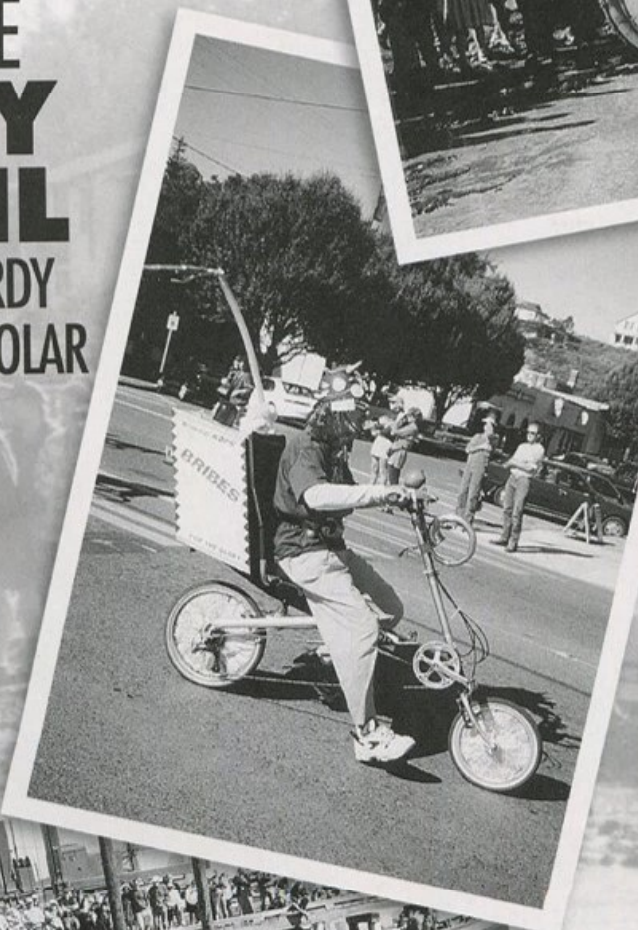


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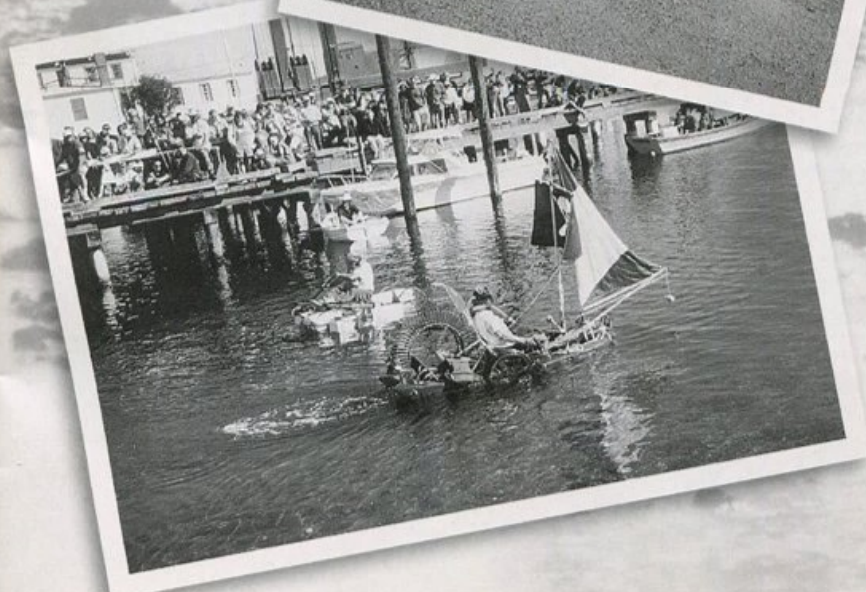
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RECUMBENT CYCLIST NEWS

The Voice of the Recumbent World

Issue #55

Since 1990

Jan/Feb 2000

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RCN Notes

✓ **SPECIAL RCN THANKS TO: Jim Langley**—(formerly of *Bicycling Magazine*) for his great RCN articles this year; **John Riley**— Photo credits for the RCN#54 cover and lowracer article belong to our pal John who is a heck of a great recumbent writer and photographer. **To our Trek R200 Test Crew:** Bentan Pist, Ron Friedel, Avi Bitton, Bob Voitus, and Mike Bremer; **Our Port Townsend Leader Correspondent**—Patrick J. Sullivan; **Krazy Kinetic Kop Liaison**—John Liczwinko ('Lizwacko'). **And all of the wacky Kinetic Racers and Race Fans of Port Townsend, Washington** whose names we could not list here; **And ALL of the RCN readers, writers and contributors; And especially the behind the scenes crew of Mark Colliton, Ron Schmid, Paul Arends, Marilyn Bryant and our International agents** to which RCN would not be possible.

Cover Photo Credit Kinetic Racers: Top: Mugga Flugga; Center; Top Kop John Liczwinko; Bottom: Kinetics at the Saturday float test. Cover design by Mark Colliton.

Fine Print: RCN is published by Bob and Marilyn Bryant & family in the Victorian Seaport of Port Townsend, Washington. We are a two-person company, publishing from our home office. We have no employees, only dedicated volunteers and friends who work cheap. We are as far from a corporate affair as you can possibly imagine. This magazine is published by enthusiasts, for enthusiasts—because we love recumbent bicycles. We are the voice for the enthusiast recumbent world since 1990—10 Years in July of 2000!

Editorial License and Bob Rants

KineticBob

Robert J. Bryant, Email: bob@recumbencyclistnews.com

"Skulptures have ranged in grandiosity: solo racers run along in duck-shaped inner tube or cruise on a skateboard, carrying a surfboard, or race in a configuration of plumbing parts as overgrown hamster exercise wheel"—Michael Bittman, Course Commissioner



Kinetic Skulpture racing has to be one of the goofiest events in the history of modern man and certainly in the arena of human power. Some RCN readers may need to look deep inside their recumbent souls to find a sense of humor that allows one to enjoy such lunacy. I know I did.

I was aware of the Port Townsend (PT), WA Kinetic race before moving here, however, we'd never been to the race before. And I have no excuse for that. I've been to a few kinetic races in the past—though admittedly...I never "got it." I can even recall poking fun at them. Lately, the search for FUN in my cycling combined with our relocation OUT of the rat race has had an effect on me. Or, maybe it could be something they put in the water here in PT. (Our 'unofficial' town slogan is, "We're all here, because we're not all there.") Even my daily ride has changed. Just riding to town covers a near Kinetic Course, with trails, sand, dirt, crushed gravel and lots of varied terrain. Even our bike trail along the bay is unpaved. It takes more energy to ride it, and I love being out of target range of cars. I guess I was finally ready for Kinetic Skulpture Racing.

Covering the kinetic race might stretching the interests of our readers—though we'll give it a try. This fun-loving group doesn't really have a publication of their own. I am still not sure if it fits into what we do, so I'm throwing it out here for RCN readers to decide. The same will go for some coverage of recumbent pedal watercraft later in the year.

Anyway, lets get back to Kinetics for a moment. Many recumbenteurs are closet kinetics. BikeE's Paul Atwood is a former racer. BikeE's Dave Ullman instructs at the Corvallis Kinetic builders seminar and Bill Haluzak has built and raced Kinetics. Our hometown Kinetic Top Kop John LizWacko rides a BikeE AT as he dispenses tickets, accepts bribes while keeping the local racers in line. Many of our local Seattle recumbent riders make the trek up to PT to check out the Kinetics, and I know this is the case with recumbent riders in the Corvallis, Eugene and Portland areas for the DaVinci days event.

At this point, I may have piqued your interest. You might ask—what is a Kinetic racer? I think rather than to define a racer, we'll explain the course. The Kinetic Race Course has a road Course, usually in a downtown area (streets closed off). Some Courses require that the racers go through sand. Thus, you may find all-terrain parts on some racers.

"A kinetic skulpture is a human-propelled, artistically-enhanced vehicle that must go through mud, float in water, and transverse hilly neighborhoods. All of the Skulptures are human propelled and environmentally clean."—Michael Bittman, Course Commissioner

The mud bog requires the racer to be a human-powered swamp buggy, though imagine it at a snail's pace. Many participants cheat, drag onlookers into the mud...or try some mud wrestling. Each racer is required to carry a teddy bear. At the bog, teddy bears are catapulted out into the audience. So you might be thinking that this sounds all too easy. Well, here is the toughest part. A Kinetic Racer is required to be amphibious. Yes, this means float and propel through the water. In our case, it is Port Townsend bay—out in front of town. Some Racers have pedal-powered propellers, some have paddles affixed to the wheels and others use kayak paddles. The occasional cheater will be towed by another boat. Though remember, cheating is okay, as long as you bribe the right official.

You see, in PT kinetic racing, first place is NOT sought after. The distinct prize is the for "Mediocrity," or coming in dead-middle. This is why you will find racers doing pirouettes at street corners, running extra

laps just for fun, paddling around waiting for the water exit ramp waiting for the rest of the gang or eating an ice cream bar at a store on the course.

In Port Townsend, we have no big-buck racing teams like they have in "Kalifornia." Most entries are home-spun, home-built and cross the spectrum of human power. Some are highly engineered vehicles, others are made from old junk from your back yard (do you have an old rowboat, canoe or riding lawnmower?). Many are very seaworthy, and yet others look like they are ready to sink. Duct tape and Styrofoam are necessities for kinetic racers. Even the race MC carried a roll to dispense for emergency repairs.

Even the most straight-laced engineers can be spotted taking notes around some of the racers—watch closely and you may even detect a smile. Others are here just for fun. One guy was riding an old Schwinn Varsity towing a homebuilt amphibious raft. When he gets to the water, he throws the Varsity on top of the raft and paddles. The Spirit of Mugga Flugga is the biggest and baddest entry in the PT race, looking like a cross between a monster truck, swamp buggy and a quad recumbent bicycle. Mugga seemed to be a bit too big for its own britches. This racer has been known to scatter crowds and ram cars. This year it was spotted all too often riding on its flat bed trailer. The town favorites were the Angelic Skow and Cheese Whiz, was piloted by 10 year old Kira Koehler of Port Hadlock. She used two big truck tire inertubes and walked and rolled inside of them to propel herself. Angelic Skow appeared to consist of a backwards old wooden rowboat, two kid's bikes off the bow and a motorcycle fork and front tire off the stern. Two masts flew the flag with a mock "Charlie's Angels" shadow logo. A boom box with a disco beat, dancing, posing and lots of blowing kisses kept the crowd in stitches. There is a fair amount of good natured improv and drama in our hometown event—fun is highly encouraged.

'The Rules' is a list in constant state of amendment. Those who choose to be authoritative for the weekend, often author new laws."

—Michael Bittman, Course Commissioner

The judges also make it known that bribes are accepted. Judges are required to dress up—Barbie & Skipper were in attendance. Judges are treated well, motoring around the course in a Mercedes microbus. Good clean fun ... for the most part. We are told that the Rosehips Kween Kontest gets pretty wild—and is a must see (for adults). Kinetic racing founder Hobart Brown was in attendance. Hobart started the first kinetic race in Ferndale, California 30 years ago. Hobart fixed up his son's tricycle. Other local artists decided that it looked like fun and built racers. He has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize for his work in kinetic racing—which is gaining popularity around the globe.

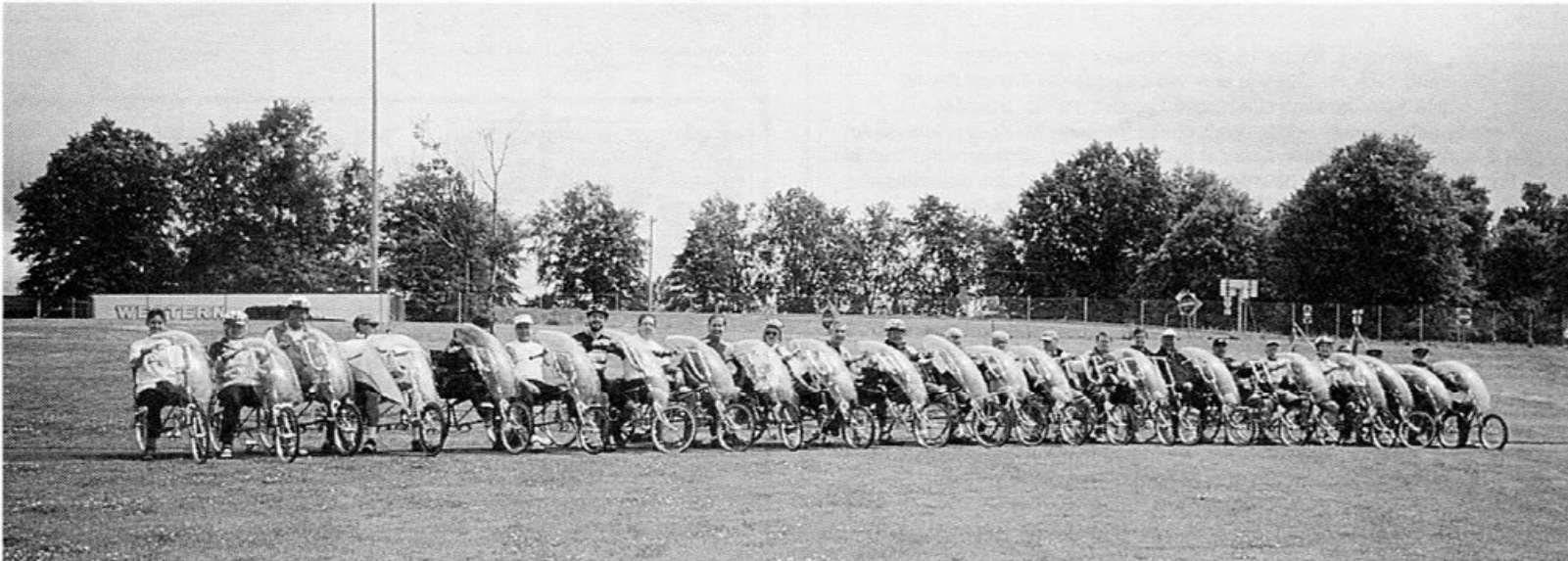
This event is just about as much fun as anyone could hope to have without breaking the law and Port Townsend, Washington is the perfect zany and wonderful town to have the event. Plan to bring your bike, as anybody with a bike can ride in the prerace parade, follow the racers on the Course or just sightsee our Victorian Seaport or the surrounding Olympic peninsula. Heck, if you don't like the idea of Kinetics, we have Victorian home tours, a wooden boat festival and sea Kayak symposium.

So, don't ever come here, you'll absolutely hate it.

Viva Recumbency!
Bob Bryant ☐

Recumbent News

Do you have a new or updated recumbent model, recumbent related product or service?
If so, please send press releases and photos to: RCN, POB 2048, Port Townsend, WA 98368.
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FIRST ASSEMBLY OF THE EASY RIDERS RECUMBENT CLUB

June 6, 1999 - Delta Park, Portland, Oregon.

There is a new fan club in town. The Portland area dynamic super-Enthusiast duo mother/daughter Connie McAyeal and Laurie Smith have started a club and newsletter just for Easy Racer owners. Issue #3 has just been mailed. If you love your Easy Racer, you're gonna love this read. Easy Racers' Gardner Martin sponsors this newly-formed exclusive recumbent club. The club is based in Portland, Oregon covering Oregon, Washington and Northern California (with chapters being formed in other areas as well). The club produces a newsletter that features members' stories, monthly rides and special events such as campouts and parties.

The members' enthusiasm for this wonderful recumbent is contagious... club membership is growing fast! Events for 2000 include The San Juan's and Long Beach, Washington and Crater Lake National Park, Oregon.

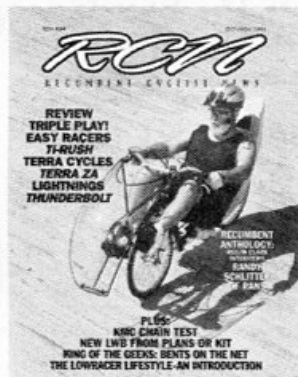
A newsletter subscription is \$15 (\$10 if you own an Easy Racer).

The newsletter is a biannual. Subscribe by March 31, 2000 and receive a free issue with your subscription. Family members on other types of bikes are of course welcome. T-shirts and water bottles are also available.

For more information contact Connie McAyeal at ohyesbent@hotmail.com or Laurie Smith at toureasylover@hotmail.com or see the club website at: www.geocities.com/toureasylover/

Easy Racer Recumbent Club, c/o, Connie McAyeal
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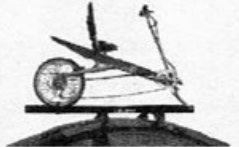
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Portland, Oregon. Starting spot will be Gateway Transit Center (NE 99th between Glisan and Halsey), 10AM. 35 miles of mostly flat, leisurely riding. We'll cruise the quiet bike paths alongside I-205 & Springwater Corridor, lunch at the Rainbow's End Tavern in Troutdale, and belch our way way back along Marine Drive. Contact: Jeff Wills at tel. 360-254-3736 or email: jwills@pacifier.com

Sunday March 19, 2000—Florida Recumbent Rally & Test Ride

Contact: Atlantic Bicycle 954-971-9590

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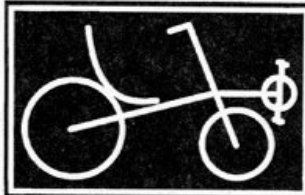
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June 3-4, 2000—Midwest Recumbent Rally

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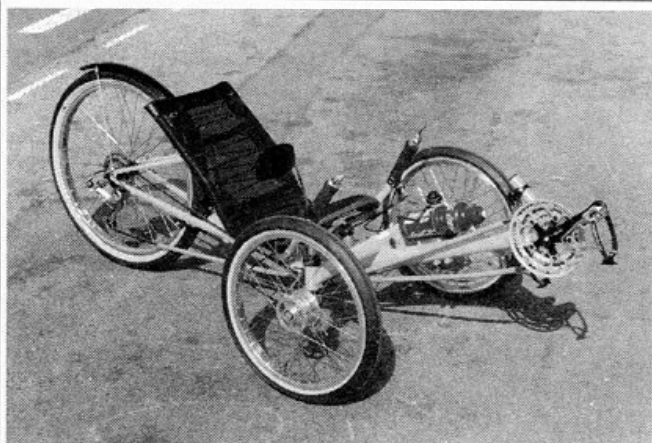
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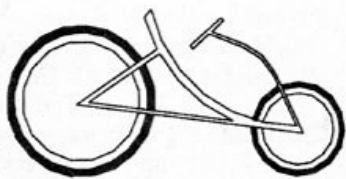
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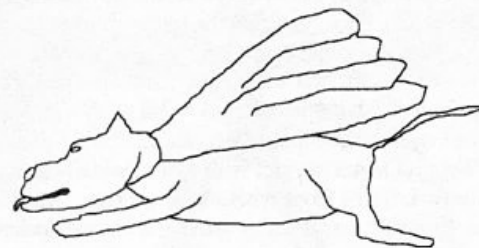
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* I realize this may be a little overstated, but Joe (our dog) tells me this stuff and he just looks so honest its hard to not believe him. I know what you're thinking: "This guy's nuts!" But if you knew Joe like I know him, well, that's about all.

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The Trek R200

Meet the corporate big boyz SWB recumbent

by Robert J. Bryant

Recumbent bicycles are in the process of going mainstream—and Trek is the first big manufacturer to come on board with an *enthusiast* recumbent. Trek has designed the bike for newbies coming from Trek high-end wedgies. The Trek R200 quality is excellent—and exactly what we should expect from Trek. The bike even hits the target market nearly spot on. The upright riding position, user-friendly above-seat steering, Rans seat and best of all, a lower bottom bracket height (than most every other SWB) are distinctive features that *make* the bike. All of this makes for a more tame and a more *main-streamed* SWB design. Could this be a SWB for the masses? Well, all is not perfect with this newbie machine—it's a very tall bike and has a LOT of front wheel/heel overlap. And Trek's corporate antics and seemingly anti-marketing leave a lot to be desired.

■ FRAME & STUFF

The frame is very nicely built from a giant diameter aluminum 6061 T-6 3" main tube. You will either love it or you won't. We're not sure what function it plays, but it gives the bike a personality. The craftsmanship is also what we have come to expect of Trek's fine line of wedgies.

The rear suspension is right off one of their mountain bikes and works pretty good. It is similar to a Rans Vivo, utilizing the Cane Creek rear shock. The shock requires less air pressure than do most other similar suspension types. Pogo can be evident depending on rider weight, and the firmness of your set up. The problem with suspensions of this type (air shock) is that if you put in enough air pressure to never pogo, you don't get as cushy a ride as you might expect. (Recumbent manufacturers need to learn about coil/oil rear shocks.)

The front suspension on the Trek R200 is noticeably absent. Due to the bike's height, the front suspension was deleted. We were told that a 16" front suspension fork/wheel may become an option, though when we asked if it had ever been tried, the response was "no."

It's no big secret that SWB recumbents have quick handling (responsive). When you hit road hazards, it's nice to have a front shock. Every other SWB manufacturer I can think of offers the front suspended shock as an option for this very reason. When I asked a Trek engineer about this, I got some lame comment about how smooth the roads are in Wisconsin (I'm not kidding). Surprisingly, this fat-tube aluminum SWB with rear suspension and no front suspension rides pretty smooth.

