

THE MID-ATLANTIC RIDE JOURNAL

VOLUME 1 • NUMBER 1 • WINTER 2024

A regional snapshot
FOR THE LOVE
OF THE BIKE

SPOTLIGHT: A Lasting Impact

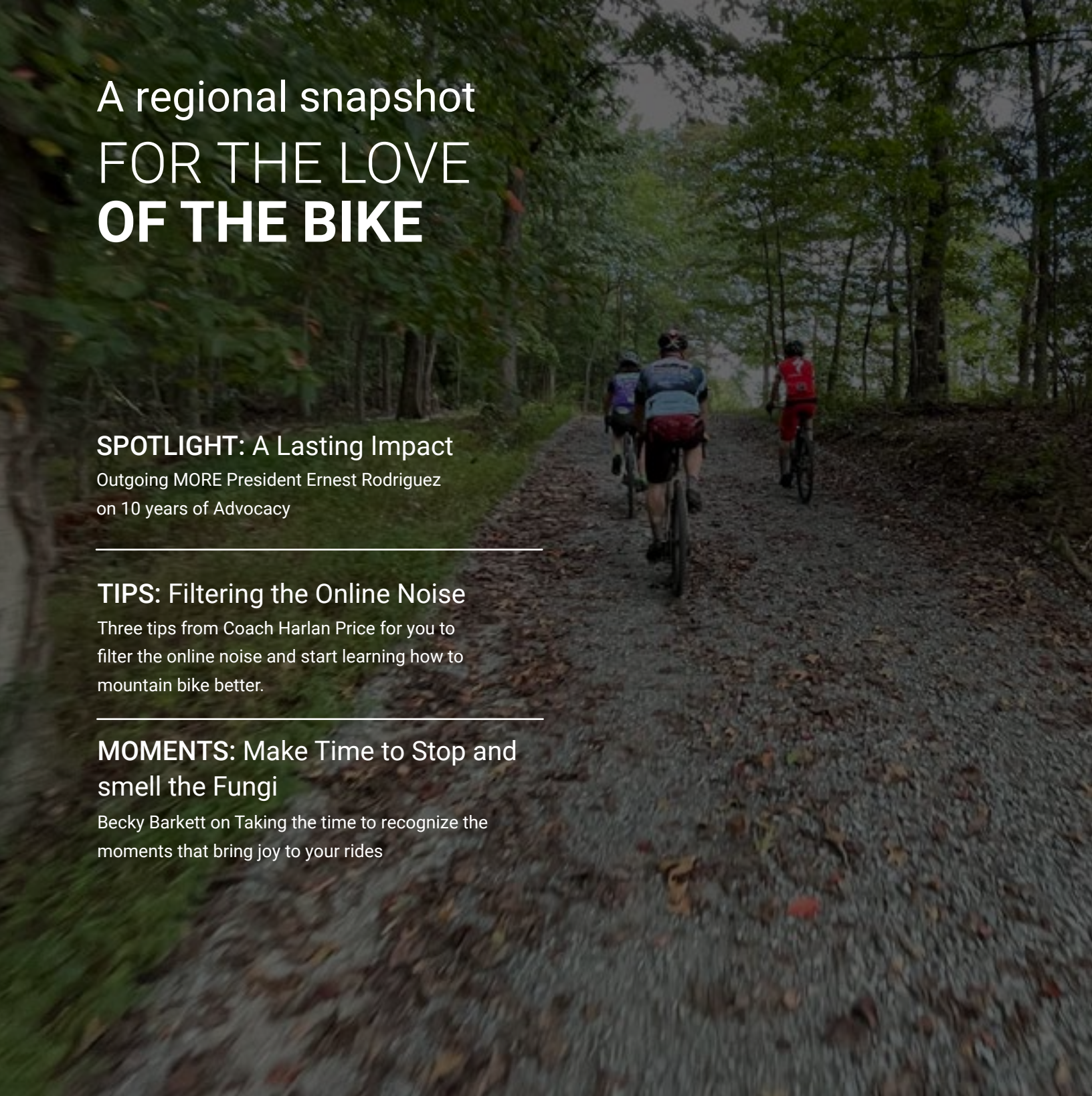
Outgoing MORE President Ernest Rodriguez
on 10 years of Advocacy

