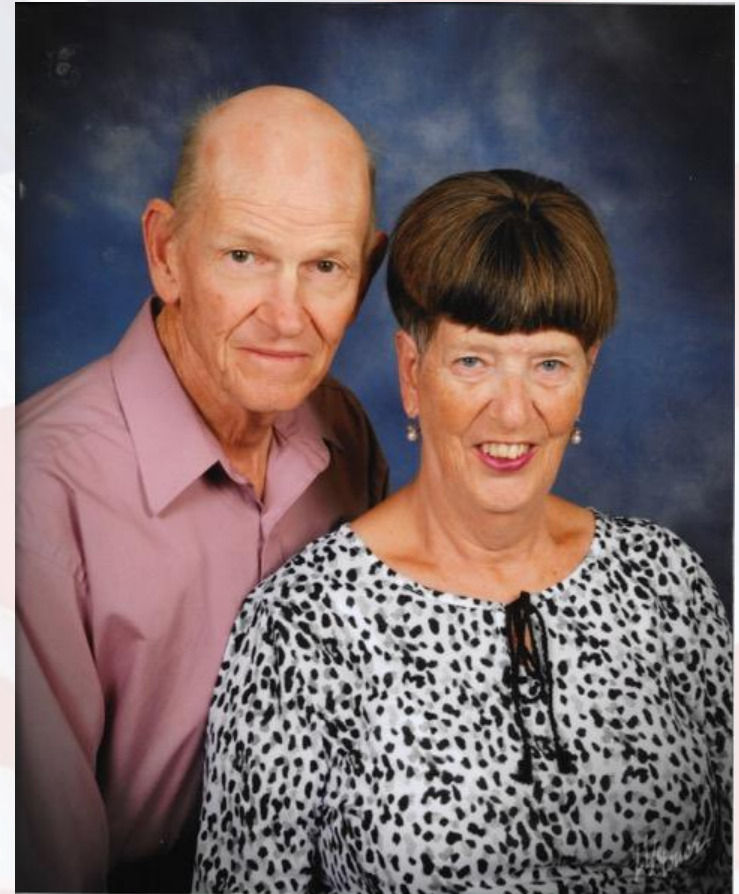


## **“It’s a Beautiful Day for a Bike Ride”**

*A tribute to Bill Lang  
by Shirl Boatman*

The cycling community has lost a great friend and cycling enthusiast with the passing of Bill Lang on his birthday, July 24, 2019. Anyone who knew Bill recognizes the phrase that Bill was known for, “It’s a beautiful day for a bike ride.” From the moment I was first introduced to Bill in 2007 by Steve at the JBC 4<sup>th</sup> of July ride, I saw him as an inspiration. I know many of you have known Bill far longer than me, but the impact he had on each and everyone of us is unparalleled.

This compilation is my attempt to memorialize Bill based with his words, his emails, his photos, and the photos and stories that many of you shared with me for the writing of this article. Thank you to all who contributed photos and stories.



## William R. Lang

July 24, 1948 - July 24, 2019



William (Bill) R. Lang "Map Man" age 71, passed away peacefully at home July 24th in Frankfort, IL. Born in Joliet, IL to the late Ralph C Lang and Alice (Carter) Lang. Loving Husband and Best Friend of Charlotte (Char) Barnwell Lang. Loving father of Tim (Gina), Tami (John) Mattson and Donna Lang and Dave Guerra, Fiancé. Cherished Grandfather to Matt Brandolino, Taylor, Madison and Deric Lang, Alexis and Luke Mattson. Brother of Shirley Hill, and the late Carter Merrill (Osia) Lang, and numerous nieces and nephews. Bill retired from the EJ & E Railroad in 2002 after 37 years of service. Bill was a Decorated Vietnam Veteran, serving from February 1969 - February of 1971.

Bill was an avid cyclist, bicycling over 400,000 recorded miles in his lifetime. Bill was a Founding and Lifetime member of the Joliet Bicycle Club, holding numerous offices and performing many duties for the club. He was also a member of Folks on Spokes and Team McAllen Bicycle Club in McAllen, TX. Bill was a teacher for the Joliet Police Bicycle Patrol, and a certified Effective Cycling Instructor and was always willing to share his experiences and knowledge of bicycling to anyone. He would never leave a cyclist behind, and will always be remembered for his infamous saying, "It's a beautiful day for a bike ride", no matter what the weather was like outside.

Bill and Char wintered in Alamo, TX and was very involved in the activities of the park, volunteering his time and service. He was also on the board of the HCMPO, which provided funds for bicycle and pedestrian projects in Alamo, TX and the surrounding communities.

Bill has requested that mourners wear their favorite cycling jersey both to the wake and the funeral. In lieu of flowers, donations to the Joliet Hospice or their favorite charity will be appreciated.

Visitation will be held at Kurtz Memorial Chapel, 65 Old Frankfort Way, Frankfort IL 60423 on Monday, July 29, 2019 from 3:00p - 8:00pm. Funeral service in the funeral home chapel on Tuesday, July 30, 2019 at 10:00 am. Interment will follow to Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery, Elwood. For information, [www.kurtzmemorialchapel.com](http://www.kurtzmemorialchapel.com) or 815-806-2225. To send flowers to the family of William R. Lang, please visit [Tribute Store](#).

[Click here for Funeral pictures](#)



## Thoughts of Bill Lang

by *Al Sturges*

Bill Lang was an amazing man. Maybe the most amazing thing to me was the way he could be so open about his severe health issues. I remember him joking about the “expiration date” one of his doctors had given him. The date was April the following year, and this was at least five years ago—maybe 10.

Bill was my “Effective Cycling” certification instructor, and he gave me a test with essay questions that took me hours to complete. Later, as the requirements were changed, Bill, Barbara, and I held classes together where the tests were completed in minutes.

Bill once asked me to take him on some of my favorite routes to the east, out of his usual riding territory. After we were almost done, he let me know I hadn’t taken him on any roads that he hadn’t already ridden. I think he knew all the good bike routes in the northern part of Illinois, and many in the southern part.

The first time I rode with Bill, I took some turns in front as it was “the thing to do.” Bill let me know that he wasn’t used to riding behind anyone, and that I didn’t need to do that. I’m sure we rode farther and faster with my just staying in his draft. On that ride, I learned that I wasn’t as focused on my surroundings as Bill. Several times, from in front, he noticed there were cars behind before I was aware of them.

Bill didn’t get much sleep. He used to commute by bike to work from New Lenox Township to his job in Indiana. At the same time, he spent a lot of time with his family and was a township trustee, in addition to doing recreational rides and being active with his bike clubs.

At the time he was doing all this, he was featured in *Bicycling Magazine* as having ridden 10000 miles in a year.

Bill’s politics were pretty much the opposite of mine, and many of those he rode with. This was not a problem as he was always pleasant about it and didn’t push his ideas on others.

Bill was the one who encouraged me that to get an electric-assist bike. He gently got across the idea that an e-bike would let me ride with my usual group, without slowing them down. That advice got me past the idea that an e-bike would be “cheating, and has added at least one year so far to my ability to bike with my friends .

A Folks on Spokes member cycling in Holland asked an old Dutchman he met how long he would keep biking. The answer was, “You ride and then you die.” Bill’s Ride Illinois 2019 mileage total is 3,128 miles; his last ride was just weeks ago.

Most of you are too young to remember the *Reader’s Digest’s* series, “The Most Unforgettable Character I Ever Met.” Bill is mine.

