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# THE RIVENDELL READER

Issue No.

Issue No.

29

Spring 2003



Spring 2003

29

THE CYCLING QUARTERLY FOR THE DISENFRANCHISED

## Not In This Issue

Give yourself a six-pack in 6 weeks by following an exercise program espoused by a genetically blessed exercise addict who thinks food is over-rated and basically has no life outside the gym.

Guaranteed: No feature longer than 450 words.

How to hard-boil an egg and never have the shell stick (Seriously: if you know the secret, what is it?).

Baseball card-sized reviews of the latest bikes.



## When Pooh Was in Books Only

**T**

his is what I do for a living, and it's good in some ways, but I consider it to be a high stress job, and I don't have the emotional fortitude for it.

I stress out about relationship issues, like when somebody's mad at me or disappointed in me for not responding in time to an email, or something I've said in the *Reader* or our catalogue that makes somebody mad at me, when I wasn't even trying. If I make a sideways remark about garish synthetic clothing, I'm offending somebody who makes a living selling it, or somebody'll say I'm endangering riders by suggesting they wear more muted colors. Sometimes they're quick to think I implied something I didn't, and of course I think they inferred something that wasn't there. Recently a really nice guy got our Romulus brochure and thought we were carbon-fiber bashing on p. 1, paragraph 6, last part:

"A steel Romulus is built to last 20 years, easy... Aluminum's fatigue life is much less. Carbon fiber doesn't suffer dings, nicks, scratches, and exposure well."

He thought that was unfair to carbon-fiber. Well, it wasn't meant to be, and I'm sorry if it came off that way, but I still believe it. Carbon fiber frames will outsell high-end steel frames 100-to-1 this year, so my comment (which I stand by) won't make a difference.

I think it's important to point out these differences between materials, and I think it's okay for us to do it. We aren't going to go to the trouble of making bikes this way, and then sit passively and hope the orders roll in. Lugged steel bikes have more to offer than nostalgia, but a lot of people out there would have you believe otherwise. It's possible to make a strong frame out of non-steel materials, but it's easier to make one out of steel, because steel has some inherent advantages, mostly in toughness and failure mode. I believe with all my heart-or-whatever, that steel is the best frame material by far. And "failure mode" has tons to do with that.

On an unrelated note, some of you know that I got a patent on something. I got it the last day of 2002, and I'm not bragging about it, because it's neat and all, but that's it. It's for color-marks on vehicle tires (any vehicle), chosen and arranged so that when the tire rolls above a predetermined speed, two or more colors appear to blend to form a third color. It's called SpeedBlend™ (things need names). Colored bike tires are old news by now, but they don't blend to new colors at speed, and that's the difference. I think there might be some application on car tires, too, where you could put the color on the sidewall. On a bike tire, it could be sidewall or tread, or both. We've made prototypes using colored tape and Sharpies, and they work fine until the tape comes off.

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**THE RIVENDELL READER**

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*Editor:*

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Grant, who still has a long way to go

*Photos:*

Mostly by John B.

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Anyway, I'm not going to spend my life trying to license it or sell it, but I refuse to not hope.

It's not so easy to lose weight by bike riding. I know there are lots of people out there who've lost 50, 100 pounds and more, but I think—based on my own observation of my own belly—that once you're just, say, ten pounds over your dream weight, you've got to turn into a food-fearing megamiler in order to lose any more. The problem, at least for me, is what people who write books call "emotional eating." As though food should be just for sustenance!

A few of you know that Brooks has been bought by Italian big-time saddlemaker Selle Royal. A Selle Royal/Brooks guy came by last week and left for us a saddle we've been asking meekly for, for a year or so now. It's a B.17 with a longer straight section of rail, further toward the nose, the idea being that this will let you shove the saddle back farther. Since most riders shove the saddle back all the way anyway, it seemed like a good thing to do. It doesn't force you back farther, it just lets it happen if you want it, and on some bikes, I want it. If you have a no-offset seat post, or if you're on a bike with a 73.5-degree or steeper seat tube angle, this saddle, among Brooks models, is necessary. Anyway, it's a strong indication that the new, Selle Italia-owned Brooks is listening and is willing to do some fun things. When a huge company comes in and buys a small one, you don't always expect fun things to happen.

Another thing Brooks is looking into is resurrecting some older models, and bringing back some of the expensive details from the past to current models. An example is the name plate. Now, when you look at the Brooks nameplate, maybe you don't think anything great, or maybe you think, "hey, cool, a real copper name plate," or something like that. A mental thumbs-up, since what other saddles even have name plates? But when you compare the new one to an old one, you can see that the old one is nicer. It's the same with the saddlebag loops. The old ones had round edges and were generally imbedded in the leather. Prices will increase, but prices increase all the time, anyway. We don't want to sit around encouraging short-cuts, after all.

The old Brooks catalogues, by the way, are fascinating to read. When I think of old guys back then, I imagine them being humorless and stodgy and more or less concerned with getting through the day and keeping their routine—a lot like Mr. Banks, in *Mary Poppins*. But the catalogue copy writers at Brooks don't fit that at all.

Another thing Brooks is looking at bringing back, and I'm not saying it'll happen for sure, are saddlebags. True Brooks Nuts know that Brooks made luggage before making saddles, and that saddlebags were part of the Brooks line as early as 1908. I've got eight or nine Brooks catalogues from 1908 through 1939, and there are tons of neat saddlebags and small tool bags in there. Brooks wasn't the only

maker, either. Saddlebags are probably the least likely Brooks resurrections, but there's still a chance.

I think Brooks ought to make saddle covers for all of its models, and fender mudflaps, and we'll tell you more as we find it out, but the point I'm trying to make here is that things are looking UP for Brooks, even though they were bought by a big company.

I recently bought about 25 pre-1972 issues of *Bicycling!* magazine, and its predecessor or precursor, *American Cycling*. It took me 9 hours to get through them (most of it on a plane). There's a gentleness about the content and writing and photos and advertising that's just not there—or here—any more, and it made me feel embarrassed,

inspired, ashamed, and committed to doing a better job with the *Reader*. I think most magazine marketing folks would look at them and scoff at the layout and everything else about them, but I still prefer them to what we have now, for the same reason I'd rather watch Ed Sullivan than Fear Factor (but not NYPD Blue). I'm not just talking about *Bicycling*, the Now Version. It's fine for what it is, just like the *Reader* is fine for what it is...but neither looks good compared to those old issues, with Fred DeLong and Clifford Graves contributing, and just so many interesting things.

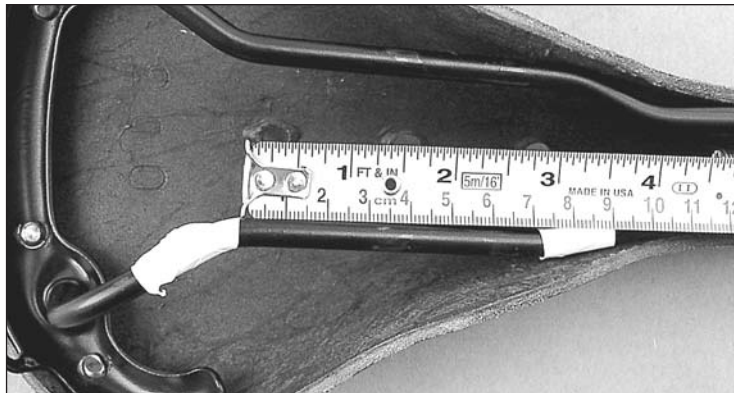
I'd like to reprint some stories from those old issues, but I don't know where to find the authors.

Many have died, and others must be really old by now, more than 30 years later. I can just imagine getting into trouble that way, so I'll just say here and now that if we reprint an old story and you happened to have written it, we'll pay you our going rate (which is generally barter) for it, and I think that'll be fair. The ads, too, are really good. Overall, our sport is portrayed as something anybody can get into, without a huge investment in sunglasses and body armor.

Last week I went to Dale Brown's *Cirque du Cyclisme*, a weekend event attended by about 75 folks from all over the world who like traditional lugged steel bikes etc., and I've got to say it was thrilling and inspiring to see so many people just like us. I don't mean to include you if you just picked up this issue somewhere, but the point I want to make is that a renaissance is coming, so be happy.

I hope you like this issue. I'm concerned about the length of Richard's interview and Lon's story, but I really liked them both. Lon's a good writer. He writes clearly and humbly, and doesn't get in his own way, and I find it really pleasant to read. I can't help but wonder about the spelling of Rubby's name, though. But that's it, and what a face! John said it belonged on the cover, and who could argue with that?

—Grant



Our rough, seat-of-the-pants, shoot-from-th-hip, devil-may-care, cavalier measurement of the straight/usable portion of the prototype new saddle rail shows a reading of 70mm, which is about 10mm (3/8-inch) more than on a current B.17. It's no earthshaking benefit to Riv-Rom-Red-Ram-Atl riders, whose bikes have shallow seat tubes already, but if you're riding a normal bike, especially a smaller-than-57cm normal bike, this new rail configuration will probably do you good.

# Mail

## When to NOT Repair a Frame

I am interested in knowing why Bhima's crashed bike, shown in RR27, will not be fixed (you mentioned that it wouldn't). One of the reasons I purchased 3 Rivs (one in hand two on the way) was that if I ever had to replace a tube or three that I could ship it back and have it done. I found comfort in knowing that I could ride my "original" Riv forever. So for a case study or a to give people the real life example, I would be interested to see how much it would cost and the time required to rebuild Bhima's bike and a road test report. It would be interesting to see if repairing the bike would indeed cost less (with a shorter lead time) than purchasing a new one. —Dan Morgan II

*Right now it can't be fixed because it's part of an insurance settlement, so we have to keep it in "as mangled" condition. Maybe it will be fixed later. It certainly could be, but with so MANY tubes needing replacement, it's in the category titled "Borderline Impractical." Usually a bike gets wrecked when it plows into something head-on, and just the downtube and top tube, and maybe the fork need replacing. In this case, it's those things PLUS the seat tube, PLUS both seat stays and chain stays. We've repaired many accident-wrecked bikes, and will continue to do it...but a side blow like this one that leaves ONLY the head tube intact is a special case. Ordinarily, when the downtube and top tube get replaced, the head tube does, too---because it's easier to replace it than it is to save it. So throw that pup into the mix, and it's odder still. The practicality of replaceable tubes on lugged bikes is real, and when one or two need replacing, it's the way to go. A bike has about 11 tubes, and when 6 or more need replacing.....you've got to sit down, eat a few more cookies, and think on it..*

## Smelly Lube?

I use Pro-Link as a drive train lube for winter riding. It does a great job, but I store my bike in my office when I commute to work, and the Pro-Link unfortunately reeks like an oil refinery. I've solved the problem by adding my favorite essential oil (patchouli) to the Pro-Link. Now my office smells like a HIPPY oil refinery. I think I'll try sandalwood in the next bottle.—Joe Bally

*Nobody here notices the smell. I keep bikes in the house all the time, and they all have Pro-Link, and my wife has the most sensitive nose in the universe, and she hasn't squawked yet. So, some questions just don't have answers, I guess.*

## The Gaits of Bears, by Type

In your Lear's Book of Nonsense, there's the limerick about the man on the bear, "When asked, Does he trot? he said Certainly not, he's a mopsicon flopsicon bear." Apparently the motion of bears has drawn the attention of observers, and they do describe the walk of the California grizzly as a "pace," ie, both legs on the same side move together. A trot moves legs on a diagonal, and is much easier to ride. The feel of a pace can well be compared to riding an off-kilter washing machine...or a camel. I was looking up images of bears to make a copy of the cavalry flag given to the Cal 100 in 1862 and discovered that the bear motif on the original was patterned after a Charles Nahl portrait done about 1855. This same piece was adopted about 1952 to be the official pattern for our modern state flag due to complaints of individual interpretations that came out looking like anything but a bear. The same complaint appears about the quality of the job done on the original Cal 100 flag! Examine our current state flag and you will see a bear that, indeed, does not trot. —Jeff Matthews

## The Peloponnesian Cutie/Troublemaker

While poetry undoubtedly had and has more importance in the working lives of oral cultures and in their knowledge transfer than it does in our current age of convenience and information (think in terms of apprentice-based learning rather than google-search-based), I do have to take a few issues with the idea that "poetry got shorter and cuter and rhymed," as you said in RR28.

I'll grant the part about shorter. The idea of cuteness is best left for another letter, but wasn't the Peloponnesian War started over a cute girl? Cute has its place and nothing is cute about much contemporary poetry, though there is plenty of that yucky, artsy, and overly sweet verse that is being written. Probably, Homer's time had the same folks running around, but nobody bothered to copy that schlock down once alphabets and writing became all the rage.

As to rhyming, that is a major reason epics like The Odyssey took a poetic form. Rhymes are one of several poetic mnemonic devices that "random sentences" do not lend themselves to. Rhyming is definitely seen in many (most?) serious poetry circles these days as antiquated and limiting. To my tastes, however, the occasional rhymes are not only a nod to some traditional masters, they add an important sound and balance of the verse. —Kyhly Lyndgaard, Taipei

*Hi Khyly, I think you misinterpreted my remarks. I LIKE rhymes! In fact, I'm suspicious of poetry that doesn't. That doesn't mean I don't like it, just that I'm suspicious. But there are few people alive who know less about poetry than I do, for what that's worth.—GP*

## \$9 COUPON—Good through July 10, 2003

You have to cut it out or photocopy and mail it in, and sign it, too. It won't work over the phone. But if you do that, it's worth \$9 on any in-stock merchandise order of \$90 or more, through July 10, 2003. Not good online or over the phone. That's the only thing. signed \_\_\_\_\_

## Pls Help Us Get More Subscribers!

Our Goal is 10,000 subscribers, and we're at about 6,000 now. Ordinarily, a publication needs more readers so it can raise its ad rates or attract new advertisers. That's not a bad reason, but we have no advertising, so it's not *our* reason. We need more because the per piece cost of printing and mailing the *Reader* is too high right now, and with more volume, it goes down a lot. Plus, more subscribers means more potential customers for the things we sell. The advertising-free Reader doesn't begin to pay for itself, but a higher volume would help a lot, and more regular old orders from *Reader* readers—that's what it takes.

A year is \$20, and you get a \$10 credit toward anything we sell.

An even better deal is 3 years for \$35, and the same \$10 credit. For that you get long stories and interviews that are too long for any other publication; and tips and such that may help you set up your bike better, or change your attitude toward riding in a good way. Anyway, we need more subscribers and extended subscriptions for current subscribers, and we're asking for your help here.

Show this copy to a friend. Or if you're on the shy side, send us the name and address of a friend who might like this, and we'll send them a complimentary copy. If *you* want back copies to give away, just ask and we'll send them. If we don't get our subscriptions up to at least 8,000 by December, the *Reader* will be shortened to its original 32-to-40 page length starting 2004. That wouldn't be so terrible, but we'd prefer to keep them fatter.

### To Whom Should We Send a Free Issue?

(Who should we send a free issue to?)

your name here: \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street \_\_\_\_\_

Street \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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Richard Sachs is one of the four most famous frame builders in the country, because he's been building frames for 30 years, is really good at it, and he's been the subject of at least 20 newspaper and magazine articles over the years. Although he has built track, touring, road, sport-touring, and cyclo-cross frames, 90 percent of what he builds, and 95 percent of what he sells are road frames, and not just any road frames. Richard Sachs builds Richard Sachs road frames, which, quality aside, means he designs it for you based on some measurements and conversations...and in the end you get Richard's interpretation of a classic road bike. If you want a funkadelic survivalistic commuter/tourer, or you have your idea of what a frame should be like, he's not your builder. (Don't think we're trying to skim orders off him—we don't do wacky bikes, either.)

Richard's interpretation of classic has changed little over the years, and a Richard Sachs bought today isn't that different, geometrywise, than a Richard Sachs from 1977 or so. Richard likes a lot—8cm— of bottom bracket drop (the distance the bottom bracket falls below the wheel centers). More drop means a lower bottom bracket, and so Richard's bikes all have low bottom brackets, and it was entirely Richard's influence that got me to go to 80, also. Well, Marc Muller had some influence there, too. Serotta recently went to 8cm of drop on some of its road frames, and it's all a good thing. But it's a Richard Sachs signature, and when Richard leads, others will follow.

Richard is also a racer, and always has been. A few years ago he was the Connecticut State Criterium champion, and last year he got silver in the state's cyclocross championship. Most guys of his age have a thickening middle, but Richard's riding keeps him elf-like, and he pretty much looks like he'll live another 50 years. He has that body type.

During the past three years or so, Richard's website has blossomed, and via that and assorted chat groups on the net, he's been more accessible than ever, something he considers a blessing and a curse, but mostly a blessing. He talks about that on the following pages. Also during the past 3 years, he's developed as strong a liking for cyclo-cross racing as he ever had for road racing, and he talks about that, too. Basically, he don't want to road race no more.

I knew of Richard in the middle '70s, from reading bike magazines and just paying attention. I met him at a bicycle trade show in 1987, but he doesn't remember; that's probably the way it is with famous people. But then in 1990 or so, when I was at Bridgestone and writing ads, I wrote a full-page spoof ad for VeloNews' April first issue, which always included some jokes discreetly woven into the serious stuff. It was about a fictitious frame builder who was building some fictitious frame for us, but I didn't let on, and near the end I said that when your frame was delivered, you'd also get a small bag of filings created during the making of it, and noted that most builders discard the filings, because "if you know what to look for, the filings reveal more about the quality of the frame than the frame itself does," or something like that. A week after that ad came out, I received a small package of filings from Richard, and I still have it. I suppose I could sell it on eBay, but I wouldn't want to deal with the wacko who'd want to buy it.

Everybody talks about Richard as though he's a god. He's been called the "Stradivarius of the Bicycle Frame," and was recently profiled in *Cigar Afficionado*, and that's a lot to live up to. Richard does it well and humbly. Once when we were talking on the phone, I forget what I asked him or said, but his response was, "Did you ever see the movie *Being There*? Well, I identify with Chauncy Gardener. Sometimes I feel exactly like him." I got the movie that night, and don't agree at all, but maybe that just makes Richard's point. He is as humble as Pooh, and has nothing to be humble about.

This interview was conducted live, with a tape recorder in December, 2002, when Richard was out this way for the Cyclocross Nationals. It's three times as long as I expected it to be, and if this *Reader* is more than 56 pages, blame it on this. Go to the bathroom now, take off your shoes, settle down on the sofa, and allow an hour for it.

—Grant

## An Interview with Richard Sachs

Richard, I want to get some of the facts out of the way fast. You are 49 and you've been building bikes for about 30 years. As I've heard it, when you became interested in making frames, you were a bike racer and worked in a bike shop, and you were just out of high school and were planning to become a write. Is that right? And then you got distracted and somehow you wrote some letters to some European frame builders to see if you could get a job there?

Richard Sachs: What?

Precisely. What I mean is, you were working in a bike shop before college, and somehow got interested in building frames, so you sent some letters off to European builders, and one of them said sure, come on over. And you're 49 now, right?

Well, yes, I am 49, and that is a concise history of the first year or so. I was interested in bike racing, but I



Spencer, left, with Richard.



Richie wrapping Ritchey. We'd recently received some Ritchey cranks, and Richard helped us wrap and label them.

you have any brothers and sisters and what were they like? When did you develop an interest in bikes?

I grew up in Bayonne, New Jersey. My mother raised me and I think I'm a product of being raised by loving and strong women. My mom, her mom, her mother's sister, my uncle—this was my nuclear family. I don't have any brothers or sisters. I was a regular kid. I liked sports, and played stickball in the neighborhood. During summer I was always at summer camp and we did all sorts of things that middle class kids do at summer camp like short sheet beds, played softball, color war, and flag football— so that's what I did.

All kids rode bikes back then. Were yours special, put together yourself, or just normal bikes?

From the get-go everything about where I am today and from answering your questions now to previous 30 years is complete serendipity. When I was old enough to get a license, it wasn't like I was riding bikes or thinking about bikes all through my teenage years, but after you get a license I thought with a license I'll get a car. I don't know why I thought that but I did. My family wouldn't get me a car and I guess I put up a little bit of a stink. I said, "well if I don't get a car, I want a bike." And my Mother said, "Fine we'll get you a bike."

And you were about sixteen.

Or seventeen. Had my Mother bought me a car or let me use her car, I wouldn't be here answering these questions, but the next day I bought a ten-speed bike, an Atala. I found riding to be exhilarating.

planned to go to college to pursue a career in creative writing. But because I delayed admission I had my whole summer plus some months to kill, I thought it would be really interesting to go to England and learn about bike making. It was not something I thought about doing for a profession. So yes, I wrote away to about 20 builders, got three responses and one affirmative, from Witcomb in London. I offered to work for free if they'd teach me, and they said fine, so off I went. It was 1971.

Did you write to just small builders or did you write to Raleigh also?

I wrote away to lots of companies. Most of them probably didn't reply to me because they didn't build frames. The three that did reply were Witcomb, which was affirmative, Bob Jackson, who said, "No" and Ellis Brakes, who said, "No." The others are just names that everybody would recognize probably. Geoffrey Butler, Harry Quinns, Fred Baker, the whole entire gamut of names that were popular in the late '60 and early '70s.

I want to back up some. Where did you grow up? Do

That wraps up your childhood and introduction to bicycles, so let's talk about Witcomb—your experience there. Was it what you expected? Were you impressed at all or disappointed? Did Witcomb influence your current style or did somebody else influence it?

Well...those are all different subjects. First of all I wanted to make frames. I thought I wanted to make frames because I thought the racing bicycle was the most beautiful thing I could imagine, and trying to get a job in bike making was born of that. It wasn't that I wanted to go and learn about Witcomb's method. But they were gracious, took me in, I lived with the family. It was an incredible experience especially when you factor in that even though it was 1971 and 1972, I was more part of the '60s. I was pretty much counter-culture. I thought making something by hand would be cool, almost an act of defiance. But it wasn't like I was a frame builder when I was there. I did whatever they needed, from filing metal to packing bikes to making coffee. Eventually they said "Watch and we'll show how to braze this." That's how it starts and it was an incredible experience, because I was just 18, and hav-

ing this unconventional experience oversees—it was great. I just thought, “oh this is cool. Everybody else is like on a college campus and I’m living by myself in London, I’m 18, and I’m doing something really different.”

