

GOING FROM 15 MILES OF BIKES PATHS IN SEA PINES TO TODAY'S **112 MILES ISLANDWIDE** WAS A DECADES-LONG UPHILL RIDE

BY LISA J. ALLEN PHOTOS BY ARNO DIMMILING

ooling around Hilton
Head Island on beach
cruisers is nearly a
requirement to experience the true Hilton Head.

From miles of beaches to more than 100 miles of paved pathways, it's the way to get around, relax and enjoy the scenery. But it didn't happen overnight.

Like much of the ambiance that makes Hilton Head Island a top family destination, it started with island developer Charles Fraser.

"Bike paths were absolutely Charles Fraser's idea," said Peter Ovens, whom Fraser enlisted in the 1960s to oversee construction of the bike paths and boardwalks that made Hilton Head unique. Hilton Head Plantation, also developed by Fraser, followed suit.

THE EARLY DAYS

From the start, Charles Fraser built Sea Pines Resort with leisure paths in mind.

"We changed the name from bike paths to leisure trails and widened them so they would accommodate both purposes – pedestrians and bicyclists," Ovens said.

"We tried to connect all of the systems, to put a net over the area if you will," Ovens said.



Charles Fraser wanted to keep Hilton Head Island's bike paths away from the road. He wanted the trails to weave among the trees and give bicyclists and pedestrians a closer encounter with nature.

Efforts were somewhat constrained where lots had already been platted and sold because some owners objected to a portal that would bring bicyclists and pedestrians past their windows.

But the rest of the development was a blank canvas, Ovens said.

Designers also had a lot of room with which to work: The development spans 4,600 acres.

"Fraser took a quarter of it for open space," Ovens said, noting it was an unheard-of commitment. People think most of that open space is consumed by the 600-acre forest preserve, but that's only half of the area left blank, Ovens said.

That acreage became the foundation of the 15-mile trail system.

"Charles wanted to keep the trails away from the road," Ovens said. "He didn't like that, with them right next to the road."

Instead, he wanted the trails to weave among the trees and give bicyclists and pedestrians a closer encounter with nature. He chose asphalt over concrete because it blended in better and wouldn't crack like concrete.

"It was brilliant at the time," Ovens said. "He didn't do a lot of sporting activities, but he saw their importance for a family-oriented destination.".

By 1980, the 1,500-bike rental fleet in Sea Pines and Hilton Head Plantation sold out often, according to records kept by Truitt Rabun, a land planner who moved to Hilton Head in 1972.





MAKK

Hilton Head Island is known as a family oriented resort destination and for its leadership in environmental preservation and resource conservation practices. The pathway network provides a safe transportation alternative by connecting residential, commercial and recreation areas of the town.

FOILED BY FUNDING

Despite the popularity of the trails in Sea Pines and Hilton Head Plantation, they pretty much ended there.

"By the late 1970s, there was only one path on a public road, the one from Sea Pines to Coligny Plaza," Rabun said. Sea Pines built it with the hopes others would maintain it, but no one did.

To try to extend the trail system beyond the gates, Rabun and other bike enthusiasts formed Pathways for Safety Committee, an offshoot of the Hilton Head Island Chamber of Commerce, to plead for funding from anyone who would listen. But because Hilton Head Island was then just an unincorporated part of the county, it wasn't a high priority, despite repeated, well-researched appeals.

The group rallied support from all of the resorts, the Sierra Club, land planners, national biking groups, even Palmetto Electric, which was amenable to allowing bike paths along their utility rights of way, Rabun said.

They often cited seeing a woman pushing a baby stroller in a traffic lane of Pope Avenue because she had no other choice.

The arguments for sidewalks and biking trails were sound, but the money was absent.

The state attorney general had ruled that state highway funds couldn't be used for bike paths because users didn't pay gas taxes, which in turn fed those coffers.

Federal grants usually required 50-50 matching and ongoing local maintenance. There was no kitty for the matching funds and no entity that could promise maintenance.

Seven years of work resulted in little. The S.C. General Assembly approved funding in 1983 for a single mile of path along Pope Avenue.

"The only way bike paths were going to happen is if there was a town," Rabun said he realized in the early 1980s.

THE PATH-PAVING CRAZE

Once the town was formed in 1983 and was able to levy taxes, it built bike and leisure paths with abandon. The town built miles and miles of pathways, but then ignored them.

Frank Babel, a retired IBM executive from Dallas who moved to Hilton Head about eight years ago, immediately noticed the poor condition of the bike trails.

"I traveled a lot, When I

started riding here, I was distressed. There was a lot of debris and root and branch intrusion on the paths and a lot of the dots weren't connected."

Babel, now co-chairman of the HHI Bicycling Advocacy Committee, began a weekly ride to chronicle the condition of the trails and reported back to the town.

"The town at that time was just building pathways," Babel said. "They were doing the hardware, but not the software, so to speak."

Babel also looked for a trail map, but instead found maps for beach access and others for parks.

"The beach map had no access points for bikes." Babel said. "I found a bike map that was mimeographed that you could barely read

and didn't show the beaches or the parks."

Babel spoke up at public meetings to raise the need for a bike trail system.

"They weren't used to people just being a pain in the neck," he said. "I was just known as, 'It's just Frank.' "

He got to know bike shop owners and other bikers and formed a community group called Squeaky Wheels Bicycle Advocacy Group. "It gave me an umbrella organization to deal with island issues," he said.

He went to the Greater Island Council, but didn't get a lot of attention there either. "These are people who want to talk about roads, not bikes, so I was a pain there, too."

A lightbulb went off for Babel when he heard that Spartanburg earned one of the state's first Bike-Friendly Community designations from the League of American Bicyclists about six years ago.

"I was complaining about anecdotal things," Babel said. Now he and the group had a tangible goal that provided a framework and milestones to elevate the status of biking on the island.

"I worked for EDS and sold locomotives to countries. I'm used to big deals. I don't play checkers, I play chess," Babel

Bicycling advocates started playing chess.

They started working on the planning and the league's five Es: Engineering, Education, Encouragement, Enforcement and Evaluation and set up volunteer forces to address those issues.

A plethora of bike clubs

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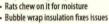
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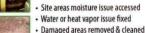


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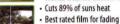
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Bicycling is a key component differentiating this community from other resort communities and significantly reduces the congestion and vehicular traffic that would otherwise be generated. The 12-mile long and five-mile wide island has 112 miles of pathways.

emerged, the largest being Kickin' Asphalt, which was formed in 2006. Kickin' Asphalt set up a fundraiser for the Boys & Girls Club called Pedal 4 Kids, and they helped maintain the public trails. With guidance from the statewide Palmetto Cycling Coalition, bike safety classes sprouted for all ages and level of riders.

THE SILVER AWARD

Eventually, the Hilton
Head Island-Bluffton
Chamber of Commerce also
realized that biking was a primary reason people came to
Hilton Head, along with golf,
tennis, dining, fishing and
the beach. It too began promoting Hilton Head's biking
appeal on its website and
promotional materials.

