

# “Bicycling Historic Route 66”

*Tracy & Peter Flucke*

**B**e careful if Tracy and Peter Flucke invite you to join them on a bicycle ride as you might not be back for a while. This adventuresome couple is just as likely to pedal across the USA as they are to enjoy a leisurely outing from their home in northeastern Wisconsin.

In *Bicycling Historic Route 66: Our Adventure Crossing the USA on a Bicycle Built for Two*, the Fluckes invite you to join them on their epic 2016 ride along the “Mother Road” that was billed as the best route from Chicago through St. Louis to Los Angeles when it was established in 1926. Tracy and Peter take turns sharing their perspectives of the challenges they faced in the form of heat, wind, and scarcity of services while enjoying all that America’s most iconic highway has to offer.

## About Tracy and Peter Flucke

Tracy and Peter Flucke (*pronounced FLU-key*) are president and vice president of WE BIKE, etc., LLC, a Green Bay, Wisconsin, consulting firm that specializes in the areas of engineering, education, enforcement, and encouragement for walking, bicycling, and healthy communities.

The Fluckes are enthusiastic bicyclists, runners, and outdoorsmen. They bring passion to their work in helping communities and citizens improve pedestrian and bicycle safety and access by looking at the world through bicyclist and pedestrian eyes. Both are experienced and well-respected presenters.

Tracy and Peter have completed three unsupported cross-country bicycle trips on their tandem: Northern Tier – 2014 (4,362 miles); Mississippi River – 2015 (3,052 miles); Historic Route 66 – 2016 (2,603 miles).

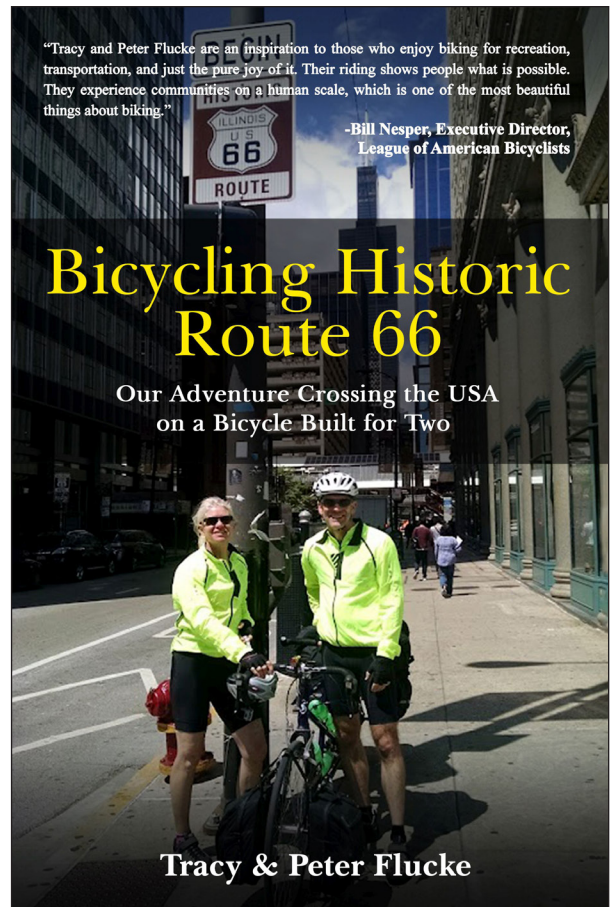
**Tracy and Peter’s first book, *Coast to Coast on a Tandem*, chronicles their Northern Tier trip.**

### Contact Information

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Separate image files and a complete PDF copy of the book are available in advance of interviews/reviews. See the following pages for a sample chapter from *Bicycling Historic Route 66*.



