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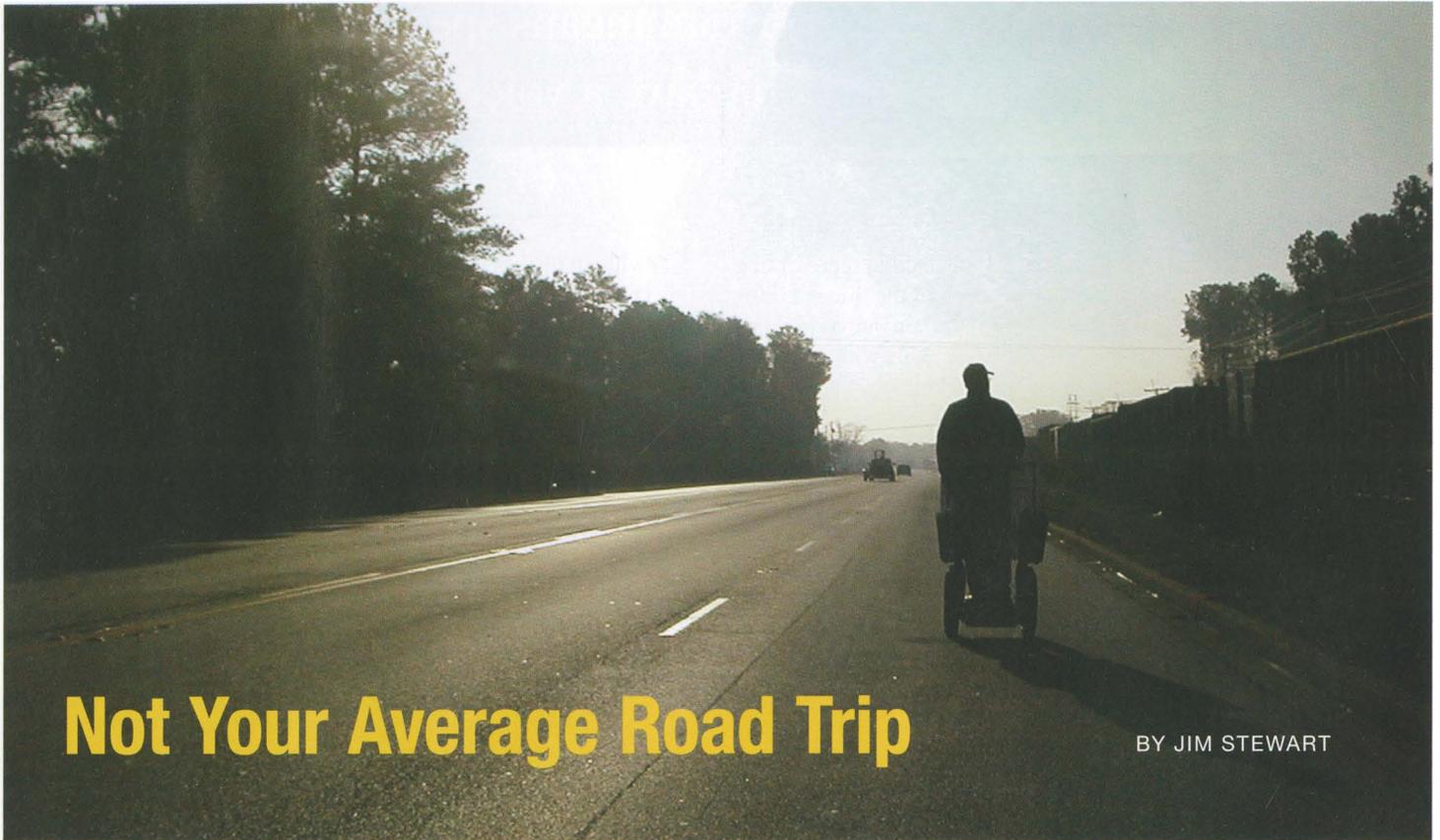
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Not Your Average Road Trip

BY JIM STEWART

A FURMAN SOPHOMORE FINDS A UNIQUE PLATFORM FROM WHICH TO PROMOTE A WORTHY CAUSE.



