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Cycling: The Two-wheeled revolution

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Cycling:

In Portland, Gerald Isaac commutes to the H&S office, to clients and to law school on a motorcycle.

In Honolulu, Melinda Askew bought a ten-speed bicycle so she wouldn't be left behind when her fiancé went on weekend bike trips. Soon she was also riding it daily to work at H&S.

In Willoughby, Ohio, outside Cleveland, senior accountant Don Seaburn's trail-biking hobby has led him to become spokesman for a group of businessmen seeking city land where they can ride their "dirt" bikes, as they call them.

These and other H&S people are part of a phenomenon of the Seventies—some among millions of executives, housewives, secretaries and other adults who are riding out on two wheels for fun, exercise, convenience and economy.

Observers of the two-wheel revolution have talked mainly about the bicycle boom, simply because suddenly there are so many of them; but *H&S Reports* has discovered the parallel development that motorcycles are becoming acceptable. Though some still decry the hazards and others consider them unprofessional, motorcycles are no

longer merely the outrageous noisemakers of "The Wild Ones" or the stretched out eccentricities of "Easy Rider." For the experienced, they are practical, economical, fuel-saving vehicles (Gerald Isaac gets fifty miles a gallon with his Honda CB500). For the accomplished, they are sporting wheels to take on rough trails (Don Seaburn rides his dirt bike to unwind after a hard day's work).

As you might expect, neither bicycles nor motorcycles are America's favorite conveyance, though for the past two years consumers have bought more new bikes than new cars for the first time since World War I. By this year, 65 million bicycles were in use, compared with 93 million cars registered in the U.S.

The explanation for the bicycle's popularity lies in a combination of factors: our national preoccupation with physical fitness, our environmental concerns, our efforts to cope with the fuel shortage and, for some, a desire to be free from motorized living and in touch with elemental things. Even the commonplace Saturday trip from home to hardware store can become a small adventure for a cyclist, who has an unhurried closeup view of colorful autumn leaves and brilliant chrysanthemums.

The bicycle was not always looked upon so benignly, however. In the late nineteenth century, cycling had grown from a novelty for daredevils to a

Sunday sport for young people and courting couples, some of whom rented bikes at "wheeleries" to ride in parks. But many Americans still considered the bike an infernal machine. In an effort to change the public mind, one manufacturer put on a big publicity campaign with the message that bicycling induced health and happiness. He offered prizes to doctors who published articles endorsing that view.

Medical approbation, along with other favorable publicity and some aggressive merchandising, swayed the public, so that by 1896 demand for bicycles outstripped production. Soon after that, decline set in upon the bike industry because the automobile caught America's fancy in the twentieth century.

Then, in an example of the way history, too, goes in cycles, it was a doctor who helped stimulate the new bike boom. Paul Dudley White, the heart specialist who attended President Eisenhower, began evangelizing in the 1950s about the health-giving virtues of bike riding and followed his own prescription into his eighties.

So bicycles went from being balloon-tire, banana-seat toys for ten-year-olds to being trim, sophisticated, multi-gear wheels for adults. Some of them once again rent bikes and ride in the park. Christine Seibold, H&S office secretary in Garden City, likes cycling in Flushing Meadow Park, past the memories of the '64-'65 New York World's Fair.

The Two-Wheeled Revolution

By NANCY Q. KEEFE

As the bike acquired status, husbands and wives gave them to each other for presents. In Cincinnati, senior accountant Mark Nocito and his wife, Jane, have his and hers bikes, as do senior assistant Denis Hamilton and his wife, Marilyn.

Commuters, like Bill Rogers of the Chicago tax staff, strap briefcases to rear fender carriers and bicycle to suburban railroad stations. Others, like Sharon Leonard, Ventura County audit department secretary, bicycle right to the office. Observers say that Sharon's daily rounds on the eight-block trip from home to the office resemble a Perils-of-Pauline serial because she has to do battle with trees and utility poles that jump into her path, and slacks that get tangled in her chain.

Some have a smoother ride. A successful New York insurance man owns two bikes, one for home and one for his midtown Manhattan office so he can ride through traffic jams and reach more clients than he could by driving.

Shoppers are using their bikes for short errands because, as senior accountant Wanda Raglow of Cleveland observed, "It's certainly more economical and a lot less trouble parking than the car."

Weekend athletes are bicycling as a preparation for other sports. While waiting for the snow to fly, skiers keep their ski legs by frequent short wind sprints combined with slower cycling for

distance. Tennis players who bicycle to the court take care of both transportation and warm-up.

