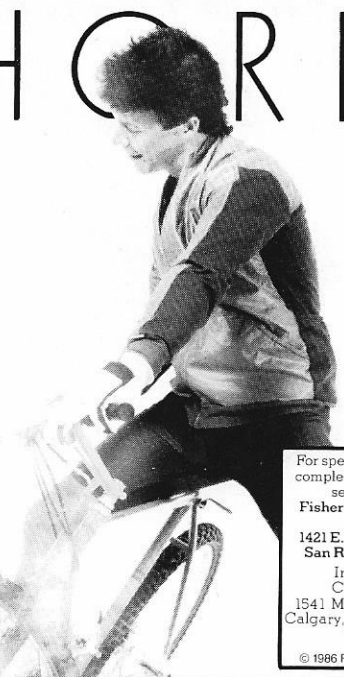


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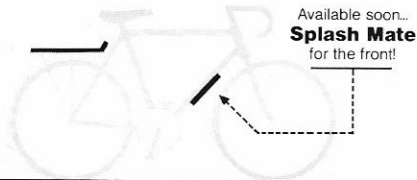


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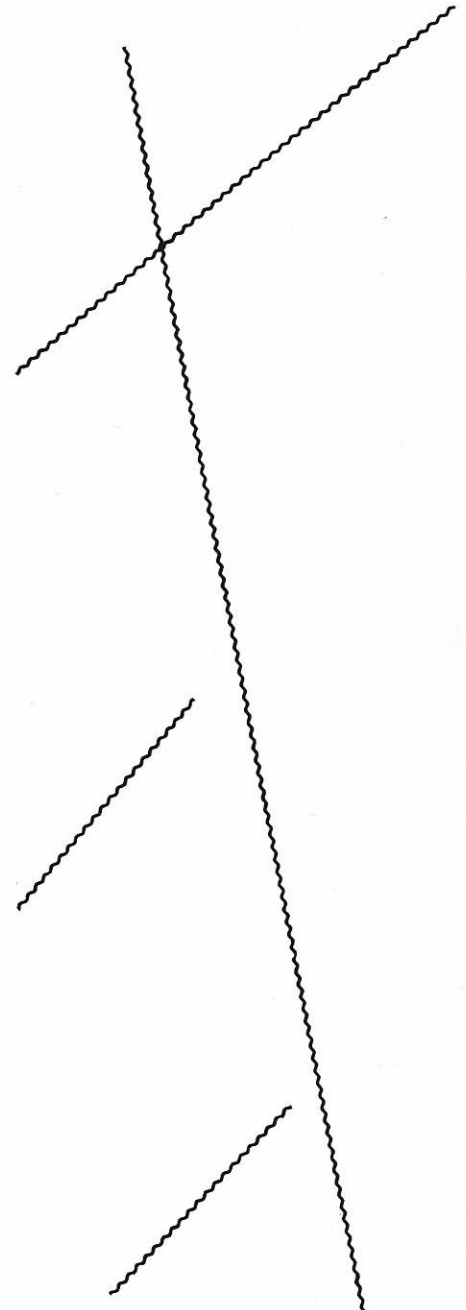
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The Nilsen Family or The Nilsen/Sousa Dynasty

By Don Mertle

One of the easiest ways to get a mountain bike ride started around San Rafael, California is to call the Nilsen Family. It doesn't much matter whether the plan is for a night ride, a campout, the town parade, a race or just a quick spin. The family's involvement in the fat tire movement dates from the early straight-gauge, long wheelbase, local-production-only days, and they have passed along some of the traditions, such as single speeds (for downhill or for simplicity) and converted cruiser-style frames. They were represented on the ride that was my introduction to extended rides in the dirt, which included thousands of vertical feet of grueling indoctrination. We could probably milk a whole issue out of their exploits if we had nothing else to go on.

The stereotype of the fat tire rider as a 20 to 40 year old single male may apply to some of the early converts and innovators, but it hardly describes the situation today. Family traditions are founded on the things families do, and the seven Nilsen siblings along with first cousin Larry Sousa show just how universal fat tire fun is, even though their interests and occupations are just as varied as the ways they set up their bikes and the types of riding they do. It may be that the only things they all have in common are the family and their love of bikes.

A season of cycling with the Nilsens includes barbeque rides, moonlighters, and road centuries on knobby tires, as well as more mundane events such as races and campouts. In 1986 both Big Sur and the high Sierra were the meeting grounds for "North meets South" get-togethers with friends from around the state.

I rode with Rob and Liz first, and soon afterward I made the common error of meeting Laura on a bike and mistaking her for Liz. A little later one of my friends started going out with Liz and he brought back from a family dinner a report of four sisters and some unseen brothers.

Rob turned up in the R.O.P. (Regional Occupational Program) welding class, and went on to work with machine tools and do foundry maintenance near the shipyards of San Francisco. He regularly commuted twenty-plus miles each way on his custom drop-bar Ibis until the business closed up the Bay Area shop.

Continued on page 28



Don Mertle

The seven Nilsens. From left: Rob, Mitch, Joan, Liz, Laura, Dan and Jan.

Continued from page 27

Rob competes the most regularly. Among his exploits are winning the single speed race at Whiskeytown on his antique Pro-Cruiser the past two years, and with stoker Dan Woodward from North Hollywood, finishing 20th overall at the TNT at Lake Tahoe (third tandem). His top ten finish at the last Repack downhill race on his single speed proves his downhill talent as well. His present race bike is an Ibis and his tandem is from Ritchey U.S.A. Rob was numbered among the drop-handlebar element until recently when he switched to flat bars.

Liz is also a successful racer, placing well at the original Mountain Anguish in Angwin in 1984. She also beat me at the last Repack, but I've gotten better at that sort of thing. Liz got her start on a Powerlite cruiser-style frame, but when the time came she got together with her brother Rob and sister Joan and the three entered into a multiple deal with builder Scot Nicol for their three custom Ibis bikes.

Joan made the pilgrimages to Crested Butte and Moab in 1986, where she and the other women riders compared notes about the scandals of the bumpy roads. Unlike most of her siblings Joan is a road convert, having established her two wheeled commitment by riding coast to coast on skinny treads. Besides cycling she has been seen: on belay, on cross country skis, and afoot or afloat in the great outdoors. She works in a local library and shares a house with her sisters Laura and Jan. Joan also has an Ibis with drop handlebars.

Laura has the most distinctive long flowing locks, and she has accused male riders of riding behind her to check her out from that perspective. More often than not, in spite of all appearances, they were just trying to keep up, for Laura races credibly as an expert. Camping is her favorite mountain biking activity and she instigates many overnight adventures. Laura's bike is built around a rare Cook Brothers diamond frame dating from about 1981.

Jan is the last convert of the three sisters living at "the convent" (a misnomer). She works for a garden supply firm and finally got her own bike, a Ritchey Aspen, after getting by for

some time borrowing the extra mounts available "in house." Her baking is currently more famous than her fat tire exploits.

Dan is the only Nilsen sibling living east of the Petaluma River, at the south shore of Lake Tahoe, where we took the full group photos and rode with all seven. Dan lives a classic "mountain mix" of skiing the backwoods in the cold seasons and riding the back country when it is warmer. Night work at the resort's clubs leaves him his days free all year at the lake. Dan's machinery is a several-year-old but immaculate Ritchey, and he is seen on it at races close to where he lives.

Mitch is the Black Sheep of the flock. He is quiet and doesn't look much like the others, so I knew him for a while before I realized he was related to the rest. He isn't the biggest camping enthusiast, but he is always up for day rides. Mitch raced for Ritchey U.S.A last year, and he has also done well as an unsponsored rider, riding his Cunningham custom racer. This bike commonly comes with drop bars, but just to be different, Mitch rides the upright style. The only time I ever caught up to him was when he got four flats at Whiskeytown, but he still dropped me at the end.

