

# KBC PedalPress

[www.kalamazooobicycleclub.org](http://www.kalamazooobicycleclub.org)

The Newsletter of the Kalamazoo Bicycle Club

August 2004

## President's Letter:

Ah, mid-summer. Ain't it grand? Flowerfest was a fine success, with a very large turnout on a very pleasant day. The weekday KBC rides have enormous turnouts—without a doubt the largest ever. Besides personally thanking **Tom Keizer** and his Flowerfest crew for a tremendous job, I want to thank those KBC members to work to help the club succeed year around, and make the rides be fun for more and more people. And I'd like to encourage more KBC members to become more active in the club. Best place to start—come to a monthly meeting, the second Tuesday of each month, 7:00 pm, at the YMCA, 1001 W. Maple St.

In particular, I see that the Monday night ride has at last returned to its Recovery Ride roots—the nice and steady 17 mph group that **Zolton Cohen** leads has become the largest group out there. In addition, I see that more people doing club rides has resulted in more people able to stay with the faster groups on other nights. I'm simply amazed by the number of people who are still with the front group for the final sprint on Friday's Tour de Gull.

Still, things can go awry, as anyone who attempted the Wednesday night ride on July 21 can attest. We haven't been so soggy in years—even in the bathtub. Thunder claps and lightning crashing down simultaneously. Roads totally flooded. Nearly no visibility; nearly no brakes either. Bottom brackets literally under water at times. Nothing like a serious summer cloudburst on your bike 20 miles from home.

Still, it was kind of fun. The idea of getting rained on while riding a bike is a lot worse than the reality of it, especially in July. I suspect the folks in cars were laughing at us, but that's okay because we were laughing too.

Doug Kirk, KBC President

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## Lance Wins 6th Tour de France

One reason this newsletter is late getting to the printer – and thus to you – is that the Tour de France has been going on for the last three weeks. And, like any true bicycling fan, the *PedalPress* finds it hard to tear its eyes and ears away from the sights and sounds of the world's largest sporting event being played out on the roads of France.

**Lance Armstrong**, the leader of the US Postal Service team, just won the overall Tour, on Sunday, July 25, 2004, his sixth in a row – a new record.

What struck the *PedalPress* this year, from watching tapes of Outdoor Life Network broadcasts recorded by friends and following along during live broadcasts over the Internet, was the excellence of the reporting – and of the reporters on duty - during the Tour. **Phil Liggett**, **Paul Sherwen** and **Bob Roll** make up a knowledgeable, incisive, articulate and erudite team. With the exception of Bob Roll continually referring to the race as the “Tour Day France,” these commentators never miss the significance of a single pedal revolution all the way to Paris.

Like many movie fans, the *PedalPress* would pay to hear British actors read the phone book, merely to hear the precise diction and fabulous accents. So, couple the Brit voices of Liggett and Sherwen with the most exciting bicycle race in the world, and high drama unfolding on the slopes of the Alps and Pyrenees, and you've got a combination that is difficult to beat. A priceless moment in this Tour included Paul Sherwen, describing Jan Ullrich during the individual time trial up Alpe D'Huez, as “a beast of a man on a bicycle,” who “turns over his massive gears, while Lance dances on his pedals.”

Compared to the commentary offered in any other professional sport, such as football, basketball, or professional wrestling, the TDF reporters are head and shoulders above the crowd with their intuitive, informative, and innovative style. They had the *PedalPress* on the rivet for most of the month of July. Good stuff OLN – and good stuff, Lance!

## Upcoming KBC Events:

**The 7<sup>th</sup> annual Ride Around Kalamazoo County** (100 miles) will be held on **Saturday, August 21 at 8 AM**, led by Randy Putt and others TBD. Meet at the KVCC parking lot (SW corner near the tennis courts) and be ready to ride at 8 AM. The pace of the ride is generally ~18 mph average. The pace depends on the riders in the group. I encourage riders of all abilities to attend. We need leaders to accommodate other ride paces as well. Contact Randy if you are interested in leading. Bring your own food and some money to refuel along the way. The group plans to stop at least 3 times along the way for refueling. A map will be provided, or obtain one from the KBC web page.

