

CSBA Spring Rally 2017

Day 1 – 131 miles

The rally was planned for Thursday the 18th through Sunday the 21st. It appeared that everyone was not going to arrive until Thursday afternoon so since Christy and I were going to be there Wednesday night I went ahead and created an adventure route to ride Thursday morning and when everyone else arrived we would do a short road route. It turned out that Jon was also going to get in on Wednesday evening. I let him know of our plan to get up early to hit the adventure route and then ride the road in the afternoon. Since the route I planned had asphalt between trail sections we determined that Jon would be able to meet us where we come out of the trails and we would ride together to the next trail.

Thursday morning we departed the hotel around 9:00am after meeting for breakfast. The hotel was located less than a half of mile from US 52 which is one of the nice connector roads in the area. We headed north into the Jefferson National Forest looking for the Wyrick Trail which is part of the Trans American Trail. Christy and I head up the trail and Jon goes on up 52 to the next paved road to meet us where we come out of the trail. The trail was really nothing more than a single lane gravel road heading across the mountain ridge. While following the gps route, we ended up coming to a closed gate that was at the end of the road. There were a few houses in the area so I asked a gentleman about the road and he said it had not gone through in several years. He instructed me to go back about a mile from where I came and take a right. We did and sure enough, it brought us back onto the route a couple hundred yards from that gate. We continued down the trail until it came out onto a much more traveled gravel road. We eventually met back up with Jon on CR615 and CR610. I was not expecting 610 to be another trail but when we stopped to talk to Jon he informed me that it was gravel. Since Wyrick trail was not really a trail but a gravel road, Jon decided that he would probably be fine riding his Concourse up the trail. We headed up CR610 which eventually turned into Burkes Garden Road which oddly enough does not go to Burkes Garden which is on the other side of the mountain. This road actually does turn into more of a trail so we keep checking on Jon to make sure he is doing ok and he was willing to keep going. After covering about 4 miles of this gravel, rutted trail we come to a hiking trail head with a parking area where Burkes Garden Road meets up with Round Mountain Road. There is a sign ahead that reads the route does not go through and is a dead end. Since this was also supposed to be part of the Trans American Trail I decide to ride up as far as it will allow to see if the sign was correct. About 2 miles up the road had a huge ditch that was dug across it, with the dirt piled up behind the ditch and several huge boulders in front of the ditch with no way to get across. Apparently the sign was correct which was good since there was no chance of Jon bring the Concourse up this section of the route. After discussing our options, we decide to take Round Mountain Road rather than going back the way we came. It was much of the same of the first 4 miles that we took up the mountain but this time it was descending which made it slightly easier for the Concourse. Eventually we made our way back out onto pavement near the town of Bland, VA on US52 once again. We take a break at a gas station near the intersection of US52 and CR614. We were planning on meeting up with Matt and Pat for lunch shortly after noon so we decide to take CR614 over to CR61 into Tazewell, VA. This is one of the routes that we rode last year while it was raining. CR614 is a much better road when it is dry. It winds through the beautiful farm land in the area with a little town called Grapefield about half way to SR61. This allowed us to take a little break from the twisties and drop our speed down to relax through the community. Once back out of the

little residential area we are able to wick it up again. We come out onto CR61 just north of Burkes Garden which is also known as God's Thumb Print due to the way it looks from the air. We did not get up to see it but if you would like to know what it looks like you can check out this [link](#).

We make our way through Tazewell heading for SR16 otherwise known as [The Back of the Dragon](#). If you have not experienced this road, you do not know what you are missing. This road is 32 miles long, just as twisty as US129 (Tail of the Dragon) with a speed limit of 55 mph, very little traffic and great pavement. You need to add this road to your bucket list, it will not disappoint. We stopped at the gas station just a couple miles from the entrance to this great road to allow a few commuters to get on down the road as well as a LEO that was behind Jon. After waiting about 30 minutes we depart from the break and head up and over the mountain. If I remember correctly, in the 32 miles, we only had to pass two vehicles. Hard to say that when you ride the 11 miles of US129. We roll into Marion, VA and take US11 east back into Wytheville. We met Matt, Pat, Phil and Lisa for an early diner at The Log House 1776 Restaurant which was recommended by the hotel desk clerk at the Comfort Inn. It was a very unique restaurant with origins from the 18th century. The food was very good as well as the service.

After diner we said our good byes to Jon since he was only here for the day as he had to work the following day. He had a 3 hour trip to get back home. I am sure this day of riding was a day that he will not forget for a very long time if ever.

The rest of us rode back to the hotel so they can get checked in and unloaded. We chat outside by the bikes and discuss what route we will be riding on Friday as well as what time we will be departing.