It would be an oversight to tell the Nilsen story without mentioning their first cousin Larry Sousa. Larry has worked for Fisher MountainBikes for several years, and does everything from re-assembling imported bikes to meet custom standards, to testing the prototypes of components and framesets. Since he has been around the off-road scene since just about day one, Larry has been on many epic tours and pilgrimages and consequently appeared in the photo sessions of just about every magazine that has written about the sport. His personal bikes include a Ritchey, a Powerlite, and a 24-inch Pro-Cruiser, although he is usually seen on one of Fisher's bikes. Larry's girlfriend Tanya also rides her bike, the first mountain bike built by framebuilder Craig Smith (who later built team bikes for Fisher and other companies)—when she is not riding her horse. Like some of her friends she could be at the crossroads, either galloping or pedaling.



Larry Sousa shreds Repack.



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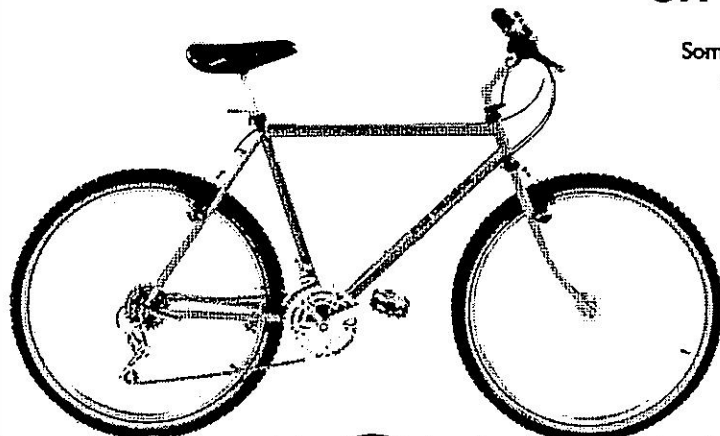
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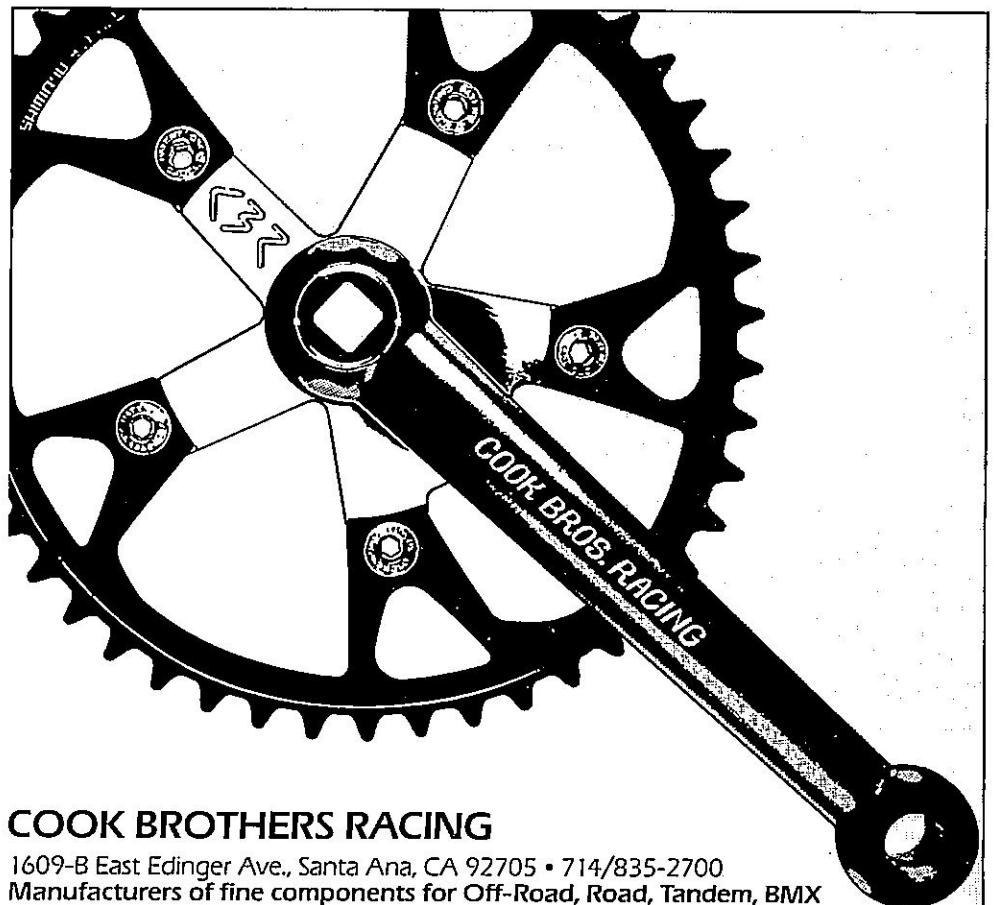
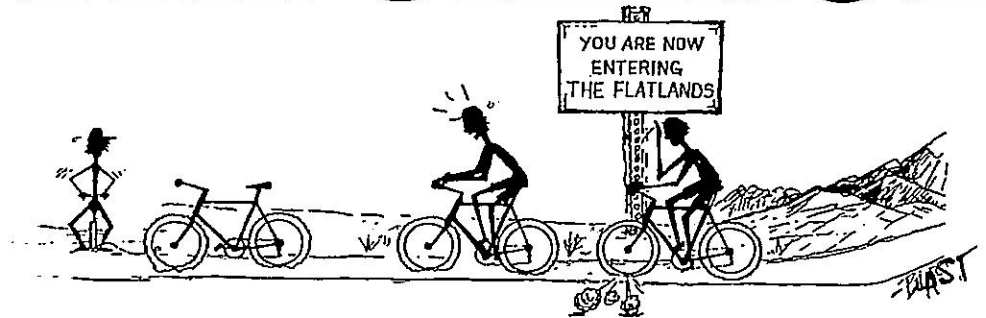
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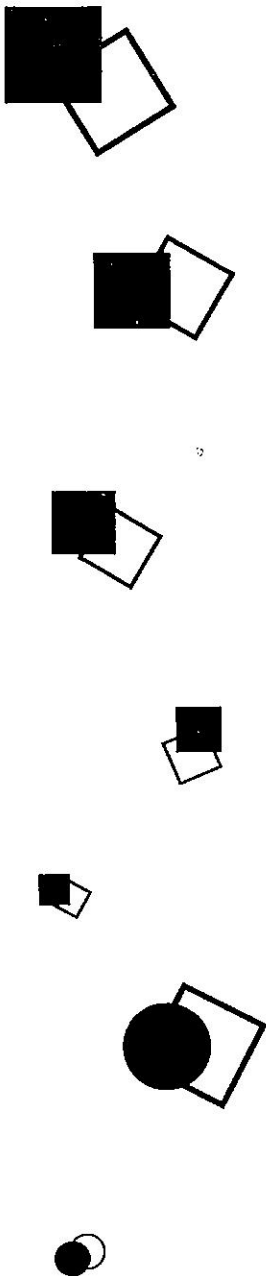


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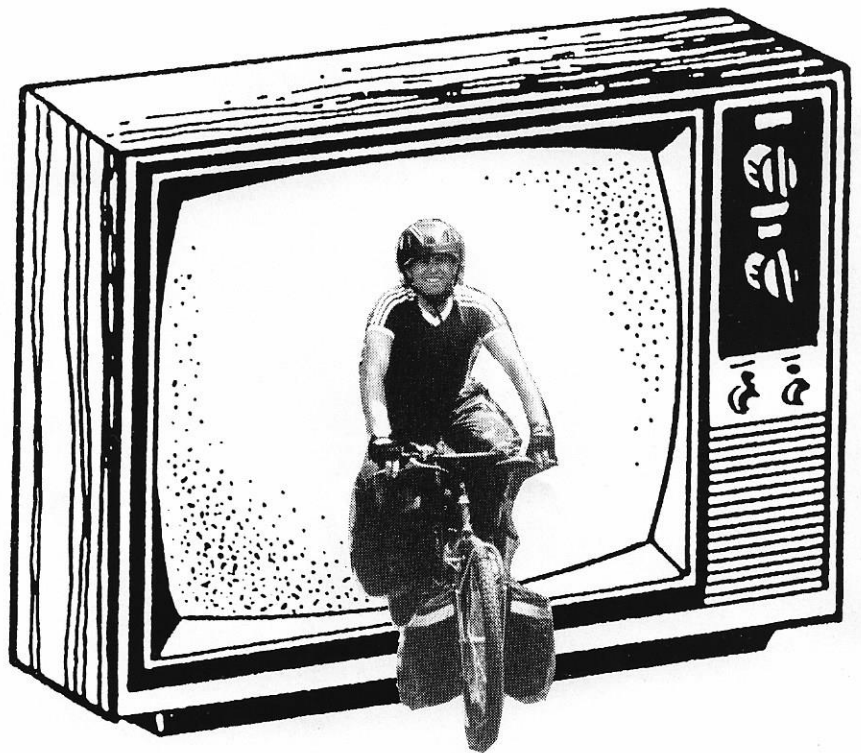
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NEW PRODUCTS

by SeeKay

One of the nice things about the bike magazine business is that you can get your wholesome journalistic hands on all the cool components before the consumers get their nasty retail paws all over them. Just so it's on the record, Shimano donated this 1987 S.I.S. group to us. They didn't tell us to try it on a bike, they just sent it to us. Now we could have let it sit around in its neat little boxes, but nooo, not us. We had to rip and tear those packages and check this stuff out, not forgetting to put the instructions and all the little screws and widgets safely away.

