

CONNECTICUT POST  
**Sporting Life**

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**INSIDE:** Julie Inkster, right, will defend her U.S. Women's Open title starting today in Libertyville, Ill. The tournament is scheduled the same weekend as the British Open. **D7**

Touring company can create a

**BIKE TRIP  
BUILT FOR YOU**By **BILL MCDONALD**  
William.McDonald@Thomnews.com*"We do inn-to-inn trips or customized trips. We can go around New England, Europe, wherever you want."*— **Sal Lillienthal**  
Bicycle Tour Company owner**S**al Lillienthal of Kent can take his act anywhere in the world. In this case he has a bicycle touring company that can tailor-make a trip.

And that's what he did recently when a New York City law firm with a partner in Wilton asked him to meet a busload of interns (called summer associates by the firm) for a not-too-difficult ride out of Sherwood Island in Westport that would end with a party at the partner's home that afternoon. It was part of several so-called bonding experiences such as Broadway theater outings and evenings at restaurants arranged by the firm of Wilkie, Farr and Gallagher. The Wilton partner was Tom Cerabero, who did not bike but just threw the party.

Law firm spokesman Billie Levine Kelly praised Lillienthal's organization, The Bicycle Tour Company. She did not go on the ride but arranged it beforehand.

"This is the second year we've used Sal," said Kelly, who lives in Greenwich and works at the firm as director of legal recruiting. The first year was a tour along the Greenwich shore.

"I organized the tour, told him we wanted an easy picturesque ride of about 10 miles. He was fabulous. He had T-shirts and water bottles for everybody. I went to the party later at Tom's house, and everybody raved about the ride."

Lillienthal grew up in Greenwich so he knew the region. In this case he designed a ride for beginners. It went out of Sherwood Island over I-95 and to the right onto flat, winding, two-lane, tree-shaded Greens Farms Road for a bucolic ride past the stately mansions of Greens Farms in Westport and the Southport section of Fairfield. The riders turned around in Southport Center after admiring large yachts of Pequot Yacht Club in Southport Harbor and rode back. The whole trip hardly took more than an hour.

Two summer associates at the firm called it one of the better outings.

"On the whole, I'd say everyone had a real good time," said James Berger, 26, of Los Angeles, one of the 25 participants. Like all the other associates, he is between his second and third year of law school, in his case at Columbia Law School.

"I'm not a biker, and I handled that 10 miles well, as did everyone else. It only took 45 minutes. The rest of the day we were at the partner's house in Wilton. It wasn't for the athletic experience but for the bonding experience, and I'd say it worked out well."

Mark Connelly of New York City, 23, just finished with his second year at New York

University Law School. He was also glad the bike trip wasn't too strenuous.

"I consider myself an outdoors person who doesn't get out much," said Connelly. "I play on the law firm's softball team. I rode towards the front, but this bike trip was not hard for anyone. No one complained. We were just riding along and talking. It was over before we knew it."

"We all had helmets, and we were all fitted for bikes based on our height and weight," he said. "They showed us how to work the gears and what to do going up a hill and down. They took care of us very well. We had a great time."

Lillienthal has also helped plan and give technical assistance for the annual "Down to the Sound Bike Tour" sponsored by the Western Connecticut chapter of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society that took place June 10 out of Sherwood Island.

Betty Fairbanks, chapter executive director, said she was referred to Lillienthal through someone who had taken a bike trip with him. The trip involved 500 cyclists riding for pledged donations along routes of nine, 15, 25, 46 and 62 miles. The nine-mile route was to Southport and back.

"Sal volunteered his time," said Fairbanks from her Norwalk



Jean Santopatre/Connecticut Post

**Let's go:** The Bicycle Tour Company organized this group of cyclists from a New York law firm at Sherwood Island State Park on a nine-mile trip around Westport.

office. "I think he has a family member or friend with MS. I called him since I wanted some advice about the routes to make sure they were safe. The day of the event, he had several vans to do small repairs and fix flats. He also donated a prize of a free one-day bike tour with his company. He was invaluable to us, very knowledgeable about biking."

Lillienthal, 33, said he does have a friend with the disease for which there is no known cure. So he was glad to help in the MS program. In his bike tours, he likes to go from local small day trips up to week-long rides just about anywhere.

"Anyone can come from around Connecticut and rent a bike for \$25 a day and ride along the Housatonic River here or whatever

route they want," he said. "We do inn-to-inn trips or customized trips like the one in Westport. We can go around New England, out west, Europe, wherever you want."

Lillienthal developed a love for biking from age 15 when he went on a bicycle tour of France with other teenagers through the Student Hostel Program, based in Conway, Mass.

The following summer he became a helper at the Massachusetts office and during summers while attending Hobart College led trips through New England and Europe.

Though his degree was in Third World Studies he still gravitated toward biking and became a bicycle mechanic for a store in Burlington, Vt. This led to being a mechanic for the U.S. National

Bicycle team in 1992 and 1993 followed by the American professional Motorola Cycling Team on a world circuit including the famous Tour De France from 1994 to 1996, and Saturn Cycling Team, another professional team in 1997.

It was while sitting around with some Saturn members one evening that the idea for his own company came up.

"Some of us thought of starting a tour company and biking around Europe and the USA," he said of his business that started in November 1997.

"And here I am."

So with many weeks of summer left to go, take your pick of an ideal bike trip and tell Lillienthal. He'll probably know how to do it.

**BICYCLE TOUR COMPANY****WHAT** — The Bicycle Tour Company. Three full-time and 15 part-time employees.**WHERE** — Based in Kent, but tailors individual and group bicycle rides to anywhere in the world.**WHO** — Owned by Sal Lillienthal, 33, Greenwich native, former bicycle trip leader with Student Hostel Program, Conway, Mass. and mechanic with the elite Motorola and Saturn racing teams that took him to such world-class races as the Tour De France.**RATES** — Starts at \$25 to rent a bike from for day trip from Kent. Group trips include: New York City day trip, \$75; Litchfield County Weekend, \$790; Martha's Vineyard Weekend, \$950; week in Andalucia, Spain, \$2,450. Groups limited to 15 members including staff.  
**CALL** — (860) 927-1742, (888) 711-KENT; email (info@bicycletours.com); Web site (bicycletours.com)**Riding partners:** The Bike Touring Co. owner, Sal Lillienthal, right, loads his van with extra bikes and food as part of the service he provides. In left photo, he welcomes a group on a trip out of Sherwood Island in Westport. Lillienthal's company can help a single bicyclist or a group of 15 on a trip to Europe.