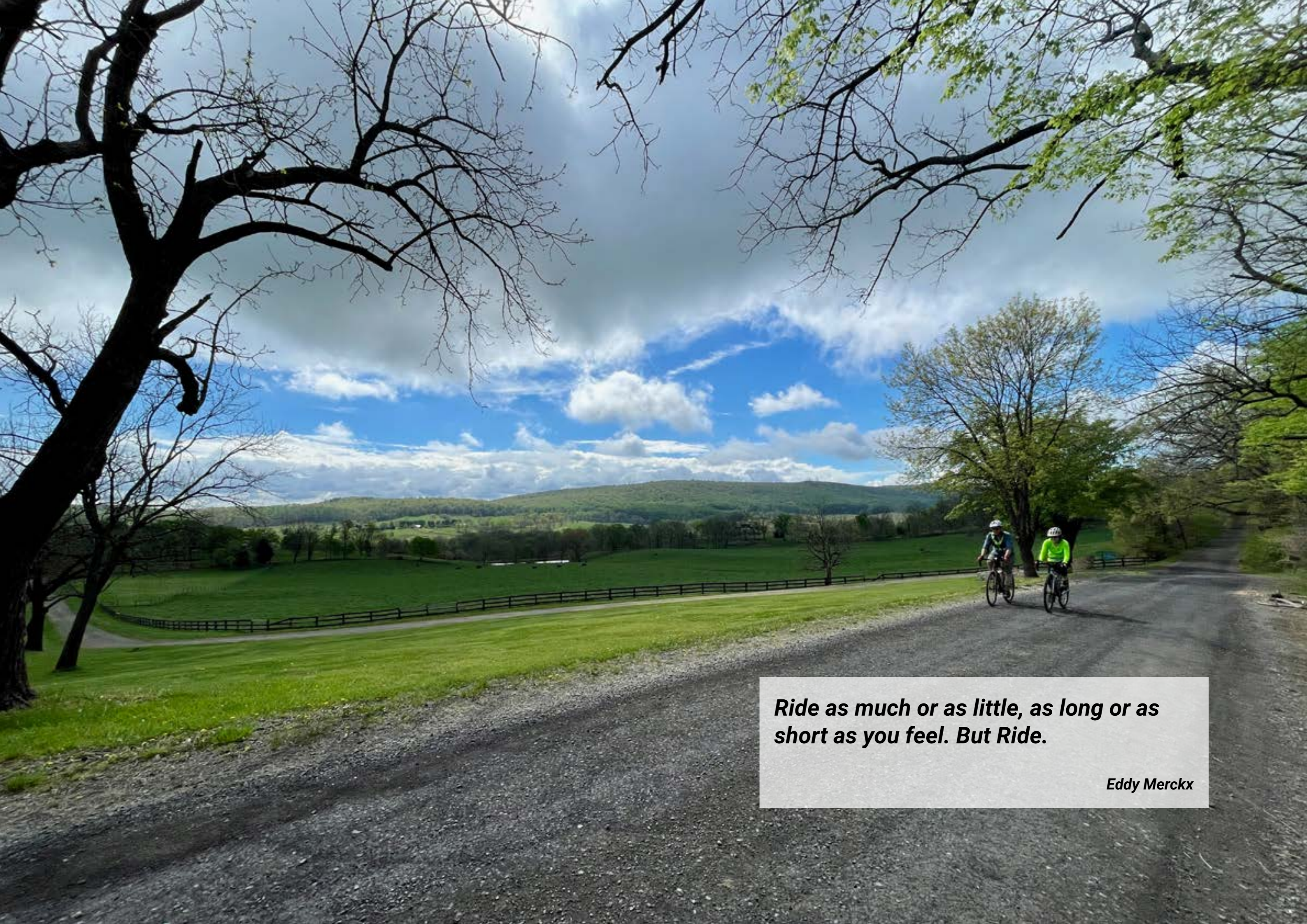
TIPS: Filtering the Online Noise

Three tips from Coach Harlan Price for you to
filter the online noise and start learning how to
mountain bike better.

MOMENTS: Make Time to Stop and smell the Fungi

Becky Barkett on Taking the time to recognize the
moments that bring joy to your rides





Ride as much or as little, as long or as short as you feel. But Ride.

Eddy Merckx

Martín Fernández

@BestRidesDC • <http://www.bestridesdc.com>

"...to motivate and inspire others to bike and discover the same joy and love of cycling we have in common."

Dear Reader,

I proudly present to you the first edition of [The Mid-Atlantic Ride Journal](#), a digital publication that aims to highlight the people and places that make our community special.

I've been fortunate to have lived in various places in the Mid-Atlantic, from Northern Baltimore to Northern Virginia, for a little over three decades, and have experienced first hand how the cycling culture has evolved over the years. When I first started riding in the late 80's, I never imagined how much cycling would become a part of my life.

My involvement with the Mid Atlantic Off-Road Enthusiasts (MORE) in early 1992 opened the door, and gave me the opportunity to publish multiple regional cycling guides. Publishing books about trails allowed me to experience, visit, ride, on and off-road destinations all across our region. Beyond finding new places to pedal, I have met some amazing people along the way. All of them eager and willing to share their favorite loops, local knowledge, and experience, showcasing the places where they live and ride.

The goal of [The Mid-Atlantic Ride Journal](#) is to share those same experiences with you, as well as to introduce you to some of the people I have met along the way, hopefully in their own words. This digital magazine's mission is to motivate and inspire others to bike and discover the same joy and love of cycling we have in common.

I also hope you are willing to share your stories with the rest of us via this journal. If you have an epic adventure, a first ride in a new locale, a personal story to tell around your "love of the bike," or simply want to share your particular expertise, please don't hesitate to reach out.

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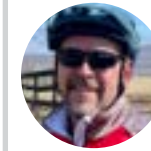
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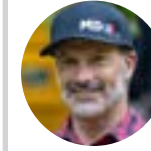
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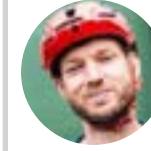
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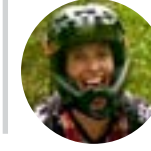
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A Lasting Impact

Photo: Will Nichols

Ernie Rodriguez: Ten Years of Advocacy and Leadership with the Mid-Atlantic Off-Road Enthusiasts (MORE)

By Martín Fernández • [@BestRidesDC](#) • [BestRidesDC.com](#)

Several years ago, I put together a piece for [my website](#) that featured my buddy [Ernie Rodriguez](#), highlighting all the work he was doing for our community. It was in 2016, and he was about to start a second two-year term as the President of the Mid-Atlantic Off Road Enthusiasts (MORE) bike club. He had already made a considerable impact in the organization, and his leadership was exactly what the club needed.

Fast forward 7 years... Ernie has continued to be MORE's "crank turner," and helped lead MORE through continuous growth.

Over the course of the last decade Ernie served on MORE's board as President and only recently relinquished the reins to allow someone else to help execute the Board's vision, and lead MORE into its 4th



EPIC Volunteer. Photo: Casey Anderson

decade of existence. It's time, he says, "for someone else to carry the torch and build upon the work that's been done and continue to move the club forward."

