

Tacoma Wheelmen's Bicycle Club

Newsletter

May 2000

Founded 1888

This month:

- [Members prefer "Wheelmen"](#)
- [Daffodil Classic](#)
- [PMC: Ready to go](#)
- [Past Pedalin'](#)
- [From the president](#)
- [Around the world report](#)
- [Members](#)
- [Ride notes](#)
- [Bike Fridays at meeting](#)
- [Selecting dream bike](#)
- [1,000 helmets fitted](#)

Other bicycle information

- Rideline:
(253) 759-2800
- [May Club Rides](#)
- Peninsula Metric Century:
June 4
[information](#) and [registration form](#)
- [Headwaters Century](#): Sept. 10
- [Bicycle advocacy issues](#)
- Free [want ads](#)
- [Events calendar](#)

25th Daffodil draws 1,100

The silver anniversary of the Daffodil Classic attracted riders from all over the state who feasted on a free dish of finish-line strawberry shortcake.

The post-ride dessert wasn't the only new attraction of the oldest organized ride in Pierce County. Co-coordinators Karen Forbush and Jan Brame brought in booths, vendors, recorded music and free hits of coffee. Downtown Orting had the ambience of a festive street fair.

In addition to the 20 and 50-mile loops the ride also featured a family route on the new bicycle trail along the Carbon River.

Peninsula Metric Century: Ready and set to go

Carol Davis Co-coordinator of PMC

Mark your calendars for June 4, and be ready to ride the 18th annual PMC. A few changes are in store, but the basic integrity of the ride will be preserved.

A small course change will avoid Glenwood which has increased traffic over the years and avoid the Purdy intersection. Don't worry! We will not take you up 144th street. The Purdy rest stop will be at the Purdy fire station.

The 100-mile extension will follow the periphery of the Gig Harbor area on the west side of the freeway and will still include your favorite hills on Fox Island.

The Gig Harbor Fire Station is being remodeled this year, so the Gig Harbor registration and rest stop will be at the Best Western Wesley Inn which is just two doors away on Kimball Drive. The folks at the Best Western also donated a room which was raffled off at the Bicycle Expo for those who pre-registered at Expo. Pre-registration at Expo tripled over last year.

Instead of tiny souvenirs, a raffle will be held on the day of the ride with a variety of door prizes at both Gig Harbor and Southworth.

A high quality polo shirt will be available with pre-registration only at a special promotional price of \$15. Don't forget to include your size with your order. The only other way to obtain this collector's item shirt is to volunteer to help at this exciting event. A few slots for volunteers are still open. Call Carol Davis today at 253-857-5396 or e-mail at [Bicyclguy @aol.com](mailto:Bicyclguy@aol.com).

You will all want to be involved in one way or another with the PMC 2000.

From the President's desk

Steve Brown Past President Ernie Stephenson made a pitch at the April meeting for club members to consider running for a position on the Board. Many of the current officers are taking a well-deserved break from their current responsibilities. Please let Ernie know of your desire to run for a board position. Elections will be held at the June general meeting. By now the success of the 25th Daffodil Classic is well-known. I want to thank Jan Brame and Karen Forbush for their courage to lead the charge on this huge task. Thanks also needs to go more than a dozen people that have been meeting monthly to plan this event and the 75-plus volunteers that provided support on the day of the event.

Great Job!

The board meeting is May 2, 7 p.m. at the downtown Tacoma Library, 1102 S. Tacoma Ave. The meeting agenda will include a recap of the Daffodil Classic and reaffirming our commitment to wearing bicycle helmets on all club rides.

Tradition wins survey . . . for now

Dorian Smith

The last issue of the Wheelmen's newsletter presented the results of a survey regarding the club's name. If we assume the survey roughly represents the club, two-thirds of the members say the name Wheelmen should remain, as it has for more than 110 years.

The traditionalists are a clear majority.

But it's also important to note that the name is offensive to one out of every three members. They enjoy the club's activities and rides but they would prefer another name. They believe Wheelmen is sexist and misrepresents the club to potential members.

