



January 1997

ILLINOIS VALLEY WHEELM'N greater peoria's bicycle club



On a Lark and a Cannondale

FIRST AND FOREMOST, I'D LIKE TO THANK ALL THE HEROES OF THE WHEELM'N FOR SAVING MY LIFE THIS SUMMER. The doctor said get exercise or take an early pass on life. I got the exercise thanks to the pace and friendship found on our multiple weekly rides and the treks to faraway trails. And I'm still here.

Many of you will recall the trip to the Elroy-Sparta "tunnel" trail. We raced the weather and each other to explore the Wisconsin dairy country and rolling hills with holes cut through them. I was a fun-filled two days of outdoor activity loosely organized around riding and eating. But this is not a treatise on the Wisconsin trip. (Has that already been done? If not, why not?) For now, read on for something completely different.

On our Wisconsin venture I learned of a trail in Minnesota called the Root River Trail. One hectic Thursday afternoon in mid-October I suffered a lapse of responsibility, packed the car, and early the next morning, headed toward Iowa to locate the Root. Iowa? Sure. I-74 to I-80 to I-380 to 150 to 52 equals Preston, Minnesota. It's best to take 16 East just outside of Preston and head for Lanesboro, which is trail center, activity hub and the most aesthetic town on the route.

Perhaps I should attempt to convince you to expend the six hours driving time. What I found along this trail were the most heartwarming people anywhere I've ever been. As I traversed the two-lane roads in northern Iowa and southern Minnesota, the grain trucks were bringing in the harvest, tractors were moving equipment on the roads and automobile traffic was light. Courtesy abounded. Trucks pulled to the shoulders, tractors left the roadway or pulled into drives to let traffic past. Townspeople offered to show you the trail head rather than provide directions. If accommodations were scarce, private homes were opened to borders. In Lanesboro I stopped at an inn called Guest Hus of Lanesboro. I was intrigued by the front yard full of people with bicycles. Although no rooms were available, attested

by the crowd out front, the proprietor suggested I might take the housemaids quarters since she was gone for the weekend. At \$35.00, who could resist?

I had not found just an inn keeper. This was a one-man welcoming committee, local historian, tourist information center, trail guide and counselor. Lanesboro is a late 19th-century town located in a valley at the base of limestone bluffs with the Root River flowing through downtown. The bluffs loom above the north and west sides of the town. The trail passes between the bluffs and the river with Lanesboro's small dam and waterfall creating the main features in the town park and campground. Much of the town's central area is given over to park land and the rest of main street is a quaint tourist paradise. Pubs, clapboard hotels, shops and museum—many dedicated to bicycling. The people of this area and other towns on the trail show their appreciation of the biking tourist at every opportunity.

At the western end of the trail is Fountain, with Preston being a six-mile branch south, about midpoint between Fountain and Lanesboro. Beware! From the Preston branch to Fountain is seven miles uphill. Not too steep, very pretty, but all up! The branch to Preston is even more gorgeous and is level. The Root River flows through Preston so the river valley and woodlands give this section of trail its attractive setting. Combined, this western end of the trail is 37 miles round trip out of Lanesboro. Preston is built on rolling hills with downtown better described as uptown because it is located on the highest hill. Nothing a bicycle cannot manage with ease, but add to the thrill ride by climbing two blocks and then besting the town speed limit by flying down the next two blocks.

East out of Lanesboro are the towns of Whalan, Peterson and Rushford. The trail continues ten miles or so east of Rushford and abruptly ends at a barricade in the middle of the woods. It appears there are plans to continue the trail as the route is cut, but there are no trespassing signs and only mountain

bikes could continue. The Root River Trail is paved with asphalt and the bridges are wood plank. Any type of bike would be suitable. From Lanesboro to the eastern barricade is a 50-mile round trip.

I would be hard pressed to recommend the east section over the west, but I give the nod to the east as the trail travels ten miles between the rocky bluffs and the river flowing out of Lanesboro. The remainder of the trail looks similar to the Tunnel Trail, but the towns are devoted to the bicycle tourist. Cafes with pie and ice cream, turn-of-the-century hotels, and bed and breakfasts abound. This area is also the busiest part of the trail. On Saturday afternoon, I had my first experience with bicycle gridlock. The trail was so packed you couldn't pass and had to maintain grandma's speed and be ready to dodge the two-year-old's training wheels. But it was fun! Everyone was having a ball. I never heard a gruff voice or harsh command. This could have been Mayberry in the 50s.

