



▣ Riding ❁ Collecting ❁ Restoring ❁ Research ❁ History ▣

## The Duties and Opportunities of a Captain

---

Being Captain can be lots of fun and it is very rewarding. Ultimately, everything that The Wheelmen is and what it does depends on our Captains. Other key Wheelmen volunteers provide valuable services as Officers, Committee Chairs, etc., of course, but the Captains are the ones who “bring it home” to their fellow Wheelmen. Whether you are elected or appointed, only you can authorize events. It is up to you to arouse enthusiasm, and draw members in your state or division.

The first duty of a Captain is to figure out what to do; however, every situation is different, and certain accommodations must be made. This bulletin will let you benefit from the experience of others and will give you a lot of hints to ease the way for you.

Do not let the relatively long list of duties you see here discourage you. Most of them are presented as suggestions, not requirements. Historically, each Captain has pursued those things he/she can do and sometimes delegated others. Some things, like choosing a uniform, may already have been done. Comparatively few Captains have been able to “do it all.” Do the best you can. The more the better, of course, but whatever you are able to do will be appreciated. Good Luck and Have Fun as you serve your fellow Wheelmen. Take your job seriously, but don’t take the fun out of it, either for yourself or for others.

There *are* some *mandatory* aspects to the job, however. One of these is the submission of an *Annual State/Division Financial Report*. This is absolutely essential to maintain the club’s tax exempt status with the IRS. (The club is exempt from paying taxes. Donations to it from an individual or organization are not deductible.) The report is due to The Wheelmen National Treasurer at the end of our fiscal year, September 30. A full statement would be helpful, but a simple listing of the year’s starting and ending balances and income and expenditures would suffice, but you must retain proof of expenditures, in case of an audit. (Also see the paragraph below on *expenses*.)

### KNOW YOUR MEMBERS

Keep an eye out for potential leaders or persons with special skills, who may be able to make special contribution of their talents to benefit the club. We are an organization of volunteers. The more “willing hands”, the better the club can be. As Captain, you may appoint other Wheelmen (or hold elections) for other state/division posts, such as co-Captains, Treasurer, Bugler, Event Captains, etc. The one exception is that you may not appoint your own successor as division/state Captain. Only the Commander of The Wheelmen can do that.

Make a file card for each family. Include each member’s address, phone number, spouse’s name, children’s names and ages, the member’s profession, a list of bikes owned, other collections or hobbies and any other useful information. (Our Membership Chair should be able to provide you with mailing labels, or if you have a computer, a list on disk.)

Keep another stack of cards on former members and non-members who have bikes or have shown interest in our activities. Help those with old bikes to fix and to learn to ride them. If they won’t ride, perhaps another member of their family will or they might sell out to members who would ride. Try to get the interested ones involved. If they are looking for a bike, do what you can to help them find one. If they seem serious, try to get them a loaner bike, so they can learn to ride and perhaps even participate in parades, etc. Be sure to let them know that you do not need to own an old bike to be a Wheelmen member. All you really need is a sincere interest.

Whenever you may be meeting the public, you should always carry along sufficient copies of our Prospectus and Membership Application forms (available from our Publications Chair.) It is also good to have your own business cards to pass out.

#### DEVELOP YOUR PEOPLE

We are all in this for fun. Let's enjoy it together. Get acquainted with your members. Help them get their bikes in running condition; help them learn to ride. Ride with them informally. Provide special events for beginners. Provide coaching and parade practice for the more experienced. For the more advanced riders, encourage formation and trick riding and century rides. Talk with them. Be open to their concerns. Accept them, uncritically, as friends. Have fun with them.

#### ENCOURAGE USE OF YOUR DIVISION / STATE UNIFORM

Whenever The Wheelmen appear on public display\*, particularly at parades, demonstrations, and OHWTs, they should be in uniform, as club members were a century ago. If they are not, men should try to be as close to the official uniform as possible, (See Bulletin #5a) with plain, collared, long sleeve shirts and dark trousers, not in T-shirts. (For their own safety, they should be in knickers, if riding a high wheel.) Women who ride high wheels should dress like men. Women and men should always be in costume appropriate to the era of their bike\*.

