

OH Bike Mini-Newsletter – November 2023

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Message from the President



Well, it's been a busy month here in the Oxon Hill Bike Club. Our monthly ride schedule has been filling up with rides to be led by several of our regular ride leaders including Steve P, Joan O, Ron A, Dan D and myself. We are always looking for more ride leaders willing to lead their own favorite rides.

Michael B stopped by the house to drop off an "indoor bike trainer" in case Jackie wants to use it for "rehabbing" from her recent surgery. While Michael was visiting, he mentioned his own serious medical problems. We (Jackie and I and the OHBTC

membership) had no idea he was so ill for so long. He pulled through but it took at least eight months and many hospital stays. He is now retired and with Azealia is planning a long cruise to celebrate his recovery. Jackie and I recommend riding a trike for anyone with any kind of physical problems.

Which brings up another point. In my Masonic Lodge there is an officer whose job it is to keep track (as other members bring to his attention) those of our number that are sick and/or ailing in some way. He then reports to us during the meetings, so we can contact those that need prayers, cheering up, shopping, errands, or whatever is needed.

Do we need a sick committee contact in our bike club?

See yens on the trail or road,
Rabbi Randy, President



Oxon Hill Bike and Trail Club Board Meeting Minutes - Draft

Date/Time	October 16, 2023 7 PM
Attendance	Board Members: Randy Schoch, Joan Oppel, Walt Roscello, Jessica Hirschhorn, Ellen Goodwin, Steve Palincsar, Dan Donahue, Jim Hudnall, Leslie Tierstein Oxon Hill members: Jackie Schoch, Jane Hudnall, Rick Hagan, Wally Huie
Absent	Board member: Diane Harris

President Schoch called the meeting to order at 7:06 pm.

Minutes – A motion to approve and distribute the notes from the special September board meeting was made, seconded, and approved.

Treasurer's Report – Walt Roscello

September 2023

Monthly Income = \$560

Total 2023 Income = \$22,440

Monthly expenses

(including Labor Day picnic) = \$442

Total 2023 expenses - \$16,517

Total funds (checking and CDs) - \$59,102

Renewal of Liability Insurance Policy – Joan Oppel

Joan reported that she completed the application and payment for renewal of the club liability insurance. The new policy is effective October 15, 2023 through October 15, 2024, and the premium is \$1269.65.

Summation of Special Board Meeting

Three items from the special board meeting on September 18 were discussed.

Survey to Lapsed Members – Dan Donahue

During the September meeting, the board discussed ways to encourage more engagement with the club from current members, more ride leaders, and ways to increase membership. New members join every year, but many do not renew. As a way to gain insight into why and what might improve retention, the board decided to survey members who have not renewed in the past year. Dan Donohue created an excellent draft survey, and as a part of this meeting, members reviewed it and offered suggestions and additional items. Dan, Jessica, Joan, and Ron Altemus will finalize the survey with the goal of sending it out in early November. (Ron has expertise with Survey Monkey and volunteered to help.)

Facebook Meet Up Group – Jessica Hirschhorn

Jessica reported on her research for setting up a MeetUp group. She also reported information from another cycling group on its disappointing MeetUp experience. The board decided not to pursue this avenue at this time.

Trial Membership – Steve Palincsar

The board decided to try offering a trial one-month membership to allow riders to experience several rides with the club (instead of the insurance policy restriction that permits the club to allow a guest on only one ride as a guest). Steve investigated setting up a trial membership in the Wild Apricot system and reported it is doable but requires further research on the mechanics. He and Jessica will work together on setting it up. The board decided on a \$3 charge for the trial membership.

The meeting adjourned at 8:05 pm. **Next Meeting:** November 13.

Oxon Hill Special Board Meeting Notes – September 18, 2023

The board met on September 18 for a special discussion of the future of the club. Discussion topics included membership growth, member engagement with the club, ride calendar listings, and number of ride leaders.

