

Alternative Cycling

February 2002

The Official Newsletter of the WISIL HPVers

Since 1992 the WISIL HPVers are the Wisconsin/Illinois HPV Riders

Hello Again

by Len Brunkalla

Yes,...it has been quite a while since the last WISIL newsletter was published. It's probably been three years. Nevertheless, we are still here, functioning like Windows 98® in 'SAFE MODE'.

So...what happened that our newsletter vanished? Here's the low-down on the shut-down. Len Brunkalla had been functioning as Writer/Editor/publisher/Race-director & promoter/meeting facilitator/& sometimes president for WISIL for quite a while. Throughout 1996 & '97, the club had been asking for a new person to takeover the newsletter duties, as Len had other things to do concerning making a living. Although there had been offers to do layout from two or three individuals, nobody volunteered for the whole kitn'kaboodle.

WISIL has eked out an existence via the internet, and a website that we are proud to thank Warren Beauchamp for. Besides the website, there had been several critics that thought that the club could function better as a virtual club, relying only on the Internet to relate information, and broaden the spectrum of membership. This has proven great in theory, but less great in practice. When there had been regular meetings, there had been enough people on hand to gauge opinion, get ideas, and vote on club business. True, this can be accomplished over the internet, via e-mail, the faceless, emotionally void, and impersonal modern method. What the internet lacks for all the keyboard ticklers, is an intimidation factor, an imposed responsibility, a real 'step forward and be counted' aura. If anyone had thought that it was hard to get volunteers for club duties before, just try it when your only method of communication might be an e-mail posting in cyberspace to unknown people that may or may not be **"ON-LINE"**. Arguing a point via internet, within a group, could take days or weeks. Virtually the same people that had volunteered to help with events before the stopping of the newsletter and regular meetings, are the same people that are helping now. The internet is great for some people, and we have had several contacts from people via the internet. Please remember however, that these people were looking for us, or **'related topics'**. Our largest turnouts at events we still due largely in part to real printed media. We still need a newsletter, and perhaps regular meetings where perhaps, Len will be more abbreviated. So, we are still looking for a new newsletter writer/editor/publisher, for no pay, just the personal satisfaction of a job well done. Any takers?

What WISILers Have Been Doing

by Len Brunkalla

For those of you who are unaware of what some of us have been up to, this will be a cursory overview of some of our industrious members, that your editor is aware of.

The HPV racing events, such as the Tucker 100 (@ Northbrook), the Cheddar Cheese Challenge (@ Kenosha), and the HydroBowl watercraft event have continued each year, and in 2001 netted the WISIL HPVers in excess of \$400 that has been earmarked for future racing events. Just as our regular meetings had come to a halt, Bill Murphy and Warren Beauchamp had done a brief but brisk business in blown fairing bubbles, to net about \$1500 on behalf of WISIL, and for a new multi-rider streamliner club project. That project is still currently on hold. If you are interested, please contact Warren Beauchamp via the website e-mail.

Bill Murphy continues to operate his "skunk works", where many WISILers have viewed projects, worked on projects, or gotten great ideas for new projects concerning HPVs. Currently, Bill has been designing a air-prop boat. His previous HPB took an unplanned journey into the air on the way to the 2000 water event in Sparta, Wisconsin. Bill's boat came off of the trailer while on the highway, at speed. Miraculously, it suffered only minor damage, and was repaired in time to compete.

Warren Beauchamp has modified his Barracuda with a one-blade suspended fork, and a rear driven 700c wheel. The fairing has gone through a few renditions. A new streamliner is in the works.

The 2001 Tucker 100 racing event, held at the Northbrook Velodrome had a record turnout, boasting 54 entries. The Cheddar Cheese Challenge, held at Kenosha's Washington Park Velodrome, also reported a record attendance of over 40 entries.

Ron Drynen, has joined into the mix of people who are involved in the HydroBowl watercraft event. Bob Buerger, Bill Murphy, and Warren Beauchamp combine their efforts to bring off the event. In 2001, Len Brunkalla built a new catamaran, the 'Captain Kidd', which folds up to fit into his minivan. The boat was piloted by his daughter, Jamilah.

