

**Fall Color Ride
Oct. 18, 2025**

By Marcy Hotz

The day kicked off at Ski-Hi Fruit Farm, Baraboo, a spacious building filled with snacks, beverages, pottery, trinkets and apples, apples, apples! Apple pies, apple turnovers, apple cider, and 30 different varieties of cooking and eating apples. Outside, the valley landscape provided all the bold, beautiful colors of autumn.

At the Drivers' Meeting, Hank Netzing gave us the outline of bio-breaks and meal-stops for the day, along with a map of the area that looked like a plate of angel-hair pasta.

With the rainy forecast, our ride participants in 17 cars remarked that the weather instead was perfect for our needs. Tops down under the cloudless bright blue sky, we rolled out of the parking lot and past signs that would have led us to Devil's Lake or Wisconsin Dells. The land was a multicolored tapestry of trees, dotted with the occasional patch of silos and cows. Speaking of cows, they come in many varieties and colors in Wisconsin: Jersey (light to medium brown), Hereford (red body with white face), Holstein (black and white) and Gurnsey (light brown with white spots).

Hank and Laura led us on many curvy roads of SW Wisconsin's Driftless area, between walls of corn on both sides of the road, past beautiful rock-layered escarpments. Loganville, a Sauk County town of 300 people where well-kept, compact homes lined Main Street, was the location for our first pit stop. From there we journeyed past gigantic Halloween skeletons and zombies. Big orange pumpkins dotted yards and fields.

As we zoomed past gorgeous golds, sumptuous siennas, and amazing ambers, we came to a small field containing small teepee-shaped constructions of corn stalks, called cornshucks. Later, we saw a large array of solar panels in Vernon County. We were near Wildcat Mountain and crossed the Kickapoo River. As we approached our lunch stop, we were forced to make the obligatory U-turn; the street was blocked for a community festival. "No one told me they were having an event today," complained Hank as we piled out of our cars. "Park wherever you can!"

Sure enough, the street on which the Rivers End Restaurant in Ontario (who knew there was an Ontario, Wisconsin?) was situated was closed off to traffic. Music played, pumpkins were piled on a table, gift baskets were displayed either for bidding or for purchase (not sure) and there was an air of festivity. (This was a fundraiser, we later learned, for a town resident who had an accident of some sort.) This writer wanted to explore the festivities, but alas! We were there to eat and had to return to our cars by 1:00.

The restaurant was ready for our crowd. The menu was plentiful, and a second menu contained their barbecue specialties. We were in and out within the allotted time. As we left the building, an auctioneer was chanting his bid calling. You know, that fast singsong that no one can understand, and when you raise your paddle, you are never sure of what you bid.

About ten minutes from lunch, we visited a couple of Amish shops. Walking to the first one, we were welcomed by two young men wearing the typical Amish attire and a small puppy who endeared herself to everyone. The first shop contained beautiful hand-created wood items: trays, baskets, wall pieces, cutting boards, cheese slicers. Our group purchased many items. The second store was a clock shop which proudly announced, "We Repair". Wooden clocks, ceramic clocks, mantel clocks, wall clocks, grandfather clocks, cuckoo clocks, wrist watches, pocket watches. Our group bought a few clocks. As

we rolled out of the driveway, we realized the cornstalk teepees, cornshucks, belonged to this small Amish farm.

A few minutes away stood another Amish shop containing crafts and food items: pickles, dilly beans, hot pads, microwave bowl hot pads, pies, banana bread, cinnamon-raisin bread, and much more. Our group spent freely.

Between shops along the road we spied some horse-drawn carts, and avoided a few gifts of horse apples.

Five minutes down the road was the required ice cream stop, The Old Country Cheese Store. Not an Amish shop, to be sure. The prices were more than double the same items purchased from the Amish stores. But they had snacks, jams and jellies, many types of cheese, wooden rolling pins and various crafts. Most everyone dropped some cash here.

We drove through Hillsboro, population 1382, which sports a large brewery, the Hillsboro Brewery. This facility was a lunch spot on the morning drive of the 35th Anniversary Celebration.

The Del-Bar, our dinner destination, mostly east on Hwy. 33, was an upscale supper club in Wisconsin Dells. We enjoyed a great meal and celebrated Jim Loeffler's birthday. After a long and extremely enjoyable day of driving, shopping, eating and chatting, we bid our farewells and headed home.

Many thanks to Hank and Laura for putting it together and leading us around some great Wisconsin roads. Special thanks to Cindy and Greg Garnett who did a super job keeping us together as sweep.