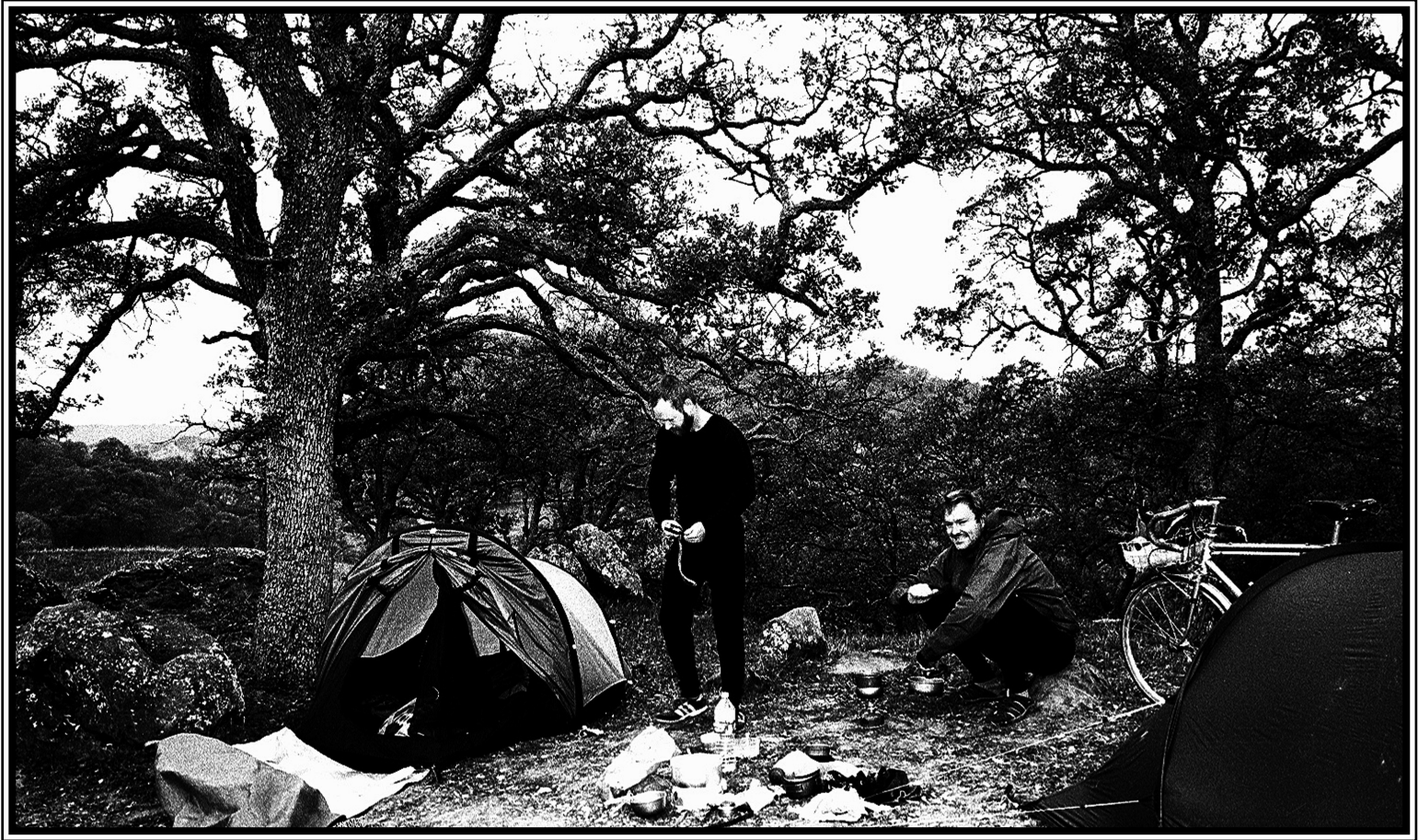




early 2008



This issue is late mainly because early last year I had a necknervearm

problem that kept me from typing for about 6 months. I recovered a lot, and as late as February 17 this *Reader* had 68 pages. Then on February 18 we got printing and postage quotes for it and learned that we couldn't afford to print and mail it, so I cut down and put the extracted stories into RR41, giving head start on that one.

Starting with RR41, a paper version mailed to you will cost \$3. If you want it free, it'll be that way on our site, as a pdf. Three dollars isn't that much, but it sure will make a big difference on this end. We don't sell ads, after all.

This issue is roughly ten by thirteen, even larger than the internationally famed A4. The idea, back in the arm-pain days, was fewer & bigger pages, bigger photos, more frequent issues. It turned out not to be that way,

Orangatang at the Smorgasborg

though. Bigger photos and the *same*-sized pages would have been smarter.

There's one story in here about exercise that will either make you mad or relieved. Although he is not mentioned by name, the protagonist is Grok, the posthumously famous caveman of the glorious days of yore. Grok didn't have the media telling him the best way to maximize his athletic potential. He didn't envy other cavemen's exploits, or think about how he could lose weight or hypercharge his physiology so he could reign supreme in the next Rift Valley Marathon. And, despite Grok's crab apple-size brain, in the field of diet & exercise he was Einsteinian.

Mark Sisson wrote the article. Our wheel-builder Rich found it online and emailed me a version that circulated among members of his cycling club, where it raised a ruckus. It's

hard to feel neutral about it.

I'm just putting it out there. If I thought it was hooey I *wouldn't* put it out there, but it doesn't sound like hooey to me, and at least it should stimulate your own internal debate. Now that we have the web, do "internal debates" even exist anymore? Don't people just log on and spout off?

This story, which we can call the Caveman story, may seem out of place in what is mostly a cycling publication, because it challenges the benefits of aerobic exercise and the generally accepted high carb diet that goes hand in hand with it. For that reason, it makes me nervous, but it was too compelling to not print, so there it is, and let the chips fall where they may, but I hope we don't get buried under a pile of chips.

We all want the same things, don't we? Decent muscles, a body weight we can stand, some flexibility, and enough fitness to do the

things we like to do, and pain-free mobility. A small percentage want to dominate their club rides or get lower PRs or get on a podium they never got on in their youth, but most of us just like riding bikes and want them to make us healthier and stave off the stiffness, shortness of breath, and fat.

So the Caveman story is not here for whatever shock value it may provide, but just to help you think: Here I am, a bicycle rider. I want to ride my bike because it's fun. I like that it's good for me, too. I like the social part as well. No matter what comes down the pike, I ain't gonna give it up, but could a change in riding style actually make riding more fun and healthier? Is it possible that doubling my miles, something I secretly don't see as practical, without sacrifice, or fun, wouldn't be good for me? Is it possible that a different riding style could be not only easier to do, but more fun & more healthy too?

A recurring theme in past paper propaganda, and this *Reader* too, is parenting. I've received a dozen or so complaints-by-email saying why waste the paper, why not devote the space to bike stuff?, and I can understand that if the *Reader* was titled *Solamente Le Velo*, but we've always covered non-cycling things—ever since our Danish Dagger story in the first or maybe second issue. Besides, this

particular article has some good things to say, and putting it here in this largely bike publication guarantees that some will read it who wouldn't have read it otherwise, and they may get some good out of it, that's all. It's one of those *if it helps just one person...* kind of stories, and I bet it helps more.

Scott Cutshall's story in this issue is one of the more remarkable weight loss stories you're likely to read. For a few weeks, Scott and I spoke and emailed daily, and one thing that became clear is the power of regime, just drawing a line and never crossing it, making things black or white. Even vegans quickly find out the closest and best places to buy vegan chocolate pastries, and the next thing you know, your options and temptations abound again, and you're caving in and filling out.

Scott's plan severely limits options, works for him, might work for anybody. At least it will get you thinking, & that's fine.

Last thing: Sheldon Brown died of a heart attack, on February 4. Most of you know it by now, and those who don't probably don't know who Sheldon was, anyway. He was swirling with facts and wisdom, of information weird and practical, micro and macro, about bikes, music, photography, acting,

books, travel, whatever, and he was someone who could talk to experts and rookies with equal ease and respect. The environment that shaped that Sheldon has never been duplicated or even approximated since. I wrote a bit more on our site, and it doesn't feel right to repeat it here as I posted it there, but I can't just put out a *Reader* so soon after Sheldon died without mentioning it. John Schubert wrote a wonderful tribute to Sheldon in the current *Adventure Cycling*. I don't know if it's online, but if you get a chance to read it, read it.

Sheldon's life was a big ripple life and his death is a big ripple. He did so much that hadn't been done before, and won't be done again that way. Monuments have been erected to lesser contributors in areas not as important as bicycles, so why not Sheldon? I can see him on a horse or a bike, in Newton or Marblehead, or maybe just his bust.

Out of deference to Sheldon, from now on I'll spell derailleur this way. It was how the thought Americans should spell it, and I remember an agreement we made about that. I may slip up now and then, but most of the time, derailleur. It de-rails the chain, after all, and on my internal totem pole, Sheldon tops tradition. — Grant

Clarifying what you get with a membership

We've put it on the site and in our catalogue, but not everybody reads those, and there's still some confusion about what the heck benefits there are to becoming a member, so here we'll try to fix that.

1. The main benefit, by far, is the 5 percent rebate credit. It works thusly: When you are a member, and while you are a member, your January thru December purchases are totalled and a 5 percent credit is created on your account.

We don't mail you a credit or a notice, like REI does. Everybody (well, not everybody, but many) have suggested we do it "just like REI does it." Not gonna happen, we're too small, the resources aren't there and won't be in the near future. At any time, you may call to see what credit you have, or you can save your receipts from the calendar year before, and multiply them by 0.05. Same result.

Your credit must be spent in the calendar year in which it was calculated and issued. No spendo, you lose-o. In this way, I believe it is the same as REI.

Now, when you have a credit on your account, you don't have to request we use it

on your order. The computer defaults to that credit invoice, so if you earned a credit in 2007 and you've ordered something in 2008, you can bet the family jewels the credit was applied to that invoice; and if there's any left over, it's still there for you, waiting to be auto-applied to your next order.

If you bought a bike from us last year, holy smokes, you probably have a credit of at least \$150. That's thirty-seven bars of pine tar soap.

You can't cash your credit. You can't use it toward merchandise, then return the merchandise and request cash for it. It's good for goods only.

2. You will get the *Reader* if and when it comes out. But holy budget crunch, Batman—it costs a ton to print, so it may be that we go to online *Readers*. I know, I know. I hate that, too. But we don't have advertising sales to pay for the printing, and it may become necessary. We'd still offer paper versions as things-you-can-buy for \$2 or \$3 or something. If you like the paper, it'll be worth it. We like the paper, too. Never going to give up the paper, but it may cost you something to get it.—GP

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Why do the brake levers go there?

Hey, man:

Why do they put the right brake lever on the left on road bikes? Every motorcycle I ever rode had the front brake lever on the right, so it's a natural response to go there first. The front brake lever on my cruiser has always been on the right, but I set it up after years of motorcycling. I have a Dia-compe sidepull with the squeezing arms on the left side (for right-handed front braking), so what's up with road bikes, and why are those snappy Ultegra brakes of mine set up backwards?—Michael P., Grapevine, Texas

Hi Michael,

I'd say it's a learned response, not a natural one, to reach for the right lever (if you're a motorcyclist)...but you ask a good question.

The Consumer Products Safety Commission requires front-left brakes. Custom bikes escape some CPSC rules, but normal bikes don't, and most people start out on normal bikes and get locked in to front-left braking. It's common for motorcyclists to switch their bikes, and Mark, our head mechanic and not a motorcycle rider, switched his cyclo-cross bikes to right braking, something to do with braking the rear wheel when he's off the bike, I bet.

You can set up a typical "right handed" brake (like all modern high-end sidepulls are and have been for half a century or more) for right front braking. But in the days of external brake cables, the resulting loop was smaller and could more easily cause a problem by catching your right hand on it as you moved your hand from the bar to your nose to scratch or pick it. With aero cable routing like we have now, it's not an advantage, but since aero cable routing doesn't care which side the caliper arms are on, there's no reason to change.

Usually you apply the brake often enough on any given ride that you get in tune with that particular bike before you get yourself in the kind of jam that only a hard slam of the brakes will get you out of.

Maybe left-front began out of a fear of using your strong hand too strongly and launching over the front wheel. —Grant

The ol' bike safety helmet thing again

Hey, man:

Several people have expressed outrage that the *Rivendell Reader* sometimes shows riders without bike helmets. I think the writers need to re-examine their own psychology and beliefs. Why do people believe bike helmets are always absolutely required, and no photos may disagree? Fundamentally, it's because they believe bicycling is dangerous.

The available data says otherwise. In the US, bike head injury fatalities are less than 1 percent of the total annual deaths-by-head injuries.

Mail, man



Cyclists doing ordinary riding are actually safer than pedestrians.

There are marketing and lobbying folks who want you to believe any bike ride might well become a tragedy. But the head injury scare was invented after the product was developed, not the other way around. It required intense publicity to create the paranoia, and intense efforts to create the impression that helmets are tremendously protective. Once again, the best data disagrees. As www.cyclehelmets.org notes, it's difficult to show that helmets produce any significant benefit for cyclists. By discouraging cycling, they may make things worse.

It's a shame that helmet-safety evangelists are so intolerant, just as it's a shame that the *Reader* publishes horror stories overreacting to rare negative incidents. Why scare people away from the activity we love? Riding's benefits are tremendous, for the individual and society. Riding is less risky than so many other activities we like. - Frank Krygowski

We have shown riders here and there without helmets (one in this issue), and every time we do we get the letters. There's no right or wrong in this. If somebody's so malleable as to be swayed by our photo of a haired rider, they'll be molded back to helmetdom the next time they see a photo or a real rider in a helmet. In real life, people don't flip-flop like that, though. The reasons for donning or not donning a helmet are more complicated than just a visual, I'm sure.

Some of us here always ride in helmets, some hardly ever do, but none never does. I believe people take more risks when they feel invulnerable, or less vulnerable, and I also believe that bike helmets are far less protective than motorcycle helmets. The combination of making you feel much safer while not actually fully protecting you—in any field or activity from toxic waste removal to fencing—is a dangerous combination.

But it isn't our wish to make your decisions for you. That may be an unintended consequence, but it's not our mission, dream, or anything like that. I'd rather see more people in helmets than fewer, but that doesn't mean I'm going to nix a photo of a haired rider, when it serves the photo purpose just fine.—Grant

When you need to be clicked or clipped in

Hey man,

As someone who has never gone clipless but has had it as a goal, I found *The Shoes Ruse* interesting. Quite frankly, I thought the several years that I commuted on my 7speed Gary Fisher Alfresco that I was not really cycling because it came with platform type pedals that wouldn't even take toe clips and I did cycle in all sorts of shoes, even hush puppies when they were in style. Now the bike is in the shop for a fixie conversion and the pedals are being swapped out for ones that take toe clips because, well, everyone has told me you need toe clips or clipless for fixed gear riding...But, if you can really live without toe clips I'm will to try it. (And I'm holding onto the wheel with that 7 speed hub. It's just that Alfred was one of the best commuter/urban riding bikes that I've ever had and I wanted to try fixed gear on a bike frame that I was familiar with). And, in the mean time I'm taking the toe clips off my Breezer Greenway to see how it goes. Julie

Hi Julie,

You need to be clipped in for fixed-gear riding, because if your feet come off the pedals while the bike is going really fast, you aren't really in control of the bike anymore.

Fixed fans say fixed riding teaches you how to spin, and this is kind of true. But the arguments in favor of spinning always play off the danger-to-your-knees and inefficiencies of mashing (high gear, super low rpms). The thing is, there is a middle ground, from 65 to 95 rpms, and it doesn't take hours of fixed gear riding to be able to do that. The first bikes had fixed gears, but once freewheels were invented (in the '20s, I think), fixed gear riding faded away nearly completely, although some riders still prefer it. Road racers have used fixed-gear riding to develop their spin so they can rev up to 120 to 140rpms, and BMX racers have been known to spin at 200rpms for spurts, even with 180mm cranks—and I don't think they train with fixed gears. Maybe they do. Do they? I doubt it. I'd be surprised. I'm sure they don't.

The fastest fixed "spinners" are those who, on descents, have earned to relax below the waist and let the whirling pedals carry their limp legs around. It looks like pedaling, but the legs are more passive than they are when pedaling.

A fixed gear rider with hand brakes can stop faster than any other rider, and with less chance of skidding. Fixed gears are faster up hills, since the movement of the bike helps turn the pedals through their traditional weak spots (at 12:00 and 6:00). Fixed riding can be more relaxing, since the bike sort of takes you along for the ride, and

Grant

The top 2/3 of this page is for first-time Reader readers who've never heard of us. Don't read it if we're old hat, yesterday's news, etc. Ye olde honor system is in effect.

We are thirteen and about a third now, and to introduce ourselves and our company to new readers, here is this.

Who we are:

We're a small bike company about 30 miles east of San Francisco, in Walnut Creek, California. We try to ignore the mainstream trends in bicycles, and if we're influenced by them at all, it's oppositely. We focus on bikes, parts, and clothing that the mainstream bike industry gave up on long ago. Our mission isn't about nostalgia, or hoity-toity classics, though. It's just an attempt to keep a certain style of bicycle alive, and with it, a certain style of riding.

We don't claim to be the only ones doing this, or even the leaders, but it has been our unwavering mission every since 1994, and it's not going to change.

It's a mission easily misunderstood, because it more easily defined by by what it isn't rather than what it is, but opposing notions are so prevalent, that it makes some sense to do that. We do not cater to racers, or put racing on a higher level than regular riding. Just the opposite, actually. Racing's influence is widespread and sends a message that the sideshow is a role model for the rest of us.

We have a catalogue of goods and a website. You can get our catalogue free by calling free: 800 345-3918. Operator is standing by.

Our site: www.rivbike.com.

Some things we've done or had a hand in, at least:

1. We brought attention to lugged steel frames, and demonstrated that there is a market for them even in the 21st Century Fox. Due in small part to our efforts, they're almost not even regarded as quaint throwbacks, and the market for them is bigger than sane people predicted it would be fifteen years ago.

2. Our 13-year emphasis on a comfortable riding position has helped to make extended head tubes (for a higher handlebar) the norm, not the funny turtlenecks they were thought of years ago. We didn't invent them, but we helped make them acceptable.

3. Thirteen years ago, cotton duck bicycle bags were unavailable in the U.S., until we imported them directly, sung their praises, and now they're everywhere you look. It may have happened anyway, but for several years there in the late '90s, they were hard to get elsewhere.

4. Likewise, wool clothing used to be hard to get. We're less certain of our nationwide influence over its regained popularity, but our incessant insistence that it's the way to go has not hurt the movement.

5. Our close relationship with Nitto (of Tokyo) has been fruitful, and over the last thirteen years we've put nicely shaped and beautiful handlebars on thousands of bikes. In the process, we've helped Nitto become, if not a household name among bike riders in general, at least a household name among the savvy ones! Nitto deserves the fame, and this year we'll have a Nitto jersey, even. If all goes well.

6. Many of our suppliers are even smaller than we are, and without our patronage would have much less of a presence or none at all, in the U.S. market. We have always tried to be good customers to our suppliers, and most would agree that we are. It feels good to matter to a business faraway.

7. Our sizing and fitting methods haven't taken hold nationwide, but have made a big difference in the cycling experience of a few thousand riders.

8. We've tried and are still trying to rearrange the hierarchy of bicycle riding and emphasize just riding over just riding your fastest and hardest and longest everywhere you go. A big part of this is just saying (as we have and do) that it's fine to wear normal clothing and pedal without click-in shoes. We are not anti-vigorous rides, though. It's more that we don't idolize the highly aerobic "talking cheeks."

Where we're going, future-wise

Sticking with lugs and steel, wool, all that good stuff. Delivery has always been our number one challenge, and we're beginning to take it ultra seriously these days, and so you may see some new options popping up here and there. Not replacements, just more options. -Grant

Help us make the Reader better.

1. Which are your favorite stories or sections? Please list at least one.

2. What would you like to see in the next issue? _____

3. Less of? _____

4. This page size OK, or do you prefer the other? (circle) this size OK other much better

5. What one single thing can we do to improve the RR? _____

The Ives Badge

by Gene Russell

My cousin John Bailey died in 1973, and I lived with my cousins for a few months that summer to help support his family. While living at their house, my Peugeot UO8 was stolen, and their home owners insurance gave me \$150 for it. I used that money to buy an Ives frame from Angel Rodriguez, who with Glen Erickson had just opened R+E Cycles on Roosevelt Way in Seattle's University neighborhood. Angel had bought some Ives bikes because they were full Campy and he could sell the parts separately for more than the complete bikes were worth.

I didn't even have wheels to build up the new frame so I borrowed some from my brother's bike. I remember that first ride with great clarity. It was love at first ride. The Ives is responsive, maneuvers well, and is rock solid stable at every speed.

The Ives was my main transportation throughout my 20s. I commuted to work and school on it and completed many club rides around Puget Sound. In 1976 I made my own panniers and rode 4500 miles in Bikecentennial. My grandparents lived in Livingston, Montana and I rode the Ives twice to their house, and I rode to San Francisco on it twice in the early '80s on it.

So many good memories, and so much good service from my Ives. Then in 1975 I had decided to have the Ives painted bright yellow with the head tube and seat tube bright orange. R & E could take care of that, and when I ordered the paint job Angel offered to braze on some fender eyes in return for the head badge. I hesitated, then thought "What do I care about that old head badge?" So I agreed, and Angel fired up his drill, drilled off the head of the rivets, and the badge was transferred to a piece of wooden closet rod he used to hold his collection of head badges.

That was when I felt the first pang of regret. For 33 years people would ask me, "What kind of a bike is that?" It was like being poked in the ribs repeatedly. That pang of regret. I would have to explain "Its an Ives." If it still had the badge, they wouldn't have had to ask.



Last year I Googled Ives trying to find something about its history. the history of the Ives mark. The history remains a mystery but I ran across other Ives owners. In particular Dan Wyman has a picture of his Ives head badge. Looking at Dan's head badge, the little pangs of regret became a quixotic quest. "I want my head badge", I thought. I emailed people in Italy. I searched ebay. I emailed Angels former employer. I emailed Glen Erickson. "Last I heard he was living in Panama", said Glen. Aha! Finally I found Angel at his home in Panama. Initial responses were discouraging. Angel didn't even own a bicycle anymore. Then a couple of months passed and he said he might know who would have it. Another couple of months and I started working from a photograph toward producing a replica. Angel said hold off on the replica the trail had not gone cold. I continued to struggle with Adobe illustrator.

January 2, 2008 I collected my mail. Amongst all of the flyers was a small brown envelope. "What is this?" I puzzled. I didn't order anything. Maybe it is misdelivered. Nope, it's for me. I checked the return address. C Walker? I don't know any C Walker. I opened the envelope and there was a small jewelry box inside. I still didn't get it. I hadn't allowed myself to expect

or to hope because that would be too disappointing. I opened the little box and suddenly there it was my Ives head badge. I got my head badge back and cried.

The reattachment had to be done correctly. My brother suggested tape. No way. What good is having a machine shop if you are going to resort to tape? So I spent a day in the shop machining a drill jig. When the holes popped through I could see small bits of brass from where Angel had brazed over the old holes. On the money. Then I turned some brass rivets on the lathe and made a rounded punch to set the heads properly. With the fork removed I inserted a large rod in the head tube to act as a buck. Two quick taps cinched the rivets firmly in place and finally the pang is gone. I got my head badge back. I got my head badge back.

Fresh hamstrings forever

by Ken Mierke

We don't usually print articles on performance, because such articles send the heinous message that speed matters. This is one of those articles, originally written by an exercise physiologist with a particular interest in triathlons, no less. There's good information here. —Grant

Your muscles can't work constantly without a break, but bad pedaling technique asks them to do that. It's especially a problem with your hamstrings. Your hamstring's job is to extend your hip and flex your knee, and during a 360-degree pedal stroke, it does one or the other at all times. No wonder it gets tired!

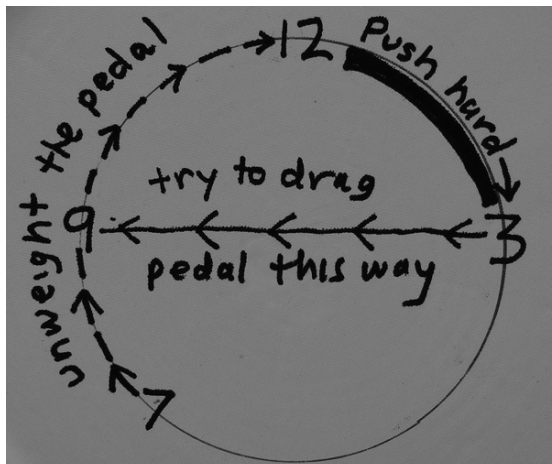
The key giving your hamstrings a recovery period is learning how to use them and how and when not to. Here's what you need to do:

1. Begin your down-stroke early, pushing down diagonally from 12 o'clock toward 4 o'clock. But...
2. When the pedal reaches 3 o'clock, start your backstroke. Try to pull your heel directly backward through the bottom bracket. You can't actually do that, of course, but trying to will make your pedaling more efficient.
3. When the pedal's at seven o'clock, pull up and forward with your knee. Concentrate on using your hip flexor muscles, in the front-hip and upper-thigh area, and relax your hamstrings during this part of the stroke. Just thinking about this usually helps it happen. So think about it.

