

# KBC PedalPress

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## President's Letter

June, 2003

Kathy & I are off riding our bikes someplace. We're heading out for our annual self-contained bike trip the last week of May. Haven't figured out where we're going yet.

Usually we've got a destination in mind and I'm getting maps together by now, but this year just loading the seat rack and handlebar pack and biking away from it all, leaving right from the back door seems like the right idea. Both of our jobs have us feeling like getting a little lost might be a good idea. We'll figure out where we're going when we get up each morning.

Many of you know that Kathy & I have ridden all over the country. We can honestly claim to have done fabulous rides in dozens of states. There are lots of great roads out there, and bike touring is without a doubt the best way to take them in.

Still, we have some of the best riding to be found right here. Sure the scenery's fabulous out west; the climbs (and descents) are awesome. But there just aren't that many roads in the mountains of Colorado, New Mexico, Wyoming and Arizona. I've talked to riders out there, and they bemoan the paucity of roads, or ALL of them have enormous climbs. We're got dozens of great roads right here; a good choice of terrain.

If you think the traffic's bad here, you're wrong. And believe it or not, the drivers and the dogs aren't all that bad here either. Need proof? Try Georgia, Alabama or Mississippi, where, I might add, the roads are narrower and shoulders generally non-existent, or southern California or much of the east coast, where traffic's simply unbelievable.

Besides, if you live much further south, you've got to plan your summer rides to beat the heat of the day, which is just too brutal—week after week with weather like those few unbearable days we get each summer. I could go on, but I think you get the point. What's to be done? Lay aside all your sundry other activities. Go ride your bike! Everything else will wait. -Doug Kirk, KBC President

## KBC Wish List:

The cities of Kalamazoo and Portage are undergoing dramatic changes in terms of high-end jobs being relocated and terminated. Of course these aren't just jobs going away; of greater importance are the people who held those jobs.

As our cities are affected by these changes, so is KBC. Many people who work hard to make KBC what it is are facing relocation or downsizing. This means there is a potential reduction in the number and quality of volunteers KBC has to work with.

As a consequence, there has never been a better time to get involved in your bike club. As people whose jobs have been eliminated move away from the area, the positions they held in KBC become vacant. Unless we can staff some of those openings, we will no longer be able to serve the biking community even to the extent we do today.

As of this writing, it is certain that KBC will be losing longtime Flowerfest volunteer group chairman **Dave Newman**. In addition Social Director **Emily Mattes** leaves for college in the fall. Flowerfest and social get-togethers are two of the most important activities KBC does during the year, so those positions are of vital importance in the overall scheme of our yearly calendar.

Of potentially greater impact, it is uncertain at this time how the Pfizer jobs situation will affect KBC's leadership, but there are several important volunteers who may see their jobs transferred elsewhere.

Now more than ever we need your energy and input. It's fun to volunteer, you meet some wonderful people, and it is rewarding work. Please come to the **next KBC meeting, 7:00 PM, June 10, at the YMCA on Maple Street** and get involved.

## Upcoming KBC Event in June

### The 6th Annual Old Car Festival Ride on June 7th starts at Vicksburg High School at 9 AM.

The route is approximately 60 miles over pleasant country back roads, typically with a couple of stops for refreshments at gas stations and stores along the way. Pace of the ride depends on who shows up, but has been in the 17-18 mph average range the last several years.

Afterwards, old car buffs might be interested in wandering around Vicksburg to take in the sights of all the old cars that come into town for the old car show.

If you've never done a longer group ride before, consider this one. It's a relaxed ride done at a reasonable pace, and the scenery at this time of year is the best southwest Michigan has to offer.

### "Fast Karl" Kappenman Speaks Out on Time Trialing

Throughout KBC's 2002 **Tuesday Night Time Trial** series last year, KBC member and Uber athlete **Karl Kappenman** was consistently in the top three finishers. On May 7th he took the top prize in 2003's inaugural version of the TNTT, with an average speed over the 9.75 mile course of 25.11 mph.

