

In Memoriam – J. Martin Shipp

BY ROBERT BINGHAM

Upon receiving the news that Martin Shipp had been killed in a hit-and-run incident, I felt as if the wind had been knocked out of me. Martin had registered to ride permanent # 2818 Raleigh – Berea – Raleigh. He rode his bicycle to the starting location about half a mile from his residence and then started the ride around 5:30 a.m. on August 30, 2024. Less than an hour later, he was struck head on by a vehicle passing on a double yellow line and was killed. The driver fled the scene but was arrested later that day.

Martin was a careful rider and used lights and reflective gear. Ironically, he had ridden a permanent two weeks prior to his death and stated in an email to me, “I won’t be doing that again -- by which I mean starting at 11 a.m. on a weekday.” He then went on to describe the very bad traffic and concluded “I’ll stick with starting at 5 a.m., or 6 or 7 (or 8 at the latest) on a weekday.” I have ridden with Martin more than 30 times on the stretch of New Light Road where his death occurred, and Martin has been on it close to 175 times. (Permanents # 2259, 2818, 1795 all use that road.) Unfortunately, nothing can protect even a seasoned, safe rider from a reckless, irresponsible scofflaw behind the wheel.

Martin and I joined RUSA early in 2010 and met each other that spring while participating in the Raleigh, NC brevet series. We soon discovered we were both “back-of-the-pack” riders, and this led to riding many permanents and brevets together. Prior to picking up randonneuring, Martin was a distance runner and recreational cyclist. He volunteered as a ride marshal for the MS150 events held in New Bern, North Carolina and organized an informal group of friends (named the “Bay Leaf Irregulars”) who rode in the Raleigh area and beyond. (One gath-

ering was a multi-day tour on the Blue Ridge Parkway.) Some of those riders subsequently joined RUSA at Martin’s urging. He managed to balance randonneuring and non-randonneuring events, keeping interest alive for both.

Within three years after joining RUSA, Martin was plunging into volunteering as well as encouraging other members to create permanent routes. Martin used his extensive knowledge of Raleigh and the surrounding area to help plan routes and aid in the use of RideWithGPS. His volunteer work included handling registration, providing drop bag support, pre-riding courses, picking up DNFs, and simply giving words of encouragement to flagging riders, whether the event was a 200k or a 1200k. Martin also served on the RUSA committee responsible for reviewing new brevet routes.

Martin did ride a lot (as can be seen by checking the RUSA website “Results” tab), but his focus was more on helping others to achieve their goals. This came into sharper relief as he began to shoulder more and more responsibilities from longtime Raleigh RBA Alan Johnson. This ensured a smooth transition when Martin became the RBA in 2023. In addition to retaining the long-used routes of Alan’s SR series, Martin added several new routes



A selfie taken two weeks before his death.

and promoted the new Rouleur award by scheduling events needed to obtain the award.

Statistician and actuary that he was, Martin never tired of analyzing data related to RUSA. He also maintained his own detailed blog of rides (<https://irregularveloadventures.blogspot.com>) which is a good source for those interested in learning more about him.

Martin will be sorely missed by many people. His tragic death leaves a big hole in the Raleigh cycling community, especially for randonneuring. As I write this, the case against the hit-and-run driver has not gone to trial. The driver faces five separate charges. Whatever the outcome, Martin is gone from us, and for that we sorrow. 🚲

Postscript: *The driver who hit Martin tested positive for marijuana and accepted a plea deal. She was given the maximum sentence for both charges, felony death and felony hit and run resulting in death, and will serve the two terms consecutively, for a minimum of 132 months in prison.*