

Tacoma Wheelmen's Bicycle Club

Newsletter

March 1999

Founded 1888

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Future Ride Notes:

Spring Break in Arizona's Wild West. Join Carol Davis on Scenic Cycling's tour from April 6-10, to experience the land of Saguaro in bloom. The tour begins in Tucson and goes through Bisbee and Tombstone. Call Carol at 857-5396.

Southern Oregon Whaahoo!! Experience the highlights of Southern Oregon from shining sea to purple mountain's majesty! From the evening of June 18 through July 4, we will ride about 770 miles, starting with a train to Eugene. We will cruise to the ocean down to Gold beach for a rest day (Anyone for whitewater?). From there we turn inland to California Redwoods, and on to Ashland for a rest day (Take in a play?). Then it's on to Crater Lake and beyond along some of Oregon's most scenic byways. From Bend we'll head back to Salem to catch a train home.

Contact Roz or Carol Davis, 857-5396, or Ralph or Dena Wessels, 857-5658, to reserve your spot.

Cascade Challenge (Carla Gramlich)

I incorrectly listed the wrong dates for this week long trip for last month's newsletter. The real dates are August 7 - August 15. This ride will be over 400 miles in length and include a couple of mountain passes. You will also get the joy of carrying all your own gear. I am making reservations, and have actually heard from several people who are interested in this trip. I had visited several of the areas this winter on ski trips and I have information on restaurants, and summer activities. If you are up to the challenge, give me a call at (253) 752-4038.

Annual TWBC Banquet Pushes Soap

Dorian Smith

Members of TWBC and their friends and family members celebrated another year of enjoying and promoting their favorite sport at this year's annual banquet on January 23rd at the Tacoma Mountaineer's Hall.

The catered affair was an opportunity to report the club's thrills and spills, rededicate the camaraderie, and push the soap. The members were reminded that The Tacoma Wheelmen's Bicycle Club is not only the oldest bicycle club in the state (possibly the nation), but also the largest all-volunteer club in Washington.

In his low-key, inimitable style, emcee Bob Myrick kept the evening light-hearted, while he introduced club officials who in turn presented awards for volunteer work or riding achievements.

The evening ended with the ever-popular half-hour slide show produced by Steve and Phyllis Lay. The slide show featured more than 200 shots of breathtaking views

and candid portraits of rides in 1998. Many banquet attendees agreed it was difficult to be sequestered in four walls on a cold winter evening while gazing at images of sunlit summer days on faraway roads.

The evening was rife with accolades and humor.

Vice President Steve Brown presented the club's board members and duties.

Ralph Wessels and Janice Jensen extended gracious thanks to all the volunteers who devoted time and effort to the club's booth at Bike Expo, the Seattle-to-Portland Spanaway lunch stop, and the club's two major rides - the Peninsula Metric Century and the Daffodil Classic (named by "Bicycling" magazine as the best ride in Washington).

Ride Leader Connie Reitzug thanked the many ride leaders who organized and guided club members on hundreds of scheduled trips. She recognized Gary Moore for leading the most rides (34) for the year. Other active ride leaders included: Carol and Roz Davis (23), Barb Root (24), Ann Dahl (22), Peggy Fjetland (18) and Louie Boitano (18).

Connie recognized the character-building experience of falling off a moving bike with the "Over the Handlebars" award for numerous members. Especially noted were Scott Pierson and Louie Boitano, who fell the day after Halloween after slipping on a decayed fragment of pumpkin.

"Over the Rail" awards were given to Joyce Clifford and Phil Blenkush for colliding with traffic railings. "Not only was Phil on the other side of the rail, so was his bike," Roz Davis told the audience.

In a climax to the awards presentations, Ralph Wessels handed out special awards. In honor of Steve Forsness who last year was attacked by a rabbit, the Closest Creature Confrontation Award was created. Jan Brame earned the award for her harrowing showdown with a Canadian bear club.

Louis Boitano was presented with this year's first-ever Predator Plant Pileup Award for his contraposition with the pumpkin.

An array of prizes were offered to the recipients throughout the evening, including books, pictures and glasses. However, the soap gifts remained untouched towards the end of the awards.

It took Bob Myrick's diplomatic insistence and crowd chants of "Pick the soap! Pick the soap!" before they were chosen.

