

URBAN VELO

Bicycle Culture on the Skids

Issue #1 • Spring 2007



- **-12° in MINNEAPOLIS**
- I ♥ Riding in the City
- **BIKE POLO REVIVAL**
- Proper Lock Use
- Complete Streets
- **PATCHING TUBES**
- Bike Bike Preview

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Issue #1 Spring 2007



URBAN VELO

Urban Velo PO Box 9040 Pittsburgh, PA 15224



Photo by Brad Quartuccio

URBAN CYCLIST is a magazine dedicated to bicycle culture in cities around the globe.



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Special thanks to Amy Enrico, Michael Browne and Hurl Everson

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Editor's Statement

By Brad Quartuccio



Photo by Brad Quartuccio

This is it. Urban Cyclist #1 - Bicycle Culture on the Skids.

Just a glance out the window and it's clear; more cyclists are navigating our cities than ever before. And with them rolls an abundance of ideas and experiences.

For people from all walks of life the bicycle is the great unifier. Brothers and sisters on two wheels, another cyclist is a friendly face in a crowded sea. Through this a wealth of culture is within reach - much of it focused on our shared loved of two wheels.

That is what *this* is all about. Urban Cyclist is a reflection of cycling culture in modern day cities. It is not about the bike. It is about the rider. 

We want your words. Send your editorial contributions to brad@urbancyclist.org



www.swrvecycling.com

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Publisher's Statement



Photo by Jeff Guerrero

By Jeff Guerrero

To the tune of Fear's "I Love Livin' In The City"

**My house smells just like a zoo
Got bikes in the living room
Chainrings hung on the door
Sidi's lying on the floor
But my bike's cleaned up
Morning rides are always rough**

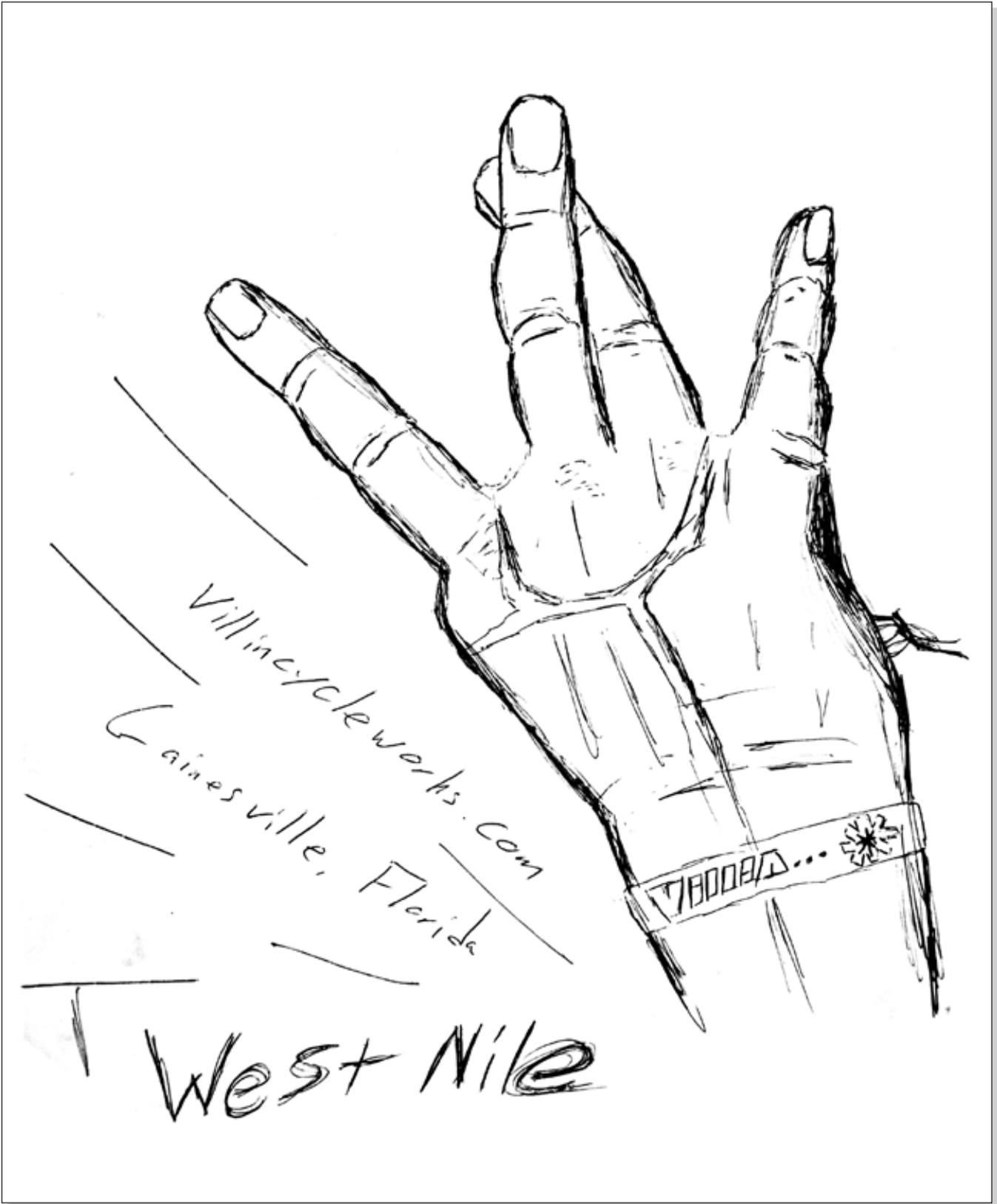
**I love riding in the city
I love riding in the city**

**Dreamed my whole life of a city
Where bikes are king and the air ain't shitty
People riding everywhere
Bike lanes with room to spare
But in reality
The roads are clogged with SUVs
Car or bus, it's all the same
You just gotta take your lane**

**I love riding in the city
I love riding in the city**



Urban Cycling issue #1, Spring 2007. Actual print run: 1000 copies. Estimated free online downloads: 9000 copies.



Tell them you saw it in Urban Velo!

I Love Ridin

NAME: _____

LOCATION: _____

OCCUPATION: _____

Play along at home!

Mail (or email) us your response to any or all of the following questions:

Where do you live and what's it like riding in your city?

What's your favorite (or the most exotic) city you've ridden in, and what made it special or memorable?

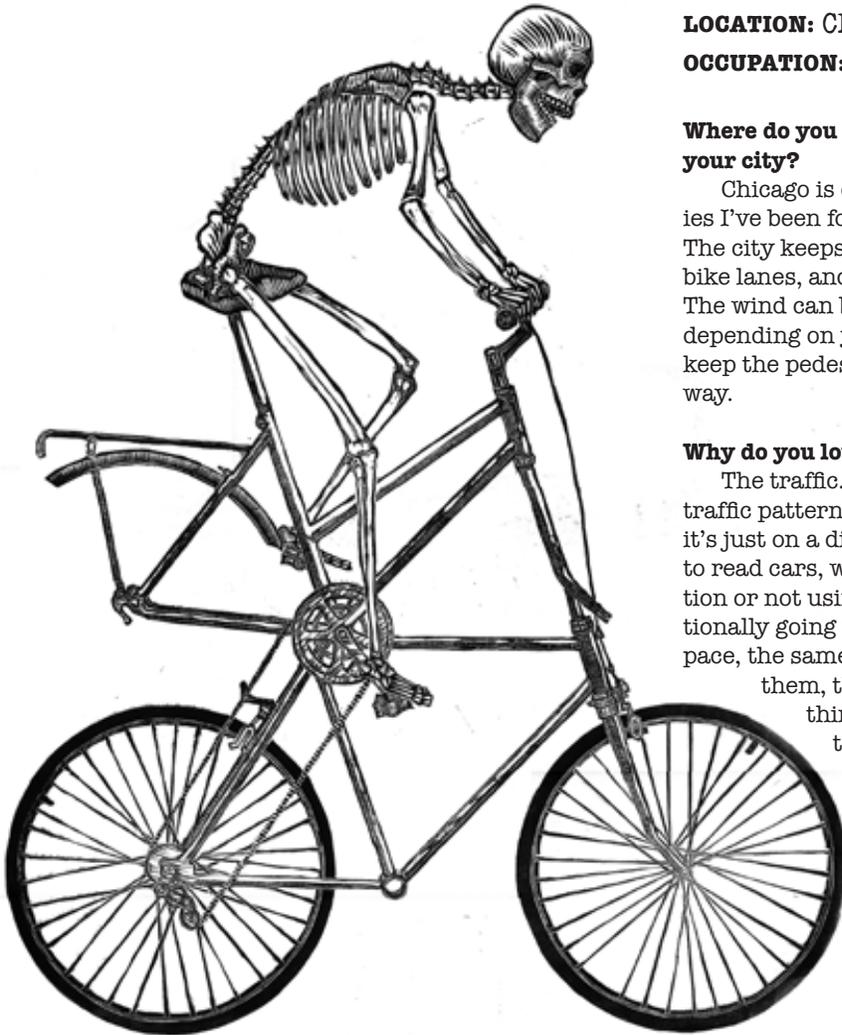
Why do you love riding in the city?

Or just say whatever you want about riding in the city... Poetry anyone?

Send responses to Urban Cyclist, PO Box 9040, Pittsburgh, PA 15224 or email jeff@urbancyclist.com

g in the city

I Love Ridin



Artwork by Damarak The Destroyer

NAME: Damarak The Destroyer

LOCATION: Chicago, IL

OCCUPATION: Messenjerk

Where do you live and what's it like riding in your city?

Chicago is one of the most bicycle friendly cities I've been fortunate enough to spend time in. The city keeps up on plugging potholes, adding bike lanes, and maintaining trails for public use. The wind can be your best friend or worst enemy depending on your direction and the snow can keep the pedestrians off the street and out of your way.

Why do you love riding in the city?

The traffic. Organized chaos. A bike fits into the traffic patterns just as cars and pedestrians do, it's just on a different grid. You have to know how to read cars, whether they are not paying attention or not using their turn signal, or just intentionally going to cut you off. If you go at a constant pace, the same cars will pass you, you'll pass them, they'll pass you, etc. They probably think I'm crazy for not wanting to sit in traffic.

Sometimes everything just clicks. You build up speed, you catch all the lights, the wind at your back, and to quote one dockworker who saw me "just flying" through the urban playground.

Poetry anyone?

Yo mama.

Check out www.damarakthedestroyer.com

g in the city

I Love Riding in the City



Photo by Brad Quartuccio

NAME: Big Jonny

LOCATION: Flagstaff, AZ

OCCUPATION: Pro Loser (Writer? Webmaster? Slacker? Injured reserve?)

Where do you live and what's it like riding in your city?

I live in Flagstaff, Arizona. We're a small touristy little college town up in the mountains of Arizona a mere 75 miles from the Grand Canyon. Since our population is a hair under 60,000, we don't quite have the "urban" experience of folks in bigger metro-

politan areas like Phoenix, Denver or Las Vegas. But we have roads and cars and daily commuters trying to get from point A to point B without getting hit. You know, that famed urban cycling experience.

What's your favorite (or the most exotic) city you've ridden in, and what was special or memorable?

After two minutes of hard deliberation, I'll call this one a tie between riding in Amsterdam and Las Vegas. Both have plenty of visual distraction and highly impaired cyclists and motorists crowding the roadway. I've avoided danger in both cities to date, but the very real possibility of things going pear shaped exists in both places.

My most memorable moment was when I turned to my friend Jimbo, who's upcoming wedding we were celebrating in Amsterdam, and told him, "I'm bonked, we need to slow down." He had dragged his drunken friends way out of town, in the rain, on rented three speeds to some god forsaken tourist trap with a windmill. I guess the engineer in him really, really wanted to see one up close and personnel. Or course, the tourist trap was closed when we got there, so we turned around and rode back an hour and half into the wind and rain with no food.

I bonked super hard. And within two blocks after I told Jimbo I was toast, he rode away from me and I lost the group in traffic. And by "traffic" I mean thousands of commuting cyclists. Here in the States, a group of cyclists is such an oddity; you can see your friends literally for blocks. In Amsterdam, my compatriots disappeared into the crowd almost immediately. Think of a crowded New York sidewalk, but everyone is on bikes. So, there I was, dropped and alone, in a foreign country, with a hangover, no map and nothing but a pair of wooden clogs in my messenger bag.

