

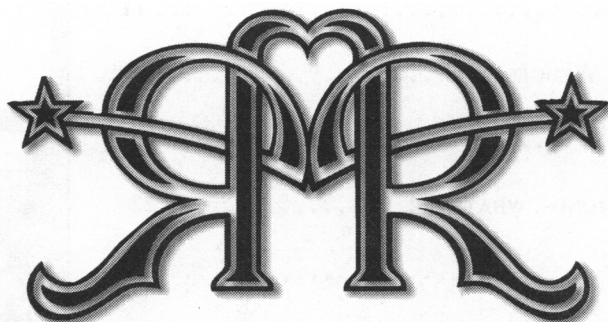
FOR BICYCLERS

## THE RIVENDELL READER

Issue No.



October 2001



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## When Abercrombie &amp; Fitch

**T**oday is the day after the attack, and as I'm going over this issue, everything I've written seems like trivial crap, and it seems disrespectful to send it out. It's hard to do the final editing, so I'm not going to put that much into it this time. Typos and layout blunders seem the least of the least of issues. If you know somebody who was hurt or killed, we're so, so sorry. Put this away, and come back to it when you need an escape, when you're in the right mood, when your head has settled.

There's a Freddie Hoffman update in, I think, the July *Bicycling*. For those of you new to Freddie, he's a 42-year church janitor who lives in New Jersey and has ridden (actually documented) more than 1.2 million miles on his bike, and raised more than half a million dollars for the Leukemia Foundation. He was born with slight brain damage that makes it hard for him to learn things most of us take for granted. In what he calls the "roaring '80s," his yearly mileage was about 50,000, but these years he's closer to 37,000. He has ridden about three and a half times as many miles in his life as Eddy Merckx has, and he rides a Schwinn Voyager, in sneakers, with toe clips. His handlebars are steel "roadster" style, a lot like the Priest bars we offer; and they're plugged with SunTour Power Ratchet (non-indexed) bar-end shifters—all facts not harped on in *Bicycling's* story. True, it was about Freddie and not his bike, but it's not like nobody cares about these details.

In RR23 there was a section called BIG, in which guys wrote in and talked about riding as heavyweights, and some of the challenges weight brings. In this issue, Kathy Stewart tells her own story. Of course we all know bicycles aren't just for fitness-obsessed professional singles or the moneyed childless who met at the gym, but it's good to be reminded of this now and then, too.

These days I feel self-conscious about what I wear when I ride. I think what we wear, or at least what I wear, reflects my riding values. I've *been* speed-obsessed, and

between 1977 and 1983, every ride was full blast, with timed splits and all. I raced for 6 years, and I wore racier clothes then (though I was always slobbish by racing standards). I've never had as much fun riding as I do now. In the old days I enjoyed the after-ride feeling, and the feeling of fitness, but the pedaling itself was painful, and I never saw anything. Now I ride the same roads and see lots.

THE LOCAL MOUNTAIN IS LOADED with bikes, and I see a lot of handlebars rotated forward so the ends point up to the rear. It would take fifteen seconds with an allen wrench to change it, but I never say anything, even if we're all just sitting around at the junction recovering from the ride and enjoying the day and making small talk. It's not the same as telling a stranger, "Your bike is too small," or something else that can't be fixed, which I wouldn't even think of doing. But the rotated bars, you know, with the brake levers way down there and the ramp so steep it provides no resting perch, can't feel good and can't be gotten used to anymore than a foxtail in a sock can, and is just as easy to remedy.

When I see riders, the first thing I look at is how they fit on the bike, what size they should have gotten, what changes they could make so easily to improve things immensely, and what size Rivendell I'd put them on. It's more a curse

## What's in our name?...

It's occurred to us that *The Rivendell Reader* all by itself could be about anything, but most probably is about elves, hobbits, and Middle Earth. As most of you reading this know by now, that's not the case. We're concerned that the name *Rivendell Reader* should have some sort of bicycle connection. We're wondering whether we should change the name, or come up with a subtitle with a bicycle connection, or leave it alone. Maybe the new masthead works. I know "bicyclists" is more normal these days, but I like the older "bicyclers." After the attack, heavens, does it matter? Of course not.

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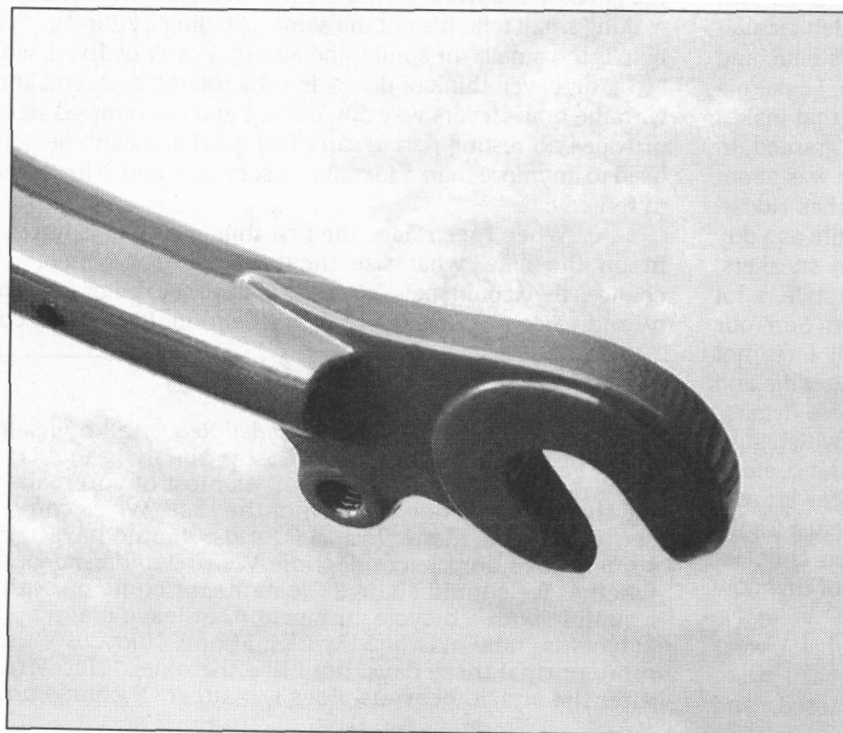
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THE RIVENDELL READER

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*Editor:*  
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 Grant. I'm bad at it, but I'll get better.



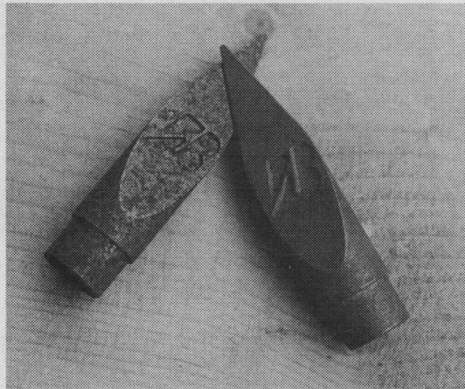
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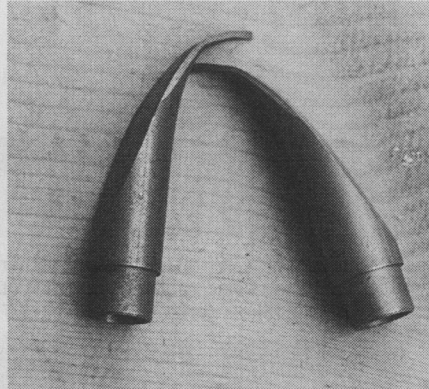
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# A Preponderance of Plugs, and...

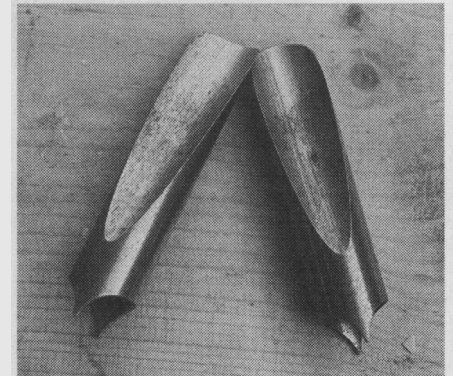
**T**his is the kind of article that makes me nervous because I can imagine people thinking, “Instead of celebrating the joy of the open road and the freedom, health, and planet-saving benefits of riding, Rivendell wastes three pages on insignificant frame details. What a joke!” It’s NOT a joke. Bike frames are neat, but they often have secret connections that are covered with paint, so you can’t tell what’s going on at the point where metal joins metal. In RR23, we talked about the front dropouts. This issue’s secret connection is where the seat stays attach to the seat lug. There are way many more styles than we show here, but you can’t rightly expect us to fill a whole issue with them, can you? So here are some. Sorry if your favorite isn’t included.



**FLAT TEARDROP.** The tips are thin, and were then bent to curve around the seat lug. Bstone team issue, not on production models.



**ENGLISH FULL-WRAP.** Common on English touring bikes from the '60s onward. See one on the Mondia on the next page, too.



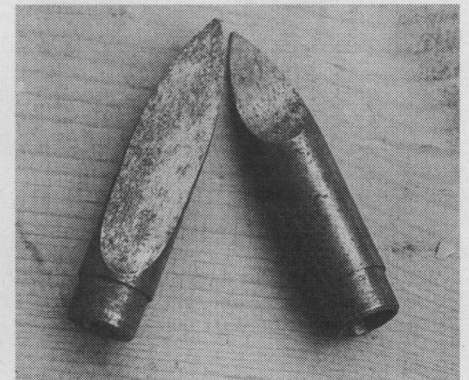
**EXTERNAL SPOONS.** Rare style. Shown are two different tip styles. The rounder one, on the right, looks better.



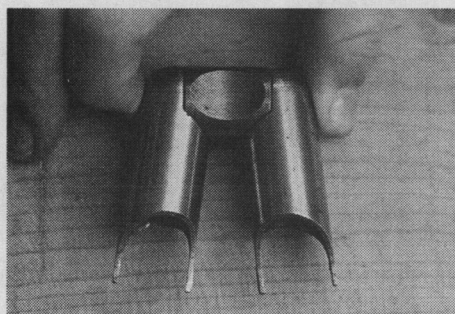
**INTERNAL SPOON.** “Spoon” refers to the concavity. Internal means the stub end goes inside the seat stay. Generic, good-looking.



**FASTBACK.** There are other way to do “fastback” seat stays, but this one’s easy. Braze the upper portion directly to the seat tube, chop the stays **off** straight, and it **looks a lot more labor-intensive than it is.**



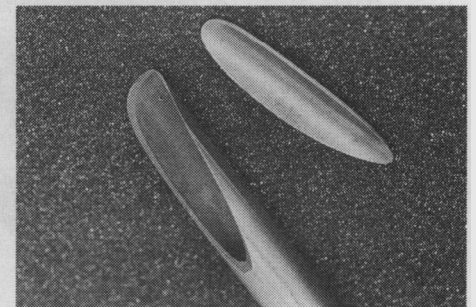
**FLAT TEARDROP WITH SCALLOP.** The scallop (right) increases contact area between the plug and seat lug. It doesn’t show.



**FASTBACK W/ INTERNAL BINDER.** Inspired by the Cinelli style. This one has external sockets. Note the scallop, for brazing contact.

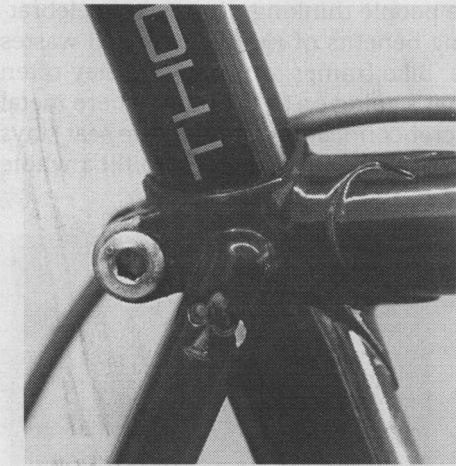


**STUBBY ARROWS.** The concave areas mate to the seat lug. Lots of contact. See a finished one at this same location on the facing page.

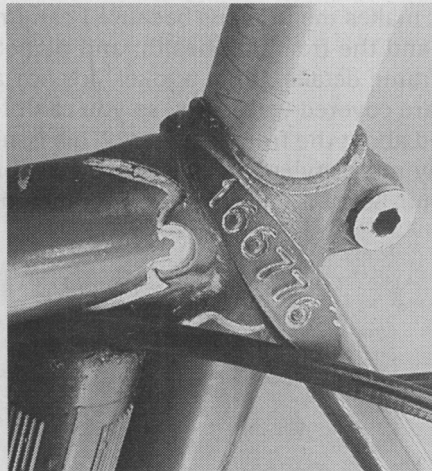


**THE REAL DEAL, O’Neil.** The original style, made by carving the seat stay and covering it with a thin metal cap. All plugs are fake these. Some plugs may offer more brazing contact area, for a better joint, though.

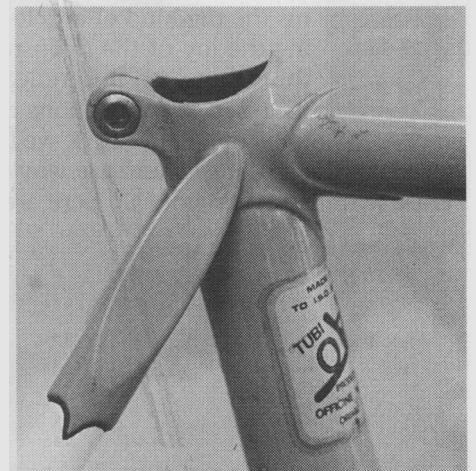
# ...a Selection of Seat Clusters



COLNAGO, relatively recent, but still lugged. This looks like a direct-braze, but the relieved gives it away as a plug.



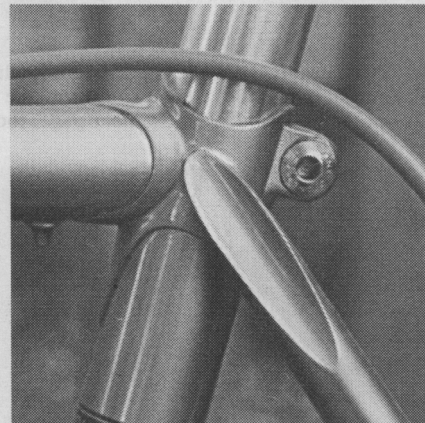
MONDIA (SWISS). With the English full-wrap style, which was said to give extra strength for touring. This bike's serial number is 166776.



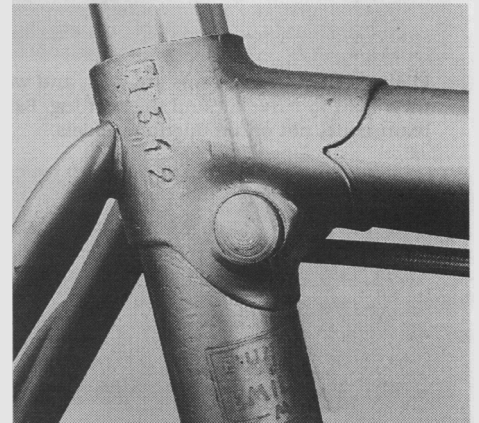
SIMILAR TO ROW 1, SEAT 3 on the facing page. Machined plug with internal socket.



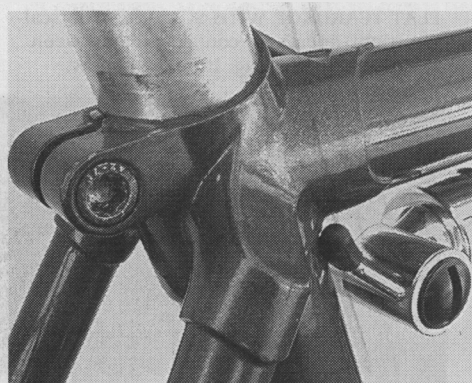
MERLIN/MOOTS. The single tube is welded directly to the seat tube, and in this case, houses a rubber bumper rear suspension



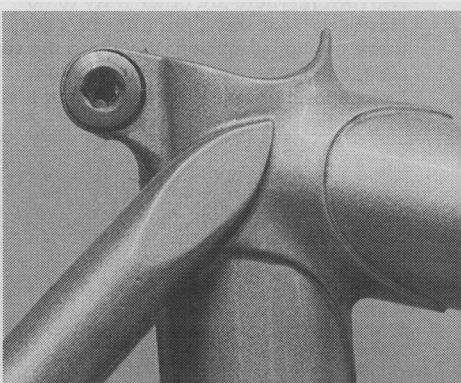
MASI SPECIAL. Late '60s or early '70s, this was surely a cap brazed onto an open tube. From the Richard Sachs collection.



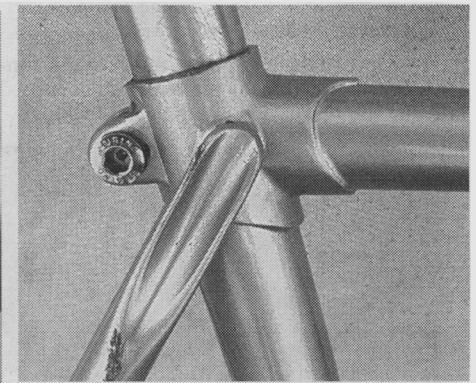
LEGNANO. Even without paint, you can tell by the unique binder bolt placement that this is a Legnano (Italian) frame. Such is the value of



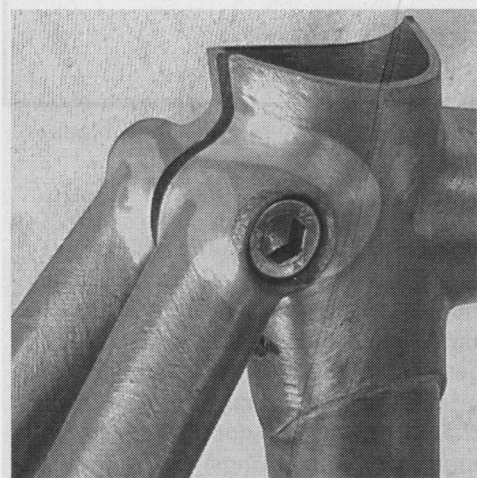
HERONI Integrated seat stay sockets simplified brazing and give it an interesting look.



STUBBY ARROW style. Huge contact area (see Row 3 Seat 2 on the facing page) and a bulldog look. I sort of like it.



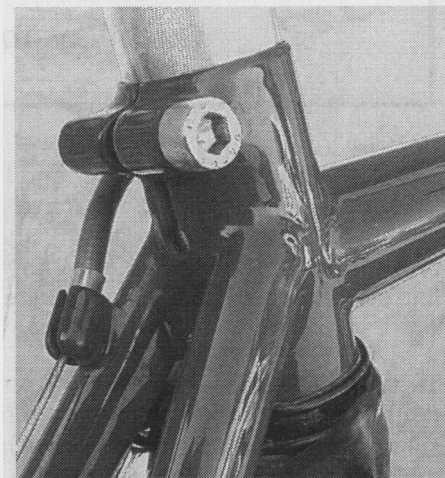
WHY NOT? The seat stay itself was smashed into concavity. On a nicer looking seat lug, it might not look so bad.



Toyo, who makes, among others, Ritchey frames, the Atlantis, and Rambouillet, does a nice job fillet brazing. This is a Ritchey-style seat cluster **on** an early prototype. Unpainted.



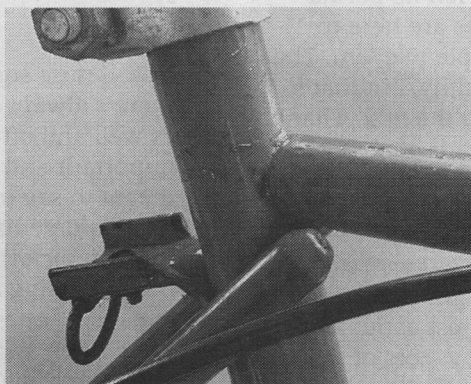
Ritchey Annapurna, Tom's fanciest bike. Note points **on** the seatstays, a trademark. Combo lug/fillet frame. Tom has always used fastback seat stays. It's his style.



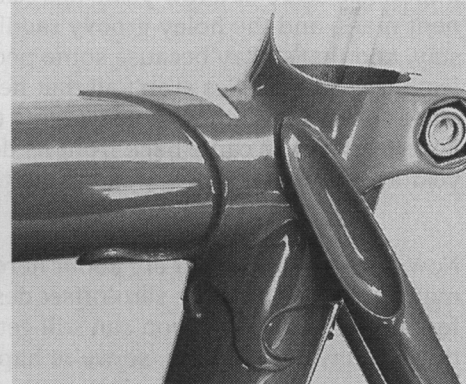
Tig-welded cluster **on** a Bernie Mikkelsen custom. There's **no** lug, **so** the binder bolt is well above the seat stays.



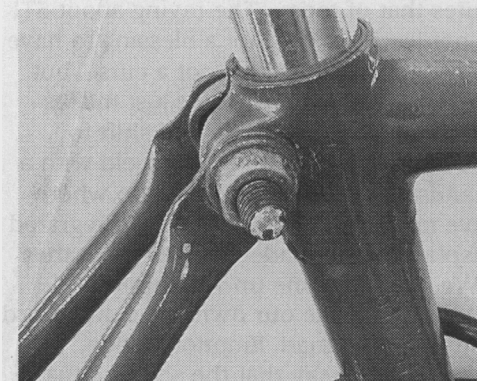
Richard Sachs. The plug is simple and fine. Shown **on** one of RS's Anniversary frames, built with modified older Riv lugs.



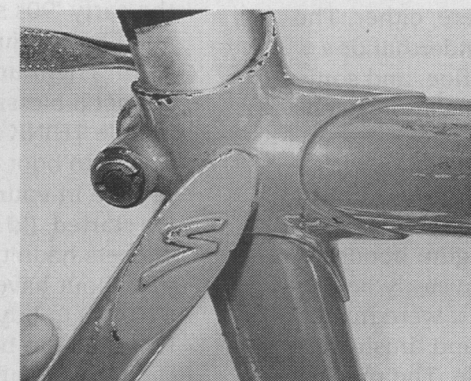
Sears Free Spirit. in good company. Note the tapered top tube. And, if the seat stay broke loose, the round end wouldn't poke **so** bad.



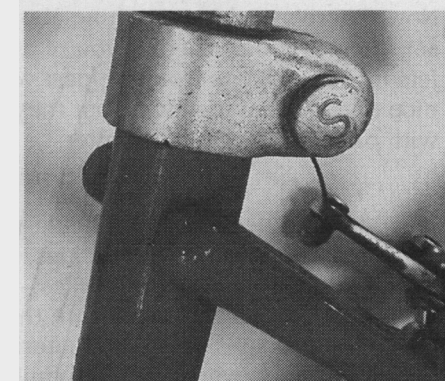
Current Rivendell road-style frame. The curved plug weighs only half an ounce, and provides plenty of brazing contact. It's good.



This is a dept-store grade cheapo with a fast-back-style attachment, in which the stays were flatted, drilled, and bolted directly to the seat lug. **Sort** of a cheap Cinelli-style.



**You** can tell by the **S** this is a Specialized. It's a pink Stumpjumper Team bike from about **1985**, when lugs were still a Specialized deal. Nice bike.



**Schwinn (Varsity-grade)** attachment, this one **on** a ladie's style frame found locked at the local BART station. This is a women's bike, hence **no** top tube.

# Parts Then vs Parts Now

One Way To Look At It . One Person's Opinion, That's All.

## STEMS

**THEN.** Modern stems are lighter and larger, but for the most part, they're far less attractive. There's more variety now, in materials and design, and more mountain bike influence in road designs. They're less svelte now. I like svelteness, so I liked stems better then.

## HANDLEBARS

**THEN.** Modern bars are lighter and less attractive, with their flattened curves, bead blasted finishes, and silkscreened logos. Company logos have been simplified, and engraved crests—which used to be standard—have, like the wind, done gone.

## SADDLES

**Now.** More variety, and nothing's been worsened. The impotence scare of a few years ago has left its permanent mark, and the holey-groovy saddles are here to stay, and that's okay because some people like 'em. The featherweight saddles aren't all that healthy, but that's okay, too, because they're just adding to the mix. Thank goodness Brooks came back from its death of about a year ago, or we'd be pretty sad about the saddle picture.

## SEAT POSTS

**Now.** There's nothing to cry about here, either. Yes, too many big logos, and the zero-offset designs don't work for a lot of people, but you can still get just about anything you want out there, so we're happy. Lots of the modern posts have clamp sections that are too short, and don't support the saddle rails properly. But there are plenty of good designs, too. More variety now.

## HEADSETS

**Now.** There's nothing to whine about here, either. The selection is good, whether you're a neanderthal or a Jetson. The designs from the past were fine, and some nice ones have gone away, but they've been replaced with ones just as good or better.

## BRAKE LEVERS

**THEN.** Twenty years ago you could get aero or non-aero easily, in a wide range of qualities, and gum hoods—which look so nice on most bikes—were easily had, as well. The top quality levers from the past were made better than today's best. The materials and finish were better, and they were usually rebuildable. The modern lever market suffers from lack of choice—it's all aero, and most of the levers have built-in shifters; and the quality has dropped, while the complexity has increased. And everything comes with black hoods.

