


PEDALER



The Newsletter of the McHenry County Bicycle Club
Pedaling Together Since 1980

April 2008

2008 MCBC Board of Directors

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To Join or Renew

Send your \$15 check and completed membership form to:

MCBC Membership
P.O. Box 917
Crystal Lake, IL
60039-0917

The updated Event Schedule is available at:

www.mchenrybicycleclub.org

Have you recently changed your e-mail or home address? Help keep MCBC records up-to-date. If you have a change, please contact Cathy Cwick at:
cacwick@yahoo.com

THE UDDER NEEDS YOU!
Volunteers wanted
(see page 5)

WANTED
Ride Leaders---weekdays and weekends
Geoff: mumfordg@chater.net

UDDER MEETING

Wednesday, April 2
7:00 p.m.
McHenry Township
Whispering Hills Community Center.
4708 Jeffrey St.
McHenry IL

GENERAL MEETING

Wednesday, April 30 at 7:00 p.m.
McHenry Township Senior Center
3703 No. Richmond Road
McHenry, IL
Rte 31 across from the Johnsburg Water Tower

The Social Chairperson is still vacant. If you are interested, please call Anne Lunk at (815) 455-9239

MCBC ROAD CLEAN-UP

Our semi annual road clean-up is scheduled for Wednesday, April 16. Wednesday, April 23 will be the back-up date in case of bad weather. Maybe the snow will be gone. You will receive an e-mail from Mary informing you of the place and time.
(see the article on page 10)

PLASTIC RIDE 2008

This year's Plastic Ride will be held **Tuesday, July 29 and 30**. Please make your own reservation at the Best Western in Janesville (608)756-4511 prior to July 15th. When making your reservation, please inform them that you are with the **McHenry County Bicycle Club** and use the **Group ID # 1975**. The room rate is \$60.00. Please let me know if you will be booking this trip with us.



Madame Prez Sez



Tom Baer
Vice President

SUPPORT YOUR

CLUB WEBSITE!

Log on often

And
Tell your
Friends

www.mchenrybicycleclub.org

MCBC is a Not-For-Profit Social Club, which donates significant funds from our Invitational to bicycling organizations. MCBC has no employees or otherwise paid or compensated Club Members or Officers.

MCBC 2008 CAMPING TRIPS
Ruth Blair – Camp Coordinator
(815) 943-7884 dorandruth@charter.net

This is the schedule planned for the 2008 MCBC camping trips. Days reserved are for Sunday through Friday, but some campers do extend the days to arrive earlier. You need to reserve the days you can go. It is important that you register at each campground as soon as possible to get included in the MCBC group area. Contact the host for the trip to get more information and to let them know you plan to come.

At least 3 to 4 days of rides are planned starting on Monday. Rides vary in length from 30 to 60 miles. Canoeing/kayaking and hiking are often available. Maps and Cue sheets are provided. Motel listings can be found on the Internet or by calling the Chamber of Commerce for each area.

MAY 18-23 THOMSON CAUSEWAY RECREATION AREA, IL Hosts: Chuck & Kathy Lemke, 847-223-5394, kclmke@aol.com This campground is located on the Mississippi River in Thomson, IL only a couple of hours away. Rides include the paved Great River Bike Trail as well as country roads. This is an Army Corps of Engineers camping area. Reservations can be made at www.Recreation.gov or at 877-444-6777. See a full view of the campground on the web site. Golden Age Passports are accepted. The hosts suggest reserving early in the Hickory Point Area, sites 112-126. (Planned rides will start on Tuesday, May 20)

JUNE 15-20 BOULDER JUNCTION, WI. Host: Pat Kellogg, 815-459-6049, pkellogg@stans.net The campers continue to repeat the trip to this area for the beautiful country roads through the north woods of Wisconsin. Included are rides to Presque Isle, the Indian reservation and paved trail/road around Boulder Junction and Saynor. Make your reservations using the form found on the web site, www.camp-holiday.com Confirmations will be sent in May. CAMP HOLIDAY 715-385-2264

JULY 13-18 DOOR COUNTY, WI. Hosts: Dorwin & Ruth Blair, 815-943-7884, dorandruth@charter.net This annual trip is a favorite of all campers. Rides are planned throughout the peninsula on secondary roads to all communities and points of interest from Sturgeon Bay to Gills Rock and on Washington Island. BAILEYS GROVE CAMPGROUND, 920-839-2559 campnowwi@yahoo.com,

