KBC PedalPress

www.kalamazoobicycleclub.org The Newsletter of the Kalamazoo Bicycle Club

January 2004

President's letter

In last month's PedalPress, the Editor saw fit to proclaim that no one in KBC does more, on a day to day basis, for bicycling in the community than yours truly. A fine example of editorial license, I'd say, I appreciate the compliment, and if we're talking about who has ridden more miles around here the last twenty years or so, I may well be in the running.

But in terms of who really promotes bicycling and works to help get people out on their bikes, honest folks, I'm way down the list. Consider the people who eat, breathe and live bikes, folks who actually depend on bicycles for their livelihood—Richard Neumann, Bob Kennedy, Steve Johnson and no doubt one or two others I've forgotten, men who have worked in our local bike shops for years. Also, local bike shop owners Doug Stevenson, Paul Wells, Chandler Garrison, Billy Gillespie, and the recently retired Jerry Wybenga.

Think about it. These are people whose mortgages and grocery bills get paid by local bicyclists. Their very livelihood depends on you and me. Who else around here can honestly say their life's work revolves around mankind's most noble invention?

These guys simply must love bikes. They can fix flats in their sleep and replace spokes with one hand tied behind their backs. Better yet, they regularly just happen to have a replacement for that morphodite set screw you dropped down the drain at home while-silly boy-you were washing the gunk off your derailleur in the sinkwith the water running—in your usual last-minute thrash getting ready for the big race tomorrow morning. They're even gentlemanly enough to wait till you leave to start laughing, too!

And unless you act like a total jerk, they'll try to dig up something to salvage that broken piece of unobtanium with which you wander sheepishly into the store, even though they know as well as you do you bought the thing off the internet trying to save a few bucks or get it a couple of days quicker.

But more importantly, they do their level best to sell and service bikes, which means they are both creating bicyclists and serving their needs.

Truly important work, guys, and on behalf of my constituents, I salute you.

Doug Kirk, KBC President

Is This the KBC *PedalPress*?

The sharp eyed among you will notice right away that something's wrong here. The old PedalPress looks different. Are your eyes deceiving you? Do you now, at long last, admit you need reading glasses or those bifocals your optometrist recommended during your last exam?

Nope. Don't get excited. It's nothing that dramatic. The fact is, the PedalPress is undergoing a makeover. It's sporting a new look, and the editor is working to get familiar with unfamiliar software to put it all together. So far it's been, well, a challenge.

This is but one part of KBC's communications improvement program that the Board of Directors and Communications Committee members Paul Bruneau, Zolton Cohen, Larry Kissinger, Kathy Kirk, Mike Miles and Jeff Newman have undertaken.

Not only is the *PedalPress* new and (hopefully) improved, we have a new website address as well. It's www.kalamazoobicycleclub.org - a moniker that better reflects KBC's name. This may improve the chances of someone who doesn't know much about the club getting to the right address on the world wide web. It's also easier for most people to remember than was the previous site name.

The new website that goes along with the name isn't up and running yet, but will be soon. In the meantime, anyone keying in the aforementioned letters will be redirected to the current site.

Currently, the contents of the old site are being loaded onto the new one. Look for additions and improvements at the new site in the next few months. We're trying to communicate with you better. Any suggestions?

Recovery Party Information

It's almost PARTY TIME! Yes, you've been waiting all year for this, and now it's almost nigh!
The 2004 KBC Recovery Party will take place on **Saturday night**, **January 24th**, **from 7-10 PM at the home of Chris and Marian Barnes**. The directions are as follows:

From the Oakland Drive Exit on I-94, head south about 1/2 mile to Milham Road. Turn right (west) onto Milham, then take the first left (south) onto Evergreen. Drive about 7/10 of a mile to the corner of Evergreen and Ridgefield. The house is at 6705 Evergreen, the Southeast corner of the intersection of Ridgefield and Evergreen.

Every KBC member is welcome to attend the Recovery Party. As in years past, KBC will provide an entrée, drinks, cups, plates and utensils, entertainment and door prizes. KBC's Social Directors **Michele Intermont** and **Mary Cohen** ask that you pitch in by bringing some food to share.

