

2010-12 Focus on Members

Our Focus this month is on Don Sprague, long time member and frequent Ride Leader.

Participation in team sports was something that I never enjoyed. I was the kid who would drop the ball causing my team to lose.

Biking was another matter. I rode my one speed balloon tire bike all over town. When I was 11 years old, a friend and I rode our bikes 34 mi from New Brunswick to Princeton, NJ and back. At the age of 14, another friend and I rode our 3-speed English bikes 70 mi from Highland Park to a Boy Scout camp near High Point, NJ. Then for over 22 years, I was so busy with school, my career and starting a family, that I didn't ride at all.

In the mid-70's, I joined the Princeton Outing Club. Riding our bikes on trips was one of our activities. Several members who were also into biking said that I was very good at it and that I should join a bike club. I didn't join, at least not then.

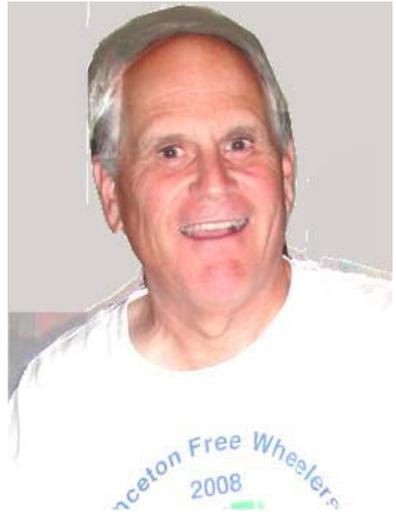
One day in the mid-80's, a guy by the name of Ed Post called to ask if I'd like to bike with him and some other friends. We did a number of rides together. His wife, JoAnn had been a member of the Princeton Outing Club and knew I liked biking. In August of 1985, Ed and I did the Princeton Event together. Shortly after we both joined the Princeton Free Wheelers. A few years later, we both became ride leaders.

In the late 1980's, I drove with my family to visit my brother in Wisconsin. I managed to fit our four bikes on the car. When we arrived at his house, he came to the front door, saw the bikes and exclaimed, "My God, you're a biking fanatic!"

Since joining The Freewheelers, I have done over 35 centuries and four double centuries. I have participated in six MS 150 rides, five Anchor House rides, four Bike Virginias, three GEAR trips, two Seagull Centuries, and the Ride Around New York City. I have done many other rides too numerous to mention. By the end of this year, I'll have ridden my bike over 111,000 mi since joining the club.

My brother was right, I am a biking fanatic! So, why have I become a biking fanatic, you may ask.

Well to start, it's all about people. During my 26 years with the club, I've met and enjoyed riding with hundreds of wonderful and interesting folks. My only regret is most of them have moved on to some other



new interest. I still miss many, particularly the genuine characters such as Norm Batho and John Crawford. The good thing, however, is I'm constantly meeting new biking enthusiasts.

Exercising, while doing something I love, is fun, not work. I'm pleased with myself in that I am keeping my weight down while doing something good for my body.

Then there is the after-the-bike-ride high. After a ride, I often feel euphoric for hours without smoking, drinking or resorting to other drugs. I've often come home from work stressed, annoyed or worse. After riding my bike, I have returned home totally relaxed and at peace with myself. Biking is good for my head.

Another great thing is that I can ride at 14 to 16 MPH for miles and miles with no assistance other than from my own muscles. At these speeds, I can much better appreciate the beautiful scenery than I could while speeding along in the closed cabin of a car.

All of my senses are in play. I can hear the birds singing and the dog barking as I ride by. I can feel the heat, humidity and wind. I can smell the flowers and freshly mowed grass. What other sport can offer all of this?

A non-biker recently asked me when I was planning to stop. My answer was that I will keep at it until I no longer can.

Don Sprague