

KBC PedalPress

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The Newsletter of the Kalamazoo Bicycle Club

April 2002

President's letter:

This is my third installment of the KBC President's letter, one quarter of the letters already written for this year. For those of you who don't know me I figured there's no time like the present to tell you a little about myself.

I have ridden bikes for as long as I can remember but have only called myself a cyclist for the last 5 years or so. I started racing BMX at a local track in Muskegon when I was about 8 yrs old. After a few successful seasons the track closed and we quit racing. I turned to traditional team sports (hockey and football) for the next 10 years. As a kid without a driver's license I continued to ride my bike wherever I went and would take long rides for fun on the weekends.

Unlike the case with most of the kids I grew up with, getting a car wasn't the end of my cycling. A car became a way to take my bike to different places to ride. We would go out and ride our mountain bikes in the places where we used to ride our motorcycles. Or take the bikes up to one of the State's first Rail-Trails (the Hart-Montague Rail Trail).

Once in college I became more interested in cycling. All of my riding was on a mountain bike until the mid nineties when I bought my first road bike. Since then my road mileage has steadily grown. But moving to Kalamazoo and getting involved with KBC has had the biggest impact on my mileage and my overall cycling fitness.

I was transferred to Kalamazoo in October of 1998 and joined the club shortly after my move. My wife and I were married in December of 1998 and she moved here at that time. I began to participate in club rides in the spring of 1999 and became known to many of you as the guy in the red plaid Syncros jersey.

My club involvement quickly expanded beyond the club rides. My first active role was helping with the 2000 FlowerFest. Again in 2001 I helped plan the FlowerFest, this time I was also the Vice President of the club. Being involved in club leadership has been a good experience. If nothing else it has helped me get to know more KBC members than I would have if I had been participating exclusively in the rides. Furthermore, it's nice to be able to hear good ideas from club members and find ways to implement them. The great KBC baseball caps and this year's time trial series are two good examples of that.

As the weather continues to improve I will see many of you at our rides. Like all Michigan cyclists in early spring I am dying to go for a ride and be comfortable in just shorts and a jersey. That time will come; and when it does you will see me on a black Cannondale wearing a red plaid jersey. See you on the road.

Greg Bouwman, KBC President

KBC Wish List:

Jersey designer - Do you have graphic arts talent? Then the KBC would like to enlist you to work on a new design and be the point person for the new KBC biking jerseys we're going to order this summer. This is a good opportunity for someone to really put his or her mark on the Club, as your work will be seen everywhere KBC members ride. Interested? Come to the next KBC Board meeting at the Borgess Fitness Center on Gull Road at 7 PM on April 9th with your ideas.

Bike mechanics - KBC has worked out a date and time, Saturday April 13th at 10:00 AM, to help repair kids bikes at Lakeside Treatment and Learning Center, located at 3921 Oakland Drive. There are approximately 25 youth bikes that need new tires, lubrication, adjustment, and cleaning. KBC will purchase the parts we need from local bike shops in the next few weeks. From you we'll need floor pumps, tire levers, a truing stand, workstands, rags, solvents and lube, and many willing hands to help make the work go faster. Please join us for this worthy cause, and check out Axel's assessment of the bikes on page 9. See you there. Contact Chris Barnes at 327-8972 or barnesmc@net-link.net for more information.

Flowerfest Volunteers - Next Flowerfest meeting is on April 18th at 7:00 PM. Contact Dave Newman at 375-8105 for more details.

Next KBC Meeting - Tuesday, April 9th, 7 PM, Borgess Fitness Center on Gull Road. It sure would be nice to see a few new faces there. There's a lot going on these days at KBC. Come to a meeting and see firsthand what's up with your bike club.

Upcoming KBC Events

Saturday, April 13th, 10:00 AM, KBC R&R (Repair and Rescue) Mission at Lakeside Treatment Center.

As you'll read in Axel's column this month, Lakeside Treatment Center at 3921 Oakland Drive has a lot of kid's bikes in various stages of disrepair. Chris and Marian Barnes have asked KBC members to work as mechanics for part of a day to help get the bikes rideable for the kids at Lakeside. We'll need rags, floor pumps, tire levers, basic hand tools, a truing stand, workstands, lubricants, and lots of hands willing to get a bit dirty for a good cause. Doug Kirk, Greg Bouwman, and Chris have already done a preliminary assessment of the bikes and ordered parts from local bike shops. Now the only thing we need is man and woman power to put the bikes back into riding order. Plan to meet at 10:00 AM on April 13th at Lakeside. Contact Chris for more details at 327-8972, or barnesm@net-link.net.

Saturday, May 18th, KBC R&R (Recruitment and Riding) Party.

