

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**Contact: Selena Stevens  
UK Public Relations**PROFESSOR FINISHES CROSS-COUNTRY BIKE TREK**

**July 13, 2000 -- (Lexington, Ky.)** -- University of Kentucky family studies professor Greg Brock brought his unusual summer vacation to an end July 2 when he dipped the tire of his recumbent bike in Atlantic Ocean waters off Tybee Island, S.C. The ritual marked the end of his 3,000-mile bicycle trip across America, from Santa Monica, Calif., to Savannah, Ga.

"I felt very self-satisfied," said Brock, 53, the son of Mrs. Beryl Brock of Nazareth, Penn. "There were moments on the road when I felt as free as I could be in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. There was nothing to do but get down the road. Very infrequently do we get a chance to be as independent as I was then. Those are the moments I will treasure."

A professor at UK since 1987, Brock lives in Lexington, Ky., with his wife, Jeannette Coufal, and their three children ages 16 to 23. Biking across the United States had been a lifelong dream for Brock. However, his year-round teaching requirements had prevented any attempt at the trek. The refinement of online courses at the University of Kentucky and the presence of strong cross-country Internet networks gave Brock a chance to fulfill his dream. With the approval of his college dean and the help of university and other sponsors, Brock spent nine months planning, dubbed his trek "UK Across America" and began June 1 from the Santa Monica Pier in California. He expected to be on the road between 60 to 90 days. In reality, he finished his trip in only 32 days, including a rest day and several low-mileage "rolling rest" days.

"That first day, I was nervous and excited, but scared too. I could hardly believe I was facing 3,000 miles on a bicycle. I had heard horror stories about California drivers, but they turned out to be the most mellow of the motorists I encountered. It was fun passing through towns I'd heard about on Johnny Carson's "Tonight Show," like Coucamunga and Coven, and I rode on part of the old Route 66."

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Brock's first few days were so full of nervousness that he held tightly to the return portion of the airline ticket that had brought him from Lexington to Santa Monica. He slowly forgot about the ticket, though, as the fascinating and historic scenery captivated him. The family professional part of him was excited by the new people he met and the ways of life he observed.

"By the time I was in Arizona, I felt like I was in control," he said.

"The trip gave me an awareness of how complex Americans have become. We are different, and much the same. Mass culture and media have created an awful lot of sameness across the U.S. in housing, dress, cars and habits. But differences were apparent in food, language and pace of life."

Biking during the day, Brock passed almost 100 miles daily while taking in the scenery and talking on his cell phone to students and well-wishers.

"The time passed quickly. I was focused on the road and absorbed in the moment. I had to watch for road hazards, reserve motels, plan the next day, monitor my water and food use, look out for cars and answer the phone. At night, I had to do bike repairs, wash out clothing, tend to my class, write trip journals, eat and sleep.

"We feel the life we live on a daily basis is so jam packed that we just can't do anything else. Compared to my life biking, that other life seems like a luxury now."

A memorable segment of the trip came at the Mississippi River, where Brock found the only option for bike crossing was closed and gated at each end. . Delta, La., mayor Robert Ott gave him a car ride across the river. But, intent on making the entire trip under his own physical power, he squeezed under the bridge's eastern gate and jogged its one-and-a-half mile expanse. The security guard spotted him when he was nearly halfway across the bridge. Warning Brock that he risked arrest and ordering him to get off the bridge, the guard followed Brock the rest of the way, but let him go once the jog was complete.

"I'd overcome so many challenges on the trip," Brock said. "To not overcome this one would have been a big disappointment."

At the end of his trip, a crowd greeted Brock in Savannah's Forsythe Park, including UK alumni and President Charles T. Wethington Jr. and Wethington's wife.

"It was a goal of the trek to push along the discussion about distance learning in higher education," he said. "It's incredibly important in higher education that professors rethink their roles and experiment with styles of teaching, learning and service that go beyond the status quo."

Brock, who is an avid jogger, made it back to Lexington in time to bike in the city's annual Independence Day parade and compete in the 10K run. The run's top finisher in his age bracket for the past few years, Brock came in second this year.

"I guess I must have left my legs on the trek," he said with a smile.