



Rivendell Reader 42



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WHEN KIDS HAD PEA-SHOOTERS & SLINGSHOTS & PLAYED MUMBLETY-PEG

READER NO. 41 WAS MAILED IN FEBRUARY 2009 and now it's nearly February 2010, and that is why this Reader is two Maynards and twice as long. In some ways this issue is rough.

The *Reader* has never been entirely about bikes, and that is nothing against bikes at all. I have less against bikes than anybody I know, but there is only so much you can say about them in one issue, so some repetition is inevitable.

Not everybody who starts with us stays with us, anyway, so what's old to vets is new to rookies. Back to "not everybody who starts with us stays with us": When you come upon Rivendell early in your education as a cyclist, there's a tendency, as you gain experience and knowledge, to explore new territory, discover new worlds, and associate the old friend with grammar school, so to speak. Orvis suffers from this, to a certain extent. An Orvis bamboo fly rod is or was more accessible to more people, and got to young fly fishermen before, say, they found out about Leonard, Paul Young, and Winston; and it cost less, though not that much less. So you'd start with an Orvis, get good with the rod and at catching trout, and at that point Orvis would be your stepping stone on to rarer, less-well-known and therefore more prestigious rods that seemed to offer the same thrill at that stage of your fishing career as the Orvis did earlier. I don't know

the name of this phenomenon, but I believe it is one. It's rare to marry the first girl you date, and for the most part that's a good thing, although once in a while you should.

In the late '70s when I was working at REI in Berkeley, we sold Madshus Birkebeiner cross country skis, which at about \$70 a pair, were the most-expensive light touring skis at the time. They were also the best-looking, with no paint or varnish, just an oil finish that showed all the wood at its best. Google them and see for yourself. But despite their good looks, or on top of it, they were great-skiing, high-performance skis, and before the age of specialization set in, they were used for everything from groomed track skiing to week-or-two back country treks equivalent to a fully loaded off-road bicycle tour.

Then Madshus quit making the Birkebeiner, and REI bought a bunch, maybe hundreds, and blew them out for \$29.93. In those days, all sale items ended in \$.93.

Whether the sale was successful or not depends on how you define success. We sold out in a few hours, and it seemed that every fourth person in the store that Saturday was walking around with a pair of Madshus Birkebeiners. People who had never owned cross-country skis found out about the sale and bought them, and everyone was shrugging their shoulders and

saying, “At this price, you can’t go wrong.” They were starting at the top, that’s for sure.

Preparing wooden cross-country skis meant brushing pine tar onto the bottoms, heating it up with a butane torch, and then, when the pine tar got thin and bubbly, rubbing it in with a rag, and repeating. It took about ten minutes per ski, and you had to be careful, because if the flame was too hot or too close or dwelled too long at the same spot, you’d burn the wood. It’s the old trick of running your finger through the candle’s flame fast so it doesn’t burn you.

About twenty people got the skis and charcoaled the bottoms black. They returned them, and were refunded their \$29.93 plus tax.

On a Darfur scale, it didn’t matter. If you like to laugh at stupid mistakes where nobody dies, it was a good chance. On an oil spill scale, it was a trivial hoot. But on a ski scale, where you think of the designer and the makers, and all of the potential in those plain-looking wooden skis, it was a disaster. Those skis had something like 36 laminations of wood, finely fitted together and glued and made into skis, and they had thousands of miles in them never skied, never would be skied.

Back then and I bet still now, REI had a return policy the was referred to internally as “Smiling Jack.” It meant Jack or Jill could return anything for any reason, and you did whatever it took to make him go away smiling.

Under Smiling Jack, abuse was impossible. The Birkebeiner Incident pushed a few buttons too hard, though. The tribe was on the warpath, and we had a recovery pow-wow to get back into the spirit of Smiling Jack.

Within a year of the Birkebeiner sale, we also blew out some mountaineering boots, a model called the Habeler Superlight (named for Peter Habeler, a mountaineer buddy of Reinhold Messner), made by Kastinger. Peter Habeler was at the peak of his career back then, and was well-known for his quick, oxygen-free Himalayan ascents. The boots were made for sub-zero temperatures,

and were a light “double-boot,” with a removable reflectorized liner. The outer was full-grain leather, and it had the normal Norwegian welt, and speed-lace and hook lacing arrangement. It came out just at the onset of the plastic boot age, and to borrow a term from another industry, it was a “last-gasp” leather mountaineering boot, made with the best materials and every crafty trick a boot cobbler could throw at a boot in an effort to survive and stay relevant as the plastic ski-boot style mountaineering boots were advancing in force.

REI blew them out at \$3.93 per pair, no limit per person, and there were guys walking around with four and five pair stacked in their arms over their heads, assorted ballpark sizes. It made us employees livid to see day hikers and car campers scamper to the register with armloads of the finest mountaineering boots of their day, at \$3.93 a pair. I am ashamed to say I bought a pair, but only to rescue them from somebody far less likely to need them than I. Keep in mind that this was before eBay, so the chances of reselling them was slim. How this incident fits in with this editorial is unclear to me, but it seems to fit.

I remember a 60-Minutes story several years ago about Nordstrom’s return policy, also famously lenient. It was rumored that you could return something to Nordstrom that you didn’t even buy there. This was tested and proved correct, and in the show, as I recall, the 60M reporter was interviewing the return department person, who acknowledged that she knew the thing wasn’t bought there, but that was OK, she wanted to satisfy the customer.

Our policy is to treat you the way we’d like — well, it’s pretty much Golden Rule-like. Everybody who works here has the authority to do what it takes to handle your problem without checking with anybody else. It doesn’t come up a lot, but just so you know, that’s the deal. Still, if you didn’t buy it here, you can’t return it here. I think that would be doing you and your circle of contacts in the future a disservice.

We regularly write or say that we don’t like carbon forks, because we’ve seen too many of them shatter and snap. Anything can break, and not all breaks point to defects. The concept of “wearing things out” has fallen out of favor in the past couple of decades, but it used to be common.

When something breaks you have to look at the reasons and the consequences, and the repairability of it. We’ve had dropouts break on our bikes. They aren’t defective dropouts. They are well-brazed. But sometimes riding puts a little too much stress on a place that wasn’t super reinforced, and a crack develops and grows over time—many months, always—until the dropout “suddenly” breaks. And it breaks where dropouts have broken for scores. It’s always the right side dropout, just behind the chainstay.

Hindsight is a good teacher, and we’ve made small changes that reduce the chances of this happening to virtually zero, but now and then one breaks, and a blogger puts it on the web, and it makes me sad, and we take care of it. The fix is not difficult, and the fixed dropout is stronger than the new one. But it is a bummer.

At least it is not a life-threatening bummer, or an unrepairable one. In a pinch, in any town of 400 or more people, there is somebody who can weld the steel back good enough to last another 10,000 miles or so. The same cannot be said of lesser materials.

Many years ago friend Henry Kingman was riding an old steel mountain bike in the Afghanistanish mountains of Nevada, five or so miles from town (as I recall he told me), when his fork, which had an unusual stress riser about three inches down from the top of the crown, broke. It didn’t suddenly go until it suddenly went, but Henry hadn’t noticed the crack. Whatever—he was in the true blue boonies with a broken steel fork. This was before cell phones, but he might not have had coverage anyway, and anyway at the time he was living with his mother, and would your mother be able to help you if you were stuck five miles from a paved road?

Henry found a stout stick of the right diameter, and stuck the stick down the broken-off lower portion of the fork blade, and then stuck the sticking out part of the stick into the upper stub of the blade still joined to the crown, and made it out fine without duct tape or bailing wire. Who among us doesn't wish we'd done that? Not me. I do, for sure, but I'm not sure I'd have thought of that. I think I would have, but I'm only 70-30. Our forks lack the feature that made that happen, so I'll never know, but I think it's a wonderful story, and Henry's not a blabby braggart, so I'm happy to tell it for him.

Most of you are aware of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, which, I've heard, donates more money to charity than the entire U.S. government does. That's a great way to be rich, I think. Rupert Murdoch, inspired by the Gates Foundation, has upped his contributions a lot, too. And Google's Sergy Brin seems to be following. Wouldn't it be nice to be in that position?

And wouldn't it be difficult to be a parent when you have so much family money? I'm not saying it would be bad, or that money rules out raising good children. Of course it doesn't. But it changes the game some, I'm sure.

Picking charities is not that hard; crossing them off your list is the hard part. There is an organization, I think its name is Charity Navigator, that evaluates the efficiency of various charities; an efficient one being one that gives a high percentage of the take to the cause, as opposed to paying the staff a lot and having just a little left over for the children or women, or whomever. We think hard about the organizations we give money to. There truly are so many good ones, and please don't send in your personal favorite. I know it's every bit as worthy, and yet, if we were to give to it, we'd be taking away from one of our other five. The Carter Center is the biggest one, and is also funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, which dwarfs our contributions (\$2,000 or so). But the Carter Center, even if big, tackles small, unglamorous, ugly tasks that no other groups take on, and they get in there

quick, are effective immediately, and deserve everybody's support.

We give to Mercy Corps and Somaly Mam Foundation and Nepalese Youth Opportunity Foundation, anti-sexual slavery organizations in Asia, and combined, it's about \$6,000 to these three.

One of the charities we give to is Smile Train, the cleft palate surgery people, the people who place those ads with the big grids of twisted-lipped children. Last year, a documentary on Smile Train—called Smile Pinky—won the Oscar. It's only 39 minutes long, and you should see it, somehow. Anyway, we donate about \$2,500 a year to Smile Train, and this year we're trying to supplement that by donating 100 percent of the profits from sales of Smile Train T-shirts and flying discs (think Frisbee, except they're made in the U.S. by Discraft). It costs \$250 per surgery. Imagine if you had a horrendous cleft palate and no money to get it fixed, and your family was shunned because the locals thought you were cursed by God with the funny mouth. So, \$250 to fix one—not a bad deal, and when the shirts and discs come in, please buy one.

I know many of you read the New York Times, because I'm often emailed stories from it. I get it online and on driveway, and it is a simple pleasure in my life. About three years ago there was a short piece in it written by book author Harlan Coben, called "Will Play For Food." Sometimes we pay to reprint previously published stories (Daniel Steel, Wendell Berry, Ian Frazier and others have been in the Reader), and I really wanted "Will Play For Food," too. But the price for reprints had increased o'er the years from \$150 to \$250, and I offered \$200 and they didn't go for it, so it's not in the Reader, but you can read it anyway online for nothing. Google "Harlan Coben, Will Play For Food." It appeared on October 27, 2006, New York Times, and you can find it both on Harlan Coben's site or the NY Times site. It's a shortie, and even \$200 seemed extravagant for it, but it's certainly worth your time to find it. Times have changed, for sure.

Nicholas Kristof is a NYT columnist you must like if you read him, and will like

if you haven't but start to. He writes a lot or mainly about hard life in Third World countries, but with hope. He finds and writes about heroic people helping the sad sacks, and there's always a link to a site where you can learn more and donate money. Of course all over charitable donations are off, and I'm sure that Nicholas Kristof's columns help them. A late October column was about fistulas in Africa. Here's fistula: A 13 to 14 year old girl gets pregnant before her hips are wide enough, so during birth, the emerging baby damages her down there, and as a result a hole forms between her vagina and her anus (sorry if this is too graphic). So she leaks feces and urine and stinks all the time. Naturally the entire community figures God has cursed her, so they shun her and she lives a sad and lonely life, maybe being cared for by a mother or somebody who just can't let her go.

To find the story, go to NYT.com and search "New Life for the Pariahs." It was the Halloween day column. There are good links in it, including one to a YouTube video which tells the story of a woman who has a third-grade education, but is now a fistula-repair surgeon. A fistula repair takes only about twenty minutes. That's about as worthwhile as a twenty minute time span gets.

I know what it feels like to read third hand accounts about these kinds of things. The writer seems to be horning in on the worthy deeds just by passing on the information, like he's part of the good part. I'm not part of the good part, but here we have this bike business, and business is hard, fair to good, not good to great, and it all has to do with what the business means and what it's supposed to do.

Many of you have lost your jobs or had your hours cut, and it's normal these days, and still sad. We haven't had to cut anybody's hours or jobs yet, but some of you sometimes ask, and yes, the economy is affecting us, too. And the weak dollar, which I oft whine about online. It feels like Koufax is the exchange rate and Gibson is the economy, and we have to be Tony Gwynn to even bat .275, and some-

times we're Gus Triandos—which isn't bad, I'm a Gus Triandos fan, but come on.

Let's see.....what else is happening? The Roadeo is pronounced "rodeo," and despite what you may think, calling it that doesn't glorify animal cruelty. It's not bullfighting, and the "deo" at the end may be Latin for God, but not in this context. The Roadeo is a road bike, and that's just a descriptive and easy to say name with a bit of flair at the end. This Spring we have some new bikes coming around, and as things settle down and solidify, we'll spell out the details on the site.

This editorial is the ramblongest one ever and won't be repeated. The Reader plan from the start was four issues a year, but it hasn't worked out that way. The plan this year is to tighten up and be more regular, Reader-wise. Congratula-

tions, I think, if you read this section end-to-end. The main thing: Look into the Fistula story. Find that YouTube video of the surgeon lady with the third-grade education. Well, here it is:

http://www.nytimes.com/packages/khtml/2005/06/12/opinion/20050612_FISTULA_AUDIOSS.html

I recently visited my oldest daughter, who's away at college, and I had a few minutes to kill one morning, and there was a big covered outside bike parking area, so I thought I'd take a survey. Here's what I found:

Total bikes: 124
Total steel bikes: 62, exactly 50%
Total lugged bikes: 26 (21%)
Total of our bikes: 1 (a Rambouillet)

I know it's because they were bought cheap, not because the college kids liked the slender proportions and the underlying toughness, but it even so, it was good to see 30- and 40-year old bikes still in service. Today's \$6500 carbon bikes won't be still in use even in six years. Their legacy will be landfill, until somebody figures out how to recycle carbon fiber. Divide the cost by years of use. Divide the cost by years of safe use. Divide the cost by the risk. Multiply that by pi and divide by four.

What will fill the campus bike racks in 2040? Some Surlys, for sure. Now and then a Betty Foy, a Sam, and someplace, in some campus rack, there's bound to be an a Hilsen, a Hillborne, Atlantis, Bombadil, Roadeo, and so on.

—Grant

¶[Hoefler Text]¶

Hoefler Text is an Antiqua font designed for the computer age. Originally developed for Apple in 1991 by Jonathan Hoefler it's one of the first fonts to incorporate and encourage the use of complex typography for use on computer screens. Hoefler has been included in every version of Mac OS since System 7.5, is used in the Wikipedia logo, and is the official font of Obama's whitehouse.gov. In designing this baroque-inspired text, Hoefler took advantage of Apple's "Advanced Typography" which allows automatic ligatures (Judæo-Christian affiliated golfballs), SMALL CAPITALS, and swashes (Rivendell Reader). Hoefler Text also features old-style figures, meaning that numbers can have ascenders (like 6,8), descenders (like 3,4,5,7,9), or none (0,1,2). 0123456789 as opposed to the all-caps 0123456789 of Helvetica. We've tried to use these features conservatively throughout Rivendell Reader 42, without going overboard. 🍷

CONTENTS

1. Editorial
5. Mail Letters
6. Establishing Limits. Some Opinions
7. Herschel's Broken Crank
8. Electronic Shifting
9. Broken Spokes & Wobbly Wheels
10. Goofing Around With Bikes
11. Freddie Hoffman
15. Richard Schwinn & Freddie Hoffman
16. The Make-Do Mechanic
18. Blogs & Beausage
19. Cars, Helmets, Fido
20. A Modern Presidential History of the Road Bike
21. Eric Karo's Netsket & Nanners
22. Alaska to Argentina 1973 by June Siple
37. Too Big Bike and a Wooden Top Tube
38. Waterbury Leather Works
41. Chainstays, Sidewalls & Triangles
42. Corner Like a Triangle
44. Re-perking Saggy Saddles
46. Sackville BarSack
47. Shimano's New 9-speed, Don't Brake with Rocks
48. Roadside Debris
49. New 650B Tires
50. The Roadeo
51. Shimmy Shimmy Coco Bop
52. Six Poems
56. Silver Shifter Washers & an Asymmetrical Rig
57. Bag Rigging and Cycling Shoes
58. Two of Mark's Bikes
59. Strangest Bike Incident
60. Two Scooters
61. Kickbikes
62. Speculation about the Future of Bike Parts
63. How to Not Get Fat & Make your Family Hate Riding
64. Steel Replacement Forks
65. Who Rides a Betty?
66. Who Rides a Homer?
67. Who Rides a Sam?
68. The Only Cyclist in Town by Maynard Hershon
69. Twenty Dollars, Two Tubes and a Coffee by Maynard Hershon

MAIL LETTERS

Mail is mainly email and gets answered promptly. Some questions are of general interest, but most are, “Here’s my situation, lend a hand?” which we’re happy to do, always, forever, let’s get that straight. Our Letters are often off-topic, but have something to say that’s worth sharing.

The first of the first two letters here was a real letter. The second was a post on theonlinephotographer.com, my downtime hangout. It’s repeated here because it is relevant to bikes, too. Both are written by Mike Johnston, the online photographer at theonlinephotographer. —Grant

To sell or use?

There’s that great free-market legend that the market is a perfect engine, that it will efficiently produce what the greatest number of people most want and need. That isn’t true, of course, for one simple reason: Most products in the consumer economy are not designed to be used, they’re designed to be sold. It’s a bit like the fact that evolution has efficiently eliminated most fatal childhood diseases but not the common diseases of old age: Because evolution is only interested up until the point of reproduction.

Once they do, it hardly matters if they get heart disease or dementia later on. Similarly, the overpowering focus of product creation only goes up to one very important point: The point at which the consumer forks over his or her money.

People argue that customer satisfaction and service are also important, yadda yadda, but the point from the seller’s perspective is that they just don’t want customers with bad experiences and low satisfaction polluting future sales. Pure producers actually hate things like “word of mouth,” because it can subvert their efforts to make the sale to others. A good example is the movie industry, which has gone to Herculean extremes to AVOID word-of-mouth—they’ve structured their business so that they can control the “buzz” by constructing artificial buzz in advance of release (prerelease promotion) and then doing half the picture’s business in the first weekend or two, avoiding the negative effects of word-of-mouth and ensuring a certain level of return on investment. Never mind if anyone likes the movie or if it’s a piece of crap.

Rivendell is an interesting business, because you’re both producer (and seller) of bikes and also a connoisseur of biking.

Normally, those two impulses are almost opposites. In your case you’ve done what some small sellers do and tried to enlist your connoisseurship in the service of your sales, by educating your consumer, soliciting his or her trust, and transparently looking out for his or her post-purchase satisfaction. It’s not the best model for sales, although it’s much more ethical in the long run and no doubt much more satisfying for the connoisseur side of your nature.

Of course the bicycle industry as a whole couldn’t care less, except insofar as it’s composed of small connoisseurs, which it is to some extent. I mean, which would the industry rather have:

—a bike which is 50% more likely to sell and then 50% more likely to sit in the purchaser’s garage unused; or

—a bike which is 50% less likely to sell but 50% more likely to be ridden and enjoyed after it has sold?

Some people like to argue the “meta-“ view, which is that it’s good for the industry in the long term to turn a pedestrian/driver into a cycling enthusiast. And of course it is. But that’s not something the industry can reasonably focus on. There’s no way to track the benefit. That, and the fact that the benefit is intolerably diffuse: Turning a pedestrian into a cyclist doesn’t reward any one company’s efforts to do so, it just rewards the bicycling industry altogether. Industries literally kill themselves all the time. A good example of what happens when long-term effects are ignored is the high-end stereo market, where the interests of an increasingly smaller pool of increasingly exclusive dealers and producers have conspired to choke the whole broader enterprise like a mad strangler. It’s both funny and pathetic to read a stereo magazine in

which a forlorn editorial plaint about the death of the high end sits cheek-by-jowl with a review of a \$66,000 CD player. It’s like a giant “2 + 2 = ?” It’s a subject that fascinates me. —Mike Johnston, Wisconsin

The Point of Sufficiency

I thought for sure I’d already written a post called “The Point of Sufficiency,” but a search doesn’t turn it up, and I can’t seem to find it under another name. So I thought perhaps I should just write it again, at the risk of repeating myself. This was triggered by one of Eolake’s comments to the “High ISO High Noon” post, in which he said that when it comes to ISO speed, we always want a little more, and then a little more.

That’s true—until it’s not.

The idea is one that I’ve at least mentioned many times, for instance here. It’s that in the history of photographic equipment and materials there have been various “competitions” or “races” to see which company can provide the most/fastest/best, but then in most cases a point of sufficiency is reached and customers decline to pay for further improvements.

This happened with film formats (film basically got down to 35mm size, which was small and convenient enough—further efforts to popularize still smaller formats all failed); lens speed ($f/1.4$ was deemed sufficient by the market, with further increases in maximum aperture being rare and not especially popular*); telephoto reach (the “Olympia Sonnar” for the 1936 Olympics was a widely admired and popular achievement, but now, 1000mm and 1200mm lenses are mere curiosities); shutter speed (consider that the Nikon N8008’s 1/8000th shutter speed was a big selling point, but the Mi-

nolta 9xi's 1/12000th was met with a yawn); fine grain in B&W films (Panatomic-X was enough; only a few fanatics followed the Tech Pan craze); reducing the size of SLRs was a brief race in the '70s (the Pentax ME was small enough); even build quality in cameras and lenses (the current market supports—barely—one carriage-trade brand. Beyond that, better build quality has not been rewarded with sales).

And so on.

Note that this is not a technical matter—it's a marketing matter. It has to

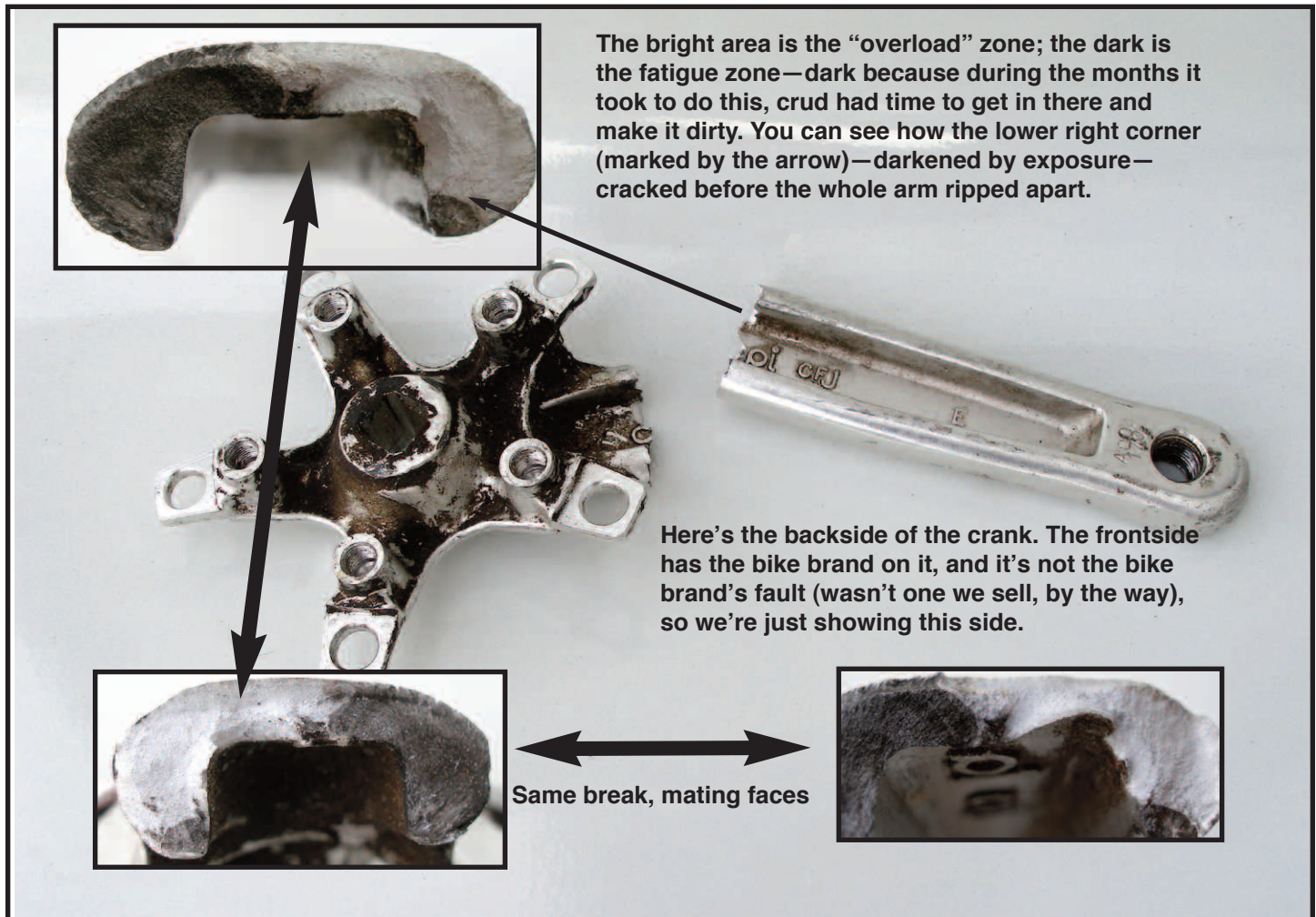
do with meeting the need for what people want for as long as enough of us are willing to pay for it. The trend is for the race to continue among the manufacturers for as long as the buying public is rewarding the improvements. But sooner or later the buying public has what it needs, and has had enough, and stops wanting to pay for further improvements, and the manufacturers (save perhaps for one or two niche products in each case) basically give up the chase, and go try to find some other idea that will sell.

My prediction (which I've mentioned many times) is that this will happen with ISO speed in DSLRs, too, and with megapixels in Bayer-array sensors of the current type**. I don't know where the end point of either will turn out to be, and I don't know whether we have arrived at those points yet (is 24 MP enough? Is ISO 12,800 enough?), but history predicts that sooner or later, you will have enough and won't want to pay more for more.

—Mike Johnston

ESTABLISHING LIMITS. SOME OPINIONS.

<p>How many rear cogs?</p> <p>Racing doesn't answer this, because racers are paid to ride what they ride. They're up to ten, eleven...nutty. For normal riders, seven is plenty, but unavailable. So stop at 8 or 9. No more. No double-digits.</p>	<p>How light a road bike?</p> <p>Twenty wispy pounds, and then only if you live for your fast club rides. Even that involves some compromises, but not necessarily any dangerous ones. For non-clubbies, don't worry about weight. Period.</p>	<p>How expensive a bike?</p> <p>Pinarello has a \$17,000 bike. There are scores of \$6,500 bikes. They're ridden lightly and replaced soon, making the cost-per-year about \$2K. The price becomes the status. It's a weird world out there.</p>
<p>How many bikes?</p> <p>Seven is good. A beater, a bomber, a single-speed, a touring bike, a lightish road bike, a do-all racked and bagged bike, a mixte, a loaner, and a work in progress. Seven? Make it nine.</p>	<p>How many miles, or hours?</p> <p>If you're single, unattached, working full-time, and it's summer: Twelve hours a week, don't count the miles. Married, children, job, winter in Minnesota or North Dakota: Three hours a week. Do other stuff.</p>	<p>How much touring weight?</p> <p>Weekend tour: 30lb. Weeklong tour: 45lb Month-long tour: 46lb In wet weather: Add 5 to 7lb. Carry more if you want to...but you don't <i>need</i> to. Unless you need to carry water.</p>
<p>How hard the tires?</p> <p>If you don't race: 70 psi. If the tire needs more than that to keep from bottoming out, it's too skinny. Want to be comfy, want long-lasting wheels? Ride fatter, softer.</p>	<p>How skinny the tire?</p> <p>Even racers stop at 23mm, and other than maybe some world record attempt on the track, there's no reason for anything skinnier. Non-world record attempters should ride one size bigger than the smallest size they're comfortable with.</p>	<p>How few the spokes?</p> <p>Anything less than 28 is "I'm living in fantasy land" land. If you weigh 200 to 215, 32 front and 36 rear is your min. Over that, 36 both, and wide rims, big soft tires.</p>



HERSCHEL’S BROKEN CRANK, NOT ONE WE SELL

You can look high & low till the cows come you know where & hell freezes you know what, before finding a better example of a fatigue failure.

When people look at a broken window, they blame the rock-thrower or the ball-hitter, not the window-maker. When bike parts break, they blame the part, not the rider, or not the circumstances. There’s this notion out there that no part that costs good money should ever break, but of course perfectly good parts do, sometimes after years of normal use, sometimes in an accident, and sometimes (rarely) because they’re defective.

A failure analysis expert can almost always determine why something broke and where the break originated, and how long ago it all happened. Metal doesn’t separate without writing down its history in the cross section of the failed piece.

Herschel W. was riding along and didn’t notice that his crank was cracked. For months he didn’t notice, and during that time, the broken surfaces rubbed against one another, dulling the surfaces. The gap between the surfaces increased, and the months provided the time for dirt and oxidation to discolor the metal.

When the crack had grown sufficiently, the crank cracked anew at point X in the upper left photo. Enough time elapsed for this to dirty, and all the while, the main crack was growing. Eventually the rest of the crank couldn’t shoulder the load, and it ripped apart suddenly, leaving bright, clean, crystals in the cross section.

To Herschel, it seemed to happen all of a sudden, but the crank says otherwise, and Herschel understands.

ELECTRONIC SHIFTING

Just because something has been tried and found unreliable before doesn't mean it shouldn't be tried again. If that were the case, your next cross-country business trip would be on horseback. No, make that "on foot." No, make that "a mix of lying on your back and flailing like an infant, and rolling."

So don't rule out electronic shifting just because SunTour (in partnership with Browning) and Mavic swung and missed at it in the '90s. I rode them both—the SunTour/Browning for about 20 days, and the Mavic, about 300 yards. After about a week of riding (15 hours?) it shifted whenever it felt like it. The Mavic worked fine for a few laps of the Bstone parking lot, but others must have had problems, because it didn't last. No doubt Shimano knows those failures inside and out, and learned from them.