By the time the town took up the charge in 2010 to get a Bike-Friendly Community designation from the League of American Bicyclist the following year, much of the work was already underway on all fronts: maintaining trails, adding well-marked pedestrian crossings and safety islands in the middle of busy streets, putting up stop signs for bikes and walkers at road intersections and sprinkling the island with bike racks.

Not only did the island get designation as a bike-friendly community in 2011, it got the state's only silver award. Six South Carolina cities sport bronze awards.

"We formed another committee, the HHI Bicycling Advisory Committee, so we wouldn't lose momentum," Babel said. "We want to make the island safer and more bike-friendly for the entire island."

Susan Thomas, senior vice president of the chamber's Visitor and Convention Bureau, co-chairs the committee with Babel.

"It's important to note that it took a lot of yeoman's work by individual volunteer committee members and town staff in developing our bicycling-friendly infrastructure to take a swing at this designation and hit a home run with the Silver Award with our first application," Thomas said.

PRESENT DAY

Today, Hilton Head has 112 miles of bike trails, paths and lanes, with 50 of those miles in gated communities.

"The last 10 to 12 miles have been really important connections," Babel said, citing those along Mathews Drive and Pope Avenue.

Another new draw is a 2-mile off-road trail at the town's Crossings Park, but it's up to volunteers to maintain it for now.

There is no question every entity on Hilton Head Island sees the popularity of biking on the island.

"Biking is one of the most popular activities visitors do, no matter what their age, no matter how long it's been since they were on a bike," said Rob Bender, director of recreation at Sea Pines Resort.

"The other beauty is the ability to ride on the beach. It's unique. We encourage our visitors to enjoy that."

The resort is more than willing to do the extra work to clean the saltwater and sand off their rental bike fleet.

"We do a good job of cleaning, maintaining and replacing bikes when needed." Demand for bike rentals within the resort has gone up 25 percent in the last three years, Bender said.

"Last year, rental companies brought 46,000 bikes into Sea Pines," said Toby McSwain, director of safety and security for Sea Pines' homeowners' group, the Community Services Association. "That's on top of the 1,200 bikes we rent here through our three resort rental companies and the bikes visitors bring in."

Sea Pines has always maintained its trail network, dispatching crews six days a week to make rounds to clear, clean and maintain the trails, McSwain said.

In fact, there are so many bikes in Sea Pines, they ask riders to stick to the trails rather than roads and don't allow people to pedal into the resort.

"You need to be staying as a guest to bike in. Otherwise you have to bring your bike on your car," Bender said. "It's because of the limited amount of trails."

However, they are considering adding trails to the forest preserve.

It's all an effort to draw generation after generation of families to Hilton Head Island.

As Bender said, "You talk to people who vacationed here as child, and riding bikes along the beach and the trails are their fondest memories."

And now there is an island-wide, well-maintained trail system that welcomes even more riders.





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The Hilton Head Island Bicycling Advocacy Committee is a group of 25 volunteers who work with the Town of Hilton Head and others to develop traffic signs, kiosks, websites and brochures about bicycling on the island.

Bike Advocates

>>>>> NEVER STOP PEDDI ING THE TOPIC

BY LISA J. ALLEN | PHOTO BY TONI TROUT

There is a group that never wants Hilton Head Island to forget about the importance of bicycling to the local economy.

The HHI Bicycling Advocacy Committee, formed after the island earned a silver award in 2011 as a Bike-Friendly Community from the League of American Bicyclists, tirelessly creates and promotes bike-related events and efforts in order to weave bicycling into the fabric of life on Hilton Head.

The 25 volunteers' work ranges from building and distributing mobile bike racks at community events in hopes more people will arrive on two wheels, to encouraging the Hilton Head Island-Bluffton Chamber of Commerce's second annual Bike & Dine Week that paired dining deals with biking. They've been working with the Town of Hilton Head and others to update traffic signs, kiosks, websites and brochures about bicycling on the island.

The island has about 50 bicycling "gadflies" to thank for encouraging the town to add pedestrian-crossing signals, putting in more crosswalks and adding safety islands in the middle of busy roads.

"The group began meeting informally at the chamber to coordinate the application effort in 2010, as well as discuss issues around bicycling safety, infrastructure and promotion of bicycling in our region," said Susan Thomas, co-chair of the BAC and senior vice president of the Visitor and Convention Bureau.

BIKING M

Thomas is a biker herself. "I consider myself to be a weekend warrior rec rider, but I have aspirations to become more active in longer group rides if or when my work life slows down just a bit."

The BAC's goals for 2014 fill a seven-page spreadsheet, from making biking more visible to the community to staging more safety classes to setting a baseline for bicycle use.

Because of the biking group, the town is investigating a bike share program as found in many major cities.

Part of its work is to ensure a successful renewal next year of the Bike-Friendly Community designation, said Marcy Benson, the town's senior grant administrator.

Hilton Head's designation is unlikely to rise above silver because a gold designation has significant benchmarks related to how many employees ride to work, said Charles Sampson, a member of the Bicycle Advisory Group.

"More people are biking," said Frank Babel, co-chair of the committee, adding that the BAC trained 40 ambassadors to help people get where they want to go via bike and illustrate the appeal of bicycling on Hilton Head.

Babel uses the RBC Heritage golf tournament as an example of biking's growth. The tournament let bikes in for the first time three years ago and 500 bicyclists entered Sea Pines. The next year, 2,800 arrived, and this year, 3,800 bikes were pedaled in, despite the rainy weather.

The town, with the help of the BAC, intends to make all community events – including the Concours d'Elegance this fall – bike-friendly by carting in portable bike racks by the trailer load.

Today, there are 30 bike rental businesses on the island, for a combined fleet of 20,000 bicycles. Add the roughly 5,000 to 10,000 bikes people bring with them strapped to their vehicles and those owned by residents and that's a lot of bikes, Babel said.

But the committee still has a lot of work to do.

"For active cyclists, our infrastructure is weak. The people in Spandex want to go fast," Babel said. "They do it for the exercise."

The BAC will boost its awareness efforts for motorists to make biking on roadways safer.

"The emphasis has been recreational bicyclists. They are our bread and butter," Babel said.

Two other groups of bikers need attention, too: Commuters and off-road.

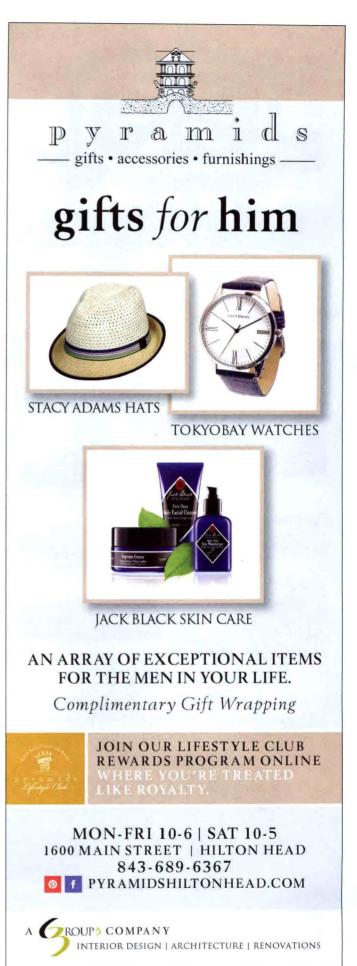
At present, most commuters are service workers who get to work via the pathways. To encourage other commuters, the committee helped set up lots where people can park their cars at Jarvis Creek and Coastal Discovery Museum at Honey Horn and jump on their bikes to travel to the rest of the island.

