

18. Living on the Edge

State law defines the word “roadway” as “that portion of a highway improved, designed or ordinarily used for vehicular travel, excluding sidewalk, berm, or shoulder, even when used by bicyclists.” Articles provide, “Persons riding two abreast shall not unduly impede traffic, and, on a laned roadway, shall ride within a single lane.” Operant in this language was the phrase, “within a *lane*” [his italics]. Roadway means *travel lane*, not gutter or parking lane or sidewalk. As traffic themselves, bicyclists are entitled to roadways, that is, just to the left of that often faded solid white fog, parking or road edge line. Other documents recommended riding in “a straight line *at least* 3 feet from curb to allow room for moving around road hazards”, and avoid “dodging between parked cars” so as to be seen by overtaking motorists. Elsewhere laws define bicycles as “vehicles”; no vehicle may steadily ride to the right of a line that marks a parking space or road edge. Where you ought to be on road is something better diagramed, but you get the picture, the right third of any travel lane. Clearly, according to all documents and state laws, bicyclists were supposed to ride where mo-ves drive. Too bad bicyclists and motorists mix like fuel vapor and spark. Differences in speed create conflicts, sometimes result in death, and suffocate cyclist confidence.

Only once did Al see a motorist pulled over for a lane violation on freeway, never on secondaries. Personal observations aren't required to prove occurrences of phenomena, but he was sure statistics would confirm his suspicions. Lawmen are loathe to give tickets because of ripples. A single ticket might mean your insurance doubles. This is patently unfair as a penalty, cruel and unusual; far exceeds misdemeanor, usually victimless. Why not report to insurance after 5 tickets? Insurance companies prefer once, because they're greedy. So, in the process, they actually make driving more dangerous by relaxing deterrents. Additional tickets at higher fees would mean more revenue for towns. Suspects with outstanding warrants are sometimes caught when stopped for traffic violations. Impatient, weaving motorists are a danger to everyone including themselves. Yet ratio of cars pulled over to ones being driven, generally badly, at any hour on any given stretch is extremely low.

Despite enforcement neglect, the fine for a lane violation is second only to speeding 10 mph over a posted limit. A solid white line trumps a double yellow in traffic control hierarchy. Amidst apparently seldom read, crucial to life, driver guidelines, hard to

find anywhere, are laws that actually mandate, “Don’t cross solid double yellow lines.” Okay, most drivers know that would put them in jeopardy of a deadly head-on collision. Nevertheless, they so often clip ends at corners, yellow stripes at many intersections get worn off for several car lengths. Yet it’s just as unlawful to cross solid white lines, which mark off roadside parking or separate dangerous highways lanes. Bicycling thousands of city miles each year, he constantly saw automobiles straddling or travelling entirely within *breakdown lanes*, where bicyclists ride compelled out of fear, particularly at intersections where cars angle illegally into a turn. Obviously, bicyclists generally violate this restriction. Multiple provisions imply bicyclists may use shoulders or sidewalks as a temporary resort, while motorists illegally swerve right into them around cars that are turning left. Add to this confusion cars double-parked and parked where unlawful. All this makes the road edge a busy place, when it really shouldn’t be.

Fatalities he researched mainly occurred when bicyclists suddenly veered into travel lane or, while riding too close to curb, they weren’t noticed by intersecting or overtaking motorists. If they had been riding steadily where they belonged, *out in lane*, they likely wouldn’t have surprised unwary motorists and might still be alive. Those who sit out have somewhere to go when situations arise, and will slow motorists trying to pass, which increases everyone’s safety. Biking close to curb sets a bad example, endangers those riding responsibly, encourages excess speed, increases need for costly sweeping, and invites tragedies. Most road users believe cyclists belong on sidewalks and often are incredulous when told otherwise. Even champion Leg Lemon erroneously warns cyclists to stay within shoulders. Fearfully following such advice, he always eased in on right curves lest clippers take him out. If they can’t see you, you’ll be under their wheels in a heartbeat. He tucked in, then gradually resumed lane. Without shoulders at such spots—corners, crossings, curves—hazards multiply. Treated merging lanes the opposite, angled over quickly and regained position on right, since a motorist, neck craned back to merge as fast as possible, momentarily pays no attention to what’s ahead. When faced with a choice, he favored going right rather than left around potholes; didn’t want to be caught by mo-ves also swerving to avoid.

Of fatal bicycle accidents, 90% involve cars. While statistics are clear on this point, you have to dig into reports to discover what happened. From news, most often he’d found it was from being overtaken from behind or from side. There’s a new USDOT statistic that pinpoints a high percentage, perhaps 90% or more,

of car-bike collisions (not fatalities) occurring on sidewalks, but this is rather misleading. What it means to imply is that cyclists aren't careful crossing where cars normally back out or emerge from parking lots and spots, but how is that different from a) riding properly along shoulder at same point, or b) riding directly in parking lots? And what does it say about lack of proper planning at a spot known to be unsafe? Pumped up with thrill of having acquired some object of their desire while shopping, motorists are particularly aggressive and negligent. They hunt, kill, then dance and howl round their fire. *Beware.*

