

**PRESIDENT’S LETTER – DOUG KIRK**

**REGULAR CLUB RIDES BEGIN MAY 31**

That’s right! The percentage of positive Covid-19 tests has finally dropped enough that we are comfortable restarting regular KBC rides starting on Memorial Day. All the usual KBC group rides will be starting at their usual times and locations.

So, all the usual groups/paces on Mondays at 6:15 p.m. at Texas Drive Park, the Tuesday Women’s Ride from Pedal South, All the Wednesday Night groups from the 10<sup>th</sup> St. trailhead at 6:15 p.m., the Thursday ride from Pedal Downtown at 6:15 p.m., and the Friday morning women’s ride from Texas Drive Park at 9:30 a.m. This information has also been posted on the KBC website.

In addition, the Tuesday Time Trials have already begun. These take place on the first and third Tuesdays of the month at the Pavillion Township Hall located at 29<sup>th</sup> St. and Q. Ave. Come out and give this 10-mile, flat course a try. Sign up at 6:00 p.m., first rider starts at 6:30 p.m.

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The June KBC meeting will take place at Texas Drive Park on June 8<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. We hope to be able to return to meeting as we used to at Shakespeare’s Pub in July, but for now we are still at the park. Hopefully our new KBC jerseys will be available for pick-up at that time as well. Hope to see you there.

\*\*\*\*\*

I was consuming an adult beverage in front of O’Duffy’s pub the other day when a group of riders pedaled up—all riding cruiser bikes several decades old. They wore t-shirts proclaiming they were the Kalamazoo Pub Peddlers. They meet Thursdays at 5:00 at Bronson Park and noodle from one downtown bistro to another for a couple of drinks and dinner. Great idea, and not a stitch of lycra on a single one of them. They were having fun for sure! Who knew? Not me! Maybe I need to get out more...

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For years I’ve preached the value of using a rear-view mirror on road rides, pointing out that you wouldn’t want to drive a car without one, so why would you ride a bike without one? Well, now I have another reason for it—the rear-view mirror is a great place to stuff all the misery, anxiety and awfulness of this dreadful pandemic!

Email: [president@kalamazooBicycleclub.org](mailto:president@kalamazooBicycleclub.org)



**HIGHLIGHTS**

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**As KBC resumes group riding activities, please send photos of your rides to:**

[editor@kalamazooBicycleClub.org](mailto:editor@kalamazooBicycleClub.org)

# KBC Meeting Notes—April 13, 2021

## Finance report as of 05/10/21

**Pam Sotherland**

**PREVIOUS BALANCE  
CASH (PNC Checking +  
PayPal) AC-  
COUNTS: \$13,605**

Monthly RECEIPTS (Cash  
In): \$1,460

Monthly EXPENSES: \$1,279

**CURRENT BALANCE  
CASH ACCOUNTS:  
\$14,801**

**TOTAL DESIGNATED  
FUNDS: \$6,680**

Discretionary Expenses:  
\$500

Education Fund: \$5,008

ROR21: \$1,172

**TOTAL ENCUMBERED  
EXPENSES: \$1,000**

KRVT Pledge: \$1,000

**AVAILABLE FREE BAL-  
ANCE: \$7,121**

Current Cash minus Designated Funds minus Encumbered Expenses

**CERTIFICATE OF DE-  
POSIT: \$6,189**

**The next KBC meeting will be Tuesday, June 8 at 7:00 p.m. at Texas Drive Park, safely distanced**

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (EC) REPORTS:

**President:** Doug Kirk

KBC sanctioned group rides are not happening as positive cases are still high. When 3-4% is reached, which is hopefully in a couple weeks, the EC will communicate this out. It is still encouraged to get outside and ride your bike, club rides will resume soon!

**Treasurer:** Pam Sotherland

Presented the treasurers report.

## DIRECTORS REPORTS:

**Education Chair:** Paul Wells

Current balance is \$5,008.20 in which part is still on hold for potential League Certified Instructor training happening in the fall. Paul brought 5-foot passing signs and magnets for members to take during the meeting. 5-foot signs are now at all Kalamazoo Public Safety stations for two weeks.