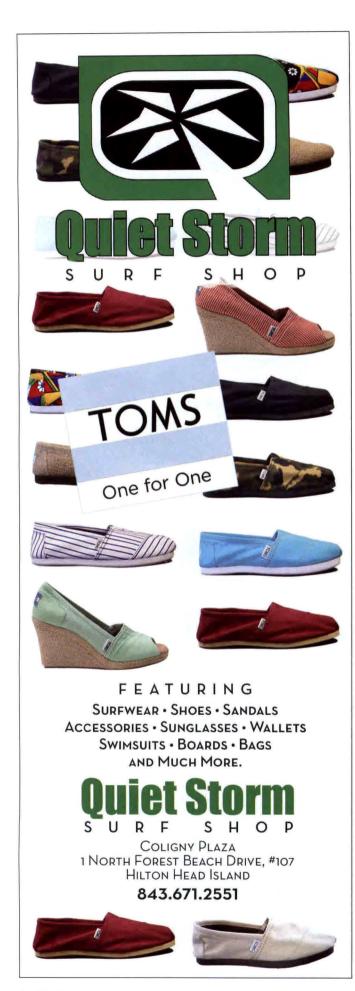
As biking gets more popular, who knows where it will lead.

"I would love to show real estate on bikes, but it gets a little hot," said Sampson, who is the owner of Charles Sampson Real Estate Group. "Biking is something that when I meet brand new prospects, the package I give them isn't just about the real estate, it's the lifestyle: arts, the symphony, outdoor activities, fishing, kayaking, golfing, walking and biking.

"It's just another arrow in the quill to say the lifestyle is pretty cool. A lot of people ride in Colorado, but there are mountains out there. It's pretty flat and easy to ride here."

And getting safer every day. M











>>>>> HEY BICYCLISTS,LET'S BE SAFE OUT THERE

BY LISA J. ALLEN | PHOTOS BY ARNO DIMMLING

As more and more people pedal around the island, it's getting safer to do so, said Frank Babel, co-chair of the Bicycle Advocacy Committee.

"The more riders, the fewer accidents because drivers are used to them," he said. "The more people who ride, the safer it becomes."

Even with a spike in the number of recreational riders, the number of car-bike crashes on the island fell 38 percent from 2011 to 2012. The number of crashes rose in 2013, but with so many more bicycles, the rate fell.

"It takes constant education of motorists and bicyclists," Babel said.

The highest risk of collision arises when a car is making a right turn and the driver looks left for oncoming traffic. If a bike approaches from the right, the driver might not see them and

proceed to turn anyway.

"We tell bicyclists, unless you make eye contact with the driver and you make sure they see you, wait for the car to pass," Babel said.

The group also encourages riders to be extra careful if they decline to wear a helmet. Because most island bikers are recreational and riding on trails, few wear helmets.

Babel noted that in Amsterdam, a city of far more bicyclists than motorists, few people wear helmets and the crash rate is low.



"They ride bikes all of the time and they're careful," he said.

The BAC, through education on trail kiosks and safety training for rental company employees, is encouraging that riders younger than 12 wear a helmet.

For all types of riders, the BAC's safety committee conducts traffic safety classes, bike-handling clinics, distributes safety brochures to bike rental shops and provides outreach to low-income families. The committee has given away thousands of helmets and reflective gear to families without means, Babel said. The group also offers bike law and safety training for local police officers and sheriff's deputies.



To make your island riding safer, here are some tips:

- When crossing driveways, slow down and yield to cars.
- When approaching an intersection with a street or road, stop and look both ways before proceeding.
- Use the pedestrian crossings.
- Wear a helmet.
- Wear bright-colored clothing so you're more visible to motorists, pedestrians and other riders.
- Stay to the right on the trail except when passing walkers or slower riders. While collisions with cars isn't going up, collisions with other bikers and pedestrians is increasing. Let pedestrians know you're coming. "Excuse me" or "Coming up on your left," work well.



RIDING ON THE ROAD

For those who ride faster or farther, South Carolina made it easier and safer to get around on bikes in 2008 when it updated its bicycling laws.

The state eliminated the requirement that bicyclists ride on side paths if one is available. That makes it safer for bicycles who ride for speed. It's safer for the pedestrians on the leisure path, too.

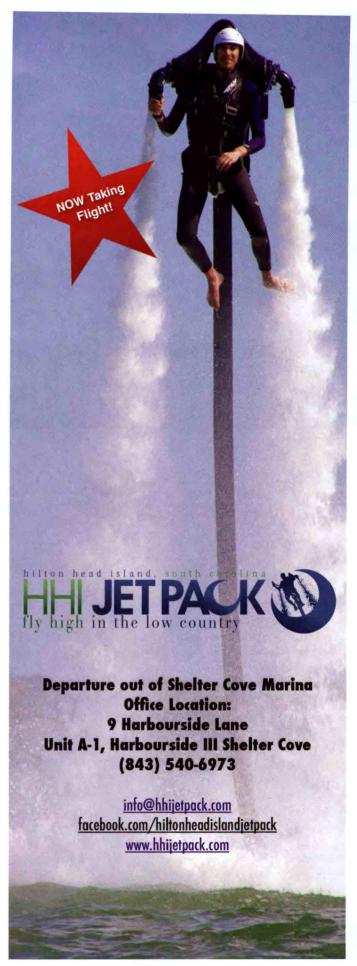
The law also got tougher on drivers who don't share the road. The updated law requires drivers to keep a safe distance between car and biker, a welcome change for bicyclists all too accustomed to drivers passing as close as possible to express their displeasure with bikers, called "brushing" riders. Passing too close now carries a \$1,000 civil fine whether or not there was an injury.

Drivers and passengers also can be fined up to \$250 and spend 30 days in jail for yelling at bikers or throwing objects in their direction.

There also will be more room for bicyclists. All new road and widening projects receiving state or federal money have to include a designated bike lane.

All these efforts add up, Babel said.

"What we've found is that safety is a process of continuous improvement," he said. "There is no silver bullet in bike safety."





REINFORCES ISLAND'S COMMITMENT TO BEING A BICYCLE FRIENDLY COMMUNITY

BY MEGAN MATTINGLY-ARTHUR | PHOTOS BY ARNO DIMMLING

Long celebrated for its world-class golf courses, thriving arts culture and more than 12 miles of sparkling sand beaches, Hilton Head Island has also gained a reputation as a premier destination for recreational biking.

The island draws more than 2 million visitors each year, many of whom come to enjoy the nearly 60 miles of pristine public pathways and nature trails by bicycle. Hilton Head Island also boasts more than 50 miles of pathways and shared roadways within its private developments.