Downstroke

Many riders start the downstroke late—at around 2 o'clock—and direct the force straight down. When you do that, your hamstrings work too much, because almost all the power must be produced by hip extension, which activates your hamstrings.

Much better to start your downstroke early, at 12 o'clock, pushing down hard diagonally toward 4 o'clock. In this kind of stroke, your quadriceps and butt muscles are working hard, while your hamstrings are mostly relaxing.



If you care about improving your pedaling stroke, making it more efficient and all, try to do this,

Backstroke

This is when you want to rely on your hamstrings, because your backstroke is about knee flexion, your hamstring's job. As I've already said and will say again here, try to start your backstroke at about 3 o'clock. Understanding this concept and thinking about it will improve your pedaling.

Upstroke

The upstroke is the most misunderstood part of your stroke, and is where most riders are the most inefficient. The movements of the upstroke are hip-flexion (lifting the knee) and knee-flexion (lifting the foot). Since the hip-flexors are active only in this range of the pedal-stroke, they should be the primary muscle contracting during this phase. Since the hamstrings are active during the backstroke and somewhat active during the down-stroke, relax them during the upstroke: Don't pull up.

Instead, unload the pedal by using your hip flexors (not your hamstrings) to bring your foot from 7 o'clock to 12 o'clock. The hip flexors, once trained, are extremely fatigue resistant, because they're active for about 25 percent of the pedal-stroke.

If pedaling efficiently is your goal, it's worth your time to train your hip flexors, and it's easy to do it. *Concentrate on lifting your knee, not your foot.* If you think about lifting your foot, as most riders do, you'll be more likely to use your hamstrings. So forget the foot, go for the knee. Your hamstrings will relax more, and you'll tire less.

*Ken Mierke is an exercise Physiologist and coaches triathletes and cyclists, from beginners to professionals. He owns his own coaching business, Fitness Concepts www.Fitness-Concepts.com and developed the techniques of Evolution Running www.EvolutionRunning.com. He also wrote a book called *Lean for a Lifetime: The Athlete's Guide to Losing the Last Ten Pounds*.*

Let ol' Mr. Heat turn your classic gum-hooded brake levers into a bubbly yet grippy mess.



A fellow came by the other day on his friend's bike, a bike that spent a few years in a hot barn, just sitting there minding its own business, and bubble by bubble, it developed a look and texture unlike any we've ever seen. Where are the time-lapse photographers when you really need them?

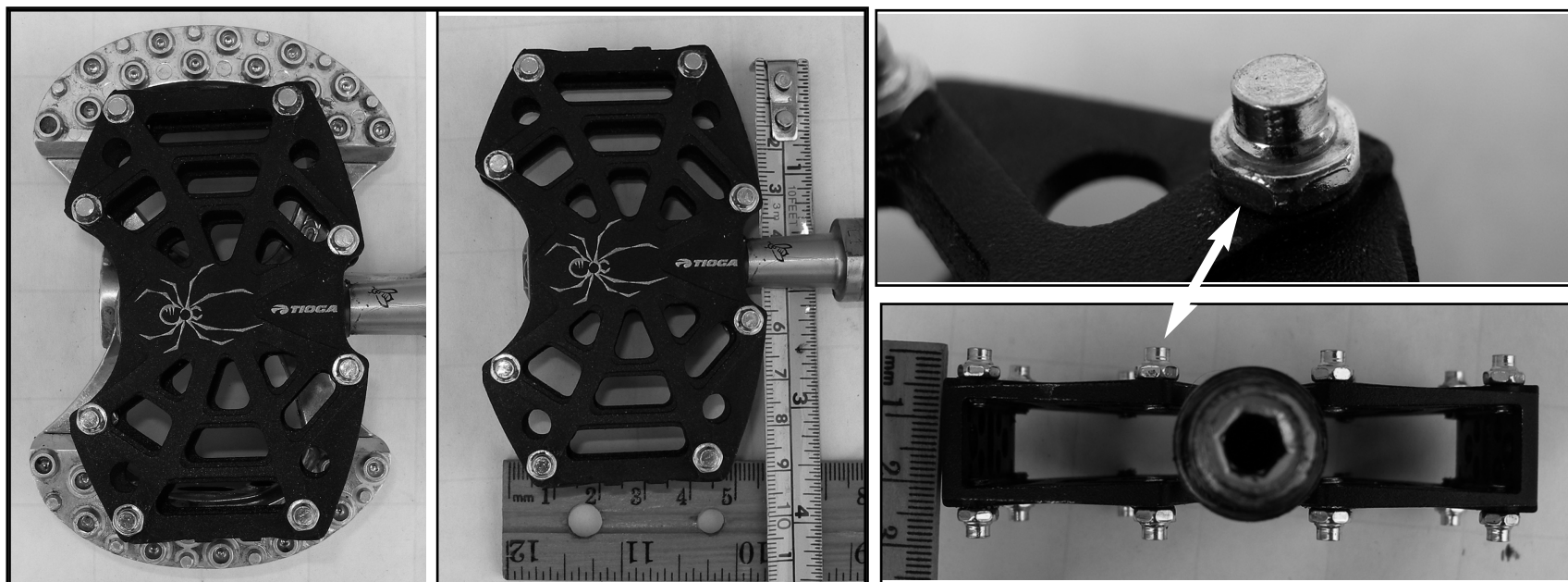
Sidepulls on a mixte?

About 99.8 percent of our mixtes (Glorius and Wilbury) are equipped with centerpull brakes, and one percent gets a centerpull rear/sidepull front.

This bike, representing the remaining 0.2 percent, got sidepulls front & rear, and we made sure the arms wouldn't interfere with the heels before changing the braze-on location. It's a pretty slick bike. Not bad.



New ultraprincey ultralight ultrabitey pedal in stock.



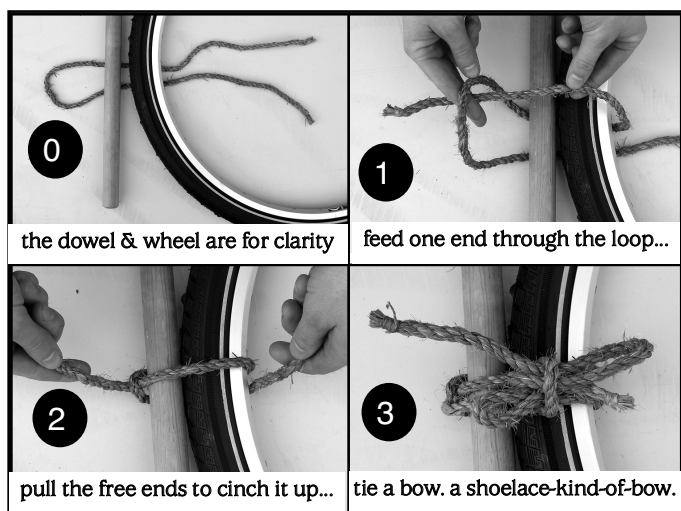
We saw it in a Japanese catalogue first, then at a trade show second. The word is, it's some kind of BMX pedal made for the Japanese domestic market and the European market. That may be true, but aside from the bad-boy spider logo, it looks pretty much right up our alley. In the photo at the left, it's stacked on top of a Grip King, so you can see how...it stacks up. Shorter and narrower, basically. The actual dimension are somewhat derivable from gazing long hours at the middle photo. Top right: Close up of the nubs. There are eight—count 'em!—removable nubs on each side, for a total of —multiply 'em!—sixteen per pedal. You can use none if you like slippery pedals, and up to all of them if you like super grippy. With eight per side biting into your shoes, it's kind of hard to slip no matter what. They grip even better than the Grip Kings in that way (GKs have more surface but are less bitey). That makes us wonder

whether maybe Grip Duke or Grip Viceroy would have been more appropriate for Grip King, but at the considerable risk of offending both atheists and born-again, maybe we should just call these new pedal the Grip Gods. *Spyders* for now, though.

They're light (285g, compared to the Grip King (370g) and expensive (\$115, compared to GK: \$50). They're not as big as the GK, so rather than a ten on a comfort scale, they're an 8.5. The Sneaker pedal is a 9.35, and GK is a 10. Odd that they're BMX pedals, since those are usually bigwifefat things, but what else could they be? They have the nubs; Tioga is well-known in BMX. Gotta be-MX.

We like them a lot. They feel great and grip like an ice pick.

Black Spyder: # 14-054, \$115



A handy knot to know

This is the knot all the Japanese and Taiwanese workers use to tie wheels to frames before boxing the bikes. It's a great way to attach bags to handlebars, seat posts, and racks. It ties fast & easy, cinches up without slack, holds fast, unties in a half a second. It's real name is... I forget, but it's in a book at home.

Our holier-than-Mao stance on water bottles

Nobody says normal plastic water bottles are fantastic for you, and there's evidence that they aren't. Nobody says they never make the water taste bad, and we all know they do.

If you can give up their super squeezability and nice rubbery caps, there are options that affect the water less. The SOMA bottle is the best of the plastics. We sell it for \$4, less than the cost of a big normal bottle most places.

And now we've started stocking SIGG aluminum bottles, made in Switzerland for 100 years. No alzheimers worries with these babies—they're coated something that stays on the bottle, doesn't get into your 'quid. We'll have pure aluminum ones, too, and maybe another color for festive fun on holidays. It fits a cage, the top flips open, doesn't leak, and the spout is easy to sip from. It's not the chug-a-lugger's dream bottle, but the water flows out plenty fast, there is another even faster optional cap, and it'll last you a quarter century, minimum. These should be on our site by now. If you're innerested...

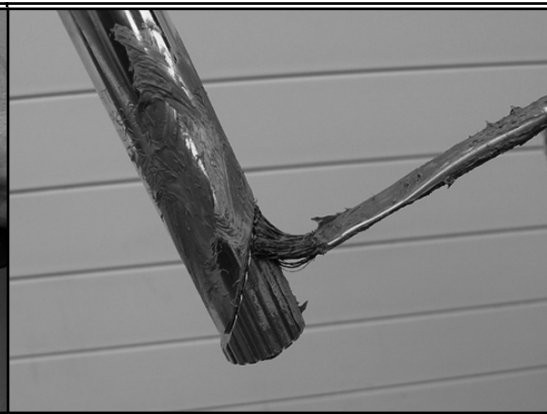


Left: Specialized. Functionalistically No. 1. Middle: Sigg. Aluminum. \$20, lasts 25 years. Right: SOMA. The safest plastic cheaply.

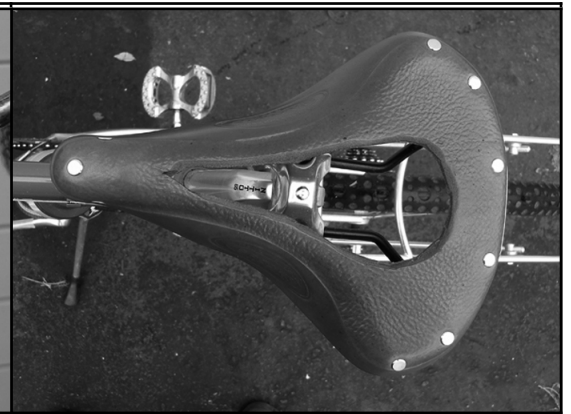
Tips & a Coupon



Get a tub of grease and the world's cheapest brush. Cut a hole in the plastic top of the tub, insert brush. Now you need never again sully your fingers.



Always grease the stem wedge, not just the quill. Otherwise, it can get stuck in your steer tube. Everybody grease the quill. One in three grease the wedge. Be that third!



Likem holes but gotten Brooks? Just as an experiment and not to correct any dysfunctional anything, mind you, one of the guys here cut a hole in his B.68. Works fine, but the hole needen't go back as far as it is here. Leave another inch of hide.



Talc your tubes. Put a dozen or so healthy sprays of baby powder in a nylon bag (like, a sleeping bag stuffsack). Toss in tube; shake. Remove and install. This way, the tube won't stick to the tire, so when you go to fix a flat, it's easier to get the tube out.



As world-beating as they are, cork grips can be slightly less than super grippy when you wear certain gloves or mittens. Rubber bands or cloth bar tape fix it. Rubber bands shown.



Before you clamp a kickstand onto your chainstays, tape them first. For to increase the grip and protect the paint. This works well, no problem.

Three reasons to be a Rivendell member

1. It's cheaper to be one than not being one.

It works like this:

- Let's say you join for a year for \$20. You get \$10 off your first order, so that \$20 is more like \$10.
- Each *Reader* will have at least one coupon worth a random amount between \$10 and \$100. The coupon on the right is not only an example (e.g.), but is actually one of the real things, and you can't use it unless you're a member.
- **At the end of the year, your purchases are totalled and you are issued (in the form of an internal invoice) a credit worth 5 percent of your calendar year purchases, good toward future purchases.** You can join by phone or online, or by mail. \$20 per year, or \$35 for three years. If you think about that mathematically, it's better to sign up once a year. But your time's worth something, so is ours, so we most recommend you go for three. OK?

Here's the coupon

It's worth \$10 on any order over \$50, you have to be a member, and mail orders only.

No phone orders.

I'm already a member. I just want to use the coupon, and I'm submitting it with an order.

I want to join for ___ years. I'm including

check or Mastercard or Visa.

card no. _____ exp _____

3-digit security code on the back. (what's this?) _____

Name _____ Member No. _____

Address _____ City _____ St _____ Zip _____

Interview: Peter Enright of Phil Wood & Co.

Phil Wood & Company is an American manufacturer of bicycle products, namely bottom brackets and hubs, based in San Jose, California. Phil Wood sold his business to Peter Enright and a group of investors in 1991, passing the torch of top-notch manufacturing 20 years after coming up with what Phil thought was a better way to make bicycle hubs.

Rivendell believes in Phil Wood products, and sells its fair share every year, because the products sell themselves. Ace wheelbuilder and Rivendell employee Rich Lesnik developed some Riv-only Phil IRD freewheel-friendly hubsets with Peter.

Here's an interview with Peter, a humble businessman dedicated to quality and devoted to his employees.

What did you do before life at Phil Wood?

I was a principal in a medical products firm that provided surgical tools, and before that I worked on nuclear power plants. I also taught engineering at San Jose State for twelve years

How did that lead to Phil Wood?

I began riding bikes a lot in the early 1970s, and I shopped a lot at Spence Wolf's Cupertino Bike Shop. Sometime in the mid-1970s he showed me some Phil Wood hubs and told me about the company, which was right there in our back yard.

Spence knew I put deals together, and in 1988 told me Phil wanted to sell and retire. He asked if I could help Phil find an interested buyer; Phil had some prospects and Spence asked me to find others.

I considered several outside investors, but none were interested in acquiring sole ownership; each wanted me (or someone like me) in the equation. I had a son in preschool and thought it would be good to get a job near home and not travel as much. So, I became interested in looking at the acquisition myself, incorporating a group of investors I knew.

However, I didn't know enough about the company, so to learn more about it, started working at Phil Wood, sweeping floors, running errands — anything to help out. I did that full time from September 1990 to March 1991, until the stock buyout that March. The new shareholders asked me to stay on and run the business for two to three years.

So do you own it, are you president, or what? And who are the shareholders?

Phil himself was a minority shareholder, and I bought his minority shares, and eventually I bought out some of the other shareholders and became the majority shareholder. So for good or bad, I make the final decision on almost everything.

How about you talk about Phil Wood himself. When did he start the company, and why?

Phil's a great guy, and was really passionate about his products. One evening in the early '70s Phil walked in to Cupertino Bike Shop to complain about the wheel he just overhauled. He asked Spence why no one made a hub with sealed cartridge bearings so the balls don't fall out and roll all over the kitchen floor. Spence said: "Why don't you make some?" They talked more about other stuff, and then Phil left. He came in a few minutes later, stuck his head in the door and asked: "How many should I make?" Spence said: "Of what?" Phil said: "Hubs!" Spence said: "I don't know, make 50, and if they sell make some more." That's how it started.

Do you stay in touch with Phil?

Phil moved to Iowa and had some health problems, but is doing fine now. We keep in touch through Julie Rae, his granddaughter, and Phil's wife, Vada, who tries to visit the factory whenever she's in town.

What made Phil successful, in the early years?

He made great hubs and bottom brackets, and the word spread. His first supporters were BMXers. We still get people asking to have their old hubs brought back to life after 30 years.

Phil Wood & Co.

You asked a question earlier about what led me to Phil Wood. He and I indirectly crossed paths in the early years.

In the early '70s I was doing work in Italy and during some time off, I visited the Colnago and Cinelli factories. Cinelli was hard to find; it was smaller than I'd expected. Cino was there with his arm in a

sling—from a fall—and his son wore a three-piece suit. I remember that part well—dad in sling, son in suit. Cino gave me a tour, and even though his arm was in a sling, he stopped to chastise a worker for using a torch on a part mounted on a precision table. I remember that pretty well. Then he took me back to the office. He and his son measured me up, and I ordered a bike.

Cino brought out a package that just arrived from Campagnolo, and recommended I consider Campy's then-new Super Record group, which I didn't know anything about because word of the group hadn't made it to the States. Back then Campy's "new group" was a highly desired item, so I said sure, and got it. I think it was the first one in this country, and nobody will ever convince me otherwise!

But the interesting thing that occurred when I was leaving was that Cino Cinelli showed me his personal bike, which happened to be pink. I looked at the hubs and said, "You've got Phil Wood hubs!" He was shocked, he couldn't speak English, but he understood that I knew what they were. When Cino Cinelli rides Phil Wood hubs, you know they're good.

And as you may remember, there were many bikes that were "all Campy but with Phil hubs" back then. Phil hubs were always considered an upgrade.

You bought a company named after somebody else, and kept the name. It seems like a smart thing to do, given Phil's reputation and the momentum and all, but do you ever have any second thoughts?

No. I consider myself the current steward of the company. My focus is to keep it going, grow it, maintain the quality, then hand it off to others when the time's right. At some point I'll remove myself from the day-to-day activities and focus more on designing new products and tooling, so we can be more efficient.

Do you ever get offers to buy? Do you make business decisions based on a specific exit strategy? What is your exit strategy, or to see PW in 20 years, for instance, and how long do you plan to be there?

Sure, but I'm not interested now, and I don't see anything changing that soon. I recently developed a secession plan, one that will carry the Phil Wood legacy for another generation.

How do you describe your company in social situations to people who don't know about it?

I say I'm an administrator at a machine shop, which is the truth, but not the whole story. They usually smile, say "that's interesting," and move on. I don't like to talk about work in social situations to somebody who's never heard of it and isn't exactly sure what a hub is—it takes too much effort to describe the company and give it the credit it deserves.

I know that feeling. In those kinds of situations, I say "I work at a small bike company" and then they'll usually bring up Lance and say how

business must be great, and then they'll talk about carbon fiber, or titanium, and ask how much our bikes weigh, and if I'm not careful I'll find myself talking about how carbon snaps, and how it's neat that steel dents and bends, and if my wife is near, she sort of slips away.

Since taking over at Phil Wood & Co., what mistakes have you almost made?

I've made more mistakes than I've almost made, but nothing life threatening to the company. In the early '90s I was working on a sealed headset design, and I asked the owner of a bike shop in San Jose, a guy who was already familiar with Phil Wood products, what he thought of it. He told me to not waste my time on it, and the design is still on the back burner – it's more that we don't have the machine time to produce them than lack of desire – but we'll get to it soon.

Early on, salesmen from every sector bombarded us with their products or raw materials. Material costs are an integral part in the overall cost of a product. Some distributors/brokers offered steel and aluminum at substantially discounted prices. To get the price, I'd have to commit to a certain level of purchasing that would have locked us in for at least five years.

Before our final commitment, I requested a copy of the certification papers for review, and they weren't in English. From that point on, we demand that all our raw material must come from a U.S. supplier. You know, an apple pie is only as good as its ingredients, and we want the absolute best possible.

Going back now to the headset, how soon, and is it a threadless style, or threaded?

I'd like to see it threaded, but there's not much market for threaded headsets.

It will be both. We pride ourselves in being versatile and nimble enough to provide unique solutions so cyclists can maintain and enjoy their "Old Faithful Steeds".

Are there things you wish you could do with the business, but can't right now? Things like moving it, expanding it, or changing it somehow?

No, I've got all those things out of my system. We've gone through the borrowing phase, machine purchases, staffing, and expansion. We've settled in, optimized our production lines, kept costs under control, added new equipment as the demand requires. We have a great staff, will expand our staff slowly, offering a lifetime job and growth opportunity.

I want to stay here in San Jose, because this is the home to those at Phil Wood & Co. It's where their children go to school. We have what I feel is an excellent work environment. The factory location is stable, and I would not want to make a move that would upset their families, make their children change schools, and maybe end up where the weather and riding are worse.

Do you own or rent, and how big is your building?

We rent, and our rent is pretty low, actually, but my plan is to buy. We have just over 20,000 square feet, and 18 employees.

Phil started out with hubs, then added bottom brackets and pedals, and later added cassette hubs. How have the hubs changed over the years? And the bottom brackets? And why no more pedals? Those were neat pedals, but I can see how they wouldn't have much of a following these days.

Our hubs have, I feel, improved over the years due to several factors. First, the one thing that is consistent is the torque-tube body. Second, the major factor in the evolution of our hub is the inclusion of computerized mills and lathes. Their cost is high; however, the consistent accuracy from part to part is quite important in production runs. Many of the processes are still produced as we did in the beginning. I believe we are the only manufacturer that coins the spoke holes by hand on our hubs.

Bottom brackets have changed a little since the beginning. Originally

we used a water pump shaft bearing and attached our square taper ends to the cartridge bearing. We later moved to a steel shell, then an alloy shell, then a carbon fiber shell (on some models), then our magnesium shell on others. The look externally is the same. What has improved is the tolerance we place on the parts that make up the unit. The tolerance we keep on the spindle is actually tighter than the tolerance our bearing manufacturer maintains on the bearing. We've adapted our square tapers to the whims of various manufacturers, usually within a day of receiving the specs on their units.

Pedals are an interesting item. We produced the first sealed bearing pedal, which was approved by the California Highway Patrol. The evolution stopped there. Producing it was an option when I joined the company. I saw that others had taken the concept we introduced and were producing excellent products. Others were addressing the need for a good pedal; so I opted to focus on other projects.

To answer your inquiry on the production of another pedal, if there is a need, and other manufacturers do not satisfy it, we will produce one.

Do you farm out any of your production? You must, at least for small parts. Bearings, at least—right? And how come some of the bearings are brown, some are black, and some are orange-salmon? What's the difference?

There are multi-billion dollar companies that produce bearings. That's all they produce. To think we have a requirement that they haven't covered would be foolish on our part. We order hundreds of thousands of bearings. Because of these quantities, we're able to specify every aspect we want in the bearing. These manufacturers have detailed drawings on file for our bearings.

We've also been in the unique position in that if a problem occurred with our hub or bottom bracket, we would receive it for service. From over 30 years of doing this, we know what characteristics in a bearing will be best for our products. We regularly meet with our bearing manufacturers and discuss new features we want to include in the next production run. They issue a new drawing, we review it, and we specify that drawing in our next purchase order.

As far as the colors of the seals go, sometimes they mean something, sometimes they don't. Each of our manufacturers has its own colors that indicate certain characteristics. The bottom line is that we will place the appropriate bearings in the hubs we produce. If there is a special requirement regarding the part, we will accommodate the request.

We don't farm out production, we make everything here in San Jose.



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The manufacturing portion of your business is a big machine shop. Is it manual machining, CNC, or a combination? Is there anything you can't make?

There are a lot of things we can't make, but they're not relevant to our industry. If in making a part, we need different types of equipment, then we'll get it. Machinery salesmen who see all the other machine shops in the area tell us ours is probably the best-equipped in Silicon Valley.

We manufacture everything in-house because we have lathes, mills, center-less grinders, surface grinders, punch presses, brake presses, broaching machines, polishing machines, honing machines, and more. This is how we control the quality and every detail of every part.

We acquire more machines as we need them, but we're pretty well set-up now, and I expect in 20 years we'll still be here servicing 55-year-old bottom brackets and hubs.

How do you decide what to make and what not to make? You seem to make only things that need bearings. Is there a reason for that, like "company focus," or is it something else? And how big of an order run makes it worth it?

We're credited with introducing the first production sealed bearing bicycle components. We've produced many products that do not revolve around bearings—including disc brakes, crank-arm spiders, tools, and other items for the cyclist. We're at the point where it's important for us to focus on manufacturing existing products rather than offering new products. The size of the run is dependent upon where we need to interrupt the production process to implement a new feature or option.

