

BBC Century 2004  
“The Red-light Century”  
The Fisher report  
By Greg “Bulldog” Fisher

I haven't written a ride report in some time. The last one was about the “Cheaha Challenge2004”. I would preface this report by saying the people that put on this ride love the sport of cycling. They work real hard to make sure we enjoy our ride and that we are safe and well fed and hydrated.

My reports usually entail my adventures with Larry Pierson, friend and fellow long hauler and president of Druid City Bicycle Club in Tuscaloosa, AL. We are the older and slower group that goes the distance, more than most folks. Larry and I had every intention of starting out together but after the second rest stop we got separated.

This ride starts out like most big rides, some 350 or so riders, riding everything from a Wal-Mart mountain bike to a \$5000 dollar Seven with Dura-Ace. Of course as in every ride you have the fast folks, slower folks and not ready for prime time riders.

This ride is an out and back which I find intriguing. This ride slash play on the mind puts you retracing your ride through the best and worst parts of the ride. As my mentor Larry would say there are no easy centuries. This one is no walk in the park. The first few miles take you through Montevallo and series of traffic lights. Red light sounds kind of redneck, more about that later. We go up a few little hills; I mean a bunch of us, over 200 folks. We go down a bumpy clip seal road which reminds me of our roads we ride back home. You go 20 miles or so and then they are the hills. Folks in the BBC call them rollers. This would be a series of roller coaster type hills enough to get sweat and snot out of the most dignified. Doing these little bumpers has everyone huffing and puffing and something else I won't mention here.

After the ride on the scream machine you turn off County 86 on the County 42 and the road goes flat, a nice break from the rollers. I think about 4 miles or so and we see the second rest stop. Larry and I stop here and refuel, replenish and relieve. The folks at the rest stop are great and try to accommodate in any way they can. I was disappointed when they said they didn't have any souse meat or cocktail hotdogs, maybe next year.

It was time to saddle up and get going. I don't see Larry and I am not sure if he had gone ahead or was still there or abducted by aliens.

So I clip in and do something uncharacteristic of me, riding with people I don't know and having a ball. I ride down this flat surface till me and some other guys hit the infamous AL 145/ County 61 which turn into the death trap AL 25. The roadway of the redneck, the super size dump truck, pick up and the lastly the odd balls in funny clothes with their hydra packs and funky head gear riding on 23 cm skinnys.

I have found that in these parts that the favorite Christmas presents is the car horn and they use with much veracity. I was between Beeswax Creek Park and Harpersville riding with a young man doing his first century, rule of thumb, never ride two by two on AL 25 unless you own the road, have a death wish or love being cussed out by other human beings.

We are riding along and the next thing I know, this fellow in a pickup truck is jacking down on his horn and saying hello in four letter words. These gall us all some time but can you do? You are up against a person with road rage in a 3500 pound vehicle, maybe

armed and has his pit-bull in the floor board. You just have to take off and go or start packing heat. Along the way I ride through Wilsonville and stop for some traffic lights. I tell the fellow riders next to me, imagine a century with traffic lights. Most of rides we do only have power lines.

I ride on and reach the "BUMP" rest stop. This is my favorite and this where I get to talk to Wayne Lankford who is putting together a book about bike rides in Alabama, still no souse meat. With my batteries recharged and my sites ahead I make the 10 mile or so trek to the Vincent turn around. I didn't think I would ever get there. Finally I reach nirvana and the Vincent rest stop. Here I see folks dressed in 18 century clothes and working the rest stop. I thought I had on some funny clothes. The next thing I know Larry shows up about five minutes behind me. We had to ask the bright question, of where each other had been.

Refreshed we head back the last fifty miles to the start of the ride. Again we get separated and I find myself pulling a group of riders down AL 25 on the way to Beeswax.

I am strong, I am fast, I am invincible but I am also old so my body tells the latter. I get to the beeswax rest stop turn and stand and my whole body cramps, I am talking the thighs, calves, and a major owie. I sit and spin and the cramps subside. I get to the rest stop and take off my shoes and get some fluids in me and I am better.

Larry and I get back on the road which seems to have less riders on it as people seem to be taking naps at the rest stops or gone on to finish the ride. The ride soon turns into the usual pump the pedals till we get back to rollers. Now 20 miles out on these hills isn't too bad.

When you have ridden hard for 80 miles and hit the hills then this is a lot more difficult but a great challenge. I like the hills but most folks don't. I don't like sugar beets so there. We make it in at about 5:50 ride time, no records here, I don't care. Century riding is an adventure not an enema. I see too many folks ride it that way to just get in over with like an enema.

We get back to finish and are cheered by some children and adults for finishing the ride, now that's cool. We freshened up and put our steeds on top of the car and went had a wonderful barbeque dinner with all the trimmings.

I would like to thank the BBC for putting on a great ride and a very interesting route complete with red lights.