Day 2 – 222 miles

We planned to meet for breakfast at 8 and depart by 9 Friday morning. After looking at the weather that looked to be coming toward us we discussed waiting a little longer to allow the rain to go by. As we observed the radar it appeared that as the green on the radar got closer to us it was diminishing as well. We decided that since our route was taking us NE of the hotel we would be able to stay dry. We departed at 9:30 after everyone filling up with fuel at the bottom of the hill. Matt said a prayer over the ride and we rolled out. Once again we start our day heading north on US52 but this time we are only on it for a few miles before we head East into the Jefferson National Forest on CR717. CR717 turned into CR601 and went on for nearly 30 miles of twist roads through the countryside with some one lane bridges along the way and once again, very little traffic. We come out to SR100 and head north. This is yet another nice road that leads us into Narrow, VA. As we are riding through this town we notice some very black clouds approaching from the west so we stop to assess the plans and what we should do. After looking at the radar and considering changing the route to take us back SE we made the decision to stay of route and hopefully turn NE before we run into the weather. God was on our side in this decision as we were able to miss the rain once again as we headed north on 643 into Peterstown, WV. It appears that we to out ran the rain and there were no dark clouds in sight. We turn east onto US219 also known as Seneca Trail. This road was nothing special, fairly straight with a few curves scatter along the 20 mile stretch we were on. We ride into Union, WV and Matt signals that he needs to fuel up so we pull into a parking lot to take a break and stretch our legs.

We continue east on SR3 for another 20 miles of road with even less curves than the last stretch. We come to our turn to start heading back south on 311 as we notice a large group of cruisers sitting just ahead of the intersection taking a break. This road was one of the highlights of the entire route. It takes

us up and over the mountain range down into Paint Bank, VA for lunch and the Swinging Bridge Restaurant located behind and attached to the Paint Bank General Store. Apparently, the person that owns this establishment has a strange eye for art. There was a statue of a cow coming out of a cracked egg as well as a shrub that was trimmed to look like a buffalo. The shrub is something that the owner takes home in the winter back east and keeps in a greenhouse to keep it from dying.

This was a great choice for a lunch stop. There is a buffalo farm close by that the restaurant gets their meat from, they are famous for the buffalo burgers which I must agree that they are delicious. As we were sitting in the screened in back porch dining area we see the group of cruisers pulling in that were at the other side of the mountain when we turned south. Thankfully we did not end up behind that group coming over the mountain. After enjoying a wonderful meal and some great conversation we take a quick walk around their souvenir shop and general store to see what they are peddling.

We fuel up at the general store and continue south on 311. The route continues to satisfy our need for twisty roads as we make our way down to 621 headed back west through the forest. This is yet another nice road with no traffic. We come out to US460 and head slightly north to pick up 605 west. This was a very cool road as it was narrow with no lines but also no traffic. Once we got to the end of this we found out why. The road turns right or left onto 625 which runs along the New River. After turning left, we cross over the railroad tracks and the road turns to gravel. I was thinking that it cannot be much gravel as it was the route suggested by the Roadrunner Magazine but it did not end so we all decided to turn back. Which was not bad as we got to ride 605 again the other direction back to 460.

We stop to take a break at the gas station / grocery store at the corner of 460 and 605. This was a crazy busy store for as small as it was. It must have been the only place to get supplies from in many miles. While here we decide what route to take around to get back to the planned route. Phil and Lisa decide they have had all the fun they could take and make plans to slab it back to the hotel. After looking at the map I see that we can go back south on 460 and pickup Prices Fork Road just outside of Blacksburg, VA and that will meet back up with the route. Prices Fork takes us down to US11 and we ride that back into Wytheville to the hotel.

This night we decide that we will be eating Italian for dinner. We ride into town to the Italian Garden and Brick Oven. It was another one suggested by the hotel as well as having 4 stars online. Pulling into the parking lot we were not so sure about the place but we went in anyway. It turned out that it was in fact a good place to get Italian food. Their small Calzones and Stromboli's were big enough to feed 2 or 3 each. I cannot imagine how big the medium and large were. We stuffed ourselves with dinner and desert then headed back to hotel. Reviewed the available routes and made our decision on what to take for Saturday. I spent about an hour reviewing the route using Google satellite view to make sure we were not going to run into any additional gravel roads.

