

## With My Pals To Palmetto 2008

Some things are just worth doing again. Last December, the With My Pals To Palmetto ride was my first century after getting back into cycling four months earlier. This time around, it would be my 17th century of the year!

Yesterday, we went out to do it again. Because of the South Eastern Conference championship game between the Florida Gators and the Alabama Crimson Tide, I had a sneaking suspicion that this Pals would be another cherry lost for me ... my first time riding an unsupported century all alone.

I got up early because the ride start had been changed to 7:00 am to try to get folks back in time for kickoff. I started beef tips in my crock pot and then bundled up in layers of winter-weight spandex. On my way out to Mt. Olive Baptist Church, I stopped to have some breakfast at McDonalds. You all might remember how Larry hauled me over to eat at Nick's In The Sticks. Well, this McDonalds has something to recommend it also. Apparently President Ronald Reagan ate there after speaking at The University of Alabama on October 15, 1984. He ordered a Big Mac, large fries and sweet tea. They actually have a display commemorating the event.



Phil was already at the church when I arrived, which was nice. I had planned to be a trooper and ride it alone, but it was going to be better to have company. I was a little surprised to see him because the temperature was 27 degrees. He had told me before that his cut-off was 30. A few other hardy souls showed up, and by the ride's start we had a group of six. Here are Will, Jim, me, Bruce, Phil, and Stephen.



We decided to ride the 101 mile route backward, which brought us to the Zion Mall as our first rest stop. Last year Major Dave had told me that I could do all my Christmas shopping at the Zion Mall. I probably could have. Here is one view of some of the wide assortment of merchandise available.



The proprietor told me that they have an auction there every Friday and Saturday night in the old church sanctuary. Apparently they have been able to build a new church right down the road since last year. Here are Bruce, a Zion Mall regular, Phil, Jim, and Stephen enjoying the hospitality.



We were all wondering where the sun was that Accuweather had promised. When we took off again, I was cold and clammy. I hung back with Stephen who was off his pace today. Bruce, Will, and Phil dropped us as they scurried after Jim's strong lead. To be frank, I would have probably gone with them, but Stephen did not know the route ... we were riding it backward ... and I hate to say this, but this is one of the crummiest maps that the Druid City Bike Club has. So I would dash off ahead of him and then stop and wait for him at the next turn. Here is Stephen with his pal (me!) at Palmetto. The place had a little more rust and a few more weeds since last year!



I will have to admit that I was a little nervous about leading Stephen on the reverse route when I had only been through the opposite way. Add to the fact that one of the roads I was looking for had one number from the Lamar County end and apparently another number on the Fayette County side. I timidly took the turn outside of Kennedy onto an unmarked road and hoped we were going the right way ... and prayed for a miracle.

And at mile 57, a miracle occurred ... we saw Jesus walking on the water, so I knew we were on the right track!



We met up with Phil, Jim, Will, and Bruce at the Chevron station in Fayette. Will and Jim still had the layers of newspaper inside their jersey that they had put there at the start of the ride for insulation. Both complained that the sun had still not come out and that they had thought they could have ditched the newspaper by this point in the ride. Accuweather had promised 54 degrees, but it was clearly not much above 40 at that point.

Stephen was still off his ride and had had leg a cramp when we stopped, so I recommended that he drink some orange juice. He asked me to not ride ahead of him anymore in case he had trouble, so I stayed back with him for the last 34 miles. Somewhere out on Mormon Road, the sun at last came out. Maybe it was that, but it seemed like once the sun warmed him up some, he began to ride the last 15 miles much better.

On his way home from the ride, Phil came past us in his car out on Rue Road. We were about 3-4 miles from being finished for the day.

I think the next time I start a cold morning ride I'm gonna fill a thermos with hot cocoa!

