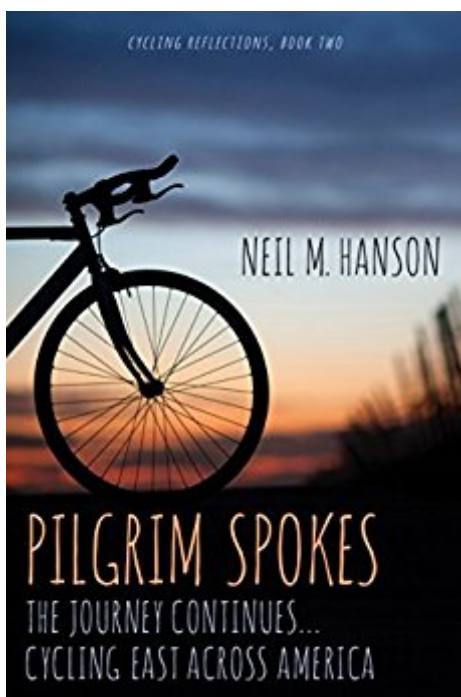


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Pilgrim Spokes: Cycling East Across America (Cycling Reflections Book 2)



Synopsis

The Journey Continues... Book 2 in the Cycling Reflections series
A Captivating Adventure
Reflected in Beautiful Prose
Pilgrim Spokes weaves a story around the eastern half of Hanson's cross country bicycle journey, continuing the saga begun in his award-winning previous book, Pilgrim Wheels. More than just a journal of a bike ride across the country, Hanson's delightful and beautifully written story takes the reader on an engaging pilgrimage of observation and reflection. Often hilarious, sometimes poignant, and always inspiring, it's a must-read adventure that will stir your soul.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I had read Neil's first part of this adventure in "Pilgrim Wheels" and couldn't wait for the rest of the ride in this book. It certainly did not disappoint! Neil is almost my age so this was a story that I could identify with better than youngsters that take long rides out of college to put off getting a job. Neil has been there and done all that, this was an adventure he took as a mature adult, like me. Although there is a bit of technical stuff for bikers most of the book is more about people he met,

rode with, stayed in their B&B, or ate in their diners. It's the relationships that he forms on the trip that makes it so interesting to me, if you are people person then you will love his stories. He talks honestly, mostly very positive, but does mix in some of the not-so-nice side of bike travel. Neil is a talented author that really keeps your interest in the story. My only disappointment was that he got all the way across the country, his ride was one, so my question is- Where next, Neil? Now that I have retired I hope to run into him on the road somewhere!

Pilgrim Spokes picks up where Pilgrim Wheels left off and continues the journey to its conclusion. You should read *Wheels* before *Spokes* to get to know Neil (and Dave) because we are picking up in Medicine Lodge Kansas and riding to Annapolis Maryland. There is a companion book *Pilgrim Way* that details the specifics of the ride from the detailed route, mileage logs, gear, etc. that is interesting for the serious cyclists who can get into those statistics. In *Spokes*, as in *Wheels*, Neil continues in his stream of consciousness style of reflecting on things around him, in front of and behind him, his life, society, history, the people he meets and the natural world around him, capturing well the stream of thought one experiences while out on a bike for an extended time and which experienced cyclists know well. It's one of the perks of getting out on a bike. Neil is a skillful writer and the book reads easily from place to place. It is not just for cyclists, but reading it makes a strong case for becoming one. I think most cyclists have a dream of one day doing what Neil did, and unless you are in your 20's and can ride with big panniers and sleep in parks, Neil's minimalist approach is the way to go. I understand there is another book in the works on a South to North journey along the Natchez Trace. Can't wait.

After reading Neil's book about the first half of his cross-country bike ride, I was eager to read this one about the second half, though I wondered if it would be as good. Turns out it's actually better. In this tale, recounting the ride from the Midwest to points east, Neil has honed his observational skills and does an even better job of blending in-the-moment travelogue with cogitations on the bigger meaning of it all. What I liked best about both books is that they allowed me to join the trip vicariously and experience the road as Neil and his cycling buddy did. I could relate to the joys and miseries he details and felt the pleasure of recognition when he described places I have been. I particularly liked reading about his encounters with the people along the way, often fellow travelers, waitresses, motel proprietors, and the like. It still amazes me that Neil had the stamina and overall fitness to undertake this ride. It inspires me to know that at an age when many men morph into couch potatoes, Neil is still out there facing the same physical challenges that he undertook 35

years ago.

Neil's book is a truly great read... and it went by too fast! The stories he shares along the way make the reader experience pedaling along with a new friend out on the road. Descriptions of the small towns, rural roads and landscapes he cycled through paint a great visual image of America from the saddle. Neil shares his unforeseen challenges and their unexpected rewards, both internal and external, along the way in an honest tone and, as great story teller's do, allows us to not only share the adventure, but also feel that adventure along with him. Thanks Neil... I can't wait for the next book!

I enjoyed Pilgrim Spokes (part 2) as much as I did the first book. I don't think it really stands on its own, but is at its best when read after Pilgrim Wheels. This book tells of the second half of Neil Hanson's cross-country bike trip. In this, Neil is riding with his friend Dave at the start. Neil and Dave are close to my age, and I, too, am a bike tourer, and so I especially enjoyed their banter. But in the midst of that conversation, I was aching to read more details of their riding! Parts of the dialogue had almost a "My Dinner With Andre" feel to it. In this book, sometimes Neil rides alone and sometimes, with a friend. I like the mix of those experiences. Like with the first book, Neil captures the mindset of the experience, with plenty of great detail sprinkled in. The author's philosophical / poetic view of the world made for enjoyable reading. This book filled me in on more details of Neil's "outside" life, something I liked. He merged it well with his present experience. I expect that cyclists and non-cyclists would enjoy this equally. I found myself thinking about this book, even when not reading it. I also shared some anecdotes with friends. That's a sign of a good book. While not a page-turner, this place was a happy place for me to be.

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