

Tacoma Wheelmen's Bicycle Club

Newsletter

Founded 1888

September 2000

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SIR Offers Marathon Cycling Randonneuring Offers Long Rides

Peg Winczewski

It all started quite by accident, actually, as many great experiences do. I was surfing the web on a friend's computer, randomly looking up different bicycling sites when I happened upon the BC Randonneur club. I had never heard of the word "randonneur" but soon found out it is a French term which translated into English means marathon cycling.

I was interested in doing long distance bike rides as a way to check out unfamiliar territory in the northwest. Canada seemed a bit of a stretch, but when I inquired about it at the BC booth at bike expo, I was told that there was a local club. I was unable to locate any information on it until, during a

Wheelmen's club ride, Ken Stagg informed me about SIR (Seattle International Randonneurs). He gave me the web site address and told me that he was considering doing some of their organized rides.

I read up on some of the specific aspects of a randonneur ride or brevet, as it is called. Each distance has a total time limit including rest periods as well as riding time. The distances range from 200-1200 kilometers. Riders are encouraged but

not required to have fenders with certain specifications. Headlights and taillights are required for nighttime riding.

The rest stops or "controles" are set up along various stages of the course and are in locations in which food and drinks are provided or can be purchased as needed. The ultimate goal for many randonneur participants is to complete a brevet series of 200, 300, 400, and 600 kilometer rides within a specified time limit. These distances are required to be completed in order to qualify for PBP which occurs every 4 years.

PBP is Paris-Brest-Paris a 1200 kilometer ride which originated in 1891, and is considered the oldest bicycling event still run on a regular basis. Professionals are not allowed in the ride, although many participants race to finish in the fastest time.

I discovered that SIR had scheduled their 200K on April 1, which was early in the year for me, as my first 200K is usually done at Millersvanyia in mid May. I decided to go ahead and give it a try even though the only ride I had done over 50 miles this year was the McClinchy mile (77 mile) in mid March, and I had suffered the last 30 miles of it.

Ken and I decided to carpool to Kent for the start, and when we arrived there were about 20 men and 2 women awaiting the start of the ride. The ride organizer provided a course map and a brevet card which he explained needed to be initialed and dated with the time at each "controle" along the route.

These controles are meant to ensure that no rider has taken a short cut of the course either by mistake or on purpose. There are also secret controles, not designated on the brevet card, in areas in which it would be to a rider's advantage to cut some mileage off the route. There are designated time ranges in which you must get to the controle before it closes. If you fail to make it at the latest time then you do not receive credit for completing the ride. These ranges are fairly generous, so I wasn't worried about it.

It turned out to be a gorgeous day, though a bit warm. However, the ride was comfortable for the most part with a minimum of hills. Ken and I managed to

complete the ride well within the 13 hour time limit even after having a leisurely lunch at the controle in Eatonville. I had to get used to keeping the odometer on throughout the ride even during rest periods, which reflects in a low MPH average. A veteran randonneur rider commented that he tries to average 20K per hour (12.4 MPH) during the brevets, but this becomes more difficult to do as the mileage and elevation increase with each ensuing brevet.

The 300K brevet was on May 13, and would start in Clinton on Whidbey Island proceeding along Deception Pass, north to Bellingham, down to Sedro Wooley, Lake Cavanaugh, Arlington, Granite Falls, and finishing in Mulkiteo. The time limit on this ride was 20 hours, with an elevation gain of 8500 feet. I was hoping to finish in 15 hours and avoid as much night riding as possible. I checked out the course earlier since I was unfamiliar with the area and realized that I would be finishing in the dark. The day of the brevet was a perfect day for bicycling, with overcast skies and temperatures in the low 60's.

Early in the brevet, I found myself riding in a paceline with 4 men for the initial 50 miles but felt they were a bit too fast for me. As well, they were too rigid on the rules of their paceline, which took some of the joy out of it as I preferred to check out the scenery rather than stare at the wheel in front of me.

I rode the remaining 140 miles alone, experienced 2 flats, and finished in just under 16 hours. The last two hours were in the dark, and although I had headlights I felt a bit scared and vulnerable riding alone. This was my first experience riding at night, and I was glad I had checked out the course previously as it would have been easy to get lost even with written directions.

