$3.50, unless you've made other arrangements

The Rivendell Reader

RR No. 28

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A Quarterly For Bicyclers

Not In This Issue

Wisenheimer answers to fake questions

Debunking the food myth we introduced last year about this time

Four advertorials designed to woo or pay back advertisers

Mucho glassy-eyed technofawning

Features you can read during a commercial

Snickering criticisms and blatant misrepresentations of things we don't understand

Our 4-page Annual Food Bar shootout, because heaven forbid you should risk $1.69 and taste it yourself

When Scriptwriters Knew the Difference Between "Nauseated" and "Nauseous"

This is our 28th issue in eight full years, and the *Reader* is still short of where I want it to be. I lay it out in Quark, and I'm mediorcre at it. There are typos, but fewer in recent issues than in the early ones. There's not enough consistency in the features, issue-to-issue, either.

What I really want is to pick the articles and assign the stories to authors; and it would be good to have someone who'd get all the art and photos together, too. For Michael Barnes' story in this issue, it took me an hour and a half to fill the inner tube full of sand, then shoot it, then prepare it in Photoshop. I picked a wet day, so I couldn't just pour the sand in with a funnel; I had to ramrod it down there with a broom handle. An assistant would be fine, too.

Business is okay, but we're still in debt and still can't get a loan, but we still make payroll and pay our bills on time. I've tried to get a loan, but our debt-to-sales-to-inventory ratio doesn't merit one. I hear radio commercials about how small-business friendly this or that bank is, but when I ask, it's always a No. I dress for it, and leave the meeting feeling like a cow in a suit, ready to rip it off and be myself again.

I get distracted and excited by projects We have the best selection of lugs in the world right now, and we're getting more all the time. Lugs are costly, but if we're going to live up to the slogan on our T-shirt ("Home of the Lugged Steel Frame") then we'd better have lots of lugs.

Our wool program has potential, but is hampered by a shortage of cash to do it right, and a difficulty in finding wool and getting delivery. Mark is now in charge of it, because he's good at things like that, and I can't deal with it any more. It'll be much

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THE RIVENDELL READER

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better this Spring.

We're expanding from 2,000 square feet to 3,000, and should be moved in by the end of January. We need more storage, and room for a sink, a small showroom, some bike racks for demo bikes and employee bikes, and maybe a table to sit down at and eat, since right now we eat at our desks and generally work through lunches.

Sometime this Spring we'll try to have Curt here for a long weekend of a framebuilding demonstration. Shortly after that, we're thinking about a first ever Rivendell ride. The date's not set, but we'll do our best to pull it off, and may try a mini-one (ten riders) before we blow it with a big group. We'll ride and talk and eat and get to know one another. It's hilly here, though, so I worry about that. Even at a social pace, the hills are steep and mean if you aren't ready for them.

A food item mentioned a while back, B & M Boston Brown Bread, must be on the chopping block. The eaters of it are 45 years old at least, and it is ALWAYS placed on the bottom shelf, below all the beans, where the people who know about it can't reach it, and the ones who might be intrigued by bread in a can and want to give it a try won't see it. There could be millions of would-be Brown Bread fanatics who'll never know what they're missing, because nobody looks below the beans. I predict brown bread will be gone in 6 years.

Similar things happen every week, in all industries. The humble traditional thing gets booted because it can't make the numbers. Sometimes it's because labor prices have increased, and it's no longer profitable to continue making it; other times it's because the small thing can't affort to promote enough to get noticed.

It's been my long-held belief that all outdoorsy companies ultimately phase out their core goods and replace them with women's clothing, and I try to imagine The original company image provides the allure, or at least some of the value to new investors, and then they change it to suit the market. Eddie Bauer and Abercrombie & Fitch have gone that way completely, but others are on the way. When the numbers run the show, it just makes sense.

I recently read a book that suggested when something loses its function, it gets artsy. A couple of examples are poetry and painting. The original poems were long stories, and the function of poetry was to make it easier to remember the details. Homer and Philo and that group could remember more details in poem form than in random sentences. Then writing became the medium for retelling history, so epic poety became less necessary, and poetry got shorter and cuter and rhymed.

The original painting-style art described something accurately with pictures; and before that, cave painting. Then cameras came along, and the next thing you know, white canvasses and splattered paint are art. Somewhere in there is the story of lugs. I think the story is evolving right now, and we're in it, and I can't see it to comment. Will anybody ever cast a lug with fake tig-welds at the joint, and a plain, blunt-cut socket that fades into the tube unnoticed? Or will lugs go the way of Hetchins, with ultra-fancy ornateness ? When we were developing the Rivendell lugs, I wanted a certain amount of fanciness, to stand out against the plainless of welded frames. Also, we favor painted head tubes, for the same reason (you can't do them on a welded frame because there's no natural border).

A few weeks ago on daytime TV on an episode of the old *Andy Griffith Show,* Opie was about 12, and he was riding his bicycle no hands to show off to a girl, and oops, he wrecked his bike and then wanted a new one. So he went looking for a job at the local grocery store, bagging and delivering groceries to earn money for a new bike. But another kid wanted the job, too, and there was only one job opening. The shop owner wanted it understood the job would cut into play time, but both kids were willing to sacrifice that. So the shop owner says they could both work for a week, after which he'd pick the one who did the best work, and the other one would have to go. Opie and the other guy hustle up a storm and do great work, and it's a hard decision, but the shop owner picks Opie.

Opie's proud, and he goes home to tell Pa (Andy), and Andy and Aunt Bea are proud, and Floyd the barber and Goober are proud, and they're all talking about how Opie will probably grow up to be a doctor or a lawyer some day, and Opie's smiling in the Opie-sort-of way.

A scene or two later, Andy and Floyd are sitting around, with Floyd kind of rocking side to side like he always did, and gazing upward, and around the corner runs the kid Opie beat out for the job, and he almost runs them over, he's so excited. Andy says something like "Whoa, whoa, watch out, what's the hurry?" and the kid, who doesn't know that Andy is Opie's dad, says,. "I gotta go and tell my Pa I just got the job down at the grocery store! I gotta go!"

Andy says, "I thought Opie Taylor got the job…" and the boy says, "He did, but he just got fired! I got the job, I got the job!" (He's excited.) When Opie comes home that day, Andy is disappointed and mad, and he lectures Opie about how it would have been one thing to not get the job, but once he got it, how could he get fired the first day? Andy says, "I've never been fired in my life, I just don't understand." And all this time, during the lecture, Opie tries to speak up, but Andy doesn't give him a chance to speak. Andy finally asks Opie why he got fired, and Opie says it was because he asked to get off work early so he could go play baseball.

That explanation doesn't satisfy Andy, so he asks for more details. "Well, Pa," Opie goes on, "I asked the other boy what he was going to buy with the money he earned, and he said he wasn't going to buy anything. He said his dad lost his job, and he was going to use the money to pay bills. So don't you see, Pa? I had to get fired!"

For a long moment Andy got quiet, and then he said, "Opie, I was bragging to Floyd and Goober about what a fine boy you were turning into, but I didn't get that quite right, son." At that Opie got even sadder. Then Andy says, "No, I didn't get that right. You aren't a boy, Ope, you're a man." The show ends soon after that, and no kids saw it, because it's on at 1 p.m. weekdays. It makes you wonder how re-runs of *The Andy Griffith Show* would do in prime time, and how it would do against *The Batchelor*, or *Fear Factor*.

Thing are good here, in general. We still have our debt, but we have plans to pay it off. Debt adds to the pressure, but I still think a loan would help us. With or without, we're here and tooting along.—Grant

Mail

Carradice and Baggins Diffs

I'm thinking of buying a Camper Longflap and noticed that your catalog mentions there being some differences between your bags and those available elsewhere. What are those differences? Also, is there an attachment point for a "blinky" light?— Mac Stricklen

Not a huge difference. Over the years Carradice has changed minor details on its stock models—-numerous nuances too many to make a big deal out of here, but in general the "Rivendell" versions are upspec'd and better, and in some cases (including the blinker light thing) the Riv spec thing has become standard even on the Carradice models. On ours, the strap is leather; Carradice uses a cheaper polypro webbing for its own. Ours also has a leather abrasion patch underneath; an option on Carradice, but generally not what you'll get, I think, if you order one stock from somebody else. It's not a big deal or a war of any sort, though. After years of this, and seeing certain details degrade JUST SLIGHTLY, BUT STILL, we decided to quit the fight and make our own. In a month or so we'll have the Baggins line of saddlebags. It won't by any means blow the doors off the Carradice models, which are quite nice, but it will have several notable features that we think are worthwhile without being obsessive. Our new catalogue shows these, and they're on the website, too. Grant

Why Not Slope the Top Tube?

To achieve the handlebar height that you folks recommend (and which I have found to be vastly more comfy than my previous setup), why do you NOT choose to slope the top tube up more radically and use a longer head tube, rather than using a stem with an extra-long quill to achieve the "proper" hbar height? Frankly, I think a hyper-extended stem looks dorky, but more importantly, it would be nice to NOT be tied to one brand of stem (Nitto seems to be the only company that makes a good selection of stems with XL quills.) There are still plenty of off-the-shelf stems that have "standard" quills, and it would be nice to have them as an option (ok, my hidden agenda: I have a box of beautiful short-quilled Cinelli stems in the garage that would look great on a Rivendell if they could go high enough.)

I just don't buy the Rivendell arguments for quill stems/ "against" Ahead-style stems. Clamp-on stems are lighter, almost certainly stronger (not that I've ever heard of a quill stem failing, but I have heard of plenty of threaded steerers failing and expanders getting corroded into the steerer, even for conscientious bike owners), and much more widely available in a huge variety of configurations than quill stems. In 22 years of serious cycling, I have never felt the need to adjust the height of my stem in mid-ride- once I get it dialed in, my stem stays at the same height. Do you/would you make a frame with a threadless steerer?

I think a lugged steel frame, with a sloping top tube (significantly more than 2 degrees) to raise the stem/handlebars higher, and a clamp-on stem would truly make a beautiful, comfy, innovative, MODERN bike- as opposed to a beautiful, comfy, innovative, and slightly dorky retro-grouch bike...—Steve Bodayla

Here, we tend to think stems jammed down low look kind of funny, so "dorkiness" is mostly a matter of what you're used to, I think. I prefer to tweak several things subtly, rather than one thing drastically, to achieve a good launching height for the stem and bars, and the 1.5-to-2.0 degree upslope, combined with the 15mm extension on the top lug, and an extra centimeter on the steerer, is a good way to do that, I think. Even without a long-quilled Nitto, which doesn't look dorky to me anyway, you'll be able to use your short-quilled Cinelli stem, and still get the bars up there decently.

Threaded steerers don't fail unless there's misuse of some kind, and if there's a wedge in the quill, they won't separate anyway. I'm surprised you've heard of it so much, because in my experience it's rare. Yes, I've seen it, but there's no need to overreact to a rare incident. Quills get stuck ONLY if they're not greased. If they're greased, and headsets are maintained as they ought to be, I can't imagine a quill getting stuck. Plenty of threadless steers have broken, but that's due to under-engineering them, not a fundamental design problem having to do with the way they work. People brake things, it just happens, but it'll be a dreary day when the main design criteria is making something totally bustproof.

Your box full of Cinelli stems needn't go to waste. I think they have 26.4mm clamps, which means they require Cinelli bars, too—and the newer Cinelli bars are going to 25.8 or 26mm, like most others. Cinelli bars are fine quality, but they are not as fine as Nitto, and the new ones—fine quality or not—are not the deluxe match for your older stems. Also, another way to look at it, is that a $2,300 frame ought not be designed around a $50 stem. Just for you, if you don't tell anybody else: Order a Rivendell and we'll throw in any Nitto brand stem you want!

So far we have not made forks with threadless steerers, but we haven't ruled it out. I think there is a line between being "retro," (a term I don't especially care for) and finding a style and sticking to it. If we were sticking to a dysfunctional style, that would be dumb. But threaded steerers and standard quill stems work just fine, and I think they look proper on a Rivendell. To some folks, combining the two would be using the "best of both worlds," but I'm not there yet. We've talked about other options, and we've got time to play them out.

I hope you get a frame anyway. If you don't get a Rivendell, I've no doubt that you'll be able to find somebody out there who'll make you the bike you're after.—Grant

English Lady Agrees

I am a 5'3" woman with strong and long-held views about women's frame design. Until I read your article about it in RR25 or 26, I thought I was shouting in the wind. I have photocopied it about six times to send to people, and I have used it in many round-the-camp-fire type discussions. But it would really help me -and small women everywhere - if I could put a link to it from my local cycle group page, and a few other cycle group pages I'm connected with.

So could you tell me if it's ever going to find it's way onto the web? Ilive in England, so I'm fairly unlikely to buy a frame from you (I have a Paramount which I ride when I visit America). But I would have no hesitation in recommending your frames on the strength of this one article alone!—Maxine Cain , United Kingdom

Yes, as soon as we get it on the site. I don't actually know how to do that myself, but I'll ask somebody who does to do it, and it's so nice of you to say those things, and to want to refer people to it. We could send you extra copies of that story. We printed some out for an all-women's ride here, but few of the riders were interested in them. They were free, we weren't even selling anything, it was just to get the information in their hands, but they didn't seem interested. I think the feeling is that if they ride a small bike that superficially fits, it must be correct. Anyway, it is very nice of you to write. It is about the only positive feedback I've received (no negative....mostly just nothing!).—Grant

Steal Factor of Pretty Bikes

My 68 cm Atlantis is built up and working beautifully (I sent you a digital pic a little while back), but I'm afraid it's a little too beautiful. I commute 30 miles round trip every day to an urban college campus, and I'm worried my bike will attract too much attention. Do you think it would be a good idea to just buy the best U-lock Kryptonite makes and park in a high visibility area? Have you guys at Rivendell come up with non-permanent ways to make your frames less appealing? I have a Zefal rack and some fenders, but it is not enough to prevent the bike from standing out BIG time.—Grant Holbrook

The Atlantis looks nice, but I bet most thieves don't have the eye to appreciate it, and it's not a famous brand, like Magna, Trek, Giant, Specialized, Magna, Schwinn, Serotta, Magna, Colnago, Airborne, Mangna, Lightspeed, Masi, Look, Calfee, or Magna. I've seen some people wrap duct tape over the tubes on nice bikes used for commuting. In hot weather, the sticky part melds to the paint, though, so if you do that, put something on under it first—

paper, cardboard, or maybe electrician's tape. Maybe, if you do that, just do the electrician's tape and forget the duct tape.—Grant

Tom K. Likes Ti

Recently Tom Kellogg drove an hour each way to come talk to our club (at my request, since I was on the hook to provide programs for our meetings). As you probably know, Tom is a custom framebuilder, cofounder of Spectrum Cycles based in Breinigsville, PA. He still builds custom steel bikes and says it is a special feeling to do one of them, although it has been a few years since he made a profit on them. (His steel frames are quite nice and they are priced a little lower than Rivendells, although the lug work, though elegant, is not as fancy.) He also designs titanium bikes for Merlin and Spectrum, though Merlin builds those. He talked to us about the advantages and disadvantages of different materials (a subject I know a lot about myself) and was very fair, even complimenting makers such as Cannondale and Trek. However he is completely sold on titanium and couldn't praise its ride and its indestructible qualities highly enough. Of course titanium bikes are his primary source of income, but he also rides a titanium Spectrum exclusively these days and was clearly familiar with and equally positive about his direct competition at Litespeed. Although he does build some touring bikes, racers and performance-oriented riders are his main market, and obviously he does racing bikes well. Since he is a racer himself, I detected a certain racer mindset in what he said, at least compared with my own touring and aesthetic bias. He didn't seem to think lugs were worth mentioning to us; the fact that threadless steerer tubes and the stems which fit them were replacing the threaded variety didn't bother him; my question about how appropriate Lance's bike was for the typical rider seemed to puzzle him at first until he realized he was talking to a tourist rather than a racer. In summary, here's a very knowledgeable guy and fine craftsman who would probably do quite well on your video-and-interview test, but who doesn't seem to be likely to advance the cause of lugged steel bikes. I should also note that although Tom was very well received by our audience of regular bikers, most of whom are not steel bike riders, few of us became instant converts to titanium. Cost is probably the main reason. However, a friend who rides a steel touring bike and an aluminum performance bike came away newly convinced about how good steel is. Tom brought a couple of frames with him (also at my request, for he said he does not like to give sales pitches for his products). One was Sarah Uhl's world championship bike (Ms. Uhl is currently riding her sponsor's brand), a steel track frame, a little beat up but interesting in that what looked like a head tube lug blended seamlessly into the top tube; another was a titanium road frame destined for a customer in a couple of weeks. Though the latter had smooth, clean joints and had a nice transparent blue finish, it seemed only a little lighter and was a lot less interesting than the lugged steel frame to my biased eyes. Others were of course drooling.

I like the variety of products you sell and am not about to suggest items to cut out. I will say, however, that your commitment to discontinued goods, natural fabrics, hemp twine etc., good as they undoubtedly are, do not help the cause of making your newly-produced frames seem as modern as the run-of-the-mill fare in bike shops. I suspect that there are people who see what seem to be exclusively old-fashioned products and a sit-upright, tone-down-your-dress attitude and assume your frames are outdated and aimed at fuddy-duddies. Heck, your bike frames are a lot less conservative than the rest of your product line! I personally think that a few Campy and DuraAce components, a Phil freehub, a really flashy Rivendell jersey (I picture a design with lug-like graphics) in a moisture-wicking synthetic fabric, and a genuine lightweight road racing frame (perhaps lugged 853) would not only sell decently but improve the image of the rest of your product line among potential customers who came to cycling too recently to appreciate what you offer. Would a few such items seriously compromise your principles?

I do know one person who is considering buying one of your frames (probably a Rambouillet but possibly a Rivendell if she decides to save her pennies) but will have to go elsewhere for components since her first bike came with dual-control shifters. Wouldn't it be nice if people like her could buy a complete bike from you with the kind of components they already know? I like giving my regular bike shop business, and turn to you when you offer something they can't. In addition, I look at the catalogs of most mail-order companies and see mostly trendy junk. However, there are times when I'm already making an order from you and wish I could tack something else on, but Nashbar or my local shop has it and you don't. There is a local convenience-store chain which always has the lowest gasoline prices around. I am told that they just break even on the gas; it is when the customer walks in to pay for the gas and buys a snack that they make their profit. Perhaps something similar could work for you. I am not a businessman and I would caution against following my suggestions too closely; I am also aware that there is a cost involved with stocking items which can become obsolete in a short time. But I'd like to see you, your frames and your sensible products around and thriving many years from now, and I really would like that flashy jersey.—Stu Baird

We've already decided to offer STI kits, but are staying away from duplicating Nashbar's inventory, as much as possible; and flashy jerseys, too. Thanks for the nice story about Tom Kellogg. He's a smart fellow.—Grant

Brockton, Mass. Tough Town…

I love the Rivendell reader. I picked up the May-July issue at Bicycle Day at the Museum of Transportation In Brookline, Massachusetts. But please, don't worry about being insensitive. First of all, in the victim society we've created over the last 35 years or so, no matter what you say or do someone is going to be offended. Secondly, it reminds me of VeloNews when they print a correction because they said some guy won the Tour of Nowhere, when it was the Tour of Somewhere. Who gives a crap. I just wish I could take you back to Brockton, Massachusetts in the 1950s when I was growing up. Nobody was safe from having their feelings hurt. Name calling was an art form. The result was usually a fist fight and the next day we'd be back at the playground playing ball together. Just as nice as could be. And guess what, none of the name callers I knew grew up to be ax murders, perverts or even Enron executives. It's only in the pathetically politically correct times we live it today that hurt feelings and sensitivity are an issue. In the past you toughed it out, punched them out or proved them wrong. — Gene Gilmore

peter cummings, from Bratislava

i have stumbled across the woolywarm.com recently and i dig that wool garment for its (i believe) natural feel and civil look. i read the woolywarm.com throughout and liked the information but still missed some. the site lists all pros of wool as a material for cycling garment but does not mention any shortcommings of it. in particular i am interested in how prone to physical damage wool is. in case of mountain biking (not "stunt biking"), one gets in touch with trees, thorns, etc. that drag the garment and may possible cause some damage to it. is wool in this aspect comparable to synthetics or is it not (i am thinking of my wool pullovers that need to be carefully treated not to drag somewhere). also, please state any other shortcomings you are aware of. thank you for answers.—peter from Bratislava

Wool isn't the stuff for busting through briars and thorns, but I wouldn't call that a shortcoming any more than I'd say that the shortcoming of sandals is that they don't protect against snakebites. If you ride in thorns, just wear a shell over your jersey, and that will do it. Tightly woven fabrics are appropriate for things like that. Knits are more comfortable and stretchy. Use them together sensibly, and you're all set!—Grant

Stainless Steel Lugs? When?

You hinted at the possibility of offering Riv customs with stainless lugs. How likely is this, how soon would they be available, and what would be the approximate price difference versus a standard build?—Dave Gardiner

I don't have any immediate plans, but it's not difficult to do (get them made). It just takes money, and we don't have it now. Building with them isn't the expensive part; it's polishing them after the build, and masking them from paint. It could easily add $1000 to the cost, and at that point I'm afraid we'd be attracting a different audience. Rusting lugs isn't an issue as it is. I'd like the look of polished stainless lugs, but I'd also like them not polished. I think customers would want them to gleam, though, and that's what costs.—Grant

Why No Centerpulls?

The best combination of braking power, feel, and ease of maintenance for medium-clearance frames is provided by centerpull brakes. Centerpulls abruptly became uncool when Campagnolo introduced their sidepulls, and the coolness factor in using high-end, short-reach sidepulls helped reduce the availibility of frames with fender clearance. The centerpull market niche was further squeezed when cantilevers became common because of mountain bike applications. My question is: does anyone make centerpulls any more? Is there any availibility of NOS caches? If these are available, I think that you should be promoting them over medium-reach sidepulls, because they just work better.—Jim Hagerman

In the '60s and early '70s many decent bikes came with centerpull brakes. My Falcon came with Weinmann brakes which I now have about a zillion miles on. They have always worked well and are easy to maintain. They modulate and stop well dry or wet, particularly when fitted with Scott-Math shoes. I've ridden single-pivot sidepulls and cantilevers and other brakes, but don't like them at all. Sidepulls don't stop as well, and the others are too hard to modulate. But soon after sidepulls were introduced, centerpulls disappeared. (I know that technically a cantilever is a centerpull, but I'm talking abouit the normal style, the old kind.) Why did centerpulls die? Don't they have more mechanical advantage than sidepulls?—Joel Rizzo

Yeah…It would be good if there were more variety these days, and if certain extreme segments of bikes didn't drive design and manufacturing. We should not be promoting them over std reach sidepulls, though, because std reach sidepulls are great, and actually available. It wouldn't make lots of sense to push stuff that's so hard to get, but read the next page.

We had a minor part in getting standard reach brakes remade, but that was relatively easy compared to resurrecting centerpulls. We have virtually no resources and little influence beyond our own world here. When you approach a manufacturer with an idea, the First question you're asked is. "How many will you commit to?" And if the answer isn't satisfactory (and we don't have the capacity to make it that way), you get laughed at behind your back, in a foreign language. It would be good to have centerpulls an option. But on our bikes designed for std reach sidepulls, you can fenderize a 700x35 and run a 700x38 with no fender, and that seems good.

Mechanical advantage is leverage, and is a result of the length of a lever arm and the location of its pivot relative to the brake pads. Long-handled pliers with a pivot out near the jaws have more mechanical advantage than do short-handled pliers with super long jaws, for example. That's why nobody buys the short-handled pliers with super-long jaws. Centerpulls have more mechanical advantage than single-pivot sidepulls, but no race has ever been won due to better braking, any mechanical advantage deficit didn't exactly matter to the racers, and still doesn't. Besides, if you want lots of mechanical advantage and a sidepull, just get a dual-pivot model.

The common type of centerpulls, the kind that bolt, are flexier than sidepulls, and we've been reared to hate flex. Flex is easy to sell against, even when it's harmless and comes as part of an otherwise desirable package.

Centerpulls won't make a noticeable comeback unless randonneuring in the French tradition becomes chic, and that's unlikely. But we are approaching brake makers about centerpulls, even ones that get brazed on, and if they won't make them under their label, maybe there will be a Silver model (our parts line) sometime in the next 4 years. —Grant

Prices Too What?

Most every thing Rivendell offers is a noteworthy useful item or at least quirky enough to be of interest. Many are top quality and aesthetically pleasing too, both very important to me. In a number of recent RRs etc. you have mentioned the necessity for higher prices. I typically buy the best when I can and I am usually willing to spend the $ to get it. However, I think for me and many other customers you are now very close to pricing yourself out of the market place with many of your offerings. I would be surprised if you will not see a significant roll off in sales of your wool products and bag offerings with anything more than perhaps a 10% increase. I believe and I think you know it too that you have already hit the price ceiling on Rivendell frames. As it is I have held off and delayed purchases of quite a few items and haven't though seriously about a Rivendell custom frame in years.

As you know things that enjoy very high perceived value, say like Rolex watches, can get pretty big $ but unfortunately I don't think many of your offerings enjoy such an enviable situation. The closest comparable situation might be Rivendell frames. However, I must tell you that, the folks I know who have them, although they think very highly of them, do not think they are worth the current asking price and suggest alternatives. Personally I pulled the plug at around $1700.