In 2011, the League of American Bicyclists awarded Hilton Head Island its coveted Bicycle Friendly Community designation.

Originally founded in 1880 as the League of American Wheelman, the League of American Bicyclists recognizes communities that create safe and convenient places to ride; offer programs that give people the skills and confidence they need to ride safely; and encourage a strong bike culture.

Boasting a silver-level designation, Hilton

Head Island is the highest-ranking Bicycle Friendly Community in all of South Carolina, according to the Town of Hilton Head Island website.

And though biking programs have long been a part of the nonprofit Greater Island Council's mission to make Hilton Head Island an even greater place to live and visit, the town stepped up its game after receiving the League of American Bicyclists' Bicycle Friendly Community designation with the creation of the Hilton Head Island Bicycle Advisory Committee.

The committee oversees programs created to help maintain the town's silver-level designation, such as the Hilton Head Island Bicycle Ambassadors Program.

"Our basic objective is to help make bicycling on Hilton Head Island a more memorable and safe experience," said Steve Alfred, program chair. "That's where our focus is, to make the bike paths of Hilton Head Island a welcoming place and a safe place."

The bicycle ambassadors are community volunteers who patrol the island during the peak tourist season, welcoming bicyclists and providing directions, maps, safety tips and limited first aid and mechanical assistance as needed.

Outfitted in neon yellow vests donated by Transportation Safety Apparel, bicycle ambassadors can be easily identified by residents and tourists alike who may be in need of assistance.

"If (the bicycle ambassadors) see anybody that has a question or needs some information, they approach and ask if they can help," Alfred said. "Usually the people who are approached are very appreciative of the assistance. I think people like to know that they are welcome and encouraged to be riding on the Hilton Head bike paths."

For the past two seasons, HHI Bicycle Ambassadors have covered the RBC Heritage tournament held at the Harbour Town Golf Links in Sea Pines Resort.

BIKING M

They also patrol designated areas of the island from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. each Saturday from June 1 through Aug. 15. Additionally, bicycle ambassadors are welcome and encouraged to wear their characteristic vests, and carry maps and safety fliers whenever they're out riding.

Though Hilton Head Island's Bicycle Ambassadors Program began with just a handful of volunteers, it has since grown to include as many as 40 participants, including members of local cycling clubs such as the Kickin' Asphalt Bicycle Club.

All program volunteers are required to complete a two-hour training session provided by Beaufort County Sheriff P.J. Tanner's office that includes information on bicycle safety and the duties of volunteer ambassadors, as well as tips on approaching cyclists, and CPR and first aid training.

The sheriff's office hosts regular training sessions and, with Alfred's eye firmly fixed on the League of American Bicyclists' gold- and platinum-level designations, there's no better time to get involved.

"(The Bicycle Ambassadors Program) is part of the effort to show that we should maintain, if not improve, our silver-level designation as a Bicycle Friendly Community," Alfred said. "We're always looking for more volunteers. We have several training sessions a year."

For more information on the Hilton Head Island Bicycle Ambassadors program, or to volunteer, email Steve Alfred, program chair, at sjalfred@aol.com.

To learn more about the League of American Bicyclists, call 202-822-1333, email bikeleague@bikeleague.org or visit bikeleaque.org. M



Hilton Head Island Bicycle Ambassador Marcy Benson assists two riders at the entrance of Coligny Beach Park. The ambassadors are community volunteers who patrol the island during the peak tourist season.





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KNIGHT **RIDER**

CYCLING A TRUE PASSION FOR >>>>> ISLAND RESIDENT

BY TIM WOOD | PHOTOS BY W PHOTOGRAPHY

Ron Knight has always worked better with a goal in front of him. It just took him 47 years to figure out that he'd rather accomplish those goals on a bike.

Thirty years and 35,000 bike miles later, the founder of the Kickin' Asphalt Bicycle Club is still pedaling and still tackling goals riders a half century younger wouldn't dare take on.

He tackled the 104-mile Assault on Mount Mitchell and Marion on May 19, trying to become the oldest rider to even finish the grueling trek.

"I did this once when I was 71 and I asked around and found out that the oldest person that had ever done it was 78," Knight said. "I told them, 'OK, I'll see you in seven years.' And here I am."

The Assault starts in Spartanburg and is a bearable 76-mile ride to Marion. That's when the real fun begins. Riders traverse rolling hills then start a steep ascent for 28 miles to the top of Mount Mitchell, the highest peak east of the Mississippi River.

"It's about 6,700-feet elevation, but when you factor in the downhill portions of the climb, it's about 10,000 feet of climbing," said Knight.

Numbers on the page don't do justice to just how grueling the Assault can be, the toll it can take on the body. So why does Knight feel so compelled to put his septuagenarian body through this?

"I guess because I'm crazy," he said with a laugh. "You know, I'm not a fanatical bike guy, I just love staying active. I think it will enable me to live longer, but I know for sure it makes me feel more alive while I'm living."

This passion was acquired, not genetic. Knight was a salesman for IBM in Ohio and raised four kids before the bug bit him.

"One of my customers had just done the Iron Man in Hawaii," Knight said. "I was really intrigued by his excitement. He talked me into challenging myself, got me to try it and I absolutely loved it."

The next year he tackled a marathon, a feat he calls one of the three toughest things he's done in his life.

That led to Knight taking part in international distance triathlons (1-mile swim, 25-mile bike, 10K-run). He's completed 80 overall, none more satisfying than one he did with family.

"My grandson Gabe and I tackled a triathlon in Chicago. I was 70, he was 12 or 13," he said. "It was one of the greatest moments of my life, getting to share that with him."

He's done plenty of endurance treks that have prepped him for the Assault. Right before moving to Hilton Head 13 years ago, Knight did an LA-to-Boston ride with his former wife.

"What an unbelievable way to see the country. The red mountains in New Mexico and Arizona, riding in the rain ... what a trip," he said. "I dipped my rear wheel in the Pacific Ocean in Manhattan Beach to start. We rode for seven weeks with five total days off. We averaged 83 miles a day. Then I got to dip my front wheel in the Atlantic at Revere Beach outside Boston. My ass felt like hamburger when we got there, but boy

was it worth it."

When he first got here, there was no bike club on the island, so Knight rode with the Coastal Bicycle Touring Club in Savannah at first. He quickly got tired of the back-and-forth to Georgia and quickly found a group wanting to start a group here.

Thus, the Kickin' Asphalt Bicycle Club was born in 2007.

"You know, I tried to pick up golf and do as the Romans do, but it just wasn't for me," he said. "So I started looking for other nuts like me and pretty soon, we had 40 people."

The club started with monthly Lowcountry rides, quickly evolved into weekly rides and stands at 188 members today. Knight and his crew have tried hard to establish rides for all classes of riders, from the most expert to the beginners - or as Knight lovingly calls them, "the Draggin' Asphalters."

"We're a very social club, we don't do advocacy. Frank Babel and his crew have done a marvelous job with that and we play well off each other," he said. "We do unique rides all over the Southeast. We have a summer picnic and a holiday party, so outside of the riding, it's a great place to make friends."