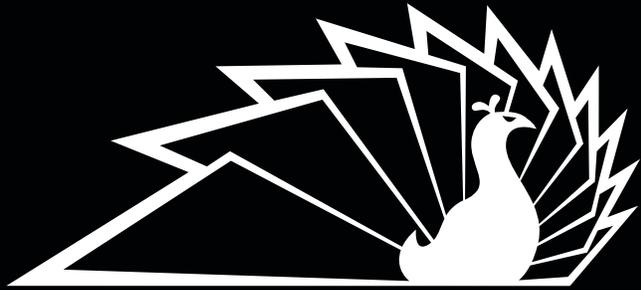
I could have killed him. But I was too busy dying.

Poetry anyone?

Buildings pass me by,
Like sands through the hourglass,
I need a beer.

Check out www.drunkcyclist.com

I Love Riding in the City



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I Love Riding in the City



NAME: Chippy Chippendale
LOCATION: Currently in Yorkshire, UK
OCCUPATION: Bike Journo

Photo by Chippy Chippendale

What's your favorite (or the most exotic) city you've ridden in, and what was special or memorable?

I was a bike messenger in London, wow, 15 years ago now, but I still look back on it with great fondness. It was a time when I got to ride my bike every day through the streets of London. One of the best places to thread a bicycle through traffic chaos. As Travis Culley said in 'The Immortal Class' - there comes a time when you can see into the future. You can see where all the traffic you are riding through will be in five seconds' time and you plan your route through it. Traffic in London moves at an average of 12mph - slower than a fit cyclist can sustain for hours. This lets you pick your place between the cars and red London buses, choosing when to make your attack.

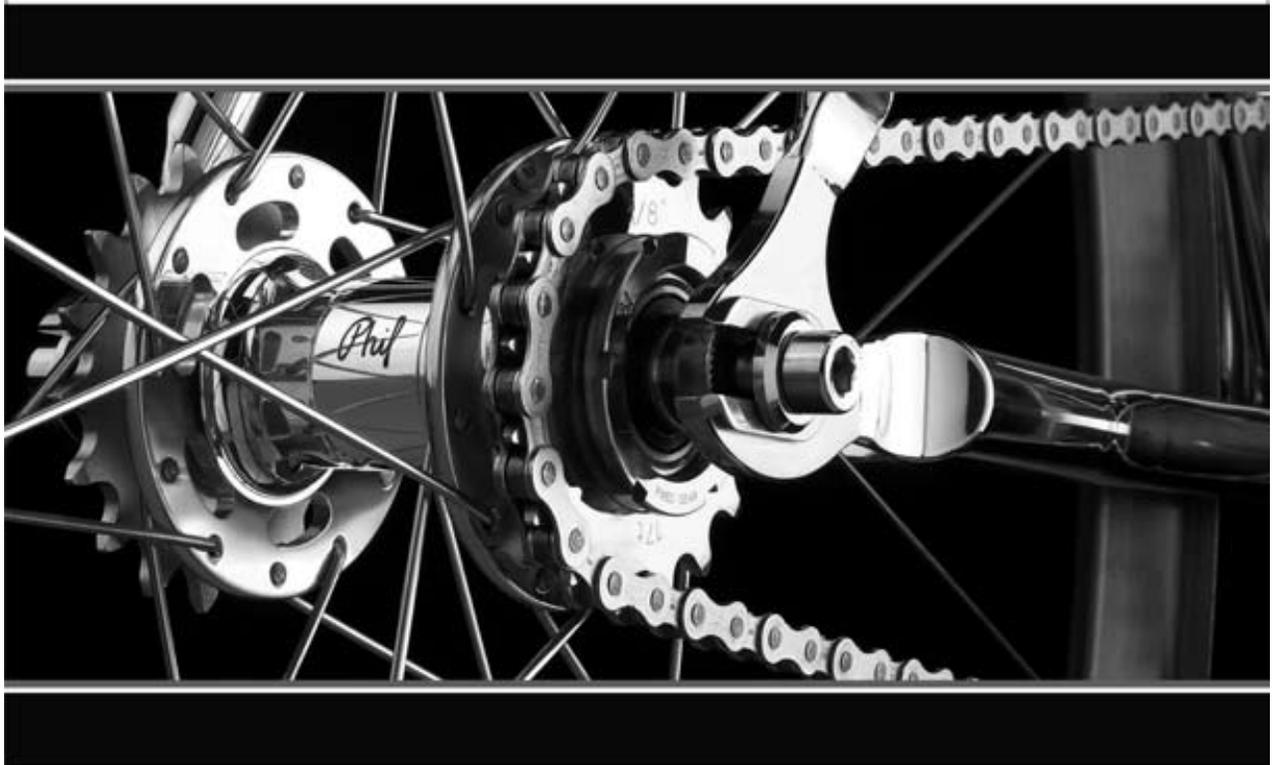
London's pretty flat, so you can just hoon along all day.

The streets of London have evolved over a couple of thousand years, certainly not with cars in mind. The labyrinthine streetmap is compounded by one-way streets, dead ends and bus lanes. But after a few months of riding, everything starts coming together. Just as a good typist can't always tell you where the 'k' key is on a keyboard, but can write 'keyboard' without thinking, so my routes across town became embedded into my mind, with streetnames replaced by landmarks like ad agencies, photo studios and coffee shops... Happy days.

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Photo by S. Lee & Erin Nicole Brown

NAME: Erin Nicole Brown

LOCATION: Brooklyn, NY

OCCUPATION F/T: Photo Agency **P/T:** Bicycle Habitat

What's your favorite (or the most exotic) city you've ridden in, and what was special or memorable?

I really enjoy riding my bicycle around Philadelphia. The Chinatown bus from NYC to Philadelphia is so accessible and affordable. My most memorable moment has to be when I took the 7pm bus down on a Friday night during the summertime in 2001. I tossed my bike underneath the luggage compartments below the bus, then headed to Philadelphia! I rode my bike around that lovely city all weekend. I met up with some of my friends and drank beer, swam in fountains that we shouldn't have, then rode to the pretzel factory and stuffed our faces with yummy food. I got to visit some local bike shops in the area and see Tony's father's country folk band play at the fire station. That weekend was amazing!

Three years later in Philadelphia, I re-kindled an old flame with my high-school sweetheart at Re-Load's Annual April Fools Race.

Check out www.erinnicolebrown.com

NAME: Kent Peterson

LOCATION: Seattle, WA

OCCUPATION: Commute Program Director, Bicycle Alliance of Washington

Frost and Moonlight

I roll through air that is cold enough to make every sound clear. There is a tick in my right pedal, keys clink in my pocket, my bell rings itself on the rough pavement of the Bellevue Slough. The freeway drones like our entire planet has tinnitus and I wonder if it is good or bad that I can manage to tune all this out almost all the time.

The moon that set behind the city, behind the Olympic mountains in the morning rose again this evening. The warmth of the day is leaving as I leave for home and the light again is getting low. The city streets are familiar, the rhythm of red and green and four-way stops, the tide of traffic, the workday workers working their ways away.

Check out kentsbike.blogspot.com



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Photo by Wes Cheney

NAME: Wes Cheney
LOCATION: Norfolk, VA
OCCUPATION: Photographer

Where do you live and what's it like riding in your city?

Norfolk is a city built atop tidal swamps, and is thus constrained by water. I plan my rides by bridges and ferries. Once when I lived in a flood prone area I parked my cars in the relative safety of a downtown parking garage and biked home through the warm hurricane winds and up to a foot of water.

What's your favorite (or the most exotic) city you've ridden in, and what was special or memorable?

Flat broke after riding across Europe for five months, I scored a job as a bike messenger at Heaven Sent Couriers. What more need be said?

Why do you love riding in the city?

I love finding the alleys and back streets, the pedestrian bridges and little parks, and stitching them into my daily rides to work, the store and church. I love meeting my co-workers at a stoplight, me on my bike, them in their car, and beating them into the office!

Check out www.weschency.com

NAME: Amy Rice
LOCATION: Minneapolis, MN
OCCUPATION: Artist

Where do you live and what's it like riding in your city?

I live in the heart of Minneapolis, MN. We've got bike lanes in the downtown area but they scare me a bit and sometimes I hop on to and ride on the sidewalk (I'm always polite and yield to pedestrians when I do so). We have some other nice trails to get from here to there on a bike fairly easily. The city seems smaller to me on a bike than in a car. My dog loves to ride alongside me and knows a whole bunch of bike related commands.

Why do you love riding in the city?

In the winter here in Minneapolis there is a real sense of camaraderie with other commuter bikers. There are days when it is so cold that bikers have a white halo of frost around their facemask mouth and nose holes. We're proud of our frosty faces. I never cease to think at some point of a 10° below or more ride, "there is something wrong with my bike...no wait that's me, my muscles, wait no it's my bike..." Sometimes in the spring when all the sane riders come out with their clean, pretty bicycles and the paths are crowded and the bike lanes busy again I actually miss the sub-zero rides.

Check out www.amyrice.com



Art by Amy Rice

I Love Riding in the City

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Photo by Brad Quartuccio

NAME: Ted King-Smith
LOCATION: Pittsburgh, PA
OCCUPATION: Retired bike messenger, film projectionist, bloody student.

Where do you live and what's it like riding in your city?

Pittsburgh has vast undulating landscapes of post-modern desolation and despair mixed with moments of sublime beauty and nostalgia. Something between the set of Metropolis and l'enfer du nord.

What's your favorite (or the most exotic) city you've ridden in, and what was special or memorable?

I've never really ridden anywhere that exotic yet. . . but some of my favorite experiences riding are on the swift banks of the Lehigh Valley Velodrome, the shaded country roads of Bloomington as ridden by Dave Stohler, the all out sprint across Market Street to the placidity of Kelly drive in Philadelphia, the Zoo Bomb route down Burnside on an astro-turf covered

cruiser in Portland, the cruise down Coney Island Avenue to see the Wonder Wheel or the treacherously fun Williamsburg Bridge in Brooklyn, but best of all are the heart breaking heights and beautiful vistas throughout any Pittsburgh road ride.

Why do you love riding in the city?

Pittsburgh is a source of constant frustration from potholes a plenty, to moronic motorists, to treacherous climbs, descents and highways between you and a good cup of coffee, but occasionally from this bursts brilliance and fun to be rivaled nowhere and with it a tight-knit (if not always organized) scene who will watch your back and buy you a beer (and no one will gank your rear wheel while you drink it!)

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Photos by Joel Gwadz

NAME: Bill Ketzer
LOCATION: Albany, NY
OCCUPATION: Writer/Musician

A Memory

Albany's Sheridan Avenue runs the length of the Arbor Hill ghetto from uptown to the nightlife/business/iniquity district on North Pearl Street by the Hudson River. One early evening a few years ago I climbed up from those pubs on that road, checking out astonishing rows of unoccupied two-family houses now rotting into compost. Radiator fluid ran past me down the street like storm water. I was in the land of the all-seeing eye, and soon a car pulled up behind me. Maybe you know the feeling. They were tracking me like a stray calf, thinking of how to bring me back to the herd. I didn't look back, and finally the old white Toyota pulled up beside me. Two young girls, very young, about 13, start heckling me, tipping full cans of beer into their laps as the car sputters and jerks.

"Boy, you in the wroooooong hood!" they cried, and proceed to throw lit cigarettes at me and attempt to nudge me into the curb with the Toyota's quarter panel. This happens so often that I don't even get scared anymore, but I did hop the curb to ride on the sidewalk, because I will gladly take a beer can to the head or a cigarette burn for the team, but stacking the bike (my only means for escape) in the ghetto is never an option. By this time, however, a small line of cars assembled behind the drunken children, and apparently their blaring horns and curses convinced them to hit the gas and rattle away at considerable speed. Whatever.

