

Fleche Centre-Atlantique (avril 6-7, 2007)

Rapport de l'équipe «838 pounds of Flèche»

Les points forts de la journée: beaucoup de kilomètres dans les jambes, un vent de face violent et glacial, des montées vicieuses, toujours à la bourre par rapport au chrono, bouffer comme des ogres, mais bien sûr l'éclate totale.

L'équipe «838 pounds of Flèche» constituée de son capitaine Bill Beck et de ses compères, Tom O'Neill, Kelly Smith, Ray Skinner et Lothar Hennighausen, a pris le départ à 6h30 du matin dans le Delaware. Nous nous sommes dirigés plein Ouest, comme le veut la devise d'Andrew



Jackson: «*Toujours vers l'Ouest jeunes Randonneurs*». De puissants vents de face nous ont littéralement puni pendant plus de 200 bornes entre le Maryland et la Pennsylvanie, et cela jusqu'à Thurmont...pour finalement devoir faire face à une montée terriblement éprouvante dans les montagnes de Catoctin, où le soleil, lui, était en train de se coucher. Après avoir parcouru plus de 260 km et avec plus de 90

minutes de retard, nous nous sommes enfin retrouvés à Shepherdstown en Virginie de l'Ouest vers 9h15 du soir pour casser rapidement la croûte. On en a aussi profité pour faire une petite maintenance et quelques réglages sur le vélo de Kelly de façon à ce que toute l'équipe puisse finir dans les temps. Devant faire face à la nuit tombée, l'équipe a alors traversé le parc du Shenandoah à l'auteur de Harpers Ferry pour se retrouver en Virginie. Grâce à notre Capitaine Bill et à Tom «jambes d'acier», nous avons pu rattraper notre retard, ce qui nous a permis de souffler une petite heure à l'étape contrôle obligatoire de la 22ième heure et de profiter du relais-dîner de l'Amphore ouvert toute la nuit à Herndon. A 4h30 du matin, l'équipe «838 pounds of Flèche» a rassemblé ses dernières forces pour se diriger plein Est en direction d'Arlington, où nous sommes arrivés avec de l'avance à la dernière étape. Pour fêter cette victoire, Bill, notre capitaine, et Tom «jambes d'acier» ont alors décidé de parcourir une boucle supplémentaire en passant par les «Quatre saisons» sur la fameuse rue M dans Georgetown. Après presque 360 km dont plus de 6000 m de montée, l'équipe «838 pounds of Flèche» a finalement validé l'épreuve à l'étape d'arrivée. Une expérience aussi extraordinaire ne pourra jamais être égalee.

Reporting for Team “838 pounds of Flèche”

Our story can be summarized with a few simple facts:

- **5 men in spandex with their vélos**
- **Average age >50**
- **838 pounds of Flèche**
- **24 hours, five States and the Nation’s Capital**
- **230 miles of road and 18,000 feet of vertical elevation gain**
- **60,000 Kcal**

But these mere facts do not give justice to our adventure. Team “838 pounds of Fleche”, the



validity of the name was not independently confirmed, convened on a sunny and warm afternoon in Newark (DE), only to be faced with a dire weather forecast. The forecast called for some snow accumulation (which, however, never materialized) and strong winds from the NW. Like the other Fleche teams, we had to battle those for 10 hours while riding West and North West. Team Captain Bill Beck and riders Tom O’Neil (appropriately named strong rider Tom), Kelly Smith, Ray Skinner and Lothar Hennighausen spent a leisurely evening,

Not a good omen!

including a pre-ride dinner with “our drivers” Jeff (Bill’s son) and Josie (Kelly’s wife) at the *Cucina de Napoli* (the portions were amazing and the price was just right for any student or Randonneur!). Josie got quite a laugh from our near panic over the weather forecast Friday evening and it was near mutiny. But our Captain made it clear after dinner: *“We’ve got to do the ride now, we’ve eaten the calories!”* The night in our Motel 8 domicile was rather short as a loud