■ THE SEAT

Ahhh. The ultra-comfortable Rans seat (same seat as on all Rans models) on the Trek seat mount is a match made in heaven. The seat slider is bulky, has three quick releases and a long distance of seat travel—and works very well. Some riders experienced a tad of seat slip, though many did not (seems controllable via proper adjustment). The R200's bottom bracket is a few inches below seat height, which makes for optimum SWB comfort ergonomics. I'm sold on this aspect of the Trek. It is by far the most pleasing of the SWB positions. The Rans Vivo/Screamer-like seat recline adjuster works wonderfully and the position is adjustable, though is more upright than other Rans or Vision models.

The Trek steering riser easily adjusts to the magic 90 degree arm bend and optimum SWB ASS control ergonomics. A real stem and "arc" bars allow you to dial in your hand/wrist position as well.

In the Spring of '98 when the Trek prototypes were first unveiled, the joke was that it was a recumbent designed by 6' tall engineers. This may or may not be true, however the bike fits tall riders VERY nicely. The bike just plain would not work well for RCN's Marilyn Bryant at 5'4".

■ MID-DRIVE

This is the first time any manufacturer has had any success with a Mid-Drive drivetrain. The Mid-Drive is the amidships cassette that has 5 gears

going forward and 8 in the back (40 total). The concept sounds great, although it requires a proprietary mid-drive cassette made by Sun Race for Trek. Trek has SRAM make a proprietary 5-speed mid-drive twist grip shifter to shift the mid-drive. The mid-drive concept has been around for years, though never has been a critical or sales success. They are noisier, less intuitive, add some friction, have custom or proprietary parts and require more maintenance. The benefit is short chains (that sometimes derail) and adequate gearing using a 20" drivewheel (without a 3x7).

Unfortunately, Trek's corporate pencil pushers went for some really cheap chain on this bike (since updated for 2000). They also insisted on a problematic spoke protector. Trek also installed too much of the bad chain on most R200's, thus if you hit bumps at high speeds, you are likely to derail one or both of the chains. This trait is common with single chainring drives and precautions need to be taken.

■ WHEELS

The wheels seem pretty nice. Black Bontrager hubs and rims laced make them very attractive. The dual 20" wheels remained true during our test, however, the "spoke protector" was a problem. It made an annoying "card in-the-spokes" noise all of the time (remember when you were a kid?).

■ BRAKES

The R200 comes equipped with Shimano Nexave V-brakes. These are detuned V's with an almost antilock feel. The rear wheel will lock-up and skid if you brake hard on the rear. I realize this is necessary, however, it should take more effort (in my opinion). Many SWB recumbents could use better brake modulation. Personally, I see easy lockup as a negative trait when I am visualizing Slumgullian (mountain pass in Colorado—see RCN#42). However, few Trek SWB owners were concerned by it.

■ OPTIONS AND ACCESSORIES

With this new bike came no accessories. There is no kickstand, pannier rack or fenders. Seat bags can be had from Rans or Angletech—as long as Trek continues to use the Rans seat. The lack of options is interesting as Trek advertises the R200 as a 'touring bike.' Unfortunately, you won't be doing much loaded 'touring' if you leave it up to Trek's accessories for this bike. Also, the Primo Comet tires are way too wimpy for touring.

■ TREK MARKETING (OR LACK THEREOF)

Trek comes off as a big conglomerate manufacturer that has little time for enthusiast magazines (so far, they do not even subscribe to RCN). The test bike was months late and was a problematic demo that was at the tail end of their media circuit. We had asked Trek to make sure that the bike was "ready to ride." We were assured that it was, though it was not. They are seemingly experts at "it's not my department" and just pass the buck on to somebody else. It's a wonder how anything actually gets done in an environment like this.

We wonder just how pro-recumbent Trek is? All of the indications we get are that they are not very excited about their own product. We have heard some industry criticism over the way Trek handled their own entry into recumbents. Trek seems to have a history of poor marketing of niche products. (Did you know they have an electric hybrid?).

The dealers' attitudes about this bike cross the complete spectrum from poor to excellent—depending on who you talk to. The largest Trek dealer in our area gave us three different stories (one from each store) from, "they didn't make enough," "the project is canceled," after fessing up, this dealer admitted, "we didn't order any and won't be carrying it." We heard this from others as well. Many dealers bought one or two R200's and know very little about recumbents. If you are reading these pages, the odds are that you are far more recumbent-educated than many of the dealers

involved in the selling of this new recumbent. Disinformation can be a problem with novice dealers—and especially dealers who sell only one or two brands.

In contrast, there are a lot of dealers who love this bike. Trek offers dealers good credit terms, the product is of high quality, competitively priced, they are predictable (mostly) and deliver on time. One dealer we know has sold nearly 60 bikes, another hadn't sold his first.

■ VERDICT

The mediocre test bike, politics and bureaucracy aside—I liked the bike. This is *not* a passionate design like other SWB models we know and love. Squint your eyes and it could almost pass for a Rans model. What is different is the bike's height. It is a tall boy. The ergonomic feel of the cockpit is more of a sit-on, rather than sit-in design, and the handling feels the same way. It rides like a mainstreamed Rans SWB. Besides the hordes of people who will buy it because it is a Trek, some others won't buy it because it's a Trek, yet others will want the bike because of the user-friendly SWB riding position. The bike has a reclining seat back, sliding seat base and the bottom bracket is lower than the seat. This is a unique selling point. My usual toe-numbness high BB (bottom bracket) indicator never became apparent during my Trek testing.

My biggest hesitation about the Trek SWB recumbent—is with Trek itself. This bike has lots of proprietary parts and they don't seem very committed. There has been zero marketing of the Trek recumbent. With this arguable lack of commitment—we are concerned. We hope that they



The Trek R200—photo courtesy of the Trek Bicycle Company

can change. Our advice if you want an R200—find a specialist who knows and understands the bike. They can set it up right, and answer questions without hesitation. If you buy the first one from your local wedgie dealer just hopping on the recumbent band wagon, prepare for possibly a long break-in period. This is a really bad bike to buy mail-order unless you are PROMISED that they will carefully set up and road test your bike prior to shipping (and then I'd still be cautious).

If Trek's *corporate style recumbent mainstreaming* is the shape of things to come—I am concerned. Luckily, the bike is pretty good. □

Ratings & Specs

■ RATING

- ✓ **Comfort** — A
- ✓ **Design/Style** — B
- ✓ **Drivetrain** — C+
- ✓ **Chain Management** (Idlers/Noise/Vibration) — C-
- ✓ **Brakes/Braking** — C+
- ✓ **Finish Quality** (welds/paint/preassembly) — A
- ✓ **Rider Ergonomics**—Adjustable recline seat, bottom bracket lower than the seat. If you have suffered from toe numbness or thought most SWB have too high of BB, or closed position, the Trek is for you. This bike offers a very user-friendly riding position.
- ✓ **Best Use**—A wonderful all around performance/sports tourer/commuter recumbent. Our only hesitation is the heel overlap/interference which offers the occasional surprise hit with the front wheel during low speed turns.
- ✓ **Best Rider Type/Size**—This is a tall bike, and best suited for riders in the upper -5' + range, and should fit riders well over 6' tall, albeit with a more upright seating position.
- ✓ **Comparison to Market Competition**—Directly comparable to the V-Rex, Rocket, and Vivo.
- ✓ **Weak Points/Upgrades**—Mid-drive woes, lack of a front suspension, lame manufacturer.
- ✓ **RCN Performance Potential** —B
- ✓ **RCN Value Rating** —B
- ✓ **RCN "Bob" Rating** —B -

PROS

- ▲ A good value
- ▲ Excellent ASS stem/riser/bar
- ▲ Comfortable Rans seat
- ▲ Wide gear range (without 3x7)
- ▲ Stable confidence-inspiring SWB handling
- ▲ Includes shock pump (though we didn't get one)
- ▲ Mainstream manufacturer with lots of dealers

CONS

- ▼ Lots of heel interference/overlap with the front wheel (bad idea on an entry-level recumbent).
- ▼ High seat/tall bike for tall riders.
- ▼ No front suspension
- ▼ Adjustable user-friendly riding position (lower BB than other SWB).
- ▼ V-brakes work well, but modulation is not so good.
- ▼ Bad chain and spoke protector (upgraded for 2000).
- ▼ Why did they seemingly reinvent the wheel with a proprietary mid-drive?
- ▼ Lack of commitment so far (by mfr.)
- ▼ Lots of mistakes by Trek: dealing with enthusiasts, dealers, media, etc.

ABOUT THE BIKE

MODEL—R200; **TYPE**—SWB; **STEER**—ASS, Trek fold forward stem/riser/arc bar; **WB**=43.75"; **SH**=26.5"; **BB**=23.5"; **WT**=#32; **FM**—TIG 3"Alum.; **FK**—CroMo; **SWING ARM**—Trek VRX; **SUSP/RR**—Cane Creek shock; **SUSP/FT**—None; **Access**—www.trekbikes.com

COMPONENTS

CRANK—Cyclone 170mm 39-T w/guard; **BB**—Shimano UN52 sealed; **HS**—Dia Compe SAS alloy 1 1/8" direct connect; **DER**—SRAM ESP 7.0 (2); **SHIFT**—SRAM ESP 7.0 8x5=40-spd; **GEARS**—Shimano 11-28 8-spd.; **MID-DRIVE**—13-24 driven cogs (5spd) 24 tooth drive cog Sun Race; **CHAIN**—Shimano or SRAM/Sachs (this is the update); **GEAR INCH RANGE**— 24.3-122.5; **PEDALS**—ICON Solemate clipless Black **WHEELS**—406mm 20" X 1-3/8"; **RIMS**—Bontrager; **TIRES**—Primo Comet; **HUBS**—Bontrager; **WHL BLD**—Trek; **BRAKES**—Shimano Nexave V with Avid levers; **WARR**—Lifetime frame/ 1-year components; **COLORS**—Red.

KEY: WB=wheelbase; SH=seat height; WT=weight; FM=frame; FK=fork; SUSP/RR=rear suspension; SHIFT=shifters/speeds; BB=bottom bracket or BB height; WT=weight; BB=bottom bracket; HS=headset; DER=derailleur; WARR=warranty

Counterpoint—Trek R200

by Bentan Pist

Hey there! Now you didn't think you could get rid of me that easily did you? As long as the world is producing crap, I'll be there. Whenever a new product comes out and needs to be critiqued, I'll be there. And until recumbents are considered *real bikes* by the masses, I'll be here. Today's victim, the Trek R200. Come on kids it's time give the big bully of the bike world a bloody nose.

The Trek R200 is a short wheelbase, above-seat steer recumbent and is made of Trek label Alpha aluminum which, according to their catalog, "provides exceptional comfort over distances." That's not all the catalog has to say. If you want a good laugh, stop by your nearest Trek dealer and pick one up.....a catalog, I mean. The R200 is listed as a *competition level* bike meaning it has "many of the same features of pro level bikes, minus the higher price tag." What? The list of features next to the photo (pg. 69) states "the custom-tuned Cane Creek AD-5 rear shock absorbs bumps and buzz." What the *&% is "Buzz"? It comes with Primo Comets for cryin' out loud. What buzz are they talking about? They go on to say "The Cyclone crank and SRAM ESP 7.0 7-speed derailleurs (triple) are in a unique, mid-drive drivetrain that offers a wide gear range." It actually comes with the 5x8 system that we've all heard about. The spec's in the back state the R200 comes with a Trek Recumbent saddle. Since when did Trek buy RANS? But the most insulting thing about the 2000 catalog is that they used the same photograph as last year. The bike pictured is a 2-year-old prototype! They wouldn't even bother to take a new photograph of a stock model. They had to show off a bike that uses two-year old ESP derailleurs and a couple of unfinished "prototype" parts. The R200 is placed in their catalog along side two touring bikes. The XO 1, their new, full-on cyclocross bike gets two whole pages dedicated to it. How many of these do they realistically expect to sell this year? Because they are Trek they are almost guaranteed to sell as many R200's as they choose to build. Am I the only one who is at least slightly insulted by all of this? By the way, the website is of no help either, it has all of the same info as the hard copy.

This appearance of a complete lack of concern on the part of Trek for this particular product is evident in other ways; like the vacuum of available accessories to go with the bike. There is no way known to man to mount a kickstand on this bike or a rack, even though Trek bills the R200 as a "touring" bike. In fact, if it weren't for the RANS seat bag, there would be no way to carry anything at all on this machine. What is the logic behind any of this? Granted, I ain't got no high-falutin ed-ju-cation or nuttin', but I just don't get it! Moreover, NO-ONE at Trek knows anything about this product—or wants to. Ask your local Trek dealer to get some info on the R200 from his inside or outside sales Rep. The only answer he'll get from either person is "Yes, we have one and I think it's Red."

This aluminum-framed bike weighs in at about 38 lbs. Which surprised me, when I first tried to pick the damn thing up I guessed it was over 40 lbs.! A RANS Rocket weighs 34 lbs. I don't know what a Vivo comes in at, but I don't think there's an extra 4 lbs. in all that messy suspension even with the suspension fork, and it's made outta steel. Which prompts me to ask, What good is an aluminum frame if it isn't any lighter? Corrosion protection? Yeah, but how many people have actually had a steel bike rust out on them? Stiffer boom? It's 3" wide! A paper towel roll that size is stiff. Why not build it out of steel and drop the price? Straight out of the box the R200 set up pretty nice, for the most part. Other than the need to change chains and rebuild the mid-drive, it was pretty on par with other recumbent assembly. No I'm not kidding!

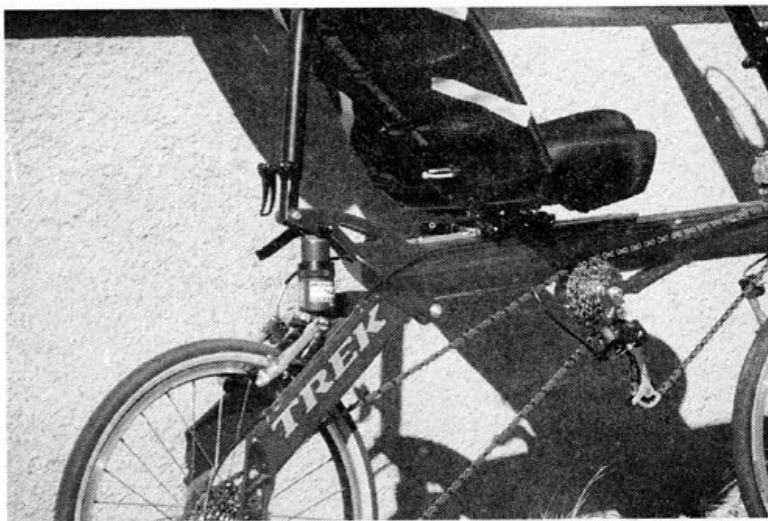
After trying for nearly an hour to make the drivetrain SHUT-UP, I finally switched to a Sachs chain set and Poof! No more noise. I have since learned that I'm not the only one experiencing this problem and that Trek has stopped using the crappy chain responsible for it all. Good for them. I also had to add a spacer into the mid-drive cassette to keep it

from flopping around. This "flop" made the chain skip and jump around on the cassette. Again, this is something Trek has fixed. All new bikes are prone to stupid little errors like these; I understand that very well. But I expected better from Trek than to have those kinds of things go wrong. I also had a fun time getting the brakes set up. The canti studs for the rear wheel are placed too high on the stay and too far apart to let the pads contact the rim the way they should. The industry standard for canti stud width is 80mm. The R200 rear studs are 95mm apart! Is Trek too cool to abide by this unwritten rule? Once set up the brakes supply ample stopping power, but they don't touch the rim squarely, the way every other Trek bike does.

After the hours of labor necessary just to get the thing to operate the way a bicycle should, I almost hoped the ride would suck. Hell, I expected to hate it! The worst part about the R200 is that when it's all said and done, all of the stupid little unnecessary tweaks have been performed, the damn bike rides OK. Believe me, I would LOVE to blast that infernal machine from here to kingdom come for all of the headaches it causes during the set up procedure. But one spin around the block turned this sad clown's frown upside down. It's remarkably smooth and stable handling especially at low speeds! It felt very comfy, although I didn't much care for the seat to B.B. height relation. I think the seat is a tad bit too high; at least for my taste. However, I do believe some of the handling characteristics come from the higher center of gravity. Sorta like the Vision R-32. So all in all I'm OK with this issue. However, the tall seat implies that this bike is built for a longer-legged person, but the seat angle adjustment suggests otherwise. More on that subject later.

I like the steering system better than the RANS flip-it. The oversized tubing makes for a sturdier feel than the flexy RANS system. Another big plus of the steering system is the adjustable/replaceable handlebar. I found the handlebar to be a bit too wide for my taste and wanted to switch it to a narrower one. No problem! Ever try that with a RANS? Anyway, the handling was light and predictable and stable at speed as well. I had no problem riding one handed or even no handed with some degree of confidence. I didn't much care for the unsightly gouge the throw adjuster bolt made in the base of the unit, but that seemed only cosmetic to me. On the other hand, if this were a mountain bike the product development team would never let this issue go unnoticed.

As far as the mid-drive, I'm a bit torn here. I like the basic idea; super wide gear range—neat! But I also believe this bike is a poor example of execution. The R200 has a wide gear range. In my opinion the full range could still have been managed by using only the small and large mid-drive cogs and eliminating the other 3. That would have eliminated many gear options in between, but also a lot of confusion. I've been riding bikes all of my life and paying attention to them for the last 12 years or so and I found the 5x8 shifting a little bit, no, A LOT confusing. Granted, even a standard 3x8 drivetrain has some gear overlap, but this mess was way too confusing to be useful. So I found myself only using 2 of the mid-drive gears and the full range in the rear. I live in a relatively flat area of the world and this was more than enough for me. I never had a need for the three large chainrings, er, cogs, oh... you know what I mean. Overall I thought this rig was geared a little on the low side, but probably appropriately for hilly regions or for touring. I'd be a little wary of going off self-supported with that unique front shifter, though. I'm a big fan of Grip Shift; I think it works great! But I'm always wary of unique parts that *can't* be found in any bike shop across the country. The mid-drive system seems to add a lot of extra friction into the drivetrain as well. This is most evident when you try to back pedal. The mid freehub doesn't turn very freely and causes the chain to sag when you try to back pedal. Again, this isn't a huge issue, but would never pass inspection if it were on a mountain bike. I did throw the front chain a couple of times on some really bumpy terrain, which I attribute to this problem. But I could be wrong.



The Trek VRX rear suspension and Sun Race mid-drive—RCN



Trek mainframe and back side of mid-drive. Note Trek seat track with Rans seat.

The use of the RANS seat is nice too, even though they don't get credit in the catalog. I know very few people who don't think this seat is just the shiznit. The only problem is with the adaptation for use on this particular bike. I'm a relatively small guy—5'9", 140 lbs. This means that my seat position is up towards the front third of the fore/aft adjustment. I also like to have the seat laid back pretty far. Even with the seat in the front third of adjustment, I nearly bottom out the back angle adjust. If I were any taller, I wouldn't be able to set the bike up for my liking. Now hold yer horses pardner, I fully understand that not every bike should fit everybody. It all comes down to riding style, body characteristics, intended usage, blah, blah, blah. All I mean is that if you are a tallish style human, and you like to recline a goodly amount, than you may have a hard time on the R200. I've heard rumors that Trek has made accommodations for longer-legged folk in the form of a shorter top piece to the seat adjuster, but I've not seen one. The fore/aft adjust is pretty slick, and works about as good as any. I haven't been able to make the seat move involuntarily, although some larger, more powerful people have. I don't dig on the garbled mess of QR's that are required to make the seat slide. I understand why they use three and agree that they're necessary to accomplish the task of easy removal without changing the fore/aft (F/A) adjustment, but Man, there's a lot of action going on down there! I can't help but think that there could be a cleaner looking and probably lighter way of doing it. The large track the seat is attached to also cut down on the amount of F/A adjustment.

The rear suspension on this bike is a good idea, for taller people. Since I'm short, I don't have enough of my body weight distributed over the rear wheel to get much relief. A taller rider would appreciate this more. But I would much rather have had a suspension fork versus the rear, but what can you do? This, to me, is yet another example of the ineptitude of the

R & D team at Trek who designed this machine without putting very much thought into it.

The seat easily removes, the steering system swings around and folds flat, and the rear suspension swing arm detaches via a quick release and folds under the frame allowing the R200 to fold down to a smaller package. This feature is kinda neat, but of no real use to me. Here's why. A.) I don't have a car: why would I ever fold this bike down? B.) If I ever ride my bike far enough away from my house that I would feel a need to drive to the start, I am more than likely going with someone else which means I (we) would need to use a bike rack anyway. When folded the R200 definitely gets smaller, but not small enough to fit into a suitcase that can be carried on an airplane. Which means it would have to be checked or otherwise shipped apart from my side. If I have to check or ship this machine, again the folding feature is a moot point. For me the ability for the R200 to fold is completely irrelevant. However, I acknowledge that some people may find it convenient.