Takeaways from the discussion:

- Consider what kind of club Oxon Hill wants to be:
 - Do we want to focus on more participation from existing members or do we want to focus on adding members?
 - Focus on C/CC/B rides?
 - Or try to reconstitute A/AA/BB and even B ride classes?
 - Target specific age segments?
- Determine how to encourage active engagement from members, that is, active participation with the club in some form: attending rides, leading rides, volunteering for certain activities.
- How do we encourage more ride leaders? More rides on the schedule could attract more riders.
- Consider offering “classes” for members to help with more club engagement
 - How to list a ride on the website
 - Mentoring for new ride leaders by current and former ride leaders, and actively seeking leaders to mentor
 - How to use *Ride With GPS* for navigation, with a phone app or on a dedicated GPS device
- All-class rides have attracted large numbers of riders during the past two years. Should we expand to holding one per month?
- The Friday Indian Head Rail Trail ride is popular; it is on the calendar every week and its participants enjoy the social aspect of the ride as well as its consistency. Can this be replicated with other ride listings?
- Survey the members who did not renew during the past 12 months to find out why.
- Explore the possibility of offering a one-month trial membership to allow nonmembers to do more than the current “one ride allowed as a nonmember liability insurance restriction.”

Submitted by Joan Oppel

Approved by the Oxon Hill Board on October 16, 2023

New! 1-Month Trail Membership for only Three Bucks

Oxon Hill Bicycle & Trail Club, Inc. (OHBTC) is a non-profit, membership organization incorporated in 1972 to promote bicycling as a means of recreation, health, transportation, and physical fitness. We are an active bicycling club with members and rides in Maryland, the District of Columbia, and Northern Virginia. Our primary focus is recreational rides in Southern Maryland (Prince George's, Charles, Saint Mary's, Anne Arundle and Calvert Counties). Membership is open to cyclists of all ages and abilities.

Sign up here and join us for any ride for a month during the beautiful Fall weather.

<https://ohbike1.wildapricot.org/>

Black Forest/Alsace Wine Route Bicycle Tour

by Diane Harris

Since the mid-1990s, Theresa and I have taken cycling vacations. All the trips have been fully supported, meaning the routes, lodging, meals, mechanical, and SAG support are provided by the tour operators. This year's vacation was a Vermont Bicycle Tours (VBT) Black Forest/Alsace Wine Route, which included stops in Switzerland, Germany, and France.

We arrived Saturday morning at the start location in Basel, Switzerland. Riding wouldn't start until Sunday, so we used the day to explore some of the sites of Basel. There were narrow, quaint, cobblestone streets and the must-see, 16th century town hall.



Sunday, we met Jean and Cedric, our very experienced VBT tour guides, who were not only familiar with the region, but also knew the history of the area, Alsace, which at various times belonged to either Germany or France. There were 16 riders. From the hotel in Switzerland, we were shuttled across the border into France for our bike fittings, safety briefing, and the first ride, 14 miles along the Grand Canal d'Alsace. This was typical canal riding, flat with smooth gravel, water on one side, and occasional crossings to the other. What added interest was knowing that in past times, the country you were in, was at war with the country on the other side of the canal. This was evident when we passed a WWII "pill box" and could look across the canal at vineyards occupied by the enemy. After the ride, we were shuttled across the border (France into Germany) to our lodging for the next two days, Badenweiler, Germany, in the Black Forest. Badenweiler is the site of the 2000 year old excavated Roman Baths and Spa ruins, as well as the Cassiopeia Thermal baths. It is also the site of several giant Sequoia trees (~160 years old) from the United States. Among those who visited Badenweiler in the past (for its health benefits), were Anton Chekhov and Stephen Crane, both of whom died there (tuberculosis).

