

For all my cycling friends

but overridingly for

Lee Fox, role model, friend and mentor

and to Mary ]ane Reynolds who as editor of

Velocipede ﬁrst encouraged this nonsense

Past Applegarth In Radiance

My Sunday morning

Genuflections

Are made with bending knees

While sun spokes stroke

Across the road

And fire the fallen leaves.

My spinning chainwheel’s

Starred reﬂections

Whin upward through the trees

And glinting from

My streaming cold:

The snailtrails on my sleeves.

The Bhakti Yogi Buys A Bike

Astride my dual prayerwheel

I meditate at speed

Devotion to my Dharma is

The only call I heed.

I never lust for victory

Nor crave frenetic motion

But gentle like the Ganges

Flow calmly to the Ocean.

To cycle through the Cosmos is

A karmic task and thrill,

I just adjust my cadence to

The rhythm of each hill.

I have a little mantra that

I murmur on my way

And if you pay attention

You are sure to hear me say:

‘Though heavy is the Samsara.

And hard to pedal solo;

I do believe Eternity

Is fully Campagnolo.’

Cyclops

The dusk like gauze is falling

The day is fading fast

And homeward I am crawling

In hope that light will last.

As remnant shots of daylight

Are shuttled through night’s loom

I pedal apprehensive

Beneath the waxing gloom.

Myopic in the twilight

I peer from left to right

As cars from all directions

Scud blind towards the night.

Ecologists of the human race

List this amongst your theses:

That Cyclists of the Crepuscule

Are endangered as a species.

M’illumino d’immenso

*near Llandudno*

Alone, the swishing sound of spinning spokes

Disturbs the hush that marks the break of day.

In downhill speeding ecstasy we rush.

Below, the sea is opalescent grey.

Mysteriously, the low horizon drifts

And drops beyond the arc of human reach.

The ocean sighs and heaves in restive sleep

And snores incontinently on the beach.

A literary fugue begins to form:

The dreaming corpse in Finnegan's Wake

That etherised upon the table lies:

But soft, what light through yonder window breaks

But then, the voice of Ungaretti wins.

His matinal verse our day begins.

How Did Emily Pankhurst Get To Parliament?

l’ve seen those London bicycles

Especially in the rain

Who're rnanacled to railings

By principle and chain.

Buckled, rusting and deﬂated,

Their spokes are all awry:

So utterly abandoned,

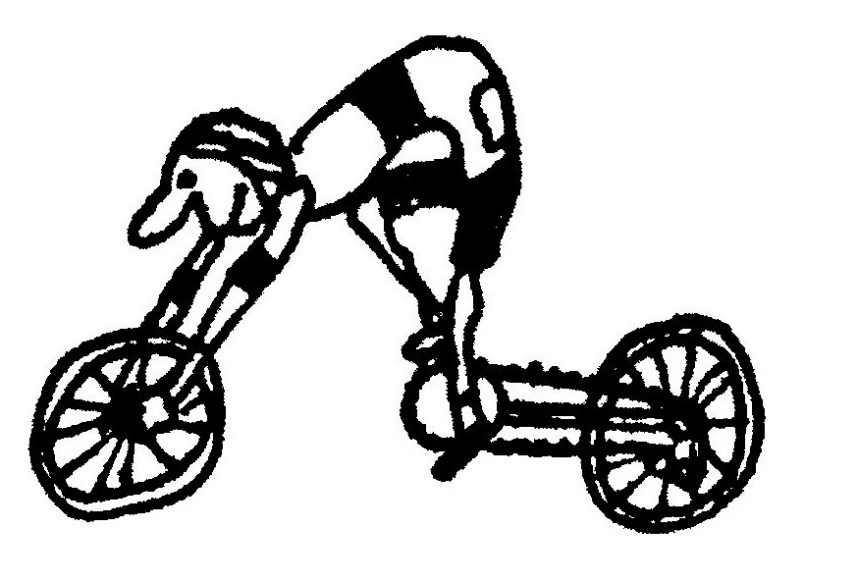
A tear comes to the eye.

How are the British mores

That make them pamper pets

And then, neglect completely

These sainted suffragettes?



