

KBC PedalPress

The Newsletter of the Kalamazoo Bicycle Club June 21, 2016

www.kalamazoobicycleclub.org

SPECIAL EDITION

Dedicated to everyone in our cycling community which has been so deeply affected by the events of June 7, 2016, and especially to the deceased, the injured, and their loved ones.

EDITOR'S LETTER:

I didn't really know any of the victims. Met a couple over the years, shared a few rides. Like a lot of us, I found out when friends texted there was a terrible bike wreck north of town, and was I was okay?

I was numb that night. Like the shock was too much for my emotional wiring and blew the fuses. Couldn't comprehend the horror. Couldn't imagine the scene, the devastation. Went to bed unable to grasp what it meant to the injured, the loved ones. Doubt I ever will.

By morning my guts felt pummeled. Had to DO something, anything to help...who? Victims? Bike buddies? What did I have to offer besides hugs and tears? I drove to Open Roads to beg a bike to "ghost". Channel 8 was there. Worse, they wanted an interview. They *begged* for an interview. There was no fight in me. I've no idea what I said, but remember needing Kleenex.

Painting ghost bikes with friends was better than doing nothing. Channel 3 was there, and blessedly interviewed someone else. Placing the bikes at the scene was simply surreal. The Ride of Silence that night was hundreds of cyclists in states of shock. Sharing grief is better than nothing but I still felt sucker-punched.

Went on a group ride a couple of days later. When we spoke it was about something—anything—else. Everybody hiding—or hoping for some respite from—the enormous white elephant in the room. Learned it's hard to ride fast when my heart aches and my guts are gutted.

Here's the thing, the really hard thing, the thing that grinds at me: If it were 5 dead and 4 injured in a car wreck, or a train or plane, without really knowing the victims it wouldn't hit me this hard. I am not proud to admit this. Even the Uber driver murders—which I imagine non-cyclists find every bit as shocking—didn't cut this close to the bone.

Why? After all, we all accept a certain amount of risk when we ride, lots more risk than in a car. We all think about getting hit sometimes. Wouldn't be human if we didn't. Families and co-workers tell us dreadful bike-wreck stories and beg us to take up golf instead. We ride anyway.

We accept the risk. Doesn't matter what kind of riding it is, this is a risky sport. I know riders who've nearly died mountain biking, and even time trialing on a closed course. We accept the cold fact that every ride might be the last ride. And we push off and clip in.

The more we ride, the more we learn about the risks—through our friends or our own personal school of hard knocks. We ride knowing perfectly well it ain't if you crash, it's when and how bad. So why is it so hard to accept the inevitable?

Two reasons, I think. First, I've learned the hard way that serious injuries are just as hard emotionally on the loved ones as on the injured ones—not to mention the deceased, who we trust are at least spared further suffering. It's hard because of what love is and because there's precious little you can do for the ones you love. It's hard to be thrown into a space where you wish you were the one who got hurt instead of that special person lying there.

But I can't say I loved any of the nine riders. Didn't know them well enough. Reason two is that they were killed and maimed not just having fun, but doing something they—and you and I—truly love, and those of us who ride in groups know the special kinship that grows in a group of your best riding buddies.

The idiot in that truck drove those nine happy, fun-loving family members from Cloud 9 to the depths of death and despair, shattering bones, lives, and families. And because it could have been us, because the enormity of the loss, it isn't far away or abstract or imaginary. It's RIGHT HERE, up close and personal. And because we are all comrades in the shared risk of a sport we love, we are all shattered.

--Doug Kirk, editor@kalamazoobicycleclub.org

Cycling and Mental Health: Checking-In Post June 7th:

(Editor's Note: The following article is by Dr. Victoria (Tory) Cane, Ph.D, a licensed psychologist who is also a member of KBC & Team Clark Logic. Many of us, myself included, continue to have difficulty coping with our emotions resulting from the tragedy of June 7. Dr. Cane's article validates our angst and offers suggestions for moving forward.)

As a cyclist, I think that I speak for many in saying that this activity is an important pillar of our mental health. We ride for so many reasons that positively impact our mental health including (but not limited to): maintaining physical health, being mindful (fully present in the "here and now" without judgment), connecting to our environment, and connecting to community. The tragedy that befell our cycling community and our larger world on June 7th rocked many of us in ways we couldn't conceive.

