

2013-11 Focus on Members

Our Focus this month is on Marc Bernardo, honing his group skills & expanding his riding horizons with the PFW since 2008.

My name is Marc Bernardo, and I'm a Princeton FreeWheeler. It all started in the summer of 2007. I've been riding my bike up & down the Delaware &

Raritan Canal State Park bike path, with my wife Millie that year and was intrigue seeing these cyclists biking on the shoulder of NJ 29 in Hunterdon Co. So, I did

my internet search, found & joined PFW that August. I

requested a copy of the current ride list via email and

quickly identified my first group ride that I believe was within my biking capability.

It was the 30 mile Back by Lunch C ride out of Cranbury on Sunday morning. I

showed up with my GT Talera hybrid bike amid all these cyclists on road bikes

with clipless pedals. After a short briefing from the ride leader about group riding

guidelines, we set off from the park towards the Assunpink. As soon as the group

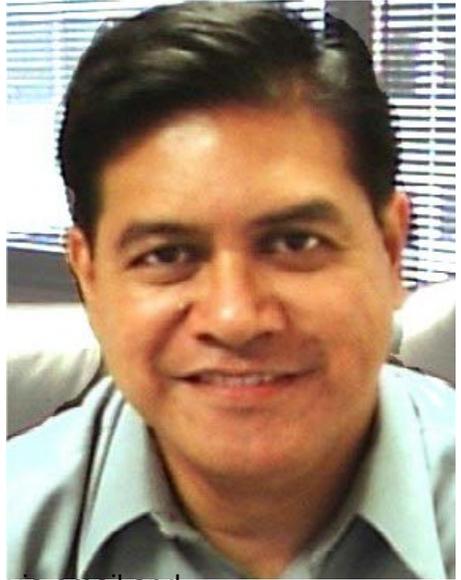
turned left into Main Street, I was quickly dropped. However, I remembered Club

Ride Guideline #8, "ALWAYS NOTIFY THE LEADER before leaving the group." So I pedaled as hard as I could and caught up with the last guy in the group to tell

him that I will be dropping out of the ride, and to let the ride leader know.

The following week, I found myself at Princeton Ski Shop in Lawrenceville going through sticker shock on how much it cost to get an entry level road bike. It's a good thing that my wife's nephew works there, and he was able to give me a good deal on a last year's model, 2006 Lemond Etape aluminum frame bike with Shimano Sora 8 speed groupset. The next time I showed up at the Sunday Back by Lunch C ride, I was ready with my new road bike with SPD pedals, outfitted

with Lycra bike shorts and jersey and cleats. It was the first time I met and rode with Norman Batho and I became a regular on his ride.



The following year, I was feeling confident with my riding abilities & started joining Pat Van Hise's C+ rides out of Yardville to destinations such as Horse Park of New Jersey and Walnford Park. I also started riding Kyle Nylander's C+ rides out of Mercer County Park. One day I decided to venture back to the D&R Canal and showed up at Mike Heffler's C+ ride out of Frenchtown. When he first saw me, he advised me that this ride might not be for me since it's a hilly ride and I've only been doing flat rides. But since my bike has a triple, I believed that I should be fine. I was able to hang with the group until we crossed the Delaware River to Riegelsville and met my first real hill riding on a bike: Sherers Hill Rd-Delaware Rd. With a lot of encouragement from the other riders in the group, I was able to make it up to the top. After the downhill, we made a right turn on Stouts Valley

Rd, then a left turn up to Spring Hill Rd. That's when I decided to listen to my legs and call it a day. I turned around & headed back on my own to Frenchtown. As you can imagine, I ended up walking up Sherers Hill Rd-Delaware Rd.

As a newbie cyclist, I was concerned I don't know how to fix simple mechanical problems with my bike, such as adjusting the brakes & derailleurs & fixing flats. In order to get familiar with the workings of my road bike, I wrenched my bike components' upgrade to Ultegra 9 speed, except for the Tiagra shifters. This also gave me the gumption to build my carbon road bike, 2008 Rocky Mountain Solo Team CR, with parts I gathered online. The other accessory I invested in was a Garmin Edge 705. This gave me the ability to navigate my way back to the ride starting point whenever I dropped out of a ride and to map the rides that I did.

As a person relatively new to cycling when I joined, I've benefited greatly from being a PFW member. I intend to continue taking advantage of my membership by expanding my riding experience to include the hilly rides. Only with PFW can you join a Saturday half-century group ride through the hills of Hunterdon County

and Bucks County and then join a Sunday metric group through the flat and rolling terrain towards the Pinelands of Burlington County.

Lastly, I want to thank the PFW Ride Leaders, Board Members and volunteers that keep the club rolling along.