

The Comprehensive History of the Washington Area Bicyclist Association

I. At the Starting Line (1972)

The memory of Earth Day was still fresh, and the environmental movement was in full bloom. Americans were raising serious questions about what was happening to the quality of the air as a result of the automobile. "Ecology" was the byword, and a 10-speed bike craze was sweeping the nation. It was 1972, the year more bicycles were sold than automobiles for the first time this century.

Cary S. Shaw was concerned about many of the issues of the year -- social justice, the quality of life, war and peace -- and he had participated in demonstrations against the Vietnam War. But he had never led a protest or even been active in a political movement. He had received his B.S. from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in industrial management with a concentration in mathematics, and his M.B.A. from Harvard Business School. Such is the stuff that is hardly the making of a crusader seeking to overturn half a century of national transportation policy.

Nor was he a particularly avid bicyclist. Often, but not every day, he rode his yellow Schwinn from his home in the District's upper northwest neighborhood to his work downtown. He was generally interested in outdoor activities, including hiking, but he did not do much recreational riding and he was not a member of any bicycling organization.

In 1972, Shaw, at 27, directed the computer center at the National Planning Association (NPA), a small non-profit organization which did studies for the federal government. His duties included running programs and helping others who used the computer. He also hired and supervised a staff of two college interns who worked part-time.

Yet, he did enough bicycling to realize that the urban transportation system was not friendly to bicyclists. The Ski Club of Washington asked him to lead a bike ride and he found that other cyclists, too, shared the same problems he did. But, Shaw later recalled, "They did not perceive it as a general problem. Someone caught their bike in a grate -- they thought, well, they just caught their bike in a grate - - but I could relate to the fact that that was a problem in grate design. Someone had recently bought a bike and they decided they weren't going to use it because they were afraid of traffic. For them, it was a simple, individual decision. I could relate that that was happening to a large number of people."

That sense was reinforced again when in early 1972 when the National Park Service experimented with closing a lane of Rock Creek Parkway for bicyclists. Shaw again talked to other bicyclists about the problems they faced. He found common complaints about potholes, automobile traffic, and feelings of discrimination by transportation planners. During some of those discussions, people suggested an organization to deal with these problems.

If there was a legacy from the turbulent 1960s, it was the new feeling that the individual could make a difference. And if the individual could cause change, so much more so could a group of individuals. The massive demonstrations against the Vietnam War seized the consciousness of a nation and caused a shift of U.S. foreign policy. There was power in numbers and organization. That legacy was not lost on Shaw, who concluded that the way to deal with bicyclists' problems was through an on-going institution of and for bicyclists.

From the beginning of his thoughts, Shaw intended such an organization to be more than just a service club for its members, but to serve all bicyclists. Perhaps even more important for Shaw was the broader concept of service to the public at large. If bicyclists had problems, that was a wrong to be righted. And if Shaw didn't come forward, no one else would.

Shaw later recalled, "If the number of bicycle-related accidents was mounting, who was taking care of this? Who was taking some sort of action to help reduce these accidents and to make it safer? As far as I could tell, there was not another agency that was specifically taking care of this. I definitely had the feeling that we were engaged in something which if we didn't do, was not going to be done by someone else. This is kind of a very powerful motivating feeling.

"Very often, in your work life, if you are assigned a job, and you chose not to do it, if it's important, the boss will find someone else. But in the area of the public interest, it may be that it doesn't get done. That can happen with things like traffic safety.

"One of the role models here was Ralph Nader and what he did for automobile safety. This was a clear and present need for the safety and well-being of the public. And yet you can ask yourself, if he personally were not around, and some other people with him, would this revolution in safety have happened in that way at that time? Maybe not."

Another decision which came early for Shaw was that an organization should be directed specifically at improving conditions for commuters not recreational cyclists. He recalls, "High on our minds was an alternative form of transportation. A person who is bike riding purely for amusement will take his bike where he chooses. If he doesn't like how downtown looks, he'll take his bike out to some farm area and bike around there. But if you're commuting to work, then you want to improve your personal situation...it requires the involvement of some agencies that are affecting that specific locale."

The organization should deal with a wide range of issues concerning bicyclists, Shaw thought. It should not be limited to just trying to solve bicyclists' problems, but should help educate bicyclists and motorists, encourage more bicyclists, and change attitudes about bicycling as a transportation mode.

Shaw never considered forming a committee of Potomac Pedalers Touring Club (PPTC) or the National Capitol Velo Club (NCVC), both which were thriving bicycle organizations in the area. Shaw felt that WABA's goals were too different from PPTC or NCVC. However, Clay Grubic, PPTC's President, did provide Shaw much assistance in the early days. Larry Black, head of NCVC, also was a strong supporter of bicycle advocacy. In fact, several years later at his own expense he started a telephone taped message of current bicycle events.

"I finally decided, with all these bicyclists, with all these needs, here's an opportunity to do something where there seems to be a public need and no one seems to be filling it. I have time I can spend on it, my work had become routine, here was an opportunity to do something. I decided to form an organization. I thought up a name -- the Washington Area Bicyclist Association -- I designed a leaflet which was printed by a computer printer which had some of the basic slogans and demands and a little tear-out slip."

Armed with stacks of leaflets, Shaw went to a bike-in on the grounds of the Washington Monument during the spring and distributed as many as he could. It was on that day that Cary Shaw took the irreversible step of announcing his new bicycle organization to the world. WABA was born. The birth, however, did not come quickly. Even at the low price of only \$2 for annual dues, at the end of a week, there were only nine members, including Shaw. Undeterred, the WABA founder fired off a press release announcing the formation of the new group. Though the Washington Post -- then as now -only sniffed at local events, the press release was picked up by a number of radio stations and WABA membership shot up to 100 members before the end of the month. That was an early lesson in the importance of media for WABA.

According to WABA mythology, the date of its founding was May 1, 1972. The announcement press release, mailed later that month, might be equally important. Still, another important date might be the first meeting of the general membership on May 31. The meeting was conducted in the West End Library meeting room at 24th and L Streets, N.W. The range of issues covered included many which became the focus of WABA activities -- bicycle parking, theft, motorist education, bike trails, and bicyclist education.

Even though the first regular Metrorail service was still years away, WABA members were concerned about the ability to take bicycles on the trains as in the newly created San Francisco rapid rail transit system. This was brought up at the meeting also.

The organizers of WABA felt that communication with members was important. The first issue of Ride On!!, consisting of mimeographed sheets stapled together, was undated, but probably appeared in late May. The name, complete with the enthusiasm demonstrated by not one, but two exclamation points, was a play on

the popular slogan, "Right On!" which always appeared with one or two exclamation points. At the time, "Right On!" didn't have quite the radical abandon it once did, but it had not yet become part of the vernacular of the political center. Ride On!! appeared monthly during the remaining months of 1972, each issue containing WABA statements, news of WABA activities, and articles about legislative actions affecting bicyclists.

Shaw established the WABA office at his own office address, the third floor of 1666 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., not far from Dupont Circle. It was a small, cluttered room, with stacks of paper piled up on the sill nearly covering up the one window. WABA board meetings were held at the table in the NPA conference room, where WABA newsletters and mailings were also prepared. The WABA records were stored in NPA filing cabinets.

The WABA mailing list was kept on an NPA computer. The WABA telephone number was even an NPA telephone line connected to an answering machine Shaw had loaned.

Under the leadership of Shaw, who used the title "acting chairman," WABA moved quickly to act on its agenda. By July, WABA established eleven task forces and committees. Of these, four dealt with different parking problems. They also included a Road Conditions Task Force, Newsletter and Distribution Staff, Theft Recovery Task Force, Bikeshop Task Force, and Architectural Consultant."

Lobbying for bicycle improvements on the national level was a novel idea in 1972. The revived League of American Wheelmen, located in the Midwest, was years away from hiring a legislative director. The Bicycle Institute of America, predecessor to the Bicycle Manufacturers Institute, was still located in New York. The Bicycle Federation had not yet been established. WABA found itself in unique position to influence Washington on bicycle issues in an ongoing fashion not possible since the old League of American Wheelmen abandoned the effort closer to the turn of the century.

Thus, WABA considered its scope to go beyond just the local concerns of bicyclists in the District, Maryland, and Virginia. Early issues of Ride On!! discuss issues before Congress and the federal agencies. WABA urged federal officials to review Environmental Impact Statements for their effect on bicycling. WABA criticized the Office of Management and Budget for dismissing bicycle facilities as "cosmetic effects." Ride On!! covered the progress of the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1972 which authorized funds for bicycle facilities.

The controversy over bicycle lanes was addressed from the very beginning. The first issue of Ride On!! proclaimed, "We whole-heartedly endorse the idea of bike lanes -- lanes on major travel routes...separate from the rest of the road by a white line which the motorist may not cross."

On May 1, the D.C. Register carried a notice of the Council's consideration of a regulation which would require managers of commercial buildings to permit the bicyclists to be brought into and stored in their buildings. It also required some buildings to provide bicycle storage. WABA discussed the proposed regulation at its first meeting, and the early newsletters urged members to support the proposal.

One of the early challenges for WABA was winning approval for a bikeways system originated by a staff member on the District Council, and which became included in the District's budget. This was before home rule, and approval of the budget required an act of Congress. However, Representative William H. Natcher of Kentucky, chairman of the House D.C. Appropriations Subcommittee, struck the bike lanes provision.

"We heard through the grapevine," Shaw remembers, "that Natcher had said, 'this is ridiculous, we don't have that any bikes, why take away the space from cars. Who wants it anyway?'" With the defeat of the budget in Congress, the whole process had to start over. It also meant that WABA had to educate Congress that someone did want bicycle facilities.

The first year's issues of Ride On!! were full of suggestions on improving the bicycling environment in the Washington area. Some of these remained controversial issues for most of WABA's history. WABA urged the Cabin John Trolley line to be used for a bikeway; bicycle racks to be placed at Metrorail stations; and bicycle storage at Union Station to be improved.

The early WABA activities were surprising for their diversity and number. Between May and December 1972, WABA:

Sent a letter to the National Capitol Parks asking for regular communication. Helped clean up the Rock Creek Park bikepath following the disastrous flood brought on by Hurricane Agnes, and gained positive television coverage in the process. Gathered statistics on bike thefts. Sent WABA volunteers Wentworth and Rich Liroff to lobby Congress for passage of the District budget which included a provision for bikelanes. Began a petition to urge the District Council to hold hearings on bike theft, parking, and capital improvements to reduce road hazards. Sent WABA legal counsel Joel Joseph to testify at a hearing of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) in support of free or low-cost bicycle rentals at Metrorail stations and major bus stops. Began a collection of maps, traffic regulations, registration laws, and other information which it made available free to members. Organized recreational rides. Through word-of-mouth and early recruiting, WABA membership grew rapidly. Membership reached 162 by late May. By the end of June it was more than 200, and it rose to 430 by September.

II. First Lap (1973-1975)

WABA was rolling in high gear when it began its first full calendar year. As chairman, Shaw poured time and energy into WABA. The other Board members were enthusiastic and hard working.

WABA representatives testified before a wide range of government bodies on numerous bicycle-related subjects. Shaw, who had a beard when he started WABA, shaved it off to appear respectable when testifying.

In 1973, WABA testified before the Regional Air Quality Planning Committee on D.C., Maryland, and Virginia air quality plans; before the D.C. Council in support of the request by the Department of Highways and Traffic for a bike route system; and before Congress in support of a provision in the Federal Highway Bill to spend highway trust funds on bicycle improvements. The following year, WABA testified before the Maryland General Assembly for bills to provide access to sidewalks and divided highways.

In spring 1973, WABA testified before the D.C. Zoning Commission which resulted in the Commission ordering the developers of a downtown building to substitute bicycle racks for some of its planned automobile parking spaces.

Ride On!! grew in size and sophistication. The two exclamation points in the name were dropped. It came out on a regular, bimonthly schedule (almost). The issues of 1973 were mimeographed sheets, stapled together, and contained news of the District, Virginia, Maryland, Congress, and federal agencies. National, and even international news of bicycling activities was extensively covered. The issues also contained legislative updates and notices of hearings. Each issue during 1973 ran ten to fourteen pages. The layout was careful, though the mimeographed pages had a crude look. Later, production switched to photo offset. The quality of the writing remained high, and articles often contained detailed legislative and policy analysis.

Much of the WABA activity calendar printed in Ride On!! was devoted to recreational bike riding. Bike rides in 1973 went to Arlington, Anacostia, Mount Vernon, Wolf Trap, and Rock Creek Park. WABA even organized one overnight bike hike along the Chesapeake Bay. During 1973, beer and pizza rides were advertised several times.

The age of the "be-in," "teach-in," and "love-in" had not yet passed. On April 7, 1973, WABA organized a Cherry Blossom Bike-In, complete with a ceremony at the Lincoln Memorial.

WABA offered a number of services to members and the general public. WABA ran bike repair courses, wheel truing sessions, and ride leader skills rides. WABA held a televised, public service educational program at the Central Arlington County Library. WABA also ran a survey of its members to evaluate bikeshops.

The results, published in Ride On!!, incorporated almost 500 comments to rate twenty-one shops.

WABA was accepted by many government officials who looked to the organization for assistance. Its members provided advice on racks and parking devices to the Montgomery County Director of Parking. WABA established an official Citizen Advisory Committee in Montgomery County. WABA was appointed to the Council of Governments Transportation Planning Citizens Advisory Committee. WABA representatives participated in a National Bicycle Symposium sponsored by the Departments of Interior and Transportation. Even EPA used WABA's research library.

WABA offered to help the American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO) with a guide for bicycle routes, but it is not clear if the offer was taken up. Ride On!! did run a set of principles to be used in judging proposals for "bikeways, routes, lanes, paths, and facilities improvements."

Acceptance did not come easy, but clear victories were achievable. An early success was getting sewer grates covered in the District. Also WABA conducted an all-out lobbying campaign against part of a D.C. Highway Department bikeway proposal. WABA wrote a letter to each member of the Council with a detailed analysis of the proposal.

As a result, the parking and bikepath provisions were passed, but the bike routes opposed by WABA were defeated. An article in Ride On!! crowed, "Lessons to be drawn here are that genuine progress on safer commuter biking in the District can come only when WABA and the Highway Department agree on plans. Department proposals opposed by WABA will fail."

