

# Immersed in the journey

19,000-mile trip  
an inspiring road  
for rider, others

**J**ason Hill plans to spend much of the next two years on his bike.

He has no planned route, no schedule, no hotel or dinner reservations, just \$20 a day, the open road and the dream that by the summer of 2007 (give or take a few months) he'll have traveled about 19,000 miles from Prudhoe Bay, Alaska, to Tierra del Fuego, Argentina.

"A lot of people don't realize what can be done on a bike," said the 34-year-old.

He calls it "Tour Para Bien Estar" – tour for well-being – and he hopes this trip will make a few people realize what can be done not only with a bike, but with a life.

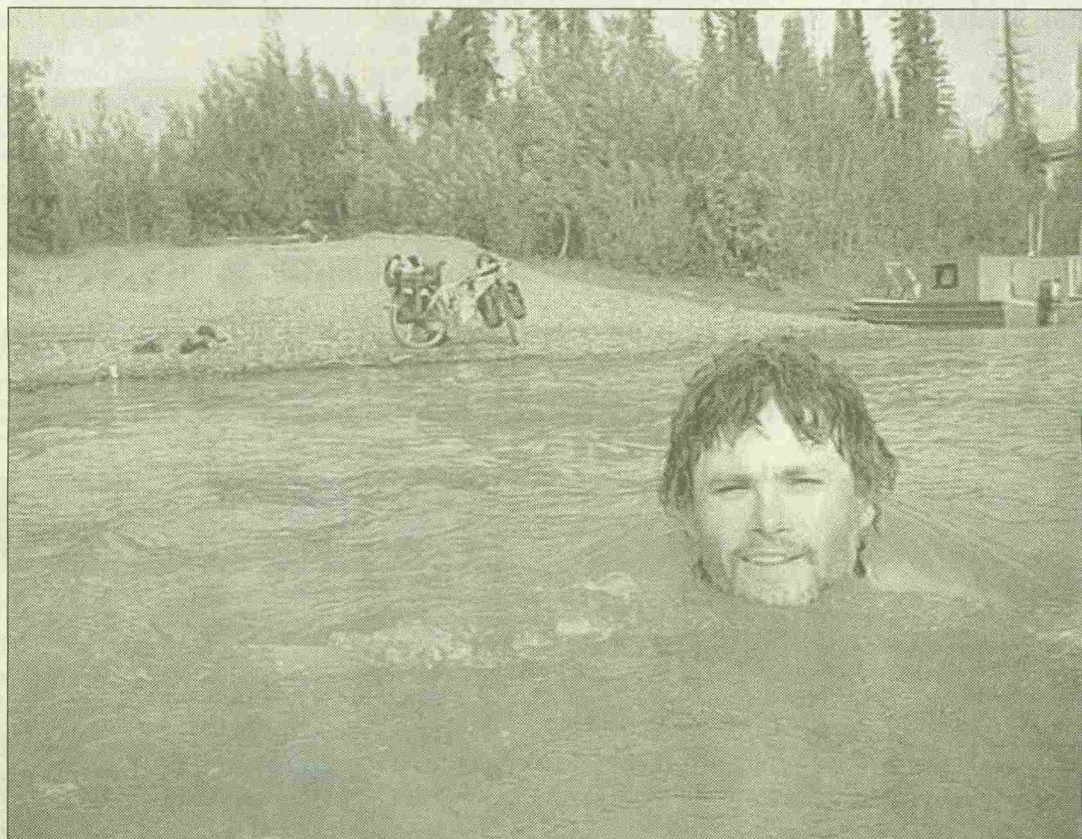
The former Cincinnati resident, a former employee of local bicycle shop Bio-Wheels and a graduate of Brookville (Ind.) High School, is 73 days into his solo journey that started in Northern Alaska. He spoke by phone Wednesday from Valdez, Alaska, where he was awaiting the arrival of his only companion for the trip: a mini-disc player that was coming by mail to help him pass the time. He left Valdez Friday to head toward the Yukon Territory, traveling from 30 to 120 miles a day depending on the weather and terrain.