But imagine my surprise when five minutes later they came barreling back down the hill, straight towards me! I dumped the bike at an intersection and ran for it. They missed me by about five feet, hopped the curb at the corner and crashed into the boarded-up home waiting there. The sound was deafening. Smoke billowed from the place like the Vatican had just found a new pope. "Oooooooh-eeeeee!" an old man on the street said. "Oooooooh-eeeeee!" I replied. We stood there together, in silence for a moment, then I got on my bike and rode home.

NAME: Joel Gwadz
LOCATION: Washington, DC
OCCUPATION: Computers

predict... modify... adapt

the movement of a bicycle through urban traffic is far from a ballistic motion

the trajectory is always up for revision

there is a need to always predict what is ahead
 anticipate changes
 modify your path
 and be ready to adapt to anything and everything around you

close calls are part of everyday
 close calls are part of being on the bike
 close calls happen whether running a light or obeying the law
 it is just part of being on the bike

Check out gwadzilla.blogspot.com

Check out www.billketzer.com

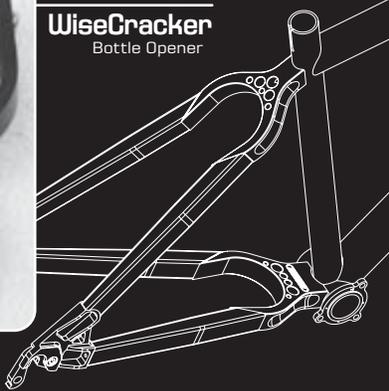
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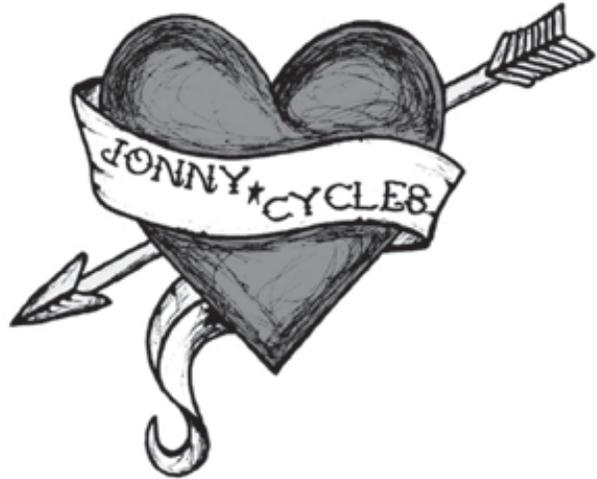
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I Love Riding in the City



NAME: Tim Woody

LOCATION: Anchorage, AK

OCCUPATION: Diageuast

Photo by Tim Woody

Where do you live and what's it like riding in your city?

I commute year-round in Anchorage, Alaska, where we get the full range of weather: rain, strong winds, a little heat, lots of sub-zero cold, and mosquitoes. Mosquitoes count as weather. You've heard of "clouds of mosquitoes," right? We've got 'em.

What's your favorite (or the most exotic) city you've ridden in, and what made it special or memorable?

Anchorage is my favorite because it's the least-hostile city in which I've spent a lot of time on the bike, and the scenery and wildlife are so amazing. You can literally be riding through downtown traffic one minute, then zip a couple of blocks down a side street and encounter a 1,500-pound bull moose standing by the curb. Take the right trail on the way home, and you might come across a bear. I carry pepper spray on my after-dinner trail rides.

Cold is manageable. You can always add layers.

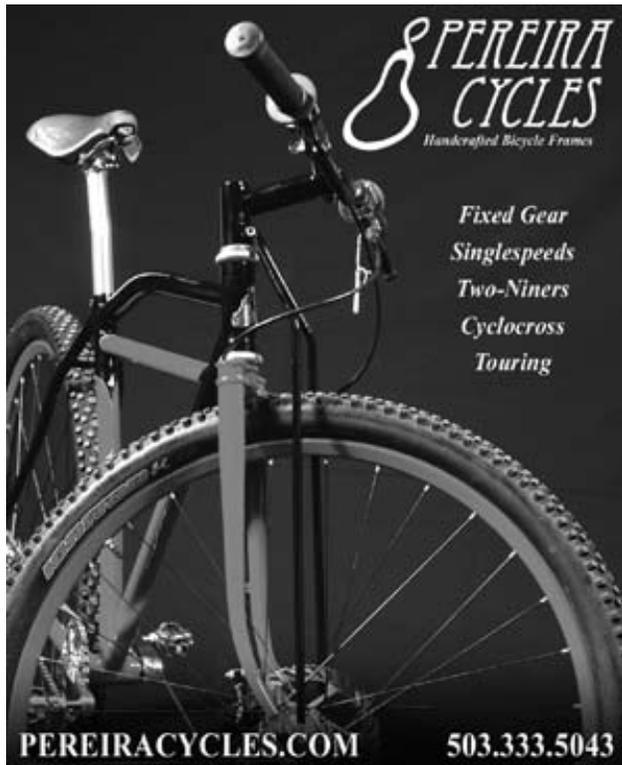
Why do you love riding in the city?

Cycling through a city gives you a much greater knowledge of your surroundings. You learn who walks his dog on your route every morning; where the aroma of good food wafts out of a restaurant; where the homeless people sleep; where the sidewalks are crumbling and which subdivision just got repaved.

Riding in traffic heightens your awareness and sharpens your skills in ways that trail riding doesn't. It's like a bizarre team sport in which you constantly find yourself on a field full of players, but you don't know their loyalties or which uniform they wear. Who's going to stumble and knock you down? Who's going to attempt a vicious tackle? Who's going to open a hole by throwing a traffic block and wave you through to the end zone on the other side of the intersection?

Check out alaskabikeblog.blogspot.com

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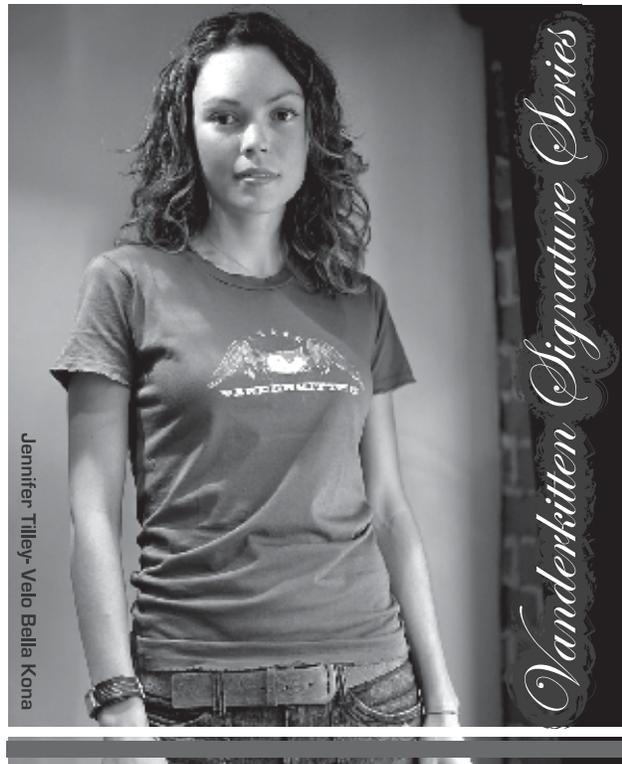
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I Love Riding in the City

NAME: Corey the Courier
LOCATION: Phila/NYC
OCCUPATION: Bicycle Messenger

Where do you live and what's it like riding in your city?

I live in New York. It is an urban jungle in the extreme sense. Pedestrians litter the roadways like ants, cars and trucks drive aggressively to combat delays caused by jaywalkers.

What's your favorite (or the most exotic) city you've ridden in, and what made it special or memorable?

Philadelphia has a 50-mile bike path that goes from the Museum of Art almost all the way to the Lehigh Valley Velodrome. Fairmount Park, the world's largest in city park, contains the trails of Belmont Plateau and Wissahickon—perfect for cyclocross or heavy-duty mountain biking. They have the annual pro-cycling race along Kelly Drive into Manyunk in Early June. Every year it's always a jumbo biker party that stretches along the Schuylkill River from Center City to Manyunk.

Why do you love riding in the city?

There's always a chance you'll see a friend on their bike or strolling along the street. You can appreciate more of the little details that make city life enjoyable more than a pedestrian or speeding vehicle driver.



Photo by Brad Quartuccio



Artwork by Olivia Edith - www.oliviastreet.com

The Acrobats Build A Ramp

By Andrew Trapp

For Vicente Lovato

The kids on my street were acrobats.
They were dirt clods and fistfights
And tightrope tops of fences.

When the bus stopped at the corner
In front of Vincent's house, we'd scatter
Below garage doors and into refrigerators,
Or under doormats on damp cement.

After Kool-Aid or brown grass and dog poop,
We'd push shovels into holes for hideouts,
Or pedal and pull handlebars up gritty curbs.

*From cannons of concrete block and splintered plywood,
Coaster brakes and seat posts and shinny grins
Fly and fail to gravel dirt and bleeding chin.*

I Love Riding in the City

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IMAGES: JEFF@URBANCYCLIST.ORG

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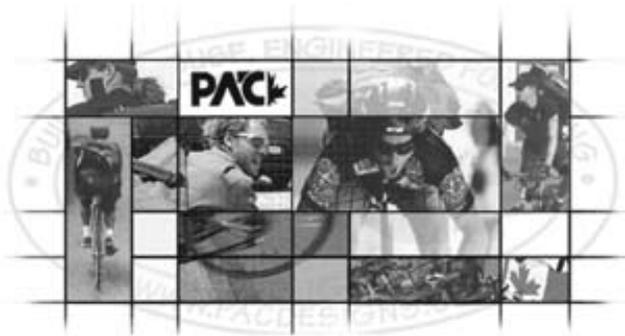
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I Love Riding in the City



NAME: Mac Howison
LOCATION: Swissvale, PA
OCCUPATION: Non-profit Management

Where do you live and what's it like riding in your city?

I live in Swissvale, in the Mon Valley of Pittsburgh, PA. Pittsburgh is hilly and old-fashioned, with lots of side streets, alleys, brick and limestone road surfaces. Riding in Pittsburgh is challenging (uphill) and exhilarating (downhill). I often choose to explore new routes, alleys and sidestreets on my way to get from here to there. People on the sidewalks seem to like seeing bicycles—they smile or watch you ride by. People in cars are less impressed, and their behavior towards cyclists needs a lot of improvement.

What's your favorite (or the most exotic) city you've ever ridden in, and what made it special or memorable?

Pittsburgh is my favorite because it is rough and ready, and it's my home.

Poetry anyone?

Schwinn wheels with old tires
cobblestone streets of Pittsburgh
purring like a cat.

