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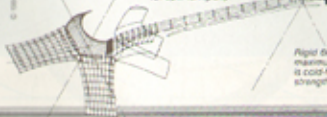
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Circle number 4

mountain bike

November - December 1986

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On the cover: We don't know about you but this shot speaks to us of paradise. We love the snow in Crested Butte but our wheels start spinning at the thought of mangoes and sunshine and swimming in the ocean and smooth white sand. . . . David Blahart and Debby Kochin photography.

2-32 There's also the option of pure Adventure travel to parts unknown, even if the wind chill factor (headwind that is) is in the teens and it's raining and the people think you are crazy.



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2,600 MILES AND THEY CALLED IT A PICNIC.



DIAMOND BACK
RATTLE THE COMPETITION



editor's note

I'm sitting in front of my computer and staring out the window at wildflowers and green aspens. Mountain bikers decked out in colorful clothes with rain gear tied around waists have been drifting out of town and heading into the hills all morning. It's the height of the summer cycling season, the trails are in perfect shape, the mountains abound in color, yet my mind struggles with thoughts of golden leaves scattered over the forest floor, dried husks of wildflowers waving in the wind, and snow glistening on rocky summits. Winter may even have struck in full strength by the time you read this.

That's the nature of the magazine business. Instead of living in the present, editors live in the future. We plan magazines around the climatic realities that will exist when the issues hit the newsstands, not what's out the window. I think about what trail I'd like to ride this evening while working on issues you'll read this coming winter. While that provides me with a sense of perspective on the endless trivia of daily affairs, it also speeds up the passage of an always too short summer. I find myself panicking at not being out in the hills, exploring new trails, revisiting old friends discovered in past years. The realization that I've not even remotely had my fill of riding this summer spurs me into dreaming about cycling Baja's backcountry, exploring New Zealand, or escaping to an adventure laden trip across Kenya this winter. That there's little chance any of these will come true detracts not a whit from their attractiveness.

That's why we're running escape stories this winter. We may not ourselves be able to fly off to Hawaii for a month of cycling and swimming but at least we can vicariously share the thrill of doing so. Such thoughts are the light at the end of what can at times seem an endlessly long tunnel of freezing weather, snow storms, and hours riding the rollers.

Not that everyone puts away the fat fires for the winter; Southern Californians in particular enjoy year round cycling. For the rest of us, winter is when we dream of

places far away, places of hot sun and dry dirt, places like Australia and South America or, for something closer to home, Mexico, the southern Arizona deserts, Death Valley, Big Bend, Florida.

This is the first of our escape issues, the last issue of '86, and the ninth since June, 1985. The fact that Mountain Bike Magazine is still in production a year and a half later is in itself a notable achievement; 80% of new magazines die before their first year is completed. Readers who have been with us since the beginning know as well as we how much our magazine has changed and grown.

Mountain Bike Magazine has established itself as a quality periodical for enthusiast off-roaders. (Notice I avoided saying "the most respected", the universal cycling magazine claim to fame.) We don't attempt to be something for everyone. We've focused on one segment of the entire cycling spectrum and intend to maintain that focus.

We've been accused of being "snobbish" by one periodical dedicated to off-road cycling (another new one rumored to be coming out this fall) and we've been accused of being anti-road riding. Neither are the case. We're simply mountain biking enthusiasts eager to broadcast to the world just how great this sport is. Newsstands are filled with magazines written with a generalist approach to cycling. Those magazines serve a purpose and we have no argument with what they do; it's just not our approach. We're proud of being off-road enthusiasts and are only too willing to patriotically wave the flag, to loudly advocate that these American-born fat tired flyers are the best thing to come along for cyclists since pneumatic tires.

We've grown steadily because of your enthusiastic reception of our efforts. Sometimes we hear complaints from a manufacturer about a product review and sometimes readers call or write to voice their differing opinion on a subject. But without fail, that ragging is offset by far more praise on precisely the same subject. We can't please everyone nor do we

attempt to but by and large, we've received overwhelming support. For that we thank you.

In answer to numerous requests for more issues per year, we're continuing the bi-monthly format for the immediate future. We appreciate the compliment of such requests but more issues per year are out of the question at this time. We'll also continue our focus on places to ride but we need your help to do so. We need to hear about those places before we can send a writer there. Even better is to receive finished pieces. We're always hearing, usually second-hand, about great places to ride but getting there and then writing up a story on the place takes more time than summer seems to have. So we're always looking for destination cycling pieces. Some time may pass before they finally get published but we still need them.

We also receive requests for more technical information on bikes and components. If we seem to de-emphasize the technical, it's only because other magazines already do a thorough job of evaluating components and frame materials. Rather than duplicating already available information, we've elected to approach the subject from an experiential point of view. Besides, your local bike shop mechanic - if he (or she) is good - can provide far more reliable information than any magazine editor.

The bottom line with us is how does the bike handle in the backcountry, how do the components perform when caked with mud and weeds, how do they stand up to the average rider's practice of ignoring his or her bike's maintenance. Subjecting components to controlled laboratory tests will never be as effective as watching them survive the kind of torture most riders subject them to.

If you haven't yet ventured into the backcountry far away from those carefully maintained dirt roads that so resemble paved highways that only the black top is missing, you're in for a shock. You'll discover that your sparkling, wonderfully operating mountain bike that glides

around town more smoothly than a politician running for office has a propensity for mud, grit, sticks, and weeds that can make a small boy jealous. You may, for as long as a month, clean and polish your new bike after every foray into the woods but the time will inevitably arrive when you start putting off the cleaning for a few trips at a time. That's when you'll find out exactly how good those components really are.

Forget the lab, plow into mud up to your hubs, listen to the weeds and sticks getting mangled in your spokes, feel the tires thudding into the assorted obstacles across your path. There's the true test of any mountain bike - mountain bikers too for that matter. The folks who intimately see the results of these eagerly pursued adventures are your local mechanics, not the magazine editors always presented with gleaming new bicycles.

That's partially why we appear to de-emphasize the technical aspects of mountain biking. But there's a second and more important reason: our basic philosophical relationship to the sport. For us, mountain biking is a recreational lifestyle. The equipment is simply another tool that enables us to pursue backcountry experiences. It's easy to get so caught up in the bicycle itself that its purpose is forgotten. Certainly we take great pride in beautifully crafted and

Backcountry Publications consists of a core group of people here in Crested Butte, Colorado. Part of this group is:

Hank Barlow — Editor
Kimberly Schappert — Art Director
Mark Waters — Advertising Manager
Nancy Schappert — Business Manager
Contributing Editors are:

Mark Slise
Dennis Coello
Teresa Bradford
Frank Staub
Gary Sprung

We work hard to put out a quality magazine and welcome queries for both photography and stories. Contact us at:

Mountain Bike Magazine

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Crested Butte, Colorado 81224
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performing mountain bikes - such machines are wonderful to ride - but the reason we own one in the first place is to pedal through the backcountry, not to impress our friends and neighbors.

We love the challenge of riding gnarly single-tracks, climbing steep hills over rocks and ruts, flying down rolling hills, darting through the woods over a checkerboard of sunlight, and charting a tenuous route over previously unexplored terrain. There's nothing better than the exhilaration of successfully overcoming a series of obstacles in the path then reaching some remote spot high on a ridge with nothing but wilderness stretching out

before you. Or discovering a grown-over trail leading to a beaver pond deep in the forest. Or silently peccalling under a canopy of leaves and suddenly spotting an elk or deer grazing ahead of you, totally unaware of your presence. Or finally cresting a low hill and spotting your elusive destination in the distance.

That's what mountain biking is all about. The equipment is only a means, like a snorkeler's mask, a runner's shoes, an artist's brush. That's what Mountain Bike Magazine is all about - the exhilaration, the challenge, the joy, the adventure, the people. That's what Mountain Bike Magazine will always be about. ★



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Off the Road

by Dennis Coello

After an extended mountain bike tour, I'm often asked several troubling questions. The first is usually, "How many miles did you cover?" (I seldom know.) The second is "How long were you out?" And last, always delivered with thinly veiled sarcasm, comes the question I enjoy the most: "What kept you?"

I've been complaining for years that we suffer from a "Race Across America" mentality, that the how far/how fast crowd does more to hamper biking than help it. No, don't reach for the typewriter to produce an angry letter to the editor. First hear me out.

Bicycle racing is thrilling. Who can watch a hotly contested criterium and not be enthused? Or read of the training and endurance necessary for RAAM riders to cross our nation in ten days without at least a tiny gleam of hope for the human animal? (After all, my poor brain contends, if they can ride nearly nonstop for three thousand miles, I should be able to at least get out of bed each day.)

The problem, I am convinced, comes in the application of that attitude - "faster is better" - to all forms of cycling. I'm used to disdain from lycra-shorted cyclists, who shake their heads almost (but not quite)

Is she smiling or laughing at that ridge ahead?



Dennis Coello

imperceptibly as they pass me. And the burgeoning crowd of joggers-turned-bikers (those who have opted for two wheels to save knees and vertebrae, to escape the three-annual purchase of ridiculously priced running shoes) must be forgiven their myopic concentration upon minutes and mileages; years of staring at digital watches and heart rate monitors have produced an inevitable warp.

Pavement-only tourers, especially if they're new to the sport, often are beset by the motorist's equation of a "day's progress": number of hours times constant speed.

But mountain bikers - what's their hurry? The terrain is usually gorgeous and traffic consists of an occasional deer or other cyclist. Several times after riding well-known, scenic trails, I've had local bikers refer to them as "six hour rides" or "four hour grants." Then I tell them the route took me two days.

That lack of communication is acceptable; I've grown used to condescending smiles. My point is that speed-emphasized attitudes are harmful to anyone new to the sport. Such an emphasis creates pressure (whether conscious or not) to ride faster. Can novice riders simply say, "Well, I just go slower than you," without feeling apologetic about it? And how many other potential mountain bikers are deterred in the first place out of fear they can't keep up?

We all know the basic tenet of democracy: organized masses mean power. Want to keep mountain bikes from being excluded from more areas? Increase the number of mountain bikers. We won't do that by fostering the notion that mountain bikes are built only for speed and rock hopping. Or by trumpeting the notion that riding technique, and a bike's abilities, is what mountain biking is all about. Was the backpack the focus of the ten-year hiking craze - a craze that had so much influence on environmentalism - or that which could be reached, seen, and experienced through the use of a backpack that led the charge for preservation?

I'm not unimpressed by bikers who can dance upon one wheel and leap across logs. Nor do I pass over articles which tell, at length, the reasons for the tensile strength in the newest frames. But mountain bike rallies which offer only gymnastics and magazines which concentrate on gravel spraying, bike flying tales of off-roading will continue to miss that enormous market of folks who simply want to enjoy the woods without a God-awful heavy pack on their backs.

Okay. So much for the editorializing. If we want to swing the backpacking crowd to mountain bikes and introduce others to the joys of slowing down, we need to be prepared to spend the night away from

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81224

the smallest free-wheel cog from 14 to 13. The result is a go-anywhere gearing spread from the mid-twenties to nearly one hundred inches.

Tires: I suggest wide pressure-range psi skinnail with a tread pattern that has a bead of constant rubber down the center line. That will eliminate the clumping feel typical of knobblies on pavement. Ritchey Quads and the new Specialized Crossroads II are excellent examples of multi-purpose touring tires.

Fenders: This depends upon your tolerance of wet feet and stripes up the back. Neither is a real problem on one-day rides, where you'll be home to wash up but on a tour, you'll soon look like a mud ball.

Pedals: Try the strapless clip/bear trap combination for a good, non-slip grip and anti-rotation.

Seatposts: Get one long enough for almost full leg extension. Otherwise you'll be losing out on power when pedalling on hard surfaces over easy terrain.

Mirrors: Mountain bikes are the finest commuting vehicles made yet many manufacturers make it almost impossible to mount a mirror on the bars. Mirrors are a must for traffic and good in the wilds for seeing the griz sneaking up from behind.

Water Bottle Cages: I'll admit it. I was among the first to laugh with derision when Blackburn came out with their heavy-duty "mountain bike cage". I thought: what some people will do to capitalize upon a craze. I've since learned that the increased beating cages receive off-road takes its toll. Whatever brand you buy, buy quality.

Nuts, Bolts, etc.: Fender nuts, water bottle mounting bolts... every place on your bike where there's a connection which can come loose will come loose - if there isn't a locknut to secure it. Where locknuts are impractical, I use one of the many brands of liquid "Lo-tite" that hold

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Water: This is one of the most crucial of special considerations, both in volume and purity. Most of us know about the backcountry bane giardia, a parasite killed only through boiling or filtration. Even the

purest-looking, high-country water can contain it. Boiling is a pain; look into the filtration method purifiers on the market.

Medical Supplies: Yeah, I know it feels whimsical to worry about packing such things, especially if the planned ride is only a weekend. But think how stupid you'll feel if you pull a header down a rocky slope and end up bleeding to death, or remember a bit too late that your snakebite kit is sitting back at home. I've yet to take a mountain bike ride which wasn't safer than most daily commutes in traffic but there's always the consideration that one is far away from medical attention and often alone. Learn to take care of yourself!

Panniers: Many companies have specific lines of tough, durable bags designed to take a beating. Lone Peak and Madden bags convert to backpacks (excellent for establishing base camps by bike then footing it from there with lightweight daypacks), and all have special features worthy of a close inspection. Some regular touring panniers can also be adapted but be sure to secure them against bouncing off.

Overall weight/placement: Avoid all needless weight. Pack lightly in handlebar bags and front panniers for quick maneuvering. This pushes more weight toward the critical region of one's rear wheel, the spokes of which are already suffering from the hardships of rough terrain, but you can ease the strain by packing light and sharing loads with panniers.

If you're brand new to mountain biking, I suggest several shakedown rides before your first backcountry tour. Learn something about the maintenance of both your machines - your bike and your body - before setting out.

If you're used to flying along at breakneck speed, try a weekend at a slower pace. Days of camaraderie and unhurried conversation with fellow riders and black-sky nights of hoot owls and campfires make for pleasant times and even sweeter memories. ★

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home. The solutions are simple. Sometimes the answer lies in planning rides which end each night in towns - bed and breakfast inns in New England, motels in Midwest towns, resort hotels or hostels in the mountains. Such luxury in weekend rides will lure many from their dread of (Good Lord!) sleeping upon the ground.

But for those of us who prefer a combination of inside accommodations and camping out, we must deal with that old problem of the backpack: what to take along. Compounded, of course, by the questions of how to set up the bike for all-terrain touring. What follows is my personal preferences in these areas.

BIKE

Gearing: I've had to change the gearing on several bikes to create a broader range, necessary for mixed pavement and difficult dirt trail sections. I increased the large chainring from 46 teeth to 48, and dropped the smallest freehub cog from 14 to 13. The result is a go-anywhere gearing spread from the mid-twenties to nearly one hundred inches.

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nuts in place no matter the abuse yet yield when a torque is applied.