I understand very well the parameters and constraints of the cost/price equation and that you may not have much choice. I also know how difficult embracing some of the options are but I thought you ought to at least hear one customer's view of the matter.—Harvey Roth

Well…it's a bummer to have to justify our prices, but we have the cheapest rent in town, nobody here makes what they ought to, and it's difficult to see the whole picture from where you are. If it's any consolation, we've yet to make a profit on paper. I'm not complaining, but we have money issues looming constantly, and I can't see how lowering prices would help out there. A better CEO might make the difference, but I don't have the gumption to fire myself.—Grant

Members Only Coupon

$15 Off Any Deliverable Order Over $200. Good thru March 5. (Ash Wednesday)

Mail orders only. If you ask to use this over the phone, we'll actually tack on a $15 charge for presenting us with an awkward situation (having to say No to somebody kind enough to order something from us). So to use it properly, fill in your name and member number (or address), and mail this in with a paper order. You should cut it out. We've made sure to put only letters on the backside of this, and although the letters may entertain you briefly, there's not a lot of substance in them worth, like, preserving (apologies to letter writers).

Name: Member No. City/State

A Living, Breathing Centerpull? In 2002?

It's the Dia-Compe 750, the brake made famous by septillion cheap Nishikis in the mid '70s. It's a long reach centerpull, probably another reason the high & mighties never gave it a second look. But now, when the "best" brakes have gotten so short that they're impractical for anything other than smooth dry roads, and bike design in general is getting less practical and more extreme, this brake's humble yet excellent design, generous clearances, and fine but not lustrous finish is making us fall in lust with it to the point that many of us here want to get a new frame designed around it.

There were two versions of this brake. This one, the mod. 750, has a minimum reach of 60mm (3mm more than the maximum on a Shimano standard reach dual pivot) and a maximum reach of 78, which puts it in its own league, reachwise. For our purposes, a reach of about 60 to 62 would be perfect, so this brake qualifies. But the other version, the mod. 610, has a minmum reach of 49mm, and maxes at 63mm. (Dia-Compe should have called them the mod. 78 and 61, respectively.) The model 61 has less metal and looks more familiar, and it's the one we'd opt for if both were available. But in the mid-eighties, when the devaluation of the Yen forced Japanese makers to close up shop in Japan and move to Taiwan, it was decided that they could take only so much tooling, and since the longer reach brake (this one, the mod. 750, with 75mm of reach) had more customers, Dia-Compe took the tooling for it, and destroyed the tooling for the 610. The latest news is that Dia-Compe can still forge these longer arms, and can make some but not all of the small parts. I'm kind of bugging them to make this complete, and they're polite because that's just the way they are, and we have a long history together, but it's pretty clear they wish Grant wasn't begging for a centerpull, because they have a hard time saying NO. You know what? It would help the cause if Dia-Compe heard from somebody besides me. So, if you would like to see this brake come back, send a brief polite email to Naoto Kosugi at Diatek@aol.com. He's not the decision maker, but he'll pass it along to the fellow who is, and the worst that'll come of it is they'll be mad at me for sic'ing you on them. But it is not a terrible thing— to ask somebody who used to make something to make it again. It's not a bad kind of message to get, just an indication of the interest. If you write, keep it SHORT.

A Summary of Benefits

1. More power than single-pivot sidepulls, probably the same as dual-pivot models.

2. If you get the bolt-on style, you can use "sidepull-weight" fork blades, as opposed to the heavier ones you ought to be using if you braze on brake bosses.

3. Compared to cantilevers, better brake arm clearance with panniers.

4. Compared to V-brakes, longer pad wear, better looks, and total compatibility with road brake levers.

5. Symmetrical. You either care about that or you don't, but if you do, there you go.

6. Great fendering.

Centerpull brakes have proven to be a good and reliable brake for more than 50 years. Given that variety is a good thing in general, and there are tons of worse things in the market, and that their death blow was dealt during a brief blip when touring was seen as nerdy (and we know better now), why not bring them back? What *harm* could come from that?

Trivia: Longtime riders will look at this brake and say, "Oh yeah, an old Dia-Compe copy of a Weinmann (Swiss) cheap centerpull." It looks identical to a Weinmann, and even the label is the same red. But there was more Dia-Compe in those Weinmanns than you might think. Just after WWII, Osaka was flattened (sorry about that). At that time, the father of current Dia-Compe owner Kozo Yoshigai was making bike parts out of steel, when he heard that a European bicycle parts maker had access to high-quality aluminum, which wasn't then available in Japan. Investigation revealed the maker to be Swiss brake maker Weinmann, and shortly thereafter Kozo's dad started importing Weinmann brakes to sell in Japan. The relationship continued steady until the early '60s, when Kozo's dad flew to Switzerland to visit Weinmann in person. There, he saw Weinmann's hot-forging facilities, and thought the brakes would be better if they were cold-forged. But Weinmann didn't have any cold-forging dies for the brakes. So Kozo's dad returned to Osaka, and with Weinmann's approval, made the dies and started making the cold-forged centerpulls. Later, those dies were shipped to Switzerland, where Weinmann continued using them. That's the fact, or close to it. —Grant

12 Tips to Help You Ride Further Than You Ought To, and Still Actually Like It

By Ed Pavelka and Fred Matheny

Ed and Fred operate www.RoadBikeRider.com. They offer "how to" cycling books as well as a free weekly newsletter for road riders. Subscribe on the website and receive a complimentary copy of their eBook, "29 Pro Cycling Secrets for Roadies."

Cycling was founded on endurance. The sport captured the fancy of Europeans late in the 19th century by serving as a metaphor for life—long struggle, tough conditions, great odds.

Distance records remain worthy challenges. That's why we ride centuries, doubles and even triples, as well as randonnees such as Paris-Brest-Paris. But suppose you don't want to spend months building your endurance for a long-ride PR. Is it possible to ride longer than you ever have in one day without specialized training—and have fun, too?

You bet! Let's see how to begin a ride at sunup and still be grinning when you finish at sundown—with a new mileage record.

1. Make it an adventure. Take time to design a great route. We recommend a big-loop or out-and-back course rather than a network of roads that keep you close to home. Otherwise, you'll be fighting the temptation to climb off each time you pass your door (and chances are good that you'll succumb). A record ride should be a ride that goes somewhere, preferably into areas you've never pedaled through before. A point-to-point route is good, too, if you arrange for a lift back home. Reaching new places heightens the sense of achievement. Whoa! You rode all the way to Aunt Mildred's and back!

2. Stick with familiar equipment. It's tempting to install new parts or don new clothes in the hopes of boosting speed or comfort. Don't do it. Ride the same bike and wear the same clothes that have proven to work well in your other long rides. A new brand of shorts might seem fine on an hour-long ride, but the liner could have a seam or texture that gets to you in 75 or 100 miles. Stick with your tried and true.

3. Eat aggressively the week before. Pick up your pace at the kitchen table during the several days before the ride. Then top off your fuel tank with glycogen (muscle fuel) by eating a big dinner on the eve of your adventures. Emphasize carbohydrate in the form of pasta, veggies, whole grains and fruit. Don't forget dessert. Pro roadie Henk Vogels was asked what he ate before a 140-mile race: "Three or four plates of pasta, ice cream and go to bed bloated." Well, maybe that's extreme—but do eat a hearty last supper a couple of hours before bedtime.

4. Have a farmer's breakfast. Don't be in such a hurry to get started that you skimp on your pre-ride meal. Thanks to cycling's smooth pedaling motion, you can eat an hour before the start of a non-competitive ride without risk of stomach upset (assuming you don't have to climb right away). Put down at least 100 grams of carbs at breakfast. Good choices are cereal, skim milk, a banana and a bagel with cream cheese. Add some eggs or other protein to give the meal a longer "burn time."

Concerned about gaining weight? Don't worry—an all-day ride can burn upwards of 5,000 calories, figured at an average of 500-600 calories per hour. Even after the big meals we recommend, you'll still burn several thousand more calories than you've consumed.

5. Remember the Hughes Principle. While we're talking about eating (don't you just love this sport?), remember that the keys to successful long rides are food and fluids. Ultramarathon cyclist and coach John Hughes minces no word in stating, "No matter how fit you are, endurance is limited by what you eat and drink during a ride." So, down at least one large bottle of sports drink each hour and munch at least one energy bar or its 250-calorie equivalent. Use a backpack-style hydration system to tote extra fluids if you'll be in the boonies for long periods, away from convenience stores.

6. Keep a patient pace. Do long rides well within your aerobic zone. If you're using a heart monitor, don't exceed about 80% of your max heart rate, even on climbs. That's a perceived exertion of "moderate." If you're breathing hard and can't whistle "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," you're going too fast!

7. Go low. Unless you'll be on pancake-flat roads the whole way, you should be riding a bike with a triple crankset. The reason is that low gears let you accomplish No. 6 even on difficult climbs. Spinning up hills is the way to avoid going anaerobic and incinerating great gobs of energy. A good rule: Have gears low enough so you barely need to pedal harder on climbs than you do on the flat.

8. Take timeouts. British cyclists are steeped on long rides. They have a tradition of stopping at cafés or pubs for tea and snacks. They know a pause refreshes. Likewise, ultra-distance runners have learned that taking short walking breaks enables them to go way past their previous maximum distance.

But don't overdo it. You can't afford to be off the bike very much if your aim is a mileage PR. Keep total break time to 5 minutes every hour. Get off the bike, stretch, visit the bushes, or buy a snack at a convenience store. This dismount will take pressure off your crotch, relieve stiffening muscles, divvy up the total effort and give you a mental boost because you'll feel fresher when you get rolling again.

9. Have your meals on wheels. Ahh, back to food again! You gotta keep eating, but it's scary how much time passes while you make a few purchases in a country store and sit on the front step refueling. So, fill your bottles, grab enough food to last to the next stop, then eat and drink once you're rolling again. You won't stiffen up, and even twiddling an easy gear as you munch will give you a mile or two each time. This can add a dozen miles to your total during an all-day ride.

10. Use your whole saddle. To prevent crotch numbness and undue tenderness, stand frequently and sit in different locations. Perching in one position and grinding away is a recipe for discomfort. Use every hill and corner as an opportunity to pedal out of the saddle for at least several strokes. Scoot your butt so that pressure is changed to a new location every few minutes.

11. Focus on your feet. Although the difference between the pedaling technique of a pro rider and that of a recreational cyclist might be miniscule for each revolution, inefficiencies add up. You don't have to drill in the weeks before your ride to develop a smoother stroke. Just pay attention to basics like pulling your foot through the bottom of the pedal arc. Even thinking "pedal circles" will help even out a choppy stroke and save energy over the whole day. This becomes especially helpful in the final hours when fatigue makes it tougher to hold your form together.

And speaking of feet, a common discomfort during long rides is known as "hot foot." As soon as you feel the telltale burning sensation, loosen your shoelaces, hook-and-loop straps and/or your toe straps should you use them. Feet swell during long rides. If something is restricting them, the loss of circulation produces the sensation of heat. Short walking breaks help limit the smoldering, too.

12. Bask in your accomplishment. After setting your mileage PR, you'll be psyched. And this excitement can easily make you want to ride even more. That's great, but first give yourself a break. Take at least one rest day (two is usually better) and then ride short and easy for the rest of the week. This will help heal any soreness and replenish your energy. Smart recovery helps your body grow stronger after tough efforts.

When you do it right, in three or four weeks you might even feel eager to set another PR!

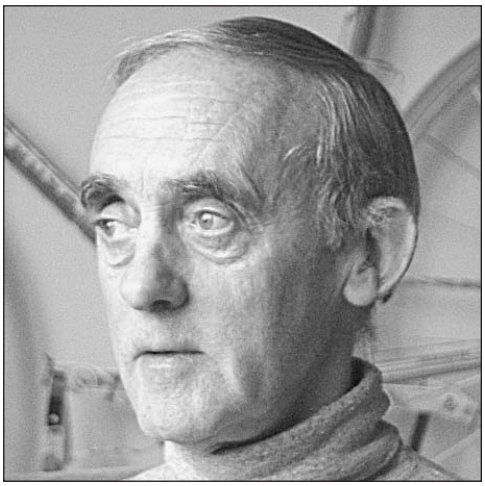
(Ed and Fred run www.RoadBikeRider.com, a website dedicated to providing expert "how to" information for roadies. They publish a free weekly newsletter and send an eBook titled "29 Pro Cycling Secrets for Roadies" to all new subscribers. Both are former editors of Bicycling magazine and have written more than three-dozen cycling books.)

Coming in the Next Issue (RR 29)

An interview with Richard Sachs…a Legnano story…something about Bridgestones…a story about the Pedersen bike from Denmark…a rim story by the guy who may know more about rims than anybody else…frame joinery comparison: tig, fillet, and lugs in the laboratory…and some other things, too.

If Mike Barry were living in this country he'd be a household name, at least among cyclers who've been around a few years. But he's an Englishman living in Ontario (the Canadian one), where he is well-known because he's been plying his trade there for more than 30 years. I've known of him for maybe 10 years, and I've spoken to him on a semi-regular basis often since Rivendell began, and I know more now because of it.

His passion is for what we around here call "Frenchy bikes," but he knows old bikes and new bikes, cheap bikes and good ones, and has at times been a racer, randonneur, advocate, designer, builder, and retailer. Mike's overall bicycle knowledge, past and present, is undoubtedly unsurpassed, and certain aspects of it are unequalled. I've tried to draw that out in this interview, and in some cases I am slightly insincerely argumentative, to that end. —Grant



Mike Barry last month.

An Interview with Michael Barry

Where and when did you grow up, what were you like (and what did you like) as a kid?
I was born just before the war (1938) and grew up in Wimbledon, South London, England. My Father died when I was six months old so I never knew him. I had no brothers or sisters.

When did you start to ride a bike?
I learned to ride a bike at the age of about six but there was a great shortage of bikes during and after the war, so my earliest rides, out into the Surrey countryside, were on my mother's single-gear BSA.

Was your mom short, or were you tall, or was the bike too big for you?
It was much too big for me but I did several rides of thirty to forty miles at an age of about nine. When I was eleven my mother bought me a Raleigh Lenton Sports, an all-steel sports bike with a Sturmey four-speed hub gear. I thought I was the bee's knees. Raleigh Pro Reg Harris was World Sprint Champion then and he was my hero. He had a Lenton Sports as his road training bike (at least that is what the advertisements said). What could have been better? I immediately became hooked on cycling and devoured both of the weekly cycling magazines of the day, *Cycling* and *The Bicycle*. I've read *Cycling* every week since. That is 52 years.

***Cycling* has been a *weekly* for 52 years?**
Yes. It was first published in 1891 and has been published every week since. Over the years I have collected back issues and now have about 86% of all the issues ever published. Most are in bound volumes. They make quite a good library of cycling history.

I bet. What was it like, riding in England back then, just after WWII?
It was a wonderful time to be cycling in England. There was very little traffic and I soon got to know my way around the maze of country lanes just south of London. Herne Hill track wasn't far from home and I often went there to watch Harris and the other sprinters of the day. The stands would be packed with thousands of spectators who mostly arrived by bike. The bike parking area was filled with bikes with barely a lock to be seen. Hundreds of bikes just leaning against one another. At the end of the meeting we would all race one another home, emulating our heroes that we had seen performing on the track.

Were bikes affordable, and what did you ride?
They were affordable, yes, because after the war there were many bomb sites around London and they became places to deposit junk. We kids scoured them for old bike parts and I put together a fair number of bikes that way. I'd sell these bikes and use the money to buy new parts for my Lenton Sports. It was not long before the Lenton frame wasn't good enough. I saved all my paper round money to buy a Claud Butler New Allrounder. Now I had really arrived.
All of my spare time was spent cycling or hanging around the local bike shop. The manager was a club cyclist and I didn't need much encouragement to start riding with the Redmon Cycling Club. I was about fourteen but the club did not allow members below the age of sixteen. This didn't stop me riding with them but because I wasn't a member of a club, I couldn't race. At fifteen I upped my age a year and became a member. My first race was a local classic, the Kentish Wheelers Novices 25-mile time trial. I won it with a record time of 1h 2m 40s. This delighted the older members of the club but I got a real telling-off for falsifying the club membership form. It was believed in those days that a young rider would burn out if he started racing before the age of sixteen. They'd take us on 150-mile tear-ups on a Sunday and think nothing of it, but for some reason thought a 25-mile time trial would burn us out.
After that I raced regularly and did reasonably well as a first category amateur. Compulsory National Service got me into the RAF for three years where I managed to get onto the RAF Cycling Team. This was wonderful, because there were inter-service races all over the country on Wednesdays and civilian events on Sundays. Most of the time that I was supposed to be fixing planes, I was riding my bike or traveling to and from events.

In 1956, riding a time trial in England.

When did you move to Canada?
Besides spending my time in the RAF racing bikes I did manage to get a pretty good education in electronics. After I was discharged I got a job servicing and installing spectrometers. These are analytical instruments used primarily in the metals and oil industries. The job enabled me to travel a fair bit and that whetted my appetite to see a bit more of the World I moved to Canada in 1964 with the idea of staying for a year or so and then moving on to Australia. Bike racing in Canada at that time was great as there were thousands of recent immigrants from Europe and all the races were like international events. Each ethnic group had their own club. I became a member of the Britannia CC, which was all Brits. There was an Italia CC, a Croatia CC, a Berolina CC (German), and so on. The cycling community was very close knit, and each weekend after the race there was always a party somewhere. It was a great time.
However, early in 1965 I was offered a job by a US company that made spectrometers and I moved first to Detroit and then to Pittsburgh and later to Buffalo, New York. There was very little cycling in the US at that time, but my job took me all over the country. I would always look up the local cycling club in any town I was in. That way I made cycling friends in many towns. Although there were few cyclists they were real enthusiasts. One had to be enthusiastic to put up with the ridicule one received. No one that I worked with would believe that someone my age (27) who had a company car would actually choose to ride a bicycle in their spare time.
There was a very keen bike racing community in Buffalo and many National Champions and Olympic riders came from there.

When did you start to build frames, and how did that come about?
I moved back to Canada in 1968 and soon after met an old racing acquaintance from England, John Palmer. Back in England we had both hung around bike shops in our youth and picked up a bit of knowledge of frame building, so this time around we struck up a close friendship. John was keen to start building frames in Toronto and even had a set of 531 under his bed. I found out that CCM, the large Canadian bicycle manufacturer, had recently sold off all their lightweight frame-building components. I managed to track them down and bought the lot for $100.00. There were several complete sets of 531 and numerous sets of Nervex Pro and Legere lugs. Only true fanatics could understand the excitement with which John and I pored over those dusty, dirty old boxes of bits of steel. We then rented a friend's basement, got ourselves some torches and gas tanks and were under way. We spent many hours in that basement. The first frames we built were used in the indoor velodrome in Delhi Ontario. They were well received and seemed to stand up well to the rough and tumble of steeply banked velodrome racing. The Delhi track was 115 metres and had 55-degree bankings.
Those basement hours, one would have thought, would have had a detrimental effect on our love lives but in fact both our future wives spent many hours down there with us. There's true love for you.

What do you look at when you look at a bike frame? What matters to you, aesthetically?
In just the frame then it is the workmanship. Clean brazing. Lugs, of course, although I do like well-made bronze welded bikes. You probably call them "fillet brazed." Paint and finishing detail is very important. I really dislike unicrown forks, Aheadsets, silly nonsense like curved seat stays, and other gimmicky things which make no difference to the ride and do not help the aesthetics.

How would you describe the change in bicycles from the '40s to now? Say, decade by decade. Talk about anything from how they were marketed and advertised, to styles, popularity, materials…anything.
Actually I think it quite surprising how little change there has been. By the end of the forties we had 5 cogs on the back and two or three chainwheels. The Italians and French had well designed frames but their workmanship wasn't up to the standard of the Brits. The Brits did very nice workmanship but their design was generally poor. It was the fashion in England in the '40s to have 73-degree head and 71-degree seat no matter what size frame.

Well, let me tell you—it works for my new 59cm…
Yes, it possibly does work well for you on a 59cm frame but to say that 73/71 was ideal for all frame sizes is ridiculous; but that is what they did in those days.
In the fifties they went to "Continental" styling which meant 72 degrees parallel no matter what size frame. That of course meant super long top tubes on small frames or toe clip overlap. The latter was often a big problem with Brit bikes especially as they were all built for 27" wheels and mudguards. I've always liked the French touring and 'around town' bikes and the Italian racing bikes. I've never seen a good Italian touring bike, although some of their 'around town' bikes are excellent.
Just after the war, late forties, early fifties, there was a lot of innovation in the bike industry. Lots of small companies making all sorts of interesting stuff. Palladini hubs (similar to the later Cinelli Bivalent hubs), Campag Paris-Roubaix derailleurs, Constrictor components from England, the whole incredible range of gears from Sturmey Archer, wonderful oil bath transmission from Sunbeam with a quick-

release three-speed hub that left the sprocket and chain in the bike when the rear wheel was removed. It seems to me that in those days innovation and quality drove the market where as today it is driven by fashion.
I know you are not going to like this, but I believe that the biggest improvement in bikes in the last fifty years that I have been around them is derailleurs and shifters. There is no comparison between the old stuff and the new derailleurs with STI or Ergopower. We have the Japanese to thank for that. We would all still be riding Campag Super Record if Shimano and SunTour hadn't made them change their ways. Don't get me wrong, there is a certain aesthetic and simple quality to the Super Record stuff but the cheapest Shimano now works much better.

I'm not the arbiter of taste, but although I think today's derailleurs are as functionally good as derailleurs have ever been, they lack the style of the old ones, and they don't work world's better than a top derailleur from the '80s. It's sort of like comparing a $399 3.4 megapixel digital camera from today with a Canon or Olympus or Rollei rangefinder from back then—which is *better* is hard to say until you define "better." No doubt today's shifting is faster and more convenient, but the difference in a non-racing situation, just a guy out on a lonely road needing to downshift for the climb or a tailwind—well, how hard is it, even with a "crummy" old Super Record? You ease up a hair on the pedals and pay a small bit of attention for a fraction of a second, and bingo, you're in.
Oh yes. It works quite well but with STI/ERGO one doesn't even think about it. Changing gear just becomes a natural reaction.

Hmm…well, yes, but from my observations and limited experience, it goes beyond "natural reaction" to the point where riders start shifting even when there's no need to. I think it's like a full guy walking around with a chunk of a cheeseburger in his mouth, and a Camelback full of a chocolate shake and the straw's in his mouth. Shifts occur because they're so easy, and they become almost reflexive, even when there's little or nothing to gain. I think a case can be made for maintaining reasonable convenience while removing irresistible temptation, and that's where downtube shifters and bar-ends come in; and I don't like the looks of the others, either.
I admit down-tube levers make for a much cleaner, aesthetically pleasing bike but I find it difficult to see that bar-end controls have any aesthetic or mechanical virtue over Ergopower.

Well, I suppose you can get used to something if you're exposed to it enough. But at this stage of my life I'd take a Shimano Tiagra aero lever over any integrated lever, because they look better to me and fit my hand better. Outside of competition and riders who for medical reasons can't move their hands around, I see STI and Ergo as a way to make bikes more attractive to those riders who associate "integration" and "high tech" and "change" as improvements. They offer "brainless shifting," but shifting's already easy enough; and they turn riders into compulsive shifters.
I cannot see what is wrong with "brainless shifting." After all the bike is a tool for transporting oneself under one's own power with the least amount of effort.

With former business partner Mike Brown, left, just after finishing the Raid Pyreneen, a 444-mile (710km) ride in France, over 18 mountain passes, and with 49,000 feet of climbing. Our Mike plans to ride it again this September.

It's hard to counter the "tool" argument, but another way to look at it is that it's a whole world in itself, and reflects the values and personality and attitude of its rider. If a bike is *just* a tool, then we all ride super-thin tig-welded steel, powder-coated black, or maybe aluminum. In that world, your Mariposa bicycles, with their gorgeous integrated racks wouldn't exist. I'm not denying their function, but there are cheaper and faster ways to achieve it. For the racer the bike is just a tool, but to somebody who loves bicycles, I think it's more.
Well, sure, but there have always been beautifully made tools, and making a tool beautiful doesn't make it work any less efficiently, it just makes it more enjoyable to own and use. Just look at some of the wonderful wood planes that have been produced. Cheaper, less well-finished tools often do an equally good job, but they are not so enjoyable to own and use. If you're really enthusiastic cycling or wood work or whatever, you just get more enjoyment from having really nicely constructed equipment.
I don't you should have to think about changing gears. If I'm climbing a hill out of the saddle, as I am every morning on my rides in the park, it is great to be able to change to a lower ratio without sitting down and taking my hand off the bars. It took me a long time to accept the new shifters but now I have them I would never go back. I won't say that I don't enjoy riding my vintage bikes with their down tube levers; and I love riding my bikes equipped with the much more difficult Campag Paris-Roubaix shifters, but they are not my choice for everyday use. For the average rider I think it is the one new innovation that should not be ignored.

You have a point. But personally, I like feeling the derailleur move, and fine-tuning it. It's not a burden, and you miss that in indexing—all you feel is the click. But anyway, I wish manufacturers who have near monopolies, as Shimano and Campagnolo do, would also feel a responsibility to provide options. At one point I'd have said they *have* that responsibility, but I'm mellowing, and

Racing the British Cyclo-cross Championships, 1958. Note the sidepulls with good tire and mud clearance; and the right-front cable routing, mated to the "left-handed" caliper.

now I'll just say I wish they felt one.
I certainly agree that there should be options. I also think manufacturers have a responsibility to supply spare parts for components made just three or four years ago.

