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FEATURED

## Coast-to-coast ride brings personal growth, raises money for Alzheimer's research

By Renee Beasley Jones Messenger-Inquirer Aug 3, 2019

Photo by Alan Warren, Messenger-Inquirer | [awarren@messenger-inquirer.com](mailto:awarren@messenger-inquirer.com) David Weafer holds the bicycle helmet he used this summer to ride Bike4Alz, a coast-to-coast ride that raises donations for Alzheimer's research. As Weafer crossed the nation, he wrote the names of Alzheimer's patients on his helmet as a way to remind himself of the reason for the ride. It also was a way to honor those who suffer from Alzheimer's.

Alan Warren

David Weafer isn't riding bicycle much these days.

On July 20, Weafer finished a coast-to-coast ride called Bike4Alz, an Alzheimer's awareness campaign and fundraiser. He was one of 12 Phi Gamma Delta brothers from Western Kentucky University who crossed the nation on two wheels. Two other fraternity brothers drove support vehicles.

During their 3,000-mile trip, they raised more than \$70,000. After the ride's expenses, they expect to donate up to \$55,000 to Alzheimer's research.

Bike4Alz started at WKU in 2010 after the founder's grandpa lost his battle with Alzheimer's. Since then, the annual bicycle ride has raised a total of about \$300,000 for research, counting this year's donations.

On May 13, the Phi Gamma Delta group -- all bicycle-riding novices -- dipped their back wheels in the Pacific Ocean. Their starting point: San Francisco. On July 20, they plunged their front wheels in the Atlantic at Virginia Beach, Virginia.

The trip was a time of tremendous personal growth, Weafer said.

"I grew. My friends grew, and the amount of money raised for Alzheimer's research grew," he said.

Weafer, the son of Mike and Sharon Weafer of Owensboro, is a 20-year-old starting his junior year at WKU later this month. Before Bike4Alz, he had never ridden farther than five miles in one day.

He admits he didn't spend enough time conditioning his body. Weafer logged a total of about 100 miles in the saddle before starting the ride.

"If I would have gotten closer to 500, it would have helped," he said.

Highlights from the 2019 Bike4Alz:

The Phi Gamma Delta brothers pedaled 120 miles one day in Kansas, which was their longest day. That state is relatively flat, so the group took advantage of no hills or mountains and rode 80 miles or more per day until they reached Missouri.

"Kansas was really the hardest mental battle of the trip," Weafer said. "You've done 60 or 70 miles, and you're dead. But you have another 20 to go. That was the toughest part."

In the Rockies, the group humped up Cameron Pass, which is 10,249 feet above sea level. It was the trip's highest elevation.

This year's Bike4Alz group experienced more bad weather than previous rides.

California was cold and rainy.

When this year's group rolled through Nevada, hail and snow hit, and the cyclists had no winter gear along.

The Great Plains greeted them with thunderstorms and tornado warnings. Missouri brought flooding.

By the time they reached Kentucky, heat hit. Virginia sweltered. On the last day of the ride, the heat index reached 110 degrees.

There were accidents along the way. One rider flew over his handlebars and was laid up a few days. Another injured a knee.

One wreck involved a vehicle. A Bike4Alz rider was cruising downhill at about 30 mph when a motorist turned in front of him. He hit the car and rolled over the hood but didn't suffer any major injuries.

Now that the ride is over, the band of 12 brothers is enjoying a welcome hiatus from biking.

Weafer said he may pedal to class a little this year at WKU.

Also, he saw some beautiful bike paths on this summer's trip. In the future, he may take his bike on vacations and enjoy some of those trails.

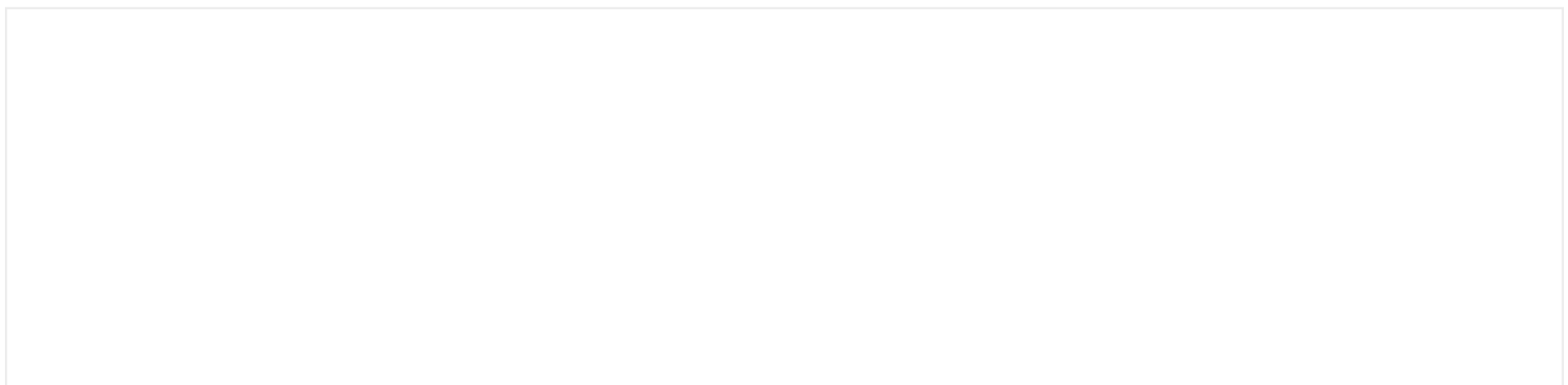
But no more 120-mile days or Cameron Passes.

