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Tacoma Wheelmen's Bicycle Club

Newsletter

December 1998

Holiday Celebration potluck

December 12th will be a day of celebration. A mid-day and evening ride (see the ride calendar) will bracket a potluck supper at 5:00 p.m. Joyce Clifford is once again hosting the supper at her home, 3811 N. Madison, in North Tacoma. For the rides dress for the season, with reflective clothing in the evening and lights to decorate your bicycle. For the supper, bring food!

Parking is limited around north Madison, so car pool, park around the corners, or ride your bicycle. Members are welcome to participate in all, or any part of the festivities. These activities have been a tradition in our club to help celebrate the holiday season.

We do not hold club meetings in December or January. You are encouraged to attend the holiday celebration in December, and the Annual Banquet (see below) in January. Our next club meeting will be on February 16, 1999. If you have suggestions for

enhancing our club meetings, please call Steve Brown at 253-752-4038, with your ideas.

Holiday Parade

Karen Forbush

It is time once again for the Downtown Tacoma Christmas Tree Lighting Parade. The date is Sunday, December 6th, and the parade starts at 5:00 p.m. TWBC will be represented as one of the official parade entries.

We need riders, young or old, to decorate their bicycles and join us to ride in the parade. If you have an unusual bike be sure to ride it. I do not have details yet, such as our position in the parade, so check the ride line (759-2800) for time and place to meet. Battery operated Christmas lights for your bicycle are usually available at Rite Aid or hardware stores.

Call me for information at 752-0764.

TWBC's 1999 Banquet

Bob Myrick

TWBC tickets for our Annual Banquet make a great Christmas present for your cycling family and friends. You are cordially invited to this event.

Our banquet is buffet style, and is still scheduled for Saturday, January 23, 1999, at the Tacoma Mountaineer's Club, 2302 North 30th Street, in Old Town Tacoma. This year's banquet just happens to be on Steve Lay's 50th birthday, and the 100th anniversary of Mt. Rainier National Park. It also celebrates the year when Jan Brame tried to run over a bear on Vancouver Island, and Louie Boitano's encounter with a pumpkin, with unexpected consequences.

The banquet starts off with visiting and refreshments at 6:00 p.m. Dinner is at 7:00 p.m., and will be catered by Dean Wilkey, who was the chief chef for catering at the old Grazie's Ristorante.

We will have freshly baked breads, Campagnola salad, Caesar salad, hot and fresh seasonal vegetables, Italian dishes, and dessert.

After dinner, Connie Reitzug and friends will recognize members who have reached milestones in their ridership, and who have had notable encounters on the road of life. Ernie Stephenson will thank our Board Members, staff, and all of you great volunteers.

The highlight of the evening is always a great slide show recalling our 1998 adventures. You still have time to submit your best slides to Steve or Phyllis Lay (759-1816).

Help is still needed for the banquet. We need someone to work on a theme, design a cake, provide refreshments, help Stan Engle and Bob Cook set up the room, clean up, and do similar jobs. Call me at 473-7455 to help and support your club.

Dress at the banquet ranges from your cycling clothes to jeans and sweaters to your best evening dress or tuxedo.

Now is the best time to send in your reservation form, found below. Attendance is limited to the first 96 people to register. Your fellow cyclists, board members, and myself really hope to see you there.

From the president
ernie stephenson

Best holiday wishes!

On behalf of the Wheelman board members, Karin, the boys (Sean, Scott and Adam) and myself, I would like to wish all the Tacoma Wheelmen and their loved ones a wonderful Holiday Season. May this time of the year find you happy, healthy and close

to good people you love. Cherish those people and ride safely for their sake. Bless you all, Ernie Stephenson

Ramrod Position Open

Bob Myrick

The Redmond Cycling Club(RCC) is looking to hire an Event Director to oversee the daily operations of the 1999 edition of RAMROD (Ride Around Mt. Rainier, One Day).

The 1999 RAMROD will mark the 15th running of this event and will coincide with the 100th birthday celebration of Mt. Rainier National Park. RAMROD will no longer be a time trial event. It will be a regular ride event like the Daffodil or PMC, just a bit harder with 154 miles and 10,000 feet of climbing. Think of it like doing the Daffodil hundred and the PMC sixty, just all in one day.

