

The BOB Gazette

BRIDGESTONE
OWNERS EST 1993 BUNCH

- Old vs. new pedals
- Our catalogue artist speaks
- Lots o' cranky opinions
- Special offers for BOBs

BOB: A Small Fry, But Growing

As of April 22, we have 477 members, and our goal for the year is 4000. That's what we need to make BOB pay its way, as opposed to being a money pit, a folly, an expensive experiment.

We need your help. Know a Bridgestone owner? Tell him or her about BOB. There's a membership blank on the back page that you can photocopy, a practice we heartily encourage.

Naturally, there's something in it for you. The BOB who signs up the most members between April 15 and May 31 wins any bike we have; the nine other top recruiters win other prizes like tires, rims, the odd derailleur, clothing, and whatever parts and accessories we can get our hands on without digging too deep into the inventory.

To get credit, write your name and BOB number in red ink somewhere on the membership form.

We'll announce the winner in an upcoming *Gazette*.

Who's Number One?

BOB #1 is a fellow named Tad Kodama, also the President of Bridgestone Cycle (U.S.A.), Inc. This was not an honorary deal, though—he in fact paid his \$20 long before anybody else did. Tad, by the way, rides a '92 XO-1, his longest recent streak being 62 days without a miss. This, in the middle of the wettest winter California has seen in a decade.

Who Answers the BOBline?

Candace Barker of our marketing department. She's making BOB work, keeping things organized.

'94 SURPRISE: SAYONARA, TOP-MOUNTS

Is Bridgestone selling out? Quite the contrary. That's why we're selling out.

We've resisted index-only systems since they first came out, but next year we'll spec them pretty much across the board.

We still prefer top-mounts and shifters with a friction option, but they aren't selling, and are gradually being phased out of production. In any case, we'll have plenty left over from this year to carry over.

It used to be easy to sell top-mounts, but now, dealers tell us "there's no market—my customers want the new stuff." This is frustrating—the whole idea that newer is necessarily better. Any noise we make to the effect that just maybe the old widget is better than the new gizmo just reinforces the *retrogrouch* stereotype we seem to be branded with. *Arrrgghh*.

Whatever the case, if you want top-mounts, or if you know somebody who

doesn't yet have a bike, but who will want top-mounts, get them now. Don't let anybody tell you they'll be obsolete—since top-mounts have a friction option, they will always work with any chain or cogs that come down the pike. Top-mounts will become unavailable, and this is a shame. But they will be the last shifters ever to become obsolete.

Related Calendar Story

By fall we will have a limited-edition "Bicycle Endangered Species" calendar, and BOBs get first shot and best price. It'll cost about \$10 in the fall; \$7 if you send money before September 1.

If you like classic bicycle parts, you'll love this calendar. We've been wanting to make it for three years. B/W photographs.

THE BOB INTERVIEW: ARTIST GEORGE RETSECK

His work is familiar to BOBs everywhere—but his name might not ring a bell. He may well be the best cycling illustrator working today—but he keeps busy drawing for science magazines. He works in a profession known for its temperamental personalities—but his is a pleasant, unassuming demeanor.

He is George Retseck, an artist from Doylestown, Pennsylvania. George has been sketching bicycles and bike parts for more than ten years, and his illustrations have been the highlight of the Bridgestone Bicycle Catalogue for the past two years. We hope he draws for us 20 more.

In this interview—the first of a regular series of Q and As with interesting cycling people—*The BOB Gazette* talks to George about cycling, his career as an illustrator, and life at home in Doylestown.

BOB: How old are you?

George: Thirty-six. I'll be 37 in January.

BOB: The what?

George: The 29th. Why?

(continued on page 5)

George's illustration of a SunTour Superbe Pro brake caliper is one of his own favorites.



WHAT'S NEW

THE CLIPLESS ADVANTAGE

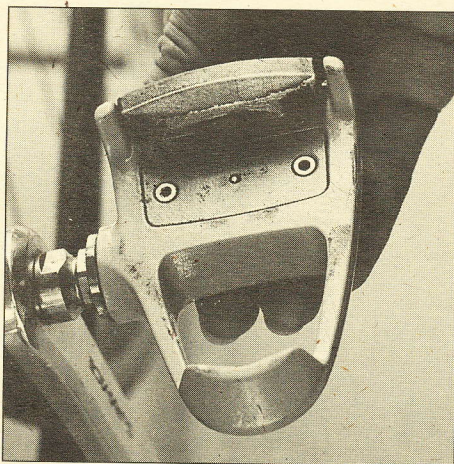
Make that "advantages"—traditional pedals are hopelessly obsolete.

by BOB Jr.