Black is fine, looks great on many bikes, but all black hoods is like all black shoes.

## BRAKE CALIPERS

**THEN.** There were more standard reach brakes, so you had more choices. The quality level is about the same now as then. Modern dual-pivot brakes are great, but not a godsend unless your hands are too weak. Cantilevers have just about died, but you could get tons of them back then, and they were really good. V-brakes didn't exist, and that in itself isn't a good thing (since V-brakes are good brakes for some things); but mainly back then there was a better choice, in all ranges of quality. Shimano's re-introduction of the midpriced standard reach sidepull, and first-time intro of the Ultegra standard reacher will brighten things up this year, and with any luck, others will follow.

## FRONT DERAILLEURS

**Now.** I miss some of the designs from the past, but there's always a modern replacement that does the job as well and often better. Front derailleurs have the least important and simplest task of any bike part, and as I've meant to say in the past, if anybody holds a gun to your head and demands you give up one of your bike's parts forever, pick this one. But still, the cheap ones now are better looking and work better than almost all of the expensive ones from 20 years ago (not that they didn't work fine); and they cost next to nothing, comparatively. Shimano's engineers and designers have done a good, good thing.

## SHIFTERS

**THEN.** The quality and variety we had up through about the early '90s smites that of today. The raving about STI and ERGO is just not justified. It is not a blessing to have shifting right under your fingertips. It's not a curse, but it's not a blessing. Having it so convenient just makes people THINK too much about shifting, and shift to much, to boot. It's like sitting on the chesterfield with a remote in your hands. Click-click-click. Back to where we started. I'd have no gripe about that IF the integrated clickers hadn't displaced independent shifters, but they just about have. We need to come up with almost \$10,000 to buy tooling to make our own, we can't afford that, and I'm bummed...and mad. Emotions aside, though, it would be tough to say that the shifter situation is better now than it was then. Fancier, but the added complexity, cost, and lack of a friction option shouldn't go unscolded. It's just what happens when the market is controlled by too few makers.

**REAR DERAILLEURS**

Now. The derailleurs of the early '80s were good, and for a given price, were finished better and had some features that were nice but lacking in modern derailleurs. The cages were more attractive, and the bodies often had cast-in art, rather than silkscreened logos; and they weren't painted, for crying out loud. But overall, we've nothing to complain about now, and Shimano's derailleurs, especially the silver ones, are something to rave and rejoice over. We don't have SunTour as an option, but Shimano has lots of variety, and they all work great.

**CRANKS**

THEN. There was less variety, but there was enough variety for anybody, and chainrings were more available. The only crank bolt circles we actually need are 130 and 110/74, and they were plentiful back then. Now it's hard to find a 110/74 (despite its benefits), and the new compact designs are split in at least two directions, and you can't get a decent range of rings for either. Then there's the Q-Factor issue. Back then, cranks weren't as wide. These days crank makers favor mountain bike frames, and so many are too wide where they shouldn't be, so cranks are made wider to clear them. You can get good cranks these days; they're just harder to get.

**CHAINS**

Now. The old Sedisport was cheap, strong, and shifted great. But there are plenty of modern chains that do all that, too, and are silver, to boot. The chain situation is good and will only get better.

**BOTTOM BRACKETS**

TOUGH CALL, probably now. I like the cup-and-cone bottom brackets. Yes, they are more difficult to service, but they were still easy enough, and they went on forever. Now nobody makes them, because bike mechanics hate them and new riders are so easily sold on "sealed and maintenance-free" models. The early sealed ones, except for Phil, crapped out early and all the time. Slight exaggeration there, but they were bad. As much as I'd like to point out design flaws and a shoddy history with the new ones, I can't do it. Shimano and Tange (who makes Shimano) models are excellent and cheap and easy in every way.

**HUBS AND REAR GEARS**

TOUGH CALL. I can't bring myself to get happy about the demise of cup-and-cone models, because with it went the interest in learning how to service them, and I think certain mechanical skills are part of the being-a-bicyclist package. Also, back then there were plenty of free-wheels, and gearing could easily be customized. Today it's much harder and sometimes impossible to customize gearing, and freewheels are harder to come by

(but they'll never die, so don't jump off a high rock). I've just recently warmed up to cassettes, and "warmed up" is putting it too strongly, maybe. I wish they were available in 6 and 7 speeds, but that won't happen. But I'm less picky now than I was then, about gearing. As long as the wheel's strong and I can get a decent range, I don't care if it's 7-8-9 speeds. One good thing is that cheap sealed hubs work pretty well. Modern cheap hubs are better than old cheap hubs. I'll call this one a tie.

**RIMS**

Now, but not by much. There were more practical designs back then, fewer downright dumb ones, but rim quality and joining techniques are better now. Maybe it's a tie. Back then you could still get Mavic MA2s and Mod 3s, and those are the only two rims a road rider needs, but you can't get them anymore. There are good rims, still, but it's hard to praise modern rim times without groaning about some things.

**TUBES**

Now. Not by much, tiny victory, but: You used to be able to get inner tubes without longitudinal seams. It's easier to patch a seamless tube. But modern tubes are fine, and the superlight ones are kind of neat.

**TIRES:**

Now BY FAR. Casings and rubber are better, period. We have lots of wacky colors, but you don't have to buy them, and if you like them, great. Even if you disagree with me about everything else, you gotta agree with 'un.

**SPOKES**

Now. Spokes in the '80s were good, too, but they weren't any better, and there's more variety now, and fewer lousy spokes.

**CABLES AND HOUSING**

Now. Thinner, smoother, pre-stretched, and housings come lined. Same story as tires: No arguing this.

**Summary**

I haven't tallied the Nows and Thens, but overall, cheap stuff has gotten better, pro stuff has gotten slightly worse (with exceptions), and variety has grown for mountain bikes and shrunk for road bikes. Aesthetically, modern parts are generally less beautiful, and seem oddly proud of it. And the emphasis on lightness has its repercussions—in many cases, it doesn't last as long, and in many more, it's not serviceable. We (Rivendell) are more practical than sentimental, though, and there are lots of good things happening. Well, maybe "lots" is overstating it. **But** some.

# Bicycle Frame Materials 101

for more of this, on lots of topics, and even some tests, go to [www.rivendellbicycles.com](http://www.rivendellbicycles.com)

## Steel

**Pro:** Strong, proven, tough (if it develops a crack, the crack grows slowly, so your chances of noticing it are good). Easily repaired by people who don't speak your language and wear odd hats, so it's practical for round-the-world tours. Dimensionally ideal for good tire and crank clearances+ it doesn't require huge diameters for strength or stiffness. Available in wide variety of dimensions and alloys to suit anything from a superlight girly hill climbing bike to a 65-lb Rhodesian warhorse bicycle for transporting dead rhinos across the savannah. Steel tubes can be joined by more methods than any other, offering more manufacturing options+ glued, tig-welding, migwelding, fillet brazing, or silver-or-brass brazing with lugs.

**Con:** Maybe none. Some would say "it rusts" as a con, but a good paint job can easily last 20 years, and there are a variety of anti-rust sprays now available that can prevent rust on the insides of the tubes. So "it rusts" is more of a theoretical issue than a real one. Those who have a commercial interest in non-steel frames are usually quick to point to weight as a drawback—an easy sell, since everybody has lifted a monstrosity heavy steel frame at some time or other, and knows the feeling. In fact, a given volume of steel weighs 3x that of aluminum and 2x that of titanium. But you don't need to use as much (volume) steel as you do other materials, because steel is stronger, and stiffer, and resists cracking better than other materials. A good, 56cm steel road frame may weigh 4.5lb. A superlight steel road frame may weigh 3.5lb. A light aluminum frame is around 3lb, some even less. Some carbon fiber frames are down around 2.5lb. The percentage difference of the bare frame weights is up to 40 percent, which sounds considerable until you factor in the weight of the bike parts (another 17lbs), at which point it falls to about 9 percent. Add a 165lb rider, and the difference is less than 1 percent.

## Aluminum

**Pro:** Light, inexpensive to buy, tubes available in a tremendous range of diameters, wall thickness, and alloys.

**Con:** When a crack develops, it tends to grow quickly, leading to sudden failures. Good engineering can guard against cracks, but historically, aluminum frames do not have an exemplary record in the crack department. Harder to repair than steel. Requires large-diameter and/or thick walls to achieve sufficient strength and stiff-

ness, so "strong and stiff" aluminum frames are chunky looking. That isn't necessarily a con.

## Titanium

**Pro:** Strong, light, beautiful material. Given the same dimensions, a tube of Titanium will weigh half that of steel, and about **25%** more than aluminum. Stiffer than aluminum, not quite as stiff as steel (depends on the alloy, despite what you've heard). Titanium bicycle frames can have somewhat more "traditional" proportions than aluminum frames of the same stiffness and strength.

**Con:** Expensive, and doesn't readily lend itself to brazing with lugs, and therefore all titanium welds tend to look more or less alike and generic, whether they're from the U.S., Russia, or mainland China. That isn't necessarily a con, but it must frustrate the high-end U.S.A. builders, whose work quite closely resembles

## Carbon Fiber

**Pro:** Light, strong, and easily tailored to achieve desired strength/stiffness properties.

**Con:** Despite theoretical structural possibilities and advantages, carbon fiber frames do not have an enviable record of reliability, and one continuing problem are the joints and connections. There is evidence suggesting that long-term exposure to UV rays is damaging to the resins that bond carbon fiber. Failures tend to be sudden, and on-the-trip repairs are practically impossible.

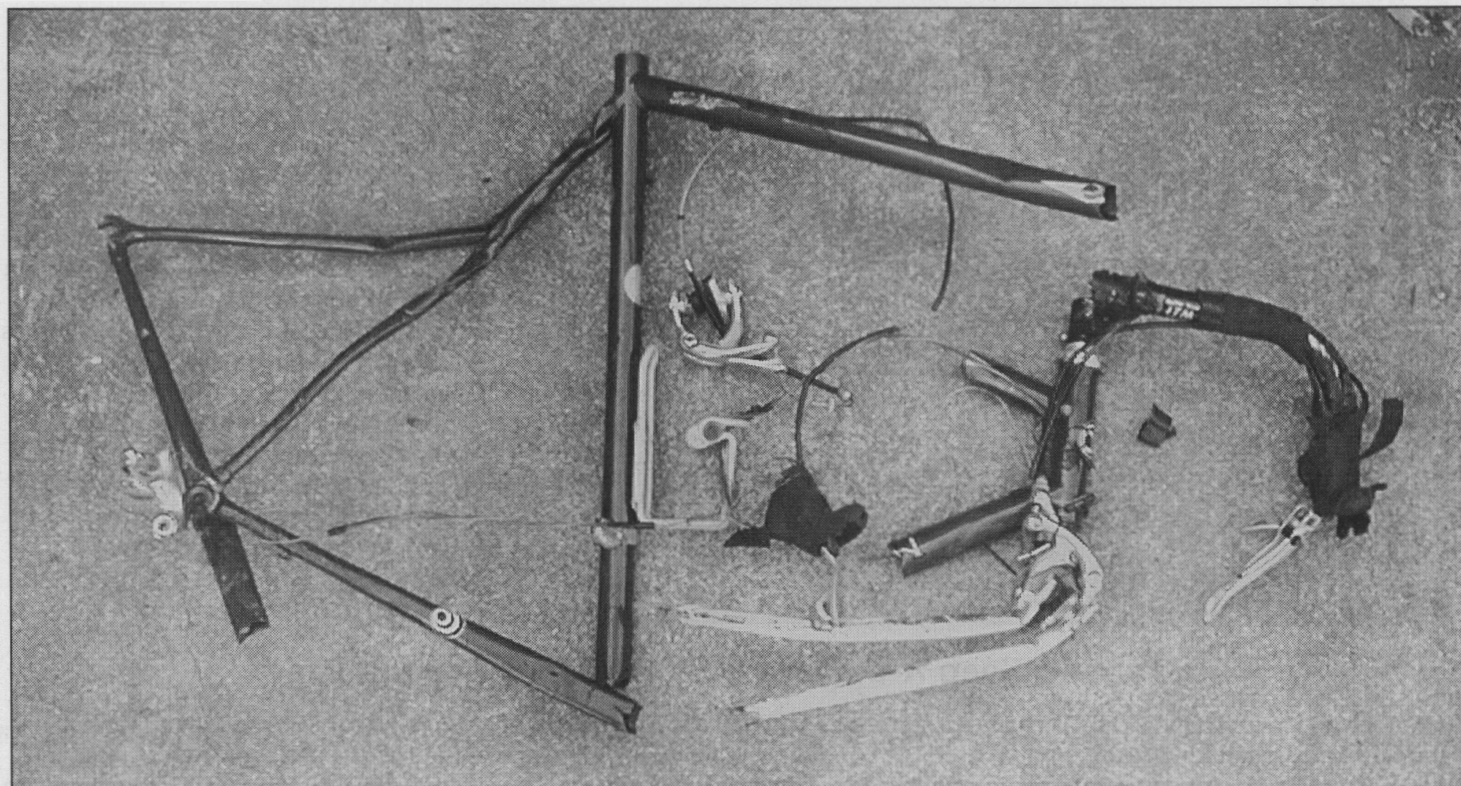
## The Frame of the Future Is...

**Plastic.** Plastics technology is moving ahead rapidly, and probably within 5 years there will be relatively strong 2.5 pound frames with internal compartments and electronics. The molds will be expensive, so only the richest companies will be able to afford them, but once the tooling exists, it will cost just a few dollars to make a frame, leaving plenty of money left for promotions, advertising, and driving all other technologies into the ground. Frames and dimensions will be streamlined, and many things that are now outside the frame (cables, chains) will go inside. The plastic frames will house computers, GPS devices, and other electronic gear that will monitor your workout, provide feedback during your ride, and record your body's response to it so you can store the information on a CD or post it onto your personal website. Until then, just ride your bike.



# Crash of the Month

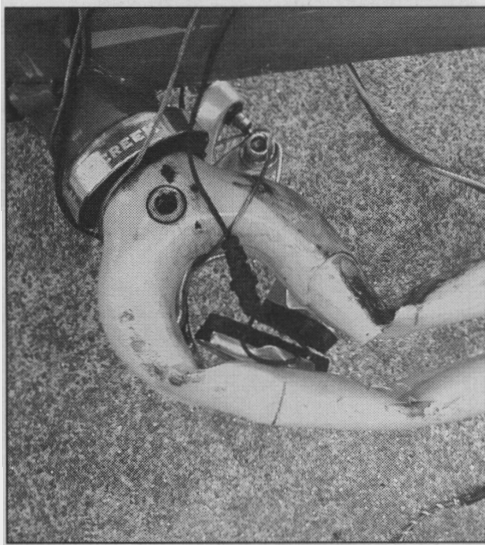
Pal Jeff found this on the side of the freeway. A fine custom frame made by Brent Steelman and equipped with Campy parts. We dearly hope it fell off the roof rack.



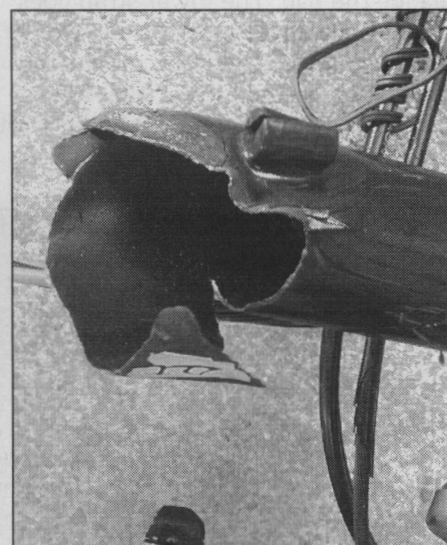
Perhaps some looting took place, or maybe some other parts got dragged away by passing cars, but this is all Jeff delivered to us. It's an orange Steelman frame, about 54cm, with a yellow fork. Found on a freeway near San Jose, CA.



In the old day's you'd just be able to take this part down to your pro road shop, replace each broken part, then rebuild the lever.



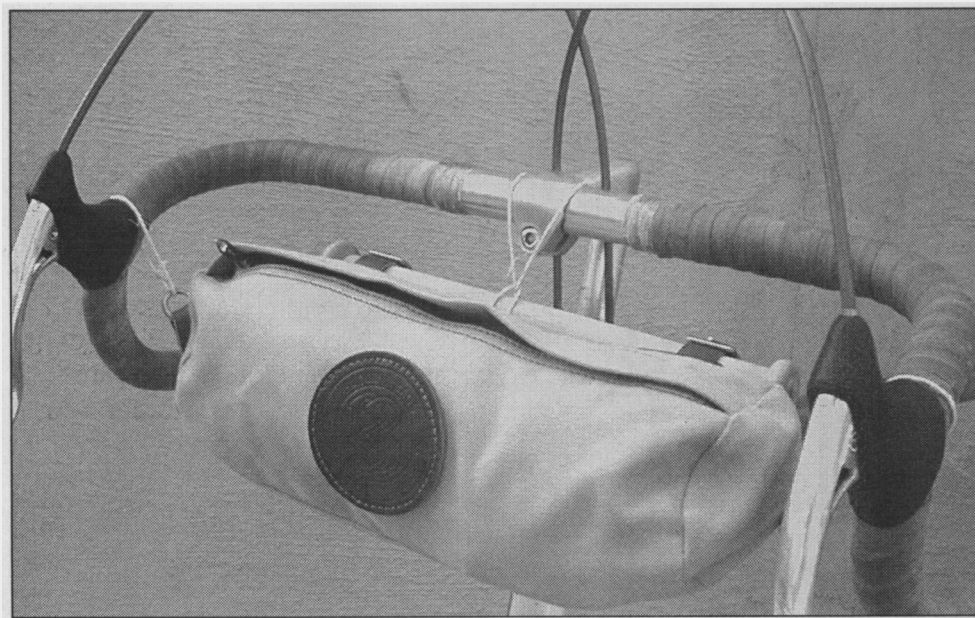
Here's the fork, part of a brake lever, and some of a mangled brake caliper. This bike is well beyond repair.



Here's the top tube. Try to imagine the bike falling off the roof, and then something happening to it that could do this. I

# Get Creative With Bags

These two good ideas, and may lead to you to several others, in which case, send 'em on in and maybe we'll put them in a future issue. No prize money, but such satisfaction!

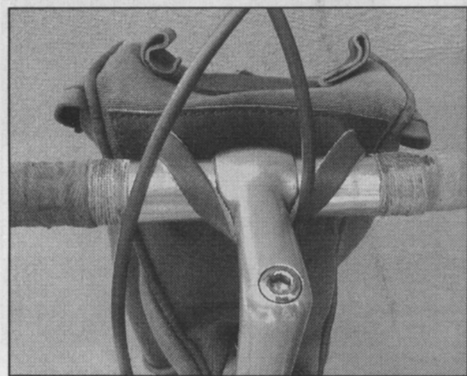


## Got Big Mitts?

If you're bugged by the straps on the Candy Bar Bag taking up space on your handlebar, then strap the straps to a dowel or stick or something, and suspend the center of the something from a cord around the stem. We got fancy with this one; it uses an official dowel from a hardware store, and some tinker-toy like round things screwed to the ends as keepers. They aren't necessary, but if you have nightmares about the bag sliding off the dowel, they'll certainly put your mind at ease. Besides, they're a nifty way to add wood, and anytime you can do that to a bike, it's a good thing, right?

## Want To Keep A Camera Handy In Your Banana Bag?

Member Benson Tongue—U.C. Berkeley professor of mechanical engineering that he is—figured out a way to rig his Banana Bag (which he already owned) onto his handlebar. It works like it was made for it. It's perfect for a camera, and you can still carry your normal junk in another seat sack in back. We've stolen his idea, it works great, and here's how to do it. In these photos we've used a toe strap as the main strap, and it buckles inside the bag. The lower strap goes around whatever part of the frame it hits, usually the headset, maybe the head tube. Keep it loose (that lower part). This works great, with and without a camera in it.



# Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About ZIPPERS

by Nancy Kangas

Zippers keep books from spilling out of backpacks, sofa cushions from bursting out of their covers, giant weather balloons from sputtering to the ground, and millions upon millions of people from being indecent. But for thousands of years, people closed clothes and all their other flaps with buttons, snaps, and buckles and that was that. **So** how did a clumsy batch of crooked metal wires rise to such fame and fortune to take a prominent place in our lives (and on our pants)? The zipper's story is full of wild-haired inventors and hard-working tinkerers; it takes about **40** years and isn't always very pretty.

MACHINE SALESMAN WHITCOMB L. JUDSON WAS A MAN who had tasted the glory of receiving patents for his inventions and was hungry for more, so he tackled all those tiny buttons on high-topped shoes people wore in the late 1800's.

What he came up with looked dangerous: along two strips of cloth he attached a chain of wires bent into hooks. These hooks or "clasps" stuck out from the cloth until a "guide" in the middle moved over each set of hooks, shoving them together to interlock. This was laced into the shoe flaps so that fastening up your boots would be a breeze every time.

Whitcomb's "Clasp Locker or Unlocker for Shoes" was bulky, jam-prone, and doomed to fail, but he received a patent on August 29, 1893. Buoyed, he took his invention to the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 in Chicago, where he proudly wore the new gadget in his own boots. Perhaps the 20 million or so visitors were distracted by the sight of the first electric Ferris Wheel also on exhibition at the fair. Perhaps they were perfectly happy with buttons. In any event, he sold just twenty—to the U.S. Postal Service to hold mailbags shut. The Clasp's nasty habit of refusing to unclasp, however, killed any possibility of a second order.

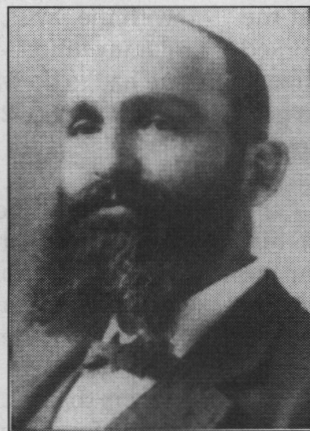
But Whitcomb had impressed one important per-

son, his friend Colonel Lewis Walker. In 1901, the Colonel created the Universal Fastener Company (the name kept changing over the years) and hired Whitcomb to work out the bugs. In 1905, Whitcomb came up with the "C-Cururity Placket Fastener" to close the openings in men's pants and women's skirts. Instead of a chain of interlocking wires that had to be sewn in by hand, Whitcomb clamped metal hooks on one side of the cloth tape and metal eyelets on the other. Again, he used a slider in the center to get each hook to snag its eye. The C-Cururity may have been easier to make and sew into clothes, but it wasn't dialed yet. Sometimes the hooks' sharp edges would tear the fabric of the garment; other times the hooks and eyes would pop apart and stay popped, at which point you had to cut the whole thing out. What's more, a C-Cururity cost 35 cents, which in those days was mighty steep, since you could buy buttons for practically nothing. One story goes that when a salesman named Willie Wear tried to sell a second batch of C-Cururities to a store in Pennsylvania, the shopkeeper chased him out with a meat cleaver. All was not well at Automatic Hook and Eye (the going company name). They needed somebody to figure out how to get these things to work, and fast.

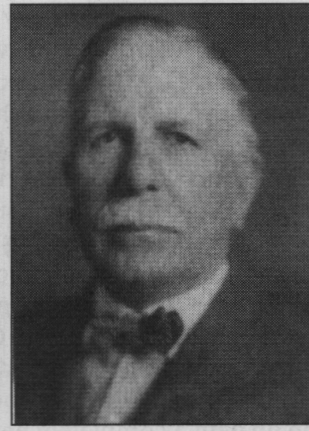
## The Zipper Czars

Judson, the idea man, whose thirst for yet another patent launched the idea and made the first ill-fated versions.

Walker, the guy who rescued it from failure before it was **too** late and kept it alive long enough to find Sundback, who finally made a good one. Make no mistake—we're still no fans of zippers, but we admire the men who made them happen.



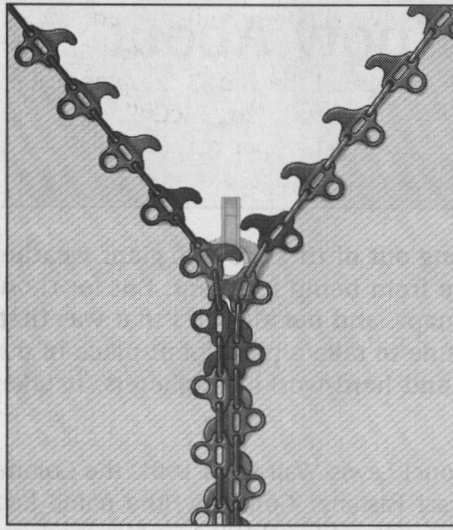
Judson. Always looking for a shortcut and a patent.



Co-conspirator Walker, Judson's pal & a visionary.