My overall impressions? I give the Trek R200 a B for ride quality. She gets an A- for component spec. This bike comes with some pretty cool components from SRAM, Bontrager, Avid, Icon and RANS. I give a D- to Trek due to overall lack of concern for their own product. Yielding an average C+. Yep, when it's all taken into account this machine is nothing special, but it doesn't completely suck either. It's just another bike. We, the disciples of the recumbent movement, have been waiting for some savior to lead us to the Promised Land, and many of us thought he would come from the land of Wisconsin. But now it seems a let down to find that Trek is NOT that savior. Where are Jim Jones or David Koresch when you need them? Anybody else wanna take the lead? ☐



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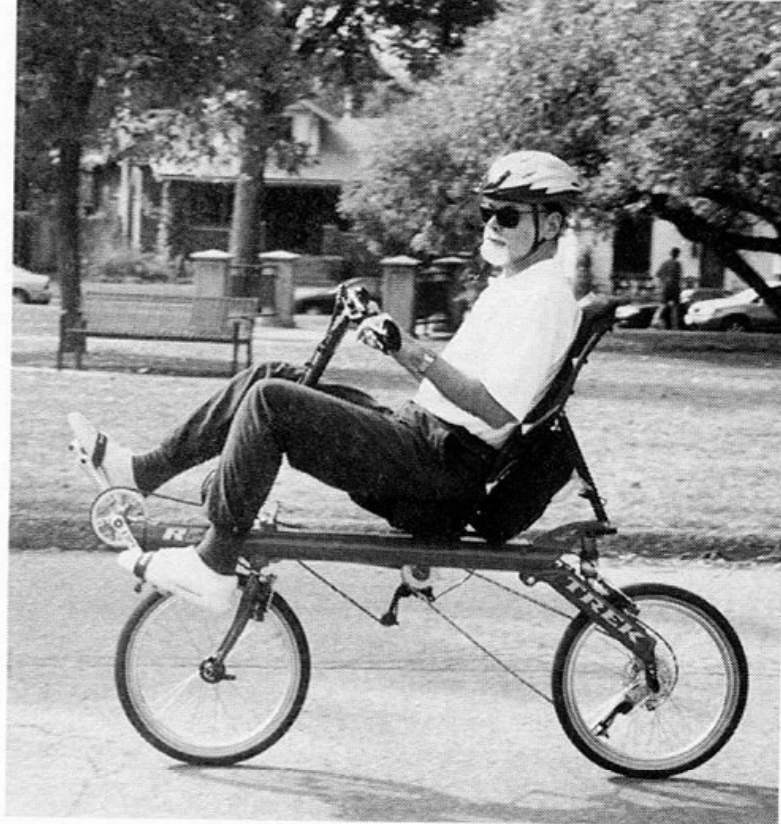


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Bob Voitus on his Trek R200



Our test bike in Port Townsend, WA

Trek R200 Rider Commentary

■ Trek Rider Reviewers

Ronald J Friedel (RF); Height: 6'

Avi Bitton (AB); Height: 6'2"

Mike Bremer (MB); Height: 5'10"

Bob Voitus (BV); Height? 5'11"

■ Dealer Purchased From/Price Paid:

RF: \$1499—Wheel & Sprocket, Hales Corners, WI; Rating: Harry Wozniak—Great!

AB: \$1350—NA, Rating: Nice, helpful guy, knows ZERO about bents.

MB: \$1400—Agee's Bicycles, Richmond, VA; Rating: Good, but a bit puzzled over the R200 (their 1st bent).

BV: \$2750—Angletech (Philteavid version); Rating: Excellent

■ Recumbents that you considered prior to your Trek R200 purchase:

RF: We have a Vision, R42, USS, LWB, a Ryan Fleetwood/Duplex, LWB, USS, and a Haluzak Leprechaun, SWB, USS, in the family now. Have owned a Rans Nimbus, LWB and an Infinity, LWB, USS, in the past. I have ridden most everything at Wheel & Sprocket. I considered a Haluzak Horizon.

AB: V-Rex.

MB: None.

BV: V-Rex, Vision, Tailwind, Tour Easy.

■ How do you find the seat adjustment/recline?

RF: Lots of adjustment for leg length. Maybe too easy. Wheel and Sprocket shortened the seat recline tube with a tubing cutter because Harry knows that, as a Vision rider, I like a moderate recline.

AB: Very adjustable. So far, yes. I'm still experimenting, gradually reclining it further.

MB: Works well. So far, I might want to drop it lower later. (All I would need to do is trim the support tube, I got two sets with the bike.

BV: I'm just starting to try more reclined positions (started out with the seat fairly upright). Just went and checked the range—should be enough for me.

■ Does the seat slip?

RF: Yes. I filed grooves in the track to fix it.

AB: No.

MB: No.

BV: No.

■ Do you notice the heel interference/overlap with the front wheel?

RF: I wear size 47-48 Shimano sandals so heel overlap is a problem, especially on the tight U-turn I need to make coming out of the loading dock at work before commuting home.

AB: No.

MB: Yes, but I just plan a little before turning slow and tight.

BV: Had it happen twice—but I'm getting much better and don't think it will be a problem.

■ Do you notice the high seat height?

RF: Yes. I have a 31 inch pants inseam and so putting down my leg at stoplights is approximately equivalent to the Vision with its seat fully reclined. The Trek is also fully reclined but the angle is about what the Vision has at half recline (the Trek has a more upright riding position). How is the braking? Braking is fine. Harry Wozniak replaced the standard brake pads with Aztec pads. He said the standard pads are too soft and are grabby. Personally, I like softer pads. I think the Shimano brake pads I've used are rim destroyers. Way too hard. The Aztec pads are not trapping grit and wearing out my rims.

AB: Yes — can't imagine feeling secure at a standstill if I were significantly shorter.

MB: Notice, how about love it!

BV: No problem—but a little lower might be nice.

■ Does the rear wheel lock up under hard braking?

RF: Haven't noticed but the Trek is my fair-weather commuter and so I've not ridden it in the rain.

AB: It can.

MB: Yes, but I look at that as a user error. I've never had any bike that I couldn't lock both brakes if I wanted.

BV: Still taking it kind of easy so haven't noticed.

■ **Has your Trek shifted dependably?**

RF: Now it shifts great. I had to work at it though. Wheel & Sprocket put on a Sachs chain upon delivery of the bike. I had to shorten the chains to the absolute minimum and set the derailleur angle adjustment screw so that the derailleur jockey wheel is one link away from the cassette. I also added a SRAM Bassworm to help the rear derailleur.

AB: NO! I'm still constantly adjusting the shifters. It keeps intermittently auto-shifting, grinding, skipping. When it's smooth, it's heaven, until it goes nuts again. White Lightning only made it worse. Have you had to repair/replace anything on your Trek R200? Seat-mesh came with holes and the shock QR was bent (both to be replaced by Trek). I intend to replace the chain and possibly one or both cassettes. I'm also getting wider tires.

MB: The mid-drive has worked well from the start. The rear drive has been a little tricky to get tweaked. The bike shop routed the cables contrary to the Trek factory diagram so I had to reroute the rear cable. I then inadvertently applied a bad batch of White Lightning lube which gunked the entire drivetrain. After cleaning and chiseling the mess off I relubed and have just got the indexing zeroed in. It now shifts true and crisp. It seems like the space between the cogs is barely enough to clear the chain. I'm certain that the rear chain will need to be kept very clean to allow the sideplates to clear adjacent cogs.

BV: Yes—probably due to the Angletech upgrades.

■ **Have you had to repair/replace anything on your Trek R200?**

RF: No.

AB: NA

MB: Other than rerouting the rear drive cable, no. I am thinking about different tires as I am going to use the bike for commuting.

BV: No—but only have ridden 120 miles.

■ **How do you find the quality of the Trek?**

RF: Very good paint and construction quality. The engineer in me is impressed with the engineering.

AB: Overall, very good. I think the frame is finished beautifully (welds, paint).

MB: Very nice. I ride a Trek Police MTB at work and I would say the finishing and general workmanship of the R200 is comparable.

BV: First rate.

■ **Are you happy with your purchase?**

RF: Reasonably so; there are no perfect recumbents.

AB: Yes, and getting happier as I dial it in on each ride.

MB: Yes.

BV: Extremely—only problem is the lack of really long bike routes nearby—not yet ready to do too much on-road riding.

■ **Comments on Trek's entry into recumbents:**

RF: I'm happy to see them doing it. I've now ridden the bike for more than 700 miles since the middle of July. About 200 miles of this were on a tour, but the majority of miles are from daily commuting to work.

Some people have been having shifting problems with the Trek R200 recumbent. I initially had problems but with fine-tuning now the shifting is great. And, I didn't need to buy new derailleurs. Wheel & Sprocket installed a Sachs PC41 chain on the bike when I bought it.

You need to have the absolute minimum chain length on this bike. Set the gears for the big-big combinations and remove chain. To be safe, let the air out of the shock and have someone sitting in the seat when you check rear chain length. Then, adjust the derailleur angle adjusting screw so that the jockey wheel on the derailleur is about one chain link, or three pins/rollers, away from the teeth in the cassette sprocket. (The Sachs web site recommends 4 pins, or 1 1/2 links, but one link seems to work better on the Trek. The shortest possible chain on the Trek keeps it from jumping off the sprockets when going over big bumps. Use a good quality chain lube. The system is noisy with Finish Line Krytech wax-based lube I used on a tour when we were riding on lots of dusty fine-gravel rail trails.

AB: Impressive in concept, somewhat flawed in execution. The flaws (with the exception of the high seat-height) are easily remedied (i.e., upgrade the drivetrain). I actually like the height, as I ride in urban traffic. I'm disappointed in the shock—not as effective as I'd like—a front fork shock would be great (but what would that do to seat height?). My BikeE AT and Stratus are much more comfortable over bumps. The Trek is much more maneuverable—it turns on a dime and the rigid frame is nice uphill. Rear foldability is nice. Great handlebars.

MB: If the rumors that the first run of these bikes was limited to 1000 are true, they didn't build enough. A little publicity and they will sell a lot of these bikes. Trek needs to get to work on developing an underseat pannier rack (ala BikeE) that will carry serious cargo and keep the bags off the mid-drive. This bike screams for the open road.

BV: Great to see a big manufacturer enter the market—and with a design that's somewhat unique. On the other hand, have a little touch of guilt at buying from other than one of the recumbent pioneers. I had a very hard time deciding between the V-Rex and the Trek—rode each almost a dozen times around Kelvin Clark's test route. In the end it was probably the appearance as much as anything else that gave the edge to the Trek. □

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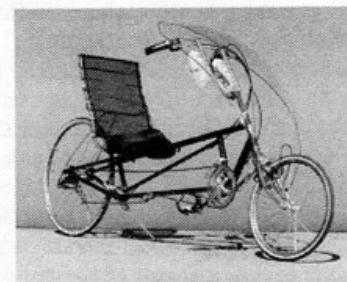


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Kinetic Event an Exercise in Mediocrity

Kinetics conjures up kounty's crazy kharacters



By Patrick J. Sullivan
Port Townsend Leader Staff Writer
www.ptleader.com



♥ For the glory!

What else could convince men, women and even children to take to Port Townsend Bay in craft made chiefly of Styrofoam, duct tape and old bicycle parts?

Sure, that must be what makes the same people slog through a Dismal Bog.

For the glory! And for the chance to bask in the glow of pure mediocrity. That certainly must be what drives dozens of people to participate, and hundreds to observe, the annual Great Port Townsend Bay Kinetic Skulpture Race.

The 17th annual event comes to Port Townsend October 2nd and 3rd, and it promises to be another humdinger.

"We are totally excited," said Janet Emery, Kinetic High Priestess and President for Life, about this weekend's event. "Sunday was my one day off, and my phone has been ringing off the hook. You cannot believe how many people have been coming out of the woodwork for this race."

The first Kinetic festival occurred in Ferndale, Calif., in the 1970s, but soon after, the idea took hold in Port Townsend. The festival began before tourism was much of a factor here, and it was purely a local event, with some wayward souls from Humboldt County, home of Ferndale. It continued into the early 1990s, when a lack of volunteers, the onset of political squabbles and an atmosphere of partying tarnished an image that was never exactly intended to be polished.

The pendulum swung in 1994 with a variety of new kinetic volunteers with fresh energy. Since then, the Kinetic Festival has come out of the kloset and racers and fans are coming out of the nooks and krannies.

This year marked the third consecutive February that Port Townsend's Kinetic kulture has been represented at the Seattle Bike Expo. The group has been a catastrophic hit, and has been invited to the 2000 event, Emery noted. Last year's appearance in Seattle stimulated three new skulptures for the October race, and Emery hopes for similar results this year. The organization is an all-volunteer affair, and Emery spreads the credit around.

"There are so many people who can come to bat for Kinetics and help see this thing through," Emery said. "What a bunch of kharacters."

Susan Yawman is the head judge, and "She's done an incredible job outfitting us with judges this year," Emery said. "We have quite the kast this year."

♥ What is a skulpture?

Kinetic skulptures must be human-powered and capable of traversing paved roads, Port Townsend Bay and the Dismal Bog mud pit. Kinetic racers and fans must be kapable of having fun without taking the event too seriously.

There is no limit on a skulpture's number of krew members, but they all must be active participants. Some are solo, some tandem and a few are team efforts. Some skulptures are engineering marvels, while most are a mixture of bicycle parts, Styrofoam and duct tape.

While there are awards for least time required to finish and for engineering, the most highly prized award is that for "mediocrity," the skulpture that finishes in the middle of the pack.

"We don't want to place a great value on winning, because everyone who participates is really a winner," Emery said. "Kinetics is about promoting non-vehicle things. It's not about being better than somebody else."

Attire is an essential part of Kinetic weekend. Essentially, anything goes. The more colorful the better. It's a lot like Halloween, with

people assuming kharacters and personas.

Another essential ingredient is that no harm be done, Emery reminded. "Kinetics is not about putting anyone down," Emery said. "Everyone is an equal."

♥ Safety first

Glory and mediocrity are only surpassed in the Kinetic World by safety. There have been too many instances of kids or adults riding bicycles or even walking in front of a 1,700-pound skulpture that cannot stop on a dime. While serious injuries have thankfully been avoided, more spectators and skulptures means more attention on safety.

"This is a race," Emery said. "It's fun and it's crazy but it's a race, and we don't want people riding their bikes too close or running in front of skulptures. When a Kinetic Kop tells you to get out of the way, please do it because it's for your own safety and the safety of our racers."

♥ Kome out and play

A race with more than 12 skulptures is considered a great success, and on Monday, Emery felt that number would be topped. Last year's event had 16, "and people seem to be coming out of the woodwork with skulptures, so we could have more this year," Emery said.

Along with at least a half-dozen "homegrown" skulptures, Emery expects a few impressive visitors. "The Pod Squad" is a skulpture maintained by middle school students from Sweet Home, Oregon. "We are looking extremely forward to having them," Emery said. "They are a hoot. They are dressed up like little Annikin Skywalkers from Star Wars. They are so cute."

Last year's "Killer Tomato" from Oregon is now the "Dung Beetle." It's painted brown like a dirt ball and features a beetle trailing behind with legs that move when the skulpture does.

Skulpture entries will be accepted until almost High Noon on Saturday, when the race starts at City Hall downtown. If you can't tape something together that floats and gets you through a mud bog, just come on down to watch.

"Please come out and play," Emery said. "It's a blast."

Kinetic race sinks with glory!

Too early for Halloween but not too late for the loony bin, Kinetic Festival is a great forum for people to dress up and play—including this insect man with plastic bug on his tongue.

In true kinetic lingo, mediocrity is the best of all possible worlds.

Still, Port Townsend Kinetic President For Life Janet Emery could not restrain herself from talking in plain English about her evaluation of the 17th annual Great Port Townsend Bay "Ynot2" Kinetic Skulpture Race.

"It was absolutely incredible," Emery said Monday, her voice raspy after two days of kinetic krowd kontrol. "I want to thank the people of Port Townsend for koming out and showing us that they support us. That was the kooldest part. Port Townsend kame out in full regalia and supported the Kinetic Skulpture Race."

Excellent fall weather certainly kontributed, and Emery estimates that more than 1,000 people watched Sunday's eight-mile race, which started downtown and proceeded to Fort Worden State Park and the Jefferson County Fairgrounds before returning downtown.

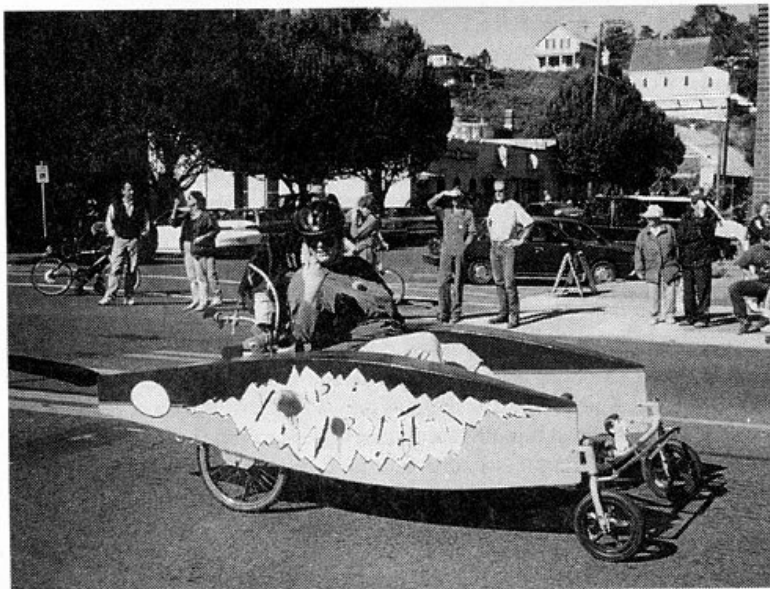
"You would not have believed all the people at the mud bog and the people lining the streets for the race," Emery said. "When they were in the



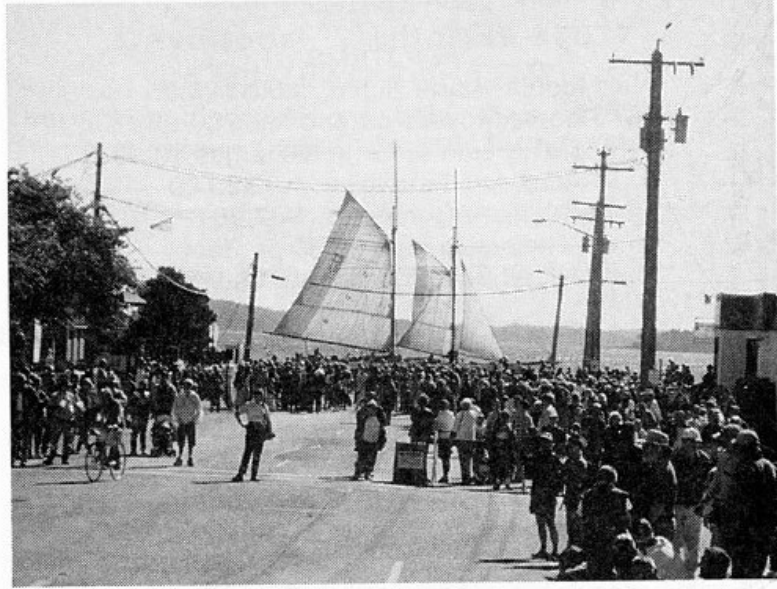
Bad Clams at ramming speed toward John Montgomery's "Happy 2 C U"—RCN



Kinetic race inventor Hobart Brown — RCN staff photo



"Your Worst Fear" at the parade. This one flips over and floats — RCN staff photo



The crowd watching the "brake test." The sails are courtesy of the schooner "Adventuress." Only in Port Townsend, WA—RCN staff photo

water, every pier and the waterfront park was full of bodies."

The event drew a record of 22 skulptures, and 21 crossed the finish line. The previous low water mark was 16 skulptures. Organizers were particularly delighted to have nine Jefferson County skulptures, with the most attention going to Kira Koehler, a 10-and-a-half-year-old fifth-grader from Port Hadlock. Her skulpture, "Cheese Whiz," was essentially two innertubes that she rotated like a gerbil in a cage.

"Kira is the perfect example of local kinetic spirit," Emery said. "Here comes this 10-year-old kid up to me and says, 'I want to race.' She was what really made it this year for me, personally, because she did it. She turned in the race application Saturday morning and she did it."

Koehler wasn't the only child involved. The Pod Squad, a team of middle school students from Sweet Home, Oregon, won an award for traveling the farthest to compete.

Eight kontestants competed for the honor of Rosehips Kween, an honor won by Velveeta, with help from her Slice Girls. Velveeta (otherwise

known as Brooke Anderson) is a second-generation Rosehips Kween: Her grandmother won the honor in 1986. The 1999 runner-up was candidate Belinda Crocker.

"The Rosehips ball was a total success," Emery added. "We had a kapacity krowd, and we have an incredible 1999 Rosehips Kween."

The whole weekend was accident- and incident-free, apart from one minor sinking during Saturday's water safety test. Emery credits the many volunteer workers and local law enforcement and fire department officials with helping things go smoothly.

"It was incredible," Emery said. "I am so in awe over the whole thing—that everything came off without any hitches. Looking back at it, it's like 'Oh My God, we pulled it off again, better than ever.'"

All for the Glory, naturally. □

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News Vol. 55

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■ Kinetic Schedule of Events

Kween Kontest—All wannabe royalty out there should get ready for their big chance at kweendom in the Rosehips Kween Kontest. Contestants must be no less than 21 years old, be able to walk, and show up for the Ball with a recipe, a joke and a talent. Each contestant is given five minutes to present herself. Bribes are essential.

Wannabe Parade—Debut your kinetic kostume on Saturday at the Wannabe Parade. Be careful not to spook any tourists—and make lots of kommotion walking.

Skulpture Safety—Immediately following the parade, all skulptures must complete a brake and float test. Although kinetics is about having fun, it's also about being safe. Some homemade skulptures (and even some designed by engineers) may not always float as intended or stop as hoped. The brake and float tests make such deficiencies known before the race.

Rosehips Kostume Ball—The nonprofit Kinetic group pays for its event by raising money at a Saturday night dance. Remember, Kinetic kraziness is all for fun and glory and dancing with rubber chickens.

Sunday Race—The race starts at High Noon. After a run through town, the skulptures enter the water on Tyler Street and paddle around (or under) Union Wharf and the Port Townsend waterfront.

