

# Five Years Old—Critical Mass!



AUGUST 29, 1997 SAN FRANCISCO CRITICAL MASS

## “Awesome and Inspirational”



Tonight's ride was awesome and inspirational. I sense a fundamental change in the ride, and new possibilities opening up before our eyes. The last time I felt this way was the very first time I went on a Mass ride.

I'll tell all about the ride my mini-mass(es) went on, but first I've got to mention the most important thing:

We were being cheered everywhere we went, and I do mean everywhere! Folks were cheering us from cars and cable cars, from the sidewalk, and from their houses, leaning out of their doors and windows taking pictures!. All told, I saw *hundreds* of well-wishers tonight!

As the Mass grew in size it had turned into something of a herd being led around by the police. We didn't get into contact with a lot of people that way. I remember the cheering from the early days of the Mass; it's really good to have it back.

My ride was great, even though it wasn't the one I was planning to go on. I was planning on the “Family Mass” ride. (I don't have a family started up yet, but since there are always some enterprising folks at the Mass I figured I could adopt a little tyke and get a nice Burley trailer in the deal.) Fate intervened: my front brake had gotten munged and I wasted time trying to fix it with my broken Cool Tool, so the families and tykes and trailers were already gone when I showed up. I hightailed it towards the Embarcadero, hoping to catch up with a friend who was riding in a mini-mass that started at Pier 7.

As I got near the end of Mission Street I came upon a not-so-mini-mass, and I noticed that they were stopping at red lights and going when the lights turned green again. I hooked up with them and rode for a few blocks.

I broke off to see how things were going at Justin “Pee Wee” Herman Plaza, where the SFPD had recommended we not converge or embark from. Shame on me.

There were, of course, thousands of people there. Lots of flyers and some high-quality stickers. The fluorescent ones harkened back to the heyday of ACTUP and Queer Nation, with messages like “One Less Mayor” and “Willie Brown Can Sniff My Bike Seat.” Shame on them (and where can I get some?).

I joined the cyclists embarking from Pee Wee Plaza, back down to Mission Street. We stopped at the first intersection because we had a red light. The

cross traffic was a mini-mass! We all waited our turns.

We slowed down to pay our respects to the two cyclists who were killed this week while biking on Market.

After this I had a notion to somehow just bail from Market Street. It's not much fun and a good number of us don't like getting in the way of the streetcars. We made some concerted efforts to make way for the streetcars, though. An intriguing thought occurred to me on Market Street: No form of transportation gets as many passengers down Market as fast as Critical Mass! This is true even though our journey is now slowed down considerably by stopping at every red light.

This got really tired, so mini-masses started to form, and they broke off down side streets. And that's when things *really* started to get interesting.

I've talked to a number of people and it would seem that there were at least a dozen mini-masses criss-crossing their way around the city. We would split up here and there and other minis would join up when they met. It was particularly fun at intersections where the cross traffic was another mini. Folks would ask where the mini was going and join up if they liked the sound of it.

I was in a mini that split up at Broadway. Half headed up to the Broadway Tunnel (where they met another mini headed through the Tunnel from the other direction).

I went with the other half. (I've been through the

Tunnel plenty of times, on skates.) We were going to Golden Gate Park. Then we changed our minds and climbed Lombard Street. A cable car stopped and everyone waved and cheered and took pictures of us. And then we went down the crooked part.

I was stressing out a bit here, due to the condition of my front brake. I managed to stop at the STOP sign, though, as did everyone else. Yep, we stopped at STOP signs as well as red lights, and let cross-traffic through in turn. We obeyed the traffic laws! The worst infractions I witnessed were a few folks rolling on the sidewalks.

Sometimes there were delays at green lights, generally with good reason. At one point on Van Ness there was a delay at the green light because we didn't want to run over a pedestrian who'd crossed against the light. An unobservant police officer pulled up a car and blew the loud obnoxious horn at us for this.

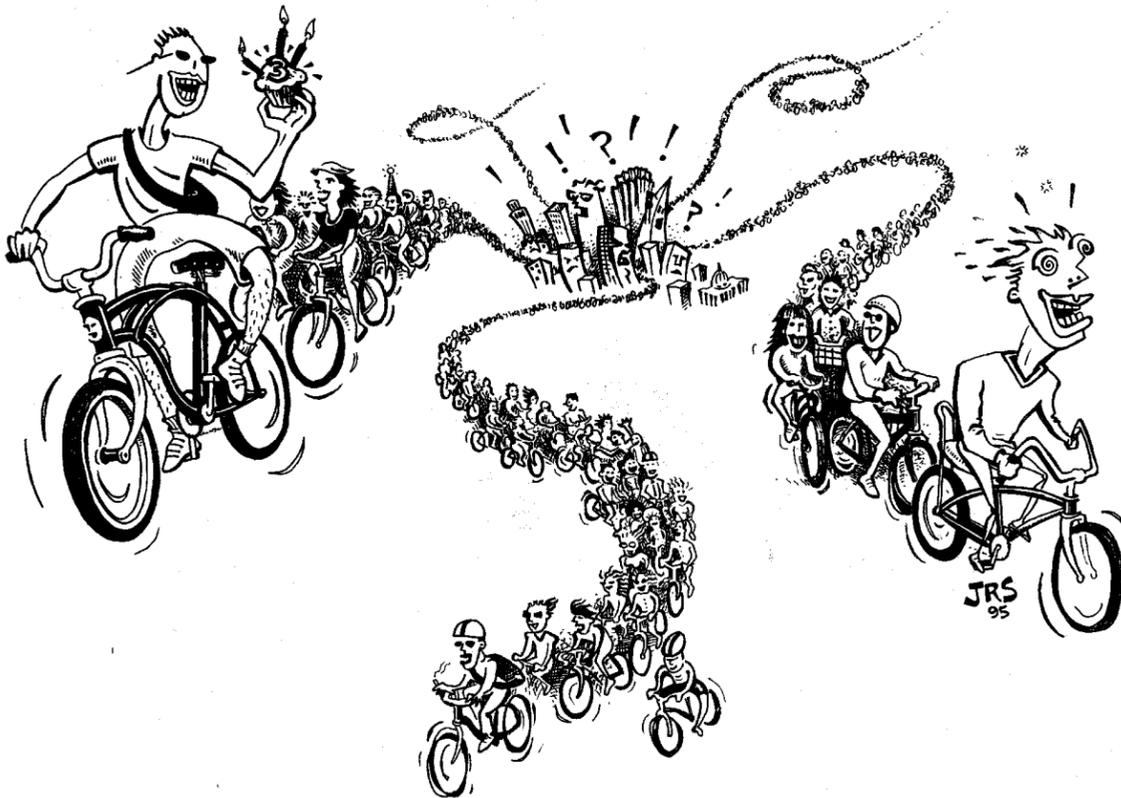
After Lombard Street, we made our way through Chinatown and met up with another mini who were heading down from the Broadway Tunnel. They weren't the folks who split off from us earlier, this was an entirely different group! We joined up and headed to the Stockton Tunnel. Another cable car came by with beer-spewing drunken male yahoos on board, really our only major negative encounter aside from the police car. To Hell with them: we tore through the tunnel, yelling our lungs out.