Parents have discovered that bicycling can be enjoyed by the whole family together, so it has become commonplace to see cars and campers bedecked with bikes as families drive out in search of the perfect cycling route.

Federal, state and local governments have responded to the bicycle constituency by diverting some highway funds to bike paths. Oregon is using one percent of its gasoline tax receipts and federal highway grants for bike and foot trails. Ohio has 500 miles of bikeways, part of which are in suburban Cleveland, where Wanda and Don Raglow enjoy the six-mile bike trail that winds through the woods of Rocky River Reservation. It is convenient enough for them to ride out on summer evenings with friends on a bike hike and picnic.

And somewhere along the bike paths, these lean, lightweight machines acquired a certain mystique of the sort that used to be associated with sports cars and sleek boats. Some brands even trade on the magic of a name: senior accountant Bob O'Connell of Garden City owns a Pierce Arrow.

One amateur cyclist with an old and unglamorous three-speed Raleigh discovered the mystical devotion within the fraternity upon joining an organized Sunday bike tour. She found that, while

keeping up with the pedaling wasn't difficult, keeping pace with the conversation of the truly dedicated about the merits of *dérailleur* gears over Sturmey Archers or Tokheims was impossible. Sometimes mystique turns into simple mystery. The ten-speed sprocket on a bike belonging to an anonymous H&S cyclist in Cincinnati developed a malfunction. The cyclist stood aside helplessly as a seven-year-old repaired it.

The bike's subtle mystique—or fad attraction—has a practical application, however. Trudy Smolnik, senior assistant in Cleveland, had been riding her five-speed Huffy just for recreation until last spring when she heard a radio appeal to join a twenty-five-mile bike-a-thon to benefit the National Association for Retarded Children. The idea was that cyclists would gather sponsors to donate money for each mile they rode. Trudy persevered over the entire route and reported in, exhausted but exhilarated, with a healthy fifty-five dollars for the fund.

Still, the benefits of cycling are mainly personal—a kind of recreation that one can enjoy in solitude or in a group, opportunities for a different kind of vacation and a sense of well-being from exercise in the open air.

face of the automobile and was resurrected in the 1960s. Handbooks on bicycling, available in any bookstore, are as numerous as spokes in a wheel.

From any of these you can learn about groups like Vermont Bicycle Touring, which conducts leisurely weekend and five-day tours for adults and families through the valleys of the Green Mountains with overnight stops at New England country inns.

If you want to travel on your own, you can get information on arrangements and fees for shipping your bike on a bus, train or plane. Alternatively, you can wheel your bike aboard ferry boats, which still provide the main access to some offshore islands. Many vacationers take bikes to Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket, Massachusetts, where cars are almost prohibitively expensive to operate, and to Fire Island, New York, where cars are simply prohibited.

Local organizations will supply information on bikeways, which are being set aside with increasing frequency. For instance, earlier this year, H&S in Phoenix reported that several staff members and many clients enjoyed evening and weekend cycling but disliked having to brave street traffic. They hoped for bikepaths. The city responded with an eleven-mile bike loop past a picturesque lake with a picnic area, which is a good idea. Cycling makes you hungry.

Advice from the experienced suggests starting a bike trip early in the day after a good breakfast, but not sitting down again to a big meal until the ride is over. Snacking on high-energy food keeps you going during the day. A recipe for a handy and tasty favorite, called "gorp" or "grop" (because you grope in your saddlebag for it) comes from a cookbook, *The Portable Feast*, by Diane D. MacMillan. Basic gorp is a mixture of equal parts of raisins, chocolate bits or carob and peanuts. Gourmet gorp has those three in addition to equal amounts of white raisins, almonds, dried apricots, macadamia nuts, walnuts and cashews. You needn't worry about the calories. Cycling will burn them off.

In fact, the very exertion it requires discourages some people. Ten-speeds help, but even they can't conquer all the hills. Sometimes, all but the purists would appreciate the boost that a small gas or electric engine could provide.

bikes firmly secured on the back). One night, Donna awoke to hear someone outside the camper say, 'Get your gun ready!' I immediately wanted to back the camper over the two thieves but decided (because of the fuel shortage) not to waste the gas—or have the thieves waste ammunition. The thieves pedaled away."

They now have brand new bikes and presumably plans for more touring. That kind of vacation swept across the U.S. and Canada this past summer and will probably attract even more adherents next year because returning cyclists spread enthusiasm.

Bike clubs all over the country are deluged with requests from cyclists who want to go on day trips, weekend tours and long adventures. *Sunset* magazine surveyed the West and found 190 such clubs operating, organizing tours that take cyclists along spectacular coastal routes to Big Sur or through the Avenue of the Giants in northern California on a road left to wander among the redwoods after a main highway was relocated.