In mid-October, as with our earlier trip to Wisconsin, the early morning temperatures were cold! By mid-morning, the weather was tolerable, and by afternoon it was warm to hot. These towns do not wake up early. Ten a.m. is reasonable for any activity and the area did not become crowded until afternoon. The locals recommended mid-week visits as there are plenty of accommodations during

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NEW MEMBERS

Michael & Marilyn BownPeoria

RENEWING MEMBERS

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Edith AlbrightChillicothe
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Gary HartzlerPeoria
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Illinois Valley Wheelm'n Greater Peoria's bicycle club

Affiliated with the League of American
Bicyclists and League of Illinois
Bicyclists

All newsletter phone numbers are in the
309 area code unless otherwise indicated.

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Submissions, including stories, news, images
and/or humor, are welcomed.

Deadline: 15th of the month
Newsletter published monthly

the week. The weekends are booked a season in
advance.

On the way out of Minnesota, I traveled the
Root River Valley on highway 16 all the way
east to the Mississippi River crossing at La
Crosse. The drive in this valley is as pretty as
the ride on the trail. The roadway being more
exposed than the trail, more of the valley could
be seen. I would recommend the Root River
Trail over the Tunnel Trail for beauty, but the
Tunnel Trail for uniqueness.

On our trip to the Tunnel Trail, I heard of a
fourth tunnel on a trail north of Elroy.
Following I-94 through Wisconsin my drive
took two hours to reach Camp Douglas, the
north end of the Tunnel Trail branch. This is a
county trail, not part of the state trail. To its
advantage it is also paved! The trail head is all
but unmarked behind the Camp Douglas
downtown area. Parking is on the street serving
the rear of the downtown buildings. The trail is
very similar to the Tunnel Trail in appearance.
The tunnel is short with its surface in terrible
shape. The interior of the tunnel was not
dripping, but the floor was rolling in waves with
water in the low spots. Do not ride into this
tunnel; you'll be in for a surprise unless you're
well lighted. Coming into Elroy 12 miles later
you enter private driveway, not unlike the
northern approach to Dunlap on the Rock Island
Trail. From there, you're on your own. No
signs, no help. Having been in Elroy on the
state trail, I headed south until I came to
familiar territory and then followed the Tunnel
Trail a few blocks east to the town center.

What a temptation to head west on the
Tunnel Trail! Remembering the long, boring
ride along the highway before heading up to the

first tunnel stopped me from stretching this lark
into a week-long absence from work. It was still
early morning with few bicyclists braving the
cold. I removed a layer of clothing and talked
with a local gal who was opening the
information center. She had just started biking
to control her cholesterol. I think I gave her
encouragement with my success story. She gave
me information (it was her job) regarding the
lack of signs connecting the trails. The two
government entities sponsoring the trails were
not taking any initiative to promote each other
so the town of Elroy was considering
sponsoring signs between the trails. It would
seem like such a simple thing to do, until three
governments get involved.

This leg was 27-miles round trip and well
worth the detour if you find yourself with
enough energy at the east end of the Tunnel
Trail. Although the trail was paved, it was done
with an asphalt with so little binder that the
surface was loose, much like the crushed
limestone of the Tunnel Trail. Road bikes
beware.

The trip home on I-94 was a breeze. Four
hours. This is Wisconsin Dells territory. Traffic
was bumper-to-bumper and the slow lane was
going at 80 mph! I followed the same Jeep
Cherokee for two hours to the Illinois border.
There the pavement went at the "Welcome to
Illinois" sign signifying the end of road building
technology. Helping me feel even better about
returning home, a few more feet into Illinois
was the sign "Welcome to the Illinois Toll
Way." From Illinois roads to the trails, we need
to leave the state to experience how the rest of
the country lives. Just give me two hours notice.

—Larry Paustian

ride, ride, ride

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 1. New Year's Day ride
from Charlie and Franny Klees' house.
10 a.m. (Level I)

SUNDAY, JANUARY 5. Show and go. Fondulac
Park Administration building, East
Peoria. 11 a.m. (Level II).

