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From Marin County's Seventies Clunker to the Durango World Championship 1990: A History of Mountain Biking in the USA

Frédéric Savre, Jean Saint-Martin and Thierry Terret

Between the 1970s, during which several enthusiastic cyclists rode off-road, and the 1990s, during which the first Union Cycliste Internationale World Championship took place in Durango (Colorado), different steps contributed to the success of mountain bike in the US. Inventions took place throughout the period from Gary Fisher's mechanical improvements in 1975 to Joe Breeze's first specialized frames made in 1977. In the same fashion, the 'Stumpjumper' was sold on a large scale in 1982, making it the first industrially-produced mountain bike, which led to a new stage in terms of commercialization. The mountain bike opened a new market in the cycling industry and certainly became more financially accessible to a large number of people. This sport, which began in the US, became a worldwide outdoor sport in the last decade of the twentieth century when the Olympics welcomed it with open arms at the Atlanta Olympic Games.

Du Clunker du Comté de Marin dans les années soixante-dix aux Championnat du monde de Durango en 1990. Une Histoire du Vélo tout terrain aux États-Unis

Entre les années 1970 pendant lesquelles plusieurs cyclistes enthousiastes sortaient des routes et les années 1990 où s'est tenu le premier Championnat du monde de l'Union Cycliste International à Durango (Colorado), différentes étapes ont contribué au succès du vélo tout terrain aux États-Unis. Des inventions ont été développées tout au long de la période, des améliorations mécaniques de Gary Fisher en 1975 aux premiers cadres spécialisés de Joe Breeze construits en 1977. De

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la même manière, le “Stumpjumper” a été vendu à grande échelle en 1982. En devenant le premier vélo tout terrain industriellement produit, il a mené vers une nouvelle étape en termes de commercialisation. Le vélo tout terrain a ouvert un nouveau marché dans l'industrie, facilitant l'accès financier au vélo d'un grand nombre de personnes. Ce sport qui a commencé aux Etats-Unis, est devenu un sport de plein air international dans la dernière décennie du 20ème siècle qui a vu les Jeux olympiques l'accueillir à Atlanta.

Del artilugio de Martin County en los años 70 al campeonato del mundo de Durango de 1990. Una historia de la BTT en los Estados Unidos

Entre los años 70, cuando unos pocos entusiastas empezaron a rodar en bicicleta por caminos y senderos, y 1990, año del primer campeonato del mundo de la Unión Ciclista Internacional en Durango (Colorado), diversos factores contribuyeron al éxito de la BTT en los Estados Unidos. Durante todo este periodo se sucedieron los inventos, desde las mejoras mecánicas introducidas por Gary Fisher en 1975 hasta los primeros cuadros específicos que Joe Breeze fabricó en 1977. En esta línea, la “Stumpjumper” se vendió a gran escala en 1982, convirtiéndose así en la primera bicicleta de montaña producida industrialmente, lo que comportó una nueva era por lo que respecta a su comercialización. La BTT abrió un nuevo mercado en el negocio de la bicicleta y ciertamente se hizo mucho más asequible para una franja de la población cada vez más amplia. Este deporte, inventado en los EUA, se convirtió en un deporte al aire libre global en la última década del siglo XX, cuando los juegos olímpicos lo recibieron con los brazos abiertos con motivo de las olimpiadas de Atlanta.

Von Martin Countys Seventies Clunker zur Weltmeisterschaft in Durango 1990. Eine Geschichte des Mountainbikens in den USA

Zwischen den 1970ern, als einzelne enthusiastische Radfahrer abseits der Straße fuhren und den 1990ern, als die erste Weltmeisterschaft der Union Cycliste Internationale in Durango (Colorado) stattfand, trugen verschiedene Schritte zum Erfolg des Mountainbikens in den USA bei. Erfindungen wurden im Verlauf der Zeit von Gary Fishers mechanischen Verbesserungen 1975 bis hin zu Joe Breezes ersten speziellen Rahmen, die 1977 produziert wurden, gemacht. In gleicher Art und Weise wurde der „Stumpjumper“ 1982 in großem Stil verkauft und stellte damit das erste industriell gefertigte Mountainbike und so der nächste Schritt in Richtung Kommerzialisierung dar. Das Mountainbike öffnete der Fahrradindustrie einen neuen Markt und wurde besser erschwinglich für eine größere Anzahl Menschen. Dieser Sport, der seinen Ursprung in den USA hat, wurde zum weltweiten Outdoorsport im letzten Jahrzehnt des 20. Jahrhunderts als die Olympischen Spiele ihn mit offenen Armen zu den Spielen in Atlanta empfingen.

从马林县的七十年代老破车到1990年杜兰戈世界锦标赛：美国山地自行车运动的历史

自上世纪七十年代一群自行车发烧友骑着经过改装的自行车从山上飞驰而下，至上世纪九十年代在科罗拉多州的杜兰戈举办首届国际自行车联盟山地自行车锦标赛，山地自行车运动在美国的发展经历了多个不同的阶段，使得这项运动在美国得以推广并风靡。对普通自行车的改装始自加里·费舍尔和乔·布里兹，前者于1975年对普通自行车进行机械改装，后者于1977年制造了首个山地自行车专用车架。在“改装之风”盛行的情况下，名为“Stumpjumper”的腾跃式山地自行车在1982年取得了较大销量，使之成为第一种投入工业化生产的山地车，为山地自行车的商业化进程带来了新的举措。山地自行车的发明为自行车业开拓了新的市场，对许多人而言也能买得起这些车。山地自行车这项起源于美国的运动，在成为1996年亚特兰大奥运会正式比赛项目后，在20世纪的最后十年成为了风靡全球的户外运动。

Since the 1970s mountain biking has emerged as one of the fastest growing sports in the US and many other countries. Originally a recreational activity, mountain biking grew rapidly in three decades to become a professional sport and ultimately an Olympic event in 1996. Despite the popularity of mountain biking, little is known about the history of the sport. This article will discuss the many factors that contributed to the critical formative years of mountain biking, from its origin in Marin County, California to its first world championship in Durango, Colorado.

Invented in 1817, the bicycle initially was simply a means of transportation. In 1896, the US Army's Buffalo Soldiers [1] tested the bicycle for military use by travelling on 100 lb bicycles for more than 1,900 miles through the American West from Missoula, Montana to Yellowstone and back to Missoula through the Great Plains to St Louis, Missouri, where they were welcomed as heroes. During the first 'bicycle boom' [2] at the end of the nineteenth century, bicycles became popular for recreation and sport competition. Major Taylor, [3] who would become internationally famous as a racer on indoor and outdoor tracks, was winning events in the US and popularizing cycling as a sport. Off-road biking also grew in popularity due to the absence of paved roads. Cyclists rode on paths not only out of choice or pleasure, but also out of necessity.

Writer Albert Londres [4] magnified the wild and epic conditions of 'the slaves of the road' in a series of articles that appeared in *Le Petit Parisien* in 1924. The Paris-Roubaix race [5] held in part on the 'hell of the north' cobblestones symbolized the

roughness of these roads of the past. Since the International Cycling Union held the first world championship in Paris in 1950, cyclo-cross has become increasingly the domain of experts.

More recently, in 1955, cyclists of England, [6] Wales and Scotland founded the 'Rough Stuff Fellowship' [7] and wanted to voluntarily get away from roads for touristic and non-competitive purposes. The 'Vélo Club Parisien', whose origins have been traced to the period 1951–56, [8] was created with around 20 members who modified bicycles for use in nature, even for acrobatic uses. Among the numerous other contributions, John Finley Scott, Professor of Sociology at the University of California at Davis, built a 'woodsie bike' in 1953 with a Schwinn frame, a derailleur and a cantilever brake. Scott often rode mountains alone. No one else shared his passion at the time apart from a few other isolated individuals around the world.

