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The Rivendell Reader

Issue No. 39 Early 2007

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A Quarterly For Bicyclers

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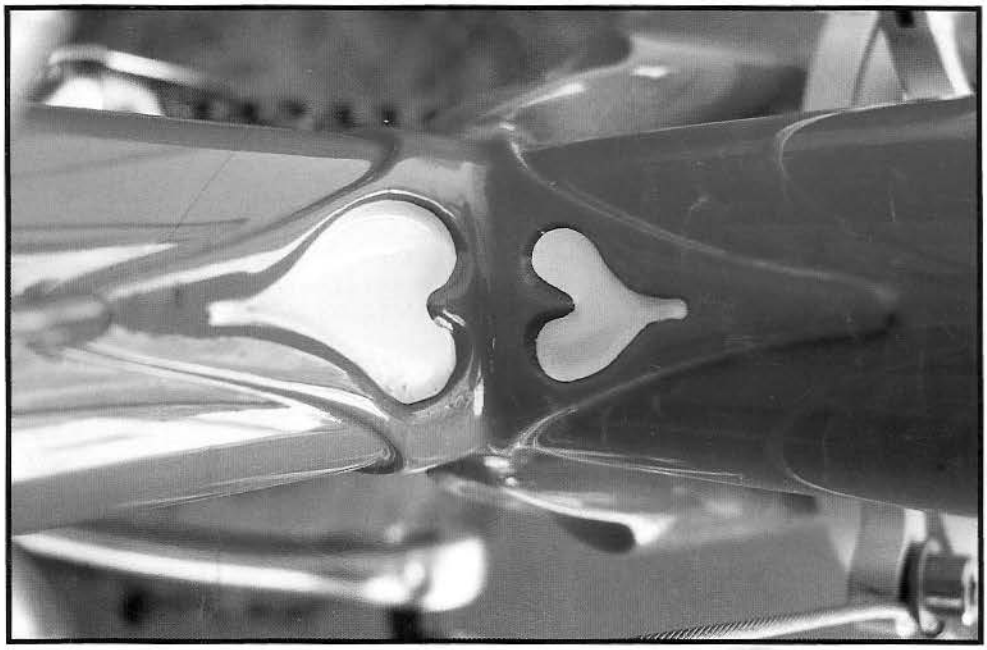


Brushing out the Maypo with Ipana

There have been recent articles in fat & famous newspapers about bike-fitting sessions that last 5 hours and cost up to 400 dollars. Our fit-sessions would never make the newspapers, not even the local *Contra Costa Times,* but this thin pub isn't as picky, plus, it has the insider-thing going for it.

It's easy to rationalize five hours when you're looking at a bike that costs $6,000 to $10,000 *and* you believe an imperfect fit could lead to long-term injuries. Maybe in special cases it will, but most of us riders have well-lubed ball-and-socket joints that evolved to let us run away from fierce animals over rough terrain. We don't have rigid robot joints that grind, squeak, & spark when something isn't laser-aligned. Pedaling is low-to-no impact and is easy on joints, which is why you can ride a bicycle into your eighties, and is why riding is the exercise of choice for injured athletes in rehab.

Anyway, whether a fit session lasts five hours or fifteen minutes, the goal is still a position that lets you ride comfortably, efficiently, and injury-free. That position is determined only by how you rest on the bike's contact points—the saddle, handlebar, and pedals.

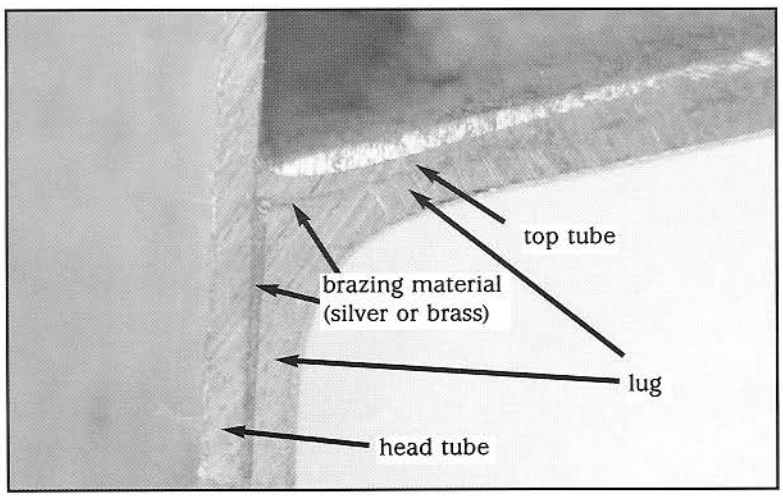
The thing is, you can be comfortable & efficient in more than one precise position. That's good, because different surfaces, conditions, loads, traffic, effort, & weather call for adjustments in position.

Here at Rivendell a fit-session starts with measuring your Pubic Bone Height (PBH). Our site and our catalogue show how to measure it, but it's easy to explain without pictures, and I've done it a hundred times: Bare feet ten inches apart on a hard floor. Hook a metric measuring tape over a thin edge (a hardcover book, for instance), and pull it all the way up until it's pressing hard against your pubic bone. Have a math whiz take the reading on the floor.

PBH minus 10 to 10.5cm is your Saddle Height (center of crank to top of saddle). Your frame size depends partly upon the frame's design, but if we're talking about a bike with 700C road wheels, then take away another 15cm if you're under 5' 8" & *up to* 19cm if you're

...*continued on page 3*

In This Issue



Cross-section of a lugged frame joint. The upper head lug, specifically. Kind of hard to see all this, but you may be able to get the point.

The Rivendell Reader

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6' 5" or taller, to get frame size. If you're in-between, subtract something in-between.

Saddle fore-and-aft is a quickie. When they go at your knee with the plumb bob, shifting your saddle back and forth until the bump just below your knee is directly above the ball of your foot and the pedal axle, they're working with old information (that you need to center the ball of your foot below the knee-bump and just above the pedal axle). I just shove the saddle all or almost all the way back on the seat post, and 99 percent of the time it's good enough to send you out on the road with, and you can work out the details there. We like the knee-bump behind the pedal spindle, for reasons I don't have space to go into here without having to shrink the type smaller than the 8.5 point it is already.

Saddle angle: Start with the saddle level, and see if that feels right. It probably will, but now and then some riders like it nose-up or nose-down a bit. You won't determine the absolute best saddle angle during an indoor fitting session. It has to happen outside.

Handlebar width is the easiest of all. In the old days the common advice was to get the bars as wide as your shoulders. To me, it's fishy. People say if the bars aren't wide enough, your chest won't open up enough and you won't be able to breathe as well, but lungs don't get squished that easily. You can prove that right now as you're reading this. Press palm to palm; now breathe.

Still, I'm anti-narrow handlebars. Women usually get 38cm & 40cm, and some go as narrow as 36cm. That's what happens when you go by shoulder-width. But when you think of the bar as a lever to control a bike that wants to fall left or right with every stroke, a wider bar makes sense, because it's a longer lever. Most riders who are open to a wider bar and actually try it like it, and they never go back to narrow after that. Try 2cm wider than you ride right now.

The best thing I've read about crank length was a few years ago in *VeloNews*, when techical editor Lennard Zinn put riders with various leg lengths on bikes with various crank lengths and somewhat scientifically tested their performance cardiovascularly and otherwise. The test showed most people, even tallies, do better with 165mm cranks, generally favored by petites. That was a disconcerting result. Nobody debates 165mm cranks or 180mm ones, though. It's always a 2.5-5 5mm debate.

It seems that crank length *should* grow or shrink according to your leg length (or PBH), but if average-legged riders (PBH 81-87cm) rode 170mm or 172.5mm, shorties (PBH 70-74cm) would ride 120mm, and tallies (PBH 94-99cm) would ride 210mm, and that's not a world we live in. Here's a guide that won't steer you far wrong: Under 5' 3"? Ride 165mm. Over 6' 3"? Ride 175mm. In between? Ride 170mm or 172.5mm. If your legs are long or short for your height, go up or down a notch. If you have long legs and can't stand the thought of riding 175s, find some 180s, but be careful around corners. Main thing: don't fret about a 5mm difference.

Stem length: The old way of sizing the stem—so your view of the front hub is blocked by the handlebar—doesn't make sense because it doesn't consider head tube angle & fork rake or upper body position. You could have a blocked hub with a 74° head tube angle and 40mm of fork rake, but the same position with a 72°/50mm combo will push the hub out in front. It's best to go by what feels good to you, not by what looks right to somebody else, or an old Italian formula—that with all due respect to the old Italians—never made sense in the first place.

Stem length is always a compromise, anyway. A long stem feels better climbing out of the saddle, because when you do that you lean forward, so a long reach is no big deal, even feels good and non-cramping. A short stem feels better down hills, because it makes it easier to push your butt back, for safer braking.

Most of the women we fit with drop bars get an 8cm or 9cm stem, and most men get a 9cm to 11cm, and subsequent stem changes of more than a centimeter are rare.

Bar height: Most riders are super comfortable when the handlebar is 2-3cm higher than the saddle, but that's hard to achieve with most modern bikes. Shoot for getting the bars & saddle the same height, ride the bike a lot, and raise or lower them as you need to. I like mine 3-4cm higher than the saddle, but that's me.

Shoe and cleat positioning can take hours or even days. One of the goals is efficiency, and just riding your bike enough will train that. I strongly suspect pedaling unplugged (not strapped or clicked to the pedals) trains your feet to move in circles better than if you're solidly fixed to the pedal. You don't train a dog to come by pulling on the leash. The other goal is preventing injuries. Most pedaling injuries are repetitive stress injuries, from doing the same slightly bad thing over and over and over again.

Pedaling injuries most often happen to thousand-miles-a-month riders who are plugged into the pedals. Is it the shoes or the miles? I don't know, but the normal fix is to reevaluate the position just in case the first plug-in position didn't thread the needle exactly right, and then try a different position and see if that works.

I think the best way to avoid pedaling-born knee problems is to ride unplugged in non-clicky shoes on double-sided flat pedals that allow you to find your perfect home without locking it there. When your foot is free to roam a bit, you're less likely to repeat the same exact motion until a tendon or something goes twang.

It's the difference between rigid robots and loose geese. With a robot, if you don't align and lube a moving arm or a leg just right, it grinds & sparks & squeaks until *way to go, you wrecked the robot.* That's why robots have never fulfilled their promise of helping with the housework. Geese, on the other hand, have such wing flexation that—you can take this waterfowl fact to the bank—they've been known to fly upside down on super long flights when they can't take a break. Flying upside down uses different muscles, and when they get tired they flip back over & feel like new, vivaciously refreshed men & women all over again.

It's hard to believe how great pedaling unplugged is until you try it. It's a high hurdle for beginners who are just getting into "serious" riding and don't want to be held back; and for veterans who have decades invested in pedaling plugged in, and who have spent a thousand dollars on special shoes and pedals. If you have a hard time with it, think about the feet-training again, in paragraph 17.

•••

Getting a bike-fit *can* be a simple, logical, flowing process. You don't need five hours inside searching for magic numbers that activate your turbocharger. The main things are to get the handlebars high enough & wide enough & the saddle at the right height, scooched back & level or close to it. It may take one to three tries to find the right stem length, but don't overthink it. Get a saddle you like, bar tape that feels good, put the brake levers & shifters where you like them, don some comfortable clothes, and then just go out & pedal loose like a goose, not rigid like a 'bot.—Grant

Mail

Hey—is that thing sticking out what I think it is?

There is one disturbing thing I've seen in two RRs: the word "protrubing." Now, there is the word "protruding", and there is a "protuberance". Many people mispronounce the latter as "protruberance" by associating it with "protrude". As any dictionary will show, a protuberance is something with a tube-like shape that juts out. The key word here is "tube." So please, for all us academics who are members of Rivendell, don't ever, ever write that word "protrubing" ever again.

Yours sincerely,

Jeremy Bergerson, Lecturer

Dept. of German, Scandinavian & Dutch

University of Minnesota

Hi Jeremy...any of my close friends or family will attest that "protrubing" has long been one of my favorite words, second only to "gription," and let me tell you—ignorance was sheer bliss. But it's always good to know these things, and I thank you for setting me straight, Jeremy. Note to others: Don't get the idea that I love being "set straight." I can handle it now and then, just like anybody else, but I don't live for it. —Grant

Asteriskses versus dashes

Re: Maynard Hershon's columns sin RR37: I am saddened to see you are letting your standards slip—at least as far as the written word. It was disheartening to see you print the p-word (page 42 paragraph 5 of Drew's letter); then more suggested smut on page 43: the b—, f—, b— and b—words.

If you can't run these pieces with all nasty, offending, vulgar, tabloid words deleted, please don't run them at all. That is the biggest single reason I cancelled my subscription to *Bicycling*, after 15 years.

Would you have your children edit these two articles, or read them for pleasure? Would you show them to your pastor?

Please respond to this, either in a letter back, or reply in RR39.

—Name Withheld (by Grant)

Dear Name W.,

Maynard was quoting the cusser, and the guy was not yelling, "Darn ya, ya nut!" I thought it was better to combine actual letters and asteriskses to suggest what the guy said. When you wrote to me, you used dashes, not asteriskses. The main difference, one that is not lost on me, is that yours was a private note, and the RR is more public.

I'm not a major cursing fan, either, but sometimes you have to spell it out almost the way it was, and that's when asteriskses and dashes come in handy. Any time you'd like to cancel or get a refund, you're welcome to it. This goes for anybody, by the way. It's not a challenge, just a fact, and it's always been that way. —Grant

Tested and verified

I'd like to report my discovery today that the shimmy solution offered in RR 38 seems to have done my bike plenty of good. For those that haven't seen it, it's like so: a Mr. David Porter wrote a letter describing a bike with low speed shimmy, the kind that occurs around 15 mph while riding no hands and results in reasonably violent steering oscillations. It's categorically different from the conventional-wisdom shimmy that occurs at higher speeds, often while coasting down hills; for example, pedaling makes it worse.

I had noticed that if I leaned way back while riding no hands, rather than leaning forward, it had a calming effect on the shimmy, but it was present much of the time on my Fuji commuter bike.

The letter describes the discovery that shimmy vanishes in extreme cold temperature, and that a bike with a headset with too little friction is more prone to shimmy than a bike with a higher-friction headset. My bike had no play in the headset, so I wouldn't say it was too loose; but I tightened it up about 1/16th of a turn, and even though there is no discernible increase in steering friction, I could not initiate the shimmy. Time will tell if it keeps working, but all indications are good.

My thanks to David Porter for bringing this solution to my attention. The cycling world should know about this!

James Black

Los Angeles, CA

Applauding that iconoclasmism

I need to register how offended I am by the catalog cover picture of a helmetless rider. I realize the literature on using helmets at higher speeds is ambiguous, and there's no reason to revisit it here. Suffice it to say that we will likely never know, because there's not the financial incentive to settle the question. But it used to be said that airbags might cause more harm than good. Well-funded successive studies disproved that rather convincingly. Would you want your sixteen year old child driving a car without airbags? Would you want your younger child riding a bike without a helmet? No you wouldn't, as we learn on p. 64. And, on p.25, you take pains to tell us that you had hoped the rider in that picture would wear a helmet. Well, your cover picture, which is far the most romanticized of the pictures, is modeling the kind of behavior that children will embrace the moment they begin to rebel and are out of sight of parents. And then you have the temerity to lecture cyclists about good parenting (p. 103)!

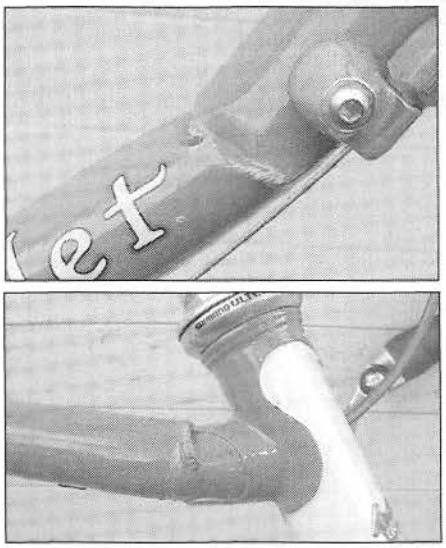
I applaud your iconoclasm and all the extraordinary good you have done for our beloved sport. But you might as well dangle a cigarette from the guy's lips. You're selling image--the very thing you otherwise criticize about the industry. This is just plain wrong.

—Ken Sacks

There's no lecture on parenting in our catalogue, just a review of a good parenting book, and an excerpt. The rider on page 25 was offered a helmet, but declined, and the caption was attempted humor. Helmets have saved lives, but there's more to the story than that. The cigarette comment was unearned. Pictures of anything can influence anybody, but you can't rely on or blame images of a helmetless rider for protecting or endangering children. I bet you don't write to the networks or the bigger mags when they show helmetless riders, or old photos of Eddy Merckx.

When you say image is what we're selling, I find it hard to agree. If you see image in everything, then there's no debating that, I guess, but our plan is to sell bike things, and now and then a book & bar of soap. We try to do this in a respectable way, but every once in a while somebody takes offense. —Grant

The bike was facing forward on a roof rack. Both wheels in the tray, and the down tube was being held by one of those down-tube holders. The arms that swing up and grab the down tube.



Top and above: Crunched down tube and top tube. This frame is easily repairable. The lug isn't damaged, and even if it were—which, let me reiterate, it wasn't—but if it were, *it* could be fixed or replaced.

The Dark Secret of Roof Racks

They hold your bike securely and out of sight, so you don't worry about it. So you don't even think about it. So you forget it's even there.

The number of bikes wrecked by roof-mounted racks numbers in the thousands by now, and in a century it will number in the millions. The phenomenon is the well-known "out of sight, out of mind" one that we're all at least slightly familiar with.

On the 60cm Rambouillet above, the collision changed the head tube angle from 73 degrees to 57.9 degrees. The fork rake remained the same 4.25mm, and the trail (which is calculated with the head tube angle, fork rake, and wheel radius) went from about 60mm to, hold onto your hat, 210mm.

OK, but how did it affect the *ride*?

When you slacken the head tube and don't change anything else, trail increases, and that's what happened. Now, trail theory says that too much trail makes a bike hard to control at slow speed, and that was certainly the case here. It was ridable, and you could even go around corners on it, and things like that. But slight leans and minor turns of the front wheel (at super low speeds) made it hard to control. I couldn't ride it no-hands, so no showing off on this bike.

Fixable?

Yes, and that's one of the few dozen-or-so neat things about lugged steel frames.

On the other hand, to fix it would cost about $260 in labor and materials (at our "we feel sorry for you and will not profit on this" price) plus a paint job ($220, same deal), so that's $480, plus another $60 or so for two-way freight, and that doesn't include reassembly. Still, the total is at worst less than half the cost of a new frame, and in the bargain you get to pick any old paint color.

Back to this bike. How much damage was done?

The frame and fork and handlebars hit the 'rage, and we saw slight evidence that they'd been scraped some. Most of us here would continue to ride them, but Nitto's Mr. Yoshikawa would not like that, and we'd not recommend it. Aluminum, once it gets nicked or scratched or buckled or dinged even a little, should probably be replaced. So we'll recommend that to this fellow.

So what's this bike's fate? Repair? Replace?

Replace. Insurance will cover a new frame, or most of it. Or maybe the owner's dad will, since dad was driving at the time. Then we'll have it repaired ourselves, made good as new, and will use it as a demo bike, or sell it as a fixed one. It'll take a while, because it's not high priority and we already have a bottleneck in paint, but this frame will be back on the road eventually.

E-less Raven: Verse 3 results & verse 4 challenge

If you're a long-time reader perhaps you're sick of this, and if you're new to us, here's the deal: We have an ongoing challenge/contest to rewrite verses of Edgar Allen Poe's The Raven, without using the letter "e." Such writing (ruling out a particular letter) is called lipomatic writing, and if you like words and writing in general, lipomatic writing can be fun, and harms nobody. Therefore, it may keep going until we have the whole blame thing. This issue's challenge is verse four. We're going in order.

The only allowed "e" is in the name "Lenore." That is the woman's name, after all.

Entries by mail by March 24 to \ RBW/NOE • Box 5289 • Walnut Creek, CA 94596. By Fax: 925 933 7305.

Somebody outside of Rivendell is the judge, so you can't get mad at us if you think your entry was better than the one that won. The winner gets a $250 Gift certificate, and the next best nine will get Gift Certificates ranging from $25 to 100. The top ten entries will be published in the next issue. Other than Lenore," any e's disqualifies you. Even one. Don't blow it with a "the."

To the right here is the third verse of The Raven as written by Poe, and below it, the winner and runner-ups. —G

And the silken, sad, uncertain rustling of each purple curtain
Thrilled me - filled me with fantastic terrors never felt before;
So that now, to still the beating of my heart, I stood repeating
`"Tis some visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door -
Some late visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door; -
This it is, and nothing more,'

2nd runner-up: Michael Ziser

At a sad and fatal flirting of my satin window curtain
I thought—I wrought a vision of so calamitous a horror
That now, to still my sighing, I stood limply amplifying,
"'Tis a body wants admitting at my parlor door,—
"Just a body wants admitting at my parlor door;—
Naught but this, that rapping's for."

1st runner-up: Stephen Greenwood

And a forlorn, fitful roil of my silky drapings royal
Did chill,—did fill my mind with fanciful horrors mortal;
So that now, to calm my squirming blood I stood affirming,
"'Tis a visitor wishing admission through my portal,—
Good company, possibly, but punctuality in shortfall;
That it is, and that is all."

The Winner: Sue Peterson

Soft, silky, sad my curtains roll
A panic slips in, swamps my soul
'Til in my marrow pounds a thrum that drowns my words, till this I hum:
"A visitor," I chant, "that's all,"
"A bud, a pal, a casual call."
"That's it," I blurt. That's all, that's all.

Here's the fourth verse. Have at it and good luck, folks. Same deal—nobody employed by Rivendell will judge, so don't get mad at us if you don't win.

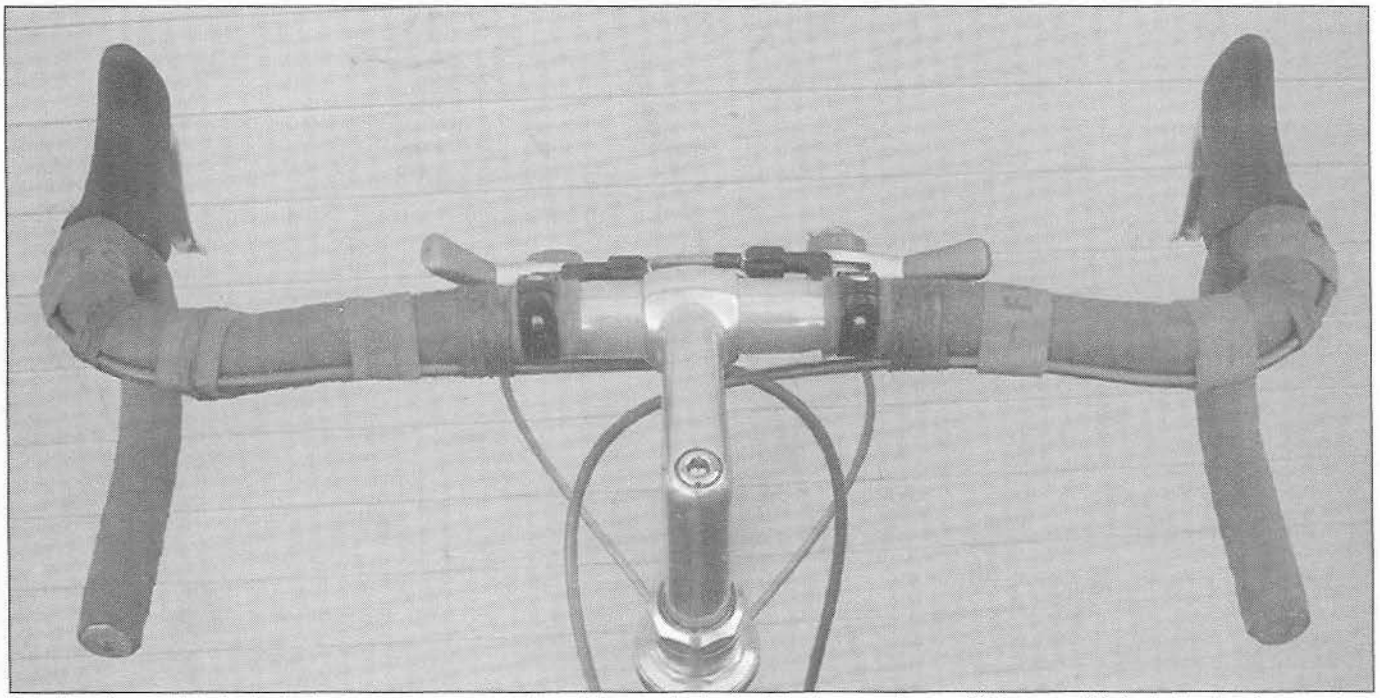
Mail or fax your entries, along with the real verse. The addresses are near the top of this page, up there.

Presently my soul grew stronger; hesitating then no longer,
'Sir,' said I, 'or Madam, truly your forgiveness I implore;
But the fact is I was napping, and so gently you came rapping,
And so faintly you came tapping, tapping at my chamber door,
That I scarce was sure I heard you' - here I opened wide the door;-
Darkness there, and nothing more.

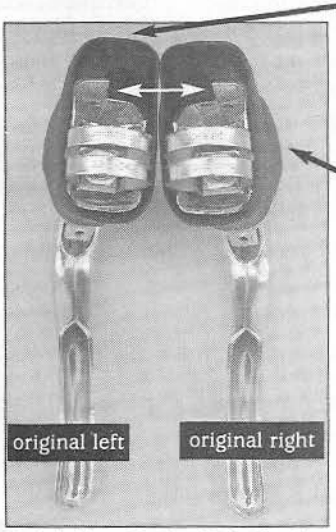
The Good, External & Backwards way to wrap brake cables on a drop bar

Non-STI Shimano and Tektro brake levers come in lefts & rights, and are designed to have the brake cables come out on the inside of the bar, then travel in front of it. It works fine, but there are benefits and no drawbacks to doing it backwards. And while we're at it, there are additional benefits to keeping the cables outside the tape.

We are *not* taking a hard line on doing it this way. The other way works fine, of course. But the wrapping and cabling of your handlebar is one area where there's plenty of room for creativity, and if you've got more than one bike, or another bike coming up, this is a perfectly functional way to do it. I like it backwards & out in the open.—G

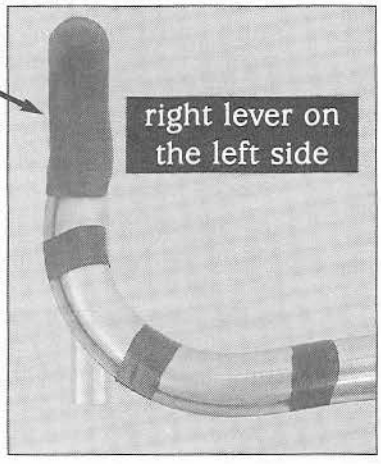


Benefits of reversing the brake levers so you can put the cables on the back of the bar, as shown: (1) Ever so slightly better hand support when your hands are just behind the brake lever. (2) Avoids slight irritation that sometimes comes when the cables are mounted too high on the front of the bar. It can't happen back here. Also, while we're at it, you can play around with the highness and lowness of the housing. Higher will flatten out the top of the bar, and some people like that. There's nothing not to like about it, so long as it's behind the bar. Benefits of keeping the cables on the outside of the tape: (1) You can change shifter styles without unwrapping the whole dang handlebar. (2) It adds interesting texture and it gives the bar a swarthy, *nuthin'-to-hide* look that unsettles neat-nics.

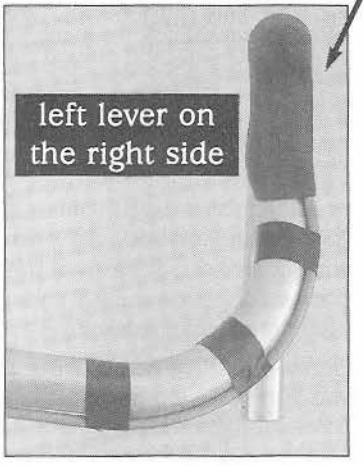


Left (left) and right (right) brake levers, with white arrows showing the cable-entry area that makes them so. Reverse them.

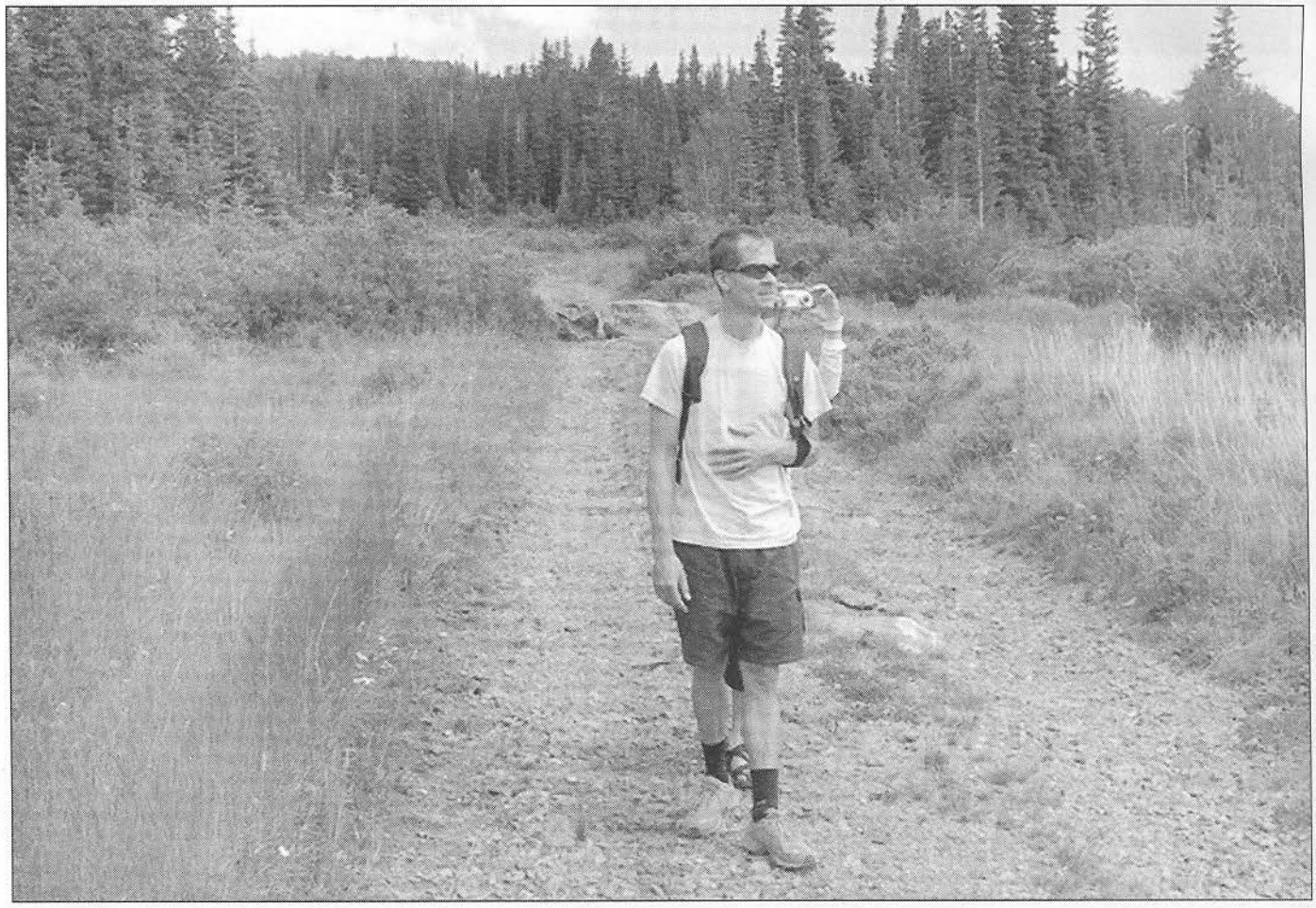
You can achieve the same functional result with a neater look...



Here's the normal way to wrap backwards. Tape the cables to the bare bar with electrical tape here and there, then wrap the bar tape over the brake housing. You still get the benefits, and the cables are hidden 'neath the tape. Nobody will even notice you've reversed the levers and backwards-routed the cables. This doesn't work with interruptor brake levers, though.



(note: please appreciate the superb use of arrows)



Andy Hampsten Interview

How old are you? I'm fifty-two.

I'm forty-four.

How tall are you, and how much do you weigh, and how does that compare to your racing weight? I'm 5' 10" and weigh 185, which is 9 pounds more than what I raced at.

I'm 5'9" and I weigh 145—about 10 more than emaciated race weight. My arm warmers stay on now though, so that's a bonus.

It sounds like you've been lifting dumbbells. What's your normal daily life like?

I get up and no longer think about what training regime I need to do that day. Breakfast is first on my mind now. Then how much work do I have to do before I am free to ride, snowboard, ski, or work in the yard. My 10 year old Emma comes home from school and we play hard, unless of course I rode more than worked.

Here's what I've heard: After Andy retired from racing, he was sort of a hero to the Italians for his snowy ride over the Gavia Pass, the ride that won him the Tour of Italy in 1987. And he liked Italy, too, so he retired there and became a winemaker. End of story. How accurate and how thorough is that?