### **33rd Annual Anniversary Ride and Party, Saturday, September 18th, Kal Haven Trailhead parking lot.**

This popular event, combining a ride, food and socializing, is one of KBC's most popular – and best attended – occasions. Riders meet at 10:00 a.m. at the Kal Haven Trail parking lot, ride a 14, 19, 23, 31, or 36 mile route that meanders up into Allegan County, and then return to the Trailhead for food and conversation. KBC will provide pizza and soft drinks, napkins and cups, and we ask you to chip in with some salads, deserts, or anything else you might wish to share with others.

The ride routes follow the same roads, but give riders an opportunity to cut off at certain points in order to shorten the distance, if desired. There is usually a large contingent of riders doing the 36 mile route, at an average speed of 18-19 mph. Other groups may choose a pace that is comfortable for the riders present. Maps will be provided.

The Anniversary Ride is a good one to bring a friend to if someone has said to you that they'd like to start getting involved in bicycling. Newcomers, especially, are welcome at the Anniversary Ride and Party. See you there!

### **Classified Ad:**

**Cheryl Olson**, professional mountain bike racer, compiler of KBC's Race Results page in the *PedalPress*, and recently featured with her husband Mark and other members of her racing team in *Bicycling* magazine, sent this notice in to the *PedalPress* recently. It sounds like a great opportunity to learn from one of the best. Any women interested in becoming involved in the sport of mountain biking?

Cheryl writes, "This is a class I have been teaching this summer to get women more comfortable on the trail. I teach techniques and take them out on the trails."

### **New Members:**

Kevin Cleary  
Steve DeLobel  
Amy Elman  
Harland Fish  
Marie Giacobone  
Darrell Greathouse  
Evelyn Greathouse  
Frances Greathouse  
Jessica Greathouse  
Tristan Greathouse  
Jelania Haile  
Laurie Homrich  
Tim Krone  
Michael Louisell  
Cliff Muller  
Cal Samra  
LeMoin Shadduck

### **August Expiring Memberships:**

Eric Austin  
Tom Bedeck Family  
Mike Boersma  
Nancy Bunkley  
Tom Cappaert  
Martin Coffey  
Ralph Freed  
Brad Fry  
Michael Lahaie Family  
John & Sandra Martin  
Gary Mattox  
Francine Melgar Family  
Kerry Miller  
Renee Mitchell Family  
John Mulac  
Kevyn Raynes  
Cal Samra  
David Sperry  
Patti Sweet  
David Warwick  
Brian Yost

### **August Birthdays:**

Stephen Barnes  
Kara Linne Barone  
Blair Bates  
Linda Bruneau  
Alex Clothier  
Deeann Dopp  
Paula Eckert  
Gabrielle Ferrara  
Ken Fouts  
John Johnson  
David Jones  
Katie Jones  
Josh Kalkman  
Austin Kucharski  
Emmanuel Millet  
Fred Royce  
Tyler Stevens  
Zoe Teel  
Julie Vichinsky  
Tyson Vonderfecht  
Kathy Watt

Beginner Mountain Bike Class for Women, 3 evenings;  
August 6th, 13th & 20th, 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM at Fort  
Custer, Cost: \$35 Learn skills, build confidence and learn  
the trails. Call Cheryl Olson, Athletic Mentors, (269) 664-  
6912

## Meeting Minutes:

KBC's regular monthly meeting was held on Tuesday, July 13th, at the YMCA on Maple Street. Present were Victor Van Fleet, Mike Berry, Paul Bruneau, Chris Howard, Mike Krischer, Larry Kissinger, Tom Keizer, Mike Lahaie, David Mitchell, Mike Boersma, and Zolton Cohen.

In the absence of KBC President **Doug Kirk**, Vice President **Mike Boersma** took over chairmanship of the meeting.

**Mike Krischer** and **Tom Keizer** reiterated the need for volunteers at various times during the Flowerfest Tour.

**Mike Lahaie** gave details about the new order he is sending to Voler for extra jerseys, and said he would attend Flowerfest in order to sell what is already on hand. He is ordering more extra large jerseys, as that size sold out quickly.

**Victor Van Fleet**, KBC Safety and Education Chair, sent an invitation to Scott Jungman of the Kalamazoo Gazette to ride Flowerfest. Van Fleet also described the notices he has been posting in the Kalamazoo Gazette in the Bulletin Board section concerning KBC weekly club rides, as well as Flowerfest.