Once I held the stuff up next to my good old bike... Well, I had to get a new frame too. Then of course, since the group doesn't include these items, I had to get a headset, seatpost, saddle, handlebars, tires, rims, spokes, and build the wheels. No problem. All that took was my gold American Express card and twenty minutes. By now this free equipment has cost me eight hundred bucks, because being in the magazine business I have to keep up appearances, so I'm a snob about what I ride. See how lucky you are not to get this stuff laid on you?

It occurs to us that maybe Shimano sent these parts groups to every other bike magazine, in which case you will be seeing endless reviews of the stuff. Most reviewers will probably come to the same conclusions, so you can read it here or anywhere else; still, it's our duty to tell you what we think.

The group, which bike purists call in Italian the gruppo, is a set of parts including: bottom bracket, brakes, shift levers, derailleurs, pedals, Bio-Pace cranks, brake levers, hubs, freehub pair, chain, and a little item called the Shark Fin which protects the chainstay and keeps the chain from dropping between the chainstay and the tire.

There are two major departures between the '87 group and the previous Deore line, the U-Brake and the Shimano Index Shifting (S.I.S.) system. In other areas the existing designs have been updated from the previous Deore or adapted from other product lines to give smoother function, such as the new pedals, the redesigned cantilever

brakes, the hub set, or the new brake levers.

Index shifting is the big thing this year. Shimano is one of the main proponents of this idea, although Suntour originated it several years ago and has also introduced an index-shifting line for 1987. The first Suntour systems were on the market a decade ago, but they didn't catch on, perhaps because they were cumbersome and hard to adjust, and weren't compatible with other systems. Suntour's new version of index shifting is called "Accushift," and it operates on slightly different principles from the Deore S.I.S.

The Shimano Index shifter is marked with preset click-stop positions, and the theory is that the gear shifts are precise because the rider can feel how many positions the lever moves. One great aspect of the rear shifter is the switch that takes off the click-stop feature. If it comes out of adjustment or if it is used with another derailleur it can be returned to a normal friction setup instantly with the merest flick of a lever. The trickiest thing about the system is the adjustment, which can be confusing, but as I got more familiar with the system I got better at adjusting it. It took two days while the cables stretched and the housings seated themselves and while I got around to reading the manual as a last resort, but it works perfectly now. Final index shifting adjustment is made by turning a knob located either at the derailleur or one on the shifter, so presumably if things come out of adjustment, they can be tuned on the fly. The shift lever for the front derailleur is not a click stop design. Both levers can be set in any of three angles to the handlebar.

The hottest thing about indexed shifting is what it does for your hole-shots. In a lot of off-road races it is essential to get off the line quickly to keep from being trapped behind a pack. With the indexed shifting you can start in an appropriately low gear, and then make a perfect and noiseless upshift under power when you spin it out. You don't have to worry about overshifting and bogging down, or dropping the chain, or just getting a

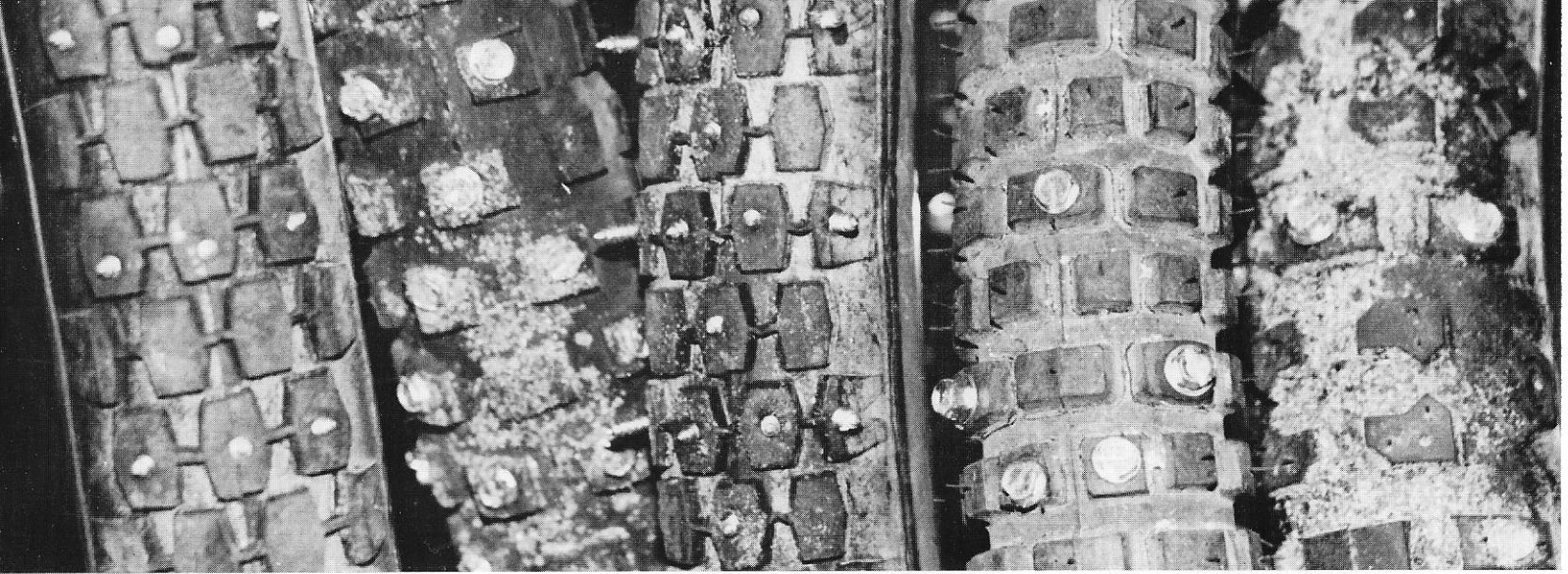
rotten shift. The new sound of bike racing is "click-click-click."

The key to the S.I.S. system is the special derailleur cables and housings. Cables normally stretch and housings compress on any shifting system, and they do so especially on a mountain bike that has long runs of housing. The effect of compression and stretching is a sloppier feel to the shifting, which mountain bikers usually ignore, because with friction shift levers they compensate by shifting slightly past the desired gear and adjusting the lever if it makes noise. The precision necessary to make the index mechanism work precludes this slop, so Shimano has come up with special non-stretch shifter cable and non-compressing housing. In order to keep bike shop mechanics from gnawing this stuff, which is practically impossible to cut with the standard bike shop tool (a butter knife), they include with the gruppo a set of high-quality cable housing cutters. Good thinking.

The Accushift system operates on a different principle from the S.I.S.; instead of a rigid connection between the lever and the derailleur, the Accushift has a centering system that lets the rider overshift to move the chain, then lets the derailleur move back to line up with the cog. This means that the Suntour system can use standard bike cables, but the result is a sloppier feel to the shifting process compared to the S.I.S. Although the Accushift can be switched from friction mode to indexed mode, it's not as easy a process as on the S.I.S.; the friction adjustment screw must be loosened several turns to move the indicator, so it's unwise to attempt to switch between modes while riding.