Loading up with calories at Cucina de Napoli

domestic squabble peppered with four letter words erupted shortly after midnight in the adjacent room. Little sleep was to be had. Ray and I were up early and to ensure an early breakfast and an on-time departure we headed to the office, which was locked with the night manager sleeping on a sofa. We knocked at the door and woke up the manager who hesitantly agreed to open the breakfast room. As it turned out, breakfast was rather Spartan consisting of stale donuts, frozen pancakes and cornflakes. Somehow I had much higher expectations from reading the Motel 8 web site. Captain Bill: *“The breakfast offered at the Super 8 was pretty pathetic. Especially the 1/2” of syrup for the entire hotel! I’m glad I brought my raisin bread”*. Kelly: *“My secret breakfast weapon before the start was pizza! I had 2 leftover slices and they went down fine*

that morning". At 6:30 a.m. sharp, the Team was ready to roll, as documented in the picture taken by the night clerk. We rolled out of the parking lot at 6:40 and as soon as we left Newark it became clear that this was a Fleche in its truest sense and no "ersatz". The team was hit by a double whammy, ferocious rebarbative headwinds and relentless climbs. The first control at mile 17 served as a reminder that the Wawa serves as a Community Center in this part of the world with plenty of coffee to keep all those Truckers



Team 838 Pounds of Fleche: Kelly, Bill, Tom, Lothar and Ray

and Randonneurs awake.

A little over two hours into the ride, as we approached the mighty Susquehanna, Kelly could not keep up for unknown reasons, but thanks to Ray's engineering ingenuity the problem was solved. An eye witness account: *"The infamous "False Bonk" as we approached the Susquehanna and my rear wheel slipped. I was freaking out to be suddenly just gone off the back. Nothing seemed to be wrong I just couldn't move. Ray saved the day by suggesting I check my rear brake. Not only was it rubbing but the tire was*



What a selection!



Crossing the mighty Susquehanna

scraping on the chainstay so hard it left a gob of rubber on the frame! If I'd kept plugging away the tire would have blown I guess." The ride to the second control was rather uneventful, but the control itself, an abundant gas station and garage, was a relic. Bill recalls: *"The guys at the New Park Service station were "good ole boys" and looked nothing like the lycra-clad cyclists that descended on them. But we all got along fine, they seemed interested in our ride, and they were very helpful in fixing Lothar's bracket."* Yes, the bracket. As a true "want to be Randonneur" I needed to

install all kinds of gadgets on my bike, two head lights, computer, my watch and of course my Garmin Vista CX (although I am still not on a first name basis with this device and I keep asking Steve and Nick stupid questions, which I should be able to answer myself). Since my Lemond Cross bike has additional brake levers on the handle bar, I had too little space for all those necessities and needed to install a handlebar dashboard, which held the Garmin and the computer. Upon crossing the Susquehanna, the screw holding the dashboard came lose and I just caught the

Garmin in time before it hit the pavement. Bill reassured me that I could purchase some screws in a Hardware store in Stewartstown. Fortunately the good ole boys in the “abandoned” mechanic shop were able to fix the problem and I could continue tracking the route for my grand children.



The team crossing the Susquehanna
Tom, as so often, is leading the group, followed by Kelly, Lothar and Ray. In order to take this picture Bill had to drop back to the end.

Team 838 Pounds of Fleche: Five cyclists on a mission!



Ray Skinner (are we lost?)



Lothar Hennighausen



Captain Bill Beck



”Strong Rider” Tom O’Neill
(Does he carry an extra pair of glasses?)



