

Here are rider comments from most of the Rochester 600k entrants. Each rider had their own experiences, but there are some common themes on nutrition, staying focused and that each rider did have a plan for their ride.

### **Jim Joy (32:41)**

***Jim has been riding brevets for many years and has completed multiple 1200k rides including PBP. Jim's GPS climbing numbers and comparisons are very interesting. Jim was one of two riders in their 60s to complete the 600k.***

I too thought this was a hard ride, even though the weather was nearly ideal. I definitely do a LOT better in cooler weather, as I have DNF'd twice on the Rochester 600 with heat exhaustion. In reviewing my GPS data and comparing to previous years, however, it didn't seem far out of line:

My (somewhat smoothed) GPS: 21,439'  
Mike's number for the original route: 21,409'  
My smoothed number for Delaven '08: 21,863'  
My raw number for Waterloo '06: 21,935'  
My smoothed number for the old Rochester route ('03): 18,670'

But the number that has me worried is Mike's estimate for the TCBC 600K -- 25,393! That sounds like it will be really tough. The TCBC routes share the same characteristic with the Rochester ones--most of the climbing is concentrated in the middle of the ride. According to my TopoFusion analysis, the overall 600K climbing averaged 115 miles at 4.6%. This wouldn't be too bad if it WAS averaged across the entire distance.

I had a good ride. Much stronger in the first half, as usual. Also rode mostly by myself, again as usual. I find that I just have to ride my own pace. I got back from Elkader around 9:30PM, which I think is the earliest I have ever been, had some solid food and slept for three hours. (I always try to sleep in increments of 90 minutes to match the natural cycle.) I left West Union at about 2:30 AM. Although I thought I had checked carefully, it turned out that my main light was mis-adjusted (too low) and because of the way I had it mounted I didn't have the tool needed to adjust it (a crescent wrench). So I ended up riding the brakes on some of the faster downhill--that was a drag (pun intended). Even though it never got that hot, I could feel my energy being sapped away as the temperature rose during the day.

I finished at 2:41PM for a 32:41 time, my third-best 600K time (and the faster two were definitely much flatter). The bike worked well although I did end up with a pretty sore butt and I had continuing soreness in my left hand, but not my right, which I find quite puzzling. Also very slight numbness in the tips of my left thumb and first finger. The longer I ride, the more I am convinced that I must have some essential asymmetry in my hips (and not just my leg-length discrepancy) that throws my whole upper body off. So, if I can't fix it, I'll just try and ignore it.

I'll be very interested to see the finishing stats. I think some of the people must have had a very long day on Sunday.

### **Jim Joy – from a response a day later**

I'm glad to hear that you're going to modify the route for the TCBC 600K. The Rochester ride was tough enough--I hate to think about what it would have been like in the rain with adverse winds.

I am not planning on doing any of the rides you mentioned. Unless something changes I think my current limit is 600K, so that rules out the 1000. I would have liked to do the Waterloo 400--I've done it

several times before--but not the weekend after a 600. And the Waterloo 600 is another real tough ride and I expect it will be pretty hot in the middle of July. So I'm going to take a breather and then try for a second full series with the Rochester and Apple Valley rides in August, September and October.

**Ahi Bennuri (217 miles completed) – Ahi started bike riding in late 2007, completed his first brevet last fall and has been working hard to complete brevets and earn his Super Randonneur status. He has completed 200, 300 and 400k brevets already this year.**

I did not finish the ride - I abandoned at 3:30am after returning to West Union. I think I put in about 220 miles because I was a little lost in Elkader.

It was a great experience though. I decided to live and learn rather than keep pushing on this occasion. I do feel a twinge of guilt/regret. But I'm not too disappointed; there will be more chances, and I look forward to them.

At first it did not seem like the hills were as big as they were on the 400K from Apple Valley. However, they were relentless, as you said; and they seemed long enough if not as steep as the ones on the 400K.

I made some changes that probably did not work very well.

- I lowered my saddle a day before the 600K; my left knee started hurting a little by the time I finished 220 miles.

- I put more pressure in my tires than was warranted. 90 front and rear.

I'm planning to do the next 300K from Apple Valley, and I want to try 32mm tires this time.

