

Recumbent Cyclist

Issue No. 75
May/June 2003

News



The RCN "Spirit" at Point Hudson, Port Townsend, Washington — in balmy January weather

The HPV Velo "Spirit" Compact

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House Cleaning: What You Need to Know About RCN Issue Mailings

by Bob Bryant
bob@recumbentcyclistnews.com

This is boring, but essential stuff — facts about RCN mailings. Please take the time to read it, as it could save you time and concern down the road. The bottom line is that RCN guarantees that you receive each issue that you pay for — as long as we have a correct mailing address for you at the time of the mailing. Please read on.

Standard Mail (3rd Class)

For the majority of our mailing, we use 3rd class mail. The USPS does a fairly good job delivering 3rd class mail. There are three problems that come up on a weekly basis here at RCN in regards to 3rd class mail:

1. The US Postal Service DOES NOT forward standard (3rd class) mail. If you have moved and didn't inform us of your move — or have a permanent or temporary "forwarding order" with the USPS, they toss the issue into the recycler and sends us a bill to tell us your new address. We end up paying to send your issue three times, a total cost for us of approx. \$5 (per instance, per subscriber).

This is a serious concern for us. In fact, it was our number one concern when recently lowering our subscription rates,

2. About 1% of our mailing doesn't make it to subscribers. Unfortunately, this is beyond our control. The best we can do is to send a replacement issue as soon as we're notified of a delivery problem. Some areas of the country are worse than others. We have a few ongoing problems. If you have mail problems, or have missed your RCN issue more than one time in a calendar year, we suggest that you upgrade to first class mail.

3. Your seasonal address forwards result in your RCN being thrown in the USPS recycling bin. RCN is not forwarded to your second address (for the same reason as above; see #1). We have the ability to keep your second address on file, and the dates in which to send to each address. This would be a nightmare if every subscriber did it. We currently have a few dozen — which is manageable. If you have seasonal addresses, the best way to handle it is for you to upgrade your subscription to first class (though we can handle it if we have the correct info from you).

The reason that we don't use first class mail

for our entire mailing is that it's prohibitively expensive to use for our entire mailing. However, we do offer it as an option. Your issue is mailed from our office, in an envelope, by me personally, via first class mail (\$45 per year).

The above are not new policies, this information is located within the first few pages of each RCN (see gray box).

Summary

In the Fall of 2003 we lowered our subscription rate to \$32. The previous rate had been \$35, and as high as \$40 per year. With this new lower rate, we can no longer send out free replacement issues (unless USPS or RCN error).

If you miss an issue due to USPS or RCN error, we're happy to send out replacement issues by first class mail. If you've missed an issue because you haven't notified us of your new address, or you have not given us enough notice — we regretfully must charge an issue replacement fee of \$4 each issue. If this is all too complicated, please just drop us an e-mail to see if you've missed any issues.

Your Mailing Label

The top line of your mailing label tells you the status of your subscription. It should read: "Expires w/RCN 075", with the "075" being the number of the last issue of your current RCN subscription.

I'm available to answer circulation questions and concerns via e-mail. Most of the time, I answer within 24 hours. Thank you for your understanding and patience in this matter.

Closing

We hope you'll find that RCN has an excellent customer service department. If you send us an e-mail or a letter about a problem. I personally respond and try to solve the problem ASAP. Many of our problems are due to the level of USPS mailing service that we have chosen. 3rd class is the slowest and most affordable type of mail. There are forwarding restrictions due to the affordable cost of mailing. Using first class more than doubles are postage costs. We do offer a first class mail option that is fully forwardable. Your issue will come in an envelope to boot.

Thank you for your continued support
Bob Bryant ♦

See important notice on page 5

Recumbent Cyclist News

Subscribe

A newsletter by recumbent bicycle enthusiasts, for recumbent bicycle enthusiasts, since 1990.

Recumbent Cyclist News is published six times per year. US subscription rates are:

\$32	1 year, 6 issues*
\$45	1 year first class mail**
\$60	2 years, 12 issues
\$80	3 years, 18 issues*
\$60	International Airmail

* 3rd class mail is NOT forwarded by the USPS. If you move, there will be an additional charge to resend issues.

** Recommended for those who've had trouble with their mail, move often, or have two seasonal addresses.

Contact

RCN
PO Box 2048
Port Townsend, WA 98368
E-mail: bob@recumbentcyclistnews.com
Web: www.recumbentcyclistnews.com
If you need a personal reply, please send a letter and SASE or write us an e-mail.

Schedule

Expect RCN to arrive every other month. Issues should arrive by the end of the first week of the 2nd month of the issue's date. E-mail us to check if we are late.

Address Changes

Don't forget to send us your new address when you intend to move. Please allow 60 days' notice for address changes.

When to Renew

Please renew 60 days in advance if you can. By the time you read this issue, the next issue and database have gone to the printer.

Your Mailing Label

The top line of your label will say "Expires w/RCN XXX", with the "XXX" being the number of the last issue of your current RCN subscription.

Missed Issues

You should receive RCN every two months—within the calendar months on the cover. Standard mail moves at a slower rate than does first class mail. It can take 2-6 weeks to cross the country (RCN is mailed from New York State). Standard mail is not forwarded, and issues are not returned to us.

If you miss an issue due to an RCN or USPS error, we will send a free replacement. Other replacements are \$5. Please send us a card or e-mail.

RCN Database

We DO NOT release, sell or, give out the personal information of our subscribers for any reason. If you need to contact an RCN subscriber, send us an SASE letter to the person, place inside another envelope and send it to RCN.

Fine Print

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Cannondale — Our contact at cannondale, David Campbell, offered us this update in March: "Cannondale filed Chapter 11 bankruptcy on January 29, 2003 in the United States Bankruptcy Court, District of CT, Bridgeport, CT. There will be a bankruptcy auction on March 20, 2003. On March 20 some entity will buy Cannondale. In the interim there is special financing in place and most of our people are here, working and being paid. There have been a steady stream of potential buyers/bidders visiting both the factory and the office. These entities .

can be divided into two basic profiles: "strategic buyers" who would fit the Cannondale brand into/expand their existing bicycle business, and "financial buyers" who would see the business as a good investment. The winner of the auction would likely close in early April. I'm sure a press release will announce this event.

I see no reason why recumbents would not continue, and increase, under new ownership. A significant element of our success has been the pursuit of niche products. As you know, our first recumbent was/is a success. New model development was affected by the events of the last few months, but fundamentally we are good and quick at developing new products. It should not be hard to renew recumbent product development.

The bicycle business was successful and profitable. The interest noted above makes perfect sense. It was the expensive motorsports effort, and the failure to incorporate it separately, that dragged the company into debt and bankruptcy.

I would expect that in early April a much clearer picture will be available. I hope this helps you to plan communication with your readers."

M5 Titanium Shock Proof — M5 Recumbents has introduced a Titanium Shock Proof. The Ti model has been intensively tested and is now available. The Ti model is 5 pounds lighter than the CroMo version. Check out www.m5-ligfietsen.com. Source: M5

Keep Your BikeE Alive — We've been told that a 2003 Burley seat mesh will fit a BikeE Sweet Seat frame. Seat bases can be purchased from Calhoun Cycle (Evolution modified RANS base). Thanks to Belmont Wheelworks' Scott Chamberlain for the tip.

BikeE Parts II — Check out www.bike-route.com/Recumbents and

Spy photo: the new EZ3 Lite. Note the aluminum frame, 3x20" wheels and 3 disc brakes.

bicycle.com. Atlantic is reported to have BikeE seats, carbon fiber stems, frames and swing arms: <bikparts@bellsouth.net> or tel. 888-412-3687.

Linear Parts — Contact the Bicycle Man www.bicycleman.com or Tel. 607-587-8835.

E.R.R.C. Easy Racer Tailbox (fits KoolBack seat)— The first batch of TailSoks are now in stock. See the E.R.R.C. website: www.geocities.com/e_r_r_c.

Sun Bicycle Newsgroup — There is a new Topica group list for EZ owners. Check out this website for more info: <http://rideitbent.net/ezseries.htm>

Ryan Owners Club — Bob Krzewinski and Paul Bruneau would like to announce a new resource for information about bicycles built and/or designed by Ryan Recumbent Cycles. The Ryan Owners Club web site currently has a good start, and we will be adding many more historical photos and documents. We also welcome contributions that anyone would like to share with the Ryan community. The address is <http://ryanownersclub.com>

RUMORS

Easy Racers/Sun — We're hearing rumors of a new bike that's being prototyped at Easy Racer headquarters in Freedom, CA. The new bike has a curvy-tubed CroMo frame, full suspension in a 20/20 CLWB. The front suspension looks similar to a headshock. The rear shock is a coil-oil.

We've heard that Sun sales nearly tripled between 2001 and 2002. The sales numbers we've heard easily make Sun the world's largest recumbent manufacturer. Sun has plans for a full line of recumbents over the next few years. Coming in 2004/5 are a SWB and tadpole trike, and probably more. We've also heard rumors of a deluxe tandem, with perhaps an independent pedalling system. ♦

Calendar 2003

May 10, 2003

Michigan Recumbent Rally — East

Recumbent displays, dealers, test rides. 9a.m. - 3 p.m. Willow Metropark pool shelter (SE MI). Contact: www.LMB.org/wolbents, wolverbob@cs.com or Tel. 734-487-9058

June 7, 2003

Ohio State TT Champ's — Lowracer Challenge!

Troy, OH
Race against Ohio's finest roadies in a 40K TT, and then go on a Metric century the next day. Thom Ollinger is organizing the HPV portion of this event as a lowracer speed fest.

June 13-15, 2003

Rocky Mountain Recumbent Rally

Contact: See page 5 of this issue.

June 21, 2003

Rochester Area Recumbent Rally

Contact: See page 6 of this issue.

June 21-22, 2003

Michigan HPV Rally/Races

Waterford Speedway in Waterford, Michigan
Two days of HPRA HPV racing.
Contact: www.LMB.org/mhpva, wkiehler@aol.com or 313-884-0109

June 28, 2003

Michigan Recumbent Rally — Central

10a.m. - 3p.m. Contact: tel. 517-694-6702, www.LMB.org/wolbents, blackrush@worldnet.att.net

June 28-29, 2003

Easy Racer Return To Freedom Event

Contact: www.easyracers.com or www.geocities.com/e_r_r_c

August 1-3, 2003

10th Annual Midwest Recumbent Rally

Stevens Point, WI
Contact: 1-800-233-4340
www.hostelshoppe.com/recumbent_rally.php

August 15, 16, 17, 2003

2003 Recumbent Retreat

Fort Stevens State Park
Warrenton, Oregon
Contact: jjoyful1@aol.com and www.ohpv.org

September 6, 2003

Michigan Recumbent Rally West

Kalamazoo area. Recumbent displays, socializing. Numerous ride options. 10a.m. - 3p.m.
Contact: www.LMB.org/wolbents, Paul.Pancella@wmich.edu or tel. 616-353-0125

September 20, 2003

Fall Recumbent Rendezvous

Northern Detroit area. Recumbent test rides, group rides, displays. 9am - 3pm. Stony Creek Metropark Eastwood Beach shelter.
Contact: www.LMB.org/wolbents, wolverbob@cs.com or tel. 734-487-9058.

September 29, 2003

Worlds HP Speed Champs/.decimach 2003

Battle Mountain, Nevada
World Human Powered Speed Championships and .decimach Challenge. Racing occurs daily 9/29 -> 10/4. HPRA racing the last two days. Will somebody break 82 mph and win \$24,000!?

October 1, 2003

Ohio HPRA HPV races

Columbus, Ohio
Two days of HPV racing, probably at the Columbus Motor Speedway.

For the most recent updates on HPRA races, see: www.wisil.recumbents.com/wisil/events.htm and www.ihpva.org.



The Lissy Side-by-Side "Sociable" Tandem

Carl Georg Rasmussen, leitra@leitra.dk

When you want to make a bike tour together with your wife/girl friend/friend you often find it difficult to keep the same pace. A speed which is comfortable to one of us is either too high or too low to the other. You must frequently stop and wait.

If you are riding a recumbent, and your wife is struggling against the wind on an ordinary bike, the difference gets even more pronounced.

It's lovely to ride together — but not easy to put into practice. Ok, why don't you offer your wife a recumbent?

I did, several times and many different types, but always the same negative result! For some reason few women want to ride recumbents.

Then I bought a tandem and invited her on a ride with picnic to a beautiful countryside. That was much better. She really enjoyed sitting in front at the controls while I

was sitting behind pedalling full power. But there were still a few things, which could be better:

Starting and stopping with a long bike on two wheels wasn't that easy. The cranks were directly coupled, which means that you both have to pedal at the same time and with the same cadence. Also the conversation was difficult when one is sitting behind the others back.

Then I got the idea to purchase a recumbent side-by-side. In Europe there are several types on the market, but some of them are too wide to pass through gates or too slow, because they are built for handicapped or elderly people. The best choice seemed to be a new side-by-side built by one of my German customers (Leitra-owner since 1989) Peter Lis.

Peter lives together with his wife Karin in an old water mill between Hamburg and Lübeck, and he is a passionate bike-owner and bike designer.

He's an active member of the German HPV Association and has been the owner of more than 20 different recumbents.

The "Lissy" is only 1 meter wide (40 inches) and extremely maneuverable. The seats are very comfortable and sufficient upright to permit a good overview. The seats are a little displaced so that our shoulders do not touch each other. The transmission systems are independent, one connected to the left rear wheel and the other to the right. In this way we can shift gears or stop pedalling without disturbing each other, a feature which my wife appreciates very much. We can stop and go without the balance problems we had on the tandem. The steering and braking are reserved the left rider. The luggage can be stored in a box between the rear wheels.

My wife and I have made several long trips together, and she really enjoys it. The "Lissy" is a perfect family vehicle, where you can talk together, share the view and point at things and work together in an efficient way.

The total weight of the twin-trike is 46 kg, which can be reduced using lighter (thinner) frame tubes. Peter Lis has furnished his "Lissy" with an electric hub motor to go faster uphill. My wife and I still prefer the 100% human powered version. Should we add more weight we would rather spend it on a light fairing for weather protection. ♦

RCN Season Preview Updates

Bacchetta: Their correct phone number is Tel. 727-341-1881.

Evox: For more information, visit www.evocycle.com or call 800-610-4131 (USA).

WizWheelz: New phone: 269-945-5581.

Cambie Cycles: Their correct telephone number is (from road test): 877-414-8999. The Recumboni comes in three sizes: 70", 73" & 76".



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RCN Makes A Move Toward Monthly

For the past few years we've been working on refining the various systems that we use to publish RCN in hopes of moving towards a monthly. Well, we're not jumping to monthly right away, but we're making a move in that direction.

Starting with the July 2003 issue, we're moving to an 8 issue per year schedule. RCN will become a bit smaller in page count (28-32 pages per issue), but will come out *eight times per year*. The idea is that we become more timely to better compete with the our Internet competition. We also would like to offer a few issues per year *FREE* on the internet as downloadable Adobe pdf files. We eventually hope to move to 10 issues per year at some point in the future.

Because we're starting this schedule mid-year, we're adding just one more issue for 2003.

Here is our 2003 schedule:

Issue	Ad Deadline	Mail Date
RCN 76 July	April 15, 2003	June 1, 2003
RCN 77 Aug	May 15, 2003	July 1, 2003
RCN 78 Sept/Oct	July 1, 2003	Sept. 1, 2003
RCN 79 Nov/Dec/Jan	Aug. 15, 2003	Nov. 1, 2003

Please note that 3rd class mail can take 4 weeks for distribution

Many subscribers have had issues added to their subscriptions. Our ad rates will not increase, but will be reformatted. With the tighter schedule, on-time payment will be necessary to keep the issues flowing. If you have any questions or concerns, please email bob@recumbentcyclistnews.com. If you'd like to write for RCN, please write for our writer guidelines. ♦

1st Annual Rocky Mountain Recumbent Rally June 13-15, 2003

Best Of Bents of Arvada, Colorado, the largest recumbent bicycle dealer in the Rocky Mountain Region along with a group of recumbent enthusiasts are kicking off the Summer cycling season with the inaugural Rocky Mountain Recumbent Rally June 13-15, 2003 in McIlvoy Park Arvada, Colorado.

Recumbent bicycles are making their presence on the streets and trails of Colorado in greater numbers each year, and we want to celebrate and explore their unique imprint on cycling through the Rocky Mountain Recumbent Rally! Whether you already ride a recumbent or are a recumbent wannabe — the rally will satisfy your recumbent curiosities and imaginations!

Manufacturers will be bringing their latest bikes for demo test rides, offering the largest assortment of two and three wheeled recumbents for inspection and test rides in one place!

A series of seminars will be available to entertain and educate. Topics include: Recumbent 101, Maintenance & Repair, Recumbent Self-Contained Touring, and Fitness and Conditioning. In addition there will be representatives from local bicycle clubs and organizations.

Local guided rides will be available to explore the back roads and trails on your bike. For the competitive spirited souls there will be recumbent trike races, and King of the Hill Climbs!

The Arvada Gold Strike Festival will be ongoing along with our Rally offering arts, crafts, and live contemporary jazz performances by Nelson Rangel and Dotsero!

Please check out the rally website for details: www.bestofbents.com/RMRR.HTM or contact Best Of Bents, tel. 303-463-8775 for further information. ♦



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10th Annual Midwest Recumbent Rally

August 1-3, 2003

Join other recumbent riders during the 10th Annual Midwest Recumbent Rally, sponsored by the Hostel Shoppe. This unique event will be held on Friday, August 1st through Sunday, August 3rd in both Stevens Point and Amherst. The Rally offers a variety of activities both for the recumbent devotee and those interested in learning more about these laid back bikes.

The rally kicks off on Friday night with the Ice Cream Ride from the Hostel Shoppe to Cone Corners at 3:00 p.m. Rally attendees can also register for the event at the Hostel Shoppe from 10:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m.

Saturday's events will be held at Pacelli High School in Stevens Point. The rally includes free test rides of various demo recumbents and trikes from a large variety of manufacturers. The morning guided tour will leave at 8:00 a.m., with approximately 15 and 30 mile routes with sag wagon. You can also buy or sell a used recumbent at the swap meet, attend various seminars featuring industry reps

and enjoy meeting and talking with other recumbent riders. Enjoy a catered lunch by Rockmans Catering featuring assorted wraps and other goodies. You can also purchase a commemorative t-shirt while supplies last. The Hostel Shoppe will also be open from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturday with a special rally sale on in stock recumbents.

On Sunday, join the Hostel Shoppe owners, Rolf Garthus and his wife Barb, on the "Super Tour" group ride based out of the Amherst High School. Riders will meet at 8:00 a.m. in the high school parking lot and can tour through scenic rolling hills. Rockman's will also be providing the Sunday lunch in the high school cafeteria and the lunch will be subject to availability. Sunday is a day devoted exclusively to riding, socializing and having fun.