One of the Accushift options is a shift lever that mounts on the brake lever. Having tried it, I think it would take some getting used to for anyone who is used to having a bar-mounted shifter; it feels awkward to me, but who knows, if I had never tried anything else, I might love it. Strictly a matter of preference, because you can get the setup either way.

The Shimano derailleur pair seem



A few of the owner-modified tires. Some guys like the points in, some like 'em out.

BI-CYCLE KHANA

Out here in California where we produce this rag, cycling is an all-year sport, even on skinny tires. In more frozen parts of the country, cyclists have traditionally switched from their bikes to cross-country skis when the snow got deep and the streets turned to ice. That is, until the introduction of fat tires. Now snow offers an entirely new set of thrills, evidenced by the Snow Leopard race in California, the Iditabike race in Alaska, and now

the Mountain Bi-cycle Khana in LaCrosse, Wisconsin.

Up in Wisconsin they held their event on the frozen surface of Lake Onalaska, and everyone tried to outdo everyone else in dreaming up secret ice-weapons for the "modified" class. Tires studded with sheet-metal screws were the norm, although as the photo shows, there are any number of ways to arrange them. The "Ice Warriors" from Sturgeon Bay brought their own

design, a pair of ancient one-speeds with barbed wire wrapped around the rear wheels.

To no one's surprise, the modified bikes ate up the stockers in the three events, which included a one-mile time trial, a toboggan pull, and an obstacle criterium. Scoring was totaled over the three events, with separate awards for stock and modified classes. Despite their "secret weapon," the Ice Warriors did not finish in the money.



Barbed wire on a rim is not exactly a "fat tire," but fortunately it didn't work, either.



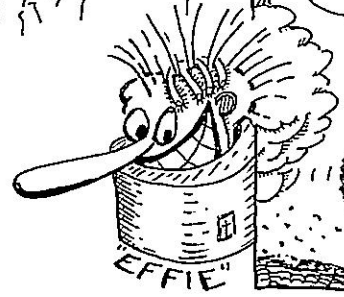
"Mary Jo's Toboggan Pull" was event number two. Riders towed a loaded sled a measured distance for time.

Photos courtesy Bikes Ltd.

WRECK TIPS

BY
E. EWE
BALLOUT

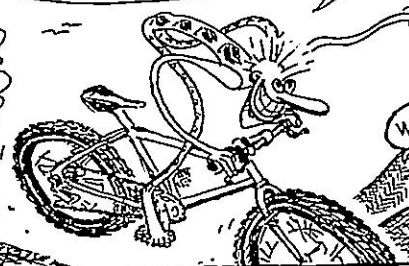
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BIKES ARE SUBSTANCES, TOO? BUT IS IT ACTUALLY POSSIBLE TO RIDE TOO MUCH?!!

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TAP TAP TAP TAP TAP

- 1 DO MY HOUSEMATES, FAMILY, SPOUSE, PETS, SIGNIFICANT OTHER BICYCLES OR WHATEVER I LIVE WITH RECOGNIZE ME WHEN I RETURN FROM A RIDE... WITHOUT THINKING A BIT FIRST?
- 2 DO I EVEN KNOW ANYBODY WHO DOESN'T RIDE ALL THE TIME?

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- 2 NO: THIS MIGHT SEEM LIKE PARADISE, BUNNY; BUT IF IT GETS IN THE WAY OF NORMAL SEX, DRUGS AND REGGAE MUSIC, YOU BE ABUSIN'!

(YES, ANSWERERS: PERHAPS YOU NEED MORE F.T.F.'S STUDYUP!)

Cart Read ©87

LETTERS

Dear Fat Tire Flyer;

Received the latest issue the other day and passed it around the club house. Our compliments to you on this especially thought-provoking issue. We really liked and appreciated the coverage of the Hidden Valley Outlaw National Championships. With racing fees on the increase and NORBA's fees going up next year we feel that a lot of sport riders will not be able to join in on the fun of organized racing. It's encouraging to know that other groups feel the same way and are holding "unofficial" events for the enjoyment of the

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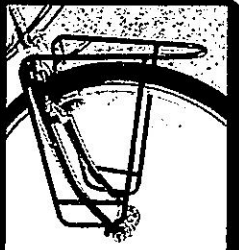
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riders rather than the profit of the promoters.

Two of the most fun outings last year were the unofficial Spring Runoff and the Punk Bike Enduro. Since so much attention and the blame of increased costs are put on insurance premiums, why not return to the justice of the old west and make people responsible for themselves rather than suit-happy? Of course, that would mean non-publicized, non-sponsored, non-paying get-togethers. Sounds terrible. What would we ever do without all the "support" from the industry? Maybe have fun riding in the dirt and saving the twenty-five bucks for ourselves rather than supporting the insurance industry.

The Recon Riders Mountain Bike Club
Santa Rosa, CA

To Whom It May Concern:

I just finished looking over your recent coverage of the 1986 NORBA National Championships. I was very disappointed to discover that your coverage was limited to only the Pro-Am class. Pro-Am riders make up less than one half of all the riders participating in the Nationals race, therefore, why do you limit your coverage to just the Pro-Am racers?

I worked a full-time job this season, had to purchase and maintain my own bike, pay all my own personal traveling and entrance fees to races, and worked my ASS off training!

I guess what I am trying to say is give credit where credit is due. How are the lower classes ever going to get recognized if we don't receive any recognition?

Sincerely,
Jeff Murray
1986 NORBA Expert Champion

Editor responds;

Before launching further into the subject, let me point out that in order to get the first coverage of the Nationals to hit the stands, we went to press three days after the race, and those three days included our drive home from Colorado to California. This deadline and the fact that we were holding only two pages for the coverage limited our ability to put together a comprehensive article on the event. Because most of our readers are more familiar with the names of those at the top of the professional ranks, we concentrated our coverage on this group.

We don't consider ourselves strictly a mountain bike racing magazine. In the (long ago) past we attempted to keep up with the racing scene by printing comprehensive results, but as races proliferated, our pages became long, boring lists rather than the incisive, penetrating coverage Flyer fans have come to expect. However, we couldn't even find your name in the NORBA NEWS, which is supposed to publish this information. (No results are given for Expert Men in their race coverage.)

The foregoing is not meant to demean your effort, which was every bit as impressive as the efforts of the pros, considering that no one paid you for your training time, supplied you with a bike, or set you up with a condo in Durango for a month of training before the race.

For the record, and to prevent having to print more letters like this, here are the other winners at Durango:

Expert Men: Jeff Murray (Park City, Utah)
Expert Women: Martha Kennedy (St. Paul, Minnesota)
Veteran Men: Rick Kearns (South Lake Tahoe, California)
Masters Men: Don Cousins (Big Bear Lake, California)
Single Speed: Greg Herbold (Durango, Colorado)

FTF;

I want to allay any fears regarding the immediate erosion of our beloved mountains. [FTF Vol.6-4] True, mountain ranges around the world are eroding even as I write. However, stages of mountain uplift and their subsequent erosion are part of nature's big game plan. Carrying dirt and pebbles to the top ain't gonna help. In fact, this might increase the rate of erosion by scraping off new layers off dirt and pebbles as our tribute to the mountains' longevity is moved downhill by rain and wind. Recent geological time trials on mountain erosion tend to be in the range of millions of years. By the time the mountains we ride are gone our descendants will be on vacation lunar cycling on the moons of Jupiter.

Optimistically,
John Korhumel, Colorado Springs

Editor responds:

We always thought nature's big game plan was to use the run to set up the pass.

Dear Charlie;

Excuse me Charlie (he'll hate you for this), but here I believe is what you meant.

Chainsuck; *noun:* A condition caused by the upper section of chain drawn down between the tire and the right chainstay as a result of *no* tension.

Reference: Vol. 6 #5, Page 28.

Very Truly Yours,
John Kirkpatrick, Director of Advertising and Public Relations
Ross Bicycles

Apprentice Assistant Editor replies: You'll hate us for this, but here is what we believe you mean:

"Chainsuck; *noun:* A condition caused by the upper section of chain *being* drawn, etc..."

Dear Charles;

Thank you for sending me a copy of your January/February trials issue.