Off-road cycling practices therefore existed from the time of the invention of the bicycle to the dawn of the 1970s, and what are widely known as the mountain bike and mountain biking were born out of the multiple affiliations. [9] However, the phenomenon took on new, different and larger-scale proportions starting in the 1970s, which gave it the semblance of being its own sport and not simply an underground practice of a small group or of isolated individuals. As both a competition and mass sport, mountain biking soon became an emerging sport of the end of the twentieth century. From 1980 to 1990, the number of mountain bikes sold went from 300 to 7,000,000 units in North America. A 1990 Gallup poll listed cycling and mountain biking as the third most popular leisure sport in the US as identified by 28% of the respondents. [10] A symbol of this success was the first international UCI Mountain Bike & Trials Championship held in Durango, Colorado in 1990. This brought together more than 800 competitors from 34 countries as well as 10,000 enthusiastic spectators. In addition to the attention that such events now received in the local and specialized cycling press, newspapers, magazines and other media also became interested in this new form of ancestral, yet also very modern form of cycling. [11]

Which processes and actors participated in the emergence and in the singular and fairly quick development of this new sport in the US from 1970 to 1990? How can one explain this sudden fervour which occurred in less than 20 years? Which contextual, technological, commercial and media factors promoted the geographic diffusion and rapid institutionalization of this new type of cycling? These are the questions that are the central focus of this study. The main sources include the analysis of the journal *Fat Tire Flyer* and the archives of institutions such as the Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI) and the National Off Road Bicycle Association (NORBA). The article is also based on oral history, using a set of 15 interviews with the American pioneers and the organizers of the main events in mountain bike organized in the US from the 1970s. [12]

The birth of the mountain bike needs to be contextualized at the intersection of historical, traditional cycling and of new sports, leading to the analysis of three successive conjunctures.

The Era of Pioneers: 1970–76

A favourable context in terms of sports and culture

The 1970s saw the appearance of new sports, with characteristics that marked a departure from major North American sports such as football, baseball, basketball and hockey. Notions of new physical sensations, especially of sliding sports that take place in more natural environments with informal groups, frequently characterized the new, often extreme pastimes. Beyond surfing, [13] other sports [14] developed and were characterized among other things by their role in the counter-culture. [15] Skateboarding has its origins during the 1950s, a time when interest in surfing was also rapidly rising and was initially a sport practised by surfers missing waves. [16]

The Bicycle Moto Cross (BMX) was created by and for the children of Californian motocross pilots who were too young to drive motorcycles. In 1970, Scott Breihaupt, a pioneer at 13 years of age, organized the first pay-and-enter race and founded the Bicycle United Motocross Society (BUMS). It became the most popular mode of transportation for teenagers to ride around in the street after school. Manoeuvrable, equipped with brakes and solid, this type of bicycle was also soon used by young people in and around Fairfax (California) to descend the hills of Marin County near San Francisco. The young bikers went up by pickup trucks and then got back down to town using fire/emergency roads and trails. According to an early participant in the sport: 'Riding BMX bicycle and fishing in the county's lake was our major leisure.' [17]

If one analyses 50 years of *Sports Illustrated*, [18] a widely read and influential American sports magazine, cycling cannot therefore be considered to be part of the general sports culture in the US, as far as the media and the public are concerned. This is confirmed in almost all of the interviews with the cycling pioneers of mountain biking. 'It was like a secret', explained Joe Breeze [19]. 'When we crossed paths near Los Angeles, we waved and sometimes we stopped!', added Gary Fisher along with various anecdotes. [20]

A Unique Boom in Bicycle Sales from 1972 to 1974

Between 1972 to 1974 production rose as the sales of bicycles doubled in the US. Franck Berto, who has analysed this 'boom' by highlighting the oil crisis, notes changes in consumer habits: 'In the early 1960s, the bicycle market had two characteristics. First, it was a market for kids and second, the kids stopped biking at 15 years old.' [21] The variety of available products on the market increased due to the appearance of specific bicycles for children, especially the Schwinn Sting-Ray and the creation of the first BMX bikes. Books and programmes such as *John Forester's Effective Cycling* appeared, which emphasized knowing and using bicycles as vehicles in various forms. It was also during these years that one saw the appearance of actual modern, specialized shops. In 1970, a reference book, *The*

Complete Book of Bicycling by Eugene Sloane, provided the first technical information to new cycling experts. [22] However, *Bicycling* remained the major US magazine for another two years, until *Bike World* entered the scene. In 1975, the Amateur Bicycle League of America was transformed and became the US Cycling Federation, demonstrating that cycling was becoming more of a sport and more professional.

The bicycle was less of a 'secret' and became more and more a sport and a useful activity in its own right. Gary Fisher also mentions this sales boom of mostly uncomfortable ten speed bicycles with skinny tyres: 'Out of 15 million sold, 10 million were left in the garage the following year: it was not the right bike!' Previously cycling and fitness had also been encouraged by President Eisenhower himself with the Presidential Physical Fitness Awards. Outdoors and fitness values emerged during this period, which promoted this development.

At the same time, a critical school of thought emerged regarding popular sports. In a book written to counter the competitive school of thought, David Marloy denounced 'The funnel effect' of an all too elitist sports environment. [23] He indicated, by taking basketball as an example, that in 1974, 200,000 high schoolers played basketball, then 5,700 of those played in college, out of whom 211 were drafted by the competitive league, but only 55 actually became professionals. In a successful book written in the 1970s, [24] George Leonard proposed alternative solutions to competition that would promote the harmonious growth of the individual by emphasizing the positive role of recreational versus competitive sports activities. The purely competitive approach to cycling was modified by a focus on different non-competitive and in-nature types of cycling.

A New Type of Cycling in Marin County, California

It was in the San Francisco Bay Area during the early 1970s, where the hippy movement had recently started, that off-road cycling habits emerged. [25] Tribal, efficiency-driven, playful or pre-sport oriented, [26] these ways of cycling brought together significant numbers of enthusiasts. Tired of criticism and of being excluded from cycling competitions because of their long hair, the pioneers of mountain biking were motivated to cycle in less organized, open air forms. The 'Larkspur Canyon Gang' flew down Mount Tamalpais (2,571 ft) just for the challenge and to feel the speed; some youths used old bicycles to navigate Marin's mountains with ease in order to escape the local authorities closing fire roads. The 'Cupertino's boys' and Russ Mahon added speed to their clunkers for the Mill Valley cyclo-cross of 1 December 1974. Gary Fisher, Joe Breeze, Charles Kelly, Marc Vendetti, Otis Guy and more generally road cyclists, discovered a new way to train and to compete outside the regular roads and tracks.

Adventurous cyclists, an encouraging local environment characterized by mountainous terrain, a favourable climate and many trails near residential areas of the Bay Area all contributed to making the San Francisco Bay Area the birthplace of the first mountain bike activities. During the 1960s, the area near the Golden Gate

Bridge had resisted pressures to develop housing and became a protected area (the Marin Headlands) in the same way as the Point Reyes National Wilderness was protected. The economic growth of Silicon Valley 70 miles to the south enabled Marin County to become the refuge of a generation of rich, upper-class people looking for a pleasant lifestyle with the advantages of the proximity to a busy big city. This population was essentially urban and modern, but also close to nature, being very concerned about and involved in environmental causes. Gary Fisher, who was a significant contributor to this new way of cycling, described the attractions of the area: 'San Francisco, is different say, from Los Angeles. Here, you have wilderness near a big city, plus, a large network of trails. In one day, you can cycle, surf and find yourself in the middle of downtown San Francisco and go see a show: Marin is a secret place to have fun!'. [27]

By 1975 organizations such as the 'East Bay Bicycle Coalition' in Berkeley, the 'San Francisco Bike Coalition' and 'The Derailleurs' in San Francisco and in the bicycle chapter of the Sierra Club organized weekday as well as weekend outings, and encouraged others to see the bicycle as a way to get around ecologically and to teach the public to do likewise. [28] However, it was mostly because of the dynamic members of Velo Club Tamalpais, represented by Charles Kelly, that the first mechanical experimentation occurred: 'We bought old bikes for \$10 a piece. One day, Fred Wolf and Gary came over so we could go exploring. I didn't have a bike also, so we shared! Two rode, while one ran, to give you an idea about what we were like ... It was crazy, we didn't have any specific goals, we only wanted have fun between friends ... My first ride was in 1974, on Thanksgiving, with only one speed and a coaster brake.' [29] Otis Guy offered a similar explanation on the types of cycling before 1976: 'It was really just for fun and meet up with friends on the slopes of the mountain Fire Road.' [30]

The new form of cycling that was emerging was accompanied by an interest in modifying existing bicycles in order to make more adventurous and aggressive usage of the comfortable city bike. Until 1976, it was the Schwinn bicycle, a basic, affordable bike with large tyres, that was the main object of the tinkering that occurred.

