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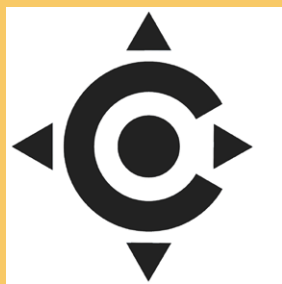


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Dave Iltis, Editor, Publisher, &  
Advertising  
[dave@cyclingutah.com](mailto:dave@cyclingutah.com)

Assistant Editor: Lisa Hazel  
Assistant Editor: Steven Sheffield

David R. Ward, Founder  
[dward@cyclingutah.com](mailto:dward@cyclingutah.com)  
Bob Truelsen, Founder

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Contributors: Chuck Collins, Dave Iltis, Charles Pekow, Joe Kurmaskie, Nancy Clark, Sarah Kaufmann, Bobby Kennedy, David Collins, Catherine Fegan-Kim, Lou Melini, Kelly McPherson, Lukas Brinkerhoff, Turner Bitton, Don Scheese, Patrick Watson, Dave, Richard Vroom, Elizabeth Kreutz

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**ROAD RACING**

**Review: ESPN's 30 for 30: LANCE**



Lance Armstrong and Jan Ullrich riding up mountain. Photo by Elizabeth Kreutz, courtesy ESPN

By Don Scheese

Why another film about Lance Armstrong?

Since Armstrong's fall from grace in 2012 there have been a number of films, mostly documentaries (The Armstrong Lie, Lance Armstrong: Stop At Nothing, The World According to Lance), and one fictional treatment (The Program). So, what new details and perspective could possibly be provided in such a short period of time?

The answer may lie in the latest tour Armstrong has embarked upon: a Tour of Redemption. As ESPN writer Bonnie Ford stated in this 30 for 30 documentary directed by Emmy award winning Marina Zenovich, "Lance always tries to shape the narrative about him."

Since confessing to doping in 2013 in his infamous interview with Oprah, Lance Armstrong has been literally traveling the globe apologizing to various people whom he wronged over the years: former soigneur of US Postal Service Cycling

Team Emma O'Reilly, former racer Filippo Simeoni, former teammate Frankie Andreu and his wife Betsy, among others.

And as an indicator of the success of Armstrong's attempted recovery from disgrace, during last year's 2019 Tour de France, NBC Sports invited him on air as an occasional guest commentator during its coverage.

Furthermore, he has launched a pair of popular podcasts, one called The Forward, in which he interviews a variety of personalities from world of politics, entertainment, art, business, sport and more, and another called THEM MOVE, in which Armstrong, along with former teammate George Hincapie, and occasionally former director Johan Bruyneel talk cycling & other issues—more proof that his stock may again be on the rise in the fickle minds of the American public.

As such, this latest documentary may be—and has been perceived by some—as yet another attempt by Armstrong to revise people's opinions about him. One thing that

cannot be denied: whether loved or hated, respected or reviled, Lance Armstrong is hard to ignore.

For cycling aficionados and followers of Armstrong's ignominious rise and fall, inevitably there is a fair amount of familiar territory covered in this documentary: the cocky youngster raised in Plano, TX by a young determined single mom; the kid no good at stick-and-ball sports who proved to be a prodigy at endurance activities like swimming, running, and cycling; the strict disciplinarian of a second father; the meteoric rise in triathlon competitions and then the professional cycling world, achieving a world championship at age 21; the miraculous cancer survivor and budding philanthropist; the Miracle Comeback Kid who went on to win seven consecutive Tours de France and became a global celebrity; the ill-fated comeback from retirement in 2009 which ironically resulted in his downfall; then the USADA investigation and now infamous confession to Oprah.

Yet one of the fascinating aspects of this most recent film are the new voices inserted into the narrative, witnesses not heard from in previous films. I was very interested to see Armstrong's mother Linda come before the camera and talk about his upbringing; his stepfather Terry Armstrong admitting to his strict disciplinarianism and regret over not telling his adopted son he loved him enough; his former trainer Rick Crawford revealing how undisciplined and bully-like the teenage Armstrong was; his director sportif Johan Bruyneel discussing the culture of cycling and why the team could not take back Floyd in 2009 because he was "radioactive" after his getting busted for PED's in 2006; and Armstrong's children Luke and Grace as well as present partner Anna Hansen revealing how they

Continued on page 4



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### Lance - Continued from page 3

felt about the doping revelations, his former girlfriends, and trials and tribulations as Armstrong's life and lies slowly unraveled in the 2009-12 period.

Perhaps the most powerful and interesting point of view is provided by former teammate Floyd Landis, the person who more than any other was responsible for bringing down Armstrong back in 2010 when he revealed to various media outlets and authorities the shocking extent to which Armstrong and his teammates—including Landis himself—had engaged in systematic doping to win all seven Tours de France. "It's always all about Lance," states Landis.

Of course, familiar faces and voices are included too: Betsy Andreu, Greg LeMond, Tyler Hamilton, Christian Vandeveld, George Hincapie, Emma O'Reilly. These folks do not add to so much as repeat and reconfirm already established facts and insights into Armstrong's saga and personality.

We know that he tried systematically to destroy the careers of Frankie Andreu and Greg Lemond. We know that Tyler Hamilton readily participated in the sophisticated doping program of US Postal, before becoming a key rival.

We know that Armstrong went into "full-on denial" when confronted with the investigations first by Jeff Novitsky of the FDA, then Travis Tygart of USADA, and subsequently went into a deep venomous funk after suffering his "tragic" fall from grace and stardom.

And we know that Armstrong, in

typical "Attack Mode," slandered Emma O'Reilly by calling her a "whore" after her tenure as one of the team's soigneurs during the glory years—one of the actions he most regrets, he reveals to the director, when she asks "What's the worst thing you ever did."

This is one in a series of revelations that occurs during the documentary. In Armstrong's attempt to tell, "not the whole truth, but My Truth," as he says at the outset (italics mine), he unapologetically proclaims, after his near-death experience with testicular cancer, that no, it wasn't hard to take EPO again because EPO is "one of the safer drugs you can inject into your body." Or that, despite all his lies, denials, and counterattacks against those who dared tell the truth about his doping, he has "no problem looking into the mirror every morning" and that he "wouldn't change a thing" about his fall—because from it he emerged a better person, more humbled and forgiving, as a result.

Supposed proof of this New Lance comes near the end of the 2-part documentary when he discusses his relationship with his greatest competitor during his 7-Tour run, the German cyclist Jan Ullrich. Armstrong visits him in Europe after Ullrich experiences his own tragic fall from grace: his doping bust in 2006 as part of Operation Puerto, his subsequent confession to using PEDs during his career, his marriage breakup and failed fatherhood, his consorting with prostitutes and arrest for violence to women, and his own attempt at recovery. Armstrong actually tears up and reveals that "I love him" when referring to Ullrich's

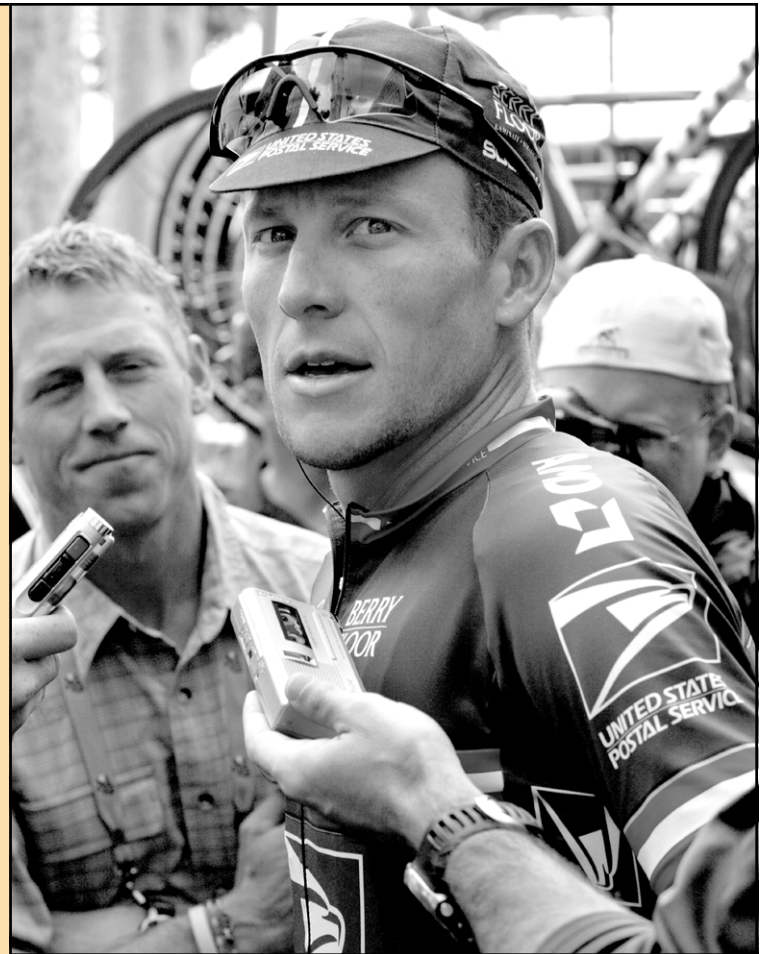
situation, perhaps seeing his own fall echoed in his former rival's life and fate.

Then comes for me what I find the most telling moment of the entire film. In a series of flawed comparisons, Armstrong asks rhetorically, "Why does Italy glorify [former doper] Ivan Basso, yet disgrace [1998 Tour winner] Marco Pantani? Why does Germany idolize [former doper] Erik Zabel but disgrace and destroy Jan Ullrich? And why does America idolize George Hincapie but disgrace and destroy me?"

If Armstrong cannot honestly answer those questions, then I have to wonder: how much has he really changed, to what extent has he really been transformed?

"I could be Floyd Landis, waking up a piece of shit every day," he says earlier in the film. "There will never be a relationship with Floyd Landis," he states when asked if he has reconciled with his former teammate. "He is not forgivable." But all Landis did was (eventually) tell the truth. Granted, he did it out of revenge, for being blackballed in a sport he felt was hypocritical and that had betrayed him.

If Armstrong is indeed grateful that he was brought down and became a changed man, then why wouldn't he be able to forgive the person most responsible for his downfall? If it's because he thinks Landis is a rat for snitching on him, what about Tyler Hamilton's allegation that Armstrong, in a fit of jealousy and competitive rage, ratted him out to the UCI for doping when Hamilton beat him in the time trials at the 2004 Critérium du Dauphine Libéré?



Lance Armstrong talking to media. Photo by Elizabeth Kreutz, courtesy ESPN

Just like the Old Lance, the New Lance appears to believe there are two sets of rules: one for him, the other for the rest of the world.

I think that while this latest treatment of the greatest fall from grace in the history of sport has its merits, it fails to ask the really tough questions. After an introductory anecdote supposedly revealing, in his own words, the New Lance, the director opens with the same question to Armstrong, Hincapie, and Dave Zabriskie, "When did you start doping?" All are a bit taken aback by

the seemingly blunt hard question right at the outset of each of their interviews.

But from then on, Armstrong does what he does best: shape the narrative.

Note: LANCE can be live streamed on ESPN+.

Don "Seldom Seen" Scheese lives and rides in New Mexico, always in search of new adventurous routes, especially on gravel roads.

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**MOUNTAIN BIKE ADVOCACY**

**Advocacy Alert: Help Save Red Cliffs Desert Reserve Trails for Mountain Biking**

By Lukas Brinkerhoff

Hey Utah Mountain Bikers — Hi, it's Uncle Knux. Come on in, there's beer in the cooler and we'll have some refreshments when this is all over, but first we need to chat.

You see, as a mountain biker, you need open space to enjoy your sport, to get your shred on, to pedal till your lungs scream, whatever your chosen cycling poison is, you need space, wide open space. In Utah, that means you need public lands. Currently, we have lots of open space, lots of public lands. Unfortunately, many of our elected officials are hell bent on following California's lead and doing everything they can to encourage suburban sprawl. You know, the stuff of endless road construction, houses instead of space and malls. You all know we need our malls.

I know all of you riders in Northern Utah love coming down south. And why wouldn't you? We have killer trails and we have lots of open space. A good chunk of those trails are protected and made possible because they fall within reserves. All the trails in Santa Clara? Those are located in the Santa Clara River Reserve. Care to shred the Claw? Yup, the Bear Claw Poppy trail and all of its off shoots exists because it sits in the protected Bear Claw Poppy Reserve. What about all those trails through the iconic red rocks of St. George and Washington? Again, that space has only been preserved because it is a National Conservation Area, the Red Cliffs Desert Reserve.

The Red Cliffs Desert Reserve (RCDR) has a lot of trails in it. Those most loved by mountain bik-

ers are Prospector, Church Rocks, Paradise, City Creek, Broken Mesa and Icehouse. One of the best parts of the RCDR is its continuous nature. One can jump on Prospector and heading Southwest ride only dirt through Grapevine, Powerline, T-Bone, Pioneer Hills, City Creek and in Paradise. It's actually our favorite way to end the popular Turkey Farm Loop.