Current KBC members are invited to bring one or more friends to this event; people who might be interested in riding with and joining KBC. Scheduled for Saturday May 18th at the Kal-Haven Trailhead on North 10th St. (site of the Wednesday night KBC rides), the party starts at 1:00 p.m. After an hour of socializing and eating (this is a potluck), there will be a 10 mile fun ride on the Kal-Haven Trail starting at 2:00. Greg Bouwman suggested that some of the faster riders might want to meet at 10:00 or 11:00 that morning to do a faster ride, then return for the party (and food, right Greg?) at 1:00. If you know of someone who would like to join KBC, please have him or her come as your guest to this event. More details in the May PedalPress.

KBC Alumni news:

Kelli Emmett, an extremely talented young woman who rode regularly on KBC rides in 2000 before taking the big step to test the professional waters (we think with the GT Bicycles team last year) has signed with the Luna Chix team for 2002, according to Velonews.

She will be riding with some of the biggest names in women's mountain bike racing--Allison Dunlap and Marla Streb, among others. Anyone who rode with Kelli will recall her as an obviously talented rider with a modest, soft-spoken demeanor.

Yet another KBC alumna goes for it in the big time!! We certainly send Kelli good luck and great legs for the 2002 season! Doug Kirk

Denny does it again:

Longtime KBC member Denny Morrison has once again displayed generosity worthy of praise – and emulation. For the second time in as many years he donated money to KBC to buy bikes for kids who need them. At the last KBC meeting, on March 12th, young Robert Gooding got the surprise of his life when Denny unveiled a shiny, new black Giant mountain bike in his size. Camera flashes popped as Robert tried to lift his jaw off the floor and stick his eyes back in his head. It was like Christmas in March.

As we helped Robert's mother load the bike in her van she shook our hands and again voiced a heartfelt thank you to KBC and Denny. It seems this family was having a rough time of it lately, and that new bike was one of the few good things to come down the pike in her boy's life. KBC hopes Robert enjoys his new bike, and we all should tip our helmets to one generous son of a gun – Denny Morrison.

Zolton Cohen

Crassified ads:

For Sale: Cannondale R600 racing bicycle; 2.8 aluminum frame; 58cm size; STI shifters; Shimano 105 components; 16 speed; black and gray; excellent condition; \$395 Reason for selling: "I have too many bicycles in my garage." Dale Krueger, 375-0114 dkrueger@net-link.net

Recumbent Exercise Bike. Deluxe, full back support, padded seat, variable magnetic resistance, computer, adjusts to fit 4'6" to 6'6" users. SMOOTH, QUIET AND LIKE NEW. \$250 Marty Glista at 342-2660

Product Review: Carradice Saddle Bags by Curly Stays

(Editor's note: Dr. Stays is at it again, with a very thorough review of a bag that sounds like the real ticket for bike commuting. It's a subject a lot of you bike commuters out there may find of use.)

Until last year, I didn't ride my bike to work very often, even though the route is fun to ride and my workplace has a secure bike rack and excellent locker facilities. After I bought a Carradice saddlebag last summer, however, I began bike-commuting much more frequently. My Carradice bag fits on all of my bikes, and will hold my work clothes, shoes, jacket or sweater, tool kit, lock, work papers and disks, etc. Before I bought the saddle bag I carried my work gear in either a courier bag or panniers. I suspect the courier bag would be excellent for short commutes, but it was hot and the weight of the fully loaded bag made my butt ache by the end of my 12 mile one-way commutes, especially when I rode a track bike with a narrow Flite saddle over bumpy city streets. The panniers were great at carrying my gear, but the panniers required a rack and I wasn't interested in putting a rack on most of my bikes. So, I only used the panniers when I commuted on my clunky beater bike, which is not as much fun to ride.

The Carradice saddlebag is strapped to loops on the underside of the saddle, such as those on a Brooks B.17. An additional leather strap on the front of the bag wraps around the seatpost. Carradice bags can be used even on saddles without loops through the use of relatively unobtrusive loop-attachment clamps that can be easily bolted to the rails of most saddles. It is very easy to use a Carradice saddlebag on almost any bike. In this article I will discuss other features of Carradice saddlebags and my experience with their largest model, the "Camper."

Carradice has been making saddlebags in Nelson, England for over 60 years. Their "Original" line of bags are made of heavy waxed cotton duck with double seams, leather scuff patches, and thick leather straps with roller buckles. Carradice saddlebags are made to last a long, long time, and are much better made than an old Brooks saddlebag that I also own but rarely use. I learned first-hand how waterproof Carradice bags are when I was caught riding home last October 25th in THE thunderstorm that blew down many area trees. Despite the heavy rainfall and gale-force winds, my gear stayed completely dry!