By the time you read this, you may also have read glowing reviews of Shimano's system. It is one thing to bet against a last-gasp SunTour effort to stay alive. It's a similar thing to bet against a French effort to get an electronic drive train to market quick. But you'd have to be a nut to bet against Shimano's entry, given that they've been working on it for well over a decade, with fear of failure and a huge cultural-based fear of loss of face at stake.

On one hand, I want it to succeed, because—being a normal person, I want the

vaulter to stick the landing, and the juggler to keep on catching the fiery batons while he's riding the giraffe-like unicycle. When Shimano's electronics succeed, it will have earned all that applause by making the first ever commercially successful and reliable electronic shifting.

But here's the thing you knew was coming. I'm afraid of the consequences of a totally glitch-free Shimano Electronic Success. Shimano has always trickled down high-end technology to everything else. Then everybody else follows Shimano, and the next thing you know it's a world with no manual/cable shifting. Yes, that would be bad.

Electronic shifting, to virtually everybody except the developers, is a secret inside a black box. Every time something goes into a black box, it becomes less accessible, understandable, and scarier. If you're walking on the moor and your shoelace comes untied, you can fix it. If you're driving along the moor and your car breaks down and you know as much about cars as I do, you're out of luck. You get the picture.

Granted, if you don't know anything about bikes and you shift into the spokes, you're also out of luck. But at least you can see wuzzup, and when you can see it, your brain kicks into gear.

There's no equivalent with electronics.

If electronic shifting were a revolutionary boon to all, that would be one thing.

But Shimano's own cable shifting is so easy and so good that there's no room for a boon. For there to be room, the benefit has to be huge. Were the first electric windshield wipers a boon? I'd say yes. Was the first snowplow? Yes again. The first elevator? (Consider skyscrapers and people in wheelchairs, not just the lazy). Yes. And don't let's even talk about the first flush toilet.

But what about the electric can-openers, vegetable chopper, and carving knives? In a one-handed world, they're a Zeus-send. In a two-handed world, they downgraded to conveniences.

Racers will use electronic shifting and win on it. But what if the second place finisher is on manual, and electronic shifting actually gave the winner an advantage. Was it a fair contest?

At best, successful and totally reliable electronic shifting is racer and racing-driven race-bike progress. Mostly, riding a bike is pedaling, not shifting. At its recreational best, it's joy rides with friends. Electronic shifting won't increase the fun of that, and cable-shifting doesn't detract from it. All in all, I hope Shimano doesn't give up cables. Shimano, please don't give up cables. (I know nobody at Shimano reads this, and all in all, I give cables a decade, but I'm an optimist.)

STRUGGLES ARE BAD. EASY IS GOOD. IS TOO EASY POSSIBLE?



People have been on the warpath against work ever since one of the early homos (*habilis, erectus*) figured out sharp rocks were useful. From those stone tools (which let's see you make one in 2010!) have come the washboard and the washing machine, the abacus and the computer chip, the bicycle itself and now the electronic shifter. Do the slope lines for ease and progress ever cross? If I'm photographing Yosemite rocks on an overcast day, I can use the manualest, meterlesst

camera in the land and get good exposures. If I'm shooting Miesha wearing a beanie for the website and the photo has to go up in five minutes, I use a point-and-shoot digital.

Shifting gears in the '70s meant easing up on the pedal stroke and timing the shift to take at the weak spot. Sounds hard, but it was a cinch. Indexing was even easier, until it failed. Eletro-shifting lowers the bar even more. It's now under the surface. Is that low enough?

BROKEN SPOKES & THEIR WOBBLY WHEELS

Spokes don't break as much as they did in the '70s and earlier, because spokes got much better in the '80s, and spoke failures plummeted instantly. But not *all* spokes are good and not *all* wheels are well-built, and spokes still break. I haven't broken one in 20 years, but I've broken more than 20, and I still see & hear about snappin' spokes.

You have to know what's going on in the wheel. The left- and right-side spokes play tug-o-war with the rim, and as long as the hub has the same number of spokes on each side, and the tension is balanced (no slackers, no ultra musclemen), the wheel will run true. One loose slacker or broken spoke upsets the balance and causes a wobble. On the road, you can fix the wobble by loosening a couple of spokes on one side and tightening some on the other in the area of the wobble, but who carries a spoke wrench? And if you aren't a semi-maestro with the spoke wrench, you'll surely do more harm than good. So you can't just pack a wrench and think you're good to go.

A wobbly wheel can shake the bike, and if the wobble is huge, you won't be able to ride the wheel. On top of that, one broken spoke leads to more spoke breakages, unless you fix it. A wobbly wheel causes jerky braking. (That may seem to be an argument for disc brakes, but it is not. Disc brakes have their drawbacks, too.)

How rims stiffness affects wobble

The lighter the rim, the fewer the spokes, the greater the spoke tension, the more magnificent the wobble. A heavy, wide rim is more likely to be laterally stiff, and a stiff rim isn't thrown out of whack as much as a light one. When a broken spoke is part of the picture, touring rims do better than light racing rims.

How spoke count affects wobble

The more spokes the less dramatic the wobble when one breaks. And on that note, when the load is shared by more spokes, you're less likely to break one in the first place. All things equal, the smaller the distance between spokes, the smaller the wobble when a spoke breaks.

How spoke tension affects wobble

The higher the spoke tension, the bigger the wobble when one breaks. On top of that, the fewer the spokes the greater the tension requirements to make a strong wheel. That's why 20-spoke wheels are a bad idea.

How rim size affects wobble

A smaller rim is laterally stiffer. It's harder to twist. And for a given number of spokes, the smaller rim has a shorter spoke-to-spoke distance than a larger rim. With the same cross-section, a 32-hole 650B rim is stronger than a 36-hole 700C rim; and an even smaller 26-inch rim is stronger still. That's not a case for smaller wheels—other consideration

trump the difference in wheel strength—but it is a fact nonetheless.

Why do spokes break, and is there anything you can do to prevent it?

They break from fatigue. Fatigue comes from flex. Flex comes from looseness and stress. Most decent spokes break, when they break, at the bend where they go into the hub. A less obvious bend, only now and then but often enough to mention, is where it exits the spoke nipple. Sometimes the nipple doesn't seat well, and you get a bend there.

Modern steel spokes are about a thousand times better and stronger than the spokes of yore. Modern hollow carbon spokes aren't good.

Protecting your spokes & wheels

Ride softer tires, which absorb stresses before they reach the spokes. Softer usually means bigger usually means wider rim, and then you have all of these factors in your favor.

Conservative recommendations

Ride the widest rims you can tolerate, with as many spokes as you can stand, and protect the rim with the biggest softest tire your frame will fit.

Last Words on Spoken Brokes

They're not a big deal, and it's something every rider should experience at least once. They're easy to replace; the wheel is easily restored to new-like condition, and off you go again, smoothly.

ADDITIONAL NOTES ON SPOKES & WEIGHT

Sit down on a chair and lean your torso forward 25 degrees, so that there's about a 65-deg angle between your thigh and your 'orso. Now pull up your shirt and look at your belly. If it looks like something you'd be happy to display on your Bellybook page, then the following spoke-weight information may be useful to you. Otherwise, it is purely academic, but there's nothing wrong with that every now and then.

# of spokes	How long mm	14ga. plain	14 ga. butted	Oz. per wheel
28	292	243.6	215.6	8.6/7.6
32	292	278.4	246.4	9.8/8.7
36	292	313.2	277.2	11/9.8

The weights assume brass nipples. You save an ounce a wheel with each four-spoke subtraction.. But as you go to fewer spokes, the spokes get longer, saving you less weight; and fewer spokes creates less wind drag; but with more spokes, the spokes draft one another better. This is a problem with this kind of meaningless detail. The nonsense kicks in and it can go on forever. If you simply want strong, reliable wheels, you'll simply ride **more spokes, heavier rims, and bigger & softer tires.**



This Schwinn High Sierra (modified) rode fine with a normal bar, but when we mounted drops on a short (DirtDrop 8cm) reversed stem...it still rides fine. It seems it shouldn't. Physics can probably prove that it can't. And yet it does.

GOOFING AROUND WITH BIKES: REVERSING THE STEM

The longest stems in history were the 17cm Ritchey's, made in the early '90s for mountain bikes. The longest road stem I've heard of is a 14cm Cinelli, another available but not popular length. The normal range of road stems is 8cm to 12cm, and the big sellers here are 8cm to 10cm.

The most common *want* is an easier reach to the drop handlebar. A shorter stem is the most common way (but not necessarily the most effective way) to get it. If that doesn't work, a sweepy-back bar, such as the Albatross certainly will (in which case, use a longer stem).

Stems affect handling, but how much, and under what circumstances, and can they wreck handling or improve it? This is a good question. When you ride drop bars on super long stems, beyond 12cm, the bike steers funny, kind of slow (my opinion, since it's a feel thing). I used to think super short stems quickened steering, but the 7cm stem on my Hillborne certainly doesn't make it too quick, so I just don't know.

Ex-framebuilder Dave Moulton once said, at least I think he did, that he thought the brake levers on a bike should be directly above the front hub; and this was typically best achieved with a 9cm stem. Maybe the size of the bike affects it. I wondered how a bike would feel with a reverse stem on it, so Jay here set up this ol' Schwinn High Sierra that way.

The handling is normal. The bars are too close for me, but I could ride fifty miles like this, because it feels less odd than it looks. It makes me want to experiment more, but it's a time-consuming experiment.

This may come in handy for somebody, and in any case, it is nice to know that reversing the stem to bring the bars closer doesn't guarantee odd handling. I suppose if you had super long legs and a short torso and arms and wanted drop handlebars and couldn't afford a custom bike and didn't mind well-meaning strangers pointing out the mistake in set-up, then this might be a solution. As it is, I think it's just interesting to know that it causes no harm.

FREDDIE HOFFMAN

PEDALING FOR OTHERS, PEDALING FOR HIS LIFE

by Gary Boulanger

Cyclers can be divided into those who know about Freddie Hoffman and those who don't. We covered him many many issues ago, and it was time for an update. Gary knows Freddie, and was the right guy for the job. —Grant

A typical American cyclist rides when it's convenient for his or her schedule, and usually just on the weekends with friends. The equipment is often new, serviced by the local bike shop. Discussion centers around work, family, bills to pay, vacations taken, the economy, and politics.

For Freddie Hoffman, the bicycle is more important. It's almost all he has. The 51-year-old janitor from River Edge, New Jersey was born oxygen deprived, and as a consequence, suffered severe learning and basic comprehension loss. Local educators wrote him off as a lost cause, but it was his mother's determination to teach her son how to speak, walk, read, and enjoy a quality of life many take for granted. She was his advocate.

Ruth Elizabeth Hoffman's dedication to Freddie included the gift of a tricycle when he was five, and the dark haired child immediately set off on a path that would not only save his life, it would later gain him access to all lower 48 United States and meetings with more than 30 state governors.

But it took him a million miles to get there first. This is Freddie Hoffman's story.

Life Saver

Freddie, one of two children, was a social outcast in every sense of the ugly label. He never had a friend come to his house after school, never enjoyed a sleep over, never dated a girl, nor enjoyed the childhood like most of us did. The bicycle was his outlet, and his five-year-old legs intuitively carried him the third of a mile around his tear-dropped New Jersey neighborhood, up to 15 miles a day, according to his logbook. He's kept meticulous track of his daily mileage in a several dog-eared notebooks. He may have a one-track mind, but his ironclad attention to detail is astounding, as is his endurance.

He racked up 3,000 by the time he was 7 years old, graduating to a Schwinn StingRay. He did his first century when he was 10, proceeding to do 18 more that year.

In time, his legs, lungs and heart were conditioned like an elite athlete's, but his mind was still abnormal, a condition he's accepted.

He learned how to maintain his own bike at an early age, from a father who worked in the automotive repair business after

wrenching on airplanes during World War II. Freddie is quite proud of his late father, who was strict but fair. The elder Hoffman was part of the team which installed the turbo boosters on B-25 Mitchell airplanes for Jimmy Doolittle's infamous Doolittle Raid on Japan in 1942. While Freddie's mother was the one who worked hard to help him read, write and run, Freddie's father gave him wings to fly, allowing the youngster to venture out beyond their River Edge neighborhood.



Freddie's Herculean efforts on the bicycle didn't go unnoticed in cycling mad New Jersey. Mike Fraysse, who was team manager of the 1976 and 1984 Olympic cycling teams, gave Freddie two Paris-Sports bicycles, one for criterium racing and one for the track. The former racer saw potential in the young cyclist, and encouraged Freddie to race.

Without any formal training, Freddie finished third in his first road race, but his slower way of processing things and one-track mind didn't mesh with the need to judge a race situation as it unfolds. So Fraysse suggested time trialing.

Freddie and his father drove to Wisconsin in 1985 for the United States Cycling Federation (USCF) national time trial championships, where Freddie finished ninth behind Kent Bostick. He still has the yellow road bike and blue track bike in his New Jersey basement.

To the Moon and Back

Most of the world watched Neil Armstrong land on the moon on July 20, 1969. Freddie was captivated by that moment, and was determined to pedal the equivalent mileage between the earth and moon – 239,592 miles each way – on his bicycle. For 17 years he rode for himself, compiling mileage that would humble Eddy Merckx or any pro racer who's ever lived.

As Freddie's bicycle trips gained distance, it was important to do proper planning and map them out. He used basic Esso gas station maps, always taking the roads less traveled to reach his destination, a practice he uses today.

Then his world turned upside down in 1986, the year his mother, Ruth E., died from leukemia.

Freddie felt indebted to his mother, and wanted to honor her memory in the only way he knew how, by riding his bike. He or



The Dataman likes instruments, and keys.

ganized a solo fundraising ride with all proceeds going to the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, Freddie style.

He worked as a custodian for a local church, and had flexibility in his work schedule. Attempts to work in local bike shops only led to failure because most shop owners couldn't handle his slow and methodical work style. In the late winter and spring, he would ride his bike upwards of 15,000 miles, going door-to-door, collecting pledges for miles ridden on trips westward. He christened his bicycle "Ruth E.," and rode west.

His mileage during the 1980s was colossal: nearly 507,000 miles. That amounts

to nearly 139 miles per day. He caught the attention of local television stations in the early 1990s, right around the time the movie *Forrest Gump* was popular. By then, Freddie resembled the actor Gary Sinise, who played Lieutenant Dan in the movie, as video taken from that era shows. His New Jersey accent, coupled with

an occasional stutter and almost Elmer Fudd lilt, made him an endearing hero to many, but his solo effort continued, and his fame didn't really spread beyond New Jersey or his local Leukemia & Lymphoma Society chapter. Freddie rode on, continuing to rack up the mileage, while raising an average of \$25,000 a year for the chapter.

The Bikes

Freddie customized his bike to fit his needs. Eschewing a standard road position – and something he's not deviated from since – he modified his bike with steel Wald swept-back touring bars, front

and rear racks with panniers, horns, generator lights, bar-end shifters, black foam 'mattress' touring saddle, fenders, and a gaggle of gadgets on the bars, including the same Japanese odometer he's used since his StingRay days.

Sitting nearly stock straight, Freddie's legs propel his bike – weighing upwards of 100 pounds with necessary gear to ride across the country self supported – with a spin Polish cycling coach Eddie Borysewicz (Eddie B.) called the smoothest he's ever seen. This, from a man who's coached Greg LeMond, Rebecca Twigg and a host of superstar cyclists.

In the summer of 1994, the head tube cracked on Freddie's Schwinn Voyageur – Ruth E. II (see sidebar). He called Richard Schwinn, co-owner of Waterford Precision Cycles in southeastern Wisconsin and this chance meeting led to a Waterford sponsorship. Waterford build him a stout frame to carry his stout body and stout, 100-pound load. For three decades, he's ridden these miles with 100 lbs.

In 1996, Freddie showed up at the Waterford factory, where I was working as Rivendell's production coordinator. A chainstay on Freddie's bike needed repair. I, like many, had never heard of Freddie, who was referred to as 50,000-a-year Freddie by then. Grant asked me to grab a quick interview, which appeared in an early Rivendell Reader. I, like Richard and the others at the factory, were equally impressed and perplexed with this New Jersey cyclist with a memory like an encyclopedia. We said goodbyes as Freddie rolled off west.

A Million Miles

Freddie pedaled his millionth mile in Last Chance, Colorado on August 8, 1996. He was alone, as he has been for more than 45 years as a cyclist. His accomplishments have garnered personal accolades from Presidents Bush and Clinton, 30-plus governors, and a legion of fans, thanks to articles in *Bicycling*.

But Freddie never set out on this journey for himself. His fastidious approach to raising funds and awareness for several causes, including the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, Alzheimer's Association, and a Native American school out west, have benefitted thousands, many of



It was a bummer to learn Freddie pedals well over 300 pounds of body and gear (only part of which is shown here) on a 28mm front tire—a size we recommend only for lightweights.

whom he's never met, many of whom have become his friend. I've seen the photo albums bulging with evidence.

All told, Freddie has raised more than \$1 million for various charities, living on a part-time janitor's salary. His effort amounts to nearly a dollar a mile.

His Secret?

Freddie's everyday gear doubles as his cycling gear: cotton t-shirt when it's warm, with polyester gym shorts and K-Mart athletic running shoes. A well-worn and faded yellow light windbreaker with an old Trek sticker is his jacket of choice. He wears an orange/gold Giro helmet, and when it gets cold he adds cotton sweatpants and worker's cotton gloves. He doesn't wear protective eyewear, and does all his maintenance in his one-stall garage, where his parents' bikes are stored on the wall behind a boat and other items.

He maintains his bikes often, squeezing out every ounce of performance, and builds his own wheels. He doesn't waste anything, as evident by the old dish towels and t-shirts he uses to wipe everything around the garage and inside his home. His tiny workspace spills out onto the broken asphalt driveway, where he props the garage door with a pole. He flips the bike on its bars and seat, setting the bars on a wooden block. Zip ties, rubber bands and bread ties hold many things in place.

His diet consists of whatever food he wants. His 5'9" frame is carrying about 215 pounds, and he's been known to lose 30 or so pounds during his summer trips across the country. He enjoys

pasta and rice, and realizes, like many of us, when the cold, winter months roll around he tends to overeat. He's also a calorie-burning machine.

The Future?

His father died from Alzheimer's in 2007. Freddie dedicated four years to caring for his ailing father in the four-bedroom, red brick cape cod, cutting back on his training.

I was Freddie's first visitor since his father died, and the cluttered home groans from more than 50 years of accumulated memories, much in the form of memorabilia and hobbies from past years. Freddie is thinking of selling the house his father built in 1954 and moving to Charlotte, South Carolina to live near his cousins.

Freddie regaled me with stories from his travels. He never had a bike stolen, and usually stayed at campgrounds or hotels along the way. As his financial supporters grew with his fame, he often stayed at their homes. A highlight of the past few years was meeting childhood hero Neil Armstrong in Dayton, Ohio during the 100th anniversary celebration of the Wright Brothers first flight in 2003.

Freddie has never flown in a plane or driven a car.

Freddie Hoffman remains The Soloist, churning the pedals at 80 rpm, always riding. He may be a square peg in a round-hole world, but his accomplishments are the stuff of legend, something few of us can fathom. 🚲

ANOTHER SIDE OF FREDDIE

Once you know Freddie has a learning disability *and* has pedaled more than you and your five most pedaly friends have combined, it's easy to think he's got nothing else going on, so he rides. Wrong. Freddie is a human thunderegg.

Telephone conversations with Freddie tend to be long, because he's loquacious. Last Spring I called and asked if he could arrange a photo for the story, and once he said yes, the conversation got interesting. I found out this—edited to fit the space, and with some of the humbleness removed:

- Freddie saved his cousin's life. His cousin had a heart attack, and Freddie applied CPR for 11 minutes, called the ambulance, and pedaled to the hospital. Recovery time was about a month. Freddie assured the doctors he could take care of his cousin in his cousin's home without a professional home care provider. He cared for his father for four years, so this was nothing.

- He described in detail the surgical procedure performed on his cousin's heart. He uses big words in proper context (at least, I assume it was—I could barely follow the conversation).

- Freddie's out of pocket costs on his trips are covered by a charitable contribution to the Leukemia-Lymphoma Society,

for whom he raises about \$60,000 per year. He says, "After a day of riding in 95°F with 85 percent humidity, I want air conditioning and a shower." He stays in the cheapest hotels he can find, and will spend \$100 only if he gets into town late and nothing else is available.

- He shoots film, not digital, and has a technical vocabulary.

- He owns five pair of binoculars, with different powers for different conditions, and knows binoculars inside and out. He has what he describes as "a passing interest in astronomy," but talks in depth about the atmosphere on Jupiter, the moons of Saturn, the width and thickness of Saturn's rings, the speed of radio waves and the time it takes for them to go from here to there, and the Cassini spacecraft. I like astronomy, and I've read more books about it than Freddie has, but he seems to have heard many facts about the cosmos, and doesn't seem to have forgotten any.

- Meteorology (weather) is also a fascination. Freddie is interested in the natural world, and learns about it. Since he lives on his bike, I'm sure it serves him well. -GP

FREDDIE'S TWO BIKES

Freddie's Wet Weather Bike



1975 Schwinn Collegiate 5 speed, made in Chicago

Crank: Schwinn Ashtabula one-piece steel crankset, 46t

Pedals: Platform rubber block

Rims: 26 x 1-3/8-inch steel

Tires: Schwinn 26 x 1-3/8-inch

Handlebar: Wald steel

Stem: Forged steel, probably Wald

Shifter: Stem-mounted Schwinn Single-Stik shifter

Rear brake: Sturmey-Archer hub

Front brake: Schwinn-approved sidepull

Front generator: Union

Saddle: Black foam mattress cheapy

Accessories: Front and rear VistaLites blinkies

Original Japanese speedometer/odometer

Air Zound & Rubber squeeze horns

SKS silver plastic fenders

Freddie's Main Bike (Ruthie E. IV)

58cm 2001 Waterford 1900, Reynolds 531 fork

Crank: 1989 Campagnolo Euclid, 170mm arms, 49/38/26

Pedals: Specialized with plastic toe clips

Rear Wheel: Mavic A719 rim; Phil 40H rear; Avocet Cross II 700x32c tire

Front Wheel: Mavic A719 rim, Mavic 36Hhub, Avocet Cross 700x28 tire

Handlebar: Wald steel tourist handlebars

Stem: 90mm forged steel stem

Shifters: SunTour friction bar-end shifters

Freewheel: Shimano 14-28 6-speed

Derailleurs: Shimano Deore F; Deore LX R

Brakes: Shimano cantis, Dia-Compe levers

Headset: Campagnolo 1-in. threaded

Accessories: Greenfield kickstand clamped directly to the chainstays

Steel seatpost with no setback; shimmed to fit seat tube with reversed clamp

SKS black plastic fenders with custom front flap

Bemis digital temperature and humidity gauge,

Archer Road Patrol radio on the down tube

Sigma cyclometer

Union front generator headlight

GrabOn foam handlebar covers

Air Zound air horn, Rubber squeeze horn

Axiom rear rack bag

Old Man Mountain custom front and rear racks

Original Japanese speedometer/odometer

Front and rear VistaLite lights

Black foam comfort saddle

Zefal hpX3 frame pump



Freddie Hoffman pedaled his one millionth mile on his first Waterford 1900 (Ruth E. III), which was destroyed by car in 1999. His latest 1900, built in 2001, was built with Reynolds air-hardened 853 steel, silver brazed to Henry James lugs and dropouts. The fork is made from Reynolds 531 blades, with a Henry James fork crown and dropouts, with cantilever studs. He has ridden more than 200,000 miles on the yellow Ruth E. IV.

RICHARD SCHWINN & FREDDIE HOFFMAN

Freddie called me on a Monday in early July 1994. He had just found a crack in the head tube of his Schwinn Voyageur (also known as Ruthie II, after his mother). He called to see if we would fix it. I told him that we generally didn't work on Schwinn because we were too expensive for the basic Schwinn owner.

He was his usual persistent self, and I finally told him that we'd have to see the frame in order to work on it. He was calling from Pennsylvania, so I suggested that he box it up and send it to our Wisconsin factory so we could look at it. Then he explained that he was already on a tour. I suggested that he better get home before something ugly happened, adding that since it was a vertical crack, maybe several hose clamps would hold things together until he got home. I hung up and forgot all about him.

Thursday afternoon, Freddie rolls up to our front door on his Voyageur, hose clamps and all. I did the math: -- 3 days, 800 miles -- and Freddie was ready to get started tearing down his bike and getting it fixed. Our ace framebuilder John Sotherland worked on the bike while Freddie told me his story.

He was riding to raise money for the Leukemia Society, something he did every year in memory of his mother, who died of the disease. I learned all about the Freddie story: how he was born with about 30 percent of his cerebral matter dead; how he could barely walk by the age of 4 or 5; how he discovered at age 7 that he could ride a bicycle, which he rode for hours around the cul de sac in front his house (essentially a 150-foot circuit) for hours on end; how he spread his range such that

for most of his life, he was riding 50,000 miles a year, year in and year out.

By the time of his visit, he'd ridden 900,000 miles and had the logs to prove it.

Freddie shows all signs of being a savant. He says there's no way he can operate a computer. It's totally beyond him. Then he'll launch into a totally lucid description about how cystic fibrosis progresses at a molecular level. One thing I found quite remarkable about Freddie is his sense of symbolism and the meaning everything he encountered had in his life. Though at times he sounds like a religious skeptic, I've met few people with his spiritual intensity and his sense of personal meaning.

It took us until Saturday to get the repair complete and to send him on his way. We were just developing our 1900 model, the Adventure Cycle, so it seemed like if there was ever a rider more deserving of a sponsorship, Freddie was the man. I asked him to write down what he wanted in a bike so we could build it for him. It took a couple of months to get it, but I received a four-page, hand-written letter filled with technical details of what he wanted. In all those pages, he'd crossed out only three letters.

In one of our many long conversations, he told me one of his dreams. He said, "One of these days I'm going to have a big party to give thanks to you for all your help and I'm going to present you with the chainrings from my millionth mile." He waxed on for 20 minutes on the details of the celebration: all the people he'd invite, how we'd be sitting together at the head table and

so on. It sounded like yet another scene out of Forrest Gump. No shrimp boats though.

Over the winter, we built Ruthie III for him, which he was riding when he reached his millionth mile a year-and-a-half later. He was somewhere in the middle of nowhere, west of the Mississippi.

At 183,000 miles on Ruthie III he had his big first accident, totally tearing up himself and his bike. He could only do 28,000 miles the following year (1999) while we built Ruthie IV, which he's been on for more than 200,000 miles. I'm proud not only that it's got more miles than any other Waterford we've built, it's got more miles than any bike Freddie owns. It may even be more miles than any single bike has ever been ridden, though I've never researched the topic.

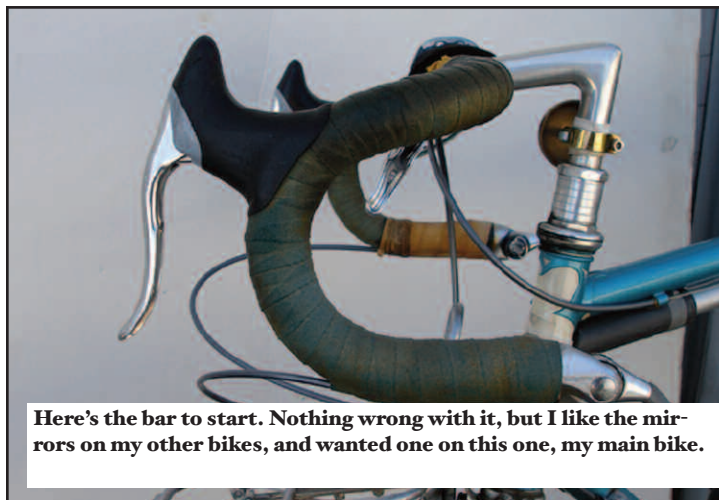
Oh yeah, and 10 years after we met, Freddie invited me to his town in northern New Jersey. The Chamber of Commerce was honoring him for all his fundraising work. There were 250 people there - quite a feat! There, in front of all those people, just like in his dream, he took the opportunity to give me those chain rings, mounted on a marble plaque with his trading cards and all.

Fred's been one of the great inspirations in my life at a level you just can't imagine.

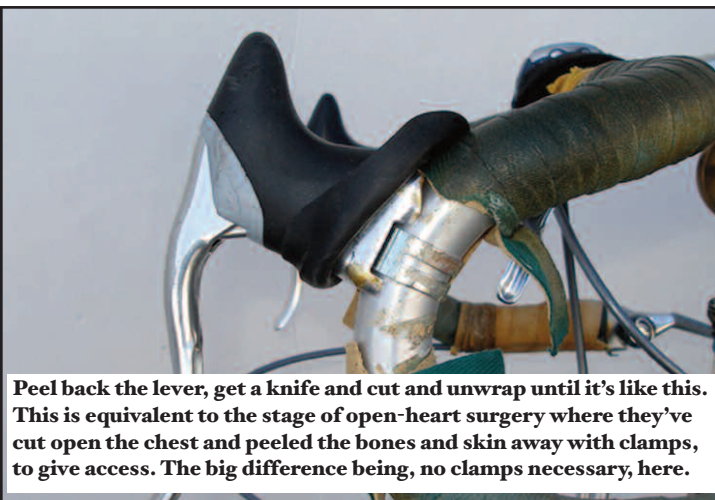
- Richard Schwinn,
Waterford, Wisconsin, April 4, 2009

THE MAKE - DO MECHANIC

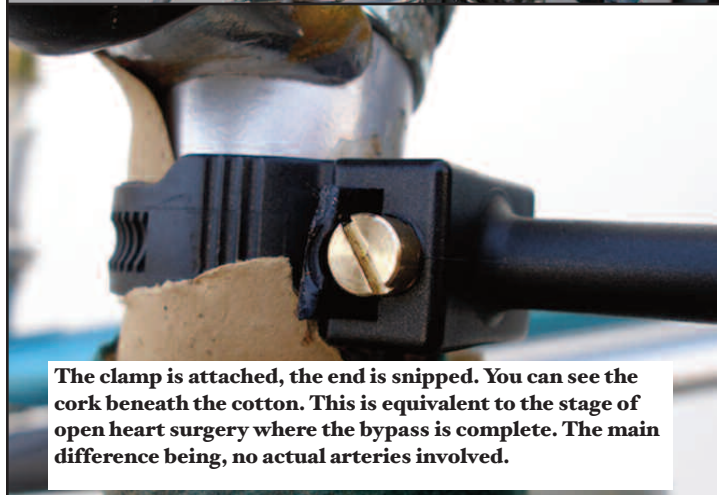
We as much as anybody and more than any of you (well...) are fans of the clever, tidy, elegant solution (to add to the cliché); and when we assemble your bike, we go to extreme lengths to find them. But when a problem presents itself on our own bikes, the winning solution is usually the quick-n-dirty one, as this impromptu March 23 survey shows.