Clearly if we were to produce a new item, we would want to have a minimum run of one shift. If it's to make a hub with six holes, we could do this item "off-line".

Do your employees ever give you new product ideas, or anything like that?

Sure, and their friends. We get feedback from vendors and customers, too—from all over, actually. As far as new products go, we get more requests than we can handle. Everybody wants us to make something that would make his or her life better, but even with all of our capacity, there's only so much we can do.

Are you concerned about "dedicated" drive trains like Shimano and Campy ruling out Phil bottom brackets on high-end bikes?

For 90-plus percent of riders the square taper is perfect, and depending on the crank material and number of times the cranks are pulled off, they should last the better part of one's lifetime—or at least a decade or more of constant use. That seems pretty good to me. Regarding "dedicated" drive trains—we produce replacement cups to fit Italian, French, Swiss, English, and other threaded bottom brackets.

Does the bottom bracket/crank situation make you want to make a crank, though?

We're busy enough, and I don't want to make a crank now. Doug White and Paul Price do a great job with cranks.

Would you ever consider a forged crank, like Campy, Sugino, and so on? Forging dies are about \$100,000, and they lock you in to one style forever, which I'd guess would be a tough thing for a machine shop. But wouldn't a forged crank be ideal?

Forging companies have offered to amortize the tooling costs over the first and second year's orders when we pressed them on terms and pricing. Luckily we're established enough to garner these concessions. The tooling costs are high, but not out of reason and would add incrementally to the cost of a crank set.

If the square taper cranks were to disappear, that is, be reduced to little or no new production, we would be compelled to support the existing base of square taper bottom bracket users with a cost effective, high quality and durable crank set. This is not something new to us; we've made cranks for special applications and have the setup and

tooling needed.

Do you have plans for new parts? Maybe a headset?

I have two design books, each about an inch thick, that have notes and drawings for products and production tooling. Items get dropped and added continuously. Unfortunately more items get added than dropped or completed. I know I will not complete all the items in either book in this lifetime.

Would you pay licensing fees for the Aheadset design? Shimano doesn't want to do that, so they don't have a non-threadless design. Would you just bite the bullet and pay the fees, or do you have something else in mind?

We've had headset designs for a long time. We have drawings from the 1970s; we've been running them on some our bikes for about five-plus years. They don't infringe on any other designs.

Let's talk about grease. I've always liked Phil grease, but it seems bicycles don't test grease all that much, do they? Nothing moves fast, nothing gets hot, and so how much better can one grease be than another?

Our grease has evolved over the years; we incorporate better rust inhibitors and extreme pressure additives when they become available. There's a bicycle component manufacturer that has researched and compared all greases. They purchase the same grease from us, that you would, to lubricate their out-board bearings – only their quantity is significantly larger.

A few years ago you had actual Phil Wood bikes. Why no more.

Because we're a parts maker. The Phil frames you've seen were made by a local builder, and now we just "endorse" a builder by having him make a line of custom frames for us. We have our input on the design, but we don't actually make them here.

We got into Phil Wood bikes because I got really pissed off—and I don't get angered easily. There was a bike manufacturer that wanted to spec our hubs and bottom bracket on its high-end single speed mountain bikes. The yearly quantity was in the hundred range, so I decided to offer a package for a price below our production cost. I figured we would lose less than if we spent the money advertising. They came back several times, asking: "Can you make it lighter? Can you lower the price? Can you make it cheaper?" I couldn't believe it. We were already losing money on it, yet he wanted us to lose more. I felt like a vendor at the flea market.

Finally I said, "No. You should look at something or someone else." I gathered the staff, explained what happened, and sought feedback about us getting into the 'complete bicycle' business. I argued that we

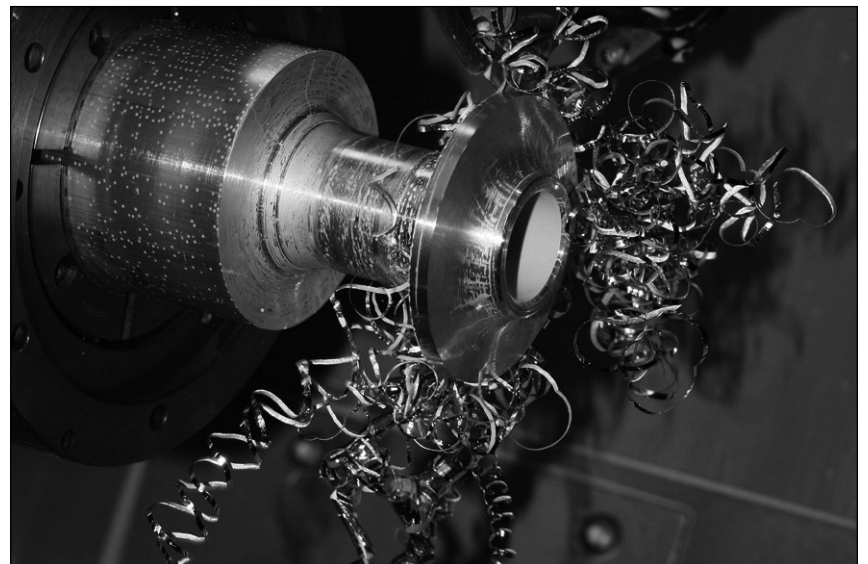


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could offer a better frame, made in the USA, with our components, and additional American-made components at a good value to the cyclist. This was during the very beginning of the single speed evolution. Since this area was not on the radar for almost all manufacturers, we felt it was a niche market. Thus we put the Kiss-Off name from our hubs to our bike, which was made for us by Sycip Designs, another fine Bay Area manufacturer.

This venture did what I hoped it would, and I was happy with the result. No more pissed off Peter!

For our 32nd anniversary, we offered thirty-two full custom disc-brake titanium single speeds built for us by Independent Fabrication, in Massachusetts. Thus was born the Phil/Independent Single Speed – Off road bike, or as we branded and decaled it: the “Piss-Off”. Both bikes had wonderful riding characteristics. Maybe in three or four years we’ll offer a 40th anniversary bike.

Riders who are deep into featherweight parts think Phil hubs and bottom brackets are too heavy. What do you say to that?

First, we build parts to be ridden hard for years, even decades. We’ve been around long enough and seen what fails and under what kinds of loads, and we build to prevent that. I’m not saying you’ll never break a Phil hub or bottom bracket, but it won’t be because we ignored strength to hit a target weight. We don’t have target weights.

Our standard hubs have large stainless axles, heat-treated stainless end caps, large bearings filled to the max with our grease, and to compete in weight, we’d almost have to eliminate the hub shell.

I’m with you there. How about this: If Phil got a tax-free \$1 million gift, how would you spend it? And how about \$5 million?

If we got \$1 million tax-free, I’d spread it among the employees, about \$50 thousand each. They could make a trust fund for their children, pay down their mortgage, or use it as a down payment on a house, maybe. If we got \$5 million, they could do even more. You can invest in all the new equipment and facilities you want; but if you don’t invest in your people, any production or sales gains will be short lived.

That sounds great, but how much money would you have to have before you’d buy more machinery, or a building that you’d own? Or a health club with Pilates classes and day care? I guess what I meant was, how would you spend it on the business? I know employee happiness is important, but I’m after something more nuts-and-bolts than that, for now. If I (Grant) had a million, I’d buy a building so I didn’t have to worry about Toyota buying this one and bumping us out of the county. If I had five million, I’d buy the 5,000 square foot vacated camera shop smack dab downtown, and get air conditioning and solar panels, and a mini-gym and a child play area. I’d get more

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650B tires made, and flesh out the Silver components line so it would include a Shimano-sized brake lever with a Cane Creek-style button quick-release. Compared to your answer that makes me out to be a devil, but that’s the kind of answer I’m getting at—how would you change your business? Would you at least buy a building?

From what I’ve observed in this industry, the “principals” of a firm own most of the facilities for a company, and they rent back to the company. So the rent stays the same, and there is no guarantee that the zoning will not change and force one to relocate. There are tax ramifications to owning your own building that may not be desirable. The next group of managers at Phil Wood & Co. will be saddled with the task of determining what facilities are best for the firm. My function is to expand the company and keep it healthy for the next crew.

I’d still buy a building. It would be nice! Anyway, what are your challenges, as a business? Hiring, buying materials...?

No, it’s growth. If you’re not growing, you’re dying. You can’t tread water. You can grow too much in the marketing and sales area, and not be able to deliver product – this will kill you. It’s a fine balance to grow in a distributed manner so that you are not handicapped by one facet of your business or another.

You can invest in all the new equipment and facilities you want; but if you don’t invest in your people, any production or sales gains will be short lived

Your treading water comment strikes home here. I’ve often described Rivendell in exactly those terms. I feel that way most of the time. We’ve got too many challenges and too few easy solutions at once, and it feels like treading water. Along the way we’ve grown, but only incidentally, not by plan. That could be our problem!

Anyway, talk about your hand cleaner. I know it’s not your invention or exclusive to you (except in the bike industry). But who at Phil discovered it, and when. Just for the record, I’ll never use anything else, even though it leaves a messy sink.

Well, we’ve had more of a hand in that stuff, actually. There are several companies that make a similar hand cleaner. We tried them all; picked the one we liked the most, and then changed the formula—the ingredients—to make it better still. Your hands should be dry when you use it, and when you’re finished rubbing your hands; the loose residue should easily wash down the sink. If you have chunks of cleaner in the sink, you’re wasting it.

Okay then, I’m glad to stand corrected. Let’s talk a little about sales. There wasn’t much competition when you started, but now there’s are lots of high-end sealed hubs and bottom brackets made in America and other places. And the market has changed, and square taper cranks—well, you can’t get them from Campy or Shimano anymore, at least at the high end. So how are sales now, and what are your predictions for the next five or so years? Especially considering that square-taper cranks are the odd ducks these days, and they seem to be your bread-and-butter.

I’ll get to the bottom brackets in a minute, but first I want to talk about hubs. What I look for is the overall consumption of the aluminum for hubs, because it’s a good way to judge production. When I started working here, we would peak periodically at 300 pounds of aluminum in a week, enough for about 200 front and rear freewheel type hubs. Now we go through 1500 to 2000 pounds per week.

Sales are fine. We try to accommodate the cost of doing business into the price of our products. When material and lubricant costs have escalated beyond normal expectations, we’ve maintained our prices,



Finished endcaps. These are the cylinders just outside the hub flanges. They thread onto the hub axles (see the hex holes) and butt up against the dropout faces.

worked harder in being more efficient in the production of the product, but have never sacrificed quality. Over the years sales have increased, but profitability suffers at times due to these external economic factors.

We're comfortable with what we're making, have some financial reserves to grow a little—including funds set aside for surprise maintenance—and have never missed payroll. Our employees feel secure, and they should.

Which other companies do you admire, and what specific products trip your trigger?

I'll answer this question with a story...

While working at a power plant in the Northwest, I was at a social even, a party of some kind, where I met an older gentleman who'd worked in logging. He asked what I did, what I've done, where I've been, and I asked him the same.



Jose (ponytail) and Peter (beard) look at a control panel

He had two sons and a daughter. The daughter married and moved away. One son worked with him in his family owned lumber mill. He said his health wasn't as good as it used to be, and he was tired a lot. The son took over the mill and has run it, with some ups and downs, for the last seven years. He then mentioned that his other son had earned an MBA and a PhD and was a vice president with 3M in Minnesota. As he was telling his story, his mannerisms became somewhat muted and the story was becoming more matter-of-factly. I paused, then asked him of which son he was more proud. He looked me in the eye and said: 'You're not worth a ____ 'til you've had to make payroll!'

So what companies do I admire? It's the ones that have integrity, work hard, and make a quality product. Paul Components and White Industries are at the top of my list at the moment.

Post-interview notes

I started this interview in about April, maybe March of 2007, and I ran into typing difficulties about halfway through and couldn't work on it after that. So I contacted a friend, Gary Boulanger, to tie up some loose ends, and he did that and more on this, and I want to thank him.

Thank you, y'big knucklehead.

Over the years we've bought from more than 150 vendors, and when you do that, your own internal rating system evolves. It's not just how good their stuff is, but also a range of things such as delivery, packaging, labeling, invoicing, customer service, technical expertise, willingness to listen and

maybe even act on criticism and suggestions, and General Friendliness.

When you throw all of these into the mix, it's hard to beat Phil Wood.

I also particular like Phil's (or Peter's...) internal confidence, which shows up as a reluctance to bend to market trends when it (or he, Peter) thinks they're dumb—a word he'd never in a million years use, but that's what it amounts to. Whether they are dumb or not is another question. Usually they are, but the point I'm trying to make is that Peter is resolute in his beliefs and his dedication to protecting Phil's reputation, and he's that way without being stubborn or blind to innovations, change, improvement.

Phil doesn't come out with new things often, but when it does, you can believe there's a couple of years of development behind it. I'd like to see new or resurrected Phil pedals, headsets, and even a crank, but Peter will do these only if he thinks they're good ideas whose time has come, and if it happens, we'll sell them right off the bat.

Hey, did you notice that Peter singled out two of his competitors—White and Paul—as the companies he most admired? Holy cow, how many other people on earth or beyond would do that? Negative two, negative one, or just zero? —Grant

At some point in your bike life, you'll wish you could *Ghost Ride*



If you have more than one bike, there will come a time when you have to take two bikes someplace, and there's no car and nobody else to help you, and that's ghost-riding comes in handy.

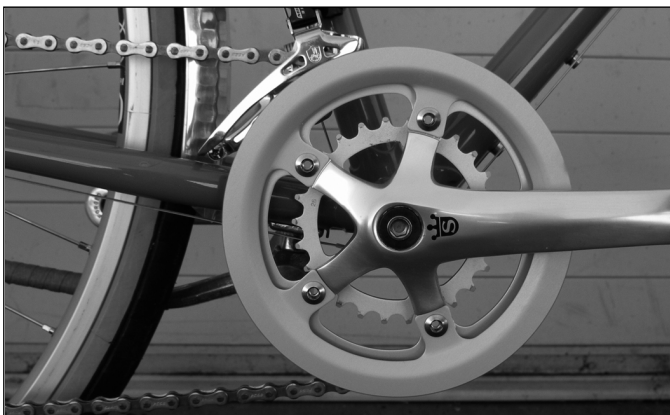
You grab the other bike by its stem and just ride. The bike in your hand will start to wander off course, but no amount of verbal description can teach you how to keep control of it as well as half a minute of actually doing it. You will get the hang of it in no time.

The easiest stems to grab are traditional-shaped ones, shaped like a "7," but a skilled ghost rider can handle any stem. A horizontal extension makes it easier, though.

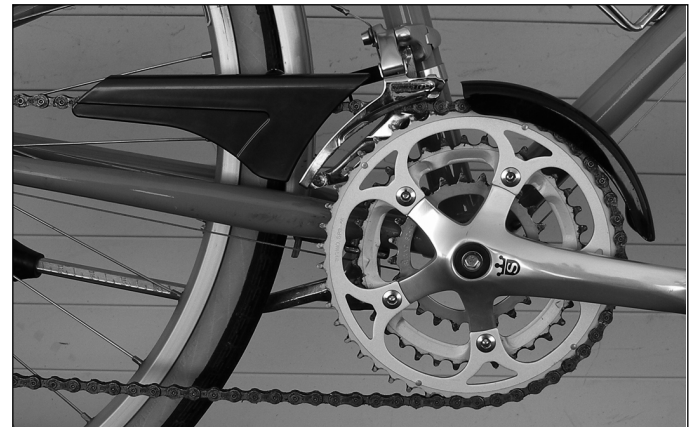
As your skills improve with actually doing it, you'll find that hills aren't impossible, and cornering is easier than you'd ever imagine. Working into it slowly and with normal precautions will probably keep you upright all the time. Stopping at a light is easy, because you have four wheels beneath you, not just two.

Practice on Foam Road, while wearing thick protective clothing.

Two Options In the Keeping-Your-Slacks Clean Department



We aren't selling the one on the left right now, but we have the combo on the right, and if you have a double or triple crank and an extraordinary fear of chain grease, we heartily endorse it!



A guard in place of an outer ring

This isn't actually an option on a normal bike; it's the one that comes on the Sugino 40 x 32 double that's stock on our Quickbeam. We've sold a few riders who didn't want greasy pants, and despite the fact that the front derailleur is technically out of the approved height ranges for the 40T big ring, the shifting is perfect, no problem at all. We have about 30 of these cranks around, but are saving most of them for our next run of Quickbeams, which we hope to have by early Fall '08.

Back on topic: It works, this chainring guard, but the one on the right works even better.

Two guards, and keep that outer ring

Japanese accessory maker OGK has done it yet again, with what it calls, in typical Japanese fashion, this "epoch-making" combination of chain guard and chainring guard. It's actually really nifty, and yes it's black and yes it's plastic, but it does the job, and for the right bike, it's quite perfect. Mounting them takes patience and the ability to follow illustrated instructions, unless you can also read Japanese. Give yourself half an hour, and you'll be all set.

Set up correctly, it completely unaffected anything else. You go about your business and your pants stay clean, even without a strap or clip, and even if you have, as you just might, white bellbottoms.



The Primal Blueprint: Maximizing through Moderation

by Mark Sisson

This article that could have a huge and lasting impact on the way you eat and exercise, or it may infuriate you so much that you send us mean mail for even printing it. New ideas that rock strongly and longly held beliefs and threaten sacred cows tend to have that effect. Well...strap on your crash helmet, folks. —Grant

Let's get one thing straight right off the bat: Endurance training is antithetical to anti-aging. So it amazes me when guys in their 40s and 50s who are training for a marathon or Ironman suggest that doing so will keep them young. It won't. Endurance training speeds aging almost as fast as watching TV, drinking sodas, and eating potato chips. In some cases, it speeds it up even faster.

I know, I know, you've been told that exercise is the fountain of youth, and the more you do, the greater the benefits. Well, science is starting to disprove that, and I suspect the evidence in support of my thesis will accumulate exponentially now that the first generation of aerobic overdoers has started dropping prematurely.

There is a middle ground, a perfect balance of diet and exercise that will lead to the longest, most productive life.

First, a history lesson

Humans aren't designed to work for extended periods at 80-90 percent efforts. Our evolutionary blueprint, the last draft of which was completed well over 10,000 years ago, set us up as great slow-movers and occa-

sional fast sprinters.

We have two primary energy systems:

- (1) fat-based, which allows for long slow steady walking across the Savannah; and
- (2) ATP-based, which gave our ancestors 20 seconds of balls-out sprint speed to escape the saber tooth tiger (or let grandma lift the '67 Ford truck off gramps when the cheap jack failed).

Just because we weren't designed to operate at high revs for long periods doesn't mean we can't. Clearly, we *can* train-in amazing endurance—but *because it's not in our evolutionary nature to exercise that way, doing so extracts a huge cost.*

Even our hunter-gatherer ancestors probably relied more on superior tracking skills and walking than they did running for hours or days after their prey. The energy costs of doing the latter would almost guarantee extinction: You run after an antelope for four hours and he gets away. Now you not only don't have any food, you've used up all your glycogen and, oops, there's that saber-tooth tiger licking his chops and ready to pounce.

But our bodies *are* among the best in nature at adapting to hostile environments and self-destructive lifestyles. It's that capacity to adapt that allowed our ancestors to pass along their DNA blueprints to us, but it's also what allows us to today to weigh 500 pounds when we overeat a little, or allows addicts to thrive on a sixty Vicodin a day, when your or I would die on ten.

During the Irish potato famine, many went from living on nothing but ten to twelve pounds of potatoes per person per day, to living on nothing but seaweed and shoe leather for months. That's adaptation!

Back when games were invented, it was a natural alpha male thing to want to test the endurance of one guy against another. It may have aided in mate-selection. And because the first real endurance games probably happened around 10,000 years ago when we learned to grow crops so we didn't have to chase down food every day, you could say that it was most likely *because* of these new-fangled high-carbohydrate grains that we could first fully test out our adaptive endurance mechanisms.

You could even argue that grains and sugars fueled the endurance fire as our early frat-boy ancestors attempted to one-up each other every generation until today, when we have type-As doing triple-ultra Ironmans back-to-back. Sure, they burn a little fat here and there, but most of it is based on a maladaptive second-rate carbohydrate energy system that was never contemplated in the original design prototype!

What do endurance contest have to do with aging? Lots.

Carbohydrate metabolism is an inefficient and costly way to move for long periods. Your muscles and liver can hold only 500-600 grams of precious glycogen. That's only two hours worth of fuel when you're running sub-six minute miles. So if you're an endurance athlete it behooves you to consume lots of carbs — the simpler the better — and to accelerate the burning of fatty acids if you continue training and racing.

That's where the philosophies of endurance training and anti-aging agree to disagree. You need carbohydrates for fuel, but carbohydrates require an enormous amount of insulin be produced and circulated to help store it.

Anti-aging scientists tell us insulin is one of the best markers of longevity in all animals...that the less you produce (type 1 diabetics notwithstanding) the longer you live.

Chronic high-level training naturally depletes glycogen, which causes the body to release the adrenal hormone cortisol to cannibalize muscle tissue in order to help make new glucose (gluconeogenesis). Besides tearing down valuable muscle, chronic cortisol release carries with it a litany of negative effects. It suppresses immune function, which opens the door not only for short term upper respiratory infections, but may leave the door open for longer term, more serious issues (asthma, cancer, and heart disease, which we know has a strong inflammatory component). Chronic cortisol release also reduces the ability of your bones to take on calcium, so it's not surprising that so many runner/triathletes — especially women — have low bone density. Anti-aging experts say that among elderly, low bone density is a pretty fair predictor of mortality. Break a hip when you're older and your chances of dying skyrocket.

Speaking of cortisol, not only does training and racing tend to produce it, but even the training meals can produce it. A meal high in sugar and other simple carbohydrates can cause a dramatic rise in cortisol (as part of an insulin-adrenaline cascade). That's one reason why sugar is a powerful immune sup-

pressor.

The beta-oxidation of fats during heavy training generates oxidative fallout (also known as "free radical damage") at a rate that is often 20 times what you generate at rest. Oxidative damage of cellular constituents such as DNA, proteins and lipids can result in progressive destruction of cells and tissues. This oxidative damage is believed to be a contributing factor to many diseases including cancer, heart disease and aging in general. Your body has natural



Something for the ladies...

antioxidant systems designed to keep pace with your normal low-level fat-burning systems (walking and at rest) and even your occasional ATP-based "life or death sprint" systems, but it really wasn't designed to compensate for hours of high-level aerobic performance. Oxidative damage to cellular DNA is usually cleaned up by the immune system, but a compromised immune system may set the stage for major problems later on. The cumulative effects of oxidative damage are why many long-time mileage junkies look older than they are.

Lean mass is a major predictor of longevity. "Dying of natural causes" is better described as "dying from organ failure due to loss of organ reserve and lean tissue." Organ reserve (the functional capacity of any or all organs necessary to support life) and skeletal muscle mass increase or decrease together depending on the stimulus or lack of it. So, *anything you do to build muscle tends also to build or improve your heart, liver, lungs, kidney, and kidney tissue. Similarly, anything you do to diminish muscle—like, by not using it—tends to have a negative effect on your vital organs.* We call it "atrophy," and it's what "use it or lose

it" is all about. When you work, your body adapts to do more work. Stay in bed for a few weeks and you'll lose both muscle mass and organ reserve. If you're young, you can build both back with diet and minimal exercise. If you are old, it's often the beginning of the end.

Exercise is a great way to increase muscle mass and, hence, organ reserve. We were, after all, designed to move. But our DNA blueprints were fine-tuned to work best when we walk long distances, sprint like hell now and then, lift boulders, and climb trees. The benefits of true low level activity are many: We develop an extensive capillary network and reduce the chances of a heart attack or stroke. We burn more fat, we increase our anti-oxidant levels and slow aging. We regulate insulin better and our bones get stronger. Surviving run-ins with the saber tooth tigers makes you stronger, better adapted to do it again.



and something for the lads...

Many age group endurance athletes over-train in their exuberance to excel at racing, and eat too many carbohydrates to stay fueled. Over the years, their muscle mass, immune function, and testosterone decrease, while their cortisol, insulin and oxidative output increase. Do this long enough and you'll age faster.

That's why I stopped racing and training ten years ago and why I prefer hiking, sprinting and weight-training today.

Summing up

Readjust your training to fit your DNA blueprint. If you're not getting enough exercise, step it up. If you're training hard and long for grueling endurance competitions, back off. On the bike, sprint more and rest more. Break it up and have fun. Lift weights, do yoga and there's a good chance you'll be healthier and look better.

Mark Sisson is a former 2:18 marathoner and 4th place Ironman Hawaii finisher. He has coached elite runners & triathletes & is the author of "The Runners World Triathlon Training Book" & "Training and Racing Biathlons." He served for 13 years as chairman of the ITU (International Triathlon Union) anti-doping commission and liaison to the IOC Medical Commission. He owns Primal Nutrition, Inc, a sports supplement company.

www.marksdailyapple.com

www.primalnutrition.com

Disturbing coincidences?

