

KBC PedalPress

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The Newsletter of the Kalamazoo Bicycle Club

September 2003

President's Letter:

September, 2003

I knew at the time that Greg Bouwman was a great President of KBC—young, energetic, and really gung-ho on bicycling. It was a raw deal when you got stuck with me instead. I haven't had a fresh idea since, well...hey!! Cut the snide comments! I'm not THAT old.

But we still benefit from Greg's enthusiasm in part because he's been visiting us, coming down for a few KBC rides this year from Muskegon (Motto: If you want to ride west, better ride east first.)

Greg offered a great suggestion to me on a Wednesday Night Ride a couple of weeks ago. Since we already have a regular time trial successfully underway (1st and 3rd Tuesdays of the month—see the Ride Calendar), there's no reason we couldn't also run a Team Time Trial at the same time.

Sounds like lots of fun to me, and a great way to practice serious, up-close-and-personal paceline skills with a small group of riders you know you're comfortable riding with because you pick them yourself.

It might be too late to get too many teams out there yet this year, but I don't see why any group couldn't show up at any KBC time trial (all riders at the TT must be KBC members) and start ahead of the singles. The fact is, I'm already cogitating who I'll be recruiting. It'll be interesting to see how a team can do in comparison to what Kathy & I do on the tandem. Better yet, maybe we'll see if we can line up four tandems...

By the time you receive this newsletter, Kathy & I and no doubt twenty or thirty other local riders will be biking to the Mackinaw Bridge—my 14th DALMAC and counting. Hope we—and you—have great weather and fresh asphalt wherever we point our wheels.

Doug Kirk

KBC Wish List

It's coming down to a critical time in KBC. Several key volunteers who have done a lot of work for the club are leaving, either because of job changes, relocation, or just plain overwork and burn-out.

As you'll read in Brad Fry's minutes of the August KBC meeting on page 3 of this PedalPress issue, Flowerfest and the Tuesday Night Time Trial are losing volunteer leaders. These positions need to be filled if there is to be a Flowerfest and TNTT next year.

It takes man and woman power to run a bicycle club. KBC has been fortunate over the years to have had many committed volunteers to help guide it along the way. But the ranks of people willing to put time into the club are growing thin these days.

It is a fact of life that most every one of us is busy with work, family matters, and other time commitments. Yet, if you value what KBC stands for and has done for you and others over the years, we could use your help now.

Another fact of life is that volunteer work is fun, rewarding, and pays dividends far greater than the time committed to it. You meet people with different backgrounds and in different professions. It broadens your perspective on the world, and you forge new friendships along the way.

Please join us at the next KBC meeting on Tuesday, September 9th, at the YMCA on Maple Street in Kalamazoo, at 7:00 PM. You just may see someone you know there.

No one is going to pressure you to do anything. We'd just like to see some new faces. And perhaps you'll discover a way you can help your bicycle club.

Upcoming KBC Event: * 32nd Anniversary Ride and Trailhead Picnic*

- Saturday, September 20
- Kal-Haven Trail entrance on 10th Street, just north of H Avenue
- 14, 23, or 36 mile rides begin at 10 a.m.
- Picnic follows around noon
- Ride route maps will be available the day of the event, but the picnic is **COME ONE, COME ALL!** (Even non- or infrequent KBC riders are welcome. In fact, encouraged! Reluctant spouses, children, and significant others, too.) Bring something to share if you feel ambitious (homemade salsa, zucchini bread, veggies and dip, your favorite cookies), but we'll provide the staples to nourish and hydrate. We promise. This get-together is a chance to *catch up* on summer rides and other adventures and *gear up* for the fall season. See you there!

September 6th & 7th, 2003 - Michigan Recumbent Weekend

Michigan Recumbent Rally - East: September 6th

Vineyard Classic ("Wine and Recline") Tour: September 7th

A weekend of recumbent fun! Starting mid-morning on Saturday, September 6th, recumbent bikes and trikes will gather for demos, short rides and swapping stories at the Michigan Recumbent Rally - West. The Rally will be held at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo, specifically on the main campus, adjacent to parking lot 49, which in turn is located between Lee Honors College and the Kanley Chapel. For a map of the WMU campus, visit www.wmich.edu/admi/maps.html. On the online map, the Rally area is the yellow-colored parking lot next to Sangren Hall.