Well—it feels good to get past that nasty integrated shifting issue, and I agree about the spares. Anyway, I'd like to know your thoughts on the American bike industry.
In many ways it's its own worst enemy. For years it promoted pseudo racing bikes as being ideal for everyone and then moved to the other end of the spectrum with mountain bikes. Neither is ideal, but I guess it sells big numbers by creating fashion. It seems to me that if the industry promoted a bike that was light, comfortable, and safe, people would want to be regular cyclists and be inclined to leave the car at home—and in the long term the industry would benefit. They are coming a bit closer now with "comfort bikes" (what an awful name) but why clutter them up with suspension? There are not too many cobbled streets left in North America, so it's unnecessary. It just makes the bike more expensive, heavier, and ugly. In Holland and Japan, where the bike is still considered a legitimate means of transport, they have wonderful city bikes. Although I must admit the popularity of the big heavy Dutch bikes confounds me.

I think the more citified people become, the more macho they buy. Rich people who work in the high-tech industry and whose professional lives are all about silicon chips and spreadsheets—and there's nothing wrong with that, and I appreciate and use the fruits of their labor and wouldn't want to do without 'em—but they tend to buy ultra extreme bikes, and wear ultra extreme clothing, to get a balance in their lives. The bike aids their fantasy, and where's the harm? The practical bike doesn't fill that need as well. The need isn't "safe, comfortable transportation in the downtown sector." So, I can understand it on that level, but I doubt there's a body alive who is any more repelled by their appearances than I am. So, Michael, what styles of bike do you like most?
I don't have a favorite style. I really like fully equipped touring bikes, I love a really well put together road racing bike and I particularly like the older French-style city bikes. I dislike mountain bikes although I'm sure they are fine for what they are intended for. I dislike touring bikes with carriers and no fenders.

Talk about how Mariposa started, and the name "Mariposa," which I think is the best name ever for a bicycle. How did you come up with it? I know it means "butterfly" in Spanish, of course, but I'm always curious how others come up with names.
Well, when John and I were building in the basement, we were looking for a name that sounded European but had Canadian connections. *Mariposa* fits perfectly as there is a Mariposa county in Ontario and Steven Leacock, the Canadian humorist, wrote many books about a town named Mariposa.

Have you ever built other brands?
We have built a few bikes under the name Alcyon, a name I stole from the French. We used it on a few bikes we built from a mix of Columbus and Reynolds tubes, all good stuff but not complete sets so we didn't think we should put the Mariposa name on them. Now we use the Alcyon name on bikes made for us by other builders.

How many builders has Mariposa had over the years?
I think it is seven. Tom Hinton has been with me now for the last twelve years and does the majority of the building. Krys Hines built a few bikes a year or two ago.

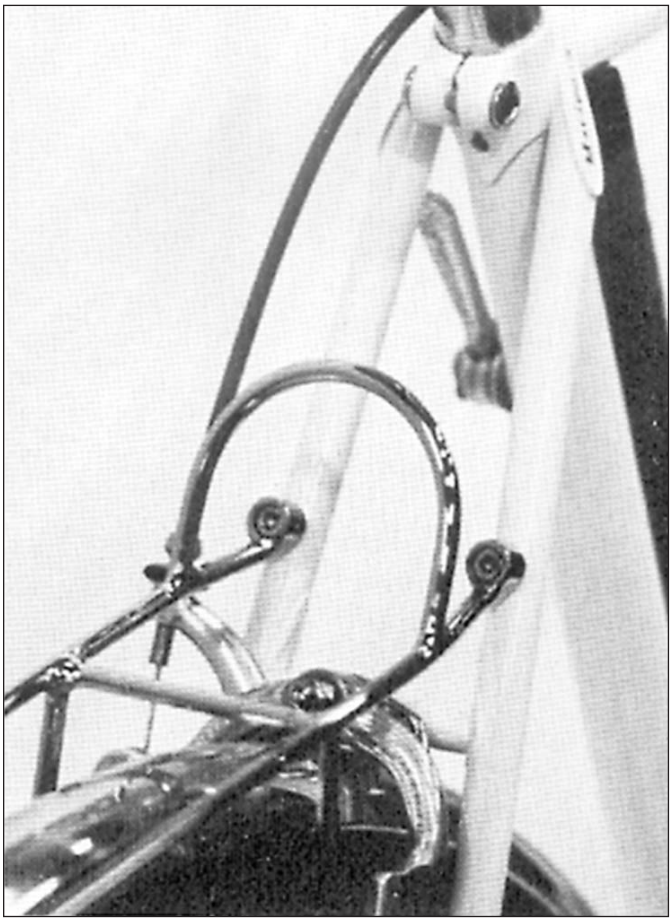
Aren't most Mariposas brevet bikes? And weren't you a founder of a randonneuring club in Canada, at some point? I don't know, I just heard…
Yes, most of the bikes we build are randonneur or touring bikes. I think that is just because we have made a bit of a name for ourselves with the custom carriers. We've built all sorts of bikes over the years, but I like the touring/randonneur bikes, since they're more interesting and more complicated to build.
My ex-partner Mike Brown and I rode the Raid Pyreneen in 1981 and were then looking for a greater challenge. We thought, ,of P-B-P, but to qualify one had to ride a series of Brevets (200, 300, 400 and 600 km). There were no brevets organized on this side of Canada so we formed the Toronto Randonneurs and organized them ourselves. The problem was that we engendered so much enthusiasm in our staff at Bicyclesport that they all went to P-B-P and Mike and I had to stay at home to look after the store.

When did you stop riding brevets?
A few years ago. Maybe I will get back to it, but it takes a hell of a lot of time. I'm hoping to ride the Raid Pyreneen again next year. Now I usually go out on the Donut Run (A 100km training ride that starts in midtown Toronto at 9 AM every Saturday and Sunday) or for a leisurely ride on the tandem with my wife, Clare. I also ride my cyclo-cross bike in the park most mornings.

Can you be honest?
Sure. I think I usually *am.*

Well then, I've heard that you're the world's foremost authority on wacky old derailleurs. Do you know anybody who knows more than you do about them?
I don't personally know anyone who knows more about them, but I'm sure there are a good few people that do.

Probably not in Canada, though. What is it about them that you like? Their simplicity?
Yes, I do like the simplicity. It is a very simple mechanism that pushes a chain from one cog to another. Nothing complicated about that, but there have been all sorts of ways to do it. The Vittoria Marguerita of the late thirties was a wonderful example. To change gear the rider had to first move a chain-tensioning lever that was situated just above the chainwheel. Then, while back pedaling, select one of three sprockets by twisting a knob which was fitted to the end of the chain tensioning lever, and then re-tension the chain before pedaling forward again. This wonderful device was produced in Italy and used by many top Italians. On the other side of the Alps in France they had derailleurs that were similar in operation to those that we have today. The Italians took no notice though and continued on right into the fifties with the



Many Mariposas come with custom racks, such as this one. They're made to fit each frame, and are light and lovely, in the French tradition. I've never seen this particular attachment before. The archy-loop keeps a saddlebag or a rack-mounted load from mushing up against the brake cable or seat stays. Barely in the picture and blurry, you can see the downtube shifter mounted on the upper left of the seat tube. It remotely engages a tire-drive generator, mounted behind the bb.

Campag Corsa and Paris-Roubaix, both of which changed while back pedaling,
The Trivelox was one of the few British derailleurs. The Brits tended to favour hub gears as they were very concerned about the chain always being in line. The Trivelox addressed this by moving the sprockets laterally instead of the chain. It worked very well and had one of the earliest cassette hub/sprocket arrangements.
I've got quite a few rusty old derailleurs that one of these days I'd like to display somewhere, although probably few people would be interested. As you can see I could go on and on about this nonsense, but we shouldn't bore your readers.

I think over the last 8 years we've built up their resistance to that, but anyway—function-wise, how do the old derailleurs compare with a modern Shimano? Let's say you were shifting both with friction shifters and using the cogs and chains that worked the best with them. I'm just wondering whether anything can equal or beat a Shimano.
I've already addressed that. The old derailleurs can't match modern Shimano or Campagnolo, except perhaps the Simplex SLJ 5500. However, it is getting more difficult to find friction shifters that will work with the modern derailleurs. I

A modern Mariposa road bike, set up for brevets, and built with a mix of components and accessories you don't often see here in the states. Namely, the rack and fenders, with Campy Ergo.

say why bother, get Ergopower or STI.

Any friction shifter will shift any modern derailleur.
No, there is not enough cable pull on the old friction levers to shift the new derailleurs over eight or nine cogs. One needs the newer larger-barrel levers and they are now almost impossible to get.

That might be so with the old Simplex shifters, which have a 14mm diameter drum, but the Japanese friction shifters have 18mm to 20mm drums, and pull more. I'll send you some Silver shifters. In any case, the issue seems to be the closeness of the cogs, and the closer they cram them together, the better you have to be to shift without over shifting—but it ain't that hard, even with 9-speed. It's way easier with 8-speed, and a cinch with 7/6/5, as you know.
I will give you that it is easier to shift with friction over 5/6/7 cogs but it is a fact of life, that it is now getting almost impossible to get 5/6/7 freewheels or cassettes. Why bother?

Well, my personal "why bother?" point has changed over the years, due to the futility of finding a good supply of 12-28 6-speed freewheels, to name one example. Right now I've given up on 6, but haven't yet given up on 7. I'd love to see Shimano introduce a 6 or 7-speed cassette that fit in the same space as the current 8/9 models. The cogs would be further apart, and some good things could happen with it; or it could fit into a smaller space, and wheel dish could be reduced. Either way, it would be good; but it won't happen, because it takes some effort to sell the benefits of fewer gears to a market which is wired to see it as a step backward, like introducing a new and slower computer chip. But a small percentage of riders would recognize the benefits and potential, and even though it won't happen, it would sure be nice it if did. I will donate $1,000 to that fund.

The real problem, as I see it, is mostly the perception that friction is for cave men or rebels, and fewer gears is a step in the wrong direction. The reality, at least from my point of view, is that friction ought to be the default for anybody except racers—because it works so well and is less finicky, and the idea of integrating shifters and brake levers just seems pointless, since braking and shifting are two completely separate operations. You hear the argument that now you can brake and shift at the same time. I can see how, once in a great while that would be beneficial to a racer, but only if other racers are doing it, and then only in a specific instance—like at the bottom of a hill, the road turns sharply and the finishing sprint is a steep uphill. Even then, legs beat shifters. So I still have to wonder what the benefit is, other than convenience for racers and manufacturers.
I agree it is a convenience to racers, but I see it as a benefit to all other cyclists, too. But I cannot see the convenience to manufacturers.

Well, in 1987 Shimano and SunTour had big, bulky, 4-finger mountain bike levers, mostly slightly downsized versions of motorcycle brake levers. Dia-Compe had BMX-inspired 2-finger levers, which were smaller and lighter and worked as well. Well, the product managers were spec'ing the Dia-Compe levers on bikes that were otherwise all Shimano or SunTour (mostly Shimano, by that point), and it left Shimano and SunTour with mountains of unsold brake levers. The next year they both introduced integrated shifting in its Rapidfire braker-shifter combos. Integrated shifting didn't come about because riders were complaining about separate thumb-shifters (which still have a following). I suspect it came about largely because Shimano and SunTour knew product managers wouldn't give up indexing to use smaller brake levers. For them, it guaranteed that they'd sell a set of brake levers for every set of shifters, which of course is ideal. I'm not saying it has no benefit to racers, just that its benefits to non-racers have been oversold.
What you say about Shimano/SunTour may be correct, but I cannot see the analogy to the road bike systems. Before Rapidfire a rider could still change gear without moving his/her hand away from the brake lever. With Rapidfire Shimano just introduced a slightly different system. It did not alter the way in which the rider is able to ride. STI/Ergo enabled the road rider, for the first time ever, to be able to shift gears while out of the saddle with his/her hands in the most efficient position—on the hoods.

You've got a point there, but I'd still like to see options. Anyway, Mike, you've said great things about the Simplex SLJ-500 rear derailleur, and I'm baffled. What's the difference, mechanically, between a Simplex SLJ-5500 and a Campy Nuovo/Super Record—or Gran Sport, for that matter? I always figured that the SLJ was Simplex's attempt

to copy Campy, with an identical movement.
The big advantage Simplex had over Campag was the spring in the upper pivot. This, of course, is now universal on all derailleurs, but Simplex had it fifty years ago. It keeps the pulley wheels close to the cogs and makes for much more efficient shifting. Campag stuck with the design that they introduced in 1952 with their Gran Sport model. The Record, Nuovo Record, Super Record and C Record were basically all slight variations of that basic design. However, when the original Gran Sport was introduced chainrings of 52/48T and sprockets of 14-24T were the norm. Because of the relatively close ratios there was not much chain wrap-up required, and the Gran Sport worked well—particularly compared with the other derailleurs of the day which were all of the transverse spring variety and the Campag was a deformable parallelogram. By the early seventies everyone was using 52/42 on the front, which required more chain wrap. Simplex had their deformable parallelogram derailleurs well-established and with a spring in the upper pivot they handled the extra chain wrap much better than the Campag. Simplex unfortunately got a bad name for themselves, not because they didn't make a good derailleur but because they made an excellent derailleur out of plastic and it was inexpensive. It was fitted to the majority of the "ten speeds' which were at the forefront of the bike boom of the seventies. Of course the cycling enthusiasts wouldn't buy derailleurs that were made of plastic and wouldn't buy inexpensive ones. The Campag. was very much more expensive and therefore must be better, or so the thinking went, and so the enthusiasts went for Campag. I contend that the Simplex Criterium was a much better derailleur than the Campag, but Campag outsold the Criterium by several hundred to one. Simplex had the bottom-end market sewn up with the Prestige model, though, and Campagnolo's feeble attempt to get into it with their crummy Valentino model wasn't successful. Later on, Simplex introduced the SLJ models, which were the same design as the earlier Prestige and Criterium, but without the plastic. In my opinion the SLJ is probably the best derailleur ever made, but it was introduced too late. Campagnolo had the high end market sewn up and Simplex could not get rid of their cheap derailleur image.

Another Mariposa tour-y bike. Mike's a neater fender-mounter than any of us here are, and has gone to the trouble of equipping this light tourer with what looks to be Japanese-made Honjo aluminum funders. If you want to know what fenders ought to look like before you enter your bike in the Concours, lookie here. They look like an integral part of the bicycle—something I/Grant couldn't achieve if I had a month to do it and my escape from the dungeon depended on it.

Oh yeah. The spring in the upper pivot. I forgot about that, but I didn't realize it was such a big deal; now I know. Here's another question: If you were leaving on a 5-year ride on paved and unpaved roads and you couldn't replace anything except the normal wearables, which derailleurs would you pick? And shifters?
It is very unlikely that many of us will do that although I'd love the opportunity.

I understand that, but it's an IF question.
Okay, then. *If* I was going on a trip to areas where I couldn't get spares or couldn't get them sent in, and there aren't too many places left like that, I'd probably choose Simplex SLJ 5500 with the wonderful Simplex retro-friction downtube levers. I have them on my touring bike now although I should probably change to Ergopower, but the bike was built in 1981 and I don't want to mess with it.

What about the rest of the bike?
I'd use 26" wheels with smooth treaded 1.5" tires. I would of course have mudguards (fenders), front and rear carriers, and generator lighting. Pretty much the touring bike that I have now except that now I have 700C wheels. I think that the 26s would be a bit more durable for such a trip, and it would be easier to get spares.

The look of bikes and parts matters to you, I imagine. Well, I know. What do you like and dislike?
I like bikes to look as if they have been designed as a whole unit, rather than with add-ons. There is nothing worse than a racing bike with a Blackburn rack held on with clips, and mudguards held on with Zip Ties, which I know you like to champion.
I do not like Aheadsets and bolt-on stems. For 100 years we have been able to adjust the handlebar height by simply loosening an expander, tapping it down and setting the height. Now we have to, at best, juggle around with a bunch of spacers or worse get a new stem. It just doesn't make any sense except perhaps when one is trying to get the weight as low as possible. We built one Mariposa with an Ahead, and that was for my daughter–in-law, Dede Demet Barry. We used it so that we could use a carbon fork with a carbon steerer. I must say that it went against the grain, but it did reduce the weight of the bike a fair bit.

That's interesting, but let me defend Zip Ties. I see them as mechanical objects of a clever design and almost

unlimited uses. On modern bikes, with modern brakes and dimensions, there are times when Zip Ties make the difference between fenders fitting and fenders not fitting. It's a sidepull world, and when you have short-reach sidepulls, regular fender mounts don't work. You can snip and grind and modify, and if you have no family life and lots of time, you can do a fair job of fitting fenders on some short-reach road bikes, but most of the time they just won't go. Also, for me, there is a perverse (not perverted, just perverse) pleasure in using Zip Ties to fit plastic fenders onto an ultra-expensive road bike that won't take them any other way. It's sort of like putting a pair of cheap sneakers on a high society lady so she can walk through gutter-barf without getting her feet mucked up. Except the Zip Ties are so inconspicuous, at least from 10 feet away. They're cheap problem-solvers, and I'll defend them to my grave! But I know what you mean, of course…so let's get on.

What decade in the past sixty years was the best for bicycle style? And in which country?
I think bike styling was fine until mountain bikes came in and influenced almost everything else. It is a fact that there was a definite geography of bike design. Each country in Europe had a distinct style but most of this distinctiveness is being lost now. The mountain bike rules along with McDonalds.
As far as racing bikes go I would say that the best are the late seventies, early eighties Italian bikes. I don't think there is anything to compare to those except perhaps a Richard Sachs of the same period. Paint, decals, chrome. The Italians seemed to get it all together.
The best touring bikes were definitely the sixties-seventies French bikes. Herse, Singer, Routens were all excellent and I base a lot of what we do with Mariposas on their design.
City bikes, again I give it to the French. When the Brits and almost everyone else were building all heavy steel city bikes the French were building light frames with mostly Dural components. Even the fifties-sixties French department store bikes were very well designed with decent alloy fenders, 650B wheels and built-in generator lighting systems.
The Italians had some very nice ones, too. I have a couple of really nice Olympias from the seventies which are beautifully made. The earlier Brit city bikes were very good but they never did get around to lightening them up. The Raleigh three-speed could have been excellent had they used alloy components. There is no doubt that the quality of the Raleigh really dropped off around 1960 when Tube Investments took them over.

Did the style evolve and then devolve? Talk about things like how styles evolve, and what the influences are. Which countries' styles do you prefer? Characterize styles from the following countries, in five words or less, and just so we don't go on forever, limit it to "city bikes."
I will refer only to "around town" city or commuter bikes, or whatever you want to call them—the bikes that most people should be riding.
England: Heavy, not too innovative after the fifties.
France: Excellent. Light, well designed. Crummy paint.
Italy: Very good. Some English influence. Rod brakes, full chain cases, but generally much better built than English.
Germany: Generally heavy. Not too well designed
Holland: Heavy, well built, probably good for the terrain and climate.
N. America: It is difficult to think of a true American bike other than the balloon-tire monsters. They were not really bikes intended for adults but toys for young people to use until they could afford cars. There three-speed Schwinns and the like, but they were based on English design and style and had most of the same deficiencies the Brits had.

How have racing bikes changed over the years, in terms of style?
Well, I don't think they did change too much until recently when we started getting sloping top tubes, fat aluminum tubes etc. Certainly not aesthetically pleasing. I cannot imagine that in thirty years people will be collecting sloping-top tube Giants like they are now collecting the Italian bikes from the seventies.

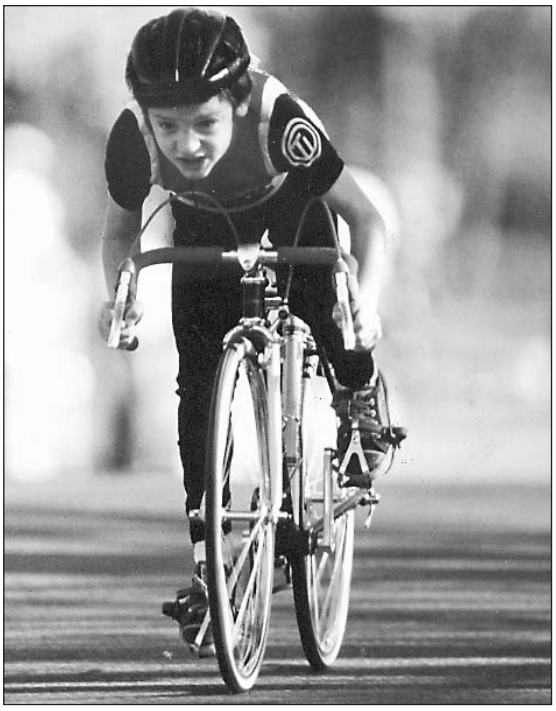
The touring bike seems to be more stylish, and certainly more interesting in many ways than the racing bike.
I'm not sure that I would say "stylish" is the term, but a good touring bike can be more interesting than a racing bike. There are far more opportunities for the builder to show off his ideas. This is also true with the really good city bikes. A city bike should be something that one can commute on, day in, day out, in all weathers. It will have many of the features of the touring bike but without the wide range of gears. I think that hub gears make sense, but unfortunately the ratios on most of the hub gears tend to be too widely spaced.

You must have some strong feelings about the American influence on bike style.
Well, in recent years American influence has meant mountain bikes and as I've already said, I'm not too enthused about them. Why anyone would ride big knobby tires on anything but the muddiest of conditions, I do not know. They just soak up all of one's energy and have no practical value at all for most of the people that ride them. Straight bars are, of course another backward step.

The smallest (34cm) and biggest (87cm) Mariposa bicycles ever made. The customer is David Aird, and he is just under 7 feet. From a builder's point of view, the tough part here is getting a steer tube long enough for the head tube, and finding a seat tube long enough. Most seat tubes stop at 65cm. My guess: Plain-gauge aircraft CrMo reamed at the top to hold a seat post.

Not many people know this, but you have the distinction of being the guy who…how do I put this…well, the last woman to win a major race on a lugged steel frame did it on a Mariposa. Tell that story….

Alright. My son Michael, who races for US Postal, is married to ex-World Junior Champion and multi-US National Champion Dede Demet. They both rode on the Saturn Team together. Dede retired from racing after the 2000 Worlds to go back to University. She still kept fit by riding in the mountains and running and skiing. She even rode a few races in 2001 and rarely finishing out of the top three, despite taking a heavy schedule of courses. Michael was to be riding the US Pro Championships in Philadelphia in June, and Dede thought she'd like to race in the women's event. But she had to be on a UCI team, so she shopped around and Team Talgo offered her a spot. They asked her to ride the World Cup race in Montreal on the weekend before Philly. She had already asked us to build her a bike and now the pressure was on to get it ready for Montreal. Tom did a great job and she picked up the bike a few days before the World Cup. The bike turned a few heads before the race but attracted a lot more attention after she came across the line alone to take the win. I'm sure that it was probably the only steel bike in the race and certainly the only lugged steel bike. We got quite a bit of publicity from it. TV commentator Curt Harnet gave us a wonderful plug on national television.



Michael Barry Jr, when he was 9. Michael is now a professional road racer who married Dede Demet, the last woman to win a world-class race on a lugged steel frame. A Mariposa, and it was just last year.

You like lugs. What is it about them that you like?

Aesthetically they are so much more pleasing than tig welding. I also like bronze welded bikes for their very clean appearance, but overall I think lugged bikes look the best. I don't think they will make the bike any faster, or be stronger, or go up hills easier but as we know there is much more to a good bike than a bunch of pipes welded together.

I think a lugged joint is stronger, and there's lots of evidence to make that case, but well-made frames these days don't tend to break at the joints, anyway (and poorly designed lugs on badly built frames is not a good combination, either. Anyway, it's hard to find lugged frames these days. But Marinoni, in Canada, still makes a lot of them, don't they?

Until this year Marinoni were still making lugged frames but now they have dropped them completely. Last year they built a batch of lugged cyclo-cross Alcyons for us, but refused to do it this year. They told me a lugged frame just takes too long to build compared to a tig frame, and they have so much work building their own tig steel and aluminum frames, that they were not willing to spare the time for us.

Sorry to hear it, Mike, but it's happening all over like that these days. What do you think is the future of bicycle frames? Will lugs completely die off?

Lugs will almost certainly disappear completely from the production bikes. It is only guys like you and me that will persevere with them. There will always be a demand from the real enthusiasts, but the demand decreases every year. Fortunately there are far fewer guys building with lugs so we are kept busy and will continue to be, I think, for the foreseeable future.

What do you think the bike of 2010 will look like?

Well, 2010, that's only eight years away. I think 99% will be aluminum and made in the Orient. The traditional spoked wheel will have been almost completely replaced by odd spoke patterns that go way out of true if a spoke should break. I think the MTB will have had its day. I think that people are at last beginning to realize that it is not ideal for the use most people put it to. I'm sure that some marketing whiz will come up with some equally inappropriate bike. I hope that the recent fad for suspension is gone and I think that it will be.

Talk about your business, Bicycle Specialties. Is it a retail store or a manufacturing business, or both? How did you start it, and all that?