**Webmaster:** Kathy Kirk

If there are any suggestions/ideas for more visible events and information email Kathy [webmaster@kalamazoobicycleclub.org](mailto:webmaster@kalamazoobicycleclub.org)

**Kaltour Director:** Mike Krischer

KalTour is happening on Sunday, June 27, 2021. Spread the word! Schoolcraft High School will be the location with port-a-johns in the parking lot. The routes are set. The food will likely be prepackaged and AMBUCS will be making peanut butter and jelly sandwiches ahead of time. The biggest question is how to navigate drinks. Mike will poll KBC members on Facebook to gather more feedback and ideas and he has talked with other ride organizers in the area. Masks will be required when not riding or eating. Anyone interested in volunteering should reach out to Mike at [kaltour@kalamazoobicycleclub.org](mailto:kaltour@kalamazoobicycleclub.org).

## NEW BUSINESS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

**KBC Jerseys:** Kathy Kirk

Orders took place and jersey pick up will be at the next KBC meeting. 82 jerseys were ordered which brought the price down slightly from \$62.10 to just under \$60. There could potentially be another opportunity to order in late summer, so be on the lookout for more information.

# KBC Meeting Notes Cont.

## **Bike Week:** Paul Selden

It's Bike Week (May 8-15)! The City of Portage hosted a Smart Cycling 101 class to start the week. Another event was Intro to Gravel Riding that occurred this past week in which 6 people rode their first gravel ride. Bike Week has been promoted on the radio, WKZO, and promotion of 5-foot passing signs will continue. There are many great events taking place and it is encouraged that everyone checks out <https://kalamazoobikeweek.org> for more information on events.

## **Gilmore Gravel Grand Prix:** Jason Young

The event is Saturday May 22, 2021. There are race categories and gran fondo categories. Ride options are 80 miles, 63 miles, and 23 miles as well as a special fat tire bike ride. If anyone is interested in volunteering it would be greatly appreciated. They are currently looking for 6-10 course marshals and clean-up after the event. Check out more information at [www.gilmoregravelgrandprix.com](http://www.gilmoregravelgrandprix.com)

## **Dirty Donut:** Dan Frazier

The second Dirty Donut Race is on June 6, 2021. There is a 22 mile, 41 mile, and 60 mile race. They start an hour apart from one another. There are stops for donuts on each route, and time is adjusted based on how many donuts you eat during the ride. Lunch is included in the event as well as a finishers medal and prizes are for those who win the sprint races. kalamazooBC21 is the promo code to register on BikeReg. Check out more information at [www.dirtydonutracerace.com](http://www.dirtydonutracerace.com)

## **Ride Our Routes:** Paul Sotherland

This starts in June! Ride routes that touch every township in Kalamazoo County. If routes are completed you can register to get a t-shirt and pay \$10 by submitting an entry form (found on the KBC website and in local bike shops). There are route options on roads and the shared-use pathways. Kids under 16 can get a t-shirt for free if they complete it. There could be a challenge for club members to complete the best, most efficient, route that is a metric century touching as many townships as possible, prize to be awarded at the recovery party. Check out more information at <https://www.kalamazoobicycleclub.org/events/ride-our-routes-2021/>

## **Woollam Nature Preserve:** John Knowlton

John has attended Kalamazoo County Parks and Commission Meetings as Camp Rota-Kiwan was recently purchased by Kalamazoo County and the name has changed to Woollam Nature Preserve (212 acres). The county has planned to restrict access and will seek input on how to properly develop it. John has encouraged advocacy for bicycle infrastructure at these meetings and will let the club know of any potential opportunities to share out.

## **Educational Opportunities:** Renee Mitchell

A bicycle friendly driver program has been developed which can be a great opportunity for companies. Another opportunity coming to Michigan is more League Certification Instructor trainings, specifically one will be offered in Portage, MI the weekend of August 13-14.