The Rally will take place from 10am until 3pm and is completely free. **Breakaway Cycles** is expected to attend with a full range of recumbents. For more information about the Michigan Recumbent Rally - West, contact **Paul Pancella** at Paul.Pancella@WMich.edu (anytime) or call 616/353-0125 after August 11st). After the Rally, participants may want to plan on taking a trip on the nearby Kal-Haven Trail with a group start at 4:00pm from the Kalamazoo trailhead (maps to the trailhead, and of the Trail, available at the Rally site). For more information about lodging and attractions in the Kalamazoo area visit <http://www.kazoofun.com/>.

On Sunday, September 7th, a recumbent contingent ("mass" recumbent start at 8:30am) will join in the **Vineyard Classic Bike Tour**, held in Paw Paw, Michigan, just west of Kalamazoo. The ride has three different lengths (22/39/60 miles) traveling through small towns, orchards and of course, vineyards. Brochures for the Vineyard ride, with a pre-ride registration discount, can be obtained by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to the Paw Paw Service League, 55105 Orchard Lane, Paw Paw, MI 49507. For more information on the Vineyard Classic tour, call 616/657-6309 or e-mail oas@wmich.edu.

On September 20th, there will also be a **Fall Recumbent Rendezvous** in the northern Detroit area, at the Stony Creek Metropark Eastwood Beach shelter. Contact Bob Krzewinski at www.LMB.org.wolbents, or wolverbob@cs.com, or 734/487/9058 for more details

September Birthdays

Lee Anderson
Eric Bekker
Mary Cohen
Kevan Farrell
Kirsten Hemmy
Arianna Holmes
Chris Howard
Fred James
Shanna Keller
Gary Mattox
Ashley Mitchell
Ronald Reoch
Tim Stewart
James Wyrick

New Members

David Decker
Robby Keller
Lauren Keller
Shanna Keller
Robert Keller
Kevin LaLone
Dennis McCornac
Michael Miller
David Naegele
Elaine Naegele
Ron Newhouse
Douglas Northcott
Charles Page
Houston Peterson
Jeff Rohrstaff
Linelle Ross

Expiring Memberships

Ross Barker
Bruce Caple
Marjorie Coates
Barbara Lalonde
Dave Malivuk Family
David Newman
Erin Paske
Matt Siebert
Linda Tompkins Family
Gary Wank Family
Sandy Wyant

August, 2003, KBC Minutes

KBC's regular monthly meeting was held Tuesday, August 12th, 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, Brad Fry, Rick Whaley, Jeff Newman, Tom Keizer, Emily Mattes, and Mike Boersma.

This month's meeting began with the introduction of **Mike Boersma**, an Oshtemo resident, KBC club member, and recently elected League of Michigan Bicyclists Region Four (Southwest Michigan) Director.

Next, **Doug Kirk** summarized last month's financial report provided by Treasurer **Terry O'Connor**. Doug reported this year's Flowerfest event drew in \$7323 of income, with a net profit of \$1732.

Doug also noted that the club has a large amount of money saved from previous years, and suggested the club spend a portion of this money in a worthwhile way. Those in attendance provided several ideas including donation of new bike route signs to Kalamazoo and Portage, purchasing bike racks or bike boxes for area businesses, sponsorship of a restroom along the Kal-Haven trail, promotion of a bike or helmet giveaway, acquiring Tour de France videos for donation to local libraries, and maintaining a bicycle seat library for club members to evaluate new seats on a trial basis. Club members are encouraged to brainstorm further, and bring ideas to the September meeting, or contact a KBC board member.

The continuing need for club members to volunteer for club positions and special events was discussed next. **Doug Kirk** noted that the Flowerfest organizing committee is losing two key people due to relocations. The club is continuing to seek a member to lead the planning for next year's event. **Jeff Newman** reported that a new volunteer would also be required to lead next year's Tuesday Night Time Trial Series. **Emily Mattes** announced that she would be stepping down as the club's social director. As announced in last month's *PedalPress*, volunteers have been found to take this position. Club members interested in volunteering for open positions should contact a KBC board member or come to the next club meeting.