I have also added a stem extender to raise the handlebar height. I'm finding that on the hills, I need the reach of my handlebar to be shorter and higher too. I will do some training miles to figure out if this is right for me before I attempt the next 300K.

On retrospection, I do not know why I gave up. I was afraid that I wouldn't make it on time to the Cresco control if I started off at 5:30 because it was supposed to be hilly and I had taken 6 hours 15 minutes to complete 60 miles from West Union to Elkader and back. I made it to Elkader just as they were closing at 11:55. I thought that that control was supposed to be open till 2:05.

I have decided that I will wait for the 600K from Apple Valley. Unfortunately that means I will not be attempting the 1000K. But that seems only logical.

### **From a follow up note from Ahi a day later**

I lowered the saddle a little so I could have a slightly higher handlebar in relation to the saddle. On the one day I rode it seemed like it worked for me. But I knew even then that it wasn't ideal.

I'm trying to dial in bike fit now based on my hill climbing experience. Otherwise the fit of my bike has been pretty good.

My average speed and power need to increase however. I too absolutely feel that it is key for finishing the longer routes, and especially ride with others.

I'm not doing any TCBC group rides lately. I have to get into it once again before the 1000K. (Mike said that I could ride it if I wanted to, as there isn't an official qualifying event for the 1000) I'll try and do my best and have an exit strategy.

After all, the point is to do something challenging, try and enjoy it and finish something you start. And everything preceding the event (all the preparation) is proving to be tremendous fun in it's own right. I just might show up for the 1000K. :)

## **Gary Bakke (New Richmond, Wi) (36:34)**

### **Gary started doing brevets last year. At 69 was the oldest rider to complete this 600k. Gary put together a very thorough perspective on the ride**

The 600K starts in the Wal-Mart parking lot on the north side of Rochester. The basic route is east to Rushford and then south into Iowa continuing to Elkader and then returning on the same route.

The first day, conditions were near perfect. It was about 50F at the start and warmed to the low 70s. There was a slight 3-5 mph breeze mostly from the SE. I started with a group that included Rob Welsh and Mike Aeling, two of the most experienced and talented Randonneurs in the mid-west. I had no hope of riding with Rob but with a maximum effort sometimes I can tag along with Mike. The bad news is that I lost the group at mile 10 when I had to make some clothing adjustments. The good news is that this was the best thing that could have happened. From then on I rode my own pace. I probably would have a DNF if I had tried to ride with those two any longer. I rode alone to the first checkpoint at Stewartville at mile 30. The group, including Rob and Mike were leaving shortly after I arrived. I had visions of chasing them down but after about 3 miles I realized that was a bad idea and gave up. Smart move. Instead, I waited for Jeff who is an experienced Randonneur and rides a nice steady pace. Jeff's skill and experience helped me survive my first 600. Jeff and I rode the rest of the day somewhat together. Depending on who got to a checkpoint first, he would wait for the other. But out on the road we usually rode more than ½ mile apart. We got to West Union, IA at mile 217 at 10:20 pm. I went to the Super 8 motel about a block from the checkpoint. Some of the other riders continued on riding through the night. Someday I may try that but for my first 600 my goal was to succeed at the distance, not set any time records.

I showered and was asleep by 11:00 but then awoke at 12:30 and couldn't get back to sleep again. I intended to get up at 3:30 but now, at 1 o'clock, I could have started to ride again but I didn't have enough charge left in my batteries to power the lights for more than 1 ½ hours so it would not have made any sense to start riding that early.

The second day conditions continued to be excellent. Certainly much better than the winds we had experience on earlier brevets this spring. But, by mid-day the temperature was too warm to be perfect for me. Sunday morning started out cool much as it had been on Saturday, probably low 50s at 4:30 am and foggy. The fog slowed the ride from then to a little after sunrise. Because of the fog and my bike computer problems (more later) I missed the first turn that was only 3 miles from the start but it only added about a mile to my ride. The big fog effect was that, before daylight, it limited my downhill speed to about 20 mph because of the poor visibility. Because there were several hills, this was a factor in my slow, 13.9 mph start to the day. It was hilly but ok until Rushford at mile 302 (which was 85 miles for the day). I arrived at Rushford somewhere around 11:30 am. I think my on-bike average from West Union to Rushford was about 13.9 mph at that point. Based upon my uneducated plan, that was too slow and I had visions of picking up the pace after Rushford. But that didn't happen. At Rushford, it was starting to get quite warm.

