

# HISTORY OF *BICYCLISTS OF IOWA CITY*

## The First 45 Years

By Rick Walton

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BIC has an interesting and colorful past that spans 45 years. The origins are from a “Steering Committee” (Founders) that formalized in 1976. These dedicated bicyclists envisioned the need for such an organization and made it happen with foresight, imagination, organizational skills and dedication. Their foundation persists.

BIC Officers and active members were and continue to be, volunteer. All have had busy lives, but their time and energy contribute to the success of our organization.

My source of information was primarily from material supplied to me by two persons. David Christ provided the first ten years’ worth of newsletters and other documents. This is deemed the **Early History**. Sharon Doak saved newsletters from 1991-2014. There were no materials for the intervening 5 years, 1986-1990.

These resources were scanned for relevant material and then summarized for what were the important factors in our history. Ann Ridenour, David Christ and Dan Nidey critiqued the initial document and supplied additional, anecdotal information. Sharon Doak, who is most familiar with recent events, also reviewed.

For events and persons, years or a single year is given with each entry. All years that each person or event spanned is usually not included. Selected were what I perceived to be the most significant.

The organization of this document is by topics. Names are listed in three very important officer categories that had both major responsibilities and impact on our many activities: President, Newsletter Editor and RAGBRAI

Coordinator. There are many others that contributed much; they will be included with their area of responsibility.

-Presidents: Dave Johnson 1976, Larry Sharp 1977, Dave Yeager 1978, Doran Pearson 1979, Sharon Birney 1980, Greg Kovaciny 1981, Shelley Plattner 1982, Bruce Reynolds 1983, Dick Siefers 1986, Gloria Marchman 1991, Bonnie Rubin & Charlie Williams 1993, Michael & Christine Harrington 1994, Todd Black 1996, Chuck and Kathy Murphy 1998, Linda Thomae 1999, Steve Poggenpohl 2000, Steve Rudin 2004, Nate Van Der Weide 2010, Andy Alberts 2016, David Heitbrink 2017-.

-RAGBRAI Coordinators: Ann Ridenour 1977, Greg Kovaciny 1982, Ann Ridenour & Jim Hannah 1984, Paul Millice 1994, Kent Dolezal 1995, Chuck Murphy 2006, Karen Parrott 2012, Lynn Rose 2015.

-BIC Post Newsletter Editors: Drake Hokanson 1976, John Ferguson 1981, Shar Hartman 1983, Mary Greer 1992, Marv Scher 1998, Mary Bradford 2002, Michael Herring 2004, Sharon Doak 2004-15 (longest serving Editor with 97 issues).

## **Early History**

-Steering Committee (Founders): David Johnson, Dan Nidey, Jim Hannah, Marilyn Weber, Ann Ridenour, David Christ, Drake Hokanson, George Penick, Steve Birney, Larry Sharp. The first organizational meeting in fall, 1975.

-BIC logo designed by David Christ, 1976 and appeared in the first newsletter in 1976.

-Constitution and Bylaws drafted by Dan Nidey 1976.

-Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws filed with Iowa Secretary of State 1979.

-Bylaws reviewed and reinstated 2008, 2017.

-Blue and white (black and blue also suggested) colors adopted and selected as official colors 1976.

-Blue and white t-shirts designed and distributed to members 1976.

- Membership: 69 in 1976, 130 in 1977, 155 in 1978. By 1981, approximately 500 members. Membership increased rapidly in early years because of active recruitment. Numbers have remained relatively constant, with variations. Some decrease in recent years.
- Membership fees established: \$3 in 1976, \$4 in 1982, \$8 in 1992, \$20 in 2001.
- First election of officers November 1976.
- The first Newsletter printed in April, 1976. A, B, C, and D (different lengths and degrees of difficulty) rides were listed.
- The BIC Newsletter (Bicycle Post) only in hard copy every month from 1976-2011, then online for 3 years. Later, BIC news and information available only on the Website, Facebook and by email.
- Events other than bike rides scheduled each week.
- Board business meetings always monthly.
- General membership meetings established in 1976 and continued for approximately 10 years. Well attended and included some business and a program.

## **Rides**

- First BIC ride in 1976 from K-Mart to Hills and retrace.
- Tour de Amana. April 1976. 70 or 54 miles.
- First weekend overnight signature event ride to Pictured Rocks Methodist Church Camp near Monticello in 1977. Jim and Ann Ridenour coordinated yearly until 1997. Gretchen Holt directed until 2002.
- Organized A, B and C rides from 1976. Several each month and primarily on Saturday and Sunday. Some overnight.
- Racing & race training an important BIC activity in the early years. BIC had a team with as many as 60 members in 1981. Racers trained and

coached by Jack Janelle. Racing Directors on the Board: Dan Nidey (1977) and Bruce Reynolds in later years.

