

2015-02 Focus On Members

Our Focus this month is on Harry Koenig, long time member and current PFW trip advisor.

After undergoing a heart attack & quintuple coronary by-pass surgery's - twice, at early ages of 44 & 51 I vowed to be more diligent regarding diet & exercise. I joined a fitness club and bought a new inexpensive bicycle. My ride consisted of 10-12 miles, doing my best to avoid any hills.

Shortly after I joined the Westchester Cycle Club doing 30 mile C rides. Cycling in northern Westchester, Putnam Counties and the back roads of Ct. there were lots of hills. I struggled with the uphill's but loved the downhill's. I vowed to improve and 11 months after my 2nd CABG I did a hilly first century. At mile 95 the tears started - WOW I had come a long way.

I became the B/B+ ride leader and eventually the Westchester club's Rides Captain. Not gifted with artistic skills, I took pride in designing scenic cycling rides over less traveled roads. I became proficient ascending and my favorite ride was a 50 miler I designed in Harriman State Park. You either ascend or descend but what great scenery rewards.

Teri and I hosted Rhinebeck, NY 3-4 day weekends for many years, a great cycling area. I was now the proud owner of a Kestrel carbon fiber bicycle. Doing long distance rides became a challenge and my buddy Sam and I twice did the "Ride Across NY State", Buffalo to Central Park.

After retiring in 94 I set my sights on a Cross Country. Riding with CrossRoads Cycling Tour in 97 I did LA to Boston raising \$5k for the American Heart Association. Dipping your rear wheel into the Pacific and then finally after 3400 miles and 47 days the front wheel into the Atlantic is a thrill that is hard to top. I had joined an Internet CABG support group and a few of the members came out to give me support along the way.

Shortly after I moved to NJ in 99 I did the obligatory first PFW ride with Norm. It was a Nov C ride & no A or B rides that warm Sunday. After 10 miles & averaging about 17mph, another new club rider asked "wonder what the B rides are like?"

Became a volunteer with "Caring Hearts" at RWJ - visiting heart surgery patients before and after surgery. Depression is not uncommon after this surgery which I had experienced after 2nd CABG. Depending on the patient I might relate my cycling adventures after surgery and felt I had lifted their spirits.

My wife Teri and I would lead a 40 - 50 mile midweek ride from Thompson Park and on Sat longer rides. Then in 99 I did a Pacific Coast ride - Seattle to San Diego another CrossRoads tour. One riders comment "another boring day of spectacular scenery" perfectly summed it up.



My 2nd Kestrel has a lot of dust on it but my thoughts of PFW are of the many nice people Teri & I have met along the way. One I would like to mention is Al Lowich. On a mid week Thomson Park ride, I was struck by a car and was taken to RWJ by ambulance. Al drove Teri to the hospital. Fortunately a concussion was the most serious injury. Words of advice - If ride starts at Thompson Park you do not want to finish at RWJ.

In my years of cycling one thing that is generic is the special friends you make and the camaraderie of cyclists. PFW is no exception. Harry Koenig