

JohnnyRide 2013 was DHF's tenth annual bike ride to raise scholarship dollars and have some fun. Folks wanted to make it special...and it was. Not for any dramatic or profound reasons, but simply because a lot of folks made JohnnyRide 2013 an especially enjoyable, entertaining day. New people joined us for a good time, we raised more money to keep the Scholarship Program going, and the sun came out!

To be sure, any number of things helped to make this year's JohnnyRide special. Anna Webber created a snazzy, new logo for JohnnyRide 2013 that looks really good on this year's tee shirts. Paul Durand and Scalzo Hospitality supplied us with enough ride numbers to last for many more JohnnyRides. Ellen Olson secured the donation of several dozen brats from a local butcher, Olson's Meats of Woodville, that provided most of the main course for the picnic-style meal. And Maryfrances Evans created an impressive PowerPoint video that celebrated the 10-year history of JohnnyRide.

Other things, too. JohnnyRide 2013 had the best turnout of riders for some time. Oddly, we had no youngsters ride this year. They were more interested in romping among the bales in the hay barn, visiting the animals, and chasing each other around the grounds.

The youngest JohnnyRider was sixteen-year-old Matt Evans, grandson of my late sister Elaine. Matt's dad Jim brought Matt and his older brother Andrew up from Des Moines, Iowa, and all three rode. Indeed, older brother Andrew, a college freshman, was first to finish. Congratulations, Andrew!

As for the rest of us – a total of 16 riders by my count – the impressive thing to me is that we all finished the 23+ mile ride! What fortitude! What determination! What a long, uphill haul out of Glenwood City! I vow that next year that one little, knobby hill near the end of that long haul will not defeat me again; I will ride all the way to its summit!

I had the pleasure of Ben Plowman's company on my ride, my late sister Evelyn's grandson. My gosh, does that make me seem old? Anyway, it was delightful to share that couple of hours on the road with Ben, whom I hadn't seen since he was a little kid. Now, he's a civil engineer in Ohio. Whew, how time flies!

My nephew Tom Hillis (who lives in Maine) picked Ben up in Ohio, and the two came up to northern Wisconsin together. There, Tom was reunited with his brothers Joe (from Des Moines) and Clint (from Texas). To me, their reunion was one of the really special things about JohnnyRide 2013. The three brothers had not been together for years. Tom, by the way, has the orating skills of a "Durand" raconteur. He has no trouble holding an audience (well, at least most of them) with tales from his adventuresome life.

Then, there was my dear maternal aunt, Evelyn Singerhouse. If there is such a thing as a youthful 92-year-old, she is it. Laugh-loving, lively, a sparkle in her eyes, Aunt Evelyn came to the picnic with two of her daughters, Susan and Mary. This was a "first" for them that I hope will be repeated.

Another special guest was Father Foley of Minneapolis, who once had a connection with Monsignor Arthur Durand of the Minnesota Durands. Father Foley (who said he prefers to be called "Jerry") left a nice donation to JohnnyRide before returning to the Twin Cities for a meeting. I regret that more folks did not get to meet this nice man.

Still another special guest was Patricia Durand's exchange student from Japan, Mone Tamura, a charming young woman who is completing her senior year at Rice Lake High

School. I don't know how many of Aunt Evelyn's homemade doughnuts Mone ate, but I'm pretty sure she enjoyed several iterations of an American treat that she knew was special. As usual, Patricia herself rode the ride (thank you, Patricia), but this year she *was not the last one to finish!*

No, that honor went to my cousin Shirley Mueller's daughter Audrey and her friend Christine. Both were new riders. Before the ride, Audrey's friend pledged an extra \$50 to JohnnyRide for each of them, *if they finished the ride*. Afterward, Audrey said there was no way she and Christine were not going to collect that extra \$100. And they did! Congratulations to you both. I hope we'll see you next year, too.

Okay, to finish my report on the bike ride part of JohnnyRide 2013, I want to thank two "locals" who joined us...Donna Timm and Leo Rauterkus of Clear Lake, Wisconsin. It's always nice to have new acquaintances enjoy what in many ways is a "family" affair. Other new riders this year were Joe Hillis of Des Moines and Marilyn Doll-Rayner of Madison, Wisconsin. Thank you both for joining us. Finally, riding again this year were Marilyn Durand of Burnsville, Minnesota and Tom Olson of Madison, Wisconsin. And of course my sister Ellen, who put the finances of the Durand Heritage Foundation in jeopardy because she did not fill out a *Release from Liability* form, and rode the distance with a troublesome knee. Thank you all for doing JohnnyRide 2013.

