

# LIFE & ARTS

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## LEISURE



BRUCE STOTESBURY/TIMES COLONIST

Racing technology gave new impetus to cycling styles.

### WHEEL LIFE

## There are no new spins on cycle trends

*What goes around, comes around — even in the bicycle world.*

Bicycles fashions follow cycles, if you'll pardon the pun. Here is a look back through bicycle history to bring current styles into perspective.

High-wheeler bicycles, also called "Penny Farthings" after large- and small-size English coins, were first developed in the early 1870s. They had a huge front wheel that was pedaled directly, and a small wheel in back. These contraptions were difficult as well as dangerous to ride, because a sudden stop resulted in a "header" (the rider flies forward head first).

The invention of the "safety" bicycle (with its two smaller wheels, chain drive system, and pneumatic tires) led to the great popularity of bicycling at the turn of the century.

Although bicycles were originally toys for the wealthy, they soon became affordable, and were used for transportation by the middle and working classes. But as automobiles became more common, bicycles became less prestigious.

There was little innovation or quality devoted to bicycle manufacturing in North America. The basic one-speed design evolved little for half a century, except for superficial style changes. By mid-century, most bicycles were slow, heavy cruiser models, sold as children's toys.

Europeans had more regard for bicycling. Manufacturers there incorporated racing technologies, including high-quality frame materials, light and narrow wheels, and multi-gear drivetrains. During the 1950s, three-speed English bikes were the height of fashion. By the 1960s and 1970s, everyone wanted a French 10-speed with Italian components.

Bicyclists became weight-conscious. Iron gave way to exotic steel alloys and aluminum. Parts were redesigned to remove superfluous material. Manufacturers and bicycle owners drilled and filed components down to a skeleton, for a "Swiss cheese" effect, with the hope that removing just one more gram would create the perfect bicycle.

Then, in the early 1980s, bicyclists became excited about aerodynamics. Experts said we must be both light and skinny. Manufacturers produced new streamlined components, while bicyclists learned to crouch on funny looking bicycles while wearing rubberized body stockings in order to cheat the wind.

But these bicycles had their disadvantages. They were uncomfortable, delicate, expensive, and generally impractical for anything except racing. It makes little sense to spend thousands of dollars for an ultra-light bicycle that requires an extra heavy

lock and special tools, especially if the rider is a few kilos overweight.

About the same time that physics students were testing bicyclists in wind tunnels to determine the ideal "tuck," a bunch of college dropouts were out having fun, screaming down fire roads on old fat-tired bikes. The fashion swung round. Soon, everybody wanted the gnarliest mountain bike with the coolest gadgets, including self-adjusting seatposts, 24-speeds, and front and rear suspension.

Well, not everybody. Some bicyclists prefer an in-between style, or "hybrid" bicycle that has the upright position and wide gearing of a mountain bicycle, but lighter weight components for more efficient riding, making

it suitable for commuting, touring, and the kind of cycling that most people actually do. Some even have internal gears and brakes, a more advanced version of the old three-speeds.

And what do we see in bicycle shops again? It's the old cruiser bicycles, with cantilever frames, fat tires, upright handlebars, and comfy seats. But this time around they are available with high-quality materials and multi-speed drivetrains.

You have more choices than ever if you are shopping for a bicycle now. You can find road racers, mountain bikes, hybrids, touring bicycles, cruisers, tandems and three-wheelers. So, which should you choose? The one you will enjoy riding most, of course. Don't worry about fashion, and be skeptical of any well-intended friend who offers advice. Get a bike that you like.

After all, bicycling is not about purchasing equipment, it's about riding. While bicycling manufacturers and magazines prey on consumers who demand the latest style gear, out on the street fashion is defined by how you ride. Not just fast or flashy, but fun and frequently. You are what you do, not what you own.

Ask yourself two questions. First, what type of bicycling do you plan to do? Second, how much can you afford? Then visit a couple of bike shops to see what is available and try out a few models. This should give you a good idea of what suits your needs.

And, if you are purchasing a used or discounted bicycle, don't be tempted to buy one just because it's a "fantastic deal." If it's not your size or style, leave it for somebody else. A great bicycle is one that you want to ride, no matter what the fashion.

**Suzanne Kort and Todd Litman write on cycling Saturday in the Life&Arts section.**



JOHN MCKAY/TIMES COLONIST

Round-the-clock volunteers Susan Knowler, Vickie Weber, Linda Hillard and Tony Knowler ponder a cliff face while demonstrating search strategies used in emergencies.

## On the LOOKOUT

*Leisure pursuits from hiking to sailing can cause emergencies that call on the brains and brawn of a dedicated army of search and rescue volunteers.*

**By Katherine Dedyna**  
Times Colonist Life Writer

If you want Susan Knowler to lend a hand, please don't ask her to bake a pie.

The Victoria investment adviser would much rather be jangled awake at 2 a.m. during a rainstorm by a phone call sending her out looking for a lost hiker. And her husband, Tony, would be completely in step given he's search manager for Metchosin search and rescue.