The route for Day 2 was from Badenweiler to Staufen and back to Badenweiler. It started with a very nice descent to one of the many bike trails and roads, through vineyards and small towns. The flats of yesterday were replaced by rolling hills and occasional short steep climbs. On arriving in Staufen, we could see high up on a hill, the ruins of the Staufen Castle, built in the 12th century. Staufen is one example of the many small, picturesque villages and towns we'd see on all the routes of this tour. Narrow cobblestone streets, lined with half-timbered houses, window boxes filled with blooming flowers, small restaurants, bakeries, pubs, and coffee shops. Towns were separated by lots of farmland

and vineyards. It's a beautiful area. I enjoyed the ride, even with the steep climb back to the hotel. In the evening, we took a walking tour of the nearby Roman Spa and Bath ruins.

Day 3's route took us from Germany to Colmar, France. Along the way we stopped for lunch in Neuf-Brisach, a fortified town and UNESCO World Heritage Site. The architect of this fortification (building began in 1698) was Vauban, a French military engineer considered to be the best of his time, in service to Louis XIV. There, we were introduced to the regional dish, Flammekueche (similar to pizza but NOT pizza). It was good! After a walking tour of the fort, we continued the ride to Colmar, a town near the German border. The old part of town is known for its cobblestone streets and half-timbered houses, as well as the canal which gives the town its nickname, "Little Venice".

One of the nice things about this tour was the choice of rides offered each day. This ride would take us up two climbs that were part of Stage 5 in the 2019 Tour de France! It was 27.3 miles with 3006 feet of elevation. After the climb, we descended to Eguisheim, voted one of the most beautiful towns in France. It's another town with narrow cobblestone streets lined with half-timbered houses and window flower boxes.

Day 5 was Colmar to Obernai with stops in Riquewihr and Ribeauville. This was the longest ride of the tour, with mileage varying from 13 to 40 miles based on rider preference. It was a combination of lightly traveled roads with vineyards on both sides, paved bike trails, and roads passing through small villages. There was also climbing (~1870 ft). Theresa and I opted to do the 40 mile route. Today's weather started with temperatures in the low 50s and overcast skies. Eventually it rained, not hard, but steady. Some riders opted to take the van to our next lodging but because we had rain gear, we kept riding. This area is described as "picturesque" and if pictures were used as examples in the dictionary, any of the towns and countryside along the route could be used. It was beautiful, even with cloudy skies and rain. From the old churches with their steeples and clock towers, to the half-timbered houses with steep rooftops, to the castle ruins on distant mountaintops. Theresa and I stayed a bit too long at one of the rest stops, opting for a sit-down lunch of quiche and Orangina, instead of getting a sandwich to go. With the help of one of the guides, we were able to catch up to the rest of the group and we all stayed together, reaching the second rest stop at a bakery, where we enjoyed hot drinks and snacks (for me a cappuccino and chocolate eclair). We reached the hotel in Obernai, in the section of city with narrow cobblestone streets and shops, churches, hotels, and restaurants. In spite of the rain and this being the day with the highest mileage, it was a very nice ride.

Day 6, Obernai to Entzheim (France). The weather forecast called for rain for most of the day. At breakfast most of the riders were dressed for riding and it wasn't raining. Theresa and I had rain gear, the temperature was mild, most of the others were riding, so we decided to ride. Today's route took us by a facility that housed rescued storks. There were also ducks and swans. We accessed the Canal de la Bruche, and then rode through more villages and small towns, passing fields of cabbage and hops (already harvested). Yes, it rained off and on throughout the day, but not enough to make for an uncomfortable ride. We returned to the hotel in Obernai, did a little shopping, got hot coffee and a pastry, before returning for the final group dinner of the tour. The riding is over! It's been a good tour with excellent tour guides, nice people, and very manageable routes taking us into areas not only with lots of vineyards but lots of history, good food, and wine!