I can't believe some people still ride in toe clips. They either have a weird ax to grind or they simply haven't tried clipless pedals. Basically, I don't care what their problem is; I know I'll never go back.

I've spent enough hours dealing with toe-strap tightness, sore feet, and trying to flip the pedal up while the bicycle is moving to know that I never want to do it again. Why should today's new cyclist put up with that? Rites of passage? *Right.*

Clipless pedals now come in so many varieties that there are features to fit anyone's needs. It's true that some are heavy, but the lightest ones are much lighter than even the lightest standard pedal. Almost all clipless styles provide more cornering clearance than standard pedals. All clipless pedals release more easily in a crash than standard pe—what am I saying? Clipless pedals now *are* the standard



By almost any standard, clipless pedals are hands-down superior to traditional pedals and toe clips.

pedal—at least on good bikes! No wonder all pro racers ride them. Even Sean Kelly.

But clipless pedals aren't just for competition. For cold-weather riding, clipless pedals are the winners, no contest. You

can overload your shoe with booties galore and still clip into the pedals, no problem. With toe clips, you haven't the room.

For in-town riding though stop-and-go traffic, why hassle with toe clips every time you have to stop? Forget it.

And although GrandBOB claims that pedaling is just as efficient with clips and straps, most cyclists I know believe otherwise. And psychologically, it's nice knowing I can have the same technology that holds skiers to their skis at 80 mph through bumps and turns and yet releases them in crashes.

The argument that clipless pedals raise your feet above the pedal spindle is true, but weak. What difference does a few millimeters make? Besides, some clipless pedals sit you lower than other models.

I'm surprised Pops didn't bring up the only argument he really has that makes any sense: Clipless pedals are, universally, the ugliest components ever to taint a bicycle—followed closely by clipless-style cycling shoes.

But who cares? Once you're all clicked in and pedaling, the beauty of clipless-pedal technology shines right on through.

THE BOB WIRE: NAMES AND PLACES

Pick up a cheap chopstick from an inexpensive Chinese restaurant, and put it aside for now. Then stand up in a normal way and stick your arms straight out, keeping them at shoulder height, like that **Leonardo da Vinci** drawing (your feet need not be wide apart). Now ask a friend to try to push them both down. Then place the chopstick sideways in your mouth bite down hard, and have your friend push with the same effort

John Stamstad won Iditabike—that 200-mile snow & ice race in Alaska—on a stock MB-2 frame and fork and Moustache Handlebars. New course record, around 15 hours. Sometime before

June, maybe the last weekend in May, John will try to break his own 24-hour off-road record, riding an XO-1, the bike *Mountain Bike Action* said was no good off-road, with Moustache Handlebars, which *Bicycling* said were painful. The course must have at least 12,000 feet of climbing. John would like the requirement to be 20,000 feet of climbing, and since he already owns the record, the rulemakers may accommodate him.

The C.C. Filson Company has a great free catalogue. If you like simple, rugged, fashion-free wool and cotton clothing—no pre-distressed "weekend wear" here—call or write for a catalogue: Box 34020, Seattle, WA 98124; tel. 206-624-4437.

Road Bike Action, a new mag from the publishers of *Mountain Bike Action*, debuts this June. . . Meanwhile, **Mike Foley** is trying to resurrect *The Bike*, that magazine that almost debuted last fall. We saw a photocopy of what was to be the first issue, and it's good. Originally it was going to be a slick 9 x 11-inch glossy, but we're encouraging a cheaper, recyclable tabloid, a la *VeloNews*. Any thoughts on *The Bike*, call Mike at 714-363-6450 or write him at 24781 Cutter, Laguna Niguel, CA 92677.

We're cutting back our advertising a lot this year—it's maybe 40 percent of what it was last year. Advertising is a strange business—it's so expensive, and the benefits are questionable. If you want to advertise

BRIDGESTONE

WHAT'S OLD

TOE CLIPS: FOR RIDERS, NOT EX-SKIERS

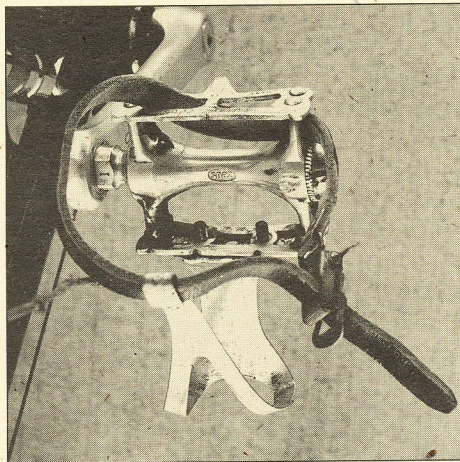
Fight the hype—clips and straps are still the best.

by BOB Sr.

