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Boston Bicycle



REFLECTOR

BACK IN THE SADDLE //////////////////////////////////////

By Darrah Bowden

For those of us who did not brave winter riding this year returning to our bikes a bit rusty on the finer points, here are some things to keep in mind as you get your wheels rolling again. Maybe you've had your bike since you were 12, or someone just gave it to you, or you found it in the trash, or you bought it for cheap from someone on Craigslist. Maybe you even bought it fairly recently at a bike shop. Whatever the case may be, this is a fine time to take stock of your bike and all its parts and see that everything is as it should be.

Before you ride:

- Air those tires! Fatter tires need air every couple of weeks and skinny ones should be pumped up every few days. Rolling around on too-soft tires will slow you down and increase your chances of getting a flat! Most bike shops will be happy to lend you a pump.

- Secure those wheels. This may seem to some like it goes without saying, but the quick release skewer that holds many bicycle wheels on is frequently misunderstood. If you have a glimmer of a doubt that you know how to properly operate a quick-release, please don't be afraid to ask.

- Are both your brakes working? Can you stop easily? Can you skid the rear wheel easily or stop the bike quickly with just the front brake? If not, get ye to a bike shop or have your bike savvy friend give you a hand to get your stoppers stopping properly.

- Anything else seem loose or not functioning properly? Most bikes have a little bit of rattle in them, but try to pay attention to any looseness and if it seems like it wasn't there yesterday, take it to your trusted bicycle mechanic or bike-smart

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JIM AND ME

The best part of my day gets better in the Springtime.

The potholes I know so intimately, the same Gillette employees sulking on an outdoors smoke break, the root bumps in the path - all looking a bit cheerier. Flowers and leaves are bursting out. It smells like spring. I ride faster, and the air is invigorating.

The first glove-less day and other annual milestones feel great; Bostonians snap out of a winter laze. Familiar faces buzz by me on the Southwest Corridor again. I haven't seen many of these people since October: iPod girl with milk crate, my dear stone-faced messenger with a paper cup of coffee (it's fun to try to crack him into a smile), really tall and upright guy with orange reflector vest, my archaeology professor (remember me?), and my favorite, Jim (I even made up a name for him, and I like to think he is a Capricorn too).


The only thing I really know about these people is that we have this bike-ride thing in common, and it inspires us to smile at each other in unspoken

acknowledgement - a camaraderie, even if I will probably never speak a word to them.

Last May I had a rare chance to engage with some brief chats at the Ruggles stoplight on this path, inviting passersby to a bike advocacy forum. The flyer advertised discussions concerning issues Boston cyclists face and work being done to improve the situation. Some reactions took me by surprise. People - cyclists - that I see riding every day for transportation in their city living, said "oh, I'm not a cyclist."

This is more than a matter of semantics. Fear of the word cyclist (probably due to associations with spandex and odometers) isolates people who should be coming together, especially in the cold climate of Boston (and I don't mean the weather).

We love flying around on this simple contraption (as on page 6, some literally fly); UNITE! Check out our website, and send us some feedback. This publication can be what you make it.

- Jasmine 

I'm not drunk, I'm avoiding potholes
BostonBiker.org

NEED A HELMET? GO TO H.E.L.L.

By Nadav Carmel

Be it due to a pothole or to a collision, any serious cyclist has either been in or knows someone who has been in a serious crash. Though you wouldn't guess from the spate of bicycling deaths in Boston last year, Massachusetts is actually on par with the national average as far as bicycle fatality and hospitalization statistics go. Of course, this is no consolation to the family and friends of those deadly statistics.

After cars killed two of his friends within one month of each other last spring,

though, Zack Smith was able to channel his grief into something positive. Shortly afterward, flyers began appearing around town bearing the slain cyclists' pictures and the acronym "HELL." It seemed tasteless to some, but it got attention, and "they would have found it funny," Zack says. And given that Helping Everyone Live Longer (HELL), the organization he runs out of his bedroom, has distributed

over 300 free helmets to anyone who asks, you can't really argue.


"If you actually care about the people in your life who love you, you will wake up and start wearing a helmet," Zack says. "It's not that difficult."

Currently a full-time student, Zack sees HELL growing exponentially after he graduates, when he can

"If you actually care about the people in your life who love you, you will wake up and start wearing a helmet."

incorporate as a 501(c)3 non-profit and begin fundraising. For now, HELL's entire budget comes from donation jars at bike-friendly businesses, benefit

concerts, and the minimal fee Zack charges for custom painting some helmets. But "as long as we have \$20 to our name," he says, "that's a helmet we can give to somebody who needs it."

