

Natural Healing Express Weekly

Column Volume 145 RAGBRAI – America’s Favorite Bicycle Ride

Well, one week from today (I write these articles on Friday for publication on Tues) I will be leaving to become a Rookie Rider on America’s Favorite Bicycle Ride. RAGBRAI, which stands for Register’s Annual Great Bicycle Ride Across Iowa, is 480 miles long this year. Yep, riding a bike across Iowa in July. Doesn’t even sound like a good idea. And, in February of this year, I would have strongly bet against my participation. As in never, ever, ever.

But, then a funny thing happened. A dear, dear friend was diagnosed with cancer and in 26 short days, she passed. I found myself having conversation with one of my best friends...and the only one I have known since I was three years old. Through an odd set of circumstances, we were now living within a 1 ½ of each other for the first time in our adult life. Obviously, we were both grieving and she tearfully said, hey, we should do more stuff together before it’s too late. Dying, death and funerals have a way of bringing that to your attention.

So, we had another sip of wine and I said, “Yes, I agree”. She said, “I have an idea, you should do RAGBRAI with me this year.” And, of course I said yes... And then about 30 seconds later, I asked, “What’s a RAGBRAI?” Shortly after, I found out. Hoping she would just forget about it but knowing she wouldn’t, I just nodded.

Then came the all the next steps. I needed a bike. I needed bike clothes. I needed to put on the bike clothes and get ON the bike. I consider myself athletic but much more of a volleyball player and a runner than a biker. Stuff hurt on my body that has never hurt before. And, it was still COLD outside. It’s now truly amazing to me how much wind can play a factor in biking. My bike is very light and is super quick to react to wind.

So, now the bike is purchased and adjusted to me (whatever that meant at the time). I am dressed, helmeted, gloved and ready for my first ride. I went exactly 13 miles. I started to get the feel of it and honestly, it was quite enjoyable. Then came an outing in Madison with my BFF and two others, I went 5 miles and had a flat tire. There are a whole lot of things you wonder about when you are stranded out in the middle of nowhere and realize you may now have to walk and possibly carry your bike. But soon thereafter, I learned to change a bike tire in the wind on a cold day. Check that off the list.

Then came my first “organized” ride. It was put on by the GOATS of Galena. They are a great group and put on a ride through the rolling hills of Jo Daviess County. We entered for the 36 miler. I probably shouldn’t have, but I agreed to ride with my friends—yes, the experienced ones.

How can it be uphill to Shapville in both directions? We rode and rode and rode, through canyons, and scout camps and wide open windy spaces. The views were spectacular, but I was exhausted and had no idea how to use my gears. If you do not, you will fall out and immediately stop. That happened—several times. My other rookie riding partner cramped and began using words I have never heard him say. My BFF and her hubby were at least six miles ahead of us and circling back to cheer us on. Wonderful. Insult to injury and we were almost halfway done..Even the beautiful Holsteins in those rolling hills were starting to peeve me off.

It took a while, but I finished those 36 miles with 3600 feet of climb. And, I almost just quit right there. But no, there were at least 20 more “training” runs to come. So, since that day in April, I have been riding and riding preparing for RAGBRAI. Some days are better than others, but what I have learned from biking so far has been terrific. It is considered a silent sport, meaning just you versus the apparatus. I have learned it is

NOT a silent sport for me, especially on hills. I have learned that if you stick a bike tire in a chug hole deep enough, you will be laying on your side in the middle of the road in a nanosecond.

I have learned respect for the wind. I have learned how to stay hydrated at all times or suffer leg cramps comparable to child birth. I have learned that sharing time with someone you love despite the fact biking is really not your sport of choice is worth it. I have learned a little something about those parts of your body that may need a little more "butter" than others. I have learned that working my body back into shape is just a tish harder than it used to be. But, I now know that even an old dog can learn new tricks. And, I have rediscovered that childhood excitement of riding a bike and the blessing of friends.

Next week, the Route of RAGBRAI.

Enjoy! Hope to see you soon and as always, please contact us via one of the following methods. Natural Healing Express: Phone 815 990 8732, email: skscham@aol.com 204 W Main St, Lena, IL 61048.

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