Here's a list to review – and many of these are people I know or knew personally:

- Marathoner Brian Maxwell, ranked #3 in the world at one time and founder of PowerBar died of a heart attack at age 51.

- Alberto Salazar, probably the greatest American distance runner ever, had a heart attack at age 48 that left him clinically dead for 8 minutes (his heart stopped several more times on the way to the hospital).

- Greg Welch, one of the most versatile all-around triathletes ever (he won Ironman Hawaii, the ITU World Championships and the world Duathlon Championship) was forced to retire at age 37 due to severe heart problems. He has had over 10 open heart surgeries and wears a pace-maker.

- Mark Montgomery, who was a top pro triathlete for many years, had his pace-maker installed at age 46 as a result of V-tach issues.

- Johnny G, the developer of the popular "Spin" classes and a RAAM racer, has had severe cardiomyopathy and recently had a pacemaker installed.

- Maddy Tormoen, 3-time world Duathlete-of-the-Year and 35-year old triathlete Emma Carney, twice ITU World Triathlon champion, each now have defibrillators implanted in their chests to correct life-threatening arrhythmias.

- Chris Legh and Julianne White, both Ironman winners, have each had entire sections of their colon removed immediately after a race due to "ischemic conditions" where the blood supply to the GI tract was rerouted for so long (as the body diverted the blood to its periphery to cool itself) that whole sections of the colon literally died from lack of oxygen and nutrients.

- John Walker, one of the greatest milers of all-time was diagnosed with Parkinsons at 46.

- Marty Liquori, another world-best miler was diagnosed with leukemia at age 43.

- Bruce Balch, Steve Scott and Lance Armstrong (all top endurance athletes) got testicular cancer after a few years of competing. Most of the top runners from the '80s don't run anymore; many can barely walk due to arthritic conditions. And we think endurance training is healthy?

The "less is more" concept is taking hold among many former endurance athletes. When you cut back miles and start throwing in a few short - but intense - interval sessions each week, you start to realize a few things you hadn't until now:

- 1) You are training as a Primal Man lived.

- 2) Ironically, you feel less "beat up"

- 3) It takes less time to accomplish.

- 4) It's just more fun than slogging out long miles. Research now also confirms that this method is far more effective at improving cardiovascular fitness and promoting HGH release than the long, hard rides are.

One other thing. The high mileage training sort of requires that you replace all that lost glycogen with a diet high in carbs. If you follow the Primal Blueprint, you know that's highly inflammatory and leads to other undesirable effects. All in all, I am thrilled to have discovered that I can be healthier and "fitter" (OK, I can't quite race as well, but who cares?) on less work.

What's not to like?

Mark Sisson

How this story changed riding and eating for me. Just...as a matter of fact.

Mark Sisson didn't actually say it, but if you buy his message & apply it to riding, then maybe the long death marches aren't that aren't that fun in the first place, aren't that good for you in the second place. With Grok-riding, whatever pressures you feel to increase your mileage or average speed can go into the garbage can. Instead of "What would a young Eddy Merckx wannabe do?", think "What would Grok do?" Would He push his heart rate to 85% of max and hold it there till the woolly mammoths come home? I say nay. He'd mosey, sashay, and jog a bit just to keep his muscles loose & ready for the odd life saving or meat-catching sprint. *Do gazelles jog? Does any wild mammal jog? Do rock climbers? Dancers? I'm just sayin'...*

And foodwise: Instead of ingesting massive calories of pasta and other grain-based carbohydrates because that's what we cyclers are told to eat— and then trying to ride it off—eat less brown & more red, green, yellow, orange, and purple. Don't think "What would Grok eat?", but "What *did* Grok eat?" We know he'd eat anything and he'd probably kill you to get it, but the options weren't there, and his body evolved to process what was. Grok never saw amber waves of grain.

Riding then: I used to think the best thing I could do for my heart was to ride full blast and maintain a high pulse as long as I can. When I went on a slow ride with family or friends who don't ride a lot, I'd think, *boy, this good family fun is a cardiovascular zero, so I better make up for it later.* It would've been nice to know I could be dad-on-a-family ride without going into cardiovascular debt, but once you've *been* fast and that fastness has become part of your identity, it's hard to get that shrieking, finger-wagging, rotten-toothed howler monkey off your back. It's not, like, *monkey, be gone!*

Riding now: Grok didn't exercise at his lactate threshold or aerobic maximum, and not me neither no more (that's Grok-talk). When I'm riding on my own I'll vary my pace. I'll go up the mountain in bites of walking, jogging-with-bike, riding, sprinting, walking. I've always loved riding, and it's going to be even more fun now, because I won't have that cardiovascular-obsessed baboon-like primate-thing on my back. I'll do longer rides easier, like Grok jog-walking across the savannah. I'll enjoy slow rides more, and I won't be feel guilty when I'm not near my max effort. *Yee-haw.* And I still get to ride.

Food then: I had a healthy diet, heavy on whole grains. I kept a steady stream of oat bran and flax coursing through my guts, absorbing cholesterol, scraping artery walls clean, fighting cancer, whatever. I like brown scratchy grains, and I'll miss them.

Food now: When I'm not at a social even where not eating something will make somebody sad or make everybody around me feel awkward, then I'll go by this: If Grok didn't eat it or eat something pretty darn close to it, I won't, either. I'm cutting back grains 90 percent, mostly by eliminating mountains of cereal. I'm still going to eat some wholegrain and sourdough bread and pasta, a little every day, but not tons every day like before. I'm typing this at the breakfast table. My wife just got up and asked "What are you doing?" I said, "Working on the Reader." She said, "I mean, with the smells." I said, "That's collard greens." It won't be my normal breakfast, but I wanted to establish a benchmark, and it seemed like a good one.

Michael Pollen's *In Defense of Food* seems to be a good guide. I'm going by it as much as I can. It's all Grok. — Grant

The Everyman's Library

special inside, better outside

If you're bookish you've seen them here and there—the gold-diamonded spines being hard to miss on the bookshelves and all. But...you probably didn't know how special they are. We'll fix that.

Over the years many good things get discontinued or get cheapened as the new people in charge have different values than the ones who were in charge then, and the new guys, fully aware that they don't have the product chops of their founders, go out to make their mark by increasing profits, either by cheaper materials, methods, or good old fashioned cheap labor.

The Everyman's Library series of hardcover books is one of the good things that has survived that trend. Everyman was started in London in 1906 by Joseph M. Dent, its stated purpose being to make good literature affordable, so that "for a few shillings, the reader may have a whole bookshelf of the immortals; for five pounds a man may be intellectually rich for life." Good books cheap, but not cheaply made, though.

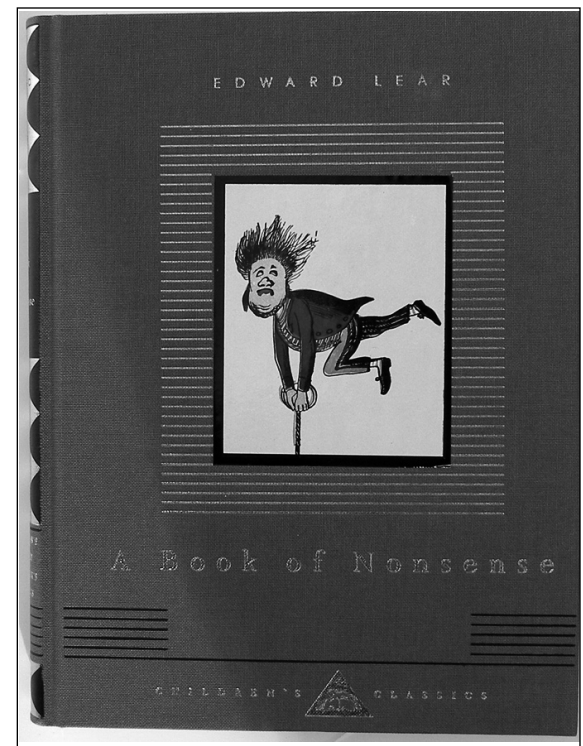
From the start and still, the books in Everyman's Library are made way better than average. They all have full-cloth sewn-in bindings (stronger), silk bead headbands (not sure what those are), permanently attached ribbon bookmarks, classic typefaces, and on top of all that, they are printed on acid-free papers, for long life and no brittleness in old age. They feel good in your hand, and you don't need to know the details of their materials or construction to know they're strong books. They feel better in your hand, and it makes you want to hold them and read them and just have them around.

It's an expensive way to make a book, and yet books in the Everyman's Library series sell for \$14 to \$20, or about the same price as fat new paperbacks about your favorite Hollywood stars.

All Everyman's Library books are classics that, if they had to play by the same rules as contemporary books (staying in print only as long as sales warranted it), would either be out of print, or available only as cheaper paperbacks or leather-bound collector's versions out of everyman's price range.

Alas, there are no books on bikes here, but what did you expect? There's plenty to choose from anyway—more than 500 titles in a range of categories, heavy on poetry, fiction, and speeches written by smart and talented writers from the past. The only living author with an Everyman's Library title is John Updike.

Google Everyman's Library to see the whole list. They've got a neat electronic card catalogue with all the Everyman's books. You'll come away with something, that's for sure.



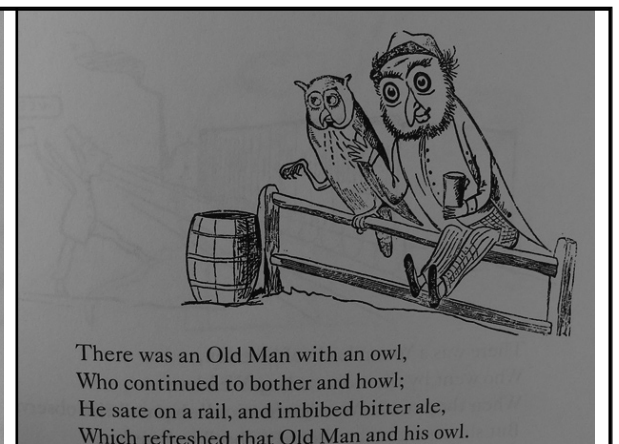
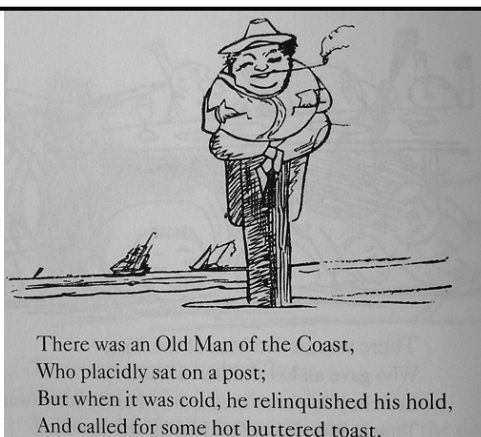
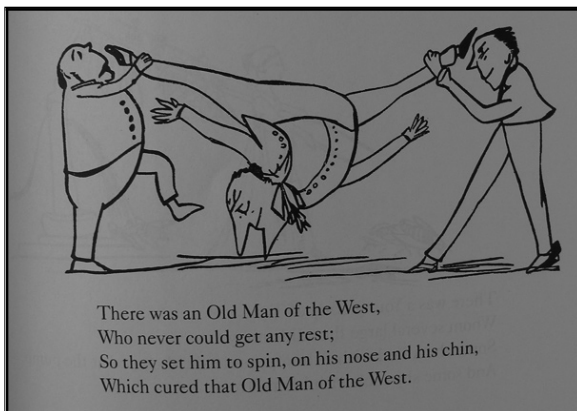
The Book of Nonsense

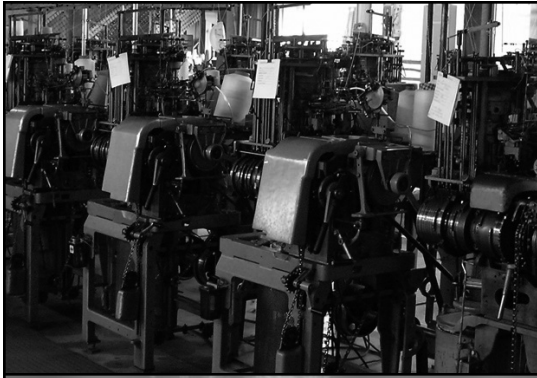
by Edward Lear

If you've had it up to here with sophisticated humor, clever nuance, sexual innuendo, and humor-by-way-of-other-people's-misfortune or stupidity, and just want some kind of nonsense and clean pureness to cleanse your brain with, then there's nothing better than five minutes with this book. It was first published in 1846, and I'd like to go back in time then and see what the reaction was. You don't think of 1846-ers as sitting around reading funny books, when they had the wild west and survival and gambling guys with derringers and bowler hats to contend with, but it must have been some kind of a hit, because it didn't get buried and forgotten, and has been published continuously since.

It's the perfect waiting room, coffee table, car trip, airplane book. You can open it to any page and start right in. Edward Lear was most famous for his limericks—and it's full of them, for sure—but also as stories (The Owl & the Pussycat being the most famous) and a variety of other nonsensical things that defy description in such a small space.

As of February 5, 2008, we've sold 1,048 of these in 12 years. As long as Rivendell exists and this book does, we'll continue to offer it. It's easy and fun to read with children, and you can be old and like it, too.





Top: You dint think they knit them by hand, did you?

Bottom: Angora Bunny No. 14-2G1Z358. The face is somewhere in the middle.



Four of twenty-two Northlanders brave the elements to say hello and thanks to fans of the wool monkey socks.

From left to right: Kathy, Laura, Keri, Vicki.

Vicki Johnston & Northland Woolens

How long has Northland woolens made socks, and what did you do before that?

I started making socks in 1989, as part of my daughter's 4H project, and started Northland Woolens in the mid 1990s, when she was still at home. I wanted to be with her, so I quit my job in a gift shop to do it. I majored in dietetics and worked in that some, even before.

How many employees do you have?

Three full time, and 22 part-time, depending on the time of year. About half are Amish women, who hand-sew some items for us.

Why no men?

I've never had a man apply. Most don't like sewing and I run the machines. Stay away from my machines!

Have you grown in since the start?

Sure. I started with two commercial machines and am now up to 28 sock machines and 6 hat machines. We make hats, too. You should buy our hats.

Too late for this year.

Well, next, then. I would like to add on a few more different styles of socks and hats but that would require more machinery. More machinery means a building addition. More building means more money.

What do you think about socks? And compare yours with others.

I think most companies have gone too techni-

cal as a means to sell socks. I like wool socks. Our are mostly wool with just enough nylon to keep the machines from jamming. I say it's 5 percent, but it's probably more like three.

Where do you get the wool, what kind of sheep. and what's the story on the rabbits?

Well, the sheep come from all over the U.S. My wool guy tells me it's merino, but I wouldn't be surprised if there were some other breeds in there, too. It's all good wool. Merino is what the public knows.

Well, merino sheep aren't black or grey, so it can't be all merino.

Actually, there are dark merinos now. A recent innovation!

How about the angora?

My friends and I raise them, and whatever wool our bunnies can't supply, we buy from out of towners. There's a growing demand for angora wool, so people are raising rabbits to supply it.

Why put any angora in the socks at all?

Tell me you're joking! The angora wool adds warmth and softness, and improves wicking. All sheeps wool is good too, but a bit of the bunny doesn't hurt a bit.

What is it like to work at Northland Woolens?

Well, everyone is close, and turnover is rare. Kari, who invoices and ships, has been a family friend for more than fifteen years.

Who are your customers? I never see these socks in stores. .

You're the only west-coast customer we have. Well, maybe one or two others, but mostly we sell to small hunting and fishing stores in the midwest.

I think the west coast think wool is only for cold weather. Of course, that's just not true.

Of course not! Is Northland Woolens a family business?

No, no. My husband is a lawyer, my son is an engineer, and my daughter is finishing up in dental school. I'm the sock maker!

Do your family members wear only Northland socks?

Oh, no. My husband wears dress socks—usually wool ones, at work, but when he goes hunting or curling (he's a curler, too), he wears my socks. He didn't used to. He thought wool couldn't be as warm as the synthetics, but he knows better now.

My son wears wool socks most of the time, not all the time, and my daughter liked the usual girly socks as she was growing up, thanks a lot. But to answer your question: No, but they are their favorites.

Where do you see Northland Woolens going? And what is your dream for it?

I can't imagine us getting big, if that's what you're getting at, but I just want to keep making socks right here in Minnesota.

The Shoe Ruse

I prefer not to reprint things from past issues or on our site, but this time there are four good reasons for it: (1) I've been semi-lame in my typing arm, and it's a good way to fill space without fresh typing; (2) The original Shoes Ruse (SR) appears on rivbike.com, but tons of people don't read that; and (3) More than half of these Readers will be distributed to riders—at charity rides and other events—who've never even heard of Rivendell, and this might be a good thing for them to read. It's not like it's the precious gospel last word on shoes and pedals, but it is a perspective that's not often considered, and it's always good to consider new things; and (4): The SR infuriates people got an amazing email response to the online Shoes Ruse, and it's I paid extra attention to it because the writer has the same name as her world-famous fashion-designing mother who is no longer with us, or her. I pulled the name at the last minute, because the back-and-forth, while not nasty, isn't all that pleasant. But I've got to say it's a funny feeling, getting an angry letter from the daughter of somebody famous. — Grant

THE BIGGEST MYTH IN BICYCLE RIDING is the touted benefit of special cycling shoes. The argument is this: With a firm connection to the pedal, you can apply power for the full 360-degrees of a pedal revolution. And stiffness equals no loss of energy equals more speed.

Honest Hopi, that's one of the biggest, fattest lies of all time on any topic, but experts, riders, and the media repeat this over and over again, year after year. Coaches, trainers, people we're supposed to listen to. Statesmen and Pillars of the Community. Even the Girl Next Door says it over and over.

On August 20 of 2007, a fellow who had just completed a money-raising ride from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific (with a group of 60) came by, and "pedals" came up, and he said the organizers of the group required click-in pedals. Many of the riders didn't even own a bike until the ride, but no matter: No click-in pedals, no ride. Those rule makers are well-meaning, but deluded. The notion of positively locking your foot onto a pedal seems to make sense, and is certainly an easy sell. But it is not true. Just because a guy is fast or experienced and Generally Well-Meaning & Honest About Most Things, doesn't mean he knows what the heck is going on with his shoes and feet and pedaling muscles. A common misconception, that one; and easily shot full of holes by one bicycle ride in sneakers—but on your good & normal bike.

When elite pedalers and lousy rookie pedalers have been hooked up to machines that measure muscle activity during pedaling, the machines tell us this:

- during normal pedaling at normal cadences, nobody pulls UP on the backstroke
- the elite/efficient pedalers push down less on the upward moving pedal than the rookies do.

Think about that: The super fasties minimize the downward force on the upward-moving pedal more. They don't pull up on it or even unweight it. They just minimize the downward pressure on it, so one leg isn't fighting the other as much.

That is a far cry from the 360-degrees of power the clickers and media and experts promise you.

The thing is, if all you can hope to do is minimize the downward force on the upward-moving pedal, how does it help to be clicked or strapped in?

It doesn't and can't.

There are some benefits to being firmly attached. Whether they make sense for you and your riding, only you can answer. Here they are:

1. In slippery conditions and vicious sprints, and when hopping the bike over a dead raccoon or up onto a curb, a connection to the pedal is a benefit.

2. When you climb a super steep short hill, you actually can pull up on the upward-moving pedal for a few strokes, and doing so helps you turn over the other pedal (get it past 12:00 and into the power part

of the stroke).

But before you think, "Hey, that's me—I don't want to not be able to hop over a dead raccoon, and now and then I get wild in rainy weather sprints; and there was that one time the hill stopped me, and I don't want that to happen again." consider how often those things will matter. Before I started pedaling free, I imagined myself hopping over dead mammals all the time—because I'd done it a few times. But when I gave up pedaling connected (about 5 years ago), I haven't missed it once. I ride around the mammals, and not once have I wished I was connected.

There are actual, real benefits to pedaling free:

1. You can wear any shoe in your closet. Sandals in hot weather. Crocs, even. Sneakers, boots in the snowy-cold winter. Footwear to suit the weather, not to fit the pedal.
2. More efficient muscle use, less chance of repetitive stress injury. Regular cycling shoes may give you some lateral float, but they lock your foot to the pedal (fore-and-aft wise) in one place, and that's not how we use our feet. When you go up stairs or do leg presses at the gym (efforts not unlike pedaling up a hill), you push with the middle of your foot. Not with the ball of your foot, as you've been told is proper for cycling.

When you run fast, you run on your toes (or off the ball of your foot). When you walk, you land on your heel. Middle-distance runners run off their mid-foot. Rock climbers use every part of their foot, depending on the rock and the move.

Your foot is just a foot, but you use it different ways for different kinds of efforts, and click-in cycling shoes don't let you do that.

On long grinding hills, it is absolutely more comfortable to pedal close to your arch. You can't do that if you're clicked in. And on longer rides, it's good to vary your foot's position over the pedal, because doing this shifts the load to different muscles and tendons in your legs.

If your foot is locked in one position, you're much more likely to get a repetitive stress injury, because you're much less likely to repeat the same motion over and over.

Now, shoes.

Racing shoes are rigid, slippery plastic. Riders shopping for them pick them up and test their stiffness (as though it matters) by trying to bend them with their hands. If the shoe is rigid and unyielding, they heave out an "ahhh..." and consider it worthy.

It's a bunch of hooey, though. Your foot doesn't bend when you pedal a bike. It tenses and pretty much stays straight, just as it does when you walk up stairs.

You want TWO things from a shoe:

- protection from the pedal. You don't want to jam the pedal into your foot.
- gription. You don't want to slide around on the pedal.

That is all.

Now, when the pedal is as big as a soup spoon, the pressure is concentrated in a small area, and the shoe needs to be something-like-hard-plastic to protect your foot.

Now, pedals.

When the pedal has a bigger platform the pressure is distributed over a wider area, and the shoe sole can be much less rigid, thick, plastic. There are pedals out there that let you wear the flimsiest sneakers or even flip-flops, with no loss of efficiency and no pain.

The best pedals are double-sided pedals, the kind made for BMX riding. Some of those are monstrously heavy because they're made for riding off roofs and landing hard, but others are just normal, medium-to-lightish pedals that are perfect for the modern go-anywhere rider looking for a way out of the rigid-shoe jailhouse.

Now, shoe again. Specifics and details.

Ninety-nine percent of the riding I've done over the past 5 years has been in \$39 Teva sandals. I use the Hurricane model, the cheapest, flimsiest, lightest (20oz for a pair of size 10s) model. In the summer I wear light socks or none; in the winter I often double-up thick wool socks. Being sandals with adjustable straps, there's never a fit problem, there's never the feeling of crampedness or anything.

Chaco has said it would introduce a cycling sandal, but there doesn't seem to be much action there. Anyway, the Tevas are great. Chaco—I think it's not going to happen. That's too bad, because the soles are really grippy.

What's the lower limit, shoeswise?

That's hard to say, when you consider how much of the world rides barefoot (something not even I would advocate!). I know a few people who prefer Crocs for all riding, including off-road and long distance

touring. John here wears Crocs as his main cycling shoes, too.

I recently got some fake Crocs, from Target. They cost \$9.99 and weigh about 5 ounces a pair. My foot fits in them loosely with a wool sock. I've been riding them lately and the grip is excellent, even better than Tevas. I timed a hillclimb that I do all the time, and my times are no different than with Tevas (or real cycling shoes, for that matter). The fit is loose, but it doesn't seem to matter. The comfort is out of this world. They work great with Sneaker pedals and Grip Kings, and on any ride that doesn't involve hiking with the bike up steep, loose trails, they're perfect.

One more benefit to pedaling "free"

Your feet learn to pedal in circles, because they aren't forced to. As a bike rider, you're already accustomed to moving your feet in a circle, but when you're locked into the pedals, your muscles don't have to learn, because they're going to move in circles no matter what. If you want to train a dog to come, you don't keep it on a leash and haul it in like a bucket of crabs when you say come; and if you want to train your feet to move efficiently in circles, you don't force them to comply by locking them to the pedal. I've never been accused of being what you call a muscleologist, but that doesn't seem to be the way to train muscles to move your feet in circles.

Summing up the whole ball-o-beeswax

The most important and liberating thing I've learned in 40 years of riding nearly daily, is that for me, normal shoes and pedaling unconnected is the way to go. Emotionally, it felt weird at first—giving up something I'd practiced and espoused for 35 years. But physically it felt great, and I honestly can say, and have said and will continue to contend, that I don't notice a drop of difference in performance. My times are the same no matter what shoes I wear. I'd say, if you're looking for an excuse to head out in Hush Puppies, now you have it.—GP

Response to shuz ruz, and response to response to shuz ruz

Oh, BS. I'm glad your feet are structurally rigid enough (maybe you should stretch?) to pedal in disasters like Crocs, but some of us can't even walk in those things, much less pedal in them. It's not an idea you should be promoting, as a big chunk of us out there start to have our feet tear up in our thirties and need to be toodling the bike around in saddle oxfords to have enough support.

