Spotlight on Bruce Erdman

By Vera C. Stek

When we meet someone on an Outdoor Club hiking/biking/kayaking outing, it’s natural to assume that person’s passion is the outdoors and to limit discussion to shared enthusiasms. However, after several years of interviewing members in the Spotlight, it’s obvious that many of you have widely varied and often disparate passions beyond the outdoor activities.

Bruce Erdman is a prime example of this; while he joined OCSJ as a way to better enjoy his new-found biking habit, the New York native has other passions as well, including ceramics.

His biking story is also interesting because he doesn’t ride the typical off-road or road bike.

Here’s his story:

Q. Tell us a little about yourself: where you were born, where you live, family situation, job, age, etc.

BRUCE: I was born in 1951 in Brooklyn, NY. I lived and played on Long Island. I learned to sail when I was 8 and I was a racing skipper at 13. In my late teens and early twenties I taught sailing for four summers at two nearby yacht clubs. By the time I was in college, my brother, father and I had a wall full of sailing trophies. The silver trophies are not what’s important here. Rather, the lessons I learned on the water sailing set the foundation for the rest of my life. For example: safety first, being prepared, checking your equipment, commitment, confidence, and most importantly practicing good habits.

I met the love of my life, Laurel, at college in Miami, FL. Soon after we graduated we began a great adventure traveling out West. We lived in Idaho, Washington and Utah. We spent all of our free time playing in the mountains hiking and skiing.
I had a job in direct sales and I learned I could make a living on straight commission. This was another life lesson that further instilled confidence and commitment.

Q. When and why did you join the Outdoor Club? What benefits do you get by belonging? When did you start leading rides and why? Do you do any other outdoor activities such as hiking or kayaking?

BRUCE: After living out West, five years later we found ourselves here in New Jersey. A place neither one of us had ever really thought about before. Laurel had decided to go to Rutgers School at of Law so Cherry Hill seemed like the best location to buy a house at the time.

When we moved to NJ, we needed to find like-minded people that enjoyed the outdoors. It was difficult time for us for various reasons but it was in that framework that we first heard of OCSJ. It is a little blurry in my mind but I think it was a cross country ski trip or a canoe trip or the Cape May trip that made me aware of the club. However, it was several years later, in 1983 I would turn a new page in my life and begin biking.

As a youngster growing up I rode bikes everywhere. I even learned to ride a unicycle. I never liked the 10-speed racing bikes. Like most kids we just rode around helter-skelter.

In 1983 I bought two brand new Specialized MTB bikes. These were the first production mountain bikes made. No one had seen them before so people would stare at us and ask questions. We are used to being early adopters.

I was hooked on biking. I started riding everywhere again. It was at this time I started riding on the road with a few friends. One of my riding buddies, Joe Chudinsky, who had once been an Outdoor Club leader, suggested I ride with the Club.

Riding on the road was quite different for me but my friends tutored me in the way of road riding. I was eager to learn but I was having trouble keeping up on my slower mountain bike. So I bit the bullet and began riding a classic 10-speed. Now I could keep up with the gang and ride on the road.

Taking up on Joe's suggestion I also began trying some easy rides with the Club. I must say I was a little intimidated riding with the group not knowing anyone and not knowing the area. I remember worrying about keeping up and being afraid I'd get dropped (remember this is before cell phones and GPS).

It was the skillful and professional leadership of Critter (Alan Horowitz) that continued my education in road biking. I try to emulate his leadership and pass his knowledge on to those who ride with me now. It's because of Alan's leadership that I began leading rides. I wanted to give back to the club a little of what I gained from being a member.

It was in the late '90s when I really became a stronger bike rider doing the Tuesday and Thursday evening rides after work and sometimes on Saturdays and Sundays, too! I was riding 1600 miles a year. Riding was like therapy after a hard day at work I would drag myself to a ride because I knew Critter would be there. Along with a bunch of others we would pound the pedals out of the parking lot and eat up the road before the sun sets. We would return with more energy than we started with in good spirits and would all sleep well at night!