The Reserve has been under attack pretty much from its inception. The desire to develop everything (see above about endless sprawl) is strong in Washington County. Our elected officials are giddy about turning this place into the next Salt Lake Valley or even worse, Los Angeles (they are pretty much following the LA County play book to a tee, see Lake Powell Pipeline). And I get it, there's money to be made. Can you imagine what a view lot on Church Rocks would sell for? I think you get it.

Unfortunately, all that money that could be made is really just trading our biggest asset, our open space and iconic red desert, for McMansions and pavement.

Erik Peterson sang in Mischief Brew's Love and Rage, "And the greatest of all historical shams is believing you cannot do something you can."

We are currently amid a fight to save the Red Cliffs Desert Reserve. County Officials, UDOT and our Congressman are hell bent on pushing a road through the Reserve. This road, known as the Northern Corridor, would start at the top of Washington Parkway and push right into our trails. It would become the bottom of Broken Mesa/Icehouse,



The Red Cliffs Desert Reserve mountain bike trails are in jeopardy from a proposed freeway. Photo by Lukas Brinkerhoff

eliminate Powerline and T-bone and end back at Red Cliffs Parkway just above Pioneer Park by Pioneer Hills Trailhead.

It's easy to look at these instances and feel like it's impossible to win. Not only do those we oppose seem to have all the power, but there's that ever present bureaucratic inertia (if UDOT doesn't build roads, it doesn't have a reason to exist) we have to contend with, but history is on our side.

You see, this isn't the first time the Northern Corridor has been pushed. No, this fight has been going on for almost 20 years. And every single time, the people have spoken, and the road has been kept out of the Reserve.

You know you are winning when those you oppose begin trying to circumvent the public process. Congressman Stewart has introduced a bill that would do just that. Instead of allowing the road to go

through a NEPA process including public comments and protests, it would be pushed through as a legislative move.

Now, mountain bikers, this is where you come in. You might be thinking that this doesn't affect you, but this is your land. The Northern Corridor isn't dissecting land owned by the county or a city or even private individuals (while there are private inholdings that could benefit from this road), it's your land. You have a right to speak up and be part of the process that will ultimately determine if this road happens or not. You are a public landowner and it's time to stand up for that land and oppose those who would give it away far too cheaply.

So, what can you do? It's actually a pretty easy process. It's simply commenting to the BLM, signing some petitions and putting numbers behind the message that we do not want a road through our desert.

Fire up the internet box and go to [savepioneerpark.org](http://savepioneerpark.org). The front page includes a link to a To Do List. Go there and follow the steps. Easy peasy.

This fight won't be over when we stop this road once again. Attacks on our open space, our public lands are going to continue. We have to make sure that we stay vigilant and active to ensure our voices are heard when it comes to our state. If we don't, there's a chance we will lose all these amazing places. Access to our land stops when it becomes privately held.

Alright, I see you're getting antsy. The cooler is right over there, grab a beer and a cookie, just don't forget to act.

Thanks, Uncle Knux.

Lukas Brinkerhoff blogs about mountain biking and life at [mooseknuckleralliance.org](http://mooseknuckleralliance.org).

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## ADVOCACY

**“Stay Safe, Stay Active” Streets Provide a Possible Vision of the Future**

A cyclist on the now dismantled 900 S Safe Street closure. Photo by Dave Iltis

By Turner C. Bitton

On April 23, 2020 Salt Lake City Mayor Erin Mendenhall announced

the first of several “Stay Safe, Stay Active” street closures with the announcement of the closure of 500 North between Redwood Road and 800 West. With the announcement,

Salt Lake City joined a growing number of cities throughout the country that have begun reimagining their relationship with streets.

Across the country cities of all sizes have closed streets to vehicle traffic and opened safe access to pedestrians and cyclists. The simple act of putting up signs and barricades can provide significant recreation space for families on bicycles, joggers looking for extra space, and people who have mobility issues – whose needs are all too often forgotten.

With up to 80% of habitable land in a city paved over for streets, every inch of recreation space become crucial at a time when physical distancing is so important. To promote the public health, cities have reimagined the community’s relationship with its streets. Residents, it seems, are all too happy to take advantage of the safe, pedestrian-centered changes by

utilizing the open spaces.

With bicycle sales experiencing a significant boom since the onset of COVID-19, streets are becoming a new adventure for cyclists without a history on city streets. The urgency of reclaiming streets has grown as maintaining physical distancing during the COVID-19 crisis has proven difficult to some residents. This is especially true in dense areas where playgrounds and other public gathering places have closed due to health precautions. As summer approached, and trails, bike paths, and sidewalks grew busier, Salt Lake City took action to provide additional outdoor spaces for residents to get out onto the street and enjoy physical activity.

To determine the least disruptive and community-friendly closures, Salt Lake City conducted a week-long survey. During the week that the survey was active, over 6,200 people completed the survey weighing in on the proposed closures.

In addition to survey data, the city used geographic equity, connections to parks and trails, hospital/emergency routes, transit routes, and traffic patterns in determining the best routes for closure.

At the time of the street closure announcement, Salt Lake City Transportation Director Jon Larsen released a statement explaining the care that the city was taking in opening streets, “These are challenging times and we are aware of the strain that the current situation is placing on people’s physical and mental health. Opening up more space to walk and bike is one way we are trying to help people stay healthy and safe... Similar initiatives to this have been successfully implemented in cities throughout the world, and we’re excited to make this happen in Salt Lake City.”

Since the initial closure in April, Salt Lake City announced several other neighborhood street closures, which altogether, represented roughly 8 miles of closures within city limits. However, as of June 30th, Salt Lake City began reopening some of the streets that were closed previously and normal operation has resumed.

As with all changes, the closure of streets hasn’t been without controversy and some residents have expressed frustration that vehicles are unnecessarily restricted by the closures. Still, many residents have expressed optimism about the future of initiatives like “Stay Safe, Stay Active.”

Taylor Anderson from the newly launched Sweet Streets Initiative, a new Salt Lake City transportation advocacy group, shares that optimism. “I think particularly during this pandemic we’ve seen just how inadequate our sidewalks — and even some trails — are in just about every neighborhood. The Stay Safe,

Stay Active streets showed what can be accomplished when we view streets as public spaces for everyone and not just people traveling by car. About 80% of the public space in our city consists of roads, so it’s time for Salt Lake City to join others in permanently reallocating street space for all people.”

The lessons learned, he argues, will provide a pathway forward for doing just that. “We saw that we can make changes to our streets and the sky won’t fall. There won’t be paralyzing gridlock. When given the space, people will get into the streets we all pay for and use it. I hope and expect that the city collected valuable data during this unprecedented time to see how these streets were used when they were temporarily altered to help make changes moving forward.”

Others see significant opportunity to use street closures as a mechanism for stimulating an awakening economy. As states and cities begin to reopen, many restaurants and businesses see closed streets as an opportunity to better utilize urban space to thread the needle of public health and economics.

On June 13th, Salt Lake City Mayor Erin Mendenhall signed an executive order allowing restaurants and businesses to apply for special permitting to reopen in outdoor spaces so long as they provide a 6-foot pathway for pedestrians and foot traffic.

It remains to be seen what kind of cultural change will occur when whatever form of normalcy returns post-COVID. However, one thing seems to be apparent – residents will have dramatically reimagined their relationship with the streets in cities across the country.

[Editor’s Note: the following streets were closed in Salt Lake City as part of this program, although a number have since reopened: 900 South between 300 East and 700 East, 600 East between South Temple and 900 South, Wasatch Drive between Crestview Drive and 1300 South, Stratford Avenue between 1300 East and 2000 East, 4th Avenue between A Street and N Street, 200 West between 600 North and North Temple, Emery Street between 300 South and Hayes Avenue, 800 East between 700 South and 1700 South, Kensington Avenue between 700 East and 1400 East, and between 1500 East and 1600 East.]

Turner C. Bitton is an avid cyclist and is well-known for his commitment to public service. He lives in the Glendale neighborhood of Salt Lake City with his husband Chase and their two dogs Charley and Moose.

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**SPEAKING OF SPOKES**

**Emigration Canyon Illustrates Need for Better Planning for Bicycles**



A rider near the top of Emigration Canyon. Photo by Dave Iltis

By David Ward

I live on the main road heading up Emigration Canyon, a canyon located just east of downtown Salt Lake City. Emigration Canyon, so called because it was the canyon through which the first Mormon pioneers descended to settle in the Salt Lake valley (or just “the canyon” as us canyon residents refer to it), is a cyclist’s paradise.

The road here gently winds through beautiful wooded terrain with its adjacent creek for about 6 miles before it kicks up somewhat steeper for the last 1.5 miles to the summit, Little Mountain. Its grade is gentle enough that most cyclists with a little bit of fitness can reach the summit, while sufficiently steep enough to challenge the more hardcore among us. According to Strava data (thanks to Cycling West for this information), this is the most popular ride in the State of Utah, and the 4th-most popular ride in the country. On mornings, evenings and all weekend, my wife and I look out from our kitchen window onto a steady stream of cyclists heading up and down the canyon.

So, it was no wonder when electronic road signs placed the last week of May at both ends of Emigration Canyon, announcing it would be closed from June 15 to September 22 for road work, caused an uproar in the cycling community. I was not caught unawares as I had been so informed already by the mayor of our Emigration Township, and had even been enlisted by him to provide support and comment for a complete

re-paving of this road rather than another chip and seal effort. But while I passed the word on to a few, most of the cycling community was not so informed, and so this came as a shock, and with little time to do much about it.

Nevertheless, there was an outcry once the signs went up and, thanks to the efforts of some good advocates, some changes occurred. First, the closure of the canyon was pushed back three weeks while preparatory work that did not require closure of the canyon was done. Second, it appears that re-paving will commence from the bottom (Salt Lake side) of the canyon and proceed in sections so that the canyon will be progressively re-opened as sections are completed. Also, it appears that canyon residents will be allowed on the road for commuting, and maybe even to access other areas for recreational riding.

As both a resident of the canyon and as an avid cyclist, I have mixed feelings regarding this entire affair. First, motorists and cyclists alike are going to love this new road. It will be smooth and free of the potholes, cracks, road patches and other issues that have plagued this canyon road for as long as I have been riding here. Kudos to Mayor Joe Smolka who recognized the need for a complete re-paving and advocated for it. Even if there had been no access during the entire re-paving project, the end product would be well worth the inaccessibility, though as outlined above, concessions and accommodations have been made.

What is more troubling, though, is the failure of Emigration Township

and Salt Lake County planners and engineers to adequately seek input from cycling advocates and the cycling community generally. The popularity of this canyon road for, and its use by, cyclists is well-known to these people. As are the cycling advocacy groups and organizations, primarily the Salt Lake City Bicycle Advisory Committee, the Salt Lake County Bicycle Advisory Committee (SLCBAC), and our regional bicycling publication, Cycling West. It would have been easy and a no-brainer to reach out to these advocates during the planning process.

As a result of this failure, the opportunity for compromises in the design of this project, and in particular issues relating to lane and shoulder widths, speed limits, debris control, and maximized user benefit was lost. While the temporary accommodations were able to be addressed, it was too late to bring about positive discussion addressing these other issues.

I assume some responsibility for this. I was involved, as I said, in advocating for a complete re-paving of this road, but was not asked to be involved or kept informed beyond that. Nevertheless, I should have made certain, rather than assume, the more vocal voices named above were involved.

This issue of involving interest groups in road planning and design is not an isolated concern, relevant only to Emigration Canyon. Rather, anywhere there exists a popular and favored road or trail for riding, we need to remain alert, make ourselves visible to designers and planners, and make certain we are heard.

In the end, I am mostly pleased with what is happening in my canyon. But I recognize it could have been better. Indeed, it should have been better.

Editor’s Note: At the time of publication, the road has been repaved, and many of the striping issues are being resolved. David Ward’s column is a reminder that it’s important to stay involved from start to finish of a project, especially on your favorite bike routes.

**METAL COWBOY**

**Spinning Someone Else’s Wheels**

By Joe Kurmaskie

I’ve always liked criterium races, though I’ve only been in one, which I won, but we’ll get to that in a bit. I do a crit a couple times a week in my neighborhood. I’m the only one in the race and it’s not a square as much as a very long rectangle with a slanted roof on it along the bluff. I like to do five laps because after that I get a little bored and it feels like I’ve gotten the blood flowing enough.

I lean into the corners and open it up on the long straightaways and sometimes I narrate in my best color commentator voice, “It’s time to open up the suitcase and see what tricks are stored in there.” “Dig deep, lad. It’s the bell lap.”

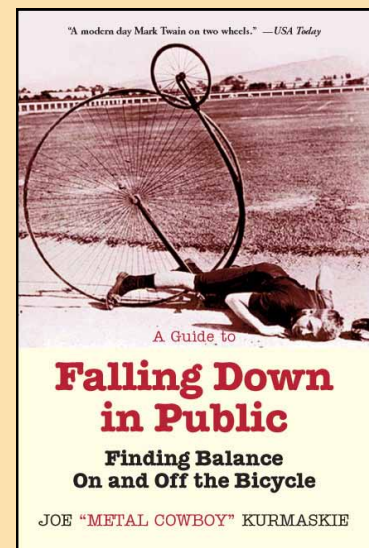
Sometimes I pass other riders who don’t know they are in a race. Mostly I like taking the air and seeing the angle of the sun across the pavement when it’s beaming through the trees. Mostly I like feeling alive and in motion.