If this sounds like an event you just can't miss and you want more info, you can register on-line at www.hostelshoppe.com or call the Hostel Shoppe at 800-233-4340 nationwide or 715-341-BIKE. ♦

Recumbent Cyclist News

RCN ORDER FORM

RCN Back Issues

The back issues below are in stock and available as of January 15, 2003.

- RCN 74 2003 Season Preview/ Buyers' Guide; Sun EZ3, Recumboni
- RCN 73 Bacchetta Giro, Strada, and Aero reviews; Reynolds T-Bone
- RCN 72 Sun EZ Sport, Catrike, Bike or Trike?, Car Free Adventure
- RCN 71 Penninger trike, Burley
- RCN 70 Lightfoot Ranger, Rotator Pursuit 700, Cycle Genius, Pantour
- RCN 69 Cannondale recumbent; Greenspeed GTO, Wicks bike/trike
- RCN 68 Easy Racer Fold Gold, RANS Vivo, Rocket, Tailwind
- RCN 67 2002 Buyers' Guide
- RCN 66 Vision Saber, BikeE E2 Barcroft Dakota, Bentech kit build

We have many single copy old issues, and we can do custom reprints of complete issues or individual road tests. E-mail: bob@recumbentcyclistnews.com

- Back issues are \$5 + \$2 First class mail postage & handling each
- Any three back issues for \$20 Postpaid (\$15 if ordered with any subscription)
- Any six back issues for \$36 postpaid (\$30 if ordered with any subscription)

How to Subscribe

Subscribing is easy—just fill out this form, select the options that you would like, enclose payment and mail.

Subscription Rates

- \$32 One Year 6-Issue Subscription
- \$60 Two Year 12-Issue Subscription
- \$80 Three Year 18-Issue Subscription
- \$45 One Year First Class Mail option (if you move frequently, have seasonal addresses or have had trouble with your mail).

Please mail orders to:

RCN
PO Box 2048
Port Townsend, WA 98368

RARE Recumbent Rally

(r2K.3.4) Saturday June 21st, 2003

The Rochester Area Recumbent Enthusiasts and the Rochester Bicycling Club will host the 4th Annual RARE Recumbent Rally, on June 21st, 2003.

The ride will originate from the Hamlin Beach State Park in Hamlin, N.Y. Tent camping is available on a first come-first serve basis in the group camping area (you must book through us).

The ride will begin at the main parking area at Hamlin Beach State Park at 8 a.m. The ride is 75 miles. It includes flat country roads with low traffic, followed by forested bike path and continues to downtown Rochester to the Di-

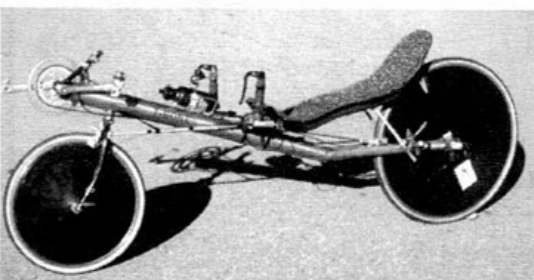
nosaur Barbeque where we stop for lunch. Lunch is followed by a photo stop at the High Falls and the return ride includes an ice cream break at Kelly's Farm Market.

A remote start from the Basil A. Marcella Park on English Rd. in Greece NY cuts the ride down to 25 miles. The short ride is on paved multiple-use trails and city streets.

The RBC and RARE are charging no fee. All meals and accommodations are on your own nickel.

For more information and group camping reservations, please contact Michael Brisson at mbrisson@rochester.rr.com. ♦

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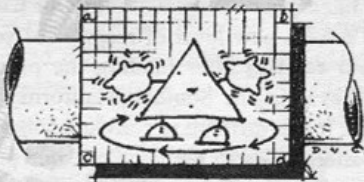


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Ellis Muther on his T-Bone

Happy T-Bone Customer

Last summer I was reading RCN and noticed an announcement that George Reynolds had switched the production of his bikes to titanium. At George's website I was able to see the new models and get spec details.

After doing some comparison shopping, I called George to talk recumbents. He's not only a craftsman, but is knowledgeable about bicycle components. After discussing my size, age and riding habits, I decided to buy a T-Bone, and sent off my deposit.

When the bike was ready, George called me to tell me it was on the way. It arrived five days later. I took the boxes to my local bike shop for assembly. In retrospect, any experienced rider could probably assemble the bike.

When I opened the box, the first thing I noticed was the shiny, well constructed, titanium frame. The meticulous welds were the most outstanding feature. A couple of hours later, I was off on my first ride. The most notable features were the twin big wheels (26") and the M5 seat.

After many weekends of riding on the local and country loops with my wife (on her upright bike) I can say without exception that if you are interested in an upscale recumbent, I recommend that you give George a call.

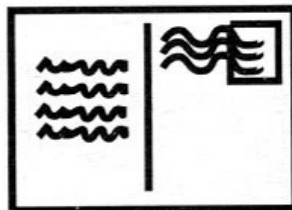
Ellis F. Muther, MD

Car-Free Kudos (RCN 72)

Just finished reading the Nov/Dec issue of Recumbent Cyclist News. "Why We Sold Our Car" is one of the most fun, helpful, down-to-earth, articles I've ever read. You did a real service, and in so doing opened our minds to the possibility of going car free, with your honest experiences of attempting such a feat in our car dependent society.

Your knowledge, experiences, and true caring for your children's future was evident in this article. To show your children by example, and to give them the gift of freedom to live your example is something few children are blessed with. I'm thankful the recumbent community has such a person at it's helm. For you are not just wishing for someone else to take care of our earth, traffic and family problems,

Write RCN . . .
Write Soon . . .
Write Often . . .



mail@recumbentcyclistnews.com

you are truly doing everything possible to accomplish this yourself.

When I saw that picture of you and your family sitting there on the ground looking like you are driving a car. I started chuckling, then I covered my mouth and was saying: "This is fabulous—just fabulous! My husband was in the room, and he thought I had lost it. I thank you for sharing your experiences and knowledge with us.

Connie McAyeal
Portland, Oregon

Car-Free Tickler

I've since finished all of RCN 72. The photo of you and your car-free family was a tickler! As a result of reading your article, I broke down and ordered a copy of *Divorce Your Car*. I could go car-free in a heartbeat. Which is a laugh of a statement since we have three vehicles and two drivers in our family. My husband isn't interested in going without a car.

Kelly Iniguez

Car-Lite Is a Great Idea

I really liked your "Why We Sold Our Car" article I have a new level of respect for you (and your family) after reading the piece. When I was living in Southern California 15 years ago, it was difficult to convince folks to look at alternatives to the "one car, one person" mentality. It still is, eh!? When I moved here to Eugene, Oregon to work for Burley, I was pleasantly surprised that not only was it acceptable to ride a bike to work, it was somewhat expected (or any other alternative means like the bus, carpooling, etc.). I'm proud to say that for the past decade I've averaged less than a 1,000 miles a year in my car while cycling 15,000 to 20,000 miles.

Keep up the good work with RCN and alternative transportation challenges).

Rob Templin
rob@burley.com

Lighting Comments (RCN 73)

I'm writing to comment on the LED lighting article by Kent Peterson in RCN 73. I've been testing bicycle lighting systems in my home lab for years and making recommendations to

industry. In my lab experiments with the CatEye lights, I've had different findings than Kent, and am writing to tell you about them:

1. The CatEye EL-300 isn't brighter than the CatEye HL 500 II Micro. In fact, I've found the opposite to be true. Both of these lamps suffer from lack of electronic regulation, so that if you use them with alkaline batteries the light output will be dismally poor after the first half of the battery run time. However, if you had to buy one of these two lamps, my recommendation would be the \$20 HL-500 II Micro, with its substantially a brighter light (and better peripheral illumination).

2. As for helmet mounted lights, I recommend the The Princeton Tec Matrix over the Aurora. The Matrix has electronic regulation, that allows it to run at constant brightness as the battery voltage drops. I've found that AAA batteries are a dramatically inferior choice for powering such lamps when compared to AA batteries. AA batteries offer 4 times the run time for a given cost. Eveready Lithium batteries that offer twice the capacity of alkaline batteries at about 60% of the weight.

While I agree with Kent that the CatEye LD600 is a superior disposable battery powered LED rear flasher, it's not the best choice for serious riders concerned about safety. I recommend the NiteRider 16 LED tail lamp and a small rechargeable battery pack to run it. This red tail lamp is brighter than the LD600, can be clearly seen and noticed during broad daylight, runs off rechargeable batteries, and DOES NOT dim in brightness during the discharge cycle.

In my opinion, white LED lamps are not quite ready for use as primary bike headlamps. There are systems in development that will be acceptable, using the newly introduced 1 and 5 watt Luxeon Star arrays of LED dies as well as new white LED technology. These should be available in the next year or so.

Further down the road, if improvements in cost, efficiency, and power handling of white LEDs continues at the same constant pace it has since they were developed, it's quite pos-

sible that, within the next decade, white LEDs will replace both incandescent and fluorescent lamps as the primary if not the sole means of domestic and commercial room lighting.

Martin H. Goodman

Are We Lazy?

Recumbents are a great way to ride, but they encourage wide spread laziness. If I want to ride somewhere, I expect to get a sore butt! I'm 18 years old and sick of industries throwing product after product at me for the mere sake of convenience.

American youths are surrounded by so much convenience: shopping on TV or the internet, internet, online checking, huge houses, gaming devices, convenience stores, and parents standing nearby. What happened to the days when men would go out and shoot dinner?

I see recumbents as just another big SUV on the road, another lame corner store. If you're going to ride a bike — sit upright. It's the way it was meant to be. Recumbent builders shouldn't have the right to twist and bend the beautiful art of the bicycle.

Dave Arbit

Editor Comments—We do live in a consumeristic world that markets everything to everybody. Small recumbent manufacturers don't seem to play this game. In fact, I feel that most don't promote their products enough.

I don't think recumbents promote laziness. Being comfortable allows riders to ride farther. An average (recumbent) cyclist might be able to ride 2-3 times as far as they are not in pain.

Some riders can't ride upright bikes due to health reasons. Other have balance problems, and three wheelers are the only answer.

Cars Are Convenient (RCN 72)

I read with interest your article on getting rid of your car. I admire you for the attempt. My dream is to live in a town that would accommodate cyclists to the point that autos are entirely excluded. (Fat chance!) I've got a pretty good situation in that my workplace is a six-mile commute with only one major (4-lane) road crossing, yet I don't cycle as often as I could. As you pointed out, the temptation with the auto in the driveway is often just too great. Thanks for a thought-provoking article.

Glenn Garland

Trike Safety Article (RCN 72)

I ride a recumbent trike and the cars avoid me like the plague. This is not a politically statement, but in two years only one car has come even close. They all give me plenty of room. When asked about safety I state that since most people have never seen a recumbent trike they must notice it, and when they see it has three wheels, they think I must be retarded, disabled

or something and give me a wide birth. I don't let it bother me as it gives me a safe feeling. I

Your article on "Why We Sold Our Car" was SUPER! The BIG smile on Marlyn's face standing next to her new Toyota Echo says it all. Chock another one up for the "marital physics"! Thanks for so many years of reading enjoyment. I hope RCN is around for many more to come.

Larry
wa2koul@pacbell.net

More Car-Free/Car Lite (RCN 72)

Thank you for your wonderfully enlightening article "Why We Sold Our Car." The photo—well, in a word, it's brilliant! I can't remember an RCN that featured a photo of your family—and this one is a classic!

The format of the article provided much needed information for any readers who've ever thought of going car-free. The information you gave about SUVs, refrigerators, color TVs and bathroom lights was brilliant!

I sold my van in June of 2000. I've never regretted that sale, but drastic it was. I've had a car since age 16 — 21 years with an addiction. I was spending \$610 a month (not including gas) to have that leather enhanced, all electric gadgeted, bike carrier sitting in my garage — insanity!

What I've found since that sale is, I can consciously make decisions on having to use a car (my husband does have autos). This sale meant that my total dependence/addiction on automobiles was virtually eliminated. The only time I ever drove was to take my daughter to one of her endless activities or to go on a group ride. Melissa is now in college and has flown the coop. Since her graduation, I haven't driven more than 40 miles. I've also vetoed going on any group rides in which driving a car to get my bike and I somewhere is required. I'll hitch a ride for me and my 'bent if someone is going that way. I fill up their gas tank as a thank you and it works really nicely. I save a ton of money and they get a tank of gas for their efforts.

We sold our house early last year and moved into an apartment. We now live on-site where Steve works. I'm 2.6 miles from work, which enables me to walk to work when the roads are unsafe during the winter months (42 minute walk at last count). He walks out of our apartment and he's at work.

We have a shopping center across the block. Our community has a pharmacy, a hardware store, a Hallmark card shop, a few restaurants, a sheriff's office, video store, vet, health club,

dentist, naturopath, family health clinic, insurance office, investment office, etc., all within the center. My circle is truly nirvana... Katie Alvord (Divorce Your Car author) would be proud. If I need to go somewhere else, I have a 5 mile bike ride to the TriMet MAX line (mass-transit).

Your article that you put together has reaffirmed the decisions I've made and given me a bundle of hope knowing that your readers have the opportunity to make changes for themselves along the same line. Thank you for taking the time to tell all of us about your personal experience.

Your last paragraph stated: "Was our experiment a failure?" Oh my gosh no! What you've done is created an article that thousands of people will read. You've planted a seed. What it will reap, you may never know. So, to your two very fortunate kids and to Marilyn for her willingness to give it a go and to you for sharing . . . Thank you. Ride Safe . . . look both ways before crossing. . . And remember your bus transfers...

Laurie (Wo) Smith, ERRC

Society Out of Balance

I just finished your article on your family's Car Free experience. I am sure you'll receive praises from those who advocate such a lifestyle, and condemnation from those who don't. What I read was that such a decision is, first, a personal one and second, in order to be truly successful, must be in balance with your life's needs and circumstances. In making such a decision there is no universal standard of correctness. What is right for you may not be for someone else.

To me, the true essence of your article is that, as a society, we are out of balance, totally dependent on gas guzzling vehicles available to us at 0% financing. We all want to conserve energy and not pollute the atmosphere, but surely our vehicle doesn't cause all of that, everyone else's does. We need our vehicles, our neighbors should cut down on the use of theirs. The solution isn't abstinence, it is moderation, fitting alternative modes of transportation into our lives to reduce our current dependence on automobiles and to provide many of the benefits you described in your article.

Each day I bicycle (recumbent of course) to work, on an errand, or even just for exercise, I reduce my expenses, pollute less, receive exercise, and enjoy the surroundings I

. . . continued on page 32

Send Letters to the Editor of RCN

If you have something to say, a differing viewpoint or experience—we want to hear from you! **Please limit letters to 300 words.** RCN reserves the right to edit submissions for clarity, content, and space limitations. Please send to bob@recumbencyclistnews.com or RCN, PO Box 2048, Port Townsend, WA 98368



HP Velo Spirit

Urban Bike for the Recumbent Planet

By Bob Bryant

HP Velo is the European recumbent manufacturer who's done the best job at cultivating the American market. They are easy to deal with and are known for their very cool cutting edge and high quality recumbents. With the demise of BikeE and rumors and problems at Cannondale, the Spirit will easily capture the high-end CLWB market.

While it seems as though HP is far away, they are as close as your Internet connection. They deliver in a timely fashion just as if they were stateside.

The quality of the bikes are exceptional. With our two test bike experiences, we've seen no problems or concerns with the way that HP Velo does business.

Systems

HP Velo has frames built in Taiwan, while their bikes are painted, assembled and packed in Germany. The result is an exceptional level of quality, that you might come to expect from a German automobile manufacturer.

Frame — The main frame tube is an over-size 3-inch diameter aluminum tube that has a sexy curve that allows for an easy step-over height. The bottom bracket is placed on the main tube just in front of the headtube (very SWB-like). A suspension swing arm is attached off the back of the main tube.

Fork — The Spirit has an aluminum front suspension fork. A steel spring is "discretely integrated" into the steerer tube. It's similar

in appearance to the Cannondale and works well.

Suspension — The HP "No Squat" rear suspension is hydraulically dampened by a coil/oil shock for a very smooth ride. There is 2.33" of travel. Our Spirit came with an optional spring for heavier riders. We never had to install it. The front Headshock-like suspension has just 1.2" of travel, though also seemed quite adequate.

The suspension was a big improvement over BikeE's, and nearly as good as the Cannondale. We'll give Cannondale the benefit of the doubt for being a suspension specialist, but we definitely like the Spirit bike better.

I never experienced much rear suspension pogo, and am sure it could be dialed-out for riders who do experience it with the additional spring.

Steering — A stump tube comes out of the headtube and attaches to a steering riser. The riser attaches to a stem, that connects to some Euro style tourister-type bars. The feel is very Euro, almost like a more urban version of the "tweener" set-up found on the Bacchettas.

Weight — This bike is not light. Full suspension urban recumbents are seldom lightweight. Our test bike with the integral seat rack, pannier rack, fenders, rearview mirror, and pedals weighed 45 pounds.

Drivetrain

Components — The components are a mix appropriate for this bike. The hubs are SON

(front, generator) and rear SRAM DualDrive. The bike has a "DualDrive rear derailleur — shifted by a SRAM chain and DualDrive twist shifters. The SRAM Dual Drive shifted perfectly. Though the system worked fine, we find SRAM derailleurs cheap looking compared to those from Shimano. However, durability has not been a concern that we are aware of.

After reviewing recumbents with small drive-wheels and large chainrings, and overly complicated mid-drives — the DualDrive was a welcome change. It simplifies the frame design, and makes for the perfect urban recumbent drivetrain.

If there is a part on the bike worthy of upgrade it would be the Tracer single chainring alloy crank. If you replace it, you then must find a way to adapt inner and outer chain guides (chainrings with no teeth) — otherwise you may have trouble with chain derailments. So it's probably not worth doing.

Chain management — HP Velo outfits the Spirit with dual chain tubes and *no* idler pulley. Initially, you do feel some friction as you crank the pedals or spin the rear wheel. However, the performance of this CLWB is quite good, and we love the simplicity of the well thought out chain management system.

Braking — There are no excuses from HP Velo about braking. There are no mixed brake sets and theories on why a 16-inch front wheel can't have a disc brake. The Spirit comes outfitted with twin Tektro disc brakes. The stopping power is exceptional — and the finest of any CLWB we've tested. We had test bikes with Tektro, Avid and Formula discs here at the same time. I prefer the Avid's, but the Tektro's are a close second. MAGURA Julie Trekking, hydraulic disc brakes and levers are an available option (\$169).

Pedals — The Spirit comes with a rather nice pair of alloy pedals that have a rubber grip surface. As one who likes fine retro pedals, I took an immediate liking to these. However, if I were going to ride this bike at speed, I'd opt for a platform/clipless combo pedal. It is my belief that you need to be clipped in when the BB is as high as the one on the Spirit.

