

THE APPALACHIAN SPRING SPECTACULAR

has a thirty year heritage in Morgantown, West Virginia

It was started by the Monongalia Bicycle Club in a student house on Wiley Street, when after attending the Appalachian Century in Marietta, Ohio in October 1977, Rich Harper and Tom Kalina decided something similar would be good for Morgantown. "We kept our bedroom doors open to get heat from the living room, and we were in our beds, talking across the hall about starting a spring ride through our new group, the Monongalia Bicycle Club. Tom said he was busy enough as Club Coordinator (he didn't like "president.") so I should be the ride coordinator, and soon I was. We set it for the weekend before dead week so studying wouldn't be an excuse not to come, and we had about 60 cyclists ride loops from the Courthouse to Kirby and Waynesburg with a stop at Roberts Run covered bridge on the return. (A \$2 fee included a light lunch. ed.) Rube Fellicelli from the Pathfinder and Jeff McClure from Morgan's bike department worked with us. I remember pulling my car off the road to paint a Dan Henry (route marker) in Pennsylvania and getting stuck in deep mud. A farmer pulled me out. We had another good event in 1979 and again in 1980 after I left town. Then I think it died for a few years."



A Courthouse photo from the first Appalachian Spring Spectacular Sunday, April 16, 1978, shows Rich Harper talking to a group which includes Monongalia Bicycle Club organizer/coordinator Tom Kalina (now living in eastern Pa.), founding member Cliff Cox, Milt Cohen (passed his century and still in Morgantown) and Ron Turner (HCBA charter member, still living at Lake Floyd, Harrison Co.). The other side of Rich is also shown below. (Kalina pix)



In 1983 the Harrison County Bicycle Association (now Country Roads Cyclists) decided to sponsor the event with the same format, in hopes of reviving it among Morgantown cyclists. Don Campbell managed the event. Twelve pre-registrants decided to stay home due to cold weather on April 17th, but 39 others road the established routes and were greeted by snow sprinkles and a pot of hot baked beans in Pennsylvania. The ride caught on anyway, and Morgantown Wheel-People with Frank Gmeindl sponsored it in 1984, moving the date to April 29th. In 1985 the Monongalia Bicycle Club returned to sponsorship with 56 participants according to "Spokin' Words." In 1986, over 100 participated. Our newsletters had few details for the following years, but it continued on late April Sundays, often with support from Wamsley Cycles and/or Pathfinder staff through 1993. Ron Turner, who did most of the earlier rides notes, "The last time I did it, I was on a tandem with a friend from the gas company in Clarksburg. We did okay most of the way, but eventually decided to get off and walk one of the big hills. Chip (Wamsley) was driving sag and tried to give us a lift, but we walked to the top and rode on back." A Saturday "bonus ride" century was added in 1988, and dismal weather failed to deter over 50 in 1992. The Greater Morgantown CVB sponsored it in 1996 to benefit MRTC.



Country Roads Cyclists, by agreement with an informal Monongalia Bicycle Club, became the regular sponsors of the Appalachian Spring Spectacular in 2002. The first Sunday in May became the day of delight, with most of the established features continuing to the present. Frank Gmeindl has continued as coordinator/facilitator, with a committee of about half-a-dozen members (of both clubs) doing the preparation and another dozen or so helping on the big day as ride leaders, sag, food stop and registration assistants. We had 110 participants, great weather and a fine Papa John's pizza feast on the deck of the West Virginia Brewing Company in 2006, and **we're back!**