

BRATGAP 2004
Or do you know the way to San Hosea?
The Fisher Report
By Greg (Bulldog) Fisher

Ferdinand Magellon once said “Give me a map and I can find the world”. He really didn’t say that. I would like to preface this report to say that on every Century ride, maps are offered. They are not required. They are not guaranteed to be a 100% accurate (unless you ask Larry Pierson). Larry Pierson, the person who does these maps is a veteran map maker and veteran Century rider. These maps, if followed, will get you from point A to point B 99.9% of the time. The other .1 % is when you leave them in the back pocket of your jersey. Many of us have ridden these routes many times and generally don’t use a map. The maps are a guide for everyone that rides on these Century rides. The folks that put on these Century rides would hope that all would use their maps. We would hope that no one would get lost and frustrated and even frightened. However, sometimes in the heat of giving chase to the lead group, or being hypnotized by the natural flow of the road, or riding with your stockbroker while getting the latest stock tips and missing a turn. All this makes for anxious and frustrating moments. It also makes for interesting story telling.

Saturday morning February 27, 2004 on a bright and cold morning would find Larry Pierson, Dave Casebeer, Phil Hardee, Pat Ferguson, Bruce Smith, Elliot (Style Man) Swartz, Pixie Hicks, Ashley Renfroe (From Birmingham) and Yours Truly would gather at Capitol Park to do the 103-mile **BRATGAP**. Usually on these rides you have different groups, a lead group, middle group and a bring up the rear group and of course the “ Rocket Riders, the speed demons of the skinny tires”.

The ride started out pretty much uneventful the first 15 miles to Myrtlewood school where we met Brad Poindexter, Gary, and the always lovely Patricia Falls, Julie Ray and Dr. Richard Snow. Pixie would turn around and ride back to the park and call it a day. Smart girl!

We would all adjust our clothes and then we were off down Gainesville Road on the way to Ralph. The bulldog would shed his cycling jacket and gloves and do a Mike Ham and ride bare armed and bare handed the remaining 85 miles. I would take, uh, borrow a wonderful cycling vest from Gary Falls so I wouldn’t get chest freeze. We would start up the long climb on Wesley chapel and this would be the last time I saw Dave and his hyperspace cyclists. The remaining of us relaxed group would take a more casual ride down Sipsev valley into Ralph. There would be no stops here. Everyone who passed through Ralph would go on down County 67 to Snoddy Road.

Well it seems Pat and Elliot was a little confused about the Snoddy road turn. Larry and I saw two men in yellow and tried to holler them down, that’s louder than yelling. Larry started after them but stopped because it would have added mileage. Anyway it turns out it was Pat and Elliot. They found their way to Romulus and back to the park for 60. Julie Ray would miss the same turn and go a little ways up 67 and turn around to retrace her steps back to Myrtlewood and get 30 miles. **Where were your maps?**

Larry and I would proceed on down Snoddy road to 191 and hang a left on 191 to the little town of Union, Alabama. We would stop at the store to patronize the local establishment. I made a small wager with Larry that Gary and Patricia wouldn’t come down as far as Union. Larry said, “ what makes you think that”? At that point I knew I was sunk because that’s what he always says when he knows he’s won. About that time Gary and Patricia show up. We talked with the Falls and then we saddled up and headed down 208 to Mantua.

Meanwhile Major Dave and his group of vapor trail wannabes would be a good bit ahead, as in 10 miles ahead. They would stay together till they hit Pickens county 2. At this point you are at 50+ miles and fatigue starts to set in. Dave decided to sandbag a couple of the guys in the group about the 3 killer hills up ahead. There were more than that and it would prove to divide the group into those that could and those who couldn't. The lead would split here.

Bruce was far enough back to not see Phil make the turn in Benevola. Bruce would miss the turn and go a mile and realize his error. **Could Bruce have looked at the Map!**

He would turn around and then see the banana on the road, a Casebeer road marker. He would finally meet up with Phil in Jena. They would take it on in to the park and get their T-shirt. Missing from the lead group was Dr. Richard Snow, who stayed with Dave's group till the Pickens County ripple hill effect and again fell victim to Benevola cut off. He would miss the turn, and we are not sure where he wound up! He did get back home. It was like a scene out of that old 60's TV show "Candid Camera"! **Was Richard's map in his back pocket or safely in his truck at Myrtlewood?**

Meanwhile Larry and I went on to Lewiston to State 14. We finally arrived at the bait shop for our lunch stop. It would be 10 minutes or so later the "Rocket-riders" show up. It would be Paul Haganloh, Eric White and Mike "Hammer" Ham. Larry told Mike that the first group was 25 minutes ahead. He asked, "did he think they could catch them"? Mike said " # % \$ yes". Larry went on to suggest maybe a wager on whether they could catch them. Mile then said " % \$ # let me get on the road so I can catch them". Larry and I road with them for about 2 minutes. The "Rocket riders" would then kick it into hyperdrive and Larry and I would see them disappear in the hills of Pickens County 2. Paul Haganloh would trail the fast group and drop back from the hills and headwind bombardment. We would see him again on Benevola road, having missed the turn on to Romulus road. **This is a tricky spot on the route and was on Paul's map, which he had out studying, after the fact.** Even the Bulldog would miss the sucker turn in Benevola, **map safely in his back pocket!**

Paul would ride with us a few miles then try to make up some time. When we finally got off Romulus road, I sure was glad! We started the home stretch for Capitol Park and I started to get foot and leg cramps on Gainesville road. I would grit my teeth till we got to the Fosters store. I got my shoes off and rubbed my feet and drank some PowerAid. After a few minutes I felt better. We then made for the park. We got there at 3:40 PM. About 15 minutes later Mike and Eric pull up and told how they missed the turn and went an additional 22 miles. **Where were your maps!?** This was a great ride on a great route on a beautiful day. Thanks to Larry Pierson for the maps, we can use the same ones again as they were hardly used. Thanks to Chris Hendrix at CyclePath for wonderful Gray T-shirts. Gray is my favorite hint, hint!