In the early '80s, Look, the ski binding manufacturer, wanted to expand its product line beyond the declining ski market, and it looked to the cycling industry. Like indexing, click-in pedals were aimed at the cycling's new yuppie market—riders who had money to spend but no time to learn. Aided by a media anxious to write about anything new and to attract new advertisers, as well by as the personal endorsement of Greg LeMond (whose sponsor, coincidentally, was Look), clipless pedals were promoted as a technological advancement akin to pneumatic (air-filled) tires. What a crock!

Clipless pedals handicap a bike on anything other than a "serious bike ride."

It seems a shame not to be able to ride a bike in any shoes. Bikes are—or should be—more universal, more friendly, more ready for a late-night milk run. Clipless



A standard pedal, a toe clip, a toe strap: A classic combination that still can't be improved upon.

pedals sans clipless shoes are dangerous.

It's funny that the "floating" clipless pedals are so popular right now. It used to be that this same effect was achieved with worn-out cleats! If you want flotation, just

ride enough miles in a standard cleat to wear it out, or take a file to the pedal slot.

Standard pedals position your foot closer to the pedal spindle, for a more stable base. Imagine pedaling way above the pedal axle—you'd have to raise your saddle to get the right leg extension, and the higher pedal position increases rocking as you pedal. Splitting hairs? Maybe—but no more than the clipless brigade does.

Clipless proponents claim that clipless pedals allow you to pull up better. What clips and cleats have they been riding? I've often gone for a ride without even noticing I haven't snugged up, and I've never pulled out. Besides, pulling up has proven to be inefficient. The trick is to unweight the upstroking pedal, not pull up on it.

Safety at a stop light or in a crash? In town, just loosen the straps a bit, so you can pull out easily. And every time I've crashed, the bike and I have separated.

Finally, I find the reaching down and snugging (or releasing) of toe straps a pleasant ritual of any ride. It only takes three seconds—what's the big deal?

By the way: Did anyone else notice that the Olympic gold medalist used toe clips and straps? The media buried this one.

in the various cycling magazines, here are approximate rates for a one-page, four-color ad: *Bicycling*, \$15,000; *Bicycle Guide*, \$6000; *Mountain Bike Action*, \$3000; *Mountain Biking*, \$2500.

More wool: We've found a U.S. mill that can make decent wool jersey cheap. We've selected, for BOBs only, a nice, ugly green, unfashionably fashionable. Details next issue.

Tom Ritchey has designed a couple of all-in-one tools, they should be in production by August, and we'll do what we can to make them available to BOBs

Jobst Brandt, who wrote *The Bicycle Wheel*, knows more bicycle esoterica than anyone

else we know, and Tom Ritchey once referred to him as "the only person I listen to." Jobst sez: Those brownish blotches on the sidewalls of your clincher tires? Stains from Rema patches. Ever gotten a flat from a fine wire? Part of a steel-belted radial. And why more rear-wheel flats than front-wheel flats? Because the front wheel flips up and "sets" the penetrator, ready to poke the rear wheel. Jobst on cornering: "Everyone says 'Don't brake past the apex of a corner.' That's wrong. To go fast, enter the corner as fast as you can, hit the brakes suddenly and keep them applied past the apex, and then accelerate out. That's the way." OK, thanks.

In mid-June we'll have an MB-4/S, equipped with a Specialized Future Shock SE fork. And next year we're planning on a few models, at least one, maybe two,

with the Allsop stem. Don't tell. . . There is a misspelling on p. 20 of this year's catalogue. The first ten BOBs to find it win an as-yet-undetermined prize—nothing big, but something good. Send a note or call in your answer to 800-328-2453 x 232.

The XO-1 isn't selling. Dang—we were going to make 1000. What a great bike, what a shame. How do we sell them? Any tips? Maybe we will carry them to '94.

If you like art even a little, spend \$25 on Stephen Wiltshire's *Floating Cities*. Stephen is a 19-year old autistic savant, black, living in England, and this book will knock your knickers off. Hurry, because it's out of print—but bookstores can order it for you. Some lucky BOBs will win a copy soon. We have a dozen.