SUNDAY, JANUARY 12. Show and go from
Fondulac Park Administration building,
East Peoria. 11 a.m. (Level II).

SUNDAY, JANUARY 19. Show and go from
Fondulac Park Administration building,
East Peoria. 11 a.m. (Level II).

MONDAY, JANUARY 20. Martin Luther King's
Birthday ride, 15 Parkview Ct.,
Groveland, 11 a.m. Jack Welch, 387-
6117. (Level II)

EVERY SATURDAY. Show and go from the square
in Washington. 8:30 a.m. Jack Welch,
387-6117 (Level III).

RATING LEGEND

Level I: Beginner, less than 20 miles, less
than 15 mph, not self sufficient
Level II: Intermediate, 20-50 miles, 15-18
mph, partially self-sufficient
Level III: Experienced, 50+ miles, 18+
mph, totally self-sufficient

Rules of the ride...

- 1) Ride no more than two abreast—single file in
traffic and at intersections.
- 2) Pass only on the left—and announce your
intentions.
- 3) Create space in large groups to help motorists
pass safely.
- 4) Maintain a safe distance from the
rider ahead of you.
- 5) Check all inter-sections for traffic. Avoid "group
think."
- 6) If you stop, please pull off the road.

The IVW strongly recommends that you wear a
helmet.

PLUG INTO LIBLAB. I encourage all IVW members with access to computers to subscribe to LIBLAB, the on-line information service of the League of Illinois Bicyclists. This will give the IVW quick-strike capability for bicycle advocacy action. For example, public meetings for road and trail projects are prime opportunities to create positive change for bicycling. If we don't ask for bicycle accommodations at these meetings, business-as-usual roadbuilding (cars-only) is likely. Through the electronic mail grapevine, we can instantly pass the word about upcoming hearings and guarantee that cyclists will get a fair shake.



Here's how it works: When I see notice of a public meeting, such as a posting in the local newspaper, I send a message to the LIBLAB electronic mail list. Everyone on the e-mail list gets a copy. Anyone on the list is also free to send a posting; in fact, I strongly encourage this since I don't always spot the hearing notices first. This service was very handy this fall. Meetings were held on several important local projects, including the eastern ring road, all within a short time span. There was not enough advanced notice to get word out in our newsletter. The LIBLAB e-mail system did the trick.

Here's what to do: Send a two-line e-mail message to: majordomo@fuji.physics.indiana.edu. The

message's two lines should read
subscribe liblab
end

Once you're connected, you can post a message (hearing, notice, etc.) to all other LIBLAB subscribers by sending it to: liblab@fuji.physics.indiana.edu. The LIBLAB E-mail list is intended for bicycle advocacy news. There's a similar system for Illinois bicycle event news (invitational rides, etc.). To subscribe to this list, send a message to: majordomo@cyclings.org. The message's two lines should read: subscribe ilcyclist
end

If you're a web-user, also check out the League of Illinois Bicyclists home page at <http://www/lib.uchicago.edu/~rd13/lib/> listing Illinois bike clubs, shops, invitational rides and links to other bicycling web pages.

IVW TESTS CANDIDATES' CYCLING SAVVY. This spring, a large chunk of Peoria's city government, including its mayor, will be brand new. Will the new faces be bicycling friend or foe? We have a say in that. We sent a 16-question survey to all candidates for the upcoming Peoria City Council / Mayoral election. Issues ranged from continued publication of the Peoria Bicycle Map to creating a bicycle coordinator's office at city hall. We'll publish results in the February newsletter. The primary is February 25, the

final is April 1. I've found that government works for those who choose to take part in the process. Written surveys are one effective method, but keep your eyes peeled for opportunities, such as meet-the-candidates type events. Pull up a wheel and perk up your ears—we've got a chance for a beautiful spring.

