

FREE



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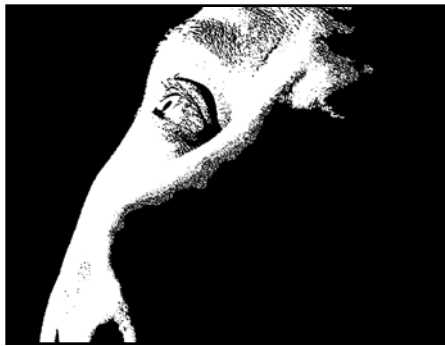
* Telepathic Yak Fur pg. 15

**HEY LADY, NEED
SOME HELP WITH
THAT CASE OF BEER?**

Page 8



From the Editor



Your Junk Pile, My Space Fortress

by Wiley Davis

Morning had barely happened and a mist drifted around the bases of the pine trees. In the slim light the forest seemed to press down on us slightly but there were three of us and that amplified our bravery.

Jake had an alarm clock and we'd set it for five in the morning. That in itself was an element which added a certain mystique to our small expedition. When you're seven years old, you don't have very many peers who own alarm clocks. Watches, certainly, but alarm clocks belonged to a different world where things happened of such immense import that special devices had been developed to ensure that they happened on time. We grasped these technical devices as part of a parallel universe with more dangerous undercurrents than our own but we hadn't yet conjured the real reason our parents needed alarm clocks... they could depend on no one but themselves to wake up. We'd gathered around the clock, debating the time to set, and Jake worked the buttons like an amateur bomb-maker, pressing and turning each knob with uncertain seriousness while we tried to talk him through the procedure. Once set, it sat there as we slept, waiting to explode us into wakefulness. But its real mission had already been accomplished, rendering our expedition vital with the simple addition of a time constraint.

The expedition itself was direct in its aim. We would set out from Jake's house (a log cabin, actually) and walk into the woods. We'd done this before, of course, but this time our plan was to go farther than we'd ever gone before. That was it. Go farther. How many expeditions contain this simple objective at their core? All of them, really. They get gussied up, but going farther is the essence of every

important human endeavor that I can think of. Some folks go for speed, but even going faster is simply a variant of going farther.

And so we set out into the morning with its strange, cold light, and we walked through the woods with a silent, but giddy, cheer that diminished as we approached

We pressed into the woods bluntly, but soon our feet snapped fewer twigs and we passed through the strange forest like a slow arrow.

the terminus of our experience. Nothing marked the spot, not even a distinguished physical feature and certainly no flag or brass marker. But we knew the place and slowed as we approached it. We crossed the line without speaking and for some reason our walk, which had been widely spaced and side-by-side, became close and single file. We pressed into the woods bluntly, but soon our feet snapped fewer twigs and we passed through the strange forest like a slow arrow. Gentle ridge after gentle ridge passed beneath us and I be-

gan to worry about finding our way home. Then we made our giant discovery.

Cresting a small hill, we walked upon a clearing in the trees and found the wreckage of an alien spacecraft... or SpaceLab (and we without our helmets). The clearing held a swath of metal components. White enameled steel poked up

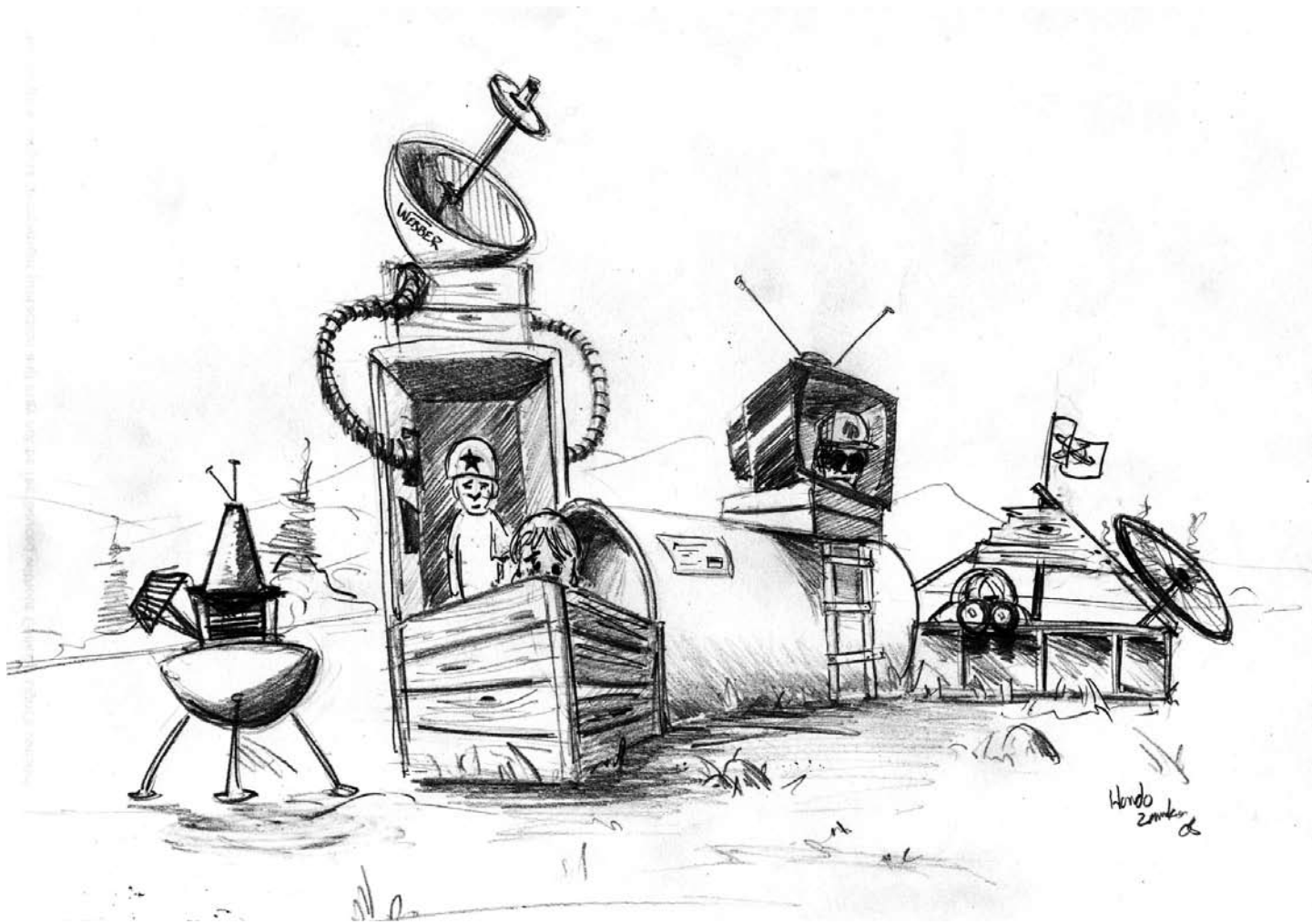
from tall weeds. Grey boxes festooned with red and green wires snaked along the ground. Rust covered bare metal and we approached with the extreme caution such a burial ground of foreign technology demanded.

