

Welcome to what we believe is the largest Blue Marble Travel trip ever operated. We hope that your expectations are high, and that this rollicking circus surpasses them!

Because we are so many, we felt we should give you a primer on who was aboard, to shorten the learning curve. Thank you for your more-or-less willing participation (there was some grumbling, and references to homework...): the results are satisfactory, at least to us.

We should have done a Facebook page, linked things to other things, started blogs... but all of that started to sound like a lot of work, so we just did this. Maybe we should all wear name tags.

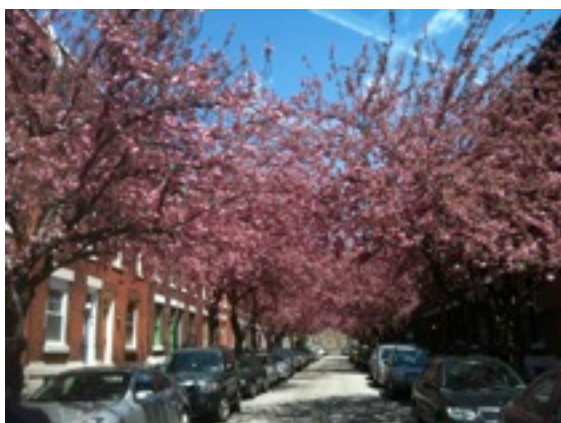
The Pods

Our 28 riders include four knots of people who have known each other for long years, and travelled together on multiple Blue Marble adventures in the past. To help you figure each other out, here are those groups. A few riders are legitimate “cross-overs,” with feet firmly planted in two “pods,” and they are assigned to both. Many can claim such associations, with greater or lesser attachment, so these judgements are subjective.... Others, though they may know each other outside Blue Marble (**Christian & Karen, Alden and Danielle**) have not previously formed a Blue Marble riding pod. They are labeled as “indi[pendant]”.

Tom and Cherie Pod. Tom Detroy and Cherie Zavitz, (pictured here, in Tim and Anne’s house), met on a Blue Marble trip in 1998. By coincidence, **Tammy’s** first trip with us (see below). They celebrated their engagement on another, and took their honeymoon on a third, bringing along 20+ of the guests at their wedding. They are what we call in French the *Grands Absents* of the trip. Material concerns prevent their presence, to the regret of those of us who know them.



Through Tom and Cherie, we (Blue Marble), met their then-neighbors **Tim** and **Anne Hughes**, in turn the founders of this trip. Their nearly-annual Blue Marble buddies include **Tom A, Frank, Christine, Nicolas**, with only slightly less frequent appearances by **Tammy, Steve** and others.



Philly Friends. **Nicolas** lived in Philadelphia for a few years (here, a view of 23rd street), and a couple of his Blue Marble friends moved there during that tenure. They, the people they introduced us and each other to, and other Blue Marble friends already local, combined to form a Philadelphia phan club. Some have since moved on, but we share an attachment to the city, and to each other, that pre-dates (and is not contingent upon) the current remarkable baseball team. **Richard, Kristin, Rich, and Kara** (in addition to **Nicolas**) represent the pod on this trip.

Arizona Crew. Initially a subset of the Tom and Cherie pod, above, the Arizona Crew staked out its independence with the launching of Traditional Surly Killer Tours (named for the three creators, **Frank, Tom A,** and **Steve**). TSK was created to host bike trips in the Arizona desert. Only one has been operated to date, but the frequency of operation should not be seen as a reflection of product quality. No, it is a reflection of the difficulty in picking dates when Phoenix temperatures are not set to “blast furnace” (as TSK will tell you, reassuringly, “it’s a dry heat.” Bone-bleaching, even).

*Correction: **Tom A** says that TSK has operated two tours. We weren’t invited on the second one. Fine. See if we care.*

The founding trio is joined by **Todd** and **Trung** on this trip.

Rhode Island Contingent. **Christine**, partner **David**, **Tammy** and **Kerri** are representatives of a group that includes a few other Blue Marble friends. An interesting web brings them together, befitting a small state... For instance, **Christine** came to us independently (see Tom and Cherie pod), but then met **David**, who knows mutual friend and sometime rider Lynn (not on the trip), who introduced **Kerri** to Blue Marble...

They are most enjoyable when they discuss their home state, which sounds so dysfunctional that it would be better as a sit-com.

Blue Marble. In addition to the two Blue Marble employees pretending to work on this trip, **Lyn** and **Nicolas**, two former Trip Coordinators join us as paying passengers: **Richard** and **Sue**. They have moved into other stages of life now, which the less-successful of us have not managed to do, but they look upon their time at Blue Marble with sufficient affection that they return frequently.

And that is it for the pods. Those not part of any, or belonging to pods of more recent creation, are identified as “indi”(pendant).