It's the myth I try to keep going. I did stay in Italy after I was done racing in '96. I restored a farmhouse (I cleaned bricks and asked dumb questions os the competent brothers who built it) and started hobby farming with olives and grapes. I'm good at tending the plants, OK at making wine, pretty good at consuming and giving it away. Now that I don't live here much I need to sell my house and land and find an apartment in town. That might put me in the bad position of drinking store bought wine for the years before I can get back here and stay long enough to make my own.

4. When did you decide to become a winemaker and an olive oil maker, and what led to that?

I just picked up the reins of the previous owner with the wine and olives. I had no interest in agriculture before moving here, just gardening. Wine is fun if you have the time to baby sit the vines all spring and summer, then play house taking care of the wine until prime drinking time—that's in March. Olive oil takes a lot of time to prune the trees in winter and all day for weeks, and harvest is in November. And there is nowhere I prefer to be than in trees in Tuscany in November. So one liquid is a lot of work to harvest and needs to be consumed in a year or two, the other is a lot of work all year and

might need to wait a long time before being put to use. It's a nice pairing.

5. How did you learn all that stuff?

Craft is something that I can do. I asked the old timers, read some basic books, talked to some of the best winemakers on earth. Now I listen to my taste buds. Does this wine taste like an earthy place I like? Is it store bought? Is it therefore trying to be something that it wasn't growing on vines? How much did somebody monkey with it?

6. I don't know anything about wine, but tell me: What makes one wine good and another bad?

Bull. I bet you got it bad for the really nice wines. Most do, a nice red wine has all the irresistible flavors of desirable flesh. Anything you like is good. A lot of wines are treated like beverages both in the vineyard, where somebody might irrigate and fertilize the fruit, and in the cellar. Wine is one of the only ways of conserving fresh fruit without heating it or drying or really changing it too much. It happens on its own, so it is divine in its nature, but will also go to vinegar after it ferments, unless you intervene. I like wines made from great fruit and a minimum of interference from the wine maker.

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7. Do you know who Robert Parker is?

Big time wine critic. Probably bigger than he might like to be. Wine makers often make fools of themselves trying to make wines he likes, so they sell more of it. He definitely knows what he likes.

8. Do you know what "making wine by the numbers" is?

Lord have mercy I can only imagine.

9. What about ageing wine in oak barrels, versus ageing it in stainless steel vats with chunks of oak floating around in it? Any opinion there?

I used an old barrel once— in 2000, with my sangiovese, mamma mia what a year! I liked it. After eight months it no longer had much tannin left in it. Sangiovese *has* a lot of tannin in it, so why cut down oaks and leach that tannin into red wine? And if that what companies want to do then why not use chips instead of thousand-dollar oak barrels?

I don't know if I've ever had a wine made with chips, but I know I've had a lot of wines that didn't need to sit in barrels. Word is, in the better cellars is in barrels. In Italy's best Brunello winery, Soldera, they say barrels are for beverages. Stainless steel fermentation techniques, and many new techniques that started at UC Davis have helped the wine world. All that newness needs to be put into context of the 4000 year history of wine making.

10. OK. Do you have to work?

Probably. I have a daughter, Emma, and bikes to support.

11. Sometimes people who answer "probably," don't have to work. OK, talk about making olive oil.

It takes great fruit and a lot of care in picking it. Olive trees are generous, and if you prune them firmly and harvest them gently you will have great oil, and I mean straight from the olive mill over garlic rubbed bruschetta and boiled savoy cabbage The-Best-Food-You've-Had-In-Your-Mouth good. Then you eat it in the next month. Don't store it, flavor it, filter it or hoard it. When I don't produce my own I am happy to pay good money for it because it saves me a month of work. It needs to be picked by hand, because machines can bruise the fruit, and you are eating oil of fresh fruit. It's cheap medicine and can cure most of our diet worries. Stop using butter and try olive oil—I had bread with oil, salt and tomatoes for breakfast. It is great for baking and all the calories in it are loaded with flavor!

12. The most expensive olive oils come from Italy. Why is that?

Italians love great oil, they consume more oil than they produce, they're reluctant to let the best oils go, so it costs a lot. They also started the mafia, so a few tricks are available to them.

12.5. How do you judge olive oil?

Try to find an oil in a green/golden color, never too yellow, and one that's produced on site at a small producer. It can be milled off the farm, that's a complicated process, but it should be bottled where it is grown. If a family's name is on the label that's usually a good sign.

Well, if I wanted to get some of your favorite olive oil, or any of our readers wanted some—just to see what Andy Hampsten thinks is good, where can we get it? What brand is it?

Well, Grant, actually—believe it or not, I have plenty of it stacked in 5-liter cans in my house in Colorado.

Five liter cans is the smallest? What about a quart?

No, just the 5-liter tins, but it's good oil, and if you like olive oil, this is as good as it gets. Five liters costs $125, plus $10 for shipping, to anywhere in the states. If anybody want some, they should write to me at andy@cinghiale.com.

Would you autograph the tins, at that price?

Sure. If they ask.

Enough on the oil and wine. You also run bike tours in Italy, don't you?

Yes, and the company is Cinghiale Cycling Tours. My sister in law Julia keeps the office clicking along, so it is pretty smooth. They are in Tuscany and now there is a trip in the Dolomites in northern Italy. I like keeping in areas I know. I get fun folks who like to ride, probably ride 3000 to 5000 miles a year, and like to hang with with other people who like good food and good riding. There are a lot of guides so we can go out with maps in our pockets and never use them. All rides

get hilly here so the guides tag along with clients and tell them about the sights we see and where to turn or stop for a spring or snack. Some trips stay at one hotel the whole time so we can do cooking lessons and see my home region intimately. Other trips start in my village and do a long day to another area for 4 days or so.

What's "Cinghiale"?

It means wild pig. They run around eating what they want whenever they want. Somewhere there's an analogy there but outside of Castagneto Carducci and maybe Arkansas it is a little hard selling the wild pig theme to smart people.

14. I like wild pigs. On our third annual Rivendell Overnight this year, we're trying to get one to eat. They're tearing up the mountain, so the state lets pigtrappers trap them. They used to feed them to the homeless in Oakland, but then the FDA said the meat wasn't inspected, so they couldn't do it anymore. We're trying to get the meat for the weekend. That's my deal with wild pigs. Anyway, one of our employees, Keven Mowen, is a guide for you. Is he any good?

Too good, now that he is engaged people are trying to adopt him after the trips. He is calm, super organized, pleasant in a tight situation and loves to eat and ride his way around Italy.

15. He's fluent in Italian. You must be pretty good in it by now, too. Did you learn it as a racer, or after racing, just by living there?

My grammar is lazy but I can yak all day. It really got going when I started racing in Italy. I stayed with a family, and I'd speak to them, and to racers.

16. What are the priorities in your life, right now?

I keep trying to make the world a bit better than how I found it. Not counting all those transatlantic flights.

17. How do you want your life to be in 20 years?

Kid or kids grown up and maybe a home cooked meal waiting for me when I come in from my ride or hanging out at OMC (Old Man Corner).

18. You have at least one child. Does she know much about your racing career?

She loves riding, and is way too smart to want to race. We often go down to the bike path along the creek and see what we can see. Hills aren't her favorite so I help her when she is tired. She looked at a magazine with photos of me racing and said, "Dad, no offense, but you look so stressed when you raced." She loves stories about my youth, just not about racing. But now her school friends point out something I did in my racing days and I get scolded for not telling her that story.

19. Keven says that now and then you ride in normal clothes. I really want to believe that you never wear lycra anymore, but somehow I can't imagine a clean break after a career in it. But he says you ride in normal clothes a lot. How much is he exaggerating?

Not that much. I ride a lot in regular shorts & undies, a comfy shirt and usually cleated mtn bike shoes if it is a long ride. I like being able to walk around cafes or sights easily. If I am going out for only a ride I still wear cycling shorts and jersey.

Most of it is plastic and I bit** about the feel and smell. I am looking at producing wool clothes, but I don't have anything solid. It is nice to ride in regular clothes, but I like the pockets on jerseys.

Andy and a white-shirted accomplish look at grapes, presumably on Andy's lavish spread in Tuscany.

Sitting down for a snack without a wet chamois (Swamp ass as my girlfriend calls it) is nice. Cotton and wool shirts do not have that odor of bacteria gone amok in polyester funk, which makes me and any rider instantly cooler. I don't have a bag to substitute my jersey pockets for food, phone, and stuff. The specialty cycling clothes are fun for people who like to be a part of a club, or even throw together a jersey for a special trip. Here in Italy riders always have shorts and even gloves and socks to match their jerseys. That is fun. However I am more into not racing or looking like a racer.

20.3. Are you at all concerned about maintaining a racing image?

No, I am not concerned about looking like a racer, my cyclometer tells no lies. Yes, I wear cycling clothes for some rides, but I haven't worn a one piece lycra suit for 10 years. I go to cafes in Boulder and Italy and talk to friends waiting for a ride to start. So I am a poser, but hanging out in bad smelling plastic cycling clothes is getting me down. I have been riding in some nice MUSA clothes, the shorts are comfortable and a long sleeve or short sleeve button up shirt is really nice. The seersucker long sleeve is cool and keeps me warm on evening rides off of my local mountain loops. A bonus feature is I am able to button up the collar one handed on the gravel descent of Gold Hill road.

20.4 Were you the last Giro winner (1988) to wear wool?

Yes, I was the last. And now I lust after well made wool clothes. Cycling jerseys are fun and I am used to using the pockets for my stuff. I am more attracted to soft and sturdy wool garments, and am looking for designs to incorporate as riding clothes. I like the clothes racers wore before WWII on and off the bike. If made with today's high quality wool fabric they could be some really nice clothes.

20.5. What kind of bikes do you ride these days, and what kind of riding do you like most? Also, what is your ideal ride, and how are your bikes different from the bikes you raced on, and from current modern racing bikes?

I ride my '82 Moots mtn bike every day as my town bike. It keeps me fit and sane getting around town. I ride on roads about 3-4 times in a good week, and I use my Hampsten ti Strada Bianca model breakaway bike for 80 percent of those rides. I select my bikes by tires. The Strada Bianca has Ruffy Tuffys so I can do gravel roads in the mountains or flats near my house. I love finding new roads to ride on. I will soon upsize these tires to the bike's limit so I can grow my wealth of terrain to conquer. How about the "32" Paselas Grant—will those fit my bike if the long reach Shimano calipers are about 3mm from their maximum reach?

Yes, as long as the center of the brake hole in the fork crown is less than 11mm from the underside of the crown. Usually, especially on carbon forks, they put the hole too high, and the air space you need is filled up with carbon fiber. I don't know what fork you have, but that's the rule—no more than 11mm from the center of the hole to the underside of the crown. It's something to look at, anyway.

20.9 Anyway, what kind of riding do you like most?

I like to ride up a canyon in Boulder and link some favorite roads with new trails to get across terrain, or just give in to the flat terrain and ride hiking trails in open space. That's when I'm home here in Colorado. My favorite riding of all is in Tuscany, and a few months ago I had my best day ever, at the Eroica, a long on-road and off-road rally in Chianti.

My ride was 135 kilometers of roads with half on gravel, permanent roads signs marking the way, I started at too late for the official departure time because I had to take care of my Cinghiale Tour clients. But I caught Keven and a handful of clients by noon. The rest stops served water, wine, bread with cheese, or with olive oil, or with salt and wine, the best ribollita soup possible, panforte. I am looking for a bike from a big tire era to do the full 200 k distance on in 2 years.

My favorite bikes now are pretty much 70s-style racing bikes with good tire clearance. I've set an old Eddy Merckx with fenders and a fixed gear. I love fenders but in Colorado there are not many days I'll need to go out in the rain. My town bike has fenders and a rear rack on it, that helps keep me out of my car and therefore out of doors.

I used to do light touring before I got serious about racing. Now I want to ride on dirt roads with just a light bag or two.

21. When tour clients come to Italy to ride, do they have preconceived notions about you? Are they nervous? Do they wear pink jerseys in homage to your Giro win? Do they try to race you?

Naw, I have them pretty mellowed out by the time we ride, or I pour more wine for them at night. There are often retro jersey themes going on, with a great wool jersey outbreak on my last trip.

22. What one question do you hope I don't ask? I won't ask it, but I'd like to know if there is a question like that. I'm thinking it might be something about drugs in cycling, asking you to speculate or comment on that topic. Which I won't do. Is that it, or is it something else?

I dislike talking about crashes, because its bad karma, and I dislike drugs in sports. Drug use is pandemic in pro cycling. I was a pro for 12 years, and can testify that there's no need to take drugs to race, even at the Tour de France, which at 25 days long the first year I did it, was three to four days longer than it was this year. Racers use drugs so they can go faster and win more, and make more money. But even in a race as strenuous as the Tour, it isn't necessary.

23. How many bikes would you use during a year?

During my racing years I would have 4 to 10 bikes a year, the high end being when Eddy Merckx was making bikes for us. Ahhh, that was nice. Nobody can fit a rider to a bike like Eddy.

24. Of the bikes you rode, did you have a favorite? And do you still have it? Care to talk about it?

My '90 Merckx made from 753 tubing, that I destroyed in a one man crash in England on it's first race. And of course my '88 Huffy made by John Slawta at Landshark that I bought just before going to the Giro d'Italia. It won the race for me coming down a snowy Gavia pass.

25. I think *you* won the race, but it sounds like a good bike. You know, I've often thought that professional racing would be more interesting if each rider had to use the same bike for everything. And one bike for the entire Tour. Sort of an old style approach, and sort of the same approach John McEnroe espouses for tennis. What do you think about that? I know it'll never happen, but if it could happen, if there was anonymous voting and you had the tie-breaker, would you vote for that?

For smaller races it would be nice. Add on aero bars on a road bike make for a great time trialing position. But some innovations come from weird bikes, so change can be good.

25.5. OK, but what about the idea that in a race, all competitors should have access to the same technology? In the Olympics and in pro races, or at least in the big tours. The

innovations could still happen—in smaller races, amateur races, wind tunnels or wherever—but shouldn't a pro race be a race of people and not gear?

I don't think the winners of pro races have any equipment advantage that anyone else with money can't buy. They have light bikes with crazy responsive equipment, carbon wheels with hand made tires as about as unfair fast as it gets. Its expensive but all pro teams have it, and so do the sport racers with lots of funds.

Andy and his daughter, Emma Rose, on the tandem.

In time trials there is some specialized wind tunnel testing, that is quite expensive. It gives riders feedback on how to sit on a bike, but there is a good copy cat effect for everyone else.

26. Well, if I could push the "everybody races the same bike" button and not have it traced back to me, I would. Anyway, what changes in cycling would you like to see?

I like how many people ride bikes in America now. It is mainstream and that is good. I think more people will start riding on quieter roads including my favorite dirt roads as they mature as riders, and they will encourage other riders to join them. I see a lot of riders driving to good riding places with their bikes and I hope it is a short step for them to start riding nice routes to get to a fun place to ride. Most new riders in our country are introduced to road riding through watching bike racing. That's great, and they will all adapt to their own style of riding over the next phases in their riding careers.

27. Do you compete anymore? Local fun races or anything?

No more racing. I did some cyclocross last year, and it's fun, but it's too hard on my body and I no longer want to subject my body to such extreme efforts.

28. OK then. Now when you go out on a normal ride, are you often recognized? And do unknown riders try to beat you up the hill? What's it like to be you and to go for a ride where you might run into just about anybody?

It's all pretty chill. In Italy people are pretty jaded so they don't believe I would be cruising through their village. Some people in Boulder recognize me after rides, but on the bike I am the village idiot who waves to most everybody on the road who rides, so a lot of riders look away in cool embarrassment. If I am spotted and it looks like I am going to be cornered by someone in the "remember me? I cheered for you on Alpe d'Huez on turn 5" club I use a glazed stare and a peace wave with a clear "Love to da bikas!!" salute and ride on by.

30. Back to the Giro win ride. Describe your bike for the Gavia Pass stage. You used one STI shifter and one down tube shifter? And you had Pino skewers? That's what I seem to remember.

I liked doing my mountain season races with a light bike. My mechanics were great so I couldn't put on really goofy parts. The left shift lever on the down tube saved weight and was fun. I had Pino skewers on my light wheels and even had a set of his wheels, but never raced them.

My bike that day was standard '88 Shimano Dura Ace, 32 spoked wheels with those superb Vittoria tubular tires. A soigneur was at 3k to the top with hot, sweet tea for every rider. Our manager was 1k from the top with a mussette bag filled by each rider with winter clothes bought that morning by the team. There were Goretex ski gloves, wool hats, balaclavas, rain jackets, thermal jerseys, leg warmers, shoe covers, whatever the rider wanted for the 25k descent into Bormio, was waiting for them at the top. Other teams only had a plastic rain cape and cotton hat for their riders. We knew the 25k descent to Bormio was the greatest difficulty; it descended towards the north and into the storm's path.

From the summit I was isolated on a slushy road in a snow storm. I kept pedaling in my 53-14 to keep my legs and gears from seizing and braked most of the first half to keep the snow from icing my brake pads. At 10k to Bormio the snow changed to sleet, at 7k to go Eric Brukink passed me and brought me back to racing reality. I couldn't get on his wheel but chasing him kept me in touch with getting my too-cold carcass to a warm place. Fortunately I crossed the finish line before mono-focusing on getting my body warm again.

30.5. I like the wool hat part. What was your high gear on that stage? And what sort of a high do you like now, for the riding you do? Have 11t cogs made you go smaller in front?

I think I had a 39/ 25 or 27. Right now I prefer my 34-50 compact cranks, a 12-27 is what I run in the rear. I only raced with an 11 cog once, in 1984 at the Nevada City criterium. I used it to place 2nd. I don't think I could really have used an 11 with the horse power my legs had in my best days. Maybe in a time trial on a downhill, certainly in a team time trial.

31. Did you know Pino well?

I did know Pino pretty well. I saw him at races in the Midwest in the 70s throwing his wheels into the air and letting them bounce to show how strong they were. I talked to him a lot in Italy and tried a few of his products. He was a fantastic futurist with his machining. He made a ti bike in the 70s, out of hollowed out solid titanium stock. He made the hubs and many of the parts on Eddy's hour bike.

32. Yes, he was a smart guy, but had a hard time bridging the gap between "good idea, nice prototype" and "getting somebody to make it for him without driving them crazy."

That's how I saw him, anyway. He'd stand too close and steamroll right over you with his enthusiasm and insistence and those glaring big eyeballs, but I liked him a lot, and spent hours and hours talking with him.

Ok now—your brother Steve and you have Hampsten Cycles. How did that come about, and what would you like to say about it?

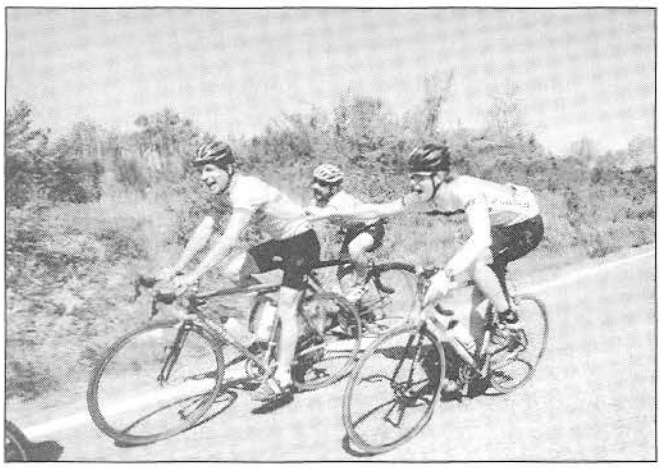
We started it when he was making bikes for the Match factory. A friend of mine was importing a few bikes from Toyo, your Japanese supplier, to his tiny bike shop in Switzerland, and I let him use my name. Steve does a great job working with clients and I like designing bikes and fitting riders. Steve does 95% of the work and we both get a lot of satisfaction out of helping riders get out on great fitting bikes.

32.3. What kind of bikes are they? Racing style, or touring?

We organize the models by how they handle/where the rider wants to ride, which is all about the rider's body and what tires he/she wants to be on. Our most popular model is the Strada Bianca, our dirt road bike. Ti seems to be most people's favorite, but Steve would rather the world ride lugged steel bikes. We are both happy to get people out riding on a well-fitting machine.

A lot of the bikes are racing bikes with a better fitting front end. Most racing bikes are too low and long where the handlebars end up. Our clients tend to not be in their 20s with all day to ride, so we look to make their position as comfortable as possible, probably talk them up a tire size or two, and leave some budget for goodies like a great seat, nice bars and wrap, and a refreshable tire budget.

We also have a touring line called Tournesol. They are a major nod to the stunning mid 20th century bikes out of France and England. We love the 650b wheels, integrated fenders, racks, lighting systems, and "Lets go now" feel of comfy bikes. Rene Herse, Rivendell, and Alex Singer are influence here. Seeing the bikes on display at the Eroica ride convinces me Hampco Industries should continue to look back at cycling's past for our new models. I saw a Bianchi from the 30s with an integrated headset, I love Italians for their willingness to make mistakes.



Andy, left, and a couple of riders goofing off on one of his trips.

33. What do you not know much about that you'd like to know or learn about?

Malolatic fermentation, botany and metallurgy. I envy Scot Nicol (of Ibis Cycles) to an unhealthy degree.

33.3. We all want to know more about "malolatic fermentation" —like, what is it?

It's what makes wine yummy. I once had the sense to it in the traditional Tuscan method of adding a bucket of Colorino grapes to my already fermented must according to the advice of the farmer I bought my house from. Risky and delicious!

34. I want to apologize to all who read that response, Andy (and readers). Something got messed up. I think we have an idea of what "malolactic fermentation" is, though, and we also know that you once bought a house from a farmer who gave you some risky advice, and the next thing you know, it turned out delicious. I goofed somewhere along the way, but the result, in a way, is a nice mosaic of sounds and rhythm that I can't bring myself to straighten out. How did you start riding?

I was bored and looking for air on my Stingray. Some good riders taught me to hang on to their wheels when I got a ten-speed, so I could make it home on long rides.

35. What was your first win?

Dakota Territories 25 mile time trial championships, 1978. Or an informal training race in England in 77 when I was 15. A long road race with senior riders. It finished on a hill and happened to be hot. A. Hampsten 1st, Stephen Hampsten 2nd.

35.3. How about your first race? Do you remember that? I'm not talking about Stingrays around the block, but your first sanctioned race.

I rode a Raleigh Record in a criterium around campus in '75 or so. My brother Steve won, best friend Peter O'Kelly got second, and I came in third and last. I was hooked and came back the next year and squared off with my Fargo rival Hanz Sholtz. He's the Bike Friday guy now.

36. I never understood the name, but people sure do like the bikes. When were you most scared during a race?

It had to be in the '86 Tour, coming off the Tourmalet. Some poor slob blew a tire near me and I figured it must be Alexi Grewal, whom I like and thought in that instant I was going to miss as we headed into a hairpin next to a drop off. It was of course my front tire and I managed to pull over without losing any skin.

37. Have you ever wished you could flat or otherwise drop out because of a mechanical?

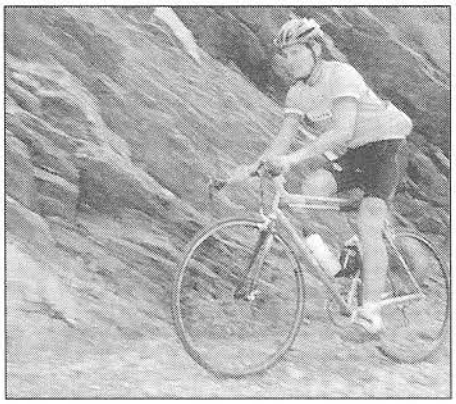
Thoughts like that usually preceded a flat or crash, and then a long chase back on, so no, I learned not to think that way.

38. When did you realize you were competitive near the top, and might someday win something big?

When I won a stage in my first pro race, stage 19 of the '85 Giro d'Italia.

39. What do you like to do besides ride your bike and make wine and olive oil?

Eat and drink with friends, make things out of wood or metal or tinker with a bike. Hang out with my daughter and girlfriend. I am jonesing to build a shed with my new impact



Andy riding a road bike off road in Italy. Now, about that olive oil: It costs $125 plus $10 shipping for a whopping 5 liters—about the going rate for premium olive oil, but you can't buy it by the pint. We got some, and it is delicious, of course. Hard to stop dunking bread in. Elsewhere in the interview Andy lists his contact information.

driver, for now I am happy chopping wood. I like to dream about snow boarding and bring my skill level in trees a few notches up from my current mantra of S*%#, F$#@, S%#, F%$*

40. If you hadn't become a racer, what would you have liked to do, maybe? (assuming you had the training for it, the education, the skills, and so on)

Being a wine and olive oil maker would be nice. Of course then there is a fine marketing line between being a farmer and marketing-driven corporate beverage magnate. But Thomas Brown is doing it in California, and very well. I probably would have nearly made it as a cross country skier, or runner. Forest Ranger was my dream job. Or pan-Italian bicycle delivery flunky, paid in food and wine in a car-less era.

41. What would you like to accomplish from this point on?

Keeping my body in good enough shape to be one of those old farts riding his bike around the countryside when I want to. I'd love to help the sport of cycling get back to a healthy state, but I don't know how to help it. I do see how getting people interested in riding their bikes in sane cultures helps them see the world in a new setting, so that's nice. I am a bit short on lofty goals now. I want to be with my family more than anything.

It's time you met Keven Mowen

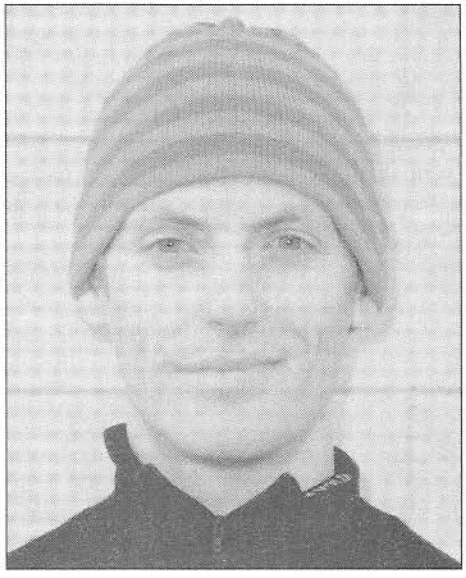
Keven is 29 and has been here on and off since late-2005. He's been full-time and regular only since October 2006.

Before that he was a nanny in San Francisco, and a bicycle guide in Italy for Andy Hampsten's Cinghale Bicycle Tours. Between his first day here and finally going full-time, he spent at least two separate full months over there; and yep, he's fluent in Italian.

The nanny part probably throws you off some, because there aren't many male nannies, and of the ones out there, few are Stanford graduates, as Keven is. Ultimately, the desire for other full-time work sent him our direction, and he's fitting in well here.

Mark is particularly glad to have him, since Keven has taken over the bike-painting coordination and the A. Homer Hilsen orders. The AHH orders are pretty straightforward, but always require lots of time and communication, and it was biting into Keven's build time. The paint coordinatingis a pain in the neck, and Brian is glad to be rid of it.

Since Keven is the new guy and is still in semi-eager beaver mode, I'm going to heap more jobs on him and see how he does. He knows, because he's been told, that working at Rivendell means manning the oars and rowing more than your weight around. It's not just a groovy bike company and we don't just sit around making mobiles out of lugs. That has, in fact, been a dormant project for some time, and it may be yet another Keven



task, but there's more to here than that. A nice lug mobile would be welcomed, though.

Keven rides a lot and races cyclo-cross. His favorite food is Indian, his favorite movie is *Little Miss Sunshine*, and his favorite book is *Siddhartha*. It is unknown whether his favorite book influenced his food choice or the other way around.

Keven can answer most questions and handle any order. He's johnny-on-the-spot when it comes to picking up the phone & we like that about him, too. All in all, there's nothing more you need to know about him than you've just been told, and we hope to have him around here for a long time.

Keven's Legolas

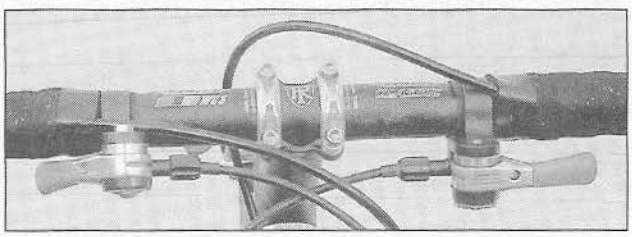
Keven has two e's, and the Legolas is our only bike made specifically for competition. It's for cyclo-cross, and among our small staff here we have three committed cyclo-cross racers—Robert, Mark, and Keven.

The Legolas project was Mark's idea. He's one of the others. Mark has two custom Rivendell cross bikes, and despite their being lugged steel, still manages to win many races on them. His bike gets plenty of compliments, and he thought we could sell 30 or 40 production cyclo-cross bikes, if only we made them, so we did.

"We" in this case is Colorado framebuilder Mark Nobilette, who by now has built maybe 55 or 60 frames for us, and will soon go to work on customs as well. He's certainly ready for them, and having a second builder will help our delivery a lot.

In any case, the Legolas will be made again next year, but our purpose here isn't to drum up pre-orders, but just to show you—in glorious black and white on newsprint— a quite nice bike we have that you probably haven't seen before.

Keven's is a 62, and as pictured above but minus the pump, weighs 19.2 pounds. With 700x35 Panaracer Cinder-X tires, and no hundred-dollar bills traded for ounces here and there. It's still a double, the cassette is steel, and everything it is really light for what it is, and sometimes, the lightest.



This is a slick way to set up shifters, especially if you have long thumbs and don't care that the left shifter moves the rear derailleur (opposite of normal). Keven says he's adapted to it, and if one can adapt to this, one can adapt to anything.

The bike alone would barely warrant a page, and not this many words, but in this case Keven has set it up interestingly with below-the-bar Shimano bar-end shifters mounted onto Paul's thumbies. It's a way to go we've never seen before, but Keven figured the below bar location for the shifters would prevent his sliding forward into nothingness, as might happen if he mounted them on top, and his hands were muddy, and he wasn't paying attention, hit a bump.

We think that's unlikely, but in any case he did it, it works great, and you could do it too, if you, like Keven, are willing to relearn to shift the right shifter to move the front derailleur, and the left the rear.

That's quite a commitment there, but Keven is happy with it. (***Flash:*** He just changed it.)

Robert Bailey Rides Again

In Reader 37 there was a letter written by Robert Bailey, telling the story of when he was driving a tractor to mow some grass. The tractor was hooked up to a grass-cutting attachment called a bushhog, and he slipped and the bushhog chewed up his legs below the knee, leading to their amputation. Among the many things that Robert is—father, husband, Scout troop leader, bicycle rider, and eternal optimist—he is now, also, a bilateral amputee—a person with two amputated legs.

Several of you wrote to Robert and sent good wishes and encouragement. I called Robert to ask about his condition, and the more he told me about his story, the more interesting it got, and the more questions I had...which lead to my asking whether he'd be OK writing about it. He said yes, it'll be therapeutic, and may help people be more understanding of and more comfortable with a topic that , I think it's fair to say, makes all of us squirm a bit, but Robert himself isn't a squirmer, and he'll make you comfortable right off.

The photos here and on the following pages are pretty graphic, but a story without such photographs not only wouldn't have the same impact, and it just wouldn't have made sense. Certainly, if Robert can live with it, you can learn about it and see some black-and-white pictures.

Amputation is one of those topics that, if you're concerned about turning off readers, you keep the photos to a minimum, and if you want to tell the story the best way you can, you just show them. There's no way around that, so hold on, here they come.—Grant

Yep, I Ride Again

by Robert Bailey

Thank you to everyone who took the time to write me. Each email touched me deeply.

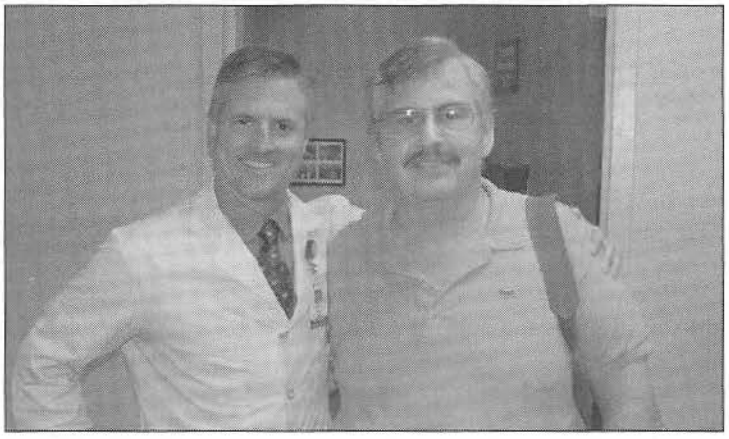
When I was injured I had so many people there to support me; family, friends, six churches, Scouters. They all came to visit and keep my spirits high. Now it is ten months later. The crisis is over and many of them have moved on to help others in need. People would tell me that I had lifted their spirits far more than they had lifted mine. That is a nice thing to hear and hard to accept.

I have come a long way, but the end is not in sight. I have purposely built a group to support me. I am involved with my church, Scouts and other amputees. I hope I can help them, but I also know how much they mean to me, and each of your e-mails makes you a member of my circle of friends.

I must stop and thank one person in particular. Dr. Phil Woodland is a minister at my church. He is retired and spends what time he chooses to in pastoral care. But every time I was in pain and filled with the blues, there he was praying with me. Since I left the hospital, he has made sure that help was always there for me.

