

2014-10 Focus on Members

Our Focus this month is on Spencer Halper, One of PFW's "OctoMen" & frequent member of "Team Social Security."

My cycling began at age three, while pedaling away and ringing the bell of my little red fire truck, on the sidewalks of Middletown, NY. At the mature age of five, my wonderful fire truck was hijacked by my little three year old brother. Fortunately, I acquired a more sophisticated and faster mode of transportation, a tricycle. My new trike served me well on the sidewalks of Port Jervis, NY, until I was chased by my neighbors goose, that nipped my butt. I guess you can say I was goosed.

At age seven we moved to Brooklyn, NY, where dad took a job helping build ships in the Navy Yard. I enrolled in 2nd grade, our principal was Mr. Lipshitz and my brother took possession of my trike. Not to be deterred, I became the scourge of neighborhood sidewalks, on rented 10 cent an hour two wheelers.

Being a nomadic family, we moved to Allentown, Pa, as I was entering sixth grade. There I finally got my own two wheeler. It was a used \$5 bike and very heavy. After attempting several long distance rides, my friends with similar bikes and I decided that limiting riding in the neighborhood made the most sense. All pedaling stopped at age sixteen, when I got my driver's license and filling the cars with girls became the priority. You bet.

My exercising resumed while in the army in Hawaii. There I was spellbinding as a mile runner, finishing last and second last in two races. My running resumed at age 49. Within nine months I did my first marathon and continued to run until I turned seventy and my aching feet said stop the nonsense.

But I must back up to age 35 when I bought my first new two wheeler. It was a 5 speed Schwinn tandem with metal saddle bags. We added a third seat for our daughter Leah and our son Matt rode along-side us. When Leah was 3 she needed a potty stop. We dismounted and held her over a sewer grate to do her business. She still remembers that someone walking on a nearby overpass was looking at her. Gladys, my wife, never learned to ride. So, I would balance for us and pedal like a madman while her legs turned. She never understood why I was worn out after each ride, while she was fresh.

Getting back to my senior years, I decided to test biking. The narrow tires on a road bike scared me, so I bought a hybrid when I turned seventy one. While riding the hybrid for 8 months, I built up to 35-mile group rides and nearly collapsed on the hills. Next came a 30 speed carbon fiber road bike and separated shoulders from an accident, where I became air-borne together with my new bike. After recovering, I was fortunate to find Norman Batho and his band of social security white-heads. With them I learned, if you didn't want to be dropped, you didn't follow Georgio and if you wanted to do a century you rode with Mary before, during and after the group rides, as I did the year she did 18,000 miles and I



tagged along to end up with 7,600 miles. Being a snowbird also helped my mileage. A special thanks goes to my favorite ride leaders, Dennis Whitney and his man Friday Al Porter on weekdays and Ira Saltiel on Saturdays.

I keep thinking of the selfless acts of kindness by Erich and Ernie cheering up Craig during their weekly visits. On a return ride from one of those visits Erich left us forever. Erich we all miss your botanical lessons, operatic arias, sense of humor and good will.

Ride on, Spencer