July 29-30 PLASTIC RIDE. Hosts: Mary Lou and Geoff Mumford, 262-877-9132. mumfordg@charter.net

AUG 17-22 SPRING GREEN WI Hosts: Roger & Elaine Foin, 815-678-2132. roger@xjrdesign.com This camping trip has been most enjoyable as rides are often along the Wisconsin River and through the hills on countryside roads. One day of canoeing or kayaking the river is included for those who want. Points of interest include The House on the Rock and tours of the Frank Lloyd Wright estate. The Foins have reserved 10 sites for the group at WISCONSIN RIVERSIDE RESORT www.wiriverside.com. Please contact the Foins to get a site instead of the resort as they prefer only one contact for the group. For NON-CAMPERS, Cabins are available, contact the camp grounds directly for reservations.

SEPT 14-19 6- Day Ride. TRIRI September Escape 2008. www.triri.org

SEPT 20-23 Lanesboro, MN. Drive to Lanesboro on Saturday, Sept 20. Camp in the town park campground. Ride the 50 mile Root River Pave Trail for 2 days. Hosts: Dorwin and Ruth Blair. dorandruth@charter.net

SEPT 23-27 WILTON, WI County Park. Tuesday, Sept 23, drive to Wilton, WI and set up camp in the county park. Plan to ride the hills of the Amish area in the Kickapoo Valley for 3 or 4 days. Riding the El Roy Sparta trail and canoeing on the Kickapoo River are other options.
(Hosts: The Blair's, see above)

OCT. 5-10 MADISON, WI, DANE COUNTY PARKS Hosts: Andy & Anne Lunk, 815-455-9239, aanno@mc.net This was a new trip for the campers in 2007. Riders requested to repeat the trip. The campground is quite nice and is located near miles of paved trails and roads that are routed for bikes. Madison is rated as one of the best areas for bike riding. Reservations need to be made soon as sites are limited. Ask for a site between 21 and 29 where we hope the group can be together. LAKE FARM PARK UNIT CAMPGROUND (608-246-3896)
Contact Anne Lunk for a brochure and more information.

All campgrounds have electric hookups and nice washrooms. The group includes those with tents to those with big motor homes and non-campers. Camping groups vary from 15 to 28 people. Check the web site for more information about camping activities. COME JOIN THE FUN! If you want to be added to the MCBC camper's list to receive advance information please let Ruth know dorandruth@charter.net

2008 Event Schedule

Rides start promptly at the times indicated. Please allow enough time to get yourself and your bike ready to ride. Bikes should be in good working order. **DON'T FORGET YOUR HELMET!**

Date/Time	Description	Leader Info.	Directions
WEEKLY RIDES			
Sundays 7:00 a.m.	Fast Folly (Road or Mountain Bike Mania?) Join Dean Setzler & CO. for an early FAST ride: great training ride for the animals. Call Dean the day before for details.	Dean Setzler [815] 675-6251 dsetzler@imaxx.net	Intermatic Plaza south parking lot; SR-12 north to Spring Grove, IL
Tuesdays 9:30 a.m.	Northern Illinois: Varied routes to Hebron and Woodstock: 15 to 25 miles round trip at a leisurely pace. [new this year]	Geoff Mumford [262] 877-9132 mumfordg@charter.net	Keystone Canoe Basin Keystone Rd and Barnard Mill Rd. Richmond, IL
Tuesdays 9:30 a.m.	Northern Illinois: Varied Routes to Hebron, Woodstock and Harvard: 35 to 50 miles round trip.	Geoff Mumford [262] 877-9132 mumfordg@charter.net	Keystone Canoe Basin Keystone Rd and Barnard Mill Rd. Richmond, IL
Thursdays 9:30 a.m.	Southern Wisconsin: Varied routes to Twin Lakes and Lake Geneva: 15 to 25 mile round trip at a leisurely pace.	Geoff Mumford [262] 877-9132 mumfordg@charter.net	Veterans Memorial Park Fellows Rd, Genoa City, WI
Thursdays 9:30 a.m.	Southern Wisconsin: Varied routes to Twin Lakes, Lake Geneva and Fontana: 35 to 50 mile round trip.	Geoff Mumford [262] 877-9132 mumfordg@charter.net	Veterans Memorial Park Fellows Rd, Genoa City, WI
RIDES & EVENTS			
Saturdays	Rides will be announced on our MCBC Event e-mail on the preceding Friday		
Sundays	Rides will be announced on our MCBC Event e-mail on the preceding Friday		



1984 MCBC "ROLL FOR GOLD" (See article on page 7)

UDDERINGS

The polar ice cap is beginning to melt, much to the dismay of many Club cross-country skiers. However, lo and behold, there is an expanse of pavement! Pavement, a surface upon one rides a bike. In approximately two months, over a thousand riders will take to this pavement on June 1st for the 26th Annual Udder Century. The Udder is the premier invitational ride in Chicagoland and the main event for MCBC fund raising.