At this point, my randonneuring experience was so far so good, but I knew there were more challenges ahead of me as my ultimate goal this year would be to complete a 400K (250 mile) brevet which would qualify as my longest ride ever. In next month's newsletter I will let you know how I did.

Bike Tour in The Netherlands

D.J. DeYoung

In 1999, while attending the Seattle Bike Show with my nephew, who was helping me find a good, reasonably priced bike, to improve my biking enjoyment. One of the booths that we passed was for a Bike & Barge tour in the Netherlands. I was immediately interested as my wife and I had been in the Netherlands for a short visit and I hoped to go back some day for a more relaxing look at the country, particularly the northern province of Friesland.

After due consideration, I contacted them through their web page, www.bikebarge.com, for their 2000 tours. Bill Snow, the director, immediately sent me a list of proposed tours and I signed up for the 15-day Circle North tour. It started in Amsterdam, up through North Holland, into Friesland, down around the IJsselmeer Sea, and back to Amsterdam.

My flight was a direct flight from Seattle to Amsterdam, arriving early on Saturday, May 20. We were met at the airport by Saskia, one of our two tour guides, and taken by van to the barge, really a 120-foot boat, the Lisa Marleen. There were 26 people on the tour, 20 from the Puget Sound area, two from Portland, and four from California ranging in age from their late 40's to over 70 years old.

After a brief orientation and assignment to our onboard cabin and roommate, we set sail for our first town, Volendam, where we were assigned our bikes and taken on a short tour to become comfortable with our bike and basic rules of the road.

All of our meals prepared by an excellent cook, were family style and provided as part of the tour. Breakfasts were typically Dutch with fruit, various breads, meats and cheese, plus cereal for those that wanted it. After breakfast, we prepared our own lunches for later in the day, and talk about what we would see on the next day's tour.

There were two bike tours every day, a short under-30 and a long-40-mile tour, or you could stay aboard the boat as it sailed to the next destination. The highest hill we encountered was about 45 feet above sea level, so neither tour was that

difficult; and Holland is noted not only for its many canals, but its thousands of bicycles and excellent bike paths.

We would leave the boat about 9 a.m. each morning. Mid-morning we would stop in a small village to look around; or there might be a schedule tour, or the guide would mention about a little pastry shop up the way, were we interested?

Lunch made for a very relaxing ride, definitely not for the Type-A cyclist. We returned to the boat about 5 each evening. Evenings always included a town walk lead by one of the guides who pointed out areas of interest and provided some local history.

Special scheduled tours included a working windmill pumping water into one of the many canals, a cheese factory, a 16th century working planetarium in Franeker, a pottery factory in Makkum, a cattle auction in Leeuwarden, and a WWII bunker as part of the Ijsselmeer dike.

We also toured the fortifications of Naarden, a 17th century town and a fortified castle in Muiden built in the 13th century. We were provided with museum passes, which were good at all museums in the Netherlands.

The weather is very similar to the Puget Sound area, and we happened to have about a week of showers and wind with one very stormy day that kept most of us indoors. One small group decided to ride to our next destination and ended up catching a train into town. After we had sailed to our next stop, some of us took advantage of a tailwind, biked about seven miles to a small town to see the museums and caught a train back to the boat.

The ten days of biking ended too quickly. Thursday was a day to see the sights in Amsterdam. Friday we left the Netherlands at about 2 p.m., arriving in Seattle at 3:30 p.m. after a 10-hour flight.

The two-week vacation went very quickly. I rode about 370 miles, typical for those in the large group. Would I recommend this tour company? You bet. The boat was comfortable, good meals, good crew and tour leaders, good bikes, and a good group of bikers to share this low-key biking vacation.

Headwaters Century Come out for Sept. 10th Event

Ralph Wessels

The months of planning and organizing are finally coming to an end for TWBC's newest ride, the Headwaters Century.

The ride will be on September 10th with registration starting at 7:00 AM. Ride options are 45 miles, 100K and 100 miles.