We sat and watched until it was clear nothing lurked. We approached slowly, two-fingered flinging open of hatches. Jake kicked a box filled with wires and nothing dire came of it. Our caution became curiosity and our curiosity turned to excitement over our discovery. Soon we

had laid claim. We pushed the metal boxes into new formations, our shoes carving tracks in the dirt while we pushed with our backs. Our space fortress was coming together. How would we announce our discovery at school? Our alien/Aztec/dinosaur-bone-filled clearing of pure adventure had to be declared. And so we spent that day and many more. Then someone asked the question: "How many more of these might be out there?" And of course, you know what that led to.

We set out in search of more illegal appliance dumping grounds, the kind that rural patches the world over contain. The type of thing universally decried in the adult world, we sought them out as if they were important archeological treasures, which they were.

The point? Well, it's simple. What you think is terrible might actually be grand. What seems a step backward could be a step forward if you approach it with the right kind of head. That dusty bike hanging in your garage just might make a space fortress out of your commute. And once you start, who's to say how many more might be out there? ☺



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This is Gus. He came close to winning an alleycat on his pink Electra cruiser. Half-way through, half his handlebar broke off. He didn't let that stop him. Gus is a real go-getter. He may even have been a Boy Scout. He looks Adversity in the eye and says, "Hello Adversity. Nice to have your company."



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*WELL, MAYBE NOT LOGS.

by David Cain

Where the ankle meets the chain: Cycle clothing that doesn't sacrifice style

In the US, it has always been a little unclear; from sports machine to children's toy, to weekend recreation, we've only just begun to see the bicycle front and center as an elegant and powerful tool that provides efficient transportation incorporating civility, speed, economy and fun. Rather than an add-on to our lives, it can hold a primary place in our daily activities. In other less affluent car-centric cultures, bikes have long been a necessity to accomplish the needs of daily life. Here in the US, the automobile took us far away from the utility of cycling. But the evolutionary vision of what a bike can be is still forming in the collective mind of today's culture and I'd say the future looks good. The fact that you are reading this magazine attests to that. It follows that as our bikes evolve toward a closer reflection of our needs and values, so to should what we wear on our bikes. Knickers, breeks, knickerbockers, plus fours, $\frac{3}{4}$ -length pants, pedal pushers, and capri's—whatever you call them—they are all some variation of the baggy knee trousers worn by a large part of the population in the early 20th century—sportsmen of all stripes, average citizens, newspaper boys. They were everywhere. Women of the late 19th century took to wearing bloomers, a related form of knickers, in large part so that they could ride—what else—the bicycle, which was becoming a fashionable pursuit. They played a key role in the struggle for the emancipation of women. Alas, over time, knickers fell out of fashion and slowly disappeared from regular use. Happily, there are indicators that the return of the knicker is close at hand. Slightly under the radar of cycling-culture-at-large, you'll find a renewed interest in these distinct and functional pants that have advantages uniquely suited to today's cyclist.

"American transportation cycling is still happening," says Patrick Barber, resident of Portland, OR and proponent of functional, civilized cycling attire. "We're kind of rebuilding. Our bikes don't accommodate street clothing. You have to accommodate somehow and the biggest stress point is where the ankle meets the chain. Knickers that look good and have a cross function are a great step in the right direction."

Knickers for him are "not about resurrecting a tradition," so much as "taking a bunch of old ones and shoving them together" to meet the needs of contemporary cycling here in the United States. Knickers simplify the relationship between you, your bike and your clothes. They also bring sensible cycle clothing into the realm of daily activity. Looking at mainstream images of cycling you might get the impression that spandex and lycra are prerequisites to ride a bike. These sleek outfits are as much about creating a fantasy of fitness and speed as they are about function, and they appear to my eye as a uniform—one that separates the wearer from daily life. Ninety-nine percent of us are not racers and never will be and don't need that sort of get-up to be ready to ride a bike. It's nice to be able to just get on your bike and go and knickers are really helpful in this respect. True, you can just roll up your pant leg or tuck it into your sock to keep clear of the chain, but that seems like coping; a solution that isn't ideal.

These days wool is almost exclusively what I wear to ride, and I don't think you'd know me from the next person on the street. It feels good to comfortably fit in with my fellow citizens. Of course, not all knickers are the same. Like any clothing, some will be more or less your style, and it might be worth considering this if you are a little hesitant to branch out into this new territory. On one end of the style spectrum, you'll find messenger-style rolled up jeans or Carhartt's which become, in effect, a pair of convertible knickers that score pretty high on the cool-o-meter and are easy to fashion yourself. You might come across an easygoing variation marketed to the out-door crowd as $\frac{3}{4}$ length climbing pants, usually made out of some modern synthetics that look neat and sharp. Then come the more tailored versions in wool and corduroy that are like a pair of men's dress pants that stop just below the knee. You may also find similar used military versions from Army-Navy suppliers. Women's options are widely available as Capris, or the appropriately named "pedal pushers". They all work. The style to choose depends only on one's fashion preferences. In the last couple of years, a variety of retailers have sprung up to offer a nice range of choices,



Photo courtesy Bicycle Fixation

with knickers made of wool, hemp, cotton and other materials. Among these are Bicycle Fixation, Rivendell Bicycle Works, Chrome, and Swrve. And you could always try to alter a pair of your own pants into this retro-futuristic cool cycling garb.