Preparations for the ride began during the dark frozen nights of winter. New chairpersons were arranged, marketing messages were sent to numerous publications and plans for the rest stops were finalized. Much work remains to be done, including the recruitment of volunteers. **We sure could use your help. Please give one of our chairpersons a call and volunteer. Chairpersons in need of volunteers are:**

Registration – Jackie Homan
 Garden Prairie Rest Stop – Steve and Debbie Edmunds
 Beck's Woods Rest Stop - Mike and Cheryl Lynch
 Darien, WI Rest Stop – Geoff and Mary Lou Mumford
 Road Signs – Dick Homan

Book now while positions are still available!!

Registration for the Udder began in early January with the update to the MCBC web site and the opening of Active.com for online registration. Our brochure has been sent to the League of Illinois Bicyclists (LIB) who will distribute them to bike shops in the Chicagoland area and to cyclists who participated in many of the area's invitational rides. As of March 11th, we have 61 cyclists pre-registered, which is about 25% ahead of last year.

Monitoring the Udder email box requires me to answer questions regarding the Udder. I have also noted how much money the Club will bring in as soon as I claim all the money the Club has won in poor African nations that need someone to help get their money out of the country. The Club is also the heir to many rich people who have passed away without any other heirs. I will be leaving on my extended trip shortly and hope to be back before the Udder. With the all the winnings I am proposing making all volunteers this year eligible for the following prizes:

First Prize - An all expense paid weekend for two in Chemung, IL (home of Beck's Woods). It also includes all you can eat meals at the local Citgo station.

Second Prize – Dinner for four at any 5 star restaurant in Garden Prairie. Appetizers will be served at the rest stop.

Third Prize – An evening of “clubbing” for two, in downtown Darien, WI. Get out your formal wear for this one as you tour one trendy club after another.

Stay tuned for the announcement of the winners after the Udder.....

Tom Baer, Head Udder



The TREK “UDDER” Edition

CLUB RIDING RULES

Club riding is probably safer than going it alone. MCBC rides will take you on the least traveled, safest routes, and if you get into trouble, there will be someone around to help out. On the other hand, the bike-to-bike collision is a very real hazard when many bikes ride close together. Also, your view of the road can be restricted. Following are basic safe cycling rules you should apply to when riding with a group of fellow club riders.

Announcing Hazards: When riding in a tight group, most of the cyclists do not have a good view of the road surface ahead, so it is important to announce holes, gravel, grates and other hazards. Indicate road hazards by pointing down to the left or right and by shouting “hole”, “bump”, etc. where required for safety. “Car up”, “car back” or “dog up”, etc. are pretty straightforward warnings to the group that are your important contributions.

Be Predictable: Group riding requires even more attention to predictability than riding alone. Other riders expect you to ride straight, at a constant speed unless you indicate differently.

Communication: Use hand and verbal signals to communicate with members of the group and with other traffic.

- Hand Signals: Basically, you point to where you’re going (just like a car). Hand down means you are slowing or stopping.
- Verbal Warnings: Along with hand signals, verbally warn cyclists behind you if you are stopping, turning, etc.
-

Change Position Correctly: Slower traffic stays right, so you should try to pass others on their left. Say “on your left” to warn the cyclist ahead that you are passing. If you need to pass someone on the right, say “passing on your right” clearly since this is an unusual maneuver.

Safe Drafting: You’re really testing your reaction times if you follow another cyclist closer than two or three feet. Even that distance requires extra attention. Personally, most of us would rather keep a ten-foot gap and enjoy the scenery.

Move Off the Road When You Stop: Don’t interfere with traffic. The lead rider should pull forward in the stopping area so the other riders can pull in behind.

Ride One or Two Across: Ride as appropriate to the roadway and traffic conditions and where allowed by law. **Always single up** when cars are trying to pass you if the lane is wide enough for them to safely do so.