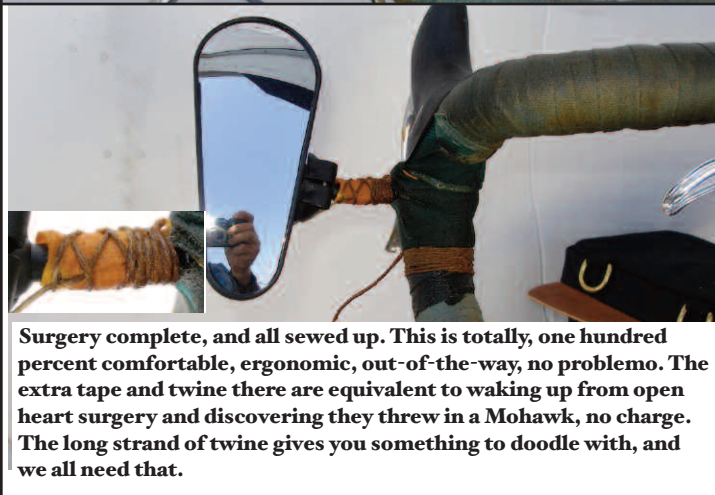
Here's the bar to start. Nothing wrong with it, but I like the mirrors on my other bikes, and wanted one on this one, my main bike.



Peel back the lever, get a knife and cut and unwrap until it's like this. This is equivalent to the stage of open-heart surgery where they've cut open the chest and peeled the bones and skin away with clamps, to give access. The big difference being, no clamps necessary, here.



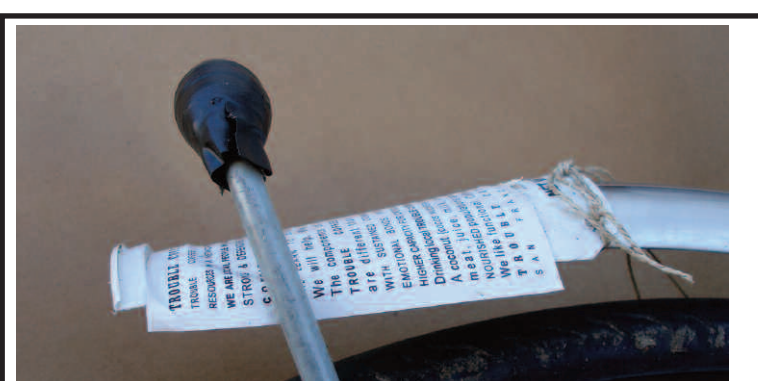
The clamp is attached, the end is snipped. You can see the cork beneath the cotton. This is equivalent to the stage of open heart surgery where the bypass is complete. The main difference being, no actual arteries involved.



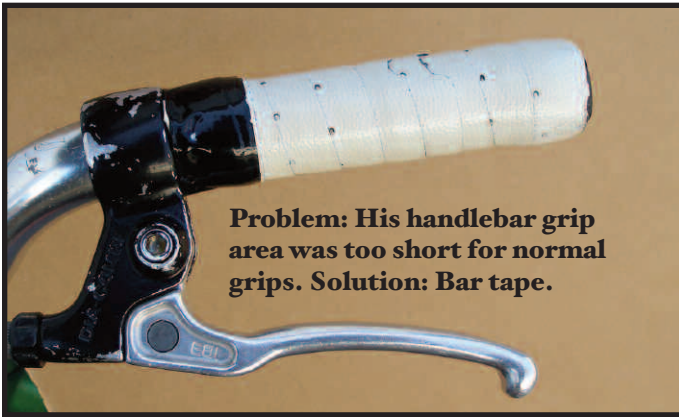
Surgery complete, and all sewed up. This is totally, one hundred percent comfortable, ergonomic, out-of-the-way, no problemo. The extra tape and twine there are equivalent to waking up from open heart surgery and discovering they threw in a Mohawk, no charge. The long strand of twine gives you something to doodle with, and we all need that.



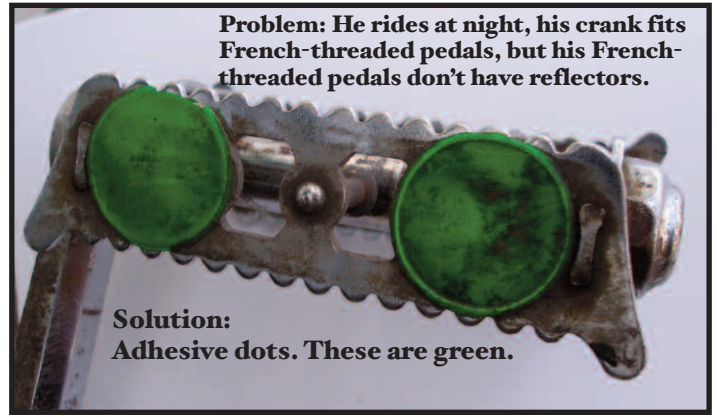
Problem: The thermos didn't fit the water bottle cage, so how does he keep his coffee hot?
Solution: Cut the top and bottom off a large water bottle, slip the thermos in. The rubber band is there...for looks.



Problem or challenge: Vaughn's fender wasn't long enough in front. He wanted a few extra inches.
Solution: He cut up a plastic yogurt container and put a local coffee shop advertisement on it, and secured it with twine to two holes in the fender. This is about as low as we go around here.



Problem: His handlebar grip area was too short for normal grips. **Solution:** Bar tape.



Problem: He rides at night, his crank fits French-threaded pedals, but his French-threaded pedals don't have reflectors.

Solution: Adhesive dots. These are green.



Problem: His plastic Simplex down tube shifters broke, and his bars (on this old, low-end Peugeot) didn't have enough room for thumb shifters, and wouldn't accept bar-end shifters.

Solution: He mounted SunTour shifters to the Simplex clamp.



Problem: His rims are drilled for Schrader valves, but he lives a presta-valve life.

Solution: He used a valve that didn't fit the hole. Too small. He should have or could have wrapped the hole-height of the valve with tape to fill in the gap, but the no-tape method works as long as the tire pressure's high enough.



Problem: He "shifted" his fender rearward to give more coverage back there, but it left a gap on this other end.

Solution: He happened to have an old fender scrap he could use, but just as easily could have cut up a water bottle, or used the remainder of the yogurt cup Vaughn used for his front-fender extension.

Robert - Problem: He shoulders his bike a lot in cyclo-cross and taking the bike up long flights of stairs. The pump inside the main triangle would get in the way, would get pushed out.



Solution: A pump clip mounted to the seat tube. The business end of the pump nests in the crook of the chainstay-seatstay-dropout. It holds fast.



Vaughn's version uses LED light bracket and hardware found around the shop.

THIS FELLOW INVENTED THE WORD “BLOG”



Peter Merholz

Friend Gino and I were talking, and the conversation led to him telling me, “A friend of mine coined the term “blog.” One thing led to another and here’s the story. Peter Merholz is his name. Take it away, Peter..

Around May 1999, I was among a small group of people who published what were then called “weblogs.” We were link scavengers, annotating the web one site at a time. On a lark, I placed in the sidebar of my site, “I’ve decided to pronounce the word “weblog” as wee’- blog. Or “blog” for short.”

Among my internet friends at the time were the good folks at Pyra Labs. Their business was building software for project management, but, on a lark, over a weekend they built the first version of a weblog publishing tool. They called it “Blogger.” And as the success of their tool grew, and the web genre that it supported, my word entered the common parlance. In 2000, The New Yorker published an article titled “You’ve Got Blog,” and I knew the word had arrived. By 2004, it was selected as “Word of the Year” by Merriam-Webster. —Peter

REVISITING *BEAUSAGE*

It’s pronounced byoo-sij, not “bow-sawzh,” and it’s beauty through usage. It’s not patina. Patina usually refers to environmental degradation of metal that happens without use. Age and environment may contribute to beausage, but beausage requires use. Beausage happens in high quality things generally made of natural materials; in high quality goods suffering for you but staying in the game. Sun-baked plastic and worn out polyester don’t have beausage.

Old boots and blue jeans do. An old hatchet handle, or pocket knife, or wear marks on an old camera are beausage. Beausage isn’t dangerous. A the crack in an axe handle is not beausage. The darkening and polishing of the axe handle’s wood is.

Beausage makes things look better than new.

Here are some place it can show up on a bike:

Tires that have been ridden in the mud and maybe quickly but not fastidiously cleaned.

Leather saddles darkened with lubrication and cracked with age, yes. Cracked vinyl saddles, no.

Crank arms polished by shoes.

Rims that show brake pad marks.

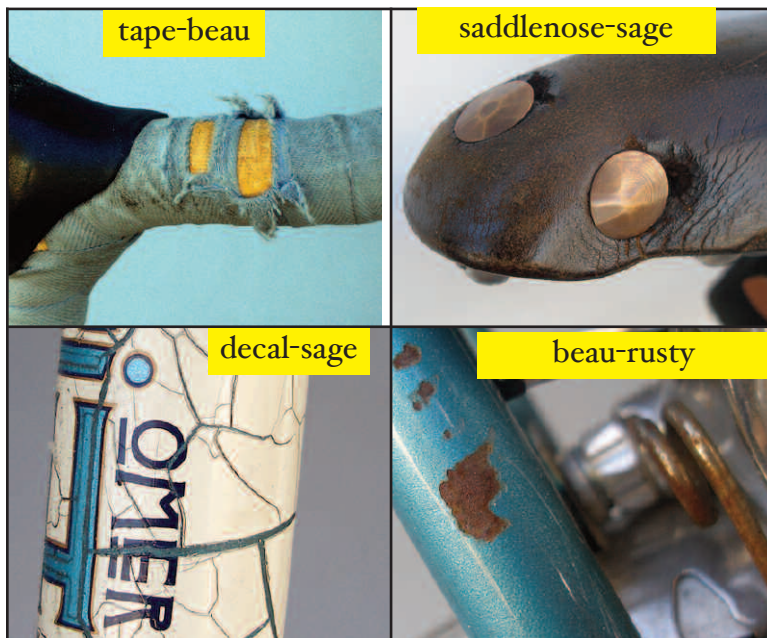
Bar tape that’s fraying and faded.

Superficial scratches in the paint, torn decals.

Chromed baskets rusty at the bends.

Bike bags faded and dirty, and curled leather straps with buckle-marks.

Beausage is a useful concept that can help cure you of an obsession to keep the bike spic-n-span. Use it, don’t abuse it, and you’ll get beausage, not abusage. Remember, it’s pronounced byoo-sij; rhymes with blue midge, goo-ridge. Get it out there in the air.



GETTING CARS TO SCOOCH OVER; AND HELMETS

There's an old bicycle-safety saw that says "be predictable," but it's not a slam dunk. Your first task is to stay alive, and *un*predictability can help.

When you're riding on a bike trail and there's a wobbly child on a bike ahead of you—or an unleashed puppy or toddler, you're extra careful passing, because it's unpredictable.

When drivers aren't sure what the cyclist was going to do, they were more careful around them. Wouldn't you be more careful driving around a wobbly rider?

British psychologist, cyclist, and traffic researcher Ian Walker has done the most comprehensive studies to date on how motorists and cyclists interact, and he says motorists give more space to helmetless riders, women, and riders in civilian clothing.

He speculates that unhelmeted riders get more space because drivers figure helmeted riders are more experienced, and less likely to swerve or freak out when they pass close.

Maybe women get more space because they're seen as more vulnerable, or society will hate you more if you hit one. Maybe it's the "women driver" stereotype. Maybe guys don't want to be scolded by a woman for passing close; or maybe female drivers like to see other women out there on bikes, and don't want to do anything to scare one of their own.

The Safety Swerve & Saliva to the rescue?

As you're riding down the road and you notice a car coming up about two or three seconds back, wiggle a bit, or swerve just for an instant out toward the car lane. Don't do it so close to the car that you'll shock the driver, don't do it if there are cars coming toward both of you in the other lane, and don't try this if you aren't the captain of your bike. Or, if you're uncomfortable with the Safety Swerve, give yourself

a little shake, as though you're shaking out the stiffness and are totally unaware that you're in traffic. Or spit to the left, but not at a car. You may not be the spittin' type, but understand the spirit of this notion, and tailor it to your own situation. Spitting too late and too high at a car full of thugs is not "tailoring" it properly.

As for the civilian clothes: It must be that riders in civilian clothing are, like unhelmeted riders, regarded as less serious and less predictable. Maybe drivers identify more with people who wear the same kinds of clothing they do, and dislike those who don't. Xenophobia kept our ancestors from making friends with the predatory animals and unfriendly tribes. Just because a guy's behind the wheel of a car doesn't mean he's completely free of those ancient tendencies.

Helmet note that is not anti-helmet, but could be easily twisted to seem that way

Helmets and bike safety are always part of the same discussion, as they should be. Helmets are one of the more complicated, divisive topics in bikedom, on par with health care and the war. On the wear-your-helmet side, there's no denying that styrofoam between head and pavement helps in a hit, and that is one powerful argument.

But it is not the only argument in town. Statistics tell us that whenever helmet use is mandated, bicycle use plummets, and when there are fewer riders, there's less rider awareness from drivers. And then there's the controversial notion of risk-compensation: The tendency for a person to take more risks when using safety equipment.

If you wear a helmet, wear it level and correctly, and as much as you can, pretend that you're not wearing it at all.

FENDING OFF FIDO

If a dog chases you and you can't escape it —

1. Look it right in the face and shout like you're the boss.
2. Spray with water from your bottle.
3. Use loud air-horns right in their face; and dog-spray.
4. If you're off the bike, use your bike as a shield.
5. Climb. I had to climb up a big cement fence post once to escape two dogs who would've gotten me otherwise. A guy in a truck stopped to shoo the dogs away, and barely made it back into his car before they got him. The whole thing is: Dogs can't climb, and you'd better be able to. Onto a car, even.

The classic dog-fender offer is a frame pump. I don't know of anybody who's ever actually bonked bowser with one, but it's comforting to have. When it's between a small-brained animal with big canine teeth and you, a little spray can even the odds. For the record. Nobody loves their dog as much as I love mine, so don't write and say I'm anti-animal.

Consider this, too: If it's a little nipper or an old grizzled dog acting out his final fantasy, go easy, even play along. But if you have a big fresh dog biting your loins or your face, you're dealing with its inner wolf, so use your inner monkey-man.

A MODERN PRESIDENTIAL HISTORY OF THE ROAD BIKE

Top song/artist:

1969: Aquarius/ The Fifth Dimension
 1970: Bridge Over Troubled Water/ Simon & Garfunkle
 1971: Joy to the World/Three Dog Night
 1972: American Pie/Don McLean
 1973: Killing Me Softly With His Song/ Roberta Flack

And the Oscar went to:

1969: *Midnight Cowboy*
 1970: *Patton*
 1971: *The French Connection*
 1972: *The Godfather*
 1973: *The Sting*

Economic factoids:

Average income: \$9,400
 Ave. house: \$21,300
 Gallon-o-gas: \$0.36



Richard Nixon

1969-1974

Headlines: Vietnam • Watergate • Roe v. Wade
Typical rider age: preteens; then teens post E.D.
Most bikes made in: US, France, England
Most bikes cost: \$65 to \$170
Popular brands: Schwinn, Peugeot, Raleigh
Frame materials/construction: Lugged steel, or the Schwinn way (still mysterious). No TIG
What's new in bikes?: Ten-speeds were new. Drop

bars, gears, and so on.

What bike-thing or event shaped the future?: The first EARTH DAY in 1970. Teenagers were sick of Vietnam, scared of the draft, most had missed hippie-dom, and Earth Day filled a need to do something for themselves before going to college or war. In the mid-'60s, nobody over 12 bought or rode bikes. Earth Day "required" kids to get to school motorless, and kids complied, and got reintroduced to bikes in the bargain. Many E.D. participants continued to ride bikes and as they aged, split into new markets. Today, old guys who start riding bikes are influenced by same-aged riders who got into it on the first few Earth Days.

The Nixon-Agnew era road bike was a general-purpose bike with ten speeds & drop handlebars. You could put a rack & fenders on it, and tires up to 35mm. It could handle any road, any weather, commutes, and short, local tours. These days we'd call it a "Country bike," just so it wouldn't get lumped in with truly unversatile road bikes. But back before the age of bike categorization, it was just a ten speeder, and you rode it where you wanted to go.

The frame was usually carbon steel, which on the totem pole of bicycle steels is a notch below the chrome-molybdenum (CrMo) steel used on the bikes only rich kids or racers could afford. Most frames were made of thick-walled high carbon steel tubes and weighed seven or eight pounds. This grade of steel starts out weaker but are always thicker to compensate. The thickness plus the metal itself means the tubes can take more heat with less degradation, and the post-brazed/welded strength is plenty sufficient for any kind of riding.

Racers and other high-end bike aficionados turned up their noses at NoCrMo steel, but the bikes held up and for the most part continue to hold

up. They weren't pounded for 10,000 miles a year, but to make up for that, were often dismounted on the fly, or carried another person on the rack in back.

(About twenty years ago when Huff was still in flower, I was at a Shimano event and riding a shuttle bus and talking with a top Huff fellow. I forget exactly how the conversation got steered this way, but he said, "Our customers don't respect their bikes and so they treat them like #@&*!. They may not be chome-moly and what-not, but let me tell you—they take a beating and they hold up!")

Back in the pre-'80s there were lots of cheap & poorly executed artistic touches to make the bikes look fancier: Thin, semi-fancy chrome caps affixed to plain fork crowns to give them a "fancy, high-end" look from across the street; chromed lower seat stays, chain stays, and fork blades; painted panels, and head tubes; pin-striping, head badges fastened with rivets, and I'd even say glorious graphics. It was as if the staff graphic artist went to town, but then the staff bean counter dumbed down the execution to fit the budget. I'd say there's an opposite approach going on today, with more effort applied to things outside the

bike—distribution, marketing, promotion, and sometimes brilliant paint, but zero details.

When those ten speeds were all over, and especially once you were exposed to better bikes, they were easy to denigrate. Now that they're gone and their equivalent priced replacements are fat, loud, and detail-free, it's easy to get swoon over their skinny tubes and interesting artistic details, even if the execution wasn't all that fine. Cheap bikes have always copied expensive ones, and but most of today's expensive bikes are poor role models for today's cheapies. They could learn something about art from the old cheapies. (We do what we can, and I'm proud of the way our bikes look, but the graphics and details—not execution—on a 1963 J.C. Higgins beats our bikes hands down.)

Those were the road bikes of the Nixon years. The bike market consisted mainly of sting-rays and other one-speeds, with a few three-speeds and only the rare ten-speed. Couples in their thirties and forties bought bikes for their pre-teen children, expecting those children would quit riding when they became teenagers, because that's what teenagers did.

The First Earth Day Influence: Not to be underestimated, by a long shot

A seminal (seminal: “of, relating to, or consisting of seed or semen”) evolutionary event was the first Earth Day: April 22, 1970. It may be a stretch to suggest without Earth Day, the bicycle world as we know it today wouldn’t exist, but it wouldn’t be much of a stretch—and I happen to believe it.

A bicycle industry would exist, of course, but it wouldn’t be the one we know. Maybe old guys wouldn’t ride bikes. Maybe something else would have kick-started it in another direction; we just don’t know.

The first Earth Day got tens of thousands of non-cycling teenagers back on bikes for at least that day. All of them aged, and many never stopped riding. Maybe you’re one of them. But even if you’re not, you probably owe your reintroduction to bicycles back to Earth Day, 1970, because you must have been influenced by Earth Day participants or those influenced by them.

Earth Day 1970 was the first Green Day, and it came on the heels of race riots, the Vietnam War, Watergate & Tricky Dick, and growing environmental concerns and a highly publicized oil spill—all of which miffed peaceniks. They were ready for something positive to celebrate and defend, and the environment was it, so Earth Day—which was all about positive solutions anybody could take part in and not negative problems none of us could influence—was warmly received. The bicycle connection was that school kids all around the country were told to get to school and around in general without motors. It was a bigger deal then than it seems now, because in 1970, teenagers didn’t ride bikes. (If you were the exception, allow yourself a proud, private moment, and please don’t write demanding a retraction—because the statement is largely true.)

If kids didn’t have a bike for Earth Day, they bought or borrowed one. Participation was high, and many of you took part. In 1970 I was a sophomore in a high school of 1600. Before ED (still Earth Day, the seminal event, not the unseminal ED) only one kid at my high school of 1600, Mike Busbee, rode his bike to school. But on Earth Day at

least 400 more did, and at least 200 continued to for the rest of the year and the next two years that I attended. The percentage of repeat customers in my school may have been higher than average, but all over the country, ED got teenagers on bikes again, and many of never got off. It is key to everything that’s happened since.

Earth Day led to new companies and a revitalized industry that now catered to teenagers who wanted bikes with gears and racks, suitable for riding not just to school but most places a car used to take them. Bikes such as these were always available, but they were considered too expensive and largely too large for kids, so they were hard or impossible to find in Joe Blow’s Bike-Lock-Key-and Mower Shop.

Schwinn Varsity sales skyrocketed. At \$80 each, they were affordable, and they lasted forever. Varsity riders graduated to the Peugeot UO-8 riders (\$95), and Raleigh Supercourse (\$100 or so). These Euro-brands introduced riders to other bikes from France, Italy, and England, and to a better (fancier) world of components. Bicycle riding is an equipment-intensive sport (unlike, for instance, body surfing or basketball), and I think we’d all agree that to a certain extent, passion for parts fuels passion for riding. The ball was rolling furiously, picking up influences and gathering momentum along the way, branching out here and there.

Six years later, in 1976, there were several thousand bike riders in their teens and twenties ready to ride the first Bikecentennial tour across the country. Six years earlier, no chance. This new and huge interest in touring spawned dozens of companies specializing in bags, racks, panniers, mirrors, shoes, helmets, and clothing. Many of them are still around (Blackburn, Cannondale), many had a nice run and folded or were absorbed into other companies (Eclipse, Rhode Gear, Blackbottoms).

At the same time and at the same rate, the bicycling media exploded. Bicycling and Bike World, the two main mags, went color and big time, and had terrific articles—general, introductory, and technical—which in many ways

would shame what’s out there today. Rider-technician-engineer-writers introduced new enthusiasts to the inner workings of the bicycle, making them more comfortable with mechanics and heading out on their own.

The formative years of touring lasted from about 1976 to 1980. Touring was accessible to so many people, and when you have a huge gang like that, it’s only natural that some will start wondering how fast they can go. American bicycle racing really started taking off around 1977 or so, and many of its new converts had their fling with distance and now wanted speed.

Frame building blossomed, and within a few years American builders—notably Albert Eisentraut, Bruce Gordon, Tom Ritchey, Matt Assenmacher, Peter Mooney, Bernie Mikkelsen, Mark Nobillete, Peter Weigle, Richard Sachs, Tim Issacs, just to name ten quick and off the top of my head—were creating frames that raised the world standard and put American builders on top. Up to then, the European frames set the pace, but it was an easy pace to set in a market that was largely ignorant of what constituted a really fine frame, and tended to swoon over anything with a foreign name. I’m not saying the early ‘70s Colnagos and so on weren’t good; but they weren’t in the same class as the top American frames. They impressed an unsophisticated audience, and still have charm and swoon factor, but they weren’t as good. They led to much better bikes.

In the years from 1970 to now, bicycle riding has grown from a pipsqueak acorn sprout into a big old oak tree, with factions on every thick branch, and mini-factions on every skinny shoot. It’s hard to absolutely nail the beginning of it all. You can keep going back to the invention of the bicycle, or even further back to the hobby horse that led to the bicycle. But the key point here is that bicycle riding in America, for the most part, was in a rut until 1970, when first Earth Day dragged it out and gave it a push that’s led to everything that’s happened since. At least, that’s my take.—Grant

Gerald Ford 1974-1977**Top song/artist:**

1974: The Way We Were/Barbara Streisand
 1975: Rhinestone Cowboy/Glen Campbell
 1976: Play That Funky Music/Wild Cherry
 1977: Star Wars Theme Song

And the Oscar went to:

1974: *The Godfather II*
 1975: *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*
 1976: *Rocky*
 1977: *Annie Hall*

Economic factoids:

Average income: \$14,000
 Ave. house: \$35,000
 Gallon-o-gas: \$0.55

Techie Widgets:

Pocket Calculators & Microwave Ovens



Frame materials/construction: Lugged steel, more CrMo (chrome-moly) tubing (better).

What's new in bikes?: Nothing worth mentioning. As ten-speeds became more popular, more competition made more decent ones.

What bike-thing or event shaped the future?: The Bicentennial was the impetus for Bike Centennial, a DIY cross-the-country bike ride started by an organization of the same name, which provided day-by-day planning & logistics guides so you wouldn't get lost. More than 4,100 mostly teens started it, half of them finished, and once you've ridden 4,200 miles from here to there, you're comfortable on a bike forever. Many were Earth Day-ers who'd continued riding since ED-1.

With touring popular, many new companies were born to supply the bikes, racks, panniers... Quality was improving, and good gear was plentiful.

As ED-riders aged into twenty-some-things, they continued to ride; and many of them bought bikes with their own money—for the first time ever. The whole industry was revitalized with the prospect of selling young adult Americans decent-to-upscale bikes. Bike clubs formed. Bike magazines and organizations were born flourished, supported by new and old manufacturers and new and old distributors reaching out to the new young-adult market.

Bicycle touring, and therefore the whole bicycle movement and market, got kick-started in the summer of '76 when around 4,000 riders pedaled coast-to-coast on the new Bikecentennial route—inspired by the country's Bicentennial. Some of the aforementioned companies were ready for it, some barely missed it, but when one rides across the country, one tends to not be intimidated by ten-mile rides after that, and so almost all of the cross-country riders continued being riding their bikes.

My girlfriend and I rode across the country that year (I was 22), and of the hundreds of other riders we saw, probably 90 percent were between 19 and 26. It's a safe bet that most didn't ride bikes seven

years earlier, and were re-introduced to them on ED; and an even safer bet that if they didn't start again with bikes on ED, they were at least influenced by others who did.

So many new tourist resulted in so many new touring bikes and touring gear, and lots of companies sprouted up to fill the needs. Some Bikecentennial riders repeated the next summer, and others took on other tours and became lifelong tourists. Still others had enough of touring after riding all the way across, but still liked bikes and riding, so got into day-rides, commuting, and racing.

These other inspired more bike styles, including the sport-touring bike, a lighter-duty tourable bike that was zippier on the road, but still good enough for the occasional tour. I guess it was about like a Hilsen or Hillborne or Rambouillet, in that way. (Ours are better, make no mistake.)

And then lots of Bicentennial vets got into racing, giving that branch of riding a huge shot in the buttock.

Bikes got better real fast, and the market was now mostly 18 to 24 year olds, spending their own money on better bikes that for the most part weren't even

available before ED, and that their parents wouldn't have spent the money for in any case. , and getting better ones. With no ED, chances are Bicentennial wouldn't have had the participation that created the markets that created the manufacturers that created the better gear.

Tons of new companies emerged in the mid-'70s, and some that were nearly unknown got famous. Some are still here, some are gone: Blackburn, Madden, Eclipse, Kirtland, Specialized, Trek, Cannondale, Burley, Eisentraut, Bruce Gordon, Ritchey, Merckx, Avocet, Rhode Gear, Citadel & Kryptonite locks, Bell, Skid-Lid, Bailen, & MSR bike helmets, Bullseye, Phil Wood, Emily K clothing, Grab-On, Belt-Beacon, and the world famous Bike-a-Boose (kid trailers).

Eisentraut particularly was building before ED, but the market for high-end custom frames was microscopic. Tom Ritchey was never a tourist, but certainly many of the ED riders that stuck with bikes got into racing and wanted something good became his customers (at one time I owned five Ritcheys, so I know this was true in at least one case). Most of the others in that list were mid-'70s to early-'80s touring-centric companies.

Jimmy Carter 1977-1981

Headlines: Three Mile Island • Hostage Crisis • Olympic Boycott • Jim Jones/Kool-Aid • Camp David Accords

Typical rider age: 20 to 30

Most bikes made in: Japan, US, England, France

Most bikes cost: \$200 to \$280

Popular brands: Raleigh, Trek, Specialized, Cannondale, Peugeot, Schwinn

Frame materials/constuction: Steel (mostly lugged), tiggged steel, growth of tiggged aluminum

What's new in bikes?: Nothing new

What bike-thing or event shaped the future?: THREE THINGS: 1. The 1979 movie *Breaking Away* debuted and was a hit. Every Bike Centennial rider and ten friends and thirty others saw it. I thought it was stupid, but have friends who started riding because of it. 2. Right on the heels of *Breaking Away*, American youngster Greg Lemond—following a glorious few years of racing as a teenager in the U.S.—went to Europe and started winning races there, too. The bike media pumped racing, and fueled the racing-bike movement. Touring was out; racing, in. 3. The mountain bike was introduced. In a year and a half, the touring bike would be dead.