Being a big trials fan and motorcycle trials rider who is attempting (slowly but surely) to master bicycle trials, I thought the issue was just great.

It's also encouraging to see the bicycling press being appreciative of the tremendous skill required to participate in trials. This is one of our big problems with motorcycle trials, lack of appreciation and support from the media. Motorcycle trials remains a small and esoteric pursuit. Hopefully, bicycle trials won't find the same fate.

Rich Brooks, Advertising Manager
Cosmopolitan Motors

Dear FTE,

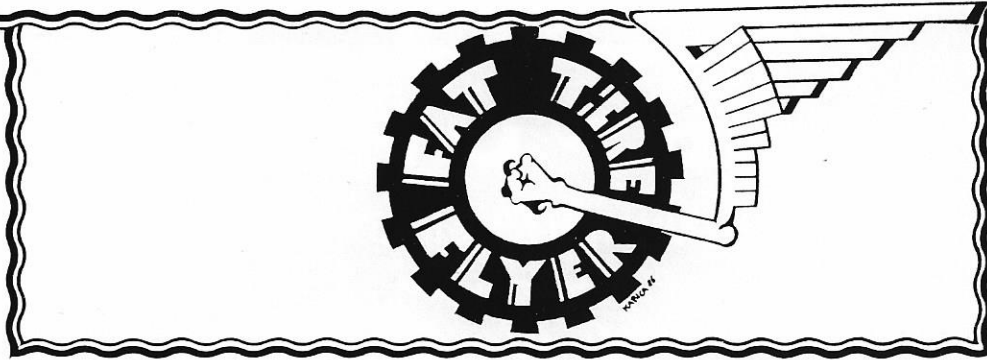
On page 36 of Volume 6 -5, the pictures of the man surfing down Lombard Street were well worth buying the issue.

What bravado, what skill, what great photos of one of San Francisco's finest bike surfers, *the* finest in my opinion.

It is your real life photos of the daredevils and talented people in San Francisco that make your magazine worthwhile.

More pictures of the Master Surfer in action in Golden Gate Park should grace your pages.

Keep up the great photos,
A Bike Surfer Groupie
Ellen Pucci



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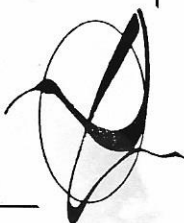
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WELL!
HIYA, KID!
FIRST
MOON-
LIGHT
RIDE?

YES AND
OOO! FRANKLY,
I'M A LITTLE
NERVOUS!



WINK

SAY, LISTEN UP, DOLL-
FACE! JUST STICK CLOSE
TO ME. I KNOW THESE
TRAILS LIKE THE
BACK OF MY
HAND!

OOOO, MUDPUP
IT'S SO DARK!

AW, IT'S OK—
WATCH YOUR
FRONT WHEEL

I'M GLAD YOU
KNOW WHERE
WE'RE GOING!

NO SWEAT,
HEY!

GEE, IT'S KINDA SPOOKY!

NAW



WHERE'D
THAT LIGHT
COME FROM?

DON'T WORRY,
IT'S ALL DOWNHILL
FROM HERE!

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THE END?

Continued from page 3

when passing, especially on narrow, cliff-side trails.

Out in the hill canyons there are motorized off-road devices, the kind that make noise, spew obnoxious vapors, and go unnaturally fast. Horses don't like those and a lot of bicyclists don't either, but a mountain bike won't shy and buck when surprised by a chainsaw on wheels. On the other hand, bicyclists don't command the respect of dirt bikers, who are obviously afraid of any four-legged animal larger than a cocker spaniel.

After learning to endure deep stream crossings with an air of nonchalance, the cyclist must deal with trails overgrown with towering brush. Disappearing into this jungle on the mountain bike with the growth over your head, the handlebars snatched and twisted from side to side, your bare legs scratched and poked by unseen enemies, you glance ahead furtively at the horseperson high above it all on four-foot long legs. When the cyclist emerges from this section the horse is waiting, munching noisily on grass. The horse turns and offers a blank stare, and you realize what rodeo riders have known all along; horses have a sarcastic streak, especially noticeable when they are staring down at you.

Then you come to The Hill. The horse disappears with a streak of hooves and a blur of flying tail. I don't care if you have thighs like Nelson Vails', BioPace chainrings and a 34-tooth rear cog, on the climbs the horse is going to leave you looking like a sweaty snail on the trail.

But all is not in the horse's favor. There is portability; you can't put a horse in the back of your Subaru, at least not in one piece. And storage: during periods of disinterest or heavy rain the bike is content to sit in a corner of the garage. The horse must be fed twice daily and frequently groomed and exercised.

Point by Point Comparisons

Traction, visibility and ground clearance: the horse is far superior. Hooves push through soft surfaces where bikes bog down. Long legs step over obstacles. The horse's body is four feet off the ground and his eyes stick out two steps ahead to see where he is going. What do you expect? The horse was designed by nature over millions of years, and mountain bikes were designed by hippies on unemployment over the last decade.

Suspension and handling: with four-point independent suspension, self-damping and leveling, our equine friend wins again. Because the horse's design is structurally stable, you don't have to lean it up against something when you dismount.

Availability of parts and service: for a bike see your dealer, for a horse see your vet. If part of a horse is damaged, it either grows back or you shoot him. As part of the factory warantee for horses, models in original condition with good social management will provide their own replacements every few years.

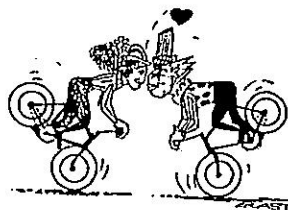
Environmental impact: because it is lighter and rolls, a bike is less abusive on trails, as long as the tires aren't skidding and hikers aren't running for cover. Though the horse contributes fertilizer, the bike doesn't nibble on the local flora.

Endurance: since the horse has to make every step while a bike rolls and freewheels, the horse tires first on a long fast ride over rough ground. However, he will plug along at a slower pace almost indefinitely.

Top speed: on smooth, level ground, with the horse at a dead run and the bike in top gear, both are neck and neck.

In conclusion: horses and mountain bikes are as compatible as their riders, and can share the same trails if ridden responsibly. And the most responsible thing the mountain biker can do upon encountering a horse is to get the heck out of the way!

I tried riding the horse once, and he almost threw me. I let my girlfriend ride my mountain bike, and now I have to buy her one. The horse hasn't offered his opinion of bikes, but he's been very patient with me.



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Charles Kelly

Continued from page 34

functional, although as I mentioned, the index shifting seemed a little tricky to adjust at first. In keeping with the rest of the group, the derailleurs show a new sleek look, which doesn't make them work any better, but function isn't everything.

The S.I.S. shift levers, like the brake levers, are cleaner looking than previously with the redesign of the formerly gross clamps that I thought were the worst aspect of the old Deore line. The brake and shift levers are designed to fit close together on the handlebar. One Shimano standard that has changed is the size of the mounting hardware. Nearly all the fittings clamp with a five-millimeter allen bolt now, instead of the six as on the old style. Since a few of the cable clamps are still six millimeters, now you need two allen keys to assemble your bike.

The brake levers have an adjustment for reach, so riders with smaller hands can move them in closer to the handlebar. There are four settings, which can be quickly changed by turning a little cam screw with a flat-blade screwdriver or even a coin. Of course, the closer to the handlebar the lever is, the less cable it will pull.

The U-Brake works with the same pivots as the SunTour Roller-Cams, but

it looks more like an old center-pull in design. A lot beefier than the cantilever, it's a lot heavier too, and heavier than the roller-cam for that matter. In function I can't argue with the smooth and firm U-Braking, but it isn't significantly better than the cantilever braking. The brake could be made more powerful if it weren't mounted under the chainstays because in the era of ever-shorter chainstays there isn't much room for length of the cable travel that would be necessary for higher efficiency. At 286 grams the U-Brake is a little heavy, comparable in weight to the lower priced Suntour roller-cam (model XC-9000); this is nearly four ounces heavier than the S.I.S. cantilever brake, which weighs 190 grams a pair. When I spoke to the Shimano product people, they told me that the U-Brake is designed primarily as an aftermarket item for people who already have roller-cams on their bikes and want a brake that fits on the same pivots but requires less adjustment.

