

Letters to the Editor

Editor's note: Letters to the Editor must be signed. The Gazette-Times will not publish unsigned letters. Please include your address and phone number on all letters for use by the G-T office. The G-T reserves the right to edit. The G-T is not responsible for accuracy of statements made in letters. (Any letters expressing thanks will be placed in the classifieds under "Card of Thanks" at a cost of \$7.)

Columbia Plateau Stage racers remember

(Editor's note: The following three letters were submitted by Anne Morter, of Ione. They are three accounts of people who raced in the Columbia Plateau Stage Race held this summer.)
To the editor:

It was hot, nearly 90 most of the time, with brisk winds that made it feel like the inside of a breezy sauna. Oh yeah, there were also the herds of cattle that watched us bound, or rather ride, effortlessly over the metallic cattle guards that perplexed and kept them from crossing to the other side of the road, like miniature Berlin walls. Add some more hills, lots of them, some steep, some long, all hard... and hot; then include some random specklings of deer, good food, friendly people, and about 300 spandex clad masochists, and what do you have? No, not a Saturday Night Live spoof on the movie "City Slickers", but the Columbia Plateau bicycle race.

Most cyclists would say that I have been fortunate. I have been racing since I was only 11 years old, signed my first pro contract at the age of 22, and even had the chance to race against Lance Armstrong (the basketball equivalent to playing Michael Jordan, in his prime). I have also had the opportunity to travel to other countries, dozens of states, and hundreds of different races, yet when asked what my favorite race is, I would say, without question, Columbia Plateau.

Bike racing is a segregated sport. At nearly every other race, we race, head to our hotel rooms, eat with our teammates, and stumble to our beds. There is very little interaction among racers, the women hang with the women, the men hang with the men, the beginners hang with the beginners, and the elite hang with the elite. This is not a matter of choice, but more of timing. We race all day, at different times, and then must find food, our beds, perhaps a little Sports Center and then sleep for the next day. Columbia Plateau integrates the riders, putting us together, where we sleep in school gymnasiums or outfields (on that note, never sleep on a pole vault mat, your back will hurt the next day!) and eat together. It is like one big sleepover.

Then there is the food, prepared for us by volunteers who look like they are having as much fun as we are. They're always smiling, talkative, and make some great food (kudos to the guy doing the grilling — your salmon was great!). But their duties don't stop there, we see them the next day, out in the sun, in the middle of the deserted roads of central Oregon's eastern plains, holding water bottles for us in the feed zones (a feed zone is an area where the riders are allowed to take food or water). Now, I know guys whose wives won't stand, waiting for them in a feed zone, yet these complete strangers are

out there treating us like we are riders in the Tour de France!

After the racing is done, the food is eaten, and the sun has gone down, groups of us always look forward to heading out and doing some from-the-tap carb-loading. One gentleman in Ione has been manning the bar in town for as long as I've been coming; he is a staple part of the Columbia Plateau experience, and I look forward to seeing him, his comfy leather chairs, and his television, every year. Then, in Fossil, there is, of course, the Shamrock, which has my name written on the walls so many times you'd think I was a regular.

What you have in your three little towns of Heppner, Ione, and Fossil is special. You've got a race that people from Seattle, Missoula, Portland, and even California and beyond will put their jobs down for a day or two, pack up the family, their bicycles and their sleeping bags, and head to the center of eastern Oregon for, as fast as they can. It is three days of the year that we, as cyclists and racers, look forward to every year, anticipate during those hard months of winter training, and feel a little sad when it comes to an end. Columbia Plateau is my favorite race and I look forward to the opportunity to eat your food, take your bottles, and drink a beer with you all again next year!
(s) Rusty Beall

Clarkston, Wash.

To the Editor:

This is an opportunity I would not like to miss. I'm in school right now, driven by the desire to grow as a writer, so here are a few quick words (though they're truly only quick if you read especially fast). Holy be-geezus! The Columbia Plateau bike race is more painful than a hundred allergy-season sneezes... and I'm not just saying that.

I last did this race two years ago as a category four racer. I was young, innocent and actually thought climbing mountains during competition was fun. I actually thought 95 degree heat was fun. This silly mind of mine actually confused racing long painful stages with other exercises one may call fun. "Fun" mind you. Fun is drunken ping-pong. Fun is a red frisbee at a summertime barbecue, or a silly conversation with a cute silly girl. No, Columbia Plateau is and was not fun. It was epic. And epic is the nature of a story which you tell your grandchildren.

