

Day Five of the Tour is the most challenging the group has faced this year.

It all started out at the Ashland Country Club after each rider had breakfast with their host family. This was the first time this had occurred in five years of the tour and it was a nice surprise. We all met at the country club then to regroup and study the route maps for the day. On paper it looked simple: ride west a ways then go a bit north to Shelby then stair-step southwest to Galion and then westerly to Marion. The problem is that lines on paper are only two-dimensional. What was missing was the third dimension, the height of those lines.

The group left around 8:45 and the nice in-town downhill enjoyed the day before was now a sluggish uphill grind for about two miles. Once out of town the road became an angry roller coaster that had hills large and small with a few twists and turns thrown in for good measure. Add to the lumps the ogre that has been daunting the tour all week – headwinds – and the riding turned beyond challenge into the frequent drudge.



The first stop was Shelby Community Park, which half of us missed on our first attempt but finally found. We were greeted by the friendly faces of Shelby Rotarians who offered fresh fruit and juices, the perfect stuff for thirsty bikers. It was only mid-morning but it felt to be much later.

The road to Galion, our lunch stop, became more challenging as the wind kicked it up a notch to about 20 mph. When we rode south along a tree-lined road, that wind would be blocked and our riding normal; but when we returned to riding west, it was like we hit a wall. The force of nature put quite a distance between the lead group and the trailing group, which spread out the dining at the Varsity Grill, owned by Lisa Hoffman of the Galion Rotary. While we were there, David Dayne, District Governor Nominee for 2010-2011 and member of the Galion Rotary, presented a check to the touring group. Funny how the presentation of a check can make us all forget about the trials of riding hills with headwinds. It just makes it all so worthwhile.



After lunch it was back at the road and Mother Nature. Afternoon is also when the sun gets stronger and today it did. Two riders were affected with some heat exhaustion, sending one to the hospital as a precaution. Others sweated it out.

Around four the group landed in Marion at the Fahey Bank, exhausted and very thirsty. Luckily there was a neighborhood establishment that specializes in thirst care and many riders sought its libations. Shortly the host families showed up and took the riders home for showers and a change into dry, fresh-smelling clothes.



That evening we all met at the Warehouse Restaurant for a fine Italian dinner and fellowship with the Marion Rotarians. It was a noisy room filled with laughter and conversation. The group did quiet down shortly when president Kathy Masters and MESA Chairperson Cherie Carroll presented the group with a check from the Marion



Rotary. Their donation raised the thermometer another big notch as you can see on the home page of this website.

The highs of the fellowship with Marion were met with the reserved hush of concern over the next and last day's ride back to St. Marys. The forecasts we were shown earlier in the day showed continued high winds, cold air and probable rain. What fun!

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