**Top song/artist:**

1978: Stayin' Alive/Bee Gees

1979: My Sharona/The Knack

1980: Call Me/Blondie

1981: Bette Davis Eyes/Kim Carnes

And the Oscar went to:

1978: *The Deerhunter*

1979: *Kramer versus Kramer*

1980: *Ordinary People*

1981: *Chariots of Fire*

Economic factoids:

Average income: \$15,000

Ave. house: \$49,300

Gallon-o-gas: \$0.65

Techie Widgets:

Mobile Phones, VCRs

The movie *Breaking Away* came out in 1979, starring Dennis Quaid (who later bought an XO-1, and so did Meg Ryan) and Jack Earle Haley as two of the local dumb rock-quarry kids who slay the imported college rich kids in a bicycle race. I walked out of that movie about halfway through after one too many technical inaccuracies, but it is an absolute established fact that it got a lot of teenagers onto bikes, so good for it.

By the early '80s, Japanese bike makers had hit their stride in quality & efficiency. This, combined with a weak yen & strong dollar, allowed labor-intensive, artsy touches like pin-striping, chrome, & different color head tubes even on mid-priced bikes. The best year of all to buy a mid-priced bike—and by that I mean the year when bikes offered the most for the least; the year when the Japanese makers had hit their stride making sporty-touring and general road bicycles; when the bugs were out not only of the frames, but of the parts, too. And a year later, in 1985, there was a...well, I may raise some hackles with this one, but I'd call it a great cheapening. The exchange rate worsened

horribly, so that in 1985 a dollar bought only 60 percent of what it bought in 1984, and there was a commensurate reduction in manufacturing costs, in order to maintain prices. On top of that, indexing landed, and I may be a stick in the muck about this, but indexing wasn't the godsend it was made out to be. It was plenty easy to shift without it, and the Japanese derailers—SunTours and Shimanos—had evolved to the point where they outshifted Campy derailers that costs four times as much.

What indexing did (I would say, heaven forbid I should voice an opinion), is change the mindset from one of "I'm going to practice so I can learn to shift smoothly" to "I pay good money, I expect perfectly performing products." It made riders lazy, and to a large extent, we're still in that, what can *you* do for *me?* mode.

The early '80s also brought us Greg LeMond, a Reno, Nevada rider who cleaned up in America in his teens, and turned pro as soon as he could, and started winning over there, too. His success had a huge impact on racing over here. Before Greg, racing was mostly for

guys who couldn't play ball sports, but after Greg the number of racers grew, and this created new opportunities for manufacturers and magazines.

The bike magazine scene was at its apex in those years, with three big-time full-time general purpose cycling magazines out there: *Bicycling* (still exists), *Bicycle Guide*, and *Bicycle Rider*.

If you've got nothing but time and spare money, you could do worse than search out ancient issues of *Bicycle Guide* on eBay. It represented a level of journalism that the bike industry had never seen before, and in a general purpose magazine, hasn't seen since. The staff of Ted Costantino, Doug Roosa, Keith Mills, and John Dervin (under Publisher Bill Fields) have gone on to other jobs since the magazine folded when, as I heard it, a major advertiser pulled a year's worth of ads after it didn't get its bike on the cover that final year; but whatever the story, that was a great magazine, and one of the best things, along with LeMond, to come out of the Carter years.

Top song/artist:

1982: I Love Rock & Roll/Joan Jett
 1983: Every Breath You Take/The Police
 1984: Like a Virgin/Madonna
 1985: We Are the World/USA for Africa (Michael Jackson)
 1986: That's What Friends Are For/Dionne & Friends
 1987: Livin' On a Prayer/Bon Jovi
 1988: Roll With It/Steve Winwood
 1989: Blame It On the Rain/Milli Vanilli

And the Oscar went to:

1982: *Ghandi*
 1983: *Terms of Endearment*
 1984: *Amadeus*
 1985: *Out of Africa*
 1986: *Platoon*
 1987: *Last Emperor*
 1988: *Rainman*
 1989: *Driving Miss Daisy*

Economic factoids:

Average income: \$21,000
 Ave. house: \$78,2000
 Gallon-o-gas: \$1.25
 Techie widgets: PCs, Macs, camcorders

**Ronald Reagan 1981-1989**

Headlines: AIDS • Challenger blew up • Iran-Contra Deal • Stock Market Crash ('87) • Berlin Wall comes down

Typical rider age: late 20's to early 40's

Most bikes made in: Japan, Taiwan, US

Most bikes cost: \$250 to \$500

Popular brands: Raleigh, Trek, Specialized, Cannondale, Panasonic, Schwinn, Miyata

Frame materials/construction: Steel (lugged till '86), aluminum, titanium

What's new in bikes?: Titanium, mountain bikes

What bike-thing or event shaped the future?: Greg Lemond's success led to a huge upsurge in racing, and with the touring bike dying and soon dead, the racing bike took over. Early '80s, Shimano went nuts for aerodynamic parts. Wacky, they failed. The mountain bike became mainstream, everybody and his uncle-in-law had one, every bike maker made them at all price points, and the mountain bike near-killed all road bikes. This is what happened, really.

The only way the road bike stayed alive was as a racing bike. The non-racing road bike, holy cow, nobody bought 'em, and manufacturers made them only out of habit, but in dwindling numbers. Tig-welded (non-lugged) steel bikes dominated the steel bike market; other materials gain tonsa ground.

In 1985, Reagan removed the solar panels Carter had installed on the White House roof, and right around this time racing and racing bikes really took off. With suddenly so much competition, manufacturers tried to stand out with increasingly radical race-oriented designs, and with each ante-up, the bike became more race-specific, less real-world useful.

At about the same time, mountain bikes were introduced in a big way. The Ritchey-Fisher-Kelly-Breeze-and whoever else wants in on the start were exciting people, and Specialized introduced its Stumpjumper in (all of this is from memory), 1982. I don't think it was any earlier. It cost \$1,000 and was lugged. The next year there was a tiggged one for \$750, and Univega and I think Ross also had mountain bikes (in '83). By 1984 every major brand had them, they were starting to eat into road bike sales.

The mountain bikes back then were made for blasting around the hills and having fun in the woods, not racing. They were conservatively built, and typically

weighed 28 to 30 pounds. Nobody ever complained; because they were ten pounds lighter than clunkers, and had lower gears and better parts, and it was understood that yes, if you want a bike for rough-riding, it's going to weigh more.

As mountain bike racing took off, mountain bikes adopted more road bike attributes. I was part of that. When I designed the 1986 Bridgestone MB-1, it had the shortest chainstays (42.5cm) of any mountain bike. It had the steepest head tube (72°) of any production bike, and it was the first production mountain bike to have quick-release wheels front and rear, and toe clips and straps. I was proud of it at the time, and it was a home run in the market, and shifted mountain bike design more toward racing. I'm not saying it was a seminal bike (see above), but it proved at least that mountain bikes could be racier than they were, and sales wouldn't suffer for it.

By the mid-to-late eighties almost all mountain bikes were tig-welded (to cut costs as a result of the dollar's devaluation

in May 1985). This had a big influence on road bikes, because lots of the new mountain bike riders hadn't been road bike riders before that, so they weren't into lugs at all, didn't even know what they were. In a few years when they came to buy road bikes, the idea of a tig-welded one wasn't as repulsive to them as it would have been to their big brother in 1981.

Another way those mountain bikes influenced road bikes was sizing. Mountain bike riders bought small bikes (by road bike standards) because, to make a long story short, mountain bikes are different, and the smaller sizes work. But then when these mountain bike-only riders came around to road bikes, they couldn't handle going from a 19-inch mountain bike to a 23-inch road bike, so they bought 21s, or the metric equivalent.

In other words, they bought bikes too small. Not everybody, but there was an epidemic of that, and that epidemic led to longer seat posts (not a bad thing, but not a fully good solution to a problem).

George H.W. Bush 1989-1993**Headlines:** Persian Gulf War • Rodney King beating**Typical rider age:** 30 to 45**Most bikes made in:** Taiwan, US, Italy**Most bikes cost:** \$300 to \$600**Popular brands:** Trek, Giant, Specialized, Cannondale, some Schwinn & Raleigh**Frame materials/construction:** Steel (mostly tigged), aluminum, titanium**What's new in bikes?:** Mountain bike suspension**What bike-thing or event shaped the future?:** Mountain bike suspension, introduced in 1990. Caught on immediately, changed mountain bikes from fyncles to high-tech, performance- and competition-oriented (downhill) bikes.

It wasn't just boots-and-plaid wearers in the woods anymore; it was superhero-wannabes doing stupid stuff on bikes, and relying on the suspension to get them through it. Normal people going wack-o on bicycles, heavily armored. Ski resorts opened up during the summer, so riders could get lifted to the top, then come tearing down. This is a harsh take on the happenings of the time, but it's not far off base.

**Top song/artist:**

1990: Vogue/Madonna

1991: More Than Words/Extreme

1992: End of the Road/Boyz II Men

1993: Dreamlover/Mariah Carey

And the Oscar went to:1990: *Dance With Wolves*1991: *Silence of the Lambs*1992: *Unforgiven*1993: *Schindler's List***Economic factoids:**

Average income: \$27,500

Ave. house: \$120,000

Gallon-o-gas: \$0.97

Techie Widgets: Cell phones

By the late 1980s mountain bikes had become the bike of choice for Joe average, and road bike makers were frettin'. Along the way, they'd adopted as many mountain bike influences as they could stomach, in a hope to get crossover riders, and the effect on road bikes wasn't entirely positive—at least from the traditionalist's perspective.

Steel was dying in the market. Lugs were almost entirely gone except on custom bikes. Technology (suspension and new radical designs) were often credited with making mountain bikes so popular—it seemed every four months or so there was something new and wild to love or hate about them—and road bikes, in comparison, were relatively stagnant.

The stagnation soon vanished under a cloud of smoke, and out emerged radical frame designs, super light frames, newer materials at lower price points, and an emphasis on racing that continues to grip the road market.

By the end of Bush I's reign, lugged steel bicycle frames were so much on the outs that they were considered nostalgic. I was at Bridgestone then, and we had

one more year of them—1994—and then we closed up the American office.

I think sometimes people can hear this or look back now at it and think, "too bad it couldn't have kept going." But if there had been a 1995, it would have been miserable for me and ultimately bad for Bstone's legacy, because there was just too much pressure (internal and external) to change and be like them.

I'm sure the 1995 bike line would have presented a mixed message to Bridgestone fans, and disappointed those who came to expect some fairly well thought-out quirkiness from them (us). We'd have had some familiar styles that cost Bridgestone in Japan more to make than they wholesaled for; and then there would have been Trek ones to appease a certain percentage of the sales staff and dealers. The catalogues would have been totally different. Those were just hard times for road bikes, and the road bikes that grew from it were supersonic jet-bikes, with racing clearances, weights, and proportions that didn't play well with the recreational rider. They're still the norm, and still don't.

Sidebar just on Bridgestone

Bridgestone continues to be Japan's biggest bike maker, most of them are made in China, and not at all like the ones sold in the U.S. Bridgestone in Japan is the big bland corporate bike maker whose size dictates its strategy—to make everybody's bike, from tots to oldsters, and at affordable prices.

It is quick to hop on trends, to sponsor teams to win credibility among young riders and others who like their kin all over the western world, want to ride what winners ride—no matter that winners ride what they're paid to.

Deep in the bowels of Bridgestone there is a core of riders with traditional tastes, but they have little influence.

With the exchange rate as it is, there's not a snowball's chance in heck that Bstone will reenter the U.S. market. The only way that would make sense—remaking the XO-1, MB-1, and RB-1 and selling them direct, with a four-person US team in a funky little office somewhere with cheap rent—it just takes too much to coordinate, and there's not enough to gain.

Top song/artist:

1994: The Sign/Ace of Base
 1995: Gangsta's Paradise/Coolio
 1996: The Macarena/Los Del Rio
 1997: Candle in the Wind/Elton John
 1998: You're Still the One/Shania Twain
 1999: Believe/Cher
 2000: Breathe/Faith Hill
 2001: Hanging by a Moment/Life House

And the Oscar went to:

1994: *Forrest Gump* 1995: *Braveheart*
 1996: *The English Patient* 1997: *Titanic*
 1998: *Shakespeare In Love*
 1999: *American Beauty* 2000: *Gladiator*
 2001: *A Beautiful Mind*

Economic factoids:

Average income: \$32,000
 Ave. house: \$113,000
 Gallon-o-gas: \$1.16
 Techie widgets: Internet explodes (in popularity)

**Bill Clinton 1993-2001**

Headlines: Apartheid • Diana killed • O.J. trial • Oklahoma City Bombing • and the Un-abomber guy

Typical rider age: 30 to 45

Most bikes made in: Taiwan, US, Italy

Most bikes cost: \$400 to \$900

Popular brands: Trek, Giant, Specialized, Cannondale

Frame materials/constuction: Steel (mostly tigged), aluminum, titanium, carbon fiber

What's new in bikes?: Carbon fiber

What bike-thing or event shaped the future?: Carbon fiber went semi-mainstream, at least at the high-end. Aerodynamic wheels fat, few spokes. Rivendell Bicycle Works born in late 1994. It was minor but not invisible news at the time. More significant to some than to others. Below most radar, but not super-stealth. It was what it was. How ya' doin'?

The Clinton-years road bikes were increasingly unlogged. Bikes under a thousand dollars were usually tig-welded steel or aluminum. Russian elementally pure titanium frames were readily available (Airborne—remember those?). And, for the first time, carbon was cheap enough and available enough to get a good lock on the high end.

For the most part, the Clinton bikes were the worst-designed road bikes of all time. By that I mean they fit only skinny tires, and most couldn't fit a fender. By now, threadless headsets had almost entirely replaced threaded ones, and with them came the clamp-on stems that make it so hard to raise the handlebars.

In the early Clinton years, it was hard to even find brakes with sufficient reach to design a bike well. Campy didn't make them, Shimano didn't make them, but there were a few old Shimano and Campy brakes around any individual rider could find. But nothing a real manufacturer could use...and bikes were designed

around short-reach brakes, with all their limitations. It was discouraging.

Finally Shimano re-introduced a "standard reach" sidepull—a model it had quit making a few years earlier—and that helped us a lot. Now I could design more clearance into a sidepull bike, and with Shimano's support, nobody felt too nervous about their future.

Rivendell started in late 1994. In March of that year I and one other American (Brad Stempel, sales manager) heard the news that Bstone was closing us down in the Fall, but we had to keep mum until the official announcement in June or July (otherwise, the fear was, dealers who owed us money wouldn't pay).

I was scurrying about trying to figure out what to do next. My oldest daughter was almost six, my wife had another one in the oven, we hadn't been in our house all that long, and the prospect of moving was just too much.

As I alluded to earlier, the climate at Bstone-USA was changing, and had we gone on another year or more, the bikes

would've been different and I'd have been miserable. That fact alone was some consolation—I was being forced out of a job that would have been pure heck even just one more year.

I got job offers that would have paid me a lot more than the \$55K I made at Bstone. One offer was for \$80K, but I wasn't interested in that company or the kinds of bikes they made. I didn't want to be a rebel in any new company, and I didn't want to have to bite my lip, so I thought I'd start this.

The first thing I did was contact Nitto and ask if they'd support me in my new work. Yes, they would. Then I contacted Waterford about bikes, and yes, they'd like to make 'em for me. I went for a walk in Marin with Richard Schwinn, our first meeting, and things went well.

When Bstone closed, I got the BOB (bridgestone owners bunch) member list—it was a group I and my department there started, so it was only fair—and out of that, I had an instant and excellent customer base and a new life.

George W. Bush 2001-2009

Headlines: 9/11 • Afghanistan • Iraq • Katrina • Sarah Palin/ Joe the Plumber • Obama/McCain campaign

Typical rider age: 35 to 55

Most bikes made in: China

Most bikes cost: \$700 to \$1800

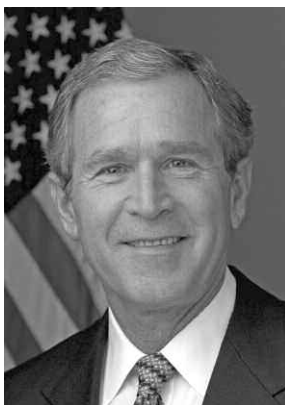
Popular brands: Trek, Giant, Specialized

Frame materials/constuction: Aluminum, titanium, carbon fiber, some steel—mostly TIG but some lugged at the high end.

What's new in bikes?: Carbon fiber goes super mainstream. Electric bikes. Laser-beam bike fitting!

What bike-thing or event shaped the future?: Lance Armstrong won 7 Tours de France and jazzed people up about road bikes. Everybody, even fat people, dress like Lance now and pretend to race. Carbon fiber forks, which are dangerous snappers, are the default fork on virtually all road bikes. "Road bike" comes to mean "racing bike." Carbon fiber becomes the buzzword of the masses.

Threadless headsets and clamp-on stems introduced, and all but kill the quill stem and threaded headset. Tires get super skinny. Wheels get fewer spokes, and skyrocket in price (high tech wheels). The road bike is going to heck in a handbasket...

**Top song/artist:**

2002: How You Remind Me/Nickelback

2003: In da Club/50 Cent

2004: Yeah/Usher

2005: We Belong Together/Maria Carey

2006: Bad Day/Daniel Powter

2007: Irreplaceable/Beyonce

2008: Low/Flo Rida and T-Pain

And the Oscar went to:

2002: *Chicago*

2003: *The Lord of the Rings--The Return of the King*

2004: *Million Dollar Baby* 2005: *Crash*

2006: *The Departed*

2007: *No Country For Old Men*

2008: *Slumdog Millionaire*

Economic factoids:

Average income: \$43,000

Ave. house: \$136,000 to \$200,000

Gallon-o-gas: \$1.46 to \$5.00

Tech widgets: iPod, iPhone, iTunes, tons of digital cams, Flip Videocam, Myspace

The big thing in W. Bush's reign was carbon fiber becoming the default road bike frame and fork material, at prices so low anybody halfway seriously interested in a road bike could afford one.

I think a lot of makers will look back on these years and wished it had gone another way. It's hard to write about carbon without writing about its failure mode, which is sudden, and the danger inherent with sudden failures. There are so many bikes out there with carbon forks, and they won't last, and when they stop lasting, that's when the fun stops.

Oddly or not, the prevalence of carbon fiber seems to have helped a renaissance of lugged steel bikes. Not at the popular price points, but certainly at the unpopular, higher ones. Lots of the newcomers are graduates of UBI's framebuilding class, where you pay \$2500 or so and spend ten days in school and come out with a frame you made yourself. A certain number of graduates take to it and get the gear and have the support or the money to keep it going, and will eventually be-

come good builders, or good brazers, or experienced, or something.

The thing about frame building—and I am speaking as a non-builder, but as a designer who knows some of the ropes anyway—is that there is so much more to it than brazing. Brazing is just a fraction of the making a frame.

There are good brazers who are bad designers. There are good designers who are bad brazers. There are good brazers and good designers who are bad fitters. There are good fitters who don't put the customer on the right kind of bike for their weight and riding.

Good brazing starts with preparing the tubes properly, so the molten silver or brass penetrates well, and the tube itself is undamaged by the heat. Good brazing is fast, because speed comes with fluency. But not all fast brazing is good.

Good brazing also means brazing in a way that maintains frame alignment as much as possible. It's especially important at the bottom bracket shell. You can have good penetration, but if it was achieved through a brazing sequence that pulled

the shell out of square with the frame (so that the left side is behind the right side), or shifted the whole shell to one side just a little, then although the penetration may be thorough, the frame isn't right. It's defects won't show up on a frame stand, but properly mounted cranks will be out of kilter and you'll be pedaling weird.

Fitting really took off in the Bush II years. But for all of its technological trappings (including laser body scans), people still end up on bikes that are way too small way too often—and this is after a \$200 fitting session that ends with an output sheet of misinformation. We've all seen the 6-ft, 210 lb. rider on the 16lb 56cm bike with 23mm tires.

Practical bikes were starting to get popular during the later years of the reign. Partly inspired by French bicycle fashion, partly by touring, and partly, I'm guessing a reaction to extreme racing bikes, we started seeing more mixtes, cargo bikes, and inexpensive excellent tig-welded bikes with practical clearances and stout frames—like the Surly Long Haul Trucker.



Barack Obama 2009-

Headlines: Obama, Health Care, the War, the Economy, many famous people die

Typical rider age: even old guys ride

Most bikes made in: China

Most bikes cost: Road bikes ave \$1300 to \$1600

Popular brands: Trek, Spec., Giant, Cervelo, Scott, Scattante, Fuji, Felt, Surly, Bianchi

Frame materials/constuction: Carbon, aluminum

What's new in bikes?: Electromagnetic shifting

What will shape the future? Injection-molded plastics, maybe called "thermoplastics" or something else will be the big thing. It'll be a way to lighten bikes and create frames with molded compartments for batteries, chargers, electronic gear and lights. At first they'll be made in the U.S., but soon, China. They'll be recyclable and will be touted as green. The first ones will be lousy, but after ten years they'll be pretty good. The new technology will allow non-traditional manufacturers to become bike makers. In about 50 years, none of the current bike brands will be around, unless they've been bought out, and the name kept.

Hopes for bikes Obama's reign: Well, I'd like to see bikes get skinny again, because they work fine that way, and look great. I'd like to see steel make a comeback in the popular price ranges (say, under \$1200), and it would be great if it were given some respect, and not just thought of as the stuff grampa's bike was made out of.

For selfish and unselfish reasons, I'd like to see the dollar increase in value against the Yen. This would help us and help you, but it would also help Japanese parts makers and frame makers. It was they who were driving the repopularity of bikes (along with Schwinn and Raleigh) back in the mid-to-late '70s, and it's kind of sad to see how the exchange rate has made it so hard for them to export to the U.S.

I'd kind of love to see a Nitto crank, but it won't happen, because, among other reasons, Mr. Yoshikawa worked for Shimano decades and decades ago, and he doesn't want to infringe. But imag-

ine a Nitto crank! It would be made of mythrill.

Bicycle riders dressed in normal clothes would be a welcome sight. Not just because so much cycling clothing is wacked out, but because I think it would help non-cyclists see us as more like them, and if that happens, maybe they'll be more likely to get on a bike. The more riders there are, the more awareness and politeness there is from drivers.

I'd love to see more bike parking in downtown areas, and I'm all for car-bans on every other Sunday and things like that, in shopping areas.

Shimano could help matters if it made a moderate group for normal people. I don't mean boring or low-priced or lackluster; I mean, let's see some good-clearance brakes (like the Silvers); and make some killer centerpulls, and fix the cantilevers, and how about a 110/64 crank with a non-super high Q-Factor?

One-inch threaded headsets and their companions, the 22.2mm quill stem, belong on more bikes than you can shake a stick at, but they're almost gone from new bikes now (except for ours), and that makes it hard to get the bars high enough—so lots of riders are uncomfortable. Along that line, I'd like to see a trend to upsizing bikes, and a trend away from normal riders thinking they have to copy racers. Normal car drivers don't do that, so why not bike riders?

As I've said a few times lately on the site and now here, I doubt carbon bikes as we know them now will continue to exist in even five years. Several fork makers have quit already, and maybe there are reasons they're quitting, I don't know. I know it's wondrous material that makes impossible things possible in some fields, but I don't see a bright future for carbon fiber bicycles.

ERIC KARO'S NETSKET & NANNIERS

Riv member & practicalist Eric Karo came up with a ghastly functional way to tote stuffables and gangly things. You zip-tie, tape, tie, or twine a normal basket net onto any handlebar, then you put stuff in it. I've carried clothing, books, food, and handlebars. It costs \$8, weighs zero, holds soft things, things too big to fall through the mesh, and even bulky things. Good job, Eric.



Netsket, Moustache H'bars, using a clip from the net.



Netsket, Moustache H'bars, Vaughn's shirt. Put one on, and you won't take it off.

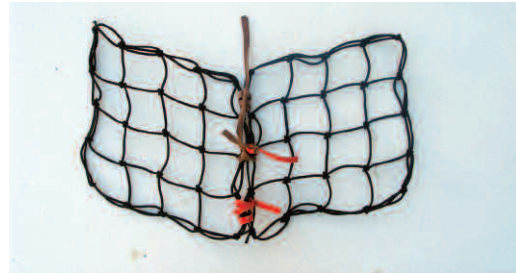


Netsket with drop bars, shirt, and carrying Albatross bars. It is not waterproof, dustproof, windproof, or anything-proof, but it holds stuff nicely, and sometimes that's all that matters.

But does it make sense?

Sure does! A basket net costs ten dollars. A full set of rear Netanners would be \$40, and that's getting up there, but it's still way less than the cost of real panniers, and it's a system that works.

More practical for most, though, is just one Sketnet on the handlebar. It's not in the way, it weighs next to nothing, it's only ten bucks, it holds thing, and some of things it holds, a bag won't, and a basket won't, well.



Two basket nets. Join them however you like. In this rig, we've just folded bar tape in half and wrapped it around and tied it off in a few places. The hooks that come with the net go on the sides & on top, for easy loading & hooking to the rack.



Shown here empty and with zip ties holding the sides closed. It's better to use the hooks. Easier to load.



Using the hooks, the Nanners contain the load and hold it to the rack. Loading is a cinch. It looks like heck, but it works great. You'll figure it out.



June and Greg Siple put in miles on the Campbell Highway.

ALASKA SOUTH THROUGH THE YUKON, ON THE WAY TO ARGENTINA, 1973

by June Jenkins Siple. Photos by Dan Burden

For another, longer look get ahold of the April 23 National Geographic . —Grant

Hemistour was the first American bicycle expedition to travel the length of the Western Hemisphere—18,272 miles from Anchorage, Alaska to Ushuaia, Tierra del Fuego, in Argentina. It's the longest land route on earth, and we pedaled it between June 16, 1972 and February 25, 1975. Twenty-nine cyclists rode varying distances, including Dan and Lys Burden (8,628 miles to Salina Cruz, Mexico), and Greg and June Siple (18,272 miles). Originated in 1966 as "Project 66" by Dan, and dubbed "Hemistour" by Greg in 1968, the ride garnered financial support from sponsors, cyclists, family, and friends to promote American Youth Hostels, Inc. and bicycle touring—*June Siple*.

Still nursing a strained right knee, I dismounted to push my 35-pound ten-speed Peugeot PX-10 loaded with about 40 pounds of camping gear, food, and clothing up the last steep sections of Taylor Highway, in Alaska. Coming closer to the Yukon Territory in Canada with every hard-won mile, we tackled steep foothills, one after another, and frustratingly lost elevation on each short downhill, but somehow gained altitude overall. Near the border the gravel road would rise to 4,515 feet, higher by 429 feet than our biggest pass in Alaska, then blend into “Top of the World Highway” on the Yukon side.

At our slow climbing pace, a pestering squadron of mosquitoes, black flies, and deer flies easily kept up, buzzing around exposed arms, legs and faces to attack unguarded skin. With every hour closer to noon, the mounting heat sweated off bug repellent, and retarded progress, while a lack of road-side creek water in the area made quick, cooling road-side face rinses impossible. My rear derailleur cable had slipped, forcing a walk. To keep me company, Dan hiked along and we chatted more than a mile, swatting bugs. We could empty water bottles on ourselves to cool off, but that would waste scarce water meant for drinking.

With no low gear to battle the hills, I'd been killing time, trudging along on foot until Greg, bearer of the group tool kit, could catch up. I tried riding again once the slope softened, managing third gear, do-able on the lesser slope. Lys passed me, perspiring and red-faced like the rest of us, but gamely pushing on. Once Greg arrived, we tightened the cable, the bike lying in loose gravel just off the dusty road. Ahead of the pack as usual, our fifth rider, John Likins, would be at the quasi-town of Boundary, Alaska, already enjoying a breeze with his tundra view above the tree line, and writing a letter to his girlfriend.

Newly determined to stay on the bike, I zigzagged across the gravel road from one shoulder's bulldozed cut into the hillside, to the opposite shoulder on the drop-off side. I climbed more gradually that way, rather than bucking the steep grade head on and risking greater insult to my knee. But I had to be cautious with that maneuver, because it took me back and forth across

the full width of the road, where I could get slammed into oblivion by a tourist RV. On this road, luckily, vehicles came along infrequently, but I kept an eye on the road behind me with a Chuck Harris rear-view mirror hooked onto my sunglasses. A side-swipe danger to cyclists, large RV mirrors were mounted so far out from both sides of campers that they were a danger in themselves. Meanwhile, Greg cranked his equally loaded bike straight up the grade, stopping to catch his breath at the higher altitude, then cranking hard again out of the saddle. Agape at the view we seemed to create with every foot of altitude climbed, he enjoyed the unfolding grand panorama of wild flower-speckled tundra, purposely keeping me in sight behind him in case my cable slipped again.

A cool determined wind picked up incrementally the higher we climbed, and we donned windbreakers at Boundary. Gleefully finding mail, fresh film, and dehydrated food we had shipped to ourselves from Montana, we splurged on hot coffee indoors at the cafe, but were permitted to feast on our own food. An impending rain squall gracefully headed for the border, dropping gray horsetail-like sweeps of moisture, wetting the cafe windows. Not far down the road, we celebrated our first customs stop at Little Gold Creek with free pop and beer, courtesy of the Canadian couple on duty. Pedaling onward into the Yukon, Greg and I fell to the back of the group.

Already worn out for the day, we still had to reach the only spring in this high country to camp. The promise of a 40-mile descent the next day seemed unlikely. Motorists infallibly, albeit enthusiastically, describe the road ahead in rosy phrases like “it's all downhill,” but in a car the nuances of hill and dale blend into a single grade. We continued to blow out our leg gaskets on a long series of hillocks as we finished 27 difficult miles to an oasis-like camping spot on the flattened ruts of an abandoned road at Bruin Creek. Luxuriant Warmlite sleeping bags, designed by Jack Stephenson of Woodland Hills, California, offered a comforting respite in our snug Warmlite tents. Winter ice remnants survived nearby in the clefts of an abandoned road bridge, built log-cabin-style.