## Life in Vietnam

July 21, 1969 to July 17, 1970

My loving wife, Char, kept all my letters I sent from Vietnam. Now, 47 years later, I am reading my letters I sent her. Char & I were married before going to Vietnam. I dragged her through those tough years of being separated by the war and how horribly we were treated here in the United States, both before and after Vietnam. Here are excerpts from those letters. I have left out the mushy stuff, like “I love you”, “I miss you”, and talk of what we will do upon my arrival back home. I did find one letter in early 1970 where I wrote that if we could not have our own children, we would adopt. So I told our son that he was thought of in 1970 and I have written proof. He was born around June 6, 1973 and he arrived with us on January 8, 1974, direct from Korea.

I arrived in Vietnam on July 21, 1969. I had a few days of orientation and processing and then three days of training before heading on to my unit. This was the rainy season so I got wet almost every day. There were no clean clothes to change into...I just stayed wet and eventually dried out only to get wet again.

On August 1 I was at LZ (Landing Zone) O’Keeth which is nothing more than a mud hole, I wrote. My friend from Wilmington, IL, Leopold, went to a different company. That was the last time I saw him. He was hit and died on Labor Day, 1969. On Aug. 1 I went to the field with 1st. squad 1st. platoon Company B 2/12 Cav., 1st. Air Cav Divn., (AM). Within one hour I after I got off the chopper in the field, action broke out. We fought the VC for one and one-half hours. We suffered one causality; one person was shot in the hand. So we hurriedly left that area and called in air strikes of the area we were in. We did not go back to check on dead gooks.

August 5 we were out of the bush for a few days on a LZ. I carried lumber to build bunkers and filled sand bags for two days. At night I had to go out in front of the LZ with one other person and be on watch for any activity. I got wet. This is the rainy season. Mud and water everywhere.

August 9 we received word that we had cut off 600 NVA (North Vietnamese Army) soldiers that are trying to get back to Cambodia. The gunships spotted them and opened fire. Word was that they killed 100 of them. Intelligence reported 50 to 75 gooks (NVA) were headed our way. We were on alert however they never made it to our LZ, until August 12 that is. The gooks attacked us around 230 am with mortar rounds. At daybreak we headed out around the LZ to see what we could find and go up the side of a hill looking for gooks. We did find a bunker but that was it. It was well camouflaged.

On Aug. 16 I wrote: “2 days ago I saw my first dead gook! Not very nice.” I was up near Tay Ninh, in the jungle.



August 17: "My feet are bothering me real bad. I am going to the LZ to see what can be done. Maybe I can get out of the field for good. I sure hope so. The medic here says they are real bad and is sending me in tomorrow. We moved so fast yesterday we left one guy behind all night alone. We found him OK this morning. That is why my feet hurt so bad, because we moved so far so fast. The bugs are bad here. Leeches, ants that love to bite us, termites, fleas, flies, mosquitos, etc."

Aug. 23: "Right now I carry 21 loaded magazines, 1 claymore mine, 4 hand grenades, 10 quarts of water, 9 meals, poncho, blanket, air mattress, 2 trip flares, 4 smoke grenades, camera, starlight scope, 200 rounds of machine gun armor, m-16, writing paper, dry socks and T shirt, towel, razor which I never use, cleaning equipment for the m-16, bug juice, oil for m-16, a small bible, notebook and a pen." That is a three-day supply of food and water. It was hard humping through the jungle. We would have to wait for the point men to cut a path through the jungle with their machetes. The vines would get tangled up on our packs; some vegetation had thorns that would cut us. Cuts do not heal. They become jungle rot if not taken care of. If I wait five days to treat the cut then it would take another five days to clear up. Our medic carried ointments that could be applied to the cut. Mainly mercurochrome. Or take a leech and put it on the sore and let the leech suck out the pus. The jungle rot would clear up after that. We would hump between 1/3 mile and one mile each day. It would take us all day to cover that much ground. At night we set up ambushes on trails. It has been some time since our last contact with the enemy.

Aug. 29: "We got a new Sgt. in our platoon. He is a lifer (one that makes the Army his career) and has 12 years of service. He is also fat. Yesterday he had to find a log to sit on so he could take a crap. Then he starts screaming for toilet paper because he used up his one roll and still needed more. Last night one could hear him snore all over the perimeter. When he is awake, he is always telling others to be quiet. He is a Korean War Veteran. He asked to be over here. He has a lot to learn."

Every third day we would have clear a place for a chopper to land to bring us supplies. Water, food, mail, ammo, a hot meal in empty artillery casings.

On Sept. 1 I was made squad RTO. My squad leader got tired of having a new RTO so often that he decided to make me RTO, soldier that had a long time left in Vietnam. Before the RTO was an experienced soldier that was nearing time for him to leave the field. Now I carry a radio and batteries for it and I no longer carry machine gun ammo. I was good with the radio and quickly moved up the ranks to where I was battalion commander's radio operator before I left Vietnam.

Sept. 2: "I have only 321 days until I leave this country for good. I can't wait to be back with you." "July 20, 1970". "So we can continue our lives where we left off."

Sept. 3: "Yesterday we jumped out of a chopper into chest deep water! The grass was also chest deep. It was that hard to get out of. Everything got wet."

Sept 4: Well, 2 days ago we had a combat assault; I was next to our CO on the first bird. He jumped first, and all I saw was a steel pot. I was scared. What happened, he fell. The water was chest deep. I jumped second and fell. I sure had a hard time getting on my feet again. The grass was as high as the water was deep. Sure was hard moving. We had about 100 to 200 feet before we reached dry ground. We were lucky that the ground was hard, because if it were muddy we never would have made it. That night sure was cold and wet. Everything got wet. Yesterday it rained all day. We sat around under ponchos and tried to stay dry. Good thing there were no VC(Viet Cong) to shoot at us.”

We have meals called LRP’s. They are freeze-dried packets of food and all we do is add hot water. We would heat the water with C-4. C-4 comes in a 2 pound block. It is like play dough. We could break off a small piece, roll it into a ball and light it with a match. It would burn at a high temperature. C-4 is an explosive. Add a blasting cap or hit it hard and it would explode. We all carried one or two blocks of the stuff. The LRP packets were spaghetti, chicken stew, chicken & rice, beef stew, beef & rice, chili con carney, beef hash, or pork and potatoes. We also had C rations.

Sept. 7: “Today makes 27 days straight in the field. Sure a long time without a shower. I get clean clothes about once a week or so. That sure isn’t often enough. We have been ambushing trails lately. Haven’t gotten anything yet. Well, another Sunday and we are to make another combat assault today. I am worried because each combat assault the water has been deeper.” The only difference between us and the 82nd. Airborne is that we jump without parachutes!

Sept. 9: “Ho Chi Min died and we are under a cease fire.” Well, last night we ambushed a trail anyway.”

Sept. 11: I wrote “I am on LZ Capt. White which is just outside the town of Song Be, on the Song Be River. 13 of us had a small break.” Also the gooks shot down a chopper not far from us. No one hurt. They were able to get the chopper out of the field. So much for cease fire.” For some reason I do not remember this at all.

Sept. 12: I was chosen to represent our company in an honor guard for our battalion commander who was leaving. I got a clean set of clothes, cake and lemon aid. All I had to do was stand around and salute him. Another chopper was shot down this time wounding the door gunner and one other. So much for the cease fire.

