

Ragbrai 43 2015

“They call the wind Mariah”

Sioux City

Morningside College

After a week of temps in Cedar Rapids that went from all most cold to 91 on Friday we left for Sioux City. We left a little after 8 AM and had lunch in Fort Dodge. High today in the mid 80's and forecast of not too bad of weather for a few days. Then maybe 90 for Thursday and Friday. We will see how it all works out won't we!

All riders are staying in a good sized gym at the college. Almost no one had to sleep in the middle.

I am sure we will have a lot of people out early because of the distance and the hills but I will try for around 7AM. I will try and ignore the air releases/dragging sounds etc.

We met a number of people in a neighborhood bar. They even bought a round of beer for us.

We made it to the Expo but it was like most Expo's crowded and hot.

I give Morningside College an A/Gold star as an overnight stay. Churches are hard pressed to compete with multiple showers and bathrooms. Although at one end of the gym we had water coming up along the edge. They had a big fan that was noisy, but it probably covered up all of the snoring and other noises.

Sioux City to Storm Lake

76.5 miles 3941 ft of climb 5 town stops

Church stay- Lakeside Presbyterian Church

6.4 mile Leeds

21.9 miles Kingsley

14.9 miles Washta

5.9 miles Quimby

16.3 miles Hanover

11.1 miles Storm Lake

The day could have hardly been any better. It was a cool morning and not too bad later. The humidity was good and the 76.5 miles turned into over 83 miles because of where we started.

The views along the route were great with all the terraced hills providing a panoramic view. As you might expect we were going up and down and repeat.

We all got to view a reconstructed village of Hanover from the 1800's to the early 1900's. We went by here three years ago. I remember writing in more detail at that time. This time we did more sitting and resting because it was only 11 miles from Strom Lake.

The views riding into Strom Lake reminded me of last year riding into Clear Lake.

I talked to several Air Force riders today. They say they have 144 riders this year and you always see them stop when someone had a flat or mechanical problems. Good for them!

The new propane showers seem to be a hit. It makes the showering process go faster. I do think we have a few things to figure out because I had very cold water for my shower.

I had an interesting conversation with a man tenting on the church property (with consent). He was a Vietnam Vet (Hat) and when I asked him how he was doing today he said "not to good I am tired and don't have much energy. This is my 28th Ragbrai today it was tough. Two years ago it was better and even though I have had some health problems before, it looked good for me. Last year I went to the doctor before Ragbrai and he thought I had gas or something. So I went on the ride but I had to take nitro glycerin tablets every morning. This last winter I had open heart surgery, a couple of stents and other things. I am 76 and the doctor suggested I shouldn't go on the rider but I can't understand why I am so tired." (After 75 miles)

Does that tell you anything about someone wanting to do something so bad that common sense goes out the window! God love the effort but all I could say was hope you have a good rider!

You all have stories you have heard. At the end of the journal I will let you share them with everyone.

Monday

Storm Lake - Fort Dodge

68.7 miles / 308 foot of a climb

4 town stops

2 optional rides

 Fonda to Manson 17 miles

 Pomeroy to Manson 17 miles

Gravel Loop

11.2 Newell

8.8 Fonda

19.6 Manson

15.4 Clare

13.7 Fort Dodge

Church stay - St. Paul's Lutheran

Well 6:30 AM came with IPHones saying there would be another rain storm coming shortly. (It had rained earlier). It did rain but by the time we got to Fonda it had stopped. We had the

most beautiful day in many ways. One was the weather and the other was watching Zach Johnson win the British Open.

We rode into Fonda to get something to eat and as I passed a TV I noticed he had come back from 3 down to be tied while we were there. But, it also posed a problem. Zack got to the back 9 and we had twenty miles to the next town of Manson. Anyway, there were 6 golfers playing behind him. So the hour spent in Fonda, the 20 mile rider to Manson, plus more than two hours to see it to the end.

The crowded sports bar gave him a great roar. Funny thing was half the people there could have cared less. They were bikers and not golfers.

Yes, our Cedar Rapids Hero has now won two majors. The rest of the ride was a joy ride.