In 1996 I was covering the Tour Of The Gila for the newspaper where I worked. My landlord was one of the race sponsors. He co-owned the local bike shop and he was a pretty chill guy. He partner was a ball of stress. You know how you can actually see stress swirl around some people? It’s a five-day stage race with a crit in town on that Saturday. I rode along on the long day out to the cliff dwellings and appreciated how fast these non-bodyfat fuckers could coax a bike to go.

The Saturday race was in multiple parts. The women raced in the morning, then the citizens crit. Then the men’s cats in the afternoon. My landlord came out at about 5 minutes before noon with a mountain bike and told me he’d signed me up for the citizen’s race. I waved it off and pointed out that I was wearing hiking boots. The gun sounded and he literally ran me to the start line and pushed me forward. I had a few seconds to decide to peel off or dig in.

I have this default feature built into the reptile part of my brain ... it’s always set on fight. So I did my best to get my hiking boots onto the middle of the pedals and I dug in, hard. so hard I had to back off a bit so as not to blow up, but that was after I’d caught and overtaken the pack.

I held my line in my Mountain Hardware shorts, Suwannee Country Tours tank top and hiking boots. I looked absurd, I felt exhausted. By the third lap I con-



templated dropping off the back but half of the town, my friends and neighbors were chanting “Joe, Joe, Joe” at every corner. Several of their dogs chased after me, mistaking “Joe” for “go” perhaps.

Much of my life has followed this track ... a push from nowhere, chaos, excitement, sound, fury, pain, and motion, then at some point a big smile turns to laughter because fuck, it’s all gonna be over soon enough so enjoy the ride.

A hundred yards out my boot slipped the pedal and I almost went down, but I went loose and completed the motion catching the pedal again. When it was over, I was laying on the ground thinking is this what a heart attack at 29 feels like?

The Ilg brothers helped me to the curb where I sat with my head between my knees for an indefinite period of time.

“You won,” Craig Ilg said but all I heard was, “You done.”

“How do you feel?” Craig’s brother asked.

Still a bit breathless, I could be philosophical, “Like I will stick to touring for here on...”

When they put the medal around my neck I chuckled, realizing that since I was the reporter, I was going to have to write about my win in the third person when listing the stats for that day. Since the race was a loop, it somehow made sense, as if seeing myself as I came around to the start.

On stage, I manage to blurt out, “Next year leaving the hiking boots at home ... maybe flip flops.”

Joe Kurmaskie is a journalist, syndicated columnist, and contributor to numerous magazines including Outside, Bicycling Magazine, Men’s Journal and Parenting. He’s a bike advocate, activist, found of Cadence Press, and a Random House author of seven books including Metal Cowboy, Mud, Sweat and Gears and A Guide To Falling Down In Public.

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## GRAVEL

## A Guide To Gravel Bike Tires or A Theoretical Treatise on Tire Selection



An assortment of gravel tires. Photo by Bobby Kennedy

## By Bobby Kennedy

Right now, we're deep into the lockdown and I'm feeling a bit pernickety and out of sorts and so maybe now's the absolute best time to talk about gravel bike tires.

Why now? Because I get asked about tires, and ask others for recommendations about tires, more than any other subject by an absolutely enormous margin. They make more difference to your ride than nearly any other component on the bike, possibly barring the saddle. Tires can make or break your ride but using the right tire for every ride potentially means having several dozen sets all queued up and ready to go, which means no, no way in hell. Especially not if you're running without tubes.

So there's no better time to figure out what kinds of tires are best for you and your ride, or to figure out whether angels have navels, or if that one-handed clap you can kind of do counts, or if trees only fall in the presence of an observer than right now, when we're basically barred from all the productive things that would otherwise call us back to sanity.

Ground rules: this is not a tire review. This is a theoretical treatise on tire selection theory. If you aren't sitting down, get on that. The largest bike parts distributor in the US,

Quality Bicycle Products, lists over 1500 models of tire in its inventory. Not all of those are for gravel, but a lot are. And QBP doesn't carry a lot of brands, or even all the gravel tires produced by the brands that they do carry. So yeah, we're going to stay general. Hopefully, after you read this, you can help someone else find their tires rather than being the nth person to ask, "What tire should I run for \_\_\_\_\_?" We're going to talk about design rather than model.

But what makes for a good gravel tire? Gravel is weird because the surfaces are often worse than you'd find on dedicated mountain bike trails, but the tires need to roll fast and (usually) fit into frames that won't accommodate tires larger than 42mm (this is changing, but 42mm is pretty common). So out-and-out mountain bike tires won't fit. To make it more difficult, most people tend to ride decent amounts of pavement on their gravel bike, so tires should be fast, too. There are a few different kinds of gravel tires and they basically fit into one of these three categories: hardpack, hardpack with knobs, full-on knobbies. So, God help us, let's begin.

**First Thing: Bigger is Almost Always Better**

No matter what kind of tire you run, bigger tires will give you better traction, comfort, and float than smaller sizes of the same tire. There are limits. A big tire can still ride

like a rock if it has a full puncture belt and you pump it up to 1000 PSI. But, unlike on asphalt, where efficiency is king, traction and comfort are what make you fast on dirt and gravel. Bigger tires are also heavier, usually, so there's that, but even a little higher weight often won't overcome the benefits of being able to float over loose surfaces. I got dropped on my own Salty Lizard 100 course by a bunch of guys on mountain bikes because we rode on a ton of sand that my 700c x 40 tires wouldn't let me drift over like their 29 x 2.3" tires let them. Longer courses, too, usually favor big, comfy tires – not a lot of 40 mm tires on the Tour Divide. But, on the other hand, if you need a good tire for the Crusher in the Tushar, weight and efficiency become important again: no one wants to lug 4 lbs. (roughly two light 29" tires) up the Col de Crush. So yeah, whatever else you read below, remember that bigger is almost always better except when you're about to climb 10k' in a competitive setting.

**Supple As Flip: Hardpack Tires**

Hardpack tires – the Panaracer Gravelking, Hutchinson Sector, Maxxis Refuse – rely on teeny treads, volume, soft rubber, and suppleness to keep you anchored to pavement and hardpack dirt. That tread might be siping (Gravelking and Sector) which looks like wee lit-

tle ridges, or a file tread (Challenge Gravel Tire, Maxxis Refuse, and IRC Boken), which looks like lots of dots or tiny diamonds. Some, like Vittoria's Terreno Dry, rely on space-age materials that I'm just flat not qualified to discuss. Hardpack tires roll really fast on those minuscule treads, basically like road tires. The tiny treads hook up just enough with nearly-solid surfaces to keep you from skittering all over the place, while the suppleness (just a minute on that one) of the tire helps it to deform around the road surface and keep those treads pressed firmly into the terra. None of these are industry terms, btw. I'm just demystifying marketing here.

Anyway.

Suppleness is the quasi-sexual term for how much and how readily the tire deforms under pressure. Tires with a thin carcass (rubber outside) and cap (rubber on the top) tend to be pretty supple because there's not much material to deform

in the first place. That can be awesome. Supple tires tend to be more comfortable at a given size and pressure than non-supple tires. They also have a built-in puncture-resistance because they'll deform over a sharp thing rather than resist it and get stuck. Think of trying to poke a hole in a piece of paper that's pulled taught versus one that's just kind of floating loose. They can also be very, very fast because that comfort and ability to deform means that you can just chug on through whatever you hit.

But being supple and having tiny treads alone won't keep you on the ground, so many truly hardpack tires often have a fairly soft rubber compound as well. This is definitely the case with the Boken, not so much with the Sector. The official term here is "durometer," the relative hardness of the material itself. Soft, low-durometer compounds deform and grip more easily and can rebound more comfortably

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**Specialized Pathfinder Pro Gravel tire. Photo by Bobby Kennedy**

**WTB Resolute gravel tire. Photo by Bobby Kennedy**

than harder durometer compounds, but they also wear faster and break easier.

So, the skinny on these tires is that they'll generally handle asphalt and asphalt-like surfaces just fine, but they might explode when exposed to rocks. That depends heavily on the compound and whether the company has added a puncture-resistant belt, but the trade-off there is that the belt generally decreases the ability of the tire to deform and thus, its beautiful suppleness. These tires are generally very round as well since they don't have shoulder knobs, which is great for cornering on hard surfaces, not so hot at digging into sand. However, that roundness can make them absolutely amazing at surfing through deep, fresh gravel. Really, it's beautiful. Everyone should experience it at least once.

**Send It: Knobbies**

Knobby tires sit on the far side of the spectrum. They tend to feature large knobs on top and shoulder knobs that are meant to bite into softer surfaces. That's the secret of knobbies: they bite into things that are softer than the knob material. When they bite, you have great traction and you can rail things that would wipe out riders on slicks. But on pavement, which is way harder than the tire material, your knobs are useless. This is why even knobby tires generally have a round silhouette: they have to maintain some kind of even traction on pavement. Squared-off profiles might bite well in soft conditions but when you get back on hardpack, they'll try to lose grip when you lean the tire over the corner of the profile. My WTB Resolutes are very much knobby tires, but the knobs are arranged so that looking at them, they appear to have a solidly round silhouette. The Resolute is pretty sweet.

And they bring up a good point about those knobs. In front tires, knobs are pretty great. You can lean the bike over into turns and not lose traction because when the rear wheel goes out from under you, you can recover, but if the front goes, the only place you're going is over the bars. In the rear, those knobs can help you grip on loose climbs,

but they tend to interfere with your efficiency and traction everywhere else. In the rear, the knobs on a Resolute squirm under rider weight/power. So instead of that planted feeling of a tire holding on for dear life, you get a feeling like pulling Velcro. Braking, that interrupted surface between knobs doesn't grip as well as a slick or semi-slick because, well, there's nothing there. The knob might grip, but it can't bite, and its effective edge (the bit that works on the ground) is smaller than the smooth surface of a slick, or the center line of a semi-slick.

In general, the best things to think about with knobs are: how tall and how many? Widely spaced knobs can get you better traction in very loose conditions like sand and mud, where you need to be able to get rid of material as you move. Same with tall knobs, which bite deeper into the nasty stuff but will squirm more on hard surfaces. Closely-spaced low knobs, like on the Maxxis Rambler or Panaracer's own ticket to tire immortality, the Gravelking SK, will roll and grip better on hardpack but can leave you washing out when you're caught in the sand trap. So, it's a question of what you think you're going to end up on: the faster you think you're going to be travelling on really crappy surfaces, the more and taller knobs you need. As a bonus, knobby tires often come with extra protection, though some, like the Resolute, just come with sidewall protection and depend on tubeless tire sealant and the knobs themselves to prevent punctures. In the latter case, knobby tires can sometimes be actually lighter than semi-slicks and slicks, which have a continuously thick carcass around the whole tire. I'm running a Resolute in the front and a Specialized Pathfinder semi-slick in the rear that outweighs it by at least 40 g despite being the same labelled size. So why would I want to run it, when I don't have as much grip on dirt as with another Resolute or as much grip on pavement as with a slick? Well...

**Semi-slick Tires**

Some tires try to split the difference between a pavement tire and a

allowing it to last longer than the knobs on a knobby tire. Lasts longer on the road, but has a harder time on anything slippery (it's vice versa really quick on the road). If you ride a lot of pavement but have a local trail that you like to hit on your way to climb mountain roads and don't mind getting loose when the descent gets loose, semi-slicks are pretty great, as long as you don't mind the hefty weight penalty of that continuous strip of rubber. They almost always weigh more than sister models from the same brand. But the efficiency's better. Your choice.

**So, Which Tire Should You Buy?**

HA! Good luck. No clue. But ask yourself, how hard are the surfaces you ride? Do you need to be more efficient or more comfortable? Do you really stink at sand? Generally, a good rule of thumb is to get a tire that'll basically handle your go-to ride without wearing down after two go-arounds – knobbies last a pretty long time when they never touch asphalt. Or hit up your local gravel race promoter because we might act all curmudgeonly when we get the damned tire question again, but really, we love feeling needed. And aside from the certitude of knowing that angels do not actually have navels, that's what we need right now.

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**NUTRITION****The Athlete's Kitchen: Hot Weather Hydration Tips**

By Nancy Clark MS RD CSSD

Steaming hot summers bring up nutrition questions for athletes who are training and competing in the heat:

- How can I tell if I've had enough to drink?
- Should I be consuming extra electrolytes?
- Is it possible to drink too much?\*

With summers getting hotter and longer, here are some practical hot weather sports nutrition tips.

To start, let's look at the physiology of keeping the body cool. Normal body temperature is 98.6°F (37°C). When you exercise, your body temperature increases. At 104°, you are in the danger zone. If you were to really overheat and get to 107.6°F (42° C), your cells would get damaged—similar to how raw egg white coagulates as it starts to cook. You don't want that to happen!