Here are lists of recognitions and awards:

2000-mile club: Phil Blenkush, Dena Wessels, Barb Root, Ann Dahl, Bob Cook, Ralph Wessels, Toni Matson, Bob Myrick, Louie Boitano, Carol Davis, Roz Davis, Steve Lay, Phyllis Lay, Peggy Fjetland, Steve Kubiszewski, Mary Kubiszewski, Scott Kubiszewski, Carla Gramlich, Gary Moore, Gus Fant, Mike Romaine, Greg Torfin, Joyce Clifford and Steve Brown.

1500-mile club: Lonna Cain and Robert Deehan

1000-mile club: Janice Jensen, Noel Higgins, Rich Walter, Ray Fjetland, Chris Romaine, Linda Walter and Dan Austad.

500-mile club: Diane Koch, Rick Olexick, Nancy Olexick and Mat Reitzug.

Ride Leaders: Karen Forbush, Jan Brame, Cynthia Hammer, Phil Burgess, Helen Burgess, Scott Pierson, Joy Roelofsz, Mary Neukom, Rachel Ballor, Doug Ballor, Diane Koch, Mat Reitzug, Janice Jensen, Robert Deehan, Steve Brown, Dena Wessels, Joyce Clifford, Greg Torfin, Mike Romaine, Phil Blenkush, Ann Dahl, Barb Root, Mary Kubiszewski, Gus Fant, Scott Kubiszewski, Gary Moore, Carla Gramlich, Steve Kubiszewski, Phyllis Lay, Steve Lay, Peggy Fjetland, Ralph Wessels, Roz Davis, Carol Davis, Louie Boitano, Toni Matson, Bob Myrick.

Bicycle Commuters (mileage in parentheses): Bob Myrick (582), Louie Boitano (2,276), Ralph Wessels (669), Steve Lay (7,765), Phyllis Lay (6,396), Carla Gramlich (2,257), Gary Moore (2,855), Gus Fant (1,632), Phil Blenkush (277), Dena Wessels (77.6), Steve Brown (1,017), Connie Reitzug (349), Lonna Cain (337), Dan Austad (2,887), Linda Walter (84), Richard Walter (422), Janice Jensen (76), Mat Reitzug (295), Nancy Block-Olexick (3,242), Rick Olexick (1,298) Ed henderson (3,438), Doug Ballor (1,026), Hank Giddings (4,059), Bill Newman (113) and Scott Pierson (3,400).

New and renewing members

TWBC welcomes and thanks the following new members and renewing members for January and February, 1999

New Members: Adam van Buskirk; Nicole Fortino; Paul Jakeman; Dan Larsen; Paul Plein; Glenn Robertson; Chris Smith; Kenneth & Cynthia Stagg; and Lee Lee Stewart.

Renewing Members: Dan Austad; Dick & Judy Baerg; Walt Boepple; Louis Boitano; Bob & Anne Buhler; Susan Hardie; Geralyn De Jesus; Patsy Lavelle; Joyce Marciel; Dave Marquez; Toni & Vern Matson; Steve Mauer; Ken & Mary Neukom; Teresa Seim; Tom Shirley; Joseph Soy Jr.; Debra Soy; Bill & Sheila Swanson; Reggie Tison; Katharine Ward; Michael J. Wood; and Sue Yerian.

Cannibalism considered at overnight snowshoe trip

Anne Heller

On February 6 Carla Gramlich led a group of Wheelmen up a 4.3-mile hill with an elevation gain of 2300 feet. Carla acquitted herself well, leading not a group of

cyclists, but snowshoers and skiers to High Hut, a cabin near Ashford maintained by the Mt. Tahoma Trails Association.

Before the trip ended there were harrowing exploits, howling winds, blowing snow capable of removing the top layer of epidermis, serious talk about the Donner Party and speculation as to which member of this party would provide the most and best sustenance for the rest of the group. Worst of all were the soul-searching questions everyone had to deal with. Was it better to don boots, gaiters, coats, hats and gloves to answer nature's call on a wind swept ridge? Or, was the nobler course to remain inside the warm hut and hope for a quick and merciful death by carbon monoxide poisoning? Each man and woman had to look to their innermost being to find answers to these questions.

Happily, the entire party, Carla, Steve Brown, Jan Brame, Dolores Fitch, Dave Parker, Dorian Smith, Bob Vogel and I, survived our own personal Night on Bald Mountain.

