



Bulletin # 24

By a survivor of the  
Bicentennial Dearborn to  
Philadelphia Tour '76  
and Century '77  
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▣ Riding ❁ Collecting ❁ Restoring ❁ Research ❁ History ▣

## Preparation for the Century (Physical Fitness)

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Presumably we emerged from the sea. First we swam, then learned to crawl, then to climb, and finally to walk. Our fascination with the wheel is lost in the shadows of antiquity, but our ability to self-propel ourselves on the wheel is barely one hundred years old.

As a walker, man is quite efficient, requiring only .75 calories per gram of weight per kilometer traveled, which is better than the efficiency of dogs, birds, or the automobile, but not quite as good as the fish. However, put man on a bicycle and he becomes the most efficient of all traveling animals and machines, using .15 calories per gram of weight per kilometer traveled.\* In addition to this economy package, all the bonus goodies offered by The Wheelmen fall into line, such as socializing, touring, awareness of history, being at one with ecology, and having an inexpensive means of acquiring improved body tone and maintaining a better physical condition.

After joining The Wheelmen one discovers there is a ladder of accomplishment; namely, the OHWT (10 miles or more cross-country touring) and the Century (100 miles in one day). Fortunately, one can be a participating member without competing for these classifications. Should every member be urged to climb this competitive ladder? Definitely not! The decision to commit oneself to the stress of the OHWT or the Century depends upon a number of factors. Have you had or do you now have an active medical problem? It is obvious that being overweight, or having diabetes, kidney disease, heart disease, etc., affect your decision. But do remember that serious medical problems **do not** preclude a fitness program tailored to your abilities. For example, under medical supervision, known cardiac cases as observed with treadmill and stress tests are very effectively rehabilitated. They first start with walking, later jogging, and as cardiac function improves, cycling. So if you have had medical problems, get proper medical advice for your conditioning program.

Wheelmen joining our conditioning class can be divided into four age groups: (1) under 30 years, (2) 30-40 years, (3) 40-50 years, (4) 50 plus years. All trainers and medics are aware that the younger age group is favored as far as the muscular and cardiovascular systems are concerned. If you have no known health problems and your general physical fitness is good, let's start to ride.

You must guard against overdoing. "Progress slowly" says Dr. K. H. Cooper.\*\* By so doing you will build up your legs and general muscle tone, and more important, you will not overtax your heart.

To make your cycle fitness program logical, check your resting pulse rate (65-80). Pick a fairly level test area of from 2 to 5 miles. Start your ride and try to maintain 60-90 RPM (pedal revolutions per minute) for 2-5 minutes and check your heart rate again after the completion of your selected distance. If your heart rate does not exceed 120 and you are not out of breath, continue riding. Do not force yourself. Stop or slow down if you get out of breath or have any pain or dizziness. Don't try to keep up with a younger or faster rider.

If you can cover your test area without undue stress, increase the speed and distance of your riding. Try to push your pulse rate to approximately 120-140, and if not out of breath, see if you can continue at this pace for 10-15 minutes. Five minutes after completing this cycling stress course your pulse should drop below 120, and in 10 minutes, below 100. If the pulse rate does not return to below 100 in ten minutes, reduce your activity until you can build up to greater cardiac efficiency.

The whole field of heart and lung conditioning is known as aerobics,\*\* and if properly applied, can, with safety, be used as a guide to an effective conditioning program to prepare for the OHWT and the Century. Depending on your age and basic fitness, the preparation

time for these events could be as short as sixty days. Don't prepare for just one big event. Get in condition and stay in condition. You will feel better, look better, and live ten years longer, as you cycle over the countryside with your Wheelmen friends.

### *A Check List for Long Distance Riding*

1. The bike must be in good condition: (a) Check spokes and tires. (b) Be sure bearings are properly adjusted and oiled. (c) Ensure that the seat is adjusted for your derriere and to your style of riding—seat cover of heavy leather and not too soft.
2. Clothing: (a) Stitch chamois skin into the seats of riding pants, as many experienced riders do. (b) Wear clothing light and tight enough to avoid snagging on seat or handlebars when mounting and dismounting. (c) Wear light gloves, always. (d) Wear head protection if racing and when riding in traffic or in bright sun.
3. Food: (a) Drink plenty of fluids, Gatorade, etc. (b) Replace salt if perspiring a lot, especially if temperature approaches 90°F. (c) Take adequate first class protein foods to build up muscle tone. (d) Eat much carbohydrate before and during a demanding ride.
4. Avoid chilling while riding and especially on concluding any demanding ride.

\* V. A. Tucker, Duke University

\*\* K. H. Cooper, M.D. "The New Aerobics"