Ernie never really planned on being MORE president, but after a stint as Virginia's Advocacy Director in 2013, he felt energized and optimistic and jumped at the opportunity to lead the club.

If you know Ernie, or spend any time with him, you'll know that one of his favorite phrases is "building community." As he transitioned away from the



EPIC Rider. Photo: Karen E. Good

presidency, he told me he was most proud of the continued recognition of volunteers who make trails possible in our region, and proud of those who have helped grow our community of off-road cyclists.

He's seen MORE grow into a highly functioning organization and hopes the next President works on developing a theme that helps the club focus on key initiatives and strategic growth, while sustaining the level of support given to trail liaisons so that they, may in turn, continue to motivate their local riding community. He hopes that the club invests more



Always fun riding and volunteering with Ernie. Here we are at the Patapsco Fun Series. Photo: James Corbett - epiclifeimages.com



Surrounded by a community of friends - enjoying the Team XXL "unofficial" aid station during a recent MoCo Epic. Photo: Jason Miller

resources in support of volunteer learning and growing from past experiences.

Although Ernie stepped down from the club's presidency, he plans to stay engaged and remains dedicated and willing to contribute however he can. He's really looking forward to the next chapter in MORE's history, and is eager to see new ideas come to fruition, and is excited that MORE's new leadership will bring a new approach to management of the club.

Ernie won't brag, but under his leadership, MORE's inventory of trails grew exponentially. Ernie championed the efforts of MORE's growing team of Trail Liaisons and his support was invaluable. His energy, enthusiasm, and ever present smile were motivating.

He was instrumental in securing funding for multiple destinations, including the trail system I manage,

Locust Shade. I often feel embarrassed with the credit I get for working to make that place happen, because the truth is that without the support of the MORE Board – and particularly Ernie's guidance and continuous support – Locust Shade and multiple other trails in our region would not be what they are today. I'm sure other MORE liaisons will echo that sentiment.

As Ernie transitions away from the board he hopes to travel more, spend more time with his grandkids and more importantly, ride MORE.

If you see Ernie out on the trail make sure to say thanks for the lasting impact he's had on the trails we love to ride. ☐

Make Time to Stop and Smell the Fungi



All Fungi Photos: Becky Hunt Barkett

By Becky Hunt Barkett • [@Becky.HuntBarkett](#)

A few years ago I was out riding alone, just getting my legs warmed up, when I noticed a yellow flower on the side of the trail (above). I stopped to take a look and, upon closer inspection, realized that it wasn't a flower after all. Instead, it was a brightly colored mushroom.

I was so mesmerized and in awe at the uniqueness and beauty of the fungi, that I continued on my ride searching for more.

That one mushroom got me thinking about how many other different varieties were out in the woods. I wondered how many times I had ridden by and missed these wonderful little "plants."

Since then, I have taken time on some of my rides to make it a point to "figuratively" stop and smell the fungi. That first sighting sparked a bit of interest, so I did some research, and learned that mushrooms aren't really plants, they are in a kingdom of their own, fungi. Fungi both look like and take the form of plants. Unlike plants, which make their own food through photosynthesis, the mushroom uses enzymes to feed upon other substances found in the soil and ultimately "flowers" above ground.

Mushrooms often grow in partnership with other plants by attaching themselves to them. Like the Chicken of the Woods pictured on the right. They are also a key

component of our forests since they help recycle nutrients and break down dead plants.

I've been amazed at the variety of mushrooms that have suddenly "emerged" before me along the trail now that I am paying attention. Now it's like a scavenger hunt to find fungi that I haven't seen before.

Mushrooms often grow in partnership with other plants by attaching themselves to them.

While I don't always ride slowly enough to notice them, I still make it a point on some rides to "hunt" for them. Since making the time, I have seen dozens of different mushrooms in all kinds of colors, shapes and sizes along the various trail systems we all love to visit.





Some are easy to spot while others are more elusive. Making the time to search for fungi has really helped me appreciate all the forest has to offer, and they are yet another reason to cherish the natural beauty that surrounds us. □

And, depending on the time of year, the appearance of the same mushrooms may be different. I've also learned that some mushrooms should not be touched since they are poisonous. Though, some are edible.



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Race Day Preparation

Coach Matt Eggleton has some proven advice to get you ready for race day:

Matt Eggleton is an accomplished mountain bike (MTB) and gravel racer, having competed in the National Ultra Endurance MTB Race Series every year since 2016, and he has stood on the podium many times over, all across the Mid-Atlantic. Most relevant to this topic, Matt is a USA Cycling Certified Coach and has logged over 500 hours of coaching – primarily endurance and ultra-endurance MTB and gravel racers – including two state champion Masters racers. Below, he shares his approach to getting ready for each new season.

By Matt Eggleton • [@Matt.Eggleton](#) • <http://www.eggleton.net>

Racing is exciting! Testing yourself against your previous efforts, as well as against your peers, helps build confidence and character. You can, and will, become the best version of yourself when you take a methodical and structured approach to getting ready for race day.

The framework I have adapted and employed for coaching (as well as a lot of the efforts I lead in my day job as a strategist and planner for the Department of Defense (DoD)) is what I call the “Strategic Performance Approach.” The four phases of this approach are: Envision, Plan, Prepare, and Execute. When executing this plan you won’t just move from phase to phase, instead, as you move from one to the next, you will frequently check in on the previous phases and, if warranted, refine your approach.

Envision: Close your eyes and think about what it will be like the day AFTER a huge success at your big race. What do you see? What does it mean to you? How do you feel about yourself? Where in your body do you feel it? Describe (out loud) those feelings. Are you smiling? Hold onto that. You will come back to your “why” frequently.

