

# **2012-1 Focus on Members - Part 1**

**Our first Focus this month is Russ & Max Hazon, Father & Son getting lessons of riding – good and bad.**



It was a beautiful Saturday morning in the summer of 2010 when I first met Pat Van Hise on one of her Tri-County rides. I had just purchased a brand new road bike and already had two or three rides under my belt. I had no idea what to expect on my first group ride and wasn't even sure whether I really wanted to join a riding club.

The ride was spectacular, the scenery beautiful, but it was the warmth and friendliness of Pat and the other members that made it memorable. At the end of the ride we spoke and I told you that I would join the club. I went home, showered, then went online and became a member. It was one of the best decisions I've made and have never looked back. Over the next several weeks I met that group every Saturday morning. It was something I looked forward to all week long. The rides were always fun, but the friends I made over those few weeks were what made it such an enjoyable experience.

As time passed I wanted to ride more and more. I took some time off over the summer and did a few rides with Dennis Whitney out of Etra Park. These rides were longer and faster and pushed me to work harder. After a few of these rides I felt myself becoming a stronger rider. As other more experienced riders got to know me they offered tips and advice along the way. John Powers was one of those people. He would offer subtle tips and advice during the rides, trying to teach me how to ride smarter, not harder. I quietly listened and absorbed as much as I could. Truth be told, I could not get enough. I began scouring the ride list to see what other rides I could work into my schedule. I did a few rides with Kyle Nylander. Kyle spent a tremendous amount of time teaching me basic riding skills and helped make a few minor adjustments that definitely made my rides more comfortable.

The best part of riding came late in 2010. Just having purchased my own bike I couldn't afford a new bike for my son Max and was searching the used market high and low. I was having a difficult time finding the right size bike. I kept at it until one day Sue Moser said she had an older bike about the size I was looking for. I met her later that day and she handed me a beautiful Raleigh that was in perfect shape. The odd part is that she wouldn't take any money for it. It's not often you see this kind of generosity in people and I was touched. I hurried home and showed it to my son. He was excited and the next day we

rode. And we rode many more days after that. It has changed our relationship and strengthened our bond in more ways than I could ever have imagined.

The season quickly ended for me and I knew where my weak spots were. I hit the gym all winter long and spent lots of time in spin class trying to work on my problem areas. It worked and I came back strong in 2011. Hills, although not effortless, weren't as torturous as they were in the past. My endurance was good, but my speed was still down. I knew I could fix that with more time in the saddle. I made every effort to put on the miles. I began riding to the group rides instead of driving. I started sneaking in rides during the week before it got dark. This was going to be my year!

My son and I rode out to Sawmill Road and did a Tri-County Ride. At the end of the ride we said goodbye to the group and took the long way home. I put on a solid seventy miles that day with a nice climb up Agress Road towards the end. I still felt good. I decided that I was going to ride again the next morning as a recovery ride. I looked through the ride list and saw that Cliff Hochberg was doing a new members ride. It was a C pace and would be just what I needed to stretch my legs. I met Cliff and the rest of the group and off we went. The ride was fairly uneventful until we turned off CR 524 on to East Branch Road. We had traveled about a quarter-mile when I moved to the right to avoid a pothole. I hit a patch of sand and don't remember much after that. I do remember the handlebars being jerked out of my hands, being catapulted from the saddle, then being helped up and feeling a terrible pain in my right shoulder. Cliff was extremely calm, but appeared quite concerned. I refused an ambulance and instead had my wife pick me up and take me to the hospital.

I learned some things from this ride and will remember of a few key points for a long time:

- Avoid sand and gravel like the plague!
- If you are falling, bring your hands in, not out.
- Hitting the ground hurts ...alot.
- Clavicles are inherently flawed by design (I believe auto manufacturers refer to this as the 'crumple zone')
- Breaking your calvicle hurts ...alot!
- Breaking your clavicle in four hurts four times as much as a single break.
- Never stop home on the way to the hospital to remove your favorite jersey.

There is a good reason hospitals use scissors to remove your shirt.

- Blood stains cannot be removed from dayglo yellow clothing.

The hospital confirmed Cliff's suspicion. My clavicle was broken in four places. It was surgically repaired with a titanium plate and six screws. While not one of the easier injuries I've ever sustained, it could have been much worse.

Over the next few days Cliff would call me to see how I was doing. I was truly impressed that someone whom I've only met a handful of times would go out of his way like this. About two weeks later I got a call from Dennis Whitney who asked how I was doing. He said he just found out about the accident and asked if the group could stop by during one of their rides. He said it was something they liked to do when one of their own got hurt. I have to say that I was truly touched. The camaraderie amongst the Free Wheeler's is truly amazing.

When the PFW Event Ride approached I spoke to the board about helping out. Max and I wound up running one of the SAG vehicles that day. Giving something back and helping others was a great lesson for both of us. I had the opportunity to meet some good people and teach my son a valuable lesson at the same time. It was hard work and a very long day, but it was truly rewarding. So much so that Max had asked if we could do it again next year.

Friends of mine have asked if I will ever ride again. I've been honest and explained my fears. I've also explained the beauty and joy of riding. The freedom and peace that I feel on the open road. It's a freedom that I haven't felt since I was a kid. I am already counting the days to my 2012 riding season!

Russ