That wasn't always the case, even though WABA could be a feisty contender. On June 5, 1974, WABA announced at a press conference that it would sue the District for "flagrantly and deliberately violating a federal order to build a pilot bikeway." The bikeway, ordered by the EPA under the Clean Air Act, would have extended from Key Bridge to Alabama Avenue, S.E., passing the White House and the Capitol. Under the EPA requirement, it was to be completed by May 1, 1974. The pilot bikeway was just the initial step of EPA's larger bicycle order which required metropolitan area governments to build 180 miles of bikeways by the summer of 1976.

The suit was handled by WABA counsel Joel Joseph, who later ran against Polly Shackleton for the first popularly elected Ward 3 seat on the District Council.

WABA was proud of its David versus Goliath contest. A cartoon on the front page of Ride On!! showing two men labeled "WABA" and "EPA" dragging up the courthouse steps a man labeled "D.C." Unfortunately, later that year, the court dismissed the suit. In November, the board hesitantly approved \$100 to file an

appeal. Preparation of the appeal proposal dragged on more than a year, and eventually the suit was lost.

Other WABA initiatives were also more impressive in the planning stage. In 1975, WABA member Ron Bass proposed a pilot project to lease bicycles. Jack Sebastian of BMA heard the proposal given at a WABA Board meeting, and he thought it had merit. Officials at the Shoreham Hotel were also contacted, and they expressed interest. The idea may have become a victim of squabbling among Board members and no funding source was ever found.

In 1975, the board also discussed making a movie on bicycle safety. One of WABA's more attention-grabbing activities was the "Great Commuter Race" on October 31, 1973. The race was jointly sponsored by the Metropolitan Coalition for Clean Air, the Emergency Committee on the Transportation Crisis, and WABA. Bicycles and automobiles left eleven locations simultaneously from ten neighborhoods in the District and Arlington. All participants converged on the front steps of the District Building. The rules required vehicles to obey all traffic laws and park only in a "legitimate parking space." Ten of the eleven bicyclists won.

WABA continued its interest in federal action. In 1974, WABA members Steve Hudak and Bruce Myles learned that Project Independence Blueprint, a federal plan to make the U.S. selfsufficient in energy by 1985, did not mention bicycles. They organized a number of bicycle-related groups around the country as the National Bicycling Coalition. The coalition testified on December 11, 1974 before the U.S. Energy Resources Council on the energy saving potential of bicycles. WABA paid all expenses for the coalition, including printing and staff time.

Of course, when U.S. government decisions affected local bicyclists, WABA lobbied on the national level. In January 1975, the National Park Service tore up the inner drives along the Mall, replaced them with gravel, and called them "bikepaths." WABA supported a suit in U.S. District Court to block the plan. WABA also involved Maryland Congressman Gilbert Gude in the effort.

During WABA's first year, a bikeways plan in the D.C. budget was denied. However, through diligent lobbying by WABA members, District Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman Natcher reversed himself, and the proposal went through.

WABA began to experience peculiar difficulties that came with being established. For example, WABA received calls intended for radio station WAVA. And once, WABA got a call from an investigator who was trying to dig up dirt about a WABA board member who worked for the Center of Auto Safety. Apparently, the investigator was trying to make the case that any board member of a bicycle advocacy organization was inherently anti-automobile.

During this period, three WABA projects were begun which remained central to WABA's activities, and even had farranging influence outside of WABA. They were the Legal Panel, the Helmet Study, and the Greater Washington Area Bicycle Atlas. The establishment of these projects and their nurturing to success was a testament to the creativity and hard work put in by the early WABA members.

The Atlas had its genesis in 1973 as a joint effort with the Potomac Area Council of American Youth Hostels. AYH put up two-thirds of the initial publication costs, with WABA providing the rest. The book was written by Alan Berkowitz, an Antioch College cooperative student working in the WABA office.

It was completed early the following year. The book described 42 cycling trails, complete with descriptions and detailed maps, and contained 128 pages. It covered trails in Maryland, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Virginia, and the District. With a \$2 cover price (with a fifty cent discount to WABA members), it was only expected to break even. It was meant to be a public service and an effort to encourage bicycling by making it easier for the public to find enjoyable, safe bicycling routes.

The first printing of 9,000 copies was sold out by spring of the following year. A second printing of 3,000 was planned, with the AYH share as \$2600 and WABA paying \$1200. That printing, too, sold out quickly.

Willis Jourdin, Jr., a Washington attorney and WABA board member, came up with the idea for the WABA Legal Panel "to defend and advocate bicyclists' rights without charge." Jourdin was another key figure in WABA's early directions. Shaw later described him as "kind of a father figure. He had a lot of insight, a lot of wisdom, a lot of energy. He made proposals. He could be counted on to then follow them through. Yet he was very friendly."

The idea behind the legal panel was to help bicyclists who had been unfairly treated by the police or other officials, to change laws or regulations which affect bicycling, and to advise bicyclists of their rights. Jourdin and Joseph were the first co-directors. Within a year, they were joined by John English, who was director of research of the National Committee on Uniform Traffic Laws.

The first printing of the "Legal Docket" in the May-June 1974 Ride On!! listed eight cases. These included a bicyclist run off the road in Bethesda, a cyclist hit by a right- turning car and the cyclist was held responsible, and a bicyclist illegally ticked for riding on the sidewalk in Georgetown.

Shaw himself used the services of the legal panel for a successful \$1,000 personal injury suit when he suffered kidney injury from a bicycle accident along the trolley tracks below the Whitehurst Freeway.

Jourdin also came up with the idea for a study of bicycle helmets. At the time, the racer's hairnet was the traditional helmet, even though it provided little protection. If bicycle helmets were rare, rarer still was credible information about them. Jourdin wanted to evaluate the safety of the helmets on the market; however, WABA could not afford to pay a laboratory to do the testing, and testing by a manufacturer would be unacceptable. He got in touch with the Snell Memorial Foundation of Sacramento, California, named after race car driver Pete Snell who died in an accident in which his substandard helmet may have even contributed to his injuries. The Snell Foundation, a volunteer organization, tested the safety of first racing helmets, then motorcycle helmets.

The Snell Foundation wrote back to WABA that there weren't enough bicycle helmets on the market worth testing, so there was no point in Snell getting involved. Undeterred, Jourdin decided to focus on testing the comfort of helmets, which was in the scope of WABA's ability. In late 1974, WABA received donations of helmets from American Safety, MSR, Bell, Cooper, Nestor, Johnson, Protec, Safetec, and Shoei.

About twenty WABA members responded to a notice in the December Ride On!! and became members of the helmet testing panel. They borrowed the helmets, wore them for two weeks of regular cycling activities, filled out a questionnaire, then took another helmet.

Early on, Shaw recognized that WABA could not carry on a full range of activities as a strictly volunteer organization. He drafted a grant proposal in early 1973 for \$7,500, which he submitted to the Eugene and Agnes E. Meyer Foundation of Washington. The purpose of the grant was to develop a research resource for bicycle commuters and transportation planners, which was essentially what WABA was doing without the grant. The money would pay for office supplies, office rent, and support staff.

The grant was approved in June 1973, with Shaw as the administrator. However, the grant was contingent on WABA receiving 501(c)(3) status from the Internal Revenue Service. Though WABA had little trouble filing for the status, early on some members were afraid this might cramp WABA's lobbying activities.

Effective April 1973, WABA raised the dues to \$5 for regular membership. The board also instituted two new membership categories: sustaining for \$15; and \$25 for sponsoring. The dues increase had no negative effect on membership. By September 1973, 520 members were recorded. About this time, WABA also received a \$250 grant from the Bicycle Institute of America.

WABA also raised \$160 through donations made in the memory of Leo Decrescente, a bicyclist who died in an accident April 2, 1973. The motorist who hit Decrescente was charged with criminal negligence. Donations were expressly earmarked to promote legislation which would improve bicycle safety. This was

the first of three funds which were eventually established by WABA in memory of bicyclists who died in accidents.

WABA's first years saw few financial problems. In September the treasurer reported that during WABA's first year, it had \$1300 income, \$1300 in expenses, and a deficit of \$50 to pay for meeting rooms. The treasurer did not report the source of the \$50.

That fall, the money started coming in and WABA could act like a real organization. In October 1973, the board approved \$100 for WABA's first employee, Lucy Domin, to help with executing the Meyer Foundation grant. Domin, a senior at George Washington University, was to be paid at "a rate equivalent to minimum wage." The following month, with coffers bulging at \$9,500, the WABA board appropriated \$3,200 for publication of the Atlas, voted to open a checking account, approved hiring an intern from Antioch College, and approved a move to a new office at 1346 Connecticut Avenue, N.E., at \$95 monthly rent.

The new office, a small room in the Dupont Circle Building, was a friendly home for WABA. Bicycles could be taken into the building. Also, it was home to other, low budget, public interest organizations run by kindred souls. Office hours were normal business hours, plus Thursday evenings 7:00-9:00 p.m., and Saturdays, 10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

The low-paid staff changed frequently. Domin worked as a part time staff member until the middle of May 1974. A full time employee, John Robeck, worked during the first part of that year. Robeck was a student at Antioch College, Yellow Springs, Ohio, who was working through Antioch's cooperate work program. Their duties included office maintenance, answering telephone calls and correspondence, and office work. An answering machine, donated by Shaw, took calls when the office was closed.

Robeck was succeeded by Eric Neurath, who apparently did not remain long in the position, and was followed by Leslie Seeche about June 1974. Seeche, also an Antioch intern, was paid \$65 a week. Later, Lance Ringel was hired as the Office Manager toward the end of 1974. In an example of "title creep" which recurred several times in WABA's history, he was elevated to the position of "Executive Director" by the time he left June 9, 1975.

Shaw ran for reelection as Chairman against Steve Hudak at the annual meeting in September 1973. Hudak, who had worked closely with Shaw from the beginning of WABA, was an organization mainstay. He was the first ongoing editor of Ride On!!, and had served as secretary during the first part of 1973. After losing the chairmanship, Hudak settled for becoming Vice Chairman. However, Shaw abruptly resigned at a board meeting March 27, 1974, and Hudak took over.

Recalls Shaw: "I had been busy at WABA for over two years. I felt a lot of specific tasks had been accomplished. I felt that the organization was viable. I felt that some of the things were on to new stages. I think I had done my bit and I hoped that the organization could continue... But primarily it was a matter of having devoted an awful lot of time and effort over a couple of years and feeling it was a chance to go on to other things." Shaw changed jobs shortly afterward and had less time to spend on WABA. Though he maintained ties with some of the members of the board, he had little formal role with the organization after he resigned.

Shaw's departure left a vacuum that could not immediately be filled. He had the vision to see a more bicycle-oriented transportation system and the ability to deal with those who could make that vision a reality. He was boundless with energy toward his cause. He would often work at the WABA office past midnight and on weekends. Many WABA members remember first hearing about WABA directly from Shaw, who would stand with a clipboard on bicycle routes passing out WABA leaflets. Some have suggested that he seemed to work full time for WABA.

He also had a rare creativity to solve problems and the raw gumption to carry out his plans.

Shaw was annoyed that there was no bike path leading from the 14th Street Bridge sidewalk down to the area of the Jefferson Memorial -- just grass and mud. When D.C. officials refused to do anything about it, he got fed up. He took a series of photographs of a bicyclist riding on the path on the Virginia side leading to the bridge, riding on the bridge, and falling down in the mud on the District side. He mounted the photos on posterboard and labeled them with big letters.

A high ranking official in the D.C. Traffic Department was scheduled to deliver an address to a national group of highway planners meeting at the Sheraton. Shaw took the poster and put it on an easel outside the room where the official was supposed to speak. A few hours later, Shaw checked and found the poster turned toward the wall. Shaw then reversed it. But by the end of the day, the poster and easel were gone.

Less than a month later, that official was reported to have gone to the 14th Street Bridge, asking questions about how to build a bikepath. Within a few more months, the path was built.

In order to bicycle to his girlfriend's house, Shaw rode north on Connecticut Avenue across the Rock Creek Bridge. Because the street narrowed there, he felt safer on the sidewalk, but he had to stop to lift the bike over the curb. Shaw asked the D.C. Traffic Department to install a curb ramp, but officials told him that in order to put in a curb ramp they had to do an engineering study to

determine if it would block debris that flows along the curb in the rain.

One day, he awoke to find a big pot of tar outside his apartment. Shaw recalls that he got dressed in workclothes and, in broad daylight, "I grabbed a whole bunch of it, I carted it over to the bridge, I plopped it down and I made this big, fat, wide, smooth ramp up to the sidewalk. And I also got some yellow paint and I painted a big traffic stripe leading to the ramp.

"When it was finished, I turned around, and almost immediately, someone was wheeling her baby carriage up the ramp. The woman said, 'I was watching you from the window. Thank you.' And a couple of minutes after that, someone whizzed along on a bicycle, saw the thing, zipped up on the ramp, and away he went."

Since that time, the District has added a number of "official" curb ramps there. The one that Shaw built is still there -- and, in fact, has a new coat of tar.

About March 1975, Shaw moved out of the Washington area.

Only four issues of Ride On!! were published in 1975, with none coming out after July.

Despite the huge surplus of funds in 1973 and the growing membership roll, some members of the board heard warning bells over WABA's fiscal policies. As early as April 1974, treasurer Fendall Marbury warned that operating deficits were running \$400 a month, and that WABA would be broke in a year. In January 1975, a new treasurer, Pat Schooley, sounded the same note. Schooley reported that the previous three-month income averaged \$389.45 each month, but WABA expenditures averaged a monthly \$791.98. At that rate, Schooley predicted, WABA could only continue about 9 months.

Another dangerous practice was not dropping members who failed to renew. Membership was supposedly 707 in June 1974, and office manager Lance Ringel reported in May 1975 that WABA's membership stood at 960, but that some would have to be dropped for non-payment. Despite the glowing membership report, membership recruitment became an increasing focus of the board.

In spring 1975, Ringle left as Executive Director to go back to school to study film making. As an interim measure, the office was left staffed by volunteers. However, important clerical work was not always done adequately.

The solution to WABA's financial problems seemed to be another grant. A second proposal was submitted to the Meyer Foundation in April 1975, but it was turned down several months later. At the July board meeting it was calculated that WABA needed about 1,000 more members to pay the salary of a part time

worker. A motion was made during that meeting to close the office. However, the board decided to keep it open staffed with volunteers.

III. Falling Off...And Getting Back On (1976-1978)

Bicycle sales in the U.S. fell a full fifty percent from 1974 to 1975. The year 1976 was shaping up to be no better. The bicycle boom had gone bust. With the decline in bicycle sales was a decline in interest in bicycle advocacy in general, and specifically, a decline in interest in WABA.

