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## THE MT. LEBANON Cycling and Caffeine Club

*You might say that the Mt. Lebanon Cycling and Caffeine Club has a bit of a sense of humor about themselves – but they take their cycling quite seriously.*

BY PAMELA PALONGUE

This loosely formed group has no bylaws, no meetings and no secret handshake. They have only one rule and it's really more of a common-sense safety practice than anything: you must wear your helmet when cycling. In fact, if someone doesn't wear a helmet the other members mercilessly ridicule the rider until he/she recovers from the lapse in judgment. Generally, only one "humorous hazing" is all that's required to get members to willingly comply with the safety requirement.

There's a definite emphasis on fun and fitness with the group, rather than a laundry list of requirements for membership. The founder, Dave Bodnar, and a buddy of his, Dan Carroll, planned it that way.

Both Dan and Dave were serious runners, who ran not only for the enjoyment of being outdoors, but also for the massive number of health benefits associated with a cardiovascular workout. But in 1988 after 12 years of running, Dave was beginning to learn the painful lesson that joints don't last forever. After knee replacement surgery, he and Dan (who was also beginning to "feel the burn" and not in a good way) began to look for alternative forms of exercise that would still have the same benefits, but with much less strain on the body. Cycling seemed a natural choice – a great workout that affords an excellent opportunity to simultaneously enjoy the outdoors.

The club really grew organically, because at first it was just Dan and Dave. They would go out riding on the weekends and were not able to go very far. "I think we rode into downtown and I thought it was going to kill me," says Dave, who started his cycling with just a simple 10-speed bicycle. But over time their endurance increased and friends began to ask if they could ride along with them on their outings. Soon, there was a whole group of men riding their bikes on Saturdays and riding during the week as well.

Twenty-eight years later, the group has about 40 active members, with approximately 15 to 20 showing up for a weekend ride. They ride year-round, regardless of the temperature. Snow and ice, however, stop the bikes in their tracks.

Safety is always most important. Despite this, there is one humorous photo taken of Dave with icicles dangling from his cap and face, after riding for over two hours in subzero weather.

"We're very consistent," explains Dave. "You don't have to call and check to see if we'll be riding, or worry about the rain. We always ride." The riders are careful though to plan for plummeting temperatures, or conversely, extremely hot days for which lots of hydration is required.

One jaunt that the group takes is a scenic ride through Cecil and McDonald, which is a 36-mile round trip. Another regular route is from The Coffee Tree Roasters in Mt. Lebanon to the Pittsburgh Zoo in Highland Park. In fact, it was at The Coffee Tree that the group got its nickname, "Mostly Old Guys in Tight Pants." A patron at the coffee shop saw them and after paying for his own coffee, gave the clerk some extra cash and said, "And this is for coffee for the old guys in tight pants." The phrase just kind of stuck and reflects the good-natured humor that the group has about itself, despite the lengthy rides that require a certain level of fitness to participate.

Some of the members are triathletes and race competitively, while others just participate for the fun and fitness aspects. Though most of the members are from Mt. Lebanon, there is a doctor from Squirrel Hill who rides along and one gentleman who comes all the way from California, Pa., to ride on the weekends.

If you are interested in participating, it's best to contact Mt. Lebanon Cycling and Caffeine Club first via [mtlccc.org](http://mtlccc.org) — to make sure that you will be able to keep up on the long rides. Other than fitness level limitations, Dave says that anyone is welcome to join the group. Although there are not too many female members at this point, there are a few who participate and women are certainly welcomed.

Dave sums up the experience of cycling with the club by saying, "It's easier on your body, there are no fees and the sunrises are gorgeous."

To learn more about the club, visit the website and also YouTube.com, which has several videos of club rides. ■