An amputee does not have a disability, he has a physical challenge. One person in 200 will have something amputated in their lifetime — that's what I've read, at least. I pray that none of you have to wake up to what I did. Life has many types of bumps in the road. If I have learned anything, it is "That which does not kill you does make you stronger" is true. Grant asked me to write an update to my life since my last letter in late March. He asked that I write from the heart and not try to write Hemingway. I must admit that in Louisiana we would more likely to mimic William Faulkner, Walker Percy or Robert Penn Warren.

Wife Unyop, son James and daughter Elizabeth visit me in the Rehab Ward. Feb. 4, 06

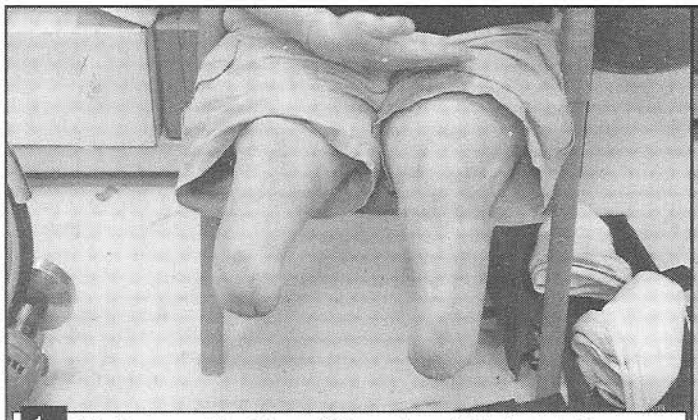


With Dr. Bradley Meeks, my primary care guy.

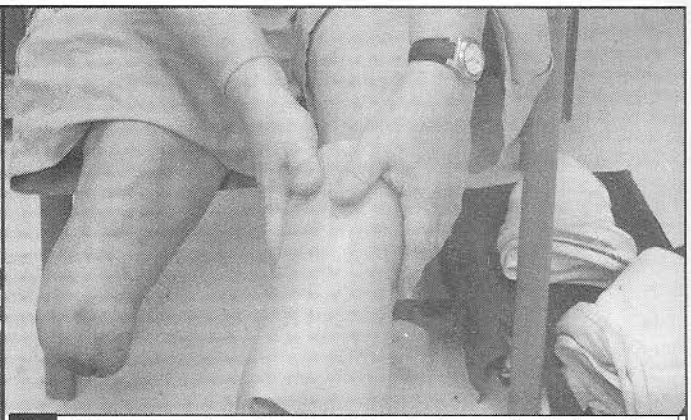
When I came home from the hospital on March 15, I was confined to a wheelchair for 5 weeks. My left leg was completely healed, but my right leg was a patchwork of stitches and staples. I soon learned how to clean and wrap it myself. Unyop and James (my wife and son) took great care of me. But I hated the chair. I found how to squeeze it into my bedroom. I couldn't reach anything. I had to transfer to my bed, or chair, or sofa, or car using a board. I took sponge bathes. If I had to go to the bathroom, I went from wheelchair to chair, to chair, to toilet.

I soon found out the fun in finding a solution to a problem. I used a "reacher" to grab something. A ramp at the door allowed me to get outside. Sometimes I used my hands and knees. Sometimes you have to ask for help. I had to learn when, but only when I had tried to do something for myself.

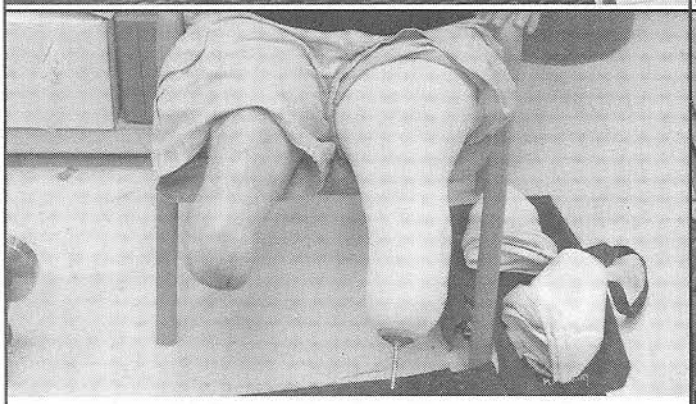
I have been a Scoutmaster for almost three years. I started going to meetings again as soon as I came home. The first thing I told my scouts was, "Don't forget your first aid—in 30 years you may need it." My brother-in-law and brother saved my life.The first was a Life Scout and the second is an Eagle Scout. Later I went to our Scout Camporee with my Troop. I saw a lot of my Scouter friends for the first time So many people wanted to push my chair across the fields it became a bother. That night it stormed and we evacuated to the Dining Hall used for Summer Camp. One young scout could not resist and decided to play "20 Questions" with me. I patiently answered



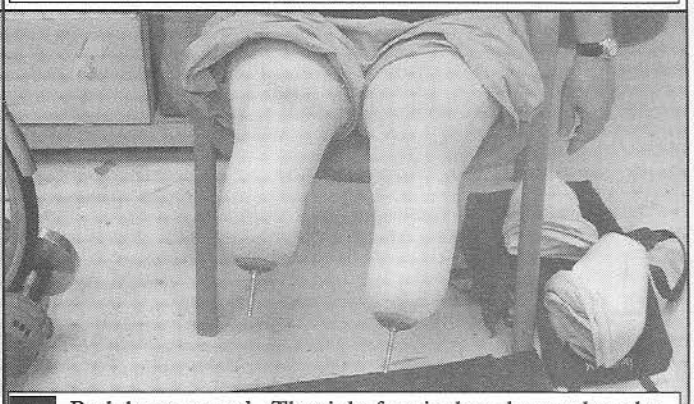
1. My bare, residual legs. This series of photograpshs was taken on Oct. 25, 2006.



2. First comes the gel sock. It is rolled onto the limb cushioning and protecting the skin.



3. Care must be taken to not trap any air in the sock. The pin at the end anchors the leg inside the socket.



4. Both legs covered. The right four inches shorter than the left. The cloth socks on the floor are added and removed during the day as the legs shrink and swell.

his questions about the accident. I told him that they had to tie my legs with tourniquets He didn't know what a tourniquet was so I suggested he go ask his scoutmaster, who told him.

Finally Dr. Diaz, my plastic surgeon, was happy with my wounds. While I lay on my stomach talking to the nurses, the student nurses practiced on me by removing my stitches and staples. Suddenly it was all over and there were over a hundred staples laying in the pan. No pain at all. A few weeks later I felt something on my leg. I carefully used my fingernails and pulled out a 3 inch thread of stitching.

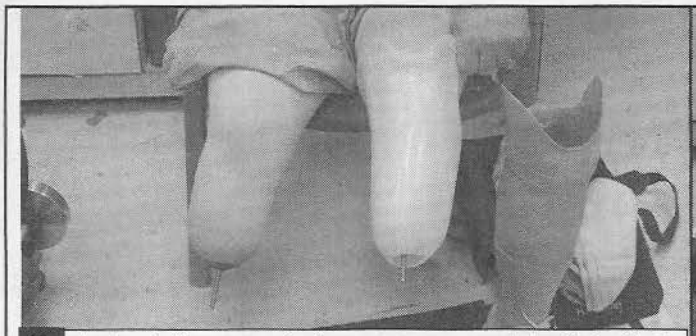
In late April, the folks at Hanger Prosthetics were ready for me. Jay Tew is my prosthetist. He's a master engineer, an artist, and in working with me so much, making my new legs and all, he has also become my good friend.

The first step in making new legs is taking a computer scan of each leg. Then a large, rotary cutter made foam copies of each leg. Next, test sockets were made by stretching a piece of clear plastic over the forms. Only then were my feet ordered from the factory.

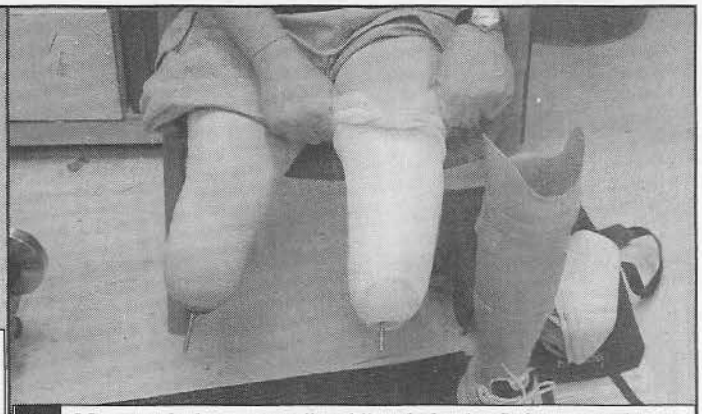
My feet are called Renegade flex feet and are made by Freedom Innovations. They were made according to Jay's measurements. They are made of carbon fiber. When your heel hits the ground, energy is taken, stored and fed back to the forefoot as you continue through the stride. That is a very crude description, but the flex foot allows me to walk more normally, instead of like Boris Karloff.

About a week later I went back to Hanger to try on the test sockets. Jay slid them on and could see how my leg fit inside. In a couple of places it looked too snug. Jay used a hot air gun to soften the plastic, then used his hands to push out the plastic to make a proper fit. From that test socket Jay made the final socket. I returned on May 12 to try on the result.

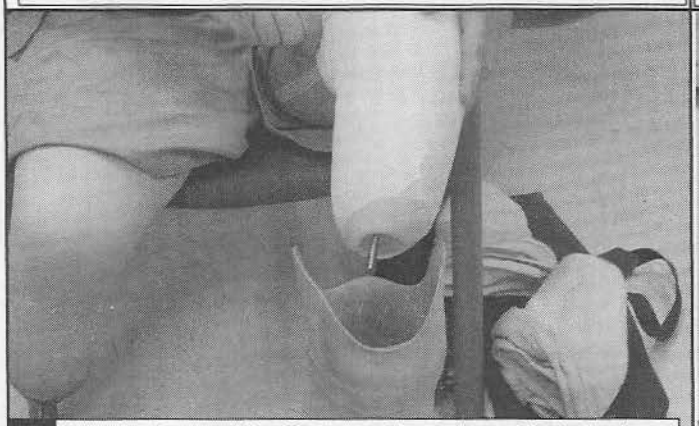
The sockets are made of Kevlar, fiberglass and carbon fiber. The foot is attached to the socket using titanium fittings and alloy posts. Jay has me put on a gel sock with a long pin on the bottom. A white plastic inner liner is pulled over the sock. If the liner is too loose I take up the space using a cloth sock. The pin goes through a hole at the bottom of the liner, which smells like model airplane glue, and socks. My leg then goes down into the socket. The pin, with a little nudging, goes down in a hole at the bottom of the socket and locks. I'm in.



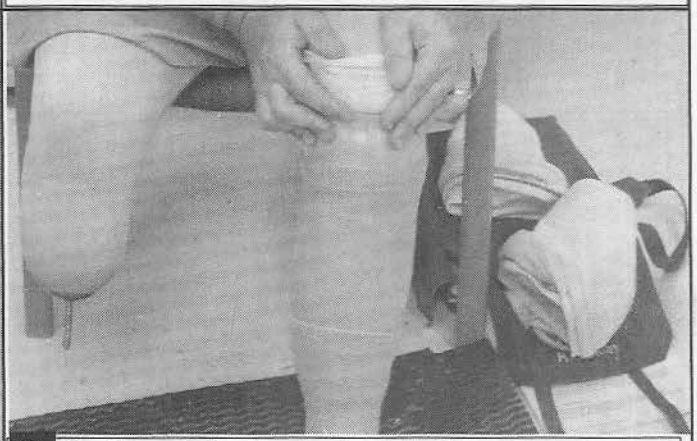
5. A plastic liner spreads the pressure around the limb. Cloth socks inside the liner keep the legs from bottoming out. The leg is supported by a shelf which runs in a circle inside the socket just under the kneecap. The topband of the fake skin sock marks the shelf.



6. Next, a cloth cover or "sock" to help the fit between the limb and orthotic.

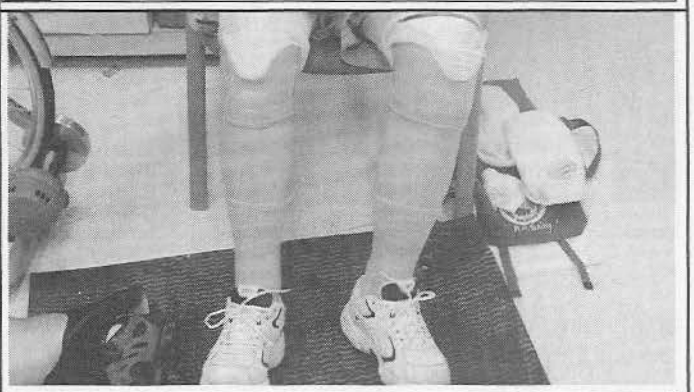


7. The leg is placed inside the socket. The socket is kevlar, carbon fiber and fiberglass, and is strong, but flexible.



8. It takes practice to make the pin lock properly.

9. You have to do it all over again on the right side.



10. Finished! Painted sockets can match skin tone. Fake skin stretched over foam fills out the leg. Long shorts keep most people from even noticing

In a long room with mirrors and a set of parallel bars. Jay tells me to grab the bars and stand up. I do and walk stiff legged down the lane. I go back and forth as Jay makes small adjustments. Finally he uses Locktite on the little screws. Jay tells me that in 15 years with Hanger he has never seen what I had just done. Bilateral below the knee amputees (BKA) do not just get up and walk. I wear my legs outside, but ride in the wheelchair, one last time.

I'm supposed to get used to my legs, but I am not supposed to walk until I go back to the Rehab Ward. The next day I walk out to the street and get the mail. Three days after I start in-patient rehab, they send me home. They can't justify me staying.

Now comes the good part—bicycles. From the day I "go verticle" I am ready to get on my bike. It sits in my bedroom on a training stand. I use a small stool to stand on and slowly lift my right leg over the rack and saddle. The Brooks B67 feels familiar. I try to slide my feet into the cages and find I can't. I don't have the leverage and

11. Jay and Sue check to see if the pylon fits the titanium fittings. Jay can make Robert as tall as he wishes. Later the pylon will be trimmed down. Robert decided there was no point trying to stay taller than his son.

12. Me and "Charlie", my Rivendell in August of 2006. (I bought it on eBay from a fellow named Charllie.)

13. Me with a prosthetic leg and Jay Tue of Hanger Prosthetics. Jay is an artist, engineer, and wizard.

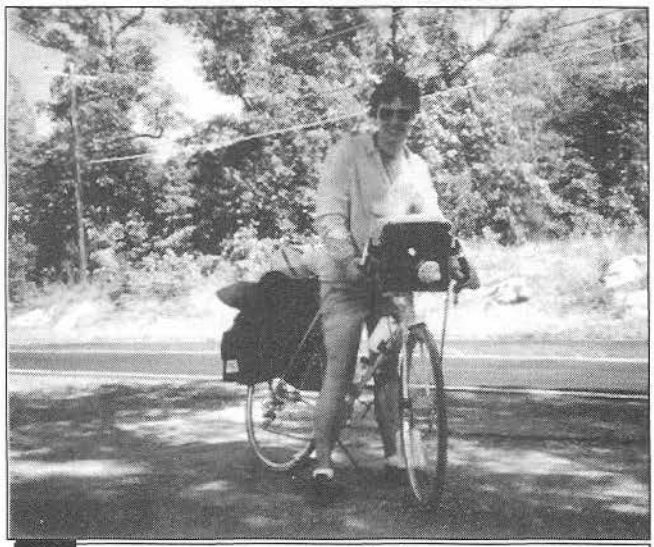
14. Trying out shoe-pedal-cleat systems in the hospital.

finally have to ask James to help. Then I discover I walk toe-out and ride toe-in. My heels hit the crank arms. I know you can add an extension to the pedal or change the length of the crank arm. That might work for someone with one good leg, but not for me. I am bilateral and plan on riding out on the roads. I end up calling GP and asking his advice. Soon I have Eggbeater pedals on my Rivendell, and I'm ready to ride the trainer.

Jay and I set the bike on a trainer between parallel bars. I clip my cleats into the Eggbeaters. Jay lines my shoes up with the crank arms. Then we mark the fittings so I can turn my ankle for walking or riding.

The next day I take my legs off, change my shoes, and move the ankles. I take the bike out into the hot Louisiana afternoon. I move the bike so it is next to the curb and gingerly raise my leg over the saddle. I stand for a second, then clip one shoe in and push off and move the other foot to the pedal without clipping in. I settle in and ride. It feels familiar. It is hot. I'm trying to clip in my left foot, and finally get it. I ride for about 15 minutes around my neighborhood and realize how hard it is to turn my foot 6 degrees to unclip it. Finally I notice a friend's truck is home and I automatically pull into his driveway. Then I remember I'm clipped in. I brake and wildly grab for a vine trellis as I go by, and hold on for dear life.

The legs I use for walking just don't work well with my bike. There is not enough freedom around my knees and too much around my shoes. I turn my leg and the shoe won't move, but Jay tells me he'll build me a set of legs just for riding.



15. Here I am in November, '81, down the East Coast and taking a breather in the Shenandoah Valley.

16. Troop 50 Scoutmaster, on a dare, successfully walks across the Troop's monkey bridge. Oct. 28, 06

I went to visit my Troop at Summer Camp. With just the help of a walking stick, I walked from the front gate. I went to the Trading Post, the flag pole and the Dining Hall. Finally in the waning sunlight the Camp Director chased me down with a golf cart, and I was glad for the ride. My one regret is that I didn't meet the scout with one leg and one arm. He did use a prosthetic leg to walk with. They kept telling me how he did everything everyone else did. He swam the mile swim with just a leg and an arm. Some kid!

One afternoon I decided to mail a package, so I tied it on the rack and off I rode down a busy street. I pulled up and stopped. It was hot and I was sweating. I waited ten minutes for my opening. Finally it came and I pushed off, and my left leg dropped to the pavement. Did you ever have one of those feeling where you were about to crash and there was nothing you could do about it? The sweat broke the seal of the gel sock. I just scraped up my elbow.

I've fallen worse off of a bed and a chair, injuring both legs. The worst was my right leg. It felt like a sprain. With my bruised tailbone I could not sit down or walk freely. I dragged my right foot for about six weeks. It didn't stop me from walking, but it slowed my progress. Now I walk around with out a stick.

Jay Tew and I are finally ready to make some bike legs. The mass in my lower legs shrank to the point where I needed new sockets, which I'm wearing right now. The new sockets give me better control. Jay is going to use the old sockets and hook them to some feet from around the shop. I have spoken to Professor Hugh Herr of MIT and Harvard. Grant read a story about him and told me about him. He is a bilateral BKA (below the knee amputee) too and is responsible for important breakthroughs in prosthetics. I know there are BKA riders going across the U.S.A., but so far we have not found any bilateral BKAs. It looks like Jay will get to make a prototype leg for biking.

I have become active in my Church. I joined Sunday School and Wednesday Night study. I joined the committee that sent me cards and visited me. I have become Chairman of the Advisory Council for the La. School for the Visually Impaired where my daughter is a student. I am now a staff member to teach the Boy Scout Wood Badge Course next Spring. Several amputees in Baton Rouge are creating a peer support group to visit amputees in the hospital and help them and their families come to terms with limb loss.

The other night I went to my Troop's little brother Pack Meeting. I was wearing long pants that night. My legs were not showing. Going out to sample some of our cobbler was a young cub with some serious orthotic braces. He was using short crutches and asking for no help. I walk up to him and say, "I see your orthonics. I have prosthetics." I raise my pants legs to show the skinny titanium ankles.He is startled. I tell him about the son of another Scoutmaster. He had the same type of braces and has just completed Eagle Scout. At first he didn't believe me. We spoke for a while and at the end of the meeting we exchanged high fives. Tough kid! I will keep an eye on him. Every time I start feeling full of myself and get a big head, someone comes along and humbles me.

Just as I am about to finish my writing someone interesting enters the story. I have been searching the net looking for another bilateral BKA who rides bicycles. It has been hard. There are many single amputees riding bikes, but where are the bilat BKA's? (reminder-bilateral,

meaning both legs, and BKA, below the knee amputee) A river, to a bayou, to a ditch by the road leads me to Armin Kohli. Mr Kohli is a Swiss, bilateral BKA who rides endurance rides to bring attention towards the misuse of land mines. He has circumnavigated Africa, and has become an active spokesman for amputees. So far that he has to make his own adjustments to his legs when his residual limbs change shape. I have just sent off an email to him asking for advice in the creation of my bike legs.

I hope to be working soon, and driving my van before this *Reader* is published. Because of all the things happening in my life, great things are possible. The key is accepting what has happened. Nothing I do will bring my legs back, but I'm alive and I can make what has happened a powerful and positive engine for change. I hope to meet many of you in a few years at the end of trial in the Marin Headlands. There will be many miles and adventures before that happens, though.

Let's help Robert some

Part No. 31-458 is the Robert Bailey Fund. It costs $25, and for every one you buy, we will:

- Kick in our own $25
- Create a separate invoice for you, showing a $10 credit.

So it'll cost you just $15, and we'll match your $25, up to a total of $5,000 from us. And if we end up giving him $5,000, that means you've given him the same amount, so he'll have $10,000 from us. After we've given $5,000, we'll about be tapped out on this, but we'll continue to pass on the money from your purchases of 31-458, and we'll continue to give you a $10 credit for every 31-458 you buy.

You may buy a 31-458 the same ways you buy any other part. On the shopping section of our site, it's listed under Miscellaneous.

(1) Send us the check, and on the envelope put:

RB FUND/Dept 31-458.

(2) Go to rivbike.com and find the RB Fund Button.

Reiteration for clarification: It's part no. 31-458.

There's more...

1. An organization called...
The Challenged Athletes Foundation

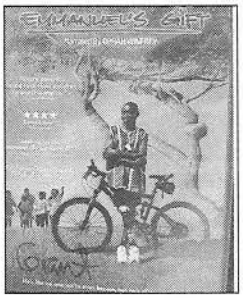
The Challenged Athletes Foundation grew out of a charity Triathlon to raise money for disabled athlete Jim McLaren, and that's all I'll say of it here, because if you're interested you can go to the site: caf.org

...or, if you watch the movie to the right here, you'll find out about it there.

I'd heard of it for several years (it became an official organization in 1997), but without investigating or knowing anything else about it, I figured it provided $3,000 wheelchairs for relatively wealthy white wheelchair marathoners, and left it at that. With so many groups and organizations needing money, it's easy to leave something at that and get on with the business of keeping Rivendell alive, which is our own challenge.

When Robert Bailey started talking about the CAF, I got re-alerted to them, and then I saw the Emmanuel movie, and the combo sort of had a big effect, and now we give them money. That's what it takes. It's a good, good org.

2. A DVD titled...
Emmanuel's Gift



Emmanuel's Gift wins the World Champ First Place prize in the Inspiring Documentary category.

It's about Emmanuel, a disabled kid (one working leg) in Ghana who doesn't accept the beggar's life in the streets. He wants to ride a bicycle, and the movie tells the story of one amazing thing he does after another. It becomes more than a cycling movie, though it surely is that, and in the end you sit around thinking wow. Over and over again, just wow. Then you'll reexamine your own life and if you're anything like me, think, "What a putz I am. I wanna be like Emmanuel from now on. How can I do that?" It's available everywhere movies are sold or rented, and it goes for the going rates. If you're a movie buyer, you'll probably buy one. It's good for the whole family, no problem. View this soon.

Emily Leutzinger and handlebar wrapping the slow way

There's a small group of five or six high-school students who don't exactly hang out here, but come by often enough to feel at home here, and we with them. Emily, a junior, is one of them, and without any provocation or inspiration other than seeing a bit of twine here or there on our handlebars, opted to get some Albatross bars, mount them upside down, and twine-then-shellac them from end to stem. It's not what you'd expect from somebody of her age, gender, or position in life, but there it is.

It's not a show-bike, either. It's an old Raleigh she rides to school and around town. She and her cronies organize and ride in the local Critical Mass rides, seem to shun cars, and now and then buy a Brooks saddle or a pair of MKS pedals from us.

Emily says: *I bought my bike on Craigslist about four months ago. Since then, I have added parts of my own but my favorite modification is the twine wrapped handlebars, sealed with shellac. I decided to wrap my bars this way because I had the idea, the materials, and the patience. The result was well worth the time because of its unusual look; I haven't yet come across any other bars like them.*

New Tire Coming, with a fancy new name...

By early May we should have a slightly fatter (33.333mm) version of the Roll-y Pol-y, our zippy-but-comfy, checkerboard-treaded road tire. Whether it hits 33.333mm or not depends on the usual Influencing Factors: Rim width, tire pressure, & casing stretch over time. Ultimately, most if not all tires are name-sized before they're born, and the rest is guess, with the understanding that a near non-bullseye isn't the end of the world.

We 'd planned to call it the *Georgie Porgie* until we found out Georgie Porgie was real (George Villiers, also known as the 1st Duke of Buckingham). It turns out he was both dishonest and a philanderer. Then we locked in on Gunga Din, the much-disparaged and pathetic water carrier who put the needs of others before his own, and after he died he was finally appreciated for the selfless person that he was. When I was a kid, everybody knew of the poem Gunga Din, or had at least heard the line, *you're a better man than I am, Gunga Din!* But in these super-political, hyper-sensitive times, it's not-not-not unfathomable that somebody will twist Gunga Din into a pro- or anti-Islam, or infer, by some of the old language and references in some of Rudyard Kipling's poems or books that he was not pc-enough by modern standards, and therefore we must be bad too, and so...I chickened out. It's always safer to chicken out, friends. We had art made for both Georgie Porgie and Gunga Din, by the way. The winning name: **Jack Brown**. No doubt there are many Jack Browns out there, some good, some bad. We had no particular, no specific Jack Brown in mind in the naming of this tire. The 700 x 33.3 Jack Brown tire will fit any of our 700c road frames, & we expect it will be a top choice for A. Homer Hilsen riders.

JACK BROWN 700x33.3̄/622bsd

Big boulders and bracken, no problem. The Pugsley rolls over them, no fits and starts, no need to skirt anything. This is not Grant.

Pugsley
by Surly

The Surly (brand) Pugsley is a fat bike with huge tires, and it's for riding on ground that you can't safely or at all ride with any other tires.

And once you get past its cartoon proportions and start looking at it critically, you'll see how remarkable a design achievement it is. The tires are the challenge.

You don't just plug those fatties into an existing frame, and you don't just tweak old familiar frame dimensions a bit to make room for them. Once you've decided on tires as fat as the Pugsley's almost four-inchers, you have to start from scratch and let the tire width drive everything. More on this later.

So you have to be committed to super fatties, and if you ride on icy and snowy roads and trails, or sand, or over boulders and things like that, you've got a good reason to be. The Pugsley may not be the only bike out there with huge tires—there are customs, for sure, and there may be a few lesser-known production bikes—but it is, absolutely, the category definer. If you go to a custom builder and describe this type of bike to him, you can't go far before uttering the words, "like a Pugsley." Any custom builder should examine the Pugsley before cutting the first tube. And most of them with any sense will tell you straight out: Just get a Pugsley.

Last spring I rode a Pugsley at night in the snow at about 0°F, in a Pugsley-only relay race. Four-rider teams, each lap about 5 minutes, and the course was ill-lit (candles), narrow, twisty, and off-camber, with a decent descent and a bit of a climb at the end of it. The hard part was finding the way. It wasn't traction, as it would have been with any other bike. That doesn't mean you'll never slip with them, just means that night, I didn't. Although I don't live in Iceland, I was intrigued enough to get one. I figured it might make a good Reader story, you never know.

Setting it up

I thought about Moustache H'bars and Albatross bars, but I went with drops because I've seen Pugsleys with Albatross and Moustache H'bars, and I haven't seen one with drops before. Setting it up with drops would make it easier to compare to a regular road bike, too.

As it turns out, I can get the same identical position on a 20-inch (50.8cm) Pugsley as I can on a 58cm or 59cm normal bike. That's because the top tube slopes up a lot, and rather than cut the threadless steerer, I just stacked it up with spacers so I could get the bars as high as the steerer would allow. Sitting on the Pugsley as you see it up there feels exactly like sitting on my custom, or a Rambouillet, or an A. Homer Hilsen.

Shifters

Brian here set up his Saluki with top-mounted thumb shifters, and I've been wanting to do that ever since I tried his; but haven't wanted to switch out my bar-end shifters, because I like them, have no complaints, and it's a hassle to swap over.

The thumb shifters are made to clamp around a 22.2mm handlebar, and to make it work on a 23.8mm bar (the main bar diameter on Noodle bars). I had to use a longer bolt and file away some metal in the shifter clamp. I used a rat-tail file and a flat file, and it took about 20 minutes and a longer bolt. It's easy, just not pop-n-go. Paul's Thumbies cost more and are easier, but I wanted the cheapies this time.

I reversed the shifters (L-R) to get better cable routing, and everything set up perfectly. Super cheap $12 shifters (part no. 17-097), and they work dreamily. We don't sell many of them, and I'm sure that's because they're too cheap. If you have a spare bike around that you can experiment with, try them, and you'll get your eyes opened.

I used a Rapid-Rise rear derailleur, and this way pushing the shifters forward gives me a lower gear.

Crank & BB

The Pugsley-preferred crank, the one Surly recommends is a 32x20 double. With an 11x32 8-speed cassette, that gives me a low low and a high high and plenty in between. Calculated on the well-entrenched but not-as-smart-as-Sheldon's Gain Ratio chart, using 29 as a multiplier (since actual wheel diameter is 29.5-inches), the high/low gears are 84 and 18.

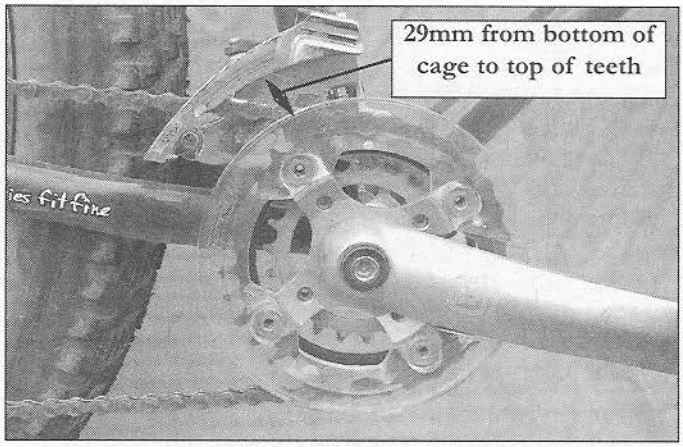
The crank came designed for an ISIS-splined bottom bracket. The ISIS spline is an alternative to Shimano, and whatever its benefits or attributes, it's not the normal way we go around here, but it fit the crank, and I just wanted to get the bike together. I since found out that Phil Wood makes a Pugsley-compatible bottom bracket that would have let me use a square-taper crank, but you know—sometimes it just doesn't matter. I got a crank and bb combo that worked.

Chainline challenge and solution

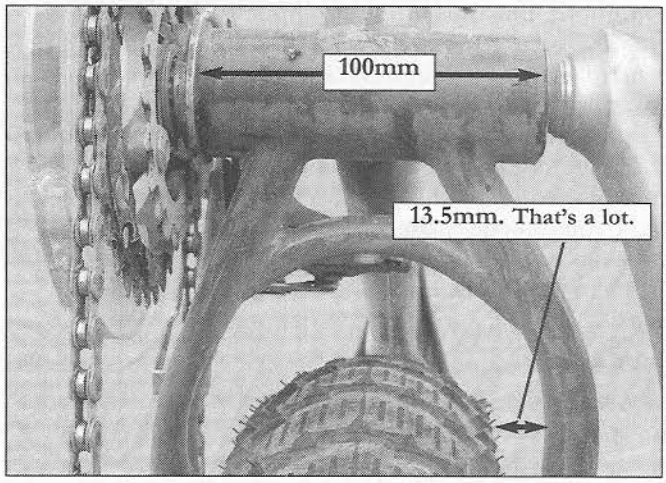
The super wide bb shell kicks the cranks out far, the only way to get a good chain angle with such a right-sided crank was to make the frame asymmetrical, so the cassette is moved to the right the same amount. They did that, so problem solved. It's more complicated to explain—how that all works and everything—but when you see the bike and think about it, it makes sense. The frame is still straight.

Front Derailleur

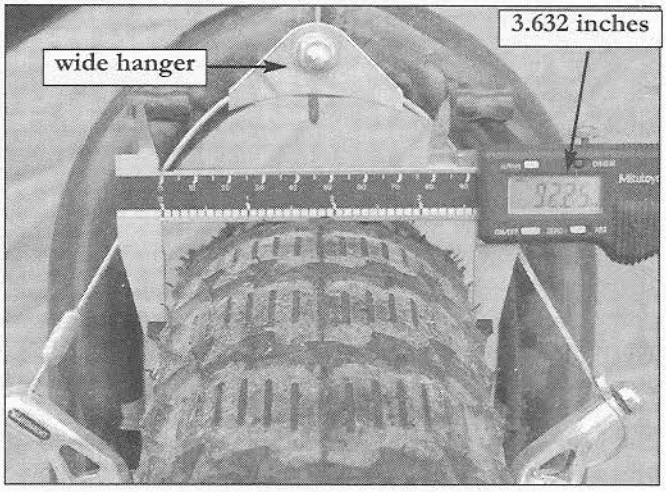
The front derailleur is what's called an "E-type," and mounts onto a mount that itself mounts just outside the bottom bracket shell. It was developed for downhill bikes and others with special needs. In the case of the



It's a Truvative 32x20 crank, with a thick plexiglass-like chainguard mounted where the outer ring usually goes. You need the low gears for hills and rough ground. Oh yeah.



