

2014-08 Focus on Members

Our Focus this month is on Joe Bucci, long time PFW member and frequent Leader of PA Rides.

Let me start from the beginning. Many years ago I was born in Italy as the son of a poor farmer and his wife. The extreme poverty and hard life drove my family to emigrate to the USA. I was 6 years old. My parents found work in a sweatshop where we lived in North Philly.

Growing up as a kid in the inner city was not that bad. We had street games that kept us entertained after school. You may not know the games we played: stick ball (halfies), handball, baby in the air, kick the can, and my favorite...buck buck (who remembers Fat Albert ?). I was 12 years old when my dad bought me my first bike. He was 27 when he could afford his first bike (and primary means of transportation).

Ziping ahead.... in 1990 my son, Dante, was in the Boy Scouts. They were working on their cycling merit badge and they asked the dads to help out. In addition to learning about bike safety and maintenance, they had to complete 6 rides of 25 miles each and one ride of 50 miles. I even took them all the way up Federal Twist for bonus miles. They all made it, including about half of them walking to the top. Dante was only 10 years ! After doing all those rides, I was hooked.

I then joined the Princeton Free Wheelers and the Central Bucks Bicycle Club, however, I swore that I would never wear those Spandex shorts ! That didn't last long. My bike was a \$60 K Mart road bike with a kick stand. The peer pressure was too much. First the kick stand went and then the whole bike went. I quickly became a serious roadie.....well....almost. I'm still hanging to my toe clips (cages)!

I tried other sports over the years but most were one and done such as: sky diving, bungee jumping from a hot air balloon, hang gliding, aerobatic soaring in a glider, wind surfing, parasailing, etc. My wife, Maryann, thought I had a death wish in a mid-life crisis.

I have been leading C+ club rides for many years. Most of them start along the Delaware river: Bulls Island, Washington Crossing, Yardley commuter lot. I like to change it up a bit, so look out for my Roulette ride; Graveyard tour; Ride or ski; Zigzag, etc. My favorite week long rides were Anchor House and Ragbrai. This year will be my 25th MS 150 City to Shore ride. Dante has



joined me for 23 years. We also do The Wall before the pros get there each year. Now that I'm retired, I hope to do more riding with the Social Security Team and other cyclists.

Some fellow riders say that I like hills. The truth is I hate them. That's why I've got to keep doing them. In my hill search, I found one right in my home town in the middle of the Apennine mountains. It's hard to imagine a hill with a 60% grade, but there it was along with a warning sign. I previously thought that 18-20 % hills were huge. No. I did not even try to walk up or down it ! I thought I would flip over. I will be there again in August 2014. My Italian bike is waiting there for me and the hills.

In addition to the camaraderie of group rides, I appreciate the added safety it provides. In my 24+ years of cycling, I have had only one crash. It was in the Apennine mountains and due to a dangerous combination of down hill, high speed, switchback and gravel. I have traveled all over the world (85 countries when I stopped counting years ago), and I still come home and realize how good we have it here. God bless America. Ride on, Joe