Personally- I can't ride distance in anything BUT the rigid things. Sorry my feet haven't held up to your specs, but plantar fascia tears up on any ride further than coffee. Of course, the thought that some of us might do well in stiffy mountain shoes with beartraps and clips seems too radical for your sandals only world-veiw, but you might be decent and edit the article to include the whole world of feet and who likes what. (In my club the former are beloved.) Crocs are abominably destructive to a lot of people with common medial arch weaknesses and Rivendell shouldn't be using it's voice to dictate injurious footwear, should it? And there isn't a damn thing wrong with clipless, which I use and love. I also put the time and drill into learning to use them well and have them set correctly.

You think I don't get maximum efficiency? Breathe my dust and see.

If you can still walk after wearing Crocs to ride- good for you, but why don't you show some respect for us who have different feet and different needs. Like Meat wedges, instead of knee surgery. 40% of the population has a natural foot cant that gives us a beautiful leg position on horseback and is hell to wear sneakers with.

You are in a tiny minority. I'm in a much bigger minority. Let's read some respect for people in the middle, most of whom are on the road in whatever they like if they can find it anyway. If you convince people to go on the road in flimsy sandals you'll get a cranky mob hobbling after you. — Lizzy C.

Oh- I don't know what gym you use, but the ones where I squandered my youth trying to get to Seoul had me squatting and free weight pressing on the balls of my feet... I seem to recall that being the norm unless you're in a big hurry to ruin your knees by doing hack squats. You need to go watch some other sports and see the power transfer through the

feet, even sprinters DO run on the balls of their feet. How do you think toes could support the forces they put out?

L.C., I think you're overestimating the rate and severity of foot problems, and underestimating the capabilities of sandals and Crocs. Crocs and their copies aren't sterling examples of the cobbler's craft, but it's hard to imagine that pedaling in them or walking around in them, with their light, cushy, contour-soled shoes of any kind can actually be harmful. John here has plantar fasciitis, and is wearing Crocs to help it! On doc's order! Our cavemen & cavewomen distant cousins used to go barefoot. They didn't ride bikes, but your suggestion that Crocs are "disasters" is off, I'd say. Harsh, at least.

I'm also no weight lifter, but my local expert says you squat with feet flat, weight toward your heels, not up on your toes. You don't say whether you're still squatting after not having made the Olympic team, but if you are, push up with your feet flat. That'd be my advice. Anyway, the point of The Shoes Ruse is that for non-racing riding, most people will do fine with any reasonable shoe or sandal. —Grant

Kirk Pacenti & the immediate future of 650B

Briefest possible history of 650B tires: Originated in France more than 50 years ago, originally made for bad streets and touring bikes, and despite a few (literally) attempts over the years to sell 650B bikes in America, it never caught on, and 650B became mostly a strictly French thing, with a few Dutch bikes thrown in now and then. A handful of American enthusiasts had an interest in its resurrection, and that resurrection has happened

Rivendell Reader: Why 650B for MTBs and why now?

Kirk Pacenti: Well, 650B wheels are the right size for contemporary mountain bikes, especially for full suspension designs. Twenty-niners brought to light the advantages of bigger wheels, but in most instances the wheels are too big to create good frame designs. Still, they got people thinking outside the 26-inch box, and while 29ers are still a fresh size, people aren't stuck on them, and are realizing their limitations. For instance, most people realize larger wheels have advantages. But 29ers are too big for all but the biggest frame sizes. So 27.5, a size between 26- and 29-inches, makes sense and seems to be catching on.



Kirk

RR: Who are the early adopters?

KP: Vicious Cycles and Lynskey Performance are the first to offer 650B bikes in their 2008 catalogs. Haro, Vassago, Soma, Origin 8, Carver and several much larger brands have plans to release bike models for spring of 2008. I think you'll be surprised to see what brands will be joining this list in the next year or two, although I am not at liberty to mention any other names right now.

RR: Of the media, who seems to be most on board? List reviews, test rides done or coming up?

KP: Dirt Rag tested and reviewed my first 650B bike and has a strong interest in testing more, specifically full suspension designs.

BikeRadar has been one of my biggest international media supporters. Richard Cunningham of Mountain Bike Action is excited about it; Mountain Flyer and Bicycle Retailer & Industry News (the trade magazine) have also run stories about 650B wheels.

RR: Any scoffers?

KP: Plenty! Aside from those with a clear commercial interest in 29ers, most of the nay-saying is coming from self-appointed 'internet gurus' within the 29er crowd. I'm sure some of them said the same thing about 29ers too.

In either case I don't concern myself with what they have to say. Most knocking the idea have no frame building or bicycle design experience, so I liken their comments to a carpenter's apprentice telling Frank Gehry 'what's wrong' with his architecture. With guys like Dave Turner and Noel Buckley supporting the concept, I'm comfortable hanging out on the 650B limb.

RR: Which tire makers are interested?

KP: Kenda will be releasing three 650B mountain bike tires in spring 2008. Schwalbe also offers 650B tires, though none seem to be true mountain bike tires at the moment. Panaracer and IRD may again partner to co-brand the quite popular Fire XC Pro tire in the 650B size as well. I have a few more tire designs that I hope to release over the next 24 months, ranging from low-knob XC race tires and mud tires,



Neo-Moto: The first of at least several chubby-knobby 650B tires of 2008.

to semi cyclo-cross type tires. There are several tire makers interested in the 650B/297.5 size, and I'll bet within two or three years everybody's on board.

RR: Are you at all concerned about this new size taking off and you—as the first designer of a mountain 27.5 knobby—not having a finger in every pie?

KP: Not at all. I knew from the start that if the wheel size is going to be successful and take hold in the industry, a much bigger company or companies would have to get involved.

It's my goal to produce premium quality products for the after market. These big companies can produce tires at a fraction of the cost that I can and it doesn't make sense for me to compete with them for OE sales head to head. I would rather be an ally to them by promoting the wheel size, and its benefits to bicycle manufacturers. If I can sell 6,000-7,000 tires a year through my new website, I'll be doing just fine.

RR: Prediction: How many new 650B mountain bikes next year? The year after?

KP: I'm sure there will be at least five hardtails and one or two full suspension mountain bikes available this spring. The year after that I suspect we'll see many more.

RR: Prediction: How many new tires, and will the volumes eventually span the range, or will the 650B size become locked in the 52mm to 60mm range?

KP: I have four or five tires I would like to do. I'll be focusing on the mountain-bike specific sizes from 2.0- to 2.3-inches (50mm - 60mm). However, I have plans for a Pacenti Mini-Moto tire design somewhere between 42-44mm wide. I think this tire could have a lot of different applications, but especially with the world's many existing 650B bikes. At 43mm wide it wouldn't be UCI legal (35mm is the maximum width allowed), but some people said they would prefer it for non-UCI sanctioned CX events.

A knobby tire this size could potentially work with many of the current Rivendell models, as well as Rawland, Kogswell and maybe a few others. It could make these bikes much more trail worthy for someone who didn't want an 'all out' mountain bike. Around the world there are potentially millions of bikes that could benefit from this tire as well.

RR: What are the challenges of long-travel bikes that make this a better size? (and list what you consider to be the optimum frame size range, or rider height range, for 650B).

KP: I think the wheel size can work throughout a complete range of sizes and styles of mountain bikes. I don't focus too much on rider height because production bikes typically serve the average sized person quite well. If you're 5'0" or shorter, you're probably better off with a custom 26-inch wheeled bike. If you're 6'5" or taller by all means go with the 29er!

My main focus is 650B wheels on four- to 6-inch travel, full-suspension production bikes. I think this is the future of mountain bikes, and those kinds of bikes can't be designed as well around a 29-inch wheel.

It's a matter of available space. Forks for four- to 6-inch travel bikes are super long, and when you combine that with a big, 29-inch wheel creates a very high front end. To keep the bars as low as possible, frames are often designed with very short (80mm) head tubes. Structurally, putting a 19- to 22-inch lever on a three-inch head tube is

a bad idea.

The rear end also has lots of problems when trying to move a 29"-inch wheel through four- to 6-inches of travel. Typically you'll see seat tube angles get steeper on 29-inch full sus bikes. This is done for several practical reasons. First, it'll prevent the wheel from hitting the seat tube under full compression. Second, it allows for a somewhat shorter chainstay. The problem is that this solution also creates long front centers and can create more problems with fit and rider position.

RR: How committed are you to this size? Will you quit your current business to pursue tires?

KP: Completely committed. I've considered selling off the www.bikelugs.com business, and have even entertained a couple offers. But I doubt I'll ever quit my current frame building supply business, because I like everything about it.

The thing is, there's more potential in 650B tires and other parts.

RR: Do you think 650B will ever take over either the 26 or 29er market? Will it ever be "No. 2"?

KP: I can see it becoming the preferred or even standard wheel size among bicycle manufacturers and bike riders alike, but I don't think it'll replace either 26- or 29-inch wheels. At the least, it is here to stay.



Shown with both a Col de la Vie and a Fatty Rumpkin, but when you buy a wheelset, tires aren't included. Just want to be clear...



New good & cheap 650B rims & wheels

Weinmann, the venerable Belgian rim maker who sold out to a big rim maker in Taiwan who is now making rims in China, has introduced a fine & frankly nearly perfect 650B rim, which they call the ZAC19 ("zack nineteen").

Width: 23mm; **Brake surface ht:** 12mm;
Weight: 490g; **Eyelets?:** Si; **Holes:** 32, 36;

Parallel walls: Oui; **Assym rear:** Nyet.

So: Except for the lack of an asymmetrical rear, it's right up there at or near the top of the 650B rim totem pole. Just as important, it builds up nicely. It doesn't take a struggle to pull it into shape. That means more even spoke tension, a more durable wheel, & is an indication of quality.

Besideswhich, the rims are dirt cheap, and so are the wheels, so whether you're a skinflint or a Daddy Warbucks, they're great values, and a good way to go if you're looking to convert a 700c bike to 650B but don't want to sell all your food stamps to do that.

The wheels: Shimano Deore hubs, and 3x DT (Swiss!) butted spokes, brass nipples.

We'll offer these as a loot-saving option on all of our 650B bikes, and by March we should have 700C equivalents in, too.

Rim cost: \$20 each. Front whl: \$75; Rear: \$100

Prices good through March, and as always, check our site for updates (and 700C availability).

www.rivbike.com

How Not to Talk to Your Children

The inverse power of praise

by Po Bronson and Ashley Merryman

A recurring thread in our propaganda is parenting. Now, if you aren't a parent, maybe you think that's a waste of paper and your time, and inappropriate for what is ostensibly a cycling publication. But that's just it: *The Rivendell Reader* is only ostensibly a cycling publication. Longtime readers know we pepper it with this and that every now and then, and this is one of those times. As for this particular article: It's a reprint from *New York* magazine. Not *The New Yorker*. It offers a point of view I hadn't considered, and one that's worth considering...and then adopting, lock, stock, and barrel. Now, listen up...— Grant

Thomas (his middle name) is a fifth-grader at the highly competitive P.S. 334, the Anderson School on West 84th. Slim as they get, Thomas recently had his long sandy-blond hair cut short to look like the new James Bond (he took a photo of Daniel Craig to the barber). Unlike Bond, he prefers a uniform of cargo pants and a T-shirt emblazoned with a photo of one of his heroes: Frank Zappa. Thomas hangs out with five friends from the Anderson School. They are "the smart kids." Thomas's one of them, and he likes belonging.

Since Thomas could walk, he has heard constantly that he's smart. Not just from his parents but from any adult who has come in contact with this precocious child. When he applied to Anderson for kindergarten, his intelligence was statistically confirmed. The school is reserved for the top one percent of all applicants, and an IQ test is required. Thomas didn't just score in the top one percent. He scored in the top one percent of the top one percent.

BUT AS THOMAS HAS PROGRESSED through school, this self-awareness that he's smart hasn't always translated into fearless confidence when attacking his schoolwork. In fact, Thomas's father noticed just the opposite. "Thomas didn't want to try things he wouldn't be successful at," his father says. "Some things came quite quickly to him, but when they didn't, he gave up almost immediately, concluding, 'I'm not good at this.'" With no more than a glance, Thomas was dividing the world into two—things he was naturally good at and things he wasn't.

For instance, in the early grades, Thomas wasn't very good at spelling, so he simply demurred from spelling out loud. When Thomas took his first look at fractions, he balked. The biggest hurdle came in third grade. He was supposed to learn cursive penmanship, but he would-

n't even try for weeks. By then, his teacher was demanding homework be completed in cursive. Rather than play catch-up on his penmanship, Thomas refused outright. Thomas's father tried to reason with him. "Look, just because you're smart doesn't mean you don't have to put out some effort." (Eventually, he mastered cursive, but not without a lot of cajoling from his father.)

Why does this child, who is measurably at the very top of the charts, lack confidence about his ability to tackle routine school challenges?

Thomas is not alone. For a few decades, it's been noted that a large percentage of all gifted students (those who score in the top 10 percent on aptitude tests) severely underestimate their own abilities. Those afflicted with this lack of perceived competence adopt lower standards for success and expect less of themselves. They underrate the importance of effort, and they overrate how much help they need from a parent.

When parents praise their children's intelligence, they believe they are providing the solution to this problem. According to a survey conducted by Columbia University, 85 percent of American parents think it's important to tell their kids that they're smart. In and around the New York area, according to my own (admittedly nonscientific) poll, the number is more like 100 percent. Everyone does it, habitually. The constant praise is meant to be an angel on the shoulder, ensuring that children do not sell their talents short.

But a growing body of research—and a new study from the trenches of the New York public-school system—strongly suggests it might be the other way around. Giving kids the label of "smart" does not prevent them from underperforming. It might actually be causing it.

For the past ten years, psychologist Carol

Dweck and her team at Columbia (she's now at Stanford) studied the effect of praise on students in a dozen New York schools. Her seminal work—a series of experiments on 400 fifth-graders—paints the picture most clearly.

Dweck sent four female research assistants into New York fifth-grade classrooms. The researchers would take a single child out of the classroom for a non-verbal IQ test consisting of a series of puzzles—puzzles easy enough that all the children would do fairly well. Once the child finished the test, the researchers told each student his score, then gave him a single line of praise. Randomly divided into groups, some were praised for their intelligence. They were told, "You must be smart at this." Other students were praised for their effort: "You must have worked really hard."

Why just a single line of praise? "We wanted to see how sensitive children were," Dweck explained. "We had a hunch that one line might be enough to see an effect."

Then the students were given a choice of test for the second round. One choice was a test that would be more difficult than the first, but the researchers told the kids that they'd learn a lot from attempting the puzzles. The other choice, Dweck's team explained, was an easy test, just like the first. Of those praised for their effort, 90 percent chose the harder set of puzzles. Of those praised for their intelligence, a majority chose the easy test. The "smart" kids took the cop-out.

Why did this happen? "When we praise children for their intelligence," Dweck wrote in her study summary, "we tell them that this is the name of the game: Look smart, don't risk making mistakes." And that's what the fifth-graders had done: They'd chosen to look smart and avoid the risk of being embarrassed.

In a subsequent round, none of the fifth-graders had a choice. The test was difficult, designed for kids two years ahead of their grade level. Predictably, everyone failed. But again, the two groups of children, divided at random at the study's start, responded differently. Those praised for their effort on the first test assumed they simply hadn't focused hard enough on this test. "They got quite involved, willing to try every solution to the puzzles," Dweck recalled. "Many of them remarked, unprovoked, 'This is my favorite test.'" Not so for those praised for their smarts. They assumed their failure was evidence that they weren't really smart at all. "Just watching them, you could see the strain. They were sweating and miserable."

Having artificially induced a round of failure, Dweck's researchers then gave all the fifth-graders a final round of tests that were engineered to be as easy as the first round. Those who had been praised for their effort significantly improved on their first score—by about 30 percent. Those who'd been told they were smart did worse than they had at the very beginning—by about 20 percent.

Dweck had suspected that praise could backfire, but even she was surprised by the magnitude of the effect. "Emphasizing effort gives a child a variable that they can control," she explains. "They come to see themselves as in control of their success. Emphasizing natural intelligence takes it out of the child's control, and it provides no good recipe for responding to a failure."

In follow-up interviews, Dweck discovered that those who think that innate intelligence is the key to success begin to discount the importance of effort. I am smart, the kids' reasoning goes; I don't need to put out effort. Expending effort becomes stigmatized—it's public proof that you can't cut it on your natural gifts.

Repeating her experiments, Dweck found this effect of praise on performance held true for students of every socioeconomic class. It hit both boys and girls—the very brightest girls especially (they collapsed the most following failure). Even preschoolers weren't immune to the inverse power of praise.

Jill Abraham is a mother of three in Scarsdale, and her view is typical of those in my straw poll. I told her about

Dweck's research on praise, and she flatly wasn't interested in brief tests without long-term follow-up. Abraham is one of the 85 percent who think praising her children's intelligence is important. Her kids are thriving, so she's proved that praise works in the real world. "I don't care what the experts say," Jill says defiantly. "I'm living it."

Even those who've accepted the new research on praise have trouble putting it

"Emphasizing effort gives a child a variable that they can control," she explains. "They come to see themselves as in control of their success."

into practice. Sue Needleman is both a mother of two and an elementary-school teacher with eleven years' experience. Last year, she was a fourth-grade teacher at Ridge Ranch Elementary in Paramus, New Jersey. She has never heard of Carol Dweck, but the gist of Dweck's research has trickled down to her school, and Needleman has learned to say, "I like how you keep trying." She tries to keep her praise specific, rather than general, so that a child knows exactly what she did to earn the praise (and thus can get more). She will occasionally tell a child, "You're good at math," but she'll never tell a child he's bad at math.

But that's at school, as a teacher. At home, old habits die hard. Her 8-year-old daughter and her 5-year-old son are indeed smart, and sometimes she hears herself saying, "You're great. You did it. You're smart." When I press her on this, Needleman says that what comes out of academia often feels artificial. "When I read the mock dialogues, my first thought is, Oh, please. How corny."

NO SUCH QUALMS EXIST for teachers at the Life Sciences Secondary School in East Harlem, because they've seen Dweck's theories applied to their junior-high students. Last week, Dweck and her protégée, Lisa Blackwell, published a report in the academic journal *Child Development* about the effect of a semester-long intervention conducted to

improve students' math scores.

Life Sciences is a health-science magnet school with high aspirations but 700 students whose main attributes are being predominantly minority and low achieving. Blackwell split her kids into two groups for an eight-session workshop. The control group was taught study skills, and the others got study skills and a special module on how intelligence is not innate. These students took turns reading aloud an essay on how the brain grows new neurons when challenged. They saw slides of the brain and acted out skits. "Even as I was teaching these ideas," Blackwell noted, "I would hear the students joking, calling one another 'dummy' or 'stupid.'" After the module was concluded, Blackwell tracked her students' grades to see if it had any effect.

It didn't take long. The teachers—who hadn't known which students had been assigned to which workshop—could pick out the students who had been taught that intelligence can be developed. They improved their study habits and grades. In a single semester, Blackwell reversed the students' long-time trend of decreasing math grades.

The only difference between the control group and the test group were two lessons, a total of 50 minutes spent teaching not math but a single idea: that the brain is a muscle. Giving it a harder workout makes you smarter. That alone improved their math scores.

"These are very persuasive findings," says Columbia's Dr. Geraldine Downey, a specialist in children's sensitivity to rejection. "They show how you can take a specific theory and develop a curriculum that works." Downey's comment is typical of what other scholars in the field are saying. Dr. Mahzarin Banaji, a Harvard social psychologist who is an expert in stereotyping, told me, "Carol Dweck is a flat-out genius. I hope the work is taken seriously. It scares people when they see these results."

Since the 1969 publication of *The Psychology of Self-Esteem*, in which Nathaniel Branden opined that self-esteem was the single most important facet of a person, the belief that one must do whatever he can to achieve positive self-esteem has become a movement with broad societal effects. Anything

potentially damaging to kids' self-esteem was axed. Competitions were frowned upon. Soccer coaches stopped counting goals and handed out trophies to everyone. Teachers threw out their red pencils. Criticism was replaced with ubiquitous, even undeserved, praise.

Dweck and Blackwell's work is part of a larger academic challenge to one of the self-esteem movement's key tenets: that praise, self-esteem, and performance rise and fall together. From 1970 to 2000, there were over 15,000 scholarly articles written on self-esteem and its relationship to everything—from sex to career advancement. But results were often contradictory or inconclusive. So in 2003 the Association for Psychological Science asked Dr. Roy Baumeister, then a leading proponent of self-esteem, to review this literature. His team concluded that self-esteem was polluted with flawed science. Only 200 of those 15,000 studies met their rigorous standards.

After reviewing those 200 studies, Baumeister concluded that having high self-esteem didn't improve grades or career achievement. It didn't even reduce alcohol usage. And it especially did not lower violence of any sort. (Highly aggressive, violent people happen to think quite highly of themselves, debunking the theory that people are aggressive to make up for low self-esteem.) At the time, Baumeister was quoted as saying that his findings were "the biggest disappointment of my career."

Now he's on Dweck's side of the argument, and his work is going in a similar direction: He will soon publish an article showing that for college students on the verge of failing in class, esteem-building praise causes their grades to sink further. Baumeister has come to believe the continued appeal of self-esteem is largely tied to parents' pride in their children's achievements: It's so strong that "when they praise their kids, it's not that far from praising themselves."

By and large, the literature on praise shows that it can be effective—a positive, motivating force. In one study, University of Notre Dame researchers tested praise's efficacy on a losing college hockey team. The experiment worked: The team got into the playoffs. But all praise is not equal—and, as Dweck demonstrated, the effects of

praise can vary significantly depending on the praise given. To be effective, researchers have found, praise needs to be specific. (The hockey players were specifically complimented on the number of times they checked an opponent.)

Sincerity of praise is also crucial. Just as we can sniff out the true meaning of a backhanded compliment or a disingenuous apology, children, too, scrutinize

...having high self-esteem didn't improve grades or career achievement. It didn't even reduce alcohol usage. And it especially did not lower violence of any sort.

praise for hidden agendas. Only young children—under the age of 7—take praise at face value: Older children are just as suspicious of it as adults.

Psychologist Wulf-Uwe Meyer, a pioneer in the field, conducted a series of studies where children watched other students receive praise. According to Meyer's findings, by the age of 12, children believe that earning praise from a teacher is not a sign you did well—it's actually a sign you lack ability and the teacher thinks you need extra encouragement. And teens, Meyer found, discounted praise to such an extent that they believed it's a teacher's criticism—not praise at all—that really conveys a positive belief in a student's aptitude.

In the opinion of cognitive scientist Daniel T. Willingham, a teacher who praises a child may be unwittingly sending the message that the student reached the limit of his innate ability, while a teacher who criticizes a pupil conveys the message that he can improve his performance even further.

New York University professor of psychiatry Judith Brook explains that the issue for parents is one of credibility. "Praise is important, but not vacuous praise," she says. "It has to be based on a real thing—some skill or talent they have." Once children hear praise they

interpret as meritless, they discount not just the insincere praise, but sincere praise as well.

Scholars from Reed College and Stanford reviewed over 150 praise studies. Their meta-analysis determined that praised students become risk-averse and lack perceived autonomy. The scholars found consistent correlations between a liberal use of praise and students' "shorter task persistence, more eye-checking with the teacher, and inflected speech such that answers have the intonation of questions."

Dweck's research on overpraised kids strongly suggests that image maintenance becomes their primary concern—they are more competitive and more interested in tearing others down. A raft of alarming studies illustrate this.

In one, students are given two puzzle tests. Between the first and the second, they are offered a choice between learning a new puzzle strategy for the second test or finding out how they did compared with other students on the first test: They have only enough time to do one or the other. Students praised for intelligence choose to find out their class rank, rather than use the time to prepare.

In another, students get a do-it-yourself report card and are told these forms will be mailed to students at another school—they'll never meet these students and don't know their names. Of the kids praised for their intelligence, 40 percent lie, inflating their scores. Of the kids praised for effort, few lie.

When students transition into junior high, some who'd done well in elementary school inevitably struggle in the larger and more demanding environment. Those who equated their earlier success with their innate ability surmise they've been dumb all along. Their grades never recover because the likely key to their recovery—increasing effort—they view as just further proof of their failure. In interviews many confess they would "seriously consider cheating."

Students turn to cheating because they haven't developed a strategy for handling failure. The problem is compounded when a parent ignores a child's failures and insists he'll do better next time. Michigan scholar Jennifer Crocker studies this exact scenario and explains that the child may come to believe failure is

something so terrible, the family can't acknowledge its existence. A child deprived of the opportunity to discuss mistakes can't learn from them.