The Individuals

Alden & Danielle Gibbs (indi). Beginning riders, advanced eaters, Danielle and Alden Gibbs join Blue Marble on the strength of recommendations from **Karen** and **Christian**. They are the only complete “newbies” on the trip, if we discount **Trung** and **Todd** from the Arizona Crew (but who have participated in TSK adventures). Their interview with **Anne** will be shown in its entirety on Tuesday night at 8p, 7 central.

They hail from Delaware (a small American state between Maryland and Pennsylvania, known for nominating witches to run as candidates for Senate), by way of Annapolis, where they met. They still enjoy sailing on the nearby Chesapeake Bay. And witch hunting. Which accounts for **Karen’s** expression in her photo.

The couple are celebrating their 18th-and-a-half anniversary, a very important Sabbat in the Wiccan Calendar. This will be Danielle's first visit to Portugal. It will be Alden's first since an ill-conceived 1987 effort to corner the roof slate market.

Alden is the current leader in the “most tested man on the trip” contest: he tried persistently (if always courteously) to get us to reserve a post-trip Lisbon hotel room for him starting in April. (In our defense, we did, finally, reserve the room, in August; so in far less time than it would have taken him to build a hotel, even if he already had the roof slate.) Perhaps in revenge, he says that, during the trip, he looks forward to engaging discussions on sex, politics and religion. And then leaving the room.

Anne Hughes (Tom and Cherie pod). One of the trip’s co-founders, she is referred to (with a mixture of affection and fear) as “Anne The Inquisitor.” She was thus dubbed in Alsace, after horrified bystanders witnessed her “benign” questioning of a hapless chap, befuddled by gewurztraminer and *vacherin*. She then interpreted and widely disseminated the gleaned information, and there may even have been a quiz (we were all a bit befuddled by that point). Proud of her accomplishment, she has vetted unsuspecting Blue Marble newbies for their “back-stories” ever since. Consider yourselves warned.



This Blue Marble role has nothing to do with her professional background in managing services for mentally retarded (“developmentally challenged”) adults. Though there is some useful crossover, as you will discover when you meet **Frank** and **Steve**.

For the past 8 years, she and husband **Tim** have been Co-Directors of a summer camp and retreat center in the beautiful Berkshire mountains, in the northwest corner of CT. She does not recommend sharing a job with a spouse. But she comes from a family of 7 (5 girls), which shared clothes, closets, the house’s one hair dryer and bathroom.... so she is at home with communal living. Indeed, if she is not in better shape, it is because she and Tim spend their summers managing 1000 campers and 50 staff, and eating fresh-baked cookies. They don’t get to the bikes much.

Perhaps understandably, they do not have children of their own, but borrow other people's when their own parents get sick of them. They also generously adopt other people's parents, most recently **Nicolas’** 83-year-old mother, whom they collect from her nearby home in Wuthering

Heights during power outages, and whom they recently took on a tour of CT retirement communities. As Anne says, “we like other people’s old people.”

Anne very much looks forward to joining a group of bicyclists where most of the important decisions, like what to eat, where to stay, and how to get there, have already been decided.

Carole Lynn Duffy (long ago **Tom and Cherie pod**). Travelled (with **Tammy, Tom A, Tim** and **Anne, Nicolas...**) on the Tom and Cherie Honeymoon trip to Umbria in 2000. But, while CL has remained a Blue Marble regular across the years, she has often travelled independently of the pod. This trip marks a welcome (by the rest of us) return. We aren’t sure how she feels about it.

If she has a signature trait, it is her remarkable organization. There are people who will, throughout their lives, accomplish more before 9a than we do in a week, and Carole Lynn is one of them. By the time we've stumbled into the breakfast room for much-needed coffee, she has scoped the town, chosen where to have dinner and what to order, and established a seating chart. She looks at us expectantly (and sweetly) for the wine pairings, but we are rarely ready with an answer. When we finally pick up speed, later in the day, she has long since moved on. But she likes us, and has the distance necessary to forgive.

Of a military family, Carole Lynn is at ease in charge. She delegates with talent, has started and run businesses, often in difficult contexts. She is also comfortable led by competence. She shakes her head sadly at artistic approximation, and wanders off.

Most recently from the left coast, she grew up in the east. She still has family in the Tidewater basin, and doesn’t really know where she lives just now.



Christian Wright, Karen Lantz (indi). Making their second Blue Marble trip, Christian and Karen hail from Wilmington, Delaware, where they enjoy cycling the gentle hills of the Brandywine Valley, exploring state parks and trails with their vicious attack retrievers, Ginger, Zoe, and Carmen, and dreaming of one day completing a thru-hike of the Appalachian Trail. In their spare time they pretend to be lawyers.

They expect to get lost a couple of times on the tour, in defiance of the excellent Blue Marble directions [ed: for those who know Fawlty Towers, this is where Manuel would say, “¿Que?”]. In preparation, they have been practicing Portugese emergency phrases such as “Posso ter um copo de vinho do Porto?” and “Onde é o banheiro mais próximo?” And Christian, at right, has been refining his bail-out technique.

