

CB-less in Seattle

By Mark Caldwell

Group riding in GWRRA has many benefits. You have a built-in pack of friends to enjoy the ride with (and reminisce about it later). Riding in a group can be safer, due to greater visibility, advance warnings of road hazards, and knowing that if something goes wrong, there are others who can help make them right. You can develop closer friendships with the others on the ride simply through shared experiences. And last, but certainly not least, there is the fun of great conversations over a shared meal on the road. But did you know that some people feel all alone, even when they are in a group? I had a taste of this the first few times I was riding in a group in GWRRA, because I was CB-less in Seattle.

I had never ridden with a group before I joined GWRRA. When I first heard about it, I thought it sounded like a lot of fun, and looked forward to my first ride. I did not have a working CB radio setup on my bike, but I was assured by other members that it would not be a problem because GWRRA teaches a set of basic hand-signals so I would know what was going on. I went on a couple of group rides with this arrangement, and it was true that I was able to keep up with the group, but there certainly were awkward moments, such as when the entire group is making a lane change from back-to-front, and I was the only one hanging out in the old lane. There also was a strange feeling of being in the group, but not part of the group when we made rest stops, and realizing that I really had no input on when or where we stopped. I enjoyed the rides and scenery, but felt that I was missing out on part of the experience by not being connected to the group via CB radio. And sure enough, when I bought a new bike and was wired-in, I found that there was a whole new dimension, and enjoyment, to group riding.

So let me encourage you that if you're in a group riding situation where one or more persons does not have a CB, pay extra attention to how you may help them feel included in the group, and not just a tag-along 5th-wheel. This goes beyond just placing them in the number two position in the group. Remember, they have not heard the conversations that have been going on during the ride. Let them know when you make a rest stop, what the plans are. If you're the lead rider, be sure to use those hand signals, and make an extra effort to communicate your intentions to the CB-less rider. The leader DOES make a difference. Let's keep up the GWRRA tradition of Fun, Safety, and Knowledge by helping every rider get the most fun out of group riding opportunities.