My son, Luke, is in kindergarten. He seems supersensitive to the potential judgment of his peers. Luke justifies it by saying, "I'm shy," but he's not really shy. He has no fear of strange cities or talking to strangers, and at his school, he has sung in front of large audiences. Rather, I'd say he's proud and self-conscious. His school has simple uniforms (navy T-shirt, navy pants), and he loves that his choice of clothes can't be ridiculed, "because then they'd be teasing themselves too."

After reading Carol Dweck's research, I began to alter how I praised him, but not completely. I suppose my hesitation was that the mind-set Dweck wants students to have—a firm belief that the way to bounce back from failure is to work harder—sounds awfully clichéd: Try, try again.

But it turns out that the ability to repeatedly respond to failure by exerting more effort—instead of simply giving up—is a trait well studied in psychology. People with this trait, persistence, rebound well and can sustain their motivation through long periods of delayed gratification. Delving into this research, I learned that persistence turns out to be more than a conscious act of will; it's also an unconscious response, governed by a circuit in the brain. Dr. Robert Cloninger at Washington University in St. Louis located the circuit in a part of the brain called the orbital and medial prefrontal cortex. It monitors the reward center of the brain, and like a switch, it intervenes when there's a lack of immediate reward. When it switches on, it's telling the rest of the brain, "Don't stop trying. There's dopa [the brain's chemical reward for success] on the horizon." While putting people through MRI scans, Cloninger could see this switch lighting up regularly in some. In others, barely at all.

What makes some people wired to have an active circuit?

Cloninger has trained rats and mice in mazes to have persistence by carefully not rewarding them when they get to the finish. "The key is intermittent reinforcement," says Cloninger. The brain has to learn that frustrating spells can be

worked through. "A person who grows up getting too frequent rewards will not have persistence, because they'll quit when the rewards disappear."

That sold me. I'd thought "praise junkie" was just an expression—but suddenly, it seemed as if I could be setting up my son's brain for an actual chemical need for constant reward.

In a similar way, we put our children in high-pressure environments, seeking out the best schools we can find, then we use the constant praise to soften the intensity of those environments.

What would it mean, to give up praising our children so often? Well, if I am one example, there are stages of withdrawal, each of them subtle. In the first stage, I fell off the wagon around other parents when they were busy praising their kids. I didn't want Luke to feel left out. I felt like a former alcoholic who continues to drink socially. I became a Social Praiser.

Then I tried to use the specific-type praise that Dweck recommends. I praised Luke, but I attempted to praise his "process." This was easier said than done. What are the processes that go on in a 5-year-old's mind? In my impression, 80 percent of his brain processes lengthy scenarios for his action figures.

But every night he has math homework and is supposed to read a phonics book aloud. Each takes about five minutes if he concentrates, but he's easily distracted. So I praised him for concentrating without asking to take a break. If he listened to instructions carefully, I praised him for that. After soccer games, I praised him for looking to pass, rather than just saying, "You played great." And if he worked hard to get to the ball, I praised the effort he applied.

Just as the research promised, this focused praise helped him see strategies he could apply the next day. It was remarkable how noticeably effective this new form of praise was.

Truth be told, while my son was getting along fine under the new praise regime, it was I who was suffering. It turns out that I was the real praise junkie in the family. Praising him for just a particular skill or task felt like I left other parts of him ignored and unappreciated. I recognized that praising him with the universal "You're great—I'm proud of you" was a way I expressed unconditional love.

Offering praise has become a sort of panacea for the anxieties of modern parenting. Out of our children's lives from breakfast to dinner, we turn it up a notch when we get home. In those few hours together, we want them to hear the things we can't say during the day—We are in your corner, we are here for you, we believe in you.

In a similar way, we put our children in high-pressure environments, seeking out the best schools we can find, then we use the constant praise to soften the intensity of those environments. We expect so much of them, but we hide our expectations behind constant glowing praise. The duplicity became glaring to me.

Eventually, in my final stage of praise withdrawal, I realized that not telling my son he was smart meant I was leaving it up to him to make his own conclusion about his intelligence. Jumping in with praise is like jumping in too soon with the answer to a homework problem—it robs him of the chance to make the deduction himself.

But what if he makes the wrong conclusion? Can I really leave this up to him, at his age?

I'm still an anxious parent. This morning, I tested him on the way to school: "What happens to your brain, again, when it gets to think about something hard?"

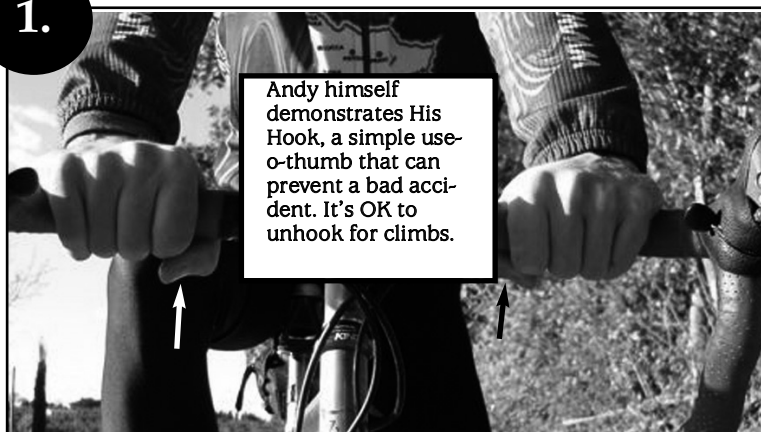
"It gets bigger, like a muscle," he responded, having aced this one before.

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An Even Seven Decent Tips For Bike Riders

There actually is a near-legendary mirror; one so good that nobody who has them will sell it because they can't get another one. It is the old metal Rhode Gear one, and is no longer made. The newer one is fine, but not as fine; and there are a handful of mirrors that fall into the Acceptable category.

1.



Save Your Skull with the Hampsten Hook

Keven here works part of the year as a guide for Andy Hampsten's Cinghiale Bicycle Tours in Italy, and he told me this. He said Andy encourages his clients to ride with their thumbs hooked below it.

It comes from having seen several pros riding unhooked and crashing because of it. Their hands get bumped off, or slip or something, slide forward, off the bar, and the next thing you know, they're steering with their triceps.

The Hampsten Hook (our name for it, not Andy's) prevents it. It's easy enough to do and can prevent an accident. So: When you find yourself riding a thumbless mammal, take a look around; if nobody's watching, quickly employ the Hampsten Hook, and you'll be slightly safer.

2.



Save Your Bike With the Abele HelmLock

You're out on a ride & hungry. Up ahead you spy the Golden Arches and you skid to a halt. But you can't bring it in and you don't have a lock. You know you can't leave without a gutful of fries and a burger made from the muscles and fat of more than 700 cows, so put on your thinking cap. Fifteen minutes later, you realize *aha!* My helmet will perform semi-admirably as a temporary lock. Enough already, it's time for chow!

The Abele Helmet Lock, named for our own Mark Abele, won't foil a hardened lifelong bicycle thief, but it will stop a run-by opportunist, particularly if you combine it with a dislodged front wheel. Mark here swears by this method, but accepts no responsibility if your bike gets swiped by a thief who's onto the Abele Helmlock.

3.



Keep your bottle in its cage

Long and steep and not-to-mention bumpy descents can test the limits of any bottle cage, and why do that? It's better to lend your cage a helping hand by securing the bottle to the seat tube or down tube by means of a John's Irish Strap (shown here), or any old piece of cord or tape you have. It also works on a busted cage. Work with what you have.

4.



Secure a Too-Big Basketload

I often, too often, in fact way too often carry way too much stuff in baskets secured to dinky little racks. I used to it sway and I'd say whoa and cross my fingers, but now I use a John's Irish Strap to double-secure the rack to the handlebar. Steering is 100 percent unaffected, the load is secure, and nothing can go wrong.

5.



Stabilize Your Resting Bike

Strapping your front wheel to the downtube prevents the wheel from flopping sideways, and that makes your bike more secure when it's leaning up against a tree in the woods or a pole downtown. This is a way to go if, for whatever reason, your bike lacks a kickstand.

Looping a strong rubber band around the valve stem, then the downtube, then back around the valve stem works, too. It's also a lousy light lock, which is way better than no lock, or a lousy heavy one.

6.



Make Pretend-Panniers Out of Stuff Sacks & Straps

If you don't have panniers or you just want to go superlight in the bag department, you can just strap stuff sacks onto the racksides. Make sure the pressure doesn't push the bags into the spokes, but that's easily prevented. It works well. This is a picture of a real bike after a real trip, and it worked really well.

7.



Don't Wrap Over Your Shifter Cable Housing

In the pre-index shifting days of yore yore yore, many bikes with bar-end shifters had had had wound stainless steel cable housing that was so flexible you could tie it in a monkey's fist the side of a golf ball. It needed to be contained under the bar tape, or it would flop like a slinky. Modern indexable housing is a different can-o-wax altogether. It's so stiff it can hang out there, free as the wind, and there's nary a flop or flutter in a million bumps. If you like the feel or look of wrapped housing, that's fine; but keeping it outside the bar tape is kind of cool in its own rebel way, and makes switching your housing or shifters or any part of the rigamarool a lot easier. Excuse the horrible tape job--it's my own bike (Grant). I'll fix it later.

POP QUIZ

This was an old feature of the earlier Rivendell Readers, and we believe it remains a legitimate, respectable use of space. We heartily hope you agree.

The answers to the quiztions can be found in this Reader, in our catalogue, on our site, and in some cases, just in your head.

Now, if you're anything like us, your immediate chief is: What do I win, and are there any strings attached that are going to frustrate me, cost me, or make me think the whole thing's pointless? And who checks the scores, and how soon the payoff? Are there any rules?

You win a \$5 credit on your account. Not much, but this is a quiz, after all, and not a test. This will be created on your account, internally, and you'll know you won when we return to you your graded quiz.

You must be a member to play. My thirteen-year old daughter will check the scores, earning a nickel per check. I haven't the time! You will be notified no later than April 1. That may be April Fool's Day, but this is no joke. The only rule: Mail us your entry along with a self-addressed envelope, for which we'll supply the stamp. Send to:

Rivendell Pop Quiz • Box 5289 • Walnut Creek, CA 94596

1. Most \$2,000 to \$6,000 bikes are too dang _____ for the rider.
2. Andy Hampsten's main contribution to the safety of all bicycle riders worldwide is the Hampsten H __ k.
3. Scott Cutshall was a professional _____.
4. Long exposure to sun has this effect on gum rubber brake hoods:
 - a. revitalizes them
 - b. makes them smooth
 - c. makes them _____
5. T or F: Top riders apply power at all phases of the pedal stroke.
6. About how many Americas have Chron's disease?

7. The Numbah One Killa of bicycle frames is:
 - a. fatigue
 - b. sudden impact
 - c. fatigue, followed by sudden impact
8. Let's all carbo-load & ramp up our mileage to insane levels.

___ Sounds good! ___ What-you trying to age me faster?
9. The most critical part of any cyclist's kit is his/her:

totally rigid carbon-soled click in shoes gloves something else
10. Cut wool tops and sox will...

___ not fray ___ fray to beat the band

Name: _____

Score (we'll fill this in, max of 10): _____

The Raven Challenging Continues: Verse Four

As a refresher to long-time *Reader* readers and an introduction to rookies: We have an ongoing contest-like challenge among our readers to rewrite Edgar Allan Poe's *The Raven* without using the letter E. Verse by verse. This is the fourth of eighteen verses. I'm a huge Poe fan and *Raven* fan in particular (I also like quite a lot *Ulalume*), so it wouldn't surprise me. The last entries were submitted almost a year ago—since this *Reader* is so late—but they were too good to just let evaporate...so here they are, like or not. (I do!)

Verse Five

Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there wondering, fearing,
Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortal ever dared to dream before;
But the silence was unbroken, and the darkness gave no token,
And the only word there spoken was the whispered word, "Lenore?"
This I whispered, and an echo murmured back the word, "Lenore!"
Merely this, and nothing more.

Rules & Tips & Prizes

1. You can't use an "e" except in "Lenore." Two allowed there. A single missed "e" killed it for some entries. Here's an example:

Soon it was, horror abating, I was sick of all this waiting.
"Jack," I cried, "or Jill, a bold apology my suit,
But you did disturb my nodding, with your soft and silly prodding,
And so light was your rap-rapping, knocking at my dorm-room door,
I did not know a visitor," but as I flung my fast-closed door
Without was black, a vacuum's roar. (Gretchen T. Lewis, Mahattan, KS)

If she'd said "said," she'd be in the money. (Second line, third word)

2. You can't just drop the e as I've done in the headline. In other words, "Dp into that darknss pring, long I stood thr..." won't win.

3. Try to stay true to the mood and what's happening.

4. Submit your entries by snail mail on paper, addressed to

Raven Contest
Rivendell Bicycle Works
Box 5289
Walnut Creek, CA 94596

It'll take forever again for us to get around to publishing them and picking the winners, but this is our way of fostering patience in these instant-feedback times. The winner gets a \$100 gift certificate. Runnerups get \$50 gift certificates. All e-free entries that show effort and don't make a joke of it will receive something. Include your contact info on your entry, not just on the envelope.

Other and notes & comments

Although verse five is written above, I'm sure Poe would have implored you to read the whole poem. It's really good. There are rhymes within lines and lots of 'litteration, and it's both spooky and humorous.

It was written around 1848, before the Civil War, before Lincoln, before the bicycle was invented. If you seek it out in enough books or internet sources, you'll come across versions with slight differences. In the fifth verse, for example, "But the silence was unbroken, and the darkness gave no token..." is sometimes "But the silence was unbroken, and the *stillness* gave no token..." There are about seven others, but the differences are small, and not surprising. If you'd written a long poem like this, chances are you'd go back a few times and change a word or two.

Who picks the winners? Notn a Rivendell employee. Somebody else with some kind of word-related qualifications. If you're mad at not winning, don't blame us.

Poe's

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.

Runner Up

In thirty ticks my soul found basis; I cut short my prior stasis.
"Sir," I said, "or Madam, your kind pardon I'd ask for;
But in truth my lag in coming was how placidly your drumming,
How tranquilly your front-door drumming run out at my main door,
I hardly though you calling"—now I flung ajar my doorway;
'Twas dark and cold as March in Norway. *Daniel Ari Richmond, CA.*

Runner Up

Now I think my valor abound; and my past fright was not found
"I'm awfully sorry, lad or lady, your waiting I abhor
You must know that I was laying, whilst on my door your hand was
playing
And so softly your palm braying, braying upon my front door;
A sound I cannot distinguish"—cast apart my wood front door;
I saw naught but black night roar. *William Conlin Boston, MA*

Runner Up

Sifting slowly through this pausing, past confusions of my causing
"Sir," said I, "or Madam, could you grant a pardon if you might?
For my mind was mildly drifting, through thoughts which I was sifting
Your faint knock hardly shifting, shifting wits off my plight"
--Moving quickly, door flung outward, looking hard, but naught in sight
Black abyss now shrouds this night. *Jim Edgar Corte Madera, CA*

Winner

With my spirit growing hardy, jumping up to hail this party,
"Sir," said it, "or Madam, truly your grudging I'd abhor;
But if I am lying dormant, I want a racous informant,
Not soft tapping as of varmint, but a sound as loud as war."
And finishing up this cop-out, I now fully swung my door; —
Nothing nigh, but mat and floor. *Stephen Greenwood Fort Collins,*



Me at 450 lbs, well below my top weight.



Me at 232. By the time you read this, I'll be less.

From 501 to 232 in Two Years, and I'm Not Finished

by Scott Cutshall

I was born in 1963 in a medium-sized town in Northwestern Pennsylvania. My family wasn't wealthy, but my dad was a senior partner in a CPA firm, and my five-years older brother and I didn't want for much.

We lived in the good part of town, and I was bothered when new friends or a potential girlfriend made a big deal of our address. It wasn't a big deal to my brother, me, or the other kids who lived in our neighborhood.

I was skinny as a kid, but in puberty I got bigger. I was still active, but I was getting bigger, and it became an obsession to my dad, an ex-Marine/Korean War veteran. It bugged him a lot—I suspect for health concerns, but also for family pride. Our family doctor always says, "It's baby fat, he'll grow out of it."

My brother, five years older than I, became known as "Gut" on the swim team, partly because of our last name, partly because of his growing midriff as well. I became "Mini-Gut." We swam competitively, and were a force at swim meets. He specialized in Butterfly, while my thing was Freestyle and running cleanup in the 4x100 meter Medley Relay. I also played baseball and football, in the neighborhood and on organized teams, and was the fastest kid in my pack. I was active, and it seemed natural.

I've always been introspective. Our family would vacation in the summers in the Adirondacks, and I remember one particular day, getting ready to go swimming with my

brother and changing into our swim suits in the hotel room. My brother was 16 and overweight, but I was even more overweight. So he said to our mom and dad, "You have to do something about Scott. He won't live past 30." That sentence stayed with me nineteen more years, until my thirtieth birthday. And for a fleeting moment on every birthday in between I'd think how many more I had left. The night before my thirtieth birthday, I sat up in my apartment, petrified that my older brother, who always knew more than me, the guy I looked up to, was going to be right. He must be right, he always was, he's my big brother. I got through my birthday the next day, with a party, friends, gifts, and a cake, but then sat alone waiting for the time I had always been told I was born—11:57 pm. The clock clicked past it, and I was still here. Small things like that, as a large kid, and then large adult—they chink away at your armor. They age you, they trouble you. Of course they aren't logical or rational, but when thoughts are planted in your head as a little kid, they stick.

I always liked music and was good at it. My mom recognized this in me and started me out with music lessons at a very young age. We had a flute in the house because my brother played it for a while. I took right to it and loved it, but couldn't stand the stereotype that it was a girl's instrument. My brother recommended music to me, music that had flutes—Jethro Tull, Tim Weisburg, classical works;

then one day in elementary school I started watching the drummer. And that was that. Drums spoke to me more than the flute had, and I've been a drummer ever since.

I began studying with a private teacher at Allegheny College. The pivotal moment in my youth sports career came when I was asked to join the varsity football team, and I had to choose between that and the marching band. I chose band, and the football coach said, "Okay, fine. If you want to be some little sunshine sissy and provide entertainment for the real men, go ahead." He was also a P.E. teacher, and from that point on, until I graduated high school, he called me, "Sunshine." Nice guy.

During those years I had two real loves: music and riding my bike. A little bit later, girls came onto the scene, which dovetailed nicely with being a musician.

Music allowed my brain to create and express, and allowed me to shine and gain acceptance during high school when my increasing weight set me apart from the other kids. My bike was freedom. I had the usual bikes that a lot of kids had back then, from Sears or the hardware store. But then in the mid-'70s, our town got its own real bike shop.

My brother, who always knew about the new hip places in town, noticed it first. I looked to him to show me what was worth being into, and he talked my dad into going

down to the new store a Saturday, after we mowed the yard. I distinctly recall a huge Bridgestone sign and an intoxicating mix of new tires, tubes and metal — like fresh chrome.

My brother was always into bicycles and bicycle racing. I remember him trying to talk our dad into a beautiful white Peugeot that reminded me of a sleek seagull. Dad looked at the tag and flat out said, “No.” The salesman waved us over to a row of Bridgestone “Kabuki” models, around \$150 to \$175. Dad’s answer, after a 45 minute speech from the salesperson: “We’ll get back to you.”

My brother & I were shocked two weekends later when, after helping with yard work, dad said, “If you two aren’t doing anything critical to world politics, what do you say we run down to that new bicycle place?”

Later that afternoon my brother and I were the talk of the neighborhood, riding around on our Bridgestone Kabuki bikes. They had shining quick release skewers, skinny tires, and were a lot lighter than the bikes our friends had. It was glorious, and we rode everywhere.

And then I hit 16, the car appeared, and the bike disappeared, and my weight took off.

I kept getting bigger until, twenty-three years later, on a hot June day in 2002, my wife finally got me to go to a doctor for a consultation. I avoid doctors, and wasn’t expecting good news, so this was hard for me.

My blood tests were surprisingly good (at my heaviest my cholesterol was 170). Then I stepped onto the horse scale, looked away, and told them not to tell me. Amy later told me anyway: 427 pounds. I was relieved.

The doctor welcomed me, Amy and Chloe into her office, closed the door and announced “Scott, unless you lose weight, you have two to three years to live, and the odds are so against someone your size being able to lose that much weight, they don’t warrant consideration. Medication won’t work fast enough for you; your only hope is surgery.”

After the shock, Amy and I asked the usual questions— “What’s involved? What happens after the surgery?” The doctor answered all of them, and then I asked: “What are the risks of surgery?”

“There are many,” she replied, “and the bigger the patient, the greater the risk. I’d recommend losing as much weight as possible before the operation.”

I found that last bit particularly insulting. I mumbled to Amy, “I want to go home, now.”

As we were leaving I asked the doctor, “What are the chances that I live through the surgery? I need to know.”

“Fifty-fifty. We won’t know until we’re inside you looking around.”

We returned to the car and on the way home, stopped so Amy could pick up some groceries. Chloe, who was two then, was in the back seat playing with teletubbies. I was in the passenger seat of the car, crying “I’m a dead man. I’m a dead man. I’m a dead man.” It was all I could keep repeating in my head. I kept my head down so Chloe wouldn’t see my red, tear-streamed face. I kept my sobs low and muffled between my hands.

My weight didn’t affect my job as a profes-

“Scott, unless you lose weight, you have two to three years to live, and the odds are so against someone your size being able to lose that much weight.”

sional jazz musician living in New York City. But my life was changing fast. In 1997, I met and married Amy, my mom died, I relocated to Michigan, then returned to NYC and decided to start a family, retire from music, and be a stay-at-home dad.

And, now I was a Dead Man. Dead if I didn’t get operated on, and in my mind, dead if I did. I kept thinking about all the complications, all the things that could go wrong if I went through with the operation: dumping, infection, sutures tearing out internally, bowel obstructions, all the vitamins and supplements one must take for life, the psychological ramifications of folks who’ve had the operation and continue to try and eat large amounts of food and either stretch their altered stomach back out or tear it open altogether, eating a tablespoon of food per meal. Lastly, and most ominously, these procedures haven’t been around long enough for long-term studies.

It was all too much. So, I ate. By 2005 I weighed 500 pounds. My days consisted of climbing out of bed, walking slowly to the bathroom, then to the kitchen, having to sit, getting back up and then walking to the living room to sit again. I lost all hope. Of course I had thoughts, ideas, plans. But then I’d look down at—me. And they’d all seem impossible.

I asked myself, “How can I undo all this? How did I get here? Look what I’ve gone and done now.”

My back was so bad I couldn’t support myself. I could walk only 10 feet at a time. I still cooked, using one hand to support myself on the counter or chopping block. My knees were killing me too. Amy would sit up at night watching me breathe while I was sleeping, because she was worried that I had developed sleep apnea. I constantly stopped breathing

while I slept, stirred awake for a second and do it all over again. No matter how much I slept, I was exhausted. I had really bad headaches every day, and I usually ended up vomiting due to the headache pain.

All I looked forward to was hanging out with Amy and Chloe, and eating. I lost all ability and will to even walk. I was with Chloe during the day inside the house, but I missed out on all outdoor activities with her and Amy. They went to the park to play while I stayed home. Amy’d fill me in, but it’s not the same as being there. Occasionally Amy would beg me to sit outside on our front stoop. It was great to be outside, but also embarrassing and humiliating. People walking up and down the sidewalk would look and stare. Amy would get angry at them while whispering in my ear, “I love you, don’t worry . . . this is good for you.”

In 2003, 2004 and most of 2005, I kept track of how many times I went outside our one-bedroom apartment: 2003 (6); 2004 (4); 2005 (3).

I stopped driving in early 2004 because I couldn’t fit behind the wheel. By late 2004 I could ride in the car as a passenger only by having Amy help me in and out, and using the door as a stabilizer. Chloe and Amy were thrilled anytime I took the rare car trip on an errand—where I’d wait for them sitting in the car in the parking lot while they shopped. All my shopping was on the Internet.

One day in 2004, I was at our front window waving goodbye to Amy as she left for work. As she disappeared, I noticed a bike rider pedaling up the street. You didn’t see a lot of cyclists on our street, especially at 7 a.m. on a weekday morning in rush hour traffic. This guy, and boy I wish I could meet him some day, was dressed in black tights and a black jacket, topped off with a yellow helmet. His bike was dark green, with two red panniers. He was just bolting by the traffic, and had the biggest grin on his face. Standing there that morning, in the same clothes I wore every day—the only clothes I could wear anymore—watching life, and this guy on his bike blow past me, I began crying hard.

I needed to make one last stand.

It all started that morning, but like most big processes, it started small and slow.

I called my brother in Philadelphia and asked him if a bike could hold me. He thought so. We talked for a bit, and then I hit the Internet to start looking.