We cruised down Stockton, crossed Market, and met up with *another* mini. We all headed down Mission, eventually meeting up with yet another mini, and made our way up to Dolores Park, where we partied into the night. Then we went home and watched the idiots on the teevee news attempting to explain this thing.

This is it, this is definitely the next level. We don't need an escort and we don't need corking. My mini made things up as it went along, so we don't even really need routes—though it seems to me that having a number of route ideas is a good way to go. (Perhaps I was on that Liberator Bicycle Excursion for Free Souls mini-mass and didn't even know it. I never did find that Family Mass, though.)

I'll never forget this ride.

by Jym Dyer: [jym@igc.org](mailto:jym@igc.org)



This special 5th birthday rag for **CRITICAL MASS IN SAN FRANCISCO**

was desktop-published by

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(We used Quark Xpress on a Win 3.1 machine, and had it printed at Howard Quinn in SF.)

This is a one-shot publication. If you are interested in getting copies, send an appropriate donation

MADE OUT TO “CASH” TO

**CM 5 B-day**

c/o 41 Sutter St. #1829, SF 94104

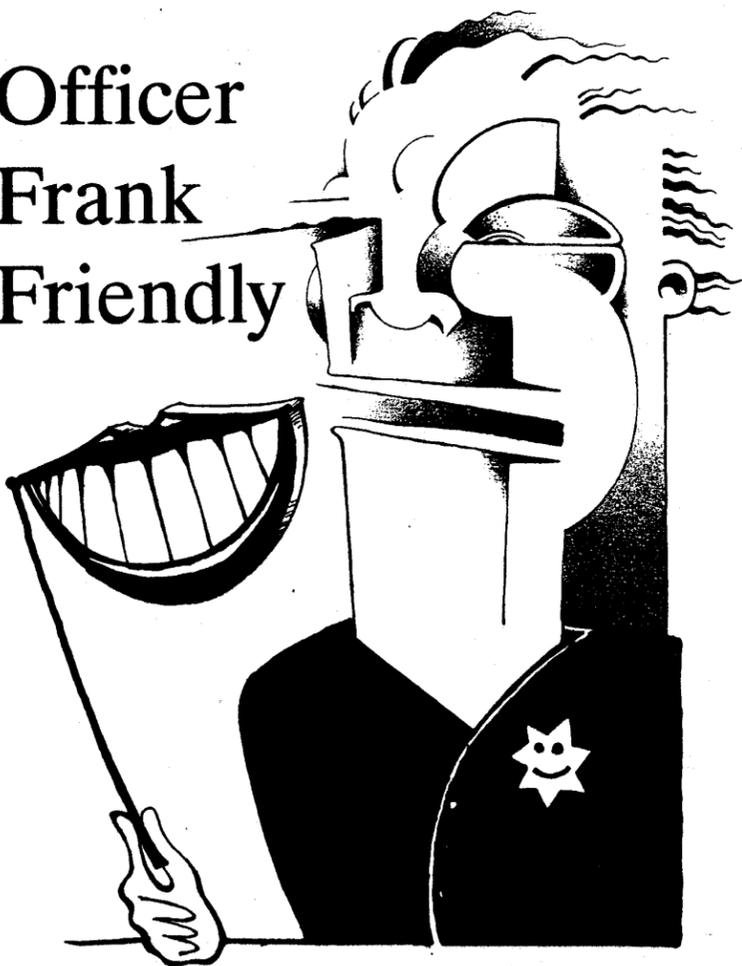
## How I Found Myself the *VICTIM* of a Mass Uncivil Obedience Action

I had a feeling the BART strike would wreak havoc but imagine my surprise Monday afternoon, when, as I rode my bike downtown I encountered a huge gathering of motor vehicles blocking the road. Noticing all the stationary vehicles revving angrily in gridlock I felt sure there was going to be a riot. I thought “Who are these four-wheeled anarchists? Do they have a permit to hold this awful parade? Where is the police escort?” No sooner had all this crossed my mind when the single occupant from inside a spotless red sport utility vehicle yelled at me “get a car!” and spat in my direction! I wheeled my bike over to another car driver who didn't look quite as mean and said “what is this?” The driver told me that he and several hundred thousand other motorists in the city got together each day at rush hour to “drive home together”—“although we don't actually interact with each other, since we're kinda stuck in our cars,” he added. “Do you have a leader?” I inquired. “No, it's just a happening,” he said proudly. “What are you achieving with this demonstration?” I pursued. “I'm not really sure, I don't know why we do it actually,” he seemed a little panicky all of a sudden. At this point a few of the cars started honking followed by more honks and soon there was a deafening eruption of honks. The guy yelled something at me but the honking cacophony drowned him out. He handed me a little flyer that said Don't Question—Just Drive!! then grabbed his cell phone and rolled the window up in my face. Oh shit!

I realized now that some of the other cars had started to surround me and were revving their engines viciously and making short violent lurches forward towards me. I hopped a curb, darted down a side street and in a few minutes I'd found a back alley route to head home on. I recounted the bizarre experience, and then felt the ocean breeze coming up, boy was I glad to be on a bike.

—Ted White

# Officer Frank Friendly



**OUR COOPERATION DEPENDS  
ON YOUR OBEDIENCE!**

In **March 1996** a questionnaire was distributed among Critical Mass riders at the ride, as well as on the local <sfbike@cyling.org> list. One question asked for opinions on the police presence at Critical Mass. Here is an excerpt from the published answers (alternating typefaces indicate new respondents). No doubt everyone's thinking has evolved after the blatant police misconduct of July 1997.

