

On the road to the end of the world

A story of adventure and love

- North American crosses the Americas and meets the love of his life in Trujillo
- A ballet dancer leaves everything to undergo a bicycle odyssey

By Luis Cabrera Vigo (Translated by Thane House)

The story of Thane House and Berniz Bertinetti reads like a novel of love and adventure. It has all the ingredients to make it more of a cinematic work. The argument is this: a man decides to arrive by bicycle at the end of the world, as Tierra del Fuego is known. The trip is planned to take a year and a half, but halfway along (Peru), he finds the love of his life. With her, he decides to skirt South America and re-enter Peru by way of the Amazon River.

GETTING ON THE BICYCLE

We go back to May of 1997. Thane House is 30 years old, he has just left a Telecommunications company and before kicking cans he decides to get on his bicycle to link one point of the United States with Canada. He took a plane from his native San Francisco, heading to Alaska, and a small town called Homer. It was the 16th of that month. Traveling like this, in the middle of the loneliness of those places, Thane wondered how much time would be required to reach Central America. Researching, he knew that he could do it in a year and a half.

In the adventure to the border with Mexico, he was accompanied by his mother, then he continued alone. He came to run into some Zapatistas. He crossed some poor areas of Guatemala and Honduras. By February of 1998 he was in Colombia.

When he arrived in Quito he had registered 20 thousand kilometers on the wheels of his bicycle. While in Ecuador he set his tent up on the dividing line of the planet. "I slept with half of my body in each hemisphere," he recalls with the smile that characterizes him.



HEART ON THE BIKE

Did Thane imagine that in Trujillo he would find the woman who would accompany him along the rest of his remaining route? Neither he nor she. It was July of 1998.

«In Trujillo I met Berniz, through a friend who has his 'casa de ciclistas' in Trujillo», says Thane. Berniz Bertinetti, ballet dancer, grants her friendship and that of her family to the American, who can spend up to three months in Peru. She would accompany him by bus and backpack to Cuzco and Lake Titicaca.

«She invited me to return to Trujillo for Christmas, but since I do not like to travel backwards (to the north), I proposed to Berniz to meet me in Santiago de Chile», he continues. (The story he relates today in Trujillo, almost five years after the beginning of this adventure).

Thane asks for permission to accompany Berniz for two months from Don Augusto Bertinetti. The initial idea is that she would accompany him from Santiago de Chile to Puerto Montt, then he would continue the route alone and maybe they would not see each other again.

"But in the beautiful landscapes of Puerto Montt we fell in love, and it was impossible to separate. Then, without permission from her parents, I asked her to accompany me to the goal, that is, Ushuaia. She accepted", he tells us, while Berniz shows her album to Cecilia Vera, her partner in ballet times.

TO THE END OF THE WORLD

Thane wanted to get to the southernmost tip of continental South America. This is where the Cross of the Seas is located at the top of a mountain, just where the Pacific Ocean and the Atlantic Ocean meet. This was achieved by arriving at Cape Froward.

There he finds out that Ushuaia and Bahia Lapataia exist, the southernmost city in the world and the end of the Pan American Highway. "It's a perfect place to start or end a bike trip," Thane tells us. In these lands Thane and Berniz encountered days of great danger during which they were almost frozen. They endured horrible climates with snow everywhere. The hardest part



was for Thane because one of those days he started to tremble from so much cold and Berniz's quick attention managed to save his life.

At the Cross the couple left a small monument in cement, with some words about the trip. In Lapataia Bay he had reached 36,582 kilometers. At Cape Froward Thane asked for Berniz's hand in marriage. Just then, a rainbow came out at the end of the Strait of Magellan, as a symbol of the great love they have. This was on August 16, 1999.

RECORD

Thane, along with Berniz, reached a record in Bahía Blanca (Argentina). His odometer marked 40,070 kilometers, the measurement of the circumference of the Earth. In Belem, Brasil, it would reach 51,048 kilometers traveled and at the end of his trip he would reach 52,369 kilometers. The entrance to Peru was made from Belém to Yurimaguas. They left the bicycles in Iquitos and traveled to Trujillo to marry on August 17, 2001.

Berniz Bertinetti:

A ballet dancer who changed her life

A very easy-going person, we met Berniz Bertinetti, now 23 years old. When she began the adventure, she was 19 years old. We talk with her as she and her partner get ready for their next trip, to California.



- Completely different. I studied for eight years. - Not leave, but change, wanted to enjoy my time do work a lot. I wanted to - How did you know Thane? Trujillo. They introduced us women, that they are all skinny.' And he comes over



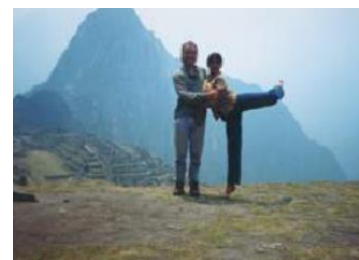
see ballet performances and he stayed two weeks longer than he had planned to stay in Trujillo. Then we fell in love. - The meeting was halfway through his trip... - I met him when he was already traveling. He came from Alaska and came from the north end to the south end. Yes, I met him halfway through his trip. - Tell me about the moment when he proposes that you accompany him. - At first, I took it as a joke. He told me 'come for two weeks, there's nothing to lose, let's go sightseeing'. 'Good, yes, why not?', I thought. Then he told me 'let's go', and we planned only for two months, which was extended. - That is to say that when you separated in Peru you did not think that he was going to return. - I thought that I would never see him again, that maybe we were going to communicate by Internet, but this didn't come up. - At what point do you feel that it was already a strong relationship that was not going to end there? - When we were in Chile, Puerto Mont, we had already finished the time that we had asked permission from my parents and supposedly I had to go back to Trujillo. We arrived in Puerto Mont and he said I should continue... - A very difficult moment ... - I say, I'm already outside, why not? In Trujillo, I have my family, but I left everything to continue with him. I wanted to learn about more places, and we did ... - Thane told us how the trip was, now tell me how did the people you met on the route treat you? - The most incredible thing is that people we had never seen before opened the door of their homes to us. With all the trust in the world. We give them thanks for that. - The trip was only in daylight. - Only in the day, in the nights we rested. We would stop one or two days in a place to wash clothes, sort things out and continue. - You never imagined a trip like this? - Never ever, a totally new experience. I said 'ni loca, it would be the last thing I would have ever done', but from one day to the next, without even thinking about it, we did it... why not? why not...?

- Berniz, what was your life like before meeting Thane?

I was a ballet dancer before I met him.

- But you told me that you just wanted to get out of that ... for example, study administration. At the beginning of 1998 I a little. Some people believe that ballet is not work, but you change my life, and it did change in a way I never imagined.

- I met him through a friend from a "casa de ciclistas" in because he had said that here in Peru there were no thin gorditas. And this friend says 'I know a girl who is very to meet me. We developed a nice friendship, I took him to



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* "The bicycle is my way of pursuing my dreams, it's my magic carpet, without it nothing was possible," says Thane House.