

## Reviewing an Amazing Odyssey – Furst's Fantastic Bike Ride Across the U.S.

**Editor's Note:** *IMPACT* Editor Jeff Hanley recently interviewed Ken Furst, co-president of Levitt-Furst Associates, Ltd., about his recent incredible journey – a 3,600 mile, 48-day solo bike ride across the U.S.!

The full story of Furst's impressive odyssey from last summer—and pictures of his incredible experience—are at [www.kens-bikeride.com](http://www.kens-bikeride.com). Levitt-Furst Associates, Ltd. is the Insurance Manager of The Builders Institute (BI)/Building and Realty Institute (BRI). The firm is based in Yonkers.

**IMPACT:** When did you start planning this journey?

**Furst:** When I was 24 I cycled from San Francisco to Los Angeles along Route 1. It was at that point that I dreamed of one day biking across the country. But I forgot about that dream and got caught up in my career and family. Then, three years ago, when I started thinking about my impending 50th birthday, this goal came back to me. So I went out and bought a bicycle and spent the last three years building up to this.

**IMPACT:** Where did you start from and why did you take the route you took?

**Furst:** The most basic rule of biking across this country is that you want to have the trade winds at your back, so it is much more enjoyable to bike West to East. On Father's Day, I started in Anacortes, Washington, the official starting point of the Northern Tier cycling route across the U.S. I cycled

through the beautiful Cascade Mountains in Washington and Glacier National Park in Montana, and stayed on the Northern Tier Route for two weeks until I hit Harlem, Montana. It was there that I hit my first destination, which was a memorial for my best friend from college, who was killed in an Air Force Training Exercise in 1992. I then left the published route and improvised so that I could visit Mount Rushmore in South Dakota, Field of Dreams in Iowa, and see old friends in Indianapolis and Cleveland.

**“Except for the first two nights of my journey, nothing else was planned.”**

**IMPACT:** Did you camp out along the way and did you have pre-determined locations where you were going to sleep?

**Furst:** Except for the first two nights of my journey, nothing else was planned. Each night I would study maps and determine possible destinations for the next day. I camped out six nights. I stayed in motels and hotels 20 nights. For 12 nights, I was able to stay with friends or friends of friends, or even friends of friends of friends! However, the highlight was the nine nights that I stayed with strangers through a website called Warm Showers. Through this site, I met families that open their homes to cyclists going across the country. I met amazing people and

heard great stories this way.

**IMPACT:** Any scary experiences?

**Furst:** None with people. The people I met were always exceptionally welcoming and open. However, cycling on the roads was a lot more dangerous than I had predicted. The trucks out west go 70-to-80 miles per hour on these back roads, and there isn't always a large shoulder to cycle on. I got run off the road once and had many other close calls. But thank God I had a safe journey. Unfortunately, along the way, I heard many sad stories of cyclists that were not as fortunate.

**IMPACT:** How has the acclimation back into your routine been?

**Furst:** It has been a very strange experience. Within minutes of being with my family, I felt like I never left. And getting back to work at Levitt-Furst was delayed by the 2,000 balloons my employees filled my office to the ceiling with. But once I popped all those balloons, I was back and running. The trip, in my mind, seemed like it happened 100 years ago. I feel great for accomplishing what I set out to do. However, I feel disappointed that the emotions from the experience are hard to recollect. Luckily I have a ton of pictures that help me remember what an experience it was!



Ken Furst, pictured above, cycles along one of the many roads he encountered during his journey.



Ken Furst takes a break from his journey.

## Conference to Review BRI's New Contract with Local 32-BJ

**By Jeff Hanley, IMPACT Editor**

WHITE PLAINS – “A Review of the Building and Realty Institute's (BRI's) New Labor Contract with Local 32-BJ Service Employees International Union” is the topic of the Nov. 18 seminar of the BRI's Collective Bargaining Group (CBG).

The meeting is scheduled for a 6:30 p.m. start. It will be at The Crowne Plaza Hotel in White Plains.

Matthew Persanis, Esq., chief labor counsel for the BRI and its lead negotiator during its recent negotiations with Local 32-BJ, will be the keynote speaker at the event.

Event officials said that Persanis will thoroughly review the series of changes to the BRI's new contract with Local 32-BJ. The agreement, which runs from Oct. 1, 2014 through Sep. 30, 2018, was reached at approximately 5:30 p.m. on Sep. 30, the

final day of the 2010-2014 contract between the two entities.

The settlement, viewed by realty industry officials as a victory for the BRI and its Employer Members, capped two months of intense negotiations between the BRI and Local 32-BJ. Employer Members of the BRI will face Wage Increases of 9.27 percent over the four-year life of the contract.

BRI officials termed those increases as “fair and reasonable” to both parties. The increases are far below those agreed to by the Realty Advisory Board (RAB) in New York City and the increases reached between The Co-op City Complex in the Bronx and Local 32-BJ, realty industry officials added.

Event officials said that Persanis will analyze all financial changes to the agreement, as well as the series of Language Revisions. All of those changes are viewed as positives for

the building and realty sector, realty industry officials said.

More than 430 buildings and complexes compose the BRI's CBG. The BRI bargained on behalf of its Realty Component Councils – The Advisory Council of Managing Agents (ACMA), The Apartment Owners Advisory Council (AOAC) and The Cooperative and Condominium Advisory Council (CCAC). Local 32-BJ represents thousands of building service workers in the New York metropolitan area.

Advance reservations for the seminar are now being accepted at the BRI offices, at (914) 273-0730. Reservations are also being accepted through [jeff@buildersinstitute.org](mailto:jeff@buildersinstitute.org).

The BRI is a building, realty and construction industry membership organization. The association has more than 1,400 members in 14 counties of New York State. Those

members are involved in virtually every sector of the building, realty and construction industry. Founded in 1946, the BRI is based in Armonk.

**Editor's Note:** A full report on the BRI's new Labor Contract with Local 32-BJ begins on page one.

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