

The Inkslingers’ Velo Tête-à-Tête

2025

Belles Lettres

2nd Quarter



“Underbiking” is riding a bike on terrain that’s more difficult than the bike is designed for. It is similar to regular biking but with less suitable equipment. Not to be confused with “Overbiking,” (or “overdressed”) which is a new slang term that refers to a rider who is using a bike with more suspension travel, geometry, or other generally “gnar-capable” components than are needed for the trail they are on. Pictured is Rex Barber, in the early 1900s, Grand Junction. Barber was recently featured in a musical number in the 2021 opera, “One Bike.”

Use this link to watch: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZZCf3xyvnl0&t=6s>

1885 Rover Summer

By: Clifton Skidmore

Last winter (2024) I had a hair-brained idea. Things get a little slow in a bike shop during winter time, so I amuse myself by thinking about projects. Special Projects. Special Projects Division (SPD). In 2023, I rode the Erie Canal from Buffalo to New York City. It's a flat gravel towpath that actually loses 500' from Buffalo to Albany. Needless to say, it was pretty easy. During the trip, I read a historical fiction novel that pertained to the trail and the towns alongside, mid 1800s stuff. After a few days, it was pretty clear that I was on the wrong bike and in the wrong century. This historical canal towpath deserves some knick-knacks and a vintage single speed.



Rover Does Old Spanish Trail

So, during the winter of 2024, I combined a few routes from my bucket list, a vintage silhouette of

a bike that had been speaking to me for years, and my sky-miles.

I called my local frame builder and commissioned him to weld together an 1885 Rover, from Coventry, England, based on a photo I stole off the internet. And he did. I dressed it up with vintage handlebars, a two-speed kickback hub, a leather seat, and a Car-radice luggage sack.

The Rover was one of the first safety bikes designed after the high-wheel era, after the chain had been developed (mid 1800s). It was designed by Starley from the UK. (Uncle and Nephew) Starley was a Penny Farthing builder and can be credited with many things bicycle. If you have ever wondered why your spokes run tangential to your hub flanges—Starley. The Rover was so popular that in Poland they spelled it “Rower.” It actually means “bicycle” in Polish. (Your next group ride fun fact!!)

Then, I got online and purchased airline tickets and paid the entry fees for three rides that were perfect for my Way-Back-Machine. The six-day C n O Canal Trail (Pittsburgh to DC). The Cino two-day vintage gravel ride in Kalispell, MT, and the Apple Cider Century in Three Oaks, Michigan.

I dusted off my knickers and found a chest-man-pochette to hold my essentials.



Showing up at a group ride with a 139-year-old two speed bike definitely breaks some ice.

To keep it humble, I used my trail name, Clifton Skidmore. The bike performed flawlessly on all three rides and I was able to make some great friendships. Six months later, they are still texting me in the middle of the night to my wife's angst. "Relax babe, these guys are the real deal," I tell her.

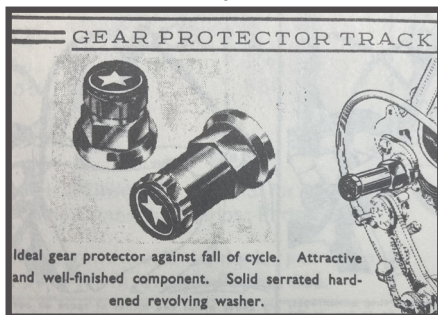
Each of the rides provided some great money shots for the Face Books and the kids back home.

As with all great adventures, I'm a little bit at a loss as to what to do next. The L'Eroica in Italy has come up on my radar for 2026. I need a new project. I guess I'll just sit here and watch the snow fall until something rings my bell.

Bicycle Genders

In my study of trying to understand non-binary, I discovered that a gravel grinder bike is non-binary.

It's not a mountain bike and it's not a road bike. However, it can be ridden on the road, and it can be ridden on dirt trails, although it does neither well. But it does do everything well. In the simplest terms, all "gravel grinders" should be called "wish I brought my other bike." So, if you want to ride a boring mtn. bike trail or a real slow road ride, the gravel bike is perfect. There is just something about it - although you will never understand until you are on one.



Free Wheelin'

By: Itchy Scratchy

Free Wheelin' was inspired by Jason, who never wore under-pants under his Carhartts while mountain biking (I could never pull that off). To put this into perspective, I will quote my mom at the dinner table when I was 14; "I don't know how you could ever ride a bike with that thing." Yes, it was horrible to sit at the dinner table that night.