Recognizing his expertise in this aspect of our sport, the *PedalPress* asked him what it takes to put a good time trial together.

**PP:** How do you pace yourself in a Time Trial and what advice would you give a first-time time trialer? Would you go out easy and try to finish strong at the end?

**KK:** I've never paced myself at anything in my life. Speaking for myself, as a first timer, I would rather blow up and have to walk my bike to the finish (rather than not go out hard enough). I'd come back the next time even stronger and finish with nothing left in the tank or just not have to push my bike in quite as far.

**PP:** In terms of equipment or techniques like stripping your bike of any excess weight, what do you think is most important?

**KK:** Do whatever you think will make you faster, from double knotting your shoe laces to spending \$5000 on the lightest, most aero time trial bike you can find. If you think you're fast, well that's 99% of it. But for the money nothing will improve your time more than aero bars. You could slap aero bars on an '82 Schwinn Varsity and take 30 seconds off a 10 mile TT. Next are wheels, and light and aero is the key here.

You're only going 10 miles so you probably don't need two water bottles, a Camelback and a tool box along for the ride. If you're an average rider and just want to improve, keep things in perspective (initially) and don't buy into the aero/light weight quagmire. But if your bike is your sports car, or your Learjet with the portable bar, spend what you can and have fun. There are worse things you could spend your money on.

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## TNTT Information

**KBC is again sponsoring the Tuesday Night Time Trial Series on the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays of the month. This year the TNTT will start at the corner of Q Avenue and 29th Street, south and east of Kalamazoo (parking at the Pavilion Township Hall).**

**The time trial will start at 6:00 PM sharp with riders leaving at 30 second intervals. The route is approximately ten miles long. You must be a KBC member and must wear a helmet to ride in the TNTT.**

## June Birthdays

Kristopher Blake  
Phil Caruso  
Marjorie Coates  
Tahni Gauthier  
Richard Neumann  
Mary O'Connell  
Cheryl Olson  
Joan Orman  
Jenny Putt  
Bob Schuler  
Steve Stapleton  
Sally Van Sweden  
Carolyn Vonderfecht

## June New Members

Anna Farrell  
Kevan Farrell  
Rachel Farrell  
Angie Farrell  
Pat Farrell  
Jeff Harrison  
Lindsay Honholt  
Jim Pankow  
Wayne Ramsey  
Virginia Stapleton

## Memberships Expiring in June

Lee Anderson  
Kara Linne Barone  
Deborah Bauer  
Janet & Max Breuer  
Bill Duggan  
Brad Fry  
Bob & Kristin Gray  
Thomas Herman  
Alta Herman  
Stacy Hibiske  
Barbara Hibiske  
Greg Jensen  
John & Marcia Johnson  
Family  
Karl Kappenman  
Rand Loga  
James McNett  
John Meyers  
Tai Mindy  
Karen Reitz  
James Walhout

## May, 2003, KBC Minutes

KBC's regular monthly meeting was held Tuesday, May 13th, 2003 at 7:00 pm at the Kalamazoo YMCA located on Maple Street. KBC president Doug Kirk led this monthly meeting. Present were Doug Kirk, Kathy Kirk, Jeff Newman, Zolton Cohen, Brad Fry, Victor Van Fleet, Paul Bruneau, Tom Keizer, David Newman, and Mike Lahie.

This month's meeting opened with a discussion of proposed changes to the ride route on Monday nights. Because of concerns related to heavy traffic on 8th Street and at Texas Corners, the Schoolcraft route will be revised. **David Newman** reported on a successful trial of the updated route. **Jeff Newman** will generate maps for this new route and distribute them to the ride leaders.

Next, updates on the KBC New Member Ride/Party scheduled for Saturday, May 17th were presented. KBC Social Director **Emily Mattes** is organizing this year's event, which will include a road ride for existing members, a pizza lunch, and a trail ride for new members.