If you'd like to contribute to HELL, request a helmet, or find out more, please visit www.hellmets.org 

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jasmine@bostonreflector.com

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Consider a man riding a bicycle. Whoever he is, we can say three things about him. We know he got on the bicycle and started to move. We know that at some point he will stop and get off. Most important of all, we know that if at any point between the beginning and the end of his journey he stops moving and does not get off the bicycle he will fall off it. That is a metaphor for the journey through life of any living thing, and I think of any society of living things. ~William Golding



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BRINGING THE BICYCLE BACK TO DORCHESTER: A TALE OF BICYCLE REVOLUTION

by Shane Jordan

"Are you all lost?" Clearly people were not used to seeing 20 people on bicycles riding in a single file line down Dot Ave. Our red blinking lights strung out down the road like a moving dance party. We were a group of normal people, but to many we were doing something highly unusual. Dot Bike formed with a simple mission, bring the bicycle back to Dorchester, and make the lives of the cyclists already here better.

Our most successful actions so far have been our monthly "Dot Bike ride home" rides.

The second Wednesday of every month you will find Dorchester bound cyclists meeting at the fountain in the Boston commons at 5:30pm.

Twice we have convoyed down Dot Ave. The first time we were met with stares, odd glances and worried looks. What were those crazy people on bicycles doing? The second time we were met with the same confused looks, but we were also met with a couple smiles, even some waves, and one salute. Could the simple act of riding your bicycle start a revolution in the way people think about transportation? We sure hope so.

Dorchester (Dot) is one of the largest neighborhoods in Boston, yet it is one of the least served areas as far as bicycle infrastructure is con-

cerned. Dot bike has been working with Nicole Freedman from the Mayor's office to request bicycle racks for Dot Ave and other locations. For so long there was no voice for cyclists in Dorchester; Dot Bike is trying to become that voice. If you ride a bicycle in or through Dorchester, consider

joining us. Add your voice to ours and help us bring the bicycle back to Dot.

DOT is one of the largest neighborhoods in Boston, yet it is one of the least served areas as far as bicycle infrastructure is concerned.

For more information and to join our mailing list, please visit DotBike.org



BIKES NOT BOMBS

11

tainer shipments are planned to send 5,000 donated bikes, which would have rolled into the Massachusetts waste-stream!

• In January, BNB shipped 542 bikes with parts and frames to Maya Pedal in Guatemala. This organization provides pedal-powered machines (bicimáquinas) like grain grinders or water pumps at low costs, directly addressing economic needs of rural people while supporting environmentally sustainable development. www.mayapedal.org

• Back in Boston, students in the Earn-A-Bike Program, are also learning about pedal-power machines, in addition to learning the skills to be safe and self-sufficient urban cyclists, as part of a

new Global Justice curriculum.

• February's shipment sent bikes to to Tumaini Cycles in Arusha, Tanzania, which provides vocational training in bicycle maintenance and repair, including employment in the shop, business learning, and help to students in starting their own micro-en-

terprise bike businesses. "Tumaini" means "hope" in Swahili, and each year these programs serve about 200 young people orphaned by HIV/AIDS. Traditionally, BNBs goal is to start one new program each year, but in '08, they're able to start two.

The Bike-A-Thon on June 8 is the biggest fundraiser of the year for BNB, and every rider makes a big difference! Register NOW on the website or call 617-522-0222.

• On April 26, BNB volunteers packed tools, two custom benches, and 425 bikes into a 40 foot shipping container. Once in Ghana, doors and windows will be cut in the metal sides, so that it becomes part of the structure of the new workshop. The shop is being designed to fit the reach of mechanics in wheelchairs and will employ a full staff of disabled mechanics as a part of Emmanuel Yeboah's new project. (Check out the documentary [narrated by Oprah] Emmanuel's Gift).

• The BNB Green Roots Festival is the after-party for the ride, and it is open to the public from Noon-5:30 pm: food, live music, and thoughtful content including workshops and panel discussions on themes of water, home-improvement, urban toxins, local food, and the environmental costs of war. Best-selling author Bill McKibben is keynote speaker! Stoney Brook on the Southwest Corridor, J.P.



Clockwise, from left: "Shop in a Can", bound for Accra! photo by Kit Transue; Bike-A-Thon; Earn-A-Bike in Ghana, photo by Emily Lin.