The trip began in the rain as we shouldered our 20 to 40 pound packs. We would go up to the hut, hike around a bit, take some photos of the fantastic views, stay the night and come back on Sunday. All went well for the first few miles. As we moved up the mountain the temperature dropped and the rain turned to a light snow. After three miles things started getting more serious; the temperature dropped, the snow increased and the wind came at us at a gale force. We later learned that the wind in Tacoma that day hit 50mph. Traveling across an open ridge was horrendous. The snow blew so hard we could not keep our eyes open. That was just as well because those wearing glasses couldn't see anything anyway because of fogged over lenses.

Finally we came to a sign that said the cabin was just a third of a mile farther. By this time Dave Parker resembled Omar Sharif in Doctor Zhivago with icicles hanging from his mustache. We struggled against the wind and prayed to see the cabin soon. We hardly knew when we arrived because the cabin was covered to the eaves with snow. After struggling out of the snowshoes we tumbled into the cabin where Bob

Vogel had a fire in the stove. The temperature inside the cabin was then 40 degrees. Over the next few hours it rose to a steamy 70 degrees as our soaked clothing dripped from pegs all around the walls.

Once warmed, it was time for dinner. By now everyone was cheery again as we savored spaghetti and meatballs, shrimp-avocado salad, Chinese chicken salad, garlic bread and wine. For dessert Dorian first threatened us with yellow snow cones before bringing out the brownies.

While cooking, and all through dinner, an alarm went off intermittently. We assumed it was an exceedingly sensitive smoke alarm set off by the cooking. The alarm became a running joke. Since there were many stories being told, we laughed that the alarm was really a lie detector. Whenever it went off in the middle of a story the teller of the tale had to revise the story and revert to something more believable. Dolores was most susceptible to being caught by it. Eventually the alarm went off more often and stayed on longer. While the stories were getting more unbelievable, we did start to wonder about that bothersome alarm. Luckily, before Bob Vogel took the battery out of it, he discovered it wasn't a smoke alarm but a carbon monoxide alarm.

Even with our veracity vindicated, this was not good news. We looked for a window to open but snow banks covered even those on the second floor. The only one not covered in snow was frozen shut.

Eventually we opened it and let in some fresh air. Suddenly we weren't sleepy any more and apparently everyone told the truth the rest of our stay because the alarm never sounded again.

Being first frozen and then gassed were not the greatest problems facing us. The worst was the inaccessible outhouse that was only 40 feet away from the door of the cabin. To get there a person had to walk up onto a snow bank, traverse the edge of the roof of the cabin, drop down an eight foot bank, shovel away three feet of snow from the door, break away the ice from the chain that kept the door almost closed,

shovel away the snow that drifted inside, and of course take a trusted friend along to hold the door closed while using the facilities. During the first few hours no one was willing to do all of that and instead used the wide-open spaces as best they could. We all faced the possibility of being blown off the mountain at the most ignominious moment. I will not go into those stories, but I can assure you they are all true.

Finally, perhaps in desperation, Dorian broke into the outhouse and we claimed it as our own. Civilization had returned to Bald Mountain.

In the morning the wind was blowing harder than the night before. It was impossible to tell how much new snow had fallen since it wouldn't stay still long enough for us to measure it. At this point we started to wonder about how long we would have to stay there and what we could do about food. Carla, being the generous person she is, and also because it would reflect on her leadership skills if any of her charges starved to death, offered for our consideration her husband Steve.

Steve graciously declined the honor. Some people favored Bob Vogel, he being the youngest of the group and perhaps the most tender. He countered that while young, he might be stringy. Dave Parker argued that while he was the largest, he was also the oldest and therefore would be tough. Because of my size, I did not think my nomination was warranted. The others assured me they needed a snack while preparing a larger meal.

Luckily, before anyone sharpened the Swiss army knives, the weather cleared a bit and we could see a distance of at least ten feet. As quickly as possible we started packing up, especially those of us being eyed hungrily by our companions.

We almost forgot the travails and worries of the preceding night as we raced down the mountain in a foot of powdery new snow. At home that night I had just a momentary shudder as I sat simmering in the hot tub.

Around The Wheel

William F. Hoehne

Editor, TWBC Newsletter

At the December 1st, 1998 Board meeting of TWBC, I told board members I was retiring as newsletter editor effective with the March, 1999 issue. This is the March, 1999 issue.