Special Considerations

Maps: Pretend it's 1968 and your mantra is "topo...topo...topo." I'm continually amazed at the number of cyclists who plan daily rides according to mileage alone with almost no thought to terrain. "Flat" maps are fine for motorists but mountain bikers need more information. Topographic maps, especially the 7.5 minute series with which most backcountry travelers are familiar, provide it. In fact they provide so much information to trained eyes that I make it a point not to look at them if I want to be surprised. But if you're trying to reach a certain town in a single day or be back at work on Monday morning, use topos. Available through U.S. Geological Survey offices, some sporting goods shops, and through the mail:

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Panniers: Many companies have specific lines of tough, durable bags designed to take a beating. Lone Peak and Madden bags convert to backpacks (excellent for establishing base camps by bike then footing it from there with lightweight daypacks), and all have special features worthy of a close inspection. Some regular touring panniers can also be adapted but be sure to secure them against bouncing off.

Overall weight/placement: Avoid all needless weight. Pack lightly in handlebar bags and front panniers for quick maneuvering. This pushes more weight toward the critical region of one's rear wheel, the spokes of which are already suffering from the hardships of rough terrain, but you can ease the strain by packing light and sharing loads with partners.

If you're brand new to mountain biking, I suggest several shakedown rides before your first backcountry tour. Learn something about the maintenance of both your machines - your bike and your body - before setting out.

If you're used to flying along at breakneck speed, try a weekend at a slower pace. Days of camaraderie and unburied conversation with fellow riders and black sky nights of hoot owls and campfires make for pleasant times and even sweeter memories. ★

Is she smiling or laughing at that ridge ahead?



Dennis Coello

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Mantis XCR Composite



Bike Test

tube. He also includes a carrying strap. We really weren't too thrilled with the carrying strap at first but now that we've used it a few times, we like it. It's comfortable and it really does make hauling the bike easier than pushing it. Our only gripe with the bike was the lower water bottle cage — two are mounted on the down tube. It's mounted just a shade too close to the upper cage so that a large water bottle has to be squeezed in to fit. There's plenty of room to move the braze-ons down the necessary inch so if you order a frame, request that change.

You're probably wondering by now how much the bike weighed, invariably the first question people come up with when looking at new bikes. This was one of the lightest we've had yet, just over 25.5 pounds. The only bike that weighed less was the Klein. But then that weight was with Ritchey Force tires while the Klein had Ground Controls.

So, did we like the bike? No doubt you already know the answer to that, — yes. The Mantis XCR Composite is one more great mountain bike, beautifully crafted, light, strong, and fast with superb handling.

The bike's climbing ability is uncanny. The only other bike that climbed as well was the Montaneus Comp Lite with its 16.5-inch chainstays. Yet for some reason, we weren't able to ride the Montaneus up some hills we rode the Composite up. The higher gearing of the Montaneus had some influence on that but there was more to the situation than that. All we could figure was that the Composite's balance and steering are so refined that maintaining a line on the track was easy. We could concentrate on propelling the bike forward without worrying about staying on the trail.

On fairly level trails that darted through the trees, the XCR was unreal. The fun factor was pegged out at ten and any rider's passage was invariably associated with laughter. The bike likes to fly. If we were surprised at all by the bike's handling, it was on downhills. Steeper head angles like the Mantis' 71 degrees often result in a bit of diceyness on the part of the rider and require more concentration and skill than slightly shallower head angles. Not that they can't be ridden fast down the steepest of hills; they can. They're just more demanding. Yet the Mantis didn't feel at all like a

steep head angle. The ride was smooth and predictable with never a sense of steering that was maybe too quick. We could steer around obstacles as easily as bashing over them.

Flat roads were where the bike practically took off. Richard designed the bike with a relatively long top tube and coming out of the saddle seemed as natural as waking up in the morning. Everyone invariably shifted into a high gear then stood up and hammered the cranks. The bike took off like a rocket. The only limit to its speed was the rider's strength. Not that you had to stand up, pedaling in the saddle was equally comfortable. But whenever a burst of acceleration was needed, standing provided instant and gratifying results. In fact, everyone seemed to spend more time out of the saddle on the XCR than on any other bike. Not because we had to, it just felt good. On the steepest hills, we'd often perch on the tip of the saddle to maintain rear wheel traction while powering the pedals around. That position was amazingly effective and was the reason we were able to ride up so many places we normally walk. ★

We first reviewed Richard Cunningham's aluminum/steel mountain gem over a year ago for the August '85 issue. That one arrived dressed up in a beautiful shade of pink, almost a pastel pink. It was without a doubt one of the most striking machines we've received. Its handling was equally striking and the XCR quickly became a favorite. A year later, we decided to road test various top of the line components available to mountain bikers and to eliminate differences caused by characteristics inherent to frame designs, we elected to use one frame set, a Mantis XCR Composite.

What Richard sent us was a 20-inch frame dressed up with the most dazzling paint job we've yet seen on a bike. The paint is the work of Velo Color. If what you've always lusted after is a one-of-a-kind paint job, something that will set your bike off from every other one, give Velo Color a call; based on what we've seen, he'll get the job done to your complete satisfaction.

The XCR Composite is unique. Richard has combined an aluminum main triangle

with a steel rear triangle to produce a strong, light bike but with plenty of tire clearances. Angles are 71-degree parallel with 17.25-inch chainstays and a 42.25-inch wheelbase, nothing particularly revolutionary in these days. What Richard has done though, once again demonstrating his independent thinking, is use a fork with only 1.5 inches of rake rather than the almost industry standard 2-inch rake. The smaller rake increases the trail, resulting in what Richard refers to as the perfect combination for ideal steering characteristics. Obviously such a statement is open to argument from any number of other builders. Nevertheless, Richard's never been afraid to march to a different drummer and he's convinced that the XCR's geometry is ideal for all off road conditions.

Has he succeeded? In our opinion, absolutely. To quote one rider: "This is the finest handling bike I've ever ridden. The steering is smooth and round, never twitchy yet so quick that maneuvering through technical sections is a snap."

We put the bike through its paces on a variety of demanding trails and roads. It passed every test with flying colors. One

rider took it over a particularly long trail that encompassed miles of fairly smooth jeep road, then a rougher double track, and finally a narrow, steep single track. It's a trail whose length he has never successfully ridden cleanly. He still had to walk a couple of times with the XCR but just barely. That passage was the closest he's ever come to cleaning the distance, something he'd decided wasn't possible. Now he can't wait to go out and tackle it again to see if this time he'll succeed.

We're not going to go into the components on the bike since that will be the subject of an article in the Nov./Dec. issue. We'll be testing a variety of company's equipment, primarily Suntour and Shimano, and will give you the results of that later. Selecting your components is also part of the enjoyment of ordering bikes like the Composite; you can get it your way.

Richard's a practical man (IMB profile Sept/Oct 1986) and that shows. The front fork and rear triangle are chromed for a durable finish. The rear brake is mounted on the seat stays rather than under the chain stays for easy access. A pump peg is behind the seat

Note the junction of main and rear triangle. The bolting together of the two makes for cheaper replacement if the frame breaks.



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Circle number 13

Components

An Update

Mountain Bike Magazine decided to start with a pretty hot frame as continued by hanging all different components on it. Why? Partly for information; we are equipment freaks at heart. But mostly for the fun of trying out all this great stuff. We learned it. Hopefully through this account, so will too.

We'll start with gearing in reviewing how the top-of-the-line components worked on our Mantis XCR Composite. We used two different set-ups. One consisted of Sakae FX cranks and chainrings (24/36/46) and a seven-speed Suntour Winner Pro freewheel (12/14/16/18/21/24/28) on an XC quick release hub providing a 22-inch low and 99-inch high. The second was straight Shimano with six-speed Dura-ace freewheel (12/14/17/20/24/28) and Biopace chainrings (28/38/48) providing a 26-inch low, 104-inch high.

The seven-speed was perfect for every condition we rode. Colorado's mountains require a low gear - at least for recreational riders - and the 22-inch granny did the trick. We pedaled up steeper and longer hills with it than with the Shimano gearing. Replacing the Shimano's 28-tooth oval ring with a round 26-tooth ring for a 24-inch low helped but not as much as the 22-inch gearing. Two

inches may not seem like much but it is. Unfortunately Biopace rings are not available in 24-36-46 sizes so to maintain optimal front shifting, we had to use a 26-tooth granny with the middle and large oval rings. (A 10 to 12-tooth gap is the recommended maximum.) We could have changed the freewheel's 28 cog to a 30 for a 22-inch low but we really enjoyed the tighter gearing of a 12 through 28 freewheel.

(Whether Biopace rings are in fact advantageous is moot. Shimano engineers claim they are and, until someone proves otherwise, I assume their information is based on fact. None of us can state unequivocally, based on seat-of-the-pants testing, that the oval rings are an improvement. But if oval chainrings were available in 24/36/46, we'd probably select them over round rings.)

The argument against such a low granny gear is that you can walk up a hill as fast as you'll ride it. We don't agree. A person running with his bike may be as fast or faster in a race; we won't argue that. But we're talking recreational riding here. With a low gear, we climbed hills faster and easier than we could on foot. Plus there's the challenge of riding up a hill. When an attempt means dismounting part way up, gasping for air, legs trembling, we still give it a go whether walking is easier or not. The answer is

part of the fun. If that isn't true for you, a higher low gear may be fine but our recommendation is go low. If you're planning a backcountry tour with a loaded bike or if you're from sea level and planning a high mountain ride, you'll definitely want a low gear, probably even a 24/32 for a 19 inch granny!

The advantage of Suntour's seven speeds is the tighter gearing. Mid range shifts with Shimano's six-speed resulted in greater cadence drops than with the seven-speed. The Dura-ace is an especially attractive hub, beautifully finished and designed and lighter than the Suntour but whether it is mechanically superior is a matter of argument though most mechanics we spoke to seem to lean towards the Shimano. They like the bearings' out-board placement, feeling that is a stronger design. What they didn't like was the difficulty in adjusting the freewheel if play develops. In fact, Shimano says it can't be done but evidently it can be with a special tool. Most also preferred the loose balls though some raised the point that if the left-side race gets pitted, it can't be replaced.

Suntour XC hubs use cassette cartridges that are easily and inexpensively replaced. Those who preferred the XC hub would have liked to see a Superbe Pro in a 130 spacing because it can be easily dis-assembled and repaired rather than having to replace the entire cartridge. They also liked the Superbe Pro's finer finish. Some use the Superbe Pro rear hub anyway, replacing the quick release skewer with a nutted axle.

So what's the final recommendation? Either one is excellent. The Suntour's less expensive; the Winner Pro freewheel is

easily adjusted and lubricated; the XC cartridges are cheap and quick to change; the Superbe Pro cartridges can be disassembled. The Dura-ace looks great, may be a stronger design, has loose balls, and is lighter. Take your choice.

The same was true for the two front hubs we tested, a Shimano Dura-ace with Araya RM-20 rims and a Suntour Superbe Pro with Saturne X22 rims. The Superbe Pro sported only 32 spokes rather than the normal 36 for off road use but the weights were still pretty much the same. Both rims stood up equally well. The Arayas are a bit lighter but some felt they don't stand up to side loads as well. Braking was smooth and even and, after an initial break-in period and spoke tightening, all wheels maintained their trueness. We also heard the opinion that the Saturne may last longer since its sidewall is a touch thicker. Nevertheless, both rims may only last a couple of years due to sidewall wear caused by braking.

Derailleurs were again a slightly odd ball mix. With the seven-speed, we used a Suntour Sprint in back and a Suntour Cyclone M II in front but with the freewheel, we used a Shimano 600 GS. Front derailleur selection was limited because of the Mantis' 1.25-inch seat tube. If we'd been able to pry loose from Montaneus a Deore XT with a band instead of a clamp, we would have thrown one on but they had no extras. We also briefly used a Suntour XC (available for 1.25-inch tubes) but switched back to the Cyclone. The reason had nothing to do with the derailleur's performance. The XC is highly regarded and rightfully so. We just liked the Cyclone's cleaner and lighter design and, despite not being designed for

mountain bike triples, its performance was excellent. The only shift it labored was from the granny to the middle chain ring but so did the XC. We probably didn't appreciate the XC's action because we're used to the derailleur's spring shifting the chain down to the granny rather than pulling it over with lever pressure.

We also decided spring action down shifting is superior because of the ability to move the lever while coasting down a short hill in preparation for a climb. The moment we spun the cranks, the chain dropped down and we were off whereas the XC requires dragging the chain down while pushing the lever and spinning the cranks. Since most down-shifts are performed in challenging conditions, we found the lighter action of the spring actuated down-shift easier to perform when bouncing over rough terrain. But, and this is an important but, the spring action derailleur requires superior rider consciousness. If you blow the shift down to the granny, you might not be able to shift once you're on the hill. That's where the XC is so impressive - shifting under load.

The Shimano Deore XT is a beautifully shifting wide range derailleur that works and looks great and has a light, positive action. Shifting down to the granny isn't as guaranteed (assuming everything's adjusted properly) as with an XC but then the trick to clean shifting lies more with the rider's skill than with the mechanism. For instance, while the Cyclone is generally not considered a wise choice for triples, it performed perfectly for us as long as we respected its limitations and never attempted to shift under load.

Shifting the Suntour Sprint rear derailleur also demanded a high degree of rider consciousness. It's a short cage unit and our gear range exceeded its capability a bit. So we only used the three largest cogs with the granny, all the cogs with the middle, and the three smallest cogs with the big chain ring. Accidentally shifting onto the big ring while on the biggest cog could have broken the derailleur, an expensive consequence. A short cage's advantages are its snapper shifts and not having that long cage hanging down to get

caught on brush, etc. The Sprint's only annoyance were the slight lever adjustments always required to eliminate driveline rattle, partially caused by the seven-speed's closer cog spacing.

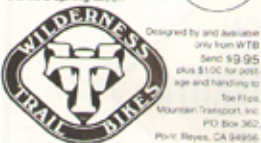
The Shimano 600 GS's long cage is designed for wide range, touring gears. Though the normally preferred rear derailleur for mountain bikes is the Deore XT or Suntour XC, we preferred the 600's action. It's surprisingly precise considering its ability to drag the chain from a 12 clear up to a 34-tooth cog but that long cage is more exposed to snagging than a shorter design. (The 600 is also available in the short cage, S.I.S. version but it's range is more limited even than the Sprint's.) The

vote for the Sprint's shorter cage and crisp shifting was unanimous. But if your shifting skills are sloppy, you're better off with a long cage derailleur. We also used the Suntour XC rear derailleur and its performance was equal to the Shimano Deore's but not quite as sharp as the 600 GS's. We also found that the Sprint maintained a higher level of performance when loaded with mud and weeds than the long cage derailleurs, rather odd considering it's basically a road racing unit. The closer spacing of the seven-speed freewheel didn't even interfere with the Sprint's action.