- To dissipate the heat generated by working muscles, blood flow to the skin increases and your sweat glands get activated. As sweat evaporates from the skin, it provides a cooling effect.

- Humid heat (New England) is physiologically more stressful than dry heat (Arizona). Hence, athletes who will be traveling to a sporting event want to acclimatize to the environment in which they will be competing.

- With repeated training in the heat for more than an hour a day, the body acclimatizes over the course of 7 to 14 days. You'll notice greater exercise capacity. In one study, endurance increased from 48 to 80 minutes.

- The more you train in the heat, the more you sweat. While this helps keep you cooler, the additional fluid loss can easily lead to progressive dehydration if you do not fully replace sweat losses on a daily basis.

- Sweat losses of 2 to 3 pounds per hour are common among athletes who exercise vigorously in the heat; some lose more than that. You don't need to replace every drop of sweat, but you do want to minimize losses, so you end up losing less than 2% of your body weight (3 pounds for a 150-pound athlete).

- "Drinking to thirst" generally works for day to day living and fitness exercisers, but not always for athletes. Studies suggest drinking to thirst often results in body water deficits of 2% to 3% among athletes who sweat heavily in the heat. That level of dehydration impairs athletic performance. Hence, ironman Triathletes, marathoners, and other endurance athletes should have a drinking plan that balances losses with intake.

- To learn how much sweat you lose during exercise, weigh yourself nude before and after a hard workout, accounting for any fluid consumed during the session. If you have lost, let's say 2 pounds per hour (32 ounces, 1 quart), target drinking 6 to 8 ounces every 15 minutes the

next time you exercise at that intensity and under those weather conditions. Practice drinking that volume of fluid, to train your gut to handle it comfortably.

- Monitor progressive underhydration by taking daily weights first thing in the morning. A downward weight trend can be a warning sign of inadequate fluid replacement, particularly if the morning urine is dark and concentrated. (Yes, it could also reflect fat-loss.)

- You can tell if you have adequately rehydrated by monitoring the color and volume of your urine—as well as how often you need to urinate. For example, if you sweat heavily during your workout and then don't pee for five hours afterwards, you are underhydrated. Urine that is dark and concentrated is another warning sign.

- On a daily basis, your goal is void a significant volume of urine that looks like lemonade, not beer, every 2 to 4 hours. Google urine color chart for a visual resource.

- When you sweat, you lose not only water but also electrically charged minerals (electrolytes), more commonly known as sodium, calcium, magnesium, and potassium. Sodium (a part of salt) is the main electrolyte of concern.

- Because you sweat off proportionately more water than sodium, the concentration of sodium in blood actually increases during exercise. In standard (i.e., not extreme) exercise situations, replacement with electrolyte supplements is needless; food eaten at meals/snacks offers ample electrolytes.

- The primary purpose of sodium in a sports drink is to enhance fluid absorption and retention, as well as enhance absorption of carbohydrate. The amount is inadequate to replace sodium lost in sweat. For example, a slice of bread offers about 125-200 mg sodium; 8-oz. Gatorade offers only 110 mg.. Gatorade Endurance formula, 200 mg.

- If you will be exercising for hours on end in the heat (i.e., all-day bike ride, ultra-run, or tennis tournament), you can lose a significant amount of sodium. Assuming you will be consuming food during the extended exercise session, you can replenish lost sodium with peanut butter & jelly sandwiches (500 mg sodium), thin pretzels (490 mg/1-oz) and cheese sticks (200 mg/stick).

- Caution: Do not over-consume plain water and/or sports drink during extended exercise unless you are taking in other sources of sodium. Excess water dilutes the reduced amount of sodium in the blood and can lead to hyponatremia (low blood sodium), a life-threatening condition that can result in death. This can happen, for example, with slow (4-hour) marathoners who diligently drink at every water station, regardless of thirst.

- After exercise, if you need sodium, you will crave salt and should honor those salt cravings with crackers and cheese, pickles, pizza, potato

**COACHING****Make Recovery Rides Fun!**

Make recovery rides fun! Photo courtesy Sarah Kaufmann

By Sarah Kaufmann

**The Purpose of Recovery Rides**

Is there a really a good reason to ride easy? The answer is absolutely, yes!

Sarah Kaufmann on a fun 'recovery' ride at Snowbird, Utah. Photo by Cathy Fegan-Kim, [cottonsoxphotography.net](http://cottonsoxphotography.net)

Your hard training sessions result in muscle damage. The rest and repair that occurs after this damage is the time for adaptation to occur and for you to get stronger. You can't get stronger if recovery does not occur. Active recovery or recovery rides aid the recovery process by stimulating blood flow that carries the nutrients to help heal damaged muscles and tissue. This light pedaling also flushes your legs of metabolic waste that is the by-product of your harder sessions.

Most athletes do well with four hard days of training per week. Few can tolerate (and adapt to) more, and many athletes actually experi-

ence better adaptation with fewer hard days per week. If you train hard for four days, that leaves three days for light riding or off. For most of the riders I coach, that means two days of light riding and one day completely off.

If you are a very time-crunched athlete, take the three days off the bike and just do your four hard days of training. If you can prioritize riding time a little more, the two days of lighter riding will aid your recovery and adaptation. Usually one of those days will be a dedicated 'Recovery Ride'. The other easy day should still be a lighter ride, with a slightly different goal (be that skills work or neuromuscular in nature), but still a shorter duration and lighter intensity than the dedicated hard training days.

The wording I use when I prescribe recovery rides is as follows; "Little to no resistance on the pedals,

the only goal is to spin your legs out. Make an effort to breathe only through your nose. This ensures that you keep the effort low enough and it also elicits a lower stress hormonal response to the activity."

These rides should be anywhere from 30 to 60 minutes and should leave you feeling refreshed. When in doubt, less is more with recovery rides. In cased you are wondering if your ride is too easy, it isn't. If you are wondering if your ride is too hard, it probably is. Choose a flat route and keep it in a gear that allows you to lightly spin. You should stay below about 50% of your threshold power and about 70% of your threshold heart rate.

Recovery rides should be both a mental and physical break from training. If the weather is crummy or riding sounds like a chore, just take the day off. Recovery rides should not be an additional source of stress. Spin to the coffee shop, ride in jeans, or ride your beater bike. Add whatever outside cues you can to keep yourself from digging deep or trying to go fast. If you are eyeing a segment on STRAVA, turn STRAVA off that day, no PR's on recovery rides.

Let recovery rides be your mental and physical reward for the work you put in during your hard sessions. Instead of dreading them as wasted time, appreciate the benefit you get from active recovery and soak up the lightness.

Sarah Kaufmann is the owner of K Cycling Coaching. She is an elite level XC and CX racer for the DNA Pro Cycling Team. She is based in Salt Lake City, UT and can be reached at [sarah@kcyclingcoaching.com](mailto:sarah@kcyclingcoaching.com) or 413.522.3180.

chips, V-8 Juice—or more simply, sprinkle salt on your recovery meal.

- Most healthy, sweaty athletes can set aside public health guidelines to "limit your salt intake." Replacing sodium losses is important to rebalance your body.

- When you know you will be sweating for more than an hour or two in the heat, plan to boost your pre-exercise salt intake. By consuming 300 to 500 mg sodium before you exercise, the sodium will already be in your body, working to retain water and retard dehydration. During extended exercise, plan to target 500 to 700 mg sodium per hour (and more if you experience muscle cramps).

- Chocolate milk is preferable to sports drink to enhance rehydration. It offers more sodium (150 mg vs 110/ 8 oz) —as well as more carbohydrate (to replenish glyco-

gen stores) and protein (to repair muscles). Drink wisely!

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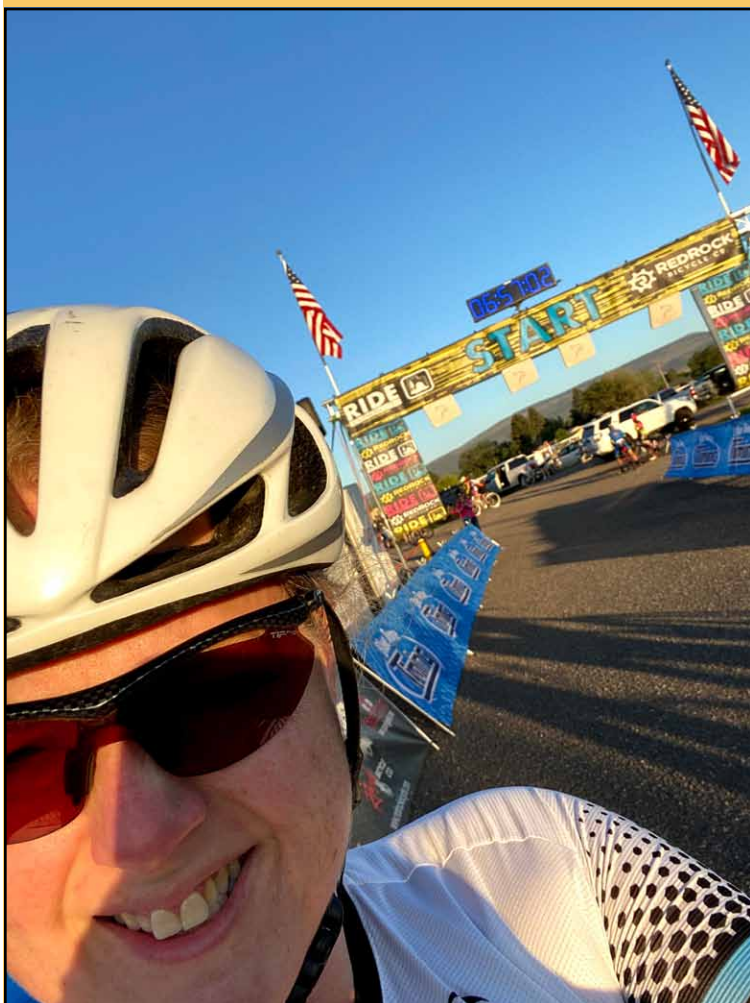
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## ROAD RIDING

**The Continued Adventures of a 40-Something Mom: The Desperado Duel**

Kelly McPherson at the start of her successful completion of the 2020 Desperado Duel. Photo by Kelly McPherson

By Kelly McPherson

The Desperado Duel boasts 50, 109, or 150-mile road rides through eastern Utah. I had never done this event before because it always seems to fall near my anniversary and my husband is not a cyclist. "Happy anniversary, Honey! I'm going to leave you and go ride my bike all day." I can't see that going over very well.

However, this year, with the serious lack of events due to Covid and the fact that I am still training for Lotoja, I thought it would be good for me to sign up and do the 150. It would be so good to ride somewhere other than loops around my house.

In order to solve the anniversary complication, we made an extra-long weekend of it and hauled our travel trailer out to a cute little campground about 16 miles outside of Panguitch and about 5 miles from

Bryce Canyon. It was so much fun! I would highly recommend doing that. The area has so much to explore and do that coming down just for the night, riding in the event and going home is kind of a shame. We spent quite a bit of time in Bryce Canyon as well as going on a 2-hour horseback riding adventure in Kodachrome.

Friday evening was packet pick up at the start line. The line was long and I was hot, which is why I probably got a little testy with the volunteer when I found out that I would be expected to ride 109 miles, cross the finish line, let them know that I was heading out for the final 40 and then leave the music and food at the finish line to head back out and up a steep and barren looking climb. Ugh! At the end of 109 miles, I figured I would be about done. The thought of having to leave the finish area and go back out was very frustrating. Ugh! Could I even do that?

Saturday morning dawned beautifully. The temperature was comfortable and there was no wind. Lively music was playing as I finished preparations for a very long day. Finally, it was time for the 150s to roll out. The group starting right at 7 was small and much faster than me, so I wasn't surprised when they all passed me within the first couple of miles. I resisted the urge to try to keep up with them. The day was going to be long and I didn't want to burn any matches quite this early, so I kept my pace steady and headed out of town.

The first climb is on the bike trail up through Red Canyon and it is absolutely gorgeous! I don't normally like to ride bike trails as there are usually too many pedestrians on them, but this one was wide and freshly paved and a fantastic alternative to the highway. I was a little concerned about the distance from the start to the first aid station at mile 25, especially with the climb in the middle and possibly really warm temperatures, so I was tempted to bring a third bottle. Then I realized that our campground was at about mile 16, so I told my husband about when I would be there. He waited to refill my water bottle and let me choke down a banana. Perfect!

After the top of the hill, the course profile appears to be downhill for a very long time, which is a bit deceptive. It is a rolling downhill that starts out kind of pretty, but quickly goes out into the desert where I rode alone for a very long time. I passed one guy, but that is pretty much the only human being I saw until I came to a small canyon and to the 2nd aid station.

For some reason, there were riders at all the aid stations, but as soon as I got back on the road, they all seemed to disappear. Weird! Aid stations were all well stocked with a variety of supplies. I tended to drink a little pickle juice and grab a Sweet & Salty granola bar at each one. Though, by the time I got to the aid

station at mile 95, all I wanted was a rice krispie treat and a coke.

