

## 2015-03 Focus On

### Members

***Our Focus this month is on Cristina Marquez, 2015 Membership Meeting Presenter, dedicated B+ hill rider & accomplished Ride Leader.***



The fun started in 1997 when I moved to NJ for work and joined the PFW club to discover a great life of cycling and meeting great friends! My first ride was with Norman, a great ride leader! I was struggling to keep up with Norman since my leg muscles were accustomed to running which does not translate into long endurance bike rides. It was clear to me that I needed to get in shape to keep up with my new PFW friends!

So I began training with Ken Natalie's hill rides out of Hopewell, NJ. Instantly I found myself on Poor Farm road trying to figure out how to get up that steep hill! This is when my love/hate relationship began with climbing. I would not allow this "steep" climb to get the best of me! Following in Ken's pedal strokes, I have been leading PFW rides on Thursdays out of Hopewell, NJ for the past 5 years.

Early in my cycling (2000 – 2002) my husband and I moved to Wales, UK for work assignment. We spent the next 2 years climbing through the hills/valleys of Wales. My first season there was a bit of a challenge given that I was recovering from back surgery (a ruptured lower disc) and had to take it easy. There are no flat roads in Wales! The 18% grade climbs were common and very demanding. However it provided a fantastic way to see the beautiful countryside in the summer when daylight lasted until 11pm. Living in the UK also made it very easy to travel into Europe for cycling.

In 2001, we biked in the Italian Dolomites. Little did I realize that not only would I be dealing with the miles long climb to the top of Paso Role but also learned the relationship between altitude and oxygen levels in the higher mountains. This meant more stopping to breathe and taking pictures of the beautiful scenery. We also travelled to Mallorca, Spain in 2002 to attend a spring cycling camp operated by an English organization and then returned in spring 2006 with some of my PFW buddies. Both trips were a great experiences. During spring training there are cycling groups from all over Europe training in this warm weather nirvana. It was a great opportunity to ride with cyclists from other countries. The camaraderie, scenery, and climbing in Mallorca was spectacular!

In 2003, it was back to Italy with our PFW friends and tour guide, Luciano Virgili, for the best of everything (great biking, food, wine and gelato). It is amazing how much gelato one can eat when you spend the day cycling! A

small group of PFW friends, including George Foradori, met up with Luciano in central Italy, Umbria region. We stayed in Spoleto, Umbria where we cycled the beautiful and very challenging Apennine mountains. By the time I got to the top of the mountain I was ready to throw my bike off the mountain and said I was done with cycling! Soon after I had some gelato and came to my senses.

Knowing that I wanted to go on many more cycling trips, in 2009 I decided to take my "baby (aka bike)" to Belinky bike shop in Philadelphia to have S&S couplers added to the frame. This allows me to travel with my bike packaged in a standard size luggage case and avoid the now sky high airline fees for oversized bags. We returned to Italy soon after to cycle through Tuscany, Tobi, and Luciano's home town of San Benedetto. Italy is by far my favorite place to cycle!

In June 2014, I decided to head back to Europe to conquer the French Alps with Cervo Rosso, a Cycling team based in Switzerland. This was certainly my biggest cycling challenge given that I am older, my back/knees are shot, and I have consumed more gelato than I have biked! The challenge for this trip was to get in shape for 5 full days of cycling in the French Alps by end of May! The ride profile called for long rides from 60-80miles per day with elevations of 5-10,000 feet of climbing. It is impossible to train for this type of climbing (miles long climbs) in NJ. I had to pull out my old "Hillier Than Thou" cue sheets to find the steepest/longest climbs in NJ for my weekend training rides. My weekday rides consisted of hill-repeats up/over the Sourland ridge. Still this was not enough as I soon realized. By mid-May, my husband who was cycling with me on most of these training rides said he was done and no longer wanted any part of this "hills from hell ride". He was right about that! He did at least help me train as best as I could for the ride. For this trip, I joined a couple of friends from CBBC club and we ventured off to Samoens, France. I arrived in Switzerland to meet the CervoRosso cycling team and learned that most of the riders were racers from Australia, Switzerland, and UK. I thought "holy crap!" I knew then I was in trouble and was going to suffer during the trip! They were all a bunch of Strava junkies who were in dire need to prove who was king of the French Alps (Col de la Ramaz, and Cote des Gets)! I was happy being queen of gelato (which were still closed I might add in early June). This is not Italy. The riding pace on flats was 22-24mph and the climbing pace was sprinting to see who will be king of the mountain. In the evening the group would gather for dinner and consume plenty of wine. Climbing at altitude, dehydrated, consuming too much vino and not enough gelato took its toll on me. Multiple days of this and I was cooked! Thank goodness there was a sag car on the rides ready to pick up the stragglers. There was no shame for me on this, I gladly accepted the ride since I was on vacation! In spite of having to work hard on the climbs, the trip was wonderfully coordinated by Cervo Rosso!

I am on to planning my next cycling trip. My philosophy in life is to live life to its fullest. I hope to see you on my PFW Thursday Hopewell hill rides. I am always looking to meet new PFW friends.