

Amicus Curious

LaGrange lawyer to ride across Iowa

By Maria Kantzavelos
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The hours that G. Grant Dixon III invests on his bicycle is time he could be putting into his plaintiff personal-injury practice in LaGrange, but the recreational cyclist says rolling over the pavement brings him the balance and clarity he needs to ride the extra mile in law.

"It forces me to step back from my practice in some way and not do legal work when I could be. As strange as it sounds, by doing that, I actually am far more productive than I would be if I just worked more hours," Dixon said. "The math doesn't seem to add up, but I've found it to be absolutely true."

For Dixon, 45, cycling yields a better lawyer.

"The practice of law can make you very unbalanced. You tend to spend a lot of time at work and tend to let other areas of your life kind of slip away, or go in second place," Dixon said. "As the wheels are rolling down the road, it's a really clarifying experience. I know when I'm not riding, I don't feel as fresh, clear-minded, as energized."

"When I'm riding regularly, I actually have more energy during the day," he said. "Rolling down the pavement really does seem to pull out the problems of the day, and it puts a lot of things into perspective. I'm absolutely convinced it makes me a better lawyer."

Dixon said his devotion to cycling for fitness has waxed and waned over the years since he first took up the hobby during college at Indiana University in Bloomington (cycling is "a culture down there," he says).

Dixon, a former Corboy & Demetrio P.C. associate who opened his own practice in 2000, considers himself a non-competitive cyclist. "I don't race," he said.

He said he puts in "saddle time" on the bike almost every day of the week, year-round, and has participated in many



G. Grant Dixon III

bike tours or rides for charity over the years.

Now, Dixon is gearing up for his biggest ride ever.

On Saturday, the trial lawyer from LaGrange will be among some 8,500 cyclists from around the country and overseas kicking off a week-long ride across the state of Iowa as part of RAGBRAI, a non-competitive bicycle ride that touts itself as the longest, largest and oldest bicycle touring event in the world.

Sponsored by The Des Moines Register, RAGBRAI, which stands for Register's Annual Great Bicycle Ride Across Iowa, is heading into its 38th year.

Dixon has known about the annual ride since he first saw it roll through Iowa when he was in Des Moines (where his mother lives), looking for work after graduating from college in 1987 with a degree in business.

"It's a huge event out there," Dixon said.

He landed a job as a copy clerk at a law

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firm there, became “really intrigued” by the work of the lawyers, and decided to head to law school. The 1991 graduate of The John Marshall Law School served as a judicial clerk to U.S. District Court Judge Charles R. Norgle of the Northern District of Illinois before joining Corboy & Demetrio, where he practiced for about eight years before starting his own firm, Dixon Law Office.

In addition to the 8,500 riders participating in the seven-day RAGBRAI, which begins near Iowa’s western border and ends along the eastern border at the Mississippi River, the event includes about 1,500 daily riders. The route changes each year, and an announcement of the small towns and cities included along the route, including those that serve as destinations for overnight stays, is usually made in late January or early February.

“They have this build-up that goes on about it. And when RAGBRAI is rolling through, obviously, significant portions of the state are just shut down,” Dixon said. “You’ve got 10,000 people on bicycles riding through. I would not want to be in a car

next Sunday in Sioux City, Iowa.”

He won’t be. Instead, Dixon plans to trek across Iowa, where “the corn will probably be a little higher than waist high,” on his road bike, averaging 63 miles per day for a seven-day total mileage of 442 miles.

Dixon said he had long wanted to give the tour a try. But when he learned that this year’s ride would travel through the small farming town of Algona, within a mile or two of his grandparents’ home, “I knew I had to ride this year,” he said. “It’s exciting for them to have one of their own participating in something like this.”

For seven days straight, Dixon’s plan is to follow the RAGBRAI route that kicks off from Sioux City on Sunday and heads first to the town of Storm Lake, where he and other riders will camp out for the night after cycling for more than 68 miles that day.

He’ll be riding with a group of cyclists from Algona, he said, with a motor home and trailer, stocked with the cyclists’ gear and clothes for the week, meeting them in each of the overnight towns on the route.

“The next morning we’ll take down the

tent, eat breakfast, get on the bike and ride again,” he said.

All the while, Dixon’s wife “gets the pleasure of spending the week with my three kids on a farm in Algona,” he said.

Dixon said he started preparing for the week-long tour, in earnest, in late January and has since racked up about 1,500 miles on the bike.

“The preparation is just spending a lot of hours on the bike. A lot of it is just the endurance, and lots of time,” he said. “You’ve got to alter your schedule. I’m up at five in the morning and on my bike by 5:15 — rain or shine, whether it’s cold or hot.”

In a sense, Dixon said, training for his biggest ride ever is like trial practice.

In trial practice, “You do all the preparation you think is necessary, and then you do a little bit more, and you go into the courtroom and give it your best shot. You do the best you can and put on your case based on your preparation,” he said. “Here, with RAGBRAI, it’s very similar. I don’t know how everything is going to turn out, but I’ve given it preparation — lots of time. I feel ready, and I’m going to give it my best shot.”