Having already ridden nearly 700 miles in Alaska, we would do the same in the Yukon in 16-17 days, and log 50-60 miles per day on the all-gravel roads. But our main preoccupation, besides riding and eating, bothered us in the tents at night. The potential for bear attacks lay on our minds, and we also worried about moose. Often we had to sweep moose scat out of the way to pitch our tents. Unpredictable large animals 6-7 feet tall at the shoulder, with males weighing 800-1500 pounds, they might step on our 3.75 pound nylon tent at night. Being trampled by a moose—what a way to go. Although we hauled our food stores up into trees at night, Yukon spruce seemed to be shorter and more slender than the trees in our Alaska campsites. Under our food burden, they sometimes bent over to almost touch the ground, more of a bear enticement. As the lightest sleeper, I would awaken at least once at “night,” with the midnight sun providing light, and paid attention to every sound on my last tentative visit to the edge of the woods. Little did I know that those soothing sleepy night bird calls may have been moalling to each other, one little chirp at a time, like sonar.

Not expecting daytime animal encounters, especially in the tundra environment on Top of the World Highway, we rode steadily the next day to get to Dawson City. Airhorns, within easy reach, hung on our handlebar bags to warn others or summon aid. Many folks, especially Alaskans, were surprised at our lack of a handgun arsenal for protection. But we hoped for positive wildlife sightings, and mellow meetings with our fellow human beings. Bear spray, not yet invented, wouldn't be on the shelves for another fourteen years. Our options were, therefore, limited to luck, luck, and more luck. Not so comforting, but the best approach was to think about something else.

On a flat stretch of road Dan and Greg happened to be riding together, with Dan just ahead. Bursting from the left shoulder edge, an animal came directly at Greg, who was so surprised that he inexplicably stopped and put his left foot down, instead of sprinting towards Dan. The creature stopped its rush abruptly at this impasse, and reared up on its hind legs. Greg, who couldn't think of anything else to do,



Lys Burden, Campbell Highway, Yukon, Canada. Note: bike racing shorts, knee socks.

scuffed his shoe in the loose gravel repeatedly to scatter rocks as a distraction. Fortunately the stock-still mammal high-tailed it back the way it came. First startled, then laughing with relief, Greg watched the three-inch critter, a vole or shrew, disappear off the shoulder. City boy meets Shrewzilla. That would be the closest thing to an animal attack all the way to Argentina. Hemistour, the big-time, low-key bike expedition.

The flirtatious road continued to toss us a little downhill, then slam in an offsetting climb. When would we descend to the Yukon River on the fabled glorious downhill? We expected John after 15 miles for a lunch stop, but he had gone ahead, tempted by the unseen proximity of Dawson City. Suddenly, we descended sharply for 9-10 miles on a freshly-graded road, so I braked lightly and often on the precipitous slope to avoid losing control in the gravel. A spill would inflict abrasions taking a week or two to heal, not worth the risk of a head-long descent. My hands started going numb and ached from the braking and tight grip on the drop bars to maintain control.

Greg and I stopped several times to let the rims cool, and so I could shake out my hands to relieve the tingling and pain. Lys and I were hit by stinging wheel-flung gravel that day from Clinton Creek Asbestos trucks. Pulling over for each rushing mini traffic jam just off the ferry, I finally reached the Yukon River. It was flowing fast to the Bering Sea in Alaska, with the golden city of Dawson, population 700, just across the roiling brown water.

Famed for its legions of hard-living gold prospectors during the 1898 peak of the Klondike Gold Rush, then a wild freewheeling town of 30,000, Dawson City would have become a modern ghost town if the Canadian government had not intervened. Tourism had taken hold with the preservation and restoration in 1962 of the Palace Grand Theatre, where we took in a play and a Vaudeville show, the Dawson Gaslight Follies. Many abandoned buildings had settled at cock-eyed angles from permafrost heave, and lay half-ruined along the dusty, board-walked streets. Unique sites included a paddlewheel boat graveyard back across the river, and

the Yukon Order of Pioneers (Y.O.O.P.) cemetery up on the hill behind town.

While Dan and Greg scrambled to shoot pictures of the photogenic Dawson with film provided by National Geographic magazine, the rest of us did chores, wandered about town, or relaxed for two non-riding days. Interviewed on a local radio show to be re-broadcast later via the CBC throughout the Yukon, Greg also talked with a reporter for the Whitehorse Star. I felt grateful for the first recreational break we'd had since Anchorage, as guests of the Denning family in an old barbershop converted to gospel hall. We had early-to-rise mornings to pack up our sleeping bags, eat breakfast with the family, and make way for Bible School, all in the same room.

Around 10 P.M. rested, repacked and ready on our last evening in Dawson, we headed south 13 miles to camp with plenty of daylight left. With only 14,000 residents in 1972, but larger than California in square miles, Yukon Territory presented a scattering of settlements no doubt tiny fractions of

their gold rush era size, along the North Klondike Highway. We came across these little towns a day or two apart in bicycle travel time. A new road, the Dempster Highway, being built near Dawson City north to Inuvik in the Northwest Territories, wouldn't open for another five years. Most bridges planned were still blueprint drawings—otherwise we might have been tempted to try for the Arctic Circle.

Hot mid-day temperatures of 80-90 degrees soon forced us into mid-day siestas, and more riding in cooler evening hours, as we pedaled along the relatively dry, breathless land between the MacKenzie Mountains to the northeast, and coast ranges to the southwest. Although we did get rained on from time to time, who would think that, so far north, we would ride into such gritty summer heat?

White and black spruce forests dominated, and a forest fire flared up in the distance, a routine part of summer life. We visited a fire camp to shoot photos, and check out the kitchen to talk to sooty men deprived of sleep. A scattering of exhausted fire fighters napped directly on the dusty ground, yellow hardhats over their faces to block the punishing sun and heat. Helicopters, noisy and constantly in motion, slung out diesel-smelling aviation fuel exhaust, and stirred workers to load or unload supplies amidst blade-driven dust clouds.

As Greg and I gained strength, my bum knee hurt less, and we were able to stay together more at the back while maintaining a good pace. I carried the beefy first aid kit and Greg hauled the heavy, well-stocked tool kit advised by the Braxtons. Unless someone rode off-route, practically impossible in this north country where route changes might occur once a week, we could "sweep up" a broken-down bike or injured rider, and patch things up, barring major breakdowns like a pretzeled rim or broken bones. Motorists could be a possible source of help in a pinch, but we had to be as self-sufficient as possible and not rely on the passer-by. No bike shops existed along our route in the territory, and no emergency room until Watson Lake near the boundary with British Columbia.

Back in the states, most people following the news of our ride probably thought we were masochists to ride on gravel. Why suffer needlessly? It

just wasn't done—few cyclists would consider riding gravel for even an hour, let alone 1,500 miles. During the early 1970s in Ohio where we grew up, recreational day rides, rallies, local weekend group events, and races had become increasingly common, but were always on pavement. Extended tours of a week or more, also on paved roads, were rare.

Our Hemistour wheels, built with the same size rims as three-speed bicycle wheels, plus Campagnolo Nuovo Tipo high flange hubs, and Robergel 280mm spokes, were proving to be virtually trouble-free except for an occasional flat. Built by the Braxton Bike Shop in Missoula, Montana specifically to avoid problems on gravel roads, those wheels proved their worth daily. Lucky to have the shop on our side, we five had little experience on gravel beforehand, but once we grew fit, we came to prefer gravel in many respects.

Like canoeists navigating a river, we learned to read a road, and to work out our course. Having developed such skills on gravel, it all became second nature, and biking itself more interesting than cruising along on trouble-free, smooth pavement. Motor vehicles came past us more slowly on gravel, making it safer, in that respect, than pavement. One could even hear a bike rider coming from behind by the progressively louder crunch of gravel, and freshly pumped up bicycle tires might pop a piece of gravel 15 feet away with a tight "pong" sound.

The Yukon, with its open forested valleys and distant bluish mountains, became the heart of our north-country travel. Settled into routines after three weeks on the road, we became more confident of our goals. During a half-day break in Carmacks, everyone in the grocery store rushed to the door because it suddenly grew dark outside. Colors deepened and the intense afternoon heat abated instantly. A little alarmed, I had just purchased chainsaw oil to lubricate the bikes, and had no clue that we were experiencing an 80-85% solar eclipse. An eventful day overall, we clocked our first 1,000 miles.



John Likins pumps bike iron on the Campbell Highway. After leaving Hemistour in Jasper, Alberta, John rode 100-130 miles per day on a solo ride to Winnipeg, Canada. Note Oxford-type shoes, Chuck Harris mirror on glasses.

John, the librarian from Massachusetts who started with us in Anchorage, had legs like a Clydesdale. He took the lead at will, occasionally riding with Dan for short stints, but easily churning forward again, kicking up a mini dust rooster tail. We four Hemistour core riders stood in awe of his strength, although most of our future companions would also outride us. He packed his Peugeot UO-8 neatly, British style, set off by black socks and full fenders—his "kit" all perched precisely on rear and front carriers with scarcely a wrinkle. As we requested of all our companions, John had prepared carefully, paying the Braxton shop to custom-build Hemistour 26 x 1 3/8 inch (650B) gravel-hardy wheels for him, and taking other suggestions to heart.

Even though he had only car-camped before, John exceeded our expectations. He installed three water bottle cages, including one to hold a fuel bottle. With his British-built Karimor front carrier and canvas "Solong" front panniers, he evenly distributed camping gear, clothing and food. In those respects John was more prepared than us. The rest of us had only one water bottle cage apiece, an oversight from last-minute preparations in Missoula. We core four lacked



Dan Burden tops off group water bottles. Not the best practice because of water-borne parasites, we drank freely from clean-looking, fast-flowing streams in Alaska and Canada. Note blue jeans and running shoes. This photo by Greg Siple.



June Siple takes a break. "Bike Safe" flags, donated by Walter Carrell of Marion, Indiana helped with visibility, especially on dusty roads and in low light conditions.



June & Greg Siple guzzle water on a hot afternoon. In 1972 only the useless leather "hairnet" racing helmets were available, with the first hard shell helmet in bike shops by 1975.

front panniers, still a subject of debate, but I broke ranks and had a set on backorder.

Our red nylon packcloth "Touring Cyclist" panniers, designed by Jean and Hartley Alley of Colorado, traveled along rough roads, snugly hooked to Holdsworth "Claud Butler" rear carriers made in England. But, unlike John's neat packing, our loads went consistently akimbo. We had dedicated our left-hand panniers to food and kitchen gear. That way, packs tainted with food smells could be hauled up into a tree at night to avoid bear raids and rodent damage. The right side, containing only clothing and personal items, could be heaved into the tent along with our sleeping bags and T.A. canvas handlebar bags. As we ate the food, the much heavier left pannier would go progressively slack, until we picked up a new food cache at the next mail stop to re-plump it with edibles. Sleeping bags and pads, carried zipped together as a pair by each married couple, topped one spouse's load, while the other half hauled the tent, poles, and pegs. With the food pannier full the sleeping bags rode level, but after we gobbled up most of the week's supplies, the sleep-

ing bags would tilt downward across the sagging pannier.

After re-packing the panniers at food/mail stops, I typically hauled a full load of 22 pounds of food in one pannier, 12 pounds in the opposing clothing pannier, 9 pounds for the handlebar bag, and 8 pounds for the two sleeping bags and built-in pads. On a full-load day I would, then, carry about 50 pounds on my 35-pound bike (including its racks, flag and full water bottle). When adding a full one gallon water cube to my load, typically in dry sections or on short stints to camp, I carried as much as 60 pounds.

So, I pedaled 65-95 pounds of bike plus baggage down the road everyday, or pushed it on foot up the steepest hills, more awkward than staying in the saddle. We enjoyed lighter loads with every bite of food the group consumed. Weight distribution was as non-sexist as possible, with close-to-equal loads for all. And, if you had a flat you fixed it. Equality of the open road.

By the end of the long dusty gravel Yukon "highways," John's curly dark hair had evolved from a neat Boston trim job to wild locks with the tips

bleaching out. His packs had accumulated dust, and, total neatness aside at last, an occasional display of freshly-laundered underwear festooned his north-country rig. Life in the Yukon progressed to a devil-may-care, laid-back lifestyle, and we jumped into lakes or streams at will to bathe on hot Yukon afternoons. Dan, our most fearless open-air bather, recklessly plunged into frigid lakes or streams time after time.

We four intentionally left our watches behind in Missoula, but John gleefully retained his, crowing the time each morning. Our wakeup call was often the only clock setting of which we were aware all day. Greg and I fought back good-naturedly against reveille by shouting back likewise meaningless random numbers, "27!" or maybe "49!" But he would not be daunted. As a practical matter, however, the presence of a watch, very occasionally, could be handy, like hauling a chain tool along. Not necessary 99% of the time, a watch would be indispensable for the 1%, especially if we'd had a plane to catch, which we didn't.

Cooking occasionally demanded a timepiece. But John quickly found an-



Lys Burden fixes flat Dunlop tire. They proved less reliable than Goodyear Rib All-Weathers, which carried Greg from Alaska to Montana without a flat. Hemistour Photo by Greg Siple.

other use for the watch. Not all that far from the Arctic Circle, we had daylight all the time. With the lack of night, we had to make sure we were getting enough sleep. One couldn't tell by the sun's position whether it was 4 A.M. or 7 A.M., so we left it to John to wake us. Likewise, after a day of cycling, one could be absolutely fooled by the midnight sun effect—it might be 7 P.M. or 10 P.M. Often still on the road during the cooler part of the evening, we'd wonder why we were so tired. Time to set up camp.

We also regulated our day by mileage, stopping to camp when we'd logged a pre-determined number of miles for the day, so we wouldn't overdo it. I crawled out of the Siple tent one evening, but quickly retreated in surprise. It was DARK out there, and startled me! I named the place "Too Dark Camp" in my journal. We'd have to re-adjust.

And although John's propensity to be off the front became an irritant, even discouraging, we saw some humor in it, and advantages to the group had emerged in Alaska. John evolved into the lunch stop and camp site selector. Almost bounding ahead at full speed, conceivably popping off spoke heads in his haste, he could take care of his own repairs in repose up the road, write letters, read, and even nap, while remaining easily in the lead from breakfast to dinner. After nearly every meal he worked alongside Greg to clean pots and dishes, the two exchanging quips and stories. He gathered and cut firewood, and, even as the solo bachelor, made an earnest effort to be part of the group in camp.

John may not have been aware, but he performed another function. As unofficial trip "buffer," he helped divert our attention from each other. Our core group had unresolved problems galore, many of which came to the fore during the nearly three-year planning period, and traveling together flushed out plenty more. Instead of looking for a buffer, we should have hired a counselor to ride with us to Montana.

Besides the effort of riding our bikes and performing daily chores, we also expended nervous energy avoiding our emotional backlog. As for Greg and me, only married two years, we found ourselves unwittingly married again, to Hemistour. We had lost most of our independence, power to make decisions, and influence over the future of our own married life. I felt sorry for John at times for having to put up with our foibles, but he appeared to be blissfully unaware most of the time. And yet, so many wonderfully compelling moments, and appealing events seduced us into thinking that someday, somehow, our problems would just solve themselves.

Greg and I originally thought the first section of Hemistour would be an ideal time to get our core problems ironed out. So, we suggested not having other riders along until we reached Montana. Because of the physical challenges to bikes, gear, and riders on the 1,500 miles of gravel to Missoula, not to mention the other 1,600 miles on pavement, all four of us were concerned about breakdowns of unprepared riders. Isolation, accidents, and weather extremes encountered in the north country could bring our core group to a halt temporarily, but for a "wing-it" type of rider it could be a disaster. Hemistour could advise riders who wanted to join, but could not control their preparation.

All riders had to be financially independent, and fully equipped, but John easily passed muster. We had no reason to turn him down. In the end, the Lys and Dan prevailed, and actively courted other riders who might also

act as a "buffer" between the Siples and the Burdens on the first section. But no other riders joined us. In the end, John turned out to be a great addition to our group, and we were lucky to have him, even though we usually saw him only at meals and in camp. He never held us back or balked at chores, nor did he complain about the bugs, the route, the weather, or the isolation.

I initially got flak for being too slow in Alaska, but as the group evolved John turned into the object of biker gossip for leaving us all so constantly behind. Probably just flying high from being in the midst of a great adventure, John seemed to revel in riding off the front. Small wonder that a lone bachelor, who had to camp at night with two misfit married couples, and longed for his girlfriend, would want to create some distance during the days.

Along the Campbell Highway where we headed east near Carmacks, we rode into an isolated world. For 362 miles not a single permanent building did we see. It was like being out to sea, no ports of comfort except our camp evenings in cozy tents, one of us reading Klondike! from our library-on-wheels. Mileposts became buoys, and quavery heat waves rose along the horizon like salt water waves tossing easy-weather whitecaps. The wind could either fill our sails to push us along, or punish us with a nor'easter. At lunch stops our crew would gather and reckon distant weather. Days of thinking and dreaming, riding and eating, blended one into the other.

The mere handful of vehicles passing us per day on the Campbell became objects of interest rather than dread. Socializing with locals often took place in the middle of the road, where a pickup driver would stop and turn off the engine, elbow hanging out the window. Whether he handed out welcome snacks or drinks, or delivered a joke, his settling dust plume would drift off the road to add to already-dusty vegetation just off the shoulder. Even big rigs found time to stop.

But Yukon roads consisted of a maddening variety of gravel surfaces, good and bad, and the Campbell, although it had been open to traffic only four years, was no exception. These northern roads suffer from surface shifts caused by permafrost, and have to be graded regularly or fall into wash-



Greg Siple and John Likins on the North Klondike Highway.

boardy, rutted, pot-holed disarray. Motorists would be flogged every which way on a neglected road, nuts and bolts shaken off and scattered like chicken feed along the highway, which turned into the flotsam and jetsam of the open road. In Alaska I found a portable radio that hit the dirt, its parts scattered along the shoulder for 20 yards. I patiently gathered the trail of pieces, blew off the dust, and optimistically re-assembled it. Voila! I had a working radio. A road grader working on the horizon could spoil our day. To level a gravel road, graders scraped the high parts down into low areas, causing hidden wells of deeper gravel that can flounder a cyclist. Freshly graded roads meant loose gravel everywhere, and our daily goal of 50-60 miles took much longer to complete. But a neglected road had well-worn ruts we could follow, potholes we could weave around, and often had hard-packed smoother dirt strips to ride for short distances. Our slow pace allowed choice and precision of path through the maze.

Although we disliked washboarding, the hard-packed series of wave-like deposits from motorized use, it could be fun if the troughs between waves happened to match the wheel base of our bicycles. In that case we stood on our pedals and let the bikes roller-coaster along, like Kentucky

Derby jockeys standing in their stirrups at the end of a race. Washboarding, which could rattle your amalgam fillings loose, occurred at points of motorized acceleration or braking, usually on one side of the road at a time. With light traffic we could sometimes switch to the opposite side to avoid them.

Fifty pounds lighter than Dan and nine inches shorter, Greg's physique and level of stamina came much closer to mine, and his quirky sense of humor made him an ideal riding companion. Talking constantly on the road, we made conversations last for days. A subject could be thoroughly explored without the least boredom, especially with a tailwind, when a days' travel turned to delight in our biker lifestyle. On headwind days the chit-chat made the miles fly much faster than with a head-down grind. I sang Girl Scout camp songs to lighten the way on long downhills or when riding solo.

In our gravel road reverie we lived in the moment. Fit and maybe more content, our troubles were less able to keep pace. But at Watson Lake we would have to start riding the dreaded ALCAN (Alaska-Canada Highway) southeast for a long, long way. The all-gravel section, from Watson Lake in the Yukon, to Ft. St. John, British Columbia, would be about 590 miles. Dan and Lys, especially reluctant to bicycle

the ALCAN, had driven it with friends in the fall of 1971 to research routes for Hemistour. They witnessed a bad stretch, about 345 miles long, with a poor surface and hilly terrain. More semi-trucks, lots of RVs, campers, cars, and dust, billowing dust, were hallmarks of the road, in comparison with our little Yukon by-ways. Worse, people drove at higher speeds on the wider ALCAN, increasing the danger of sharing the road with motor vehicles. If not covered with metal grates, or permanent grills to deflect flying gravel, motor vehicle windshields would get broken or cracked and have to be replaced. We were continually warned about being hit by flying gravel: "What are you going to do about all those stones hitting you?" they would say. We'd get hurt, we were crazy to do it. While thinking it couldn't be that bad for slow-moving cyclists, we were definitely intimidated. Higher prices for supplies, more commercialism, and harried travelers were other negatives.

Maybe we expected the worst, but coming to the end of the Yukon seemed like the end of a world we would never know again. Then I talked to a truck driver who changed everything. He knew of a back road.

TOO BIG, BUT MAYBE DAT'S WHY IT FEELS SO GOOD. I'M KEEPING IT.

I had a 56 Sam set aside for me, but the 56s sold out, so I gave up mine to a customer. I didn't want to be without a Sam, and I could've gotten a 52 (I rode the prototype a ton and liked it a lot), but something possessed me to get a 60, and just shove down the saddle and bar, instead.

The goal on any bike is to get the saddle and bar in the right place, and once you do that, the size doesn't make that much difference. Except with the too-big 60, I can't even straddle the bike, and that's not a good thing. When I lift the front wheel up onto a sidewalk, I've got no lift-zone; and let me tell you, you want that lift-zone.

But let me also tell you, it's the most comfortable riding bike I own, and every bike I own is dreamy in that regard. I'm all for minimal exposure on the seat post, but this one is too minimal even for me. Over the years I've gotten used to more stem quill showing, and I like it, but this one is shoved down far, because as much as I like my bar high, I didn't want to get



My pbh is 85 and the frame is a 60, and the top tube slopes up 6-degrees.

used to a bar so high on a bike so big that it would make my right-fitting bikes feel wrong.

I'd planned to put cantilever brakes on my Sam, but the shoved-down stem didn't allow for smooth front cable routing, so I went with a V-brake up front and a cantilever (which I'd already put on) in back.

If I were out and about and saw one of our bikes set up this way, I'd be bummed and ashamed. I'd want to swap it for a smaller size. I don't recommend this, but I'm not going to give it up, either.



Top left and right show precise hand-miters. Bottom left photo shows ingenious way to keep the rod from slipping. Bike as shown after a successful Sub-24-Hour overnight in the local hills

ADD A SECOND TOP TUBE TO ANY BIKE

I wanted to try it. I'm not claiming anything wonderful about it, but I kind of like the woody look down there, and I we're getting used to double top tubes on Bombadils and the big Homers, and I wanted one on my old favorite camping bike. I'd seriously consider this on a too-flimsy bike if I was going to tour on it. So it's not entirely a joke. Not at all.

With more time and electronic tools, the fit-up could be a lot better. This was a quickie.



Teresa Rodriguez



Juan Marquez



Julie Rak



Miriam Lugo



Russ Kaye



Sharmila Nadisan



Yolanda Nieves





View of Waterbury from the Greyhound bus.

WATERBURY LEATHER WORKS

Waterbury Leatherworks makes our Sackville bags, and I went there in early March to meet the Waterburys. Waterbury the town is about 45 miles southwest of Hartford, Connecticut—insurance capital of the country. To me, being born and raised in the S.F. Bay area of California, Waterbury looks like a nice old town, the sort of which we don't have here in the west with old buildings, and many of them, brick. I was glad to see that Waterbury Leather Works is in the biggest, brickiest building I've even seen.

It's a five-stories tall, shaped like a squared U. From the early '80s to 2008 it was the home of Waterbury Garment, a thriving children's clothing that took up the whole building. There's a half-decent chance that some of you 50+ year olds were tykes, some of your clothes were made there.

But the times don't allow American-made children's clothing, so the big brick building now houses about fifteen smaller businesses, and as far as we're concerned Waterbury Leather Works is the king of them all.

It's an old company with a long history, but a newish name. Now General Manager Russ Kaye started it under the name of C & R Handbags (his wife is Cindy, and he's R) in 1985, as a contractor for Dooney & Bourke, the super fancy lady's purse company. His dad had a good position there, and dad imbued son with design and manufacturing standards that serve them, and us well, and—if you have a Sackville *you* well, today.

Then in 1993, Russ sold C & R to working-man's tool belt and bag maker McGuire-Nicholas, and continued to supervise the manufacturing. I have a McGuire-Nicholas bag, and it's all right. Three years later, in 1996, McGuire-Nicholas sold it to Ernest Bentley, the current owner and other half of the pair I flew there to meet in early March.

Like Russ, Ernest has bags in his blood, too. He was plant manager for J & R Handbags, a high-end women's line, for years. They're a good team. In private conversations with each of them, Russ said Ernest was a good guy, and Ernest said the same about Russ. I like them both.

Three years ago they had a booming business with 28 employees, stitching fine bags for a dozen or so companies. The economy tanked, and now Waterbury is down to 8 employees and fewer customers, and we're glad to be one of them.

Have you ever looked at luggage made in the '30s, '40s, and '50s, when the machines were manned by Helen, Ruth, Ethel, Dorothy, Betty, Lucille, and Mildred? It's a military level of quality fairly largely foreign to the 21st century. But it's the house standard at Waterbury still, but in this case it's Shamila, Minerva, Yolanda, Julie, Teresa, and Juan. Plus Ernest and Russ.

The work area is about 60 feet wide and 180 feet long, with many vacant workstations. The work moves at a pace that seems right for a crew that's familiar and skilled in doing it, and is not under the gun to overproduce. There's no slacking, but there's none of the "can't look up, no time to talk" pace that I've seen in other factories. It's a quiet workshop, and the eight



Left to right: Juan Marquez, Yolanda Nieves, Julie Rak, Sharmila Nadisan, Teresa Rodriguez, Minerva Echeandia, Miriam Lugo holding the first Sackville bag.



Owner Ernest Bently, left; and Production Manager and former owner Russ Kaye. The best two bag-maker/designers/prototype makes/idea generators/problem solvers we've ever worked with, by a good margin.



Sewing the bags, melting the thread ends, installing a buckle.

workers know they're the sole survivors of the economic downturn.

We went to Waterbury for the U.S. labor, and largely for the quality of the bags, and their general expertise. They've made so many different styles over the years, with every kind of flap, pocket, sleeve, buckle, zipper, and combination imaginable.

We've worked with several bag makers over the years—and tons of other makers for non-bag products. Typically, you submit a design, and they make it. If there's something difficult to make about it, they'll suggest a minor change to make sewing it easier, but other than that, they just forge ahead. Ernest and Russ, to their credit, never take the path of least resistance and always improve upon our ideas. They figure they're the experts on all bag matters; they've built hundreds of thousands of super high-end bags in every possible design, they don't want to make anything funky.

They aren't yes-men, either. When I suggest a detail or submit a design, it stands about a 50-50 chance of passing. Details I overlook, they catch. Compromises I approve, they don't.

Underside melted & smeared thread-ends

When you're sitting there stitching a seam, at some point the stitch has to end, and you cut the thread. Waterbury's standard

is to end the stitch on the underside of the bag, where it won't show. This may have come about on \$400 women's handbags, where a dangling thread might scare somebody off a high society woman. It wouldn't scare me off, and it shouldn't scare you off, but they're coming from the top-most reaches of the handbag market, so every Sackville bag has underside thread-ends.

Then they burn the nylon thread and smear it, so it won't dangle or unravel. We're really happy to be working with Waterbury, and there are about eight more models we're working on. Everything happens slowly, but they'll be good when they land.

Filling out the line

We need and will get a boxy handlebar bag, rear and front panniers (maybe dual-duty), a messenger bag, a daypack, and that should do it. It never was and still isn't the plan to make x number of bags; the new models just come up as the want arises. In any case, the handlebar bag should be here by February 28; the panniers, by mid-March, the daypack by April, and the messenger bag (we might axe this one) by mid-May. Anybody who knows us well knows that it won't happen like that, but it is, honestly, our intent.



This chainstay is 45.5cm long, longer than the chainstays on most touring bikes, even biggies. The frame, coincidentally, is also 45.5cm. And the bike handles incredibly. Brisky-frisky, no twitchiness, just great.

LONGA CHAINSTAYS, DEY HELPA DA SMALL BIKES

Small bikes usually ride worse than bigger bikes, because they're too reactive. It comes from being low to the ground and short of wheelbase. Longer chainstays fix that, but most builder-designers think, "hey, small bike, proportionally shorter chainstays." Those small-short bikes fall too quickly, descend too squirrely, and are harder and less safe to ride.

Five years ago a custom customer ordered a bike, and it was a 46. It had 46cm chainstays with 26-inch wheels, and it rides like a regular bike. He bombs down the mountain on it, and now our small bikes have long chainstays. It's the right thing to do on a small bike. You don't just maintain the proportions of a bigger one.



The sun cooked this sidewall in about three months of summer storage. This particular sidewall is especially tough, and has layers underneath still intact. But still; time to go.

DA SUN, IT BAKE-A DE SIDEWALLS

Skinwalls, in particular, turn brittle dryness when exposed to enough sunlight. So, if you live in a hot place and ride skinwalls, don't store your bike outside. Now, Armorall is supposed to protect tires from sun, and that may be your salvation if you in Tempe and must keep your bike outside. Keep Armorall off the tread, though, because it's slippery stuff. Tires on display at trade shows are often shined up with Armorall to make them glisten. They have to be de-Amorall-ed before they can be ridden safely.

Blackwall tires are way less vulnerable. They tent to weigh more and look worse, but that's the breaks.



Baskets easily fit triangles on the side, too—and another on the front. Imagine the possibilities when you have two baskets on your bike. We are NOT just trying to pump triangle sales.

TRIANGLES ALL AROUND

Few if any can match our fondness for the dorky touring triangle. It's a lifesaver, literally, and unlike flasher lights, it's nearly as effective in the day as it is at night. Well, maybe not nearly, but it still shows up great and gets you noticed.

We've taken to putting them on baskets, and why not? The point is to be seen, and these work great. You may be thinking, "hey, aren't motorists accustomed to seeing those on the backs of things, and if so, won't it make them feel funny, or somehow endanger you if you put one on the front?" The answer to that is easy: I doubt it. When you ride through intersections, you need all the help you can get. Triangles!



Everybody who was into bikes in '83 recognizes this shot of Jobst Brandt from an Avocet tire ad. He is riding down Haskins Hill on Pescadero Road, between Silicon Valley and the Pacific Ocean, and still uses the same form and technique 27 years later.

