

RAGBRAI XXXVII

A COOL RIDE

Part of the coolest July in recorded history

The Trip:

Saturday. It was a great day to go Council Bluffs, very cool in the morning, finally making it to the 70's in the afternoon. We are staying at *Our Saviors Lutheran Church* in the education building with plenty of room. After a trip to the EXPO and barbeque we had a beer with Dick Melon from Calif. It was a return trip to RAGBRAI for him. The dipping of the ceremonial tire led to a beautiful suspension bridge between Council Bluffs and Omaha Nebraska. Actually the dipping was done on the Nebraska side.

This is a special RAGBRAI for me with two children and friends riding for the first time. It should lead to a lot of fun all week long. The forecast for the week looks good now, only time will tell. It will be 52.6 Miles to Red Oak with 3700 ft of climb. We will be staying at Bethlehem Lutheran church in their educational area.

Sunday The ride to Red Oak was great with the temp in the high 70's to low 80's with low humidity. The rolling hills made for great viewing especially with terraced crops along the hillsides. The towns were packed with people. In fact Minola was so tiny and crowded with people that we had three blocks of mostly standing with a little walking. There were long lines everywhere. I hope more towns tomorrow will spread the out the riders. The ride to Red Oak turned out to be almost 60 miles because of off-route location in Council Bluffs.

Monday will be 72.6 miles to Greenfield with 5100 of climb, and we will be stay in Methodist church. Along the way, we will have seven stops, and I am looking forward to Greenfield where I have great memories from when my National Guard unit overnighted there 50 years ago. On the say, we will be passing threw Corning (the birth place of Johnny Carson) and Stanton (the home town of Mrs. Olsen of Folgers coffee fame). The forecast is for a great day on Monday so I hope it holds true.

OK! The day didn't go as predicted. We had clouds that looked to unload on us all day, but only got droplets until 4:00 pm. No wind again. The seven stops made for reduced lines and crowding. I did see Johnny Carson's birth place, and I was impressed with the pride the people had taken their restoration project. Stanton, *the white city* and home of Mrs. Olsen, was nice with Swedish dancers along Main Street. I also saw the big water tower that looked like a coffee pot and another one that looked like an upside down tea cup. The ride was very hilly but not extreme hills. But it was up and down and up and..., (you get the idea). The weather caught up with us in Greenfield. We didn't have much rain, only enough to make it hard for the vendors and the town to make a profit. The town still looks great and the most unexpected treat was a car museum downtown with cars from 1902 including an amphibious car. Some of us also found a winery next door to our church and had a nice meal and wine there. Can you believe a winery next to a Methodist church.

Tuesday looks good but who can believe a forecast this year. It will be 77 miles with 4470 in elevation with 8 stops. Hope for the best!

Well the forecast was wrong. It was cold and a little rain to start and it didn't clear up until 2:00 pm. It turned into a great day any way so who cares. We had Elvis impersonators and other singers in Prole, and I even went wine tasting at a winery a half mile off the route. That made two wineries in two days!! The world must be changing.

We are staying at Trinity Presbyterian church in Indianola, again in the education bldg. It also has the added feature of inside showers. Indianola was blessed with better weather than Greenfield so the town did well and was packed.

Wednesday is short, only 44 miles to Chariton with 2200 ft. of climb. We will be saying at the First Methodist church and they say we will have a shower inside.

And what a wonderful day for a short, beautiful ride. We had hills but mostly long and gradual. There were five stops including Lacona's relaxing shaded park with a guitarist strumming and singing away. Much better than the karaoke we had in Milo (which was bad enough to make you leave town). The church not only had a shower but lots of bathrooms and great food.

Thursday will be 77 miles to Ottumwa with 3400 ft. climb, were we will be staying in the First Methodist church.

What a BEAUTIFULL day to ride! With 8 stops, good pie and good food, in general. I also stopped at Honey Creek Resort state park on Rathbun Lake. It is a state funded resort (God save the tax payers) with a 105 room hotel, 29 cabins, 18-hole golf course, and a water park. They had entertainment at the hotel and, of all things, wine from a local winery. All of this in the middle of nowhere! As a tax payer I do hope they make it.

It was an experience riding into Ottumwa just as a thunder storm hit the in-town traffic. The storm ended quickly, but an experience none-the-less. There was good weather for the rest of the day.

You have to feel sorry for downtown Ottumwa because of the vacancies and general disrepair. The Methodist church was large and kind a maze of rooms. (What a wonderful place for a kid to play hide and go seek!)

Friday will be 75.5 miles and 2600 ft of climb, with our overnight at St. Alphonsus Catholic Church.

Friday was the same as usual. You know, wonderful again. The climb out of Ottumwa was steep and the town showed real well with beautiful homes and Indian hills community college. The ride was a breeze for the first 55 miles but harder then with a head wind the closer we got to Mt Pleasant. Since the whole week has been cooler than normal, today brought back the good old days with temps in the upper 80's.

Having family along this year brought a test of trying to keep in contact with the group. I know all of you RAGBRAI veterans have had this happen. We lost LeAnn (my daughter) in the first

sixteen miles, and we thought we were ahead of her and she thought the same. As you might have expected, she got there two and one half hours ahead of us. It made for a good laugh afterwards but frustration at the time. It is funny how you can see the same person 10 times in one hour and can't find the person whom you are riding with!

St. Alphonsus brought a church stay to a new level, and I might say a good one: selling beer, wine, pretzels, and popcorn in the church along with a good meal.

The late evening was mild and Mt Pleasant had a lot going on at the town square. They also set the scene well with lights along the tops of all the buildings surrounding the square. They seemed to have gotten it all in before a rainstorm.

Saturday, we all know that it is always a short ride. Low and behold, it happened again: 43 miles to Burlington with 1100 ft of elevation. I know, I sound like a broken record about the weather, but it was a breeze of a ride and the breeze was mostly at our back. And except for a few hills near Geode state park it was level.

My family had a treat in New London where along the route my nephew Cory Lindell had placed a welcome (*valkommen in Swedish*) sign and then fed us breakfast.

The end of the ride into Burlington was wonderful with a ride up Snake Alley. It was steep, twisting, and full of people walking or having a problem riding on bricks.

We all seemed to find the meeting place fast and were ready to leave for CR by 12:30

Observations

1. If this global warming then bring it on. It was the coolest RAGBRAI in at least 9 years. (That's how long I have been riding.).
2. A few years ago when RAGBRAI went threw southern Iowa. It looked poor, but this year it showed very well. In fact it was a very good, topped off by Mt Pleasant.
3. It is great to have family along. It makes for a more fulfilling experience. People have told me that before, and now, I know.
4. Dick Woodward did a wonderful job and I for one think he should take the job for ever.
5. Jim Weisbeck did a great job driving and helping us in a very low key way. He had to be low key because he had to keep our youngest rider John (his son) in line. It was a terrible task that we all enjoyed.
6. Was it me? Or were there more people laying on the road waiting for care?
7. It was the hilliest since RAGBRAI XXIX with 22,800 of climb in 442 miles

David Evans