 miles came and went, and I was STILL climbing! Fortunately, for me, the climb only lasted another 3/4ths of a mile. Once I became aware that I was no longer heading up, I about collapsed! In fact, I did collapse on my aerobars, as I started heading down. Still breathing heavily, I was just uninterested in the idea of coming off of the aerobars and taking a grip in my drops. I know, for fact, that I was over 70MPH, because when I examined my computer, at the control, I actually looked up my max speed for the section. (This was DEFINITELY done on the descent at the top of the gap, because it leveled out a bit down near the University. ) Now I say “know,” because the number in the front was DEFINITELY a “7.”

Here would be a good time to mention that I reset my computer per each stage, so all of the max speeds, climbing data, etc, were lost. The only thing that stayed as a cumulative was my “navigator function.” This is a reset-able function that will enable one to keep ones odometer going while he/she clears stages. It is a good function; it is just a shame that it doesn’t include the Max totals or the climbing totals in a similar format... VDO will be hearing a suggestion from me on this!!! Now, I say at least 70, but I believe it was 72 or 73... Not that the 2 or 3 means much at that point, I was moving over 70MPH, in the dark, on a road that I knew nothing about! (Other than what Joe told me back at the deli, I knew nothing.) In hind-sight, I would suggest to everyone reading this, that what I did, on the side of that mountain, was the height of stupidity! Please don’t try that! Here is an explanation as to why. Like I said before, the road levels out going past the school, but I was still moving in the 30 MPH neighborhood. I was busy watching the road for cracks and holes, since I did manage to find some on the way down, so I stopped paying attention to how fast I was moving, though I did slow down as

I passed a couple on the BMB, saying a word or two in greeting as I went by, and I stopped when saw another rider on the side of the road, further down.

It was a brief stop to see what was wrong. I learned that his stem broke at the steering tube! I was informed, later; that that rider was in pretty bad shape, but I could not see him, on the side of the road, due to his helmet light obscured his features. He informed me that the help vehicle was on its way, and he was going to be fine, so I started back down the hill. It was in this part, of the descent, that I hit a moon crater! I was sure that I heard my fork crack, my wheel fold, my tire blow, and I was equally positive that I was sailing over my handlebars! Imagine my shock to find that I was still rolling forward and STILL on the bike! There were lots of other holes and cracks in the road, and I know this, because I hit most of them, on the rest of the way into East Middlebury! My recollection was that the rest of the way into the control consisted of me wondering when the stage would end, and when I would be eating next! (Not necessarily in that order.) Incidentally, I did have a bit of a blow-out when I hit one of the holes, but fortunately, my tire did not go flat till I entered the parking lot of the control point. Now here is where I absolutely HAVE to thank a volunteer, by name... At least first name... Chris was one of the SAGs, and he fixed my front wheel for me while I ate. Why does this go above and beyond? Because somebody actually woke him up from a nap to do it! I believe I was there at 1:AM or at some point close to that time... I dined on Lasagna and just about anything else I could shove in my mouth, I drank some coffee, and some other stuff, mixed up some bottles, filled up my camel bak, got showered, changed, into something warmer, checked my phone messages, and away I went! (I was there for some time, though. I received several messages, most of them were well wishes, and a friend of mine told me that I should go outside and look at the glorious moon! Given the hour, I couldn't call her back, but I did make a mental note to call her and tell her that I noticed the moon, just a bit, that evening! Also, a friend who rode a portion of the NJ600K joined me here. His name is Mike.)

I rode most of the way, to this point, myself, so I was happy to have some company for the long stretch up to Rouses Point, NY, mainly because it would last for 90 miles. Thus began an extended chat session! The miles melted away as we talked about some people's silly names, (the true story that I am thinking about is not fit for this report, so if

you REALLY want to know, I will be happy to share, some other time.) to bike equipment, to the country side to I don't remember what. Anyway, the first 45 miles brought us to a gas station that was a short ways from a major highway overpass. I can't remember, at this time, which one it was, and reality is that the number doesn't matter, as most of the interstates look basically the same, and they signify nothing to a cyclist rolling through the darkness. However, in just 10-12 miles or so, we found ourselves starting to cross onto the islands of northern Lake Champlain.