Cyclists who rides on the road (even those who don't) know there are risks inherent to this activity. As someone who does ride on the road, I've taken my cues from mentors who have taught me to be as visible as I can, to follow the rules of the road, to ride predictably, and to use my voice assertively to communicate. The decision to ride on the road is a personal one and I believe everyone has to make peace with it based on his or her own analysis of risk and benefit. What happened on June 7th defied all the rules we follow, all the care and preparation we take. It was something that by all rights should never have happened. And yet, here we are.

News of what occurred the evening of June 7th reached me just as I finished a ride some miles away. I spent the next hours huddled with two teammates, grappling with what information we had. The next day I operated as if moving through quicksand. I threw myself, as much as I could, into helping and activating for the ride of silence which was to take place that evening. In the days that followed, I have seen my community come together in an astonishingly supportive, loving, positive way and I am confident the support will continue.

I am also worried. I am worried that some of this may be too big, go too deep, and that people—cyclists and non-cyclists—may struggle. I'm a little worried that the very nature of this sport, which calls for a certain ability to withstand suffering, may make it hard for someone to look for help if they need it. That's why I'm writing this. In addition to being a very enthusiastic, new cyclist, I am also a licensed psychologist who has been in the field for 16 years. I work with many people who have experienced trauma and I want to reach out to give a little information on the experience of trauma and some resources to get help if needed.

The American Psychological Association defines trauma as an emotional response to an extremely negative event. Reactions to such an event can include the experience of a range of emotions like anger, shock, and fear. One may also experience a strong urge to avoid any cues that remind one of the event. Someone does not have to have a direct experience with the event or to experience loss of a loved one to be negatively impacted.

What makes the Kalamazoo cycling tragedy potentially different from other traumatic events is the closeness of this community (even for those who did not personally know one of the injured or killed, it is very likely we know those who did which magnifies the intensity of the loss) and the fact that many of us will continue to experience the same circumstances (i.e.: riding on the road) as those that occurred on June 7th. I believe these realities may make our healing journey more complex.

I want to point out here that the experience of trauma does not necessarily mean that someone will develop the problems that occur when trauma effects linger for multiple weeks/months and can become post-traumatic stress disorder or PTSD. The potential for development of PTSD can be mitigated by increasing care and attention immediately after the trauma.

There are some decent online resources regarding trauma and I will link them here. I will recap:

- 1) The importance of self-care as you move forward from trauma.
- 2) The importance of self-validation regarding the emotions you are experiencing (do not tell yourself "I shouldn't feel this way", there are no right and wrong ways to feel about an event like this. Even much-maligned emotions like anger make sense and serve a purpose).
- 3) Connecting with others. Connecting with others can not only help to provide a sense of belonging and a means of processing what has occurred but it can also help to develop a sense of purpose, meaning, and hope; a way forward.

If you believe you are struggling in ways that do not seem to be improving or are getting worse, consider reaching out to a mental health treatment resource in our community. There are multiple ways to do this including investigating options connected with your medical plan. In general, you can ask about your plan's coverage for "outpatient mental health" services. I usually recommend that when someone is seeking a provider, they have a brief phone contact with the potential provider first to assess initial fit. As a provider myself, I require this brief check-in before I schedule a first appointment as it's important for me to understand what is bringing someone in for treatment and what their goals are. I also tell them about my background and theoretical orientation so they can make an educated decision about choosing to work with me.

Treatment for trauma can include a variety of interventions that I won't describe in detail here but in general they include providing education about the body's stress and anxiety response, and explaining how trauma symptoms can manifest themselves, with the goal of imparting how these symptoms can be interrupted, gaining a sense of shared goals for treatment, and helping the client move forward.

There are multiple resources in the community. Several have responded to my inquiries about availability to treat those who have been impacted by the June 7th events and they include:

Larry Beer, founder of Child and Family Psychological Services

<http://www.childandfamilypsych.com/>

Lou McCroskey, LLP, private practice 1011 W. Maple St. Ste 150 Kalamazoo, MI 49008 269-492-7505

Both of the above practitioners have expressed willingness to provide a certain amount of sessions at no charge if needed (specifics should be discussed with the provider). Other providers include:

Gary Snapper, LLP, LPC

<http://www.cognitivebehaviorsolutions.com/>

Dawn Bouaouad, LLP

https://therapists.psychologytoday.com/rms/name/Mandala+Counseling+and+Consulting+PLC_Kalamazoo_Michigan_133136

Online Resources for Trauma:

<http://www.helpguide.org/articles/ptsd-trauma/traumatic-stress.htm>

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/health/topics/coping-with-traumatic-events/index.shtml>

<http://www.apa.org/index.aspx>

<http://www.webmd.com/mental-health/mental-health-coping-with-grief>

2016 KalTour -- Changes & Challenges Due to the Tragedy

I hope everyone reading this already knows that all proceeds from this year's KalTour on June 26th will benefit the families and victims of the June 7 tragedy. I also hope that everyone knows that the Kalamazoo Bicycle Club is being supported in this endeavor by other cycling-related organizations in the Kalamazoo area including SWMMBA (Southwest Michigan Mountain Bike Association) and the Trikats (triathlon club) as well as the Clark Logic Race Team.