The BB shell, at 100mm, is 32mm wider than the usual 68. That's to allow the chainstays to go way around the tire, and then, after that, to allow a good chainline. This is a problem with lots of bikes, and the Pugsley, with tougher challenges, solves it nicely.



The Endomorph tires say 26 x 4 on them. Surly calls them 3.7s. Using our expensive Mitutoyo caliper, we get 92.25mm, or 3.632 inches—close enough! If you use cantilevers, a wide-bridge straddle wire hanger will help the cross-over cables clear the fat tire. As shown here.

Pugsley, the bottom bracket shell is 32mm wider than normal, so no seat-tube mounted front derailer will shift out far enough to reach the chainrings. The bugaboo is you can't raise and lower it according to the diameter of the big chainring. Usually you set up a front derailleur so there's a 2mm gap between the underside of the derailer cage and the top of the big ring's teeth, but with this one, it's about 29mm—more than 14 times the spec—but shifting is easy and good despite that. Front derailers are tolerant in that way, and then the plastic chainguard probably helps prevent shifting off the ring to the outside. It's thick plastic.

Brakes

The Pugsley frame is disk-brake compatible, but I like cantilevers, and they set up fine. I used cheap Shimano cantilevers—a favorite around here—with chunky Mathauser pads. I'm sure disks would be better in some conditions, but rims are disks, and a given amount of braking force is more effective the further it is from the center of the hub. Cantilevers have a clear power advantage over disks in this way, and disks make up for it by offering much more braking surface area. If you think about it this way, cantilevers (or any rim brake) are not the outdated cave-man brakes the disk-fans want you to believe they are. Rims can go out of true, but even on skinny rims that's more of a theoretical problem than a real one, and on the 65mm-wide Pugsley rims, it's not going to happen.

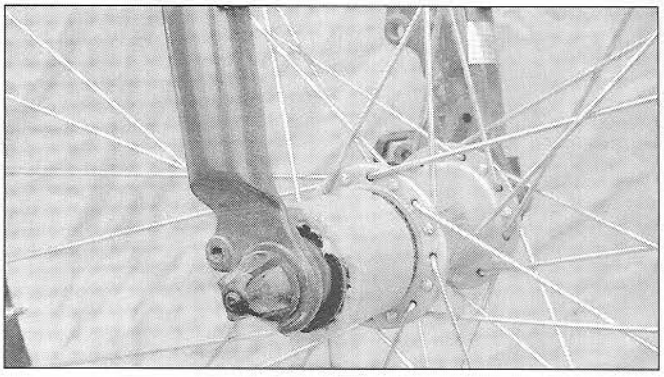
Front Wheel

It's a rear wheel, identical to the one in back. The forks are spaced 135mm, and the hub is a rear hub. I don't have a cassette on it, but I could, and then...well, I guess the idea is to let you use either wheel anywhere. Different gears on one wheel? OK, fine, but mainly I think it had to do with the width of the tire and the dearth of 135mm front hubs. It's a Pugsley, it's odd from the get-go, so it's easy to get over the rear front wheel.

How Does It Ride?

It feels pretty normal. The most obvious influence, as you'd expect, is the tires. Each weighs 2.8 pounds, it's not their weight that I noticed as much as their traction. In fact, they feel lighter than I expected them to feel, a feeling shared by all who ride the bike.

But here's the deal. Ordinarily, one of the reasons for riding tires soft is to increase the tire's contact area and get more traction. With the Pugsley's 3.7-inch wide Endomorph tires, there's plenty of traction without running them soft. And on dirt or pavement or any surface that isn't downright slippery, when you do lower the pressure to below about 15psi (which doesn't feel soft to the squeeze, but sounds soft), the tread grips the ground so well that when you steer the bike in a different direction, the soft, tall tire between the rim and



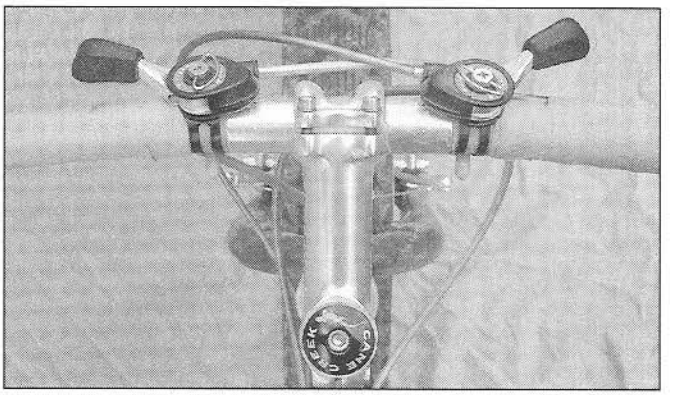
The front wheel uses a rear hub. You can put a different range of gears on it if you like, but I didn't want to do that, so I just covered the cassette body with a cardboard tube.

Trivia: Pugsley Addams's real name is Ken Weathewax. He was born in 1955, and his dad trained Lassie. He is still living, and ought to own one of these bikes. He was Chester in the early Gleem commercials.

The Large Marge rim has offset spoke holes and is wide enought to hold the Endomorph, even at low pressure, without rolling. It's one of many ultra-fat specific parts made for the Pugsley, and it must be the most unwreckable rim ever made for a bicycle.

ground twists as it absorbs the turning force. You're going to have to think that one through, because that's what happens, and there's no other way to say it that's any better than that. So on dirt you ride about 18 to 20psi to soak up shock, and on pavement you ride the recommended 30psi. That's what I did, and no problem.

On a rocky road made entirely of baseball-to-boulder-sized granite, no pavement of any kind, the Pugsley was terrific. Usually when you hit a big rock head on, the bike stops as you lurch forward, but the Pugsley absorbs it and rolls right over it. When you hit the side of a rock, usually the front wheel glances off it and the bike changes direction, but the Pugsley keeps rolls straight. You still feel the bumps, but not as much, and you keep your momentum, direction, and traction to a degree not even 2.35-inch tires and a suspension fork can equal. Not that I'd know, but I dearly wish to believe it.



Nice shifter set up. You need to file the clamps some and use a longer bolt, and use the left on the right & the right on the left, for cleaner cabling. With a Rapid Rise rear derailer, pushing either lever forward gets you a lower gear.

It's almost impossible to lose traction. There's a super steep trail I ride at least twice a week, and on 35s I have to pick the best line and follow it perfectly, with maybe a foot of leeway. Otherwise I'll lose traction in the loose parts, or hit a rock and lose too much speed to keep on the bike. I rode the same trail on the Pugsley, purposely taking the worst possible line up it, and scooted right up.

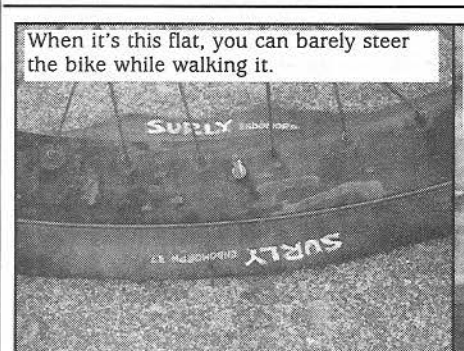
When you go off a curb and the wheels land flat, the tires doesn't deform as much because the load is spread. When you run into a curb, the load is concentrated, the tire deforms a lot, and it feels smoother. Intuitively, you'd expect an off-a-curb landing to feel smoother, but it doesn't work that way. You can get a suspension fork with the Pugsley, but enough is enough. If you've already come to grips with bouncy forks, you might as well have one here, too, but I got mine without. With tires that big, how much more help do you need?

Criticisms

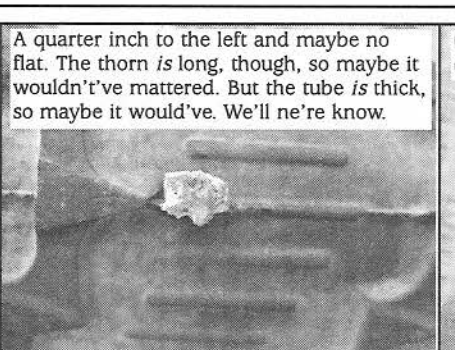
None. It goes without saying that an extreme bike is going to give up something on the other end, but a bike should be reviewed from the point of view of its designer. How well does the bike perform its range of intended duties? And then, as a matter of gravy, how far beyond that range can it range? The Pugsley was intended for ice and sand. We have neither around here, but big bumps, no problem, and it's faster than you'd ever guess.

I got a flat.

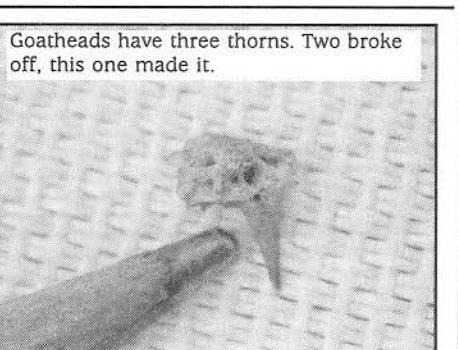
It was a goathead thorn that did it. We had a story about them in a past *Reader*. They're vile things that came to the new world caked in the hooves of Spanish horses. *Gracias!*



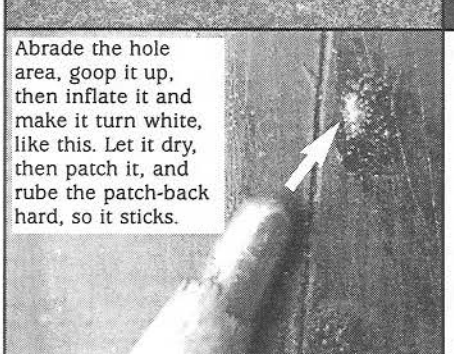
When it's this flat, you can barely steer the bike while walking it.



A quarter inch to the left and maybe no flat. The thorn *is* long, though, so maybe it wouldn't've mattered. But the tube *is* thick, so maybe it would've. We'll ne're know.



Goatheads have three thorns. Two broke off, this one made it.



Abrade the hole area, goop it up, then inflate it and make it turn white, like this. Let it dry, then patch it, and rube the patch-back hard, so it sticks.

I got the thorn three miles from home, and when you get a goathead, you leave it in or the air will rush out. I expected I'd have to inflate the tire really high to find the leaky air, so I marked the tube well and found it early. It took about 70 pumps from a Zefal HPX pump to put enough air in to reveal the leak.

The Endomorph was harder to get off than I'd expected, but I did it. After fixing the flat, which I estimate as my 350th fix, I remounted the tire. I have a floor pump, but I wanted to pretend I was in the woods with a frame pump, to see how many strokes to ridable pressure. It took me about 350 to get it up to a desirable 25 psi. *That the number of estimated pump strokes equalled the estimated number of fixed flats is one of those amazing coincidences.*—G

A marriage made in heaven? Pugsley and Nigel Smyth; specifically, the Big Loafer, usually a rear bag, mounted on the Nitto Top Rack, usually a rear rack. But the fork is so wide and the braze-ons are so spaced that it all works perfectly.

THE PUGSLEY CONUNDRUM

In the past 30 years I've read lots of articles written by brainiacs telling us to the second how much slower you go on a five-mile, 1,500-foot climb if you lose x pounds of bike or body weight.

Last week I rode a super steep climb I've timed a hundred times. My times and bikes from Wed, Thur, Fri: 7:47 (A. Homer Hilsen); 7:55 (Pugsley); 7:38 (A. Homer Hilsen). I was slower on the Pugs, but I've timed this more than a hundred times over the last year and a half, and my average time is 8:10. I've broken 8:00 fewer than ten times; once on the Pug. Today with my normal riding buddy I rode a 6.5 mile climb that gains 2,000 feet. This climb includes a 0.9 mile sprint, and both my overall and my sprint time were the same time as I ride on my normal bikes.

I don't get it—the 15.9-pound wheels alone weigh more than some whole bikes. The wheel diameter is huge, which should exacerbate the weight problem, because the farther from the hub the weight is, the more it slows you down. And shouldn't all those knobs create friction and high rolling resistance? I can hear them and feel them buzz and I feel slower.

You can't say "oh, you're just trying harder when you ride the Pugsley." I'm not. I go as hard as I can on my bikes, & why would I want a Pugsley to compare so favorably? I didn't design it, we don't sell it, it doesn't have lugs. I like it OK, but not like kin.

Then why? Do the heavy wheels maintain speed better? What if the 35-lb bike had light wheels? This wheel-weight and momentum thing is interesting. Certainly a heavier wheel is harder to slow down, and maybe that's more significant, even on climbs, than we've been led to believe. Wouldn't it be a hoot if heavier wheels proved to be faster up hills? Anyway, if you can explain Pugsley's fast times, send a note: grant@rivbike.com. In the subject field write (your name/Pugsley 'planation). —G

Technicalities

Frame weight (20-inch): 5 lb 13.5oz
Fork weight: 2lb 12.5oz
Whole bike as pictured above: 35 lbs.
Seat tube angle: 72-degrees
Head tube angle: 70.5-degrees
Rake(mm): 43 Trail (mm): Whatever you want it to be, my friend...
Wheel diameter (mm/inches): 744/29.29 (!)
BB drop/Standover heigh (mm): 55/83.5
Seat post size, stem size: 27.2mm/1 1/8-in threadless
Q-Factor (crank width, outside-to-outside) (mm): 218
Color: Purple
Frame/fork price: A bit under $600
Pugsley-specific parts you're not likely to have in your garage: Bottom bracket, crank, front derailleur, rims, tubes, tires.

Suggestions: Get an extra tube, because if you get a slow leak, good luck finding it.

To Order one: Ask your local bike shop. Buy one or two parts from us, though, OK? Noodle or Alba or Moustache H'bars, pedals, maybe cheap thumb shifters that work so well. Something we have that your LBS doesn't. Just something. Cork grips!

the Gleem Connection Longtime readers with a keen eye for detail know that my favorite toothpaste is Gleem (it has been used in two *Reader* headlines). So imagine my delight when I found out on the InterWeb, that Ken Weatherwax, the real name of the Adams Family Pugsley character—got his big break in TV job being Chester on a Gleem commercial. No Gleem = No Chester and maybe somebody other than Ken Weatherwax would have gotten the job, and the show would've been cancelled early. —Grant

Q & A w/ Pugsley's Dad, Dave Gray

How did Surly happen?

Our parent company is Quality Bicycle Products, a big US parts distributor. Surly was started in 1998 by Wakeman Massie, the first GM, and other QBP employees who wanted a better selection of single-speeding components.

What led to the Pugsley? And it's named after the kid in The Adams Family, right?

Yes, "Pugsley" refers to the portly lad from The Adams Family. The Pugsley story began a few years ago when a rider and frame builder named John Evingson came to QBP with his bright red single-speed equipped with 80mm-wide rims and 3-inch knobbies. John was looking for a company to make wide rims. The rims he had are no longer made, so we decided to make the Large Marge, which led to the Endomorph tire and Pugsley frameset.

What were the design challenges, and how many tries did it take to get them right?

We wanted the bike compatible with modern drivetrains, and we wanted to use as many standard parts as possible. The wide tire was the biggest problem. On a normal bike, it hits the front derailleur. We solved that by going to a 100mm-wide bottom bracket shell (32mm wider than normal) and offsetting the stays 17.5mm to the drive side of the bike to keep the chainline in check. This way, a stock 135mm-spaced hub can be used, and the chain doesn't rub on the tire in the lowest gears. The other challenge was the fork. It had to let the big tire fit between the disc brake caliper and the right dropout. The normal 100mm front dropout spacing doesn't allow that, so we went to 135mm spacing—odd for a front wheel, but it meant we could use a standard rear hub as a front hub. By offsetting the fork 17.5mm, as we did with the stays, we allow wheel interchangeability. So you can set up Pugsley as a single-speed and change wheels to change your gearing. And an extra freewheel or fixed cog on the front wheel offers a bailout if your primary drive fails in the middle of nowhere. We tested two sample runs before Pugsley went into production.

Is it perfect now? What would you change on it?

No, it's a work in progress. If I could change anything without adding weight, cost or complexity, I'd add a bit more standover clearance and a taller head tube.

How many prototypes were there?

Four. I'm using the first sample as my single-speed, and another (from the 2nd sample run) is my geared rig. Both have thousands of kilometers on them.

How many have you sold? Where do most of them go?

Last year, we sold about 400 framesets, and I expect that sales will stay pretty consistent year to year. Maybe, 25% of Pugsley sales go to shop employees, and the rest go to riders who want a bike that will take them off the beaten path.

Well, lots of bikes will do that. I got one because I wanted a bike that could do what no other bike can do, and I wanted a simple bike, not one with lots of linkage. So, you may SAY it's for "cyclists who want a bike that will take them off of the beaten path," but it's more than that.

Sure, Pugsleys can be used like any other mountain bike, but the traction and floatation offered by the high-volume tires add to the repertoire. Pugsley riders have crossed sandy deserts, vast salt flats, and frozen oceans. All that aside, it's perfectly suited for twisty local singletrack and fast parking ramp descents.

What psi do you ride, where?

In soft, deep snow, I go down to 5 psi; hard-packed dirt or hard-snow…17 psi; pavement…22 psi; rutted icy roads…about 12 psi. Minneapolis has a little bit of everything, and I use Pugsley for everything year-round.

How many go out with disc brakes?

I'd say 90 percent are built with discs. I use cantilevers on my single-speed and discs on my geared Pug.

Fenders, ever?

Maybe. It's on the list of possible projects.

Other tires, ever? A road slick? And what about fenders?

I have a new tread design in mind, but it will probably be an all-purpose shallow knobby. A road slick could happen, too. Fenders, maybe. Next Summer (2007) we'll have a new crankset will come with a Pugsley spindle option. And, we've talked about Pug-specific racks and bags.

How many flats have you gotten?

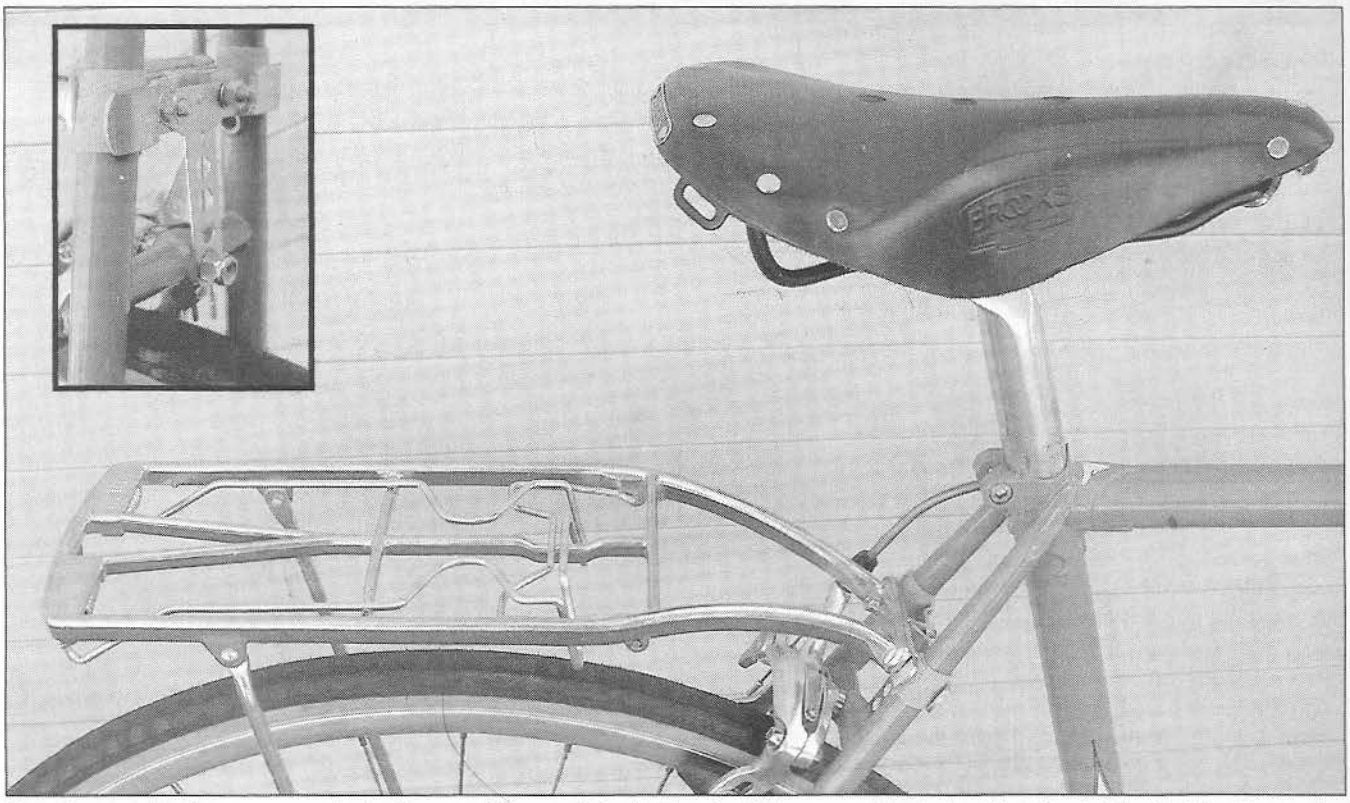
A dozen or so, but they're rare, now, because I put 50-60ml of Stan's tubeless tire sealant into each tube. I carry a high-volume Topeak Mountain Morph tire pump to trail repairs.

How many Endormorphs did you have to order? It must have helped, having the maker already be a QBP oem tire maker.

We order 1000 each time from Innova. QBP has carried their studded tires for several years, so we have a good relationship with them.

As you'll see when you read my review of it, I'm finding that the Pugsley is not as slow as I expected it to be. What's been your experience with that? I know it seems slow because of the look and sound of the wheels, but in timed personal events, it's not proving to be slow. Comment on that…

I find that it's faster over many types of terrain. The low-tech suspension of the tires helps me keep momentum over rough sections of trail. I can take more direct lines, at higher speeds, without worrying about sliding out or bouncing off-course. One-wheel and two-wheel drifts, around corners, are easier with big rubber. There's a bit of a placebo built into Pugsley, too. Knowing I've got the biggest tires under me adds a little extra confidence, so I tend to pedal harder and go a little faster.



Here shown with the mousetrap in the down position, and the "ballcatcher" down, too. That's the thing that holds a ball in place so it doesn't slide off the rack. This rack has carried everything. Inset: The "T" bracket prevents slipping. Those Swiss!

Living classics: The Swiss Pletscher Rack

First, since some and/or most of you don't speak Swiss: It's pronounced *plet-cher*...and seventy-five percent of the well-ridden bikes in the '60s and '70s had this Pletscher rear rack. That was in the days when kids rode to the playground or ball field with their mitts, bats, assorted balls; and to school with books and lunch. They probably cost $5 back then.

The good news is, Pletscher still makes the same rack, not made in China under a Pletscher license, but in Pletscher's *own* factory in the land of cheese, chocolate, and watches. And it's still just $20. In the weight-to-price category of Swiss Metal Things, it makes the watches seem like a ripoff.

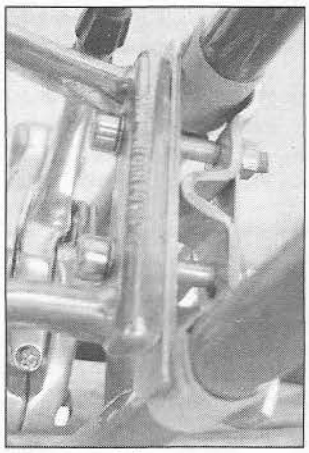
Why it fell out of favor (get sales figures)

The first 'bout a foot b'low the belt blow came in the late '70s, when touring was popular, and people started riding fancy bikes. This rack was never intended to carry panniers, so folks who tried that and found it hard to secure the panniers denigrated it. Also, it was designed to clamp onto seat stays, not bolt on, and people didn't want to clamp bare metal, even if Swiss bare metal, onto their new & fancy frames. That's understandable, but it's not a fault of the rack as much as a proper use sort of thing.

In any case, the familiar old Pletscher, the classic old standby that worked supremely well for Spaulding gloves, Voit footballs, Wilson basketballs, the occasional Jack Kramer (this was pre-Wendy Overton) tennis racket, and lunch and schoolbooks, was now looked down upon. The new king of racks was Blackburn. It was aluminum, and triangulated (like a truss!), and solved issues the Pletscher didn't even address.

On the other hand...

There you were with your fancy Blackburn rack, and without panniers to go with it, you suddenly couldn't carry things your Pletscher could. Eventually there were rack-nets, but they came years later, and many a ball wasn't carried until then.



Top view of the seat stay clamping part. One or two wraps of bar tape protects the stays. The "T-bar" shown in the inset photo above, goes on the outside of the thick piece. At least that's how we did it.

Does the Pletscher stand a chance nowadays?

Well, it's tough out there. Snobs won't buy it and most shops don't even stock it. But it is still being imported, and Swissophiles that we be, we've decided to stock it. If you have a bike you'd like to make more useful for the least amount of money, and get a genuine Swiss rack.

Compared to a Nitto rack, it's heavier and rougher around the edges, it costs a sixth as much. Most racks that cheap have a swagger and falsehood about them that makes you feel taken in, but not this one. The Pletscher rack is a low-tech/high integrity/super cheap ultra-bargain. Only $20! Swiss! Been around forever! We probably won't keep it in stock, not sure about that yet, but we have enough to sell now, and we'll see how it goes. It's a good, cheap rack.

Material: Die-cast aluminum with steel mousetrap.

Keen feature: The stopper foot, which holds a ball in place.

Weight: 21.4oz /606g. You can't squawk about that.

Pletscher Rear Rack. Part No. 20-137, $20

Pletscher History and Trivia

Pletscher established: I'm guessing around 1940.

No. of employees: Best guess? Two hundred.

No. of these racks made: Millions and millions

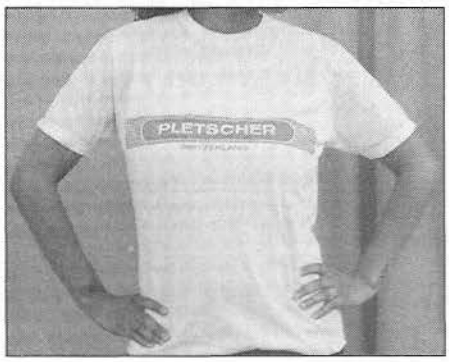
Qty. sold per year: 70,000 wouldn't surprise me.

Main countries of export: Germany, England, the U.S.?

Changes in this model over the years: None noticeable.

Do they make other things, other racks? Yes, lots of other models. They've got quite the array, but this one remains a super value, and is the original classic.

We have 48 T-shirts. A fine case could be made that *getting* them was not a superb use of time, & you can bet we won't do it again. But don't think for a minute that we regret these. Nothing—but nothing—could be further from the truth as we know it.



But there's something about the Pletscher marque on a natural creamy U.S.-made organic cotton T that cyclers the world over ought to find irresistible. It's a pure brand, a classic unaffected by weirdness, flash, and unassociated with performance-enhancing drugs, and they don't make junk. The logo hasn't changed for eons and likely never will. We have the world exclusive on these.

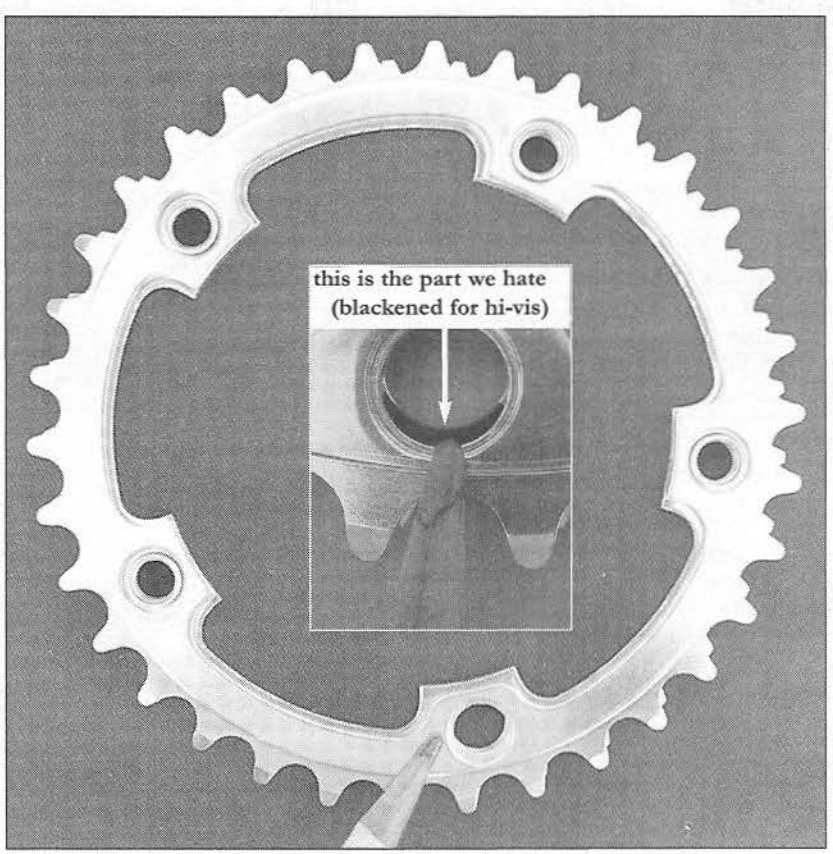
These are certified, meaning we got approval for them, and the artwork came all the way from Switzerland (in Europe), with the stipulation that we send a Large to the guy who told the guy to tell his guy to send us the art. Buy 1/2-size larger than you ordinarily would, as these seem to run about 1/2-size smallish.

T-shirt ($20): M: 22-262; L: 22-263; XL: 22-264; 2x: 22-265

Be aware of this quirk with Campy chainrings

Our favorite big-and-middle ring bolt circle diameter is 110mm—popular on mountain bikes in the '80s, and now the standard diameter for "compact" road cranks, too. It allows chainrings as small as 33t, and if your crank is a 110 you can use 110mm bcd (bolt-circle diameter) chainrings from virtually anybody.

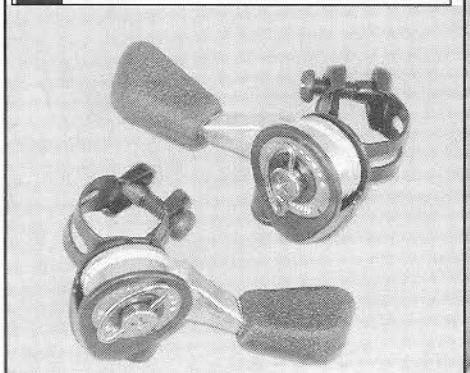
The dissenter is Campagnolo, who makes four of the five bolts fit on a 110mm crank (so they can claim to offer a 110mm crank), but there's a rogue bolt that's off just enough so that nobody else's rings will work on the Campy crank. And yet, they don't make a wide variety of rings for it, so you're stuck. The photo here shows how close it is, but it's not close enough to work. It makes you buy a Campy ring if you already have the crank. It would've been nicer to make it interchangeable. Nobody would've squawked at that, especially us here & now.



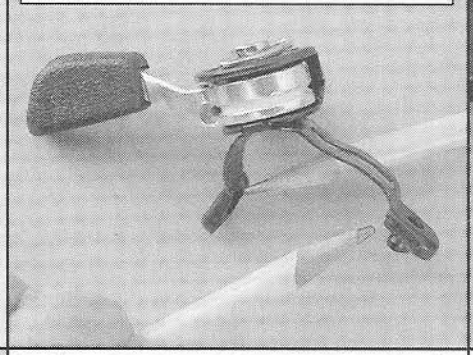
Adapting cheap thumb shifters to drop bars...

This is one heck of a worthwhile project. If you don't already have some thumb shifters with bendable steel clamps, then order our Part No. 17-097 for $13 shifters. The actual work, shown below, takes 90 minutes if you're slow. What you end up with is old mountain bike-style thumb shifters mounted just outside the center sleeve on your drop bars. When you mount them, the left goes on the right,

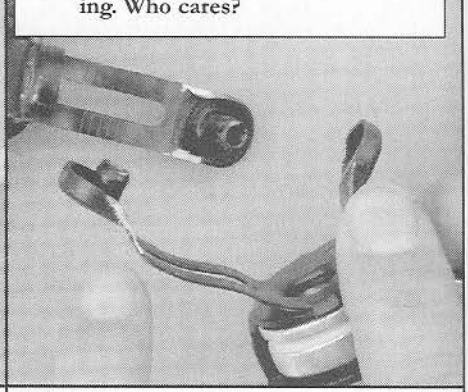
1. Right out of the package.



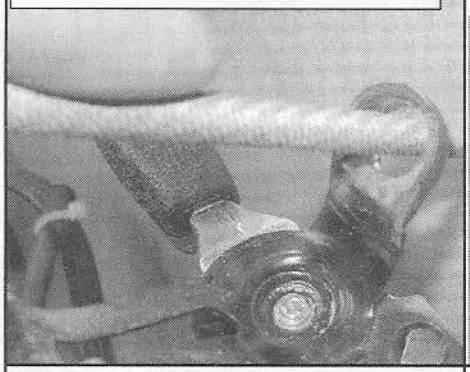
2. The heinous bumps. File 'em! A Dremel or hand file works fine. A bit of a hassle, yes.



