

## Day Five – Fostoria to Defiance

Our fifth day began with breakfast at Fostoria Promedica Medical Center (as outpatients). From there we returned to the Best Western, our home from the previous evening, where we staged our bike preparations and then headed out west on our first leg of the trip. This was to North Baltimore, about 10 miles off. From there it was on south to McComb where we were met by Bob Smith and many other members of the McComb Rotary. They had a spread of sandwiches and sides and fruits and such. Their enthusiasm for being included on the tour was obvious and we hope to return often.

From McComb our next destination was Defiance, about 37 miles off. The only problems with such a route, beautiful as it was, was that the temperatures were gradually rising, along with the humidity. The temps at noon were in the low 80s but by one were in the upper range and then by two were in the low 90s and by three were in the mid 90s. The cloud cover dropped from mostly cloudy to barely cloudy in the same period. The impact of this climate change on bicyclists is to make hydration (replenishment of liquids) and electrolyte replacement a primary concern. Exhaustion comes earlier and more often; energy is sapped; rest stops more frequent; thoughts of swimming pools and ice cream filling one's day dreams while pedaling away.

The geography of Northwest Central Ohio is mostly flat with some very gently rolling hills they would laugh at in southeastern parts of the state. These make for a very interesting topography for cyclists and keep us from falling asleep as we watch row after row of corn, then soybeans, then corn, then soybeans drift by as we quietly coast along on our two wheels. In spite of the potential boredom of such limited crop variety, we couldn't help but admire the progress of this year's crop in this area. Our geography also taught us some new names for towns in the area that many of us had never heard of before: Belmore, New Bavaria and even smaller hamlets with less renown like Ayersville and Deweyville. As we said before, the Rotary Bike Tour is partly a geography lesson for Rotarians.

Eventually we rolled into Defiance. Not as a mass, not even in a split group. More like a strand of beads spilled along a highway, each landing in a puddle eventually at the end. Our destination point was the Defiance YMCA, where we were greeted by President Jean Hubbard, John Jacobs and Darline Clemens, among many other members. From there they gathered us under their wings to their homes for a quick clean up – some requiring more cleaning than others, then returning us to the dinner spot, called Charlie's Down Under. A festive time was held at Charlie's, with Defiance Rotarians mixed with Bike Riders, mostly discussing either the bike ride or what the local club does in projects. One can always gauge the quality of a party by the decibels generated. This one would be judged a 10 by any standards.

Finally, Pete kicked us out and we all headed back to our hosts' homes for more fellowship. And again, as we have said so many times before, the true value of the MESA Bike Tour rests not in the dollars raised, but in the friendships created. The tour is a unique way to enjoy Rotary and tonight was exemplary of that fact.

Tomorrow we take on our last day of the tour, with a promise of tailwinds mixed with scorching temperatures and the likelihood of afternoon thunderstorms. Sounds like Ohio weather in midsummer. Check in tomorrow to see how we fare with it all.