Leave A Gap For Cars: When you are impeding faster traffic, leave a gap for cars between every three or four bicycles. This way motorists can take advantage of shorter passing intervals and eventually move piecemeal around the entire group.

Be ALERT At Intersections: The lead rider should say “slowing” or “stopping” to alert those behind to the change in speed. While it is courteous to announce the condition of the intersection to the following cyclists (“**Clear**”, “**car right**”, etc.), **each cyclist is responsible for verifying that the way is really clear before entering the intersection.**

Teamwork: Give a helping hand, watch for other members’ problems (loose straps, loose equipment, tire condition, etc.). It’s what makes club riding special. Especially be considerate and helpful to new and inexperienced group riders.

AN ARTICLE FROM THE PAST---DO YOU REMEMBER WHEN?

Bike Club plans “Roll for the Gold”.

The McHenry County Bicycle Club will present “Roll for the Gold” a bicycle race on Saturday, January 28 1984, at the Spring Hill Mall in Dundee.

The race will begin at 10 a.m. in the center of the Mall and continue until 4:00 p.m. Pledges and donations have been given in advance and all proceeds will go to the U.S. Olympic Cycling Team.

The general public is invited to attend this race and observe the new sport of ultra marathon cycling.

Those wishing to donate to the Olympic cycling fund may mail donations to McHenry County Bicycling Club P.O. Box 173 Ringwood IL.60072

Roll for the Gold will be a six-hour race covering at least 200 mile. Seven area bicycle clubs will compete. Several members of this team will be ultra marathon cyclists, including Lon Haldeman, Harvard, winner of this summer’s race across America, a 3,100 mile race which extended from Santa Monica, to Atlantic City N.J. Haldeman covered this distance in 11 days. John Silker, Woodstock, fifth place finisher in this race, will be a part of the team, as will be Susan Notorangelo Haldeman, transcontinental record holder for women cyclists. Notorangelo recently competed in the Paris-Brest-Paris race in France.

Crystal Lake Herald 1/18/84

YA GOTTA START SOMEWHERE!

We have all had to make the decision at some time to start somewhere. You have seen the Ride Schedule. You know there are many types of rides, but have you tried one? If you are new to road riding with a group, chances are you are hesitant to take that first step to start somewhere. This is the month to take that step. If you can just start with one ride, you will be hooked to continue riding. Didn’t you join a Bike Club so you could ride with other people? You will find others to ride with that share your same ability level. The trail rides are ideal for getting acquainted and riding without worrying about traffic. 18-mile round trip with a meal stop midway will give you an idea of how you rate with other riders’ abilities. If you usually ride longer distances, then you can take the 30-mile option or less. In order to be comfortable riding with the group, you should be able to do 9 miles in less than an hour. You may choose to ride a trail on your own before riding with the Club. The road rides also can be as short as 20-mile distances. If you ride a hybrid or mountain bike, you will find yourself working harder to keep up with same ability riders on road bikes. All Club Ride Leaders provide cue sheets and maps, so you can ride at your own pace. Call the Leader and find out about the route distance and expected mph. Ask about a shorter route if you choose. (Keep in mind that “show and go” rides do not have a designated Leader.) The Leaders will never leave a rider on their own unless the rider agrees.

Tell the Leader if you are on your first ride. Introductions and instructions are part of the ride. It’s a good idea to arrive 15 minutes before the ride is scheduled to leave. Have your helmet, a bike pump, an extra tube and a full water bottle. Someone will help you fix a flat. Experienced road riders are always willing to provide bicycle tips and techniques, safe riding rules and “tall tales” of the road.

If you still aren’t sure about when to take that first step, please call one of the MCBC Board Members or any Leader listed for some discussion about the Club rides.

Ya Gotta Start Somewhere! Just do it! Come join the group. Enjoy being an active member of MCBC!!

Ruth Blair

1st Century Ride

Geoff Mumford	1955	Dorwin Blair	1989
Dave Steffen	1959	Marge May	1990
Connie Steffen	1975	Dick May	1990
Al Petty	1977	Ann Wall	1992
Jay Marshall	1982	Jack Wall	1992
Jackie Homan	1982	Barb Mahr	1999
Dick Homan	1982	David Falk	2004
George Mann	1984	Craig Kurchina	2005
Ruth Blair	1985	Mary Winkel	2006
Pat Kellogg	1985	Pat DePaepe	2007
Roger Foin	1986	Mary Lou Mumford	2007
Steve Arnold	1987		

If you would like your name added to the 1st Century Ride List, please contact Geoff Mumford at mumfordg@charter.net

Chuck & I were camping with the MCBC group at Spring Green in 2006 when after doing our usual 30-some mile ride, we heard that Ann Lunk was still on the road with Barb Mahr. They were going to ride 100 miles. Then Ann & Barb came to the campfire that night all excited about their accomplishment...Ann's first Century Ride. They threw down the gauntlet.