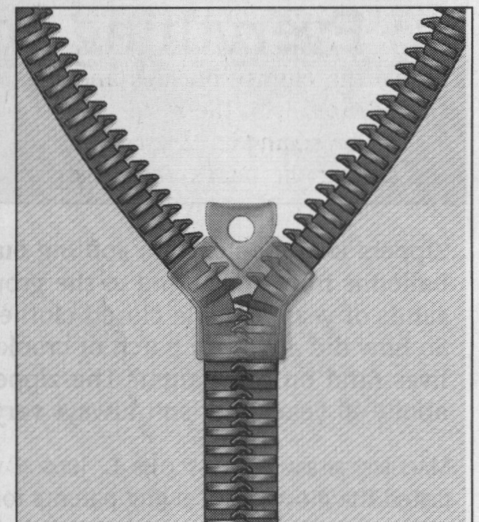
Point man Sundback, from Sweden, via Power Plants



Judson's original Clasp Locker or Unlocker. The sides were identical, and each link had to be sewn by hand. A slider brought the two sides together.



Judson's C-Curly Placket Fastener. Instead of being sewn in by hand, metal hooks were clamped on one side of a cloth tape, metal eyelets on the other. Mated with a slider.



The common zipper, Sundback's Hookless No. 2. Identical spoon-like teeth were clamped to cloth tape and as usual, brought together with a slider. We all know this 'un-

#### Go Gideon: Sundback's the Swedish Savior

Gideon Sundback came over to the United States from Sweden to work on giant turbo-generators for the power plant at Niagara Falls. So when the Colonel wrote to ask Gideon if he might like to use his mechanical engineering talents to fix their fastener, Gideon wrote back, "I make dynamos. Who wants to fool with hooks and eyes?"

Eventually he changed his mind, possibly lured by the plant manager's lovely daughter, Elvira. In 1906 he accepted the job, and would go on to be The Father of the Slide Fastener Commonly Known as the Zipper. But first, he had to stop the gadget from ripping itself to shreds.

The hooks were a problem, so he soon came up with a "hookless" fastener. The Plako, as it was called, had metal "jaws" on one side of the tape that clamped down onto a cord at the edge of tape on the other side. The Plako may have looked different, but it was plagued by many of the same old problems. For four long years, Gideon worked alone, the company always a breath away from bankruptcy. (Broke and hungry, the Colonel once had to pay for his groceries with stock in his company, which probably peeved the grocer at the time. Later of course it made him rich.)

Finally, December 1913 — a breakthrough — the true ancestor of today's zipper was born. According to historian Robert Friedel, author of an entire book about the zipper (entitled, naturally, *Zipper*), frustratingly, nobody really knows where his radical new idea came from. Gideon was a brilliant thinker and a lousy note-taker. Later he recalled, "lying awake nights trying to figure a way out." He desperately needed to come up with a completely new concept. His inspiration: soup spoons. As described by Gideon's

patent attorney, his new invention worked like two stacks of soup spoons, their handles pointing out. If there were just enough space to slip the bowls of the spoons of one side in between the bowls on the other, the whole batch would form one snug, flexible spoon stack. Gideon didn't use spoons, of course, but very small metal "teeth" along each fabric strip. Similar to previous models, a Y-shaped slide splayed the teeth out at just the right angle to let them slip either together or apart. Finally—a fastener that fastened! The "Hookless Hooker" (later simply called "Hookless No. 2") got the Colonel so excited, he changed the company name to Hookless Fastener Company.

#### No Rest For Gideon, Though

There was no rest for Gideon, though. Over in Europe, a woman named Katherina Kuhn-Moos had received patents with the Swiss, German and British governments for a similar invention — and surely others were in the works. Now all he had to do was design a machine that could crank out his Hookless No. 2s quickly, efficiently and perfectly.

#### Bertram G. makes it work

But even if Hookless Fastener could mass produce its masterpiece (which it eventually did), the company had another, perhaps more serious problem: the general public didn't give two hoots about the Hookless N. 2, and clothing makers were (understandably) suspicious of them. The Colonel had hoped to sell Hooklesses to pants makers, but the orders that trickled in were for an odd assortment of items — one for sailors' money belts, another for Locktite tobacco Pouches, and one from the rubber company, B.F. Goodrich,

for a small batch of samples. The year was 1923 and B.F. Goodrich was testing slide fasteners in galoshes, hoping to replace the clumsy buckles and make a sleeker, meaner boot. Pleased with the result, B.F. Goodrich ordered more and started selling its "Mystik Boot". When salesmen complained that the boot's name didn't sound very practical, B.F.'s president, Bertram G. Work, agreed. Little did he know that his zippy suggestion - to call it the Zipper - would add a new word to the English language.

The Zipper Boot was a runaway success; soon the Talon Company (the new name) was working three shifts a day to handle the orders for millions and millions of zippers—and not just for boots. Everything from girdles to sleeping bags and musical instrument covers claimed to sport the most modern of fasteners. A whole line of children's "self-helpclothing" boosted zipper sales by boasting that kids would learn independence if they could dress themselves. Zippers finally broke the dress-barrier when far-out Italian fashion designer Elsa Schiaparelli put them all over her creations. According to *The New Yorker* at the time, Elsa's spring 1935 collection was "dripping with zippers". She even put this hard-working-pickup-truck of a fastener on an evening gown. By 1937, the world was out-and-out zipper-happy. *Esquire* magazine wrote that the zipper beat buttons in pants. Zippers, they said, would prevent "the possibility of unintentional and embarrassing disarray". Thus the zipper began its reign as King of the Fly and it's ruled the roost ever since.

But did the zipper rest?

No way. Zippers got zippier. A double-ended zipper came along to make it easier to undo jackets at the top and bottom. Nylon zippers thrilled skiers because they didn't freeze up in the cold. In 1950, the invention of the "toothless" plastic zipper completely revolutionized the tops of plastic bags. Today there are glow-in-the-dark zippers and neon zippers, quick-release zippers for firefighters' uniforms and waterproof zippers for scuba diver' suits. YKK engineers developed a separating zipper you can **start** with only one hand, which makes it easy for children and people with disabilities. Last year (1999) the *Utne Reader* put the zipper on a short list of items (along with antibiotics, the Frisbee, ice cream cones, and sticky notes) created in the 20th century and worth taking into the 21st. Zippers have even been to space (hitching a ride on an astronaut's suit). Practically the only place you can be sure not to find a zipper is on an

Amish person (because it would be sinfully modern, stylish and showy). But will some new fastener on the block (Velcro?!) come along and steal the show? "Zippers will be around for a long, long time," says Terry McCullough, engineer with the country's largest zipper manufacturer, YKK. "Nothing else is as easy to use that has the strength of a zipper." Terry's job is to invent new zippers, which he says is pretty hard. But he's particularly proud of a zipper for luggage that won't be ruined if you scrape it on the ground. Not everything he's tried has worked out: the zipper he invented for a butcher's uniform fell apart when it was washed, thanks to laundry chemicals. "I developed a new zipper that worked, but it was too expensive to use." He says, "Our ideas come from dreaming about new ways in which a zipper can be used".

Macon, Georgia: Zipper Capital of the World

A man named Tadao Yoshida started YKK in Japan in 1934, and today the company runs the largest zipper factory in the world in Macon, Georgia. There, in 12 plants that take up 276 football fields (304 acres), over 3000 people work around the clock, seven days a week. YKK's factories in 52 countries all over the world make about 7 million zippers a day. Of the over 1500 different kinds of zippers, almost half are brass zippers - and half of the brass zippers end up in the flies of jeans.

According to Caril Critcher at the zipper-making Ideal Fastener Corporation, this is sure to be the Year of the Zipper, "The last good year for zippers," she says with a sigh, "was about eight years ago. They were everywhere. You'd see two or three zippers on the legs of jeans." But trends cycle back around, and to her delight designers have been calling and sampling zippers. "You're going to see a lot of zippers," she says.

This was **first** published, in an only slightly different version, in *Muse*, a science magazine for children between about **9** and **15**. My daughter Kate subscribes to it, and I read every issue cover to cover. It's not as though you learn this stuff just by getting older, after all. If you have children, look into **Muse**.

**Muse**, Box **7468**, Red Oak, IA **51591**. Subscriptions (**10** issues per year) for exactly **\$32.97**. Phone: **1-800-827-0227**. Or [www.musemag.com](http://www.musemag.com).

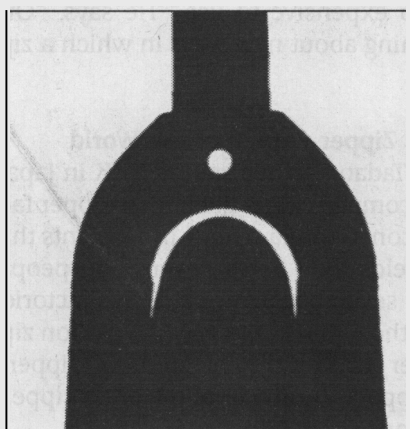
### Sort of Like a Treasure Hunt

But there are lots of good magazine articles out there, and if you find one that seems like Reader-fodder, pass it on to us and we'll contact the authorities and see if we can reprint it. Obviously, it needn't be about bikes, but it can be. There may or may not be a finder's fee in it for you. Basically, don't count on it, but if we're feeling flushed at the time, we may send you a gift certificate for \$25 to \$50. Some of the best stuff in here has been from outside.

Understand this, and you'll know more than 98 percent of the bike riders on the road. It's important, it's fundamental.

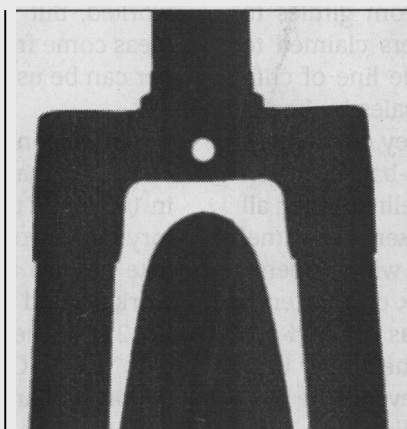
# Clarence... You Need Clearance!

Clearance—that air space between tire and frame, allows all good things to happen. It lets tires roll. It lets bigger tires roll. It lets wobbly and hoppy tires, and muddy ones roll. It allows fenders. We got a carbon fiber fork, just to make sure the new Ruffy-Tuffy still fit it. It's a typical CF fork, and you'll see that a Ruffy Tuffer clears it. Whew, because it's a good tire that you ought to be able to ride on any bike. Then we put a 700x35 Pasela in it, and it didn't fit. Then we put the same tires in a Rivendell short-reach fork (for modern sidepulls with a maximum reach of 50) and a Rivendell standard reach fork (for brakes with a maximum reach of 56). We shot pictures showing the different amounts of clearance. More clearance makes a bike more versatile, and there are no drawbacks to it. These are actual ~~silhouetted~~ ~~silhouetted~~ silhouetted photos. —Grant



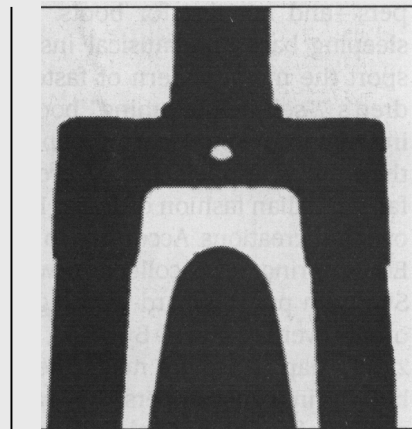
**Carbon Fork**  
43 reach, 700x27

It works with a true wheel. **No** fender clearance. The hole's too high, the blades too short. There's **no** advantage, but it works fine if the wheel's fine.



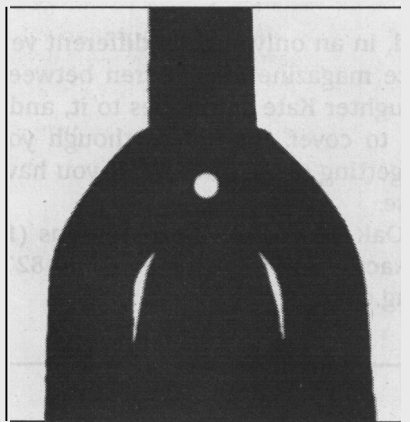
**Riv Fork**  
48 Reach, 700x27

Good clearance. There's wobble & hop room, and room for mud. Fenders? If you zip tie them, yes. This is **a** good design, works with all short reach brakes.



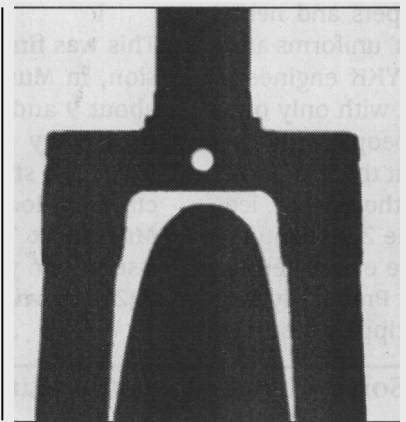
**Riv Fork**  
56 Reach, 700x27

Great clearance. Room for fenders, mud, wobbles, and hops. Only disadvantage is a shortage of modern brakes, but Shimano is bringing back **two** models now.



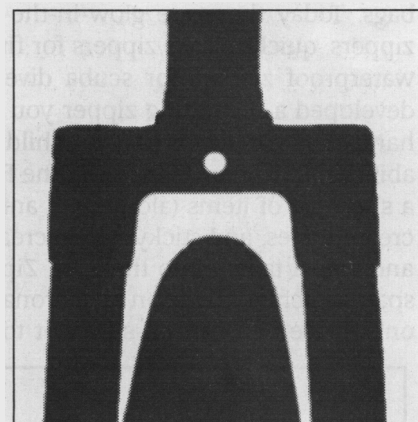
**Carbon Fork**  
43 reach, 700x35

Jammed up and jelly tight. Won't work, **no**, not even in a pinch. The blades are too short, that's all.



**Riv Fork**  
48 Reach, 700x35

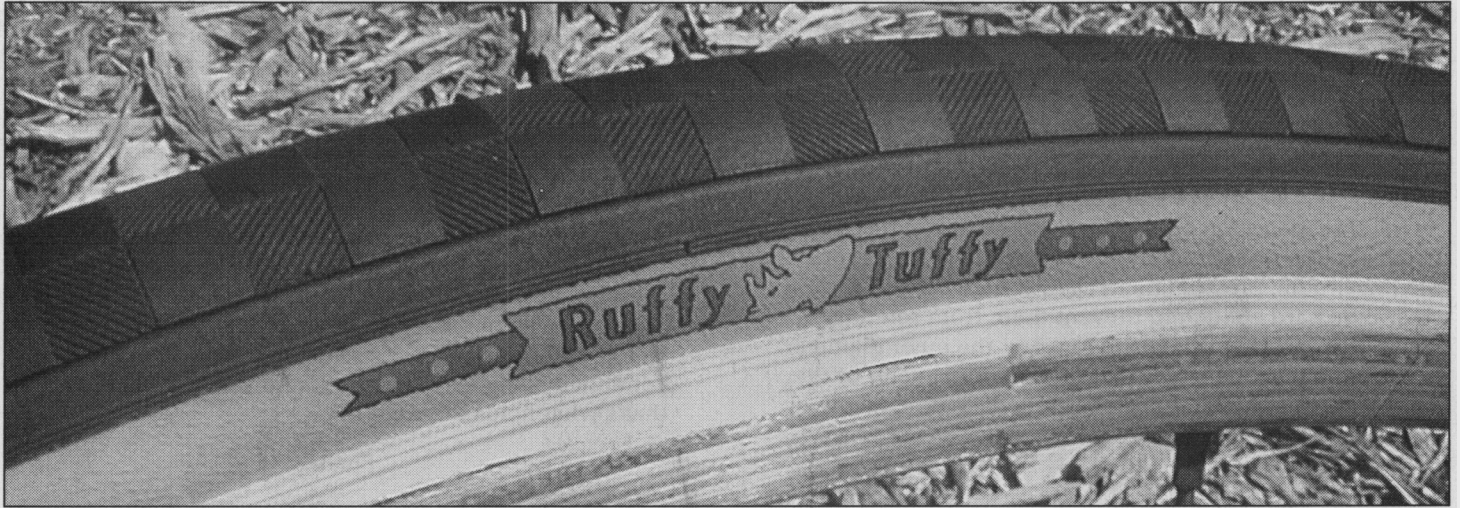
Clearance for dry roads and **no** fenders. The best choice if you don't have standard reach brakes.



**Riv Fork**  
56 Reach, 700x35

Room for mud, fenders. There's plenty of room for a 700x39, too.

# Introducing the Ruffy Tuffy



Andrew was riding home one night and heard a “tick-tick” with each tire revolution. He investigated and found a nail had entered the tire at about 11:00 on the tread, and stuck all the way through, with the point exiting at the tread/sidewall junction. Remarkably, **no** flat. He pulled the nail, still **no** flat. The most likely explanation: The kevlar belt beneath the tread deflected the nail away from the tube. Andrew still rides the same tire today, and can’t even locate the wound. Results may vary, but if you’re looking for a good combination of light, tough, and long wearing, this is a good one.

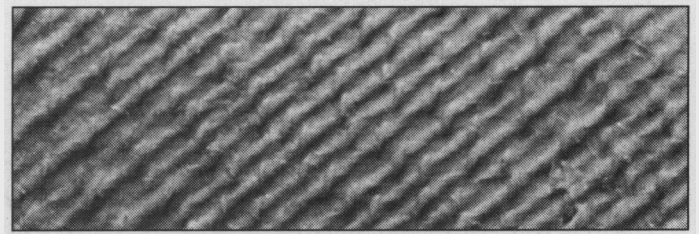
The Roll-y Pol-y is our vision of the perfect speedy type road tire—light, cushy, round and great cornering, long wearing, good looking, and with a tough, cut-resistant casing.

It looks like a Roll-y Pol-y but the Ruffy Tuffy has:

1. An extra millimeter of tread, for longer wear. It’s **40** percent thicker, **so** it has to wear longer.
2. A kevlar belt underneath the tread, for **punc**ture resistance. It’s not puncture-proof, but the kevlar stops most sharp objects.
3. A rhinoceros , instead of a Roll-y Pol-y bug (pill bug, sow bug) on the label.

If you’ve been riding racing tires and want a similar tire with a better look and a bit more cush, get the Roll-y Pol-y. But if you’re not as weight conscious and are looking for a tough, long-wearing tire that doesn’t eat up clearance like a 700x35 or bigger, the Ruffy Tuffy’s the way to go.

It’s a great fast commute tire, light touring tire, or all-around road tire if you aren’t obsessive about weight. At 320g, it’s not heavy, but it’s just not one of the lightest clinchers out there. It corners astoundingly well, there’s no way not to love it.



## Tornado Casing

Each strand of nylon is spiral-wound with three strands of kevlar, making the Ruffy-Tuffy’s casing one of the toughest available, and certainly the toughest of any reasonably light-weight tire. The Roll-y Pol-y has the same Tornado casing.

## The Ruffy Tuffy

- Kevlar-spiraled casing for cut-resistant sidewalls.
- Kevlar belt for puncture resistance.
- An extra millimeter of rubber (2.5mm versus 1.5mm) for longer wear.
- Kevlar bead, for lightness, but mainly so we can store them in less space.
- Made in Japan by Panaracer. Never wobbly, always straight, always consistent and predictable.

**item no. 10-043 \$45**

# How Stems Tighten

There are two ways to tighten a standard stem quill into place in the steerer: A cone, and a wedge. It used to be that all stems came with cones. In the early to mid-'70s or so, good ones came with cones and cheap ones came with wedges. These days, wedges are far more common than cones, and although neither one is clearly superior to the other, there are differences, and that's what this column is about. What about Aheadsets and quill-less stems? Yes, we'll get there, too, but not in this issue.

## How a Cone Works

As the threaded stem bolt screws into the cone, the cone climbs up the threads and forces apart the split portions of the lower quill, pressing them against the inside of the steer tube hard enough to prevent them from rotating inside it. In order for the cone to work, the outer diameter of the cone must be larger than the inner diameter of the stem quill; and the quill must be slotted (split), to allow expansion. That's about it.

### Plusses

Tightening the bolt has no effect on the angle of the stem. **Also**, if you crash and twist the bars/stem around on a cone stem, it tends to be easier to twist back into place without affecting the tightness. If you crash more than 6 times per month, that's a consideration.

### Minuses

1) Cones don't have the tightening potential of wedges, and so aren't as secure unless they're clamped down hard. But clamping them down too hard bulges out the steer tube. Then the next time you try to put on a headset cone race, it won't slip over the bulge. That's no defect!

3) If you raise the stem so high that the bottom of the quill is in the threaded portion of the steerer, and this causes a failure, your front wheel will become independent.

### so...?

Cones are fine if you don't tighten them too much. Nitto, though, feels they're not sufficient for off-road use.

## How a Wedge Works

As you tighten the stem bolt, the wedge climbs up the threads, slipping as it goes, until (and this happens pretty quickly) the edge of the wedge sticks out farther than the edge of the stem quill. Continued tightening forces the wedge and the quill in opposite directions, increasing their combined diameter to bigger than the stem quill's, and that's what holds the stem in.

### Plusses

It takes little force to tighten it securely, so, compared to a cone stem, there's less of a tendency to overtighten the stem and damage the steerer. And, if a failure occurs, it's more likely to be at the top of the wedge and if the steerer breaks there, you still have steering control (probably for months and months!). The stem will wiggle a bit in the steerer, it'll feel not right, but you won't die immediately. On the next page we have a photograph of this.

### Minuses

At the microscopic level, tightening the stem cocks it to the side, but you'd have to be nuts to fret about that, since it's undetectable to everybody except liars.

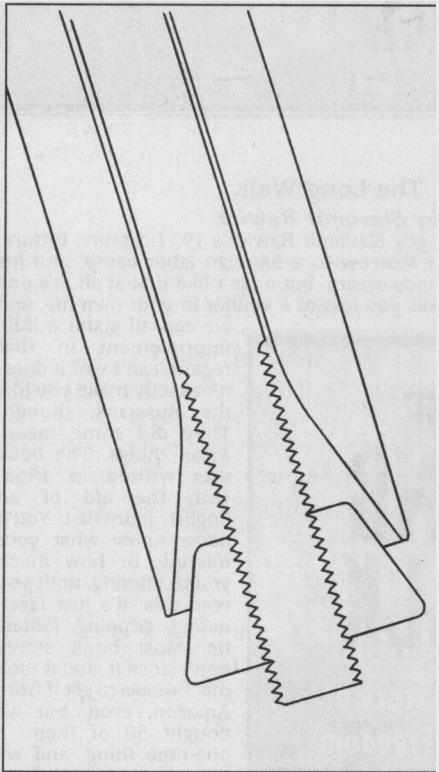
### so.. .?

It's time to quit being a cone snob. Cones are fine, wedges are fine. You can misuse either of them, and if you don't misuse either, they'll give you no trouble at all. But wedges are harder to misuse, and the consequences of screwing up are less likely to kill you.

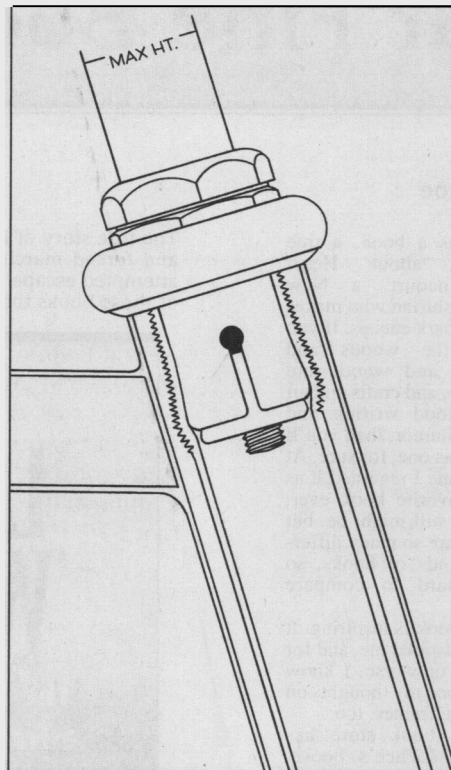
## Why Not Do Away With Cones and Wedges?

Because that would mean using an Aheadset (threadless) headset, and missing out on the vertical adjustability possible with longquilled traditionally styled stems...and the trade-offs aren't worth it. You get a headset that is easier to adjust and keeps its adjustment better, but it's not that much easier to adjust, and a properly adjusted threaded headset stays adjusted really well. If the traditional system didn't work well, it wouldn't have been tolerated for nearly a hundred years. The main advantage of traditional stems doesn't really count much if the stem quills are short, as they usually are. But when you get a stem quill that's 150mm or longer, as they are on most of the stems we offer, then you have a tremendous advantage when it comes to raising the handlebars. To get them up that high with a threadless system means using an angled clamp-on extension. They're generally harder to find and are always less attractive.