**David Newman** provided an update on plans for the **2003 Flowerfest**. He noted that while he has a list of volunteers for the day of the event, he is still in need of several volunteers for road painting. The volunteers plan to paint the Flowerfest route on July 10th, with a rain date scheduled for July 17th. Interested volunteers should contact David.

Several meeting attendees stated concerns regarding the lack of emergency medical coverage for the Flowerfest event. **David Newman** will contact local authorities to determine possible options for providing first aid support for the event. **Zolton Cohen** will publish a short piece on Flowerfest for the *PedalPress*.

And finally, the ongoing struggle to update the KBC constitution was again undertaken by those in attendance. Drafts of the constitution from the previous two meetings were reviewed and further clarifications and revisions made. Changes are nearing completion, and **Zolton Cohen** will forward a copy of the final draft to KBC Webmaster **Larry Kissinger** for posting on the KBC website for member review. A final review and vote is scheduled at next month's regular meeting.

With no further business to attend to, the meeting was adjourned at 8:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Brad Fry, KBC Secretary

### Letter to the Editor:

Dear Editor,

After reading Axel Kleat's article "Slow Down" in the May issue of the PedalPress, I could not keep myself from responding to him as follows:

C'mon Mr. Kleat. As they say, "Get a life." An enjoyable bike ride is not based on heart-rate monitor numbers. It is based on the experiences you have (positive and/or negative) on each ride. Throw away that monitor. You don't need it. Are you upright and pedaling on your bike? Are you aware of your surroundings? If so, your heart is working just fine. The only heart rate you have to worry about is zero – in which case you won't be aware of it anyway. And what if you spy a young, buxom blonde strolling along the side of the road and your heart rate zooms to 180 bpm or above? So what! Enjoy!! To be so tethered to number is, to me, self-defeating.

I ride because it is something I love to do. Each day, each ride different. I see deer, rabbits, squirrels, and hear all kinds of birds twittering in the trees. I see kids standing, ready for the school bus. Some wave and say, "Hi." I respond with a smile. I see a blue heron flying alongside me over the lake's edge as I marvel at the sight. It watches me as if wanting to cross the road but retreats back over the water as I continue on my way. How could I be aware of all this if my mind was preoccupied with worry over whether my heart rate was over a prescribed limit?

Each to his own, as they say, and if you enjoy riding this way good for you. But I think you're missing the whole point of the ride- ENJOYMENT. If I should expire on a ride because my heart rate went too high due to the sight of a pileated woodpecker flying across my route loudly announcing its presence, I'll be happy. I went out on a high note – doing something I really ENJOYED.

Sincerely,

**Patricia D. Wolf** – whose May birthday was inadvertently omitted from last month's PedalPress listing.

## JUNE RIDE SCHEDULE

In between the rain showers there have been some great riding days in May. I hope you have been able to do some riding. The 2003 KBC rides continue to be well attended. As always we are short on ride leaders. We especially need help this year in light of the changes at Pfizer (formerly Pharmacia). Many of our most active members have been affected by these changes. Please be considerate of these folks in these difficult times. We all need to pull together during this transitional period. We especially need help greeting new riders and making sure they get started with the appropriate ride group. It would be helpful if all members participated with this activity. Introduce yourself to someone you do not know, especially in other ride groups. Riders, if you have not tried a KBC ride yet this year, bring your bike and let's ride. Riders and especially ride leaders please bring your cell phones for emergency use. It is desirable to have at least one cell phone per group.

### NOTE: ALL WEEKDAY RIDES START AT 6:15 PM THROUGH AUGUST

**The Monday Ride at Texas Drive Park** will consist of 3 to 6 ride groups in June depending on attendance:

- 15-20 mile group at 10-12 mph leaders TBD
- 15-20 mile group at 12-15 mph leaders led by **Cliff Muller and Luanne Cali**
- 25-30 mile group at 15-17 mph (new group) led by **Randy Putt and Zolton Cohen**
- 25-30 mile group at 16-18 mph leaders led by **Terry OConnor and Fred James**
- 25-30 mile group at 19-20 mph leaders TBD
- 25-30 mile group at 20+ mph leaders TBD

The 10-15 mile mph groups generally ride the same route. These groups are recommended to new riders who are not certain where they fit in. These groups typically ride to Schoolcraft and take a break for ice cream.