PRODUCT REVIEW: TA BOTTLE CAGE

It's old, it's steel, it's French, it's shiny, and it's the best.

The chromed-steel TA water-bottle cage is the best in the world, and the only cycling component from the golden age to survive the '70s, '80s, and early '90s unspoiled by the industry's desperate efforts to attract yuppie high-tech obsessives.

This cage remains the preferred cage among European pros—all the more impressive when you consider that there are no bottle-cage sponsors in Europe, so the riders are free to use any bottle they want. In spite of almost no advertising, year after year, the cage of choice is the familiar chrome-and-white TA.

The TA cage is strong. It's steel, so you can bend it for an even snugger grip on bumpy descents, and it won't blacken your bottle like aluminum does. It's also affordable—neither your budget nor your

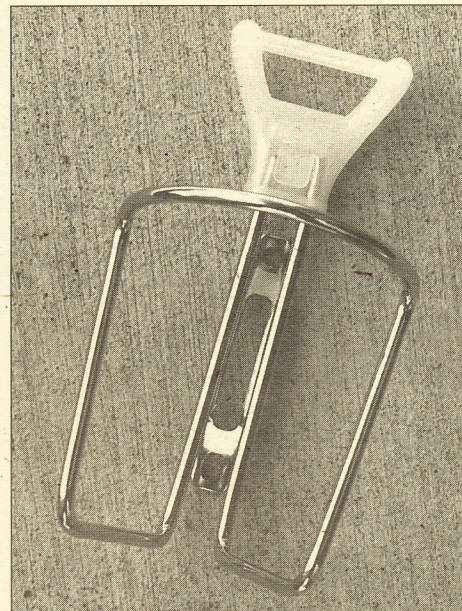
karma will suffer from buying it.

The TA cage isn't perfect, though. Sometimes the plastic hook comes off—a rare happening you can prevent with a short screw through the lower part of the plastic. And in time, the chrome plating starts to die. Not a big deal.

The TA cage is French. A Frenchman, Pierre Lallement, invented the bicycle. French touring bikes have always been the epitome of bicycle class—more so than Italian road bikes, even. French panniers? They're expensive, but nothing, not even Beckmans, can touch them.

The TA bottle cage has the same class, but it's available and affordable. Every bike should have one or two.

Check the BOB Catalogue for BOB-only prices on this best-of-cages.



It's not the lightest, but TA's chromed-steel cage is a quiet monument to function and good sense.

DOCTOR BOB: ASK MORE QUESTIONS, OR I LOSE THIS COLUMN ...

Dear Dr. BOB:

I want to put slick tires on my mountain bike to make it ride faster. How narrow can I go? I read somewhere about tires blowing off a rim because they were too narrow or because of the bead on the tire. Can you set me straight?

The width of your rim determines the width of your tire. Narrow mountain bike rims like the Araya RM-17 or the Ritchey Vantage Comp or Pro will take a Specialized 26 x 1 Turbo S/ATB. Wider rims like the Vantage Expert or Sport will easily accept a Ritchey CrossBite 1.1. Tires will not blow off the rim as long as you use a hook-bead rim (all modern rims are hook-bead) and do not exceed the manufacturer's recommended pressure. Other tires you might try are: Tioga City Slickers, Specialized Fat Boys, Ritchey Tom Slicks, Avocet City. Try a Kevlar bead for lighter weight.

Dear Dr. BOB,

Can I and should I retrofit Rapidfire Plus shifters on my MB-4?

You can retrofit Rapidfire Plus shifters, but why do you want to? Thumbshifters

are lighter, more adjustable, easier to maintain, less expensive to replace in the event of a crash, and they provide that all-important friction option that can get you home in a pinch. If you have small hands, they are less tiring to use (I speak from experience on this one). And if your derailleur freezes or gets clogged, they can be shifted with the heel of your hand.

Whoa.
You can't
do that.

Dear Dr. BOB,

I have a 1990 RB-1 and I'm thinking about putting on the new STI shifters. Do I only need to buy the shifters?

Whoa. You can't do that. Your 1990 RB-1 is SunTour-equipped. It is not compatible with Shimano's STI system. But there are two other shifting alternatives you might want to try. One is

bar-end, or BarCon, shifters. The second is SunTour's Command shifters. They mount next to the brake levers and work quite well.