Jeff Newman reported that he is continuing to work on a ride classification system for rating club rides and routes. This system will be published in a future newsletter.

With no further business to attend to, the meeting was adjourned at 8:05 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Brad Fry, KBC Secretary

Important Tuesday Night Time Trial Information!

Due to the Labor Day holiday, there will be no TNTT on Tuesday, September 2nd.

The last TNTT of the season will be held on the third Tuesday, September 16th. Site location is the same: Corner of Q Avenue and 29th Streets, south and east of Kalamazoo (parking at the Pavilion Township Hall). Time is the same: 6:00 PM sharp.

So rest up and get your gear assembled to make the last one your fast one.

Crassified Ad

Small road bike for sale.

2002 Fuji Ace se (small edition). Has 650c wheels, size is 43 cm with a standover height of 27".

Cromoly Frame with Shimano STI, 21 sp.

Retail is \$550; asking \$325.

Andrew Florian placed 2nd in the State Juniors criterium on this bike.

Never crashed, though it does have paint chips from transporting.

Phone 344-2015 or email terryf@chartermi.net

RAMBLINGS FROM THE RIDE CAPTAIN

As I write this note the temperature is hovering in the mid-70s with clear skies. This year has been an outstanding one for cycling with great weather. Ride attendance at KBC rides, both weekday and special weekend rides, has been terrific. Although we have had some weekly rides interrupted by rain, haven't we had some great weather this summer? There has been some rain mixed in as well to add variety and keep the grass green.

Along with the hot summer temperatures come road repairs. The county road crews have been busy laying down new chip and seal on numerous roads in Kalamazoo and adjoining counties. Keep a careful lookout for loose gravel. It can be treacherous.

The ride calendar is in full swing and attendance at the weekly rides continues to be strong. We have 40 or more riders at the Monday, Wednesday, and Friday rides. There are as many as 30 – 40 riders in one ride group! These large groups are great. We do, however, need to communicate within the group the presence of road hazards and other vehicles. Groups this large take up a long section of the road. Remember, we do share the road with automobiles, which are much larger and faster than bicycles. The groups have done a good job so far this year in following the rules of the road. Be careful not to cross the centerline and do stop at stop signs.

The rides have been congenial. There is a lot of communication and conversation among the riders. Everyone seems to be having a great time. The overall fitness of riders in KBC is outstanding. There are a lot of new faces at the rides this year, which is good news. The new riders are becoming ride regulars and are having a positive impact on the success of the rides this year. I encourage all of you veteran KBC members to take the opportunity to introduce yourself to riders you don't know. It is a chance to make new friends every week.

There is still a lot of great riding left in the next couple of months. **DALMAC** over the Labor Day Weekend, the **Wine and Harvest Festival Ride** on Sept 7, and **Apple Cider Century** on Sept 28 are in September. The **Turning Leaves Century** in Dowagiac is typically nice (Oct 12). The **Hilly 100** in Bloomington, IN on Oct 18 and 19 is a great way to end the touring season.

Some of our Pfizer (formerly Pharmacia) KBC members have left the area for new jobs and others will be leaving in the next couple of months. Some members will be re-locating to other Pfizer locations and others at different companies. We wish them well and hope they can come back to visit on occasion. We all need to pull together during this transitional period. KBC will need some new volunteers in the upcoming months to keep the rides going strong. Riders, if you have not tried a KBC ride yet this year, it is not too late try a club ride. See everyone on the road in September

SEPTEMBER RIDE SCHEDULE

September brings a start time change to the weekly rides as daylight starts to diminish. Rides in September start at 6 PM! At the discretion of the ride leaders we can keep the start a bit flexible the first couple of weeks of September. Daylight doesn't start to fade rapidly until late in the month. In October, ride start times move to 5:30 PM. Summer can't be over yet!! We do have a lot of riding left this year, so let's go.

