

Trio of brothers start New Year pedaling through Mexico

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By: **Kevin Bonham**, Grand Forks Herald

The Berg brothers, the Starkweather, N.D., natives who are bicycling from Alaska to Argentina to raise money for Habitat for Humanity, are beginning the new year by pedaling through Mexico.

At last report this past week from their blog, www.boundsouth.org, they had just completed a trip through Mexico's Baja California.



Brothers (L-R) Nathan, Isaiah and David Berg of Starkweather, ND, are riding their bicycles from Anchorage, Alaska to Argentina to raise money for Habitat for Humanity.
photo by Eric Hylden/Grand Forks Herald



“All good things must come to an end, or so the saying goes,” Isaiah Berg wrote in his Highway One Diary. “Highway One and its stories ended for us in LaPaz near the southern tip of Baja California. Riding south along the Sea of Cortés and weaving back once more through the harsh deserts near Constitución made us anxious for the end of a long road stretching back to northern California.”

Isaiah, 19, Nathan, 25, and David Berg, 22, began their 20,000-mile journey, Bound South: Three Brothers' Expedition from Alaska to Argentina, in August. They are on schedule to finish the trip by May, in time to return to Starkweather for the high school graduation of their younger sister, Marta.

Their goal is to raise \$60,000 to build a house in the Red River Valley with Lake Agassiz Habitat for Humanity. But their mission will not be over until they help build it this summer.

They're traveling along what is known as the Pan American Highway, a popular long-distance bicycle route.

While many cyclists travel with support vehicles and teams of assistants, they're riding alone, with just the gear they can stuff in their saddlebags.





They have no prearranged stops or reservations at hotels. Rather, they rely a great deal of the time on the generosity of people along the way.

The fifth leg of their expedition, according to Isaiah Berg, is to ride through the subtropics and highlands of Central America, from Mazatlan, Mexico, to the Panama Canal in early February. Then, they'll travel by ship to the Colombian coast, where they will tackle the Darien Gap, the Andes of Colombia, Ecuador and beyond.

They've been writing and posting photos and recording audio snippets on their blog along the way.

"LaPaz, 'The Peace,' appeared on the horizon with no time to spare," Isaiah wrote in the diary. "The desert was wearing on us. Our last night before reaching the city we found ourselves on a desolate stretch of Highway One with little water, little food, no supplies within 40 kilometers, and worse yet, solid barbed wire fencing along each side of the highway.

"Any good bicycle expedition depends on fortuitous gaps in the cattleman's or farmer's fence. Through those gaps and into the wilderness we camp out of sight and leave in the morning, leaving nothing but tire tracks. When no gaps exist, we are forced to get creative; which in this case meant sleeping under a bridge that hummed and grumbled over us with every passing vehicle. Lest you get any romantic ideas about our brave campsite, it smelled like poop. But then again, we probably did, too."



The Bergs have gained a group of dedicated followers, friends and family, as well as people they've met along the way, all of who are contributing encouragement to the journey, if not money to the cause.

In a Christmas Day post, Isaiah described and posted photos of their dinner with the Salazar family in Guadalajara, Mexico. "Guadalajara and North Dakota are worlds apart. Today the distance shrinks," he wrote, "In Mexico and at home, love abounds, family is primary, and somehow snow is nowhere to be found."

Ted and Lloyddean Davis, an Oregon family with whom they stayed earlier in their trip, responded: "My friend from Devils Lake sent me some lefse for Christmas. It was interesting, but I think I prefer pizza, but not the one you had at our place. Be careful and enjoy your trip South."

And his parents, Jim and Elizabeth Berg, responded from back in Starkweather:

"We know there will be many more crossroads on your trip where the Lord will cause your paths to cross with ministries like this. ... Pray, Pedal and Post. Eating and sleeping is allowed in your day as well."

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