The cantilever brake from the S.I.S. group has a sleek new look, and a cable anchoring system that prevents the possibility of the yoke cable dropping onto the tire and stopping the wheel abruptly by catching on a knob. The anchoring system is designed to make the yoke cable line up in the

optimum position for brake leverage. According to John Uhte of Shimano, the new yoke system has less cable stretch than the old one for 20 to 30 percent better efficiency, which is one reason these brakes feel so solid. Another interesting aspect of the cantilever brake is an allen-keyed setscrew that adjusts spring tension on one side for perfect centering. The cantilever brake uses the same pads as the U-Brake, which are gummy but firm. According to Shimano, the shoes and the brakes are designed to alleviate some of the problems of alignment caused by the shoes wearing down.

The Deore pedal set is a welcome addition. I've never been a fan of any of the previous Shimano off-road pedals, but I like these. Even without clips and straps they get better purchase on the shoe sole than the Suntour "Bear Trap" XC-9000, and at a spec weight of 412 grams the pair weighs an ounce less than the Suntour bear traps, although it is still considerably heavier than the Suntour XC-Compe, which comes in at 335 grams per pair.

The new S.I.S. freehub set is the first designed for off-road, and I think it's high time this type of hub got off-road tough. I have used the Deore road set of freehubs on my racing mountain bike because they are the

lightest hub and cluster combination I have found, but the road version was nowhere near tough enough. I found that the dirt worked its way into the cluster and made it so creaky and noisy that I couldn't ride with it; the new off-road version hasn't developed that problem. The freehub design places the bearing on the cluster side closer to the dropout than in a standard hub, so the axle is better supported and more resistant to bending or breaking. Because hub and freewheel are a single unit, the design saves weight. Compare the weight of the Deore freehub pair and cluster with the weight of a pair of comparable Suntour hubs and cluster: Shimano 653 grams, Suntour about 910 grams. (By the way, we didn't weigh this stuff; we're quoting from the factory specs.)

The Shark Fin always draws comment. This little plastic doohickey is a combination chainstay protector and chain deflector that keeps the chain from dropping between the tire and chainstay and also protects the paint on the chainstay. Of course, it covers the paint up, but even though you can't see it, it's protected. Expert riders keep the chain from snagging on the tire by shifting into a higher gear when they start downhill, but this can require some tricky shifting when the trail is rolling. I found in my riding that the cute little device lets me leave the bike in a low gear when I coast down rough trails so I don't have to make a quick downshift when the trail turns sharply upward. The gadget gets its name from the shape of the chain deflector. It's shaped kind of like a shark's fin. Get it?

The Shimano technical newsletter points out that in extremely cold weather the double-sided tape that holds the Shark Fin onto the chainstay gets less sticky and the fin can drop off. The recommended cure is to heat up a small flat piece of metal (they suggest a screwdriver, but I wouldn't do that to one of my screwdrivers) and put a hole in the fin. Then run a cable tie through the hole and around the chainstay.

Some aspects of the gruppo defy adequate evaluation after only a few rides. Bottom bracket. Hmmm. What can you say about that. It goes around, it holds the crankarms on, and it hasn't fallen out yet. The same with the crankarms; they hold the pedals and chainrings and haven't fallen off. The chain shifts gears perfectly and hasn't broken. The chainrings that come with

the S.I.S. are Bio-Pace, which have been redesigned for a little less extreme non-roundness, and while we could go into a long rap about the Bio-Pace, this product has been around for several years and isn't exactly hot news.

The Shimano people gave us an interesting account of the accelerated design and testing stage of developing the new line. Shimano is well known in the bicycle industry for their futuristic and almost fantastic range of testing devices in their factory. These machines duplicate the stresses faced by bicycles and components, repeating them around the clock to the point of failure. The failure is analyzed in order to develop ways to prevent it.

But a testing device is no better than the tester, and if the right questions are not asked in the laboratory the result will be failure in the field. In order to refine the testing procedures to exactly duplicate actual working conditions, Shimano created hand-made prototypes and loaned them to a few prominent off-road racers, riders who were certain to demand the utmost in performance, and who could be depended on to put many miles on their bicycles. After these riders had

put a few thousand collective miles on the equipment, they returned it to Shimano. (During this time we tried the prototypes ourselves, and they had problems.) In the factory the engineers analyzed wear patterns and found ways to duplicate them in their testing machines. The field experience of a few thousand miles could then be turned into literally millions of simulated miles of wear in the lab.

One of the advantages of getting all the components together is that they were designed to work as a system, and by using all components from the same gruppo, the rider is assured that they will work together without major modifications. For example, since the hubs, bottom bracket and cranksets are designed to work together, the use of all three together practically guarantees a perfect chainline.

I wonder why a seatpost and headset weren't included; it seems that anyone who buys the rest of this stuff will need these also. Also, how about some kind of stem? My frame came with stem and handlebars, but this isn't universal. For that matter they should throw in a saddle and some rims and spokes. Maybe some tires. Yeah, then a frame... Yeah, that's the ticket...

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BACK ISSUES

We couldn't possibly take the time to answer everyone who has asked about back issues, so we'll do it here. Some issues are out of print and out of stock, never to be seen again except by those who subscribed early. We do have available copies of some of our back issues. You will be interested to know that the price indicated includes postage, which costs us more than the bulk rate we use for subscription copies. Price of back issues is \$2.50 per copy. Outside the U.S. add \$1.50 (U.S.) per copy.

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(Cyclo-Cross, Ricky Cha, MudPup)

May-June 1982

(Reseda-to-the-Sea, Coyote Derby, San Anselmo Race, Ricky Cha, MudPup)

July-August 1982

(Race Reports, Carmel Valley Clunker Tour, Here Come the Kids, Ricky Cha, MudPup)

January-February 1983

(The Wheel Thing, Crested Butte Tour, Las Vegas Show, TechTips, Fat Tires Explode in America)

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(Joe Murray Interview, MudPup, TechTips, Wreck Tips, Whiskeytown Downhill, Tecate to Ensenada, Book Review)

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(Flyer Jets to Japan, Mulga Bill's Bicycle, Chequamegon, Fat Tire Festival, Get Thee Behind Me, MudPup, TechTips, To the Top Down Under)

November-December 1984

(An Elder of the Off-Road Tribe, Mountain Bikes in Mountain State, Uncommon Options, Point Reyes Update, TechTips, NORBA Nationals)

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(Trials Issue: Nicol, Norton, Earley, TechTips, Out to Launch, Ice and Snow, Wreck Tips, Bodfish, MudPup, Mountains in Missouri, Fastest Fat Chances, Ratios)

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(Touring Issue: Max Hirschberg's Yukon Ride, The Arctic Cycle, Bicycle Trafficking in Bolivia, Tour Roundup, Uncommon Options, Universal Bike Review, Uncommon Options, Products, MudPup, Bodfish, Wreck Tips, Leapin' Lizard Downhill)

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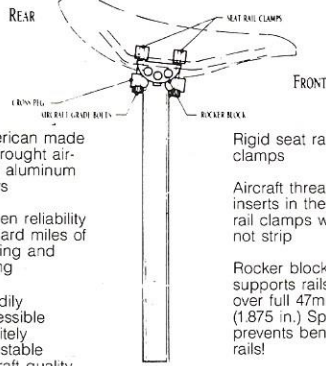
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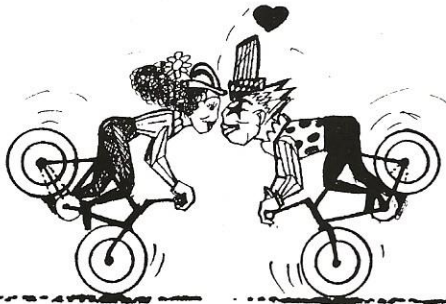