Free Wheelin' is the term used to describe a mountain bike completely stripped of its brakes. Skis and ice skates don't have brakes, neither do volleyballs. What if, by removing the brakes, new human skills could be developed to control a bicycle? Much in the same way before the bicycle, people didn't know they could be taught to balance on two wheels. The entire states of Kansas, Nebraska, and Iowa could be opened for mountain bike trails because riders no longer need long descents to enjoy mountain biking. It only requires a slight incline in the terrain for it to be too fast, too fast, way too fast!! I wanted to test out my theory, so I stripped the brakes off my Cannondale and headed to the Lunch Loop. Below are the results of my test ride:

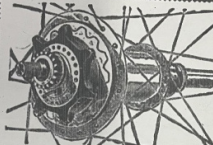
Experiment #1. Lunch Loop 2018.

- I almost died.
- I parked the van and rode down the hill heading towards Nor'easter. I was rolling so fast, that by the time I hit the drainage at the bottom... I could barely hang on.
- There are three ways to abort a freewheelin' bike. The left side, the right side, or off the back.
- Somehow, I got off the back and did what Free Wheelin' guys call, "a tumble weed." That's when every part of your body touches the ground. There was a lot of dust.
- I'm sending you this message from Taco Bell. I looked back from the parking lot to see the counter girl thinking I'm stoned because I feel so exhilarated. I can't get the smile off my face. I'm just so happy to be alive.
- Notes for future riders: The trail has to be built for the bike. Ya' can't just ride any trail. Lunch Loop trails are not built for bikes with no brakes.
- On the way home, I drove past a bunch of guys on std. mtn. bikes. ... It gets lonely

here in outer space.

The best way to describe my first experience is like when you start to fall over backwards in a chair. Yeah, it's just like that. Exactly like that, but for longer.





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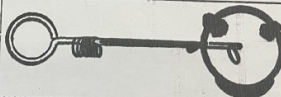
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Help Us Name This Product



Currently called a Seat Bag, Brown Cycles would like to have a more exciting name for this product. So, we are asking for your help. Below are a few options that we have thought of:

It's a Seat Roll

Dropper Post Wrap Bag

Tool Roll

Cowboy Saddle Roll

Tail Bucket

Tool Diaper

Trail Gear Wrap

Momma Bertha's Sweet Ass Rolls

Cashel Roll

Cantel Bag

Caudal Catch

Email info@browncycles.com or call
970-245-7939 for your opinions.

How To Get Your “Girlfriend” On a Bike

By: Bobbles Nsuch

There is not a man in the world that wouldn't buy his dolly any bike she wanted. We are not that complicated. We just want to go for a ride with them.

As a retailer that sells bicycles, I often see male cycling enthusiasts coming into the shop with the dream of having their girlfriends (or wives) riding with them. I was listening to a sermon at church a few weeks ago and the preacher was addressing the needs of men. One of them was the need for a man to share his recreational activities with his lady. I looked around the room to see who was tuning into this transmission. All of the guys were on the edge of their seats and the ladies were 100 miles away. This differential is the crux of this discussion.

Day after day, the hairier sex buys bikes for their lovelies only to decorate the walls of the garage and to meet the status quota of, “Yes, she has a nice bike.” Some of these guys have been pushing this agenda for years with no success. Hopefully, by the end of this discussion, men will feel better about their strife.

- Defining the Problem:

How big of a water bottle should you carry to hold all the tears that are shed while riding together? I have heard it said, “Men and women are different.” With this tid-bit in mind, it should not surprise anyone that riding styles, passions, and end goals might be different also. I once spent an entire summer riding with another man's wife. When I asked why her husband doesn't ride with her, she quietly replied, “He just can't do it.” “Physically,” I said? “No mentally. It makes him crazy.” Most men want to see what is on top of The Monument - that's a bike ride. Most ladies want to see what is on top of the glass counter at The Bagel Shop. That's a *date*, not a *bike ride*. Maybe a dictionary may resolve some of the problem.

- The Fickleness of Men:

I once saw a lady riding a mountain bike with a group of men. She was good and was able to hold her own on the trail. Within minutes, the guys were all down at the shop buying bikes for their girlfriends. Little did the guys know that the female rider was a plant. A cross-dressing male paid by the association of local bike shop owners to increase sales of woman's bikes in the area.

