Slowing down not partof his vocabulary.

Don’t tell Robert Mann he’s old.

Although he has no problem having birthdays and telling people his age, at 68 Mann gets angry when someone tells him he’s old.

“Old is like a disease,” he said.

A self-described attention-deficit-disorder person, Mann does not let any grass grow under his feet.

“I don’t go home and kick back because I don’t even own a recliner,” he said with laugh.

These days, his priority is biking—spinning his sleek Cannondale down the highways and byways of Nebraska.

Mann rides paved roads generally in the spring, summer and fall and jumps on a sturdier mountain bike for jaunts in the south hills during winter.

“It puts me on a high,” Mann said. “If I get up in the morning and can’t go right away because of weather, I keep watching until I can go.”

If he doesn't get a chance to ride at all, it bothers him all day long, he said.

A look at Mann's calendar shows scribbles of mileage on nearly every day of the year—usually between 20 to 25 miles—plus a blurb about weather conditions daily.

Mann has ridden bikes all of his life but "more in earnest" the past 12 years.

That came about when he taught shop in Durango, CO, and a student introduced him to bike trails around the Colorado mountain town.

Mann admits to liking mountain bike riding the most even though he travels more miles in less time atop a road bike.

Depending on wind conditions, he can finish a road bike ride in about an hour and 15 minutes.

His goal for 2009 is to ride 4,000 miles. With 3,886 under his bike shorts already, Mann has pushed that target to 4,500.

Mann is not new to the Gothenburg area.

He lived in Gothenburg from 1972 through 1985 when he taught high school shop before quitting for a few years to pursue woodworking on his own.

After a move to Colorado in 1988, he later retired and returned to Gothenburg in 2004 because of the “friendliness of the people.”

Mann described the Durango area as unfriendly to bikers.

“There was a guy who took swipes at bicyclists with his pickup,” he said. “Here, people move all the way over when you’re riding.

“They’re friendly on the road and friendly everywhere.”

In fact when he first moved back, he said some of the ranchers in the south hills were surprised to “see a guy in Spandex riding the pastures.”

Now they’re accustomed to seeing a gray-haired man on a bike wearing spandex shorts.

While in Gothenburg the first time, in 1972, Mann started exercising on a regular basis.

That was when he had a flight medical exam and was told by the doctor he was overweight at 200 pounds and had high blood pressure.

The doctor told Mann he had a diet for him.

“He told me topush myself away from the table.”

Because Mann wanted a pilot's license and to be in better shape, he started roller skating, dropped 35 pounds, got his pilot's license and built two airplanes.

"Roger Peden gave me something that's just pretty neat," Mann said about the former airport manager and flight instructor who taught him to fly.

In the late 70s, he became an avid runner until injuring an ankle.

These days, he said he's proud of what he's doing whether it's biking, rebuilding his country home, rowing up the Tri-County canal, cross-country skiing, baking bread or a jumble of other activities.

"My soul belongs to God but my body belongs to me," he said, quoting Russian mystic Grigori Rasputin. "We should be responsible and take care of our bodies."

So far, Mann said he's not encountered anything he wants to do but can't physically even though he admits to losing some of his strength.

"When I do, it might be a big shock."

In the meantime, Mann plans to continue road and hill riding—especially on each birthday.

For his 68th birthday, Mann rode 68 miles from Gothenburg to Arnold to Dunning.

The Arnold-Dunning route is one of his favorites.

“Because I’m out in the middle of nowhere,” he said.

His No. 2 favorite is a winding, seldom-traveled road from Brady into Wild Horse Valley.

The most traveled route is from Gothenburg to Cozad on a paved county road south of town.

Mann said he intends to bike until “the day before I take up residence at Ft. McPherson National Cemetery.”

Until then, wave when you see a gray-haired man in spandex shorts pedaling down the highway.

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