

31. Exile on Main Street

In December, Al took in several streets not recommended on official maps. Timing wasn't good, being the month statistically highest in traffic accidents with lots of distracted holiday shoppers. Many were bad dreams, although some were okay in part. Unfortunately, to get from and to their decent stretches bicyclists had to endure disrespect in road design, usually enough to quell ridership altogether. Shoulders were inadequate where roads turned from 2 lanes into 4. A wide, clean, margin makes for tolerable riding alongside cars at turnpike speeds. Main streets are fine when traffic volumes are low; they're often happily direct and flat, historically built over easiest routes from horse-and-buggy days, then paved and widened as communities built around them. Interstates and limited access highways have sometimes eased their burdens, but urban sprawl has negatively impacted all roads, especially segments that feed interstates.

Bicyclists are entitled by law to ride main streets just as any road, unless expressly prohibited. Bears repeating. Club rides used them for short hops between more pleasant venues. If not, they couldn't stage rides in most communities. Starting at malls or plazas, one can't help passing an occasional highway exit or rotary. Nobody plans an entire tour alongside cars. Notwithstanding, why feel obligated to stick to rough tertiary roads with rabid beasts? Shady lanes in summer, for sure. But for him, rides increasingly included long stretches on busy streets, especially in bad weather.

After countless thousands of miles riding everywhere, he learned a new principle for bicycling safely: *shelter*. On country roads, whenever you break down there's seldom a service center with an overhang, or somewhere just to get out of cold or rain. Main streets have gas stations, mini-marts, pay phones, public buildings, restaurants, and some comforts he'd come to appreciate. Full of cheer and gratitude, he supposed that storekeepers thought him rather mad, at least distinct from grouchy motorists they ordinarily wait on. If traffic is thick, you can cut through back alleys, detour onto deserted parallel streets, and never be far from shelter. Bicyclists by habit do this in areas they know. On longer excursions, one would need signs or stripes before attempting to bypass bad intersections or brutal segments.

After all, bicycles and mo-ves mix poorly among those who are neither cautious nor experienced. While both can be used for personal transport, they are *not the same*. Bikes barely achieve any

posted speed limits on flat. Mo-ves generally exceed despite terrain. Generally, bicycling is about 5 times faster than walking, but motoring is only 2 to 3 times faster than bicycling except on highways. This means you can bike to destinations to which you wouldn't normally walk including intermediate places to which you'd normally drive, if you're not in too much of a hurry. Extra horsepower means better climbing, faster acceleration from stop, and higher overall speed. Climbing, all cyclists slave, slog and weave. While sand and slick hardly matter to motorists, they severely impact bicyclists. Sand accumulation, slippery downhills, and unplowed bikeways deter bicycling for half of each year in Northern climates from start of Winter to start of Summer. Bikes can leave roadway altogether or thread through traffic. Mo-ves are confined and must give way to size-challenged entities at intersections and between lanes, which demands constant control. Sheer luck combined with the fact that roadways are often empty keep more collisions from occurring. That's why traffic controls exist, to restore attention at intervals, to uphold these parameters, although removing many of them would mitigate stop and go situations, save fuel, and suppress accidents, according to many experts. Traffic controls are no more than band-aids for bad urban planning.

Red lights don't apply to bicyclists. They usually treat them as yield signs, merely suggestions to free wheel. Bicyclists never want to stop, particularly if clipped in, so they'll hover at intersection or sneak behind intersecting vehicles, anything to keep moving. At intersections where you can't tell who else has a red light, experienced cyclists shadow vehicular flow as a screen, like following a blocker in a football scrimmage. Any bicyclist who has a clue can brake on a dime, corner tightly, and practically never cross a motorist's path. Since embedded control strips don't trip for bicycles, signals must not apply. Otherwise, bicyclists would have to wait for a mo-ve to come along. For how long? Overnight? Not only ridiculous but repugnant to any self respecting pedaler. You aren't safer waiting for green lights either, since that also means vehicles from front or rear cutting you off. A moving target is harder to hit. The right moment to cross, despite color of control, is when all motorists have stopped. Even better, avoid extremely busy intersections, if you can, although DOT physical engineers make this almost impossible.

Folly to equate bicycling and motoring. Road planners must distinguish between them then accommodate based on differences. Bicyclists are more attentive than motorists, can hear and see better, and have a much better sense of whether to go or stop.