Carradice saddlebags have a long flap that can be extended to cover items that might not fit entirely within the bag's main compartment. These bags also have two side pockets for smaller items. The saddlebags come in three sizes, with capacities ranging from 850 to almost 1500 cubic inches. Because of the long flap, the

maximum capacities of the bags are larger than these nominal values. The largest bag, the "Camper", can accommodate all the gear needed for extended B&B touring, or hold a light sleeping bag. The smallest bag, the "Low Saddle," could carry gear needed for commuting or light day touring. The bags also have D-rings on the flap that can be used to secure items that might be quickly needed, such as a lock or a rain jacket. For riding after dark the bags have some reflective trim and a tab for an LED. Unless the bike has fenders or a rack, at least 10.5" is needed between the saddle loops and the tire or the smallest bag will drag on the tire. Carradice makes an uplift seatpost attachment that allows the bags to be used on bikes with less clearance than this.

What is it like to ride a bike with a fully loaded Carradice bag? I suspect that for seated riding most riders will not notice that the bike handles any differently. My riding position probably presents a worst-case scenario for impaired bike handling with the saddlebag, since my bikes have curved seatposts that allow the saddle to be pushed extremely far back, and the saddlebag is consequently positioned directly over the rear axle. I did notice some understeer with the saddlebag, but only when it was fully loaded (i.e., with more than 20 lb of gear) and I was going fast on curvy, wet roads. The saddlebag will catch some wind, and it may result in the bike being pushed around a bit more than normal by strong crosswinds. Because of its location, however, the saddlebag will probably catch less wind than a pannier. Climbing while standing can be a problem with a loaded saddlebag, since the bike will feel sluggish at being rocked to and fro and the bag may sway a bit. When I ride with the saddlebag, I try to stay seated up most hills, even though I stand frequently when not using the saddlebag. Finally, the back of the thighs may brush against the saddlebag during each pedal stroke. This can be remedied if it is a problem by a simple modification to the seatpost attachment or by using the Carradice uplift seatpost attachment.

I have been very happy with the performance of my Carradice saddlebag. For more information about the bags, check out the Carradice web site (www.carradice.co.uk). Normal retail price of the bags is \$70-80. US retailers for Carradice include the following bike shops: Rivendell (www.rivendellbicycles.com), Wallingford (www.wallbikes.com), Harris (www.sheldonbrown.com/harris/index.html), and Peter White (www.peterwhitecycles.com).

BE A RIDE LEADER

The weather is becoming more spring-like (actually summer-like down here in Siesta Key, FL), so it is time to think about KBC rides for the year 2002 ride season. KBC had a great group of ride leaders last year and the 2001 ride season was a good one. Attendance at the rides continues to increase. With the increased ride attendance we need more rider leaders for the 2002 season to accommodate the larger groups. The more ride leaders we have the better. Volunteer to lead some rides. It's fun. The routes are well established for the Monday, Wednesday, and Friday rides. Give it a shot. The club will be happy to help get you started.

There was large rider participation in the 16+ mph ride groups and these groups are well established for the three weekly ride nights. Although there was a good 10-15 mph ride group on Monday evenings, participation on other nights has been limited for riders at this pace. In order to make additional 10-15 mph ride groups a part of the KBC ride calendar KBC needs you 10-15 mph riders to participate in and to help lead the rides. Once a group gets started it feeds on itself.

If anyone is interested in leading rides this year, please give me a call at 649-1814 or send me an email at sterling.r.putt@pharmacia.com. I will be more than happy to discuss how to lead rides with you. In fact, most any experienced KBC rider would be happy to discuss ride leader responsibilities with you. You do not have to wait to be asked. No experience is necessary, only the willingness to ride with a great group of people who enjoy riding their bikes. See the March Newsletter for info about how to lead a ride.

APRIL RIDE SCHEDULE

Wear the appropriate clothing and let's go for a ride. If anyone would like to lead a weekend ride in April, give me a call or send me a description of the ride via e-mail or to KBC-general@yahoogroups.com. If the roads are dry, there will be riders ready to ride. I have a lengthy e-mail list of riders so the ride information can be transferred quickly and on short notice. If any of you would like to be added to the e-mail list, send your e-mail address to me: sterling.r.putt@pharmacia.com).

We plan to continue the Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday rides for the 2002 season as well as five special weekend rides. KBC is open to other ideas for weekend rides as well. Send your ideas to any KBC officer or the Ride Captain.

ALL WEEKDAY RIDES START AT 6 PM IN APRIL

The Monday Ride at Texas Drive Park will consist of three ride groups in April:

- 15-20 mile group at 10-12 mph (will start in May or June),
- 15-20 mile group at 12-15 mph leaders TBD (will start in May),
- 25-30 mile group at 16-18 mph leaders TBD,
- 25-30 mile group at 19-20 mph leaders TBD,
- 25-30 mile group at 20+ mph leaders TBD.