The Clunkers: A Time of Tinkering and Riding

The new form of cycling that was emerging was accompanied by an interest in modifying existing bicycles in order to make more adventurous and aggressive usage of the comfortable city bike. This activity was called 'clunking'. Until 1976, it was on Schwinn bicycles, a basic, affordable bike with large tyres, manufactured in the 1930s and 1940s that the first mountain biking pioneers got their start. As the main object of equipment tinkering, they called their bikes 'cruisers', 'balloons', 'bombers', 'beaters', 'junks', 'Fat Tire bikes' and, most of all, 'Clunkers'. In 1972, Tim Dupertuis, of Velo Club Tamalpais, made a Fat Tire bike with 24 inch wheels and a derailleur. [31] It was the first locally known case of a derailleur added on this type of bike, differing from the mountain bike's standard 26 inch wheel.

In 1973, Russ Mahon a member of 'the Cupertino Riders', constructed a bike with front and rear drum brakes, and with 10 speeds (front and rear derailleur). By the end of that year, half of the Cupertino Riders (Morrow Dirt Club) had abandoned 'coaster brakes' and were riding bikes with 10 speeds. On 1 December 1974, at the Mill Valley cyclo-cross, three young racers from Cupertino, a city 50 miles south of San Francisco, used multispeed clunkers, whereas the other competitors used traditional cyclo-cross bikes.

This was the turning point for Gary Fisher and the pioneers of Marin. Fisher's early innovations began in 1974, when he added motorcycle brake levers and a rear derailleur then, a few months later, a front derailleur with two chain wheels. In 1975, he used Suntour thumb shifters, a new hub and quick release. This great cyclist who, according to his own account, never had either the competency or the time to create frames is to be distinguished here from Joe Breeze:

The Cupertino Boys didn't have lower speeds to really climb. I did, I had the right speeds and big cranks to climb. In the beginning, when I rode with the 'Canyon Gang', 20% of the time we rode and 80% of the time we pushed! We didn't give a damn, by foot or hitchhiking, we had the time. I used to be a runner, and I found that stupid. I knew that we could do it with lower gears. I invented the concept. By 1974, I had a bike that could climb and descend anything with great brakes. It was the same to me, my bike was only 4 pounds heavier, but I could win on the climbs and on the descents. Making a frame is a lot of work and I didn't have the time or the money to do it. [32]

These comments reflect the shared pleasure, imagination and fervour of the first pioneers who characterized those first years of the discovery of using cycles off-road that were more adapted to the conditions of Marin County's cultural and topographical conditions.

Between Sports and Sales: 1976–81

The Repack Race in Fairfax, Marin County: A Catalyst for This New Activity

The five years from 1976 to 1981 marked the golden age of the pioneers. Their roles were decisive. Each of them was a conceiver, tinkerer, experimenter, maker, salesperson, organizer, competitor, communicator, businessman and codifier. [33] The pioneers acted first out of passion, before any economic challenges modified their respective commitments.

At first, the gatherings were mostly around Marin County, with group outings across the hills such as the 'Appetite Seminar Balloon Ride', 'Valentine's Day Ride', 'Loma Alta Full Moon Cruise' or 'Columbus Day Cruise'. These events were organized informally without any competitive goals. However, the true impetus for this growing enthusiasm for the sport is symbolized in 'The Repack Race'.

On Thursday 21 October 1976, and under the guidance of Alan Bonds, Fred Wolf and Charles Kelly, the first of 24 Repack Races was organized as a two mile descent (1,300 feet) of Pine Mountain, above Fairfax, California. In one month, the 'Repack'

became a true competition with a well known and well studied course, with specific rules, with its distinguishable riders and champions, such as Joe Breeze, winner of ten 'Repack' Races, Gary Fisher, who, during the seventh run on 5 December 1976 had the fastest time of 4'22''14 and Wende Cragg, [34] who was one of the only women in the race. All of these first races took place in a spirit of togetherness, of making this type of cycling known and, according to Charles Kelly or 'Captain Repack', without specific ambitions:

When Repack took place, I was asked if I thought it could become a sport, and I answered that it would be as if one day an American won the Tour de France! And it happened! [...] Repack was a real race [he illustrates the chronological history], it attracted people from all around, it was something friends messed around with, but it was also another thing to do it with people you didn't know. But that helped in terms of improving equipment. [35]

That race helped in terms of exposure [36] and proved to be quite attractive to participants from further and further away, but it was also a testing ground for new technologies, to test mechanical improvements made to the bikes.

To Colorado and Southern California

By 1976, interest in mountain biking was beginning to emerge elsewhere. Having seen an article in *Co-Evolution Quarterly*, [37] the pioneers Marin, Charles Kelly, Gary Fisher, Joe Breeze, Mike Castelli, Wende Cragg and Gary Fisher went to Crested Butte, Colorado in 1978 to participate in a tour held by locals who had already ridden their bikes in a unique ride called the 'Crested Butte to Aspen Pearl Pass Klunker Tour' on 17 September 1976 in response to a challenge from Aspen's motorcyclists. This second ride provided an opportunity for the young riders of Colorado to notice the existence of more sophisticated bikes. It also enabled the Californians to experience a new type of terrain, a mountain that was different from the large hills in and around Marin. During a gathering in 1978, the Californians and the Coloradoans compared two different approaches, the more competitive and more active style of the Californians on their tailored bikes contrasting with the more festive, local style on the bikes of the Coloradoans, with few adaptations. [38] The two approaches were complementary and soon formed the foundations of the identity of the mountain bike: challenge, rivalry and sharing the pleasure of nature in the mountains.

The spread to Colorado generated connections in Southern California. Former cyclist at the 1960 Rome and 1964 Tokyo Olympic Games, the American Victor Vicente (born Michael Hiltner), who was also known for his charisma and artistic values, organized the 'Reseda to the Sea' race in March 1980. [39] Originating in the San Fernando Valley suburb of Los Angeles, this was the first race that allowed cyclists on all types of bikes (road, cyclo-cross, BMXs, mountain bikes, Breezers and clunkers) to participate. Gary Fisher remembered this first meeting with jubilation:

It was special there especially in the first run, there were cyclocrossmen, BMX's guys and 'roadies', and they all said they would win! There were 4 miles of climbing on the road, 8 miles of all types of descents and climbs and then 3 miles on the road. I was in shape. Two weeks earlier with Greg Lemond, I did San Francisco to Los Angeles, and on top of that. I really had the best bike for that race! I ditched them on the first stretch with my fat tire! It was ridiculous, some had one-speed bikes and walked. Also, after the all-terrain parts of the race, I was still comfortable. The cycling industry guys at Long Beach saw that the bike was really fast from point A to point B!

'Reseda to the Sea' marked a symbolic step in the history of mountain bike on several levels. First of all, by taking the sport to a very populous region of the state, it led to its spread all over California. Additionally, it was one of the first races where different types of bikes got to start the same event together. The spread of the sport demonstrated the intrinsic qualities of the mountain bike in racing conditions to other disciplines such as road cycling, BMX and cyclo-cross. [40] The event also showed the superiority of the bikes of Marin and of their inventors on all terrains. Finally, two years after their trip to Colorado, the pioneers of Marin confirmed their desire to share their passion for an important phenomenon and to show off their equipment, even to sell their products.

From Artistic Tinkering to the First Sales

The effervescence and spirit of competition that surrounded each mountain biking event accelerated the rate of improvements made on the machine, especially with the use of new and particular frames. According to Charlie Cunningham: 'In terms of how innovation happened, everyone looked over everyone else's shoulders, learned from everyone else. And when the craziness of the mountain bike arrived, it already had a life of its own. There was suddenly more demand than supply, and the main reason was that the mountain biking was fun.' [41] As true testing grounds, races were great places to try out different mechanical innovations. If the bike stood up to the challenges imposed by the course, its sturdiness was assured and it became feasible to commercialize the bike on a large scale. As a vector of communication regarding the new way to bicycle, the 'Repack Race' really highlighted the value of these new machines created for a growing audience.