-Safety. In 1978, the County Board of Supervisors and Sheriff's Dep't issued a plea. Bicyclists should not take county roads. The recommendation was the bike path along Old 218 (now N Dubuque) to West Overlook. There is a remnant of this path by the World's Largest Wooden Nickel. Fortunately, BIC ignored this recommendation.

-BIC sponsored and supported half and full-century rides 1976-2000.

-Start of rides in the early years was College Green Park, usually one per week. In 1980 rides began in the Pedestrian Mall. Later, different starts were identified.

-Saturday and Sunday were the signature rides year-round, even in winter, into the 2000s. There always have been Saturday rides. Sundays tapered in later years.

-Weekly rides added: Wednesday evening (Marv Scher in 1998), 2sday 2 Wheelers (Mary Palmberg in 2006; then Mark Heffron; Rick Walton 2015-), Thursday rides added (Gloria Marchman in 2001; Barb Goff later, now Bob Oppliger 2020 ). Monday Sugar Bottom Loop Ride (Brad Cronk in 2005).

-Amana 4<sup>th</sup> of July Breakfast Ride began 1979. Usually the single best attended ride of the year. Earlier, an average of 50 participants.

-Bike ride distances generally longer in the earlier years and decreased somewhat in later years.

### **Other Bike Events and Rides**

-BIC Newsletter always listed many other bicycling events and rides, primarily in the Midwest.

-BIC participated in combined rides with other bicycle clubs from other east Iowa communities.

-Lake Darling Campout each spring. Yearly from 1979. Tom Hauser early coordinator. Steve Poggenpohl then for several years.

-Amish Harvest Century and Stagecoach Tour. Began 2003 and largely coordinated by BIC. 2007 became and continues as Courage Ride with less BIC organizational involvement.

-Spring Rides. Yearly and always overnight. Initiated by Marv Scher in 2006. First several years on Memorial Weekend. Became Marvelous Marv rides, now TGIS on other weekends.

-Picnic and Swap Meet at East Overlook 2008.

-Moonlight Ride 1977. Full Moon Ride 2010 and later years.

-Ride of Silence. Nick Maddix 2010.

-BIC Holiday Lites Ride. 2006. Tour de Lights later years. David Heitbrink.

-Mississippi River Weekend. Rock Island to Savanna, IL. Joel Pickard 2008-2010.

## **RAGBRAI**

-Several BIC members rode in 1976 (RAGBRAI IV). First official BIC RAGBRAI 1977. Organized by Ann Ridenour.

-86 bikers on 1978 BIC RAGBRAI. In successive rides, numbers increased: 131 in 1980, 165 in 1981; decreased to 140 in 1994. Numbers have remained in this range.

-Many years included a Night Before RAGBRAI party.

-BIC won first Ride Right Safety Award in 1992

## **Special Events**

-Bike Rodeo began 1977 by BIC/school district yearly with instructional activity at 4 elementary schools; now all 22 in area. Coordinated by Bob Oppliger since 2009. BIC donates helmets; enjoys many sponsors and partners.

-Annual Christmas/Holiday party began 1980. Now the Winter Blast. Donna Hamm.

-Bike To Work Week. Began 2004. Mark Wyatt.

- Root River XC ski weekend 2000 and later. Linda Thomae.
- Hot Chocolate Ride. Last Saturday of January regardless of weather. 2005 and later years. Bob Oppliger, then David Heitbrink.
- Bike Expo with presentations by local bike shops. 2008 and later. Now Bike Shop Hop. Donna Hamm.
- Picnic/Potluck. 2008 and later.
- Jingle Cross. 2011 and annually. BIC supplied many volunteers (most crossing marshals) and a substantial donation.
- Devotay Ride. 2008 and later. Kurt Frieese. Biked, then BIC feed at Devotay.

## Other

- Old Capitol Criterium sponsored/initiated by BIC in 1977. Now different sponsorship. BIC donated and recruited most (approximately 150) Corner Marshals until recent years. Steve Poggenpohl for many years. Early, the BIC Racing Team competed.
- Criterium route in Hancher parking lot 1977-80. Changed to current route 1980.
- Helmets not required in early years and not worn by many. In 1981 Criterium Newsletter, many competitors were without helmets.
- Helmet and rearview mirror safety considerations article in BIC Post. 1982.
- Helmets required on all BIC rides. 1992
- Iowa City earns "Bike Friendly" recognition by American League of Bicyclists. 1990
- Iowa River Coordinator Trail proposed and strongly supported by BIC. 1994.
- BIC Website established. 1995

-BIC designed and ordered jerseys, shorts, arm warmers, caps, etc. Sharon Doak. 2005, 2015.

-American League of Bicyclists national organization appoints Bob Oppliger as Board member. 2009. Oppliger elected permanent Board member 2017.

-BIC enlists ClubExpress, an online service to manage membership. 2010. Now ClubExpress handles all online activities.