

2012-02-02 Focus on Members - Part 2

Our Second Focus piece this month is on Tom Hammel, Accomplished Leader and author of several books on how great bicycling is in and around New Jersey.

I think I have always enjoyed biking. Some of my favorite memories as a kid were riding around my neighborhood and doing tricks on my bike with my friends. Of course as most of us as we grow up we leave our bikes for cars and never go back. I got back on a bike again a little over 20 years ago as a way to start exercising and work off a few pounds. What started as a 3 mile ride around my neighborhood turned in to a 10 mile loop and then my mileage just kept growing.



About that time I saw the ad in the Princeton Packet for the Princeton Free Wheelers. I thought it would be a good way to learn some new roads and expand my riding even more.

Riding with the club really did a lot more than help me learn new roads. It also helped me improve my bike handling skills, learn to ride with a group, and learn how to help someone (Name withheld to protect the innocent) fix a flat tire . . . 4 times on the same ride. I spent a lot of time riding out of Cranbury and Mercer County Park with Norm Batho, Dennis Whitney, Howie Slafer, Don Sprague, Ed Post and Chris Cook. That's when biking became more than a way to exercise, it became fun and part of who I am.

A lot of people who don't bike think it would be boring to ride a bike on the same roads over and over again but even today after 20 years and hundreds of stops at the Clarksburg deli, each ride is still different and interesting in its own way. For me riding is a form of meditation that helps me get away from the grind of daily life. It relaxes me and helps me relieve stress.

Over the last 10 years I have expanded the places I ride and learned a lot of new roads from people like Laura Lynch, Mike Heffler, and Chris Cook. At least once a month I try to do a ride in another part of the state or try to attend a cycling event in another state. As Herb Cohen can tell you, looking for new roads often means getting lost and getting home late, but you usually come back with a good story.

I have a lot of great stories from my years of riding and I know I have a lot of adventures ahead. Everybody needs some simple pleasures in their life and biking is mine. I am happy that I discovered the Princeton Free Wheelers and people to share this simple pleasure with. I didn't lead a lot of rides for the club last year because I was riding in and around Philadelphia for a new book. The book is now done so I hope to lead more rides this year and share some of my adventures with all of you.

Tom

Editors Note: Hey Tom, don't forget to let us know when that book is going to be available!!