If your last name begins with the letters A-H, please bring an appetizer. Last name I-O, a salad. Last name P-Z, desserts.

And come hungry! Last year there was enough food at the Recovery Party to feed an army of starving bikers.

Mike Miles is putting together a slide show consisting of images taken during the KBC Tuesday Night Time Trial Series, Flowerfest, and some Mountain Biking races. And local bike shops Alfred E Bike, Breakaway Bicycles, Billy's Bike Shop, and Village Cyclery have promised to assemble a pouch of great biking related door prizes to be given out during the party.

Not only that, but you also get to connect with all the biking buddies you haven't seen since the season ended! If this sounds like your kind of night, we'll see you at the Recovery Party.

Iceman Results!!

This year the Iceman lived up to its reputation as 6 inches of snow fell overnight on Kalkaska, where the cross-country race begins. Everyone experienced a slippery crash or two, even the best of mountain bikers!! Great job to everyone!!

The Iceman marks the end of mountain bike racing for 2003 and the beginning of 2004 race preparation. Stock up on those hand and toe warmers for those long, cold winter endurance rides.

It seems as though more and more racers are training through the tough weather and it's getting harder to get a notch up on the competition. Have a great winter and happy training!

Here are some fantastic 2003 race results from an upcoming racer, **Stephen Barnes**:

Michigan State 2003 championships	5th place
Michigan BMX 2003 points total	4th place
Lansing track (Gier Park) September 29th	1st place
Wayland track (Flashpoint) August 26th	1st place

Iceman Race Results

Name	Class	Place	Time
John Meyers	Expert 35-39	3 rd	1:55
Greg Bouwman	Expert 25-29	6th	1:58
Mike Jones	Expert 40-44	6th	1:56
Tom Cross	Expert 40-44	28 th	2:10
Mike Birmann	Expert 40-44	3rd	2:12
John Spaulding	Sport 40-44	35th	2:22
Rob Nicey	Beginner 45-54	3rd	2:31
Scott Hite	Sport 40-44	121st	2:58
Terry Hutchins	All men 55-64	22^{nd}	2:37
David Bishop	All men 55-64	44th	2:58
Stephen Barnes	All men 12-14	11 th	2:59
Keith Wilkinson	Beginner 35-39	1 st	2:13
Richard Neumann	Singlespeed	9 th	2:06
Scott Steurer	Expert 40-44	11 th	2:00
Joe Kucharski	Singlespeed	12th	2:10

Also, **Michael Miles** did exceptionally well in the Kentucky State Championships, coming in 9th in Expert Class, beating his time of last year by over 30 minutes.

DECEMBER, 2003, KBC MINUTES

KBC's regular monthly meeting was held Tuesday, December 9th, 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, Tom Keizer, Zolton Cohen, Mike Miles, Terry O'Connor, Chris Howard, Scott Freer, Kathy Kirk, Brad Fry, Jeff Newman, Larry Kissinger, Paul Bruneau and Randy Putt.

The December meeting began with Jeff
Newman providing an update on the design for the
new club jerseys. Jeff presented several large prints of
the proposed jersey design. The prints displayed were
for short sleeve jerseys. Jeff Newman and Mike
Lahaie will work with Voler to determine the cost and
feasibility of also obtaining long sleeve jerseys.

A decision to allocate advertising spots on the jersey to Alfred E Bike, Breakaway Bicycles, Village Cyclery, and Billy's Bike Shop for a \$100 donation was approved. In addition, up to six more spots have been placed on the jersey for additional advertising. Those in attendance agreed that these spots would be sold to local businesses for a \$500 donation. Jeff reported several local businesses have already expressed interest in purchasing advertising spots, and that the donations would help offset the cost of the jersey to club members.

Next, **Doug Kirk** discussed feedback regarding a new domain name for the club's internet website. The proposed domain names included kalamazoobikeclub.org, kalamazoobicycleclub.org, and kzoobicycleclub.org. Discussion on the club's email listserve generally favored kalamazoobicycleclub.org. Doug called for a vote on a new domain name, and those in attendance unanimously approved kalamazoobicycleclub.org. **Paul Bruneau** will make arrangements to reserve this domain name.