Kelly Smith
Always respond with a quip and a smile

West of the Susquehanna

The terrain west of the Susquehanna was, as expected, hilly and fierce headwinds were tossed at us. However, our spirits were still high as we stayed pretty much on schedule, and distances between controls were manageable. After the control at Rutter's at mile 64, we headed for lunch at the **Plum Crazy Diner** in Westminster at mile 86. The sit-down lunch felt really good and the hot turkey sandwiches and eggs over easy did their jobs. As a harbinger to mechanical problems he faced down the road, Kelly was fiddling with his bike and lubricating various moving parts. But more about this later



After lunch at the Plum Crazy Diner at mile 86 (note Lothar looks already pretty beat but Tom and Bill are full of smiles. Ray and Kelly take the middle ground.

The no-no bridge!

Apparently the premier Randonneuse Crista Borrás had warned us (or maybe only one of us –



BB) not to cross the Monocacy River at mile 107 on the Conover and Harney Road Bridge as it had a **STEEL GRID DECKING**. But after all, did you ever listen to your mother? Following a steep downhill at mile 107 (naturally the last entry on this page of the cue sheet) a metal bridge emerged and nobody was in the mood to slow down. Since there was no metal bridge mentioned on the cue sheet, there was not supposed to be one - Doh! As Kelly noted: *“That metal bridge north of Thurmont that scared us all to death. Tom noticed a sign for bikes but*

The infamous Conover Bridge

didn't have time to read it, Chuck has seen it and it says 'Bikes 5 MPH', we hit it at about 30! It was amazing none of us went down on that grating.” As for me, I was the last to wobble across the bridge seeing the end of the Fleche adventure, or even my life, in front of my eyes. In my short cycling career this was probably the scariest moment. In reflecting over this incidence I googled Conover and Harney, the two roads on either side of this infamous bridge. James Conover was the Captain who fought the “Battle of Monocacy” in the summer of 1864, where he

was mortally wounded. And little was to be found out about Harney, even on Wikipedia. All I know that it is a small town on the MD/PA border.



Horse power meets pedal power

Somewhere where Amish live. While we were riding into the wind, this guy had a tail wind – good for him!

Finally, the mountains, which will shield us from the winds?

After cycling west for 121 miles into a steadily blowing head wind we reached Thurmont at sunset. The expert Randonneurs and amateur meteorologists among us profoundly announced that the mountains would shield us from the fierce winds. Well, it turned out different and now we had headwinds and steep climbs (what more can you ask for). As we had refueled with delicious Alpine chocolate just east of Thurmont we decided to press on and tackle the major climb of this Flèche. While the 5 mile steady uphill passing through the Catoctin Mountain Park (<http://www.nps.gov/cato/index.htm>) lifted us to 1,700 feet above sea level, my spirit was clearly not lifted but rather deteriorated. This long climb, which brought us up Catoctin Mountain, was my low point, and over a 4 mile distance I lost 10 minutes on the leading pack. Naturally Captain Bill had a very different outlook on this climb: ***“The climb up Rt 77 from Thurmont looks the most impressive on the elevation profile, but the repeated steep climbs in eastern Pennsylvania are harder”***. Thank you Bill for all those encouraging words. When I turned south on the ridge onto Stottlemeyer Rd. my fellow Flèche members were waiting and we regrouped. For the history buffs, all I was able to find is that Stottlemeyer was a Maryland volunteer in the Civil war. Back to the story, Tom appeared to be more than concerned about my well being or perhaps even more about us not making it to the finish line in time, and as he told me after the Fleche that he was VERY concerned on two occasions, during my “bonking” on the Catoctin climb, and in Shepherdstown (more about this later). Since I respond very well to peer-pressure, I continued without stopping. For emergency situations I had brought along ONE power gel, a remnant from the Delaware Cycling Club Century ride. This gel and plenty of Gatorade did the trick, I felt rejuvenated and pushed forward. Is it really the carbs in these gels or the perceived mental boost that frees the tamed energy? It got really dark somewhere along Stottlemeyer and Tom passed me in his usual *steam roller* style as did Ray. While we were steaming ahead, Kelly’s bike developed cable problems. Bill still with him at that time also moved on and we left Kelly in the dark with his problems. Here is Bill’s defense: ***“As I recall, Kelly’s problem seemed to be fixed when he and I started riding again. I rode up towards you (Lothar) thinking that Kelly would be catching up at any minute.”*** Bill rode up to me on Stottlemeyer Rd, so that I wouldn’t be in the dark by myself (thanks mom!). I have to admit his Schmidt hub dynamo with the halogen lights were like truck headlights and easily outperformed

