

LaCrosse to Kenosa Bike Tour
301 miles, Labor Day Weekend, 1976

In 1972, I saw an announcement for the 3rd annual Wheeling 100 and decided to ride my first Century. At that time, I had a Schwinn Continental, which I thought was pretty special. The ride really turned me on, especially the hilly part thru Barrington Hills. I had lots of opportunity to talk to seasoned riders along the way. One of the riders was Keith Kingbay, a Schwinn executive. Keith was a bit older than me and I was impressed with his skill and ease of riding. In talking to Keith along the way I commented that riding bothered one of my knees. He advised me that if the bike was set up right, and fit properly, nothing should hurt. I believed him and also got the idea that I wasn't riding the ideal bike.

I continued to ride when possible, and in time, convinced my wife to buy me a nice, white Peugeot with sew-up tires, (from Sauganash Cycles), for my 40th birthday. This put me in good shape to ride several Centuries in the following years. (I thought this would be my last bike, but since then I have managed to buy about 8 more, five of which I still own).

Well, some time in the summer of 1976 I saw that the Wisconsin Wheelmen were sponsoring a LaCrosse to Kenosha tour for Labor Day weekend, on the recently created Wisconsin Bikeway. I got permission from my wife and talked a fellow engineer to join me for this adventure. I didn't have quite as many miles on his legs but he was a bicyclist and wanted to do it. I had been riding with the West Suburban Wheelmen, a racing club, since about 1973.

Communication with the Wisconsin Wheelmen was with a Vern Kappes, who advised there would be 10 to 15 riders and the cost would be \$5.00 Registration, \$3.00 Van Fee, \$5.00, 1st overnight and \$3.00, 2nd overnight, plus meals. My riding partner and I had to drive to Kenosha, leave a car, and take a train to LaCrosse, with our bikes.

The first night was in a hotel in LaCrosse. After spending the night without much sleep, trying not to oversleep, we managed to rise, dress, and ride our bikes to Burns Park, located at 7th and Main, where the group of about a dozen riders, men and women, put their sleeping bags and other kit in a Sag Van and departed for the first stop, a hotel in Reedsburg. This was a beautiful, scenic ride.

The second day covered 115 miles, from Reedsburg to New Glarus, where the Inns all were full. But our tour guide had managed to obtain accommodations for us on the farm of "Skip" Henry DeHaan. We had a large hayloft in a cow barn, which also, fortunately, had a hot shower, which we all used. After some discussion amongst the group, and an argument, as I recall, we all slept like babies in our sleeping bags on the hay.

Rising to the second day, only 86 miles, we headed to our final destination, Sturtevant, at the Wisconsin Information Center, where we had left our car. This third day was the prettiest part of the trip, and would have been flawless but for the fact my riding partner, near Walworth, with about 40 miles to go, declared he could go no further, threw his bike onto the grass, and laid down, declaring he was done. Well, it took a lot of talking and pleading and finally, he submitted, got back on his bike and we finished the 301 miles well before dark.

As I look back, I can remember the long hills, the perfect weather, the beauty of the Wisconsin farmland and would love to do it again. I can't understand why the group didn't stay together. We could have drafted, we could have talked, we could have enjoyed each others company. The route was excellent and I don't recall any traffic, and certainly no altercations with drivers. We had no flats and no mechanical problems. I don't have any of the names of people in the group, and no pictures, which I regret. Overall, however, it was one of the highlights of my life, and I think about it often.

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