From Rushford to Chatfield, about 25 miles, the hills were very difficult. Starting from Rushford there is a ½ mile climb, then about 2 miles of a gentle up slope and then 2.6 miles of a major climb. Parts of the big climb were steep enough so I was standing in my lowest gear. I was hoping for respite after that climb but the following hills were relentless. I don't remember anything that looked like a flat spot. I would have to say that Rushford to Chatfield was as tough as any 25-mile stretch I have ever ridden. Even after

Chatfield, the hills continued but they were interspersed with a few mostly level areas. But there was a major climb just after leaving Chatfield and two more just before Stewartville. In between there were more challenging rollers. Because I was descending at 30-40 mph and climbing at 4-10, I think I was actually climbing 75-80% of the time. It just didn't stop. One memorable little U shaped valley started with a short, maybe 600 meter, steep down hill section that produced a 40 mph coast, which instantly slowed to 4.8 mph within about 100 meters as I started up the other side. That was the extreme but there was no end to the relatively steep ups and downs.

An odd thing is that I didn't perceive the hills to be this tough on the way out Saturday morning. Are they easier going east? Maybe it was just my fatigue that made the westerly direction so difficult. I've ridden in the Canadian Rockies where most of the climbs are on roads engineered to 7-9% grades. Those climbs are long but I find the steep rollers on this course to be more difficult. On rollers I have a tendency to try to use momentum and then extra effort to power over them. On a long, more gradual, climb I tend to ride within my abilities and just get into a climbing rhythm. I will have to ride the rollers smarter in the future.

From Rushford and on, my quads started to get tender and I was feeling hot. My on-bike speed slowed considerably. I tried to conserve energy on the up hill sections, but many of them were so steep that it required a significant effort anyway. There is no way to soft pedal a 9-10% grade. Because my quads were getting progressively sorer, my hot foot had returned from Saturday and I was feeling the effects of the heat, I rode very gently and took quite a bit of time (at least 30 minutes) at the checkpoints. I ate hot dogs, ice cream, nachos, V-8, green tea, water and Coke at most stops. I also had 2-4 Endurolyte tablets at each stop and occasionally a couple of salt tablets. On Saturday I had used Hammer's Perpetuem but it was too old to use on Sunday. I think the real food on Sunday actually worked better. I had started the day in the motel with a bottle of Ensure, some oatmeal and coffee. Calories, electrolytes and hydration were not a problem for me on either day.

In general, the roads are superb on this route. Most of the pavement is smooth with very few frost cracks or potholes. There is an exception for a 10 mile stretch north of Harmony that is unpleasant. Traffic is light and motorists for the most part are accommodating. The night riding is a pleasant experience. Nature's smells are prevalent; there is little wind; it is cool (sometimes cold), and; it is easy to know when traffic is approaching from the rear. I do enjoy night riding but I will keep the real fast descents off limits at night.

At the end of the day, I felt fine but for my tender quads and a sore butt. My nutrition seemed to work fine and I was not dehydrated. No muscle cramps after the ride. I drove the 100 miles home to NR without difficulty.

Today, Monday, my quads are even more tender than last night. The last time they felt like this was after the Boston Marathon back in 1979 when they were very sore from all the downhill running in the last few miles. Right now, I'm not sure my legs will be up for the TCBC Acapulco ride Tuesday night.

### **Bike Computer.**

I really like my wireless Shimano Flight Deck computer but it doesn't work for Randonneuring because the moment I turn on my Night Rider headlights, the Flight Deck stops working. Others tell me that this is not unusual for a wireless computer. That leaves me on the course without an odometer to help interpret the cue sheet. Having had that problem on the 400K, I purchase a cheap Specialized, wired, computer to use for this ride. But there was a problem; the new computer kept resetting itself into the set-up mode. Because I was new to it, while trying to get it back into operational mode, I inadvertently cleared all the ride data. That left me with no info about distance so navigating was a challenge. Maybe it was a blessing

because the added mental effort necessary to navigate probably kept my mind off of body parts that were starting to hurt.

