



SPOKE 'N' WORD

JULY 2009



“Deep summer is when laziness finds respectability.”
-Sam Keen

A bicycling extravaganza

Veloteers, Pedlar host a special ride

WRITTEN BY NICK SULLIVAN

It was just the usual Veloteers’ Saturday morning rides, with a twist.

Make that several twists.

Saturday, July 18, was the Veloteers annual picnic and membership drive. This year the club did it in a grand way with a bicycling extravaganza in conjunction with the Bike Pedlar-Hermitage. In addition to the two rides, there was a pasta feast afterwards

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outside the Pedlar while inside the store a gigantic promotion and sale was going on. Also, riders could watch the Tour de France on a big screen television.

The result was what is believed to be the largest turnout for a Saturday morning Veloteers ride in the club’s history, with at least 60 riders taking part.

“It was our membership



-- NICK SULLIVAN photo

Riders depart the Bike Pedlar-Hermitage for a special Saturday morning ride.

drive we have every July, which coincided with the bike race [Tour] on TV and the Bike Pedlar having a big sale,” James Waller, Veloteers president, said. “So it kind of all just came together.”



-- NICK SULLIVAN photo

Caterer Maribeth Dedmon, left, dishes up lasagna at the Bike Pedlar to hungry riders after their ride.

That it was a beautiful, pleasantly-mild day for July did not hurt either. The turnout was helped by a group of 15 or so riders from the Fogbees club in Hendersonville. Fogbees stands for Fat Old Guys on Bikes (and Fine Ole Gals on Bikes).

The shorter, 26-mile recreation ride went from the Pedlar to Highway 109 and back. A longer ride of 35 miles took a winding route through the back roads of east Davidson and west Wilson Counties.

Upon returning to the Bike Pedlar, riders were treated to a meal catered by Maribeth Dedmon, a recent culinary arts school graduate. Hungry riders dined on lasagna, vegetarian pasta, salad, an assortment of tasty deserts, and a variety of beverages.

Indications were that the event brought in some new members and created quite a bit of interest in the club. Perhaps the extravaganza

will become an annual affair.



VELO GEARS

WRITTEN BY TIM COBLE

Comebacks at all levels rate respect

There's something about a good comeback story that's hard to resist.

When we witness someone trying to repeat an accomplishment or regain former glory we find ourselves almost involuntarily rooting for them.

Even if on a purely logical level their efforts seem naively hopeful or, at worst, driven by stubborn egotism, there's a part of us that instinctively applauds the choice to defy steep odds. It confirms to us that some things are precious enough to strive for, even when (or especially when) the chances of success are exceedingly slim.

July 2009 will undoubtedly go down in the annals of cycling as the month of Lance Armstrong's cycling comeback. (Because as much as seeing him in yellow in Paris would qualify as the ultimate victory, only the most jaded critic could insist that

anything less would constitute a failure.)

Given what we've seen of his personality over the past decade, it didn't seem likely that Lance would be satisfied with going out at the top of his game. When you've made a career out of delivering your greatest accomplishments after people have written you off, quitting while you're ahead can't come naturally.

So, if Lance goes home with number eight, history will record a successful comeback and the Tour will add one more story of epic accomplishment to the record books. If he comes up short – perhaps a podium position or a team win, both of which seem possible at the time this is being written – the story will be less exciting and his detractors will have the satisfaction of seeing the mighty champion fall.

Either way, both Lance and the sport as a whole should be able to achieve a degree of closure. Unless he intends for this to be more than a one-time event...

The only truly unfortunate outcome would be if people were to assume that Lance's is the only comeback taking place this year. A rider coming off of a doping suspension, earning a clean start from the bottom of the

ranks, is no less deserving of respect and encouragement. In fact, an argument could be made that this is a comeback year for professional cycling as a whole.

Discussions of Operation Puerto, disgraced riders and absent teams are so conspicuously missing from most race coverage that it could only be the result of a conscious decision to put the controversies of recent years in the past as quickly as possible.

Yet the absence (so far) of any headlines announcing an incriminating test result would seem like just cause to hope that the worst of those days are behind us. In fact, the only comeback that we're not likely to see this year is Bob Roll's facial hair – and I think we can all agree that that's a good thing.

Slightly closer to home, we have the tremendous good fortune to be sharing in a number of long-term comebacks. At the beginning of the season it was my distinct pleasure to get dropped like a ton of bricks by a fit, fast and powerful Bob Ostrowe on the club's pancake ride.

Bob and a number of other post-injury riders continue to remind us that cycling is like any other intimate

Nominations for Board sought

This year the Veloteers plan to hold elections after the membership drive.

If you, or a fellow Veloteer you know, are interested in holding a position on the board, please send your nominations to info@veloteers.org.

The current Board is stepping down and the club will have five positions to fill in this election.

Nominees must be able to attend the club meeting on the third Monday of the month, fill an officer or chair position, and head a Big Hill Challenge committee.

The Board and officer positions are held for two years.

The position responsibilities are spelled out in the club by-laws and are posted on the club website at www.veloteers.org

relationship: sometimes you get hurt along the way, but you stick to it because you can't imagine life playing out any other way.

So, by the time you read this it's likely that the 2009 Tour de France will be in the books and Lance either will or won't have gone home with win number eight.