Puncture Near Wittedrif

What bliss to be alive this morn,

With land and lake awake to raucous dawn

And every instant serendipitous

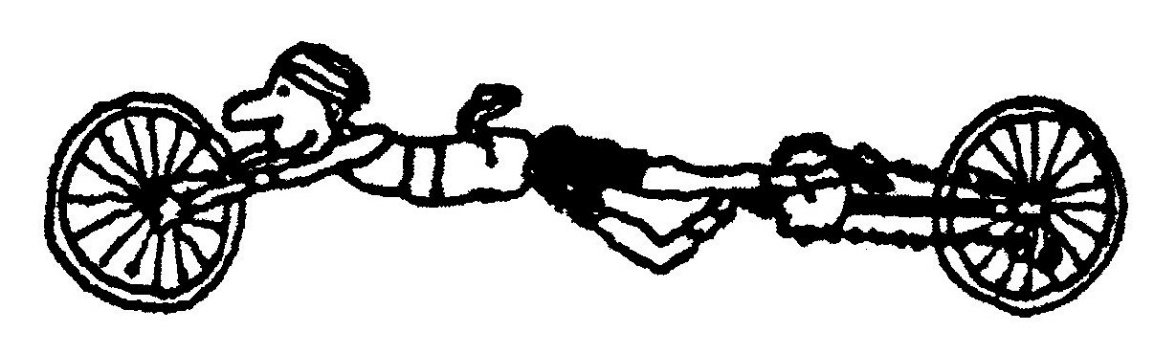
I praise, head bowed, the moment I was born

And each unconscious step that led to this

Epiphany of pantheistic bliss

But revelation's brief: a single thom

Deflates it with a disillusioned hiss!



Illustrations: The Frameless Bicycle (pat pend) in action.

Note the ‘tubby’ in the back pocket which dates the idea

Yet In Arcadia Ego

I strain against the southeast gale

My futile shirt a ﬂapping sail.

The vineyards and the waving grass

Applauding wildly as I pass.

Limerick

A molluscular cyclist called Mel

Wore a crash-helmet made from a shell

He said: ‘It ﬁts right,

Looks nice and is light

And protects me from starlings as well.’

Puritan Against The Wind

When every pedal stroke's a bore

When bum and back and neck are sore

And ﬂesh is mortiﬁed for sure,

Then, I believe, my soul will soar.

Hinault’s Not What He’s Missing

I love to ride my bicycle.

I love to keep in shape.

I skim along the country roads

On all-fours like an ape.

Though clouds above are scudding

And the roadside hums with life,

To me it's just a canvas that

I cut through like a knife.

My posture’s parabolic as

My feet pump up and clown

And all I see while training are

Bike tyres turning round.

An optional moral

I am, you'll note, in every way

A man like all the rest;

Oblivious to life itself -

Preparing for a test.

Death On The Road

It crept across the country road,

the snake that made us stop,

In threat it raised its spade-shaped head

and puffed its body up.

We all moved back in mild alarm,

an atavistic fear;

Deep down we knew what Adam felt,

when Satan sidled near.

But that was that. We checked no urge

to hurt or kill the beast

(This tale is not Lawrentian,

not moral in the least).

In fact , our one concern was that

the snake, now lying still,

Might soon be squashed by truck or car

(we wished this snake no ill).

We lamely tried to shoo it on

but still it doggo lay

And none of use would pick it up,

a fact we'd rue all day.

We cycled on, all hoping that

our friend would slither fast

Across warm tarmacadam to

the safety of the grass.

‘I've heard,’ said Nick, ‘that snakes enjoy

relaxing in the street.

The tar retains the sunlight well

and reptiles need the heat.’

We pondered on this thought a bit,

imagined how it feels

When, hurtling through the morning air

came Death on sixteen wheels.

There was no chance it could ecape

such synchronistic fate,

When we returned five minutes on

we were five minutes late.

Our erstwhile undulating friend

obliterated lay.

A tattered rag. The grassy verge

one million miles away.

And then we knew that our concern,

our gentle empathy,

Had slowed it down so it could keep

its date with destiny.

Cycling Senryu

1.

Hypoglycaemic

while pedalling by a bakery

Thoughts of Marcel Proust

2.

A cyclist’s second

marriage — a new chain

on an old cluster.