Dear Dr. BOB,

I'm planning a long bike tour across the United States. Which Bridgestone bike would be the best for this kind of ride?

You have two wonderful choices. The first is the XO-2, a wonderful touring bike with 26-inch wheels, flared drop bars and bar-end shifters—all the features of a loaded tourer with the strength and softer ride of a 26-inch wheel. The other choice is the XO-3—almost all the benefits of the XO-2 with Moustache bars, thumb-shifters and a lower price. Of course, the XO-1 with a triple crankset could be the ultimate touring bike.

Does a mechanical question have you stumped? Ask Dr. BOB; he can help. He'll respond to all questions personally, and we'll print selected letters right here. Write to: Ask Dr. BOB, Bridgestone Owners Bunch, 15021 Wicks Blvd., San Leandro, CA 94577.

BRIDGESTONE

GEORGE RETSECK: "I DRAW LOTS OF SUBJECTS"

continued from page 1

BOB: *We just might want to send you something, that's all. Do you have a family?*

George: Yes. Pam and I were married in 1980, and we have a ten-year-old son, Jon, and a six-year-old daughter, Shannon. And a four-month-old St. Bernard named Briacon, but we call her "Brie." I knew Pam in high school, but we started dating in college. She asked me out.

BOB: *Briacon?*

George: It's a town in France. Pam and I went to see the Alpe d'Huez stage of the Tour de France, but couldn't get near it due to the crowds, so we went hiking in the mountains around Briacon.

BOB: *OK. How did you get started illustrating?*

George: In the second grade I drew a picture of an evening sky, and everyone made a big deal about it—I was comfortable with drawing from then on. Kids would give me their art projects to fix up if they weren't going well.

BOB: *That doesn't sound too forthright, George.*

George: Yes, well anyway, my two older brothers, Tom and Jeff, were better artists than I, and my grandfather on my dad's side was a good painter, so I was encouraged and inspired when I was young. Also, my father was a perfectionist and was always telling me, "Take your time, do a good job, don't rush."

BOB: *Well, that explains the five days it took to draw the XO-1. Do you have any formal training?*

George: I graduated from Kutztown (Pa.) State College with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in 1979. My first professional job was in my last year of college, illustrating a home-improvement magazine called *New Shelter*. Later I worked with *Bicycling* and *Bike Tech*, *Bicycling's* technical newsletter, a few Rodale books (*Rodale publishes Bicycling—ed.*), and *Bicycle Guide*.

Later, a friend became an art director for *Popular Mechanics*, and I've freelanced for it since 1984. In 1985 I got my first *Scientific American* job. I learned a lot from other illustrators—Hank Iken, Fred Wolff, George Kelvin, and of course, Daniel Rebour.

I've worked for Mathauser, Vittoria, Avocet, 3ttt, a wheelchair brochure for Merlin, and a local bike shop. And you got my name from Ted Costantino at *Bicycle Guide*, right?

BOB: *Yep. You ride a lot, too, don't you? I've called you up a few times and you weren't there; you've been out on a ride or racing at the track.*



Above: Portrait of the artist with son.

Quote: "I can't pay the bills on my cycling jobs alone."

George: I've always been a rider. My main bike is a '74 Raleigh Pro, still stock, but I own a lot of other bikes, including, as you know, an MB-1 you gave to me as partial payment. I started racing in 1971, criteriums and track mostly, but I don't race much any more—a little track, but not a lot. Mostly I want to help my children learn to ride. Oh—and I've toured all over the East Coast and in seven countries in Europe.

BOB: *Compare yourself to Daniel Rebour.*

George: Rebour was more focused on cycling. I draw lots of different subjects,

and I don't want to give them up yet—astronomy, mechanics, science, things like that. Rebour was able to focus on cycling because all the cycling companies used him. His style was so unique and consistent. But my work requires me to use lots of different mediums and styles, which is fun but distracting.

To develop a style like Rebour takes complete dedication to the subject matter. But I can't pay the bills on my cycling jobs alone, not yet.

Rebour shaded differently than I do. He shaded radially. I shade along the main line of the part. His way takes longer because it uses more lines. Also, he worked on paper or a board, and I work on drafting film.

BOB: *What do you least like to draw?*

George: Graphs and charts. And bike chains.

BOB: *What are your favorite George illustrations?*

George: The fork crowns in this year's catalogue, and I like the SunTour sidepull, too, on the RB-1/7 page. My favorite non-cycling illustration is of a Babage Calculating engine, for the February '93 *Scientific American*.