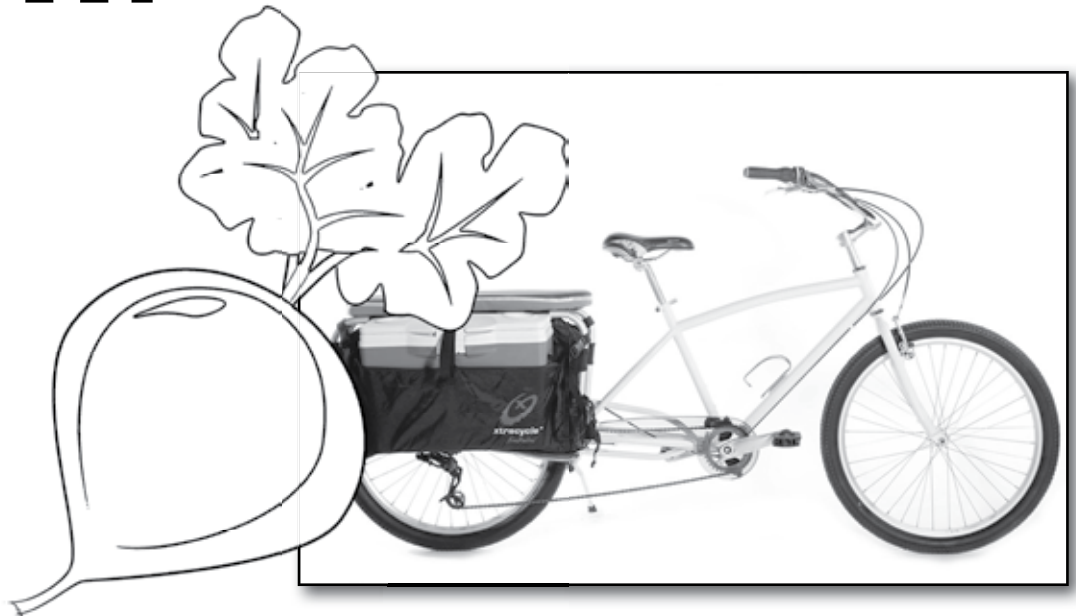
Whatever variation you settle on, knickers allow you the opportunity pedal comfortably around town, break new fashion ground and pick up some groceries all at the same time. All good stuff. ☺

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WHAT'S THE RADISH?



Bike-By-Number

36

36 is the sum of 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8.

According to Jewish tradition, in every generation there are 36 righteous people (the “Lamed Vav Tzadikim”) in whose merit the world continues to exist.

The Thirty-Six Stratagems are a collection of Chinese proverbs illustrating useful approaches to conflict situations.

The number 36 above is printed in 36-point Helvetica type.

The minimum number of spokes required for a “real” bicycle wheel. 40 might even be “realer” but this is a story about the number 36.

Why it's the latest offering from Xtracycle

Yep. Xtracycle will be bringing us a bike they're calling, The Radish. Now first, a word of caution. The bike pictured above is the Radish, but it's a pre-production photo, you dig. That means the final version available in stores might not be configured exactly as shown. Don't hassle Xtracycle about it. Go with the flow. Here's what we know about it:

The bike is steel. It won't be available until the end of the Summer. The bike's not one piece, it's two. It was designed to bolt to Xtracycle's FreeRadical system, resulting in a bike that is less stiff than the Big Dummy, but more stiff than a Townie Xtracycle. That, and it comes with a chainstay bridge designed specifically for the FreeRadical, which should translate into less of a need to keep tightening that point of attachment.

This is a great deal for Xtracycle because it means that they will soon have an integrated product to offer bike shops and customers. That means it's easier for green bike commuters (cue the double entendre) to wrap their heads around the Xtracycle concept. And it should mean more bike shops stocking and ordering Xtracycles for their customers. And the two-piece design (as opposed to the Big Dummy approach) means it can ship in a standard length bike box. Cool, eh?

If you have no idea what an Xtracycle is, then we suggest you visit them on the web at www.xtracycle.com. In a nutshell, it's a long bike that can carry lots of stuff... even another person.

This is just the latest development in the long-tail cargo-bike market. Surly also makes an integrated frame called the Big Dummy that is compatible with the Xtracycle rack and bag system. Kona makes the Ute, rumored to be available next year in more than one frame size. And there's also the Yuba Mundo (yubaride.com). It's interesting times to be in the bike business. 🚲



CLOCKING

OFF

by Sam Walker

Does anybody really know what time it is?

Does anybody really care?

- Chicago

No offence to the very late John Harrison, or the Swiss, or my wife, who has separated our house into minute time zones to aid her morning routine,* but I couldn't really care less.

Granted, my days often have little more structure than a bouncy castle. Perhaps if I worked for one of the many fine British train companies I'd feel different [insert obvious gibe HERE]. But somehow I don't think so. Chances are I'd cock my head, peer off into the middle distance, decide it was 5:02 or whatever -- perversely, I've gotten pretty good at guessing what time it is -- and enjoy a very short tenure. I'm not that accurate. '02' was an embellishment.

Maybe I don't worry too much about time because it doesn't exist. "The unreality of time's passage has been near the top of the philosophical agenda from the outset," writes Paul Davies in his book *About Time*—must reading for anybody with a bit of, well, time on their hands. Davies outlines some of the difficulties physicists have with the subject and alights on Zeno of Elea, who argued that motion itself was impossible, "since at any given instant of time an apparently moving object is in fact static." Good grief, never mind time. When I ride my bike am I even moving? Maybe that's why they sell cycling computers: proof...

Everyone has the right to know their morning commute of 11.8 miles just took 44 minutes 37 seconds, with an average speed of 15.8 mph, which is 0.3 mph better than the day before. And if they're further made aware that they achieved a

cadence of 99 and climbed 100 meters you can't blame them for taking an interest. It's their sweat; they're entitled to quantify it. As I did, some years ago. Those are my stats. I recently unearthed them from my personal Burgess Shale, scribbled into a long lost notebook. Although I fabricated the cadence and the altitude, I needn't have, because you can get computers to tell you that, too, as well as your IQ: just add all the numbers together and see if you can come up with the square root.