Everyone he personally knew in crashes collided by being overtaken. Some aficionados scoff at rear view mirrors, but he wouldn't ride without one after it had saved his life. Hoped if they also did it would gain acceptance. A mirror lets you continually monitor conditions ahead and behind. Cyclists are often conformists, programmed, so subordinate that they automatically obey traffic laws and ride responsibly. In addition to motoring code, there are local ordinances that only cyclists need obey. Cycling is the most over regulated personal activity in existence. If ever you quote statistics, cyclists will argue over them. They might admit knowing nothing but convince themselves you're wrong from their personal experience, so assume you have none. They wear you out with arbitrary nonsense. People who show courtesy are normal. Only schizophrenics believe in their own delusions independent of physical substantiality. Studying fatalities, one draws an inference that speeders squeezed then overtook bicyclists, mostly on 4-lane roads without shoulders, which by definition include awful rotaries and badly laid out intersections. Perhaps drivers had to weave around some obstruction—bump, crack, grate, pothole. He'd seen this firsthand many times over. Despite his garish reflective clothes, lights, rear view, and savvy, he'd been in many near misses, sideswiped thrice, and struck once, but not seriously. Just over your shoulders hovers both an angel, right, ready to pull you out of trouble, and a demon, left, dragging you into danger, such as speeding mo-ves. A mirror is your way to watch for demons.

Bad road design and improper upkeep can kill you. Surface conditions were a facility issue. But this comes under city and state budgets for motorized transport, not bike infrastructure funds, which can't by statute be used to fill potholes. They tear up old asphalt and put down fresh, as if it's chewed out bubble gum that gets too brittle and stale. You'd think they could find a material that got better with age, not crumble, form ruts, and require endless expensive, profitable primping. Streets represent

civilization, about the only public thing left that's designated directly for good of all. Yet in sharing it, users exhibit their most uncivilized behaviors. In countryside, civilization mostly ends at road's edge, where earth goddess totally takes over amidst decaying woodland understories. If not for community diligence, natural processes would reclaim roads in practically no time at all.

He always found what was off the edge more interesting as scenery. Pavement can endlessly vary but it's either just a dangerous detail with which to deal or too dull to discuss. Getting off had its rewards: courtyards, food kiosks, historical markers, interpretive signs. Visited one of America's smallest national parks. Founding father created a tiny oasis there, a well where those traveling on US-1 could rest a spell, water their horses. Today groundwater is tainted, and well collects trash, a shame, really. Urban planners and vandals stifle any symbolic selflessness from this spot. Current paradigm is better represented by pillories, treadmills and velodromes, spots for punishment, not wellsprings to share.

When he talked to mayors, they all favored bicycling, supported it wholeheartedly, but basically told him in so many words, "You're on your own." If on your own, why do you need them? Perhaps you need a *bicycling party* to forward your own candidates. Or paint your own bike lanes, as they did in Portland, Oregon. One mayor of Portland was a bike nut, so infrastructure became inevitable. One term in office is all pols need to instill irrevocable change. Once there, infrastructure will get used, later expanded, until cycling is so common everyone accepts it. Then party can move onto other cities a spread corridors throughout a region.

In 2000, urban vehicle miles were 1.7 trillion or 61% of total travel compared to only 44% in 1960; this increase was mostly due to urban sprawl. Busses and trucks cause ripples and wear grooves, then freezes and thaws buckle and break, all of which kills pavement quicker than they can afford to keep up. Yet, as an issue to get behind, this is an impossible interdiction, a non-starter. Only motorists care so much about bumps and cracks and so little about dedicated bike facilities, where surface never has to carry comparable weight and thus maintains its integrity far longer. Among "vehicles", only things as light as bicycles don't destroy pavement.

Weaving around and on the line was where he rode, mesmerized by the stripe. Afraid to fall under rushing wheels, he balanced under exertion, swerved to avoid grates or motorists, used smoothness of paint to reduce friction and preserve fragile tires, at least when road beneath it wasn't still scarred from previous work. You can see debris better on white. A little further out, lane was

grooved from heavy use and often had long tire-snagging cracks, as well as patches separated after utility trenches had been refilled. Further in was seldom swept by bigger tires, full of busted grates and drainage hurdles. That white stripe is a mystical balance point. One must *contemplate the edge*, truly comprehend its meaning. Cycling was living on the edge in more ways than one. It was sometimes like tiptoeing along a tightrope, meant inviting ridicule, risking your life, sacrificing your livelihood, tottering along while braving swirling chaos. Bicyclists are *marginalized* without any power to retaliate. They're forced into gutter with the waste it's designed to handle. "Finally we are no one," in mým's words. Being marginalized makes you a hugger. Accepting makes you invisible.

Bike lanes and signed on-street routes are a convenience for motorists, an attempt to restrict bicyclists from using entire road. Practicality demands dodging loose debris, opened doors or improperly parked cars. Bike lanes are therefore *suggestions* rather than obligations; they say "Bicyclists may be present!" but fail to restrict. In Paris, bikes share lanes with busses, which show up infrequently, although many a fatality has been caused by their big damn mirrors. They've never mixed nicely. He'd use a bike lane only when it didn't compromise safety. Otherwise, he'd do whatever worked, pass motorists on left, ply travel lanes or sidewalks.

States have laws and may assess fines. But can they ticket someone without a license? If you confiscate a bike and bicyclist is then assaulted or in any way injured, wouldn't this expose town to legal liability? So what was his penalty to be? Obviously, there's a lot of overlooked legal issues regarding bicycling, another reason it's discouraged. This hasn't stopped some municipalities, notably NYC, from issuing all sorts of unconstitutional fines and tickets to every civil disobedient, who either doesn't pay them or gets them overturned in court, another inconvenience they dump on cyclists.