"When he does something, he does it in full force," said Hill's mother, Lynne Scott. "He's very outgoing, very gregarious. He doesn't know a stranger, and that should help him along the way."

Hill carries on his bike the 100-plus pounds of equipment he needs to be self-sufficient: food, a water filter, a stove, a tent. His route is unplanned, determined by suggestions of friendly people he meets along the way. He already has had people offer their front yards as places to pitch his tent, couches and floors on which to sleep and dinners for him to eat.

"It always restores my faith in the human race, just to be treated so well," Hill said. "It's a recharge of my batteries, to experience the different cultures."

Hill plans to work this winter at a ski resort, take wilderness classes in the mountains, make canoe trips, enter bike races and take a Spanish immersion class in Los Angeles before heading into Mexi-



Provided photo

**Jason Hill**, a 34-year-old former Cincinnati, took some time off from his bicycle trip for a dip in the Yukon River in Alaska in June, the first month of his journey. The trip is expected to last two years.

co. And he has the wildlife to entertain him. He already has seen five brown bears, dozens of moose and bald eagles, a pod of killer whales and swarms of mosquitoes.

Oh, the mosquitoes.

The worst part of the trip hasn't been the rugged terrain of the Dalton Highway or the aching muscles from a 114-mile day or the fear of bears in camp, for which he carries a gun ("You just have to hope you're doing everything correctly," Hill said.). The worst part has been the mosquitoes, hundreds of them. So many that he has inhaled dozens and counted 60 bites on one part of his ankle.

"It's impressive how such a tiny creature in sheer numbers can drive you insane," Hill said.

But he's not about to let some bugs keep him from his longtime goal. Hill began planning the trip five years ago, after he made a three-month bicycle trip down the continental divide with friends.

Three months wasn't enough.

"I wasn't ready to be done, but because of time and money, I had to stop," Hill said. "You always find yourself in a time crunch (on trips), so I needed to plan something that was going to be bigger."

These next two years will incor-

## Online

For more information about Jason Hill or Covenant House Alaska, visit [tourparabienestar.com](http://tourparabienestar.com).

porate a lifestyle Hill, a former Boy Scout, has gotten used to.

He bounced from Cincinnati to Asheville, N.C., to Anchorage, Alaska, where he showed up two years ago with nothing. Within 16 hours, he had secured a job and met three people who would become some of his best friends. He decided to stay in Anchorage, saving money for what he has budgeted to be about a \$15,000 journey, plus emergency funds. He built up his endurance by riding his bike the 20-mile round trip to his work at The Bicycle Shop and Humpy's Alehouse, which are helping him with sponsorship for his journey, including bike parts along the way.

Hill also began volunteering at Covenant House Alaska, a division of the international organization that provides shelter and guidance to homeless and at-risk youth. He worked in the shelter's recreation department, assisting with group outings and maintaining its bicycles so the kids could use them for fun or to get to a job.

Now, he hopes *his* bicycle will inspire some of those kids.

"Jason Hill's bike tour ... will show youth along his route the real-life application of healthy choices and organizational skills and that truly, if youth set their mind on a goal, they can achieve anything," Covenant House Alaska director Deirdre Phayer wrote in a letter.

Hill plans to share his story at Covenant Houses along the way.

"I want to play a more positive role in their lives," Hill said. "I want to encourage youth along the way to keep up with their travels, to inspire them to set goals."

With the help of a friend, Hill maintains a Web site to share his story. He updates it with photos and stories via laptop, one of the few luxury items he has strapped on his bike. His hope is that his story will reach the people he meets along the way, and beyond.

He already has one fan.

"When I read (his Web site), I think, 'Wow, this has got to be some incredible person doing this,'" Lynne Scott said. "Then I realize it's my son doing it, and it gets a little scary. But I am so very proud of him. It's a great undertaking."