The 10-15 mile groups will generally ride the same route and the 25-30 mile groups will typically ride the same route. The 10-15 mph groups are recommended to new riders. For more experienced riders who are new to the club the 16-18 mph group is recommended. Ride leaders are needed for all the ride groups. The more volunteers the better. The ride leaders make every attempt at keeping each group together although the 20+ mph group may fragment.

*The Tuesday Ride starts at Breakaway Bicycles on Romence Rd in Portage. The ride is led by Paul Wells and consists of one group that rides 25-30 miles at 16-18 mph. Check this ride out. **This ride will start in May.***

The Wednesday ride begins at the Kal-Haven Trail Parking lot. KBC plans to offer three ride groups:

- 10-15 mile fitness group at 10-15 mph on the Kal-Haven Trail (to start in May, need leaders),
- 25-35 mile group at 16-18 mph leaders TBD,
- 25-35 mile group at 20+ mph led by Zolton Cohen and others.

The fitness ride at 10-15 mph on the Kal-Haven Trail is a new ride and will start in May or June. This ride needs ride leaders to make it a go. Ride leaders are needed for the 16-18 mph group as well.

The Wednesday night Hammerfest will start at the Kal-Haven Trail Parking lot at 6 PM in April. The pace of the ride is typically greater than 20++ mph and the route goes to Bloomingdale and back (about 46 miles). Since the route is well known to most of the regular riders, no maps are available for this ride. This group is typically large (more than 15 riders) and consists of racers and other experienced riders. There is no designated ride leader. The group typically fragments into smaller groups and the riders oftentimes do not finish together. This ride is hard and is not suitable for inexperienced riders. Some riders can be expected to be dropped from the main group.

Thursday night is Coed ride night at Texas Drive Park. This is a nice and easy social ride and generally has a pace of 15 – 16 mph. There were several dedicated leaders who made this ride successful over the past couple of years, but we currently are in need of new ride leaders. This ride will start in May.

The Friday Tour de Gull meets at Billy's Bike Shop in Galesburg for a ride around Gull Lake (27 miles). This ride typically consists of two groups:

- 16-18 mph group (leaders TBD)
- 19+ mph group led by Randy Putt and others TBD.

We need additional ride leaders. The route for this ride is well established so the ride leader job is easy. Give it a try. There has been some interest from club members in establishing a 13-15 mph group for this ride. If you are interested, please contact the Ride Captain.

Meet at the KVCC parking lot (SW corner) on Saturdays and Sundays at 12 PM for 30-60 mile rides. Dave Newman plans to lead the Saturday rides. There is no designated ride leader for Sunday. Those riders who show up on Sundays will determine the route, distance, and pace. Come on out to ride with old friends and meet new friends.

Mark your long-range calendars for some special weekend rides this summer. Several rides are being planned for the summer months.

- The 3rd annual W Ave Ride (48 miles) from Vicksburg HS on **April 28** led by Rick Whaley,
- The 4th annual Old Car Festival Ride (about 60 miles) from Vicksburg HS on the **second weekend in June** led by Randy Putt,
- The 5th annual ride to South Haven with a stop at the beach (100 miles) in **mid-July**,
- The 5th annual Ride Around Kalamazoo County (100 miles) in **mid-August**.
- The 31st KBC Anniversary Ride, distance and route TBD.

Except for the W Ave Ride on April 28th the dates and pace for these rides are not firmly established. Mark your calendars and stay tuned for further details. If you have comments about the above-mentioned rides or have suggestions for other rides, contact Randy Putt by phone or e-mail. Check out the KBC web page (www.angelfire.com/mi/kbc/) for the ride calendar and for any last minute changes.

WW III Is Coming !!!

.....and are we all doomed? Only to a life of regret, if we miss the third annual (Whimsical) W Ride!

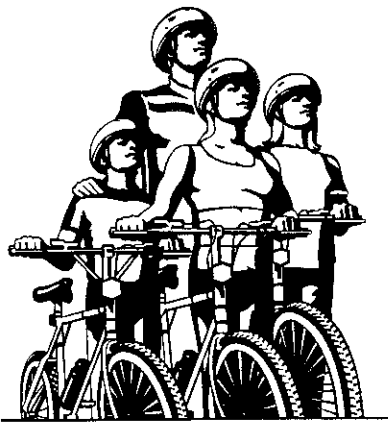
Once again, we'll meet at Vicksburg High School, this year at 9:00 AM on Sunday, April 28, 2002. We'll ride west on W Avenue until we reach the Van Buren County line. After we turn around, we'll retrace our figurative steps and ride east until we get back to Vicksburg. After a short break, we'll continue our journey to the east on W Avenue until we reach the Calhoun County line. And what will we do then? Will we call a cab? No, we'll just turn around and ride back to Vicksburg. Although they'll be no French judges at the county lines (sorry, Yuri Kleat), all riders will be encouraged to execute both of their 180 degree turns with style and grace.