## POLICE ESCORTS:

**17 support police escorts, 16 oppose them, 4 argued they are both a help and a hindrance, 4 like some bike cops, but with less "management," and various people offered comments on the police presence:** i haven't seen any problems with the so-called "escorts", tho' their best efforts (in my view) are to block (motorist) cross traffic @ intersections for the benefit/safety of all. however, when they (police) begin to try to impose their own ideas of what is an 'acceptable' route (and quit 'escorting'), or attempt to limit the alternate routes people wish to use, i believe they have overstepped their boundaries, welcome, and usefulness. i would suggest that if they (police) have problems with scofflaws (or whatever) on alternate routes, let them deal with those problems THERE, away from CM, not try to control the mass. (after all, if cyclists are legally equal vehicles on the city streets, then what difference does it make if those 'scofflaw' cyclists started out riding with the mass, or not? if those cyclists want to be on their own, let them! the police should focus on them in the situations cyclists have chosen to be part of..) in all fairness i must say that the bike cops i have met have been very much more 'human' than many of their regular counterparts... but it's obvious that those same bike cops prefer not to be seen chatting with us cyclists by their peers... they've been very chatty (with me) in a kind of 'undercover' way almost under their breaths while riding... pretending to be looking somewhere else, (as if avoiding being seen looking/speaking with us cyclists), being more responsive when addressed as 'just another guy' (/girl; tho' i haven't seen any lady bike cops...), tho' that seems to me to be the norm with people in their profession, and people in general. it would seem to me that there must be a good deal of a split amongst the (police) ranks with regard to CM, but i've gotten the impression from those i've spoken (whispered!) with that most of them personally kinda' dig it too! / Ideally, i wish they would stay home because they are irrelevant to the original intent of the ride. Unfortunately, people outside the ride seem to understand an armed police presence more than a critical mass of human beings on bikes. / I like them for the way CM goes now it lends a certain air of legitimacy to it. I also really like getting the bike cops out and about with other cyclists. / I support them as long as they escort / I don't mind them coming, but they shouldn't have motor vehicles. / I favor limited police involvement, but feel that the current event is often too isolated from the public due to this barrier. / Stay Home. Friday Night Skate doesn't have them. / yes (especially the cops on bicycles!), but i will say that the motorcycle cops that are SUPPOSED to be out front stopping traffic need to get farther out front. and the bicycle cops need to get their ass in gear so they don't lose (pinch off) the leaders (not to mention the leaders need to stay with the pack) / Yes and yes. If the cops are cool then an escort can be handy, especially if tempers flare. I saw at least one seriously stressed motorist venting her rage at the ride. But your police suck (probably because they're on a power trip because some nutter saw fit to arm them). A friend of mine out here has been arrested on one CM and ticketed (for running a red light) on another. In London I have never heard of either arrests or ticketing. So until your police become human I'd say they should stay at home. / support - increases their awareness of bikes — maybe more bike cops will be seen as a result (less gas, less threatening than cop cars, etc.). They seem to have become much friendlier and mellow over the past 12 months (well, there was that one ride a few months ago) / I am mixed on this issue. We are so big now, but drivers can be very unruly and impatient. And some riders like to taunt and hassle drivers. / FALSE CHOICE! The point of Critical Mass isn't about police. It's about a huge mass of cyclists. For me, police presence is neither here nor there. I do fear if we get too confrontational and "anti-cop," they'll react violently, and Critical Mass will become another small, obscure lefty event. I think there's a silent majority of riders who ride the Mass because it's "safe," and aren't into being arrested or clubbed. Police confrontation will scare us away. / I'm not thrilled about the police escort, but I think it's worthwhile because I don't want the ride to provoke ugly confrontations, or collisions between bikes and motorists. / The police lessen our impact and squelch the spirit of CM. To a degree, the police have co-opted CM. / I didn't at first. Now I do because the ride becomes too dispersed and motorists would try to squeeze through the gaps otherwise / Why are there so many? / Police escort gives credence to CM, gives it some justification (to non-cyclists) /

## When The Police Joined Critical Mass and How Things Changed . . .

There was a time when you needed to bring a bag to Critical Mass to carry all the hand-outs that were distributed before a ride and when Massers themselves safely shepherded riders through the streets. These "corkers" would hold up placards with signs saying "thanks for waiting" on one side and "honk if you love bicycles" on the other. On the ride bicyclists passed out little flyers to standers-by who were curious about the ride.

Critical Mass was 350 strong (up from 50 seven months prior) by the time the police got involved.

It was April 1993. At the intersection of Guerrero and Market a car who was at the head of stopped cross-traffic lost patience with waiting and drove his car through the Mass. The woman who he headed for leapt from her bike in time, but her bike was flattened, ending up between the front and rear axles of his car. He accelerated in an attempt to get away when other bicyclists jumped on his car, kryptoad his windshield and one leaned in and took his keys from the ignition. They held him there until the cops arrived. The police cited the bicyclists with malicious mischief and the car driver was allowed to leave without a mark on his record. The bicyclists contested their charges and the case was dropped five months later.

The police said their escort was for our protection. But judging from the way they acted, I believe it was to keep a watchful eye on us. Whenever any of the riders attempted to manage a part of the ride, we were threatened with citation or arrest. On several occasions I was threatened by officers when I attempted to hand out "We're Sorry" flyers to standers-by. Corkers were threatened with the same when they attempted to help facilitate the ride. The police did not always make it to an intersection in time for the light change and cars would start making moves to run through the mass. When the officer arrived to take over the post he would threaten that cyclist. When Massers wanted to "break Mass" and stop at a light because we felt the ride was too thin to hold the intersection, police would yell at us to keep moving or else be cited for refusing to obey a lawful order.

The police decided their best strategy was to get the ride over with as soon as possible. (they complained about Critical Mass's costs to the city with overtime and the strain on manpower.) So a fleet of police cars, paddy-wagons and motorcycles brought up the rear of the ride and sirened at stragglers and those who were not able to keep up with the rest of the riders. On one occasion a father had fallen behind the ride with his child on one an attachable rear bike pseudo-tandem hook-up. The police kept on his tail, maybe two feet behind. So I slowed to stay with him and told the police to go ahead because this guy was going as fast as he could. We were left alone and I rode with him until he was safely out of the snarl of traffic that followed the ride. Another time I was on my cruiser and the ride

came to a hill and I didn't take it as quickly as many-gear bikes. An overweight motorcycle cop was barking at me to "Hurry up!" I told him I was and he said "Try harder!"

One of the reasons Critical Mass was started was to be a social space. Rushing about was not conducive to this. I thought splitting the mass into two groups, one for the fast riders and one for the slow, would be a good idea. The first ride went well, we split at 2nd Street, the slow riders turning left and the fast ones continuing down Market Street. The cyclists on the "Frenzied" route had a great time, but were obliged to follow all traffic laws, and unfortunately got bogus tickets for riding through Stockton Tunnel (which is legal). On the second "Frenzied/Mellow" ride, we were met at the split with a line of riot police. A stand-off between bicyclists and police held up traffic.

Later, Mayor Jordan called for a meeting to discuss the "frenzied" route and the future of Critical Mass, and invited the chief of police, other officers, government transit officials, bicycle advocates and the "leaders of Critical Mass." Because I felt responsible, I went to the meeting. The police and mayor claimed to be concerned about our public safety and used that excuse for wanting to have the route ahead of time (that means before Massers get a chance to see it) so they could coordinate their manpower. I offered that if the police allowed us to manage our own ride, then they wouldn't need to be so concerned about their staffing. They countered that only an emergency vehicle was authorized to direct traffic.