For the last eight years, they've volunteered their outdoor skills — orienteering, bush navigation, practical tracking — their energy and community spirit to land-based searches for lost hikers, wandering old folks, kidnap victims and suicides.

"Twenty-four hours a day, when we get a phone call, off we go," she says. "If we're in bed, we'd be gone in 15 minutes. We

have a permanent, dedicated pack of equipment in the house and special clothes that you don't have in the laundry."

"I leave work. I leave bed. I've left four guests standing at the door for dinner."

And is she grumpy about how gruelling and inconvenient that is?

No way. "It's very, very rewarding." And it's a good thing. "Land search and rescue is entirely volunteers in B.C.," Tony notes. "It's worthwhile and if you won't do it, who would?"

The round-the-clock readiness is not as bad as it sounds," adds the construction manager. Usually, there are no more than six searches a year.

The Knowlers belong to an army of 5,229 B.C. search and rescue volunteers including 619 on Lower Vancouver Island.

In 1997-98, they undertook 747 searches on land, sea and in the air. On Vancouver Island, that included 95 searches on land, 14 on inland water, 11 in the air and three on the ocean shoreline.

The number of searches has nearly doubled from 399 in 1989-90, says Tony Heemskerk, Victoria-based director of the Provincial Emergency Program. "We encourage people to go out there and explore beautiful B.C. and people are out there exploring beautiful B.C."

Not only is the population larger and

more outdoorsy, there are more elderly people with dementia wandering away.

B.C.'s well trained and organized volunteer search and rescue brigade is "miles ahead" of the rest of the country, says Heemskerk.

"They spend an incredible amount of time and energy making sure they know how to search. Many of them spend a lot of their own time developing their skills and being professional at doing it. I think we're pretty lucky in B.C."

And while the province is doubling its PEP training programs this year to \$340,000, some volunteers take issue that outside training is not always reimbursed.

Linda Hillard isn't one of them, although she has spent thousands from her own pocket in 11 years as a Victoria search and rescue trainer and manager.

When Michael Dunahee disappeared, Hillard and her tracking dog searched the Blanshard school playground picking up the scent. Dreadful as it is to find that a missing elderly man has blown his head off, "the worst part is not finding anything, not closing," she says.

On the upbeat side, she recalls a missing man and his teenaged son who were located after an all-night search in East Sooke Park while his frantic wife and little children huddled in the car.

Hillard, a 44-year-old group home worker, uses vacation days when she's called out during the work week. Others forfeit a day's pay to participate.

She is one of an increasing number of women involved, now that getting fit and dirty are no longer viewed as unfeminine.

Luckily, Hillard's kids have always been self-sufficient, because she often had to leave them behind to respond.

It's definitely not a calling for glory seekers, she says.

"A lot of people think because they're physically fit and like the outdoors, they can just run around and find people. That's not the case. There's paperwork and tests involved, and they better be able to read a map and be able to handle a radio."

Given the strenuous nature of locating missing persons, risk takers among the public are prompting discussion within the search and rescue ranks.

Heemskerk says charging fees for significantly negligent behavior on the part of victim will be up for consideration later this year. But he notes that the volunteers who do the leg work rejected the idea two years ago.

Not only would fees have to be enforced, but financial concerns could delay searches for crucial hours.

The vast majority of searches do not involve negligence but it happens.

"I can't say we resent it," says Hillard. "Most of them don't realize it. People don't want to stay to the main trail. A lot of them want to go off and explore or they exceed their limits, wearing a T-shirt. The coast cools down really fast at night. If you get a bit of drizzle, hypothermia hits really hard and really fast."

The new Juan de Fuca Marine trail is a case in point.

"They think this is a place to go and take Grandma," says Vickie Weber, a registered nurse and Sooke search and rescue volunteer manager.

"It's pretty rigorous. There's a lot of people who are not experienced, who are under prepared and ill equipped."

Melissa Wells, 32, Victoria air search coordinator for CASERA-Civil Air Search and Rescue Association, says people seems to be getting smarter, and taking fewer risks by leaving more flight plans.

Wells, who has a pilot's licence, also volunteered for seven years as a spotter on search and rescue aircraft.

That is "highly stressful" work covering massive areas rather than an escapist joy in flying, says Mike Scott, a zone commander for PEP-Air/CASERA.

"They're looking for an object on the ground. There's a certain pattern of scanning they have to follow. Most of the guys are pilots — they know damn well it could be them on the ground."

Last year, CASERA did 11 PEP searches and 19 Rescue Co-ordination Centre searches on Vancouver Island and 14 of them were in the Victoria area — many are for emergency locator transmitters.

"You couldn't find a more dedicated bunch, I'll tell you," says Scott.

There are no stewards coming down the aisle with hot meals and if you miss something, it's life and death, he says.

△ Sea Rescue C2  
△ Mushroom hunters get lost C2