I can't remember precisely where, but I recall passing the first BMB finisher, Whittlesey S as he was heading back to the finish. We smiled and waved, looking at a man who truly looked as if he was out for a Sunday ride, and the most stressful thing he had done was decide whether or not to have coffee that morning! What an amazing feat! I informed Michael that Whittlesey was a good 168 miles ahead of us. He said something like: "Gee, Thanks SO MUCH for telling me that! I REALLY needed to hear that! Thanks Steve!" I laughed a bit, and we bantered about a bit as we crossed one of the many bridges heading northwest toward the border of Canada.

Everyone who rides with me knows that I am much faster on the flats than I am on hills, and this section of the ride was relatively flat, so I picked up the pace, dramatically. It was more of an unconscious effort, on my part, but it was enough for Mike to tell me that he was not going to be able to hang with me, and that I should ride ahead. I was reluctant to do that, but when we got within about seven miles, or so, I felt a powerful urge to visit the men's room, so I sprinted to the Rouses Point control. There, I spent some time off of the bike eating, and meeting some of the other BMB'ers. I waited for Mike, but that may have been a mistake, because I was not feeling anywhere near as well when I left, as before I got there. The realization hit me that I spent too much time down, while not sleeping when I was riding, weakly, for the next 25 miles or so.

This became an issue within 12 miles of our ride toward the turn around point, in Canada. I found myself struggling to keep up with Mike, who seemed to be riding at a leisurely pace. Shortly after I started feeling these issues, we passed Mitch L on the way back. I shouted: "Hey Mitch, I want to give you my Keys!!" However, Mitch was riding like a man possessed! Either he didn't hear me, or it plainly didn't register, because he kept flying in the opposite direction! I thought that maybe someone would be headed

back to Boston, and would be able to give him my keys, so I didn't dwell on it. Mitch may or may not be without his clothes, as they were locked inside my car, in the parking lot. Back to the business at hand, it was past time I was at the turn around point, so I redoubled my efforts to catch up to Mike, who had started climbing the most intimidating looking hill (in my humble opinion) I have ever seen! (with 350 some odd miles in my legs)

This hill is hit at about 23 miles into the leg, but one can see it from about 5-6 miles away! It starts out with the ability to see this piece of road at the top of a ridge, way off in the distance. As one gets closer, more of the hill becomes visible, but most of it remains obscured until he/she is on top of it. I am not sure which was worse; It was between seeing the top of the ridge which was way up, or looking up at it from the bottom of the hill. Well, I was making progress on Mike, who was moving slowly up the hill, and I could understand why, as I began my ascent. Words can not do justice to my feelings upon reaching the summit, it was as if I was already on my way back, and the finish line was becoming closer with each pedal stroke. I started to move a bit faster as I closed in on the turn around. I started counting down with 20 miles to go, 19 miles, 18, etc. Canada has some beautiful landscape, but I was not looking, I was busy wanting to turn around, and with each stroke, I moved closer! At some point, I remember looking at my odometer and wondering why it was that the rest stop was not in sight. I did this while I found myself riding past the control! After 31 hours and 40 minutes, I finally made my way into the last control I would have to reach before heading back to Boston... From here, every mile I rode, I was getting closer to the finish! Of course the idea that I was only 375 miles away from my car never entered my brain. That is until I sat here writing my report.

#### 600K Number Two

I made this stop happen as quickly as possible, I ran in, had my brevet card signed, grabbed some food, filled my bottles, visited the men's room, and headed out in about 12 minutes, or so! I would like to say that my memory of the people, at this control, was a great one! They were more than happy to give us anything we needed!

On the way back, I passed some Canadian cyclists who were out for a ride, and when they saw me, they stopped at an intersection up ahead of me, gathered in a group, and