Karen enjoys fantasy novels (hence her passion for the route sheets), knitting, and American football, not necessarily at the same time. Christian wishes he could be a race car driver, loves college basketball and photography, and knows full well that a five-ounce bird couldn't carry a one-pound coconut.



Christine Fitzgerald (Tom & Cherie Pod, Rhode Island Contingent).

Christine is a New Jersey native, and a Boston lawyer, in a private practice she helped create (she lives in Rhode Island with partner **David**).



Among many remarkable traits, one has always astounded us: her ability to transition between poised, thoughtful, sophisticated, and erudite woman; and, let's face it, Snooki. She finds this characterization severe, but we have witnessed her rapping Eminem on the streets of Paris in the middle of the night, in a voice charitably described as piercing, and stand our ground (at some risk to ourselves).

Indeed, this dichotomy would be deeply upsetting if we did not sense that she had control over the shift. Instead, it is only an enigma. A talent so rare as to be intrinsically interesting, and yet without any obvious positive application.

She is striking in other ways, too. Just ask **Steve**, who has the bruises to prove it. Quote upon hearing that she had joined the trip: “The air balancing seminar in Duluth is looking like a good option.”

When riled, Christine can resort to monoblock imperatives. As in, “Don't. Even. Think. About. [choose your subject].” It is safest to keep a respectful distance at these moments. If proximity is required, closely follow any instructions. One is tempted to recall that her partner is **David Morello**, but it would actually be irrelevant: Christine is at least as dangerous.



Damon Bopp (indi) is the “better” half (read: smarter, stronger, better looking) of Team Damon & **Steven**, a third-time Blue Marble cycling duo from Central New Jersey. By trade, Damon is a decorative painter specializing in high-end murals, custom stencils, and *Trompe l'Oeil*. His love of all things mural, fresco and/or “pretty,” will lead Team D&S to the altar of just about every church, chapel and cathedral on any given route — even if it requires a small detour. In Portugal, this means that we will probably not see much of these two after the first day, and can thereafter share out their meal budget.

Damon is from Olathe, KS and likes puppy dogs, NPR, and Camaro convertibles (we try not to hold that against him).

With months of spin class experience under his belt, he is ready for his most ambitious Blue Marble trip yet. His riding style is “slow and steady.” Often the victim of rock slides — see photo, below — he has learned to be cautious. So he doesn't mind people passing him—unless they're walking. He is also not crazy about being passed by donkey carts.



Note in passing the alacrity of Coordinator Cate Dundee's reaction to Damon's misfortune. She almost certainly intends to spring into action... soon. Here at Blue Marble, we work only with the very best. Relax, Cate. **Carole Lynn** has ordered the medivac helicopter, lined up specialists at the local hospital, and is arranging post-op physiotherapy. Maybe you could cancel his hotel room? Damon@boppart.com

Danielle Gibbs: see Alden & Danielle, above.

David Morello (Rhode Island Contingent) is a former organized crime figure from Boston, MA. Local folklore depicts him as a Robin Hood-style social bandit, dedicated to protecting his neighborhood and its residents. But we know better: David is pretty much in it for himself. He masterminded a protection racket targeting drug kingpins and illegal gambling parlors, and is under indictment for nineteen murders.

A sometime informant for the FBI, David was long able to fly under law enforcement radar in exchange for information provided on competing New England crime families. But in 1994, tipped off by his former handler about a pending arrest, he fled, and went into hiding in nearby Rhode Island, where he set up a front operation paving over wetlands to make shopping malls, and money laundering through a network of New York System Wiener outlets (don't ask). He has thus far avoided the long arm of the law, managing to pin many of his misdeeds on other Boston crime figures (most recent victim: Whitey Bulger). He was detained for questioning in another recent sweep (http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/44640001/ns/local_news-boston_ma/#.TnypexJmso), but his lawyers have already obtained the restitution of his passport, leading experts to wonder if his connections in law enforcement are not still a factor.

David has two grown sons, and lives with long-time partner **Christine**, through whom he came to Blue Marble. He is the only of our clients to pay cash. Please forgive the quality of the photo: recent photos of David are quite rare.



Frank Di Michale (a.k.a. Franco, a.k.a. “Traditional Frank,” which he preferred to “Old Frank” on a trip where there was a “Young Frank”... part of the **Arizona Crew**) grew up in and around New York City. Earned a BS in Electrical Engineering from the University of Alabama: Roll Tide.

His first job was with GE in Birmingham. He moved next to Texas with Bell Operations (helicopters), with the goal of a project assignment in Iran. The Shah’s overthrow messed up his plans (not to mention those of many Iranians). On to Phoenix, working for Motorola, which sold his division (we don’t think it was personal), now ON Semiconductors. ON provided Frank with work and travel opportunities to a few places in SE Asia, including a 4 month stint in China. During our trip, Frank's "when I was in China" stories will serve to put in perspective the monotony of fado.



Along the way he helped raise a couple of boys, although he never married. Frank never married, that is. Last he checked, the boys had not married, either. Frank takes this as a sign that they were raised properly (see **Todd**, **Tammy**).