CORNER LIKE A TRIANGLE

A bicycle is so inherently stable that at moderate speeds or in gentle corners, it lets you get away with bad habits that will cause you to crash on harder, faster turns. It's almost exactly like whacking slow-pitch softballs lobbed underhanded to you by your favorite niece, and then up steps Sandy Koufax and fires you a 90 mph fastball. Bikes are so easy to ride, if you can ride them, that your form tends to collapse when things are not dire. This How To won't change that, but it's a good short course in cornering, and it may steer you back on track.



Your path

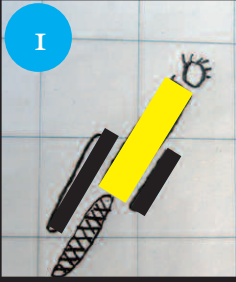

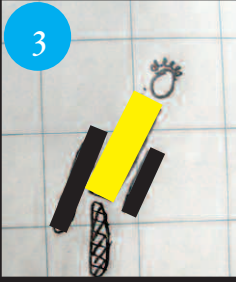


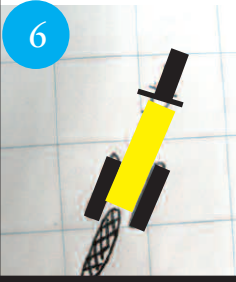
Turn a corner the way a baseball player runs bases. As you approach the corner, drift outward by leaning your bike slightly in the opposite direction of the corner. Then, as you can see a bit around the corner, cut it sharply, look at where you want to go, because your bike tends to follow your eyes. Point your hips into the turn. Your hips are magnificently powerful steerers. Then, once you've done this and cut the turn, let the bike drift outward toward the middle of the road as you exit the turn.

The non-baseball version: In the kind of parking that should be called parallel parking but isn't, you can't just approach and cut into it, or you'll hit the other car. You have to swing wide, then cut, and then all's well. It's the same with turning a corner on the basepaths or the road. Approach middle, swerve or drift to the outside, then cut when you can see past the corner.

Solid line GOOD: The outer drift sets you up for a sharp cut, minimizes the drift, shortens the path.

Dotted line BAD: When you don't set up your turn, you drift like mad (you could die) and ride more distance.

Six body & bike positions. Pick one!

					
<p>Mark Abele & Jobst Brandt Outer pedal down, inner pedal up, legs parallel with body, outer pedal weighted more.</p>	<p>Classic knee-out Like Mark & Jobst, but inside knee out. Weight the outer pedal & imagine catching wind and pivoting with inside leg. Jay keeps up with Tom Ritchey with this method.</p>	<p>Oppo-Phinney Not a bad way for wet roads. If you need more lean, tilt the bike down so it's in line with your body. Too conservative for racers & Jobst, but it works well.</p>	<p>Davis Phinney The ex-pro leaned his bike, kept his body rather upright. If he needed more turn, he leaned his body. Unusual but it worked for him.</p>	<p>Giuliano M. Ohio's best descender leans, but tucks his inside knee over the top tube to keep his weight over wheels. Fastest Mt. Diablo descender I ever saw, even in rain.</p>	<p>Abe "Cranks Horizontal" Lincoln The best way on dirt or bad surfaces. Allows body english mid-turn, for more control. Fine on roads, too. Easy to shift pedals from this position.</p>

Three other things you need to know before turning pro

1. Jobst (see left) sez brake in turns

"The old axiom "never brake in a curve" is all wet. Fast guys always brake in curves ...with a fine touch. At a 45° lean angle, lateral force is 1G and trimming that with 0.1G braking gives a total traction demand of the square root of the sum of squares of 1.0 and 0.1, which is 1.005G... or insignificantly more than just rolling through the curve."

I'm sure the Jobst's math is right, but here: If you're shooting for maximum speed, carry speed into the turn, feather the brakes as little as required to make the turn, and stop braking at the apex, and coast on through. That's good technique at any speed, but you don't always have to brake for turns. Sometimes you can slow down enough just by sitting up and catching wind. And on rides where you aren't going for max speed but just want to be reasonably smooth through the turn, brake more sooner and coast sooner. Nobody will pass you, because you aren't in a race.

Now, if you're going too fast midway through a turn, you can't finesse your way out of it, and all you want is to save your skin: Unlean the bike (put it upright), aim it toward the edge of the road, sit back, and brake hard.

Recreational riding is not about maximizing your speed and living a private fantasy, but good technique means safer riding at any speed. Work on your technique and the speed will come naturally, whether you care about it or not. Ride within your limits, and don't scare yourself unnecessarily.

2. Watch where you look

Because you'll go there. Crashin' rookies get scared and look at the cliff, at the parked cars, at the gravel shoulder, and ride there. This phenomenon, called target fixation, is as real as real gets. You can't help it. Back when we were monkey-men and monkey-women, those who didn't attend to danger got eaten. Those who kept their eyes off the prey mis-threw their spears, and riders who don't look where they want to go, don't go there.

3. Steer with your hips

Former Bstone salesrep and Super Week race winner Mike King told me this secret, and it's the most amazing thing. When you go into a turn, turn your hips into it. You won't believe what a difference this makes. Unicyclists and no-hands riders do this all the time, and bicyclers should, too. This is the single best tip you'll ever get. If you paid \$5 for this issue, you got your money's worth with that tip. If you're reading this free online, you owe five bucks, buddy boy. Steer with your hips, hips, hips.



This old Ideale saddle was the most swaybacked, ridge-y saddle of all time. Fixed with fine firm foam, it's comfortable. Ideally, no pun intended, the leather would be soaked and softened, then stuffed. The foam would prevent further sagging...as foam does.



This Ginzu II knife, bought new for \$2.39 in the early '80s, is a superb implement for cutting foam. Any bread knife will do. And then for the smaller pieces, of course, a shorter blade does fine. Serrations are nice, but not necessary.

RE-PERK A SAGGY SADDLE WITH CHEAP FIRM FOAM

If you hang around leather saddle raconteurs, you'll hear stories of Brooks saddles going on for twenty years. But dead animal skin dries and gets hard and cracks and shrivels over time. You can delay this with saddle covers and goop, and by tensioning the nose bolt and lacing the flaps. But all skin, whether reptile, human, or bovine, eventually craps out. Scoff if you will, but you've sat on leather-covered foam before—in expensive sofas and car seats. It works in bike seats, too.

Cheap firm foam can give a swaybacked saddle back a second, vigorous life longer than the first. As long as the foam holds up, the saddle won't stretch.

The air space below the leather offers no support, so it lets the saddle sag and stretch. Stuff it with firm foam and it can't. And the saddles we've stuffed and are riding feel great. I did it to my daughter's B.18 without her knowing, and on her way to the train in the morning, she said, "What did you do to my saddle? It feels great." It was saggy before, and I just jammed a 3 x 7-inch wide right down the middle.

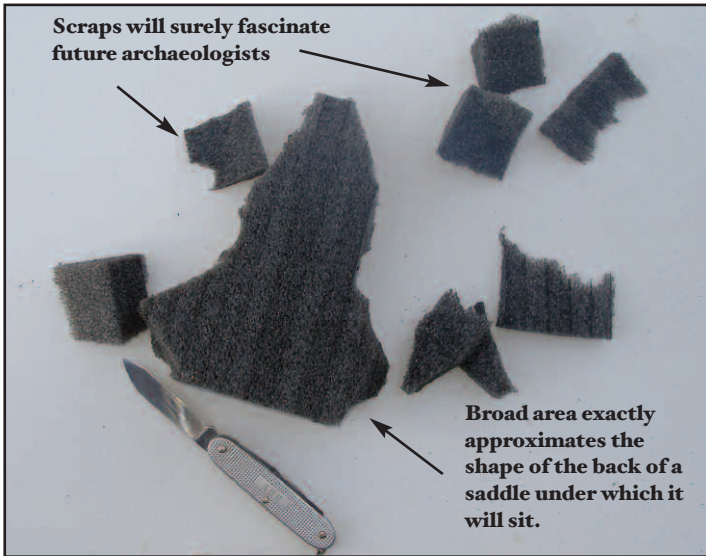
The hunt for fine firm foam

If you've bought a bike from us and kept the foam, you're rich in foam, unless you tossed it. Packing stores probably sell some kind of foam. I doubt the saddle makers will develop their own stuffin'. There's not enough money in it, and they'd see it as admittance of failure, or something.

We'll sell you a nice, chunky little block of bike-packing foam. Maybe there's a better foam, but this works fine, and we have no time to look.

Will blocking the air inhibit breathing? It's not a surgical fit, and I suspect there's not a lot of air movement through the leather, anyway. If your nose is stuffed and you open your mouth wide and close your lips on a saddle, you'll see how well leather stuffed with oils or waxes breathes. In the name of science, I'm proud to say I've tried. I recommend it to all who say leather breathes.

Anyway, so far we've saved six saddles, and improved the comfort of each. Viva cheap firm foam!



Once you have your fine firm foam, go to it with a knife. Smaller cuts are best handled with a smaller knife, but foam is carver-friendly, and you'll find you can do no wrong. It's best to start with too-fatta chunk. You can force it into the space and it'll stick. If you cut too small and have gaps to fill, foam scraps do that just fine. The hunk of foam is not a fist-sized raw diamond you're trying to cut for the Queen of Queensland, and don't expect your first attempt to be ultra-superb.



The most comfortable saddle in the world. A B.67 I cut out too much. Lost support. Even lacing didn't resurrect it. The foam totally saved it, and it's now on a friend's bike. I don't care who you are or what your crotch probs are—this saddle is a pillow crotch, and that's that.

Emil here was riding a super-saggy B.17. First I laced it, then I stuffed it. The shape is back, and he loves it.



Selle An-Atomica are the comfort Viceroy's, but they flex more than Brooks. This one was totally saved by stuffing.

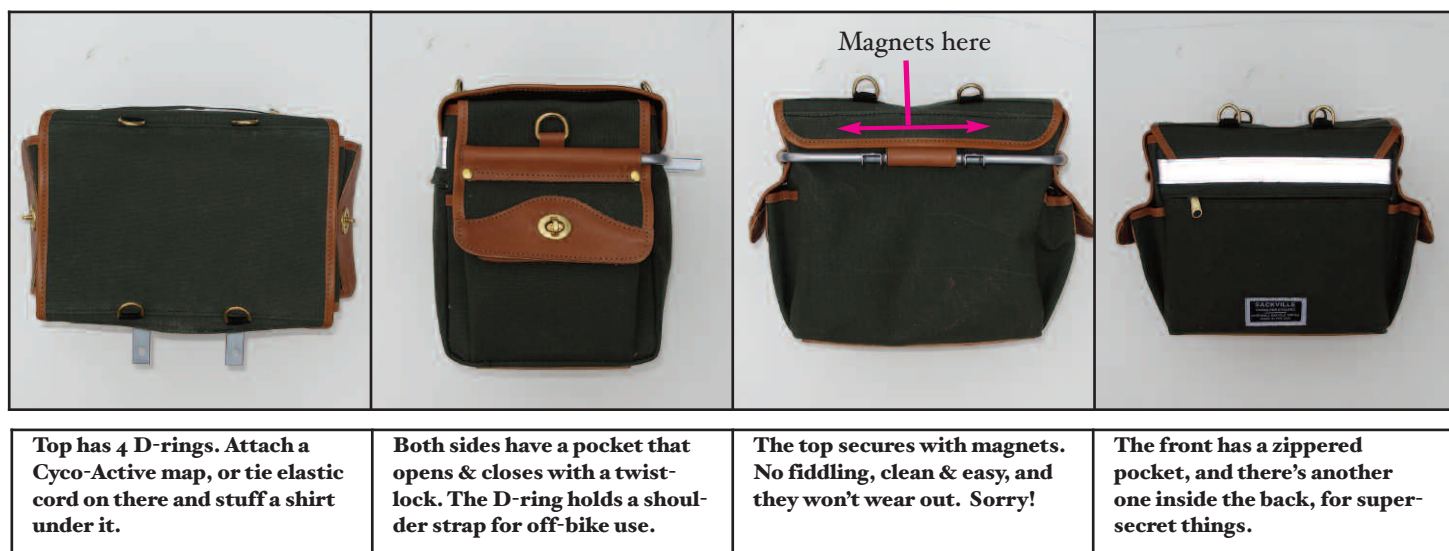
Before stuffing, this Selle An-Atomica was sagging to beat the band...as swaybacked as the day is long...a hollow shadow of its former firmer self. Stuffing took no time at all, restored its shape, and it's an everyday saddle again.



Now that Sella An-Atomica and Brooks both have cut-out saddles, it may occur to you to cut-out your own. There are worse ways to spend five minutes, and all you need is a sharp knife, an imitation Bic pen to mark it with, and medium muscles. This shape seems fine. Without the foam, too much structure is lost in the cut. It might work well enough to keep the pressure off a festering pustule, but under a normal crotch it feels odd. A skinnier cut would help a lot, but in this case, this was how I cut it, and there was no going back. So basically, I thought I wrecked it. The firm foam fixed it, and it is now as comfortable as can be.

Cut a trough in the foam, for pustule-protection or just more comfort? The saddle is your oyster rasa...explore away!





A NEW HANDLEBAR BAG, THE SACKVILLE BARSACK

It's been years since we've had a handlebar bag in our line. Competition in the handlebar bag game is pretty stiff, and we mean that as a complement to the many top-notchers already out there. Most of the niftier ones are the boxy French style—basically a box with a flap and some pockets. So is the BarSack. The Sackville BarSack isn't filling a niche that wasn't already jam-packed, but it is adding a nice one to the fray, and beyond that, it has the look and quality of a Sackville, because it is one.

Boxy bags typically open on the rider's side, to give easier access when riding, and so the wind will hold down an unsecured lid, rather than blowing it open. So does the BarSack. Most close with elastic loops around hooks, a method that's worked well for sixty or more years and needs no defending. The BarSack rebels, and uses magnets.

We considered the pros & cons, the fears & concerns one might have with magnets—weakening over time, not being able to overfill the bag and have elastic stretch to accommodate—but Ernest and Russ at Waterbury have used these magnets on octillions of women's handbags for years, with nary a crap-out. If yours is the first to fail, the D-ring on the back of the flap is easily rigged to secure the flap; a backup you won't need.

As for overfilling: Use elastic on those flap-mounted D-rings and stuff a jacket under it. At some point you're confronted with the fact that a handlebar bag is best suited to smallish loads and gear such as snacks, gloves, sunglasses, small camera, wallet, cell phone, a small tool kit, and a light windbreaker—and this bag gobbles up all that. If you occasionally have to overstuff it, you can deal. If you do it a lot, supplement it with a saddlebag, trunksack, basket, or whatever.

Functionally & aesthetically, the magnets are magnificent. They let you open the lid quickly with one mittened hand in the dark, even if you're clumsy; and the closure is secure. Not to denigrate elastic—which has been used forever & is replaceable in a pinch. But in this application, we like 'gnets even more.

We tried three prototypes before the final. They included different openings, mountings, securings, and sizes. At first we wanted a bag that didn't need a rack. That has its appeal, but required complication in the rigging, and even when fully rigged, was wigglier than we wanted.

So we went to an existing Minoura product as a bag-mount, but it too had problems. So we went back to the Nitto F15 Boxy Rack (now the BarSack Rack), which we developed years and years ago. The bad news: It costs more than nothing & more than the Minoura thing. The good news: Mounting is slick, simple, and swift, and it holds the bag securely, with ample knuckle room in back and plenty of hand and thumb room on the sides. It is a **perfect** solution, and now we have to scramble to get some in stock.

It's the rack we sold with the old Baggins Boxy bag, years ago. If you still have that bag, you can new-grade to the Sackville and use the same rack. If you're starting from scratch, you buy both. The BarSack Rack (new name) requires a drop bar with a 26mm sleeve. That rules out old cheap drop bars and modern ultrafat racing bars, but rules *in* bazillions of halfway normal top-quality drop bars, including the ones we offer.

The Sackville BarSack is a fine handlebar bag by any standard, and comes in two super pricey Scottish fabrics:

Dark olive cotton, stiff, dense, not oily, waterproof; and **medium grey ripstop cotton-poly**, a hair lighter but still with plenty of body, at least as waterproof, equally dense.

The BarSack has three outer pockets (two on the sides, one in front), and one zipped inside pocket. If you want a map case, buy a *CycoActive* one (we have them, \$12). The bag is designed for it, and it's handy to have it removable—so you can strap stuff on top when you don't need the map, or replace it when it gets cruddy. We include a shoulder strap which fixes easily onto side-mounted D-rings. There's a highly reflective 3M Scotchlite strip across the front, as there is on all Sackville bags, because every little bit helps.

SHIMANO'S NEW 12 X 36 9SP



We expect this to be a popular one. Most of us here are putting them on new bikes we build up. Ratios: Count 'em yourself! You get the 12t, you get the 36t, and the in-between progression is normal, smooth.

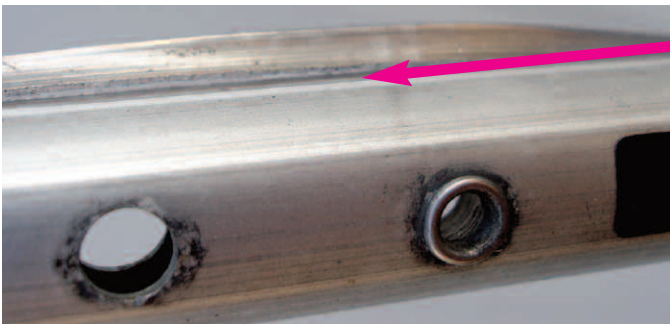
'Tis indeed rare when Shimano comes out with something brand new that appeals to grumpy us, but that wasn't the plan so much as an unintended consequence. This 36t 9sp cassette has all kinds of good things going for it, and you should get one or two.

First, the 36t lets you stay in your middle ring longer. Never a bad thing, that. If you have a 36t chainring, you get a 1:1 without shifting to the granny.

Second, the small cog isn't an 11t, but a 12t. Now, whether 11t or 12t, hardly matters, but we and probably you also think a 12t is the more useful if you aren't racing.

Third, it is entirely compatible with Shimano's existing mountain & touring derailleurs. They're rated to 34t—at least, that's been the case up to now—and you'd halfway expect Shimano to require a new derailleur to go along here. But no. Thank you, Shimano.

Fourth & last, it's cheap. About \$45, whatever. It's not \$90.



This don't happen unless there's a rock in the pad; and if there's a rock in the pad, it makes a scraping noise that, if unattended to, you get used to and don't hear anymore. Eventually the tire blows off the splayed-out rim, *blam!*

DON'T BRAKE W/ROCKS I

The braking surface shows scoring by a rock in the brake pad. When the groove got deep enough, air pressure deformed the rim in two places, each about eight inches long.

Disc brake fundamentalists could certainly use this as an argument against rim brakes, but it's really an argument against rocks in brake pads. True, true, true—a disc brake avoids this altogether; but we show this here because you it's unusual. I've seen or heard of this happening only about five times in more than 35 years of hanging around bikes. When a rock gets stuck in a brake pad, it makes a noise when you brake. It's best to stop and pry it out with a pocketknife, and it's good to do it soon, before you get accustomed to the

sound. That can happen. When my girlfriend and I rode across the country many years ago, well, when I got back a friend noticed I'd worn 90 percent of the way through my front derailleur cage. It was a thin and windowed cage (Huret Jubilee derailleur), but still. You'd think she'd have noticed the noise and told me, but nay, not so.



Another week of braking with a rock, and a big long strip of rim would have become separated, and the tube would have blammed.

DON'T BRAKE W/ROCKS II

Cannot over ultra-reemphasize this.. Another rim, another rider.. There is not one thing wrong with this rim (design-wise). It had so much potential. Yes, rocks are a fact of life on the roads and trails, but it's good to attend to the sounds of scoring. And th signs of it: Usually there's a bright line of clean aluminum around the circumference of the rim, caused by, you know, the rock. The best tool for surgical extraction is the hole punch on a Swiss Army knife. But any blade'll do..

PUTTING YOUR FLOPPED-OFF CHAIN BACK ON USING ROADSIDE DEBRIS SO AS TO KEEP YOUR HANDS CLEAN

Chain flop-off is a fact of life with most bikes, even finely tuned ones; although it is way more common on the coarsely tuned. Don't cuss when it happens; put it back on—while maintaining your spic-n-span hands.



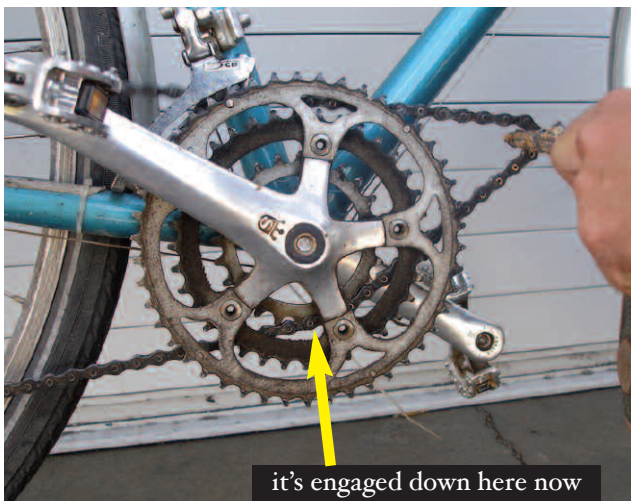
it's off. bumper!

It happens. More often on triples than on doubles. What causes it? Three things: Bumps, the sudden slack caused by a massive downshift, and I dunno what else. Something.



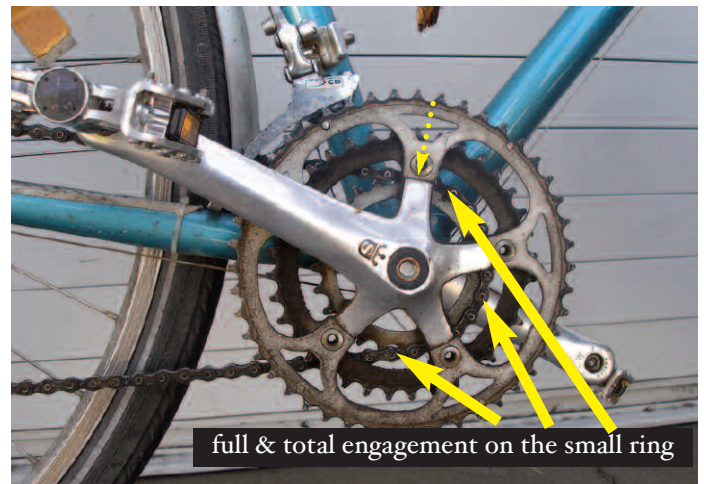
common stick. thanks, tree.

Any stick, even one from a popsicle tree, will work. For more fingerless options, see way below.



it's engaged down here now

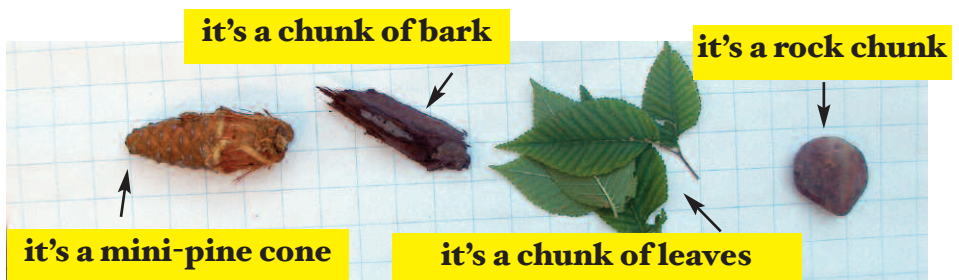
Use the stick to lift the chain forward and onto the small ring. The crank will rotate backward, and you just sort of go with the flow and guide the chain onto the ring as you go.



full & total engagement on the small ring

It' takes ten seconds when you get good at it. There are clamp-on devices you can get to prevent the chain from dropping off the inside. N-Gear makes one, and there's one called the Third Eye.

Can't find a stick? Where are you riding? There's always sticks around, as part of the agreement all animals have with nature. But here are some alternatives.



it's a chunk of bark

it's a rock chunk

it's a mini-pine cone

it's a chunk of leaves

RECENT NEWS IN THE 650B TIRE WORLD

To the dismay of the naysayers, 650B is well-established as the RC Cola of the tire-and-wheel world, with much of the credit going to early pioneers and continuing supporters Jan Heine, Panaracer, Schwalbe, Kirk Pacenti, and Velocity (for the rims). It is a practical and sometimes ideal wheel size for bikes that aren't too small or too big, and we're glad, but not shocked, that it's taken root.

Here are two newbies, both made by Panaracer, each with its specialty, and we'll stock 'em both.

Soma New Express. Super tough midweight all-'rounder



You can't see it, but the whole inner tire, bead-to-bead, is lined with a yellow kevlar "hypertext" (?) shield to both ward off thorns and protect the sidewall from sharp rocks and box cutters. The chances of a sidewall blowout, even when the sun has baked the tire years from now, are slim. Tread is the familiar Pasela tread, which seems good for everything.

Pacenti Pari-Moto. Super light event tire.



Kirk (Pacenti) designed this as an "event" tire, but that doesn't play fair with the tire's capabilities. We'd call it a lightweight, puffy road tire, good for general use with a nod (and certain concessions) to lightness.

*The sample shown actually weighs 291g, but with a 1.5mm tread thickness. Kirk says the production tires will be thicker—about 2mm—and the 308g listed here is a prediction.

Fenderable with tires up to 33.333mm.

Threaded headset and quill stem also available, same price.



Shown with a threadless steerer, but also available with a conventional quill stem and threaded headset. Frame w/fork (\$2,000), or we can build you a complete bike with roadie parts (as shown) or the standard Rivendell fare—triple crank, bar-end shifters, lower gears. Roadie version, about 20lb and \$4,500; Riv Std way: 22lb and \$3,300.

HERE'S A GOOD SPORTY ZIPPY ROAD BIKE: THE ROADEO

Maybe you've seen the new Roadeo on our site, maybe not. It's our version of a club-rider's bike, as opposed to a pure racing bike. It's every bit as "fast" as a pure racing bike, but about 20-times safer, more comfortable, more versatile, and *because* it's those things, it's more fun, too. To our way of thinking, right or wrong, up or down, it is what a clubster ought to be on.

To say there's not a problem with the typical modern road bike is to be in denial. Seriously—no joke, and not trying to be controversial or mean.

A bike that won't take a 28mm tire, won't fit a fender for riding on wet roads, won't let you get your bars high enough for comfort, and that has a fork made of a material notorious for its sudden failures—at prices between \$2,000 and \$7,000—well, that's a problem.

Mark is our fastest guy, and he rides with fast guys. He rides his custom Rivendell cyclo-cross bikes with 32-33mm tires on the roads and trails, but thought we needed a bike more roadie-ish, with sidepulls. One that fit and was designed for the stuff clubbies ride these days—threadless headsets, clamp-on stems, mainly. Mark is practical enough to want a fenderable bike, because until

global warming is complete we're still going to have rain and wet roads; but he forbade rack mounts and other concessions to utility. He said, and he's right, that we have so many other bikes that do all that, and so this one didn't have to.

By not having to, we could lighten the tubing (saving maybe half a pound a frame and so being more attractive from *that* point of view).

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It's a lot like the A. Homer Hilsen, but isn't as versatile. That part is OK. If you have one roadish bike, get the Hilsen (or Hillborne). If you want a bike with Grand Road Manners but with super trail abilities and all-around usefulness (rackable, haul stuff on it, still rides ultra superbly), get the Hilsen or Hillborne. But if you've got those bases covered

and have room for a stripped down demon of a bike that you'll ride with clubbies or on solo spritzzy rides where you don't have to take stuff and you won't leave the pavement, you won't do better than a Roadeo, because that's what it's made for.

The default color is white, with red or blue trim. Other colors available, as long as they go with the decals we have (red, blue, or cream). Our design, our lugs, our all-that-stuff and made just for us by Waterford. Waterwho? Ford!

Lead times vary from a week to three months, depending on stock, paint, quirks. As always, we're happy to talk to you, answer all questions, and help you customize the Roadeo just the way you want and need it.

SHIMMY SHIMMY COCO BOP, SHIMMY SHIMMY BOP

An inconclusive & therefore unfulfilling—but, cathartic—discussion of speed-wiggle. It must be said.

One of the few Mysteries du Velo I can think of, and maybe the only one to ever halfway stump cycling's Three Wise Wons—Brown, Brandt, and the Great Greek Papadopolous—at least in the sense that I don't think they've chiseled their explanations of it in granite—is s-s-s-s-shim-m-m-m-m-m-y.

Shimmy is democratic, thank goodness. Every builder I've spoken to dreads the topic like Superman dreads kryptonite, because it comes up in one of these variants:

1. "I love my new bike, it's just great, thanks a lot...but I notice a funny thing. When I'm going about 20mph with my hands off the bar, the bike shimmy. Other than that, it's great! What should I do?"

2. I just got back from a tour on my ten year old Connoisseur Selectissimo. I'm wondering—do frames go soft after a while? Because, funny thing, but when I take my hands off the bar and give a little shake, the bike shimmy. My friend's didn't do it, and it's a Cheapy."

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Some of the time it happens when the bike is loaded heavy and high up front, and when it does, the method of loading or the weight is blamed. But sometimes it happens on unloaded bikes. Jobst says it tends to happen more in cold weather, brought on by a shaking rider with a death grip on the bars; and that is has nothing to do with weight distribution or hand-on/hands-off the bars. He says bike length and saddle height contribute to it.

Your saddle height is determined by your leg length so you can't really do anything about that. And wheelbase is a result of design targets (chainstays, top tube, head angle, fork rake, even seat tube angle and drop), not a target itself; at least that's how I see it.

And big bikes (lots of vertical height) always have disproportionately short horizontal length as it is. Reeling in the wheelbase while the bike gets bigger

and the saddle height grows will result in a bike that won't fit or work well.

Jobst also suggests that perfectly aligned bikes may shimmy more or more often than misaligned ones, but isn't sure on that one. I'm sure the solution isn't to make bikes a crooked on purpose, so where do you go from here?