Chuck & I got up the next day to find out that Marge & Dick May had left early to do a Century Ride. Well, what could we do but jump on the bikes and ride. We used the GPS that Chuck had mounted on his bike and headed to the Dells and back. Only to find we were 10 miles short. After a taking a break at Culvers, we planned a 10 mile route that would end up at the campgrou

That was one of the few times Chuck rode at my speed.



Kathy Lemke

CHICAGO BIKE TRAILS

Joe Lewis developed a website; <http://chicagotrails.com/> a little over a year ago as a project for a web development course at Harper College. The site includes up-to-date information on Chicago area bike trails, trail-related news, bicycle recalls, invitational ride information and links to cycling resources. For anyone who uses Google, there are Google gadgets available for the News, Recalls, and Ride pages.

BIKE SHOPS

Bikes Plus, 203 West Northwest Highway, Barrington, Illinois 60010 (847-382-9200)

Trek	Giant
Gary Fisher	Mirraco

Wheel Werks, 115 North Main Street, Crystal Lake, Illinois 60014 (815-444-6897)

Waterford	Gunnar
Look	Co-Motion
Fuji	Isaac
Orbea	Bike Friday
Salsa	Flat Foot
Surley	Electra

RRB, 629 Williams Street, Lake Geneva, Wisconsin 53147 (262-248-2588)

Scott	Electra
Marin	Argon
Kestrel	Isaac
Ridley	Breezer
Colagno	Biria

Wonder Lake Bicycle, 4308 East Drive, Wonder Lake, Illinois 60097 (815-653-9904)

KHS	Fuji
Freeagent	SE
Sun	

Main Street Bicycles, 52 East Main Street, Carpentersville, Illinois, 60110 (847-783-0362)

Jamis	Raleigh
Redline	Scott
Blue	Waterford

Buyer Be Wise (Bicycling Magazine, April 2008)

PEDALS

Pricey pedals are a bit lighter thanks to techy materials such as carbon and titanium. But you'll notice very little or no performance bump compared with midrange models of chromoly and glass fiber. Quality workhorse pedals cost \$100 to \$150, half that of feathery ones. And generic pedals compatible with Shimano SPD or Look Delta cleats go for as little as \$35.

SHOES

Inexpensive shoes disappoint, with poor closure systems that won't cinch your feet comfortably, and flimsy uppers that wear quickly. Quality footwear includes features such as ratcheting buckles and stiff carbon soles. Spend what it takes to find the proverbial shoe that fits and don't order online just to save \$5. Buy from a shop so you can try on multiple models and sizes.

SHORTS

The best shorts are constructed with multiple panels---look for eight or more---for a more conforming fit. And they use vastly superior padded inserts. Spend \$100 or more (they start getting really good in the \$150 range) for shorts that boast multi-layer or multi-density, stretchable, smooth seamed, gender-specific padding. Your bum will thank you.

TUBES

A generic \$5 Chinese inner tube is all that your bike ever needs. Spending more gets you either special thin lightweight tubes, which are less weighty but more prone to punctures, or a brand name box that contains a \$5 Chinese tube. They're just butyl rubber doughnuts.

TIRES

Better tires have superior puncture resistance and wear and reduce weight and rolling resistance so you go faster. Look for a supple casing—sidewalls flexible like a leather glove, not rigid like a car tire—and thread counts of 60-plus tpi. Tires with folding beads, rather than wire, are often lighter and easier to mount.

HELMET

All helmets sold in the United States meet CPSC safety standards, so a \$30 lid is equally as good at protecting your head as a \$200 one. Many under \$60 helmets offer fit systems similar to pricier models, often head straps with buckles or dials for easy adjustment. They lack just flashy styling and extra vent holes.

SUNGLASSES

Quality glasses offer the 100 percent UV protection claimed (drugstore cheapies often don't), and they're more scratch-resistant. Sport glasses also have pliable ear and nose pieces that keep them stuck to your face, even on descents or choppy trails. And many offer interchangeable lenses or prescription options.