The distance is 48 miles. The pace will depend on who shows up and we'll probably form more than one pace group. Just remember that it's bad form to drop the ride leader, even though that's never stopped anyone before.

Rick W(haley), Ride Leader

Phone (Home): 329-1285

E-mail: fredrick.s.whaley@pharmacia.com



April Birthdays

Christopher Barnes
 Laura Cosgrove
 Rhonda Cross
 Thomas Cross
 Cindy Gippert
 Cynthia Hapman
 Aaron Kirk
 Kathy Kirk
 Ed Mazurkiewicz
 Mark McCormick
 John Mulac
 Thomas Noverr
 Amber Rewalt
 Andrew Rosenbaum
 Natasha Thannhauser
 Michael Uggeri
 Rick Updike
 Karen Watt
 Molly Wells

April Expiring Memberships

Paul Banner
 Luanne Cali
 Mike Cutler
 Bob & Kristin Gray
 Lee Kirk Family
 Teresa Liedtke
 Michael McKee

April New Members

Giti & Jud Henrie
 Kevin Biek
 Tom Cochran
 Denise Dickerhoof
 John & Suzan Spaulding
 Reese Spaulding
 Evan Spaulding
 Donald & Marsha Visker

March 12, 2002 KBC Board Meeting Minutes

7:00 p.m., Location: Borgess Fitness Center on Gull Road. Present were Greg Bouwman, David Newman, Zolton Cohen, Kathy Kirk, Denny Morrison, Greg Sparbel, Terry O'Connor, Emily Mattes, Steve Secondi, and Karen Sue Mackaluso.

This meeting started with the presentation of a bicycle to a boy named Robert Gooding. Continuing a youth bike giveaway program he pioneered last year, Denny Morrison generously donated funds to KBC for this venture, selected the very happy recipient (and the bike, from Alfred E. Bike), and was on hand to make the presentation. Denny is currently looking for a worthy young girl in need of a bike for another presentation this year.

Greg Sparbel, representing the Portage Public Library, spoke to the meeting participants about suggestions for bicycling-related books, videos, DVDs, or magazines for the library. Mr. Sparbel seeks input on this subject from KBC members, figuring that we represent a good base of knowledge of what's available and which media would be best. If you have any ideas you'd like to share on this issue Mr. Sparbel would like to hear from you. Contact him at the Portage Public Library, 329-4544, or via e-mail at GSparbel@pdl.lib.mi.us.

Terry O'Connor presented the Treasurer's report, indicating a small (\$299.23) loss of money last year, and also suggestions for lowering KBC's cost per member. Zolton agreed to check with a mailing service concerning prices for bulk printing, folding and mailing the PedalPress.

Emily Mattes, KBC's new Social Director, proposed a ride/party in May, the focus of which would be to attract new KBC members. Check page 2 in this issue of the Pedal Press for more information about this event

Karen Sue Mackaluso is again this year looking for volunteers to staff an aid station at the Borgess Run Saturday, April 27th. If you can help, contact her using her e-mail or phone number on the back of the PedalPress. Karen Sue also reported she hasn't the time to follow up on designing or ordering new KBC jerseys. Zolton will put an announcement in the *PedalPress* requesting someone else take on this project.

Kathy Kirk, KBC's database manager, reported a plan to send Flowerfest brochures to all names in the database. David Newman will stock all area bike shops with the brochures; this is to include all bike shops in Michigan and even as far away as Chicago. The brochures will be printed within two weeks.

Greg Bouwman reported that his inquiries as to whether KBC can engage in lobbying activities (such as producing a position paper on the R Avenue widening project) revealed that our tax-free status is not jeopardized as long as no more than 20% of KBC time or money is spent lobbying.

Chris Barnes reported that he, Doug Kirk, and Greg Bouwman met at Lakeside Treatment Center to check out the kids' bikes there with an eye toward a KBC-sponsored bike repair effort at Lakeside 10:00 AM on Saturday, April 13th. All KBC members are invited to come and help. Bring rags, tire levers, pumps, tools, work stands, etc. Lakeside Treatment and Learning Center is located at 3921 Oakland Drive, about ¼ mile north of Kilgore Road.