Sagacious readers will have noticed in the masthead and deadline sections of this page that the new editor is Dorian Smith, who has already served our club as webmaster and a stint as secretary. (Anne Heller is our new secretary, and a fine person she is, too.) Dorian's first issue as editor will be the April, 1999 edition.

Probably the best thing I can say to help Dorian get off to a good start is: Club members-get your damn articles in on time!

Cycling Ad

For Sale: Look pedal PP 256. One year old with cleats. Blue in color. \$45.00. Call Bert Dionne at 253-862-6527

Tacoma Women's Bicycle Club (aka Biker Babes)

Carla Gramlich

The Babes met again on the first Friday. Our meetings consist of one hour of spin, followed by a good dinner and then some form of entertainment. We have been meeting at the downtown Y and participating in the 5:00 p.m. Spin Class. The problem is that arriving after 4:45 p.m. means that you can't get into the Spin Class. Peggy and I got in, but Reggie and Janice had to find something else to do for the

hour. Peggy used her Y connection to get a bicycle with a non-adjustable resistance setting. I got a work out and Peggy got an hour of light spinning. When the weather improves we will try cycling around Pt. Defiance.

We had a wonderful meal at a Thai restaurant in Puyallup, and the rest of the babes went to see Mel Gibson in a new movie. I left after the dinner since I had little sleep that day and had to get ready for a snowshoe trip the next day. Snowshoeing is part of my cross training program. The deep snow on Sunday also allowed me to practice a pace line. The leader got to break through a foot of new snow.

I am starting up the Friday rides in March. Here is an opportunity to do some hills, something everyone needs to practice. In April, I will lead some longer rides with more hills(something to look forward to when the days get longer.

I now have two new wheels that I built in a wheel building class. Soon, I will get them trued and on my new bicycle. The art of wheel building is patience, which I am sorely lacking. I will be building up my new Italian bicycle after it arrives. I am hoping to get my bicycle on the road by the spring to help with my training for RAMROD.

Foothills Trail Work Party

Carla Gramlich

I will combine a work party and ride on March 19. We will walk the section between McMillin and Orting, picking up litter and glass. Then a bicycle ride of the trail and Daffodil short loop if time permits. Meet at the McMillin Trail head at 11:30 AM to pickup litter and then at 2 PM for the ride.

Daffodil Classic, PMC Update

Janice Jensen

TWBC Daffodil, PMC Coordinator

If you were at the February general meeting, you saw the Daffodil, PMC shirts. You also are aware that we are a lot like "Uncle Sam" looking for a few good men and women to help serve in the Daffodil Classic in April. So don't delay, space is limited, and for your services you ride for free. Call Reggie Tison for a spot, Kent Wienker for sag, or Dave Parker for parking.

Last month I thanked half the committee members for all their help and support. This month I'd like to thank Louie Boitano and Bob Cook for their help with the route and pre-rides, Mike Romaine for truck rental, Steve Lay for his wonderful Daffodil shirt design, Steve Brown and Greg Torfin for equipment, Carla for a great job in publicity and distribution, and Ralph Wessels for keeping the group on track. Everyone pulls together so nicely at the meetings, it makes Daffodil and PMC a snap. The next meeting is set for March 4th, 7pm at my house(5613 71st Ave Ct.W., University Place. See you there!

Past pedaling

anne heller

Historical highlights of TWBC's 110 years

Wheelmen in 1897 numbered 2,750 members

The Tacoma Wheelmen held a unique position in 1897. They were more than a social club composed of people with common interests, they were also a quasi-governmental agency that collected one dollar from each of their members. In 1897 the Wheelmen had 2,750 members, this at a time when the population of the city was

about 42,000. If there were a similar proportion of riders to population today, we would have 12,000 members in the Wheelmen instead of the approximately 400 currently enrolled. In 1897 the money collected from membership dues paid for street improvements.

As reported by the Tacoma Daily Ledger on September 19, 1897: "Did it ever strike the people of this city that Tacoma has the largest local organization in America and perhaps the world? The Tacoma Wheelmen's association is composed of twenty-seven hundred and fifty members at this date, of which about five hundred are ladies. The initiation, or rather, yearly dues is one dollar, collected by the city and placed in what is known as the 'bicycle road fund,' and the whole fund is expended in the construction of paths and other incidental expenses, and, by the way, it is the only organization in America where the members must pay their dues or be fined or go to jail.