It's where he met his triathlon mates, Bob Bredin and Brian Cossachi. Together, they make up Team Viva Viagra.

They do the Beach Bum Triathlon together each year and tackled the Assault together seven years ago.

"They're my bucket list crew. We meet every Monday for lunch to solve the world's problems and dream up the next trip. We went tubing in the North Carolina mountains. And we did the Warrior Dash near Charlotte together," he said. "It's a 5K full of obstacles, a 12-foot rope wall,

running over fire and sloshing through mudpits. That was fun but tough at age 75."

Knight is on his own this time in the Assault. He finished it in 11 hours and 33 minutes last time but has had two left hip replacements since then. He must complete it in 12 hours to qualify as an official finisher.

He spent extra time training in the mountains this time and even bought a new Trek Domane bike for the journey, retiring his 16-year-old bike.

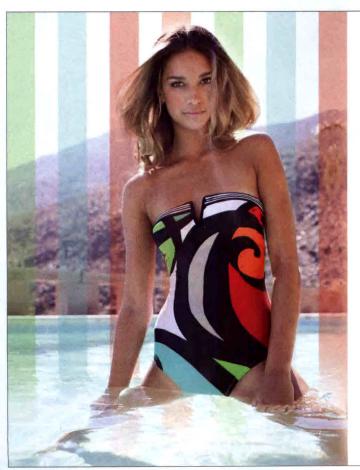
"I strongly believe I can do it, but I've already met my goals here," he said. "The oldest to finish thing, that's just a badge. I've lost 15 pounds and really challenged myself, so whether I hit the 12 hours or not, I've gained a lot."

And this is far from the finish line. Knight already has a hike planned for June with Team Viva Viagra.

Then the club will tackle a weeklong ride in Germany along the Moselle River in the fall - a follow-up to a weeklong Austria ride along the Danube two years ago.

Knight knows there's plenty of people that might call him obsessed with riding. He prefers to see it as a means to adventure. He has plenty else in his life - he just finished renovating his kitchen and he's prepping for another fall of Ohio State football at Mangiamo's with the Buckeyes Alumni Club.

"I love life and I love to live it to the fullest. I feel great and I want to get every ounce out of this life," he said. "Hey, I can be a couch potato. And I know the obsessed ones. For me, this is a passion. I love home improvement, the Buckeyes and chasing women. This is just the thing that gets my juices flowing the most."



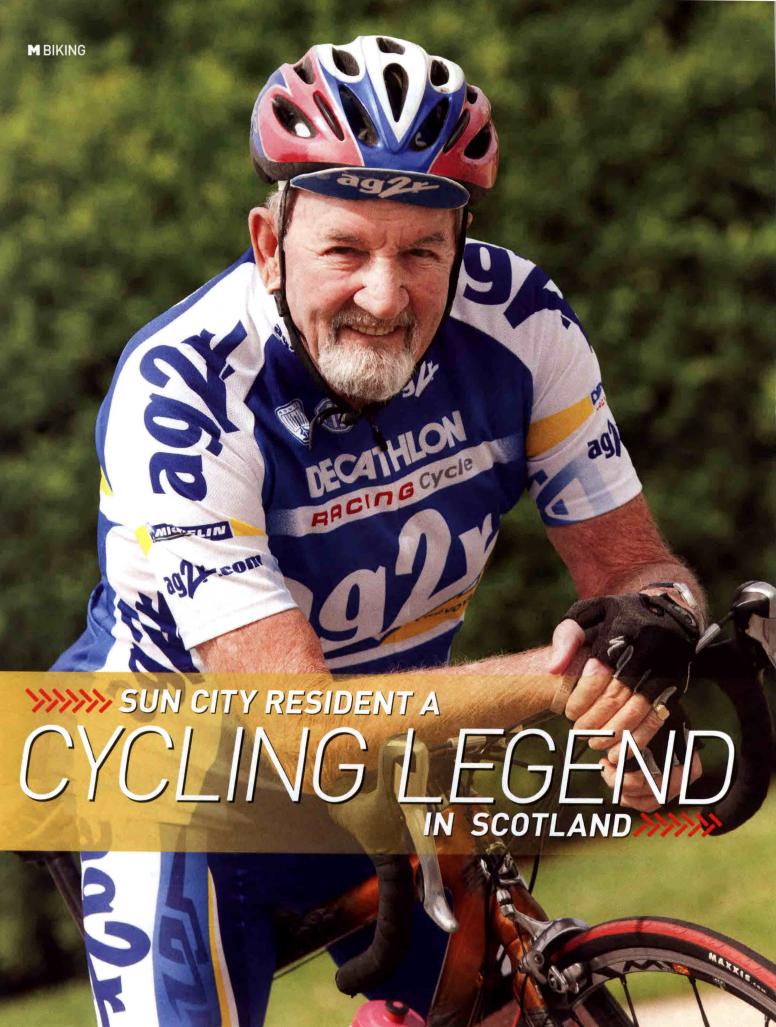
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IN 1961, KEN LAIDLAW WAS AT THE **TOP OF THE CYCLING WORLD** — OR AT LEAST AS CLOSE TO THE TOP AS A SCOTSMAN HAD EVER COME. BY JUSTIN JARRETT I PHOTO BY ROB KAUFMAN

A year after representing Great Britain in the World Championships and the Rome Olympics in 1960, Laidlaw became the first Scottish rider to complete the Tour de France when he finished 65th, earning most aggressive rider honors during the race's 16th stage.

Then he quit. At age 26 and a world-class rider at the peak of his career, Laidlaw walked away.

"I was an angry young man," the 77-year-old Sun City resident recalls. "I did what I was supposed to do – I was the first Scotsman to finish the Tour de France – and nothing happened afterward."

Laidlaw was offered only a minor contract, which he compared to being sent to the minor leagues and considered "a huge setback" to his career.

"That didn't suit me, because it had always been upward and onward for me," Laidlaw said. "I thought, 'This just isn't going anywhere. ... If you don't want me, I'll leave. Thank you for nothing. Goodbye.' "

When Laidlaw was disqualified on the next-to-last day of his last major race, the Tour of St. Lawrence in Canada, he struck up a conversation with two other riders from New York. Turns out

all three were carpenters when they weren't on their bikes and Laidlaw learned the union scale in New York paid five times what he could make for his trade back home.

"It was a no-brainer," he said. "I had been living out of a suitcase for like seven years, so it was easy for me to move."