For more experienced riders who are new to the club the 15-18 mph groups are recommended.

As noted there is a new 15-17 mph group on the Monday night schedule. This group is for riders who are interested in a steady pace with lots of conversation; *as such, it makes for a good "recovery" type ride for experienced riders.* Other riders may be new to group riding or may be a bit nervous about riding in a group. The leaders hope to help teach some group riding techniques and help riders feel more comfortable riding in a group. No one will be left behind in this group. There has been a consistent group of riders in this group and yes, the group does average around 16 mph.

The 16 – 18 mph group is for riders who interested in improving their skills and speed to move into a faster group. The leaders plan to promote pace line skills and improving bike-handling skills.

The two faster groups are for more experienced riders. The 19-20 mph group typically stays together while the 20+ mph group can splinter into smaller groups. These groups may often be combined depending on the number of riders.

**The Tuesday Ride** meets at Breakaway Bicycles on Romence Road for a 25 – 30 mile ride at 16 – 18 mph on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of the month. **Paul Wells, Steve Johnson** and others lead the ride from the bike shop. Some of the leaders plan to ride the Time Trial Series starting at the Pavilion Township Hall at the corner of Q Ave and 29th St on the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays of the month at 6 PM.

**On the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays of the month, KBC is again sponsoring the Tuesday Night Time Trial Series. This year the TNTT will start at the corner of Q Avenue and 29th Street, south and east of Kalamazoo (parking at the Pavilion Township Hall). The time trial will start at 6:00 PM sharp. You must be a KBC member and must wear a helmet to ride in the TNTT.**

**The Wednesday Rides start at the Kal-Haven Trail Parking lot.** KBC plans to offer four ride groups:

- 10-15 mile fitness group at 10-15 mph on the Kal-Haven Trail led by **Nancy Summers**
- 25-30 mile group at 16-18 mph led by **Bill Strome**
- 30 mile group at 22+ mph led by **Zolton Cohen** (the Half-Fast Ride)
- 46 mile Hammerfest at 23+ led by **Doug Kirk and Matt Seibert**

**The fitness ride at 10-15 mph on the Kal-Haven Trail is a new ride.** Nancy plans to ride out for 1 hour so the return ride can be completed in 1.25 hrs (total of 2.25 hrs). She emphasizes the speed as 10-15 mph or as easy/hard as you're able. HELMETS, of course, ARE A MUST! Riders may contact Nancy via email for more info:

NANCYLSUMMERS@yahoo.com or KBC's group list. Nancy indicates that she plans to ride most every Wed evening so get out there and make this ride succeed.

Bill works hard at keeping his group together. It is a great ride in the hills NW of Kalamazoo. Zolton's Half-Fast Ride is off to a great start again this year. It is one of KBC's most popular rides. Zolton does a great job keeping this group together. Its success is due to his efforts in making this a fun, safe, and fast ride.

The Wednesday night **Hammerfest** starts at the Kal-Haven Trail Parking lot at **6 PM** in May and for the rest of the season. The pace of the ride is typically greater than 23 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. The group can fragment into smaller groups and the riders often times do not finish together. This ride is hard and is not suitable for inexperienced riders. Some riders can expect to be dropped from the main group.

#### **The Thursday Ride also starts at Texas Drive Park.**

This is a nice and easy social ride and generally has a pace of 13 – 16 mph and the distance is 20 – 25 miles. There were several dedicated riders who made this ride successful over the past couple of years. **Steve and Carolyn Vonderfect** plan to lead this year, and they could use some help from time to time.