Following the vote on the club's new domain name, **Jeff Newman** reported on additional plans to

update the club's website. These plans were formulated by a committee consisting of Jeff
Newman, Paul Bruneau, Mike Miles, Zolton
Cohen, and current KBC Webmaster, Larry
Kissinger.

Jeff indicated that information on the current website, hosted by *Angelfire*, will be transferred to the new website. Future enhancements will include an updated club photo section, and a ride classification key. The committee will continue to explore publishing the *PedalPress* online. Because the new jerseys will display the club's website, it was confirmed that the new website will be online before the jerseys arrive in April.

Plans for the 2004 KBC Recovery Party are progressing. The party is scheduled for Saturday, January 24th, 2004. Tom Cross will serve as "Master of Ceremonies" for the event. Mike Miles volunteered to produce a slideshow of photos taken during club rides and events. Additional details will be published in the *PedalPress*.

Doug Kirk asked for approval to donate \$100 to the Kalamazoo YMCA for providing space to host the monthly club meetings. The meeting room is currently provided free of charge by the YMCA. This request was approved, and KBC Treasurer, **Terry O'Connor** will make arrangements for the donation.

Finally, **Zolton Cohen** provided an update on the future of the Kal-Haven Trail. Due to state budget cuts, the burden of maintaining and operating the trail may be turned over to local county governments and volunteer organizations. Several options for club involvement were presented and will be explored further at future club meetings.

With no further business to attend to, the meeting was adjourned at 8:10 pm. Next club meeting is scheduled for 7:00 PM, January 13th, at the YMCA on Maple Street.

Respectfully submitted, Brad Fry, KBC Secretary

Do You Know Mike?

Mike Boersma, KBC's new Vice President, is an avid bicyclist who "grew up on and off and on and off and, finally, on in the Kalamazoo area." He is an attorney with his own practice.

Mike's been biking since he was 4-5 years old; as an adult he's biked for about 13 years. He started biking (as an adult) by mountain biking. He says, "I was one of the early riders of the Yankee Springs course before it became overcrowded." When he graduated from law school he celebrated by buying a road bike.

Mike joined the League of Michigan Bicyclists about 2 years ago. His motivation for joining grew out of frustration from "breaking wheels on rough roads, and they were the only statewide bicycle advocacy group working for better conditions."

Earlier this year he applied for a vacancy in the region 4 directorship, and by unanimous consent became the region 4 director for LMB (Region 4 includes all of SW Michigan, including Kalamazoo).

Mike's job at LMB is to be a liaison between LMB and the community, including elected representatives (Rep. Hoogendyk, Rep. Lipsey, Rep. Wenke, Rep. Upton, and Sen. George). "Some of these folks," Mike says, "are more receptive than others to the needs and wants of bicyclists (better roads — ones without potholes and with wide shoulders and no chip and seal!!!!; better treatment of bicyclists in the motor vehicle code, and better education of drivers; among other things)."

Mike represented the bicycling community at the Michigan Transportation Summit of 2003 (Michigan's elected representatives, other than the governor, were not at the meeting). "What, if any, long term changes to Michigan transportation policy arise out of the summit remain to be seen," he says.

"I would like to make KBC more visible to the community. The COOL new jerseys will help do that. However, I think that KBC needs to get involved in activities like the Kal-Haven Trail. I also think KBC must remind the powers that be that we as bicyclists have concerns related to road (and trail) conditions in and around Kalamazoo. I will also serve as timekeeper, Flowerfest volunteer, and meeting place finder (if necessary) in my role as VP."

So Mike, welcome to the club!

Brother Can You Spare a Bike?

Kelly Doyle, Adherence Specialist from CARES, the Community AIDS Resource and Education Services of Southwest Michigan, wrote to the *PedalPress* recently to announce a newly formed bike co-op in Kalamazoo.