The meeting adjourned at 8:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Doug Kirk, KBC Secretary

Mail Call:

Each week, and each DAY in the spring and summer, the KBC mailbox gets stuffed with brochures announcing bike riding events across the state and country. It's because we're a bike club, and bike clubs send ride brochures about their fund-raising rides to other clubs in order to solicit riders for their rides. KBC does the same thing with Flowerfest brochures and posters. But what happens to all those brochures that come into the KBC mailbox? Usually, unless the exact person handling them happens to want to ride in that particular event, they get tossed out – or rather recycled. This is an environmentally correct operation, after all.

An example is an announcement we got in last week for a couple of "Recumbent Rally" events on two consecutive Saturdays, May 11th and 13th. The first rally will be at the Willow Metropark pool shelter off exit 11 of I-275, just south of the Detroit Metro Airport. The second takes place in Holt, just south of Lansing. (Contact Bob Krzewinski of the Wolverine-Bents Recumbent Cyclists at (734) 487-9058 or wolverbob@cs.com if you're interested in these events, by the way). Now multiply these rally announcements by a hundred and you'll get some idea of the burden the KBC mailbox bears on a weekly basis. Some clubs send out 10-20 brochures along with a poster. At this point nearly everything gets thrown out.

And that's a shame, because there are probably riders out there who actually would want to participate in the "Big Mac Shoreline Scenic Bike Tours" in June and September, or the "Slate Covered Bridge Tour" in New Hampshire and Vermont in September. But how do we get ride announcement brochures into the hands of those whom they might benefit? We don't have a clubhouse with racks inside to have them available for members. Attendance at the KBC meetings is usually relegated to the same handful of people working hard for the club, so distributing them that way would be of limited use. And there are too many to list in the PedalPress. How would we determine which rides get to be on the list and which don't? Anyone have any ideas about how we can handle the ride announcements and brochures that come into the KBC mail box? Please get hold of Doug Kirk, KBC Secretary, or me, if you can think of anything. Zolton Cohen

Carving Out a Niche with a Small Piece of Glass

by Zolton Cohen

My dad gave me a couple of pewter German beer steins a few years back. He occasionally used to drink beer out of one, the smaller one, because the larger one held about a liter and that would have been too much beer for him in one sitting. These steins are unusual because they have glass bottoms. I asked him about that and he said it was a traditional design that came into being, in his words, "so that when you're drinking beer you can still see your enemies approaching."

I feel much the same way about my glasses-mounted biking mirror. Although this device is a diminutive, inexpensive, lightweight accessory it has saved my bacon more than once on the roads, and also somewhat defines the way I ride. "Real" bikers, racers, wouldn't be caught dead with a rearview mirror. But I've grown old and (hopefully!) mature enough to accept the fact that no one is going to mistake me for one of the hard boys. So I wear the mirror. It has become so much a part of my everyday riding gear that I feel naked on the bike without it – the same way I do when I inadvertently (and temporarily, I can assure you) forget to put on my helmet. And when cross country skiing or walking – even in the car – I sometimes tilt my head in that particular way, even though I'm not wearing the mirror, in an attempt to catch of glimpse of what's going on behind me.

When I'm alone on my bike I use the mirror to look for cars and trucks approaching from the rear. When I see one in the distance and it doesn't immediately take evasive maneuvers to get around me I try to drift out into the lane a little bit, maybe 6-12 inches or so to see how the car driver is going to react. If the car moves over to accommodate me, then all is well and I feel I can continue to ride along with no problem. But if the car (or, usually, a pickup truck) starts aiming for me, I know it's time to head for the ditch. That extra foot or so that I've carved out and created for myself is the cushion I need to avoid a confrontation with someone who wants to "teach me a lesson." It doesn't happen often, but enough so that I'll never ride without a mirror again. It's the vision thing man.

Wearing a mirror in a group is advantageous as well. Although I'm not much of a sprinter (some would say I'm not even much of a biker, period), I like to wind it up now and again when a road sign approaches. My mirror gives me a heads-up when one of my riding partners pulls out of a paceline and starts to move up along the outside. If I miss the stealthy (*snick*) of a chain being shunted over into the big ring I can always count on a visual clue via my mirror to the impending sprint – and to the impending oxygen debt.

A Failure To Communicate

By Doug Kirk

If you don't ride your bike in the City of Kalamazoo, you may have little interest in what follows, unless you care about the politics and communication issues that go into accommodating non-motorized transportation. But if you care about the ability to get in and out of Kalamazoo by bicycle, read on.

In last month's PedalPress I reported that the City of Kalamazoo had at the last minute deleted bike lanes from the eastern portion of its plans for rebuilding Parkview Avenue. Your faithful correspondent was a trifle peeved over this development, and that it appeared as though the City had attempted to hide the change from the bicycling community. After a double-dose of blood pressure medication finally took hold, I made an appointment with the City's engineers to discuss exactly what the plans now entail and why the City's non-motorized constituents were left in the dark after being fully involved in the original plan.