Got a peek at a suppressed report from California documenting accidents by type. Diagrams showed all to be associated with leaving shoulder and merging into motor flow. Obviously, motorists don't know how to react when someone weaves out to avoid impediments or make a left. He'd always assume lane well in advance. Too easy to overlook a cyclist on right, too hard when directly in front. Although bicycles only require minor road considerations, since they negligibly effect pavement and take up so little room, they get even less than deserved. One should expect their smaller turning radii, size so small they can take chances, cross and clear faster when propelled by a skillful rider. Besides, there's hardly anything for which a bicyclist can be held liable. Motorists are practically always wrong in a collision, unless parked or well stopped outside an intersection. Yet bicyclists are expected to obey all traffic laws in addition to, at least in his state, dozens more specific to them, a sad capitulation to automotive dominance. Might qualify as the most overregulated personal activity, traffic code cleverly twisted back onto people it was supposed to protect. Bicyclists find it practically impossible to obey laws that weren't written to apply on a roadnet designed to exclude while unable to compete with vehicles.

Why didn't transportation departments recommend certain roads? Their experts are acknowledging roads weren't designed with bicycling in mind. Given mandates of law, wasn't there something that could be done? Curb and space can be defensive allies or definite threats. Gutters drain rain but collect debris. Defensive driving courses advise—in fact, their *1 key point*—always leaving yourself an “out”, somewhere to steer should something unforeseen suddenly pop up. You can't always simply STOP. Quickly descending, he'd ride good pavement in middle of travel lane, away from linear cracks typical where automotive wheels roll, then use shoulder to go around something or out of way of faster vehicles, if any at those speeds. Shoulders are only temporary safety outlets, not bicycle lanes, and at high speeds were likely to harbor more dangers than often clean and empty driving lanes.

Clubs warn their members to “bike right”. Or else what? There are more manuals on operating bicycles correctly than for cars, a sad paradox. According to USDOT statistics you're 3,000% more likely to get into an accident in a mo-ve than on a bicycle during an average trip for either, 3.5 miles. You have to pass tests to get a driver's license, not so for bicycling because none is needed. Bicyclists not in competition hardly ever collide with or hurt others; damage and death stats would be negligible. All one has to do is

dismount a bike to become a pedestrian, which instantly changes rules. There's more than 1 way to skin a cat. Which way you choose depends much upon how delicately you wish to proceed.

Bicycling is more like walking than driving. Do they hassle you for walking badly? Suppose even that's possible, as they do ticket jaywalkers. Watched a crunk-eyed, plastered stoner propped up against a wall, after seeing a patrol car, unsteadily stand, patched tatters soaked with urine, and insanely smile at officer. Some lonesome soul, seated on a cold sidewalk, was bound to bring a bust and frisk. So you'll even be hassled for remaining stationary. Deciding criteria seems to be, "If you can walk home, we'll let you go." You might stay home, but even then there are laws against private acts. It's safer to be in a coma, but it costs too much. Dead and buried at your own expense is where society prefers you. Then they'll pave right over your grave to build more motorways and parking spots.

Bicyclists already respect motoring, but not vice versa. Deterrents are in place, but a \$75 fine for killing a bicyclist is hardly enough. Caught on amateur video and televised in news was a small white car rear-ending another, then, backing up, turning and mowing down a pedestrian in an adjacent yard. Horrifying pornography? No, that came later. Motorist was given a slight fine for drunk driving. Purposeful aggression toward bicyclists and pedestrians ought to be considered a hate crime. He was fed up of being told to "bike right" versus the hypocrisy of scofflaw motorists doing the exact opposite with impunity. These cartel slogans chafe and irritate like cheap shoes. Boils your blood, brings out bile, phlegm and melancholy. Bicyclists and motorists alike find it hard to bolster their humors when they have to suffer fools.

Forester correctly skewers national bicycle cartel and regional clubs for increasing fears and promoting bad road engineering. What such criticism doesn't seem to realize is these orgs are half-way houses for people migrating from automotive addiction. Addicts need to steer clear of temptations. Bikeways offer a way, group rides another, and they'll always harbor a bunch of fearful weaklings who grovel and kowtow before almighty perceptions and ply seldom used back roads until they heal. Ideally, there are no mo-ves, only bicycles and public transportation. Really, there will always be some mix that includes cars, motorcycles and trucks. Balance between extreme viewpoints is what's called for, neither mode given preference, only today it's 1% consideration for cycling and 99% for motoring. All bicyclist consternation derives from fears stemming from this tilted imbalance. If only they'd stop stealing shoulders at intersections, this mix could improve.