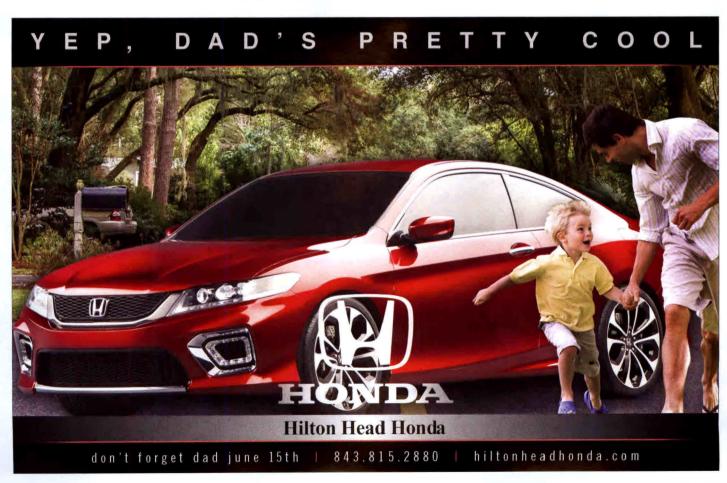
He went back to Scotland and began the process of moving his young family to New York to start a new life. He and his wife, Theresa, lived in New York for 13 years before moving south to Savannah.

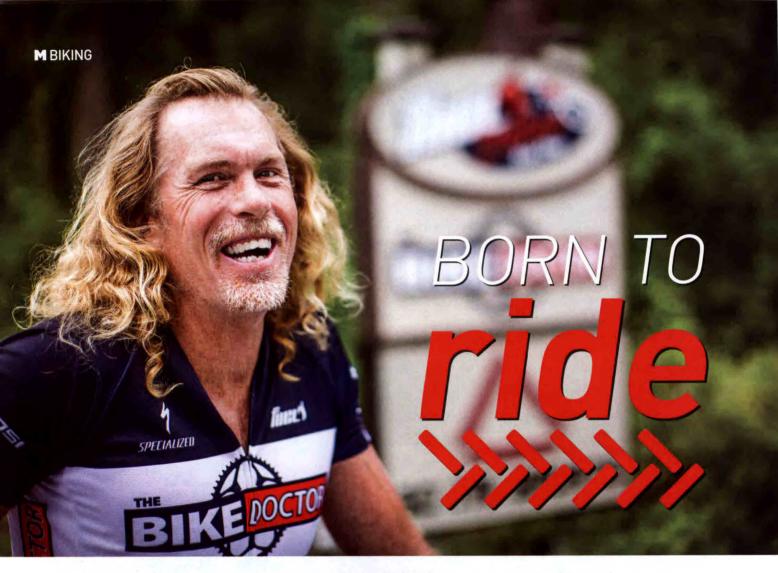
After three decades there they moved to Sun City seven years ago, though they spend a large portion of their time traveling.

One of their many trips was back to Laidlaw's hometown of Hawick, a small town in the Scottish Borders region, in 2010. Laidlaw was honored on the 50th anniversary of his appearance in the Olympics and rode 50 miles in the Ken Laidlaw Sportive, an event put on by the Hawick Cycling Club and named in his honor.

Even at age 77, Laidlaw still rides 22 miles three or four times a week, and he sees no reason to quit.

"It's never been a big thing for me to ride 20 or 30 miles," he says. "I can't walk worth a damn – arthritis – but for whatever reason it doesn't bother me on the bike."





HILTON HEAD RESIDENT IMMERSED IN CYCLING LIFESTYLE

BY SALLY MAHAN | PHOTO BY VITOR LINDO

For longtime Hilton Head resident Peter West, biking isn't just a hobby, it's a lifestyle.

The 52-year-old licensed acupuncturist can be seen almost daily riding his bicycle on the island, long blonde hair flying.

In fact, he puts in up to 200 to 250 miles a week on his bike. There are even times where he rides up to 100 miles a day, a thought that would make most people blanch. Not West.

"When I ride more than 100 miles in a day, I feel happy and content," he said. "A 100-mile ride is almost hypnotic. There's a gene within me, an odd genetic thing, that I can ride all day and have fun.

"My gravestone will probably read 'Peter has ridden more 100 miles a day than anyone else,' " he said with a chuckle.

West started doing serious riding in Pittsburgh in 1988. When he moved to Hilton Head in 1993, doors were open to explore his new home by bike.

"In those days you could ride up and down (U.S.) 278," he said. "We would ride out to past Island Ford and there would be no traffic. We'd even go out to (S.C.) 46 in Bluffton.

"That's not even a thought now," he said. "Hilton Head Island is safer now than Bluffton, but Bluffton is great on the weekends." West rides daily with a group of devoted island bicyclists. In addition to daily treks with those folks, he also rides with a group every Tuesday and Thursday sponsored by The Bike Doctor, a bicycle repair and rental company with stores in Bluffton and on Hilton Head Island.

Those die-hard bicyclists love riding on the island.

"The nice thing about Hilton Head Island is the size," said West. "It sets up good for the biking community and everyone in that community knows each other."

He said while the bike paths on the island are great, he and other regulars like to be off the beaten path.



Licensed acupuncturist Peter West can be seen almost daily riding his bicycle on the island, long blonde hair flying. In fact, he puts in up to 200 to 250 miles a week on his bike. There are even times where he rides up to 100 miles a day.



BIKING M

"The paths and beach biking are awesome," he said. "It's nice to see people out there having fun, just being outside. But for us, the paths can be dangerous to others because of our speed. We ride up to 20 mph and that's a pretty significant difference from the speed people are riding on the paths. The paths are not necessarily my thing, but they are awesome."

West said he loves riding on the Cross Island because "it's really wide and super-safe."

And despite what some people may think, biking for West is not a solitary endeavor.

"We're kind of like a group of kids out having fun," he said. "Half of the beauty of biking is the fact that it's social and a little competitive, but it's also takes teamwork. It's a fun group activity.

"I know a lot of people through biking and there's a lot of camaraderie." He also enjoys the fact that he can also take off on his own.

"When you bike you can say six words and then off you go. You don't have to sit and chit chat ... just pick up pace and go."

As West has gotten older, he has curtailed activities in other sports.

"Over the last five years I've been biking more than ever," he said. "I used to like to run and swim, but running has gotten harder."

But he hopes he never has to give up biking.

"I'm single and well-suited to this life," he said. "I would not do what I do if I was married or had kids. I'm not that irresponsible. I have cats and they don't care if I ride all day. They're like, 'Just give me some food and make sure the water bottle is filled.'

"I just feel blessed and I'm grateful I can ride my bike around this island."









PAUL SHERWEN TALKS THE TOUR, HIS PARTNERSHIP WITH PHIL LIGGETT, AND HIS DEEP LOCAL TIES. BY BARRY KAUFMAN

We all know what the Tour de France looks like. A rolling blur of colorful spandex, spinning tires and gleaming chrome winding through the lush countryside of France.

Furthermore, we all know what the Tour de France sounds like. It sounds like Paul Sherwen, the celebrated British rider turned commentator who, along with partner Phil Liggett, has called the race since 1986.

"It's hard for Americans to understand the Tour de France," said Sherwen from California, where he was calling the Amgen Tour of California. "You look at a Super Bowl stadium, that holds 100,000 people. Along the Tour de France, you'll have 4 million physical spectators along the route."

As the Tour's international appeal has skyrocketed in the last few decades, the duo of Sherwen and Liggeet has become synonymous with the Tour.