Annual Meeting and Flea Market

@ Wheel & Sprocket

Once again, the people at the Wheel & Sprocket bicycle dealership, in Hales Corners, Wisconsin, have invited the WISIL HPVers to have a meeting at their store, February 23. This will be the sixth year that the good folks at Wheel & Sprocket, have hosted this event for us.

The Wheel & Sprocket chain of bike stores is one of the finest, and largest independent bicycle dealerships in America. Here you will find a great selection of road, touring, or off-road bicycles for the whole family. Additionally, Kris Kegel, owner of the W&S stores, has amassed a tremendous range of recumbent bicycles at the Hales Corners store. There is also a great selection of Skiing equipment at this location. As if this weren't enough already, visitors may get to meet,..... Harry.

Harry Wozniak, manages the Hales Corners store, and adds character to the already friendly and helpful staff. Harry is seemingly always moving, hard to keep pace with, and if you ever see him in the same spot for more than a few minutes, you better check his pulse. Heck, to many people, the recumbent buying experience is not complete, without meeting Harry.

The meeting will start 10:00am, and should be completed within one hour. We will address topics such as, the HPV Race Series, upcoming or culminating rides, this newsletter, and a new club streamliner project. The flea market will commence, immediately following the business part of the meeting.

We would like to institute a couple of rules, by which to conduct the flea market.

1- Please wait until **after** the meeting is completed before commencing to sell or trade goods. This will keep the meeting from being disrupted. Waiting until after the meeting, will also give late comers an even chance to view sales items.

2- Please keep all flea market items confined to the meeting floor, so as not to disturb the regular store sales floor. If any item is too big for the meeting area (i.e. a streamliner), please ask the store manager for advice on how to proceed.

3- Not all transactions need to be sales. Many people find that one person's junk is their treasure and vice versa, and a trade is born.

4- Neither the Wheel & Sprocket store, nor WISIL HPVers, takes any responsibility for the items traded or sold in the flea market. This event should be considered the same as garage sales, and "**as is**" is the phrase for the day.

5- If you buy something, you own it, **take it with you**. If you brought something, and didn't sell it, **you still own it, take it with you**. If you make clutter, unclutter it. We like the store, and currently, they like us, and we want to keep it that way. Behave better than you do at home, 'cause you aint home.

Wheel & Sprocket

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Hales Corners, WI
414-529-6600

A VISIT TO A MALAYSIAN BIKE FACTORY

by Len Brunkalla

This past June, My wife Sa'mah, and my daughter Jamilah, went to visit the relatives in Singapore. While there, they made arrangements for my sister-in-law to fly back with them. The three of them returned on July 16. Although my sister-in-law, Saedah, had planned on staying for six months, a visa snafu had reduced that to 90 days. At the time, it was not a big deal. After the tragic events in September, in New York, our perspective changed. Suddenly expecting a Muslim woman who does not speak English, or read or write any language, traveling alone, was not a good idea. The in-laws called four or five times expressing their concerns. I checked on-line for cheap airfares, and managed to find round-trip airfare, on the same airline, for \$784 not including all of the extra fees and taxes.

Despite the tragic events of September 11th, I had the opportunity to visit Singapore and Malaysia again, so I grabbed it. This was especially good for me as local weather had been dishing out temps in the low 40's, and Singapore is on the equator with an average yearly temperature of about 90. It took some hasty calls to the ticket broker, and Japan Airlines, to get me on the same plane on the same day (especially now), but I managed that, and adjacent seats.

On the day of departure, we had arranged for a stretch limousine, to carry us to the airport for the requested 4 hours ahead of departure (though we allowed only 3 1/2). The limo was a white stretch which impressed Saedah, but the early morning 38°F was more of a shock for her. She borrowed a long, wool coat from my wife (which she continued to wear for several hours into the flight). Security at the airport was different, though most of the security personnel were still pretty shaky on their procedures.

At any rate, we arrived safe and sound in Singapore via Tokyo, about 26 hours after we had left the house, and two days later. Though we had left from Ohare on a Sunday morning, we arrived in Singapore just after midnight, Tuesday morning. The best way that I've found for combating jet-lag, is to sleep as little as possible on the plane, arrive dead tired, in the middle of the night, and wake up feeling very close to normal. It was normal until my wife called at 9am Singapore time and informed me that the USA had just started bombing Afghanistan. I made sure to put my WISIL Missile T-shirts back into my suitcase,.... we weren't going to be wearing them on this trip. My wife asked me if I was sure that I would be coming back. No worries.