Should you go out and try a metropolitan 50? A car, without signal, abruptly turned into a parking space with him alongside. When he went around on left, said, "Thanks, buddy," into open driver's window to curses and groans. Later, while riding through a fork in road, where he had to squeeze left, got a, "Get off the f***n' road," from an impatient pickup driver spinning wheels. Riding a short segment of a wide cinder path in the city's ritziest district, an old matron stretched out her arms to stop him. He only stopped because he thought she might need help. Privileged bitch snottily pointed out that somewhere there was a sign that mandated, "Path for runners and walkers only". So? He simply replied, "I don't buy into it," and began to ride away. When she persisted, he just said, "Screw you." What did she expect? To get her regal way as usual? Luckily, he wasn't some psychopath on her precious path. What makes people think just because you're on a bike they can exert their control over you? If motoring, she would've jumped meekly out of his way without so much as a word. So many times he was banished he wasn't about to take it from anyone without a badge. Besides, he never saw any break or signs in this barrier and was crossing over at next intersection anyway. You'll also encounter rude treatment on country roads; only difference was its frequency.

Art, media or news should consist of whatever its producer wants, whether artifacts, such as paintings or sculpture, however offensive, installment pieces, or outdoor activities, including non-violent demonstrations. People aren't forced to view; they can drop dead, jerk off, stay home, turn channel to a station carrying teletubbettes, or walk in another direction. Public displays are fair game for faultfinding, too. Acts put out for viewing that do not cause injury and only offend sensibilities, not pocketbooks, should be exempt from lawsuits but not ridicule. This includes reporting malfeasances of CEOs, club officers, foundation directors, hedge fund managers, or public officials. Limiting greed is society's highest priority. Once you cross a line into public's eye, or profit from celebrity, any interpretation of your actions is quite legitimate, since it constitutes a reaction to your service from those paying for it. Criticism should be welcome, indicates someone cares.

Speaking of hate crimes, consider censorship. Smacks of administrative misbehavior, constitutional rights violation, McCarthyism, and unchecked vindictiveness. You allow that crap, next they'll be rounding up outsiders and filling concentration camps with them. In a bid for club election, one he knew he had no chance of winning, he made it his mission to raise bylaw and election process issues, since continuous improvement is sped along at

such times, if someone has gumption enough to speak up. Since then, people often asked why he didn't run for political office. Can't get your point across and wouldn't win. Besides, it was too late for him to begin being chaste and faultless. These alone might deter potential candidates, but shouldn't. Got to mosh it up if you want improvements. Because what he did and said "resulted in offense of club volunteers and officers," he was barred from bulletin board and club activities. Listserv censorship supposedly equals intellectual electronic castration. Where are bylaws that say officers can unilaterally banish offenders, disallow them from volunteering, and get away with it under cover of an election? Sounds like an abuse of power, nothing new. Of course, this usually blows up in a dictator's face, because martyrdom always significantly raises a martyr's popularity.

With his name, Labann, being banned was something he was practically choreographed into. He had become used to people looking around him or pushing him aside as if he was a door or other obstacle in front of the object of their desires. It's no wonder he looked to the sweet face of the Mother of Exiles, his one true friend. But banishment worked in his favor, since there was less to obsess over, or spend money he didn't have for diminishing returns. There were fewer chances for reprisals against him. In fact, he constantly forced such decisions, pushed people to their intellectual limits, not that these boundaries were very far to begin with. Good minds appreciated his nudges. Only idiots can't use criticism to their personal advantage. Crooks, lamebrains, losers, and officers of biking clubs hate criticism of any kind. Petty dictators can't deal with ideas. Those who are threatened by diversity ought not be in charge of anything involving diverse people, not even pets. They should stick to inanimate objects, count potholes, keep an eye on bridges, or make sure trains run on schedule.