The St. Paul Church offered us with a large church and a lovely meal just for us.

Tuesday

Ford Doge- Eldora

72 miles - 1325 Foot climb

6 town stops

12.8 Duncombe

8.7 Webster City

15.0 Boondocks (not a town)

1.3 Williams

11.0 Alden

6.6 Buckeye

17.5 Eldora

Church stay - Saint Paul's Lutheran

Someone was looking out for us. What a great day to ride in Iowa. It made it around 80 with low humidity!!!

With so many stops we did do a lot of walking. It seems to me we walk more every year in towns. Again, the towns were great. Webster City was probably the best, with every detail covered.

The church in Eldora was smaller but adequate. They served almost 1200 hot beef sandwich meals we were told. They were good but, because of the meals a lot of people didn't get into the church to bed until after 8:00 PM.

Wednesday

Eldora - Cedar Falls

58.4 miles - 1644 foot climb

7 town stops

8.8 Steamboat Rock

5.2 Cleves

6.5 Ackley

7.0 Austinville

3.7 Aplington

5.2 Parkersburg

9.4 New Hartford

12.6 Cedar Falls

Church Stay - Bethlehem Lutheran

We have had years of hot/cool/rainy and great weather but, this year is working on being superb!

You can't usually see the wind blowing the grass or trees along the roadside but the high speed we got today said tailwind or I am really strong and ready for the tour!

This was our shortest day so far and you would think we would be in Cedar Falls early. Well, after many stops and conversations it just slowed us down. It could be that good weather makes us not keep our concentration / or too much beer. It was good to go through Parkersburg and see all of the progress from the tornado that hit a few years ago.

Coming into Cedar Falls is different than most stops because of the University Town.

The Bethlehem Lutheran church is mid-sized and we filled it. But no one was too cramped. They weren't serving meals was good. There was a large number of campers around the church property. We were not that far from the Unidome and college hill so we went there for a toddy or two on our way into town. We went here so Craig could see the place where he got his University career (one semester at UNI). At his hill he said he thinks things have changed in 30 years (duh-same beer).

You probably know by now I haven't attended a single concert. I think next year someone should volunteer to attend and rate them for me.

Thursday

Cedar Falls - Hiawatha

70.9 miles - 2377 foot of a climb

8.2 Hudson

19.9 LaPorte City

10.0 Mount Auburn

8.3 Vinton

11.3 Shellsburg

5.7 Palo

7.5 Hiawatha

No church - just home.

Like many I rode home and missed everything in Hiawatha. By the time I got home I had 80 miles and a party with family and a wonderful comfy bed. It was again a nice riding day.

Friday

Hiawatha - Coralville

65 miles - 2955 foot of a climb

College Jersey Day

7 Stops

16.4 Whitter

3.3 Springville

10.7 Mount Vernon

2.0 Lisbon

2.4 Sutliff Cider (not a town)

10.2 Solon

5.7 Coralville

Church Stay - Prince of Peace Lutheran

A lot of people (including me) short cutted the ride by using the trail to Ely then on to Solon. I have had my fill of riding through Mt Vernon or should I say walking. It takes forever! As many people know the ride from solon has about six good sized hills and if you weren't by them around 11:00 AM you got rained on. Up and down big hills is not the most fun in the rain. That combo made it the hardest ride of the week. It was the first time I ever took a shower in a shower.

The church was not new to us as we stayed there the last time Ragbrai was in Coralville. We were packed fairly tight and the church was surrounded by a combination of semi-trailers divided into five rooms of 3 people each. It was said that they paid \$2200 a week for that box. Plus there were tents everywhere.

Saturday

Coralville = Davenport (Rock Island)

68.5 miles - 1711 foot of a climb

8 towns

2.9 University Heights

3.2 Iowa City

21.0 West Liberty

4.9 Atalissa

4.9 Moscow

3.8 Wilton

5.7 Durant

7.6 Walcot

14.5 Davenport

The ride to Rock Island. The day started early because it was forecasted to rain. Plus the last day seems to be longer than scheduled and it was around 75 miles and we had a 2:00 PM departure for Cedar Rapids.