Riders and especially ride leaders bring your cell phones for emergency use. It is desirable to have at least one cell phone per group. The maps for the Monday, Wednesday, and Friday rides can be found on the KBC website (www.angelfire.com/mi/kbc/). Maps are also available from the ride leaders at the start of each ride.

NOTE: ALL WEEKDAY RIDES START AT 6 PM IN SEPTEMBER

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

- 15-20 mile group at 10-12 mph leaders TBD
- 15-20 mile group at 12-15 mph led by **Mike and Sherry Higgins, Cliff Muller and Luanne Cali**
- 25-30 mile group at 16-17 mph (new group) led by **Randy Putt and Zolton Cohen**
- 25-30 mile group at 18-20 mph led by **Terry O'Connor and Fred James**
- 25-30 mile group at 20+ mph leaders TBD

The 10-15 mph pace groups will generally ride the same route. The 10-15 mph groups are recommended to new riders who are not certain where they fit in. These groups typically ride to Schoolcraft and may 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 above there is a new 16-17 mph group this season, which has become quite popular with 15 – 25 riders each week. 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 pace is at around the posted 16-17 mph average.

- The 18-20 mph group is for riders who are 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 faster groups are for more experienced riders. The 18-20 mph group typically stays together while the 20+ mph group can splinter into smaller groups. These groups may 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.

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 ride meets at the Kal-Haven Trail Parking lot. KBC plans to offer five 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 19 – 20 mph led by Tim Stewart and Ron Gauthier (new group)**
- 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** (starts at 6 PM)

The fitness ride at 10-15 mph on the Kal-Haven Trail is a new ride. Nancy plans to ride for 1 hour so that 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: NANCYLSUMMERS@yahoo.com or KBC's group list. Nancy indicates that she plans to ride most every Wednesday evening, so get out there and make this ride succeed. Five riders joined Nancy on June 11. How about a few more?

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 going well again this year. It is one of KBC's most popular rides. Zolton does a great job keeping this ride going. Its success is due to his efforts in making this a fun, safe, and fast ride. Due to the pace of this ride, some riders may be dropped from the main group.

New group - Tim Stewart and Ron Gauthier will lead a 19 – 20 mph ride on the same route. Thank you Tim and Ron for suggesting this group.

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.

Thursday night is Coed night at Texas Drive Park. This is a nice and easy social ride and generally has a pace of 14 – 16 mph. The distance is ~ 20 – 25 miles. There were several dedicated riders who made this ride successful over the past couple of years. **Steve Vonderfect** is unable to lead in September, so we need another rider to step up.

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 hear from you.

Bike Theft!

Editor's note: While most KBC members are very careful about keeping their valuable bikes locked up and out of harm's way (most of us have a lot to lose!), occasionally a thief will abscond with one of our bikes.

KBC Vice President Jeff Newman investigated bike theft recently and came up with these findings. Have you recorded the serial numbers of your bikes and stored them away in a safe place? After reading Jeff's article, I did. They're now in a file in my office, next to my will.

Some of this information comes from talking with local shops and asking how they deal with theft, as well as with local authorities and online sites related to bike theft.

1. Bike/resale/pawn shops are supposed to verify the status of the bike (actual depth of effort not really discovered) before reselling - hopefully before buying it, but before selling it anyway.
 2. Serial numbers are the key. If you don't have the number for your bike, get it. The bike shop you bought it from probably does. Look under the bottom bracket on most bikes.
 3. If your bike is stolen, report it to the police (again, you need your serial number). It will get entered into a national database that any local authority can access.
 4. If you see a bike that is possibly stolen (quality of bike that doesn't match the rider, price on a bike that's just too good to be true, suspicious terms, etc.), call the police. They have to personally verify the serial numbers on the bike, and request that you meet them there to verify the bike in question. Don't be afraid to get involved. It might be your bike sometime - return the favor ahead of time!
- If the price is just so low that it won't last long, buy it or place it on layaway, and investigate it from there (call the police, local shops, etc.). If nothing else, you'll get a good bike, or maybe can resell it in the paper (and maybe find the owner that way), etc.

Be sure keep the receipt to prove you didn't buy it off the street or steal it, and have to shoulder

the theft conviction yourself!

