

Natchez Trace Century
"Ground Hog Day"
The Fisher Report
By Greg "Bulldog" Fisher

This would be the third ride in the "Scorpion Series. The infamous "Natchez Trace Century". This particular route according to "Southern Bicycle Tours Inc." (AKA. Larry Pierson) is the most ridden route in the United States. To me, the good rides are local. The great ones you go out and get. This is one on the great ones.

Saturday morning, early, I mean "early", still dark, heck the chicken weren't even up. There we were, at 6 a.m. in front of the Northport Civic Center. Larry, Dave, Brian Abbot, Pixie Hicks, Paul Deci, Sam Evans, Gary and the always-lovely Tricia Falls, Phil Hardee, Pat Ferguson and Daniel DeJarnette and yours truly gathered for a photo shoot of the group. We then counted taters to see who rode with whom.

About 6:15 the happy caravan left for the Trace. I rode with some great folks. We plied in Pixie Hick's spacious Suburban along Larry and Paul Deci. After 2 hours of travel and a biscuit and potty break we arrived at Pigeon Roost. We unload and get in our gear and check our bikes. We look and see a brand new surface on the Trace. I am thinking this is going to be great. The infamous Ben Morton would join us later on the Trace. He rode with Larry and Gary and the always-lovely Tricia and allegedly rode with Pixie Hicks and Paul Deci on the 66 miles route. However it was told to me, by some very reliable gossip that they stayed on the tailgate of Pixie's suburban and spun the front wheels of their bikes while drinking cold beverages till the cycle computer showed 66 miles.

The weather was a little cool and sunny to start with. This would change as the day wore on. This ride is different from the other rides. Most rides are a loop. You start at a point and loop around back to your starting point. This ride is an out and back. To ride to a turn around point and go back to where you started.

As with all rides you got the guys like to hammer the ride. To see whom can get their heart up to 400 with out breaking loose some plague or breaking a nail. This would change as the day wore on. We are riding on this wonderful new surface and smiling like we are making a commercial for "Southern Bicycle Tours Inc." We go about 5 miles and "boom". Our wonderful surface in now "Black Warrior Drive". For the next 90 miles or so, your behind is hammered by the combination of 110 PSI 23 cm tires and 16 to 25 mph speeds and a rather worn surface, by biking standards.

If you rode this ride in a car, you would think, this is a piece of cake. It's another thing to get on a bike and ride it. On this day, the weather warmed up some with the sun being out, till it clouded up. There wasn't any wind, till the wind started to blow at about 10 mph. This ride is a little different. Most rides come to stop signs and turn. Most rides you encounter dogs junk cars, trailers, and four wheelers, broken glass, little stores and lots of hills and human beings. This ride had virtually none of that.

This ride at times was like the movie "Ground Hog Day". In "Ground Hog day" Bill Murray relived the same day over and over. This ride is like that in the fact the ride and the scenery seems to repeat itself. It was kinda like being in a bike ride simulator. One thing we saw at about 60 miles was a long line of abandoned rail cars. There must have

been 300 of them with trees and weeds growing around them. They looked like they had been there for years.

There was only one store on the Trace we rode. It was 25 miles down for where we started in a place called French Camp. This was mainly a wide place in the road. There was only one store. When you are tired and thirsty and hungry, you take what you can get. As I said earlier, this ride is mostly straight and flat. "There is no way to screw up right"? Wrong!

If the ride is a 100 miles and you go 50, you turn around don't you?. I know it isn't mixing rocket fuel. I went past the 50-mile mark like I was going to Jackson, Mississippi. I did turn around get back on track. Usually the "Bulldog" is in the back, doing clean up and picking aluminum cans. About 10 miles up from the turn around point, there is a rest stop. Supposedly everybody ahead stopped there.

Not Bulldog, I was focussed, determined, single minded..... dumb. I passed the rest stop on route to French Camp. I am almost at French Camp when these two adolescents pass me like "Hotrods from Hell" and scare the brownies out of me. It was the Major and Sam Evans. This would not be the last of their antics. Poor OLE Brian Abbott had broken a spoke and limping along behind the other group. I figured the Major thought Brian hadn't had enough excitement for one day. By the way "Don't try this at home" Sam and Dave, (not the singing group) concocted a fake biking accident.

They laid their bikes down on the road and lay down next to them. Brian rides up and sees Dave and Sam in their crash positions. When Brian walks to check on them, they hop up and say, "got ya". Brian was a not amused, he was not understanding, he was very upset. I think he was p---ed. It is not nice to fool Brian Abbott.

We all got back about 3:30 P.M. or so. Gary and Tricia came about 10 minutes later. Congratulations to Pat Ferguson who completed his first century. We had 10 out 13 riders do the century and two that were just spinning their wheels. All and all, everybody needs to ride the Trace. The surface needs some work, but it is still an awesome ride. There are no easy 100 miles. This one isn't either. It takes a lot of stamina and no doz.

I hope we do it next year. Those interested in riding next year, send \$3.15 to "Southern Bicycle Tours Inc" in care of Larry Pierson