I would write about not having any friends because I don’t smoke or drink and I won’t do some pot. When we get a 3-day R & R in country, which happens about every third month, the guys get drunk and high on pot. They have sex on their mind all the time. It is terrible the way some guys talk and act. This is a war. Most of us are here because we were told to be here and too chicken to not refuse to get drafted. When we are on the LZ for a few days out of the field, the lifers harass us continually. Details for this and



that. Go around and pick up paper, dig holes, whatever. This is the other war we fight in Vietnam. As time went on, I did get more comfortable being over here, but really wanted to get out of here. We had the option to receive money each month from our pay. Otherwise they put some of it into savings account and some accrued so eventually when we needed it we could get it. I got \$30 a month. I spent maybe \$2 a month on a cold soda if we were in an area where I could buy it. I didn't have a need for money in the field! As time permits, I will write more from my letters.

**Bill**







*Goodnow Grove 1-1-02*



*Earl, Bill, Bill  
Luka City, IL 1-20-02*

*Bill, Carol, Chuck, Lee  
2-3-02*



*Chuck, Bill, Lee  
2-3-02  
Sag Quarries*



Bill & Taz 4-28-02



Audrey, Lee, Dan, Bill, Carol, Al, Janae, Chuck  
Up's & Down's 5-4-02



Lee, Chuck, Bill, Dan  
8-3-02 Bourbonnais, IL.



Lee, Chuck, Carol, Bill, Roger  
Frankfort, 11-16-02



*It Was a Beautiful Day for a Bike Ride!*

Bill @ Everglades City, FL  
12-29-02



Bill & Dick @ Veterans Park  
St. Peter, FL 12-31-02











**Saturday, March 2, 2013**

The Casa del Valle bicycle club surprised me Friday, March 1 by honoring me for my accomplishment of over 500 miles on my trike for the month of February, 2013.

Normally this would be something that does not qualify for being a major event, but for me, it was an accomplishment. I never ever believed I would be on a bicycle/tricycle pedaling to places again. I thought my cycling would be limited to riding around the park, not getting out on the roads again.

My first fear I had to overcome was riding. I was afraid to ride again. That is one reason I found many excuses why not to purchase a trike. My second fear was riding on the streets with traffic on a slow trike where I had very little acceleration or speed.

I was given the trike by a lady friend who was dying of cancer. She departed the park last spring for the last time, never to return again. She was returning home to Wisconsin to die. She passed away in January, 2013. At first I was reluctant to accept the trike, not knowing whether I could adjust it to fit me. With some help from another friend in the park, we were able to adjust the seat so I could ride the trike. He helped me do some much needed minor maintenance and on November 1, 2012, I started riding the trike. At first, I rode only within the park. I would do some laps. My cruising speed was somewhere around 7 to 8 MPH. Not very fast. Another friend convinced me to ride to breakfast at Felix's located about one half mile from the park. This trip was my first adventure outside the park since January, 2010. I was back on the streets again. As I became stronger, I bicycled further. I cycled 201 miles in November, 2012. I continued to cycle further and was becoming faster. December I cycled 355 miles, and so it went. January was 338 miles, and February, the furthest was 557 miles. I had no goals. I just did it, while exceeding all my expectations. My speeds increased to a cruising speed of 10 to 12 MPH.

The reasons I cycled more was because I enjoyed it, like in the past. The reason I cycled was because of my friends. I could not have done it without their encouragement. Team McAllen Cycling is one group of wonderful people that encouraged me and assisted me in obtaining the proper equipment, such as cleated pedals, lights, and tire repair equipment. My other friends here in Texas also encouraged me and supported me through my trials with the cancer. My friends at Casa del Valle encouraged me by cycling with me to the Friday morning breakfasts. Sure, the furthest place for breakfast is only 4.2 miles away, but for me, that was an accomplishment. Other friends from the park encouraged me to ride with them to different places outside the park. We rode to the avocado orchard, shopping trips, a lunch ride to McAllen, the flea market, and other places. They gave me the "canned air" since it would be very difficult for me to pump up a tire away from home. I realized that after having a flat and my friends had to assist me with making the repair. And others here in the park have given me help and words of encouragement that kept me going. I cannot forget my cycling friend from back in Illinois who not only donated a pair of cleated cycling sandals to me, but also shipped them to me in Texas. I also want to thank my cycling friends in Illinois, who have kept my spirits up and have never forgotten me when I could not ride. Their encouragement has kept me going even when, at times, it seemed that my cycling days were over. I have cycling friends from all over the country that I keep in contact with. They too have provided me with the support and encouragement to keep on going. I am so grateful to all my cycling friends who have returned me to the pleasures of cycling.



My cancer will eventually kill me. Cancer will eventually win the war. However, I believe the cycling has made the battle both more difficult for the cancer, and easier for me physically and mentally.

IT IS A BEAUTIFUL DAY FOR A BIKE/TRIKE RIDE!

BILL





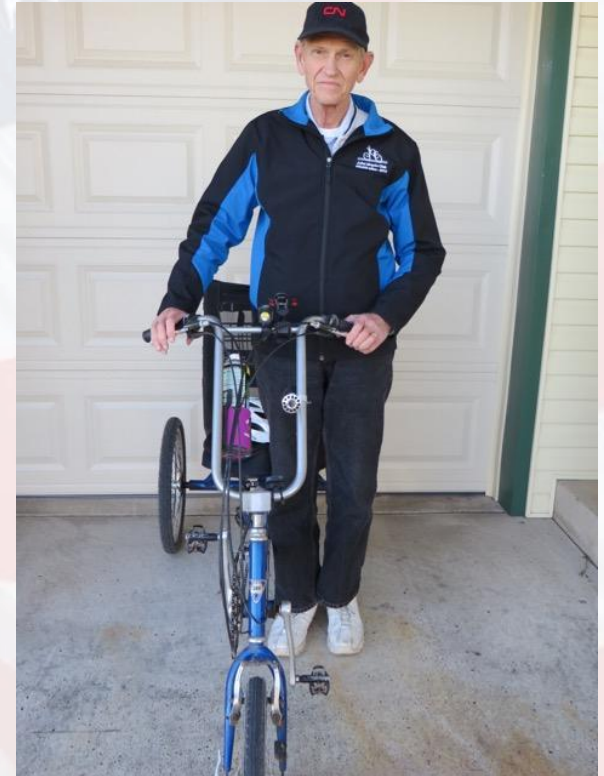








Prior to Bill acquiring a motorized trike, he received a “little help from his friends” with the attached push bar.





## **Come Hear Bill Lang, legendary Chicago cyclist**

### **Life on Wheels – a story of Bill Lang**

Posted by [William Lazarus](#) on August 19, 2013 at 8:41pm in [Bikes and Bicycling](#)

Bill Lang's first bike belonged to his brother, and was way too big. Joliet, 1952. Bill was four years old. His brother owned a 28 inch bike. When Bill climbed on, his feet could not reach the pedals at the bottom of the stroke. To get on, he'd find something to lean the bike against and climb up. As for stopping, "I just had to fall over."

"I did it. If I wanted to ride, that was the only thing available."

Bill, 65, has shown the same spunk throughout his cycling life. For 26 years, Bill rode more than 10,000 miles yearly, topping 14,000 miles some years, despite ongoing struggles first with prostate cancer and then worse.

After prostate surgery, Bill's doctors told him he could not ride a bike for a year. He switched to a recumbent.

