

PETOSKEY News-Review

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Harbor Springs man died doing something he loved

By Marci Singer News-Review Staff Writer
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HARBOR SPRINGS — Fred Knoodle, 68, of Harbor Springs, [lost his life yesterday morning](#) doing something he loved — riding his bicycle.

The fatal accident occurred at approximately 7:50 a.m. when he collided with a vehicle on Hathaway Road near Kipp Road in Harbor Springs.

His wife, Jimmie, said yesterday was the first time Fred had ridden that route this year.

"He wanted to get out early, but was always concerned about sun in driver's eyes," she said.

Jimmie said Fred was really athletic and loved biking. He had already ridden two bike tours with her this summer, another one on his own in the U.P. and was getting ready to leave for the DALMAC next Thursday.

"He had almost 3,000 miles in his bike this year," she said. "He could tell you exactly how many miles he had ridden in the last 30 years. He also was really looking forward to the new extension on Magnus Park bike trail."

In addition to cycling, Fred loved history and his family.

"He was a big historian — not just the Civil War, but also World War II and family history. And he was a good family man. He loved his family — our children and grandchildren were his pride and joy. He loved being at their events."

Jimmie said Fred always put people first and made special trips to the nursing home to visit friends he knew.

"He was a wonderful person and he cared about people always," she said. "He especially cared about elderly people."

Another one of Fred's passions was gardening.

"He was busy all the time," Jimmie said. "I used to ask him, 'Can't you just rest?'" she said. "There are lots of green beans out there in his garden that need to be picked right now."

Married for more than 40 years, Jimmie and Fred had been through a lot, including Fred's bypass surgery three years ago.

"We had a wonderful marriage," she said. "I never thought it would end this way."

In addition to being an avid cyclist, Fred was also the "driving momentum" behind getting the cannon restored for the city of Petoskey, said city parks and recreation director, Al Hansen.

"He will be sorely missed by union veterans and the cycling community," Hansen said. "He was very kind and pleasant to work with. He was very outgoing and enthusiastic about what he did and was always very conscientious. He was also very avid in promoting cycling in the community."

Fred, who had ridden more than 82,000 miles over the span 39 years, said that people who think bicycle tourists are off their rockers usually spend too much time sitting on their own rockers in the fall 2005 issue of Michigan Bicyclist.

"Couch potatoes," said the retired GM executive. "Don't knock it if you haven't tried it. You see much more on a bike than you do driving through towns at 50 miles an hour."

His friend, Neal Breaugh, secretary and treasurer of the Robert Finch Camp No. 14 of Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, said Fred's accomplishments as the Civil War Memorial Officer were nothing short of outstanding.

"He was the Civil War Memorial Officer for the last eight years. As such, he has registered almost every monument in Northern Michigan," Breaugh said. "He and his wife, Jimmie, went all over Northern Michigan and took pictures of every monument. Thanks to them, we have a beautiful record of all those monuments."

Breaugh said in addition to discovering that the Petoskey cannon was a confederate cannon, Fred also served on two department committees — the Grand Army of Republic Committee and the Civil War Committee at the department level, and arranged for the rededication of grave stones for veterans in the area.

"He was my right arm in doing all of this," Breaugh said. "He had two or three dedications planned for this fall and into early 2009. He did us proud serving on both of those committees. He was truly an outstanding, outstanding member of our organization. The entire camp will miss him."

Breaugh said that he had just e-mailed Fred 30 minutes prior to learning about the accident.



In this 2002 file photo, Fred Knoodle of Harbor Springs, a member of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, keeps guard on a Confederate cannon that was donated to the group by the Petoskey Department of Public Works. The cannon was found in 1996, buried behind the Perry Hotel in Petoskey.

"We were planning on him sitting as a representative of the Civil War Society at an event this Saturday in Traverse City when we dedicate two plaques," he said. "We will leave his chair empty and have a moment of silence during the ceremony. We will also mention honoring and praying for him and his family."

David Kaplan of Petoskey, who is also a member of Robert Finch Camp No. 14 of Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, was planning on attending the event with Fred on Saturday.

"Fred and I would attend as many of the meetings as we could. He was interested in history and so am I," Kaplan said. "When we would spend time traveling to and from Traverse City, Fred would talk about his work at GM and his love for bicycle riding. He was a true gentleman and very dependable. Fred was a pleasant, nice person in every regard and I enjoyed his company."

Breaugh said one of the smartest moves he made was asking Fred to be the Civil War Memorial Officer.

"I said it many, many times," he said. "He was a respected and hard working individual. He died doing something he loved — he loved cycling and he loved the Civil War. I can't even begin to express how much I am going to miss him."

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