You should take a look at it.

BOB: *I will. George, where do you want to go with your illustrations? More magazine work? Tool catalogues? A book?*

George: I'd like to have a monthly magazine assignment where I could illustrate dissected bike parts, or just nice bike parts. I'd like to do more tools, too. A tool catalogue would be nice. Rebour illustrated the VAR catalogue, and I envy him. I'd like to do Park's, or the Third Hand's, but they don't seem interested. Anyway, I really do like the Bridgestone catalogue work.

BOB: *What are your particular strengths and weaknesses?*

George: I'm pretty good at drawing mechanical things and astronomical subjects, and my airbrushing is pretty good, although I don't do any of it for you guys.

BOB: *Astronomical things? Like stars, planets, the moon?*

George: Yes, and quasars, black holes, star nebulas—it's a great release to paint them, because they're free-form, and nobody knows what they look like.

BOB: *That's nice. I could probably do them!*

George: I doubt it, BOB.

EDITORIAL

JOHNNY CRASH: A BOY MAIMED SUES

Actual cases. Names have been changed to protect us from further litigation.

Case #1: A lawyer named Twain owns an '89 MB-3. He rides it in a local bicycle rally, gets his foot caught in the toe clip (Fisher-design double-thick steel,

nothing weird, no feet-grabbing teeth or anything). Twain falls at five mph, can't get foot out, falls over (remember, five mph), cracks his arm and dislocates his shoulder. Sues for a lot of money—our court costs could go up to \$100,000, so we settle for less out of court.

Case #2: Experienced Expert-category mountain bike racer Joe crashes in a race, says it's because his wheel came off, and claims it's our fault. He's ridden and raced the bike for years, no problem. Wants a million dollars to cover his facial and back injuries, which he says hurt his career and made it hard to function, yet the jury finds his face as picture-perfect as ever, and evidence suggests that he raced in and won a downhill event not a month after his crash. He denies. Judge throws his case out of court. He appeals. At this point our costs have exceeded \$100,000, and there's still no final ruling.

LETTERS

Fan mail

My name is Scott and I have been a Bridgestone owner for just over a year. In that time I have ridden my MB-0 in cyclocross races and mountain bike races. I've commuted to work, gone snow riding with homemade Alaska tires, and done two passes in the Death Ride with my two-year-old girl in her bike seat. I even toured solo to Ashland, Oregon, on it.

I bought my bike because I wanted a versatile bike that I could race on and still tour and commute on. It works. Thanx for making cool bikes.

Scooter B.
BOB #264

You're welcome.

Fan mail (not)

BOB Sr.: You are obviously in need of some drug-testing. I am not a trendoid cyclist—I started riding in '69 and have worked in bike retail since '75, and I don't own a mountain bike, any non-steel frame, nor anything with STI.

[But] why would anyone miss the old cantilevers (*Gazette* #1)? They squealed like protected witnesses, had almost no vertical adjustment, and didn't stop the bike as well. Face it, junk is junk, new or old.

Here's some more junk I'll never miss: Cheap tubulars (constant flats). TA metal cleats (hard to walk in, couldn't hold nails). Stronglight cranks

(good design, bad metal). Detto Pietro shoes (were good for two weeks, after a 50-week break-in). Cinelli rollers (loud!)

There is modern junk too—Hyperglide cogs with too many gears and too short a life. Road STI shifting. Cheap shock forks that work five times, then freeze for life. Squishy gel saddles that any beginner rider outgrows a need for after a dozen rides.

But let us not forget that in 1969 and 1975 there was also trash that nobody in their right mind would miss.

History BOB

BOB Sr. replies: Let's not mislead those who didn't read the column—I never praised a lot of the stuff you hate—although I do like Stronglight. But some of the old designs were superior to those of today—independent of the metallurgical qualities (or lack thereof). As far as Detto shoes go, remember—they were cut to fit Italian feet, not yours. Anyway, I recently bought three pairs, at \$20 each. Real shoes, real leather, a real deal. But they don't fit like Sidi Super Cycles, that's for sure.

THE BOB GAZETTE

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Nuisance suits are the worst part of life. A real pain.

Case #3: Another racer, Harry, raises his stem about an inch and a half above the "max-height" line. Dealer points it out, says don't do it. Friends say, "No, Harry, no!" Harry says, "It'll be fine—it has been up to now," and of course the steer tube breaks at the threads, causing a crash, causing face cuts. Harry sues, citing original owner's manual for not emphasizing enough how important it is to bury the max-height line beneath the headset. Two years later, still in litigation.