We went with Suntour XC brakes from the beginning, not even considering cantilevers. We've used Shimano and Dia-Compe cantilevers and Suntour XC and XC Sport and Wilderness Trail Bikes roller cams on a variety of bikes for a couple of years. We'll be the first to admit that Suntour's version of the WTB roller cam has never fully performed up to its theoretic ability but in our opinion, when properly set up, it's superior to cantilevers. Not that there's anything wrong with cantilevers; there isn't. Roller cams are just better. We also prefer the XC over the XC Sport contrary to many another opinion. We've ridden a lot of bikes with a lot of brake combinations and are convinced of the roller cam's superiority. For the very best braking, we haven't found anything yet to compare to the WTB roller cams (that opinion might change in the next month or so) but their expense precludes their appearance on very many bikes. The next best bet are Suntour's XC brakes then the XC Sport and then the cantilevers. The only distinct advantage we know of that cantilevers have over roller cams is less tendency to clog up with mud. Roller cams are somewhat notorious for loading up with mud.

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More Components

The first thing we did with the XC's was change the pads, replacing them with Aztec pads. They don't screw in but work anyway. That eliminated the Suntour pads' mushiness. With that, their performance was everything we wanted. The action was light, the braking smooth and powerful. We also equipped the Mantis with XC's front and rear with the roller cams mounted on the seat stays rather than under the chain stays. (We've never understood why so many builders got into putting cantilevers on the front and roller cams on the back. The combination has never made sense to us. If you prefer cantilevers, do like Tom Ritchey and put them front and rear. If you prefer roller cams, do like

Schwinn and Redline and put them front and back.)

The argument that because of the chainstays' rigidity, the brakes are more effective may be correct in theory. But our experience has been that roller cams mounted on the seat stays are superior. The only reason we can see for that is that they're easier to work on. They're a bit of a pain to adjust under the stays so people often ignore them whereas the upper position is a snap and consequently the brakes are better maintained. At any rate, the brakes were excellent. They were so good in fact that quite a few riders who tried out the bike got off asking why their XC's didn't work as well.

It's true that applying the brakes can, and often does, flex the seat stays. That was true of the Mantis. Standing still, we could see the stays move slightly when squeezing the levers. But when flying downhill, there was no lessening of braking power. In summary, the brakes worked beautifully, were easy to adjust, and remained cleaner in the high position.

The rest of the components we selected for the Mantis were pretty straightforward in performance. The IRD seatpost was light, easy to adjust, and gave us a tad more forward movement than the heavier but less expensive SR Laprade we also tested. The Cinelli Gran Tour saddle was wonderfully comfortable, quite light, and, despite claims of alloy rails' undependability, held up to every test. After a year's hard use, the saddle's going strong. The Fat Chance titanium handlebars were light, strong, and comfortable - also real eye catchers for anyone who's into high tech gear. The XC shifters were as always easy to use and nothing has come along yet to replace them as the preferred choice.

The Dia Compe 284 brake levers were a real hit. They looked good, fit fine, and had all the braking leverage we ever needed. Their small size was so comfortable that everyone who used them started wondering if an even smaller lever was available.

There's still no better pedal than the Suntour XC Comp. Even if you don't use toe clips and straps, they're still great pedals. They're light, well sealed, and have adequate teeth to hold your shoe on. The cage is also replaceable. If you like clips and straps, there's no other pedal for off-road and in our opinion, clips and straps are a must. A slick trick being done by a number of riders is to drill a small hole in the center of the pedal so you can inject grease inside, dramatically extending the bearings' lives.

There's not a lot to say about the headset. We selected the Dura-ace for the Mantis and loved it. It stayed tight and was wonderfully smooth. Headsets tend to be the forgotten member of a bike since there are no moving parts to watch or fine metal work to gaze longingly upon. But there's probably no other component that's subjected to as much punishment as the headset. A good one disappears from your mind; bad ones are nightmares. If you've ever found yourself deep in the hills with a loose headset and no wrench, you'll know what I mean. They're not too expensive so do yourself a favor and get a good one. We've had excellent results with Shimano 600's in the past and have had equal results with the Dura-ace. An additional advantage of the Dura-ace is the instant respect it, and vicariously you, receives when someone checking out your bike spots it. A little ego stroking never hurt anyone so get the best. ★



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Having spent the past three weeks immersed in tandems, that seems an appropriate subject for this issue's column. Besides they're almost as fun to write about as ride. So just consider this an ode to mountain tandems, possibly the finest vehicle ever made.

My partner, Steve Potts, and I have only recently put the first of ten new tandems on the dirt. We started designing and mitering tubes late last year but they'd been put aside while we concentrated on more important projects. Plus we only had two orders for tandems, Steve's and mine.

This year's Tahoe to North Truckee (TNT) race was our inspiration to complete the first bike. The TNT is a fast course with some technical but basic trail riding in the first few miles. A fire road then gradually climbs to the apex of the eighteen-mile

course. The remainder of the race consists of a fast roll with a few switchbacks and double track banked turns. It's the perfect tandem race course.

The new tandem was piloted by Roy Rivers with Joey Peterson stoking. The previous year's first place by Roy and Joey on a Ritchey-designed tandem had caused the opening of a new class after the promoter was faced with racers' protests. Though it's true the tandem has significant advantages in this particular race, the double unlikelyhood of all contributing factors adding up to success is an equalizing element.

After thirty solid hours of work getting the bike finished in time for the race, Joey and Roy departed from Marin County for Tahoe at one in the morning, arriving with just enough time to pre-run the course. They hadn't teamed together since last year's

TNT tandem victory. Solid confidence in their compatibility soon had them at the end of top gear, a 55/11. A 100-rpm cadence translates into 58 mph!

The following morning found many of the Pro-Am racers taking the tandem far more seriously than the previous year. The first downhill's somewhat technical nature forced the somewhat less maneuverable tandem into twentieth position. A curtain of dust also made caution the prudent course of action. The tandem would be in its element later where the race followed smooth trails and fire roads.

Roy and Joey's strategy worked. After a fifteen hundred vertical foot climb to the course's highest point, Starrett Pass, Roy and Joey were in sight of first place Max Jones (riding for Ritchey). The tandem blew by Max on the ensuing downhill with Roy and Joey winding up in high gear. Max might have been able to tuck in behind them with bigger gearing but I don't know how I'd feel about drafting a rock spitting, 60-mph missile though. Consequently Max was out geared for the second year in a row. Still, his second place finish was impressive. Roy and Joey broke their last year's course record by more than a minute with Max less than two minutes behind.

Racing is fun and success great but I wanted my tandem back. I still hadn't ridden it other than a five-mile test ride just before Joey and Roy took it to the race. I was excited and curious about riding this new design. Steve and I still had the Tom Ritchey "marathon" design tandem (tubing supports run from the head tube to the rear dropouts) that Roy and Joey raced in '85. Tom and Steve are close friends and Tom had given the jugged and tacked frame to Steve to complete. We'd fitted the Ritchey tandem out with a Type-1 fork and "Speedmaster" Roller Cam brakes along with a very short stem for the stoker's handlebar. The bike was excellent - reliable, predictable, fun. But can Steve and Mark leave well enough alone? Noooooo. We decided to try our own hands at designing a tandem, to experiment with a new design.

Circle number 43

ORIGINAL SIN

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DESIGNS INQUIRIES INVITED

What we decided to use is a "direct lateral" support tube connecting the head tube to the rear bottom brackets to provide more support for the front bottom bracket. (Direct laterals are currently used on most mountain tandems.) The bike's tighter triangle between the two riders has resulted in improved rigidity. It's now easier to stand and maintain rhythm. The extra stays of "marathon" designs make for a rigid power transmission but at the expense of a rather harsh ride for the stoker. A marathon's stoker's feet have been known to inexplicably become freed of clips and straps whenever a particularly abrupt bump

was hit unless the straps were really snug. The new bike's rear rider position is the same as a single bike's while the front feels like a short single. The chainstays are only 17 inches! Getting the necessary clearance for the big tires off-road tandems require while still having enough room for a centered driveline with 30/43/55 chainrings was tricky. We had to remove some material from the inside of the brake arm and use different springs to make enough space for a fat tire mounted on a reasonably warped wheel. That much room is required for those times during a ride when you dig the wheel.

The wheel hasn't warped yet though. I'm still amazed that a virtually standard mountain bike rear wheel can take the punishment a tandem subjects it to. Axle strength and hub spacing are the only real concerns. Just as a comparison, many 27" wheel road tandems use 48 spoke rear wheels. Most also use drum brakes. Our mountain tandem's roller cams mounted front and rear has been plenty of brake. If 350 pounds of bike and riders can be stopped in 100 feet from 40 mph on a 16% grade, the braking's covered. The only change we made to the brakes was to use steeply angled cams. The cam travels further through the rollers though with a resultingly higher brake pad wear factor, especially when in demanding and gritty conditions.

I recently experienced the loss of rear brake power precisely because of that. The pads were no longer able to squeeze the rim because the tips of the cam had been reached and the rollers were no longer pushing out on the brake arms. That was the beginning of another of my little learn by trial and error experiences. The fire road we were riding was steep and some three miles long. After slowing and carefully negotiating the downhill with front brake only, my comrades and I inspected the extremely worn front rim and yes, the tire was hissing. Removal of the front tire revealed a worthless tube and electrical tape perforated at every spoke nipple access hole. Fortunately Bob had a spare tube. We were quickly on the way, after removing then reapplying the tape. Still no rear brake though. (I promise to bring a 10mm wrench next time.)

Tandems are an extremely effective test for brakes, drivelines, forks, and relationships. Only the best equipment is good enough. The tires need a 60 psi minimum for solid handling and puncture resistance. The driveline has to shift positively under power and that requires attention to details such as removing intermittent teeth from the outer two chainwheels to aid chain engagement. The freewheel has to have a simultaneous engaging pawl and a positive locking adjustment to keep freewheel play to a minimum. The forks need dampening and braking abilities beyond the performance criteria of any single bike. The steerer must also be double thick.

With all these considerations, are tandems worth it? Definitely! Tandems are a blast. Besides, you can take practically anyone out for a ride without having to worry about losing them. Tandems are unbelievably versatile, far less limited than most mountain bikers can imagine. Matt and Joey have had the Ritchey designed tandem on trails that few single bikers choose to negotiate. I've also ridden that tandem many road miles at the same speed as I have on my road bike (with a strong stoker of course). For long, diverse tours, tandems are unsurpassed. Does everybody need one? No, only half the people. It takes two to tandem. ★

Events Wrap-up 1986

Despite last winter's insurance shake up there was indeed quite a season of events this summer. This is by no means meant to cover all of them. We've picked 5 significant gatherings in the mountain biking world not previously focused on. We wish to extend our congratulations to those hearty souls out there, pro or amateur, who dove into the race scene as competitors. We also wish to extend our appreciation to all those spectators and support personnel who made it all happen. We've got a great sport here.



Casey Counselman and Todd DeAngelis of WTB/Trek/True Temper. Between the four riders on this strong team almost to the slots in the top ten at any race are already filled.

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NORBA National Championships Durango, Colorado



Lisa Muhich



Cindy Whitehead



View of Course



Hank Barlow

By Hank Barlow

The 1986 NORBA Nationals are now history and for the first time in three years, neither Joe Murray nor Jacquie Phelan are the reigning champions. The Pro/Am Men's race winner was, to the surprise of almost no one, Ned Overend (sponsored by Schwinn) while Jacquie was defeated by Cindy Whitehead in a tight race between Cindy (currently riding for Schwinn), Jacquie (Cunningham Aluminum Bicycles), and Mary Lee Atkins (Schwinn). Cindy led Jacquie by only eighteen seconds while Mary Lee was another twenty-eight seconds behind Jacquie. Lisa Muhich, an unsponsored rider from Durango, finished fourth five minutes behind Mary Lee. Had Jacquie and Mary Lee not had minor mechanical problems during the race, spectators might well have witnessed a fierce final sprint. Unfortunately the field's competitiveness beyond those top four was less than considering that two years ago, Jacquie effectively raced alone, this year's results are a dramatic improvement. Hopefully, the trend will continue into the future and women's mountain bike racing will see twenty racers vying for that top position.

Cindy and Jacquie had been dueling throughout the '86 season, often alternating wins with Cindy displaying just a shade more strength than perennial winner Jacquie. Cindy's finest moment came in the Sierra 7500 in Bishop, California where she rode 49 out of 50 grueling miles without a saddle. Cindy wasn't alone in proving herself in Bishop though. Jacquie suffered a nasty fall and a subsequently injured ankle that swelled up during the final part of the race. Nevertheless, she pushed Cindy to the end.

Both arrived in Durango determined to give the Nationals their best. Jacquie proved that in the first lap when she quickly went out in front. But a determined Cindy and a jammed chain kept her from once again repeating as National Champion.

Durango's Mary Lee Atkins put on one of her finest races to date. She raced in most of the major events throughout the season, usually coming in behind both Cindy and Jacquie. According to reports, she relied more on natural ability than a strong training program, electing to race herself into shape. If so, Cindy and

Jacquie have got to be wondering what she's capable of if she ever decides to seriously train. But, like Jacquie, Mary Lee at thirty seems to have a broader perspective on life. She hasn't yet elected to single-mindedly devote herself to the job of bike racing. But she's thinking about it.

Meanwhile Cindy Whitehead's racing career is just getting going. She's young, focused, strong, and extremely determined. Behind her Scandinavian good looks lies an impressive intensity that, combined with the confidence she's no doubt gained from winning the '86 Nationals, is going to make her hard to beat. If anyone's going to do it, Jacquie still has to be favored to do so. She's a tremendous competitor with one outstanding quality: she thoroughly enjoys doing what she does.

One of the sporting world's classic clichés is the one about someone deserving a win. The only person who deserves to win is the first across the line. Nevertheless, if anyone deserved to win the '86 Nationals, it was Ned Overend. The '86 racing season was an extended tour de force for this impressive competitor from Durango. Consistency

was his hallmark. As far as we heard, he finished every race he entered, winning all but three and placing second in those. He never flat-tired, never had mechanical problems. That was the kind of record that took Joe Murray to the championship in '85 while Ned flat-tired in two of the season's major races. That year, the Ross and the Nationals. This was Ned's year and he took it to the max (including racing in the world's on the US road team). But not without a slight whisper of a doubt, namely one John Tomac.

John came out of nowhere and won the Ross Stage Race - impressively. He races for MongOOSE - another unknown name to most mountain bikers unless they have a background in BMX. He's young, eager, and strong - very strong. His bike handling skills, developed in BMX, are impressive. He arrived in Durango determined to blow everyone away and for two laps, looked like he might be able to pull it off.

His strategy was to hammer from the start, get to the top of the hill first, then bury Ned and the others on the downhill. That's exactly what he did. By the end of the first lap, he had some twenty-seven

seconds on Ned. Spectators at the double hump jump were astounded at the speed he flew through with, landing on the downside of the second hump so smoothly that it appeared to never leave the ground. Joe Sloop (Ross) came through in second and displaying almost equal control in the air. Third was Max Jones (Ritchey) with Ned fourth and riding the humps much more conservatively than Tomac or Sloop.