my flimsy LEDs. The last we saw of Kelly was his headlight in the distance before we turned onto Rt. 40. Shortly thereafter we entered Washington County and caught up with Ray and Tom who were waiting for us on Boonsboro Mountain Rd. Ray had received a phone call from Kelly with bad news: Kelly's derailleur cable had broken. While Tom and I took off, Ray and Bill were on the phone with Kelly discussing the problem, but since Kelly said that he had a spare cable, there was no need to ride back to him. One day I need to consult "old timers" to find out how they dealt with communication issues prior to the cell phone era. The steep and winding descent to Boonsboro on Boonsboro Mountain Road was challenging, to say the least. Some Randonneurs even called it *scary*. Here some eye witness reports. Our captain: ***"The night descent of Boonsboro Mountain Road into Boonsboro was pretty hairy, with lots of curves and rises that I couldn't see over until the last second. Ray and I went down together with me in the front because of my brighter lights and, since I was on and off the brakes most of the way, I was a little worried about causing a collision with Ray. But it turned out fine."***

Finally, we crossed the bridge over the Potomac and rolled into Shepherdstown at 21:15, only 1:30 behind Bill's conservative schedule. Seeing the Potomac after 151 miles of hard work was extremely gratifying. Clearly we were on the home stretch (well, a long one). Tom was already at the Blue Moon when we got there and explained that the cook had been sent home early, but that we could have sandwiches or leftover soup. The owner / manager of this "Etablissement" was quite eccentric telling us about his life and that he lived in an old yellow school bus. It is apparent on these pictures that we had shrunk down to four riders and Kelly was nowhere to be seen. Sandwiches, coke, stewed chicken curry and other fine cuisine lifted our spirits and life did not seem that bad after all. The Blue Moon Café had its own character. Young and middle aged folks were hanging out, drinking beer and minding their own business. Our appearance and the intense clicking of our cleats on the stone floor changed the quiet ambience.



While Bill enjoys his sandwich and his diet coke, Ray is contemplating about life

Quite a bit later, I recall that were ready to move on, Kelly showed up. He was panicked and ready to drop out from this Fleche. Kelly was frustrated with the mechanical problems and obviously hypoglycemic (perfect and fully accepted medical excuse for acting irrationally). Since it was freezing cold we huddled up in the ante room of the Café, essentially blocking its main entrance. The conversations on how Kelly would get home and how the bike could get fixed did not go anywhere. But it was out of the question to leave Kelly behind. Team “**838 Pounds of Fleche**” had started with 5 members and “**838 Pounds of Fleche**” would check in at the Marriott control in Arlington. Tom and Bill, just having had a



Lothar and Tom are not too picky about their food

caloric boost, were ready to “assist” Kelly in his quest to replace the broken cables. While Kelly fixed the bike, they held the cables for him and offered observations about the “shift” cable looking kind of short and thick (yes, the brake and Derailleur cables are different). Finally: we were ready for the last 80 or so miles!

Night riders

Our departure from the Blue Moon café had been scheduled by Captain Bill for 21:46 (I really wonder how he came up with this time), but it was more like 10:30 when we finally pedaled into the dark night. The night riding turned out more pleasurable than I had anticipated. It was quiet and peaceful, even serene. The moon provided plenty of light, which was supplemented by Bill’s halogen light and an occasional car sneaking up from behind. We rode hard to make up precious time. Although nobody noticed, Ray claims that his low point was on this stretch: *“My personal low was when leaving the Blue Moon. I had put my third layer on but was unable to quit shivering. I thought something was loose on the fork or front wheel until I realized I was shivering that hard the bike was shaking. Fortunately it only took about a half mile to warm up”*.