**Paul Bruneau**, a member of the KBC Communications Committee, proposed on behalf of that body that the Webmaster position become a Board-appointed position. This will require a change to the KBC constitution. **Zolton Cohen** seconded the motion, and the measure was passed unanimously by the Board members present.

The next step in this process will involve a vote on the motion by the members present at the August meeting, on Tuesday, August 10, 2004, at 7:00 p.m., at the YMCA on Maple Street.

Presuming the measure will pass at the August meeting, Bruneau iterated that solicitations for the Webmaster post are open to the membership. Anyone interested in this position is asked to contact any KBC Board member (contact information on the last page of the newsletter or on KBC's website).

One member of the Communications Committee has already indicated an interest in becoming KBC's Webmaster.

Bruneau, reporting for Treasurer **Terry O'Connor** – who is on vacation bicycling around Europe – said that the KBC Treasury currently holds \$6,005.72 in savings and \$4065.90 in checking. Proceeds from Flowerfest applications will increase those numbers significantly in the near future.

With no further business to attend to, Mike Boersma called the meeting to a close at 7:30 p.m.

The next KBC meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, August 10th, at 7:00 p.m. at the YMCA on Maple Street in Kalamazoo.

Respectfully submitted, Zolton Cohen for **Brad Fry**, KBC Secretary.

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### Electronic PedalPress Update:

As most KBC members already know, the KBC *PedalPress* will be going electronic in February of 2005. You'll receive a brief notice via email around the first of each month announcing that a new issue is ready for viewing. In the message will be a link that, when clicked, will take you directly to the encrypted site containing the new issue.

Once on the site, you'll be able to view the PedalPress either as a whole document, as you'd read it now in hard copy, or you'll be able to go directly to articles or features that interest you the most; for instance Axel Kleat, or Upcoming KBC Events.

In order for all this to work smoothly, be sure to inform KBC database manager Paul Bruneau (contact information on the back of this newsletter) of your current email address. *Again, KBC will not sell or give away your email address to anyone.* We're as irritated as most of you probably are about the preponderance of spam on the Internet, and won't contribute to it by providing spammers with more valid addresses. This is also a privacy issue; one we take very seriously as well.

## Flowerfest Festoons Local Roads With Riders

Dawn broke on Sunday, July 18th, revealing an absolutely picture-perfect day. With blue skies overhead, a pleasant temperature, and low humidity, KBC's Flowerfest Tour was the beneficiary.

Riders showed up in droves.

**Tom Keizer**, of the Flowerfest Organizing Group (FOG), reports that 406 people signed up to do Flowerfest, and the traffic at the food stops bears that number out. In fact the Briar Patch SAG stop, unfortunately, ran out of food several times during the event – an occurrence that was disappointing to a number of hungry riders. However, swift coordination via cell phone and ham radio contact between FOG members **Amy Lehman, Mike Krischer, Cliff Muller, and Mike Boersma** brought in reinforcing shipments of Subway subs, bread, peanut butter, bananas and cookies, and everyone eventually got enough to eat.

The *PedalPress*, while manning a shift at the Briar Patch, ran into **Rick Lanting**, President of the Rapid Wheelmen of Grand Rapids and his wife **Kim**. The Lantings were on their tandem, enjoying the day and Flowerfest. They remarked that they thought Flowerfest was a very well run tour.

The Lantings also were a witness when one rider complained to the *PedalPress* that the Flowerfest route never changes from year to year. The gentleman claimed to be growing bored riding the same roads time and again. When the *PedalPress* asked if the rider would like to become a volunteer for the next Flowerfest so that he could have some influence on where the routes went, the Lantings said that they had never seen such a remarkable disappearing act. One moment the man was standing there and the next he was gone.

That prompted a discussion between the Lantings, KBC member **Jim Eckert** and some other riders about the state of volunteerism at bicycle clubs. Like KBC, the Rapid Wheelmen club is run primarily by a small core group of members committed to bicycling promotion and interests. This works for a while, until those doing the bulk of the work get tired and burned out and then have to move on.

**Lucinda Means**, Executive Director of the League of Michigan Bicyclists, who was also riding Flowerfest, also stopped by the Briar Patch to chat and to comment on the great organization and many features she witnessed at Flowerfest. She is full of ideas about promoting bicycling and bike clubs, and extended an offer to come and talk to a club meeting sometime during the fall or winter about how we can increase membership and volunteer participation.