Ned let John go, content to tuck in behind while Joe pursued the young rider on the silver MongOOSE. As long as John pulled out no more than a thirty second lead, Ned wasn't worried. That's what happened. John increased the lead to thirty seconds but no more while Ned continued to ride conservatively. Ned's plan was to wait until the fourth lap to make his move. He didn't have to wait that long. John dropped out after the second lap with a broken chainstay and was race for the National Championship and the over Ned, who on the second lap had impressively passed Max Jones on the steep climb past the jumps, steadily increased his lead on eventual second place finisher Max Jones. Ned looked

strong enough at the finish to have gone on for another three laps while everyone else appeared whipped.

Mike Jordan (Ross) pulled into third right behind Max, even looking like he might be able to make a move on Max before the finish. He didn't; he was beat, just hanging on. According to Max, that was how he felt too. Fourth place went to WTB/Trek/True Temper rider Casey Kloser (Ross), and Roy Rivers (WTB/Trek/True Temper). With three minutes behind Ned, a mere twenty seconds separated Max, Mike, and Casey.

Rounding out the top ten were Mike Kloser (Fisher), Rishi Grewal (Moots), John Loomis (Ross), and David Meyer (Independent). With three minutes behind Ned, a mere twenty seconds separated Max, Mike, and Casey.

The '86 NORBA Nationals were the best yet. The planning was superb with three days of tours over local trails and jeep roads organized and led by local riders. Unfortunately an especially early snowstorm rolled into town, dumping rain

continued on page 46

Fat Tire Bike Week



Hank Barlow

By Hank Barlow

Ahhh, mountain biking in Crested Butte, the finest in the world. Period. No ifs, ands, or buts. The best. Always has been, always will be. And Fat Tire Bike Week. The first, the oldest, the most exciting, the most important, the best... well... maybe not the best. At least not lately. Three years in a row of declining attendance is ample evidence of that. Bad - even terrible - weather plus organization that was often seriously lacking had contributed to all that. But really, the weather had more influence on declining numbers than anything else. Nobody likes cycling when trails are quagmires of cold mud and snow is constantly encountered at elevation. Not that that is exactly how it was but things tend to get exaggerated when folks plan vacations around specific events and, after traveling long distances, fail to achieve their expectations. In such circumstances, people have a habit of remembering the worst, not the best and that's what ends up dominating memories. Such has been the case with Fat Tire Bike Week, Crested Butte.

But this year was different. Fat Tire Bike Week '86 was back on track. Attendance may have been low compared

to past years (and as a result of past years) but participants' experiences were up, way up. Fat Tire Bike Week '86 was a grand event. Even the weather cooperated with, for the most part, blue skies, golden aspen leaves, and dry trails. Nights were cold but the days were glorious.

This year's organization was excellent. Every day saw morning and afternoon tours heading out of town with local riders leading visitors to favorite trails. These were enthusiast rides too, not turkey trots. The entire spectrum of Crested Butte's unsurpassed riding were presented. Glowing reports from participants were the rule. Everyone, except those who'd been here in the past, were astounded by the array of incredible riding, better than anything they'd ever experienced. The result was the dramatic expanding of people's perceptions of just how much they could do with their mountain bikes. Many had never dreamed that these amazing fat tired flying machines could go all the places that they went.

People started pulling into town on Saturday and Sunday though Fat Tire Bike Week didn't officially start until Monday with tours the main focus each

day. Tours weren't the only thing going on though. A rodeo featuring trick riding was held on Tuesday and on Wednesday were the Colorado State Trials Championships. This was the finest trials event I've seen to date. There were three different difficulty categories for participants to enter with two different courses. All sections consisted of natural obstacles with very little interference from the organizers other than the occasional stacking up of logs.

The advanced course was a bear with no one able to come close to cleaning it. Despite the riders' problems, all agreed every section was cleanable. This was a fine spectator event with crowds moving about with the competitors, cheering them on, and generally being astounded by the riders' abilities. The only drawback to the event was the lack of some of the country's top trials riders like Kevin Norton and Scot Nicol.

This year's races, a particularly sore point in the past, were the best yet also. Races pretty much started on time, the courses were unsurpassed, and results were reported promptly with no screw-ups.



Hank Barlow



Bob Woodhouse

Left to Right: An old friend to Crested Butte, Rich Cost. Every year he visits to wow the locals with his trail expertise. Nancy Schappert heading into Dorchester Campground for the first draw on the loop. Always a spectacle in the fall is the brilliant golden of the changing Aspen leaves. Steve Curry and Dave Lindsey admiring one of the many views enjoyed by visitors this year.



Frank Staub

The first race was a short and quick prologue time trial Thursday morning, a one-lap sprint over the criterium course. The day's main attraction was the afternoon criterium. Mountain bike criteriums are usually nothing other than a gravel surface road race but not at Crested Butte. The 1.5 mile course is superb, a true test of mountain biking skills. Some two thirds of the distance consists of a smooth single-track while the balance consists of a double-track and gravelled road. How good is the track? Well, it's the best part of a ride called the Upper Loop and it's one of the locals' favorite rides. So varied and challenging is the riding that it's pretty much our standard course for testing bikes. It's an excellent measure of both a rider's and a bike's handling, speed, climbing, and downhilling. And unlike most criteriums, it's a favorite of both spectators and participants.

Friday's road and trail race was in this writer's mind the best mountain biking course yet set. Total distance was about thirty miles over a combination of improved gravel road, jeep road, double track, and single track. What made this

This year's organization was excellent. Every morning some local turned a group of visitors on to yet another of the incredible spectrum of Crested Butte rides.

course so special was the combination of the track, terrain, and country through which the racers passed. Racers were constantly presented with impressive views of Colorado's gold plated mountain splendor. It was one of those courses where no matter how fast or slow a participant was, he or she would arrive at the finish having just had an incredible ride.

Competitors took off from the Skyland Golf Course start line, pounded down the Brush Creek Road, up the Ferris Creek Road and onto the Ferris Creek single-track. Beyond a low pass, the trail slides through a pocket of conifers and into a beautiful meadow with sweeping mountain views then dives down a gnarly hill, twists through aspens, then exits into a meadow just before the Brush Creek ford. From there, they ran up a steep hill to the Brush Creek jeep road, rode back down the valley to the West Brush Creek jeep road

where they hammered up another steep hill into a beautiful valley of aspens, meadows, and beaver ponds. A single track climbs angles up and across the base of Teocalli Mountain, eventually topping out on a high ridge and the high point of the loop. After a flying ride along the ridge crest, the trail dives down the back side, sometimes steep, sometimes mellow, always exhilarating, until finally rejoining the Brush Creek Road for the fast return to the start line. The course has everything that makes Colorado mountain biking so incredible.

The race's winning time of two hours and twenty-three minutes, by Max Jones (Ritchey), was a real shocker. That was a good half hour faster than the fastest estimates. In fact, the top five finishers - Rishi Grewal (Moots), Dave Meyer, Steve Cook (Ritchey), and Tracy Smith continued on page 46

Chequamegon Fat Tire Festival

Cable, Wisconsin



Hank Barlow



Pat Murray

Left to Right: The lush fern forest of Wisconsin's north woods. Mark Frise (Montaneus), always a man to watch in any North Country competition. Competitors in the orienteering event picking up clues.



Hank Barlow

By Hank Barlow

Pronouncing Chequamegon isn't easy; it helps to be from Wisconsin. The state specializes in tongue-twister names. Once you've got Chequamegon wired, then you're ready to tackle Chequamamas, a name you'll hear frequently if you get to next year's Fat Tire Festival, a recommended move. Chequamamas are the local bicycle club who stage the event. They're the festival's spirit and the reason this has become one of mountain biking's finest events. Some say the best. One of those is Joe Breeze.

"I've been to a lot of events and this is the best bicycle event I've ever attended. Not just off-road either, this is the best bicycle event period!"

For those of you new to the sport, Joe is a fat tire legend, the first to build lightweight, chromoly mountain bike frames, and the co-designer of the Hite-Rite. (Joe's ultimate claim to fame is for the finest name ever given to any bicycle: the Breezer.)

Running into Joe in northern Wisconsin was a bit of a shock. The Chequamegon Fat Tire Festival has been an event operating in a publicity vacuum and an event that would seem to hold little

interest for Californians. Until now, no major magazine has ever featured the festival, primarily because it takes place on the same weekend as the better publicized Ross Four Day Stage Race in Massachusetts. Yet Joe had heard enough about it to convince him to pack up his bike and clothes and fly east. Was he glad that he'd done so? Absolutely.

"This is a great event! The organization, the events, and the people are tremendous. It's great fun; I'm already planning on returning next year."

Joe wasn't speaking as a spectator either. Saturday, he rode in the Chequamegon 40, a forty-mile, point to point race. Sunday morning found him cycling through the Wisconsin woods with compass and map in hand, enthusiastically pursuing orienteering points. Then in the afternoon, he was wowing the spectators in his attempts to win the limbo contest and after that, he entered the Cable Criterium. He even held the fastest first lap time for three heats. All in all, it was a busy weekend for Joe and the over four hundred mountain bikers in attendance.

If you've never been to northern Wisconsin, you owe it to yourself to do so

at least once. The landscapes are beautiful, strikingly different for anyone from the western United States. Fields of corn, pastures full of dairy cows, and classic farm houses set in groves of maples with massive, white barns in the background alternate with vast stretches of deciduous forests. Criss crossing those forests are a maze of logging roads, ski trails, and hiking paths. So extensive are these roads and trails and so continuous are the woods that maps and a compass are absolutely necessary for any extended exploring.

Hills, as far as sustained climbs are concerned, are non-existent. If you could momentarily desude the land of all forests, what you'd see from an airplane might resemble a shallow sea of short, sometimes choppy swells sweeping into the distance. Wisconsin's land forms are the product of the great ice sheets that periodically spread across North America. Lakes and ponds seem to be everywhere yet streams are infrequent. It's as if the land is a giant sponge absorbing all rainfall then collecting it in every hollow. Notable landmarks or summits from which you can look out are so rare. Wander a hundred

feet away from a trail and, without a compass and map, you could be instantly lost.

Adding to the initially disconcerting nature of these northern woods is the sameness of the immediate surroundings. Cycling over a trail, logging track, or even a graveled county road can begin to resemble riding rollers through a 3-D video of green. Everything changes yet remains the same. The only way you can keep track of how far or long you've traveled is with a bicycle computer and a watch.

Once you get used to the sensations, the riding is superb, especially on the old logging trails and newer ski trails. There's a softness and stillness to the land that quiets the mind. Voices are absorbed so effectively that riders seventy-five feet apart can pass like ships in the night. It's an environment that seems to encourage social riding as opposed to grimly hammering as fast as possible. That's probably why the Chequamegon Fat Tire Festival is so much fun. Not that participants don't race hard and fast; they do. There's just a contagious looseness in everybody's attitude that turns this into an exceptional event.

In my mind, the Festival's premier event isn't the Chequamegon 40 or the Cable Criterium; it's the Sunday morning Rough Stuff Rendezvous, a wonderful orienteering race. Each participant was given a contour map of the area and a compass if he or she didn't already have one (be sure to include one in your gear if you attend in '87). Seven control points were marked on the map and at each one was a punch with a unique shape. Racers were given individual start times. They then had to get to every control point as fast as possible, punch their cards as proof they'd been there, and race to the finish line. What made this such a great event were the maze of graveled county roads, improved logging roads, old logging roads, ski trails, and obscure trails. Plus there was always the option of striking out cross-country from one point to another. There was no single route that was obviously faster so everyone had to constantly make their own choices. Plus no one knew how they stood time-wise relative to anyone else until the race had been completed.

Watching four racers arrive at one control point from four different directions

and then depart in separate directions wasn't unusual. Nor was it strange to watch a group surrounding one control point politely waiting their turn to punch their cards while carrying on conversations. But the moment they were back on their bikes, they put the hammer down to the next point.

The men's event was won by former world orienteering champion Jan Hald-Bjorgum in just over one hour. The women's race was won by Kimberlee Caledonia who also won the Chequamegon 40. If you've never done a mountain bike orienteering event, try it; you'll like it.

The Chequamegon 40 takes place for most of its distance on dirt and gravel roads, but not all of it. The first part follows the world famous Birkebeiner ski racing trail. The trail is a fifty-foot wide swath of grass winding through the woods. Riding it was strange. The ground was saturated from heavy, late summer rains and the tires sunk into the grass and soil just enough to require lower gears than the terrain would normally have dictated.

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Ross Stage Race



By Brooks and Roxanne Dodge

It was a cold, windy night in northern New Hampshire when Mike and I loaded our Mt. Whitneys onto our car and headed south. The Volkswagen was so tightly packed with food, tools, and camping gear that there was barely room to sit. The cramped space did nothing to make the long drive to Massachusetts' Wendell State Forest pass any faster. We pulled into the campground and watched a sprawling array of mountain bikes, variously shaped tents, and vague shadows pass by our windows as we slowly searched for a vacant campsite. Upwind from the port-a-pottys proved most acceptable.

The shocks gave an audible sigh of relief when we relieved the car of our gear. With eyes fatigued by blinding headlights, I dragged out our antique Coleman lantern and attempted to light it. The lantern promptly spluttered then almost blew up in my face. We reconciled ourselves to developing night vision. A sharp wind whistled through the campground while we groped around setting up a rarely used tent - another relic from a bygone era. Mike tried to help in his weary state but quickly lost faith when he saw the vice

grips used to keep the tent from folding up like an umbrella. Finished, we sat back to admire our quarters when a gust of wind whipped through and sent the tent flapping like a riled up hen. Surely we'd be better riders than we were campers.

Dawn crept up in a gray fog, almost indiscernible from night. We were standing around the registration area waiting for something to happen when the queen of mountain biking, Jacquie Phelan, rode in leaning on her horn and announcing that the race could begin. Perhaps because the sport is informal and new, the pro racers were helpful, friendly, and accessible. I found no over-blown egos or snobbishness.

Registration complete, it was time to check out the course. The start/finish area was curtained with flapping Ross Bicycle banners. Good tunes and concessionaires completed the carnival atmosphere. We decided to give the course a trial run.

The 2.5 mile circuit began with a flat section for about a third of a mile on a dirt road followed by a sharp right turn up and over a small bump. The course then leveled out before dropping down a rutted dirt road. The smoothest line was on the

far left. We then pedaled in top gear across a flat section, the fastest yet trickiest section of the loop. A sharp fall-away right-hand turn was lined with hay bales. The turn became a favored spot for race spectators. The speed carried into the turn here dramatically demonstrated the difference between the pros and the rest.

Beyond the corner was the obligatory hill. It was a steep battle - granny gear time for us, middle chain ring for pros. The course then continued along a flat road about a quarter of a mile until bamboo poles drew us abruptly onto a tight, twisty single-track where derailleurs and chain rings might be abused on the rock-strewn terrain. The section required precise shifting, braking, and bike handling. Two hundred feet before the finish line was another challenge, an extremely rocky and steep hill. The unbelievable technique here, as later demonstrated by the pros, was to get off, shoulder the bike, and run to the finish.