Although the distance to the next control was less than 15 miles, we got separated again. Kelly and I fell back and suddenly I felt lost. The Control was at the Exxon gas station off Harper’s Ferry Rd, but in the darkness I only read Harpers Ferry. We passed a town, which I presumed to be Harpers Ferry and we were

Night Riders Tom and Kelly

together when we made that left turn onto US 340. Somehow I misread the cue sheet, the miles did not add up and I started to worry that we had missed a control. I alerted Bill of my suspicion that we were going the wrong way. But what did I know. Bills daughter had been in College in Shepherdstown and he was certain that we were on the correct road as he had used that route many times when visiting his daughter. Knowing Bill he probably needed to visit his daughter to make sure she was studying and not squandering her parent's \$. After four miles on US340, we entered VA, our fifth State, and the Exxon station, a well lit icon, appeared to our right. After all, US340 was not that bad at that time of the night. It must have been just shy of midnight when we pulled into the control. We had cycled long distances on quiet roads and this part of the world, the *hinterland*, feels empty. But there are vibrant hubs, called gas stations, where the locals meet to not only to fill up their gas guzzlers (and sometimes hybrids) but also purchase whatever they need, and possibly even socialize. This Exxon station provided me with a whole new insight into our society. Having lived in the Washington area since 1985, I have rarely experienced such a buzzing and exotic situation (but I should say that normally I am in bed by 10 and do not go to gas stations at midnight). The line at the register was at least 15 people deep, waiting for their turn to check out whatever they had purchased. Ray was in line close to the register, waiting to get the Brevet card stamped, and as we were running well behind schedule I asked politely whether I could cut in. There was no objection. The lady behind me in line engaged me in a conversation and wanted to know what we were doing. This was a legitimate question since our profile clearly did not fit that one of a midnight shopper. Five males in dark spandex outfits, wearing reflective gear, clicking shoes, sun glasses and Helmets with lights. Although this appearance might have been threatening to your run of the mill suburban, this crowd was accepting. Back to the story. I told the lady, that we had started at 06:30 in Newark (Delaware) and that we were on a mission and our way to the Nation's Capital. Although she might not have known where exactly Newark was, it was clear to her that we had covered a great distance already. The conversation went as follows: VA Lady: "***Where will you stay overnight and sleep?***"? Lothar: "***We will ride all night so that we are in Washington at sunrise***". VA Lady: "***But you need to sleep. Where will you sleep?***". LH: "***No, cannot sleep. We are on a mission and we will need to ride all night***". VA Lady: "***But it's night ...*** At this time, it was my turn at the register, I paid for the Gatorade and got my card stamped. "***Be safe***" was the **farewell by the customers still standing in line.**

We are in Virginia! No more border crossings, no more hills, no more head winds, this should be easy. That's what Captain Bill had promised us. However, instead of dying down during the night the Randonneur god shifted the wind, which now blew from the South East in a vain effort to slow down this audacious group. The 15 miles to the next control at the **7-11** in Purcellville were covered pretty quickly. Again, this **7-11** was snapshot of our society at 02:00 on Sunday morning. Bill's schedule had planned in a 0:21 hour stop to refuel and get our cards stamped. While a regular citizen would stop for 20 min or maybe 25 min, Randonneurs stop for 21 minutes. And then we are surprised when we are told that we are way outside the curve.

