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## Family, friends not surprised by pair's ride

By Karen Price, PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE-REVIEW  
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### Photos



Steven Perezluha  
Submitted



Danny Chew  
Submitted

Carol Perezluha wasn't surprised when her 18-year-old son Steven came to her with the notion of riding a bicycle from their home in Florida to Alaska and back.

Worried? Certainly.

What mother wouldn't be?

But she couldn't say no.

"I thought it was amazing; he was reaching for the stars and dreaming big," she said. "Our father always encouraged us to go for our dreams, go where our heart took us and have passion for what we did."

It helped knowing that he would be accompanied by her brother, Squirrel Hill's Danny Chew, 47. And cycling was simply in the blood.

It was Carol Perezluha, who grew up in Squirrel Hill in the house in which her brother and mother still live, who got the rest of the family interested in long-distance cycling in the first place. She started as a teen, riding 100 miles or more in a day. Middle child Tom Chew, 50, proved to be a good sprinter and made the Olympic cycling team in 1980, the year the United States boycotted.

But it was the youngest sibling, Danny Chew, 47, who really took to distance riding, eventually going on to compete in the 3,000-mile Race Across America eight times, winning twice. The whole family would get involved when Chew raced, and Steven Perezluha grew up cheering his uncle on.

"It almost feels like creating Frankenstein, but in a good way," she said.

Steven Perezluha and Danny Chew completed their 19-week, 12,000-mile trip on Oct. 31. While they were gone, the Perezluhas and Chew's mother, Sally, would follow their progress on-line thanks to satellite tracking devices.

"We'd watch that all the time, every day," Sally said. "We'd look at the Internet and see those little marks moving."

There were things that Carol Perezluha didn't know until much later, like the fact that Steven would often ride ahead of Chew then double back because he was faster. But she never wondered whether her son was in good hands.

"Danny isn't married, he doesn't have kids, and we and a lot of his friends think Steven is the closest he'll ever have to a son because he's so eccentric," said Carol Perezluha, a math professor at Seminole State College, where Steven is a freshman environmental studies major. "I trusted Steven with my brother because I knew my brother would protect Steven with his life."

The Perezluhas flew to Alaska and were there when the duo crossed the

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*Karen Price is a Pittsburgh Tribune-Review staff writer and can be reached at 412-320-7980 or via e-mail.*

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border. They brought them bags of freeze-dried food for the rest of the trip and treated them to cabins and motels during the two weeks they spent touring the state.

Then, they said goodbye and flew back to Florida while Chew and Steven Perezluha climbed back on the bikes to begin the ride home. They arrived in Florida more than two months later.

"I just felt like it was such a learning experience for Steven, which is why I didn't mind him taking a semester off from college," Carol Perezluha said. "The things they learned about people, the road, bikes, nature. ... and how to be independent."

Glenshaw's Don Erdeljac, Chew's friend for 16 years, was also not surprised when he learned of the pair's plan. He, too, followed their progress and then kept roughly 100 friends and acquaintances updated via e-mail.

He doubts there are many people who have what it takes to make such an epic journey.

"Danny just was just born with a very strong mental ability to handle adversity and be very enthusiastic," Erdeljac said. I don't see very many other people having that ability, but it comes natural to Danny."

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