One small change is that the start will be at the Enumclaw Junior High School, which is right next to the Enumclaw High School. The high school is still undergoing construction and won't be available as anticipated.

There may still be an opportunity to volunteer for the ride by the time you read this. Contact Ralph Wessels at 857-5658 or Carol Davis at 857-5396 to inquire. Volunteers will receive a commemorative Headwaters Century 2000 mug, get to ride for free, and will have a lot of fun.

Many thanks to those who have already volunteered.

So come on out and enjoy this great fall bike ride!

From The President's Handlebars

Anne Heller

It is September and time for two important Wheelmen events. First of all, on September 10, the club is sponsoring a rejuvenated Headwaters Century ride in rural South King County. If you haven't done so already, give Ralph Wessels or Ernie Stephenson a call, they are eager to have your assistance with the ride. After you finish your stint at the registration table or the food stop, plan on doing the ride. As we all know, summer begins in the Northwest after the Fourth of July and extends well past Labor Day. Headwaters promises to be an ideal ride on a lovely day.

Secondly, plan to attend the general membership meeting on September 19.

This is the one true business meeting we have each year. It is the time to discuss and agree upon a budget for the club for the coming year.

Without input from the membership, the Board operates in a vacuum. Come to the meeting and help decide issues that affect the Club and, through our donations, the local biking community.

I hope to see you there.

Bicycle Alliance of Washington

PSRC Bike/Ped Staff Resource Group Participating on Puget Sound Regional Council's Resource Group to provide input as they update their regional nonmotorized transportation plan. We're identifying what's already on the ground, what's scheduled to be constructed, and finding missing links in the network.

Olympia trail possibility Exchanged several e-mails and spoke with Larry Leveen, a member of the Olympia Bike Advisory Committee, about rail-trails and railbanking. Olympia is interested in the possibility of converting a rail line into a public trail if it is abandoned. Nothing imminent is on the horizon, but trains have not run for a couple of years. It's being discussed because the West Bay area is going through redevelopment.

Interurban Trail Shoreline has begun designing their portion of the Interurban Trail, which will run from 145 St to 155 St and 185 St to the Snohomish County line. SnoCo Parks hopes to construct a section of the trail between 152 St NE and Lake Stevens soon. Seattle is still trying to work out details of an agreement with City Light before proceeding with their portion of the Interurban. There is some known opposition from adjacents in Seattle and we will be ready to organize trail supporters in the north end when the time is right. An interjurisdictional working group has formed to seek funds and develop a historic interpretive program and signage along the Interurban Trail.

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STP EARNS A "10"

Cynthia Hammer

To be interesting, an article should contain adversities, challenges, and obstacles. Sorry to have to make this boring, but the STP was perfect in every way. My riding companions were great: Dianne Koch and Tony Thomas.

They waited for me when I lagged behind on the hills. And they bolstered my ego by commenting on "your strength for your age," when I took the lead in hooking up with the 20-mph pacelines.

We had wonderful weather, not sunny, but not raining either, Hallelujah!

Occasionally, it was cool enough to put on a windbreaker, but mostly, we felt fine wearing just shorts and shirts.

Some headwinds on Saturday, but you'll have to ask Tony about those as we drafted behind him whenever the going got tough.

No bike problems, no flat tires, and no injuries. The rest stops had enough variety of foods. I always looked forward to the next one. The route was well marked, and fellow cyclists knew the rules of the road so I felt safe even when there were lots of cyclists on the road.

The finale in Portland was memorable, complete with an "I finished STP" emblem, free showers, music, food, beer, sunshine and comfortable chairs to sit on. We laid around for two hours before boarding the bus for Seattle. Watching the sunset, dozing off and on, and chatting with fellow cyclists on the bus became the perfect conclusion to a perfect ride.

Other TWBC riders on the STP include Carla Gramlich whom we often saw looking for Steve Brown, and Steve Brown whom we sometimes saw looking for Carla. Occasionally, we saw them, together.

I also saw Peggy Fjetland, Ernie Stephenson and Gary Moore, and I heard that Ray Fjetland was there. I hope their STPs also scored a 10.