**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. Additional ride groups are welcome. It is a great route of rolling hills and curvy roads and a fast and furious finish for the 22+ mph group.

- 16-18 mph group leaders TBD
- 22+ mph group led by **Randy Putt** and others TBD.

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. We would love to have you.

#### **SPECIAL WEEKEND RIDES**

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

- The **6<sup>th</sup> annual Old Car Festival Ride** (about 60 miles) from Vicksburg High School at **9AM on June 7**, led by **Randy Putt** (note the change in date)
- The **6<sup>th</sup> annual ride to South Haven** with a stop at the beach (100 miles) **July 12** at 8 AM from KVCC
- **Flowerfest! July 20th!** Not a race, but a ride for everyone. With routes of varying lengths up to 100 miles.
- **New Weekend Ride! July 26**, 10:00 am from St. Timothy's in Richland. A 5 to 10 mile family ride and 30-50 mile moderately fast ride into Barry County, followed by a picnic lunch. More details in the next newsletter
- The **6<sup>th</sup> annual Ride Around Kalamazoo County** (100 miles) on **August 9** (tentative)
- The **32<sup>nd</sup> KBC Anniversary Ride**, date, distance and route TBD.

The dates and pace for the latter 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/](http://www.angelfire.com/mi/kbc/)) for the ride calendar and for any last minute changes.

#### **Flowerfest, July 20th!**

If you're only able to make one KBC weekend ride this year **Flowerfest, on July 20th**, would be a very good choice. Registration is at KVCC between 7:30 and 11:00 AM.

Flowerfest is KBC's only fund raiser of the year, and features your choice of 15, 31, 62 and 100 mile routes, plus a 12 mile escorted family ride. Once again, **Saturn of Kalamazoo** is flying in a professional **Saturn Cycling Team** racer to ride the 62 mile route with riders interested in doing that distance. It's always a thrill to talk to the Saturn racers, and one can learn a lot seeing them in action, up close and personal.

The food (**sub sandwiches, cookies, fruit**) at the sag stops, and especially the **post ride massages**, are more than worth the \$20 (\$15 if you sign up before July 1st) event fee. This year, help KBC raise some operating money - and have a great time by riding in this tour. Check the KBC website for details!

## KBC Racing Update

Unlike our Wednesday night group rides, the racing weather has been fantastic with predominantly dry conditions. The Tour of SE Michigan RR race is a new stage race replacing what was formally known as "Ann Arbor Roubaix" or "Cone Azalia". This race offers what is very likely to be the toughest competitive fields in Michigan. Many pro riders come from out of state, resulting in all categories, A, B and C being very challenging. The road race in stage 2 offers a 7 mile loop with 2 miles of dirt and some of the worst asphalt you've ever ridden. What Fun!!!!

There is plenty of racing in June to choose from. Don't forget if you plan to race "Ore To Shore" in August, the cutoff for your pre-registration discount is June 16<sup>th</sup>. Visit [www.oretoshore.com](http://www.oretoshore.com) for more information. If I've missed your race results this year, please email me at [caolson@resourceocean.com](mailto:caolson@resourceocean.com) and I'll be sure to add your results in the future.

-Cheryl Olson

## Race Results

	Race	Name	Class	Placement
4/27	Cannonsburg XC	Taylor Birmann	Beginner 14 & Under	5th
		Mike Birmann	Sport 40 +	3rd
		John Spaulding	Sport 40+	13th
		Richard Neumann	Singlespeed	2nd
		Mike Miles	Expert 30-39	19th
5/4	Fort Custer XC	Pete Skellenger	Elite	6th
		John Spaulding	Sport 40 +	16th
		Taylor Birmann	Beginner 14 & under	5th
		Mike Birmann	Sport 40-44	1st
		Scott Steurer	Expert 35-44	5th
		Richard Neumann	Singlespeed	3rd
		Mike Miles	Expert 30-39	9th
8/11	Tour of SE Michigan			RR / Prologue
		Pete Skellenger	A	24th/56th
		Mark Olson	A	42th/43th
		Cheryl Olson	B	50th/55th