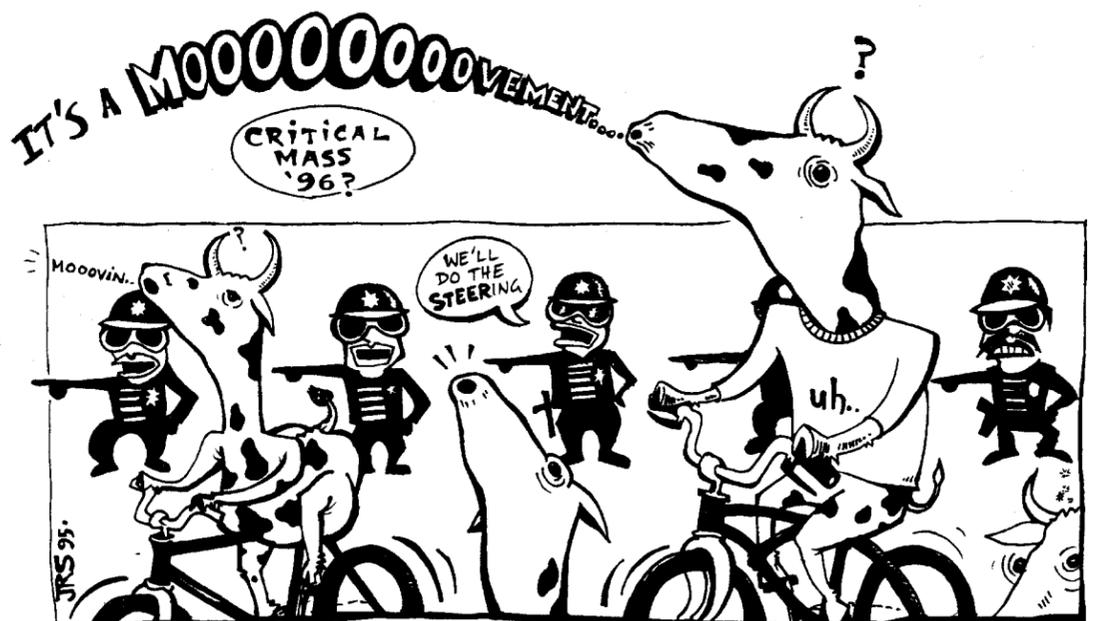
By the third year anniversary many of us considered Critical Mass too big to keep in one group and envisioned a ride that started in one area and then split up and reconvened. By this time, the cops had turned the ride into a parade procession and Justin Herman Plaza was devoid of the xerocracy that was common in the beginning. People began to drive their cars to CM, unload their bikes, ride the ride and then drive back home. It was sickening.

For years the ride consistently grew. But I felt the quality of the ride suffered and dropped out completely for a year or so, too sad about the complacency. But then I decided to at least ride. Even if Critical Mass wasn't what I had enjoyed in its heyday, at least it was still the best party in town.

By spring 1997, the ride numbered 3,000 and held up traffic for 20 minutes at intersections. The car drivers who had been derided for running red lights and consequently injuring pedestrians, diverted complaints against them to the bicyclists in Critical Mass as being the biggest red light runners in town. Nevermind that the police insisted that we run the lights. Willie Brown jumped in and called for the ride to cease.

We all know how *that* was received on the July ride. The August ride ushered in an overdue era of self-management.

—Anny Canalyst



But CM'ers must plug-cork intersections and 'educate' drivers / safety issue—IMPERATIVE / ONLY if they are on bicycles / I regret the police. I never ride at the back because there are always a bunch of police and it makes riding uncomfortable. / ONLY so long as they assist with traffic and DON'T try to control the road or the ride!! I feel ambivalent about the police—they're a help AND a hindrance!

Happy 5th Birthday San Francisco Critical Mass!

# TRUCULENCE DAY!

## San Francisco, July 25, 1997

Came from Excelsior and arrived at JHP 5:45. Went crazy on my own xerocracy and handed out 350 flyers. Went around the plaza twice, some riders receptive. i also got a lot of dirty looks, but this i'm used to in my daily life. (Although i did feel really dissed when i walked up to a group who looked like some Marin Bicycle Trail Council or SFBC types, with their one less t-shirts on. Baseball type dudes, looking at me with disdain.) i leafletted all through the main body of standing riders (while the speakers were talking), but i'm always too shy or don't feel i would be accepted right out there in front with the originals, or maybe it's Him and the Man i'm afraid of. (Anyway, i relate more to the mass of down-to-earth everyday people, not that they care about me though)

i couldn't tell the impact of it, but it was 6:40 by the time i realized it and some guy said Pier 7 group took off earlier, so when we got there no one was there. How many took off from Pier 7? Was it 1000 as reported on tv? Did anyone see my salmon colored flyers out there?

So it was that we were the last ones to leave around 7pm when the last cops left JHP, we didn't "disobey the route"! Thought something was strange and we rode up Market to try to meet it at 8th not knowing the route plan broke down.

We are in the midst of traffic and at around 1st St. we met up with a backed up mass. In what seemed like a group of the advocate/activist people stopping for lights and stuff, getting split up, i was able to meet and talk to Nick Carr a little. There were minis on every block along this section of Mkt. i think another mini came up 9th St. and merged or took some with them. We followed the mass of riders who made the dog leg around Larkin, Hayes to go to the mayor's office at Franklin (this is what i would have ridden on my own making. Mkt to the mayor's office). Turned right on Grove to another left on Van Ness and left to corner of new State building. (This intersection was Chaos as was the case with many intersections we passed, now riders were corking and getting into it with drivers- some intersections had 50+ riders standing, arguments with drivers—accidents, violent aftermath, sirens wailing everywhere.)