NAME: Pixelfee*78 aka Astrid Hübner
LOCATION: Cologne, Germany
OCCUPATION: Bike Messenger, Graphic Artiste

Fahre mit meiner Susi *Riding my bike, Susi*
fast jeden Tag *almost every day*
Der Großstadtdschungel *The concrete jungle*
ist die Spielwiese *is the place to be*

Manchmal fragen mich Leute *Sometimes people ask me*
Was zur Hölle geht ab bei dir? *what the hell's going on?*
Bist du verrückt oder *Are you crazy?*
was ist deine Antriebskraft? *What's your story?*

Kann es nicht beschreiben *I can not describe it*
Ich weiss es einfach nur *I just know*

genieße den Geruch der Luft *I love to smell the air*
die Frische *the freshness*
den kalten Wind *the cold wind*
der in meine Ohren bläst *blowing into my ears*
abgefrorene Hände und Füße *freezing hands and feet*

Gib Gas *Ride on*
Susi *Susi*
Gib Gas *Ride on*

Check out www.pixelfee78.de



Photo by Mac Howison

I Love Riding in the City



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Photo: Brad Quaruccio

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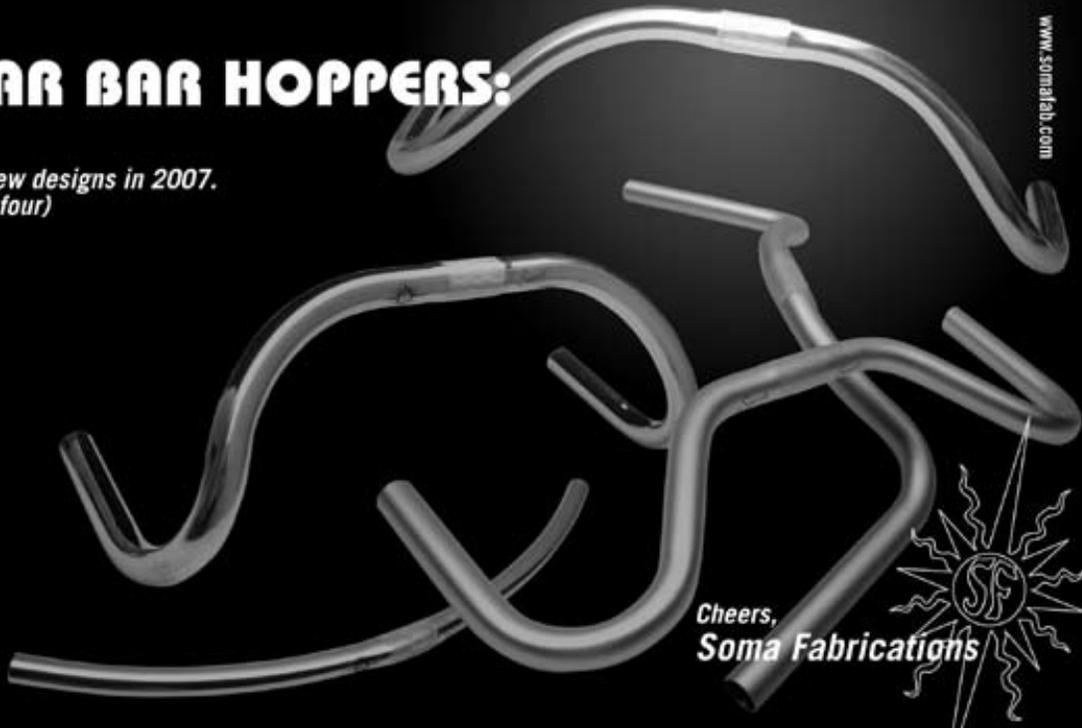
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I Love Riding in the City

NAME: Rattlecan

LOCATION: Colorado Springs, CO

OCCUPATION: Arsonist

Where do you live and what's it like riding in your city?

Colorado Springs is different from most cities because most of the cycling community is made up of bike jocks. We have the OTC (the overtraining center), CTS (chemical training systems), the 7-11 Velodrome, flat roads out to the east and a bunch of sweet Rocky Mountain singletrack to the west. We also have an indoor BMX track for the winter months, which is super fun. The climate is pretty mild and we get 300+ days of sun a year. I haven't driven in four years and consider my city riding as training. It keeps me sane and in shape should I find myself in a field sprint on the track, suffering up a long climb on a group road ride, drafting a car at 35mph on the way back home from Manitou Springs, bombing the pipeline downhill with the boys, or just having some fun on the single-speed in Palmer Park.

Check out www.groundupdesigns.com



NAME: Bob Lafay

LOCATION: Tujunga, CA

OCCUPATION: Part-time Cartoonist

Where do you live and what's it like riding in your city?

Tujunga, CA. Lots of cars...but no one walks here, so the sidewalks are always an option. The streets are hilly also, so mountain bike gearing and tires are the best choice here.

What's your favorite (or the most exotic) city you've ever ridden in, and what's special (or memorable) about it?

#1. Tropical Havana, Cuba. Very little traffic. The cars that are there are 40's and 50's—worth looking at. Without the spare parts, not many are moving unless you pay to get a ride in them.

#2. Beijing, China—a never-ending sea of bicycles. Joining in is no problem. Bicyclists are used to riders coming and leaving. Drafting a million bikes is an unforgettable experience. There are very few cars, but the ones there spew out a whole lot of pollutants. Cough, cough.

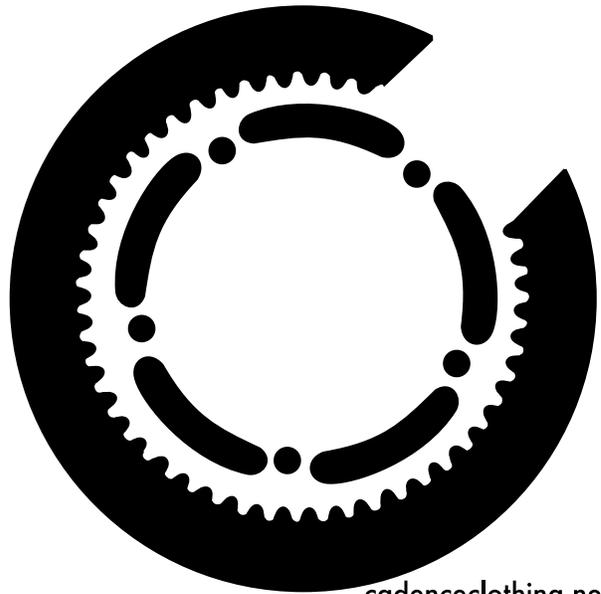


I Love Riding in the City

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BikeBike

PREVIEW

By Erok Boerer
erokore@bike-pgh.org



Fueled by the rising cost of gasoline and the gutting of public transit, more people are choosing to transport their bodies using their own renewable human power. Since bikes aren't the common, everyday method of most in the US, there is some apprehension

on getting started, as well as dropping a couple hundred bucks on a new ride. Many people then search out a used bike, but most don't know where to start, mechanically or otherwise. Taking advantage of the throw-away American culture while subsequently meeting the rising demand for used bicycles and friendly advice, community bike shops have been spreading like wildfire across US cities.

Part outreach, part greasy workspace, there is no cookie-cutter way to describe a community bike shop. Every city has its own local flair, and this is reflected in their given shop. According to the Bike Collective Network, a community bike shop may include some or all of these traits:

- **Non-profit bicycle organizations**
- **Shops that are accessible to people without money**
- **Shops that have an educational focus, teaching others how to fix bikes**
- **Shops that are volunteer run**
- **Organizations that ship bikes to communities suffering from first world colonialism and its effects**
- **Shops that provide free or low-cost services to the community**
- **Organizations that recycle bicycles and parts**

Several years ago, it became obvious that there were a number of community shops sprouting up around the country, and pretty much re-inventing the wheel each time. Some particularly astute folks from New Orleans's Plan B Bike Shop decided to organize 2004's Bike Bike Conference, the first ever convergence of these similar projects,

minds, and DIY sensibilities. Workshops varied from basic "how to" nuts and bolts type of stuff to more heady, but equally important "combating racism and sexism" discussions and workshops. With the addition of rides and social events the overall conference has a celebratory vibe, and is a great way for new folks to get inspired, and the cynical older folks (like myself) to get re-inspired to continue with this worthwhile work. Out of these convergences, the Bike Collective Network hath sprung, with the mission of linking up the various groups and sharing knowledge.

Now in its fourth year, the Bike Bike Conference (August 10-12, 2007), will make its first East Coast appearance in Pittsburgh, hosted by the Free Ride Bike Collective. Although registration is appreciated, the conference is open to all. Efforts are being made to make sure that there is something for everyone, whether you're thinking about starting a shop, you're involved in a shop that's been doing it for years and want some fresh ideas, or you just want to share and network. Since Free Ride doesn't know everything, all interested parties are encouraged to contribute to this collaborative effort. If there is a subject that you feel particularly enlightened and want to share what you've learned, please consider hosting or facilitating a workshop or discussion.

No matter how great you think bikes are and that they have the potential to save the world, it is sometimes hard to admit that the bike industry is still an industry, and will succumb to the same corporate consumer model as washing machine and automobile companies. Our community bike shops are an important component in the charge to turn the bicycle into an inexpensive, practical, and simple method that almost anyone can use. Many consider us the "gateway drug" of the bicycle world.

If you are thinking of attending or would like to host a workshop, please check out the Bike Bike website. 

Web Resources

Bike Bike
www.bikebike.org

Free Ride!
www.freeridepgh.org

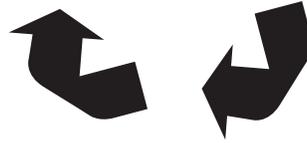
The Bike Collective Network
www.bikecollectives.org

Plan B Bike Project
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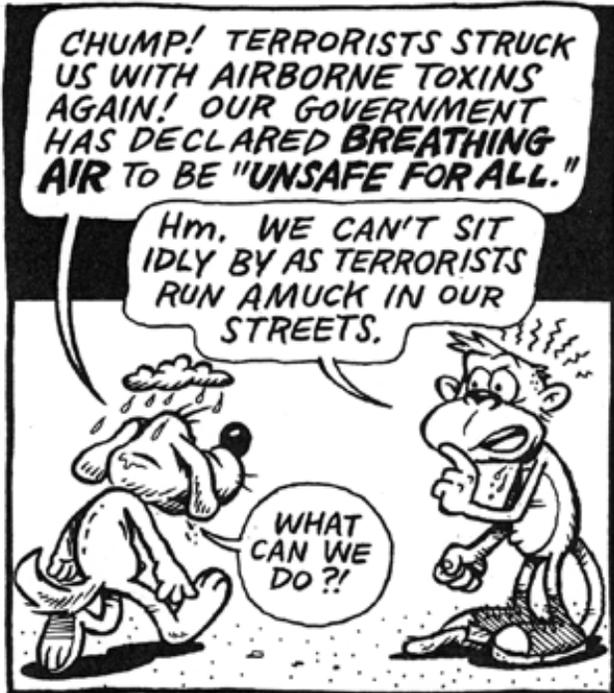
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Bike Polo

The Novice's Guide to



Words & Photos by Bill Dozer



While the proper institution of Bicycle Polo was begun over a century ago in the wilds of Pakistan, and maintains much of the refinement and dignity of its equine forbearer, we of the city environment have mutated and bastardized this gentlemanly game into something that suits our more reckless and drunken lifestyles.

About five years ago in Portland, a few of us bike messengers, upon learning of this new pastime from some peers in Seattle, decided that we should establish standard rules for play. Although rules seemed counter-intuitive to the haphazard and utterly disorganized nature of the game, it was agreed that should disputes arise, there should be a standard against which they are judged, so as to keep the game going—the most important thing.

We arrived at the title: Little Beirut Style. Now, each city has a few of their own localized rules, in keeping with the DIY ethos, but these are the skeletal basic rules, to guide the novice into a simple understanding of that sport over which we are so fanatical:

THE COURT

Regulation court size is a single tennis court, fenced on all sides. Approximate dimensions are thirty five feet wide by seventy feet long. Basketball courts, handball courts, or any enclosed court will do in a pinch.

The court shall be set up with a goal on each end, marked by traffic cones or some other post visible from all points in the court. The goal does not need to have an upper limit, nor a net. The posts shall be set one bike length apart. The goals are placed approximately six feet in from the edge of the court, so that there is a playing area behind the goal.

The half-court line must be marked.

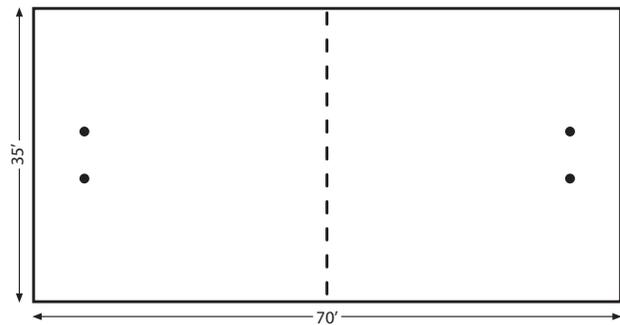


Figure 1A - The Court

THE GAME

No time limit. First team to 5 wins. When the game is tied at 4, we call it “Beer Point.”

Each player must have a bike and a mallet. The Mallet may be held in either the right or left hand (generally right is easier), but must remain in the same hand for the entirety of the game: no switch hitters.

To start the game, the ball is centered. A count-off of “1, 2, 3, GO!” is given, and teams sprint like hell from their goal line to try to take control of the ball before the other team does.

Mallet-to-mallet contact is permitted, as is “hooking” another player’s mallet.

Body-to-body contact is permitted, but hands may NOT be used. Just like in football, you can use your elbows, arms or shoulders to push, shove or ride someone into a fence or bystander... but you may not grab or push with hands.

