

CULTURE



**Mountain Folklore** *By Dave Kline*

# Get on your bike and take a ride

**W**E LIVE in a gorgeous county. I say it all the time. And one of my favorite ways to see it is by riding my bicycle. I'm not going to be shy here, I want our county to embrace cycling and build an infrastructure that invites cyclists from all over the world to ride our roads and trails and, most importantly, stay in our hotels and visit our tourist attractions and community events. Other states and countries have become bicycle-friendly and are reaping a huge reward of tourism dollars for it. Many of our rural communities such as Oley boast

beautiful landscapes and easy-to-navigate roads for cyclists who prefer to commute or tour on macadam. Lancaster County is already taking its love affair with bicycles and folkloric tourism to the bank, as is the town of Jim Thorpe in the Lehigh River Gorge to our north. We should be doing this, too. We already have an advantage because we have the wonderful Schuylkill River Trail running right through the heart of Berks County. The trail connects several counties and communities and when completed will be a linear park stretching from the headwaters of the

Schuylkill in Pottsville to the tail waters of the river beyond Philadelphia. It will become known as one of the premier bicycle trails in the United States. Public and corporate funding will help trail officials to continue progress. We also have a highly organized and fun bicycle club in our community, which I encourage you to join as soon as possible. The more members we have, the better. The Berks County Bicycle Club was founded in 1973. Some of the founders were Bill Kaufman, Emily Weidner, Carroll Winterhalter, Theresa Boylan and Jim

Brossman, to name a few. According to club stats, there are currently 190 members. My longtime friend and colleague Butch Ulrich, who is the club's president, recently told me about some of the club's benefits. "It's just \$20 per year, per family, to join and we offer a minimum of five rides per week from April through September," he said. "We ride on weekends the rest of the year and offer discounts to the local bike shops and a monthly newsletter telling you what's going on with the club, plus we offer some special events during the year." Ulrich's leadership of the club has helped it expand by offering valuable services and connections. The club has become very progressive in its view of community service by creating things such as an online ride map database any rider can use. This is great for the community at large and even helps promote tourism. "We just felt that with technology like Garmin and Strava



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The Berks County Bicycle Club offers plenty of support for bikers, including group rides and a database of trails to explore.

and so forth, some riders want to know the rides in advance, so we posted all of them on our

website at [www.berksbicycle.com](http://www.berksbicycle.com)," Butch said. "There are several hundred rides listed,

and anyone can check them out." The club also took steps to

offer group rides for cyclists of all ages and abilities. There are specific benefits to participating in group bicycle rides. "It's more often fun to ride with others," Butch said. "Plus, you can possibly learn from those around you. We have a link on our website, 'Want To Ride With Us,' that will give you a description of the many rides and what we suggest all riders know and do before coming out on a club ride." So, next time you're driving down a rural road and come across a group of cyclists, please slow down and give the riders the state-mandated 3 feet of clearance. Roads are meant to be shared, and if we all cooperate to grow a culture of cycling in our county, those roads someday will be paved with the gold of tourism dollars, just as so many other communities have discovered. ☺

Dave Kline is producer and host of the weekly "Mountain Folk Radio & Web Show" on WEEU 830 AM and chief advertising and sales officer for Reading Eagle Company. Contact him at [dkline@readingeagle.com](mailto:dkline@readingeagle.com).

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