We started from Coralville with a tour of Iowa City and the University. It included the football/basketball stadiums plus the old capital and a part of downtown Iowa City.

All this time we were hearing about rain in Des Moines and coming our way. If that didn't get our adrenalin going the route south and sand road with a little tail wind did. It was flat and it was fly time! With stops for a breakfast burrito in West Liberty and ice cream in Wilton we were in Wallcott before 11:00 AM. What is there to do but hit the road to Davenport.

By this time the rain had headed south and we were still flying. There were a couple of hills in Davenport but again it seemed like we were twenty years younger and had actually trained. We did get our seventh bloody mary's in seven days and still get across the government bridge before noon. We only got a little lost but found a great rib place for lunch to fill us up for the ride home.

It was about this time I decided on the name for this 43rd Ragbrai, an old song I remembered had a phrase. "They call the wind Mariah" Frankie Lane. Well this year we had a good Mariah of a wind. We had very few headwinds, no gall tailwinds but steady winds pushing us along. We missed a few storms and hot weather. Just remember how hot it got just before we loaded on to the bus to go home 90 plus.

I have included a few stories I heard but here are few of your stories/tails/conversations and funny things that happened to you. I'm not giving names but you made my job easier.

It was different this year walking over one new bridge and under another within one mile. And when the lines waiting to go under the second bridge got to about three hundred yards something else happened. Bikers started going around those waiting their turn and when they did people started booing them. It was done without serious anger but some stopped and looked a little embarrassed.

One of our group stated he had done 25 Ragbrai's in jest and wondered why no one called him on it. (Well I think he has really done 28 and he is a good buddy of the Vietnam. I talked to him in Storm Lake. Could be?)

Storm Lake

Butch ("some call me Henry, some call me Hank") runs the best dang train set this side of the Chattanooga choo-choo. He has four trains running though the town and under the mountains, past the engine turnabout, and along the veterans cemetery gravestones. ("You paint a popsicle stick and cut it in half to make two stones")

This all takes up half the basement at the Old Carnegie Library. Butch/Henry/Hank motions over to see his workshop off to the side. It's the old walking safe. Carnegie had a safe in all of his libraries Butch says to his store his antiques. The rest of the library belongs to Christmas.

The greeter, the former chief librarian at the new library built in 1972, says most of the collection came from old storefront displays in Chicago. They came from a guy who had a hobby that got out of hand. Just like the guy who 12 years ago built the original set I saw.

His home set has suffered neglect since he began at Santa's Castle, but he dreams. Butch "I told my wife I wanted to put moose holes in the walls so the trains could run through them, incredibly she said no!"

New Hartford

Jake Waltors retired from Deeres as a quality control man (engines ya know). He started in 1954 back when they had two-stroke diesels and had worked for 39 years. These days all a farmer has to do is plot in what he wants and he doesn't even have to steer. It's like a plane on autopilot.

As we sat another fellow walked up Jake said "why aren't you worken?" The guy says, "I quit." That's code for retired. "What did you get in?" Jake asked. "38" "well pull up a piece of this wall and sit" another retiree said. I gave him my spot. What a response to see.

Thanks for the people who made it possible.

The most important job is getting our lodging. John and Judy Bryant have been doing it for many years. Without them what tent would you be sleeping in?

Dave Benderson did a great job again. Just think how much better he could be if he ever got excited?!? (Kidding)

Jim Weisbeck you are like a mother to us. Well maybe that would scare all of us if it included tucking us in and a kiss!! Just call him our bearded protector and all around a great guy.

Dave Obst our go anywhere man or please pick me up person. But you are way to low key. (I would be wired all the time.)

Rick Paulas for getting the truck setup and also being our home base.

All of those who helped load and unload the bikes.

Jerry Meyer without you I would still be wondering around lost in many towns. Your maps do help!! But I still got lost so one of us is not perfect!

Thanks to Craig and LeAnn for rolling along with Dad. I hope you liked it as much as I did.

It was a great week with family and that includes my Hawkeye Bike family as well.

-Dave Evans