Another bike maker tells us it gets three new lawsuits every day. Almost all are "nuisance" suits.

Bike riding is like skiing, except cyclists fall onto a harder surface, and bikes have more parts than skis. We build strong, safe bikes, and we warn people of all foreseeable dangers, but it's never enough.

OP-ED

THREE BIKES, AND SHE'S STILL NOT SATISFIED

by Gail Ross

Snowbound much of the New England winter just past, I have managed to put a lot more thought into my bikes than miles on them and have come to a sad conclusion. After all these long dark hours of soul-searching, I have been forced to admit finally that I don't relish riding any one of them for another season.

With due respect to the BOBs out there, I must admit that I am not yet a BOB but at worst a wannabe, at best an F.O.B. (friend of Bridgestone). No, my three unbeloved bikes are from other makers, let's just say. I'll leave out names to protect the innocent, since the fault is not so much with the bikes anyway but with a cheap buyer who compromised to save money, who cowered when she should have charged, so to speak.

It's not surprising that I fell into this trap because in each case I was able to save a tidy sum. When I bought the frame for my road bike, for example, I saved \$250 by choosing second-best. I passed on a \$750 frame with slack geometry suitable for the long bike rides I prefer and opted for an aggressive criterium-style frame worth probably \$650 but marked down to \$500. At the time I thought I was pretty savvy, but even now, years later, I am still trying to find the elusive comfort zone. I squirm around on the bike, or move the seat forward or back, buy a longer or shorter stem, and too often think of the bike that could have been.

My mountain bike is great—a stiff light steel frame with Shimano XT throughout. The price was a steal all right, but the bike is big enough for someone two to three inches taller than I. Although I've jury-rigged it with the shortest stem I could dig up, my weight is always more over the rear wheel than the front. With me on it, the bike never handles as well as it should.

The third bike I optimistically refer to as my "commuting bike." I bought it long ago, when I had a discount at one particular store. They didn't have anything I really liked in my price range—around \$500. So I settled for and am stuck with a heavy mountain bike with tubes that feel like some plumber's castoffs.

I am reminded of these deficiencies every time I ride the bikes and am still trying to figure out how to get out of this

predicament. But when I do, I'm going to take a different tack: I'm going to project how much it would cost per ride not to have to suffer such indignities. (After at least 500 rides on my road bike, the cost is down to about 50¢ per ride, for example.) Then I'll decide whether I've really found a bargain or if I'm just buying a lot of aggravation.

Gail is a former editor of Bicycle Guide.

"DEDICATION" AND THE CLONING OF BICYCLES

by Grant Petersen

The word "dedication" sounds good on the surface. We admire it in people, and we aspire to it ourselves. But dedication has a totally different definition to bicycle product managers and to component manufacturers.

It's odd that dedicated systems are sometimes referred to as integrated. Segregated is more like it, because a "dedicated" bicycle component is one whose function requires it to be used with another very specific related component.

Dedication didn't exist until indexing; you could equip a bike with French (Simplex) shift levers, Italian (Campagnolo) rear derailleur, Japanese (Shimano) front derailleur, American (Phil Wood) hubs, Spanish (Zeus) freewheel, Swiss (Edco) cranks, and the cables and chain of your choice. Bikes had character, and everything worked together in international, interbrand harmony.

Indexing changed everything. In an indexed system, you start the shift, but the system stops it. Trouble is, unlike you, the system hasn't a brain, so it doesn't know where to stop it. So for indexing to work perfectly every time, a given movement of the shifters has to move the derailleur a specific, replicable amount, and the cogs have to be in specific spots and of specific sizes. Cable stretch, kinks, extra friction, misalignment, or parts made in another country will make it dysfunctional. Yet flip the shifter to "friction" mode, if it has

one, and all's well again.

For manufacturers, indexing justifies dedicated parts, and dedicated parts justify more dedicated parts. Once you buy into one piece of a dedicated system, you're obligated to the rest. In a typical system, the shifters and brake levers are physically joined, the spring and cam in the brake lever are designed for the specific brake caliper, the click stops in the shifter are matched to the spacing of the cogs, and the cogs fit only on the same manufacturer's hub. And now there's front indexing, a dubious feature that dictates compatible chainrings and frame geometry.

The main advantage of a "system" is that it allows companies who otherwise might stub their toes to assemble combinations of workable bike parts. They don't need to know the chain-wrap capacity of a certain rear derailleur, or the "throw" of any given front derailleur, because these niggling details have already been worked out. Any fool can spec a bike.