Once all the skulptures are out of the water, the teams are turned uptown towards Fort Worden State Park, the Dismal Bog, heroic Teddy Bear Toss and the final procession back downtown to finish line at City Hall. The post-race award ceremony follows the race.

■ Kinetic Rave Awards

Dress to Kill (best-dressed krew): Angelique's Skow; Artsy Fartsy (best artistic design): The Cat in the Hatillac; Moxie Award (krew that shows most guts and determination): A Bozo Named Dean; Sportsmanship: The Kinetic Man (guy in a wet suit); It's the Pits (best pit krew): Your Worst Fear; Founders (shows the best spirit in keeping with Kinetic Founder Hobart Brown): Queen of the Universe; Unluckiest: The Millennium Love Bug; Lucky Duck (best use of duct tape): Kalipso; Breast of Show (best-looking front end): The Milk Duds; Rump Roast (best-looking rear end): Goofy; Quick Fix (skulpture that repairs and resumes kourse): Dung Ho; Naughty Naughty (most unsportsmanlike behavior): Bloody Mary; Glorious Spectator (krowd favorite): Angelique's Skow; Best of the Blues (best song): The Pod Squad; Racer's Favorite: Cheese Whiz; Last Out of the Water: Long Shot; Shark Bit (first out of the water): Bad Clam; Single Simplicity: Phantom Menace Pod Racer; Most Retired: Mugga Flugga; ngineering: Bad Clams; Most Time: Long Shot; Least Time: Lampoon; Bob Simmonds Memorial Scholarship Award: Cheese Whiz; Spirit Award: Cheese Whiz; Mediocrity (a most favored state of glory to the skulpture that finishes in the middle): Two Middle Age Women of Equal Weight and sometimes a Boy on a Banana from Salt Springs, Canada.

■ More Info

- ✓ Port Townsend Kinetic Race Site—www.olympus.net/kinetic/
- ✓ Port Townsend Guide—www.ptguide.com
- ✓ Port Townsend's great newspaper—www.ptleader.com

There are Kinetic Skulpture races in Baltimore, MD; Boulder, CO; Ferndale, CA; Sacramento, CA; Corvallis, OR and Ventura, CA.

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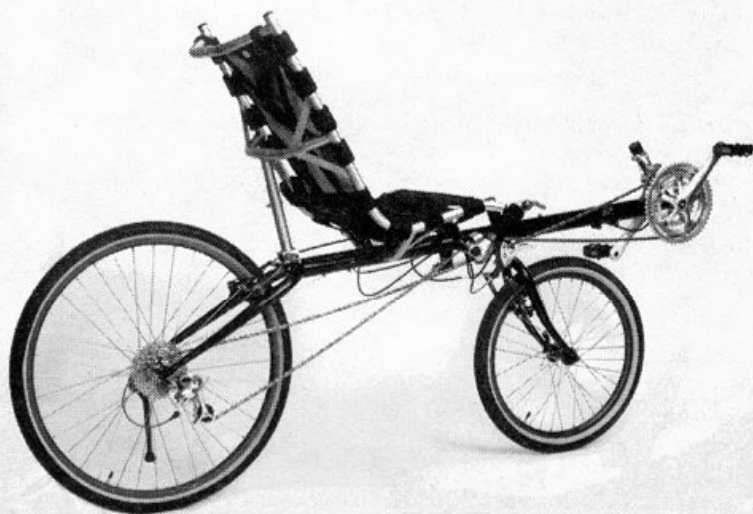
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"Dung Ho" at the flotation test — RCN staff photo



The Spirit of Mugga Flugga in the mud bog in Port Townsend—RCN

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"Milk Duds" in the mud bog — RCN staff photo

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The Rans Wave, Tailwind & Gliss

by Robert J. Bryant

Squint your eyes and the Rans Tailwind, Wave and Gliss look very similar. The fact of the matter is that they are. The bikes are all based upon the Tailwind concept—a simple design utilizing dual 20-inch wheels, a TIG welded CroMo frame and the comfortable Rans seat.

The Tailwind is the nucleus for these models. Once the ugly ducking of the Rans line—the Tailwind has blossomed. In the early years, it had a square main tube, a more upright head tube and much less refined steering geometry as well as an odd ball chopper-style handlebar.

■ DESIGN

The Tailwind has been refined into an exceptional performance “compact” that skirts the edge of being a LWB. The frame design includes a mix of a round mainframe tube and the chainstays that come out to the bottom bracket. The result is a good looking, nice riding and attractive machine.

The Tailwind has a fairly stiff rear end due to the rear frame triangulation, and rearward center of gravity (c.g.). This becomes most noticeable after riding a rear suspended compact. The Rans seat and seat base foam offer some passive suspension. Rans deliberately builds some passive front suspension into their compact and LWB designs. This can take some getting used to. While the rear end is fairly stiff, the front end tends to flex at the headtube and especially the T-bar above-seat steering.

The differences between the three bikes are not readily apparent, but they have taken this excellent concept and offered it in three very distinct market segments:

▲ THE WAVE

This is essentially a Rans Tailwind with some lower end components, fat tires and a 16” front wheel (instead of the Tailwind’s 20”). This drops the bottom bracket some two inches and totally changes the ride and feel of the bike. The Wave handles differently than either the Gliss or Tailwind. The fatter tires and smaller front wheel and lower bottom bracket make it feel like a mini-Tour Easy. There is more wheel flop/tiller effect than you’ll find on the Tailwind or Gliss, but it’s fine. It actually makes the handling more forgiving. The fat Primo V-Monsters will inspire confidence in new riders.

The ‘99 Wave had some mediocre low-end components in the wheelset. The rear wheel is a solid axle/bolt-on (non-quick release). The bike also uses a freewheel. The V-brakes and levers are ESP 5.0/7.0 with a 5.0 rear derailleur and shifter. The Tailwind uses 7.0 brakes, rear derailleur and shifter. The V-brakes stop the bike just fine—though they are probably overkill on this bike. The levers are the same as the Tailwind. The front derailleur is the same Shimano RSX—and front shifting is better due to the smaller chainrings than the Tailwind has. Frankly, I can’t really tell the difference between 5.0 and 7.0 shifting—other than the one gear.

The Wave is a \$700 bike with a \$400 seat. This is a terrific recumbent bargain. I give the Wave two big thumbs up. I love compacts for what they are. Simple bike trail cruisers that can be anything you want them to be. The bike is also ripe for a 3x7/63-speed conversion as it already has just a 7-speed, and needs a better rear wheel.

▲ THE TAILWIND

This is the compact performance machine. For light-medium weight medium height riders (to about six foot), this can be one very quick machine. If you climb off of a Wave and onto a Tailwind you will immediately notice that the bottom bracket is higher and the bike appears longer (due to the 20 inch front wheel). The bike has a light feel and the handling is a bit lighter. The bike tends to change direction quickly at medium to high speeds, though is intuitive. The ESP V-brakes stopped great. It is possible to pull full on the brakes with no wheel skidding. The 8/24 speed ESP 7.0 drivetrain shifts smoothly through the gears. The front shifting is another story. The 39/52/62 Dotek triple crank has some tall chainrings. The front derailleur is a road triple Shimano RSX. The

shifting was okay, though there are some annoying side effects. As a recumbent enthusiast, I am accustomed to the chain dragging on the derailleur cage in low gear. It’s a fact of life when you use chainrings this tall. Recumbent newbies who are buying Tailwinds may not be so forgiving. Since I like dual 20” wheels, I have always downplayed the Rocket/Tailwind large chainring shifting. The truth of the matter is that if this was my only recumbent—I’d outfit it with a SRAM Sachs 3x7 hub and get rid of the oversize chainrings (necessary to give the bike adequate gearing with a 20” drive wheel).

▲ THE GLISS

The Gliss has to be the most comfortable and smooth riding LWB ASS bike in the history of recumbents. The suspension and added wheelbase length moves the Gliss out of the compact spectrum and into the world of real LWB bikes.

The Gliss is definitely lost in the plethora of Rans models. It has been rare since its introduction. The bike has never really developed a character of its own, so it never gets much buzz (this can be said about many Rans models). So if we want to pick at the \$1995 price, you could say that the Gliss has the same seat, same T-bar steering, similar frame design and similar components (one notch up from the Tailwind), yet the price is double that of the Tailwind. Is it worth double? That is up to you to decide. In the world of custom quality enthusiast recumbents—even the Gliss is an affordable and beautiful recumbent.

The Gliss’ passive suspended front end, seat base and handlebars/stem, along with the rear air shock make the bike’s ride very smooth. Passive suspensions (seat, bars and frame flex) are not as good as an actual front suspension and we continually hear of riders who do not like the flex in the Rans LWB above-seat steering.

Gearing is an issue. As discussed above, the dual 20-inch wheels limit the high end of the gearing. The gear-inch range on a stock Gliss is 26.5-107 gear inches. The low is not low enough and the high is not high enough and the tall chainrings impair the shifting to some extent, though Rans has done a terrific job trying to avoid the Sachs 3x7 hub (though the bike comes with a braze-on for it). Our suggestion is to get your dealer to build a 3x7 rear wheel (63-speed conversion) or at the very least upgrade the cassette to a megarange 11-34.

■ COMFORT

You’ve all read the continuous raves by myself and others about the Rans seat. Well, the seat has changed. The ABS plastic seat base flexes up and down and riders will definitely have an opinion. I liked the seat more on the Gliss and Wave than I did on the Tailwind. I have no idea why. It is my guess that the higher bottom bracket and rearward center of gravity were part of it.

The new seat has been refined again for 2000 and is very comfortable. The foam is more contoured and gives you that “sit in” feeling. There are vent holes in the new foam as well. Their were occasional glitches with the first Taiwan Rans seats—that should be worked out for 2000. Rans is also working on some new optional high-performance seats (2001?).

■ ERGONOMIC PERFECTION

If you read one paragraph in this review, this should be it. Most LWB recumbents have low bottom brackets and require a fairly upright seat angle for the ergonomics to work. Otherwise, your riding position gets too open and you lose efficiency. And in the case of LWB ASS bikes, the controls get too far away and create even more ergonomic issues to deal with. The downside to the upright seat/low bottom bracket bikes is that it can lead to recumbent butt for some riders.

If you raise the bottom bracket upward, and allow the seat to lay back (recline) you get what is similar to a SWB riding position—but better—the bottom bracket is lower than the seat height. For comfort based



The Rans Tailwind



The Rans Wave

riders—this can be recumbent ergonomic bliss and the best riding position there is. Will this make you faster, more efficient, able to climb hills better? Probably not. Though I've always been one to say that if you are comfortable, you will climb well. I suffer from recumbent high bottom bracket/toe numbness disease, and this riding position does not induce toe numbness for me.

This ergonomic perfection does have some drawbacks. The center of gravity on these bikes tends to be rearward on all of them. This is due to the bottom bracket and seat placement combined with the long T-bar controls. This makes for bikes that are stable and like to go straight. Low speed maneuvering on the Tailwind and Gliss can be difficult. A low-speed weave when climbing is difficult on these bikes. The Wave's low-speed maneuverability is superior to the Tailwind and Gliss.

Rans quotes some very liberal sizing for these bikes. I am not doubting that they won't accept a 50.75 inch x-seam, but I am telling you that on especially the Tailwind and Wave, this will have the rear wheel heavily loaded and is not optimum. The Gliss solves this problem with an additional 5 inches of wheelbase. If you are tall, be sure to test ride and see if you are feeling "tail heavy."

■ DRIVETRAIN/CHAIN MANAGEMENT

One minor glitch to the Tailwind/Wave/Gliss design is chainline. At first glance, you'd say this is a great chainline—certainly far superior to every SWB—and this is correct.

Rans LWB bikes have a dual roller idler for both the upper/lower chain. They tend to be lightly loaded and seem mainly there to keep the chain off of the frame tubes. The Wave's 7/21-speed seemed to work well with negligible idler noise. The Tailwind has an 8/24-speed and there is some idler noise/vibration in the lower gears in each chainring. John Schlitter, formerly of Rans called this his "shift indicator." The Gliss has the most complex chainline due to the rear suspension swing arm, though we didn't notice any noise or vibration.

■ TOURING/USE

All three bikes can be toured with, however, the Tailwind and Wave's c.g. are already too rearward (especially for taller riders). Your best bet would be the Rans seat bag and a BOB trailer. Mounting a rack will take some diligence on your part with the Wave and Tailwind.

■ OPTIONS & ACCESSORIES

Rans offers fender sets, seat bags, a kickstand and they list fairing mounts (though we've never seen them—mounts come from Rans and fairings from Zzip). It's definitely not as easy to buy or mount a Rans fairing as it is from the competition (Easy Racers & BikeE).

■ RANS TRIO SIZING

The Rans sizing is pretty liberal. The bikes are supposed to fit riders from a 36 to a 50.75 inch x-seam. I have a 44.5 inch x-seam at 6 feet tall—and the bike feels a bit tail-heavy for me. I keep asking Rans for a Tailwind XL. I am not sure I'd recommend this bike to anyone much over my height. However, I am aware of 6'+ Tailwind owners who love their bikes. The Wave seems to fit (slightly) taller riders better—which is an odd statement. It must be the 16" front wheel. The Gliss fit me happily and perfectly. I guess it's the XL Tailwind (five inches more wheelbase).

■ VERDICT

Hey, what's not to like. The Wave is a fantastic bike trail cruiser/recreational city commuter entry-level recumbent. The Tailwind is a more aggressive/performance oriented compact LWB that is priced hundreds below its nearest competition (and it may be better suited for many riders than a true LWB ASS machine). The Gliss is the true enthusiast machine that combines ultimate comfort with performance with high-end components with rear suspension and a wheelbase that will accommodate taller riders. The bottom bracket is higher than traditional LWB machines, yet low enough to be comfortable and easy to use, while still allowing enough seat recline to alleviate the dreaded recumbent butt—ergonomic perfection.

The downside I would have to say is the gearing. Shifting these tall chainrings is no fun. I think I'd opt for a 3x7 hub conversion (all 3 have 3x7 cable braze-ons)—though this will be costly on the Gliss and Tailwind as the rear derailleur, shifter(s) and chainrings all need to be changed. With this in mind, look at your budget and possibly take a look at the Stratus. We don't particularly like the Primo Comet tires on the Tailwind and Gliss. We suggest something fatter, cushier and less flat-prone. Most owners and riders would probably agree that the T-bar above seat steering needs to be stiffer and the adjustment tweaked just a bit.

I loved the Tailwind and Wave, though I would like to see Rans take the design further. The first place I'd go is into an XL frame or perhaps experiment with a 26" rear wheel. As much as I love the road feel of the dual 20" wheels, I believe that they will have a negative effect on sales due to the gearing and the perception of a "kids bike" (the Vision R40 outsells the Rans Rocket). With Burley coming on board with a new 26/20 compact LWB and the big price gap between a Tailwind, Stratus and Easy Racers, it may be time for Rans to go to the next level.

■ ACCESS

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Web: www.rans.com



The Rans Gliss—photo courtesy of Rans

■ SPECIFICATIONS

WAVE
WB—61"; **SH**—23"; **BB**—18"; **FITS**—36-50.75 x-seam (Rans); **WT**—32 pounds (RCN); **PRICE**—\$795
FRAME—CroMo; **FK**—CroMo unicrown; **STEER**—T-bar ASS; **CRANK**—Dotek 30/42/52 crankset; **HS**—Ritchey Logic; **BB**—Shimano LP37 bottom bracket; **DR**—ESP 7.0/Shimano RSX 24-spd. **SHIFT**—Shimano 11-28 7-spd. freewheel; **CHAIN**—KMC; **GEAR INCH RANGE**—NA; **PEDALS**—NA **WHEELS**—406mm rear/305mm front; **RIMS**—Alex 101; **HUBS**—Quanda front/bolt on rear; **TIRES**—Primo V-Monster; **BRAKES**—ESP 5.0 V-brakes; **COLOR**—Electric Blue
RCN RATING—Bob Bryant B+

TAILWIND

WB—61"; **SH**—23"; **BB**—18.5"; **FITS**—36-50.75 x-seam (Rans); **WT**—32 pounds (RCN); **PRICE**—\$995
FRAME—CroMo; **FK**—CroMo unicrown; **STEER**—T-bar ASS; **CRANK**—Dotek 39/52/62 crankset; **HS**—Ritchey Logic; **BB**—Shimano LP37; **DR**—ESP 7.0/Shimano RSX 24-spd. **SHIFT**—Shimano 11-28 8-spd. cassette; **CHAIN**—KMC Z9000; **GEAR INCH RANGE**—NA; **PEDALS**—NA **WHEELS**—406mm 20"; **RIMS**—Alex DA16; **HUBS**—Shimano STX; **TIRES**—Primo Comet; **BRAKES/LEVERS**—ESP 7.0 V-brakes; **COLOR**—Emerald Green
RCN RATING—Bob Bryant B+

GLISS

WB—66"; **SH**—23"; **BB**—18.5"; **FITS**—36-50.75 x-seam (Rans); **WT**—32 pounds (RCN); **PRICE**—\$1995
FRAME—CroMo; **FK**—CroMo unicrown; **STEER**—T-bar ASS; **CRANK**—Shimano 105 42/52/62; **HS**—Ritchey Logic; **BB**—Shimano 105; **DR**—ESP 7.0/Shimano 105 27-spd. **SHIFT**—Shimano 11-32 9-spd. cassette; **CHAIN**—KMC Z9000; **GEAR INCH RANGE**—NA; **PEDALS**—NA **WHEELS**—406mm 20"; **RIMS**—Alex DA16; **HUBS**—Shimano Deore LX; **TIRES**—Primo Comet; **BRAKES/LEVERS**—ESP 9.0 V-brakes; **COLOR**—Lazer Black or Benz Silver
RCN RATING—Bob Bryant A-

KEY: WB=wheelbase; SH=seat height; BB=bottom bracket or BB height; WT=weight; FM=frame; HS=headset; FK=fork; STEER=steering/handlebars/stem; CRANK=crankset; DER=derailleurs; SHIFT=shifters; WHL=wheels; WHL BLD=wheel build; WARR=warranty

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Battle of the Big League Compacts

Rans Wave vs. BikeE CT

by Bryan Ball

When it comes to recumbent bike sales in the United States it's an undeniable fact the CLWB's rule the market. It is also more than fair to say that the CLWB market has been pretty much cornered by two companies—BikeE and Rans. Both companies are very popular choices for entry-level riders and both makers have two bikes each that lie very close together in the areas of price and quality. At the under \$700 price-point, BikeE's CT 2.0 is matched up face to face with the Wave from Rans. If you up the ante to \$1000 to \$1200 the Rans Tailwind faces direct competition from the BikeE AT 3.0. Well, enough talk, let's get to the riding.

BikeE CT 2.0 vs. Rans Wave

BikeE CT 2.0 - ☆☆☆☆ 1/4

When BikeE's CT 2.0 was introduced in mid 1998 it was nothing short of revolutionary. By moving some production overseas, and making some shrewd component choices, BikeE had brought the recumbent bicycle more within reach of the average cyclist. At recommended retail price of \$695, the Oregon-based company had produced a durable, high quality bike that wouldn't put an unreasonable dent in anyone's wallet. The bike seemed like a ray of light from the heavens to a lot of cyclists, and they sold like wildfire. Due to the mid-season introduction, and the obviously high degree of customer satisfaction, BikeE sent the CT 2.0 into Y2K with one major upgrade—gone is the controversial short back seat of old. It has been replaced with the much improved Sweet Seat that made its first appearance on the '99 AT 3.0. Many BikeE enthusiasts love the old seat, but the post office in Corvallis, Oregon hasn't been seeing many complaint letters about the Sweet Seat either.

In my opinion the only bad effect that the Sweet Seat has is on the sticker price. The CT 2.0 has risen from \$650 dollars in 1999 to \$695 for the year 2000. The CT 2.0 has one of the shortest learning curves of any recumbent bicycle. After a 10 second instructional speech, most anyone capable of riding an upright bike can ride a BikeE. It handles very easily and has a very open cockpit. It's by no means lightning fast, but it's predictable and has a very solid feel to it. The CT also attracts a lot of buyers because of its futuristic looks. Its clean lines and anodized finish have captured the gaze of more than a few wandering eyes. The centerpiece that the CT 2.0 is built around is its aluminum beam frame. The main beam looks a lot like an I-beam, allows for a high degree of seat adjustability, and leaves room for plenty of accessory mounts. The frame comes in two sizes, regular and large. At 5' 11", I am at the extreme range of the regular frame size. Anyone over 6' should probably opt for the large. The CT's drivetrain is the ubiquitous SRAM (formerly Sachs) 3x7 with an internally geared three speed rear hub and a seven speed cassette. The 3x7 works very well in most conditions, and eliminates any concerns regarding chain rub or chain length in extreme gears and provides an adequate range of gear inches for most situations. The only real drawback to the 3x7 is the fact that the internally geared hub does not shift well under heavy loads, but with a little bit of pre-planning and some experience, this becomes a non-issue for most riders.