Riders have to finish the first 109 miles by 2:30PM or the race organizers won't let you start the final climb. That is a 7.5 hour window, which I should be able to do, but it was going to be close. I wanted to take the first 109 miles easy so I would have something left for the final climb, but I knew I would need to push a bit towards the end if I wanted to have the option of finishing the 150. I wanted to make that decision myself, instead of having it made for me by race management.

The last 25 miles into the finish line at 109 miles were hot and windy with a good steady headwind the entire time. Ugh! I had been preparing my mind for making the choice to cross the finish line and then head back out for the final climb, but that wind was taking some of my resolve. I kept my head down and kept pedaling, and crossed the line by 2:00PM. Yes!

I was happy to hear myself firmly declare to the volunteers at the finish line that I was definitely headed back out, to do the finish loop. I didn't know that I had that kind of resolve in me!

Riders can see the beginning of the climb from several miles away as they head into the finish line the first time. It is an exposed climb that seems to just go straight up the mountain. Ugh! When I reached the bottom, though, it wasn't as bad as it looks from the distance. I think the climb topped out at about 6% grade, so not too bad. It just looks ugly.

Once you get to about mile 116, the road flattens out some and starts to stairstep some uphill rollers through some really pretty mountain forestland. It was cooler during this section and even a little overcast. Some dark clouds threatened rain, but never gave more than just a few sprinkles, which were greatly appreciated.

The race guide says that riders are going up to Panguitch Lake,

when in reality, they are going a little past it to the final aid station, so be prepared for that. It was a little hard to see the lake and then ride right past it.

I knew I was one of the last riders so I was a little concerned that maybe the volunteers had already packed up the aid station and I wouldn't know when to turn around. It would be good for race management to put a sign up somewhere along the lake to let people know how many miles they have until the aid station. If I didn't hear a volunteer in a car driving back down holler at me that I still had 3 miles to go, I would have been really worried and may have flipped early.

Finally, I got to the aid station. I was the last person to make it all the way there and the volunteers were just about as giddy as I was. I filled up my bottles, grabbed another granola bar, and headed back down. Yes, it is down, but there are a couple of short climbs on the way back to Panguitch. One benefit of being the last rider is that one of the volunteers leap-frogged me all the way down the hill. As much as I would have liked to not be the last one, this was somewhat comforting and I was grateful for it.

Finally, finally, finally, I reached the finish line for the second time. I was the last rider to finish. Even though the race website said they would support riders until 6PM and I crossed at 5PM, most of the food, music, and tents were already packed up, which was a little disappointing.

Luckily the finish line was still there. I did get some pizza and a couple of little bottles of Sprite and I sat over by the splash pad to watch naked children run through the water while I waited for my husband to come get me.

It was a good day! The course was tough physically, mentally and emotionally, but I was tougher!

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## BICYCLE TOURING

## A Bike Tour around the Uinta Mountains



On the road to Flaming Gorge. Photo by Patrick Watson

By Lou Melini

A ride around the Uinta mountain range has been on my bucket list of short tours for over a decade. What attracted me to the route is the multitude of roads keeping a bike traveler off of US Highway 40 from Duchesne to Vernal. To the north of the Uinta Mountain range are numerous gravel roads south and west of Fort Bridger, Wyoming, that will take one away from I-80. I also like that I could do this trip from my house without needing a bus, train or car.

In addition to the route, there are ample resupply options along the way that limit the need to carry food no more than 2 days.

I did the trip with 2 “youngsters” that have gone on several overnight rides with me. Patrick and Dave were gracious enough to carry all of the food and spare water over the final 4 days along with being frequently at the front of our small pace line when we encountered headwinds. At 69, I welcomed the assistance.

The route we took is 470 miles with nearly 25,500 feet of elevation gain and of course, elevation loss. During the 7 days of riding, we averaged about 11.4 miles/hour. There were 3 long days of 80-82 miles, over 7 hours of saddle time, and lots of chamois cream.

The first of those days included

riding over Wolf Creek Summit, another had 6,400 feet of elevation gain, and the 3rd long day included 46 miles of gravel roads. The one full rest day in Vernal was very welcome for my tired legs.

## Planning for the trip during the coronavirus pandemic

Being anxious during the planning phase due to the uncertainty of sudden campground closures is an understatement. On the other hand, news reports of crowded state parks and other campgrounds had me worried about being turned away. Another concern was the ability to socially isolate in a packed campground. A small bottle of hand sanitizer is on my bike tour checklist, but a mask is new to the list. Then there was the nightmare “what-if” such as one of us waking up at night with a fever and a cough.

We made reservations at 3 campgrounds, a number that equals the number of campground reservations that I have made in over 22,000 lifetime miles of bike travel. It turned out that we could have rolled into any of the 3 campgrounds without a reservation, as none were full, but all were busy with campers. There was plenty of room for social distancing. Fortunately, we did not encounter any mechanical or other issues that might have delayed us from honoring our reservations. We only “stealth” camped once as the

campground was closed for reasons unrelated to the coronavirus.

[Author’s Note: On a subsequent trip, all of the campgrounds that I encountered were full on the weekend and many were full during weekdays so plan accordingly.]

In order to limit our exposure to other people, we decided to do group meals that reduced our shopping exposure to one person with a shopping list for breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks. The plan for meals worked well with the additional benefit of camaraderie within the group.

## The Ride

## Days 1 and 2

Day one was a meandering route through Park City after climbing to Parley’s Summit on I-80, ending south of Kamas. I’ve done this ride numerous times. Logistical options were limited with the closure of the campground at Rock Cliff recreation area.

We started day 2 with just under 10 miles of relatively flat, low-traffic riding before we starting going up. The climb to the top of Wolf Creek summit is long and steep, longer and steeper than I remember in my younger days. The road has one switchback to reach the summit at 9,500 feet. The US Forest Service campground at the summit provided plenty of rocks to sit on for a much-needed rest. The next 47 miles that took us almost to Duchesne were downhill with a tailwind. For lunch, we cruised into Tabiona to the City Park, which had a great view of the southern Uinta Mountains.

We averaged over 20 miles/hour on this 47-mile section of the ride, ending the 80-mile day with a short steep climb to Starvation State Park. We immediately changed our reservation to the campground that had much needed showers. The neighboring campers brought over beer and Pepsi that we could choose from, which was a nice experience, accompanied by beautiful views and a nice sandy place that was nearly surrounded by grass to pitch our tents.

At 11:00 PM we found out why the grass was so nice as we were awoken by the sprinkler system going off. No one put the fly on their tent as it was warm, and the stargazing was nice, but due to the wind, we were getting sprayed. There was quite a bit of shouting as we pulled up stakes and moved our tents away from the water. We quickly got everything under control at the cost of a small tear in 2 tents, plus I cut my finger pulling out a tent stake.

## Days 3 and 4

The ride to Vernal from Starvation State Park was a proverbial walk-in-the-park. Relatively flat roads, a nice tail wind and except for a short section near Roosevelt and the approach to Vernal, we had roads devoid of traffic for the 65-mile day. Vernal had all we needed. The KOA campground was very clean, and well-stocked with nice people to make our stay pleasant. In addition, we had a small pool to relax in and an outdoor stovetop so we could save our fuel. As I mentioned earlier, we took a rest day here for the anxiously anticipated 80-miles and 6400 feet of climbing to Manila. In a fit of panic, I considered hiring a shuttle to take me part way. Fortunately, a cooler head prevailed when I real-



Patrick and Lou on gravel road to Chalk Creek road and eventually to Coalville. Photo by Patrick Watson

ized that the road is open year-round and has a fair amount of truck traffic, which meant the grade of the road is fairly reasonable.

## Days 5 and 6

We had an early 6:30 AM start for Day 5 out of Vernal. As we approached mile ten there was a sign stating that there were 10 switchbacks and “only” 5-8% grades in the next 4 miles. With a couple of stops for scenic views, the group spun up US Highway 191 only to come to even more beautiful scenery at the summit, where we rode through a Ponderosa pine forest south and west of Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area.

We decided the beautiful road we rode wasn’t enough, so we took a detour for lunch at Red Canyon overlook, a picture-perfect spot. In fact, it looked exactly like the postcard I purchased at the KOA in Vernal. In addition to the views, there are several small Forest Service campgrounds, a café and a visitor center that is to be included as a lodging stop on a return visit. I seem to collect ideas for more trips whenever I go on tour.

We ended the day losing quite a bit of the elevation we gained just prior to Manila. Despite the exten-

sive climbing, we had to carry food on this leg, knowing that Manila did not have a grocery store.

On day 6, we stopped in Mountain View, Wyoming where there is a grocery store but no camping. We had a late lunch and picked up supplies before moving on to Fort Bridger, which has camping, but no grocery. This is part of the logistics of small-town travel that I have frequently encountered. The ride on day 6 was high rangeland once out of Flaming Gorge National Monument, with little climbing, sparse traffic, and views from the north of the Uinta Mountains.

## Morning Coffee on day 7

On this day we had about 2,000 feet of net elevation loss but it was still a tough day. We rode 82 miles, including 46 miles of gravel road. When we got to Chalk Creek Road, pavement, and an expected downhill, we faced a stiff uphill draft which slowed our efforts.

The gravel road from Fort Bridger to Utah Highway 150 (Mirror Lake Scenic Highway) was a highlight. The area is primarily rangeland, with the historical attraction of the original route of the Mormon trek into Utah.

There was the obvious contrast of

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**Kilns in the Ghost Town of Piedmont. Photo by Patrick Watson**

traditional shearers in a pasture shared with large wind turbines. We stopped at the Piedmont charcoal kilns, a formerly prosperous town 150 years ago but now only the kilns remain. There was a lot of wildlife along the way, though we had seen deer, antelope, eagles, osprey, and numerous small mammals and other birds throughout the ride.

When we arrived at the Coalville campground, we had dinner “catered” by Patrick’s wife, Joy. I was beat; beat up tired after the ride. I took a shower then wandered to the office in the slim chance of having coffee, as I didn’t feel like firing up my stove and having instant coffee. As with every tour, a story emerges.

There were 2 employees when I entered the office. I asked the young girl behind the counter about coffee. She was about to direct me to the back when the guy stocking shelves spoke up and said; “The coffee is back there, pointing to the back of the office. I made it fresh this morning.”

I looked at him and said, “It’s 4 o’clock! Fresh this morning?”

He said it was in the special carafe that kept it fresh and warm adding that I could try it before I bought it. So, I tried it, then filled my camp mug and added enough sugar to make it OK.

When I approached the cashier, I asked; “So how much is this morning’s coffee?”

The guy interjected and said \$1.50. As I slid 2 \$1 bills across the counter, the cashier sheepishly slid one back and said; “That’s plenty for morning coffee”.

Dinner was absolutely fantastic. I am still saying thank you to Patrick and Joy for the meal. I turned in early for a good night’s sleep.



**Typical highway and shoulder north of Vernal, Utah. Uintas Bike Tour scenes. Photo by Dave**

**Day 8**

Dave suggested that we return to Salt Lake City via Henefer and East Canyon, a wise choice as we avoided Park City traffic and the duplication of a route we took on day one. I was home by early afternoon and already looking forward to riding the loop again.

**History along the tour**

There is a lot of history along the route of this tour. The most notable history is between the old trading post and now city of Fort Bridger and the former city and current ghost town of Piedmont, both located in Wyoming.

In 1842 or 1843, depending on source, Jim Bridger and his partner Louis Vasquez established Fort Bridger to trade with Native Americans and service emigrant traffic along the Overland Trail.

Later emigrants on the Oregon, California, and Mormon trails used Fort Bridger to obtain supplies. Though now famous, Fort Bridger at the time was not as well outfitted as the more “luxurious” Fort Laramie on the eastern Wyoming plains. Fort Bridger also serviced the Pony Express, the Transcontinental Railroad and the Lincoln Highway. When I-80 was built, Fort Bridger

was bypassed along with the towns of Lyman, Urie, and Mountain View that now only see traffic as part of a historic byway.

Brigham Young and the Mormon pioneers took control of Fort Bridger in 1853 or 1855 depending on source, to service emigrants on the Mormon trail. In 1857 Fort Bridger became an Army post for most of the next several decades, ending their control of Fort Bridger in 1890.

In 1928 the Fort was sold to the Wyoming Historic Landmark Commission. In 1933 the original 38-acre site became a Wyoming Historical Landmark and Museum.

After leaving Fort Bridger, we stopped in Piedmont, a once thriving town established in 1867 to provide railroad ties for the Union Pacific Railroad. Kilns were built to provide charcoal for the railroad and the Salt Lake City steel industry.

In 1940 the town ceased to exist following the rerouting of the railroad a couple of decades earlier. The name Piedmont was derived from an area in Italy where 2 of the early residents came from. Three of the 5 kilns are still present and were listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1971.

Near Piedmont are historical markers and encampments where the original route of Mormon pioneers passed through. Small iron

rail monuments are also present as reminders of the original transcontinental railroad.