The summer weeks flew by with clear heads and exercise. When the season ended it was more difficult to be disciplined. There was however, cross country skiing to look forward to too. We went on many OCSJ X-country ski trips back in the day when we had snow. One could look forward to staying in shape and having fun in the winter months. I learned it is always important to look forward! One of those life lessons.

Soon spring would be here and the excitement of hiking, biking, and canoeing would fill my mind. If I keep moving I just feel better.

Q. When did you switch to a recumbent bike? Why do you like it?
BRUCE: As you already know I didn’t always ride a recumbent bike. In 2000 I bought my first recumbent bike. Originally it was motivated by my wife Laurel, who because of wrist and neck pain had stopped riding with me and now wanted to join in the fun. I tried an under seat recumbent at Jay’s Pedal Power (now gone) and out of character I bought it on the spot. I usually deliberate and research and pinch pennies before this kind of purchase. I could barely ride this new style of bike but my first experience was a lighting flash of inspiration, its potential was sublime. This was the answer to all the things I did not like in a 10-speed bike! NO butt pain, NO wrist pain, NO neck and back pain, yet the potential for greater speed and comfort on longer rides.

There are few recumbent riders now and there were none back then to help me learn the proper riding techniques. So I taught myself. By the end of the first season I was riding longer and faster and having more fun than ever before. My wife joined me on her new recumbent bike. Although she was slower to adapt to it, we were soon racking up the miles together.

The recumbent made me a better rider. I learned how to properly shift gears and I had better cadence. I was now looking forward to what was ahead instead of looking down at the road. I found I was riding faster rides and going further.

On my upright bike I was fine for 2 hours, but more than that I could not sit on the seat and I would be shaking out my wrists. I would just hang my head down and stare at my front wheel till the ride was over. Why do I like my recumbent bike, you ask?

I have learned quite a lot about recumbent bikes in the last 20 years. There is a lot of misinformation out there with very few knowledgeable people to get facts from. I’m working on a YouTube presentation to help clear some of that information up. With that in mind let me say this: It’s all about the right bike for the right job. For those who ride bikes know. You will know what I mean when I say. A road bike is not a good mountain bike or the beach cruiser will slow you down on a B pace ride. The bike I love to ride is not just any recumbent but rather it is a carbon fiber short wheelbase high racer recumbent. The right bike for the right job. This bike that gives me wings!

Q. What’s the furthest you’ve ever biked? Do you do any of those charity rides? Do you have goals such as a certain miles per week or per year?

BRUCE: My longest ride was a little over 80 miles. Medford to Cape May. Usually I find I get a little bored after 2-3 hours so I prefer shorter trips. As for charity rides I have done a few but tend to avoid them whenever possible. I am happy to support the cause without putting my body on the line. No doubt these types of rides are fun and useful but many riders are novices who have not trained in group riding skills. They tend to be unpredictable. Biking is dangerous and the biggest danger is other riders.

Since 2000 I find myself riding about 2600 miles a year. It is not a goal but as a year comes to a close I always squeeze a few rides in to keep up my fitness. It works best for me to try and get at least 3 rides in during the week. When I’m rolling at least 100 miles a week I know I’m feeling good. It is easier to ride four 25 miles bike rides. It is more difficult to ride one 25 and one 75 miler.

Q. What are some important biking safety tips you can pass on? What’s the most important piece of bike equipment you have?

BRUCE: Safety is a big topic for me. Since I was a young sailor on Long Island Sound I learned early that good habits keep you safe. I continue to this day to find and refine my good habits.

Keep your equipment in proper order and use proper safety precautions. This means: tires pumped up before the ride; helmet on with straps correctly tensioned under the chin; a mirror is essential, especially for a recumbent bike; know the rules of the road and follow them to be predictable to both fellow riders and to cars; looking both ways before crossing the street. You don’t want to rely on the guy that yells "clear" who didn’t see the truck coming; carry a smartphone. It ticks all the boxes for safety, navigation, tracking, etc. You won’t get lost, you can call for help if needed, and you can chart your progress and log your rides.
Make these things habits!