<b>ATTENDANCE:</b>	Paul Guimond	Terry O'Connor	Matthew Wells
Shaun Ballard	Marc Irwin	Paul Selden	Jason Young
Stacie Ballard	Doug Kirk	Pam Sotherland	Eric Zahrai
Clark Bennett	Kathy Kirk	Paul Sotherland	Mark Zettel
Dan Frazier	Mike Krischer	Gordy Vader	
Anne Gentz	John Knowlton	Paul Wells	
Charlie Grdina	Renee Mitchell	Rick Whaley	

## **KBC Statistics (Thanks to Rick Whaley for managing these details!)**

**Please check for your name here!**

Total Memberships: 272 — Total Individuals: 478

**New or Renewed Members:** Max Bailis; Jeff Bell; Joanne Beverage; Jennifer Braga; Kate Hamann & Family; Brent & Phyllis Hepp; Jeanette Holm; Michael Miller; Geoffrey Mallett; Katharine Maxey; Doug Peot; Thom Peters; Ciara Poolman; Flint Wiles; Bruce & Amy Withers

**June Expiring Members:** Kevin Cleary; Michael Conway & Family; Gautier & Emeka Debysier; Thomas Dewhirst; Kevin Douglass; Kitty Flatland; Michael Gibbons; Matt & Kristy Gunderson; Dave & Jennifer Hauschild; Joshua Kling; Amy Kuchta; Heather Lettow & Family; Val Litznerski; Cindy Little; Ryan Maguire; Barney Martlew; Denis Thomas & Family; Gordy Vader

## **Education Committee Update—Paul Wells, chair**

KBC had 32 of our "Give Them Five to Keep Them Alive" 5' passing yard signs in front of all the Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety stations for two weeks in May, coinciding with Kalamazoo Bike Week, KDPS thought it was important to educate the public about the 5' passing law on the streets of Kalamazoo. KDPS also has signs at headquarters on Crosstown Pkwy to give out. We will retrieve the 32 signs and find new locations to display them. Thanks to Paul Guimond, KBC's VP for initiating this program.

I got a call from Thom Brennan, KBC member, Education Committee member, and Kalamazoo County Road Commissioner, that the KCRC wants signs to give away provided by KBC at the office on Kilgore Road. It feels like progress to me that bicycling on public roads is becoming normalized. Having the support of our local governmental agencies is critical to not being brushed aside or marginalized as road users. When you see KBC members and Road Commissioners Thom Brennan, Mike Boersma, or Larry Stehouwer, make sure to thank them for representing and supporting the rights of cyclists in Kalamazoo County.

Thanks for promoting safe cycling!

## **Did You Know?**

Did you know that...you can contribute to maintenance of roads and streets in our region by reporting areas in need of repair? Here are links that will help you do that.

City of Kalamazoo - <https://www.kalamazoocity.org/reportstreets>

City of Portage - <https://seeclickfix.com/portage/report>

County of Kalamazoo - <https://www.kalamazoocountyroads.com/contact.php>

And...be sure to send a follow-up "report" to express thanks for a job well done.

Now you know...

Submitted by Paul Sotherland

## KALTOUR RETURNS! — JUNE 27, 2021

### By Mike Krisher, KalTour Chair

Many things are slowly and gradually returning to normal and so are group cycling events. KBC-sponsored club rides have returned, and KalTour 2021 is coming at the end of the month on Sunday, June 27. We need both volunteers and riders to make this happen. Please participate in one (or both) of these roles. To ride KalTour, you can register (with a \$5 member discount) on the club website until Thursday June 24. For volunteer information, see below.



KalTour will offer a wide variety of supported routes both road and gravel. The road routes include an around-the-county century, as well as 62, 31, and 15 mile routes. There will also be a 10 mile guided family ride. The 100, 61, and 31 will stop at Scotts Mill County Park while the 15 and the 10 will visit Prairie View County Park. Gravel road routes of 62 and 32 miles which were offered for the first time in 2019 also return. Our start location is once again Schoolcraft High School (one half mile east of the traffic signal at the US 131 McDonald's). This location provides access to quiet rural roads as well as an extensive network of gravel roads.

