

## New York Cycle Club

### **The A-SIG is Born . . . and it is Truly a Labor of, um, Love**

by **Christy Guzzetta**, NYCC Lifetime Member

Once upon a time, “A” rides were fast and furious. Guys (few – if any – women came out for A rides back then) with shaved legs, tight wool shorts, 10-speeds and cleats nailed to the wooden soles of their cycling shoes would blast off from Central Park - only a small percentage of whom would ever return. What happened to the rest was anyone’s guess. If someone didn’t have their cleats nailed on just right, they were clearly a nerd. If their frame wasn’t Reynolds 531 or Columbus tubing, likewise a nerd. If their components weren’t Campy Nuovo Record or Campy Super Record, that person must be from Nerdsville, U.S.A.

It was intimidating, scary, disheartening. The “A” riders took pride in the difficulty of their rides; long, fast, hard. No one waited; it was keep up or get dropped. “A” riders enjoyed counting the numbers of those who did not return. After all, you can't just wake up one day and be an A rider. It takes the proper equipment, practice, skill, technique, training, conditioning, know how. Some people would try for a ride or two, get dropped (“Where am I?” “How do I get home?” “Is everyone laughing at me?”), then take up ballroom dancing. Others would become “B” riders and hold a grudge against the “A” s for the rest of their natural-born lives. The “A” riders were mean, tough, indifferent. Grrrrr!

But something happened that softened the heart of one of those hardcore “A” riders – something that would also change cycling and the NYCC forever.

Christy Guzzetta was that hardcore “A” rider and arguably the fastest bike in all of New York City! He was a bachelor back then and trying to score points with a very pretty girl he often saw riding a custom chromed Cuevas in Central Park. Jody Saylor was her name. As polite, and gentlemanly, and charming, and courteous as Christy could be, Jody wouldn’t pay him any mind, wouldn’t give him so much as the time of day. Springtime racing season came along and Jody had the misfortune to crash and blow out her knee. She had been in a cast and on crutches for most of the year following. She wondered, “How will I ever be able to ride on "A" rides again?”

Ever-resourceful Christy suggested, “You should take that program in the Club”. Jody inquired, “What program?” Oh, my goodness, Jody is talking to me! Christy just kept babbling, trying to keep the conversation going. “Oh,” he said, “the

program in the Club that teaches people how to ride on "A" rides.” There was no such thing. Jody inquired, “I haven’t heard about it. How does it work?” Christy just kept babbling and babbling, he was so excited to be talking with Jody he would say anything at all. “Oh, it’s very *special*” Christy said. He paused, thought for a moment, then continued, “The series starts off kind of easy. Each week it adds some miles and picks up the pace a touch”. Jody was curious, “Gee,” she said, “I haven’t heard about this series.” Christy continued thinking up things, “It’s a very *special group*. Starts the first Saturday in March and continues every Saturday up to July 4<sup>th</sup> – rain date Sunday. It’s a *special group* for people who have an *interest* in becoming "A" riders. It’s a *Special Interest Group* . . . . it’s a *SIG*, it’s the *SIG*”. Jody agreed. “Sounds like a terrific series, a fantastic plan!” she said. “I’m going to sign up for it”. Yes, what a fantastic plan indeed.

Christy proceeded to run home and lay out the whole program – 17 rides, starting with an easy ride the first weekend in March. “By July 4th Jody, it’ll be like you never had a knee problem in your life,” he assured her. “And you’ll be riding centuries, fast, in pacelines”. But what he did not tell her was, “you’ll be riding with me.”

Christy proceeded to invite several strong “B” riders to join them, “B” riders who always wanted to be "A" riders but didn't know where to start. To make it official – credible - he put the following notice in the New York Cycle Club Bulletin.

**SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP**  
**PROGRESSIVE "A" RIDE SERIES**

Christy Guzzetta is forming a "Special Interest Group" - a progressive "A" ride series - for those individuals who want to ride on "A" rides in 1987. This series, consisting of approximately 17 rides, will be geared specifically for those people who have never before ridden on "A" rides; or those who haven't in a very long time. Other interested parties will certainly be welcome to participate.

We will cover all the requirements of "A" riding (conditioning, equipment, technique). Series will begin during the first weekend in March. Schedule of rides and other details will be available during the break in the regularly scheduled February meeting.

Or call Christy Guzzetta.

The SIG was born!

A group of 40 non-“A” riders showed up at The Boathouse that first Saturday in March, 1987. Seventeen weeks later there were eight new peline riding, butt-kicking, hooting-and-hollering "A" riders. Eight great new friends. And . . . and . . . and . . . . . Jody and Christy had fallen in love. Cycling and the New York Cycle Club and life as they all knew it would never be the same.

Since those long-gone hardcore “A”-rider days, LYCRA was invented, as was carbon fiber, titanium, 30- speeds, electronic shifting systems. Lots of women now participate in the SIGs; Campy Nuovo Record is long gone; no Reynolds 531; and you couldn't get a nail in the bottom of a pair of cleats with an air hammer. Additionally, hundreds and hundreds of new "A" riders have completed the A-SIG program since 1987. The A-SIG series has been honed to 12 rides. In the A-SIG, cyclists learn that being an “A” rider takes nothing more than the proper equipment, practice, skill, conditioning, and know how. Thousands of Club members have completed the other “A”, “B”, and “C” SIG programs that have developed over time. Each SIG develops the “know how” to better enjoy that particular riding style.

People have graduated from the SIGs and become spirited leaders of Club rides and enthusiastic officers of the New York Cycle Club. Many uncovered a talent and bug for racing and have become champions at the local CRCA level, on the professional racing circuit and literally around the world. The “A”-SIG has indeed produced many great riders.

And. . . . Jody and Christy married! A number of other marriages and many, many new and wonderful lifetime friendships have resulted from what started as a scheme to meet a gal close to 30 years ago.

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