To join a tour, you do not have to join a club, because most welcome newcomers without obligation. Information on clubs and trips, or on buying, riding and maintaining bikes in general, is available from the Bicycle Institute of America (122 E. 42nd St., New York 10017) or the League of American Wheelmen (not yet "Wheelpersons," at 3582 Sunnyview Ave., NE, Salem, Ore.). The league had 100,000 members in 1898, died in the

At the same time, there are hazards. Melinda Askew, file clerk at H&S in Honolulu, has come close to being sideswiped by cars several times. "Mostly I get honks and yells," she said. "Some people have yelled at me to get off the street and out of the way, but I feel that people's attitudes toward cycling have changed a lot since the energy crisis (the gas situation in Honolulu was bad) and I've seen a lot more bikes on the roads."

Melinda equipped her bike with a horn, partly to signal drivers and partly to honk back at jeerers. All bikes should have—and some states require—a horn or bell capable of giving a signal that can be heard 100 feet away.

Other hazards arise, not from opposition to bikes, but from their popularity. Thefts have soared, increasing as much as 200 percent in affluent communities where ten-speed models abound. The Insurance Information Institute estimates that one-fifth of the 15.3 million new bikes bought last year were replacements for stolen bikes. John and Donna Givens form part of the statistics.

John, senior assistant in Palm Beach, said he and his wife "were on a cross-country tour in our camper (with

Several such engines are being marketed as auxiliaries to pedals. One, called Chicken Power (because it adds the power of 650 chickens or one horse to a bike), can be engaged by a hand lever when the bicyclist cannot scale a hill on his own power. Unfortunately, small engines on bikes are illegal in some states because motor vehicle departments view them as motorcycles that do not meet legal safety standards. A movement is underway before some legislatures, however, to exempt bikes with motors under three horsepower.

If bicycle purists would scorn even a tiny engine, motorcyclists would scoff at it. They are the seekers of distance and speed beyond the range or power of a mere bicycle.

When Gerald Isaac, Portland tax senior, was invited to represent H&S on a panel at Northwest University's business administration conference last November, he nonchalantly traveled the 175 miles to Seattle by motorcycle. Even though a snowstorm forced a halt on the return trip, he is undeterred in his enthusiasm for motorcycle travel. "I'd like to tour the U.S. on the bike with my wife, Judy," he said.

Kerry Ahern, senior assistant in Cleveland, capitalized on already being in Europe, courtesy of the U.S. Navy, to tour the Continent by motorcycle. He bought a Triumph Bonneville, one of the biggest road bikes, and packed camping gear for six weeks of traveling and sightseeing. Despite one expensive though not dangerous collision, Kerry said, "I enjoyed the cycle so much that at the end of the trip I wondered if I really had purchased the cycle for the trip or planned the trip as an excuse to use the cycle. Back to the States, work and reality, I have put only 500 miles on the cycle in two years. Traveling was a pleasure on the big open roads of the Continent, but traffic is too heavy and hazardous in the city." So he is considering trading in the big Bonneville for a small trail bike, the kind that his Cleveland colleagues Don Seaburn and Dan Blake have.

Don, who regards trail biking as a hobby like golf or tennis, likes the challenge it offers him. "It requires more rider ability than bike performance," he said.

Dan said he preferred racing to "just riding around," and last year raced frequently on Sunday afternoons. This

year he has had to be content with occasional pleasure riding because he has been studying for the CPA exam. Though racing appears to be a dangerous sport, Dan said he thought competition under controlled conditions was much safer than riding on the highway among cars whose drivers were unused to cyclists.

Somewhat ruefully, Dan acknowledged that racing is an expensive hobby. His Penton competition bike cost around \$1,000 to buy and about twenty dollars a week to maintain.

How does an accountant charge cycling costs? According to a *Wall Street Journal* report, an energy analyst has pondered the problem. In a paper funded by the National Science Foundation, the analyst wondered whether to charge the cost of bike riding (including, say, the extra food to fuel the cyclist's muscles) to transportation, recreation or exercise. As a bike commuter he found his forty-minute trip sufficient exercise. When he had to join a car pool, he began swimming for exercise. From his experience he offered the hypothesis that "if the cyclist rides to work in lieu of jogging or something else, the extra time on the bicycle [or motorcycle] should be charged to exercise or recreation, not transportation."

It's a neat question. Accounting, like cycling, requires a delicate balance. □

Nancy Q. Keefe is a freelance writer who regularly pedals her three-speed Raleigh through the rolling hills of Westchester County, New York.