This debate comes at an interesting time. There has been a call from the board to boost the club's stagnating membership. For many years the club has had 350 dues-paying members. Last year 85 new members joined, but 75 members departed. A meager net growth of 3 percent.

Certainly there are common-sense steps the club should make to keep in touch with members and unaffiliated cyclists who could be enticed to join. But the club should take a hard look at why 75 people a year allow their membership to lapse. And here's where the name of the club becomes symbolic. Long-time members prefer the way the club has always done things. That's the comfort of tradition. But there may be other types of cycling and activities that are not being offered that could attract new members.

Some cyclists blame a decline in U.S. cycling. However, statistics don't support that assumption. According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, the numbers of new sold bicycles has remained the same for the past decade. But a 1998 report from the Bicycle Product Suppliers Association show that road bikes make up only 2 percent of the market.

That means TWBC as a road riders-only club is aiming for a very small niche. If the club intends to thrive and encourage new members, the veterans who have enjoyed their cycling experience for many years should look at who are today's cyclists.

Perhaps this means offering a wider variety of scheduled road rides or embrace different types of cycling. Mountain bikes make up a whopping 54 percent of the market. Even the numbers of hybrids (essentially slower road bikes) is much higher at 10 percent.

At this time the future of the club is locked in with long-distance road riders who make up a majority of the Tacoma Wheelmen, but not the majority of cyclists.

Personal needs dictate selection of dream bike

Cynthia Hammer

Although I love my Trek 1420 touring bike, I noticed I was less frequently in the front pack on our Tuesday morning TWBC rides. Would a new bike, a road bike, help? My Trek had served me well, over eight years, but it was showing it's age, and I had ridden it, I could swear, over 750,000 miles!

Friends were telling me to get a new bike, and then my father sent a big check. I interpreted this to mean, bike-buying time. But how to decide? How to get the bike of my dreams?

Two things to know: I hate to shop and I'm not a techie. But I knew what I wanted: a bike that would make me feel young, beautiful and strong! Quite a feat when you're 56 and fading fast. I noticed that the younger women in the club (i.e. those in their 40s), the ones I wanted to catch, were riding Litespeeds. They were always smiling as they rode past, so I imagined they were happy with their purchases! My choice — a Litespeed like theirs.

I thought a 10-minute visit to Spoke and Sprocket would set me up, but I miscalculated. There were more decisions to make than just, "I want one of those."

It was a 90-minute visit, getting more questions answered than I knew to ask, learning more than I realized I needed to know, getting more intimately measured — crotch to floor, crotch to knee, armpit to fingertips, etc.—than I had anticipated.

My time at the store was well spent — learning relevant information about bike design, materials, the Campy group vs. the Shimano group, Look vs. SPD pedals, and wheels and tires. I went in the store ready to buy, and went home thinking, “I need to go home and think about this.” It had become too big a decision to make in 10 minutes.

Did I really want to spend all that money? Would a new bike be worth it to me? Eventually, I concluded that I’m only young — oops, only 56 — once. So I returned to the store the following week, deposit money in hand. I was ready to buy a Litespeed — only to learn that Jim, the store owner, thought an Eddy Merckx was the better bike for me.

From my measurements, the Merckx was a perfect fit, just like a custom order. So, with no test ride, I ordered my Merckx. You should see me riding by, in early May, if you don’t blink at the wrong moment!

For my techie readers: I decided on the Shimano group for two reasons: Campy is noisy and had several positions for shifting. I was worried I wouldn’t always get the chain easily positioned on the desired sprocket. Maybe a false fear, but I like things simple — and no, not as you might be thinking, because I am simple-minded!

I chose Look pedals (red cleats) because I have used that system for years. Even after four knee surgeries, I have little knee pain when biking with this set-up.

Using Look means using cycling shoes with stiffer soles (more support) and the pedals have a bigger platform (again, more support for the knee). Some of the stuff I learned in my 90-plus minutes at Spoke and Sprocket.

I chose the brushed titanium frame because I can easily buff out scratches with the scrubber sponge kept at my kitchen sink. If you could see my battle-scarred Trek you would know why bike-body maintenance was a high priority.