But maybe you meant important in terms of performance? Then my answer would be clipless bike shoes and pedals. These make you one with the bike and add power and muscle to your pedal stroke.

Q. What are some of your favorite rides?

BRUCE: Laurel and I have biked in many locations but here in South Jersey I like the quiet roads out of the Medford area, especially in the Spring and Fall. The long flat straight roads are wonderful to tap into all your senses. Rolling down the street with the fragrance and colors is intoxicating! And the location is convenient for us to go often.

Q. Do you go on biking vacations? If so, where have you been? Any places on your bucket list that you’d like to get to some day?

BRUCE: For many years we went out to State College, PA, for a recumbent bike rally! Bike rallies are low key and you meet lots of friendly like minded people.

When we visit friends and family in and out of state by car we take our bikes along for short sightseeing trips.

As far as bucket list places I don’t have any burning desires at the moment since Laurel and I have hiked, biked and skied across most of the United States. We have learned to appreciate each location we have visited. There is great beauty everywhere you look. And some great places to ride.

Europe would be interesting there is so much history to explore.

We are hoping to ride in South Carolina and Florida when we get past this pandemic.

Q. What are some of your other interests?

BRUCE: Ceramics is more of an obsession than just an interest. In my late 20s I went to the University of the Arts for 4 years to study ceramics. I also attended summer ceramic programs at Anderson Ranch in Colorado and Kent State in Ohio. I even went to South Korea for the opportunity to work with my friend and mentor, Jin Bae, who lives in Seoul.

I work in high fire clay mostly on the wheel. I make functional things that let me explore design and are pleasing in their everyday use. Clay is a magic material and I could talk about it for hours.

My most recent ceramic project has been creating clay bird houses. That combines both my interest in ceramics as well as birds. My goal is to make a piece of decorative art that also serves as a functional birdhouse.

Way back in the ’80s I was interested in computers and that turned into a series of jobs working with information systems. I recently retired from Edmund Optics after 18 years as a communications analyst, but I still enjoy the challenge of playing with computers. I have many interests but often lack time to pursue them all. Usually it’s one thing at a time. I like sailing, hiking, biking, skiing, canoeing, birding to name a few.

Q. What’s something about yourself that might surprise others to know?

BRUCE: I’m a self proclaimed "know it all," but anyone who knows me knows that. But if they don’t, I would be surprised! But I am always open to learning something new.

Q. Anything else you’d like to say about anything?
BRUCE: The Universe rewards action! Find something you like doing and do it. The Outdoor Club is a place where you can live and grow. Your participation will help you and others.

## President's Message

I don't have much to report due to the inclement weather these past few weeks, but be assured we have been active behind the scenes gearing for the better days to come.

One topic, I wanted to broach is MeetUp etiquette. Due to the Coronavirus19 pandemic and State of New Jersey governor’s orders, our club must restrict the number of participants per event. That is why we insist members RSVP their intended attendance. So far, so good.

However, when a member who has RSVPed fails to appear at the event. It poses a problem. Should the leader wait in the cold with the group? Often, the signed up member never cancels the RSVP or never calls the leader or never shows up.

If the member cancels their RSVP, then someone on a wait list would be able to move up and be able attend. Cancelling an RSVP is easy. Please be considerate. It can get much more complicated if a member is on more than one waitlist for the same day. We have seen the same person registered as participants for four events scheduled for the same day! How that might happen is the person was on several waitlists and moved up due to a registered persons cancelling. They never checked the day of the event.

So, if one is on any waitlists, it is their responsibility to monitor their status on MeetUp. Otherwise, they move up and then fail to attend preventing someone else from attending. So bear with us, while our club struggles, like many other organizations, to deal with the spread risks posed by this terribly destructive virus. Again, we understand things come up that prevents a signed up member from attending. Please cancel your RSVP as soon as possible to open a slot.

Be safe and enjoy the great outdoors responsibly.