The 22 hour control

The original plan had been to hit the W&OD trail in Purcellville but based on Crista's advice the route and cue sheets were revised and we entered the trail in Leesburg. It was flat and we were flying. Well, when I say we, I am mainly talking about Tom, Bill, Kelly and Ray. I was barely hanging on by my teeth and my heart rate failed to get above 110, which is a sure sign of exhaustion. Bill's schedule had us arrive at the 22 hour control at the **Amphora Diner** in Herndon at 02:32 with a 1:57 break (Bill, did you think two hours would have been an excessively long break and that's why you cut it down to 1:57?). We made up time and rolled

into the parking lot at 3:15, still enough time for an extended breakfast and some rest. As can be



seen in this picture taken by our captain, the food of choice was pancakes (Tom, Bill, Kelly), eggs and hash browns (Lothar) and something indiscernible for Ray, and those delicious dishes were washed down with plenty of coffee with half/half and not that skim milk we use at home. By that time Bill had switched from Diet Coke to milk (I guess it was breakfast time). The Amphora, again, provided detailed insight into what regular people do at 4 a.m. on a

The Amphora Diner: Last chance for real food

Sunday morning. Now I know why teenagers come home from parties at 6:00, they stop for breakfast in all-night diners. There were plenty of couples and teenagers eating everything from pancakes to steaks. The local law enforcement officers, sitting close to us, also had breakfast while keeping a close eye on the teenagers (or maybe us). 04:20 – last stop at the restroom, filling up bottles, dressing up, paying.

04:30

Control card stamped, clicking in and off we roll. The Fleche rules dictate that the 22:00 stop is at least 16 miles from the finish, which should provide sufficient room to finish in time. But Herndon, with more than 20 miles to go was the closest stop Bill was able to find. This made me worry a little, but Tom was confident as ever: ***“This is my back yard, we have plenty of time and we will arrive early at the Marriott”.*** ***“Yes Tom, you are fresh and strong, but I am weak and tired!”*** With Tom in the lead we fly East on the W&OD trail. The first joggers appear in the dark (they should be required to wear lights as well) but they are no match for a bunch of dedicated Randonneurs. The trail frequently crosses streets but traffic is almost non-existent and no serious attempts are made to slow down. This is no problem for the first rider, who can easily spot the posts on the trail at the intersections, but for me riding last (well somebody has to be last and make sure that nobody is left behind) it is a challenge to evade them. Although we had breakfast my body had not recovered and my heart rate stayed low despite working hard.

Suddenly a detour. The trail was blocked off and we were diverted onto a gravel trail, where I lost sight of my cycle comrades. The trail deteriorated and there were no tire marks any more. Had I missed a turn, yes I did, and would I DNF this Fleche? No, this cannot happen to me, the Rookie Flecher, so close to the finish. But there was help. An angel appeared high up to my left, an angel with headlights. Ray was adjusting something on his bike when I passed him 30 feet below on a dead end trail. I think he was laughing when he saw me below on the dirt trail. I carried by bike and worked my way through the bushes to join Ray (thanks Ray). Finally we caught up with the rest of the gang and pulled up at the Marriott at 06:05.

No, not another loop!

I was ecstatic that we finally had finished and were ready to check in – but there was a glitch. Yes, we had cycled 227 miles, which amounts to 363 km, and thus satisfied the Fleche rules.

What else do you need? Well, there were three issues. First, we had planned to ride five states and the Nation's capital. Only the first goal had been accomplished but we had not crossed the Potomac into DC. Second, Bill was paranoid (well this word might sound a little strong but it is pretty much accurate and describes the situation at hand) that the **L'audax club parisien (ACP)**, which oversees all Fleche events and certifies them, would use a different mapping program with the potential of us coming up short. Thus he wanted to ride a DC loop. Lastly, Tom with all his youthful abundance of energy wanted to give his muscles a final workout. Well, as I mentioned earlier, since I am easily convinced to do foolish things, I stayed with the team and crossed Key Bridge into DC. The plan was to ride to the "**Four Seasons**", which according to Tom was just over the bridge and around the corner, get our cards stamped and back to the Marriott, with plenty of time to spare. While crossing Key Bridge, and being in my comfortable last position, I spotted a Shell Station on the left, a much closer control than the "Four Seasons". However, my friends did not respond to my verbal attempts to attract their attention and thus we continued on M Street towards the control. We pulled up in front of the hotel stormed into the lobby (the click-click theme continues on the marble floor) and Tom in a rather persuasive manner convinced the concierge to sign the Brevet cards. The story is as something like this: Concierge: "**How can I help you?**" Tom: "**We are on a mission and need proof that we were here in this hotel. Could you please sign this card**". Concierge: "**Of course**". Now I understand why Tom is a successful commercial real estate guy. Who could refuse to sign the contract he places in front of you.