A few months later I had an old Trek, purchased from Craigslist, from someone who, later I found out, was an iBOB. I rode it one time, after midnight because of not wanting to

be humiliated, the length of our block.

It was thrilling—the freedom, the speed, the movement, the lack of knee and back pain.

It was also terrifying: the pain in my crotch and butt, and the flexing of the bike frame.

I stopped riding it. But, in the meantime, I had found the iBOB List, the Rivendell site (and joined up), and realized something big was happening for me. I didn't feel like a freak or a leper. There were folks out there who, when I opened up to them, had good things to say, and were encouraging.

Through this I learned about custom frames. Being a musician, having an absolute belief in artistry and craft, I was intrigued. While taking all this in, I had also begun talking with Amy about having a custom frame that would hold me, and not flex so massively. In the meantime, I bought an Atlantis from a shop in Vermont, and had Peter White build me some wheels. My 500 pounds flexed it too much, so I sold it and ordered a custom frame from a builder named Bob Brown, in Minneapolis.

When Bob said, "Basically what you need is a single tandem," I knew he was my guy. He didn't balk at my story and intentions. Not many builders could hear "Need a bike . . . weigh 500 pounds" in the same sentence without thinking it was a joke. One frame builder, well known and highly regarded builder responded to my email with, "Listen buddy, I have no time for BS inquiries like this. If this email is real, you're a disgrace, give up."

But the guys at Rivendell cared, and it led to the Buffalo prototype. I rode that bike, then passed it on to another rider, Chris Hoffer, whose story was in an earlier *Reader*. Folks like Bob and the Rivendell group let me know I wasn't insane, that I wasn't alone in all this.

While my custom was being built in Minnesota, I had a sit-down with Amy about what we were eating. After a long talk, and some number crunching, we determined that we were spending almost eight hundred dollars every two weeks on eating out/delivery. And while that's a normal New York way to eat, it was too much money and too much food. That talk led to Atkins.

If you ever want to become vegan, try Atkins. It became so bad, I'd stand outside while Amy cooked off the day's various beef onslaught. Snacks of cheese, pepperoni . . . dinners of hamburgers sans buns, slathered in mayo, yeesh. The psychology of it was too much . . . we figured we'd be better off eating lard out of a tub chased down with a mayonnaise smoothie. Amy, who is an RN, would

say, "Here's to a clogged heart . . ." before another meal of meat. It works for some people, but it didn't for me, or us.

Back to the custom bike. Bob called and told me it was ready. On top of that, he'd be able to deliver it, because he needed to be in the NYC Metro area on business (he is not a full-time builder). What's more, he assembled it himself, in our kitchen, with parts from my Atlantis. I desperately wanted to hang out and talk with him as he did it, but my back and knees wouldn't allow it, so I sat on a chair the entire time he was there. I always worried that he'd interpret that as being unhappy with the bike, but quite the opposite . . . he had built and delivered the bike that would save my life.

Around that time I started my blog, "Large Fella on a Bike," a kind of think-tank for me. In it I talk about family things, bikey things, life things, a place to dream about what was to come. At the beginnings of the blog I posted about weight, and one of the folks that responded mentioned a doctor who practiced not far from us in New Jersey, who had writ-

It was thrilling—the freedom, the speed, the movement, the lack of knee and back pain. It was also terrifying—the pain in my crotch and butt, and the flexing of the bike frame

ten a book called, *Eat To Live*, by Dr. Joel Fuhrman. This book turned everything around for me, and us.

After reading it we threw everything we had in our kitchen out. *Everything*. We bought only fresh raw fruits and vegetables, organic whenever possible. That was nearly as expensive, in some ways much more, than eating an endless day to day of Vietnamese, Thai, Chinese, Middle Eastern, and standard fast food.

We knew what to expect with detoxing from the chemicals, preservatives, and refined sugars in the standard American processed food diet. We quit drinking sodas, even die, and drank only water from then on. Our meals were mostly lightly cooked and raw veggies, fruits, and a few nuts. Detoxing was bad. We got sick, had night sweats, constant bathroom breaks, fever, and odd dreams. We were supposed to do this for six weeks before we'd be clean and ready for other foods, but we bailed after five. Amy almost stopped eating entirely. The viscous quality of soups and drinks made with veggies we were food processing and juicing was similar to motor oil. It'd take two

hours to eat a bowl of this soup . . . and I love soup, and have always loved veggies. No salt, nothing.

When that ended for us, we went right back to our old habits of take out and delivery.

Now that I had my new custom bike, it was time to do something. But I didn't, and for two reasons. First, my new bike was beautiful, expensive, and I thought I'd hurt it. Second, I felt that unless I was backing the riding with a new way of eating, the riding would be negated. So, the bike sat idle.

One day Bob called to ask how the bike was, and how we were doing. I glossed over the not riding it part and we chatted. Then Amy, who had been hearing my end of the conversation and figured out what Bob was asking, said loudly so Bob could hear it, "He's not riding it Bob . . . he's worried about damaging it!" She was ticked at me. Bob then launched into a great one-sided conversation about my bike. How he had built it, the inner workings of the bike's construction, the fact that he had built this thing like a tank, a beautiful tank, the effort that went into it, that it could handle anything I threw at it . . . and that, lastly, anything & everything that could break, wear out, get scratched, whatever, could be fixed, replaced, and brought back to new.

After that phone call I remembered what a teacher of mine had once told me about drums: "We honor the instrument through use, and to use the instrument is to show your love for it. A silent drum is a dead, sad instrument."

The next day Amy & I outlined this plan:

"I am going to do the following: Every morning I eat a banana with a bowl of vegan soup or a small salad with some kind of light dressing. For lunch, my homemade Hummus with a piece of whole wheat pita and something like sprouts, tomatoes or mushrooms. Dinner, a huge salad and a small amount of homemade pasta. Tons of water. If I need a snack . . . it'll be a few nuts, maybe some fresh fruit, organic naturally sweetened granola bar maybe. A glass of wine, maybe a beer down the road . . . an espresso now and then. And riding my bike. Period, that's it. Taking all that into consideration, what am I missing out on; what vitamins will I need?"

She told me I'd need a few supplements and then looked at me and said, "I'm in too."

And thus it began on Thanksgiving Day 2005, after years of growing larger, now topping the scale at 501 pounds, I was making a final stand. I ate my first meal of my new way of eating, plus two ounces of turkey breast, looked at my girls, smiled, and said, "That was my first, and last supper." We all hugged.

Riding was painful, but I rode. My first ride was 1.9 miles long and took about two hours. During that ride I sat on a curb wincing with tears in my eyes, because I was doing it, and because my legs were cramped, my knees were throbbing, my sitbones felt horrid.

Eventually I figured out that it was better to ride only at night. Partly because there was a little less traffic, but mostly because I took less abuse from people on foot and passersby in cars. People stared, laughed and snickered. I heard everything from the uncreative, "Wow, look at that fat dude on a bike!" to the more creative, "Jesus, that poor bike doesn't deserve to have all that riding on it." I kept on riding, and I ate what I outlined to Amy.

Like many cyclists I've been swiped at with cars, had things launched at me (three kids in a Mercedes Benz convertible yelled "HEY FATTY!!" and tossed a full 2 liter bottle of Coke that hit me in the back of my head, causing me to crash and sit on a sidewalk for 30 minutes trying to recall my name and where I lived.

Riding was hard, but I kept going at it, in baby steps, every day.

We made a plan to weigh-in every six weeks (something we still do to this day), but the largest weight scale we could afford maxed out at 440 pounds. As I watched many six week clusters come and go, with Amy's weight falling off dramatically, I waited and waited for the scale (which announced the weight in a voice that sound like Stephen Hawking to talk to me). It wouldn't speak if the weight was over 440 lbs, and and it was silent for a long time. Amy begged me to go to the doctor, the hospital, even the supermarket to use a larger scale so I could see the progress she knew I

was making. Yes, my clothes were starting to hang off me. But I wanted that scale, our scale, the one in our kitchen, to talk to me.

On March 30th, 2006, I stepped up and onto it, expecting silence again, but after a moment of nothing, Stephen Hawking announced "Four hundred twenty-four point eight pounds." I stepped off and back on again, and Mr. Hawking spoke again. Amy started screaming and jumping up and down. Just to make absolutely sure, I turned the scale over, popped the batteries out, put new ones in, and stepped back on a third time. Same thing, same voice, same weight.

Since November 2005, and through today, February 8, I have lost 268.6 pounds. I used to wear 6X sweatpants, 3X underwear and a 10X shirt. Now I'm wearing medium wool underwear (from Rivendell), large wool tights, and all my shirts, t-shirts and jackets are 2X and getting loose. My wedding ring falls off the biggest finger I own, my middle. The watch that I couldn't wear for years, sits around my wrist in the 6th hole in from the outside. I can walk as far as I need to. And I ride every day. Amy can hug me and fully place her hands around her wrists behind my back while doing so. Chloe can jump on me and I can toss her around my neck, shoulders and back, and I don't hurt.

I look deflated, like a big empty balloon, and eventually I'll consider surgery to get rid of 30-50 pounds of excess skin hanging off me. Maybe after I quit losing weight and achieve the weight I'm meant to be. But even then, I'm torn. Amy thinks I should do whatever I want. On one hand, it'd be nice to know my actual weight less the extra empty baggage. On the other hand, that skin reminds me of what I've

been through, and the journey I am on. Either way, it's not a vanity thing; I'll never be a shirtless, bronzed beach guy.

Even if my weight had stabilized and I decided I wanted the skin removed, it's nearly a moot point, because the surgery is considered cosmetic, it isn't covered by insurance, and we can't afford it.

People say to me all the time, "How can you eat the same thing everyday?" and "Don't you ever miss the Old Foods?" Or innocently enough, "So what's your goal weight . . . and how will you celebrate it?"

I can eat the same thing every day because it tastes great. No, I never miss the "old foods." I ate enough of everything, both good and bad, so I know what it tastes like. I still love the smell of hot-seared beef, though. I'm human, after all.

But now, for the first time in my life I can actually feel food hit my stomach and, 15 to 30 minutes later, I feel a blast of pure energy. I now call food, "Pleasure Fuel." It's beautiful, and I cherish it.

Regarding a weight goal: If they work for others, swell, but no thanks for me. My weight loss isn't because of a mere diet, but a whole change in my lifestyle. It's how and who I am now. I'll continue on eating how and exactly what I eat now, and riding my bike.

I don't sit on the sidelines anymore. I'm not a bystander in my life any longer. However, those things shaped my life, who I am now, who I have become, and for that, along with the folks I am meeting along this journey, I am eternally grateful.

What I eat & what I do for exercise

This is what I eat & how I exercise every day. It may seem boring or restrictive, but for me, an unvarying regime with virtually no decisions to make is absolutely key. It makes it *easy*. We fine-tune the foods we love, and fewer choices allows us to maximize family time. I can do this because I'm a stay-at-home-dad, and we homeschool Chloe. All ingredients that can be had organic, are organic.

Breakfast: Banana, Thai Kitchen (brand) roasted garlic or spring onion vegan soup with 8 to 10 drops of Frank's Hot Sauce *or* a small salad with tomato, small handful of croutons, cracked fresh pepper, garlic powder, and Newman's Lighten Up honey mustard dressing cut 50-50 with spring water. Plus two shots of espresso with raw sugar; and a quart of water, and these vitamins: Origin (brand) Complete Multi-Vit, plus calcium, magnesium, zinc, B-complex, B-12. And Nature Made (brand) flaxseed oil.

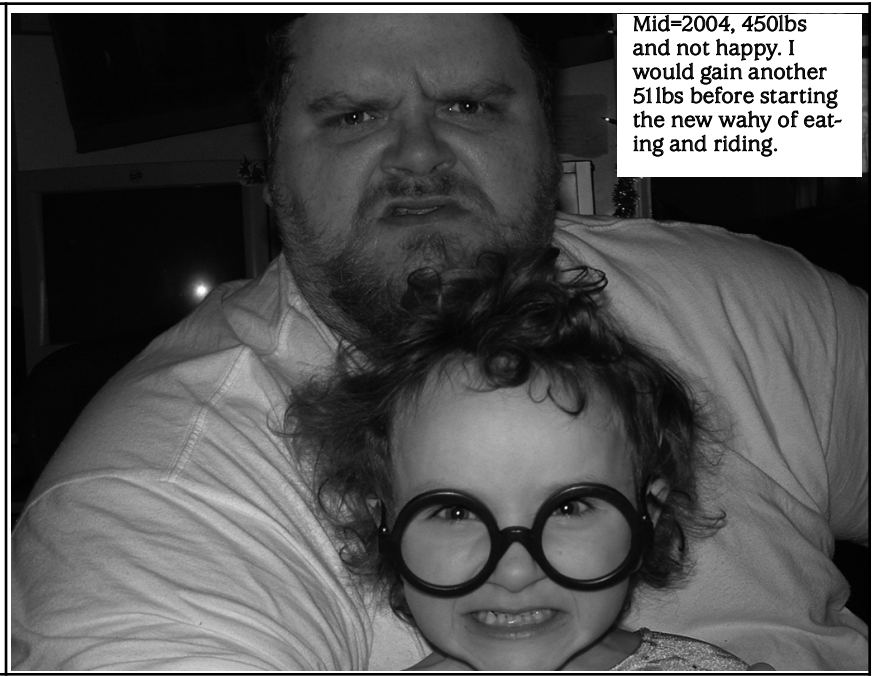
Ride: Within an hour, I ride my bike a minimum of ten miles, (plus one more). I know that's eleven, but I call it my "ten plus one." If conditions force me to walk (it's snowy here), I walk, but the bike and I go ten plus one, no matter what the conditions. Chloe goes with me about twice a week, but if it's colder than 20-below, she'll

stay in. Any ride length, minimum of ten miles and often in the twenties, plus one extra mile.

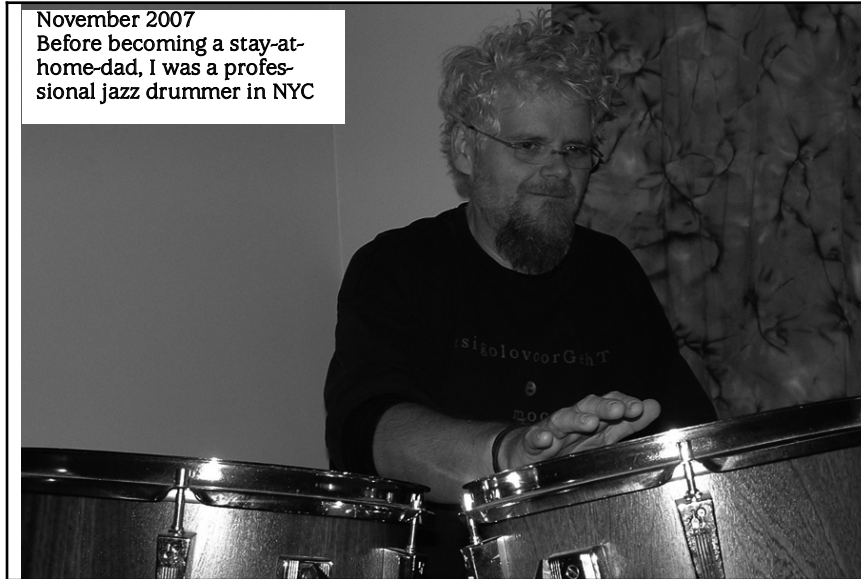
Lunch: Hummus wrap w/sliced tomato, kosher salt, fresh cracked pepper, oregano, & Plochman's mustard. The wrap is thin, not puffy, and is usually whole wheat. I make the hummus from chick peas, tahini, lemon, salt, garlic, and olive oil, & 8lbs feeds three for a week. I wash it down with a local microbrew beer, & more water.

Dumbbell workout: I have two 10lb dumbbells and two 15lb dumbbells. I start with the tens: 2 sets of 80 curls, then 2 sets of 25 tricep extensions (behind my ears to the ceiling). Then, with the fifteen pounders, I do 2 sets of 60 curls.

Dinner: The main course is what we call our "Mega-salad." Each of us gets a 1-to-1.5lb head of romaine, with seasonal raw vegetables and usually asparagus, with our usual fresh cracked pepper, garlic powder, handful of croutons, and diluted (as above) Newman's Lighten Up Caesar dressing. Then 1 to 1.5c of pasta with red sauce and basil. Amy and I include a glass or two of white wine, usually South American or Spanish.



Mid=2004, 450lbs and not happy. I would gain another 51lbs before starting the new way of eating and riding.



November 2007
Before becoming a stay-at-home-dad, I was a professional jazz drummer in NYC



December 2007, 30 below



February 6, 2008



I usually ride at night still, at least in Winter.



Me & Chloe
in early
February '08.

My take on all this

by Amy Cutshall

Not long ago we were mired isolation and helplessness. There was frustration, depression, and anger, and things seemed on a downward slide we couldn't stop. It was heartbreaking to see this happening to my husband, a man who loved life and people, closed up in our tiny apartment with only our stories of the outside world to keep him afloat.

I've been an RN for 22 years, and before that, had a dysfunctional childhood. My whole life has been dedicated to fixing people, and I'm good at it. To not be able to fix the ones I love, including myself, was horrible. Scott is the world's biggest chicken when it comes to anything medical, to be there when the doctor said his chances of surviving an operation was 50-50 was so hard.

Diets didn't work for Scott. He tried so many. Then he started reading about bikes, and it was great to see him so animated. but how many times can you look at the same Rivendell catalogs and Readers when all the while he was still sitting in a chair and nothing was changing.

I remember the day Scott said, "Look, this is what I'm going to do, this is how I'm going to eat and I'm going to ride a bike a lot. You don't have to change anything, just be supportive." I looked at him and said, "No, we're all in," and that was the beginning.

Scott is a fantastic cook, so he took our favorite recipes, eliminated the animal products and cut back the oils, and now our food tastes fabulous and satisfies. We drink lots of water, a beer after a ride if we feel like it, and wine with dinner. We still celebrate food, and his cooking skills still shine.

Before Scott started riding, a walk around the block took over an hour, with breaks on stoops along the way, and pain and tears. I'd offer to get the car and drive him home, but he was stubborn, and kept going despite the pain. By the time he got back home, he looked like a wounded soldier.

When he started riding, he was made fun of, so he started riding at night, when he was harder to notice. But once on the bike, the freedom of being able to go somewhere came back to him. There were aches and pains, but the mobility

made up for them. The bike relieved him of the burden of his weight and brought back all the great feelings of riding as a child. He has never looked back.

We ride as a family all the time, or at least we did until it got so extremely cold out here. Now Scott rides alone much of the time, but he's out there every day, I mean every day (he rode 4083.2 miles in 2007).

Our family rides are many hours long—we just ride and explore, stop at playgrounds and parks for Chloe to play, and like to stop at coffee shops to hang for a while. I keep our pace down, because I can't keep up with Scott, even when he's pulling Chloe.

In June of 2007 we relocated from the NYC area to the Twin Cities to have better places to ride, and to live in a biking community. It has been wonderful. Scott has been hanging with a local frame builder trying his hand at a different kind of art other than music, and so far he loves it. Best of all has been our acceptance into the biking community here. It is full of warm and inviting people who love bikes as much as we do. We went on our first group ride this summer, with hundreds of people in the ride. It was such a revelation—so many people in cars stopped and blocked traffic and honked and waved. We were greeted warmly by pedestrians and motorists alike. We've made a lot of great friends since we've been riding, and gone are the days of shame and ridicule. Now we're just a family who rides a lot. The only stares and pointing that come our way these days is directed at Chloe on her tag-a-long, and the Christmas lights strung all over it.

Our choice to homeschool Chloe was daunting, but I've come to realize that the most important things that we can teach her are exactly what we surround her with every day. Health,



activity, love, and pure enjoyment of family. She's an avid reader, she's coming around on math and is fascinated by all of life. She knows more about health and nutrition than most adults. She is a social dynamo and makes friends easily, and always champions the small children and the underdogs.

With Scott's mistrust of the medical community (and remember, I'm an RN...), we don't have any numbers to share on him except weight. His blood pressure has always been beautiful, like 110/62, and his last known cholesterol was 170 in early 2005 at 500 lbs. I however have always had a cholesterol level in the high 200's even before I really carried any extra weight. Once, about a year into our new life we ran some blood tests on me at work. The sample was drawn about 2 hours after I had eaten a full dinner instead of the standard 12 hour fast before a cholesterol check, and my cholesterol was 162.

These days Scott almost never sits still, and hates being indoors except at the end of the day. The pride I feel is immeasurable. So many times every day I am struck by the change and the emergence of the man that he has evolved into. The future holds so much possibility. We talk all the time about bike touring and opening our own cafe/bike shop. I'm sure we'll get there. Everything feels within our reach now.

iceskating and/or sledding with Chloe each day.

Chloe and I tend to have treats at the coffee shops we visit, but we don't overdo it. I'm sure if I cut out the treats and kept active through winter, I would weigh at least 15 pounds less. However, unless we relocate to a more moderate climate, it's not happening. We keep the treats healthful, but certainly they are not necessary. That said, I enjoy them and will continue to!

I feel good at 150. I can do everything I want to do and I can almost keep up with Chloe, not Scott, never Scott. I don't need to look like someone else's ideal. I dress the way I feel comfortable, and the way I like to dress, and feel healthier and better at 42 than I have in 30 years. That's a nice way to feel.

My weight

I'm 5' 3", and when the new regime started I weighed 209.3 pounds—it runs in my family. My family looks like the typical American of today, but it's always been that way, even before it became pandemic. When I look at photos from before the weight loss, I am horrified! You can ignore it much of the time if you try hard, and I did. It's rough on one's self esteem, but I've never suffered an overabundance of that anyway.

Within a year of our new life, I reached the low 150s, and remain between 150 to 155 routinely, depending on the season. I *really* do not like being cold, so, my riding drops off, and a couple pounds creep on in winter. I walk to and from work, only a mile or so. Also, unless it is hellacious outside, I try to go

Bob Brown talks about the frame he built for Scott

Scott introduced himself to me by email, gave me the condensed history of his life, his riding habits, and told me he was over 450 pounds.

He wanted a frame he could ride with carry touring gear. We hashed out the details of the frame via email over the next few months and I was going to be in New Jersey on business in a while, so we arranged a meeting and fit-session at Scott's house.

He cooked dinner for us that night, and afterwards I watched him ride up the street on his Atlantis. The Atlantis is stiff, but was no match for Scott, and as he pedaled I saw the BB shell swaying, and knew I'd have to build the stiffest frame I possibly could.

With wheel strength a big concern, I needed to make sure it has room for the biggest tires around. He planned on touring with it, so it needed full fenders, racks, lights, the works. He also knew he wanted it fully lugged, so I needed to suitable lugs. I settled on a double oversize frame using a mixture of lugs to get the geometry he needed. The tubing was quite thick as well, basically this bike was built like a heavy tandem but with only one seat.

There were really only two big obstacles on the frame and both of those came from needing big tire clearance.

I ended up custom bending my own s-bend stays from Reynolds 1.2mm round chainstays, and Kirk Pacenti got me a double oversize bottom bracket shell.

There weren't any wide fork crowns, so I made one myself out of a fake Henry James crown, cutting it up and making a new cross-tube for it. It has more fillet-brazing than lug brazing, but it looks the part and did the job well. The cross tube is brazed to the fork blades directly and the ³lug sockets² are really mostly decorative so I didn't need to rely on the strength of the sockets or a simple butt joint between the cross tube and socket.

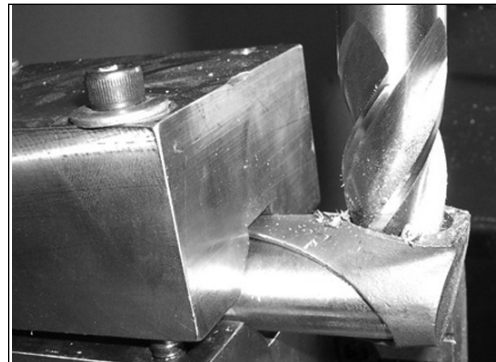
Finally the frame was built and we had to settle in on paint. Now, I think Scott got a Dupont color chip book so he could pore over the options from the comfort of his home. Finally, he settled on a nice blue with cream panels and yellow accents.

Again I had to be in New Jersey on business, so I delivered it to Scott myself.

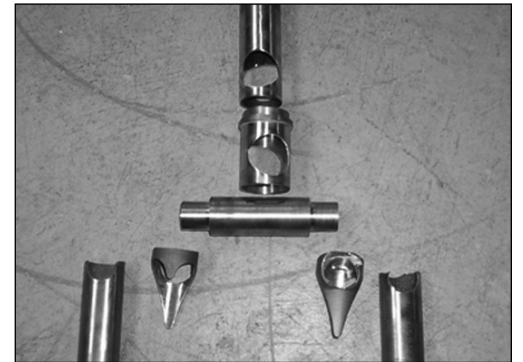
A few years later Scott commissioned me to build a frame for Amy as a gift with all hand-carved lugs in the shapes of things that are important in their lives. That one still stands as the most ornate bike I've built to date.