The BikeE CT 2.0 (1999 model)

Rans Wave ☆☆☆ 1/2

After seeing BikeE's explosive sales of the CT 2.0 in 1998, Rans responded with the \$795 Wave in '99. To produce the Wave, Rans used its own overseas-made Tailwind frame, added some slightly downgraded components, and a smaller 16" front wheel. Fortunately for Rans, the 16" wheel and new fork don't adversely affect the bike's handling. It only sacrifices a degree of high-speed stability for improved manners in traffic. The frame is TIG-welded CroMo steel and uses a CroMo unicrown fork. The frame allows for plenty of fore and aft seat movement, but the seat can't be moved quite as easily as the BikeE unit. The frame is one size fits all and this could become a problem for riders much over 6' 2" or so. Rans spec'ed the bike with SRAM ESP 5.0 shifters, rear derailleur and brakes. The brake levers are SRAM's 7.0 units while the front derailleur is a Shimano RX100. The only

places where it's obvious that this is Rans' budget bike are its cheap looking Quando hubs, and the Dotek crankset. The 52-42-32 front chainrings are excellent in town and provide a lot of low gear for climbing, but with a maximum of 94.5 gear inches, the Wave runs out of steam well before the CT 2.0.

The seat is the same comfortable seat that has made Rans famous. This year, the seat is built overseas. The Rans seat has become a personal favorite for countless riders and has been so well received that many other companies offer it as an upgrade on their bikes. However, the new version has received a few complaints this year, due to its thicker, spongier foam and slippery cover. There have also been a few reports of seats breaking. These reports haven't been numerous and most people still rate the seat as the most comfortable in the business. When the rubber meets the road, one of the first differences that pops up between the CT 2.0 and the Wave is frame stiffness. While probably more comfortable, the Wave just doesn't have that same solid feel that can be found in the CT. Heavier riders will most likely feel a little more comfortable on the CT 2.0.

The Wave's long, flexy T-bars are also slightly disconcerting for beginner riders and increase the Wave's learning curve. However, after a few rides, riders should get used to the flex and the concern will probably go away. Rans is quick to point out that the bar flex is completely intentional. The bars provide some passive suspension and, according to Rans, make the bike more stable. While the CT 2.0 shines in town and in day-to-day riding, the Wave seems to be a little more at home on the open road. With a 60.5-inch wheelbase, the bike barely fits into the CLWB category. This makes it a little more difficult to horse around in traffic, but the long wheelbase and comfy seat would probably be preferred for longer rides. Unfortunately, on longer rides, the Wave's lack of a high gear comes into play. Since it uses the same frame as the more expensive Tailwind, the Wave has plenty of braze-ons for racks and balances out equally with the CT 2.0. Both bikes carry a load very well for CLWB's, however, when loaded down, the Wave's superior braking gives it a slight edge.

Winner? BikeE CT 2.0

The BikeE's easy handling and lower price just barely edge out the Wave's comfort and superior braking. With the exception of its gearing, the Wave shines when out on the open road, but in this price range, it's unlikely that many will be used as long distance bikes and this capability may be sadly overlooked.

In the entry-level market, rideability is paramount, and the BikeE CT 2.0 is much easier to ride for the first time than the Wave. BikeE specializes in the CLWB (compact) style of recumbent. They have committed dealers, multiple models and lots of specialized accessories. The bottom line is that if you're just entering the market and have hardly even seen a recumbent, but want a bike that will be useful to you for a long time, go for the BikeE CT 2.0. If you've already put a few miles in on recumbents, want to do a little touring or take longer rides and aren't that concerned about going all that fast on the downhills, maybe the Wave is for you. No one is ever going to tout the CT 2.0 as the fastest 'bent on the planet, but BikeE has the entry-level market secured. Quite simply, there is no recumbent that is easier to ride or easier to live with than the BikeE CT 2.0.

For 2000, the now 24-speed Wave has had a price increase to \$895. If your budget allows, take a look at the Rans Tailwind or new Burley. □

Choosing a Compact

by Bob Bryant

▲ What is a Compact !?

(CLWB or Compact Long Wheelbase). By our goofy definition, a "compact" is based on a LWB design with the crankset behind the front wheel. A compact is where the seat is raised and a smaller diameter wheelset is used to make the bike....more compact.

To confuse matters more, compacts are sometimes referred to as MWB (medium wheelbase). However, based again on our goofy definitions, an MWB has the crankset at or damn close to the headtube. MWB recumbents are the Vision R32, Radius C4, and Recumbent Barn Redbent.

If you are a medium height/medium sized rider, you can ride just about any compact. If your height edges toward or above 6', the Rans Wave and Tailwind develop a very rearward c.g. Some riders don't care about this, especially if they are light-medium weight, or don't ride up hills. If you do care, BikeE offers the "XL" and will even build special "XXL" frames for large and tall riders. They also build XS (Extra Small) frames as well.

The Rans Tailwind has a 20" front wheel. This DOES improve performance. The Tailwind has always been known as a hot little performer. Every so often I read about somebody wanting to convert their BikeE to a 20" wheel. Just buy a Tailwind. The Tailwind also has a slightly higher bottom bracket, which also adds to the performance. The Tailwind is a great bike, but it is for on-road riding. The combination of the stiff frame, rearward c.g., 20" drive-wheel and lack of rear suspension make it a stiff ride.

In this case, opting for the luxurious BikeE AT with Cane Creek rear suspension shock makes a lot of sense. I have always enjoyed suspended bikes, but never found them necessary. That is....until we relocated to Port Townsend, Washington. Now, almost 50% of my riding is offroad, on trails, paths and/or paved roads with rough concrete and/or light sand/gravel over the top. A rear suspension and some meaty fat tires are worth their weight in gold. So be sure to think about where you will be riding. Recumbents do fine on fire roads, unpaved bike paths and even some easy singletrack. You can get as gonzo as you like. If offroading is in your future, BikeE is a great bet.

All else being equal, the question of which brand to choose is not as difficult as it may seem. BikeE lives, eats and breathes compact. They have a full line of accessories including a 20" wheel stationary training stand, their own shock pump, a BikeE computer, fenders, shock boot and we even saw a composite stem/riser piece that will be available soon.

The Wave has that great seat and the Tailwind can offer improved performance over a CT, AT or Wave (though BikeE does have the "NX" performance compact), the fact remains that Rans' compacts get lost in the plethora of excellent Rans models and don't get the adequate attention that they might if Rans specialized in compacts, too.

Compact News 2000

by Bob Bryant

While the entry level, low-cost BikeE CT and Rans Wave prices sneak up for the 2000 season, there are some other choices for the Compact connoisseur.

\$499-\$529—Sun SuperCruiser EZ-1SC J & B Imports is a national bike parts wholesaler who has licensed the EZ-1 from Gardner Martin/Easy Racers and will distribute the bike to every bike shop in the USA through its regional warehouses and sales force. This bike may quickly become the best selling recumbent in the nation. The bike will be a 21-speed, have an Easy Racers Kool Back-like seat, square steel frame, V-brakes and a 406/305mm wheel combo (same as a BikeE CT).

\$1299—Burley Design Coop of Eugene, Oregon has a new compact/LWB (we're not sure yet). It has rear suspension, remote above-seat steering and converts to a SWB. Burley is a leader in the tandem and child trailer market and they say, "recumbents are bigger than tandems," and they want in.

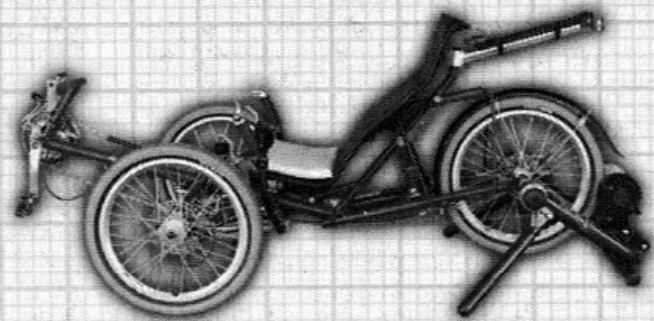
\$1599—BikeE FX: In what may be the coolest "compact" on the recumbent planet, BikeE has a full suspension mountain bike model for 2000, called the "FX." This model is built in the USA and uses the "NX" steering geometry, but has a mid-drive (triple crankset) that is shifted via a front derailleur. The FX comes with a short back (old style CT seat, yet cut down), or you can order with a Sweet Seat at no charge. The cool thing about this bike is that it can be set up as a hybrid or even a full suspension road bike. By the time you read this, we'll have our test FX.

\$2199—BikeE E2: BikeE is slated to introduce its new tandem in February of 2000.

▲ More Compact Info

We did a "Compact Buyers' Guide in RCN#43 which is still available. The Linear Compact was reviewed in RCN#40 and the BikeE CT and NX were reviewed in RCN#50. (issue sold out/road tests available for \$3). We also suggest that you take a look at RCN#45, our LWB issue. □

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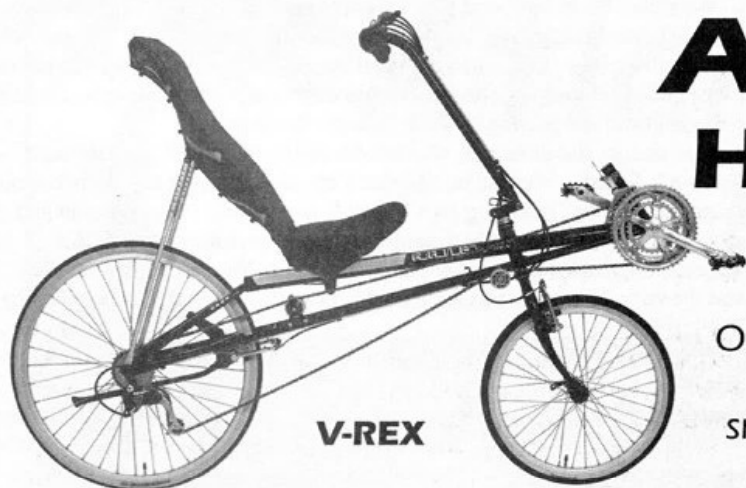
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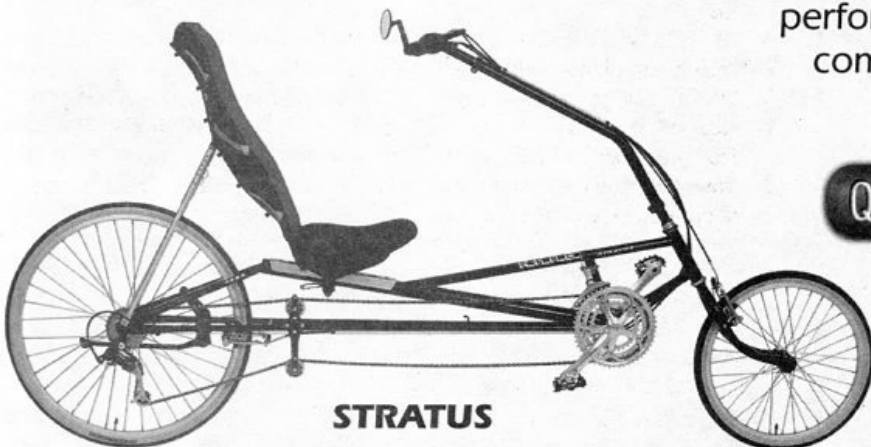
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BikeE Does MountE

by Bill Conklin

It was a beautiful blue sky morning in Denver, Colorado—a perfect day to make a recumbent ascent of Mount Evans. This is the highest automobile road in the United States. I got up early, ate a quick breakfast and got the equipment ready for the expedition.

Riding bikes at a high altitude not only takes a lot of energy, but it takes some preparation and the right equipment. The weather can change instantly at 14,000 feet. Cyclists starting a ride in shorts may end up in a rain-suit with gloves and an ear band before the ride is over. So I got the rain suits, pile jackets, first aid kit, cameras, cell phone, and bike repair kit, water and Power bars together and loaded two BikeE Airtechs with special low gearing on to the Subaru. I stopped to pick up my friend Jill and we merged onto I-70—heading out of Denver. About an hour later we got off at the Mount Evans exit.

As I drove up the road to Echo Lake, I thought about my plans for this trip. I have heard individuals claim for several years now that recumbents can't climb hills. I decided to prove them wrong—and we have a few hills here in Colorado. The true test would be to climb the highest automobile road in the Continental United States on a recumbent. I picked the BikeE because of its semi-recumbent position, which is probably the most efficient recumbent rider position for hill climbing. We arrived at the entrance to the Evans highway, paid our entrance fee and headed toward the Summit Lake parking lot to start the ride. The road from Echo Lake to Summit Lake is quite scary; it is narrow and winding. The exposure on parts of it is so steep that it seems a car could fall a thousand feet if it missed a turn. I did not enjoy the drive to or from Summit lake, the exposure is less on the road above the lake. The ride is approximately 5 miles and a 2,000 foot elevation gain. Mount Evans is a 14,000 foot mountain and is on the list of the highest peaks in Colorado.

We parked the car at Summit Lake, unloaded the bikes and loaded the BikeE bag with our equipment. I also added bright vests and fiberglass wands with twirlers. Several people came over to us and asked if we were going to ride up the hill. They were from Florida and couldn't believe we were planning to do it. They couldn't breathe at 12,000 feet.

After taking a few photos of the incredible view, we hopped on the bikes and started up the hill. The bikes behaved well on the climb. We geared low and kept our feet spinning while getting pushing leverage from the seat back. Although you cannot stand on a recumbent, you can certainly push hard with the support from the seat back. The new BikeE Sweet Seat worked very well. After about a mile we stopped and took some great pictures. We then continued slowly and consistently up the mountain. The view was remarkable. As we got higher and higher, we could see the summits of many of Colorado's lesser peaks on the horizon. The traffic was infrequent because we chose to ride on a weekday with an early morning start—which is a good idea due to afternoon thunderstorms.

At the 3-mile marker, we stopped to watch several beautiful, furry white mountain goats grazing by a pristine pond. They didn't show any fear of recumbent riders—even though it might be the first time they had ever seen recumbent bicycles. The road continued up, winding in steeper sections until we came to a wide place where we could sit and rest. One lady with an obnoxious canine asked us if we wanted a ride; she was dismayed at our presence and our alien contraptions (recumbent bicycles).



Bill climbing MountE—photo by Jill

A fellow on a wedgie MTB who had been dropped off at the summit to enjoy the ride down, stopped to try out our bikes. He thought they looked pretty cool.

Time came for the final assault as we slowly spun our way up the last 1.5 miles to the summit. As we arrived at the parking lot, we were met with many looks of curiosity. "Did you ride those things up here?" "Was it hard?" "How long does it take to learn to ride one of those?" "What kind of bike is that?" The BikeE is a real conversation piece. It is great to be one of the first ones riding future bicycle technology. What a great icebreaker it is! One retired fellow was so excited, he rode the bike around the summit

parking area about 5 times. He liked it so much that I was afraid he might ride off down the mountain. He ended up taking a brochure from me. I think there is a good chance he will become a recumbent rider as well. We took a few summit photos and I called BikeE on my cell phone to brag about the ascent. Let the wedgie riders drool not only at the comfortable relaxed ascent, but on the descent as well—wedgie technology is a thing of the past.

We suited up in our wind jackets, pants and full gloves for the descent. Clouds began to form and the summit area was covered in a fine mist. We started down in a cloud and overheard the sputter of a lonely single-engine plane above. Hopefully, the pilot had instruments so that he could avoid a collision with the peak as he flew through the clouds.

Descending the mountain was terrific. Although a wedgie rider can climb a hill easily because he can stand up, he will never experience the exquisite pleasure of sitting on a Sweet Seat, looking straight ahead and all around at the scenery while virtually flying down miles of beautiful mountain highway. The ride ended all too soon. We loaded up the bikes and drove to Idaho Springs for a cold beer and tasty Buffalo burger at the Buffalo Bar.

This trip not only shows that a recumbent can climb a mountain, but that it can climb the highest road in the United States with ease. I am 54 years old and my riding partner is 49. Although I have previously climbed Mount Evans on roller skates and a Unicycle, my partner had never ridden up a mountain and she had previously only spent an hour getting used to the BikeE.

I don't know if Mount Evans has been climbed on a recumbent before, but it is possible that this expedition was a first ascent. I suggest that you come to Colorado and give recumbent mountain climbing a try. If you can't come to Colorado, go out and ride some hills around your house on your recumbent—work up to climbing mountain passes. It opens up an entirely new dimension to recumbent cycling. □

Editor's Note: The BikeE often gets pigeon-holed as a "beginner" or "entry-level" recumbent bicycle. Just when you try and generalize about them, another rider accomplishes a great feat riding...a BikeE. Many riders choose BikeE for the user-friendly riding position, easy handling, easy hauling, affordability, ease of purchase (lots of dealers) and just plain and pure recumbent simplicity. BikeE riders are among the friendliest recumbent riders. They might not come in first place (here I go generalizing, again...), but they are fun-loving riders who truly enjoy and ride the wheels off of their bikes.



ABOVE: Bill Conklin at the summit—photo by Jill

BELOW: Bill's friend Jill climbs MountE—Bill Conklin



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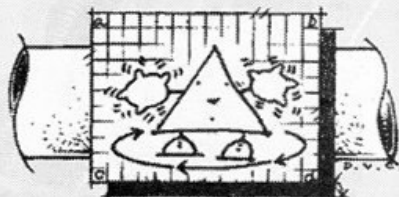
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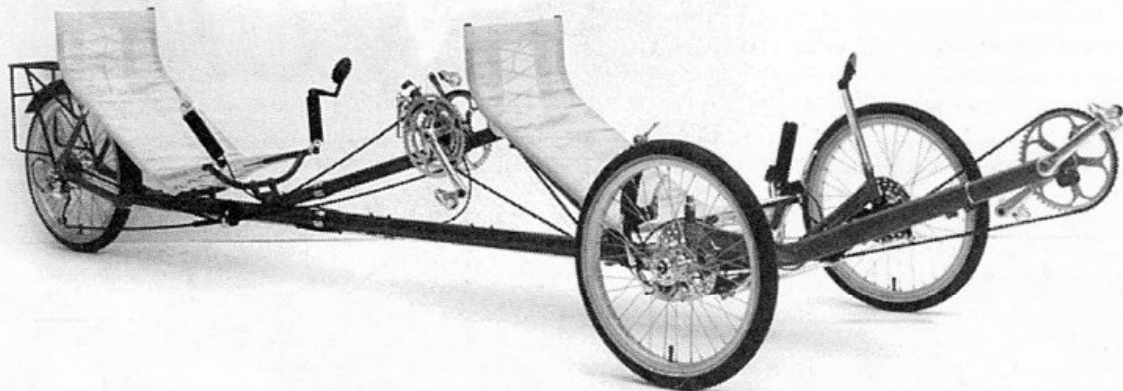
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The Learning Curve — Pedals & Shoes

by Tony Sowers

As a newbie to recumbent bicycling, I had to start from the beginning. I thought I would use good walking shoes and things would be fine—WRONG! Herewith, some conclusions in the hope of being useful to other beginners.

- ✓ In a recumbent, particularly a Short WheelBase (SWB), one's feet tend to fall off the pedals!
- ✓ When biking relatively long distances, the pressure on the bottom of your feet, if you don't "pedal in a circle" a bit, cuts off some of the blood circulation and leads to "hot" feet.
- ✓ Flexible shoes, even if relatively stiff, cause tired foot bottoms.

▲ STAYING ON THE PEDALS

This turns out not to be trivial. In order to keep your feet on the pedals, you either have to lift the feet with your legs, or you have to keep some pressure on the pedal at all times. Mostly, you use pressure on the rough surface of the pedal. Over long periods of time, this pressure cuts off blood circulation and you have no way to "rest" from the pressure. The resulting "hot" feet get VERY uncomfortable.

▲ FLEXIBLE SHOES

They are comfortable to wear and walk in, but there's a difference between biking and walking. In walking, you take pressure off the bottom of your foot with each stride. In addition, when walking, the pressure is distributed across the entire bottom of your foot, while the bike pedal is a LOT smaller than that.

▲ PEDAL IN A CIRCLE

This phrase refers to doing some pull on the upstroke as well as push on the downstroke. Clearly, this can only be done if one's shoes are, somehow, attached to the pedals. The benefit, in addition to the equivalent of about one gear change of additional power, lies in the release of pressure on the bottom of the feet and the consequent infusion of fresh blood. "Hot" feet no longer happen!

▲ CONCLUSIONS

Buy the stiffest riding shoes you can find—NO FLEX! Use clipless pedals or clips so you can "pedal in a circle."

Selecting the proper pedal is important. They need to offer the following: Positive attachment to the pedal—no "falling out." Easy extraction in an emergency. Easy insertion, even under load up a hill. Ability to swivel through a large heel angle to avoid "heel strike" with the front wheel (SWB).

Almost any type of attachment pedal will give firm attachment, clips or "clipless."

▲ EASY EXTRACTION

This is a matter of practice. It does take time and repetition to learn how to quickly extract from the chosen pedal system. You will come to a stop, forget to extract, and fall over—probably several times. If you're like me, you won't enjoy the embarrassment of the fall and you WILL learn to extract when needed. It may take awhile before you are confident of your skill in this regard.

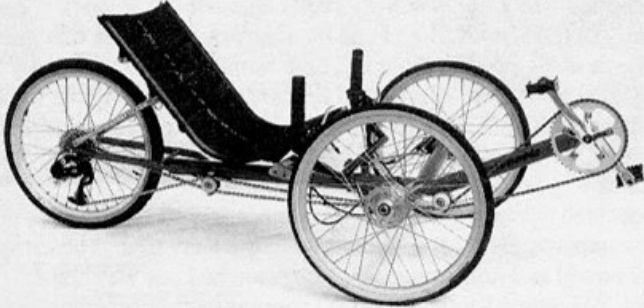

▲ EASY INSERTION

All pedal designs strive to be easy to insert, but what is easy on a wedge and easy on a recumbent can be different. The old-fashioned toe-clip is cheap and fairly easy, but is pretty unhandy and doesn't swivel. I purchased a set of SPD compatible (K2) pedals and found that they did the job, BUT were not easy to get into. I had to "mess around" almost every time and had to have some space to coast to do the job. I could NOT get into them reliably on a hill. My wife has a set of Speedplay Frogs. They

are a LOT easier to get into, but see comments on swivelling, below. I've recently purchased a pair of BeBop pedals. These are a cinch to get into. Insertion consists of placing the feet in approximately the right place and pedalling away. It can readily be done on a steep hill.