Frank has been cycling annually with Blue Marble since 2001, and looks forward to each year’s adventure, not to mention the interesting historical, cultural, culinary and oenophilic information provided by Blue Marble’s most helpful Coordinators. When they aren’t running into trees at speed. Frank.DiMichale@onsemi.com

Fred Young (indi) was raised up in the North Shore suburbs of Chicago, escaped to California after high school, and after stints in Alaska and Guam has gone to ground in central Missouri. Literally. He is a soil scientist. His 59th birthday is on the first day of our trip (October 2, the Sunday we first assemble). Since he is married to another trip participant, **Julie**, if literally everyone forgets, there will be hell to pay.

They actually form quite an endearing couple, with a wonderful mix of curiosity and skepticism, not to say cynicism, constantly playing off each other. So, if you hear **Julie** referred to as “Ginger,” you will understand why.

Fred has trained for this trip by gradually increasing his cycling and alcohol consumption. He is not recommending the latter, though we aren't sure why not. He thinks port wine is just "eh," and has signed up for this trip in order to be proven wrong. Fred and Ginger have travelled annually with Blue Marble since '06, and met **Tom A.** on our Brittany trip, last year.

Ginger Rogers (ethereal): on this trip only as a silvery aura. See **Julie**, below.

Julie (a.k.a. Ginger) Youmans (indi)

Top Four Reasons to go to Portugal

1. Glamor. Julie, a.k.a. Ginger, was thus introduced on her first Blue Marble trip. As in Fred and.... Even though **Nicolas** now remembers her name [ed.: this is optimistic: Nicolas does not generally remember his own name], the sobriquet stuck, and the trips give her an ever-renewing chance to float in Ginger Rogers' silvery aura.
2. Music. In a former life, playing early music, she discovered a recording that paired performances of renaissance love songs with the sultry fado. She can't wait to hear live fado, she feels it important to her musical culture. She hopes to pair it with other musical genres, starting with hip-hop.
3. Stories. As an oral historian, Ginger collected stories as part of a statewide cultural conservation office. She has one herself: she slept deep in the vaulted cellars of a Portuguese castle built in 1455, bathed in 7-foot long marble tubs, took meals on the loggia against a backdrop of 16th c. azulejos. True or false. [ed: we guess “true.” This is the type of thing that happens in Portugal.]
4. Tile (in Portuguese: *azulejos*). When she retired from staff at the Missouri House of Representatives, she began making tile, and small sculptures. She loves being anywhere she look at 400-year old stone, or tile of any kind. She can't wait to see more, and will certainly be satisfied by her time in one of the birthplaces of the art form.



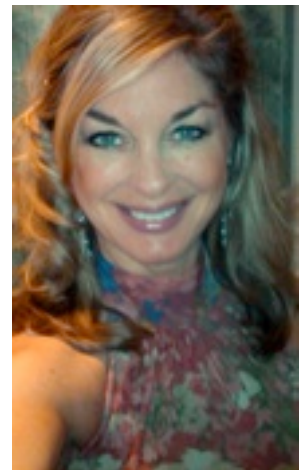


Kara Witcoff (Philly Phriends) grew up in the Washington DC area, attending an acclaimed Montgomery County public school, only to see it become a juvenile delinquent detention center after her graduation [ed: are we sure about the “after” part?]. Undergraduate Business degree from Indiana University's prestigious Kelley School, at the time known simply as IU SOB. Masters Degree in Organizational Dynamics from the University of Pennsylvania (no honors: though she prides herself on being dynamic, the “organizational” thing held her back).

We have two adult photos of Kara, and could not decide which was more flattering (though neither does justice to the subject). On balance, we prefer the one on the right.

She has lived in 8 US states. Plus a brief stint in London where, as a volunteer with the UK's version of the Peace Corps, she attempted to save the world in 6 months. Results-oriented, she soon realized the futility of the effort, and moved back home to the birthplace of governmental paralysis, Washington DC. There, she joined the masses in their attempts to fit a square peg into a round hole.

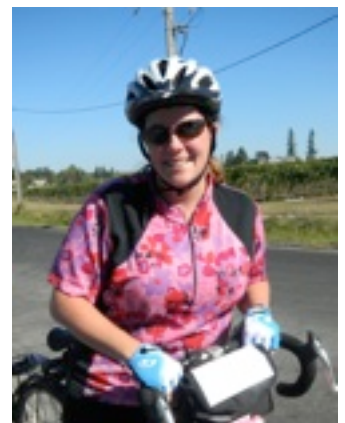
Kara's joys in life include a never-ending passion and curiosity for travel, adventure, food, wine, friends, and the pursuit of the 'perfect' relationship. Or, failing that, of totally-impossible-but-entertaining relationships. Which unfortunately get in the way of the 'perfect' ones.... She has travelled with several of the **Arizona Crew**, and now lives in DC, in the same building as **Richard**.