then they actually cheered me on! This was actually one of the highlights of my ride, the beautiful shining faces shouting words of encouragement as I was still beginning my trip home. I passed quite a few people still on their way out, one of whom was Laurent... I shouted some words of encouragement, like: "You are almost there, you have this!" About 12-14 miles later, I found myself climbing the back side of that intimidating climb, and I dare say that it felt like it was a tad more difficult. It could have been because it was one that was fairly long and seemingly without end, but it more likely had to do with the fact that I now had 400 miles in my legs. (This was new territory, because I have never ridden further than 400 miles, before this event.) It was on this stretch that I had a conversation with a professional football player. We were discussing cycling equipment, and what was good, vs. what was not so good for larger cyclists like him and me. After about 20 minutes of this conversation, I turned my head to state something very sage-like, but I didn't see him. I looked to my left, and I noticed that he was not there, either. In fact he was nowhere to be found in any direction! It was at this time that something began to dawn on me. I realized that he was never there! I imagined the whole thing, that I had been having a conversation with a figment of my imagination! It was at this exact moment that I concluded that I should take a nap as soon as possible. Not here, though. Since it had begun to rain shortly after I left the control, and it continued to spritz on and off, everything was a bit damp. Also, the realization that I was hallucinating kept me very awake for the next 20 miles till I reached the border crossing.

The border crossing was uneventful, but I did have to wait in line behind about 12 cars. It is my understanding that nobody else had to wait, that they were brought to the front... I had the privilege of waiting, in the rain, before my chat session with the border crossing guard. Oh well, I guess everyone needs some time for lunch, and that was where the other guard was, at that particular time. I was getting very excited; there was a BED, waiting for ME, just four miles up the road, in Rouses Point! My spirits were not dissuaded when I began to feel the wind start to blow. All I thought about, was FOOD GLORIOUS FOOD!

This is where I describe the volunteer staff of Rouses Point. I can't remember names with faces, so rather than insult anyone; I will say that the Gentleman serving the food was just terrific! I know from my earlier stop through here, about... I am not sure how

long ago, that was, but I definitely rode 100 miles since last I was here, and it was the same guy serving food! Most of the volunteers were only able to get short naps here and there, so they were just as cooked as we were! I was not in good physical shape when I arrived at the control, and this was evidenced by the grunts and groans I was making when I tried to get up and walk. Yes, I needed sleep, desperately! I explained to one of the volunteers that I did not want to sleep for any longer than half an hour, and she woke me up precisely 30 minutes later. I was actually surprised as to how alert I was when I received my wake-up call. Within about 5 minutes, I was up, moving, planning my course of action, and eating. I noticed my friend Mike was there, and out cold, so I asked about him. I was informed that he went down about 10 minutes before I woke up, so I decided to keep eating and planning, while allowing Mike to sleep. Laurent had made it here, while I was sleeping, and he sort of congratulated me on sleep! It is amazing how important the simple things become on a ride like this!! One of the volunteer's names that I can remember was Dave. Dave was the man in charge of the Secret Control, and after chatting a bit, I told him about my plans for finishing. He had no problems sharing his opinion, and after I got him to stop laughing, I suggested that my plan was not written in stone. In addition, if I didn't succeed in beating my speed across the islands on the way up, I would just concentrate on finishing.

What he was laughing about, was the wind. I hadn't felt the full force of it yet, so I was completely unaware of how ludicrous my plans actually were, until I started riding. I woke Mike up after giving him about 45 minutes, and we got everything together to leave. We heard the wind, but didn't really get a feel for it till we started heading east and more so when we were heading south. We had a constant 30MPH wind blowing up from the south, and it slowed our progress dramatically! In a section where I intended to make up some time, I wound up losing more than I ever hoped to gain. In the Furnace Creek 508, I experienced wind, while navigating through Death Valley. I will say, for fact, that the wind in Death Valley, during last year's race, was worse. (One racer described it as being "thermo-nuclear.") I believe that it was the best training for what I faced on Lake Champlain.

Mike started having problems with his knee early on in the stage, and told me to keep riding, so I did, but reluctantly. I found myself really wanting a cup of coffee, but not

finding anyplace that was open. All I had to keep my mind occupied was the howling of the wind, and the staggered flow of morons who felt the need to put their bright headlights on, as they came up, on the other side of the road. Anyone who has ever experienced this has got to know how annoying this is to a cyclist! One moron had his spare tire dragging on the road, directly under his fuel tank. While his wheel was dragging, it sent a shower of sparks flying..... Directly.... Under..... His..... Fuel Tank!!! (I am still waiting for the KABOOM!) The final bridge across the lake was the most brutal, because I had the least shielding, from the wind, as it tore across, threatening to blow me over. Apparently, everyone, except those who were in the very front, had to deal with this wind, so I was not alone. I arrived to the Rt 2 turn, and found the first 24 hour gas station since Rouses Point! There was no thought, no hesitation, I turned left, instead of right, rode into the parking lot, and strode in. It was early AM, I have no clue what time, because I was not paying attention. What I wound up doing, was grabbing some food, and a 32 ounce cup of iced coffee, and proceeded to listen to the life stories of one of the other customers, and the woman working at the store. I won't go into what all was told, but let it be known that there was very little about either of the two of them, that I did not know, before leaving!