I studied the figures, considering why I had thought them important enough to transcribe, and why the record abruptly ended. The second part was easy. When my last bicycle was stolen I simply hadn't installed a computer on the new one. In fact I'd lost the habit of snapping it into its cradle on the handlebars some time before the theft.

As for why I'd bothered recording my stats in the first place, that's also a no-brainer. The numbers were a terribly convenient shorthand. It was only later that I was to decide that they had nothing to do with why I was on my bike in the first place.

Six years ago I started cycling again after a long absence from the saddle. Like many born-again cyclists, one of my first discoveries was that technology was now sufficiently advanced that I could attach a little magnet to one of the spokes and become instantly preoccupied by how slow I was. Each click of a handy little button presented new data to confirm this. The only reading which wasn't judgmental was the clock, and even that seemed to blink in an accusatory manner. The obvious way out of this hell was to improve my stats. This wasn't too hard at first, my numbers going up in leaps and bounds. But they soon plateaued, as they must when you make the fateful decision not to be [insert personal cycling hero HERE]. The numbers gradually lost any real significance, except on the occasions I'd find myself barrelling down a hill at 40 or 50 mph, and to be honest, I never found that knowledge particularly helpful at the time.

When the weather was bad I straddled a stationary bike in my living room. This was so boring that even the computer was a welcome distraction, and the numbers were always far more cheery, given the terrain. I'd regularly clock up averages in the mid-20s and even nudge the 30s, with an all-time and frankly meaningless record of 60mph for a few seconds one gloriously rainy day. It must have broken some kind of barrier because it's the last stat I ever wrote down.

Now I'm back where I started, so long ago. Just me and a bike, no cable snaking up the fork.

A friend of mine does time trials. He rides 100 miles in less than four hours. I've always assumed this is something only particularly fit extraterrestrials -- perhaps riding recumbents -- are capable of, but he assures me sufficiently motivated humans can do it, too. He doesn't use a computer. "I know how fast I'm going," he says, despite the absence of a wire plugged into the base of his skull and slithering down his legs. I imagine he's converted a gear cable into an abacus or something. You can't listen to music on time trials; you gotta keep your mind occupied. Then again he probably just finds out later when he gets the speed camera photos in the mail.

It's not that cycling computers don't have their place. If only they told you something really useful, like a Star Trek tricorder does. If you don't know what that is I can't possibly explain, but trust me, it's the greatest invention the 25th century has to offer. The ideal model would tell you when you're due for your next cramp so you can go to a nice shady spot for a lie-down instead. You'll be able to pass it over a bike to gauge its true metallic composition. ("Those forks appear to be Reynolds 531 rather than the claimed Reynolds 725, Captain.") It'll prompt you to drink when you're in danger of dehydration, which I currently check by borrowing the nearest wing-mirror and noting how much salt has dried on my face. And naturally, it'll warn you of the presence of any hostiles in the area. Excuse me. Mine seems to be bleeping now.

* details on application 🚲

Sam Walker's latest project is another cycling forum. You can wander on over to it by typing this ultra-top-secret pass phrase into the address bar in any standard web browsing device: www.anothercyclingforum.com



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! Quarterly nspiration

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No thanks. I'm good.

"How do you get home a week's groceries on a bicycle?"

Car drivers say this as if the impossibility of such a task is self evident. I don't argue, but I do chuckle, because many of us do it all the time.





by Anne Felker

For

those of us using our bicycles as primary transportation, the ability to easily and safely carry stuff is the

difference between getting by and not. It's also an issue of advocacy for non-car transportation. The most frequent excuse I hear from car drivers as to why they couldn't possibly use their bikes instead is: "How do you get home a week's groceries on a bicycle?" Car drivers say this as if the impossibility of such a task is self evident. I don't argue, but I do chuckle, because many of us do it all the time.

Some of the more ridiculous things I have carted on my bicycle include: a year's supply of hickory nuts, my fifty-five pound dog, a small cast iron stove, and myriad 7 mm wrenches. (Why do people lose only their 7 mms?) A couple of things I wish I had been prepared to carry, but was not, are: a dressmaker's form at a great price in a yard sale, a foot and a half wide puffball mushroom in prime condition, and a watermelon.

What are the logistics of carting stuff on a bicycle? Let your bicycle do the lion's share of the work, whenever possible. For a major grocery buy, or taking large packages to the post office, or any such task where big and undefined space is best, I use a trailer affixed to the rear axle of my bike. I and other family members have used our BOB trailer for nearly ten years, and have found it reliable and sturdy, both for weeks-long self contained bicycle trips and for day-to-day chores. Interestingly enough, the only failure of the trailer was not when it was loaded down with weight, but when it was empty and I hit a pothole, which caused the center pivoting rod to come undone. It was easily repaired and has been in regular use without further incident.

Another factor about the trailer is that it does gain some notice, probably because it is so purely functional and runs counter to the idea of us cyclists as merely out playing. When using my trailer to carry cases of beer, I experienced perfect strangers offering to assist in whatever ways I might find helpful. (See title, above.) These strangers were amazed to the point of shouting that something so comprehensible, even enviable, as a case of beer can be carried with ease on a bicycle. If you'd like to replicate my experience, I suggest you carry a case of Chimay or Corsendonk or some

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They Came With Front Panniers Pt. II

by Wiley Davis

This is the continuation of a story printed in the Winter issue. To read the beginning, go to www.practicalpedal.com

Meanwhile, in a small, sour-smelling, bar just forty miles north, two girls sat at a small table drinking cheap beer from cans. They wore cycling shoes with recessed cleats, shoes chosen as much for their pedaling prowess as for their ability to evade by foot.

Planning, Adam thought, is what people who can't believe in TV do. We make big plans. And it's still vicarious even if the characters look like us. He thought this and set off through the green light, pushing too tall a gear so it would get him through the six-lane intersection. The batteries in his light had died and he rode faster than he would have liked, trying to get on the bike path and off the streets before it got too dark. But traffic was light. At the second signal he stopped alongside a new Honda Civic. An old man stared over the steering wheel. Probably anxious to get home--there already in his head. Another plan. Students complained, but he enjoyed the dead emptiness of campus that set in just after the last class. A commuter campus.