To begin, I was dropped 25 miles into stage number one. Being "dropped" is a gentleman's way of saying that you got spit out the back. And unlike a group of gentlemen the race continued flying forward, consequently leaving me to finish twenty minutes behind the day's winner.

The next day's road stage saw me approach with only one goal in mind. Attack. And if that

doesn't work, attack again. Simple logic is the best kind of logic and I logically accomplished my simple goal. In the company of three other strong riders I sneaked off the front only a few miles into the race. The sun scorched, my legs and arms burned (not just from the sun) and in the company of my fellow escapees we maintained a small gap over the field of racers. Unfortunately most dreams end, and at mile 55 this dream came tumbling into reality as we were scooped up by the remaining racers.

Day three saw my simple mind make the same simple choice-attack. So, for predictabilities sake I found myself again off the front. Myself and four other riders did a very close impression of the day before, and again at mile fifty-five the remaining racers scooped us up. Now someone who prides there own common sense may question my own. They may think me off my rocker, missing a few marbles or owner of a brain burnt by the sun, which after this race I may well be. But my stubborn tactics actually earned me a handful of points which I picked up at intermediate sprints throughout the race. In fact, dear readers, I was only four points short of becoming the Columbia Plateau 2002 points winner. Instead I'm the first loser, holding strong in second place.

Oh I cannot complain as I wait for next year, at which time I'll be stronger, lighter and hopefully dumber, so as to find the confidence necessary to win this impossibly fun, yet painful race.
(s) Chad Nichols

To the Editor:

What do you get when you combine some of the most beautiful countryside, warm temperatures, and hundreds of shaved legs? You get one of the country's premier point-to-point bicycle stage races.

The Columbia Plateau Stage Race is a point-to-point bicycle race which starts in Heppner, Oregon, travels to Ione on day one, does one race in Ione before heading to Fossil on day two. Day three sees riders compete back to Heppner for a total of just under 220 miles.

If that isn't enough on it's own, add in some very challenging climbs, fast descents, and some stiff competition to make this race one of the most anticipated races on the cycling calendar.

My name is Larry Zimich, and I am an Elite cyclist from North Vancouver, Canada. I have been asked to give you all a bit of an insight as to what this race is like from a riders perspective to get your cycling shorts on and climb onto that bike!

My team, the Campione Racing Team, has made this race part of its schedule for the past few years as it provides us with

the only chance during the year to do a true point-to-point race.

What I mean by point-to-point is that we start and finish in different areas much like what is done in the Tour de France cycling race. This provides a truly challenging race for all involved.

Day one from Heppner saw our group ride extremely hard during the first few climbs which enable us to separate from the rest of the group or what is referred to in cycling as the peleton and establish a break away group of 13 riders. We rode speeds of over 30 mph to the end of the race and finished ahead of the next group by seven minutes. This gave us a very good lead in the race.

Day two started early with a time trial or a race against the clock as you ride on your own on a two mile uphill course with your time added to yesterday's time. That afternoon we then raced from Ione to Fossil by way of Condon, so you can imagine, the hills, 107-degree heat and wind played a major role in the day's outcome. Again a group got away on the road up to the plateau before the decent into Fossil and fortunately I was one of them.

Day three was a slightly different route that had been planned due to roadwork but was again a route of ups and downs as we went backwards from the day before. All those great downhill on the Saturday now became not so great uphill. Fortunately for me, being a climber, that made things all the better. The day came down to a group of six of us and the win went to a fellow Canadian. There was nothing better than to see that one-mile sign to Heppner!

Stage racing like this is such an experience as you eat and breathe the race until it is over. Somehow you loose track of the

Boardman chamber holds meeting

The Boardman Chamber of Commerce will hold its monthly general luncheon meeting, on Wednesday, Sept. 18, at 12 p.m. The luncheon will be held at the Port of Morrow's Riverfront Center. Members and non-members are invited to attend.

Senator David Nelson will be speaking on the special sessions and what was accomplished. He will also give an update on the state's budget and the governor's reactions to the legislatures attempt to balance the budget.

Riverfront Lodge will cater lunch, and there will be a cost of \$7 to be paid at the door. Reservations are required, and must be called in to the Chamber by Monday, Sept. 16. You can reach the Chamber by calling 481-3014.

Garden Club yard of the month



The Heppner Garden Club September Yard of the Month was awarded to Greg and Marsha Sweek, 135 N. Court St., Heppner.