• • •

Here's what I *think*, not what I *know*:

1. If the top tube is too long, skinny, or light for the rider and load, and the speed is just right (usually about 18 to 20 mph), and you're doing the wrong things with your hands, the bike may shimmy. I b-b-b-believe this because the 1992 62cm RB-1s shimmied, the 1993s didn't, and the only diff was the top tube, which fattened to 1 1/8-inch. That's not good science, but that's what happened.

2. If the headset is adjusted perfectly, the bike may shimmy. A reader wrote about this once, and suggested the fix is to snug it some. It seems to work.

Other accused culprits include untrue wheels (they have to be super wobbly to have this effect), asymmetrical loads, and too light wheels. I've accused them myself, but now I recant.

My Atlantis, built in 1997 or early 1998, has been ridden a lot and especially a lot heavily loaded on dirt trails in the local hills; and commutes, and regular old rides. There couldn't be a better-riding bike on earth, but I can induce shimmy if I have a big load in back and I hook my thumbs over the bar next to the stem and pointing toward me (it's as awkward and unnatural as it sounds, and painful). I came upon this position when I was goofing off, and the bike shimmied within three seconds. I changed positions and it stopped. I can't make it shimmy with a normal grip, or even another abnormal grip anywhere else on the bar. I even hooked my pointers right next to the stem and hung on, but no shimmy.

That's not the only time a bike will shimmy. Loaded bikes ridden no hands will often shimmy at speeds greater than 16 mph, but that's just Apollo telling you keep your hands on the bars, be the master of your ship.

This needs an abrupt conclusion, no matter how unsatisfying it may be. A satisfying one would leave you with knowing, but I've already said that I don't know, so how could I pull that off? My unsatisfying conclusion:

If the bike is reasonably stiff and straight and nothing is clearly wacky about the geometry—and here I'm not talking about a little more or less trail than you may think is absolutely proper, or a degree or even three of head tube angle; I'm talking about stuff so wacky I can't even put it into words—then I'll bet you a million amoebas it won't shimmy 99.9 percent of the time you ride it. When it does, change your grip. Shift your weight. Load it differently. Hold the top tube 'tween your knees to make it stop. Do not think your bike has a mysterious perfect storm of nautical details that culminate in a bugaboo. No bike in a Third World country shimmy.

I've talked with people who've had super stiff, oversized aluminum bikes shimmy, which suggests frame stiffness isn't a factor; but then why did the big RB-1's stop shimmying when they took on thicker top tubes and nothing else changed? Jobst—and I realize I'm quoting him out of proportion to Sheldon and the Greek, but he's had a lot more to say about it—he says when the bike is leaned slightly, the gyroscopic force of the front wheel twists the top and downtube. Would a double-top tube bike resist shimmy? I don't know.

Last thoughts: Change your grip, pedal the pedals, or touch the top tube with your knees to stop it. Be the commander of your ship, master of your bike, slayer of shimmy. Also, don't ride a loaded bike at high speed, no hands.

SIX POEMS BY STUPENDOUS POETS

Poems, for the most part, haven't rhymed for the past century and a tenth. To me, a poem that doesn't rhyme has some explaining to do. It better have something going for it, and if it's something I can get, like a good story or beat or a quirky use of words that strike a chord, then OK. But you can't just lay down one-word lines and say it's about a feeling. We misplaced The Raven entries from the last issue. It has been a while, we rearranged, and they got lost in the cleanup. This is the poetic substitute. —Grant

The Girl of Cadiz

Oh never talk again to me
Of northern climes and British ladies;
It has not been your lot to see,
Like me, the lovely girl of Cadiz
Although her eye be not of blue,
Nor fair her locks, like English lasses,
How far its own expressive hue
The languid azure eye surpasses !
Prometheus-like, from heaven she stole
The fire, that through those silken
lashes
In darkest glances seem to roll,
From eyes that cannot hide their
flashes:
And as along her bosom steal
In lengthen'd flow her raven tresses,
You'd swear each clustering lock could
feel,
And curl'd to give her neck caresses.
Our English maids are long to woo,

And frigid even in possession;
And if their charms be fair to view,
Their lips are slow at Loves confession:
But, born beneath a brighter sun,
For love ordain'd the Spanish maid is,
And who, — when fondly, fairly won,
Enchants you like the Girl of Cadiz ?
The Spanish maid is no coquette,
Nor joys to see a lover tremble,
And if she love, or if she hate,
Alike she knows not to dissemble.
Her heart can ne'er be bought or sold
Howe'er it beats, it beats sincerely;
And, though it will not bend to gold,
'T will love you long and love you dearly.
The Spanish girl that meets your love
Ne'er taunts you with a mock denial,
For every thought is bent to prove
Her passion in the hour of trial.
When thronging foemen menace Spain,
She dares the deed and shares the danger;

And should her lover press the plain,
She hurls the spear, her love's avenger.
And when, beneath the evening star,
She mingles in the gay Bolero,
Or sings to her attuned guitar
Of Christian knight or Moorish hero,
Or counts her beads with fairy hand
Beneath the twinkling rays of Hesper,
Or joins Devotion's choral band,
To chaunt the sweet and hallow'd vesper;
In each her charms the heart must move
Of all who venture to behold her;
Then let not maids less fair reprove
Because her bosom is not colder:
Through many a clime 't is mine to
roam
Where many a soft and melting maid is,
But none abroad, and few at home
May match the dark-eyed Girl of Cadiz.
— *George Gordon (Lord) Byron, 1809, who,
despite a clubfoot, was a good swimmer.*

**I Missed His Book But I
Read His Name**

Though authors are a dreadful clan
To be avoided if you can,
I'd like to meet the Indian,
M. Anantanarayanan.
I picture him as short and tan.
We'd meet, perhaps, in Hindustan.
I'd say, with admirable elan ,

“Ah, Anantanarayanan —
I've heard of you. The *Times* once ran
A notice on your novel, “an
Unusual tale of God and Man.”
And Anantanarayanan
Would seat me on a lush divan
And read his name— that sumptuous
span
Of 'a's and 'n's more lovely than

“In Xanadu did Kubla Khan” —
Aloud to me all day. I plan
Henceforth to be an ardent fan
of Anantanarayanan —
M. Anantanarayanan.
—*John Updike, 1990s*
Anantanarayanan's book is titled,
The Silver Pilgrimage.

Kubla Khan

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
 A stately pleasure-dome decree :
 Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
 Through caverns measureless to man
 Down to a sunless sea.

So twice five miles of fertile ground
 With walls and towers were girdled round :
 And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,
 Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree ;
 And here were forests ancient as the hills,
 Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.

But oh ! that deep romantic chasm which slanted
 Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover !
 A savage place ! as holy and enchanted
 As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
 By woman wailing for her demon-lover !

And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,
 As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,
 A mighty fountain momently was forced :
 Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst
 Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,
 Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail:

And 'mid these dancing rocks at once and ever
 It flung up momently the sacred river.
 Five miles meandering with a mazy motion
 Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,
 Then reached the caverns measureless to man,
 And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean :

And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far
 Ancestral voices prophesying war !

The shadow of the dome of pleasure
 Floated midway on the waves ;

Where was heard the mingled measure
 From the fountain and the caves.
 It was a miracle of rare device,
 A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice !

A damsel with a dulcimer
 In a vision once I saw :
 It was an Abyssinian maid,
 And on her dulcimer she played,
 Singing of Mount Abora.

Could I revive within me
 Her symphony and song,
 To such a deep delight 'twould win me,
 That with music loud and long,
 I would build that dome in air,
 That sunny dome ! those caves of ice !
 And all who heard should see them there,
 And all should cry, Beware ! Beware !
 His flashing eyes, his floating hair
 !

Weave a circle round him thrice,
 And close your eyes with holy dread,
 For he on honey-dew hath fed,
 And drunk the milk of Paradise.

—*Samuel Taylor Coleridge, after waking up from a dream, 1816*

LASCA

I want free life and I want fresh air;
 And I sigh for the canter after the cattle,
 The crack of the whips like shots in a battle,
 The medley of horns and hoofs and heads
 That wars and wrangles and scatters and spreads;
 The green beneath and the blue above,
 And dash and danger, and life and love --
 And Lasca!

Lasca used to ride
 On a mouse-gray mustang close by my side,
 With blue serape and bright-belled spur;
 I laughed with joy as I looked at her!
 Little knew she of books or of creeds;

An Ave Maria sufficed her needs;
 Little she cared, save to be by my side,
 To ride with me, and ever to ride,
 From San Saba's shore to LaVaca's tide.
 She was as bold as the billows that beat,
 She was as wild as the breezes that blow;
 From her little head to her little feet
 She was swayed in her suppleness to and fro
 By each gust of passion; a sapling pine
 That grows on the edge of a Kansas bluff
 And wars with the wind when the weather is rough
 Is like this Lasca, this love of mine.

She would hunger that I might eat,
 Would take the bitter and leave me the sweet;

But once, when I made her jealous for fun,
 At something I'd whispered, or looked, or done,
 One Sunday, in San Antonio,
 To a glorious girl in the Alamo,
 She drew from her garter a dear little dagger,
 And -- sting of a wasp! -- it made me stagger!
 An inch to the left, or an inch to the right,
 And I shouldn't be maundering here tonight;
 But she sobbed, and, sobbing, so swiftly bound
 Her torn reboso about the wound,
 That I quite forgave her. Scratches don't count
 In Texas, down by the Rio Grande.

Her eye was brown -- a deep, deep brown;
 Her hair was darker than her eye;
 And something in her smile and frown,
 Curled crimson lip and instep high,
 Showed that there ran in each blue vein,
 Mixed with the milder Aztec strain,
 The vigorous vintage of Old Spain.
 She was alive in every limb
 With feeling to the finger tips;
 And when the sun is like a fire,
 And sky one shining, soft sapphire,
 One does not drink in little sips.

The air was heavy, and the night was hot,
 I sat by her side, and forgot - forgot;
 Forgot the herd that were taking their rest,
 Forgot that the air was close opprest,
 That the Texas norther comes sudden and soon,
 In the dead of night or the blaze of noon;
 That, once let the herd at its breath take fright,
 Nothing on earth can stop the flight;
 And woe to the rider, and woe to the steed,
 Who falls in front of their mad stampede!

Was that thunder? I grasped the cord
 Of my swift mustang without a word.
 I sprang to the saddle, and she clung behind.
 Away! On a hot chase down the wind!
 But never was fox hunt half so hard,
 And never was steed so little spared,
 For we rode for our lives, You shall hear how we fared
 In Texas, down by the Rio Grande.
 The mustang flew, and we urged him on;

There was one chance left, and you have but one;
 Halt, jump to ground, and shoot your horse;
 Crouch under his carcass and take your chance;
 And, if the steers in their frantic course
 Don't batter you both to pieces at once,
 You may thank your star; if not, goodbye
 To the quickening kiss and the long-drawn sigh,
 And the open air and the open sky,
 In Texas, down by the Rio Grande.

The cattle gained on us, and just as I felt
 For my old six-shooter behind in my belt,
 Down came the mustang, and down came we,
 Clinging together -- and, what was the rest?
 A body that spread itself on my breast,
 Two arms that shielded my dizzy head,
 Two lips that hard on my lips were prest;
 Then came thunder in my ears,
 As over us surged the sea of steers,
 Blows that beat blood into my eyes,
 And when I could rise--
 Lasca was dead!

I gouged out a grave a few feet deep,
 And there in Earth's arms I laid her to sleep;
 And there she is lying, and no one knows;
 And the summer shines and the winter snows;
 For many a day the flowers have spread
 A pall of petals over her head;
 And the little gray hawk hangs aloft in the air,
 And the sly coyote trots here and there,
 And the black snake glides and glitters and slides
 Into a rift in a cottonwood tree;
 And the buzzard sails on,
 And comes and is gone,
 Stately and still like a ship at sea.
 And I wonder why I do not care
 For the things that are like the things that were.
 Does half my heart lie buried there
 In Texas, down by the Rio Grande?

—Frank Desprez, English playwright in the late 1800s, who moved to Texas to become a cowboy, and did. 1897 or so. This is a famous cowboy poem, famous in cowboy poem symposiums and contests, and get-togethers. All the modern cowboy poets wish they'd written it.

Boots of Spanish Leather

Oh, I'm sailin' away my own true love,
 I'm sailin' away in the morning.
 Is there something I can send you from across the sea,
 From the place that I'll be landing?

*No, there's nothin' you can send me, my own true love,
 There's nothin' I wish to be ownin'.
 Just carry yourself back to me unspoiled,
 From across that lonesome ocean.*

Oh, but I just thought you might want something fine
 Made of silver or of golden,
 Either from the mountains of Madrid
 Or from the coast of Barcelona.

*Oh, but if I had the stars from the darkest night
 And the diamonds from the deepest ocean,
 I'd forsake them all for your sweet kiss,
 For that's all I'm wishin' to be ownin'.*

That I might be gone a long time
 And it's only that I'm askin',

Is there something I can send you to remember me by,
 To make your time more easy passin'!

*Oh, how can, how can you ask me again,
 It only brings me sorrow.
 The same thing I want from you today,
 I would want again tomorrow.*

I got a letter on a lonesome day,
 It was from her ship a-sailin',
 Saying I don't know when I'll be comin' back again,
 It depends on how I'm a-feelin'.

*Well, if you, my love, must think that-a-way,
 I'm sure your mind is roamin'.
 I'm sure your heart is not with me,
 But with the country to where you're goin'.*

So take heed, take heed of the western wind,
 Take heed of the stormy weather.
 And yes, there's something you can send back to me,
 Spanish boots of Spanish leather.
 —Bob Dylan, age 22. *It's a song*. 1963

The Stone Troll

Troll sat alone on his seat of stone,
 And munched and mumbled a bare old bone;
 For many a year he had gnawed it near,
 For meat was hard to come by.
 Done by! Gum by!
 In a cave in the hills he dwelt alone,
 And meat was hard to come by.

Up came Tom with his big boots on.
 Said he to Troll: 'Pray, what is yon?
 For it looks like the shin o' my nuncle Tim.
 As should be a-lyin' in the graveyard.
 Caveyard! Pavtyard!
 This many a year has Tim been gone,
 And I thought he were lyin' in the graveyard.'

'My lad,' said Troll, 'this bone I stole.
 But what be bones that lie in a hole?
 Thy nuncle was dead as a lump o' lead,
 Afore I found his shinbone.
 Tinbone! Skinbone!
 He can spare a share for a poor old troll,
 For he don't need his shinbone.'

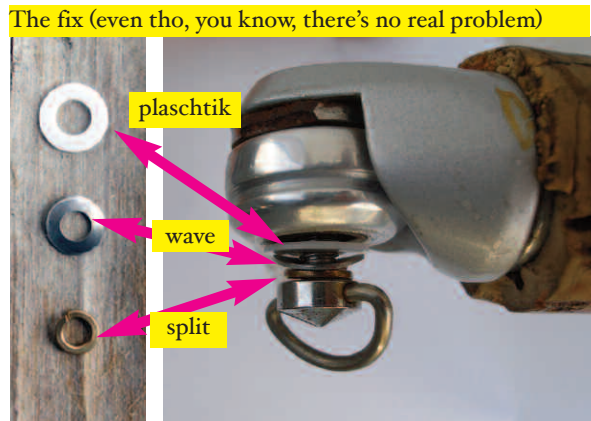
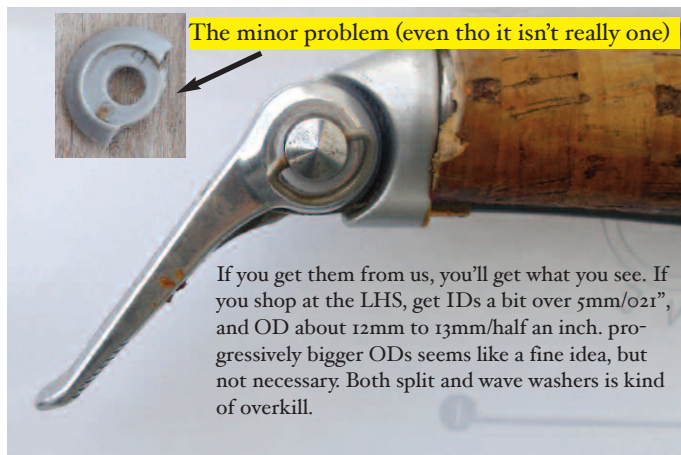
Said Tom: 'I don't see why the likes o' thee
 Without axin' leave should go makin' free
 With the shank or the shin o' my father's kin;
 So hand the old bone over!
 Rover! Trover!
 Though dead he be, it belongs to he;
 So hand the old bone over!'

'For a couple o' pins,' says Troll, and grins,
 'I'll eat thee too, and gnaw thy shins.
 A bit o' fresh meat will go down sweet!
 I'll try my teeth on thee now.
 Hee now! See now!
 I'm tired o' gnawing old bones and skins;
 I've a mind to dine on thee now!'

But just as he thought his dinner was caught,
 He found his hands had hold of naught.
 Before he could mind, Tom slipped behind
 And gave him the boot to larn him.
 Warn him! Darn him!
 A bump o' the boot on the seat, Tom thought,
 Would be the way to larn him.

But harder than stone is the flesh and bone
 Of a troll that sits in the hills alone.
 As well set your boot to the mountain's root,
 For the seat of a troll don't feel it.
 Peel it! Heal it!
 Old Troll laughed, when he heard Tom groan,
 And he knew his toes could feel it.

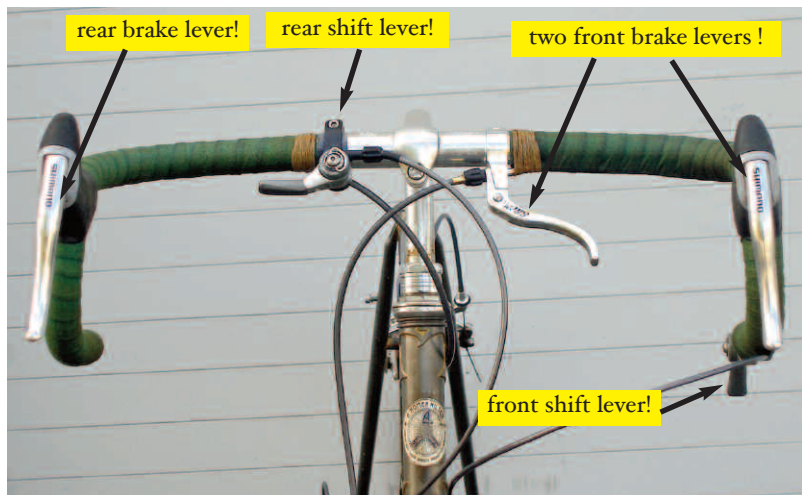
Tom's leg is game, since home he came,
 And his bootless foot is lasting lame;
 But Troll don't care, and he's still there
 With the bone he boned from its owner.
 Doner! Boner!
 Troll's old seat is still the same,
 And the bone he boned from its owner!
 —J.R.R. Tolkien, 1970s?



SILVER SHIFTER WASHERS

About ten times a year we'll get a call requesting a replacement washer, because theirs broke. The wingbolt head holds the remaining chunk in place, so the shifter still works fine, but a cracked washer is disconcerting, so we replace it. It's plastic, just as the SunTour shifter which served as a model for the Silver was. And plastic tho it be, it can go for 7, 8, 9 years without cracking, or it can crack in a year. It depends on tightness, sun exposure, and plain bad luck.

We now have washer sets (three per set, one set per shifter) that can replace the original plastic washer. They include a plastic defrictionator, a wavy washer, and a split lock washer. You can get them at a hardware store, as we did, or with an order you can request-a-set. We'll fold them in a piece of tape and go. After December 1, 2009, silver shifter orders will come with these. At least for a few months. So you'll have the original plastic ones, and you can replace them with the triplets, before or as needed.



It's clean, smart, ergonomic, functional, different but not wacky. It's *you*.

are three (III) potential drawbacks, but they're minor & may not apply. (1) Price. You buy a full set of Paul Thumbies and use only the right one; and a full set of Interruptor brake levers and use only the left one; (2) If you're a symmetricist, you are confronted with asymmetry; and (3) if you're a handlebar baggist, you'll find squatters on your favorite real estate. If those things don't apply, dive in.

A SENSIBLE ASYMMETRICAL BRAKE & SHIFTING RIG

You shift more in back, and brake more in front, so this shifter-brake lever rig—which puts the rear shifter and front brake lever on top-of the bars where your hands often dwell—is far from foolish.

Your handlebar-shifter-braker set-up isn't something you have to lock in to. It's fun to set bikes up different ways, and you'll find that hopping from bike to bike, with different brake and shifter set-ups, is remarkably non-befuddling.

We've set up a few customer's bikes this way, and they're a delight. If I were starting my own bike from scratch right now, I'd do it in a second. There



JAY'S BAG-RIGGING CREATIVITY

Some bags are totally plug-and-play, some aren't, and some can be rigged a variety of ways with equally excellent results. Jay here always figures out the slickest, best ways of doing anything.

Here he rigs his Nigel Smythe Big Boxy bag on his Sam Hillborne this way. He rests it on a Silver Hupe support, and then, using some John's Irish Straps, lashes the bag (using the slots there on the underside) to long bolts sticking out of the hourglass rack mounts that are brazed onto the seat stays. Strapping the bag to the long bolts tensions it from below and keeps the Silver Hupe locked in place. The whole thing looks rather strappy (and striped strappy at that), but it's the best way to carry this bag on this rack.

THREE CYCLING SHOES THAT AREN'T, AND ONE THAT IS

Honestly, there's no need to bolt your shoes to your pedals to enjoy the bike & pedal efficiently. Here are four normal shoes that work great or off the bike: a sneaker, a semi-dress shoe that looks toure, a sandal, and a touring shoe that looks dressy. Put them on grippy, double-side pedal and go to town; and when you get there, walk around.

(1) Adidas Samba: This classic indoor soccer & allaround knock-about shoe has satisfied hundreds of cyclists for years. Nice looks, grippy rubber sole, no problem. \$45+.

(2) Allen Edmonds Mitchell: US-made by a hi-class shoe maker and intended for weekend wear by would-be athletes—but it has everything you need for pedaling, including a sticky sole. They look semidressy, work great. Retail is \$250, but closeouts may be had for \$99. Alternatively, the replacement is the Peyton. Various widths.

(3) Sandals: Shown are Teva Hurricanes, \$39. Great sockless in summer, double-socked in winter, and lousy only in mud. Before you yelp about how bad they must be: I've pedaled 99 percent of my miles in them, for seven years. Afraid you might hurt your exposed toes? Don't be a scaredy cat.

(4) Marreschi: Italian-made touring shoe, uber-classy, thin hard sole. The sole isn't as grippy as the others (the maker may be overly concerned with not absorbing pedaling energy, which is not a problem with any of these shoes)—but they're intended to be used with toe clips and strap. If you're clipless, strapless, just use them on super grippy (studded/spiked) pedals. Fantastic-looking. About \$250, and you can find them at: <http://www.dromarti.com/>

There are hundreds of other sneakers, sandals, and regular shoes that work fantastically on grippy, double-sided pedals—it's hard to find one that doesn't. Try riding in your favorite, most comfy shoe.



TWO (2) OF MARK'S BIKES



Mark's cyclo-cross bike. One of less than half a handful of Rivendells to have two panels and pinstriped lugs, and an excellent reason to rethink the policy against it. This dark grey and bean-red bike is far from a typical Rivendell custom,, and he got away with it only because he and Joe Bell conspired in secret. The floodgates are far from open, but only a blind and stubborn Style Maintainer would forbid something that looks this good, and I'm not him yet. The cost on this paint job? Seventeen hundred dollars. Still want it? OK, I'll sign off.—*Grant*

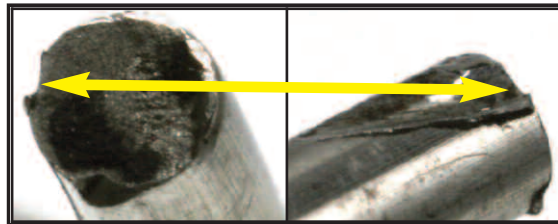
Mark's 650B'er

There were some who said it would never happen, but rather than face another rainy winter commuting on 700x23 tires, Mark, our mechanic-among-other-things, finally ditched the skinnies.

The Schwalbe Middies (650 x 34mm) look great, and he says the bike rides better than ever.



-To find out how to convert a 700c bike to 650B wheels, go to rivbike.com. Click on the READ setion. It's there on the right side, lower.



LEFT: Cross section showing the progression of the break.

Right (but still to the left of this): The gouge that started it all, caused by overshifting, caused by badly adjusted

CONTENDER FOR STRANGEST BIKE INCIDENT OF ... EVER

I was riding across the street in the crosswalk, about at the 50-yard line, and my bike skidded to a stop. So I carried it off the playing field and investigated in foul territory, and found what you see in these pictures. Hampered by forensics skills go only so far, and so I took it to the ultimate authority, Robert (Pineapple Bob, if that means anything to anybody).

Robert noticed the base of the spokes had been bent a bit from an overshifting incident years ago. A little bend, a little gouge, a little flex (fatigue) over a long time (several years), and the next thing you know, a “sudden” spoke failure. There is no narrowing or crimping or waisting at the break, which proves nobody took pliers to it. And looking at the cross section under hi mag proves the slow, fatigue failure.

A broke spoke is one thing, but how did it bend and stick into the chain?

Robert guesses that once it was free-floating, it floated in between the links, and pedaling bent it. He can picture that happening, I can't, but I believe him, because he's basically always right, and I was pedaling.

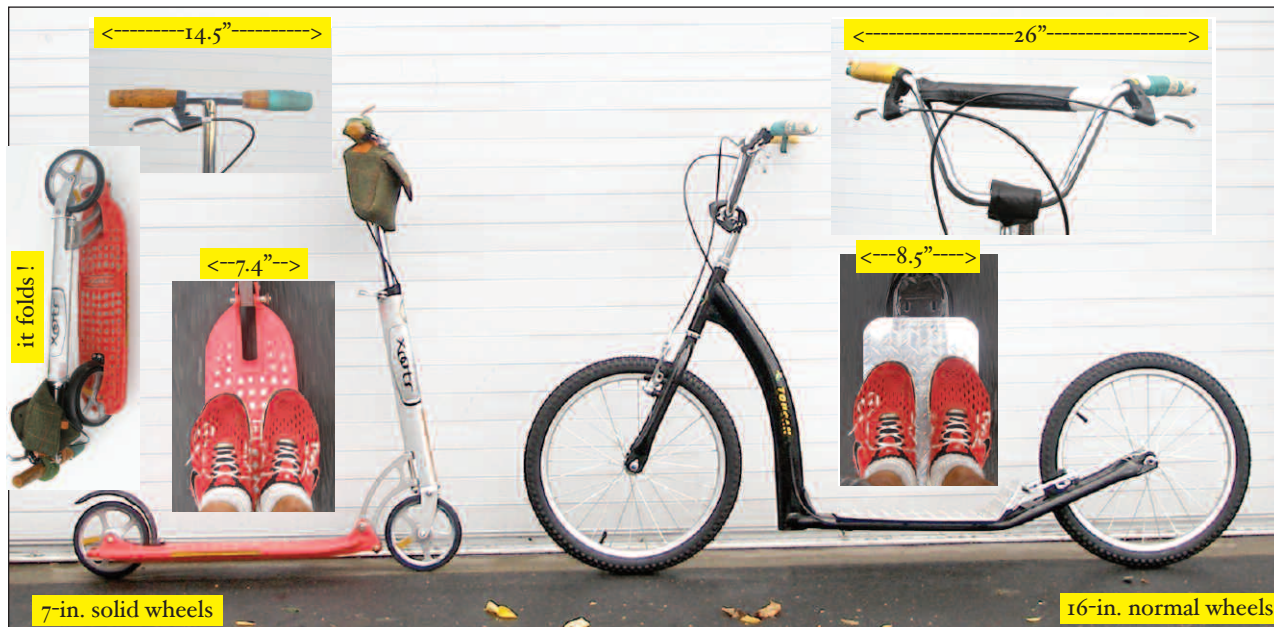
Do you have first-hand experience with a nearly equally unlikely accident-incident? Take fantastic photos, send them in at 212dpi and croppable, tell the story, win a minor prize to be determined only if you beat out the other contenders, and if you don't, no getting mad and disappearing. Email to dave@rivbike.com, and in the subject field, write INCIDENT YOUR NAME. Open to members only, because...well, that's just how it goes.

SCOOTERING, AND TWO SCOOTERS WORTH A LOOK

For all-aroundness, it makes sense to vary your muscle use, and when the trip is short & flattish, fairly smooth, not many dogs, and you don't have to carry anything, a scooter's a good way to go. Just another bullet in the exercise bandolier.

On flat to rolling trip downtown, a high-effort on the scooter is only about 20 percent slower than a casual effort on a bike. If you want a good workout for your back lower-mid back muscles, scootering is a good way to get it.

Here's our take on two decent models. We have them both. Not to sell—we just have them to like, get around.



Xootr Mg, 7" wheeler

The Xooter ("zooter") is remotely like a vastly improved Razor scooter for adults. It has bigger wheels, so it handles bumps and potholes better, and a bigger foot platform, for easier stepping and resting. And it has a front hand brake and a rear pressure plate. The brakes scrub your speed, but not on a dime, not even on a manhole.

It comes pre-assembled and folds in half in three seconds, so you can take it anywhere. The handlebar adjusts vertically with a quick-release. The original foam grips feel bad, but just replace them with bar tape or cork. The tires are solid rubber; the bearings are smooth.

It's great for short flat trips on smooth pavement; is at its limit on chipseal. It steers nicely. It folds, it's light, it goes, it's fun. Everybody should own it.

Go to Xootr.com. About \$200.

Toucan 16" wheeler

The Toucan 16-inch wheeler is more bike-like because it has real pneumatic tires and hand brakes for both wheels.