Once on the path, Adam pushed hard. He flew under the bridge and up the paved ramp then over the same bridge and back down another ramp. He followed the bay inlet, small hills short enough to stand and fly over and sweeping turns which somehow seemed to add speed. His face flushed from the effort and he savored the warmth of his skin on a cool night. He pushed harder and kept the gear tall, wanting to wear out before reaching home. In his mind he was already anywhere but home.

He ran out of steam near the park. He laid down in the empty parking lot, his back against the warm asphalt, and watched the jets fly their pattern. The flashing lights ringed the city, crowning its grey streets and floodlit-orange parking lots with a halo of twinkling jewels--bestowing on the city a living title of nobility. The planes circled overhead as a testament, thousands of decisions made to stay or to leave this place. Something important occurs here. Adam didn't think of this in words but he felt it just the same. He watched their flashing lights and tried to hear them over the low static of freeway noise but he couldn't. The planes connected him, somehow, to that important thing. Getting cold, and nearing the decision to get up, he remembered Sioux City and the man who needed a bubble fairing. Sioux City, the bike shop that always has what you need. Forgotten amidst the rush of finals, he remembered it now and smiled up at the planes.

Meanwhile, in a small, sour-smelling, bar just forty miles north, two girls sat at a small table drinking cheap beer from cans. They wore cycling shoes with recessed cleats, shoes chosen as much for their pedaling prowess as for their ability to evade by foot. The girls reclined in the small chairs, their long, worn-out limbs set free to lie in comfort. Strands of damp hair clung to their sweaty foreheads. The elbow of the taller girl had yet to fully scab over. They seemed, even to casual observers, to be happy, and only slightly worried.

Note how we just leapt from Irvine to Long Beach, from one character to another in the span of not even seconds. We did it with the simple word of meanwhile. Things happening simultaneously in different places. Meanwhile. A specific word to bring out the connective tissue that binds us all together, the connection that dissolves in the day-to-day focus on our own specific problems and joys. Meanwhile brings it back. It is the most powerful transition in fiction. For Adam, the jets circling overhead twinkle with the excitement of meanwhile; that look of worry, slight as it may be, observed on the faces of the two girls in the bar... a worry over meanwhile.

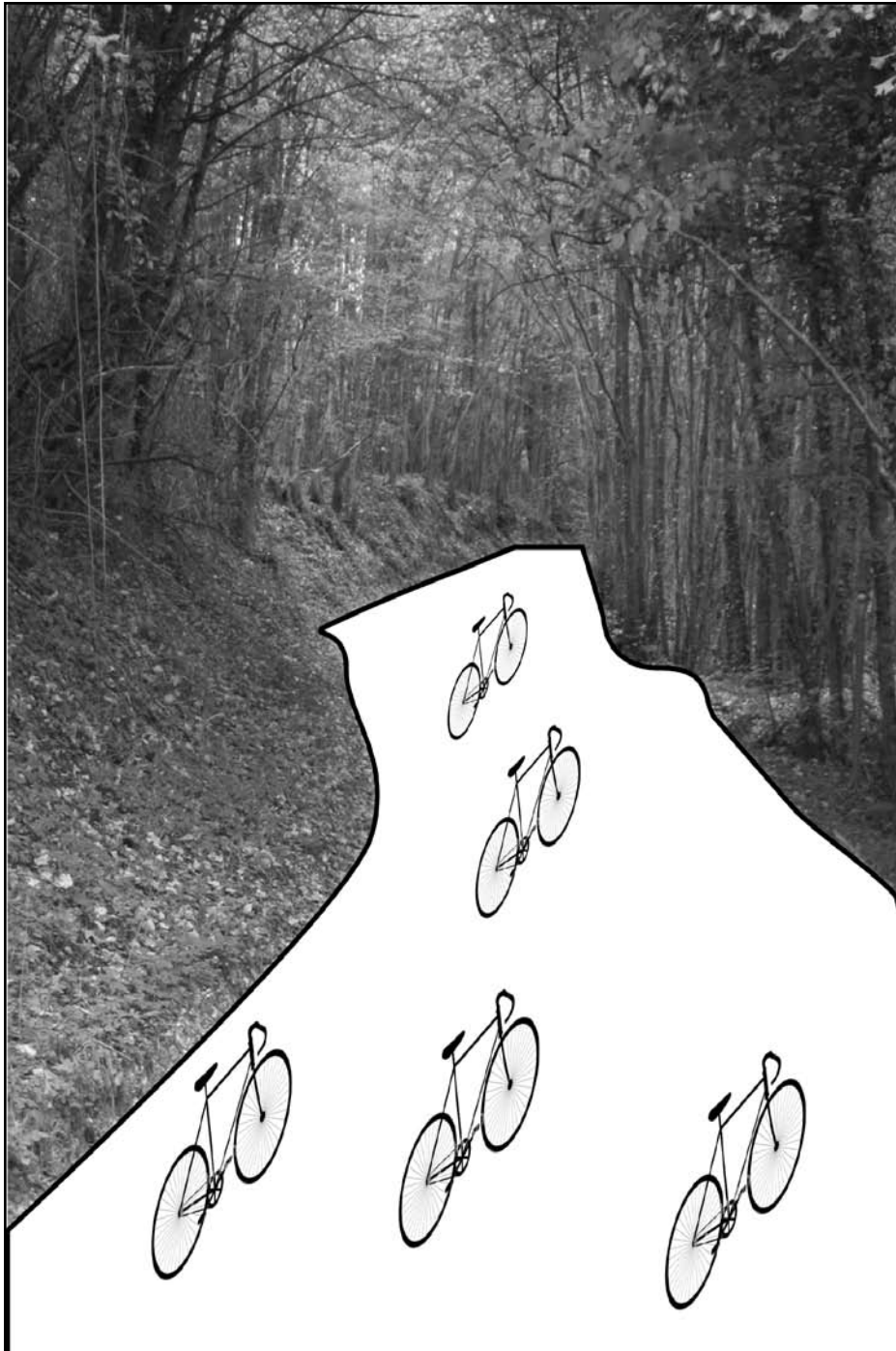
"You girls out playing anarchy again?" the man behind the bar asked.
"What's it to you Hal?" the taller girl said. Everyone called the bartender Hal.
"Just trying to keep the reputation of this joint intact, if you know what I'm saying."
"Hey Hal. How come you know my name but you won't tell me yours?"