In 1972 I started a shop in downtown Toronto called Bicyclesport. My original partner in Mariposa, John Palmer, wasn't interested in the new venture, but another ex-Brit. bike racer, Mike Brown joined me in partnership. Bicyclesport flourished in the bike boom of the seventies and although I say it myself, I think it was one of the best bike shops to be found anywhere. We moved to larger premises in 1980 and this turned out to be our downfall. The whole operation just got too big with fourteen employees at the peak. Mike Brown quit and went back to England in 1985 and in 1989 I pulled the plug. I started Bicycle Specialties the next year with the resolve not to allow it to become too big. The most employees that we have had since is three. My original intention was to build Mariposas and sell oddball parts, but we did get almost back into a regular bike shop for a few years. We closed the retail shop last year and now work out of an industrial unit. The internet has opened up a whole new market and keeps me too busy. It doesn't leave enough time to work on the Mariposas so we may have to get another person. At the moment it is just Tom and me.

Well, Michael, thank you for taking the time for this interview, and for being a strong and positive influence on me personally, and on Rivendell. It's easier to dig in your heels when you know other people who smarter have done it before, and are still doing it.

Interviewees Past & Future

Past

Rivendell Reader No.	Who Got Interviewed
2	Roger Durham (Bullseye)
6	Jobst Brandt
9	Michael Kone (Bicycle Classics)
10	Tom Ritchey
11	Harold Bridge
12	Joe Starck
13	Phyllis Harmon
15	Tim Isaac
16	Alex Moulton
17	Lon Haldeman
18	Maynard Hershon
22	Joe Bell
23	Curt Goodrich
25	Sheldon Brown
27	Charlie Cunningham

Future

In no particular order. Some of these interviews have been conducted already, some are promised, one or two are conditional maybes, and a few are folks we haven't yet contacted, but plan to, maybe:

Richard Sachs—Chester, Connecticut's best-known framebuilder…***Akira Yoshikawa***—President of Nitto…***Albert Eisentraut***—the guy who brought American frames respectability and raised the bar for every framebuilder who followed…***Tetsuya Ishigaki***—President of Toyo, and one of the world's top builders…Shimano's ***Wayne Stetina*** and his boss ***Yoshizo Shimano***—two of the most influential bike people we can think of, and often do…***Kozo Sugino*** of Sugino cranks.

We'd like your ideas, too. Some of our best past interviews were your suggestions in the first place. Only thing—with all due respect to your neighborhood hero, we're trying to interview folks whose sphere of influence is a little bigger, and are more, say, marquee names than your neighbor's cousin…not to imply that famous work is any more important, just that the interviews have more potential.

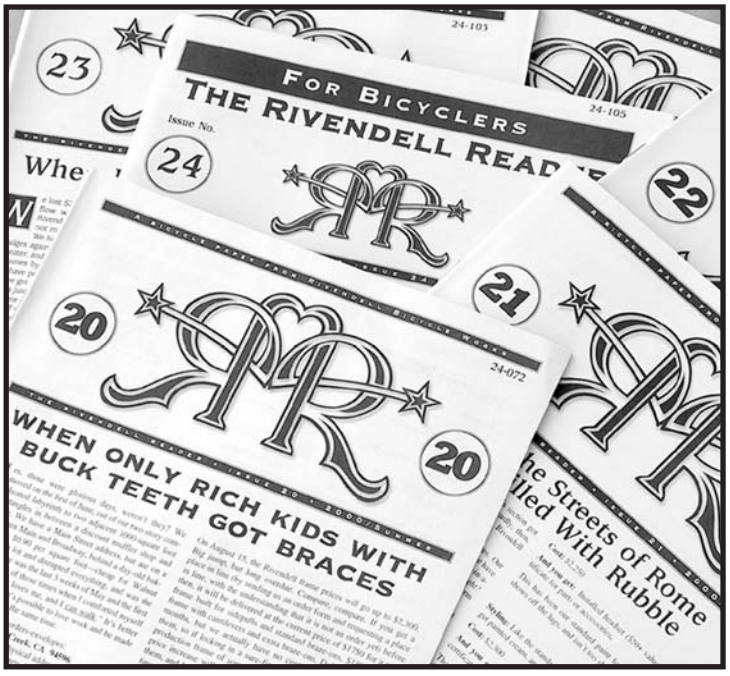
The Skinny On Getting Back Issues…

Maybe We'll Them On CDs and PDFs. It's Hard To Say Right Now

If we offer them on CDs, then they could fall into the wrong hands and be used for evil purposes. This may be why the Real Publications don't do that, and it's something to consider before we jump into it.

Putting them on our site as PDFs is another option we're considering, but the issue there is downloadability. Some back issues, like perhaps most of them, aren't electronic, and downloading time without a DSL linem, will be kind of long. We could just warn you all, and that's likely the way we'll go, but it's still something we ought to think about, rather than just go ahead with all crazy-like. The more recent issues, from about 19 on, are still electronic, and should be easy and fast to download.

We have to sort this out. We are thinking on it.



The Brooks Champion Swallow

by Bob Gordon

Bob Gordon, a physical therapist living in Brookline, Massachusetts, is as big a Brooks fan and authority as anybody I know; and he's as much an insider at Brooks as an American can be. He knows the guys and gets the straight poop, so you can pretty much believe what he says.

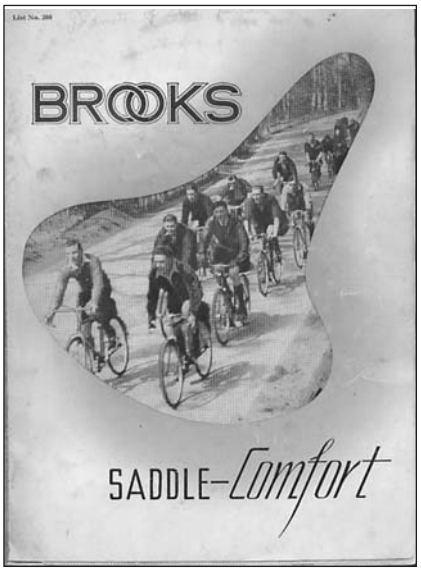
While one could argue that it would be an unlikely choice for the discriminating cyclist in search of the ultimate in posterior comfort, should the topic swing to streamlined good looks and labor-intensive construction, there is little discussion that the Brooks Champion Swallow represents the pinnacle of hand-crafted cycle saddlery.

Named for the elegant and lithe dark bird that is frequently seen swooping about the English countryside (and not, as rumor would have it, for the coordinated action of the sub-mandibular muscles contributing to the action of digestion), the "Champion Swallow" was introduced in the early 1930s to meet the demands of the elite racing community. The first Swallow, at just 1 pound 9 ounces, was not the lightest in the line, but the minimalist design was chiefly configured to allow the competitive cyclist minimal friction to the hypertrophied adductor or inner thigh muscles, with the belief that these would get chafed after long hours in the saddle, or with powerful sprinting.

Chris Wood, master saddlemaker fifty years ago, preparing blanks for a small batch of Brooks Swallows. Photo was taken in 1951.

In spite of the fact that it was always the most expensive saddle in the line—about 30% more than its closest cow-hided brethren—the process of making and assembling a Champion Swallow (which was later designated with the addition of "B.17") was a highly skilled and surprisingly lengthy endeavor. Chris Wood, the Basil Rathbone-looking gent in the photo, was Brooks' supreme saddle craftsman, and was responsible for nearly all of the stitch-sided Swallows that emerged during the 35 year period from the late '30s to the mid '60s. To begin with, the cut of leather was the finest from the animal—adjacent to the spinal column, where it is the thickest and toughest. After starting with a blank that was hand-cut over a template (before the advent of the cutting machine in 1956), about half an inch was left along the entire length of each bottom side of the saddle, in anticipation of it ultimately being folded back under to house a supporting steel wire. But before this can happen, it has to be chamfered along its entirety, on the inside of the lower lip, contrary to convention. Following this, the lower edge was punched with tin-tacks, which resemble carpet tacks, to provide the holes for the hand stitching that would later secure the wire. With the approximately 40 tacks in place on both sides, the blank edges were soaked in a shallow pan of water overnight to allow it to become pliable, and then one elderly lady in the factory, doing 10-12 saddles a day, would hand-stitch the sides with her own thread concoction, about 4 to 5 strands of black cotton twine, each run over a block of beeswax and then twisted

into one incredibly strong string. To put the exclusivity of the B.17 Swallow into perspective, only 50 per week were delivered, compared to 3000 B.17 Standards.

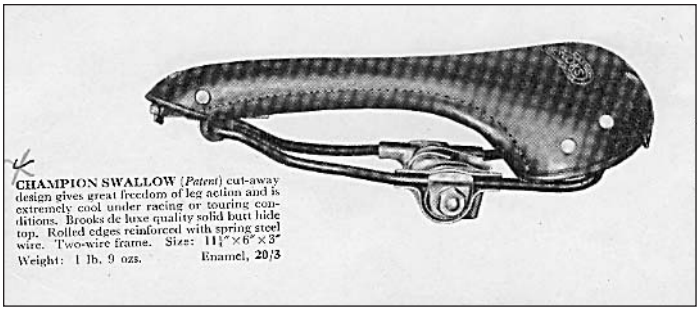


Brooks catalogue cover, where the photos on this page came from.

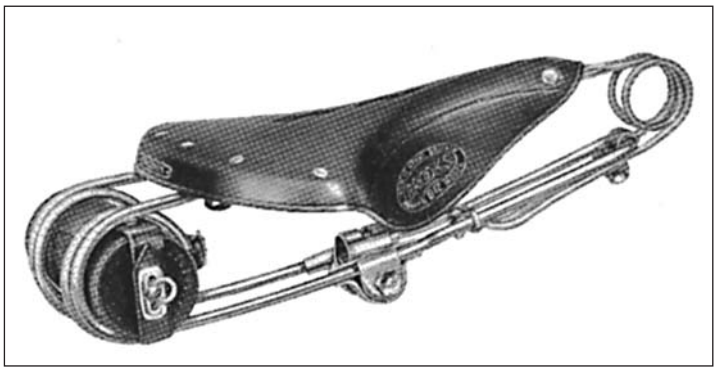
In the early fifties, Brooks experimented with a line of saddles aimed at the "lightweight enthusiast" by introducing four saddles with aluminum backplates and stainless steel rails and nosepieces. They mimicked popular saddles already in the line, and the corresponding model to the B.17 Swallow was the B.57. Since the quality of aluminum alloy was quite poor back then, few of these survived intact, owing to frequent breakages of the back plate emanating from the rivet holes. Another interesting permutation was the "Campanola" (sic) model, sported longer and more closely spaced rails for greater forward and aft saddle adjustability, but could only be used with the corresponding Campan*olo* seat clamp, distinguished by the casting of the name in the clamp edge—another very uncommon variety.

Originally introduced in the 1930s to offer a lower-priced alternative to the B.17 line, the B.15s, which are distinguished from it's more highbrow kin by a slightly lower priced cut of leather, and sporting hollow rather than solid rivets, brought about its own Swallow in the mid-fifties. The B.17 Swallow retained its solid rivets and stitched sides, whereas the newly introduced though less expensive B.15 variety dispensed with this and opted for a simple flap of leather that was folded over and secured underneath by four hollow rivets.

Soon after the B.17 and B.15 Swallows were discontinued, the Swallow was re-introduced in the late '60s as the model CL3. Although appearing much like its earlier counterparts, the newer variety used an aluminum bridge about halfway down the nose, which is secured by a rivet on either side. Though it does a very decent job of re-creating the original Swallow effect and ride, its fabrication is undeniably cost saving, which was Brooks' intention. The joke around the Brooks factory was that "CL" stood for "cheap leather," as it used the less desirable and durable shoulder and belly leather, rather than the butt.



Champion Swallow, from a 1930 Brooks catalogue.



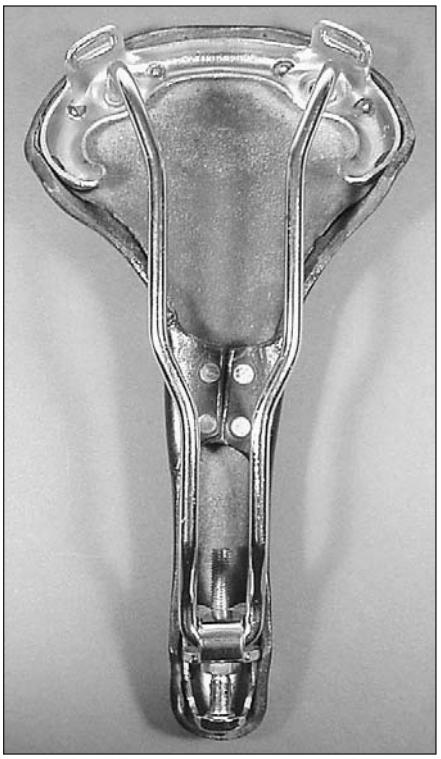
Another model from the Swallow era, this B 80 model boasted of using more than 6 feet of wire. It weighed 4 pounds. We show it here because it's unlikely we'd be able to do a story on it alone, and we figured if you're reading this Swallow story, you'd probably like to see this one, too. How much would a new-in-box B 80 fetch on eBay?

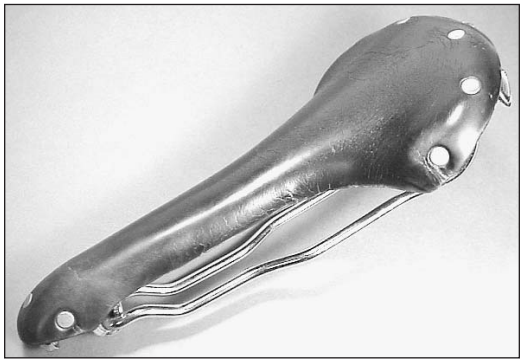
In the early 1990s, Brooks introduced a new model, the Swift. With its zippy good looks and cutaway design, titanium rails, hand-hammered copper rivets, and equally questionable comfort quotient, it all but sounded the death knell for the Swallow. Though the Swift will never achieve the lofty status of it predecessor, there is some satisfaction in knowing that one of the finest quality saddles is still in production.

Thanks to George Flegg, who took time away from punishing his friends on the golf course, to fill in the gaps.—BG

BROOKS NOW

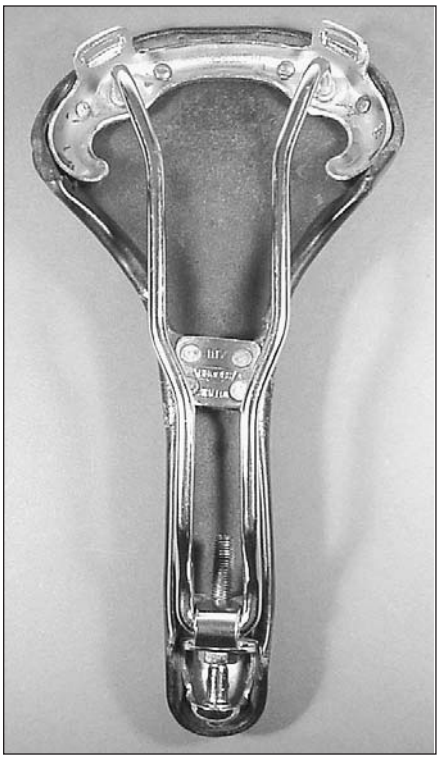
Not much room; we'll make it quick. A couple of years ago Brooks was broke and was sold to a Las Vegas gambler for $39, something ridiculous. Fans howled. The factory land was bought by a university—not a bad thing, generally, but we're talking about Brooks here. Soon after, three partners bought Brooks, revived it, fans rejoiced…and now, a few months ago, Brooks was again sold, this time to Italian plastic saddle maker Selle Royal. What now? Will Selle Royal improve things or make them worse? Hmm. Well, we're optimistic, but don't put off your Brooks purchase forever.





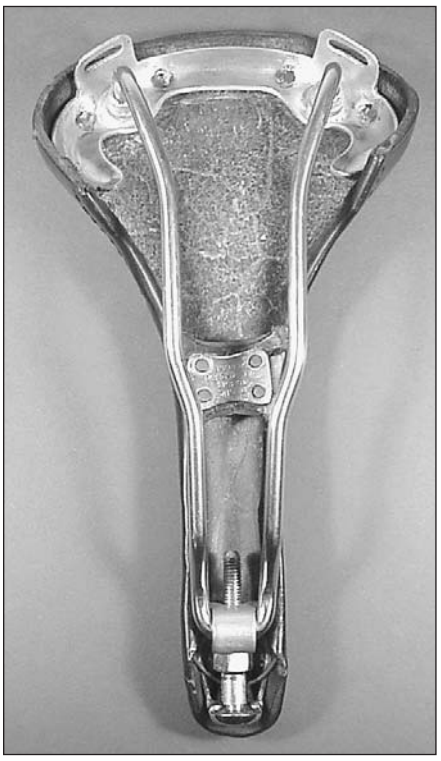
Brooks B.15 Swallow
1960s
15cm x 29cm
1lb 2.5oz

Side flaps attached underneath with 4 rivets. This one seems ideal for male riders who "dress left."



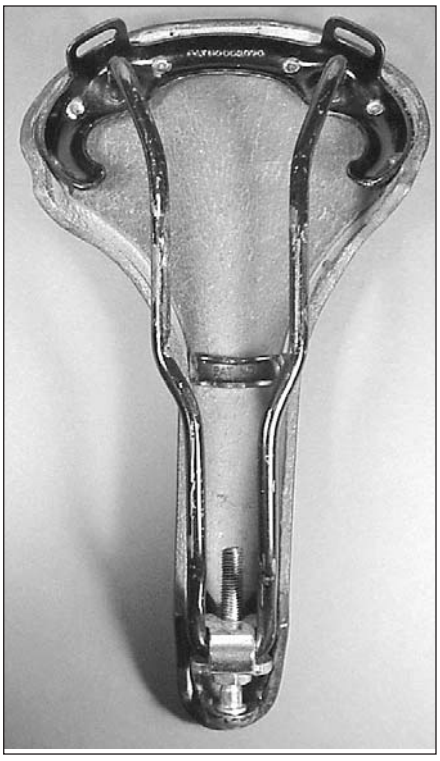
Brooks B.17 Swallow
1960s
15cm x 29cm
1lb 2.5oz

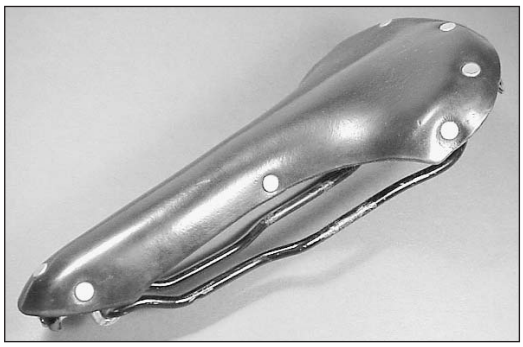
Wire sewn in edges, nice name plate joining the flaps on underside; and bag loops. They always had bag loops.



Brooks B.57 Swallow
1950s
15cm x 28.5cm
14.5oz

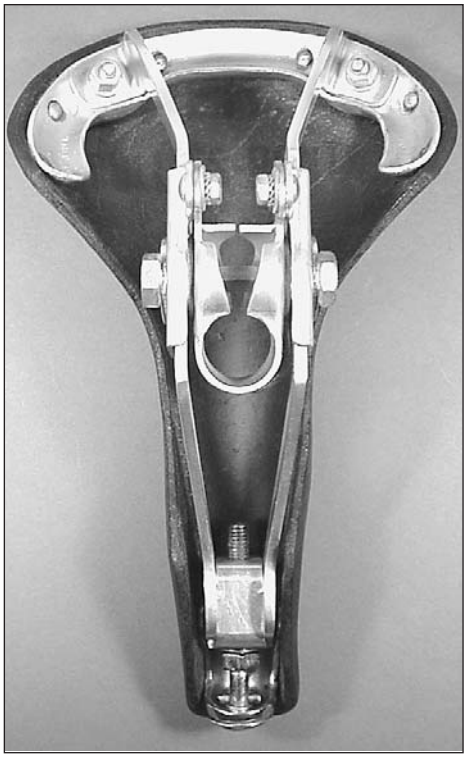
Stainless rails, aluminum rear frame, the deluxe Swallow. This one is in prime condition, and note the bag loops.





Lycett L.15 Swallow
1960s
15.5cm x 28cm
13.5oz

Budget Swallow. Brooks owned Lycett. Note the steel U-brace, attached with rivets, to prevent flaring flaps. With black bag loops.



Ideale 90 Swallow
1970s
15cm x 26cm
1lb 2oz w/post clip
French maker Ideale's variant. The shortest one, and it had unique rails. Rare.

Two Modern Saddles with Swallow-like Influences

Left top: An early Selle Italia Flite saddle, with carbon fiber body and no covering whatsoever.

Left bottom: A contemporary, popular, and still available Brooks Swift. Available in honey brown, black, and British Racing Green, if you can find it. We can special order it for you (call), or you can try Wallbike.com, Harris Cyclery, or your local shop.

Both have looks and dimensions similar to the Swallows—namely the long, thin nose, the high-cut sides, and rear width down around 15 to 15.5cm. Too narrow for me/Grant, but many people like them.

~~101~~ 2 Ways to Protect Your Saddle From Rain and Sweat

1. Goop It

The hide is off the cow, and even though the factory has treated it already, if you don't do anything to it, it'll eventually dry out like a piece of bark. So put some leather stuff on it to juice up the leather cells—or whatever they are under the microscope—and keep them strong and flexy; and also to repel water. A super dry saddle soaks up sweat and water, and a coating of goop will make most of it run off.

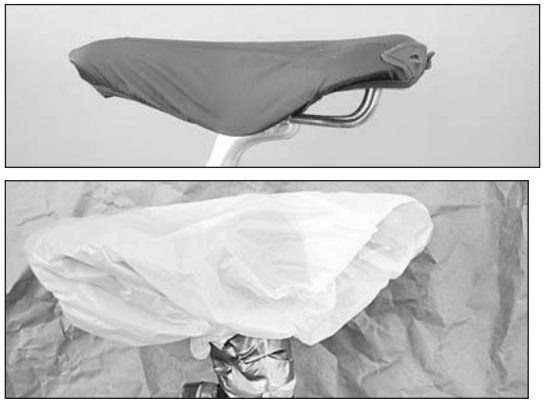
Over the years, everything has been used to treat the leather; and mistreating and overtreating saddles has ruined nearly as many as rains have. The two goops we recommend are Brooks Proofide and Obenauf's Leather Preservative, and though both work fine, Obenauf's wins. It's fun to apply, you'll get into it, but don't overdo it. A chunk the size of a pencil eraser will treat one whole topside. Opinions vary as to whether or not you should treat the underside of the saddle. Naysayers claim it'll block the breathing. Pragmatists say the leather is more open down there and needs protection even more than the topside. Everybody wants a definitive answer, so here's ours: Apply goop in a polka-dot pattern on the underside, and use fenders or at least a saddlebag to keep the wheels from tossing roadwater at your saddle's underside.

2. Cover It

Even if you've treated your saddle, there's something to be said for doing the same for it as you'd do for yourself, which is, namely, make it wear a hat. The argument for hatlessness is that the hats cover up the beautiful leather, and may not go well, colorwise, with the rest of your bike. But just like the high society lady who uses a newspaper to cover her permanent as she walks from the expensive store to her expensive car in the rainy parking lot, function sometimes has to win a battle.

A decent rule to follow in deciding whether or not to hide the hide under a bonnet: If it's raining when you leave the house, do it. If it's not raining but it might start, and your ride is long, bring it. On a sweaty summer ride, put it on. So your gorgeous saddle may be covered up about 30 percent of the time. Oh, well…

Note: Some people never do this, and still get good results. But preventing your saddle from getting soaked makes sense to us.



Top: Genuine Carradice Saddle Bonnet, fits the B.17. Bottom: Lowbrow Solution—produce bag and duct tape. Secret tip: Since the Carra-bonnet is stitched, some leakage may occur; so if you plan to be out for a few hours in a downpour, put a plastic produce bag on underneath it. It takes up no space, and why not? If the super floppy look offends, wrap it to the saddle with duct tape.

Not to turn this handy hint page into a commercial opportunity, but many folks reading this may not currently have our catalogue, and references to things like Carradice Saddle Bonnet and Obenauf's are going to fly way over their heads, so we feel obliged to mention that we have this stuff, and most bike shops don't. Orderable by phone (925) 933 7304 or at rivbike.com.

Carradice Saddle Bonnet for the B.17
Part no. 11-014 $15

Obenauf's and Proofide
Obenauf's Tiny tub, 1-oz. part no. 31-243 $3
Obenauf's Big tub, 4oz. part no. 31-344 $10
Proofide, 4oz tin. part no. 11-005 $6

One Way To Assemble a Bike

A STEP-BY-TEDIOUS-STEP GUIDE TO HOW WE DO IT. THE MECHANIC IN THESE PHOTOS IS ANDREW. HE EVEN WROTE THE CAPTIONS. HE DON'T WORK HERE ANY MORE, BUT HE'S STILL A PAL AND THIS IS STILL OUR METHOD. THESE DAYS, ROBERT KUROSAWA (PINEAPPLE BOB) ASSEMBLES THE BIKES HERE, AND HE'S GOOD, TOO. THE PROCEDURE SHOWN ISN'T THE ONLY ONE THAT WORKS, BUT IT'S HOW WE DO IT HERE, AND IT DOES WORK.