**What did your Mom think about it?**

Well my Mom was supportive. When I was over there, I was having such a good experience and a good time and learning so much that I thought I’ll postpone college. I’ll just ride this bike building thing out and when I’m done I’ll come back to America and go to school. That never happened. Coincidentally, the Witcomb family was setting up an exporting business to America, so when I was finished at Witcomb, I came back and got a job at Witcomb, USA. We didn’t build bikes, we were just the agents for Witcomb in North America. It was a commercial venture. There was a fellow who owned it. There might have been about four or five employees, and I was one of the young helpers there.

**Eventually you started building your own frames and you had to get a few tools. What was your process like? What tools did you get? Where did you get them? How did you start out?**

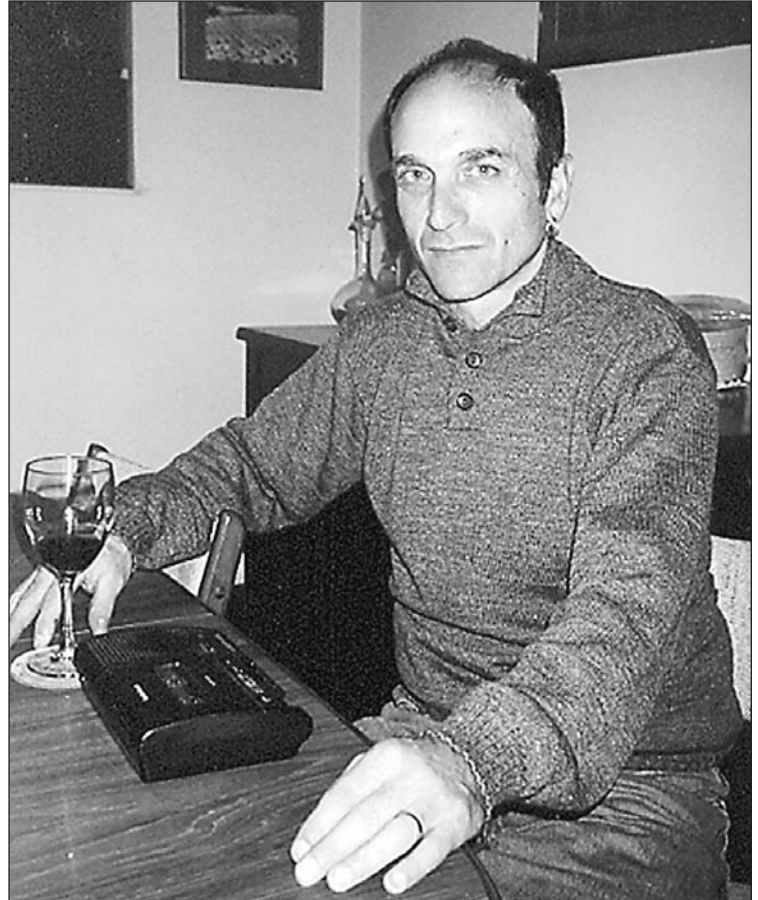
Well, the guy who owned the Witcomb USA name decided to start building frames so me and Peter Weigel became the frame builders of Witcomb, USA. That was probably for another year and a half to two years of my stint there. But it became too much of a chore. Our boss did not really love bikes. He wanted to be part of the bike boom. He wanted us to work. We didn’t really know enough. We weren’t really frame builders even though we had been in England and absorbed some of the processes and knew enough to stay out of trouble, but we weren’t by any means frame builders. We developed some resources. We had local machinists make some fixtures, and everything worked. At one point along the way I just got fed up with it and I left. I mean, I got fired, because I wasn’t fun to be around— but I had been planning to leave, anyway.

I was planning to do the Richard Sachs cycle stuff I started in April 1975. I started out simply and simple.

**Do you have your first frame that you made?**

No, I sold it to was a guy from Mexico. The oldest Richard Sachs frame that I can track is owned by Skip Lyle in Little Rock, Arkansas. He’s a bike collector and it’s the first Richard Sachs frame that I made for myself, and the 8th frame I made under my own name. He had it restored and it is in his collection now as a display piece. Well, I can get a picture of that bike. He made a print for me.

**Good, but it probably won’t happen in time for this. In the ‘70s and before that, Eisentraut was building really nice**



Richard was going to stay with me, but heavy rains flooded our guest room, so here he is at Mark’s house. But it’s my tape recorder, and yes, that’s a WoollyWarm derby tweed sweater.

**frames earlier than anybody. When did you first hear of him or see his frames, and what was your reaction?**

Well, one thing I forget to mention earlier is that just before I went to England, I worked at a bike shop called the Ski Rack, in Vermont, and it sold Eisentrauts. But I saw only one before I went to England. I didn’t know anything about it except it was made by a guy and not a company. It was made by a guy. I was impressed that there was a guy doing it in America. Then in the middle ‘70s I was impressed with the fact that some of the Turin racers—Mike Neel and Jim Ochowicz and others—were racing on Eisentrauts. I thought it was cool that a national level team was racing on handmade bikes, not on Schwinn’s or Raleighs or whatever.

**But you were starting out now I guess with the market the way it is now, if you were to start over, would you build with lugs?**

Well that’s all a hypothetical question.

**Correct. There may be another one down the road, too. Well...?**

Well, when I started in the early ‘70s when I was a teenager and I thought bikes were incredibly beauti-





For the benefit of local readers, this is Mark and Richard approaching the top of Pig Farm.

ful, but I was drawn into it because the sport was more important than the product, but the product was cool. Now I'm 49 and I don't think bikes are beautiful now. They are not beautiful to me, anyway. They don't draw me in the way they did then. Because there is nothing beautiful about them. They have their own aesthetic and they certainly work and carry people down the road and are efficient and you can make a living from it, but if all that was available then was what I see now, I probably wouldn't have looked twice at them

**What do you think of when you see an older European maker making compact aluminum frames—for instance, the new DeRosas and Colnagos.**

Well, their choices are market-driven. Those kind of companies influenced me when I started because you have to copy something. They are pretty much corporate level and they are seen as being frame builders, but they make thousands and thousands and thousands of bikes a year. I think to a man if you asked them, "Do you think this is the apex of your working skills? Is this is the best you could offer? Is there a point in your life when you were making frames that were better suited to what you wanted them to do? I'm

sure none would say "This is the best I can do or have done." They are light, fairly inexpensive, easy to make, and they are making lots of money. They have a lot of people on staff. Everybody on staff has kids. They need to make those choices.

**What are your thoughts on frame stiffness?**

I don't ever consider stiffness in my frame. I wouldn't even know how to define it. When people talk to me about it, I've no clue what they are talking about.

**What do you mean you have no clue?**

Well, the bike has to be forgiving and resilient so it can be ridden comfortably. I don't know what stiffness is. My notion is that when a rider feels what he thinks is a lack of it, it's really the result of a poorly designed or made bike. I think the construction methods also contribute to how the bike feels, and it's not simply the tube's gauge or cross section.

**Up until maybe four or five years ago, all of your down tubes were 28.6mm ( 1-1/8th inches), and—**

—Well it was longer ago than that. But if you're asking me why did I morph or evolve into the oversize tubes?

Is that the question?

You're a sharpie.

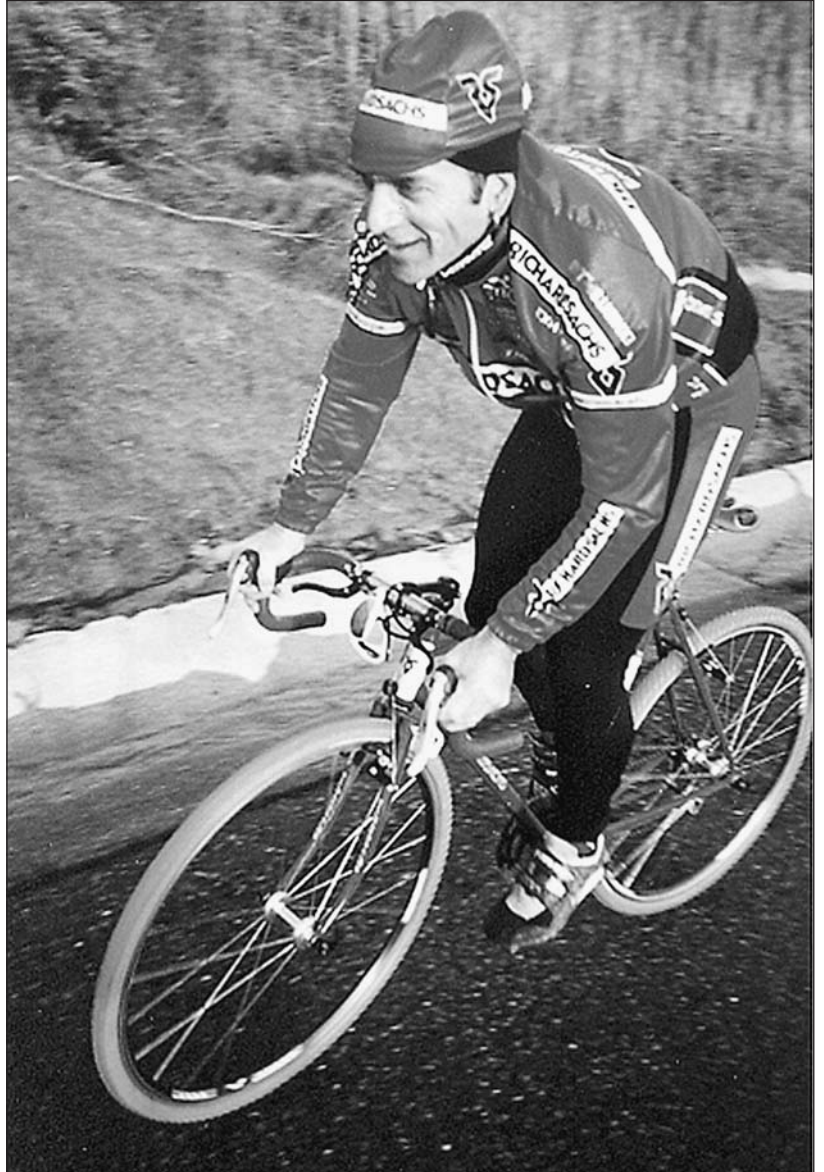
Well, I did it for style. There was a point about eight or nine years ago that I no longer was able to look at my frames, which were essentially made with the standard two diameters at that point. The shape of components was changing. Clamps were becoming more sleek, stem shapes were getting more futuristic, wheels were losing spokes—*everything* was looking different. When I started hanging those newer parts on bikes that looked like they hadn't changed in the years, it kind of offended my sense of aesthetics, so the only way for me to change that was to grow the tube diameters. It wasn't like I did it to improve the bike or to make a statement, except maybe to myself. The bikes looked like they were from the preceding era. I could only do so much change having lugs, and changing the diameter helped me to feel good about bringing myself into the '90s, and also make modern racing bikes that happen to be built the traditional way, with lugs.

**If you are building a big frame 64 or 65 or larger frame for a real heavy rider, don't you think the over size tubing is an advantage here, just a better balance, just more proportional to the size of the rider?**

I guess in theory, yeah, but in practice there were people that were 6 foot plus, there were people that were 200 pounds plus back in the '70s and before that. You either increased the diameter or you could increase the gauge. Doing both would just simply make it like too heavy or more heavy that it should be. I worked with what was available and I don't really think that if oversized tubing is appropriate for many people that, for instance, super oversized tubing would be better for big people. I'm confident in my skills, so I think I can make a light, responsive, super simple bike frame out of normal diameter tubing.

**Tell us what makes you choose one brand over another tubing.**

Well, I have to feel good about the vendor. In most cases I'll choose the vendor who wants my business. If they make me jump through hoops, if they make me pay more for something that is blister packed, when all it needs is to be put in a box and sent to me from the mill, I won't do it. Brand doesn't matter that much to me. I thought Reynolds made really good tubing. I still think they do, but they left America three or four years ago and it became too much of a chore for me to continue using it, so I started using Dedacciai. It has good brand recognition so I figured well, you know, one's gone and another one's arrived.



Richard and his cross bike on Bear Creek Road, part of a 30-mile loop we rode to show off the local riding and stretch legs after a marathon interview.

As long as I know what I'm doing, the tubing isn't going to make or break the quality level of the bike.

**When did you stop putting tube stickers on your bike?**

1979.

**In one of the old Bridgestone catalogues, there is a story you wrote in an article where you talk about the differences between what you called hand wrought details and investment cast ones. You seem to look askance at fanciness if it wasn't carved or filed or brazed. Do you still feel that way?**

Not as much (laughing here). Maybe it was because I thought, well here I am, I've already put in 10 years learning how to hone my skills and some guy is going to come along and say to the newer frame builders



Richard puts pins in the lugs before brazing. "Pinning" the frame helps the set the geometry before brazing. Another way is "tacking" the tubes in a fixture that holds them properly.

who didn't have the same experiences, "Here, save yourself time and money. You just take it out of the box and use it. You don't have to get your hands dirty, you don't have to cut your fingers, or have a sense of aesthetics. Just use it." I just didn't think that was the best way to do it.

It's a different era now. Back then the material they used was wrong. In 30 years I think the casting materials have become better suited to bike making. I think they are softer, more malleable. They are more like the tubing they are holding, which I think was at the core of the problem that I was having with investment cast pieces in the beginning.

**When you started building frames, racers seem to ride more expensive bikes than they do now. These days they seem to ride more big company inexpensive bikes.**

Well, I think right now the sport is industry driven. When I started, most racing bikes were handmade. They were made by production shops, frame building shops, or even some small artisan shops, but they were painted up to represent the sponsors who were supporting the teams. Everybody knew that was going on. I think now because there is so much money involved with the sport that if a company like Trek or Colnago or Litespeed sports a team, they want the team riding in exactly the product that the consumer is going to get at the store. There is no way to get around that. Masking frames really is something that doesn't occur on a regular basis anymore. It happens, but it is not widespread as it was before.

**Back then it seemed as though racers were the ones who rode really fine frames. Since racers today ride much less expensive frames for the most part, there are exceptions, do you think that has had an effect on what the enthusiasts want?**

I think the enthusiasts always want what sports heroes use. I'm not going to get into the pathology of that, but that is simply the way it is. It's business.

**Where do you get customers now?**

I think there are people that have different sensibilities. Maybe their sensibilities are fine-tuned, or maybe they're attaching something to my bikes that really shouldn't be attached, but I get the person who wants something that doesn't have a compromise. People want a bike from me because I have "X" amount of years of experience and stay pretty true to the company line, whatever that is, being a one man shop.

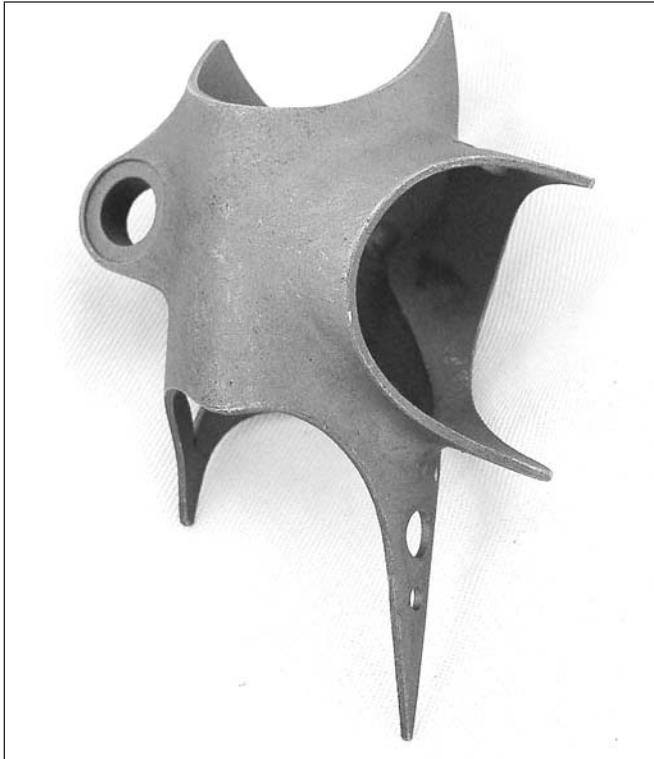
I feel like I live outside the bike business and watch it from the sidelines. The people who get my bikes are probably people that would not normally go to a bike store to get their really fine bike. They might get their first bike or their second or third bike, but they know ultimately that they want the experience of having me measure them, me deciding what is best, me building it in a fashion that would guarantee that it rides well and looks good.

**Can you describe a Richard Sachs' frame and 25 words or less, 50 words or less, what are the main characteristics of your frames that sets them apart either aesthetically or design wise or in any other way?**

Well I'll borrow from some text I had in a brochure 10 or 12 years ago. I said "rational design, superb construction, and excellent workmanship," or maybe I said "excellent construction and superb workmanship." Those were the hallmarks that I decided were going to define what I did. I think first and foremost the bike has to fit. Then it has to go down a road with stability, and be comfortable.

**I think every manufacturer would say the same. What I'm getting at is, what are the design features of your bike that you think are a little bit different?**

Well I think when I talk about design, I'm referring to the two dimensional drawing that exists on a piece of paper or in my mind. When I think about all the points that connect the rider to the bike meaning his hands, his butt, and his feet. I also think about where the wheels are in relationship to that triangle that is borne between his hands, his butt, and his feet. I think about how far apart the wheels are, where the center of gravity should be, how far away his hands will be from his saddle, and I try to take a mental picture of that and create that tubing on a three dimensional plane. My front wheel bases are longer than most, my trail measurements are less than most, my center of gravities are lower than most, my chain stays are lower than most. Across the board, you know, my set backs are longer than most (his seat tube angles are shallower—ed.). Modern frame design has, unfortunately, become Americanized. By that I mean I think fine bicycle making as far as the design



Richard's new seat lug. This is as nice a lug as I've seen.

goes reached its zenith before the bike boom. That doesn't mean improvements haven't occurred, but if you look at racing bikes up through maybe the middle to late '70s—but no newer than that—most of them were comfortably designed, they allowed the rider to finish races, they were more stable. And since then, things have changed.

I think my bikes haven't changed, design wise, since that era, and I think they ride better for it. For not having changed.

**You typically use 8cm of bottom bracket drop, which, especially with skinny race wheels, means a low bottom bracket. Were you doing that from the start or what influenced you to go that low in the bottom bracket?**

Well, let me try and be specific. I don't really make custom frames. I make frames made to designed in a way that I think is the best for the person who I am fitting a bike to. In the beginning of my career I had customers who were national team members and people that were just the best riders in the country. Strangely, they always asked for something that was stable, and I kind of bookmarked that and I thought this distinction is really odd because people that I am making the bikes for that are racing on the national level, and they want bikes that, by *Bicycling* magazine standards, were not "racing bicycles." They wanted the bikes to be, all summed up, longer and lower, just the opposite of the way the bike journalists said racing bikes should be.

I think the line in the sand came when one of my clients, Rudy Sroka, who was also a good friend of mine, was on the first American team to be invited to the Tour de L'avenier, which for those who don't know, is the amateur Tour de France. He wanted the bike to be 76 degree parallel, with an 11 1/4-inch bottom bracket, the shortest chain stays as was possible, and a minimum fork rake. I made the bike because I thought that, "well bike makers make bikes to order and this is what Rudy asked for." He was my pal and an accomplished racer, and I figured, well I'm not going to argue. The bike looked great. You couldn't tell from the side that it was queer. It was what he wanted. He had enormous success on it, but when he went to the Tour de L'avenier, which was his first taste of European stage racing, he lasted three or four stages. At the time the team manager, Mike Neel, said to him, "if you ever get invited back to Europe to represent America in the stage races, don't bring that bike. Or if you ever find out I'm the coach, don't bring that bike."

Rudy related that story to me and at that point I said to myself *that's it*. None of this stuff ever made sense to me. I didn't really have the spine to tell people when they asked me for these strange designs or these fantasy challenges or these versions of what the editors of *Bicycling* magazine were saying was this year's flavor geometry. I continued to fill those orders because I didn't know how to say no. Even though I was getting the information process for my other customers that said we like our bikes the other way. We are real racers and we are national team guys, and we want it to be this way. So I stopped making bikes to order and I decided to use my experience from the sport and say, "Look— there are two people in this equation, and I know more about the design than you do. I will design the bike to fit you perfectly. The result of this will be based on what I think will be correct for a bike." I don't think I've taken an order since, where somebody tells me what to make.

**Visually what do you like or look for in other things? And what other builders do you admire?**

Well I don't really look around anymore. I'm not driven from within the industry. I used to be. I used to need role models and I used to need something to influence me to copy. From the beginning the first frame that I wanted to make frames like was W.B. Hurlow. He is not well known in America

**He's still alive.**

Yeah, I think he's 81. Maynard went for a ride with him. He lives in Southern California and has come to visit. Not to get off the point but one of the biggest influences in my life was when I ordered my first frame. I think this part of the story really belongs at the beginning of this interview, but I'll tell it to you now. I kind of got drawn into getting a custom frame made before I even knew what a custom frame was. I

didn't need a custom frame but I kind of heard about this guy who made them, you tell him what you want and he makes it. I wrote away to him and he wrote me back. I sent him a deposit and I waited, told him what I wanted. He offered me some options and then maybe eight months later after a dozen or so letters, all hand written, all on beautiful stationery, the bike arrived. The whole process of communicating with this guy who I had not met, sending him a deposit, thinking, "Wow some fellow in a far away land is going to make me a bicycle, and I'm going to like go to the airport and Emery air freight is going to deliver it, and its going to come out of their office, I'm going to sign a piece of paper, take it home and unwrap it." I thought, "What could be better than that?" and I think that from the get-go I kind of wanted to use that as my role model. I wanted to be Bill Hurlow at some point in my life. I don't think any frame has ever had the impact on my life or has made me look twice at it the way my first Hurlow did. Even though I make bikes and I'm expected to look around and be influenced by what is going on the industry. I don't really look at bikes and pass judgment. Unless it is just to be cynical or judgmental, which is kind of small of me to begin with. I think bikes essentially don't do it for me. I like my bikes. I like to try and make my bikes better but I don't look at bikes to figure out what to do to make my bikes better.