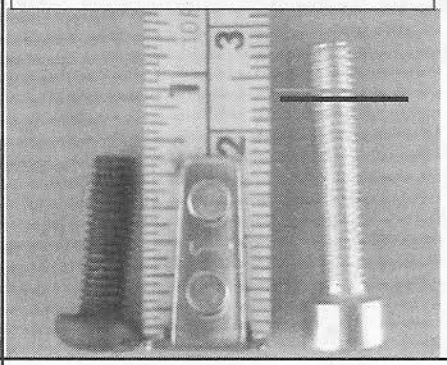
3. The filed heinous bumps. Don't fret about the bare new metal rusting. Who cares?



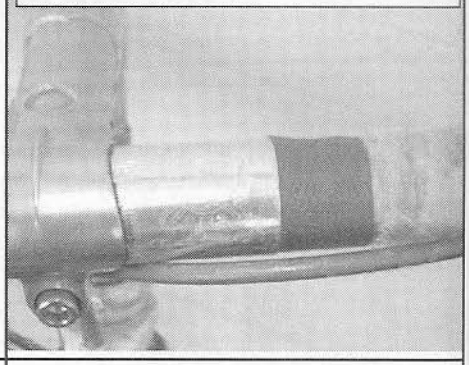
4. Enlarge the hole w/a rat-tail file. This takes time and a rat-tail file, or a reamer. Something.



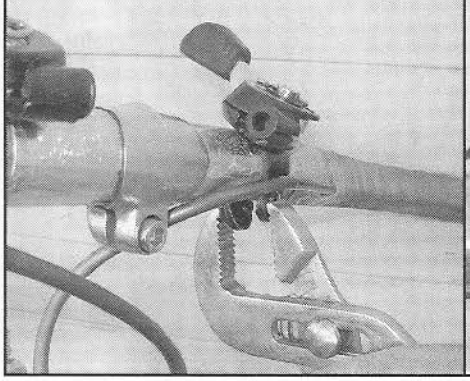
5. Use an M5 bolt. This one is too long, my friend; too long. Ideal: M5 x about 25mm.



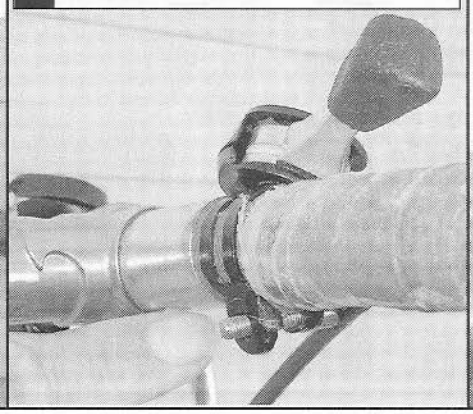
6. Tape the bar outside the sleeve. One layer. Scratch-prevention, my friend; scratch prevention.



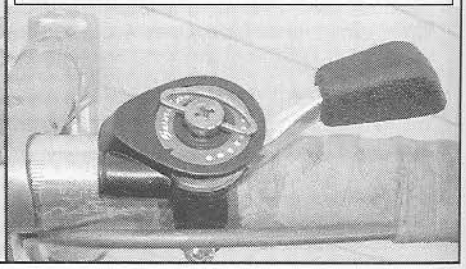
7. Bring the ends around and squeeze them with slip-jaw pliers.



8. Proof that our bolt was too long.



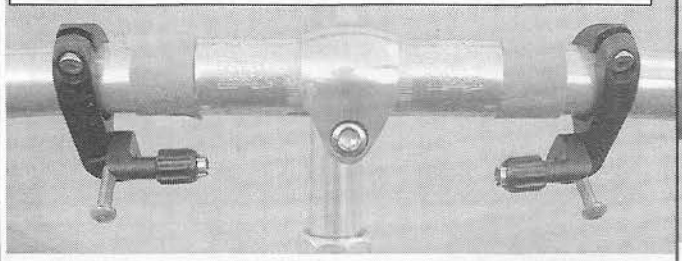
9. Here's one shifter. Then you just do up the housing and cables. These shifters come with black housing and thicker-than-we-love cables. If I were you, I'd get some grey housing and fancier cables, which are still cheap.



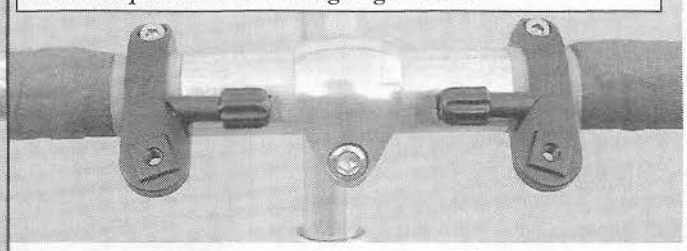
...and Doing the Same Thing With Paul's Thumbies

This is the slicker, $125 alternative, using Paul's Thumbies and Shimano Bar-end shifters, which gives you an indexing option, if that's important to you, and the shifters don't look so all-fired cheap. But the cheap way we show below wins the bang-forda-buck award, and in friction (non-indexed) mode, it works every bit as well as this other way. Two ways to achieve the same good end.

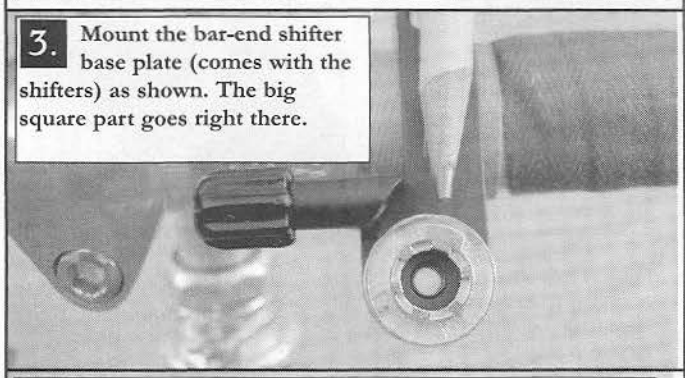
1. About 1.5 wraps of bar tape just outside the sleeve. Then mount the left and right Thumbies as shown.



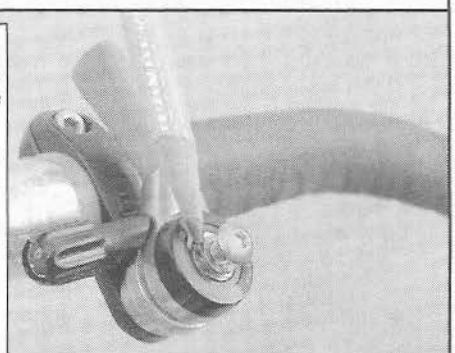
2. Remove the screws. Mount Thumbies onto tape. Ignore the fact that these bars have been taped. It was a mistake. Not pertinent to what's going on here.



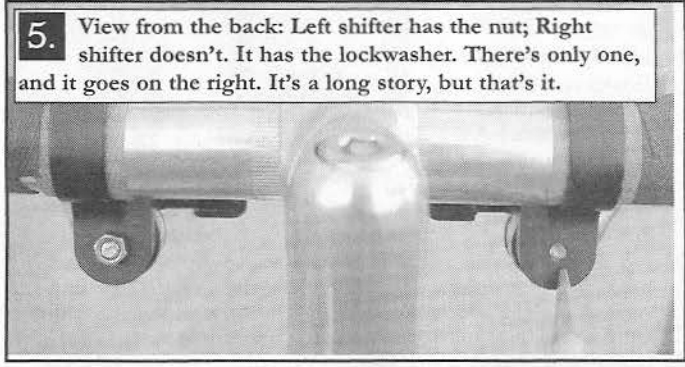
3. Mount the bar-end shifter base plate (comes with the shifters) as shown. The big square part goes right there.



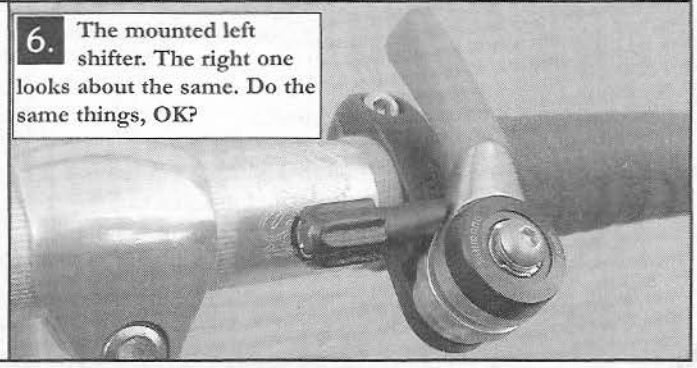
4. Align the shifter with the base plate. That's the only way it'll go on. Screw it down. Note: the left shifter has no lockwasher. There's only one, and it goes on the RIGHT shifter.



5. View from the back: Left shifter has the nut; Right shifter doesn't. It has the lockwasher. There's only one, and it goes on the right. It's a long story, but that's it.



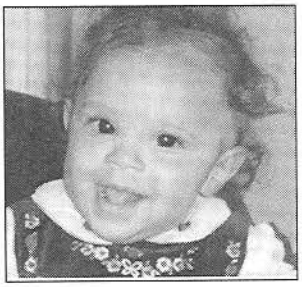
6. The mounted left shifter. The right one looks about the same. Do the same things, OK?



It's not a wacky idea, it's not new, and you shouldn't just forgettabout it

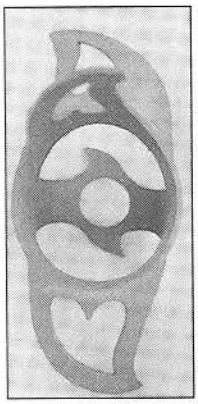
Burley used to set up tandems with thumb shifters on drop bars, so it's not new and it's certainly not our idea. But it's pretty nice, and another smart alternative to integrated shifters & brake levers. Top-mount shifters are easy and pleasant to use, and you get used to them immediately. Since they mount just outside the stem, they sorta-kinda occupy the same space as interruptor brake levers (those cyclocross-inspired supplementary levers), but the combo works well. You just angle them so's not to interfere, and it all fits and doesn't even seem cluttered. They also work, maybe to your surprise, with handlebar bags. Again, it's all in the rigging, but we've never had the slightest problem. If you have a spare bike around, or are just one of those experimental sorts, try setting up a bike this way. There are lots of different ways to do the same thing, and this is one of our favorites. —Grant

Miscellaneous

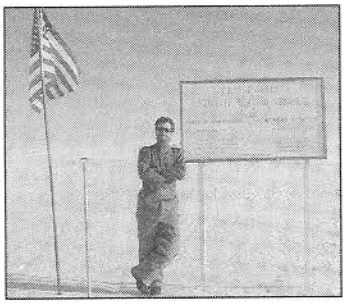


Miesha's 6-month old baby Laiya stays here with her during the day, and it's common to hear her when you're talking to Miesha on the phone. There's a crib and a heater, so it's warm for her, and we all like having Laiya around. We may need a bigger space for her once she starts walking. Here she is, and she really is that cute.

The last batch of mixtes with the ridiculously fancy and nearly unpaintable lugs is in, unpainted. Sizes 50, 52, 56, and 58. It takes about 3 months to get one painted, and about two weeks to get it assembled here into a complete and ridable bike. The next group of mixtes will be made with simpler lugs that are still fancy by any standard, just easier to paint. Don't go thinking that if you miss out on one of the super-fancies you're getting any less of a bike, because it's not so. We have about 12 to 15 each of the others (super fancies) available, as of right now, and the new "unfancy" lug is show here, looking right down its throat.



Two years ago one of you sent this photo, taken at the South Pole, and you're wearing one of our WoolyWarm derby tweed sweaters. You don't win a million dollars, but I look at this picture regularly, and I want to know who you are. email me: grant@rivbike.com. Thanks.



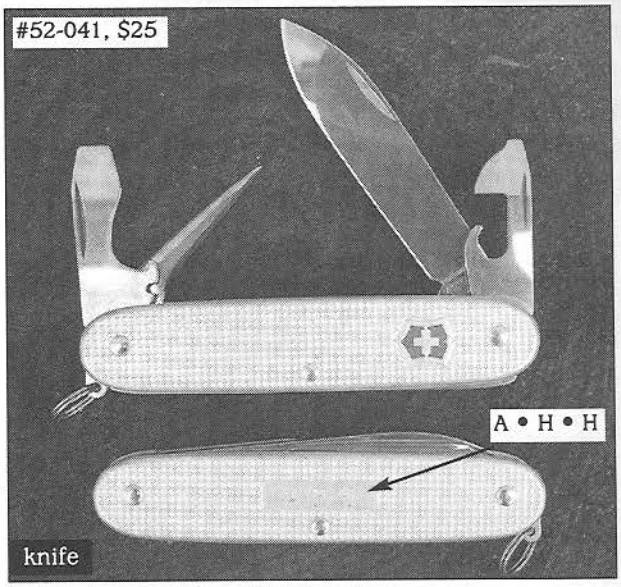
We're thinking again about a tandem, and what's different this time around is that we're no longer compelled to compete for macho points with the oversized thinwalled models already available in abundance. After riding more and more on a normal-tubed tandem, albeit a well-braced one, I/Grant am pretty sure that it's a good way to go.

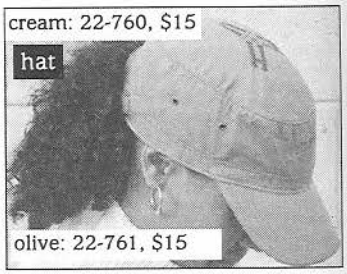
What this means is that rather than needing $25,000 in new lugs, we can use many current ones, and so we'll need only maybe $14,000 in new lug molds for a tandem.

It's still a backburner project, and we still don't have $14K laying around to play with, but this new way of looking at it makes the tandem project a lot more swallowable.

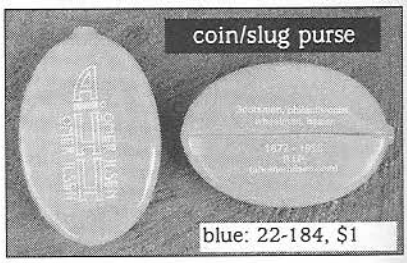
Tandems, like recumbents and folding bikes, seem to attract the ultra-techies, and this wouldn't be that kind of bike. It'll be a comfy country tandem for families and couples who want a beautiful bike that rides well, that's all.

A. Homer Hilsen stuff





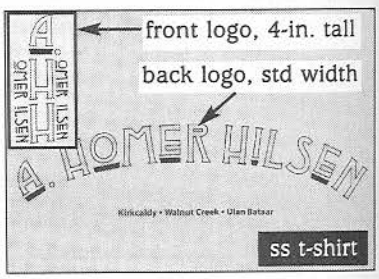
Many of you have wisely embraced A. Homer Hilsen not just as a bicycle, but as a veritable lifestyle, and with the items here, that should be easier'n ever. There's no schlock—it's all really good and cheap. The **coin purse** is a genuine Quikoin/USA model, the same kind you had as a kid. The **knife**, a Victorinox "Pioneer," is identical to the model issued to soldiers in the Swiss Army, but with a ring on it, so you can tie it to something and lessen the chance you'll lose it. It usually retails for $33.50 plain, and we paid $3.50 each for A•H•H engraving, and we're selling it for just $25, which doesn't make sense. The **ss organic cotton T** is super neat and tidy, as T-shirts go. It's made in the USA, and has a nice cut, but order UP a size, friends. $15



M: 24-178; L: 24-179

XL: 24-180; 2X: 24-181

Stock through June only. These items are a hassle to get, and although we'll always have one or two of them, it's doubtful we'll keep in stock the bonanza you see here now.



Headbadges

Almost all bikes had head badges before the 1970s. Then head badges started disappearing, and I'm inclined, as usual, to blame it on racing bikes. Back then the best racing bikes had decals, which may have sent the message that good bikes didn't need a head badge. That's true in a strict sense, but I've never met a rider who'd rather have a heaqd decal than a head badge.

The lousiest badges are plastic. The second lousiest are screen-printed aluminum, which aren't much more than thick decals. The third lousiest are laser-etched aluminum, with more permanence than screen-printed aluminum, but still too smooth.

I like detailed, bumpy head badges. The more and the bigger the better the badge. Good design helps, too.

Head badges are sort of the fun centers of the bike. Everything else is there for a reason. It has to do something, and because of what it has to do, it has to look a certain way. On the head tube, anything you put there works, so have fun.

Lots and lots and lots of people collect head badges, and at least one book on them is coming out in the next few years. The best collection I've seen in real life is the one at Bridgestone. They were all Bridgestone badges, but there were tons of them, and about a third were remarkable. By today's standards, they'd be A-plus-plusses.

Let's not get snobby about head badges. Just enjoy them and don't revere them, and don't look down on good bikes that don't have them, or be impressed by funky bikes that do. It is just a badge, after all, but there's no denying that a really fine one sure is a nice and worthwhile thing.

I'm glad we found HOOK-FAST. Their badges are wonderful, and I wish you could see one up close.

Dan Gorriaran and HOOK-FAST

1. How did HOOK-FAST get started, and why it is called "HOOK-FAST"?

My grandfather, Manuel Gorriaran was born in 1900 and graduated from MIT 20 years later with a degree in mechanical engineering. He then traveled around the world to learn about international trade, and settled in Cuba, in 1926. The name comes from a belt buckle style—the "HOOK-FAST Can't Slip Buckle" a guy named Herbert Hoffman invented. Each buckle was decorated with emblems illustrating people's hobby, trade or affiliation. That was in the mid-1920s, and in 1929, my grandfather moved to the United States and bought HOOK-FAST.

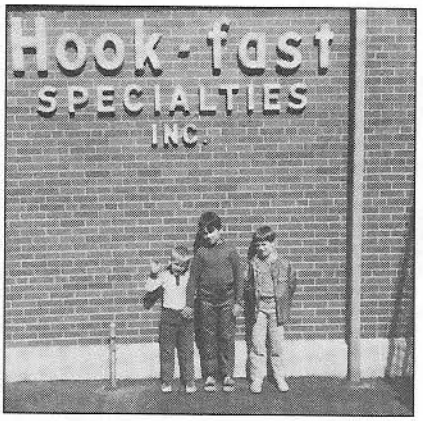
He got requests for emblems without the buckles, and that led to his making badges, nameplates, awards, emblems, and other accessories. He was good at his job and with customers, and HOOK-FAST continued to grow. We moved to our current spot in Providence, Rhode Island in 1959, and by the early 1960s we made more than 5000 distinct products. When my grandfather retired in 1988, I took over.

What have you changed about it?

We've modernized some, just to keep up, but the modernizing hasn't been to cheapen things or make them in higher volume, necessarily. Mainly, we've just bought new machinery and use whatever technology we can to make really finely detailed, last-forever metal badges and emblems. I think what separates us from some others, and what makes our badges look the way they do, is the handwork our craftsmen to the die, and then the finish work. Even with modern equipment, you still have to finish it and do some of the fine details by hand

Your quality is fantastic, your prices are pretty good—we pay about $6.50 per badge after a tooling charge of $1,000 or more. And the badges we get always get here about three months later than we expect, but now we're planning for that. Who are your main customers?

We make badges and emblems for police, firefighters, EMS, the government, corporations, transportation officials, one or two other bike companies, and athletes. I'm a competitive rower,



Dan there waving, with brothers Mike & Steve in front of grampa's plant, 1969.

and now and then my club will win an award, and I'll see it and think, "I could make a better one." So I propose it to the race promoter and show a sample. They're impressed, and I make the medals the next time.

4. What percentage of your customers come back for more badges, or whatever?

Just over 84 percent.

5. How many employees?

Twenty-five.

6. Who is your competition?

V.H. Blackinton, Sun Badge and Smith Warren. They do good work, too.

7. Who owns HOOK-FAST?

The Gorriaran Boys: Mike, Steve and Dan Gorriaran who bought the company from dear old dad when Manuel senior passed. My brothers work in the computer industry, and I work here.

8. What kinds of things do you make?

We make Badges, Name Bars, Medals, Identification Emblems, Service Pins, Airline Wings, Transportation ID, and different kinds of awards. That hasn't changed for a long time; it's what we do.

9. Do you make a HOOK-FAST style belt buckle?

Yes, and let me tell you a story, In the mid '90s we made a big, honkin' western-style buckle for some firefighters. It was 0.22" thick brass. One of the firefighters was in the wrong place at the wrong time, and a bullet hit his buckle, probably saving his life. But yes, we still make belt buckles.

10. Your favorite badge or thing you've ever made? Just your personal opinion, and just to take the pressure off, I won't print this if you say it's one of ours.

The badge projects I like the best are those that make my customer's happiest. It sounds corny but it's true. Nothing makes us more proud than a gushing, enthusiastic customer.

11. What does the future look like for this kind of craft?

It's good. We've noticed a backlash against cheap badges and tags. Most people like buying something really good once and keeping it for life, and when you get something from us, you want to keep it. I think as long as we continue to do it well and rely on technology and top employees, we'll continue to succeed.

12. What do you like to do besides make badges?

I like to row boats. I compete, actually, and since you asked, I won the North American Open Water Rowing Championship in Seattle this past October—it was a crazy race with 180 boats going off on a shotgun start. Two weeks ago my rowing partner, Mike Smith, and I won the Head of Charles for the fourth time. That's the biggest regatta in America. So, when I'm not making badges for A. Homer Hilsen, that's what I like to do.

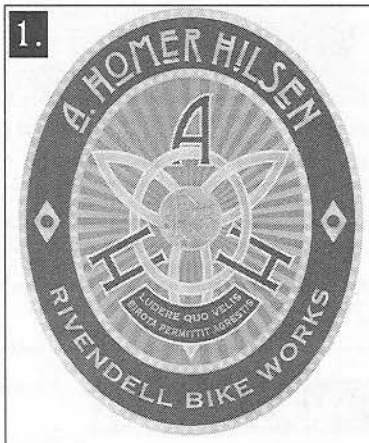
www.hookfast.com

Making the Badge

Even before this, we send a sketch for Hook-Fast to render up nice, like these. I/Grant liked the one on the right with the big letters, but Dan liked the one in the middle, and I liked the centered RBW thing in that one, so we went with it. The one on the left didn't stand a chance, and it had our name wrong, anyway.

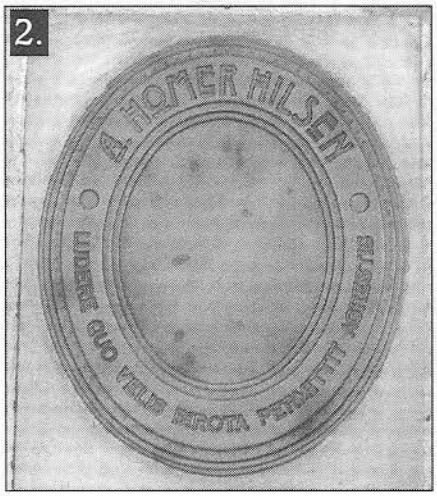
I like the way it turned out. We left two holes, so if you want to rivet it on yourself, you may do so. We glue them on, and that's fine, too.

1.



Since this final piece has recessed lettering, we need to make an electrode. This is made simply by engraving the detail using our computerized plotter into a piece of copper.
We then weld a copper rod to the back of the electrode and drop it into the EDM machine. The electrode is charged and a steel block is dropped into a pool of water. The charged electrode is pressed into the steel for around 35 hours and makes an impression that's about 0.040" deep. Got it?

2.



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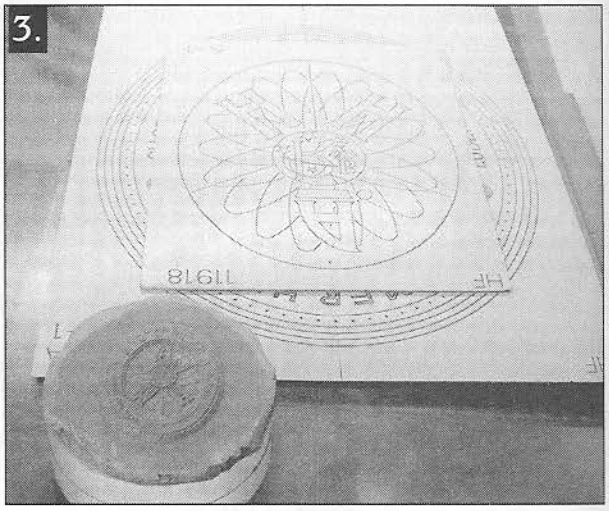
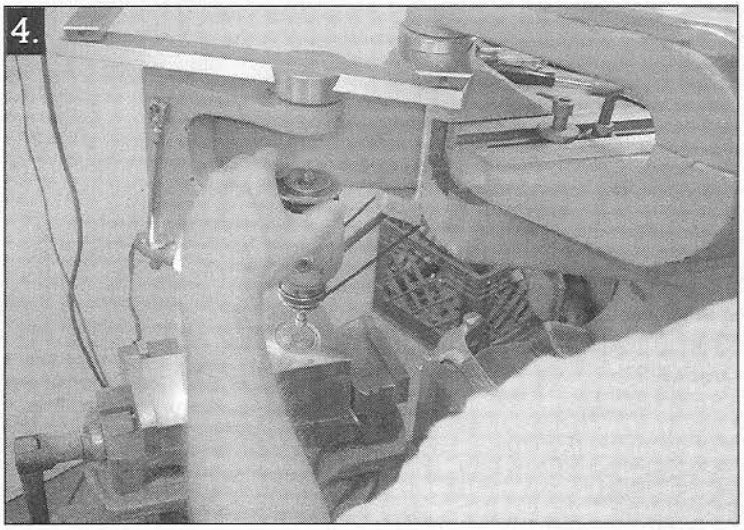


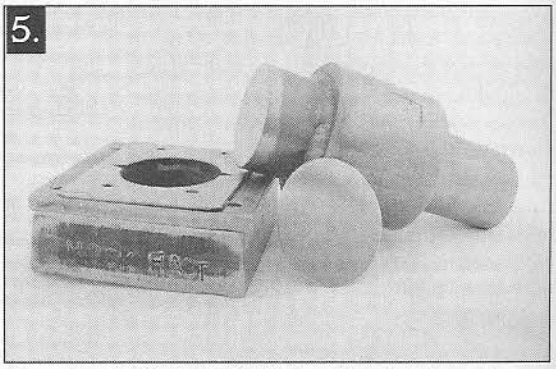
From my trusty art, we vectorize an overlay and cut the remainder of the image in the die with a standard pantograph machine.

4.

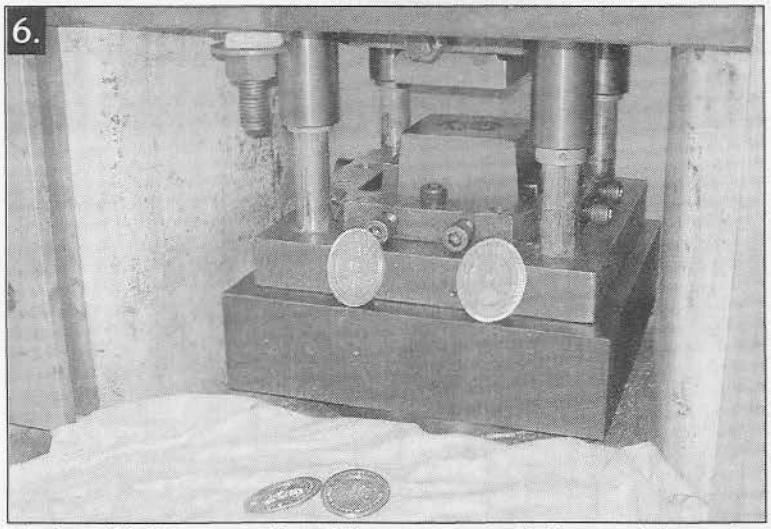


Here, the die-cutter cuts the fine details into the steel block, creating the negative image from which we strike the badge.

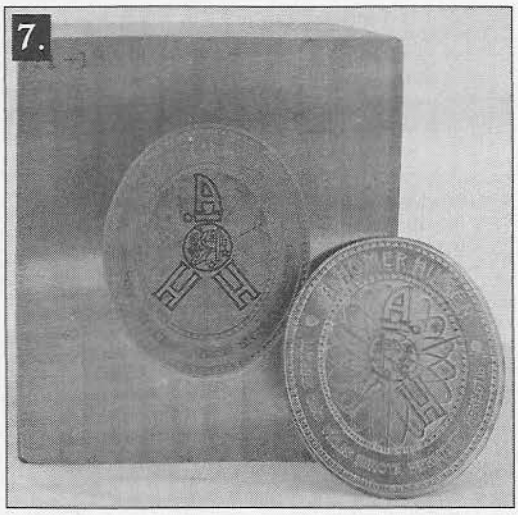
5.



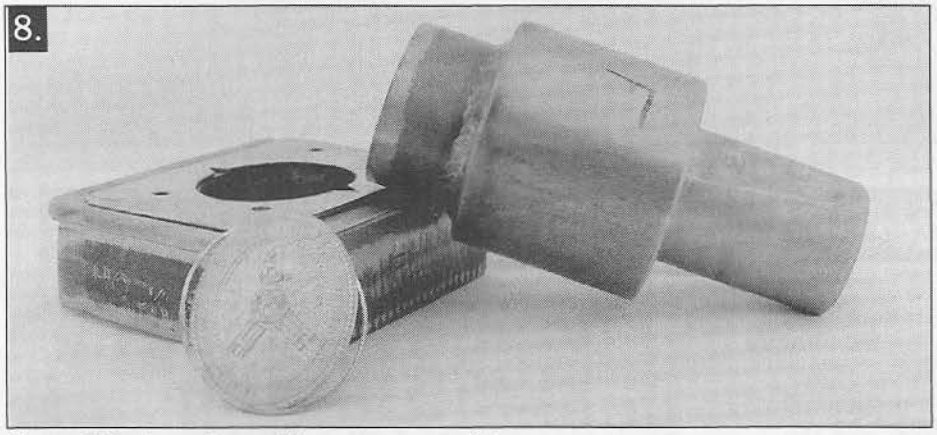
Once the steel block "die" is heat-treated for hardening, we create a trim tool, plunger and stripper in order to blank-out theoval for striking and final trimming. This cookie cutter creates the final shape.



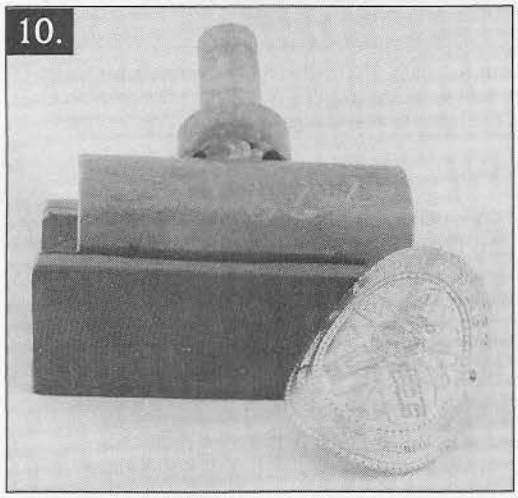
The brass blank is squeezed at 1100 tons per square inch, annealed to make it soft again, then squeezed a second time to ensure that all the deep detail in the die is up and square. This is a crucial step in creating a top-quality deep and detailed badge.



Here's a badge after the first squeeze in the hydraulic press shown to the left there. A closer inspection will reveal some of the flaws from the first squeeze where the borders aren't fully even.



Above: This trim tool cuts off any excess material.
Right: Here's the badge after two blows, trimming, and piercing (making the holes). As I understand it, the badges will be glued. But the holes do allow a screw-or-rivet option.



Finally, we make a "dapping" tool, which forms the badge to fit the bike's head tube. The lower part of the tool is wood, radiused to fit snug against the head tube.

The badge is fully blackened and the highlights are polished off before it is silver plated. This makes the details "pop."

The letters are inlaid with enamel, then baked. Then a final layer of lacquer is baked on, and each badge is inspected for perfection.

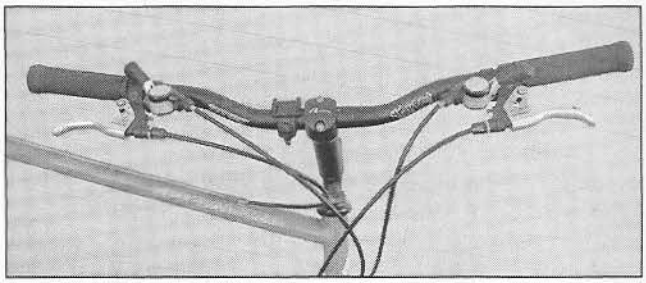
Specialized Rockhopper Makeover

The early-'80s to early-'90s medium-good, all-steel, non-suspended, no monkey business mountain bikes will live forever. They were designed before the superlight craze, so the tubes are appropriately thick to handle whatever for however long you own the bike, and even a couple of generations of inheritors who don't even like it. If you have a Specialized Rockhopper or Rock Combo, Bianchi Grizzly, Bridgestone MB-2,3, or 4 or even 5, or any of a dozen others, and you don't ride it any more for whatever reason, then you should spiff it up a little and make it fun again.Those were tough workhorses with no frills or gimmicks, and they cost next to nothing, there's a lot of life left in them, and they don't make bikes like that anymore.