Tracy & Peter Flucke



# Excerpt from *Bicycling Historic Route 66*

by Tracy and Peter Flucke

## Day 26

June 28 – Erick, Oklahoma, to Groom, Texas  
77 miles (total miles – 1,494)

Warm, 87-94 degrees, sunny, slight cross and tailwind

### Peter

Just west of Alanreed, our route takes us on the shoulder of I-40 for about six miles. There are no other roads to ride on. We have ridden on interstate highways before in Montana and North Dakota during our Northern Tier trip, so this is nothing new to us. There is a nice, wide, fifteen-foot shoulder to ride on and we are protected by rumble stripes. It is no big deal as long as we use extreme caution at the on and off ramps.

We try to cross at the narrowest point to improve our safety at freeway ramps. The less time we spend in the path of speeding motor vehicles, who are not expecting to encounter bicyclists, the better. We avoid crossing at the beginning of the ramps, where the distance is greatest, and instead ride the shoulder part way down the ramp. When Tracy, who is looking back over her shoulder for overtaking traffic, yells “Clear!” we cut back to the main road shoulder at a ninety-degree angle. If there is no safe gap in traffic, we simply continue down the ramp and then ramp back on the other side.

The fatality rate for a bicyclist struck by a motorist going just 30 mph is approximately 50 percent. At 60 mph, the fatality rate is almost 100 percent. The speed limit on this stretch of interstate is 75 mph.

### Tracy

For the first time on this trip, we have to ride on I-40. It sounds scarier than it is. The motor vehicle drivers are great and typically pull over to the left lane when they go by. We especially like the professional truck drivers. They just get it, and when at all possible, move over one lane for us. They also are typically friendly, and it is not uncommon for us to receive a little beep-beep and a wave when they go by.

### Peter

One advantage of riding on the interstate is that there are rest areas with water, bathrooms, air conditioning, and snacks. We stop at one for a short break. Several other travelers in the parking lot look at us quizzically as we roll in. Eventually, a couple wander over to ask, “What the heck are you doing here on your bicycle?” We laugh and explain that historic Route 66 takes us on the interstate because there are no other roads available for us to get through the area. This sparks a rush of the usual questions, “Where are you from?” “You bicycled all this way?” “Where are you going?” We have heard them all before and happily answer every last one.

The Gray County Safety Rest Area sits on a high hill

and has amazing views. It also has interpretative information inside about the wind turbines, which are abundant in this area.

After exiting the interstate, we have another twenty miles to ride to Groom (pop. 566) our ending point for the day. The road finally levels out five or so miles east of Groom, and we pick up a tailwind. We make it to our motel by 3:30 p.m. It is nice to be in early for a change. We are spending the night at the Chalet Inn. What a pleasant surprise. Even though it is an old property, it is clean and comfortable. Just what a couple of hot and tired bicyclists need.

Groom is known for the Leaning Tower of Texas, a nonworking water tower that was brought in as a marketing ploy. The owner, Roger Britten, bought the tower from an adjacent town and purposefully installed it at an 80-degree angle, with two legs in the ground and two dangling in midair. His truck stop and restaurant were very popular with this attraction. Unfortunately, there is no longer a restaurant or truck stop here, but the Leaning Tower remains and got us to stop and take a look.

For dinner, we discover this little ice cream place known locally as DQ. No, really! It is our only choice for food, other than the gas station next door. (And our diets were going so well, too!)

## Day 27

June 29 – Groom to Amarillo, Texas  
52 miles (total miles – 1,546)

67 degrees and stormy in morning, hot afternoon, 94 degrees, tailwind

### Peter

The wind abruptly shifts to the north (a crosswind) five miles into the ride and increases to 15-25 mph. This is no big deal as the storm clouds are still a comfortable distance to the north, although we are now moving much more slowly. At this point, I start looking for possible shelter, freeway underpasses, grain elevators, etc., just in case.

