

SAN CLEMENTE

SUN POST NEWS



FRED SWEGLAS, THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

There's no turning back as George Allen and Julie Valero lead their guests onto El Camino Real in San Clemente to bicycle to their wedding Saturday.

TANDEM CYCLING

SAN CLEMENTE COUPLE RIDE THEIR FAVORITE BIKE 45 MILES TO THEIR WEDDING, ACCOMPANIED BY DOZENS OF GUESTS. PAGE 6

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It's wedding bells, and bikes, for S.C. couple

By FRED SWEGLES
THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

If you and your bicycle are all but inseparable, even on your wedding day, it's hard to stay away from the one you love.

In the case of Julie Valero and George Allen, the one they love happens to be the same bike – a particularly well-traveled two-seater.

Oh, and they love each other too.

On Saturday, they embarked from their San Clemente home to pedal their tandem bicycle 45 miles to their wedding at Stone Brewing Co. in Escondido, a four-hour trek.

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The couple were fully expecting to draw stares and a few horn honks along the way – Allen in

his bicycle jersey made up like a suit, and Valero wearing a veil and train as part of a bicycle wedding outfit.

If that weren't enough of a spectacle, Valero and Allen were escorted by friends on bikes – about two dozen, in all, several of them joining the ride in Oceanside. Among the riders were John Urtu and Susen Sarpa of San Clemente, previous owners of the bride and groom's tandem bike. In 1995, Urtu and Sarpa rode it from San Francisco to San Clemente for their honeymoon after being married on Mount Tamalpais.

"Two couples will (have been) married on the same bike," Urtu said.

A little crazy, all of this?

"No, not for us!" Valero said. "People who know us say, 'Oh, that's perfect for you guys.' We've traveled all over Europe. I rode across America."

The ride across America was in 1998. Valero was among 730 riders who pedaled from Seattle to Washington, D.C., to benefit the American Lung Association. Allen, who was a cycling acquaintance then, donated to the cause.

Allen and Valero have been a couple for nine years, during which their shared passion for cycling has taken them thousands of miles, including cycling together with Urtu and Sarpa.

"In 2010, we rode from Vancouver, B.C., to Portland, Ore., and George and Julie came with us with the bike that they're going to get married on," Urtu said.

"We've taken that bike a lot of places," Urtu added. "Grand Canyon, Zion, Bryce,



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George Allen and his bride, Julie Valero, share a smooch before setting out on a 45-mile bike trek to Escondido for their wedding Saturday.

down the Mississippi River to New Orleans. We were trying to ride it in every state."

Valero and Allen purchased the bike in 2003 after Urtu and Sarpa got a new tandem bike. Urtu, who runs a bike-fitting business out of his home, reconditioned the tandem bike for Valero and Allen. A highlight for the new owners was taking a train to Salinas and riding the tandem

bike down the Big Sur coast back to San Clemente.

Another time, "we rode up Mount Baldy," Allen said. "We suffered together, and it was exhilarating once we got to the top. It was a good ride down."

Describing their decision to tie the knot, Valero said it's sort of like riding a tandem bike.

"It's teamwork," she said. "When one



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George Allen and his bride, Julie Valero, come out the chute along a bike trail at San Onofre State Beach.

"It's teamwork. When one person is feeling a little weak, the other person picks up. You have to work together. You have to communicate to ride a tandem. You have to trust. This is kind of how our life is, and it's good."

JULIE VALERO,
BRIDE

person is feeling a little weak, the other person picks up. You have to work together. You have to communicate to ride a tandem. You have to trust. This is kind of how our life is, and it's good."

"We've promised to never leave each other, to support each other," Allen said. "It's like on a bike ... those who suffer together stay together. We realize life does go up and down, and we will stay with each other forever."

But isn't pedaling 45 miles a grimy, sweaty way to get to your wedding? "When we get to the brewery, they're going to open their private restroom for us to clean up a little bit," Valero said. "We won't be able to take a shower, but we'll be able to do the essentials. My parents are bringing clothes for us to change into."

HOW'D IT GO?

The bride and groom reported that Saturday's bicycle journey went well, as did the wedding and the transport home for all the cyclists. It was a windy ride, but "we had a tailwind the entire distance – no rain, and loads of fun during our adventure," Valero said.