The successful operation of KalTour depends on many people, but most of all you, the KBC members. The first opportunity to help involves painting the colored arrows on the roads to mark our routes. That will happen on Tuesday June 15. Meet at the Schoolcraft High School parking lot at 6 pm. Please email or call if you want to participate (or just come).

We are still in need of more people to help on the day of the ride. Some duties such as working at registration or post-ride cleanup can be combined with riding. We also need volunteers to help with the sag stops and to transport supplies from the ride headquarters at Schoolcraft to Scotts Mill. The safe and sanitary operation of our food stops will require more volunteers than in the past. Please help out if you can!

It wouldn't be 2021 if I didn't mention COVID precautions. Our basic precaution is to require masks when approaching the registration canopy and while obtaining refreshments. We will also be using pre-made and prepackaged food and drinks when possible.

I am looking forward to seeing many KBC members and other cyclists when KalTour returns on June 27. KalTour can also use your help! Please let me know if you would like to help out with road painting, shopping for supplies, or working on the day of the ride at registration or one of the sag stops. My email is [kaltour@kalamazoobicycleclub.org](mailto:kaltour@kalamazoobicycleclub.org)

### LMB Bicycle Friendly Driver Program June 8—Renee Mitchell

Join LMB on Tuesday, June 8<sup>th</sup> at 12:00pm for a free 1 1/2 hour virtual interactive class aimed at educating drivers on the best and safest ways to share the road with people on bicycles.

Topics covered include:

- Why sharing the road is the safest alternative for both motorists and bicyclists
- What's legal and not legal, for both motorists and bicyclists
- Common crashes and how to avoid them
- Why bicyclists "take the lane" and what motorists should do in response
- How to navigate bicycle related infrastructure such as: sharrows, bike boxes and green lanes

Click on the link below for more information, to register for the program or to view other dates the program is being offered this summer. Please share information with family and friends! [Bicycle Friendly Driver : League of Michigan Bicyclists \(lmb.org\)](#)

## KBC'S ORIGIN STORY FROM 50 YEARS AGO—JOHN BALL

Greetings to the members of the Kalamazoo Bicycle Club. June will mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the club. This is a noteworthy achievement as many bicycle clubs disappear before reaching this age. It is also a good time to look back at how this all began and almost failed.

Cycling was still mostly relegated to child's pastime in the 1960s. There were a few informal groups that were riding, but the "10-speed" revolution was just beginning. One of the riders in the group I rode with, Chuck Stevens, was riding his bike in a rain storm on Oakland Drive during the summer of 1970 when a car pulled up at a stop sign. The driver leaned out to ask him if he would be interested in a bicycle club. Chuck responded yes and the driver nodded driving away.

We heard nothing of it until the following spring when a notice was placed in the Schwinn and Kalamazoo Cycle and Electric Supply stores announcing the formation of a club with the inaugural ride the first Saturday in June, the 5<sup>th</sup>. About 25 or so riders appeared in the Zayre department store's parking lot on the east side of Kalamazoo that sunny Saturday morning. Brian Chappell, the individual that Chuck met the year before, was the instigator of the event and welcomed everyone.

The ride, led by Brian, headed down to east N Avenue and continued east around the bend to east MN avenue and ended at Cold Brook County Park on Portage Lake. There Brian discussed the idea of forming a club to promote cycling and provide an opportunity to participate in club rides. Brian was English and had spent most of his life there cycling (and had numerous stories to share include a 100 mile ride home and back for weekend leave while he was in the military). He was employed in Kalamazoo as a draftsman and used his drawing talents to produce our weekly route map.

Our second ride, Saturday June 12, we met at KVCC and headed off to Maple Island in Paw Paw. We had 43 attend this ride. I remember the number clearly as we were all excited that interest was growing in the club. When we arrived at Maple Island, we found it was closed to cyclists but Tom Higgins, an attorney if I remember correctly, pulled some strings and quickly got it open for us.

Later that week a group met at Tom's home to begin formalizing the club. I cannot remember everyone there but there were three key people. Tom, who wrote our constitution and become president, Brian who served as our ride captain, and Ross Barker, who become the editor of the newsletter and designed the club logo.

