

2012-05 Focus on Members

Our focus this month is on long time member and frequent Ride Leader Diane Hess.

Like most folks who grew up in the suburbs of NJ, bicycling was a great way to get around. I can still remember the day when I was able to stay upright – no training wheels. It was on my neighbor's two wheeler which had a flat rear tire. I cycled through grade school but as high school approached with the prospect of driving, bicycling went by the way side. When I graduated from college I asked for a 10 speed and received a Schwinn Varsity which I rode for about a year and then it collected dust in my garage.



Marriage, work and school filled the next decade. After my divorce I reconnected with my college roommate who had continued to ride and encouraged me to take it up again. I'd been going to the gym regularly and would cycle there. One of my cycling companions there was

a PFW member who suggested joining the Princeton Freewheelers. He gave me one of their newsletters which I hung onto for a year!

I finally called the number in the newsletter and spoke with Barbara Hunt, the Membership and General Information guru at that time. After speaking with Barbara I came out for the 1990 Labor Day All Paces ride. Barbara had suggested starting with a D ride; Ed and Joanne Post were leading the D ride that day. Boy, was I pleased with myself when I finished that ride. After the ride, Ed put me on Joanne's bike (she's about 2 inches taller than me) and with my feet barely touching the pedals, he said

something like "Now you'll see what a road bike should feel like." He also told me that if I upgraded to a new bike I would move up a ride class. And he threw in that PFW

was looking for more ride leaders.

I continued to ride my Schwinn Varsity through the Fall with Andrew Gale and Fern Goodhart. I also began to shop for a new bike. Within 6 weeks I was the proud owner of an 18 speed Miyata touring bike, a pair of real bicycle shorts and biking gloves.

The following Spring I began to ride in earnest. Frank Stanski always did interesting rides and you were guaranteed one food stop along the way. Dan Rappoport introduced me to Hollow Road which, to this day, is one of my favorite roads. And you could always count on Lorraine Barry to lead a strong C ride on the weekend.

It was not long before I decided to give back by leading weekend rides for the club. Originally I borrowed from the leaders who I had ridden with; but as my confidence grew, I branched out and created my own rides. Weekend rides led to evening rides and the Griggstown Grinder (which owes its name to Joan Prins) was born. My pace was picking up; C was too slow, but I was not quite a B. So when I submitted my rides I added a + to the C and it was accepted!

I had been keeping my college roommate informed of my cycling progress and she thought it was time for me to consider a week long bike ride – she proposed that I join her group on RAGBRAI (Register's Annual Great Bike Ride Across Iowa). I agreed to do the ride and then panicked because I had never ridden 7 consecutive days. So

what did I do? I signed up for a week of riding in New Mexico the month before

RAGBRAI. Bobcat Pass outside Sante Fe was my Mt. Ventoux. I made a number of

rest stops on the way up and it seemed to take forever, but I made it to the top. I also

had the opportunity to ride through a crosswind. I learned then that I would much rather cycle up a hill than ride into the wind.

Iowa, which was not flat, offered rolling hills and a moving carnival. I'll never forget the first day of the ride when we stopped in this little town – a few houses and a bar – around 10 in the morning. The bar was open for business and people were buying. I still don't know how some of those folks were able to ride for the rest of the day. And the hospitality of the folks from

Iowa was beyond compare. Shortly after I returned from my RAGBRAI adventure I met my husband, David, on one of my rides. Our wedding invites, don't gag, had a tandem on them. We've been cycling together ever since.

I volunteered as a Member-at-Large for several years in the 1990s and have worked the registration table for the annual Event whenever I'm in town. Volunteering allows you see how much effort goes into making the Club a success; I hope that you will consider volunteering, even if only for a few hours at the Event or leading a ride or two.

I'm looking forward to retirement when I won't have to squeeze biking in between work and chores. I also hope to become involved in the bicycle advocacy movement, particularly in my community, which is car centric but has lots of possibility to evolve into a LAB Bicycle Friendly community.

This is the part where I thank all those folks who have ridden with me these past 20+ years. You're all an inspiration and I feel fortunate to have the opportunity to ride with you. So, get out there and ride. Give back to the club that brings you all these great rides and social events and provides an opportunity to stay healthy while meeting some great folks. May the wind always be at your back. Diane