The pedals are silver, the handle bar wrap is royal blue which picks up the blue of the Merckx label nicely. I plan to buy a new jersey with matching helmet and gloves to complete my new spring outfit.

Call if you'd like my assistance in buying your new bike.

More than 1,000 served

Carla Gramlich

On April 1, Helmets on Wheels provided more than 1,000 helmets with custom fits at the Annual Children's Safety Fair. The help of some great volunteers made for a record day. Our helmet distributor is not aware of any other organization providing more than 1,000 helmets in one day.

Special thanks to the many club members who made this helmet sale such a success: Jan Brame, Karen Forbush, Steve Brown, Jack Woods, Chuck Morrison, Susan Blanchett, Pat Wingerter, Rich Patrick, Vern Martin, Sheila Pudists, Chris Smith, Mat Reitzug, Reggie Tison, Bob Vogel, Cynthia Hammer, Noel Hagens, Scott Pierson.

Members

New: Vernon J. Martin, John Stingl, Dorene DeMars, John Baker, Kate Hoke, Christian Olsen, Donna Robinson, Jon Ortgiesen, Tamara Grunhurd.

Renewing members: Enid Larson, Kenneth and Cynthia Stagg, Doug and Sharon Aukland, Scott and Carrie Nelson, Terry Mehin, Tim Knudson

Test ride Bike Fridays at May club meeting

Steve Brown

Hanz Scholz, founder and development manager at Bike Friday in Eugene, Oregon, will be the featured speaker at the May 16 general meeting. For those that don't know, Bike Friday is a small wheel bike with a unique travel system. The bike folds into a standard-size suitcase which doubles as a trailer that is pulled behind the bicycle.

They also have a tandem that folds into two suitcases.

See the May ride calendar for a special ride for Bike Fridays (or any bike with lights) to the meeting. Hanz will have some demo bicycles available at 6:30 p.m. to test drive before the club meeting. For more information visit the extensive Bike Friday web site at www.bikefriday.com.

The meeting starts at 7 p.m. and is held at the South Park Community Center, 4851 S. Tacoma Way, in Tacoma. For more information on this club meeting call Steve Brown at (253) 752-4038. Also, the phone number at South Park is 591-5299.

Around the world report

*Club member **Bob Warfield** is bicycling around the world on the Odyssey2000 tour. He has been writing prodigiously, mixing travelers' observations with sociology, local politics, international economics and history. This is one of his four e-mailed reports from Italy.*

Carry a map and a note with your current hotel address and phone. Remember, "I" stands for Informazioni, but check time and day, lest you find it closed. Be extra careful about keys; room, front door, draw bridge, toilet, rental car, etc.

Your world can get complicated fast without an essential access. If something is new or unfamiliar in the least, get the resident expert to demonstrate or explain it fully. And, remember, all is never lost, unless the traffic gets you.

About traffic, BACK TO ITALY. They've got it. Interestingly, there are rules and laws, not so different from ours. But enforcement, and more importantly observation and practice, is another matter.

You'll learn quickly that almost anything goes this side of outrageous: jaywalking, U-turns, using any part of the road not obstructed by a rockslide. Right-of-way defaults to the guy in front, usually a motorscooter, unless it's Bob on his bike in Palermo.

The central operative rule is that everyone gives way to the most urgent, compelling, nose-ahead guy on the road. This sounds crazy. It is crazy, but

strangely, it seems to work pretty well. Still eye contact, yielding to any vehicle coming from the right, and see and be seen (the universal motorcycle caution) are consistently operative.

There are posted speed limits, but I've seen no evidence that they're enforced. On the autostrada, the guy with the biggest engine sets the pace. Cops are everywhere, customs, carabinieri, municipal police, military people. Half of Italy is in uniform or habit.

Two thirds of Italy smokes. The Marlboro Man is wearing Gucci's and hasn't a clue what that rawhide is for. It's nearly impossible to avoid, and a damned nuisance. But most will inhale their way to paradiso before they're 45, which is why Italy has so many political parties. They never get old enough to figure out the value of cooperation and coalition, even though they often wind up littermates on election day.