At the request of Charles Kelly, who was determined to find a more solid and a lighter frame than his clunker possessed and who was disappointed by the descent performance of the first frame built by Craig Mitchell in 1976, Joe Breeze came up with a drawing of the first frame specifically for mountain biking on paper by taking inspiration from the geometry of the clunkers. He then built it in Cromoly steel in the autumn of 1977. It was named 'Breezer', weighed 36 lbs and was equipped with 12 speeds. The nine other 'Breezers' that he built over the next six months had 18 speeds and were nickel-plated for durability. It was the first such bike equipped with all new parts. He remembered this period and noted the result of his work with satisfaction: 'I took the time to study. After all those years of cycling, I had an idea about what

would work. I was the first, in October of 1977, to make a suitable frame, and it won the following Repack. It was the first time that a mountain bike looked brand new! And the people who say it were taken aback: Wow! It's a real bike!' [42]

Charlie Cunningham, an engineer by trade, became the first to create an aluminium frame and then to further innovate with a sloping top-tube. In late 1978, Meert Lawwill founded 'Lawwill/Knight Pro Cruiser', a company that sold the first assembled mountain bikes. Subsequently, Tom Ritchey, a prolific young frame builder and member of the Junior US Cycling Team, became well known for the quality of his frames and for his production capabilities. [43] Knowing about his strengths as a builder, Charles Kelly and Gary Fisher, new associates, solicited Ritchey for the building of some frames. They assembled the bike and then sold them for around \$1,300 at the shop. With a mix of pride and nostalgia, Gary Fisher recounts: 'After I opened my shop with Charles in 1979, we called it "MOUNTAINBIKES"! We felt that it was dynamite! You could have a brand new mountain bike. We made an impact on American society. I started the business. I thought it would be stupid not to divulge the secret. I wanted to cover the Earth with bikes. I did it! With the first viable new mountain bike and specialized shop!' [44] Production soared from 200 to 2,000 in two years. By the early 1980s mountain biking became more known as a sport and spread to more areas in the west part of the USA.

An epiphenomenon in the world of bicycles, the new bikes proved their efficiency in the mountains of Colorado and their specific all-terrain uses in Reseda to the Sea. As technological advances multiplied, the period from 1976 to 1981 finally resulted in a conjunction of cultural, technological and major events factors as well as a dynamic role for the pioneers. With better performing bikes, adapted cycling areas and an enthusiasm and growing admiration amongst the cyclists, the conditions were favourable for the institutionalization of the sport on a larger scale.

Institutionalization and Industrialization: 1981–86

Cycling is No Longer Confidential

The early 1980s were a turning point in terms of how cycling was perceived: the bicycle was no longer the toy of a child or adolescent, as symbolized by the Stingray and the BMX. The movie *Breaking Away*, [45] depicting the passion that four teenagers from Bloomington, Indiana had for cycling, brought forth this new trend, one that was outside of traditional standards of sport. The modified equipment also facilitated the use of the bike as a means of transportation. From 1983 to 1989, the number of cycling adults went from 10 to 23 million, the number of cycling commuters doubled from 1.5 to 3.2 million, and the number of competitors went from 40,000 to 200,000. [46]

This popularity was also confirmed by successes that Americans now had in international competitions races. In 1981, Jonathan Boyer became the first American

to participate in the prestigious Tour de France. [47] That same year, Jim Ochowicz organized 'Seven-Eleven', which would be the first American team to participate in the Giro d'Italia. Eric Heiden, a five-times Olympic ice-skating champion at the 1980 Lake Placid Winter Olympics Games, converted to the new sport and saw some success in road cycling as part of that team. A year later, the first 'Race Across America' demonstrated the cyclists's endurance, as they attempted to ride across the country from Santa Monica, California to New York City. The exploits of the young Greg LeMond, the professional world champion on the Alterhein (Switzerland 1983) course who in 1986 became the first American to win the Tour de France, really established a general obsession for cycling. The four gold, three silver and two bronze Olympic medals in cycling won by the US at the 1984 Los Angeles Games, which also marked the first occasion that women participated in the sport, further increased the popularity of biking. Connie Carpenter won the cycling road race and Alexi Grewal became the first American male to win a gold medal. [48]

Nationwide Spread and the Beginnings of the Internationalization of Mountain Biking

During the 1980s, the Californian base of the early 1970s, which had been followed by an expansion into Colorado and Utah, now witnessed a spread to a much larger part of the country as well as to Canada. In 1982, following the purchase of the first bikes in Marin County, the West Point Cycles Shop in Vancouver, British Columbia, quickly became the epicentre of mountain biking in Canada. The Canadian Off-Road Bicycle Association was founded in 1982, a year before the establishment of the National Off-Road Bicycle Association (NORBA). In the US in 1983, Wisconsin's Fat Tire Festival at Chequamegon, in which 27 bikers from four surrounding states competed on a 40 mile course symbolized expansion into the mid-West. Gary Crandall, the organizer, indicated that 'The first question in the minds of the rivals was not who would win but what kind of bike'. [49]

That same year, the beginnings of mountain biking reached the 'old world'. Stéphane Hauvette, who had learned about the sport in California, organized France's first event in August at the ski resort of La Plagne with the help of Gary Fisher. In England, the February cover of the *Bicycle* magazine showed for the first time a mountain bike with a young girl wearing a cowboy hat, a choice which reflected the somewhat nostalgic stereotype of the American 'Wild West'. The only specialized magazine, the *Fat Tire Flyer*, editorialized: 'England has fallen for Fat Tires'. [50] The American biking revolution was taking over Europe. Jacquie Phelan, the best female mountain biker from the early 1980s, went to Wales, where she won a singular competition: 'bike versus horse' across the hillsides of Wales. The following year, the journal *Action Bike* was created as the first European mountain bike magazine. Switzerland, Germany, France and Italy were quick to adopt the mountain bike, despite certain skepticism from the European cycling industry [51]. In 1984, upon an invitation from the Japanese magazine *Be-Pal*, Charles Kelly, Tom Ritchey, and Dale and Anne Stetina arrived at the first Asian race to give advice and to

promote the sport in Japan. [52] Charles Kelly recalled: ‘As we understood it, our mission was to help them and introduce the concept to Japan.’ It was also the time of the first media broadcasts of mountain bike adventures such as the 1983 Mongolia and China expeditions, the climb of Mont Blanc by Jaap Lampe and Erik Pootjes on 14 September 1984 and the climbs of Kilimanjaro by brothers Dick and Nick Crane on 31 December 1984. By then the mountain and spirit of adventure were already linked to this new bike.

The Creation of NORBA

Aware of the need to become organized to maintain accessibility and to formalize the first rules of the sport, the pioneers of Marin had decided to create NORBA in early 1983. [53] The goal of NORBA was to promote all aspects of responsible off-road biking, including racing, tourism and leisure activities. The association served as a unified voice for the mountain bikers and off-road cyclers as well as an entity that sanctioned all terrain races. As such, the Association provided insurance for bodily and material harm, established normal rules for competitions and was committed to gaining public access to all-terrain cycling.

The protection of accessibility, cycling insurance and the organization of competitive cycling constituted the three goals of the Association. [54] As reflected in newspaper headlines, by 1983 the question of accessibility was in the news, as there were more and more conflicts over the use of trails. [55] Using the ‘Wilderness Act of 1964’, which ‘prohibited the use of motor vehicles and other forms of mechanical transport’, the Sierra Club attempted to ban the use of mountain bikes on trails.

The first NORBA meeting was set up by Jack Ingram, owner of Panda Bikes, at his home in Lafayette, California on 25 January 1983. No minutes were taken of that first meeting. The next meetings were held in Marin County, where most of the pioneers lived. They were attended by Jack Ingram, Charlie Kelly, Tom Hillard, Amy Slate, Mark Slate, Eric Koski, Charlie Cunningham, Casey Cunnzelman, Scot Nicol, Joe Breeze, Barbara Edelston, Gary Fisher, Dave Koski and Darryl Skrabak. Over the next six months and 21 meetings, [56] the group with the original pioneers focused on progressively building the first rules and the foundations of this new sport by defining age and level categories, equipment, technical inspections of the bike, insurance, relations with the cycling industry, links with other sports, communication with pedestrian and equestrian associations, environmental impact studies and driving rules. The first regulations were brief, and the writers took care to portray their activity in the spirit of autonomy and respect. [57] The spirit of those rules differentiated competitive mountain biking from track cycling and cyclo-cross, where outside help was already set up. There was an affinity with the notion of inherent autonomy for outdoor sports such as rock climbing or even surfing. [58]

On 24 May 1983, Glenn Odell, already invested as a mountain bike maker since 1979 and creator of the ‘Bruiser Mountain Bike’, sent a letter proposing the takeover of NORBA. Busy with their diverse activities and constrained by a precariously

balanced budget, the founding members welcomed this proposition with a certain relief and with certain directives, stating: 'However, we recommend a business structure rather than just having an individual proprietor with an office that would include the organizers, industry members, runners' representatives, and possibly others. Under the auspices of this group structure, as the "executive" director, you would be given important decision-making powers as directors have over large sports organizations such as football and basketball.'

