



# TRP Rally Report

## The Lancaster Country Ride Joy Ride 2016

Story by Lisa Tilley

The Greater Dallas Bicyclists have pulled it off again! It was another perfect day for the Lancaster Country Ride when the weather, the wildflowers, the townspeople, the high school drum line, and the cyclists all merged together for a giant party south-east of the D/FW area. And when I say giant, I mean record numbers, about 1,540 to be exact, according to event organizer Brenda Barnell. Congratulations, GDB!

I have affectionately named the Lancaster Country Ride my "Joy Ride" and so I was up and even pleasant as I loaded up my car for the drive across town. Rumor had it that there would be record numbers and I was in the mood for convenient parking. I could see that many other friends had the same idea as I arrived in Lancaster, but the town was ready for us and volunteers were stationed with orange flags managing every possible place to park. All of my friends and I were treated to organized, timely parking. I was able to pick up my packet, including my super comfy GDB socks and bling, and take pictures of the quaint little square. Vendors were busy setting up for the afternoon outdoor festivities and early cyclists visited John's Trikes and Bikes and The Lovin' Oven Bakery. The boy scouts provided breakfast to cyclists as well.

I got back to the car, kitted up and pedaled my bike through the square to the start line. As is custom, the Lancaster High School Drum Line players were getting the party started. The waiting cyclists always get really into the music and the drummers eat it up. This ride would not be the same without these great students' enthusiastic greeting. Another favorite is the flyover from the D/FW Lancaster Commemorative Air Force. The flyover included the open cockpit Stearman, which I have had the luxury of flying in since the last time I pedaled in Lancaster. The commitment of these gentlemen to keep these classics flying and provide the flyover mirrors the commitment of the city folk who make this cycling event great. By the way, you, too, can fly in one of these historic planes and your donation keeps those planes in the air. Check out [www.contrails.us](http://www.contrails.us) for details.

Cyclists were released by routes (24, 42, and 62 miles) and speed, and we were off. Needless to say, it was a bit tight for the first few miles. Hundreds of cyclists of all levels and experience slowly pedaled out of town. It's a time for happy chatter and a keen eye so you don't get tangled with someone next to you. As the miles go on, the crowding is less and it really evens out after the first rest stop. We pedal toward Ferris under gray skies that sprinkled just once, ready to experience the pops of color, blues and reds to be



exact, from the Bluebonnets and Indian Paint Brush, the pride of Ellis County and the Lancaster Country Ride.

From Ferris, we pedal on past sleepy ranches and peaceful neighborhoods, out into the countryside headed towards Palmer. We make a right on to Sugar Ridge Road and return cyclists know this part of the loop is where the work begins and the scenic gems are hidden. Roads become hilly and even a bit challenging, but after putting some good pedal work in, you are rewarded with bluebonnet spotted meadows and inspiring vistas. This is where the impromptu rest stop occurs, where cyclists park their bikes and city folk park their cars and snap the iconic Texas bluebonnet photos of themselves and each other. It's a great place for a breather, and it is followed by a very nice descent, and the GDB assigned a volunteer to warn people of the big turn at the bottom. Great communication and much appreciated by those new to the route. This back half and last leg of the 42 mile route also contain the famous camel ranch that cyclists love to visit roadside, and

new to me this year was the horse ranch that went as far as to put out feed so cyclists could feed and interact with the horses. Being outside and pedaling is great therapy, as we all know, but to see the interactions and the smiles the animals provide on this route add a deeper dimension to the "rally" feel of the ride. We are hardworking employees, parents, athletes, you-name-it, who could all use the reminder to slow down and enjoy the day.

Speaking of enjoying the day, somewhere between the city

gazebos (which made for perfect rest stop shelters) of Ferris and Palmer, I made a new friend. DeeDee, in a Mad Dog kit has completed an Iron Man Half and completed more running events than I count. I absolutely enjoyed comparing notes on our cycling journeys and have gained a new forever friend. It was also fun to catch up with friends from The Iron Riders and The Manly Bulge Bike Club.

As much as you love a ride, it's always nice to see the city limits sign for the town from which you started. I look forward to chatting with friends, snapping a few more photos and indulging in some lunch. I missed the Lancaster Historical Society this year. They usually grill and provide malted beverages for a donation and that makes my Joy Ride complete. I hope they come back! There is PLENTY in the town square to choose from in addition to food trucks and the like. I chatted with GDB members Paul Brown before the ride and Steven Krogh afterward and both were smiling, pleased with the day. After making my rounds I actually went over to the Commemorative Air Force hanger and thanked my friend Steve and friends for the event flyover. I had a quiet lunch on the tarmac at the Taxiway Café.

If you haven't pedaled this ride, you really need to get here, grab your complementary GDB socks and enjoy the event for all it has to offer. Set the time aside to stop and smell the bluebonnets in 2017. Support the boy scouts by grabbing breakfast at the Methodist church, cheer on the percussionists at the start line, pedal the route, take it all in, come back and enjoy the vendors and stop by the Lancaster Commemorative Air Museum, (as well as the Cold War Museum). It will all be here, eagerly waiting to greet you and celebrate the day!



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