Sharing the Road - Practical Tips for Biking with All Types of Drivers

*By Ellen Goodwin**

This past September I rode the Civil War Century. I had just enjoyed the magnificent Gettysburg battlefield when a driver behind me pulled into the oncoming lane in order to pass. As the car pulled around me, an oncoming pickup slammed on its brakes and honked. I continued to ride and very shortly

was within a few feet of the driver's side of the pickup, which remained stopped. The driver leaned out the window, looked me in the eye, and screamed, "Get the @\$% off the road!!!" while making a universally recognizable hand gesture.

We've all been there. No matter how safely, defensively, or courteously you ride, some day you will encounter a driver who is unaware of, indifferent to, or aggressively hostile toward bike riders. If it hasn't happened to you yet, know that at some point in your cycling life you will encounter a driver that will rattle you--or worse--call your safety into question.

Here are five tips to protect yourself as you share the road with all manner of vehicles and drivers.

1. "Keep calm and cycle on."

If you are like me, your natural inclination may be to hurl even more expletives and middle fingers at a driver who delivers these, cuts you off, honks to startle you, or even threatens to hurt you for slowing them down. But your better response will *always* be to remain calm and not engage. My grandmother used to say, "If you can't say anything nice, don't say anything at all." That's still great advice, even if a driver curses at you or spits in your face. Remember that you are outside to enjoy fresh air and a change of scenery, get some exercise, and --*most important*-- to get home safely!

2. Record the encounter — and make sure you don't self-incriminate with your actions.

With the prevalence of smartphones and GoPro-type cameras mounted on a cyclist's bike, it is easier than ever to record aggressive driver encounters. You should not hesitate to use these devices to record any truly threatening event. Documenting the situation with video, still photos, voice memos, written notes or emails to yourself or others can bolster any case that may warrant further legal action. But you should *make sure you're not caught on tape escalating the situation with verbal threats or physical retaliation. If you come off as verbally or physically threatening, this could weaken any potential case you have against an aggressor.* If you are cycling in a group ride, others in your group should think to start recording or photographing license plates immediately since a threatened individual may not think quickly in the moment.

3. Intimidation from an angry driver is assault.

Whether they pass too closely (3 feet is the law), coal roll you, scream threats or stop their truck and pull out a baseball bat, if someone places you in "reasonable fear of imminent bodily harm" in Virginia, or "intentionally frightens" you in Maryland, they have assaulted you. That is a crime. They don't have to touch you. That would be battery, also a crime. Record as many details as possible: time, date, location — including road name and mile marker — license plate, make and model of vehicle, description of the driver, things they said to you (and things you said back) — anything that may be pertinent to the encounter. Gather identifying information from any potential witnesses. When it's safe to do so, you can report it to the authorities. It does not have to be immediately.

4. Uninsured motorist insurance coverage can help you if you get hit by an under-insured motorist.

Cyclists who are insured drivers may be covered for injuries sustained while bike riding by their own auto insurance policy. Because auto versus bicycle claims often involve severe injuries, in a case where an at-fault driver has low insurance limits, the cyclist may not be compensated for their injuries. However, if the cyclist has Uninsured/Under-insured Motorist (UM/UIM) insurance for their own car, they could be compensated under the terms of that policy. This is worth exploring even though the cyclist's car was not involved in the incident.

5. Share some love on the road.

As cyclists, we can do our part to deescalate any encounter by thinking before we respond, remaining calm, and apologizing if we are in error. When a driver passes courteously after being held up behind you or a group of cyclists, try to remember to wave and smile, indicating your appreciation of their

patience. This can be particularly helpful on a group ride or organized event when drivers are likely to be delayed by multiple cyclists. Hopefully, your kindness will help drivers be more patient for the next cyclist they encounter.

Cycling gives us so many benefits—great exercise, stress reduction, beautiful scenery, epic adventures, and the freedom to eat dessert TWICE! Even with all of this, your number one priority on the road should be to finish the ride unharmed so you can do it again.

*This article was largely taken with permission from the [2023 Event Guide to the Shenandoah Fall Foliage Bike Festival](#). Learn about this great event at <https://shenandoahbike.org>.