In either case, take a minute to contemplate comebacks and the people who make them. Think about what it means to be granted a second chance, and even more significantly, what it takes to give someone else that opportunity.

Relish the knowledge that life sometimes gives do-overs and make a commitment to rise to the challenges that those opportunities present.

The most significant comebacks seldom make the headlines, but for those who are fortunate enough to be involved in one of these shots at redemption, life is never the same.



ON THE ROAD *WRITTEN BY NICK SULLIVAN*

Touring is total freedom

I got to thinking the other day that I haven't been on a bicycle tour in a long time.

I don't know why. I used to tour a lot. In fact, I'd train to tour.

I suppose in recent years that family vacations have taken priority over going off with some friends on a bicycle tour for a week. And, I've had a hard time recently finding someone who wanted to go with me.

But, I miss those touring days a lot. Talking about getting away from it all. Touring is total freedom.

All you have to concern yourself with is riding – getting from one place to the next; and, if it's one of those camping tours, pitching a tent.

We didn't have cell phones back then, or e-mail or laptops, I-Pods, Facebook, or any of that other noise that you get hooked on and must have with you now, even when you go off to "get away from it all." It was just riding, exploring around, eating and drinking, and sleeping.

I've done all sorts of tours except one of those mass group rides with hundreds of cyclists trying to ride across some state together. That always seemed like an exercise in brutality to me, and, as slow as I am, I was always afraid the food would be gone by the time I finished the day.

But, the League of American Bicyclists has three-day riding rallies each

year, where hundreds of riders show up, that are well done and a lot of fun. The League had one at Middle Tennessee State University one summer, which was a great time. We rode all over Middle Tennessee.

There was also a state organization of clubs at one time known as the Tennessee Bicycling Federation (I believe) that would rally from time to time. I don't know what ever happened to that outfit.

As for longer tours, I always preferred those where there was a hot shower and a comfortable bed at the end of the day.

I did take a Sierra Club camping trip one year to the Eastern Shore of Maryland that was fine for the most part, until I busted my rear derailleur. The tour didn't have any sag support or mechanical parts, so I had to finish the tour in one gear. That was OK, as it's pretty flat up there until you come to a bridge.

The bugs were bad and you never could get the sand out of your sleeping bag. But, the riding was great, and it ended up with tubs of crab legs and beer on the porch of a pleasant bed and breakfast on the shores of Chesapeake Bay.

The now-defunct North

Carolina Bicycle Touring Society had some great tours back in the early days of my touring, before liability and insurance became such pills and put this little operation out of business.

The NCBTS's best tours were week-long affairs on the Outer Banks. The tour started inland before hitting the coast and averaged about 50 flat miles a day, ending up at Ocracoke Island.

The tour stayed in relatively-inexpensive motels. Meals, except for a get-acquainted banquet the first night, were on your own, although everyone seemed to get together at the same place every night. There was a lot of camaraderie and I made some life-long friends on those tours.

The worst tour I was ever on, I suppose, was one of those Bed and Breakfast affairs that seem to be taking over the bicycle touring market now and attract a lot of beginners and one-time riders. It was far too regimented as far as meals and such were concerned.

It is my habit to hit the road early and get in some miles before it gets hot. On this tour, however, everybody seemed content to sit

around the breakfast table until 9:30 or so before making moves to head out. This turned out to be alright, because the rides didn't go very far any way.

Some of my best tours, however, were those a few friends and I would put together and do on our own.

There was a neat camping tour we did in Tennessee that started from my garage, went to Center Hill Dam, rambled around up on the Plateau some before coming down through McMinnville, Manchester, and Henry Horton State Park, and then back to my garage.

It was beautiful country, but lots of hills and some big-mile days. I wouldn't want to do that one again.

One I would consider again, though, is a tour some of us took in the Kentucky Bluegrass several years ago. It started out in Lexington and followed a back road through the racing horse

farms to Frankfort and then on to Shelbyville for the first night.

Next day was a nice ride to Bardstown. We had a rest day the next day in Bardstown to take in My Old Kentucky Home and the Stephen Foster Story musical and to enjoy a couple of the fine restaurants in Bardstown.

Have you got a tour to share?

Do you have a favorite tour that you'd like to share with your fellow Veloteers; or one you recently got back from?

If so, Spoke 'n Word would love to hear about it. Just e-mail a description of the tour, with a picture or two (jpeg format) if you have them to nickbiker1@aol.com for inclusion in an upcoming newsletter.

Next stop was Harrodsburg. It's hard to spend a lot of money on this trip if you

try, but if you want to splurge one night, the historic Beaumont Inn here is a good place to do it.

The last day is back to Lexington via Shaker Town and into the Kentucky River Gorge. Miles are moderate - - about 50-55 miles a day - and it's rather hilly in places, but the scenery is beautiful. Part of the trip actually uses the TransAmerica Bicycle Trail. And, there's plenty to do and see after your day's ride.

Yes, I'd definitely do that tour again. And, I'd finish it off with a big slab of prime rib, a brown derby, and a mint julep or two.


From the Editor ...

Do you have content for the Veloteers newsletter? Please continue to submit your stories, photos and items of interest as Word documents or jpg files nickbiker1@aol.com for future publication.