Plan: There are hundreds of books written about planning a race season that can be reduced down to just a couple of key points. Pick out the pinnacle race (or races, no more than 3) that will be your primary objective for the next year. Structure and schedule a rhythm of workouts that you can realistically keep in order to prepare for a race(s). This is where a coach can help. For example, plan 90 minutes of riding every Tuesday and Thursday, then three hours of riding every Saturday and Sunday.

Plan to go hard on Tuesdays and Saturdays and keep it gentle on the other days. Boom! You have just created a 9-hour per week training plan. As you get closer to the race(s) you’ll get more specific in your preparation. Take a moment and revisit your “why?”

Prepare: Preparation involves training, equipping, practicing, and simulating. Training includes the workouts (on the bike and in the gym) that will make you stronger and fitter. You will also need to equip yourself with the gear necessary to perform (e.g. bike, apparel, tools, and other logistics equipment). Practice is when you repeatedly utilize and refine your skills and familiarize yourself with your equipment. Finally, simulation is when you put everything together and perform a dry run (or dress rehearsal) on the racecourse (or one similar) to build the necessary

confidence to execute. Once again, take a moment and revisit your “why?”

Execute: Now is time to execute your vision, plan, and preparation on race day. It is very often the easiest part of the Strategic Performance Approach – “All I have to do is stay upright and ride hard for six hours!” Take a moment and revisit your “why?”

Again, racing is exciting, and the journey from when you begin envisioning and executing your structured approach can be just as exhilarating!

Planning will allow you to have something to do every day between now and your selected race day. And all that meticulous work is part of the rewarding journey toward the best and happiest version of you. □

Back for 2024! The Quantico Epic



Photo: Bruce Buckley

After a one year hiatus, the Quantico Epic, hosted by The Quantico Mountain Bike Club (QMTB), is back on the 2024 Mid-Atlantic event schedule.

By Paul Haag • [@paul.haag](#)

The Quantico Epic, modeled after the MoCo Epic, held by the Mid-Atlantic Off Road Enthusiasts (MORE) in the fall, gives regional riders an opportunity to ride along a trail system that is otherwise not open to the public.

The Main Side Trails aboard Marine Corps Base Quantico in Triangle Virginia are maintained by the Quantico Mountain Bike Club, and are a superb system of old-school trails that are both challenging and rewarding. Those of us who ride Quantico on a regular basis love to say that “if you’re not climbing, you’re climbing”. That is a little bit of a misnomer, because Quantico’s network of trails have some great

descents. To run them, though, you have to earn them.

Saturday April 27, 2024 will be the 6th edition of the Quantico Epic and give you an opportunity to challenge yourself on a superb and unique trail system.

In anticipation of the event, the QMTB trail team has been hard at work getting the trails ready so that they can showcase their work.

Just like previous editions, the 2024 Quantico Epic will feature multiple routes of varying distance and difficulty.

The most arduous will be **Montezuma’s EPIC Revenge**, a 50 mile route that includes trails on Main Side (below), the Officer Candidate School (OCS) network, and the Geiger system. Roughly 90% of this route is off road, with the vast majority on Singletrack and double track trails. Only a 5 mile portion of the route is along the base’s paved roads. That is necessary to connect Main Side with Geiger and the limited access OCS trails.



Riders make their way along Montezuma’s Epic Revenge, the challenging 50 mile course, Photos: Bruce Buckley

Next up is **Give me Some PT - OCS Style**. This 35 mile loop is similar to the 50 miler but cuts out some of the Main Side trails and gives you the opportunity to sample the OCS network (below).



Riders make their way along Enginner, one of the main gravel roads on OCS, Photo: Martín Fernández

By far, the most popular route, is the **Main Side Singletrack Mayhem**. This route samples virtually all of the Main Side trails and adds Geiger into the mix. Like Montezuma's EPIC Revenge, this ride includes approximately 5 miles of pavement to connect the Main Side Trails with Geiger system. If you are a competent intermediate rider looking for a challenge, this is your ride.



The popular Woodpecker steps appear in both Main Side Mayhem routes. Photo: Martín Fernández

If you are not quite ready for the beating that Quantico often dishes out, then the **Main Side Mini-Mayhem** is likely the ride for you. This 18 mile route includes some of the best singletrack aboard Quantico and should provide plenty of off-road and singeltrack excitement.

Riders will be supported by one of multiple aid stations sponsored by local shops. The aid stations provide participants with nutrition, drinks and general good cheer and offer Epic riders a chance to catch their breath before carrying on to the next challenge along one of the routes.

If you are not up for riding but want to experience this unique trail celebration you can volunteer and help

make it happen.

Registration for the 2024 Quantico Epic opened up in mid December and is currently available on BikeReg.com.

QMTB is also looking for volunteers to help make the event happen. Volunteers receive special recognition, including post Epic led rides by the QMTB Trail crew. If you can't ride, or if you want to bring along your partner or a family member to enjoy the event, please consider helping out.

Learn more about the QMTB and the Quantico Epic at www.qmtb.org



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Telling a Story



All Story Photos: Korey Hopkins

By Martín Fernández • [@BestRidesDC](#) • [BestRidesDC.com](#)

As I began planning this first issue of the Mid-Atlantic Journal there was one person I really wanted to profile, Korey Hopkins.

|

Over the last couple of years Korey has been making a name for himself in cycling circles in our region for the quality of the freelance visual work he has been producing, highlighting not only Mid-Atlantic trails but the people and events that are a part of them. I was happy when he responded in the affirmative to my request for a quick interview with him, so that others would have a chance to meet him and learn more about his work.