**You're right, that should have come earlier. Anyway, Mario Confenti died young, at 34 years old or something. He made 200 frames under his own name and now he is a legend. Have you seen any of his frames?**

I think, when I thought about him back in the '70s, I still had the rose colored glasses on meaning that I was in my early '20s. He wasn't much older than I was, but he from a culture where frame building was part of the sport. He knew things about bike design that I probably may never know. I also think the guy had a certain style that other Italian builders didn't. He had the nerve to come to America as part of the Masi venture, and then he had the nerve to move on to make his own bikes. He was able to write his own ticket because nobody questioned that he knew what he was doing. He was basically the only game in town. I loved looking at his bikes. I think they were beautiful, but when I look at them now they seem lukewarm, because now I know things about bikes I didn't know then. The best bikes from that era, let's say the '70s, are not even well executed by modern standards, they were just the best quality level in their era. That goes for my bikes, too. My skills as a maker and as a designer have evolved manifold and I look at some of the bikes that influenced me back then and I think emotionally, *yeah these things are cool*, but intellectually there is really nothing there for me. I don't know if it's good or bad, but that's how I feel.

**How did you come to like red and do you insist on it, or do your customers just see it as a signature color,**



Richard's new top head lug matches his other ones, and has a smart extension cast into it.

**the only proper color for a Richard Sachs frame?**

Well, it's another instance of serendipity. I didn't choose the red for the red bikes. The racing team that I sponsor—that I have been sponsoring since about 1982—wore red jerseys, and I wanted the bikes to match. The colors caught on because the team did well, we got press and notoriety, and the association with red just took on its own life.

**Have you made any touring frames?**

Oh yeah, and I still do.

**How many?**

Well it depends on what you call a touring frame.

**With the eyelets and clearance, for instance, and okay with fenders. The normal definition.**

Well, for me to make a frame with touring eyelets or eyelets and what the English call Christmas tree ornaments—maybe two or three a year. It's not my market, because of my racing background. Even though people who call me up for a frame don't necessarily race, my knowledge and experience comes from racing, not from having toured around the world and knowing how to pack a Coleman stove so it doesn't rattle.

**The Peak One doesn't rattle, but it's still too heavy to take on a tour, I think. Soft stuff around them is the answer, but about cross frames: Are they harder or easier or different than any way to make it a road frame—besides the cantilever bosses? Do you put as much work into a bike for sloppy riding as you do for a road bike, and has your team's success with cross**

**helped sell cross frames?**

Well that's a mouthful. The cross frames take quite a bit less time than a road frame. At least the team frames do. They take a day to make (each frame). I put less time and workmanship into them, because they are just tools, even though they have beautiful JB paint jobs. Surprisingly, even though the frames are kind of cutting-edge light for steel—around 3 1/2 lbs for a 54cm frame—we haven't had any breaks, dents, cracks or failures.

**You must be using a superlight tubes, with 0.7mm butts, and 0.4mm bellies—**

Yeah. I use the Dedacciai "Zero" tubing. I guess there was a point where in the late '90s when I was starting to use superlight tubing for the cross frames and I thought, you know, I'm really flirting with disaster. But we have to make them as light as possible because you know when you're tired, you don't want to be carrying around any more weight than you actually have to.

**Have you started using it on the road?**

Oh I have, yeah, I have no problem with it.

**Do your customers ask you about tube specs or—**

Never. Those years are long gone. At some point, maybe after I'd been in the business for 20 years or so the whole interaction with the client and me changed. I got to a point where people were just happy that I had the confidence and the experience to make the frame. It wasn't about tube gauge, or angles, or cross section or tubing profile, it was simply about me. They wanted me to make the bike.

**How do customers contact you?**

These days it usually starts with email.

**Do you spend a lot of time on email correspondence or talking on a phone?**

Yeah, I spend a lot of time that should be spent at the work bench, but I end up getting diverted into client contact whether its electronic or telephoning.

**How has it effected your production? How many frames did you used to make a year and how many are you making now?**

Well, I still think of myself as a guy who can make 80 to 100 frames a year because when I began that is what I did. I was able to do that easily because I was younger and I had more zeal and spent six or seven days a week working, and I didn't have direct contact with my clients. I sold through bike shops. I was just opening up letters and putting them in my clipboard, and when a letter came up, I made a frame. That all changed. Through the years the amount of time it takes for me to talk to the clients and answer ques-



Lower head lug with integrated stops for Ergo/STI.

tions and send thank you notes and send out order forms, all that kind of stuff cuts into my frame building. I think now I can make 50 or 60 frames a year. I am embarrassed about that, because I still think of myself as being more productive. Because of all the time spent with the client, I make fewer frames. I don't want it to get to the point where I'm making so few frames that I start to feel like *Ye olde frame crafter*. I want to spend most of my time in my bench, but without email contact with my clients, I wouldn't have anybody to make frames for.

**How many hours go into a road frame?**

Well if I just stand at my bench and make a frame, I can make a frame in about two days, say about 16 hours. But I don't ever get even 8 solid uninterrupted hours to build, so a frame I start on Monday morning won't be finished Tuesday at 5.

**How long is the wait for a frame?**

About a year and a half. I have nearly 70 committed orders and you know if everything went smoothly, and the 71st order came tomorrow, I figure it would take me 18 months to get it to that person. I have never had this much work in my life and I'm very happy and I feel fortunate that people want to line up and wait, but you know, if all of a sudden six people call me up and ask me a bunch of questions, that can take a day of my time, and all of a sudden I'm a week behind.

When you say you have 70 people in line, these are



Here you go now. Richard holds a freshly painted frame. Joe Bell paints them. Richard's prize Masi is in the background.

people who have put down deposits?

Yes, I have 70 orders.

So how much deposit do you require, and what's your return policy? Say someone puts down a couple hundred dollars and seven months later they say, "I cannot wait any more, give me my money back."

Well, that doesn't sound like the kind of question I like to answer, but I'll try. My price list says I require 50 percent down. It's been that way since 1980 or so. But I have so much work backed up that I'm telling people to just send me a few hundred as a place holder. Just a place holder, send me a few hundred dollars. There is no need to send me 50 percent. If they send me 50 percent, it is not going to change anything, but I don't want to be responsible for more than I have to.

What's a frame cost?

Well, these days it's \$2,500. So typically somebody would see my price list, want to commit to an order, send me \$1,200 to \$1,250 whatever. I never say no if somebody sends me \$1,100. And as far as deposit returns go, I have only two ever, one of them was this past year after I broke my leg and frames were delayed. Before that there was one deposit returned I think in the early '90s.

How many frames have you built?

I have to guess 5,000 or so. I have probably made several hundred I can't even account for. Frames that were made off books. Frames that were made and labeled otherwise. Frames that were for my team that I didn't record in the log. Through the years, you know, I'm not saying I'm not a good bookkeeper, but after a while, after like 25 or 30 years some things just fall through the cracks.

What is the most rewarding part of making frames?

I think it's hitting my marks. I have a mental picture of what I want the frame to look like, then I have to cut everything to fit. I have to use the joining process, which causes everything to react and expand and contract, and then it has to come out perfectly because sometimes bicycles push the speed of small aircraft on takeoff or landing so you want the thing to be right. You don't want it to be simply wrestled into shape. You want to be able to build it so that it is perfect. Through the years, I have developed repeatable sequence of assembling that allows me to make the frames perfectly. I don't even think about it anymore. I make my fixture setups, cut my tubes, shave my lugs, shave the tub ends, plug things in, mark them, heat and braze them, and all of a sudden you have a frame that is beautifully brazed, which I know from experience is going to take the guy down the road with complete confidence. When all that happens simultaneously, there is no way to describe how happy I am. Some people make babies and I make bikes. This is what I do. This comes from my gene pool, and I think there are a lot of people that hear me say that and think this guy is really nuts, but everybody does something, and I make bikes.

When you think you have reached your peak as a builder or have you reached it yet?

I don't think I have reached my peak because I've kind of conceded to the fact that these things are handmade. I'm thinking "god there are still holes in my act and I cannot figure out how to fill them." So you learn and you learn and you learn. You try different things and all of a sudden I figure out what is bothering me, then something else starts bothering me. So little by little I raised the bar on my own standards, but I'm still not completely happy and I'm not sure I ever will be.

You got married a few years ago; how did you meet Deb?

I met Deb in the middle '70s and had not seen her again until the early '90s. Remember the story I told you about Rudy Sroka? Well, a few years before that, Rudy was going out with Deb, in high school. So I met Deb as Rudy's girl friend, and I had a girl friend at the time and four or six of us would go to the races and

just have a good time. Things changed and everybody moved on. Rudy and Deb broke up after high school and by coincidence Deb moved into my area of Connecticut about 10 years ago. I never forgot about Deb because she is really attractive and nice. We remet in 1992, and it didn't take long for us to acknowledge the chemistry between us. We dated, then got married 5 or so years ago. It's really great. She is my best friend. Deb and I often say that we share one heart. Some people consider themselves best friends or sole mates or joined at the hip. Deb and I really think that we share one heart and think that is really nice. We don't always want to be with each other. We don't do everything together. Sometimes we do nothing together, but we always feel like we were made to be with each other.

**She is a massage therapist now and before that she was making really good baskets.**

Yes. Deb decided to have a career change three years ago. Before that she made period correct baskets, and was a hand weaver. She has been invited to the White House to show her stuff.



Richard's wife Deb.  
Basketmaker and massage therapist.

**Bush or Clinton?**

Clinton. Yeah Clinton.

**Did the Clintons have a basket?**

Well I don't know who gets to keep it. I think it actually belongs to the American public. It belongs to the people of America because a basket is given to the White House but it doesn't belong to the Clintons. It was kind of neat and I think at least five successive years during that period she was also I think voted to be

among the 200 best crafts people in the country. She hasn't forgotten how to do all that, she just doesn't do it for money anymore.

**Do you have a lot of baskets around your house?**

Sure.

**You recently designed your own lugs and got them cast by Long Shen. Talk about them, and say why you waited so long.**

Well, I waited so long because I didn't take the initiative to just belly up to the bar and have these things done, but I've been thinking about it since the early '90s because that was about the era when the available lugs were becoming less available. I had always used lugs that were kind of hard to get or unique to my frames. Anybody could have used them, but I had

resources in the Orient that got me some lugs and some shapes that were not commonly available. All the shapes that I like are kind of an evolved version of the Dubois lugs that I used on my bikes in the '70s.

In the middle '90s I wasn't happy with the material available for the lugs and spent a long time reworking, reshaping existing lugs. The work that goes into those frames is all hidden once the bike is built and JB paints them red.

For my new lugs, I just sent Long Shen the best examples of those reworked lugs, and after going back and forth a few times, they got them just right.

**Now that you've got 70 frames in your queue and delivery is 18 months already, does it occur to you that once you come out with your lugs, you could get another 40 or 50 orders almost immediately? From past customers who want your latest?**

Yeah, I know, but it never occurred to me because the cogs in my head don't work that way. I'll cross that bridge if I come to it, but I don't know if having these lugs on my frame is going to make them better.

**Do you plan to keep these lugs for your frames or are you going to sell them?**

Sell. The number of fine lugs for frame building that are available I think is minimal, and I have never really been happy with what is on the market. So what I wanted to do was to design a lug that could be considered the Richard Sachs lug and put it into the marketplace so other builders who either come from the '70s, '80s, '90s, people who are hobbyists or even small production shops in Italy or in North America, if those people wanted to use my lugs on their frames that would be part of what this is all about. I am more proud of the lugs than I am of a lot of the frames I have built over the years because this is something that I made.

**Who would you like to see use these?**

Well, I'd like to see anybody use them or not use them, even. In other words, if they ended up on the bookshelf or the mantle piece, that would be fine too. What I'm doing here is trying to bring classic or traditional frame building processes into the 21st century. Because the lug designs are kind of traditional. These are the lugs that mimic the frames that I made in the '70s when I had DuBois make me lugs on a regular basis. If a European company wants to use them, then I will consider it a complete success. If nobody wants them at all, that's okay, because I did this for myself. I also look at these things as my contribution to this style of frame building. It is a way for me to make a legacy.

**Well, OK, so you would like to see other builders using your lugs. If somebody was building his first**





Filing an early Rivendell lug. We supplied Richard with lugs for some of his bikes. Only fair, since he designed them.

frame, you wouldn't mind if he used these lugs?

No, and I think these lugs suited to somebody who is starting out because they have short points, and are malleable, or bendable. I have used one set of angles for all my frames since about 1982 and all my frames have come in all the angles. It is up to the frame builder to know how to do the reworking and that is part of what a frame builder's task is meant to encompass.

These look really finished and I think you mentioned to me that there is no room for any builder to add or subtract anything from these so are you going to use these as they are cast?

Yeah. Obviously, they are going to need maybe a minute or two of dressing up only to the casting process. There are some limitations in how sharp or pointed an edge might be from the foundry. On one hand they are perfect as is, but because I make frames one at a time, if I want to sharpen up a point or define a window a little bit further, I might do that. For the builders who buy these things and want to personalize them there is really not much more on these things to make changes, which is, you know, maybe that *is* a problem

How would you feel about somebody building with your lugs and thinking, "Well. I really like the Richard Sachs thing and I'm going to do him pay him the ultimate compliment and also get my bike painted exactly as he has his painted, and I'm going to get decals that look similar to his, and heck I'm going to go to JB for the paint job too." Now how do you feel?

It doesn't faze me in the least. I have at least a 30 year

head start so even if you just take the exact same materials, and the exact same paint scheme, create a decal set, use the same lugs, whatever, it's still not my bike. I mean it's flattering that somebody would want to go to that kind of degree to either pay respects or even do it just as a spoof, but it's not going to affect what I do, and it's not going to affect what people who have Richard Sachs bikes think of their bike.

**On the head lug you have a 15mm or so extension. It's not traditional, and it's not what I'd expect you to do. Why'd you do it?**

I upped it some, so now it's about 19mm. Maybe 18. Most people think that extended head lug thing is kind of a '90s thing or even, if you will, a Rivendellish thing. You need to have the head tubs higher in the front. Because through the years, this is something wrong that has not really been addressed. Headsets have gotten smaller through the years; even the threaded ones are now quite miniature compared to what preceded them. You've lost at least 6mm of space just in the '90s when headsets became compacted. Worse

yet, quill stems have become shorter. Now if you want your bars in the same place as they used to be, you need to somehow build up the head tube so that you don't have your stem all the way up. So that's probably the reason I did it. I actually like the look, too, because I think with the oversize tubing and the short lugs on the extension when done well, looks to me like it's well thought out and completely functional.

**I'm with you and I go even further: To me, bikes without them look funny, but that's just because I've seen them for so long on our bikes. Anyway, you got a new fork crown too, so talk about that, please.**

Yeah. I took the basic flat crown that I had been using since roughly 1982 and refined it to the point that this was exactly what I wanted, made it a little taller, and about 6 or 7mm wider.

**Did you make it wider because you are building more cross bikes, or because you want to use it for your team bikes?**

Well I did it for those reasons as well, but I actually think it looks better and I don't have the engineering background to say well wider is better or narrow is better. It is just an aesthetic decision, it's a decision I made based on my own aesthetics.

**Are there any other frame building pieces that you are running short of or that you are concerned about? Do you want to get a bottom bracket shell sometime, and what about dropouts?**

Well, I do fear for the future, but my production is safe for at least five years. It would be prudent to have my own bottom bracket shells so that I could do



detail work. Dropouts, that's something that may happen down the road. Small fittings I'm not too worried about because any machine shop could make those pieces if the pieces from the frame building supply industry kind of ran dry.

**How long do you see yourself building?**

I've never thought about it. I think this says something about my personality. I kind of feel like I'm just getting into it even though I got into it in 1971 or 1972 and now it's 2002. Maybe because I work alone. Maybe because I'm self-taught. Maybe because I'm an only child.

I've made thousands of frames and a lot of time has gone by, but I still question what I'm doing and maybe that helps me want to learn more. I wish I could have complete confidence in the fact that what I'm doing is exactly the way it should be done. I think with people who make things by hand that is part and parcel with their character, but you're asking me about what I'm going to do in the future; actually I'm still trying to figure out what I'm doing. Having said that I don't want to have anybody lose confidence in me because they think, "well he doesn't sound like he knows what he is doing." My bikes are superb, but I still think that there is an enormous amount of things to learn about bike making.

**Would you do anything differently if you didn't have to work for a living? If you had several million dollars, would your life change?**

No it wouldn't. I supposed I wouldn't need to have paying customers the way I need to have paying customers now, but I think, you know, look—I'm 49 now and I've been working in the bicycle business for at least 30 years. I suppose I would continue to make frames on the same schedule I have now. Having a million dollars as a cushion would enable me to not to worry about customer contact and marketing.



If you didn't need to have paying customers, would you price them any differently? I know in our case we don't price them higher because we are afraid of losing customers and we want to keep the builders busy. We figure we'll make our money in some other ways. In your case, if you didn't have to have paying customers, would you price them higher? When you see a Colnago C40 or a DeRosa king frame selling for close to \$4,000 without a fork or maybe even with a fork and you look at



Making sure all the pins are there.

your frame for fork for \$2,500...?

Well the price is \$2,500 now and I also have other frames that cost more, but they are kind of anniversary frames that I have made through the years. They are \$2,500 because I have not made the time to tend to my price list and to make the adjustments. I told everybody who has an order with me that you know I don't really know what the frame is going to cost when I sell it to you in 18 months; your deposit holds your place in line, but you're going to have to give me some latitude because if my costs go up. If JB raises his paint prices, or if the material costs go up, or the cost of living in Chester escalates too much, it is not going to be \$2,500. That is simply what it says on the price list today and I feel lucky because everybody who have queued up agrees with me that if their frames cost more when they get it than when they signed up for it, that's life.

We are winding it up here, but something else occurred to me that I wanted to ask you. Your thoughts on forks in general and making a fork and

the amount of work that goes into making a fork and what you look for in a fork and your thoughts on after market forks. Has anyone ever put an after market fork on your frame?

Yeah, not somebody who has actually bought a bike from me, but there are people who have my bikes that got them second hand or people that have bikes that are 10 or 15 years old and they get caught up in this huge "flavor" thing with whatever it is. If you're talking about forks then they think well yeah I've read all about this carbon fiber stuff and I want to try it. So these are not people that I have direct contact with, but I've heard about people with Sachs frames that have replaced the forks only because they want to try something different, and I cannot fault them for that. I have obviously strong issues with the fork thing.

Most people don't think of it the way a frame builder would, but a fork is a pretty important part of a frame, and it's not supposed to be considered an accessory that you buy once your frame is complete like a handlebar set or a saddle. The reason people buy forks now from fork factories is because it is cheaper and more efficient to make them in a mold than it is to have the frame builder continue the tradition of making them to mate with the frame. I think that is a sad thing but you know that is the way the market has gone and I don't try to fight it. I continue to make my forks because each fork is made for the frame that it is stuck into.

Do you get requests for forks separately? Do you ever build forks to sell them?

Well not so much that I could make a market out of it. I have sold forks to people that just wanted them, but maybe five or six. It's not a product for me.

Do you get requests for chrome lugs? Do people ever come to you and say, "Well, I want to just go nuts here, so can I get a chrome crown, chrome lugs?"

Yeah, not the way I did up until maybe the '90s. Chroming is not in vogue anymore. It was a look that was more part and parcel with the traditional European frames that kind of vaporized by the time the middle '90s came around. Another dimension is the cost of doing chrome in America. Because the volume we give the plater makes it cost-prohibitive to put them on the bikes. Some people just have a blank check and if they want the crown or the lugs chromed, then we can do it, but aesthetically it doesn't really complement the bikes I am making now. It happens twice a year, at most.

I don't know if this will be in the interview either, but I've got to wind it up somehow. How do you want to be thought of historically and what do you think your contribution to bicycles has been and will be when you're gone?

I never really thought about it, but if I mean I kind of feel like I'm still on the way up. So you're asking me about what my legacy might be? I'm going to be dead, so it won't really matter, but if you want to just play with this: I don't fit the mold. I live outside the box. Even though I make frames I don't consider myself part of the bicycle industry. I'm a racer who happened to fall in love with bike frames and wanted to make beautiful things during the week and race on the weekends. I've been involved with the sport, and I've been really lucky. I haven't had to make compromises that are market-driven.

I'm really proud of the lugs. Now that I have a set, I can say to somebody else. "this is my design, I gave birth to this and it is something that somebody else can use to make their bikes better or their life easier or simply something to fondle because it is a beautiful

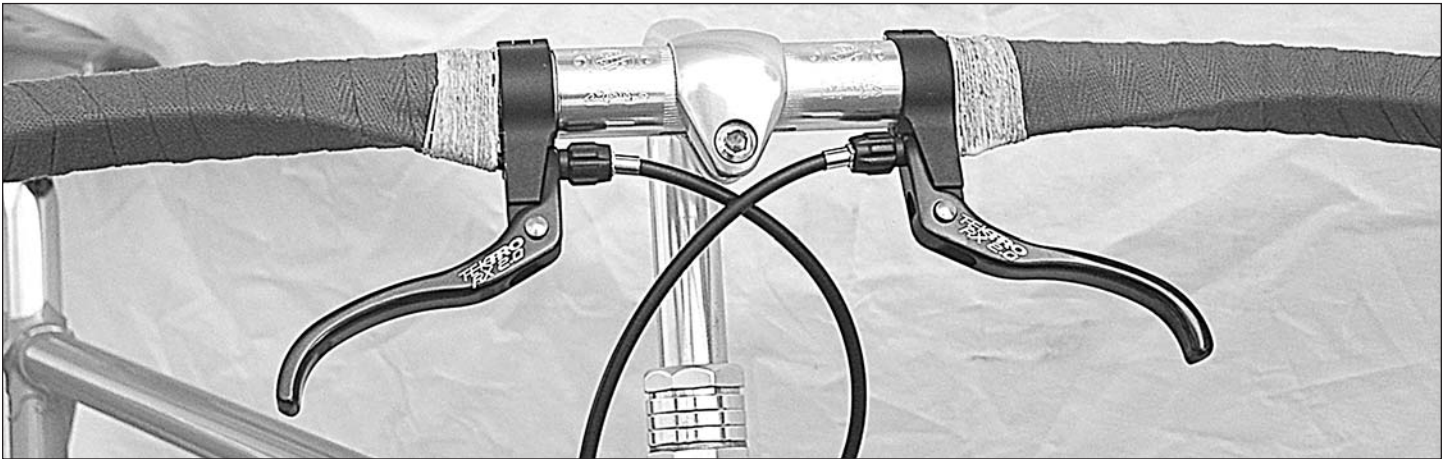
thing." I've always felt that classic frame building was better than the kind of production building that goes on. I think it is more organic. I think you can make a better bike when somebody who knows what they are doing takes it, configures it, puts something of themselves into it as they are making it, and delivers it to the client that orders it. I'm not sure it can get better than that. So having the lug project is in a way a way for me to say I am helping to prolong the building of classic frames because these are beautiful lugs.