Karen Lantz: see **Christian Wright, Karen Lantz**, above.

Kerri Dowdell (Rhode Island Contingent) is employed by Delaney (age 11), Andrew (9), Megan (7), and twins Addison and Savannah (4). Plus husband Rod, when he can get a word in (“Yes my family must love me to let me go on these trips, or maybe they like it more when I am gone.”).

Her career was not always so illustrious: U of RI degree to give a legal (pharmaceutical) veneer to a successful entrepreneurial business as a drug dealer. Fled to FL when she got wind that she had run afoul of **David Morello's** syndicate (a territory thing — Rhode Island is not that big). Prospered in the Geritol State (where better to sell drugs?), retired on the proceeds (the thing to do in Lipitor Land), and is rumored to have gone straight....

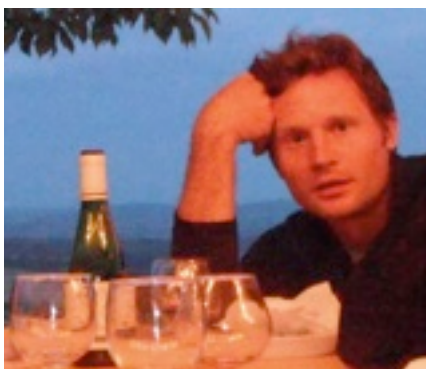


She loves biking, or at least did until the recent crackdown on doping. Rode a first “century” with Blue Marble friend Lynn Pezzullo in 2007 (noted quote: “if you look back and I’m not there, get an inhaler”), and has been in the saddle ever since. This is her second Blue Marble trip — the tone was set early on the first one when she discovered that we replaced the now-repressed pharmaceuticals with wine-soaked 3-hour lunches. Her laconic reply to a friend’s, “How did you do it?” “Oh, you get used to it.” kerri@dowdellfamily.com

Kristin Gilbertson (Philly Phriends). If you talk to Kristin for five minutes, you will learn she is originally from Oklahoma. That she was perhaps the only Okie ever to hit upon the idea of studying Russian in high school. That her parents lived in a trailer park (this turns out to be true, but misleading). And that she used to work for the World Bank in Eastern Europe (so the Russian paid off). You may not learn that her uncle used to have a fishing show in Wisconsin (see **Lyn**).

She lives in Philadelphia and works at the University of Pennsylvania. She “does something with investments” [ed: the something is “invest”] — in a valiant attempt to preserve the university’s endowment, while at the same time laying in enough ammunition and bottled water to survive the coming revolution — see Oklahoma roots, above. She has been there for seven years.

She enjoys tango, fado and financial crises. She speaks Russian and Spanish and is trying to cram in a few words of Portuguese before the trip. This will be her fifth Blue Marble adventure, mostly with one or another subset of Philly Phriends. She also travelled in Alsace with **Tammy** in `05, though it was a big trip, and they may have both forgotten that.



Lyn Donelson (Blue Marble) once aspired to be a professional wrestler. His inspiration was the late great Ravishing Rick Rude (his native Iowa was a bit short on dynamic role models). But at age 8, he discovered his real passion in life was bass fishing. His career goal is now hosting his own Sunday morning fishing show, alongside the likes of Babe Winkleman and Al Linder (his brush with fame may be upon him: **Kristin’s** uncle had a fishing show).

Until that happens, you may find him working at Blue Marble. He has tried many other lines, and found them wanting: papaya planting, financial services in NYC, construction... The conclusion is generally that riding a bike is better, even if the money isn’t.

Lyn’s stories of wild adventures in exotic lands are usually grounded in truth, and his gift for synthesis brings them to life. Put any exaggeration down to a skill he learned hanging around the grain elevators and livestock sale barns of his youth, where hog futures and corn yield weren’t the only things discussed.

He winters in poor places with weak currencies, and hopes that his shots are up to date. We speculate that his (obviously genuine) enthusiasm for European cycle travel comes at least in part from the lessened risk of cholera during that portion of his calendar year.

Nicolas Clifford (Blue Marble, Tom & Cherie Pod, Philly Phriends) was born on Hallowe’en (it could only have been then or April Fools’ Day), 1960. He spent his early years in Greenwich Village, New York, son of a wine journalist and sometime cookbook editor.

He quickly developed an interest in trains worthy of autism (the social skills also fit). At age 8, he graduated from riding the subway to school to driving his own train,



provoking surprised consternation amongst waiting passengers at Union Square. (The train was operated by the BMT division of the NY subway... anyone note the coincidence in acronyms?) His 10th birthday gift was a one-way train ticket to Chicago, by himself. Unfortunately for his parents, it was too late: he was already able to find his way home.

Undergraduate degree in Economics, MBA with a fitting specialty in Transportation... but then moved to France, and abandoned civil society for the world of cycle travel. 25 years later, he is still Blue Marble's Logistics Manager (he meshes the trips and the trains), and leads trips, with a never-ending passion for Europe's curious corners.