Continued on Pg. 13

What Makes A Good Ride?

by John Freidrich



My perception of what constitutes a nice bike or a nice ride has changed much in the last couple of years. I've been a 'cyclist' for somewhere around seventeen years and before that found the most happiness astride a bike. In the early 90's I considered myself a Mountain Biker (an unfortunately awkward term) but I'd dabble in a bit of road riding occasionally. In the late 90's I built my first fixed-gear on a whim, subconsciously searching for The Meaning Of Riding.

In 2001 I moved to Bozeman and found a thriving, if disjointed, cycling community. Lots of people riding trails, lots of people riding roads, but there was still something missing.

Last year Captain E. handed me a copy of The Bicycle Quarterly, a rag dedicated to classic cycle touring, racing, and the history of classic bikes and bike design.

This event forever changed my perception of what "Cycling" is.

The cover has a Frank Patterson illustration depicting a British gent pausing at the side of a road, taking in the countryside while enjoying a pipe. His bike, likely a Raleigh or Dunelt or Rudge with a Sturmey-Archer hub, rests on its stand next to him. The bike appears to have a largish bag, perhaps a Brooks Millbrook. It's probably the same bike that takes the guy to work at a steel factory. He might also use it for time-trialing on race day, with fenders and bags removed, of course.

My point (as much as there is one), is that many cyclists tend to think of themselves as specific kinds of riders: mountain Bikers, road racers, tourers, DHers, singlespeeders, fixed-gear riders, etc. And they willingly exclude themselves from not just another kind of riding but an expanded way to view life. Sounds grandiose, I know. But try it! Get an old three-speed at a garage sale and take the scenic route to work. Wear regular clothes and take an hour to go eight miles. Ride a road bike on a dirt road (trust me, the bike can handle it). There's a world of experiences bikes can help take you to, once you stop thinking about needing the "right" equipment for exactly the "right" type of riding.

With this in mind, I went for a solitary ride the other day, in the English tradition. I packed my bag (a Crumpler messenger bag-not the best choice, but it's all I had) with a sandwich, some peanuts, a camera, and a bottle of water (my bike doesn't yet have a bottle cage).

I hopped on my KHS Winner, recently acquired from Sethanol and converted to a fixed-gear. I rode at a leisurely pace, maybe 15 mph on a combination of dirt and paved roads. My route took me along the Gallatin River, where I stopped for lunch. I saw tons of cows, had robins fly alongside me, heard woodpeckers, and saw some ospreys. All this, even if I had noticed, would be diminished had I been on my road bike, or even if I had been riding with another person.

I've been in the process of Anglicizing my bike, with its 32mm tires, 3-speed-esque handlebars, and full fenders. Its current gearing (42x17) allows me to climb pretty much all hills around here but does not hold my top speed down too much.

The ride ended up being about 38 miles, and it took me about four hours. It's something that I'll be doing more in the future, and I heartily recommend that you try it. Even if you don't have the 'right' bike. 🚲

Continued from Pg. 11

"Because, Higgins, you like to tell people what your name is because you have a weird name." Hal closed the tap and walked the glass of beer he'd been pouring down to the end of the bar, his back to the girls. He took the money and walked back to his usual position under the wall-mounted television set. "Where'd you hoodlums strike this time?"

Higgins looked at him. She felt no affection for the man but it pleased her that he took a genuine interest in their exploits. "405, again," she said.

"Little late for rush hour isn't it?"

"There was an accident. Thought we'd liven the mood."

Hal looked around the bar, dramatizing his curiosity. "Where are your boys?" he said.

"Some Poncharelli gave chase. They had to break off early."

"Any reactions?"

"Kids and truckers as usual. Got a big rig to toot the horn. Kids gave thumbs up. An ear-cooter tried to block me with his Mercedes."

"Ear-cooter?"

"You know, those dudes with little cel-phone headsets jammed in their ears. They hate us."

Hal looked past the girls at the door. "Here come your boys now," he said.

Saturday morning. The first day in months he'd beaten the alarm clock. Adam climbed out of bed and went downstairs to make coffee. He drank what he made while looking at a map. Just down the highway, maybe a half-day's ride, was a campground and park. He'd go by Sioux City and get some panniers, maybe another water bottle, and whatever else he might need and set off for a night of camping.

It'd be the first time he'd ever camped by bike. And though the distance wasn't all that great, the element of overnight gave the small trip an edge. Even in the Mediterranean weather of Southern California, committing to a night outside was just that, a commitment, small but certain.

He flew down the hill and got lucky with the green light across the PCH. He rolled into the strip-mall and past the Jack-In-The-Box and the hair salon. He locked his bike to a lamp pole and walked over to the door that he'd passed by so many times, always thinking it was a maintenance closet. No sign indicated

what existed behind the steel door. There was no window to allow a peek.

He stared at the knob, one of those industrial knobs that run parallel to the door, deciding if he should knock first. Deciding not, he reached for the handle and was a bit surprised that it turned freely. The inside was much darker than the bright outdoors and it took his eyes a moment to adjust. When they finally did, he stared at the room. "Shit," he said aloud.

The room was empty. A bare concrete floor, not a grease stain on it, and unpainted sheetrock walls boxed in complete and total emptiness. Nothing but a door in back to the alley, air and dust, and two bare bulbs hanging from the ceiling, illuminating the dust. There'd never been a bike shop here, let alone anything else, Adam thought. The Southerner had lied. Another tall tale told to the jackass kid in the Jack-In-The-Box.

Adam turned around, thoughts of camping, of adventure, the kind that beat the alarm clock, had left him. He grabbed the doorknob and turned it, squinting in anticipation of the bright day.

"Can I help you?" a voice called out from behind him.

Adam turned and saw a small man standing in the doorway at the back of the room. "Sorry," he said. "Someone told me this was a bike shop."

The man walked fully into the room and shut the door behind him. "It is a bike shop," he said. "Sioux City."

"Are you out of business?"

"Nope."

Adam looked around again, as if he'd misinterpreted the emptiness, a trick of the light. "Where's your stuff? I was told you had all kinds of stuff."

"Who told you that?"

"A guy riding up from Costa Rica a few weeks back. He said you had a reputation for always having what a person needs."

