

## Linda's Loop 300

by

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There were 12 riders who came for this ride - for two of them it was their first ever 300. For Linda and myself, it was the first time we had done this ride, which was a big deal because I plotted and planned this ride in honour of Linda (hence the name - Linda's Loop). Even though the weather forecast was predicting rain and strong headwinds, that did not take away from the anticipation of the ride. We started out with tailwinds and crosswinds, but by working in groups, we handled that no problem. It was a little cool - but we were mostly prepared for that - no problem. We enjoyed an awesome meal in Grand Bend, with some having fresh pickerel, some having bacon and eggs. We all agreed that a swim in the lake was not necessary. A wonderful tailwind blew us to London and then on to St Mary's.

Coming out of the Pub in St Mary's (with some of the group having shared 2 pitchers of beer with their hamburgers), we were thrilled to see that the northwest wind had turned to !southwest, and the clouds had broken up to allow sunshine. Even though I got a flat tire, Linda and I agreed that this was a near perfect ride and it was rides like this that made us all love Randonneuring. It was looking like we would make it home before it got totally dark - what a bonus! The wind really started to pick up and we were going over 30 km/hr without effort. The sunshine was covered by dark clouds and it wasn't long before the torrential downpour began. We were 40 kms from home and we didn't really care about a bit of rain. Until we made a left turn. At 31.8 kms from the end, everything changed. Our pace line of four became a scattered scramble to keep the bike upright, on the road and away from each other's wheels. It was insane. We could barely maintain 10 km/hr and we wondered if it would be safer to walk with the bikes. At times I was shivering so hard that I wasn't sure if the bike was wobbling because of the wind or due to my shaking!

Because the ride started and finished at my home, I can tell you that coming home never felt so good. Three cyclists had finished the ride hours earlier and along with two spouses, Cindy Fisher and Ann DeBruyn, had got the fire blazing in the wood stove, sausages cooked, salads/desserts set out, and tea ready. They helped us take off our wet clothes, sat us down in chairs and gave us dishcloths soaked in hot water to cover our hands and toes, which I discovered is a most wonderful feeling. Unfortunately the conditions were more than they could bear for 2 of the riders who found shelter and needed to be picked up - good on them for getting as far as they did - they have a story to tell - cold piercing rain, 80 km/hr winds and night time riding! The tea sipping turned to beer and wine, beds were set up for those sleeping over and logs thrown into the fire to keep everyone warm and cosy. Eventually I went to bed, and as I was falling asleep, listening to my fellow cyclists talking and laughing while sitting around the wood stove, I thought to myself! "**This is why I love Randonneuring!**"