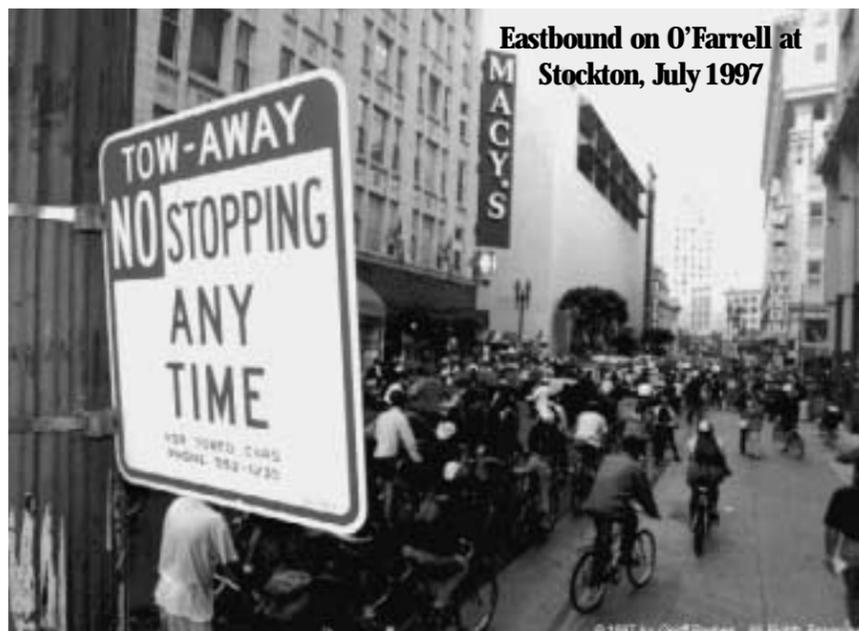
Up Franklin, now it got ugly at Bush and Franklin—

another mini-mass came up Bush and merged/intersected and the mass backed up—took pictures here. Now there was corking/not corking—sometimes both, at the intersections you didn't know whether to stop for lights/not to stop for lights, some intersections had cops and they wanted you to obey the controls, other intersections were clear or had corking, drivers didn't know whether to go or wait, got stuck in intersections and got hassled. Some fought back and i don't blame them.

Washington To Polk (mayhem along Polk) down to O'Farrell to Mkt, we tried to catch the front to see the leaders but it was total chaos at every intersection along Polk and O'Farrell back towards the downtown area. (Somewhere here there was an intersection with a muni busload of people in the street trying to physically stop the riders and one guy kept yelling, "let the muni bus cross." At that moment, I felt we behaved pathetically.)

Saw a cop manning a barricade, who looked like a corn-bred rookie, whip a baton and strike a rider just because he was mouthing off; we heard other police loudspeaker threatening riders with arrest at this point in time around 8 pm; took them only about one hour to rally the troops for the clampdown, they already had tactics set up, they just had to figure out where to deploy. Maybe had helicopter survey on the Sacramento mini who weaved it's way back downtown. I think there was another mass going back east on Mkt. At Mkt and O'Farrell this mass got split and some sifted through the jammed up intersection at Grant ave to Mkt.—straight through a left turn only. We went left with a few others across Grant Ave then down Post to the dogleg at New Montgomery to Mkt. Getting back to the Hyatt, this big mini turned left to Davis and up Sacramento...

We could see way up ahead a blockade of flashing brights at Montgomery and on Sacramento as we



approached Sansome the mini backed up to this intersection, We Saw, We Said 'See Ya.'

We bailed and went one block over and saw screaming police vehicles slam to a stop and cops literally jump out running towards Sacramento St.... We were right there on the sidewalk on Clay and they could have grabbed us if they had the inclination, lucky for us we didn't catch up to the leaders of this mini-mass. Even a reporter on bike, we read later, got beat up in the scramble.

We were outta there... later on saw some video on tv and heard of the 250 [later it was determined that only 115 or so were arrested, and less than 10 were cited for anything worse than a traffic infraction—ed.] who were arrested, we warned the people who were around us at Sansome and Sac and i hope they weren't stupid enough to stand around anyway to get arrested, unless they wanted to.

So we barely escaped the wrath of the Man and disappeared into the night. Stopped in Chinatown, went up Pacific to Stockton, 4th and Townsend and Potrero and Bayshore and Silver...all quiet. It's a thin line between love and hate. Love takes work, hate is easy. And the lines are being drawn...no not bike lanes!? Still. It's up to the riders to decide where to go... From here...

We could start from Pier 7 again...

—Looking Jim

## San Francisco, July 25, 1997

i'm speechless. it was the ugliest thing i'd ever witnessed, yet it was also a thing of profound BEAUTY and i am proud to say that i was a part of it.

what happens now? who's going to show up next month? i guess this pretty well fucks a fifth anniversary celebration, huh? i was waiting at jhp for a couple of stoner friends with a couple of stoner friends when imperceptibly, the enormous clan of cyclists in the plaza began to move. it was not until nearly seven o'clock that i maneuvered the gt through the concrete construction thingee down there and i ended up walking my bike for a quarter of a block because there were so many people. the ride proceeded as any lechermass might until we reached i dunno, mission and first, mission and second where a group of pedestrians had linked arms at the intersection, trying to stop the river of bikes but without much effect. this is also where i saw the first of many ugly, ugly UGLY confrontations between cyclists and motorists and i think this is where ktvu picked up some footage shown on the ten o'clock news. (most of the footage shown was definitely anti bike) after another ten minutes, the group ended up on market street. at this time, i was sure something was rotten in denmark (to my delight) because the ride KEPT MOVING UP MARKET STREET whereas the route published in the chronicle mentioned nothing about the powell street bart station. at about this time, i jumped onto perhaps fifth street and got ahead of the main mass--i had started to fear an SFPD trap somewhere along market street because it seemed as if the group had stopped at powell street and there seemed to be a lot of flashing police lights in that location as well. when i reached what i think may have been eighth street, a group of not quite a hundred passed across mission street and when i arrived at maybe ninth or tenth street, i joined a group of at least two hundred, probably more--many, many more. this group followed a route past city hall, up van ness avenue went left on perhaps geary(?) and right down franklin to Broadway and through the Broadway tunnel. pretty uneventful, no confrontations with motorists. i must note that in the southbound lane of van ness avenue there was a huge group of harley riders who revved their engines in support of us--very impressive. after the Broadway tunnel is where things got nasty and stupid--time after time, i kept seeing cyclists do things that give us such a bad image, forcing the way through inter-

sections, cursing at motorists, nearly running over pedestrians and such. when we crossed market street, we turned right onto Howard until we reached seventh street where i witnessed a fat blonde guy in a Toyota four runner run over a guy's bike and trash his back wheel. i took the vehicle's license number and made notes of the place and exact time of the incident and gave it to the unfortunate cyclists, but this was after another neanderthal attempted to pull the driver of the four runner out of his vehicle and punch him a few times. i left the scene soon after this--a vehicle surrounded by fifteen to twenty cyclist--is this the occupied vehicle that cyclists were attempting to overturn? maybe two of three blocks later i came up on carlson and his merry group and rode with this mini mass until we hooked up with scudder and the scanner, a fine idea and a fine job avoiding the spd. to Dolores Park we went, how many ended up here, a hundred? a hundred twenty five?

i'd go on, but it IS time to go to work for me, yes Saturday, yes, i work. i'm almost afraid to ride my bike to work as i do every day--i feel like i have a target painted on my back, BUT..