Not so with motoring. Motorists are required by law to *be in control* of their vehicles at all times so they can avoid any situation they come upon—including bicyclists, children, construction, stray pets—stay within lines, stop on a dime. To comply, most drivers would have to slow by half. During practically every outing, especially within city, sometimes several times on a single ride, someone swerved into his line, often intentionally, as if to say, "Stay out of my way, f***er!" Because lanes are wide enough to handle tractor trailers doesn't mean cars should weave within them. While biking, you're almost immune to citations. Driving, you practically can't avoid them. Motorists are jealous, resentful, and simply angry with anyone they come across. Some see nothing wrong with this

attitude, but would be horrified if a 20-ton semi-tractor trailer did it to them. They'd file a complaint. After all, that's directly analogous, hostile mass in a 20:1 ratio.

Motorists who harass cyclists with impunity may eventually wind up killing some. Makes sense to file preemptive criminal charges. There are traffic laws against driving aggressively, negligently or recklessly; emitting excessive noise, such as using horn except when necessary to insure safety; failing to carefully avoid collisions; following too closely; improperly overtaking or passing; leaving scene of an accident; not revealing insurance information; and refusing to render aid. There are also criminal misdemeanors of harassment or stalking, malicious destruction of property, reckless endangerment and second degree assault or battery. To indict for assault by a legal standard, accused must have shown by actions an intent to inflict bodily harm or put victim in apprehension of same. For battery, accused must by intentional actions caused harmful or offensive touching of victim's person or property. You can witness a complaint yourself but bringing in impartial witnesses is better. A victim need not show emotional, physical or other damages or a criminal conviction to collect in a civil judgement against an accused, although these might add to punitive judgments.

Subpoenas can be issued, fines levied, vehicles confiscated, licenses revoked, jail time given. Given chances for failure and fact there's a safe alternative in cycling, why drive any more than absolutely necessary? But many people don't care about anyone, and the evidence is plain from simply watching what they do while driving. CNN headline, "Road Rage Incident Kills 5 Year Old." Those who claim they've never experienced road rage are liars, unless they call it "righteous indignation", don't drive or take Prosaic. A panel of sports announcers were laughing about their unanimous road rage. He sarcastically supposed any threat to life was something worth joking about, like cancer, heart disease and motoring fatalities, a fine way to ingratiate yourself to families, of victims, which includes just about everyone. Talk about politically incorrect!

This constant onslaught of cutoffs, near misses, and panic over being accosted, bottled, doored, overtaken, or pinched combined with the inherent effort to pedal made cyclists a grumpy, humorless bunch, more prone to commiserate among themselves than share rapture. They swapped tales of brutal conditions, horrible treatments, terrible rides, and worst accidents. While bicycling, one might relive Diane Ackerman's quote, "When I go biking the World is breaking someone else's heart," unless you're cut off, driven into curb, or screamed at. Much depends on where you

ride,. If a positive bone once existed in a bicyclist's body, it was broken by endlessly witnessing man's inhumanity to man. Made cyclists an edgy lot who knew the meanings of banished, prohibited, restricted. No need to argue semantics or quote Webster's.

Club's position was that bicyclists are usually wrong. Bent by guilt and buying into assigned role as 4th class citizens, they prostrate themselves before their idol, the car, cognizant of countless inhumanities they heap upon each other and mindful of humiliating experiences they've had dealing with this more potent adversary. Would compare to dogs, but dogs have more integrity than that. When they tell bicyclists to "bike right", obey traffic controls, or stay out of motorists' way, they simply capitulate in shame, kowtow to their undeniable master, automotive stupefaction.

As in everything, returning to origins yields a better understanding. By definition, automobiles are devices meant to move without intervention; they *drive themselves*. Locomotives, in contrast, simply move on a prescribed, unwavering course with such determined momentum they are practically unstoppable. All moves are hardly stoppable to some degree. Conversely, a bicycle is something totally under its operator's control. You can *bike right*, whereas you cannot *motor right* despite added regulations, insistent calls for education, and many more laws. The prevailing perspective is, "Let inevitable accidents be sorted out by insurance companies."

Ride safe? Where? Everyone gets this picture. Lunkheads without patience or skill to ride in town, which requires dealing with difficult intersections and finding quiet side streets, are forced to confine their riding to pleasant countryside, where traffic is light. All who claim to ride over 5,000 miles/year can only do so in country settings. Average riders just can't achieve high enough speeds to log more in cities, at least not safely: too many corners and obstacles. Those who do have long known that vehicles cannot be confined to a single lane. Lanes are too narrow for wide bodies. Especially worrisome are tailgaters, who can't see beyond vehicle in front and weave from side to side.

To take water in a shady spot, he stopped on a curve at the crest of a long hill. Along came a Toyoyo in breakdown lane, nearly taking him out. Similar incidents happened with alarming regularity. This didn't make each driver a felon or homicidal maniac, just someone too careless and distracted to pay attention. Careless driving contrasts with congested driving, but not so much as to prevent accidents. Factors as ill designed sunglasses, solar glare, and windshield grime created forward blind spots bicyclists might inadvertently occupy. Happened as often in country, head turning

scenery and unencumbered speed where bicyclists think they're so safe. Only frequency of encounters were lower, but no less deadly. USDOT crash statistics show 4 out of 5 motor accidents are on country roads, 80% of nation's byways in terms of paved miles, so likelihood of being overtaken at high speed may actually be greater in country. A solid white line at the edge of every road would help define this boundary, especially when visibility is low, better for both bikes and mo-ves, but might also expose the shortcoming that many aren't really wide enough for 2-way traffic. Regular ruts off the road edge are evidence that lanes are too tight.