In 2006, Bill learned he had multiple myeloma, a blood cancer that destroys bone marrow. A resulting tumor ate three inches of his spine. His doctors nixed back surgery as it was too likely to kill him.

Bill kept riding his recumbent.

By 2010, Bill figured his riding days were over. "I found out I was wrong."

A friend in his winter home in Texas willed her three-wheeler to Bill in 2011. That year, he biked 150 miles, and 648 miles in 2012. But he couldn't transport the trike here to ride in the summer. On his return to Frankfort this May, friends in the Joliet Bike Club and Folks on Spokes presented Bill with another trike. So far this year, Bill is approaching 5,000 miles. He calls the trike his "wheelchair".

Bill keeps daily as well as yearly logs of his distance and speed. Many days are impressive. For instance, Sept. 12, 1987: 145 miles, 19.2 mph average. Sept. 2, 1991: 100 miles, 20.5 mph average.

These days, Bill says, “I’ve got neuropathy up to my waist. Balance is difficult.” Still, “I can ride the trike. I can’t go as fast as I used to. I can’t keep up [with fellow riders]. But I put them to shame by my doing the miles.”

Asked if he would still be alive if he wasn’t such a rider, Bill responds without pause, “No, definitely not.”

Char, his wife of 46 years, agrees. She figures the exercise itself keeps the cancer at bay, and knows it’s good for his mood. “If you are depressed, you aren’t even going to try to fight it.”

Despite that perspective, Char doesn’t join Bill on rides. Bill says they’ve got a pact. He doesn’t ask her to ride, she doesn’t ask him to bowl.

“She’s a hillbilly,” Bill jokes. “Yep, and proud of it,” Char responds.

Bill and Char find strength being themselves. But there are still touchy points, difficult memories for Bill, whose myeloma stems from his exposure to Agent Orange in 1969-1970.

Bill was stationed about 80 miles north of Saigon, near the Cambodian border. He started as an infantryman, at the bottom of the pecking order, and eventually became radio operator to the battalion commander.

For a period he fought in Cambodia, intercepting weapons supplies for the Viet Cong. He was one of about 10,000 American soldiers in Cambodia, and was surprised to hear President Nixon initially deny the United States had any extensive troop involvement in that nation. A few days later, Nixon recanted.

Returning to the United States in the midst of anti-Vietnam fervor was not easy. “I was treated so poorly. Until recently I wouldn’t wear anything that indicated I was in Vietnam.” Like other returning soldiers, Bill felt disgraced. “I threw my medals away.”

Those medals included two bronze stars. Bill kept the paper, but not the metal.



It was standard stuff of war. “We got shot at. They ambushed us. We shot back.” Soldiers were killed, and those remaining were scared, and killed in turn. The Mai Lai massacre, he said, was far from one of a kind.

The business of death had its lighter moments. Bill remembers a commander ordering the dropping of a grenade into a hole. It turned out to be a messy mistake. “We blew up a good outhouse.”

But most of those holes had people in them, including noncombatants. “Why did I get these medals?” He wonders. “Why? Because I killed people. Basically everything you get is because you killed people.”

In 1996, Bill returned to Vietnam, bicycling with a group about 1,200 miles from Hanoi to Saigon. The ride, he recalled, was like biking back roads in Indiana, often smooth and nice, sometimes filled with potholes.

With one exception, Vietnamese were invariably friendly on that return trip. A colonel approached on a motorcycle and pushed one cyclist to the ground. It turned out the colonel was drunk. A general apologized profusely, and at a dinner that night announced that the colonel was being demoted and sent elsewhere because of his behavior.

Throughout his life, Bill has found that biking has opened doors. When he was in high school, he was considered what might be called a nerd. But biking gave Bill a mobility that other kids didn’t have, and eventually other kids, including girls, took interest. His status rose.

For years, Bill taught bicycling classes at the Flossmoor Village Hall. At work, he was a train dispatcher for EJE Railroad in Joliet. The title did not reflect the eventual scope of the job. By the end, he was in charge of operations. His office was the size of a gym. It was big enough to bike in. In fact, on the day of his retirement, he biked around his desk, and out the door forever.

As he talks, Bill tells story after story of adventures big and small. He takes particular pleasure at the memories of generous, friendly people he has met through biking, and of friends who have stuck by him through the worst as well as the best of times. When Char went off to an international shuffleboard tournament, cycling friends dropped by daily to keep him company and make sure everything was okay.

Along with cancer, Bill has sustained a stroke. He has a pacemaker. His incurable myeloma continues. By this time, he says, half of the people who contracted the disease are dead. "If I hang in another three years, I'm getting down to less than one percent survival."

"Will you make it?"

"Yes," Bill replies without a moment's hesitation. "Why not?"







In true Bill Lang humor, he sent an email to his friends on December 19, 2013 from he and Char's Texas winter getaway, "If I were in Chicago right now, this would be me."

The many sides of Bill!







In an email from Bill on April 30, 2014:

Statistics are a measurement of where one has been. They can also be used to boast one's image, and distort the truth.

For me, it is a way to measure my accomplishment. Or should I say, my astonishment!

On May 10, 2011, I underwent a stem cell transplant at Loyola Medical center. I had an exercise bicycle in my hospital room. I did not have the energy nor the balance to climb upon the thing, let alone to pedal it. So it just sat there, out of the way. Upon returning home in early June, 2011, I did a lot of sleeping. Eventually I disposed of all my bicycling stuff including clothing, tools, everything associated with bicycling, and I even gave my bicycle away.

For me, I thought my bicycling days were over.

In November of 2011, a lady let me borrow her trike. You know, the type seniors use. I would ride it around the park in Texas. One to two miles a day. That was all I could do. Any incline was impossible for me to ride up. That was the best I could do. In November of 2012, I inherited a recumbent trike from a lady dying of cancer. I started riding it. Riding it more and more each day. I regained my courage to ride further, and even gained courage to ride out on the roads. I could see the benefits of riding a trike. So much that I received one upon returning to Frankfort on May 1, 2013.

I continued to get stronger. I even purchased and started wearing cycling clothing again. June, 2013 I rode my trike 1162 miles. Just like the old days. But not quite. That took 120 hours, average speed 9.7 MPH. Of course, there was lots of help from my friends pushing me up the hills.

The month of April, 2014, I rode my trike 986 miles. 96 hours. Average speed 10.27 MPH.

June of 2011 I never dreamed I would ever ride any type of cycle again. Let alone the miles like I used to do. To date I have ridden my trike 10657 miles. 18 months of riding. Incredible!

That is the only way I can describe it. Others would say, crazy! I look at what the cycling has done for me, and I do not want to stop. I am afraid of losing what I have accomplished.

Tomorrow will be my last riding day for a while, as Char & I will embark on another adventure, another challenge. I finally have the courage to travel again. And, I hope the strength. Yes, I am scared. I am afraid I will fail. But if I do fail, I can say we tried. If all goes well, we will arrive in Frankfort around June 1.