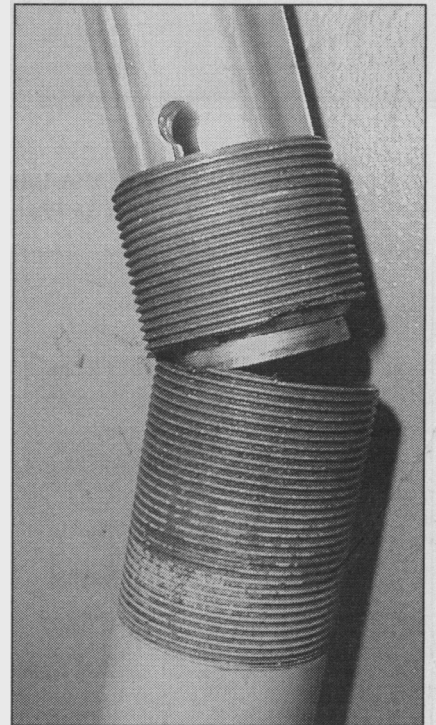




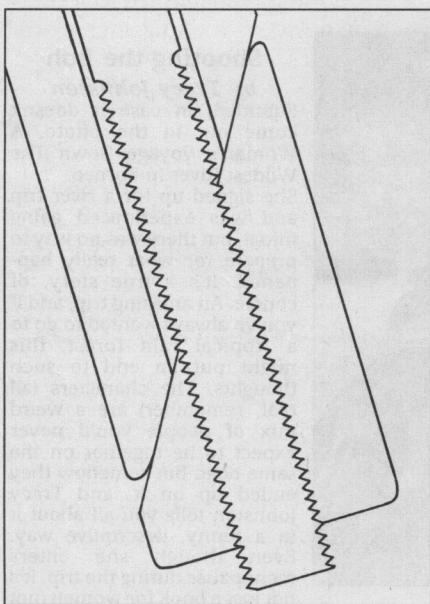
Andrew's drawing of a cross section of the bottom of a cone-type stem. **As** you tighten the stem bolt, the cone climbs the threaded bolt, expanding the lower stem, which tightens it in the fork's steer tube.



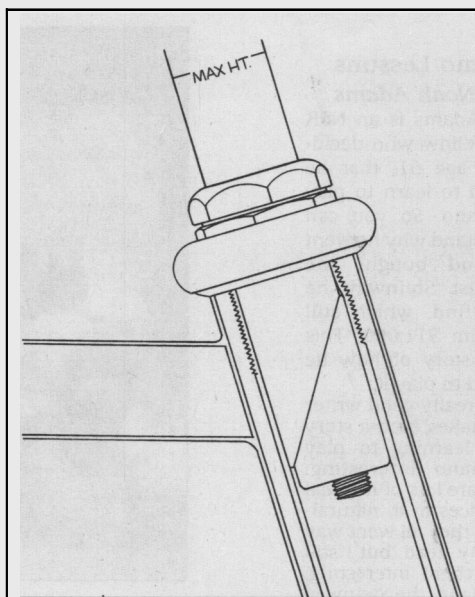
A cone stem raised too high, **as** proved by the Max Ht line being exposed. It should always be buried below the top nut of the headset. Note the bulge (stress) in the threads. This can lead to damage, pain.



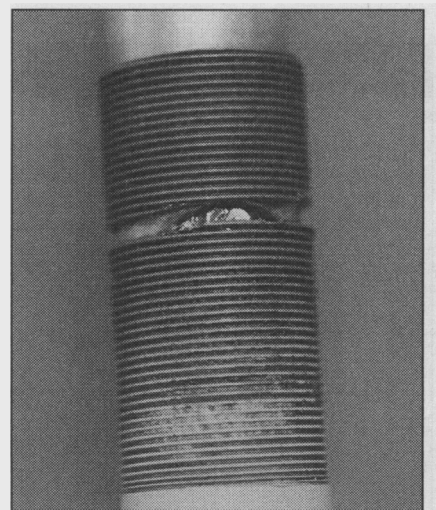
Worst case scenario: The only stress riser in a cone stem is at the bottom, and if the bottom is in the threads and it does break, you'll crash. This one, was cut with a saw to simulate failure. We cranked hard and wiggled, trying to make it fail the "real" way, and couldn't.



The bottom of a wedge stem. Tightening the bolt forces the wedge up the shaft. Then it slips **off** the ramp, forcing the quill and the wedge to press against opposite walls of the steerer, which snugs the stem in there but good.



This stem's too high (the Max Ht line should be below the headset) Even **so**, it won't cause a failure unless you really overtighten it, and if a failure does occur, you'll still be able to steer. See the photo to the right.

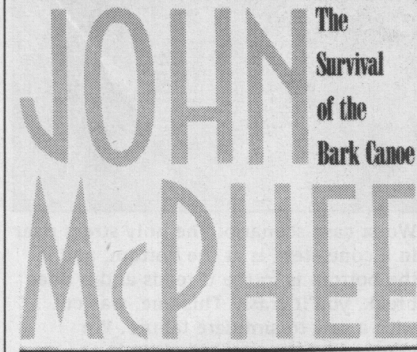
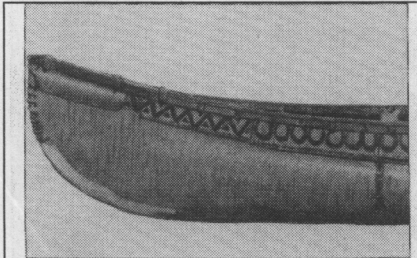


Here's a neat picture. To simulate a busted steerer and prove that it's not Instant **Loss** of Control, we sawed one in half and then stuck a wedge stem in it. The expansion below the separation keeps it together. **You** can still steer. (Before sawing it, we tried to break it by overtightening, but failed. Wedge stems are secure when they're "one grunt tight." Don't crank too hard on them!

## Four Fine Books

### The Survival of the Bark Canoe

by John McPhee



This is a book, a true book, about Henri Vallaincourt, a New Hampshire who makes birch bark canoes. If you like the woods and lakes, and wood, and knives, and crafts and art and good writing and some humor, then you'll like this one, for sure. At one time I regarded it as my favorite book ever, and it still might be, but there are so many different kinds of books, so it's hard to compare them.

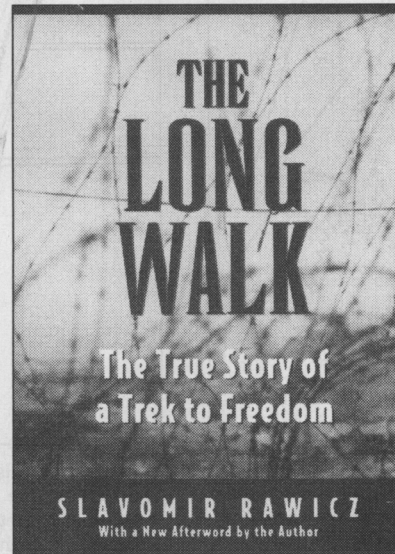
This book is inspiring. It sure inspired me, and for better or worse, I know it shaped my thoughts on bicycle frames, too.

Every book store has John McPhee's books, but this one's usually not in stock, so you may have to order it. Wait—I guess we bought a few copies to sell.

### The Long Walk

by Slavomir Rawicz

The true story of Polish guy Slavomir Rawicz's 1939 capture, torture, and forced march from Moscow to a Siberian labor camp, and his attempted escape. It sounds dreary, but it isn't like that at all. It's one of those books that makes you less of a whiner in your own life, and



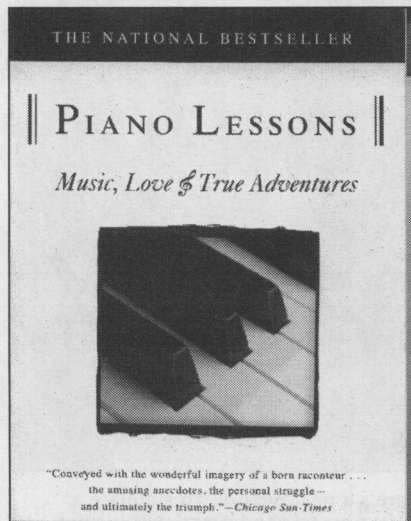
we can all stand a little improvement in that regard, can't we? It doesn't exactly make you like the Russians, though. They did some mean, mean things. The book was written in 1958, with the aid of an English journalist. You'll never know what your missing, or how much you're missing, until you read this. It's just fascinating, gripping, fantastic. Most book stores don't stock it, and it took me 3 weeks to get if from Amazon, even, but we bought 50 of them, a one-time thing, and we have them now, ready to go. That shouldn't taint the review. If you don't like this book, return it for a double-credit

### Piano Lessons

by Noah Adams

Noah Adams is an NPR radio fellow who decided, at age 51, that he wanted to learn to play the Piano. So you can understand why he went out and bought the cheapest Steinway he could find, which still cost him \$11,000. This is the story of how he learned to play it.

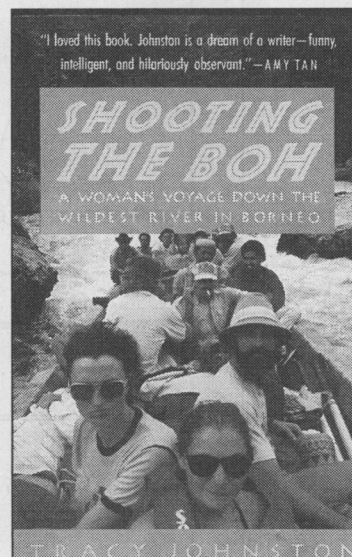
He's a really good writer who makes even a story about learning to play the piano interesting. There are lots of musical references in it, naturally, and they all went way over my head, but I still found them interesting,



and learned a few things along the way, about Schumann, the Steinweg family, computer programs that teach you how to play, and why you shouldn't necessarily buy an expensive piano if you live where it's humid. This book is easy and fun to read, and you come away feeling good and a little more cultured than you were before; but not in a bad way.

### Shooting the Boh

by Tracy Johnston

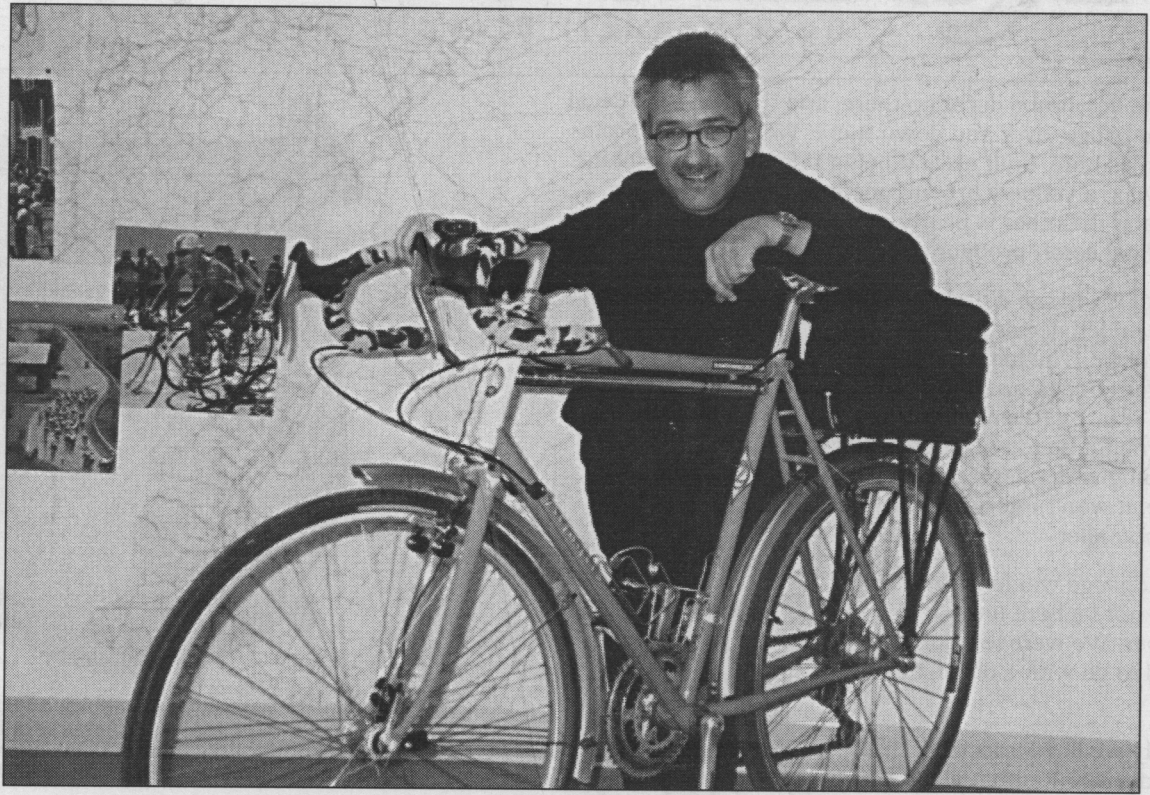


that there'd be anything wrong with that). There's a few tough guys on the boat, too, and a European super model. I'm not trying to imply that guys like tough characters and supermodels, though. I'm just...well, read the book and see for yourself. The chapters are world-record short for an adult book, and you'll stay up late, late, late reading it.

Subtitled, in case it doesn't come out in the photo, A Woman's Voyage Down The Wildest River In Borneo.

She signed up for a river trip and was experienced going into it, but there was no way to prepare for what really happened. It's a true story, of course. An amazing trip, and if you've always wanted to go to a tropical rain forest, this might put an end to such thoughts. The characters (all real, remember) are a weird mix of people you'd never expect to be together on the same boat, but somehow they ended up on it, and Tracy Johnston tells you all about it in a funny, descriptive way. Even though she enters menopause during the trip, it's not just a book for women (not

## Who ..Ridesan Atlantis?



**JEFF BAKER**

Stem: .....Nitto Pearl, 11cm  
 Bars: .....Nitto Randonneur  
 Seat Post: ..Nitto  
 Saddle: ...: ..Selle San Marco Rolls  
 Front Der: ...Campy Daytona  
 Rear Der: ...Campy Daytona

Shifters: ...Campy friction bar-ends  
 Crank: .....Campy Racing Triple  
 BB: .....Mavic  
 Wheels: ..SunCR 18,Conti 26x 1.3  
 Other: .....Blackburn rear rack

**Age:** 45

**Family:** married 14 years, with two girls, 12 and 13.

**Occupation:** family physician

**Favorite cycling shoes:** Sidi.

**Favorite Breakfast:** Toasted dry pumpernickel bagel, coffee.

**Favorite Lunch:** Turkey breast, tomatoes, sprouts, hot pepper, and Muenster cheese in a fajita wrap.

**Favorite Dinner:** My own marinara over fresh pasta, with a spinach-romain-mushroomsalad, and fresh coffee.

**Favorite Book:** *It Isn't About the Bike*, by Lance Armstrong.

**Favorite Movie:** *Shrek*.

**Years riding:** Forty

**Favorite type of riding:** Fast cruising on country roads

**Type of riding on the Atlantis:** commuting, randonnerring, shopping

**Dream Ride:** Paris-Brest-Paris

**Interests beyond being a doctor and riding:** Karate (Tang Soo Do), music (trumpet, brass ensemble playing), family

NEW BIKE COMING

# Rambouillet

By Rivendell Bicycle Works

150mm

That's the downtube decal up there, and the seat tube decal and head badge, over and down there. We have four prototype frames here, built up and being ridden. Two are painted beeswax, a yellowy brown; one is a caramelly butter-scotch, and the other is pearly orange. Bhima here is picking the final color, probably from among these.

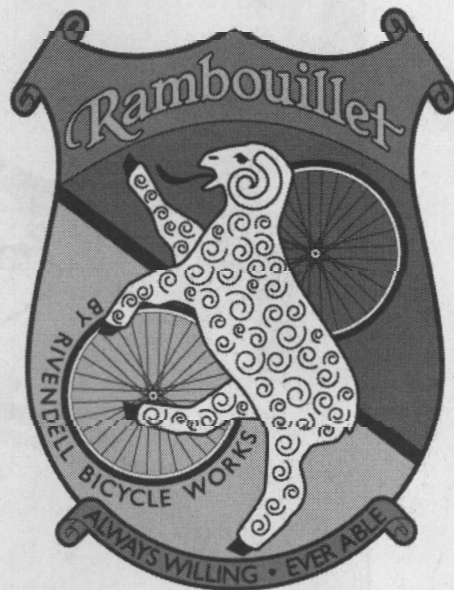
The decal is the same dark blue outline and cream fill as most Rivendell decals, and the Atlantis decal. The letters are spaced far enough apart to be easy to read. The "By Rivendell Bicycle Works" might be too big, but we're going with it, and from a distance, it won't interfere with the Rambouillet.

The headbadge will look great, but it might not be here until December. We were temporarily tempted to go with a decal, but it passed.

Currently we have told Toyo that we'll order 400 Rambouillets next year, and would like to get delivery in quarterly batches of 100. That doesn't lock us in, it's just a guess about what we'll do, and will help both us and Toyo prepare, to avoid delivery delays.

We had 10 Atlantis dealers this year, and will likely have 15 Atlantis and Rambouillet dealers—the same ten Atlantis dealers, if they wanna keep going with us—and five more, who have wanted to sell Atlantises, but we weren't ready for them last year. If you've got a shop in town that sells both Rambouillets and Atlantises, that's some special shop. We're working on promotional materials to help them educate their customers. Although it seems so obvious to us, that these bikes should outsell anything within 500 dollars of them, we know it's not so obvious to everybody else. We're frustrating our dealers with lousy delivery. We live with it, but we gotta, and they don't.

One tough, sort of technical decision on the Rambouillet was whether to go with a 130mm (road) or 135mm (mountain/strongerwheel) rear hub spacing. There are good argu-



**The Rambouillet head badge, sometimes called a name plate. Like our others, it'll be copper and colored with fired enamel. The design may change slightly from this one. It'll screw on. The colors have not been determined yet. They'll be good!**

ments for both, but the best deal is to split the difference. Spaced at 132.5mm, the frame easily squeezes to grab a 130mm hub, and easily spreads (just 1.25mm per side, after all) to grab a 135. So you can run modern road groups on it and get a decent chainline for a double, or you can put a 135mm hub back there, get a stronger wheel, and be able to use mountain bike hubs. If you ride with two chainrings, it makes more sense to use a 130mm hub, because the smaller cogs will be kind of far outboard on a 135mm one. But if you ride a triple, it works fine at either 130mm or 135mm. It's a good way to go, so 132.5mm it is.

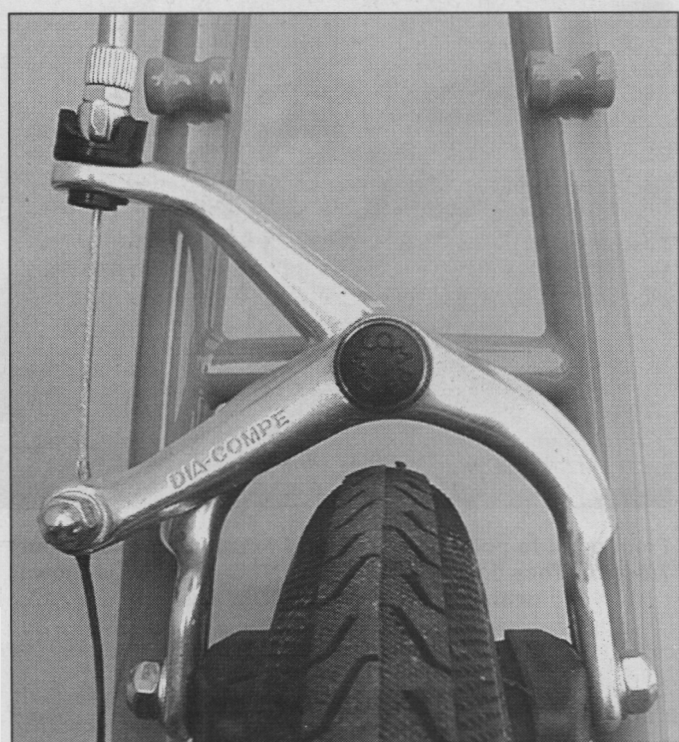
We expect many Rivendell owners to get Rambouillets. And, there are lots of Ti and Carbon fancy bike owners out there who'd like to ride in the winter, but don't have a fenderable bike for it, and they might pick one up, too.

At about \$2,000 complete, the Rambouillet isn't exactly the kind of bike you buy on impulse, but for a bike that will last so long and feel so good, it's a bargain. Sizes: 54, 56, 58, 60, 62, 64, 68cm, measured from the center of the bottom bracket to the top of the seat lug (c-t); the way almost all non-Italian frames are measured.

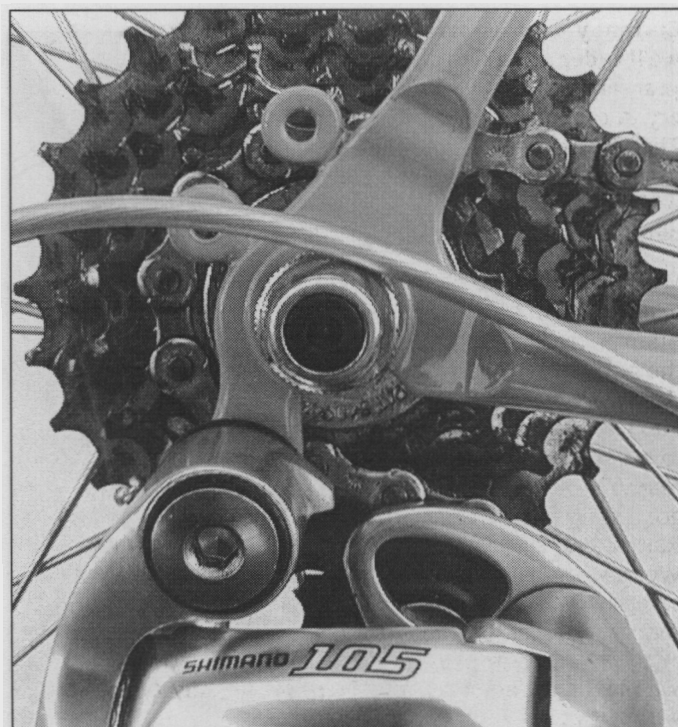
We will have these by March, 2002. The price is \$950, and includes Tange headset. Deposit and ordering information later—we'll update you on the web, in emails, and in RR25.



This is Rambouillet No. 0002, one of four prototypes we received in August. It's a 62. The frame came with a 130mm rear spacing, as we specified, but now we've decided on 132.5. The fork crown shown is not correct; we'll use our new crown, shown somewhere else in this Reader. Other changes: The fork blades won't be so fat down at the dropouts. The seat stays may change to double-tapered. It might not come with rack mounts. It will be orange, with cream details and head tube. But everything else, and the ride, are perfect.



The Rambouillet is all about clearance, and here we show it with a standard reach Dia-Compe 505Q brake and a 700x35 Pasela tire. It easily has room for (and we've ridden it with) a 700x38.



Finding just right dropouts is harder now than it has been at any previous time in the past 25 years. There are more dimensions to a dropout than you might imagine, and if your standards are high, the pickings are slim. We're lucky to have found this nice vertical.

# Brazing the Bottle Stars

by Curt Goodrich

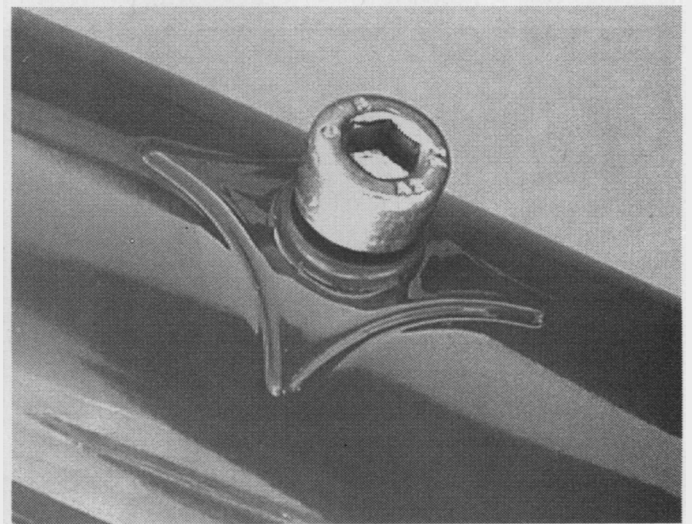
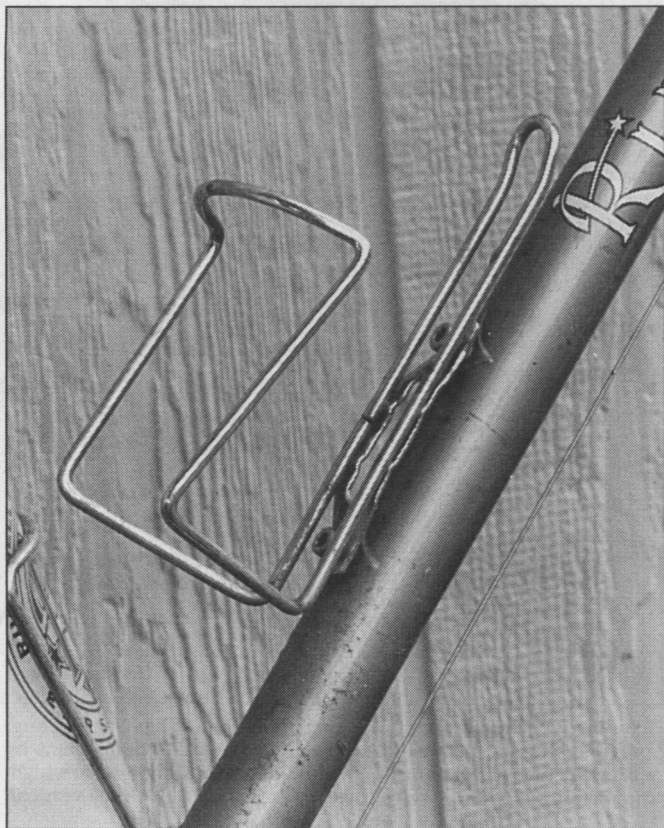
Almost no bicycle frames are being made today using the water bottle star (or “diamond”) braze on. Frame builders regard them as an unnecessary complication, which of course they are.