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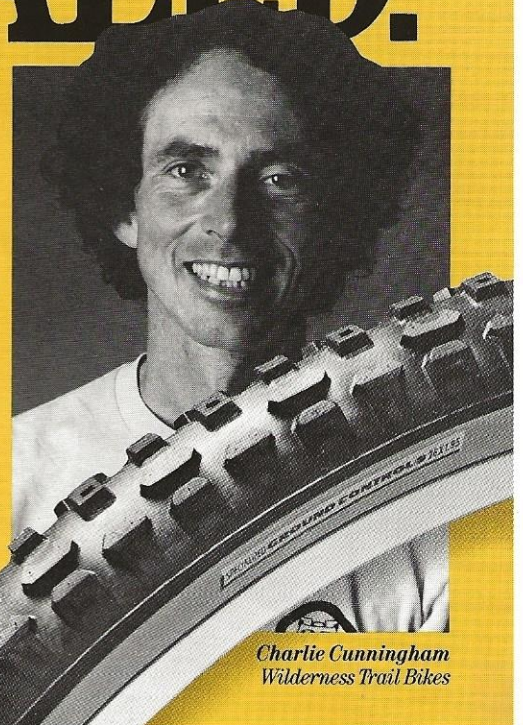
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Fat Tire Flyer 43



Craig Moffet

Continued from page 4

Both the Himalayas and the Andes are full of potential for mountain bikers. The mountains are laced with uncounted trails and traffic is unheard of. Except for visas and permits required of all foreigners, there are no regulations on cycling, and travel by mountain bike is an opportunity for the rider to come in close contact with other cultures without relying on the forms of transportation (trains, buses, autos) that are confined to more populated areas.

High altitude cycling presents some special problems. Anyone planning to ride above 10,000 feet should be aware of high altitude illnesses and should be able to recognize symptoms and deal with emergencies. High altitude illnesses can be severe and even fatal if not dealt with immediately.

The most important factor in avoiding altitude sickness is proper acclimation. Over time our bodies adapt to higher elevation in several ways; we produce an increased number of red blood cells, our respiratory rate goes up, and the pressure in the pulmonary arteries increases. It takes some time for these changes to come about; most occur within six to eight days, and by the tenth day about eighty percent of the total acclimation has taken place.

The optimum way to acclimate is to increase the elevation by only 500 to 1000 feet per day, with occasional rest days. Under most circumstances this is impossible; for example, I had to fly into Lhasa and start my ride from nearly 12,000 feet! For sudden changes like this it is essential that the rider rest for a few days, drink plenty of fluids and exercise lightly. One severe form of altitude sickness called Pulmonary Edema occurs most commonly in unacclimated individuals who ascend rapidly to high altitude and then participate in heavy physical activity. On both our Himalayan trips we rested in Lhasa for a week and trained slowly, riding more each day until we could ride as much as we would have at lower elevation and still feel all right. We spent two weeks in Lhasa preparing for the ride to Kathmandu.

There are several common misconceptions about acclimation, and even professionals disagree on the process. Training occasionally above 10,000 feet produces little acclimation. Those who return to sea level for only two weeks will need to go through the process again on returning to altitude. There are no drugs which aid the process.

Almost everyone experiences some problems when first arriving at high altitude; common complaints include fatigue, shortness of breath, and headaches. Some have difficulty sleeping; on our first night in Lhasa we were all tired by 10:30 or 11:00, but wide awake by 2:30 or 3:00 a.m. Sleeping problems are sometimes accompanied by unpleasant dreams.

After the required interval, most people

can adapt to altitudes between ten and fourteen thousand feet. Despite acclimation, some people will experience problems above this level, and it is essential that members of any group watch for symptoms among their colleagues. Look for dizziness, a major loss of appetite, nausea, and a general feeling of malaise. If the condition deteriorates from these symptoms, subjects lose the ability to answer simple questions. In extreme cases the condition can include hallucinations, nerve paralysis and coma.

The best therapy for altitude sickness symptoms is an administration of oxygen if it is available; failing that, it is essential to get the patient to a lower elevation. Suggested reading for those planning to spend any length of time at high altitude is Chapter 12 of *Medicine for Mountaineering* (edited by James A. Wilkerson), entitled "Medical Problems of High Altitude."

Food and water consumption are important at high altitude. Riding forty to fifty miles a day with thirty or more kilos of food and equipment on the bike can be very punishing, and a high-caloric diet is necessary to meet the energy needs this creates. The loss of appetite that is a common symptom means that some people must force down the amount of food required. Even for those who don't normally eat sweets, it is a good idea to carry some along, since they can usually be eaten when anything else is unpalatable. Stay away from foods that cause gas, including

most vegetables. Gas can cause very painful distension in the digestive tract. We found onions intolerable while spinach, rice, dried tomato flakes, apple flakes and potato flakes were staples. Garlic and soy added flavor without causing problems. Foods high in fats and oils should be avoided; not only are they often unappealing at high altitude, there is also some evidence that a diet high in carbohydrates and low in fats permits better acclimation.

Water is more critical than food, and dehydration is a major cause of altitude sickness. A rider needs approximately two liters of fluid per day at sea level, but at high altitude, this requirement more than doubles. Again, even if you aren't thirsty, be sure to drink at least four liters per day. In areas where drinking from streams is dangerous, take a water filter that filters down to .2 or .4 micron.

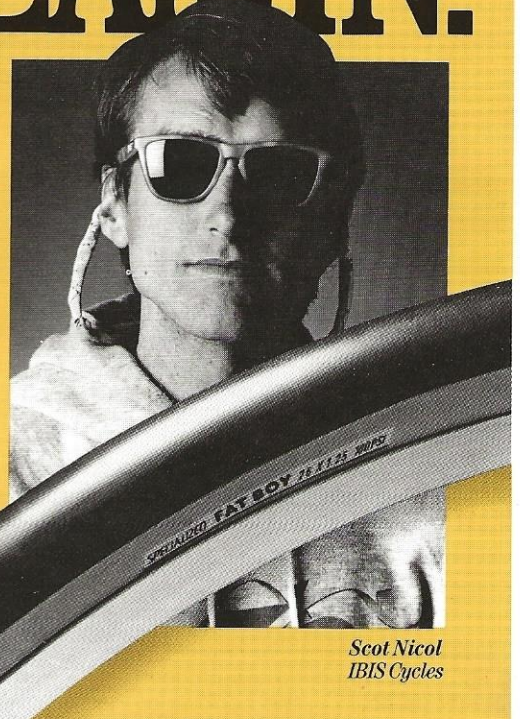
The sun's rays are more intense at high altitude. Take a good sunscreen, dark glasses, and a cap with a visor. Dry skin and chafing can make biking uncomfortable or even impossible. Vitamin E oil, a good hand and face lotion and Spenco chafing cream helped us keep our skins hydrated.

High altitude presents real physiological dangers, but it can be an exciting and safe experience. There are many considerations besides those I have mentioned; study the problems before you set off, then have a good time!