Doyle writes, "The Freewheelin' Bicycle Co-op's objective is to get bikes to people who can't drive or cannot afford transportation. These beneficiaries will be giving back to the organization by passing out flyers, picking up bikes, or repairing bikes."

Freewheelin' is looking for any kind of bike, but would prefer adult bicycles. She is also collecting helmets, locks, and tubes/tires. Any person receiving a bike from the co-op will also receive a helmet and a lock.

Doyle says the project is "not a non-profit organization (as far as having status with the state) but the organization is not funded—any monies donated are used to buy helmets and locks." At this time they are not able to give a tax credit receipt.

All bikes are distributed through Doyle, and persons needing bikes are referred to her through other social workers. Social work organizations know who has the need and who is not able to afford transportation. At this time she is getting the word out to ACT, CMH, FIA, Family and Children Services, CARES and the United Way.

Once a person receives the bike, he or she will own the bike and will assist in some way with the project for at least 2 hours.

Doyle is looking for donations of bikes, helmets, and locks, and volunteers to help repair bikes. She is talking to bike shops in Kalamazoo to see if they want to help with repairs, and when she purchases helmets, locks and parts it will be from those shops.

So far Doyle has 13 bikes, 6 recipients, and 15 volunteers. Many of the volunteers do not have repair experience but can help with fundraising and referrals. She hopes to have a bike pick-up day in the spring and will park a truck at Hardings on West Main and advertise for bicycle donations.

"This is a very grassroots project, Doyle says." Please call her at **345-0798** if you have a bike to donate, or any suggestions or feedback.

Kal Haven Trail Sea Change...

Recently, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, DNR, announced that they were looking to relinquish the day to day operation and maintenance of the Kal Haven Trail. They will still own the trail, yet are looking to lease it to the counties through which it runs for a dollar a year for 25 years. The county governments then would take over maintenance and operation of the trail for the next 25 years.

The *PedalPress* attended a preliminary meeting concerned with these issues on December 3rd, and another – along with KBC Vice President **Mike Boersma** and KBC member **Paul Pancella** – on December 17th. Here's how things look so far:

Some of you may have noticed in recent years that the Kal Haven Trail has not been maintained up to its previous standards. Toilets are closed, mowing has not been done along much of the trail, and things generally look a little run down. This has much to do with budget cuts at the DNR. They haven't had the funds to put into maintaining the trail to its prior level.

According to the DNR representatives at the first meeting, maintenance of the trail takes between 30 and 65 thousand dollars a year, depending on the level of service provided. County representatives said they would not be able to come up with that kind of money on a yearly basis. So, the initial indication was that trail maintenance might have to be stitched together through a combination of county parks personnel and volunteer labor.

Judging from the turnout and enthusiasm expressed at the first meeting, volunteers are in abundance. And every entity represented - from volunteer clubs and organizations to county parks departments - has a strong interest in keeping the trail going and improving on it. The question is how these volunteer forces can best be deployed. Some suggestions at the meetings included fund raisers, trash clean-up days, "adopt-a-highway" type sponsorships, and corporate or organization sponsorship of facilities like toilets and well pumps.

At the second meeting, several people suggested that it might be more efficient to have one "authority" or "board" in charge of the major maintenance of the trail; such items as mowing and washout repair. Then local entities could contribute to a central fund to pay for these services.

In order to help raise the funds necessary to maintain the trail and keep it open, user fees will likely be reinstituted. Since 2001, when the fees were rescinded, use of the trail was free to anyone. Next year, if this proposal goes through, there will probably be someone at the trailheads, and possibly mobile "rangers" on bikes, collecting money again. There was discussion about daily passes (which used to run two dollars), weekly passes (a new concept), and a season pass (25 dollars previously). Nothing firm has been settled on yet about what the actual fees might be.

The cost of hiring collectors and mobile rangers to "staff" the trail would be relatively high, (48 thousand a year, from one rough estimate). And, judging from fee collections in the past, the cost of staffing might nearly equal the amount collected as trail fees. However, some at the meeting thought it would be a good idea to institute such a program in order to insure compliance with the fees, and also to give a "presence" of authority on the trail, especially during peak user hours. Having staff on hand during operation hours might also lend a measure of safety and security to the park.