The stars (or diamonds) are referred to as reinforcements, which is more of an historical description than an accurate one. They do add metal around the hole, and in the '60s and early '70s, they were thought to be a safeguard against the whole tearing or cracking or something, but since then we've all learned that it's an unfounded concern. These days calling them reinforcements is misleading because they have no function other than dressing up an otherwise plain area. And then, you mount a bottle cage on them, and you can't even see them! From a functional or labor standpoint, the stars don't make sense.

Sometimes when I've talked to other frame builders, they've asked me if I get tired of dealing with all of those pesky details, like the stars. Actually, I find the

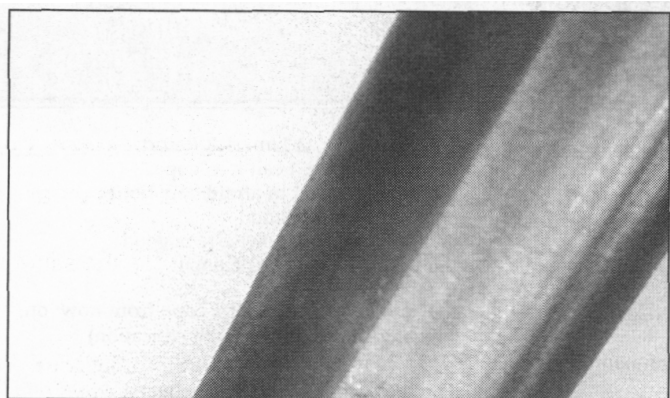
stars—and lots of other easily overlooked details on a Rivendell, to be challenging, and interesting. Also, sometimes things just need to be beautiful for the sake of beauty.

Brazing the star is a delicate job. The star is very thin compared to the tube so careful heating is needed. When the temperature of the area is correct the silver flux turns clear. This is also the time that the star tends to start to float and pivoting around the water bottle boss. I think this is what many frame builders don't like about these braze-ons because the idea is to get the stars mounted with the points going in the right direction. Once the star is pointing correctly, I add silver to the top of the star next to the water bottle boss. The silver is drawn around the water bottle boss, under the star and into the inside of the tube. The trick is to add just enough silver because if you add too much the edges of the star won't be crisp.

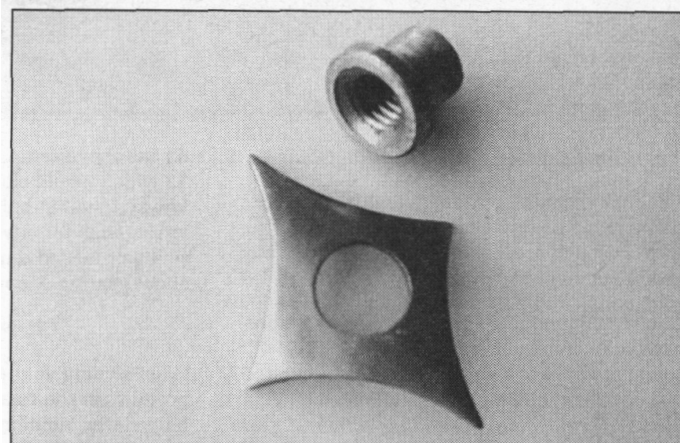


From point to point on the vertical axis is 22mm, or about 7/8-inch. They don't seem that big. This one here is shown with a bottle cage bolt. Obviously.

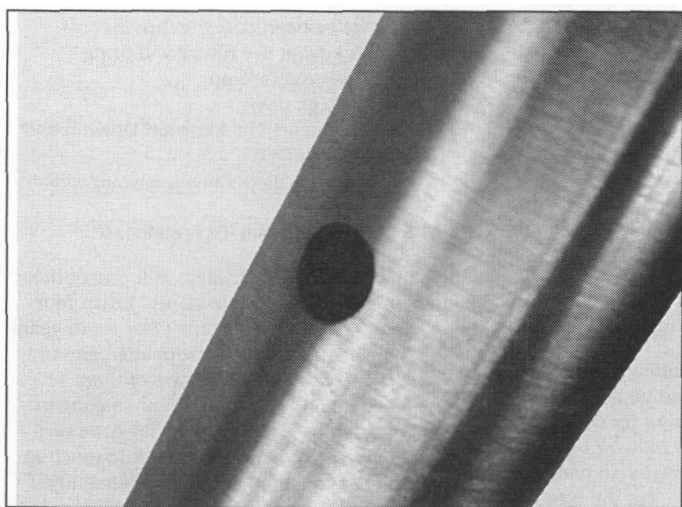
**Left** All that work and it disappears under the cage. It disappears even more when you're carrying a bottle, and when don't you? **On** frames that have 3 sets of bottle mounts, the third set is on the underside of the down tube, which means only ants looking up can see them—and then, only if there's no cage mounted!



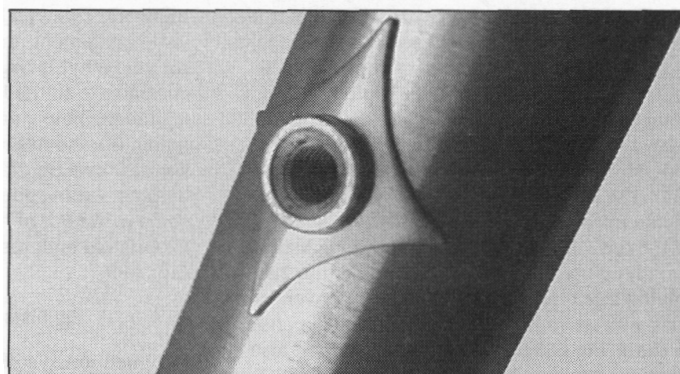
A bare tube. In the old days when people thought bottle cage holes were dangerous, it would just get painted like this. Then, for a while, it was cool to braze on a raised threaded section for the tube, without actually drilling a hole. These days, holes are fine.



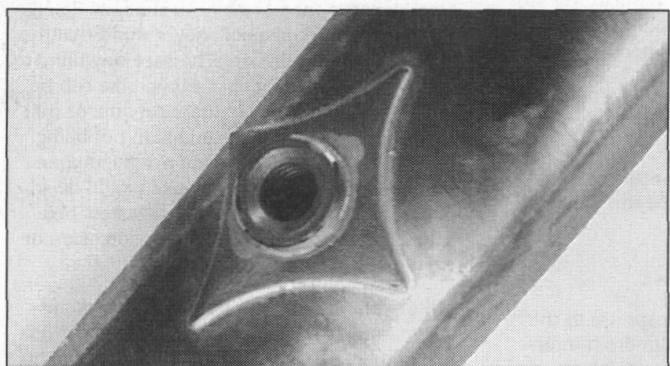
A diamond reinforcement and a threaded bottle stud. There have been various styles of reinforcements over the years. Most were diamond-shaped, and of the diamond-shaped ones, these are the fanciest. The stud can be brazed in all by itself, and that's fine.



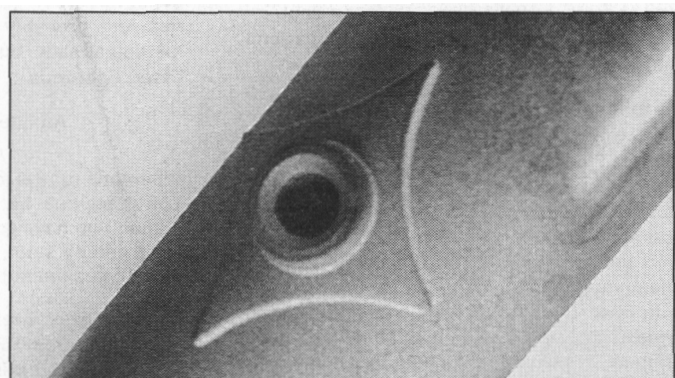
Here's the...hole! Two per bottle mount, 64mm/2.5 inches apart. Most frames get two sets, some get three. Now the area around the holes needs to be cleaned for brazing. I use a strip of 80 grit utility cloth to shoe shine the area. This removes any scale on the tube and burrs left by the drill bit.



Here, the pieces are just set dry in the hole. In real life they get brushed with flux, which protects the tube from the flame, and once it's heated up, all heck happens. The flux becomes liquified, although the bottle boss keeps the diamond from floating away, the diamond floats freely on a layer of liquid flux. If I add brazing material when the diamond is cockeyed, I have to tap it straight right away, or else it'll solidify crooked. Also, the radius of the diamonds have to be checked to make sure they hug the tube, and then discarded or tapped into shape beforehand. It's a lot of work for something so small and functionally unimportant.



Here's the hole after brazing. The flux has been soaked off it. You try to line up the points of the diamond along the centerline of the tube. It's risky. If one's off by a noticeable hair, what then? Is that a defect? Or is that the risk we all take with diamonds? Getting a frame returned for such an imperfection, just one frame, will have us seriously questioning the continued use of diamonds. It hasn't happened yet, though, and the diamonds sure look nice.



After the brazing has cooled and the flux has been removed, the area gets blasted, to remove excess silver. What's left is a beautiful little detail that will be there for the life of the frame. On some smaller frames, the upper point of the lower diamond and the lower point of the upper diamond are chopped off, so they don't interfere with your vertical positioning of the front derailleur.

## MAIL

## The Gearing System That Will Not ...

The main purpose of this letter is to reassure riders that half step gearing is still alive and well. I used to scoff at it (as I did at riding fixed gears) but stayed to preach.

About six months ago I switched from a close ratio road crossover triple (28/38/50, 12-21 7 speed cassette) to a much lower Q (143 vs 165) more or less half step double (43/46, 11-12-14-16-18-21-28), where I use the middle five gears (12-21) for half stepping and the 11 and 28 as downhill and bailout gears respectively, using the 11 only with the outer ring and the 28 only with the inner ring; it's basically a 10 speed half step with two additional, downhill and bailout gears. I haven't paid much attention to mathematical exactitude, instead seeking an adequate range and consistently small jumps between adjacent gears. The crossover triple gave me a range (with 24.75" diameter wheels) from 103" down to 31" over 14 non-duplicate gears (103, 95, 88, 82, 77, 72, 67, 63, 59, 52, 45, 40, 36, 31). The half step gives me 12 non duplicate gears from 104 down to 38 (104, 95, 89, 81, 76, 71, 67, 63, 59, 54, 51, 38), and I can substitute anything up to a 34 tooth bailout for the 28, giving a gear as low as 31". The crossover setup has a bit more range, but only at the expense of a third ring and touchier front shifting. It also puts the cruising gears (72", 67", 63", ie 38 X 13, 14 and 15 teeth respectively) on the outside of the cluster which, when used with the middle 38 require some chain deflection. The half step setup, however, puts the same gears right in the middle of the cassette (46X 16, 43X16, 46X18) for an almost ideal chainline; and the front shifting is practically indexed --just shove the left lever back and forth. I have to say, though, that I did not appreciate the benefits of the half step setup until I converted from bar end shifters to Kelly Take-Offs; I can double shift the latter much easier than with bar end shifters.

As to finding suitable rings, TA makes Cyclotouristrings in just about any size, and Bicycle Specialities in Toronto (has them available at very reasonable prices. Further, last year's QBP catalogue showed 110bcd rings in just about any combination of sizes. As for cogs, you can do what I do and simply mix and match hyperglide cogs to get the sequence that you want, though this means foregoing smooth indexing (which doesn't bother me, as I use friction). It's true that it's hard to use more than 6 cogs in a halfstep setup (particularly if you have a 4 or 5 tooth difference between the rings), but here again you can set up a modified half step arrangement where you half step with the middle five or six cogs and use the bottom and top cogs as extra downhill or bailout gears. Were I to use an 8 speed cassette, I would mod-

ify the above setup to something like ...21-26-32 which would close the gap between the 51" low and the 38" bailout, giving 51, 44, 41, 33, low enough for anything except steep offroad riding or loaded touring.—Patrick (obsessing about gearing) Moore, Albuquerque, NM

## Groovy Camera Bags

I was reading your discourse on natural fabric products in the catalog and it o to me that you have never mentioned Domke camera bags. The Domke F2 (the "original") was the brain-child of Jim Domke. He designed a bag for his own uses and had a local awning company whip one up in a cotton duck fabric. It was a hit with his fellow staffers at the paper and then the world over. Today it is almost standard issue equipment for any working news photographer. Why? It hugs your body, expands and contracts to fit the load, it's easy to work out of, it's tough, simple and practical. It's the best bag going. Domke has since sold his company and the new owners offer all sorts of different designs -- some good, some not so good (and some made out of "modern" materials -- but the F2 Original endures. —Bob McEwen, Jefferson City, MO

## Fixing Flats Sans The Right Stuff

You mentioned stuffing vegetation in your tire as a last resort to walking... and you're right, it's a hassle. I have another common fix that I tried once when my spare was also blown (I had flattened earlier in the ride). Carrying no patches and left with two blown tubes I cut the tube at the puncture and tied it in a knot then seated it back on the rim and pumped it up, though not too full. It got me on my way, saved my wheel and allowed me to ride. Since printing your "fix it" on the flys in the latest catalog you've no doubt have received a lot mechanical war stories. And, probably heard the "tube tying" method already, but, what the heck...Erim Taser, California

## An Education by Poetry

## A Limerick

When one tube is joined to another,  
You shape one, but don't shape the other.  
A joint, you have got  
But a miter it's not,  
Call it a cope next time, Brother.

—Jamie Fisher, Architect (in response to the photo caption in RR23, Curt Goodrich interview, in which I misused, as googolplex have before me, the term "miter" in referring to the cutting of one tube end so that it "fishmouths" up against another. The way bike frame tubes are prepared. I have never heard of this procedure referred to as anything except mitering, and I've heard it called mitering at least a thousand times. However:

## A Limerick Retort

If the next time, I call it a "cope."  
There won't be, I'm afraid, any hope  
That I'll be understood  
By those whose knowledge is good  
And soitenly not by the dope.

—Grant (who will call it a cope from now on, anyway, and thanks for the education)

Hip, Hip, Hooray and three cheers!  
Pass 'round those tankards of beers,  
For if sales are no worse  
Than your elegant verse,  
You'll thrive for another three years!  
—Jamie Fisher (response to mine)

So...what we've been doing is thriving?  
I hate to think what the future will bring  
If, when three years are up  
Our sales, they go down  
I'll be shaking a cup! On a corner! Downtown!  
—Grant, over and OUT  
'not that there's anything wrong with that.

## Steel &amp; Rust &amp; Why Not To Fretaboutit

I live in a Middle Atlantic state, not one of those desert preservative climate states. I own four steel bikes, three of which are 17 or more years old. Their paint jobs range from adequate to excellent. I try to take good care of them \* I don't leave them out in the rain or soaking in brine or anything like that \* and if I get a serious scratch on one, I try to put a little touchup paint on it within a few days. Consequently, I have never had a rust problem. In addition, I have never heard any detractors of steel pay more than token attention to the rust subject. To them, the drawback of steel is that it is heavy. They know the difference between an iron skillet and an aluminum pie pan, or an old steel department-store bike and a new Raleigh, Cannondale or Litespeed, never mind that the comparisons are unfair. They are unwilling to believe for an instant that a steel bike can be as light as an aluminum or titanium one, or that there might be some advantage in not being quite as light, and they wonder why anyone who tries to tell them otherwise would lie so blatantly. That's where the major steel bike sales pitch challenge will be, not corrosion or even craftsmanship.

I like to think that with the exception of aesthetic issues I have presented the case for different materials fairly in my book Performance Cycling (Van der Plas Publications), but I can hardly expect one book to permeate the cycling public's consciousness.—Stu Baird

## Frame sizing

Your web page on sizing is very helpful, but is unclear as to how saddle height is calculated.



You indicate how to measure pubic bone height. But how do you go from pubic bone height to saddle height? Specifically, you offer the following example:

"If you are 5 feet 9 1/2, your pubic bone might be 85cm. Your saddle height will be about 75cm." The question is: how do you calculate saddle height from pubic bone height? Thanks for your help! —Ernesto

Sorry about that. Just subtract 10cm. In short riders, it's likely to be 9.5 to 10; in tall riders, 10 to 11. If you ride in thick-soled shoes, there will be a bigger difference. And it does not distinguish between crank lengths. But 99 percent of the time, it's PBH minus 10 equals saddle height. The Lemond formula for saddle height is:  $PBH \times .883$ . Ours works out to closer to  $x .880$ . Anyway, the key is to get a good, accurate PBH. Other things to look for: 1) If your saddle feels fine at PBH minus 12, I'll bet you pedal with your heel low. It's your leg trying to extend. 2) If your saddle is PBH minus 8 or 9, you probably pedal with your toes down. Other) A too low saddle is not as obvious as a too-high one, and moving the saddle up incrementally until it feels right is likely to result in a too-low saddle, because the tendency is to stop raising it when it feels good, but BEFORE it feels best. A too-high saddle is more obvious than is a too-low one. so it's best to start too

high.—Grant

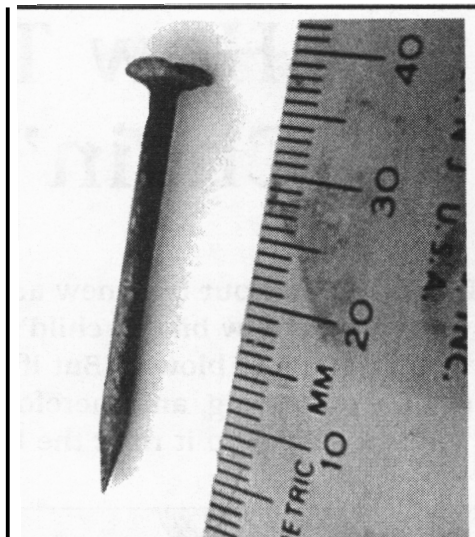
Preciray For Sale

I loved the article by Joe Young on the Var Preciray bike stand. I bought one many years ago when I had my store. Unfortunately, I no longer have a use for it and would like to sell it. It is in good condition, but in need of a bit of cleaning and an instruction book (available from Joe Young). I can teach the buyer the basics of how to use it. I would like to get \$400 for it. Shipping and/or delivery to be worked out. I live upstate New York (Westchester County). Phone: (914) 763-9113; fax (dedicated line, fax anytime the ringer is shut off) (914) 763-0176; e-mail (not reliable because I forget to check it): dupntwatch@aol.com. Thanks. — Roy Sumner.

How Deep the Post?

How far inside the bike does the seat post need to enter. I have a very long seat post and am considering cutting it off at the "correct" length.—RIC

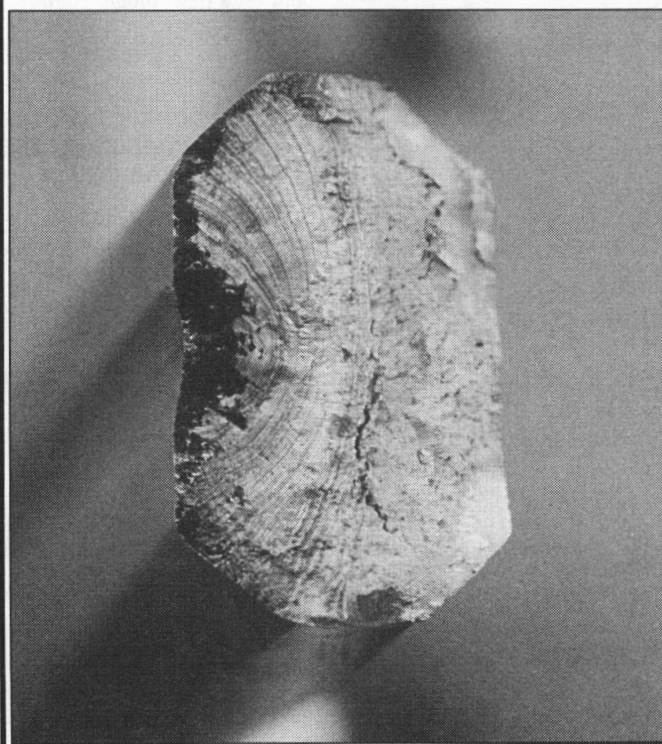
Manufacturers vary the height of the "minimum insert" line according to the length of the post, but a safe-conservative insertion is 30 percent of the shaft length. That's measured to the bottom of the clamp to the top of the round part, the cylinder part.



Andrew's Nail

This is the nail that pieced Andrew's Ruffy Tuffy but somehow, miraculously, most likely, got deflected away from the inner tube by the kevlar belt under the tread. For more details, read the main caption on page 13.

# How This Crank Broke



I was over at a friend's garage last week, gathering seat stay plugs to round out that part of this RR, and saw a broken-in-half crank that clearly showed every stage of the failure.

It's a grooved Campy. It's not a bad design, it's not a defect, it just broke. The failure started at the groove. The dark area is the portion that's been exposed the longest. Dirt, water, and weathering got in there and festered for months. You can see how it penetrated toward the center, then gradually crept around the outside.

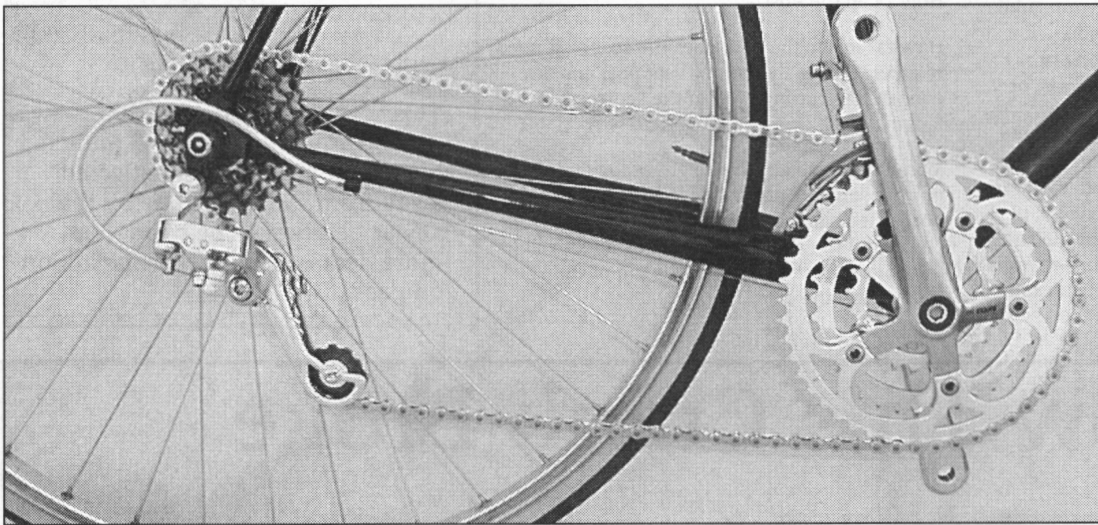
Just inside the dark old area, extending about halfway through the crank, is a smooth, polished area. It looks like woodgrain, but it's shiny, with no sharp or rough areas. That's the fatigue zone, where the two broken surfaces rubbed against one another. It may have taken 200 to 500 miles. Thirty to seventy hours? Honestly, I have no idea, but it is polished, and the polishing comes from the two halves rubbing against one another.

About halfway through, you can see the whole right side of the crank is rough. That's the overload zone, where, once the fatigue zone reached a certain point, the crank just couldn't take it anymore and just gave way. Once the fatigue zone got this far, the overload occurred suddenly, within a second or two.

It's possible that a non-grooved crank wouldn't have failed.