Past experience indicates the event director position requires about two months of full time work spread from January to August. RCC has allotted \$4,000 as the stipend for successful completion of the director's duties. To schedule an interview, call Charlie Buchalter at 425-743-0483, or try Charlie@atoc.com. For general RAMROD information, call Pat Marek at 206-361-5064 or, try rec@blarg.net.

All member bulletin: the TWBC Newsletter editor has a new E-mail address. The new address is: wfhoehne@home.com. Keep those cards and letters coming in, and articles too.

New and renewing members

TWBC welcomes and thanks the following new and renewing members for the month of November, 1998:

New Members: Franklyn George; Nancy E. Henderson; Bill Newman; Marna Oza; and Betsy Sawyers.

Renewing Members: Karen Forbush; Steven Forsness; William F. Hoehne; Doug Ringenbach; Terry Rosberg; and Kent Wienker.

Activity Notes

Bicycle Alliance Legislative Committee meeting, December 6, 1998: The Bicycle Alliance of Washington will have a legislative committee meeting on Sunday, December 6, 1998 at the La Quinta Inn from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. The address is 1425 E. 27th, Tacoma, WA. Call Bob Myrick for details at 473-7455, or the Bicycle Alliance at 206-224-9252.

Tour Opportunity:

New Zealand in February by Bob Myrick: If you have a passport, some free time, and money, I may have a deal for you. Wayne Martin and Sue Gygax of Lake Chelan, Washington, are young retirees who put on low budget, cooperative trips to interesting places around the world. Wayne and Sue will put on three bicycle tours of New Zealand as follows: The Southern Alps. 670 Km. February 1-10, 1999. Cost is \$150.00. Otago and Dunedin. 550 Km. February 11-19, 1999. Cost is \$150.00. Bank's Peninsula Death Ride. 100 Km. February 20-24, 1999. Cost is \$80.00.

Wayne and Sue provide a sag bus, campsites, maps, and organization. You have the option of renting inexpensive cabins, and if you do not like to cook, restaurants are usually available.

To find out more about Wayne and Sue, look up their web site at www.nwi.net/~waynesue, or call me at 473-7455. Wayne started the Bicycle Institute in Ashland, Oregon, as well as the Third Hand and Loose Screws tool and parts supply businesses. He also started the world famous Death Ride in Markleeville, California,

and the week long Supertour rides. Next summer, they will walk and hike through Europe.

Cross Country Ski and Snow Shoe Adventures

Bob Myrick

I have planned several outdoor, mountain adventures for TWBC members this winter season. Most of you are aware that snow is better than rain. Cross country skiing and snow shoeing are a great alternative and complementary activity to bicycling. Snow shoeing is like walking so don't be afraid to turn out for these activities. You already own the clothing, your bike clothes. Just add a wool cap, wool gloves, gaiters, and lightweight hiking boots. You can rent snowshoes for about \$10 at the Mountain Shop, REI or Backpacker's Supply. The Mountaineer's "ten essentials" and a day pack sure help. Polypro underwear is also a godsend.

The big trip is a 3 night , New Year's eve adventure to Copper Creek cabin on the Mount Tahoma Trails Association(MTTA) system at Ashford, WA. Most of the twelve spots are reserved, but feel free to call me for a standby spot. Day trippers are really encouraged to come up and see us. Your car will need a snowpark permit. Louie Boitano and I will be working on the MTTA ski patrol in case you need assistance.

Over Christmas weekend, a dear friend has people staying at Copper Creek. I will lead a trip to the hut on December 26. Call me for carpooling.

The next big trip is a two night trip to Snow Bowl hut on January 16, 17, and 18, Martin Luther King's weekend. Again, eight spots are reserved, but call me for standby reservations. Most people would prefer snowshoes here because the terrain is more challenging, probably requiring intermediate ski skills. The MTTA headquarters will be a bit past Ashford this year at the Rainier Overland development. Maps are available here. Snowpark permits are available at the gas station in Ashford.

Carla Gramlich has reserved part of the High hut for the first weekend in February. Much later in the season, I hope to run my annual bicycle, ski or snowshoe trip from the Crystal Mountain road to White River ranger station to White River campground near

the climb to Sunrise. For you Mountaineer's, I will be leading snowshoe trips to the MTTA area in March.

I hope to see you on the mountain this winter.

