

The Skinny on Cycling  
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### The Dairy Queen Bike

This past weekend, I spent a few glorious hours riding my new carbon fiber road bike through some of the nicest parts of central Indiana. This late winter ride was just what I needed to get my cycling juices flowing again. The crocuses had begun to bloom and while not technically warm, the sun was doing its best to combat the slight chill in the air.

After this ride, I was putting things away, wiping down my bike and generally enjoying the post-ride bliss when my daughter poked her head into the garage. She said “Hey, Dad! I guess it won’t be long before we can ride our bikes into town to the Dairy Queen. I can’t wait for it to open. I love it when we ride there for ice cream!”

As I was putting away my new high-tech bike, I got to thinking about how much I enjoy those short little jaunts with my daughter. At nearly ten years old, she and I are working on building some of the memories that I hope will last until she’s a happy old woman.

When I was a kid, my bike was my source of freedom. Being raised in the rural Hendricks County town of Coatesville, kids relied on their bikes to get them to their friends, to earn money delivering newspapers and to get themselves back and forth to baseball practice. In fact, my Dad was one of those kids from a previous generation who had earned his spending money as a kid by delivering papers on a red Schwinn midweight bike with a two-speed kick back hub.

That night, while lying in bed, I got to thinking about the upcoming trips to Dairy Queen this summer and how, while my road bike is made of the latest space-age materials and light as a breeze, it just doesn’t lend itself to those late Sunday afternoon trips to the ice cream Mecca of Danville, Indiana—not to mention the fact that I always get a little ribbing when I lean my road bike against a sign post while my wife says something about “All that money for a bike and you’d think it’d have a kick-stand!”

This afternoon, I found myself in downtown Indianapolis after some meetings and thought I’d make a quick run to a bike shop. I had never visited Indy Cycle Specialist before but a little research on their web site revealed that they had a nice selection of “cruisers” in stock. Thinking that it wouldn’t hurt to stop in for a quick look, I headed east on Washington Street and quickly found myself looking through a showroom window at several really nice looking cruiser-style bikes. Before long, Rich, Jim, Scott and the rest of the guys at Indy Cycle Specialist had

me riding various cruisers around the parking lot. However, one of these bikes had caught my eye when I walked into the store and honestly, deep down, I knew that bike and I had a connection. One of those connections usually reserved for memories of summers gone by, trusty old dogs and fishing trips with your Grandpa.

After a nice visit with the guys in the bike shop and a quick brainstorming session on possible explanations to give my wife, I was hauling home a shiny new red Schwinn 7-speed cruiser, with chrome fenders and a bell on the handlebar, in the back of my pickup truck.

Knowing that my wife was due home late tonight, I took my daughter on a quick bike ride to town and back. She really liked the new bike and I think she's a little jealous that my bike is so shiny and has a cool little bell. We had a nice ride and more than once she said "Dad, it's too bad that Dairy Queen isn't open yet. This would be the perfect evening to go for ice cream." I smiled and thought forward to some great times we'll have this summer cruising around town together.

After our ride, we stopped to visit with and to show my new bike to my father who is nearing sixty years old. My Dad's always been supportive of my weight loss and cycling endeavors but, while always supportive, he never showed more than a passing interest in my bikes. However, when I showed this one to him, it didn't take more than a slight suggestion before he was on that bike, flying down the driving way, whooping it up with his gray hair blowing in the wind. After his first, albeit brief, bike ride in probably twenty years, he said, "You know, I used to deliver papers on a Schwinn midweight with a two-speed kick back hub when I was a kid." With a grin so big I could hardly contain it, I replied "Yeah, Dad, I think you've mentioned that before."

So, as I sit and write this column, my wife still hasn't made it home. My daughter's getting ready for bed and there's a Schwinn 7-speed cruiser in the garage with a post it note reading "Costs slightly MORE than you paid to have the dog's teeth cleaned, but slightly LESS than my truck payment." I'm also leaving a copy of this column on the kitchen table with hope that she reads it before she finds me.

Depending on how she feels about the sticky note this may either be the last cycling column I ever write or, later this summer, you just may see my father, my daughter and me sitting at the Dairy Queen enjoying a sugar-free Dilly Bar and building a few more precious memories.

Now I lay me down to sleep.  
I pray the bike I get to keep.  
If my note don't work so well,  
Please bury me with that little bell.

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Wade Winger, the author of “The Skinny on Cycling” is the father of one adorable little girl, the husband of a beautiful & talented librarian, a Yogi and an avid cyclist. His web site, [www.HowILost100Pounds.com](http://www.HowILost100Pounds.com) features common sense advice on losing weight without suffering and improving your cycling through healthy living.