Though Nicolas loves Portugal, his travel there has not been without incident: he once ran down a tree at speed, which didn't work so well (damage to the tree was mercifully minor). Fortunately, M.D. **Richard** was along (so was **Tom May**, but that was fairly irrelevant). Together they explored Portugal's EMT organization in unintentional preparation for **Todd's** participation in this trip.

Wife Laura also works in the business (and shares **Anne's** view of sharing a job with her husband). His two daughters, Mathilde and Elise (ages 7 and 5), are adorable French schoolchildren. ncenvoyage@gmail.com (personal) or nicolas@bluemarble.org for Blue Marble stuff.

Richard "Rich" Stokes (Philly Phriends — we call him Rich, to distinguish from **Richard Bankowitz**) has been traveling with Blue Marble for 10 years now, going on a new trip every year, like clockwork, never repeating. He is an avid cyclist at home, too, touring the countryside around Philadelphia most every weekend. Indeed, our trips represent a vacation for him — from biking.

When not in Europe, and not on his bike (which is, unfortunately, most of the time) Rich is a Philadelphia-based architect, owner of his own firm, Stokes Architecture. He specializes in hospitality – restaurants, hotels, and even amusement parks (Moreys Piers in Wildwood, NJ). And especially in putting totally out-of-place restaurants around Philadelphia. Our favorite is *Parc*, a remarkable *Café de l'Opéra* lookalike on Rittenhouse Square, where we go to order calf's liver in raspberry vinegar. We are sure we are the only ones who do, but heck, it's on the menu.



He also advised **Richard (Bankowitz)** on the renovation of a truly remarkable house in Philadelphia's Art Museum district, some years back, a vast project only tangentially related to **Richard's** decision to move to Washington.

One of Rich's recently completed projects is "Frankford Hall," a beer garden in Philadelphia's Fishtown neighborhood (yes, that really is the name of a neighborhood — anyone else see a simple way to improve area real estate values?). The design of this project benefited from time spent on the Blue Marble Austria trip two years ago. Hic! Next up: a Philly Phado bar.

Richard Bankowitz (Philly Phriends, Blue Marble). Though we associate Richard with our time in Philadelphia, he is native to the Hudson Valley, and we knew him during a tenure in Chicago, long before he moved to the City of ~~Gross Mismanagement~~ Brotherly Love. He has now gone on to Washington DC, where he is **Kara's** upstairs neighbor.

He is a board-certified Internist [ed: that means “doctor”] and Medical Informaticist [ed: that means nothing at all] who has worked for 25 years in health care quality improvement. He is now Chief Medical Officer for Premier, an alliance of 2500+ not-for-profit hospitals.

But the pinnacle of his illustrious professional career (to date) was his year spent as a Blue Marble Coordinator; an occupation he chose, as he later explained to recruiters, “because I could.” Both he and the company survived. He is still in counseling over the Spanish van incident, but he informs us that all charges have been dropped.

An unusually thoughtful man, and a gentle iconoclast (or at least, icon interpreter bereft of accommodation), Richard is pulled in many directions by his varied interests and influences: from MBA to astrology, MD to feng shui, informatics to religious imagery, all with an undercurrent of barely managed dyslexia.

Richard can make himself understood in five languages, and obtain a meal with appropriate wine parings in still others. But his record in Portuguese is spotty: among his lunch orders, we can cite a kilo of prawns with a bottle of cognac, and (on another occasion) a “roasted Tuesday.” His agitation on being told it was Wednesday was palpable. Richard.Bankowitz@PremierInc.com



Steve Rath (Arizona Crew). As Steve’s nickname, Gopher Killer, hints, he is by far the Most Interesting Man in his neighborhood. Grew up in Southern California, Pasadena to be precise. Parents Polish American, hence Catholic grade and high schools. Enjoyable Little League career, still considered a high point. Father was a liquor store owner, so Steve doesn’t always drink Dos Equis. If a margarita or a *kir royal* can be found....

Attended a sampler platter of most of CA's public colleges — sophomore year was 3 of the best years of his life — always with the the specter of becoming a Mexican manual laborer as an inspiration to try again. 11 years as an engineer, followed by a sabbatical during which he took his first Blue Marble trips. We got enough on him during that brief contact that he's been forced to make return trips ever since.

He did return to work (still engineering) and now lives in Phoenix. He wiles away his spare time playing shuffleboard with Whitey Bulger (they caught the wrong guy). Beneath the stubbly surface, a true renaissance man (owns nothing made after 1983), of unique style (day-glo orange bike helmet and red nylon jacket, pictured), and of many passions (classic rock on vinyl, the perfect glass of orange juice, water treatment on an industrial scale, and the Rams NFL draft picks).

Hobbies include tennis, French Country decorating, and squashing beetles with a shovel. And, beware: Steve considers word games a full contact sport.



