

My first organized bike ride.

Our club used to ride to Milwaukee for a weekend when the VanDornicks led the ride. We would ride to Milwaukee on Friday. Ride loops on Saturday and then ride back on Sunday. I went on a couple of these, but I'm sure that many of the club members went on more of these than I did.

My first ever weekend bike trip was a one-way return from Milwaukee, WI back to Glenview, IL in 1968 when I was in eighth grade. The trip was organized by the park district for junior high school kids as part of the "78" club (since we were 7th and 8th graders). We put our bikes into a box car and then rode the train to Milwaukee. We rode our bikes to a youth hostel on that Friday night. The plan was for us to ride about 45 miles per day to return to Glenview on Sunday.

We were a mixed bag of suburban kids with department store bikes that had been upgraded for our trip. I had a 10-speed Raleigh 26" bike that my father insisted I put new tires on even though the old ones weren't worn out. I kept the old ones (after stealing them out of the bike store dumpster).

We carried our own clothes, so most people just wore a knapsack while they rode. Even then I would rather put the weight on the bike rather than on me, so I put my backpack on a metal pack frame and tied the pack frame onto the rear carrier over the back wheel to make Boy Scout panniers.

We got lost on the first day and ended up doing a 50 mile loop. My Boy Scout genes were fully active back then, so I was the only person with food (2 gallons of trail mix) and a half gallon of water. Yes, my backpack NEEDED that metal frame to carry the weight. We were eventually picked up by a sod turf farmer with a large flatbed trailer. We loaded up and were taken to the youth hostel scheduled for that night.

I got used to my sweep rider position as we finished the ride home the next day. The trail mix was gone, but I had replaced the half-gallon of water. I can only help people who ride in front of me, so I still try to ride sweep whenever possible.

I had another reason to ride sweep when I rode a one-week ride in Nova Scotia, but that is another story.

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