Wheels and Tires — The fat and robust Schwalbe City Jet 1.95 tires are the perfect tire for an urban rider who wants to be able to tackle diverse terrain. While a rather low pressure tire (65 psi), they have a Kevlar belt, which adds to their durability. Our test period was in January with ice, mud, crud and we rode through all of it — even some off-road.

Comfort

Seat — The HP Velo seat has an aluminum frame with an integral rear rack coming off the back. The rather plain vinyl covered seat base was surprisingly comfortable. The beauty

of the seat is in the two quick-releases that both clamp down on the seat track (a la Burley or Cannondale) and allow the seat to recline and base to adjust separately from the back. You can also loosen four allen bolts to move it further. The seat back is very comfy and has three tension straps to shape and set the back's firmness. The seat is superior to other CLWB's. Changing riders (sizes) is easy with the quickly adjustable seat.

The Spirit's seat is set at 60 degrees and has 5 degrees +/- of recline adjustment.

Ergonomics — The Spirit has a bottom bracket that is between 1/2" and 2.5" (for me at 6' tall) below the seat height. While this is higher than other CLWB models, and may require the need for clipless pedals — the ergonomics are near perfect.

User friendliness — Some aspects of the Spirit make it extremely user-friendly. The cockpit is easy to climb into and the main tube has a swoopy bend to it that allows you to step over easily. Most riders will be able to sit flat footed on the Spirit. One aspect of the design that makes it less user-friendly than other typical CLWB's (like the Sun models) is the higher bottom bracket (BB). This may take a new rider longer to get accustomed to. Clipless pedals are mo

Performance

The Spirit offers the finest CLWB handling in it's genre. It's very neutral feeling — very SWB-like. It can turn on a dime, and navigate through just about anything. We took it out in the country with the fairing on and experienced fine performance (for a CLWB). We even rode it as fast as she'd roll down the steepest hill around town (Cook Avenue Hill). My only concern is that my feel wanted to bounce off the pedals at speed. I can't recommend riding the Spirit at high speed with the stock pedals. While excellent for around town, the BB is high enough where you'll need clipless pedals to hold your feet onto the bike.

The Spirit is about as maneuverable as a recumbent can be. It's short enough, and with the higher BB and smaller wheels, it can get in and out of just about any situation.

Hill Climbing — Like most CLWB, I found the Spirit to be a slow, but steady climber. The main reason for this is the heavy weight of the bike. Our test bike was even heavier with the SON hub and fairing, though the Spirit is no lightweight even without these options.

So while I found the Spirit to be a competent recumbent, performance will suffer — especially up hills — due to the weight of the bike.

Owning

Utility — The Spirit is an ideal urban commuter. Perhaps the best you can get. It will haul a big payload (underseat panniers, seat rack and room for seat bag) — but best of all the

thoughtful (European) manufacturer offers well thought out and carefully fit options that improve roadworthiness.

Options & accessories — We ordered our Spirit with the optional SKS Bluemel fenders (retail \$35), a BM Cyclestar rearview mirror (a bit small, but works fine; \$15 retail), the SON generator hub/light system (wonderful!) and a kickstand (\$13). Our test bike also had the HP lowrider pannier racks (\$90) which worked well, but strapping our panniers on (lower) was not as easy as we'd experienced with other racks.

We also borrowed the Radical bag from our Hase trike which fit the Spirit better than the Kettwiesel it was designed for. There is a HP seat bag, but we neglected to order one.

Back to the light system for a moment. Most of the time you cannot even tell that you are riding with a generator on. As the hub turns, it generates electricity to power the lights. There is a nicely fit BM Lumotec oval headlight with the on/off switch) and internal wiring that runs back to a red tail-light. After three minutes of riding, LED lights come on when you come to a stoplight (and stop pedaling for a moment). While not luminescent as my Night Sun system, the SON generator will never leave you with a dead battery. The lights also have an automatic dusk sensor.

HP Velo offers the SON as an option, which includes the internal frame wiring and mounts for the lights. It's a most impressive system (retails for \$309 USD).

The Spirit has braze-on mounts for front and rear lights, fenders, and several other items. There is one spot for a water bottle on the topside of the main tube. Others could be fitted, or there is room for a hydration pack on the seatback.

Our test bike had the optional Streamer fairing (\$279) that quick-release to the handlebar and stem/riser via three Klickfix" mounts. The fairing velcro mounts to the aluminum sub-frame (works very well). The Streamer appeared to be just as nice as the fairings we've seen from Zzip and Mueller, with good edging and quality. As usual, they scratch easily. On this particular bike, the fairing worked nicely to keep the cold winter air off the rider, and did offer a performance boost. This is a worthwhile option, especially for commuters in cold climates.

Verdict

With the demise of BikeE, we must question the feasibility of a recumbent mass market. While many enthusiasts opt for "go-fast" performance recumbents, we're not sure if there is a big "urban commuter" market (or if they'll opt for a CLWB). It does make the most sense as an urban recumbent, but some riders want their bikes to pull double duty as a weekend warrior, so they might opt for a go-fast commuter. BikeE sold enough RX's to make them

INFO AT A GLANCE

Specifications

Model — HP Velo Spirit
Type — CLWB
Steering — OSS
Wheelbase — 51"
Seat height — 24 - 28"
Bottom bracket height — 23.5"
Frame sizes — one-size-fits-most
Weight — 39 pounds
Weight limit — #275

Frame — 3" diameter Aluminum 7005 T6,
TIG-welded and heat treated
Fork — CroMo
Stem — HP Velo
Handlebar — Alum. T-bar
Seat — HP mesh back, foam base

Components

Crank — Tracer alloy single
Bottom bracket — n.a.
Headset — CT-2 threadless
Derailleur (front) — none
Derailleur (rear) — SRAM DualDrive
Shifters — SRAM 5.0 DualDrive (twist)
Cassette — SRAM DualDrive 8/24-speed
Chain — Shimano
Gear inch range — n.a.
Wheels — 406 mm 20"
Hubs (rear) — SRAM DualDrive
Hub (front) — SON generator (optional)
Rims — Alex hollow chamber
Tires — Schwalbe City Jet 1.95
Brakes — Tektro disc
Pedals — Alloy VP 607
Suspension (front) — 1.2" travel
Suspension (rear) — 2.33" travel

Incidentals

Priced from — \$1495 + shipping/options
Warranty (frame) — 10 years (orig. owner)
Colors — Red or Yellow
Fits Riders — 5' - 6'7"

Pro

A very comfy ride
Excellent craftsmanship
Exceptional handling
Exceptional ergonomics
Lots of great options
European styling

Con

Cost (though comparable to its peers)
New design
Limited performance
Heavy
SRAM DualDrive rear der. is mediocre
Not as user-friendly as low BB CLWB

Contact

HPV Velotechnik
www.hpvelotechnik.com



Note the Spirit's seat, integral luggage rack and optional pannier rack. The seat has better recline and angle adjustment than most CLWB models.

worthwhile (though it didn't help to keep them in business). Cannondale says they sold enough recumbents to make the project worthwhile — though neither are stellar examples. A company like HP Velo should be able to sell enough Spirit's to make it a worthwhile model in their stable of SWB performance and touring recumbents.

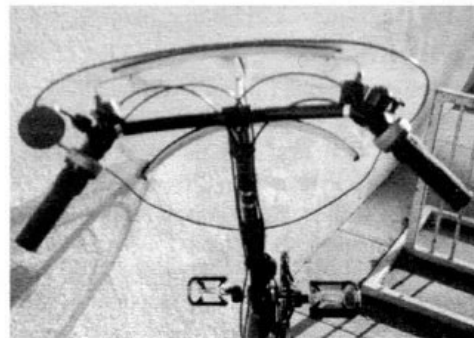
In comparing the Spirit to the BikeE RX, it's flat out a better bike — no question about it. It's also more affordable than the final RX, and it has a workabout front suspension, more comfy seat and better options. The Spirit is simpler than the Cannondale (with it's complex mid-drive) and far less expensive. Our loaded test Spirit cost about what a basic Cannondale sells for. The Spirit is a more refined product than any of the above. Like the above bikes, if there is a downside it's the weight. Our loaded Spirit weighed 45 pounds.

One aspect of the Euro bike that we very

much respect is that the Europeans don't mess around when it comes to serious accessories to turn their bicycles into vehicles for urban transportation. In fact, in some countries, these accessories can be mandated by a given countries legal requirements. In contrast, most USA manufacturers are quite lame.

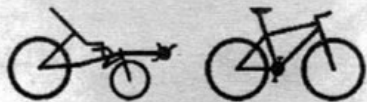
The compact style of recumbent truly is the ultimate for urban riding. This CLWB is no longer than an average touring (upright) bike. The Spirit has exceptional handling and road manners. The feeling is very neutral and stable — one of the best handling recumbents we've ever reviewed (and the best CLWB handling).

The HP Velo Spirit does not ride or feel like a new recumbent model or design. It feels refined and dialed-in. Ours was robust and problem free in our daily use. The Spirit is an exceptional CLWB or urban/commuter recumbent. It's an attractive, simple and straightforward recumbent that is an absolute pleasure to ride. ♦



The Spirit has excellent ergonomics. The fairing fits and works nicely, as does the rearview mirror. The fairing removes in less than one minute. The cockpit is roomy — even for this XL sized road tester on a one-size fits most bike.

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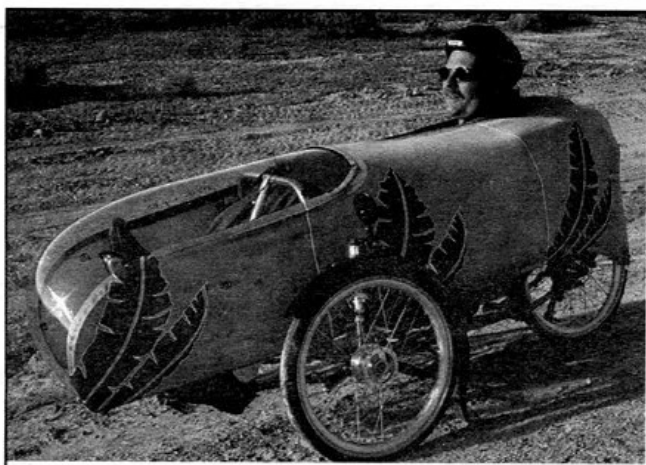


Photo by Bill Cook

Greenspeed GTO with body sock at Battle Mountain, Nevada.

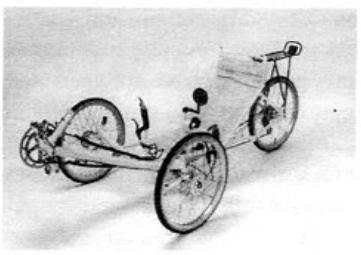
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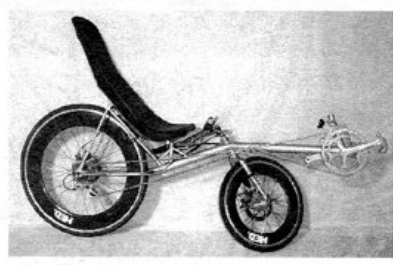


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Chris Burkhardt (left) and Bill Cook (right) and the Columbia

Columbia, A Gem of a Tandem

By Mike Stern

A nice thing about the recumbent world is the ability to go directly to the people you wish to deal with. Over the years I've communicated with Tim Brummer of Lightning, Greg Peek of Longbikes, Steve Delaire of Rotator, and John Schlitter of X-eyed, among others. And cutting-edge retailers such as Kelvin Clark of Angletech, Zach Kaplan of Zach Kaplan Cycles, and Dave Doty (before his retirement) of Valley Bikes all shared with me their insight and experience. Add to that list Bill Cook of Barcroft Cycles.

I first talked to Bill during my search for a more performance-oriented 'bent to replace my V-Rex. I concluded that for me there wasn't an appropriate substitute for the all-around performance I was getting. Given the extent of my quest, I felt a visit to Barcroft would be a waste of time, but I had devoted so much effort to the search that visiting one more company couldn't hurt. So, my wife and I combined a weekend vacation to Washington, D.C., with a test ride. Like most of my plans, the trip turned out far differently than I had anticipated. During that trip my wife, a dedicated upright road bike rider, suggested as an afterthought that we try the Columbia tandem. We enjoyed it. While the desire for that bike was not immediate, a seed was planted that grew during the winter. We discussed the bike and the fun we had riding it. My wife subtly suggested we consider adding it to our growing inventory. After months of discussion, further communication with Cook, and an analysis of

our finances, we placed the order.

We had test-ridden tandems before. Although my wife and I do the same rides, we never seem to ride together. I pass her down hills and on downgrades, and she returns the favor up hills and on upgrades. Neither of us is comfortable with altering our riding strengths to keep together for any length of time (it isn't a competitive thing, we both enjoy the riding benefits our different bikes provide). The tandem concept was a solution, since all seats arrive at their destination at the same time. Of those recumbent tandems we had ridden, however, none had felt right. Recumbent tandems are long, heavy, and difficult to transport. They're fine bikes, but the practical implications of owning one of these beasts deterred us. Until we rode the Columbia, that is. When we made our decision, it stood alone as the only compact, relatively lightweight tandem available in the U.S. market.

The Columbia was born and bred in Washington, D.C. Both Bill Cook and Chris Burkhardt are members of Washington's Happily Independent Recumbent Lovers Organization (WHIRL), a very active group of recumbent riders. Chris built a compact tandem for himself and his wife. The final product was similar to, but smaller than, the Columbia. Bill consulted with Chris during the building, became impressed with the commercial possibilities of the bike, and began to tinker with the design. The final product is longer than the

original bike to accommodate larger riders. It was christened the Columbia, as Chris was born in the District of Columbia (Barcroft names all of its bikes after a state or geographic district).

The Columbia was designed for short-distance touring. It can pull a trailer. While not intended as a speed machine, in the summer of 2001 it was used to set a new 200-meter recumbent tandem sprint record at the Northbrook, Illinois, Velodrome, hitting 34 mph. The record bike used a 73-tooth chainring instead of the standard 58, but other than that it was the same bike we have.

In moving from a single recumbent to a recumbent tandem, I found that I had to adopt a new riding style and philosophy. I usually ride in the middle chainring on my V-Rex, with occasional visits to the big ring. I brought that same attitude to this tandem, and my knees and legs paid for it. As one seasoned tandem rider aptly put it, "You've got gears, use them." To enjoy the thrill of 35+ mph downhills, you have to endure the drudgery of 5 mph uphill. You soon learn to maximize momentum to get a running start on the inevitable uphill. And you constantly move through the gears. I finally learned this by following other recumbent tandem riders, observing their pedaling, listening to their shifting, and talking with them about how they do things. When I first started riding the Columbia, I thought we were the only ones who were slow on the uphill.

Now, on to the Columbia.

Technical Specifications

Frame — The frame is made of 4130 CroMo steel. It is custom made by Steve Delaire of Rotator Recumbents. Delaire is a master welder who makes frames for other manufacturers (Easy Racers for one). Most of the reviews I read mention frames having TIG welds. On the Columbia, due to the need for stronger joints, Delaire brazes them. With the thinness of the tubing, if the joints are TIG welded (a process that melts the steel) the frame tubing could weaken unless reheated to restore its strength. By brazing (welding brass into the joints), the tubes are not melted so there is no loss of strength. The finish of the welds is smooth with no gaps or rough edges. They may not be as finished-looking as some other welds I've seen, but they're comparable to others and are not unsightly.

Fork — The fork is a steel (CroMo) tandem fork—the same one is used on the RANS Screamer.

Paint — Ten standard colors are offered, but any color can be ordered at a small cost. Painting is done by Northeast Custom Paintworks. Our color is Porsche Guards red (at the suggestion of Cook), and the finish was

flawless. It is a deep, bright red with a subdued reflective sparkle. The sparkle is from a metallic additive in the clearcoat finish which provides luster and enhances the shine. For the Barcroft Virginia (yes, I finally found the bike to replace the V-Rex) I ordered the frame in Volkswagen Beetle yellow. All I needed was the universal paint number and the color was mine.

Steering — The RANS Flip-It riser stem and steering bar are used. I find this setup ideal (I have enjoyed it for many thousands of miles on my V-Rex). With the infinite adjustments available, I am able to set the bar as close to my body as I like. I find that reaching out for the bars like you do with Easy Racers, Bacchettas, and others is uncomfortable and can cause fatigue. I set the adjustments so my hands lightly grasp the steering bar and hang, without any force. In all the years I've ridden in this position I've never encountered problems. I also appreciate the ability to have all my controls in front of me.

The head tube angle is 74 degrees, which is slightly more upright than what I'm used to. Though is more vertical, I find that the steering feels much like my RANS V-Rex.

The steering responds with good road feel. Road shocks are muted, so my hands don't bounce or vibrate. Turning maneuvers are precise and controlled. Except at very slow speeds, I don't have a tendency to oversteer, and cornering is sure and solid.

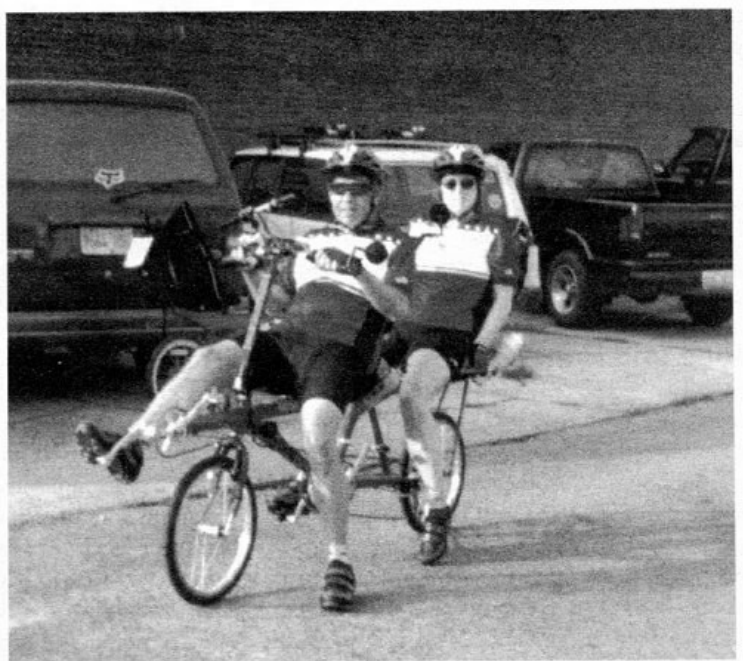
Weight — The advertised weight is 46 pounds—a figure I confirmed by my own inexact weighing. At first blush that seems high since the RANS Screamer, with a much longer wheelbase and overall length, and the Double Vision, longer still, are advertised at 52 pounds each. But website comments from other tandem owners suggest that those weights may not be spot-on. Also, remember the Columbia's frame is sturdy and solid and incorporates a sliding boom. Perhaps a few pounds could be shaved by eliminating the extra weight of the boom, but that would limit the bike's ability to fit larger riders.