With haste, Odell began to organize the first US mountain biking championships. The first national meeting of the 'new NORBA' took place on 16 September at Crested Butte in the presence of 25 members and 75 non-members, in front of whom Odell announced his role in the organization and also suggested that the best thing would be to conduct an impact study to show that the mountain bike was not any more damaging to nature than hiking or horseback riding, and to clearly identify and respect fragile areas. [59]

The first US championships in Santa Barbara represented the early fledging of the young institution. Given an unfavourable weather forecast, the racers were called upon to decide, by a show of hands, the number of laps to run. [60] During the race, Tom Hilliard, the technical director, decided in a certain air of confusion that, for security reasons and for the protection of the environment, the number of laps to complete during the race would be reduced. Odell indicates that he ended the race to avoid any damage. [61] '1983 will be remembered as the first National Mountain Bike Championships, the one that didn't quite happen completely!', Charles Kelly wrote with humour. [62] Steve Tilford and Jacquie Phelan came first in this first initial championship in the history of the mountain bike in the US.

The following year, having noted the success of the NORBA races, the United States Cycling Federation (USCF), the original institution that ran road, track and cyclo-cross races in liaison with the International Cycling Union (UCI), threatened to cancel the racing licences of all those who had participated in races under NORBA's label. [63] The USCF wanted to help run regular and small races. It considered mountain biking to be just like cyclo-cross and, therefore, its organization and management fell under the USCF's jurisdiction. The USCF finally limited the rewards of the winners of each race to \$1,000 (if the racer won more money, it would go to the USCF), whereas with NORBA, the racer would collect all of the gains. Representatives of the USCF, NORBA and BMX met on 11–12 November in Washington, DC, the headquarters of the American Bicycle Association, to find a solution.

After two years of conflict, [64] an agreement between the USCF and NORBA to contribute to the growth of competitions was finally concluded on 13 April 1985 in Colorado Springs: 'The USCF and NORBA wish to cooperate in the development of bicycle races and to administer a just treatment to all participants. [65] The USCF races permit a great amount of technical aid to racers whereas NORBA races prohibit help.' [66] Now USCF racers would be able to race and be medically insured and the NORBA races could still be run according to NORBA rules.

As reflected in the work of sociologists Elias and Dunning, [67] an implicit organization was transformed into a highly specified organization governed by unique rules: the evolution from an open space to a specified and either defined or marked terrain, the changing in the distribution of roles, the level of violence tolerated (falls, guards), the importance of the agility over brute force and finally the importance of individual identity over group identity were valuable indicators of the new rules.

Jacque Phelan and Joe Murray: The First Champions . . . of a New Sport

The 1970s had witnessed Marin County's legendary Repack Race and Colorado's Pearl Pass Tour. The early 1980s saw new 'classic' [68] mountain bike races: Redding's 1981 'Whiskeytown Downhill', Santa Rosa's 1982 'Rockhopper' in California and the 'Paradise Divide Race' in Colorado were among the main races where new cyclists met each other in friendly competitions. As of 1984, the 'Suntour series', a series of eight races run in six states covering practically the whole country, [69] marked the beginning of the involvement of a greater number of sponsors as well as more and more organized teams. Major brands such as Specialized, Raleigh, Schwinn or Ross tied to pioneers such as Ritchey, Fisher, Cunningham, Mantis, Ibis (designed by Scott Nicol) or Salsa (designed by Ross Shafer) attracted the best riders from cyclo-cross, cycling and even BMX. [70]

Unbeatable for eight races in 1984, Joe Murray monopolized the podiums; Steve Cook, Dale Stetina, Gavin Chilcott and Laurence Malone also stood out. The charismatic Jacque Phelan, NORBA champion from 1983 to 1985 and unbeatable for four years, had to wait for the bravura of Cindy Whitehead [71] to get some competition on her level. According to Phelan: 'That day, the press was more interested in my defeat than in Cindy's victory. Now, the sport can begin!' [72]

It was during this period that new practices such as trials occurred for the first time during Fat Tire Week at Crested Butte, Colorado thanks to the drive of Brian Skinner, Scott Nicol, then Kevin Norton and Dave Wonderly. Following the great enthusiasm generated by this practice at the Rockhopper of 1983, the first rules were written up in several points by the young NORBA, directed by Tom Hillard. Along the lines of the Repack Race, but on more mountainous terrain, the first descents began. The 1985 Mammoth Mountain race, the 'Kamikaze Downhill', [73] gathered together more than 200 racers and many spectators along its 2,000 metres of negative slopes.

The media began to value a more spectacular, even aggressive view of mountain biking, which complicated their relations with other trail users. At the same time, this new mode of transportation through nature tourism resulted in increased tourism, especially in the rocky dunes of Moab, Utah, where the 'Slickrock Trail' had been created in collaboration with the Bureau of Land Management of Canyonlands National Park Service.

The Industrialization of the New Machine: From the Stumpjumper to the First Suspension Bikes

In late 1981, the arrival of the Specialized 'Stumpjumper' designed by Tim Neeman [74] had began the transformation of cycle building from the crafting stage to the industrial stage. 'It is not a new bike, it's a new sport!' or even 'Stronger than dirt: the Stumpjumper will take you anywhere you've got the nerve to go' – these were the advertising slogans of the firm that took on the production of the Specialized Stumpjumper. A converted cyclist as well as a young, dynamic director of Specialized Bicycle Imports (an American brand created in 1974), Mike Sinyard had decided to begin industrial production of this first famous model: 'We saw the potential and we accepted the risk. I gambled the future of my business on the success of the Stumpjumper.' [75] The components were still a mix of elements taken from road cycling. Using connections in Japan and California, Mike Synniard became the first to produce a series bike. The price was \$750, which was just under half the price of other bikes being sold on the market by small companies.

In 1982, crafted and industrial products still competed with one another, but soon the new famous brands dominated the market. The first Interbike Expo, arranged by Steve Ready and Herb Wetenkamp, was held in Las Vegas in 1982. Mountain biking was new in the bicycle market, and Charles Kelly and Gary Fisher participated in the mountain biking seminar. Craftsmen represented a consequential portion of the market that year with 2,000 bikes sold by 15 companies [76] for most of California versus 3,000 sold by Univega thanks to Ben Lawee's 'Alpina sport' model and Specialized's 'Stumpjumper'.

Almost all the known powerful and already-established cycling brands entered the seemingly lucrative mountain bike market. The American and Japanese brands, such as Centurion, Diamondbike, Fuji, Cyclepro, Miyata, Ross, Sekai, SR, Takara, KHS, Raleigh, Schwinn and Trek, entered a sector that produced 50,000 mountain bikes from a total of 9,000,000 bicycles of all kinds that were sold in 1983. Schwinn made the affordable 'Sidewinder' which sold for \$250, increasing access to this new sport. Whereas certain craftsmen survived the industrialization of 1983 and their products, such as 'Rocky Mountain' or 'Wilderness Trail Bikes', became major brands, others did not.

The Japanese companies were the first to frequent Marin County and to believe in the economic future of the mountain bike. Keizo Shimano was quite interested in this new concept and carefully examined the bikes of Marin. [77] For a seminar organized by his company in 1982, Shimano went to Crested Butte with Junzo Kawai of Suntour. Quickly, the two Japanese giants commenced research into and production of peripherals and specific components such as derailleurs, brakes or rims. Competition was fierce to develop the best products in the research and development labs. The contest could be seen in the appearance of the first specific components such as the transmission group 'Deore XT' from Shimano or the Suntour 'Dirt Component Ensemble'. After initial tests conducted by Mert Lawwill, [78] the first plans for suspension systems appeared at the prototype level. Cannondale began the

production of aluminum bikes with the ST 500. The 'Yen Shock' led to the introduction of more and more reliable components to the fast-growing market. In 1985, 550,000 mountain bikes were sold in the US, which was 5% of the market.