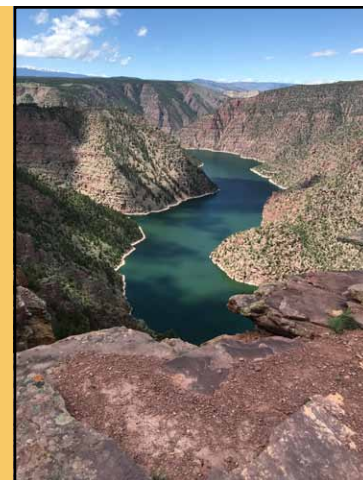
**Tour Summary**

We left Salt Lake City on June 13, arriving home on June 20. The high temperature for the 8 days was just over 80. There were 3 mornings that we woke up with lows of 39-40 (Kamas, Manila and Fort Bridger). Doing the ride a couple of weeks earlier may insure more comfortable temperatures, but the week we rode was a bit cooler than the previous week, so we got lucky with the weather. We only used the flies on our tents when cooler morning temperatures were expected. The only precipitation we experienced was a brief hailstorm as we approached the Daggett County line north of Vernal, the summit of our climb that day.

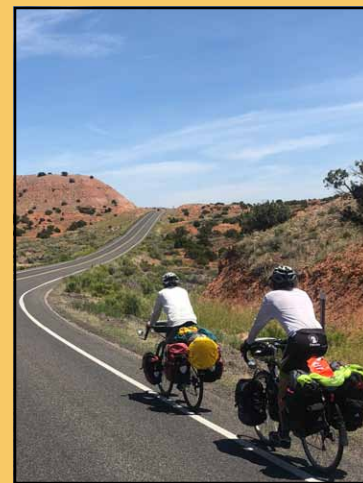
Tire sizes ranged from 700Cx32- to 38-mm on our bikes. No one struggled on the gravel roads, though the ride was bumpy at times. We had one flat tire for the entire tour from a small piece of wire imbedded in the tread. Each of us had a low gear in the range of 20-21 gear inches (24 tooth chain ring/32 tooth cassette ring), which was adequate for Wolf Creek and East Canyon summits.

We stayed in 4 commercial campgrounds, one state park, and one location that I will leave as undisclosed. We had a shower at the end of each day save one, a luxury that we all preferred at the end of long days in the saddle. Forest Service land is available at some of the higher elevations near Wolf Creek summit and Flaming Gorge if one wants to stealth camp or stay in forest service campgrounds.

We traveled mostly on low-traffic roads. Shoulders on roadways were generally narrow. Except for one thrown beer can near Tabiona, traffic was friendly and polite. Not once did I feel like I was on the wrong road. We used a combination of DeLorme maps (provided by me, the old guy) and GPS navigation from the young guys, go figure. Both worked well, though the GPS gave better detail on the gravel roads.



**Flaming Gorge! Photo by Patrick Watson**



**On the road in the Uintas Bike Tour. Photo by Patrick Watson**

We had redundancy with tools, kitchen items (stoves and pots), and water filters. We ended up only needing the water filters one night. The redundancy helped as one filter clogged and couldn’t be fixed.

For me, traveling on my bike is the most enjoyable and memorable aspect of cycling. This particular tour was outstanding. Scenery, nice accommodations and two great riding partners made this a memorable bucket list tour that I hope to someday repeat. I just hope my aging body and confidence cooperates.

Lou Melini is a lifelong bicycle commuter, and the former Commuter Column editor for Cycling West.

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September 12-13, 2020 — Big Mountain Enduro, Big Mountain Enduro Series, Winter Park, CO, BME Stop #1: The BME returns to Winter Park again in 2020.

September 12-13, 2020 — Flagstaff Enduro, Flagstaff, AZ, Two days of enduro racing in and around Flagstaff, Jeff Frost, 928-380-0633, canisbleu@gmail.com, barnburnermtb.com, leadvilleraceseries.com

September 13, 2020 — Battle of the Gravel, Good Dirt Ride, Savery, WY, The Battle of the Gravel will host 3 distances a 21, 68 and 91 miles. The event will start and finish at the Boyer YL Ranch with a BBQ dinner to celebrate the finish.

September 19, 2020 — Barn Burner 104, Leadville Race Series, Flagstaff, AZ, 104 mile mountain bike race, Solo, Duo, Teams, Kaibab and Coconino National Forest, Camping on private land. 26 and 52 mile options. Party afterwards with music, food, and beer.

September 19, 2020 — Fire on the Rim Mountain Bike Race, Pine, AZ, 15, 30, and 45 mile mtb races near Payson, AZ, Janet Brandt, info@fireontherim.com, fireontherim.com

September 19, 2020 — 12 Hours of Penitence, Penitence Canyon, San Luis Valley, CO, A 12-hour endurance mountain bike race with a course so entertaining, you'll be asking yourself, "Can I do one more lap?," Jerry Duran, 719-480-3885, 12hoursofpenitence@gmail.com, 12hoursofpenitence.com

September 19, 2020 — Gunni Grinder, Gunnison, CO, Two course options. Single loop-format. Although some paved roads are necessary, the vast majority (about 90%) of the course will be on gravel and dirt roads.

September 20, 2020 — Yeti Betti Bike Bash p/b Stan's No Tubes, Betti Bike Bash, Lakewood, CO, Women's only mountain bike race and festival including: Little Bellas Girls Camp and VIDA MTB Series Clinic.

September 24-27, 2020 — Mountains to Meadows, Grinduro, Quincy, CA, 62 miles of pavement, gravel, and singletrack with a TON of climbing and twisty descents.

September 26, 2020 — Fears, Tears and Beers Enduro, Ely, NV, Enduro mountain bike event.

Timed sections mostly downhill, combined time wins. Men's and women's events for all classes. Fun run, beginner, sport, and expert classes., Kent Robertson, 775-289-6042, 775-296-2162, krobeg@mwpower.net, Kyle Horvath, 775-289-3720, kyle.horvath@elynevada.net, elynevada.net/fears-tears-and-beers/

September 26, 2020 — Chino Grinder p/b Lauf, Chino Valley, AZ, Endurance Cycling Event-Gravel road cycling adventure with 150, 115, 62, 44 and 25 mile options., AZ Gravel Rides, 480-452-9767, AzGravelRides@gmail.com, azgravelrides.com, chinogrinder.azgravelrides.com

September 27, 2020 — Horny Toad Hustle MTB Race, New Mexico Off Road Series, Las Cruces, NM, Jan Bear, 505-670-4665, janbear@gmail.com, Dave Halliburton, 575-312-5991, gotdirtnm@gmail.com, hornytoadhustle.com, nmors.org

October 3, 2020 — Tour of the White Mountains, Pinetop-Lakeside, AZ, Arizona's longest standing mountain bike event. At 7,000 feet, The Tour is a grassroots event with laid back vibes among a gathering of bike-minded individuals., Dave Castro, 520-623-1584, info@epicrides.com, Dave Castro, dcastro@epicrides.com, epicrides.com

October 3, 2020 — Road Apple Rally MTB Race, New Mexico Off Road Series, Farmington, NM, The Road Apple Rally began in 1981 as a competition between horses and bicycles.

October 4, 2020 — Great Trail Race, Truckee, CA, Ride or Run between Truckee and Tahoe City. The Great Trail Race follows roughly the same route as The Great Ski Race between Truckee and Tahoe City with one major difference: You choose to run or bike one of two course options.

October 10-11, 2020 — Big Mountain Enduro, Big Mountain Enduro Series, Angel Fire, NM, BME Stop #4: a two-day race entailing upwards of 12'000 feet of long technical descents throughout the weekend.

October 10, 2020 — Co2uT - Desert Gravel, Fruita, CO, The Co2uT chemical equation can be broken down as follows: Co=Colorado, 2=to, uT=Utah. This kick-ass gravel race will take you from Colorado to Utah...and back.

October 15-18, 2020 — USA Cycling Collegiate Mountain Bike National Championships, Durango, CO, Collegiate National Championships and Montana High School Championships, Chuck Hodge, 719-434-4200, chodge@usacycling.org, Chad Sperry, chad@gorge.net, Ben Horan, 312-502-5997, bhoran@gmail.com, usacycling.org

October 16-18, 2020 — 12 Hours in the Wild West, Ruidoso, NM, 6 hour and 12 hour race, held at Grandstone Lake Trail system, Seth Bush, 505-554-0059, ElCapitan@ZiaRides.com, ziarides.com

October 31, 2020 — Prescott 6er, Prescott, AZ, 6 hour and 12 hour mountain bike race on a 9 mile loop with solo, duo, junior, masters and singlespeed categories, Breanna Bissell, 480-734-0558, info@mangledmomentum.com, prescott6er.com

November 14, 2020 — USA Cycling Marathon MTB National Championships, Palo Duro Canyon, TX, Chuck Hodge, 719-434-4200, chodge@usacycling.org, usacycling.org

November 21, 2020 — Prickly Pedal MTB Race, Peoria, AZ, Get in a heart-pumping, rip-roaring ride through the desert terrain of the Maricopa Trail beginning in Cave Creek, Arizona and finishing at Lake Pleasant Regional Park in Peoria, Arizona. All proceeds benefit the non-profit Maricopa Trail and Park Foundation.

November 21, 2020 — 12 Hours of Fury, Fountain Hills, AZ, 12 Hours of Fury will test your body, mind and mountain biking skills. The race will begin and end at the Four Peaks Staging Area in McDowell Mountain Regional Park. The 15 mile loop is smooth, fast and fun.

November 21, 2020 — Tinker Classic, NUE (National Ultra Endurance Series), Beatty, NV, New Date! MTB Race and Festival. Enjoy 60+ miles of singletrack and many more miles of gravel roads and pavement. 3 day Bike Expo with demos., Cimarron Chacon, 970-759-3048, info@groraces.com, tinkerclassic.com

November 21, 2020 — 6 Hours of Fury, Fountain Hills, AZ, 6 Hours of Fury will test your body, mind and mountain biking skills. The race will begin and end at the Four Peaks Staging Area in McDowell Mountain Regional Park. The 15 mile loop is smooth, fast and fun.

December 12, 2020 — Dawn to Dusk AZ, Fountain Hills, AZ, Endurance mountain bike relay. Compete as a solo, duo, or team on a fast, fun course in McDowell Mountain Regional Park. Family friendly camping and event expo promises a fun weekend!

May 1, 2021 — Avimor Coyote Classic, Knobby Tire Series, Avimor, ID, 14th annual - This is real mountain bike racing; not for the weak. High speed rolling double and single track with a ton of climbing.

May 7-9, 2021 — US Bank 18 Hours of Fruita, Fruita, CO, 16th Annual event at Highline Lake State Park, an oasis in the desert with the famous midnight start.

May 8-9, 2021 — Grand Enduro, Grand Junction, CO, 4th Annual, Race the top 3 trails of the Lunch Loops (Ribbon, Gunny, and Free Lunch) with amazing views in the background.

Utah Weekly MTB Race Series Regional Weekly MTB Race Series Utah Mountain Bike and Gravel Racing

September 26, 2020 — Antelope Island 50K MTB Race, Antelope Island, UT, 6th edition of Antelope 50k Mountain Bike Race will be held at White Rock Bay Trailhead.

October 2-3, 2020 — Salty Lizard 100, Wendover, UT, Only an hour and a half west of Salt Lake City, the Salty Lizard 100 showcases the best of Wendover's amazing gravel roads.

October 10-12, 2020 — Moab Rocks, Moab, UT, Incorporates Moab's best classic and new routes and combines them into a 3-day masterpiece of cross-country and timed descents.

October 12-13, 2020 — Huntsman World Senior Games Mountain Biking, CANCELED FOR 2020, St. George, UT, Must be 50 years or older. Three events: hill climb, downhill, and cross country.

October 17, 2020 — 6 Hours of Frog Hollow, Frog Hollow Endurance Series, Virgin, UT, New Date: 13 mile long course in the UT desert combines sweet single track, with some technical sections, and great climbs.

Regional Mountain Bike and Gravel Racing ID, WY, MT, NV, AZ, NM, CO, MT, OR, WA, and Beyond

September 12-13, 2020 — Big Mountain Enduro, CANCELED, Big Mountain Enduro Series, Santa Fe, NM, BME Stop #3: A two-day backcountry race entailing upwards of 6'000 feet of long rocky descents.

September 12, 2020 — The Angry Horse Gravel Grinder, Idaho Falls, ID, Come crush some gravel and Ride the Angry Horse. This fully supported ride offers three different routes.

Advertisement for 90.9 KRCL radio station featuring a smartphone displaying the station's app with a song playing and the text 'Take us everywhere you go ...'.

Advertisement for KCYCLING COACHING featuring the text 'SARAH KAUFMANN PERSONALIZED CYCLING COACHING ALL AGES, ALL DISCIPLINES, ALL LEVELS OF EXPERIENCE 413.522.3180 | sarah@kcyclingcoaching.com'.

Advertisement for coffee garden featuring the text 'Curbside Pickup! 9th & 9th 801-355-3425 254 So. Main'.





## ROAD RIDE OF THE MONTH

## Five Great Central and Southeastern Idaho Century Rides



Sage, Sun Valley, and Sawtooths Ride. Photo by David Collins

By David Collins

## Ride 100 Miles or More in One Day

(This article is the fourth in a series, to see the first three, check out the 2019 March and July issues and the Late Spring 2020 issue.)