More Bicycle Parking!

Carla Gramlich

TWBC last year was able to establish secured bicycle parking in the Proctor District. Those bicycle lids are catching on! The Main Library in Downtown Tacoma has purchased a pair of lids. These bicycle lids are located behind the library. An additional 10 lids are waiting final approval, and installation could begin early next year.

I had contacted a city council person concerning secured bicycle parking when a new parking garage is built downtown. I visited Vancouver B.C. in September and was pleased to see that several parking garages in that city provide such facilities for bicyclists. I am hoping that the city could provide some secured parking for bicyclists since they seem to be able to provide for more cars.

Bicycle parking at the Tacoma Dome Station has been discussed with Sound Transit. Sound Transit has been speaking with bicyclists to properly accommodate for bicyclists at park and rides and on board trains.

TWBC members met with Phil Miller and suggested that this plan should provide for short term, long term and on demand parking. Short term could be racks. Long term could be bicycle lockers with a deposit for a key. On demand parking would provide secured parking, like a bicycle lid. This type would accommodate the occasional commuter.

We also suggested that if cars are parking for free that same courtesy should be extended to parking your bicycle.

More input from other cyclists concerned with these issues is needed.

Attend Sound Transit meetings and express better consideration for bicyclists concerning parking and taking your bicycle on the bus. Remember to make a statement and bicycle to work, school or errands to show that it is possible to leave the car at home.

Government report
bob myrick
director of community
and government relations

Ralph Wessels, Scott Pierson, Carla Gramlich and I met at the Planet Burrito for our November meeting. We were happy to see President Ernie Stephenson's "Viewpoint letter to the editor" in the TNT. Ernie expressed our views that more pedestrian/bicycle bridges should be provided to cross over the expanded I-5 corridor. The high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes and rebuilding of the overpasses has to be closely monitored to protect non-motorized users.

Carla indicated she was willing to write an article regarding the new bike lids in Tacoma and our attendance at the Sound Transit meetings these past few months.

Ernie Bay and I will continue to be on the Puget Sound Regional Council's (PSRC) Enhancement's Committee for the ranking and selection of projects to be funded by the new federal Transportation Equity Act (TEA-21) program. For 1999, \$21 million is available for funding enhancements, like trails, across the State of Washington. Our TWBC committee still feels some agency should begin planning a bike route and improvements along the I-5 corridor. Our local need is between SeaTac airport and Olympia.

Carla reported that she and Ernie Bay have been attending trail planning meetings with members of the PSRC and the Bike Alliance of Washington. We wondered if the Pierce

County Park's Trail Commission needs to be reactivated to pursue more trail projects in Pierce County.

We noted the Bicycle Alliance of Washington will again have their legislative committee meeting in Tacoma this year at the La Quinta Inn from 10am to 2pm on Sunday, December 6, 1998.

The Statewide Bicycle Advisory Committee is looking for a new member to represent our region. You should send a letter expressing interest to Mike Dornfeld, WSDOT, Box 47393, Olympia, WA, 98504. Mike is the Bicycle and Pedestrian Program manager and can be reached at 360-705-7258. This committee meets 3 or 4 times a year across the State. I believe travel expenses are reimbursed.

Currently, three club members are on Tacoma's Transportation Committee. The other members are all fond of non-motorized issues as well. This past month, the committee questioned the lack of full sidewalks at the Point Woodworth development in Northeast Tacoma. The Light Rail link for downtown Tacoma was discussed. The TEA-21 federal funding program was presented. We would like the City to fix its' railroad tracks near Roy and other areas under the TEA-21 safety program. The committee was particularly concerned with the possible improper installation of angle parking in the Proctor Business District. Hopefully, Al Tebaldi, the engineer in charge of our roads, will explain it next month.

At our next meeting on Tuesday, December 8, Craig Francis, a City Public Works Engineer, hopes to attend. He is administrating the non-motorized program and hopes to receive input on our perceived needs for improvement projects in the City. I hope you can attend. We will again meet at the Planet Burrito on Sixth Avenue at 7:00pm.

Past pedaling

anne heller

Historical highlights of TWBC's 110 years

(Editor's note: This is the third installment of a story with a Tacoma connection. Anne's source for this story is a 1902 edition of "Overland Monthly," a magazine published in San Francisco.)