The small man stared at Adam and then smiled, suddenly without any warning. Waving his hand he said, "That'd be Al. Sold him a bubble fairing last week. He's a good fella but never was too precise with his language. What he should have told you was that Sioux City has a reputation for ONLY having what a person needs. A deserved one at that." He walked over to the back corner of the room. "See here," he said. "Just what you need."

As Adam approached, the man stooped down and picked a small package up off the floor. "What's that?" Adam asked.

"Batteries, of course. Two AAs... for your light. Their a bit old so I'll only charge you a dollar. They should get you through your trip, at least."

Adam fumbled in his pocket and dug out a dollar. He handed it to the man and took the batteries. He watched as the man straightened and folded the dollar into neat thirds before putting it into his pocket.

The man looked up as if surprised to see Adam still standing there. "Go on now," he waved his hand. "You got yourself some riding to do."

Adam turned and walked toward the door. At the threshold, he turned and said, "My name's Adam... thanks."

The man smiled. "Name's Hal. And you're welcome. Come again." ☸

...to be continued

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Continued from Pg. 9

other good import or the best of your local microbrewery. And be sure to smile as you pedal.

Using a trailer is not an every day event, as there are many other ways to cart your stuff. Ordinary chores, like carrying a purse or wallet, a laptop, a few books and other work accoutrement, are handily done in a pannier or two over a rear rack. The upside of using panniers is that they protect the contents from weather, especially if you routinely line the panniers with plastic bags. I have found the panniers avail-

especially when taking curves and turns. We bought a set of bike courier bags from the Canadian Pac Designs a few years back, and they have proved a fine carrying tool; the bag shifts weight from the shoulders to the center back, especially when the rider is in the drop handlebars, so that the rider can carry quite a lot with less discomfort than other backpacks. These particular bags are designed to accommodate carting of your laptop.

I do have one caveat, admittedly bizarre, about using a backpack. Only recently as I was traveling through the center

down the road, and eating it right there in mid-day. But that experience taught me to always leave just enough room to carry some unexpected pleasure -- I think of it as my "watermelon cache." The slow pace and immediacy of bicycle transportation allows us to appreciate the way a simple item like a watermelon or a puffball mushroom or even a dressmaker's form could add far more to our lives than we should do without. In other words, when traveling by bicycle, it's always best to be prepared for the best. ☸

As he passed me, I looked and saw that his pants were nearly fully down, so that his entire buttocks was there for all to see "Now that," I said to myself, "Is what comes of being your own beast of burden."

able from Adventure Cycling to be ideal, because of their size, variety of separate pockets, durability, and night-riding specs, including places to easily install rear lights for safe night riding. However, there are also times when open bags are more useful (carrying plants from the nursery, or loaves of bread still warm from the oven, etc.), and keeping a set of these handy will expand your options. For those of you interested in etymology, the word pannier, dates back to the 13th Century and in addition to meaning a carrier slung over the rear tire of a bicycle, refers also to the hoops once used to expand women's skirts at the sides.

If you're too broke (or concerned about keeping a slim silhouette) to afford panniers, the next best option is a rear rack and a set of bungee cords. Bungees are cheap and versatile and come in a variety of sizes. If you want to go super frugal, limit yourself to the bungees you find by the roadside, keeping in mind that they are there because of a bungee failure. (No, Virginia, there is no Bungee Fairy.) The downside of this simple method is that your goods will be subjected to all sorts of weather, and can easily shift from their original spot with the rigors of your riding.

Finally, for those of capital so limited that you can't afford even a rear rack and a few bungees, use a backpack. You can carry a good amount of bulk in a shoulder slung knapsack, but increased weight is hard on the neck, shoulders and back, and the loaded backpack changes our balance on the bike in ways we can't always predict,

of my small city, I observed a cyclist go by, loaded down with a hefty backpack. He pedaled very fast in a low gear, making slow and labored progress. As he passed me, I looked and saw that his pants were nearly fully down, so that his entire buttocks was there for all to see. "Now that," I said to myself, "Is what comes of being your own beast of burden." The lesson here is, using a backpack is probably the most distracting way to cart your stuff and there may well be unintended consequences to such distraction. A bare buttocks in the bluster of March...Brrr.

Of the many ways to cart stuff on a bicycle, which is the best method? After years of carrying things all ways, I recommend that you have all of the options available, and use the one that works best for a given job. Sound extravagant? I tallied up the cost of all the carrying equipment I currently use, including a rear rack, a set of rear panniers, a set of open bags, a trailer, and a bicycle-specific backpack, and I come up with about \$841, retail. This may seem a hefty sum by itself, but not compared with the ever increasing cost of using a gasoline vehicle to do your errands.

One final thought: Years ago when my then thirteen-year-old daughter and I were on a cross Pennsylvania tour in scorching summer, we came to a farm stand selling watermelons. The brutal heat of that July day made the luxury of a cool watermelon a necessity, but we had no room in our bags. So we made do by buying a watermelon, walking our bikes to a tree-shaded spot

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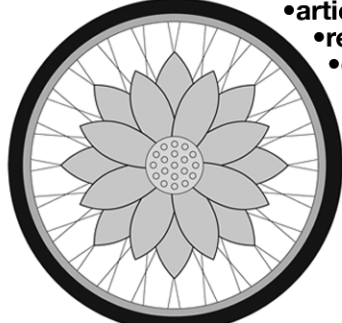


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Gaston Dilmoore's *Outdoor Situation*



by Gaston Dilmoore

I've discovered several practical applications for yak fur. Nunzig doesn't believe me. I've also discovered the real reason to keep cheese. Nunzig refuses to listen. There's an arrangement of cheese next to my kit, and the yak fur I keep in a satchel made of reeds. I've named the satchel William.

Nunzig says a satchel does not need a name.

Nunzig is silly. And he's rather short, isn't he? Well, he is a Sherpa, but he's a short Sherpa.

Regarding the yak fur. You see, it may be used to cushion a bike seat. It may also be used to reduce chafing. Also, yak fur, if used specifically, can resemble a small rodent, which is great fun when Nunzig isn't looking. When he does, he jumps and shouts "Ah! A small rodent is there!"

It's great fun, that.