If your State/Division has not already selected a uniform, one of your first priorities should be to establish one. Old pictures show a variety of uniforms on early riders. We know that their uniforms were important to them and that each State or Division of L.A.W. had their own special uniform. The breeches are usually cut alike, but colors and materials (appropriate for the era) vary. Stockings are not always the same color as the knickers. You may decree special shirts and a special type of tie. See Bulletin #5, "The Bicycle Uniform...", and Bulletin #5a. Reviewing what other Divisions have done will help you select appropriate uniforms. Also study your magazines for authentic variations. Consult with your members so you can choose a uniform that will be popular with them.

#### GET A BUGLER

A bugler was an important part of most nineteenth century L.A.W. clubs. A bugler not only lends added color to your gatherings and the image you present, but can be a

\* *Uniforms or period costumes are not required for century or competition riding.*

very real help in communicating with your members during events. Encourage a young, musically inclined Wheelmen to become your state's bugler. Our Bulletin #6 and the audio tapes of actual bugle calls, by Alex Pollock, will be of great help. If he or she does not own a bugle, help find one. It could be an appropriate club purchase by your state/division.

#### IDENTIFY THE ORGANIZATION

Design and have a state pennant made that can be attached to your bicycle for special events. A number of State Divisions have made large Wheelmen banners, with their state name on them. These can be hung at special events. There are two generic banners that can be borrowed. One is in the East and one is in the Mid-West. Some Divisions also have two PA systems to help them communicate at meets, demonstrations, etc.

#### USE OUR BULLETINS

Become familiar with all of our bulletins so you can recommend them to members with individual needs. As Captain you will want to pay particular attention to the bulletins on Uniforms (#5), Bugles and Bugling (#6), How to Organize a Wheelmen Meet (#8), Sample Press Releases (#8a, 8b), Parade Riding (#9), and Story of Bicycling in America (#12). Contact the Publications Chair for an up-to-date list of Wheelmen bulletins.

#### GET ACQUAINTED WITH THE CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS

We are not known for running strictly by the book, and our rules are rather minimal. We are more interested in our bikes and riding them than the business end of the club. However, it is good to familiarize yourself with the instruments that govern us, so we do not make embarrassing mistakes.

Note that, according to our Constitution and By-Laws, our State organizations are Divisions.

#### MAKE A PUBLICITY SPLASH

Do not rely on the uniqueness of our machines to get the story about The Wheelmen across. You can only attract new members by showing them that The Wheelmen exist. To get your name in the paper and on TV, you need to make contacts with the media. Get to know the folks at your newspaper, and local radio and television stations. Although you can never control what goes in/on the media, they are usually very happy to be able to cover something as unique and interesting as The Wheelmen. So do not be afraid to ask! Who knows? this may even bring in some leads on bikes or potential members. But to be able to do

it, you must get the correct information to reporters. Don't be surprised or upset if errors creep into the stories. Just be grateful for whatever coverage you receive. Minimize the chances for error by providing complete and accurate information *in writing*.

#### YOUR DIVISION'S PROGRAM OF EVENTS

Enter parades and demonstrate your talents and machines. You make the final decisions for your state, but what events do your people want? Also learn how often they want events. Founder Bob McNair suggested no more than two a month. If you have too many members to personally contact everyone yourself, find some members with good judgment and who are likely to be in tune with the members. Phone them to discuss affairs so your decisions on programs will have popular support.

Keep your members informed. A newsletter need not be formal or fancy. The important thing is that the content lets your members know what is going on and what is coming up, so they can plan. They can be as simple as office copies of hand written notices. To make it easy on yourself, try to get two or more events on each. (Our Membership Chair may be able to provide you with mailing labels.) As the date draws near, you might use a chain telephone reminder. You must know how many are coming to make good plans. Members are more likely to come if you get them to commit themselves a week or more in advance.

#### OFFICIAL HIGH WHEEL TOURS (OHWT)

You should provide your members, particularly the newer ones, with the opportunity to upgrade their membership status to "Voting", by conducting OHWT tours. (By the way, we use the OHWT designation no matter what old bikes participate. But the Captain must know the qualifying criteria for bikes to be counted for voting membership.) These tours are intended to encourage members to use their machines. So select routes that are scenic, interesting, level, smooth, and free of traffic.

