

# BBBC History: Farewell to Lee Chouinard

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by Betty Frank-Bailey

Lee Chouinard, founder of the Bonita Bay Bicycle Club, and his wife, Fran, were honored by over 60 bike club members on Saturday, October 31, 2015 at Estero Bay Park. Club President Robin Tucker Goyette captured the mood of the crowd when she said, "Over the past ten years I have cycled thousands of miles with Lee, both here in SWFL and on bicycling vacations across the nation. When I climb on my bike with Lee, I feel again like a kid on the first day of summer vacation ... an endless morning of fun awaits me! Lee's experience and perpetual good humor contribute to an exceptional group cycling experience. I have no doubt that, come next summer, when my husband and I hop into our motor home, we'll head straight to Denver so we can go bicycling with Lee Chouinard!"

The Chouinard's are settling in Denver, CO after enjoying over 16 very active years biking and playing tennis while living here in Bonita Bay.

An avid cyclist, Chouinard founded the bike club in 2000 with about 16 inaugural members of various biking abilities. Initially rides were 35 miles or less with speeds of 10-15 mph; today, typical group rides range from a relaxing weekly 10-15 mile ride in Bonita Bay at 10 mph to challenging daily 50-60 mile rides to Ft. Myers or Naples at speeds of 18-24 mph. The club's first century ride (100 miles in one day) took place in 2003 with just four riders, and its first sponsored international ride was held in July 2009 when 20-25 club members biked through the Loire Valley in France.

Chouinard has remained an active board member of the club for the past 15 years, most recently as its statistician. During this time, Chouinard has played an important role in recruiting new members and organizing events, helping the club grow to over 180 members who, collectively, rode over 175,000 miles in the past year. Chouinard, himself, contributed over 5,000 of those miles. He estimates he has ridden more than 140,000 miles since he taking up biking in 1985, including cycling across the US twice – once from California to Florida and again from Florida to Maine. Chouinard did the north – south ride solo with his wife, Fran, driving as support. All Bonita Bay Bicycle Club members wish Lee and Fran many happy years in their new Colorado home where we are certain they will be spotted biking!