3.

Cycling past

a kiewiet’s nest, he stops

to check his chain.

4.

The hotter the clay

the worse for the tricycle

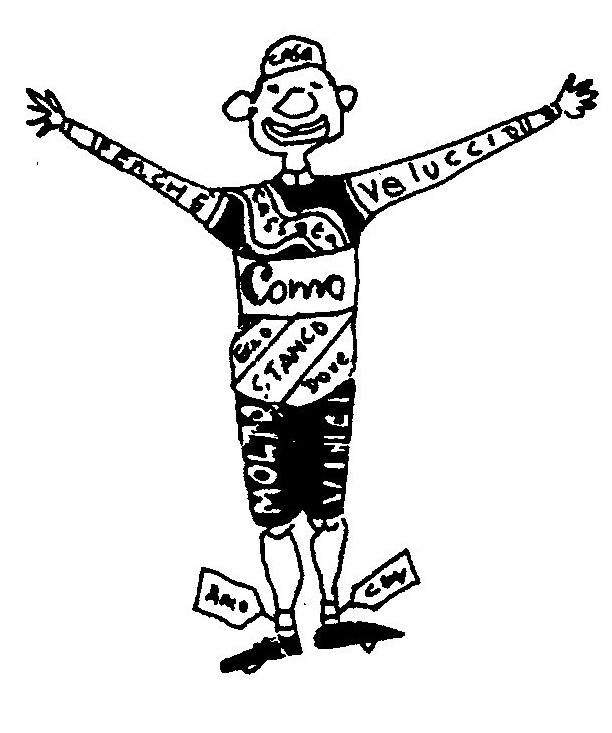
ice-lolly vendor

5.

Cycling to the shop

in his Campionati

Del Mondo jersey

ll Sponsoroso

Enrico Gelati of ]ohannesburg has

such a wide variety of prestigious

cycling clothes that the Dante

Alghieri Society often use him as a

crash-course in Italian for

Beginners.

He carries the Society’s emblem

beneath his right shoulder.

La Gipiemme

After only two years of leisure cycling, a Pinelands father of three, Mr

Henry Kantor, can carry on a twenty five minute monologue on the

subject of Italian Bicycle Components.

Mr Kantor, a passionate Opera lover, is also working on a cycle of

arias based on the Campagnolo Catalogue.

A Clever Ratiolist

The contention that strenuous cycling has a negative effect on human

IQ was positively squashed by a Montevista time trialist, Peter ‘Pedals’

van Onsen.

Van Onsen managed, after grinding out 300 km in an amazing

9 hours 45 minutes\*, an exhaustive series of complicated gear ratio

sums with contemptuous ease

\*An average speed of 41,8 kilometres per hour.

The Ultimate Replacement

In cycling circles much debate has swirled around the ideal form of

liquid replacement. Fashions have included plain water, ﬂat coke, hypo

or isotonic electrolyte solutions, lemon tea with brandy, yakmilk and

back again to water. But still the controversy rages.

In simple terms the body sweats and needs to replace the ingredients

of that sweat. Biochemists, sports medics, Nobel prizewinners,

midwives and charlatans have all had their say and, as yet, the ideal

bottle has not been formulated. However, a new product manufactured

in South Africa, called Dune, is about to hit the market with the motto

— ‘There is no substitute for replacement’.

The manufacturing process is simple and non secret although highly

secretionary. A top cyclist, for instance an Argus Tour winner, puts on

a specially adapted wetsuit which has internal channels and external

tubes, designed to collect and transmit perspiration into pre-sterilised

bottles. The athlete grinds away for the equivalent of Z50 Ks on an

ergometer which is programmed to stimulate the rigours of a Tour de

France stage. The collected sweat is then pasteurised, spray dried,

packaged and marketed.

The powder merely needs the addition of water and is ready for the

bicycle race. Dune plan to launch this innovative aid to competition

with their top-of-the-range ‘Lance Armstrong’ early next year. Prices

will vary from R800 to a quite affordable R25 per packet. Cost will

depend on the level of championship that the donor represents. A

Tour de France winner would be the ultimate, and the minimum

standard would be a Pedal Power approved fun ride winner.