Above: The frame as we receive it. The headset is installed, but may need adjusting and more grease.

We Boeshield all the frames thoroughly, turning them this way and that to make sure the rustproofing gets into all the corners.

Frames get a full set of water bottle bolts, often greased and installed, but at least included. The bottle cages attach with M5 stainless steel socket head cap screws, which take a 4mm allen. These weigh fractionally more than the lightest bottle cage bolts—probably button-head bolts that take 3mm allens—but we like 4mm allens, because the wrenches are harder to lose, and 4mm has a non-metric equivalent (5/32"), in case you're in a pickel somewhere where they don't have metric wrenchews.

Our seat binder bolt (not shown) is an ordinary M6x20mm bolt that you can replace at many hardware stores. Every frame we make uses the same binder bolt, and it is a smart choice.

Here's what I get from the warehouse—a bin full of parts, which in 2.5 to 3 hours will become a bicycle. With cantilever brakes and bar-end shifters, it would take up to 4 hours. A less efficient builder might take up to 6 hours.

Production wheels get trued a little, but custom wheels don't, because they're already finely tuned and perfect. All the wheels get cotton Velox rim tape, and talc on the tubes, to prevent sticking.

A Phil Wood retaining ring. I put it in a turn or so, then spread the included Loctite over the remaining threads. The one with the red mark has a left-hand thread, and goes in the drive side. Sometimes it takes a little fiddling to get the chainline and clearances right. I Lloctite until I've got it figured out.

I lube the mating surfaces on the Phil bottom brackets—the grease makes removal much easier. I've don't grease the frame threads, though—it'll render the Loctite ineffective. To remove a stuck retaining ring from a Phil BB, thread it back into the frame, with the spindle on the outside. You can use the BB as a lever, and wiggle it right out of the ring.

Both rings tighten in the same direction, and it's a lot easier when you have two tools—one to hold one ring, one to tighten the other ring.

Time to mount the cranks. Look for about a 5mm gap between the inner ring and chainstay before tightening the crank bolt. When you use the same maker's crank and recommended BB, it'll work out fine. When you mix brands (as is always the case with Phil), you may have to shift the BB spindle left or right some.

I grease the crank bolt threads and torque the bolts to 25 ft-lbs. Make sure the gap between the chainring and the chainstay is still at least 2.5mm. With certain combinations (T.A. Cyclotourist cranks come to mind here), tight clearances down there are almost a requirement—I've seen a gap as small as 1mm. It may work, but why push it?

The front derailleur: The cage should be parallel to the chainrings. I make the gap between the big ring and the cage as narrow as I can, given the restrictions a low bottom bracket combined with small chainrings can put on my choice of front derailleurs. We can't use a 105 triple on a Rivendell with 700c wheels and a 46T big ring—the cage hangs down too far and hits the chainstay. We use double derailleurs on 46-36-24 combos, though, and they work fine.

Grease the rear derailleur bolt and put it in, making sure the B adjustment screw is clearing the tab on the dropout hanger. BTW, the length of the hanger and your shifting (index or friction) help determine the real capacity of your derailleur. We use derailleurs rated to 27T on 28T freewheels, and they'll probably even handle a 30T cog, depending on the dropout.

Brakes: Just make sure you use the proper washers (or none) to ensure sufficient engagement of the threads. Notice that the pads on these Ultegra standard reach dual-pivots have been swapped out for Mathausers.

The brake is centered when this mark (arrow) is centered. There's a fine adjustment, which we'll get to later. For now, center the caliper and tighten it.

Stem into quill: I grease it up good, getting grease on the threads of the expander bolt and all over the wedge, even between the wedge and the quill. Grease, lanolin, or Phil oil work fine. Oil the expander bolt threads if you're fanatical. It cannot hurt.

The Nitto Stem Pry: Japan's gift to bicycle mechanics, especially those who have ever had to install a Nitto handlebar shim. Even if I'm not installing a shim, this tool is a joy to use. The handlebars go right in, no scratching or swearing.

Since I only work with new brake levers with fresh and flexy hoods here at Rivendell, I'm comfortable turning them inside out like this for installation. Older gum hoods easily tear, so don't do this with them.

Where do the levers go? It's up to you. I like to position it 1-1.5cm above the bottom of the bar, as shown. The "traditional" position is level, but higher supports your hand better. Then, rotate the bars up so the ends point toward the rear brakes. On most bikes, that's about 10 degrees from horizontal. Look at the beautiful curve on this bar.

Anywhere there's the potential for metal-to-metal contact, I prevent corrosion and frustration by greasing one surface before assembly. I also put beeswax on the screws, both to prevent corrosion and to keep them from loosening. Sometimes the square hole in the washer here is tight on the boss. File it or tap it on, using a socket (or dumbbell) and light mallet.

Here's the mounted shifter. This one's an old Superbe Pro. On our new Silver shifters, grease the little silver washer, both sides.

Grease the threads when installing a freewheel or cassette! Or use anti-seize. It isn't as big a deal for cassette lockrings, because they aren't tightened by pedaling force, but it's still a good idea. For freewheels, just thread them on by hand and use the test ride to tighten them. Cassette lockrings get torqued to 30ft-lbs.

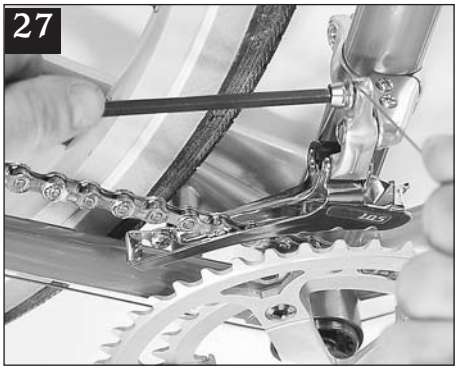
Install the wheels and align the brake pads to the rim. Make sure the entire contact surface is 1mm or so below the upper edge of the rim, so the pads don't meet the tire after they're worn down thin (later on).

Install the dual-pivot caliper with the wheel centered between the pads as much as possible, then use a 3mm allen to fine-tune it. Turn clockwise or c-cw, as the brake requires. Single pivot brakes require a different procedure, not shown.

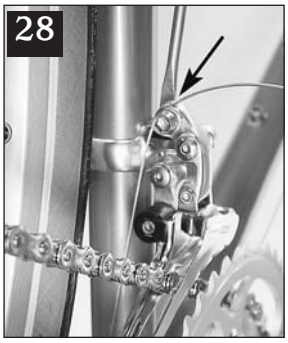
Chain length: I leave the chain as long as I can, still making sure the rear derailleur takes up the slack when the chain's on the small cog and the small ring. If you have a triple with a relatively small inner ring and a relatively large outer, setting the chain length this way may result in your derailleur being ripped violently from its hanger (or worse) when you're in the big ring and you try to shift into the big cog. If you want to ride the big ring x big cog combo, make sure the chain is long enough to do that. For more on chain length, read RR 25. (Or go by this: The chain should be just long enough to be tensioned in the small x small combination, and long enough to shift easily to the big x big.)

Two kinds of cable housing: shifter housing (L) and brake housing (R). You can use brake housing for shifting, though it'll compress a bit and screw up your indexing. You CAN'T use shifter housing for brakes, because the strands are parallel, not wound in a spiral. So the housing lacks the compression strength that brake cable housing needs.

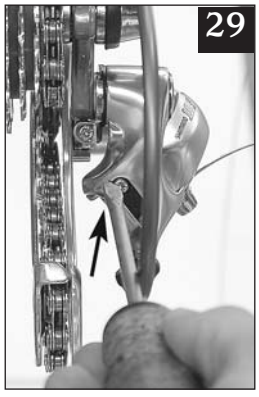
Cut the ends as square as you can, and file or grind them until they're free of burs. If you file: Keep the file stationary, and move the housing!



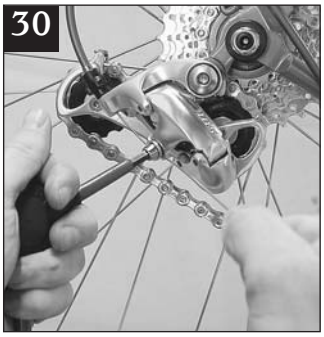
Attaching the front derailleur cable – using a ball-end allen wrench makes this easier, but I don't tighten it all the way down with one—it could slip and damage the screw. You'll probably have to readjust the cable anyway after setting the limit screws.



The limit adjusting screws are on top; see the arrows. Turn them 'til the chain drops easily but not overenthusiastically onto the inner ring while on the big rear cog, and climbs without a struggle up onto the big ring while on the small rear cog. Make sure the cage does not come into contact with the crank! Sometimes you have to bend the cage some, if you have an odd derailleur-crank combo.



Despite this photo, I usually adjust the rear derailleur limits before putting the chain on. I can easily see when the upper (jockey) pulley is aligned with the biggest and smallest cogs, and that's all there is to it. 99.9% of the time, you can safely ignore the B adjustment screw - some derailleurs don't even have one.



I screw the barrel adjuster in all the way, and hold the derailleur in its farthest-out position while tightening the cable. There are all kinds of tricks for making supposedly non-compatible parts index together, like putting the cable on the wrong side of the bolt to change the travel, but I don't know any of them.

Brake cables: Grease the head of the cable to prevent squeaks. Lube cables with Phil oil, grease, or graphite. The arrow points out that I adjust the brake with the barrel adjuster UP. This is technically wrong, but makes it easier to remove the fattish 700x35 tire (open the brakes up by screwing the barrel down). Also, I adjust the cable with the quick-release UP, also wrong, but since I'm not tensioning the cable, there's slack in it, and after I tighten the pinch bolt (as shown), I flip the quick-release lever back down, and it takes up the small amount of slack.

Once you've test-ridden the bike and gotten everything in the right place, it's time to wrap the bars. Cut two two-inch pieces from the end of each roll (don't cut all four from one roll, or you'll be short), and cover the brake lever clamps with them.

I wrap toward the outside of the bar, over the top. On the right side of the bar, that's clockwise when viewed from behind. I don't do the figure-eight thing around the brake lever, because with our wide bars, the tape isn't always long enough. Anyway, one wrap around the lever covers it. I use my fingers to hold the tape down, and pull hard on the tape in the direction I'm going. With cloth tape, I wrap the left bar counter-clockwise, and the right bar clockwise.

If the tape is bunching up and getting wrinkled, pull it tight, wiggle it side-to-side, and if it still wrinkles, push the wrinkle out. It takes practice. I've done this about 120 times. Some tape colors are easier to wrap than others, for some reason.

Twine: I cut a piece 9 feet long, then fold that in half, and cut an eight-inch piece from the center, leaving me with three pieces. One long piece gets wrapped around the end of the bar tape, starting from the inside. Wrap it nice and tight, pushing the strands toward each other, if you have to, with a screwdriver or something.

When you have enough twine left for about five more wraps, make a loop with the short piece, and wrap over it (with the loop toward the outside).

Keep wrapping the twine over the loop, and push the end through it. Grab the ends of the looped piece, and yank them back through, tightening the loop around the tail end and pulling it through. Coat the twine with something that dries clear, and is waterproof yet toxic; then shellac the bar tape if you like. That's it.

Here's the finished bike. About two weeks later we got a note from its new owner: "My new Rambouillet came about a week ago, and I've been so busy enjoying it that I plum forgot to contact you folks and say THANK YOU!! It's the finest riding, best fitting, prettiest bicycle I've ever owned. You people do it right. Keep up the good work!"

There Are Lots of Ways To Assemble A Bike

The assembly process shown here is one of many possibilities. What's important, if you assemble bikes for a living or simply do it a lot, is that you get a routine down that you can follow from bike to bike. It's more efficient that way, and you're less likely to forget something.

For space reasons we've not shown things like making sure the wheels are true, and that there's enough grease, and alignment checks, and so on. I/Grant am confident there isn't a bike shop in the land that assembles a bike *better* than we do, but I'm equally sure there may be shops within phone range of you who are just as good, even if they don't twine the bars.

Some shops tout themselves as the only good assembly in town, and say everybody else is a hack. It's fine to be prideful, but top-quality assembly is something lotsa folks can do.

How can you tell who's good? Most complete bikes come to a dealer 90 percent assembled, and if that's all they work on, it's likely that some of the skills required to build from scratch are a bit rusty. But if a shop does a fair amount of business in framesets, it's likely they have experience assembling them from scratch. Also, if you're getting a road bike assembled, make sure your shop has experience in road bikes.

Andrew's Additional Assembly Notes

Not every bike we build has parts this fancy—we have less costly cranks and bottom brackets, too, and seeing this build shouldn't deter you from putting those on your Rivendell, Atlantis, or Rambouillet. Every bike part we offer meets our high standards.

Most of the bikes I build have cantilevers. The best way to set up cantilevers for lots of leverage and stopping power: Keep the straddle wires low and grip the pad studs toward the outer end. This increases mechanical advantage. It should be an article itself, and will be, but not right now.

Most of our bikes have bar-end shifters. The bikes with cassette hubs get set up to index, even though I like to think most people use the friction option.

This bike has the unusual and not generally recommended combination of light-action, dual-pivot brake calipers and non-aero brake levers. Brake levers intended for use with these calipers have springs that compensate for the light action and pull the cable back through the sometimes convoluted housing inherent with aero routing. Non-aero levers don't have these springs, so sometimes the brake doesn't snap back after you release the lever. This time it worked fine. If you want to use this combo, you may have to take the springs out of the calipers and bend them a bit to increase resistance. Not a do-it-yourselfer? Don't do it!

Assembling a bike with used and mismatched parts presents unpredictable challenges that can add hours or days to the job. If you want to do it, great, but here, we use only new parts we know work together perfectly. Your bike can still be unique, though.

In a perfect world, all of our customers would pickup their bikes and ride away. That happens only about 2% of the time, though, so we pack most bikes—another 45 minutes, if you're good and have it down. I cover all of the frame tubes in bubble wrap, and anchor the right crank to the chainstay. Then I remove the handlebars and front wheel, and attach them to the frame (with plenty of padding between them and the frame), tying down anything that might move around and do some damage. I stick a dense blue foam block into one end of the box, and poke the fork ends into it. Then a smaller box, containing the saddle, seat post, pedals, front skewer, etc. gets taped inside the big box, a plug goes into the seat lug to protect the fancy point, and another foam block goes on top of that. If the frame is 64cm or smaller, I'm done. If it's a little bigger, I may need to make a peaked roof to accommodate the larger frame. If it's a 68cm, I remove both wheels, the right crank, the rear derailleur to fit it into a box UPS will accept.

Tool List

(* means nice to have, but its function is duplicated by other tools in the list)

1. 4-5-6mm allen Y-wrench
2. 8-9-10mm socket Y-wrench
3. separate allens, 3-4-5-6-8mm
4. separate box & open-end wrenches 8-9-10mm
5. 12-inch crescent wrench (opens to 32mm +)*
6. crank bolt extractor (or use self-extracting bolts)
7. crank extractor (or use self-extracting bolts)
8. side cutters (dykes)
9. cable and indexed housing cutters
10. chain tool. ProGold is unbeatable.
11. separate T-handled allens 4-5-6*
12. mini vise grip
13. headset wrench (thin spanner), 32mm if 1-inch headset
14. headset locknut wrench, pro style
15. headset cone slammer
16. headset press (or do it yourself; see RR27)
17. headset extractor (or long punch, screwdriver, hammer)
18. tub of grease with small hole in the top, with brush in hole. Lanolin is useful, too, for external metal-to-metal contacts.
19. flat or half-round file, fine
20. dirty clothes or an apron
21. rags or shop-quality blue towels (good hardwares stores have them)
22. bike stand. Tip: Hold the bike in the stand by the seat post, not the seat tube. Tilt the bike slightly downward, so the bars don't swing around and smack the top tube. (Some small-cheap-light-portable bike supports will do the job, too.)

Mark's New Cyclo-Cross Bike

As explained by Mark Abele himself, but Grant wrote the captions.

Mark says:

Well, I'd wanted a Rivendell for a long time and I was finally in a position (employee) to rationalize yet another bike to my wife. I started cyclocross racing a few years back and really enjoy it, and I like the versatility of the cross bike. I wanted my Rivendell to be an upgrade from the entry-level frameset I'd been using. Here's what I had on my wish list:

Neutral steering (72.5 head with 4.5cm Rake)

Good ground clearance for obstacles (+ 10mm)

My familiar road position (73.5)

Quick handling, and good traction for slippery sections

Open (not compact) main triangle for easy shouldering

Clearance for 38c tires

Normal "Road" double crankset & BB (my other bike required a high "Q" factor because of the flared chainstays

Other little goodies that Curt did: Sealed stays,fork blades and bridges. Also, the seat stays are capped, not plugged

Color: Solid Grey #57704 in the "Standard" paint style

Specs

Frame: Custom for Mark, brazed by Curt of light Reynolds 753 and True Temper OX plat tubing. Reynolds 531 blades. Vertical dropouts for fast wheel changes. Painted by Joe Bell. Plain grey with cream details.

Headset: Ultegra, sealed

Stem and bar: Nitto

Seat Post: SunTour

Crank & BB: Ritchey, Shimano

Pedals: Time

Saddle: Avocet Racing O2

Hubs: Dura-Ace

Rim: Mavic Open Pro 28H

Shifters: Dura-Ace bar-end

Front Der: Dura-Ace

Rear Der: Dura-Ace

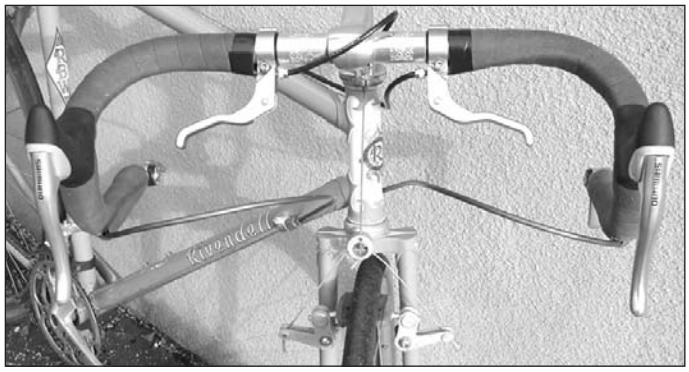
Race tires: Hutchinson Pro Series

Brakes: Spooky

Brake lever: Tiagra with IRD interrupters

This is Mark on Mt. Diablo, and this particular left turn may be the best left turn in the world. Mark's grey bike and Derby Tweed sweater match the road and fog and woods perfectly. This photo is actually in color.

There's nothing cyclo-crossy about the pointed dropouts, but far be it from us to miss an opportunity to show off this most favorite non-functional detail. SInce Mark's bike is grey, the creamy details such as this are even more important, aesthetically.



Mark and lots of cross riders—maybe 40 percent, at least here on the West Coast—ride with "interupter" brake levers. We'll have a story on them in the next issue, but basically they're a better and safer version of the old "suicide" levers that used to come on old cheap ten-speeds. The new style, shown here and increasingly available from a number of makers, lets you brake from the tops, and they ain't squishy.

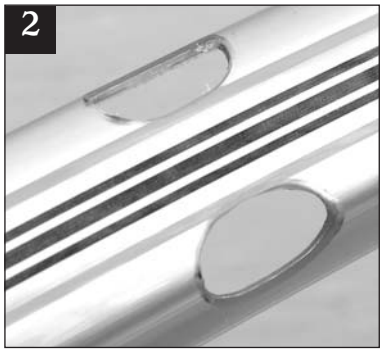
The tire shown is a Ruffy Tuffy—not a cross tire, but the day these pictures were taken, Mark didn't have his knobbies on. But even with a 700x35 knobby, there's plenty of room for mud. You're looking at the brakes, right? They're Spooky brand. From Europe. A pain to set up, and they don't work any better than Shimano and cost more, but they're slightly lighter and have that "I'm a special brake for hard core cyclo-cross riders" look.

Our normal cable routing is at 7:30 or so, but on a cross bike that gets shouldered a lot, it's better to put the stops up higher, so they don't bite you when you carry the bike. These are about at 11:15, which works well. For cross bikes, some makers route the rear derailleur cable along the top tube and down the seat stays. There are minor pros and cons to that, but Mark opted for the normal way, so there you go.

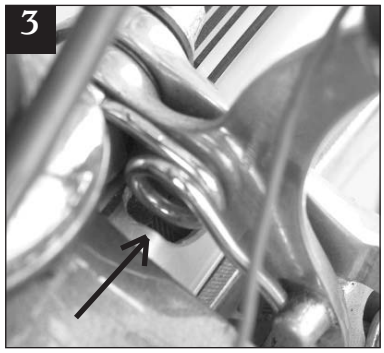
Mounting Fenders When Tharain't No Room To

Most road bikes these days are unfenderable, and yet it rains. The bike shown here is barely fenderable, but there's not tons of room for fenders, and the tricks shown will help you mount fenders on most hard-to-fender bikes. Some bikes seem to defy fenders, but once you get creative, you'll surprise yourself with the tricks you'll come up with. Don't give up, mainly.

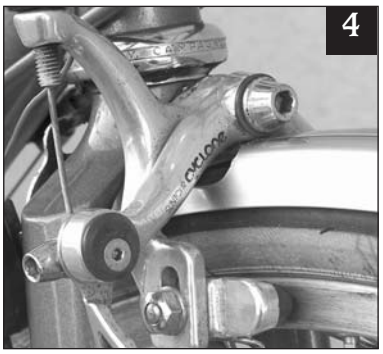
Hand-fit the front one under the brake and mark where the brake'll hit.



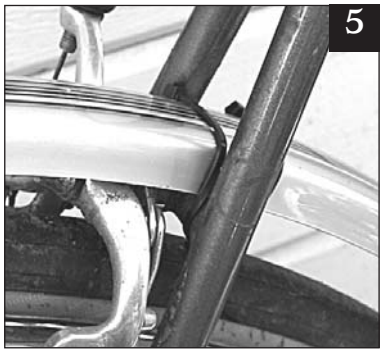
Guess some, but basically you want to end up with two holes.



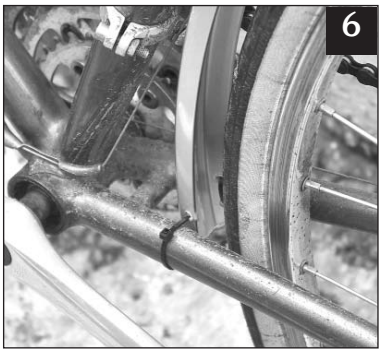
You may need to make the holes big enough to clear springs. It depends.



With the holes here, the brakes can get squozen without pushing the fender into the tire. This is good!



Route the fender over the brake. Drill holes and use zip-ties.



Got more zip ties? Use them to attach the rear fender to the chainstays. You'll need to drill holes.

Fender Cops will blow the whistle on you for not having a consistent clearance all around the front and rear tires, and indeed, that rear fender will raise eyebrows even on Death Row. And then when they see the zip ties, they'll haul you down to the police station by your ear.

But we're in this together, because every time we suggest zip ties we get letters from disappointed Reader readers who think we're as highbrow as they are.

But not all bikes are show bikes, and if you want to put fenders on a bike that's not exactly made for them, don't fret about looks. Nothing you can do with fenders looks sillier than riding down the road spraying gritty roadwater all over self & bike. Bike shown is a 1980 Ritchey sport-touring model. The thing behind the fork is a generator. It still needs mudflaps.

Bike Hits Buck at 40 mph

by John Potis

I moved from Madison, Wisconsin to Oakland, California in May. Soon after arriving in California, the Rambouillet I ordered around New Year's arrived. I built it quickly and was riding within a few days.

I got off early from work one day about two weeks ago, and went for a quick bicycle ride up in the hills. I hooked up with another rider doing the same route, and soon we came to my favorite part of the ride—the descent down South Park Road through Tilden Regional Park. It's the steepest hill in the park, there's only one turn you need to brake on, so a good rider can reach 50 mph on it.

I took the lead, picked some good lines and was going about 40 mph, just getting to the part where I would have really picked up some speed, when a 3-point buck (6 points by Eastern count) that I estimate weighed about 175 lbs moseyed into my path. I hit him, flew off the bike, landed on my helmetless head and shoulder, and continued sliding. I saw my front wheel roll down the hill, and the buck was gone.

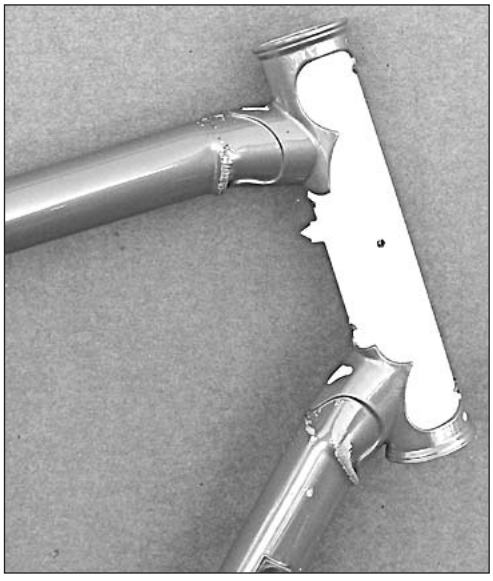
The rider I was with flagged down a car, and took me to the emergency room, where the woman who cleaned my road rash dropped her pants to show me her own road rash.

