

Burnt Store Bike Group

Graham Segger, Burnt Store Marina

Have you ever wondered about the procession of lime green garbed cyclists sleepily making their way through the Burnt Store Marina and Burnt Store Lakes communities at dawn most mornings? Where are they headed and what in the world motivated them to get up so early?

What you are witnessing is the ritual-like assembly of the Burnt Store Bikers. The intermediate destination for this gang is the Burnt Store Golf & Activity Center parking lot on Vincent Road where they assemble all days except Sunday just before 7:00, 7:15 or 7:30 am. The precise time is based upon a complex algorithm concocted by Prof. Mike Barton and involving sun sightings, global positioning, atomic clocks, ambient temperatures and Daylight Savings Time. The Prof can be relied upon to issue his hearty hey-ho and get the morning ride rolling at the designated start time. A typical morning ride will be an eight mile run up and around the perimeter of the Burnt Store Lakes community. Several of the more energetic "hard bodies" will do a second loop or extend the ride up to Pirate Harbor or Burnt Store Villages. Most mornings several pelotons evolve based upon energy levels and bike efficiency.

While healthy living and an incentive to get up in the morning may motivate many in the group, there are some members, myself included, who view this as essentially a coffee club, carefully masquerading as an exercise group. Most mornings the gang gathers after the ride at the Trading Post for a coffee and a chance to debate and solve the problems of the world. Many of the questions answered in my book about Burnt Store Road had their origins at these sessions.

Unlike the activity, golf, yacht and tennis clubs, there are no initiation fees or annual dues for this club. They also accept members from all genders, ages, political stripes, religious persuasions and even the odd alien (moi). While strong opinions abound, there is a sense of tolerance, if not necessarily respect, for all views expressed. There is no truth to the rumor that you have to be from Iowa to participate, though it is true that those roots are not uncommon.

Like most respectable and disreputable biker gangs, this group wears its colors proudly. The gaudier and louder the lime green the better. While some wear Lycra and purpose bought bike gear, the majority do not. More important to most is staying warm when the morning temperatures dip.

Safety and proper bike etiquette are important to this group, but there is also a little of the rebel in some of these bikers. Stop signs are occasionally treated similarly to the way they are in developing countries, as a suggestion rather than legislated direction. The golf entrance gate is occasionally treated as an obstruction to be negotiated like a slalom gate at Aspen, in contravention of the strict admonitions to dismount.

The bikers are usually accompanied by at least one or two of the several physicians who are members of the core group. Former ER doc Bob Singer is guaranteed to harangue anyone who shows up without a helmet and shame them into quick compliance with gang protocol. Flashing LED head and tail lights are also de rigeur given the early morning start times. Attendance of medical personnel has also proven of great value to the many members of the group who have found various creative and acrobatic ways to fall from their bikes. Other than one or two members, whose spouses have invoked a variation on California's "three strikes rule", most live by the club's maxim of "getting back on the bike again".

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The gang, which also consists of a sizable contingent of Burnt Store Lakes residents, appreciates and thanks the property owners of the Lakes for their driving courtesy and wonderful smooth roads. I, like many in the gang, have 18 gears on my bike, but rarely need more than one.

If you feel like a little exercise and conversation one morning, inflate those tires, oil that chain, dust off your helmet and make your way to the golf course parking lot. If they're not there at 7:00, just wait another few minutes and someone is likely to be along.