No worries exactly, as I quickly set about my agenda, which was to contact my Malay friend Zaqif, in Kuala Lumpur, to do some traveling up the peninsula. Some of you may remember Zaqif, a stocky, guy that helped with the AMB timing equipment at the Northbrook event, years back. After a 4 1/2 hour bus ride north, I met up with Zaqif, outside of a KFC, at 9:30pm. We stopped for some tea, _teh tarik_ (sweet milk tea), then off to the house to sleep. We had quite a drive ahead of us the next day.

The next morning, we quickly loaded our luggage in the car, and after stopping at a roadside food stall for a breakfast of fried rice and eggs, and teh tarik, we were on our way north. It was going to be a four hour drive to Teluk Intan, in the state of Perak, where we were to visit a business acquaintance, and factory owner.

I had met Khalid Abu Hassan, while he was visiting the US, and had stopped in Illinois for a reunion at NIU. At the time, he had seemed quite interested in the prospect of building recumbent bicycles, as a new product line for his metal fabricating business. As it turned out, after visiting his facilities in Teluk Intan, his facilities lacked the equipment and organization necessary to undertake such a venture. After a friendly lunch, at a hawker center (an Asian term for a food court), we were back on our way to our main objective, the Victory Bicycle factory, in Taiping. Taiping was further north, past Ipoh, through some mildly mountainous territory.

After two more hours of driving, the last of which was on a 2-lane highway, we arrived in the city of Taiping. In most major cities in Malaysia, the main roads into town, are decorated with ornate archways that welcome visitors in Arabic, and bahasa Malaysia. Although Taiping is the 2nd or 3rd largest city in the state of Perak, it probably has less than 70,000 residents.

We had not made hotel reservations, nor had I contacted Victory Bicycle, that I was coming. Actually, their website had disappeared from the internet, and I was not particularly certain that the company still existed. I remained hopeful.

Zaq and I followed roadside signs, that Led us to the hotel Seri Malaysia. Rates were RM\$130 (or about US\$34). We ere to learn later, that these rates were a tad on the high side. The hotel had a lovely view of a mountain ridge, a park, and the state prison, which was across the street. I was still hopeful that I would succeed, not only in finding the bike factory, but getting an instantaneous appointment to visit their facilities, the next day. As luck would have it, I grabbed the local yellow pages, and low and behold, Victory, and a few other bike factories were listed. After a quick, slightly confused, but nevertheless positive toned conversation with a lady at the factory, we made an appointment to visit the factory the next morning.

That evening, after a tropical storm blew through the area, Zaq and I visited a local eating center. It was relaxing to be able to sit outside, eating mutton soup, and sipping teh tarik, at 10pm. It was interesting to me that all of these eateries, and other sidewalk vendors, were still doing business this late at night, and would still be going to their day jobs in the morning.

The next morning, there was another tropical storm in the area, though not as intense as the previous evening. We took advantage of the free traditional breakfast, at the hotel, nasi goreng (fried rice), or mee siam (Thai style fried noodles) and Malay coffee. At the front desk, we acquired a local street map, in a tourist brochure, which, besides providing directions, also informed us of several cheaper hotels in town. The appointment was for 10:30am, so we ventured out at 9:30 to locate the place. Zaqif was an important asset, not only as a friend and driver, but for being able to sort out an industrial estate address. We arrived at Victory, at 10:00am, still in the rain.

For those of you who don't know me, I will give you a very brief history of my obsession of bikes and Malaysia. I fell in love with this area of the planet, not long after I fell in love with, and married, a Malaysian gal from Singapore. This was about the same time that I fell in love with recumbent bicycles also. I have been trying to find myself a situation whereby I can be building bikes, and living in Malaysia, ever since. I am not however, fluent in the language, an engineer, or experienced in a venture of these proportions, nor do I have money. Despite these shortcomings, I am extremely enthusiastic about such an undertaking, and this enthusiasm keeps me motivated. (I do have some experience designing and building recumbents.)