Being out in the middle of lane might also get you killed. Sure, he preferred going where this type of riding is possible. Middle has less cracks, debris, and sand. But when you have to share with an endless rush of motorists, riding in a straight line on right works for all parties. Local ordinances, at least, were quite clear. All vehicles must be operated within travel lane. Slower moving vehicles, bikes included, must avoid obstructing others. Where not striped, bicyclists should ride about 3' from right edge of road, neither in breakdown lane, nor out in middle. Hopefully, there's enough shoulder to pull into, if necessary. Advocates recommend shifting to left of lane well before a left turn, when there's *crossing over*, a phrase with a double entendre: 1) Shifting from one side of street to other, or 2) Leaving this life for another plane of existence. Both apply to reckless cyclists, but too often all find themselves on wrong side of road with no way across badly planned intersections or extended barriers. He had to clamber many a jersey barrier.

For such maneuvers you don't need bike lane striping. However, many riders would prefer them to just a wide breakdown lane, since stripes define a zone not for car flow, not for parking. Stripes cost little and declare that bikes belong on public streets. Doesn't mean cyclists are safe there... Oh, no, not by any means. Where they do exist, motorists treat them as exit or merge ramps. Although most motorists stay within space allotted, slow to make sure they do, they accelerate when lane becomes straight and wide or is flanked by a bike lane. If there's not enough road width for bike lanes, then they must at least leave a shoulder. Work crews could use some kind of an edge finder or standoff when they paint lines, which would keep lines away from curbs. Obviously, striping is for areas where there's considerable interaction between big vehicles and bikes, and is pointless on country lanes, interstates, and tranquil side streets. They need to sweep often enough so lines remain visible. Of things for which his compulsory contributions paid, he appreciated street sweeping, a miracle each May.

Ode to Street Sweepers

Unannounced in Spring they appear
stealthily in pitch black of night.
My bike and I note that the blight
of debris and sand we both fear
is suddenly removed from sight.
This miracle that does so delight,
like first snow's gleam in next sunlight,
as a patchwork, recurs each year
until most our gutters are clear.
Just bicyclists does this excite,
because margins are where they steer.
Few motorists will ever care.
Done, sweeps quietly disappear—
to mount new brushes, equip machines right,
or do another unknown repair—
unappreciated for their
important services, which might
remain unsung if not done here.
To them let's raise a beer and cheer.

Trying to accommodate an ever increasing burden of cars, road designers steal shoulders for yet another lane, instead of expending money and time to widen entire road, which is what's called for. Effects can be abusive. As one Jesuit crossing America on a bicycling holiday complained that roads suddenly turn without warning from manageable byways into restricted expressways with no alternative bicycling route. Planners need to accommodate bicyclists just like mo-ves. Whenever a road is changed from 2 lanes to 4, planners need to widen it for a broad shoulder or provide a nearby parallel alternative for bicycling. Achieving the latter would take surprisingly little: imagination and intimate knowledge of side streets, things gained by riding a lot. Often they can revert 2 lanes in each direction back into 1 with no loss in flow. Each lane would be wider so there would be somewhere to pull over. Then motorists would be less likely to pass dangerously on right and more likely to slow or stop. All this is common sense not rocket science. Transportation departments look at prestigiously conducted studies funded by oil cartels, which urge them to pack roads with as many fuel burning vehicles as possible. They then add lanes, hurry them along, pave over everything. Trillions have been wasted constructing and fixing roads which will shortly become useless as economy stagnates and fossil fuels disappear. Time to end this madness.

To comply with new Federal laws, whenever a new road goes in, a study must be made to ensure adjacent bike access. Legislatures need to mandate bike access through industrial parks, new housing tracts, and shopping centers. This can take a number of forms—dedicated bikeway segments, lane striping, ped/bike bridges—all easily accomplished when putting in roads anyway. Businesses need incentives to elevate bike commuting. He didn't know the precise statistic, but suspected a very high percentage of motoring miles and resulting gasoline consumption involves daily commutes to work. Cities and towns never cooperate, put up a fight every time a project is suggested. Councils and mayors don't want to risk losing constituency, so back the slightest opposition to bike construction, when, instead, they could take pride in providing safe routes for kids to bike to school. There are extensive sources that explain how bicycling infrastructure improves environment, local economy, and property values. Reliable sources estimate a 20:1 return on investment in it primarily from benefits to local health but also pollution abatement and tourism expansion. Moreover, such enhancements are most needed in urban settings where they alleviate congestion and gridlock. Unfortunately, bikeways become havens for muggers and predators whenever use is light. You need more responsible adults using them if you want to ensure safety for children, but the same is true for roads and those who walk alongside, especially deserted ones where there are more prospects for kidnapers with vans. Bussing seemed the only "safe" way currently available, a lumbering vehicle with no seatbelts and seldom any supervision. Each year many more kids are killed by riding on busses than bikeways, although that's not such a fair comparison, considering how few bikeways there are.

Streets vary depending upon how much traffic they're designed to handle: Feeder roads and main strips that connect highways with malls and shopping plazas, freeways where access winks in and out, interstates with no biking access at all, practically dead cul-de-sacs, quiet loops in housing developments, secondaries that drain or fill feeders steadily depending upon hour of day, and tertiaries too narrow to drive fast upon which cross main roads where mo-ves suddenly gang up on you while you're riding gently along. Similarly, bikeways can be alarming busy with strollers and unruly children while punctuated with unwarned crossings of speeding motorists. There's nowhere to ride totally alone and unmolested, not even dirt country lanes, which teem with dogs and other quick quadrupeds, only degrees of alert or relaxed. Climbers on Mt. Everest complain that its foothill trails are too crowded.