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SHORT UPDATE FROM

Bikes Not Bombs promotes bicycle technology as a concrete alternative to war and environmental destruction. Based in Boston for 24 years, this world renown organization is busier than ever. Its local and international work empowers individuals and communities with programs based around the most efficient machine ever invented, which invariably turns up in dusty basements and dumps... Almost entirely by volunteer labor, well over 5,000 of these bikes will be processed by BNB and geared up for a new life. Get involved; volunteer nights are every Wednesday, 7-10pm, but there are many ways to plug in. One way: as a grassroots organization, BNB needs cash, and even if you don't have any yourself, you can help by riding in the Bike-A-Thon!

- 2008 will be the biggest year yet for BNB's international programs, partnering with grassroots organizations in the Global South and providing used bikes and technical assistance to support micro-enterprise bike businesses, facility community development, and help build sustainable transportation infrastructure. This year, 10 con-



Kit Transue

DOT 1889 A policeman's quote from a story about how local bicyclists were more interested in racing than pleasure riding in Franklin Park, from the *Dorchester Beacon*, October 19, 1889 (shortly after the invention of the safety bicycle—roughly the kind we have today).

"Those cranks are doing bicycle riders a great deal of harm and unless they stop racing, the bicycle riders are apt to be put out of the park limits. This business has got to be stopped and it is for the interest of the wheelmen that an end should be put to it before a formal complaint is forwarded to the park commissioners. I don't object to bicycles if they are ridden at an ordinary rate of speed, but if the boys don't stop racing I shall make a vigorous kick that will be felt."



Dot Bike does Franklin Park

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BACK IN THE SADDLE continued

pal to check out. Loose parts wear out faster and can lead to bigger problems.

-Lights! At night (and even at other times of limited visibility, such as foggy or dark days), lights are the law. Most bike accidents happen when visibility is poor. The brighter your lights are, the more visible you are, and it is your responsibility to make yourself as bright as possible. Check that your lights are aimed so that cars, pedestrians, and other cyclists have the best chance of seeing you. Remember, white light forward, a red light in back. A light that is running out of batteries, ob-

scured by a bag or clothing, or pointing at the sky or at the ground won't help you--no excuses!

- Last but not least, the helmet: Helmets are not required by law if you're older than 16. Law or no law, until all Boston drivers are looking out carefully for bicycles on the road, it is definitely worth it to have a helmet properly fitted on your valuable head. One last tip: If your helmet is more than five years old, it might be worth checking out the new helmet technology: today's helmets fit better and more comfortably than ever.



EVENTS

BAY STATE BIKE WEEK May 12 - 18 Did you know May is National Bike Month? Visit bay-statebikeweek.org to find out how you can join in on the festivities. Events are free, sign up today.

BOSTON MASSIVE May 17. BBMA.org All day & all night partying, racing, dancing, drinking, freestyling extravaganza. Race for your chance to win one of 5 round trip airline tickets to the 2008 NACCC in Chicago!

(Top male/female/out of town) **TRICK FOR TREAT** finals will also be held at the afterparty, where the best fixed gear freestyler will win \$500 cold hard cash!

GEEKHOUSE OPEN HOUSE May 18th 2pm-8pm at the new shop: 15 West Sorrento St, Allston

ONGOING

BOSTONFIXED GROUP RIDES WEDNESDAYS Leave from the Christian Science Center at 8PM. 175 Huntington Ave, Boston. bostonfixed.us/forum

CYCLISTAS WEDNESDAYS Women cyclists unite! Group rides weekly, as well as brunch-a-thons and craft nights. www.myspace.com/bostonbikeblog

BIKE POLO SUNDAYS Games every week at 2PM in Allston, weeknight locations vary. bostonbikepolo.com

BOLDSPRINTS Simulated track sprints, indoors! Visit bostonsprints.bostonbiker.org for upcoming dates.



PROFILE: SARAH SALTER

Profiled by Mary Flatley

BBR: How long have you been biking in Boston?

SS: Since 1958, my first year at university here.

BBR: What is your favorite thing about Boston riding?

SS: The city is so accessible by bike - It is compact, and mostly flat, so it is quick to get from Dorchester to JP to Somerville as well as around Boston itself.

BBR: What is your least favorite?

SS: Potholes and grates that are placed so that the long slots are parallel my bike tires, not at right angles.

BBR: What are you riding?

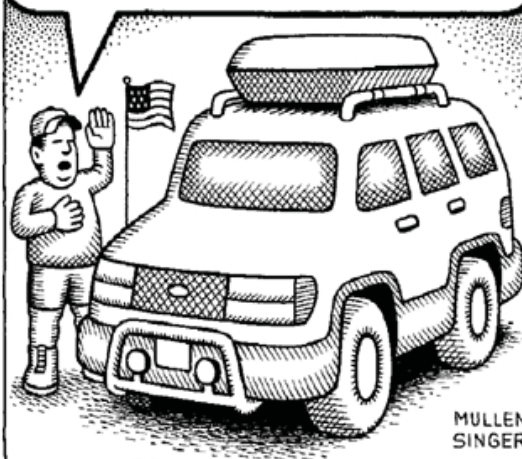
SS: TREK Coaster, Mayor Menino's model - it's an old folks bike with automatic gear shifting, a coaster brake, and an upright riding position.