I got two stitches in my head and four where my collarbone poked out. I still had about an inch and a half separation in my collarbone. I had surgery last Tuesday, a week after the crash. I'll be fine.

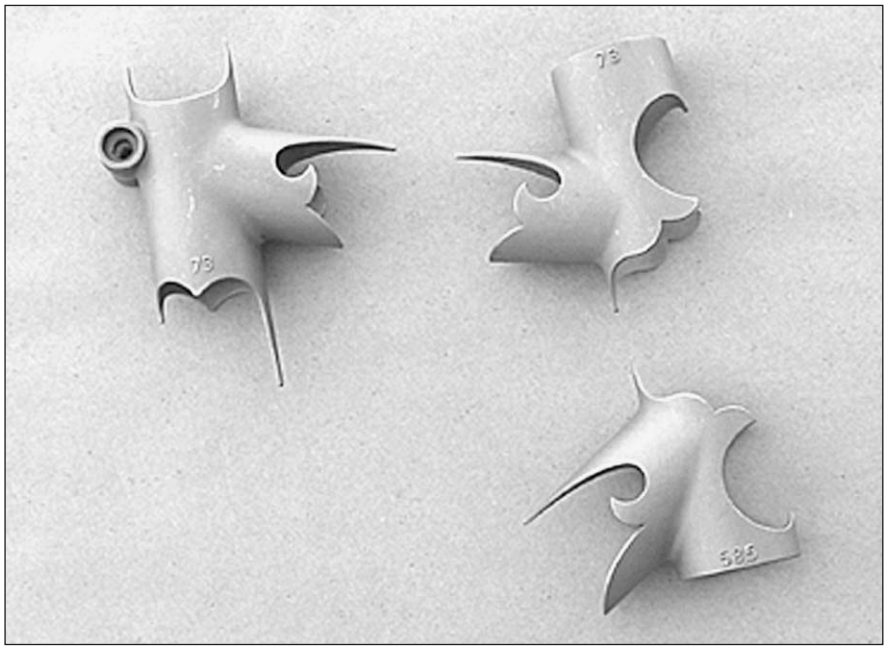
Top: A slight bulge in the rear part of the top tube, just ahead of the lug point. If this were the only damage, the frame could easily be ridden. During riding, the rear of the top tube is the least stressed part of any frame.

Above right: This shows how the fork leveraged against the down tube, causing a monster crease behind the spoon. You can also see how the fork turned, and the crown jammed against the down tube, causing another slight dent there. It was probably at this point that the fork blades (look left) caved sideways. In a pinch, the fork could be straightened and ridden, because steel is tough, and the fork has strength to spare. But we'd always recommend a new fork in a case like this.

Right: The major damage. This is typical of a front-end collision, and in most cases, the only damage occurs to the down tube and top tube, in these places. The down tube goes first, and then the top tube. Or maybe they go at the same time. The down tube generally bends first, because it suffers the most damage. Sometimes the top tube escapes damage.



As lugs go, these look more like British models from the '30s, '40s, or '50s than something fresh out of the oven. The massive amounts of material seem to come from a time when steel was crummy, heat was hot and plentiful and perhaps too generously applied, and sheer bulk around the joint could inspire confidence in the frame's strength.
But they are fresh out of the oven and just becoming available now. They're the only investment cast lugs ever that are designed to be dramatically changed by the builder; and that makes them unique and important and worth taking a good look at.



Kirk Pacenti's Fancy Carveables

Kirk is a young guy, in his mid-thirties at most, but has been a professional bike person for most of his life, and has a resume that would win him a job anyplace there's one to be filled.

I met him when he worked at Tim Isaac's Match, the company that was formed to build lugged Schwinn Paramounts, and ultimately ended up building many superfine Rivendells as well. That was a few years ago, and now both Tim and Kirk work for the American Bicyclery Group, owners of Lightspeed, Merlin, and Quintana Roo. Kirk is the designs custom bikes there, which he tells us more about in a small sidebar interview on the next page.

Among other things, Kirk is a superb tig-welder. He's able to weld 0.5mm steel to quarter-inch plate, if the job calls for it (few bikes would); and in a past life, he tig-welded frames for well-known U.S. custom builders. He is not *anti-tig*, which makes this lug project he's got going even more curious.

Kirk's new lugs, made by Long Shen, are big news among traditional builders. Partly it's because these are largely lugless times, and any new lug is automatic big news in that small world, which has fine Henry James lugs to choose from, but precious little else. And, partly it's because Kirks new lugs are the first and only investment cast lugs ever made that seem contrary to one of the benefits of the investment casting ("lost wax") process.

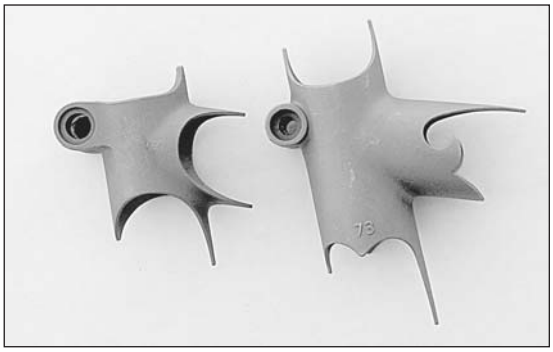
The best modern investment casters are able to cast in fine detail that was simply not castable 20 years ago. It seems weird, then to create a set of lugs that are designed from the get-go to be modified by the builder. Modifying lugs is a pain in the neck, and is one of the reasons *for* investment cast ones.

And, you'd think, why design in any swirls, spoons,and points, if you expect and hope the builder will just file them out or modify them in such a way as to make the lug unrecognizable from the original?

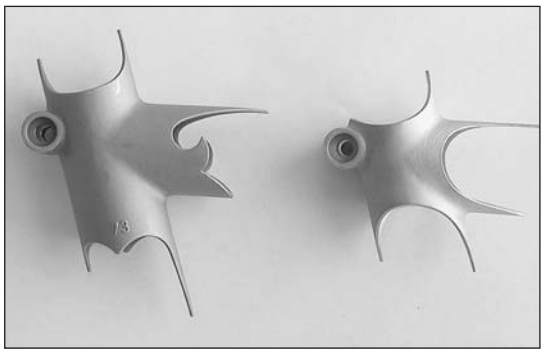
But that's what Kirk has done, and it's a fantastic idea. While he could have just designed blunt-cut blanks, he included ornamentation to save some carving time, and to suggest possibilities. The orginals, shown here, are usable as cast, but it's unlikely anybody will do that. If somebody wants to braze without a lot of carving, that somebody has other options.

What Kirk's lugs do is give a carver a place to start. There's enough metal there to completely reshape the lug, using it as though it were just a blunt blank, but it's more likely a builder will take the more practical option and "shrink" the lug using the current shape as a guide.

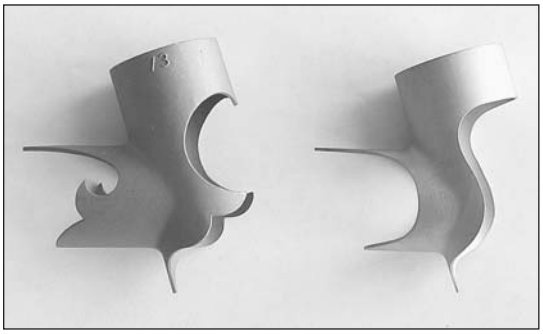
Kirk is well-connected in the traditional builders field, and is creating a site to show off different interpretations of these new lugs. Budding and new builders can see, get ideas from, and be inspired by the works of—so far—Glenn Erickson, Curt Goodrich, Tom Oswald, Peter Mooney, and J.P. Weigle. Sacha White ought to get some up there, too. Visit www.bikelugs.com for an eyeful. Things are looking up for lugs, thanks to Kirk.



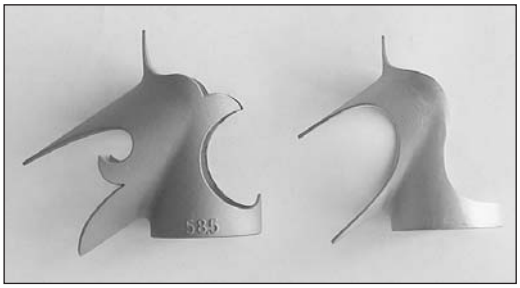
Left: Generic normal seat lug: Right: Kirk's could be carved to copy it, but offers many possibilities.



Pre- and post-carving. In this picture and the two below, you see Spectrum Cycles' carved up version. This is the seat lug, of course.



Here's the top head lug. You can see the overall simplification of the lug; and the angle (73) is gone now.



The bottom head lug has been carved to match the seat and top head lugs, nicely done.

Questions for Kirk

1. You're the custom frame designer at Litespeed. I imagine you did this on your own time, but is this going to have any ugly repercussions there?

I don't think so. It's a great job and I wouldn't jeopardize it for a few lug sales. I work on my stuff at home and keep it low key. Besides, lugged bikes don't compete with Litespeeds or Merlins, so it's not a problem.

2. When and why did you decide you wanted to make lugs? It's not like there's a big market for them, like there was 15 years ago...

Well, I've wanted to do my own lugs for about 9 years, but I didn't get serious, or get the money together, until about late '99. I know fewer builders than ever are using lugs now, but I love the craft and want to see it continue. I figure these lugs will do more to keep traditional methods alive than anything I could do as a builder. Also, I wouldn't say nobody builds with lugs. All my heroes still use lugs exclusively.

3. How long did it take to come up with the details, how many versions did you do on paper, and what were you trying to achieve? And what other lugs or ideas influenced the design?

For the past 2 years I have been playing with the basic shoreline, and it didn't change much from the original sketches. The hard part was coming up with a shape that would give a builder a good starting point. Then trying to leave enough space for carving without making it look too funky. As you can see there is a lot of room for carving. Nervex lugs (all types) and early ('94) Rivendell lugs were a big influence.

4. How do you plan to market them? How much will they cost?

I can't advertise them, so I rely on word of mouth and the internet. I will do a website someday. They're expensive—$55.00 for steel, $65.00 for stainless.

5. How many will you sell this year?

Well, I've sold about 45 pair so far, so with some luck, maybe 200.

6. Do you see these as competing with other lugs, or just offering another option?

I wanted to offer an alternative. I suppose "alternative" implies competing at some level, but I like lugs, and I wanted to make some, and I wanted to offer a set that was "carveable" from the start. I know that's an unusual road to take, given that investment cast lugs are usually used "as cast," but with my lugs, a builder can create his own design and make it unique more easily than he can do with a more svelte lug. That's the point. I would be thrilled if I couldn't recognize the lugs when a builder got done with them.

Gyroscopy and Staying Up

by Michaeil Barnes

Spinning bicycle wheels, as you'll soon see, make excellent gyroscopes. But do you need the gyroscopic stability of the wheels to make a bicycle rideable? This is one of the perennial questions of bicycling, and opinions still vary. I'm not going tell you what to think about this issue, but I'll suggest some experiments that let you decide for yourself.

First, a few observations. Think of those little wheels on children's bikes or folding bikes—they are too small to generate much stability, yet those bikes are rideable. Or how about a kid's Razor scooter? It's pretty easy to stay on top of one, even though the wheels are way too small to generate any useful gyroscopic forces. Finally, try switching your wheels from the heaviest wheels you own to your lightest. The reduction in rim weight and the consequent reduction in angular momentum will mean less gyroscopic stability. The bike will feel more responsive with light wheels, but most people wouldn't say it feels less stable.

Here's a wheel heavied-up with an inner tube filled with sand. It works pretty much as the author says. We snipped the long end before riding it. If you want to try this yourself, work with dry sand. (Fender got a mudflap before the first rain.)

Let's clarify this with some experiments. The first is one of the great simple science experiments of all time, so give it a try. All you need is your front wheel, about ten feet of sturdy string or twine, and an exposed ceiling beam or a strong ceiling hook. Tie the ends of the twine together to make a loop, and attach one end of the loop to the ceiling hook or beam. Tie the string together at the top if necessary to make sure both strands hang straight down with no gap in between them. Slip the non-lever end of your quick release through the lower end of the loop so the string rests between the nut and the hub.

Now you have a bike wheel hanging from a piece of string—big deal. Here is where the fun starts. Grab the wheel by the quick release lever and bring the wheel up to vertical, with half the weight supported by the string, and the other half by your hand. Give the wheel a good spin, hold on for a second to let it stabilize, and let go.

The wheel will hang vertically in the air, slowly pirouetting around the string. The rotation is due to precession. It's the basis for autopilots and missile guidance systems. And it helps you turn your bike, too. Your bicycle wheel gyroscope translates a rotating force or torque (gravity, in this case) into rotation on an axis 90 degrees opposed to the original axis of torque.

Demonstrate this experiment for friends, but first let them try to guess the result. Most people won't believe the outcome until they see it with their own eyes. This experiment is guaranteed to cause a bug-eyed smile on the face of any curious six-year old. If you like, try a variation of this experiment—tie a heavy wrench to the quick-release lever (on the side without the string). The extra gravitational pull doesn't make the wheel tilt, it just makes it precess faster.

Now for experiment number two. First, get an old inner tube, one for 700x28 or fatter tires. Get rid of the valve stem by snipping all the way through the inner tube on either side of the stem. Fold over one

end of the tube, and pinch it closed with one of those medium-sized black spring clips used to clip stacks of paper together; or just tie it together. (If you use spring clips, remove the little wire handles.) With a funnel, fill the inner tube tightly with sand, and clamp off the remaining open end as before. Thread the sand-filled tube through the spokes of your front wheel, jamming it as close to the rim as possible, and use electrical tape to secure the black clamps together.

You've just added about 2.5 pounds to your rim's weight, increasing the angular momentum and gyro-stability of the wheel. On my RB-1, the modified wheel fits easily within the fork, but I do have to remove the front brake. With your new heavy wheel in place, go for a ride, making sure to wear a helmet, and making sure to keep your speed low, just in case something comes loose and jams in the fork. *(In other words, don't sue the author or Rivendell.—ed.)*

I alternated my heavy sand-weighted wheel with a regular one. First I rode with hands on the bars. The heavy wheel felt a little more sluggish, but it was subtle. I'm not really sure I would have noticed the difference. Then I rode without hands. Wow! Obvious difference. With my regular wheel, I had to get up to speed in a medium gear to ride securely without hands. With the heavy wheel, I could ride hands free in low gears, coasting slowly, even climbing a slight incline. It was bizarre—the bike was way more stable.

For a final test, I rode my heavy wheel on my training rollers, with and without hands. On the road your forward speed imparts momentum to your bike and body, helping to stabilize you. On rollers, your bike and body have no momentum, so the bike is much trickier to ride. Typically I have to ride rollers for a month or two to get my balance tuned enough to ride without hands, and even then I can only do it for a minute or two at most.

Since I don't ride my rollers in the summer, I was pretty rusty. Sure enough, with my regular wheel there was no way I could ride without hands. It was rough riding even with hands. With the heavy wheel, it was a different story. Riding rollers with hands was very stable and much more relaxing than riding with regular wheels, and almost as stable as riding down the road. Plus, I could ride without hands easily. Without the momentum of riding down the road, the difference in gyro-stability between the light and heavy wheels was really noticeable.

So what have we learned? Does gyro-stability make a difference? Not much, unless you are riding without hands. But that may be enough to save you from some serious road rash in an emergency situation. About a month ago I was descending down the back-side of the Geysers ride near Healdsburg. I hit some debris with my front wheel and—BAM!—my hands bounced off the handlebars. I looked up to see I was headed off the road and down a steep embankment. I managed to get my right hand back on the handlebars, where I instinctively grabbed the brake lever and squeezed, locking up the rear wheel, causing it to skid out to the left. I turned into the skid as best I could and managed to get my left hand back on the bars in time to correct the skid, with no loss of skin or pride (well, just a little).

Throughout my ordeal, which must have lasted only five seconds, my trusty RB-1 behaved very predictably. Without the gyroscopic stability of the front wheel would I have been dumped on the ground? I hope I never have to find out.

Michael Barnes is a senior science writer at UC Berkeley, and a bicycle rider, and is qualified to guess, make hunches, and state his opinion.–GP

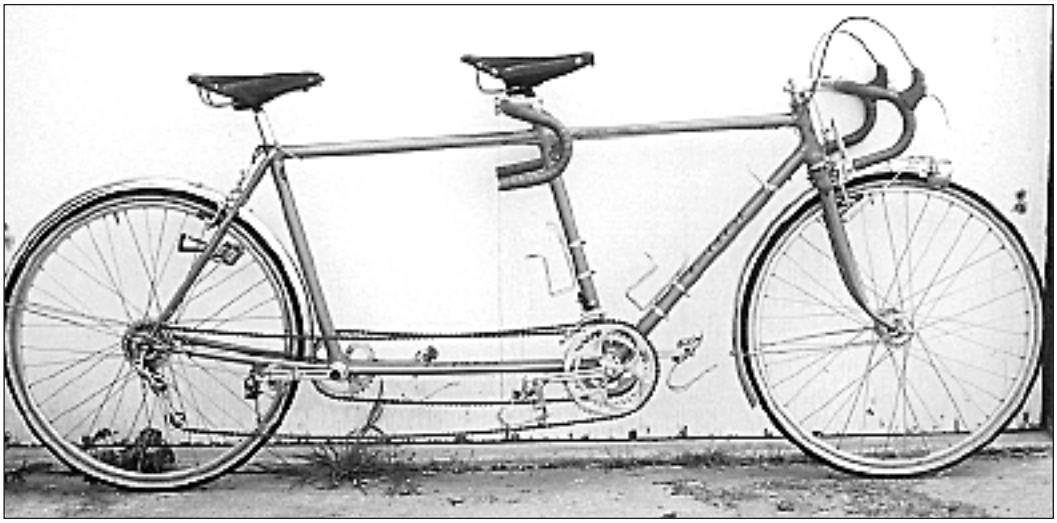
A French Bicycle Conglomeration

by Jan Heine

At a time when most bike stores sell only "road" and "mountain" bikes (more appropriately called "road racing" and "offroad racing" bikes), the choices offered by French *constructeurs* of days past are almost unbelievable. RR 24 showed the randonneur bikes, RR 25 featured a French camping bike, and RR 26 a 1952 René Herse randonneur. This time we will look at what else you could buy back then...

Tandems

In 1936, a period of strikes and unrest throughout France led to a mandatory 40-hour work week and 15 days of vacation. Since the 1920s, people had started to appreciate nature, but money was tight, and so travelling cheap and light by bicycle became popular. Young families often went bicycle touring on tandems to see the country; and many photos from that period show a child seat mounted on the rear top tube, with a single-wheel or two-wheel trailer being towed behind.



1950 René Herse tandem. During the 1960s or 1970s, this tandem went back to the Herse shop to be updated with new braze-ons for centerpull brakes (instead of the original cantilevers) and modern derailleurs (originally probably a Cyclo). The drive from the front cranks made sense when the front rider had to control the rod-operated front derailleur. Plus, it gives a perfect chainline in any gear!

Quality tandems were pioneered by Pitard and Hurtu, and soon more performing machines became available. Baras offered tandem versions of his famous aluminum machines, while Singer and Maury offered steel tandems that could easily be mistaken for much more recent machines.

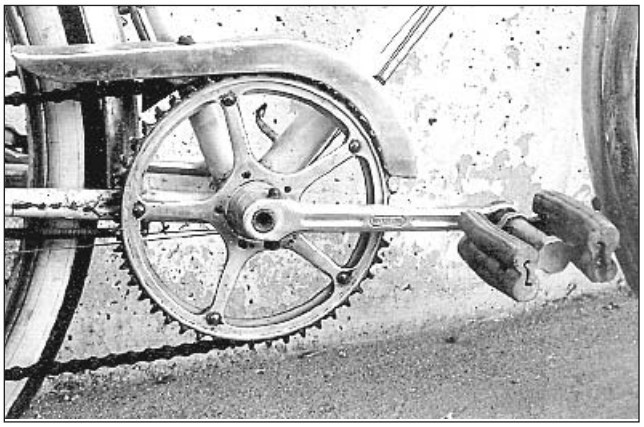
I was lucky to ride my friend Hervé Thomas' 1957 René Herse tandem, similar to the one you see in the photo. Hervé is a strong rider and experienced tandemist. Being taller, I was to be on the front. I approached the old Herse with some apprehension: The open frame lacks bracing, and tandems without lots of bracing are not supposed to work, especially for tall, strong riders. But since all French builders offered well-braced frames for touring, it was not for a lack of knowledge or materials that they made the open frames. They must have felt that open frames were superior for lightweight teams riding without luggage. During our 80 miles of riding, the bike proved stable enough to ride at moderate speeds without holding onto the handlebars (something I haven't managed on any tandem I've tried, new or old), and it climbs, descends and corners well—proof that Herse knew what he was doing. The oversized tubing of carefully selected diameters (32mm downtube!), joined by handmade lugs, may have something to do with the extraordinary performance. Tandems were serious business then, and many special parts were available—Maxicar hubs with wider flange spacing make super-strong wheels, freewheels with three instead of two pawls don't strip even when two riders apply the torque of a V8 engine, and special tandem tires were wide, round and grippy. Another myth dispelled: The ride of this 1957 Herse rivals the best tandems available today.

City Bikes

If all your riding was just 5 miles to the office and back, every day, rain or shine, you still might want a nice-looking, well-handling bike. A bike to be proud of, with a few gears if there were hills or wind along your route, with fenders to keep your work attire flawless even in a drizzle, and with a rack for your briefcase. Most of all, a fun bike to ride.

No problem—all the famous makers gladly would build a bike to suit your needs. The French makers believed a city bike should handle and ride like a performance machine. Their city bikes featured lightweight tubing and carefully considered geometries. The bike on the next page was built by Ondet of Lyon, who was not one of the famous builders. One wonders whether his lack of fame is due to living in Lyon (the magazines were all based in Paris) rather than to his craft. The fillet-brazed women's frame with the brazed-on rack is made from superlight tubing, has a neat front derailleur under the chain guard, and is complemented with the best and lightest parts from the 1950s. The pedals are superlight racing pedals covered

Ondet city bike with a typical performance mixte frame: A diagonal tube meets the seat tube, and additional seat stays brace the rear triangle. This lightweight frame is complemented by top-drawer components: Maxicar hubs, Mavic fenders, cottered alloy cranks, Ideale saddle with alloy rails, cantilever brakes.



Under the chain guard, you find two chainrings (half-step gearing) and a lever-operated derailleur. Rare in the 1950s, the 5-speed freewheel gives a useful spread of gears.

with large rubber blocks. I don't who would have ordered such a bike, but its performance belies its appearance. However, not every city bike was geared for performance above all—many featured internally geared hubs and full chain guards. But all were fun to ride.

"Porteur" Bikes

Newspaper carriers in Paris were well-paid professionals, who delivered the papers on their bikes. Quite a few of them ordered custom bikes from one of the famous "constructeurs." Equipped with sturdy racks guaranteed to haul 110 lbs., they often featured the best in quality components. A nice bike definetely was a status symbol. But it also avoided the hassles of broken equipment on the job. Just imagine chatting with the guy delivering your paper about the latest cantilever brakes and the beauty of fillet-brazed stems...

A Goëland Porteur, equipped for the job: Sealed bearings in hubs, bottom bracket and even the pedals meant the owner could deliver newspapers in any weather and not worry about the bike breaking down. Goëland frames were every bit as nice as the top makers', but "budget" parts like steel cranks kept the price significantly lower than that of a Singer or Herse.

Racing Bikes

Yes, Herse, Singer and the other constructeurs would build a racing bike, if you insisted. If you just wanted a bike with fenders but no lights, you'd chose a "sportif." Even on racing bikes, customers often ordered special touches like concealed cables, vertical dropouts and various braze-ons. Other racers were more typical of the time, with horizontal Campy dropouts and few braze-ons. Most Singers that came into the U.S. during the bike boom of the early 1970s were of the latter variety. Beautiful bikes, which ride great, but not as awe-inspiring as a true randonneur bike...

Motors, trailers and more

In the 1950s, the bottom fell out of bicycle sales due to a recession and the availability of relatively cheap cars. Many makers felt the need to offer motorized bikes. A "Mosquito" engine was attached under the bottom bracket, additional bracing reinforced the frame, a small gas tank was mounted inside the main triangle, and off you go. Or would you rather have a motorized Herse tandem?

For those who needed to carry more gear than their bikes could handle—think bicycle touring for two plus a toddler with only four panniers on a tandem - several French makers offered trailers in one- and two-wheel configurations. Especially the one-wheeled models look very similar to the popular trailers of today. However, most riders preferred to carry the load on the bike: Two-wheeled trailers are cumbersome and unwieldy in traffic, while one-wheeled ones affect the bike's handling even with only moderate loads.

Conclusion: Truly custom bikes tailored exactly to your riding needs.

Almost gone are the days when you could walk into the shop of your *constructeur* and order a complete bicycle built exactly to your needs, whether you were planning to ride the 750-mile Paris-Brest-Paris or just to the office, whether you planned to carry camping gear for a four-week vacation or just a briefcase

A 1970 René Herse racing bike. Classic racing components with a few special touches, like concealed cable routing, brazed-on cable stops for the rear brake, and vertical dropouts.