One of the most interesting things to come out of these meetings was a real blockbuster dropped by **Richard Skalski**, Senior Engineer for the City of Kalamazoo. Skalski presented information concerning the extension to the trail, which will lead into downtown Kalamazoo. He said, because of a timely road reconstruction project on 131 in this area next year, the opportunity came up to put a tunnel underneath 131 for the Kal Haven Trail extension. At this point he is "90%" sure the tunnel project is a go, and state engineers are currently working on the design.

Skalski said the tunnel would be about 16 feet wide, to accommodate service vehicles, and would be lighted. The surface would likely be packed steel slag from factories in the Chicago and Gary, Indiana area – the same surface currently on the trail heading west from the trailhead on 10th Street.

The Friends of the Kal Haven Trail group mentioned that the trail has not had any major work done to it since it was first built 20 years ago. They mentioned the need for pruning trees back and trail rebuilding in some areas as some of the more extensive things needed.

"Kal Haven" Continued on page 6

Continuted from "Kal Haven," page 5:

Mark Thomas, chair of the committee working on the Kal Haven Trail meetings, and Bob Gregersen, head of The Kalamazoo County Parks and Recreation Department, are putting together a preliminary budget for the next meeting that will address these and other issues.

There is a long way yet to go in this process, and meetings will continue periodically to discuss what will be needed in the future to keep the Kal Haven Trail going. It is one of our best resources for recreation in the southwest Michigan area, and worth putting considerable time, effort, and money into. KBC's Board of Directors is interested in finding out more about how we can help.

The next scheduled meeting for the Kal Haven Trail Consortium is set for January 21st at 4:30, at the Gobles Driftbusters Snowmobile Club. If you're interested in attending, please get in touch with Zolton Cohen, at zcohen@ameritech.net.

February Birthdays January Birthdays Eric Austin Zolton Cohen Paul Banner Rachel Fouts Deborah Bauer Terry Hutchins Jack Bley Celine Keizer Paul Bruneau Joe Kucharski Jini Caruso Rand Loga Mike Cutler Jim Eckert Jason Machnik Roy Richardson Christina Ferrara Megan Smothergill Dan Ferrara **David Sperry Brad Fry** Timothy A. Stewart Doug Gaff Alta Herman Zachary Teel Thomas Herman January Expiring Memberships Paul Jacobson Abbey Lawford Michael Birmann Family Renee Mitchell Mike Peterson Kaitlin Noverr Rick Updike Family Scott Steurer Mike Teel February Expiring Memberships **Brian Unser** Michele Intermont Bill Watt Dan & Sally Van Sweden

A Fork in the Road By Axel Kleat

I see in the paper that next summer the City intends to extend the Kal-Haven trail from the present trailhead on 10th Street to the middle of downtown Kalamazoo. They even hope to add a tunnel to route trail users under US 131 in another couple of years, thereby avoiding the necessity of having the trail join H Avenue in order to cross the freeway.

The route will generally follow Ravine Road. You may have never noticed the old railroad right-of-way located mostly on the south side of Ravine, though it crosses over to the north side about a third of a mile from Douglas Avenue. And if you come down Ravine to Douglas, at the stop sign look directly in front of you to see the right-of-way angling to the right, towards downtown. Motorists and trail users will be within a few yards and plain sight of one another virtually the entire route up Ravine until the trail splits off near Drake Road.

Even now, Ravine Road is the best way to head northwest out of central Kalamazoo. Like many of you, I've ridden it dozens of times. For many of us, it's also the best route to the current Kal-Haven trailhead—which of course is the starting point for KBC's Wednesday Night rides. So, once this extension is built, we'll each regularly be deciding whether to ride the road or the trail.

Unless the trail is a work of bituminous art, I expect I'll keep to the road, thereby subjecting myself to various motorists thinking—or yelling in expletive-laden fashion—that I ought to get my sorry two-wheeled butt over on the trail where it belongs. I've sure heard this from a few irate motorists while pedaling along D Avenue next to the current trail. I suspect that there would even be a certain cadre of bicyclists who would say the same thing—albeit more politely.