IVW GUIDES CHILLICOTHE BICYCLE PLANNING. On December 17, IVW member and Chillicothe resident Dave Schaufelberger and I met with city staff and a local developer to discuss bicycle plans for their community. The short-term focus is a multi-use trail linking a new subdivision to the local high school. When the city sought trail funding, however, they were told by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources that showing the trail segment as part of a more city-wide road and trail plan would greatly improve their chances to receive a grant. Dave will be working with city staff person Eric Schultz to identify the most bicycle-appropriate routes to link Chillicothe's parks, stores, schools, etc. At the meeting, we also emphasized the importance of including bicycle access in upcoming road plans, such as the planned upgrade of the River Beach Road (old IL29) which could provide a scenic riverfront bicycle link between Chillicothe and the Peoria road and trail system.—*Eric Hutchison*

Illinois Valley Wheelm'n Membership Application

(please print)

Name #1 _____ Birthdate _____

Name #2 _____ Birthdate _____

Name #3 _____ Birthdate _____

Name #4 _____ Birthdate _____

Name #5 _____ Birthdate _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Phone (_____) _____

Signature (Name #1) _____ Date _____

(parent or guardian needed if registrant is under 18)

Are you renewing, or is this a new membership? (check one)

Renewing New

If new, how did you find out about the club? _____

Are you a member of the League of American Bicyclists? (check one)

Yes No

Basic membership:

Individual (\$10) \$ _____

Household (\$12) _____

Voluntary advocacy contribution: (\$5, 10, 15, other) \$ _____

Total enclosed \$ _____

DISCLAIMER: In signing this form, I understand and agree to absolve the officers and members of the Illinois Valley Wheelm'n bicycle club of all blame for any injury, misadventure, harm, loss or inconvenience suffered as a result of taking part in any activity sponsored or advertised by said organization

Make check to: ILLINOIS VALLEY WHEELM'N, 6518 NORTH SHERIDAN RD STE 2, PEORIA IL 61614-2933

using our projects to create similar progress in their areas.
—Eric Hutchison

EFFECTIVE CYCLISTS KNOW WHEN RIGHT IS WRONG. Illinois law states that a cyclist must ride on the right-hand side of the lane, but a cyclist has the right to take the full lane when the rider deems the lane is too narrow to share, or when there are hazards on the roadway. In practical application, if you feel traffic is too close, then move out toward the center after yielding to vehicles immediately behind you.

Cyclists have the same rights as other slow-moving vehicles; we don't have to endanger ourselves so traffic can pass without moving into another lane. On the other hand, if we want to continue to share the roads, we should allow traffic to share our lane, if it is wide enough.

Here's where we should all become active in advocacy. A wide right lane is safer than "bike lanes." Attend local highway improvement meetings and voice your opinion!

Next month: "Be visible, be predictable and be assertive."

—Charlie Klees

LIB AND LAB, PARTNERS IN PROGRESS. The League of Illinois Bicyclists (LIB) is the first state chapter affiliate of the League of American Bicyclists (LAB). This historic agreement promises to strengthen both organizations and the rights of cyclists nationwide. In a nutshell: When you join or renew your LAB membership, a portion of your dues go to LIB, putting your money directly to work in Illinois. Likewise, all members of LIB must also be members of LAB. This arrangement gives LIB strong incentive to recruit and retain members for both organizations. The LIB was also granted charitable status by the IRS. This means a portion of your dues/donations to LIB are now tax-deductible, further boosting potential membership growth. Tipped helmets to Al Sturges, Barbara Sturges, Ted Sanders (LIB) and Noel Weyrich (LAB) for the hard work needed to put this together.

IVW ADVOCACY PROJECTS HIT THE ROAD. Bicycle advocates in

Springfield, Champaign, and the Quad-Cities requested copies of the new Peoria Bicycle Map and the IVW bicycle action plan for Peoria. They are

Pedal in the New Year

Charlie and Franny Klees will host their second annual Polar Ride on January 1, at 10 a.m. C&F live at 515 S. Pleasant Hill Rd., East Peoria. Please bring a covered dish. Riders and non-riders welcome. Route dependent on weather. Additional parking at 'head start' next to church. Call 694-3674 for more information.

**ILLINOIS VALLEY WHEELM'N
6518 NORTH SHERIDAN RD STE 2
PEORIA IL 61614-2933**

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Your IVW membership expires: 10/03/97

RON ANDERSON
203 LOCUST
WASHINGTON, IL 61571-2207

Happy New Year!

*Meet the club January 1 at the Klees house,
515 S. Pleasant Hill Rd., E. Peoria*