Players may handle the ball in any direction they wish, and are not subject to rules to establish "right of way." Stealing is part of the game. What are we? Gentlemen?

A player may throw their mallet in order to try to block a goal. So far, this has resulted in some fairly memorable crashes, but no serious injuries. Just don't kill anyone.

Teams consist of three players. Any more and too many people get hurt.

The ball used is a standard street hockey ball. It is suggested that you heed the weather recommendations on the packaging (red - above 80', orange - 40'-60', blue - below 40') as getting hit with a red ball in 40' weather is right painful.

The ball is ALWAYS IN PLAY unless a goal is scored. If a goal is scored, the scoring team must retreat to half court before the ball must be brought back into play. The ball may be brought back into play before the scoring team crosses the half court line. This is called "coming in hot."

If a player touches the ground ("dabs") then that player must complete a 360' turn ("circle out") before returning to play. The player may block the ball or other players with his/her bike before returning to play, but may NOT contact the ball or any other player with his/her body or mallet until returning to play.

A goal is scored ONLY if an attacking player strikes the balls with the end of his/her mallet, and the ball crosses the goal line between the goal posts. If the ball is hit with the flat side of the mallet and crosses the goal line, the shot will be called a "shuffle" and the play will continue. The goal is awarded to the last player to touch the ball. Assists may be awarded.

If a player is behind the goal, he/she cannot pass the ball through the goal to him/herself. You may pass it through the goal to another player, but you can not bring it through the goal and score yourself.

If you have a question about a play or rule, and it's not listed here or under the court-specific rules, it's legal. We generally don't like rules.



THE BIKE

No specific rules apply to the building of a polo bike, but we do have some strong recommendations.

The bicycle should be single-speed, either fixed- or free-wheel, with a single rear brake mounted on the left side (for right handed players)

We recommend that polo bikes be of the mountain bike variety, as they are more durable, and the parts are cheaper and more readily available from used bicycle stores.

Riser bars or BMX handlebars are recommended. For safety, it is also stressed that handlebars be cut down shorter than the length of an average arm. We would prefer that there be no more impaling on the polo court.

THE MALLET

The standard bike polo mallet is constructed from an ordinary aluminum ski pole, and a short piece (about 5-7 inches) of high density PVC piping, which you can get from the hardware store or steal from the gas company. The pole should be cut down to a length of about 32 - 36 inches, with the point and grip removed. Match the diameter of the narrow end of the pole to a small wood-boring drill bit (usually 9/16"), and drill through the center of the PVC pipe. Press fit the pole into the PVC mallet head. Trim off any excess pole that peeks through the underside of the mallet head, and affix the mallet head to the pole with a long self tapping screw or a bolt and nut that passes through the pole and both sides of the mallet head. If using a self tapping screw, make sure to trim off any excess poking through the other side of the mallet head - for safety. 

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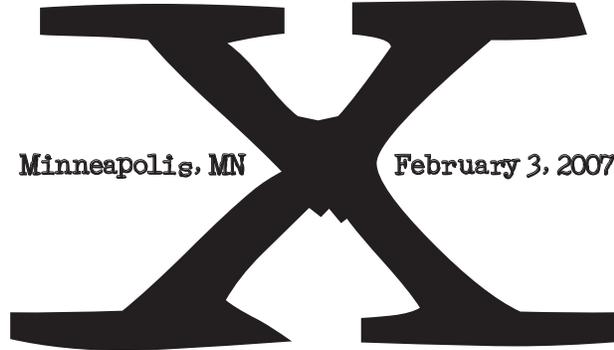
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Stupor Bowl



Minneapolis, MN

February 3, 2007

By Jeff Guerrero

It's after midnight when I wheel the van into the parking lot of a neighborhood bar in the outskirts of Minneapolis. Although we've had the heater cranked for 14 hours straight, the moment I turn off the ignition the air temperature drops sharply. The sliding door opens and a rush of cold air turns the van into a walk-in freezer. A bearded man in Carhartt overalls shoves his head inside and shouts, "Pittsburgh... Fuck yeah!"

Hurl's obviously been drinking, but then that's what we're here for, too. Amidst a flurry of hugs and handshakes our host for the weekend calls out, "Who's the Polish Hammer?"

Malice, Hammer's miniature pinscher, responds with a less-than-menacing growl.

"Fuck yeah!" Hurl continues to take stock, "Lockwood! Fuck yeah! Guerrero... Quartuccio..."

As we enter the pub a Dead Kennedys cover band breaks into Moon Over Marin and I'm utterly transfixed. Soon enough I notice the table of young women eager to register me for tomorrow's affair, and I plunk down my \$15. The registration kit includes a t-shirt, manifest, stickers and a pair of hand warmers—a telltale sign of things to come.

Back in Pittsburgh the weather forecast had called for a high of 1° F, and we briefly thought of staying home. Briefly. I for one was far too excited about my first visit to Minneapolis—birthplace of my grandparents and home to quite a few of my friends. Among those friends is a pretty well known guy named Hurl. Responsible for the world's best known bike zine, Cars R Coffins. Hurl graciously offered to let our motley crew of Pennsylvanians defile his bathroom for the weekend.



Which way do we go? Photo by Brad Quartuccio



One On One bicycle studio, coffee bar and art gallery. Photo by Jeff Guerrero



He likes it! Topher likes it! Photo by Brad Quartuccio



Only bad girls smoke cigarettes. Bad Kelly Mac. Bad. Photo by Brad Quartuccio

Sufficiently liquored up and subsequently chilled to the bone, we pile into Hurl's house and I for one am absolutely blown away. I suppose I shouldn't make assumptions, but the last thing I expect to find is a clean, modest sized, tastefully decorated home. Sure, I didn't expect pools of vomit in the living room, but I did rather expect to find myself sleeping next to some bike parts at the foot of a Park stand. I unfurl my Therm-O-Rest in the finished attic and I'm out like a light. I don't even wake up when Topher yells into the porcelain megaphone during the wee hours of the night.

At the crack of noon we're roused from bed...to go to the bar. Thankfully the Triple Rock, best known for hosting punk rock shows, also specializes in breakfast. My queasy stomach won't let me order The Mother Trucker, let alone a Bloody Mary, but our host orders both along with a beer to wash them down. Our next stop is One On One Bicycle Studio—possibly the coolest bike shop ever. The front third is a full-service coffee shop, the middle is a showroom full of drool-worthy bikes and accessories, and the back is home to a full-service bike shop. The main man is another old friend of mine, but Gene O's busy doing about twelve things and giving a television interview, to boot. I join the growing mob of cyclists in the alley behind One On One and thank myself for having the good sense to eschew contemporary cycling fashion and wear snowboard goggles and a balaclava. As overdressed as I feel, the cold is still nipping at my fingers, toes and the tip of my nose.

Without much ado the crowd takes to the streets en masse and reassembles in what must be the coldest square mile in America. Nearly everyone in sight is jumping or wiggling around to keep warm, and eventually Charlie Brown's teacher makes some announcement that signifies the start of the race. Excited to start riding to get warm, I mount my bona-fide messenger bike (a salvaged relic from the defunct Triangle Messenger Service) only to find the freehub body has frozen. Lockwood, Brad, Topher and The Polish Hammer disappear as I try in vain to mount and ride my crippled hoopy. My extremities go numb as I hike back to One On One, and for the time being I'm more than happy to huddle over a Café au Lait.

I'm rejoined by Hurl, Lockwood Topher and Brad soon enough, and the One On One mechanic has my bike fixed way before I'm ready to venture back into the cold. I soak up one last bit of heat while Lockwood swills his fifth beer of the afternoon, and once again the ice-cold wind is in my face as I struggle to keep Hurl in sight.



www.myspace.com/bestfriendsforeverandfriends says it all. Photo by Jeff Guerrero



Gene Oberpriller explains the concept of "beer thirty". Photo by Jeff Guerrero



Minneapolis businesses rolled out the red carpet for us. Photo by Jeff Lockwood



Dear Minneapolis

The last time we met was nearly seven years ago when you hosted around one hundred passionate souls on bicycles fashioned with one, lonely gear. It was a fantastic time, and the events of that weekend saw the arrival of municipal agencies usually dispatched only in the event of a fire or a large civil disturbance.

For the past seven years, the blaze we lit in the parking lot of Grumpy's that evening has burned within me for another bicycle circus in, on and around your fair streets. This past February finally brought me back for just such a thing with Stupor Bowl X.

From the moment we arrived at Club Underground, to the time we crunched through the snow outside Hurl's house to jumpstart the van for our 15-hour drive home, we were treated to a form of chaotic cycling camaraderie that one must experience in order to completely comprehend and appreciate. In sub-zero temperatures, we rode our faces off on a tour of all you had to offer. We drank beer, fraternized with old friends and shared stories, philosophies and more beers with new friends.

It was an experience I won't soon forget, and I thank you profusely for having us. I look forward to the next time we meet, perched atop our bicycles. Let's make sure it's less than seven years this time.

Truly,
Jeff Lockwood

Dress for Success

A Rough Guide to Stupor Bowl Survival



Locked and loaded, eh, Lockwood? Photo by Jeff Guerrero

Layer Up, Buttercup

The key to staying warm is trapping air around your skin. Multiple layers do this better than one thick one. Remember, you can always take clothing off, but you can't put on what you don't have with you.

Weatherproofing

Once layered properly, you need to finish with a shell to keep the elements at bay. Even if it's not raining, a waterproof jacket will block the wind better than an ordinary windbreaker. While you're at it, cover as much of your head and neck as possible. A balaclava (thin ski mask) is ideal, but even a bandana will help.

Technical Wear? Bahhh...

Sure, expensive technical wear is nice, but old-fashioned wool works incredibly well. It stays warm when wet and resists odor naturally. And you can find some great bargains out there.

Some of the best gloves I've ever used were a combination of wool liners from the Army surplus store and cheap pleather work gloves. Warm, water-resistant and tough, I got several winters out of my \$10 investment. Wool socks and sweaters can be found at yard sales and thrift stores, and wool riding britches can be made out of old wool dress pants. Fleece is another great insulator, but it's almost worthless without wind protection.

We hustle to one stop after another, and before long I've got more stamps on my manifest than I ever expected. I had rather fancied the notion of hitting three or four cool stops, downing my weight in coffee and beer, and being the first in line for the after-party. Hurl, however, is determined to show us as much of the city as possible in a few short hours. Each time my toes start to thaw at a beer-stop I'm snapped back into action by Hurl the Taskmaster. By the time we reach Hurl's CRC Coffee Bar I'm lagging behind. The moment I pull out my manifest I hear Hurl barking, "Let's go, we gotta move!"

I look over and Topher's beard is completely frosted over. For a moment I wonder where The Polish Hammer has disappeared to, and how Malice is enjoying the sub-zero afternoon temperatures. The last stretch of riding takes us along a shady bike path and we freeze mercilessly as we tick off the miles heading back towards the center of town.

At long last we gain entrance to the after-party. The velvet ropes are no joke, and I get the sense we have no business being in such a club. Still, the venue's got a stage and a dance floor big enough to hold 280 alleycat racers. After a few overpriced drinks and a couple slices of pizza, Hurl's better half leads us to a much better bar around the corner. I'm glad to be out of the menacing gaze of the Club Fancy-pants bouncers, and Topher proves to be a hit with the ladies in the decidedly less highbrow establishment. Meanwhile, the rest of us fill our pie holes with bar-food and beer.

Come closing time, Hammer and I have managed to lose our gloves at the bar, yet neither one of us notices the cold as we pedal back to Hurl's. (We later learn that the overnight temperature plummeted to -12° F, and I thank my lucky stars I didn't get a flat that night.) The last thing I remember is Hurl performing a spirited rendition of House of Pain's "Jump Around" in his living room, which is definitely a sight to see. To the City of Minneapolis—thank you for a hell of a time. I can't wait to visit again. I'll just make sure it's in the summer next time.

Visit www.stuporbowlmpls.com for way more information than you need (seeing as how the race is over) or check out crccoffeebar.blogspot.com and www.oneandonebike.com for slightly more coherent accounts of Stupor Bowl X.