As developments advanced, the press gave growing attention to the new sport. The *Fat Tire Flyer* magazine, which began publication in 1980, was the first periodical to be dedicated solely to the mountain bike. It remained the only information source on the topic until 1985. The magazine was present at all the meetings, sports gatherings and cycling salons. It brought together all the announcements of events and other important information, such as the creation of NORBA, the first championships and regulations on trail access. At the same time that the content reflected the codification and rapid institutionalization of the mountain bike in the US, more and more space was given to advertisements. As the source of major and unique information, the *Fat Tire Flyer* Magazine and Charles Kelly its creator were the main channels of communication exchanges and expansion until 1985. [79]

Towards International Recognition: 1986–90

The First Intercontinental Races

Beginning in 1986, the *Fat Tire Flyer* was no longer the only specialized magazine. By 1989 the demands of more numerous cyclists had led the creation of others such as *Mountain for the Adventure*, *Mountain Bike Action* [80] and *Dirt Rag*. [81] It was also in 1986 that the public came face to face with the wonders of the mountain bike and the sport thanks to 'the Super Cross Mountain Bike Exhibition Race' that was held between two motocross races in front of thousands of spectators. Won by John Tomac, this was different from normal races organized in the outdoors with shorter runs that were not that adapted to non-motorized bikes. In addition, the first dual slalom races where two racers face off on a parallel slalom established the beginning of this spectacular arrangement, which was also held in 1986. Adventurous cycling was demonstrated when Mount Everest base camp was reached and when the Idita Bike Race in snowy, cold Alaska took place in 1987. Each was a great media success, which further highlighted the capabilities of the bike.

From 1987, international competitions led to the first real races between American and European riders, with the first unofficial world championships held in Mammoth, California. These were won by Ned Overend and Cindy Whitehead, who competed on the same type of race, another 'unofficial world championship' that was organized in Villard de Lans, France.

In 1988, the first international challenge, the 'Grundig-World Cup Race', attracted the best riders, with Americans clearly dominating. Two 'unofficial' world championships were held on each side of the Atlantic, the first at Mammoth, California and the second at Crans-Montana, Switzerland, where 17 countries and 350 racers were in attendance. The best American riders, such as Greg Herbold or Ned Overend, subsequently travelled to Europe with the help of their sponsors, but

very few Europeans made the trip across the Atlantic for budgetary reasons. It was not until 1989, when the young Swiss Thomas Frischknecht was recruited to Team 'Ritchey', that a European competed regularly on American soil. [82] Having gotten his start in cyclo-cross, the young champion shone with success on the American circuit and made it easier for mountain bikers of both continents to move around.

A New Market for the Cycling Industry

By the end of the decade, the mountain bike had changed the way in which cyclists accessed the outdoors and bicycle parks. Whereas by the end of 1985 550,000 bikes had been sold (5% of the bicycle market), the 1990 the number had risen to 7,000,000 (65% of the market). In 1988, more than half the bikes sold in the US were mountain bikes. Shimano's 1986 indexed speeds and the first specific Trial Bike was produced as a series, which helped democratize the sport. The mid-1980s saw the proliferation of the mountain bike's specific accessories, such as the 'Hite-Rite Seat' (designed by Joe Breeze) or specific helmet (Bell). The first 'full suspension' bikes appeared the following year, augmenting the different possibilities for downhill racing, whereas materials such as carbon and titanium had been around since 1988. Shimano, still ahead in terms of research, developed the concept of clipless pedals, whereas in 1990, some racers already had developed forks sold as a series by Rock Shox.

The Creation of the International Mountain Bike Association

On an institutional level, Glenn Odell sold NORBA on 4 August 1986 to Clayton John and the American Bicycle Association (ABA), which were already in charge of BMX. The experiment was short-lived because the cyclists did not adhere to the new showy values of this association: 'We are at a dangerous crossroads. We have been sold to the wrong people who do not have our best interests in mind. Their honesty and ethics are certainly in question. We must watch closely, react quickly and take whatever action is necessary to save our organization.' [83] The ABA finally sold NORBA and its 20,000 members in February 1989 to the USCF, the only federation recognized by the UCI, which saw its membership triple from 1980 to 1988, with an average annual growth rate in race permits of 14% during the same period of time. A year earlier, Marylin Price founded 'Trip For Kids' to promote mountain biking amongst disadvantaged inner-city youths.

In response to this access problem, in 1988 the International Mountain Bike Association (IMBA) was founded. According to Michael Kelley, one of the founders: 'It was about time to react [84] and to organize, without which we wouldn't have any space to ride in the outdoors. A few more months without a structured defense system, and we wouldn't have been able to ride anywhere, especially anywhere here in the Bay Area.' [85] The Bicycle Trails Council of Marin, the Bicycle Club of the East Bay, Sacramento Rough Riders, Concerned Off-Road, Bicyclists Association de Los Angeles and the Responsible Organized Mountain Pedalers of San Jose founded the

IMBA hurriedly in the spring of 1988, taking over advocacy. NORBA remained in charge of the races. By the autumn, the 'Six Rules of the Trail' were written and disseminated by means of signs and brochures to cyclists and 'Land Managers': 'Ride on open trails only, Leave no trace, Control your bicycle, Always yield on trails, Never scare animals, Plan ahead.'

For the 1989 Interbike show held in Las Vegas, the new association became well known at the cycling industry level by promoting common interests: 'No Trails, No Sales.' It said that 'the future of mountain biking will depend on responsible riding, volunteer trail work by mountain bikers, and political clout'. Ashley Korenblat (President of Merlin Bicycle since 1989), Linda DuPriest of Specialized and Tim Blumenthal from *Bicycling Magazine* joined the IMBA's board, thereby giving it economic and media importance. A newsletter and a 'Land Access Alert' were regularly published by Don Douglass, thereby reinforcing external communication, the defence of the sport, and creation of riding spaces in cooperation with local and national agencies that had a role in outdoor protection.

Durango: A Turning Point in the History of the Mountain Bike

In 1989, the Union Cyclist International (UCI) was made up of two organizations: the Federation Internationale Amateur de Cyclisme (FIAC) and the Federation Internationale de Cyclisme Professionnelle (FICP). [86] In September 1988, for the first time, *Le Monde cycliste*, an internal publication of the UCI, reported that organized mountain biking was being practised more and more:

A first report, at embryonic level shows that mountain bike is at present practiced in a structured manner in France, in United States, in Italy and in Australia. The former even foresees the organization of a World Championship competition in 1991, while maintaining excellent relations with the American NORBA. Our aspirations are to include in the big 'two wheel' family all the enthusiasts of this new rage. To achieve this, we are concentrating our hopes on all the national Federations, since we are quite aware that many of them favor the inclusion of this sport within the FIAC. [87]

In terms of international cycling meets, the UCI was at first an observer, but was also quite attentive to the growth of the phenomenon. The federation set up a 'mountain bike' commission within the so-called BMX and Trialsin commission. [88] The 'mountain bike' commission became independent from the previous one in 1989: [89]

Even though mountain biking was quite new, it became a most important occurrence. The FIAC could not ignore the explosion of this phenomenon and it was in that spirit that it created a technical mountain biking group in the heart of the Commission Internationale de BMX et de Trialsin (CIBT). The group was headed by Marc Lemay of Canada and also included Dale Hughes (USA), André Tignon (Belgium), Stéphane Hauvette (France), Pedri Pi (Spain) and Augusto Rosetti (Italy). [90]

The international federation therefore relied on the existing American and European national federations, which were already involved in the organization and development of mountain biking. The first international regulation project fit on one page [91] and the first formation of international commissaries took place in Paris in early 1990, barely a few months before the first championship. [92]

Officially, the UCI representative Marc Lemay, the organizer Ed Zink and Colorado Governor Roy Rommer announced on 14 March 1990, as an official protocol, that the first world championships would take place in Durango, Colorado. [93] The official statement prepared by Governor Roy Rommer reflected the importance that mountain biking had attained and the pride that the state enjoyed as the home of this first world championship:

Whereas the first Mountain Bike World Championships are to be held in 1990. Whereas Colorado is the home of mountain-bike, as well as the official home office of the American Cycling Federation. Whereas the Purgatory Sky Resort area in Durango was chosen as the ideal place to hold the first World Championships. Whereas the Championships will see the gathering of the best mountain bike specialists from all nations. I, the undersigned, Roy Rommer, Governor of Colorado, do hereby proclaim that the Colorado Mountain Bike World Championships event be held next September of this year, 1990.