Which brings us to one coming up soon — like next week. Near as I can figure, there are 17 active parties and four major tickets. Gets tricky, because there are parties formed around local elective offices that I haven't, God knows cannot, count.

But that draws another picture of Italians. They seem to be, at every venue, on every corner, by every alley, across every balcony and from every window where two can become three, forever engaged in conversation. Christ do they love to talk, debate, evoke, animate. Did someone say gesture?

Yes, that is until I get to the ticket window at Termini Roma and want help with a connection from Pisa permitting bicycles. I can gesture too, but quickly both of us are reduced to stick figures and numbers trying to dissolve Arabic into decipherable coherence.

Then, I learn that I'm at the wrong window, having been sent from where I'm now returned to start all over again.

How, I ask you, did these people ever manage to design and build such a splendid rail station or drill so many curving tunnels through so many mountains

and get them right or design such efficient high-speed trains, silent and luxurious? I don't see many Japanese around; they must have done it. Used to be pretty good at organizing slave labor too, before Constantine got a hair and moved operations to Istanbul. That was the beginning of the end, and we wound up with Mussolini. Will and Ariel Durant probably had more to say about it, but that's basically what happened.

Ride notes

Galloping Goose Bike Trail: On Memorial Day weekend, a beautiful 2A (no hills) ride will leave Port Angeles by ferry to Victoria, B.C. and the town of Sooke. This 90-mile ride will cover three days two nights, staying in beautiful bed and breakfasts. From Victoria the trip winds along a "Rails to Trails" trail (mountain or cross bikes required). The 30-mile first day to the town of Sooke. On the second day riders can ride through Pot Holes Provincial Park or walk around the small town of Sooke. On the final day the group will return and stroll around Victoria. Two ferries home to choose from. Information call Scott Kubiszewski at 253-383-2588.

RAGBRAI XXVIII. Join 10,000 cyclists July 23-29 for the Des Moines Register's Annual Great Bicycle Ride Across Iowa. This is a unique ride that includes church picnics, homemade ice cream on rhubarb pie, music and dancing, rural hospitality and outrageous costumes (helmets are required, but not much else). Also included is a 449 mile ride across southern Iowa (the hilly part) on good roads with virtually no traffic. See <http://www.ragbrai.org> or call Anne Heller at 253-761-0709 for more information.

A ride is being organized leaving June 5 or 6 and taking the **northern route** to Minot, N.D. It will consist of wilderness camping (no camp grounds) with a few motel stops. Daily travel distance will average 80 miles. Anyone interested contact Ron Menge at 253-845-8496

Joyful Cycling (led by Joyce Clifford and Cynthia Hammer) has been resurrected after a 5-year hiatus. Starting Thursday evening May 4, we will lead 30-40-mile training rides. These rides will start at 5:30 p.m. (start locations and destinations are on the ride calendar). The purpose of these rides is to build speed and maintain a steady pace. There will be a short "power bar break" halfway. Maps

will be available. If you want to get better at cycling, join us every Thursday evening.

Last minute rides: If you would like to add a last-minute ride for a weekday, contact Connie Reitzug at 460-1533 by Sunday afternoon. For a weekend call Thursday afternoon. Riders' essentials: All bicycle riders are urged to wear a helmet, carry repair items — such as spare inner tubes — and first aid supplies on every ride.

Past pedaling

anne heller

Historical highlights of TWBC's 110 years

100-year-old safety questions: lights? Brakes?

Safety is a constant concern for the cyclist. Bicyclists study and debate where and how to ride to avoid untoward incidents with cars or pedestrians. Should one ride in the regular lane of traffic? On the sidewalk? What kind of lights are most visible to oncoming traffic? What about brakes and other equipment?

What is a cyclist to do?

Not too surprisingly, these are questions which cyclists have asked for 100 and more years. Perhaps someday we will have definitive answers. Personally, I am not counting on that. From my observations and reading, safety questions are like health and equipment questions; they are with us always and they provide constant fodder for authors of magazine articles.

