

2013-03 Steve Freidlander

Our Focus this month is on Steve Freidlander, cycling tourer and dedicated recumbent rider.

My interest in cycling as an adult started around 1970 when I was a college student in Boston. I was getting tired of walking and strolled into a bike shop one day, where I impulsively bought a bike for about \$50 or \$60, mainly to get to my classes on time. Most bikes in the shop were either 3 or 10-speed, plus one or two 5 speeds. I didn't know anything about bikes at the time, but 5 speeds seemed like a happy medium.

It didn't take long to realize that my humble 5-speed could go a lot further than the one mile ride to my classes. I soon ventured out to the suburbs on longer rides, and at the end of the spring semester, decided to pedal all the way to Maine where my family lived - a 135 mi trek that would take 2 days of riding. With minimal preparations - no spare tubes, tools, or even a water bottle - I set forth. I got as far as about 100 mi when on the second day, heavy rain and a broken shift cable caused me to give up and call for someone to pick me up. Nevertheless, the experience whetted my appetite for further cycling adventures. I became convinced that bikes are a great means of transportation, both for getting around town and for longer cross-country trips.

After finishing school and making some money came a new ten-speed and commercial tours in faraway places. My first experience with a group turned out to be the longest ride I've ever done - a wonderful three week tour with an outfit called "Eurobike" that covered parts of England, Holland, and Germany. Subsequent tours took me to Colorado, Vermont, and Bavaria.

My first encounter with the Freewheelers came about as a result of my working for AT&T, where Frank Stanski was organizing rides for employees. Frank was one of the founding members of the Club, and I recall going on rides with him, Dick Bograd and Dan Rappoport in the early eighties, as well as doing a couple of weekend trips in Vermont. I don't think I actually joined back then, however, as life was taking me in other directions.

Meanwhile, in 1980 I'd come across an article in Bicycling magazine about some weird contraptions called recumbents. Being somewhat of a contrarian, I was naturally attracted, but didn't get around to buying one until I spotted one on display at a Sharper Image store in 1989. The experience turned out to be addictive, and I soon developed a taste for exotic human-



powered vehicles. Today my garage includes fully streamlined recumbents (see photo), a standard tandem, and one bike that folds to fit inside a suitcase.

After I moved to Hamilton about six years ago, a recumbent friend re-introduced me to the Freewheelers and Norman Batho's rides from Cranbury. I've learned a great deal about Mercer County from the many rides I've done with Kyle Nylander. In addition to the fun and comfort of riding recumbents, having a variety of different vehicles has enabled me to experience a wide variety of club rides. The tandem, which I ride with my partner Ellen McCourt, and folding bike are good for C rides. On my faster "bents", I'm basically a C+ rider, but with a front fairing (a large plastic windshield on one bike, a fiberglass nosecone on the other) for improved aerodynamics, I can keep up with B rides that are not too hilly. And with full streamlining, B+ rides become doable. (I don't feel too guilty about "cheating"). Contrary to popular belief, it is also possible to do hilly rides on a recumbent, but I prefer the flatter rides from Hamilton, Cranbury, Etra, and Allentown, etc.

In addition to Club rides, I enjoy cruising around Hamilton going to shops, library and gym, spend a lot of time on Long Beach Island during the summer. Each year in May, Pat Van Hise and I lead a tour of the island that seems to have become an annual tradition. I also enjoy doing multi-day rides and last June led a few riders on a 3 day trip north along the Delaware and spending two nights in Easton, Pa where we were rewarded with a Franki Valli (of the Four Seasons) concert. I'm hoping to do something similar this year, possibly to Red Bank in the fall, also including a concert. Some of my other multi-day rides are described on the club's website under "member ride reports".

All in all, I feel lucky to be living in this area and having a group like the Freewheelers to take full advantage of all the great riding opportunities. We are also fortunate to have the Economy Bike shop in Hamilton, one of the few shops on the east coast that has a large inventory of recumbents in stock.

Check them out!

Steve.