

February, 2015:

An Archaeological Dig into DVBC's Distant Past by Rich Patterson

Have you ever wondered how the Delaware Valley Bicycle Club was started, or what took place during the club's infancy?

This story will include some cyber digs into Daily Times articles in the 70s, phone calls to past presidents, a story from Frank Havnoonian, and some deductions that Sherlock Holmes might approve. Former DVBC newsletter editor Bob LaDrew had taken an interest in building an archive of past newsletters to share with current members and to preserve DVBC's past, as well as to honor those in the past who established the club's solid beginnings. Bob yearned to know how the club was first established. Let's see what twists and turns this story takes.

The initial momentum was ignited once LaDrew learned that there was a stash of past newsletters buried in dusty cardboard boxes stuck deep inside a dark closet of Rich Patterson, DVBC's past president from 1984 and 1985. Bob made a stop at Rich's home to pick up the newsletters. Some months later, Bob sorted out those newsletters and a timeline of past presidents was built.

Further discussions and emails ensued, and rather than trace DVBC's history back to only the 80s, a determined effort was undertaken to see what took place in the 70s and who were instrumental in forming the club.

Richard Mann / Bob McNair

The bloodhounds were rounded up to do some tracking... Were there any potential leads? One thing that was known is that Frank Havnoonian, the encyclopedia of Delco bike history, has often shared his story that back in the early 70s Bob McNair, the club's first VP and secretary, sat in front of the Media Courthouse with Richard Mann and chatted about forming a bicycle club.

To see where this story might lead, a cyber sleuth went to the Web looking for some supporting evidence. Lo and behold, the following Delaware County Times article was discovered:

Apr 8 1972. The Daily Times...

"Bicycle club slates program. A new bicycle club for touring enthusiasts as well as racers will start this week with a program of regular rides on Sunday mornings and Tuesday evenings except when the club schedules special events. Interested cyclists of all ages are invited to join by coming to Mann's Cycle Shop, West Chester Pike at Route 252, Newtown, at 10 a.m. Sundays for racing, or 11 a.m. for touring, or meeting on the steps of the county courthouse in Media, at 5:45 p.m. Tuesdays, for rides until dark."

Could this have been OUR Delaware Valley Bicycle Club? Another article was found. Read on....

Nov 20 1974, The Daily Times...

ANN JENNINGS of Upper Darby responded to the newspaper article, "Build Bike Trail, Network To The Times". Ann wrote, "Congratulations to the Daily Times for its excellent article on one of Delaware County's many cycling enthusiasts, Miles Warner. Cycling in Delaware County, as in all parts of the United States, is fast becoming a many faceted activity for a vast number of our citizens. If you are a loner and like to ride at your own pace, that's fine. If the idea of riding with other cyclists appeals to you, there are many fine riding clubs in the Delaware County area that would welcome an experienced or inexperienced cyclist. An example is Britannia Cycle Club, under the direction of Richard Mann of King of Prussia, who is well known in cycling circles for his expertise in touring and racing direction. Britannia boasts some of the finest touring and racing members on the East Coast. Cycle track and road racing, long a very popular sport in Europe, is attracting a great many fans in the United States."

DEDUCTION: Additional research uncovered no articles directly linking Richard Mann with the Delaware Valley Bicycle Club and, reading between the lines, it appears that Richard Mann's passion was bicycle racing, not "social" bike riding.

Bruce Anders / Bob McNair

Another name associated with Bob McNair and bicycling is Bruce Anders.

In the "1972 Safety Code" that appears in the DVBC Virtual Museum, we see that Bob McNair had led a ride for boys and girls to a distant youth hostel, while sharing the leadership for that ride with Bruce Anders. Further sleuthing revealed that Bruce was a vo-tech student at the time, which would eliminate Bruce as a likely key figure in organizing the club.

Earl Williams / Bob McNair

Additional Googling unearthed this gem:

March 15, 1973, The Daily Times

(<http://www.newspapers.com/newspage/14691644/>)

Bicycling season to begin MEDIA -- the bicycling season will get under way with an open meeting of the Delaware Valley Bicycle Club at 2:30 p.m. on Sunday in Media Federal Savings and Loan, Front and Orange Sts. Those who want to cycle along the Ridley Creek Valley before the meeting are invited to come to the Savings and Loan at 1 pm with their bikes. A special feature of the first get-together will be a slide talk by Bill and Esther Cohen of Springfield on "Exploring France's Loire Valley by Bicycle". In addition, the season's schedule for evening rides, Sunday tours, weekend hostel trips and vacation trips will be described. The club is especially interested in family cycling, and in overnight hosteling trips for teenage boys and girls.

The Delaware Valley Bicycle Club was organized last April by Bob McNair of Swarthmore and Earl Williams of Prospect Park. It rapidly grew to more than 70 families from the Chester Pike, Media, Swarthmore, and Springfield areas. Last year's program featured a wide variety of events for riders of all abilities. It included leisurely evening rides, dawn rides, weekend hostel trips, picnics and educational outings. More information about the club may be obtained by writing Delaware Valley Bicycle Club P. O. Box 408, Springfield, PA."

This yielded yet another name! Upon getting out the shovel again to dig further into the Web, an Earl Williams was found at LinkedIn. The profile mentioned his graduation from Interboro High School and employment by Westinghouse (the company for which Bob McNair also worked). Bingo! This HAD to be the Earl Williams who was mentioned in the Daily Times with Bob McNair. Knowing that Earl is now working at Old Salem Museums

and Gardens and most likely living in the Winston Salem area, our cyber sleuth took his shovel out to dig again - this time to get an address and/or phone number. Using the RADARIS website did the trick.

Our cyber sleuth made a call and left a message. Earl was kind enough to return the call, and sure enough Earl is our man! In fact, Earl Williams was the first president of our club. Earl had made an announcement seeking others to go on social bike rides back in the early 70s. Bob McNair responded to his announcement and they met at Bob McNair's home. According to Earl, Bob McNair was the brains behind the club, as well as the creator of its name Delaware Valley Bicycle Club. Together these gentlemen set the club's early schedule of events.