This fork-in-the-road highlights a basic distinction—or division—among bicyclists. Some of us use our road bikes for riding on roads and are not averse to dealing with cars. We have our individual ideas of how busy or narrow or dangerous a road we'll put up with and we do our best to fit in and co-exist alongside the four-wheelers. We look for the best routes and in general view bicycling as a means of transportation and sport. The roads usually present the best way to cover the most distance in the least time with the most fun.

Others view bicycling more as a diversion, a pleasant way to get some exercise, and are far more likely to be found on a stand-alone trail or biking around neighborhood side streets than at towards the right side of a traffic lane. These riders often find their cycling routes restricted due to the nature of the roads they come to and their unwillingness to face the risks of, say, riding up Ravine Road or D Avenue instead of the handy trail along-side. A reasonable enough choice, I might add, though I admit to some amazement when at a party recently, an otherwise sane woman complained that there was way too much traffic around her rural Lawrence home to ride her bike safely!

Bike trails are great—don't misunderstand. Anything that gets more people riding is automatically terrific, and no doubt lots of people would agree with the woman from Lawrence will ride this way. I've just pedaled on past bike trails, I guess. Seems like it would be lots cheaper and easier just to widen the road and put in a nice, wide bike lane, especially when they stick the trail right next to the road instead of cutting their own, quiet path through the woods.

Anyway, the first time I come upon this new trail-to-be, I'll be looking at a real-life version of this bicycling fork that I passed without realizing it, much less thinking about it, a long time ago. I can't help thinking that cyclists who stick to the trails are unwittingly letting Big Brother spirit away a giant chunk of the freedom that is a hallmark of our sport. Bike trails just don't go too many different places, and aren't exactly the venue of choice for a paceline. A bicyclist sticking to the trails is akin to an antelope at the zoo—trapped.

What will riders biking up that new trail think when they see me riding parallel to them, ten yards away, out there with the cars? Will they think I'm crazy and lucky to be alive? Will they be jealous, wondering just how far I'm going? Will they philosophically ponder what's keeping them trail bound? Or even feel limited by their decision to avoid the road? Will they feel like we imagine zoo animals must feel as they pace about wearing ever deeper paths around the circumference of their cages? Will seeing me out there be the catalyst for a few of them to try pedaling on the other side?

And what about the powers that be at the City?

Will they drive past me and return to their offices scratching their heads, wondering why they scraped up funds, worked out details and hassled with property owners just to see bicyclists ignoring their creation? Do they understand the choice we each made when we came to the fork? Will some rage-filled driver decide to pick me off just because I have no business being on the road when there's a trail right there?

Robert Frost wrote that when he came to the fork in the road, he took the road less traveled...and that had made all the difference. By becoming bicyclist, I made a similar choice, but once I became a rider I came to another fork, and by taking the more traveled path, I escaped.

Doug and Kathy Kirk Head to Spain

KBC's loss at the upcoming Recovery Party will be Spain's gain, as President **Doug** and Database Manager **Kathy Kirk** are heading to Spain for some riding in January. As a charity gesture, they told their old friend **Axel Kleat** he could go along - as long as he packed light and didn't make a fuss. It is unknown at this time if Kleat will be allowed to bring his bike.

Kathy got the opportunity to train in Spain with a friend of a friend, and Doug, suspecting he'd miss Kathy for the month she'll be gone (and also suspecting he was going to miss out on some good riding) decided to join them for a period of two weeks.

The Kirks expect the weather to be in the 50's and 60's, so it should be much more pleasant for riding there than it will be around here. Still, they're packing tights and foul weather gear.

KBC wishes them well and good weather for their travels and biking overseas. And when they get back, we're sure Axel Kleat will have some tales to tell. But that'll have to occur in the March issue. Don't forget there is no February PedalPress.

For Sale: Guardian two bicycle trunk mounted carrier made by Graber; purchased from AEBike, good shape, everything there including the instructions. \$20 Dale Krueger 375-0114

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