I had heard of and interacted with Korey multiple times over

email and social media, and personally met him for the first time during a photo shoot at the trail system I manage, Locust Shade. Korey was working on a promotional piece for the Mid-Atlantic Off-Road Enthusiasts (MORE), and had coordinated several riders to come out to shoot some video and stills for the project at Locust Shade. Since I have a photo background myself, I asked him if it was OK for me to tag along and snap some frames of my own; it had been a while since I had been on a shoot, and I thought it would be a perfect opportunity to dust off my camera.



Korey has been making a name for himself in cycling circles in our region for the quality of the freelance visual work

Watching him work, his interaction with the riders and how he set up his shots, brought back a lot of memories of my days behind the lens. It also reminded me of all the skills, beyond the technical, needed to be a successful visual artist.

Korey hails from Norfolk, VA. His parents were in the military and ended up in the DMV after years of service. He has called Maryland his home since he was age five. It's then that he began his affair with photography, albeit he wouldn't know it until later in life.

"My parents used to work the Andrews Air Show in the early 90's and would give me some disposable cameras," he told me. "It was a way to keep me occupied while they worked." That first informal "exposure" to



photography would lay the foundation for his work later in life. While he never took any photography classes in high school, he plugged away at his craft. Though, it wasn't until studying engineering at the University of Maryland, that he bought his first DSLR with the earnings from his first engineering internship.

That camera hooked him. "I binged on internet forums and books and took the camera to New York City to shoot. I really didn't have a solid grasp of exposure, composition, post processing, etc. but I was hooked."

The immersion in cycling afforded him the opportunity to travel, and it would not be long before the two things he loved merged together. His photography skills began to help him visually document his trips. "I shoot the environment I'm in," he told me. "Then I shoot some faces and details from a ride, like that

broken derailleur being fixed on the side of the trail. Maybe some things beyond cycling. I just try to tell a story people can relate to."

Experimenting in these mediums has also helped charge his creativity. Beyond his work for hire, Korey is also planning several personal projects, and has been scouting locations for his next FPV adventure. On the "Still" side he's working on a "gravity biking" project. "I really enjoy riding gravity trails, and most of the ideas I have are based on that." His project aims to build on, and share the experience he's gained on the trail. "I'm really passionate about this project and want to line up the right people that can help execute my vision."

For those that are considering photography as a career path, Korey has some of the same advice that most photographers will give you: "just shoot, and

"I just try to tell a story people can relate to..."



shoot a lot. And when you think you have shot a lot, go shoot some more. There is no replacement for shooting to learn." He also says, "don't be afraid to try things out. We learn from mistakes, just do it." Oh, and if you "really" want to do this professionally, he adds " don't forget the business side of things, take a class!"

When not on assignment, chances are you'll see Korey out at the Frederick Watershed, scouting out a location for his next photo shoot.

To learn more about Korey and his work, visit his website at KHopShoots.com. □



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My "NICA Way"

Looking back at the Maryland Interscholastic Cycling League's 6th Season and ahead to the 7th...

Photo: Corey Hopkins

Jon Posner is one of the co-founders and co-directors of the Maryland Interscholastic Cycling League (MICL). MICL functions like a Maryland "chapter" of the National Interscholastic Cycling Association (NICA), which is a nationwide youth cycling program founded in 2009 in Berkeley, CA.

By Jon Posner • [@mtbpozz](#)

NICA started as a racing league, but over the years has evolved into much more than that. Today, NICA is a robust outdoor experiential education program that places emphasis on introspection and personal growth alongside development as a cyclist. I have been a NICA league director since the MD league formed in late 2017, We held our first season in the Fall 2018.

Along with Fred Powell, we manage a mostly volunteer staff of nearly 35 amazing humans who help make everything run smoothly.

Part of the NICA League culture is the foundational

question "NICA Why?" This is someone's reason for being a part of the NICA community. My "NICA Why" is because mountain biking became a central part of my own life at a critical and formative time. The sport provided a welcoming and supportive community, and a new way for me to experience the natural beauty and splendor that surrounds us. For me, there is no greater joy than seeing others discover and experience that same love of cycling I have. For decades I worked in bike shops, spreading my passion for cycling one customer at a time. The feeling of seeing someone else fall in love with the sport never gets old. Through the MICL we are now able to introduce hundreds of families each season to the mountain bike



The Maryland Interscholastic Cycling League Leadership team, from left to right: Jon Posner, Adam Lewandoski, Diana Allen and Fred Powell. Photo: Korey Hopkins

community and the benefits this program provides for all participants.

For the 2023 season, MICL had 691 student-athletes and 365 volunteer coaches across 28 teams around the state. MICL produced a coach training weekend in the spring to onboard new coaches, and then the 28 teams held practices and rides throughout the summer and into the fall. MICL ran an event series in the fall featuring 4 race weekends and one non-competitive adventure weekend. All events were held in MD State Parks. The MD state finals have been held the last several years at the Pickall area of Patapsco Valley State Park (PVSP) on the "School's Out" trail, which was built in part by MICL coaches, riders, and their families during the Covid pandemic.

Up until 2023, NICA leagues operated wholly independently and there were no inter-league competitions and no multi-league events. That all changed last year with the first ever NICA Regional Festival and Championship at

Fair Hill, Maryland. MICL, along with the Pennsylvania and New Jersey leagues hosted a dozen leagues from the East Coast. These leagues sent riders to participate in a full weekend of adventure riding, invitational racing, and a large festival and expo experience.

This past year MICL achieved several firsts. We held the first ever MICL night ride at our Button Farm event on the Schaeffer Farm trails, and the first adaptive cycling event at our finals at PVSP in partnership with Friends of PVSP and Kennedy Krieger. We then closed the season with our first ever coaches relay race. The race proved to be fun and gave us a great opportunity to finish the season in a competitive and "wacky and fun" way.

