

Oma's Kitchen
July 4 Miles 5256-5275
From Ed Chasteen

Oma's Kitchen is about to become Sarah's Table. And Kearney will reacquire the culinary crown it surrendered when Clem's closed. Hundreds of times over more than a decade I biked the 25-mile round trip to Clem's on a Saturday morning for breakfast. A half-order of biscuits and gravy. Every time superb! I made friends I never saw except at Clem's. The Lutheran Bunch always sat at the table for eight in the no-smoking section. Sometimes they asked me to join them. Then one day Clem's closed. No warning. No good byes. And I biked to other towns for breakfast. Excelsior Spring's Mill Inn, Lawson's Catrick's Restaurant. When Oma's Kitchen opened in Kearney, I tried it. They didn't do biscuits and gravy right. Rather than rustic, the old house looked unkept. I told my biking buddies I didn't like it.

One recent day, Rich Groves said I should try it again. He had been there. And liked it. Then I found myself right at noon in Kearney, 60 miles into a ride on a sweltering July day. None of the recently opened chain eateries beacons me. OK Rich. Oma's one more time.

Ruth's Club Sandwich! Red juicy tomatoes. Sourdough bread. Crisp bacon. Turkey and ham piled so high I can't get my mouth around it. Maybe Rich is onto something. Today's the Fourth of July. I'm back. Rich, Dale Ahle and I left our cars at the now closed Blue Light Station at 69 and 33 highways in Liberty. East on 69 to Rhodus Road to 140th. Left to Jesse James Road to downtown Kearney and Oma's. The biscuits and gravy today are world class. "I'm sorry, Rich. I seriously misjudged this place."

Then I'm at the counter to pay the bill. "I'm the mother of the new owner," says the friendly cashier. "New owner? When?"

"This May. And soon we'll be Sarah's Table."

Mystery solved, Rich. You and I came to a different Oma's Kitchen. We'll be coming often to Sarah's Table. If only the Lutheran Bunch would stake out a table. I'll Email Charlie Kueck and suggest it.

<http://www.greaterliberty.org/>

July 8th
Miles 5420-5480
From Ed Chasteen

A Navajo sand painting's demise is intended from the moment of its inception, and the final act of its creation is its intentional destruction. To attempt its preservation is to deny the inherent dignity and worth of its essential transient nature.

Strange thoughts perhaps as a pleasant waitress places a tenderloin sandwich in front of me at Oma's Kitchen. Then, again, not so strange. "We've been talking about you." So said Janis Ballard as I entered just a few minutes ago. Then she retired to the kitchen to prepare my sandwich.

Tripod pillars support all the small town cafes I bike to more than once-biscuits & gravy, tenderloin sandwich and homemade pie. Oma's b&g passed the first test last Saturday. Now for #2.

Presentation is picture perfect. The sandwich comes open-faced. The tenderloin overflows the half bun beneath on the right side of the plate. The left bun supports a red juicy tomato, a purple ringed slice of quarter-inch thick onion, pickles and lettuce of complimenting greens. The small plastic cup of creamy white salad dressing is neatly filled. The bun is fresh and soft to the touch. The surface that receives the dressing has been lightly toasted and looks to have been lightly buttered.

When fully assembled, I have to hold it in both hands and can hardly get my mouth around it. The meat is uniformly tender, its fried batter a pleasing kaki color, light and airy, but with just the right crunch. My ears give it two thumbs up. Too soon I have devoured this work of art, to which I have come, thanks to biking, with a ravenous appetite. Not to have eaten the tenderloin would have taken all meaning from its creation. Even to delay would lessen its gustatory excellence, as the meat cooled, the tomato grew warm and the lettuce lost its crisp.

Everything under the sun has its proper time to enter and exit the stage. Sand paintings and tenderloin sandwiches are but two. On behalf of world class food artist Janis Ballard and her companion artists, I invite you to their gallery known for the moment as Oma's Kitchen. But soon to become Sarah's Table. The description of this sandwich was written especially for those of you who bought the miles that brought me here today. All of you who purchased miles 5000-5480 sat with me in spirit around the table. I hope by reading my account you can know you were there.

For pictures from our May 31st Century Greater Liberty Bike Ride and/or to Buy a Mile, visit <http://www.greaterliberty.org/>.