I met with Frank Szopo, Chief Engineer for the City and John Seelman, his assistant. I arrived in a spirit of cooperation straining to contain the anger beneath; my theory being that we need the people who decide what we actually get to ride upon to **want** to accommodate non-motorized transportation. There were two primary topics of conversation. First was Parkview Avenue, exactly what the plans are, and how best to accommodate bicyclists. Second was how we can work together in the future on other City projects of interest to bicyclists.

Mr. Szopo and Mr. Seelman are actually very nice men, contrary to the mental image my anger had conjured up, and they were extremely apologetic for the manner in which the last minute changes were handled. They promised to communicate more effectively with the bicycling contingent in the future. They actually asked for my input in the future, and I offered myself as a resource and contact for future road construction. I left with a feeling of cautious optimism.

I learned that roads currently being planned for reconstruction (or resurfacing, which means the road gets repaved but the curbs, etc. stay put) in the next couple of years include Oakland north of Parkview, Kilgore between Oakland and Westnedge, and Whites Road between Oakland and Westnedge. I am reasonably confident that Oakland will get bike lanes since it already has them to the south. The engineers want to rebuild Kilgore generally the same as Oakland—three vehicular lanes with bike lanes. Whites Road looks to be

more challenging, though no reason is apparent why it should not also be three lanes with bike lanes.

I was reminded that road construction projects have to attempt to satisfy various often competing interests, and widening Parkview is no exception. Many people who live in the area are adamant that the road not be widened at all, citing loss of trees, minimal set back for some of the houses, increased traffic, and other environmental concerns. In order to get the necessary width for good bike lanes on the east end of Parkview, the original plan called for a retaining wall on the north side of the road along Woods Lake, where the land drops off precipitously. Area residents complained loudly enough that the retaining wall was ultimately dropped. Without the wall, the roadway just cannot be as wide.

So the engineers had quietly eliminated bike lanes from Oakland to Broadway. The plan is that this section will have one thirteen-foot wide travel lane each direction, and an eleven foot left turn lane. The north side of the road will have no curb, a two-foot paved shoulder, then a guardrail. The south side will have a curb and a sidewalk and no shoulder. I did my level best to point out the importance of a stripe down the right side of the lane (as on Oakland Drive) for bicycle safety. I stressed that without a stripe and two or three feet of paved surface to the right of the stripe, the new plan is actually less safe than what presently exists.

Mr. Szopo and Mr. Seelman promised to look into striping and also promised to get back to me, and I said that making this change would be the best possible way to apologize for caving in to the area residents without even talking to us about the situation.

West of Broadway the new Parkview should be just fine. Plans call for four foot bike lanes each direction all the way to Drake. Barring more last minute problems you'll see Parkview being torn up before mid-summer.

When or if the State will get around to rebuilding the Parkview Bridge over US-131 is simply unknown. I do hope to speak with someone at MDOT about this in the near future, and will let you know if I learn anything, though in the past, communication with MDOT has proved remarkably unfruitful.

*(Editor's note: **R Avenue Update.***

Despite near unanimous neighborhood opposition to the reconfigured design for reconstructing the intersection of R Avenue and 6th Street, the Kalamazoo County Road Commission recently unanimously passed plans to proceed with the project. Property owners and other interested parties along R Avenue vow to fight this proposal. The PedalPress will continue to cover this issue as it develops.)

Reality Check by Axel Kleat

I owe Chris, one of the most knowledgeable riders I know, a big favor for a really good reality check the other day. Chris decided that some of us here at the club ought to service the bikes at Lakeside, a local home for troubled kids. The word was that lots of the bikes aren't even rideable. Wouldn't it be nice if we could work the kinks out of some chains and fix the flat tires before spring gets here? Indeed, it would. Count me in, I said. Get someone to bring some bikes over here and I'll work on 'em when I can.

Chris had other ideas. Let's just figure out what we need, he said, and then a bunch of us can go over there some afternoon and have at it. If you say so, I said, thinking about Schrader valves and rounded-off bolt heads and goofy, morphodite parts and all the tools I'd have to pack. But Chris had a plan. First, he said, we've got to do a triage. Triage. Geez, medical terminology. The gears in my head turned over. OK, I got it. First we go over there and see what we've gotten ourselves into.

So one cold and snowy afternoon, Chris, Greg and I hooked up after work. The nice man pointed us at a small gray shed, big enough to hold a good-sized garden tractor, and produced a key. The four of us trudged through fifty yards of March slush and heaved the doors open against the snow pile. The reality check was about to begin.