After the second Meyer Foundation grant was turned down and other sources of funding failed to work out, Hudak wrote in *Ride On!!*, "Some foundations intimated that they though bicycling was now 'passe' and perhaps a fad that had run its course."

At the beginning of the year, WABA had about \$1,700. Total monthly expenses were \$410 a month, including rent, newsletter, and staff. The membership was optimistically estimated to hit 800, and dues income was even more optimistically predicted to be \$400 a month. However, income just couldn't match projections. Some of that was beyond WABA's control. Atlas sales were down, reducing income. Moreover, WABA had trouble getting the income that it was supposed to be getting. At the March board meeting, it was reported that AYH owed WABA \$1,000 for royalties on Atlas sales, and that this money had been owed for about a year.

Part of the financial problem was that WABA had been used to spending the Meyer Foundation money for operating costs and was unable to cut costs when the funds started drying up. For example, between April 1974 and April 1975, WABA overspent income by about \$4,000. Now, WABA was in a pinch. Board members even considered a fundraising bicycle race with a \$2 registration fee, but nothing came of the idea.

WABA's fears were compounded by a new bicycling organization in Washington, the Federal Bicycle Council (FBC). The group was founded by Nina Rowe, Bicycle Coordinator for the Environmental Protection Agency.

FBC was an organization of federal employees interested in working out problems of federal workers who commute. FBC viewed its scope as different from WABA's, and Rowe was an active WABA member. However, there was some concern in WABA that the functions of the two groups would overlap.

WABA's activities in 1976 were relatively quiet. One of the big events that year for WABA was, of all things, a bicycle race. WABA volunteers assisted with time trials for the Club International des Toujours Jeunes Patrons (International Club of Ever-Young Executives), an organization of French businessmen over 40 years of age. To celebrate the U.S. bicentennial, the group held time trials on June 6 over a 10-mile course along the Maryland side of George Washington

Memorial Parkway.

Testifying on behalf of WABA during summer of 1976, Will Jourdin spoke in opposition to the Motorized Bicycle Act, which was being considered by the D.C. Council Committee on Transportation and Environmental Affairs. Jourdin said that the bill would discriminate against bicyclists and create conflicts between bicycles and mopeds. The bill was subsequently modified along some of WABA's suggestions.

In March 1977, the Atlas was revised and reprinted.

On Friday, April 15, WABA organized a Bike-to-Work Day featuring 29 caravans leaving from neighborhoods in Virginia, Maryland, and the District, all converging on the Ellipse. A noon rally followed.

The Bike-to-Work Day was part of a weekend program of Bike Days. On Saturday, the Ellipse was the site of demonstrations, bicycle registration booths, displays of biking and camping equipment, discussions about bicycle safety, and tours. Sunday was the National Capitol Open race.

WABA entered into a period of increasing instability. The newsletter was being published with increasing irregularity. Sometimes it was printed by offset, and other times it appeared as stapled, mimeographed sheets. The board minutes of August 1976 reported that more people were needed to help with the newsletter and that there were "major problems with volunteers and participation. There is not enough participation in the Board." Most of the work fell on a few board members. The Nominating Committee was having a difficult time getting people to run for the Board slots which would soon open at the general membership meeting.

After Lance Ringle left the WABA staff in 1975, there was one other staffer, Adlai Jourdin, who spent little time at WABA. Otherwise, the organization was left without anyone to keep the office going and to process the paperwork which comes with maintaining membership records. Work on the helmet study ended, because the clerical work was undone.

With declining income, WABA was unable to keep its office in the Dupont Circle Building, which by then cost \$107 a month in rent. A language school offered to rent the WABA office from 9:00 to 1:00 each day for \$75 a month. WABA turned down the offer, opting instead at the beginning of 1977 to move in with the Potomac Area Council of American Youth Hostels (AYH), which had an office at 1520 16th Street.

Rent to AYH was considerably cheaper, at \$50 a month. For that, WABA had an alcove with a desk and a filing cabinet. WABA also had access to the AYH kitchen, conference table, and some storage space. The AYH office was in a

neighborhood described by one member as "kind of funky...dicey." WABA's things would occasionally disappear. Once, the Office Manager came in to find a hole in the wall and his radio missing.

By late 1977, WABA faced a crisis. Shaw, who for many was the symbol of WABA's vitality, was gone. Hudak, another moving force from the beginning, had stopped down after serving as WABA's second Chairman. New leaders were not recruited. Of those who were running the organization, an observer later remarked, "They weren't dynamic enough to pick up the ball. They weren't ready to go out and bring in more people."

WABA had difficulty maintaining stability among its officers. The September 1977 Ride On!! reported that John Rost resigned as Chairman and that Pat Schooley also resigned as Chairwoman of the Maryland effort. Bob Swain was nominated to run as Chairman in the general membership meeting. But some WABA members were discouraged at the selection of Swain, who they felt would not be able to pull the organization out of its malaise. ALSO some felt that Swain would move the organization toward more of a social club.

It was time for drastic action. Jourdin drafted a "Resolution of Dissolution," which he presented at the August board meeting. The resolution claimed that the assets of WABA "are being wasted because they are being spent for things which do not carry out the purposes for which WABA was formed," and that FBC, PPTC, and AYH can do WABA's job better. The resolution was approved by a 4-2 vote, but provided that the question of whether WABA should continue should be presented before the General membership for a final vote.

No one really wanted to see WABA disbanded. The resolution was just as much a ploy to bring some hidden white knight out of the woodwork or to shock the remaining members into action as it was a serious effort to kill the organization.

Jourdin explained in the November 1977 Ride On!! why WABA should disband. Shaw was the driving force behind WABA, Jourdin wrote. "When Cary Shaw left, however, his successors found it difficult to devote the necessary time and energy to keep WABA a useful, going organization... Meanwhile, other bicycle organizations have been taking up a portion of the slack left by WABA."

Such a severe tactic was not without its drawbacks, even if the organization should survive. WABA "suffered a lot of damage" as a result of the ploy, one member later remarked. "It took the organization a while to get over it. There were people who thought for Years that WABA had been disbanded."

Such a white knight there was in Nancy Wyeth, who was chairperson of FBC and a member of Spokeswoman, an all-woman consulting group contracted by the District to evaluate selected bicycle routes. By profession, she was an editor at the Smithsonian Institute. She first heard about WABA's difficulties at a dinner of

leaders of local bicycling groups just a few months before the membership meeting.

Wyeth later recalled, "John Rost told me, 'I can't get the WABA board to do a thing.' WABA was in a state of fractiousness. Rost described a board meeting where everyone was talking at the same time, nobody could agree on anything. It was very hard to have action come out of the meeting."

"I think I needed a challenge at the time," Wyeth said. She had the right bicycling credentials, she was well-liked, and as a newcomer, was not identified with any WABA faction. She was convinced by Jourdin and others to run. Having made that decision, she plunged ahead.

The November issue of Ride On!! reprinted the resolution of dissolution, with a headline, "It's Raining in WABA Land," and ran a photograph of cyclists in the rain.

It turned out that the fateful membership meeting was, in fact, held on a rainy night on November 30 at the Church of the Pilgrims. First came the critical question about WABA's future. After emotional discussion, the resolution of dissolution was rejected, and the group went ahead with officer elections. Wyeth, the write-in candidate, won against Swain.

It was a very new WABA leadership which emerged that evening. None of the three officers had ever served on the board before. Half of the board members were new, and those who had served before had little experience.

Even with the total change over, Wyeth did not feel as though she were starting from the beginning. "WABA had assets. It had an office. It had money. It had by-laws, tax- deductible status, a newsletter. There was a lot in place."

Wyeth had the assistance of very competent Board members, even if they did lack experience. New Treasurer Jeremy Parker was a master of the technical details of facilities, and he could turn attention to details to financial books as well. Leslie Baldwin, though only 21 years old, was thoroughly reliable, and penned spirited minutes.

Wyeth lost little time getting the organization moving again. WABA was in relatively good financial shape, little money had been spent on the newsletter, and membership renewals still rolled in. However, WABA faced an enormous backlog of office work. Meeting on December 15, the Board decided to turn its cash into work by giving Wyeth the authority to hire a staff member.

Remembers new Board member Randy Swart, "We were all sitting around thinking, 'where are we going to find someone,' and John (Irwin) said, 'I'll do it.'" Nancy used her new authority to immediately hire John Irwin, one of three

candidates for the position. Irwin had done fundraising and research as a staff member of the Metropolitan Washington Coalition for Clean Air, and he used a bicycle for his principal method of transportation.

More than anyone else, Irwin was responsible for pulling WABA back from the brink. He was hired as Office Manager for 20 hours a week for a 3-month period. However, he was soon granted the title Executive Director, and his appointment became as permanent. Hiring Irwin "was the single best decision I made in WABA," recalls Wyeth. "He was the heart -the motor -- of WABA. He thought of projects and he followed through with projects. He had the patience to sit there with the Scripto cards and the roaches.

Though his paid hours were never increased beyond twenty, "He put in 40, 60 hours. He may have walked in the office 10:00 that morning and he'd still be working at midnight," Wyeth said.

Swart, who succeeded Wyeth, recalls, "John was one of the great WABA characters of all times. He did taxes for H&R Block in tax season because he thought he was able to save a lot of people money and that made him feel good. He took all the strain out of being president for Nancy and for me."

Irwin launched an aggressive new membership campaign, setting up membership booths along trails during the weekends. He also made a list of bicycle fairs and tried to set up booths at each one.

One of his high priorities was straightening out the membership records, which had become nearly useless. Dues were changed to be made payable by calendar year, which would avoid the accounting problems WABA had with a twelve-month membership period. Irwin and Wyeth sat down and went through three years of membership records and came up with a smaller, more accurate list. Irwin typed the list on Scripto address cards which could be run off on AYH's machine.

WABA got back into the business of promoting bicycles. New Maryland, Virginia and D.C. Committees were formed which held meetings to discuss local problems related to parking and bicycle paths.

WABA introduced a new program, Adopt-a-Bikeway, coordinated by John Harpold. Individual members would pick a bikeway they often used, follow the planning and maintenance of the route, and get to know the government officials involved with the route.

This was followed by an "Adopt-a-Bike Shop" program. This was a way Irwin got members to volunteer to make sure their local bike shop had an adequate stock of WABA brochures and issues of Ride On!!.

WABA joined with other area organizations to file suit in U.S. District Court challenging the urban transportation plan for the Washington metropolitan area, claiming that government officials were not addressing the region's serious air quality problems. Also, Wyeth and Rowe prepared testimony to the Council of Governments on a draft air quality plan.

In 1978, WABA had another program of Bike Days activities, including another commuter caravan and bicycle demonstrations. One bright spot for District bicyclists was the experimental establishment in 1976 of the position of Bicycle Coordinator for the District. The position was filled by Eileen Kadesh, then Tom Pendleton. When the position was set to expire November 1978, WABA urged the D.C. Department of Transportation (D.C. DOT) to make the position permanent.

Despite its internal weaknesses, WABA never lost its role as the citizens public interest organization on bicycle matters. Pendleton, the District bicycle coordinator during most of 1978, later remarked that WABA was partly responsible for making the bicycle coordinator position permanent. The District looked toward WABA and its members to provide constituent input, though it was not always happy with WABA's comments, and sometimes tried to ignore them.

WABA "is a force to be reckoned with," recalls Pendleton. "It might be an irritating bug, but bugs are something to be reckoned with. One mosquito can wreak havoc."

WABA's activities were focused almost exclusively on local bicycling problems during this time. However Wyeth, Rowe, and Caroline DuBoise (Pendleton's assistant) met with a staff member on the Domestic Policy Office of the White House.

Within a year of the dissolution crisis, much of WABA's institutional memory was lost. This problem was summed up in a Ride On!! article by Bill Marker, entitled, "Memories of an Old Timer." Marker, who began attending Board meetings in late 1976, found himself as the senior member of the Board by the end of 1978. By that time, only he and Virginia Gaddis were left of those who had served before the dissolution crisis, and both were new to WABA at that time. But in exchange for experience, WABA gained new blood. It was a winning trade.

Ride On! (now with one exclamation point) became a regular, bimonthly publication printed by offset in magazine format with photographs and illustrations. In 1978, six issues were published, including a special Bike Days issue.

WABA quickly went through its financial surplus. By the summer of 1978, treasurer Jeremy Parker was predicting WABA needed 250 more members by the end of the year or the staff would have to be laid off. WABA published

notecards with an 1884 illustration of bicyclists parading down Pennsylvania Avenue. Since ten sheets sold for \$2, it was not likely a large money maker. Dues were raised to \$6, then \$8. By the annual meeting in fall, WABA membership was up to 250. That didn't seem to meet Parker's prediction, but somehow WABA survived, and was doing quite well thank you.

IV. Drafting (1979-1981)

Irwin continued his efforts to increase membership, setting a personal goal of reaching 1000 by the end of the summer of 1979. The cover of the June-July issue of Ride On! was a graph showing the rise of membership from under 100 in September 1979 to almost 400 by May 1979, with optimistic estimates leading to 1000 by August. The campaign was a flop. Membership peaked at about 460 before the beginning of the new membership year.

Inadequate finances was the perennial problem resulting from WABA's consistently over estimating membership projections, and underestimating expenses. By the April 1979 Board meeting, Treasurer Jeremy Parker was warning that WABA had only \$821 and WABA would be out of business in a few months. Somehow, WABA limped through the summer under an austerity plan, which included a \$200 personal loan from the Treasurer after the WABA bank account went dry.

At the end of 1979, Irwin left WABA after his two year stint. The position was filled by Bob Bers, an experienced bicycle commuter from New York City. The Board was particularly impressed with his background as a consumer advocate. Like Irwin, Bers set a goal of increasing membership to 1000 by the end of the year.

However, membership was slow in coming, and during most of the year, WABA was on the brink of financial disaster. Parker, again warned in March that WABA had only enough money to pay for the next newsletter, but nothing else. The next month, after WABA spent \$200 on new membership brochures, there was just barely enough money to get by.

Eventually, the membership apparently did come in. The last Ride On! of the year reported membership at 937, the highest ever recorded for WABA. The following year membership almost reached 860, while if not keeping WABA in luxury, staved on dark warnings from the new Treasurer, Joe Ostrowski at least, for a little while.

At the end of 1980, when AYH moved to an office in the hostel it operated at 1332 I Street, N.W., WABA moved along with it. The rent was \$108, double what WABA paid for its shared space. But this time, WABA got its own office, complete with a bathroom and shower, though later the tub was filled up with overflowing WABA archives. The rent also included some additional storage space.

