

Great events are marked by great endings, and today's finale of the 2009 MESA Tour was no exception.



We began Day Six with an outstanding breakfast at the Marion Perkins Restaurant & Bakery, joined by members of the local club so we could say our farewells for this year and express hopes of returning to their city soon. We were in a bit of a hurry to get started earlier than usual because we knew we were looking at a long day in the saddle.

We headed out around 8:30 and headed back into town then out the west side and just like that we were on our way and going strong. We knew we would need some strength today because the weather had forecast our most challenging weather of increasing wind and a strong possibility of rain, maybe even thunderstorms. As we left town that forecasts seemed wrong – the wind was calm at 8 mph and the skies were cloudy but not threatening. We wandered farther west and the roads were very nice and only gently rolling, the temps stayed cool but good for riding and the winds only occasionally gusted to slow our progress.



Our first stop was in Kenton, where we were met by Kenton Rotarians and others from the Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development Office. They fed us well and made sure we had some to go for our “second lunch” around 2:00. While in Kenton we had a presentation on how Hardin County was the wind center of the state and that new development was in the possibility with wind farms. A second presentation was a donation by the club to the MESA project.

It was in the afternoon that we fully realized just how Hardin County had achieved its windy status. Our forecast of 8 mph had become something more realistic approximating 25-30 mph. Once these winds began we knew we were in for a tough day. And tough it was as the winds continued and we even felt 15 minutes of rain – just enough to soak us.



This area is also home to many Amish families and we saw many buggies and dodged “road apples” all afternoon long. As we rode along we had a chance to see how this other culture goes about some of its farming, using tools and techniques from another era.

Our last stop was in Wapakoneta at the familiar YMCA – we had just been to the same facility on Sunday. Then on to our last leg, the 25 miles to our destination in St. Marys.

We reached that spot – Noble School on the far north side of town – but not until we experienced even more strong headwinds, which tried to push us back in the other direction.



Arrival at Nobel School was a very welcome sight, especially when we saw many faces we recognized from when we were in town only a few days ago. President Gary Newton, District Governor Jim Heinrich, Past President Keith Flederjohann, MESA Tour Coordinator Linda Vogel, District Grant Applications Coordinator Frank Murray and other members and spouses – all were there to greet us and cheer our successful ending to a very productive week.

It was a short but sweet ending. Talk could be overheard about how bad the wind was, how wonderful all the local hosts were all week, the great meals we had. There was also talk of next year’s tour – already! If the enthusiasm and strong support can be had for next year like we had this year from the district and the many clubs we visited, next year will be in good shape.

On the way home, our crew talked and talked about all the wonderful experiences each of us had this week. The people we met, the amazing support the clubs all showed for MESA, and the true expression of the “Family of Rotary” were the stuff of our stories, along with the anticipation of how next year’s tour program will work out.

On behalf of all the many weeklong and day riders this year, on behalf of the MESA project personnel, on behalf of the thousands of beneficiaries of the MESA project, we thank you, Rotary District 6600 for the tremendous support you have given to the tour and the project. It is yet another example of how it takes so many hands to build anything worthwhile – it could never get done without you.

Ed Stewart – Tour Coordinator