

A piece of paper

A piece of paper, blank, folded,
sticks out of my pocket.
I put it there to get inspired
hoping to record an idea from my bike ride.
Riding jacket pockets are for essentials---
gel food, tools, keys, spare tire and such,
but a piece of paper seems unessential
this cold, sunny Sunday morning.

There were ideas and experiences worth recording.
The sharp, cold wind reminded me of
how our fragile lives are insulted
by just a thin protective layer from hurt or even death---
like my riding clothes protected me
from the perilous freezing cold.

A brisk, westerly wind,
a wind chill of 3 degrees F.
set eyes watering, face stinging, fingers going numb.
I kept riding to stay warm,
but mostly for the joy, and 16 miles
after one full hour was more than just enough.
I made notes; the ideas live.
In summer, when the jacket is stored
and the paper is unfolded,
I will recall the bright, bitter cold.

-Ralph Brandt

An Outsider's View of Indiana

Indiana is a backwards place
Where the squirrels are red
And the dirt isn't,
Where greetings are warmest
From those who like you least,
Where there are trees in the city
And none in the country,
And Middle American teenagers
Long for anonymity.

-Jacqueline Hawk