Personally speaking, one of this year's highlights was being presented with a team jacket from the Washington DC Dunbar High School Prime Ability team during the MICL finals. The team gathered all around me and clapped it up like they do in practice before presenting me with

their team jacket. It was really a special moment that meant quite a lot for me.

Coming into the 2023 season we completely revamped our callup and staging processes. We worked to communicate the new procedures to everyone during regular coach calls and in town hall meetings. Ultimately, the new system worked wonderfully. We plan to keep this system in place for the 2024 season.



We had the opportunity to work with many other leagues during the production of the regional event at Fair Hill and learned a lot about the different approaches that each league takes to getting things done. We're taking the information and lessons learned from that collaboration and incorporating them into our operations plan. Folks should notice better maps and other improvements at future events.

MICL student-athletes officially logged over 1,460 hours of volunteer work in 2023, but we're certain that number is higher. In 2024 we're going to work to improve how we track and report this, including participation in advocacy, education and trailwork in our registration platform, PitZone.

The 2024 season, season seven, will kick off with coach registration opening in early March and a coaches summit later in the month especially geared towards new coaches or individuals launching new teams. Student-athlete and team registration will open April 1st. Teams will begin to come together in May and June, with regular practices starting in July and running right into the race season which will start in late August. Like 2023, MICL will hold 4

races plus an adventure weekend in the fall of 2024 that will include the regional festival and championship.

Getting involved is easy. To enter a child onto a team, the first step is to reach out to the league, or find and contact a team nearest to you. If one does not exist you can consider starting a new team. It only takes one rider and one coach to start a team!

Other than having a child in the league, the best way to get involved is to become a coach or event volunteer. To become a coach contact your local team director or any league core staff and request a coach email invitation. From there, registration and training are straightforward. During the Fall event season MICL will publish volunteer signup pages for each of our events, most volunteer positions can be filled by any adult. Volunteering at a NICA race is a guaranteed fun time and is a front row seat to transformative moments for young mountain bikers!

We hope to see you in 2024 so you too can find your NICA Why and witness and experience the joy of seeing others discover and experience that same love of cycling we have at the MICL. □

Inclusion and Encouragement



Photos: Courtesy Cathy Riedel

By Cathy Riedel • @riedel77

I will be forever grateful to Jason Miller, a friend I met at James Madison University (JMU) who introduced me to mountain biking shortly before my senior year. I immediately fell in love with the sport and the Stokesville area trails. Growing up as a gymnast and a diver I always gravitated to sports that required balance, agility, and mental engagement. Jason introduced me to lots of people, trails, events, and races. I got in way over my head multiple times (24 hrs of Moab, SM 100), but every time I walked away with a desire to get stronger and take on more challenges. I cannot say enough about the people and the community, either. The support that I have received along the way from everyone has been amazing. My memory of Scott Scudamore holding a beer out for me as I barely crossed the SM 100 finish line will be one I'll never forget.

As it often happens, life got in the way. I took a hiatus from biking for nearly a decade as my job kept me traveling;



My daughter seems to have caught the cycling bug, and we have become more involved in the Virginia NICA league

that steered me to do more running. Then, pregnancy and raising young kids, along with my continuing career took priority. As my kids began to get older, my husband encouraged me to get back to biking. He recognized how much I missed having a regular sport as a part of my life. He supported my weekly commitment to join the MORE Thursday night rides at Wakefield,

which have become part of my weekly routine. Once again, I was met by a fabulous and welcoming community that helped re-introduce me back to the biking ropes, especially when I showed up with a 15 year old 26" steel hardtail. This regular ride was a great way to get my exercise, socializing,

and nature fix. Mountain biking with friends was the opportunity I needed to truly step away from work and home, and to help keep me energized each week.

As the kids continued to get older, I was able to get more regular rides under my belt. I was able to meet more people, especially some



"In the past few years, I have focused more on gravity oriented riding."

AWESOME women who I have been able to ride and connect with over the years. The MORE Women's rides include seasoned and new female riders who support one another and help each other grow, both on and off the bike. In the past few years, I have focused more on gravity oriented riding, which fulfills the adrenaline junkie in me, and I have been able to connect with more women who also enjoy this style of riding. It has been

so cool to see various race directors support the growth of women in the sport, and to see the participation increase over the years. Getting my two kids out on the trails has been a memorable milestone. They have been riding the Wakefield trails since about age 6, and both are competent mountain bikers, but they do not always like to bike. In fact, they regularly remind me that

they don't like biking as much as I do. Instead of pushing them too much, and driving them away from the sport, my goal has been to focus on keeping them active and enjoying the outdoors, whether on the bike or not. Luckily, they have grown to enjoy the Mid-Atlantic biking community and have joined me on a few biking events each year, such as the MoCo Epic, the MORE Fall camping trip, and the MORE summer picnic.



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Lately, my daughter seems to have caught the cycling bug, and we have become more involved in the Virginia National Interscholastic Cycling Association (NICA) league, which has introduced us to a whole new biking community experience. It has been so much fun to become a coach for her "Gnarling Shredders" team and learn from other coaches and student riders. My son is currently in an anti-biking phase and decided not to continue NICA; however, he continues to build off of what he has learned in the biking world and has put his energy into springboard diving.

Since I live near the Wakefield trail system I became a MORE co-liaison and continue to help organize volunteer and trail work activities to keep the trails in great shape.

When I first got involved I knew nothing about trail building, but have learned a lot through clinics and on-the-job experiences. Being a trail liaison is such a rewarding experience and I am fortunate to work with a great team of other liaisons and fabulous volunteers. Becoming involved in the cycling community has been a great way to keep my kids engaged in the community to volunteer their time and give back to the trails we all love to ride. Even when they have not been into biking, they have enjoyed coming out to MORE trailwork days and be part of a welcoming community.