The search for funds led WABA to consider an offer made in the fall of 1980 by the Society for the Prevention of Blindness, which wanted to put on a fundraising bike-a-thon with WABA. Harpold and Mollie Isaacs negotiated with POB, and a contract was drawn up to put on a bike-a-thon in May 1981.

A few months later, POB backed out, but coincidentally, the Multiple Sclerosis Society came to WABA with another offer. After a contentious meeting, the Board agreed to the offer, which sparked one Board member to walk out.

At first, Monica Maxwell headed up the WABA bike-a-thon committee, and coined its name, "Monumental Motion," a weak pun that probably few noticed. Later, Katie Moran later took over for Maxwell. To staff the event, WABA hired Linda Davis, a hard worker who put in 60 hour weeks for minimal pay.

The Monumental Motion Bike-a-Thon did not meet the high projections set by MS, but by WABA standards, it had to have been a success. About 375 riders logged a total of 12,000 miles, raising \$37,000. Expenses were \$12,000, which had all been borne by MS. WABA's share, 40% of the profits, came out to be \$9,660.73.

WABA didn't receive the check until the end of the summer, which was none too soon. In a matter of weeks, a financially starved WABA already started drawing down from the funds for operating expenses.

With all the appearances of a successful organization, WABA had an easier time than ever before attracting candidates for the Board. In the elections of 1979 and 1980, there were actually more candidates than vacancies on the Board.

The 1981 Board, elected at the end of the previous year, was exceptionally strong in management and bicycle expertise. The President was Peter Harnik, who had extensive experience working on environmental issues, political organizing, writing, and public relations. The secretary was Leslie Baldwin, who worked in the Office of Environment in the Department of Transportation. Some of the Board members included John Harpold, a management expert with the United States Postal Service; Katie Moran, Executive Director of the Bicycle Federation, a national bicycle research and promotion group; Bill Wilkinson, Director of programs at the Bicycle Manufacturers Institute and former Bicycle Coordinator for the U.S. Department of Transportation; and Michael Gessel, press secretary to a Congressman.

Unfortunately all that expertise meant strong opinions, which often led to acrimonious discussions at Board meetings. Executive Director Bob Bers was often at odds with some Board members, and he became a casualty of high Board expectations. The Board demanded a closer accounting of his time and it rewrote Bers' job description into a position that was virtually impossible for a

part-time employee. A Grievance Committee was formed to look into problems between Bers and the Board. Bers thought the solution was to hire him full time, but the Board thought the solution was to fire him. Finally, Bers resigned after a stint of nearly two years, effective October 31, 1981. He left on amicable terms. three weeks later running for a seat on the Board.

At the beginning of 1979, the editorship of Ride On! passed to Michael Gessel, a newcomer to Washington who was named to the position after one evening of stuffing envelopes. Gessel brought a more consistent style and graphic flair to the newsletter, even if he couldn't get each issue out on time. He redesigned the flag, typeset the headlines, and neatened the layout. The changes led Irwin to complain in one Executive Director's report, "Our newsletter is getting so polished, so classy, so professional, that it doesn't look like we need help."

During this period, Ride On! was more of a magazine than a newsletter. A new feature, "Wheel People," spotlighted local bicycle personalities. Another feature, "Bike Shop Beat" covered news of local bike shops. Ride On! ran more opinion articles, including an often heated series on the pros and cons of bike lanes touched off by Parker's polemic, "Why I Hate Bike Lanes." It also carried general features on bicycle riding in the Washington area, and included tips on bicycle commuting.

When Gessel gave up the magazine editorship after two years, he had established a tradition of stability that had not been seen since the days of Cary Shaw. The new editor was Susan Matson, a Board member who was already an experienced Ride On! volunteer. She kept the issues similar in appearance, and got them out on time regularly -- a first for a Ride On! Editor

A top WABA priority was public relations and promotion of bicycle commuting. WABA's most successful public event was the Earth Day Bike-In of 1980, held on the tenth anniversary of the 1970 national Earth Day. It was similar in form to previous WABA bike-to-work days, with bicycle caravans from various neighborhoods descending on Lafayette Park for a rally.

However, with thirty planned caravans, plus another twenty "unofficial" caravans, and a spectacular roster of speakers, this bike-in was executed on a scale which has probably never been equaled by any bicycle commuting event in the U.S. The before-work rally featured U.S. Secretary of Transportation Neil Goldschmidt, Representative Glenn Anderson, Senator Paul Tsongas, Deputy Energy Secretary John Sawhill, and Dennis Christopher, star of the motion picture Breaking Away.

The event, planned by WABA newcomer Peter Harnik, drew an estimated total of 3,000 bikers who participated in some part of the commute or rally. So enthusiastic were the participants of the rally that when a hat was passed to collect money to help defray costs, \$500 was collected in a matter of minutes.

The money raised from the event, plus the influx of membership dues, probably staved WABA off from bankruptcy.

As another effort to increase commuting, WABA started a Pedal Pool, a referral service for new commuters who wanted someone to ride with. About 360 WABA members filled out forms describing their routes. According to organizer Fred Dodd, who followed Randy Swart as President, potential commuters could then be matched with an experienced bicycle rider who followed a similar route. The information compiled for the Pedal Pool was later used by the Council of Governments for its bicycle route map. The Pedal Pool was given wide news coverage, including write-ups in the Washington Post and McCall's Magazine.

WABA also launched the National Bike-Sidy Program to promote the purchase of bicycles for commuting. The program, administered by WABA, was conceived by the Center for Science in the Public Interest and was sponsored by fourteen national public interest groups. Under the plan, any of the organizations' full-time employees who purchased a bicycle and pledged to use it for commuting would receive a \$20 rebate.

Another priority which received more attention was services to its members, such as getting local bike shops to offer discounts to WABA members. The discount varied between 5% and 10%, which could be substantial on the purchase of a new bike, and would more than make up for the cost of joining WABA.

Another service WABA offered was a bicycle commuting course taught by Leslie Baldwin, Monica Maxwell, Fred Dodd, and Dennis Szuhay. The two session class was offered several times. WABA also offered a bicycle repair course taught by Jim Buchanan.

The legal panel continued, though Will Jourdin changed jobs and had less time to spend on WABA. It was taken over by panel member Ed Kearney, who was Executive Director of the National Committee on Uniform Traffic Laws and Ordinances.

The annual meetings became more educational and entertaining. Consequently, attendance rose. The annual meeting of 1979 was attended by about 75, nearly twice the number who came the year before. The program was a speech by Susan Weaver, Assistant Editor of Bicycling Magazine and the showing of two short films. Door prizes were given out and Proteus Design had a display of hand built frames. Baldwin's account of the meeting printed in Ride On! said, "We were having so much fun we almost forgot there was business to attend to: election of new Board members!"

The following year, attendance at the annual meeting hit a record 125 people. There were exhibits about AYH, Bikes on Metrorail, and an audiovisual tour of Montgomery County bike paths. A program consisted of reports, awards,

announcements, and Harnik's recapping the highlights of the year. Harnik also presented a slide of bicycle facilities in Europe.

The next year, the guest speaker at the general membership meeting was Canadian activist Bob Silverman.

As bicycling was becoming institutionalized in Washington, the action was shifting away from WABA. Part of this was due to Eileen Kadesh, who had returned to her role of District Bicycle Coordinator, thus becoming both Pendleton's predecessor and successor. A number of WABA members served on the District Transportation Department's Bicycle Task Force, which in some ways took over WABA's role in providing citizen input. It was Kadesh who took the lead in compiling a list of locations in the city where accidents were most numerous.

With some pushing from WABA, the Washington Metropolitan Transit Authority (WMATA) expanded its bicycle locker program. But here again, the results were no so much the result of confrontation, but suggestion. The program also had Kadesh's backing. Bicycle improvements were more likely to be the result of subtle pressure from WABA as part of a coalition. For example, WABA worked with the League of American Wheelmen and Virginia bicycling organizations to win approval from the Virginia State legislature to grant bicyclists the rights of vehicles on public roads.

Though WABA may have given more attention during this period to financial survival, membership building, and public relations, WABA did not abandon aggressive advocacy. Leading the list of successes were those compiled by the constantly active Virginia committee, led by Nina Rowe, and later John Harpold. Projects included Arlington Cemetery bicycle restrictions, Roosevelt Bridge, the I-66 bike path, and the W&OD Railroad right of way. Nearly every issue of Ride On! was full of news of the Virginia committee's many activities which affected virtually all bicycle facility developments in Northern Virginia. WABA members had an especially large role in shaping the I-66 bike trail. The Virginia Department of Highways took many of WABA's suggestions, including widening certain parts, eliminating dangerous grades and curves. The Virginia committee also won improvements to the Mt. Vernon bike trail and influenced the W&OD trail.

The D.C. and Maryland Committees rarely kept pace with the activist Virginia Committee, but they too met and considered facilities and government relations issues.

The fight to bring bikes on Metrorail dragged on, with WABA members Nancy Wyeth and David Strom in the lead. At the end of 1979 WMATA agreed to a test involving twelve bicyclists. It was a small victory, but WABA kept up the pressure. Strom put together the Citizens Coalition for Bikes on Metro which conducted a

demonstration on September 6, 1980, outside the Smithsonian Metro stop. About twenty bicyclists protested the delay in allowing bikes on Metrorail. They carried onto a subway car a full-sized cardboard cutout of a bicycle to show how easily bikes could be wheeled into the cars. However, when they tried to take in an actual bicycle, they were stopped. The story was covered by the Post, as well as by television and radio news broadcasts.

That December, the D.C. Council held a hearing on the Bikes-on-Metrorail proposal. With behind-the-scenes support from Kadesh, and the active involvement of the Coalition, WABA, and other bicycle groups, the meeting was packed. About 35 members testified in person and 50 letters were entered into the record in support of the proposal. Only two speakers testified against the proposal. Unfortunately, one represented the D.C. Fire Department.

The next step came in April 1981 when WMATA agreed to a 6-month test program allowing bikes on Metrorail cars on weekends. The program was finally made permanent when the WMATA Board met in December. Thus, nine years after WABA members discussed the idea of bicycles on Metrorail at WABA's first meeting, the program became a reality.

Harnik, who was elected WABA President at the end of 1980, devoted much of his time to expanding the use of Rock Creek Park to bicyclists. At the time, only one small stretch of Beach Drive was closed to automobile traffic during the summer months

In early 1981, WABA testified at a National Park Service public hearing and recommended that four stretches of Beach Drive in Rock Creek Park be permanently closed to cars. The proposal was not smooth sailing; the powerful American Automobile Association came out against the proposal. Harnik organized People's Alliance to Save Rock Creek (P.A.R.C.), a coalition of bicycle, environmental, outdoors-related organizations. Much of the support service for P.A.R.C. came from WABA. Even P.A.R.C.'s money was kept in the WABA bank account

In addition to Harnik, much of the effort came from Michael Replogle, then a transportation planning expert with Public Technology, Inc. Replogle helped prepare testimony and made presentations before several District Advisory Neighborhood Commissions and to District transportation officials.

By the end of 1981, WABA had achieved some success. With WABA members on hand, Rock Creek Park Superintendent Jim Redmont cut an orange ribbon on August 29 expanding the carfree time to Saturdays.

WABA continued its involvement in the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation. Earlier efforts to establish a bicycle path had failed. Now, WABA began working with officials to improve parking on the Avenue.

The WABA helmet test panel, which had languished during the dark days, was revived by Swart. Swart was a true believer in bicycle helmets. While living in France, he couldn't find one, so he wore a construction helmet while riding. Swart's faith in bicycle helmets probably saved his life in 1977 when he hit a taxicab near the Lincoln Memorial

When he took over the study, Swart found that WABA's helmet samples were stored in closets all over Washington, and he had trouble getting them back. Rather than rely on such a geographically diverse group of testers, Swart recruited other bicyclists who used the bike room where he worked to serve on the new panel. "It was a quantum leap in speed," Swart recalls. "I could catch people every morning and get helmets on and off them."

In October 1979, WABA published the Bicycle Helmet Wearability Study, an 18 page booklet similar in format to Ride On! The study rated eleven different helmets, plus the category of leather hairnets, and discussed such factors as general comfort, ventilation, sweat control, style, and interference with eyeglasses. It also contained a section of general information, including the need for bicyclists to wear helmets. The information was given national distribution through an article in Bicycling Magazine.

In June 1980, 22-year old bicycle messenger Mary Gaffney was killed by a truck in Georgetown. The driver of the truck was given fines for minor traffic violations, and not cited for criminal negligence. The death had a strong effect among some WABA members. One such member was Carl Modig, who felt that WABA should do something to prevent this kind of accident from happening in the future.

WABA created a special investigative Task Force, which faulted the District court's decision. A year after the accident, the Board voted to establish the Mary Gaffney Memorial Fund which would solicit donations to be used to promote helmet use.

V. Breaking Away (1982-1984)

When Monica Maxwell succeeded Peter Harnik as WABA President at the end of 1981, WABA was as trouble free as it had been within anyone's memory. Part of that was due to Maxwell. Recalls Harnik, "I'm aware that the year that I was President was extremely difficult, unpleasant for many people. I think (Maxwell) smoothed things out by a really sweet, wonderful personality and being able to work with a lot of different people." WABA's coffers were fat with Bike-a-Thon money. The Board was experienced, yet the fractious debates that had hamstrung the Board were gone as new personalities filled the staff and Board slots.

As a symbol of WABA's new establishment image, WABA joined the world of high-level hobnobbing by sponsoring a wine and cheese reception at the

Sheraton Hotel. The reception was for bicycle planning specialists from the Washington area and other cities who came for the 62nd Annual Meeting of the Transportation Research Board, an arm of the National Academy of Sciences.

After a quick but methodical search, the Board hired Maggie Ronkin to fill the Executive Director made vacant by Bob Bers. Ronkin quickly adapted to the new position. By her second Board meeting, the minutes described her report by saying, "Maggie rattled her recent accomplishments like a well-greased machine gun."

Through WABA and P.A.R.C., Peter Harnik was indefatigable in his push to improve the bicycling environment in Rock Creek Park. On May 8, 1982, bicyclists, runners, and hikers converged on Rock Creek Park in an event dubbed, "Pedals and Feet for Rock Creek," in yet another public demonstration of support to reduce auto traffic on Beach Drive. The rally drew over 100 people, despite overcast skies and predictions of rain. Harnik even testified before the Subcommittee on the Interior of the House Appropriations Committee on February 28, 1984. Though the National Park Service didn't approve all of P.A.R.C.'s proposals to reduce traffic in the park, it did eventually expand the sections of Beach Drive closed off to automobiles during weekends.