Other uses for yak fur include bedding, bearding and breeding. Yes, I can breed my porridge with yak fur. It's a delicate procedure. First I must carefully shave the yak, which can get tricky, particularly during mating season, which as my luck would have it, is right now on the Kamchatka. It leaves me wishing I had some vitamin E.

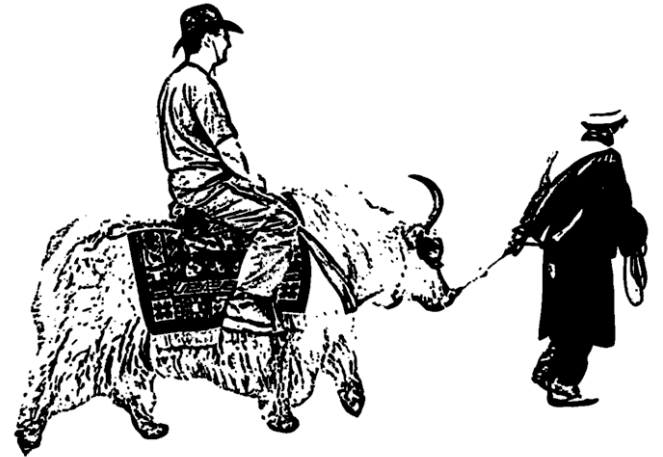
Once I've shaved a bit off the yak, I crumble the fur and then sprinkle it onto my porridge. It cooks well, leaving a crust on the top. Another use for yak fur is bearding. I'm wearing one now. Bedding is obvious, but the final application is crucial. It seems I can use yak fur to contact the backers and tell them of

our progress. I do this by employing the cheese. You see, cheese is a natural amplifier of the telepathic properties of yak fur. These properties allow the yaks to hold entire conversations while standing near mud holes more than hundreds of miles apart. This is evident through the occasional nodding we've all observed in yaks. They're nodding in approval to things other yaks have been saying to them through their fur. The cheese, you see, will allow us to amplify the signal. What I do is to apply the fur directly to the cheese (which must be arranged in a specific pattern) and then I lay my elbows on the yak fur, being careful not to affect the cheese, and then I simply think. I might think the words, "Hello yak, are you having a pleasant afternoon?" Before long, the yak will nod, and that is when I know I've

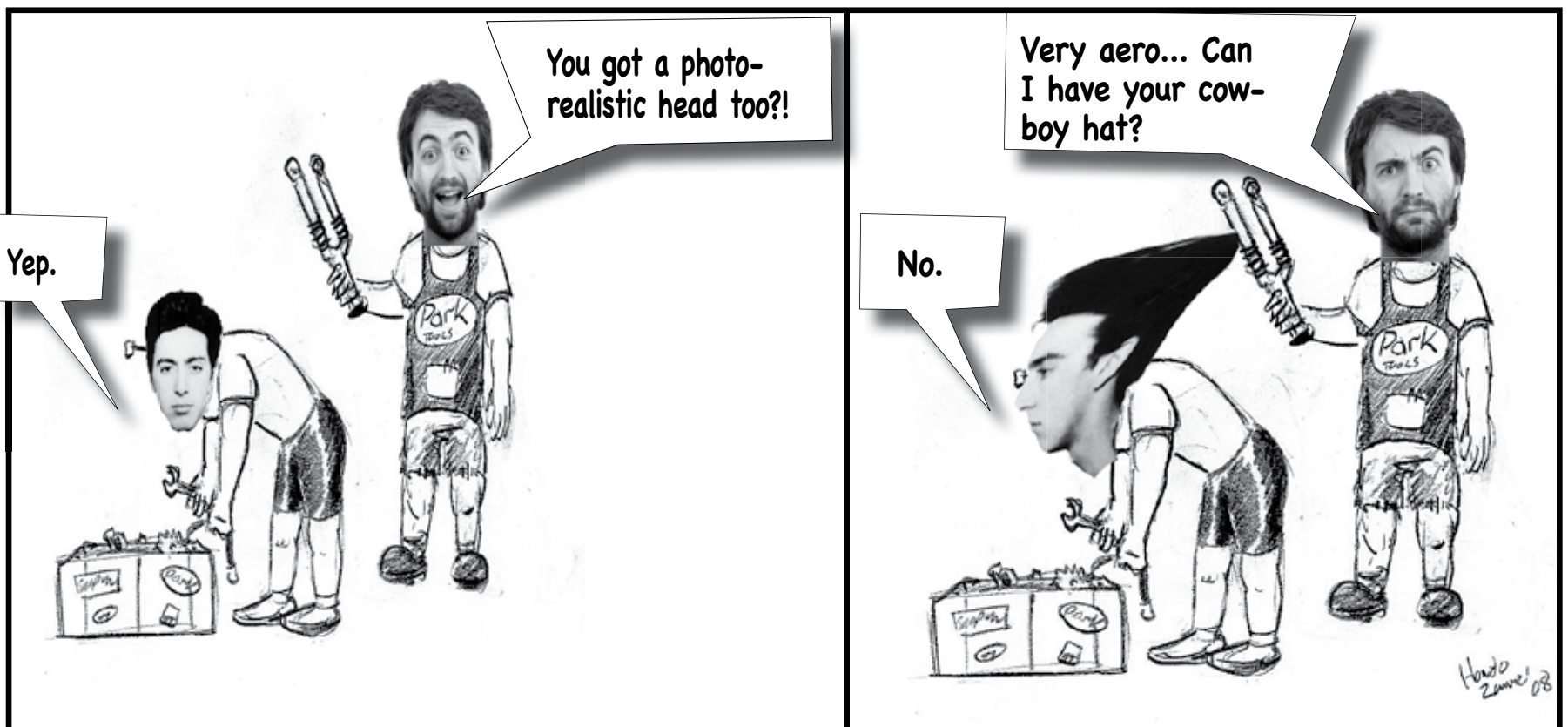
succeeded. I tried to show Nunzig, but he is a primitive person and so has no appreciation of the scientific method. In fact, he kicked me. Right there in the shin.

"See here!" I shouted, "If you don't care to learn about the use of a telepathy through yak fur and cheese, then bugger off, but don't go kicking me!"

It's remarkably strange how little he understands. He has a strong back but a weak mind. Still, I do love him so. ☺



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