OK. Well that might be the ending or we'll figure out something later, but thanks a lot. Over and out.

OK.

## A Rainy Ride With Richard

We have great riding around here, and are always eager to show it off. So I was excited as Richard and I headed up the mountain. But the weekend's storm, which flooded the Cyclo-Cross Nationals, caused rockslides on the mountain, so the ranger turned us back at the entrance. Grrrr. We went around the backside and up a trail instead, where there wouldn't be a ranger. Not good form, but this was our day to ride. I rode my road bike, Richard rode his cross bike. The climb is about 4 miles, and half a mile up it Richard flatted and didn't have a spare. He had tubulars, so my spare tube didn't do any good. We hiked the rest of the way, and talked a lot more than we would have if we'd been riding, so that part was good. The weather got progressively wetter, and it was cold and rainy at 3,000 feet. At that point, the trail meets the road at a wide, flattish horseshoe bend. Richard's hands were frozen, and his brown cotton gloves were bleeding brown as he wrung them out. I had a spare pair of woolies, and that helped. His hands were so cold that he couldn't even put them on, but together we managed, and as I was repacking my saddlebag, he headed off down the paved road to get a head start, being that he was riding a flat tire and would go slow. But it was foggy and Richard doesn't know the mountain, and instead of heading right and down, he headed left and up. Remember, it was flat at that point. I didn't see him go, so when I took off after him, I expected to catch him in a minute. But two minutes passed, and three, and four, and I thought, "Wow, he descends fast for a guy with a flat tire. It must be the cyclo-crossing..." But after another minute (it was raining good by now), I noticed I had a flat. Crudola! I was worried about Richard. He was freezing and shivering the last I'd seen him, just 12 minutes before. I replaced my tube, and just as I finished, he came down the road and found me. We rode down together, got stopped and scolded by the ranger who'd turned us back 4 hours earlier, and made it back to Rivendell. I wish I'd brought a camera—it was one of the few times I've ridden lately without one. But the next day, Richard and Mark and I went out for a sunny, 30-mile road ride, and that's where the riding photos that accompany this interview came from. Richard is fit and fast and a lot of fun to ride with. —Grant



## The New Kind of Brake Lever

FOR A COUPLE OF YEARS NOW, cyclo-cross racers have been using a supplementary brake lever that lets you brake from the top of your drop bar. Sometimes this style lever is called an *interrupter*, sometimes it's *interceptor*, and sometimes it's a *top-mount brake lever*. Anyway, it's one of the neatest things to come along in years and years, and you should at least consider them, even if you don't race cyclo-cross.

Your first reaction might be "Oh no! A resurrection of that old funky, squishy, mushy, ineffective kind of lever that used to come on cheap 10-speeds in the early '70s before riders got smart!" But the only similarity is that the levers in both cases are accessed from the top of your drop bars. The old kind didn't interrupt the cable; it just reached over and moved the normal brake lever, and it was so long that it was flexy and not effective. This new good kind leaves the real brake levers alone; it pulls the cable all by itself, and is powerful, easy, and super effective.

Your second reaction might be, "Bad bad bad—they just

encourage riders to brake with body high and hands close, and everybody knows that's terribly dangerous. I'm going to tell people not to patronize Rivendell, because look what they're telling people to do!"

Well not so fast, Eeyore. Used with good judgement, they're safe and fine and good. There are some situations where you'll want the security and body position that comes only from braking from the drops, but lots of the time, heck, these work just great.

I can think of only two possible beefs with them. Some guy might say they get in the way of handlebar bags, and that is true to either a tiny or a great extent, depending on the handlebar bag.

Mark and Robert are our resident cyclo-cross racers, and they use them on everyday bikes, too. Most of us here have tried them, and we like them, and you might, too. Only one warning, and this is not a cute sales pitch: They are the kind of thing that, once you try, you won't want to do without. Sometimes it's best not to try those things in the first place, but if you're game, read on.



Here's what we're starting out with. It's similar to what you'll start with, if you retrofit these onto any bike with aero road levers.



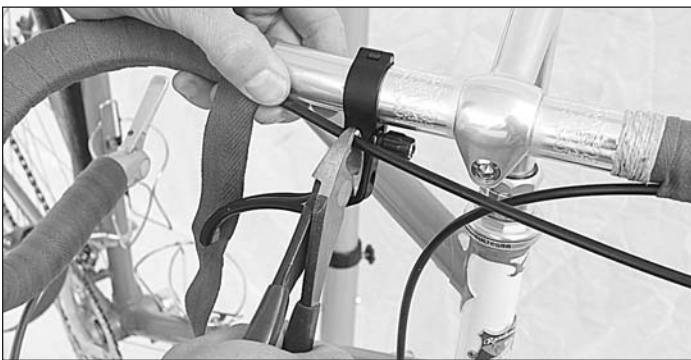
It hurts to cut a nice twine job, but you'll get over it. You can re-use the existing tape, easily.



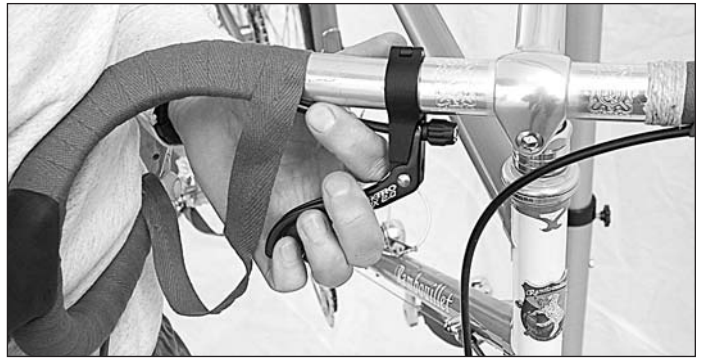
Unhookup the brake cable. Pull it back through so it's at least out of the portion of cable housing you're going to cut.



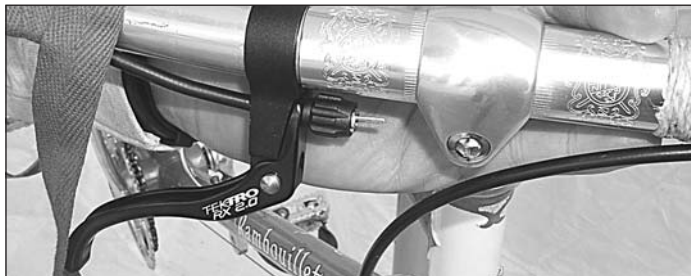
Mount the new lever. Here we're putting it just outside the bar sleeve, but spread them more if you like, or if you're using a Boxy Bag.



Cut the housing right about here, relative to the clamp. This just shows the rough-cut. Make sure you de-burr it, with a file.



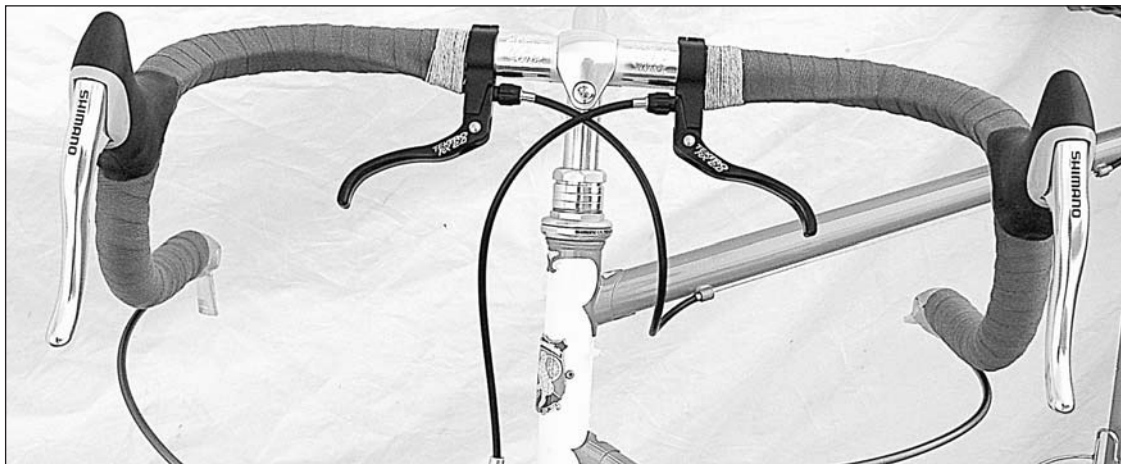
When the housing's shortened and de-burred, stick in the remaining stub. With Tektro levers, at least, you do need a housing cap.



This just shows the cable exiting the housing. With a hand behind it.



Get another section of housing, prep it and put a cap on it, and run the cable through it. This is the rear one. The other end goes to the housing stop on the top tube. Get the length right.



Hook up the brakes, test them, and if all's well, my fine, feathered friend, retape and retwine the bars. Find an angle you like. We use and offer the Tektro version, but there are many others out there, and they're all good. Some require you to strip the bars naked before mounting—kind of a hassle, but not the end of the world. Tektro levers have a hinged clamp, which makes it easy to do what we've shown here.

# Good Things Review

Things you can use before, during, or after your ride, as the case may be.



## Whirly-Pop Popcorn Popper

Any popcorn will pop its best in the Whirly-Pop. It is so fast and easy that you don't have to even think about it. Nobody will try to avoid being the popcorn maker. Two minutes and a table-spoon of peanut oil. Peanut oil can take more heat without burning, and imparts a nice scent to the popcorn. A little in the bottom of the Whirly-Pop, and a heaping third-of-a-cup of Orville's, some slow turning on high heat, and two minutes later you have a massive mound of popcorn. I've popped corn lots of ways, even lower-tech than this, but this is the fastest way, and gives the fluffiest result. Four or six quart models, under \$30.

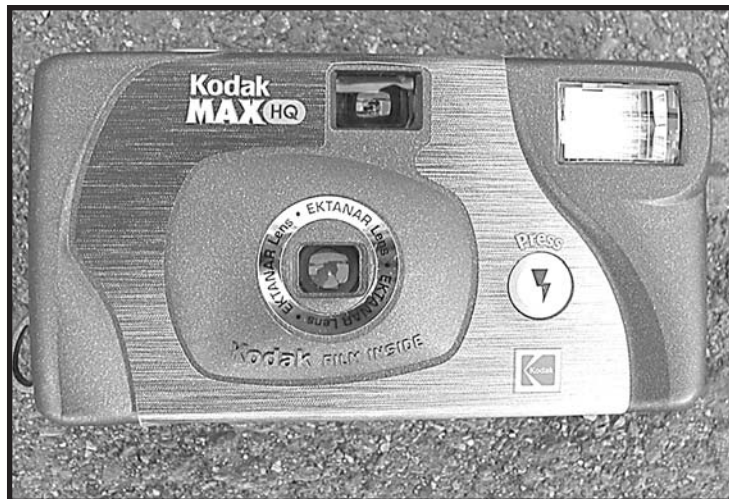
Whirly-Pop • Box 715 • Monan, IN 47959  
(800) 270-2705

[www.popcornpopper.com](http://www.popcornpopper.com)



## Dixon Ticonderoga Laddie

It's fatter than normal pencils, with thicker lead, so young children can grab it easily and won't break the lead as often. But the fatter barrel is pleasant for any hands, and even medium and old people will like the thick lead, which almost never needs sharpening. Also, the thicker lead works great on thin weak paper to corrugated cardboard. The lead is HB (No. 2). I get mine at Office Max in presharpened 2-packs for less than \$1.09—and that's without the corporate discount. It doesn't fit in normal pencil sharpeners, but the Boston Ranger 55 adjusts to fit; or use a knife or file.



## Kodak Max HQ Recyclable Camera

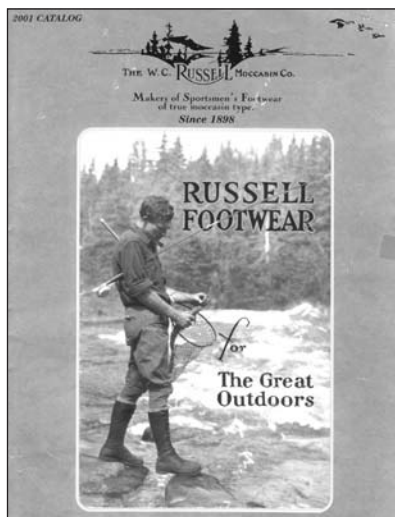
On the surface, disposable cameras sound like something foul chaps who hate the earth use, but this camera is 90 percent recyclable...and it's the best camera of its type. I read about it in a photo magazine, where you'd expect it to get spat on and mugged, but they liked it, too. At a cyclo-cross race I shot a roll with this and a roll with a normal camera, and I couldn't tell the difference. I've since taken at least 200 pictures with it, and the results are always decent-to-impressive. You can buy it with 27 or 39 exposures. It's all plastic, weighs 4.2 ounces, uses 800 speed film, always flashes, and costs less than \$10 at discount marts. The thing about this that makes it a good deal even when the math suggests otherwise (you end up with a \$15-to-\$17 stack of pix and no camera) is that you'll take it where you might not take a better camera,

so you'll get some good shots you'd have missed otherwise. Take one on every ride! It's superlight, cheap enough, and takes decent pictures. Make sure you get the model that says HQ. It brags about the lens on the box. That's the one.



## Vaughan SV2100 Sunglasses

These are sold in hardware stores that cater to the trades, and what a deal. They make no claims of their optical correctness, but they must be, because they don't distort. They're safety glasses, so they have polycarbonate (Lexan) lenses, weigh an ounce or so and—are you sitting down and holding onto your hat?—they have replaceable lenses, two-way adjustable temples, and as the photo shows, side shields to stop the wind and sun from the side. The lens shown here is neutral grey, so you can look at lupines and they still look purplish blue. If you have yellow-tint lenses, you know, purplish flowers look brown, and who wants that? (apologies to brown flower lovers). These don't have to be your only glasses, but they certainly could be, and if you tend to lose glasses a lot or just want a spare pair around, these are good ones. They look normal off the bike, too—a lot like cat-eye style glasses. Cost is just \$8, and they meet ANSI and ISO specs for safety glasses. One final thing: They come with their own reusable case, though it's no great shakes.



## Russell Shoes

Ordinarily you might not expect to find cheap sunglasses being praised on the same page as custom shoes and boots; and besides that, custom footwear doesn't come super cheap, either. But when you consider that people spend \$90 to \$220 on 99 percent plastic, mold-made running and cycling shoes, then \$125 to \$255 for a pair of made-to-measure moccasins, shoes, or boots made slowly using the best leathers, and with gobs of options...well, that seems like the bargain of the decade. This is the second time Russell has been mentioned in the Reader, but lots of Reader readers are new and missed it the last time, so that's no fair. Also, sometimes you just need a reminder. Russell makes only moccasin-style footwear, meaning there's a raised seam around the toes. But within that style, you can get all kinds of shoes or boots, and if you like footwear and aren't opposed to leather, then call Russell and ask for a catalogue. The number is (920) 361-2252. Or russellmoccasin.com. Tell them you heard about them in the *Rivendell Reader*. Just for fun.

## How To Submit a Good Thing Review

with a prayer of having it printed here

1. Include a photograph.
2. It must be still made and easily available; and you have to say where.
3. List a price or price range.
4. Send all the information by mail in a separate envelope to:

The Rivendell Reader • 2040 North Main #19

Walnut Creek, CA 94596 attn: Good Things

Digital images should be b/w tiffs, but color or b/w prints are okay, too. Things should cost less than \$75, and way less is even better. You don't win cash or merchandise credits for submissions, and we can't reimburse you the cost of film or digital media, or your time, and so on. But there is some satisfaction in passing along good and useful information like this, so have fun with it.



In all its raging glo-ree: The Legnano Mod. 44, now for sale to raise tooling money for more lugs. Of course.

## The Legnano Mod. 44

I was walking down the street and found this bike outside a shop, and it had a sign on it that said, "For Sale. See owner inside." So I went in and found the owner and after 5 minutes of nicities I'd bought the bike for \$175.

I don't collect bikes, and my house is too small to house more than about 4 (semi-famous in the bicycle industry does not equal rich). But here in one bike were so many things that I like in bikes and find so rarely on modern bikes at any price, so I had to get it.

I believe it was made in the '60s, because the former owner said he bought it new from a guy who told him that; and there's nothing about it that suggests it was made any later. Legnano bikes are semicollectible these days, but I doubt this bike was anything special when it was built. It has one gear, for instance.

I like it because even though it's a humble bike, somebody went to extra trouble to spiff it up: the paint is fancier than it needs to be; the fenders are nicely painted and detailed; the hubs and brake levers are engraved (or stamped) with Legnano; the tips of the fork blades and stays are chromed, the way they used to do; the blue-and-white two-tone saddle matches the blue and white of the frame, and even the whitewall tires and white pedals. They didn't miss anything, those Legnanoites.

It is cosmetically pleasant and thorough in a way that's relaxing to look at.

The fully enclosed chain case comes apart for those times when you have to, you know, fix a flat. It has integral lighting, which almost works after all these years. A good electrician's assistant could make it work easily.

The bike is in fine working order except for the lights. The tires appear to be original, and are in decent shape, mainly because this bike has been in a box and out of the sun a lot. The rims are steel, and everything seems original. It rides nicely, and is a medium size, to fit riders as short as about 5-4, and as tall as—well, the guy I bought it from was 6 feet easy, but he may have had the seat too low. I'd say it'll work fine up to 5-11, though.

### Some Specs

Tubing: Steel, painted a nice blue, with white accents

Tires: Pirelli 700x32 with file tread, in excellent condition, considering how ancient they are. They've not been outside much.

Number of rivets holding the head badge on: Five



Now that's a proud head badge. A Roman soldier, or at least an Italian one—and evidently a cyclist no less—poses with his rifle behind him and holding something in his hand. This badge appears to be brass, or at least brass-like, and is affixed with five screws. These days, a badge this fancy would cost as much as I paid for the whole bike.



Above: The fully enclosed chain case prevents amateur marks on your calf, and keeps the elements from attacking the chain. Some bikes back then had oil baths in the chaincase, so the chain stayed lubricated forever and never wore out. I don't know whether that was the case with this Mod. 44, but let's just pretend: The chain ran through an oil bath at the bottom of the chain case, so you never needed to lube it!

## For Sale/Good Cause: One Pre-Owned Legnano

That's right, this bike. I really like it, but I don't have room for it, and we need money for special projects. For instance, a new lug mold costs about \$3,000, and I really want us to have a small Romulus, or a Mixte for next Winter, and there's no way that money will come out of the normal checking account.

The minimum bid is \$300. The maximum is \$600, and if you're the first there, you get it. Fax your bid toll-free to: 1 (800) 269-5847. Highest bid over \$300 wins the bike, and we'll pay the freight. Auction stops June 15.



## The Pedersen Bicycle. From Denmark

An 107-year old Danish design that's still being made today; and it's good.

by Dave Ductor

Born in Denmark in 1855, Mikael Pedersen holds an obscure place in cycling history. He was an individual who possessed a rare mix of creativity, imagination, ability and drive, and his detailed understanding of mechanics combined with his technical skills enabled him to bring his numerous ideas into reality. At the same time, his less-than-stellar abilities as a businessman and his somewhat stubborn and unpredictable behavior, combined to caused him occasional financial and legal problems and missed opportunities for wider commercial success. This is perhaps why he has become more of a forgotten footnote instead of a more recognized name in cycling lore.

The production of agricultural machinery was a big business in the late 1800's, and Pedersen had obtained patents for various improvements to dairy related products. The sale of the manufacturing rights provided him with royalty payments, and would have left him left him a relatively wealthy man by today's standards. But when

royalty payments became sporadic, he began looking for other opportunities. Enticed to move to England in 1893 to help with the production of dairy equipment, he began to focus his efforts on the production of his unique bicycle. He obtained a patent on his bicycle design in 1894, but evidently he had built the wood framed bike several years earlier. The patent application states that the low mounted 'cow horn' handlebars were for resting the feet!!

It was England's charismatic financier and corporate fraudster, Ernest Terah Hooley, obviously a man far ahead of his time and himself a fascinating story, who provided the funds to form the Pedersen Cycle Frame Co. in 1896. Efforts were made to convince other bicycle companies to produce the Pedersen design under license, and at England's National Cycle Show in 1897, at least six different manufactures presented their Pedersen bicycles in addition to the ones displayed by the Pedersen Cycle Frame Co. But the cycling press at the

time was apparently hardly enamored of Pedersen's design, and lack of critical acclaim meant that production was to remain very limited.

When evidence of corporate fraud unrelated to the Pedersen business finally caught up with Hooley in 1898, he was driven to bankruptcy. The loss of his financial backing forced Pedersen to form another company, known as the Dursley Pedersen Cycle Co, in order to manufacture his design, and this is the company most associated with Pedersen's unique bicycle.

Bicycle racing was a very popular activity then, and served as a way to publicize design improvements. As Pedersen's bicycle began to set numerous records, the cycling press began to take notice. Pedersen even built a super-lightweight racing machine, using extremely thin-walled tubing, 24 inch wooden rims, wire spokes, and drilling all components to save weight. This bicycle still exists and reportedly weighs less 10 pounds!!