## **Conclusion.**

The first day went well with no problems. I was ok with my time although I have ridden that distance at least one mph faster before. I am not pleased with my on-bike pace for the second day. I tired more than I expected. Part of the problem was the afternoon heat that I could have predicted would be difficult. At Chatfield I was light headed and a bit dizzy off the bike. I felt like I was burning up. After the ride, at 7:30 pm Sunday evening, my thermometer showed 84F. Based on that, I would guess that the afternoon temperature must have been in the mid 80s and maybe higher. The sun was bright with no afternoon cloud cover. Because of my proven inability to handle heat, I probably would not have ridden this ride if I had known that it would be this warm.

But it was a good learning experience. If there is a next time, I'll be better.

## **Because I Can.**

Frequently people ask why I would ride an event like this. Most think I'm crazy but are too polite to actually say it. I have never had a good response but now I do. The Firehouse Report, a newspaper type thing sent by the sponsors of the annual Firehouse 50 road race has an article about the family of Michael Miller who died of some debilitating disease. The family will ride the Firehouse 50 in his honor. In the article they say:

*As his family, we know all too well that we should never take a healthy body for granted. Every step...every rotation of the pedals...means the freedom to use our bodies...to feel the wind on our face...and experience everything life has to offer. We are riding this year's bike race **Because We Can**—in honor and in memory of Jeffrey Holland Miller.*

Now I have the perfect answer. I ride Because I Can. Those things that cannot last forever, won't. At almost 70 years old, I am very aware that my health and my life cannot last forever. So, I'll continue to do crazy things because I can.

## **From Gary a day later.**

Thanks for your kind words. I can thank my mother for the genetics that allow me to stay active at this age.

My brother, Bill, has ridden the 200, 300, 400, and 600 series in Canada. In fact he has ridden them all several times but he has never ridden a 1200. He is talking about it but I have not heard a commitment yet. He is younger and stronger than I am so he could do it if he sets it as a goal. He knows Graham Fishlock. Do I remember correctly that he is your friend? Bill also knows Ken Bonner quite well.

If I try to stretch myself beyond the 600, it will be to ride with my brother. He has talked in the past of the Hoodoo 508 in St. George, UT which would be fun because our sister lives there. But I think his real goal is a 1200.

## **Michelle Brougher (38:40)**

**Michelle's first brevet was the AV 400k a few weeks ago. She followed up with this 600k. Michelle has been riding 150+ mile rides for a number of years. She was the only woman to enter and complete the ride.**

Yeah, that was a tough ride. Females seem to be an under-represented group since I was the only one.

I did finish, though I think I was the last to come in. It was around 8:30 (I can't even remember the exact time now) when I got to the parking lot.

I didn't think the hills were nearly as difficult as the 400k, but I ride in the coulees of WI quite a bit. These were very spinnable. The thing about it for me was that I did very nearly the whole thing alone except for a couple of very short periods - lots of solitude. I usually ride with my friend, Rick, but he was unavailable this weekend. Kind of like Robin riding without Batman. I definitely used quite a bit more energy both physical and mental being alone. Just having someone to pace off of makes a difference when you are going for hours and hours. No one to quick duck behind while you are eating something to avoid losing speed. But I really didn't mind and had a great time.

I stopped for a rest in West Union at midnight, but I should have continued on because I never slept anyways and I really enjoyed the night riding. I started back up at 4:30 am and saw a spectacular sunrise through the fog. I was amazed at the number of deer. One of them actually watched me do a big climb somewhere outside Harmony. He stood at the top and would hide when cars came by, but would then retake his post watching. Maybe he thought I was another deer? I wanted to ask him if he had any gatorade, but he decided to bolt once I got about 20 feet away.

I had seen a nutritionist about how many calories to eat since previously I always completed long rides but with low energy and loopiness for 2 days afterwards. Though this year is the first I have done brevets, I've been riding 150+ rides for several years. The nutritionist suggested Hammer Sustained Energy so I tried that out. Instead of gatorade, I mixed it in a shaker at the controls. Sure enough, I didn't have any blood sugar issues and despite the fact that I never felt like eating solid food, I never got really hungry (the nutritionist said to shoot for about 500 calories per hour based on data from my heart rate monitor during my spring rides). I am completely lucid today (unlike after the 400k).

