

NO "GRUMPY OLD MEN" ON OUR BUFFALO STAMPEDE!

It was too much fun.

By Ginger Carney

Even though we met in the town in Minnesota where that film was made, there were only happy faces and lots of laughter from the Miata men and women who gathered for the third Buffalo Stampede. Unfortunately, our original trailmasters, Ron & Paula Beckman, were unable to wrangle the roads this time due to health reasons. We missed them!!

However, we did not miss a great ride because Jim Leoffler and Karen Hart generously stepped in to take the reins. That involved a lot of extra time and planning for them, as the original route the Beckmans plotted needed to be adjusted. Time, weather, and usage had taken their toll on the rural roads. Any of us who have run an event do it because we want to and enjoy it; however, that does not mean that there isn't lots of time and energy expended. At least once during his planning, though, Jim had the benefit of a Blues festival to revel in, along with free camping. Simple rewards for a job well done!

On Sunday evening we corralled at the AmericInn bunkhouse in Wabesha, where we stayed the last two times as well. The staff is welcoming and the motel is well-kept. We gathered in the party room to catch up, to snack, to share laughter. For supper most of us cowfolk went to Slippey's, one of the sites used in the film. It was a very nice summer evening. Afterwards we again gathered in the party room for more conversation and laughter along with both adult and NA beverages. It was noisy and fun.

With Jim and Marcy Hotz as sweep, we started the Stampede drive at 9:00 Monday morning. Jim handed out the detailed route sheets along with maps of each leg. Of course, we had to have at least one U-turn to make it an official BMC event, and in fact we had two during the day. There were also a couple of times when Jim had to quickly adjust the route, and those corrections worked well. We were lucky, too, that there was very little traffic on any of the roads.

Thanks to our weather goddess (*you know who you are Joanne Tuckwood*), the morning weather was perfect – warm but not beastly hot with thin clouds preventing the sun from beating down on us. Tops down and smiles up. As always, the ribbon of Miatas streaming through the countryside and up and down steep hills was a sight to behold! As we traversed many delightful twisty, curving and often narrow rural roads, we also experienced breathtaking vistas, a field of sunflowers, rolling hills which seemed to fold into one another, a wide expanse of sky, ribbons of cornfields and dark green soybeans, and lush green woods of the Upper Mississippi region. There were goats and cows to see and cicadas to listen to, an unfortunate racoon in the road at one of our turns, and an eagle who nearly lost its life because it was enjoying its lunch at the side of the road so much so that it was oblivious to the line of cars movin' on down the road. The hungry eagle was so slow to take off that it almost got hit by our lead car! On the other hand, a turkey sitting in the middle of another road quickly flew up to a tree. (Now, which was the *dumb* bird?)

Our visit to Danzinger Winery gave us an unexpected delight: the view from the building's veranda was absolutely stunning! We spent a pleasant time out there, and – yes – many of us did the wine tasting and purchased a bottle or three. Afterwards several of us headed back to the hotel while the rest of the entourage enjoyed one last spectacular view from the Buena Vista Overlook. Following a break at the motel, we corralled again in the pouring rain and headed to The Bluffs for chow. The service was efficient and the food very good. (*Those at the last table served would probably not agree, though.*) Treasurer Jim Hotz thanked Jim and Karen for making the event possible as well as so successful, and we heartedly agreed with loud applause. Afterward, as on Sunday evening, the party room was full of revelry. And on Tuesday morning with the stampede successfully completed, we headed home.

Thanks to Jim and Karen for making this Miata event so much fun, and thanks to Ron and Paula for doing all the original planning, including the arrangements at the motel and The Bluffs. The buffalos are now at rest.