I also want to thank Clint Hillis, Bob Olson, and Pat Keppel for providing sag wagon support, and Kristin Keppel for taking a slew of JohnnyRide pictures. And a special thank you to Maryfrances Evans for handling the rider registration and to Julie Durand for managing the money and assigning the raffle numbers. As the scheduled time of 10 a.m. nears for the ride to start, there is always quite a rush of business, but both Maryfrances and Julie handled their tasks with impressive efficiency.

Brats, Johnny Cake, and More

In the ten years of JohnnyRide, we've learned to let the kids eat first, so the "grups" can linger over their meal and wait for the last of the riders to come in. Jennifer Olson was kitchen manager this year, and laid out a nice spread with the help of her husband Ahmed, and her sister Anna and her husband Jack. Thanks also to Alice Keppel, Jane Nelson, and others for providing a delicious picnic-style lunch, and for all who brought "a dish to pass." And thanks to Marvin and Sharon Utecht for again making their facility available for JohnnyRide.

The Program

The JohnnyRide "program" usually involves two parts. One part acknowledges special guests and thanks all those who help to make the day possible. The second part is the raffle, in which the most highly valued prize is a football signed by the Green Bay Packers.

This year's program had two new features. Master of Ceremonies Peter Durand introduced the video that Maryfrances Evans created to celebrate JohnnyRide's 10-year history and the scholarship program. Her production was moving, amusing, and informative. We will soon post the video on the JohnnyRide website so others can see it at www.johnnyride.org.

After the video, Peter asked folks to share some remembrance of his brother (the John of JohnnyRide). Peter himself told an amusing story of when, as a youth, in a fit of anger over some disagreement, he launched a wrench towards his fleeing brother, who turned just in time to see the wrench (thankfully) sail wide of its mark and dent the garage instead of John. Peter still remembers John's amused smile.

Those attending will remember the extra drama of this year's raffle. Each year, individuals donate a dozen or more prizes for the raffle. Peter's daughter Giselle played the role of *Wheel of Fortune's* Vanna White, presenting and describing each raffle item with entertaining aplomb. As the custom, the last number drawn in the raffle was for the coveted Green Bay Packers football.

Clint Hillis bought a large block of tickets just before the raffle (each JohnnyRide dollar earns a raffle ticket), and won the football! Clint took the much coveted football back to Austin, Texas, where it is now enshrined for all to see in Billy's on Burnet, "a fresh, fun, non-smoking neighborhood burger joint" (according to its website) that is a Packer-backer gathering place.

Absences

I was so conscious of the absence of Chuck and Anne Fick of Plainview, Minnesota. For the first JohnnyRide in 2004, I did not even know who Anne Fick was when she sent in a registration for Chuck to join the ride. I'm so glad now that I have a connection with two really nice people who happen to be "family." Since then, Chuck has ridden and Anne has either ridden or provided support in every ride. Indeed, Anne has also come on the board of the Durand Heritage Foundation, and handles the difficult job of screening scholarship applications and making recommendations for which applicants get the awards.

Chuck wrote that both he and Anne had surgery over the summer, and he did not think they would be able to participate this year. I hope we will see them back next year, wearing the "10 Years" JohnnyRide tee shirts they so richly deserve.

I was also conscious of the absence of so many of the "Gilbert Durands." In past years, some have ridden, many have come for the picnic, and many more have donated generously. This year, however, the date for JohnnyRide 2013 conflicted with a special gathering of that family to celebrate Bob Durand's 80th birthday, Gilbert and Fern's eldest. I can't think of a better reason for missing a JohnnyRide. I've known Bob since I was a little kid, and if not for JohnnyRide I would have been there to help celebrate his milestone also. I hope we'll see many of that family back again next year.

Final Thought

Two years ago, I found riding JohnnyRide especially hard. Several times, I had to stop to catch my breath. It did not help that the day was overcast and that a stiff, chilly breeze blew in my face, no matter which direction I rode. I thought, Holy Smokes, am I reaching the end of my biking? I was sweating and felt weak. This is hard!

Only three months later did I discover that I ridden that JohnnyRide with a developing case of "walking pneumonia."

Thank goodness, I have not reached the end of my ability to participate in JohnnyRide, because I want to keep going until we reach our goal of having \$50,000 in an endowment fund to award \$2,500 in DHF scholarships each year. As of this year's JohnnyRide, we have reached 60% of that goal. Meanwhile, we have awarded \$1,500 in scholarships every year from money raised in our annual rides. Almost three dozen people have received "JohnnyRide scholarships."

I feel privileged that I can continue to ride to help keep JohnnyRide going, and I give my heartfelt thanks to all of you for "keepin' on keepin' on." See you next year!