JERSEY

The fit and feel of a finely made jersey is a worthy treat for long, special days in the saddle. But for everyday squeak-in-an-hour-after-work rides, most any synthetic snug fitting top with back pockets will suffice. One way to get a high-end jersey for cheap: Look for replica jerseys of now defunct pro teams, which often populate the closeout racks at shops.

RAIN JACKET

Except for hardcore commuters or racers, and maybe Northwest dwellers, few of us really ride in the rain much. For the rare occasions you do get caught in a shower, a \$200 waterproof and breathable shell is nice, but you'll get wet eventually. And a simple \$20 clear plastic jacket, still the choice of countless pros, does the job, too.

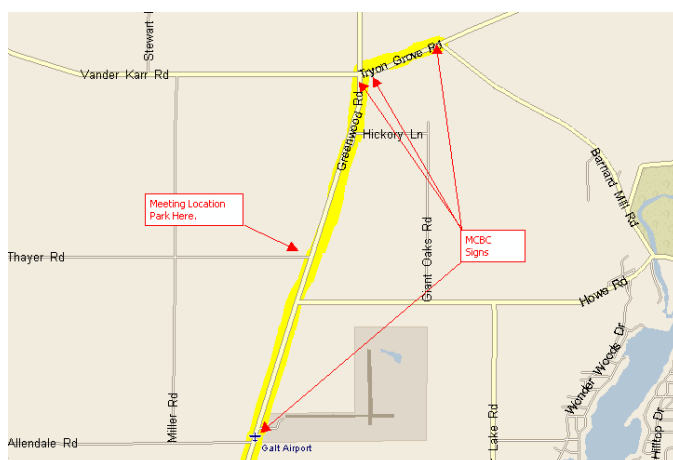
VEST AND BASE LAYER

The vest allows more versatility than any other piece of cycling clothing. In cold and windy conditions, it protects your core, but it packs small to stow in your pocket. A quality base layer, which fits like a second skin and wicks sweat, will keep you cooler in summer and warmer in winter.

MCBC Road Signs

Mary Winkel was successful in having two additional MCBC Road Signs placed on Tryon Grove Road. Mary states we will continue to clean-up our regular 2-mile section on Greenwood Road between Tryon Grove Road and Allendale Road, but we have added an additional ½ mile on Tryon Grove Road between Greenwood Road and Barnard Mill Road. We will continue to clean-up twice a year, Spring and Fall, on Greenwood and Tryon Grove Roads, for a total of 5 miles. This includes both sides of the road. She worked on obtaining Howe Road, since we ride on it several times a year, but found out this was not a County Road, so it is not part of the clean-up package. We now have 2 signs on each road—one at the beginning and one at the end—advertising MCBC as the steward for the road clean-up between those signs. Mary will continue as Captain for this event. She is **not** going to step it up one level higher and get uniforms.

Mary Winkel



Getting your bike ready for the season

When I bought my first road bike eight years ago, I was very concerned with how long it would last. I had purchased a pretty good bike, but having had no experience with biking, I was unsure about what to expect from the various components. How many miles would I get before the bottom bracket went out? How long do shifters last? How can you tell when the headset goes bad?

Maybe I was being a bit overly worried, but I wanted to keep my shiny new bike in tip-top condition for as long as I could. And putting three to five thousand miles on the bike every year would cause the miles to add up fast. I was pretty surprised to find that there wasn't much information available on the subject. Even the local bike shop people didn't seem to know what I could expect from my new bike.

Then I rode the AIBR (Around Illinois Back Roads) ride sponsored by the Joliet Bicycle Club. One of their riders, Bill Lang, was a wealth of information. He said he had over 100,000 miles on his last road bike. He finally replaced it, not because it had worn out, but because, as he said, "I got tired of looking at it".

I was amazed. I asked him all kinds of questions about how long various components had lasted. His answers have proved to be pretty good over the years. But he said that the most important question shouldn't be how long components will last, but instead, "How do you get a bike to last for over 100,000 miles?" I was all ears.

He said the key is preventive maintenance. "If you're doing your preventive maintenance properly, nothing should ever break on the road." He said you should make your bike "new" again every year and gave me a list of things I should do before every cycling season – and in some cases – even during the season. Here I'm going to summarize the suggestions he made.

Who does the work?

All bike shops, of course, are all set up to do preventive maintenance. I've used the one in Barrington and would highly recommend them. But you must, of course, be able to specify what you want done – so the following list should be helpful even if you don't do your own work.