--shekky, bastard

## Another View

After Friday's complete DISASTER, I'm a little frightened to ride alone on Market Street (sorry folks, I just don't see the success—and please don't bother trying to convince me. I've read all the posts so far and just cannot fathom how UNCIVILIZED MAYHEM can lead to positive change).

I do want to point out that I joined the Mass on Friday and rode for two blocks. I turned around at Spear and Mission when I realized this was not the "official" route and rode back to

JHP, found Cap't Martell and Cap't Hubbard and asked them:

"What the fuck is going on? WHERE is the police escort that you promised to provide? Why wasn't Mission blocked at Steuart so that the Mass would be directed on the correct path? Why do you have 5 or 6 motorcycle cops sitting in the MUNI parking lot at Steuart and Mission just watching everyone go the wrong way? Most of these people have no idea they aren't on the "official" ride!!!"

"These people have babies on the backs of their bikes,

more truculence! on page 4

Letter of intent to protest peacefully below. This letter can be faxed in to the police and the Mayor prior to participating in any event you fear may encounter illegal police repression. It gives participants a little extra legal leverage supported by 1st and 4th amendment rights.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Captain Dennis Martel and San Francisco Police Department, FAX: 415/553-1073**  
**Mayor Willie Brown, FAX: 415/554-6160**  
**San Francisco Board of Supervisors, FAX: 415/554-5163 Sent Via Facsimile**

Dear Mayor, Supervisors, and San Francisco Police Department:

I, [Name:] \_\_\_\_\_, intend to exercise my First Amendment rights of free speech and assembly at Justin Herman plaza, San Francisco, California, on [Date:] \_\_\_\_\_ from 5:00 PM until 10:00 PM. I will assemble peacefully with fellow bicyclists, and comply with all laws, traffic laws, and police instructions. I plan to ride a bicycle with fellow bicyclists, obeying all laws and traffic laws when doing so. I will encourage all other participants to do the same. I welcome the opportunity for others to join in this peaceful protest, and join with me in seeking legal representation should these First Amendment rights, Fourth Amendment Rights, or any other rights be violated by the San Francisco Police Department, any officer of the San Francisco Police Department, or the City of San Francisco.

I expect that the police department and officers will discharge their duties in accordance with applicable law, and will not, under color of law, deprive me or anyone else of any right afforded by the Constitution of the United States or of the State of California (42 U.S.C. Section 1983).

Sincerely,

Name:

Address:

City, State, Zip:

Signature:

from pg. 3, More Truculence, SF July 25, 1997

they're not here to protest!! WHAT'S GOING ON??? You're not following through with your part of the bargain to facilitate this ride! You came prepared for a riot not a ride!"

I WAS PISSED!! The response I got was:

Cap't Martel (at 6:30pm), "This is it! This is the last CM ride."

Cap't Hubbard, "We just got a call that there is an incident on the bridge. We don't have the man power to facilitate the ride. It's not our responsibility! The route was published. Everyone should know the route. We handed out 2,000 flyers."

Me: "You don't have the manpower???? What about the agreement. What about the non-existent escort? You only printed up 2,000 flyers? There were 3,000 people at last month's ride alone—and you didn't anticipate more than that showing up for this ride? If you were going to print up 2,000 flyers, why not 4,000? It would have cost an extra \$10 bucks?"

To this end, let me just say that I strongly feel the SFPD dropped the ball BIG TIME here. I truly feel they anticipated a riot and prepared for that and that alone.

That being said, I personally witnessed the mayhem that occurred at 4th and Market (I was not a part of it—I hung out a JHP for a long time talking with PJ Johnston of the Mayor's staff, a reporter and a couple of other people who attended the meetings last week and left to go home the same way I do every day—straight up Market). I saw bicyclists barreling through red lights (as if they had the right of way), smacking right into oncoming traffic who DID have the right of way, then kicking, spitting on or otherwise assaulting the cars as if the cars were doing something wrong. I witnessed this feller getting his smug little ass arrested and felt sick to my stomach that a nice, safe (i.e., police escorted) ride turned into such a mess.

If you want to participate in future rides (certainly not to be called "Critical Mass" anymore) that will be sponsored by the city and have police escorts so that traffic laws can be ignored in a lawful, dignified way, please respond to me. Also, if you found yourself caught up in Friday's critical mess because you thought you were on the "official ride", please let me know.

—Stacey McCanahan

<stacey.e.mccahan@ArthurAndersen.com>

### UNRAVELING THE STORY (AS OF 8/2/97)

Quick recap with some important new information:

1. Police did not provide escort to group. That's clear. None of the public safety experts with whom I've spoken can imagine the logic of abandoning 5,000 people downtown at rush hour with no warning or notice for any reason. Local media still finds this issue a yawn.

2. Far fewer arrests than reported. 115 (110 possibly), not 250.

3. Very few arrests on "serious" charges—7 for assault and at least one of these is highly suspect. See #4.

4. Police charge professional photographer and pedestrian Bennett Hall with striking them with his \$5,000 camera. He was taking pictures of the police bashing pedestrians and cyclists in the Powell/Market area approx. 7 PM.

5. One woman, who came to Hall's aid—she tried to rescue his camera from police—was in jail until Wednesday because she couldn't make bail. All charges now dropped against her.

6. The people arrested at Sacramento Street were lucky. An illegal, but humane mass arrest. The Powell/Market people were savaged: knocked off bicycles, clubbed, their bicycles thrown to the ground in an attempt to break them, kneeling on one cooperative detainees neck for an extended period etc. etc. The people assaulted included pedestrians and at least one pedestrian was pepper sprayed.

7. Also, many who were assaulted were not arrested. Some who were arrested were standing with their bicycles. Some bicycles were taken without receipt from people who were not charged. Some people were arrested and their bicycles left in the street.

8. Video and photos show that immediately prior to the police attacks, the street was clear, traffic was flowing and the cyclists and pedestrians were peaceful.

The photog assaulted is a well known commercial photographer with a studio on Powell and a long history of civic volunteer work. Where's the local media on this? (Busy complaining. I just got a long letter from one of them about how unfair my treatment of the local media has been.)

Well, while they were busy painting the July 25th ride as cyclist-created mayhem, one of the ugliest episodes of police brutality in recent SF history was going down in broad daylight right in the middle of Market Street witnessed by scores and photographed! And so far (it happened over 7 days ago and the people injured have been extremely vocal), none of the media giants in our fair city have shown the slightest interest in covering it.

ken@e-media.com (Ken McCarthy)

June 1996, Howard Street at 4th, San Francisco



### WEB SITE NOTES:

1. IMPORTANT Reminder: people with legal problems and/or eye witness testimony, see:

<http://www.e-media.com/cm/legal.html>

Let people know there are volunteer attorneys and private investigators organized and ready to help.