▲ SWIVELLING

This is a real problem when riding in steep country on a SWB. A sharp steering correction, such as needed for balancing at very low speeds or doing a U-turn, will bring the front of the front wheel into contact with your heel. If you cannot swivel your heel outwards without detaching, you will get "knocked out" of the pedal. Naturally, this always happens when climbing a bad hill when you have the least opportunity to get back in. Toe clips do not allow much swivel. The SPD system allows about 4 degrees, then you are OUT. I have been unable to get back in under those circumstances. Speedplay Frogs have a bit more swivel action (around 20 degrees), but when you exceed their limit, you are released, but not truly out until you release pressure on the pedal. With practice it will be possible to swivel to clear the front wheel and then swivel back into place. The latch is quite shallow, however, and it appears that it may be difficult to do this reliably. If you do come out, getting back in on a hill is possible, but troublesome. The BeBop pedals also allow 20 degrees of swivel, but they do not FORCE you out. If you keep pressure on the pedal, you can exceed the "limit" and simply swivel back in to lock without losing your pedal rhythm or your anchor point on the pedal. Most importantly, if you DO come out, you can get back in easily, even under load. □



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'Bent on the Katy Trail

Written by Betty Kolar
as told by Ted Hardy

Last February I answered the telephone and it was my biking buddy Betty with another hair-brained scheme.

"Hey Ted," Betty declared, "let's go to Missouri this summer!"

"Missouri?" I inquired.

"Yup. There is a 200-mile bike trail across the state called the Katy State Trail. The surface of the Katy is crushed limestone and besides, it is flat! No hills!"

The previous week she was spouting about wanting to go on The Lighthouse Tour, (an organized bike ride in Nova Scotia). I really wasn't excited about going on another organized ride. Now she wants to go to Missouri? She continued to rattle on. "I just read about it on the net. The Missouri River follows almost the whole length of the trail! Maybe, we can kayak in the river. I've never been to Missouri and we could bike and visit all the wineries along the way. Wouldn't that be fun? And the bluffs are supposed to be spectacular. And we could..."

I listened to her yakkity yaking. I couldn't get a word in edgewise. When Betty finally paused, I was able to jump in and said, "Say no more. We're going to Missouri."

Betty rides a road bike and I ride a '96 R-45 Vision recumbent. It has approximately 15,000 miles on it. The Vision is very comfortable and painless. I enjoy riding in a reclined position, watching the scenery pass.

Last year we went to Acadia National Park in Maine. We brought our bikes hoping to ride the carriage trails in Acadia. We were quite disappointed when we discovered that our skinny road tires could not handle the loose gravel surface. We needed fat tires. With that in mind, I knew we had to do something with our bikes.

Betty purchased a mountain bike to ride on the Katy Trail.

I considered riding a hybrid upright, though after a 20 mile ride—I was in pain. My hands were numb, my back ached and my butt was sore. It was not fun—so I rode my Vision. Betty complained that the saddle was uncomfortable on her new bike. (I just can't seem to talk her into getting a recumbent. I know she'd love it.) Since our trail is paved, I knew that my new bike would not provide a comfortable ride on the Katy Trail. I went to the bike shop and told them I wanted the fattest tires that would fit on the rims on my Vision.

We finalized our plans using the information from the book by Brett Dufur entitled, *The Complete Katy Trail Guidebook*. The book contains the history of the Katy Railroad and the many communities that grew up along the railroad, points of interest, bike shops, wineries, eateries, lodging, directions and maps to trail heads, etc. Everything we wanted to know about the Katy Trail was at our fingertips. If we wanted further information, we asked the locals. Missourians were very friendly and did not hesitate to go out of their way to be helpful.

We decided to camp in my pop-up camper equipped with A/C, at various campgrounds in close proximity to the Katy trail. The campgrounds served as a home base as we hopped our way across Missouri. We camped at the following campgrounds: Steamboat Junction, Bluffton; Knob Noster State Park, Knob Noster; Bobber Lake Campground, Boonville; Finger Lake State Park, Columbia and Dr. Edmund A. Babler Memorial State Park in Chesterfield.

Time was *not* of the essence. I am retired and Betty, a teacher, was off for the summer. The plan was to ride the trail at our leisure. The weather dictated how many miles we rode each day. Towns were spaced approximately every 10 miles. If a thunderstorm was in the forecast, we took the day off. We didn't want to get caught in the downpour because there wasn't anywhere on the trail to take cover. During the heat wave when the heat index reached over 100, we rode early in the mornings or in the evening when it was a bit cooler. We'd stay in the pop-up with the A/C running at full blast during the heat of the day. We usually took the day off when we moved to the next campground.

When time allowed, we went for a ride in my pick-up to explore the

surrounding areas and visit a few points of interest. We went on a tour to the Stone Hill Winery and participated in the wine tasting in Hermann. The Cooper County Jail and Hanging Barn in Boonville left me speechless. The last hanging was in 1930 and the jail was closed in 1978. That was one place you did not want to serve time for breaking the law. Daniel Boone's Home was located in Defiance. Daniel spent his final days in this four-story home that he built at the age of 67.

Typically, we drove to the trailheads and rode anywhere from 10 to 25 miles in one direction then turned around and went back in the other direction. In other words, we ended up doing the Katy trail twice.

We began our journey at Steamboat Junction Campground in the ghost town of Bluffton on July 1st. The Missouri River was at flood stage due to the recent rains. The farmers were beginning to worry about the river flooding their crops. The flood in '93 destroyed 75 miles of the trail plus devastated the crops and towns on the low lands. In fact the flood wiped out the town of Rhineland with 63 inches of water. The town relocated to higher ground. A few days later, a cold front passed through and it was perfect riding weather. Following the heat wave, humidity set in. The Missouri River receded. The trail became dusty. You would not believe how dirty we were at the end of our daily ride.

In 1986, the Missouri-Kansas-Texas (MK&T) Railroad, known as the Katy, ceased operation. The once flourishing towns began to disappear at this time, leaving behind a few remnants of the life of yesteryear. Landowners were opposed to the idea of transforming the MK&T Railroad into a recreational facility—a 200 mile-long flat hiking and biking trail from Clinton to Machens. Edward D. (Ted) Jones, Jr. donated \$220,000 and later an additional two million dollars for the development of the trail. The original deed of the landowners, which were mostly farmers, stated that when the railroad ceased operation, the land would return to them. The generous donation from Mr. Jones allowed the Missouri Department of Natural Resources to secure the right-of-way. The grand opening of the trail was in September 1996. Presently, 185 miles of the Katy Trail are open, from Sedalia to St. Charles.

We ran into one of the irate farmers who lived besides the trail. He thought we were insane for coming to Missouri from Florida just to ride the entire length of the Katy Trail, much less on a bicycle. Yet, other users were delighted to hear of our venture and wished us well.

The majority of the cyclists were riding either hybrids or mountain bikes. Yes, there were a few who were on road bikes. We passed the roadies where the surface, (west of North Jefferson, east of Rocheport area and east of Green Bottom Road), was hard packed and smooth due to heavy traffic of people biking/walking the trail.

The remainder of the trail, where ghost towns, pastureland and farmland exist, was unpredictable. The surface had pot holes, ruts, wash outs, rocks, fallen tree limbs, debris from bush hogging, loose gravel, and/or fine sand. The fatter tires allowed my Vision to handle this varied surface like a charm.

The yellow flies had a tendency to swarm around me as I maintained an average speed of 10 mph. I watched them dive towards my legs for a fast food snack. Meanwhile, the wide treads on my rear tire collected pebbles. The velocity of the wheel threw the pebbles up into my helmet or my lap. The pebbles entered through the vents of my helmet and settled in my hair. Occasionally, I would stop to remove the extra load I was carrying on my head. This was irritating since I was never quite sure what was hitting me. Was it a hungry yellow fly or a pebble? A rear fender would have eliminated the pebble problem.

I sat back and enjoyed the natural splendors of Missouri. The trail travels through many types of landscapes, including, dense forests, wetlands, deep valleys, open pastureland and gently rolling farm fields. Many of the fields contained rows and rows of corn. After many miles of cornfields, we had to pause and take our picture with the corn.



Ted Hardy on the Katy Trail—Betty Kolar

The Missouri River flows about 5 mph. The water was “muddy.” It reminded me of chocolate milk. During our ride we saw: towering Montiteau bluffs, Louis and Clark cave, a faded remnant of Native petroglyph, an Amish farm, an abandoned grain elevator and remnants of the flourishing towns of the past. We also saw an abundance of wildlife including deer, fox, groundhogs, rabbits, snakes, squirrels, toads, birds, and turtles. And of course, cows, horses and goats in pastures.

At times, I found myself mesmerized by the scenery. One time, a spectacular bluff towered over us. I’d look up to absorb the beauty and Betty awoke me from the trance by yelling, “The River!” I found myself drifting toward the edge of the trail that dropped down into the banks of the Missouri River.

The Missouri Department of Natural Resources was very good about posting signs that warned of “rough surfaces” on the trail. We would proceed through these sections with caution. There were also places that were unmarked. We rode mostly in single file and the one in lead would verbally warn the other of any imperfections on the surface, especially, loose gravel and holes. When I was intrigued with the scenery, I wasn’t watching the trail as closely as I should have. Betty yelled, “Hole” and before I could react... “THUMP”—the wheels ran through it. The jarring gave me a backache. I knew I ought to glance at the scenery and pay more attention to the surface of the trail. A full suspension recumbent would have softened the blow.

It didn’t take me long to realize that recumbents are a foreign human powered vehicle in this neck of Missouri. During the twelve days it took us to complete the Katy trail, we encountered two other bents. We met a man in Rocheport, who had build a three-wheel recumbent and another in Treloar, who had recently purchased a Rans Stratus in Minneapolis. He had 70 miles on the bike and was taking it on its first run on the Katy.

Once again, my Vision and I were the center of attention! I was one of

the first to introduce a recumbent on Withlacoochee State Trail 3 years ago. It bothered Betty that I gained all sorts of attention from my Vision whenever we went biking. She is petite, attractive and rides a decent road bike. No one looked twice at her. People would do a double take when I came down the trail and stop me to chat about my bent. Today, recumbents of all kinds are a common sight on the Withlacoochee Trail. She thought my attention getting days were finally over. But they weren’t.

People stared in awe and stopped me on the Katy to discuss this strange looking bike.

Annoyingly, Betty said, “Here we go again!”

They asked, “Where did you get that?”

“Did you build it?”

“Is it comfortable?”

“Is it expensive?”

“What did you pay for it?”

“What is the advantage over an upright?”

“Why do you ride it?”

Plus, the comments, “Awesome,” “I need one of those.”

“You look relaxed.”

“I bet it’s easy on the knees.”

“Way to go!”

“It looks like a comfortable way to ride.”

“Cool!”

Speaking of cool. One day we rode a total of 23 miles between Boonville and Pilot Grove. It was an extremely warm day—the high was 87. I was very thirsty upon my arrival at Pilot Grove. I made a beeline toward the water fountain. The sun was shining on the fountain. My plan was to turn on the water, let it run a few seconds to let the water cool before satisfying my thirst. As I turned the knob the water shot out of the fountain with full force. It was like a geyser. The stream went straight up

and sprayed the overhang on the roof. It startled me, missed my head by a fraction of an inch and I jumped back.

Betty saw me react and asked, "What's the matter?"

I giggled and replied, "Oh, nothing. Why don't you get a drink of water."

She sensed that something wasn't quite right. "No, what's wrong with it?"

"Nothing," I answered, "Come and get a drink of water." She again refused and sipped from her Camel Bak. I told her what had happened and we laughed. She thought Candid Camera was on location.

The Katy Trail Guidebook mentioned a brown refrigerator with snacks using "the honor system" visible from the trail at Clifton City. I assumed that the refrigerator was no longer in service since the book was published. There were no signs of life on the day we arrived. There was a church and two abandoned buildings. We walked towards the buildings and there it was; the brown refrigerator on the sidewalk. Surely the refrigerator was no longer in use. On the door of the brown refrigerator was a weathered sign. It read, "Honor System Pop - Candy 50 Chips - Crax 30"

Betty was cautious, "Be careful when you open it, you never know what will pop out of it." We heard a faint hum of the refrigerator's motor. I opened the door slowly and felt the cool air wrap around my arm. The interior light came on. The brown refrigerator was full with a variety of ice-cold soda, candy, chips and a 2 liter bottle of cold water. The note said to use the cold water to refill water bottles. A butter container holding change sat on the bottom shelf.

To the left of the brown refrigerator was an old top loading washer. It was filled with wrappers from the candy and chips. Beside it sat a pail lined with a grocery bag holding empty recyclable aluminum soda cans. We did not see anyone in the vicinity. Days later we returned while riding from Pilot Grove thirsty and hungry. So, we shopped at the re-stocked, self-service, brown refrigerator.

We passed miles and miles of cropland, mostly cornfields, towards the town of Augusta. From a distance, the fields were broken up by flood lights, bleachers and a concession stand. Betty curiously asked, "Ted, is that a ball field out there?" I redirected my attention and said, "It looks like one."

A man (who worked for the Missouri Department of Natural Resources) was painting the restrooms at the Augusta trailhead.

Betty pointed, "Is that a ball field out there?"

He confirmed it. She continued, "You know, that sure is a funny place to put a ball field."

He replied, "It's the only flat place in town."

It looked like the scene from the movie, "Fields of Dreams"—a ball field surrounded by farmland. He mentioned that in the winter, Augusta uses the trail for dogsled races.

The day we rode the distance between Pilot Grove and Clifton City, we were crossing one of the original MK&T Railroad Bridges. We saw a couple approaching us heading east. Their bikes were loaded down with four panniers, a bag on the rear rack and a bar bag, on each bike. The four of us stopped. It was their first day touring self-contained. The

woman announced that we were the first cyclists they met that morning—Day 1 of their journey. The Ohio couple used the information from the Katy Trail Guidebook to plan their itinerary. They planned to complete the trail in six days, averaging 30 miles a day. They had made reservations at various B&B's or motels that were within a few miles of the trail. No matter what Mother Nature had planned for the day's weather, they were forced to continue onward. We bid each other a safe trip.

The same afternoon, we caught up to the Ohio couple at the Pilot Grove Trailhead. We joined Tim and Pat sitting at the picnic table under a tree. It was pleasantly cool in the shade. We ate the lunch Betty had packed for us. They munched on sandwiches, purchased from the grocery across from the trailhead. The sandwich I ate was unusual. I made it a point to ask Betty about it later. We sat and talked to Tim and Pat for hours. They were both schoolteachers who spend their vacations and holidays traveling about the U.S. We had visited many of the places they had been to. We shared stories about our travels; compared notes about the Katy and the trail guidebook, teaching, bicycles, lodging, our home states and so on.

We departed with the usual closing salutations. Little did we know that we'd continue to run into them as they plodded east and we continued our leisurely hopscotch on the trail.

"Betty, what was in that sandwich we ate?" I wondered

"Oh, did you like it? It was a peanut butter, banana and raisin sandwich." Even though it hit the spot after burning all the calories and carbs from riding, I made sure that it was the last lunch she packed.

Two days later we bumped into Tim and Pat between Easley and Hartsburg. Again they were heading east and we were riding west. We continued onward after exchanging a few points of interest and discussed trail conditions. We finished the day's ride at Hartsburg. As soon as we loaded our bikes into the back of the pick up, Tim appeared and invited us to join them for lunch at a restaurant in a red caboose. Again we compared notes about what we had encountered thus far on the Katy.

Three days later, Betty and I were riding between Dutzow and Weldon Springs. We stopped at Dave & Jacques for lunch. We were about finished eating and whom did we see walking their bikes? Yup, Tim and Pat. Betty ran out to flag them down to join us for lunch. This was their final and longest day. Since we didn't complete the east end of the trail we decided to ride with them to St. Charles.

The trail was re-routed due to the road construction in the St. Charles area. The trail was rough. When we came upon the crossroad and the path that led to the Days Inn, Tim and Pat's journey was completed. As far as they were concerned they were finished with their six-day trek on the Katy Trail. Betty felt they should have continued on the last few remaining miles to the very end of the completed trail.

We said our "final" good-byes to our new friends. Betty and I were the first and last couple they encountered on the Katy.

Tim and Pat will be visiting Florida in November. We made plans to meet them and ride the "paved" bike trail on Sannibel Island. We continued east as far as the trail allowed us.

We completed our final 40 miles, (Rhineland to Treloar) of the trail the



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following day, July 14th. It took us 12 days to ride a total of 389 miles of the Katy State Trail.

I enjoyed the ride. To me it was a challenge to ride "crushed semi-packed limestone" since I am experienced riding on paved roads and trails. The July heat and the dust made the ride long and treacherous. The Katy trail would be most enjoyable when the weather is a bit cooler in the fall, when the autumn colors appear, or in the spring. I am glad that I had the opportunity to visit such a beautiful state. Now I am ready to explore the other rails to trails in the U.S.

"Where to next, Betty?" ☐

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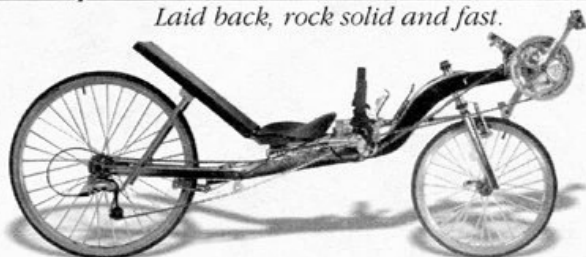
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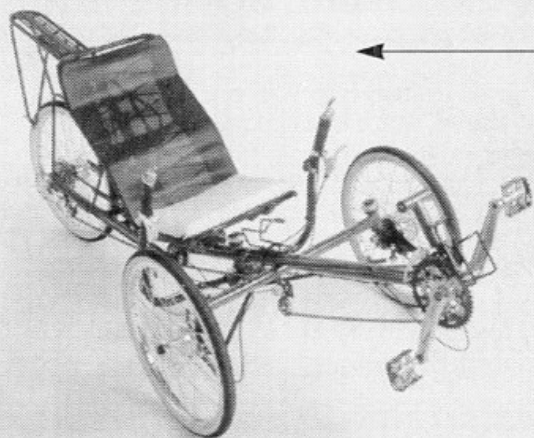
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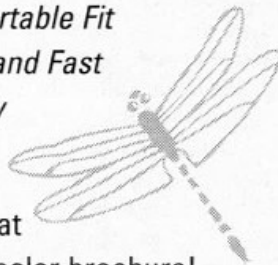
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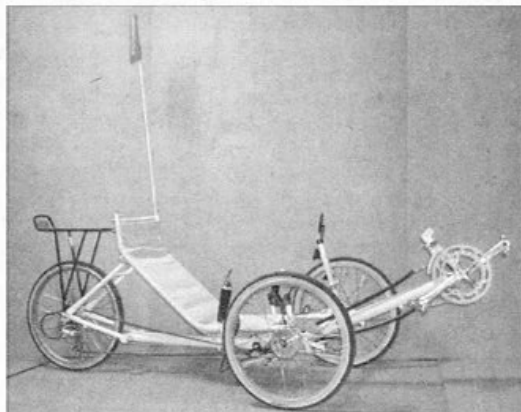
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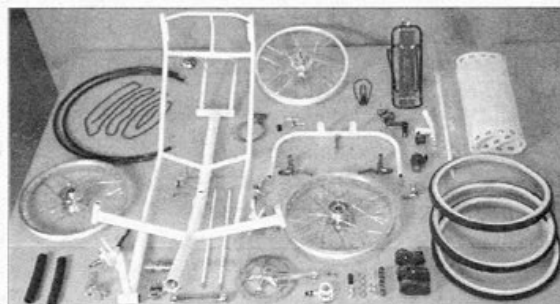
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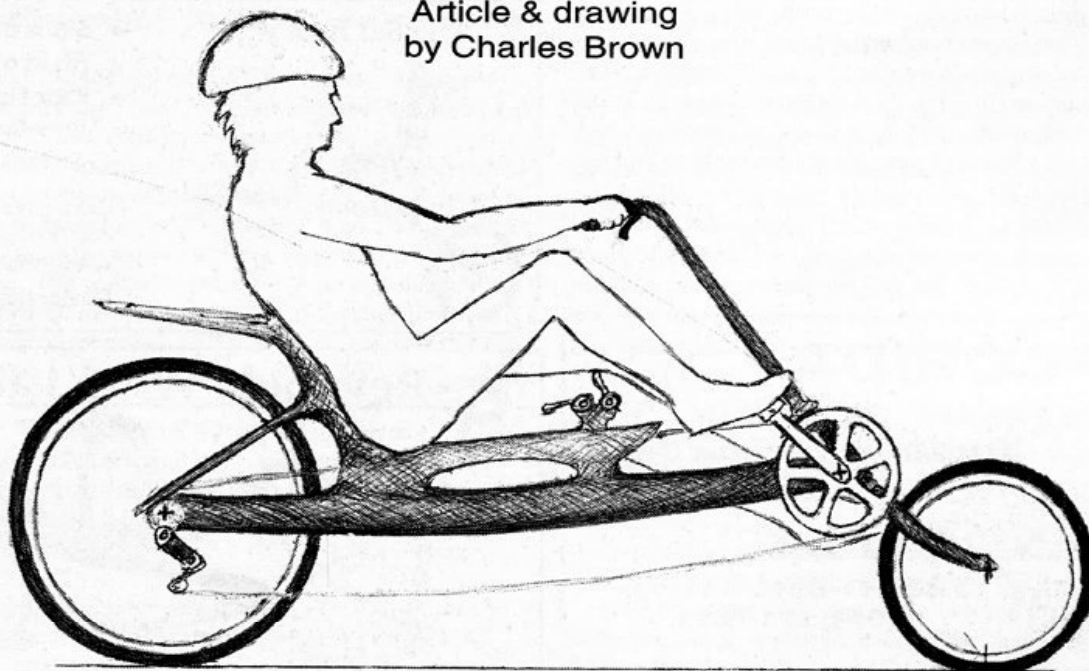


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The Performance CLWB Recumbent

Article & drawing
by Charles Brown



The half dozen or so makers of compact long-wheelbase (CLWB)¹ recumbent bicycles have been enjoying brisk sales. This is primarily due to their compact size, beginner-friendly layout, better ride qualities than SWB bikes, modest (for a recumbent) price, and ease of use. However, performance for the most part has been ignored. The designers seem to regard the group as a bunch of “beginner’s recumbents.” I intend to show that this need not be the case, and that a properly designed CLWB can be just as fast as, if not faster than, its big-wheel cousins.