I like to work on my bike so I do the pre-season preventative maintenance work myself. If you're at all mechanically inclined, nothing in the following list is overly difficult. If you've never worked on a bike before, I'd recommend the book *Zinn And The Art Of Bicycle Maintenance*. It shows every preventive maintenance task in detail – and much more. It can be found at Borders or Barnes & Noble.

Before each riding season starts:

Replace the chain

Though estimates vary, the average mileage I hear a chain will last is 2,000 miles. When a chain goes bad, it lengthens. Some people say it stretches, but the metal of the chain doesn't actually stretch. Instead, the bearings inside each link wear, and this wear causes play or slop within each link – and the overall length of the chain grows.

A new chain that fits perfectly in your chain rings and cassette will not fit properly as the chain lengthens. Left unchecked, it will cause undue wear in the cassette and chain rings. They will eventually look more like a circular saw blade than a bicycle component. And once the chain rings and cassette have been damaged, they'll have to be replaced since, at this point, a new chain will no longer fit properly.

Inspect the bottom bracket

While you're replacing the chain, be sure to inspect the bottom bracket. With the chain removed, turn the cranks and feel for any side-to-side play or grinding in the bearings. I got about 20,000 miles on my bottom bracket before I had to replace it.

Replace all the cables

Don't wait until you see the metal strands in a cable breaking apart to replace it. Replace all cables at the beginning of every season. Though this may seem a bit excessive, it almost guarantees that you won't have a cable break on the road. And remember, cables don't always break where you think they will. You might think they always break at the derailleur or brake caliper where the clamp pinches the cable. When a cable breaks at the derailleur or brake clamp, it is easy to replace (even on the road – as long as you carry a replacement with you on the bike). But it is not uncommon for a cable to break inside the shifter, especially shifter cables, making them very difficult to remove.

Inspect cable housings

With the cables removed, carefully inspect the housings that surround the cables. Be very careful – as they age, they get very brittle. I finally replaced mine at 25,000 miles – and when I bent them slightly, they cracked in several places! Obviously, I should have replaced them much sooner.

Inspect/replace brake pads

Brake pad replacement is, to a large extent, tied to the mileage and terrain (hills) you ride. But do keep in mind that, like cable housings, they do degrade over time. If a bike hasn't been ridden for a few years, I would replace them regardless of how many miles they've had.

Most pads have a visible wear line, so it's pretty obvious when they need to be replaced. When the line disappears, they need to be replaced.

If I've ridden over 3,000 mile in the previous season, I'll replace mine before the next riding season regardless of the wear line condition. Again, this may be excessive, but it all but eliminates the need for performing a maintenance task during the riding season – and the terrible consequences if I forget to do so.

Inspect/replace the tires

Like brake pads, tire life is tied to mileage and age. I've found (unfortunately) that it's also tied to the rider's weight – at least for the rear tire (no pun intended). My back tire starts to develop a flat surface on the crest of the tire within only 1,000 miles – and I hate it. It makes the bike handle poorly, especially when negotiating curves at high speeds. I can't seem to get more than about 1,500 miles before it causes excessive handling problems. The front tire lasts much longer – at least twice as long.

Since I average about 3,000 miles a year, I buy three tires during the off-season. I replace the tires on the bike before riding season starts, and keep one for replacing the rear tire sometime during the season. I'm following Bill's suggestion to "make the bike new" every year, and of course, all new bikes come with new tires. But more importantly, it ensures that I don't try to push the tires past their expected life.

Inspect rear hub and clean the cassette

Whenever the back wheel is off the bike, it is a good time to thoroughly clean the cassette and inspect the hub. It is difficult to adequately clean the cassette while it is still on the hub. With the cassette removed, it is much easier to clean each individual component. Just be careful to keep all of the components in the proper order and orientation for replacement on the hub.

The grooved part of the hub that holds the cassette should rotate freely in one direction and not at all in the other. In the rotation direction, there should be a smooth, even clicking sound. It should also run perfectly true with the center of the wheel. If you notice any side-to-side play, it's time to replace it. (Actually, it may be more cost effective to replace the entire back wheel. You may find that it costs just as much to purchase a new wheel as it does to replace the hub and have the wheel rebuilt.) Side-to-side play in the hub/cassette is a common cause of troublesome shifting. If cable adjustment doesn't correct a shifting problem, it's likely that the cassette is wobbling.