Steven Partington (indi) is the “other” half (read: opposites attract) of Team Damon & Steven—both in cycling and life in general. Steven is a professional technology geek and an aspiring writer. In fact, just for fun, he’s tortured himself by working at a very Glamour-ous magazine company in The New York(er) area for the past 16 years — sadly not in Editorial, but in Technology (his mantra: “Someday I’ll cross over. . . someday.”).

Still, his job allows for massive amounts of technology on his person at any given time. You will recognize him as the rider with the wearable solar panel on his back, charging the iPhone to track geo-location coordinates to sync up with the HD 1080p helmet cam video (yeah, he knows... he’s self-aware). At least, you will recognize him if you can find him. He’s probably back in Porto, trying to sync his devices, while **Damon** visits a church.

But the geek thing can be overplayed. Blue Marble Coordinator Cate Dundee, with whom they have most often travelled, describes them both as “charming and lovely,” and once tried to sequester them and make them live in her apartment in Bologna, Italy. It didn’t work out: Steven didn't fit, and the studio decided that the pilot episode was not significantly original (something about John Ritter).

Steven blogs his Blue Marble adventures for family and friends, so use policed language in his presence. Feel free to share, and / or follow along (www.twobikesblog.com). We fully expect **Steve Rath** to become the next youtube sensation, or perhaps **Todd**, if the camera is in the right place at the right time. Conversely, Steven has agreed not to take any film of **David**, under any circumstance. Or else. Sparting@boppart.com

Sue Sterling (Blue Marble) was born and raised in Brampton, Ontario, Canada. (Where? In the tundra to the west of Toronto. Surrounded, of course, by moose.) The brevity of Sue’s written biography should not fool you: more than likely, she will make up for it orally. A born storyteller, anything that involves talking to (at?) people makes her happy. Indeed, the one topic on which she shows any sort of reserve is... herself. **Anne**, meet Sue. Sue, meet **Anne**. Could be interesting.

Various career paths have been explored, including flight attendant, executive search consultant, and yes, even Blue Marble Bike Trip Coordinator, in the 1999 and 2000 seasons. She is fluent in English, French, and German, and can bumble her way through Spanish and Italian. Holding her Diploma certificate from the Wine &



Spirit Education Trust (WSET), she currently pays the mortgage as a Sales Representative with Andrew Peller Limited, the largest Canadian-owned wine company.

What more can we reveal about Sue? Well, that she is the host of online wine review programs “The Naked Wine Show” (pssst: she’s not really naked. But don’t tell anyone, it would lessen the thrill). and “Grape Notes.” And that she maintains a blog at www.suesterling.com.



Tammy Souza (Tom & Cherie pod — she travelled on the trip where they met but thought Tom was gay. Otherwise, maybe.... Also of the **Rhode Island Contingent**). Tammy is, as her name suggests, of Portuguese lineage, a source of great and legitimate pride. As for many of you, this will be her second time on our Portuguese trip, and she was eager to go. She loves travelling in Portugal, because, as she says, “everyone looks like my family.”

She lives just over the CT state line, as all seven of Rhode Island’s houses were occupied. She was sent to us 15 years ago by another native of the Microscopic State: mutual friend Kelly O’Connell. Or, an alternate explanation put forth by one our Coordinators: “[Tammy] is an angel sent by the Gods of cycletourism.” These can be compatible statements if Kelly is a deity.

Tammy has a varied (not to say checkered) past: born to a family where all 4 brothers and sisters were also christened with names beginning in “T.” Baton twirler in high school, curious taste in cocktails (cosmopolitans with olives — probably the Portuguese influence), used to date a Chippendale dancer... she went on to earn two Master’s degrees, work in the pharm industry, teach high school math, then back to pharm... or maybe she has just been laid off. She’s not really sure, and not really sure she cares. Briefly married along the way, and has a grown son (PJ), though she has trouble seeing him that way. Now subscribes to the **Frank** Dimichale view of marriage, which seems to be working for her, if not for her rather more traditional Portuguese family. Tammy’s favorite color is purple, except in food. tsouza22@msn.com

Tim Hughes (Tom and Cherie pod) and wife **Anne**, are very much at the root of this trip, which they scheduled, and peopled with a bunch of their (and our) friends. He is a kind and unassuming man. His real name is Tom... he changed it to Tim when he learned there were two other Toms on the trip, because he “didn’t want to be in the way.”

He learned this humility early: his first bed was a padded dresser drawer, because his parents were too busy to think of anything else to do with him (recommended reading: his mother’s autobiography, particularly the part dealing with her career as a stewardess in the early days of commercial aviation).



A native of Connecticut's Fairfield Country (along the coast, suburbs of NYC), he moved later to the Berkshires, in the northwest corner of the state. There, he and **Anne** manage the Silver Lake Conference Center, a camp / educational facility / gathering place owned by the United Church of Christ. UCC is a mainline Protestant church with at least two distinguishing features: it continues to believe in the sanctity of life after birth, and it does not particularly encourage (though it is open to) rolling around on the ground and screaming. Most famous church member: Barack Obama.