That is what keeps me coming back to Mountain Biking, the community and inclusive, encouraging and welcoming atmosphere. □



"I was able to meet more people, especially some AWESOME women who I have been able to ride and connect with over the years."

Filtering the Online Noise

Three tips on how to filter the online noise and start learning how to mountain bike better.

Harlan Price is an accomplished Level 3 Professional Mountain Bike Instructor Association (PMBIA) Coach. Harlan raced endurance and enduro MTB professionally for 10 years before transitioning into coaching and skill instruction in 2011. In addition to personal coaching and instruction, he also certifies Level 1 and 2 Instructors for the PMBIA all around the world and enjoys developing the upcoming generation of coaches. He teaches in all environments - from DH bike parks to XC trails and works with beginners to professional level mountain bikers.

Photos: Courtesy Harlan Price

Don't watch that YouTube video alone! Three tips for you to filter the online noise and start learning how to mountain bike better.

By Harlan Price • [@takeaimcycling](#) • www.takeaimcycling.com/

Let's do a breakdown of the positives and negatives of YouTube mountain bike tutorials and how to get the most out of them.

I've been teaching mountain biking for over a decade and watching YouTube instruction videos for just as long. I watch a mind numbing amount of them in order to help my clients dig out of the rabbit holes they fall down. We won't throw out the whole genre of YouTube tutorials but knowing what pitfalls to watch out for can help you navigate the overload of information.

Let's start with the short but meaningful list of positives that an instruction video provides. For one, they build stoke and get people excited to try new things. These video creators are well intentioned and want to help others learn how to have more fun on their bikes. Another

positive is that they help build a visual awareness of the technique you're trying to achieve. There is slow motion, use of arrows and lines, and ample compare and contrast happening. Those are great for building an ideal image of the way to do something. The trick is translating that information into your actual movement!

The first negative is the lack of feedback you get from a YouTube video. In a lesson, the information should always travel two directions and it's that exchange between an instructor and a student that tailors the lesson to the needs of the student. A good instructor can describe something in a few different ways and they can use your past experiences to help you understand the feeling you're aiming for. They also shoot video and help you analyze the details that are holding you back.

Another main complaint I get from chronic video watchers is the feeling of being overwhelmed by information! Watch enough videos and you'll hear multiple explanations for the same thing. You'll also hear a lot of things that aren't relevant and might even be contradictory to what they are visually demonstrating. The truth is there is more than one way to do a drop, but what the presenter often does is say this is "how" you drop no matter the different sizes, shapes or speeds that define that drop they are presenting. Remember that different drops may require different techniques and those subtleties might be difficult to see in a single YouTube video.

The other issue to watch out for is if the verbal directions they give match up to what they are actually doing. Or, what critical piece are they leaving out? I've seen very famous PinkBike how-to videos where the person says to do one thing but does another in a braking tutorial. Another example of information left out is when and how much to "stand up to the jump" in that other famous jumping tutorial. I wonder how many people have gone dead-sailor when trying to apply these tips?! Always have a critical eye and be willing to filter whatever an instructor is saying!

Let's summarize the main problems and solutions for getting the most out of your YouTube instruction watching...

Video doesn't give feedback; Solution is to get some video of yourself and compare and contrast! Ask yourself what feeling you are trying to achieve and use that as your guide.

There's too much information; Solution is to pick one piece of the puzzle and experiment. If you have ten



pieces of information, focus on one at a time and then try it in a variety of ways. All those tips are helpful and can facilitate the riding but you don't have to do them all at once! Filter!

Instruction that doesn't match the demonstration; Solution is to take everything with a grain of salt and build your critical eye! What did they forget to describe or what do they misunderstand about how they actually perform the technique?

Now that I look at the solutions above I realize that they are basically a summary of what makes a good instructor. They listen and try to simplify the information down to only what is needed for you. That means not over or under explaining in order to keep the confusion at bay. Then they help you coach yourself by trying to convey the feeling you're trying to achieve through good visual and verbal feedback!

So be your own coach. Be critical of the videos and try to summarize things in ways that help you meet your goals. Remember, doing a corner isn't a feeling. Being powerful, creating more traction, or accelerating out of the exit is a feeling. Aim for the sensations not just the "act".

When all that fails, come take a lesson! □

Destination: Snowshoe

Almost heaven, West Virginia.
Pocahontas County, Birthplace of Rivers.

By Geoffrey Branco • [@geofreybranco](#)

My first trip to Snowshoe Mountain, located on Cheat Mountain in Pocahontas County WV, was at the end of 2019, when I went to ski with a friend. I had so much fun that I found myself returning the next winter to volunteer with the resort's ski patrol and then followed up with a trip the summer of 2021 to volunteer with the bike patrol. That same year was the second time that Snowshoe hosted the UCI Mountain Bike World Cup. As a bike patrol volunteer I had a chance to witness the pros riding some of the same trails I was partoling. Since then, I have spent the last two years splitting my off time between riding and helping build and maintain trails in Prince William County, Virginia and biking or skiing in Pocahontas County, West Virginia.

My family and I were enjoying the outings to Snowshoe so much that we ended up renting a place close to the resort. Earlier this year we purchased a house near the mountain which we now call our second home.

In the spring and summer I spend most of my time riding in the Snowshoe Mountain and bike park, a certified IMBA ride center. The trails offer plenty of variety to keep myself challenged and provide ample opportunities for working on and improving cornering, navigating rock gardens, and jumping. I often find myself testing my skills against some of the same rock and root lined trails I first saw the pros compete on.