## May 7th TNTT Results

Time	MPH	Name
22:42	25.11	Karl Kappenman
22:51	24.95	Matt Berner
24:52	22.92	Jamie Clarke
24:53	22.91	Matt Siebert
25:00	22.80	Mike Miles
25:07	22.69	Jeff Newman
25:12	22.62	Doug Kirk
25:30	22.35	Dan Kallewaard
25:32	22.32	Paul Raynes
26:08	21.81	Tom Noverr
26:12	21.76	Randy Putt
26:20	21.65	Justin Merkling
26:47	21.28	Brian Yost
27:20	20.85	Terry O'Connor
27:33	20.69	Kevin Abbott
27:58	20.38	Emily Mattes
28:46	19.81	Richard Wolf
30:46	18.53	Jeff Harrison

## Upcoming Events

Date	Event	Website
June 1 <sup>st</sup>	Hansen Hills TT	<a href="http://www.funpromotions.com">www.funpromotions.com</a>
June 8 <sup>th</sup>	Tour of Cedar Creek RR	
June 13-15	NORBA- SnowShoe, VA	<a href="http://www.snowshoemtn.com">www.snowshoemtn.com</a>
June 14-15	National 24hour Challenge	<a href="http://www.n24hc.org/">http://www.n24hc.org/</a>
June 15 <sup>th</sup>	Whiskey Creek XC	<a href="http://www.tailwind.net">www.tailwind.net</a>
June 20 - 22	NORBA - Mt. Snow, VT	<a href="http://www.mtsnow.com">www.mtsnow.com</a>
June 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Ionia Rec Area TT	<a href="http://www.tailwind.net">www.tailwind.net</a>
June 29 <sup>th</sup>	Bloomer XC	<a href="http://www.tailwind.net">www.tailwind.net</a>
Oct 5 - Dec 8	KISS-Cross C-cross Series	<a href="http://www.altelco.net/~emenaker/cxHome.htm">http://www.altelco.net/~emenaker/cxHome.htm</a>

## **KBC gets a lot of mail...**

And one item that crossed our mailbox recently was a solicitation to have KBC join the **Adventure Cycling Association's Adventure Cycling Bicycle Club Network**.

The Adventure Cycling Bicycle Club Network, for those unfamiliar with the organization was, to quote their website, "... created to learn and share with clubs around the World about planning tours, advocating for bicyclists, bike commuting, sustaining your club, and more." Several club members at the May KBC meeting have used, and expressed their satisfaction with, ACA's extensive library of route map services.

Vice President **Jeff Newman** volunteered to look into KBC acquiring membership and he reports as follows:

"From what I gathered from my phone call to them this morning concerning the club affiliation program, this is a good deal.

Essentially, everyone in the club becomes a member of the ACA when the club joins, or at least they get all the benefits without having to pay dues or give them their name, or even register!

The deal is, the club pays the equivalent of two normal memberships (which are assigned to the president and the newsletter editor - who also get the magazine subscriptions), and a membership number is assigned to the club. The number can be passed out to every member, and when they need to buy maps, etc. they just use that number as if it were their own personal membership number.

A benefit touted on ACA's website is a discounted bike "travel" program, which means you can ship your bike for a discounted rate on Northwest Airlines. However, Northwest has discontinued that service. ACA is trying to work out a deal with another group to cover that cost.

One major benefit to the club is that rides and events can be listed on the ACA website - which, for the money, might not be a bad form of advertising for the Flowerfest ride."