Bill







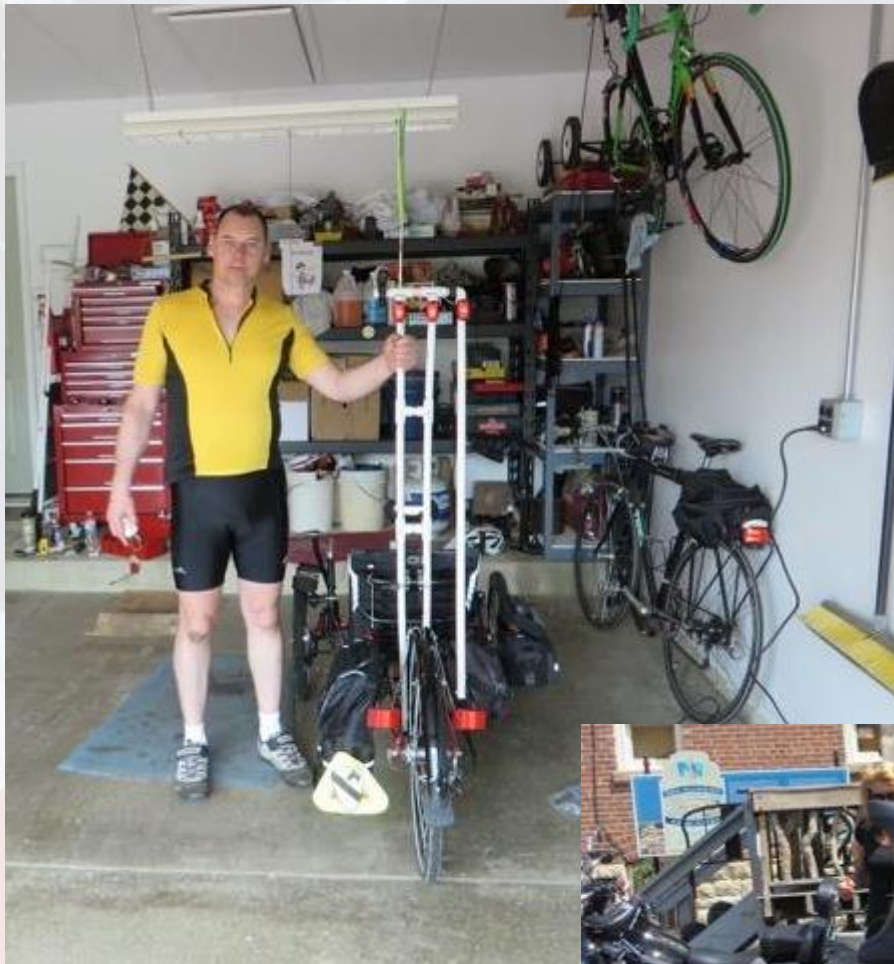












Steve installing "The Periscope" on Bill's new motorized trike.













November 17, 2016 -- Email from Bill - It was the Friday after Thanksgiving of 2008 that I took a group (25) of my friends across the Rio Grande into Diaz Ordaz Mexico for lunch. That was the last time I rode my bicycle into Mexico, until today. I rode my trike from my place to Nuevo Progreso, Tamaulipas, Mexico with my friends Mari and Lou. The weather was a cool upper 60's when we started at 8 am. 2.6 miles from home Mari got a flat tire. She ran a two inch nail into her rear tire. I carry an extra tube so we removed the nail and placed the new tube into the tire and we were on our way. The weather quickly warmed up and the southeast winds increased to when we were headed south at one time only managing to ride 7 MPH! We headed south through Progreso Lakes to the border.

Then we headed east to Progreso and then across the bridge into Nuevo Progreso, Tam, MX.

Nuevo Progreso is a town in Mexico that is where all the Winter Texans go to for their dental work and to purchase medications, and, for some, cheap marguerites. This town is about the only border town that is safe. I rode my trike down the sidewalk past all the shops and vendors. Sometimes it was a tight squeeze, but I made it. Me and my trike were a novelty. Many locals would gather around me and ask questions about the trike.



A 50 mile day for me. We enjoyed our adventure. That strong headwind down was an even stronger tailwind ride back home.

**Bill**













## Falcon Lake State Park Weekend Oct. 27-29, 2017

I love my bicycling. Well, now riding my trike since I can no longer ride two wheels. This past weekend tells the story of why I am so passionate about my cycling. A few of my friends, Mike Padgett, Richard Cavin, Darlene Bough and Pete Davila and I met at Mike's home Friday morning and traveled from McAllen to Falcon Lake State Park, about 75 miles. Mike took his pop-up camper where he and Richard stayed in, Darlene stayed in a premium shelter at the state park, and Pete and I stayed at the Falcon Heights Motel, located about 3 miles from camp. The motel was small yet clean. The cabin was one of the larger rooms and had two beds so I offered Pete the other bed for his services as translator, since the people at the motel spoke very little English. Pete speaks fluent Spanish. Cost \$63.50 per night. Thank you Pete for your services.

After setting up camp Friday, we decided to explore the park via bicycle.

We did not want to leave the park since the cold front had passed while we were in route. Now there was a strong north wind and the temperatures were falling through the seventies. Quite a change since a week earlier the temperatures were flirting with 100 degrees. We cycled about 16 miles that afternoon, goofing off, riding down the boat ramp and back up again, cycling past the picnic area, checking out the rest of the campground and doing a little off roading down near Falcon Lake. Falcon Lake is a reservoir on the Rio Grande River on the border with Mexico. Not much there, basically arid, rolling hills and desert land. No cooking around a campfire. We all headed for Roma and Pizza Hut for dinner. On the way back we were treated by a spectacular sunset as the sun disappeared over the Mexican mountains in the distance, from a high vantage point near Salineno, Texas.

Saturday morning brought brilliant sunshine with moderate northwest winds and temperatures around 40 degrees. Quite cold. Pete and I were thankful that our cozy motel room had heat! We had a breakfast consisting of oranges, bananas, donuts and other junk foods with coffee and hot chocolate for those of us that do not drink coffee.

We were on our bikes (me on my trike) a little past nine. The temperature was closer to 50 degrees now with a northwest wind. We headed northwest into the wind headed for the 33-mile trek to Zapata, TX, up and down the hills. We had to work hard up the hills...and work hard down the hills. We had to pedal downhill because of the wind. But we finally made it to Zapata and time for lunch. Ahh, lunch. Food. And plenty of it.

After lunch we toured Zapata. A dog took to our liking. Especially Pete. Pete had food in his back pack and the dog was interested in his back pack. I had used 60% of my battery to get to Zapata. I was worried that I would not have enough battery to power my motor on the trike for the return trip. But with the brisk tailwind, I flew up and down the hills, I was conservative on the downhills saving battery for just the up hills. That worked. I made the trip back with enough battery to speed past everyone up the eight tenths of a mile hill entering the state park. Total 66 miles for me. Since we had a large lunch we went to Dairy Queen for a snack and ice cream. Again we were treated to a spectacular sunset as the sun set behind the Mexican Mountains.



Sunday morning was colder than Saturday morning. Temperatures in the upper 30's. The good thing was that there was no wind under bright sunny skies. This time we headed south to Roma for a breakfast at McDonalds. Then we toured Roma going to the Roma bluffs over the Rio Grande River. Across the river is Ciudad Miguel Alemán, MX. We headed back to camp. By now there was a slight southeast wind and we were headed northwest out of Roma. And the temperature had warmed enough where I could remove a few layers of clothes. This time I had plenty of battery left so I cranked up the motor and chased the kid. Pete. I could not catch him. However, the eight tenths of a mile climb entering the state park, I placed the motor on the maximum level and headed up the hill, passing everyone. I wanted to be king of the mountain. I did not make it. ONE SECOND. That is all I needed to be king of the mountain. ONE SECOND! I tied Mike's best time of 2.30 minutes, average speed 20.1 MPH, 82 feet of climb, 2% overall grade.