In addition to the downhill bike park trails, there are some great backcountry trails on the Snowshoe property and in the neighboring national forest. From the resort, I can pedal to any of the downhill park trails, or to a trailhead to access a handful of backcountry trails that connect to the town of Spruce and beyond. About an hour drive north is a newer machine built trail system at the Mower Basin, with access to camping sites. The local IMBA chapter, Pocahontas Trails (PocaTrails), hosts the Slatyfork Enduro at the Tea Creek trail system on the Gauley Mountain.



My daughter Gwen is applying the skills she's learning at JMU on the slopes and has joined me on the Ski and MTB Patrol.



I have only scratched the surface of the backcountry trails in the surrounding areas

This summer I started exploring some of the trails outside the bike park on my own, with friends and with other locals. Thus far, I have only scratched the surface of the backcountry trails in the surrounding areas and I'm looking forward to exploring more along the region, including the new Monday Lick trails being built by a group of Pocahontas County stakeholders including, among others, the Forest Service, Snowshoe Mountain Resort, Pocahontas Trails, and WV University.

This will be our first full winter in our new home and we're looking forward to everything that ski season will bring with it. My oldest daughter, currently attending James Madison University in Harrisonburg, will also be joining me on ski patrol duties and will be using the skills she has been learning at school to help assist skiers on the mountain. When the snow melt begins, and spring comes around, the ski resort will begin its transformation into

a mountain bike downhill destination, one that offers enough variety to satisfy cyclists of all abilities, from beginners to world class downhill racing athletes.

If you are planning a trip to the resort or Pocahontas County you won't be disappointed. There is a ton to do both in summer and winter. Snowshoe hosts a variety of events including music festivals, regional mountain bike races and other events. This past year Snowshoe hosted a Grand National Cross Country (GNCC) race and the UCI World Mountain Bike World Series. UCI athletes competed in what was one of the most difficult courses of the world Cup series.

When you do come to Snowshoe to ski or bike keep a look out for me, chances are you'll spot me around the mountain enjoying everything the resort and area has to offer. □



The Off Season

By Korey Hopkins • [@khopshoots](#) • [khopshoots.com](#)

Chipotle was my go to “quick eat” spot for well over a decade.

I quickly settled on the same chicken bowl that I would eat, over and over again, only changing when I felt like ballin’ out and adding some guacamole. While it was delicious and I knew what I was getting, I eventually started to ache for more. For something different.

During the lockdowns of 2020 I ended up eating out a lot, with Chipotle being a key party in rotation. I eventually took it out of rotation just to spice things up. After a month of no Chipotle, I realized that the break was much needed. It made me appreciate Chipotle again.

Cycling is no different. For over a decade, I rode my bike just about year round. I bought the rain gear and extreme cold weather layers to ride well into the winter. When the elements beat me out, I’d jump on the hamster wheel that is a trainer and spin out miles. Being so far in the weeds of riding made it hard to envision a life where I took a break from it.

Luckily, or unluckily, depending on your viewpoint, gravity will always bring you to the ground. Sometimes that involves separation from the bike. My first big bike crash resulted in a separated AC joint. I was off my mountain bike for 3 months while I recovered. During that time, I had come to the realization that cycling had become my entire identity. I had no fallback.

After a brief period of wallowing, I decided to dust off my camera and just go out and shoot photos. My legs still worked and I could sling the camera over my good side. During the months of shoulder rehab and recovery, I shot A LOT of photos. I credit that time off the bike with helping me see what I truly enjoyed in life beyond the couple hours a day spent in the saddle. It helped me.

Today, I have started making it a point to take a break from bikes in the winter time. I never truly enjoyed riding

in the harsh weather, so why force it? When looking for alternatives, I found skiing to be the unexpected rush that helps keep the cycling stoke high.

Being able to stay in the mountains helps to still scratch the adrenaline itch of going downhill fast. Getting fresh air and admiring the visuals also helps with my mental state during a time when vitamin D levels are low.

With parking the bike for a bit the last few winters, I have found that I am more hyped up to ride once the weather breaks. It makes those first few days of riding in shorts much more enjoyable. Having spent time doing another sport that requires a different mindset has also opened up how I view trails that I have ridden a ton. It becomes easier to see bonus lines or trail jumps when you take a break and push your mind to process the mountain differently. □

How to Contribute to the Mid-Atlantic Ride Journal

Thank you for your interest in contributing to the Mid-Atlantic Ride Journal. We’re always looking for rider writers, photographers, and illustrators who have a story to share; be it an epic adventure on one of our regional trails, a personal journey of self-discovery, or simply have an interesting story to tell.

We hope the stories you share on a bike or about a bike help motivate and inspire others to hit the trail, path, or road to discover the same joy and love of cycling we have in common.

If you want to contribute, but are unsure what to write about, here are a few suggestions:

- Why do you ride? Why do you keep riding?
- Is there a personal moment that defines why you ride?
- What is special about your favorite regional cycling destination? Share details about your destination of choice
- What do you ride? What is special about your chosen cycling discipline?
- Is there a yearly pilgrimage you make to a destination beyond our region? What’s special about it?
- Is there a regional event that you look forward to? Why?

This journal is a labor of love, and not meant to be a money making endeavor, for that reason we are not offering any compensation for your submission, nor do we retain ownership of your work. You are just letting us borrow it so that we can compile it with other meaningful and inspirational stories. We recommend that if you will write something, that you stick to around 500 - 800 words.

We also can’t guarantee that your submission will make it to a later issue. We do guarantee, however, that we will read it and get back to you.

If you are good with the above, the first step is to reach out: hello@ride-journal.com We’ll take it from there.

COLOPHON

Get inspired!

The Mid-Atlantic Ride Journal (T•MARJ) is an online magazine that will be published four times a year. Our goal is to share stories from riders, to inspire riders.

We are always happy to receive feedback, and learn about what it is you would like to see and read in T•MARJ

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