Though Flowerfest didn't have a professional rider for members to ride with this year (in the past, the Saturn Cycling Team, now dissolved, along with the local Saturn automobile dealership, Saturn of Kalamazoo, had generously flown in one or two Saturn Race Team members) that fact did not seem to hurt attendance numbers. And the 9:00 a.m. "fast riders" group had its usual healthy number of competitors. A short time after the start, this 30-35 person group could be seen storming down Q Avenue, right past the SAG stop, with young **Pete Skellenger** riding point and making everyone suffer. On a windless morning when a group of riders rip past at a high rate of speed, you can hear their tires humming on the asphalt.

Though Flowerfest is KBC's only fundraiser of the year, and the income it generates is important to keep the club up and running, the most important aspect of doing the tremendous amount of work required to put on an event of this size is that it increases the exposure of bicycling to the community – and thus supports KBC's mission statement. In that regard, Flowerfest was a resounding success. Thanks to KBC, hundreds of riders were out on the roads surrounding Kalamazoo on Sunday, July 18th, and that was a beautiful sight to behold. The Flowerfest Organizing Group, as well as the group of volunteers they patched together to run the event, deserve hearty thanks for all their hard work.

## Ride Schedule:

### NOTES FROM THE RIDE LEADER

Finally we have had some summer weather in July. There have only been a couple of rides cancelled due to rain. It has been raining enough 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.

With the weather so nice it is sometimes difficult to take a day or two off the bike. After riding hard I have found that it is important to take a few rest days. Doing so has improved my riding fitness. It could do the same for you. The Monday recovery ride group is just the ticket for an easy ride. It is also fun. I know this advice has been given numerous times before. It is worth repeating.

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. These large groups are great. We do need to remember to communicate road hazards and the presence of other vehicles within the group. Groups this large take up a long section of the road. We do share the road with vehicles. 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 stop at stop signs.

The rides continue to be 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 many new faces again this year at the rides, which is great news. The new riders are becoming ride regulars and continue to have 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. Riders have been stepping up to help at the rides. Thanks everyone. Please continue help greeting new riders and making sure they get started with the appropriate ride group.

The ride to South Haven on July 10 was a success. There were 10 riders on a beautiful day with temperatures in the 80s and clear skies. The group stayed together all the way to South Haven, stopped for lunch at the sub shop downtown, and then spent some time watching the boats entering and exiting the lake on the Black River. After that, the riders rode back to Kalamazoo, with an overall average speed of about 18.5 mph. The group parted ways in Lawton with a couple of riders riding home, some returning to KVCC, and a few others frequenting a local watering hole in Lawton. I think everyone had a good time. I hope to see a large turnout next month at the **7<sup>th</sup> annual Ride Around Kalamazoo County on Saturday, August 21, starting from KVCC at 8 AM**, and the **Annual 33rd Anniversary Ride and Party on Saturday, September 18th, at 10:00 AM, starting at the Kal Haven Trailhead parking lot on 10th Street in Kalamazoo.**

KBC members, if you have not tried a KBC ride yet this year, bring your bike and let's ride. Riders and especially ride leaders are encouraged to bring cell phones for emergency use. It is desirable to have at least one cell phone per group.

The August Ride Schedule is the same as it was in July. Rides start on Monday at the Texas Township Park on Texas Drive; Wednesday at the Kal Haven Trailhead on 10th Street in Kalamazoo, and Friday at the parking lot behind Billy's Bike Shop in Galesburg. Weekday club rides start at 6:15 PM through August, with the exception of the Wednesday night Hammerfest, which starts at 6:00 PM. For more information, please visit the KBC website at [www.kalamazoobicycleclub.org](http://www.kalamazoobicycleclub.org).

***KBC's Tuesday Night Time Trial series, starting at the Pavilion Township Hall at the corner of 29th Street and Q Avenue, will be held on August 3rd and August 17th, starting at 6:15 PM sharp.***

### Racing Highlights

This has been an exciting and successful month of racing for KBC! First, **Kathy Kirk** put on a great show at the Michigan Time Trial State Championships. Not only was she the fastest woman in her age group *and* overall, but her time would have put her 3<sup>rd</sup> in the cat 5 men's class, 6<sup>th</sup> in the men's cat 4 class and 15<sup>th</sup> in the men's cat 3!!! I think she's been sand-baggin' on those Wednesday night hammer-fest rides!!!