Braving traffic, sore feet and occasional rough weather, Philip Hammond cruised through more than 35 South Carolina cities during his weeklong "Segway to Awareness." All photos courtesy Philip Hammond.

The independent documentary *10 mph* is the story of two young guys who ditch their humdrum jobs in corporate America to travel across the country, from Seattle to Boston.

Three thousand miles.

On a Segway, the latest in energy-saving human transportation devices.

Call it a giant scooter on batteries. Stand on the platform and go. Reliable, sturdy, no gas required. Its top speed: maybe 12 miles per hour on a good day, so you see why they rounded off the title.

Had the film's producers known about Furman sophomore Philip Hammond, they might well have called him in as a technical consultant or offered him a bit part. He'd have been a good fit, because he knows all about taking a long ride on a Segway.

One week. Two hundred seventy miles. Tryon, N.C., to the South Carolina coast.

Yes, while most Furman students were relaxing over the 2005 Thanksgiving break, Hammond, a Camden resident, was tooling down the highways and byways of his home state.

On the morning of November 19, Hammond climbed aboard his trusty steed in Tryon, just over the state line, and with the backing and encouragement of friends, family and corporate sponsors — the Segway, for example, was courtesy of Louis P. Batson Company of Greenville — he headed out. One week later, he arrived at Sullivan's Island, safe and sound and clad in a Santa Claus outfit.

And he did it for charity.

A member of Pi Kappa Phi, Hammond dedicated his trip to raising awareness for the fraternity's national philanthropy, Push America, which promotes acceptance and understanding of people living with disabilities.

But why a Segway? Wouldn't a bicycle have been faster? And hadn't other Furman Pi Kapps participated in the philanthropy's annual cross country bicycle trek, the Journey of Hope?

Yes, a bike would have been faster, says Hammond. But people are used to seeing cyclists on the road; a Segway, he figured, would attract more attention.

He explains: One day while walking across campus, he spotted a member of the Admissions staff zipping past him on Furman's own Segway, demonstrating to the world the university's cutting-edge, look how green we are mentality.

What struck Hammond most, though, was how he and others reacted as the Segway passed by. They stared. They pointed. They *noticed*.

For Hammond, it was a Eureka moment. Wanting to make a difference and suddenly smitten with the idea of using a Segway to do so, he began mapping out a cross-state route, lining up sponsors and securing commitments for a support crew.

And he practiced — on the Admissions Segway. So when it came time to hit the open road, he was ready.

Starting each morning around 9, he stuck to two-lane roads as much as possible. He typically traveled for four to six hours a day, and although it was cold most of the week, he had only one day of bad weather. But thanks to his sponsors, his waterproof foul-weather gear kept him warm and dry.

While rolling along at an average of 10 miles per hour, he would listen to Harry Potter books on his iPod, gab with his backup car on a walkie-talkie, talk on his cell phone and navigate using a GPS (Global Positioning System) device. He also spent time educating the local citizenry about his cause.

"Some people had heard about the trip — we had pretty good advance publicity — so they would honk and wave," he says. "At stop lights they'd roll down their windows and ask what was up. One woman offered me some Danish pastry. People were really supportive."

From Spartanburg to Clinton to Newberry to Columbia to Orangeburg and beyond, he made good time and stayed on schedule. In the end he raised more than \$6,000 that he knows of, and he distributed many flyers that described Push America and explained how to contribute to the charity.

As for bumps in the road, Hammond says cheerfully that there were few. The battery died in the middle of heavy Columbia traffic, and the governor wasn't available when he swung by the state capitol. Cows tended to panic when he passed, and his feet hurt from standing so long. But overall, he says, it was a pretty easy trip.

The final leg of his journey took him across Charleston's Cooper River Bridge. As he rolled along the bridge's bike/pedestrian sidewalk, passers-by were "going nuts all the way." At the finish line, he was feted with cake and sparkling grape juice.

So what does he do for an encore? He says he's interested in something "equally big," but for the time being he'll focus on school.

At least until he's had time to recharge his own batteries. 🍆

To learn more about Push America and its programs, visit the Web at www.pushamerica.org.