We broke camp, loaded the vehicles and headed home but not until we ate some snacks, said our good-bye's, and then headed out. How can a lot of nothing be so beautiful? Well, this part of Texas is just that. There is something about this area of Texas that continues to draw me back and each time I visit I learn something new.

We were all sad. Sad that the weekend had passed so quickly. We bonded as a group and learned about each other. Pete and I had some good discussions where I was able to learn a few things from this young kid. Thank-you Pete for putting up with this old man. I enjoyed your company. As for Mike, Richard, Darlene, thank you for making this a most memorial trip. It was a beautiful weekend for a bike trip.







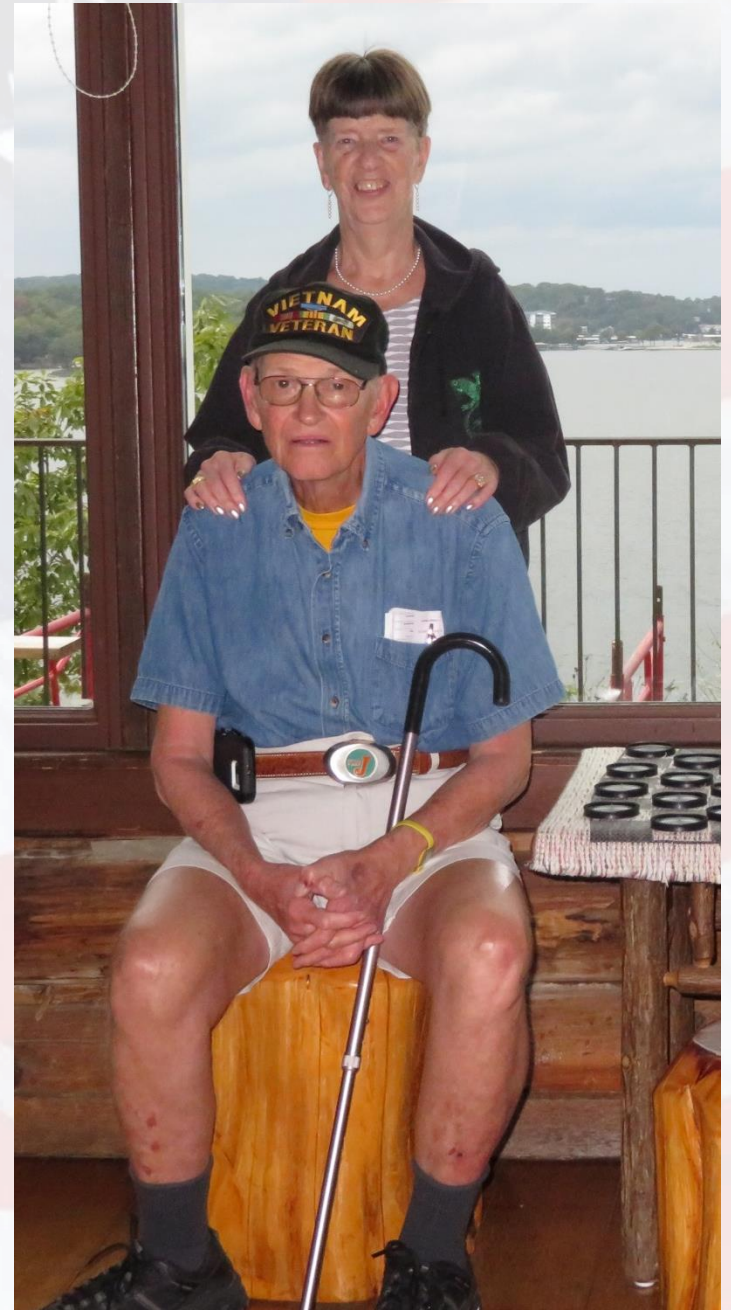
I looked up "Real Cyclist" in the dictionary, and it said "See Bill Lang".

Did you know there are double miles for riding in the snow with road tires?

Neither Snow nor Rain will stop a real cyclist from riding.













## A Shout-out to One of our Favorites

February 2018

by *Jane Botta*

Who is the most passionate cyclist you know? I suspect a few JBCers are popping up in your mind. There's definitely no shortage of JBC cyclists who are the real deal. These are the folks who ride even when it's below 32 degrees with no sunshine. If the conditions are safe enough to cycle, they won't let the day pass without getting out on the bike. They have an inordinate and almost obsessive zeal for cycling.

But I'm talking about who is THE most passionate, the one who was born with a bike seat attached to his butt. The one who won't even let a cancer diagnosis and its unrelenting complications slow him down.

You've got it--, it's unequivocally, Bill Lang. I'm sure you've heard about this cycling legend. If you haven't, you're definitely a neophyte around here. Chances are you've enjoyed a ride with Bill as leader, or at the very least, heard about one.

How do you describe Bill Lang's cycling élan? If a land surveyor calculated all the territories, routes and boundaries that Bill has logged in his lifetime, the final value would make the Voyager-1 look close to home. If you're one of Bill's cycling buddies (and most of us are), then you'd think he himself was a specialized land surveyor by profession.

His nickname, mapman, is repeatedly well-earned. Bill can map the best cycling route to wherever you want to go. If you have a hankering to find a bike route to visit Santa's workshop in the North Pole, or the research lab that's studying how to turn root vegetables in to bike frames in the UK, Bill's your guy. He enthusiastically accepts the challenge to map a ride to the remotest of locations.



What's more, as Bill plans a ride, he eagerly advertises the ride inclusively, "Carol wants to ride to the summit of an unclimbable peak in the Himalaya. We'll go on Sunday, hope you can join. Might be a few busier roads, but I got a good way."

If there's ever been a wheeled cycle worthy of sporting a stage at the Bicycle Museum of America, Bill's ride is the top contender. Although not his first choice, Bill's present day bike is actually a trike.

Some of the complications to which I've already referred, have precluded Bill from continuing to log miles on his Sramek bicycle. He logged 55, 437 miles on that titanium frame. Then, in the spring of 2012, Bill received a special gift from JBC.

"My first trike was a single speed senior type trike that a neighbor in Texas allowed me to borrow. I used that one during the years of 2011 and 2012. I slowed down tremendously about the first of January in 2010. I did some cycling but very limited between January of 2010 to December 2012. I had considered all cycling for practical purposes done for the rest of my life. Then that trike came along and changed everything."

Today, Bill rides a trike that's like a fully equipped base camp on wheels. Its battery powered montage of lights includes flashers and blinkers that would make a discotech jealous for its elaborate blinding glow. Two forward-facing lights, and several toward the ride's booty, attached to PVC piping resourcefully crafted together to be tall for visibility, ensure that even the poorly sighted will catch a glimpse of this rig.

Then there's the American flag projecting several feet higher than the lights. Patriotism is in this man's bones. Literally. Bill brought back the effects of Agent Orange exposure (the root cause of his cancer) after serving our country in Vietnam from July 20, 1969 to July 17, 1970.

As a radioman, the hefty and unwieldy equipment oft made his job a target for the enemy. Bill's willingness to talk about his experience is both interesting and educational. His brief stories are always threaded with humility as he explains, "The soldiers that were there before my time did all the hard work and serious fighting." Then he goes on to share anecdotes that reveal the true reality of having been a soldier in the Vietnam War (during all its years) and the terminal effects of chemical warfare that have been ravaging his body over the last 7 years. Although his passion and tenacity for cycling make him unique, that's not what really makes Bill so cherished. He's absolutely gifted with a natural way of making all his friends feel important to him. Somehow, he manages to make everyone feel special.