Drivetrain — Sugino tandem cranks are attached to Shimano bottom brackets. Chainrings are 36/48/58, and a Shimano XT 11-34 9-speed cassette is standard, providing a gear-inch range of 21-105. At a 90 rpm cadence, top speed is 28 mph. Remember, with tandems low gearing is crucial. You can always swap out gear rings if you want higher performance.

All the chains are Shimano HG73's. Chain management is excellent. I've read that power is lost when chains run over idlers on the torque side of the chain cycle due to the friction occurring with the idler contact. On the Columbia, there is no idler contact on the drive side of the chain sequence. Barcroft offers Vision's Independent Pedaling System as an option, but my wife and I have no problem pedaling in unison, so we're glad we didn't order it. The front idler is a beauty. Made of black urethane, it is dual channeled, one channel to hold the chain on the return path, the other to keep the torque side from lateral movement.

The front derailleur is a Shimano 105, and the rear is a Shimano LX long cage. The shifters are SRAM Rocket 9-speed. This drivetrain is as nice a system as I've found. I have the SRAM 9.0 ESP shifters on the V-Rex (but not the Rocket shifters) and have always found them to be excellent, but they pale in comparison to the Rocket version. Shifting is smooth and precise in small increments (the V-Rex shifters require a longer throw/twist), and very little effort is required to move from one gear to the next.

Braking — Odyssey A brakes with a special brace are standard. The brace is needed to ensure that the chainstays do not flex under heavy braking. Braking is not as sure as on 'bents I've ridden with disk brakes, but that is comparing apples to oranges. The braking here feels good, not spongy. It takes a little longer to slow the bike down, but when you consider that you're braking a 46-pound machine with combined rider weight of 300+ pounds you understand the reason. There is absolutely no squealing or vibration when braking. Disk brakes are optional (\$600+) and should be considered if you do a lot of mountain riding where braking on long descents can cause the rims to heat up. But they



Author, Mike Stern and the Barcroft tandem

are costly, and for our relatively flat Midwest riding (we do have hills which Colorado riders probably call speed bumps) these brakes are fine.

Wheels and Tires — Wheels are 20-inch (406) front and rear. They use 36-hole Sun RhinoLite Rims with Shimano XT hubs, laced with 14-gauge spokes. These wheels are solid. Even a nontechnical person like myself notices their sturdiness. The standard tires are ACS True 20 x 2.00. I've been a fan of skinny tires and run Continental Grand Prix's on my V-Rex. At Cook's suggestion I upgraded the Columbia's tires to Vredestein S-Licks (20 x 1.3). These tires are a lower psi than I'm used to (90 vs. 120) and wider (1.3 vs. 1.15), but I can detect no penalty in rolling resistance and yet receive a compliant, softer ride. Traction seems to be excellent. Crossing gravel-strewn intersections doesn't present the problem it does with thinner tires.

The dual 20-inch tires and their effect on the speed of the bike was something I gave a lot of thought to. Current website theory suggests that riding speed and performance are enhanced with dual 26-inch or 700c wheels (Bacchetta, Vision, and now even Rotator and Wishbone offer such models). Larger wheels just aren't as practicable. My initial impression was that the dual 20's were a mixed blessing. With a smaller wheel, acceleration from a standing start is faster, but the smaller wheels seemed to lose momentum on uphill quicker.

One obvious benefit of the dual 20's is that I can carry one spare tube size instead of two. And larger wheels would add more length to the bike, which would eliminate what I find one of the most endearing features of the Columbia: its transportability. Couple the performance with the ease of getting it around and I don't mind the dual 20-inch wheels at all.

Comfort

Seat—The RANS seat is used both for captain and stoker. Need I say more? I find this seat to be the most comfortable all-purpose seat on the market. It is high for support, mesh backed for coolness, has a padded seat for comfort, and the seat back has numerous adjustments. It slides on a runner and thus has infinite settings, which is significantly better than adjusting a boom and adding or subtracting chain links. The new RANS seats seem to weigh less than the one on my 2000 V-Rex. The one drawback for any RANS seat is its weight, but for me the increased comfort makes this concession a no-brainer. And the water bottle cage setup (cages are installed at 45-degree angles on each side of the seat back) ensures that liquids are always within easy reach.

Ergonomics — The captain's pedal setup could be classified as a

modified high bottom bracket, with hips and pedals at about the same level (the top tube does not slope). I'm used to high bottom brackets, so I find this arrangement very comfortable. The stoker's position uses a low bottom bracket similar to what is found on Easy Racers or the RANS Stratus. My stoker finds this position comfortable. Since the stoker's bottom bracket is located under the captain's seat, a high stoker's bottom bracket isn't possible.

Ride and Handling

Stability — The only time this bike shows any instability is at very low speeds. I found the threshold for true stability to be around 9 to 10 mph. Below that, there is some side-to-side shifting, though happened less and less as we gained more experience with the bike. Below 6 mph the side-to-side movement is more pronounced, as it is on every 'bent I've ridden. This isn't serious, just noticeable, and we make steering adjustments without problem. Once we got used to starting from a dead stop (it took us about ten tries to feel fully confident, and now it is second nature) we were up and under way with no problem. Downhill speeds approach what I never thought I would be riding at, and the bike is absolutely solid. You may be going 40, but except for the wind rushing by, you feel like you're doing 20. There is no wobble or shake.

Some are concerned about the potentially rough ride of such a compact tandem with the stoker seat over the back wheel. Barcroft's Bill Cook had this to say, "I initially expected that

would be the case. But it isn't. The stoker has a comfortable ride. I often stoke the bike and I'm surprised at how comfortable it is, especially for long-distance rides."

Tracking — As mentioned above, only at very slow speeds is there a problem holding a line. Above 10 mph, side-to-side movement has nothing to do with the bike itself but rather with the riders shifting in their seats. Even then, tracking is excellent. I never felt, except when learning how to start from a stop, that I wasn't in control. I've always been able to make minor steering adjustments without problem to keep us on track. You don't feel like you're riding on a bike with an 81-inch overall length. And I can't emphasize enough that, tearing downhill, with my hands relaxed on the steering, it flies straight as an arrow.

Speed and Efficiency — I believe any tandem is made for the flats and for downhills. They're nothing to write home about on uphills. I read postings from those who love hills. That isn't me. Hills are nice to look at but not fun to climb. On a flat surface, with wind as no factor, and where I can average perhaps 15 mph on my V-Rex, we're doing 18-19 on the Columbia. And that is with less effort. Downhill, I can get the V-Rex close to 30 before caution takes over. On the tandem it's closer to 40. And this is coasting, not pedaling. The bike could run more if I didn't brake. Uphill is another story. We're pushing more weight (the bike plus two riders), so we drop down the gears quickly. On my V-Rex I very seldom go to the granny gears. As stated earlier, I tried to

use that same technique on the Columbia without success. It definitely requires extra effort to push this bike uphill. Before, only well into a ride when I tired did I use the granny gears on the uphill. Now I don't wait for that to happen. When I start an uphill climb (not an upgrade, an uphill) I shift to the small chainring. The result is that while no sound barriers are broken, we do make it to the top and the pain in my knees is gone. I found there to be more effort required when we test-rode the Screamer and the Vision uphill, but to be fair, we didn't ride them for long distances.

On a recent city ride where we had rolling terrain I found it interesting that we would blow by the hardbody wedgie riders on the downhill, pass some of them (more than a few) on the flats (this doesn't happen on the flats often with the V-Rex), but would be lapped by them on the uphill. My range of speeds on my single might move between 8 and 25 mph on a hilly route. On the Columbia it is between 5 and 35. The problem is that the 35 seems over in a flash while the slow speeds seem to go on forever. But my overall average speed has been higher on the tandem despite the slow uphills. So care and common sense is essential to the successful riding of a tandem. If I ride smart I can ride this bike long distances at a nice average speed.

This bike presents a contrast to the remainder of the Barcroft line. Both of the single recumbents (Dakota and Virginia) are elongated SWB's with low profiles (21" and 19" seat heights, respectively) and reclined seats

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for improved aerodynamics. The Columbia is more upright. Seat height is 29", and because of the cockpit configuration, the seat backs do not recline very far. Your riding position is more closed, like the Lightning position or a RANS with the seat back in one of its most upright settings. Because of the stoker, the captain's seat cannot recline to the extreme, and because the bike literally ends immediately behind the stoker, the stoker cannot recline to the extreme either. This less aerodynamic configuration will have some effect on speed, but as mentioned above, my overall results are better than on a single recumbent. The disadvantages of being less aerodynamic (the more upright seat) and having increased weight (two riders and a larger bike) are overcome by double the pedal power with the same frontal area as on a single bike. Unless the course is very hilly, we generally get the better results with less effort. And while the seat height may sound high, I am 5'7" tall and have no problem placing my feet on the ground at a stop.

Maneuverability — This is a tandem. It's not as maneuverable as a single 'bent. It weighs more, sits higher, and is longer. Having said that, the Columbia, due to its compact configuration, outmaneuvers any other tandem I've ridden. The Columbia can make a U-turn inside an 11-foot circle. It also outmaneuvers some LWB bikes I've ridden. It can turn in a twelve-foot circle. I can ride it alone if need be (and pray there are no hills). At very slow

speeds (under 5 mph) it requires special handling like any recumbent. Once up to speed it handles very well. It corners magnificently. And downhill, it flies, supremely steady, as the cyclometer mounts through the 20's and into the 30's. Given its shorter length, it reacts smoothly to avoid road hazards.

User-friendliness — There is nothing complicated about the bike. Setting it up is simple. It uses a very user-friendly steering system. The seats adjust easily. The bike arrives almost ready to ride. After the initial break-in period for getting your coordination going when starting, it is a dream. For taller riders, the boom can be extended; this is accomplished by loosening two allen screws in a welded channel near the front and adding some links to the chain. Adjusting the steering up and down and fore and aft is a snap. In short, there was nothing I couldn't do, and I'm as nonmechanical as they come. And this bike has one advantage over any other tandem: it's transportable on a regular trunk car rack. We have an old conversion van. We've removed the rear seat of the van, and the bike fits in without dismantling and we have plenty of room for other things. A full-size recumbent tandem would be too long.

Fun Factor — Riding a recumbent gets you attention. Riding a recumbent tandem gets you even more attention. Riding this recumbent tandem makes you a star. I guarantee no one has seen anything similar. We ride around with

a smile because this bike is so fun. Many people yell out, "That looks like fun!" And it is. Wedgie riders inquire about its comfort and handling. My wife is a confirmed upright road rider. As this article is written, we've had the tandem nine weeks. She has ridden her road bike three times since the tandem arrived. She loves this bike. In fact, she can't wait for the rides. She now wants to do longer routes. She's never ridden anything so comfortable. And while the hills makes us strain, overall she can't wait to get back out on the bike again.

Owning and Purchasing

Versatility — Unless you can find one used, there's only one way to buy the bike and that is through Barcroft. Unless you know someone who has one, or want to buy sight unseen, a trip to Washington, D.C., is required. It was well worth it for us. Bill Cook set up an appointment, rode with us, answered our questions, and made himself available afterward by e-mail and phone. You don't price shop dealers, since dealers don't have them. But the nice thing about dealing with the owner is that you can get him to build the bike the way you want it. I know who to go to if a problem arises. To me that means a lot.

Shipping and Assembly — The bike most likely will be shipped to you. Ours took a week and arrived in a large flat carton. Packing was exceptional. Bubble wrap enclosed the entire frame, and seats were covered in plastic with

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the pedals (we ordered through the company) wrapped inside. It took little time to assemble and required no exotic tools. The cyclometer was already installed (again ordered from the company). Even the tires were pumped up. We were off and running in no time. The bike had been assembled, test-ridden to assure everything was operating appropriately, and then broken down for shipping. The only downside was that one of the seat supports had a small scratch on it. Everything was just about perfect.

Quality and Durability — All you have to do is look at this bike to know it is quality. Its finish is impressive, as is its componentry mix. As one dealer in Springfield, Illinois, said when he examined it, "This is a nice package." While I haven't had it long enough to know about its durability, I would be very surprised if this didn't hold up to all that we give it.

Cost and Depreciation — The standard's model price tag is \$3,695 plus shipping. With better tires, a cyclometer, two mirrors, and two sets of pedals, ours came in just over \$4,000. Not cheap. Comparable to Vision and RANS. Whether you think any tandem is worth this price is an individual decision. Since I haven't seen a Columbia offered for sale, I don't know how much the unit depreciates but I would think not a lot. Barcroft has a reputation for building excellent-quality bikes. They have an extremely loyal following (run Barcroft on the Google group directory and read the comments; I found nothing negative). I find them to be some of the best bikes I've ridden. So I would think that the Columbia would hold its value.

Options and Accessories — Barcroft will build the bike with whatever upgrades you want. Having said that, there weren't a lot of upgrades we needed. We got mirrors for the captain and stoker. I talked to Bill about better wheels, better componentry levels, etc., and he told me that I could have it if I wanted it, but it wouldn't make much difference in the bike's performance. I decided on two items: the S-Lick tires, which I am very happy with, and the Catye Astrale cyclometer, which has the cadence counter and has changed the way I ride. This guy knows his bikes, he is honest and up-front, and we are very happy with the bike we ordered. Because it uses RANS seats, you can add the RANS seat bags. But the stock machine is basically it, although you can get any color or colors (fade) you want.

Market Competition — The only other truly compact recumbent tandem I found was the Brazilian-made Zohrer 2 Fast, and since I can't read Portuguese I have no way to compare it. In the larger tandem market, the main competition comes from the RANS Screamer and the Vision VR82. But they are much longer and heavier units (Columbia is 81 inches long and a real 46 pounds, Screamer is 98 inches long and an advertised 52 pounds, Vision is

104-114 inches long and an advertised 52 pounds). I've ridden them both. I haven't ridden the Linear or the Longbikes. A dealer told me that the Organic Engines tandem wasn't as nice as the Screamer (it has the same configuration), but I haven't ridden that either. The Screamer I found to be nice riding but not as quick or maneuverable (the couple we allowed to test ride the Columbia commented how they could do a U-turn in the street, something they could never do on their Screamer). The Vision reminded me of a 1950's Buick sedan. Individual viewpoints differ. Other people love all of those bikes, and more power to them. If everything else were equal (and in my opinion it isn't), the Columbia still offers one thing the others don't offer: ease of portability.

Conclusion

I believe that buying a tandem will be either one of the best or one of the worst decisions a couple makes. If two riders are incompatible then it doesn't matter which tandem they buy, they won't be happy. But in my situation, this has been the best decision. We love tandeming, and we love this bike. Looking at it reminds me of the definition of a camel, "a horse built by committee." The Columbia looks like it would have a harsh ride, as both riders are over the wheels and it has a short, stiff frame; it looks like it would be slow, as it rides on dual 20-inch wheels; and it looks like it wouldn't be stable because of its short (for a tandem) wheelbase. Analyze all you want. Ride this bike and you realize that it works well, very well. Its performance is better than the sum of its observable parts. It has converted a sworn upright rider into a recumbent lover. It has transported us many miles with smiles on us and on those we pass. It is a quality, well-made, well-assembled, and made-in-America machine. It has become our main bike. And there are so many benefits to recumbent tandeming which I hadn't realized. Four eyes are better than two. Four legs are better than two, especially when acceleration or power is needed. And it's particularly nice to ride and converse at the same time. The bike exceeded my expectations. It isn't perfect. There aren't a lot of places to put panniers if you tour (we don't). I'd love a laid-back, aerodynamic, light, hill-climbing banshee. But this bike is a nice-riding, excellent-performing, portable, responsive, and fun recumbent. Dealing with a quality company and a quality owner adds to the mix. We have no regrets about getting the Columbia.

Barcroft 2003 Update

Barcroft company owner Bill Cook gave us this update just before we went to press, "We offer a suspension fork option. In the past we've used the hydraulic Action-Tec, which works well. We probably will switch to the new White Brothers aluminum air-sprung, oil-

INFO AT A GLANCE

Specifications

Model — Barcroft Columbia
Type — Tandem SWB
Steering — OSS
Wheelbase—54.5"
Seat height — 29"
Bottom bracket height — 24.5"
Frame sizes — one-size-fits-most
Weight — 45 pounds
Weight limit — 275 pounds per seat

Frame — CroMo steel
Fork— CroMo
Handlebar / Stem — RANS Flip It
Seat — RANS mesh back, foam base

Components

Crank — Sugino tandem 36/48/58
Bottom bracket — Shimano
Headset — CT-2 threadless
Derailleur (front)—Shimano 105
Derailleur (rear)—Shimano LX
Shifters — SRAM Rocket
Cassette — Shimano XT 11-34 9-speed
Chain — Shimano
Gear inch range — 20 -100
Wheels — 406 mm 20"
Hubs — Shimano Deore XT
Rims — Sun RynoLite
Tires — Tioga Comp Pool 20 x 1.75
(test bike has Vredestein S-Licks 1.3
Brakes — Odyssey A-brake
Pedals — n.a.

Incidentals

Priced from—\$3695
Warranty (frame)—Lifetime (orig. owner)
Colors — 10 standard colors + custom options
Options — Avid disc brakes; computer kickstand, bell, mirror and fenders.

Pro

A solid quality ride
Excellent componentry
Excellent finish
Comfortable
A real attention getter

Con

Cost (though comparable to its peers)
No dealer network
Limited on seat recline adjustment
Some may want a larger drive wheel
Cargo capacity (though tows trailer nicely)

Contact

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damped forks that are also light and tunable. They are, of course, expensive, but they are vastly superior to the heavy Ballistic models. As well, we offer Pantour suspension hubs for the front wheel.

We don't have a rack for the bike now. We're working on a rack of our own and we offer the entire line of Rans seat back bags.

We are also working on a prototype all-wheel-drive tandem. The captain would drive the front wheel using a version of the the front-wheel-drive system from our Oregon Lowracer. The stoker would drive the rear wheel. We'd put SRAM 3x9 hubs and disc brakes at both ends. We'll be riding a prototype in the Spring, and then decide whether to offer it.

We're experimenting with an aluminum-frame version of Steve Delaire's Rotator all-mesh seats. They would be for those folks who are extremely concerned about bike weight. Steve's seats would reduce the bike weight to about 38 pounds.

We also have a racing back-to-back all-wheel-drive tandem low racer that isn't for sale (not yet, anyway). The picture's on the web site. It really moves.

In July 2001, Chris Burkhardt and Aaron Bard set a new HPRa tandem 200m sprint record at the Northbrook, IL. velodrome. The Columbia bike was stock except for a 73-tooth chainring. We didn't design the bike for speed,

but it can be fast, especially with two animals aboard."

Columbia 1800 Mile Update

At 1750 miles the Vredestein S-Lick tires were replaced with Tioga Comp Pools. In my opinion, this is acceptable tire life due to the greater stresses created by a tandem. The new tires made some subtle but noticeable changes in the bike's performance

The Comp Pools have lower rolling resistance and thus delivered a noticeable increase in speed (1 m.p.h. faster).

While the tire is wider (1.75" vs 1.3") part of that width actually increases the height of the bike because of the tires peculiar elliptical shape. The bike has become taller (one inch).