Sales of the Dursley Pedersen bicycle continued to increase and at the peak, the company employed as many as 50 people and produced 30 cycles per week. Tandems, triples, and quads were produced, as well as folding versions. The lack of adjustability meant that 8 different sizes were offered. Frames could be enamel coated in a choice of colors, or nickel-plated. A golf bag carrier and a gun carrier were some of the available accessories, in addition to bags (gotta love that), and the company actually sold a Pedersen designed ankle-length split skirt so that women could ride and still display the required modesty. Pedersen continued to incorporate improvements into production cycles, adding such things as a ball bearing headset and adjustable handlebars, among others.

The 1903 catalog offered Pedersen's patented design for a 3 speed hub gear, based on the countershaft principle, although the design wasn't quite ready for production. It sported a friction clutch, which proved unreliable in use, and Pedersen was unwilling to modify his design. But sales were booked, and without a functional product to deliver, the company was forced into liquidation and was sold by 1905. The new owners quickly moved to correct the design of the clutch, but retained the egg-shaped hub flanges for several more years, which served to limit the hub's commercial acceptance. Dursley Pedersen bicycles, and the Pedersen hub gear, continued to be produced, but Mikael was no longer involved in the production, as he had been forced to give up control of his inventions. Unfortunately, valuable time had been lost, and the historical opportunity had been allowed to slip away. What became known as the Sturmey-Archer 3 speed hub had been brought to market at the same time, and had proven its reliability in everyday use.



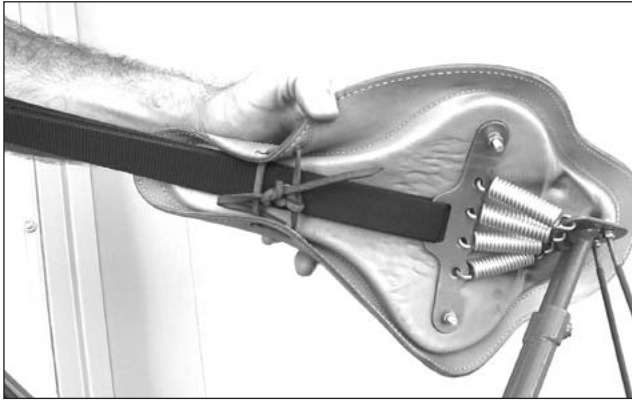
The fork crown area, showing the downtubes and the steerer.



The bb area showing how the heck all the tubes come together.



Detail of front fork and dropout/



Underside view of the saddle. There are several saddle options, mostly cosmetic (black leather or tan?). The saddle here has been cranked to the side to show how it attaches and suspends.



No room for a saddlebag, and as saddles go, it has a flounder-like appearance, but was plenty comfortable for me on 2-hour rides during which I never even got off it.



And here's the heat tube, a dinky one, but it seems to work fine.

The production of the Dursley Pedersen bicycle stopped in 1917, but the design continued to be produced in London by others for several more years. In addition to his continuing efforts in agricultural machinery, Mikael had long since turned his attention to the application of his 3-speed hub gear to motorcycles, which were based on the Pedersen frame of course, but again, valuable time was allowed to pass while design changes were made, and the motorcycle hub design was never a commercial success.

Pedersen continued his involvement in other areas and remained a prolific inventor, and his name is associated with, among other things, magneto design, accurate measurement gauges, and munitions. He was an accomplished musician who built his own instruments, brewed his own beer, and loved practical jokes, but by 1920 his creative abilities had begun to suffer, and he moved back to Denmark, where died in a senior citizens' community in Copenhagen in 1929.

## What it's like to ride, and how to get one

It's fun to ride, really comfortable (due to the high bars) for rides of up to half an hour, and pretty comfortable for longer ones. Keeping in mind that it was invented in flat Denmark, it should be no surprise that it's most at home on flat terrain. You can't really get off the seat and stand on the pedals, at least not in the normal and natural way. When you do, you lean forward and find the strap that holds the saddle pressing on your crotch, and you sit down fast and say, "Oh, excuse me." You can gear down or muscle up a climb, but the super laid-back position doesn't lend itself to putting your body weight over the pedals, and it's possible that you'd develop or discover a trick to climbing efficiently on it, but in 4 months of riding it, I didn't. But every bike has its strength and limitations, and I'd sum up the Pedersen's strength as being levelish roads and rides up to a couple of hours long. And for long, coasting downhill, I'd say it can't be beat. Steep hills don't seem steep on this bike, and it's a lot like the Vision Thoroughbred (RR26) in that way... but not quite as recumbent-like. If you ride the flats a lot, or are looking for another bike to add to a collection and to jostle your perspective on what a bike should be, the Pedersen is, really, a great bike.

The U.S. distributor is author Dave Ductor, but he didn't ask me to put this story in here. I've been intrigued by Pedersens (not an obsession, more like a strong interest and curiosity) for a few years, and I found out Dave was the guy for them, and that's how we got connected. If you want a real brochure, contact Dave at the number below Tandems are available, too.

**Dave Ductor/Pedersen Bikes**

**(909) 614-1675**

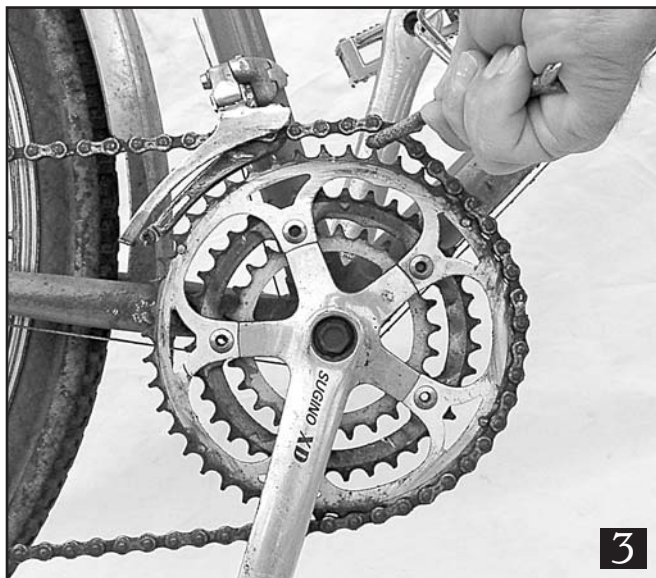
# When Somehow the Chain Shifts Off the Chainring, How To Put It Back On Without Getting Greasy Hands



Bummer. Sometimes it just does, even when your derailleurs are adjusted properly. Sometimes it shifts off the inner chainring, usually when you're shifting from big chainring to small chainring, when the chain is on one of the smaller rear cogs, whilst you're riding over bumps.



Step One: Get a stick, a rock, or some other roadside debris. Latch onto the chain from under the chainring. Use the stick etc. to pull it forward. Pull it way forward, actually, and then guide it onto the ring. If you don't pull it forward enough, it'll be hard to place it onto the ring. Not impossible, just hard.



Continue lifting and placing the chain onto the ring.



And there you go. Hmm. I think the front derailleure should be a little lower. Maybe that's why this happens so often. I never would have realized that if it weren't for this story. But honest—it CAN happen even when everything's perfect.



## The Albatross Bar

When I first read that Freddie Hoffman was nearing his millionth mile, and for most of those miles he rode (and still rides) Wald Mod. steel swept-back bars, I was bummed. I'd rather have read that he rode high quality drop bars and replaced them every three years or so. That was about 6 1/2 years ago, and now, 250,000 miles later, he's still riding those bars.

He uses them with friction bar-end shifters (SunTour Power Ratchet model), and it works for him. I'm a Nitto loyalist and too uppity to put a Wald bar on my fine bike, but I like bar-end shifters, and so we asked Nitto to make an uppity version, out of heat-treated thin-walled CrMo or aluminum. But before that, I tried out an existing Nitto model (Dove bar), and found it to be slightly narrow but only slightly, and only for guys who like wide bars, and otherwise perfectly shaped and beautiful. But being aluminum and not intended for off-road riding, it has necessarily thick walls which shrink the inside diameter beyond the minimum required for bar-end shifters.

The Albatross bar is the same shape as the Dove, just a couple of centimeters wider. It's the bar I wish Freddie would ride (so I sent him a pair). But whether he rides it or not, the combination of Albatross bar and bar-end shifters is a good way to go for a whole lot of riding out there. I've ridden it in every imaginable terrain and circumstance, on short commutes and 4-hour jaunts, and I think it's great.

On a longish ride on mixed terrain and with varied

efforts, there are going to be times when a Moustache H'bar or a drop bar will be better (for bumpy descents or fast road sections, for instance); but the Albatross bar is never far off the mark. You always have a comfortable position. The curves provide alternative hand placements. On most bikes, even bikes that are too small, the shape of the bar offers a good and comfortable position. In short, the Albatross is a neat all-around bar.

If I had one bike, I'd put drops or Moustache H'bars on it. If I had two bikes, one would have drops, and the other, Moustache. The Albatross bar would definitely go on a third bike, though; and if the other two got swept away by a rogue wave, having the Albatross bar as the only bar wouldn't be a hindrance on any ride I can imagine, short of a road time trial or fast training ride, but I don't do those anymore, anyway.

We keep a few bikes around here all set up with this bar, and invariably people who try them fall for them. It's a neat bar. Beautiful shape, smart dimensions, versatile (rightside up or upside down), and again, it's the bar we've seen that accepts mountain bike levers and thumb shifters and bar-end shifters AND is strong enough, even by Nitto's rigorous standards, for hard off-road riding. The one in the catalogue is nickel-plated CrMo steel and is 56cm wide. By June we'll have an aluminum model, 54cm wide, that's not Nitto/Riv approved for off-road, but is perfectly good for any paved-road riding you'll do. Same price. Part # 16-122.





The neat thing about the Albatross bar—and the Dove and Falcon bar, as far as that goes—is that it lets you sit bolt upright, as Mark does here, when you want to just ride and enjoy life; and it also accommodates more of a go-fast position, for harder efforts and hills. We have several bikes here set up with Albatross bars, and they're not just an internal hit, but everybody who has come by and tried these bikes raves about the comfort.

If you've grown up thinking "good bikes" and "high performance bikes" are by nature less comfortable, then it's disconcerting to ride a nice bike set up this way. It's immediately fun, immediately comfortable, and it immediately strikes you—why ride any other bike, ever? But the Albatross bar, as good as it is and as much as we like it, is not out to replace your drops or Moustache Handlebars (your flat bars—yes.) There are lots of ways to get comfortable on bikes, and sometimes just a change of pace is fun. Your handlebar affects your position and weight distribution dramatically, and so a bar that's radically different from the one you're used to is going to make the same bike feel different.

All in all, this swept-back style of handlebar has long been associated with paperboy bikes, etc., and there haven't been any fancy versions to put on fancy bikes, until this one. If you've got a nice bike that's too small for you, or just want a different bar on any bike, try an Albatross.

Here's Mark climbing a hill with upside down Albatross bars. They work that way, too, although the grips are lower, and that's generally not the goal. Notice that he's leaning forward and grabbing the bar ahead of the brake lever, achieving a position a lot like holding the hoods on a drop bar. That's a super nice position, and is just as comfortable with the bars rightside up. Helmet cops note: This was a posed picture, taken in the rain right outside our door. Mark was in no danger.



### Conundrum No. 32

This story blurs the line between editorial and advertisement, but what can we do? The information is real, and right, and maybe even useful. The Albatross bar didn't just land here—and now we have to sell it; we developed it based on our experience with Falcon bars, and our wish for something off-roadable, compatible with bar-end shifters, and made by Nitto. Ahem: if you want one, part #16-122, \$32.



Left: A simple, cheap-skate grip made by folding an old inner tube back onto itself three times, then wrapping over it with bar tape. The cushion is on top where you need it, and since there's no thickness to speak of below the grip, the shifter housing doesn't run into any interference. Shown here, the tape wraps over the housing once, but there's no advantage to wrapping over the housing at all, and it's easier not to.

Right: Deluxe, if crudely executed method using a cork grip with a channel cut for the housing. The cork grip is well-glued. This is our preferred way as of 3/2/03, but everything seems to work. The cork feels so good in your hand, though.



From the Disturbing Thoughts Department

# Gearing Observations After 405,000 Miles

by Dave Siskind

Author Dave Siskind is 61 years old, a recently retired government researcher, and lives in Minnesota, where the riding season is short. Short notwithstanding, in the last 40 years he's ridden 405 thousand miles, and rode more than 14 thousand in each of the last two years. I figure that puts him somewhere in the top 10 mileage pedalers since Grok first walked. It doesn't mean what works for him will work for you, but it impressed me enough that I asked him to write something about what works for him, and here it is.—Grant

I have a collection of 52-tooth chainrings hanging over my workbench, taken off the 25 or so bikes our family's owned in the last 40 years. I believe in low gears and high spin like some people believe in heaven and the result is about the same. To me, there are no 52-tooth chainrings in heaven or alternately, we are all so strong that we can spin 100 rpm on our heavenly 52-tooth rings like some super mortals already do on Earth.

I am not sure how I discovered low-gear spinning but I recall when. It was 1962 and I biked 57 miles round trip to visit my best friend, Rich Pollini, living three Appalachian-style mountains over from me in Dover in North Jersey. I made good time and, rather than tired, was totally energized. My old bike had a single speed freewheel after being a three-speed, nine, 12, and fixed gear at different times. Previously, I had been using a 70-inch gear (46x17 with a 26-inch wheels) as my natural multi-purpose gear. The 54-in I was now trying felt like I had no resistance and was just spinning air. It was almost like taking off the chain and just turning the pedals. For many years, I used one of those cyclometers where a pin struck a star wheel every wheel revolution. In a 54-in gear, I got one ping per pedal pulse, a kind on rhythmic resonance.

Other than when I fix-gear in the mountains of Central Pennsylvania, where too low a gear would have been impossible to handle downhill, 100 rpm in a 54-inch gear became my natural pace. This combination produces 15-16 mph. That doesn't impress races, but it has allowed me to cross the USA twice, with most days being centuries; and lets me do daylight-only double centuries, and allows me to ride more than 10,000 miles per year every year without any injuries or knee pain. For climbing, I shift down, slow the pedaling, and sometimes exaggerate my ankling. I don't pedal high gears down hills, either. I just spin out my medium gear, then coast.

My newly acquired high pedal cadence fueled discussions with Fred DeLong, one of my early cycling mentors in Philadelphia, about what's best. Fred had been a serious cyclist since the 30's, had a pretty good cadence himself, but it was nothing like the 100 rpm I was start-



Here's David sitting in front of a store, at about mile 349,543.

ing to use. He quoted Japanese studies where 60 rpm was reported to be the most metabolically efficient. I argued that higher pedal speeds felt better, seemed ultimately less tiring, and that I didn't care a whit about my miles per calorie. My argument was bolstered when we both saw how Dr. Clifford Graves spun along in a ride with him in Connecticut that fateful year of 1962.

By the late sixties, I was pestering everyone I rode with to shift down. Most did so and decided it was better, at least after a period of adjustment and acclimation. One was an old Minneapolis friend, Dave Kvistberg. He was kind of mesomorphic, strong enough to push any gear he choose to. Sometime after he raised his cadence, he mentioned that he no longer felt tired after knocking off centuries, and soon our whole bike club become happy spinners. I wrote an article about cadence for the July '74 Minnesota AYH Hosteler. Please accept the message and excuse the attitude.

On the next page are two excerpts.



Gazing at a lake somewhere in New Zealand.

“... Most of us realize that whatever biking is, it is also exercise. There are two general exercise categories, what I call ‘static’ and ‘dynamic.’ The static kind includes isometrics and basically involves few repetitions at high loads. Much weight lifting is of this kind. It is good for developing big beautiful bodies, strong muscles, and strength, but does nothing for the heart, lungs, reflex, endurance and speed. By contrast, exercise that involves many repetitions at light or moderate loads develops the cardiovascular system, speed, reflexes, and that all important endurance. (see the Aerobics book). Suppleness [as opposed to] strength.”

“The big difference between the two types of exercise is the placement of the ‘load.’ The slow pusher is riding on muscle power. His endurance is governed by strength, not his heart or lungs which are lightly stressed. He is prone to cramps. When his strength finally gives out, he literally dies. He is usually weak on hills, especially when tired. He complains about his condition. How about the spinner (low gear man)? He has the most though not all the advantages. He loads his muscles relatively lightly by his low gears. His breathing and heart rate are slightly elevated over resting rate. He doesn’t tire easily and hardly bothers to shift (as much) on hills. He isn’t without problems though. He stands a lot to lessen saddle pressure which is greater for him than for the pusher.”

Another downside is that rapid pedaling does take some getting used to and, at first, feels awkward and wasteful. The feeling doesn’t last. In summary, what I was advocating with this article nearly 30 years ago was LSD, long-slow-distance. A LSD rider can converse with a companion without being winded. Power output is the product of force (pedal pressure) and velocity. Increasing the velocity (pedal RPM’s) allows less force for a constant power. I believe less force reduces stress injuries, especially for knees, and greatly increases endurance. Better, it converts drudgery into happy spinning. It has really worked for me, now up to 405,000 miles and still going.

I have resorted to exotic solutions to get the gearing I

like. Up until last year, my touring bike had what’s called crossover plus alpine, 49-46-28 chainrings and really odd, by most people, five-speed freewheels of 18-20-23-24-28 teeth. Even with a very modest high gear of 74-in, I just was not using the 49-tooth much and decided to drop it for more middle to low gears by going to 46-38-24. I then had to modify the freewheel to eliminate duplications and also extend my low end from 27 to 20 in. I now have a freewheel of 18-20-23-26-32. I won’t use the 20 much but like having it there, like insurance. We old people need insurance.

I have ordered a new bike (January 2003). It will have contemporary rather than historic equipment and here’s how I plan to gear it: Chainrings of 46-36-24 and free-wheel of 12-14-16-18-21-24-28-32. Here is a chart showing the gear combinations. I am one of those “nerds” who still puts little charts like these on my handlebars.

Obviously, I won’t be using my 12- and 14-tooth cogs much but they’ll be along for the ride anyway. I am not completely happy with this combination that does not have the advantages of my custom made-up freewheels. For example, I would like to have my favorite cruising gear available on the 46-T chainring (two different combinations giving this gear would be fine with me) and a 64 or 65-in gear would fill the gap nicely. I may later substitute a 44 for the 46 (if I can find one, but I won’t start on that issue).

Aside from the right gear ratios, I try for two other things: avoid extreme off-center chain-lines like occur from the 46-32 combination or equally bad 24-12 and use bigger rings and cogs. Both of these are to reduce excessive wear and friction due to the reduced chain tension, I suspect lower gears are easier on the frame and drivetrain, but that has nothing to do with why I ride them.

I don’t understand the popularity of 11T, 12T etc. small cogs, and 52t and 53t chain rings. They just don’t seem all that practical for most riders. For me, lower gears work much better.

CHAINRING	24	36	46	
12	*	81	104	
14	*	70	89	
16	*	61	78	
COGS	18	36	54	69
21	31	46	59	
24	27	41	52	
28	23	35	44	
32	20	30	*	
* = No need for these				

**Editor’s comments:** There are lots of ways to pedal a bike and lots of things to consider before locking yourself in to just One Way. It’s obvious that higher cadences are something that needs to be trained into your muscles, and it’s also possible that some body types and muscle types are better suited to them than others are. Over the years my cadence has dropped, and I’d say by now it rarely exceeds 85. But now, under David’s influence, I’m going to gear down some more and pick it up, and see how that goes for a while. It’s not as though he’s some theoretician, after all.—Grant

# Lon's Big Adventure in Peru

by Lon Haldeman

I/Grant am not big on travel reading, and in fact am so low on it that years ago and in print to boot I promised no travel stories in the *Reader*. So much of the time it's small time stuff made out to be a bigger adventure than it really is, or it comes off as too teachy, or preachy, as the authors tries too hard to teach us lessons from their experience; or you get the idea that they think you're helpless without them. I know I have a bad attitude when it comes to stuff like that, but I prefer to think of it as "high standards." Remember Henry Kingman's short tour story of a few issues ago? I loved that. And this one here, by Lon, is right up my alley, too. He didn't write it for publication, just as an email journal to update a small group of friends, and as a general trip journal. He sent it to me, and I liked it a lot. He writes well, with few adjectives and a direct style that the *Reader* needs more of.

October 29 to November 19, 2002

I had traveled to Peru five times in the past three years. Each tour had a new destination, which gave me a different perspective about the people of Peru. Traveling in circumstances beyond my comfort range always offered new challenges. I was hoping this tour would be as fascinating and fulfilling. As I began planning my bicycle tour across the mountains and jungles of Peru I was looking forward to the experiences I might encounter.

I don't consider myself adventurous. Probably naive and optimistic would be better ways to describe many of the life decisions I have made. I don't think I'm reckless or careless either. Fortunately I haven't scraped off any new skin in a bike accident during the past 100,000 miles. I hope my luck would continue for the next three weeks across Peru.

My bicycle trip this time would be to scout different tour possibilities for future PAC Tour routes. This time there were two distinct areas I would cycle through. I would begin with the Andes Mountain region, which is between 4,000 and 16,000 feet elevation. Many of the roads I would travel there are paved and perfect for a road bike tour. The next region I would scout is the Rain Forest Jungle. This area is on the eastern slopes and less than 4,000 feet elevation. Most of the roads are rock and dirt and are better suited to a mountain bike. These would be two separate future PAC Tour trips. I would be riding both areas now on a mountain bike during my three weeks of exploring.

I didn't speak the language but I knew I could communicate by pointing to my map. While traveling in Peru in the past my Spanish didn't improve but my English always got worse. I was constantly converting thoughts of key English words into my limited Spanish, such as: "Where Boat" is "Donde Barco?" Most native people were always eager to respond in more Spanish than I could comprehend. I found I was better off to smile and point than to start a conversation I couldn't understand.



Small (L), and Alexander Beetle (R), crawl up a blouse. Though they are some of the smaller animals I saw, at about 4-inches long, they're certainly larger than most of the beetles I've seen in Wisconsin, where I live.

## BUILDING THE BIKE

I needed a bike that could withstand the abuse of loaded touring and be maintenance free. Much of my route would include miles of rough roads across isolated areas. I had to be able to repair my bike with a pocket full of tools or whatever I could find along the road. I had been

rebuilding my 22-year-old mountain bike with other used but more reliable parts. Just a few more pieces and I would have my Amazon Touring Bike ready to go. This was one of the first bikes of that type imported into the United States in 1980. It had been my faithful commuter bike for at least 3,000 trips to the post office over the years. This trip to the Amazon Rain Forest would be our last ride together. When I reached the end of my tour I was going to leave my bike with some teenage boys I know in Peru.