NO EXIT

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- Susan B. Anthony 1896



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PROFILE: JESSICA KUH

Profiled by Mary Flatley

BBR: Why do you ride a bike?

JK: I bike ride because it's so much more fun than driving. There are fewer road rage issues and much less aggravation overall. There is a greater sense of freedom and mobility riding through the city as opposed to driving -- you generally get where you're going faster or as fast as a car, you can hop on and off your bike easily to check things out if you pass by something interesting. You don't mind red lights -- they give you a breather; it feels good to move through the fresh air.

BBR: How often do you ride?

“I hope to keep biking throughout my entire pregnancy...I if it gets to the point where it's not fun, then I'll stop.”

JK: I commute to the school where I teach every day, about 4 miles each way, and I also ride around on weekends to visit friends or do errands. Icy roads or temperatures below about 20 deter me from riding. That and severe morning sickness which pretty much deterred me from wanting to do anything at all

for a while except lying on my couch ...

BBR: How has your riding changed since you've been pregnant?

JK: Since I've been pregnant, I feel that I'm a little bit more paranoid and hyper-vigilant as I ride. I've always been a

defensive cyclist, but now I feel like the stakes are higher, so I'm more wary. I watch even more care-

fully than before for people opening car doors, drivers making right hand turns in front of me, and the behavior of car drivers in general. I try to be very visible making turn signals, and I also make eye contact whenever possible. I think the crucial thing is that drivers see me. Even if they are annoyed that I'm in their way, they will avoid me as long as they know I'm there.

The other difference in my riding is that since I've gotten on the larger side, my husband outfitted me with a bike on which I am sitting more upright. That way my legs aren't colliding with my belly with each pedal stroke. Much better!

BBR: How long into your pregnancy do you plan on riding?

JK: I hope to keep biking throughout my entire pregnancy. I've never been pregnant before, and I'm told it gets a little awkward towards the end...but I have no plans to stop cycling at any particular time. If it gets to the point where it's not fun, then I'll stop.



ASTHMA + BICYCLING = POSSIBLE

by Raj Bhatt

Springtime is here. For most of us this means more opportunities to bike. For a fewer number of us, this also means increased potential for an asthma attack triggered by seasonal allergies.

Asthma is basically an affliction that causes the inflammation of the bronchial lining inside the lungs, making breathing very arduous. Common symptoms are shortness of breath, wheezing, coughing fits, and feeling worn down. An asthma attack occurs when the muscles around the chest enter into fits of what is known as bronchospasms. For me, it feels like someone digging their knuckles into my chest. Other symptoms are not as apparent, such as difficulty sleeping and lack of focus throughout the day.

I have to use my inhaler every day that I ride my bicycle. It's worth it. With the right precautions, bicycling is one of the few activities I can do that allows me to get some cardiovascular exercise without having to worry about getting an asthma attack that could leave me in the hospital or even worse.

Allergies are just one of the triggers of asthma. Other triggers include sickness like influenza, tobacco smoke and other heavy air particulates. In a big city like Boston, pollution can be a concern to those afflicted with asthma in addition to the regular fare of pollen and dust.

After the diagnosis, bicycling was recommended because it is an activity that does not require sudden changes in movement which can jostle the bronchial lining. Sports like soccer, football or basketball can be very dangerous to an asthma sufferer because of the sudden and often unexpected nature of the sport and possible physical contact.

If you think you might have asthma or if you do have asthma and are looking for a new activity, check with your doctor before you decide whether bicycling is okay for you.

Bicycling is actually a really good activity for people who suffer from asthma because it is repetitive and allows the participant to maintain a steady breathing rhythm. Maintaining a steady breathing rhythm is a good way to control asthma.



The asthma rates in Dorchester and Roxbury are 178% higher than the state average. The EPA has targeted asthma in Boston, particularly among low-income children of color in the heart of the city, through its Urban Environmental Initiative. (Urban Environmental Initiative, EPA)

The Boston Urban Asthma Coalition facilitates a network of organizations and communities working to combat asthma in Boston. Visit their website BUAC.org for more information.

Photo below by Sarah Beth Glicksteen, © 2008



TO THE MAX

BBR interviews Max Lee, owner of MEL'S Hyde Park Bike Shop and local favorite.