In his role as Chairman of the WABA Facilities Committee, Harnik expanded his efforts beyond Rock Creek Park. Early in 1982, he organized what Ride On! billed as "the first public hearing ever conducted by the Bicycle Association," which Ride On! further touted as a rousing success—about twenty-five cyclists showed up. The purpose of the hearing was to allow citizens an opportunity to testify on facility improvements in D.C. Later that year, the Facilities Committee came up with a full set of recommendations of specific improvements in Virginia, Maryland, and D.C., which the WABA Board approved.

An important facilities battle shaped up over the 14th Street Bridge, which was scheduled to be closed to bicycle traffic during redecking in summer of 1984. Though the resulting bike path would be a boon to cyclists, WABA was upset that the D.C. Department of Transportation (D.C. DOT) had made inadequate arrangements for bicyclists during construction. "This is totally unacceptable to the hundreds of commuting and recreational cyclists who rely on the 14th Street Bridge bike path," Harnik wrote to the D.C. DOT.

WABA didn't get anywhere with the 14th Street Bridge, but the consolation prize was early and substantial involvement in the redecking of the Key Bridge. That was good, since D.C. DOT'S first proposal was to require bicyclists to walk their bikes across the bridge! "It's incredible that a transportation agency would even consider designing a bridge where commuting cyclists have to dismount and walk," Harnik said in a Ride On! article. "It would be laughable if it weren't so revealing of the District's attitude toward cyclists."

This campaign was successful. Looking back years later, Harnik viewed his contribution to the planning of the Key Bridge as one of his most important successes. "It's a little monument to WABA."

After a year-long absence from Washington, Michael Replogle returned to WABA, and joined the Board, helping out with parking and facilities efforts. He prepared testimony for the Facilities Committee on the proposed Barney Circle Freeway in D.C. He later took over as Chairman of the Government Relations Committee.

In late 1983, D.C. DOT recommended to the Zoning Commission that five percent of all car parking spaces in District office buildings be set aside for bicycles. Replogle testified at a hearing of the Zoning Commission on January 24, 1984. He prepared a detailed study containing WABA recommendations to change the proposal.

Linda Keenan, who later became the WABA Office Manager, remarked of Replogle, "Michael, in a way, was one of WABA's secret weapons. Michael was really a certified planner. He had the professional qualifications to be able to interpret at the same level what people in the government were saying and doing. He could stand and look the Department of Public Works in the eye."

On May 23, 1982, Kadesh resigned as the D.C. Bicycle Coordinator, a position she had held on and off since it was first created in 1976. Kadesh had been upset with the direction of the Transportation Department, which she felt was becoming increasingly less concerned about bicycles. The Department decided not to fill the vacancy. Instead, Michael Jackson, the part-time Assistant D.C. Bicycle Coordinator who at that time was still in college, was given Kadesh's title.

The D.C. Bicycle Office under Kadesh and Pendleton had been responsible for some of the most important improvements in the District. WABA viewed the move as a serious setbacks for bicyclists. WABA began a campaign to get the position back, and to make sure that the District knew it had made a serious mistake.

The first step was the preparation of a blistering letter to D.C. Mayor Marion S. Barry and a press release accusing the government of taking actions that would increase the number of bicycle accidents in the District. The first salvo had its intended effect. The Washington Times picked up on the story, and a neighborhood newspaper, the Northwest Current, ran the complete press release. D.C. DOT officials were surprised at the ferocity of the attack, but they refused to back down.

Michael Gessel, who succeeded Maxwell as President, made the restoration of the D.C. Bicycle Office a top priority. WABA took every opportunity to get the message across, nor was WABA afraid of bashing D.C. DOT before the D.C.

Council. On January 24, 1983, Gessel testified before a hearing on D.C. DOT'S budget. "Continued pursuit of an unbalanced transportation policy can only result in more accidents and injuries for thousands of D.C. cyclists, more traffic congestion in downtown, increased air and noise pollution, and additional gasoline use in the District, which has a negative effect on the local economy," he said. The testimony seemed to have no effect.

Gessel and Replogle prepared a detailed report when D.C. DOT went through a reorganization and emerged as the Department of Public Works (D.C. DPW). The report recommended a full-time Bicycle Coordinator at a considerably higher pay grade than Jackson's. The report was largely ignored.

Eventually, Jackson was given more hours and made full-time bicycle coordinator. But from WABA's perspective, he did not have a loud voice in the Department. WABA decided that nothing would change unless the Transportation Department was forced by a more sympathetic D.C. Council. The following year, President Ken Hughes testified again to urge the upgrading of the Bicycle Coordinator's position in the new D.C. DPW. Still, there were no real results.

But all that changed in late 1984, when Councilmember Jerry Moore faced a tough primary challenge for his seat on the D.C. Council. Moore, as Chairman of the Transportation and Environment Committee, had always been a strong supporter of bicycles. Now, he had a special reason to listen to WABA. WABA drafted a bill with the industrious title of the "Comprehensive District of Columbia Bicycle Transportation and Safety Act of 1984" which called for a three-person bicycle office, located prominently in D.C. DPW's hierarchy.

The WABA bill, drafted mostly by Gessel, also called for the establishment of a Citizens' Bicycle Advisory Council. Moore introduced the bill July 16, 1984, but deleted the advisory council provisions because he was unsure how the advisory council would work. Moore then agreed to hold hearings on the bill. However, he made no promises that he would move the bill until after the hearing.

WABA swung into action preparing phone trees and background papers to line up witnesses. The result was a virtuoso performance. On October 29, forty witnesses, stretched the hearing out all day and evening. Everyone but D.C. DOT testified in favor of the bill. On cue, many of the witnesses expressed disappointment that the bill did not create an advisory council.

When Moore held a markup, he included an amendment adding the advisory council. Gessel, who had spearheaded the lobbying campaign, fully expected the requirement for a three-person office to be cut back. In fact, he was prepared to trade away one or even two of the people if D.C. DOT would support the bill. But the Department refused to even discuss the matter. Consequently, the bill passed the committee on November 14, including a Moore amendment creating

a 16-member Bicycle Advisory Council. It was passed by full Council without further amendment on December 2, 1984.

The WABA bicycle helmet wearability test completed earlier was a great leap forward in the promotion of bicycle helmets, but it still didn't give the most important information, which was effectiveness in preventing head injury. Randy Swart recalls, "Eventually, we woke up to the fact that we didn't have anything objective to compare the crash worthiness. All we had was a bunch of war stories."

The next stage came when Tom Balderston got back in touch with the Snell Foundation. Balderston had just quit a job in computer software, and wanted to be a full-time, freelance writer. As a motorcycle rider, he knew the importance of helmets, and was appalled about the lack of information on bicycle helmets.

This time, Snell decided that it would be worthwhile to test bicycle helmets. Also, the wearability study may have helped convince Snell that WABA was serious and credible. Snell agreed to test the helmets if WABA would buy them, ship them to Sacramento, and publish the results.

Some of the manufacturers got worried when they heard what Swart and Balderston were doing, and tried to scare them off. Swart recalls, "Skid Lid sent us a page and a half of obscure references thinking they could bury us. But Tom went to the Library of Congress and looked up everything and found out they were just blowing smoke."

Balderston wrote up the results for Bicycling Magazine, but the publication date for the article kept slipping, possibly because some of the manufacturers threatened to sue. After consulting with Jourdin, Swart challenged Bicycling Magazine to send WABA copies of those threats, so WABA could take legal action of its own. That may have done the trick. Six years after the helmet study began, the article ran in the March 1983 issue. Bicycling Magazine paid Balderston \$600, then the largest amount ever paid for an article. Balderston donated the money to WABA, where it ended up in the Gaffney Fund to further promote helmet use.

In conjunction with the article, WABA put out a national publicity effort, which resulted in mentions in USA Today and New York's WABC-TV, as well as local publicity in the Washington Post and television and radio news broadcasts.

Swart recalls that WABA was in a unique position to publish the controversial study. "Nobody can really scare us off," Swart said. "I've never had to worry about it because we had so many lawyers."

Swart and Balderston continued working on the project. At the urging of Dr. George Snively of the Snell Foundation, WABA joined the Z.90 Committee of the

American National Standards Institute, which sets national standards for automobile and motorcycle helmets. WABA became the first consumer organization represented on the committee, whose members included a number of manufacturers. The Z.90 Committee had already drafted a bicycle helmet standard, but it was bottled up by members who were manufacturers of helmets that did not meet the standard. Swart attended a meeting of the Z.90 Committee in Boston and helped iron out a final draft, which was finally adopted in 1984.

Now that the basic foundation had been laid for evaluating the safety of bicycle helmets, Swart went on a campaign to spread the information. He traveled from Georgia to New York, speaking at bicycle rallies about the importance of bicycle helmets and how to determine which ones are safe. Swart figured that if he could convince the serious bicyclists who attended these rallies, others would follow their lead. To get the point across that some kinds of foam don't absorb impact, he demonstrated with a device he built called "orange hammer." This was a hammer on a hinged arm about three feet long that hit an anvil.

If that weren't enough, Swart started a newsletter which he sent to people around the world who were interested in new information on bicycle helmet safety.

The WABA helmet research didn't overshadow the work of the Safety Committee, chaired by Carl Modig, who kept the Board spellbound with his regular reports of fantastic productivity. Unlike many of WABA's other committees, which had only one or two members, Modig's Safety Committee had a number of real, active members. The committee prepared public service announcements and press releases on bicycle safety.

Working with Swart and Balderston, at the end of the summer of 1982, the Safety Committee designed a brochure promoting helmet use, and Modig managed to get 7,000 copies printed up for \$28. A year later, he printed 4,000 more brochures. Diligent Safety Committee volunteers distributed the pamphlets at bike shops and bicycle events. The committee conducted a survey to determine a baseline for helmet use, then conducted the study again to determine if its efforts had been effective.

The Committee also analyzed in detail District bicycle accident figures going back to 1981. Jim McCarthy compiled a "Hotspot" map which used pins to plot accidents on a large, mounted map of the District. The map could be taken to hearings and was a hit at membership recruiting booths. A report on the "hotspot" project garnered more publicity for WABA, including mention in the Washington Post, the Washington Times, and Washington/an Magazine.

In addition to these major activities, WABA had a full plate of other significant efforts. In 1983, the D.C. Energy Office awarded WABA \$2,000 for a Bike-to-Work Day, which was coordinated by Bob Bers. The event was similar to earlier Bike-to-Work Days, and included a rally on Western Plaza in downtown

Washington. The event, which was also supported by D.C. DOT, attracted an estimated 1,500 bicyclists. City Administrator Tom Downs, former District Transportation Director, presented a proclamation from Mayor Barry declaring October 18, 1983 as "Bike to Work Day" in the District. Councilmember Jerry Moore also attended and in his statement he supported WABA's goals.

WABA also got involved in the redecking of Memorial Bridge from the earliest stages. And on behalf of WABA, Peter Harnik fired off a letter asking the D.C. DPW to widen the roadway and sidewalks of the Taft Bridge (over Connecticut Avenue NW).

In 1984, WABA established a fund in the memory of Carl Malmberg, an avid young bicyclist who was killed in an accident involving a motorist in College Park. With the encouragement of Malmberg's father and an initial donation by Jay Wright of \$250, the fund was earmarked for the WABA Legal Defense Fund. Under the leadership of Ed Kearney, the Legal Defense Fund (formerly the WABA Legal Panel) took on a greater activist stance.

Linda Keenan described Kearney: "He's got more legal experience in bicycle traffic law than anyone else in the country. He's another one of these people that has so much expertise and professional standing that people have to deal with him. You can't get around Ed."

WABA supported other legislative activities during this period. In 1982, WABA surveyed the attitudes towards bicycles of candidates for District Mayor and Council. Peter Harnik testified on behalf of WABA in favor of the bottle bill during a hearing before the D.C. Council. Michael Gessel attended a meeting with Maryland Secretary of Transportation Lowell Bridwell to discuss bicycling priorities. Monica Maxwell testified before the Maryland House of Delegates Judiciary Committee on a bill that would improve bicycle access to highways. Chips Johnson revived the Maryland Committee, and worked for bicycle improvements in Montgomery County.

WABA sponsored a demonstration and lecture by John Allen, who was promoting his book, *The Complete Book of Bicycle Commuting*. And led by Ken Hughes, WABA began a series of monthly "Biker Bars." A bar would be selected where WABA members could meet and socialize. Unfortunately, only two or three people would show up.

The Greater Washington Area Bicycle Atlas was becoming more out of date. Ed Pitman, President of co-publisher AYH, presented a proposal to the WABA Board to update it. Rolfe Larson took over for WABA, drawing up route evaluation forms and assigning them to riders. Some were even completed. However, when Larson left Washington, the work was scrapped.

In 1982, WABA cosponsored the fundraising Monumental Motion Bike-a-Thon for

a second year with the MS Society. However, this year, MS wanted to cut back on the expenses, and the position that Linda Davis had filled the year before was taken over by MS staff. There was less publicity, and the grand prize (which had been \$500) was reduced to a Sony Walkman, despite WABA's protests. Eventually, Maxwell, who was handling the Bike-a-Thon for WABA, convinced MS that a big prize was needed, but it was added only after the initial promotional materials were prepared.

Maxwell complained that she had to spend too much time on the Bike-a-Thon with inadequate support from MS. Though WABA volunteers came out for the day of the event, few were involved in the planning process, placing additional burdens on her. Also, WABA's profits were reduced from 40 percent to 20 percent, so it seemed that WABA was doing more work for less.

One hundred fewer riders turned out in 1982, and the gross income dropped by \$15,000. This meant that WABA's income from the event was only \$3,687, little more than a third the previous year's total. WABA blamed MS and MS blamed WABA for the poor show. The two parties mutually agreed to terminate their joint sponsorship of a bike-a-thon.

Gessel believed that the key to establishing a permanent bicycle advocacy presence in Washington was maintaining a permanent, full-time professional staff member. The annual bike-a-thon was the only sure way he knew to raise that kind of money. Therefore, as President, he felt it was essential to re-establish the bike-a-thon to create a large, dependable source of unrestricted funds. However, it was a gamble. There was not enough money to keep the organization going with a half-time staff and to hire a bike-a-thon staff. And, it could be years before the bike-a-thon turned the kind of profit on which he counted. However, he felt without a steady income and a permanent staff, WABA would be doomed to continue the same hand-to-mouth existence it had during much of its life and that other bicycle advocacy groups around the country faced.