Was he being too sensitive? Inclined to fly off in a snit? Badger opponents, browbeat rather than logically discuss, show impatience rather than gently coax? None of these are positive ways of reacting to others, nothing more than accusations by those who weren't getting their way with him that didn't represent how he really behaved, usually calm and nonplussed. Nobody who wanted to manipulate you can stand getting back persistent moral reminders. They consider moralizing and rationalizing inferior to acting, particularly acting in their favor. Demons provoke acts which lead to grief. Usually, doing nothing at all is better than some extreme reaction instigated by those who think they are in charge. "Confess and we will kill you mercifully."

Comedians flirt with edges of acceptability, censorship, taboos, yet that's okay because they're only flirting. When you really assail sacred cows, you're vilified by insiders. Retrain you eyes, you'll often see someone getting an approving nod from powerful interests: Anyone who spreads antiliberal libel, corporate human resources representatives fishing for candidates, Republican apologists and revisionist historians bashing FDR's policies. They push, push, push for ever more privilege because there's no organized resistance. No, no, that's got to stop. Bursting out to extremes is no good. Must begin to gather together and shrink gracefully from overwrought stances, level playing fields again.

Banishment raises suspicions against those in power. It exposes their misdeeds. Emerson intuited, "Every burned book enlightens the World," not just from momentary brightness of flame, but through long range implications, wagging tongues and spreading discontent. Indeed, his offense was only an opening salvo in a war of words, not only within a club with former presidents arguing over charter changes, but across society, sanctimonious zealots versus whining intelligentsia, stupid pundits allowing themselves to be polarized by what divides instead of seeking unity. Choosing sides brings a lot of facts presented in all media into question. Yet, expose their deceits, they find better ways of burying them. Or, when caught, they deny, deny, deny. Do you buy it? That's all that matters to them. He had been doing them a favor by introducing a coming storm. Beware when those in power criticize your attitude instead of what you say because what you say is irrefutable, as if to disavow truth for something they can control, namely your style, which is totally irrelevant as long as truth is served. How completely, utterly dishonest is this?

Dishonest to put a stamp of rosy charm on what's a bloody mess. Why not just characterize something as it truly is, spare no feelings? Cut out all artifice, and what do you have? Statesman Churchill summarized, "The truth is incontrovertible. Malice may attack it, ignorance may deride it, but in the end, there it is." Can't elevate feelings to values, and they certainly aren't truths. Truths are merciless, relentless, uncompromising. They must be served, or else. Truth is crap. Almost preferred being spared gritty reality with smiling lies. But he wouldn't give 2¢ for a reporter who tried to find a silver lining in a rain cloud. Neither exaggerate nor minimize a situation, even if mediocre stories make for dull news. If something effects a lot of people, it bears repeating. Take responsibility for truth yourself. But, in keeping with their primary role, newsmen distract you from what's really important. How lazy can they get,

finding various angles on the same approved story all other news services run. What about developing news on your own? Look into political corruption, scoop local issues, show how they intertwine with global ones. Exposing malfeasance and shortcomings has become increasingly rare. Journalists must remain independent. Someone must chart a course and steer this ship. Travelers tell how they made a passage, when all they did was go along for the ride.

Nobel Laureate Jacques “Anatole France” Thibault was criticized for not being as creative as other storytellers then alive. This judgment lacks any insight into this erudite, inquisitive and witty excommunicate. France was more interested in making points than entertaining, more possessed with making sense of scores of influences from exposures to great minds in father’s bookshop than pandering to fickle readers. Today, institutions organize to fleece public, offspring burn through inheritances, rich fight to maintain nest eggs, writers seek rich audiences—paradigm ugliness. It seems terribly wrong, not what life should be about. France’s characters were passionate about living, not getting and spending. With such an attitude, one not only expects disgrace but welcomes it when it pours in. You must explore whatever repulses you. You must understand why it does. Only after having done so are you entitled to an opinion about it. You may share your observations. If negative, you better be prepared to defend it, and is that worth your effort and time? If positive, your excitement and passion are enough, and those who disagree aren’t worth wasting your breath upon.

Perhaps all plots have already been overdone. Even science fiction, as speculative as it gets, forsakes new plot structure for a familiar exploration of what’s somewhat strange. If you suspend reality, anything, of course, is possible. Whatever is grossly unfamiliar will always be feared and smashed. Small minds avoid anything new, stay home, take no chances, yet don’t realize doing so usually results in the worst choice of all: lonesome regrets. Century old literary criticism seems totally useless, as people rediscover a source divorced from it then reevaluate authors on their own merit devoid of contemporary baggage. Stories told long ago by Balzac, Bierce, Dickens, Hugo, Poe, Twain and others seem just as applicable today in a world that’s not much removed from debtor prisons, mass folly, pointless warfare, psychological scars, and workhouses for the poor. Outright slavery still exists elsewhere, while wage slavery is the norm in industrialized countries. If there were any fact behind lip service this nation gives to liberty, you’d be able to contribute very little yet still survive even without property ownership. Aborigines and bushmen are the only ones who can,

but only because their environment isn't yet polluted beyond its capacity to heal itself and support life.