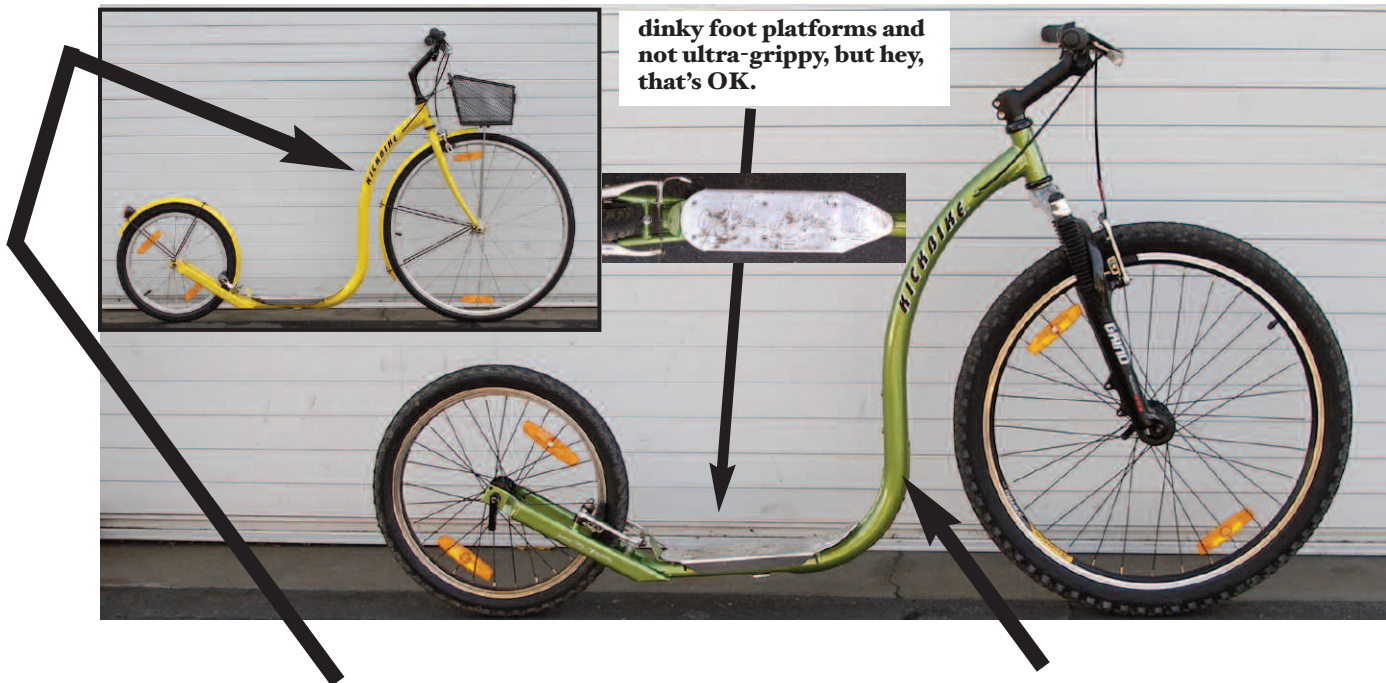
It's not the compact, quick-folding little unit that the Xooter is, but the bigger softer wheels and better brakes make it way better for bumps, trails, driveway lips, steep descents, and general scooting without looking at every nickel and dime on the street, and stopping. It has V-brakes.

The Toucan feels funny in slow-speed sharp turns (It needs more rake). Once you're pushing and gliding down the street and the turns are more sweepy, all's fine, though. The foot bed is huge. The handlebar is one of those mini-stingray type bars, and begs for a bar bag, but the cross-bar on it makes it easy to strap on a pack or bag there.

Go to kickngoscooter.com. About \$200.

AND THE *KICKBIKE*: AN EXPENSIVE, EVOLVED LINE OF SCOOTERS FOR THE DEEPLY COMMITTED.

Kickbikes are designed in Finland, made you *know* where. There' are six or eight models, and ranging from under \$150 to almost \$400. They have functional kickstands, good steering, nothing funky—and all in all, they're a good way to go if you can handle the size and don't need a folder. The foot platform is dinky. A size 13 shoe barely fits. So you stand semi-sideways as you coast, and you're a little more careful during the foot-switch phase. It's OK to have to be careful. These are nice bikes, and a lot of fun.



Kickbike City Cruiser

This is the sveltest, best all-around scooter of the four, and it's not just the backset and fenders talking. It steers normally at all speeds, it handles all roads fine, and all in all, affix a net to the basket somehow and you're good to go,

The stem is a standard quill stem, and I wonder how it would be with drops or Moustache H'bars on it, but right now it's a loaner, so it's not ours to monkey with.

It's a blast to ride. It comes with 32mm or so tires (actual), and I'd probably put a fatter tire on it, but maybe not. I think there's less weight on the front wheel on this than there is on a bike-bike. In any case, once Rich here trued the wheel, it's been great. Now, about bumps: All scooters neeeeeeed a low foot platform to minimize the leg bending of the standing leg. Raising the platform to increase ground clearance would tire you out sooner.

Good scooter, and about \$240 or so. There was an end-of-the-year clearance price of \$125. Sorry this didn't get posted in time for that one.

Kickbike X Country

Here's the commando model for trails. I've taken it up to the top of the local hill and back, which takes about 30 minutes on a bike at a normal-to-casual pace, and on this it took 40. Not bad. Most of the difference was going up—no scooter is the climber's pal, unless that climber is out for a serious leg and lower back workout, but there's nothing wrong with walking up the hill, either.

Descending. At first I found my self paying more attention than I do on a bike, but eventually I let 'er rip at near-bike speed. I was surprised to bottom out the belly below my feet on bumps, and until I realized the benefits of a low platform, I thought the Finnish guy who designed these blew it. Now I just figure the occasional bottoming out is worth the lower position that makes flatter pushing so much easier.

This model has V brakes and suspension. I'm not a suspension fan, but it didn't bother me. I'd leave it off, myself, but I can't say I'd take it off, even if it were mine to do that with, which it isn't.

SPECULATION ABOUT THE FUTURE OF BIKE PARTS

Frames

Carbon fiber will go away or be so radically changed from today's brittle frames that only the name will be similar. But I predict (as I have before) more of a future for thermoplastics. They'll be market as something without the "plastic" in the name. They'll be synthetic, strong, light, and moldable. This will happen by 2030. They'll have compartments to hold electronics, food, and in the case of electric bikes, a battery. Steel will remain, but it'll be about three percent of the market, which may not sound like much, but is more than it is now.

Wheels

Spoked wheels will be gone by 2036, replaced by molded or composite wheels that pop out near perfect and stay that way after much abuse. They'll be a lot like today's "tri-spoke" wheels and plastic-spoked kids-bikes wheel. But they'll be on virtually every new, normal bicycle.

Spoked wheels will be for collectors and nostalgics. This is a prediction, not a wish.

Saddles

By 2020 somebody will invent a pad you sit on that molds to your bottom. Sensors and a printout will identify your pressure points, and the mold will personalize itself to you.

You will then buy a saddle made from the mold. If the saddle proves imperfect, you'll report your dissatisfaction to the mold administrator, and he or she will modify it and spit out another saddle for you.

At first the saddles will be black. But in time, you'll be able to get them looking like well-broken in cowhide, or even ostrich hide, with all those little pucker marks. Fake beausage!

Tires & Inner Tubes

Tubeless tires will take over on bikes as they did on cars. I don't see that as a boon or a shame, since the tube-and-tire make a good combination already, and are easy enough to repair. But I think they'll be gone in the mainstream market by 2040. There will always be a niche market for tubed tires.

Grips

Grips will be like saddles—moldable material that you grab ahold of, gently squeeze, release, give them time to set, and voila—they're made for you. This will happen no sooner than 2017 and no later than 2020. The material will either not get dirty, or will be so

easy to clean that it doesn't matter. Fake beausage available.

Sometime after that, before 2050, something will be built into the grip that will prevent anybody else from riding away with your bike. Some kind of hand-size or fingerprint detector.

Derailers, chains, & external gears.

The derailleur as we know it now will be unrecognizable to the teenage rider in 2025. All gearing will be internal by then. Chains will still exist, but by 2040 will be replaced by belts (which drive a lot of machinery and a few bikes now).

By 2051 you'll be able to pedal up a storm indoors one fine rainy day and store energy in a battery, to be used later. All on internally geared drive trains with infinitely variable gear ratios within a specified range driven by belts, not chains.

Geekery

We're close to it now, but in twenty years, heart rate, calories burned, glucose and glycogen levels, and maybe something else going on in your blood and gut will be monitored easily, almost invisibly and certainly without chest straps. You'll be able to download or upload the information, and print out line or bar graphs, whichever you prefer, and so monitor your body yourself.

Clothing & bags

Clothing and soft goods in general will go seamless (it's starting already), and those who still wear and used stitched goods will be tagged "retro." Once the hubbub has died, there will be a return to the look of stitched clothing, but the stitches will be fake. All clothing will be available with an SPF of 50 or more.

Bike Shops

The most bike shops we've had in recent history was about 7,800, in the late '80s. We were losing several hundred a year for a while, and I believe the figure now rests at about 4,700. It's looking grim, too. Big manufacturers are controlling shops more than ever, and the truly independent bike dealer who doesn't buy the premium program (which saps their independence) is handicapped. I predict we'll bottom out at 4,000 shops.

HOW TO NOT GET FATTER THIS WINTER & AFTER

Quit the carbs. You can read and believe all you want about the wonders of carbohydrates as roughage & fuel, but none of that's as true as the ol' '60s mantra: Starches make you fat.

It's not what anybody wants to hear, but here's how it works, in a nutshell: Carbs increase your blood sugar. Since carbohydrates are evolutionary newcomers, we haven't fully adapted to them, and your body treats the high levels of blood sugar as an unnatural invasion of sorts. Your pancreas then sends out an army of insulin to kill the blood sugar.

Insulin is a metabolic hormone that instructs your body to store fat and burn sugar. As long as you have high levels of insulin in your blood, you will burn sugar and store fat.

The only way to jack up your insulin, short of shooting it, is to eat carbohydrates. If you can limit your carbs to 100g or fewer per day, you'll lose weight.

Your blood-fat won't increase. It's insulin that makes that happen, not the fat you eat. If you eat lotsa fat *and* lotsa carbohydrates, you'll get supersized like the guy in the movie. If you cut the carbs (to less than 100g per day), you'll lose weight.

Will you be low on energy for riding? It depends on how you ride. If you grind out centuries, brevets, and four-hour mini-marathons at a high level of effort, yes. That kind of riding requires a high carb diet. But if you ride at a hiking level, and mix up your riding with hard short sprints, maybe 12 a week, 30- to 45-seconds each, you won't burn sugar and you won't need to eat it.

There's a lot of commerce tied to eating carbs. Tons of experts have stuck their necks out too far on the carbo-plank to ever go back. You want to be told it's fine to eat carbs, because they're so tasty; and because deep down you think you can't give them up. Listen to me. Consult your

doctor etc, so if you keel over you don't sue. But if doc says "it probably won't hurt you to severely limit your carbs for a week, what the H - E- double hockey sticks," then try it and see for yourself.

For further reading about this:

Books: *Protein Power*, by the Eades couple; *Good Calories, Bad Calories*, by Gary Taubes; *The Primal Blueprint*, by Mark Sisson. If watching a movie is more up your alley, watch *Fathead*, and go to this YouTube 71-minute thing:

<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=4362041487661765149#>

If that link don't work, go to google videos and type in "Gary Taubes, Big Fat Lies." You're looking for the Stevens Institute lecture. It drags a bit in the middle, but there's a little crescendo there at the end, and if this topic (not getting fat) is dear to you and your previous experts haven't given you the rope-gut you deserve, try this. You're welcome!

HOW TO MAKE THE REST OF YOUR FAMILY HATE RIDING

- **Coach** them on proper technique and critique their performance so they know where they stand.
- **Insist** on proper saddle height even if they're afraid of not being able to put their feet flat on the ground. Tell them the truth—that pedaling with a too-low saddle will lead to chondromalacia. That will motivate them with worry on top of their fear.
- **Teach** them the wonders of drafting, and be sure to overemphasize the difference it makes at family riding speeds. Make them ride scarily close to your rear wheel. And teach them about rotating pace lines.
- **Buy** them upscale bikes, and remind them how expensive they are. The guilt they'll feel for not appreciating them is a fantastic motivator.
- **Make sure** they know that expensive bikes make hard hills easy, so when they're struggling, they'll think it's them, and work harder to improve.
- **Force** them to wear lycra shorts and jerseys. This will reinforce how easy and natural it is to just hop on a bike and ride somewhere.
- **Get them** clipless pedals and matching shoes so they have that "locked in" feeling. Emphasize how much easier it is to ride this way, "once they get used to it."
- **Point out** stellar examples. If you ride in a club with fast women, tell your wife that if she puts some effort into it, she can be like them. If your child is chubby, admire his or her fitter friends.
- **Give** your teenage daughter who doesn't ride a bike a bracelet or necklace made of a bicycle chain. That will put her in the riding mood for sure.
- **Race vicariously** through your children. Believe you're doing them a favor by turning play into a lifetime obsession with cardiovascular fitness.



It looks just fine, quite normal, on a carbon bike.



Steel upgrades for carbon forks, just like this one, are due in Spring.

UPGRADE YOUR CARBON FORK TO STEEL

Don't trust your carbon fork anymore? Join the evergrowing crowd, Fausto. You can replace it with steel. By Spring 2010 we'll have some unfancy, but not too down & dirty Taiwanese 1 1/8-inch threadless steerer steel forks that swap in for a carbon-forked road fork with a 1 1/8-inch steerer. Colors undecided, but black will be in the mix, and may be it, period..

Is it truly an upgrade? Heck Yes. It's a hundred times safer. It will ride as well. It will offer slightly better tire clearance, and the option, if you ride a skinny tire, of a fender. It will weigh about ten ounces more than the famous carbon forks that snap so often. Sorry, but we all know that's true, and it's not funny.

And it'll increase your comfort a lot. Not because of any shock-killing properties of steel, but because you can leave the steel steerer longer, to bring the bars up a lot higher. That's where your comfort comes from, Eddy

The rake is 45mm, close enough to your original (probably 43-45mm). You can use

your same short-reach brakes, but we've added a little reach, so you'll be able to fit a 28mm tire, easily. The crown is investment cast, super quality, with a built-in angle that provides rake even with straight blades. That's how it works.

Back to the safety issue.

When traumatized, it will bend, not snap. If nicked or scratched on the surface, it will maintain its integrity. When exposed to the sun for years on end, nothing will be compromised. If and when it finally dies, it's recyclable.

But what happens if you crash and the frame snaps? The frame maker has probably seen this happen many times, but if it happens with a non-approved fork on it, you can bet your ever lovin' bottom dollar they'll cry foul and blame the fork. There's nothing foul about this fork, but it's a loophole, and they know it.

Do you ride a safer fork and lower your risk of paralysis, or ride a carbon fork and

then if your frame breaks, the maker has no loophole? A tough decision.

In any case, we offer this fork as a way to make your carbon-forked bike safer, and anecdotal evidence suggests it will do that.

The fork blades are 1.0mm, which makes sense for a road bike. The steerer is long, but you cut it to length. It's the standard dimension for a steel, threadless steerer. If you ask the weight, we're not on the same wave length here. It's a fork that you can ride with confidence (and it weighs four to eight ounces more, typically, than a carbon fork). It won't hurt the ride. Carbon forks don't create a plush ride. That's what they say they do, but it is not what they actually do.

Price: \$200—about half the price of a top quality carbon fork that maybe you trust, but maybe you shouldn't. These are on the website: www.rivbike.com. Part No. 51-023.



WHO RIDES A BETTY ?

Name: Darby Grinelli

Age: 53

Occupation: retired

When and why did you start riding as an adult? Seriously (with no vehicle as a back-up) - this year, in March; recreationally - 2006. I started riding in order to spend time outside more often and to become more active as I naturally gravitate to reading, bookstores and sedentary activities which is not the best thing for you at any age, but certainly not after 40.

What do you use your bike for? Everything local, meaning in SFO and environs ie. laundromat, grocery shopping, getting around town, volunteer placements, meetings, site seeing, etc. I don't own a car anymore, but occasionally drive a borrowed one when necessary for vacations and visiting friends and family outside the bay area.

Favorite Foods: As long as it's vegan, Italian pasta dishes or Japanese sushi and salads. Also, my own cooking ain't bad. I love to cook.

Favorite Restaurant: Cha Ya in Berkeley

Favorite author/books: Carson McCullers "The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter," William Faulkner "The Sound and the Fury," Robert Pirsig "Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance," Jack Kerouac "Dharma Bums" and then the latest current reading craze: Eric Weiner "The Geography of Bliss." If you

asked me next week, it would probably be a different list. I read a lot.

Favorite Movie: Citizen Kane, a classic on the serious side, but absolutely the funniest flick ever is the screwball comedy, The Lady Eve

Favorite Music: The Beatles, Bob Dylan

Other things you like to do: Read, cook, volunteer at the Friends of the Berkeley Library bookstore, knit, and travel in that order.

Favorite Ride: As a very recent transplant from Portland, it has to be riding through UC's grounds [Berkeley], nice and easy like, past the Campanile, tooling around the old and new classroom buildings and copious libraries, through the woods, just soaking up the reality of living in the beautiful Bay Area, actually living in Berkeley a few blocks from the world famous campus

Other bikes: A Bianchi from Goodwill that has been modified with some Rivendell parts and accessories, kept in a St. Louis garage for rides when visiting there

What would you rather be doing right now? Reading on the sofa, drinking some warm miso soup or tea

Anything else we should know? My Betty Foy is the best thing that has happened to me in long while. I love it.



WHAT FINN RIDES A HOMER?

Name: Antti Piira

Age: 30

Occupation: Software

Favorite book: One Hundred Years of Solitude by Gabriel García Márquez

Favorite movie (Finn or English or both): Festen (The Celebration), an awesome Danish film about a family gathering gone bad. My Finnish favorite would probably be the Calamari Union which tells about a journey of fifteen men named Frank trying to make it from a poor neighborhood in Helsinki to a better one on the other side of town.

Favorite Finnish food? Fresh smoked white fish with spring potatoes. And gravlax. And smoked salmon. Lots of good fish. Salty black licorice candies!

Favorite food in SF? I really like Thai food and sushi here, but most of all I like the variety of different kinds of cuisines available.

What's your typical ride? My commute down the hill from Twin Peaks to SoMa in the morning sunshine and then climbing back up in the evening fog.

Favorite ride ever: A day ride around Lake Vuohijarvi in Finland a few years back. Perfect summer day, with lots of ice cream and a couple of swimming breaks.

What other bikes do you own? I don't have others at the moment, but for most of my life I've been riding a Carraro branded trekking bike. My dad bought it for me when I was on the 8th grade in school and I gave it back to him when I moved here five years ago.

Why'd you leave Finland? I had an opportunity to come over and work in San Francisco. I had never been to the US before and it seemed like an exciting experience, so it was easy for me to come. Sometimes I wonder if I should go back, but then the next day I'm reminded of something that I really like here. I also met this perfect girl, so I think I'll be hanging around.

What should everyone who visits Finland see? Go in the summertime and try to make it to somebody's summer cottage for a few days. Could be a nice bike ride! There is nothing as relaxing as sitting on the patio next to a lake in the middle of a forest. Prepare for mosquitos though. If you end up there in the winter time try to go to the far north where the sun doesn't come up. It can be really pretty there... and cold.

What do you miss most? Sauna in each house and apartment. I would really love to have my own sauna here. And of course I miss family and friends.



WHO RIDES A SAM ?

Name: Marcy Kentz

Age: 24

Occupation: Jewelry Designer/Entrepreneur

Years riding since you were 18: 4 years

Why'd you start? I don't have a car and I needed a better way to get to school other than take the bus.

Favorite foods: Fried egg sandwich, pasta and salads.

Favorite restaurant: Olivetos

Favorite books/authors/artists: Dan Eldon the Journey is the Destination

Favorite movie: Cry Baby

Favorite music: The Talking Heads, Dan Hicks

Other things you like to do: Cook, hike, collage and make jewelry, shoot trap.

Favorite ride: Down to the Berkeley marina

Dream ride (if time money & obligations allowed): I'm not sure where, but somewhere with inspiring scenery and minimal stress factors.

Other bikes: NSU Mix-t

Anything else we should know? My new Hillborne motivated me to ride my bike from Berkeley to Alameda instead of taking the bus. The tunnel is an intense experience, but over all its a fun ride.

THE ONLY CYCLIST IN TOWN

by Maynard Hershon

If (you'll have to imagine this) a car hits one of us cyclers, the investigating officer will tend to believe the driver's story. If there are no credible witnesses or if the cyclist has left the scene in an ambulance - or for some sadder reason he or she cannot speak up, only the driver remains to provide what may be a self-serving description of what happened.

If we are hit and we go to court about the accident, the judge tends also to believe the driver. And the media often wants to portray the unlucky cyclist as a villain, a scofflaw and a risk-loving fool, "hit because he wasn't wearing his helmet."

If we are hit and we yearn for justice or satisfaction, we play against a stacked deck. We're guilty on the roadside, in court and in the press. Only our moms believe us.

Who else but a fool would ride in today's traffic? Gotta be a death-wish, huh? Or a perverse need to irritate drivers - taxpayers and churchgoers who if it weren't for our vexing presence would be serene as the Dalai Lama.

And what did we do? We dared trespass on roads belonging to drivers. We audaciously dominated the entire curbside bike lane, full-width. Playing the vulnerability card, we demanded unusual attentiveness from motorists who have other priorities.

No wonder we're despised.

Few of us are encouraged by our progress as a nation toward sweetness and consideration - on or off the streets. We're not evolving, are we?

Certainly there's nothing considerate about text-messaging or cell phoning while driving. Or using the rightmost lane, formerly the slow lane, for passing. Or neglecting (for the first time, officer, I swear) to turn from the proper lane or to signal our turns.

No doubt alternative transportation advocates are doing their best to make cycling and walking somewhat safer. I'm thankful for each improvement but not nearly as optimistic as I might be. I don't expect to feel safe anytime soon. Do you?

I don't know how a cyclist can feel safe on the road. We're an underclass there, an easily intimidated, essentially defenseless underclass. We're outgunned and outnumbered. When we need help, we're sold out by cops, judges and media. What can we do?

I'm reading the new Tom Brokaw book "Boom," about the turbulent '60s. In talking about that era's civil rights movement he cites several older black Americans who tell him that before the movement grew strong, black people would remind one another to "stay out of the way."

I take that to mean "Avoid the notice of the white man. Don't try to understand him, argue with him or reason with him. Let white folks get on with their business. Go about your own business but swim just below the surface, nearly invisible."

That's how I ride. I try to avoid the attention of drivers any more than necessary. I want them to notice me - so they can steer around me. I expect little else from them.

On the few Critical Mass rides I've done, I felt in-the-way and unwelcome on city streets at afternoon rush hour on Friday. I

wasn't comfortable. I wanted, as I've wanted for years, to stay out of the way.

I'm no longer sure that staying out of the way is appropriate behavior. We're not going to make ourselves and our riding friends safer by avoiding constructive confrontation or acting as if we're (each of us) the only cyclist in town.

If we want things to get better, if we want to feel safe on the roads, maybe we better get in the way a little. Maybe we should think about a little collective action. Cycle disobedience.

One black man trying to have a sandwich at a restricted lunch counter is easy to intimidate, eject or injure. Hundreds or thousands of quietly protesting black people managed, after a period of strife, to change the laws. Maybe some people changed too. Eventually.

Before the women's movement, when individual women talked about equal pay and respect in the workplace, those women were ignored and called names. When thousands spoke up, laws changed. Maybe people changed too.

Just as a woman has a right to be paid fairly for her work, we have a right to occupy the space we need on the road. We have a right to ride without fear. It's not too much to ask.

If we suggest to drivers that we feel unfairly treated, the drivers will tell us about flagrant abuses by cyclists that they've witnessed. The drivers are angry even though no injuries resulted from the cyclists' irresponsible (but not hostile) behavior.

Why so angry? The drivers were offended. We seem to be taking advantage. Because drivers seldom take advantage our acts seem particularly outrageous.

Arguing or reasoning with drivers or expecting to educate them only wastes our time. If each of us deals with motorist brutality individually, if we each "cowboy up," we will fail to change anything outside our individual heads.

We need to show drivers a bit of solidarity. Demonstrate that we're a united force. Support one another. Protect one another. Call Aggressive Driver Hotlines on our own behalf and that of others. Demand to be noticed and respected on the road.

It's time for a Cycle Rights Movement, for us to act as one - cyclists together.

Though we have much in common, we don't even nod at one another on the bike path. We don't wave as we pass on lonely roads, the only human being either rider has seen in 20 minutes.

How can we act collectively? We focus on our minor differences, not our remarkable similarities of experience. We're all in this cycling thing together, right?

If we do not band together, we'll get no closer to earning fair and respectful sharing of the roads. We have to change. Drivers won't.

There's power in solidarity. Other riders are your only friends out there in SUVland. No one will help us but ourselves. The rest of America is text-messaging at the wheel and drifting unaware into the bike lane.

TWENTY DOLLARS, TWO TUBES AND A COFFEE

by *Maynard Hershon*

I walked my bike onto the Starbucks patio outside Denver's flagship REI store. A guy I see around had just gotten there too. As I walked by, he said, "I haven't seen a Rivendell in a long time," in the interest of starting a conversation. I nodded and smiled thinly but said nothing. I remember the last time he saw a Rivendell.

Tamar and I had moved to Denver the previous November. We lived near the University of Denver and used to have lunch once or twice a month at Gaia, a cool restaurant on South Pearl Street. We'd sit outside, often with other cyclists, and enjoy French-press coffee and a leisurely lunch.

One summer day a guy rode up on a loaded touring bicycle. I mean packed so high and wide you thought one of those flashing-light Oversize Load vehicles should precede him on the bike path. The guy was big as his bike, over six feet and maybe 275 pounds. He sat down at an adjacent table and stared at the menu but didn't order.

I said, hi howya doin', and he said that he'd been on his way to Ohio. As he pedaled across Denver he ran out of money. When the waitress came by, I bought him a coffee and we talked a bit more, not much, just a little. He said that he'd had a flat while passing through Denver, didn't trust his own patch jobs and couldn't afford a new tube.

We were less than a block from a bike shop. I excused myself from our table, walked to that shop and bought the guy a tube. Maybe I bought two. It's three years ago; I can't recall. I gave him the tube or tubes and he thanked me. When our group left Gaia he thanked me again. Take care, I said, have a great ride to Ohio.

But he didn't go to Ohio. I kept seeing him around. Always on the same bike, racks and panniers and boxes all over it. I'll bet the bike weighed 100 pounds. I saw him a few more times in 2007 and a few times in 2008 and a couple of times in 2009. It became clear to me that he wasn't going to Ohio, that he used his bike and his story to soften folks up for a handout. Gave me a funny feeling. I began to look at him with distaste.

Yesterday, as I said, I saw him at the REI store and he commented on my bike. I found a table and went in for my coffee. I was sitting at that table when a guy about my age (105) rode up, parked his bike against a wall, and went in for his own coffee. When he came out, he walked to my table and asked me if it'd be okay if he joined me. You bet, I said. Bob was his name.

We talked for just a moment and I said, "You see that guy with the loaded touring bike?"

"I do," Bob said, "and I've seen him before. He told me he'd been riding somewhere in the Pacific Northwest, intending to meet a bunch of friends, and he'd missed a ferry or some other

boat and got separated from them in Seattle. He said he was on his way back to Ohio after the aborted trip and had gotten short of funds. I gave him twenty dollars."

I told Bob that I'd heard much the same story. I'd given the guy an inner tube or two and bought him coffee at Gaia. Bob and I smiled at each other, unsure if we were embarrassed or just amused. The big dude had fooled us out of \$20 cash, a tube or two and a French-press coffee.

You know, Bob, I said, I could afford the tube and the coffee. You could afford the twenty dollars. He didn't take anything from us that we couldn't spare or that's going to change our lives. If there are two kinds of people, cynical people who would doubt the guy's story, and guys like us who'd help him and not wonder if his tale is legit, I'd rather be like us. I'd rather believe and reach out. Even if I get fooled now and then.

Bob said he felt the same way.

As I said what I said, I still felt a bit disturbed by what had happened to Bob and to me...and to lots of other people, probably. Not that those people gave Mr. Ohio the rent money. Not that helping a fellow cyclist didn't give those generous people a good feeling...

I guess it bothers me that the guy uses his bicycle as a prop in his show. He's a "highway surfer," as the old expression goes: A guy who carries a surfboard on the roof of his car but doesn't surf. He enjoys representing himself as a surfer. He's impressing the girls. He may even think of himself as a surfer. He just hasn't had time to put the board in the water.

The big dude on his touring bike may never have left central Denver, never been to Ohio or Seattle. He may just ride from cyclist cafe to cyclist cafe. But he always rides a bike that looks like the open road, like faraway places, like high adventure. Cleverly, he offers pushovers like Bob and me a chance to help another cyclist who's doing the lonely, challenging, self-sufficient ride, maybe the ride we wish we were doing.

Why else would his bike be packed like one of those Okie trucks in the Grapes of Wrath?

As I thought about the big guy, it came to me that I wasn't bothered by the small-time swindle. I was bothered by his posing as a cyclist - for whatever reason.

Let's again divide the world into the two kinds of people: Those who ride and those who don't. I have friends among riders and non-riders. My rider friends don't pretend they don't ride. I wish non-riders would be equally forthright.

If you don't ride, don't say you do - for a handout or be part of something cool or to impress the girls. If you don't ride, and you wish you did, what's stopping you?

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A NOTE ABOUT THIS HERE

The *Rivendell Reader* costs \$4 per issue and is available through Rivendell Bicycle Works. It is also available free online at www.rivbike.com.

The *Reader* used to be “free with membership,” but that was before we started offering purchase-credit rebates instead; and most people recognize that they’re better off with the purchase-credit rebates.

In any case, the policy has changed. For its entire history, and for the time being, and in the near future we expect the *Reader* to continue to be a labor-intensive, action-packed publication void of paid advertising. We will strive to make it worth the \$4 (current) cover price.