Gessel recruited old bike-a-thon hand Linda Davis to help him find a new cosponsor. They settled on the American Cancer Society (ACS), D.C. Division, which agreed to WABA's terms. MS insisted that WABA retire the "Monumental Motion" name, so Gessel came up with a new name, "Capital Motion," which was a pun on the previous bike-a-thon—and an obscure pun if there ever was one.

WABA retained the bike-a-thon numbering, calling the 1983 event the "3rd Annual Capital Motion Bike-a-Thon." Under the new arrangement, the ball was solely in WABA's court. WABA stood to make half the profits, but in return, WABA was required to provide all up-front costs and to assume complete financial responsibility. It was a gamble.

Hughes and Gessel interviewed one candidate for the Bike-a-Thon staff position, Ted Watkins, a roller skating messenger who knew Davis. Watkins didn't have

much experience, but he was willing to work for the little salary that WABA could offer and there was no time to interview anyone else.

WABA spent almost \$3,900 on the Bike-a-Thon, but it netted a profit just short of \$7,000. That was the equivalent of a lot of membership dues. Even more important, it was the beginning of a consistent money raising engine and could be counted on to move WABA toward a more professional organization.

WABA and ACS produced the 4th Annual Capital Motion Bike-a-Thon the following year. Gessel stayed on as General Chairman, but the staff was Ellen Jones, wife of Board member Jim McCarthy. Jones was a lucky choice for the job. "She went at it as if she were on a mission from God," Linda Keenan observed. "Ellen just felt a tremendous interest and loyalty for WABA." The profits from that year's event were not much more than from the previous year, but the lack of big improvement only seemed to fire up Jones for the next round.

During the tremendous outpouring of WABA external activities, inside, WABA was going downhill fast. Ronkin did not place the same priority that her predecessor did on membership, and no one on the Board would take over the key position of Chairman of the Membership Committee. In the spring, new memberships failed to come in at the same rate as previous years. Bob Oram's Treasurer's Report for May 1982 showed expenses of almost \$3,000 with income of \$500. Still, there were few efforts to bring in new members or to cut spending. Only five new members were recruited in June, and membership fell 200 below the level for the same period the previous year.

Ronkin hired Ron Yarashus as an intern for more than \$100 a month, but his efforts seemed to have little effect on membership recruitment. When he left at the end of the summer, he was given a \$10 gift certificate for Eddie Bauer's, which the Board minutes noted would buy him half a pair of shorts. Still, some Board members never could figure out why he was hired or what he did.

A good deal of discussion at Board meetings early in the year focused on what to do with the Bike-a-Thon funds. The Board agreed to a number of projects, but as it discussed them in meeting after meeting, the funds dwindled, and all that was ultimately purchased from the original list was a portable electric typewriter.

But WABA did make other purchases, such as a full-color, 25-minute film, "Cycling Under Your Own Power" and a bicycle trailer. For the first time in its history, WABA published six 16-page bimonthly issues of Ride On! This, along with increased activities, drained WABA's financial reserves at an unprecedented rate.

During autumn, Maxwell named Gessel to chair an ad hoc Finance Committee to figure out what to do about WABA's impending new crisis. At the October Board meeting, Gessel's report predicted that WABA would go bankrupt in less than a

year. He estimated that WABA could survive by cutting monthly staff expenses by two-thirds, increasing members, and cutting back on all other expenses. The Board then agreed to phase out Ronkin's position.

When Gessel took over as President, he cut back on everything possible to preserve working capital for the next year's Bike-a-Thon. Ride On! was reduced from sixteen pages to four, but it became a monthly newsletter. Gessel was determined to keep WABA staffed with volunteers as a cost-cutting measure. However, the paperwork burden grew burdensome for burned-out Board members, and it was difficult to get other volunteers to come into the office on a regular basis to process memberships and return telephone calls.

Gessel protested when Board members wanted to dip into the WABA treasury to pay for a staff member. However, eventually he just got tired of all the work, and the Board authorized a new position. By the following summer, Susan Palmer, a self-styled hard-core bicyclist, was hired as Office Manager. Unfortunately, Palmer was not able to tame the WABA organizational dragon. Ken Moskowitz a newcomer to Washington, described the office this way: "There was pretty much pandemonium. It took months for a new member to be acknowledged and the material to be sent out...People had sent money in, had ordered something, had tried to get information, had tried to get help from the legal panel, and they weren't getting any answer at all. There was no one there to help them."

To further plague the organization, WABA faced another disaster when it changed its mailing list procedures. Bers had long complained that it was difficult to recruit members during the active summer months when their membership would expire in a few months. As a Board member, he pushed for a membership that would last twelve months, regardless of when the member joined. There was some vague warnings from the old timers about the kind of accounting problem which had led to the great membership loss before the crisis of 1977. Oram and Ostrowski also backed the idea, and they formed a committee to look into a computerized mailing list service that could take care of the difficult record keeping.

WABA contracted with EPACO, a mailing list firm in Arlington. Unfortunately, the mailing labels were consistently full of mistakes. WABA ended up switching mailing services to a firm called CLESA, based in Annandale. That firm, too, ended up in disaster, with many WABA names lost from the list. Worse, WABA was unable to send the appropriate renewal letters, and more members were lost.

Randy Swart and his wife, Barbara, came to the rescue on WABA's mailing list problem by agreeing to manage the list on their home computer. That solved one problem, but many hours were spent going through the remnants of the old list.

If most internal affairs were going poorly, at least Ride On! caused the Board little

grief. After setting a record for longevity, in mid-1983 Matson turned the reigns over to Ken Moskowitz, a newcomer to Washington whose only job was ushering at the Kennedy Center. Moskowitz continued the newsletter's style and on-time performance and he further maintained the high quality of the newsletter in both appearance and writing.

Moskowitz ended up spending more and more time on WABA, and eventually took a job in the office of AYH across the hall. Then, in August 1983, the Board agreed to hire him for eight hours a week to help straighten out the office mess. Ken saved the office from total disaster when Susan Palmer suddenly left. He standardized some procedures and coordinated some volunteers, but he was only able to deal with the emergencies. There was no other solution: WABA needed an Office Manager.

WABA advertised for the position but none of the responses were promising. However, a January 1984 notice in Ride On! was spotted by Linda Keenan, a former employee at Defenders of Wildlife, who had just returned to Washington after traveling in Europe. Keenan, who called herself an "instant bicycle commuter," had been bicycling for only about a month when she saw a poster for WABA's Bike-to-Work Day. "I couldn't believe there was a group around doing things for bicyclists," she recalled, and after a call to the WABA answering machine, she succeeded in getting in touch with Bers.

Keenan helped out with the Bike-to-Work Day and wanted to do more for WABA. "I was really impressed by the WABA helmet study," she recalled. "I felt that here was a group that was really doing something. They weren't a frills group. They really had achieved something solid."

Keenan was unemployed at the time, but in the fall she went back to work for Defenders of Wildlife on a temporary basis, and did volunteer work for Multinational Monitor, a Ralph Nader publication. She wanted a more substantial job than the WABA position, but "I felt so interested in bicycling... Bicycling was a happy sort of issue. I really liked what the group was trying to do."

Moskowitz and Hughes interviewed Keenan and were immediately impressed. She was hired in February 1984. Initially, she had to straighten out the mess that was the result of months of neglect. She was assisted by Hughes, recently elected WABA President. Hughes, a daily bicycle commuter who had come into WABA through Peter Harnik and the Earth Day Bike-In of 1980.

Keenan's job description called for twelve hours a week at \$4.50 an hour. That was increased to fifteen hours that summer. However, Keenan, who at first had no other job, worked closer to full-time in the WABA office. Hughes, who became unemployed about this time, also spent a great deal of time working in the WABA office. "It would have been a little bit overwhelming. Ken had a lot to do with stabilizing the situation," she said. A few months later, Keenan took a part-time

job at the Library of Congress, and had to cut her hours back to twenty per week.

Keenan devoted a lot of her efforts to building up the membership, which had started to decline in the absence of anyone pushing recruiting. Keenan also made a vigorous effort for membership renewals, including calling everyone whose membership expired. In doing so, she discovered that about 15 percent of all members moved out of the area each year. Also, about half of all new members who failed to renew had joined WABA because they thought it was a recreational club and they weren't interested in bicycle advocacy.

"That was an interesting fact to learn because if you didn't know that, you could make all kinds of wild predictions about membership, which WABA used to do. WABA used to think it could practically double its membership in a year, and you can't do anything like that if you have a low renewal rate," Keenan recalled.

Membership recruitment of blacks—a majority of D.C. residents—remained an illusive goal.

Still, Keenan's aggressive recruitment and skillful recordkeeping paid off. Also, Hughes initiated a successful membership recruitment contest. By November 1984, there were 635 dues-paying members on the rolls. While that was less than the highs of the early 1980s, for the first time in anyone's memory, the Board actually believed the figures.

VI. Rounding the Bend (1985-1987)

By 1985, WABA had made it in almost every way. Hughes had been reelected to a third term as President -- the only WABA top officer ever to be elected to more than two complete terms. Keenan loved her job, and she earned the respect of virtually everyone who worked with her. She brought with her more office experience than any previous occupant of the WABA staff position, and her recordkeeping rivaled John Irwin at his best.

The bike-a-thon, at last, put WABA on a high and steady level of income. Well, almost. Echoes from a past that couldn't escape WABA: the minutes for the January 1986 Board meeting cited Treasurer Bill Silverman warning, "If current spending rates continue, WABA will be bankrupt by March 20." More echoes: in order to stave off financial insolvency, WABA circulated grant proposals to foundations without success.

However, a more skillful and dedicated Board than in the past kicked around a wide range of proposals. The Board settled on a fundraising appeal directly to members through a phone bank. Keenan and Peter Harnik came up with an elaborate Annual Report summing up WABA's successes for 1985 in an effort to induce members to donate additional money. It worked. WABA's income was enough to tide over the organization until it received the proceeds from the summer bike-a-thon.

WABA membership increased steadily, from 544 in December 1984 to 640 in December 1985, and reached 750 a year later.

At the end of 1984, Ken Moskowitz got a job writing for a Washington newsletter. Much to his surprise, he credits his landing the job largely to his experience editing Ride On! The newsletter was turned over to Sharon Gang, a staff member of Ohio Congressman Don Pease. As in previous changes, the transition was smooth, with Gang producing a well written newsletter on time each month. In mid 1987, a new WABA record was broken for number of issues of Ride On! produced by a single editor.

WABA had achieved that rarest but most important quality for an institution: stability.

Of course, all was not constant. What was once a low- cost, sleazy neighborhood for WABA's office became a high cost, sleazy neighborhood when the porno shops around the corner on 14th Street were closed down. The Hostel building was sold, and WABA had to get out. On June 29, 1985, WABA members loaded the filing cabinets and desks into trucks and trundled the office to a new location, 530 7th Street, S.E., near Eastern Market on Capitol Hill. Rent nearly tripled, but WABA absorbed the increase.

Perhaps WABA's frenetic pace was slower than previous years, but there was no reduction in successes for bicyclists in the Washington area. If there was any change, it was that WABA had become a mature organization working in an environment that was often receptive to WABA's ideas.

There was also one key factor. At the Board meeting of August 1985, the Board voted to abolish the part-time position of Office Manager and replace it with a full-time Director who would perform policy and issue work, as well as keep the office running. Keenan was the only candidate considered for the job.

The change, which wasn't even mentioned in the newsletter, had profound effects. Keenan became the public face of WABA. Where before, various board members would speak in public depending on who could take time off from work, Keenan was the principal presence. She was the press contact, now readily available. She was the professional bicycle coordinator for the greater Washington area; and by extension, WABA became the professional coordination agency.

Keenan became better able to fill in gaps left by Board members. "The funny thing is," she says, "in certain areas, the WABA board became less active. And I don't think the impact of a full-time staff person was 100% positive on the board."

"The first year that I worked for WABA, the Board members did most of the talking at the Board meetings. By the time I left WABA, I was doing probably

three-quarters of the talking at a Board meeting.

"In a certain sense, there is a small chance that some Board members may feel that the staff person can handle it so they don't really need to do much about it."

In other steps toward a more professional organization, WABA leased a computer to handle office operations; published slickly designed brochures for membership recruitment, bicycle safety, and legal information; and designed a new logo for stationery.

For the third year in a row, WABA conducted the Capitol Motion Bike-a-Thon for the benefit of WABA and the American Cancer Society, with Michael Gessel as general chairman. For the second year in a row, Ellen Jones staffed the event with her usual enthusiasm. A total of 305 riders participated in the 1985 Bike-a-Thon and brought in \$41,000. WABA's share was more than \$16,000. Unlike previous years, though WABA did not make the same mistake of letting membership slide when its coffers waxed full.

The following year, with Jones still staffing the event (but with Diane Curran taking over as Chairperson), the bike-athon almost grossed \$50,000 from 424 riders. The following year, receipts went down for the first time since WABA teamed up with ACS. That stirred the old ghosts of doom and gloom, and rightfully so. But WABA snapped back with more sophisticated fundraising from its members.

WABA testified February 12, 1985 before the D.C. Council Committee on Public Works, now chaired by Nadine Winter, on the bicycle-related provisions of the Transportation Department budget. WABA supported the passage of no-fault auto insurance in the District, supported the bottle bill, and opposed a weak, anti-litter measure. WABA also testified in Annapolis against a bill which would require cyclists to wear reflective material at night.

P.A.R.C. won another victory in the spring of 1986, when the Park Service closed off the upper stretch of Beach Drive to auto traffic on weekends.

Helmet safety remained a priority among WABA members. WABA continued to publish updates of A Consumer's Guide to Bicycle Helmets. Carl Modig returned to do work with safety, including taking a new survey of helmet use. WABA also gave a bike safety presentation at Children's Hospital.

In January 1986, WABA board member Doug Farnsworth died. WABA established a memorial fund for Farnsworth, who was well known as the head of Chesapeake and Shenandoah Bicycle Touring. The fund quickly raised more than \$1,000, eventually providing a memorial tree in Rock Creek Park.

WABA sponsored many educational events for members and the general public,

including a bicycling and sports medicine seminar, slide shows on the Georgetown Spur and on bicycle marking, and workshops on bike safety and bicycle commuting.

WABA went back to a tried and true activity by sponsoring another Bike-to-Work Day on May 1, 1986. D. C. Council President Dave Clarke and Arlington County Board member (and WABA member) John Milliken spoke. Channel 4's news team "rode" to the rally site with the group from Mt. Pleasant-Adams Morgan. WABA sponsored a moonlight ride in Rock Creek Park one spring evening in 1985. The following year, the Washington Post ran a notice when WABA repeated the event, and 150 showed up. The only problem was that WABA didn't have permission from the Park Service for a mass ride.