2. The report of the pedestrian photographer and two other pedestrians assaulted and arrested in the

Powell/Market area is at:

<http://www.e-media.com/cm/hall.html>

(BTW, his camera with 35 shots of the attacks on it was seized by police. They still have it.)

3. The general site: <http://www.e-media.com/cm> now has stills from the video taken at Powell and Market distributed throughout it. A special section with all the photos is going up soon. <http://www.e-media.com/cm>

### THIS IS THE LAST MISSIVES! — LET A HUNDRED XEROCRATS BLOOM.

Yes, folks, that's right. The "secret" cabal behind the Critical Mass Missives and over 2/3 of the routes you've all enjoyed is retiring from its role in the invisible center. But don't worry! We're certainly not retiring from Critical Mass or publishing. We just are moving to the margins where we feel more comfortable. You can look forward to the same intelligent, well-designed, thoughtful and funny fliers on future rides. We have concluded, though, that the CM Missives has become too much of the official voice of the ride, and our role as planners and coordinators far too institutionalized. So, new people, new affinity groups and collectives, will have to emerge and establish their own voices and perhaps develop a baton-passing system of route coordination... We look forward to new developments and developers!



We reprint below a selection from the <cfbike> usenet newsgroup, one of the only forums which seems to have attracted at least a few critical voices regarding the last ride and Critical Mass itself. ... no doubt many don't have access, so we encourage re-posting all

From: Hillary R Percy <hpercy@sparta.sjsu.edu> 09 Apr 1995  
I was at the March Mass, and I've been several of them over the last 2+ years. My comments so far have focused on the political agenda of the ride.



The first and last *Critical Mass Missives*, left, April 1993 (Numb 1) and April 1995 (Number 23). Various themes, reports from elsewhere, tactical suggestions, sometimes proposed routes, and occasionally political commentary, published for almost every Critical Mass ride for two years. The main protagonists of this small publication were Jim Swanson and Chris Carlsson with participation, writing, discussing, distributing, etc., from Markus Cook, Steven Bodzin, Joel Pomerantz, Dierdre Crowley, Anny Canalyst, Hugh D'Andrade, James Kern, Michael Klett, Travis Moraché, Dave Snyder, Victor Veysey, and Kathy Roberts (sorry if we forgot anyone!) By the end of two years it had increasingly become the "official voice" of San Francisco's Critical Mass, a role those of us doing it didn't want. In fact, we didn't think anyone should play that role, and exhorted everyone in our last issue to rejuvenate the xerocratic spirit and jump in... it took a couple of years, but happily, San Francisco's Critical Mass is more of a collective social and political space than it has ever been, more people have a larger stake in it, and most of us are better able to identify its interests and fight for them as well!

*Congratulations to everyone for prying open a fissure in the imposing edifice of "normal life."*

### WHAT'S NEXT?

# Nonviolence and Action

## August 29, 1997

by Josh Wilson

What the hell is this Critical Mass thing? Is it a party? A protest? A new way of commuting?

It's gone global, you know, born here in San Francisco in September 1992 and spreading rapidly from one city to the next, a virulent meme leaping readily into the collective consciousness of loosely-organized urban bicycling communities.

So, what the hell is it? What does Critical Mass mean? What is it trying to achieve? Is it fair to ascribe singular purpose to all Mass participants?

To answer the latter question, no, not exactly. But there are common threads, experiences and ideas that make the Mass a responsive, thoughtful social space.

San Francisco is not a safe city to ride in. As a former messenger and an experienced bike commuter, I have a few scars I got from cars when riding downtown. And they're relatively minor wounds, compared to the people who get hit by an automobile and wind up dead, or at best in traction for six months.



### THINK GUILT'LL GET 'EM? THINK AGAIN!!

We are drowning in moralism! Worse still, it is a primitive consumer moralism! Many bicyclists and other social radicals fall back on the uncontroversial idea that people ought to do the right thing. But as soon as we start explaining what the "right thing" is, we run into trouble. A lot of people seem to think social change hinges on buying/using the correct products (bicycles, Birkenstocks™, used clothing, vegetarianism, etc.). This focus on good shopping leads people to ridiculous, philosophically retarded syllogisms like "Cars Are Bad, You're In A Car, You are Bad."

**MOTORISTS ARE NOT BAD. THEY ARE NOT MORAL FAILURES, NOR THOUGHTLESS, GREEDY OR RICH, JUST BECAUSE THEY ARE IN A CAR!** They might be triumphant proponents of the oil/car culture, but let's face it, not many people trust, believe in, admire or have any control over oil companies, car companies, government transit bureaucracies, or local transit systems. It's a stupid assumption that someone in a car necessarily embraces the values of this society at face value. We are probably right to assume that many, if not most, of the people we pass wish they could join us, and at least offer us good will.

Bicycling and other alternatives are self-evidently better than sitting in a traffic jam or waiting for an overcrowded bus. The more we can live up to that truth, the more people will jump in—not because they were made to feel guilty, but because they want the pleasure and increased health and convenience that comes from bicycling. People will get out of their cars and onto bicycles when they think it will make their life better, not because someone tried to make them feel ashamed for participating in an absurd, suicidal transportation system.

### Do the UNEXPECTED! BE POLITE! BE CONSIDERATE!

Have fun! Your pleasure is way more inspirational and subversive than any posturing or anger or force you may bring to bear. Remember: The world only owes you what you give it. But it only delivers if you're lucky!

—Chris Carlsson

That's the underlying concern, I think, behind this and any other Critical Mass. People may have different ways of expressing it. Some want to ride together to be safe, and have a good time. Some ride together to protest for safer streets. These are flip sides of the same coin.

According to civil rights attorney Jennifer Granick, who organized pro-bono defense for cyclists illegally arrested during the San Francisco police riot of July 25th, 1997, Critical Mass is an "unorganized political demonstration." Participants are out there for the sake of ideas and principles, not leaders or a political party.

There are lots of people — of good intent and bad — who want to control Critical Mass, to define it or regulate it. Such efforts usually fail over the long term. The best they can do is nudge it. One route or modus operandi may prevail one month, then sink into oblivion the next.

In San Francisco people have tried to establish regular routes, and were ultimately ignored. The police tried a heavy-handed approach to stopping the Mass, and are now facing a lawsuit by illegally-arrested cyclists.

Meanwhile, the monthly rides continue. Critical Mass is a cultural habit, a collective expression of a community, rather than a hierarchically-organized parade. Like the folks who clog the roadways with automobiles during "drive time," Critical Mass is simply something a lot of people have gotten into the habit of doing. It fits into their lives. It's useful on many levels — as a commute option, a political statement, a social activity, etc.