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Thirty years ago the fuel crisis of the '70's paved the way for compact, fuel-efficient cars, reduced the speed limit in an attempt to increase fuel economy and helped to raise awareness of this nation's addiction to cheap oil.

Nowadays we're once again bombarded with ads for huge fuel-inefficient vehicles, images of parents dropping their kids off at school (when was the last time your child was able or allowed to walk

to school?), and the glorification of car culture (think video games, NASCAR, and the perfect drive-thru meal). It's as though the '70's never happened.

We're also constantly urged to think about the way we drive, the distance that we drive, and what we choose to drive. Or are we? Depends on whom you're listening to. Is the American Dream still built on cheap oil, fast access to all places far, and our ability to be upwardly and vehicularly mobile? What about those of us who simply choose not to drive, or for whatever reason, cannot drive? Are they somehow lesser participants in the American Dream?

FOR WHOM THE ROAD ROLLS

If you've spent more than five minutes on a bicycle, you know how generally uninviting the roads are to anyone who isn't rolling with four wheels. Our roads were paved with the future in mind; a future of automobile-dominated landscapes. But these roads are public space, built with public money, aren't they? You bet.

But before we approach this public space, first rewind in your mind's eye to post-war America. Find that 1950's black-and-white image of shiny new cars and newly-built suburban neighborhoods. The Eisenhower administration funded and built the Interstate highway system during the 1950's - the largest public works project ever undertaken. As each year passes and we move from the grainy black-and-white into the faded tones of the 60's and 70's we conjure up images of widening freeways, smog, and slowly lengthening commutes. We continue to move out in to the suburbs, discover the joys of big-box shopping in the 80's and witness the halcyon days of Internet riches and conspicuous consumption in the 90's.

The conveyor of the post-war American Dream through the last fifty-plus years has been the automobile, and the path to the American Dream has been an asphalt ribbon replete with citizens hurling from one place to another as quickly as possible in a futile attempt to avoid the next traffic jam en route to their portion of the Dream.

The present-day American Dream of never-ending consumption has been tarnished a bit by the likes of global warming and rising energy prices. In fact, people are generally happy to keep polishing the Dream as long as they can afford the polish.

THAT'S WHAT SIDEWALKS ARE FOR!

So what about this term, "complete streets"? Complete streets are roads that are simply safe and accessible for even the most vulnerable of users. This includes pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, the physically challenged, motorcyclists, motorists and freight-type trucks. For years, engineers have designed roads to move people and freight from one place to another as quickly as possible. When roads get too congested, the all-too-common solution is to add lanes. When users such as bicyclists want to use

these roads they're often bullied and pushed off the road. There is a prevailing attitude that only the stupid and poor would want to use the roads with anything other than a car.

**AS THE NAME IMPLIES,
NO STREET IS COMPLETE
UNLESS IT IS SAFE
AND ACCESSIBLE TO
EVEN THE MOST
VULNERABLE OF USERS.**

A HISTORY LESSON (NO TEST, NOT BORING)

Every six years since 1991, the Federal government has passed a transportation bill designed to fund surface transportation (bikes, freight, cars, rail, etc.) improvements across the country. This bill provides hundreds of billions of dollars in funding for projects and improvements all around the country. We're currently nearing the end of the second re-authorization of the original transportation bill, currently called "SAFETEA-LU" (see sidebar). SAFETEA-LU provides huge pots of money for all types of projects, including bicycling and walking improvements. Typically, a road improvement project will dip into several of these pots to locate funding; the combination of sources can be mind-boggling.

ACRONYMS

Bureaucrats love acronyms.
For those of you (non-bureaucrats)
who also love acronyms and love
getting lost in the fine print:

ISTER

The Intermodal Surface Transportation Equity Act, first passed in 1991; the original transportation bill.

TEA-21

The Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century; the first renewal of the transportation bill passed in 1998.

SAFETER-LU

The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users; the second renewal of the transportation bill passed in 2005. (This is a five-year bill renewing in 2009, as there was a period of extensions to the previous bill while details of the current bill were hammered out.)

TEA-4

The working name of the next version of the transportation bill due to be passed in 2009.

The current paradigm of road design and improvement is still deeply steeped in the effort to move as many cars as quickly as possible. Most road engineers were taught under the directive that wide, fast roads equate to satisfied users. For the majority of projects, bicycle and pedestrian improvements, or “routine accommodations” in transportation-wonk-speak were an afterthought – addressed only if there was enough money or space once the task of quickly moving cars was taken care of. In fact, the term “routine accommodations” within transportation circles specifically refers to bicycling and pedestrian facilities and improvements.

Additionally, the Federal transportation bill provides funding for states that follow Federal design guidance. Of course, states do not need to follow the guidance if they don’t want to take advantage of the funding provided by the Feds, but then they’re left with the job of raising those “lost” funds on their own. And for the most part, it’s easier to go with the program than to do things differently.

A direct result of the funding opportunities presented by the original transportation bill led to progressive state departments of transportation beginning to adopt language in their project design guidelines indicating that bicycling and pedestrian “should” (instead of “shall”) be routinely accommodated whenever possible. This language directed engineers to design their projects in a more comprehensive manner. But at the end of the day, this language is mere guidance instead of policy. So the question remained: how do we institutionalize routine accommodations as a required design policy instead of just design guidance?

Enter complete streets.

Several years ago transportation advocates and consultants began working to institutionalize routine accommodations as part of a coordinated effort to improve road safety and conditions for all users. During one meeting the term “complete streets” was coined and a national movement was born.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

As the name implies, no street is complete unless it is safe and accessible to even the most vulnerable of users. While this concept seems ludicrously simple, it can very easily get lost in the bureaucracy

of departments of transportation.

The beauty of the name is that it is both inclusive of all users and conveys a positive message about usability of the road. This is the sort of language that makes politicians look like they're kissing babies on the campaign trail. Who can argue with a complete street, whereas the request for an "accommodation" sounds like some sort of special set-aside. Special set-asides and accommodations require money. It is incredibly easy to build political will with complete streets.

And where there's political will, there's money.

**IF YOU'VE SPENT
MORE THAN FIVE
MINUTES ON A BICYCLE,
YOU KNOW HOW
GENERALLY UNINVITING
THE ROADS ARE...**

A NEW AMERICAN DREAM

Part of the backlash to urban sprawl has seen the emergence of a new way of urban design and architecture - "new urbanism." In many ways, new urbanism is simply a return to the pre-sprawl era where communities were designed with a balance of work and living spaces. These designs tend to reduce traffic congestion as they're typically designed around urban cores that are walkable, bikable, and transit oriented.

But again, how does this become institutionalized?

PROGRESS, MY DEAR BOY, PROGRESS!

So... is this complete streets idea gaining any traction? You bet it is. Bicycling and walking groups all around the country have been working for years to change the ways that local and state agencies approach community and road design. And they're making progress. A national coalition of bicycling and walking non-profit organizations called the Thunderhead Alliance is helping local and state bicycle and walking advocacy groups around the country get local complete streets policies in their areas. Their goal is to get state-level Department of Transportation complete street policies in all 50 states (they've got 13 as of this writing) and as many local policies as possible in preparation for a campaign to institutionalize complete streets at the Federal level as part of the Federal transportation bill. Remember: states don't have to follow Federal guidance, but they do have to follow Federal standards.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Complete streets is a grass-roots effort taking place all around the country. Every local and state bicycling and walking non-profit organization that is undertaking a complete streets campaign could use your help. Everything from donating to the local campaign to writing letters of support for complete streets to local politicians and agencies. It doesn't take much from you, and there is true strength in numbers.

Find your local and/or state bicycling and walking organization on the Thunderhead Alliance's website. Can't find a local organization? Try a simple web search. Still can't find a local organization? Consider starting one of your own. The Thunderhead Alliance can help with that, too.



THUNDERHEAD ALLIANCE www.thunderheadalliance.org

COMPLETE STREETS www.completestreets.org

The Armchair Advocate

Words & Photo by Jeff Guerrero



Bicycle advocacy can be a tireless job, and for many people, the thought of another weekly meeting is enough to keep well-intentioned cyclists from contributing to a worthy cause. But being a conscientious citizen doesn't necessarily entail volunteerism or civil disobedience. Sometimes you can affect change by just sending a few email messages to the right person.

In 2005 construction began on a dangerous portion of my commute—a stretch of four-lane highway with no shoulder. The curvaceous Mae West Bend corridor had been the cause of several deaths and countless accidents over the years, and recent flood damage made improvements imminent. Curious as to the possibility of adding bike lanes to my commute, I did some Internet research and located the appropriate person at the Department of Transportation.

It turns out bike lanes weren't an option, but a few concise, well-written emails were all it took to get numerous "share the road" signs placed throughout the corridor. Sure, I didn't save the world, but I was able to raise cycling awareness from the comfort of my own home. And so can you. 

Bicycles and the Mae West Bend
From: Jeff Guerrero

Sent: November 20, 2005
To: Douglas M. Seeley

I am a bicycle commuter who rides through the Mae West Bend en route to work. I am curious as to whether bicycles have been considered in the construction plan?

Thank you for your time.

-Jeff Guerrero
Pittsburgh, PA

RE: Bicycles and the Mae West Bend
From: Douglas M. Seeley

Sent: December 9, 2005
To: Jeff Guerrero

Sorry for the delayed response to your email. Things have been busy with getting projects ready for construction next spring. Regarding the Mae West Bend project, I regret to inform you that we were unable to make special accommodations for bicyclists. Due to the limited width and Right-of-Way through this corridor, it is difficult to provide the additional width necessary for bicycle lanes. I can say that the project will slightly widen the existing travel lanes so this will provide you a little more space for riding. There will also be new lighting installed through this section, which will help improve visibility.

Thanks again for your inquiry and have a happy and healthy holiday season.

Douglas M. Seeley, Project Manager
Pennsylvania Department of Transportation
Engineering District 11

RE: Bicycles and the Mae West Bend
From: Jeff Guerrero

Sent: April 20, 2006
To: Douglas M. Seeley

First off, I commend you and your crew for the amazing amount of progress you have made on Route 8. I for one am impressed, and look forward to the completion. I am wondering if it might be possible to request that you install a couple "share the road" signs to promote bicycle safety once the job is completed?

RE: Bicycles and the Mae West Bend
From: Douglas M. Seeley

Sent: April 27, 2006
To: Jeff Guerrero

Thanks again for your inquiry and the kind words. I have approached our Traffic Unit regarding the incorporation of "share the road" signs. It appears that we will be able to include some of these signs along the project. This is not yet a done deal, but I am trying to coordinate and get approval to put them up.

RE: Bicycles and the Mae West Bend
From: Jeff Guerrero

Sent: March 13, 2007
To: Douglas M. Seeley

I just wanted to write and personally thank you for having "share the road" signs installed in the Mae West Bend corridor of Route 8. PennDOT has done a magnificent job with the road, sidewalk and lighting.

I sent a short, polite initial message, respecting the recipient's busy schedule.

PennDOT's response was not quick, but at least they considered bike lanes. Sadly, the road-widening already required major earthmoving, taking all available space.

You catch more flies with honey than vinegar.