Another tip for “man-kind,” when you get home from a great ride

that had a lady on it, never talk about her.

- Solutions:

Electric Bikes, Recumbents and Tandems: Do you have a special-needs wife? Do I need to say more?

- Concentric Circles:

This seemed like a good idea. Let's say you toss a rock into a puddle of water and the circle of rings it creates fans out in all directions. The inner most ring will represent your first bike and all the experiences you had on it. The next ring will represent the next bike you rode and all the places you went- a little bit nicer of a bike, more adventures... and so on and so on, until the outer most ring, which is the super nice bike you ride now, and all the great things you do with it. Most men will try to use their purchasing power to place their lady-friend in the outermost ring-let. This never works. Developing a passion for a physical activity is a process. It takes time, room to grow and explore, it needs to be owned by the do'er. Baby steps, baby steps. The journey is part of the reward. I always recommend that if a man wants to get his girlfriend on a bike, that he purchase a really low end, basic, bottom of the barrel machine and let her

discover the oyster from the outside in. By the way, this process doesn't work either.

- Why Women Don't Ride:

- Bike seats: Of the seats we sell to ladies, most of them have a hole cut out of the center. I'm not sure what is going on down there, but I hear it works. I always assumed it was for prostate relief. If you are thinking right now, "But wait, my wife doesn't have a prostate," it just shows how little you know about the gal you are with. They all have them. They have been erased from the medical journals so that we, men, may never identify where all that fire comes from.
- It's hard: Men want to spin and carve corners. We like to pedal light and cover long distances. Ladies like to push hard and slow. Just the thought of their legs moving that much makes them tired.
- They just can't lean over for that long: Your girlfriend's body was just not made to sit in that position for too long. If you know anything about office-chair ergonomics, bicycles are a human resources nightmare. Bicycles were designed by men way before women could vote so naturally

the 'bent over the handle bars' position is challenging for most ladies. If, somehow, the bicycle frame could be redesigned to mimic the position of my wife handing \$9.00 to a college kid for a cup of coffee, that would be a more natural position and one that could be maintained for hour after hour.

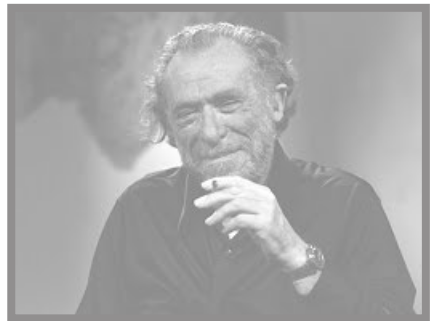
- How do them gears work?:- Girlfriends rely on men to shift their gears. That's jungle law. It can't be changed.
- Other Good Ideas: When I climb big hills, sometimes I remember the way my wife was breathing when she had our first dumpling. Slow heavy exhales, big expanding inhales. "Let the sound of the air moving past your teeth create the sound of the ocean." "Ya, the ocean"... I find this technique to be very helpful in regulating my oxygen flow. It makes me think that having a baby might be a very easy thing to do also. Perhaps someday I would like to try.
- Conclusion:

Never stop trying and you'll never succeed.

The Top 7 Most Influential Bike Books

- Bike Cult
- It's All About the Bike
 - 4284 Miles
- No Hands: the Wild Ride of the Schwinn Bicycle Company
 - Bicycle Junction
- The Golden Age of Hand Built Bicycles
- Building Bicycle Wheels

Charles Bukowski



Charles Bukowski once said, "If you're going to try, go all the way. Otherwise, don't even start. This could mean losing girlfriends, wives, relatives and maybe even our minds. It could mean not eating for three or four days. It could mean freezing on a park bench. It could mean jail. It could

mean derision. It could mean mockery - isolation. Isolation is a gift. All the others are a test of your endurance, of how much you really want to do it. And you'll do it, despite rejection and the worst odds. And it will be better than anything else you can imagine. If you're going to try, go all the way. There is no other feeling like that. You will be alone with the gods, and the nights will flame with fire. You will ride life straight to perfect laughter. It's the only good fight there is."

Underbiking

By: Farrin Fahrradwell

The first time I heard the term "underbiking" it was used in an article by Grant Peterson (Bridge-stone/Rivendell). The earliest use originates from a forum on cyclingtips.com.

The cleanest definition I have seen is: "riding over terrain on a bicycle allegedly unsuited to that terrain."

