

Where's Bixby? Biking for Rescue Animals!

Bixby, a 5-year-old border collie mix, has a personal goal. She and her human, Mike Minnick, want to spread the word about the joys of adopting shelter animals by bicycling around the United States. Well, Mike bicycles. Bixby rides along in a Bixby-sized crate on the back of his special cargo bike, enjoying the scenery and occasionally taking a nap.

Together, they have visited more than 80 animal shelters from Maine to California during a two-year adventure that has topped 8,200 miles and 31 states... and rising.

Last weekend, they visited Pacific Grove rescues, Animal Friends Rescue Project and Peace of Mind Dog Rescue, and set about finding a place to stay by posting on social media.

"I don't ride in the rain," said the otherwise affable Minnick, and the pair settled in to outlast the storm in Pacific Grove before heading down the coast. He was also waiting for a replacement for a faulty laptop computer so that he could continue putting his travels online.

Bixby, ever one to make the best of any situation, showed her skills at "fetch" to the people at this newspaper office, inviting Katie to toss a leaf (not so easy) and sharing a plastic container lid with Dana as if it were a Frisbee. She even played with a wadded up piece of paper.

Between Minnick and Bixby, they've made friends wherever they've gone and share thousands of memories on their Facebook page: skimboarding, sailing, sleeping in a luxury home on a bluff overlooking the ocean...or under a bush with homeless people, or on a boat trailer in a parking lot in Port Townsend, WA...

Minnick wasn't necessarily an avid bicyclist when he started the adventure. He was tending bar in Austin, TX and feeling generally unfulfilled when someone gave him a ticket to Burning Man. Gregarious man that he is, he met new friends there, and wound up living in a school bus in a "crazy community," Terlingua, TX, a ghost town that hosts a population of adventuresome people. He and Bixby bought the bike, a Yuba



Memories of Bixby's visit to Pacific Grove, AFRP and Peace of Mind Dog Rescue: Scott Broecker took photos of the friendly dog and her outgoing human, Mike Minnick. Minnick was waiting for repairs to his laptop and Bixby took in the dog-friendly atmosphere despite the weather.



Mundo, got a flat tire, and put it aside for about nine months. He was enjoying doing a little "ride sharing" with a small truck he bought, advertising on Craig's List to share rides to places he'd never been, when the truck broke down. Everyone had been making fun of him and the bicycle, he said, so he decided to show them all and do a test run.



On May 15, 2013 he left out of Galveston, having loaded up Bixby and 100 pounds of camping gear, dog food, and a doggie bed and pedaled to Texarkana for a family reunion with step-siblings he hadn't seen since he was 14. "It gave me back my family!" he said.

He made up his mind to do something he told himself he'd never do. He sold all of his possessions and narrowed his bills down to one, a phone. He borrowed a little money from his folks and set off. Since then, he's been treating life like "the adventure it's supposed to be." Yes, it's an adventure, but preaching the gospel of shelter animals makes it more of a mission.

Minnick's journey began in September 2013 when he and Bixby got a ride to Lubec, Maine (The Easternmost Town In the U.S.). From there they pedaled the East Coast to Key West, FL, before heading to New Orleans – where they rode in the Mardi Gras parade – and back to Texas. From Texas they headed north through Oklahoma, Colorado, Wyoming and Montana to Washington. They are now on their way down the West Coast, visiting shelters and talking to everyone he meets about how adopting a shelter animal is superior to buying one from a puppy mill.

Minnick says, "If you love animals, donate to your local shelter or rescue. Puppies should not be a for-profit commodity."

They don't have a set route. There are certain events Minnick has set his sights on, like one in Los Angeles coming up soon. He has a collection of photographs bar none, showing the ever-cooperative Bixby posed with sharks and moose and dinosaurs, just to name a few. On the way they've met some wonderful people and have stories to last a lifetime. But the hours alone with Bixby biking through some of the most fabulous scenery in the world have given Minnick time to think about another project he'd like to begin: children's books about some of the animals they've met. There was an armadillo, a teddy bear, deer, gorillas, alligators, a camel, and of course Chicken Charlie the Safety Chicken who decided to go along for the ride and watch Minnick's back. He'd also like to get on the Ellen DeGeneres Show, or on Jimmy Kimmel Live, to help promote his cause.

When will it end? Bixby and Minnick have no idea. They continue to pedal on, busking for dinner or a place to stay. As Bixby says on their website, "I'm very cute and people can't resist helping me out when my human gets stuck." For now, they're headed south to Big Sur, because Bixby heard there's a bridge on the way that's named after her.

Follow Bixby and Minnick and donate to their cause at www.wheresbixby.com. You can also track his journey at <https://www.facebook.com/wheresbixby.3>.