One thing I still have to work on for rides over 300 miles is electrolytes though I must have had about 6 V-8s every day (one per control). It stopped me for about an hour and a half in Highland (12 miles from Rushford). Outside Harmony I started feeling very strange and had some really odd non-bonking kind of symptoms like unstoppable non-salty tears, sweats and having my nose run constantly. Though I could still think very clearly, I had trouble with fine motor coordination - I thought I was going to have to call it quits. But I was saved by fortune. There is a really old looking cafe on the corner in Highland that I went into that I thought would be a greasy spoon, but was actually run by health food gurus. They gave me spoonfuls of Celtic salts and a shot glass of liquid magnesium (not to mention some really good pie once I felt better). That place is a must visit for Highland the next time you go through.

I also had the misfortune of getting a bunch of tar on my rear wheel somewhere outside Chatfield - must have been the hot weather but it seemed like the tar got quite soft. That led to the first of 3 flat tires between Chatfield and Stewartville. I finally lined the tire with all my tire boots and all my money to protect my last tube and that lasted the last 30 miles. I took the remainder of my gel in Stewartville and powered my way to the finish with only a very quick stop at the Byron control.

I absolutely loved the scenery. For me, the highlight was West Union to Elkader and back. I went out starting at 7 and returned at midnight so I saw the sunset, dusk and the night with the stars and moon. Breathtaking. I am definitely doing the Iowa 600K in July and will ride through the night.

Will see everyone again on the road. I think I will be doing the 300k in August as well. Congrats to everyone. Especially Ahi - I know he totally rode through the night by himself - I asked about him at the

Quik Trip as I pulled out on Sunday so I now he made it through the second visit to West Union. He's a machine! What a guy.

### **Mike Fox (Waterloo, Ia) (36:21)**

**Mike has been riding brevets for a number of years and has completed several 1200k rides, including PBP. Mike also has set up a number of permanent routes in the Waterloo area.**

I had a good ride, but I was kinda surprised how tired I was at the finish. With low winds I felt pretty good most of the time and had a pretty confident attitude. I even felt pretty good about the stretch between Rushford and Chatfield. It is definitely a tough stretch though. I debated on whether to stop in Chatfield or not and decided to stop get refreshed and then thought I would basically push to end. Something I learned was that a tough stretch of road may not be done with you even after you have completed it. I rode a steady pace to Stewartville, got my card signed, slammed a V8 and off I was. I had assumed that I would barely stop in Byron to get my card signed. About 10 miles out of Stewartville, I started to feel weak and had to focus on keeping the bike going. I got some refreshments in Byron which allowed me to get up Oxbow hill. Just when I thought I had it in the bag that last stretch got long. In hindsight, I should have probably taken in some calories in Stewartville even though there was only 30 miles to go.

### **From Mike's response a day later.**

I'm glad to hear how your ride went and that overall it went well. I was feeling decent when I arrived in West Union on the return. The thought had crossed my mind to keep riding, but then I remembered that the winds were not supposed to be bad on Sunday and no one was heading out at that time so I opted for the nearly full night's sleep. In hindsight, I would have liked to do the hill section in the cool of night.

### **Richard Soderberg (32:56)**

**Richard started riding brevets last year with TCBC and has continued to growth his interest and success. He achieved Super Randonneur status with the completion of this ride.**

Rob, I've put together some thoughts after completing my first 600k. If you think this can be helpful to other new riders, feel free to use in your article.

The theme of my experiences, and lessons learned, in every brevet so far---but maybe most so in the recent Rochester 600k---is: it's all about variation, variation, variation. First, I'm adapting to the fact that not just one type of food or energy supply will work for an entire brevet; variation is needed. At the beginning of a brevet, things are usually fairly rosy on the nutritional front: gels taste good, energy bars taste good, and so on. After a few hours, though, my body won't take any more of that, so I need to look for variation in whatever is available at the controls: so far, muffins, bananas, energy drinks, cola, coffee, hot chocolate, sandwiches, potato chips, cookies, pizza, candy bars and even apples have worked for me at various times, but there is no one food that will always fit the bill.