Day 3 – 251 miles

I wake up to a message from Phil letting me know that he and Lisa would be leaving first thing to head home as they had some vehicle issues popup with their daughter that Phil needed to get home to take care of. We enjoy another breakfast at the hotel and meet out at the bikes at 9:00am. Head down the hill to top off with fuel before another great day of riding. We have another time of prayer before heading south into town to pick up US21 SW out of Wytheville. As we were coming up to the first turn we were planning on making I noticed that this road was all gravel so we kept heading south a few more

miles to 749 west. This is yet another route that travels through the national forest on a nice road over to SR16 south of Marion. I am sure at this point the others were getting excited that we were headed toward the Back of the Dragon but little did they know that just before we got to Hungry Mother State Park we took a left to head west on Walker Creek Road which is also CR617. This is a very narrow road that meanders through little communities along a creek for several miles. We come out at SR107 to start heading north. We take that to CR613 west to SR80. This next section of the route was nice and twisty going up and over the mountain in the national forest again. This brings us out onto US19 going SW toward US58 then north to St. Paul, VA for a stop for gas as well as a drink as it was getting much warmer than what was forecasted. Continuing north we pick up CR63 which is one of the best roads on this route. It winds along the backs of the McClure River all the way into Clinchco, VA where we turn east onto CR83 still following the river going into Haysi, VA. We continue on 83 all the way to Vansant, VA where we turn right onto US460. This turned out to be much more 4 lane highway than I would have preferred but at least we did not experience much traffic and the road was still nice and winding. By this time, we were getting hungry and we were told about a bbq place in Tazewell that was highly rated. When 460 comes together with US19 we begin looking for the bbq place. We could not remember the name but as we are riding we see this place calls Cuz's bbq which must be it but it did not look very inviting and as we passed it the smell of bbq hit us which was all it took. We made a u turn and went back. This place has a long history and gets rave reviews from the locals but none of us were impressed to say the least. After this disappointing meal, we go to leave and find that it is raining. We stand in the door way waiting to see if it is going to let up anytime soon. We probably waiting for about 20 minutes until it stopped and we made the decision to skip the Back of the Dragon as we had already done that road in the rain last year and it was tense. The plan was to shoot across 61 to 614 to 52 and take that down to Wytheville but as we go about a half mile from the restaurant we found that it was only raining on the restaurant which was fitting in my opinion. We make the decision to go south on SR16 and hit the Back of the Dragon with dry pavement. Stop for gas at the last stop before the 32 miles of pure joy. After a quick break, we depart before anyone other than the three touring bikes that had already passed comes by. Hoping that we will catch them before the road heads up the mountain and they will allow us to go by them. That was not in the cards as they were not even doing the speed limit but they were having nothing to do with allowing us by. Once we start up the mountain we realize that they are going to hold us up so we make the decision to pull over and wait it out. We sat there for probably close to another 15 – 20 minutes and still no other vehicles came by. This allowed us to enjoy the Back of the Dragon without interruption all the way over the mountain to where we would head east on SR42 taking that over to the Big Walker Mountain Lookout at US52. Last year when we rode by this place it was raining and you could not see anything. This year was a far different story. Matt and I elected to pay the \$6 to climb up the 100' tower to take some photos of the beautiful mountain views that God had created. It was well worth the \$6 to go up there and see as far as the eye could see. We were there long enough for the store to close so we then motored down US52 past the hotel to get a great authentic Mexican meal at El Patio Mexican Grill. This was a great way to top off the day of riding and if you are ever in the area looking for Mexican food, I would highly recommend this place.

We rode the less than 2 miles back to the hotel and retired to our rooms after a long warm day of riding.

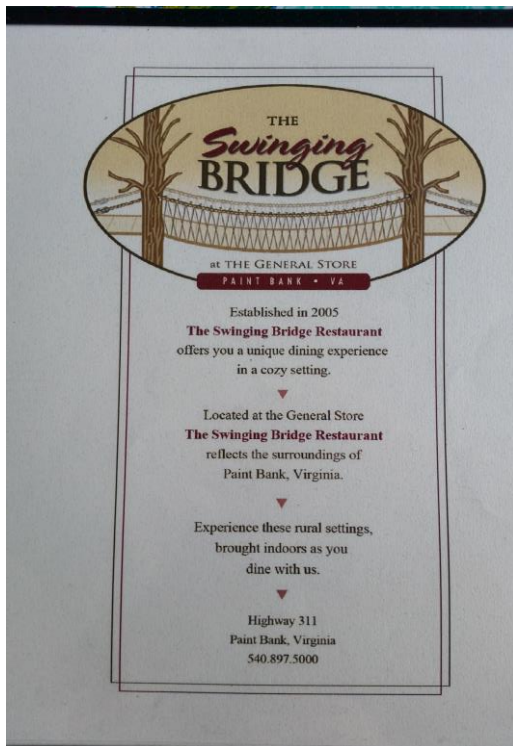
All in all, the event was a success as we could come together as a group, although small and enjoy each other's fellowship as well as ride some great roads in the area. We are looking forward to the next rally that will be planned and are hoping that more will can attend.



Tiger got a little dirty on the Trans American Trail



Paint Bank, VA General Store



Menu cover of the Swinging Bridge



One of those weird art collectables



The Buffalo shrub that has travelled the country



Looking down onto US52 from the Big Walker Mountain Lookout

I wished we would have been able to capture more pictures of the area but as Matt reminded me, we were too busy enjoying the ride to stop and take pictures. GoPro videos can be found [here](#)