He wrote a series of fervent emails to local incumbents, non-profit sulkers, and opportunistic hangers-on. Advocates had their own motive: tap tax revenues into infinity yet never implement any plan. Politicians will tell you that they'll initiate nothing until members of their constituencies come forth en masse and request action. Then they'll study issue forever and still do nothing. However, any objection, no matter how slight, will stop them cold. Consensus among hundreds is not enough to overcome an objection of one. So, in other words, maintaining status quo, which requires no effort, money or time, will generally prevail even if people die as a result. Without real leadership, concerned parties too easily give up trying to get along. Not him. Fighting these battles is engaging fun, the duty and right of every citizen, and nothing but good could come of it eventually, someday, but not so you'll notice over the course of your lifetime. But it was your duty to community, and should be done unpaid. With all World's other ills, who cares? No wonder more weren't involved. Despite a few minor complaints—people will even grouse if you *give away cash*, never enough, not an equal share, some goes back to government—there was little downside to bicycling advocacy. They might even do you a favor by revoking your driver's license or umbrella policy. When people oppose infrastructure spending, you can denounce them for being against apple pie, families, girl next door, and wheelchair users. Insurance actuaries won't dispute its merits.

Under a banner of "faith in education" and "wise public policy", anti-cyclists push a platform of "open all roads to bicyclists but do nothing else". They ridicule road bans. They'll shove their philosophy down the throats of anyone actually trying to get nation's 2/3 majority of non-riders to try. To accomplish such a mission, one must first understand why a hundred million Americans who personally transport themselves don't ever consider using a bicycle on at least some trips, and why another hundred million neither bike nor drive. Government estimates only half a million Americans commute by bike regularly, less than 1% of total bicyclists and workforce. He presumed from employment statistics that there were many professions adverse to bicycling: Carrying gear or getting there fast, not bicycling's strong suits, were important to delivery drivers, firemen, movers, policemen, soldiers, truckers, a sizeable group collectively, but not mailmen or messengers, both of whom would find bikes useful. Others were incarcerated, infirm from disease or age, too poor, or too young. This left about seventy million potential riders, fifty-seven million of whom

already ride sometimes, 81%, but among whom only nine million, <13%, describe themselves as “active”.

Any form of transportation hits you in the pocketbook. Old Sally collects hundreds of working bicycles every year that, for want of a little attention, could be practically free conveyance for the poor. A combination of free repair clinics, low cost tires, and sturdy chains could solve that problem. Recycling and repair coops spring up around colleges. People blest with discretionary income choose automotive convenience, a decision made in large part out of fear, a self-imposed extortion. There was more to fear from driving. A small percentage who don't have to commute don't, work through email out of home offices, which alleviates at least a little traffic, though some *face time* is unavoidable.

Watching children and shabby folk huddled waiting for a bus made him weep. Why suffer cold and rain? Studies comparing pace of inner city busses at peak and off-peak service hours peg it variously between 5 and 12 mph. Automobile Manufacturers Association says, “Operating speeds for most local transit services (busses) average about 10 miles per hour.” Institute of Transportation Engineers measure an average urban automobile speed at about 2.2 times that of a bus, between 20 and 25.6 mph. Such creeping along by expensive motor, you'd think bikes at 10 to 15 mph would offer a real choice if it weren't for lack of bike infrastructure.

With misgivings, he took time to answer one anti-cyclist troll, Corncob Bob, presumably a railroad worker, perhaps an industry plant. Railroaders might see bikeway adoptions of their former rights-of-way as a threat. They are surely an embarrassing symptom of an industry's decline. America's 300,000 miles of tracks has been cut by 2/3, freeing 200,000 miles of flatland for bike infrastructure and linear parks, joining electrical and gas line easements, old canal tow paths, trolley lines, and other rights-of-way. Railroad-ing could actually have been an efficient means of transporting goods between railheads, but, at some point, created inefficiencies in distribution, flexibility, and speed that people found intolerable. Whatever the causes—failings on their part, denying impact of inexpensive automobiles, or ignoring need to modernize—railroad-ing irrevocably languished. Distributors and middlemen considered it an expense, and businessmen always wriggle free of any fee forced upon them, especially ones they can manage themselves and milk as profit. Railroads were their own worst enemy, privatized extortion, and may have flourished had they been directly owned by state, offered free transportation of products and goods, and profited privately only through human transport. Instead they've

become a little used, state subsidized racket secondary to private conveyances of cars on crumbling highways.

Compared to car ownership, a high ticket price for an occasional long distance train trip was insignificant; bus and subway fees are literally pocket change, although the poor would scream should they be legitimately quadrupled. Locomotives were really knocked out by automobiles, which supplanted all 3 of their missions. Given a choice, individuals decide not to arrive in a city, then take cabs or walk to their final destinations, but drive directly there. Who could blame them? Had terminals intersected well with busses, monorails, and subways, as they do in Europe, and ported bicycles in special cars with racks, more people stateside would have opted for rail travel. Instead, greedily, railroads appropriate every square foot they can, cut off or remove every way across bridges or overpasses, and fight off any bike plans that might intersect. Activists might consider picketing rail carriers for anti-biking attitudes if trains weren't already so deselected and whipped.