To make my bike as new and roadworthy as possible I took it to the motorcycle painter for a \$40 paint job. When the painter sandblasted the frame, he found a small crack in the seat tube. Probably rust from the salty Wisconsin winters. It could have been cracked for ten years and I would not have known. I didn't want to spend any more money on welding repairs. To fix it, I coated a slightly oversized piece of aluminum seat post with epoxy and pounded it down the seat tube far enough overlap the crack. When the epoxy oozed from the broken tube and dried I knew it had a strong joint.

All the rest of the parts were vintage replacements. The only new parts were the tires, rear cog and the chain. I only had seven gears in the back and one small 38-tooth chainring up front. I was more concerned with going up the Andes Mountains than going down. I made some new yellow PAC Tour decals to go with the new red paint job. This old bike actually looked pretty sharp and I still liked the way it rode.

I was carrying all my gear in the canvas saddlebags I got in Holland last summer. I was packing pretty light. Just a button shirt, nylon pants, fleece jacket, windbreaker, hat and gloves. I wore lightweight hiking shoes and wool socks. I had cycling shorts under my baggy hiking shorts. All my clothes could be rinsed in the shower or river and would dry quickly. I carried a tape recorder in my shirt pocket and a notebook and camera in my saddlebags. With my dark sun tan and baggy clothes I almost looked like a local Indian when I wasn't on the bike. When I was riding I wore a yellow and black helmet, which told everyone I was a gringo tourist. Since I planned to sleep in hotels I didn't bring a tent. I did carry a small sleeping bag and a ground pad in case the beds weren't the best.

#### LIMA CITY TOUR

It is an all day journey from leaving my Chicago area home to finally arriving in Lima at midnight. My friend Sara, her mother and her four siblings met me at the airport. We had so many people with us we didn't have room for my bike box in the taxi. We rented a second taxi and I got to my small hotel room about 2:00 AM.

The next morning I put my bike together out on the side-

walk in front of the hotel. The bike seemed in fine shape and all my touring gear was ready to go. The hotel was helpful about storing my bike in the office behind their desk until tomorrow.

I wanted to go on a bus tour of Lima as a test to see if this was something we wanted to do as a group someday. The four-hour guided tour cost \$20. The bus picked me up at my hotel door at 10:30 AM. The guide showed us the pre Inca ruins that were built several thousand years ago in the center of the city. We also toured many Spanish military statues that are slightly incorrect. Such as the Navy General shown sitting on a cavalry horse. Lima reminded me of the fancy historic architecture of Paris combined with the adobe ruins of New Mexico.



Here's a wild llama I came across. They live in the mountains.

Later we went down into the Catacombs under the cathedral church. This is where they buried 20,000 people during 100 years by dissolving their bodies in lime dust. The flesh and small bones would decompose in the lime. All that remained are the skulls and thigh (femur) bones. The skull and leg bones were then stacked in huge pits in the basement of the church. Then they used the lime powder to make the concrete walls in the city. Since I was there on Halloween this was an appropriate tour. After we finished the gruesome tour we had a tasty Peruvian lunch at a nearby restaurant. Tomorrow I was ready to start my bike ride up the slopes of the Andes.

#### 80 MILES OF UPHILL

The first part of my route would be a repeat of a group tour I did with eighteen PAC Tour riders last November. We started in the coastal city of Lima and rode inland over the mountains. That is how I would begin my trip again this year. I did have the comfort of knowing the roads and locations of basic hotels every 50 miles.

The first day I was to climb from Lima up to the small town of San Meteo located 10,000 feet up into the Andes. San Meteo is famous in Peru for their bottled water made from the melted snow high on the peaks. As I departed Lima a low gray smog hung over the foothills. Further up the mountain the beauty of the region became visible. It

looks similar to the rocky canyons of Utah or Nevada. The landscape is very arid with only two inches of rain per year. Vegetation is barren and the changing elevation is deceptive.

I climbed for seven hours up the steady 4-5% grade. The old highway in the lower valley ran parallel to the new main road. I alternated riding on the two routes as the roads followed between the towering peaks. The old road was void of any traffic except for some small villages. The pavement was broken and cracked similar to Old Route 66 along the interstate in America. On the newer busy road the local bus passengers would pass me with sympathetic stares as I bicycled up the mountain. They were not used to seeing bicycles climb this pass. I could tell they felt sorry for me that I could not afford the 25-cent bus ride. I wanted to yell at them that I was riding my bike because I wanted to. To have the freedom and opportunity to cycle over the Andes into the Amazon Rain Forest was a fun and exciting thing to do.

The yearly drought ended during my last five miles into San Meteo. The afternoon rains started and I needed my raincoat and gloves. From my hotel I could tell the distant summit at almost 16,000 feet elevation was hidden in the clouds. Tomorrow I still had 6,000 feet to gain and half a day of riding to reach the top.

My hotel room was cold and industrial without hot water or room heat. Taking a shower and washing my clothes in 40 degree water was refreshing. The tile floor was ice cold but the five heavy thick wool blankets on the bed were welcome. It would take a strong person to rollover in bed under the weight of those blankets, which must have weighed thirty pounds. The rain outside tapping on the windows put me to sleep while hoping for better conditions tomorrow.

The next morning the rain stopped. Patches of clouds were making streaks of sunshine on the mountaintop. Last year it had taken me five hours to reach the summit from here. The elevation had started to make me dizzy above 14,000 feet. Today I would take it easy. I planned to stop and drink a half-liter of water every 30 minutes. I wanted to ride at a conversation pace and never feel like I was breathing heavy. My low gear of a 38-tooth chainring and 32-tooth rear cog would become my friend today at four miles per hour.

I took lots of pictures and stopped to buy refreshments from several small stores along the road. The snow capped peaks contrasted with the dark blue rock on the mountain slopes. By the time I had reached 14,000 feet elevation I only had six more miles of road to go to the



The back road between Tarapoto and Sauce was one of the easier roads on my trip.

summit. My head was still feeling pretty good. The air was brisk and I had on my long nylon pants and windbreaker. I carried a small thermometer on the zipper of my seat bag. It read 35 degrees. As I neared the top the snow flurries began and I knew I didn't want to stop for long. Even with my methodical pace I was almost an hour faster than last year and feeling much better.

I reached the summit at 15,890 feet elevation. It is the highest paved road in the world. I asked the policeman at the guard station to take my photo. I quickly put on my fleece jacket and gloves then pushed off down the other side. The grade down is a gentle 3%. Coasting at 30 mph was about my maximum. I was shivering too much to want to go any faster. After 30 minutes I had dropped almost 3,000 feet. The snow had stopped and I could see sunshine in the valley below. The remainder of the day was a joy. I rolled into the city of La Oroya located at an elevation of 10,000 feet. I found a nice hotel for \$9 along the main street. It still didn't have hot water but the afternoon sun helped dry my clothes by hanging them out the window. The sky was clear but there was a crisp mountain chill in the air.

#### CHICKEN AND RICE

I walked down the street to a restaurant and found a table near the window. Outside there was a young girl about twelve years old walking up and down the sidewalk. She carried a damp rag and would jump out and wash the windows of cars when they stopped at the intersection. She was hoping to receive a small coin as a tip from the driver. She wore a thick dark blue wool sweater that was torn at the elbows. Her red chapped cheeks had a scabby sunburn like the high altitude farmers who work outside all day. She presented the rugged and tattered looks of someone who slept outside on the sidewalk at night.

The waitress brought me my menu. I couldn't read it, but



The mud was as thick as cookie dough, and packed the bike wheels solid every 100 feet.



This is the road to Iquitos. To get through it, I pedaled as much as I could in water puddles.

I knew the key words like pollo (chicken), fish (pescado), potato (papa) and rice (arroz). If I ordered something that had those words in the description and I was never disappointed with the quality or quantity of the food. Meals are usually less than \$3 with enough rice and potatoes for two people.

I kept watching the girl washing car windows outside. Most drivers drove away without saying thank you. I got up and walked to the door. I whistled to the girl and waved her to come over. I pointed to the menu in my hand and motioned her to come in the restaurant. She was hesitant but then came inside to my table. I gave her my menu but I wasn't sure if she could read. I asked her in my basic Spanish... "Pollo, arroz para ti?" (Chicken and rice for you?). She nodded "yes". I must have said something right. The waitress took our order for two servings. During our meal I found out the girl's name was Diana. We didn't talk much about anything else. I did notice she had perfect table manners and could eat a chicken leg with a fork without using her fingers.

My dinner with Diana started a theme I would repeat many times during the next three weeks. When I went to eat at a restaurant in each town I would find someone to sit at my table. Usually it was a shoeshine boy who would be hanging out on the street. Once it was a mother and a small girl about two years old. The child didn't eat directly from the table because the mother kept breast-feeding the girl during the meal. I only wish I could have spoken more Spanish because I didn't know the names or ages of most of the people I met. I still enjoyed the company and I think my guests enjoyed a real meal. I was learning that my bicycle was just a prop to introduce me to an assortment of people across Peru.

#### FOUR DAYS OF ANDES

I had just crossed the highest ridge of the Andes Mountains. My route now would turn north to follow along parallel to the slopes. During the next four days I traveled through the mining country past the towns of

Cerro de Pasco (elevation 12,000') and toward the jungle city of Tingo Maria. There are still many demanding climbs as the road meandered from 10,000 to 13,000 feet elevation several times. The road was perfectly paved during this 200-mile section. Once a year the bicycle club from Lima has a road race through this area. It would be a fun and challenging route for a future PAC Tour road bike tour.

The landscape is similar to being above the tree line in the United States. Lots of barren, rocky hillsides. The sporadic tufts of grass looked like bald man's hair with a bad comb over. Just when I thought the mountains were drab and sterile I would drop into a lush farming valley. The terraced flower farms going into Tarma are famous in Peru. There were more hairpin turns than I could count in fifteen miles. It must have taken farmers hundreds of years to level the fields and move all the rocks that now make giant staircases up the mountain.

The nice thing about cycling in Peru is that bicycles receive equal respect on the road. Motorists are used to seeing herds of sheep, handcarts and pedestrians on the road. Everybody still needs to be careful because oncoming vehicles in your lane expect you to yield to them. The reverse is also true when I had vehicles pass me with plenty of room to spare they almost hit oncoming traffic in the other lane. During my entire bicycle travels I never had any motorist act like bicycles didn't belong on the road.

When I reached Tingo Maria 200 miles further north I was entering the jungle region. I had dropped down to almost 3,000 feet. I still needed to get north to the town of Tarapoto to scout the jungle routes for our tour. There were limited villages the next 300 miles. The guidebooks warned tourists not to travel the one lane mud road because of possible military rebels and drug dealers. Since I was running short of time I decided to load my bike onto one of the 4 wheel drive pick-up trucks that transport passengers through the jungle.

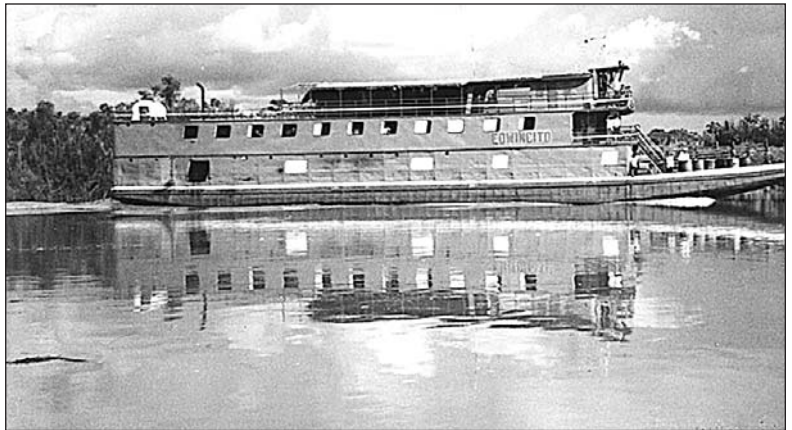
JUNGLE JEEP

The small 4 x 4 pickup truck had a king cab that fit three people and a driver...but they insisted on cramming in five people with the driver. The back of the truck had railings for ten people to stand up and hang-on. Everyone had at least two gear bags piled in the back. My bike was strapped to the outside railing. The truck was packed full and overloaded by 1,000 pounds. We could only average 12 mph. We would travel the next 300 miles on rock, dirt, mud and water.

The first day I traveled in the truck for 13 hours. Tickets were \$8. I had a seat inside...because I paid \$4 extra...well worth it. Going through the remote jungle we only saw village huts every few hours. Any smooth and straight section of gravel road had concrete pillars down the middle. This was to stop small airplanes from landing that were smuggling drugs.

We must have crossed 50 streams and small rivers in the first 100 miles. The water covered the wheels and the floor of the truck was always wet inside. I was inside the cab thinking maybe it would be better to be hanging on outside on the railing than to roll over and get trapped underwater inside the truck. Just before a water crossing I would take a photo of the river. If we didn't survive there was chance someone might find my camera and be able to explain our drowning.

The one lane road was very rutted and muddy. Meeting an oncoming truck meant each vehicle had to get half way off the road and possibly slide into the ditch. Everyone traveled at idling speeds. When the mud got too deep for the truck, everyone had to get out and walk. The driver then just did his best to get the truck moving again. I thought we were going to tip over at least ten



The Edwincito is one of five boats that make the round trip between Yurimaguas and Iquitos every week.

times because one wheel was in a two-foot deep rut and the other wheel was up on the side bank.

Later that night we got to the town of Juanjui (Wan-hooy). Juanjui received world attention in 1984 when rebel MRTA guerrilla forces invited the media to televise their attack against the local army. Instead of a battle the rebels showed up with soccer balls and organized a street party for the town. The rebels received much favorable publicity across South America. The MRTA guerrillas were rivals of the notorious Shining Path rebels. Some of the most influential guerilla leaders were actually women college students. Unfortunately over 30,000 people were killed during twenty years of turmoil. Many of these victims were villagers and farmers caught in the crossfire. Since 1997 the area has become more politically stable. I felt safe here now, but Peru received a tainted reputation because of the conflict.

It was hot here tonight in the jungle. Near 90 degrees at 8:00 PM. I stayed at a motel in the center of town. The room did not have air conditioning, hot water, or a toilet seat. The water only worked when you asked the office to turn on the water pump for ten minutes to use the shower or flush the toilet. The room only cost \$7 but it was clean and safe.

I was surprised to find the availability of public Internet computers were very common in Peru. Not many people have computers in their homes. Billboards for Internet Cafes are seen on every street in town. The cost is about 70 cents per hour. Even in the rural areas I could use the Internet at the city hall. I would try to write home everyday. My wife and daughter knew I was okay and it was a good way for me to compile the daily updates from my travels.

The next day the taxi truck departed at 8:00 AM. The road was better and we made good time on the gravel sections. We rolled into the city of Tarapoto by mid afternoon. I was a little disappointed about not riding my



Here's my bike at 14,000 feet, approaching the summit.



bike the past 300 miles. It would have taken me at least six days with only a few small villages to buy supplies. I would have been several days behind schedule with my scouting trip. Actually the riding in the truck was pretty fun and I would do it again.

After two long days in vehicles I was looking forward to riding my bike tomorrow. Tarapoto is a big town and my fancy hotel room is very nice for \$28. This is the hotel I want our group tour to stay at in the future.

There are many good restaurants in Tarapoto and an airport with daily flights to Lima. We will base our loops rides out from here. I wanted to ride everything first and get a better idea of what to expect. So far I have been eating well and have not been sick or had one bug bite.

I am not sure why I like the jungle life of Peru. The landscapes can be beautiful, but there are hundreds of other beautiful locations around the world. To say one is more scenic than another is only based on opinion. Maybe what I find fascinating is the people's simple lifestyle of focusing only on day-to-day necessities. The more I got to know the rural people of Peru I began to understand the motivations in my own life. As an American with a comfortable life I have the luxury to plan for the future. I am expected to prepare for my life twenty or thirty years in advance.

In Peru I had many discussions with local people about their future. The people with few possessions were most concerned with their next meal. Some would dream of having a baby and family someday. These people have an admirable trust that everything will be fine for them. "What will you do in the future" I questioned one young woman. "Jesus will decide my future," she said. Later I asked a street vendor what was the interest rate the bank paid on a savings account. They answered me honestly... "I have never put money in the bank. I don't have enough coins at the end of the day to fill a small purse. All my money is spent each night buying food for tomorrow. If I do not work everyday, I do not have enough coins to buy my next meal."

I also met several Peruvians who had much money. They reminded me of Americans in how they thought about their future. They knew they had a safety net of



A view from the climb up the bluff to Sauce.

cash for immediate problems. Most could afford to extend their field of vision toward other longer-term decisions. Such as "What kind of car to buy" or "Were their stock investments secure." It seems everyone needs a certain amount of uncertainty in their future to make their current life valuable.

#### COUNTERFEIT MONEY

Counterfeit money is a big problem in Peru. I have seen imitation small coins made from plastic that are good copies of the original. Paper money and larger bills are also common fraud items. That is why most stores accept only clean, unturned bills. Dirty money can camouflage paper currency that has been tampered with or reproduced on a good copy machine.

The base for Peruvian money system is the "Sole" pronounced "So-lass". Compared to the American dollar one Sole is worth about 27 to 33 cents. The exchange rate varies day-to-day by a few cents. A one Sole coin is about the size of an American quarter and is made from a yellow brass colored metal. The coins are stamped with ornate designs of faces and fig leaves.

During my travels in the deepest part of the jungle the store merchants were extra careful about looking for fake coins. I think it must be because of the drug trade and this region of Peru has more illegal activity. The Soles coins were what all the vendors kept looking at most closely. I would buy a soda for three soles coins and hand the money to the vendor. They would examine each of the three coins, then hand one back to me...shaking their heads and saying... "No good". I would ask "Porque?" (why). The vendor would show me something wrong on the coin's fig leaf. I would dig in my pocket for another Soles coin and give the vendor a new

one. The vender would look at the new coin and give me a smile and thumbs up that the coin was okay.

As I purchased items from different vendors in that same town I started to divide my two pants pockets between accepted and rejected coins. The local experts had taught me how to look for counterfeit coins. When I traveled to the next village the venders looked at my money carefully again. However my "accepted coins" were no good in their village. They wanted coins from my "rejected coin" pocket. Since I had plenty of both types of coins I decided I could play along with their game. Sometimes they would reject a coin and I would put it back in my pocket keeping my hand closed around the coin. Then I would jingle the coins in my pocket and hand the same coin back to them again. They would examine the "new coin" and give me the thumbs up. I couldn't figure what they were looking for on a coin to determine if it was fake. I don't think they knew what to look for either. As I traveled for several days through this area I must have touched and spent over 100 coins. All my rejected coins were always welcomed somewhere else.

SCOUTING FROM TARAPOTO

My first route from Tarapoto was up to the mountain village of Lamas. The first 22 miles are paved along the river leaving town. Later there is a steep rocky ten-mile climb gaining 2,000 feet to the mountaintop. From the summit you have a good view overlooking the river valley 20 miles away. Lamas is actually a Spanish settlement that was founded in the year 1610. It is a small town of about 1,000 people. Lamas is a famous location in Peru for ethnic jokes, like what American say about Polocks. Similar to "Did you hear what the crazy man from Lamas did..." Everyone from Peru has heard about Lamas even if they don't know where it is located. It is a clean town and not worthy of being the brunt of bad jokes. The mountain breezes and cooler temperature make Lamas much more comfortable than the jungle below. Returning to Tarapoto I took a different road. It was a paved, twisting, fast decent that completed a scenic 45-mile loop back to my hotel.

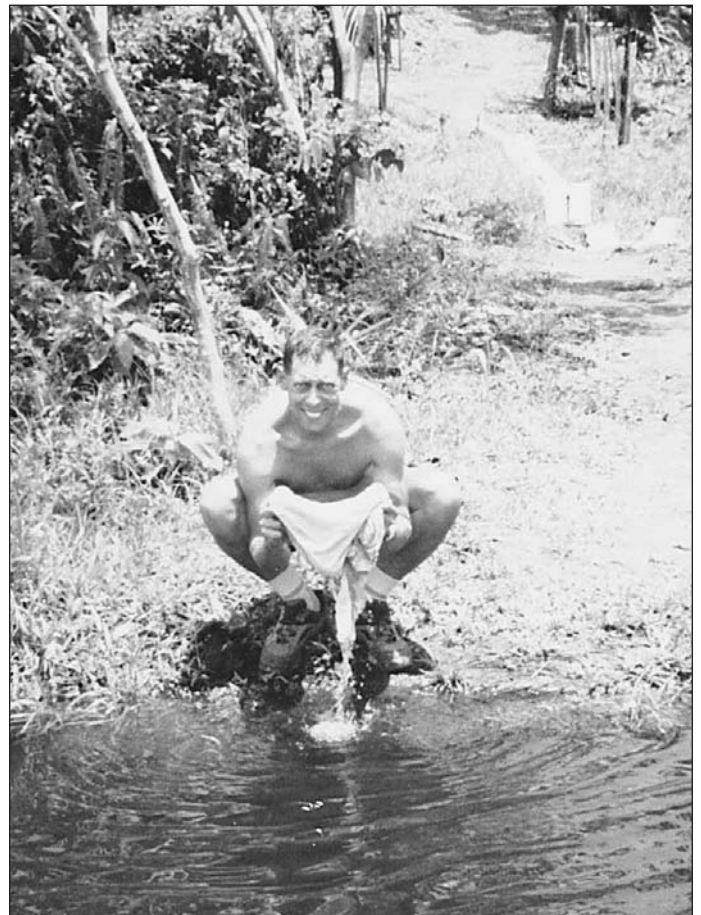
The next day I rode to Sauce (sow-see). It is another mountain village hidden 34 miles from Tarapoto. I had to cross a large river about the size of the Mississippi River in St. Louis. I used a tiny manual cable ferry boat that could carry a vehicle and a few passengers. The inconvenience of the ferryboat limited the amount of car traffic on the road to only one or two cars per hour. Although the road was built from melon size rocks it was a nice mountain route with great scenery going up the grade. It took me almost 6 hours of riding from Tarapoto, with many stops to take photos. I was ready to swim in the lake by the time I reached my hotel in Sauce.