Drawing of Herse tandem with motor: In the 1950s, French bike makers were hard pressed for orders. Herse even offered motorized tandems in hopes to gain a few more customers.

with your papers. The French custom bikes stand out in that they were conceived as complete units. A constructeur built the frame exactly to match your dimensions and riding style, picked the best components out of a huge selection almost unimaginable today, and then made or modified the parts that were not readily available. The resulting bike would stand out among its mass-produced brethren not only because of its style, but also its function and ride. Will we ever see the likes again? The many hours of skilled craftsmanship that go into sucha a bike make it expensive—labor used to be cheaper and none of the builders got rich from their craft. But I believe there will always be a discerning few who are willing to pay a premium for a truly special machine, even when they could have the most up-to-date carbon wonder for the same money or less!

Oops...

The information in my *Reader* articles comes from books, riders, bike makers and my own experience in riding these bikes. Inevitably, some of it is wrong or based on misunderstandings. It is time for a few corrections:

RR18—Mafac centerpull brakes: I maligned the plastic-bushing Mafac Racer brakes. However, after having used both plastic and bronze bushing varieties extensively, I do not notice a difference in performance. The bronze bushings are nice, but by no means essential.

RR22—Maxicar hubs: The bearings of Maxicar hubs are highly advanced units designed to accept both radial and lateral loads. They are very different (and more expensive) than those used in most cartridge bearing hubs. The hubs (including the bearings) can be disassembled and regreased with a few wrenches. The bearings are available from SKF (a major maker of bearings), but the hubs are not made any longer. Their passing is mourned by cyclotourists all over.

RR22—Why Racers Don't Advance Sensible Bike Technology: I stated that the Nivex rear derailleur offered indexed shifting. Not true - there is only one "indexed" position that allows you to shift the chain onto a chain rest incorporated into the rear dropout. Then you can remove the rear wheel without touching the chain. After having tried a Nivex, I realize that it does not need index shifting, because it is by far the best-shifting derailleur I have used.

RR24—Randonneur bikes: Rumors abound about the amazingly low weight of French randonneur bikes. The bikes for the technical trials were truly featherweight, but customers' bikes, like the one in the title photo of the article, weigh a more sensible and durable 23-25 lbs. (not 20 lbs. as stated). Also, the 4-week vacation mentioned came later. Starting in 1936, the lucky French got 15 days off.

HERE'S A PRETTY GOOD DEAL. ONE-TIME OFFER. HOP ON IT, ETC.

Jan's new publication, the *Vintage Bicycle Quarterly*, is all about French bikes, French builders, and randonneuring (French riding?). A year of the VBQ costs $27. The issues aren't as thick as the RR, but the paper is better. **Between February. 1 and March 2, if you subscribe to VBQ for a year ($27), we'll send you a Rivendell Gift Certificate for $10.** Send checks to Jan Heine, c/o Il Vecchio Bicycles, 140 Lakeside Avenue, Seattle, WA 98122. Jan will give us your name by March 5 (Ash Wednesday), so we'll know where to send the gift certificate.

Hey, You're a Street Dolphin

by Peter Moore

The more responsibility users have for an area—and consequently the more influence they can exert on it-the more care and love they will be prepared to invest in it. And the more suitable the area is for their own specific uses the more they will appropriate it. Thus users become inhabitants. — Herman Hertzberger

Long ago I edited an article for a magazine on dolphins as an "indicator species" for the environmental health of California's coastline. Toxins stored up in smaller fish accumulated in dolphins, resulting in immune system disorders, and numerous dead dolphins. Cyclists and pedestrians are the dolphins of the urban environment.

When people walk or ride, it's a sign that they aren't overwhelmed by fear of traffic—or getting mugged, or anything else that might happen. So the more cyclists and pedestrians there are in an urban environment, the more healthy that environment is.

Not all cyclists are equal indicators, though. I've been riding long enough that I'm hardened and inured to much traffic, so I'm not as finely tuned an indicator. Less experienced cyclists are even better indicators. Bike messengers willing to ride on no-brake fixed gears in San Francisco or New York traffic are even worse indicators than I am, since little can intimidate them. But my eleven-year-old son, who's just discovering the freedom of two wheels as transportation, is a great indicator, because he ís much more sensitive.

But this neat cyclists-equal-dolphins observation is too pat and easy, even if it is true, for we are not just passive indicators or human ph strips. Instead, unlike the dolphins cresting the oceanfront waves, we actively change our surroundings, so that every time one person gets on a bike and rides around cars, that rider is not just reflecting an urban environmental health, he or she is actively changing the degree of this health. We're all little Einsteins in our own railway cars: incapable of being just observers, we become an active part of the equation.

This willingness to be vulnerable, and our love for candy, and the fact that we don't live in oceans, distinguishes us from dolphins. Nobody can say for sure how a dolphin's thought process works, but Flipper lives in a less varied, simpler environment, so he doesn't need a complicated inner life.

But we've created our own environment, and in urban settings, it's often threatening to the young, old, and weak. Front porches and sidewalk cafes are among the things that act as benign and gentle nudges towards something resembling community. They help transform their settings by inviting people to interact in mixed public-private space, or transitional space, in non-threatening ways. So do relatively unprotected human beings, like pedestrians and bicycle riders. We add something on a human scale that ís manageable, graspable, and non-threatening into the urban transportation mix. Because we're vulnerable out there, we help make the overall setting seem safer and less threatening to others. It is our vulnerability that makes us valuable to society. Our willing acceptance of vulnerability makes us the opposite of drivers hurtling by in armored, air-bagged isolation. I know we don't ride to be vulnerable, but we tolerate it, in the same way we tolerate flats, mechanical breakdowns, and rain.

By being willing to be vulnerable, cyclists and pedestrians make an environment seem safer. But the corollary of this is that how we choose to ride helps reinforce our seeming vulnerability, and our real accessibility. While it's true that the Category 1 cyclist with 2% body fat, legs like oaks, and lungs with the capacity of a twin air mattress is really more vulnerable than an elfin grandmother in a land yacht, this truth ignores the very real effects of appearance. If we choose to cycle wearing helmets that look like they came out of a futuristic sci-fi movie, brightly martial clothing that reinforces our distance from everyone else, and giant-bug sunglasses no matter how efficient at blocking pesky wind from our delicate tear ducts, we lose a real measure of our beneficial effect. If we ride in packs of twenty, three abreast, and curse at passing motorists who get too close, we lose even more.

If we now and then ride to the corner store dressed like plain-wrap Joes and Janes, the plain-wrap Joes and Janes who see us will be more able to relate. It's a different message than when we're in full cycling gear, and it's a good message.

So, while we do have a beneficial effect in an urban setting, the degree of the effect we can have also depends on choices we make. I'm sure that many if not most readers wear at least some Lycra, bug glasses, or "Alien 3" helmets—I certainly own all three. But maybe, just maybe, if we ride around wearing truly multipurpose clothes, and without the martial attitude that so many cycling advertisements ask us to don, we will have an even better effect, and will make cycling a real part of urban life. Who knows—maybe we'd even end up with a viable cycling culture (as opposed to subculture) in urban areas.

Wish List for 2004

That"2004" up there is no typo. There's no way any of this will happen in 2004, so we're hoping/shooting for 2004, that's all.

1. A round greenish helmet.

There are septillion helmets out there, but they're all so…streamlined. Why the Caddy-like fins? Whatever aerodynamic advantage they provide is minimal at top speeds and unimportant at normal ones. They look fast on the rack, but that's a pitiful reason to make 'em that way. I/Grant would like a roundish helmet, well-vented, with the normal anti-rock straps that most helmets have now. I used to prefer white helmets, but after having photographed lots of riders in white helmets, I think I now prefer green, because it blends in best in the woods. But green is the Color That's Not Made, Hardly. The roundest helmet I've seen so far is either the Catlike Kompact, the one with the huge round holes. That's a good start, but it's only halfway there.

Likelihood that it'll happen by Spring, 2004: 5%

2. Grey Velox handlebar tape

Velox was purchased 3 years ago and is undergoing something of a makeover. It's not a bad one, and in fact the new owner is the fellow who brought us brown, and now we're begging for grey. And when he's done with that, we'll ask for blue or red bar plugs, like Velox used to have.

Likelihood that it'll happen by Spring, 2004: 50%

3. Centerpull brakes.

They make more sense and a bigger contribution to the whole than do disc brakes on road bikes, at least on normal frames. Yet we'll no doubt see road-discs before centerpulls. The Dia-Compe 750s are fine brakes, but they don't count: What I'd like to see is a new model with a reach range of about 52 to 62mm, and good fender clearance, and with braze-on studs available for guys like JH and DB who'd like to go all out. These brakes would look great, work great, and could actually help launch an interest in practical, rain- and trail- and tour-worthy adventury road bikes. Nobody will do it if Shimano doesn't lead; and Shimano is unlikely to resurrect a style that's already had its day.

Likelihood that it'll happen by Spring, 2004: 20%

4. A Dual-pivot sidepull with a slightly longer reach than the current standard reachers (say, 52 to 62mm), with wider, more fender-friendly arches.

We're thrilled that Shimano reintroduced the current line-of-two standard reach sidepulls, and ought to be happy with that for a while. But the one described above would be better still, and would allow mainstream bike makers to shoot for a midslot brake shoe placement without sacrificing fat tire or fender clearance. We can build with the tolerances necessary to get good clearances with the current models, but high-volume builders don't have the knowledge or skill to maximize clearance, and a new brake with slightly longer reach would allow them more room for slop, without risk of making something that doesn't work. Kind of a complicated explanation, sorry.

Likelihood that it'll happen by Spring, 2004: 35%

5. More choices in 110x74 cranks. And 110 Road cranks.

We have the Sugino and TA, and a decent stock of NOS Ritchey Logic cranks, but not all of these wishes have to be selfish. The 110x74 bolt pattern is the smartest choice for most riding, and certainly for anybody who rides a road bike and likes low gears. The current 130/74 and 135/74 patterns don't allow small enough middle rings, and there are so many benefits and not a single drawback to switching to a 110 pattern. Also, a 110 pattern road c rank that came with 48x34 rings would be better for most folks in hilly country than the current 53x39 standard. And if a top gear higher than 110 inches isn't big enough, you can mount a larger chainring. Let racers and flatlanders ride their 130s and 135s—but heavens to murgatroid, the 110 pattern makes more sense to the rest of the world.

Likelihood that it'll happen by Spring, 2004: 98%

6. New 6sp and 7sp cassettes.

Again, this is a message to Shimano, since Campy makes only racing gear, and everybody else just follows Shimano's lead. Think of this: The current 8/9 speed cassettes fit on the same hubs, take up the same space. There's more cog-to-cog space with 8 speeds than with 9 (the 9 sp cogs are closer together). The same relationship could happen with 7sp and 6sp. Shimano already makes a rear hub that takes a 7sp cassette, and it's a good, but lowish-end hub that snobs won't buy. I'd say, make the same think in an Ultegra grade, with a better finish and seals, and then make 6-speed cassettes for it, too—with hold-onto-your-hat halfsteppable gearing: 12-13-15-18-22-27 and 13-15-18-22-27-34. The steps here aren't textbook perfect, but they're close enough and would get my vote.

The neat thing about the 6- and 7-speed system is that since less space is needed, the wheels could be stronger. Shifting could be easier, even in friction (may be one reason they won't do it). You can say that racing against other racers who ride 9/10 cog cassettes requires the same just to level the playing field, but nobody can make a good case for that many gears for touring, adventure riding, and non-competitive recreational rides. With 6 or 7 in back and 3 up front, you'd still have at least 14 useable gears—which is plenty; and you'd have stronger wheels. It makes too much sense to happen.

These days it's hard to sell "less is more," and it's certainly not the path Shimano has laid out for itself, but the right spin, something like "strong wheels for tough guy riders who tour the world solo" might make it easier.

Likelihood that it'll happen by Spring, 2004: 2%

7. A Shimano triple front derailleur with a shorter cage.

The current Shimano triple front derailleurs are designed to allow a poor fool in his prime to ride the small front x small rear combination and not suffer chain drag on the bottom part of the derailleur that connects the inner and outer cages. But that low "tail," if we can call it that, makes it—well, it's kind of hard to explain, so you'll just have to read it and trust me, or somehow dig deep and follow this:

If you ride a 46t big ring on a frame with a 77mm or greater bottom bracket drop, and you set the front derailleur properly close to the outer teeth, then when you shift to the granny up front, the bottom of the derailleur hits the chainstays. The infuriating thing is that shortening the cage by 5mm would solve all problems, and the only rider it would conceivably bug is the guy who's riding the small chainring with the small rear cog—which he shouldn't do, anyway.

Likelihood that it'll happen by Spring, 2004: 47%

A resurrection of the 650B wheel.

This old French touring size has as much merit today as it ever did, and that's saying a lot. It's larger than a mountain bike wheel, smaller than a 700c road wheel, and it fills the gap nicely between the two, in aesthetics and function. Just as important, because of its heritage, it might help bring into fashion a style of riding that's countrified and not as extreme as both mountain bikes and road bikes have become. Obviously you can ride any way you like with the current sizes, but I think if 650 were to come back, there'd be no way to "extremize" the bikes it was designed for, and I think that would be a positive influence.

For 650B to stand a chance, many rim and tire makers would have to have a natural hot springs party in the Antarctican Alps, where they'd get drunk on goat's milk and gorge on Boston Brown Bread and somehow come to an agreement to support this neat cause, just for the heck of it.

Likelihood that it'll happen by Spring, 2004: 1%

1. A simple, affordable touring Shoe

Adidas makes a model that's called, I think, the "Pond." I saw it in Japan. It's a sneaker with the graphics of the old Eddy Merckx style cleats the company used to make. It has a smooth rubber sole, thin, is not drilled for anything, and looks sporty and plain. I'm not sure about the model name, but that's what it said in English next to the Japanese and up where the model name ought to be relative to the actual shoe on display…got it?

Nike started the 2003 shoe season with a promising model—black, lace-up, not cleatable and not too luggy on the sole—but pre-season ordes were dismal, so they killed it. The old Sidi touring shoes we had for years are great, but gone, and Sidi doesn't want to make them. Carnac mades a couple of models, but the US importer doesn't want to bring them in on account of they might hurt Carnac's racing reputation; but that's no huge loss, since they're too narrow in the toes, anyway.

Likelihood that it'll happen by Spring, 2004: 3%

And things & people we're already thankful for

An incomplete list, and as always, not in any particular order. From now on, with every list from here on out, that's the rule whether it's stated or not. The "no particular order" part; unless otherwise stated. From here on in.

1. Shimano standard reach sidepulls. These opened the door to frame designs and increased versatility. Hoo-ray.

2. The TA Zephyr and Sugino XD crank. Both 110 patterns. Thank goodness gracious for these.

3. Brooks saddles. It's hard to believe they still exist, but they do.

4. Nitto. How unlikely is it that a company can exist when it sets its internal standards so high that the quality necessary to meet those standards puts it out of the price range for 98 percent of the market?

5. Pine tar soap. After washing with this, anything else is like smearing perfume gel on top of the grime.

6. Joe, Curt, Toyo, and Joe Bell. It's one thing to conceive, dream about, and design bikes to be just so, but the hard part is finding the people who make them that way. We are lucky to have these guys, that's for sure.

7. Nice Rivendell members. We're always yakking amongst ourselves about how unusual it is to have customers who are so plain nice, and I don't mean only when or because you buy this stuff. I don't want to make this uncomfortable, but the good feelings come through all the time, and we know we're lucky.

8. **LED lights, tiny patches, the Zefal HPX pump, wool stuff.** Everyday bike stuff that makes life easy.

9. **Dia-Compe/Dia-Tech.** Amazingly, they made our Silver shifters, and we seem to have a good relationship. Things happen slowly, but Kozo & Crew always treat us bigger than we are, and we're optimistic about the future. This is not just a way to suck up so they'll make us some centerpulls, either. If they do it, great, but they make the list for past help.

10. Chien, Jimmy, and George from Inter World Trading Company. They're as integral to our success as anybody or anything else. They introduce us to good suppliers who become friends. They extend credit when banks won't. They trust us to pay our bills on time, and we always do. This is not kissing up, it's just a fact that all of us here know well.

So Long, Ed Burke

Bicycling seems to attract a lot of good people, and Ed Burke was one of them. He was smart and feisty and friendly, and smart, too. Ed Pavelka and Fred Matheny included this note here in their electronic road-bike newsletter (roadbikerider.com), and let me reproduce it here. You may not have known of Ed, but he was a good fellow, and helped a lot of people with his knowledge, enthusiasm, and good writing. When people like that die, you just have to say something. It doesn't do any good, but Ed gave a lot to bicycling, and we can't just ignore it. Ed Burke died, and that's a huge deal.—Grant

Last week, we were among 400 people at the memorial service for Ed Burke. Many were his friends from the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs, where Ed was a professor of biology. Others represented cycling, where Ed was a world leader in physiology and technology.

Ed Burke: Dead at 53 of a heart attack, but he was riding his bike, and there are worse ways to go.

The service was moving but not tearfully melancholy. After all, we were there to celebrate a remarkable life. Ed Burke was a man of good nature and a positive outlook. His personality brightened everyone he met. Perhaps the most wrenching part for cyclists was seeing Ed's red-white-and-blue GT road bike. It stood lonely at the front of the room with his helmet and shoes, water bottle in place and the chain still in low gear. It was on a climb where Ed suffered his fatal heart attack on Nov. 7 at age 53.

As we chatted with other riders after the service, we learned more about events leading to Ed's death. How could a relatively young and apparently fit person suddenly collapse and die during a ride? Should the rest of us in his age range be worried, too? We think that Ed, who wrote extensively about training and fitness, would want you to have some answers. Here's what we know:

Ed was physically inactive for at least 20 years after racing in college. In 1997 he decided to get back on the bike. Overweight and nearing age 50, he admitted concern about his family's history of heart disease and his own high cholesterol and blood pressure. He worked back into shape carefully. He routinely refused to do rides that demanded more than he was ready for. He became an enthusiastic long-distance cyclist, completing Alaska's Iditabike and the Leadville 100-mile mountain bike race, among other endurance events. On the road, he favored tough challenges like Colorado's Triple Bypass.

In recent months, he admitted to poor performance on the bike. In October, he told us he planned to stop riding extreme events and scale back to "sane centuries." On a ride two weeks before he died, Ed had to stop several times because he felt so bad with indigestion. He couldn't figure out what he'd eaten to cause it. Inexplicable indigestion may be a precursor of heart attack. We're sure Ed knew this, both academically and because a friend, ex-pro Hugh Walton, had experienced the same symptom before his own near-fatal coronary. In fact, Hugh told us that he and Ed had a long talk about heart problems while riding together last June. But apparently Ed didn't heed his own warning signs. In hindsight, it seems clear that his heart was beginning to fail. The lesson for the rest of us is obvious: Be vigilant!

It's estimated that 59 million Americans are living with some form of cardiovascular disease. Many people who die from a heart attack have symptoms the week before the fatal incident. These include chest pain, increased fatigue, dizziness, ankle swelling and indigestion or heartburn. Seek help immediately if you experience any of the following symptoms of a possible heart attack:

Pain or pressure (squeezing sensation) in the middle of the chest that lasts more than a few moments. Pain that radiates down the arms or into the neck or jaw. Chest discomfort accompanied by shortness of breath, lightheadedness, sweating, nausea or fainting. It's much smarter, of course, not to wait till your heart is in trouble. To take the initiative on this issue:

Find out all you can about your family heart history. Avoid the risk factors that produce coronary artery disease. These include smoking, hypertension (blood pressure should be under 140/90), and cholesterol (total should be under 200 with HDL above 35, LDL under 100 and triglycerides under 200). Get a CRP test. Inflammation, and its role in heart disease, is a promising new research area. Ask your physician about testing for c-reative protein (CRP), a substance the liver makes in response to immune system signals that may disclose inflamed heart arteries.

Cut back on saturated fats in your diet and increase portions of fruit, vegetables and whole grains. Exercise aerobically at least four times per week for 30-60 minutes each time. In other words, ride your bike! But avoid pushing yourself hard when you're dehydrated, bonking or cramping. Have an annual physical and take an exercise stress test as often as your doc recommends. In some facilities, you can get the test done on a bicycle ergometer and determine your max heart rate, lactate threshold heart rate and power at LT, as well as heart function—all good things to know if you're interested in performance.

Last Tuesday we talked about stress tests with Andy Pruitt, 52, who directs the Boulder (CO) Center for Sports Medicine and wrote Andy Pruitt's Medical Guide for Cyclists. He told us, "My philosophy has been that anyone over 45 who exercises intensely should have a 12-lead EKG, max stress test every other year, and more often if there is any history of heart disease."

A Brand-New and Fantastic Value in a Rear Rack:

The Headland Rambler

We don't sell it yet, but your bike shop may, and if your bike shop has a good selection of touring gear and doesn't have this rack, you ought to point it out to them. It has all the features you'd want in a rack, and although we haven't crashed on it or taken it out much (having just got it), it certainly looks strong. It's 3/8-inch solid 6061 T6 aluminum, and before you cry foul for its not being tubular CrMo steel, bear in mind that it costs just $50, and so far it looks like the best $50 rack we've seen. It weighs just under 2 pounds, and the maker says it'll hold up to 45 pounds. You shouldn't carry that much, though. We don't sell this rack yet. We probably will. Your bike shop can order it from Headland.

Left: The Rambler has a good, squarish shape to stabilize panniers; and it's tall enough to easily clear a 700x44 tire.

Top: The connector rods adjust all over the place, so it's easy to fit the Rambler to just about any frame.

Left: The welds look strong enough, easily, and see how the support rods are one-piece and provide lots of contact area? That's good, but even neater is this: If the weld ever failed, you could just wrap the rack together with bailing wire, then cover with JB Weld, and you'd be all set to go again.

Right: The lower strut has a welded-on fender eyelet, in case your frame has only one and you prefer to use it for the rack. This makes a lot of sense, and if we had to do it over again, we'd have ordered up our racks that way. But even without the eyelet, you can attach fender stays to just about any rack, if you're mildly creative.

Plans & Projects & The Kinds of Things We Tend To Write About To Fill Up a Page At the Last Minute, When the Printer is Chomping at the Bit, and Here We Were Thinking It Was All Under Control

The Ritchey take-apart bike is pretty clever and interesting and intriguing, and the more you investigate, the better it looks. That's where we are now, and we're thinking we'd like to introduce a special model sometime in the next year. It would have it's own name, BLERIOT (named after the first guy to fly across the English Channel), and would likely be built by Toyo, in Osaka, since Toyo builds Ritchey bikes already and by now has tons of experience with the special joiners. We'd need (and want) to do it lugged and kind of classy, but aren't yet decided on whether it would be a frameset, like the Atlantis and Rambouillet, or a complete bike, like the upcoming Romulus and Redwood. This take-apart does not consume our every waking thought, but it nags at us, and we think we'll go there…And then there's another model we'd like to do: the BOMBADIL: It's (it would be) a traditional mountain bike, slacker than the Atlantis (which we mention in the same breath only because it takes fat tires also and is entirely trail worthy). We'd design the Bombadil along th lines of an early-'80s mountain bike, with shallow angles and a super long front-center; good for bonking around in the woods and taking on descents you really ought to walk down…And then there's the GLORIUS, a small-sized road bike for folks under about 5-5. It will likely have what looks like, but isn't exactly, a "compact" frame, with sloping top tube and all. We'll do the sloping tube a little differently than Giant etc., and it will be better for it; and lugged…Ten or so of you have inquired about Rivendell tandem frames, and my pat answer has been: Forget it, it's ridiculous, the lugs required are way too many and costly, because we can't use existing lugs for the tandem tubes we'd like to use, and how rich do you think we are, anyway? But it is difficult to find a lugged tandem, and we are billing ourselves as sort of one of the last few places you can go to for lugged frames and only lugged frames, so a lugged tandem is now off the chopping block. It won't happen within a year, but two years wouldn't surprise me. It depends on how we do, of course, and right now we're doing okay, but are still more than $100K in debt, and we've made little progress paying that off. But still, yes—we are thinking about a lugged tandem. It will be made in limited quantities even for us. Probably three sizes only, long wait to get it, the usual deal.

We've been working slowly on a line of shell gear, working brand name: GustBuster (because Squallsquasher is too hard to say). I/Grant am not a huge fan of wind shells, but they have their place; and rain shells do, too. We have a few prototypes, but have not been satisfied with the fabrics we're working with. They're plenty windproof, but not waterproof enough yet; and with all the other things we have going, and Spring and Summer just around the corner, it's not a pressing project, and it could, in fact, die.

We are getting another 1000 square feet of office/warehouse/lunchroom space, and will be mostly moved in by the time you read this. That in itself is boring to read about, but in fact for us it is quite exciting. Sometime this Spring we'll have Curt out, and he'll give a frame-brazing demonstration; and we're thinking about a Rivendell member ride, too. Serotta does this kind of thing, and I'll bet the riding here is even better than it is there, and Spring might be a good time to show it off. If somebody here besides me takes this on as a project, we'll carry it out sometime this year, and will let you know the particulars. It will be social, food-oriented, slow and fun—but there are steep hills all over the place here, and even if we say it'll be fun and slow and lazy, the hills will get to you if you don't have the right combination of gears and legs and miles. There will be a fee, but we'll see how cheap we can make it, and so on. Maybe one night we could camp out on the mountain (but with a group and all, we'd have to use real campgrounds, if that's okay.) Stay tuned.