The rest of the summer was spent on Saturday morning rides, usually starting around 8 am, that began at the Corkland Shopping Center (where Schwinn was located), East Towne Mall, KVCC, Maple Hill Mall, and Ramona Lane Elementary school. Our destinations that first summer were Centreville, Cooper, Fulton, Lawrence, Plainwell, Richland, Schoolcraft, Three River, and Vicksburg. We often stayed in a single group, no rider was ever dropped, though occasionally we would break into two groups on the way back.

The third weekend of September was our first Century. I remember it well as my bike was stolen from the garage the night before. I was working on the bike that evening and stepped into the house to get a drink and when I came out the bike was gone. I drove over to Corkland Shopping to tell Brian I was out but waved to the 60 some riders who left on a tour of the county. [Continued on next page](#)

## ROAD COMMISSION INTERVIEW, CONT.

Rides continued that fall and our first dues were paid in September 1970. Rides continued throughout the winter and I remember a snowy February ride out to Climax. Our second century was held in May 1972, the Four Lakes Century. It was loops, six or seven if I recall correctly, around the lakes in Portage. We had over a hundred riders start but the strong winds reduced our numbers to 16 by the end. I chuckled where I read the newsletter you have on the Pedal Press archives that mentioned me, along with Brian's and 14 others, who endured the wind. It seemed it was a headwind no matter where you were in the loop!

The summer was spent riding many of the same routes but we also included Crum Park, a ride mentioned in the summer 1972 issue of the newsletter where I found a stray kitten and carried it back on my bike. We also met the Grand Rapid club at a middle location – Yankee Springs. The rides were well attended at the beginning of the season but the number of adult riders continued to dwindle as the number of young riders, 9 to 12, increased.

Parent had taken notice of the club and began dropping their children off for the morning. It became a task to keep the young riders in a group and many serious riders dropped the rides. I remember one ride out to Mattawan when we were hit by a sudden and unexpected storm which left the kids soaked. We received some letters from parents complaining we were not taking good care of their children.

Brian left that summer to take a job in Battle Creek and started the Battle Creek bicycle club. Tom, left the club due to work responsibilities, but Ross kept the newsletter going. I moved away but returned for the third anniversary ride on that first Saturday in June 1973 only to find myself standing alone in the parking lot. Another rider showed up, one not involved in the club but saw the ride posted and decided to come. We pedaled out to Portage Lake and back.

I heard from Ray Davis that the ride schedule had become informal and there apparently were some unresolved conflict about the direction of the club. I was not in Kalamazoo again for several year but heard the club was coming back together, and the Four Lake Century was held in 1974 and was well attended. I see a February 1980 Pedal Press article by Joel Dinda that mentioned there were problems in 1973 but without any details.

I moved back to Kalamazoo and rode with the club for a couple of years (1976-1977), even led a few rides, but left again. The club seemed to be growing and there were numerous opportunities for all levels of riders. I rode one more time in the fall of 1982 but loss all contact with club members after that.

I am pleased the club made it to 50 years and its due to the countless people over the year that took on the responsibility of leading and maintaining the organization. A few years ago we lost the club where I live now because the number of people willing to do the work of keeping a club active dwindled to only a few – no one was stepping up. I hope the Kalamazoo Bicycle Club continues to thrive and attract new leaders (and riders).

I also hope someone will repeat the first ride. Zayre is gone, of course, I think it's a car dealer now, but most of the route can be easily repeated. I wish I could come back to participate but time and distance makes that impractical. Instead I will head south of Brookings to do a loop around Lake Campbell, about 22-miles, on Saturday, June 5, 2021 and spend a moment thinking about the fun we had that first summer. Best wishes to the club for the next 50 years!

## Chip Seal Season!

The Road Commission of Kalamazoo County expects to begin Chip Sealing many roads around June 1. [This link](#) provides a list of roads which may be sealed, as well as an explanation of the purpose and process.