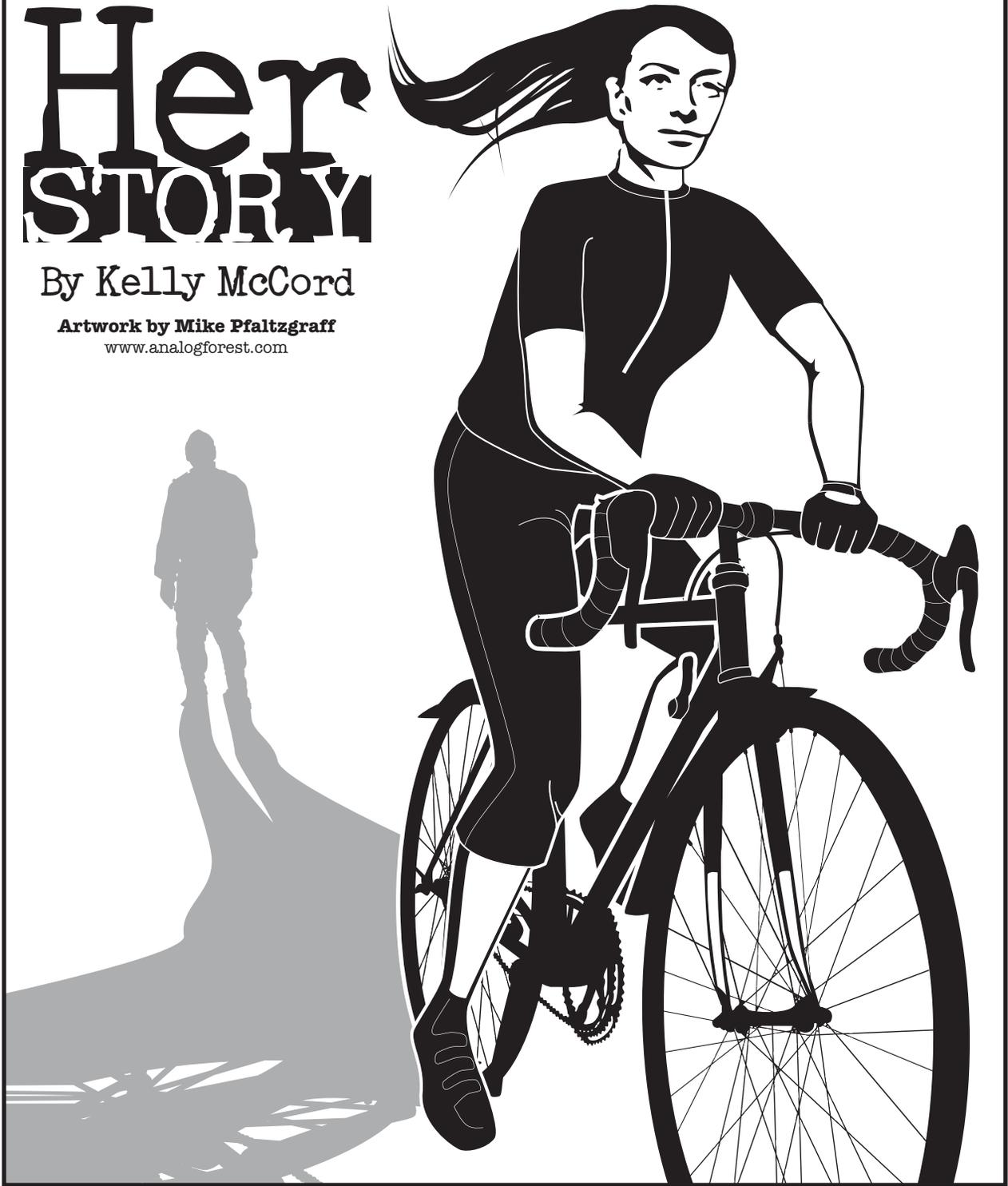
Although it's clearly not a done deal, it looks like my efforts will pay off...

Success! A short note of thanks is all that's necessary.

Her STORY

By Kelly McCord

Artwork by Mike Pfaltzgraff
www.analogforest.com



“What enjoyment to a cramped and warped woman’s life is the whirl of the wheel, bringing back as it does God’s gift of health. and the memories of childhoods delight in out of door activity. With a sense also of rest to the brain, and by raising the thoughts in gratitude above the household cares and drudgery, it gives a woman for one brief while the chance to rejoice in the feeling of liberty and delight in her own strength.” –From “Wheelwoman” (1896)

Four years ago I woke up and realized I was in a horrible marriage. I had to get out—my life depended on it. Mentally, I was at an all time low and sticking my head in the oven seemed like a good idea. My weight was at an all time high at 235. Without warning I made my move and spent the next year living in battered women’s shelters with my two young daughters. We finally settled down in Austin, Texas, the music capital of the world.

Our time began to run out at the shelter, and I had to get my shit together. I wanted to stay in Austin, and if you’ve ever been here you know why. Everyday I took the bus from one end of the city to the other trying to find a job. As you probably know, there are an awful lot of Fruitloops who use public transportation and I seem to attract them all. I’ve been told I have a kind face and open demeanor, but this was getting real old, real quick.

Then I remembered I once had a friend who worked at a bike shop in town. The first thing he did when we reunited was begin to build me a bike. It was a 1987 Mongoose Hilltopper. I thought at the time, “Great, I’ll use the bike until I save enough money to buy a car...”

The first ride my friend took me on was a lesson on how to ride in traffic. It was the middle of summer, maybe 100° F or more, and I thought I was going to die. He really did a number on me, and thinking back I never would have chosen a 15-mile ride in traffic as a maiden voyage. That night, after I tucked my girls into bed at the shelter, I took a moment to reflect. With my new bike propped against the wall, a sense of peace and renewed optimism came over me.

The next day I found a job. I was hired on the spot at Jamba Juice right in the middle of downtown. I soon found out that my store was a hub for bike messengers—a place where they rested and waited for calls. I became fast friends with most of them. They worried about me and my bad habits in traffic, and would flinch watching me ride downtown. The first time I rode in with my headphones on you would have thought I had kicked a whole litter of

puppies. The messengers chastised me, but they began to school me in bike culture, too. Knowing that I could actually live, work and play from the seat of a bike was mind altering. I didn’t even want a car anymore! After a few months of drinking all my meals at Jamba Juice and commuting 10 miles a day, I was down to 165—less than I weighed in high school. I became addicted to cycling, and the only days I felt depressed were the days I didn’t ride. Living in the shelter was full of grief and despair.

Soon my kids and I moved into our own apartment that I carefully selected within five miles of work, school and the grocery store. I bought a used bike-trailer and trekked the girls, the groceries, the cats—you name it—all around Austin.

These days the girls are too big for the bike trailer and sometimes they ask, “Mom, when are we going to get a car?”

I always respond, “When you’re old enough to get a job and buy your own.” But the joke’s on them—by that time there won’t be any fossil fuels left to burn. So they might as well get used to a car-free life.

What started with that 87-Mongoose has grown into a fleet. The Mongoose eventually got custom paint, whitewall tires and a spiffy retro seat. She’s a real pretty city-bike now. Another wonderful friend of mine gave me a Cannondale mountain bike that I lovingly refer to as My Boy, Blue. I made him into a sort of hybrid with skinny tires and cushy seat. Then there’s My Precious—The Gitane.

One day the girls and I were in Goodwill and they called, “Come look, Mom, we found you a bike!”

They do this all the time when we go to thrift stores, but its never a worthy find. But this time we scored big. I bought the 1976 Gitane Tour De France and I took her back to my friend, the mechanic. He easily brought the 30-year-old bike back to life, and when he was done even the original Houston registration tag was intact. And now I know the joys of vintage steel road bike with a Brooks saddle.

Today I’m the manager of the very same Jamba Juice that I walked into as a homeless person three years ago, and my interest in cycling has manifested into a monthly column in Austin’s WHOOPSY magazine called BIKE CITY. Plus, how many moms do you know that can pull a decent trackstand?

Cycling saved my life. It’s given me a healthy addiction and a new lease on life. My greatest ambition, besides raising my beautiful daughters, is to let other people know that, “YES, you CAN completely reverse your life for the better.” Just get on a bike and go!



Check out www.whoopsymagazine.com

Bikes on Film



Ladri di Biciclette (The Bicycle Thief, 1948)

Ladri di Biciclette is considered the quintessential work of the neorealist movement. Conceived during World War II, the movement sought to bring an added degree of realism to the silver screen. Acclaimed director Vittorio De Sica brings Luigi Bartolini's gritty post-war novel to life by shooting entirely on-location in Rome, and through the exclusive use of everyday people instead of actors. Even the lead role of Antonio Ricci (initially intended for Cary Grant) is played by factory worker Lamberto Maggiorani. In a case of life imitating art, Maggiorani himself would struggle to find work after completing the film.

Ladri di Biciclette is a story about survival in an unfair world. Unemployed laborer Antonio Ricci is presented with a rare job opportunity—hanging movie posters in the city—but the conditions of his employment require him to provide his own bicycle for transportation. As luck would have it, Ricci has just pawned his bicycle to feed his family. Despite jeers from a rambunctious crowd of job seekers, Ricci lies and accepts the job despite his predicament. Determined to see her husband seize this golden opportunity, Ricci's dedicated wife, Maria, pawns the family's bed linens to get his bike out of hawk.

Ricci is hard at work wheat-pasting Rita Hayworth's likeness to a wall when a dastardly

villain spoils an otherwise perfect first day on the job. With his livelihood at stake, Ricci spends the remainder of the movie stalking the bicycle thief. With his young son Bruno by his side, Ricci combs the streets of Rome but fails to locate his stolen bike. Worse yet, without evidence Ricci is unable to prosecute the thief once he catches the scoundrel. (Skip the next paragraph to avoid having the ending spoiled.)

Dejected, Ricci decides his only option is to become what he hates most—a bicycle thief. Unlike his own tormentor, Ricci is quickly apprehended. The crowd assails him in front of his son and Ricci is brought before the bicycle owner amid a hail of disparaging remarks. Ricci is fortunate in that at least the victim decides not to press charges. The act of mercy is of little consolation to the movie's protagonist, however, as the closing scene shows a defeated Ricci trudging home.

Ladri di Biciclette is readily available (Blockbuster, Netflix, etc.) in the United States under the title *The Bicycle Thief*. The DVD features three language options: Italian with subtitles, Italian with no subtitles or English without subtitles. While the English version is easier to follow, watching this neorealist gem in anything other than Italian is missing the point.

—Jeff Guerrero 

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Sam Blenkhorn in Manchester, England. Photo by Joel H. Swann

Speed; Adrenalin; Self-righteousness; Exhibitionism.

By Sam Blenkharn

Speed

City riding is grabbing your bike from the hall running down the steps and out. Jump off the pavement hit the road stamp the pedals and you're already flying. Hard tyres on a hard road and hard thighs as you push it push it never stopping never slacking always riding four minutes and you're there, at the door at the rail bike locked bike left and now you're walking, breathing, sweating, you're there. Done.

Adrenalin

Try this one: Been living out of the city for months and you get the train back in, back to the walls the kerbs the cars the people. So many people. Out onto the road you've been sitting on a train for an hour and half not any more you're in the saddle now you're in the army now you're in the city now. Half a mile in and you're in a 16-inch gap between a white van and a car, don't slow down a bit—give no quarter get none back. Who's scared of buses? Who's scared of anything? I own these streets, this gritty city is all mine when I'm riding. Hit the gaps you shouldn't be able to hit, gaps between kerbs and wing mirrors narrower than your bike but not when you lean it over they're not. Know how to lean your bike and stay straight up, know that the faster you go the straighter you'll go. They don't know it in their cars 'til you've done it and maybe, just maybe you don't know it either. So there's a little bit of fear as you hold your breath tense your body and pass the wing mirror, and then you're powering it away and they're not, they're sat, going nowhere. Railing the corner you lay the bike over on its side, arms strained to the bars, feet gripped to the pedals, carving out an arc and away, high and smiling into the startled face of the driver pottering along beside. There's a green light ahead it's green it's green it's amber you're out the saddle you're pumping you're stamping you're through. You're through and sailing over the empty crossroads in the open moment when those cars stop and those cars wait and you just sweep on by, feeling the hit and the high, the adrenalin soars and ebbs, soars and ebbs, until the next amber light or the next corner, the next time.

Self-righteousness

Absolutely bursting with rage. The road is solid packed with fat black cars, one person in each, going nowhere. Doubled up where there's only one lane, honking, fuming, stagnating and stupid. You're trying to do the right thing - No exhaust on my bike. My bike's as wide as its handlebars; it's 25 inches not five feet. Why are these cars even in the city? I can get where they want to go in two minutes, not twenty. Irrational hatred fills you, like a waiter has for customers, like soldiers in red for soldiers in blue. Why don't these wankers just get out of their cars?! Frustration turns you into an ugly monster. Taxi drivers are your enemy, money-grabbing bastards. Pedestrians are hapless; they should look before they walk. Bus drivers cut you up and so does any other buggler who can get away with it. You give the finger, you shout and you swear and you hate. Until you stop, and breathe, and become normal again. But flipping the middle finger is easier than thinking. No love in the city sometimes...got to keep down that monster, keep down that hate.