I'm not saying they're collectable or to be cherished and weeped over, just that they were built simply and made to last a long, long time.

But almost all of them were bought too small, and that's the thing. If you have one, I bet it doesn't fit. Back then, six-footers got 20-inchers, five-eighters got 17-inchers, and so on. Most of those bikes have long stems and low bars, good for aggressive climbing on steep trails, but not good for anything else.

You fix them by jacking up the handlebars and subbing another kind of handlebar for the mountain bike



The bike came with flat bars. The owner put on these riser bars (and a new stem, too) in an attempt to make the bike comfortable. But it's not enough. He needs higher bars and better 'gornomics.

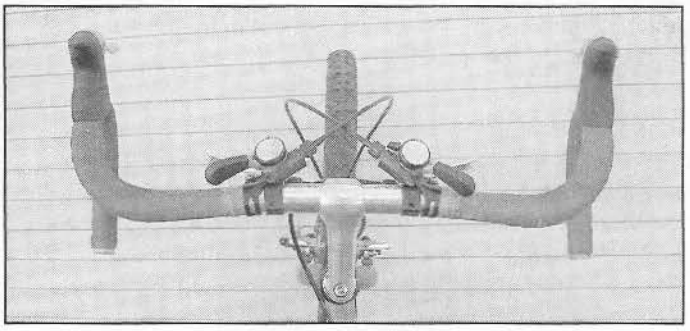
bars that they have now. The bike shown here already got new bars. The riser-style bar shown on this page wasn't normal back then, and as far as that goes, neither was the super upjutting stem. So this fellow had already put about $65 into the bike when he came to us and wanted to get comfortable.

He wanted drop bars high. He could just as easily have used Moustache H'bars or Albatross, but this time he wanted drops. So we used our tallest stem, the Nitto DirtDrop 10cm, and the 48cm wide Noodle bars that he requested. Lucky for him, we needed to fill these two pages with a Makeover, and as we hadn't done one like this in a while, we took it on and donat-

ed the labor in exchange for letting us use his bike for this story. That's how it works, sometimes. It's the famous "right place, right time" phenomenon.

He wanted to use as much of his old stuff as possible, and so he kept the shifters. They're made for 22.2mm handlebars, so to make them fit the 23.8mm Noodle bars, Mark here performed minor surgery, used a longer bolt, and that did it.

The made-over bike looks not bad. Kind of funny, but not bad. To me, it looks like the guy knew what he wanted and finally got it. A bike like this is ready for fenders, racks, touring, commuting, shopping, trail riding, anything.



This seems to be the "thumb shifter on drop bar" issue. He also switched back to cantilever brakes, which work better with these levers. Yes, you can get some drop bar levers that are made to work with V-brakes, but he didn't want 'em and we didn't have 'em.

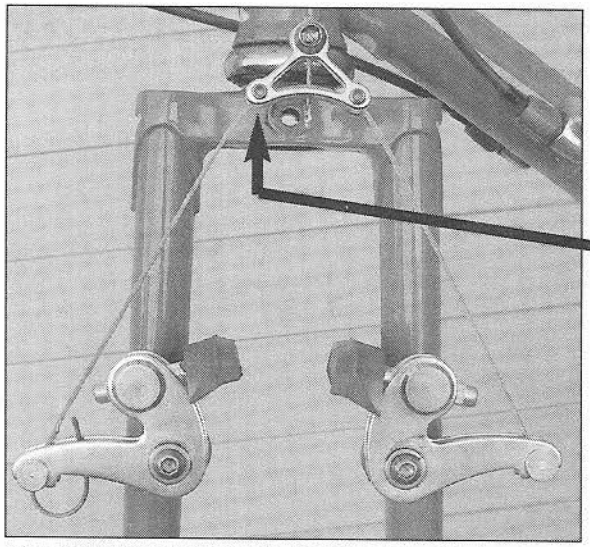
When's it not worth it?

Bikes that just sit around not getting ridden are like landfill on your own property, and who needs that? Most long-time bike riders have a bike or two or more that used to fit or used to feel good before they knew what "feels good" means, and most of the time those bikes have plenty of use in them. Don't go thinking, "I bought the bike for $400 twenty years ago; I'm sure not going to put that much into it just to get it running!" If you've had lots of good miles and years on the bike, keep it around for more. The same amount of money won't go far on a new bike, and fixing up an old bike is satisfying—whether you do the work yourself, or have your local bike shop do it. If they tell you, "Not worth it, just get a new bike," introduce them to the concept of recycling. They probably do it at home anyway, but it does more good to recycle a bike than a soda bottle, any day.

Ninety percent of the time, the problem is low bars. Stems such as the Nitto Techmomic or the Nitto DirtDrop can solve almost any low-bar problem; and Albatross bars, with their 65mm of rise, help get the grips up higher still. Bike shops usually have a decent assortment of inexpensive high-rise stems around, and they cost a fraction of what our Nitto stems cost.

To answer the headline: It's not worth it if the frame is cracked or old and French. Otherwise, it probably is.

The Tektro Ribbet: An Unlikely New, Old-Style Cantilever



This is a good-looking brake, no way around that. Stamped aluminum and not all that finely finished (except for the cable hanger), but no matter—the swoop of the arms more than makes up for that. The brakes rest on brass bushings. Everything is uncovered and visible; no black box here. The brake shoes aren't that hot. Wear them out, then go for some stubby ones that clear the frame better.

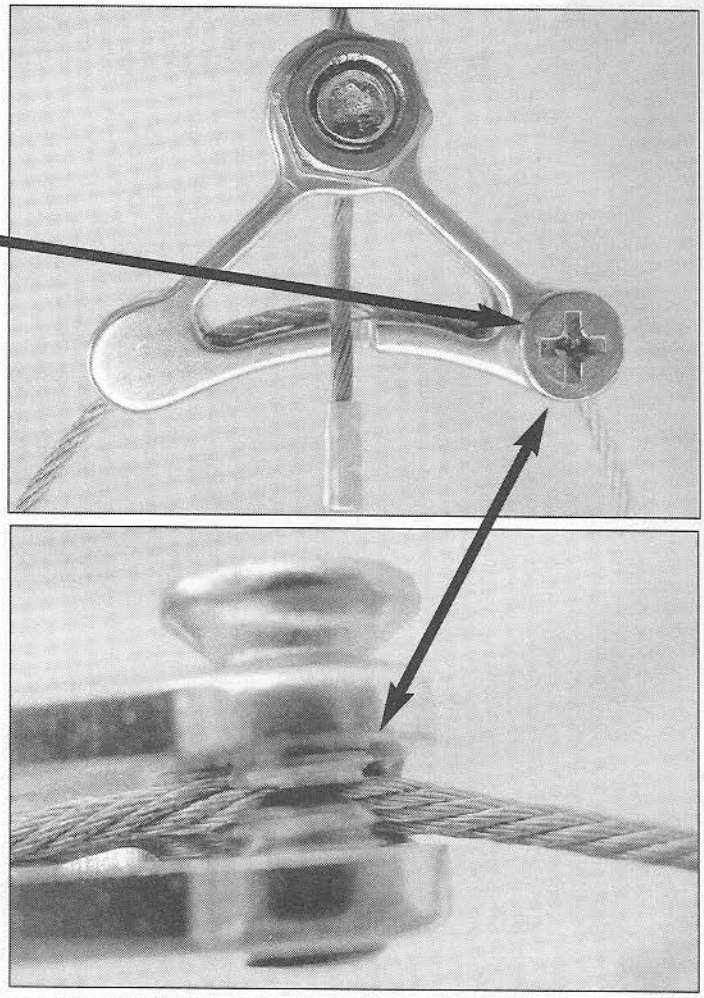
Ribbet Cantilevers...by Tektro

Cyclo-cross racers will immediately recognize these as copies of the Macedonia-made Froglegs brakes. There are minor differences. These aren't cut-out in front as the Froglegs are, for one thing—but it's obvious to anybody who's seen Froglegs that these brakes are a lot like them.

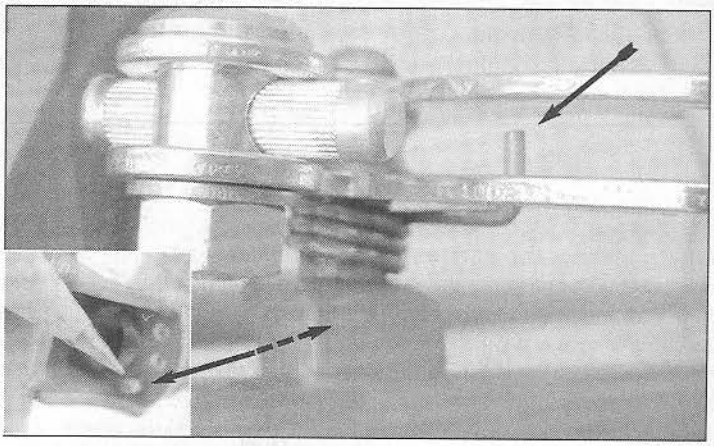
They're made in Taiwan by Tektro, Formosa's biggest and most trusted braker maker, and like their inspiration, there seem to be no concessions to Modern Times: The brake pads are the post-style (yay! more rubber and better fork and seat stay clearance); there's no way to conveniently toe them in short of grinding the pads, bending the posts, or whacking on the cantilever braze-ons (not yay! but not boo! either, since it's easy to deal with this if you're a "dealer" kind of mechanic); and as was always the case with the Mafacs that inspired Froglegs, you set the spring tension as you install the arms, by sticking the end of the spring into one of three holes in the braze-on. It's not as easy and after-the-fact as a phillips screw on a modern brake, but it's also no big deal to anybody with an "I shalt not faileth" attitude.

We were thrilled to find this brake. It looks terrific, it works great, the quality is excellent, and the only fly in the ointment is that it's not as "plug and play" as are other cantilevers. If you're a cantilever rookie or just not all that mechanically adept, maybe these aren't for you. But if you consider yourself handy and can cowboy up when the situation calls for it, these Ribbets are a great way to go, cantilever-wise.

Part No. 15-141. $80 for one whole bikesworth

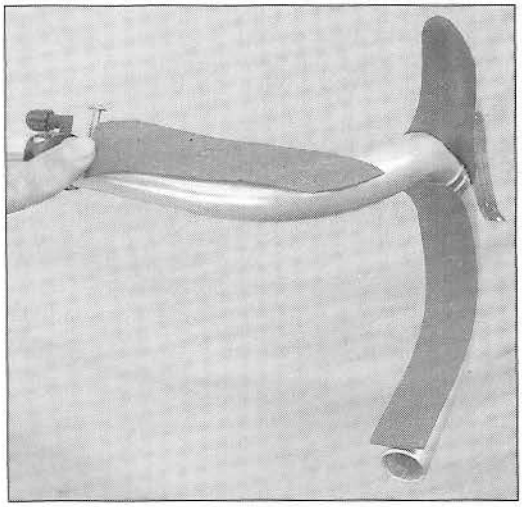


Above and to the left, you can see the unique straddle wire hanger with a pinch bolton one side that lets you lock in the straddle wire, thus maintaining the adjustment. It's a small, tiny, nearly inconsequential detail, but one that, combined with the superb finish on the hanger, launches this hanger into a league of its own, cable hanger-wise. It's like the guy who designed the brake and the guy who designed the straddle wire hanger had totally opposite tastes.



The superb lower ARROW indicates that the spring pokes in to any of three holes (this is typical) in the cantilever boss, depending on how much tension you want. The other end of the spring sticks into a slot in the backside of the arm, clearly pointed out by the upper arrow (with feather). This is the old-fashioned way of adjusting spring tension, and it works just fine.

Fun With Handlebars

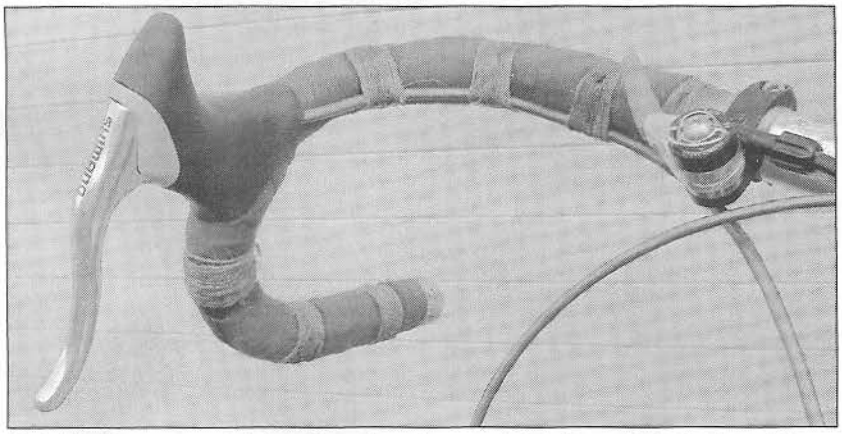


A little bit of cork, sometimes all you need

For the most part, you can divide the world's population into two groups: Those who like cork tape, and those who think it's too fat. If you like a little more padding but don't like the allover bulk of a full cork wrap (we are not suggesting you shouldn't like that; we are just acknowledging that some folks don't, and you might be one o;-'em), then here's a way you can sort of get the goodness without the fatness.

Lay the cork down as shown, or even make it two layers. Or one layer below and two on top, or any variation you like. Just don't wrap it, because wrapping it adds fatness under the bar, where it doesn't actually help, even a little bit. Not saying it hurts, just that it doesn't help.

When you apply the cork this way, you can wrap over it with cloth, and since cloth comes in many more colors than cork (at least here it does), you can get just the color you want and the feel of cloth, and all the fatness and cush where you need it.

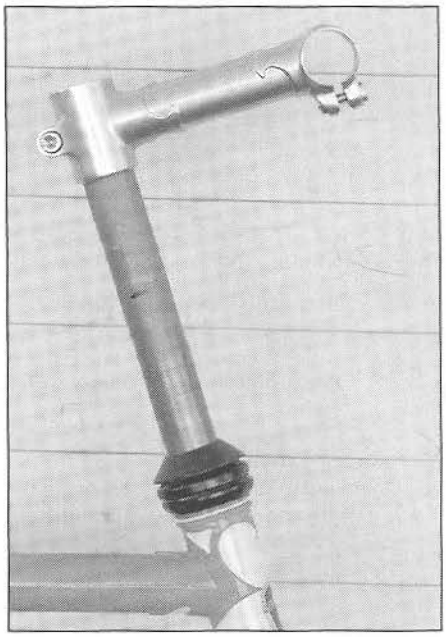


Page 48 of our new catalogue shows how to wrap twine. Hemp twine's there, too. You don't have to wrap 3/4-inch each time. Get it good at the curve, and do 6 to 8 wraps on the other parts. It's not critical, it's new territory, pioneer it!

Texture with Twine

You can divide the world's population into two distinct groups: Those who wrap cables under the tape because they like the "clean" look of it even at the expense of not being able to re-cable the bar if you change shifters; and the other fellas. Above, the cables are outside, but secured under twine. It could as easily and a lot more quickly have been staggered wraps of cloth tape in a same or contrasting color, or zip-ties, for that matter.

But cloth wrap means you'd have a potential flapper on every wrap, unless you twined each wrap, and if you're up to that you're better off cutting to the chase and eliminating the extra cloth. Twining takes time, but you just put on some music and fill your hydration pack with a milkshake, and by the time you've heard about five songs and sucked down 800 calories, voila! When you use hemp twine, it's best to shellac it, and that both darkens it and "stiffens the hairs" that stick out. So when you grab it, it feels kind of rough, but in a good way. Time and use smooth it out, and all the while you've got a unique-looking bar that gives you something to feel during your ride. It's not half-bad. Also, there's no reason you must wrap the right half of your bar the same as the left. Sometimes people can't decide between two colors when they both look good with the bike. You don't have to decide, just get both and to heck with the scoundrel-like, nay-sayers!



Odd but possible & safe

Most threadless forks have carbon or aluminum steer tubes you have to cut short (about 45mm), and consequently, you can't raise the bars high. If you leave it long, the your fancy fork might snap—my friend—and down you go.

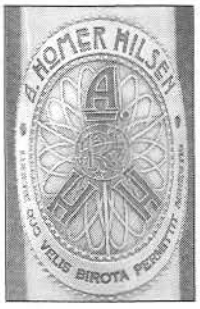
With steel, it's possible to have a high bar on a threadless steerer. The fork above is a Legolas. We didn't leave the bars this high, but just so you know...it would have been safe to do so. Go, steel.

Frame and Bike Update

We have a new builder, Mark Nobilette. So now we have Curt and Mark. Mark brings 33 years of custom building to the plate, and met with Curt to learn some Rivendell tricks. On top of that, he's built about 40 non-customs for us, and is fully comfortable with our requirements, our tubes, our lugs, you name it—he is up to speed.

For a few years now we've been telling folks that customs take a year and a half to two years. We expect that to shrink to a year now, and the quality will remain as high as it ever was. Taking on Mark doesn't mean he and Curt are competing with one another. They both build to our specs, and both meet our highest requirements. Getting another builder means two builders and faster delivery, both good things, and nothing bad.

On another note, not exactly related to Rivendells but without a section of its own below—we are revisiting tandems. Toyo may make them, and under what name, can't say, other than it won't be Georgie Porgie or the Gunga Din.



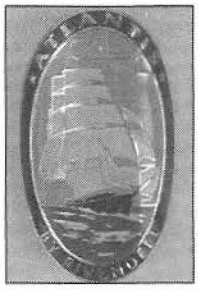
The A. Homer Hilsen is finally being delivered, and Waterford is still making them. We're trying to get them to paint them, too. Go to Ahomerhilsen.com to see lots of photos and learn about it, and even enter your poems and songs to win up to $40 credit toward anything we offer. $1600 frame/fork, but if you order all the parts for it, you get $100 credit.

The new butterscotch Saluki frames are in, along with some unpainted ones you can get painted almost any color, if you pay more & wait 3 months. Eventually we'll phase out the 60 & 62cm frames, since the A. Homer Hilsen virtually duplicates their function. We now have canti & sidepull/centerpull models in stock. Price, $1600 w/headset.

The Bleriot is the biggest bargain in our line, and you can get it through us or through any bike dealer in the country, since it is also distributed by QBP (big distributor). We expected it to drastically bite into Saluki sales, but that hasn't been the case, oddly enough. $750 for frame + fork; $1900 whole bike. Price will increase in early 2007. It uses 650B wheels. 49-61cm.

We don't sell enough smalls & bigs to keep making them, so if you're short or tall and want one, order up before we run out. The Rambouillet is everything a road frame ought to be. Good tire clearance, fenderable, light rackable, super comfortable, durable, beautiful. The current color is green, but we have some blues, too. $2350 complete bike, plus saddle/pedals.

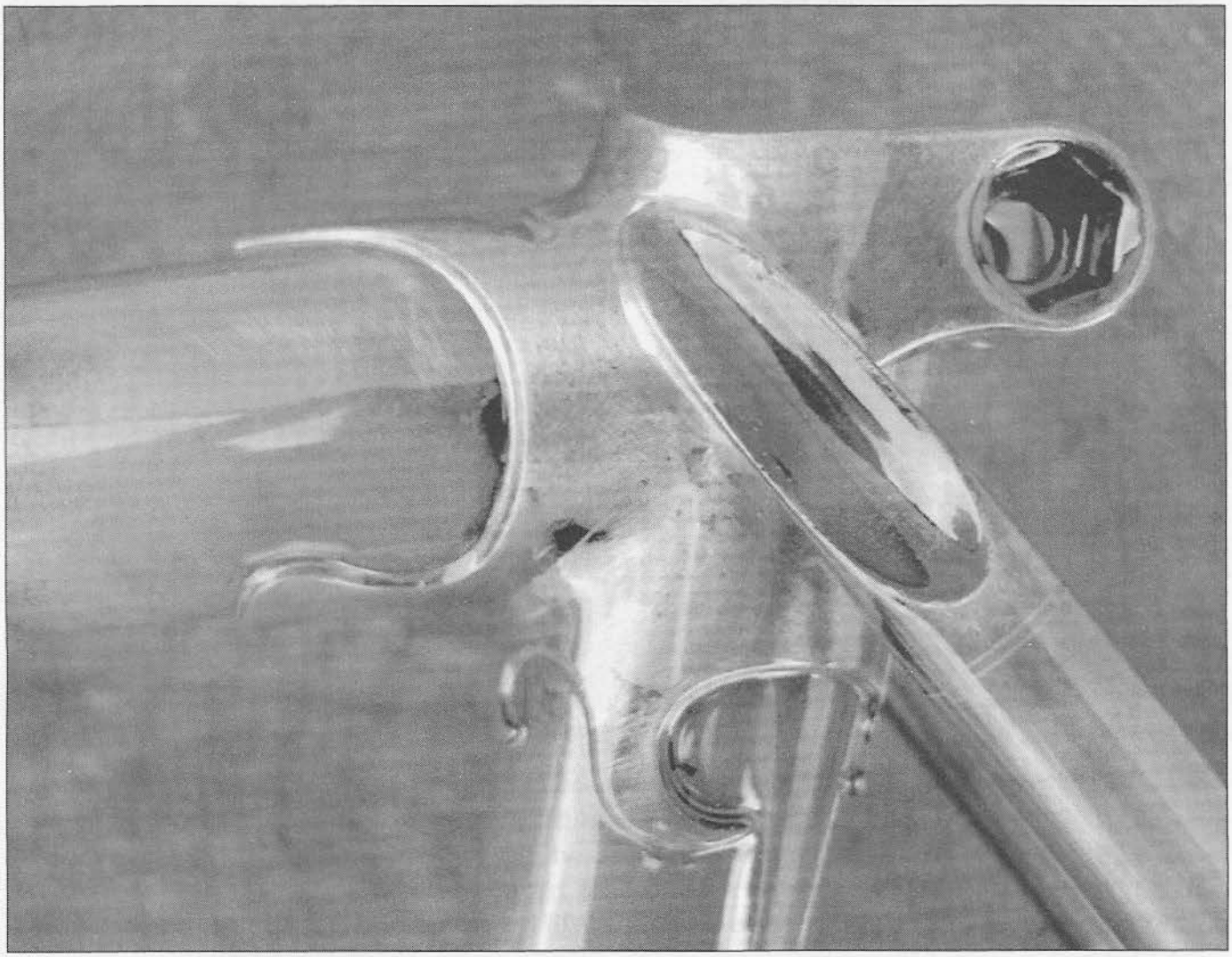
Big guys don't buy derailerless bikes, so we're not going to make these bigger than 64 anymore. We have a few of the mid-sizes in stock still, but lots of the biggies, so if you're tall and want a Quickbeam, now's a good time to step up to the plate. The Quickbeam is a mainstay of our line, and we'll get another batch in next year. Not sure of the color yet, though. Maybe frames only, not sure.



The Atlantis continues to be our most popular model, and we continue to run out of 61s regularly. The color is staying the same, but we have some unpainted ones in, and you can get those nearly any color you want, for a $200 upcharge. At some time in the future, we'll get them in with kickstand plates. Not yet, but sometime. $1400 frame/fork.

The Legolas, our cyclo-cross bike, is sold out in most sizes, with just a few 53s remaining. We're taking $200 deposits now, and if you order yours by February 25, you'll have it by June 20. Not sure of the color, but there may be options. $1500 frame & fork.

The Bombadil is our old-fashioned mountain bike that doesn't exist yet, but may exist sometime next year. We need to decide on the wheel size. Probably it'll come in 3 sizes, with a sloping up top tube. We will make no attempt to make it light. It won't have any extra fat, just extra strength, and its weight will fall where it does, considering that.



Another paint option?—Clear powdercoat over bare steel

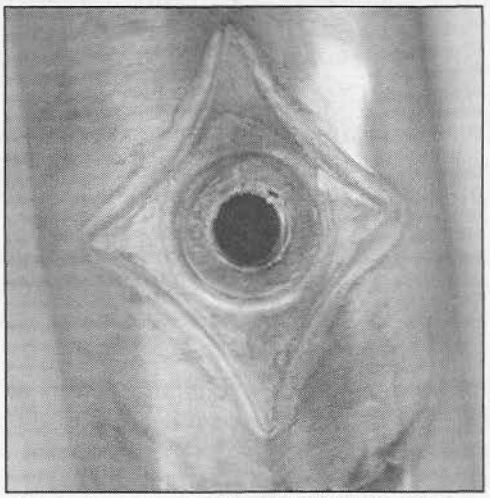
Bare steel looks like medieval armor, and every man alive likes that look, my friend. Women don't. We have several bare-metal frames around here, and it's guys often ask, "Can I get mine like this?"

Until recently the answer has *No*, because we've been painting with polyurethane paint and that kind of clear coat is porous, so it can rust underneath it. But powder coat paint is every bit as super-protective in clear as it is in colors. We have a local powder coater who says "No problem. We do it all the time to car parts. No rust, pal. Piece of cake."

We've had some bikes painted this way, and we'll ride them in the rain this winter, which is now, and if they hold up as expected we'll offer it as a paint option on at least one and maybe several models. My guess is that it will pull at people but when it comes time to push the button they'll go for a color. That's understandable; it's fun to pick your favorite color.

Now and then somebody asks for a "stealth" frame with no decals. That's kind of like hiding your date, isn't it? We're proud of these frames. Maybe the lugs and headbadge would ID them, though. That might be enough. We're going to have to think on it. What would Rolls-Royce do?

A clear-coated frame will cost less than a normal one. It's a lot easier.



The customs have bottle stars, like this. That seat lug up there is used for most of our models. Flame paint and file marks come standard.

Protovelo No.1. A 650B mountain bike

For 2 years we've hinted about a mountain bike. Now we have a prototype, with 650B wheels. This may be a can't-win deal, where 650B naysayers think the wheel size is dumb, and 650B yaysayers don't like mountain bikes. But when you scour your mind of all activity, it makes sense. It will be called the Bombadil, by the way.

Mountain bikes have matured like the six-year old kid playing wiffle ball with his pop, now all grown up and a violent ne-er-do-well. The original personality is gone, along with the plaid shirts and boots and baseball cap riding uniforms and working your way through the woods.

We want to make a mountain bike the way it was made originally and still ought to be—with thick chrome-moly tubes that won't buckle unless you really do something dumb at high speed, and won't develop a fatigue crack for at least...40 years. A bike with no movement besides the cush in the tires, because for riding in the woods and on trails, even rough ones, that ought to be enough.

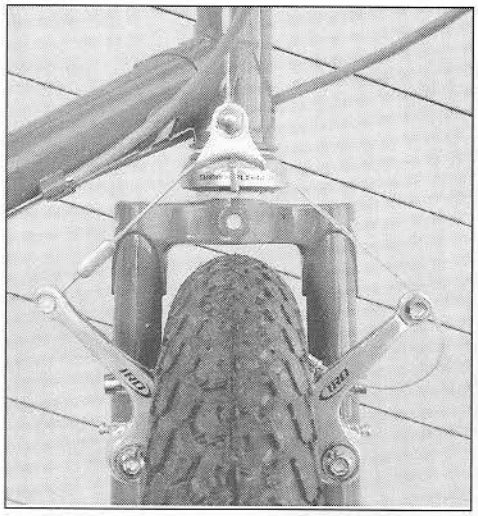
The kind of frame we're talking about can't possibly weigh less than 5 1/2 pounds. We picked tubes that made sense for a bike doomed to a hard life, and it weighs what it weighs, and no, it's not that much.

The Protovelo you see here is the first prototype, and there will be at least another. The frame isn't all that much different from an Atlantis frame, but it's heavier and the lugs are different and the top tube slopes more, which lets us make fewer sizes.

The bike shown is close to final, but there will be a few changes. We may get in complete bikes, we may get just the frames. If complete bikes, we have to decide on the bars. Bullmoose, maybe? Maybe.

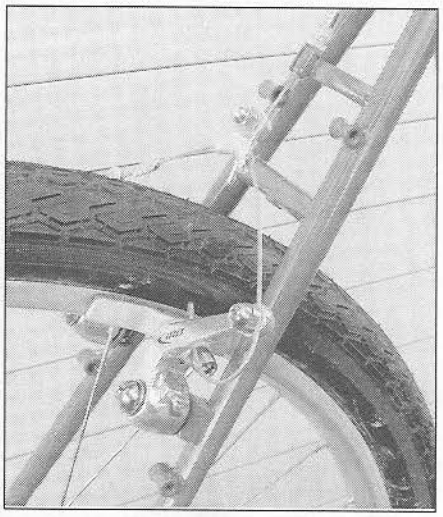
We're sticking with cantilevers, not going with disks, for reasons we'll explain later when there's more space to do that in. Oh, and it'll have 650B wheels. Why? Well, 29ers are too big for small to medium bikes, and 26ers are too small for big bikes. We aren't going to make anything too big or too small; just three medium sizes in this bike, and they'll all work with the 650Bs. There aren't many 650B mountain bikes around, and likely never will be. That's OK. This one will outlast them all. Look for it in June, 2007, but not at your local bike shop.

So far, the plans are to bring in 25 frames or bikes (Toyo-built, in Japan) in May of 2007. Painted one color to get the cost down, with some lug details filled in. Color undecided, price, about $2,000.



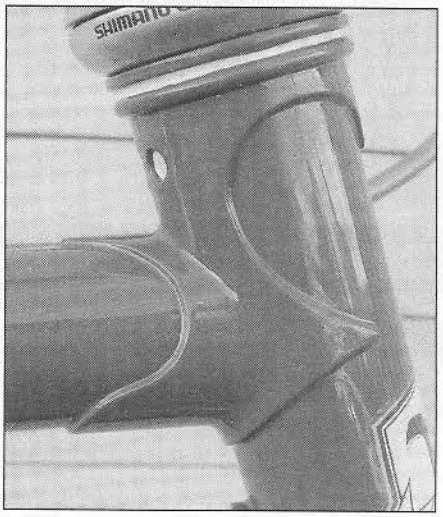
LEFT: That's why it's a prototype. Although there's plenty of room for a dry wheel to roll through, there's not enough room for a fender or mud, so the next prototype will have longer fork blades. This tire is a new Schwalbe, 650B x 45.5mm, although Schwalbe calls is a 54. It's a heavy, Germanic tire with a combo tread. Kirk Pacenti is working on a lighter fatty knobby, and with any luck at all, it'll be here within a year.

RIGHT: There's more clearance in the rear. Certainly enough for a fender with this tire, and no fender with the Phantom Pacenti tire, but we'll raise the bridge another centimeter, anyway. The braze-ons are for a Mark's rack, and that may change.



LEFT: The seat lug looks familiar, with the same binder details we have on all of our seat lugs. But the main difference is that this lug is cast at a 78-degree angle, which makes it easier to have a 4-degree slope on the top tube with a 72-degree seat tube angle. This is where my math education comes in real handy.

RIGHT: The top head lug, like the seat lug, is also cast steeper than usually, to accommodate the more radical upslope. We haven't used these lugs on any previous models. About five years ago when I thought maybe someday we'd make a bike that needed them and we had some money, I had them made. Now they're coming in handy.

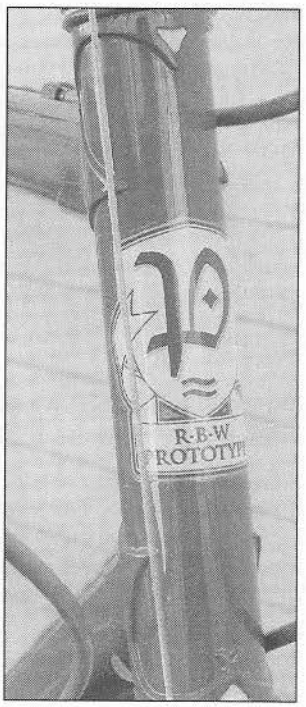


Protovelo

A DEVELOPMENT PROTOTYPE MADE FOR RIVENDELL BICYCLE WORKS

TOP: The downtube decal should probably say "by" rather than "for." The "for" makes it sound as though we contracted out the build, which we did, strictly speaking, but no more so than on any of our other bikes. We have about sixteen "Protovelo" frames around here, and we're slowly getting them painted, and will build them up into bikes and sell them off cheap (relatively speaking). The mountain bike will be called a Bombadil—another name from Middle Earth, but it sounds good for a mountain bike.

RIGHT: On this and at least one other Protovelo, I put the seat tube decal on the head tube. It's only a Prototype, so no big deal, and it fits on there fine, as the real head tube decal does on the seat tube.



Possible Bombadil sizes, geometry, and so on

Seat tube: 72
Head tube/rake: 70.5/52
BB drop: 53
Sizes: S/18", M/20", L/22"

Top tube: not sure
Chainstay: 46cm
Down tube: 1.2/0.9 DB
Seat tube: 1.2/0.9 SB

Top tube: 1.0/0.7 DB
Fork blades: 1.2 tapered
Chain stay: 1.0 tapered
Steerer: Threaded 1-inch

No lugs, a straight fork, straight handlebars, and mag wheels with Schrader valves, but when the task at hand is teaching your child how to ride a bike, this is the tool, my friend; this is the tool. The saddle height adjusts from about 15 to 17.8-inch in increments of about half an-inch.

The Radio Flyer Learning Bike

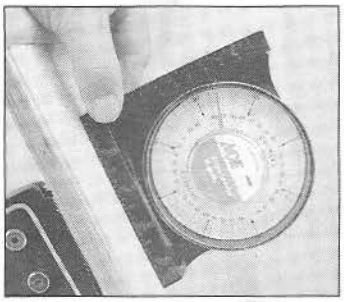
We all learned with training wheels, but that doesn't change the fact that they teach you habits you have to unlearn when you take them off. Riding a bike above about 5mph, you turn by leaning. But training wheels don't let you lean, so you turn by cranking on the handlebar. When you do that at any speed above about 10 mph, you fall over, away from the turn.

