

2014-06 Focus on Members

Our Focus this month is on Jane Danek, member since 2005 & active Ride Leader.

On my 36th birthday, I didn't like what the scale said so I pulled the ol' Walmart Huffy out of the garage and started riding. Does this sound like a familiar story?

Not long after, the extra weight disappeared and I started riding with a neighbor into the Sourlands. What a magical place to explore! One summer morning, we found ourselves on a downhill and the road turned to gravel. My friend hit the brakes, endo'd, and fractured her collar bone. The EMTs in the ambulance said "you gals shouldn't be riding out here by yourselves – you should join the Princeton Freewheelers". Being that I would now be riding alone, I did just that. The year was 1998.

I bought a "real bike" – a \$400 Trek hybrid – "the only bike I'll ever need" and started riding out of Wheel Life in Hillsborough with a great group that included Lynda Olsen, Arnie Schlussberg, Rich Konczyk and Andy Chen. I learned quickly that my hybrid wasn't cool for a roadie, so time for another new bike. The yellow Giant TCR would see me safely over many miles, and she even got her fork signed by Greg LeMond.

Some rides I went on could get pretty long, and I really didn't have the time. Someone suggested that I join a racing club because the rides are shorter & more structured. I joined the Somerset Wheelmen and loved it. I learned training, tactics, strategies & skills that serve me well to this day. I loved being on a team & meeting the fast biker girls. I did road races, criteriums, time trials and a stage race. I took a few podiums and primes, but a job change with a long commute ended it. For the next several years, I rode when I could, but not regularly.

My cycling life came back in 2005, when I got a fabulous job at Princeton University. I celebrated with a new bike (the second Giant TCR) and started riding with the PFW regularly again. I loved the fast B+ rides out of Cranberry with Ed Post or Peter Fenner, and even hanging on the back of Rick Buckley's A Train if I was feeling strong. I started leading the Tuesday B+ rides out of Rocky Hill, now known as the Rocky Hill Raiders. We really kicked it on those hot Tuesday nights in the Sourlands. Dreamy summer weekends in the hills on rides lead by Jack Palis, Peter Harnett and John Danek were amazing. We rode over hills and along quiet streams in country that rivals any place in the world.

As I have now seen! For the last two summers, my husband John and I travelled to France to ride some of the great climbs of Le Tour de France. We found ourselves on roads covered with fans and campervans and drunken Norwegians and Dutchmen shouting at me "Allez allez madame, bon courage!" We rode



through the crowds up Alpe d'Huez on the day of the Tour, and rode the entire final TT course in Chartres 2012. And Paris ... we'll always have Paris.

With France behind us, our pace is a bit slower. No "training", no rushing, just enjoying PFW rides with friends old and new at a social pace. I love what I experience from my bicycle (my third Giant TCR), and I appreciate every minute of it.

Ride on - Jane