Exhibitionism

Watch this watch this! Pull a little stoppie up to the red light. Hold a trackstand for a full minute, hanging legs out to keep your balance, or just standing cool, poised: I don't need to put my feet down. Race the bus full of dumb still people, weave through the traffic and pop out at the front, sail past a bus stop full of people who stare like cattle. My three quarter lengths show off my calf muscles, my forearms run tense into my gloves. I take my hands off the bars and put 'em behind my back, hitch my ass up on the saddle and rest an elbow on my knee. It's all good, however you ride: just be a rider. Ride right up to the door and park your bike there, don't run in from your bus that's late. Ride in the pissing rain, who cares?! Come in sweating; leave your trouser-leg tucked into your sock. Leave your helmet indoors. Ride with pride, and let everybody see it. 

Check out www.myspace.com/samuelkb

Technical Gubbins



Artwork by Erok Boerer

HOW TO USE YOUR LOCK PROPERLY

By Brad Quartuccio

Theft is a very real problem for the urban cyclist. Nearly everyone has a story of a bike being stolen, with far fewer triumphant tales of reunion. Keep your shit locked up if you want to ride it tomorrow.

Easier said than done. Everything from hardware store cable on up to the boutique bicycle locks are marketed as “high security.” One is clearly a better choice than the other, with plenty of middle ground. The right choice for you is a lock just a bit better than the next person’s. Cut-throat yes, but tactically effective.

Check your surroundings. If everyone else has a high-end u-lock and you’ve got a cable, kiss your bike goodbye. There is a reason the everyday riders of New York carry around those giant Krypto-chains, and its not just ‘cause its badass. Make sure your stuff is at least on par with what the knowledgeable locals use. Cheaping out on a lock isn’t worth it.

Besides just locking up in the first place, technique is more important than given lock model. This includes how you lock, and what you lock to. Lock the frame; no excuses. Don’t loop it through a just a bolt-on wheel, or the seatpost, stem or some other removeable component. Do make sure what you’re locking to is sturdy. Your fancy lock is only as good as what its locked to – lock to a chain-link fence and you might as well tie up your bike with a length of wire. Give whatever you’re locking to a shake to make sure its soundly connected to—and can’t be unbolted from—the ground to slide your lock off. A tall signpost is not too high to lift your bike over if a thief has an accomplice. Locking up inside your home is not to be underestimated either—plenty of bikes disappear due to break-ins.

Proper U-Lock Technique – Small u-locks are more than a fashion statement – by their nature, it is hard to jam a leverage device inside of them in use. With a larger shackled lock, be sure to fill the inside of the lock with your bike to prevent a car jack attack. With either variety, avoid placing the lock on the ground so that a hammer and pick is hard to brace against for attack on the key mechanism. Avoid situations where the bike itself may be used as a lever to attempt twisting the lock open.



Photo by Brad Quartuccio

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Technical Gubbins

Techniques to prevent component theft.



Photo by Brad Quartuccio

Beyond specialized bolts and wrenches, or actual keyed bolts, there are some DIY methods to deter component theft.

Saddle - Run a continuous loop of bicycle chain through the seatstays and saddle rails. Cover it with an old tube to quell the rattling.

Stem, bars, fork - Anything that is attached with an allen bolt can be secured with a dab of hot glue or wax and a ball bearing in the bolt head. It can be dug out with an awl, but otherwise prevents a wrench from fitting.

Wheels - Bolt-on hubs are enough deterrent for some areas. Keyed skewers also exist. Just run a cable through 'em and call it a day.



Photo by Brad Quartuccio

Proper Chain Technique - Hardware store chain doesn't cut it, I'm talking about purpose build chain with flat links to deflect bolt cutters paired with a heavy duty lock. Basically, include the frame and both wheels, and make sure whatever you're locking to is big enough to prevent the lock from being manipulated over the top. Some parking meters are susceptible to this. And keep that lock mechanism off the ground, same as a u-lock.

Proper Cable Lock Technique - There is no proper technique of using a cable as a primary lock in any big city. Most can be cut with hardware store bolt-cutters with cheater bars, well within reach of common thieves. Used as a secondary lock, or to secure wheels, a decent cable can be handy.

No matter what, common sense prevails. Never free-lock, don't leave your bike out overnight or in secluded places. An angle grinder makes quick work of just about anything on the market, and a cordless model is only a couple hundred bucks. If someone really wants your bike, given the opportunity any lock can be defeated.



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Technical Gubbins

Words and Art by Erok Boerer

BROKEN DERAILLEUR WIRE (REAR)

Unfortunately when the rear derailleur wire breaks, the springs force the component into the "default" high gear, which happens to be the hardest gear to ride in. This is the smallest gear on your rear wheel.

To make the ride home a bit more pleasant, start by turning your bike upside down. This allows the back wheel, which contains your gears, to spin freely. Slowly pedal the bike, with your hand, manually push the derailleur to a larger cog, or "lower" gear. I usually go to a gear somewhere in the middle. When you arrive at the chosen gear, stop pedaling. The derailleur should stay in place. Now look around you, and find something thin & sturdy that can fit inside the derailleur as shown. A stick usually works, or a piece of metal, broken pen, etc. Pedal again to test the set up to make sure it works. Repeat if necessary. home, keep an eye on it & be careful.

*A friend told me that a rubber band or shoelace can accomplish this task, but I've never tried it - ed.

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BICYCLE MESSENGER EMERGENCY FUND

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bicyclemessenger.org

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THE OUTCAST

it's a singlespeed thing

Urbane? Suburban? Subhuman? When I'm cycling in the city I want it both ways. I want to be a giver and a taker. I want it to hurt, to scare me, to chase my mortality and overtake my fear. I need speed and static observation as I escape by going nowhere - riding in circles and loitering in squares. I want respect but it's a one-way street. The rules are for box-dwellers and bipedal gawpers since they deserve their containment. I deserve nothing but I want everything. I shall fit in when I can and be gratefully used. When I am finished, when the city scrapes are finished with me, I shall really escape. I shall ride away to my dirty, sweat-drenched grinding and meanders of freedom. The filthy places where the exhaustion is all my own. Out there I'm in my space. Others might come along for the ride but the togetherness is an illusion. There isn't room for a community - strangers sharing nothing but nervous proximity. There is no rational grid or mass transit solution. Synthetic investments? Nature is my capital. Population density is a given. I'm not that taken. It's that give and take again. Give up? Push back? Take me - I need dirt. Empty space. Empty me. Consumption. Fulfillment.

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s h o n k y o n e s p e e d b o l l o c k s

Technical Gubbins

HOW TO PATCH A TUBE

Words & Photos by Brad Quartuccio

A typical patch kit includes a swatch of sandpaper, a tube of vulcanizing fluid and a few patches. Here's how to use them on a simple puncture.



Find the hole. Put some air in the tube, listen and look for the leak. You may have to give it a bath to spot the bubbles. Let it dry.



Scuff the area around the hole to clean and roughen the surface. It may help to flatten out seams, but don't stress too much.



Evenly spread vulcanizing fluid around the hole. You must wait for the glue to dry and turn cloudy before moving along to the next step. It must dry completely.



Take the foil backing off the patch, and without touching the surface of the patch, firmly place it over the hole. One shot, no sliding. Burnish the patch with a coin or the edge of your patch kit and gently peel off the plastic backing.



Flat Diagnosis: If the hole was on the outside of the tube it was caused by something puncturing the tire. Be sure to remove the flat-causing shrapnel from tire before reinflation. If the hole was on the inside of the tube it was caused by the rim; either the rimstrip moved or there is a burr somewhere. Fix the problem. Or it was a pinch-flat, caused by the rim pinching the tube against the ground due to underinflation or an unexpected pothole. Sometimes these come in pairs, sometimes not. Typically you know when they strike. Put more air in it next time.



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UPCOMING EVENTS

April 21, Saturday
How fast would Jesus ride?
Race at 2PM \$5
Immaculate Heart of Mary Church,
Polish Hill

May 13, Sunday
The Pussycat
Race at 2PM \$5
Frick Fine Arts
*Ladies Only

June 6, Wednesday
Neighbor of the Beast
Race at 7PM \$1
The Wall, Oakland
*Fixed Only



MORE INFO AT: MYSFACE.COM/PGHBIKERACING

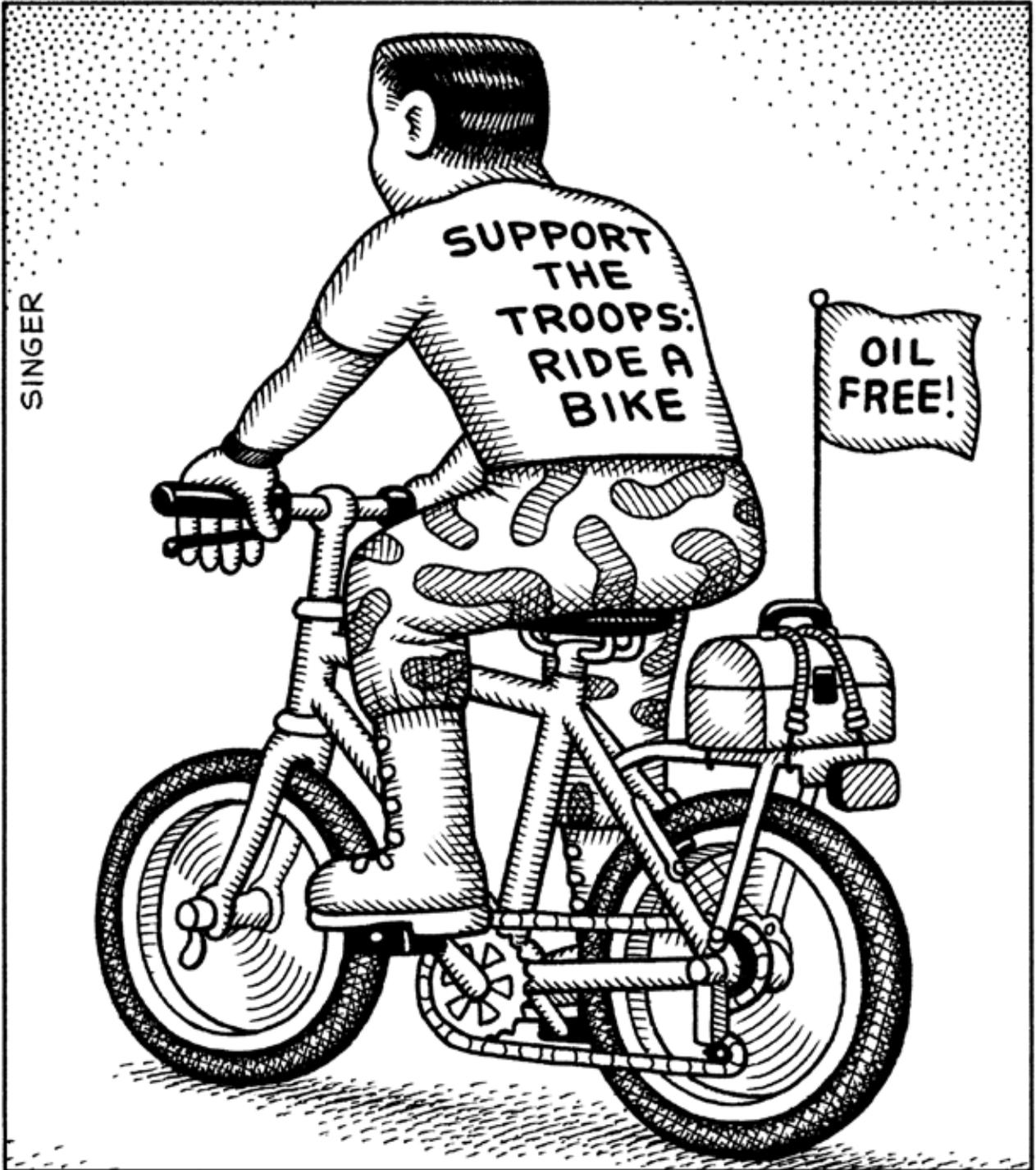
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