



# Larry O'Reilly

BY ALEX STRICKLAND



“WHEN YOU CONNECT THESE DOTS ACROSS THE COUNTRY, YOU SEE SO MUCH YOU WOULDN'T SEE IF YOU DROVE THE WHOLE ROUTE.”

## Auto parts magnate's business is transportation – much of it on two wheels

→ LARRY O'Reilly is not a guy interested in going halfway. After graduating from southwest Missouri's Drury University, he had to choose between an offer from a huge, multinational company that promised advancement, security, and a chance to return to the Show-Me State after a decade or so of moving around or joining his father and grandfather and their small but promising auto parts business.

“Even back then there was talk of electric cars or turbine cars or things like that, and I wanted a chance to grow and make some money and put down some roots,” O'Reilly said. “My dad told me, ‘We're not in the auto parts business, we're in the transportation business, and the public has a love affair with their vehicle, no matter what it is.’”

For O'Reilly currently the vice chairman of O'Reilly Auto Parts' Board of Directors after a career helping grow the company from a single Springfield, Missouri, store to operating locations in 43 states, it just so happens that the auto parts magnate is in love with bicycles.

O'Reilly — a scholarship basketball player in his college days — rediscovered cycling around age 30 after years of pounding on the court and running started to take a toll on his body. He jumped into the sport

headlong, joining long-distance rides and events like Pedal the Peaks, Tour of Colorado, Ride the Rockies, and Adventure Cycling's Cycle Montana. It was on one of these rides that a group of cross-country cyclists ended up in camp with O'Reilly's group.

“I met these people and I thought, ‘Now that's something I'd love to do,’” O'Reilly recalled. And being a man of action, that's exactly what he did — three times.

With plenty of experience as both an avid recreational and touring cyclist, O'Reilly tackled Adventure Cycling's TransAm Trail and Great Divide Mountain Bike Route each in a single summer, then split the Sierra Cascades Route into two summers to accommodate busy schedules — and a few detours to take in seven national parks on or near the route.

“When you connect these dots across the country, you see so much you wouldn't if you drove the whole route,” he said. “The way you see the land at the speed of a bike is a great way to see America.”

Seeing the country from a bicycle saddle along huge swaths of the Adventure Cycling Route Network is what helped inspire O'Reilly to go from a member of Adventure Cycling — which he's been for 20 years — to a life member in 2013.

“I fell in love with the concept

COURTESY LARRY O'REILLY

## LIFE MEMBERSHIP

*A lifetime of benefits and long-term support for bicycle travel.*

Funds from the Life Membership program are put into a special account to provide long-term support for Adventure Cycling Association. In the past, these funds have helped us purchase and update our headquarters building, saving us thousands of dollars in interest payments.

If bicycle travel is an important part of your life, please consider making a lifetime commitment by joining as an Adventure Cycling Life Member. To find out more, visit [adventurecycling.org/membership](http://adventurecycling.org/membership) or give Julie Huck a call at 800.755.2453 x214.

Thanks to these new life members who joined with their support in the last year:

- Christiana Aguiar, New York, NY
- Randall & Barbara Angell, Bothell, WA
- Gerry Bird, Woodbury, MN
- Matthew Bond, Washington, DC
- Leila Brammer, Minneapolis, MN
- Peter Brandow, Newport Beach, CA
- Ron Core, Ashland, AL
- William & Christine DeLoache, Boiling Springs, PA
- Nora M. Elliott, Anchorage, AK
- Jay Evans, Cape Elizabeth, ME
- John Fugett, Anchorage, AK
- Elizabeth Gemmill, Conshohocken, PA
- Daniel Gerdts, Minneapolis, MN
- Adam Greengrass, West Chester, PA
- Chris Guibert & Amy Oestreich, Calumet, MI
- Ruth Havican & Karen Holcomb, Missoula, MT
- Darrell Hobson, Tuscaloosa, AL
- Scott & Delinda Hood, Arlington, VA
- Steven Koch, Chicago, IL
- Kevin LaVerdiere, Youngsville, NC
- Elaine Leech, Manheim, PA
- John Marchetti, Anchorage, AK
- Ruth Miller & Linda Cathey, Eugene, OR
- Kathleen & Richard Quist, Dallas, TX
- Michael Romain, Sunrise, FL
- Fletcher Schneeflock, Easthampton, MA
- David E. Shuey, West Chester, PA
- Terry E. Vega, Steeleville, IL
- Jean M Willis, Cincinnati, OH

of Adventure Cycling supporting cycling, advancing new routes, and having the right mindset for what I was feeling very passionate about myself,” he said. “The things Adventure Cycling is involved in are always from a little different angle with the long-range plan to