It is significant that most of the 800 competitors from 34 different countries who were present that autumn did not know of the sport five years earlier. The September 1990 gathering marked the beginning of the modern era of the sport. In front of 10,000 passionate spectators and with unprecedented television coverage, Americans won most of the runs. [94] After a battle with the Swiss Thomas Frischknecht, the local competitor Ned Overend won the first cross-country world championship, while the American Julie Furtado dominated the woman's category over two other Americans. On a fast rather than technical downhill, Greg Herbold (US) and Cindy Devine (Canada) were named best riders in the world. [95]

The first world level event symbolized the end of an historical process in the young sport of mountain biking. A page had been turned for the pioneers; their sport was in fact no longer 'theirs'. One of them explains his feeling at this time: 'I remember that we were in Durango with Charles Kelly, happy to see so many people, and at the same time, he said that if the Mountain Bike turned Olympic, it would be the end of "our" sport. It is definitely a paradox in his mind.' [96]

Twenty Years of Mountain Biking History in the US: The End of a Unique Process

From its beginnings in the 1970s to international recognition in 1990, the history of the mountain bike had definitely taken root in the US. The four periods that make up this history illustrate and reinforce what is referred to as 'the process of institutionalization'. Occurring in a favourable context, 'the time of the pioneers' remains the era of the emergence of new forms of cycling in Marin County with the

values of freedom, shared happiness and natural discovery that characterized California in the context of the early 1970s. The next period, which lasted until 1981, was one of expansion, represented by the trips to Colorado and by the first races, such as the Repack Race. With passion, the bike was improved and, with reason, the bike was first commercialized. The industrialization phase, with the first series bikes, and the creation of specific institutions such as NORBA really confirmed the legitimatization of the sport throughout the country. Here the competitive and commercial challenges became central. Finally, at the dawn of the 1990s, the phenomenon was internationalized with different types of cycling practices, with specialized media coverage and institutes that spread mountain biking internationally.

From the first Clunkers and Joe Breeze or Gary Fisher prototypes to the 7,000,000 bikes sold in 1990, from Marin County to an activity on five continents, from tribal cycling and the first festive meets to an international institutionalization and to the first unified world championships, from the first Charles Kelly articles in the *Fat Tire Flyer* to large-scale television coverage, from succeeding developments in inventions, technologies, spatial diffusion, transformations of practices, institutionalization and increased media exposure, the early history of mountain biking in the US conforms to Allen Guttman's hypothesis about the genesis of sports as a type of rationalization for social life in an industrialized world. [97] It also seems to confirm what American sports historian Marc Dyreson has called 'californication', to describe the process by which the Californian sport culture has spread throughout the world and has become one of the mainstream trends of the last half-century. [98]

Notes

- [1] George, *Iron Riders*. Ten years later, in 1903, the first Tour de France was held on precarious roads. The climbs to the top took place on unpaved roads.
- [2] Tobin, 'The Bicycle Boom of the 1890s'.
- [3] Ritchie, *Major Taylor*.
- [4] Londres, *Les Forçats de la route*.
- [5] Sergent, *De Paris à Roubaix*.
- [6] Haigh, 'Mountain Touring'.
- [7] Private correspondence between Rough Stuff Fellowship and Charles Kelly. Fairfax (California).
- [8] 'Les copains d'abord', *VTT magazine* no. 102, March 1998.
- [9] Chuck Elliot, a pioneer of the Chico's area, California, called 'Bodfish', organized one of the first mountain bike races in 1976 and posed the question 'Is Mountain Biking New?' in *Mountain Bike for the Adventure*, July–August 1987, Vol. III no. 6, 16–7. He also tells the story of Kid Phillips, who used this mode of transportation across the mountains of Lassen Volcanic National Park to get around and to fish long before the 1970s.
- [10] According to a Gallup poll conducted from 10 November 1989 to 15 January 1990, out of 2,053 adults from over 300 different places across the country, 38% were swimmers, 29% were fishermen and 28% were bikers. In terms of competitive amateur cyclists, there were 1,000 in

- 1960, 9,000 in 1980, 19,000 in 1985 and 35,000 in 1990, out of which 10% were women. In August 1990, professional cyclist Greg Lemond placed 27th in *Forbes'* paid sportsplayers in the world.
- [11] Rob Buchanan, 'Birth of the Geared Nation'. *Rolling Stone*, issue 634, 9–23 July 1992: 81–89. Also 'Mountain Bikes: Cruising of the Craze'. *Smithsonian*, June 1994: 74–7.
- [12] These interviews, ranging from one to two hours, were collected between 2005 and 2007.
- [13] Surfing, an older sport of Hawaiian origins, gained popularity and spread to Australia in 1914 and California in 1920. Duke Kahamoku, swimming champion of the early twentieth century and pioneer of Hawaiian surfing, met Tom Blake in Los Angeles. A sport of reference among gliding sports, surfing became an integral part of the sports culture in California, where surfers practise the sport all along the coast. See Kimberley, *Duke: A Great Hawaiian*; Nedel, 'New Hawaiian Monarchy'.
- [14] 'Extreme sport', 'action sport' or 'adventure sport' were emerging during this time, transforming common sporting activities into a more dangerous activity and involving specialized equipment, greater speed, height or physical exertion. See for instance Baudry, *Le corps extrême*.
- [15] Dominique Jorand, 'Du hang gliding au vol libre : l'émergence d'un "sport californien" en France dans les années 1970', *Stadion XXIX* (2003); Vigarello, 'Les paradoxes du nouveau retour'; Christian Pociello, 'De l'écologie douce à l'écologie dure, le nouvel âge du sport ?', in *Esprit*, April 1987; Loret, *Génération glisse*.
- [16] Skateboarding has its origins in 1959 in California, with the sale of the first 'Roller Derby Skateboard'. The first competition was held in 1963 at Pier Avenue Junior School in Hermosa, CA. Practice usually occurred in the street or in the empty swimming pools of Los Angeles. During the 1960s this sport developed very quickly with international competitions, films (*Skater Dater*) and a magazine (*The Quarterly Skateboarder*). More than 50 million boards with wheels were sold in three years.
- [17] Interview with Steve Graventies: 25 February 2005.
- [18] Sports Illustrated, *The Anniversary Book 1954–2004*. One notices the importance accorded to American football, with 672 covers, followed by baseball (510), then by basketball (502), golfing (155), boxing (134), running (99), hockey (83) and tennis (78). Cycling falls into this ranking in 21st place with nine covers in 50 years. The majority is recent and focused on Lance Armstrong.
- [19] Interview with Joe Breeze, Fairfax: 28 February 2005.
- [20] Interview with Gary Fisher, San Anselmo: 8 February 2005.
- [21] Berto, 'The Great American Bicycle Boom'.
- [22] Sloane, *Sloane's Complete Book of Bicycling*.
- [23] Marloy, *Winning is Everything*.
- [24] Leonard, *The Ultimate Athlete*.
- [25] Grunenberg and Harris, *Summer of Love*.
- [26] Savre, Saint-Martin, and Terret, 'Le Vélo Tout-Terrain'.
- [27] Interview with Gary Fisher, San Anselmo: 6 March 2006.
- [28] *San Francisco Bay Guardian*, 10 May to 23 May 1973, 7. Jeanette Foster, 'The Great Outdoors Bicycling'.
- [29] Interview with Charles Kelly, San Anselmo: 16 February 2005.
- [30] Interview with Otis Guy, Fairfax: 16 February 2005.
- [31] Berto, *The Birth of Dirt*.
- [32] Interview with Gary Fisher cited.
- [33] Of note is the fact that only Gary Fisher, and to some extent Joe Breeze, had all of these skills.
- [34] Interview with Wende Cragg, Larkspur: 11 March 2005.
- [35] Interview with Charles Kelly, Fairfax: 8 March 2005.