A 3 Month's Outing In 3 States For 33 Dollars

When last seen, J. Edgar Ross, the young man from San Francisco who decided to travel by wheel and by foot to Tacoma in 1902, had arrived in Grant's Pass, Oregon. Because of poor roads and continuous problems with flat tires, it had been a difficult journey. Now, with a pair of the best tires he could buy, he was ready for a side excursion to the Oregon Caves.

Road Conditions-Surprise!

As usual, the local populace gave him conflicting and erroneous information about the condition of the roads. Told that the eleven miles to the caves was over good trails, he decided to take his wheel rather than hike. In Mr. Ross' words, "I have so much confidence in humanity that I never believe that a man has lied to me till I am sure of it; so I patiently climbed that fifty per cent grade, lifting my heavily loaded wheel over fallen trees or carrying it around still more troublesome boulders, looking for that good trail."

When he finally reached the caves they were a disappointment, perhaps because of the effort it took to reach them. On the trip back to Grant's Pass on a different route, he encountered a steep downhill grade. Having no brakes, the only way to slow was to back-pedal. Unfortunately, back-pedaling wasn't enough. After going around a sharp bend, he dismounted "with more haste than ceremony," bending a pedal, twisting a crank and spraining an ankle.

This was a torturous journey. For the next week he walked as much as he rode. He used abandoned cabins as refuge from downpours. He lived on apples found in neglected orchards. He met swarms of bats and hives of yellow jackets. He hiked forty miles to the foot of Mt. Jefferson with a sixty pound pack.

Mount Rainier Coming Up

Arriving in Portland was a relief. After visiting friends for several days he was off again. As he said, "Two days wheeling over fair roads landed me in Tacoma." He spent only a day in Tacoma before setting out for Mt. Rainier. Let me quote extensively from his description of the trip to Longmire.

"Before I was fairly out of the city I had a long hill to climb; but from the top of it I went spinning along a splendid road that led over what the Washingtonians call a prairie. It was unlike the prairies of the Middle West, however. Occasionally I passed through a small meadow where I could see the sky for a dozen degrees on every side of the zenith; but such spots were few and far between. But the country, though covered with timber, was not hilly; and that is undoubtedly why it is called a prairie."

"Then came the hills. They are not very high at first, and the road winds around them or climbs over them, through a forest of great fir trees, past two sparkling lakes of crystal-clear water, through the town of Etonville (sic), and across the Mashall River. Then come the mountains. I thought they were not very steep at first, and as I had been over the road once before I ought to have known. But traveling with a team and a light wagon is not like pushing a wheel that weighs a hundred pounds, as I discovered before I reached the top of the first mountain. After that I had good wheeling for half a mile, then I struck the corduroy road that leads over Mashall Mountain. I knew that there was nine miles of that road ahead of me -- up a steep grade all the way -- but before I camped that night the corduroy was all behind me. Of course I was tired, but I slept all the sounder for that."

"Next morning I had some really good road for a number of miles; then I had some unridable road clear to Longmier's (sic) Springs, where the wagon road ends and the trail begins."

"They told me at Longmier's that I had better take my wheel up to Paradise Park; but I knew that trail and I said 'no thank you'."

Paradise-Speechless

He hiked up to Paradise where he stayed three days. Visitors to Paradise can understand the elation of Mr. Ross when he says, "Paradise Park cannot be described - - no, not with all the superlative adjectives that the English language affords." He

climbed onto Nisqually Glacier and frightened himself when he looked down into a deep crevasse. He hiked over to Reflection Lake and up toward Cowlitz Glacier.

After Rainier, he returned to Tacoma, shipped his camera ahead to Portland and set out himself for Portland. His vacation was ending. Before returning to California by train he took one more bicycle trip, this time to the foot of Mt. Hood.

His expenses for the entire trip were \$22.10. An additional \$11 was spent for a ticket from Portland to San Francisco. The cost of his three-month vacation was just \$33. There were a few expenses not factored into that number. As J. Edgar said, "I did not include the tires that I bought on the way, for the old ones were nearly worn out when I started and the new ones were scarcely worn at all when I returned. Neither did I include the cost of the plates and other photographic supplies, for the negatives that I brought home were worth many times the cost of the entire trip."

So concludes the saga of J. Edgar Ross, bicyclist without par.

