

## 2016-08 Member In Focus: Peter Harnett



I have never been off a bike: English racers at 12 (Raleigh, BSA) and my first used 10-speed at 16. After getting hooked in the early 80s on road biking in Texas with several group round trips from Houston to Austin under my belt, I made my way back East. In 1988 I joined PFW. At that same time, Ira Saltiel, two other guys, and I formed the Plainsboro Bike Squad. We rode a lot, pushed each other on, and learned together about the heat and hard work during a couple of PFW Event centuries.

In 1991 I married and three boys soon followed. My wife, Beatrice (also a PFW member), and I backed off biking for several years due to small boys in tow. In 1997, we moved from Hopewell to an old East Amwell farmhouse on Orchard Road that we discovered and admired from afar during several bike rides years earlier. In 2002 Beatrice asked why I was driving over to Cranbury for PFW rides when better biking was out our front door in the Sourlands.

I then started leading rides that same year in East Amwell despite being directionally impaired and a little later got some help from co-leaders Piers Forsyth and Jack Palis (my compass!). We led scenic rides to Peapack Gladstone (Lake Road and break at Coco Luxe), Round Valley and Spruce Run Reservoirs, Oldwick, Frenchtown, and throughout Bucks County. We had a nucleus of 8 to 10 riders and things were even better when our Cone of Sunshine, Jane Danek, made the ride. John Waltz was my enforcer if someone was not playing nice, and Larry Hunt always helped to set an effortless pace up the hills. After twelve years and getting tired of leading from the back, I turned the reigns over to our able Paul Ilechko, who continues the tradition of nicely-paced and scenic rides primarily in the Hunterdon hills.

My two proudest bicycling achievements include the Longest Day (212 miles) accomplished with four fellow PFW riders and a five-day ride across New York State (500 miles); however, bicycling and membership in PFW mean a lot more to me than achievements. Bicycling has been my ride out of some low times, particularly in the 1980s, after leaving medical school and losing a brother. Bicycling has been great for fitness, restoring focus in life, and meeting and making some great friends. Our three boys remain active and fit. I would like to think this is in part due to the example my wife and I set by staying active for all these years.

Thanks to PFW and its members for making my life better! Special thanks to friends John Waltz, who makes me laugh and keeps my bikes working, and Michael Heffler, who can take you up endless hills but keeps it interesting with his great perspective on life and bicycling. An additional thanks to Cristina Marquez for great ride leads and her patience on hilly Thursday night rides.