Twenty-five bicycles were wedged inside, eight or nine of them stacked atop the others, with bars and pedals jammed between spokes and chains. Clearly, the key was picking the right bike to pull out first. Mostly they untangled themselves without a fight, and we stood in the edge of the shed spinning wheels, turning cranks and squeezing brakes. The steel was cold and before long our hands were freezing. We spent less than a minute on each bike. Chris stuck a piece of duct tape on each bike, numbered it, and made notes on each bike's needs as Greg and I looked them over.

As we extracted each bike from its friends, reality hit me, reminding me what kids' bikes really are. Tires so flat mice could move in between the rubber and the rim. Chains with rusted links jammed and stuck and fallen-off chainwheels, broken brakes, floppy seats, rims bent so bad the tires rubbed the frame—hard—on both sides.

Little bitty bikes and great big bikes. Most had frames painted bright colors, but the bikes had a vague aura of rust and dirt and grease that made them look dingy and useless as we stuck each bike in the snow before grabbing the next one. Busted cables hung from loose levers, flopping fenders rubbed on tires thin enough to see right through to the air on the other side.

I grabbed one bike by the handlebar and it pulled right out of the fork! Another had a headset so loose I could see the bearings inside.

And of course we found one diamond in the rough. Nothing too special, but a pretty, green, lugged-frame bike with straight aluminum rims, good tires and shiny, dent free fenders; even some old low-end Campy parts. Probably hadn't rolled more than a couple of hundred miles its whole life—maybe thirty years. No kid had spent time on this bike—it was way, way too nice. Ten-year old Axel would have loved this bike—and doubtless trashed it in a year or two. Maybe some counselor out there will rescue it.

Still, the fact was that these bikes needed lots of work. Maybe two of 'em were rideable. Nearly all the tires were flat. We'd need lots of tools, tubes, a few seats, cables, some tires, an air compressor, and lots elbow grease. I stood in the middle of these various states of disrepair, broken parts, barnyard-engineered quick-fixes and then I realized—reality check here, old boy—these are **kids' bikes**.

All those broken parts and wobbly wheels, but nothing I couldn't remember from the bikes I rode with my friends when I was five or ten or fifteen. Right away I remembered how we got the tires to look that way. We'd lock up the back wheel with the coaster brake at top speed over and over, scrubbing one flat spot after another. Loose steering? Well, that happens if you jump enough curbs. Bouncing off curbs also leads to bent rims, I recalled, especially if you don't go to the gas station very often to inflate those balloon tires—and if you didn't hold the air hose on too long. Who never blew a tire off the rim at the gas station? That tremendous bang made it almost worthwhile.

I always thought the best way to bust pedals was to smack them into curbs, and so what? You could still pedal with the remaining shaft under your foot. It still worked just fine. And there was all the broken stuff jerry-rigged so it just barely worked. Brakes we could barely squeeze. Ten-speeds turned to one-speeds by frozen or broken cables. Cranks and wheel bearings with incredible play. Rims that push the brake pads back and forth as they spin. Yup, my buddies and I rode bikes just like these. And when our bikes quit working we pushed them home, flipped them upside down, and practiced the true religion of backyard mechanics: you can fix just about anything with a crescent wrench, a couple of screwdrivers and a hammer. Besides, if you really screw up, you make up a plausible story and see if you can get somebody else to fix it.

Most kids would agree—brakes are nice but not essential. As long as the wheels go around when kids stomp the pedals, the fun rolls out. And that's what biking's all about when you're a kid. Bet I still could get most of those bikes out there rideable—maybe not great, but rideable—with a couple of screwdrivers, a hammer, crescent wrench, pliers, 3-in-1 oil, a patch kit and a tire pump.

KBC

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2005/02

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Billy's Bike Shop-----665-5202
Breakaway Bicycles-----324-5555
Milwood Schwinn-----349-6384
Parchment Bicycle-----343-8118
Portage Schwinn-----327-3393
Team Active-----962-7688
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Kalamazoo Bicycle Club Membership Application

- ☐ Yearly Adult Membership-----\$15.00
☐ 3 Year Adult Membership-----\$40.00
☐ Yearly Family Membership-----\$17.00
☐ 3 Year Family Membership-----\$45.00
☐ Yearly Senior (60+) Membership-----\$13.00
☐ 3 Year Senior (60+) Membership-----\$35.00

Renewal? Yes No

Please Print:

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Birthdate _____

E-Mail _____

Family Member Names

Birthdates

Signature _____

Parent's Signature (If under 18) _____

Interested in working on KBC Events? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Ride Category: ☐ Fitness ☐ Casual ☐ Competitive

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