Cars are now entrenched, but with a sudden doubling in gasoline costs, bus companies are reporting record rider-ship. Macro-chaos? The cheapest, easiest alternative will invariably be chosen. Reactionary numbskulls are already urging lazy populace to convert bikeways back into rail lines, to restore that dead paradigm. Railroads are what killed bicycling and made society dependent, weak consumers. Rails became the road to environmental destruction, begun mostly to move oil from fields to refineries. Big belching locomotives held no allure for him. Busses can be rerouted, but not railroads. Whatever, businessmen will flood into any niche to jack up prices and maintain profits. About the only way to be free of this vicious cycle is to self propel. Industry plants pump out presumably sensible pieces on how to save gasoline, but nowhere in Pat Einstein's article did it mention driving less or grouping trips. Taking dozens of measures to scrimp puts additional burden of cost and time on motorists, when there's already a way to save 90% or more through alternative means. Energy efficient busses can replace expensive light rail at a small fraction of the cost by replacing roads and tracks with dedicated bus ways, which also permit biking and walking free from other motored traffic. Hypothetically, without much difficulty one could devise one's own conveyance (a boat or bike), ride a horse, or simply walk to avoid costs altogether, and an increasing number already are.

Trying to peg Bob's motivations, hinted that "biking everywhere" sounded a little "Critical Mess", a group who began in San Francisco that stages gridlock causing demonstrations, a position

not all cyclists supported, particular conservatives. Bob would have none of that either. RR tracks cut off more routes than roads. Was probably trying to find a way to profit from educating bicyclists. People don't want to be told anything, ignore educational efforts, especially not for bicycling. And where would classes be administered? High School? Can't get teens to focus at all. One's potential for learning is not infinite. Muscle memory doesn't tie up gray matter. Once you know how to ride, you remember forever. Locally, 15% of drivers were illiterate. Didn't stop them from getting driver's licenses. Yes, this imperils everyone. Yes, you can actually do something by factoring in some *public safety planning*. You need traffic flow for the least common denominator, not thoughtful practitioners who, when you think about it, need neither accommodations nor education, can ride in traffic or on dirt equally well. So, you ignore 99.9999% of a population because you already know what you're doing yourself? Irresponsible!

Bob assumed he held a low opinion of education, obviously questionable judgement since he was an educator and writer, but, of course didn't respond to such accusations. Bob only harped on points that could be twisted into an anti-cycling viewpoint. When he pointed out that a suspension bridge had inimical expansion joints, Bob said they should repair such surfaces, a glib reply. Of course, this means replacing entire bridge. Bob's answer? "Such is the nature of the road net sometimes." Grin and bear it; take another route, even if it means an 80 mile detour. Unencumbered by any insight into solutions that suited a wide range of human abilities, Bob lived in a dream world of ideals, where a bicycle is just another vehicle, bicyclists had to become pedestrians when there were only sidewalks to cross miles of bridges or to gain access onto interstate highways, where they should be riding, and little or no change in infrastructure was needed to facilitate. So, you're riding alongside an interstate, in right lane, mind you, not shoulder, and have to cross 5 lanes of flashing 65 mph steel to exit left onto another. You put out your arm 100 feet ahead of turn, as prescribed, and, in Bob's scenario, all cars stop to let you across. What a dunce! No good changing how roads are striped, providing a shoulder, or widening them. Don't bother getting out of the way of impatient motorists. Such denial flies in the face of what one experiences during thousands of hours bicycling. No, just be run over and killed, and that will *force* public policy to acknowledge bicycling! No, thanks. An uncompromising, unflinching viewpoint that you are right gets you nowhere, which may be fine for losers and rationalists going nowhere. What makes them so sure they're

right? Who is ever right? Small steps forward are better than none and may lead to more.

To do nothing at all on a basis that traffic laws prohibit was akin to never sealing products against contamination because they should be sold fresh. When you go to a market, food comes canned, dried, fresh for which you pay a premium, fresh frozen, or preserved. This suits diversified lifestyles, recipes and schedules. Roadways should be so egalitarian: accommodate biking, commuting, hauling goods, racing to emergencies, and walking, as well as driving. But perhaps there are good reasons they don't want bicyclists and pedestrians on bridges or interstates, like *public peril*, which Bob deems a lie and evidence of bad policy. Statistics show whenever they are allowed there, a high percentage wind up dead. Probably 95% of all public roadways are shared equally by all. This only becomes an issue among urban sprawl, in congested areas, and on high-speed roadways, without which you can't have deurbanization. You don't need bikeways where there are flat secondary roads that can be shared. You do need them to avoid pinch points, cross feeder roads, get around obstacles caused by highways and railroads, and transit urban areas.

Sure, insisting on safer roads would yield some good, but the solution is not to accommodate more mo-ves, but reduce their number. The easier cities and towns make it for people to ride a bike, the more they do to dispel gridlock and preserve roadbeds. Instead physical engineers steal breakdown lanes for extra travel lanes when they see long lines of cars. They think this will make them move along better. What really cause slowdowns are lane shifts that create bottlenecks and unnecessary controls. Traffic lights aren't even a good way to cross or merge or share; merge lanes, overpasses and ramps are better, although more costly. Years later, when traffic is diverted elsewhere, converted stretches stay unsafe despite fewer motorists, because they get distracted with senseless stops, keep to right lane, as they are taught, and scarcely expect bicyclists to gradually take over. A deserted main street is a bicyclist's dream: flat, straight, wide.