Some of you, I am sure, have been on large rides with large crowds and lines for check-in, food, and portable toilets. KalTour has never been like that because 300 riders spread across a four-hour starting window and five routes doesn't lead to overcrowding. However, this year will likely be different.

We have capped the event at 1200 riders, a number we believe is the most we can handle and still put on a quality event. We have ordered more food and more portable toilets, and we have a lot more helpers so I don't think the lines will be too long. We have also expanded the start times from 11:00 until noon for the shorter rides and added a second family ride.

In order to help alleviate the possibility of long lines at registration, PLEASE try to pre-register. Here's a link to the registration page of the KBC website: <http://www.kalamazoobicycleclub.org/paypal/ffpaypal.php>
I would also like to spread out the riders as much as possible so please arrive at the start according to the starting times for your intended distance.

distance**starting times**

century	7:00 am to 8:30 am
62 mile (100K)	8:00 am to 10:30 am
31 mile (50 K)	9:30 am to noon
17 mile	10:00 am to noon
13 mile guided family ride	10:00 am & 11:00 am

Previously announced group starts -- fast 62 mile at 9 am and moderate 31 mile at 9:30 -- will take place. Watch Facebook for additional groups. I would like to see another 62 and another 31. Are there enough 17's for a group?

Due to the expected large turnout, please car pool where possible. When you arrive, please follow the signs and directions of the volunteers regarding where to park. Consider parking in the main KVCC lot and riding to the start for an extra mile. Due to our own automobile traffic, ride single file on Elm Valley Drive and on 9th Street going around the bend to 'O' Avenue. We are hoping for police support for the initial turn onto 9th Street.

The response of the Kalamazoo cycling community to the June 7 tragedy has been heroic; I hope we are able to continue the response at the same level on Sunday June 26 at KalTour.

Mike Krischer, KalTour Director

Five Bicycles In Kalamazoo

(Editor's Note: The following article by Jason Gay appeared in the June 15, 2016 *Wall Street Journal*. I have edited out portions containing information and quotes he gleaned from local cyclists. My intent reprinting it here is to present the observations and feelings of an excellent nationally known writer writing to a national audience about this local tragedy. The link to the full article is:

<http://www.wsj.com/articles/five-bicycles-in-kalamazoo-1465945453?tesla=y>

The road looks like it could be almost anywhere in America.

Two lanes, ruler straight, it can be taken in or out of town. Where the horror happened up on North Westnedge Avenue, there's a small hill, nothing major, past a string of greenhouses and a county park.

When I visit, there's still some debris scattered at the scene. The shattered pieces of a bicycle's taillight, a set of tire levers. A broken off piece of sunglasses. A fragment of a carbon fiber frame—which upon closer inspection, turns out to be part of a dropout that holds a bike's rear wheel.

It is both heartbreaking and difficult to comprehend.

Then, against a chain-link fence, you can't miss them: They are covered in flowers, ornaments and hand-written notes. Throughout the day, people stop to look at them, to pay respects, and confirm what happened on this road on Tuesday June 7 was real.

Five bicycles, painted white.

How did it happen? Why did it happen? If law enforcement had an idea, the Kalamazoo county prosecutor, Jeff Getting, was keeping that information closely held. Toxicology results have yet to be made public. This was known: That night, three separate calls had been made to police prior to the bike incident, reporting erratic driving by a pick-up truck of a similar description.

The driver, a 50-year-old man named Charles Pickett Jr., of Battle Creek had been apprehended. On Thursday, Getting, the Kalamazoo prosecutor, stood on the steps of the county government building in a blue suit and read off the charges, which included five counts of second-degree murder.

“What we are alleging is that the defendant, Charles Edward Pickett Jr., acted in wanton and willful disregard of the likelihood that the natural tendency of his actions would cause death or great bodily harm, and as a result, did kill and murder Fred (Tony) Nelson, Suzanne Sippel, Deborah Bradley, Lorenz (Larry) Paulik, and Melissa Fevig-Hughes.”