Second, I'm working on being less uncomfortable on the bike after five or six hours of riding. I try different positions as much as possible to let the sore areas recuperate. This involves not just where I place my hands on the handlebar (I'm sure most people have a number of different ways they alternate between), but also how I sit on the saddle (towards back or front, more to the left or right side), whether I pedal sitting down or out of the saddle, and also where during the turn of a pedal stroke I apply the most force with my feet. I'm not concentrating on these issues constantly as I ride, but when it aches somewhere I try to throw in variation in one or more of these areas to mix it up a bit, and it usually helps.

Third, I'm seeing more and more the benefits that come from teaming up and riding together with one or more other people in the group for longer periods of time. This provides variation in the effort of riding, between getting an easier ride while drafting behind others, and putting in a little more effort when you're up front. I find that changing positions in the group and sharing the work helps break up the monotony when the road is long and straight, and all cows look the same.

I'm hoping to do the 1000k, and if so I'm sure I'll see you there.

### **Dan Stahlmann (32:56)**

**Dan has been riding brevets for several years. He does a lot of training on his own. He was the youngest rider at 30.**

I just have a few thoughts on the 600K. This is the 5th 600K brevet ride I have done, and the 4th out of Rochester. Of all of them, this was probably the most enjoyable. I had great company with Greg and Richard, and we rode together in a friendly, efficient (no "strong man" moves) way. On Day 1 I enjoyed the scenery and on Day 2 Richard and I tested our legs a bit more. It was really exciting seeing Richard be so successful on his first 600K. I think he surprised himself. He will develop into a great randonneur very soon if he keeps up the sport!

I was surprised to see that so many riders rode through the night, and I'm glad they all made it. This was virtually unheard of during Martin's tenure of being the RBA because he discouraged it a bit. Mike and I must have broken the stigma a little bit when we did it in '07. When we did it, I had bailouts planned and everything. In contrast, it seemed like others may not have been as well planned. I was concerned when Greg ventured off on his own without a cell phone and a headlamp. I'm glad he hooked up with you and Mike.

The route was good. Specifically, the segment between Chatfield and Harmony was way cooler than Martin's old route! The changes to the segment between Harmony and West Union left things on par with Martin's old route. Though I may have preferred Martin's Spillville-West Union (did it change?). The only true complaint is why didn't we go into the old part of town for Elkader for the control? Maybe it was the hours of operation. I felt robbed of seeing those old buildings, bridges, and the river.

All in all, as I said it was my most enjoyable 600K. Great job!

### **Rob Welsh (29:00)**

After the first checkpoint in Stewartville, there were five of us (Richard, Greg, Dan, Mike and myself) in a group. When the first significant hills came after Chatfield, Mike and I dropped back and took it easy. I started feeling weak and realized I hadn't been drinking my Perpetuem regularly due to the cool weather at the start and was in a hole food wise. I stopped in Harmony for a short break and to get some fluids. I started to feel better fairly quickly but Mike was bonking as his stomach was not handling Perpetuem well. At Cresco, Mike gave me the rest of his Perpetuem and went back to food his tummy could handle – Poptarts and Gatorade (!!). By West Union he was back on track for riding through the night.

We left West Union the second time, a little after 10p after a nice shower, change of clothes and a Subway sandwich. The night riding was excellent. The weather was pleasant, although it was cold in the low spots. After midnight the moon came out and cast a nice glow for the rest of the night. We took our time and even stopped for a few minutes at a quiet corner to close our eyes. Both Mike and I use generator hubs – our lights were great and really made it safe even on the fast down hills. We arrived in Rushford at sunrise. The next 25 miles to Chatfield was the hardest section of the ride with a long uphill, several miles of big rollers then three more long climbs.

In Chatfield we found Greg, who was recovering from his solo ride through the night. BTW, Greg uses a generator hub too. We took another good break then the three of us carried on to the finish, arriving at 11a. We all agreed that this was a tough ride and it would take a few days to get over it.