- [36] *The Washington Post*, 8 November 1978, 9. Richard Nilsen, 'New California Fad Clunker Bikes'.
- [37] Richard Nilsen, 'Clunker Bikes- The dirt bicycles come of age'. *The CoEvolution Quarterly* (Spring 1978).
- [38] During an epic ride, eight locals and five Californians spent two days going to the Pearl Pass Tour (12,705 feet). Two local newspapers carried the story: 'Pearl Pass Klunker'. *Chronicle CB*, 29 September 1978; 'A Race is Nice But a Tour Has Spice'. *Crested Butte Pilot*, 29 September 1978.
- [39] Interview with Victor Vicente of America, Clearlake: 22 March 2005. Races such as the Punk Bike Enduro (1976), Fat tire Bike Week, -Col (1979) Santa Rosa, Central Coast Clunker Classic- SanLuisObispo (1980), Wiskeytown downhill - Redding (1981) were also amongst the first classic races in the history of mountain biking.
- [40] In November 1980, Gary Fisher won the 'Northern California Championship Cyclo-cross' in Berkeley on his mountain bike continuing to demonstrate the qualities of this bike.
- [41] Breeze and Amici, *Fat Tire*.
- [42] Interview with Joe Breeze cited.
- [43] Interview with Tom Ritchey, San Jose Costa Rica: 1 November 2006.
43. Interview #2 with Gary Fisher: 4 March 2006.
- [44] Interview with Gary Fisher cited.
- [45] *Breaking Away*, a Peter Yates Film, Academy Award Winner, Best Screenplay, 1979.
- [46] Nye, *The Cyclist's Sourcebook*.
- [47] He would finish 32nd as a teammate of Bernard Hinault, champion of this year.
- [48] Pavelka, 'Hearts beat fast'. Subtitle: 'Los Angeles 1984: this was the setting for the most successful week ever for American cyclists in international competition.'
- [49] *Fat Tire Flyer* No. 20, Vol. 4, No. 5, 12-3. *Fat Tire Flyer* was published from August 1980 to May 1987.
- [50] *Fat tire Flyer* No. 13, Vol. 3, No. 2, 4.
- [51] Interview with Stéphane Hauvette, Paris: 28 June 2006. Though it is not within the scope of this article to discuss the cultural clash between American and European mountain bikes, one have to realize that two opposite conceptions were soon to challenge each other. The end of the American hegemony and the rise of the European performances at the highest level in the 2000s confirm the changes.
- [52] *Fat Tire Flyer* No. 20 cited, pp. 8-11.
- [53] These facts are taken from private archives, kindly loaned by Charles Kelly, one of the founders of NORBA.
- [54] Interview cited with Charles Kelly: 'We figured that if we raced, we needed rules, and some people said one other things. Also, I contributed to the elaboration of basic mountain bike rules. National regulations were needed. Independence, equality, autonomy were fundamental guides. We didn't want to imitate how it was done in cyclo-cross, where it is one with the most support who won. Along with Tom Hilliard, we wanted simple rules'.
- [55] *Ross Valley Republican*, 9 September 1982: Pat Rayan, 'Rules of the Off Roads: Local Bikees are Writing the Etiquette'; *Pacific Sun*, Week of 25-31 May 1984: Pat Ryan, 'Clunker Bikes and County Trails'; *Ross Valley Republican*, 26 September 1984: Tracy Salcedo, 'Mountain-bikes, Hikers and Horse People Work Out Solutions'.
- [56] Compiled in the minutes of the association - Private NORBA's archives. Charles Kelly, Fairfax.
- [57] '8.1: The racers have to race with their starting bike. 8.3: All mechanical maintenance have to be done by a racer or a fellow racer. 8.6: The racers which are riding bicycle have priority on the one who pushes it.' After two meetings, the rules do not more mention 'Rider' but 'Racer'.
- [58] The self-sufficiency rule was the first and main rule.

- [59] *Fat Tire Flyer* No. 16, Vol. 4, No. 1, 5.
- [60] Interview with Jacquie Phelan: 18 March 2007.
- [61] *Fat Tire Flyer* No. 19, Vol. 4, No. 4, 5. 'In addition to personal safety, resource damage was a major concern. It should be noted that NORBA is a dual function association serving the needs of the recreational rider as well as the racer. The event route was primarily on US Forest Service land. A special use permit was required which had provisions for monitoring resource damage as a result of the event. Sierra club members were also present. Our credibility with these entities is important to NORBA being able to accomplish this major goal of securing access to public lands for cyclists and reopening areas recently closed.'
- [62] *Fat Tire Flyer* No. 17, Vol. 4, No. 2, 19.
- [63] *Fat Tire Flyer* No. 16, Vol. 4, No. 1, 19: 'NORBA-USCF: On a Collision Course!'
- [64] *Fat Tire Flyer* No. 22, 13. Racer David Chilcott went over two years of races and of problems with a lack of knowledge or lack of respect (for example, with bike changes during races) of regulations by racers or organizers: 'The 1984 season was a great improvement in quality compared to 1983 in numbers of races and in popularity. Now it is time for racers and organizers to know the rules and the spirit behind these rules. If the mountain bike is going to become a legitimate sport with athletic principles, we are responsible for upholding its ideals.'
- [65] 8 points are detailed: 1 Purpose, 2 Participation, 3 Amateurism, 4 Release, 5 Liaison, 6 Disagreement, 7 Adoption, 8 Termination.
- [66] *Fat Tire Flyer* No. 25, Vol. 5, No. 3, 12.
- [67] Elias and Dunning, *Question of Excitement*.
- [68] 'This sport is so new that any event being held for the second year is a classic', Charles Kelly writes humorously in the editorial of *Fat Tire Flyer* No. 4, March–April 1981.
- [69] California, Alabama, Colorado, Washington, Nevada and Georgia.
- [70] Interview with Ross Shafer, Petaluma, California: 28 February 2006. He became the first to support a women's team.
- [71] One of the first exploits in the history of this young sport happened to Cindy Whitehead, one mile into the 50 miler, when the clamp on her seat-post broke and her saddle fell off. In spite of this handicap she chased down Jacquie Phelan and won the event!
- [72] Interview with Jacquie Phelan, Fairfax: 8 March 2006.
- [73] *Fat Tire Flyer*, No. 25, cited.
- [74] The first model is exhibited inside the Smithsonian Museum in Washington D.C.
- [75] Internal Documentation of Specialized Companies.
- [76] In these companies, one finds Joe Breeze (Breezer), Colorado Bicycle Co (Roughrider) , Charlie Cunningham (Indian), Richard Cunningham (Mantis), Cupertino Bike Shop (Saturn), Barry Konig (Proteus), Erik Koski (Trailmaster), Mert Lawwill (Pro cruiser), Jeff Lindsay (Mountain Goat), Moots Cycle (Mountaineer), Scot Nicols (Ibis), Glen Odell (Bruiser), Chris Pauley (Tierra), Steve Potts (Wilderness Trail Bikes), Angel Rodriguez (R&E Cycles), Mike Rust (Rocky Mountain Bicycle Works), Erik Sampson (Rock Creek Cycles), Ross Shafer (Salsa) and Victor Vicente of America (VVA).
- [77] Berto, 'Sunset for Suntour'.
- [78] Interview with Mert Lawwill, Tiburon, CA: 1 March 2006.
- [79] The second mountain bike magazine was *Mountain Bike for the Adventure*. First issue June–July 1985.
- [80] First issue in July 1986.
- [81] First issue in April 1989.
- [82] Interview with Thomas Frischknecht, San Jose, Costa Rica: 3 November 2006.
- [83] *Mountain Bike Action*, April 1987, 52.
- [84] On 28 September 1987, 'Two Wheeled Terrors' appeared in *Newsweek*, thereby highlighting the aggressive side of mountain biking.

- [85] Interview with Mickael Kelley in Berkeley, CA: 9 March 2006.
- [86] In 1992, FIAC and FICP joined together and UCI unified moves to Lausanne (Switzerland).
- [87] *Le monde cycliste* (internal UCI publication, September 1988), 25.
- [88] Private UCI archives, from FIAC's director's committee, The Hague, 23 November 1988. Mr Hector Gallee became the first president of the mountain bike commission.
- [89] Private UCI archives, from the FIAC's director's committee, Moscow, 14 July 1989. Foundation of the Commission Internationale Vélo Tout Terrain called 'CIVTT'.
- [90] Augusto Rosetti, 'Mountain Bike: Another Expression of the Versatility of the Bicycle' in *Le monde cycliste* (internal UCI Publication, April 1989), 44–51.
- [91] 'Mountain bike races are made up of logging road and forest field paths. Paved surfaces can only make up 15% of the total distance of the race.'
- [92] Interview with Daniel Verbrackel, one of the first UCI international mountain bike referees. Roubaix, France: 2 July 2006.
- [93] A speech that was re-transcribed in *Le monde cycliste*, July 1990, 9.
- [94] 19 medals won out of 30 given out for two races (Cross-country and Downhill) and five categories.
- [95] Wilcokson, 'Overend, Furtado Complete Gold Rush'.
- [96] Interview with Ross Shafer, cited.
- [97] Guttman, *From Ritual to Records*. Regarding the series of evolutions examined in this research project, the criteria of secularization, equality, differentiation of roles, rationalization, bureaucracy, quantification and desire to break records are defined bit by bit in terms of the recent history of the mountain bike.
- [98] Dyreson, 'Crafting Patriotism'.

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