

Day One got off to a nourishing start at the St. Marys Community Library.

The local club hosted the riders to a fine breakfast of gourmet omelets, sausages, homemade sweet rolls and fruit. President Gary Newton sent us off with more wishes for safe riding so his club could greet us all on our return on Friday.

The group grew in size from the original 16 to a whopping 26 riders to start out from St. Marys. A police escort led us to the edge of the city and then we were officially off on the 2009 Rotary Tour for MESA. It didn't take long for the crowd to thin out from a long single strand to a well spread out line broken into a number of smaller groups.



Our first stop was only ten miles away, in neighboring Celina, where the local club treated riders to fruits and beverages. Our welcoming hosts were Karen Ryals, Club president and new member Mahammad Khokhar.

Then it was a trip round Great Lake St. Marys and on to New Bremen, where we were greeted for lunch by officers and members of the New Bremen-New Knoxville Rotary Club. President

Steve Hartwig Presented the first check of the day to the rolling ambassadors, which was greeted with rounding applause.

The group then took a brief tour of The Bicycle Museum of America, which exhibits a collection of historically significant bicycles from the 1800's right up to a unique vehicle feature in the World Olympics last year. Many of the visitors marveled at seeing "their first bike" on display, be that from the 50's, 60' or 70's.

Joining us at the museum was Kimberli Rompilla, District 6600 newsletter editor. In a change of roles, she was for once asked for a comment about the tour. After a brief reflection she added that, "What I get out of this bike Tour is the exciting opportunity to follow this group of fun and dedicated people as they travel throughout our district. It is especially exciting to meet them here in person and listen to their own reasons for doing this."

Our next trek was on to Wapakoneta, home of Neil Armstrong. This was just a quick stop for beverages and fruit but we were still greeted by President Jon Wade and three of his board and officers.

From "Wapak" to Lima it's pretty much a straight shot north and we were counting on a tail wind to help blow us there. But the front that had given us all so much needed rain on Sunday had reversed itself so now we were facing winds that didn't help us much at all. That's the way it goes in cycling

At the edge of Lima we got onto the Rotary River Walk, a nice multi-use trail developed by the Lima Rotary some years ago. This trail is about six miles long and wanders through Lima along the Ottawa River. It is easy to share a bit of pride with the local club as a Rotarian rides along that scenic trail, knowing that the dedication to service, shared among all Rotarians, is how that trail became real.



The bike group took respite at the end of the day at the beautiful Steiner Horse Ranch. Mr. Steiner, along with many members of the Lima Rotary Club treated us to very welcome fruits and beverages – the best after riding 70 miles in mid-eighty temperatures and occasional headwinds. Part of the celebration for our first day’s trip was a nice check presentation by Harold Bischoff representing the Lima Rotary Club.

Our overnight lodging brought many of us back to our younger years: the Lima club put us up at the OSU – Lima Extension Campus, in a student dormitory. There, we also were treated to college dorm dinner and look forward to breakfast there too. We all agreed it was not exactly how we remembered our own college years.

Ed Stewart, Tour Coordinator