Medical experts agree that in addition to the excreted electrolytes,

endorphins, pheromones and partly metabolised vitamins, athletes

will, as an additional bonus enjoy whatever forbidden substances that

have filtered their way through the pores of the donor.

Setting Saddle Height: The New Age Method

According to yogic teaching there are eight nodules on the spinal cord

from the base of the skull to the coccyx, called chakras. Each of these

points, when stimulated by massage, brings about physical and spiritual

relief.

Of interest to the chronic cyclist is the seventh chakra situated at

the ﬁfth lumbar vertebra about a hand’s length from the base of the

spine.

This point is often called the water chakra because of its inﬂuence

over the emotions and on the balance of the body ﬂuids.

A discreet massage of this area by the tip of the bicycle saddle can go

a long way to preventing dehydration.

To set the saddle, stand over the crossbar with legs straight and feet

flat on the ground so that the saddle tip nuzzles nicely against the ﬁfth

lumbar vertebra.

A few minutes before a race allow the saddle point to gently prod

and knead the chakra.

Cycling Magnetism

Although already banned by the International Cycling Federation, a

new product, from Assurdo Chemicals, called Magnum could make all

the difference to your bunch riding.

Assurdo have isolated a polymer of ferrum silicate that is not only

soluble in propylene glycol but can also be very efficiently magnetised.

The solution is clear and can be sprayed onto the metal parts of any

bicycle just prior to a race.

Unscrupulous cyclists who are not ashamed to wheel-sit will be

effortlessly sucked along by the bunch.

The only effort required is to secure a good place in the pre-race

line-up. Some insensitive loafing will ensure you a most impressive

bunch position in the finish.

This product, available in an ozone friendly aerosol, is not for the

highly competitive, as any attempt at break away will have you,

literally, pulling the bunch along.

It is expensive and be warned that its application can be detected by

a furry coating of fine metal debris that will cover the frame after a race

of more than IO kms.

Assurdo also do a neutralising and cleaning aerosol called Amag

which demagnetises as it cleans.

Pedal Your Way To Perfect Health

Reﬂexology is a form of therapeutic foot massage and an ancient

healing art. Terminals on the feet are connected through energy

channels to speciﬁc zones of the body. Reﬂexologists claim that when

these channels get blocked, minute lumps of crystalline deposits form

under the skin. Massage breaks up the deposits which are then

absorbed into the body's waste disposal system.

There are dozens of reﬂex points on the feet and adherents believe

that all the organs of the body are mirrored in the foot. Massage clears

toxic deposit, unblocks energy pathways, promotes the healing of

diseased organs and stimulates general health.

Of interest to cyclists is a therapeutic pedal from Sanimoto. Named

after its japanese inventor, Shihatsu Makisaki, the Shihatsu pedal is

designed to massage selected terminals while you cycle.

The balls of the feet have terminals connected to the shoulders,

heart, stomach, spleen, liver, gall bladder, diaphragm and adrenal

glands. The pedal platform is drilled to correspond to these terminals.

After diagnosis by a trained reﬂexologist, aluminium massage nodules

are screwed in at the appropriate spots.

Random foot massage could be the unsung source of many of the

beneﬁts of cycling. This would certainly not be the first time that sports

physiologists have attributed effects to the wrong causes. Considering

the ongoing accusations and denial of drug abuse in the sport, could it

be that the strongly stroked adrenals account for some of the positive

steroid tests that have made cycling so controversial?

A word of caution: care has to be taken in the alignment of the

therapeutic cleats. Maladjustment can cause the massage of the wrong

zones and you can end up curing diseases you don’t have.

Finally, before fitting the Shihatsu, ask your therapist about the

various erogenous zones on the foot. These zones vary from person to

person. Unintended stimulation could be an embarrassment during the

race. Which may explain why some people are so passionate about

what is, after all, a demanding and often tedious form of exercise.

Paracadute — A Helmet Breakthrough

This is not a polemic against the crash helmet although I do want to

moan about the hard shell version. It only minimises the risk of cranial

damage and is not insurance against it. My hard shell has the following

honest caveat: ‘No helmet can protect the wearer against all forseeable

impacts.’ It is cumbersome, hot and provokes unbelievable quantities

of sweat. It restricts upper vision, (the glorious skyward glance much

loved by poet and pedaller) and it can, we hear, cause neck dislocation.