Inspect tubes

Like tires, the life expectancy of inner tubes is partially tied to age. So whenever I have a tire off the rim, I consider the age of the tube. If it's over a season old, I'll replace it.

Inspect wheels

Obviously, wheels must be true and round. You can easily check this by seeing how well they track through the brake pads. I simply continue to close the pads (with the adjustment screw) until the rim starts rubbing. When rubbing starts, it should be consistent all the way around the rim. If it's not, the wheel is not true.

But as wheels age, other things must be inspected. Look for cracks in the rim. Inspect the area on the rim around each spoke to confirm that it is not bending or deforming.

Something that many riders don't know (I just learned this after nine years of riding) is that most rims have a wear indicator of some kind to show the braking life left in the rim. The area of the rim that contacts the brake surface (shiny exposed silver metal) should have a groove or small hole plunged into the braking surface. When this hole or ring disappears, the rim's thickness is dangerously close to being inadequate to hold the (clincher-type) tube and tire in place. If the rim fails on the rode, the results will be disastrous.

So before the riding season, you'll want to ensure that there is enough life left in each rim to get you through the season.

Inspect headset

If the headset is loose, you should feel it whenever you apply the front brakes. The front end will shimmy and vibrate. So this may not be an item in need of inspection during the pre-season. But you will want to confirm that the bearings within the headset are still smooth and undamaged. One indicator of worn headset bearings is that the steering system (fork and handle bars) will want to spring to the centered position. With the bike held in the air and level, move the handle bars so the wheel is slightly to the right and left of center. When you let go, the wheel should remain in place. If it “springs” back to center, it’s likely that the headset has a flat spot in the bearings and needs to be replaced.

Inspect/replace bar tape

Bar tape will eventually fray and compress to the point that it doesn’t provide the appropriate amount of dampening to your hands. While this may not be a safety issue, it is a comfort issue. Also, new bar tape enhances the bike’s appearance and helps make the bike “new” again, so I replace mine almost every year.

While the bar tape is off, it’s a good time to inspect the brake cable housings. Only with the bar tape removed can you remove them for inspection.

During the riding season

If you’ve done your pre-season preventive maintenance properly, there shouldn’t be much to do during the riding season. About the only thing I have to do is replace the rear tire about half-way through the season. I may also replace the chain if I’m getting in lots of miles.

But that doesn’t mean you can completely ignore maintenance issues. It is important to carefully inspect the most critical wear components on a regular basis (like tires, break pads, cables, chain, etc.). I do this before just about every ride. I like to do it outside where the light is bright enough to easily expose potential problems.

Keeping things clean

While you may not consider cleaning as a preventive maintenance issue, it does prolong the life of certain components.

Chain – As stated, the chain will lengthen during its life. But you can minimize the amount of lengthening by keeping your chain clean. The fewer the number of abrasive particles in the chain (from road crud), the less wear there will be in the chain links. Under normal conditions (no rain), I clean and lube the chain every 300 miles or so. If I’ve ridden in the rain, I try to clean and lube the chain before the next ride.

Front and rear derailleur, chain rings, cassette, brake calipers, and brake levers – I use Murphy Oil Soap in hot water, taking a sponge full and squeezing it over these components to wash out road grime.

Lubrication

Several components that need to be lubricated on a regular basis include:

Chain: I lube the chain every 100 miles or so. I use White Lightning (liquid wax), so the lube doesn’t last long. But I find it very easy to clean the chain with this lube.

Front and rear derailleur: I lube the moving parts with light machine oil whenever I wash the bike.

Brake calipers: I lube the moving parts with light machine oil every whenever I wash the bike.

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WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Sue Fairhead
Robert Pustay

Crystal Lake, IL
Algonquin, IL

Future "Save the Dates"

(See past/present/future articles for details)

April 5	Udder Meeting
April 30	General Meeting
May 18-23	Camping Thompson Causeway, IL
June 1	Udder Century
June 16-20	Camping Boulder Junction, WI
June 25	General Meeting
July 13-18	Camping Door County, WI
July 29-30	Plastic Ride
Aug 17-22	Camping Spring Green, IL
Aug 27	General Meeting
Sept 14-19	TRIRI 6-Day Ride
Sept 20-23	Camping Lanesboro, MN
Sept 23-27	Camping Wilton, WI
Oct 5-10	Camping Madison, WI
Nov 8	Annual Banquet

Mark your calendar for 2008