Bikes don't have the personality that they once did. Today's bikes work as well or better than those of the old days, but only within their dedicated systems. We've sacrificed interchangeability and versatility for the questionable benefit of brainless shifting.

Top-mount shifters still have a friction option, though. Use it, and you'll learn to shift for yourself. It's a legal, non-violent way to fight . . . *the System(s)*.

BE A BOB

Memberships cost \$20 for Bridgestone owners, \$15 for B-owners whose name is a derivative of Robert (proof req'd), and \$30 for non-owners. Clip this form and send it to the address below. Questions? Call 800-328-2453 x232.

Bridgestone Owners Bunch
15021 Wicks Blvd.
San Leandro, CA 94577

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE _____ DATE OF BIRTH _____

MODEL/SERIAL #/DATE OF PURCHASE/PLACE OF PURCH _____

MILES PER MONTH/T-SHIRT SIZE/OTHER INFO _____

CARD # (INDICATE VISA/MASTERCARD AND EXP DATE) _____

SIGNATURE _____

PAY BY CHECK OR CREDIT CARD
CA RESIDENTS ADD APPLICABLE SALES TAX

ASK PINEAPPLE BOB

Dear Pineapple Bob,

What's the best off-road mud tire? *It depends on the mud. In clay, or anything that really sticks, ride the skinniest tire you can get—I like 1.25-inch Fat Boys, or the 1.4-inch Nimbus. If the mud isn't sticky, you can go bigger and knobbier. Specialized has a new mud tire—the Storm Control—and I've heard it works well in sticky mud, but I haven't tried it. At least, look for widely spaced knobs, if you must go to a knobby, but I don't think anybody really must.*



Dear Pineapple Bob,

What do you really do at/for Bridgestone? *I work "on call." I build and strip bikes, assemble prototypes, mount shock forks for*

testing, organize the shop, and do art projects—T-shirt designs, buttons, stickers. I also designed a couple of shirts for Bianchi, just across the Bay. Bianchi and Bridgestone are good friends.

Dear Pineapple Bob,

You look like a good athlete. What other sports do you like? *I love soccer (it put me through college), and I coach it a little and play when I can. And I like and miss the old days of motocross, trials, and motorcycle road racing. I run a lot, too—mostly off-road, to prepare for my favorite sport of all: cyclocross racing.*

You can ask Pineapple Bob anything about bikes. Send your questions or comments to Ask Pineapple Bob, Bridgestone Owners Bunch, 15021 Wicks Blvd., San Leandro, CA 94577.



Bridgestone Owners Bunch
15021 Wicks Blvd.
San Leandro, CA 94577

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BRIDGESTONE

The Cat

RONA T-SHIRT:

RONA is an acronym for Retro Grouches of North America. Inspired by the *Bicycling* article titled "Techies Unite" (July '90), in which Bridgestone is called a "Retro-Grouch" company. This was not intended as a compliment, but we took it as one. Attractive logo—a blatant knock-off of the old Campagnolo logo. A fine shirt for anyone who's ever been victimized by "high technology."

Cotton. Grey or white, depending on stock.

M L XL XXL

\$8.95



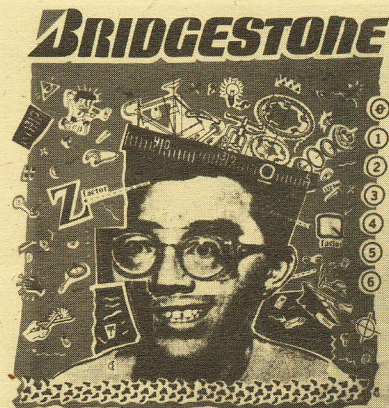
BRIDGESTONE T-SHIRT:

Designed by Pineapple Bob, who—littleknownfact—graduated from the University of Hawaii with a degree in graphic arts. Lots of details, most of which will puzzle you, but P. Bob assures us they all relate to Bridgestone.

Cotton. White w/red & black.

M L XL XXL

\$9.45



CAMPAGNOLO TRACK PEDALS:

Campagnolo Superleggeri Track (#1037A) pedals, 320g/pair. We bought 100 of them cheap—just when everyone was going clipless. We're down to about 50 pairs, we'll sell no more than 30 of them, and only to BOBs. An unbelievable price for pedals that will last a lifetime. No clips or straps.

\$60.00