ACA's website is [www.adventurecycling.org/clubs](http://www.adventurecycling.org/clubs)

**Clubs that join the Bicycle Club Network enjoy these benefits:**

- . **Adventure Cycling's Club Resource Book**
- . **2 One-Year Subscriptions to Adventure Cyclist Magazine**
- . **Free Club Listing in the Yearly Edition of the Cyclist's Yellow Pages (and 2 free copies)**
- . **Travel Benefits for Members; Shipping Discounts (for your whole club)**
- . **List and Site Links of Touring Clubs all over America and Canada**
- . **Bimonthly Club Support Packages; including articles, artwork, specials, etc.**
- . **Access to our Club Members Only Web Section (for your whole club)**
- . **Discounted Route Maps from our Adventure Cycling Map Team (for your whole club)**
- . **Group Discounts on our Tours, Events and Classes (for your whole club)**
- . **Full Access to Website Archive Department (for your whole club)**

What do you think? Is it worth KBC paying 70 dollars a year for these benefits for our members? Please contact President Doug Kirk or Vice President Jeff Newman if you have an opinion on the matter.

## Editor's Letter:

If you're like me (and I know few who are), you've been upset lately with all the rain that has been falling on KBC ride nights.

There are few things that quell my enthusiasm for a ride faster than a good downpour. It's not that I mind getting wet and cold. I've endured that type of experience before. And while I don't like it, I know it's usually not life-threatening. It's just uncomfortable.

One part I really loathe about riding in the rain is the fact that my wonderful bike gets dirty. I know, I know, all you mountain bikers out there are even now curling your lips in contempt. Mountain bikers, as I've seen during my recent forays out to Fort Custer and Yankee Springs to photograph KBC bikers in action, live in (and for) the dirt and mud.

I don't. Grit gets in my bike's drivetrain and the sound of grinding in the usually smooth-meshing chain and gears really puts the wind up me. Like fingernails on a chalkboard. It drives me crazy. I'd never make it in the mountain bike world. I never even pretend to. The road's a good place for me – the clean, dry road. Let's have some more weather that produces those conditions, eh?

## Constitutionally Speaking...

As you may know, some members of KBC have been busily reworking and updating the KBC constitution. It is not an easy task. We're trying to plan for the future and make the club strong and resilient.

Please check out this important document on the KBC website for the latest revised version. We're close to the end now and look forward to finalizing it in the next month or so. And then moving on!

## The flow:

**Dave Newman** and I have been riding together (in a car) to the Friday night Tour de Gull for several years now. We know we should ride out like real bikers do, but we often suffer time pressures that prohibit us from doing so. The good thing is, it gives us a chance to talk on the way there and back.

One thing both of us picked up on, and a subject we discussed after a recent TDG, was the concept of the "flow" of the pack. It's hard to describe, but if you've ever seen it or been a part of it, it's unmistakable.

It came to my attention from my vantage point near the rear of the pack on that Friday night. Up ahead I could see a long line of bikers taking a right hand turn. **Dan Kalleward** was in front at that point, and the speed at which he negotiated the turn seemed to elongate his bike – and his body. It looked as though someone had stretched him out in a photo - as is easy to do in an image editing program like Photoshop.

As it came my turn to slip around the corner, I became acutely aware of everything and everyone around me. If everyone is not on the same page when you're going around a corner, bad things can happen. Someone's back wheel can slide over into your front wheel and in an instant you're on the ground holding a bleeding elbow and bemoaning the expensive damage to your bike.

And that's when I really started thinking about the "flow."

Like birds in a flock that can turn – every single bird in the flock – at the same instant in midair, there are similarities to riding in a large group of bikers. We pick up subtle signals, body language nuances, from each other that enable us to respond to changes in direction, speed, or rhythm.

One rider moves slightly to the left anticipating a move toward the front of the pack. That leaves open a space in the train of riders that quickly fills. Another rider changes direction slightly to avoid a dead possum in the road and, like a river, each rider in back of him flows around the dead varmint, creating a wave-like effect.

