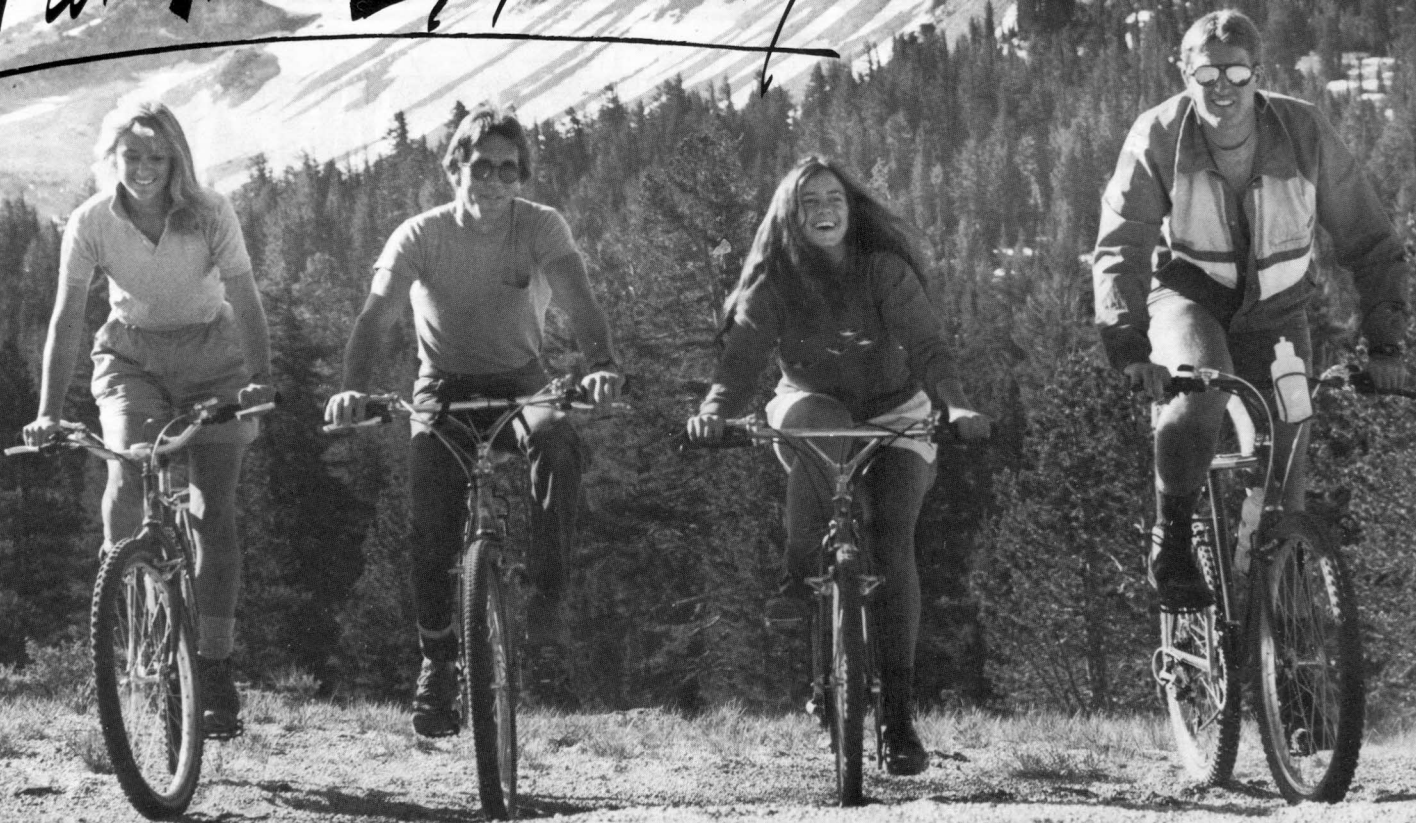


Fat Tire Explosion



by Robin K. Thompson

"Leave only waffel tracks take only memories".

It doesn't matter who you are, in Mammoth there are only two kinds of bicycle riding: Uphill and Downhill. If you don't have the stamina of National Champion John Howard, or if you're just plain discouraged riding uphill, a Mountain Bike may be your ticket to adventure and exploration.

When I was a kid, only "grandma's clunker" had "up" handlebars, and a "beach cruiser" or an occasional "Sting Ray" were the only two-wheeled vehicles besides ten-speeds available. Today, looking around Mammoth, practically all you see are "grandma's up handlebar" bikes. But now, these bikes are highly engineered Mountain Bikes or All-Terrain Bikes (ATB's).

The ten-speeds we rode as kids, like the old "Varsity," weighed 38 pounds without a water bottle and a light. Today's average ten to eighteen speed road or touring bike can easily weigh under 22 pounds. New alloy steels and lighter alloy aluminum components are bringing down the weight of these dinosaurian beasts to that of a light road bike with fat, knobby tires.

If you've ever ridden your ten-speed down a dirt trail, you know how easily your tires can get out from under you. The first things you notice about an ATB are the increased traction on sand or dirt roads and the ease of pedaling uphill.

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The increased pedal-gear ratios and "light" '80s technology have created a bike perfect for trail riding or just putting 'round town. Fat tire bike rallies and races are popping-up all over, and the number of contestants and amount of prize money is going up at an incredible rate. This sport's booming growth has instigated Mammoth Mountain to cosponsor a race from the top gondola station on the mountain.

The race, christened the "Fat Tire Kamikaze", is just part of a 3-day, 3-stage ATB race that features a 3500' descent with a 1000' climb in between some of your favorite chair lift routes on Mammoth Mountain. The finish is, of course, at the Mammoth Mountain Inn. A gondola ride to the top is furnished free to all registered contestants.

In addition to the "Fat Tire Kamikaze", this three-day "Plumbline" High Sierra Mountain Bike Rally, also features a slow-motion obstacle course competition and a 40-mile pro ride with a 4000' climb and descent near Bishop. All events have substantial cash, prizes, and merchandise in all categories.

The promoters are emphasizing "fun and family" as well as high competition, and have scheduled family rides and guided area fun rides too. So, even though the competition may be fierce, this may be your only chance to ride a mountain bike down Mammoth Mountain. I heard that you don't even have to race or ride the uphills, and the bar at the Inn will be open early for those in need of refreshment!

The entry fee for all three events is \$25 which includes a t-shirt, insurance and a barbeque Thursday night. For more details, call (619)934-2571 days, or (619) 934-6985 evenings.