

2010-06 Focus on Members

This month's Focus is on Laura Lynch, "Our Lady of Perpetual Headwinds" as she often refers to herself.



Cheryl McDonald says, "You should come ride with us. Everyone's friendly. It's a social thing."

"But all I have is an old bike. I'd have to get a new one. And all those fancy clothes and things."

It takes four months for her to persuade me, but I finally show up at the 2000 Spring Fling in sweatpants and a t-shirt, lugging my 1983 Raleigh Grand Prix through I have no idea where. It's on that ride that Terry Christie teaches me how to have a conversation on a bike: You start, get separated, and a few hours later, in line for food, you continue: "So, anyway..."

So, anyway, by June I have clip-in pedals and a pair of shorts. I know everyone in the Friday night C+ gang. I spend weekends behind Bob Barish and weekdays pondering maps of Mercer County. We go out to dinner. We have parties. I get my first biker's tan and a real appreciation for the lay of the land. By August I have a full summer wardrobe and a working knowledge of the roads around Pennington. In October I go to a swap meet in Trexlertown and come home with Kermit.

Then there's the inevitable speeding up, the "Don't drop me don't drop me" mantra as I blindly follow strangers' wheels on the Macho Mile back to Cranbury. I'm a potato among string beans. Out in the flatlands, Larry Goldsmith, Ira Salteil, and Tom Hammell teach me how to be a B. I flirt with B+ for a nanosecond and find no joy in trading conversation and scenery for speed and even more intense panic about being dropped.

Matt Rawls says, "Pedal, pedal, pedal!"

Then there are the hills. Alan Kammerman shows me first. Potatoes don't climb the way pixies can, and I'm surrounded by pixies. So I take matters into my own hands: I start leading.

Matt says, "Laurie loves the hills! Laurie lives in the hills!" Protest I do, but he ends up being right.

It's winter. There are three of us on a 23-degree day. The wind is blowing at 16 mph and gusting from there. After 8 miles we turn around. The next time I see him, Mark Schmitt says, "It's Our Lady of Perpetual Headwinds!" I make it stick.

"Hill slugs!" Barb Clancey calls out as we start up a big one. I say, "I want that on a jersey." It already is; Terry, Hilda Danek, Howie Slafer, and I each order one.

Chris Cook quizzes me on roads south of Bordentown, including the dirt ones, which he saves for when just the two of us are riding. It takes him two years to get me onto a bike with fat tires in the woods of Mercer County Park. The first day out, in the snow, I come home with 22 bruises. I buy a rubber chicken keychain to hang on the back of my mountain bike as a warning to anyone behind me.

John Smolenyak introduces me to long-distance cycling. First it's a rolling 70-miler, then my first century. I'm hooked. Preben Knapp and Ira pull me on my first Event century. Then there are Joes (McBride and Miller), Mike Moorman, Mike Berman, Frank Angelucci, Herb Cohen, and, later, Steve Klotz. In the pace line I'm the timekeeper.

Tom takes us on the scouting trips for his book. I take pictures with my cell phone. Then the blog happens. I buy a camera.

The maps on the walls get more and more pink as I highlight where I've been. I see the blank spaces and the roads with funny names, and I say, "We have to get there."

Dustin Farnum is my hero:
njbikemap.com is my bible.
The Hill Slugs are ad hoc
these days, so check the blog,



<http://perpetualheadwinds.blogspot.com>, to find out where we're going next.