Over half of the 8000 riders were doing their first STP. If you haven't done yours yet, think "next year." Try it--you'll like it--because, boring though it maybe, what's not to like?

Want Ads

Mike Welch

E-mail address: sclays@aol.com

FOR SALE Minoura Mag-Rollers with magnetic resistance upgrade. Unit is in great shape, \$25.00 253.874.0322

Karen Nye

(253) 756-0167

WANTED TO BUY an adult 17" hybrid - comfort bike with front fork suspension.

Would prefer seat suspension, too.

Claire Hagens

(253) 752-0857

FOR SALE Green Trek 1200 Road Bike 49 cm Ritchie clipless pedals, Shimano RSX components, Aluminum frame, chromoly stem. About 200 miles. \$600.

Bill Newman

E-mail address: billn@lakewoodpres.org

Need bike rack and panniers.

Local Iowan Rides 5th RAGBRAI

Anne Heller

Some random thoughts on my fifth Ragbrai. The Weather: A week of very tolerable 85 degree daytime temperatures with cooling at night into the 60's. One morning brought a rip-roaring thunder storm accompanied by ½" hail.

Fortunately, a nearby farmhouse had a covered porch and an open garage, both of which quickly filled with of cyclists and their bikes.

The Ride: 518 miles and 15,780' of elevation gain. Don't believe people who say Iowa is flat. One 75 mile day of rolling hills included a 15-20 mph headwind.

The Food: The usual. Homemade pie, homemade ice cream, lots of pancakes, smoothies, 1 ½" pork chops, lasagna, church suppers, Dutch poffertjes, Danish aebleskivers and much more.

The Scenery: Yes, there were corn fields and soybean fields and hog lots. There were also scenes from Grant Wood paintings, rolling green hills and rivers and lakes. Many of the towns had beautiful squares with 19th century courthouses.

The Teams: Too many to name and some not suitable for discussion in a family publication like the Wheelmen's newsletter. However, a few worth mentioning. A 15 member Italian racing team from Venice. 150 members of the Air Force team. Team Tutu with 20 people wearing ballerina tutu's. The waomen wore them on their hips, the men wore them on their helmets.

The Riders: 10,000 people on bikes descended on towns with as few as 50 residents. Many of those 10,000 riders looked no different than riders seen on any club ride. However, there were a large number of riders you will never see on a "regular" ride. Such as: the two men from Missouri who rode the distance on high-wheel "penny farthing" bikes, the man who rode without a saddle, the man whose entire wardrobe consisted of shoes and a leather loin cloth, the man who towed a canoe and a stereo system behind his bike, the woman who carried her dog Joey on the back of her bike, the California family on the custom-made, \$11,000 bicycle built for five.

The Entertainment: See above.

FIFTY-TWO BICYCLES AT A TIME

If you obsess about all things bicycle then this site is for you.

Bicycle playing cards have been around for more than a century; they were first produced in 1885. Check this site out to see many examples of card designs through the years. <http://www.djmcadam.com/bicycle-playing-cards.html>

Bicycle Alliance of Washington Trails Program Report

Trail Legislation Congressman Jim Ryun of Kansas introduced HR 4086, another anti-railbanking bill. Coordinated our advocacy efforts with Marianne Fowler of Rails-to-Trails Conservancy. Peter G. wrote letters to key elected officials asking them to oppose this bill. We contacted Jay Inslee's office voicing our opposition to the bill and was assured that Inslee would oppose it. (Inslee sat on the committee where the bill was referred.) Also asked trail groups around the state to do the same. At RTC's request, we contacted the Bicycle Federation of Wisconsin and asked them to talk to Rep. Obey's office (key figure on Appropriations Committee) to seek his assistance to stop the bill if turned up as a rider. BFW followed through. Bill was stopped in committee.

East Lake Sammamish Trail Continue to work with the Friends of East Lake Sammamish Trail and others on getting this trail opened. Used e-mail and newsletter to keep members apprised of this project. Worked with Friends to help turn out 200 trail supporters at the June public hearing in Bellevue. Barb testified on behalf of the Bike Alliance. Helped Jennifer identify other key testifiers for the hearing. Encouraged members who did not attend the hearing to submit written comments. Also helped Jennifer scout the Burke-Gilman Trail and the East Lake Sammamish Trail for photo shoot sites for a brochure that is to be designed for the campaign. Contacted some of our Eastside members and invited them to a Friends meeting with County Councilmember David Irons.