Even small groups should be handled in an orderly manner so everyone learns properly before you grow large. Appoint a sub-captain who knows the route to bring up the rear. Try to keep a pace which is not so slow as to be awkward for riders of high wheels, but which is not so fast that you will leave your slow riders behind. If necessary, have the lead group stop occasionally to let the others catch up. And do not "take off" as soon as they arrive; that can be a real turn-off. Be sure your people ride safely. Remember that, in most jurisdictions, the bicycle is a legitimate vehicle and as such is subject to the same laws as motor vehicles, and as its rider you have the same rights and

obligations as motor vehicle drivers. As Captain you lead and you set the example of obeying traffic rules, walking dangerous hills (do not even include them in the route if you can safely avoid them), and setting a reasonable pace. At least one rest stop, with drinking water available and bike check-over, should be included. Riding two abreast is nice where it is perfectly safe but where there is traffic, do not hog the road. You can change talking partners every ten minutes by having the rider behind you drop out and evening up twos again. (See Bulletin #14 "Rules of the Road for OHWT and Century Tours" for more information.)

Keep a register of all those who attend. Ask them to sign in. This will give you a good record of attendance and also be an aid to you in making out OHWT certificates and the required OHWT report form. As Captain, you fill out and sign the certificates and reports. Unless you have in-club talent and resources to prepare special certificates, get them (as blanks) from the Awards Chair. It is very nice if you can pass them out at the end of the tour. You *must* fill out and send the official OHWT report forms to appropriate officers as denoted on the forms, if your new Voting members are to be properly recorded. (Copies of forms are available from our Publications Chair). Be sure to designate and publicly recognize riders who have completed their first tour! This will call attention to those who thereby become Voting members.

The Publications Chair can also provide official meet Registration and Century Registration forms. Each form shows the proper distribution for that form. When requesting forms and certificates (or any other Wheelmen service), always allow the volunteer plenty of time. Remember, they might even be on vacation when you need them.

#### GET "SOCIAL" WITH SOCIAL EVENTS

A picnic, at a park or at a member's home, brings your group together for talking and making friends. Provide a short tour, or instruction, or contests. You may include swimming, old bathing suit contests, singing, or whatever. During the winter you may have gatherings at inns or homes. Activities there might include movies, work on bike parts, covered dish supper, show and tell of memorabilia, or a clinic on some restoration technique. Some use such a gathering as their own Annual Meeting where they conduct election of officers. Other off season events included Victorian Wheelmen Balls. Use your imagination on special ways to have a chance for Wheelmen to get together for more fun.

## MEETS

Meets are just overgrown picnics. You may want to invite neighboring states. Get notices to our quarterly National Newsletter well in advance of the published deadlines. Wheelmen from thousands of miles away have been known to attend published “local” events. Many meets are at museums or historic sights; we may get free entry for our members if we put on shows for their visitors. Some even provide participants with free refreshments or food.

Meets vary in character and what they include. Some are nothing more than a gathering to show folks our unusual machines. Others include opportunities to ride OHWTs or Centuries. Some have demonstrations, casual games, or races; some even workshops and banquets. Put together whatever you and your members are comfortable with and for which available facilities and resources are suitable. Such meets are worth the effort.

## CENTURY RIDES

Being a “Wheelmen Century Rider” makes one almost literally “one-in-a-million” among your countrymen. It is an accomplishment of which to be justifiably very proud. Many of our Wheelmen are eager to be able to ride one, but they usually have few opportunities. If you can arrange to have one for your members, those who take advantage of it—particularly if it is their first—will be extremely grateful. Century rides often attract riders from great distances. Bulletins #14 and #28 will give you some tips. If you are reluctant to take it upon yourself, check with your local or area modern bicycle club. Many of them conduct their own century rides and would be tickled pink to share their event with Wheelmen on high wheels. You could help make their event even more special. Their help could relieve you of a lot of the work involved. Even if you cannot piggyback on their century, they may be a very good source for willing hands to lighten your load. They can provide some special expertise on things like route selection, operating rest stops, route marking, etc.