Practical Bicycles

Dorian Smith

Last summer a couple was seen riding home from the Supermall in Auburn on a new ladies frame Huffy brand bicycle. He pedaled and she sat side saddle comfortably on a towel that was placed across the two wire baskets over the rear wheel. They chatted cheerfully as they rode home down the Interurban Trail after a day of shopping.

Many bicyclists reject that brand and style of bicycle. They are heavy and offer fewer gears than state-of-the-art models. The pedals do not accept clips. And there are no computers or even a sliver of titanium anywhere. And yet in a way, that couple's low-end bicycle represents the type and use of bicycling that could transform the U.S. from a car culture to a bicycle culture.

The United States may have enthusiastic on-and off-road bicyclists, but this country trails far behind nearly every other country in per capita use of two-wheeled non-motorized transportation.

Every year there are a few high-profile bicycling moments in this country: Miles of bicyclists fill the route from Seattle to Portland. Gonzo mountain bikers flood recreation areas for dirt bike rodeos. Thousands of cyclists riding a week across Iowa for RAGBRAI. But visitors to Amsterdam and other European cities see that many bicyclists every day going to work or school or running errands.

According to the International Bicycle Fund, bicycles are used for 20 percent of the trips made in Denmark, 12 percent of the trips in Germany and 14 percent of the trips in Japan. In Moscow 24 percent and in Beijing 48 percent of all trips are made on bikes. In the few European countries where bike ridership is lower-only 5 percent in France and Italy- bicycle use is still five times higher proportionally than in the United States.

In the United States less than 1 percent of the trips are by bicycle because the auto is used for fully 85 percent of all trips. The dominance of automobiles in the U.S. far exceeds all other countries.

The U.S. may buy 10 million bicycles per year for a population of 270 million, roughly a 27 to 1 ratio. But the Netherland's 15 million residents buy one million new bicycles every year, nearly twice the rate.

Various factors have been attributed to this disparity: price of gasoline, economics, distances traveled, etc. But there may be another reason that keeps the United States a bicycle-poor nation. This country does not think of bicycles as a practical mode of transportation.

In the U.S. are the most light-weight high-tech bicycling machines that can be easily lifted by a baby's pinky. Or you can find many shops that sell rugged mountain bikes that can careen joyfully down glacial crevices. There are tandems for touring and recumbents for reclining excursions.

But almost no where do you find the kinds of bicycles that crowd the narrow intersections in Europe and are parked in a mass of tubed metal at train stations and market squares. They are ridden by students and pensioners(housewives and shop owners).

Our bicycles are designed for carefree trail burning or designed with fragile complexity for serious roadwork. In Europe most bicycles are unattractive, dowdy and heavy. Many feature chainguards, baskets and wheel-rubbing generators for handlebar-mounted headlights. European riders also are protected from the spray of wet pavements by full-sized fenders. Few American bicyclists would drape their bikes with those options.

Most European bikes look road-soiled and rusty. In other words they are practical bicycles. They are in the tradition of the old dark green Raleighs with Sturmey-Archer 3-speed gearing, which a friend dubbed "Katherine Hepburn bikes." They are not used for weeklong trips. They are used for commuting year-round.

Americans are familiar with European brands like Peugeot, Bianchi or Motobecane. But how many astute bicyclists have ever heard of Gazelle? A full line of Gazelle bicycles is manufactured in the Netherlands. They are popular throughout Europe and sold at 1,500 dealerships in Holland alone.

But demand for Gazelle's commuter bikes would be meager in the United States. There has been no major advertising campaign to attract

Gazelle's Primeur

American customers. The bike maker's website (www.gazelle.nl) is entirely in Dutch.

There are a few bike makers in the U.S. that would like to generate a market for practical bicycles. At a Tacoma Wheelmen's meeting earlier this year, several manufacturers displayed their light-weight custom beauties to members who gushed over the utterance of each new high tech innovation. But also attending the meeting was Wes Meyer, a representative from Raleigh USA, who cautiously mentioned a new model called the SC 200 NX.

This bicycle represents a new category called "Sport Comfort," according to Raleigh's Dave Hull, a customer service spokesman. At 30-pounds the SC 200 NX is similar in appearance to a mountain bike with 26-inch tires and a suspension seatpost. But the drive train features a 7-speed internal hub. No derailleurs. It is obviously not for avid enthusiasts of cutting edge technology.