If you ride with someone long enough, you unconsciously study his tendencies. You know when he's going to stand on the pedals to boot himself up a hill, and you know when he's likely to go into an aerodynamic tuck coasting down a steep hill. You adjust to who you're riding with. It's harder though in a big, unruly pack like the one that usually forms for the TDG. There are so many more riders to contend with and whose styles you may not know so well.

But most experienced riders are pretty consistent with their tendencies – as though they were all taught by the same teacher – so they're more predictable. And that makes it somewhat easier.

Anyway, it's just an observation Dave and I made. We study these things and talk about them. It's one of the pleasures we get from riding; a heightened sense of awareness and observation. And those are good traits, too, to practice on a bike.

I hope you'll get a chance to get out and do one of the weekly or weekend KBC rides soon. As another biking friend, **Dave DeBack** once said, "Every time you go out there on the bike you learn something new. It might be something about your bike, your other equipment, or yourself. But you always learn something."

Keep your eyes and ears open. And can someone do something about all this darn rain?

-Zolton Cohen



## Blind Faith

By Axel Kleat

The University hosts a week full of athletic activities for visually impaired kids each spring, and plopping them on the back of tandems is part of the mix. I think this spring was the fifth time I've volunteered to captain some of these teenagers around, but I still manage to forget just how much fun can be had helping others experience the sheer joy of pedaling.

Not surprisingly, most of the kids aren't exactly well-practiced at balancing a bike, so even short rides at a decidedly desultory pace test one's skills and have a certain unique thrill—which is amplified by the thought of how rotten I'd feel if I managed to end up trying to convince some bleeding kid that road rash was actually cool when neither he nor his friends can even see it.

Here's the scene. I show up a little early at a big parking lot and am making myself useful helping set up half a dozen inexpensive tandems when three vans pull up and about twenty kids pile out—big, small, fat, thin, black, white, all sorts of kids. Some sport thick glasses. Others have obviously damaged eyes pointing at odd angles. Many use white canes. Baggy pants and long shoe laces are clearly in fashion, and there's not a stitch of lycra to be seen. Luckily, some foresighted soul produces a big box of helmets.

How would you feel about climbing on a bicycle you can't see with someone you've never met? A lot more nervous than these kids turn out to be, I suspect. I suppose blind people develop a sense of trust in their fellow man beyond what the rest of us do; maybe because they have to, or maybe because they are spared the sight of the myriad injustices and inhumanities the rest of us can't help but see. Still, the allure of tandem bicycling for the visually impaired is obvious.

Seats are adjusted, helmet straps click, shoelaces get tucked and pant legs are strapped

down. It may be my fifth time, but I seem to be more nervous than any of my new stokers. Can't be showing any trepidation. Kids pick up on that sort of thing. So I introduce myself to one of them, eyeball a quick seat adjustment, and straddle the bike. Then a kid far more trusting than any other kids I know fumbles his way over the frame and stabs his feet in the general direction of pedals he cannot see. Deep breaths are drawn, and we're on our wee-bit wobbly way.

Long wheelbases make tandems lots more stable than single bikes, and it's a good thing. Strange stuff happens out there. Kids stop pedaling abruptly, with no apparent forethought, as we're struggling uphill. Feet come off pedals and have trouble finding their way back on—especially when the captain doesn't know any better and keeps right on pedaling. Shoelaces end up in chainwheels and pantlegs get greasy. Kids scream with glee as we zoom downhill, but others beg me to slow down.

Some are remarkably smooth pedalers, others jerk all around and wear out my shoulders in less than 5 miles as I struggle to keep a relatively even keel.

One sixteen year old boy is very smooth, and he mentions that he used to ride his bike a lot before a brain tumor damaged his optic nerves three years ago. He is totally blind. I swallow the lump I feel in my throat and croak with all my heart that such a thing must have been terribly hard. He answers matter-of-factly that he's been pretty laid back all his life, and it wasn't all that hard for him to accept. Then he adds as sort of an afterthought that it's been much harder on his mother.

I spent the rest of that particular ride trying to digest what I'd heard. Or maybe I was just speechless.

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