Tim loves music (plays the guitar), is creative with computers, supportive of his fellows, and has a wonderful imagination. If he has a failing, it is blaming his bike for their collective performance on hills. The nickname "Fat Bastard" refers to said bike, and not to its rider. He and **Anne** can usually be found bringing up the back of the pack, taking photos and picking blackberries.

Tim knows the **Arizona Crew**, the **Rhode Island Contingent**, the **Philadelphia Friends...** and has had contact with many of the others, initially through Blue Marble, but now also from many shared travels.

Todd Ritchie (Arizona Crew) grew up in Indiana, went to Purdue. He then got out of Indiana, but continues to root for the Colts, despite their lack of a quarterback. As far as the rest of the Arizona Crew are concerned, that about tells the story. Todd adds that he's a bachelor, which he sorrowfully attributes to time wasted with the Crew. He tries to beat them off by telling endless Purdue stories, but since **Frank's** stint in China, the strategy isn't working so well: as soon as Frank enters the room, he finds he has an eager audience.

A bad crash last summer (following **Steve & Frank** down a mountain) left him with a year of rehab. On the bright side, he learned how to fly (though, regrettably, not how to land). He's been back on the bike since spring, and is ready to take on Portugal. And since no one has told him that **Steve & Frank** had oiled the road, he should ride with confidence.

An early riser, you'll find him leading the daily 6a "Fun Run," scheduled just prior to **Richard's** interpretive dance of the route sheet. Though Todd is a newbie to Blue Marble, he knows (in addition to the Phoenix crew) **Tim**, **Anne** and **Christine** from bike-centric gatherings over the years. He's a bit worried about meeting **David**, but only because **Steve** has has him convinced that Whitey Bulger is a close relative, which is absolutely a rumor.



Tom Albrecht (Arizona Crew) was raised as a South Dakota farm boy in a town smaller than anything you can possibly imagine. The desire for bigger things came early in life. Engineering provided an opportunity to move to the Phoenix area, see a few more places in the world, and have a 20 year career in the medical device industry (pacemakers, defibrillators, etc.).

Bicycling was a passion for Tom even as a child: it was literally his only way to "get off the farm." He's been taking bike-related vacations for many years and has been on "one or twelve" previous Blue Marble trips [ed: actual figure = 19], in addition to a few solo efforts.

Don't let the cheery photo fool you: Tom is known as "Surly" to his

friends (we have **Christine** to thank for the sobriquet); what his enemies call him is not fit for a family newsletter.

In a reversal of the general principle of backbiting, however, he is referred to by the far more admiring "Tom the Navigator" when he is out of the room. Prince Henry, meet your match. Indeed, Tom has a rare talent, about which he is unduly modest: he speaks route sheet. He mysteriously manages to figure out what we are trying to say, even when we don't, actually, say it, and magnanimously glides over our poor prose (noteworthy, since "magnanimous" and "surly" are words not often associated). The result: much as a mother goose, he is usually followed by a large and undisciplined string of goslings, all trying to have Kodak moments every 50 meters, and squawking loudly if he gets too far ahead. It is, frankly, enough to make anyone surly.

Tom has also travelled with **Fred** and **Ginger Julie**, in Brittany in 2010, with **Richard** multiple times, and with all of the different members of the **Tom & Cherie pod**.
albret1@yahoo.com

Tom May (indi). Both a Cubs and White Sox fan in a city where that is viewed as heresy, Tom is a Chicago native who returned to the city by the lake five years ago to strike out on his own in commercial real estate (great timing on that one, eh?).



Known both for the tremendous range of his palate ("I know, I know, we're in Paris. Where can I get pad thai?") and for his love of things powered ("The only thing that would make this bike trip even better was if we were on motorcycles"), he nonetheless returns regularly to Blue Marble World, and manages to look on the foreign cultures he rubs up against with incredulity rather than open hostility.

A proud, card-carrying member of the meatitarian club, he has signed up to travel in all-fish Portugal because his other vacation offers were going bungee jumping with a chain, or sticking bamboo shoots under his finger nails. Tom was a frequent Blue Marble rider in years gone by, and most recently travelled on last year's "Mystery Trip," with **Sue**, **Richard**, and **Nicolas**.



Trung Lam (Arizona Crew) was born to a Chinese family of 10 in Vietnam. He and several of his family were part of the massive boat-people exodus out of VN in the 70's. After a circuitous journey, including a 7-month stay in a Malaysian exile camp, he made it to the U.S. where he bounced from TX to OR to, eventually, his U.S. home in CA, where he attended school.

He is married, with a young daughter, and gainfully employed as a mechanical engineer in Phoenix, AZ. Hobbies are cycling, tennis, hiking/camping and swimming. Trung is the Statue of Liberty to bicycles: "Give me your tired, your broken, your rusty and I will rehab you and find you a home - even Huffies and Sears & Roebucks." Or maybe he is the Betty Ford Clinic. Do not ever try to pronounce the word pho in front of him. And for fun, tell him that Pei Wei is good Chinese food.