Define bad intersections? Ones you can't ride across even when light is with you. They present bicyclists with any of these obstacles: 1) Edge stripes that direct vehicles to pinch you off pavement altogether, 2) high curbs and rumble strips that bar your way, 3) manifold directions of constant flow, 4) red lights that last <8 seconds, barely enough time to clip in and go half way across, 5) steady flow of vehicles turning right on red. Road planners cater to big cumbersome vehicles, some of which were not designed for

on-road use, and forget dainty bicycles. Too little room between curb and quarter panel makes a stretch unbikeable. Bicyclists need 3 feet (about a meter) minimum on all sides to manage balancing upright. Curbs could be replaced with angled mounds, like speed bumps set alongside direction of travel, which would warn motorists they are straying yet create a space for bicyclists to slip behind or readily cross at sharp angles. Curbs only become a defensive ally when you can readily get over them, which was seldom. Most roads didn't have them, thankfully, but they were a ubiquitous nuisance in city and suburban settings, where he rode most often. Curbs can be like miniature jersey barriers, supposedly there to protect seldom seen pedestrians. More often non-mo-ves are either crossing street or sticking to gutter, so, on an incident base, there's not much protection for how much is spent. They do divert rain into storm drains. Streams that overflow roads without curbs really wreck surfaces and leave dangerous silt, but elevating road sufficiently is part of good design. One supposes curbs might also anchor pavement, keep it from splitting, where traffic was heavy, but profiles between 20 and 45°, rather than 90°, would work as well.

Some bicyclists fight back. Paceliners go eight-wide in front of impatient cagers; lone riders cut off cars on left with an accompanying hand gesture. Riders sometimes write down plate numbers of motoring miscreants, as if authorities might track them down. Actually there's little they can do. Late cult songsmith Zappa noted well, "The United States is a nation of laws: badly written and randomly enforced." Legislature's role is to make everything illegal; thus, powers that be can conveniently indict you for anything, take you out if you become a liability. Inexplicably, they even make laws regulating themselves, like those that mandate bike infrastructure, which they never obey. Lawyers thereby keep courts busy and maintain their caseloads. Individuals become Kafka's citizens on trial, unable to even comprehend offense, if any, for which they are indicted. Consumer laws only serve lawyers' greed against those who have something they want, never poor witless masses, who ultimately wind up paying anyway. In small claims cases, plaintiffs pay court costs while defendants stay home; these miscarriages make money for state, so are never made right. Little people don't get rich on corporate misdeeds, their lawyers cast lots and divide cloak among themselves. Class actions suits favor the suits. Constitutions, contracts, covenants, laws, regulatory compliance and treaties are nothing more than promises that must be kept, often aren't, and made no difference if both parties didn't complain and were eventually satisfied after a fashion. Random enforcement

didn't matter. Disputes get settled. But traffic laws are important because it's all about motorists slinging around deadly weapons in public places like saboteur bombs, unlike bicyclists. Society must draw a line on looseness somewhere, even if political corruption comparatively hurts more people.

Gutter-runners, who can't hold a lane, ought to have licenses revoked, but you can bet police don't even stop them, never mind cite. Didn't think they were even aware this is a violation. The onus is clearly on motorists not to run anyone over, regardless of why they're in road, babies straying out of yards, elderly sweeping debris, kids chasing balls. Never enforced fines are no deterrent. The low \$75 fine for a bus running them over is just another thing wrong with America. Motorists cross solid white lines, drive in bike lanes, and exceed posted limits. *Watch out!* Because they let motorists do anything without penalty, cyclists must take responsibility for themselves. American Bike League tries to bully bicyclists into doing what they're already doing by default. Their "Bike Right" slogan is hollow, when bicyclists, legally using lanes, suffer most of the consequences from mishaps, fearful to use roads at all after being ineffectually represented. League ought to be campaigning, "Drive right!" but do whatever charities and pol2222s do as bidden by biggest backers, which might as well be automotive interests and probably are. One could theorize a conspiracy about champions planted by car companies or governmental efforts to monitor and obstruct athletes on oxygen highs a lot of the time. Insurance companies, too, appreciate people who don't think at all, just do what's expected, plug nicely into actuarial charts, then die on cue.

Activists are not warriors, but those who seek common ground for common good. Bicycling is something in which everyone despite demographics can participate, a globally shareable experience, not merely a student movement. If they can get more adults riding some of the time, newly initiated would understand their rights without a declaration. Pavement serves the public: big trucks bringing goods and services, children walking to church, moms bringing broods to schools, nation's workforce commuting, people pedaling bicycles, those wheelchair bound rolling slowly. It's a public byway, not the sole province of radio lunatic Lorry Carr, obviously a callous, impatient, perverse excuse for a human being and oddly named for a truck and wagon combined, probably a motor company plant. Carr was accused of the hate crime of suggesting that motorists simply run down bicyclists in their way. This is a tactic known as *baiting*. Talk show hosts are on fishing expeditions. If they can get proponents to call in, they can land them like

carps or chumps. They create controversy to boost ratings and keep audiences. Everyone cheers a ballgame or cock fight. They also give preference to motorists on cell phones, because they know motorists are already tense and easily baited, will act like lunatics like themselves. Listening to them causes brain rot. Scary to think that policy decisions are influenced by such madmen. Activists don't respond, rather do something than talk about it.

How you perform verbally doesn't indicate any truth behind what you say. Neither Car nor Clearlyrude Syndicate, which broadcasts this show, ever apologized. One could take out a lawsuit for millions of dollars naming them as defendants. Or write to your Congressmen. But don't take their bait, which is only to their advantage, not yours. The ultimate insult for publicity hounds is to ignore them. The sad fact is they do speak for a majority of motor-ing morons, who much rather run you over than lose 1 second in a rabid dash to nowhere. Thousands of animal road kills you see each year suggest you don't have a chance directly opposing the almighty metal chariots driven mercilessly by morally blind, situationally deaf, technologically insulated, totally distracted occupants. Cars are the primary cause for a reckless society full of creatively barren and emotionally bankrupt souls who don't care about each other.