Joe Fabian

President (President@OCSJ.org)

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Vice President's Message

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I would imagine everyone is going through Covid fatigue now. Hard to believe it’s almost been a year when we went on our first lockdown in NJ. I can only speak for myself, and that is I am very tired of our restrictions and would love to return to some semblance of normalcy. Unfortunately, we are going to be living with this virus for quite some time, and even with the vaccines, no one is sure if we aren’t going to need booster shots every year. So, for the time being, we all have to wear masks, socially distance, and not gather in large groups.

Thank goodness for the OCSJ. Because of our wonderful leaders (those who have been leading for many years and those who are new to leading), we’ve been able to maintain terrific hiking and biking schedules. I am a really good follower when it comes to hiking and biking, so I can’t thank them enough for showing me parts of NJ I had never explored before. My friends all know that when I say I am not going to take any more pictures, they say “yeah right”. The trails I have been on are beautiful and when I look at my pictures, I never get tired of the splendor right in our own backyards (well, within an hour or so of where I live).

I am so grateful for being able to go out in nature, be with friends, and enjoy what is in front of our very eyes. It’s refreshing to know when I want to go outside, I don’t have to go alone. Hats off to our wonderful leaders for keeping us from going crazy during these very surreal times.

Barbara Berman
Vice President OCSJ

Message from the Activity Chair:

Frank Pearce

Outdoor activities have seen a huge surge since the beginning of Covid-19. This is obvious to anyone who has gone to their local park. The club has seen this reflected in our membership. We are one of a limited number of clubs who are offering group activities during the pandemic.

This interest has been both a positive and created some negative issues. The positive is more people wanting to participate, the negative is the limited number of leaders to run the activities. This is aggravated by the restriction imposed by Covid-19. We have had to put restrictions on participate size and give preference to member RSVP's.

A disturbing issue has been members who RSVP for several activities on the same day. This excludes others from participating. If you have obtained a spot, please remove your name from other activities on that day. Some place their name on multiple wait lists and never remove their name from the lists after they have a spot on an activity for that day.

Another issue is failure to notify leader that you will not be attending an event. You have multiple options-through meetup listing of the activity, through contact with leader -phone or E-mail. Again, you are depriving someone from attending. You may also cause those who arrived on time to delay starting because of you.

If this becomes a chronic issue, action may be taken including your removal from attending activities for determined times. Be as considerate of others as you would wish for yourself.

Again, looking forward to seeing you on the OCSJ Activities

For now, stay Safe and Healthy.

Frank Pierce
**OCSJ MEMBERSHIP**

There are several ways you can join or renew your OCSJ membership.

1. Go to [OCSJ.wildapricot.org](http://OCSJ.wildapricot.org). Then, click on the “Join OCSJ Here” button and follow the prompts.

2. Download the Wild Apricot app to your phone. Then, click on the “Join OCSJ” button and follow the prompts.

You have the option of paying on-line or mailing a check. If you are mailing a check, make it payable to Outdoor Club of South Jersey.

Our mailing address is:

**Outdoor Club of South Jersey**

**PO Box 1681**

**200 Walt Whitman Ave**

**Mount Laurel, NJ 08054-9998**

Our annual membership rates are:

- Individual - $20
- Family - $25

Membership Questions: Please contact OCSJ at [membership@ocsj.org](mailto:membership@ocsj.org)

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**OCSJ PARTICIPATION POLICY**

1. OCSJ is a member organization. Membership funds pay for insurance and other Club overhead. However, prospective members and guests of OCSJ members may try one regular activity from each of our activity sections without joining. Thereafter they must join to be eligible for the hundreds of activities and events available every year.

2. Participants on trips which charge money must be members of OCSJ, except where the trip is a joint trip with another club and the participant is a member of that club. If there is space available, members of OCSJ may bring guests on a day trip charging money. Participants on overnight trips charging money must always be an OCSJ member.
Any comments please contact: Joseph Fabian (president@ocsj.org)

MEETUP

To receive up-to-date club information, we encourage everyone to go to our website and to join our Meetup groups. It is helpful to include a photo of yourself on your Meetup profile, so the leader can properly identify and welcome you to the activity you are attending. Our activities are listed on the following Meetup sites.