**Zach McBride** had a fantastic performance at Mt. Snow. He was the youngest (age 14) of the Jr. X, Men's class. This is a class of men who will be racing Pro in the next couple of years. This is excellent!!! Bob Paksi also had a great race for his first NORBA experience at Mt. Snow. This was a muddy, technical race that was over 3 hours long for most riders. The course includes about 30 minutes of climbing up the mountain and then a 15-20 minute very technical descent. Riders complete 3 or 4 laps, depending on the class they race in. A NORBA course is so challenging that most people would be too afraid to ride the course, not to mention race on it. Great job guys!!!!

During this month's racing we made a great Michigan discovery to consider adding to your race calendar in future summers. The Superior Bike Fest stage race in Marquette, Michigan was well worth the trip! The 80 & 50 mile road races are on the hilliest, most scenic terrain I've seen in Michigan. The mountain bike race was also one of the best courses around. The twilight criterium offered more spectators than any other Michigan crit as the course overlooked Lake Superior. This is a great town for a vacation with a very fun, low pressure race environment. Riders can compete in one or many of the events, which included road racing events and mountain biking. For more information next year, check out [www.superiorbikefest.com](http://www.superiorbikefest.com).

If I've missed your race results, please email me at [caolson@mei.net](mailto:caolson@mei.net) and I'll be sure to add your results in the future.

Date	Race	Name	Class	Placement
6/13	Whiskey Creek	Scott Steurer	Expert 40+	1 <sup>st</sup>
		Michael Birmann	Expert 40+	6 <sup>th</sup>
6/27	MI Time Trial State Championships	Kathy Kirk	Women	1 <sup>st</sup>
7/11	Boyne XC	Michael Birmann	Expert 40+	13 <sup>th</sup>
		Scott Steurer	Expert 40+	11 <sup>th</sup>
		Zach McBride	Exper 19 & under	4 <sup>th</sup>
6/18	Mt. Snow NORBA	Taylor Birmann	Sport 14 & under	3 <sup>rd</sup>
		Mark Olson	Semi Pro	30 <sup>th</sup>
		Bob Paksi	Expert 30-34	33 <sup>rd</sup>
		Scott Steurer	Expert 40-44	14 <sup>th</sup>
		Zach McBride	Jr X Men	36 <sup>th</sup>
6/25 - 27	Superior Bike Fest	Cheryl Olson	Expert 30-34	2 <sup>nd</sup>
		Rick Updyke	Twilight Criterium 50 Mile RR	2 <sup>nd</sup> 27 <sup>th</sup> (1 <sup>st</sup> in age group)
		Mark Olson	Twilight Criterium 80 Mile RR 25 Mile MTB	3 <sup>rd</sup> 7 <sup>th</sup> 4 <sup>th</sup>
		Cheryl Olson	Twilight Criterium	2 <sup>nd</sup>
			80 Mile RR	3 <sup>rd</sup>
			25 Mile MTB	3 <sup>rd</sup>
			OverAll	1 <sup>st</sup>

## Upcoming Local Racing Events

I	Date	Event	Website
	Aug 1 <sup>st</sup>	Big M XC	www.tailwind.net
	Aug 7 <sup>th</sup>	Ada Criterium	
	Aug 8 <sup>th</sup>	Pontiac Lake XC	www.tailwind.net
	Aug 14 <sup>th</sup>	Ore to Shore	www.oretoshore.com
	Aug 21 <sup>st</sup>	12 hours of Pando XC	www.funpromotions.com
	Aug 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Fort Custer TT	www.tailwind.net
	Aug 28 <sup>th</sup>	Rockford Criterium	
	Aug 29 <sup>th</sup>	Stoney Creek XC	www.tailwind.net

## Bike Crashes, Bike Safety...

In April, the Wednesday Half Fast Ride suffered its first crash ever, and it was gruesome to witness. On a night with high wind **Matt Berner** hit a deep pothole on the 2nd Street and flew over his handlebars, landing on his head (actually, his helmet, which saved him from much more serious injury). **Brian Wachlarz** swerved to avoid him and also fell. Then **Dave Pierce** went down.