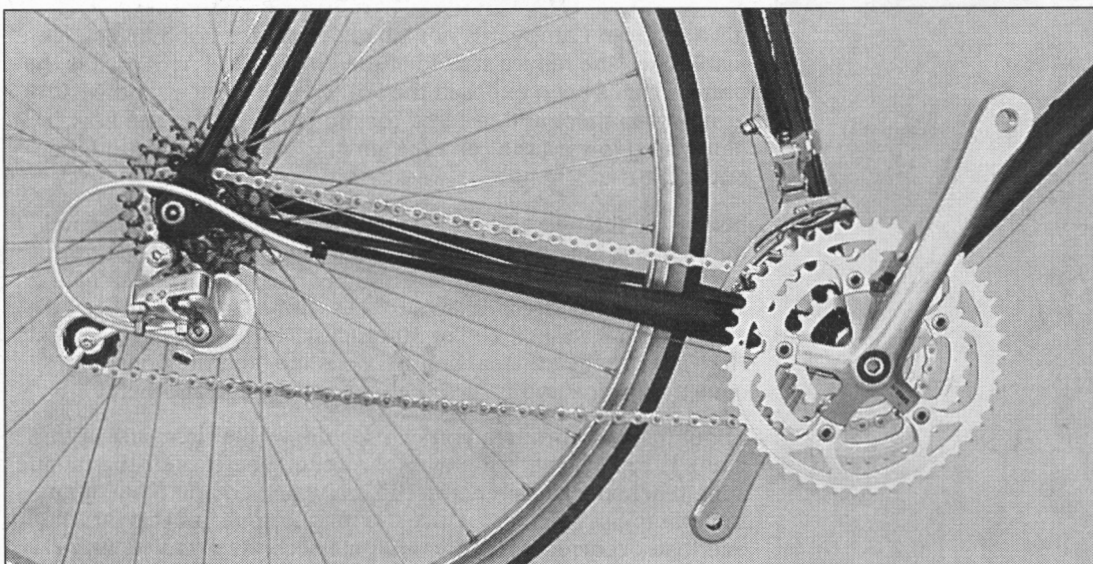
# How To Make Sure Your Chain's the Right Length

If you bought your bike new and all seems well, it most assuredly is. Getting the right amount of chain on a new bike is child's play for a bike maker, and you can take it to the bank that they aren't going to blow it. But if you build up a bike yourself from scratch, or change derailleurs, chains, or gearing, and therefore don't have the old chain to compare it with, then you might as well do it right the first time. Here's how we do it, and it works every time.



WHEN THE CHAIN IS ON THE BIG CHAINRING AND THE BIG REAR COG...

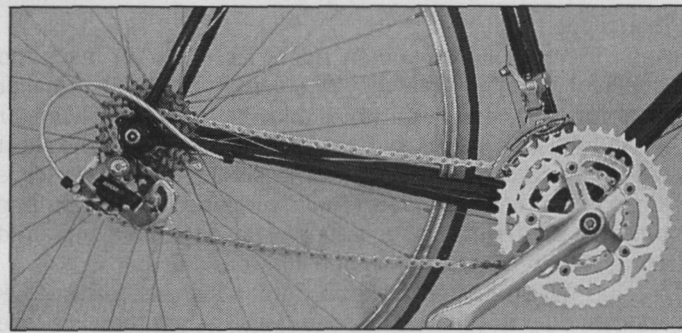
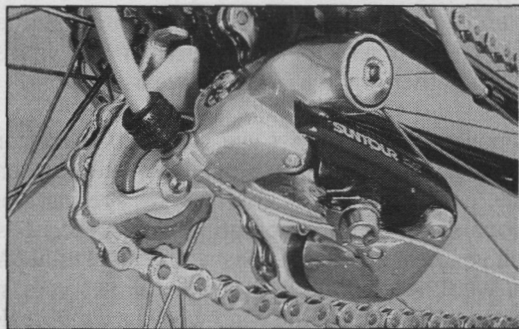
...this is what it should look like. See the rear derailleur cage, how it's angled at about 60-degrees? That's about right. It shouldn't be much more horizontal than this. If it's way too short, the rear derailleur cage will be horizontal, and when that happens, you may be able to shift to the big **x** big combination shown here, but you probably won't be able to shift out of it. **So**, when you change to larger cogs in the front **or** back, you'll have to put on a new, longer chain.



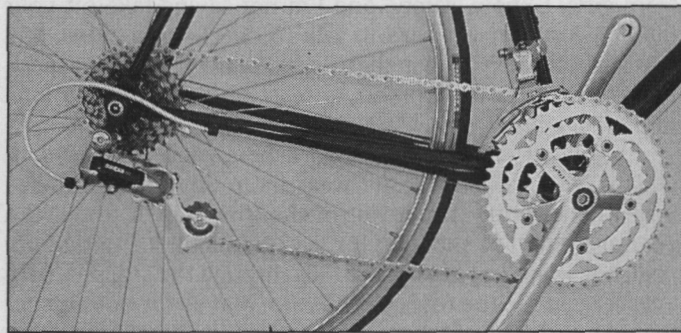
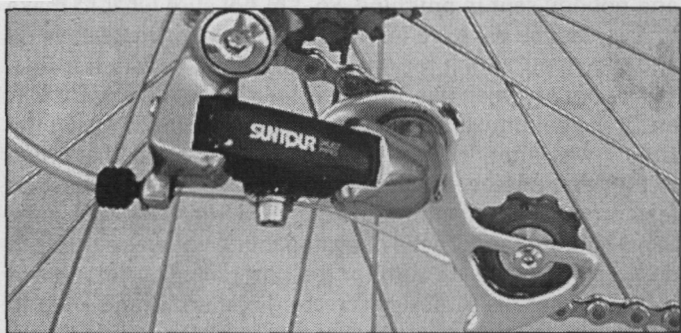
WHEN THE CHAIN'S ON THE SMALL CHAINRING AND THE SMALL REAR COG.. .

...this is what it should **look** like. Since the chain isn't being used up on big sprockets, the rear derailleur cage has to bend it through a more circuitous path (that's one **of** the functions of the rear derailleur), **so** there's no slack. Here you can see how the cage holding the rear derailleur's pulleys is rotated backwards.

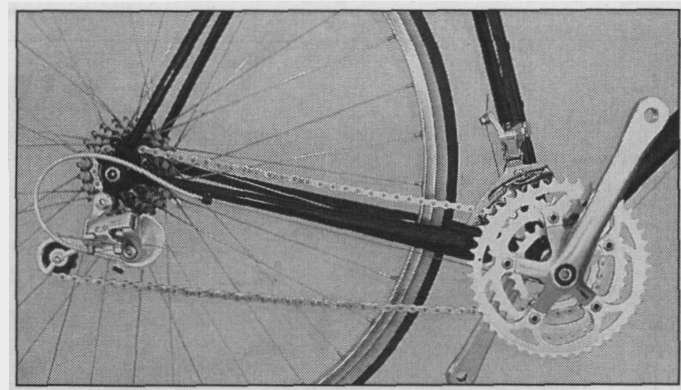
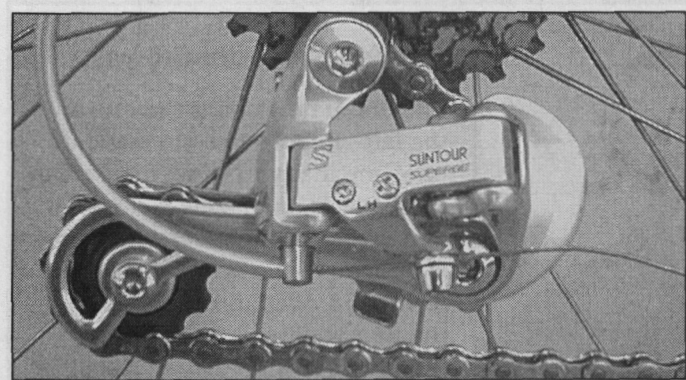
The chain is the right length when, when you're in the small front **x** small rear combination, the rear derailleur is able to take up **all** the slack, like this. A long cage does this better than a short cage does.



**CHAIN'S TOO LONG or REAR DERAILLEUR CAGE IS TOO SHORT.** Shift the chain to the small chainring and the **small** rear cog, and if this happens—that is, if the derailleur is still unable to take up the slack and the chain touches the derailleur cage as it is here, then it's time to go **to a** long cage (racing triple, touring, or mtn-style) rear derailleur. Also, you can see the lower portion of the chain is sagging slightly. The same chain, same bike, same everything is shown **two floors** down, with a long cage rear derailleur, and you can see how it works.



**CHAIN TOO SHORT.** The rear derailleur's cage should never be angled forward this much. **In** this photo, the chain is **on** the big **x** big combination. Solution: Get a longer chain or add **two** links to this one. Then it'll be fine.



**ALL'S WELL.** This is the same bike and same small chainring **x** small rear cog combination as shown **two floors** up, but this time it works. It works because the longer rear derailleur cage takes up more chain slack, since it routes the chain more circuitously. **You** can see, **on** the photo **to** the left (directly above these words) that the chain is not rubbing **on** the derailleur cage, and the chain doesn't sag, because it is tensioned.

### So...after all that—How Do You Make Sure the Chain **Is** the Right Length?

Derailleur makers tell you to shift to the big front **x** small rear combo, and make sure that the upper pulley is directly above the lower one. Maybe for indexing, that's the best way.

But we have an easier way that probably results in the same number of links, but in any case **ALWAYS** works with friction: Shift to the small **x** small and make sure the chain is still tensioned. If it is, then shift to the big **x** big combo, and make sure that the derailleur cage isn't angling forward a lot, as it is in the middle set of photos above. It should look like the upper photo on **the** page **to** the left there. Summary: Tension in the small **x** small, and not too much of a weird derailleur cage angle in the big **x** big. That'll **do** it every time, guaranteed.

than a good thing.

Most of the women riders I see are on bikes too small for them. I think they're steered toward the smaller sizes for their short top tubes, and they don't consider (or aren't told) that the reach to the bars is greater than the short top tube suggests it is, because the saddle-to-bar distance is angled, and that also rotates their soft parts forward, putting pressure on them, and it puts weight on their hands and arms, too, so it's just not a good all-around fit.

When I'm on a ride, I think it's easier to just look another rider in the face and say "Hey!" when there's a face to look at, as opposed to just cheeks and chins, which is about all we get these days. I think cyclist-car driver relations and rider-to-rider relations would improve if cyclists showed their face and head more. Now it's even hard to tell boys from girls. I know, safety, and I'm not saying take off your helmet, just that it's hard to talk to cheeks and chins, and that's about all you get these days. On the safety aspect, maybe it's safer for women, at least on solo rides, to look more like guys.

Peter, who used to work here, never wears sunglasses, and Pal Jeff doesn't wear them any more, either. I wear them about 60 percent of the time, down from 90 a year ago, and I'm shooting for less than half. It's not a lofty goal, but when you ride in the hills through the seasons, bare eyes let you see the real colors better. Maybe for rides longer than 4 hours I'd wear them, but at what point are they essential? I know it's safer to wear them, but it's even safer to stay

home (apologies to those who live in unsafe homes). Has anybody ever seen a racing Eddy Merckx riding with shades? I wonder whether Freddie Hoffman wears them.

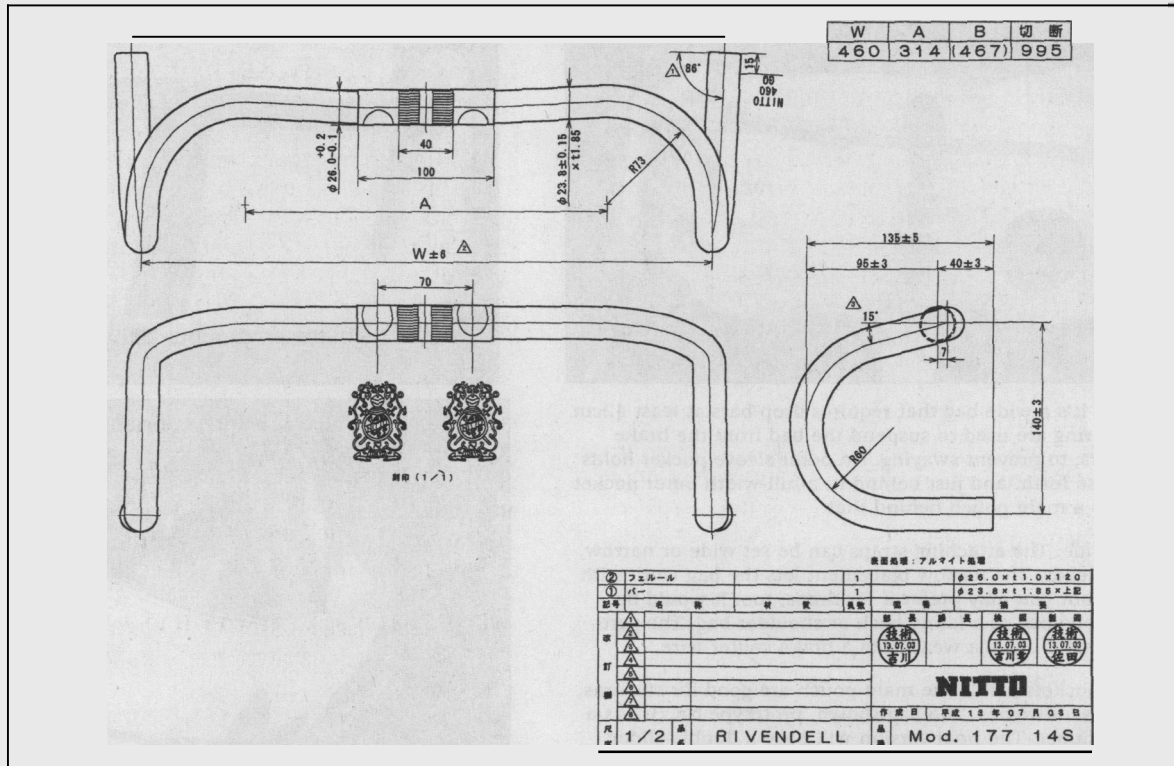
COMING DOWN A LONG AND FAST DESCENT can be silent or noisy, depending on what you wear. I'm all for windbreakers when it's really cold, but most of the time they're just noisy and keep your sweat from evaporating. Any descent is better when all you hear is the wind past your ears, I think. An extra layer of wool keeps you plenty warm, allows your sweat to evaporate, and is quiet in the wind. I have a windbreaker, and I bring it along in the winter, but I still think windbreakers are way over-used.

In the last (RR23) issue, I went fishing for black cyclists to write about their experiences as minority cyclists, and nobody sent in anything. So, I'm not sure what to make of that. Maybe we have no black members, or maybe we do and they (you?) don't feel like writing about it, which is fine. But I wonder which it is. Another thing I went fishing for was an Op-Ed column, and I got one submission, but it wasn't the style I was after, it wasn't really an Op-Ed; so that's two swings and misses. I asked Jeff to write about something he feels strongly about, and so he did. Also, there weren't many S240 submissions. That's okay, too, but what we're trying to do here is provide a forum for the non-racing cyclist. One of our deals here is to design, create, popularize, and keep in circulation the type of cycle gear that works for a ride downtown or in the country. —Grant



**Too Nice Fork Crowns:**

The brand new one is the one on the left. It looks like our standard one, one that you've seen before in these pages, but is one centimeter (ten whole millimeters) wider, and is designed specifically for tires up to **700x38**. We'll probably use it on the Rambouillet, as well, even though Toyo already has 200 other crowns there, ready to go. Here it is. If you order a Rivendell and request a fancy-cut crown, either Curt or Joe will carve it up a bit for you. It's a neat and nearly unique crown. The blade socket separation is just right for fatter 700c tires. Perfect for cyclo-x, and we'll likely use it for Rivendells when the tire-to-be-ridden will be as large as a **38**; and on Rambouillets. This is your subscription money at work. All we need is one more lug crown, and then maybe a new lug set, for a different kind of frame.



## Final Specs of the New Nitto Noodle Bar

It will come in 41, 44, and 46cm widths. The drawing shows the sweep-back, the radius of the curve, and most importantly, the flattish 15-degree ramp behind the place where you put your brake levers.

The 41 is for riders who've been riding narrow bars and can't bring themselves to go wide. It's for riders who ride 38s and 40s. Try the wider 41, and you'll probably like it. The 44 is for former riders of 40s and 42s, or those who know that 44cm is the magic width for them. Most of us here ride 46cm bars. They're wider, and feel great, and once you try bars that wide, it's hard to go back. They still aren't as wide as the DirtDrops, and those feel great, too.

Like all Nitto components, the finish is sparkling, immaculate, flawless. The sleeves have the Nitto crest

engraved. The clamp diameter is 26mm, so most road stems will fit. There may be some figures you can almost but not quite read up there, but without a frame of reference (your current bars), they won't mean anything, anyway. Based on the number of calls we take for this bar, it will surely be popular. It's a smart bar, it makes a lot of sense, and if you have a few bikes, one of them could probably stand to have a Noodle Bar. It's not so radical that you'll either hate or love it. It's pretty normal, but you will notice a difference, particularly in the ramp. These bars are scheduled for delivery in mid October, and you can order them now.

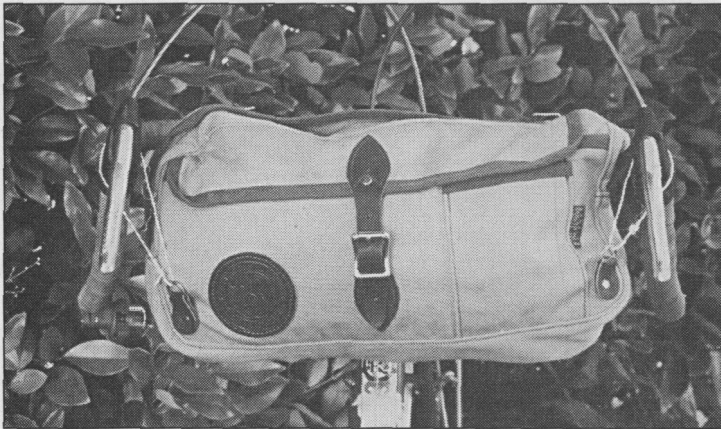
### Part numbers and prices:

- 41cm: 16-111 (\$42)
- 44cm: 16-112 (\$42)
- 46cm: 16-113 (\$52, because it's heat-treated)

## To Be Really Warm, Wear WoolyWarm

It's **our** new brand of all-wool cyclist's clothing. Every WoolyWarm garment or item will be 100 percent wool. We're starting **off** with a vest and a jersey, both Derby tweed, and a neck gaiter—all made just for **us**, in England. We'll add to the wardrobe little by little, as it makes sense to, and as finances allow. We expect to be delivering by late October—really. We've had prototypes for months now; the final details are nailed we're just waiting for delivery. Please buy some. It's **all** good stuff!

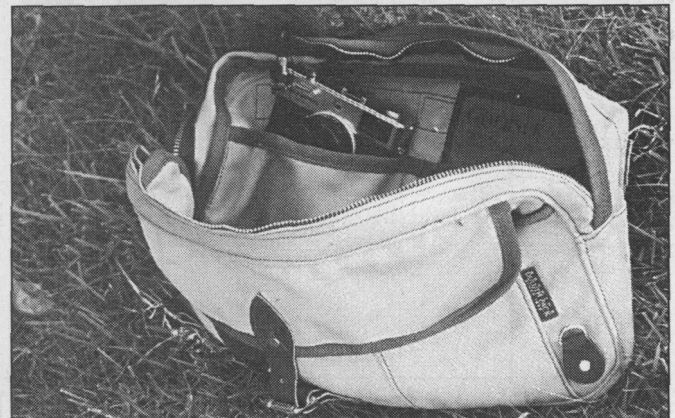




Above: Front view. It's a wide bag that requires drop bars at least 42cm wide. The lower D-rings are used to suspend the bag from the brake levers or handlebars, to prevent swaying. An outer sleeve pocket holds pens, money, and so forth, and just behind it, a full-width outer pocket holds a lot. There's a main pouch behind that.

Above Right: Backside. The attaching straps can be set wide or narrow, according to your needs. The narrow placement lets the bag work with Moustache H-bars, but you may prefer it for drops, too. It would be simple to rig the Hobo bag as a fanny back or shoulder bag. The vertical leather panel guards against wear from a brake center wire.

Right: Two sleeve pockets inside the main pouch are good for cameras, books, a wallet, or sandwiches. The bag shown, prototype No. 3, has a single slider brass zipper. The final version will have a double-slider plastic one. We tried both ways. The plastic may crap out in 15 years, but it can be replaced. It turns the corners better than brass.



## The Baggins Hobo Bag

We felt we needed a large capacity handlebar bag that didn't require a rack or cost as much as the Baggins Boxy bag—which is still the cat's pajamas when it comes to handlebar bags, so long as you can afford it. But we wanted a big bar bag that didn't cost as much. A large capacity handlebar bag for the less well-to-do!

Then, looking through the Duluth Pack catalogue, we saw a bag a bag made for strapping to canoe thwarts—the cross-braces between the left and right sides. Thwarts and handlebars aren't exactly kissin' cousins, but it looked to be about the right size and shape for a handlebar bag, so we bought one and tried it out. It worked okay, but being that it was designed for canoes and not bicycles, we weren't shocked that it wasn't just right. We used it a lot and then modified it as much as unskilled hands can, and sent it back to Duluth marked up with notes on the things we couldn't modify ourselves. Two prototypes later all the details were in place, and this is it.

You can't exactly tell by looking at it, but it holds even more than the Boxy Bag does. It goes on easy, with two buckled leather straps around the handlebars (which thread through either the two inboard or the two outboard slots, depending on your mood and the handle-

bars). Two D-rings let you tie the sides to the brake lever hoods or handlebars with a shoe lace or cord, which prevents the bag from swaying. Although some would describe this suspension and anti-sway device as "Mickey Mouse," a better description is "genius," since nothing could be easier or more effective.

There's a main pouch, accessed with a boo-hiss zipper (but a good one); and two inside sleeve-style pockets for your sandwich, camera, wallet, and map. Then on the front, there's another pocket, for things you couldn't fit inside the main one. It has almost, but not quite, too many pockets.

With minimal ingenuity, you can rig it up as a fanny pack, shoulder bag, or even a saddle bag. It's about 15.3" wide x 7.8" tall x 4" deep, which works out to about 475 cubic inches. But like all soft luggage, that's a conservative figure that doesn't take into account the unavoidable bulging when it's stuffed up full. If you aren't a bag person and you already have a Boxy Bar bag, you're probably all set. But if you are a bag person, and you have several bikes, it'll be a cinch to find a home for this one on one of them. It's ideal for drop bars at least 42cm wide.

Part No. 20-074; \$75

# The French Randonneur Bicycle,

by JanHeine

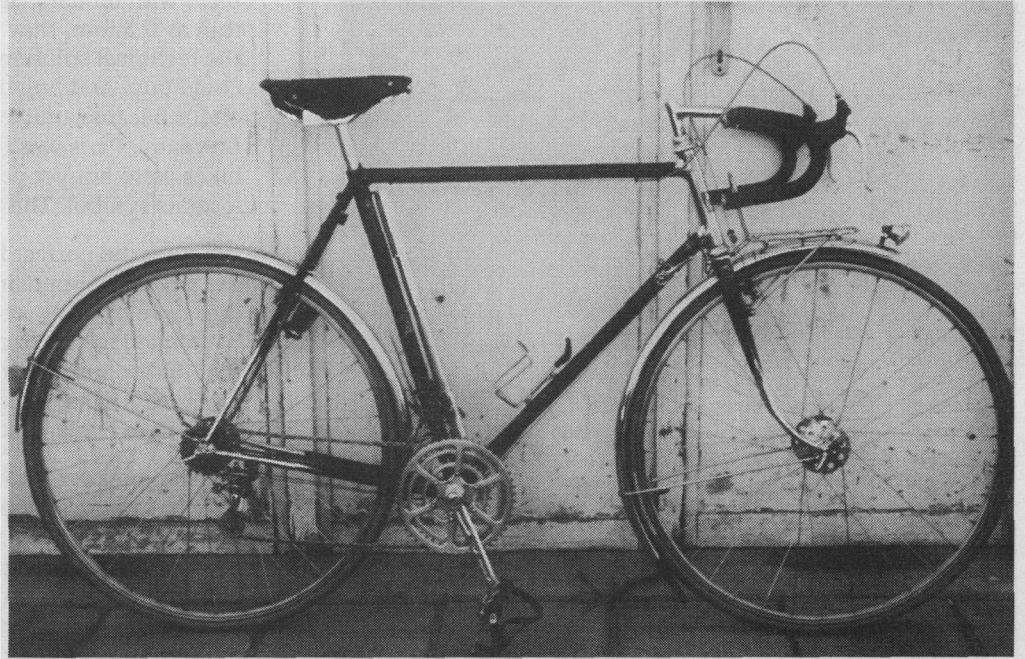
**F**

In recent years, the names of French bike makers Rene Herse and Alex Singer have become known again

in the U.S. among those interested in nice and old bikes. What makes them special? They were not ridden to Tour de France victories, nor are glorious names attached to their history. The racing bikes of these manufacturers are nice, but sought-after are the "randonneur" bicycles. These machines are truly special.

In France, the "cyclotourists" are a large and proud group. Most French racers — amateurs and professionals alike — dream of making bicycles their livelihood, often to escape dreary jobs in coal mines and factories. But not the cyclotourists — they are true amateurs, and ride because they enjoy riding. They may be competitive, but mostly they want to see the country from their bicycles, enjoy the camaraderie of other cyclists and live a good life. Many of them participate in randonneur "brevets" (see Harold interview and following story, RR 11). The dream of a randonneur is to complete Paris-Brest-Paris, a distance of 750 miles, in the shortest possible time, but definitely in less than the 90 hours allowed (see RR 17). Different from American centuries and long-distance events, randonneurs are expected to provide their own food and drink, or buy it along the way. Support from cars, while allowed at certain points during some events, isn't really part of the sport.