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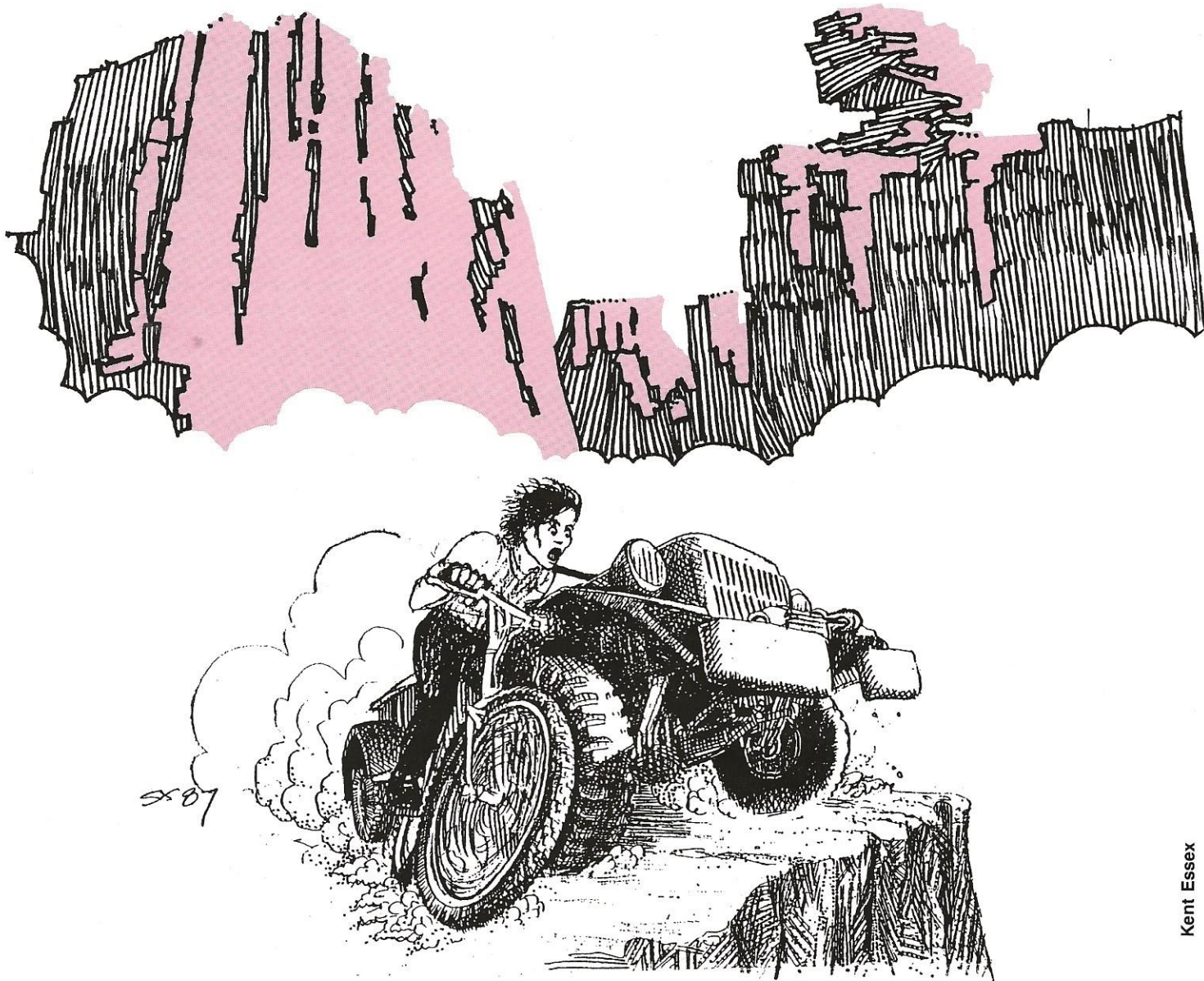

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SLICKROCK SURPRISE

by Mark Doherty

There was hardly time for us to react out in the redrock canyons when the quiet of a clear blue Utah winter bicycling day was suddenly shattered by a flash flood!

Flashing chrome grills, fenders, driving lights and rumbling V-8 engines overtook us down in the narrows of the canyon, almost before we had time to

leap onto our bikes for a running start in hopes of outrunning the deluge.

"We're gonna suffocate!" yelled Todd, my riding partner, as his Indian-brown

suntanned body streaked past me on the bumpy road. He is five years younger and quicker, but not on this day! I stood on the pedals and shifted into gears I normally reserve for paved downhills.

"Wish this road were rougher!" I called back as I started to catch him. We both knew that a mountain bike could

outrun a four-by-four on many of these desert roads. Today though, the flood was nipping at our heels. The Redrock four wheelers were running loose with their thirsty four-barrel jaws wide open. One gulp and we would be stuck at the wrong end of the dusty brown digestive systems of the gas-fed monsters.

Of course by now we knew it was our own fault. Both of us had forgotten what day of the week it was, something that is easy to do during a lazy Moab winter when all one does is eat, sleep, drink tea and ride. "Guess it's Sunday, huh?" Todd mumbled between breaths.

True, it was Sunday. And somewhere back in my memory I recalled that a special Winter Safari was to be held on Sunday somewhere out in the vast four thousand square miles of the canyonlands area. "We sure picked it this time!" I yelled back sarcastically.

At that moment Tracker Todd pulled out in front of me and took a sharp detour over some rabbit brush, past a big sage and under the branches of a juniper tree to where a finger of slickrock extended down from a higher layer of rock. Following him, I barely had time to shift into climbing gears.

Before I knew it we had climbed a hundred feet in elevation on the positrack slickrock, up a route only Todd could find. We stopped at a ledge level enough to stand on comfortably, just as the Renegades, Comanches, Cherokees and wild Broncos blazed into sight around the corner.

"Whew, that was close!" I managed to choke out. "Hope the dust stays down there for a while."

Todd just sat and smiled, sipping from his water bottle and inspecting the slickrock for a route back down. Steep stuff! While we sat I counted twenty-seven four-wheelers, two All Terrain Crashers, six dirt bag bikes, and one lone scared coyote on the cliffs opposite our perch.

The noise was impressive. I could feel vibrations for ten minutes after they had gone by.

Neither of us had anything against the four-wheelers; after all, they built the roads we were on. We just didn't care to be on the same page of the topo map. They do come in handy, however when you're stuck out in the desert on a hot forty mile ride with limited water. Most drivers can't understand why we almost always prefer a refill for our water bottles instead of the frosty brew they always offer us. They live in a different world.

After examining some flakes of chert and broken pieces of arrowheads on the ledge we decided to hit the road again. Twenty miles to go and dark comes early in January. We finished off our apples

and baked potatoes (cheap food keeps the willingly unemployed out of work longer) and hit the trail in the once again peaceful sunshine.

About a mile down the road I heard Todd mumble something. "Say again?" I asked.

"Oil" Tracker Todd has that knack of summing up an entire fifteen minute conversation in one word.

It was becoming obvious that one of the vehicles up ahead had developed a serious oil leak. It was probably the result of damage from the climb over one of three jumps at the beginning of the canyon. I knew that Todd was thinking about having "cleaned" each of the three tricky bicycling problems for the first time only this morning, something I was sure only a seasoned desert rider between the ages of fifteen and twenty-five could do.

"Reckon we'll see a dead dinosaur up here soon," I replied, noticing that the leak was apparently getting worse. "Hard to find a bikeable road that doesn't have refuse all over it."

But we forgot the oil leak and occasional black tire marks on the rocks as we neared the head of the canyon where the road climbed over a pass.

Coming out of the sandstone fins, we could finally see the mesa and buttes off to the west and the Sierra LaSal mountains across the valley bathed in new snow and afternoon sun. "Might have to go cross-country skiing tomorrow," I thought to myself. "I'm becoming a recreational junkie!"

The far side of the pass was much steeper as the road clung to the canyon wall as it descended to the highway. Soon to our dismay we saw what seemed to be an endless stream of vehicles scattered about the road in various stages of disarray.

First we came to the broken Jeep that had drained its crankcase. It was being towed behind a Bronco. Next we saw a truck with its rear wheels dangling out over oblivion, hooked up to two winches and surrounded by nervous onlookers. "I wonder why they tried to turn around?" I thought.

After hoisting our mountain bikes over the taut winch cables and dodging past the rest of the parked four-wheelers we finally came to the root of the problem: rockslide!

Todd looked back at me with a desert bighorn sheep-eating grin and let out a whoop that turned all the attention from the teetering truck to the two crazy bikers. He rode up to the rockslide and completely around it on a tiny ribbon of the road that had been left there by the benevolent god of mountain biking. It was a balancing act with the consequence of failure a long fall, but I made

it too; there's nothing like an audience!

"Five miles to pavement!" Todd yelled back at me, loud enough for most of the four-wheeler folks to hear. It was an hour to sunset and a twenty-mile, axle-busting return trip for the four-wheelers, assuming they all got turned around. We coasted off through the redrocks that were getting redder in the late afternoon sunlight.

We were already showered and on our second draw of beer at the local BYOB Moab bar when we saw the first of the dusty remuda of four-wheelers rolling back into town.

Todd looked back from the window and asked, "Did I notice one of those boys asking whether the bike shop was still open?"


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We toasted another fine unemployed winter day in the Canyon Country.

Editor's Note: The opinions represented herein are not necessarily those of the Fat Tire Flyer. To be more specific, we do not see voluntary unemployment as being a contribution to society, unless, of course, the reason for such unemployment is a generous gesture to create a job opportunity for a less fortunate illegal alien (such as a Klingon without a Green Card). If you are completely unemployable and otherwise beyond redemption, start your own magazine like the rest of us.

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