In an attempt to create the shortest possible bike, designers have crammed the back wheel forward, almost under the rider’s seat! The result is that the propped-up rider position demolishes the air flow (aerodynamics); while having all of the weight on the back wheel wrecks havoc with the steering—especially at anything over bike trail speeds. In a perverse kind of way, it may be a good thing these two flaws work together. If you’re going to be riding a bike whose front wheel has a treacherous habit of sliding out unexpectedly, at least you’re not going too fast when it happens. Now let’s move the rear wheel back a bit. This puts more weight on the front wheel, improving the steering, while making room to lower the seat, thus greatly improving the aerodynamics. The resultant vehicle becomes longer, yes, but also lower, so the overall size is not much more. Personally, I think it’s about time CLWB designers stopped worrying about whether their bikes will fit into the trunk of a car (or on a standard roof rack) and started worrying about whether the resultant bike is worth bringing along in the first place.

To demonstrate my ideas, I built one. The rider position is the same as my old Tour Easy²-like homebuilt. Cruising speed on level ground was identical. Climbing up hills at a steady speed was just a bit faster—about what you’d expect from the lighter-weight bike. It was in acceleration that the little wheels made the most improvement—the whole bike felt lighter, quicker and more nimble. And you know how difficult it can be to get started up a hill on a recumbent. The little wheels were a big help here.

On my level, mostly urban 7-mile commute to work, I average 28 minutes on the Tour Easy-like homebuilt, 27 minutes on the CLWB. Granted, this is not a big improvement but the point is, I’m not losing anything (actually gaining about 3.5%). CLWB’s do not have to be slower than big-wheel bikes. Additionally, if a front fairing is fitted, a 16” front wheel can fit entirely inside the fairing for better aerodynamics.

Using a 20” drive wheel, gearing becomes a problem. Some people use an intermediate or mid-drive to gear it up in two stages, while others use an internally-geared hub, though both of these solutions add weight and complexity. With a conventional single-stage drivetrain, an 11-tooth

(smallest) cassette cog would require a 60-tooth big chainring. Those big rings don’t shift as well, though it would be possible to modify a front derailleur to work better with them. With modern 8- and even 9-speed cassettes perhaps front shifting would not even be necessary for a lot of people. I’ve been setting up my own bikes this way for years.⁴ The old ‘10-speed’ bikes had so much gearing overlap, they actually had only about 7 usable speeds.

Another difficulty with the 16” front wheel/20” rear wheel CLWB layout is that it feels unbalanced, with a tendency for the front wheel to slide out. Now I am talking about a CLWB with the rear wheel moved back and the seat lowered, which helps, but it’s not a complete cure. Good steering geometry gets more important the faster you go.⁴

Using a 24” (600mm) rear wheel makes the gearing a lot easier. An 11-tooth top cog and a 52-54 tooth big ring is about right. In turn, the rear rim tube and tire become more difficult to find. The vehicle becomes 3” (7cm) longer, but still almost a foot (30mm) shorter than the traditional LWB—the balance problem is solved. Personally, I think it looks better—kind of like a mini-Easy Racer.

I set up my brakes so the back one is much stronger than the front and it is generally the only brake I use. When the bike starts to slide sideways, one natural reaction is to slow down, and the rear brake brings you down to a safer speed in a more stable, controlled manner. I think having the same braking power on both ends of a LWB or CLWB is dangerous. Too much front braking can, again, make the front wheel slide out.

The CLWB design saves about four pounds over the traditional LWB (long wheelbase) layout. Mine came out at 23 pounds (10 kg) without using ultralight parts.

I hope this article has given you something to think about. The CLWB design is one that deserves to be developed further. Given the wider availability of small wheels, this might even become the predominate LWB of the future. □

1. CLWB or ‘compact’: Compact Long Wheelbase. A LWB design with the cranks set low and behind the front wheel—whereas the designer has raised the seat and used a smaller wheelset to make the bike more compact.

2. LWB Easy Racer ASS touring model.

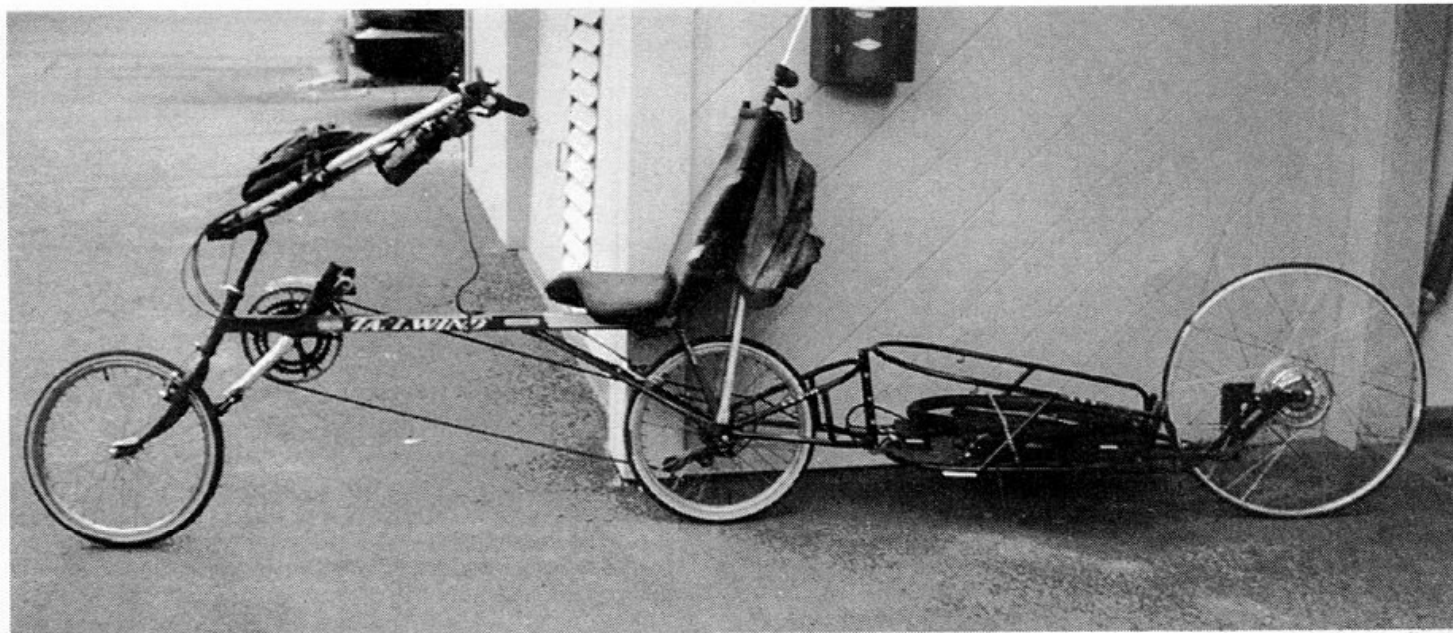
3. Some riders use a double crank with no front derailleur. They manually shift gear ranges to suit terrain.

4. Many commercially available CLWB’s are optimized for low-medium ‘bike-trail’ speed handling.

In Search of the Perfect Commuter

An EV Equipped BOB Trailer and a Tailwind

by Don Osterwise
tailwind@mauigateway.com



A modified BOB trailer with a 700c wheel and Heinzmann electric hub motor & batteries—Don Osterwise

My fascination with the bicycle is mostly trying to figure out why people don't use them as an inexpensive and fun form of transportation. The electric pedal-assist vehicle was a project I undertook to convince others that there is always a means to an end. "There is no shower where I work," or "there's a big hill that I don't think I can climb" are just some of the excuses people make to avoid using their bikes for transportation. The electric pedal-assist can help with many problems for bicycle commuters.

I work for the Maui Electric Company, Ltd. and we were given some "Zap" powered mountain bikes and some other "city" bikes with a friction powered crank to try out. I ride my recumbent Tailwind almost every day (approx. 30 miles), so I was asked to try the bikes. Surprisingly, I got a better workout with the assist motor than without. I pedal all of the time, so hills and headwinds were negated with the assist of the motor.

The electric trailer idea came about because of past experiences with trailers that could function for whatever purpose (child carrier, grocery shopping, etc.) but leave the bicycle unchanged.

I had e-mailed Philip at B.O.B. trailers and he suggested contacting "Elebike" company in Taiwan. I did get some information from them, but at the time they had no U.S. dealer and communication was fragmented. A few months later, I was websurfing and came upon an article about solar cars and the "Heinzmann" motor was mentioned. I found their webpage and a U.S. contact who referred me back to the parent company in Germany. The people that I dealt with from Heinzmann were very knowledgeable and very helpful and they also were very fluent in English. We were able to put the package together in a short amount of time with a minimum of confusion. My recent visits to the Heinzmann webpage have shown that they have given the electric vehicle department to Estelle.

I started out with the motor on the front wheel of the Tailwind and was able to get speeds of about 15 mph and ranges of about 20 miles per battery. I bought an extra battery because I didn't think that I would get enough range out of one, but I was wrong. Now, I just rotate the battery usage. I used the front wheel drive for about a year and decided to go back to my original idea, "the electric trailer." Since the motors have no gearing, the larger diameter wheels have a definite speed advantage, so I decided to put a 700c wheel on the one-wheel B.O.B. trailer. This was simply done

by welding some small plate and moving the drop-outs about 6" up and 6" back. I also had a 700c "airless" tire from Greentyre that I put on the 700c rim. As a commuter, I am willing to give up a little speed for the security of not getting flat tires. With the larger diameter wheel on the trailer, I am now able to reach speeds of about 22 mph. The range has gotten a little smaller, but I am still able to make my commutes with one battery. (I recharge at work).

The only airless tires available for the 20" (406mm) Tailwind rims are very wide BMX tires that are just too slow, so I got some 20" (451mm) rims and was able to use the Greentyre Traveller on the front. I tried the same tire on the back, but there was just too much "drag" on the tire. I went back to the 20x1.35" Primo tires and am now experimenting with Kevlar inserts ("Spinskins"). You can order a BMX length with a touring width and they will special make them for an additional \$4.

With the knowledge I have now, if I were to start over today, I would:

1. Buy a recumbent with a 700c rear wheel and a 20" (451) front wheel. I think you can get this on EasyRacers and some other makes.
2. I would get an extra set of wheels.
3. I would put "airless" tires on one set to use for commuting.
4. I would put regular tires on the other set for days when you want to blow other bikes off the road.
5. I would do the trailer exactly the same. Heinzmann has different motors for different uses. Some are more suited for climbing, and others more for speed. They even have one that will move your bike at about 36 mph with the 700c rim.
6. Lights by NightRider.
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Bob Hernacki and family on a Screamer and Cambie Trail-a-bent—BH

TRAIL-A-BENT

We (my 2 daughters & I) had a terrific time at the STP last weekend. We were given many compliments & encouraging words from passing cyclists. Our unique "rig" received many oohs and ahhs from bent & wedgie riders alike. We'd pulled a Burley Piccolo with the Screamer for a couple weeks. My daughter Becky on the wedgie trail-a-bike was often whining about how she'd have to be the only one with a sore butt on the STP & it wasn't fair. I'd already looked for a bent trail-a-bike on the web & had asked experts whenever I had the opportunity with no success. Another like-minded web searcher gave me the address of Ben Cooper, a UK bent builder who had built some trail-a-bents & had some pictures. He was willing to try & build me one by the STP deadline but the long shipping distance and short time available made me reluctant to try that route—even though he was the only person in the world I could find who'd ever built a trail-a-bent. I'd read about Cambie Cycles' offerings on their web site & was pretty impressed with what they built so I emailed them my special request & time deadline. STP was about 2 months away at the time. Bob at Cambie Cycles was up for the challenge with no hesitation. In six weeks our trail-a-bent (Bob at Cambie calls it a TAB) arrived. It's been a sweet ride for my 7 & 9 year olds along with all the other kids in the neighborhood. I'd specifically requested that Cambie borrow Burley's attachment parts & design. I'd seen none better in the trail-a-bike market. Some improvements can probably be made though not many. I highly recommend anyone who has interest in the safety of a trail-a-bike for children combined with bent comfort—contact Cambie Cycles and have them build you one.

Bob Hernacki
bhernacki@integrityol.com

EURO-RANT—RCN'S BIAS TOWARDS LWB

Reading the review about the SWB Barcroft Virginia (RCN#53) with its "seat back in an extreme reclined position" and "high, extreme and euro-BB." I would like to petition RCN about becoming Recumbent Cyclist News International. After all, how many semi-commercial recumbent magazines are available worldwide?

I strongly doubt that readers outside of the US are buying RCN because of their interest in the American way of recumbent life, or in Bob Bryant's "praise the LWB" evangelism—but rather want to soak up as much information about HPVs as they can get their hands, eyes and butts on. I hope for the US of A that this is also the case for US-based subscribers. Recumbent riders display an open mind by choice of their means of transportation—so should the magazine they read.

Take a look across the Atlantic and Pacific oceans and find that the Barcroft features are not remotely extreme by non-US standards. "Recumbutt" syndrome is not a common malady here in Europe where the BB tends to be high-ish, the rider comfortably reclined. The often-cited numb foot, which is supposedly caused by a high bottom bracket, is also nothing I hear people often complain about. This problem occurs as well on MTBs and other styles of bicycles. Of course RCN is your magazine and you can do what you want, but with its unique position it is more than just a small fanzine anymore. RCN, and you as an individual, can mould opinions and trends. With your position comes a journalistic responsibility towards the whole industry as well as your readers. Please keep an open mind. Your constantly expressing your dislike of reclined SWBs displays an implicit disrespect of the HPV cultures in other countries. Ride and write locally, think globally.

Oliver Zechlin



The Cambie Trail-a-bent accepts 5-10 year olds to 90 pounds and costs \$995 (Canadian). The unit has 6-speeds and a BikeE Sweet Seat.—BH

Oliver, I have given MANY favorable SWB reviews over the years and have many more to come. I believe that the Barcroft review was favorable. I was upfront with the builder, Bill Cook, prior to the review and honest with RCN readers in the review. I also feel that the differences in SWB ergonomics cannot be overlooked. However, I will try to do a better job of explaining the differences.

We have exactly 120 copies of RCN going to Europe (out of 5,000-6,000 that are printed). We have less than 300 copies of RCN leaving the USA. The economics of shipping RCN overseas dictates how large our readership can be. I believe the USA recumbent market to be the largest in the world. Our market is more mainstreamed. Recumbents are built and being designed by manufacturers selling to dealers and showing at tradeshows. Lowracers and very laid back SWB have to be the smallest recumbent market segment. However, I would love to do more on lowracers, extreme bikes and euro bikes. RCN will need help on this one.

Why don't you write an article about the German lowracer phenomenon? As a recumbent enthusiast, this is YOUR publication. If you don't think that your views are fairly represented, let us know and then YOU write an article about it—Bob, RCN.

LOWRACER RESPONSE

Thanks very much for printing the article and photos on my Outlander lowracer in RCN #54. I'm absolutely delighted that the bike made it on the front cover! The bike has never looked so good, and I've been getting lots of feedback from readers. One correction, though—the photos that accompanied the article should be credited to my fellow RCN contributor John Riley, not to me.

After 6,500 kms (4,039 miles) of great riding this season, the lowracer is back in designer/builder Carey Chen's capable hands for some major upgrades. These include a custom-built HeadShok-style suspended front fork and a new front wheel incorporating a Schmidt dynamo hub and Lumotec lighting system. Carey will also be mounting a full fibreglass fairing setup designed and built by Reg Rodaro, of Naples, Florida-based Ark Enterprises. The changes will make a great bike even better!

Readers who want to follow the upgrade story can check it out on my Web site at: www.praxcomm.com/ark.htm Thanks again for featuring my bike in your mag!

Alan Thwaites

nomad@praxcomm.com

I would like to apologize to John Riley for our error in photo credits. John is our most valued writer and correspondent. He has years of recumbent expertise, besides being a top-notch writer and photographer—Bob, RCN.

TELL US ABOUT REAL BAD 'BENTS

In Greenspeed's RCN#53 ad, it mentions 'suitcase trikes.' I went to their web site and there it was. Most pieces go into one suitcase and the seat in another. This second suitcase has room for clothes, etc. Now what? Do I have to sell my grandson? I just purchased a Sat R Day because of the ability to fit into a suitcase. Then I find the Greenspeed goes into a suitcase. Do you people think money grows on trees? Start telling us about really bad bents so I can stop committing lust in my wallet. I guess I'll go out and get a Lotto ticket, tell my grandson that Santa died and put my retirement plans on hold.

Francis Celino

Francis.Celino@maf.nasa.gov

RCN ISN'T GOOD ENOUGH—NEEDS COLOR

I want to let you know that I appreciate RCN, but I feel that if the magazine were in color it would do the recumbent world a great deal of good...the black and white pictures do not do the bikes justice....quite simply, your black and white pictures make these superior and advanced bicycles look very, very cheap...You are one of my main sources of recumbent bicycles, make a color magazine happen and make all of us 'bent riders proud. I will renew my subscription when RCN is in color.

Dr. Armando J. Hernandez

We plan to offer a color cover when an advertiser is willing to pay for it. Color printing is VERY expensive. A color magazine is not financially feasible. If you would like to sponsor the color, your subscription renewal will be \$250,000. The next time you think RCN isn't good enough, just think of it as a newsletter with ads—Bob, RCN.

REAL LIFE BARCROFT

With RCN just reviewing the Barcroft I thought you all might be interested in a real life experiences with this new hot 'bent. I'm going to be honest, this is a plug for Bill Cook's bike. He's a new company and few of his machines are out there yet. So, since I'm one of his first recipients I thought I'd share some of my experiences as a way of saying thanks to Bill for making a great bike and being so helpful to me.

First, let me explain that this is my first 'bent and I went to a recumbent for no other reason than I wanted to try one because they looked like they'd be fun to ride. No medical reason, no dissatisfaction with my upright, in fact I still ride my Litespeed regularly. However, with my fourth Boston-Montreal-Boston coming up next year a friend thought it might be interesting to try it on a 'bent and I agreed. So he'll be on a Rans Stratus, while I'll be on the Barcroft. One other thing, I'm fifty-one and log anywhere from 150 to 250 mile a week from March through October.

Anyway here's how the Barcroft Virginia GT (this is a prototype with a 20-inch front instead of a 16") performed in its first organized century. I did do Boston to New York AIDS Ride on the Virginia, but since it was dramatically shortened thanks to Floyd I didn't give the bike much of a workout.

So, back to The Granite State Wheelmen's Tristate Sea Coast Century, along the MA, NH and ME coast. How'd the Virginia GT do? In a word—beautifully! It flew through the ride covering the course with an average on bike speed of 17.5. Now this average speed includes a pouring rain for the first twenty-five miles or so, couple of steel grate bridges where I got off and walked, (I've seen a few folks go down on these and it isn't a pretty site), a couple of small towns with traffic where I slowed down, a few missed turns and a fair head-to-cross wind on the return. I also didn't feel like I was pushing until the very end of the ride. And even with that I got done feeling a lot better than I usually do on my upright. A bow to the comfort of recumbent.

The only time I got passed was when I was stopped and during the last 15 miles when a four person pace line blew by me. I should mention, I did this ride alone, no wheels to suck on and catch a rest. The course is probably one of the flattest you can find around New England. It's got a few small rollers in it, but nothing of importance.

Throughout the ride the Virginia GT performed. It was flawless and it lives up to the promise of a speedster. I've read Bob Bryant's review in "RCN" that the Virginia is a high-performance machine and he's right. Where I differ is I have no chain tolerance issues, brakes are perfect and as far as low speed handling, with a little practice I am sure I could track stand this 'bent (OK an exaggeration). Really, I had it crawling up to stop signs and traffic lights without issue. I can also do a snappy tight U-turn without heel problems which could be another advantage of Speedplay pedals.

I've now put over a thousand miles on this bike since August 1 and it's just getting better. I'll be doing another century this coming weekend where there's going to be a lot more climbing. I'll keep you posted on how it climbs. I should probably say how I climb on it. I know I still haven't reached the climbing potential, since I'm still introducing myself to new leg muscles and mechanics. We shall see.