All new ideas seem strange at first glance. It takes multiple encounters for a strange idea to become the norm. Nobody knew what to do with the telephone when it first came out.

I remember being offended by garage door openers in the 1970s. It was insulting to think that I wasn't able to get out of the car to open a door or even roll up a car window with that little spiny handle for that matter.

Taking a bicycle and modifying it to do the impossible is nothing new. Mountain bikes were freaks of nature in 1980, amongst all the road bikes being sold in the 70s. But that followed on the heels of the BMX craze of the early 70s being in the ridden in the swimming pools in California. Schwinn saw neither coming and lost its 80% share of the U.S. market because of it. The three speeds of the 1960s were eaten up by the road bikes of the 70s and video killed the radio star and on and on and on.

So, what is on the horizon??

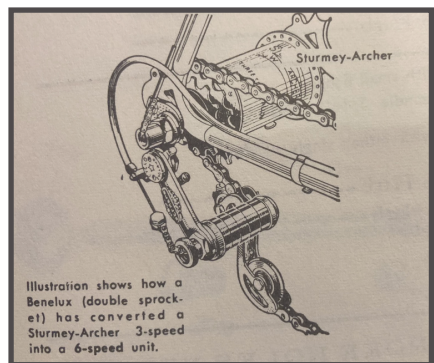
- E-Bikes and Gravel bikes have displaced road bikes.
- Free Wheelin' allows flat boring landscapes to become mind-blowing mountain bike trails.
- Overlanding is when you ride a bike but not on any trail at all. Just let her rip up the side of a mountain.

- Snow bikes, Adventure bikes, and Single Speeds have made their entrance and dissipated.
- Retro Rides are using antique bikes - as old as 140 years, to impress the modern day riders. Local, Jon Rizzo, can be seen using a coaster brake Schwinn with a banana seat in mountain bike races.
- Zwift Riders never come outside at all. They ride trainers indoors, connected to friends and family through little wires on the TV.
- Competitions have been replaced by social forms and formats of riding. Some rides require you to get a haircut at the top of the hill or sing a song for a piece of cooked bacon.

Rest assured. There is nothing new under the sun. Many of these formats were done at one time and then brought back when the time was right. All it is just chasing the wind. And isn't that why we like it?

Things I would like to be known for: Mental Toughness. Gentle toughness. Yental Toughness. Dental Toughness

It's okay not to be happy all the time. It's okay to not know how you are going to get there. Respect the Journey - Lizzo.



Ground-breaking suspension, aggressive geometry and feathery weight let you go full gas from the gun.

Grip where others slip. *Attack* where others lack. *Dominate* where others hesitate.

Upcoming Underbiking Adventures

Glenwood Gritty Graveler – June 8th and 9th, 2025. Two Dayer.

- Day 1 Route: GJ 25 Rd to Bookcliffs, Up the Tellirico Trail, Ute Trail to V.2 Rd to Debeque, cross I70, Sunny-side to V Rd and down into Collbran. Stay at Alpine Motel. Breakfast at Café. 85 miles.
- Day 2 Route: Collbran up Silt Cutt-off to Newcastle to Glenwood via I70. Pool. Train back to GJ. 60 miles.



Summer 2025 Hospital Rides:

Delta Pea Green, Grin and Barret Montrose, GJ Rose Hill Rally, GJ Tour of Valley. All of the Western Slope Hospital Foundation Rides are officially dead. Seems somewhat ironic.

Underbiking Retro Club Rides:

The following ride clubs will be formed for only three months over the next year and a half, after which they will be disbanded. Each club will rely heavily on themed retro rides according to its title.

Please apply at Brown Cycles for more information. Many of these rides will require reading lists and additional materials:

- Guise In Ties – See picture below.



- The Sandwich Rides – Yum.
- The John Beard Society Rides – Who is John Beard?
- Academy of Fists Beccaria Society Rides- We ride, argue, fight, and ride.
- Historic Romance Novels and Hallmark Movie Rides – Men over 50 only.

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-enough to entertain us for years. (Maya Angelou)

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Prerequisite Films for Employment:

World's Fastest Indian

All the John Cusack movies

Rider and the Wolf

One Bike

(Pay particular attention to the Workshops in these movies)

Required Reading for Employment:

Bicycle Junction

No Hands. The Rise and Fall of the Schwinn Bicycle Company

Apply at Brown cycles or email resume to: info@browncycles.com