Obviously, randonneurs need bicycles. When randonneur-ing became popular in the 1930s, perhaps influenced by the writings of Paul de Vivie (aka "Velocio"), but probably even more by the universal introduction of a four-week holiday for all French employees, racing bikes were not very refined. They still did not have gears. Definitely not something randonneurs would want. Various builders came up with designs specifically for cyclotourists, with a useful spread of gears, fenders, lights and racks. It was common for young men (and some women) to buy a mid-priced "randonneuse" upon graduation from college and tour the country. Many of these riders became life-long cyclotourists, and later in life were able to afford nicer machines. Soon, specialist builders started making wonderful bikes that were leagues above the average, factory-made machines. Reyhand was one of the pioneering makes during the mid-

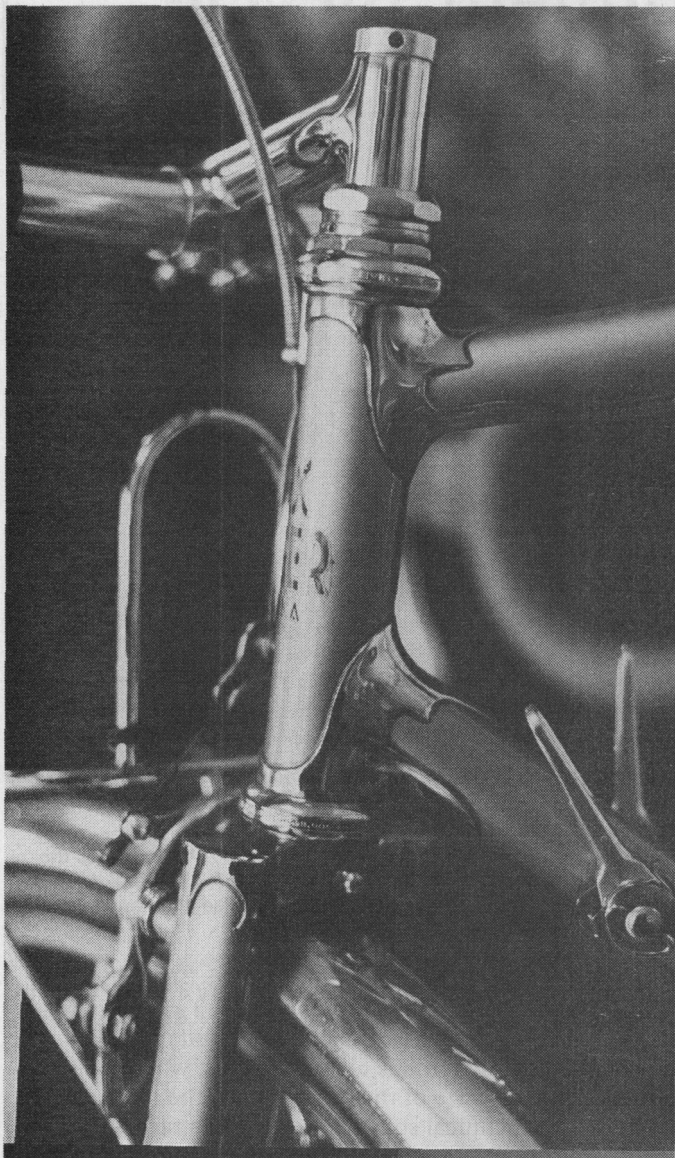


A 1950 Alex Singer "randonneuse." Fully equipped weight: Less than 20 lbs. You can see that randonneurs put their handlebars up high - most frames are significantly taller than they are long. The front fender wraps far around the wheel, and there's a mudflap: No wet feet for this rider. Also features the rare Singer front derailleurs (weight: 35 grams!), Nivex rear derailleurs, Singer cam-activated brakes, internal expander seatpost and a few other rare parts. However, the owner rides this bike a lot, and some parts have been replaced over the years with newer ones.

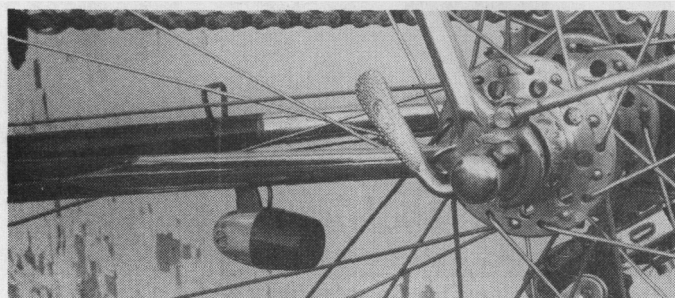
1930s, Alex Singer opened shop in Paris in 1938, and Rene Herse not much later. Many others followed - like Routens, Maury, Daudon and Faure. The bikes evolved quickly, helped along by the famous technical trials, where builders competed for the prize of the lightest bike, the most elegant and advanced technical solutions, etc. While racers discussed whether true men could race on machines equipped



Another 1950s Singer, this one the personal bike of M. Csuka, the builder himself. It's his main bike, and he rides a lot. Note the reinforced fender attachment, remote control for the generator and brazed-on Mafac centerpulls.



Elegant lugs with nice, clean workmanship. The lugs have been built up before brazing the frame to give a nice, smooth radius. This Singer has a fillet-brazed stem, brazed-on Mafacs and a front rack to support the handlebar bag.

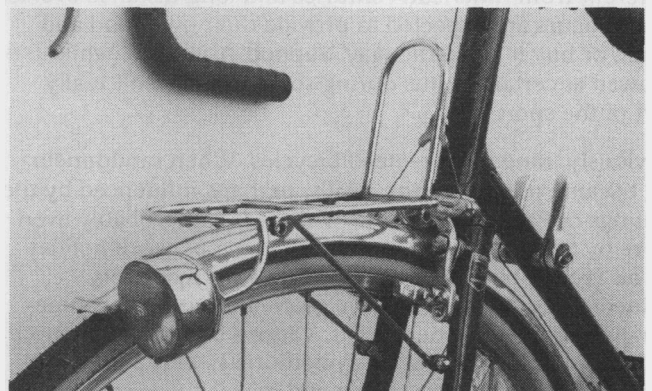


Generator wires inside the frame, brazed-on rear light and vertical dropouts - this must be a French "randonneur" bike. Maxicar hubs, of course. (1990 Singer.

with freewheels, or whether they should stick with fixed gears, the bikes in the technical trials featured triple or quadruple cranks, six-speed freewheels with alloy cogs. And a good trials bike weighed no more than 16 lbs complete with fenders, lights and racks. With frame tubes as thin as 0.3 mm, they were too flimsy to ride every day, but the technical solutions were applied to the bikes customers could buy. And buy they did, especially in the 1940s, because unlike war-time and post-war Britain or Germany, Paris was flooded with cash. Cars and motor-bikes were not yet popular, so a nice bicycle definitely was a status symbol. The bike business boomed.

Whether the perfect form was found by 1955 or whether the advent of popular motorization halted interest in further development remains debatable. The technical trials had ended by the early 1950s, as the aluminum companies that had sponsored them now saw a bigger and more lucrative market in cars and motorbikes. Randonneur bikes have evolved little since then.

So what makes a "randonneur" bike special? First, you may have noticed that I have not used the word "frame-builders" to describe the French artisans. Different from a racing bike, a randonneur bike is more than a frame with a collection of parts attached. The whole bike is conceived as a unit, the smallest details are considered in the making of the frame and components. Singer, Herse and other builders would not sell a bare randonneur frame - you had to buy a completely assembled bike. Many of the components were proprietary. Because clamps can loosen, every part is brazed on. Racks are custom-made, from tubular steel, designed to fit this particular bike's frame and no other. Fender mounting is carefully considered: Frames have vertical dropouts and all bridges are at the same distance from the axles, with threads as required. This makes fender installation easy and ensures that the fender gracefully follows the curve of the wheel. The lighting also is an



1990 Singer randonneur: The eyelets on the front rack are for attaching low-riders, in case you want to go on a short tour. On the other side, two additional eyelets are for a flashlight as a backup front light. The ingenious lower attachment of the rack allows a little adjustment to get the rack perfectly horizontal. Where are the wires for the light? Right behind the light, the wire goes into the curved tube of the rack, then through the rack to the central crossbar, where the wire enters the fender. It exits behind the fork crown and goes straight into the downtube. Not just elegant, but also well-protected.





Jan Heine's 1990 Singer randonneuse. The original owner probably was a little taller than the author, but the bike rides like a dream. 61 cm seat tube (center-center), 57 cm top tube. Since this is a taller bike than I usually ride, I don't need a head tube extension.

integral part of the bike, with wires from the generator routed through frame tubes and fenders. The entire bike is designed to be elegant and maintenance-free. Cartridge bearings in bottom brackets and hubs were widespread as early as 1948.

French handlebar bags always are supported by small front racks. This keeps their weight low, where it doesn't affect the bike's handling (unless you insist on carrying more than 20 lbs.) American handlebar bags often sit much too high and aren't attached securely. As a result, they severely affect the bike's stability, and handlebar bags have a bad name in this country.

Of course, the most important thing of a bike is the ride. My experience is limited to various Alex Singer bikes, which ride very similar to my Rivendell. They are designed to be comfortable and controllable on long distances, yet exhilarating and fast on twisty descents. These bikes are true custom bikes, with geometries and behavior specifically designed for their riders and intended uses. An Alex Singer for a 150-lb.-rider gearing up for Paris-Brest-Paris rides very differently from one designed for a 200-lb.-rider planning to cycle around the world.

Drawbacks? With all the work involved, they are expensive. For example, a new Alex Singer costs upwards of \$3500 with a good exchange rate. The Herse shop closed more than a decade ago. Old bikes from Herse and others are sought after by Japanese collectors and aren't much cheaper. However, Gilles

Berthoud and a few others make somewhat more modern, less elaborate machines that cost considerably less.

Also, many of the makers stopped being innovative when new designs were of questionable value in their eyes. As a result, there are few Singers equipped with Ergopower and 10-speed rear clusters, while most still sport Mafac center-pull brakes and downtube friction shifting. Not exactly what readers of modern bike magazines consider state of the art design. So these bikes appear to be a dying breed. That's too bad, because for long distances, there are no better bikes.

## Ten Rivendollars, Members Only

This coupon is worth ten dollars toward a Rivendell parts, clothing, or accessories order totalling \$100 or more, placed between September 20 and October 28. It must be redeemed by mail or fax, not by phone, and you need to sign it, and date it, too. Thanks for supporting us. We've got some interesting plans for the next few years, and your patronage allows us to continue publishing the Reader and bringing you a nice selection of clothing, frames, parts, books, and the pine tar soap. If there's something on the back of this that you don't want to cut out, you may photocopy it and send it in. Not combinable with other offers or merchandise credit.

Member Name \_\_\_\_\_ Member Number, if known \_\_\_\_\_

If you don't know your number, where do you live? \_\_\_\_\_

Please attach this to your order. Staple it. If you fax it in, no staple required.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you.

# It's Not About The Bike

by Maynard Hershon

I love bicycles, but not **as** exercise machines or pieces of some crafts-person's art. I love them because you can ride them with your friends. That's cycling to me.

When I am riding with friends, I do not think about the bike I'm pedaling. The bike is transparent. I think about my riding, not my "ride." I think about the speed, rotation and orderliness of the paceline. I think about how individuals ride, how savvy, how smooth, how safe. I think about how we look to drivers, what we're doing at rural intersections.

I think about conversations, the one I'm having with the person next to me and the ones I overhear in front or behind, snippets of life among the cycling classes.

I think about how I feel on my bike. Are my legs and arms relaxed? How flat is my back? How softly do my hands grip the bars? Do my knees nearly graze the toptube?

I think about the '70s when we all noticed how our friends looked on their bikes: how flat their backs, how bent their elbows, how they spun or slogged on the pedals, how pretty their pedal-strokes were whether flat-footed or pointy-toed.

We didn't talk about equipment quite **as** much then. We all rode pretty much the same stuff, seems to me, steel bikes with Campy parts, so we didn't go on about our equipment much. We talked about riding.

We also helped new riders, coached them. Alas, you can hardly do that now. Today, everyone is presumed equal. Experience is not knowledge. No one accepts critical suggestions gracefully.

No matter how you express that suggestion, you meet with a cold reception. If you ask why, you're told that you simply phrased it wrong or used the wrong tone of voice.

Whatever approach you used, it was the wrong one. You've offended him or her. Who're YOU to tell me how to ride?, **asks** a guy who's scared you four times in five miles. Hey, he's an expert. He's been riding for eight months, and he's never missed an issue of *Bicycling Magazine*. He knows all about wheels, Shimano, Rolf, Mavic, Spinergy—all the trick wheels. What **COULD** you tell him? He knows all about wheels, he just can't ride a straight line to save YOUR life.

He'd never admit that he's not one bit interested in hearing criticism, no matter how constructive. Oh no, saying that could make him sound self-satisfied. He's totally teachable. He merely has to be approached correctly, meaning at great distance, a mile minimum. And spoken to in a whisper. Simple.

**As** I ride, I think about all those things. Hey, there's so much going on, so much to notice. My bike? Well, it's there under me for sure, but it isn't on my mind. You have to have a bike to ride, just **as** you have to have a bat to play sandlot baseball, but you don't think about that bat or your bike every moment.

I sure don't. Except when my bike attracts attention. Often, someone will say something about it, whatever bike it is. Even if they say something positive, I feel self-conscious.

Really. I hate it, and I get less-than-gracious about responding to comments about my bicycles. I'm the same way with my motorcycle. I couldn't ride a flashy Colnago or Ducati. Both attract way too many comments—from riders and non-riders, geeks and aficionados, one-brand freaks and people who are simply lonely. They all want to talk about your stuff.

What's to talk about? It's just my bike or motorbike, not an emblem of what I stand for or how I live or how much money or class or discernment I may feel I have. I don't need a bicycle for an ice-breaker, a way to find common ground with other riders. I can hardly recall a conversation that started on the topic of "stuff" that left **stuff** behind and turned entertaining or enlightening.

I don't **fuss** a lot over my bikes but I like to keep them clean. Not so clean that the spacers between the cassette cogs gleam, but clean. If my bike's dirty, I think it looks **as** if I don't love it, and I do love it. I just don't focus on it beyond keeping it clean and working **as** it should. It's not a religious icon after all. It's a consumer product I find useful in my life.

I do love the idea of "the bicycle," the ways that riding has enhanced my life. I think of places I've been, fine people I've known—because of "the bicycle." Not, please note, because of one particular bike.

Whatever bike I ride, I didn't sign on **as** a rep for the company. I don't feel that everyone should have one just like mine. Nothing I own has cosmic significance. My bikes are just bikes, tools I own so I can ride. I'm aware that not everyone shares my feelings about equipment.

I have to identify with stuff-minded folks when I write catalog copy. Luckily, outfits that hire me understand my distaste for hype, for calling something Lighter, Better, Quicker, Faster, **as** my old pal Tony Tom would say. The people at bike companies who employ me like all kinds of bikes and usually own several, not just what the outfit they work for makes.

They understand that fierce brand loyalties exist, but they don't feel them. And they do love bikes. They have, after all, chosen to make their living in the low-pay bike business.

I think they love bike-riding, not so much a particular bike or kind of bike. On the best rides, to my mind, you're so involved with the pedaling, the chat, the paceline and your thoughts to have any attention left for your bicycle. Too much focus on equipment leads to self-consciousness about it, to worry about inessentials. Enough worry and you may not ride. If you didn't have the right brand of bat, would you stay away from the sandlot?

# It's Partly About The Bike

by Grant Petersen

I love riding bicycles and I love bicycles as things. I even like the way the *bicycle* sounds—it ranks up there with “silver,” and “frisbee.” I like the shape of bicycles, with the triangles and circles. I like the variety of bikes and the creative and ingenious ways the people who make them come up with to make them. I love them as exercise machines, transportation, artwork, and personal statements. I like looking at the colors, and how the colors change as the light outside does.

I like looking at the back of someone's bike as I ride behind it. I look at the rack braze-ons, the seat bag, the chainstays, and if I'm lucky, I'll see seat stay diamond reinforcements. I look at the wheel clearance at the chainstays and wonder, “if a spoke broke, would the wheel roll?”

I notice whether or not the rear wheel is in there straight, and which way the quick-release is pointed. If it's pointed to the rear, I think, “that looks goofy,” and then I remember the days when I pointed it rearward to be more aerodynamic, and I think, “but not as goofy as THAT.”

I listen to the fat, thin-walled bikes with super wheels coming down the mountain, and I can tell the difference between them and regular bikes just by the sound. I like to hear the sounds different bicycles make.

When I ride with friends, I like talking about the bikes. I don't talk exclusively about bikes, and I'm not even saying “bicycles” is my favorite topic, but it's one of them. And cameras, books, family, plans, and more bikes.

When I'm riding my Rivendell, I think about Joe, who made the frame, and JB, who painted it, and Curt, who will make another for me some day. I like how the dirt looks on the light blue, and how it collects in certain places. My bike is a silent bike, a holy bike, it runs perfectly, but it's not clean.

On rides I look around at the colors of the hills. I look for animals all the time, and Zeiss-eyed Jeff usually sees them first, but between us two, we see more than anybody else does, I'm pretty sure of that. We know where to look, when to look, and Jeff's eyes are amazing. I dumped my granny and dad on the mountain, and I say hi every time I pass where I put them. Jeff has orders to add me, when I die.

Most of the time I ride the same road over and over again, and I never get tired of it. It's a different road every month. In October, there are tarantulas. People come in cars to see them, and often stop and ask, “Where are the tarantulas?” and all we can say is, “They're around, keep looking,” but the real answer is: Ride your bike, you'll see plenty.

Last month, for the first time ever, there was a huge hatch of grasshoppers, and over about a mile and a half long stretch of the lower road, there must have been two every square foot of

it. They'd land on your legs or shoes and ride around for a few revolutions. You'd run over patches of dead ones, crunching live ones accidentally, and see the fat ground squirrels chomping on them in the road, sometimes almost hitting your wheel as they'd go back for just one more, fattening up for the coyotes.

We see about twenty or so rattlesnakes a year, and coyotes constantly, usually right along the road. A month ago we saw a bobcat swatting his paw at a rattlesnake, wounding it before we accidentally scared him off. We walked up to the snake, who slowly squirmed off into the grass, rattling like mad the whole time. About five minutes later, we saw a ringtailed cat.

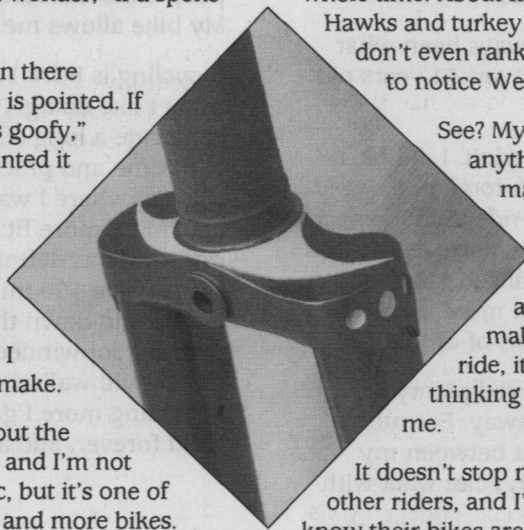
Hawks and turkey vultures are all over the place, and they don't even rank. Kestrels are common, and we've started to notice Western Tanagers.

See? My loving bikes doesn't get in the way of anything else. The bike is there and part of it. It may be a tool, but a bike made by hand, with care, by a craftsman with skill and pride, is as much art as a picture you hang up and can't ride; and my bike is as much a part of my ride as the bugs, animals, plants, and weather are, and on a solo ride, it's not a bad companion, either. I love thinking about it, and it's as pretty as nature, to me.

It doesn't stop me from being social. I always say hi to other riders, and I'll often complement their bikes, because I know their bikes are important and special to them. Most of the bikes are Lancers, Cannondales, Lightspeeds, and Specializeds, but there's a smattering of lugged steel, too. Lots of Post Office bikes and 2300s, though. I mean, *tons*.

I think it's natural for bike riders to like their bikes and even to become infatuated with them. Eddy Merckx was with his. Musicians, mechanics, woodworkers, car people, and sportsmen have always bonded with their toys. My trout trips are better because I really love my fly rod. When I can't fish, I often take one out to smell it and flex it, because it's beautiful and has my past and future in it, and it's the same with a bicycle. What a beautiful thing, especially when it's a special, handmade, beautiful one. If I die on a bed in a room, I want my fly rod and bicycle there where can see them, and think about the times we've shared. That's a sad thought, though.

There are lots of reasons to like riding, and for me, **BICYCLES** is one of them. I've had great rides on dull bikes, but riding is so fun and so important to me, and a special bike adds to it. It doesn't make sense to me to not ride a bike that isn't special, and that I don't actually care about even when it's leaning against the bookshelf at night. When some robot finally invents the truly invisible bike that actually, honestly, magically does “disappear beneath you,” I won't be wanting one.



# Big II

By Kathy Stewart

In early June I received an email from Kathy, a member here, and it had nothing to do with what follows other than one thing lead to another and eventually to this. It's a good thing. In the last issue we had several submissions by bigger guys, about the challenges and concerns and benefits of cycling; but none from bigger women. Kathy's enthusiasm for riding was obvious, and she agreed to tell her story here with the hope that it might encourage others to get on a bike, which I'm sure it will. —GP

As a child I rode my bike the same way I drive my car. Everywhere! I rode bikes well into high school, then I got my driver's license and never looked back...until about 5 years ago. You're probably thinking, "So?"

Well, let me explain. I am and have always been what doctors describe as "morbidly obese." I am 44 years old, 5'1" and about 335lbs.

I was slow to get back on a bike as an adult. I did ok at first, but then the excuses crept in—it's too hot, *too cold*, too wet. I'm an adult; no one cares if I ride, and I expected to be taunted, criticized or just plain be made the butt of jokes. Then I thought it over and realized I just didn't give a damn. Riding was more fun, and more important and necessary for me, than the opinions of others.

Along the way I got a new job that offered plenty of employee parking about 2 1/2 blocks away. For most people that wouldn't be a problem, but between my weight and a bad ankle it's farther than I can walk with-

out a great deal of pain. But I can ride that distance easily. I was worried people might laugh. My fears were groundless. Not only hasn't that happened to me, most people are encouraging and have been very supportive. My bike allows me to keep my job.

Bicycling is FUN. I am riding again because it's something I like doing. I am impatient with myself because I can't ride a long distance, but I also know that will come with time and practice, and eventually I will be able to ride anywhere I want to. I have already noticed that I am becoming more fit; I am more flexible than I was, and my wind has definitely improved. You don't have to be able to ride 100 miles, or even one mile. I started off riding up and down the street in front of my house. I figured if I got winded I could make it home, and if I got a flat I could walk the bike home and fix it there. Now that I'm riding more I got a local bike pass, it is cheap and good forever, add a bus pass and I can go anywhere!

## Kathy's Tips For Big Riders

Bicycling is easy on the joints, and you have total control of the level of exertion, so you can tailor your ride to your needs. But heavy people have a harder time than others getting a leg over the bike. Yoga or stretching will help, or just get a women's style frame with a low bar.

You do NOT have to ride for miles and miles to gain fitness. ANY amount, even 2 1/2 blocks a day in both directions is a gain. If I do no other riding I'm averaging just about 3 miles a week, and I notice improvements to my general health even with just this small amount of riding.

### Clothing

Don't worry about cycling clothes; they don't make them for obese people anyway (well, one company that does make shorts, but at my size I am not putting myself into spandex for anyone! I did buy a cycling jersey once—the Cane Creek lizard thingy. I bought the biggest they had, and looked like I'd been stuffed into a sausage casing! I gave it away.) Rather, concentrate on regular clothes.

**Tops.** For a dry, mild weather top, I wear a baggy t-shirt with a button down shirt that I usually don't button. I have a quilted wool shirt I wear in the rain. It can get soaked, but it still keeps me warm. My helmet keeps most of the rain off.

**Bottoms.** I wear jeans with a reasonable amount of comfort. If you are not wearing shorts, get a pant leg keeper of some kind. Leather toe straps work great, and you don't have to worry if they are long enough to go around your leg!

**Shoes.** I am afraid of both toe clip/straps and clipless pedals. I use a resin toe cup instead, and I know I won't flop over because I didn't get my foot free in time. I am subject to S. F.A. Syndrome (S.tupid F.reak A.ccident). However, in all my years I have never had a serious mishap with any bicycle.

**Shopping For a Bike.** A good bike shop will offer advice and support. The folks at my local shop, The Bike Gallery in Portland, have been wonderful, and a major source of encouragement.

# Questions For Kathy

**RR:** I imagine anybody working in a bike shop would be super-supportive of your efforts, and I know the Bike Gallery is a good shop. Has that been the case?

Yes! I had a great deal of apprehension the very first time I walked in the door, but everyone from that day to this has been wonderful I'd love to work there!

**RR:** Do passersby, walkers or cyclists, single you out for comments or encouragement? Are you treated any differently? In a good or bad way.

Usually adults ignore me, or smile. I always ring the bell, then announce which way I'm coming up behind them. I've had bike messengers blow past me on the sidewalk and it always startles me. I hate that, so I won't do it to others.