Course inspection completed, we watched the pros sprint out of the gate for a one-lap time trial and realized how hard we would have to ride. Then it was our

Wendell State Park, Massachusetts



Left to Right: Todd Suetzler, a good strong consistent rider for Ross. Roy Rivers and Casey Cunaelmon (WTB, Trek, True Temper) leading the pack. John Tomac (Mongoose) leading out with Ned Overend (Schwinn) following the pace. John Tomac, the overall winner, wowed more than a few with his clean run over the field.

We were standing around waiting for something to happen when the queen of mountain biking, Jacquie Phelan, rode in leaning on her horn, announcing that the race could begin.

turn in the novice class in both the time-trials and observed trials competition.

Time-trials are a race against the clock. Every ounce of energy is expended on going faster and harder, burning out the lungs. The rider with the fastest time wins. That's not the case in observed trials where it's a contest against the terrain with the emphasis on extreme bike-handling skills at very slow speeds. The objective is to "clean" (not put a foot down) a variety of severe obstacles - logs, rocks, etc. We had to follow a narrow track, riding over obstacles and around tight turns where we had to jump, twist, and hop our bikes, pushing us to our limits.

Each day's welcome reward for our efforts was a bath in a nearby pond. Mike and I followed others' lead and slowly worked our way into the cold water to wash off the sweat and dirt though most only washed off their feet before making a

rapid retreat. Recalling my motocross race routine, I set time aside each day before supper for bike maintenance. Mike had packed a good portion of his bike shop into the car and was selling parts to unfortunate racers. I wished he would sell my old tent along with the parts.

Day two was hot, cloudy, and humid. The trials seemed to demand ever increasing skills. Perhaps it was the oppressive weather but the day seemed almost too long. But then, near the end of the day, I suddenly realized my bike was becoming an extension of my body.

Saturday morning found us crawling out of our tent and shielding our eyes from a blazing sun. The weather was clear and cool for ideal riding conditions. First on the agenda was a hill climb. What was supposed to be the best of two attempts became the best of one due to tight scheduling. The start line was by "Whale Rock", just before the hard right into the



uphill section. An immediate straight provided an opportunity to get into toe clips, hammer down the road, fly into the sharp right, and then up the hill. Joe Sloop (Ross) won it in a smoking 8 minutes and some 40 odd seconds.

In the afternoon were more observed trials, five sections repeated five times. Because there was little time allowed to finish each one, we literally raced between sections. Mike and I both crashed getting from one section to another as well as during the trials themselves. My most humiliating crash was a loss over the bars directly in front of top-pro Kevin Norton.

Sunday featured a five-lap road race for novices, fifteen for the pros. The surprise of the day was overall men's pro race winner John Tomac (sponsored by Mongoose). Everyone was walking around afterwards wondering who this guy was. His win was no fluke either. According to second place finisher Ned Overend (Schwinn), John dominated the overall competition. A BMX background made him especially effective in the observed trials, an event many of the pro racers do continued on page 46

Mountain Bike Weekend

Jim Thorpe, Pennsylvania



Left to right: The railroad service road through the Lehigh Gorge. Steam Locomotive of Jim Thorpe, Pa. Hard to believe but these folks drink right out of the stream here.

Story and photo by Frank Staub

Every group has them: rallies, celebrations, gatherings of the tribes. For the hippies it was Woodstock. For the Boy Scouts it's the Valley Forge Jamboree. Race car fans have Indianapolis and jazz lovers have Newport. For many years, the only big happening for mountain bikers was the annual Pearl Pass Tour from Crested Butte to Aspen. But lately other important get togethers have appeared on the fat tire calendar such as the Festival in Chequamegon, Wisconsin, California's Mammoth Cycling Classic, and the Canyonlands Fat Tire Bike Festival in Moab, Utah.

As of June 13, another event can be added to this list. It took place in the hills along the Lehigh River in eastern Pennsylvania and was called Mountain Bike Weekend '86. However, within the mountain bike community its being referred to by the name of the town where it was held - Jim Thorpe. No, the man voted most outstanding football player and greatest all-round athlete of the Twentieth Century by a 1950 AP pole was not born in the place that bears his name. I'm not sure that Jim Thorpe even slept there. But it is the site of his final resting place.

From around 1815 and for most of its history the town went by the Indian name Mauch Chunk. Mauch Chunk prospered as a transport center for anthracite coal during the last half of the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth centuries. Then in the 1920's the coal industry slumped and so did Mauch Chunk's economy. The hard times continued through 1954 when city officials received permission from the recently widowed Mrs. Thorpe to move her husband's remains to their town and give it his name in order to generate a flow of tourists. While this may seem an irreverent and desperate deed, it was also, at least in part, an attempt to revive the great athlete's tarnished fame.

Soon after winning both the decathlon and pentathlon in the 1912 Olympics, it was discovered that Thorpe had previously played baseball in a semi pro league. This ruined his status as an amateur athlete and his gold medals were taken away. The Mauch Chunkians hoped that the twenty-ton mausoleum they built might spark a renewed interest in Thorpe's accomplishments. But as Shakespeare said: "If a man does not erect in this age his own tomb ere he dies, he

shall live no longer in monument than the bell rings, and the widow weeps." Mauch Chunk's new name and new monument failed to attract tourists.

I went to Jim Thorpe for its Mountain Bike Weekend and as far as I could tell, it didn't need any gimmicks to make itself appealing. It's a beautiful town in a beautiful setting. The winding streets and well kept buildings of brick and stone had the majestic charm of an Old World burg but with the intriguing air of nineteenth century American opulence.

From the mountain biker's standpoint, the wooded hills surrounding Jim Thorpe have a lot to offer. The town sits between two steep canyons of the Lehigh River, making for some impressive vistas and interesting rides.

On Saturday morning I joined about 25 people for a group tour on a railroad service road through the Lehigh River Gorge. For the first mile, the road was covered with a thick layer of ballast. It was rideable but not much fun - especially since I always keep my tires rock hard to avoid flats. The ballast finally ended and the road smoothed out. But the black gravel which now formed its surface absorbed the June

heat and slammed it back against our bodies. My eyes burned with sweat dripping down from beneath my helmet. I began to wonder if all the weekend's rides would be like this. Hopefully, we'd spend some time beneath the trees and out of the sun.

After several miles we paused briefly at a rustic old railroad bridge to enjoy views of the Glen Onoko Falls and a huge tunnel carved into a sheer rock face. Later we took another break at a boulder-filled stream which was actually clean enough to fill our water bottles from. These stops offered some relief from the heat but I still longed for the forest's shade blanketing the gorge's sides. I didn't have to wait long.

At the end of the official guided tour, about half our group took off across a bridge and up a very steep and rarely used road through the woods. It was a tough climb - the kind that allows you to stop a lot and watch the birds. But at least it was out of the sun.

At the top, we entered a fairy tale forest of small oaks and thigh-high ferns punctuated here and there by bushy explosions of Pennsylvania's state flower,

the mountain laurel. The road held a special fascination for me because of a uniform carpet of thick green grass covering it. In the western high desert which at that time I called home, grass grows in bunches. This was like riding on an overgrown lawn. Since I had never ridden on grass before I'd glance back now and then to see if our tires were doing much damage. I didn't see any broken shoots but then I didn't get down on my hands and knees to actually look either. That might be a worthwhile science project for a class at Jim Thorpe's high school during next year's Mountain Bike Weekend.

Some of us loaded our bikes into the cars that afternoon and drove out of town to a high point above the Lehigh Gorge. We parked at a turnout and pedaled along a bumpy powerline right-of-way for some fine views. We also found more grass-covered roads.

Most of our group returned to town after a few hours. But another rider, named Bob, suggested we explore a badly overgrown road that led down into the gorge. So he and I gave it a try. Our plan was to connect with the route we had

traveled during the morning tour along the river.

But the road went only a short distance before degenerating into a modest game trail. Now if you've ever hiked a game trail through a thick forest you can imagine what it was like to push our bikes on one. Crouching beneath bushes and jumping over logs are everyday facts of life for deer, but not for people carrying bicycles. At one point a fallen tree completely blocked the trail where it traversed a steep scree slope. The footing was just too loose for a person with a bike to get around the obstacle. The only solution was for Bob to climb a few yards up the hill while I handed up both bicycles. Then I climbed to a slightly higher point and he passed the bikes to me. A few rounds of this leap frog technique got us past the fallen tree. I learned two lessons from this. First, avoid game trails. And second, sometimes mountain biking requires teamwork.

When we reached the bottom of the gorge Bob went in the river to cool off before we headed back to town. As he

continued on page 45

Aloha From Hawaii

Story and photos by David Blehart and Debbi Koehn

Good, now that's a sunset. For all you parents out there getting rusty chains since the kids were born, take note: Adventure living need not end with this (sometimes oppressive) responsibility.



Alison Teal wriggles her tiny toes in the warm sand and eyes the bicycles neatly nestled against a swaying palm tree. I lay back on the sand, relishing the hot, tropical sun. A cloud passes over the sun and instinctively, I reach for a jacket in expectation of the sudden chill that will undoubtedly follow. It doesn't. I look over at Debby and have to laugh. The contrast to our snowed-in log cabin back in the Rockies is extreme. Two days earlier, we'd been holed up in our cabin during a raging blizzard and wondering how we'd get to the airport. Now here we were practically naked on a Pacific beach! Even the bicycles, fresh out of their traveling boxes, seem to breathe a sigh of relief. There's much to be said for a mid-winter escape!

Still, arriving at this sandy paradise had had its moments. First there'd been the normal wait for our luggage to be spit out of the plane's guts. Then we'd had to anxiously await our bike boxes' arrival, hoping nothing had happened to them. Once the boxes were safely in hand, while other tourists cheerfully piled into busses, taxis, and rental cars, we found a quiet corner in which to reassemble the bikes and Burley bicycle cart, carefully checking that nothing had been broken or bent. We then jammed anything that didn't fit into panniers into the trailer along with Alison. Then it was out into Kailua, the Disneyland-like hub of Hawaii's Kona coast. Maps were pulled out, road signs studied, and we were off, still slightly awestruck at really being in Hawaii and cycling off in search of a beach and campsite.

Traffic on the two-lane coast highway was constant and moving fast. The ride was somewhat nerve wracking with my wife and I constantly looking back over our shoulders at the oncoming cars and at Alison strapped into the Burley trailer. We'd heard too many stories of triathletes on training rides who died or suffered severe injuries while balancing along this highway's edge. The rough, irregular shoulders provided the only safety from the roar of speeding rubber on pavement. Without our mountain bikes and their fat tires, we would have been forced onto the pavement, a frightening proposition even without Alison trailing behind in the cart.

She seemed almost lost in the jumble of equipment sharing the space with her. Our airport packing job had been somewhat haphazard in our hurry to get going but would become more efficient with practice. For now, jammed into the

trailer with her were: fins, masks, snorkels, underwater camera, Lowe camera bag bulging with gear, water bottles, "Max" electrolyte replacement mix, MSR multifuel stove, sleeping pads, two Mountain Mend sleeping bags, One Moss Star Dome tent, flip flops, large bag of disposable diapers, cook kit, toilet kit, first aid kit, repair kit, tire pump, teflon chain lubricant, sunscreen, suntan lotions, oils, beach towels, straw mats, beach umbrella, and food. All were safely contained in the bright yellow and red, vibrantly visible Burley bicycle cart, like Alison, a recent addition to our traveling gear. Never having used a cart before and confronted with a stream of rushing traffic in a place we'd never been before, it wasn't immediately clear how we'd ever learn to respect, much less love, our little Burley. But we did.

Our first destination was a campsite described to us by friends: a beach near the airport and next to a research station. The campsite's closeness became more and more appealing as Alison's pleas for escape from the confining seat belts became louder. The turn onto a narrow, rocky road leading away from the crowded highway and to the beach came none too late. The bikes came alive on the lava road as if they were equally happy to escape the traffic, succumbing only to the dreaded Kiewe Thorn—a razor-sharp spike measuring up to two inches in length that magically seeks out rubber tires and bare feet. Kiewe trees prefer dry areas and beautiful beach front campsites where they have a wonderful habit of twisting and bending into perfect alcoves for secluded camping. But don't worry about thorns on the Big Island; we seem to have collected all there were.

Alison clambered around the "po hoi hoi" lava (the kind that looks like giant cow "pies") and explored the tide pools for her first tastes of sand and tiny edibles while mom set up the tent and dad repaired the thorn-scarred tubes in the waning light of our first Pacific sunset. A sea breeze provided a welcome balance to the heat rising off the black lava that forms most of the Big Island's west coast. We fell asleep lulled by the night's soft breeze and oblivious to our proximity to the airport. Dawn found us groggily cursing airplanes, having been rudely and abruptly awakened by the shattering screams of early morning, inter-island flights close overhead.

The noise spurred us into an early departure and back into the fray of the highway's rushing cars and trucks. Once we were past the airport though, traffic thinned dramatically. By mid-morning, the heat had become too much of a good thing so we ducked into a Sheraton Hotel for a quick swim at their beautiful beach and a much needed water bottle refill. Alison had made herself at home inside

her nylon house on wheels and the double-takes of passer-byes were spectacular. "There's a baby in there!" Kicked back with her feet up and teething on a plastic film cannister, Alison drew smiles and laughter from all who spotted the cart with the orange flag gaily bobbing above.

Our second night's campsite was at Beach 69 (named for the number on the telephone pole near the beach's entrance). The beach was quiet and unassuming and the evening was graced with a feast of local fare; taro root, sweet potatoes, and bananas, home-grown and cooked over an open fire, courtesy of "Ginger" John, a long-time local, and his family.

A leisurely one-mile ride north the following morning took us to Hapuna Beach Park where we found a soft, silky white beach with perfect body surfing, bathrooms, showers, drinking water, grass, shade, and playmates for Alison. Jet lagged and tired, we settled in for several lazy days and dreamy nights to better acclimate ourselves to the demands of sunbather maintenance, sand observation, and on-going water temperature inspections.

The days pass quickly and we soon recognize the initial stages of polynesian paralysis. Ardently sunburnt, we finally drag ourselves away from the water and return to the road, ready for new adventures.

We head north past Samuel Spencer Beach Park, a popular camping place often filled with travelers. After a quick stop at the town of Kahaui for food and tire pressure checks, we set off in earnest. Fifteen miles later, the road skirts the tops of lava cliffs plunging precipitously to the sea. We pass a sign for Mahukona Beach Park and turn down a tree-lined, winding road leading to a tiny park alongside an old boat launching dock. A flock of vivid red cardinals in an electric orange bouganvillea tree catch Alison's eyes. A birthday party is in full swing. Hawaiian children are playing in the grass and it isn't long before they're all gathered around the Burley peering at Teal through the side windows.

It quickly becomes apparent this is where we'll camp as the children line up for rides in the cart. A magical evening unfolds. Whales dance in the sunset, coming full breach out of the water two at a time. A crowd standing on the sea wall cheers them on.

A four-year old Hawaiian boy approaches us.