Click Links Below to Join and View

* Hiking/Camping/Backpacking Events Link

* Biking Cross Country Skiing Events Link

*Kayaking Events Link

Note: You must join each meetup group separately

If you are planning on attending an event, do not forget to RSVP. This is important information for the leader. Of course, if your plans change, please cancel your RSVP. Meetup will automatically send you an email if the activity is cancelled by the leader.

ANNUAL MILEAGE CLUBS

Some of our members like to keep track of their annual mileage and have formed groups within the club. If you would like more information, please contact them.

The Grand Mileage Club - These hardy folks strive to hike 1000 per year. They report their mileage monthly to Jenny Buffington at TotallyBuff@comcast.net

500 & 750 Mileage Club - These folks strive to hike either 500 or 750 miles per year. They report their mileage monthly to Ann Palaitis at ann.m.palaitis@gmail.com.

Bicycling Mileage Club - The bikers report their miles annually to Neil Kornhauser at nkornhauser@gmail.com.

Kayaking Mileage Club - The kayakers report their miles annually to Erika Blank at powerofpink58@verizon.net.

BOARD OF TRUSTEE MEETINGS

The OCSJ Board meets on the 2nd Thursday of each month at 7 pm. Currently, our meetings are on zoom.

TREKKER
The latest printed Trekker is available quarterly from Board Members and Leaders. The printed Trekker is also available at The Print Shop, White Horse Pike in Stratford, NJ. Contact Doug Hillebrecht at 856-309-8817 if you need more information.

Like us on Facebook

Outdoor Club of South Jersey

www.facebook.com/ocsj.org

CAPE MAY WEEKEND

The annual Cape May Weekend is scheduled for June 18, 19, 20, 2021.

If you are interested, please RSVP on Meetup.

Send your application and money. ASAP

For more details, click here
2020 was a year when lots of cyclists rode many miles solo. We also had over 300 club rides, both road and trail since June of 2020. Many cyclists like to keep a log of miles travelled; a big thank you to the folks that submitted their 2020 miles. OCSJ cyclists are very resilient and everyone should be proud with the mileage they accomplished in this crazy year and deserves the recognition. It’s not a contest but an accomplishment to what they achieved.

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**Monthly DIY Tip**

If you venture out on the roads in the winter, remember you will be riding on roads that have been brined and salted. All of these harsh chemicals will be nicely caked on your bike. Remember to wash your bike and get these corrosive chemicals off. I know it’s easier said than done, especially if you have no access to a hose. Fill a bucket with some warm soapy water and get out the sponge! You can also fill up a spray bottle or use a dedicated pump sprayer, the kind used for lawns and shrubs. I also recommend plain water after to get off the soap! A clean bike is a happy bike.... and ultimately a happier cyclist!

As always, thank you and see you on the road and trails.

Neil Kornhauser (cycling chairman)

nkornhauser@gmail.com

**TRAIL MAINTENANCE**


**Message from the Trail Maintenance Chair:**

Ro Mason
Trail Work Tuesdays are back!

The OCSJ trail crew has been working in the cold weather and snowy conditions clearing and reblazing the Batona Trail in the section of the Franklin Parker Preserve. We assisted Russell Juelg, senior land steward of the FPP, with carrying in lumber and supplies so he could replace a failing footbridge on the Reed’s Pond canal. We had 22 great people work that day, several of us past sunset.

Several of our members also assisted Russell with fixing the Drunken Hobbit Bridge making it safe to cross again.

We agreed to assist Russell with maintaining the popular Red Trail in the preserve.

The crew will also be assisting another hiking group, the Hikerbabes, with clearing the Mt. Misery Trail on a Saturday in March. Date to be announced soon.

A request was made from the Crossley Preserve for trail maintenance assistance. I will be on the OCSJ hike on 2/18 to Crossley to check out what is needed.

Whew! Busy, busy, busy!