5. Register your bike with the manufacturer. Some companies have online registration forms where you enter your personal information, as well as bicycle(s) serial numbers. Again, they can help the police verify the ownership of a bicycle if it turns up somewhere.

6. Register your bike(s) with <http://www.nationalbikeregistry.com>. They offer 10 years of recovery coverage (see <http://www.nationalbikeregistry.com/howitworks.html> for the specifics). Pricing varies from \$10 for one bike to \$25 for 5 bikes, all for 10 years.

7. If your bike is stolen, call/fax/email ALL the local bike/resale/pawn shops, and provide them with a good description of the bike, components (especially after-market upgrades) and identifying marks. Ask them to keep an eye out for it. Be sure to leave them adequate contact information.

8. Let all of your biking buddies know as soon as possible. The more people looking for it, and knowing what to look for, the better. Bug your local newsletter editor for a little space to get the word out!

9. Keep your bikes locked up when not in use! This is a pain to do, but it's important. Ask anyone who has had a bike stolen about this. The inconvenience of locking a bike up (even in the garage or house) is easier to digest than the feeling you get when you see the hooks empty or leaning post vacant.

Thieves either genuinely know what bikes they are looking for (high-end models with good resale value) or hope to get lucky and make a quick, small amount of cash reselling it to the next person they meet.

My main goal with this article is that we minimize the theft of anyone's bike. If it does happen to mine, I'd hope that someone would be on the lookout for it if they saw it somewhere!

Jeff Newman
Newman IT Solutions, Inc.
www.newmanit.com

Racing Update

There was a strong KBC presence at the races this month, with lots of excellent results. Richard Neumann and Tom Cross were tough guys at 12 hours of Pando, racing solo and placing well! Nice job guys!! There are only a few more mountain bike races left, so get your Cyclo-cross bikes ready. The first Cross race is September 20th in Grand Rapids! (See coming events below.)

If I've missed your race results this year, please email me at caolson@resourceocean.com and I'll be sure to add your results in the future.

Race Results

Date	Race	Name	Class	Placement
7/20	Boyne XC	Mike Birmann	Sport 40-44	2 nd
		Joe Kucharski	Sport 35-39	1 st
		Kevin Vichinsky	Sport 30-34	1 st
		Taylor Birmann	Beginner 11-14	6 th
		Debbie Woehrmyer	Beginner 30+	2 nd
7/24	Rose City Crit	Andrew Florian	Juniors 13-14	2 nd
8/3	Big M XC	Scott Steurer	Expert 40-49	6 th
		Richard Neumann	Exp Singlespeed	2 nd
8/2	Ithaca XC	Mike Birmann	Sport 40-44	1 st
		Joe Kucharski	Sport 35-39	4 th
		Kevin Vichinsky	Sport 30-34	1 st
		Taylor Birmann	Beginner 11-14	4 th
		Debbie Woehrmyer	Beginner 30+	2 nd
8/1	Altoona Stage Race			Circuit, RR, Crit
		Josh Tarrant	Cat 3	38 th /57 th
		Mark Olson	Cat 3	17 th /25 th
		Luke Kujacznski	Cat 3	93 rd /81 st
		Cheryl Olson	Cat 3	7 th /15 th /14 th
8/9	IK Lawless TT	Luke Kujacznski	Elite	2 nd
		Cindy Gippert	Expert	1 st
		Mike Birmann	Sport 40-44	1 st
		Kevin Vichinsky	Sport 30-34	1 st
		Joe Kucharski	Sport Singlespeed	4 th
		Austin Kucharski	Kids Race	1 st
8/9	Ore To Shore	Mark Olson	30-34	1 st
		Cheryl Olson	30-34	1 st
		Scott Steurer	40-44	3 rd
		Richard Neumann	Tandem Mixed	2 nd
		Joan Orman	Tandem Mixed	2 nd
8/16	12 Hours of Pando	Richard Neumann	30+ Individual	2 nd (27 laps)
		Tom Cross	30+ Individual	15 th (14 laps)
8/17	Lapeer Crit	Mark Olson	Cat 3	1 st
		Andrew Florian	Juniors 13-14	2 nd

Upcoming Local Events

Date	Event	Website
Sept 7 th	Stoney Creek XC	www.tailwind.net
Sept 21 st	Aspen Park XC	www.tailwind.net
Sept 20 th	Kiss Cross Cyclocross Robinettes, GR	www.kisscross.com
Sept 28 th	Pando XC	www.funpromotins.com
September 27 th	Cyclo-cross Stoney Creek	www.tailwind.net

August 5, 2003 TNTT Results

The first three participants inadvertently took a shortcut so their mph readings could not be calculated.