## “Driving Change” Campaign Underway By Paul Selden

By the time you read this article many KBC Facebook and Instagram members living in Kalamazoo County will have seen between one and three different bike-motor vehicle safety messages, more than one time. The “Driving Change” public messaging campaign:

- addresses the top causes of serious bicycle-motor vehicle crashes uncovered by WMU transportation experts;
- was designed by Lansing-based GÜD Marketing (the firm that developed the successful Driving Change program with Grand Rapids and MDOT several years ago); and,
- is currently being piloted, managed and funded by Bike Friendly Kalamazoo such that it reaches all FB users residing in Kalamazoo County who are 18+ in age, 3x in three weeks during and after Kalamazoo (Area) Bike Week 2021.

KBC members have been among the Steering Committee from its inception. KBC members are invited as guests when the Bike Program Steering Committee meets on June 23 at 4pm to review campaign results and additional priorities in an online meeting. See [www.bikefriendlykalamazoo.org/about/meetings](http://www.bikefriendlykalamazoo.org/about/meetings) to learn more.

## Half of a Three Legged Chicken - Editor’s Letter

I broke an 18 month spell this week! It has been more than a year and a half since I pinned a number on at an organized bike event. And that dry spell was in stark contrast to the plans I had for 2020. Last year was *supposed* to be an amazing year of cycling! The mountaintop experience was literally a series of mountain tops. In July the plan was to ride for six days in the Italian Dolomite mountains, climbing several famous passes including the Gavia and Stelvio. Leading up to this amazing trip was a series of increasingly harder events. In March I would do the 60-mile Melting Mann gravel race. April saw the 64 mile, hillier, Barry Roubaix gravel race. In May I planned the Assault on Mount Mitchell: a 104-mile paved ride with 10,000 feet of elevation peaking at the highest point east of the Mississippi. June was to end with a 100-mile, sandy gravel race called the Michigan Coast Loop.

But you know what happened in 2020. None of those events occurred.

I rode a lot. Alone. And not very quickly. In the absence of events, trips and group rides I got into an LSD groove. Not psychedelics, long-slow-distance. I com-



*See? An event number plate!*

pleted several rides of more than 5 hours duration. With one other person I rode the 147-mile ODRAM (One Day Ride Across Michigan) route. Julie graciously provided Sag and meal support. I went longer and slower as the pandemic wore on.

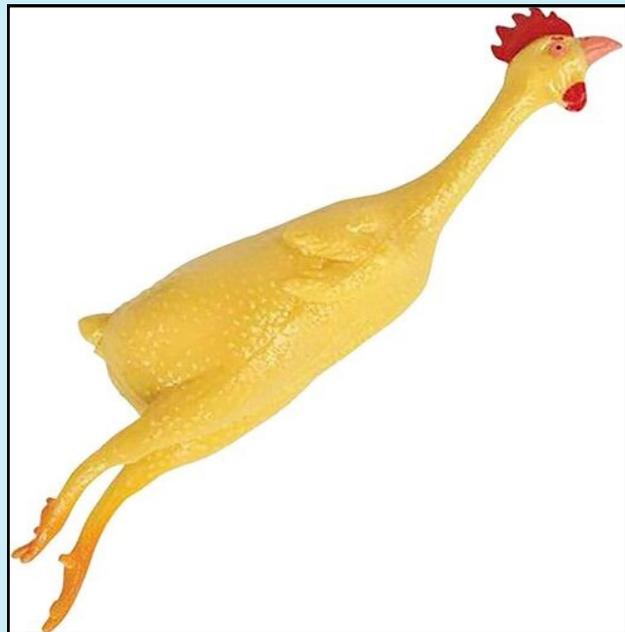
But last weekend the Hart Hills Gravel race actually happened! It was different, of course, than it was in 2019. There were masking requirements at the start and for the first mile of the race. There was no party after the event and no food in an effort to prevent congregating. But we did put on numbers and we did race with other people. And as you might expect, I remained un-fast.