The bike's handling has become slightly less precise (more squirrely) and the road feel a little less sensitive. The former is caused by this tire's tendency to stay true to its direction. A front end oversteer has become more noticeable because of the tire's tendency to stay where pointed and not quickly respond to the minor steering corrections. I attribute this to the increased width of the tire. The latter change is caused by the "balloon type" feel of these wider tires.

None of these changes are negative, dangerous or uncorrectable, they just subtly

change the feel of the bike. *Bill Cook's recommendation of the S-Licks provided an excellent riding all around tire that complemented the handling of this tandem. The Comp Pools made a positive addition in the area of speed and softness of the ride, at the cost of a little less precise handling at lower speeds. When I'm groaning up a hill or screaming down the other side, I prefer the Comp Pools lower rolling resistance. When I'm riding a rougher patch of road or am maneuvering around a road filled with obstacles I prefer the S-Licks. It all depends on your priorities. But with either tire, this tandem still delivers miles of smiles and a great ride. ♦



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The WizWheelz TerraTrike A Bug's Perspective

By Ed Logan
bourbonman@shawus.com

The most two most popular questions that people ask about my trike are usually buried somewhere deep inside articles. These questions and answers will be provided now:

Are trikes safe? I've never been given so much clearance on the road as with my TerraTrike. I have a safety flag mounted on the trike. I've ridden over 600 miles with no traffic problems. I often ride in heavy traffic on two lane roads with 55 mph speed limits.

Is the trike fast? Speed is dependent on so many things. Let me describe it in my terms: The engine is an overweight 63 year old male. My other bike is an Easy Racers Gold Rush with a Super Zipper front fairing, Aerospoke front wheel and a Rolf rear. I ride around 6,000 miles per year. On the Gold Rush, I cruise at 14-18 mph. On my TerraTrike v. 3.3, I cruise 13-16 mph. Overall, I am about 2 mph slower on the trike. It's my feeling that if I were to put a front fairing on the trike, the gap may narrow.

Trike Selection

We live in a golf and tennis community where everything is <1 mile from our house. The local grocery store is only 2 miles away. I had this idea that I could cut down on our driving by buying a recumbent to haul groceries. So I decided to look for a trike.

My research started with RCN's buyers' guide. I then lurked on the HPV Trike list (www.ihpva.org) and corresponded with many trike riders and builders. I test rode a Penninger, a Catrike and the WizWheelz TerraTrike.

A delta trike would have been the best choice for my utilitarian needs. However, when I started reading about the performance and that go-cart/sports-car-like feel of the tadpole trikes — the Navy Pilot (retired) in me just couldn't resist.

I wanted a fully adjustable recline seat and adjustable handlebars. This, of course, eliminated many excellent trikes. Also, I had a strict budget. There are some excellent \$3000-\$5000 trikes out there. I wanted to find a trike with high performance, quality and an affordable price.

After doing my research, I made the decision that the TerraTrike was the best priced performer of the group — and I ordered one. I've not been disappointed!

The Arrival

The WizWheelz trike arrives in a single box. One must install the wheels, handlebar, tie rods, seat, derailleurs, chain, and the front end steering alignment needs to be adjusted.

While awaiting my trike's delivery, I did my homework. Wizwheelz has a downloadable owners manual at their website. I studied the manual and made sure I had all of the tools necessary for the job. When the trike arrived, the assembly took about two hours (and I'm not a wrench head).

Wizwheelz did an excellent job of packing the trike. UPS, on the other hand, did everything in their power to destroy the box: multiple holes in the box, corners squashed, and the top was sagging. My heart stopped when I saw it. My first thought was that my new trike

was totally destroyed! I opened the box to find only two paint scratches and a broken tie rod end. Wizwheelz shipped the replacement part by 2nd day air. Unfortunately they didn't have touch up paint available.

Systems

The WizWheelz TerraTrike frame is TIG welded of CroMo steel. The updated v. 3.4 frame is stiffer and stronger than previous models. At 34 pounds, it's the lightest TerraTrike ever produced. The seat stays have also been beefed up. The TerraTrike has both center-point steering and Ackerman adjustment¹. The TerraTrike is built in Hastings, Michigan using mostly local labor and suppliers. The new v. 3.4 is painted a red sparkle powdercoat, with a hint of copper metal flake and a clearcoat over the top.

The build quality, fit and finish are fine and have steadily improved over the years. WizWheelz reports that, "durability has improved" and "warranty issues are extremely rare."

WizWheelz owner Dan Price recently rode a model 3.3 from Portland, Oregon, to Key West, Florida¹. He only had to replace his tires and idlers one time. RCN will have a story on him in an upcoming issue.

The WizWheelz trike frame has a lifetime warranty, and there is a 30 day money-back guarantee¹.

¹ See WizWheelz website for details.

Components

The Shimano derailleurs and Dura Ace bar end shifters provide solid, trouble free shifting. The gear inch range is from 17-92. This provides all of the gearing I need. Those who need more may opt for the Speed Drive (Schlumpf 2-speed bottom bracket option). The schlumpf shifts with a tap of your heel on a spindle axle mounted button. The Schlumpf upgrade increases the range from 20-132 gear inches. Basically, this means that you can pedal on fast descents.

Comfort & Fit

The new TerraTrike 3.4 is incredibly adjustable. There are three boom lengths (non adjustable). The appropriate one is selected for your height at the time of order. The seat slides 9.5 inches for rider height adjustment. The seat angle is adjustable over 25 degrees and there is new lumbar bend on the seat back.

There is a new more curvaceous aluminum USS handlebar. This allows for a wider steering throw and a tighter turning radius.

The TerraTrike has a full sling/mesh seat that is very comfortable. Version 3.4 has a minor change to the seat base. The leading edge of the seat now curves downward for increased

ider comfort. By adjusting the seat, recline angle and the handlebars you can achieve a real custom fit. I'd prefer the seat to be a bit wider, but I could just lose some weight.

Ride and Handling

The TerraTrike's ride and handling are excellent. It's as stable as a rock. You point it and that is where it goes. There is no pedal steer and the controls require only a light touch.

In Florida we have a lot of roads with 3+ inch drop-offs going into grass and/or sand. This can be a real problem on a two wheel bike. I've purposely gone off the road with no problem. On bike paths or roads where sand has accumulated 2-6 inches deep where I would normally have to stop and walk my two-wheeler, the TerraTrike just blasts through. Emergency stopping isn't a problem. The disc brakes are fantastic.

Options

Available options include a custom seat bag, mirror, custom rear rack, safety flag, accessory mount and indoor trainer. The most expensive option is the Schlumpf Speed Drive, a 2 speed bottom bracket, at \$320. Fenders are in development. Front fairings are available from Mueller Windwrap and Zzip Designs.

The rearview mirror is a point of contention as it attaches with Velcro. I wrapped the Velcro tight and put a zip-tie close to the bottom and it works fine. The rear rack works well but the paint is starting to chip.

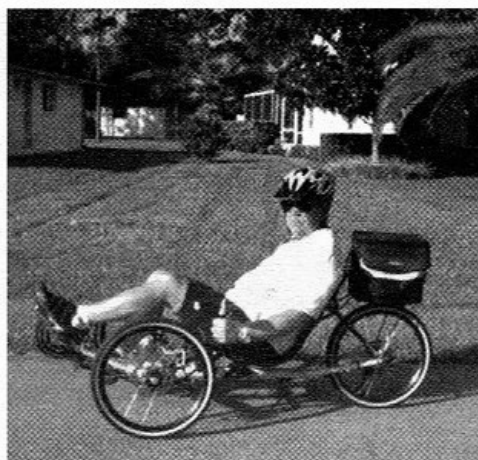
For a seat bag, I went to my local discount store and spent \$9 on a black insulated cooler with zipper top. I can carry all my tools, spare tube, cell phone etc. It also holds my Camel-back bladder inside. I attached it by drilling small holes and running zip-ties to the rack.

Owning/Purchasing

WizWheelz trikes are sold manufacturer-direct. There is a shipping charge of about \$59 to most USA addresses. Trike assembly takes a few hours.

The latest news from WizWheelz is that they have lowered the price of the TerraTrike by \$500. According to WizWheelz, "We spent 8 months working on lowering the cost without sacrificing quality, and we're excited to pass that savings along to the customer. The lion's share of the price difference is coming from our increased volume which allows us access to more efficient manufacturing processes. For example, instead of welding four directional changes in each handlebar, we're able to CNC bend a full year's worth of handlebars in a matter of minutes."

There were a few downgrades with the new



Author Ed Logan and his
WizWheelz Trike



New Deore disc brakes



New wide 1-piece USS bars

reduced price WizWheelz v. 3.4. They've changed from an FSA crank to a Shimano Tiagra crank and they're using a Velocity box rim instead of a Velocity aero rim.

Well there you have it. I love this trike and ride it everywhere. You are low and some riders may have a problem with this. So stay out of traffic and plan your routes (RCN advice).

Oh, what fun you can have. You may not be the fastest bike on the ride but you will be the most comfortable and have the most fun. For pure value and performance the TerraTrike ranks right up there with my GRR.

The WizWheelz Terratrike is fun, stable, fun, solid, fun, great company support, fun, cool, unbelievably exciting, beautiful and did I mention FUN? ♦

INFO AT A GLANCE

Specifications

Model — WizWheelz TerraTrike 3.4
Type — Tadpole trike
Steering — USS
Wheelbase — 40"
Track width — 31"
Seat height — 9"
Seat recline adjust — 30-70 degrees
Bottom bracket height — 13"
Frame sizes — One size
Fits riders — 5'2"-6'5" (x-seam: 38-50")
Weight—34 lbs.

Frame — 4130 CroMo
Seat frame — Aluminum T6
Seat material— Nylon mesh back & base

Components

Crank—Shimano Tiagra 30/42/53 170 mm
Bottom bracket—Shimano UN-52 sealed
Headset—Shimano STX
Derailleurs (f/r)—Deore Tiagra
Shifters—Shimano Dura Ace Bar-Cons
Cassette—Shimano 11-32 HG 50 9-spd.
Chain—SRAM PC 59 9-speed
Gear inch range — 17-92
(20-132 w/Speed Drive)
Pedals — Platforms
Wheels (f/r) — 3 x 20-inch 406 mm
Rims — Velocity Triple V
Tires (f/r) — Kenda Kwest 20 x 1.5
Hubs (f/r) — Velocity
Brakes (f/r) — Deore Disc

Incidentals

Price—\$1899*
Warranty (frame) — Lifetime (frame)
Colors — Italian Blood Red

Pros

3.4 Version is the best yet!
Excellent value
Very stable — no pedal steer
Multiple ergonomic adjustments
Responsive and friendly company
Built in the USA (no duty or airfreight)
Money Back Guarantee (see website)

Cons

Not easy to attach cadence mount
Mirror is low and difficult to attach to bars
Bottom bracket could be higher
Needs touch up paint

Contact

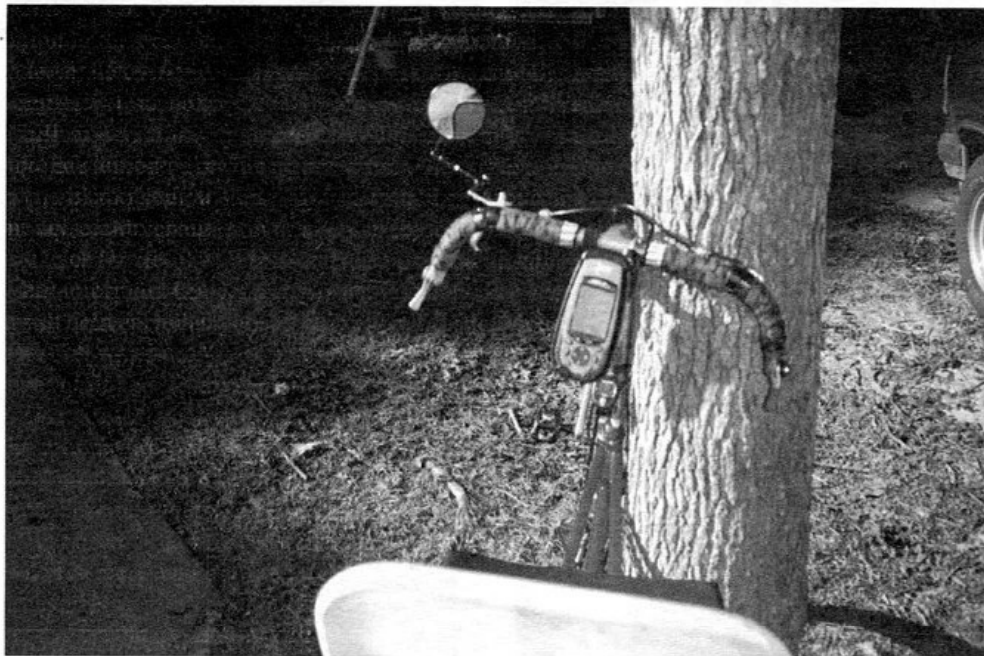
WizWheelz
Tel. 269-945-5581
Web: www.wizwheelz.com

*WizWheelz trikes are sold manufacturer direct. The price quoted doesn't include shipping or set up.

 **WizWheelz**



Exceptional
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GPS Receivers and Recumbent Bicycles

By Mark Evans
vivovoyager@worldnet.att.net

I've been using a GPS unit since my first day of riding a recumbent. A GPS is a toy/tool that compliments recumbents well as it frees you to ride and not constantly worry about navigation. And lets face it; if you ride a recumbent you probably love gadgets.

First lets take a brief look at how GPS works. The GPS system consists of a group of 21 operational satellites and 3 active spares. The working of the GPS receiver is best understood by looking at it in two dimensions, even though it really takes place in three. We know precisely the speed of the radio waves coming from the satellites and by measuring the time delay (TD) from transmission till it is received we know our distance from the satellite. So with one satellite we can know how far we are from the satellite, but no real idea where we are located. With two satellites you can think of two arcs representing the known distance from each. Now we know we are one of two places. Add a third satellite and all ambiguity is gone. With 4 or more satellites being tracked the accuracy gets better with averaging.

Most GPS receivers today will track up to 9 satellites at once. GPS receivers come in all shapes and sizes, but for our discussion here we will consider those called hand-held (though we won't be holding them). The least expensive of these just give your position as latitude and longitude and will point to a waypoint. A waypoint is any spot that can be

defined and saved by latitude and longitude. Think a point along the way. These work great for the fisherman trying to find there way to a hot fishing spot on the lake, but are of limited use to recumbent riders.

The next step up includes a moving map display. This is where things get fun and useful for us. On units with mapping there will be two levels of detail available. The first is called a base map and is built into the receiver. Base maps will vary in detail by make and model, ranging from basic to intricate detail. The base map on my Magellan Meridian Platinum is very good, showing all state roads and some county-roads.

The next level up is called a detail map. This map will overlay the base map with all known roads, terrain, and water features depending on the software purchased. To make full use of your GPS receiver, you will need a PC or Mac. If you use a Mac exclusively, you will have to shop carefully, making sure that Mac-compatible software is available. You will need a serial port to upload and download. A card reader is helpful for uploading large detail maps, if your unit uses one of the widely available removable memory types (the Magellan Meridian series uses SD memory).

Now that we have our chosen GPS receiver, have uploaded detail maps, and played with it enough to be familiar, its time to go riding. Before we can safely ride, however we need

the unit mounted to the bike. Most manufactures make bike mounts that will work with most of there hand held models. I've found that the RAM mounts are vastly superior. The RAM mounts use a ball and socket design. Once you have your GPS holder you can mix-and-match components to fit all your bikes, car, or boat. The mount pictured has a lot of metal but all plastic ones are now available.

The GPS will need to be mounted as close to your normal line-of-sight as possible. It's a lot easier and safer to glance down slightly, than to have to look way down or to the side. (Fig. 1) If you ride a trike or bike with USS then you will have to exercise a great amount of creativity to mount.

While I'm on the subject of safety, please continue to carry a paper map when going far a field, all things mechanical break, and of course will do so at the least opportune time.

Okay, lets go riding. With the unit safely mounted to your bike, reset the track and the trip odometer. Always remember to mark your starting point as a waypoint. As you start riding with the moving map screen displayed, the map will scroll as the pointer representing you stays in the center (on most units). Now you can just ride where the wind or curiosity carries you, or you can pick your route. There are a number of ways to pick your destination, and this function will vary by make and model of your GPS receiver. With my Magellan you just tap "go to" and a screen for picking cites, addresses, and user defined waypoints appears. There are several other ways of defining waypoints. For now lets pick a small town 15-20 miles away. When you have selected it, a line will appear, linking your current location to your destination.

Along the way, one of our chosen roads turns to dirt (GPS receivers are no better than paper maps when it comes to identifying dirt roads), and we are on our "road only" bike today. No problem! You take a glance at the map screen and see that another road heads our way by taking a left and a subsequent right in about a half-mile. Five miles and a few turns later we reach our destination.

Besides the map screen, there will be other useful navigation screens showing distance to your waypoint, your speed, and estimated time of arrival. There is also a compass screen showing your direction of travel and direction to the destination. The distance and ETA will be under estimated unless it is a straight, level shot. Over time you will learn to fudge these figures according to terrain and route of the road, such as, being able to cut 15 minutes off the ETA because the last leg of the route is downwind. Of course there are GPS units that will layout a route turn by turn. I've found these best for car use, because they tend to route you

directly to the nearest four-lane or other busy road.

Routes

A route is nothing more than one or more waypoints linked together. A route can be created on the GPS unit or on your PC, and can be as simple as connecting points of interest to as complex as marking each turn.

Games to play

A GPS unit just begs you to play games with it. I like to just turn the unit off and explore, and then turn it on and head home when about half of my time or energy is gone. Yes that's a simple one, but you would be surprised at the power of serendipity when you don't have to worry about navigating.

Another fun game is called geo-cache. Hikers often play this one, and in its pure form, you hide a small cache of trinkets (items of low value, but hopefully interesting to the treasure seeker) and a logbook. Then publish the latitude and longitude of the cache to your website or bike club newsletter. The cache hunters that find the treasure will take a trinket and leave something in return, then log the date and time they were there. The cache doesn't have to be a physical cache; a virtual cache can be just as fun. To do virtual caches just publish the coordinates of a favorite ride destination. The old log cabin you found up a back road, the ice cream shop that has the best banana spits, are both good examples.

