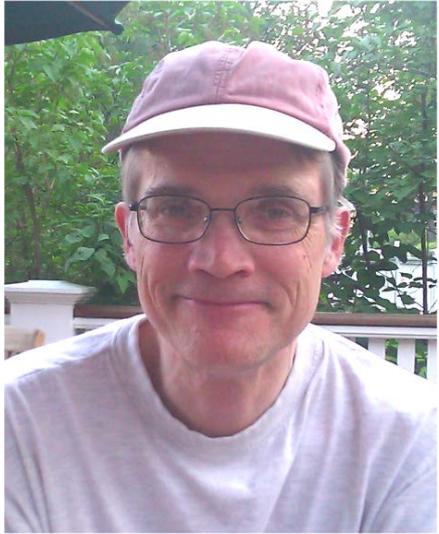


2017-07 Focus on Members

Our Focus this month is on Jud Hand, Long Distance Rider extraordinaire.

I was about six years old when my parents gave me my first bicycle at Christmas. This being the early 1960s, it was a red Schwinn single speed with balloon tires, and a coaster brake. To stop the bike, you simply pedaled in reverse. The bike also came with training wheels. A few months later, my mother took the bike and me, without training wheels, to a wide stretch of sidewalk along Communipaw Avenue in Jersey City, where, after a few failed attempts, I managed to keep the bike upright by myself.



So began what has turned into a lifetime, on and off, mostly on, love affair with bicycles. That night I rode around the block again and again. I felt the exhilaration of riding under my own power, that feeling of gliding through the air. My rides kept getting longer, from around the block, to riding to the park and back and finally, taking an epic 50-block tour down Kennedy Boulevard to Bayonne and back. The single-speed Schwinn was replaced by a three-speed "English racer," made by Mitsubishi. When I was 15, I got a 10-speed Atala, my first bike with derailleur gears. I joined the bike club at my high school. Over the summer I signed up for week-long American Youth Hostel tours of New England. My rides kept getting longer.

At the age of 20, I took an AYH trip across the country with seven other riders, covering approximately 3,000 miles, with all of our camping equipment carried on our bikes. This trip took two months, from Brooklyn, N.Y. to Vancouver, B.C. In 1977, it was still quite unusual to ride a bicycle across the country. Everywhere we stopped, local people would ask the same thing: "Where are you going on those bikes?" After a ride like that, I felt I could ride anywhere.

Well, I got married, had a son, then injured my Achilles area and thought my riding days were over at age 30. But in 1996, when I was 39 and my son was 8, we went together on a 10-mile charity ride at the Jersey Shore. To my surprise, my son finished the ride. To my even greater surprise, I finished it, too. That was it. When I found I could ride without reinjuring my leg, I quickly added miles to my rides. I finished a 100-mile ride three months later. Two years after that, I finished a 200-mile ride, the Longest Day. In 2003, I found out about ultra-long distance rides called randonneuring. The goal is to complete a full brevet series of 200k, 300k, 400k and 600k rides.

After about 10 years of randonneuring, due to family and work issues I have finally cut back my mileage and now, while less ambitious, am enjoying myself as much as ever. Sometimes I think about rides I've done before, such as the ride across the country, or riding on the Tour De France route in

the Alps, or competing in the Mount Washington hill climb or finishing perhaps my toughest ride of all: a brevet in Pennsylvania five years ago that lasted 93 hours, large portions of which were in a 40-degree rain, and covered 775 miles and more than 50,000 feet of climbing.

But mostly, I'm just enjoying being outside, under my own power, in the good company of fellow riders. I have made so many friends riding my bike, I can't count them. And that is the greatest reward of all. Jud Hand