



The Ride Captain By Carol Livingston

Today was my first time to be the Ride Captain for my bike club, which means I got to plan the route for this morning. I went to www.mapmyride.com to create it because with that site, you use Google Maps and plot points along the roads and it automatically calculates your mileage ... even gives you the topographical information. Cool beans, huh?

Oh, foo ... I can't figure out how to embed the map picture. You will have to go look at it here <http://www.mapmyride.com/ride/united-states/al/tuscaloosa/888665610>.

It was 39° and the clouds were really low in the sky at the start of the ride. It was supposed to end up sunny and warm up to about 55° today. Everyone was bundled up when we took off. We all made it out to the first rest stop at Robertson's Barbeque in Ralph. The only mishap was that Major Dave had a flat tire out on Sander's Ferry Road. Somehow, he and Courtney had gotten behind the group and when I heard about the flat, I was sorta disappointed that I had missed that. I have heard tales about how this guy was an animal with a wheel and could change a tube and re-inflate the tire in under a minute. Here is a picture of the group when they got to Ralph.

I know I need to stop and rest sometimes, but when we take off riding again on these cold mornings, I end up freezing my butt off. You see, it may be cold, but I start the ride off dry. As I'm riding, the combination of the wind and moisture wicking fabrics keeps me dry. But when we stop, I end up with a light coating of sweat next to my skin, which makes for a cold, damp sensation. Fortunately, the climb up Bethel Church Road was in about a mile, so my cold sweat turned to warm sweat pretty quickly.

At about mile 35, Bulldog decided to make a detour from the route so that we could go out Foxfire Road and see the new bridge. Last November, there had still been an old wooden bridge out there and he took a nasty fall on it. Here is Bulldog safely approaching the new bridge.



Oops ... looks like he's gonna up and (or down and) christen this new bridge also!



Just kidding ... we posed that shot.

Now, notice carefully above, in the photo before the posed one. Do you see the dirt road? There you have it, your highway dollars hard at work building a swell new bridge out on a dirt road. We have had a monsoon here the last few days, and this part of the ride was like cycling through quicksand. My bike is all muddy again ... orange, clay mud.

But you know, I love riding around out on these rural roads. We passed this field of daffodils while were still out on Foxfire Road.



It got me to reciting one of my favorite poems, of which I can only ever remember the first and last lines ...

*I wandered lonely as a cloud
(more poem, more poem, more poem)
And then my heart with pleasure fills
And dances with the daffodils.*

We made another rest stop at Dalton's Store in Foster's. I was visibly shivering by the time we left from there. And we didn't have any more hills on the return route to warm me back up. Our little group of me, Barbie, Tim, Pixie and Bulldog sort of broke up here. Everyone was cold and tired.

Courtney was at Capitol Park when we got back. As the Ride Captain, I "ordered" him to drive back out the route to check on Barbie and Tim, who would be the last ones in. I was shivering again. The temperature had only risen to 44°. We had gone 63.5 miles. Before he left on his assigned task, he told us that a group was meeting at Newk's for lunch.

We don't normally socialize after these long Saturday rides. But one of our former bike club members was visiting and had ridden with us today. Here is our visiting weekend warrior, Major Dave, and our bike club president, Courtney.



I was so glad to get to Newk's and have some warm soup and a sandwich. A very good time was had by all even though everyone was also cold and tired! Except for Jeff ... he wimped out on the ride, but joined us for lunch!