I was beginning to feel human again when I left. Amend that, to read not quite human, but close. I rode out, into the night, and followed the course, which seemed to move quickly now that I was out of the wind. Very shortly after leaving, I found myself climbing a hill, somewhere, and I hear this loud obnoxious horn. It about shook me out of my skin, before I realized that it was the customer from the gas station waving a greeting as he drove south and east. I wasn't sure whether or not to be annoyed by the gesture, so I left it go while smiling to myself that I must have left some sort of impression... Further down the road, I paused briefly to stretch, as my Achilles tendon started to be the source of some discomfort. I looked ahead, and I saw a bike headlamp coming toward me! "Mike?" Here it was Mike, who passed me while I was in the gas station. He was in unimaginable pain, because he informed me that he needed to go to a hotel and sleep for a few hours, and he spied one back a ways, so he was heading for it. I elected to keep moving, because I was afraid of what would happen to me if I were to stop...

I passed through a town whose name I can't remember, and rode back into total darkness as I moved closer to Middlebury. I was better than half way, perhaps about 35 miles, or so, from the next control, when it started to rain, again. Fortunately, for me, I saw the first traffic light in about 10 miles, with a closed, for the night, Citgo Station. I Ducked under the canopy, leaned my bike up against a gas pump, and sat down on the concrete gas island. I thought that this would be another great opportunity to stretch, so I lay back, and started doing that. I do remember the time that I arrived here, because I decided to check my phone for messages. It was 4:10 AM. The next thing I remember was that the lights of the store were on, and there were two women looking at me! I noticed that it was now 4:40, according to the clock in the store, as the woman there said: "You sure know how to give a woman a heart attack!" I started laughing, and she clearly did not like that response when she said: "Oh, you think that is funny?" I told her something to the effect that she was not the first woman to tell me that, and then she explained that she wasn't sure if I was a corpse, or just someone diving out of the rain, and she was happy that I was the latter! I explained BMB briefly, and bought some coffee. Meanwhile, she offered me the employee's only bathroom, to freshen up. I was happy to clean up a bit, and I felt comfortable at this store, despite the fact that the AC was on, and I was starting to freeze.

Looking outside, the rain was stopping, and the pre-dawn gloom was fading into actual light, so I headed out to resume my march toward Boston. Freedom from the rain, however, lasted only about 20 minutes, because the sky opened on me with renewed fervor as I headed toward the foot hills of the Green Mountains. I DID, however, get a photo of some of the foothills, before the heavier rain started to fall. These last few miles seemed to drag on forever before my tires found the parking lot of the Middlebury control. I walked in to find the same people who were there where I left them, on the way out!! Joined by organizer Jennifer Wise, I was happy to see their faces, and get some more lasagna! I spend some time here, recuperating. I had several cups of hot chocolate, and a couple cups of coffee, some cookies, some pretzels.. Just lots of food in general! I was pleasantly surprised to find that Mike had arrived, and planned on leaving with him. Another rider named Doug T, from Iowa left nearly the same time as well. The ride to the gap was uneventful as we all seemed to be moving at a slow pace hoping