Sauce is locally famous for being located on the Laguna Azul (Blue Lake). There are grass roof Indian huts around

the shore of the five-mile lake. The village women are known for making their own paper. The calm water, a comfortable 85 degrees, highlights the tropical setting. My motel room was small and clean with a thatched roof. There were screens on the windows but no glass. It is always a constant 70 degrees at night and 90 degrees during the day here.

At home my favorite kind of fish to eat is Mrs. Paul's Fish Sticks, but in Peru I learned to try new foods. For dinner I ate fish that were caught from the lake. I think I had Trout or Bass fillets. There are not any notorious man eating Piranhas in this lake. I had tried eating some of them during a previous tour. The palm size ones look and taste similar to American Blue Gills with a lot more bones and not much meat. The largest breed of fish in Peru is called Piraruca. They can be ten feet long and weigh 400 pounds. For comparison that is about twice the size of "Flipper" the TV Dolphin. One fish can feed 100 people a plate size fillet of tender white meat.

Tonight I sat on the deck of the open-air restaurant eating my fish and overlooking the lake. The hotel owner said I was the first gringo he has seen in their town for



I've found that I tend to sweat some on long, strenuous rides, and after a few days of this, it's good to wash clothes in a river.



The view going down the hill to Tarma.

over a year. Sauce is truly a hidden paradise.

I took a new, shorter route back to Tarapoto. I crossed the river on a different one-car ferry. When I arrived at the river the empty boat was waiting on the bank. I was the only one around. There was not a ferryboat operator or any other people on my side of the river. All the people waiting for the ferry were on the other shore, which was about 250 yards away. They must of thought I was the ferry boat captain because they all started waving and whistling for me come over and pick them up. I wasn't going to attempt to take the ferry across the fast current of the river. I just parked my bike and sat down to eat the oranges I bought in Sauce. After I had waited over an hour the shouts of the waiting passengers must have eventually been heard in the next village. The ferry driver came running over and took me across the river to the other side.

The narrow road leaving the ferry was as steep as a goat path and rutted with dry mud. I walked about one mile up the incline gaining 700 feet to the river bluff summit. It was 95-100 degrees and very humid too. Since I had waited so long at the ferry I was now out of water. My route had merged back into the road from yesterday. I remembered there was a crude roadside refreshment stand a few miles ahead. I paced myself while dreaming of a cold Coca-Cola.

When I arrived at the stand there were a half dozen women selling bottled drinks. The bottles were floating in five-gallon pails of water. When I asked a woman for a Coca Cola she pulled out a plastic Coke bottle filled with yellow liquid. She said "no Coca-Cola...it is pina" (pineapple juice). They filled old coke bottles with their own homemade fruit juice.

Normally I would have declined roadside beverages that were not in commercially sealed containers. Now I was

still two hours from my hotel and feeling the effects of the heat and dehydration. I drank one pineapple juice bottle and it tasted so good I had another, then another. After three bottles of roadside juice I felt refreshed. The ride back to town was on a packed sand road that shimmered in the afternoon heat. It had only been a 32 mile ride but it had taken me over six hours including the wait at the ferry. Fortunately the hotel swimming pool was waiting for me.

#### JUNGLE RIDE TO YURIMAGUAS

The next morning I began the 82-mile bike ride to the river town of Yurimaguas. The first fifteen miles I climbed a mountain road that was lined with waterfalls and ferns. Giant blue butterflies that were bigger than my hands fluttered beside me up

the grade. The road was cut along hillside cliffs that gave expansive views of the jungle valley below. Patches of cool air drifted from the shadows of roadside canyons. At the top of the mountain I passed through a tunnel that began the descent into the lower jungle. The road was very rough with the remains of car size boulders poking their rooftops through the thin covering of loose stones. My bike shook and bounced like I was coasting down a continuous flight of stairs. My tape recorder bounced out of my shirt packet and landed in a mud puddle. I frantically tried to wipe it dry. I thought it was working again but later I listened to my recording and a found I had lost 20 minutes of tape. I did not have suspension on my mountain bike but I became a convert today.

I had started riding at 6:00 AM just when it was light enough to see. It was now 1:00 PM and so far no vehicles had passed me. For seven hours I was the only one on the road. I was really starting to think I was in the middle of nowhere. Eventually a car came up behind me. They stopped to see how I was doing. They told me the reason there was no traffic was that a truck had stalled going up the mountain and closed the one lane road. Gradually a dozen other cars passed me before I arrived in Yurimaguas. I still felt that I was alone most of the day.

Between all the bouncing on my bicycle seat and the three bottles of tainted fruit juice yesterday, my bowels were not feeling so good now. I had experienced the laxative effect of jungle juice on other tours and I knew I was in trouble today. Although my legs still felt strong enough to ride I now had to deal with the hourly urges of diarrhea.

#### THE BOAT TO NAUTA

I rolled into the river town of Yurimaguas just before dark. I had to go down to the docks and find a boat for

tomorrow. My boat was called the "Madre Selva" (Mother of the Jungle). These riverboats in the jungle are similar to Carnival Cruises combined with Humphrey Bogart and his "African Queen". Most of these boats are thirty-year-old steel ferry style ships that could use a coat of fresh paint to brighten them up a bit. There are usually three decks on the vessels. The lower deck is for bags of rice, bananas and cattle. The middle deck is a big open room for fifty passengers to hang hammocks for sleeping. The upper deck has five or six cabins on each side with a walkway out to the roof. The bathrooms for all decks are usually in the back of the boat with a squatter's toilet that dumps directly into the river. My diarrhea was still reminding me to keep toilet paper and a bathroom close by.

I made reservations for a cabin so I could lock my gear inside and sleep on a cot. The cabin had bunk beds and I had plenty of room to store my bike on the upper bed. I had ridden a similar boat from Yurimaguas last year. The total trip would take forty hours to travel about 300 miles. Our boat might stop at thirty different villages to pick-up passengers and more bananas. Based on our 10:00 AM departure time I would be on the boat two full days and one full night. The boat should be arriving in Nauta by the second night. I would get off the boat there and start cycling the next morning to complete the remaining 65 miles into Iquitos. The boat cost \$14 with two meals of chicken and rice per day.

There is something special about being on the river. I felt it the first time I was on an Amazon riverboat three years ago. I have felt it every time since. The trees seem greener on the riverbank. The clouds are more defined during the day and the stars are brighter at night. Everyone aboard is on a little floating island and we are all friends.

Since I was the only English speaking gringo on the boat I tried to make some new friends with the Spanish-speaking passengers. The decks were filled with families and small children that were commuting to local villages along the river. I had brought along a Polaroid camera to take photos of the families. I would hangout on the lower deck of the boat and meet families that were sitting together. Most of the villagers do not have cameras or own photos of themselves. They are always eager to pose for a picture. After I gave them their new Polaroid photo they would all gather around and watch the picture develop like magic. Some of the people were curious about America and me. I would sit with them and draw pictures on my note pad of maps of the USA and skyscraper buildings in Chicago.

There was a TV set and VCR on the main deck. Each evening they show movies for nightly entertainment. The first movie was a Japanese made Kung Fu thriller. It



Here I am at the top, at 15,800 feet.

was dubbed over in English then added Spanish subtitles. It was a pretty dumb movie but it was the first English speaking TV I had seen in two weeks. The second movie was another action flick that was even worse. I went to bed about 11:00 PM and I could still hear the movie car crashes on the loud TV. I must have fallen a sleep because I woke up at midnight and heard a woman screaming..."Oh Yes...Oh Yes...Oh Yes." I thought there must be another gringo woman on the boat having a moment of passion in the next cabin. My diarrhea was calling me and I walked to the bathroom. In the TV area they were watching an American XXX film without Spanish subtitles. I didn't stay to watch but I expect the action didn't need to be translated to explain the plot.

The next day was sunny and hot. Perfect weather for cruising down the river. The boat would steer from



*I got a hot-rod Ford and a two-dollar bill... Rubby prepares to cook some South American fish.*

shore to shore trying to find the best river channel to follow. The rainy season would start next month and the river would double again in width. Even now the river was getting wider the further downstream we went. Some areas were so broad it looked like we were on a lake. The huts on the distant shore were barely visible. When we decided to dock at a village it caused a lot of excitement and all the people came out to line up along the riverbank. Sometimes a few passengers got off and a few got on. Our boat would unload some bags of rice and take on a bunch of bananas. The whole exchange would take only a minute with the boat barely coming to a stop.

There are as many varieties of bananas or platanos in Peru as there are apples in America. I only know two kinds of bananas at home; Chiquita and Dole, and they both look the same to me. In Peru there are at least six common types. Some are as small as your thumb or as large as Zucchini. Each kind is used for a different cooking dish. Some you can eat raw but most are served baked like a sweet potato or boiled in a soup. Restaurants serve fried and salted bananas that are sliced like French fries. They are not as sweet as American bananas. During our trip down the river our boat deck was stacked with a large selection of bananas.

During one of the longer stops I was able to get off the boat and walk along the riverbank. The local residents watched me curiously. I don't think many gringos had ever stopped at their village. When I went to get back on the boat one of the men asked me in broken English if I wanted to stay and be the leader (mayor) of their village. I had to shake my head "No." I barely spoke any Spanish and I knew even less

about making a house from palm leaves or carving a dugout canoe. Their offer was generous but typical of the friendliness the local people showed toward me during my tour.

At 9:00 PM we first saw the small city of Nauta where I would get off the boat. I stood by the boat railing and viewed the distant lights reflecting off the Amazon River. The lights of the city made Nauta look like a metropolis in the jungle. I started packing up my gear and bicycle from my cabin. Since I didn't need my cabin tonight I gave my room key to a mother with two small kids who

had been sleeping on the floor of the main deck. The boat would continue through the night to the city of Iquitos, which was seven hours down river. My diarrhea had now ended after three days of Imodium and Cipro pills. I always felt pretty strong and still had an appetite. I was going to be careful about drinking any more fruit juice.

I got off the boat and walked along the rustic river dock into Nauta. The streetlights had attracted swarms of bugs around the lights. I noticed the flocks of huge bats swooping through the night. The bats had a wingspan of about twelve inches, about the same as American pigeons. They were flying within a few inches of me but I could not hear their wings flapping. I was able to photograph them diving in front of my camera. The bats didn't eat all the mosquitoes that night. I finally got my first bite in Peru after over two weeks in the jungle.

I found a hotel downtown on the city square (Plaza de Armas). There was a street festival promoting the upcoming elections. I walked over and watched the people dancing. The local politicians were handing out paper cups filled with a dark syrupy beverage. I didn't try any but it had a strong molasses smell. The music was loud and continued past midnight. I went back to my hotel room overlooking the festival. Finally the music stopped and I could hear the dripping of a major rainstorm on the cement street.

#### THE ROAD TO IQUITOS

From Nauta to Iquitos is 65 miles by road and 100 miles by river. I had traveled both routes last year and I knew the old road was dirt and clay for the first twenty miles. From the amount of rain we had last night I expected a lot of mud on the road. The rains had stopped at sunrise. I waited until 10:00 AM to depart and hoped that the road had dried out. Leaving Nauta, I was surprised to find the road was under construction and being paved with asphalt. A road crew of at least 200 men were moving blacktop with wheel barrels and smoothing the tar and gravel with rakes. Another crew of men dragged wooden planks over the new asphalt to level the road.

Good paying organized jobs in Peru are scarce. Over 50% of workers over the age of 16 are self-employed. That means they have jobs as street vendors where they do not receive a monthly paycheck or receive any insurance benefits. The other organized workers might only receive a minimum wage of \$100 per month based on a

200-hour work schedule. I am sure most of the men working on the new road were fortunate to have a job paying \$5 per day doing strenuous labor.

After two more miles of road construction the pavement ended. The dirt road began again into the jungle. I was able to follow the tire ruts that had been left by a bus last night. The ruts were so deep my bicycle pedals were hitting on the sides of the tire tracks. I decided to try riding on the grassy edge of the road but the mud was too soft. I started walking and pushing my bike as my shoes became covered with clumps of thick red clay. In the next two hours I had traveled six miles. I would ride and walk trying to find the best wheel track to follow. The mud was just the right consistency to stick to my knobby bike tires like cookie dough. The clay would ball up between my tires and bike frame and lock my wheels

every few revolutions. I carried a small stick to clean my wheels but I was spending more time cleaning off mud than riding.

At my current rate of speed I still had several more hours of mud riding to go. I wouldn't get into Iquitos until after dark. I found that riding in the water puddles was actually better. The water kept the mud from sticking to my tires. My front tire would slide, and my rear tire would spin, but I was able to keep moving. The afternoon sun was now starting to dry the clay into a solid crust. The edge of the road was firm and fast again and I began making better time. When I reached the pavement I knew I could make it to Iquitos before dark. For the next 45 miles my knobby tires hummed at 18 mph. I had finished the cycling portion of my tour without any serious mechanical or physical problems.

I arrived at the Baltizar Hotel downtown at 5:00 PM. They charged me \$11 a night for a room with air conditioning. I got a bucket of water and disassembled my bike for a thorough cleaning. I used the remaining spray from my WD-40 lubricant to give my red bike frame a shiny polishing. The old bike looked pretty good again. Now it was time to find my old friends in Iquitos.

#### VISIT AT RUBBY'S

The next day I rode my bike over to my friend Rubby's house. It is about a four-mile ride across the city to her home. I found if I motor paced behind one of the motorcycle taxis I could go about 25 mph and slip through traffic pretty well. I met Rubby three years ago during my first trip to Peru. The unique spelling of her name



I didn't get her name, but here's a girl of 3 or 4 who lives with her family on the street, selling wares.

with a double "b" is because her father wrote her name illegibly on her birth certificate. She has become a good friend and a big help showing me the way of life in Peru.

Her family owns a craft store making beads and jewelry for a meager income. Their family has more than its share of hardships. They live in the shanty area that was settled by squatters in the 1970's. Since the homeless people built this area illegally, the city has not provided water or sewer to these houses. Most of these houses have dirt floors and they use rainwater for their daily needs. They do have electricity which helps power some of the tools for their craft business. Each house in the area is allowed 200 watts of power, which is enough for a few small light bulbs. During my past visits to Iquitos I have worked on her house building simple carpentry improvements like stairways, beds and rain gutters.

Each day Rubby's family fills a 30-gallon barrel with rain water from the ditch behind their house. This is the water they use for showering under a coffee can. They wash their clothes in a five-gallon bucket and flush their toilet by pouring a gallon of water into the basin. The wastewater flows into a backyard ditch 20 feet from their clean water source. The daily rains bring fresh water and dispose of the neighborhood waste.

When I arrived at Rubby's house I gave my bicycle to her teen-age brothers, Jonathan and Marcos. They were excited to learn how to shift the gears and use the brakes. We practiced shifting while climbing the dirt path street in front of their house. They finally learned how to spin and power over the top in the correct gear.

That old bike was good for me on this tour riding from Lima. I was impressed with how much abuse it took riding on those rocky roads. I didn't have any flats and the wheels are still straight and perfect. I think it will be a good bike for Jonathan and Marcos if they keep the chain oiled. I told them to clean the chain with diesel fuel once a week.

Her older brother Esgar is doing better with his polio. He still has to stay in bed all day. His bedsores are about three inches across. Rubby has to change his diapers and clean his sores twice a day. She made him a workout gym with springs and ropes attached to the wall. Esgar can exercise his arms and do short pull-ups. He joked that he is starting to look like Arnold Schwarzenegger even though his biceps are smaller than my wrists.

Rubby's father is still suffering from his tuberculosis. He has already lived three years longer than the doctors expected. He has a bad coughing attack once a week and has to go to the hospital to get outpatient treatment. Then he comes home and is fine again for a few days. I don't know how much longer he'll survive. Rubby's mother is having pain in her breast. She doesn't know if it is cancer but everyone suspects the worst. Even with

all the tragedies going on in Rubby's house, everyone is still very happy. I always like visiting them learning how they live with few possessions. They work long hours to make about five dollars per day for their household.

During my visit I went shopping with Rubby's mother at an appliance store. She was looking for a blender to help chop vegetables. In the store we started looking at the small washing machines. I could tell she was envious how a washing machine could do laundry for eight people much better than her five gallon bucket. I tried to explain that a washing machine needs water to fill and work properly. Their house didn't have a water source or plumbing to connect to the machine. She seemed a little annoyed that it wouldn't work in her house. I realized how many of the basic services we have in the United States such as electricity and plumbing are not possible in many parts of the world.

#### DINNER WITH DAISY

A few nights ago I was downtown in the Plaza de Armas. A young woman in a wheel chair came up to me selling penny candy. She was dressed in dirty clothes and a small ten-year-old boy was pushing her. The boy spoke some English and we began talking about their life in the city. They both live in the Belem Ghetto about a mile away. They come downtown to sell candy to get enough money for food. The woman's name is Daisy and the boy is Jesus. I think Daisy has polio in her legs but she can use her arms a little.

I asked them if they were hungry and they said they hadn't eaten today. I said "let's go across the street to Aires Burger"...it's the nice tourist cafe with the Rock'n' Roll theme. When we rolled Daisy up to the door the guards didn't know what to say. The guards are supposed to keep the street people out of the restaurant. I assured the guards that Daisy and Jesus were with me for dinner.

When we rolled Daisy up to a table everyone in the restaurant did a double take looking at her. I could tell she was excited to be eating there. We all had the roast chicken and rice special for \$2 a plate. We had enough extra food that Jesus and Daisy took a large doggie bag back home to their families.

We decided to meet again for dinner the next night. I was waiting in the city park for Daisy and a couple of ugly prostitutes walk up to me and start talking in Spanish. I could tell what they wanted so I decided to some have fun with them by negotiating prices. I was trying to convince them that they should be paying me since I was a tall, green-eyed American man. I kept stalling and said I was waiting for my girlfriend.

Just when they were demonstrating how good they were in bed, Daisy and Jesus roll up with her wheelchair. I got up and gave Daisy a kiss on her cheek and told the whores that Daisy was my girlfriend. The timing of the

moment was perfect and the expression on the women's faces was priceless as I pushed Daisy over to Aries Burger.

Daisy had put on clean clothes and eye make-up. She actually looked pretty good. She did not look out of place at a nice restaurant this time. During the next few nights I would have dinner again with Daisy. Rubby and her brother Esgar joined us one night. It was the first time Esgar has been out of bed in several months. I think Esgar and Daisy enjoyed talking together. It turns out Rubby and Daisy had seen each other on the street but had never really met. Rubby and Daisy are about the same age and I think they have a lot in common interests. It was nice that they became friends.



Diana here (L) lives in La Oroya, and makes money by washing car windows for tips.

## ELECTIONS

Next Sunday is the big national election in Peru. There have been pep rallies every night in each town I have visited. Lots of marching bands and street dances until after midnight. The reason the elections are such a big deal in Peru is that everyone has to vote. If you do not vote, you don't get your National Card updated (like a drivers license renewal). If you don't have a current National Card you can't use the bank, post office or any national service.

I had my photo taken with one of the candidates for state governor named "July". I think she was a former stripper or something and is campaigning as kind of a joke. She was dressed in a tight tank top and short pants. She gave me a t-shirt with her picture on it. All the candidates give out lots of t-shirts. I think that is how most of the village people get new clothes. Everyone is always wearing political t-shirts. The candidates also pay homeowners to paint their houses with campaign slogans. It is common for houses in good locations to be totally covered with political names

## JOISI'S BABY

Last year I met a street entertainer who was dressed as a clown. His name was Augustine. He spoke some English so I always looked forward to asking him questions about street life in the city. Augustine introduced me to his girlfriend Joisi who was a 17-year-old street vendor selling lemonade nearby. During my stay in Iquitos I bought a drink from Joisi and her mother everyday. They invited me over to their house and I eventually got to know their whole family. Joisi's father is in the military and he has five children ages five to seventeen. They live in conditions similar to Rubby without running water or indoor sewer.

Now...a year later, I went to their house to see Joisi and Augustine. Joisi's mom and dad were home. I stumbled with my awkward Spanish to ask how their family was doing. We communicated by drawing pictures on my sketchpad. Joisi came home a short time later and I was surprised to see she was eight months pregnant. Joisi hasn't completed much schooling. She is almost illiterate and can barely draw her name on a piece of paper. Trying to communicate with her by showing her words in a dictionary is useless. I learned that sometimes the most complex emotions are communicated more clearly by a frown, hand gesture or expressions.

I foolishly asked her..."Joisi and Augustine matrimonial" (got married). She shook her head... "No." Then I asked... "Who is the papa" ...while pointing to her stomach. She said... "Augustine." "Where is Augustine"... I asked. Joisi made a gesture with her hand like an airplane flying up to the sky. "Augustine to Lima," she said.

Her father joined in... "Augustine no good" ...while making a hand gesture of cutting his own throat. I could tell from their faces they were happy for the new baby but sad and raged that Joisi was alone.

"What is baby's name?"... I asked. Joisi pointed at me... "Baby Lon." I didn't know if I should feel embarrassed, surprised or honored. "Why no baby Augustine?" ...I asked. Joisi wrinkled her nose and shook her head no... "Me no like Augustine."

I tried to tell Joisi that I thought Juan Carlos might be a better name for her baby. She tapped the side of her head and motioned she would..."Think about it".

I could tell Joisi's family didn't have money for new clothes or things for the baby. I asked them if they wanted to go shopping for baby clothes at the market store downtown. Joisi thought that would be fine. Her twelve-year-old sister came with us and we took a moto



taxi into the city.

The three of us began walking along the crowded sidewalks of the shopping district. Joisi would stop at baby clothing displays. I would dawdle and do “the guy thing”, and stand around and look dumb. The store clerks would look down at Joisi’s stomach, then look up at me. Then point at me...smile...and say... “Oh you papa”. I would shake my head...“No”. Joisi would say... “Si.” I frowned at Joisi but she wanted a father for her baby. Shop owners would repeat this accusation as we went from store to store. We spent \$20 on various baby undershirts, sleepers and shampoo. Joisi was going to have her baby a few weeks after I left Iquitos. I don’t know if she had a boy or girl, or what she chose for the baby’s name.