Miraculously, there was only one broken bone, a finger on Brian. Matt was cut, bruised and scraped up pretty badly, and Dave and Brian also suffered from some road rash. Still, it could – and probably should – have been much worse. We're so vulnerable when we fall off our bikes. Injury of some sort is almost a certainty.

The unusual thing about this crash was that it was the result of a defect in the road and not through some bad bike handling or inattention on the part of the riders involved. Thanks go to **Rob Nicey**, who called the Kalamazoo County Road Commission the next day to complain about the pothole; it is now filled in. So that's one less thing to worry about.

This unfortunate incident aptly illustrates a key point about rider safety and responsibility on group rides. And that is: *when you're at the front of a group of riders, you are the eyes and ears for the entire group.* If there is any danger on the road ahead, it is your responsibility to point it out to those behind you – just as you would like them to do for you when they are at the front. *And it is the responsibility of those who have riders behind them to continue pointing out road hazards that have been pointed out to them.* The pointing-out shouldn't stop with you!

We all ride better when we're informed of hazards on the roadway. Don't "forget" or neglect to give riders behind you consideration when you come across something they should know about. It's not necessary to point out every leaf or twig on the roadway. But potholes or debris; in short, anything that could harm or affect the bikers behind you, should be pointed out either verbally or with hand signals – or both. You'll go a long way toward winning friends on group rides if you make it a point to show courtesy to other riders in this fashion.

I'll get off my soapbox now about this, but I just want to add that crashing your bike on a group ride results in a huge amount of paperwork and hassle for those of us who volunteer to lead rides. Dealing with insurance forms and incident reports is quite time consuming. The bottom line is; don't crash your dang bike! Stay upright! Make sure others are safe as well! Don't just ride for yourself!

Zolton Cohen

## Axel Kleat? No, It's an Editor's Letter

Axel's on vacation this month; It's a well deserved rest – or so he says. So your newsletter editor is going to be doing a little editorializing. The subject is road riding behavior.

If you've spent any time at all riding the roads, you know what it's like to have an automobile come up from behind to "buzz" you; some drivers seem to do it just to see how close they can come without actually hitting you. It always scares the bejeebers out of me, and it's stupid, dangerous, illegal behavior.

But every story has two sides. We also need to look in the mirror at what we're doing in large groups, or singly, on our bikes to insure that we're adhering to the letter of the law.

And from what I've seen this biking season, much of the time we're really not.

The Motor Vehicle Code states that bicyclists may ride no more than two abreast in the roadway, and as far over to the right as "practicable." On the northern route of a typical Friday night Tour de Gull, to give one egregious example, the concept of "no more than two abreast" seems to be in league with what a member of the Bush administration said recently about the Geneva Convention rules concerning prisoners of war – that those guidelines were "antiquated" and "quaint."

In many places on this twisty route with narrow roads riders are positioned three or four abreast. Get a bunch of racy biker types together in a competitive situation and that's what happens, I guess. Is it fun? Yes. Is it stimulating? You bet! Is it safe and legal, and even remotely reasonable behavior? No.

Other ride groups KBC sponsors may usually ride two abreast in the roadway, but those two lines of bikers are spread from centerline to shoulder, taking up the entire lane. It's flat-out not what we're supposed to be doing, and it's no wonder the Kalamazoo Police and Sheriff's departments get complaints every summer about large groups of bikers taking up the entire road. That is precisely what we're doing.

KBC President **Doug Kirk** had a good dialogue early this year with the Sheriff's department about matters concerning bicycling. It turned out that some of the deputies did not know the exact rules concerning group bicycle riding on Michigan's roads. Now, through his contact and through subsequent inter-departmental memos, all the deputies should be aware of the bicycling-related law. The Sheriff's department is on board with what we're doing; they support us and only want everyone to be safe on the roads they patrol. But their patience is good only as long as we adhere to the law.

Once we wander outside the law and start breaking it we're putting ourselves in a very poor position. Not only are we at risk physically from drivers who are torqued off by large groups of bikers taking up the entire roadway (and sometimes even a portion of the lane on the other side of the road), we put the Sheriff's department in the intractable position of having to start issuing tickets for improper and unsafe use of the roads. And they would be justified in doing so.

We complain loud and long about stupid and unsafe automobile driver behavior toward bicyclists. Drivers have every right to complain when we do unsafe and stupid things as well. And no, we have no "moral authority" to break the law just because we're on bikes while others choose to ride in cars.

