**Words for Celebration of NY Times Relay Race NYC to Riverton, NJ:**

(A short talk given at the celebration of the riders who had just completed the 2016 New York City to Riverton, NJ, Century Ride (100 miles) on June 12, 2016, in Riverton’s Memorial Park.)

Good afternoon. I am Gary Sanderson, Captain of the New Jersey Wheelmen, and I am here to represent all the riders who have participated in the New York Times Tri-State Relay Race and especially those that competed in the 1895 Edition of the race.

Today’s race has been a thrilling experience for all concerned including myself who enjoyed it vicariously. However, in my brief time with you, I would like to remind you that the riders in today’s re-enactment had a much easier time of it that my friends did in 1895.

First, their equipment as not as good as those that today’s riders were mounted on. The bicycles of the 1980s tended to break when in crashes, and crashes were a common occurrence in the *New York Times Tristate Relay Race*. Today, I brought my own 1895 Indian Racer bicycle with only a fixed gear (no gear changing apparatus available in 1895) just to show you what my friends were riding on.

Second, the riders in 1895 were already using pneumatic tires, but this most marvelous invention was in its infancy as far as development is concerned, and they were still prone to puncture fairly easily. Punctures were mentioned often in the race accounts along with the minutes lost because of these occurrences.

And last but not least, the roads in all of America were in miserable condition compared to what we all experience today. Most roads were not paved. They were likely to have large stones poking up here and there, and the dust was generally deep in dry seasons and the mud was even deeper in wet weather.

All of this adversity was standard fair for our racers in 1895, but they did have one advantage in 1895 that today’s rider do not have - namely, large crowds of people lining the route of the race to see the scorchers whizzing by: this had to be exhilarating to the riders. Today’s racers are still cheered on by family, friends, and bicycle race fans, but the numbers of admirers today is a small fraction of the numbers that came out in 1895 to line the route.

Why this difference? In 1895 there was no radio and certainly no television to occupy people’s time and attention. There were no cars and no movies. And baseball, basketball, and football were just beginning to emerge as national pastimes. So, bicycling, and especially bicycle racing, was the activity that attracted more of the public’s attention than any other activity**.** Hundreds, and at times even thousands, of people would come out to view bicycle races. The riders were like the movie stars of today with the press giving much space to bicycle events, and the top placed bicycle racers were some of the highest paid people in the land.

So here we are remembering the 150 mile long 1895 New York Times Tristate Relay Race, and celebrating it with a century ride generally following the route of the 1895 race. This race was reported in great detail in the New York Times, and a good sampling of these articles can be seen in the internet by searching the New York Times of June 9 & 10, 1895, if you want more information on the 1895 race. Sadly, I must say that it is almost certain that the heroic riders of today’s race who rode along a similar route from New York City to Riverton, New Jersey, will get only a fraction of the space in newspapers published after this race that the 1895 racers got after their race.

So much for history and comparisons with our situation today. Please join me in appreciating what came before and enjoying the bounty that we have today.

I congratulate the riders in today’s race, and I remember with gratitude my departed friends, the riders who participated in the 1895 race.

Finally, I thank you for your attention as I reminisced about how things were in the 1890s and about my old now departed friends.