BBR: When did you start riding a bicycle?

Max: It's been longer than I can remember. I do remember the first time I rode without training wheels though...it was my sister's birthday party. I was riding a 16" wheel bike and we lived on a dead end street. I rolled out of the driveway as my father was pulling the car towards it. I scraped against the side of the car screaming, "I'm riding!"

BBR: What kind of bicycle do you ride? What kind of riding do you do?

Max: I've always been jumping curbs since my first BMX bike...and destroying wheels. The first bike I built myself was a road racing bike in the Bikes Not Bombs Earn-A-Bike program. Now I ride BMX, trials and mountain bikes, commute to work and around town by bike. I also ride a unicycle. Mostly BMX though.

BBR: When did you get serious about riding BMX?

Max: Probably in '95 or '96. I started riding with some folks in downtown Boston. There was a messenger ride, the Hell's Bells Ride, organized by Cave Dave.* He brought bells for everyone on the ride. There were all kinds of bikes – tall bikes, choppers, fixed gears, BMX. We rode from Back Bay Bikes to the arboretum and had a cookout with grills that had been carried on a few of the bikes. After that some friends and I started a regular BMX ride around downtown Boston called the Hell's Bells BMX ride. That's when I started getting serious about urban BMX riding.



Max with Máximo Pepín, BNB Youth Instructor

BBR: When did you start fixing bikes?

Max: In the early 90's. At first it was mostly "backyard mechanics," with a pair of vise grips. My friends and I would switch parts from one bike to another. Then one summer ('93) my mother told me I wasn't going to summer camp and that I had to find a job. That's when I called Ferris Wheels. Jeff Ferris referred me to BNB's Earn-A-Bike program. After taking the course, I got a job at Ferris Wheels and further mechanics training from the BNB Vocational Training program.

BBR: When did you decide you wanted to open your own bicycle shop?

Max: Before I went to BNB or Ferris Wheels. When I first started fixing bikes, I liked it so much I knew this was what I wanted to do.

BBR: How has it been to run your own shop?

Max: It's been an adventure. It has been everything I expected and nothing at all like I expected at the same time. I'm still working towards the bike shop of my dreams and I'm getting there...slowly.

BBR: How long has MEL's been open?

Max: 3 years so far. I bought the shop from someone I knew who'd been in the location for 5 years. I knew him from riding BMX at the Hyde Park Skate park. One day at the park he said, "I'm thinking of selling the shop." And as I dropped into the bowl I said, "sounds great!" We worked out the details later, but the rest is history.

BBR: Describe MEL's for folks who haven't been there.

Max: It is currently a work in progress. I want to have a shop where I sell products you can't find elsewhere – unicycles, trials bikes, recumbents, tandems even. I also want to sell what I like and use – BMX. I currently specialize in BMX and skateboards and doing repairs of all types. I run a full service repair shop. I sell new and used bicycles. I sell skateboards and accessories, low-rider bicycles, custom low-rider parts (think carbon fiber fenders and chainguards) and accessories, BMX, Freestyle and trials frames, accessories and custom builds. I stock Kona hybrids and I can order any bike that Kona makes.

BBR: Do you have any exciting events planned for the summer for you or MEL's?

Max: I am planning a BMX/Skate Jam and fundraiser in Hyde Park Square for Bikes Not Bombs this summer. Stop by the shop for more information. I'll also be at the BNB Bike-A-Thon helping in some capacity, and possibly setting up some ramps and

*Cave Dave Martinez says: "All love for Hell's Bells goes to Bicycle Beth and Aaron G. Fannon."

the BNB Green Roots Festival.

BBR: Lastly and maybe most important, why do you ride bikes?

Max: There are probably three main reasons. Here they are in the order that I figured them out... 1. The first thing I got from riding a bicycle was independence.

You don't have to wait for the train or for someone to give you a ride where you are going. You also don't have to pay like you would if you were buying gas or riding the T. 2. Riding bikes is healthy. I get a lot of exercise whether I'm riding to work or the store or going downtown to ride

BMX. 3. After getting involved with Bikes Not Bombs I realized that bikes are also environmentally conscious. I use a bike for most trips that I make around town and a bike doesn't give off any emissions. I think the overall reason I ride is because it is fun. I wouldn't do it if I wasn't having fun. And the bike community is like a family. How many people wave to you just because you are both driving in a car?

MEL'S HYDE PARK BIKE SHOP is located at 74 Fairmount Avenue, Hyde Park, MA, and can be reached at 617-361-3441 or online at www.mels-bikeshop.com



At Spontaneous Celebrations' Wake Up the Earth Festival in JP