Hart Hills offers several distances: 55 miles, 25 miles and some shorter family-oriented routes. I was signed up for the 55 but chickened out. The forecast was for cool weather, which was fine. I rode outside all winter long and am pretty tolerant of cold when I exercise. But the second part of the forecast was a wind advisory. At the starting gun the wind was predicted to be at least 21 mph steady, with gusts over 30. And increasing each hour from there. More than a decade ago I was on a Wednesday night group ride in similar wind. The ride surface was entirely paved so traction wasn't an issue. But gusty winds and groups of cyclists are a volatile combination.

One interesting principle of physics is the conservation of momentum. This states that “the quantity called **momentum** that characterizes **motion** never changes in an isolated collection of objects; that is, the total momentum of a system remains constant.” You have probably seen the principle illustrated by a desktop novelty called Newton's Cradle. A series of marbles are suspended by thin wires in such a way that they touch each other. If you pull one back and release it to hit its neighbor, the neighbor doesn't move. Instead, the energy is transferred from the first marble to the second, to the third and finally to the last marble. It has no other marble to pass the energy to, so it swings out on its wire. As it reaches the top of its arc, it swings back and hits the marble next to it. The energy passes down the line again in the opposite direction and the very first marble that you put in motion swings out of its vertical resting position and the cycle continues.

What all that *means* is that a strong gust of cross wind hitting a double file of cyclists can knock one rider into a second. The second, having no other neighbor to pass the energy to, will hit the deck. In other words, Conservation of momentum means that even if you have great bike handling skills, your neighbor can knock you down. On that Wednesday night ride someone went to the hospital with a broken collarbone.

So, the wind was the first drumstick on my chicken-out. The second was sand. Spring has been pretty dry in this part of the world, but the race director posted hopeful comments that the light rain three days before the race would help consolidate the road surface. Twelve hours before the gun, though, he returned from placing directional signs on the course and confirmed that the surface was pretty loose. In fact, there was deep sand in several places. He assured us there would be volunteers with flags to warn of the most hazard-



ous sections. My chicken now actually has three legs: wind, sand and the fact that most of us haven't ridden in fast groups for a year and a half.

I didn't chicken out entirely; call it half a chicken. Instead of going off right at 10 with the 55 milers, I waited to line up with the 25-mile group. About four miles in the group was still pretty tight. The fast people were up ahead, of course, but us mid-packers had formed a little gravelly peloton, each of us seeking to find some shelter from the wind. There had been a steep, rutted descent two miles into the race, but everyone in front of me stayed upright. But at the four-mile mark we hit our first patch of deep sand. The guy in front of me slowed down abruptly. There were riders close on the left and right, so I had nowhere to go. I couldn't slow down at the rate of the guy in front, I touched his wheel and was instantly on my side in the sand.

Did you know how much sand you can jam into a Shimano GRX brake/shifter? My natural experiment indicates the answer: A lot! After picking myself up and assuring that my pride took the greatest wound, I attended to the bike. As I worked the brake levers, noticeable quantities of sand fell out. That seemed like sub-optimal operating conditions for small precision parts! They bravely got me to the end of the race, operating well enough to downshift for all the remaining hills. My rear derailleur was a little displaced and my first attempt to adjust it didn't quite do the trick. So, there were two additional pit stops until I turned the barrel adjuster enough to compensate for the damage done when I hit the deck.

There was consolation, though. As the route turned west near the town of Shelby, we had a cross wind. And then as we came to the turn north that brutal headwind was suddenly a blessed tail wind! I caught up to a rider on a bike with cool purple rims. She and I traded pulls on the flats, sometimes hitting 30 mph in areas without trees where the wind's long fetch could work its magic! Then we caught a few other racers and formed a nice train. I served as their leadout man on the final sprint, gutting it out until I couldn't any longer and pulling off to watch them battle it out for 115<sup>th</sup> place! It felt great to ride fast with brand new friends whom I may never see again! After the race the party was. . . non-existent. Its absence was evidence that the pandemic persists.

As for Italy, that trip has not yet been rescheduled, though I recently heard that the European Union may allow vaccinated Americans to travel later this summer. In the meantime I purchased an ink drawing of Passo Stelvio's serpentine curves.

*This essay first appeared on my blog "Thinking for Success" at [www.johnknowlton.substack.com](http://www.johnknowlton.substack.com).*