WABA was a sponsor of the 1987 Capital City Cycling Celebration, which included human powered vehicle speech championships, the Grape-Nuts/AYH ride, the Northeast Bicycle Program Specialists Conference, and a commuter challenge.

When the Maryland Transportation suddenly proposed the widening of I-270, WABA suggested the construction of a high quality bikepath along the new construction. After Maryland officials rejected it, WABA enlisted the firm of Arnold and Porter to take on a pro bono law suit to stop the highway on the grounds that the state had prepared an inadequate Environmental Impact Statement. Joining the suit was the Potomac Chapter of the Sierra Club, the Coalition on Sensible Transportation, and the North Bethesda Congress of Citizen Associations. WABA won an early victory in the courts, but ultimately WABA's suit was thrown out.

WABA also proposed that a railroad track that loops around the District from Silver Spring to Georgetown be converted into a bicycle trail. "This right of way presents a fabulous bicycle resource for D.C. and Montgomery County," Harnik said in Ride On! WABA helped form the Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail, which carried on the fight.

The new District Bicycle law took effect slowly. But by the end of the summer of 1985, members were appointed to the Bicycle Advisory Council. Keenan applied through her Councilmember to be on the Council. However, much to her surprise, she discovered that the chairperson of the Council was appointed by the chairperson of the Environment and Public Works Committee, who was Keenan's Councilmember. Keenan thus found herself in the potentially conflicting role of the WABA staff as well as chair of the Council.

"It was very awkward," she said. "Fortunately for this personal dilemma, the Bicycle Advisory Council and WABA have never taken widely divergent positions on issues." When Keenan later became a WABA board member, she felt necessary to abstain on some WABA votes.

It took longer for the position of D.C. Bicycle Coordinator to be filled. But finally, in early 1986, an old Washington friend, Tom Pendleton, was hired. Eventually, the other two staff positions were filled, giving the District what may be the largest staff of any city bicycle program office in the country.

WABA Virginia members increased activity. New Virginia activists were Bill Silverman and Charlie Martin. Also, Harnik and Maxwell moved to Virginia, joining oldtimers such as the Swarts. WABA formed an Arlington Task Force to evaluate Arlington's second Ten Year Plan for the period 1985-1995. Silverman, a computer expert at the World Bank who emerged as a star Virginia activist, was elected to the Board at the end of 1984. Two years later, at the age of 26, he was elected the youngest WABA President.

In early 1985, the long awaited revision of the Greater Washington Area Bicycle Atlas was published. Edited by Ken Moskowitz and again jointly published by WABA and AYH, the third edition was a complete rewrite of the earlier editions. It also contained an expanded section on bicycle organizations and services in the Washington area. Within two years, the Atlas was sold out, and a new third edition, revised by Sharon Gang, was published in 1987.

After five years of inactivity, the Council of Governments (COG) bicycle subcommittee was revived, in part due to Keenan's urging. This ongoing forum to exchange information among area bicycle coordinators was one more step forward for promoting bicycles.

In August 1987, Keenan stepped down as Director of WABA to enroll in the graduate program in Urban and Regional Planning at George Washington University, studying for a masters degree. She, too, had broken a WABA record for longevity by staying more than three years. Her replacement was Lisa Gurney, who has extensive experience both volunteering and working with volunteers. Gurney has a B.A. in Public Management from George Mason University and is working on her Master's Degree in General Administration at the University of Maryland. The transition was smooth and planned. Keenan continued as a Board member by serving as Treasurer.

To celebrate the 15th anniversary of WABA, a Gala Banquet was coordinated by, not surprisingly, Peter Harnik. Harnik had served on the Board every year since he was first elected in 1979, mostly as Vice President. He had always been the principal organizer of WABA's grander events.

According to Keenan, "Of all the people I know in WABA, one of Peter's greatest abilities is to make suggestions or steer things in a certain direction based on his knowledge and interest without antagonizing people. He's able to do that at the same time. If things get really intransigent, he knows when to start banging the pots and calling people to action."

Even if WABA should disappear, its effects would still be felt by virtually all bicycle riders who used the streets, the bridges, and public transportation systems. Even more important, because WABA has made public officials so conscience of bicyclists' concerns, improvements would still be made. The COG Regional Bikeways Technical Subcommittee now includes twenty-two members who are state or local government officials government who spend time on bicycle issues. Not only did WABA have a hand in creating the committee; it had a hand in creating much of its membership.

Bill Wilkinson, an early member of WABA who has worked on bicycle issues in the Washington area since 1969, looked back on WABA's fifteen years. "It got out there and was part of the new age of cycling in the front end. But what WABA and other organizations and individuals have done is to take that early initiative and institutionalize it, and over time and by dint of perseverance, make something out of it."

VII. The final stretch (1988-1992)

WABA's 15th anniversary year, 1987, began a new era. The organization was strong and solvent, it had a competent and outspoken Director in Lisa Gurney, a dedicated and experienced Board, and the longevity in the community to be a respected voice in regional transportation planning.

WABA also had a new address. Leaving Southeast D.C., WABA sublet a room from the National Parks and Conservation Association (NPCA) at 1015 31st Street, N.W., in Georgetown.

The new office was definitely a move "uptown." NPCA had just constructed the building, which was equipped with Kastle Cards and motion detectors. Co-tenants in the building included the upscale dating service Great Expectations, as well as the haughty (but now-defunct) Dossier Magazine. While a bit far from a Metro stop, the office was very convenient for the many Virginia commuters who used Key Bridge.

WABA's Arlington activists continued their string of successes. Arlington County set up a 24-hour bicycle facility hotline to report hazards on the county's bike paths, agreed to widen the planned (and long-awaited) Bluemont Trail to 12 feet, began construction of the bicycle bridge from Rosslyn Circle over the George Washington Memorial Parkway to Theodore Roosevelt Island, increased bicycle parking at the East Falls Church Metro stop (the most popular bicycle destination on the Metrorail system), and improved bicycle access to National Airport.

While Arlington was the home and focus of many active members, Charlie Martin emerged as the spiritual leader in Arlington affairs, combining quiet competence, keen political intuition, and unstoppable dedication. Martin was a physicist by training and a bicycle advocate through and through. He had a gift for using WABA's resources to advance the agenda for Arlington's bicyclists. "Charlie remains one of the most influential non-Board members in WABA's history," said

President Bill Silverman. "He had an uncanny ability to address major bicycle facilities and planning issues in the County while remaining valuable to and respected by County staff and politicians. He never got anyone angry, or left anyone with the impression that our demands were unreasonable. 'Honey tastes better than vinegar,' he once told me, and that lesson served me and WABA well."

Elsewhere in Virginia, WABA waged a protracted but successful battle with the City of Alexandria after officials installed barrier gates on the Mount Vernon Trail at the Porto Vecchio condominiums. Pressure by WABA eventually resulted in a summit meeting between WABA, Porto Vecchio residents, and Mayor James P. Moran. The gates were quietly removed in 1989 as part of a WABA-suggested engineering solution to the problems of the intersection. Moran would later prove to be a valuable proponent of bicycling after becoming elected to the House of Representatives from Virginia's eighth district in 1990.

Creation of the Capital Crescent Trail from Silver Spring to Georgetown remained WABA's highest priority. A founding member of the Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail, WABA co-sponsored a hike and rally, and successfully pressed Montgomery County to rewrite its initially weak assessment of projected trail use in the corridor. In December 1987, National Park Service Director William Penn Mott led a second hike and declared his strong enthusiasm for the trail.

WABA President Bill Silverman embarked on a campaign to compel advertisers who use bicycling themes to show riders wearing helmets. Silverman wrote to advertising associations, syndicated newspaper columns, national magazines, and Fortune 500 firms such as Chrysler, Stanley Tools, Sears, and MCI.

The WABA Annual Meeting in 1987 featured Washington Post transportation writer Dr. Gridlock (Deputy Metro Editor Ron Shaffer). Awards were given to Hank Hulme, Arlington County Director of Public Works; D.C. Bicycle Coordinator Tom Pendleton, the D.C. Department of Recreation, the Bottle Bill Initiative Campaign, outdoor store Recreational Equipment, Inc., of College Park, and former U.S. EPA bicycle coordinator Dianne Rowe.

1988 was also a year of major new facilities, critical advocacy victories, effective helmet safety promotion, and unprecedented government and press relations. In June, Arlington County dedicated the Pedestrian/Bicycle Bridge over the George Washington Memorial Parkway from Rosslyn Circle to Theodore Roosevelt Island. In November, the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority paved the W&OD Trail from Leesburg to Purcellville in Loudoun County. And in December, the National Park Service opened a 1.6-mile extension of the Mount Vernon Trail from Memorial Bridge north to the new bicycle bridge. The Rosslyn bridge and Mount Vernon Trail extension in particular were critical to the regional trail network, linking two of Northern Virginia's most strategically placed bicycle facilities. Now, bicycle commuters bound for Washington's central business

district and Foggy Bottom areas could use the Roosevelt Bridge or Memorial Bridge and the Mall to avoid Key Bridge and busy Georgetown.

In Montgomery County, the first hurdle to establish the Capital Crescent Trail was crossed in December when the County Council approved purchasing the right-of-way by a 7-0 vote.

In 1987, National Park Service began a study of the region's trails on NPS land. Badly understaffed and eager for citizen input, NPS approached WABA for help. In July 1988, WABA submitted to the National Park Service a lengthy report entitled National Capital Region Bicycle Trails: Evaluation and Recommendations. Compiled by Board members Kevin Hein, Sharon Gang, Bert Glenn and many other volunteers, this report recommended site-specific improvements to all existing NPS trails and proposed that NPS create new trails and connections. The report was a major reference for the regional internal NPS study, which was published in 1990 and still dictates priorities for NPS trail improvements.

In Arlington, the Bluemont Trail opened in August 1988. Built on an abandoned railroad right-of-way, this trail was the first to conform to Arlington's new 12-foot trail width standard, which was negotiated by Charlie Martin.

WABA sharpened its advocacy strength by creating the Bicyclist Alert. A brainchild of Peter Harnik, Alerts were sent to members based on zip code or inserted in Ride On! The Alert contained specific information about impending decisions by local governments or businesses that affected bicycling. The Alert then gave detailed instructions on what members who lived in that area could do to influence the decisions. WABA used the Alert six times in 1988 (including a special one on the Capital Crescent Trail sent to Montgomery and Prince Georges County members only) with five successes:

A February Alert concerned the proposed reconstruction of National Airport. As a result, WABA obtained promises of airport bicycle parking, uninterrupted access to the

Mount Vernon Trail, and separated grade crossings of the Mount Vernon Trail at airport access roads. Governor Linwood Holton, Chairman of the Washington Metropolitan Airports Authority, stated that the bicyclists were the group that most effectively made their wishes known, exceeding even the anti-noise lobby.

The Montgomery County Inter-County Connector (ICC) Alert also produced many supporting letters, but was deflected by Maryland DOT on the grounds that Montgomery County had not included the ICC as a bicycle facility in its Master Transportation Plan. This was one of the few failures of the Bicyclist Alert.

The Taft Bridge Alert was instrumental in obtaining sidewalks significantly wider than originally planned.

The Union Station Alert was one weapon used in a protracted battle led by Linda Keenan and David Albright for secure and convenient bicycle parking at the

renovated facility. With the welcome but unexpected help of Senator Robert T. Stafford (R-Vermont), ranking minority member of the Senate Committee on the Environment and Public Works, the developers agreed to many of WABA's demands. On December 29, Union Station installed high-security Rack HI devices. The Porto Vecchio Alert, mailed in December, targeted the Alexandria's installation of barrier gates on the Mount Vernon Trail.

WABA handled issues in nearly all local jurisdictions concerning the entire spectrum of bicycling. Among them were removal of a tree (which literally bore scars of bicycle accidents) from the middle of the Route 110 bike path near Arlington Cemetery; persuading Sovran Bank to open its drive-through windows to bicyclists; persuading the manager of the Pavilion at the Old Post Office to consider secure employee bicycle parking; persuading the Architect of the Capitol to install ribbon racks on the House side of the Capitol; asking Virginia DOT to consider paving shoulders on all new and reconstructed roads; and persuading Metro to increase the amount of bicycle parking facilities at many Northern Virginia stations.

WABA director Lisa Gurney left WABA to join a firm specializing in constructing embassies for the U.S. Department of State. Gurney's tenure, though relatively short, was extremely important to WABA. "She was unbelievably organized," remembered President Bill Silverman. "Everything important could be reached from her desk. To Lisa, the computer was a time-saver, not a word processor, and on Lisa's watch, WABA's office management support systems began to evolve from simply keeping track of members to increasing the Director's productivity." Gurney was temporarily replaced by April Moore, a former Board member who was four months pregnant yet still commuting by bicycle from Takoma Park to the Georgetown office. A few months later, WABA hired Jim Peck as the new Director.

The 1988 Annual Meeting took place in November. Peter Nye, author of *Hearts of Lions*, a history of bicycle racing in the United States, was the keynote speaker. Awards were given to Ritch Viola, Arlington County Bicycle Coordinator; Chris Brown, Chairman of the Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail; James Wilding, General Manager of the Washington Metropolitan Airports Authority; George M. White, Architect of the Capitol; John Byrne, Superintendent of the George Washington Memorial Parkway; and Randy Howes and Bob Lewis from Metro. A special award went to Peter Harnik, who retired from the WABA Board after nine years of service, including one year as President and most of the others as Vice President.

Some years earlier, Linda Keenan observed that Harnik's contributions to WABA were extraordinary. At the time he left the board, her remarks were still relevant: "Of all the people I know in WABA, one of Peter's greatest abilities is to make suggestions or steer things in a certain direction based on his knowledge and

interest without antagonizing people. He's able to do that at the same time. If things get really intransigent, he knows when to start banging the pots and calling people to action."

The Eighties ended with a banner year for bicycling.

In Maryland, the Capital Crescent Trail inched ever closer to reality in October 1989 when Congress approved a \$4 million line-item appropriation for the federal purchase of the D.C. portion. In Virginia, WABA spearheaded an effort to include a bicycle overpass for the W&OD Trail at West Broad Street in the City of Falls Church. (During the 1989 legislative session in Richmond, the General Assembly appropriated \$200,000 for the bridge, matching \$200,000 raised from the City and the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority.)