One's tempted to retaliate, get even, as this federal administration is doing against the Northeast region, which voted solidly Democratic. Meanwhile they misreport joblessness, claim everything is fine since 95% of people are supposedly working, which ignores increasing homelessness, minimizes a displaced 5%, more like 52%, and overlooks declining unemployment and welfare benefits. After paying in for 25 years, you're only doled a dozen weeks at a tiny fraction of what you contributed, then you're shut off, penniless, off any unemployment census. Unfairly, it's the same for someone who works <2 years as it is for >25. You're not paying for yourself, but for others who work the system instead of working toward permanent gainful employment. The real culprit is a lack-luster Republican governor who's done nothing to expand opportunities in a State where the fastest growing segment is in charitable begging, and the single biggest employer is State itself. Fully 15% of population must commute across borders. They've left economic development to a privatized agency with a questionable track record. That his state was last in job growth was a direct indictment of state's administrators. Whatever they pay them, they're not worth it. Replace with permanent people who have a definite stake, set quota and targets, surveil results.

Leaders are supposed to serve you. Beware. Inevitably, their interpretation of this always becomes, "Whatever serves me also serves you." They might not do their best to solicit your opinions, impossible to accomplish in a first pass, then presume to know what you want. Squeaky wheels get oiled. Vast segments of population contribute more than they ask in return, silently endure, and consequently are forgotten in decisions of substance. Society is left with entitlements and rights for convicts, lobbyists, pets, splinter groups, but never the majority. Everything majority does is ignored or illegal. Too many unresolved issues to expect bicycling justice.

Right after WWII, in answer to FDR's 4 freedoms, the United Nations adopted an International Bill of Human Rights. Article 1 proclaims, "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood." The remaining articles 2 through 28 in brief affirm for all on Earth, "Rights... to life, liberty and security of person; to social security; to work; to equal pay for equal work; to rest and leisure; to a standard of living adequate for health and well-being; to education; to participate in the cultural life of the community; and to a social and

international order.” Is there yet a country in the World where all, or any, of these rights are honored? They seem to have been eroding ever since. Continuous warfare, corporate overtime practices, indebted servitude from offshored and outsourced jobs, loss of art instruction in school curricula due to lack of funding, unchecked crime (little of which is homeland security related): None of these support UN’s Bill, yet are all happening in America today. Soon books will be burned, colleges will be closed, ethnic cleansing will commence, and that vicious spiral of ethical decay will sweep away final bastions of human rights unpopular with profiteers.

With all other pressures, local and regional, finding funds for bicycling seems a low priority. A network of road adaptations is an inexpensive compromise compared to multimillion dollar rail trails. States didn’t take enough advantage of TEA-12 funding when it was available, before it went into limbo with a conservative Congress. Paid his share to road development many times over. Roads are free and already exist. He could go anywhere anytime he wanted on them, and they weren’t so horribly unsafe, except at bad intersections and pinch points. Riding among others obviously involves politics. With local club, you have to be on the right side of its aristocracy to participate. Amidst advocacy syncope, boredom with tertiary roads, club banishment, and governmental neglect, exile on main street wasn’t a bad option. Instead of petty despots too insecure to consider another’s viewpoint, he only had to deal with irate drivers who might get impression from him that bicycling is fun and safe.

Cyclists long ago deduced that a peevish boast was the best way to conceal they weren’t much better than any other biwheeler. Those who live along millionaire row rant against bike lanes. All neighbors who are anti-bike froth at the mouth about pillaging, raping and stealing of TV sets that goes on when those “black, brown and yellow people” come into their nice areas. This is just ugly racism. What makes white Anglo-Saxons pastoral elitists who live in their suburban bliss of 19th Century privilege think they need to be segregated in cozy colonial hamlets? Not good enough to mingle? Must be deeply entrenched suspicion of plague, how any connection with strangers might introduce death and disease. Xenophobia is an inherited malady; prejudice a nurtured disorder. Both are comfortable diseases, though. Real anti-bike sentiments are sneaky. Multinationals can’t close out small builders and monopolize because their technology is too simple, so they do everything in their vast power to eradicate it as an alternative.