Burke-Gilman Trail Continue to provide support to the Friends of Burke-Gilman Trail and regularly attend their strategy meetings as they continue to work on the completion of the missing link. Arranged a meeting for the Friends with Adobe to ask for their support. We were well received and received a commitment that Adobe would send a letter of support to City Council. Spoke with Doug Walker and he also wrote to City Council and asked several others to do the same. Members of the Friends have met with all Councilmembers to ask for their support to complete the missing link. Heidi Wills has been the most receptive and she has walked the corridor with members of the Friends. The group used a generous donation to hire an architect who has drawn plans to show several alternatives to complete the missinglink through industrial Ballard. They recently held a meeting to unveil their plans to trail supporters. They will begin meeting with other community groups to review their plans and solicit community support. BGT Count Captained the Gasworks Park station for the Burke-Gilman Trail count. Lined up volunteers to staff this station for two days in May. Survey was

organized by the Cascade Bicycle Club and is conducted every 5 years. We will have access to final survey results, which will be helpful data to use for future trails advocacy.

ProParks 2000 Sent e-mail and made phone calls to get some trail advocates to the Seattle ProParks 2000 public hearing in June. We submitted comments supporting the Mayor's recommendation for trails and the overall levy. City Council voted to put a scaled back version of the levy on the November ballot. Snohomish County Centennial Trail Political pressure applied by trail advocates has paid off. The Sno-Arl Trail Coalition, the Bike Alliance and others contacted Senators Gorton and Murray and Rep. Jack Metcalf's office and asked for assistance in getting some action from the Army Corp of Engineers. (SnoCo Parks submitted a permit application over a year ago to extend the Centennial Trail to Arlington) Gorton's office followed through and the Corp is now processing the permit. The Parks Dept. is designing the trail from Arlington north to the Skagit County line.

Construction funds for this segment is in hand.

Arlington-Darrington Trail Had a great conversation with this trail's project manager at the Centennial Trail festival. SnoCo Parks is just beginning to get their master plan process under way with technical assistance from the National Park Service. The County will open 6 miles of this trail for interim use this fall from Darrington to Swede Heaven Road. The Darrington community is supportive of this effort. The County may also open a segment of this trail near Arlington later next year.

Chelan County Trails Received a reply from Chelan PUD indicating they and the relicensing stakeholders will consider trails in future recreation planning efforts as we had requested. We had submitted comments in favor of including trails at the request of the Chelan Trails Committee. The Committee is working to develop a network of multi-use trails around Chelan.

North Spokane Corridor WSDOT released an SEIS for the North Spokane corridor (WSDOT plans to build a limited access highway connecting I-90 with SR

395) that now includes a separated trail from SR 395 to the Centennial Trail. The Bicycle Alliance submitted comments supporting the inclusion of a trail and we contacted our Spokane members asking them to attend the public hearing and offer similar comments.

I-90 Snoqualmie Summit Expansion/John Wayne Trail Submitted comments opposing the proposed alternative that would dislocate the John Wayne Trail. Received a WSDOT response acknowledging that impacts to the John Wayne Trail was the most overriding concern raised during the scoping process. That alternative will not be eliminated from the EIS analysis. We will keep our eyes on this process.

Bellevue Activities Organized an e-mail campaign among our Bellevue members to put pressure on the Transportation Department to fill the vacant bicycle/pedestrian planner position and to reconvene their Bicycle-Pedestrian Citizen Advisory Group, and to provide adequate support staff for the group. The pressure has paid off. I received notice that the planner position has been filled and that the CAG will be reconvened this fall. The newly hired planner will provide staff support to the group.

Called on our Bellevue members to attend a public meeting and submit comments on the proposed updates to the Transportation Capital Improvements Program (CIP). Projects under consideration include the development of the Eastgate Trail, as well as bike lane connections to the SR520 Trail and Lake Washington Loop Trail.