the cracking sounds coming from our knees weren't something all THAT bad. This section of the route was rough, but we were moving slowly, so the roughness didn't phase us as much as it did in the darkness as we were flying down the road in the opposite direction. We passed the school, and we knew that the steepest part of the climb was yet to come. My thought was that this was between me and a bed, waiting for me at the end, so I was not going to stop, at all. One of the biggest helps, at this stage, was the fact that it was daylight. While night is good, to a certain point, the light was feeding me energy, so everything seemed a bit easier. On the descent, however, I am thinking that it made things more difficult, because I could see the tar covering the cracks in the road, and I was unsure which was concealing holes, or simply smoothing the cracks, so I didn't attack this one at warp 9, like I did a couple of nights before. Mike and I regrouped again, at the bottom, and started cruising toward Killington. This was a long flatish section where that deli and ultra-marathon runner, Joe, was located. I toyed with the idea of stopping, but I was more interested in finishing. Mike was having serious issues with his knee, and he had to stop. Fortunately, there was a rider who was also a specialist in orthopedics. While I was waiting, Mary C and Paul S drove by, and gave me a very welcome gift package. I received some Advil, and some caffeine. I am not sure if the caffeine was able to work on me at this point, but I was happy to give it a try.

Doug T was rolling past, and Mike caught up, so I started riding. In the mean time, the knee issue was still a problem, but Mike lucked out because the orthopedic surgeon showed up at that instant! I rode ahead with Doug, and started chatting with him, and the miles melted past. Before we knew it, we were in Ludlow. I was thrilled to be here, because I could shower and change, for the second time, this trip. Did I mention there was food to be found here? MMMMMMmmmmmmmmmmmm FOOOOOOOOD!!!! Yes, these things are all about the food!

After doing what we had to do, we were feeling pretty good about climbing Terrible Mountain, right out of the control. I mean what is the big deal? It is just another climb! HA! We were heading into evening, at this time, and we did not have too much light left, but it was enough to get us up and over Terrible Mountain, and Andover Ridge. The two climbs were not spaced too far apart, but the descent after the Andover climb was just fantastic! We were in the dark on most of that descent, and because some of the road was

wet, it was harder to see the holes as we were rapidly rolling down the hill. We were over 20 miles into the leg, almost before we knew it, and the countdown to zero miles left began. We were passed by Chris, the mechanic, and I was mystified by how awake and alert he was. I know that all of the volunteers were up every bit as long as we were... We chatted a bit, and told him that we would see him at the next control, Brattleboro, shortly... Shortly, yeah, RIGHT! Onward we forged, rolling up and down some of the terrain, feeling pretty good, but somewhere along this section I heard the “PTWANG” of a spoke breaking! Fortunately, it was on the non-drive side of my rear wheel, and I was able to remove it easily to keep rolling. On a side note, I brought extra spokes with me, just in case. However, this area was definitely not the place to change one, given the level of darkness in which we were plunged.

Now I am going to qualify this stage by saying it is the most difficult. Not heading out, but on the way back, there is a section that seems to go up, forever! Passing some of the landmarks, I knew I was on the right road, but I started to doubt as it seemed to be significantly longer than I remembered. At one point, Doug and I stopped, unsure which way to go, but I heard something, in the distance that made me want to continue forward. The sound of the interstate du-jour! I had no idea what interstate number it was, nor did I care... All I knew was that there was an interstate rolling past the control in Brattleboro, and we were definitely heading in the direction of an interstate. This HAD to be our interstate!

After we made the next turn, we knew we were on the right track, and were on some comfortably rolling terrain for the rest of the way to the control. On the side of the road, I noticed a café, which seemed to have lots of activity all around it. Upon closer inspection, I realized it was a “gentleman’s club” I was thinking about all of the gas stations I passed that were closed, and the fact that I could not buy a cup of coffee, but I COULD go to a topless bar with no problem! It’s funny how things work. While these thoughts were swimming in my brain, I noticed a BMB rider ahead. (Who else would be on the road at this time of night?) I know BMB is not a race, but I had a NEED to get to the control before the rider ahead of me. Later, and after our stop, Doug told me that I really picked up the pace. My quads were burning as I snickered in agreement. During these rides; sometimes I feel on top of the world, while other times, I feel like the world

is ending. Though the last little effort cost me, I was feeling very good. That realization hits home saying that one just has to ride through those world ending parts, in order to get to those top of the world parts!

Brattleboro was a good stop, for me. We had food, we had a mechanic, (Chris fixed my spoke issue while I ate,) and we were able to fill up on water to get back on the road and move out. Just 40 miles to the farm at New Salem, and then only 75 miles to go till the end!

