

# **An interview with club organizer, Paul Alman**

**May 2013**

*How long has the club been in existence?*

The Club started in the mid-70's as a spin-off of the Wolverines. Phil Farber, Andy Overmire, Phil Woolsley, Mark Nobilette, Ken and Dave, were among some of the original riders. It grew in prominence during the late 70s with about 30 riders. Things leveled off, went into decline, changed its name to the Great Lakes Cycling Club for a year or so (the president was from Jackson and we were trying to attract more riders from that area). It started to grow significantly in the early 90's and has continued to be the largest USCF club in Michigan (in terms of licensed riders) since about 1997.

*Have we ever done any charity work?*

Define charity. A lot of the activities we are involved with have had a "charity" element, and we have donated significant money to a variety of groups. In the mid 90's the Club was the "sponsoring club" for the Tour de Kids (actually it has been the sponsoring club for the Ann Arbor Festival of Cycling which I started in 1985 and is still the umbrella name for the Tour de Kids). We (Tour de Kids/AAVC) gave many thousands of dollars to the JUMP Foundation in the mid 90's. We put on seminars for kids, have open training and skills clinics, we even did a special AA Public School team in the pre-Jr Development days!

*I read somewhere that we've previously been the USCF Club of the Year. Can you give me any other information on this?*

Now you are testing me. In either 1996 or 1997 I applied for USCF Club of the Year in Division I (the large Club division) and we won it. The award was both for our racing and our community activities. We, (Brad Chick and I, then Doug Heady became our coach) had started the Junior Development Program a couple of years before that, and it was a model that a lot of other Clubs followed. We were one of the first Clubs to sponsor a Lance Armstrong Junior Olympic Race, again in the mid-90's, and that was factored into the award as well. Our coaching program which was started around that time by David Myers, Jim Levinsohn, among others was also a large factor. I can't find the info I kept on it, but we went through a series of awards in those years, winning a special award from the Michigan Recreation and Parks Association for our activities with the Festival of Cycling and Tour de Kids. The AA Parks and Rec. were a "co-sponsor" for the races I did in Ann Arbor during that time, and they nominated us.

*Who started the club? Paul Alman...I think?*

Nope, I wasn't involved with the beginning of the Club. (See above) I moved here from eastern Pennsylvania in 1977 and continued to race for the Doylestown Wheelmen for the first couple of

years I was here. I "formally" switched clubs (on my USCF license) in 1980, but was a member of the Club from about 1977. I was president a couple of times and on the Steering Committee since the beginning. As a "payback" to the sport, I started the Festival of Cycling in 1984 to try to bring racing back to downtown Ann Arbor, and then the Spring Training Series in 1986, both with the support of the Club, and have always permitted my events under the Club's name.

*Have there been any stellar performances, or people who are now more widely known, that are worth noting on the homepage?*

Stellar performances. Boy there were a lot, but it is hard to remember. Some of the earlier riders, Phil Woolsley for example, became an outstanding senior rider when he moved to California in the early 80s (raced with Bob Roll among others), and I will try to recall some of the others. We have always considered ourselves a "development" club, and many Club members have moved on to larger and better funded teams. The Team Ann Arbor (Cat 1/2) riders of the '91-'94 era, all did well in State and regional races, competing well against some of the larger and better known teams of the time. Today I'd probably point to [Alexey Vermeulen](#) on the BMC Development Team.

*Anything else you think would be apropos?*

The Club has made great strides in the past 5 years, and the while the Club/racing scene has changed (much more professionally run and managed, more emphasis on sponsorship, teams within the Club, etc.) it still retains it's local roots and feel and commitment to attracting new riders. One of the things that has distinguished us from a lot of other clubs, is the continuity of our vision and philosophy, where we have tried not to let the "latest sponsor" dictate who we are and what we stand for. We have had many very supportive sponsors during the years, and I like to think they all understood what we were trying to accomplish (new riders, development of the sport, etc.). As David probably told you, there are two reasons we had the Ford sponsorship: they support the use of their funds in developing programs that encourage young and new riders, and the person behind the funding was a AAVC member and Team Ann Arbor member who remembers what we were trying to accomplish even way back then. (Plus I guess, the fact that I pushed for the Club to accept the idea of a Team within the Club and helped them get started. They did it right, IMHO, by staying deeply involved with the Club, leading rides, helping new riders, and "tithing" a portion of their sponsorship (Mercury) to the Club.) This sense of continuity is one of the strongest things we have going for us, and I think you guys are doing a super job of honoring that continuity while bringing the Club up to date.