Pickett would plead not guilty to all of the charges at his arraignment the next day—reached Tuesday, his court-appointed lawyer Alan Koenig, declined comment. Denied bond, Pickett remains in jail.

The deceased ranged in age from 42 to 74 years old. There were additional charges related to the four injured survivors: Jennifer Johnson, 40, Paul Gobble, 47, Paul Runnels, 65, and Sheila Jeske, 53.

Parents. Grandparents. Sons. Daughters. Spouses. Neighbors. Professionals. Volunteers. Athletes. Cyclists. All of them were members of the Chain Gang, an experienced local cycling group that had been riding in and around Kalamazoo for more than a decade and a half.

The Chain Gang was not set up to be a hardcore competitive group. It had a “no-drop” rule. If a rider could not keep up the pace, or he or she had a mechanical problem or a flat, they wouldn’t leave you behind. Someone would drop back to help. The idea was to look after each other and have a nice time. Often, they’d go for a beer afterwards.

It all felt so senseless and inexplicable. A devastating photograph would appear in the Kalamazoo Gazette: a circle of crumpled bikes recovered at the North Westnedge scene, frames bent or smashed into bit, wheel rims dramatically bent or tangled.

What happened in Kalamazoo breaks hearts a hundred ways. It breaks a heart of the facts alone: So much loss, so much grief. It breaks the heart for the families of the cyclists and their close friends, who feel the impact most deeply. It breaks the heart for the community.

Kalamazoo is good biking country—not far out of town, there is beautiful terrain and country roads and a converted railway that runs all the way to Lake Michigan. There are thriving scenes for road riding, gravel riding, mountain biking, and thick-tired “fat biking” in the cold winter. If you want to ride your bike, you can always find people in Kalamazoo to ride with.

For cyclists everywhere, Kalamazoo breaks a heart because this is the deepest fear. It also breaks a heart because these group rides are essential for the sport. Group rides are often where bike riders become cyclists, where they learn handling techniques, etiquette and essential skills like pace lines in which riders take turns (“pulls”) at the front and then gently rotate to the back to protect themselves from the wind.

Group rides become families. Some of them stick together for decades, even if the riders might not be able to recognize each other in street clothes.

On Wednesday June 8, after the 5 “Ghost Bikes” were placed, hundreds of people gathered in Kalamazoo for a ride of silence to commemorate the dead and injured. The following Tuesday evening hundreds more riders set out to complete the ride the Chain Gang members never got a chance to finish. Lance Armstrong was one of the participants.

Not far underneath the grieving in Kalamazoo, there is anger. Cyclists already feel targeted and vulnerable, invisible and deprioritized. The loss of life here was appalling, but there is too much of this everywhere.

One night I was in Kalamazoo, there was a candlelight vigil at the Saint Thomas More parish, where two of the fallen riders, Larry Paulik and Tony Nelson, were members. Leaving the church after an emotional service, I watched a mother and a pair of children ride away on their bicycles—the two children riding in front, the mother riding in back. Amid all the mourning, it looked like a beautifully defiant act. A car passed slowly. The girl pedaling in front smiles and waved.

On a road not far away, another church posted a hand-drawn sign with a bike nestled in the center.

WE SEE YOU. WE LOVE YOU, it read.

It’s barely a week later. But Kalamazoo rides on.

Your Ride Didn’t Change Anything

(Editor’s Note: Most of us feel anger in addition to grief and loss. More than one KBC member sent me a blog by a cycling accident attorney in California who is definitely angry. I have edited it to tone it down a bit and delete references to California. It is reprinted here with his permission.)

I wasn’t moved by your ride of silence. I was angry. And who was I angry at? Not at psychopath Pickett. Even if he were drunk or even if he intentionally murdered his victims I wouldn’t be angry with him. He and the psychopaths like him are part of my daily cycling existence. They aren’t worth my anger, they aren’t worth ruining my day or especially my ride. I note their existence, give brief thanks that they missed, and continue on. But they are not worth anger.

Nope, I’m angry at the majority of the people on the ride of silence, and even at the people who named it “Ride of Silence.” **The problem isn’t the psychopaths and the drunks, it’s the silence of all the cyclists that enables them.** It’s the thousands of people across this country who mournfully get on their bikes and go pedal for a fallen friend and then return to life as usual, never writing an enraged letter to their elected officials, never showing up to demand safer roads and stronger laws at the local level, and not reporting reckless drivers nearly often enough. I’m angry at people who never even bother to report the vehicular assaults committed against THEM.

