

# Riding the High Bicycle Is Easy, Once the Forward Motion Begins

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badly after eight laps," said 17-year-old Julie Cory of Tecumseh, a second-year rider on Mackinac Island. "It's great that there are no cars and we don't have to worry about that, because we are the biggest people on the road. It can get pretty hectic on Main Street, because there are pedestrians, taxis, and people on bikes who don't always know we don't have brakes. I'm having a great time so far, but I'm eager to take a nap after the 12 laps."

Miss Cory said she enjoys being in costume and showing off the bicycles with visitors who don't know anything about The Wheelmen. They all want to know who made the bike and when, she said.

For Pat More and his daughter, Allison, of Grand Blanc, the century ride was a time to bond.

"This is some quality father-daughter time," said Mr. More after finishing eight laps. "Allison's mom did the same exact thing when she was 11 years old. She rode the century on the same bike that Allison is using today. We come every two years with the group. My wife has been doing it every year and my father-in-law has done it forever."

Miss More said that riding the high bicycle is easy once the forward motion begins, although it is more difficult to maneuver around people.

During the century ride, the other meet captain, Karen Turner, a member of The Wheelmen for

18 years, played the dulcimer at the Murray Hotel with Linda Losse, who was attending her first Mackinac Island event. They also belong to the Silver Strings, a group of 140 from the Detroit area who get together a couple times a month to jam with hammered dulcimers, mountain dulcimers, auto harps, guitars, fiddles, string basses, banjos, and all other types of acoustic instruments.

"I like the people here on the Island," Miss Turner said. "The century ride is nice, and so is the atmosphere. Getting up in the morning is great, hearing the quietness and then the hooves in the street."

While watching participants check in after every lap on a poster board in the lobby, Miss Turner noted, "pain is temporary, pride is forever." Getting through the century ride takes mental toughness.

Saturday, June 30, The Wheelmen were gathered on the school basketball court, participating in bicycle games for children and adults. In one, riders rode slowly in a 10-foot box, from one end to the other, the object to go the slowest without stopping or leaving the area. Another tested balance and ability to ride in a straight line, taking riders through two parallel tapes that got narrower as they got longer, called the between-the-lines challenge. Judges marked where a rider touched an outside and left the area. The winner was the rider



**Members of The Wheelmen assemble in Marquette Park early Saturday morning, June 30, for a group photograph before taking a 10-mile ride around the Island.**

who went the furthest without touching one of the lines. Another popular game was the beanbag toss, where one, two, and three point goals were marked on the court. Participants rode around on a high-wheel bicycle scoring points by landing as many beanbags in the point-areas as they could.

Spectators watched the games from the hill above the court, cheering on their fellow Wheelmen. One was Bill Katterheinrich of New Knoxville, Ohio.

"It's been a wonderful weekend for us," he said. "The weather is great, and everyone has treated us with a lot of kindness. The atmosphere is as good as it gets, especially since there are no cars to deal with. We just love everything about the Island, and that's why we keep coming back."

Another member of The Wheelmen, Jeff Cory, who has been associated with them for more than 10 years, couldn't complain, saying how much he just enjoys this meet. He participated in the century ride and enjoys taking part in all the activities on the Island. One of the challenges of riding here, he said, is alerting the other visitors to the limitations of the high-wheeled bikes.

"We try to quickly teach people that we have no brakes," he said. "It's hard for people to understand that our bikes are just a little different than theirs, because they can stop when they want and start when they want, but we have to plan ahead."

He said that The Wheelmen have already been to many cities this year, including Dearborn for an old car festival, and city parades in Ann Arbor, Saline, Clinton, and Tecumseh.

"We're big on the history of these bikes, and Mackinac Island helps us with part of the history, because there are no cars. This is all just very timely."

A Lawrence, Kansas, resident, James McKenzie, who was with his wife, Susan, noted that there were members from 10 states at the Mackinac Island event, most staying at the Murray Hotel, a tradition that has gone on for years.

"This is my second time to Mackinac, with the last being in 1995," Mr. McKenzie said. "I had a great time then and I was really excited to come back. It's been equally as great so far. It's just a fun place to go, to bring the bikes, and do the century-ride. All of the people are friendly, and the people at the hotel are all a lot of fun."

"We fit in really well here," he said. "This is the perfect place for The Wheelmen to come."

The group's national event will be the last week of July in

Vermont, with another century ride and more games.

Dell Nichols, who is the meet-captain at the Ohio events and has completed 16 century rides, has a 56-inch front wheel. When buying a bicycle like this, he said, it's important to find the right fit.

"You have to buy a high-wheel bicycle so it fits your inseam. My front wheel is 56 inches long, and half of that is 28. The 28 inches plus the length of the 6-inch crank is 34, and I have a 34-inch inseam, so it is perfect for me. That's how you buy a bike. I can ride these smaller bikes, but they aren't comfortable. You can't ride one too big, because when you push the pedal down, it leaves your foot. It's great to show people who are interested in these bikes what goes into buying



**Wheelman Bill Stoffel of Dubuque, Iowa, does some trick riding on a children's high-wheeler at the outdoor basketball court at Mackinac Island Public School, as a part of the games that went on in front of spectators, who watched from the hill.**

and riding them. Most people have never seen them in real life, only in pictures or magazines. It's so much fun."

Mr. Smith was complimentary of the courtesy shown to the high-wheelers by the police and tour carriage and taxi drivers.

Participants rode a collective 3,324.2 miles during the Mackinac Meet, with 14 members completing the century ride and another 47 riding at least 25 miles. During the Official High Wheel Tour ride Saturday, 61 riders participated in full costume.

Some of The Wheelmen can be seen the weekend of July 27, when they participate in the St. Ignace and Mackinaw City parades to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Mackinac Bridge.

## Contest Winners

In the slow race, child tricycle division, first place went to Laura Katterheinrich, second place to Madeline Stoffel, and third place to Olivia Stoffel.

Safety bicycles, are the traditional bicycles seen today. In the child safety bicycle division, Jessica Cory received first place, Emily Smith came in second, and Ryan Smith received third. In the child high-wheel division, Andrew Toppin won the gold, Alexa Toppin won second place honors, and third place went to Alisa Katterheinrich.

The adult safety division had Jeff Cory winning first place, Bill Stoffel taking home second place, and Alexa Toppin taking third place honors. In the slow race, the adult high-wheel first place winner was Alexandra Nichols. Second place went to Linsley Cory and third to Thomas Nichols.

In the between-the-lines challenge, Laura Katterheinrich won first place, Madeline Stoffel won second, and Olivia Stoffel won third in the child tricycle division. In the child safety division, Laura Katterheinrich won first place, Emily Smith won second, and Ryan Smith was third.

Child high-wheel division first place honors went to Alisa Katterheinrich, second place was awarded to Madeline Moore, and third place went to Madeline Stoffel. In the adult safety division, Audra Rittenhouse won first place, Julie Cory won second place, and Jeff Cory won third. In the adult high-wheel division, Alexandra Nichols won first place, James McKenzie won second, and Alisa Katterheinrich won third place honors.

In the beanbag toss child safety division, Ryan Smith won first place, Jessica Cory won second, and Emily Smith won third place. In the child high-wheel, Andrew Toppin won first place. Alexa Toppin won second place, and Laura Katterheinrich took home third place. The adult safety division saw Bill Katterheinrich winning first place, Gary Childs taking home second, and Charlie Harper winning third place honors. In the adult high-wheel competition, Thomas Nichols won first place, David Toppin won second, and Bill Stoffel won third.