Steve Fox, jsfox@top.monad.net

BENT OUT OF SHAPE FRIENDS

Have any of you noticed a change in your friends since you became interested in recumbents? I have. I first noticed it while talking to them about recumbents, (as I was waxing eloquently about frame geometry or the merits of different width tires); their attention span just doesn't seem to be what it used to. They start yawning and looking at their watch and trying to (rudely) interrupt me. Then just the other day I went over to my good friend Pete's house. His car was parked out front as usual, but when I knocked at the door there was no answer. The blinds in the front window parted and an eye peeked out, but still no one answered the door. Just the sound of something similar to a deadbolt latching. I figured the TV must be on loud and he can't hear the knock at the door, so I go around to the back. All the curtains are closed so I bang on the window and shout "Hey Pete, did I tell you that when I tilt the angle of my seat back 1.37 degrees and slide it forward an inch it seems to decrease my wind resistance about 2%. And..." at this point I can hear his rottweiler growling and snapping in the house. I always liked that dog, but it's no wonder Pete doesn't know I'm knocking. That darn dog is making so much noise, how could he possibly hear me? So I go to the next window and shout a bit louder" AND PETE, DID YOU KNOW THAT IF YOU USE BLADED SPOKES AND INFLATE THE TIRES 15 LBS OVER MANUFACTURER RECOMMENDATIONS THAT..." well I never got to finish my sentence, because somehow Petes rottweiler mysteriously managed to get out of the house and I had to jump the fence kind of quick. (I never did like that dog). Oh well, I know he has coffee down at the "donut palace" every morning at 6am. And I'm going to be waiting for him when he gets there. He will be curious about the different characteristics of lwb, swb and clwb recumbents. Then he will want to know about the merits of USS vs. ASS. But on the other hand, I don't know; I think ol' Pete is starting to change lately.

Robert Warren, wheels78@yahoo.com

BEST OFF-SEASON 20" TIRE

I've been asking around for advice on 20" tires (406 rims) to use this winter (wet pavement—no snow). What's your opinion on the best tire for rainy conditions? Currently I have the Comets that came stock with the R200, but everyone tells me these aren't very good.

Charles

Charles, My current favorite commuter tires are Conti Top Touring 2000. I have been riding on them since Spring on widely varying terrain—without a single flat tire (knock on rubber). They are comfortable, durable and have a good all around tread. A beefier tire is the Primo V-Monster. I ride the Conti's through the woods on single track, in light sand, rough concrete, light gravel and crushed gravel. They work great—a very high quality tire. Even though the Tioga Comp Pools have received some negative press on the internet (tire quality control), they are my preferred smooth pavement summer season tire—Bob, RCN.

CLIPLESS IN 'BENTLAND

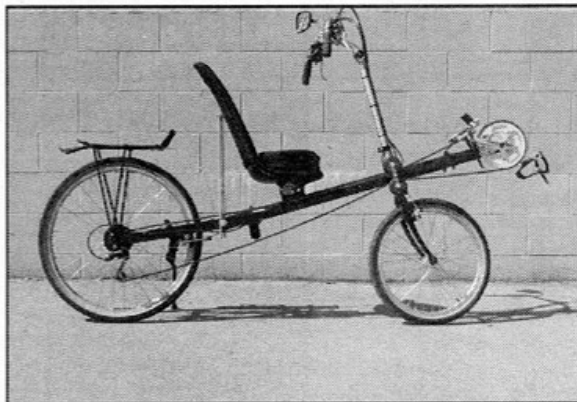
I have read articles about clipless pedals, but have yet to find anyone raise the issue of safety. I have worn clipless pedals for about a month and have found them to meet all my expectations. Unfortunately, I have not met those same expectations. While pedaling to work the other day, I made a quick panic stop and failed to declip my shoes. My right ankle was twisted out of its socket and I suffered two radial fractures. I am bedridden for six to eight weeks but I will walk again and I will pedal again. I don't think I can go back to clips & straps. Maybe Power Grips? Probably the pedals I have grown to enjoy over the last month will be here to stay. I just want everyone reading this to remember that these pedals offer the most efficient way to transfer energy from the legs to the crank but they do not know when to disengage.

Joel M. Wilson, pelotontoo@hotmail.com

Joel, you cannot generalize about pedal systems. Each brand works differently. I find the Time ATAC to be about the safest I've tried and I definitely feel safer than with grip straps or toe clips—but I have been using clipless pedals for years. There is a good buzz about BeBops, so I'll have to give them a try soon.—Bob, RCN



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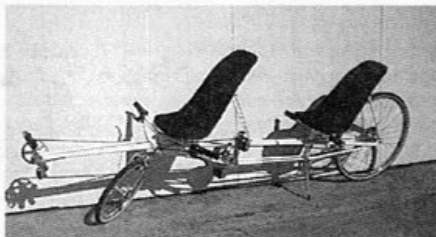
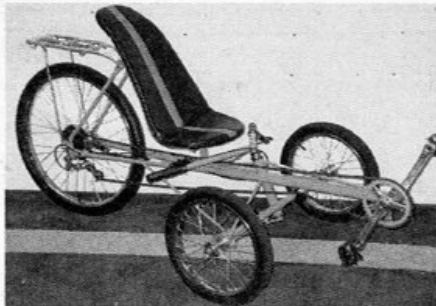
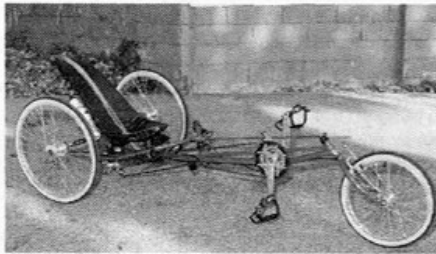


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VELOCAR

Wow! Thank you very much for this great editing work. Georges Mochet and the Velocar made the cover. And what a cover! I really loved it.

I'm really happy that this story was finally printed in RCN, and, as Dave wrote, the most surprising thing is that no one has done it before. The Velocar certainly wasn't the first recumbent, but it was certainly the first achieved to that point, and the first to break records. During the last world championship in Interlaken, this summer, there was a veteran race to close the events. An the winner was... a Velocar! (A four wheeled one.)

Jean-Charles, who is in copy of this mail, will e-mail you a scan picture (Thank you, Jean-Charles). All the best to you all, and long live recumbency! (I wish it spreads a little more around the world...)

Emmanuel, emmanuel@bikeeden.com

X-SEAM, INSEAM & OUTSEAM

What is an "X-seam," and how does one measure it? I know all about inseam measurements—very important when mail-ordering pants. I'm 6'1" and have an inseam of 32." My son, who is 6'4" has a 36" inseam. But 45"! Please clarify.

Harold Wooster, Carlisle, PA

Hi Harold, an x-seam (or Longbikes outseam) is the measurement from the corner of the intersection of ones seat back/base measured to the farthest extension of the pedal. This is a method of measuring for the seat/boom set up on a recumbent bike. My x-seam is 44.5". I can take a tape-measure and set up most bikes to within an inch of where they should be. How you get this measurement is to sit on the floor with your back against a wall (butt as close to wall as you can get it/some use a reclined board to simulate seat recline). Measure from the wall out to the bottom of your foot (toes in the air). For optimum efficiency, have somebody help you take the measurement for you. This measurement is far more effective than an inseam for setting up recumbent bicycles—Bob, RCN.

RCN REVIEWS

I would like to see more reviews with the format used for the Vision R32 test in RCN #52. I think we all benefit from the multiple perspectives offered.

Tom Sherman, tsherman@students.uiuc.edu

We plan to ask for reader/rider feedback on every review that we do from now on (as long as we can find some owners—some bikes are too new). We also plan to rely more upon reader evaluations and articles. This is an open invitation to earn a free RCN subscription (when your article is printed)—Bob, RCN.

ROUTE 66 TOUR/TRAGEDY

You may remember the article you published on my California mountain tour. "Altitude and Attitude" (RCN 44). Well, I thought I was going to have another story up my sleeve, but.....

On September 5 three Easy Racer addicts left Fresno for a 2100 mile ride back to my home state of Iowa so I could attend my 50th High School Reunion. Myself and Chuck (Pops) Nelson were on GRRs, and the third rider, Sy Sizemore on a TE. No SAG, just staying in motels at night, and carrying about 25 pounds of gear each.

We got through two days of near heat exhaustion in the Mohave desert, climbed the mountains into Flagstaff, with lots of rain and lightning storms, etc. We eventually got to Albuquerque where Sy had to leave the ride and return to Fresno. His wife met up with us a couple of days outside of Albuquerque, and took Sy back to Fresno... poor guy still has to work.

Chuck (age 73) and I (age 66), both retired, continued on.... out of New Mexico, into Texas, across Oklahoma, heading north into Kansas. We travelled as much as possible on old Route 66, but also rode Interstate 40 when Route 66 was too rough to ride or did not exist. It was a wonderful, exciting, challenging ride with new adventures everyday. (A lot of "celebrity time" because of our bikes, our age, and our destination.) We were strong (neither Chuck or I ever used our Granny) and fast and felt we were really dogging it when our days were under 80 or 90 miles.

At about 1600 miles into the ride, a tragedy occurred about 10 miles short of our day's destination in Kansas near a little town called Arkansas City, Kansas. On a rural highway a pickup truck struck my partner who was riding in front of me. We were riding single file on the far right side of the road, and the truck passed me and then struck Chuck from the side/rear. There was no reason this had to happen, as we were doing nothing wrong...there were no traffic problems, good weather, and good visibility....the driver just was not careful in passing us. Chuck received very major injuries, and was airlifted into a hospital at Wichita, Kansas. This happened on Saturday, September 25.

While I was able to stay in Wichita for a week after the accident to be with Chuck, I eventually had to come home without my partner. His family remained with him, and on October 14 they were able to fly him back to Fresno by air ambulance from one ICU unit to another here in Fresno. If it wasn't for the fact he was in such great physical shape, both from the benefits of cycling, and from daily sessions at the gym he probably would not have survived the trauma of this accident.

It is premature to speculate on the final outcome of all of this, as he will have a very long road to recovery, and some of the injuries were so severe it is too early to predict the total extent of all the problems.

Even though I got the bikes back to Fresno, at this time I have no interest at all in getting back on my bike. Time will heal many wounds, as everyone is telling me, so I will just wait and see.

The purpose of writing this is just to point out that all of us—cyclists or not—must live every day to the fullest, and enjoy all there is to enjoy, as one's life can change in just the blink of an eye.

Bill Bruce, Fresno California □

RCN Classified Ads

Recumbents For Sale

FOR SALE: RANS V-REX, 451/700c wheels, LX components, low miles, like new, asking \$925. Wanted: tadpole trike, any condition. (415) 389-9735 (CA/55)

FOR SALE: 1999 V-REX/Angletech Philtevid model. Blue, <500 miles, Avid brakes, Shimano RFP shifters, Ultegra (30-42-52), Mega9 cassette, Teflon cables, Angeltech trunk. New \$2600. Sell \$2000. OBO. Want Gold Rush. Call Greg (303) 402-1248, gpoole@rsinc.com. (CO/55)

FOR SALE: ANGLETECH ALTITUDE SWB. Excellent condition, <200 miles. Great bike, but went to LWB. Tel. 309-682-1233 (56)

FOR SALE: LAST ANGLETECH/COUNTERPOINT PRESTO. Silver frame & fork. Magura hydraulic brakes, 63-speed, Chris King headset, Grip Shift, fenders, Ballistic shock fork, Phil Wood BB, Shimano XT derailleur, Sedis R80 chain, Transverse trunk. \$1500 OBO. Marshall Rakosky 231-722-0522 (56)

FOR SALE: EASY RACER TOUR EASY, black, large frame, 21-spd., with Zipper fairsing \$1000. Also for sale: 1997 BikeE \$500. Bought a Gold Rush. Call Bob at 516-698-5939 (NY/55)

FOR SALE: 1998 LIGHTNING P-38. Low miles and perfect condition. High-end Campy components and wheels. With Zipper fairsing. Must sell. \$3,600 invested. Make offer. (706) 228-1978 or mrr@morris.com. (GA/56)

FOR SALE: 1995 RANS V-REX, 4500 miles, white, 26/20, 21-speed, well maintained, kickstand, rack, 1.4 inch rims, stationary handlebars, \$850. Blickpete@kearney.net; tel. 308-237-3540 (NE/56)

FOR SALE: LAST ANGLETECH/COUNTER-POINT PRESTO. <100 miles. Custom painted frame and fork (Navy w/Gold), Magura hydraulic brakes, 63-speed, Chris King headset, barcon shifting, fenders, Ballistic shock fork, Phil Wood BB, Shimano XT derailleur, Sedis R80 chain, Transverse trunk. \$2000 OBO. Marshall Rakosky 231-722-0522 (56)

FOR SALE: 2000 WIZWHEELZ TERRATRIKE, USS, yellow. Excellent Condition, like new, low miles Tel. 360-379-6373, am's Pacific time or drrecumbnt@aol.com (56)

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FOR SALE: 1999 HALUZAK HORIZON, USS, green, 29-pounds, too much to list, new \$1749, selling for \$1200 including packing and shipping (48 states). Call Bud days 805-658-1872 and eves 805-642-0906. (55)

FOR SALE: 1999 RANS TAILWIND, New April '99, <25 mi., can't ride, heart surgery. Paid \$1100, sell \$599. Tel. 561-278-9032 (FL/55)

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FOR SALE: LATE 1997 RANS GLISS, Metallic Blue, Sachs 3X7 63 spd. Has a scant 500 miles on it. Magura brakes, fenders, computer, mirror. There are a few minor scratches but condition and appearance is terrific. Would like to sell in the Pacific NW and could deliver. Would consider a trade for a late model Stratus or Tour Easy. Price \$1500 plus shipping (if I had to). Tel. 253-851-2286 or ttpark@msn.com (WA/56)

FOR SALE: 2 - 1998 RANS VIVO (white frames) \$1600 OBO **2 - 1998 RANS GLISS** (with green 1999 frames) \$1600 each Added 34 tooth rear sprockets to all bikes. Continental Top Touring Tires. **1 - 1997 Rans Screamer** (blue/yellow fade) \$3000. Added reverse spring Shimano XTR rear derailleur. Ask for Harry Wozniak or John Kerr. 1-800-362-4537 (WI/55)

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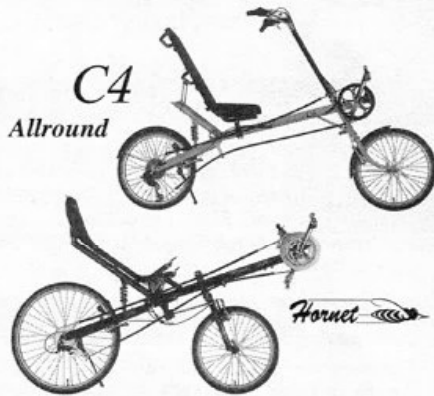
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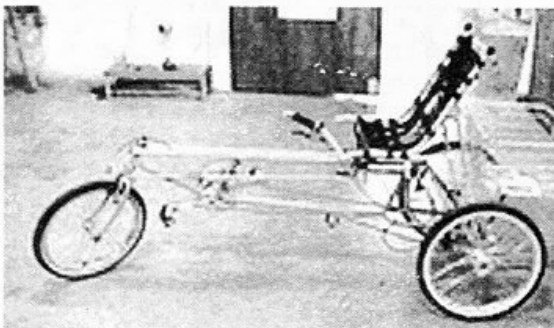
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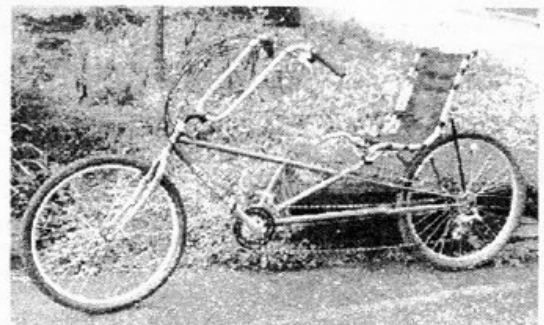
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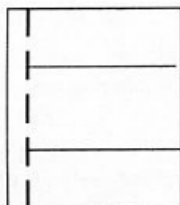
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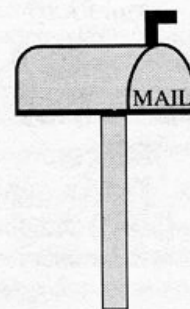


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You're pedaling down a quiet country road. The wind gently blows in your face as you slice through the wind with your aerodynamic recumbent bicycle.

Your eyes have a direct 180° stereo surround sound view of the scenery—instead of the front wheel. Your body feels good—no pain. Your arms and wrists are totally relaxed—as they do not support your weight on a recumbent. Your neck and shoulders are relaxed—because you are looking straight ahead. Your bike seat offers full ergonomic back support—and total comfort. Your hind quarters wonder what kind of a seat this is and why there isn't pain, chafing and numbness. Could this be real? Could it really be bicycling?

The recumbent experience is totally unique in the bicycle world. There are racers in streamliners, tourists riding across the country, average folks riding for fun or fitness and club rides and somebody's mom or dad getting back on a bike after 20 years. The one thing they all have in common is comfort.

You know that you have hit upon something great when you can ride 5, 25 or 125 miles and be comfortable the entire ride—seated on your hi-tech recumbent bicycle. Bicycle industry designers continue trying to reinvent the upright bicycle—with limited success. Recumbent designers may have different ideas on geometry, style, look and performance—but most know what the bottom-line is—COMFORT!

We don't care who you are, what you do for a living, where you live, what color or sex you are, your height or weight, what kind of a car you drive, how little or how much you ride—we are accepting of all people with an interest in recumbent bikes. And for those that are not—we'll try to convert you in a subtle way—through our passion for recumbent bicycles.

Recumbent Cyclist News is the voice of the recumbent world and has been since 1990—more than 50 issues! We publish bimonthly and issues are mailed worldwide. We are a magazine written and produced by and for recumbent bicyclists. Why not let us help you to learn all about recumbent bicycles and stay in touch with the recumbent world!

In each RCN issue you will find—44-68 8.5"x11" pages full of the following:

- ✓ **Editorial License:** Publisher Bob Bryant's view of the state of recumbency...as well as his RANTS!
- ✓ **Letters to the Editor:** Have a question or comment? This is your soap box. If you disagree with us, let us know. The more voices we hear—the better!
- ✓ **News, Rumors, Announcements, and Gossip:** The new BikeE Air Tech, \$650 BikeE CT and Trek 'bent... RCN readers heard it first.
- ✓ **Road Tests, Interviews & Critical Reviews:** We are in the unique position to try out and compare all of the different models available in North America today. And we'll tell you all about it—good, bad, indifferent or exceptional!
- ✓ **Recumbent Touring Narratives by Readers.**
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Viva Recumbency,
Robert J. Bryant
Publisher Recumbent Cyclist News

■ RCN BUYERS GUIDES & BACK ISSUES

Our most recent recumbent buyers' guides/issues were printed in the first half of 1998 with a 1999 update (RCN#49). The back issues below are in stock and available as of May 1999. See prices & packages below:

- RCN#54** Road tests of the Easy Racers TiRush, Lightning Thunderbolt and the Lowracer Lifestyle, KMC chain test and an interview with Randy Schlitter.
- RCN#53** Road tests of the Rans Stratus, Haluzak Horizon and Barcroft Virginia. USS: Steering for Laid-Back Riders, Route 66 Tour, Charles Mochet II
- RCN#52** Road tests of the Vision R32, Lightning R84; Living with a Leitra (velomobile); Maine to Washington on a Gold Rush; and Velocar part 1.
- RCN#51** Greenspeed GTS Trike; Trice trike; ZOX 26 FWD; Cannonball
- RCN#50*** BikeE CT & NX Road Tests
- RCN#49** 1999 Season Preview—a companion update to our 1998 Buyers Guide Series (RCN#43-46). Vision R40, Bike Friday Sat R Day and Trek SWB.
- RCN#48*** Easy Racer Gold Rush Road Test
- RCN#47** '98 Homebuilder Special Edition
- RCN#46** '98 Trikes/Tandem BG; Dragonflyer trike test.
- RCN#45** '98 Long wheelbase BG; Tour Easy.
- RCN#44** '98 Short Wheelbase BG; Rans SWB.
- RCN#43** '98 Compact BG; 1998 Awards; How to buy a...; BikeE AT test.
- RCN#42*** Bob's Slumgullian Tour article (Angletech & Rans)
- RCN#41*** Angletech Altitude, Haluzak Hybrid Race and HPM Tritan trike
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Easy Racers: Our Customers Speak

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You provide the most thoughtful, responsive service of any company with which I have ever done business. I found you on the internet and quickly confirmed your reputation as the best. As an owner who researched carefully and tried several I can honestly say I felt I was cheating when I cruised the rolling hills of New Hampshire and Vermont this fall with top end, spandex, and diamond frame riders while I was laid back and comfy. When I coasted down hills and they couldn't keep up cranking full out, even I was surprised when I caught up with the cars. My original reason was safety and comfort. After thorough research (I am the vice president of marketing for a technology company) I selected Easy Racers. My original criteria for added safety and comfort have been exceeded. Enthusiasm and fun, also exceeded expectations. I suspect I am among the most cautious, research-before-buy type of buyer. Now you have overwhelmed me with follow up service beyond expectations.

Cheers and thanks,
John Higley
New England



Laurie Smith on her Tour Easy. Laurie was not an avid cyclist until she bought a Tour Easy in June of 1999. By September, 1999, she had blown the doors off the long standing Vancouver (Washington) Bike Club Women's Recumbent 10 Mile Time Trial Record. Previous record 30:57.

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