In the District, the proposed Metropolitan Branch Trail (MBT) led the year's news. CSX Corporation tore out several railroad tracks on its Metropolitan Branch Line in preparation for real estate development. (The B&O Railroad—now CSX—built the Metropolitan Branch in the 1870s; it was the Metropolitan Branch that gave B&O the dome on its distinctive logo.) In a September 24, 1989, Washington Post op-ed piece, WABA member Pat Hare pointed out that a rails-to-trails conversion was viable from the Brookland/Catholic University Metro station south to near Union Station, and possibly north to Fort Totten. Grade separation already existed at most intersections including Florida, Rhode Island and New York Avenues, N.E. North of Fort Totten, nearly all the property to the Takoma Park border was under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service, making possible a Takoma-to-Capitol Hill off-street bicycle/pedestrian path. The Post also provided excellent press coverage in a detailed article in the "D.C. Weekly" section on November 23. At the end of the year, with the enthusiastic support of Reverend William Byron, President of Catholic University, WABA convened the first community meeting to establish the MBT in November 1989. The Metropolitan Branch Trail remained a priority in 1990. WABA founded the Coalition for the Metropolitan Branch Trail, which immediately began work to make the Metropolitan Branch Trail a reality.

In Montgomery County, WABA suffered a setback when the Maryland Department of Transportation deleted from the capital budget a \$550,000 project to improve bicycle access to and bicycle parking at several Red Line Metro stations. A Bicyclist Alert generated some protest mail, and WABA received excellent coverage in the Montgomery Journal. However, in the end, the transportation department prevailed. (WABA had worked hard to get this project funded beginning in 1985.)

In June 1989, the Council of Governments (COG) released a study evaluating measures that would influence non-automotive access to Metrorail in Virginia. The accompanying survey suggested that one in seven Metrorail commuters living within three miles of Orange Line Metro stations were potential bike-to-

Metro candidates. The report generated considerable press. (WABA had long used the previously unpublished survey results in arguments for better bicycle access to Metro.)

In October, WABA became closely involved in what was to become one of the most important and visible bicycling issues of the 1990s and beyond: placing bicycle lanes across the Potomac River on the Woodrow Wilson Bridge. Due to a persistent WABA advocacy effort, spearheaded by Arlington County activist John Gable, the Wilson Bridge Reconstruction Project design specifications incorporated a requirement for a bicycle/pedestrian lane. In November at the first public hearings on the project, WABA led the chorus of groups and individuals that testified in support of such a bicycle facility.

In March 1989, WABA hired Aron Livingston, a Lawrence University graduate working as a legal assistant at Arnold & Porter. Livingston quickly proved to be a dedicated and tireless worker, an articulate spokesperson, a talented writer and a spirited organizer. Livingston was also a skilled and devoted bicyclist, and had never owned a car.

"Aron really believed in our cause—he lived his life around his cycling habits. He not only biked to work—he biked on his vacations. He was an inspiration to our members," said WABA board member Sharon Gang. Livingston was also very computer-literate, and specified dozens of improvements to WABA's systems, procedures and recordkeeping.

The WABA Office grew into a whirlwind of activity. WABA upgraded its computer hardware in June. Ride On! underwent several editorial changes during the year but stabilized when Ginny Morton became editor in March. Board member and desktop publishing expert Todd Wallace became editor after Morton gave birth to a baby boy.

In many ways, it was the little things that kept WABA at the forefront in our communities in 1989:

WABA wrote to Rack III and Kryptonite concerning deficiencies in bicycle security devices. WABA wrote to Landmark Apartments, Union Station, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Kennedy Center, and Alexandria about bicycle parking. WABA successfully urged the Washington Post to move a newspaper box off of a bike path. WABA wrote to Montgomery County, the Maryland National Capital Parks and Planning Commission, and the Virginia Department of Transportation about bicycle lanes and paved shoulders. WABA wrote to MARC and Virginia Railway Express about providing bicycle parking at commuter rail stations. WABA also asked for bicycle storage facilities on commuter rail cars.

WABA wrote to the Park Service about the unfinished Crystal City Connector. Representatives of WABA were well received when Representative Frank R. Wolf (R-Va.) met on this and other bicycling matters. WABA commented on the Metroview project in New Carrollton (Prince George's County), the D.C. Courier bill, and dozens of other public works, legislation and community projects. WABA even went national, supporting a national bottle bill and a New York City law requiring helmet use for young children in bike seats.

The issue of traffic congestion in Northern Virginia was a dominant political topic in 1989. When Virginia Governor Gerald Baliles convened a far-reaching citizen- and municipality-oriented transportation policy initiative called the "Northern Virginia Sub-Regional Transportation Task Force," WABA jumped in to participate. At first, the Task Force made no mention of any form of transportation except the omnipresent automobile. But after several meetings attended by WABA member John Gable, the Task Force began to include bicycle and pedestrian access in its deliberations. WABA's work here also had a dramatic impact at the Wilson Bridge hearings.

At the end of 1989, WABA advocate Peter Harnik and Potomac Pedalers Touring Club (PPTC) Legislative Committee Chairman Chuck Montange initiated a far-reaching program to obtain a multi-year Congressional appropriation to the National Park Service for bicycle facilities in the National Capital Region. This proposed \$1.5 million appropriation included funds for completing the Crystal City Connector, building the Fort Circle Trail system, renovating the Porter Street bridge in Rock Creek and the Canal Road bridge for the Capital Crescent Trail, and widening the Rock Creek Trail and the Mount Vernon Trail. WABA President Bill Silverman testified before the House Appropriations Committee's Subcommittee on the Interior on March 7, 1990. The House-passed Appropriations Bill ended up funding \$600,000 of WABA's request. At WABA's request, the entire House and Senate regional delegation signed "Dear Colleague" letters to House and Senate members supporting the appropriation.

In December 1988, WABA formed the Bicycle Helmet Safety Institute (BHSI) under the directorship of Randy Swart with technical advice from Ron Brown and fundraising support from Susan Matson. BHSI had a busy first year looking for space and funding while compiling helmet literature and investigating testing facilities. Swart and Brown represented WABA at a meeting of the ANSI 290.4 Standards Committee in New York which was developing a revised and tougher bicycle helmet standard. BHSI established a Documentation Center and sent pounds of information on helmets to the press, students, researchers, and government officials. BHSI began regular quarterly publication of the WABA Helmet Update and more than tripled its mailing list. BHSI's Consumer's Guide to Bicycle Helmets pamphlet was updated and widely circulated.

Several major planning documents were published in 1990. Most notably, the National Park Service's Paved Recreation Trails of the National Capital Region

and the Council of Government's Bicycle Element for the regional Transportation Plan both provide blueprints for the incorporation of bicycling into transportation decision-making throughout the 1990s. Already these two documents have had a tremendous impact locally, regionally, and at the federal level with regard to transportation issues and bicycling.

WABA's Capital Motion Bike-a-Thon continued, still with co-sponsor American Cancer Society. Under the leadership of Sharon Gang and Aron Livingston, the 1990 event brought in \$17,000 for WABA (from 250 riders) despite torrential rain.

Earth Day 1990 was a tremendous event. WABA's Bike-to-Work Day had over 1200 participants including four U.S. Representatives.

Also in 1990, WABA members founded Friends of the W&OD Trail, an independent fundraising organization dedicated to financing improvements to the W&OD Trail. The Friends immediately began raising money from trail users to complete the proposed West Broad Street overpass in the City of Falls Church.

In August 1990, WABA Director Aron Livingston took a bicycle vacation in northern California. There, he met an old girlfriend, and within a week returned to Washington, packed up, and moved west to be with her. He then became a transportation consultant in Sacramento.

Livingston's legacy of excellence and dedication continued when WABA hired Bonnie Nevel as his successor. Bonnie's background and credentials were almost perfect. Nevel had joined WABA from the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, where she had worked for several years for Peter Harnik. A forestry major from University of Michigan, Nevel brought strong skills to WABA, including computer science, writing and dedicated environmental activism. She also was a leading volunteer for WABA's successful Earth Day Bike-to-Work Day and Bike-a-Thon. And, while Livingston had never owned a car, Nevel didn't even have a driver's license!

"Bonnie was fascinated with efficiency," said President Bill Silverman. "As much as Aron improved our systems, Bonnie went further. She used to time tasks performed several different ways before specifying how she wanted me to improve the membership program." Nevel upgraded WABA's computer systems again, adding a state-of-the-art laser printer and a modem to facilitate compilation of the newsletter and dissemination of draft documents.

In September 1990, the Pro Bike Conference of the Bicycle Federation—a biannual international symposium on bicycle transportation—came to Washington for the first time. WABA cosponsored Pro Bike, and was proud to welcome the world's bicycle professionals to its back yard.

The 1990 WABA Annual Meeting featured a keynote address by David Burwell,

President of the Rails to Trails Conservancy. Awards went to the City of Rockville Police Bicycle Patrol, the Council of Governments Bicycle Technical Subcommittee, D.C. Councilmember Betty Ann Kane (an energetic supporter of bicycling in general and the Metropolitan Branch Trail in specific), the National Capital Region of the National Park Service, the Warner Corporation (whose Reston store has provided a public water fountain to literally millions of thirsty W&OD Trail users), and WCXR-FM, sponsor of Capital Motion Bike-a-Thons and WABA's successful 1990 Bike-to-Work Day.

From bicycle lockers at the Dupont Circle Metro station to the Master Plan in the North Bethesda and Garrett Park portions of Montgomery County to the widening of North Quincy Street in Arlington to the Sligo Creek Park trail in Prince Georges County, WABA got the facts, marshalled its membership, and made a difference in 1991. WABA petitioned Congress to appropriate \$1.63 million for improvements to bicycle facilities administered by the National Capital Region of the National Park Service; Congress approved \$600,000.

In the District, the Coalition for the Metropolitan Branch Trail began a string of successes with a \$1.5 million Congressional appropriation to begin right-of-way acquisition. Betty Ann Kane, formerly a D.C. Councilmember, joined the Coalition as an unpaid Executive Director.

1991 began with yet another move—this time from the 10th floor to the 6th floor of 1819 H Street NW. At least WABA didn't have to change the phone number!

While Todd Wallace stepped down from the WABA Board in 1991, he continued his able editing and typesetting of Ride On!. WABA's automated bulk mail system improved, even after the Postal Service completely rewrote its third class mail regulations. Ride On! never suffered from low content; most issues in 1991 numbered six or eight pages.

WABA membership grew slightly in 1991. WABA's two-year membership, pioneered in late 1990, proved to be quite popular and reduced administrative expenses.

After back-to-back rain-soaked Bike-a-Thons in 1989 and 1990, the 1991 event took place on a glorious fall day. While the day was successful, the WABA Board voted in December to sever ties with its longtime co-beneficiary, the American Cancer Society.

WABA testified before: the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments on bicycle safety, bicycle planning and land use; Arlington County concerning the extension of North Quincy Street and development of the Twin Bridges Marriott site plan; Montgomery County concerning trails and parks; the D.C. Zoning Commission concerning proposed rezoning for a "Living Downtown"; the Maryland legislature concerning Maryland's Greenways program; D.C. Council

on the Capital Crescent Trail; and many more governing bodies. WABA also wrote hundreds of letters on dozens of subjects, including charges for checking bicycles onto airplanes; bike parking at the U.S. Department of Agriculture; showers at day care centers to be built on Metro land; bike access through the new Kennedy Center parking lot; hunting along the Potomac near the Mount Vernon Trail; safety improvements to the W&OD Trail; shoulders on all reconstructed and new Maryland roads; establishing a trail in the Dulles Toll Road corridor; bridging Route 7 on the W&OD Trail in Falls Church; proposed improvements to the Bike-on-Metro program; the planned massive "Potomac Yards" development in Alexandria and Arlington; area commuter railroads concerning Bike-to-Commuter Rail and Bike-on-Commuter Rail issues; and much more.

WABA's 20th year, 1992, proved to be a remarkable one. Two major facilities—jewels in the WABA crown—opened. In May, the National Park Service dedicated the Crystal City Connector, ending years of planning, arguing, and procrastination. More than \$500,000 in federal funds—obtained by WABA—paid for the completion of a .2-mile connector from the Mount Vernon Trail through a George Washington Memorial Parkway underpass to the concrete tunnel built when Crystal City was first developed in the late 1970s. At last, Crystal City, National Airport and the Mount Vernon Trail were connected. As an extra bonus, the Virginia Railway Express commuter rail station was conceived, planned and built 30 yards from the Connector during the decade the Connector tunnel remained sealed.

At 11:00 a.m. on Saturday, October 3, 1992, the W&OD Trail's worst at-grade separation was eliminated when the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority dedicated a \$1 million bridge over West Broad Street.

At the same time in the District, officials broke ground on the construction of the Capital Crescent Trail. Both events occurred in celebration of National Rail-Trail Day. The W&OD Trail bridge played a prominent role in late October when WABA sponsored a two-wheeled tour of Northern Virginia bicycle facilities (complete with bicycle-mounted police escort from Arlington County) for transportation and planning officials from Prince Georges County. The tour resulted in a dramatic change in views about bicycle transportation on the part of the Prince Georges officials present.

Late in the year, District officials began the contracting process to develop detailed engineering diagrams for the Metropolitan Branch Trail.

In the office, Nevel resigned to circumnavigate the Earth, mostly by bicycle. She will attend graduate school in wetlands ecology beginning in September 1993. Bonnie was replaced by Ellen Jones, a former Board member and Bike-a-Thon Coordinator. Jones and her husband Jim McCarthy also do not own a car, following the rich tradition of most of the WABA directors. They have two small

children who refer to the family bicycle trailer as "the station wagon."

The year—and WABA's second decade—ended with an emotional Annual Meeting as Bill Silverman stepped down from the WABA Presidency after six consecutive years. Silverman was succeeded by Linda Keenan, who since 1982 had held every other WABA position on and off the Board including Director, Secretary, Treasurer, and Vice-President. Award recipients included Recycle Bicycles, the Metropolitan Police Department Bicycle Patrol, MARC, Maryland Department of Transportation, Maryland Delegate James Rosapepe, the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority and American Management Systems, Inc.

"WABA is an incredible organization," reflected Silverman. "It is surprisingly diverse, extremely efficient, very organized and wonderfully righteous. By focussing attention and money on fundamental changes in transportation infrastructure and planning, WABA has changed the landscape and mindset of the region for the better. We've made our communities more livable, our air more breathable, and our economies more viable. Fifty years from now, historians will look back upon our first 20 years, and call us prophets."