GOING HOME

I had a night flight from Iquitos to Lima, then back home to the United States. At noon I went swimming at the lagoon resort near the zoo. It was a hot 95-degree day and the water was very warm. This is the place I would

like to end our bike tour on the edge of town. It would be a fun place to have an afternoon picnic and swim after a hot day of riding.

The restaurant there was making grilled Alligator Fillets and Grub Worms on a stick. The grubs are about the size of your thumb. They have a thick crispy coating with lots of spice. They crunch like cheetos corn curls. The alligator is actually very good. Like a stringy chicken meat with a smoked flavor. I would eat it again.

I started to get my things packed to come home. I had to buy two duffel bags to store the souvenirs I bought here. This was a good tour and I accomplished my scouting goals. Our group of American cyclists will return next November to ride the best routes and stay at the best hotels during our expedition. We will have our own guides and vehicles to keep everyone safe. I still want to offer Americans the chance to get to know the local people who make traveling interesting. Peru has so many beautiful areas to visit and explore, but it will be the people I’ve met that I will remember the most.

**An introduction to Lon for anybody who needs it, and a Plug For Lon’s Riding Camps and Tours**

Lon got famous overnight back in the late ‘70s, when he showed up with tall white socks and an ex-football player’s body, entered the Race Across America (RAAM), and won it convincingly a few times, including a double-transcontinental ride of 19 days. His wife, Susan Notorangelo, was winning the women’s RAAMs back then, too; and yep, she still rides too. Their daughter, Rebecca, is now a teenager. We interviewed

Lon in an earlier Reader—number 13 or 14 or so.

Lon and Susan started PacTours, specializing in what most of us would consider to be fast, high-mileage, serious rides for people who like to ride all day long, and learn about riding from experts. I attended one a couple of years ago—and after a week’s riding, came back fitter than I’ve been in 17 years, without even trying or thinking about it. More

importantly, I made lifelong friends, ate tons of good food, and had a great time. There’s not a lot of pussyfooting around—if you struggle to ride 25 miles in hilly terrain, PacTours might not be right for you; but if you consider yourself to be fairly fit, don’t be intimidated by the 80+ -mile days, because the rides are well-supported and everybody’s your friend. Interested?

See [www.pactours.com](http://www.pactours.com)

# The Sub-24 Hour Overnight

(Revisited)

Last year we introduced the S24O, or Sub-24-Hour Overnight, a way for busy, desk-bound riders to get a dose of outdoor beauty and spookiness into otherwise indoor lives. Lots of folks wrote and told their own stories, and we printed a few. Well, the days are getting longer, it's warming up all over, and it's time again to leave the house in the evening, come back the next morning, and try in vain to get some sleep in between.



Too bad we had to turn this color photo into a black-and-white, because those hills are pure green. Here's John back after a rainy night.

The S24O is a one-night campout that requires almost no planning, and has you back home less than a day after you left. It works for busy and family people when a full-scale bicycle tour doesn't. It's more rider-friendly, for one thing. Since it's so short, you can pack as light or as heavy as you want, and you won't rue the day you left something behind, or took too much stuff. Even if you grossly miscalculate your gear needs, you won't have to live with your miscalculation for long. Or you can experiment with ultra-minimalism, or ultra-maximalism. On a long tour, you'd be less likely to experiment.

Here at Rivendell, we use S24Os to test and use the gear we sell, and for camaraderie and stress relief. In the past 3 years we've gone on more than 40 of them, and we've yet to have a bad experience, except that one time.

On a typical S24O, you leave town in the evening, ride to a place where you can set down your bag and sleep for the night, and then returning the next morning. Fridays and Saturdays are best, since there's no work or school the next day, and if you didn't sleep so well, you can make up for it with an afternoon nap, maybe.

The S24O requires almost no planning, and certainly no fretting about planning. The idea is to bring what you need to sleep in (a blanket or sleeping bag); and sleep on (a pad); and something to eat (food); and everything else is gravy. My typical S24O kit contains:

- a. sleeping bag and pad
- b. tent or bivy sack, if there's a chance of wetness
- c. about a pound of food
- d. a book and headlight
- e. some extra woolies, which may end up being a pillow
- f. a tarp, if you go with a group. To sit on while you eat.
- g. a knife, for cutting food and stabbing coyotes
- h. camera gear

I put it all in bike bags, but panniers or a knapsack work ok. Or you can put things into stuff sacks and strap them onto your racks. It's only an overnight, so it doesn't matter.

Our first S24O of the season was Friday, April 11, through Saturday, April 12. Bhima, Ariella, John, and me/Grant left work at about 5:30. The weather report said it might rain, so we were prepared for it. Bhima and Ariella slept in bivy sacks, John and I each had small tents. We shared food in the evening, marvelled at all the green lushness, and went to bed. I read a whole book (Holes, recommended by my 14-year old daughter), so I didn't get tons of sleep. It started raining before sunup. Bhima and Ariella made a quick escape, but John and I stayed in our tents for another few hours. The ride back was all downhill. A grand time!—GP



Bhima and Ariella brought gourmet food and shared. John and I contributed PB&J sandwiches. They brought a tent, but slept in bivy sacks instead. The only thing worse than sleeping in a bivy sack in the rain is not sleeping in a bivy sack in the rain. John asked Ariella, "How did you sleep?" She replied. "I slept ten times!"



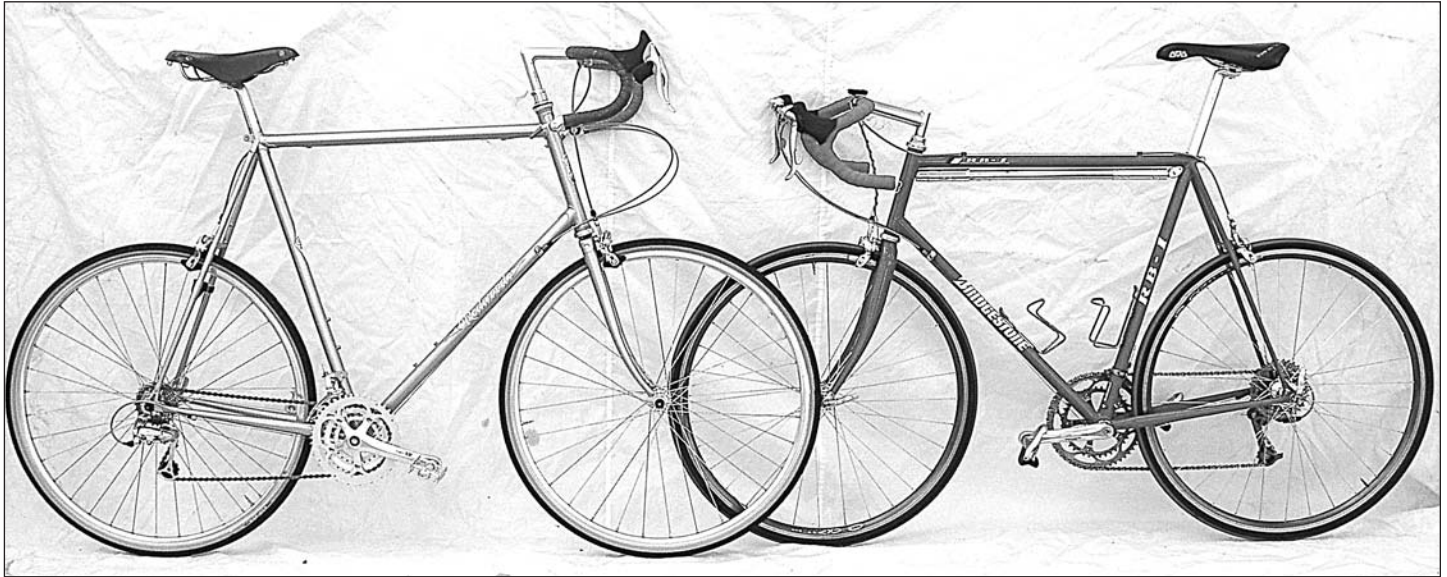
John again, on his 61cm Atlantis. Now he wishes he'd gotten a 64, but still, his position is perfect, and comfortable. Hoss Bag, black wool tights and top, covered with a seersucker. Wool socks, touring shoes. Please don't write about him carrying his helmet. It was all uphill at this point, and that's just the way it goes.



John dresses up for the return ride under the protection of a thick & gangly oak. He opted not to wear the poncho, it being not all that wind-compatible or photo-friendly.

## You Too?

If you do an S24O and want to tell about it with no hope of payment or acknowledgement, send 'er on in! Otherwise, we'll keep showing our own, until one of you gets inspired. Limit text to 200 words. Photos should be no worse than these, and show riding, camp, scenery. We expect to get way more submissions than we can print, so please don't be bummed or worse if yours doesn't make it. All photos will be lost, so keep your own copy. Prefer b/w tiffs @ 300 dpi, but can work with prints. We're on a Mac. Your story will be edited for clarity and to fit the allotted space.



Left, a 68cm Redwood with a saddle height (from center of the crank) of 86cm. Right, a 62cm bike with the saddle set at the same height. On the Redwood, the bar and saddle are level, and there is room to move the bars up or down. On the other bike, the handlebar is 11cm lower than the top of the saddle, which is tons too much.

## Tall Riders, Small Selection

**Why is it that just about nobody makes bikes big enough to fit tall guys?**

Most bike makers build up to a 62cm frame, which typically fits riders between 6' and 6' 2."

But the 62cm bike on the right up there is owned by a guy who's 6' 5", and whose saddle height is 86cm from the center of the crank to the top of the saddle. When you subtract his frame size (62) from his saddle height (86), you get a huge 24cm difference. That guarantees the bars will be way lower than the saddle, and THAT in turn guarantees a lot of weight on the hands and more neck and back strain.

Big guys have long arms and can often handle a bigger saddle height-to-bar height distance than shorties can, but that's way too much. I'd say, limit it to 4cm maximum. In our bikes, we make sure you can get it level or even higher.

A good example is the Redwood, there on the left. As the caption states, the saddle height is the same, but the bars are level with the saddle. The stem isn't even maxed out—you can raise it 4cm higher still. For 99 percent of the riders 6-4 and over, it is much more comfortable. Night and day, actually.

Why don't bike makers make bigger bikes? Well, they look at sales on the bell curve, and already, the sales of 62cm bikes is small compared to the other sizes, so it makes no sense for them to go any bigger than that.

You need a bike that's off their chart.

Another reason is weight. Weight is a driving force in modern bike marketing, and bigger frames and bikes weigh more. Another reason, and this ought to make you happy, is shippability. Big bikes are a pain to pack. They don't fit into the same size boxes as smaller bikes, so they require special boxes, which cost more. Plus, to have two different sized boxes messes you up when you go to pack bikes into shipping containers.

And finally, nobody's asking for them. High performance riders have been told over and over again that smaller is better because it's stiffer and lighter and more maneuverable. But when the bike is too small, none of that matters. Comfort is way more important, and comfort comes mainly from a position that can be achieved only on a big-enough bike.

We are always selling out of the larger bikes—whether they're Atlantis, Rambouillet, or Redwoods. Maybe we'll make more. But we shouldn't be the only ones doing it. Anyway, if you're tall, look at one of our bikes. Or look up Lennard Zinn. He works for VeloNews, and specializes in big bikes. Either way, get a good fit.

# In the Works & On Our Minds

Projects that take varying amounts of time and resources, listed in no particular order of priority except when noted.

**FRAMES AND BIKES.** A **mixte**. We need some lugs for it, but I/Grant would like to see it by Winter '03. It might be late... A **TAKEAPART (RITCHEY-STYLE) BIKE**. We have a lug designed for it, and that's all we'd need. One customer is eager to get one, and I think he's offered to help us out with the tooling cost for that lug, in exchange for a killer deal on a whole bike; like maybe free. I think we'll take him up on it. But first, I want to find out more about these bikes, and ride one. Ritchey spokespeople have threatened to bring one by, but it hasn't happened yet... A **TANDEM**. This will happen when heck gets slushy, because it'll take ten new lugs. If we could pre-sell (get commitments for and 50-percent down payments on) fifteen tandems, we'd do it. They'd cost a lot. More than, say, a Seven tandem with Ti/Carbon. A **LUGGED STEM FOR THREADLESS STEER TUBES**. Why not? Most clamp-on stems are so unbecoming. All we'd need is a rear lug, since we already have the front one. Speaking of which, we will **BRING BACK THE ORIGINAL LUGGED STEM AS SOON AS** Reynolds can supply the tubing. Keith, I know you read the *Reader* cover to cover, so prick your arm and dip a feather in and write this in your own blood: "I will supply those tubes before August 15, 2003 no matter what! And I will contact Grant about this to confirm by June 5"...otherwise we'll get them from Nitto...A **MOUNTAIN BIKE, CALLED THE BOMBADIL**. Complete bike or just frame and fork, we're not sure. But it'll be a traditional style bike, nothing bouncy on it, and it'll be pretty and good in every way...A **SMALLER VERSION OF THE ROMULUS**. Maybe it would be called the Romulus like all the others, maybe we'd design it just for women and give it a girlish name (but not like *Aurora* or something). Anyway, it would be for 26-inch wheels, and

come in four or five sizes between 44cm and 52 cm. Really shooting for Spring of '04 on this one, and I actually think it'll happen. A small percentage of our customers are women, but there's a need for a well-designed small frame out there, and I don't see it happening. One maker now advertises frames down to 44cm, with 700c wheels and no toe clip overlap. That's like saying "we make great wine without using genuine grapes."

**HARDWARE.** Dia-Compe says it WILL remake the Mod. 750 centerpull brake for us. I don't know how many of you wrote to Naoto to lobby for it, but it's happening in any case, and I'm glad. We'll probably build a bike around it...we got in 7 fillet-brazed Bullmoose handlebars from Nitto. Seven is too few to do anything with, but we may equip the Bombadil with these, eventually. I mean, with a Bullmoose, not with the seven that we got in. I don't know what to do with them. Listen, if you have an old-style mountain bike that you like a lot, please buy them from us.

**THE ROMULUS AND REDWOOD.** We underpriced them, and they're going up from \$1400 to \$1550 soon, which still puts them several hundred dollars lower than what they ought to be. I don't know about this complete bike deal we've started. The bill for bikes is much bigger than it is for frames alone, and on top of that, we have to pay it all off within 10 days of getting the bikes. It's extremely stressful, and as much as I like the bikes, it's just not worth the toll. We got in 137 bikes last week, and another 137 or so are due here late April, and I don't know how we're going to pay for it all. We'll manage, but it'll mean going more into dept, and I'm just not happy with that. I think from now on we'll not order on speculation, but on actual orders received. Forget about

stocking huge numbers of bikes. We'll pre-sell X number of bikes, then order based on that, plus some padding. Holy Moses, I just want to get out of this hole, and I promise I'll never do it again. To me, it seems outrageous that we aren't selling these bikes hand-over-fist at this price.

**A 26-INCH VERSION OF THE RUFFY TUFFY?** We're asking Panaracer for it, and if we can work out a deal where we don't have to buy the tooling up front, we'll get it. It's the tire we'd put on the smaller Romulus.

**QUICKBEAM.** Panasonic is quoting on it. Actually, they have quoted on it already, but the quote seemed rather Neptunian, so we're asking for an itemization, and maybe a lower price. We'd like this to be a \$1,000 complete bike, but no promises.

**NEW WOOLY WARM JERSEYS.** Now made in New Zealand, using super expensive interlock superfine merino. I think we're the only ones in the world who use this expensive fabric for bike jerseys. Anyway, they're good, and if you need a new wool jersey, you could sure do worse.

I've been reading ancient, pre-1973 issues of *Bicycling!* magazine, and getting inspired. There's so much good stuff in there. There's a style of writing, and it doesn't seem to matter who's writing, that I find soothing and refreshing. New magazines don't have it, and neither does the *Reader*, but it'll get better. Modern writing is full of anger and frustration and posturing, even if it tries hard not to be. Writers try to shock the readers into liking them, and coming back for more, and it isn't good. I've got a long way to go, but I'll try hard to get there. Meanwhile, maybe we'll reprint some of those oldies.

—GP



## Bob Barriskill, 81 yrs, and Romulus, 55cm

BOB CAME BY A FEW WEEKS AGO (that would be late March) to look at a replacement for his current bike, a typical modern racey-with-triple model. By our standards, which admittedly are not world standards, it was too small; and by Bob's standards, it was twitchy and uncomfortable.

Fortunately, we had some freshly built Romulus bikes for him to try out, and he settled on a 55. Naturally I/Grant tried to talk him into a 57, but in fact either one would do fine, and Bob stuck to his guns and got the 55. He's a local and rides the same mountains we do, so we swapped the 25t cluster and 105 rear derailleur for a 32t and a Deore derailleur. Bob likes his Specialized saddle and black plastic toe clips, and nobody here was inclined to wrestle him out of those. Age gets respect around here.

Bob says: "I have had about 14 bicycles during my lifetime, including two expensive handmade Italian bikes. My latest bike before the Romulus had an aluminum frame and a carbon fork. The handlebars were 3-inches below the seat, and it was nothing at all like the nice bikes I used to ride 20 or so years ago. I bought a different saddle, raised the handlebars as much as possible, lowered the air pressure in the tires, and it still rode like a bucking bronco. My new Romulus is different, and is the best bike I have ever had. It handles perfectly, is plenty quick enough, fits me perfectly, and I'm proud of the beautiful appearance, with the lugs and excellent paint. The Romulus forgives harsh bumps, yet is still quick and responsive...yet not squirrely. I can eat a banana with no hands on the bars."

# Over Gates

by Maynard Hershon

WE'D RIDDEN WEST OVER GATES PASS, Ed and I, and around scenic McCain Loop. We rolled down Kinney toward Ajo Highway and eventual coffee on University Avenue.

We were delighted to be riding in newly cool southeast Arizona, where only days earlier it would've been too hot to ride in late morning. Overnight, you can ride any time of day in Tucson. What luxury!

As we approached the big intersection at Ajo and Kinney, Ed said that, y'know, he might've preferred to ride back over Gates again, over the (steeper) "back side." Riding over the back side hadn't even occurred to me.

Ed said his heart rate had already been elevated as we passed the turn toward Gates. That back-side climb, he added, would have been excellent conditioning.

I almost said that conditioning is what you put on your hair after you wash it. My reaction surprised me; I remembered that unlike Ed I never think about conditioning. I'm not a fitness rider. I just like to ride my bike.

I get fit by accident, and enough is enough. More fitness than enough is not that useful, and it's expensive in terms of time and effort. And for what?

Despite our different athletic goals Ed and I are good riding partners. We don't just look at fitness differently. Our clothing and equipment are individual too.

Ed wears a mirror, a Camelbak and MTB-style shoes with Frog cleats, not pure racing gear. His low gears are quite low. He loves his steel Dura-Ace Serotta (Reynolds CF fork) but perhaps yearns for something a bit lighter.

I use Time shoes with Speedplay road cleats. I ride a racing-style bike with no computer and no heart-rate monitor. I wouldn't wear a mirror and my lowest cog's a 23. I ride clunky, chunky, flat-resistant tires, Ruffy-Tuffys or Armadillos. I don't know how much my bike or I weigh, and don't care.

I look like an old, no-longer-supple racer, I guess, but my appearance may be deceiving. I don't ride like a racer. I don't train. I'm happy just to ride my bike. I'm almost totally non-competitive.

Ed is, and he cops to it, competitive. He frets about his relative fitness, how well he can hang with the boys. He worries about his endurance, his climbing fitness and his ability to match sudden accelerations from people or packs. He wishes he were five pounds lighter.

I sense that he's sure we cyclists are ALL like him, all competitive. Many of us hide it, he thinks. If you say you're not all that competitive really, he'll suspect you're setting him up, to sweeten your success when you kick his butt.

When I thought about the contrast between Ed's way and my way, I realized I'm not that different from many

Rivendellers. I'm not concerned with setting a personal best time at an MS-150 or riding with the hotdogs across Arkansas.

I do ride racing-style bikes but I'm used to them and like them. I'm not advertising my blinding speed. I have no blinding speed to advertise.

I imagine that most of you, like me, feel that a ride is a fun hour or hours out on the bike, not a steppingstone to "total fitness" or a race win or a fastest-ever El Tour de Tucson. The ride is an end in itself. It's enough. Think about what a liberation that is for us.

If the ride is an end, not a means, any ride is a good ride. Every ride is a success, no matter what the heart-rate graph would look like - if you wore a monitor and downloaded the results to your PC. Even if you couldn't hang with the boys - or the girls. Even if you were the last person up the hill.

IF YOU JUST SIMPLY LIKE TO RIDE, none of those potentially ride-ruining losses would bother you. And why should they? You rode your bike. You had fun. Tomorrow offers opportunities for more rides.

You wouldn't think our attitude, that we simply like to ride, would seem so remarkable. Why else would we ride? How complicated is it? Don't all cyclists just like to ride their bikes? I don't think we all do.

If we did, we'd ride our bikes to the bases of mountains, not taxi them there on roof racks. We'd ride to run errands. We'd use our bikes for any reason, anytime we could. We wouldn't think of our bikes as outdoor exercise equipment or status-enhancing high-tech playthings.

We'd incorporate our bikes into our lives, so that we could ride them at every opportunity: We'd set things up so we can ride.

We'd choose our bikes and equipment to reflect that attitude. We'd ride in cycling clothing or we'd ride in street clothes. We'd ride in cycling shoes or in sneakers or sandals or big clumsy engineer boots. We'd ride.

I believe most Rivendellers just like to ride their bikes. It's that aspect of the Rivendell Way that I most appreciate. We ride.

I don't want to wear wool shorts. I don't want to shift gears down on the frame. I don't often want to use clips and straps. I do want to ride my bike and to see you riding yours, no matter where your shifters are. I'd be great if you and I could ride together over Gates Pass and out around McCain Loop some autumn morning.

If you wanted to think of our ride as training, as a workout, that'd be okay. Ed does. But, hey, let's ride back to town via Ajo. Once over Gates is enough.

RR 29 SUMMER 2003

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