The company is owned and run by the Teh family (yes, that is malay for _tea_). They are Chinese/Malay. I am horrible with names, but the father and head of the company is Cho Chun. After introductions, and explaining to the group (father, two daughters, son, and grandson(?)), our intentions, we had a nice 45-minute recumbent industry discussion. Then it was time to tour the facilities.

All of the bicycles built at this factory are sold domestically, and largely factory-direct. The first area that we passed through, was the warehouse area. From our viewpoint, about two container-loads of product were warehoused on site. The assembly and packaging area was directly adjacent to the warehousing area. Here, there were 4 or 5 stations where workers did final assemblies, and wrapping of finished product.

Our next stop was the welding area. Currently, all of the welding done here, is MIG. This includes frames, non-suspended forks, and some handlebar assemblies. It struck me as really different, that first, this factory work area, is not very well lit, gloomy in fact, and that the four workers that are doing the welding, are sitting crosslegged on the floor! Malay factories of this type, generally operate 9 hours per day, and 5 1/2 days per week. It hurts to think about it.

Next, we passed a jigging/fixturing area where 1 or 2 workers set frame or fork elements into fixtures that will then be sent to the welding area. Depending on the frame or part being fixtured, the worker may also tack-weld the pieces.

Victory has the capability to paint frames either by airless sprayer, or powdercoat. All frames are first chemically etched in preparation for painting. I was told that there are about 200+ choices of colors available to them. We inquired as to minimum numbers of frames per batch per color. During our visit, Zaq was photo documenting our tour, as Zaq is a photo-journalist by profession. We asked the younger of the Teh daughters, Satsko, who was short but quite photogenic, to pose next to a rack of freshly powdercoated frames, to give a size comparison. (Zaq told me later, that after the pictures were developed, that since she was so tiny, that the rack of frames still looks small.)

As we proceded through the factory, we progressed to the more mechanized portion of the facility. There was quite a bit of devoted machinery for tapering tubes, threading bottom brackets, steertubes, and the like. When a bottom bracket gets threaded, the entire, welded frame gets dropped into a machine that then threads both sides at

once. Victory makes everything for their bikes, including handlebars, and wheels. As we walked through the wheel fabricating area, we watched a tiny Indian lady, batch-cutting rolled alloy rim extrusions. They build all of their 26" & 20" wheels.

Victory builds between 5,000 and 7,000 bikes per month, depending on types scheduled for production. They currently build quite up-to-date looking, full-suspended bikes, as well as less expensive, more common rigid frame street bikes.

After our tour, we had another 30 minute discussion in the office, where we discussed their factory capabilities, versus the current recumbent market, and consumer tendencies. We also discussed possible upgrading that they could do to be more competitive in any bike market.

All in all, it was a very pleasant, and informative visit. It was especially rewarding to finally meet people that I had located via internet initially, when the Malaysian government's own Industrial Development Authority, couldn't tell me if there were bike factories in that state.

If by chance any of our readers consider traveling to the region, remember that security has been heightened on a worldwide basis. This by no means infers that security has some great consistency from airport to airport, or country to country. I traveled through Chicago's O'hare, Tokyo's Narita, and Singapore's Changi Airports. On my way to Singapore, in the company of my sister inlaw, I was never frisked, nor very thoroughly searched. On my way home however, alone, I was extremely carefully scrutinized. In Singapore, my carry-on was x-rayed three times, and physically searched twice. In Japan, I was frisked three times, but only on my return trip. Not to worry though. In Japan, the people that are frisking passengers, are young uniformed women, wearing white gloves, and whose verbal directions consist of, "May I touch you?" Okay.....

In Chicago, even though I am a caucasian, with a US passport, and from the area, the US Customs personnel instantaneously ordered a search of all of my belongings, and a barrage of questions. Where had I gone? How long was I in Singapore? Did I go anywhere else while I was there? How long was I in Malaysia? So, how long was I actually in Singapore? This had turned into more of a math test, and though math was my major, patience was not. I asked the inquisitive Customs agent, "Well, I left Japan at 11am on Monday, and arrived (at 9am) here before I left Japan, so, how long was I gone?"

For cheap airfare, I would suggest searching the internet, especially, **cheaptravel.com**, and **airvalues.com**. My round-trip ticket was about US\$840.00.