

Reading Can Get You Hooked on Bicycling

The Bicycle Newspaper Column

By Peter Flucke

For the Bicycle Federation of Wisconsin

One of the best forms of recreation and transportation is probably hooked up in your garage collecting dust.

Almost all of us grew up riding a bicycle. But even here in Wisconsin, arguably one of the best bicycling states in the country, people still do not bicycle as much as they could.

Driving a car has replaced bicycling for most of us. Between work, family, increased traffic and who knows what else, few of us ride like we used to. But maybe, if things were different, we would. For many of us the desire to ride is still there but just not the means.

Bicycling is one of the most popular forms of recreation. Moreover, it provides transportation and keeps you fit. Almost anyone can ride a bicycle. The benefits are tremendous!

Bicycling:

- is good for your health
- relatively inexpensive
- decreases traffic
- is good for the environment
- creates more transportation options
- is almost totally non-polluting
- decreases dependence on foreign oil
- is a great family activity
- promotes a sense of community

Of course, to realize many of these advantages, YOU have to ride.

Bicycling has been around for more than 100 years. But recently bicycling has begun to receive more interest than ever before from bicyclists and the government. Both the federal government, with the *National Biking and Walking Study*, and the state, with the *Wisconsin Bicycle Transportation Plan*, have begun to truly promote bicycling.

The goal of these initiatives are two-fold: Double the number of trips made by bicycle; simultaneously decrease the number of bicycle crashes by 10 percent.

Our state and our communities are already taking steps to make them happen: Roads are being designed with bicycle travel in mind: both youth and adult bicyclist, along with motorists, are being taught how to make bicycling safer; police, too, are being taught to enforce laws which will make bicycling safer and more enjoyable.

Most potential bicyclists do not consider themselves to be bicyclists, and therefore they are hard to reach. But consider this: I do not consider myself to be a gardener, but I do read the gardening column in the newspaper. Because of what I have read, I enjoy gardening more and I do it more often.

This column is for anyone who has ever ridden a bicycle or who would like to give it a try and receive all of the benefits. It is targeted towards bicyclists of average ability who only ride occasionally (the majority of us), but who, with a little knowledge and encouragement, will be safer riders and will feel more comfortable riding under a wider variety of conditions.

The goal of this column is simple: get more people bicycling more often for more reasons and enjoying it more. Funding for the project has been provided through a small state grant.

Future columns will provide you with three general types of articles: technical (e.g. "Choosing the Right Bicycle for You"), inspirational (e.g. "Bicycling Around the World in the Year 2000"), commuting information (e.g. "The Benefits of Bicycle Commuting") and much more. Authors will change from week to week; all are state and nationally recognized experts with a love of all types of bicycling.

The Bicycle Newspaper Column is brought to you by the Bicycle Federation of Wisconsin, a state-wide advocacy group whose motto is "Working to Make Wisconsin a Better Place to Bike".

During the next two years we will make 52 articles available to every newspaper in the state. The target publication period is May through October to coincide with the prime bicycling season. However, articles will also be available off season as well, but less frequently. Each newspaper may publish the columns on its own schedule. Look for this column in this paper in future weeks.

So unhook your bicycle this spring. Dust it off, fill up the tires and take it for a ride. When you get back from your ride, sit back, relax and open your paper to find out more about this truly remarkable sport. Getting hooked on bicycling doesn't mean hooking your bicycle to the garage ceiling. We will show you why.

Peter Flucke is the president of WE BIKE®. This column is provided by the Bicycle Federation of Wisconsin. For more information about this or other bicycle related topics contact the BFW at (608) 251-4456 or bfw@mailbag.com.