"This bike is geared for an aging populace," Hull explained. "It's easier to ride. It's maintenance-free and it is much more comfortable."

He said Raleigh's market studies have shown that 21 and 24-speed models intimidate many people. And for two years with this bike Raleigh has aimed for that group which wants the comfort of so-called "beach cruisers" but offering more practical use with a couple of extra gears.

Hull is also confident that some SC 200 NX cycles will be seen at next year's Seattle-to-Portland.

Spoke and Sprocket owner Jim Crouch recently observed ironically that many Puget Sound bicyclists seem committed to one ride a year. They begin training with renewed dedication every spring in February or March for the annual Seattle to Portland odyssey. But after that 200-mile trip in mid-July, the bikes are hung up in the garage for the rest of the year.

If the U.S. finally discovers the full potential of bicycles, it may need to accept bicycles that are not purely for recreation or "fun." And we'll have to accept that if some of our car culture is replaced by a bicycle culture, most of our bicycles won't be elegant.

Canadian Exchange Ride

August 1-16, 1998 Jan Brame

Editor's note: This is the second of several installments. The first installment appeared in last month's newsletter. Save those newsletters.

Wednesday August 5th - Ucluelet to Port Alberni-Mileage 0.

Flying Titanic Folks

The morning dawns gray and misty. We ate breakfast at the "Pacific Princess", a ship converted into a floating restaurant. Toni, Bob and I posed on the bow like the Titanic folks flying. We spent the morning shopping and I bought a hat with a bear on it and earrings with bears. We all had a very leisurely day.

Carol and Roz are taking the van to spend the day at the ocean while the rest of us take the freighter "Frances Barkley" back to Port Alberni. We sailed about 2:00 p.m. and our course was through the Broken Islands.

Ah, Perchance To Dream

The group variously napped, snacked on cheese balls and veggies and drank coffee. Bob C slept so much we all started to get worried. Joyce gave the ladies shoulder massages. It stayed gray and misty all day so we watched for eagles and read books. The boat stopped at Sechart Whaling Station and picked up kayakers and all their cargo as well as a load of cement. We got into Port Alberni very rested and relaxed to set up camp at the same spot. We walked to the Swale Rock Caf, for a great dinner. I have never eaten so much so often! A slow walk back to camp and another early night.

Thursday August 6th - Port Alberni to Powell River-Mileage 69:

The group broke up into those that wanted to ride the reverse "hump" (it is a ski area!) first thing out of camp and those who were sane and wanted to ride the van to the top. It was split about half-and-half. Some got up even earlier than usual to make sure they did it in time to catch the 3:15 ferry to Powell River.

So we rode to the top in the van with Toni who is driving today, and got out and started a very cold downhill. It went all the way to the Cathedral Forrest where we caught up with Myrick. I hooked up behind him and we really flew! We missed a turn somewhere and when we did turn we ran into Mary and Dena going the opposite way.

Best Pie, Bad Truck

The ride is beautiful today with the route along the coast highway by the water so the air feels cool and good. We stopped at the best pie place ever and again proceeded to stuff ourselves. The traffic was terrible after that. One big truck blew his air horn at Mary and scared her off the road and into the gravel. Luckily she sustained only scrapes and bruises. We made great time and got to the ferry dock by 2:15. I slept on the ferry.

On our way to the campground we stopped at a posh place for dinner which had been recommended by some locals. The Bay Reach Resort had never served the likes of our group before. A dozen dirty, sweaty, spandexed, cleated, sunburned cyclists show up at

their fancy place and eat like longshoremen. The lobster dinner was only \$11.95 (Canadian) and was a popular choice.

Our campsite reservations were messed up once again. The Oceanside Campground has a petting zoo. We got two little sites right on the water but inches away from neighbors with loud TV's and the campground office, which was having a party. It was, however, beautiful with the water right there and the full moon coming up. We drank wine and beer and ate Bob's smoked salmon on crackers. What a great day!

Cycling Ad

Milton Cyclery-1998 Cannondale Inventory Reduction Sale.

Prices too low to mention.

Call 253-952-6763, or visit our shop at 1322 E. Meridian, Milton, WA. (2.5 miles South of Wild Waves.)