Children sometimes make comments, but I usually totally ignore it, or if it's an ongoing issue I'll stop and ask to speak to their parents. I've only had to do that once. It works though.

**RR:** How long have you been riding?

I bought my first bike as an adult in June 1997, my riding time has been building up from there. You have no idea how often I regret selling my old Jupiter. I've been looking around on the internet to see if I could find the brand name again, but I've had no luck, and all I remember is that it was a Japanese import.

**RR:** It sounds like a Bridgestone. Japanese, and that was a Bstone model. If it was black and clunky, that's even more evidence. Do you have any riding goals?

Yes, I want to be able to travel at least 20 miles over normal terrain on roads or bike paths. Then I would like to be able to travel at least 10 miles on the bike paths here at Forest Park.

**RR:** If you ran into another cyclist of your size, would there be an instant connection? Would you wave?

Yes! and Yes! I can't speak for the other person, but I wave at anyone I pass cycling. I've never had a cyclist

not wave back.

**RR:** At what point did you feel part of the cycling world, or are you not there yet?

If desire counts I'm there, but only in spirit. I would like to be able to go on some of the local group rides, but I don't have the ability to do that yet, but I am getting there! I was able to ride from my bike shop all the way home 2 weeks ago, and I only had to stop for air (lungs not tires) 2 times. 2.6 miles in heavy traffic. Scary but fun.

**RR:** Cyclingwise, what would you like to do most? I mean, ride 10 miles, go on a tour, just keep riding and be able to do it longer?

All the above, riding is like flying to me. The only thing I don't want to do cycling wise is race, but I do follow races, and I am looking forward to the Tour 'd France.

**RR:** Riding is good for general health, but what, specifically, are you noticing--how is it helping? Self esteem, stamina, what?

People look at me with more respect, obese people are treated with contempt in a lot of ways, but when they see me on a bike I guess they

think I'm trying to do something about it. This is fascinating, to me I'm riding because I want to, health gains aside my main motivation to ride is because I like it! I like ALL aspects of cycling, I have even thought about taking the bike mechanic classes in Ashland, OR. The articles you've run about frame building, and painting were excellent! It's a good thing you work/live in CA and I'm here, 'cause I'd be hanging around like a kid asking a bunch of questions. I try to avoid letting my enthusiasm run away with me. This isn't easy since "enthusiasm" is as close as my bicycle.

Kathy can be contacted at [kmstew@teleport.com](mailto:kmstew@teleport.com).



# Atlantis Update & Review



John works Tuesdays and Thursdays, and this is his 61cm Atlantis, equipped in a really normal way, and with Nitto racks front and rear. The front one is our final prototype of the model we've been wanting for several years. One minor change, and it'll be perfect, and it seems to fit easily on just about any bike. Also shown is John's Hobo Bag, which he uses daily on his other job, which has him pedaling all around San Francisco.

The neatest thing about the Atlantis is that you can build it up so many different ways, and it works for all of them. It would be hard to imagine a better bike for loaded touring. What does the Atlantis lack in this regard? Nothing we can think of. It works on or off-road, too, since every Atlantis has enough tire clearance for off-roadable tires.

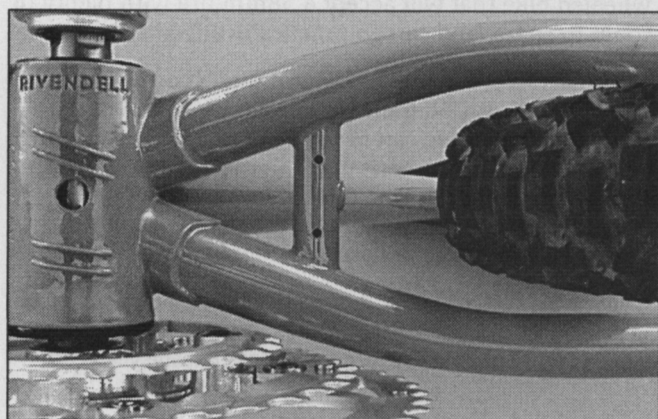
For commuting, same thing. You can strap on saddlebags and bar bags, or use racks front and rear. Either way, it carries the weight well, and handles well, so it maneuvers through and around...you know, it is difficult to write this. It's September 11, the attack day, and just nothing seems to matter right now. It's such a terrible thing, so tragic and sad and unbelievable. What now? Find out who did it and then what? Everybody has an opinion, but what's to talk about? The Reader is supposed to be, you know, a non-political publication about bikes, mostly, but we live in a political world, and right now it seems disrespectful to continue on as though the planes missed the buildings. The Atlantis, honestly, is as perfect a production bike as I can imagine. For so many things. It came out just right, and I can't think of a solitary detail that I'd change. There are no dark secrets to this bike, none. The frame quality, details, beauty, design, and function are

just right. There's so much integrity to it, and the design is so good, that I imagine any Atlantis purchased today will still be ridden in 40 years, by somebody. It's not going to wear out. It's not going to ever be less a frame or a bike than it is now. It will always provide somebody with a nice, comfortable, thrilling ride, whether it's on dirt or pavement, with skinny tires or fat ones, loaded or light. Some details you may be wondering about: Chainstays: 0.9mm heat-treated and custom-bent CrMo. They're made by a Japanese tubing maker you haven't heard of, with the funny name of Starlight. Toyo says it uses lots of Starlight tubing, and it is as good as Tange Prestige. Nothing was ever better... Seat Stays: 0.7 to 0.8mm CrMo. 16mm  $\phi$  at the top, good and stout for cantilevers, not overly heavy. Seat Tube: 0.9x0.6mm heat-treated CrMo. For a 27.2mm seat post. The heat-treatedness and 0.9 are good insurance against breakage. Top tube: 0.9x0.6x0.9mm CrMo. Down tube: 0.9x0.6x0.9mm heat-treated CrMo. Fork blades 1.2x0.7mm CrMo. They ain't gonna break. All frame joint fittings are our own design investment castings. None better, and they're beautiful and smart. Add Toyo's quality brazing, and you've got a great frame.



This 700c-wheeled 58cm Atlantis is currently set up "light and upright" style, for tiding **on** family outings. But this bike has been all over the hills here, and **on** several Sub-24 Hour Overnights (camping trips), and it takes just one ride **on** it—in Teva sandals, **no** less—to open your eyes to the tremendous comfort and versatility of this seemingly sedate set-up. The current crop of 700c-wheeled Atlantes easily accept "29-inch" tires, of which there's actually only one: The WIB Nanoraptor.

A 56 Atlantis set up as a school bus, with Moustache Handlebars and a trailer bike (a Burley Piccolo). M-F morning and afternoons, Anna tides the back part to first-grade. Weekend evenings she tides it **on** local trails with Dad. This bike, built with the first 56cm prototype, has been everything from a fast & rugged drop-bar bike, a Priest-bar balloonner, and this Moustache-barred commuter/trail bike. It's had 26 x 1.25s through 26x2.2s. Like any Atlantis, it changes personalities depending **on** how you equip it, and always seems correct however it is.



An ant's eye view of a 26 x 2.3 knobby passing through the chainstays of a 56cm Atlantis. The last batch and all future 700c Atlantes (that's 58cm and larger) have enough clearance for the monstrous WIB "29-inch" Nanoraptor tires, which measure 700x52. The chainrings shown are 46x36x24, and there's plenty of clearance there at the chainstay. The nice-looking bends in the stays are the work of Tetsu Ishigaki, the head builder at Toyo. The chainstays themselves are specially made for us out of 0.9mm CrMo. They're bent first, heat-treated later, and mate perfectly with our bottom bracket shell, also shown. Rivendell All-Rounders get the same shell. There's a threaded fender boss brazed into the backside of the chainstay bridge, so if you don't like using zip-ties... there you go!

## Joe's Website & Customer Service Update

There haven't been many cosmetic changes to the website since our last Reader. We haven't had time, but that should change soon. Our site is under a cosmetic redesign and I'll be getting a little more time to work exclusively on the website and not on phone orders, tech support, and email questions.

The online catalogue (<http://www.rivendellbicycles.com/webalogs>) coming along nicely—it's easy to update and has the best, most current information we have on our products, and more products than you'll find in the print catalogue, and fewer mistakes. It's the best source of current and accurate information, and availability, because it's updated and checked constantly. So . . . for the best info, shop online! Your credit card is secure—we have a secure server.

Our Email Updates list (to subscribe, email "rivnews@rivendellbicycles.com" and say "subscribe") is now at 3,444 - about 3/4 of our Rivendell membership. The Email Updates List contains information about special sale items, (some exclusive to list subscribers) new products and publications, and any other news we have to tell you. It's our most direct way of communicating to you, and best of all, it's free to us, free to you, and doesn't require cutting down trees!

We have a new iMac workstation/file server that also has a CD burner, and once the Readers are in PDF format, we will be able to have CD copies of the Reader available. There may be a few other surprises on the CD too . . . So look for Readers in PDF format soon. All you'll need is a Mac or a PC with a CD-ROM drive and the free Acrobat Reader. ([www.adobe.com/acrobat/](http://www.adobe.com/acrobat/)) They won't have any fancy artwork at first, but you'll have all the Readers in a durable format.

There's a new Backorders section on our website at (<http://www.rivendellbicycles.com/general/arrival.htm>). Bhima, our inventory manager, keeps this updated with news of back ordered items and new products that are coming in. Check here first if you're wondering about that back ordered item or that next run of Atlantis frames!

Thanks for your time, sign up for the Email Updates if you haven't already done so, and quit surfing/reading and ride!

## Andrew's Frame Production Update

I've recently (as of June) taken over from Jerome as Frame Production Manager. It isn't quite a full time job, but there are lots of photos to be taken, illustrations to be done, and newfangled widgets to be invented, so I'm being kept busy with other things as well. I also answer the phone and take orders when nobody else is available, install headsets and bottom brackets, Boeshield, and assemble, pack, and ship complete Rivendell and Atlantis bicycles. Mainly, though, I'm the Frame Production Manager, and if you have any questions about frames, I'm the one to call.

As those of you who have recently placed a frame order know, we've developed a new custom frame ordering process, making the whole thing easier and more fun for everyone. The entire process has been automated to some degree, to minimize mistakes, but not to such an extent that you feel like you're dealing with a machine (not much chance of that happening around here, ever!). Every decision is confirmed in writing, by mail, and we've established a formal payment schedule. Our records and communication are more thorough and better than they've ever been. We're still ironing out the last detail or two, but those of you who have placed orders recently will enjoy the New and Improved Rivendell Custom Frame Ordering Experience in its entirety. More good news: the frame catalogue finally went out. Really. I know you've heard his before, but this time it's true. Call us right away if you haven't received yours.

We've got a new fork crown, known so far as the RC-03 (catchy nickname to be determined later). It looks like a wide RC-02, and should really be considered an almost-All-Rounder crown, being between the RC-02 and All-Rounder crowns in width. It's beautiful and practical, and there are already nine bikes in line for it. It will go with our straight-but-dented chainstays, to make a 700c-wheeled bike that will accept a 38mm tire with plenty of room to spare, and can go practically anywhere on Earth.

"All that's fine, but where's my frame?", you say? Joe Starck and Curt Goodrich are hard at work, building frames as fast as we can order them (and trying as hard as they can to outdo each other in the details), while JB and his crew are pushing the Limits of Human Endurance to get them painted in a timely fashion. Please give me a call if you have more specific questions.

If you've got questions about a current or potential frame order, or even an Atlantis or Rambouillet, contact me directly by phone at 925 933-7304 or email: [ADrummond@rivendellbicycles.com](mailto:ADrummond@rivendellbicycles.com).



by Jeff Thomas

# Helmets, Boys...

Two friends were sitting on the fence rail at the junction halfway up our mountain when another rider rolled up and said, "Helmets, boys." "Huh?" one answered, and the fellow repeated, "Helmets, boys...Where are they? I wrecked one time, and my helmet saved my life. Bad fall, big crack in the helmet. It saved my life. I wouldn't be here today if it wasn't for the helmet."

From the time I could straddle a three wheeler until I was 22 years old I never wore a helmet. I survived many a hard crash and covered tens of thousands of miles without serious injury. Then the USCF decided we all had to wear an approved helmet if we were going to race in USCF events. Bike mags became inundated with drop test data. I got a black Bell V-1 Pro—Bell's hardshell that looked sort of like a leather hairnet—and rode for 19 years and tens of thousands of more miles with a helmet and without serious injury.

I was awash in confidence when I donned my first head piece. I'd push the bike harder thru corners on steep descents, in control, but with no room for error. I realized the security I felt with my helmet was bad ju-ju. If a car cut me off, I would not be able to maneuver my escape. A helmet might make for a better look in an open coffin, but probably won't save me in a high speed head-on with a car. I think I kept wearing it because of the massive pressure put on us by the industry.

Then one day a year or so ago I accidentally left on a ride without it. I was miles from home when I realized it. I felt that I was doing something wrong. I knew I was more vulnerable, so I rode more cautiously, to protect my fragile-as-an-egg head.

These days, when I ride up our eleven mile mountain, I don't wear a helmet. I don't miss it going up, and I go much slower on the descent. Going slower eliminates the high stress, super focused mindset I have when I push the bike to the limit going down. Instead, I appreciate the sights, sounds and smells that the mountain provides. If I blow a tire I have a better chance of staying upright. If an oncoming car cuts into my line I'm better able to avoid it. When I ride around cars I figure I'm invisible to them. I expect the worst and plan accordingly. I have a tandem and a trailer bike I ride my kids

around on. I never wear a helmet when I ride the with kids on these bikes. They ask me why they have to wear a helmet and I don't and I tell them the truth—because I'm a safer rider without one.

The other day I did a long overnight solo that involved a lot of tricky off road riding and some long, steep, twisting road descents, and I wore a helmet. If I'm going on a ride where I'm gonna do a lot of mixing with cars I might wear a helmet, but I'm riding more with out one. I use a helmet when the course is unknown or is known to have potential dangers (high speed traffic, no shoulder, tricky descents). I usually avoid riding in areas I know to have high speed traffic with no shoulder altogether.

I choose not to use a helmet when I'm in familiar territory that I feel comfortable riding in, 90 percent of my riding is done on our local mountain that I know well. The car use is light and slow moving due to the enormous amount of tight corners.

I'm not against helmets, but if their purpose is to prevent head injuries why not wear one in a car? I'd wager that head injuries are more prevalent in cars, and the makers could develop models suited to their higher speeds. I read about a five year old who tripped on the sidewalk and died from a resulting head injury. Should I make my kids wear a helmet all the time? My six year old boy sleeps on the top bunk....helmet?

My friends glided down the lower half of our mountain, enjoying spectacular sights, sounds and smells, when they were overtaken by the helmet cop. He was going like a bomb, passed them too close without a word of warning, heeled over and in the wrong lane.

## Sidebar

A recent story in the *New York Times* stated that despite a decline in cycling and an increase in helmet use, cycling-related head injuries are on the rise. That's the opposite of what you'd expect, isn't it? (Fewer people riding, more of them wearing helmets, remember.) To whatever extent it's true, it suggests, as Jeff does, that some people ride more carelessly when helmeted—a phenomenon well-recognized in mountain climbers and cavers. Clearly, you're going to be safer in any accident if you have a helmet on than if you don't, **but** wearing a helmet is just one aspect of safety.

This is an opinion page. It is supposed to make you think, and in doing that, it may threaten any current position you may have. We aren't trying for controversy, we're just offering the author's point of view. If you have an opinion and can state it clearly in 700 words or so (and don't mind being edited to fit the space and for clarity), send 'er on in. —GP

# Spoiled Rotten

by Tom Friend

*When I was a kid I wanted to be a pro baseball player when I grew. I loved baseball, I studied it, and I practiced and played through high school. I don't care nearly as much about it now, it's changed a lot. The only player I follow, and the only one I have any feelings for, is Tony Gwynn of the San Diego Padres. Keith Mills, Rivendell member and former editor at the old Bicycle Guide (Boston) likes him, too, and sent me this. I liked it, got permission to reprint it (Tom Friend is a senior staff writer at ESPN sports), and I thought some of you would, too. —Grant*

**I live in San Diego**, and, every night, I watch four at-bats, maybe five if I'm lucky. I do not watch the rest of the game. Screw the rest of the game. I watch Tony Gwynn, or I watch nothing at all. I come running to the TV when he's up, and I go back to what I'm doing when he's not. Tony Gwynn is the only baseball I watch, which now can mean only one thing: Baseball's over.

He says he's retiring after the season, said it on Thursday, said it even though his batting average is .333. No one retires with that average. Wade Boggs was hovering around .250 when he bailed out, so Boggs should've quit. But Tony Gwynn could hit .300 today, tomorrow, and in 2004. He could go to the American League as a designated hitter, and bat .300 until he's 45. Trust me, he could. But Tony Gwynn ain't a DH, doesn't want to be a DH. He's a National Leaguer, born and raised, and his body has fallen to pieces. And so the last baseball player on earth is leaving, and I'm going with him. He's only got three months left, and he needs to get off the disabled list so he can get his proper standing ovation. And I'm begging you to give it to him. I'm begging you to forget Cal Ripken for a second and get sentimental about Tony Gwynn. They're going to retire together, and they're going to the Hall of Fame together, but Tony Gwynn is the better player, and, in my mind -- and this is nothing against Cal -- the better person.

I know Tony Gwynn better than I know Cal Ripken, so maybe I'm biased. But eight batting titles don't lie. And 18 consecutive .300 seasons don't lie. And five Gold Gloves don't lie. And that laugh, that high-pitched, Willie Mays laugh ... Cal don't have that, either. I know Tony Gwynn, and you should wish you did, too. He broke me in as a baseball writer, back in 1985, back when we were both 24, back when the Padres had a lot of angry faces. They had Goose Gossage, and Graig Nettles, and Garry Templeton, and they had Dick Williams as their manager, and even though I like all four of them now, back then they were a bear.

But up would walk Tony Gwynn, young Tony Gwynn, coming off of a .351 season, and he would be civil. I was just this waif of a basketball writer, trying to understand baseball for the first time, trying to understand a sport I didn't care for, and Tony Gwynn invited me into his world, and explained it all.

His motto was basically this: I suck. He had this fear of failure, this obsession with not embarrassing himself. So he would show up every game day at 2 p.m., at least an hour before everyone else, and take batting practice alone. And 100 swings later, he would curse himself. And he would say, "I suck." And four hours later, he would go 2-for-4.

I ended up learning a lot of things about Tony Gwynn.

- I learned that he was almost more comfortable with two strikes.
- I learned that he had 20-15 vision.
- I learned that he wrote 5.5 on his cleats -- because he always wanted to hit the ball inside out between short and third. "The 5.5 hole," he'd say.
- I learned he was the all-time basketball assist leader at San Diego State, and that he used to shut down BYU's Danny Ainge.
- I learned that he was drafted by the San Diego Padres and the San Diego Clippers on the same damn day.
- I learned that he thought could've made the Clippers.
- I learned that he'd just had a son and a daughter.
- I learned that he and his wife met in elementary school.
- I learned that every time I mentioned 3,000 hits, he'd tell me to stop. Stop right there.
- I learned that every time I mentioned the Hall of Fame, he'd tell me to stop. Stop right there.
- I learned that as a rookie, his wife started taping every Padre game, and that he'd race home afterward, to analyze every at-bat. • I learned that he used to phone her from the road, and have her describe what he did wrong.
- I learned that that's when he started bringing a VCR on the road. • I learned that he began turning his hotel rooms into makeshift TV studios. That he'd set up his VCR and his TV on the ironing board, and would write a note to the hotel maids: "Don't touch!"

·I learned that, after the games, he'd return to the room, and tilt the TV up on telephone books so he could watch his at-bats from bed. ·I learned the video equipment was extremely heavy, but he carried it everywhere, on every road trip.. I learned there was not one other Major League player doing this.

I learned that he cared more about the Gold Gloves than the batting titles. Because he thinks he used to "suck" in the field.

I learned all of this, and then I left. For another newspaper. And then I went to another newspaper. And then to **ESPN**. We didn't see each other much, but every morning I still raced to the box scores. Gwynn: 2-for-4; Gwynn 3-for-4; Gwynn 3-for-5. On and on and on. Every day, every year. He was hitting .394 in 1994, when the strike hit, and I saw him again that September, and he was telling me he knew he would've hit .400. He knew it because his dad always said he would. And his dad had just died that year, and Tony Gwynn was **as** miserable as I'd ever seen him that day. And I left him that day also believing he would've hit .400. I believed it because if anyone could've handled the media scrutiny, it was him. He could fill up a notebook. Trust me on that one.

And then I heard about his retirement press conference, just this Thursday, and I had to go, and he hadn't changed, not one iota. He laughed his hyena laugh, and he called me the same nickname he'd called me 16 years before. And then we talked, and I thought about it all.

I thought about how every team in baseball has a video department—thanksto him and his ironing board. I thought it was a damn shame he'd gotten his 3,000th hit in Montreal, of all places. In front of only 13,000. ·I thought it was nice that his son was now a rising baseball star at San Diego State and that his daughter was a high school point guard and that he and his wife, Alicia, just had their 20th wedding anniversary on June 6. I thought it was cool that he wants to own just two of his baseball cards: his rookie card and this year's.

I thought it was awesome that he turned down more money to play 20 years in one city. I thought it was unbelievable that someone in the audience was talking to him about a home run he'd hit in college, and that Tony Gwynn still remembered that the pitch was a slider. I thought it was strange that he still didn't think he was a shoo-in for the Hall of Fame.

I thought to myself: he must still think he sucks. Well, this just in: he doesn't. He is the greatest hitter of the last quarter-century, and he's spoiled me rotten, and if he ain't playing, I ain't watching. Don't even bring me the box scores.

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## Boston Brown Bread (in the can)

I grew up with this, and was shocked to discover the local Safeway no longer carried it. The fellow I asked why responded. “Oh, I remember that stuff. Yes, nobody asks for it any more.” I found it at another store, though.

I used to eat it the recommended way, hot and with baked beans. Between the ages of about 5 and 13, it seems we ate it about once a month, enough to make a lasting impression. From age 14 on, I did my own cooking, and ate a lot of beef hearts, chard, pork liver, and eggs. I felt no need to cook up things I’d already eaten a lot of, so Brown Bread fell by the wayside.

When you’re a parent, you like the idea of passing down traditions and likes, so I couldn’t wait to try it out on Kate and Anna. I wasn’t surprised when they both rejected it, and Anna has made hating Boston Brown Bread a significant and joyful part of her life. I don’t get it. She eats Grape Nuts straight, even likes broccoli, but doesn’t like Boston Brown Bread?

To get at it, since it is in a can, after all, you take off both lids and use the bottom one to push it out, using the open, top end of the can as a knife guide. Then you replace the top lid for storage. It’s easy to lose track of how much you’re eating, because, like Pez, you can’t see it disappear. Obviously, if you pay attention to how deep the bottom lid is as you push out the top, it’ll be apparent; but I find myself focused on the business end, and I suspect you will, too. Eat it cold (refrigerated), or toasted, micro-waved, or

baked. Refrigerated, with peanut butter is the my favorite. I can’t for the life of me understand how my girls can’t love it, but I don’t force it on them. I am bummed out by it, though.

The ingredients are good—water, whole wheat flour, molasses, dextrose, rye flour, raisins, whey degerminated yellow corn meal, baking soda, buttermilk, salt, and corn oil. There’s a similar recipe on the web, but you make it at home, you don’t get the can.

The brand I buy is B & M, who also makes baked beans. It’s a funny name for a bean-maker, if you ask me. I asked B & M why its brown bread wasn’t called Boston Brown Bread (which is how I learned it), and the lady told me, “Probably because we make it in Maine, not Boston.” I think she wasn’t the historian. S & W used to make it, and there may be others out there, as well. I call it Boston Brown Bread because that’s what it is, and the “Boston” part differentiates it from the many brown-colored breads out there.

Boston Brown Bread comes with or without raisins, and I like it with. It’s moist, never dry. It washes down well with cold milk (apologiesto vegans). Get it while you can, get it *in* the can. It’s usually on the bottom shelf, where it goes overlooked. A whole generation is being raised, that hasn’t even heard of it. Try it. It’s good, and it’s a real American classic bread, and if sales don’t pick up, a bean-counter at B&M might pull the plug, and don’t think for a minute that B & M doesn’t have bean counters.

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## Wooly Beanies—\$10—Grey: 22-083; Striped: 22-103

These are light, really light, and cozy. Not bulky, so it's not like it has to be freezing to wear one. We're not saying they're the ticket for temps above above about 60°F, but the cold weather's coming soon, anyway.

## MKS Touring Pedals—\$38—14-020

This big, rectangular pedal with grippy-but-not-razorlike teeth is a favorite among all who give it a shot. It's easy to flip in to, ideal with toe clips, Power Grips, or nothing at all, since it's the same on both sides. Ride it with sandals, cycling shoes, court shoes, just about anything except really floppy thin-soled sneakers. Everybody needs at least one bike with these pedals.

## MKS Platform Pedals—\$26—14-030

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## Power Grips—\$20—14-046

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