Al's activism began by making an example of himself. As an independent adherent who actually rides avidly, unlike League officers and others who claim to, he began putting in roughly 5,000 miles each year, lifetime to date of 50,000 miles, more than most casual cyclists but not extreme. Some bicyclists do that in a few years. Bike miles don't accumulate quickly without dedication or obsession. Besides going out and visibly riding worst roads as a solitary protest, he proactively built a resume of community service: Attended and spoke at public meetings at city, neighborhood and state levels including appearances before Transportation Advisory Committee; created and conducted tri-state areas most comprehensive bicycling survey to date; contributed to his state's 2005-2006 *Guide to Bicycling* by riding every road listed and correcting 250 errors and omissions on previous guide; made suggestions incorporated into a capitol plan, surveyed sewer grates on routes selected, and suggested a counter plan that actually connects playgrounds, residential areas and schools; mapped rides for area clubs, and put arrows for dozens of rides, while getting new riders started; organized group rides and protests; raised issues about bike infrastructure, because fearful people won't start riding without it. He put up ghost bikes as a PSA that said, "walk+bike traffic kills = 6000 ghost-bikes/year. Drive as if you care!" or simply "Share Our

Streets,” then deployed them at highly visible locations so drivers would avoid running down non-drivers, as if a Stephen King character (so many were menaced by vehicles, haunted or otherwise) or King, who was likewise slammed by a pickup in 1999.

This purgatory of service had its moments. He devised a cheap, easy way to create black armbands with discount fabric, sew-free iron-only tape, and self-adhesive Velcro for under \$5/dozen. To create signs, he cut stencils for spray painting. Waiting until the last minute, as usual, found he didn't have a pad for cutting out letters without damaging furniture. Just in time, Forq's Annual Report arrived, superb for his purpose, creating an anti-motoring protest sign. Bike couriers eking out subsistence may cause mayhem, but why *Kill the Messenger* as Tami Hoag's mystery laments? *Quicksilver* was a precedent film that covered same ground. Media is full of cycling messengers and postmen, probably because of inherent conflict between bicyclists and motorists adds tension, gives stories an edginess. You have to admire couriers' civil disobedience. Why should traffic laws apply to bicyclists? Aren't laws trying to regulate a motor's potentially lethal propulsive force? Bicyclists average less than 15 mph, weigh less than 200 pounds, hardly a threat. If you get a ticket, what will they do if you ignore it? Revoke your bicycle license? Send you to prison? Who's going to get slammed? Bicyclists are more than punished enough by their bad behavior, stupidity tax. In return, he presumed he could violate every traffic law, break all the rules people bend.

Cities are statistically the most dangerous to bike, anyway. It's not their fault cities cater to motorists. Cities and malls exist because they concentrate potential transactions and minimize walking. They cater to laziness. But, face it, you'd walk less if you could drive close to an entrance and park. Specialty outlets thrive on this. Superstores make you hike to find automaton merchandise amassed in perplexing arrays. Where he shopped was a small neighborhood market on a human scale. What's made available and where you go matters. Infrastructure elevates or reduces risks.

If you're not where you supposed to be, you may have very little or no time to react, especially uphill. Yet bicycling does have advantages over motoring. Even in congested states, except for main arteries, many roads are deserted most of the time. Provided they're capable and traffic is light, bicyclists hear vehicles coming far off. An empty parking lane is a good momentary escape, if you're close enough to pull in and see situation developing behind in your rear view mirror. Anyone comparing bicycling with motoring better also contrast them; otherwise, question their motives.

It's up to each rider to judge what best preserves safety or least affects motorists. Motorists caught napping scolded him for their own vices. No telling what's coming or who's stopping, he slowed for traffic lights, whether blinking, green, or red. Then he stayed or went, not by its color but as conditions warranted. Often started through on yellow, since he needed a head start over turning vehicles. After all, bicyclists can hear and see approaching vehicles, unlike motorists cloistered in a cell touted as practically sound-proof, insulated from society, and seated much lower. Ran through most stop signs, stopping only as needed. Crossed over whenever travel permitted, and sometimes rode against traffic when there was no other choice due to oversights in highway planning. Considering a bike a vehicle entitles access to streets, unless towns capriciously decide to restrict, which they sometimes do alongside bike paths. How do they think motor-less travelers get from home to bike path? Through backyards? No, on roadways! Duh!

Enforcement is not only pointless but impossible. Hop off bike and you're a pedestrian, not subject to these laws. Bikes are more like sneakers than vehicles. Bicyclists aren't the nuisance; belligerent, noisy, polluting motorists are. To those who complain bicyclists are *in their way*, read your laws. They say operators must avoid, brake, and let pass bicyclists, creatures, other mo-ves, supposedly stay in control, unlikely at any speed over 25 mph. Operators must never cross solid white or yellow lines. Getting and keeping a mo-ve license is much too easy. Were it not so, more drivers would be forced to join those who bike or take mass transport. Vehicles or not, cyclists share roads yet behave differently: labor uphill, run steadily on flat, sometimes outpace motorists downhill. Get used to it. Should on-going tensions in Middle East get out of hand, many more will be bicycling just to ply gas-less byways. Then, best bike couriers will be heroes.

Unlike motorists, bicyclists act responsibly generally, are practically never ticketed for disobeying laws, avoid accidents by leaving pavement altogether into fields, median dividers, sidewalks, woods, whatever works in the moment, wherever mo-ves can't. They even dress to be seen, not hide menacingly behind tinted windows. But that doesn't mean bicyclists are docile or predictable, or aren't likely to sue your ass out of your stinking SUV.

