

30 years of passion keep Art Doyle's Spokes and Pedals spinning

By [Chuck Nowlen](#) on May 9, 2014 at 9:01 a.m./Hudson Star-Observer



Art Doyle's inventory is impressive, but his store's passionate service is the hallmark of its success. (Hudson Star-Observer photo by Chuck Nowlen)

Art Doyle has starter bikes, high-performance exotics, everything in-between and all the accessories you can imagine, but he knows that passion rules in a keen market, and that's what keeps his shop humming.

"I am a regional shop, and part of my goal is to convince people that the grass can be greener on this side of the fence," said Doyle, whose Art Doyle's Spokes and Pedals in Hudson has been thriving in the shadow of larger Twin Cities competitors since early May 1984.

He doesn't advertise much either. A lot of his business comes from word-of-mouth referrals, which makes Doyle's passion factor even more potent.

"We try to do such a great job with someone who comes in as a referral that the person who made that referral beams with joy when they hear about it," he explained in an interview last week.

"People come in here all the time, saying, 'Man, you have a great reputation around here.' And, after 30 years, we still believe we have to earn that -- every day and with every encounter.

"Our secret: to be earnest, honest, straightforward, thorough and truly caring about all of our customers. That's why, after 30 years, everybody who works here still loves fixin', fittin', sellin' and ridin' bikes."

Doyle's passion for biking took root early. He's had it ever since he got his first 10-speed at age 15, caught the riding bug, then decided to take the bike apart and put it back together as a repair project that took on a life of its own in high school and after.

He still bikes three-and-a-half miles to work every day. The thrill is infectious, too -- for both Doyle's staff and his clientele.

"We really do enjoy helping the people who come into the store, and we really do believe that every transaction and every person we meet here is important," he said.

"The way we view it, our customers come in to get something solved, and we try to solve it. So if they buy something, great. But, if they don't buy anything, and we still solve the problem -- well, that's great too. We really go at it from that standpoint: Let's figure this out. ..."

An additional small-town personal touch: mellow black cats Zoey and Saber, who prowl the store freely and love to bond with visitors. The cat factor also was an early shop standard, Doyle recalled.

“Somebody came in one day trying to get rid of a cat, and I said, ‘OK, we’ll try a shop cat,’” he said, now joking: “So now we have people come down just to talk to the cats. They’re polite to us, and then they talk to the cats.”

Stillwater’s loss, Hudson’s gain

Ironically, Hudson wasn’t Doyle’s first location choice. He originally planned to open a bike shop in Stillwater, but balked when he saw that “four or five” already dominated the picture there.

Then he caught word that Hudson bike-shop owner Dave Filipiak was closing his business behind a laundry at the current site of Home, Kitchen and Bath at 412 Second St. Doyle opened Spokes and Pedals there soon after “with about 10 bikes as inventory and myself.”

“One of the main reasons for taking Dave’s shop was that he had a phone number and a storefront already,” he added.

“I am delighted to be in Hudson. ... We’ve got a very broad and very deep inventory, and a very broad and very deep customer base. Looking back, I was exceedingly fortunate that Stillwater was overloaded with bike shops.”

Doyle bought Spokes and Pedals’ current location at 607 2nd St. in 1990. The business has been growing steadily since day one.

“We’ve made constant progress for 30 years,” Doyle noted. “Oh sure, we’ve had some challenges. But any challenges we’ve had were the kind of challenges you’d expect -- just normal stuff.”

That’s not easy with a seasonal business, but, by now, Doyle has the yearly ebb-and-flow figured out.

“We work like farmers here,” he said. “We have the good fortune to still have business in the wintertime, but we work a ton in the spring and summer to get through the winter. The good news after 30 years is that I’m now quite comfortable with it.”

He’s also had a lot of support from his wife and high-school sweetheart Carol, who works in concessions and exhibits at the Minnesota State Fair. They’ve raised two children together, Andrew, 32, and Hayley, 29.

“Without my wife’s support, this shop wouldn’t have worked out,” Doyle said. “I started out not making much money, so somebody in the house had to have a job.”

He also credits his staff: manager Brandon Stahnke, Matt Howie, Truman Pardy, Ben Tressell, Mitch Chatterton and Clara Malanaphy. All are permanent year-round.

“Many other shops hire temps, but we do not,” Doyle explained. “Our staff works all year, which gives them the experience, professionalism and knowledge that’s so important here.”

The nationwide surge in biking enthusiasm also has been a boon to Doyle’s shop, and the River Crossing project’s bike and pedestrian Loop Trail promises to boost the local impact even further soon, he noted.

“To be part of a group of people who helped that trend come about is a source of pride for me,” Doyle added. “I’m just very gratified that I’ve helped biking become more mainstream.”
