

AMERICAN RANDONNEUR AWARD | DON HAMILTON

RUSA is pleased to honor Membership Chair Don Hamilton with the 2010 American Randonneur Award. Don has worked tirelessly for the organization as its Membership Coordinator since early 2001. Membership is a vital RUSA job and one that few people could handle so well. He has always effectively balanced the needs of the individual and those of the organization. His warm new-member greeting is a perfect extension of RUSA's member-elected leadership. Don also served on the RUSA Board for two terms.

While many people know Don from his RUSA efforts on the national level, not so many know that he has also worked enthusiastically on the local level with the Ohio Randonneurs. Whether it was route-scouting, staffing a control for long hours, driving sag, or helping with new-rider orientation, Don spent a lot of time encouraging others in our sport while helping his local RBAs. Those RBAs have valued Don's contributions to the Ohio brevet series, especially as he was a useful link between the two during their transitional period. Following are their comments.



"There are rocks, coal dust and tree branches washing down the hill toward us. Look, Phyllis."

"I can't look, Don. My eyes are closed so I don't have to see the lightning."

Don and Phyllis Hamilton were climbing a steep southeastern Ohio hill in the middle of a ferocious summer storm. It was on the outbound half of the 1998 Ohio Randonneurs 400 Km brevet, and the Hamiltons were seriously re-thinking their decision to take on randonneuring. I had met them when I relocated to Columbus several years earlier, had ridden many centuries and other club rides with them, and enjoyed their company. They had years of loaded touring experience, but were unsure of their ability to finish brevets and ultimately PBP. The 1998 series was to test their preparation and



resolve for such long events. The 400 was a tough ride through the most rugged topography in Ohio; it took place in an absolute typhoon of rain and wind. More than half of the riders abandoned, but the Hamiltons finished strongly and went on to confidently finish PBP '99.

I remembered this sense of determination, preparation and pleasure of accomplishment later when I asked Don to accept a term as RUSA membership secretary.

"Not too tough a job, Don, we have just a few hundred members," I said.

Don accepted the appointment and has watched both the membership and the job grow dramatically. Certainly his riding success was a factor in his selection as the American Randonneur recipient (multiple SRs and twice a PBP ancien). But more than that, as a RUSA member Don has consistently been supportive of the sport and riders, whether willingly providing a generous draft to struggling fellow riders, or manning out-of-the-way controls at all hours, or showing up at the start of Flèches to provide encouragement and enthusiasm.

Most of all, however, Don has earned the present recognition for his tireless volunteer work as a RUSA board member and Membership Secretary. Certainly his

organizational skills and persistence have been vital to the smooth operation of the office. But beyond that, his warm letters of welcome and renewal provide a real human link between individual RUSA members and the organization.

In recognition of his long service to fellow riders, and to his careful nurturing of the membership office, it is fitting that RUSA has honored Don Hamilton with American Randonneur recognition for 2010.

—David Buzzee, American Randonneur recipient, RUSA co-founder, former Ohio RBA, PBP ancien.



It's awesome that Don is being awarded this honor. He certainly is a worthy candidate. I met Don and Phyllis in 2001 on my first brevet. It's a rare site to see them apart and not on their old tandem. I think I've only seen him on the bike without Phyllis a few times when his back was really bad and he had to ride a more upright machine than the tandem. Together they have put in more hours for the cause of randonneuring than anyone I know. Everyone appreciates the work that they put into processing memberships and supporting RUSA and the sport. Don has always been a mentor and storyteller for the Ohio club. He has a mind full of memories. Speaking of memories, he has one like a steel trap. Don can remember roads and landmarks from rides he rode 10 years ago, while I can't remember the turns on routes I designed a month ago. He can go on and on about his experiences on the road. He's always there when you need someone to help out whether it's scouting a new route, manning a secret control or helping to check in riders at the start and finish of events. His enthusiasm for the sport is unsurpassed. He has been an inspiration to all of us.

—Bob Waddell, RBA, Columbus OH.