Some of you have heard that Joe Starck is presently not building for us (or anybody). He was living in Southern California, but after a 20+ year absence from his home state of Wisconsin, he's moved back home to get reunited with his family, who has missed him a lot and wants him back there. We'd like him to continue to build for us, and if things work out, he'll do that. But right now he has to settle down and get other things in order, and we wish him well. I can honestly say I don't think a better frame builder has ever lived. Curt, Joe's equal, is still with us and building away in Minneapolis. A few months ago we had just 5 frames in the queue, but now there are 35, and the wait is back up to about 5-6 months. Quickbeams are ready to take their place in line, and if you want a Quickbeam—a derailleurless frame for single-speed or two-speed riding, contact Mark@rivbike.com) or call (925) 933-7304 and ask for Mark. We've written about these in the past, and now we have all we need to make them. At $1400 for the frame with fork and headset, they're one of the most expensive frames of their type you can buy, but if it's any consolation, we make diddly on them!

—Grant

From the Disturbing Thoughts Dept.

About Feet On Pedals

Virtually every cycling author and expert during the last 75 years or so has told us to place our feet on the pedals so the widest part is directly above the axle. It's elementary advice for beginners, and boring old hat to any rider with experience. *Virtually* but not totally. Roger Durham (Bullseye founder) and Sheldon Brown (of Harris Cyclery)—have suggested it might not be best for everybody, always. Roger, who is about 80 now, has ridden numerous hilly centuries, double centuries, and triple centuries, and he flat out thinks the idea that the ball of your foot must be centered over the pedal is a bunch of hooey. Sheldon's not such a hardliner, but admits to scooting his foot forward of the axle, and suggests that the conventional position is a carryover from the days of high-wheelers. Those old funny bikes had no chains or sprockets, so your gear was determined by the diameter of your front wheel. For flatland riding, they were all undergeared (typically equivalent to today's 50 to 58-inch gear), because human legs just weren't long enough to straddle a larger wheel. The conventional foot position, with the ball over the pedal axle, made sense because it allowed you to extend your leg more, so you could ride a larger wheel and get a more useful gear. But with modern hifalutin' front sprocket and chains and rear cogs and all, we can get higher gears without longer legs, so the need to extend our legs by toeing down is gone. Indeed, toeing down is considered bad form and harmful. So maybe it's a good time to reinvestigate your foot position. In fact, I've been doing that a lot now for the past 9 months, and these are my observations.

The conventional position, with the ball of your foot directly over the pedal axle, works well and you can be happy for the rest of your pedaling days like this. As an added benefit, you can rest assured no know-it-all will interrupt your ride to tell you you're doing it all wrong.

This is the way you pedal if you want to get kicked out of the local cycling club. By conventional standards, the foot is too far forward, and cleated cycling shoes don't even allow this position. But it has benefits that, once you try them, are hard to give up.

Roger Durham is a straight-talking engineer, not a physiologist, and he says when you pedal conventionally, you use your "toe-standing" muscles. The ones you use when you stand on your toes. They start at the ball of your foot and radiate up your legs to your hips and bottom. I told you he wasn't a physiologist, but his overall idea is right, I think.

He says when you apply pressure from behind the ball of your foot, you activate different muscles; and he makes the argument that on sustained climbs, it's advantageous to shift the load to different muscles now and then, instead of overtaxing the same muscles in the same way over and over again.

You might say, "But you don't use 'toe-standing' muscles if you don't raise your heel when you pedal. If you keep your foot flat like you're supposed to, there'll be no calf-flexing going on at all."

It sounds good, but my experience says it doesn't work like that, at least not for me. I've found that when my foot is proper over the pedal, there's almost a reflexive action to toe-down. It's sort of like your ankle resisting the leverage against it. Even if your foot stays level (no toe-down), it takes effort to keep it thataway.

Sheldon makes the point that the ball of your foot is made to support weight (or pedal pressure, in this case). The arch clearly isn't, and taken to extremes, applying hard, concentrated pressure upward on your arch is undoubtedly a good way to hurt yourself. But Sheldon also points out that a stiff-soled shoe shields the arch from pressure. I'd take it another step and say most any shoe short of a flip-flop or bedroom slipper is stiff enough.

Last week, just for a change, I decided to pedal up in a 36x16/18 gear, which meant a lot more pedaling force. My feet were fine still, and something else surfaced in a big way during this real grunt. I'm not stating anything conclusively because I don't have the brain for it, but it sure seemed to me that when I pedaled with my foot forward, like in the right-side photo on the page to the left there, my lower leg relaxed, my quadriceps relaxed some, and my hamstrings seemed to take on more of the load. A proper

study could verify or disprove that, but that's what it felt like. When I went back to "proper" pedaling form, I felt as though some of my effort went into "keeping me on my toes," as Roger Durham might say. Balancing, is another way to say it. *Balancing* isn't exact, but it felt sort of like I was doing squats while standing on my toes; and if you think about it some, that's pretty much what goes on when you pedal with your foot in the conventional "proper" position. I'm slightly ashamed to say I don't think I've ever done a squat, but when I picture a guy doing one, he's not on his toes.

The "doing squats on toes" feeling isn't as apparent in lower gears as it is in high ones, and you aren't supposed to go up hills at 45-50 rpms for a long time, but sometimes you have to do something in an extreme way to figure out what's going on.

The value of scooting forward on the pedal isn't just that it provides better balance and takes stress off the lower leg. I think those are real benefits, but an even more important benefit is just being able to work different muscles, as Roger Durham said. You can't do that if you're clicked or even clipped in. I think you could do it with loose Power Grips (a low-tech and inexpensive alternative to clips and clipless systems), but if you're feeling experimental, I think you ought to go out with sneaks and nothing on the pedal, so you can move your foot around on a whim in an instant. If you ride up a one-minute climb and shift your foot around, I think you'll start to get it. If you can find a longer climb, one that'll tire out your whole leg and induce true muscle fatigue, it's a really safe bet that you'll feel some benefit as you start to use different muscles while pedaling. Something like this could even reduce the risk of repetitive stress injuries. That is a hunch, but keep in mind that my brother-in-law is a doctor.

Another thing that happens when you scoot your foot forward, is you change your knee-to-pedal relationship. Here again, conventional wisdom doesn't make all that much sense. Everybody says that when your foot is at 3:00 in the stroke (crank and pedal forward, crank horizontal), the bump just below your knee should be directly over the middle of the pedal (and the ball of your foot). As I've mentioned many times before in the RR, Keith Bontrager blew holes in that argument more than a decade ago, in an article published in the old (Boston) *Bicycle Guide.* This article, titled *The Myth of KOPS,* shook me up and rocked a foundation of knowledge that had been in place for half a century or more. But it was one issue of one magazine, and the buzz has long since died off, and most of the folks writing most of the publications now were playing Pac Man when that was published. We reprinted it in one of the RRs, but our circulation at the time was 2,200 or so, and so that didn't do much good, either. All in all, we're still pedaling in the dark ages. Keith Bontrager used common sense and observations even the simplest rube could understand to build a convincing argument that that whole knee/ball-of-your-foot/center of pedal plumb line relationship doesn't make sense, but we have a new crop of experts citing it, and a new crop of innocent readers taking it all in.

What I wanted to say before I got sidetracked on that Bontrager story, is that scooting your foot forward also has a similar effect to slackening the seat tube angle. As it changes the knee-to-pedal relationship, it makes it easier to apply power *earlier* on the down stroke. Ordinarily, for most riders it's hard to apply power before about 1:30 in the stroke. You may be able to push ahead between 11:00 and then, but apply power?—most of us don't, and so we have weak spots in the pedal stroke, between about 11:00 and 1:30, and 5:00 and 7:30. By sitting back more—or moving your foot forward on the pedal—you can start to apply power sooner. It would take scientific measuring gear and exhaustive studies to silence all the naysayers on the internet, but to me, it feels like I can start to apply actual power at about 12:45. I figure if I am sure beyond a shadow of a doubt that I can feel a difference, there's a good chance that a smart group of muscle scientists with the right equipment could actually measure it, too.

I know the numbers make it all seem techy and hair-splitting, and my lack of scientific support for these hunches will make those who want to find fault here real happy, but let me say it again: I'm not stating anything as fact. But this is what I believe, based on my experience.

If you're intrigued, get some simple pedals and simple shoes and try it. Again, the benefits are most apparent on long climbs, when muscle fatigue is a factor, and on hard climbs, when your muscles are stressed a lot. For experimental purposes, you can simulate that by pedaling up a moderate climb in too high of a gear.

There's no technique to it. Just scoot your foot a little forward and keep pedaling. In theory, this might call for a lowering of the saddle, but I've never done that and haven't felt as though I needed to. Don't pedal on your heels, or even your arch—just move your foot a little forward, and see if you can feel a difference. If you can, I'd like to hear from you. Send to gep@rivbike.com. Thanks. —Grant

Disturbing Thoughts On Sole Stiffness

Cycling shoe stiffness is widely misunderstood. Usually when a cyclist picks up a pair of shoes to check for stiffness, he'll flex the heel upward toward the toe, as though that simulates pedaling forces. But it doesn't do that at all. When you pedal, the portion of your shoe that's behind the pedal is kept in place by your foot. Almost all the "stiffness" is provided by the pedal itself, so what you want in a shoe isn't a stiff one, but one that shields your foot from the pressure and potential pain of pedaling. Traditionally, that "shield" has come with a certain amount of stiffness as part of the package, but it's not stiffness per se that's so valuable. Some arch support is nice, too, because the tendon under your arch gets tense when you pedal in the traditional position, but the support can be hard or soft, and in any case doesn't have to extend the full length of your foot, creating a full-length rigid sole.

A flexy shoe's not going to make your foot fold in half, and even if there's some other benefit to having some rear-shoe stiffness (I'm not saying there is, I'm just saying IF), then it'd still be hard to make a case for having a totally flexless rear-shoe. Yet that's how cycling shoes have become—and I bet it's mainly because the manufacturers don't want their shoes to fail the bogus "flex test." If there is another reason, let's hear it.

This amount of flex doesn't hurt a cycling shoe in the least, and it makes steep walkups easier; and the shoe won't flex this way when you pedal.

One downside of a stiff shoe becomes apparent when you walk up a hill.You can snicker and say you're supposed to ride up, but hoofing it up steep trails or roads is reality for off-road riders and self-contained tourists. A stiff rear shoe makes your heel come out of the shoe when you walk or run up steep hills. For that, a pair of sneakers will outperform $200 rigid-soled cycling shoes.

More Disturbing Thoughts…on Sole Hardness and Thickness

Given that a major, and maybe even *the* major function of a cycling shoe is to protect your foot from the pedal, how much protection do you want?

Again, this is just my experience, but don't discount it like you did all that other stuff. If you're pedaling connected—clipless or with clips—totally isolating your foot from the pedal pressure is fine. After you've protected it enough to prevent discomfort, though, you don't continue to make great gains isolating it to the point where you can't even feel the pedal.

But if you're pedaling "free," without any connection, it's *important* to be able to feel the pedal, so you know where it is underfoot. It's disconcerting to ride on a bouncy trail, not knowing where your foot is on the pedal. It could be drifting off the edge and you won't know it. It could get jarred off the pedal completely. (The answer isn't to simply connect your foot to the pedal, because you may not want to give up the other benefits of pedaling free.) And if you can't feel the pedal, you can't tell how much or which direction to shift it on the pedal when you want to stand up and sprint, or how much to shift it forward or back, to activate different pedaling muscles. When you pedal free, it's best to have a shoe that lets you feel the pedal. Ironically, that rules out most modern fancy cycling shoes.

Modern shoes have to provide an impenetrable shield between your foot and the pedal, because clipless pedals tend to be tiny. With normal and wider pedals, though, you can easily get by with floppier, flimsier soles.

When I ride in sneakers and ride on pedals like the largish rectangular ones shown there, I can ride uphill for an hour and a half without foot pain. I can't exactly say an hour and a half is the limit, just that I haven't tried a longer hill than that. I weigh 185 and the hill I climb is Mount Diablo, which ascends 3650' or so in about 11 miles or just under, and usually ride it in a 40 to 50 inch gear. Those figures aren't important by themselves, but they say something about the force I push down with on the pedals. A lighter rider or somebody riding a lower gear won't push down as hard; and a shorter or easier climb will ease the pressure, too. Some pedals have more surface area than these, which will reduce the pressure; and a harder sole provides a stronger shield against the pressure, too. But just for the record and as some frame of reference, Converse All-Stars on MKS Touring pedals work fine for my feet on 11 mile climbs of 3,650 feet, under my 185 pounds and stubbornly high gears.

BMX riders ride in beefed up and stylized sneakers, and usually I don't take my cues from them because my riding is different, but the fact that they can do the outrageous things they do without being connected is some comfort here. BMX sneakers look too young-punk for my taste, but I've found any old shoe without a knobby sole will do fine. Rubber is grippy, and if it's smoothish on the bottom, or just has a fine tread that doesn't stick out a lot, you'll get grip *and* movability. I ride in Converse a lot, but the Shoe Pavillion has a pair of $17 Sketchers I've got my eye on…—GP

Romulus & Redwood Update

Many and probably most of you know we're introducing our first-ever complete bicycles this Spring—the Romulus, which comes in odd sizes 55 thru 63; and the Redwood, which comes in just 65 and 68. They're both road bikes in the Rivendell way of doing road bikes, meaning they've got good clearance for fenders and chubby tires; lowish bottom brackets, longish chainstays, and they allow you to get really comfortable, because it's easy to get the handlebar higher than is possible with virtually any other production bike.

Plus, they're hand-brazed in Osaka, Japan and are lugged; and they're steel. We don't make any other kind.

Ordinarily, when a chap stumbles into a bike shop looking for a new bike, he wants to know three things: price, weight, and specs. He also wants something that won't make him look foolish to his bike-savvy friends. Bike purchases always stretch budgets, and nobody wants to pay till it hurts and later regret it. Most $1,400 bikes have a host of decent but basically unexciting parts that are inexpensive and highly functional, but fail to get the juices flowing. These bikes don't. Every part is proud, and has been used without shame on custom RIvendell builds. The preponderance of Japanese parts on a bike of this price is astounding; and combined with a superb, hand-brazed lugged steel frame—at $1,400—makes either of these bikes untouchable in that range. In the mainstream market, you'd be hard put to do better for twice the price. You'd get higher-end Shimano parts, a lighter but lesser frame, wilder graphics, and whatever pride or satisfaction you may derive from seeing ads for your bike, or knowing a team of young pros is paid to ride the same frame.

The Romulus and Redwood frames are equal in quality (craftsmanship, straightness) to any frame costing $2,000; and are straighter than many frames costing twice that. A case can be made that they're the best-designed production road frames available—provided you're after comfort, handling, and versatility (and if you aren't, what is it, again, that you're looking for?). They weigh a pound or so more than the modern featherweights, but the difference is meaningless once you put your *body* onto the bike; and unlike those ultralight bikes, thse are built to last you 20+ years. And the frames easily merit future component upgrades when the parts wear out, but that'll be a long time from now.

These frames are hand-made by skilled, well-trained, committed builders with the Japanese work ethic and pride that have made Japanese products a world standard for quality and consistency. (No manufacturer has ever taken its business elsewhere because it couldn't get the quality out of Japan—it's always to get a lower price.) In the case of the Romulus and Redwood, the price is already super low for the extreme quality. If you're looking for a fantastic all-around road bike that's comfortable and versatile—day rides, centuries, club rides, brevets, and weekend tours—the Romulus and the Redwood are perfect.

The Components

Headset: Shimano 105
Stem: Nitto Technomic Deluxe
Handlebar: Noodle (44 on 55cm; 46 on others)
Seat post: Nitto Crystal Fellow
Brake lever: Shimano Aero BL400
Brakes: Shimano Dual Pivot, Tiagra/RX-100 grade
Shifters: Shimano Dura-Ace 9sp bar-end
Front Der: Shimano 105 triple
Rear Der: Shimano 105 triple
Cassette: Shimano 12x25 9sp
Chain: Shimano, whatever grade is appropriate
BB: Shimano UN-52 or equivalent new model
Crank, rings: Sugino XD-2 48x36x26
Hubs: Shimano 105. 36H Rear, 32H Front
Rims: Araya 540RC, silver, anodized, double-eyelets
Spokes: Stainless 14 plain gauge
Missing: You supply the saddle, pedals, bar tape
Tubing: Butted Japanese CrMo; some heat-treated
Paint, color: Romulus Lt. Blue; Redwood Lt. Green

Price: $1,400 or so. We sell it for that; most dealers will, too, but it's up to them. Local tax applies, and if we ship to you in the U.S., add $35 freight. Still a deal!
Expected delivery: March 31 to April 20.

Nightmare delivery: May 1. Shimano's parts delivery is the wild card.

To Reserve a Romulus or Redwood

You can get one from us or from a dealer. We've picked our dealers carefully, and you can expect good service and help from any of them. If you live nearby one, we encourage (but don't require) you to patronize them. The worst thing you could do is test ride their bikes and then buy from us—it makes it look as though we're using them to make a sale, which isn't ever our intention. So by all means, if you are fortunate enough to live near one of the few R/R dealers listed here or on our site, give them a chance. Also, bear in mind that many of these dealers are happy to ship you a bike, and have done it many times in the past with the Rambouillet and Atlantis. It is entirely likely that at some point we'll be out of bikes, but you'll be able to find your size at one of the shops here. In the meantime, the good way to make sure you get one is to reserve it—either through us or one of these shops. We require a $500 non-refundable (except as credit) deposit; the dealers here can make their own policy, but heck, if you're sure you want the bike, don't hesitate to prove it by putting something down. Then, when your bike comes in, the difference doesn't seem quite as bad. Not that $1,400 is a lot for one of these bikes, but you know what we mean…

Sizing Guide

This guide is based on a sizing approach that has proven near-perfect on hundreds of Rivendell, Atlantis, and Rambouillet customers. It starts with an accurate pubic bone height measurement, which you obtain by standing barefoot on a hard floor with your feet 10 inches apart. Hook the edge of a metal tape over a thin hardcover book, and pull it up until it strikes bone. Not just genitals or crotch—*bone!* Have a friend take the reading on the floor. Make sure the tape is straight. THAT'S YOUR PUBIC BONE HEIGHT (PBH), and get it right. SH = Saddle Height from the center of the BB to the top of the saddle. Usually it's 10 to 10.5cm less than PBH, as the chart here shows. The bikes come with moderate length stems, according to size, and ranging from 9cm to 12cm. If you need a longer or shorter stem, negotiate with your dealer. Most will stock the original stem, but others stems may work fine, too. It is normal to start off with one stem length, and then later change to another. Usually it takes a few hours to tell, but maybe you can tell right there in the shop. We doubt that'll happen much here, but be prepared for it, and accept it as part of the routine of dialing in your bike. If you swap before riding, most dealers will take the other stem in trade, maybe charging $20 or so labor to swap it. If you change later, buy a whole newey.

Finally: If you plan to ride 700x38 tires and your SH is at the bottom of the range already, it may be best to go to a smaller size. As always, the final decision is yours. But honestly, this is a really, really good guide. Always feel free to call us to discuss sizing!

PBH	SH	SIZE	MODEL
79-81	69-71	55	Romulus
81.5-84	71.5-74	57	Romulus
84-86	74-76	59	Romulus
86-89	76-79	61	Romulus
89-92	79-82	63	Romulus
91-94	81-84	65	REDWOOD
95-99	85-89	68	REDWOOD

Romulus/Redwood Dealers Besides Us

The best we could do by press time, and it may change. Updates on www.rivbike.com. Or call 925 933 7304.

City, State	Dealer	Telephone No.
Berkeley CA	Jitensha Studio	(510) 540-6240
S.F. CA	American	(415) 664-4545
Danville CA	Pegasus Bicycles	(925) 362-2220
Portland OR	Coventry	(503) 230-7723
Seattle, WA	Elliot Bay	(206) 441-8144
Denver CO	Campus	(303) 698-2811
Madison WI	Williamson	(608) 255-5292
Mpls MN	Kenwod	(612) 374-4042
Iowa City IA	World of Bikes	(319) 351-8337
Dayton OH	Cycles Gaansari	(937) 222-8862
Cincinnati OH	Second Chance	(513) 871-5814
W. Newton MA	Harris	(617) 244-9772
College Pk MD	College Park	(301) 864-2211
Hillsboro NH	Peter White	(603) 478-0900

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Name, member no. and address:

State, Zip, and Telephone: Ship to same?:

Model: Size: Saddle Height: PBH: Your Height:

Five hundred dollar deposit (not refundable, but transferable to parts). Okay? _____

Payment: Master Card/Visa # _____ Expires _____ Signature _____

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Telephone (925) 933-7304 Fax (925) 933-7305

Safe!

by Maynard Hershon

I'm looking at USA Today's "Life" section for August 22nd, 2002. Beating like a drum our recent obsession with fatness, the lead article, "USA Wallowing in Unhealthy Ways," extensively quotes a British nutrition expert, Philip James. James, the chairman of the global, non-profit International Obesity Task Force, says we Yanks set a valuable example for the world, a bad example.

"You have a wonderful environment to make everybody obese and diabetic. The rest of the world will look at you and know exactly what not to do," James says. I say: Because I'm not fat and few of my friends are fat, I don't think about fat much. I'm aware it's a national obsession but it's not my obsession. I do think about exercise, especially cycling exercise. So does Philip James.

After mentioning junk food advertising and junk food in schools, James brings up exercise. He says that here in the US there aren't enough ways to do spontaneous physical stuff like biking or walking. Safe, convenient ways, he means.

"You can't go to the mall," he said, "without going in your car." And: "You don't allow people to play in your streets. Your streets are built only for one thing: a motor car." The experts quoted in USA Today seem pessimistic about our battle with societal obesity. Education, they suggest, will not be effective. If we continue to make our own choices, we'll continue to make bad ones, to select unhealthy options.

Because we're so busy, the experts say, we don't climb stairs; we take the escalator or elevator. We eat fast food in huge portions and skip exercise. Physical activity, the experts say, must be part of our daily lives.

In Europe, USA Today says, studies have shown the benefit of community bike paths. Philip James takes it a bold-as-brass step further.

"If you don't have separate cycle tracks," James says, "you're not a civilized country."

I say: Phil, you're never gonna say a righter thing. Not a civilized country? Well, maybe not. Why, the chances are one-in-eight our next meal will come from McDonald's. Our fastest-growing job description is Wal-Mart clerk. Traffic's awful, we're dependent on scary folks for fuel and (speaking of wallowing) Cadillac's making huge, lumbering, lane-and-a-quarter-wide pickups.

Moms and dads won't let little Caitlin and Cody ride bikes to school. Why? It's just too dangerous: Other near-identical moms and dads in climate-controlled Cadillac pickups will run them over, right in the damn 15-mph school zone.

So kids ride to school in pearl-white Cadillac pickups. Lunchtimes, they eat junk, super-sized. The most protected, fussed-over kids in this great nation's history are the fattest, most diabetic in its history.

But those fat kids ride in VERY nice cars. Nicest ever. No tune-up for 100,000 miles or twelve personal injury accidents, whichever comes first. Let's say that as an antidote to those fat Cadillacs we feel it'd be good to get lots more people commuting on skinny bicycles.

In order to do that, to attract 1,000s to regular transportation cycling, we must build barriers between cycling America and motoring America. Asking drivers to "Share the Road" just isn't cuttin' it. We'll have to provide separate cycle tracks, as Philip James calls them.

Mass transit? We're never going to get most folks out of their cars. Awful as it is on our streets and highways, solo commuting is more common than ever. People will quit driving when we pry their cold, dead fingers from the wheel.

Crummy, unhappy drivers make our streets endless streams of ineptly or insanely driven cars and trucks. The curbside lane can feel horror-show unsafe to many cyclists, novice or experienced. Hey, let's be frank, it IS unsafe out there.

Diehards will commute despite the danger, but we're not gonna gain converts to transportation cycling without those bike paths James talks about. We have to provide safe cycling, cycling safely away from cars.

Between us, I don't like bike paths. Scary as the road is, I prefer it to a multi-use bike path, with its joggers and strollers and dog-walkers and inline skaters, all headphoned and listening to Oprah-recommended books-on-tape.

My girlfriend lived in Philly near the art museum, the famous one from the movie Rocky. She commuted to Manayunk, about five miles one way. She could ride most of the distance on the lovely bike path next to the curving Schuylkill River.

The path was an adventure nearly every day, what with other users setting traps for her, but she wasn't going to get killed on that bike path. The last mile or so of her commute was on Main Street in Manayunk, and she duked it out with the cars, morning and afternoon. But only for a mile.

Had there been no Schuylkill bike path, she'd have had a nightmare big-city commute. She'd never have stuck with it. She'd have taken buses and asked friends for rides. Thanks to that bike path, she was a regular cyclo-commuter, her own woman, not needing to burden her family or friends.

We cycling nuts will ride in the road no matter how many pickups Cadillac sells. We sneer at bike paths. We rejoice that the folks who use them, who actually LIKE them, are not on OUR roads, scaring us.

But there are only a few of us, and only a small fraction of us commute. Most of us do silly loops for training, from nowhere to nowhere on the most lightly traveled roads we can find. Hell, even those roads aren't safe. Bike paths are the hope of cycling America, the only way we're going to get lots of Americans to ride their bikes.

Imagine. Hundreds of thousands would pedal to work—if it were safe. Even if it were cold or raining. It'd just have to be safe. Safe. Like a dream, isn't it?

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