Part of it is their seemingly bottomless well of knowledge about every landmark along the route, the trivia rolling off their tongues with a speed that matches the riders in the race. A larger part of it is the seamless chemistry, a result of their years calling the race together and their shared Northern English sensibilities.

"Nothing's planned. Everything's ad-libbed," said Sherwen. "It just happens."

This on-your-feet commentary is a necessity in the fast-paced sport, and it has helped Paul out more than a few times when the commentary derails.

"This one time we were in full commentary and my chair collapsed," said Sherwen. "I couldn't pass the commentary to Liggett because he was laughing too hard. So I just had to keep commentating from my back with a headphone on."

If you know the sport of cycling, you know Sherwen. You know that in his racing days from 1978 to 1987, he participated in the Tour de France seven times. You know that he is a two-time British champion. But what you may not know is that Sherwen has local ties. Not simply "visit every once in a while" local ties like so many celebrities, but ties that run deep.

"All the family's in Hilton Head. My wife's parents, siblings, they all live in the area. We have a house in Sea Pines we regard as a family home," he said.

His wife Katherine visits every year while Paul calls the

Tour de France, visiting family including her father, Dr. Neil Love, who was honored as the grand marshal at this year's St. Patrick's Day Parade.

Sherwen doesn't visit his Sea Pines home as much as his wife does, but he's still here enough to have gained a real appreciation for the cycling revolution currently sweeping the island.

"Hilton Head is a very big golf community, but they're saying cycling is the new golf," he said. "It wasn't bike-friendly to being with. But I've been on rides with groups there, and we've done 30 or 35Ks and never crossed a road."

Sherwen made special mention of the Bike Doctor, saying, "He looks after my bikes when I'm gone. He had my championship bike on the wall at the shop."

But even for a guy who is so synonymous with cycling, there's more to the island than just bike paths. And what's more, Sherwen has shared a few of these treasures with his partner in the booth.

"Phil enjoyed Hilton Head because he's an avid birdwatcher," Sherwen said. "He likes to go out to the Forest Preserve, but also to Pinckney Island. The island is a great place for birdwatching, because a lot of the resident birds are similar to the ones in (my home in) Uganda. I've also converted (brother-inlaw) David Love. He's a keen birder."

But when he's not at his home in Africa overseeing his gold mine (yes, we buried the lede there. The man also has interests in a gold mine) or on Hilton Head checking out the birds, the racing world pedals forward, spurred by a man whose voice has served as a soundtrack to its growing popularity.

"The Tour will start in UK this year; the wife and kid are coming up," he said. "It's starting in Yorkshire with three days. And in those three days, I'd imagine we'll see 4 million physical spectators." M



Part-time Hilton Head Island resident Paul Sherwen has been the voice of the Tour de France since 1986.









BICYCLING IS ONE OF THE BEST AND EASIEST WAYS TO

EXERCISE and there is no better place to start than on Hilton Head Island or the surrounding Lowcountry.

Cycling has a long list of benefits such as increasing your stamina, building and strengthening muscles and improving your heart health. The island has many organizations that can help you start a healthier lifestyle and meet new people.

KICKIN' ASPHALT

Kickin' Asphalt is a social cycling club that organizes safe group bicycle rides and hosts social events year round. The club rides every Saturday as well as other days. To join Kickin' Asphalt, you have to fill out an online membership application (www.kickinasphalt. info). For more information about the club, call 616-460-4004, 843-588-5204 or email membership@kickasphalt.info.

EZ RIDERS BICYCLING CLUB

EZ Riders is a bicycling club that rides 10 to 14 miles every Thursday. It is a great way to enjoy the beautiful Hilton Head scenery while making new friends. To join the club, go to the website www.ezridershhi.org. There is no fee.

BIKE DOCTOR

The Bike Doctor hosts weekly group rides around Hilton Head Island. The group rides at 6 p.m. every Tuesday and Thursday from March through November. They start at the Bike Doctor's south end store, located at 31 New Orleans Road, and ride a 10-mile loop around the island. The bicyclists have the choice to ride the 10 mile loop one, two or three times depending on their riding preferences. For more information, call 843-681-7532.



ARNO DIMMLING

HILTON HEAD CYCLING

Hilton Head Cycling is a nonprofit cycling club licensed by USA Cycling that provides a high-level cycling organization to the island. It caters to all age groups, with a strong focus on its junior program. The group is an advocate for the development of cycling as a sport. Hilton Head Cycling helps you grow in the sport at a competitive level. Due to the fact that it has a wide variety of age groups, it allows the younger cyclist to learn and succeed under the mentorship and advice of more experienced riders. The group has many different sponsors, including Robson Forensic and Subaru of Hilton Head. For more information about Hilton Head Cycling, email bbrewerpe@aol.com or gesrule5@outlook.com.

BLUFFTON CLUBS

There are also bike clubs on the mainland. The largest is the Sun City Bicycle Club. For more information, contact Art Ludquist at 843-705-6398. Another Bluffton club is the Greater Bluffton Pathways. For more information, call 843-705-3378.

City and Bluffton Pathways.







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BIKE EVENTS

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DECEMBER

Elf Ride: The Kickin' Asphalt Bicycle Club puts on the annual Elf Ride in December. Members ride to deliver food and toys to St. Andrews By-The-Sea's soup kitchen.

EVERY TUESDAY, THURSDAY

The Bike Doctor Group Rides: 6 p.m. every Tuesday and Thursday. Gear up for a fast-paced Tour de Hilton Head with other passionate cyclists. The group meets at 31 New Orleans Road, Suite B. 843-681-7532.

Road Fish Group Rides: 9 a.m. and 6 p.m. The group of B riders leave from Road Fish Bike Shop. 843-686-2981.



8th annual Pedal 4 Kids: Pedal 4 Kids community ride is the largest bike event in the Lowcountry with 100 percent of its proceeds benefiting the Boys & Girls Club of Hilton Head Island. The event gives residents and guests of all ages and skill levels an opportunity to join their friends, family, co-workers, associates and neighbors in a group ride throughout the island's beautiful pathways and parks. For more information, email info@pedal4kids.com or visit www.pedal4kids.com.

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Group rides take place almost every day of the week. Special events include Pedal 4 Kids and the Ride of Silence.

EVERY WEDNESDAY

Bluffton Bicycle Shop: 6 p.m., Join the Bluffton Bicycle Shop for group rides. Weather permitting, the ride leaves from the front of the shop located at 4 Oliver Court in Bluffton. This is an easier-paced ride. Don't forget to bring lights. 843-706-2453.

EVERY THURSDAY

EZ Riders Bike Club Group Ride: 10 a.m. The group rides for a distance of 10 to 14 miles at speeds of 9 to 11 mph.



EVERY SATURDAY

Bluffton Bicycle Shop: 8 a.m. Join the Bluffton Bicycle Shop for group rides. Weather permitting, the ride leaves from the rear of the shop located at 4 Oliver Court in Bluffton. This is a quick-paced ride ranging from 40 to 100 miles. Bring plenty of water. 843-706-2453.

