



Evolution of the BBC Instructional Ride Series

The year was November 1984 and the club had over 1,500 members, but fewer than 100 were attending rides. The club wanted to move the D category (easiest rides) riders up to the C level to increase participation. One of the active BBC members, Ginnie Streamer, was tired of riding alone on the D rides. She suggested a program to help riders progress from the D level to the C level and improve their cycling skills. A memo was mailed (on paper) to Clyde, who was then in charge of rides, proposing this program which was then approved.

With the assistance of two young riders, Gordon Peltz and Howard Kaplon, the seed was planted and in the spring of 1985 the inaugural series began and has never looked back. The early years started with an average of 1 to 2 dozen attendees of which half would come out on the rides. In 1985 technological advances on bikes included something called index shifting and added a seventh cog to the cassette allowing for 14 or 21 speeds making cycling easier for the novice. Ginnie would have the groups count the teeth on their chain rings and cogs and calculate the gear ratios in an attempt to explain the value of shifting gears. These training rides were held on both Saturday and Sunday.

Email has made communication much easier on the ride leaders and Gordon no longer gets early Sunday morning phone calls asking “are we going to ride?” when the weather is unfavorable.

In 2011 a repair clinic was added at the conclusion of the series, usually in June. The focus is on fixing a flat and everyone in attendance must participate. We also demonstrate how to make minor adjustments such as seat positioning, handlebars derailleurs, and discuss mechanical issues that developed during our rides. This year we had 16 people attend this class, the largest group to date.

In 2015 we will acknowledge the 30th anniversary of the series. This event has grown significantly with an annual mailing list of over 100 interested riders with 50 to 70 attending the orientation day. Today’s orientation now includes videos of bicycling safety and technique, mechanical and equipment demonstrations, and information on bike accessories from clothing to computers. The rides are scheduled on 7 Sundays of the 8 week series. Each week 3 levels of rides are offered based on different speeds and lengths. The program starts



Gary Brandon shares the history of the BBC Instructional Ride Series at the November 2014 BBC Awards Banquet.

with flat trail rides, advances to riding in traffic and concludes with typical Baltimore County club rides with hills to climb. We average 21 riders on Sundays and participation varies week to week.

So why do people attend the series? These are the top items:

- Haven't ridden since childhood
- Exercise
- Want to ride on the road
- Training for an event such as a century, triathlon, or charity ride
- Want to meet others to ride with

The instructional ride series would not be possible without the tireless effort of volunteers. At the forefront are the founders of the program, Gordon Peltz and Howard Kaplon. And those of you who have attended know we could not go without our "pretzel lady" and the woman behind the man, Linda Peltz.

I would also like to acknowledge those who stepped in to cover for Gordon, Howard, and me when we were unable to lead our rides. This year kudos go out to Darrow Neves, Bob Carson, Bud Lippert, Frank and MaryJo Kuhn and others. If I missed anyone you know who you are and please know that we are grateful.