

WheelSpeak

The North Florida Bicycle Club March 2021



**Jeanne's Azalea Ride
signals the start
of Spring in
North Florida**

Jeanne's Azalea Rides



Jeanne's Azalea Rides are a North Florida Bicycle Club annual classic. For over 20 years during azalea blooming season, Jeanne Hargrave has been leading riders to the Ravine Gardens State Park in Palatka the weekend before the Florida Azalea Festival. Riders have a choice of riding the Cracker Swamp routes or the Century route. The ride was held on Sunday, February 28, 2021.

Jonathan Tomassetti on the 7:30 am 100-mile Century Route

The Magnificent Seven: Tony, Patrick, Greg, Joe, Peter, Michael and I started in Green Cove Springs enveloped by a thick fog rising off the St. Johns River. We circled Asbury Lake, sprinted over the hills on Thunder Road, and then hit a persistent head wind going south over more hills as we headed toward the town

of Florahome. From there we took the Paltaka-Lake Butler bicycle trail to Palatka. The heat hit us in Palatka. We had a picnic lunch at Ravine Gardens State Park. As we rode around the ravine looking at the azaleas, there was a loud "poing" sound as my spoke broke. After 75 miles of riding, I had to SAG to the finish. The rest of the century riders road north back to Green Cove Springs, only slowing down to cross a one-mile unpaved road.



Gretchen Miller on the 9 am 50-mile Cracker Swamp Route

I was all smiles because it was a beautiful spring day. I was on a bike ride with friends, and the azaleas did not disappoint us. We had a nice turnout for Jeannie's Azalea ride on the last day of February 2021, some familiar faces and a few new ones as well. The weather was great with enough sunshine so that we did not need our long cycling pants. However, there was just the right amount of breeze to stay cool while riding. The NFBC ride director Michele Yasson, got us off to a great start, and we quickly crossed the St. Johns River using the Palatka bridge. We had two recumbent bikes with us for the entire route and some strong cyclists for sure! There was not much traffic on the route, and some of the roads were freshly paved so it was a joyous day! There were



a few stops along the way which allowed for some good conversation with good friends. It was a great way to kick off the spring/summer cycling season. I am looking forward to many more NFBC miles in 2021.



Jeanne's Azalea Rides continued



Jeanne Hargrave on the 10AM C/S Cracker Swamp Route

Wow! We had 34 riders—definitely a record breaker. At least a third of them started in East Palatka to avoid crossing the tall bridge. It was a little windy and too hot to suit me, but I climbed every mountain including one on foot. I wish I had taken a photo at Angel's Diner. I guess I was too hungry.





Photos by Kendell Fredricks, Gretchen Miller, Jeanne Hargrave & Jonathan Tomassetti