We had ridden a short way, when Doug stated plainly that he needed a nap, because he was starting to lost consciousness. Looking around, I noticed an office building on the corner of one of our turns, and looked in the back to notice a picnic table. It was starting to rain again, but the table was under a tree. Then, after building a make shift camp, we promptly passed out. I am not sure if this was a good thing, for me, because after I woke up, I was feeling very groggy and I was suffering with extreme difficulty in staying awake/alert. I would suggest that we crawled across the bottom of New Hampshire, but somewhere in my sleep deprived fog that I was calling my though processes, I saw the sign that said "WELCOME TO MASSACHUSETTS," and I got a photo of it! The night was not long for the world, and I was praying for the light to come, so that I could wake up, finally! Within about six miles to go, the dawn came to say "HELLO THERE!" I was thrilled, because my energy levels started to rise, nearly instantaneously! Doug told me soon after that he was on the verge of passing out, but we managed to keep him awake until we arrived at the farm.

Bullard Farm was another great stop, for me. I ate lots of food, and I called my coach to tell him that there was 75 miles to go, and the next time I talked to him, I will have completed my first BMB! For everyone else I would have liked to have called, I would wait, because time was passing and I should be on the road. Doug went to bed, and Laurent was either there, or had just arrived, but I wanted to ride with someone, and there is no one better to chat with, than Laurent, and if anyone could keep me awake, HE COULD!! So we set out on an easy pace, just out for a morning cruise, and it seemed as if I started counting down to zero miles left, almost instantly! It was unfortunate that the weather was not clearer, because some of the lakes that we passed near to the farm were just breathtakingly beautiful! We rolled across some nice terrain, until the sky opened

up. The next couple of hours reminded me of the scene in the movie, “Caddyshack,” when Bill Murry’s character says something to the effect that the heavy stuff won’t be coming down for some time yet! For those who don’t remember the scene, he is out on a golf course caddying for a bishop, and it looks like a hurricane had just blown in! Well, that was what it felt like, the rain just poured.

Finally, as we passed Princeton, (Mass.) we rode out of the rain, and had a discussion about stopping for coffee at a Dunkin donuts. Especially since we were each given a Dunkin donuts gift card at the start of BMB. So in Clinton, we did just that. To quote Robert Frost, we were “Stopping by donut shop on warm summer day.” At least I think that is how the Poem is titled.... Did I mention that the sun came out? Once we were out, and we started riding, the countdown resumed. We only had 30 miles to go. I took this time to take a photo of a church that I didn’t take on the way out due to the need for speed, on the way out. However, since I was not in a rush anymore, I stopped briefly. I also stopped by a reservoir lake to take a phone call from Diane G. She was on her way up to congratulate everyone from the NJ Randonneurs, and I gave her a progress report on Laurent’s and my progress. Once we shoved off, I would not stop again until the end. I was very happy after riding past Wellesley College, and then turning onto Glen Road. The cue sheet says not to miss this turn, and I can understand why, because it is a very nice descent.

I am not sure if words can adequately express my feelings when I rode down behind the Holiday Inn in Newton... I was totally blown away by the applause of the people who had finished, and were hanging out... Mitch was there, wearing his bike gear, which he had to hand wash since he didn’t have the keys to my car... I received my medal for finishing, and I headed over to my car, where I leaned my bike against it, so that I could go upstairs and shower. I was in a bit of a daze and only somewhat aware of my surroundings as everything seemed surreal.

After I got cleaned up, I headed downstairs, and met so many great people, and while I am on the subject of great people, I want to say a few words about the volunteers. I remember Dave and Chris by name and face, because I interacted with them the most. However, everyone was so terrific! I feel bad that I can’t name everyone, but if they are there, next year, I know that anyone doing this epic adventure will have a fantastic time!

Jennifer Wise, who organizes BMB, has the absolute BEST in help! To Mike and Doug, I really enjoyed our ride time! Laurent, you are the best, and I am thrilled to be able to call you “friend!”

On a final note, this is not an adventure that is able to be done without some serious training, and I have to thank my training partners Doug Levy and Mitch Lesack for riding all of those miles with me. You guys are the greatest! Last and certainly not least, I want to thank Tom “The Sadistic” Rosenbauer, and Diane Goodwin. Tom for stringing together hills that were just brutal, on a 600K, and Diane, for creating and hosting the NJ brevet series. Nobody who did the Princeton 600K will soon forget it!