Batteries

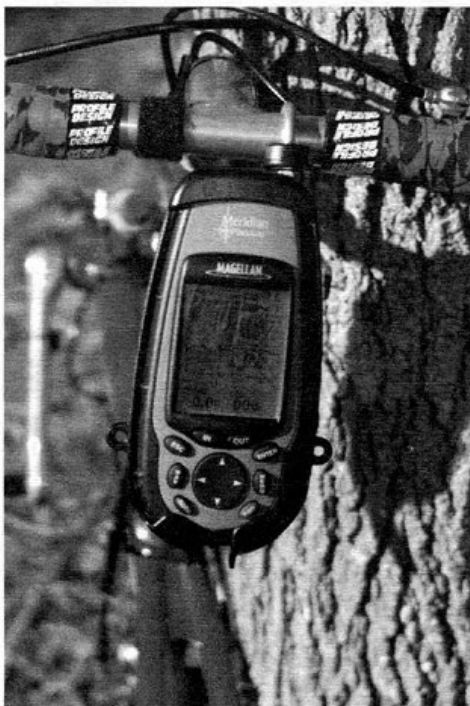
Handheld GPS units are notorious battery eaters, but in recent years, have become more efficient. My first unit would go through four AA cells in a few hours. My latest unit will milk two AA alkaline cells all day. The most environmentally friendly way to power your GPS is with rechargeable cells. If you go this route you will need at least two sets, as nicads typically don't last as long as a set of alkaline cells. If you hate changing batteries, and can find them, lithium cells cost three times as much as alkaline but last five times longer, making them a better value.

Conclusion

While most will find a GPS an enhancement to their riding, some will find it a distraction. While it is normal to obsess over a new toy like this at first, after several rides it should become just another tool like your cyclometer. If after a reasonable period of time, you find that you remember the views of the GPS more than the beauty of the ride, you may have to take corrective steps. Try turning to a data page you find boring or for you hard cases, maybe even putting it in your day-bag until needed.



The author's GPS equipped Lightning P-38 — Mark Evans



GPS mounted on the Lightning
— Mark Evans

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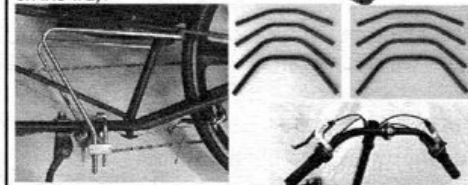
Magellan site
<http://www.magellangps.com/en/>

The most comprehensive GPS sight I know of
<http://joe.mehaffey.com/>

The official geo-cache site
<http://www.geocaching.com/>

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Cycle Vision

By Ethan Davis

Back in May of this year, I was corresponding via e-mail with Erik Wannee, co-maintainer of the Unofficial Flevobike Fan Club Website (<http://ligfiets.net/flevofan/e-index.htm>) and active participant in the Netherlands HPVA. At the time I was interested in obtaining more information about the aluminum Alleweder velomobile kit. In one of our e-mails, he brought up the idea of coordinating a visit to the Netherlands to pick up an Alleweder kit with the Cyclevision, a recumbent bicycle festival. I was intrigued.

We'd been planning to go to Japan for vacation this year but hadn't been able to pick up reasonably priced airline tickets. After looking into the cost of flying to Europe and discussing the idea with my wife, Elyse, a trip to Europe started to look more attractive. The Alleweder aspect of the trip was regrettably shelved, but the idea of going to Europe to attend Cyclevision stuck.

Several weeks later...

Prior to Cyclevision we spent a week visiting friends in the south of France and touring several of the cities in that region. Our journey from France to Lelystad, where Cyclevision was to take place. The trip included sleeping on the floor of the night train and Elyse caught a cold.

We finally arrived at the Lelystad train station for the first day of the event. I was immediately impressed by two things upon walking outside the train station: The continuous

wind, and what appeared to be at least a hundred bicycles parked right outside the door. The reputation of the Netherlands as a bike friendly country was well deserved!

We took a shuttle bus to Camping t'Oppertje. We then set up our tent and made camp before a light rain started. The challenge now was to see how we would actually get to the event. All the rental bicycles at the campground except one had been rented for the day. We approached a couple whose tent was nearby ours to ask them for a lift. They were very friendly and so we accompanied Jan and his girlfriend food shopping and then headed over to the first day of European HPV Championships.

A 200 meter course was set up with speed traps on the road right in front of the Flevobike factory. In the parking lot were recumbents of every shape and description: bikes, trikes, partially faired, and lots of velomobiles. It was incredible!

On the upper level of the factory a number of the Flevobike designs were displayed. Amongst them was an Alleweder with a side cut-aways exposing its innards. Downstairs was the prototype of the new Flevobike velomobile called the Versatile (www.flevobike.nl/versatile.html). On the machine shop floor was a human powered forlift and a human powered chair lift which may eventually wind up as part of the human powered theme park.

I walked to a recumbent shop called Ligfiets Shop Tempelman just behind the Flevobike

factory. I continued to be amazed by the number and variety of different recumbents. I knew my new Dutch friend, so far known only through e-mail was nearby, because surrounded by dozens of recumbents was a Flevobike with Wannee.nl on the side of its tailbox. After a couple of minutes of browsing spotted a fellow who seemed to match the picture on Erik's website. I introduced myself and found that indeed it was him. We chatted for awhile about the various bikes in the shop before proceeding outside to watch the races.

At this point the wind picked up and it started raining more vigorously. An empty Quest velomobile got blown over and tumbled into a light post!

I was more interested in seeing the many recumbents up close, and seeing them up close than I was in watching the races. Results of the European Championships can be found on line at: www.elan-ligfietsen.com/team/2002/results/cv/ecr.htm.

In spite of the weather, during the 200 meter sprint from a standing start, a fair number of riders passed through the traps at upwards of 45 kph (28.8 mph).

Many different types of recumbents were raced, including many Euro style lowracers with aero tailboxes. There were several different back-to-back tandems, a Thys Rowbike (ridden by its inventor) and a homebrew front-wheel-drive (FWD) hand and foot powered bike that I'd seen at the campground.

We caught a ride back to the campground with Jan. Elyse, who had been doing very well coping with her cold, took a nap in the tent. Later we had a lovely dinner of rolls, cheese and grapes at our campsite.

Erik had brought the Flevobike rear trike section for the Flevobike that he had build which served as a kind of training wheels arrangement to allow novice Flevobike riders learn more quickly (Flevo's are challenging to ride-ed). He set it up and I tried was able to ride it.

Later on several British folks rode in—I heard that Peter Eland of the cycling magazine Velovision was coming over with a group of people and was able to recognize him from some of the pictures I'd seen. I introduced myself and we chatted for a bit before I continued my exploration of the campground.

As it got dark, we started our laundry and headed over to the restaurant for a beer. On the way there, I caught a glimpse of a fellow passing me with a FWD lowracer. It appeared to be using a freewheel as an intermediate idler next to the head tube. I was quite interested since I was working on building a FWD bike at home and wanted to see how he'd done it. We chatted at the bar. I found out he was En-

glish and the FWD unit was a Kingcycle K-Drive. He was planning to race the next day.

The next morning we headed over to the Kampwinkel and had a breakfast of more bread and cheese. We then picked up our rental bikes and rode the 45 minutes along the cyclepath over to the Lelystad airport. The Dutch cyclepaths are truly amazing timed lights at intersections and special underpasses exclusively for bikes.

Along the way we were passed by all sorts of different recumbents. The final stretch was the most difficult as the omnipresent wind was blowing directly against us, but we finally made it. As we got on line, I noticed that the guy sitting in the yellow Alleweder in front of us had a recumbent shaved in the back of his head. We had arrived!

Admission was 6 Euros (about 6 US dollars) to get in quite a bargain as we were to find out. A quarter of a mile up from the ticket area was the tent sheltering the commercial and homebuilt displays and the test track where the rest of the European Championship races were to be held.

There was a special area for kids to try out kid-sized recumbents nearby. To get to the test track with the adult sized bikes it was necessary to cross a metal bridge over the large race track and walk a few hundred yards past an area with second hand recumbents that were for sale to a second, smaller oval.

After checking out the bikes in and around the tent, I decided to head over to the test track for some test riding. I test rode many recumbents including a few tadpole trikes, and a Hase Kettwiesel delta (including three linked together to form a train), a Flevotrike and the Sinner delta trike. My inability to speak Dutch proved not to be much of a disadvantage.

I tried many different Euro-style SWB bikes with rear suspension and came to the conclusion that my favorite bike at the test track was the rear suspended Euro-style Challenge Hurricane SWB OSS. I'd decided that of all the styles of recumbent steering I have tried, I really prefer the begging hamster position Challenge style of folding OSS.

Having read about the speed of lowracers, I was interested in trying one out. An M5 lowracer was available. With some difficulty I got started. It's a unique experience as the chain runs along side the front wheel, so turning is a challenge. I decided that the lowracer was not my idea of a practical bike for everyday use, though I could see how it would be quite fast.

Finally, we headed back over to the main tent to get some (more) of the seemingly ubiquitous bread and cheese for lunch. Shortly afterwards, the three hour time trial started. The start was interesting to watch. All of the participants had to run to their cycles from across the track, climb in and go. This caused a bit of difficulty for some of the fully faired two wheelers. Eventually they all got underway.

It was particularly impressive to see how fast the fully faired HPV's were able to go compared with the bare or partially faired cycles. Watching Ymte Sijbrandij in his Quest velomobile fly past some fast riders on their Euro-style racers (with the rear fairings) was just amazing. One of my main HPV interests is in velomobiles (see my website, <http://home.gwi.net/velomobile>). Cyclevision 2002 was certainly the right place to go to see these vehicles. Outside the tent were two Leitras, several carbon Alleweders, the Birkenstock Butterfly, 20 Quests, and countless aluminum Alleweders.

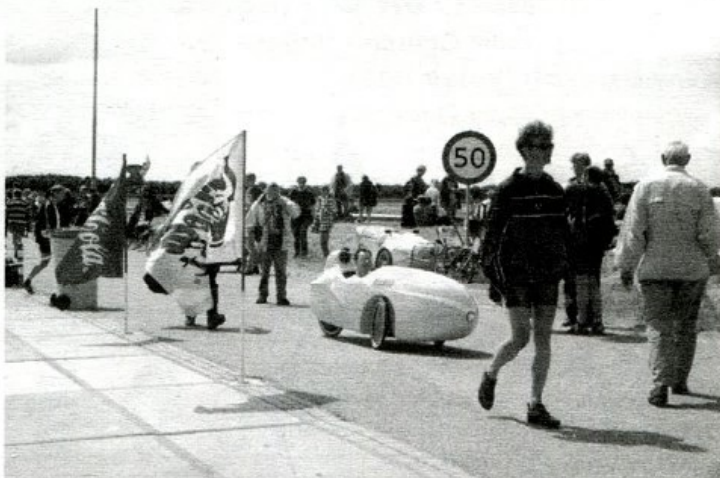
I got to try out the new velomobile by Velomobiel.nl called the Mango. Inside the tent were the Flevobike Versatile and the electric assisted Velomobile called the Aerorider. I was in heaven!

On the way back to the campground we stopped at a gas station with a "Winkel" (store) and bought some ice cream. As we cycled away, we encountered a scary looking motorcyclist screaming up the bike path in the opposite direction at 60 mph! It would seem that people like this can be found all over the world. Oh well. We opted to cycle along the path until it became a bit more rural before stopping to eat our ice cream.

When we arrived back at the campground we cycled directly over



The start of the race — Ethan Davis



The author, Ethan Davis, riding a Mango at Cycle Vision



The author, center, checking out a Velomobile

to the restaurant where we enjoyed some wonderful Dutch cuisine (non-bread and cheese) for dinner.

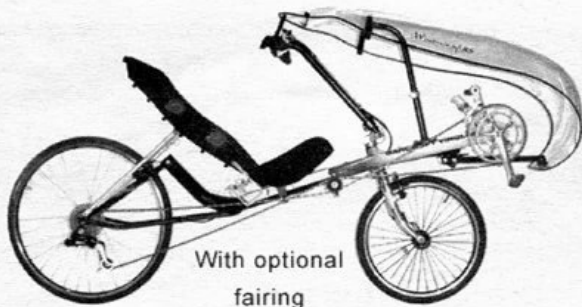
Later that evening, a fellow named Bastiaan Welmers let me take his aluminum Alleweder out for a spin. The Alleweder is fully suspended. It smoothed out the rough campground roads quite well.

The next morning, I set out for the event on my rental bike. Elyse would be driving out later with Saskia, Erik's girlfriend, who was also fighting a cold. I had to be there by noon, because Erik had arranged a kind of a Velomobile summit to discuss a variety of Velomobile related topics.

Representatives from several of the commercial velomobile manufacturers showed up, including German Eslava of Cab-Bike, Johann

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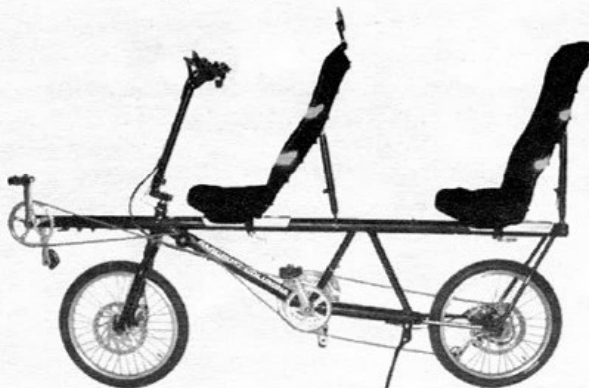
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COLUMBIA

Vrieling of Flevobike, and Jurgen Eick representing Leitra. There I met the only other American named David Eggleworth, whom I'd previously e-mailed.

Many interesting topics were discussed. Among them were the potential for importing velomobiles to the USA and the ongoing work on to standardize velomobile construction. After the event, German invited us back to his camper for a continued discussion. David, Erik and myself accompanied him there for lunch. He let me try out his Cab-Bike. The Cab-Bike is a modular design. German (who looked to be in his 50's) had ridden his Cab-Bike in its touring configuration to Cycle Vision from Giessen, Germany, some 490 Km (approx. 314 miles) away. He then converted it to its racing configuration and had raced it in the 3 hour and 1 hour time trials. After an interesting and enjoyable discussion, we split up, agreeing to keep in touch.

The remainder of the afternoon was spent looking at the displays in the tent at greater length. I ended up purchasing some of the more difficult to fabricate Flevobike parts, with the intent of eventually building one for myself. I then headed outside again, giving the Mango another try. It's quite a nice machine. The Mango is a lower priced, more compact sister to the Quest. It also sports a tighter turning radius (8 meters).

Cyclevision 2002 was drawing to a close. As the crowds left, the quiet felt odd after of the activity of the past few days. Erik had generously offered to let us stay with him and Saskia at their place about an hour away. Since he was one of the event organizers, Elyse and I helped him and the other volunteers pack.

The rest of that day and part of the next was spent visiting with Saskia and Erik—quite pleasant. Erik has a nice workshop, and even gave me a TIG welding lesson during which he joined the difficult to weld Flevobike central pivot. Later that afternoon, we caught the high speed train back to Paris where we were to catch our return flight back home.

Cycle Vision had been a tremendous recumbent experience. I was pleased to have met great people from many of the diverse corners of recumbent world. ♦

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Recumbent Tour of France

By Jeffrey Sparling

Some of you may have participated in the past in an organized cycle tour in Europe. If so, until now you either did so on an upright bicycle or you brought your own recumbent. My French wife, Lise, and I recently launched Happy Riders cycle tours to meet interesting people and share our love of recumbent cycling in France, one of the world's premier cycling regions with peaceful tree lined country roads, idyllic countryside and historic castles and monuments galore (not to forget great wine and food!).

We believe that a French bicycling vacation should be an opportunity to enjoy a variety of sensual and cultural experiences in a relaxing atmosphere on fun and comfy cycles. Fortunately France is endowed with thousands of miles of scenic back roads that often are virtual private cycle paths, cars are so few and far between. We cycle these roads on a small fleet of BikeE ATs, RANS Tailwinds and a RANS Screamer.

How does a recumbent tour differ from a traditional organized cycle tour?

First off, our tours are modeled after established cycle tours so much is similar. The most obvious difference is that we provide recumbent cycles so you don't have to bring your own (though you may, if you wish). And for the uninitiated, it is an opportunity to try a recumbent on an extended tour before deciding whether a 'bent should be in their life. It also

means that most people, if not all, in the group will be riding recumbents. This should help create the camaraderie of a shared experience. At the same time, many recumbent riders have undoubtedly experienced when they ride with upright cyclists that they typically go slower up hills and faster down. This means one is seldom riding with the group. With most everyone on a recumbent, this can be less of an issue.

The First Tour

We hosted our first Happy Riders cycle tour in the Fall of 2002 in the Gascony region of France, famous for foie gras and Armagnac (similar to Cognac but better according to the Gascons). Gascony is a rolling agricultural land in the southwest of France with various wine appellations (Duras, Buzet, Marmandais and part of Cahor), fruit orchards (in particular the famous Agen prune, which really is quite delicious), sunflowers and endless acres of corn to feed the thousands of duck and geese used to make foie gras, duck/goose confit and other regional specialties. Gascony is dotted with bastides (fortified towns from the middle ages) and chateaux forts (fortified castles), including the impressive Chateau Bonaguil, which was never attacked, being built essentially to show off the importance and power of its lord.

The Group

Our inaugural tour was scheduled to include

two unrelated couples from Colorado: Bill & Sharon Abshagen from Durango and another couple from Boulder. Unfortunately the second couple canceled at the last minute due to a crash while training. Consequently, Bill & Sharon got to enjoy their very own personal tour guides. We look forward to meeting Kevin & Erin on a tour next year.

Day 1 (Saturday) Serignac

We picked up Bill & Sharon at the train station in Agen shortly after 1 pm. After getting them back to the hotel for the first night, the Prince Noir (a former 17th century convent) in Serignac (but not in their room until 7 pm since all rooms were occupied by the Agen rugby team last years finalists in the French Rugby championships), we let them change in our room from the previous night before going out for a short 15-20 km introductory ride around Serignac. Bill rode my personal RANS Tailwind (modified with a Pantour suspension hub, Evo Pro handlebars from Calhoun Cycle and his own Bebob pedals on knee savers), Sharon rode a BikeE AT and Lise and I rode the RANS Screamer. This was Sharon's first time on a recumbent. After some initial wobbliness, she quickly got the hang of steering the BikeE. The immediate countryside around Serignac tends to be flat, though on a short climb Sharon learned all about the need for recumbent legs. Something she was to be reminded of many more times in the coming week. That evening, Bill & Sharon got to sample some local gastronomic specialties: Bill duck confit (duck legs cooked slowly) and Sharon melt-in-your-mouth escalope de foie gras accompanied by a fine local Buzet red wine.

Day 2 (Sunday) Serignac to Aiguillon (55 km/35 mi.)

We awoke to a consistent light drizzle as Lise and I had visions of the torrential downpours we had driven through coming from our home in Champagne. After breakfast we all put on our rain gear and Bill decided that he wanted to install my Mueller Windwrap fairing on the Tailwind (making it more similar to his own Gold Rush) before we headed out in the rain on a meandering route towards Nerac, the home of Henry IV. After riding through Serignac, we crossed the Midi Canal (built in the 1700s to connect the Mediterranean to the Atlantic, cutting 3,000 km off the former sea-faring route around the Iberian peninsula). We followed the canal for a few km before crossing back over it and heading towards Bruch, a small bastide on the Auvignon river. As we stopped at the intersection to turn towards Bruch, an elderly couple came out of their house to question us about our funny bikes

(recumbents are virtually unknown in France). Then Madame raced back into the house, still in her nightgown, to get a camera and take our picture. Indeed, the recumbents elicited interest most everywhere we went and are certainly a great way to meet locals.