For the last couple of years the Cutshalls had been talking moving out of NYC to a more bike-friendly place. We talked a lot about the Minneapolis area, and they finally moved to St. Paul.

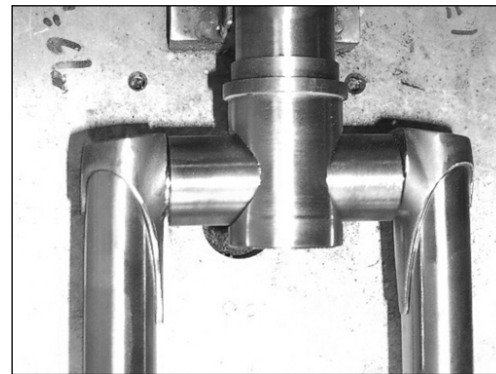
It's a pleasure to know the Cutshalls, and they've become close friends through something as simple as a bike — *Bob Brown*



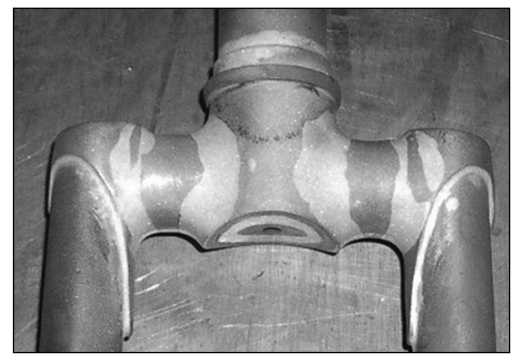
1. Drilling the crown shoulders and fork blade.



2. This isn't what a normal fork looks like before brazing, but this was no normal fork.



3. All the pieces put together, before brazing.



4. All brazed up.



5. Painted. Will it fit fat tires and fenders>



6. Yes.



Your arms out will help you balance. This is something you'd figure out without being told. Alternatively, hold onto something or carry a load.

Try feet close, try feet wide. Keep feet flat. Shift your weight around, left to right, in circles, whatever you like. It's good for you and it don't take much time.

Your bottom won't actually touch, probably. It depends on this and that. But the idea, one of them, is to get it low.

Le Stretch Magnifique de las Personas Indigenistas (SMPI)

But let's just call it the GrokSquat.

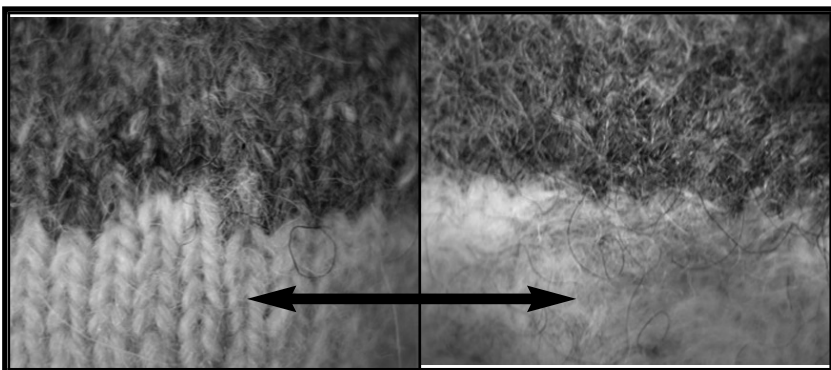
THIS IS HOW THEY SAT AROUND. EATING, TAKING, RESTING, ELIMINATING. In modern stretching circles, it's one of those stretches that comes up every now and then, and the last time it came up (to me) was on Mark Sisson's marksdailyapple.com site. There he mentions, and he's not the first, that everybody since Adam or the first cave man—who was, in fact, indigenous—have stretched without thinking about it. Mark says it's near the only stretch you need, since it stretches nearly everything you've got. That's good news for

those of us who basically either hate stretching or like the idea of it, but never actually stretch. It's not so attractive, the prospect of lying down on the rug where people walk who wear shoes that perhaps within the hour have been trodding around on the streets in slums and stepping on oil, grease, barf, and worse. So the SMPI is magnifique not only because it attacks so many muscles in your legs and back, but also because you can do it anywhere in the world, even in muck alley.

Technique: Try for flat feet. Try to get your bottom as low to the ground as you can, try for knees higher than shoulders, and while you're down there, shift your weight side-to-side some. Rock around a bit. Do it 32 seconds in the morning, 27 seconds mid-day, and 41 seconds early in the evening. If you find yourself falling backwards, hold on to the leg of a table or hold a watermelon. Oh, sure, of course, how could we almost forget?: Check with your doctor first. Just don't sue us. Remember: We're here to help.

TIPS FROM THE WOOL MODIFICATION BUREAU

Wool rookies are usually afraid to wreck their wool sox, tops, and undies, and think anything short of delicate treatment is abuse. I doesn't always work that way. Sometimes you should superiorize your wool garments by doing things to them that you aren't supposed to do, and that we shouldn't suggest, but we just can't help it just this once. We'll never, ever repeat this.



1. Shrink it, felt it, durablize it. The 95 and 100 percent wool sox we sell are heavenly to wear, the best in the world, but they won't, they won't hold up as well as sox that are 80 percent or less wool and 20 percent or more nylon. The heel gets thin and goes. So buy them up a size, wash them hot, dry them hot, and the weave will shrink, tighten, fuzz up, and fend off abraision much better. Two or three vigorous hot washingsdryings does wonders.



2. What your tailor doesn't want you to know. If your knit wool top is too long, or you want to convert a long-sleever to short sleeves, or you want a wide-open collar for hot weather sweating, or you want your tall sox to be short sox, just use a scissors and cut away what you don't want there.

Yesterday you probably thought that would wreck it, that the resulting raw edge would fray and unravel to beat the band. It doesn't happen at all. Not only that, but you can use the scrap for headbands, wristbands, whatever.

Accidental Randonneuse

by Beth Hamon



Beth, Susan France, and Michael Rasmussen

In January of 2007, I signed up to participate in a charity ride scheduled for August. Get Your Guts In Gear, or GYGIG, was a series of three rides – in Texas, New York and Washington State – designed to raise money for Crohn’s disease and colitis research. Since I have a relatively mild form of Crohn’s and am a daily bike rider, I talked about it with my partner and, with her encouragement, I decided to train for the last ride of the series, based near Seattle.

Fundraising for GYGIG empowered me to talk honestly about my life with Crohn’s, a chronic auto-immune disease that affects the body’s ability to properly absorb nutrients from food. Severe cases of Crohn’s can be completely debilitating and sometimes lead to intestinal or colon cancer. Mild to moderate cases of Crohn’s can be treated with daily medication, diet and proper amounts of exercise and rest. However, people with Crohn’s, colitis and other forms of Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) are still subject to fatigue and digestive distress during times of “flare up”. Flare-up symptoms include fatigue, bloating, severe abdominal cramping and weight loss. They also include frequent and often urgent trips to the bathroom, which is why most people with IBD don’t talk much about their disease with others.

The ride I’d signed up for consisted of 210 miles to be ridden over a three-day period. The longest distance I had ever ridden in a day was 75 miles but that had been years ago, before I was diagnosed. While I rode my bike daily for transportation and averaged around forty to fifty miles a week, I knew that would not be sufficient training for such a long ride. I had to find a way to go out for longer distances on the weekends and still sustain the energy needed to handle my physically demanding job during the week.

I had tried my hand at bike racing in my early 30’s, an experience that had helped lead to my eventual diagnosis. I’d kept bonking in all the wrong places on team rides, experienced increasing bowel pain and then began to lose weight at an

alarming rate. The coach finally insisted I see a doctor before I was allowed to race again. After two months of tests I learned I had Crohn’s disease. My doctor told me I could keep riding for fun, but racing would be out because my body couldn’t handle the strain.

So when the question of longer training rides came up, I told my bike pals – mostly racers and former racers – about my big ride, and asked if they’d like to come along on some weekend rides with me. Nothing ambitious, I warned them; a long ride for me at the start would be 20 miles or so and if I needed to stop suddenly and find a bathroom that was just par for the course. My friends were welcome to come along but I needed them to be okay with the prospect of frequent bathroom stops. Happily, several people said they’d come along and they joined me on a couple of longer training rides in February.

By the third training ride, the number of riding partners had dwindled down to two or three dependable folks. I was either too slow for the others, or my distances were too short to help them meet their own riding goals; at least two of my early riding buddies were also training for the Glacier 1000 or PBP.

My friend Michael Rasmussen, a long-distance rider, suggested I should ride a populaire, a 100km ride put on by the local randonneuring group, with the goal of finishing within the time limit. The Snoozeville Populaire was the opening event of the Oregon Randonneurs’ season, and the start point was transit-accessible — an important consideration for me since I don’t own a car. I emailed the organizer, got more information, and decided to sign up for it.

I was nervous, of course. What about the bathroom stops? What about being so much slower than everyone else? I could do nothing about either. I would get proper rest in the days leading up to the event and monitor my symptoms and medication carefully. I’d bring whatever I needed to handle pit stops out in the woods. And I’d just have to accept the fact that I would likely ride the entire course alone. I decided to go out, ride my bike and admire the pretty countryside. If I finished within the time limit that would be a bonus.

The morning of the ride dawned dark and cold. I had planned to take public transit to the ride start in Hillsboro, meaning that I would have to leave our northeast Portland home fully two hours before the start time. My partner thought this was ridiculous, and offered to drive me there instead. That meant I got another hour of sleep. Upon arrival I had time to find a bathroom, admire others’ bikes, introduce myself to some people and hook up briefly with a couple of friends who’d also come for the event. Then we grouped up, were given some instructions, and we were off.

Although I rode the event pretty much solo, I did encounter a friend here and there, usually at the controls where they’d be getting ready to leave as I pulled in. I’d decided in advance that, since I was so slow, the key to finishing in a reasonable time was to keep my stops. Get my card signed, find the bathroom, grab

some snacks and ride away again before I had a chance to stiffen up and get cold. This was a good strategy. It is probably why I finished the route with 11 minutes to spare. While the ride organizer slapped my back in congratulations, I asked if I could keep my control card as a souvenir, thinking I'd probably never do a ride like this again. But Susan France, the RBA, really wanted to send it in to the national organization to be recorded, since I'd finished within the time limit. I reluctantly let her keep my card. (I hope I'll get it back at some point. I'm proud of what I did and want that card as a souvenir of my first populaire.)

I saw that this kind of riding could really help me dial in lots of details for the GYGIG ride as well as rack up training miles. So when another opportunity to ride 100 km presented itself in April I jumped at the chance. But I was dismayed to learn that it would be a nighttime ride.

In addition to digestive symptoms, some Crohn's patients also experience what are called non-intestinal manifestations – symptoms unrelated to digestion. Because IBD is an auto-immune disorder, IBD patients can also experience severe arthritis, skin rashes and night blindness. (I had suffered from poor night vision since my teens without knowing why, until the doctor who diagnosed me explained it.) Riding at night with the ambient lighting of cities and suburbs was mostly okay, but the glare from bright lights could literally blind me. As a bike commuter, I learned to compensate by sticking to residential side streets where there were fewer oncoming car headlights to contend with. If I was blinded I would pull over to a safe place and wait until my vision returned to normal – which could take as much as five to eight full minutes in the worst cases.

I asked Mike Rasmussen if he planned to ride the Screech Owl Populaire. He said he did. Furthermore, he had worked out an earlier start time with the RBA so that more of the time could be spent in some daylight and he could get home earlier, as he was on call at work. I was invited to ride with him and the RBA. I decided to take the chance. I bought the best lighting I could afford – basically super bright, 1-watt LED lights, since my road commuter didn't have a generator hub and I was on a tight budget. I also got a safety vest at Goodwill and added several more inches of reflective tape to my bike and rack.

Everything was fine for the first two hours of the ride. The three of us left St. Paul, Oregon at 6:00 pm and rode through bucolic farmland, admiring budding green fields and ospreys flying overhead. Without saying anything, we began to draft each other, taking turns leading our threesome through a strong headwind for seven or eight miles. The almost Zen-like flow of that experience still stays with me.

By the time we'd ridden about two and a half hours it was totally dark. I was following Susan and Mike and having a tough time of it. Riding in the city with its ambient light was one thing. Riding along a totally dark rural road was another. I felt myself falling further and further behind, getting dizzy and a little nauseous from the strain of peering impossibly into the darkness. I greatly worried that I would slow down my companions. At one point, Susan rode on ahead of us and it was just me and Mike.

Then, Mike's cell phone rang; there was a technical emergency at work that he had to help solve over the phone. We stood in the darkness while I waited for him to finish his phone call; I certainly couldn't find my way alone. Although my lights did a good job of lighting up the road, I couldn't really see the lines in the road anymore or make out the road signs. I wasn't feeling as self-sufficient as I knew one ought to be on these rides.

Susan doubled back to find us and we finally made our way into the town of Mt. Angel, where the control was. The quick-mart clerk, busy dealing with Saturday night drunks, did not want to sign our control cards or really be involved with us in any way. My head was pounding and my eyes throbbed. I knew that if I continued I might cause an accident. So after giving it some thought, and dreading the call I would have to make (to ask my partner to drive 80 miles round trip to come collect me and my bike), I said goodbye to Mike and Susan and wished them a good ride. I called my partner first and then the ride organizer, who had started later and was somewhere behind us, and I stayed and signed control cards for the remaining riders when they arrived 30 minutes later. A little while after they left, my sweetie pulled up in her car and took me home. I felt demoralized and unhappy that I had been unable to continue, especially since my legs had felt so strong! I knew I'd had another 30 miles in me and it pained me to have to stop.

The next day I emailed David Rowe, the ride organizer, to thank him for setting up the ride. I explained why I hadn't been able to finish and said I hoped to come back and ride the whole route during the daytime later on. David replied that evening, thanking me for coming to the event, and applauding what he called my "strength and wisdom" – for toughing it out as long as I did while knowing the risks involved, and for knowing when it was time to stop. I

printed out a copy of his email and taped it to my wall. It served as a reminder of my growth and determination to succeed as I kept training for GYGIG all summer.

The weeks rolled into months. I attempted two more populaires before my big ride. One was the real thing and while I finished within the time limit, it did not go so well for me mentally or physically. I was having a tough day, with lots of bathroom stops and stomach cramping that slowed me down and left me feeling disheartened. The last part of the cue sheet contained incorrect directions in a part of Washington County I didn't know well, so when I finally improvised my way back to the start and found no one there, I felt abandoned. The ride organ-



Beth on her bike. It happens to be a Rivendell custom, but that's neither here nor there.

izers finally found me at the restaurant, but by then a waitress had signed my control card. I was tired and grumpy and ravenously waiting for my lunch, so I just handed my card to them, thanked them for putting on the ride, and returned to my table.

The last populaire wasn't officially a populaire. It was a brevet with 200 and 300km options, a succession of different loops that all came back to the same start point each time. But I remembered that Susan had said I could always show up for a longer ride and let her know I was planning to purposely DNF after the shorter distance. I brought along a friend who knew the area of the ride really well and told Susan we'd be stopping after 100 km. That would give us the first loop of the course, which would take us from Newberg through Forest Grove and Sherwood before climbing up and over Chehalem Mountain and looping back to the start. The ride turned out to take longer than either of us had planned, because we approached it much more socially than I would have had I ridden solo. But we had a grand time riding together, and I climbed all the way to the top of Chehalem Mountain – some 1200 feet of elevation gain in something like three miles. The mountain humbled me, and I clawed my way to the top almost in tears. But it felt so good to reach the top that I almost felt like I wanted to do it again next year.

After months of training and four populaires, I scaled back my riding in advance of the charity ride. And I have to admit something here. While the camaraderie of GYGIG was wonderful – it was the first organized bike ride where I didn't have to explain myself because half the participants had Crohn's or colitis – the ride itself was something of a letdown. In stark contrast to the four populaires I'd ridden, this ride was fully supported and sagged. There was no foraging for food, no searching desperately for a bathroom (all the stops had restrooms and plenty of snacks and liquids). And the sag wagons were a constant presence along the route, circling back and forth to keep track of riders and make sure everyone was okay.

The strangest thing happened: my Crohn's gave me almost no trouble the entire weekend, but my quasi-arthritis knee gave out and I was forced to ride in the sag wagon. Having to sag in and of itself wasn't the issue – I really did feel my knee blow up on the last day, and riding on it further might have caused serious injury. But the feeling of disappointment and, well, embarrassment at having to ride in the sag wagon was surprising and profound. In hindsight, I wish that the ride hadn't been quite so heavily supported but I understand that it had to be. I am proud of what I accomplished at GYGIG and proud to have ridden a long distance even while living with IBD; but the fact that I rode only 141 out of a possible 210 miles still bothers me a little in a way I can't fully explain.

Will I ride GYGIG next year? I don't know. It was a lot of time and training; and my partner, while supportive, didn't like being a "GYGIG widow". I am giving myself until the end of December to make that decision.

The other question is easier to answer: Will I ride in brevets again? I know I want to. In spite of how hard it was, and how demanding it was, I feel so exhilarated at what I've accomplished and what I've learned about myself, that I know I want to come back and ride again with Oregon Randonneurs next year. My goal is to ride a 200km brevet and finish within the time limit. It's a big goal for me, being twice the distance of a populaire. With my night vision being what it is, it's also likely

the longest distance I'll ever get away with so I really want to do my best. And because these are day rides in my local area I'll never be gone from home for quite long, so my partner will be happier too. While it's a shame that my slow speed keeps me riding mostly alone at these events, I like the self-sufficiency that is required, the need to keep your head clear and not let the mental junk get you down. I feel oddly proud that I had misgivings about riding in a support van at the charity ride. I'm sure I only felt that way because my longest training distances were all done brevet-style, as good a sign as any that this is a kind of riding I want to keep doing.

Beth Hamon is a bicycle mechanic, musician and teacher in Portland, Oregon.

For more information about IBD, go to www.ccfa.org.

For more information about GYGIG, go to www.ibdride.org

All about Crohn's:

Crohn's disease is a chronic inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) that causes inflammation of the digestive or gastrointestinal (GI) tract. It can strike anybody, but is most common among American Jews and Scandinavians between fifteen and thirty-five.

Causes and cure

Researchers have not yet been able to pinpoint a definite cause, but believe it has something to do with genes, your immune system, and certain environmental factors. So far there is no cure.

How many have it?

An estimated 1.4 million Americans have Inflammatory Bowel Disease (either Crohn's or its cousin, ulcerative colitis). Over 10 per cent of are children under the age of 18.

Symptoms

Persistent and/or frequent bowel movements (usually diarrhea), crampy abdominal pain, fever, and, at times, rectal bleeding: These are the hallmark symptoms of Crohn's disease, but they vary from person to person. The disease is not always limited to the GI tract; it can also affect the joints, eyes, skin, and liver. Fatigue is also common. Children with Crohn's may suffer delayed growth.

Daily hassles and workarounds

1. I carry extra underwear and medication. I always have to where a bathroom is. Self-supported wilderness backpacking trips are out for me, and on long bike rides in rural settings I also carry a tiny foldable shovel and a small amount of biodegradable toilet tissue.
2. There are certain healthy foods I can't eat: leafy greens (cooked or raw), raw vegetables, citrus fruits, bean soups unless they're pureed, red meat.
3. Symptoms can be managed with medications that are expensive and often not covered by insurance. In fact, people with IBD often cannot get health coverage because their preexisting condition is chronic and as yet incurable.
4. Symptoms can flare up or calm down unpredictably, which makes planning certain long-term events difficult. Even planning to do GYGIG was a crapshoot, no pun intended. On the upside, my co-workers have been understanding. In cases of severe fatigue (usually once or twice a year from a bad flare-up), I can always get time off or go home early if I need to.



What Swede rides an A. Homer Hilsen?

Name: Jesper Larsson

Age: 44

Job: county administrator of culture heritage and PhD student

Family: Wife and two kids

What part of Sweden do you live? Uppsala and JÄmtland

Favorite Swedish food: Goose

Favorite food in America: Seafood

Favorite Swedish book: Stig Claesson: Vem Älskar Yngve Frej?
(Who loves Yngve Frej?)

Favorite English book: The Grapes of Wrath (Steinbeck)

Favorite Swedish movie: The Seventh Seal

Favorite American movie: O Brother, Where Art Thou?

How many years have you been riding as an adult? I always have used my bike

Typical ride: I use the bike in daily life.

Favorite ride ever: Riding in the Bay Area and San Francisco

Ride you'd most like to do if your lifestyle and obligations allowed it: I would love to ride through Sweden, from north to south.

What other bikes do you have? One Trek and one Skeppshult

How did you hear about Rivendell? From my friend Johan Dellbeck in Uppsala

What are you doing in California, anyway? I'm a stay-at-home dad

What is your biggest dream/hope/wish? I good life for my children

What do you think of American politics? There is a opportunity for a change we believe in

What would you change about Sweden, if you could? More talkative people

What would you change about America, if you could? Healf care for everyone

Justaburger

by Maynard Hershon

IN TORONTO A YEAR OR SO AGO, A WOMAN bicycle courier was walking her bicycle along a downtown sidewalk, a U-lock hung somehow from her wrist. The door of a car parked at the curb opened in front of her. She heard the driver swearing, she says, and saw him throw a half-eaten hamburger out onto the sidewalk at her feet.

Without weighing the consequences of her action, she reached down, picked up the burger and tossed it back into the car.

The agitated driver got out of his car. He threw two cups of coffee at her, ran around the car and attacked her, grabbing her helmet and muscling her around. Probably he hit her, but we don't know. At one point, he threw her into the side of his car; the key in the U-lock scratched the finish, a half-inch scratch in the clear-coat covering the paint.

A small crowd had gathered. People pulled the driver off the woman. He got into his car and drove off. He must've stopped immediately to examine his car, because he was back in no-time, furious about the scratch. He knocked the woman down and hit her repeatedly.

A photographer who maintains an online presence was in the crowd. He shot photos of the driver assaulting the woman. The crowd again dragged the driver off her. He ran to his car and left the scene, but someone had called the cops, who apprehended him and brought him back.

As I understand it, because of the scratch, the woman would have had to admit to defacing the car if she pressed charges against the driver. So she did not. No one did.

The photographer put the photos up on the 'net. Local newspapers picked up the story and ran many articles about what happened, featuring the photos. One paper assigned two writers to debate in print, one in defense of the woman's act, the other in criticism of it.

The writer who criticized the woman pointed out the hostility to suburbanites of urban Toronto locals, and the general hatred that the writer suspected many cyclists feel toward their motorized cousins. You can probably imagine what was said in her defense.

Each of the parties, the woman and the driver, whose names must have been mentioned in the papers and online, received threats of physical harm because of this incident. I'm not making a word of this up.

I felt, as I read about this incident in Momentum Magazine, (Vancouver, BC), The Magazine for Self-Propelled People, that the woman's act was not so outrageous. She was return-

ing something that simply must have been discarded by mistake. No one would throw a half-eaten burger onto an urban sidewalk on purpose, right? No way.

Unlike the driver, she lives there. It's her neighborhood. She feels it's her sidewalk, and allowing someone to dirty it carelessly is neglect on her part. She felt personally insulted, I believe. If the driver was indeed swearing at her as he threw out the burger, his intention was to do just that - to insult her. Tree-huggin' bicycler bitch.

No doubt that that in "returning" the burger she was cracking the lid of Pandora's Box. Who knew what might happen? But I understand the act, and admire her for doing it. I might not have been brave enough to do it, but it feels like the right thing to do.

Throwing the burger onto the sidewalk is a violation - in law and in civility. Throwing it back into the car is only outrageous if we live in fear that our every public act may beget violence.

We do live in fear. We wear blinders, stare at the ground at our feet and avoid at all costs getting "involved." We're on our bikes and a guy bumps us with a three-ton car; we don't flip him the bird, 'cause who knows what he'll do next! Maybe he'll get REALLY mad!

Can't be worth it, we say. The guy could have a gun. He could be crazy. It's just a bike ride. It's just a burger.

If we respond to callous hostility, intended to intimidate us, with a finger gesture, suddenly WE'RE the bad guys.

We've teased the gorillas in the cage at the zoo. If they climb over the bars and seize our daughters, it's our fault! How many times must we be told? Foolishly, we walk near the prison fence, alarming the guards in the towers.

Better to be meek; we'll survive to be meek another day. We're good little children, looking up baffled at the brutal world of adults.

Don't throw back the burger. Don't flip the bird to drivers who suggest they can kill you like... nothing. Don't look right or left. Don't even glance at crazies you see downtown. Don't start anything. You could flip a driver off or just look at him and he may hit the next cyclist he sees - or the "innocent" guy next to you in the ride group.

How would you feel THEN wouldn't feel good THEN, and I don't feel good NOW.

Rivendell Bicycle Works
Box 5289
Walnut Creek, CA 94596