Riding towards the "Four Seasons" and back to the Marriott we encounter bicycles everywhere. **Team Carnivore**, some of the **Chain Gang**, the **Grey Ghosts**, all heading for the last control and the hot breakfast. The nice clerk at the Marriott stamped our cards and we did our final official duty of the day, sign the Brevet cards.



The team bore the trials and tribulations of the Fleche with longanimity.

This picture, taken by Rudy Hewitt pretty much describes the previous 24 hours. We set out and finished as "**Team 838 pounds of Fleche**".

After the ride

Kelly, Ray and Bill went to Tom's house to take a shower (apparently it was another couple of miles uphill riding). I took a cab home, showered and drove back to the Marriott with my wife Priscilla to join all the other Fleche teams for breakfast.

Some Fleche lessons and afterthoughts:**Bill**

- In the middle of the ride, my Nelson Longflap saddlebag was stuffed to the maximum with extra clothes and would barely close in the last hole of the long flap, but by the end was back to the first hole on the short flap as every layer went back on me.
- My Polar computer estimates I burned 12,100 Calories. But I can remember eating 4 pints of chocolate milk, 1 pound of ginger snaps, 1 quart of pretzel rods, 12 fig newtons, 2 chocolate cupcakes, 2 fruit pies, 2 Reeses peanut butter cups, a ham sandwich with potato chips, a hot roast beef sandwich with fries and gravy, a stack of pancakes with sausage and syrup, several quarts of Gatorade and a glass of milk!
- Although it was cold, the night riding was very peaceful, with starry skies and a late moonrise.
- Although there were mechanical problems, we didn't have a single flat!
- There were only two times I can recall that we didn't stick together. One was before Littlestown, which was OK because we were getting close to the control. But the other was in the dark between Thurmont and Shepherdstown. That was not so good, with Kelly riding almost the whole way by himself and with cable problems. It was much better when we all rode together, especially in the dark, like after Shepherdstown.

Kelly

- The urgent debate on when the 'real hills' ended on the route. I'd say the final answer was Virginia!
- The snow flurries were beautiful, in memory, at the time I was thinking how wet and cold it would be if the kept coming.
- Mass quantities of chocolate under the late afternoon sky on the roadside was most satisfying! It doesn't stick with you long though, as I learned an hour later.
- Obeying 'Murphy's Law', as soon as I bonked (for real) and dropped off the group in the dark my shift cable broke.
- Same law, as soon as the cable was fixed my shifter broke!
- It is much better to ride in the dark and cold in a group than solo (editors note: sorry Kelly for leaving you alone – It will not happen again)
- People in convenience stores are so flipped out by what we do that they are very helpful.

Ray

- What a great adventure and slightly over BLOWN challenge.
- The winds took a heavy price from all on Saturday. You guys do realize we are all crazy, sane people would never consider such feats under those conditions, let alone carry them out. Especially since I would do it again next week.

Lothar

- My greatest adventure in a long time, but next time let's find a 22 hour control with beds and a little close to the finish.
- This ride is furnished with a panoply of memories and events
- This was a cycling orgy (definition: excessive indulgence in something especially to satisfy an inordinate appetite or craving)

Lothar Hennighausen
May 10, 2007