

# Maddog Unleashed

## The Accidental Tourist: Enjoying a Road Trip, If Only Between the Ears

*For my part, I travel not to go anywhere, but to go. I travel for travel's sake. The great affair is to move.*  
—Robert Louis Stevenson, “Travels With a Donkey”



**BY PATRICK O'GRADY**

Ever find yourself trudging along in a rut? Doing the same ol', same ol', day in and day out? As stale as jailhouse bread? That's me lately, and it doesn't exactly feed the old comedy beast.

That this has been an exceptionally damp, cool summer has not helped. In truth, we never really had one. Monsoon season we got—nearly twice as much rain as is normal in July. But summer? Not so much.

Rain drove me out of Oregon back in 1983. Here, where I am tethered to property, it could only drive me out of my mind. I came to feel a bleak kinship with my paternal grandfather, who fled soggy auld Ireland for the sunny shores of America. The whiskey wasn't nearly as good, but at least it wasn't pissing down rain all the bloody time.

A brisk ride usually jollies me out of a black Irish funk. But after abandoning cyclocross racing some years back I became a fair-weather cyclist and thus my bikes grew moldy in the garage. Then a dodgy knee curtailed my running, and so I took to hiking—stumbling along in actual ruts from the heavy July runoff instead of the figurative ones in my skull.

**To the Nuthouse, Harch.** Actually, the two journeys are conjoined, because an irritable man who walks a lot has plenty of opportunity to take cadence count from the voices in his head. There are no texting drivers to dodge, no shambling iPlodders to skirt, and one's superfluous vigilance can be redirected inward.

My voices told me that I had more than rain on the brain; there were a couple sticky links in my rusty cerebral chain. The racing scene was Lance Armstrong ad nauseam, the industry news wasn't exactly a bouquet and a spritz of champagne, and here I was, up to the hubs in cranial sludge, a poor schlub trying to hitch a ride to Giggle City from the corner of Tedium and Gloom in Downerville.

Time for a career change? Maybe. More than a few readers and an editor or two might say so. But there aren't any jobs around here, much less careers. And anyway, I still like cycling, when it's not raining, and I like writing about it, too, even when the reviews involve the kind of rave one has come to expect from a health-care rally.

**It's Not a Job, It's An Adventure.** And then, out of the blue, came a note from Michael Deme, editor of *Adventure Cyclist*, the magazine of the Adventure Cycling Association.

“Ever done any touring?” he asked.

Well, no. I've cycled for transportation and exercise, for yuks and giggles, ridden uncounted centuries and races—but I've never loaded up a bike with panniers full of this and that and trundled off in search of adventure, or taken part in a supported tour.

Anyway, we exchanged a few e-mails, discussed a couple of story ideas, agreed to talk more later. And while nothing may come of it, the thought of exploring a road less traveled, examining a different type of cycling—and casting the wide loop of my belligerent ignorance over a herd of unsuspecting cyclo-tourists—cheered me right the hell up. There was a whiff of vacation about it.

A guy needs something to look forward to, especially if it's late August and the furnace has just clicked on. You know what that means—winter, which means snow, which is basically really cold rain that you have to shovel.