Participant Time MPH

Douglas Northcott	18:14	
Terry Hutchins	19:58	
Ron Newhouse	21:05	
Doug, Kathy Kirk	21:36	26.38
Matt Berner	22:35	25.24
David Sperry	22:35	25.24
Mike Miles	22:41	25.12
Mark Olson	23:33	24.20
Jamie Clark	23:36	24.15
Cheryl Olson	24:32	23.23
Megan James	24:37	23.16
Kevin Waterstraat	24:41	23.09
Paul Raynes	24:52	22.92
Rick Whaley	25:12	22.61
Andrew Florian	25:40	22.21
Terry Florian	25:40	22.21
Tom Noverr	25:40	22.21
Paul Pancella	25:52	22.04
Martin Coffey	26:00	21.92
Ron Rutgers	26:55	21.18
Jeff, Graham Newman	27:40	20.60
Gary Mattox	27:49	20.49

Editor's Letter:

My reputation as a homebody proceeds me. But accusations and recriminations to the contrary (some even from my own family members), I do occasionally leave Kalamazoo County. This August Mary and I visited family and did some biking and hiking along the Maine seacoast, upper New York, and in the White Mountains in New Hampshire.

Now, finally, I can say I've ridden a "mountain stage," kind of like the Tour de France guys. Well, it was a mountain stage about 10,000 feet lower in elevation than what they do in the Alps and Pyrenees, and not as steep. Shorter by some 70 miles and at a much more desultory pace. With somewhat fewer cheering fans lining the roadside. And no Jan Ullrich breathing down my neck. But the climbing was pretty dramatic nonetheless.

Especially so compared to the relatively puny hills we're used to riding around here.

One spot had a 12% grade, the steepest I'd ever been on when biking. Axel Kleat had warned me about taking along a granny gear, or at least mounting a bigger rear cassette cluster. But I didn't listen.

The result was that after every few pedal strokes (each of which pushed me along only 2.2 feet up the mountainside) I would look down at my groaning drivetrain to see if I had any more gears left. I didn't.

Karen Sue Mackaluso and Steve Secondi, describing an Ironman triathlon they had competed in overseas last year, had mentioned going up a mountain for hours at 5-6 miles per hour. At last I understood what that feels like.

The downhill ride was another story. I discovered my bike develops a speed wobble after a certain threshold has been reached. And that I have not the stomach for rapid, curvy, and twisting descents. That didn't really surprise me; I nearly get seasick watching the motorcycle-mounted video feed of the TDF guys flying down mountains.

After considering the cracked and worn rear tire I still had mounted on the rear of the bike, I felt it prudent to apply the brakes during the heart of the downhill ride of my life. So although I topped out at 48 mph, a new personal record (by 5 mph, beating the previous best earned on the steep downhill run north into Decatur), I could have cracked 50 with no

problem – well, at least no problem I know about now. I wasn't willing to risk going any faster at that point, though there likely isn't much difference in terms of severity of personal body damage in a crash at 48 as opposed to 50 mph.

There was rain much of the time on our vacation. As much as I hate riding in rain I figured it would be a long time before I had the opportunity to ride those roads again. So I rode in the rain. I got wet, endured, and enjoyed it.

Often, around here, when I engage myself in debate about whether to show up for a club ride when the weather is threatening, I'll weigh the pros and cons and eventually decide it isn't worth going out. And then at the next ride I'll hear from a bunch of riders who did show up, rode, only got a little wet at the start, and had a great time overall.