Ro Mason

Ro Mason is our Trail Representative. Every Tuesday, she will be organizing work days for the BATONA Trail. To volunteer, please contact Ro at romason@comcast.net

HIKING

www.meetup.com/Outdoor-Club-of-South-Jersey-Hiking/

Message from the Hiking Chair:

Evelyn Minutolo
COVID continues to restrict our activities. There are no more PA hikes for now, no Christmas tailgate, and restricted numbers on hikes, but there are still plenty of great hikes and walks out there...just bring a mask and sign up early. I can't wait to do Rich's Wissahickon hikes again.

If you do not see hikes that fit your pace or distance, then it is time to step up and lead a hike yourself! IT COULD NOT BE ANY EASIER!!! More leaders = more hikes!

If you need help setting up a hike or have questions or if you are interested in leading, email Evelyn Minutolo at sunsetwaterfall@aol.com

Thank you and see you on the trails.

Evelyn
SunsetWaterfall@aol.com

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Backpacking/Camping Trips

www.meetup.com/Outdoor-Club-of-South-Jersey-Hiking/

Message from the Backpacking/Camping Chair:

Kevin Drevik

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Schedule for 2nd quarter of 2021 is currently looking like this:

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<th>Month</th>
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<td>11-13</td>
<td>VA56</td>
<td>Salt Log Gap</td>
<td>3 day Wknd</td>
<td>VA 17-18</td>
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Beginner's Hike on Appalachian Trail in Pennsylvania | Meetup
May 15-16 PA309 Bake Oven Knob Wknd PA 20-21 9.3 Beginner

Hike the Appalachian Trail in Vermont and New Hampshire | Meetup
June 12-14 VT9 North Adams MA 3 day Wknd VT 9 19.3

Thanks!
Kevin

See you on the trail!
Kevin

If you would like to organize a trip or for backpacking information, contact Kevin at KDrevik@aol.com

Cross Country Ski and Snowshoe Trips
www.meetup.com/Outdoor-Club-of-South-Jersey/
Message from the Ski Chair:

Cross Country Ski Chair: Vacancy - Volunteer Needed
Message from the Kayaking Chair:
Frank Pearce

It is obvious that the paddling season, like everything else, is not normal. The number of trips offered and leaders offering them are down. We are one of the few organizations that are still offering group paddling. If you go on an outing, do not forget to thank the leader. The only way we can continue to offer activities is by everyone being safe. Follow the recommendations of experts. The whole goal is to get us back to normal as quickly as we can.

Cold Weather Paddling Policy (9/10/2015) Paddling in cold weather Policy as approved by board will be: During months of November thru March paddlers must wear wet or dry suits subject to approval of leaders.

Leaders have final say on participation based on safety concerns. Examples would be bringing small children or pets. Some will ask about limits on trip size. This might be set by safety concerns or limited parking. If you have a question, please contact the leader first.

Happy Paddling

If you would like to organize a trip, contact Frank at HORNET71@VERIZON.NET

OCSJ SOCIAL COMMITTEE

Dear Fellow Members, I am pleased to announce that the Social Committee is again active and holding events. We have recently held an event called FRIDAY NIGHT MOVIES. We have found this event is a great way to get out and be safe. So far, we have attended 4 movies and will plan more events. Look for more FRIDAY NIGHT MOVIES posts on Meetup.

John Kerney - Social Committee Coordinator - crewkern@live.com

Leaders Banquet

Our Banquet plans are currently TBD.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES
**Board of Trustees** - Interested in joining the OCSJ Board. Come out to a couple of meetings or contact the OCSJ President at [President@ocsj.org](mailto:President@ocsj.org)

**Publicity** - We would like to have the OCSJ name appear in more places both in print and online. Contact Fran at [franhorn@aol.com](mailto:franhorn@aol.com) if you have ideas and would like to help.

**Social Committee** - If you would like to help with the 2021 Planning, contact the John Kerney at [crewkern@live.com](mailto:crewkern@live.com)

**Website/Computer** - We could use some help from people with computer or website experience. Contact the OCSJ President at [president@ocsj.org](mailto:president@ocsj.org)