"You like Caucau (food)? You got MuMu (dress) fo'da' baby? Gotta dress up," he states matter of factly, "Gotta have Mumu w' no pucas (holes). Afta, we eat cake. You like cake? No got ca, only bike? Got tent? We like play in tent."

Nine kids climb into our Moss tent and it becomes the only storm tossed place on an otherwise calm beach. Hours later the beach is all but deserted and we're once



again on our own.

The morning finds us on the road heading north. Within ten miles, the scenery changes from dry grasslands to rolling pastures to lush rain forest. The soil is rich and deep from ancient lava flows but eons have passed since lava flowed over this part of the island. The small towns of Hawi and Kapaau give us a sense of old Hawaii. Old store fronts reminiscent of corner groceries of the 1950's have been converted into health food stores, sports shops, boutiques, real estate offices, and a deli right out of New York City. A few local families still own and operate small groceries with a seemingly infinite stock of every food imaginable. Memorable moments are spent on the front steps in the shade of a Mango tree, downing cold drinks, and sharing tales of our travels with curious locals. The islanders bring a deluge of smiles from baby Alison.

Later that day, we encounter the first major climb of our trip, to the Polulu lookout. Pedals move in slow motion. The only incentive to continue riding is knowing that walking with the loaded cart would be worse. Beyond the first and, as it turns out, steepest hill, the road wanders through lush green gorges and past tumbling waterfalls. We arrive at the lookout exhausted but our efforts are rewarded with "pali" after "pali" (cliffs) jutting dramatically out to sea through the late afternoon mist.

We pry ourselves away from Polulu's enchantment, urged on by a setting sun reminding us we still haven't located a campsite. Farm houses and pastures complete with curious mules lie on opposite sides of the road. We peer over a cliff edge at the distant black sand beach below then hear a voice from a nearby house greeting us.

"What's her name? Need a place to sleep?"

Little Teal, still immersed in the beauty of her surroundings, eyes the newly cut lawn leading up to a log cottage right out of the tales of Hansi and Gretl. We accept his invitation to camp and put Teal down to crawl over the lawn as our host, Bill Strout, tells us of his past.

"My family used to live in that valley below. My mother was born there. My father came from the mainland on a boat. That beach used to be lined with canoes. The people were expert canoe makers. The only means of transportation around the island was by boat. No one really lived in the mountains, except in Waimea, and they got down to the sea by mule, a distance of ten miles."

Bill, 83 years old, has fond memories of his life as a boy on the Big Island and loves to "talk story" about his ancestors. His tale continues long into the evening. We set up the tent beneath a full moon, surrounded by macademia nut, palm, avocado, and banana trees, then drift to sleep drugged by the powerful fragrance of plumeria and ginger blossoms. Our dreams are rich with visions of Hawaii's past.

The morning arrives unusually clear for this often windswept, wet area. We leave our bicycles at Bill's house and pick our way down a narrow rocky trail to the beach a thousand feet below. Building sand castles, we feel a new dimension has been added to our wanderlust...we're now a family of three traveling together and our fun has expanded exponentially!

Pedaling away from Polulu, we begin to experience Hawaii with a heightened appreciation for this island paradise. Camp that night is in a Keokea campground amidst Winnebagos, campers, and jeeps. We sip our tea and reflect on Bill Strout's Hawaii while watching blurred silhouettes moving inside the electrified RV's, their occupants safely insulated from the island's rich smells and sounds. Once again we're glad we're traveling by bike for our slow pace enables us to intimately feel the subtleties of the island's changing energies.

Linking the towns of Hawi and Waimea is the Kohala Mountain Road. The road rises 3,500 feet above sea level in fifteen miles then drops abruptly seven miles into the center of cowboy town. Mentally we accept the challenge of the climb but our legs rebel at the decision. Low gears and jaw clenching determination win in the end as we roll through endless pristine pastureland high above the sea. Eucalyptus line the road while cattle graze alongside.



We're lulled into a trance-like state by the land's rhythm and disregard a sudden temperature drop until clouds obscure our view and rain begins to fall. The hills resemble glistening giant green gumdrops. We stop on the crest to put on long underwear and long sleeves (only habit had included them in our clothing selection) and to gobble down the remaining food in our bags. Huddled together for warmth, peering at blurred cows through the haze, our thoughts eagerly return to the ever present Pacific Ocean below and the hot, sunny beaches awaiting us.

Our laughter is left hanging in the damp air as our bikes plunge over the last knoll and accelerate down the long awaited hill. Our cart, cornering and cruising like an animated rickshaw, follows obediently. We ride into Waimea at dusk, tired and hungry, having successfully traversed the arduous mountain road, where we settle down for a serious attempt at setting a new record for pizza consumption. Joining us in our efforts is Tom "Dr. Cycle" Moleilo.

Tom is the person you want to run into if you are in need of a bicycle wizard. His shop is in an old garage just off main street. Inside are a casual array of tools, parts, and just about anything you may need to continue on your way. His unabashed love of kids rolls out a red carpet to the shop's every nook and cranny for Alison's curiosity to explore.

Our route from Waimea to Honaka and finally the Waipio Valley (Hawaii's deepest valley) winds along the coast with snow-capped Mauna Loa always in the background. Side roads such as the Mamalahoa Highway offer a pleasant alternative to the busy and narrow belt road. Taro fields, once the pride of King Kameamea, the last Hawaiian royalty to spend much of his life in Waipio Valley, line the lush valley floor. Fruit trees and flowers abound. While rainfall on the coast is a meager twenty inches per year, only a half mile up the valley it averages over one-hundred inches. Further in, the rainfall is even greater. Consequently views of the valley's magnificent waterfalls are rare.

The valley residents are a hearty breed



and it's not at all unusual to have to wade or swim the Waipio River to get to their homes. The beautiful beach is alive with the spirits of Hawaii's past and envisioning canoes lining the shoreline, ready for use, is almost automatic.

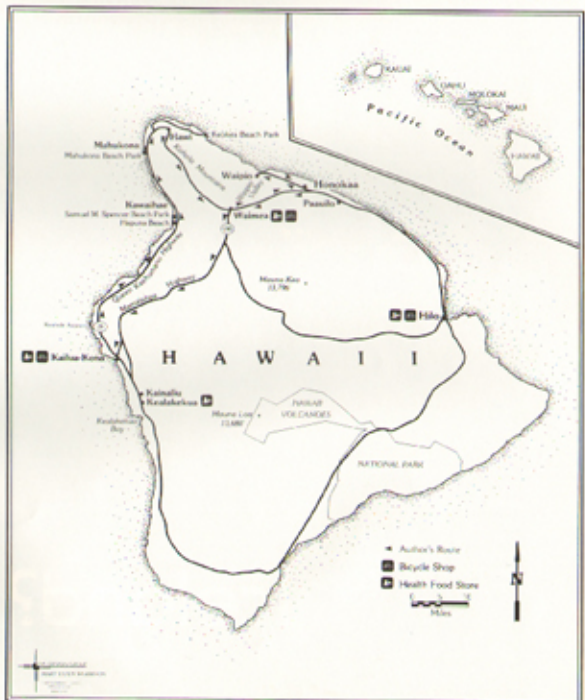
We swallow our pride and leave our bikes behind, walking in and out of the valley instead. Much local persuasion was required to convince us to do so but we're

soon thankful when we see four wheel drives laboring up the steep, rough road, having to back up and start over again if they lose their upward momentum for even a moment.

After returning to Waimea, we head south along Waikoa Road through a geologic history. The island is the home of "Mauna Loa" (Long Mountain) and her volcanoes are the most active on the planet. Significant eruptions have occurred eight times in the last ten years with smaller ones more often than that. Hardened "Ah ah" lava flows (the kind it hurts to walk on) hide beneath thick vegetation. The old, unpaved highway remains visible where it's not been buried by the flows.

Alison is unimpressed, and rides comfortably oblivious to the surreal visions of hardened molten rock. The setting sun's display of reds and oranges mesmerizes us into riding on until it disappears beyond the horizon. Caught without a campsite and unwilling to

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With all the wind and rain, why did we ever choose to spend our vacation in



Iceland?

Icelanders out for a trek across the mountains on their ponies.

A man without clothes can withstand temperatures in the low forties for only so long before he's forced to do something irrational. That we were naked in exactly such cold didn't really bother us though. What did bother us was the prospect of lowering ourselves through a crack in the rocks into a pool of water we couldn't really see. All we knew was that the water was hot; steam rising out of the crack told us that much. But how hot? There was no way from where we were to test the water without plunging into it.

For that matter, we weren't even sure if this was the right place. The lady who'd given us directions couldn't speak English and we couldn't speak Icelandic. We'd shown her a postcard picture of a cave with a hot spring and she had drawn us a map to it - we hoped. Stairs leading into the crevasse were a sign people came here so it made sense the pool would be a bearable, even comfortable, temperature but we were still apprehensive. Heck, the entire setting was intimidating. We were standing in a narrow fissure, about twenty-five feet deep, filled with basaltic columns that lay toppled against each other like a Stonehenge collapsed. Meanwhile the temperature was dropping.

I lowered myself into the crack and attempted to test the water. My hands slipped on the rocks just as my big toe touched the surface. Explaining exactly what it feels like to fall into a pool of water while wondering if you're about to be parboiled is not easy. It all happens too fast. Terror is one word. About half way in, I realized the temperature was bearable but I still sprang to the surface with my heart pounding in my throat. I let out an excited hoot, and Kevin flopped into the water with about as much style as I had.

This was the Iceland we had come to experience. We were in an underground pool about eight feet deep with the water temperature somewhere around one-hundred degrees. Shafts of light filtered in from above, illuminating the mosses and ferns that grew on the upper walls. Ledges around the side of the pool made perfect seats while the water was so clear it was eerie. We half expected some mythical creature to slink out of an underwater cave and make hors d'oeuvres out of us.

Kevin got brave and started exploring the depths of the spring. He ventured into a narrow finger of the pool and found an underwater tunnel. He could see a faint

light at the other end of the passage and decided to go in for a better look. Eventually it got to the point where all I could see were his feet. The cave obviously had another opening but he couldn't tell how far away that was and decided not to risk getting caught in the tunnel. I was content to lean back and contemplate the ferns.

The hot springs was a perfect respite from the constant wind and cold we'd been struggling through for days on end. Rarely had the mercury topped fifty degrees. This spring was a paradise after a day of pedalling up volcanoes and racing tour busses down dirt roads. (One driver did all he could to beat us but there was no way he could even keep up.) The trip so far had been a constant reminder that things will work out, no matter how bad they appear, if we'd only let them.

Finding information on Iceland hadn't been easy. There aren't a whole lot of people who have cycled the country. Kevin worked with the American Youth Hostel organization and finally picked up some information but the contacts he made had all ridden road bikes. Their perception of what was possible differed dramatically from what we had in mind, traversing the interior. What maps we found were vague and each was unique from the others. Still, riding across the uninhabited central highlands seemed plausible, tough but possible. We came up with a potential route after studying the maps but because we had no idea what the wind and weather patterns were, we kept our plans flexible. Nevertheless, as we boarded the plane for the flight to Reykjavik, our goal of traversing the interior on mountain bikes was firmly fixed in our minds. Or so we thought.

We arrived in Reykjavik, Iceland's capital, only to discover that the airline had managed to bend my fork and shatter my rear derailleur. Fortunately we'd brought along a spare derailleur for we soon found out that a derailleur sells for seventy-five dollars! That is if you can find one. But the fork was beyond repair. That meant finding a shop with mountain bike forks and purchasing a new one.

All this caused us to meet Thoster, the owner of what turned out to be the only mountain bike in Iceland. His father works for the airlines and bought it for him in New York. This bright fourteen year old saw us setting up our bikes and came running out to check them out. After we'd

By Harry Hurt

explained our predicament, he led us to every bike shop in town in search for an appropriate fork. Because there aren't any mountain bikes in Iceland, there aren't any strong forks either. We finally located a pair of very low quality, 27-inch forks. But this meant having to go without front brakes. I used it anyway with minimal problems except that with even the slightest load in my front panniers, I could push the handlebars about an inch before the wheel would react. Plus the slightest bump would send the front end into a shimmy that gave new meanings to the word control.

Our plan had called for setting off for the interior on the first full day of the trip but scrounging parts in the capital cost us two days plus the questionable forks killed that idea. We would be too far from civilization to risk a serious breakdown. We later found out that had we set out for the highlands (even with proper equipment), we would have risked getting lost or trapped in a blizzard. The island's center was still covered with snow and would remain impassable for two more months. And even then, it may have required a full support team. Oh well, maybe next time.

Although we weren't thrilled with the idea of spending more time in the city, it turned into an advantage. We kept meeting people who'd spent time in and around Iceland and who helped us plan our trip. One in particular, a German expatriate who thought we "...must be from the devil to ride bikes around Iceland...", told us more about Iceland in five minutes than we'd been able to find in four months of research back home. Consequently we changed plans again and set off for Thingvellir National Park.

In retrospect, I realize our adventure's primary adversary made its presence known the day that we arrived in Iceland. But we didn't realize that then. We simply assumed it was a temporary condition, an aberration in the normal scheme of things. We were wrong. Almost without exception, every time we loaded up the bikes, a dark cloud immediately formed overhead and the wind would blow from whatever direction the front wheel was pointed. We were human weather vanes in reverse. It happened when we first set up the bikes and it was with us as we headed away from the Youth Hostel on our first day of riding.

The day before had been fantastic - not



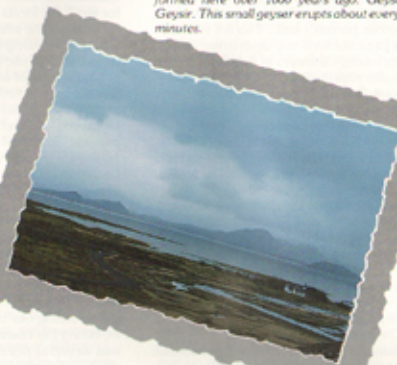
Kevin Christian



Harry Hart



Harry Hart



Clickwise left to right: Campsite on Thingvellir National Park, photographic proof that the sun does shine in Iceland. House hidden among boulders of lava. Thingvallavatn, Iceland's largest lake. The world's first parliament was formed here over 1000 years ago. Geyser at Geysir. This small geyser erupts about every four minutes.