That wasn't exactly the case up in the White Mountains. It rained hard every time I got on the bike - and for the duration of my ride. I got soaked. But after a while I forgot about being wet and not being able to see well. I was able to push all that into the back of my head and just enjoyed being out on those spectacular, foreign roads. Maybe there's a lesson to be learned here.

My friend Buzz in Colorado – one of my staunchest critics in terms of not taking vacation time – casually dismisses my trepidations and concerns about leaving for a trip. "And now vacation anxiety is setting in," I wrote him prior to this journey. "Should I buy new underwear?"

Buzz answered, "There's a distinct possibility you will find yourself standing up in front of 200 people. And a guy in the front row will raise his hand, and in a very loud voice ask, 'Hey, isn't that ratty old underwear you have on?'"

"Anything could happen on a vacation," Buzz continued. "I see why you avoid them like a bad car accident. As soon as you crawl out of your hole, something besides what you do every day; day after day; year after year; could happen. I guess that's the point."

Buzz is right on that score. One thing I did learn is that, after completing a 30 mile mountain stage in the morning on the bike and hiking for four hours up another mountain in the afternoon, you sleep well at night. And you develop a raging appetite. This is fun. I want to go vacationing again soon...

Zolton Cohen

Friday Night Fever

By Axel Kleat

Another bear of a work week is finally over. And what better way to get the weekend off to a fine start than with a nice, quick club ride? Yep, zooming around with a bunch of riding buddies, charging up a few hills with maybe a sprint or two for a sign, and a big wind-up all-out sprint at the end. Somewhere along the way, the week's angst and frustration just vanishes.

So once again, I cruise happily out to Billy's in Galesburg for our club's **Tour de Gull Lake**, our most venerable ride other than its half-brother and black sheep, the Hammerfest. And as the parking lot fills with happy faces, once again I reflect on the total illogic of riding around Gull Lake.

The pavement on much of the route is simply awful. It eats tires and even wheels every year, not to mention causing a few broken bones. I doubt there's a stretch over four miles between stop signs. We cross busy highways four times—and rarely get everyone across in one try.

We ride on a State highway for heaven's sake, unlike any other club ride, and routinely get the bejeezus scared out of us a few times each year by drivers who apparently just left the pub and are now blessed with certain knowledge that the highway—all of it—is at their sole disposal.

Blind corners abound, and my wholly unscientific reckoning—based solely on memory—is that this shortest of our regular rides produces more accidents and injuries than all other club rides combined.

Do I sound a bit disapproving? Well, yes. But bear with me here, for I'm also out there doing the ride.

What started out long ago as a scenic ride for a few bicyclists at a moderate pace around a lovely lake now features dozens of riders, most of whom are far too focused on the wheel in front of them to take in all the million dollar homes that have sprung up to block the view.

Any sensible rider would agree that the roads circling the lake are not exactly well suited to a forty-bike pack traveling 25 miles per hour.

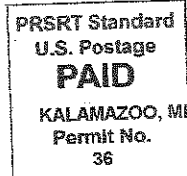
So why not change the route? Just, about nobody wants to, that's why. The route is dumb. But pack mentality - the combined functioning of the various thought processes of the riders who show up - is dumber yet. Not the individuals, but the group.

How it is that the sum of so many otherwise bright people can result in this sort of "thinking" is tough to understand, but hey, why not take a stab at it?

Maybe taking a few unnecessary risks is part of what it takes to put the week that just was firmly into the past. Lord knows people take all sorts of unnecessary risks all the time in the name of fun...or convenience...or just because they're human. Maybe it's just left-brain/right-brain interference.

No doubt we'll all keep doing the ride, but folks let's face the truth: riding around Gull Lake on Friday evening - especially in the summer when the place is packed - is not the smartest thing we do around here.

KBC Kalamazoo Bicycle Club
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2005/02

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- ☐ Yearly Adult Membership-----\$15.00
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Permission to register your name with the KBC
groupserve list and receive all the group's email messages?
Yes ☐ No ☐

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Interested in working on KBC Events? Yes ☐ No ☐

Ride Category: ☐ Fitness ☐ Casual ☐ Competitive

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