"I think I will really enjoy casual bike riding," Weafer said. "... I have a new appreciation for people who bike to work or bike regularly."

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## **Video and Slideshows**

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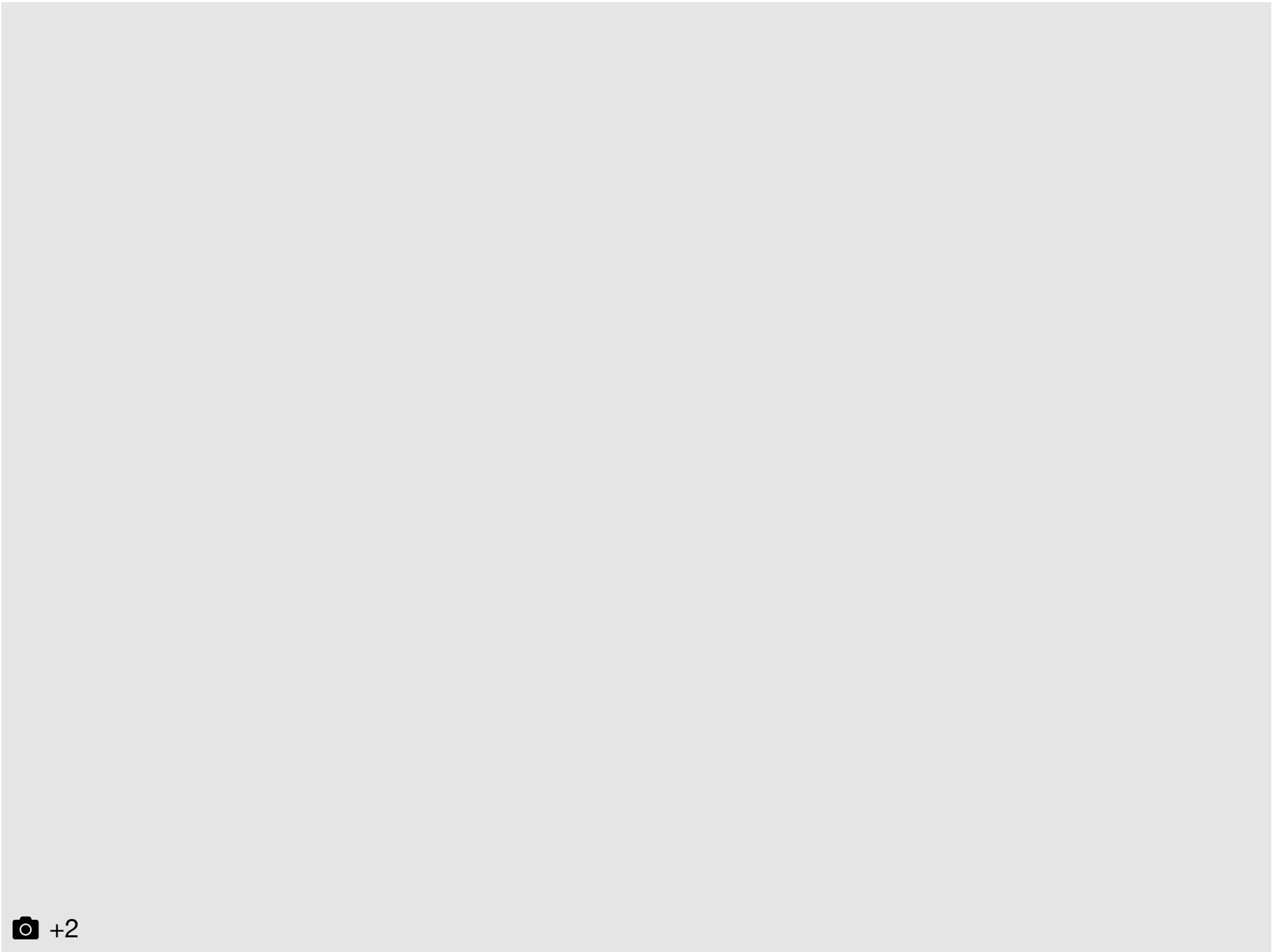


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## KSP jail incident

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 +2

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