The organization's by-laws are simply the city ordinances and are strictly enforced. Taking it all around, it is a very unique manner of conducting a bicycle organization.

There can be no resignations unless you quit riding a wheel altogether, and everyone who does ride must become a member and carry his or her certificate of membership fastened upon their wheel, and if you don't carry it there you are likely to go to jail for that also."

Because of the importance of paths for bicyclists, riders were urged to "save up their dollar, and, by the way, tell their lady friends to do likewise." One of the street improvements accomplished in 1897 was the path along Tacoma Ave. from S. 17th to S. 28th. This path was "perfection," enabling riders to "avoid the eleven blocks of rough sidewalks with loose boards, projecting spikes and the always present splinter which causes punctures."

Another accomplishment was the completion of the "C" St. path (now Broadway) from present day Division to S. 9th. Prior to improvements in the path this was a

dangerous roadway because "the grade was heavy and reckless riders came down the sidewalks on the west side at fifteen to twenty miles an hour, endangering the lives of ladies and children."

Riders heedless of pedestrians were themselves in danger of finding officer "Mike Moran on their trail some fine morning." On a recent morning "a gentleman was knocked down by one of these riders and trouble is brewing in consequence. Complaint has been made to the officials of the city and a watch will be kept in the future."

Shortly after this the city banned bicycles from certain downtown sidewalks because of the danger to pedestrians.

Government report
ralph wessels

There are several proposed bills that are of interest to bicyclists this legislative session. If you have interest in supporting or opposing them, please contact your legislator and let him or her know your feelings and concerns. Legislators can be contacted by calling their local office, or 1-800-562-6000, or by email. Complete information on the bills can be found on the Legislature's homepage at www.leg.wa.gov.

HB1221 - Establishes a Lewis and Clark bicentennial trail advisory committee to coordinate and guide the 200th observance of the historic expedition. A good bill.

HB1786 - Authorizes bicycle use on the Chehalis River surge plain natural area preserve and interpretive trail. More places to bike! A good bill.

HB1971 - This bill modifies the Cooper Jones Act passed last year, which provided for bicyclist and pedestrian safety programs. It expands the current criteria of retesting drivers involved in fatal collisions to include collisions involving serious injury, when recommended by a police officer. It also improves funding of the program and requires the Traffic Safety Commission regularly report on the progress made in the safety program. A good bill, but could go even further in addressing bicycle and pedestrian safety by including recommendations from the safety task force.

HB2048/SB5075 - These similar bills provide recreational immunity to landowners adjacent to trails. The House bill does this only in unincorporated areas. Recreational immunity is used to open land for public use without the owner incurring liability. For example, if someone is hiking and steps in a stump hole resulting in injury, the injured party can't sue the landowner claiming the hole should have been filled in. The intent of these bills is to eliminate opposition to trails by adjacent landowners by giving them immunity from unintentional injury or damage to a user of a trail. Trail advocates are the promoters of the bill. Local governments are concerned that this may increase their liability if a negligent landowner has immunity. There has also been concern in the bicycle community that the bill is overly broad. For example, a landowner falling a tree across a trail and not intending to hit someone may not be liable for his negligent act. The bills have good intentions but need to better address the rights of trail users and the concerns of local governments.

HB5291 - This bill relates to road rage, which is defined as two or more acts of aggressive driving within five consecutive miles, in a manner that intimidates or threatens another person. Identifying an aggressive driver twice in a short stretch of road will limit the effectiveness of this being enforced. It completely misses the boat as far as bicyclists and pedestrians are concerned. How many of you have had some

butthead motorist intentionally miss you by inches or otherwise try to intimidate you? It is normally a random, single incident and by the proposed bill definition wouldn't qualify. The bill is ineffective in addressing road rage for motorists, let alone bicyclists and pedestrians.

HB5757 - This bill would clarify the existing statute on recreational immunity to exclude public roads or highways or adjacent shoulders and rights-of-ways. Several jurisdictions have used recreational immunity as a defense where a bicyclist has been riding on the shoulder and injured due to a hazard (i.e., a grate with no cross bars). This will likely be opposed by government agencies. This is a good bill and should be strongly supported by bicyclists. The several bills involving recreational immunity may possibly be consolidated.