The same people who are too busy to stop a ride and call the cops, or too busy to leave work early or drive an extra hour in traffic to raise hell and demand change from the only people who can move the system are the same ones who join sad memorial rides for the dead. In silence, of course.

Funerals and memorials are important and certainly have their place, but silence isn’t bringing anyone back. Silence isn’t stopping one single psychopath from repeating the crime, or making any road safer. It isn’t changing one damned thing.

The sight of hundreds of cyclists who are sad enough to mourn the dead but too damn lazy to file a police report or attend a city council meeting or write a letter makes me angry.

I hope it makes you angry, too—angry enough to get off your ass and DO something! Go talk to your elected representatives locally and in Lansing. Get active in your club! Ask them what you can do to help. But why in the world would you choose to be silent?

President's Letter: Many Thanks to KBC Members

The tragic cycling crash on June 7th rocked the cycling community not only in Kalamazoo but also around the country. Emails immediately poured in from cyclists, bike clubs, and many others from Ohio, California, New Mexico, and across the US sending their sympathies to our areas cycling community. An email from Lance Armstrong really opened my eyes to the impact this event had on so many (we know how that ended up).

Many KBC members were flooded with an onslaught of emails and phone calls from the media for statements or interviews, unlike anything KBC has had to deal with before. For many days as the details of the crash unfolded, our 'volunteer' positions became full time jobs plus overtime. So many KBC members stepped up to assist in managing the on slot of activity resulting from the crash. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank our members for a 'job well done'!

Thank you KBC's Executive Committee, John Olbrot, Mike Boersma and Val Litznerski, your wisdom, support, dedication, and commitment are unprecedented.

Thank you Paul Selden & Marc Irwin for fielding emails and phone calls from media and others.

Thank you Doug Kirk & Dave DeBack for your work organizing traffic control and parking for Finish the Ride.

Thank you Mike Krischer for being willing to 'step up' KalTour 2016.

Thank you David Jones for emailing out to membership.

Thank you Cullen Stevenson for updating a website that is on its way out.

Thank you Toni D. Meg Zapalowski & Tim Krone for teaming up on KalTour 2016 riding for the Kalamazoo Strong Organization.

Thank you to all the KBC members who participated in the Ride of Silence and Finish the Ride events honoring the crash victims, your presence was impactful.

Finally, thank you to the many others that worked behind the scenes in a variety of ways to bring honor and remembrance to the crash victims.

-Renee Mitchell president@kalamazoobicycleclub.org

BICYCLING SAFETY ADVICE

Ride your bike—and live your life—like this day and this ride might be your last. Ride your bike like your life—and your mind and body's integrity—depend on it. Absorb every bit of wonderfulness your bike and this life have to offer.

THE NEXT KBC MONTHLY MEETINGS ARE JUNE 21st & JULY 12th at 7:00 P.M. at the Kalamazoo YMCA on Maple Street, 1st floor conference room. All KBC members are welcome to attend.

YOUR LOCAL BIKE SHOPS:

They support us so please support them—seriously, what goes around comes around

Alfred E. Bike, 320 East Michigan, Kalamazoo, (269) 349-9423, www.aebike.com.

Billy's Bike Shop, 63 East Battle Creek Street, Galesburg, (269) 665-5202, www.billysbikeshop.com.

Custer Cyclery, 104 North Augusta, Augusta, (269) 731-3492, www.custercyclery.com.

**Gazelle Sports, 214 South Kalamazoo Mall, Kalamazoo, (269) 342-5996, www.Gazellesports.com.
Save up to 30% at Gazelle Sports' Early June Shoe Sale! Shop NOW for best selection in-store or online at <http://www.gazellesports.com>.**

**Kzoo Swift, 445 Forest St, Kalamazoo, (269) 929-8053,
www.kzooswift.com.**

**Pedal Downtown, 611 W Michigan Avenue, Kalamazoo, (269) 567-3325,
Pedal South, 185 Romence Road, Portage (269) 324-5555,
info@pedalbicycle.com and www.pedalbicycle.com.**

Team Active, 22 West Michigan, Battle Creek, 1-800-841-494, www.teamactive.com.

Village Cyclery, US 131 in Schoolcraft, (269) 679-4242, www.villagecyclery.com.

**Zoo City Cycle & Sports, 4328 South Westnedge, Kalamazoo, (269) 552-3000,
www.zoocitycycle.com.**