The cagey Europeans—slavics and Germans, mainly—know all about that, which is why, when you go to Germany or some other parts of Europe, you see tiny tots scooting around on bikes without pedals. These bikes are called "balancing bikes" or "learning bikes" or something like that, and Radio Flyer has now introduced one.

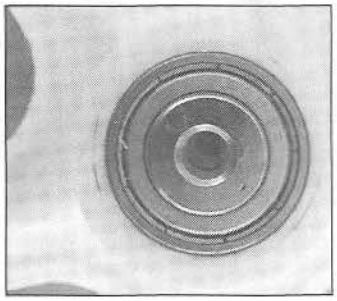
Radio Flyer has a good name, but even so I was surprised at how well thought-out the bike was, and even though it's for little tots, there are no distracting graphics, just the classic Radio Flyer logo on the familiar red. I tried hard to get somebody from Radio Flyer's "design team" to talk to me, so I could praise them and get more info behind the design, and nobody returned the call or email. So I'm guessing they just import a stock model from China, and put their name on it. That's fine.

At about $110 to $120, it's a bargain. If it taught your child to ride a pedal-able two-wheeler, it would be a bargain at three times that price, wouldn't it?

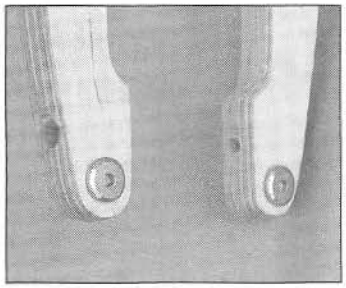
If your local Radio Flyer dealers are like mine, they haven't a clue about this bike and don't want to order it. So buy it from redwagons.com, which seems to be Radio Flyer's direct-marketing site. On RadioFlyer.com, you can find out all kinds of interesting stuff about RF. Click on HERITAGE, and watch the video. It'll tell you why Radio Flyer is called Radio Flyer, and who the heck Antonio Pasin is. The site is worth the trip.—Grant



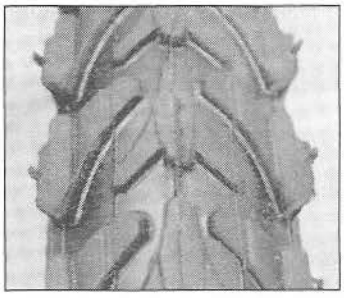
Tech-minded parents will be interested to know the head tube angle is about 74-degrees. The fork rake is zero, and the resulting "trail," is a low 20mm—good for low-speed maneuverability, not so good for high-speed control.



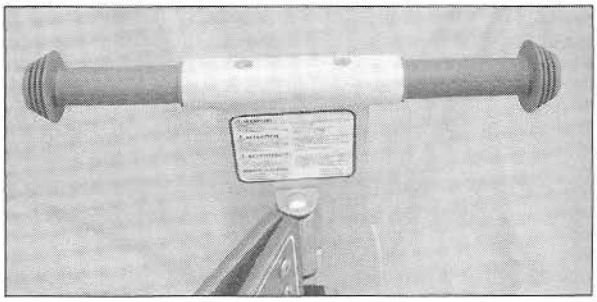
This appears to be, and feels like a cheap sealed bearing, and if that's the case, it's overkill for a bike of this type, but a nice, thoughtful feature. The wheels go on and off easily. This is really a good bike for a good little tyke.



The front fork ends, showing the laminations. The axle fits through the upper holes. The silver nut-ish things on the bottom are a thoughtful touch that seem to serve no purpose other than to prevent the dreaded delam.



Strategically placed channels guide water out to the sides; large side knobs grip loose dirt during steep leans, and a low center tread assures maximum speed on the flats. This 12" x 40mm blackwall is rated to 35 psi and has a Schrader valve.



While we don't condone the straight handlebar, the woodness makes up for it. Two bolts firmly attach it to the fork. The rubber grips (which, we prefer cork, but let's cut some slack here) have anti-slipoff knobs. This view also shows the headset. The fork is easily removed, attaches firmly, and absorbs shock like only plywood can.

This is the first such bike I'd seen. A blue PUKY, just like this one. All steel frame, inflatable wheels, foot platform, drum brake, and a saddle that's designed to keep you centered. PUKY makes a couple different sizes. I believe this is the small, and its saddle adjusts from 13 to 17in. off the ground. Here it is shown in the high position.

A German one called the PUKY

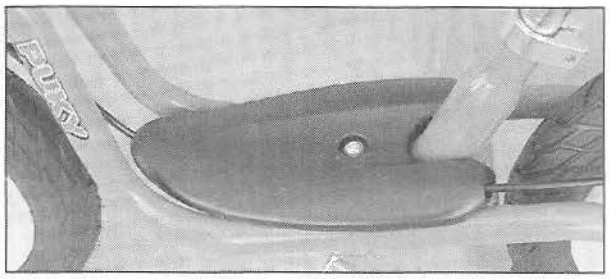
All those comments about how we all learned with training wheels even though they're bad, and the cagey Europeans have a better way applies to this bike, too. I saw one of these on the local bike trail, commandeered by 3-year old Dieter, with mom on his wheel. Dieter was in high glee, in 7mph spurts of paddling feet, resting his feet on the platform while the lactic acid dissolved.

It was an impressive sight, and it was surprising how fast he could go. Mom was on her own bike, and didn't have to stop and wait for him. She pedaled slowly, but she pedaled, and commented that if Young D compared to walking, they go further and faster, and Dieter learned a skill. He'd already mastered it, it seemed like, and was just using the bike as a bike, not a learning tool. He's not the kid you'd want yours to race or compete against in a bicycle rodeo. Remember them?

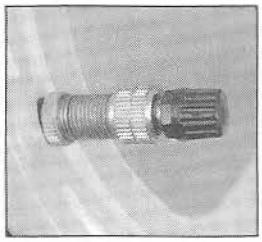
The frame is steel, our favorite material. The lack of seat stays and top tube doesn't seem to hurt anything. Everything you could think of—or at least everything a young paddler needs—is included and nicely addressed. Knobby grips, a saddle that's hard to slip off, kickstand...

The chief bugger is availability, since the PUKY is not distributed in this country yet. It costs about $100 in Germany, though (and another $90 or so to get it here). We're debating whether we should stock this bike, just refer people to the readily available Radio Flyer, import something from China.

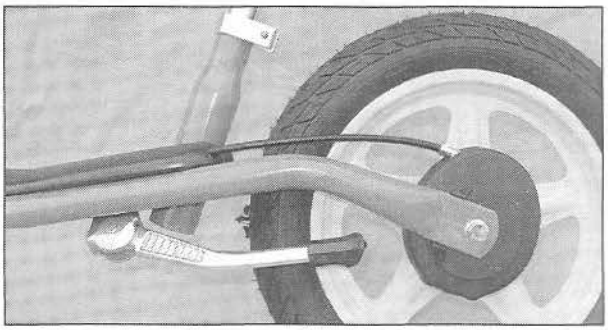
Meanwhile, we are debating getting together a Lending Library of these bikes. Details will be on our site by Feb 15.



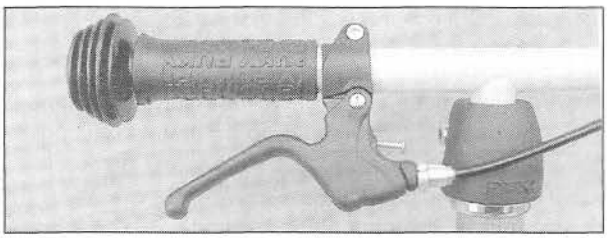
The foot platform is a neat feature that's sorely lacking in most adult bikes. Once they have the balance down, it's a good place to rest feet on a long glide. I'm for it.



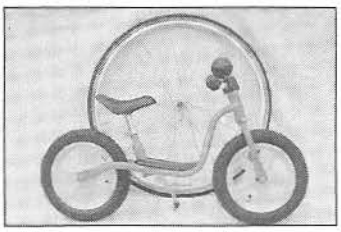
Not our favorite valve, the Woods, but as Sheldon says, you can inflate it with a presta pump. Woods valves have a curious popularity in Europe and Japan. I'm against them, but given the presta-pump compatibility, it's not a deal-killer. I probably just don't understand them. Yes, that's it.



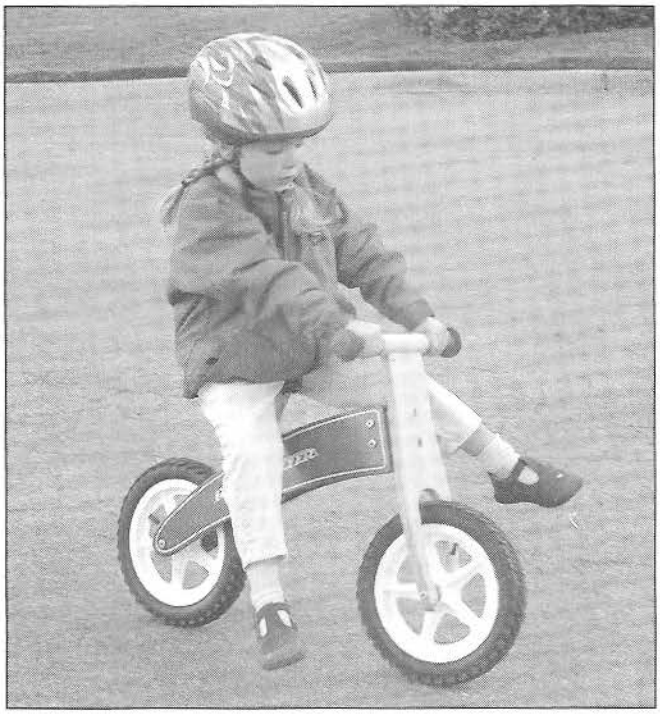
No seat stays or top tube, but the chainstay-like tube is plenty beefy. Note the kickstand and drum brake, evidence that the PUKY doesn't mess around. The 12-in. x 1.9 tires tires actually measure 46mm wide and have a "street cred" tread not unlike that of a Schwalbe Marathon.



If young Klaus can't reach the brake lever, it can be adjusted so that he can. Here also you can see the knob on the end of the grip—a feature that seems to be *de rigeur* for this style bike.



PUNY PUKY. Tiny tyros can get in on the 2-wheel action with a Puny Puky, with a minimum seat height of 13.25-in. No brakes, so watch it on the steep hills; but the kickstand remains. Same Puky quality as big Sib rides.



Annie on the Radio Flyer

Annie is 5, and has been riding the Radio Flyer for two weeks and has covered more than 3 miles, not including extensive indoor riding. It has dramatically increased her confidence and her ability to balance.

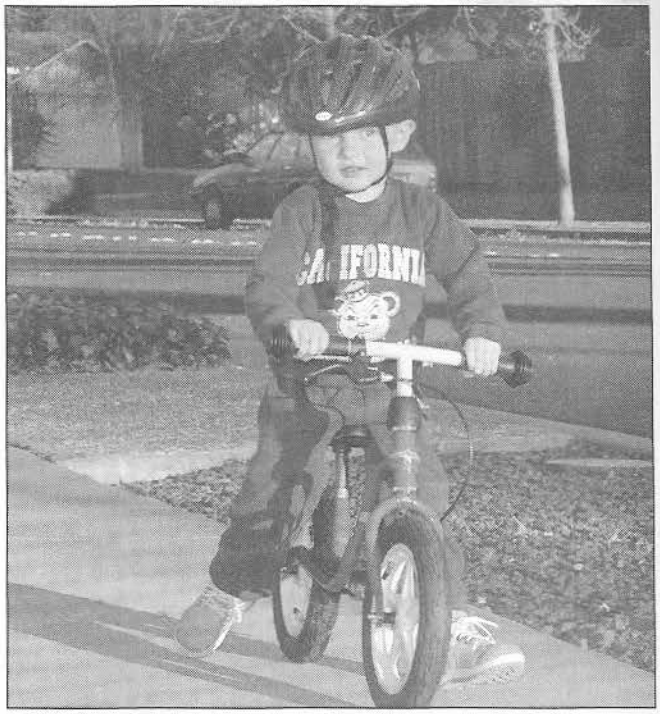
Earlier, I'd removed the pedals on the bike but even with the seat as low as it would go she had to tip-toe to reach the ground, so she couldn't push off. So I put the pedals back on and removed the training wheels and spent hours running alongside her, holding the back of the seat or the handlebars while she pedaled. This was frustrating for her and she was constantly worried that I'd let go. It hurt my back, too.

But Annie was in love with the Radio Flyer bicycle from the start, and immediately began scooting around the house. Then on the street in front of our house and she found a small down hill, and experimented with short coasts. Soon she was raising both feet off the ground to see how far she could go without touching down. The adjustable seat made it easy for her to reach the ground with her feet flat. She frequently coasts and is getting the hang of balancing. Based on my experiences with two older daughters, the Radio Flyer balancing bicycle made the transition to a two wheel bicycle easier and more enjoyable for both of us, and at the rate she's going, she'll be pedaling in a couple of weeks.

Annie told me the top three reasons that she likes this bike:

"I can coast." "I don't have to worry about tipping over."
"It's actually a two wheeler but your feet are like the pedals."

—Steve Leach, Annie's dad



Timmy on the Puky

It is amazing how two children from the same parents can be so different. Andrew, 1, is a bruiser. His rosy cheeks and forehead are continually graced, much to his mother's chagrin, with fresh scrapes and bruises, evidence of his newfound walking ability. Timmy, 3, is the model of caution. He has learned to carefully navigate the great perils of our home, the sharp edged dining room table and the treacherous, one-step precipice leading into our living room. And when I, Daddy, proudly assembled a new training wheel supported bicycle in the back yard, Timmy's new-toy excitement faded as the possibilities of tumbles and scraped knees became more evident.

As the new bike gathered dust in the corner, Grant Peterson and Rivendell Bicycles came to the rescue, offering Timmy a test ride of a peddle-less child bike called the Puky. It turned out to be the perfect vehicle for learning confidence in the saddle without the complexity of pedals and chains.

Timmy happily hopped on and seemed comfortable from the start. He has gone from simply walking along while seated on the bike, to pushing off and balancing for several feet. Timmy has yet to take a tumble due to the intuitive and sturdy design of the bike. And much to his fathers relief, he has even started eyeing the peddle bike again. I couldn't imagine a better way to introduce young children to the joy of riding than the simple, push-powered, Puky.

—Matt Shargel, Tim's dad

Website News

Our site has had a makeover, but still needs work—particularly the shopping area and the Reader's Gallery areas. It'll come along, though, and we expect to have a whopper of a makeover completed by early Summer of this year. Any suggestions, always welcome. Send to john@rivbike.com, and he'll pass them on to the right person. That's not me/Grant. I know as much about website-making as the man in the moon. As much as I know about him, and as much as he knows about websites.

Rivendell Tandems?

This is still on a backburner, but the burner is moving forward now, slowly. Custom tandems—forget it. We have a hard enough time delivering custom singles. So more likely we'll have Toyo make 3 or 4 stock sizes. One thing that's moved this ahead some is that I've decided not to go ultra-oversized in the tubing. The frame will be well-braced and strong, but it'll use 31.8mm downtubes and 28.6mm top tubes. I know (from experience) that these work. Anyway—they're still a year or two off.

We'd like to know...

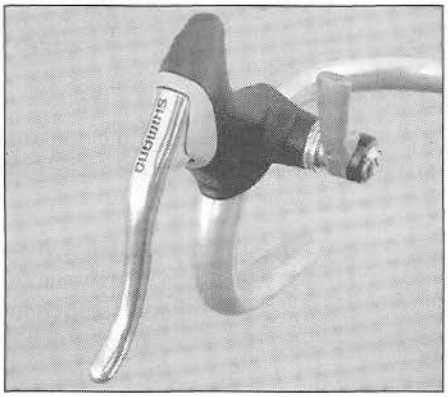
...what you'd like to see covered in the *Reader*. Who you'd like to see interviewed (must be somebody well-known, not a local bike advocate). What sort of mechanical columns and coverage. More pictures of people and their bikes? Do you like the non-cycling articles that show up every now and then? Coupons? Contests? Challenges of any sort? What about the paper? Is this high-grade (better than NYT) newsprint OK, or would you like it to be glossy, like the cover? Postcards. Send postcards. Thanks.

Rivendell Reader News

To prevent disappointments, from now on we're not talking about subscriptions, but "memberships," which means your purchases get totaled at the end of the year, and you get a 5 percent rebate in credit. In the past we've said you also get 4-or-so issues of the *Reader* along with it, and from now on, the *Reader* will come out whimsically if at all, which means anything from whenever it feels good to send one out, to whenever it's the right time. In fact there may not be any difference in delivery—because I'm not going to work on it any less—but the difference is that when we ask you to pony up for a year or two or three, it'll be for the rebate, not the *Reader*. Then it'll be impossible to be late!

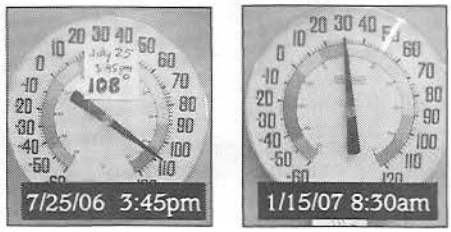
Also, no other way to say it, but we reserve the right to stop doing business with the odd duck here and there who seems extra mean. OK, that's all the bad stuff, back to the good!

Spy Shot



It's sorta like a SunTour command shifter, sorta like the Kelley Take-Off. It's a mount so's you can use bar-enders right about there. We have prototypes and are working out the bugs.

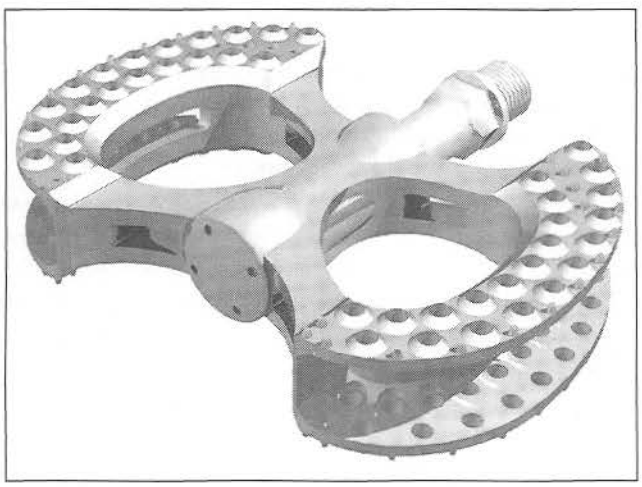
We go by the average



Whenever somebody's on the verge of getting hired here, we try to scare them off with Temperature Talk, and here's proof we don't have to lie. We have the minimum number of swamp coolers and heaters and fans required to keep the SPCA off our case, but holy smokes, it do get hot & cold here. Seersucker and wool always save the day. The company dress code just requires survival, and we do.

Grip King ? Nev-R-Slip ? Pad-L-Ped ? Riv's Folly ?

If a pedal maker said, "Design your dream pedal for clipless riding and normal shoes & sandals," it would be like this. Big surface area, grippy, low vertical height, good cornering, fairly light. 'Twould be called Grip King, or maybe the Nev-R-Slip. 'Twould be made in Japan, 'twould be available before Fall, 'twould cost less than $65.



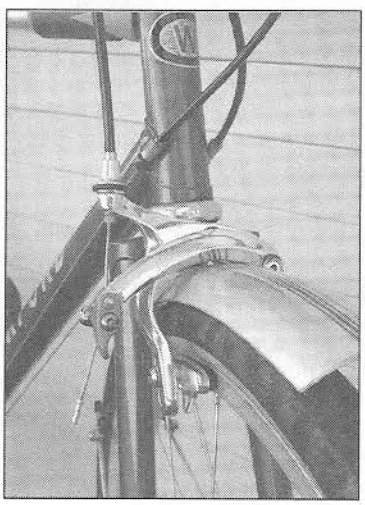
What kind of 'mera?

Most of the photos in the *Reader* were taken with one of two digital cameras: A Canon A630, and an Olympus SP-310. The Olympus seems to have an easier macro on it, good for close-ups. The Canon has a shorter lag time and displays the shot immediately without pushing another button. They're both good. I'm not saying they're the two best or anything, just that they're good, and cost less than $300 each, and some of you ask, and now all of you know. The photo to the left there isn't an actual photo; it's a computerized picture-type thing. That's why it's so perfectly clear.

This bike looks pretty good, and it works really well. It rides great.

Another fine example of a 700C-to-650B Conversion

and revisiting the idea for those of you who missed it the first time around



Lots of room for a 33mm tire and a fender. So this bike, which originally was designed for pure road riding (and thus had no room for fenders) is now able to tackle any weather and much lousier road surfaces; or the same road surfaces with more comfort, because the pluffier tires can be ridden softer (so they'll soak up more road shocks). It works perfectly. Not just OK, but perfectly.

Member Jim Baltz happened by one weekend to buy some Silver sidepulls, to convert his Waterford road bike to 650B. The next weekend he was back to show off his work, and it couldn't have looked (or worked) better.

His starter bike was a ten-year old Wateford road bike. The Mod. 1200 maybe. In any case, it was a fine road bike, but Jim decided he wanted a new bike without spending new money. So he measured the frame to judge its suitability for conversion to 650B wheels, and determined correctly that the numbers were near perfect.

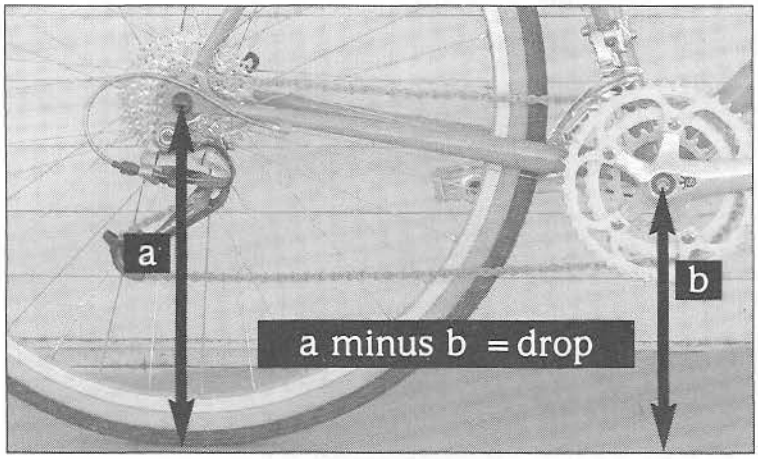
The bottom bracket drop was 7cm. On our Bleriot and Saluki, which are designed-from-scratch as 650B bikes, the drop is 6.7cm. The larger drop on the Waterford would mean the bottom bracket would be 3mm lower. Not a big deal. Not worth the ink it took here to talk about it.

The short-reach sidepulls had the shoes about mid-slot—indicating a low brake bridge and short fork blades. With a 700c tire, there was no room for a fender, and the biggest tire it could barely take was a 700x28. He wanted fenders and fatter tires, and 650B would let it happen.

Jim got some Silver sidepulls, 650B rims and spokes, and Maxy Fasty tires (about 33mm wide). Fenders, too. The bike rides just great, is more comfortable than the original, and now sees service in the rain and even on fire roads. I rode it, and it didn't feel an atom slower than Anybody's Racing Bike.

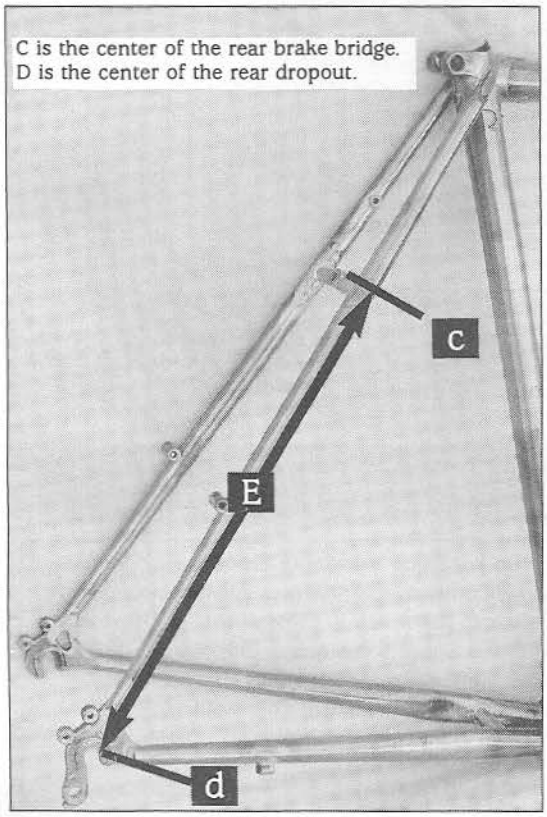
We've seen and been party to at least fifty such conversions in the last couple of years. It all began with member Rory Cameron's story in an old issue. If you have a 700C road bike with tight clearances (no fender room, can't fit a 700x32 tire); and you don't ride it anymore and you want to make it twice as comfortable and three times more useful, this is a great way to do that.

Will it work on your bike? Here's how to figure that out.



If you like knowing about bikes, and certainly if you're considering a 700C-to-650B conversion, you should know about BB drop. Sometimes called "hanger drop," or just "drop." It's the vertical difference between the center of the wheel and the ground, and the center of the crank (or bottom bracket, if there's no crank on the bike) and the ground.

On our made-from-scratch 650B models, the Saluki and Bleriot, the drop is 67mm. That allows an acceptable BB height (acceptable meaning low for good handling, but high enough so you won't scrape pedals unless you lean a lot and pedal when you shouldn't). For a 700C-to-650B conversion, the drop to look for is close to that. If it's less, the clearance will be greater; if more, it'll be less. We dasn't recommend converting if your drop is more than 72mm.



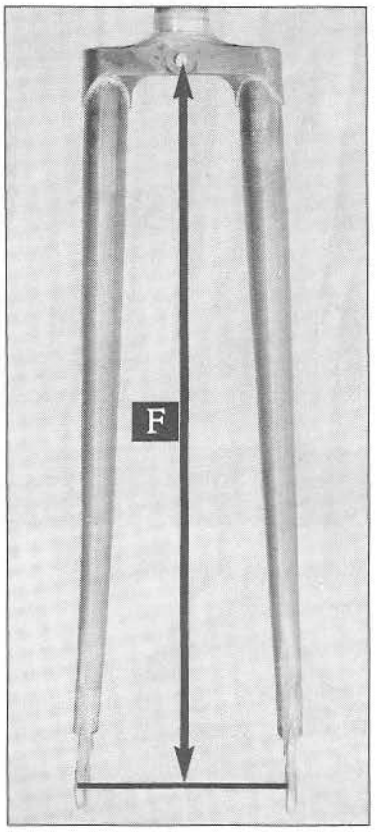
Use a metal metric tape measure. Metal, because it doesn't stretch. Metric, so you don't blow it in the conversion.

What you're after, in these two measurements, is the space the frame and fork give you for the wheel. Since you're starting with a frame designed for 700C wheels, the smaller-diameter 650B wheel will easily fit. The question is: Will the brakes reach the braking surface? If they don't, give up.

It's handy to know this: The nominal diameter of a 700C rim is 622mm. That's the diameter from the bump that the tire bead snuggles under, usually called the "bead seat diameter." For a 650B rim, it is 584mm. So the radius for a 700C rim and a 650B rim are 311mm and 292mm respectively.

In the left photo, E minus 292 is the brake reach: How far from the centerbolt the brake shoes will have to be to contact the braking surface of the rim (roughly just outside the bsd).

In the right photo, this distance is F. It's harder to measure, because of the fork rake. You can measure actual dropout center to the front of the brake hole center. That'll be good enough. You're hacking your way through this, remember. It'll work.



Brake requirements for 700c-to-650B conversions

If E is:	Use:
337 to 346mm	Paul Racer centerpull
347 to 365mm	Silver sidepull
355 to 379mm	Dia-Compe # 750 centerpull
355 to 365mm	Any of those

This story is supposed to be useful information and not a sales pitch, but I realize that not every local bike shop has these brakes in stock. We do, and many of our dealers do, too. Our prices per bikesworth (since we don't know theirs): Paul ($245); Silver ($82), Dia-Compe Mod. 750 ($45). They ALL work great.

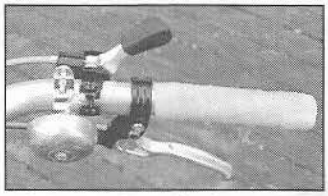
GENERAL PRUDENT WARNING

Converting 700C bikes to 650B wheels is fundamentally easy, but try it only if you know you're competent & patient & a good mechanic.

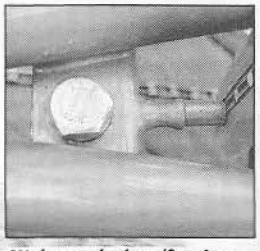
Also, not all 700C bikes are good candidates, and if your bike isn't, then it's probably fine—even better!—with 700c wheels.

All Rivendell-designed 700C frames, for instance, have too much drop (the right and good amount for 700c wheels, we'd say). So if you convert one of those, the bb height will be too low. Look for Drop dimensions between 65mm and 72mm. As stated above.

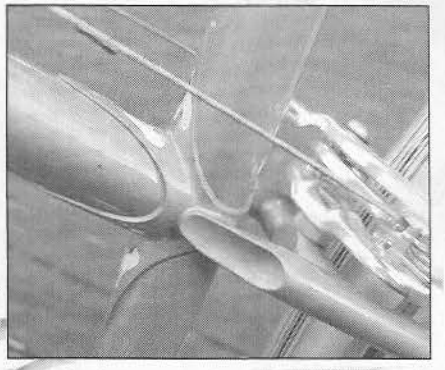
The seat lug.



All she needs, right there.

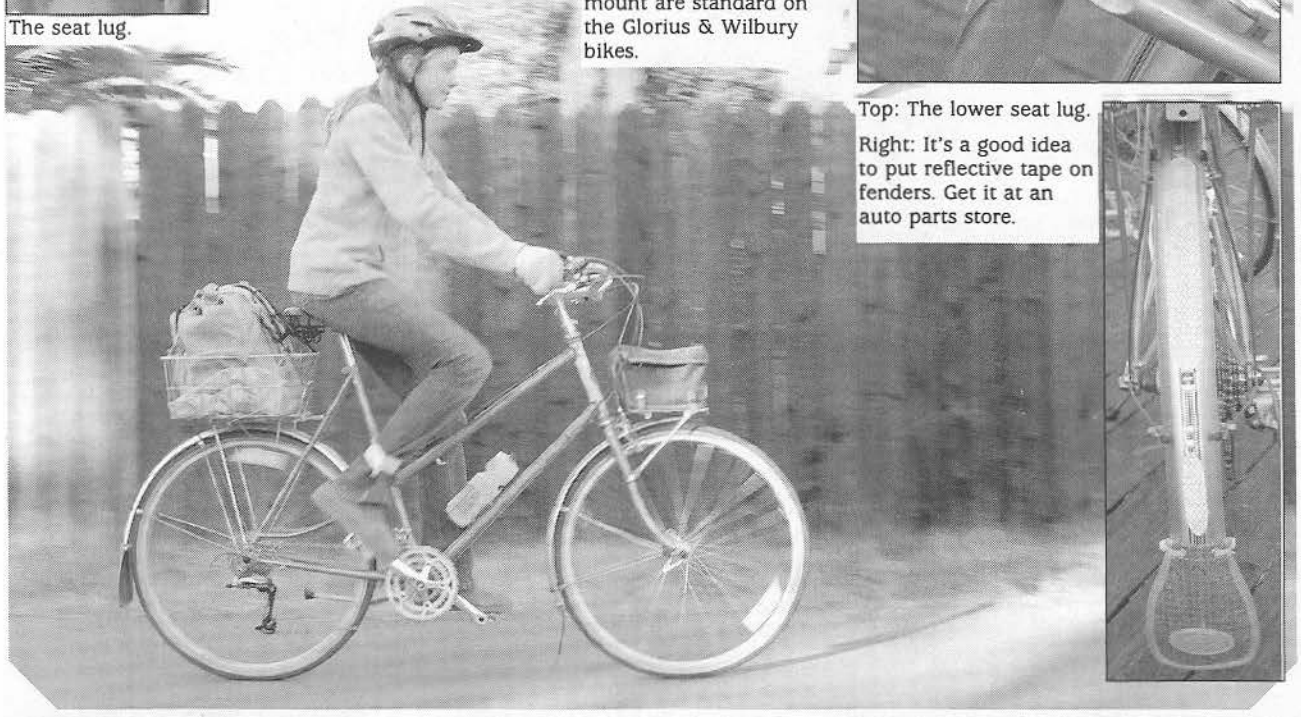


Kickstand plate/fender mount are standard on the Glorius & Wilbury bikes.



Top: The lower seat lug.

Right: It's a good idea to put reflective tape on fenders. Get it at an auto parts store.



Who rides a Glorius?

NAME: Anna Petersen

AGE: 12

OCCUPATION: Student

YEARS RIDING: 8

HOW I GOT STARTED: My dad taught me when I was young.

TYPICAL RIDE: 2 1/2 miles to school and back every day.

DREAM RIDE: ?