Idaho is blessed with iconic geography and interesting diversions. Although these rides include stunning scenery, they often feature hidden gems and forgotten high-ways and byways – a cyclist's dream – filled with unforgettable imagery, points of historical interest and quirky pit-stops.

Extended shoulder seasons are usually the best time to ride most of these routes but depending on your skills, equipment, local conditions and road closures, you might be able to ride throughout much of the year. Be weather aware, riding conditions can swiftly change.

Excursions and explorations are part of the fun of unsupported bicycle touring at your own pace. Mileage estimates are approximate and may vary depending on your tracking system and whims of the ride. Be sure to tell someone your plans and allow them to track your location using a smartphone or other device.

Solo or unsupported distance cycling often presents potentially dangerous situations related to terrain, weather, equipment, traffic, navigation and mental awareness. Even experienced cyclists must plan carefully and use wise judgment to successfully mitigate inherent risks of the sport or terminate a ride before it turns injurious or deadly. If you are new to the sport or have never ridden a bicycle 100 miles in a single day, learn the ropes with a seasoned buddy or local riding club before giving one of these routes

a go.

Make sure to check maps, plan your route and check local road conditions before you go. As with any ride, be aware of your surroundings and of roadway traffic.

Time to fill water bottles, stuff gear bags, click in and start pedaling central and southeastern Idaho's great century rides.

## Sage, Sun Valley, and Sawtooths

**Route:** Shoshone, Bellevue, Hailey, Ketchum/Sun Valley, Stanley (one way). North on Idaho 75. 116 miles.

**Terrain:** Farms and ranches, sage and lava basalt, charming and sometimes chichi townships, a high mountain pass and breathtaking alpine skylines.

**What to See:** Flats from Shoshone until a few miles south of Bellevue (where long mild rollers lazily rise and fall) passing through fertile farm and ranch lands, miles of sage and lava field basalt and nearby notable caves. Traffic builds just as you approach Bellevue and doesn't disappear until a mile or two past Ketchum. The road is still flat through Bellevue, Hailey, and Ketchum/Sun Valley, but fabulous hills and mountains jump right out of the landscape (not hard to imagine how these mountains got their Sawtooths name). Be sure to pit stop in a town or two and keep your eyes out for movie stars and celebrities flying into Hailey on their private jets and musing around town with the locals. A quick mile or two detour from Ketchum to the famed Sun Valley Lodge is a must too. The resort area is cycling friendly and laced with paved bike trails. The road begins to climb at about the 75-mile mark and crests a few miles later (after a 6 – 7% grade climb) on the top of Galena Summit at 8,700

feet. Enjoy riding down the other side into a valley lined by stunning ragged and high alpine mountains (think Idaho Alps). Pick-up the headwaters of The River of No Return (Salmon River) and finish out the day by rolling mostly flat through the valley to Stanley.

**Selfies and Photo Ops:** From the beginning to Stanley: Mammoth Cave signs; Shoshone Ice Cave sign; Nobel Prize winning author Ernest Hemmingway's grave (in the Ketchum Cemetery on Main Street); Sun Valley Lodge and pond; mountain pass views, ascending & descending; Galena Lodge; Headwater of the River of No Return sign; Sawtooth Fish Hatchery; Sawtooth Mountains throughout (beginning from about Hailey until Stanley), river crossings and bank-side views (Wood, Salmon)

**Wildlife:** Mule deer, elk, moose, mountain goats, cougars, bobcat; lynx, bears (black and grizzly), snakes, beaver, fisher, marten & mink, porcupines, pronghorn, fox, wolverines, birds of prey and prize trout (brook, bull, lake, rainbow, steelhead, cutthroat) and salmon (chinook, sockeye/kokanee).

**Best Post-Ride Eats:** Mountain Village Restaurant in Stanley. After slipping past the friendly stuffed black bear trophy, find a seat in back of the log cabin lodge style restaurant, cash in your free drink tokens (given at check-in at the Mountain Village Lodge) and take a few sips while pondering between the House Smoked Baby Back Ribs and the Sausage Plate (featuring andouille, black & blue and garlic knackwurst from Jackson Hole Wyoming's Bovine and Swine). A small side of sirloin chili made with dark beer and topped with cheddar cheese wouldn't hurt either, since this is a recovery meal and proteins are just what the doctor ordered. Another drink or two and you'll be set for some serious time in the sack.

**Still Have Legs, Lungs, and Sunlight?** Turn west at the sign for Redfish Lake (near Stanley) and drop a line in the Sawtooths' largest alpine lake – home to prize sockeye/kokanee salmon. Even if you don't have a rod & reel, the short detour is worth the photo ops with the lake and alpine mountain backdrops (about a 5-to-6 mile total detour depending on where you turn back).

**Notes:** Although several villages dot the way, cell coverage is weak or not available for long stretches of the ride. This route features prime three-season riding (winter road cycling conditions are usually dangerous and often unpredictable). Also, you'll be rolling through the Wood River Valley, be sure to stop periodically and breathe deeply though your nose. It may be the best outdoor aroma in America, especially after one of the common summer showers.

## Mackay to Salmon

**Route:** Mackay (pronounced MACK-ee), Challis, Ellis, Salmon (one way). North on Hwy 93. 112 Miles.

**Terrain:** Rolling roads through rural valleys surrounded by dramatic foothills and looming peaks, turns hilly - cresting over Willow Creek Summit just over 7,000 ft, riverside riding from Challis through the final destination.

**What to See:** Ghost towns



Row of Giants - Mackay to Salmon Ride. Photo by David Collins

Cliff City and White Knob west of Mackay. The ghost town sign on Main Street in Mackay is about all that's left standing though, so if you don't have time, don't pursue the actual sites, or if you do, don't be disappointed since rubble may be all you find after hiking a mile or two; miles of riding through the Lost River Mountains including past several 12,000+ ft. mountains starting with Mount Borah through the Mackay Dam (Borah, Leatherman, Church, Donaldson, Breitenbach, Lost River and Bad River Peak, an honorable mention rising just 46 ft short of being a twelver too); Grandview Canyon featuring rugged and jagged cliffs side-to-side descending into Challis; mostly flat riverside riding from Challis on, often hugging the banks of the River of No Return (discovered by Lewis and Clark – until 1950, boats could not ascend the main canyon, so the Salmon got the nickname "River of No Return", large tracts of untamed wilderness still blanket the Salmon River Mountains); Sacajawea Interpretive, Cultural and Educational Center near her childhood home – today's Salmon.

**Selfies and Photo Ops:** Periodic Peaks to Craters Scenic Byway signs; Ghost Towns of Mackay sign (see What to See above); long lineup of twelvers in the Lost River Mountain Range, Mile High Outfitters laser cut sign on the northern edge of Challis; too many Salmon River photo ops to mention here, deer warning and "Say no to drugs and alcohol, let's go fishing" billboards just north of Challis; Ellis Post Office storefront; Idaho Hermits sign about 11 miles before Salmon; 45th Parallel sign; Statue of Sacajawea at the Sacajawea Interpretive, Cultural and Education Center (seek an especially good angle showing the giant Bitterroot Mountains in the back ground – her childhood playgrounds); Welcome to Salmon, Home of Sacajawea sign on south side of town.

**Wildlife:** Mule deer, elk, moose, mountain goats, cougars, bobcat; lynx, bears (black and grizzly), snakes, beaver, fisher, marten & mink, porcupines, pronghorn, fox, wolverines, birds of prey and prize trout (brook, bull, lake, rainbow, steelhead, cutthroat) and salmon (chinook, sockeye/kokanee).

**Best Post-Ride Eats:** Bertram's Brewery on Andrews Street in Salmon. Ice cold house-brewed beer is the calling card here but don't let that fool you – this casual brewpub also boasts delicious steaks and sea-

food. Try the Blackened Rainbow Trout served with mango salsa, paired with house-brewed Hazelnut Ale. If you have room, order the Fish Tacos too, not what you may be expecting though, they're mini corn taco bowls cradling battered cod, cilantro, lime, guacamole, mangos and some kind of magic potion. Who would've guessed a joint in Salmon would build out foodie tacos? A tasty end to a memorable ride.

**Still Have Legs, Lungs, and Sunlight?** To ride the other side of the Lost River Range, head south from Mackay to Arco, and up the Sacajawea Historic Byway through Leodore to Salmon. It's a whale of a ride and may require an overnight stay along the way (178 miles instead of the more direct route described above). Traffic flow is non-existent, and the unpopulated miles of smiles will thrill you. If you go this way, be sure to take the short gravel road detour to well preserved giant kilns from 150 years ago (can't miss the signs).

**Notes:** Like many routes through central Idaho, cell coverage is unreliable and/or unavailable for many miles of this ride. Careful planning will help mitigate your chance of related problems. Also, like the Sage, Sun Valley & Sawtooths ride, this route should be considered for three seasons only, winter attempts may turn dangerous and/or impassable. If you choose the Leodore route (see Still Have Legs), be prepared with extra water, nutrition, and camp gear if you turn it into a two-day ride, since periodic fuel stops are rare.

## Over the Border

**Route:** Preston, Thatcher, Grace, Soda Springs, Freedom WY, Etna WY, Alpine WY (one way). North on Idaho 34, north on Non-County Road, east on Creamery Road, north on 89 to Alpine. 122 miles.

**Terrain:** Aggressive rolling farmlands, Caribou –Targhee National Forest, a handful of agriculture & mining-centric towns and plenty of climbing.

**What to See:** Pioneer Historic Byway landmarks; a few miles north of Preston, a picturesque bridge over a waterway which connects a small pond on the west side of the road to the larger Foster Reservoir on the east side; fertile farm and ranchlands through Soda Springs; Lewis and Clark Trail crossings; Oregon Trail crossings; Blackfoot River Reservoir (home to several bird species including oft seen soar-



Over the Border Sunrise. Photo by David Collins

ing bald eagles and white pelicans; skirt hems of Grays Lake National Wildlife Refuge; Caribou-Targhee National Forest; Freedom Firearms; northern armet of the Star Valley Scenic Byway including a brief roll near the southernmost tip of the Palisades Reservoir; at the finish line, the Snake River as it flows into the Palisades Reservoir.

**Selfies and Photo Ops:** Napoleon Dynamite storefronts (the cult comedy was filmed in Preston), rising roller horizon emerging from the Foster Reservoir water crossing; the vast open patchwork of farmlands unfurled around Thatcher and Grace; various roadside farm stands; Blackfoot River Reservoir resort and campground at water's edge; Soda Springs historical marker sign (near South 3rd Street West on the west side of Soda Springs) explaining the acid taste and "effervescing" gasses of the water; Oregon Trail Memorial with picturesque cliff back drop (look for the signs for the short detour to the memorial in Soda Springs) Freedom Firearms sign (Freedom WY), manufacturing home of famous single-action revolvers; Snake River in Alpine.

**Wildlife:** Upland gamebirds, birds of prey, pelicans, turkeys, fox, coyotes, beaver, deer, elk, rattlesnakes, gamefish, mountain lions, bears, martens and badgers.

**Best Post-Ride Eats:** Bull Moose Saloon in Alpine. As part of the on-site Bull Moose Lodge, Saloon, Restaurant and Liquor Store joints, the restaurant serves up reasonably priced mountain town fare. It won't be the finest meal of your life, but the food is good and the atmosphere is relaxing after a long ride. Start off by drenching a basket of fries in ketchup and a half dozen chicken taquitos while sipping a drink or two, the saloon and liquor store sister businesses make for lots of hard options. Entrée up with a rib-eye steak and all the fixings or the prime rib (only served on weekends). Warm pecan pie and ice cream for dessert and you'll be ready for bed – no problem there, just cross the parking lot and stop, drop and sleep in your log cabin-ish room at the lodge.

**Still Have Legs, Lungs, and Sunlight?** Head east on Hwy 26 to Hoback Junction (24 miles). It's a winding road that hugs the

Snake River through a famously picturesque canyon. If you extend your ride to include this leg, chances are, you'll be riding near dusk, which is a great time to take in the beauty of the greater Jackson Hole region. Fish will be jumping and big mammals will be strolling nearby. There's a good shoulder to ride most of the way, but be sure to have proper lights on your bike,

especially as daylight fades. And of course, you'll note how close you are to Jackson Hole as you study the map. Take another day or three and ride through town on your way to cycling two national parks; Grand Teton and Yellowstone.

**Notes:** Don't be fooled by the rightfully so romantic description; the ride features 5,000+ feet of elevation gain which can pack a surprising punch if you're not expecting it. Be prepared to make frequent stops for pictures, but keep your eye on the clock, otherwise you may run out of daylight before you're done and night riding in the area is not advisable.

### Idaho Falls to Arco (with Craters of the Moon loop)

**Route:** Idaho Falls, Butte City, Arco, Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve, back to Arco. West on Hwy 20 with a little back tracking for a second visit to Arco after riding around in the Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve. 116 miles.