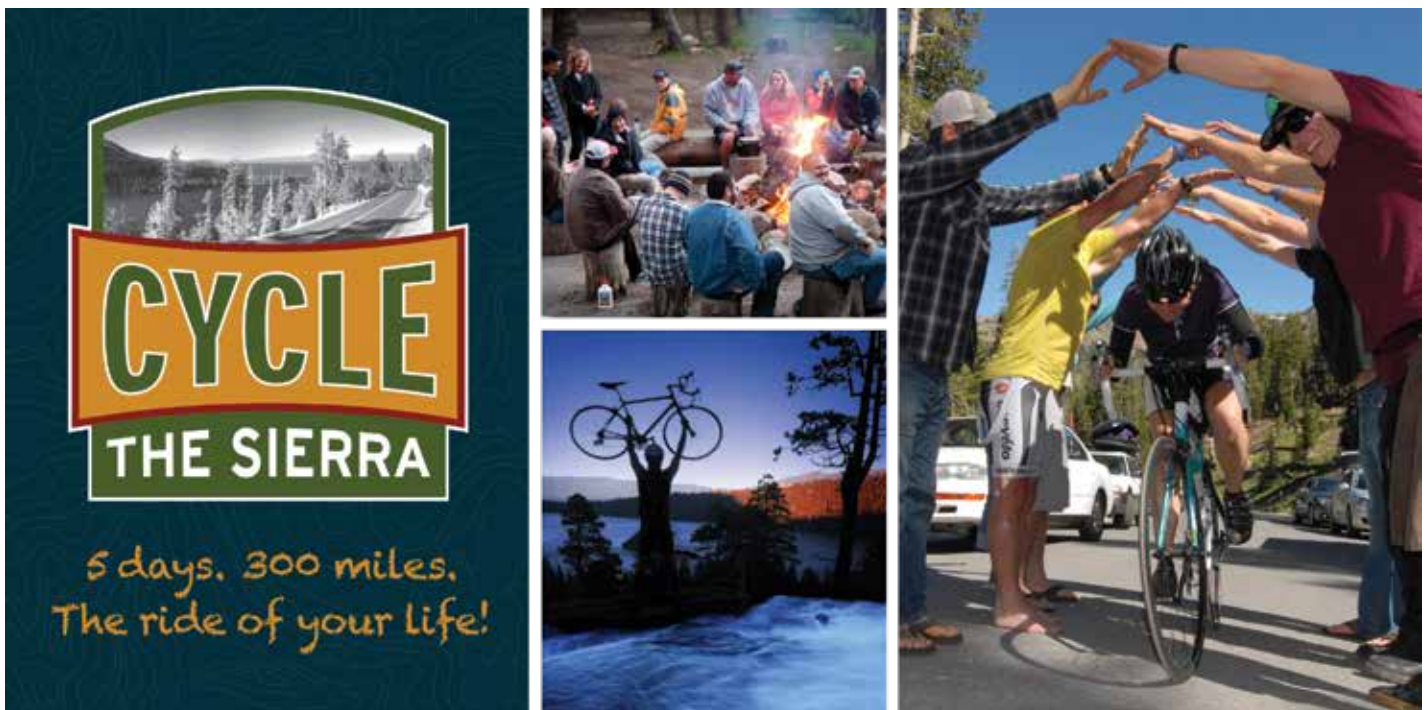
give people like me more riding opportunities.”

The 68-year-old isn't planning to slow down, either, with an unsupported tour of the Southern Tier Route from St. Augustine, Florida, to San Diego, California, planned for early summer 2015 with his girlfriend,

who he met on what else? A bike tour, of course.

“I'm not young, but I don't expect this one to be my last.” **AC**

*Alex Strickland is the Managing Editor of Adventure Cyclist magazine and most recently purchased an alternator for a mid-90s Ford truck at O'Reilly Auto Parts.*



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