Maximum fine for motorist violations among local traffic laws, \$75, wasn't much of a deterrent, certainly nothing that would protect you from constant daily infractions. Advocates delude themselves into thinking edicts will be obeyed. How many speeders do you see pulled over versus actual offenders? 1 in 100? Unposted limit on country roads is ignored and unenforceable. After selling cars based on speed, who's going to tell you that you can only drive 25 mph most of the time? Never once heard of a motorist accused of a bicycle lane encroachment, nor, for that matter, driving in gutter. From a bicyclist's perspective, fine *should* be a mandatory \$1,000 minimum and 6 month license suspension. It's not. Yet a provision fines bicyclists \$75 for first offense of wearing headphones while riding. Often saw helmetless cyclists on sidewalks with I-pods, 3 concurrent infractions, \$225. Funny how fine per infraction are equal but gravity of offense doesn't seem to be, considering how lane violations can kill and the others, while disturbing, are practically harmless. In either case, there's no provision for a second offense; neither is ever enforced. Another provision specifically allows bicyclists to ride two abreast as long as they are not obstructing traffic. Club riders were quick to criticize this normal social behavior, "Single file!" No comparing notes and dissenting against regime is permitted. The only abnormal thing about riding two by each is offenders might be conversing, something not appreciated by better-than-thous, paceliners, or the politically correct. Conservative club officers and their henchmen had nothing to say he wanted to hear, and they dearly wanted him to shut up. Where's the partnership potential? Blackmail? He wished there were some wording allowing cyclists to take left lane for purpose of a left turn, a glaring omission that will result in tragedy. He would continue to doing so anyway, valuing his life. At least this bill acknowledges existence of bicyclists on streets, and how can that be bad? He felt grateful in some minuscule way.

The word of law apparently doesn't stifle those who are contentious. Oblivious better describes your typical motorist, who never thinks anything should obstruct his/her driving under the influence or unabated violations. But they'll give unnecessary tickets to slow cyclists simply because they're easier to catch. Get used to it: Bikes belong. Bike are traffic in the lane with other traffic, not in gutter with trash motorists deposit there.

Noticed few rearview mirrors, evidence of those serious about vehicles overtaking. Some do ride too fast, head down, without communicating verbally and only ride in pairs when passing,

usually on your right or in such a way to force you into crashes. They've yet to separate low stress bicycling from their competitive rat race routine. These few should probably stick to motor sports where viewing World through windshield resembles television. The overwhelming majority of bicyclists are listening, watching, and yielding for distracted motorists. Detached and objective, bicyclists know more about bad motoring behaviors than motorists do.

Safe Routes to Schools have to traverse economically depressed areas with drug dealers, hookers, and other intimidating characters. As a bike commuter for years, had to deal with a never ending array of unforeseen hazards. Was threatened by construction runoff, sand in gutters, sudden increases in snarl due to highway closings and other factors. He'd be accosted by dogs and mean people and endured unpredicted weather, going out in sunshine, returning in snow. Unsafe routes to school make parents nervous. It's not even a city/country issue. Child predators are everywhere, but usually they're in cars, like everyone else. Cars enable crimes.

Having more people around on bike and foot provides vigilance; the more concentrated, the better. When two Seattle policemen proposed and were granted permission to patrol by bike, arrests quintupled. What he dreaded were dark alleys and lonely roads without watchful presence of people. Existing bike paths seemed safer by day than many back roads he'd ridden. A bike path is something that you can control and patrol, much like a highway, with limited access and night lighting. Makes sense to have them through the most populous areas that intersect residences and schools. Might lead to a new urbanism with places to amble quietly, get hair dressed, and pick up a latte or paperback. Real bike activists don't want to sell more bikes or books. That's just a good by-product. They want people to do something healthy on a daily basis and eliminate any obstacle that might act as an excuse not to. Facing down gangsters isn't healthy. Gangsters like spots they can escape from easily, run around a corner, step into a doorway. Increased vigilance and limited dead spots, as represented by busy commerce and community involvement, are practical deterrents, although no deterrent can stop crime altogether.

