

The Sealy Ann Mountain Century  
Let me count the pain  
The Fisher Report  
By Greg "Bulldog" Fisher

Larry Pierson always says, "There are no easy centuries". Baby, the Sealy Ann Mountain century ain't no flop down Sander's Ferry. Saturday morning was cold, 31 degrees with the sun just starting to rise over the trees.

There were the Magnificent Seven, Carol, Pam, Larry, Phil, Stephen, and Bulldog. Steve Phillips would brave the frigid conditions in search of adventure but not just another boring bike ride.

Steve Phillips is our long distance member from Birmingham. He likes to come down and do our century rides, because the other bike clubs don't do the number of century rides we do.

This guy is amazing; he goes through the hills yesterday like a squirrel! He never seems to tire or lose his excitement for cycling. He has ridden almost 14,000 miles this year. This makes you strong; however **that** is a lot of time in the saddle.

This ride takes in parts of Tuscaloosa and Jefferson counties in which coal is mined. Where you have coal, you have big hills and big trucks that haul those little black nuggets, but they take the weekends off. We saw only three or four coal trucks. Mostly we rode on deserted roads.

This ride has about 90 percent good surface and the rest, well, is like cooled off lava. We would start our ride on the Jack Warner Parkway on route to Brookwood up Alabama State Highway 216. Traffic was light like when Carol and I rode in July.

Follow 216 until you come to the 'Spot', a little store in Brookwood. We refuel and take care of bathroom needs and then it is back in the saddle to Lock 17 road. This is 25 miles of the some of the most beautiful riding around these parts.

Lock 17 road is not flat, in fact it like riding a scenic roller coaster. *There* is one climb that will make your liver poke out. It is about a mile long and about 10 percent grade. Everyone got up the climb with no problems, (livers intact).

Our next store stop was in the community of Oak Grove .If there is anything in Oak Grove besides the high school and the store I didn't see it. You can call the store the Dive, no wait; I think it really was named the dive. We did see some deer hunters who had shot a deer or two and were finished for the day. We still had fifty miles to go.

When we stopped in Oak Grove, Steve was telling Carol how much he likes this route and how she did a great job in laying it out, I agree.

However at this point I was dead on my backside and last thing I wanted to hear was how great the ride was. I was in pain and suffering and wanted someone to shoot me, please. Sometimes, bike riding hurts and isn't fun and you want it to be over.

We left the store again refreshed and relieved and on the way to the climb of climbs in our Home Grown Century, the Sealy Ann Mountain "climb of pain". If you make it up this climb you are pretty good bike rider, if you don't try again- but maybe not on the same day.

We make the climb up Sealy Ann and in my demented mind I thought the worst was over, WRONG! We continued our trek down Sealy Ann mountain road till we got into Tuscaloosa, Co. on Milldale road and some *welcome* smooth surface which eased my

pain a little. We finally got to back to 216 and crossed over to George Newell Rd, for a couple of miles and then hung a left on Bama Rock Garden road. I didn't see any rocks or gardens but what we did see, was great surface, and you guessed it: hills, more hills, lots of hills, plenty of hills!!

We finally get to Vance and by that point I knew I could make it back (Whew). We again refueled and refreshed, and got back on the bikes and off we went for the last 25 miles of riding for the group and suffering for me.

People that know me say I am not happy unless I am miserable, and **honey** I was a happy man Saturday! When we got on Keens Mill I would see my fuel gauge say empty and the last of the group fade to black. When I turned on Jack Warner Parkway, I was all alone and give out, (that is somewhere between exhausted and dead).

The traffic was like I had been transported to interstate 59 and was at the mercy of the merciless. Cars were flying by me like I was a bicycle at sundown, wearing funny clothes and going about as fast as fat Albert.

I dug deep down and gave **the old bulldog try** and made the climb and to my surprise folks were still there waiting for me. Looking all fresh and rested, like they had only ridden 10 miles.

The ride time was 7hr.18 Minutes and a 13.3 mph average, not too sporty for someone who has logged 70 centuries. But hey, some days you are SUPERMAN and some days you are Jimmie Olson.

I don't suggest someone do Sealy Ann Mountain as their first century ever or let it be the first century you did in months. If you do it anyway, don't try to be a Rocket Rider or you will give out. As Carol said hard = good training. This Home Grown Century will be a great warm up for Cheaha and the Ride of Love in May and then Cherohala in June.