If the Sheriff's department starts issuing tickets when we're not adhering to the law we can't crybaby, complain, or contest their actions. We're clearly in the wrong and we cannot say haven't been warned about it. KBC published in the April 2004 issue of the *PedalPress* the section of the Motor Vehicle Code pertaining to bicyclists. It spells out clearly what we can and cannot do on our bikes. This document is on the KBC website, and it's a subject KBC's ride leaders have been trying to address this summer through announcements before rides.



Yet little has changed.

As a person who leads two KBC club rides a week, it makes me cringe to look behind (or, more typically, in front of me on the Wednesday night Half Fast ride) and see a couple of riders riding on the wrong side of the centerline with a car approaching. Or, as happened recently as we were going up a blind hill, a car cresting the top of the hill from the other way had to swerve in order to avoid knocking off some riders who were several feet over into the wrong lane. This is wrong, and some day we're going to get nailed for it - either through a bad accident or by having tickets issued.

As a ride leader, observing this continuing selfish behavior and hubris makes me wonder if leading rides is even a good idea for me anymore. Will I be held responsible should something bad happen on my "watch?" Will I be the one on the receiving end of a ticket if someone in a ride group I'm leading does something illegal? At the end of the day, I really have not a whit of control over anyone else who shows up for a KBC ride. We're all adults and I have no authority over anyone else. But do I bear the responsibility for the behavior of the group at large, yet have no way of influencing what it does and how it rides? Other than making "suggestions" about safe riding - which may or may not be followed during the subsequent ride - that seems to be the case. And it's something I - and all of KBC's ride leaders - need to think about.

Look, there are times when I'm as guilty as anyone else out there of riding in an unsafe manner. When passing a double paceline, I contribute to riding three abreast. I've ridden over the centerline trying to pass a large group, and I don't always ride as far to the right as is "practicable." I certainly do not hold myself up as any kind of exemplary, shining, safe riding behavior. I do stupid, unsafe, illegal things at times on my bike.

But I try not to do them when cars are present.

When cars are in the area I'm (usually) on my best behavior. I want to stay safe - that's my primary motivation - but I also want to "represent" bikers as being good citizens. What I do on my bike on the road speaks to the world at large about what bikers are all about. People make judgments based upon what they see. I try, with my road "manners," to indicate that I (and, by extension, other bicycle riders) am a good rider; safe and knowledgeable about the laws pertaining to vehicles. I hope you will join me in this endeavor. It is important to keep in mind that we *share* the road with other users; what we do out there affects others, and also says to the public quite a bit about who we are as a bicycle club.

Having crankily said my piece, I realize not everyone feels this way. Here's an email I received from a KBC member during a recent online discussion about riding behavior. Though he did not request it, I will not disclose his name.

"You know me; I'm brash and unashamed when it comes to riding on the roads. When I ride by myself, I sometimes find that "as far on the right as practical" equals about three feet into the lane of traffic. I feel that in that spot I will not accidentally be hit from behind. Someone might decide to drive over me because they are unable to share the road, but they will have to make a conscious decision to do so. Whereas twelve inches from the gutter or edge of the pavement invites the road hogs to try and squeeze through where they have no business driving. Or, some inattentive driver might just clip me with his mirror and knock me into the ditch. I call this my "he's more afraid of going to jail than I am afraid of mortal injury" philosophy. Is it crazy? Maybe. But it's hard to argue with success."

Zolton Cohen, KBC Newsletter Editor

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- Alfred E. Bike.....349-9423
- Billy's Bike Shop.....665-5202
- Breakaway Bicycles.....324-5555
- Team Active.....962-7688
- Village Cyclery.....679-4242

**Kalamazoo Bicycle Club Membership Application**

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

Renewal? Yes  No

**Please Print:**

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Birthdate \_\_\_\_\_  
 E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

Permission to register your name with the KBC groupserve list  
 and receive all the group's email messages?

Yes  No

**Family Member Names**

**Birthdates**

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's Signature (If under 18 ) \_\_\_\_\_

Interested in working on KBC Events? Yes  No

Ride Category:  Fitness  Casual  Competitive

**Send to: Kalamazoo Bicycle Club P.O. Box 50527, Kalamazoo MI 49005**