Enough said — this is a happy announcement of yet another

technical breakthrough by the Italian company, Assurdo Componenti.

Assurdo worked from ﬁgures published in the Hind Donkel report

which show that 85% of head injuries are anticipated by the bare-

headed rider against 74% by the helmeted one. This difference is

presumably due to the limiting of the full audio and visual range by the

bulky helmet which restricts vision and adds to extraneous noise. Only

4% of cycle head injuries are caused by injuries to the top of the head.

The Paracadute is a combination of crash helmet and sweatband. In

essence it is a cotton sweatband with an outer layer which is a deﬂated

inner tube. The tube is attached to a small canister of compressed air

under a pressure of 12 MPa. The canister is triggered by a mercury tilt

switch that clicks on when the bicycle reaches an angle of more than 45

degrees to the horizontal. As the rider tumbles, the canister instantly

inﬂates the tube, forming a gentle pneumatic cushion protecting both

head and collarbone from injury.

The advantages of the Paracadute are legion:

* It is cool and absorbs sweat.
* It does not have to be discarded after each fall as with

polystyrene helmets. Repairs are done with a simple patch.

* It is purely functional — it is only a crash helmet when needed.
* It does not obscure the vision.
* It looks great.

One caution, however: the rider must take care to switch off the tilt

switch when dismounting.

A Psychling Breakthrough

Dr Eustace Wheeler, the chief psychiatrist at the Turnhill Clinic, is

recommending that his depressed and neurotic patients take up

cycling.

Although the beneﬁts of the sport are manifold he claims that the

main advantage for the poorly breast-fed or inadequately potty trained

patient is that it cures the need for instant gratification.

One of his patients, a melancholy 33 year old male had a history of

deep depression caused primarily by an irrational need to have his

desires met quickly. After a weekend in-depth encounter seminar on

cycling the patient immediately bought a state-of-the-art racing bike.

Now he can't wait to take his daily ride.

‘We have discovered the bicyclic anti-depressant!’ declared the

eminent Freudian. ‘Had Oedipus had access to a bicycle so much of the

history of the human dilemma would have been altered. After all,

spinning a 42/17 gear an averagely ﬁt young man can travel from

Delphi to Thebes in just over 3 hours. He would have missed the

encounter at the crossroads by at least 2 hours and 1O minutes.’

Quo Vadis Argus Tour

My son’s maths teacher, being a wizard at arithmetic, multiplied the

length of an average bicycle by the 11 OOO entries for the 1988 Argus

Tour and came to the conclusion that if all the cyclists taking part had

ridden as they are supposed to do in single ﬁle, they would have

wrapped round the course twice.

The Argus Tour has seen a 100 per cent growth per annum over the

last few years, hitting a new record in 1988 with 10 O00 entries. Using a

pocket calculator and a ballpoint, my calculations reveal that if the

current trend continues, there will be a record entry in the year 2OOO of

41 million cyclists.

Assuming the cyclists are set off in batches of 1 O00 at 5 minute

intervals, and that the officials and organisers are prepared to work 24

hours around the clock, the start will take 142 days to complete.

By 2003, a year will not be long enough to contain one Argus Tour

and Cape Town will have to break away from the rest of the country

and declare an Expanding Year with the number of days escalating in

proportion to the entries. Or maybe the earth will simply begin to orbit

the sun slower and slower under pressure from the Claremont Rotary

Club.

In any case, many of us thinking cyclists will be too old to take part.

But what is certain is that in the 21st century there will be an ever

growing number of full-time officials working on the Argus Tour. The

possibility of the infrastructure of Claremont Rotary superseding that of

the government must not be excluded, and judging by their superb

organisation, they will probably do a better job in running the country.

Footnote: Taking note of this article Pedal Power began limiting numbers.

Going For Baroque

One of the strangest human habits is the rewarding of success and the

denigration of failure. Particularly when it is taken into account that

failure of the grandest sort is the combination of the highest aspirations

with the limits of human grace, whereas in success, human mettle is

never fully tested.