With a grain elevator, and likely shelter, far off in the distance, we continue west. The clouds are beautiful, but I notice they are starting to form a wall, and they are getting closer. I do not say anything to Tracy, yet I am starting to get concerned. As a trained weather spotter who has seen more than his share of bad weather, including tornadoes, I know this cloud formation could indicate a strong gust front, unrideable and possibly dangerous conditions. Then we start to see rain and finally, LIGHTNING!

Although I used to make high-risk traffic stops and search dark buildings for bad guys with guns as a cop, I do not do lightning. Lightning makes me stupid scared, especially out in the open like this. Time to get the hell off the road. We try to pick up our pace, but now the wind is

even stronger. Fortunately, by this time we are within a half mile of what we recognize to be a very large old farm equipment storage building, and the door is open. It is not raining yet as we ride straight to the barn so we can take cover if need be. The radar on my smartphone does not look promising.

### **Tracy**

When we finally get to the pole barn, I really need to go to the bathroom and wander around the back side to find a spot. As our primary navigator, I carry the map safely tucked in a plastic bag (in case of rain) in my back pocket. When I stand up after doing my thing, the map flies out of my pocket and away it goes. \$#!+! ... I take off after it, but the wind is so strong there is no way I will catch it. The map blows across a driveway and is heading toward farm fields that stretch as far as the eye can see. The map is gone and will probably end up in New Mexico. Now what? Peter is going to kill me. Miraculously, the plastic bag gets hung up on the barb wire fence surrounding the fields. Thank goodness! I run over, snatch the map and hold it tight to my chest. I am so glad I do not have to tell Peter I lost the map.

### **Peter**

This is not the first time that Tracy has, almost, lost our map out in the middle of nowhere. When we were riding across the country on the Northern Tier route, we stopped on a two-lane, gravel road near the Idaho/Montana border so she could, again, go to the bathroom. A mile or so after we were back underway, I asked Tracy how far it was to our next turn because I was getting concerned that our gravel road should have turned back to pavement already. Her response, "I lost the map!"

"Seriously?" I replied. Fortunately, we were able to turn around and follow our tire tracks right to the spot where the map had fallen onto the road, right where Tracy had rested it on the back of the bike. Lucky there was not any wind that day.

Fifteen minutes later, the storm hits! There is no thunder or lightning, but the wind and rain are intense. Although the building is dark and dirty, it is dry. I pass the time playing with my phone while Tracy leans up against a piece of farm equipment and goes to sleep. Impressive! Usually I am the one who can sleep anywhere and through anything.

## **Accolades for *Bicycling Historic Route 66***

"Two gritty athletes give us a peek behind the curtain to see what it would be like to pedal great swaths of the country on a tandem bike. Along the way, we come to realize how unassuming and friendly they really are, which helps resolve one of the great mysteries of the book: how they manage to stay married through it all."

**-Steve Horrell, retired reporter for the *Edwardsville (Illinois) Intelligencer***

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"*Bicycling Historic Route 66* is more than just a travelogue; it's a journey of discovery that educates and entertains in equal measure. Tracy and Peter Flucke's adventure along the iconic Route 66 is filled with rich historical context, fascinating insights, and humorous anecdotes that make learning a joy. A must-read for adventurers, history buffs, and lifelong learners alike."

**-Nick Burgraff, PhD, cycling enthusiast and physiologist**

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"Peter and Tracy always delight with their joyous posts about their tandem adventures. I love the "he says – she says" format as each perspective offers insight into what unfolds as they journey across iconic Route 66."

**-Diane Jenks, host and producer of *The Outspoken Cyclist* podcast**

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"A fast and enjoyable read, Tracy and Peter's mile-by-mile concerns of weather, water, food, safety, and maintenance remind us of early motorists' priorities on the young and rugged US Highway 66."

**-Cheryl Eichar Jett, author of *Route 66 in Illinois***

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"I have yet to encounter anyone in my personal or professional experience who can surpass Tracy and Peter Flucke when it comes to bike safety expertise and endurance riding preparation."

**-Attorney Jon R. Pinkert**