In the April 1900 issue of *Contemporary Review*, a British publication, is an article titled "Cycle Law in the Twentieth Century." Interestingly, the author, H. Graves, does not see a problem between the bicycle and the automobile. The area of contention is between the pedestrian and the bicycle.

Until the advent of the bicycle, horse-drawn vehicles and pedestrians shared the roadway. Necessarily, the carriage was a noisy conveyance which the pedestrian

could hear coming. With the bicycle, an "essentially noiseless vehicle" on the roads, the pedestrian no longer had ample warning to avoid a collision.

Mr. Graves facetiously suggests that the answer to the problem might be "that collisions will gradually eliminate such of the population as are unable to detect the approach of the silent vehicles, and that, by the thorny road of the survival of the fittest, evolution" will take care of the problem.

He preferred a universal system of footpaths for the exclusive use of pedestrians, who then abstain from using the roadways except at their own peril. At the same time, Mr. Graves opposed the idea of cyclists using the footpaths. He argues that bicyclists should stay in the roadway where their movements are predictable and expected.

When riding in unexpected places, such as a sidewalk, there is a greater chance of a close encounter that can result in "infinite ill-feeling and a most unfair strain upon our coroners." Mr. Graves was in favor of a law making lamps obligatory on bicycles. While he was against the use of acetylene lamps, their "effect on horses is disastrous, and they have an absolutely blinding effect on the traveler," he did not see a problem with attaching a Chinese lantern to a bike.

He also addresses the question of right-of-way. While the idea that traffic on a major road took precedence over traffic on an intersecting minor road, there was some question about what to do when two minor roads intersected. Being an Englishman, Mr. Graves looked to the sea to come up with a solution.

As he pointed out, "This difficulty is provided for at sea, and an analogous rule might easily be framed by which a vehicle should give way to another 'on its starboard bow,' or in ordinary phraseology give way to another coming from a right-hand direction. Thus a vehicle going north should give way to one going west" and so on.

As unlikely as it seems today, one of the burning questions about cycling in 1900 dealt with brakes. Not which ones worked best, but were they necessary at all. Let me quote extensively from Mr. Graves on this question. "The question of compulsory brakes seems to need legislation, especially as the way has been

prepared for it by requiring motor cars to carry them. I am aware that my suggestion will be received with contumely in many quarters, and I confidently expect to be regarded as a kind of blackleg for advocating this reform. It will, of course, be urged that a skillful rider is as safe without a brake as with one, and, hills apart, I frankly admit this. I may confess that for ten years I rode brakeless, during which time I had two collisions, one with a drunken woman who darted from a public-house across a narrow street -- a catastrophe which no skill could have averted -- and a second when I ran into a cab in a dense fog.

"In both of these cases I managed so to reduce my pace that no harm was done. My reason for dispensing with the brake was that there was then no really good and light one in existence; and the merciful man regards the life of his tyres. Upon the introduction of the modern rim-brakes I became a joyful convert. For despite those who assert that by back-pedaling a man derives recuperative energy from mother earth, I cannot believe that any sensible man really likes back-pedaling down steep hills."

So, take it from Mr. Graves, do not ride on the sidewalk, do carry a light at night, do yield to traffic on the right and do install brakes on your bike if you have not done so already.

The 'Back Home to Indiana' Tour

Steve Lay

With all the bicycle tours to celebrate the new millennium, we thought we should do one. This tour not only celebrates the new millennium, 20 years of marriage and 24 years since our last ride across America. Not really caring to retrace the same original-Adventure-Cycling route, we decided to take the Northern Tier and Great Lake Route with a few changes.

This is a self-contained tour, complete with camping and cooking, although eating out and sleeping indoors is not out of the picture just not the norm, but hopefully limited to the ugly days. This tour leaves Sat., July 29, and we plan to

be in Indiana by the last week in September. The distance is 3,750 miles more or less.

If this sounds like the tour for you call 253-759-1816. We have people interested in going the first weekend and the first week, which should put us around Sand Point, Idaho.

Except for shorter distance riders we are limiting the overall size of the group to 6 to 8 riders for the whole tour.