

Easy Rider

The entrepreneur of “stop-and-smell-the-roses” bike tours through some of America’s most beautiful country, Suzanne Knable, BA ’74, is tour guide and head honcho to bicyclists looking for an outdoor vacation to remember.

In a lobby at the Provincetown Inn in Cape Cod, Mass., the mother hen of a bike tour for 35 adults is sitting remarkably still for the first time in five days. From morning to night, Suzanne Knable has played the role of Superwoman, helping to transport luggage, prepare meals, and handle last-minute details during a seven-day fall tour of Cape Cod and Martha’s Vineyard.

On occasion, Knable has even managed to ride. “I wasn’t a serious cyclist until I was in my late 30s and met Roger,” explains Knable, 48, referring to her husband. “We became active in the Baltimore Bike Club and noticed that the membership was as interested in recreational rides as they were in races. Our idea was to start a tour group that would allow people to explore places at an affordable price and at a leisurely pace.”

Bike and the Like, or what Knable refers to as “our stop and smell the roses tours,” is a not-for-profit group that was founded in 1996. Her husband’s income as principal of Baltimore Display Industries enables Knable to donate profits to environmental friendly organizations such as the Sierra Club and the League of American Bicyclists. “We support bicycling advocacy and open space, and only donate to organizations that give 75 percent of the donated dollar to their mission.”

Knable, whose maiden name is Ruthenberg, grew up as an overweight but high-energy tomboy around male cousins in the Druid Hill Park section of Baltimore. “While my older sister was blond, thin, and adorable, they called me ‘hippo’ in elementary school,” she says. Uninspired at Pikesville Senior High School, she grew to love learning at Catonsville Community College in Maryland. Knable transferred to GW as a sophomore when her stepfather, sensing her new commitment to education, told her that he would send her to the college of her choice if she achieved a 4.0 average.

“I loved Washington and the fact that the GW campus was within walking distance of so many amazing places,” she recalls. Knable

spent her junior year as a study abroad student at the University of Madrid and, in 1974, received her degree in Spanish language and literature. A year later she married, earned a master’s degree in business administration from the University of Baltimore and, when she wasn’t raising two children, dabbled in accounting and retail. Her first marriage ended in 1989.

Her life changed abruptly when a neighbor introduced her to Roger Knable. “At the time, Roger was in a long distance relationship, but he needed more of a local playmate,” she says, laughing. The couple, who married in 1993, take bike trip vacations through national parks and often travel together to map out new routes for the ten Bike and the Like tours a year. Today her stepson, Stephen Knable, is a junior at GW.

Bike and the Like has evolved from weekend excursions to such destinations as Cape May, N.J. and Lancaster, Pennsylvania to longer trips on the C & O Canal or across New Jersey. The seven-day Cape Cod trip, for example, was priced at \$495 a person and

included lodging, breakfasts and dinners, and tickets on a scenic railroad that took riders back to their cars on the seventh day. Accommodations ranged from the barracks-like American Youth Hostel on Martha’s Vineyard to upscale double occupancy rooms at the historic Old Sea Pines Inn in Brewster. A van transported luggage and stragglers.

Each day’s itinerary was on easy-to-read cue sheets, and gave riders the option of a 30-mile route or a longer 50-plus mile route. Built into the itinerary was an optional riding day on Martha’s Vineyard. Participants ranged in age from 30 to 72; three Germans, a couple from Texas, and singles from California and Wisconsin learned about the trip from the Knable’s Web site (bikeandthelike.com).

“An important aspect that makes their trips so wonderful is that Suzie and Roger not only participate, but provide the kind of enthusiasm that’s contagious,” says Sheila Kaufman, a 66-year-old grandmother/retired schoolteacher from West Orange, N.J. Kaufman, who has already been on three Like Bike and the tours, hopes to participate in the “Rhode Island Ramble” next fall. Adds Kaufman, “Their commitment to biking is admirable, plus they’re the cutest couple I know.”

—Bill Glovin, senior editor, Rutgers Magazine.