As with the OHWT, only Captains may authorize and designate Official Wheelmen centuries, and then only before the fact.

## DEMONSTRATIONS

The public likes narrated demonstrations and so do we. We can show them our strange bikes, our riding skills, and teach them bike history. If you have a good representation of bikes, it is always best to present them in a chronological order. For help in presenting a good narration, see The Wheelmen Handbook “Demonstrations”

and “Bikes for Wheelmen Events” beginning on pages 12 and 51 respectively and Bulletin #12, “The Story of Bicycling in America” for suggestions and ideas. A public address system would be helpful. Check with neighboring State/Division Captains or National Officers nearby to find one you may be able to borrow.

## PARADES

Only State/Division Captains can authorize Wheelmen parades or other event participation. (Make certain that your members realize this. Unless you authorize beforehand, our insurance will not cover unscheduled events.) You accept official parades and you usually run them. You will decree the uniform and whether all bikes must be pre-1918 antiques. Plan the riding order, formations, and trick riding. When we are on display in public, everything must be as perfect as possible. (See Bulletin #9 on Parade Riding for more specific instructions and hints.)

## INSURANCE

Wheelmen events are covered by our Liability Insurance. It protects our club from personal or property damage caused by a Wheelman in a scheduled Wheelmen event. The insurance does not cover bodily injury or property damage to Wheelmen members. Nor does it cover bodily injury or property damage caused by non-members participating in a Wheelmen event. Non-members participating in a Wheelmen event should be advised of their status before the event begins.

The Insurance Chairman can provide a Proof of Coverage certificate upon request.

Contact: Mr. Edwin Gerling  
2418 Lake Shore Drive  
Highland, IL 62249-2317  
(618) 654-7786

Although we provide the club insurance, it would be advisable to check your own insurance’s liability coverage. Many homeowner policies do cover such circumstances.

## EXPENSES

In order to meet your Division’s operating expenses for your mailing, telephone, printing, and supplies, etc., you should arrange for some income. Many states are able to raise more than their operating needs from payments for their participation in parades, etc. Your operating expenses may be taken from such honoraria. (Note that no part of the honoraria may be used to reimburse individual Wheelmen for their expenses to attend the event, or in any other way compensate for their participation. Example: Payment of Wheelmen dues for participants cannot be

permitted.) Where expenses are not covered by honoraria, some Divisions charge dues, or they just “pass the hat” at events. Because of IRS Regulations, States/Divisions may not keep any profit and must zero out their budgets (not their bank accounts) at each year-end. Any amount of income in excess of direct expenses *must* be turned over to The Wheelmen National Treasurer. Although transfers should be made whenever large balances occur, any final adjusting payment should accompany the required Annual Financial Report mentioned above. If you have many members, you might want to elect a Division treasurer.

You may need seed money when planning to sponsor an event which would include Wheelmen from divisions in addition to your own, that is, money to cover expenses/deposits before sufficient registration amounts are received. Financial support from The Wheelmen Treasury may be possible in the form of advances for repayment in a reasonable time. You will need to submit a proposal to The Wheelmen Treasurer who may approve the request or forward it to the Executive Board for approval.

#### YEAR-END REPORT

Although it is not mandatory, please turn in some kind of written report of your Division’s activities to the

Commander just prior to the annual meeting. In addition to being presented at the annual meeting, your report becomes a part of The Wheelmen’s permanent records. Your organization, and your own efforts, deserve recognition and credit.

#### ELECTIONS

Hold an election annually to choose your successor. If you were appointed as Captain, one of your first actions should be to seek the reinforcing of your position, or, if you wish, the election of another Captain. Only elected Captains have a vote in the Executive Board.

#### CONTINUITY

When you leave your post as Captain, assist the incoming Captain by providing him/her with your card files of members and good records of your tenure as well as any tips that you feel would be helpful. If you have a Captain’s name badge bar, pass it along. You can replace it with a Past Captain bar.

#### DO YOUR BEST

If you help others enjoy being Wheelmen, you are bound to enjoy your term as Captain too!