



Stacy and John Crawley, Mike and Brandy Ship, Dave Fleming, Tom Pritchard, Dave Collins and I met up at the KDH Rehab Center for this ride. All but the Ships and I biked from home ! I did not recognize Dave at first...last time I saw him was at the New Years Day ride, and he was more covered up! We all had a laugh when I introduced myself unnecessarily.

We went North on Michigan Road to 350N (My map calls this "Pickle Station Road" and I didn't notice a street sign) and on to 421, through the new roundabout and down New Hill. It was still work going downhill into the brisk South headwind, which was with us all day. We re-grouped downtown and met up with Rich Ries just before crossing the bridge. There's a tattoo shop there, and after a brief conversation including the merits of several local and distant artists, we set out.

Last summer, there was a bridge replaced on Cooper's Bottom (it was a big deal in the local paper, and a real inconvenience for those downstream of the construction project because they had to travel all the way through Burkhardt's Bottom, and up the hill to 421), and the new one has a steel grating surface. Immediately after this, Mike got the first of four flats. I sprinted ahead to let others know and said that Mike had a flat. Stacy heard that "Mike's bike was flat," so she was briefly confused. The first tube didn't hold air, and as he was prepping the second one, we found the culprit, a 3 carat cinder lodged in his tire. We chatted with a boy...he was probably 8 or 10, who had gotten a new BMX bike for his birthday. Some of the others went on, and Rich climbed up Burkhardt's Bottom to another ride adventure he had planned in Kentucky. The rest of us eventually regrouped in Milton. While waiting, I observed a young boy zooming up on a BMX bike, clearly winded. He'd triumphantly beaten two women, who had driven to the store from somewhere on Cooper's Bottom. When they came back out of the store, the boy saw a new Chevy Corvette parked there and declared, "I want that!" The older woman, perhaps his grandmother, said, "I'll bet you do." After exhortations to "Watch for cars!", the boy raced away for home, ahead of the women, but yet a few years behind a driver's license.

Dave Collins had headed back to downtown Madison. We learned that he rides Cooper's bottom several times a week, but at 05:30, dodging deer !

We debated numerous route options, and finally settled on climbing up Highway 7, a first for the Ships. There was a big swath of sand up against the curb on the east side of the Madison-Milton Bridge...either they were doing some serious sandblast-repaint work overhead (I didn't look up to check) or something fell off a truck. ALL of the bridge expansion joints are un-covered and treacherous, to be crossed on the diagonal. John Crawley felt his rear wheel drop in the gap, but came out unscathed.

The group got spread apart transiting Vaughn Drive and climbing Hanging Rock hill, so we re-grouped at the Clifty Swifty, now a Marathon station. While there, we chatted with couple of young guys on BMX bikes, and with the owner of a restored 1969 (?did I get the year right? John Crawley will know), who came out and fired it up, all 350cc of carbureted De-troit iron. When he pulled away, we saw another vestige of the past, the carcass of a pay phone, now totally nonfunctional at the edge of the parking lot. The Ships, Tom Pritchard, and John Crawley were headed for home from here.

Stacy, Dave and I headed for Hanover, first through Clifty Park (**Much** nicer than Highway 62 !). Dave bid us adieu there, and Stacy and I headed out the North Entrance and around to Black Road and Chicken Run. Borcharding, and later Grange Hall Road were like wind tunnels and the South wind made us work. Still, it was a warming afternoon (everyone was shedding layers through the day) and Stacy spotted someone mowing their grass. In January!

When we reached Hanover, I was expecting the barbecue place to be in town, but Stacy blasted West on 56. I hoped she wasn't headed to Scottsburg! It turned out that Smoking Crows is at the site of the former Freezer Fresh place. I was made aware of the fried bologna sandwich specialty, but declined. I was so hungry I didn't really know what I wanted, so I ordered the three sandwich platter (brisket, pulled pork and chicken sandwiches). The woman behind the counter said, "Okay, three 'sliders,'" so I wasn't so sure of my choice, but needn't have worried, because they were good. Stacy had some barbecue, beans and the 'best' potato salad. As we left, I noticed their signs at the perimeter of the outdoor eating area which said something like "No alcohol allowed beyond this point, so start chugging." It reminded me of an Ashville, NC drinking establishment with some outdoor seating. They had a sign which said, "No alcohol on the sidewalk." Okay. We weren't planning on pouring it there.

We were treated to a monster tailwind on our trip northward to Madison. We'd already paid (heavily) for it. But by the time we got to Deputy Pike, I was pretty spent. Stacy and I had discussed various route options for this ride in recent days, and she had teased me about doing longer options as long as I wasn't driving the "Pain Train." However, this afternoon, she was shoveling the coal & not sparing the throttle! Still, we made it back to the KDH Rehab Center without mishap.

I had nearly 48 miles, and I'm sure Stacy easily had the full 50 (+) with transit from and to home. Others' mileage will vary.

In spite of the conditions, it was good to be out...especially January ! Thanks to all who came out to brave the elements with us.

Jon