It doesn't stop there though. Bill's adorable bride, Char (married 50 years!), is also positively rare. Each time I see her, she consistently shines her bejeweled smile whilst giving a heartfelt greeting.

Despite not being a cyclist, Char knows most of Bill's riding buds. He ensures that she knows where to find him and the group at the end of every ride. One might think they are newlyweds from the way his consideration and inclusion of her is of the utmost importance to him.

Both Bill and Char's gentle kindness and generosity is infamous and beautiful. If you've witnessed the way in which he sparks things up for the reserved or underdog cyclists, then you know an inkling about what I mean.

"I notice somebody that's riding alone and I'll ride with 'em, make their life a little more enjoyable.

We do tend to pick-on 'em too, in a fun way, in a good way, I hope. Trying to get 'em more involved."

The legend of Bill Lang isn't only lauded in JBC, FOS, and EBC. He's well-respected within and without multitudes of bike and triathlon clubs, as-well-as community and bicycling advocacy groups.

It's not possible to do justice to the mammoth impact this man has made upon cycling and the communities in which he's resided.

The Midwest and Texas, where he and Char migrate each winter, have been the luckiest of beneficiaries, but this guy makes cycling friends everywhere he goes. I've even been asked (more than once) by fellow triathletes who've only heard whisperings about the expert mapman, "Who is that guy on the trike? You think he would help us with the route for our fundraising ride?" Bill Lang is an inspiration and friend to us all.

It's a beautiful day for a bike ride with Bill Lang.



September 11, 2018 - My first century ride.....this year. I have been wanting to ride a 100+ miles since I received my new trike back in early August. There was always something in the way. Scheduled appointments, chemo, poor weather. You name it. Monday Sept. 10 I could see that the weather would be a cool start, mid-50's, sunny and very light winds. The temperature would warm to near 80 with light winds and clear skies. So I scheduled the century ride for Tuesday, Sept. 11. Dominick and Conrad joined me.

The scheduled start time was 730 am in Frankfort, IL. Conrad was there, but not Dominick. Dom arrived 8 minutes late and used the excuse that the Old Plank Road Trail was closed for maintenance. Dominick did not know what roads to take to get around the closed trail. So he finally managed to get around the closed trail. We departed Frankfort at 740 am and headed southeast with our first town Grant Park. The roads were mostly good with very low traffic volume. Nice and quiet where we had the entire road to ourselves for most of the way. Leaving Grant Park eastbound we rode Rt.17/Rt. 1 for about two miles. Some truck traffic and moderately busy. Then we headed south southwest to Momence. I led the guys across the foot bridge to the island in Momence where I took a short break. Then we headed south across the bridge to the gas station/convenience store for a snack, fill water bottles, and purchase a drink.

We departed Momence cycling on the north side of the Kankakee River to Aroma Park. This is a beautiful road most of the time along the river. Again traffic was non-existent. AT Aroma Park we crossed the river and cycled northeast along the south side of the Kankakee river back to Momence. This time we stopped at the Firehouse Bar & restaurant for lunch. \$2.50 cheeseburgers! I had fries with mine and the other two had greens and beer. No beer for me. Someone had to stay sober in order to read the map and lead. The burger was greasy but good.

Back to the quiet back roads from Momence to Manteno then north back to Frankfort. We had rode 101 miles and were back to Frankfort about 4 pm. I had an average of 14.1 MPH when I arrived home, with a total of 106 miles. Today was a beautiful day for a bike ride. The winds were so light riding felt like we always riding into a headwind.

Early in the ride we observed a hawk take off from along the road in front of us and it had a snake in its claws. The hawk headed for a tall dead tree to eat its breakfast. Dominick was worried that the hawk would drop the snake in front of him.















Bill's passion for cycling extended to aviation as well. Bill achieved his pilot's license.













# Walking the Causeway



I walked the 3.5 miles across the Queen Isabella Causeway from Port Isabel to South Padre Island in one hour ten minutes. To the best of my knowledge, I finished in the middle of the pack. Last year I finished dead last! I rode my bicycle across this causeway in 1998 during a cycling event. As far as I could see in front of me, walkers disappearing into the fog. As far as I could see behind me, walkers disappearing into the fog.





# Walking the Causeway





# Adventures with Bill



Hey, do you really think we could ride down this bike path? Well, the answer was no! Mud is not mud like up north. This stuff looks almost dry, but this mud is known as caliche and sticks like paste and dries like cement. We hadn't traveled very far on the trail when our wheels failed to turn. We had to carry the trike and bike out of the mud. Then I had so much mud on my shoes I could not move. She had to come rescue me. What do we clean first? The wheels of the bike & trike or our 25-pound mud caked shoes? Everything we touched was mud covered. We spent over one and a half hours getting out of this mess and cleaning the mud off the trike and bike and us so we could ride home. A short 50 miles took us almost all day! But we had fun laughing at each other while cleaning mud off everything. It was a beautiful day for a bike ride in the mud!





# Adventures with Bill



Riding with Bill was always an adventure and many times ending up on a gravel road.



# Adventures with Bill

August 27, 2013

A hot day. So I got up early and headed out on my trike meeting Steve in Frankfort. The winds were out of the southwest, so we headed for Manhattan. We arrived there in good time, well for me, 11 MPH average, only because of Steve pushing me up the hills. So we decided to extend our trip back home, taking the long way. We were headed west on Hoff Rd. on a stretch of nice smooth pavement. I felt a thump, thump, thump. I slowed down and discovered a problem with my right rear tire on the trike. Yes, there is a bulge and the tire is quite worn. I lowered the tire pressure to roughly 40 psi and I told Steve I needed to start heading home. By this point I was about 19 miles from home. We both started heading back to Frankfort.



We made it back to Manhattan, about 5 miles when the tire popped. I carry zip-lock bags in my bike bag incase the weather starts to rain, I can put all my electronic toys in the bags to protect them from the rain. I folded the bags and stuffed them into the tire where the tube worked its way through the tire. We put in a good tube, pumped up the tire to about 40 psi and headed the 14 miles back home.



# Adventures with Bill

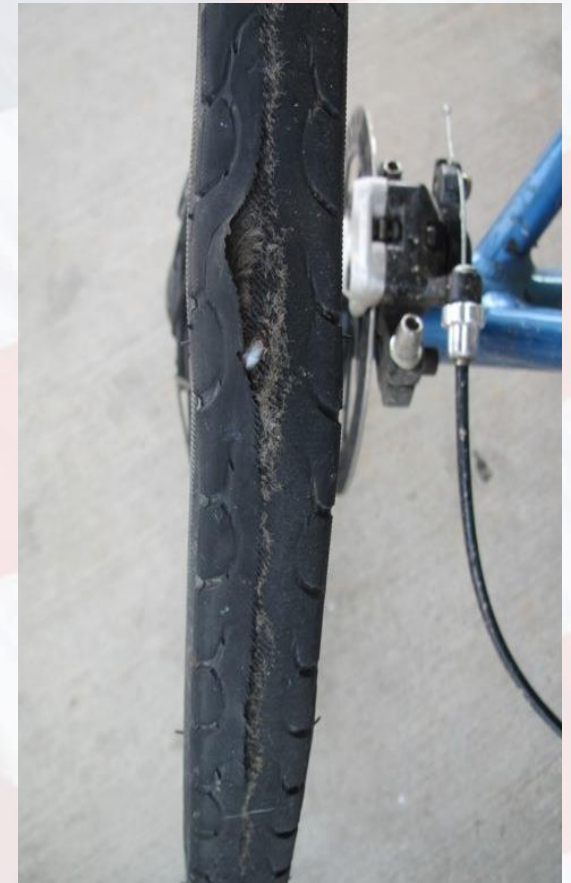


Yes, we made it back home without further blowouts. The white spot in the tire is the ziplock bags. They worked!