Hospice volunteers are trained and ready



Pictured above are Hospice volunteers (left to right) Aloha DeSpain, Delia Robinson, Hospice director Robanai Disque and Hospice volunteer director Carolyn Willey. Volunteers who have already received the necessary preparation include Aloha DeSpain, Delia Robinson, Nella Britt, Jean Jepsen, Florene Robinson, Barb Coiner and Veda Nave. Anyone interested in the Hospice program, or in attending the upcoming training sessions, is encouraged to call Pioneer Memorial Hospice office, 676-2946.

Obituaries

Jack L. Van Winkle

Jack L. Van Winkle died August 18, 2002, at Sun Health Hospice Center at 83 years of age.

A memorial service will be held at the Heppner Elks Club on Friday, Sept. 13, 2002, at 11 a.m., with interment following at the Heppner Masonic Cemetery.

Mr. Van Winkle was born August 18, 1919, the son of Cleo (Eskelson) Van Winkle and William Concer Van Winkle in Arlington. He went to school as a youngster at the Social Ridge School and graduated from Lexington High School in 1938. He went to business school in Portland and returned to Heppner to work at the First National Bank.

In 1940, he married Ruth Hannaman, daughter of Don and Lillie (Huston) Hannaman. He served in World War II as Tech 4th Grade and he received an Honorable Discharge July 13, 1946. He returned to Heppner to work again at the bank and later purchased the Chevron Service Station.

Mr. Van Winkle was Morrow County Commissioner and went to Washington, D.C., to seek support for the Willow Creek Dam with Paul Jones. He served on the hospital board; the school board, and was involved in creating the golf course and other civic projects in Heppner. He also served on the rodeo board for a number of years.

After selling the Chevron station, he opened a Sears Catalog store. He and his wife also owned and operated the Van Winkle Motel for a number of years. Mrs. Van Winkle died on Aug. 10, 1978.

He enjoyed hunting, fishing, and his time spent at his mountain cabin on Willow Creek with family and friends. He was a lifelong Elk and was the Exalted Ruler.

In 1981, he married Mary Van Blokland and they spent their winters in Sun City West, Ariz., until 1998 when they decided to live in Arizona full time.

He is survived by his wife, Mary, in Sun City West; two daughters, Shirley George of Heppner, Patricia Toll of Redmond; two sons, John Van Winkle of Glendale, Ariz., and Jim Van Winkle of Heppner and foster son Benham Malcom of Scottsdale, Ariz.; stepsons Gary Van Blokland of Umatilla and Dale Van Blokland of Manebaca, Texas; sisters, Alma Green of Prineville and June DuVall of Sun City West, Ariz.; and brother Alfred Van Winkle of Spokane, Wash; 13 grandchildren and 14 great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his brother, Bill Van Winkle and sister Lorine Toll.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Heart Association or the Heppner Elks Foundation.

Weather Report

By the City of Heppner

For the month of August			
	High	Low	Precip.
8/1	81	49	.00
8/2	87	49	.00
8/3	80	46	.00
8/4	81	47	.00
8/5	70	48	.00
8/6	79	49	.00
8/7	73	44	.00
8/8	77	49	.00
8/9	84	54	.00
8/10	94	58	.00
8/11	91	51	.00
8/12	87	56	.00
8/13	90	58	.00
8/14	97	62	.00
8/15	99	57	.00
8/16	93	56	.00
8/17	86	53	.00
8/18	90	51	.00
8/19	84	57	.00
8/20	85	52	.00
8/21	77	57	.00
8/22	78	58	.00
8/23	84	56	.00
8/24	83	58	.00
8/25	87	57	.00
8/26	86	53	.00
8/27	82	54	.00
8/28	84	57	.00
8/29	89	62	.00
8/30	92	55	.00
8/31	83	51	.00

Home Health and Hospice gain cars



Health district purchases vehicles
By Molly Rhea

The summer of 2002 has been a busy one for the staff at Pioneer Memorial Home Health. In the midst of launching the Hospice program and preparing for the opening of the Willow Creek Terrace, the agency gained three new cars. Morrow County Health District's Board of Directors, at the bequest of CEO Victor Vander Does, voted to stop putting funds into repairing the agency's aging fleet of vehicles and purchase three new Ford Focuses.

In the past the agency has obtained their vehicles as the county replaced them, leaving the Home Health staff with a "mishmash" of high mileage cars. "We have had several old deputy vehicles," said director Molly Rhea. "You know, the ones with no door handles or window controls in the back seat." The agency staff makes home visits throughout Morrow and Gilliam counties.