

Freeport number 2

There were seven total bikes with regulars of Ed Buckner, George Schjelderup, Gary & Beth Helm, and Charlie Myatt, and myself. New to the group were Henrik Poulsen and Pam Miller. Pam is very new to riding. She rolled in with just over 500 miles of experience. Brave or foolish...pick your adjective of choice. And for those who didn't come along, the day was looking glorious. It was almost November and there were just a few thin wispy clouds in the sky. The temperature was near perfect. Thank you Weather Gods.

We left the parking lot and headed for Air Base Parkway with Charlie covering the tail gunner spot with the extra eye on Pam. Thank you, Charlie. We got through town and onto Hwy 12. Traffic was not a problem and I did push the speed limit by a couple miles...not too many. Even so, I worked at staying awake on one of the most boring roads.

Yawn. I did wake up in time to take Shiloh Rd. This took us to Birds Landing and out to the windmills. I stopped at the Birds Landing stop sign and made sure we had everyone before making the left and shortly thereafter the right onto Montezuma Rd. Now I have ridden on this road a few times this year and it wasn't too rough. Now it was rough. Rough enough to bounce my bike a couple of times. We got to the hard left and headed up the hill and – whoa! – there was sand and pea size gravel in the whole road. My tire moved a good 6-8 inches to the left. I stayed up (thank you) and came to a stop at a spot where I could be sure everyone made it through. All did, but most told of their tires sliding also.

From here we rolled at a very, very sedate and smooth pace. I put my foot down from time to time and dragged it to see if the sand was missing. It was hard to tell visually, but I could feel it with my boot and hear it (sssss-ritchssssitch). Almost all the way into Rio Vista was covered by that very dangerous grit. Just at the south side of town, I stopped the group and made sure everyone was alright. All fine, but no one was happy with that road surface.

With the zig zag through town, we got back on Hwy 12 briefly before getting onto Hwy 160. Now as always I was trying to behave. This time I did...though most of the time it was because of traffic. And traffic was mostly at the speed limit, so I had nothing much to complain about. We got to Walnut Grove and saw signs saying there was a detour for Hwy 160. So we took the right onto bridge and the left onto E13/J11.

Just before Courtland, I looked to the left and saw a drawbridge was half up and the other half was down, but wrapped. I guess they were scrapping the old paint off and catching the chips to keep them out of the water. Good stuff. I wondered if that was the bridge we needed to take to get to Grand Island (stay tuned for the answer).

We rolled up the east bank levee road until we rejoined Hwy 160 at Courtland. Here I made a bonehead move just passed one of the bridge crossings. I did not see all the bikes behind me, so I pulled the group to a stop – without much warning or a good place to pull over. I had looked and saw a wide spot on the right, but it was gravel on second review and a fairly low, ugly drop off. Everyone came to a safe stop – thanks guys – kind of in the middle of the road. By the way, we had everyone. It was just my inability to see that caused me worry. Need to get radios!

Back on the real 160, we rolled at the speed limit up toward Freeport. Near Hood, a cat made the move to cross the road as we were coming. He changed his mind and turned back. Gary honked his horn in an attempt to convince the cat to stay back. The cat ignored it and sat and watched us roll by. I on the other hand looked at him with a look that I hoped would say “What?! Is there something I need to know? What?!”. Of course neither could hear what the other was saying. We got back to speed and rolled on.

Passed Hood we did run up behind a car that was doing about 15 miles below the limit. He eventually did get up closer to the limit. Oh well, almost there. I can suffer this fool for this short of a time...almost.

We made the turn onto Pocket Rd and into the gas station for gas, snacks, rest, and chit chat. I took a quick check with Charlie to see if Pam is doing fine. The report came back good. She only had one right hand turn where she went a bit wide and crossed the yellow, but there wasn't any oncoming cars...no harm.

Leaving the gas station, we headed back down Hwy 160 to the Freeport Bridge. This got us to S. River Rd. I was now on my top game of reading my directions, my odometer, the street signs. All this to make sure I did not to turn into Clarsburg. I succeeded. I bypassed the lovely little town and we made the turn onto County Rd 141 (such a descriptive name for a street). This went mostly straight with a couple of nice hard turns. It got us to County Rd 144, a narrow and rough road up on a levee. The murky water to our right was static and not moving, clogged with branches, rotted docks, and a full time of neglect. I thought a photographer would get a lot of interesting shots that would go good with an Edgar Allen Poe book (Dark and dreary, the night crept in...) or some Stephen King scarefest (Out of the water it rose. It was dripping...).

I kept my speed around 30-40 as the rough, narrow surface just wouldn't allow much more. Pot holes and road wrinkles were there waiting to bite. We even had a road side fisherman who insisted on casting just as we rolled by. We eventually left the levee road and aimed back at S. River Rd. Just 3 miles and we would hit the turn for Grand Island. We came to the bridge (that could take us left and across the river), and I didn't see and signs of the detour... Maybe... We went straight. And within a very short time the signs saying the road was closed came into view. Fudge! We couldn't get to Grand Island. It was not to be. The bridge I saw as we rode up was in fact the bridge we needed to cross to get to Grand Island.

Oh well, we make a U-turn and take the bridge to the east bank. Now if I can find a place... Um... Er... Oh finally a spot. Kind of.. It was wide enough to allow a slow U-turn, but the pavement dropped off about 3-4 inches. Oh well it is what it is. We all made the U-turn...well...except Pam. She looked at the task and evaluated her skills and came to a valid conclusion that she was in trouble. I asked if she wanted me to turn her bike around. "Yes!" came back real fast. She got off and I got on. I treated her new bike berry, berry carefully. It handled the gravel and road lips just fine.

Now with everyone pointed back, we proceeded to take the bridge and the detour to Walnut Grove. We crossed the Walnut Grove bridge and got back on Hwy 160. Shortly after that I saw the sign for Hwy 220. Hmm. Naw. Maybe if I had a better memory of the area, I would have known that this would have cut across Grand Island and gotten us back on the planned course. Oh well, simple is sometimes better. We just took Hwy 160 down to Hwy 12 and to Shelby's for lunch.

At the restaurant, I stepped in and said we were a party of 8 and before I got any more out, the waitress pointed at their banquet room. "Will that work?" "Yup" The rest of the gang were coming in and we got seated and ordered. I ordered eggs, sausage, and hash browns. Wow! Eating breakfast on a Breakfast Riders ride!? Who would have thought? Actually quite a few ordered breakfast items and others ordered lunch items. The food was good and tasty and reasonably priced. The service was pleasant and quite fast enough.

Once outside I took the group photos and we saddled up. Pam headed back to Hwy 160 and Concord, while the rest of us took the gloriously boring Hwy 12 to Fairfield. Again the traffic was mostly at speed. A great day. Thank you again, o glorious Weather Gods. I made it home by 2:45.