RIDING GOAL: ? (She actually asked: *What's that?*)

WHY THIS BIKE: It's pretty and easy to ride.

FAVORITE BOOKS: Harry Potter and the Tolkien books.

FAVORITE MOVIE: Akeelah and the Bee, Finding Nemo

FAVORITE FOOD: Chinese, pizza, lazagna

Anna's Glorius is a 58cm, which fits her 83cm-and-growing PBH quite well. It has a Nitto seat post, Albatross bars, 10cm Nitto Tech Deluxe stem, Sugino triple with 12-32 8sp cassette, Nifty Swifty SpeedBlend (on one side) 650B tires, cheap thumb shifters, Brooks B.18, SKS fenders, Nigel Smythe wool-&-leather mudflaps, a big Wald basket, a Li'l Loafer, and a kickstand. It's a useful rig.

I don't recommend expensive bikes like this for kids, but I paid about 2/3 what you'd pay and did some freelance work to pay for it, and she rides it 5-6 days a week and won't outgrow it. She outgrew a 50cm Glorius prototype (it is now her friend Emily's bike). Anna's favorite part of the bike is the SpeedBlend tires, not visible in this photo, because the rainbow colors are on the left side only. I'd rather she were on a fatter tire, but we don't have SpeedBlend Fatty Rumpkins...yet. If we get them, you'll know why. This photo was taken on her way home from school. She's trying out the thumb shifters. If she opts for the bar-enders she's used to, I'll put those back on. When she decides, she'll get some cork grips, too.—G

Who rides a Bleriot?

Name: Alicia Rozum

Age: 28

Occupation: Wellness Coordinator, Lowell High School, S.F.

Years Riding: 4.5

How I got started: My then-boyfriend (now husband) Aaron was an avid rider, and was in better shape than I. Also, we had just moved to California, and cyclists were everywhere! It looked challenging.

Typical Ride: What's known locally as "the Pinehurst Loop"—a loop through the Berkeley hills on Skyline, Redwood, and Pinehurst roads. Although, now that I can ride on trails, I think it'll become more interesting.

Dream Ride: Across Canada, Vancouver to Montreal.

Riding Goal: Eventually I'd like to have a job that I could ride to, and I could abandon the car entirely, using my bike for everything from grocery shopping to visiting friends.

Why this bike: I wanted a bike with enough versatility to ride roads and trails, and for commuting and running errands. Plus, the Bleriot reminds me of the detective from the Agatha Christie novels, Hercule Poirot. The way Bleriot looks on the seat tube is how I picture him.

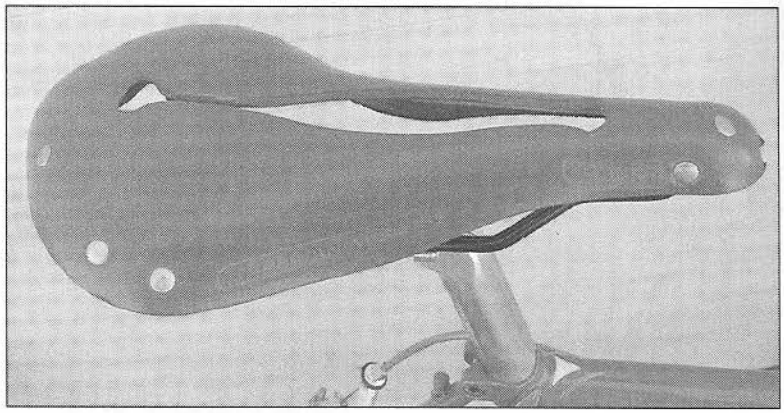
Favorite Book: When I was a kid, I loved "The Westing Game," by Ellen Raskin. I must have read it fifteen times. Now I'd have to say my favorite book is "Gilead," by Maryanne Robinson.

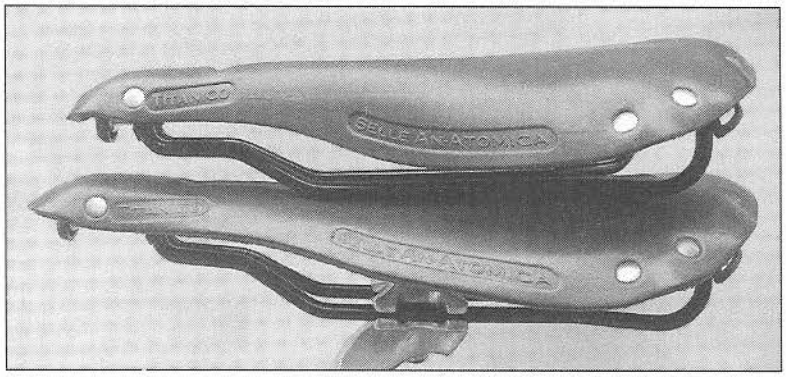
Favorite Movie: The English Patient. Don't laugh at me!

Food: Seasonal fruits and vegetables, and my Gramma Flo's stuffed peppers.

Alicia's Bleriot is a 51cm, and has a standard build kit, consisting of Nitto seat post, Noodle 44s, 9cm Nitto Tech Deluxe stem, Sugino triple with 12-32 8sp cassette, Panaracer Col de la Vie 650B tires, Shimano Ultegra bar-end shifters, Brooks B.17 Women's saddle, SKS fenders with Nigel Smythe wool-&-leather mudflaps.

Selle An-Atomica Slotted Leather Saddles





Top pic: Honey Titanico model.

Bottom pic: Hate to disappoint all ye optical illusion fans, but the bottom one really is longer, by almost an inch. The upper saddle is fresh outa da box, and 295mm; the lower one has been tensioned maximally, and is 318mm.

For more than three years Tom Milton butchered Brooks saddles, trying to make a more comfortable saddle that combined the benefits and aesthetics of leather & the benefits and popularity of slots. All the while in cahoots with a Wisconsonian leather former to mold the leather saddle tops and rivet them to the frames. In late 2005 he quit cutting up Brookses, because by that time he was able to get his own saddles under the brand of Selle An-Atomica. *Selle* means saddle in Italian. Three Italian saddle makers, Selle San Marco, Selle Royale, and Selle Italia are unrelated to this one.

There are three models, three different slot shapes (including two with the scary-sounding ED in the name), and five colors—black, red, mahogany, golden, or brown. That makes 45 variations, and if you can't find your color liking among you can order special colors; or if you've been putting off riding for lack of an ostrich skin saddle to match your cowboy boots, you can get that, too, even in green. It's not pure ostrich, which isn't thick enough. It's a veneer of ostrich (did I mention green?) over the beefhide.

Too much choice for us: We've narrowed our offerings to one model in two different leather variations, plus an unslotted one, which some may find equally comfortable. The model we like is the *Titanico*, which, at 166mm wide (SA calls is 145mm) is just 3mm narrower than the B. 17, is SA's widest model. We stock its most durable variation (for riders 180lbs and up, but suitable for lightweights, too) in both golden waterproof & brown normal leathers, and even in a Rivendell-exclusive slotless version. The waterproof ("watershed") leather is neat, and well-named, and costs $45 more than the same version in normal ("saddle") leather.

How's it feel?

Like luscious, hammocky butter. Under my 185 pounds, it sagged early on, but I tensioned it (easy), and it hasn't needed retensioning in the last about 1,500 miles. It is as comfortable as a slightly used B.17. Taste in saddles is hard to quantify, but the eight or so riders who've tried this saddle on bike test rides wanted to buy one right there. Given our long and warm history with Brooks, I wish I didn't like this saddle as much as I do. It makes me feel like a willy-nilly traitor, but I don't like my B.17s any less for it. I'm just a saddle polygamist, I guess. That's legal here in California.

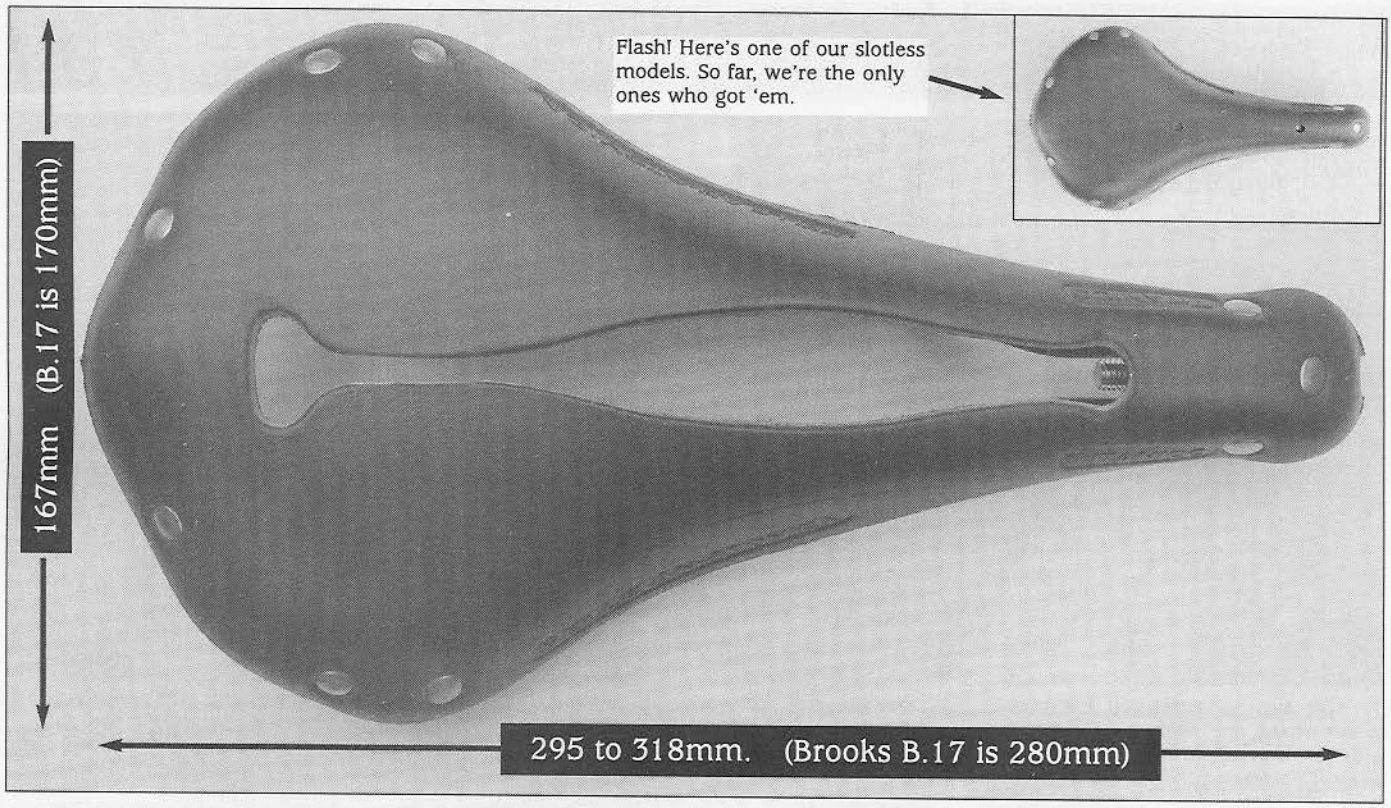
Two neat features: (1) All the SA saddles have bag loops, and (2) They also all have long parallel-sections of rail that allow you to shove the saddle all the way back to New South Wales and beyond. If you've been sitting around waiting for a seat post with more setback, just get one of these, because it'll do the same thing. This is a super groovy thing.

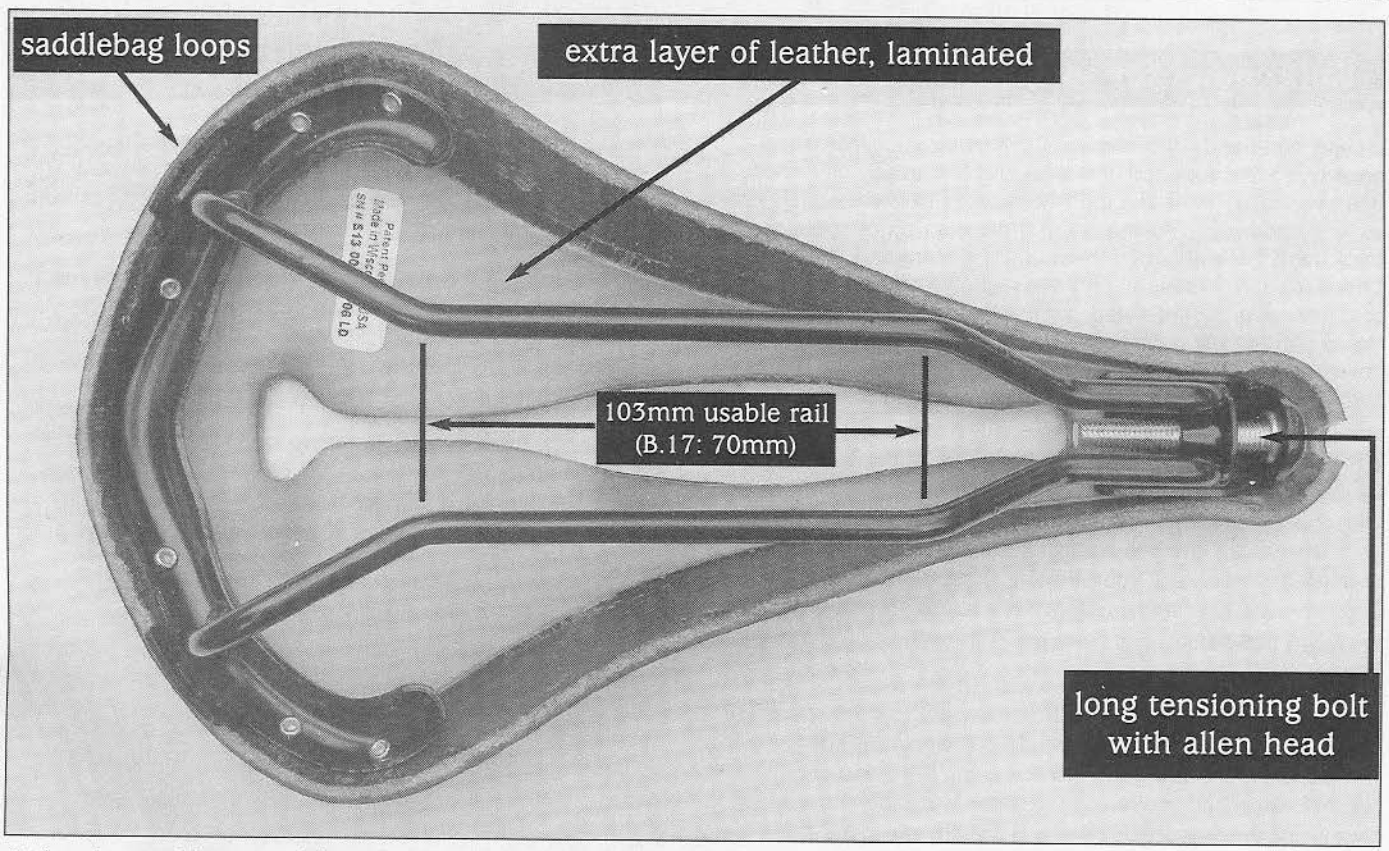
What's it all mean for Brooks?

Brooks saddles are wonderful, and better made now than they were even four years ago. But it is a good thing to have more than one readily available leather saddle, and so welcome, Selle An-Atomica. They're both exceptionally well-made and good-looking, and your crotch or your eyes may prefer one to the other. For years, I thought the only saddle I could even stand was the B.17, but this one is good, too. Tom Milton has done a good thing.

Brooks has made slotted saddles before, years ago, and could bring them back if they see a need for it. SA's Tom Milton makes a big deal of the particular slot shapes in his saddles, and the particular shapes are patented; but at some level a slot is a slot, and Brooks could certainly dredge up an old slot shape or "develop" a mere oval, and it's doubtful whether that would land them in court. About 13 years ago I cut up B.17s with slots (out of curiosity, not need, mind you), and discovered that they sagged a lot that way. No doubt the same discovery led Tom Milton to his lamination, and if Brooks were to come out with a slotted saddle, something would have to be done to keep it's structure. I've got an idea, but nobody's asking.

In any case, another good leather saddle option is a good thing for all, and if you're hankering for another fine leather saddle for another bike, you now have another choice.





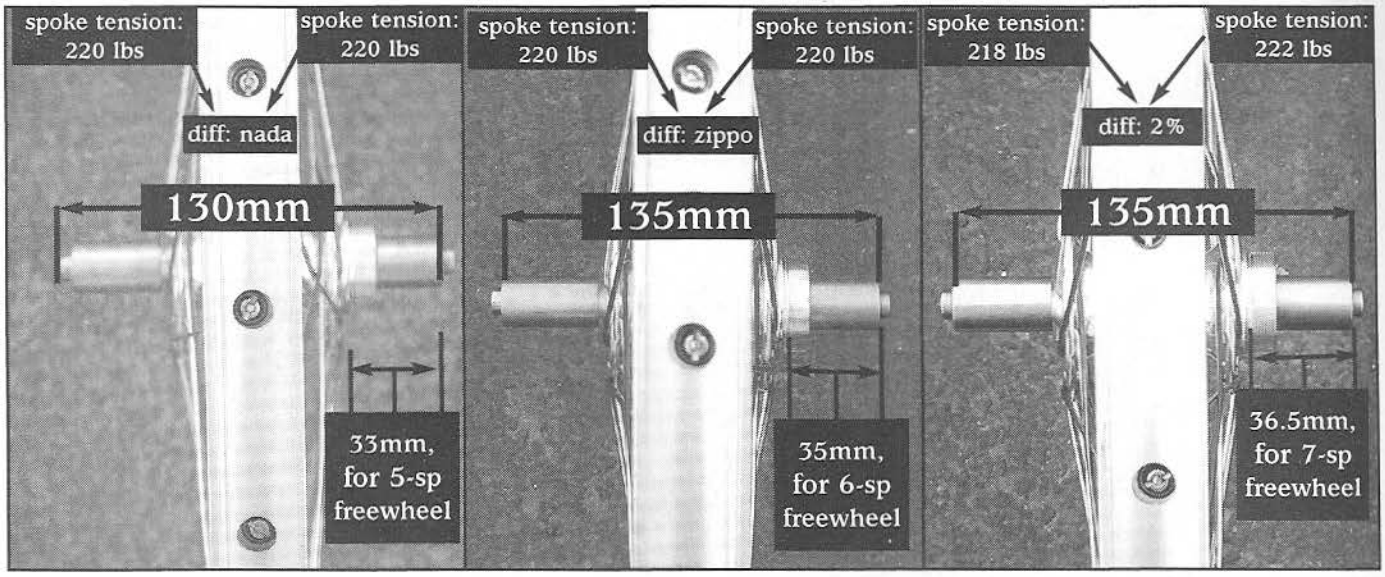
Rather than stocking several dozen SKUs in SA saddles, we're focusing on just the Titanico, in these three combos:

Honey Clydesdale with watershed leather, Part No. 11-061, $145

FLASH! Stop-the-presses, pal— RBW EXCLUSIVE: As above but no slot, Part No. 11-063, $145.

Brown Clydesdale with normal saddle leather, Part No. 11-062, $100

Probably over time the honey will darken to brownish & the brown will darken to darker brown. If you want something else we can order it for you—even a Green Ostrich.



No dish, even spoke tension, strong & smart wheel. Are five cogs enough? You can still use three chainrings. You get 14 usable gears. Considering the popularity of single-speeds, 14x that many should be OK.

No dish, even spoke tension, strong & smart wheel. Six speeds is borderline counterculture, but Eddy Merckx rode with that many. With three chainrings, you get 17 usable gears. Is that enough yet?

One mm of dish, virtually even spoke tension, strong & smart wheel. For most riders, this should be easy. With three rings up front, you get 20 usables.

Good news for some, not for others: Freewheels & fewer cogs are good again.

Cassettes, the default way to put gears on your rear wheel, are easy to live with and deal with and find in any bike shop, and even fuddy duds like me who resisted cassette wheels for so long and remain suspicious of more than six or seven cogs back there, have accepted them and use them exclusively now. I think it's safe to say the only folks who've refused to use cassettes are your fallout shelter types. The main thing is to ride, not to harp on the past or obsess about what should be, or covet what you can't get. I'm not saying that's not fun, but at some point, my friends, life should move ahead...

NOW, JUST WHEN THINGS WERE PEACEFUL, IRD has brought back five-, six-, and seven-speed freewheels. These freewheels seem to be better than any ultra-pro grade models from the past. Combined with modern rear-hub frame spacings of 130mm and 135mm, your wheels can give you enough gears AND be much stronger at the same time. And, you can now afford a Phil rear wheel, because the cost of a Phil non-cassette hub is about 1/3 as much ($130) as its cassette-style cousin ($375).

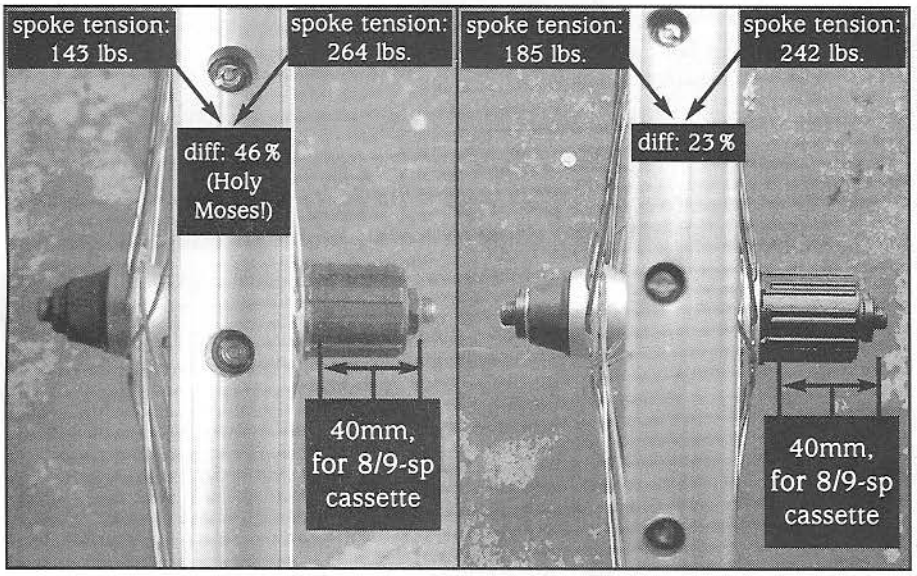
All this doesn't suddenly make casette wheels foolish or less good in any way. Built on asymmetrical rims, casette wheels are plenty good, and you shouldn't suddenly denigrate 'em just because there's a new quick-draw in town. But if you need another wheel and you're open to something different, a wheel like one of the ones in the picture is a good way to go.

Wheelbuilder Rich says this about these 5-, 6-, and 7-speed wheels: "All have equal spoke tension, left and right—the slight difference in the 7-speed wheel doesn't mean anything. The five- and six-speed wheels have the same center-to-flange measurement on each side (26.25mm), and the seven-speed was off by a millimeter (25.25R, 27.25L). If you can give up some cogs, you get a stronger wheel and longer rim life, because the drive-side spokes don't have to be higher-tensioned; and that reduces stress at the spoke hole, so rims should last longer. Structurally, these are as good as rear wheels get—they're as strong as front wheels. I see only benefits, no drawbacks."

We are foaming-at-the-mouth rabid fans of asymmetrical rear rims on rear wheels with cassettes, because they make the wheel more symmetrical and stronger. Without asymmetrical rear rims, 8-, 9-, 10-speed rear wheels would be Picasso wheels. But these wheels are perfect with normal rims.

Another benefit worth harping on: When you move the right-side hub flange outward, as you do with all these wheels because the 5-, 6-, and 7-speed freewheels don't take up as much space, the big inside cog takes the same spot (for all practical purposes) as the second-biggest cog on an 8-, 9-, or 10-speed casette. This means you can use the big chainwheel with the big rear cog without a lousy, angled chain path; and that means you get another usable cog. For centuries now we've pooh-poohed the idea that more is better. But that's not what's going on here. When you voluntarily go on a cog-restricted diet, you want to make each cog count, and with these wheels, the big/innermost cog *is* more useful, because you can use it with the big chainring.

It boils down to this: If you can live with fewer cogs, you can roam the world's grandest goat-trails, fire roads, marjoram meadows, and rocky highlands forever on a rear wheel of the highest integrity. One not forced into compliance, screaming in pain and tension below your hearing threshhold. No. A relaxed, balanced, strong wheel, on a happy & calm rim turning like butter on a silver-gleaming Phil Wood hub. But to get all this good stuff, you have to be OK with 5 to 7 and friction.



LEFT: Two Shimano wheels for 8 or 9speed cassettes. The spacing is the same, and this just shows the considerable difference an asymmetrical rim makes (it reduces the difference in spoke angle, and helps to even the tension). So when it gets right down to it, you'd have to be either (1) Nuts or (2) a loyal Mavic fan to ride a modern cassette rear wheel on a non-asymmetrical rim. (Mavic doesn't make asym rims).

Don't get bummed out just because your spoke tension isn't even. Millions of miles get ridden every year on wheels where the tension on the left- and right--side spokes varies a lot. I ride those 23% wheels you see on the right, and they work perfectly for me, and I won't retire them just because they're not theoretically ideal. My future wheels will likely be the kind to the left there, though, because even if I have zero wheel problems now, I just like knowing the wheel is strong and relaxed. —Grant

How Good Are IRD-brand Freewheels?

They haven't been out long, but IRD went to the Taiwan maker with the idea of making the ultimate freewheels, and when you compare the specifications of these with the specifications of freewheels from the past, it seems like they've given us reasons to be optimistic about these. For instance:

- the cogs are heat-treated, so they'll last a long time.
- and they're ramped (the cogs), so shifting is faster and smoother than it was with old freewheels; as good as cassettes.
- the spacers are some kind of really good plasticky resin that's better than most
- the splined bodies won't ever strip out, and use the widely available Shimano freewheel remover.

All in all, IRD didn't just decide to make crummy freewheels hoping to sell them to cheap ancients. When they took the freewheel plunge, they pulled out all the stops and made really good ones.

If the demand is there, we can expect more ratios in the future. We've asked for a 13-34 with increasingly large steps between cogs. Basically, though, we're going to be happy with usable highs, usable lows, and whatever comes in between.

DO THEY INDEX, AND IF SO, WITH WHAT SHIFTERS, ETC?

Yes, but only with 5-6-7-8sp indexing shifters. Not with 9. In practical, modern terms, this means you can index them with Shimano Ultegra 8-speed bar-end shifters, which is how we set them up on our test bike.

Won't work with the 9- or 10-speed shifters, because the teeth-notches are different because the cog-to-cog distance is closer than it is on the fewer-cogged clusters.

My guess is not many index-insisters are going to go for freewheels, anyway, but it's a good question, and that's the answer.—Grant

If you want a wheel: part numbers and prices

Size	Rim	Phil hub	FW size	Rear spacing	Part No.	Price
700c	Synergy	32H	5sp	130mm	18-251	$260
700c	Synergy	32H	6sp	135mm	18-252	$260
700c	Synergy	32H	7sp	135mm	18-253	$260
650b	Synergy	32H	6sp	135mm	18-254	$260
650b	Synergy	32H	7sp	135mm	18-255	$260

Others available. Contact Rich here: rich@rivbike.com

The Synergy rim is a 22mm wide box-section model made in Australia by Velocity. At 22mm, it is about 3mm wider than most of today's sportyguy road rims, and has enough width to hold tires up to 40mm. It weighs about 460g, which wasn't much in the old days, but a light rim today is 390g. But the 390-grammers are all too skinny (under 20mm) to work fantabulistically with higher volume tires; and the extra width gets you a lot more lateral strength, too. So all in all, we say the Synergy, in any of its forms, is a great way to go for all-around riding.

Down the Road in a Cloud of Smoke

by Maynard Hershon

Maynard & Tamar lived in Tucson, a city that they found to be not as cycling-friendly as the chamber of commerce says it is. A particularly vicious incident (see RR37) inspired a search for a new home. Many of you wrote to Maynard with suggestions, he took them all under advisement, and here he tells the Rest of the Story.

As spring turned to summer, Tamar and I began our scouting: journeys to towns that seemed civilized, cycling-friendly and urban, meaning walkable and free of strip-mall blight. Mature cities, not works-in-progress. As soon as we settled on a place, we agreed, we'd put our house on the market. We hoped to leave Tucson by New Year '07 or sooner. We're out here in late November, I'm delighted to report.

In June we visited Portland, Eugene and Bend in Oregon. Portland, we felt, had more to offer than any place we'd visited or even imagined. It's big enough to have good jobs that pay well. It's so green and so progressive it shocks you at first. SO many cyclists; so many shops specializing in transportation cycling. So many people living without cars. So much emphasis on alternative everything.

Other cities pay lip service to progressiveness; Portland means it.

Several of my old Berkeley friends have moved there, people I miss and love. I suspect the riding is terrific, both for transportation and training. Housing is more expensive than Tucson's but reasonable compared to coastal California or some places in the Central Valley. We loved the neighborhoods, the edgy cafes and invariably friendly, helpful people. I gotta say: Portlanders have a lot to be proud of.

We haven't been to Madison or Minneapolis or State College or Ithaca, NY. We fear the winters. We can't afford Davis and, truth to tell, we can't afford to live anywhere in California that fills our bill. Unless we're mistaken, the entire bottom half of the US is not for us. Too new; too car-culture.

Even Austin, the hippest place in that lower half, scares us a bit. Austin, growing outward like Tucson, will expose us, we imagine, to hundreds of terrorist plumbing contractors in white pickups. We'd prefer a place where people already have plumbing.

Portland checks the most boxes for us. We went back and forth about Portland, afraid we couldn't deal with the gloomy months. I tried to live in the NW years ago and failed. We didn't want to fail this time; we wanted to move and stay put. I made a mistake choosing Tucson and hated to think we might blow it again.

In August, we visited Denver. I'd been there on the motorcycle earlier in the year. Unexpectedly, it gave me much the same feeling as Portland: charming neighborhoods, amazing bike paths, lots of riders and lots of cool shops. Denver is pretty affordable, I'd say. So Tamar and I flew there and walked around. We rode borrowed bikes down the Cherry Creek bike path. We got together with old friends and drove around the neighborhoods, both of us thinking: This is okay. We could live here.

Because of the fear Tamar and I have felt on wide, fast-moving Tucson streets that go on forever, our rides have grown shorter and more urban—more transport than sport. Quiet country roads? Where? Instead of yearning for those roads, we dream of riding close to home where there are no cars or few cars. We'd be happy with an effective network of bike paths, either linked or easily connected by bike route streets.

Denver's bike path system is remarkable. Some of the paths travel UNDER the intersecting streets—you can ride for miles without motorized company and without stopping. You can't get everywhere on one of those magic paths, but you can mix them with quiet streets and get places—with minimum fear and/or emotional turmoil. You can feel like a regular citizen, not a marginalized minority. That's my impression, at least.

Somehow, Denver's chilly (after six years in Tucson) winter and occasional snow don't scare us as much as Portland's enduring gray and drizzle. Denver snow seldom stays on the ground long, people say. Doesn't rain much. The low humidity at 5,000 feet makes the cold less penetrating. The sun shines 300-plus days so it isn't depressing. We ached to believe all that chamber of commerce stuff, so we did.

Denver inched ahead of Portland, most days. We'd read about some advocacy miracle in Portland, or about how many cyclists cross the Hawthorne Bridge each day, or we'd hear from friends who live there and love it...and we'd waver. Maybe we can make it in Portland, we'd say. Maybe if we discipline ourselves to get out and do stuff despite the overcast and rain... But we never believed we'd have the resolve.

We felt sure Denver was the place, but we had one more trip to take. We went to Cincinnati in October for the Davis Phinney Foundation weekend, a fundraiser for Parkinson's. We flew to Indianapolis, where I was raised, and borrowed a car from my niece and her husband to drive to Cincinnati. We stopped in Bloomington, Indiana, on the way there and on the way back. I went to IU in Bloomington years ago, and I have fond memories of the town. It's the location featured so delightfully in the movie Breaking Away.

Had there been an encouraging word in Bloomington about jobs, we may have decided to move there. It's a great little town, but like many university towns, there are faculty spouses and bright people abounding, many willing or even excited to work for next-to-nothing. Apply with the

university, we were told, and wait five years. How will we support ourselves, we wondered. As cheap as housing is, it isn't free.

So Denver it was. After hours of online search, Tamar found an apartment near Denver University, close to light rail, cafes and shops, and about a mile and a half from the bike store where she'll be working. We pick up the rental moving truck tomorrow.

As I sit here at my computer, I'm surrounded by cardboard boxes and chaos. I was happy to take the time to write this note to you Rivendellers, happy for the distraction from the anxiety of the move.

Just four days ago, while we were saying goodbye to friends at Tucson's huge, twice-annual bicycle swap meet, promoted by Rivendell member Greg Yares, someone broke into the little locked shed in our carport - and stole my toolbox and 20 years' accumulation of tools. My Rivendell and my Lighthouse, sans wheels, were in the shed; the thief left them there.

Tamar and I are hoping to regain the joy in cycling that we lost living among the barbarians. We are hoping to strengthen our shaky faith in our fellow road-users. Please wish us luck on our new adventure, and reassure us that we do not, as some folks claim, create our own realities.

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We hope to be able to have your account accessible to you online, but until that happens you'll just have to know that if you bought something, the computer knows it and we have an internal record of how much you have coming on a future purchase.

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