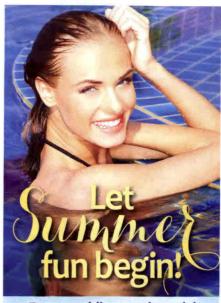
EVERY SUNDAY

Show'n Go in Bluffton: 9 a.m. sharp. The Sun City Cyclers and Kickin' Asphalt Bicycle Club go on a community ride. The two clubs meet at Publix on Bluffton Parkway. Riders will ride on local highway shoulders, local parkways and off-road paved pathways. There will be rest stops throughout the 35-40 mile bike ride. Riders must carry a road ID and must know basic safety procedures.

Road Fish Group Rides: 8 a.m. The group of A riders leave from Hilton Head Island High School, 843-686-2981.

MAY 2015

Ride of Silence: Join cyclists worldwide in a silent, slow-paced ride in honor of those who have been injured of killed while cycling on public roadways. The Ride of Silence will begin in North America and roll across the globe. There are no sponsors or registration fees, 412-360-9838 or CW5ski1@verizon.net.



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>>>>> HILTON HEAD NATIVE USES BIKE TO FIGHT MOTHER'S CANCER

BY ROBYN PASSANTE

Cancer is both isolating and unifying. It's a disease with a single diagnosis that affects multiple lives. While one fights it with modern medicine, surrounding loved ones arm themselves with all kinds of other tools to help battle the unwanted intruder.

Christopher Stuckart's weapon of choice was a bike.

Stuckart, a Hilton Head native living in Boston, felt his world come undone when his mother, Joan, was diagnosed with breast cancer in October 2012.

"When a loved one gets cancer, it's the toughest thing in the world because there's nothing you can do but be there emotionally for them," Stuckart says. "And that's hard to do when you're so far away."

Stuckart, 26, had just lost his grandmother to cancer the week before his older brother, Creighton, called with the news about their mom and the lemon-sized tumor doctors had found in her breast. At the time, Chris was working in the call center of MFS, an asset management firm in Boston.

"It was just like the life was taken out of you," he says. "So many people associate cancer with death. So that's just the scariest thing to hear."

While Joan began the long journey back toward a clean bill of health - a path that included eight weeks of chemotherapy, a radical double mastectomy, radiation, reconstructive surgery and several complications and setbacks – Chris found a path of his own to make himself feel like a contributor in the fight. A 192-mile path, to be exact.

It turned out Chris's company was a corporate sponsor for the Pan-Mass Challenge, a two-day bicycle ride across Massachusetts that raises more money than any other athletic fundraising event in the country. And the money raised by the PMC goes toward cancer research at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute.

"I thought, 'This is something I can do to give back and show her, to actually do something,' " he says. He signed up without hesitation and was instantly met with two challenges: The first was to raise money - he set his goal at \$4,300. The second was to learn how to ride a bike across an entire state.

He started hitting the gym every weekday and heading out for 50-mile bike rides on Saturday mornings. "Sitting on the saddle for a long period of time, I had to get used to that pain," he says. "There's not a lot of sitting down for days after that."

His mother never doubted her younger son was up to the challenge.

"I knew he'd do it, and I knew he'd do it with honor and grace and strength," says Joan, 58, who has lived on Hilton Head for 33 years. The artist and real estate agent was just finishing up radiation treatments when she and her husband, Marc, flew up to see Chris during the ride in August 2013. They were waiting for him at the 100-mile mark at the end of Day 1.

"He had my picture on his bike, and when I saw that I just lost it," Joan says. "He said, 'You know, Mom, I just kept looking down and remembering why I'm doing this. That gave me the strength to just keep on going.'"

That same strength helped propel him to the finish line at Provincetown the next day, and obliterate his fundraising goal, collecting \$6,700 toward the event's \$39 million total that year.

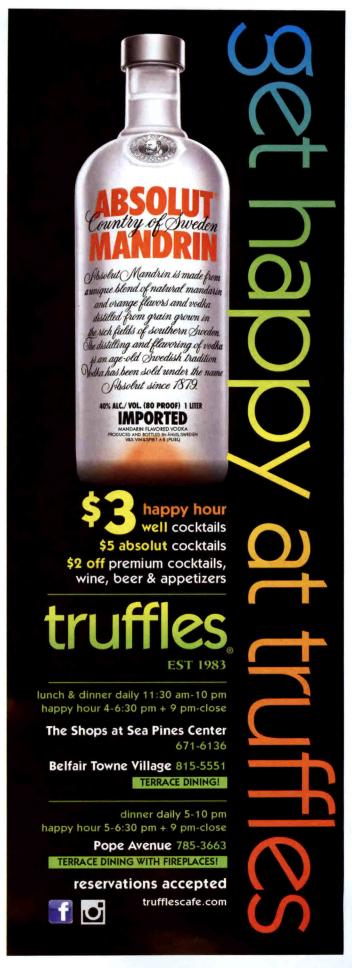
He was so happy with the experience and inspired by his mom's journey back to health that he has signed up to ride again at this year's event on Aug. 2-3, increasing his fundraising goal to \$7,000.

"It's a lofty goal, but I think now that I have a good idea, it'll be easier to get the word out. The fact that my mom's still here is living proof that we're making a difference," he says. "I plan on doing this ride for as long as I physically can."

While riding and raising money is a source of pride for his mom, she says her son's character in general is what inspires her the most.

"Chris wrote me a note (after the diagnosis that says) 'Mom, we all have a new reason to love pink. You're the strongest woman I know and you can beat this,' " she says. "I have it on my mirror, and I sit and look at it every single day." M





... AS SELECTED BY LOCAL BIKE EXPERTS RON KNIGHT AND FRANK BABEL



MOST SCENIC RIDE

The boardwalk at Barker Field overlooking the marsh is simply amazing. If you're on the south end, visit the "toe" of the island on the beach looking at the entrance to South Beach Marina. You'll see Harbour Town in the distance, Daufuskie Island dead ahead and the Atlantic to the left.



BEST BEACH TO CYCLE

Start at Palmetto Dunes, hit the beach and travel south to the tip of the island at South Beach – preferably with the wind at your back. Assuming cooperation from the tides and tourists, this is as good as it gets.



BEST FAMILY RIDE

Start at Coligny Circle and take the pathway west along Pope Avenue to New Orleans Road. Then turn right along the pathway and follow Arrow Road across the William Hilton Parkway to the Palmetto Bay Marina and back; you'll stay off the main drags and discover a lengthy hidden ribbon of trail behind the shops and restaurants. For an alternate route, turn onto the William Hilton Parkway from New Orleans Road, follow the pathways all the way to the Shelter Cove Marina and back.



BEST NATURE TRAIL

The rice dike trail in Sea Pines to the horse stables and into the Sea Pines Forest Preserve is incredibly rich in natural beauty, and it's often almost empty.



BEST EXERCISE

The Bike Doctor's organized rides provide a great workout; riders leave the shop on New Orleans Road at 6 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays.



BEST PICNIC SPOT

Jarvis Park, Chaplin Park and Coligny are great spots to picnic – as is, you know, the beach.



MOST ROMANTIC

The beach at sunset or sunrise is just right for those romantic moments.