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a cloud in the sky, and not enough wind to ripple the surface of the lake downtown. But as soon as we began to strap the panniers on, the sunshine slowly turned to drizzle and the pavement and the rain started while my jacket decided to turn home, leaving n... The first sign of civilization at Thingvellir National Park was a tiny store at the bottom of a short hill where we got out of the cold. The girl behind the counter looked at us as if we were dinosaurs. She seemed to us, she might as well have been never seen and she definitely like the lycra tight. Our helmets are on our hands together, a semblance of le look like recent loony bin. She finally got us out as soon as possible. We know the boxes on the counter behind

just couldn't read the labels to find out what kind they were. Proving hunger will always devise some way of communicating, we asked the girl to give us her favorite type. That turned out to be a pretty sage way of getting good food; we used those tactics throughout the rest of the trip. But it could get pretty funny in bakeries when the workers argued and debated over what tasted the best. "Yoo Hoo! Hai-loo! Come out of your tents!" woke us up around two o'clock that morning. We ignored it for a while but whoever it was persisted. "We know you are in there! Come out, come out!" Reluctantly dragging ourselves out into the daylight (yes, even at 2:00 am - daylight!), we found ourselves confronted by some high school girls who had just finished their finals and wanted us to celebrate with them. We finally convinced them that we really did need to sleep but that we would be by to see them later in the morning. Nine o'clock found us talking with a group of terribly hung over people struggling with their English. One of the girls, who had just returned from an evening with the local police over some misunderstanding, decided to have a bit of the hair of the dog and introduced us to akvitt. This homemade concoction should be avoided at all costs! Why these folks were looking so tattered became immediately obvious. We misread the map on our second day of riding and took a wrong turn. Our

supposed destination was Geysir, where we get the word geyser from. After a few hours of riding, we arrived at a small village and asked directions and found how far off course we really were. We then decided to visit Selloss, a city we'd never planned on going to. And once again, that worked out for the better for we soon met up with Johanna who had been a foreign exchange student in upstate New York. That in turn led to a wild evening in Icelandic bars. We had read that Icelanders were some of the heartiest revelers in the world but nothing could have prepared us for that night. Like most high-latitude countries, Iceland has an alcoholism problem. To combat this, they limit the alcohol content of their beers to about three percent. People get around that by drinking double vodkas straight up. Then there's their own version of schnapps called Brennivín, also known as "Black Death". We tasted it - once. I have no idea what it's made from but that is some serious liquor. The Icelanders tend to be very reserved but after a few drinks, all inhibitions are forgotten. And because neither Kevin nor I are blond haired and blue eyed, we stood out like beacons in the bar. We felt like celebrities. Everyone seemed to want to look at us and talk with us. Finally one of the bar goers looked at us and then blurted out (in perfectly slurred English) "Wait! Aren't you the two

who rode your bicycles into town this afternoon?" Evidently everyone in town had seen us ride in. In fact, a few cars full of villagers had earlier driven by our campsite time and time again to point, gawk, honk, and wave. By closing time, people were falling down staircases, dancing on tables, passing out at the bar, and doing all of the things drunks are infamous for. Those that had passed out were being dragged down the staircase and out onto the sidewalk to lie in the rain. Imagine the wildest party you've ever been to and you've got an idea of what it was like, but only an idea. The diehards wanted to keep the party going and drove around until they found us at Gudmundur's house returning the clothes he had lent us for the evening. Luckily his wife was sleeping so he sent the crew of crazies away. Gudmundur asked us how we had chosen Selloss to visit. We told him of our plan to go to Geysir and the wrong turn that changed it all. He then told us he was a bus driver for the local lines and that if we were at the bus station at eight, he would be driving the bus headed in that direction. That this very drunk man in front of us would be in less than six hours piloting a bus along a rough Icelandic dirt road bothered us more than a little but we told him we'd take him up on his offer anyway. We slept four hours, broke camp, and headed to the store where Johanna

worked. We found her looking as well as one can after a major battle with a bottle of vodka - miserable. She stored our gear and pointed us to the bus station where we learned that most of the crazies we had met the night before were bus drivers. Scary! But Gunne was nowhere to be found, he had called in sick for the day and another driver replaced him. The bus took us to Geysir and to Gullofoss, a nearby waterfall. Rail fell most of the day so seeing the country from a bus wasn't all that bad of a way to go. So far, every "bad" event had turned into something better. We had met Thoster in Reykjavik, which led us to a better route than we had planned on. Our wrong in turn led us to a wild night in Selloss, and we were able to see Geysir and Gullofoss anyway. None of our plans had included being as far south as we were but that in turn enabled us to take a ferry to Vestmannaeyjar, or the Westmann Islands. The Westmann Islands are home to Surtsey, one of the world's newest islands, the result of a undersea volcanic eruption. The island is a living laboratory on how life adapts to a new environment. Another island in the chain, Heimaey, was nearly destroyed twelve years ago when a hill near the center of town suddenly became an active volcano. The lava flow wiped out about a third of the town and threatened to close off the mouth of the harbor. Had that happened, the island chain's only safe harbor would have been destroyed. Like

most of the coastal villages, the local economy revolves around fishing and if they'd lost the harbor, the residents would have had to leave.

It was eerie seeing houses half-buried in lava right next to houses that had come within feet of being destroyed. Amazingly, there were no casualties during the eruption. Houses are being rebuilt and life goes on though now in an active volcano's shadow. The cone's rim is still steaming and although the surface heat feels good, it beties the intense heat below. Heimaey is definitely one of those places great to visit, but I wouldn't want to live there.

Cycling in Iceland means cycling in some strange conditions. The main battle is with the wind. We'd been warned about the erratic winds but figured that the odds would give us tailwinds at least part of the time. We ended up with a tailwind for about five miles one day. That was it. For our entire visit.

On our way out of Reykjavik, we had ridden into the wind. On our return from Heimaey, riding the opposite direction, we fought an even stronger blow. Adding to our struggle was the ever present rain driven through any opening in our rain gear. If we were to believe the wind chill chart on the back of our thermometer, we were effectively riding in the mid-teens. It seemed colder than that. Our wore Icelandic wool caps under our helmets while our faces were covered by

sunglasses and bandanas. Still, all our carefully chosen layers of clothing failed to seal out the arctic chill.

The temptation to stop was constant but the lava plains offered no shelter. The only place for a break from the cold was in the other person's draft. This led to a two-man pace line with one destination - the youth hostel's showers in Reykjavik. Our attitudes improved when we hit the main highway and we pushed the pace for the last ten miles, thoughts of hot showers leading us on like carrots. We were separated by a bus in the heart of the city and that started us on a wild game of cat and mouse through the traffic. The leader would squeeze between cars to the amazement of the drivers and pedestrians while the other would suddenly dart from behind. Passers-by would still be pointing and gawking at the first blur when the next flew by, leaving them standing with their jaws hanging down. The attention a cyclist gets in Iceland is almost enough to go there for that alone.

Despite all the hardships we encountered, Iceland is made for mountain bike touring with plenty of adventures to always lead one further into the country. The highlight ride of our trip started after our soak in the cave hot springs. We'd spent the day viewing the geological wonders of the north country and while soaking our aches away, decided to ride at night in the hope of avoiding the wind.

While we were deciding what to do,

some locals arrived. Most used the rope method of entry into the pool. We were all sitting on the ledges when suddenly, large bubbles floated to the water's surface, followed moments later by a figure gasping for air. If the locals hadn't remained so calm about the whole thing, we no doubt would have thought it was the Creature from the Icelandic Lagoon.

Another pool about 40 feet down the line was connected to the spring by an underwater tunnel. Two kids had put their face masks on and made the submarine passage - in almost total darkness. After taking a few breaths, they disappeared back into the rocks from which they had come, repeating the act a few minutes later. Kevin and I were glad they hadn't appeared when we were the only two in the pool. We probably would have scaled the walls. A few minutes after the kids' departure into the depths, we were headed for our bikes.

The weather had changed while we were soaking our bones. Clouds had set in, veiling the countryside in a light mist. It was eleven at night but the sun was still up. The dimmed lighting, the mist, and the lack of wind gave the ride a chilling mystique. Sights and sounds were muted. The mist turned into a drizzle that seemed to hang in the air, waiting for us to cut through it. Our senses were constantly deceived. We'd thought we were climbing a moderate grade until we heard the sound of water lapping on the shore of a

lake that appeared next to the road. We periodically lost sight of the shoreline but never rose above it.

Finally, the drizzle became heavier and we began to climb. We could see the road rising up in front of us but where it was heading was obscured by clouds. We climbed further into the mist while vague shapes of farmhouses loomed in the distance. Unidentifiable bird calls came out of the drizzle soon followed by unidentifiable birds. The entire scene seemed two dimensional. Our depth perception vanished as the clouds thickened and blocked out the midnight sun.

After a day of just kicking around the countryside, being on our bikes felt great. Muscles contentedly relaxed from the hot springs and the fact that this was the darkest that we'd seen it in almost two weeks added to our exhilaration. Much of the ride passed in an almost trance-like state. We just kept the crankarms turning, exchanging few words for miles at a time.

Had we been in a bus, we never would have known the experience of gliding through the silence, listening to faint cries of unseen birds lost in the fog, or watching subtle details in the shifting landscape. While drivers no doubt cursed the unpaired roads, we were thrilled by them. Cycling that night was an experience filled with lifelong memories; it was one of the best times either of us had ever had.

Our destination was a spot on the map called Laugar. At least, one of our maps had called it Laugar. The other showed no sign of civilization there at all while our camping guide listed a seasonal campsite in that general area. Whether the campsite was there or not didn't really matter; camping is allowed almost everywhere in Iceland (except in National Parks, strangely enough). But landowners do prefer that you ask their permission before pitching your tent.

The mist gradually thickened. Had it been falling out of the sky instead of just hanging there, we would have called it rain. After more downhill slides past ranchlands, we decided we'd gotten wet enough for one ride. If there were indeed a campsite, we estimated it would be a few miles ahead. If it wasn't, we'd camp anyway.

Just as the one map had said, there was the town. A large building that looked like a school or possibly a hotel stood off to the right. Since schoolyards are turned into campgrounds during the summer, we headed in that direction. It was past two in the morning so we looked around quietly. Then a car pulled up at the front of what turned out to be a hotel. We asked the driver if he knew where the campground was but he didn't seem to know. Much to our chagrin, he proceeded to wake up the hotel keeper and asked him where we could camp. The hotel keeper in turn pointed to the schoolyard, mumbled that it would be OK if we stayed there for the

night, then went inside.

We felt bad about disturbing him and figured he probably wasn't too happy about it either. But then a few minutes later, while we were setting up our tent, he came back outside, led us to the school building, and unlocked the door. He showed us the restroom and pointed out the hot water. The last thing we'd expected at two in the morning was hospitality and a hot shower and he then said we could spend the night for free! Then he shot a curious look towards our bikes, shook his head as if we were crazy, and disappeared back into the hotel.

Somewhere around the crack of noon we packed up our bags and set out for our last full day of riding before returning home. A long climb and descent led us to a starkly beautiful waterfall just off the road. The entire island would be a National Park in this country while the Icelanders seemed to take it all for granted. But like here, there are people who love the land and those who don't.

One of the most interesting people we met on the trip was an old man who ran the youth hostel in Hveragerdi. We called him Randy only because his real name was incomprehensible but started with something close to that. He'd been a sailor and a bus driver and almost everything else imaginable. He described with an obvious love for the land some of his favorite parts of the country and it seemed he'd seen almost all of it. His English was much better than our Icelandic but that didn't interfere with the pleasure of communicating with him. He gave us some black bread that had been cooked in ovens heated by geysers, and Kevin gave him his first taste of peanut butter. He's probably still got some stuck on the roof of his mouth.

Towards the end of that last day of cycling Iceland, we had the choice of taking the perimeter route along a peninsula or going up and over the mountain. The road over the top was still closed due to poor road conditions so naturally, over the hill we went.

Every turn on the ascent gave us a different perspective of the glacial valley we were climbing out of. Our tires sank into the dark red soil and around the scattered patches of snow as we slowly cranked our way to the top. Once on the ridge, we were treated to a splendid panorama of Eyjafjörður, Iceland's largest fjord. We could see all the way from the inlet, towards the arctic circle, to the city of Akureyri at the base, the end of our journey. From there, we would fly back to capital city and head for home.

We found perches on the ridge from which to contemplate the views and our incredible trip and feel the cold Arctic wind on our faces before the descent. We had ridden conservatively throughout the trip, afraid that my forks would decide to part company with the rest of the bike.

But now we faced our last Icelandic downhill. With few words between us, we set off down the hill. The loudest sound was the clunking of chains finding taller gears - at least up until the point that I heard a solid thud behind me, followed by the sound of something rolling over the dirt. Luckily it was only Kevin's front pannier that was scattered all over the hill, not Kevin himself.

Flying down that final hill on our fully loaded mountain bikes was incredible. We were brimming over with exhilaration at having fulfilled our quest. Months had been spent planning what had all started with a picture of an Icelandic beach and a late night phone call. Kevin and I had always talked about doing something together but for one reason or another, our plans had always fallen through. We'd been close friends for years but traveling together through that so often harsh and challenging environment had brought us even closer. There were times where one of us (usually me) would get so frustrated by the continual headwinds and rain that stopping and setting up camp and crawling into a sleeping bag was all the person wanted to do. Only the other's encouragement kept us forging onward.

Our two week stay was only a taste of what Iceland has to offer to anyone willing to venture off the paved roads. We saw most of what we had originally planned on but the more we travelled, the more we learned about this striking island. We never made it to the fjords in the north or the waterfalls in the south or countless other attractions. Nevertheless, we'd seen sights and had experiences we'll never forget.

Why had we chosen to spend our vacation in Iceland? Both of us would be asked that question for months after the trip. Neither of us could come up with much of an answer other than: "Why not?" But we never really tried too hard to find one either. There's just something about throwing your leg over a mountain bike and going somewhere you've never been before that can't be explained. You either understand or you don't. ★

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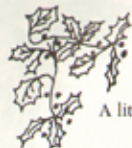
Christmas!

We here at Mountain Bike Magazine know how hard it is to pick just the right present for that favorite rider we all know and love. Our selections pictured below should give you a good start.



Gong in a concentric clockwise circle: Plastic lightweight fenders from Mt. Zefal. Pocket Pro Tool Wedge comes with New "T" Wrench set that stores extra sockets in handle or in precut foam inside zippered wedge pouch. Weissmüller Jet's handlebars. Watch for upcoming product review on this unique invention. Puma's new leather upper, plastic cleated sole cycling shoes. These look like a hot ticket to grip on and off the bike. Mountain Smith fanny pack, another of their great designs complete with compression straps, padded hip belt and lots of expandable room. Spenco Biosoft Gel Palm glove/mitten combination for all-

weather riding, thermalite and Hypora make this a water, wind and cold resistant winner. Myron Antonio 100% Acrylic jerseys. Comes in multi color combinations with rear pockets. O'Neil leather palm, padded top and mesh type thumb area. Fast looking and very functional. Bottle Buddies insulated carriers. Their makers assure us the larger size does fit a water bottle. Jones carbide/lens glasses. Virtually unbreakable, mega eye coverage. A nice color coordinated toe clips and grips. These look like a fun high quality alternative to basic black. BID seat post from those boys at Interloc. Watch for the developments coming out of their laboratory. Mt. Zefal high volume pumps. Finger exhausting yourself trying to get a tire to pressure. Rackmate splash guard. Mounts on bottom tube of front triangle to ward off water from front wheel. Muzzlers soft webbing toe clips. Moats Road Handles (see MBM, Nov., Dec 1985). Phil Wood Tenacious oil with rack to attach to frame. Thunderwear gloves blue and red. Great quality and protection from heavy brush to inclement weather. They also make positively neon regular cycling gloves. Rackmate rear rack splash-guard, much nicer than a folded newspaper. Assoc men's and women's Biosoft Gel saddles. More comfort for that special team. Always hair cleaner with solvent/lube canister attached. Blackburn poux-pouri of color water bottle racks. True crafted quality in wonderful hues to match or compliment any paint job.