I replaced both rear tires with new ones. I had 3141 miles on that tire.

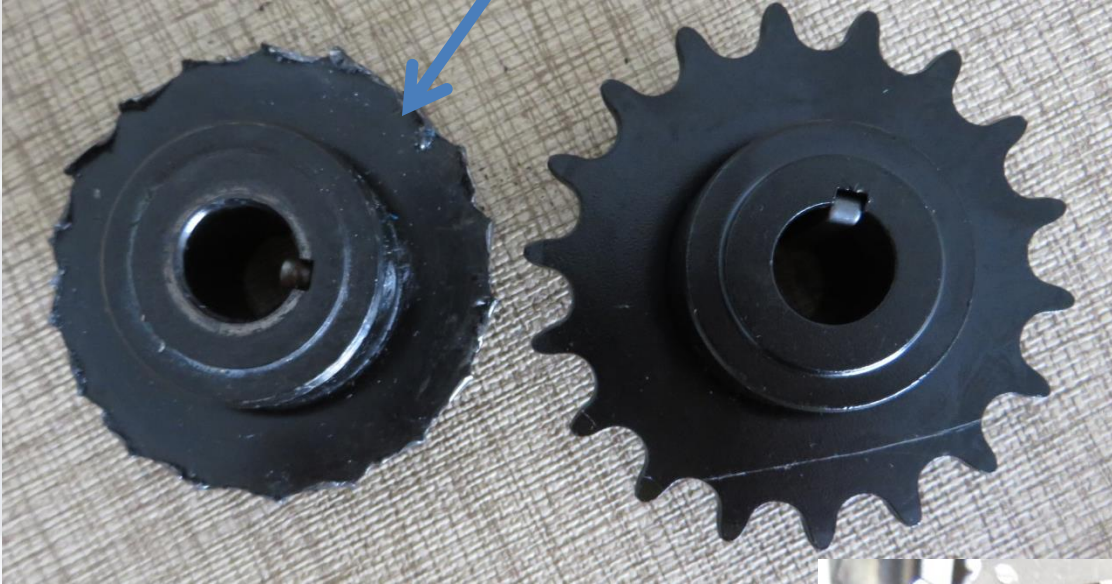
I should have done what I used to teach. Inspect your bike after every ride, make any repairs needed then head for the showers. This way you won't be late to your destination the next day. Also inspect your bike before every ride. If I would have done that, I would have noticed the tire is worn and needs replacing.

Bill





Bill rides the teeth right off the sprockets!



This trike was not designed to handle the mega miles that Bill rode. He literally destroyed the teeth right off the sprocket.









# Reluctant to put the bicycle away

Bill Lang of Frankfort said: Any time I am on that trike is worth it.'

By DENISE M. BARAN-UNLAND

June 27, 2019

As a founding member of the Joliet Bicycle Club, Bill Lang has coordinated many Fourth of July bike rides.

This year the 71-year-old Frankfort man won't participate because his extended family will be in town. Ordinarily that would not keep Lang from the ride.

But this may be the last time Lang will gather with all of them.

"I've got multiple myeloma," Lang aid. "I've been fighting it for 13 years, so I am at its end; it's over. I stopped taking chemotherapy, I'm currently in hospice. The doctor says I have maybe three or four months."

However, Lang has not stopped biking, although he now rides a recumbent adult tricycle. And he loves it.

"I [recently] rode two miles around the parking lot where I live," Lang said. "The day before that, I rode into Frankfort to meet the group. I socialized with them and they went on their ride.

"Then I just hung out in Frankfort for while to see the other sites and people I know. That day, I did a little extra. I rode 20 miles that day and that night I was in a fair amount of pain."

Was it worth it?

"Any time I am on that trike is worth it," Lang said.



Because of the medication he's taking, Lang said he won't drive a car. But he feels perfectly safe riding a bike and plans to continue as long as he is able.

"It's a much slower speed and I feel I have things under control," Lang said.

Lang said he also tries to consider the feelings of Char, his high school sweetheart and wife of 52 years, since she cares for him when he overdoes it.

"If I'm in pain, I can take pain medicine," Lang said. "But it's the caregiver who pays the price."

A life of many rides

Lang said he first started riding bikes when he was 4 and continued riding through his growing up years. At the time,

Lang mostly rode alone, especially once he reached junior high and riding a bike was no longer "an in thing," he said.

He felt blessed to have parents who gave him the freedom to ride. Lang said he'd typically bike three or four miles one way and he often biked to downtown Joliet.

"If I needed anything from the stores, I jumped on my bike and rode downtown," Lang said.

Lang helped co-found the Joliet Bicycle Club in 1973. In those days, the club was part of the Greater Joliet YMCA and ran announcements of its upcoming rides in The Herald-News' "News in Brief" section, he said.

"We would meet at Pershing School," Lang said. "And whoever showed, rode."

The first 100-mile ride was in the fall of 1973. Over time, the club held its Century Ride in the fall, its Sudden Century

Ride in the spring, an annual Fourth of July ride and a four-day Around Illinois Bicycle Ride that attracted about 125 people, Lang said.



Ride in the spring, an annual Fourth of July ride and a four-day Around Illinois Bicycle Ride that attracted about 125 people, Lang said.

In addition, various members will host rides throughout the year. Rides are posted on the Joliet Bicycle Club's website at [jolietbicycleclub.com](http://jolietbicycleclub.com).

The website also has a listing of more than a dozen area bicycle rides and rides hosted by other clubs. There's photos, videos, mileage logs, meeting times, membership information, a beginner's guide to biking and a guide for properly fitting a bicycle helmet.

But the Joliet Bicycle Club also provides information on biking safely. Visitors to the site can take quizzes checking their knowledge or learn the proper way to drive in traffic, negotiate signaled intersections, using left hand turn lanes and making u-turns.

The many benefits of traveling by bike

"It was a good way to meet people and I liked doing that," Lang said. "And it was a good way to see the country. I have biked across the states. I did that in '93 and '94. I couldn't get enough vacation time to do a complete trip, so I did some of it in '93 and some of it in '94."

Biking also connects riders to people in the communities in unique ways.

"The things you see and the things that happen out there when you're riding is exceptional," Lang said. "You always meet a lot of people and you learn that in the world, 95 percent of the people are very good people, regardless of where they live. I have met a lot of them and it means a lot."

People generally feel comfortable among those traveling by bike.

"When you're riding, you do not pose a threat to people. You re the vulnerable one," Lang said. "So people will open up to you and talk to you. They want to know where you're writing to, where you're riding from, and they're always interested in you, the cyclist. Therefore, they don't worry about you if you're going to attack them or rob them or anything like that.







In 2014, many of Bill's friends and family gathered to give him the Welcome Home from Vietnam that he never received.



The background of the image is a faded, waving American flag. The stars are white on a blue field, and the stripes are red and white. The text is centered over the flag.

We love you Bill  
And  
Cherish all our  
Memories  
Made with you!