**Terrain:** Flats, flats, flats, with a few miles of risers between Arco and Craters of the Moon.

**What to See:** 14 Mile Cave (14 miles west of Idaho Falls) – takes a little while to sneak a peek, but it's worth it if you're into caves; Three Great Buttes dominating the southern skyline upon leaving Idaho Falls; EBR-1, the world's first nuclear power plant and museum is a quick detour worth checking out; two gigantic structures (across the parking lot from EBR-1) are test stands containing atomic jet engines – remnants of a joint U.S. Air Force and Atomic Energy Commission program to build a nuclear-powered aircraft in the early 1950's (President Kennedy cancelled the program after a decade of work); kitschy Butte City buildings; cliff face in Arco proudly displaying "class of \_\_\_" giant graffiti marks going back decades; various Arco murals and signage bragging "Arco, Idaho - First City in the World to be lit by Atomic Power"; Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve – worth the entrance fee which includes access to a cycling-

friendly loop that winds through cinder cones, lava tubes, volcanic bombs, tree molds and spatter cones all in a surreal setting that sometimes really does seem like a cousin to lunar surface scenes depicted in NASA pictures.

**Selfies and Photo Ops:** Downtown historic buildings including the 1915 terra cotta Renaissance Revival Shane Building on Shoup Avenue; the 1926 Italian Renaissance Bonneville Hotel on Constitution Way and the 1909 Romanesque Revival motif I.O.O.F Building on Park Avenue; Snake River waterfalls in downtown Idaho Falls; Philo T. Farnsworth related signs (see Still Have Legs); opening miles of flat desert horizon; Great Butte southern backdrop; EBR-1 and Arco signs (see What to See); Pickle's Place in Arco; too many spots to mention in the Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve - the loop in the preserve is a nature photographer's playground; rolling hills horizon between Arco and Craters; storefronts and buildings in Butte City and Arco.

**Wildlife:** Rattlesnakes (locals tell sobering stories, legends and likely whoppers about rattlesnake infestations in the Great Buttes area – yikes!), river otters, mule deer, elk, fisher, marten & mink, porcupines, pronghorn, fox and birds of prey.

**Best Post-Ride Eats:** Pickle's Place in Arco. Think delicious homemade fare served in a family owned and operated restaurant. The 4-piece broasted chicken dinner is outstanding. It's some kind of heavenly fried chicken-ish thing they create in the kitchen and serve up crisp and hot. Be sure to add a couple of whole pickles to the order and wash it all down with huckleberry lemonade. Finish in style with a double order of pie a la mode. If you ride this route in reverse, order up a couple of double cheeseburgers at the Blue Wave Bar and Grill on Rollandet in Idaho Falls. Best burgers in Idaho – bar none.

**Still Have Legs, Lungs, and Sunlight?** Add another 15 miles by starting in Rigby (instead of Idaho Falls) and heading south on HWY 20. Why Rigby? Home of the Farnsworth TV and Pioneer Museum, Rigby boasts they are the childhood home of Philo T. Farnsworth, who invented television. You may not have time to peruse the tiny museum, but it's worth a selfie or two featuring one of the related signs in and around Rigby.

**Notes:** Pay close attention to restricted access signs west of Idaho Falls. They mark miles of Idaho National Laboratory (INL) boundaries. INL is a Department of Energy base historically focused on nuclear energy, national security and environmental science. They take their "stay out" signs seriously and are not friendly to those who don't.

### American Falls to Pocatello (the Arbon Valley Loop)

**Route:** American Falls, Rockland, Holbrook, Arbon Valley, Mink Canyon, Pocatello. South on Idaho State Hwy 37 to the edge of Holbrook, east on W 2000 S, north on 17200 W (turnoff to Arbon Valley), north on Arbon Valley Road, east on Mink Creek Road (turns into Bannock Hwy) to Pocatello. 117 miles.

**Terrain:** Immediate aggressive rollers slowly smoothing into Rockland, slices through high distant (or sometimes close) mountains,

lush fertile farmland and livestock country, deceitfully testy mild and medium climbs and descents capped off with passage through a higher mountain pass.

**What to See:** Modern windmills strewn

throughout the opening miles of the first foothills; main Rockland drag – just a few hundred yards long; two-mile detour through tiny Holbrook; Curlew National Grasslands (route passes through the grasslands twice), giant pivot irrigation systems covering acres of farm and ranchland; flat lands of Arbon Valley punctuated by periodic short arroyo rollercoaster bumps; Mink Canyon cabins and homesteads (from humble to palatial); old town Pocatello's historic buildings; Montana coined itself 'Big Sky Country' but the big sky phenomenon leaked southward to this route, look up and take in the expansive skies amidst your likely struggles with the winds (see Notes).

**Selfies and Photo Ops:** Windfarm backdrops; Rockland Post Office façade; boarded up big blue house just north of Holbrook (reminds me of the popular turn of the century kids TV show Bear in the Big Blue House); Welcome to Holbrook sign on the east side of the village; a ghost town like outbuilding that's barely standing in a drunken lean (on the east side of the road before the Mink Creek turn – can't miss it); cross in front of the Arbon Valley Bible Church; landscape near the cresting Mink Creek pass; original art deco-ish Chief Theatre sign from 1938 in old Pocatello; the Idaho State University Greek pillars on Red Hill (a Pocatello landmark and I.S.U. icon).

**Wildlife:** Mule deer, elk, pronghorn, snakes, upland gamebirds, birds of prey, mountain lions, bears, martens, badgers, skunks and other little varmints.

**Best Post-Ride Eats:** Elmer's on 5th Avenue. A laid-back joint



Atomic Aircraft Engine Prototypes - Idaho Falls to Arco Ride. Photo by David Collins

serving home cooking in generous portions awaits your après cycling meal. Salad for a post-ride starter? Usually not in my plan, but the Dungeness Crab BLT salad is an exception and kicks-off supper with a lilt. For the entrée, tuck into the 12 oz. slab of prime rib (only available after 4:00 pm). Since breakfast items are served all day, follow the protein-laden meal with lingonberry crepes. They are sweet, tart and dusted with confectioners sugar, the perfect finisher after a long day of pedaling all the way around the Arbon Valley Loop.

**Still Have Legs, Lungs, and Sunlight?** Head north from Pocatello on Hwy 91 through Chubbuck and into Fort Hall, a township in the Native American reservation of the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes. While you're there, get one of those savory bison burgers at the gas station by the casino (24 miles there and back).

**Notes:** Wind! Entering a windfarm right out of the gate hints this may be a challenging day in the saddle. Since it's an abbreviated loop that passes through and around different canyons, hills and mountains, it's not likely you'll enjoy a prevailing tail wind on any given day. Thankfully, continuous headwinds are not likely either. Be prepared for winds from every side. Also, ride with extra fuel and water since merchant stops are few and cell coverage is spotty or nonexistent for much of the route.

David Collins is a cycling enthusiast and amateur randonneur. Follow him on Instagram @rockypumpkin



American Falls to Pocatello Ride, a scene from Arbon Valley. Photo by David Collins

**GEAR PICKS**

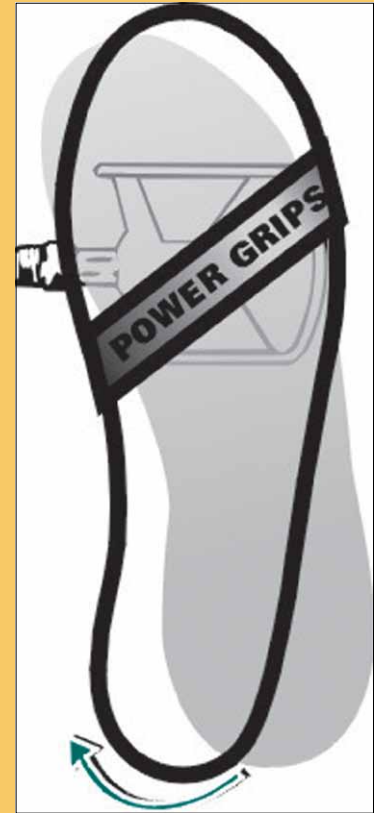
**A Review of the Power Grips Pedal System**



A Power Grip with the foot in the pedal. Photo courtesy MRP



Power Grips are a great alternative to toe clips or clipless pedals for commuting. Lou's very well used Power Grip is shown here. Photo by Lou Melini



How the Power Grip works. Photo courtesy MRP

**By Lou Melini**

Power Grips are straps that you attach to your pedals to enhance power to pedaling motion, especially uphill. I purchased my first, and only, set of Power Grips in the fall of

2016. Prior to retiring, I rode to work clipped into my Speedplay Frog pedals. I could leave shoes at work, so being clipped in wasn't a issue. If I went to the grocery store, I would just ride the short distance on top of the Frog pedals with hiking shoes.

After retirement and the start of a

volunteer job, riding clipped in was no longer a suitable option. Carrying shoes to the volunteer job was inconvenient. I purchased the Power Grips after looking at a few other pedal strap systems. According to the Power Grip website over 250,000 Power Grips have been purchased. I have not been disappointed with my choice.

I am assuming that I have about 10,000 miles of use with the Power Grips. I don't have the clipped in power I had, but I have enough to make my commutes easier than if I just rode on flat pedals without the straps. The straps are showing age, but I think they will last several more years. One reviewer on the Adventure Cycling Association stated he had his Power Grips for 10 years, though he did not state

mileage.

The straps are simple to install. I've tightened the bolts once or twice since installation. The strap is adjustable for different shoe sizes. At the adjustment clamp, I've had the strap pull out on 3 occasions but it's a simple fix. Putting your foot into the strap is also simple, perhaps because I still can remember the 25 years that I used toe clips and straps on my pedals. There are a few reviews of Power Grips that complain about the difficulty of getting into Power

Grips. On occasion this may be true. Overall, I have had an easy time inserting and releasing my foot from the Power Grips.

I would highly recommend the straps for cyclists that currently use flat pedals but need to negotiate uphill terrain. You can buy the straps to attach to your current pedals or purchase straps and pedals as a set. Prices for the straps start at \$22.50 and go to \$40 for the extra long size. The strap/pedal systems range from \$40 to \$85 depending on pedal quality.

Lou Melini is a lifelong bicycle commuter, and the former Commuter Column editor for Cycling West.

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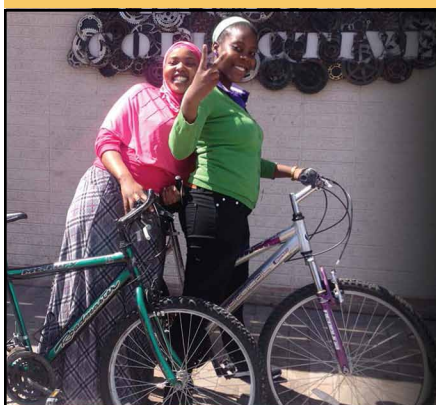
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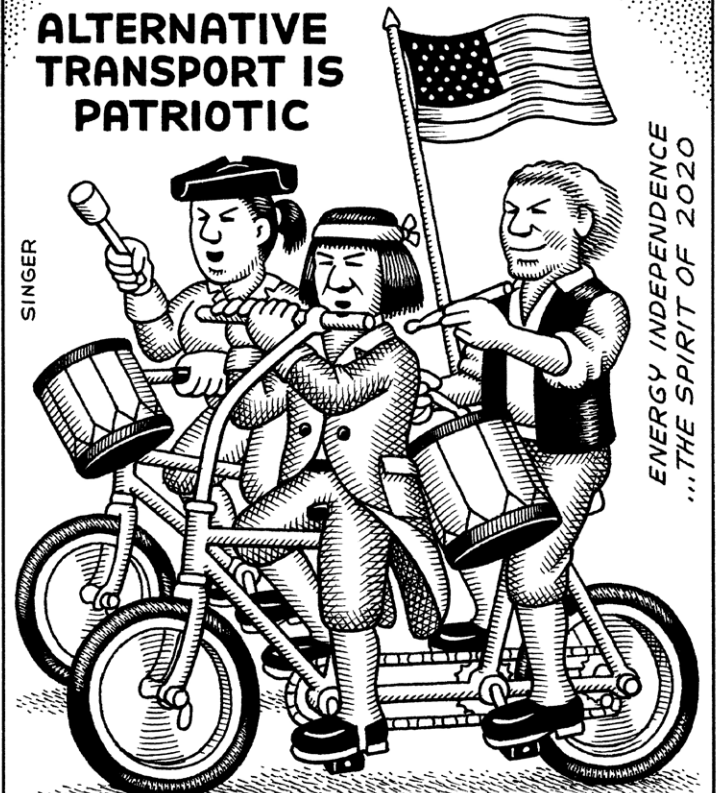
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**ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORT IS PATRIOTIC**



ENERGY INDEPENDENCE  
 ... THE SPIRIT OF 2020

**BICYCLE ART**

***Gino Bartali - 1938 Tour de France - The Bicycle Art of Richard Vroom***



**Title:** Gino Bartali - 1938 Tour de France  
**Medium:** Watercolor on paper.

Rich Vroom is a watercolor artist based in Salt Lake City, Utah. His studio is in Sugarhouse where he teaches classes, paints, and bike races. He also teaches at the University of Utah.

Prints are available for purchase from Richard. Contact him at [richvroom@msn.com](mailto:richvroom@msn.com)

Follow Rich on Instagram @richvroom or on Facebook: Rich Vroom Watercolors.

See you next year.  
Ride safe until then.



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