One of the saddest and most spectacular failures in both the musical

and the cycling worlds was revealed in 1986 and deserves the Nobel

Prize for Ambition.

A Viennese wheelwright and chamber musician, Karl Heinz von

Willig who was born in 1906 has been building the most beautiful

wheels for a connoisseur clientele since the late 40's. Combining his

talents as an engineer with his musicianship, von Willig developed a

technique of spacing spokes in specially constructed rims and then

shaving and tuning them so that when stroked in sequence they

produce simple melodies.

The standard 36-spoke racing wheel covers enough notes for a wide

variety of popular tunes. A tortoiseshell plectrum is attached by a

specially designed bracket to the front fork and plucks the tune from

the turning wheel. Much the same principle is employed as that of the

musical box or harpsichord.

lmportantly, the wheels are constructed with the correct tensile

strength to make them racing-competitive. Von Willig’s wheels never

compromise either of their two components. They are perfect examples

of aesthetic and mechanical synergism.

Over the years the international Who's Who of cycling and music

have brought the von Willig bicycles. The wheels are set into the best

quality frames which are also tuned to give off the correct harmonic

vibrations. The frames are handled by Von \Vi1lig’s friend and erstwhile

cycling rival, the Italian hillclimber Ernesto Collo. Recently Lance

Armstrong is reported to have ordered a gold alloy front wheel that

plays the Star Spangled Banner.

Although von Willig’s craft has always brought him an extremely

good living, he, like all true artists, needed a challenge and for more

than twenty years he has been obsessed with a magnificent ambition: to

arrange a Baroque fugue for four well-tempered bicycles. Years ago the

engineering was complete and the bicycles were built with extremely

sensitive brakes to allow for delicate nuances in tempo and rhythm.

As his opus magnum, Von Willig decided on ‘The Cat’s Fugue’ by

Domenico Scarlatti. It is poetic justice that Scarlatti was chosen from

amongst the other great baroque composers such as Bach, Vivaldi or

Handel. This is because of the accepted criticism of Scarlatti’s art, ﬁrst

made by Anthony Edwards of the London Sunday Times who

commented that the 17th century master's sonatas for the harpsichord

were ‘merely mechanical exercises’ - a description that is happily

compatible with cycling.

The wheels of the four bicycles that would perform the piece while

simultaneously taking part in a four-man team time trial were carefully

tuned and constructed to perform the fugue over exactly 40 kilometres.

The real problem was to find four cyclists who were capable of meeting

the virtuoso musical standards of the ride, or conversely training up

four musicians who were capable of meeting the rigorous athletic

demands.

By April 1996 von Willig had put together his ideal team which

included two riders who were initially musicians, and two musicians

who were initially cyclists.

Secretly they trained and riding ordinary bicycles managed to

qualify for the 1998 Italian Team Trial Championships in Milan. On

the day they wore special catsuits with the inscription ‘ll Gato di

Scarlatti’ sponsored by the Steinway Piano Company’s harpsichord

division.

Tragedy struck its dismal chord during the race rehearsal. Sergio

Costa Divaris, the alto voice, trying to meet the rigorous demands of

the crescendo at 37 km, fell, bringing the team down and breaking in

total two collar bones, one leg and one ﬁnger. Von Willig was

heartbroken and has retired to his Viennese estate to nurse the wounds

of shattered ambition.

In an interview with Pedal magazine, which caters to the tastes of

the musical and cycling cognoscenti, he confessed that the Scarlatti

piece was intended merely as a prelude to a more heroic venture. His

follow-up to be founded on the artistic and sporting success of the

fugue was to have been the arrangement of the Fifth Brandenberg

Concerto for a mass start road race. Bach's Concerto Grosso is

coincidentally constructed similarly to a classic bicycle race, with its

quick beginning, languid middle, and furious sprint which echoes

precisely the allegro, andante, and allegro vivace movement of the

concerto.

Ironically, as a further twist of fate, it has been pointed out by

Professor Cecil Wheeler, who is the chief musicologist at the

Constantia Cycling Academy, that in any case these days hardly any

cyclists use spoked wheels in time trials. Modem technology has

rendered von Willig’s ambition obsolete. The modern disc wheels carry

a stronger suggestion of the CD than that of a stringed instrument.