After visiting Bruch on foot, we encountered our first climb of the tour, an easy (I can see Sharon rolling her eyes as I write this) 3 km climb to a plateau followed by a 2 km descent into Nerac. Here we parked our bikes under the old stone bridge and had lunch on the covered terrace of the Au Bon Coin cafe overlooking the Baise river. After lunch, the rain subsided as the hardest climb of the tour awaited us 900 meters up a 10-15% grade (the inclinometer I had installed on the Tailwind cant be easily viewed without stopping and standing up, something Bill didn't want to do in the middle of such a climb!). After the climb we descended a gentle plateau, passing below Chateau Tasta, into Barbaste where a Roman bridge took us across the Gelisse river on our way to Vianne, a medieval bastide with all four stone arch gates intact. From Vianne, we had the option of climbing into the Buzet vineyards or following the Baise river valley to Aiguillon, our destination for the day. Sharon's non-recumbent legs voted for the valley route, which suited everyone.

Day 3 (Monday) Aiguillon to Marmande (55 km / 35 mi.)

We awoke this morning to a blue sky and white clouds and a high for the day of about 75F. This almost perfect cycling weather continued unabated for the rest of week, reaching occasional afternoon highs of 80F. After breakfast, Sharon adorned Bills helmet and handlebars with shiny tassels in celebration of his 60th birthday (the tour was Sharon's idea to celebrate Bills 60th). We began by cycling to a local supermarket to pick up the makings (wine, cheese, pate and fruit) for a great French picnic since all the cafes and stores in the villages we would be cycling through are closed on Monday.

We then cycled along an idyllic country road amongst fruit orchards dotting the Lot river valley to Clairac, an important religious center in the Middle Ages. In Clairac we visited the Abbey and its automated museum, which reenacts every facet of abbey life in the Middle Ages with life size automated monks who are seen writing texts, praying, baking, cooking, drying prunes, making wine, doing carpentry, etc. in actual Abbey rooms, including the 8th century vaulted wine cellar. From Clairac we followed the Lot river for 13 km through rolling orchards and woods before climbing 3 km to Laparade. The climb was long and steady and we were all glad to join Bill (our climbing champion) at the top, where we rewarded ourselves with a sumptuous picnic in a small park overlooking the Lot river valley.



Day 5 — stopped in the woods

After lunch our ride was rather uneventful, cycling some 21 km along a rolling plateau with short intermittent climbs and great views of the surrounding countryside before passing in front of the ancient covered market in Gontaud and gradually descending 15 km to Marmande, our home for the night. Dinner was a festive occasion as we all helped Bill celebrate his 60th birthday with a bottle of fine wine. As usual, we saw barely a car or truck for most of the day before our final descent to Marmande.

Day 4 (Tuesday) Marmande to Allemans du Dropt (47 km/29 mi.)

Today was our shortest ride of the tour. After breakfast we headed north towards Duras through rolling hills and cornfields that gradually changed to vineyards as we approached Duras. Early on in our ride we stopped in front of a magnificent restored windmill at the top of another faux plat (false flat, as French cyclists like to affectionately call small hills). Here tired cyclists can stock up on locally produced honey, though we decided to forgo the added weight. From the windmill we continued another 6.5 km to the Castelnaud town square where a functioning pump gave us water and public restrooms (a rarity in France) awaited us.

From Castelnaud we took winding back roads to Taillecevat and the beginning of the Duras vineyards. As we left Taillecevat, we could see Duras perched high atop a good sized hill and we knew that a final climb awaited us before lunch. When Bill, Lise & I reached an intersection half-way up the hill, Bill stopped to wait for Sharon while Lise and I went ahead to try and find a grocery store still open (it was 12:40 and stores in France close daily from

around 12:30 to 14:00). As we rode up the hill the postman, who was curious about our tandem couche (laying down tandem), joined us on his upright bike. While we struggled to keep up with him and his well-trained Duras hill legs, he told us where we might find a store still open. Alas, no such luck. We returned to the front of the Chateau Duras (one the three largest castles in the region) and waited for Bill and Sharon before choosing one of the many cafes around the square in front of the castle for a well-deserved ice-cold beer and sandwiches.

After lunch I commented to the serveuse about how many English there are in the area (many of the clients were speaking English with British accents) and she answered *heureusement* (thank goodness) in the true fashion of a French commeraant thankful for business from wherever and whomever. Then I made the mistake of asking her for directions out of town to the D281 towards Pardaillan, our next destination. Like a true car driver, she sent us directly to the main road. Of course we were at the bottom of the hill (after an exhilarating descent) before I realized what had happened. So I had to improvise an alternate back roads route that avoided climbing all the way back up to Duras, but alas had some more faux plats.

Once back on route, we followed rolling hills to Allemans du Dropt, our home for the night. Allemans is a charming little village whose 10th century church has some remarkable 15th century frescos on the walls. Our old world hotel was next to a large square where villagers were actively playing boules or ipetanque, a favorite pastime throughout France, but especially in the south. The game consists of throwing a small wooden ball called

a cochonnet (piglet) some 10 meters away and then players take turns tossing their steel balls as close to the cochonnet as possible (the rules and tactics appear similar to curling). Laundromats are non-existent in the small villages we often stay in and we were all getting short of clean riding gear. Fortunately, the proprietor of the hotel gladly agreed to do some laundry for us.

Day 5 (Wednesday) Allemans du Dropt to Castelnaud (69 km/43 mi.)

Though the longest day of the tour, today was mostly easy cycling terrain, with just three good climbs. We started out with a relaxing 11 km ride along a winding back road in the Dropt river valley to Eymet, a 13th century bastide that marks the southern limit of the Perigord region of France. Here we visited some of the many shops dotting the main square as we picked up supplies for another tasty picnic. The lady in the wine shop was only too pleased to let us sample a variety of wines and aperitifs. Lise and I couldn't resist. We ended up lugging two more bottles on the tandem to take home with us. She even had a bottle of chilled dry rose for our picnic, which was a treat since wines are seldom sold pre-chilled in France.

On leaving Eymet, we continued to follow our own private, scarcely a car, secondary roads along the Dropt river valley to the foot of Castellones, where the first climb of the day (2.4 km) awaited us.

We stopped for a lovely picnic overlook-

ing the Dropt river valley below. After a bucolic lunch on the grass under shade trees, we descended from Castellones and continued to follow the Dropt river valley for another 10 km or so before following winding roads over rolling hills to Montaut and its 12-14th century church. From Montaut another 15 km of rolling hills brought us to our second real climb of the day, a 2.4 km climb followed by a super 5 km descent to the final turn off towards our hotel (located on a golf course built on the side of a hill). A final 2 km climb to the hotel and we were able to freshen up and enjoy a fine dinner in the old stone club house.

Day 6 (Thursday) Castelnaud to Fumel (55 km/35 mi.)

We started the day by whizzing back down the final 2 km climb from the previous day, followed by a short climb along a meandering secondary road to the base of Monflanquin, a 13th century bastide perched high atop a hill and rated one of Frances most beautiful villages. A good 1 km climb took us to the top and Monflanquins market square where the Thursday outdoor market was in full swing. We spent a good hour visiting the market stalls and stocking up on picnic supplies. On leaving the market we descended the other side of Monflanquin and followed quiet country back roads for some 14 km to Gavaudun, where we picnicked next to the town lavoir (large outdoor wash basin found in most French villages) under the imposing ruins of Chateau Gavaudun perched high atop a cliff.

After lunch we cycled through the scenic Gavaudun valley, passing by beautiful St. Avit

and its 13th century church. Then we followed lightly traveled back roads 24 km through rolling hills to the impressive Chateau Bonaguil, a fortified castle built high atop a hill. The ride to Bonaguil included one good 3 km climb followed by a final exhilarating 4 km descent on a lonely winding road to the base of Chateau Bonaguil. We reached speeds of 55-60 kmh on the descent, braking often for the curves on the narrow road.

We parked our bikes at the base of the chateau, grabbed a welcome ice cream cone at the cafe and walked up to the Chateau where we were just in time to join the last tour of the day. The tour was in French, but between the printed English tour guide and Lise and I acting as interpreters, Bill and Sharon were able to get a good sense of the chateaus history and the austere life in the middle ages in a fortified castle. After the tour we pushed on the final 7 km to our hotel in Fumel overlooking the Lot river. Here Bill and I were able to enjoy another specialty of southwest France, cassoulet, a scrumptious baked bean stew au gratin made with duck confit and Toulouse sausage.

Day 7 (Friday) Fumel to Saint Beauzeil (49 km/31 mi.)

This morning we pedaled an easy 23 km down the Lot river valley along a meandering secondary road to the Port de Penne dAgenais on the Lot river. From the port up to the medieval village of Penne dAgenais was a steep 1 km climb with light traffic that encouraged Lise and I to walk the Screamer Penne dAgenais is

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a remarkably well-preserved medieval village and stop on the St. Jacques-de-Compostelle pilgrimage route that deserves its official designation as one of Frances most beautiful villages. We parked our bikes at the stone gate entrance to the village and carried our picnic supplies to the top of the hill where we picnicked in the shade of the Notre Dame de Peyradude basilica. When Bill energetically snapped off the corkscrew in the midst of uncorking the bottle of Cahor red wine purchased in the wine shop below, I managed to chase down the local priest who took me into the presbytery (with a stunning view of the Lot river valley below) where he proceeded to remove the broken screw tip and then uncork the bottle.

After lunch we climbed a small river valley towards Massoules, before turning towards Frespech and the nearby Souleilles Foie Gras museum. The museum traces the history of foie gras from ancient Egypt through Greece, Rome and European Jews to today. We saw how ducks and geese are gorged on corn during the final 14 days of their life to produce the foies gras (fat livers). We learned that as migratory birds, gorging is something ducks and geese do naturally before migrating, which their bodies store as fat in the liver for long migratory flights. When gorging is stopped, the liver returns to its original size within 10 days. Lest anyone think gorging is a cruel habit, it should

be noted that ducks and geese don't struggle while being gorged and are usually raised free-range in France. After sampling some of the different prepared foies gras, we cycled the final 11 km over rolling hills to the Chateau dHoste, our home for the night.

Day 8 (Saturday) Saint Beauzeil to Serignac (60 km/38 mi.)

We left the Chateau dHoste at 9:00 for our last day of cycling. After following a winding back road with a couple of short climbs for some 13 km to the bottom of Beauville, seen perched high atop a hill at the end of a good 2 km climb, we all agreed that we had seen enough pretty villages (invariably set on the top of a hill for defensive reasons in the Middle Ages) and climbed enough hills for one week. So we modified our planned last days route and followed the Seoune river valley to Grandsfonds on the outskirts of Agen where we arrived just in time to pick up supplies (including a bottle of chilled Champagne) for a picnic lunch in the local sports park.

After lunch we made our way to the Agen train station where Bill and I left Sharon and Lise to do some shopping in Agens historic town center while Bill took the captains seat on the tandem and we rode to our first nights hotel, the Prince Noir, in Serignac. Leaving Agen we followed the Midi Canal as it passes over the Garonne river. The path on each side

of the canal bridge is barely more than a yard wide. Since Bill was a novice captain on the tandem and neither of us wanted to take a swim in the canal with a loaded tandem, we walked across the bridge. On arriving at the hotel, we freshened up, had a beer and went back with the car to fetch Sharon, Lise and the bikes. That evening we had a great farewell dinner with another bottle of the same fine wine from our first evening, Chateau La Gueze 1994. Topped off of course with a glass of old Armagnac.

Day 9 (Sunday) Farewell

We met for breakfast at our usual 8:00, after which I drove Bill and Sharon to the Agen train station to catch the 8:55 train to Bordeaux so they could take in an afternoon tour of St. Emilion and its wineries. We really enjoyed having such great guests on our first recumbent tour and look forward to many more in the years to come.

Happy Riders Tours

My job as a freelance translator in France lets us offer a limited number of affordable recumbent tours for small groups (4-8) from May to October. In addition to the use of a fully equipped recumbent (mirror, cycle computer, fenders, kickstand, water bottle, good sized day bag, picnic cutlery, spare tube and cable lock) or upright hybrid bicycle for non-recumbent spouses or friends, our tours feature charming

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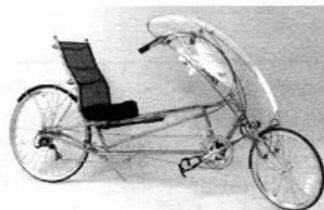
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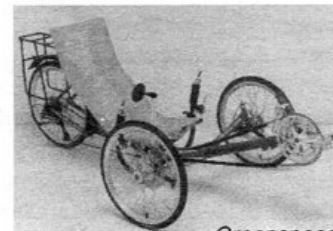
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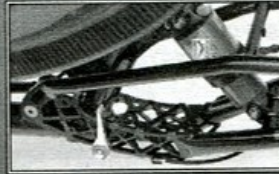
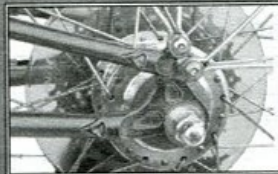
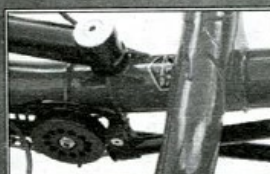
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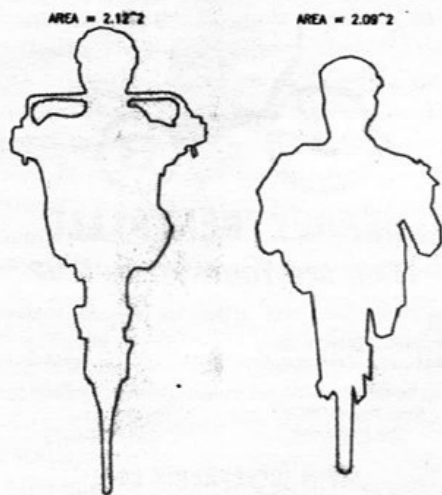


Illustration supplied by Randy Schlitter, RANS, INC.



Side view of Rich Pinto on the Bacchetta Aero. Note that the bars, as well as the circle made by the rider's legs, are sheltered within the area swept out by the rider's body. (Photo Copyright © 2003 Randy H. Goodman)

pass. And perhaps, unknowingly, I plant a seed for someone else to do the same. I never learned anything from people telling me what to do. I learned by example. Great article. Great magazine.

Mike Stern

Editor Comments—We all make life choices. I'm a firm believer that anyone can set their life up to live car-free or car-lite. It has little to do with buying \$35,000 SUVs and houses in the suburbs. It's more a choice for a simple life of walking or riding your bicycle for transportation, or driving a fuel efficient car in a thoughtful way. After my family's experience, like you, I believe that America society is out of balance.

Wage earners have the right to choose their careers, jobs, and the dress that goes with them. They also can choose where they live, so that their commute would be a flat, easy urban commute or even walk. The concept of the suburbs promotes sprawl and the America's love affair with the automobile.

This article was very timely. As our country's leaders consider going to war, one must consider that it just might have something to do with those oil fields, preserving the American way of life, along with our thirsty appetite for cheap foreign oil. Lets just hope our young people don't have to pay for it with their lives.

Bacchetta Comments (RCN 73)

I enjoyed the articles about the Bacchetta bikes, and congratulations to the Bacchetta team on their entry into the recumbent market, but I have a problem with some of the math.

I studied the frontal area images on page 25 (of RCN 73) and to my eye the Challenge recumbent looked to be the smaller. So we scanned the images and dumped them into our Auto-Cad system and discovered the Challenge actually comes out less by factor of 2%.

Please see enclosed illustrations (upper left).

In Shairs Bernhard's article the statement on page 9, about the V-Rex seat height being higher than the Giro caught my eye. If measured from the ground to the seat bottom, the V-Rex seat height ranges from 22.5" to 23.75". An advantage of the V-Rex geometry, the seat height only increases 1.25" from back to front. The Giro gains over 2", for a 22" to 24" seat height on the small frame, sounds to close to call much of a difference.

As for your dry spell in performance recumbent riding, does this mean all recumbents prior have not been performance recumbents? Don't be so quick to turn on the rest of the recumbents, you may find the problem is more engine related than the mount!

Ride long and Prosper,
Randy Schlitter, RANS INC.

Editor Comments—By "performance recumbent riding" I meant riding where I actually track my performance on bikes whose design goal is, above all else, to ride fast. My reviews of such bikes have been rare as of late.

Because the above e-mail deals with one manufacturer questioning another, we asked Bacchetta to respond. We will try to do this in the future for other similar situations.

Bacchetta Comments — The sightline of the pictures that Matt's wife Randy took were below the centerline of the bike. This makes the Aero's handlebars appear to be higher than the shoulder in those shots, when in reality they are below the shoulders tops.

Both bikes do a good job of keeping the spinning circle of legs in the torso shadow, but the higher frontal area of the Challenges dropped arm position is unavoidable. I think some of the extra frontal Matt may have measured appears to have come from under the rider, but I'd have to defer to Matt on this one.

We can't comment on how Shari Bernhard got her seat height measurements in her Giro review. Randy said that the Rex varied 1.25-inches front to rear in seat height, "an advantage of the V-Rex geometry" and that "The Giro gains over 2-inches" We just measured some Giros, and from the front to back the total adjustment along the tube is 7-inches, and the seat height changes just under 1.5-inches.

The V-rer top tubes horizontal angle is shallower than the Giros 12 degrees, but the Giro's total seat height change from the most forward possible position to the most rearward possible is still only 1.5-inches—Rich Pinto, Bacchetta Bicycles.

Bacchetta Ti Aero Author Comments — Randy (Schlitter) is correct in pointing out that the Challenge Wizard is indeed an aerodynamic bike. There is no question that the Aero's projected frontal area is smaller than that of the Wizard. I've done numerous coast-down tests directly comparing one bike against the other. Even without correcting for the weight differences (an effect that here greatly favors the Wizard) the Aero beats the Wizard in coast-downs by roughly 10% at speeds in the low-to-mid 30mph range. The Aero is faster in part because it's frontal profile is smaller. (And the Aero's profile can be reduced even more by leaning its seat further back, something the Wizard cannot do.)

The comparison photos in my review were made to illustrate how the Aero's riding position minimizes the drag from the rider's arms and legs. I feel the photo does a good job of showing this advantage of the Aero's design. But, I'm really not surprised if Randy found discrepancies when he scanned the photo. I hadn't prepared the photo with such a measurement in mind. For example, I didn't take the patience to clean out the blur of spokes that artificially fattened up the Aero's front

wheel, or correct for the perspective that exaggerated the riser, boom, and shoes, or otherwise make sure cables and mirrors didn't mislead. Machines only measure what you give them. ("Garbage in, garbage out" is how us computer-geeks describe this problem.) I think your readers will be able to make much more reliable comparisons eyeballing the photos for themselves. But let me suggest that readers might have even more fun going out on a test ride themselves — Matt Schneps.