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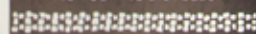
continue on into the night, we tuck ourselves in near the road, hidden by five-foot tall stalks of grass. Our tent floor compresses the vegetation, forming a surprisingly soft cushion over the lumpy lava.

Still further south, we come upon the Sports Hotel in Kailua where David, Mary Jo, and their two teen age daughters put up travelers in bunk rooms or private rooms at reasonable rates. The spacious kitchen is open to guests and is always blessed with a basket of fresh fruit from the garden. Sunsets are spectacular from the lanai while the outdoor showers and bubbling hot tub provide welcome relief to road weary muscles. Besides a volleyball court, there are ample grounds for children to explore. The owners are happy to serve as a basecamp for bicyclers and will store bike boxes and extra gear during your stay. They'll also pick you up at the airport if you call them in advance. David's a triathlete and world class cyclist with intimate knowledge of island roads and campsites. The hostel's warm, family atmosphere gave us a wonderful break from the ravages of the road and a place to exchange tales with fellow travelers.

Nearby Kealahou Bay and the historically famous "City of Refuge" are well known for great snorkeling. (The tide pools are wonderful for toddlers.) The roads are a treat to ride and the scenery green and soothing. There's also a natural foods co-op in Kealahou with a wide variety of trail foods at reasonable prices. You'll never starve on the Big Island as health food stores and

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supermarkets are frequent along your route. If asked politely, some locals will even be glad to share their garden's abundant produce with you.

(Warning: If you're traveling with an infant, check the sales as diapers can vary in price from \$11 to as high as \$18 for a package of medium size Huggies! Pay and Save in Kailua had the best everyday prices.)

The Big Island has far more miles of exploring than we were able to experience in one trip. Alison's presence led to quality rather than quantity. We concentrated on the Kona Coast because of its predictable winter sunshine. The mountain bikes were perfect for the trip. Shoulders along most paved roads were roomy enough for riding plus we were able to navigate rough lava roads to isolated beaches while fellow cyclists on lighter touring bikes had to walk. The eastern or Hilo side of the island is equally beautiful but wet. Roads to Volcanoe National Park are breathtaking but be sure to have adequate water and, believe it or not, be prepared for an occasional snow storm. Coming out of Colorado's winter, we opted for the warm, dry beaches.

Many of our trip's most rewarding moments were created by Alison. Watching her face whenever she saw things for the first time was an adventure in itself. We were forever learning from the innocent excitement of a child's first

discovery. Sea shells, sand castles, flowers, salt water, tide pools, scenery, animals, people, a tent with mom and dad, bicycle chain grease, spokes, sunsets, and full moons - all were part of our life on the road. Freedom from time and schedules and capturing the magic of the moment is inherent to traveling with kids.

Hawaii is a wonderfully forgiving place for bicycling with a baby. The hills we climbed, the fires we patched, setting up camp and cooking on the beach were enhanced by the presence of a little tan person who savored every waking moment...though sometimes the even slept. ★

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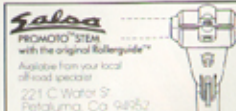
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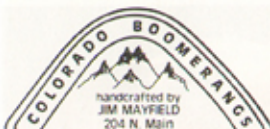
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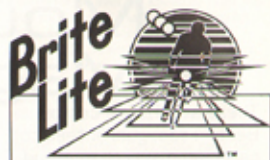
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swarm, a flotilla of rafts came by. Among the special attractions of Mountain Bike Weekend '86 were the combination bike/float tours. The participants on these trips cycled up the Lehigh Gorge to a point where they were met by a commercial rafting outfit which guided them down the river and through the rapids. While they enjoyed the whitewater their bicycles were transported back to town by truck.

Sunday brought another group tour and another new experience. This time we followed the path of the old Switchback Railroad. Built in 1827 to haul coal into Mauch Chunk, the Switchback was the first gravity railroad in the U.S. The rails and ties are gone now and what remains is a ten mile trail, straight as a Kansas highway, beneath a thick canopy of tree branches. In many places the trail narrows into a smooth single track that was mellow enough for a road bike. In fact, one of the locals who came along brought his ten-speed and said he uses thin tires there all the time. Because of its non-technical surface and gentle gradient, the Switchback would make an ideal ride for families with young children. Plus, the trail ends just a quarter mile from the Summit Hill store where everyone can munch out.

The tours at the Jim Thorpe festival were great. New places to ride always are. But the special satisfaction that came from the weekend was meeting other mountain bikers from various parts of the country and hearing about the places where they ride.

At times we formed some unlikely combinations. Consider Jay, Desmond and Cathy, three of the people I rode with. Jay was a tattooed electronics technician from Virginia whose hobbies were collecting knives and going on twenty mile rides through the swamp. In contrast, Desmond, a bicycle messenger from Washington, D.C. had done most of his fat tire cycling on city streets. Cathy, a Manhattan computer programmer, was probably the strongest woman cyclist I ever rode with. On weekends, she crosses the George Washington Bridge to traverse the dirt above the New Jersey Palisades.

I also met a pair of teenagers who said they were the only ones at their school who rode mountain bikes. This caused me to reflect further on the value of these festivals, especially in a young and slightly off-beat sport such as ours. I guess its just human nature to seek out kindred spirits.

If you'd like to be on the mailing list for next years gathering at Jim Thorpe write:

According to festival organizer Dave Bucher, most of the out and back rides will be replaced with circular routes. Also, Bucher is hoping to have a group campsite aspect of an already social event. ★

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Hills that in dry conditions would be climbed on the middle chain ring were either walked or ridden on the granny chain ring. It was just like riding on an over-grown golf course with people able to ride anywhere though lines tended to form where earlier racers had passed. But it wasn't muddy; that would come later in the race.

Visually, the scene was surreal. There we were riding over a carpet of deep, unbroken green while on both sides and over our heads was an almost solid curtain of green leaves, sporadically broken by brilliantly yellow or red autumn leaves. Cycling that same track during the height of the fall must be almost psychedelic, like riding through an Impressionist Van Gogh painting.

Eventually we exited the Birkebeiner Trail and followed a series of graveled county and rough logging roads. The best part of the course was about halfway along when we turned onto a single-track that climbed a short hill then dove down the back side over a series of small rolls. Everyone's energy immediately picked up as they swept down an amorphous tunnel of green. Odd shapes, like ghosts or whispers of smoke, weaved through the foliage.

The pace was fast and I knew I was making good time yet I completely lost all track of time and distance. I literally had no idea where I was. Fortunately every intersection and trail junction were amply flagged. I knew when I was half way only because I passed Martha Kennedy, last year's women's race winner, and she had an Avocet computer with which she kept track of her progress. That was right at the start of the mud. Nothing exceptionally bad, mind you, just good clean, slippery mud that introduced an element of challenge where normally riders spin as fast a cadence as they can maintain.

Aid stations, five altogether, were generously spread out over the course, each one manned with volunteers handing out orange slices, bananas, water, doughnuts, and lots of encouragement. Other than that though, from Hayward to Cable there was rarely a sign of civilization other than the roads and trails we raced over.

Men's over-all race winner and first in the 25-34 bracket was Scott Flanders of the Flanders Brothers Race Team in

2-45:09 for an average speed of 13.81 mph. 1985 race winner Mark Frise, riding for Montaneus, was second overall and second in 25-34 with a time of 2:48:41, a 13.52 average speed. (Race organizers had available computer print-outs of race results while racers were still coming in with updates available periodically. The print-outs listed each racer's overall placing, final time, class, class rank, bib number, full name, home town, zip, and average speed! That's what you call organization.) Eddie Hale was third overall and first in the 18-24 in 2:48:48. Dean Gies was fourth overall and third in the 25-34 age class while Mike Anderson was fifth overall and second in 18-24. Sixth overall and third in 18-24 was Donald Enters.

Men's 35-44 was won by Steve Brown in 2:59:32 (13th overall) followed by Jim Winter (20th) and Mark Keckesen (22nd). Men's masters (45+) was won by Mikee Zielke (55th), Dwight Beavers (70th) was second, and Patrick Lannin (74th) was third. Kimberlee Caledonia was the first woman (40th overall) and first in women's 18-24 with a time of 3:17:41 followed by 1985 winner Martha Kennedy (first 25-34) in 3:17:44. Diane Culp was third women's overall and second in 25-34.

Two hundred and fifty competitors eventually finished the Chequamegon 40. Running concurrent with it was the Short and Fat race, an 18-mile point to point course for those who preferred a shorter race. One hundred and thirty-three finished this race for a grand total of 381 finishers in the two races! That number is far and away the largest number of finishers I've yet heard of in any fat tire race.

The icing on Chequamegon's cake was the wonderfully entertaining banquet held Saturday night at the Lakewoods Resort, race headquarters. The lodge put out a huge and filling array of foods (as much as you could eat) followed by the awards ceremonies. The focus of the awards were the Montaneus aluminum mountain bikes presented to the men's and women's overall winners. (Besides donating those two bikes, American Manufacturing also gave away a third during a raffle for festival participants!) The banquet and following slide show all went off as smoothly as the entire weekend of events.

Like Joe said, this was one great event. Even the location, the Lakewoods Resort, was superb. The lodge sits on the shore of large lake from which locals report taking lots of very heavy fish. Boats were even available to rent if anyone tired of the biking events. The only sour note of the weekend was Sunday's overcast skies and subsequent rain that started during the Cable Critterium but even that didn't appear to dent anyone's spirits.

For information on next year's Festival, write Chequamegon Fat Tire Festival, Box 660, Cable, WI, 54821. ★

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poorly in. There was no doubt in anyone's mind that John would be a racer to contend with in the future. The overall women's competition was won by Cindy Whitehead racing for event sponsor Ross Bicycles.

I surprised myself each day by finishing in the top ten in the novice class. Nonetheless, the racing took its toll and I became weaker with each passing day. The end of the fourth day found Mike and I both exhausted and sore. I periodically reminded Mike of his initial reaction to the race a month earlier: "sounded like a piece of cake." The constant racing did wonders for our general riding techniques though and answered numerous questions we'd had about equipment. It also introduced us to an impressive array of colorful characters and free spirits.

Our gear once again stuffed into the car, we headed home full of post-race giddiness, vowing to return next year with a better tent and more training. I've participated in many races, from kayaking to skiing to motocross, but never before have I had more fun than I did in this earthy, spirited, fast-manuevering sport. It gave me back my youth. ★

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(Cunningham) — finished within seven minutes of each other for an unusually tight finish in such a long and challenging race. How they managed to cover all that ground that fast is still a mystery. Despite the small number of entrants, this was a great race over a classic course, one that could, in fact should, become one of the major races of the season, for recreational and hard-core racers.

For the second year in a row, there was no organized, overnight Pearl Pass Tour. The logistics of getting everyone's gear up to the campsite then hauling the riders and bikes back from Aspen is too much of a nightmare. Instead, those who so choose ride straight through to Aspen via Pearl Pass on Saturday and are then on their own to get back. It's still a classic ride though there's definitely not the same rich spirit the overnight tours were famous for. But this year saw the reintroduction of an overnight tour, sponsored by Mountain Bike Magazine.

Participants rode up Cement Creek, over Remo Divide, down into Spring Creek, over Italian Pass, and then on a single-track to a campground near the headwaters of the Taylor River. Everyone was able to ride fast and light since their gear was hauled to the campsite via a maintained gravel road. Upon arriving after some six hours of sustained cruising, it was time to relax around campfires, filling cups from a cold keg of beer and getting ready for Sunday's ride back to town. A fairly early start sent riders peddling up Taylor Pass (from where they could have swung into Aspen in two hours) and then along an old mining road around Taylor Peak. The jeep road turned into a little-used and at times difficult to follow single-track leading to Star Pass from where the trail drops into the Brush Creek drainage and the return to town.

The riding was incredible, some seventy-five miles altogether of pavement, graded roads, jeep tracks, double-tracks, and single-tracks. Each day's ride was about six to seven hours in length, including time spent enjoying the views. All who participated were ecstatic about the riding and especially the night spent along the Taylor River. There's nothing quite like a night of sitting around campfires, trading stories, laughing, and watching the stars after a superb day of riding to instill a powerful sense of well-being and camaraderie. The overnight tour was so successful that it'll be an annual event.

All who came to Fat Tire Bike Week '86, Crested Butte left full of the kind of feelings that made this the great event it used to be. The only thing lacking this year were so many of the folks who really got the business side of mountain biking going, the California frame builders and manufacturers' representatives and many of the top racers. But now that the word is

out that the events are once again up to the quality everyone expects, 1987 should witness a strong resurgence of interest in what really is the premier mountain biking event. If there was a shadow over this year's week, it was the rain and snow that fell immediately after most everyone's departure. Unfortunately snow in September isn't unusual and once again the question has to be asked whether Fat Tire Bike Week shouldn't be moved up in the calendar. A late August setting would probably insure a lack of snow, the spectacular wildflower displays Crested Butte is so famous for would still be out, and it would be even easier for many, especially those with families, to plan vacations around. But hey, no matter when it's held, the weather can't ever be guaranteed and the bottom line is that mountain biking in Crested Butte during Fat Tire Bike Week is still the happening event. ★

continued from page 19

on Durango and snow on the high peaks. Nevertheless, an impressive number of riders joined the tours despite the weather.

This year also marked the first time that the NORBA Observed Trials Championships were held concurrently with the racing. And what an event it was. The trials course was laid out by Specialized's Tom Hillyard and consisted of nothing but natural obstacles. This was far and away the most challenging course I've seen, a superb follow-up to the Colorado State Championship course set in Crested Butte the week before.

Kevin Norton retained the title he won so impressively in '85. If anything, his performance this year was even better than last year's, reflecting the experience he gained riding in European trials events this summer. But even more impressive than that was the tremendous improvement made by his competitors. And not just by the veterans from last year's events. This year found a score of new faces challenging Kevin. One of those was Ryan Young, an eighteen-year old new to bicycle trials but not to the concept of observed trials. He's currently the number two motorcycle trials rider in the country and number six in the world! Another tremendously impressive rider was fourteen-year old Andy Grayson. He finished third, only a couple of points behind Ryan.

Those three particularly astounded the spectators with their abilities and willingness to attempt seemingly impossible moves. Whether trials is something that attracts the recreational rider or not, just watching them can dramatically expand what someone had previously perceived as possible. As far as spectating is concerned, trials is far and away superior to the racing events and the Durango event was the best yet. ★

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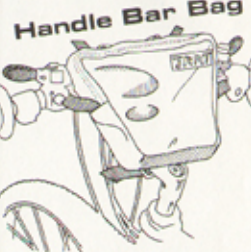
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