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BIKING MEA. AMERICA I

Rock in soft place means end of road

Chicago-based Jerry Soverinsky is riding coast-to-coast and documenting his trip weekly in the Herald

By JERRY SOVERINSKY SPECIAL TO THE HERALD

A 4-mm pebble has brought a temporary suspension to my cross-country trip. No, I'm not talking about a roadside stone that sent me tumbling over my handlebars (a la my summer of 94). Rather, this stone is lodged precariously somewhere inside my left kidney.

The cycling in Northern Mich-igan had been some of the most scenic of my trip. Tree-lined roads, rolling hills, scenic bluffs that overlook the Great Lakes, idyllic villages teeming with mom and pop shops peddling homemade ice cream and fudge - not to mention some of the best beef jerky I've ever tasted. After reaching Harbor Springs (45 miles south of the upper peninsula), I spent the Labor Day weekend with my family, who were vacationing in the bustling resort town.

During three very restful days, my peak cardiovascular activity consisted of reaching for the television remote and opening stubborn bags of Doritos. And so, as my family was set to return to suburban Detroit, I was anxious to resume pedaling, if only to work off the six or seven pounds of junk food that were pressing on my gut.

6:30 a.m., Labor Day: I'm lying in bed, in the fetal position, writhing in pain. Something was clearly wrong, I thought, while puking in my dad's car en route to the nearest hospital.

7:35 a.m., Petoskey, Mich., emergency room: The nurse in-serts an IV pain killer into my left wrist, after which I endure a battery of tests. An hour later, the doctor appeared with the results of my CAT scan. "See this blah, blah, next to this lateral blah, blah, blah?" he asked. He glanced at me, and my helpless look prompted him to change tack. "You've got a kidney stone."

"Can I have another candy bar, Mr. Wonka?" I responded, the IV pain killer clearly showing its effects.

I accompanied my family home, where I'm anxiously waiting to pass the stone.

In the meantime, I've been catching up on a ton of summer shows on the Cartoon Network. Also, my cycling butt burn has gone away, as has the pain in my wrists, a result of eight hours of daily cycling. All very positive, of course. But I'd gladly trade them all - even the cartoon thing - if I could just pass this stone.

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