Giro Review (RCN 73)

I just wanted to add my two cents worth about the Bacchetta Giro that has many folks raving. I love the bike, and own one myself, but the seat has some issues that I may be able to help someone with. First, for some postures, the top curve may cause the fabric to dig into your neck or shoulders (myself included). I simply snipped the top zip tie and replaced it with a new one, but didn't tighten it so much. That lets the fabric sag enough to conform to your body. Next, some find the seat base too shallow, causing recumbent butt (me too). I retro'd mine with a RANS seat pan and foam. It's not a swap-fit, but it can be done. I have long legs, so the deeper pan did not prevent me from reaching earth. I'm a sloucher when I sit, so I needed the space.

The Giro has as near perfect ergonomics as I've ridden. I love the "tweener" bars. They're just like the bars I made for my home built years ago.

Tom Beuligmann

RCN Kudos

Thanks for the awesome article about Calhoun Cycle (and me) in #74. We really appreciate the effort that your crew takes to keep on top of the recumbent activity throughout the US. It can't be easy trying to stay up on what a bunch of independent thinkers are doing, but your publication shows that it surely is possible.

Thanks to your readerships' support Calhoun Cycle is thriving as a recumbent shop and we will continue to work on problem solving products we call Evolution. When it comes to designing an idea Mark Stonich has become one of the main "go to" people that we work with. Mark has designed and built many HPVs, parts and accessories. Good ideas mixed with Marks' design skill will surely mean that more problems will continue to be solved by Evolution.

Luke Breen
Calhoun Cycle

Bacchetta Feedback (RCN 73)

I got my copy of RCN 73 and couldn't put it down. It's easily the best issue since I've been reading RCN. I liked the fact that you have included more performance oriented bikes. I am biased towards the Bacchettas as I own a

Strada, but I enjoyed reading about the T-Bone and the Rotator as well. I most likely will never own a low racer, but I even enjoy reading about them. Congratulations on a great edition.

Pat McShane

Lawson's 24 HR Ride (RCN 73)

I thoroughly enjoyed RCN 73. It's a performance riders delight. I especially enjoyed reading about David Lawson's exploits on his WizWheelz trike in the Michigan National 24 Hour Challenge. I've done that event seven times myself. Most recently from 1996 through 2000 on either a single or tandem recumbent. In 2002 my wife, Betty, and I were in attendance in support of our friend Gary Wagonner on one of those "other" bikes. After the grand and short day loops were completed I saw David Lawson on a regular basis as he came through the Middleville high school checkpoint after each 6.1 mile night loop.

I'd like to correct some of the information provided to you by WizWheelz in regard to David's ride. Most specifically, while David's 253 mile ride was a very fine effort for a recumbent trike rider, it was in no way a record. The Michigan National 24 Hour Challenge (a very fine, highly organized event run by cyclists with participating cyclist's safety foremost in mind) has been happening for about 20 years. Only in 1996 were two recumbent classes added, those being single and tandem, and thanks but no thanks, fairings of any kind are not allowed. David being on a single trike was a part of the single recumbent class in the 2002 event. To my knowledge, David is the first recumbent rider to use a trike in this event. At any rate, David's 253 miles was not even good enough to claim first place in the single recumbent class, as that honor was taken by Larry White from Michigan with a 285.6 mile ride on a Tour Easy. The single recumbent record of 344.1 miles was set in 1999 by Gene Oliver (Lightning P-38), who I think now resides in North Carolina.

To put David's ride into perspective, I'll refer to a conversation I had several years ago with Chicago area performance rider Ed Gin. At the time Ed had recently sold his Windcheetah trike, and I asked, "Why?" Ed replied, "Because they're slower, probably at least 2-3 mph, than a two-wheeled recumbent."

In RCN 72 "On Three Wheels" article Ian Sims commented, "All other things being equal... the bicycle will be faster due to lower weight and less aerodynamic drag." If we assume as much as 3 mph faster had David been on a two-wheeled recumbent, the additional 72 miles (not factored for time off the bike) would have raised his total to 325 miles. That would have been a most excellent ride on a chilly, very windy day, and would have easily given David first place in the single recumbent class, but still would have been about 19 miles short of the single recumbent record.

For you performance riders out there, this Michigan event is held every year on Fathers Day weekend, and really is a first class event. I'd love to see more of you attend and try your luck on the SE Michigan rollers and hills. Anyone wanting information on the Michigan National 24 Hour Challenge can contact organizers Diane or Skip Obermeyer at: N24HC@aol.com

Randy Johnson

Big Wheel Coverage (RCN 73)

RCN 73 my favorite issue ever! Guess why. Seriously, I am thrilled that you don't think the "big wheel" thing is completely nuts. With your years of experience, and your well founded love of Easy Racers, I consider your positive response a vindication.

Warren "big wheels are better" Berger

LWB Sellout? (RCN 73)

After reading the Jan/Feb 2003 issue of RCN, I really feel compelled to respond. There have been times in the past when I was sure you owned stock in Easy Racers because of your advocacy of LWB/low bottom bracket bikes. After reading the Jan/Feb issue, It seems you have done an about face and are now singing the praises of the Bacchetta high racers. Much of the magazine was devoted to reviews of the bikes, an interview with Rich Pinto, and your field test and editorial. Some of the things you said in your editorial bother me a bit.

I'm a roadie. Most of my riding is on pavement. My daily training rides are 23 miles long, longer on the weekends. I usually ride with friends, some recumbent riders, and some upright road bike riders.

I also have a problem with your saying that a recumbent must have a large front wheel to be a true "road bike." You also referred to a 20-inch front wheel as "geeky." You made the statement that roadies will be more willing to switch to one of these Bacchettas because they look more like a road bike, and that the twin 650c wheels will allow the use of the latest technology in wheel and fork design. Lastly, you said something to the effect that recumbent riders will be more likely to be accepted by roadies on one of these bikes. I really have a problem with that statement. If I were worried about receiving the approval of conventional road bike riders, I wouldn't be riding a recumbent.

I have no doubt that the Bacchetta bikes are great machines; however, in your editorial, you fail to mention some of the issues that have been discussed in previous issues of RCN, including foot/toe numbness and tire size. In the past, you have let us know that bottom bracket heights even one or two inches above seat height cause foot numbness in some riders (including yourself). The large wheeled Bacchettas have bottom bracket heights eight or nine inches above seat height! I wonder

how long you would be able to ride one before experiencing foot problems? In my own case, I've found that bottom bracket heights higher than that of the V-Rex create foot numbness problems for me. In fact, I get some foot numbness on long rides riding the V-Rex.

I also remember reading articles in RCN concerning tire size. One that comes to mind was entitled "Why recumbents need fat tires," by Zach Kaplan. The conventional wisdom in the recumbent world has been that because a recumbent rider cannot unweigh the way a rider on an upright bike can, recumbents should use a fatter tire. Now, it seems, that skinny little tires are being recommended. In the marketplace there are not a lot of choices for 650c wheels. These two concerns, foot

numbness and tire width, have been discussed over and over in the pages of RCN, yet were ignored in your editorial and in the reviews of the Bacchetta bikes.

Finally, I'd like to comment on the price of the Ti Aero. I'd love to own one, but even though I have a good job, the bike is way out of my price range. In your editorial, you said that the Aero was priced in line with top-of-the-line road bikes. True and false. A Ti Macalu with full Dura Ace can be had for a little over half the price of an Aero. Even Litespeed has Ultegra-equipped models for less than an Aero. Among my friends who still ride road bikes, none of them ride top-of-the-line bikes.

I appreciate the magazine even though I take exception to some of what you print.

Mike Marchildon

Editor Comments — I ride mostly on paved roads, but don't consider myself a "roadie." A "roadie" to me is somebody who does performance oriented riding on lightweight, skinny tire, racing type bicycles — on the road. In this context, the "roadie thing" will have appeal to only some recumbent riders.

Personally, I still prefer low BB's for commuting, hauling groceries, and even my recreational riding. I still have toe numbness when I ride high bottom bracket recumbents for more than 60-90 minutes. I took delivery of my Giro test bike just as RCN 73 was going to press. I did experience toe numbness with this bike. I even purchased new clipless pedals and shoes for this test.

For the record, I do think small wheels are geeky. So what, I still ride with them. And large wheels, they do look more "roadie" oriented. Personally, I don't care to be "accepted" by roadies, but some readers may.

RCN is not all about what "Bob Bryant believes." We print differing opinions and responses to those opinions. Just because Zach and I believe fat tires are best, doesn't mean that is the case for Rich Pinto, Mark Colliton, John Schlitter and those who ride Bacchettas or any other recumbents with fat tires. The one thing I've learned is that there is no one correct answer for all of us. Please understand that I personally DO NOT agree with everything printed in RCN. ♦

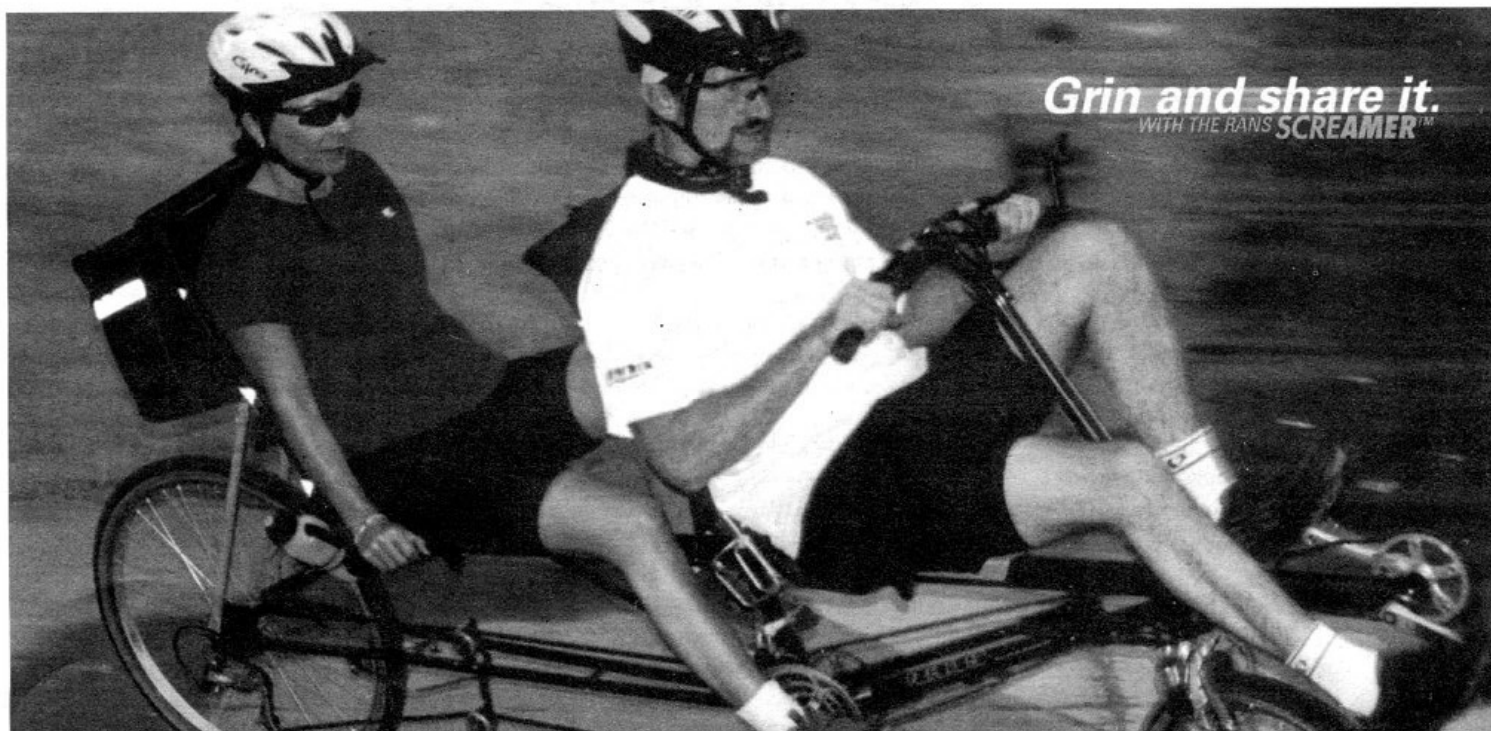
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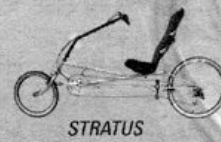
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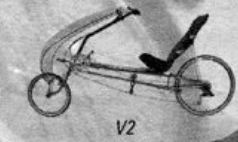
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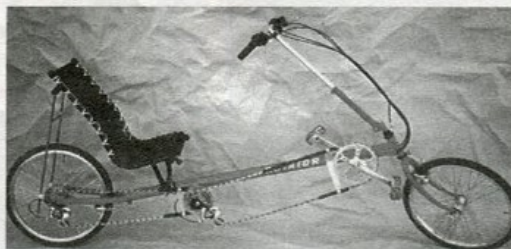


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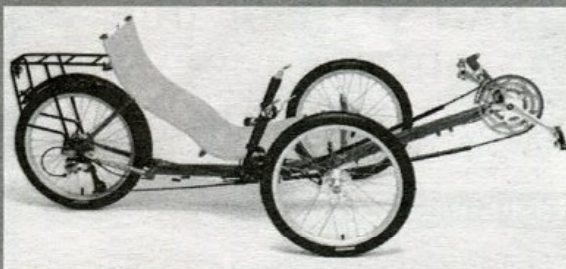
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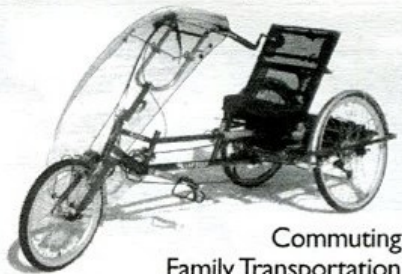
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Faux Recumbent Racers

By Jeff Green

This preoccupation with “winning” the recumbent/roadie “battle” is as ridiculous and pointless as the petty battles among roadies themselves. What does one “win” in this competition? Not much that I can see. The losses seem much greater. My question would be, why, if a rider wants recumbents to emulate the performance of road bikes, doesn't he just ride a diamond frame road bike? Road bikes will always be superior for racing conditions, climbing, sprinting, etc., because of the “out of the saddle” riding option.

The majority of road cyclists', upright or recumbent are the the victims of a marketing deluge, and how little the latest/newest/lightest bikes/equipment have to do with real riding, how much it actually detracts from the enjoyment of riding. I think this is something road cyclists (at east the “racer-wannabes”) are so wrapped up in they can't see it at all.

The “training” mentality is so dominant; I think people need to be operating under the delusion that their performance (or incremental improvements thereof) is so crucial. I think this is essentially because they don't actually enjoy the process of riding. They like the “idea” that they can ride fast, but the riding itself they don't enjoy. But they're so caught up in the mystique (and the pseudo-pleasure it offers) that they actually *think* it gives them pleasure, when in fact all they get is the warm fuzzy of the approval of the major manufacturers.

It's all about the bike, right? The Rider is often the conveniently forgotten element of the equation. This is precisely the mentality I so despise and pity among roadies: the lighter, more expensive bike will make them go faster,

they think, and thus they shell out the big bucks so they can entertain the delusion that they're “like Lance.” Meanwhile, the well-conditioned rider outrides them on an “inferior” bike.

The other day I was riding on my local 35-mile bike ride. I got to thinking — if I really “trained” I could ride this in 10 minutes less before too long. But then I realized that this would mean I had 10 minutes less of a workout, 10 minutes less of riding. I think this is what the road bike does: it makes people think in terms of speed rather than time and conditioning and enjoyment. Why? Because it's not actually pleasurable to ride! If anything, I should want to ride for *more* time, not less. If I want to ride at a high level for more time, fine, but I shouldn't continually shorten my ride ride because I can do a particular distance more quickly. What would the objective of that be? It seems to reflect the setting up of an artificial goal of performance by which I can somehow justify my “training.” So I can brag that I'm really “in shape” because I can do X miles in X minutes at X mph.

I haven't done any “club riding” for a few years. My past experience of club rides is basically that nobody is having any fun and that they really don't know what they're doing or why. It's like a drug-induced condition, a waking nightmare: Riders think, I spent all this money a light bike so that I can go fast, so if I actually just ride along and enjoy myself I'm not getting my money's worth and I'm not demonstrating (to whom?) the proper utilization of my equipment (i.e., I've “wasted” my money). Hence I must ride as hard as I can, be as aerodynamic as I can, etc. This all becomes a big appearance game. Riding is done to jus-

tify the possession/expense of the equipment, not for pleasure. People are always pushing the envelope of their own conditioning, rather than enjoying the conditioning they've gained through long and pleasurable miles.

So I'm 1-2 mph faster on the the *Faux Racer* Recumbent. So what? Who's keeping track? If it makes the ride easier, then I get less of a workout. I've heard the seats on some of these *Faux Racers* can be uncomfortable for long stretches (Hmmm, does that ring a bell?). If you ever achieve equilibrium with diamond frame road bikes, you'll be looked at as a cheater due to your aerodynamic superiority.

I can't completely dismiss the weight issue. I don't want to ride a bike that weighs 40 pounds; this slows me down too much—even though it would give me even a better workout over a given distance. So, there are limits to this argument, though I think generally one must take the middle ground.

My main conclusion is that racing bikes are for the racers — not for anyone else, they're inappropriate and potentially disastrous in terms of genuine recreation. The rest of us should be on recumbents—or other bikes, but not racing bikes. If motorists took the same attitude, we'd all be driving around in Formula 1 cars. Vroom Vroom.

I've attempted to crack this mystique among some roadies and am generally unsuccessful. Hence I hate to see it popping up again with a vengeance among the recumbent breed of faux racers. ♦

Editor Comments: Historically we find that bicycle designs get more extreme as they mature. We've seen this with both drop bar road bikes, mountain bikes and now we are seeing it with recumbents. While there are many touting modern and more extreme designs, the classic recumbent models with bottom brackets that are lower than the seat are popular, time proven, and classic recumbent designs.

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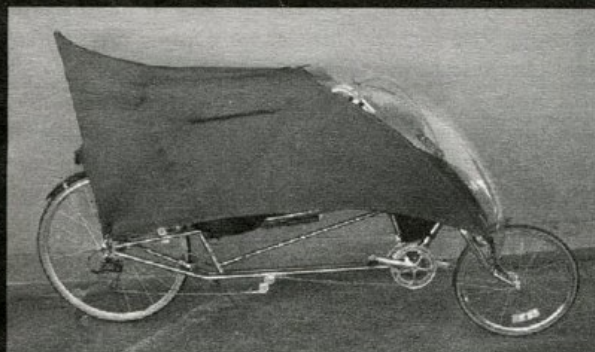
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