And in a very real sense it is the embodiment of grassroots decision making, fraught with splits and cross-purposes, as well as reconciliation and community problem-solving.

Consider San Francisco's present quandary:

At the July 25th Mass we had a police riot, followed by a month of vicious press prepping the public for another display of "lawless, cyclist anarchy" in August. But widespread violence was obviously a media fiction. The police started a riot, and less than ten people out of roughly 6,000 cyclists were even charged with anything other than a traffic violation.

Then, come the August Mass, we had a breathtaking demonstration of restraint and overwhelming, nonviolent determination.

Now, people complain that Critical Mass is boring, or has caved in. To that I flip the fattest "FUCK YOU!!!"

Seriously. Fuck that jive-ass mentality, that adolescent schoolboy attitude. "Fight! Fight!" Fuck your stupid violent habits. Fuck your little knee-jerk "off the pigs" yammering. That ain't punk rock, that's schoolyard "Us versus Them" Gangland mentality. That's the same mentality that has perpetuated slaughter in Northern Ireland and Cambodia and the Balkans and the Middle East and Rwanda and who-knows-where-else. It's the philosophy of Hatred and Revenge, and it has been a plague upon the human race since the dawn of civilization.

A letter to the September 10th *SF Bay Guardian* reads "... I went [to August's Critical Mass] prepared to see some good street fighting and instead I fell asleep watching the most boring demonstration of civil disobedience I have ever seen."

What is that??? This person came to "SEE... good street fighting"—not *participate* in a collective act—just doing the good old American spectator sports thing. Sorry we didn't entertain you. NOT! Expressing remorse over a lack of violence *threatens people's lives*. Critical Mass isn't fucking *Mortal Kombat*, you knuckle-dragging armchair revolutionary. Yeah, fighting in the streets will go a really long way towards making San Francisco a safe place for people to ride bikes. Go throw some rocks, baby. Just don't come near me because I have nothing to do with your primitive attempts to address complex intertwining socio-cultural pathologies.

The sooner we as humans realize that our similarities outweigh our differences, and that violent acts only breed more violent acts — and isn't there enough evidence of this throughout our blood-soaked Human history? — the sooner we can get down to the business of solving our collective problems.

Make no mistake. Misuse of the automobile — osten-



Flyer for the first Critical Mass, September 1992, then called Commute Clot

sibly a useful technology — is designed into our cultural expectations. People don't even understand, or are afraid to admit, that they are part of a series of cultural pathologies — smog, road-rage, gridlock, the oil problem (remember the Gulf War?) — because they have been raised to see these problems as the inevitable byproducts of human existence. Many people feel overwhelmed by the scope of the problems, and decide their efforts are worthless. "Why bother trying? You can't fight City Hall, or Exxon, for that matter, so just fill the tank up, please."

How do you address these attitudes? Do you violently confront the benumbed status quo, and make enemies out of the people you must share the roads with? Or do you challenge their imagination by breaking out of their expectations for you, and showing them a positive approach to problem solving?

Ride peacefully, and ride in Mini and Commuter Masses as much as you can, avoiding and defusing road-rage. Help create an overwhelming display of nonviolent solidarity. Demonstrate, every day, not just the last Friday of the month, the strength and superiority of your commute option. Do it with charm and good humor.

Because if Critical Mass is violent, it becomes a POLICE PROBLEM, and the legitimate political concerns behind it will be ignored by a prurient media looking for sensational headlines. That reinforces the status quo. People who act violently are destroying our power and community.

There are huge numbers of new cyclists on the streets of San Francisco, perhaps twice as many people riding downtown as compared to even a year ago. Our presence on the streets is an education and example to everyone. If Critical Mass evolves into a new way of riding together on a daily basis, with the Big Monthly Ride serving as a ritual affirmation of community, then what we will have is the beginnings of new transportation habits, new transportation patterns, a "Paradigm Shift," baby, with all the inevitability of the tides. We need to change the deeply ingrained, destructive habits of the car culture. It's environmental, it's political, it's empowering, it's personal and—necessarily—collective.

We start to solve the impossible problems of our world by changing the fundamental habits thousands, millions of individuals share. *What* we eat, *where* we get it, *how* it gets to us. *What* we buy and *why*, *who* makes what we buy, *how* they make it. *How* we get around, what systems we support when we make our transportation choices.

Changing these habits is challenging — buying only organic food, after all, is more expensive. Trying to figure out whether one company is better or worse than another can be a depressing exercise in futility. It's easier to just buy the damn product and use it. Maybe, though, after a while, simply accepting the status quo and getting on with one's business becomes less easy, more difficult. One's participation in a problem becomes impossible to ignore.

Critical Mass is, for me, a ritual affirmation of my efforts to make new habits for myself, and for our whole American culture. Critical Mass is on the leading edge, and in San Francisco we are the model for the whole world.

# Yellow Bikes Come to San Francisco



**Manny Velos, Mr. Yellow Bikes SE, 1997!**

It all started in the flurry of excitement in July, just after Willie Brown opened both his mouth and a floodgate of mass activism. I had been lurking on the mailing lists for a while, occasionally making some comment or other but generally just sitting on the sidelines and watching. Suddenly we were in crisis mode. Willie was going to try to shut us down. We were on the front page every day. People were running up and down Market handing out flyers and cyclist were eagerly taking them! It was as though Prague spring had arrived for San Francisco cyclists and the energy was infectious.

I think it was then that I saw a suggestion on the sf-critical-mass mailing list that people go to garage sales and flea markets, pick up old bomber bikes, paint them yellow and leave them on the street for people to use. The idea of public bikes resonated with me. I decided to run with it. For a week it was only a good subject for conversation at parties and on the net. One day, however, someone told me to speak with their friend Manny Velos. Manny was the catalyst that made it all happen. He knew about old bikes. He was a mechanic and had a place to work and store bikes. We had an organization!

Now things could start moving. I put the word out on the net that we needed bikes and volunteers. I bought a few bikes myself. (About \$100.00) My friend Jim and I went out on a Saturday and came back with a few more. Manny spent a weekend at Pedal Revolution truing the wheels for old Huffys and making them safe for the road. It was amazing how, when we were painting the bikes out on the sidewalk, people would come up to us and say, "Are you doing what I think you're doing? Are those going to be free bikes?" It was the sort of thing that resonated immediately with people on an elemental level. It took no explaining.

In no time we had filled Pedal Rev with a fleet of beautiful fluorescent yellow bikes. We put out a call for volunteers on the internet, needing twelve people to pick up a bike at the shop, take it home and show up the next morning at 7:30 AM at Duboce park for a mini mass ride to City

Hall. I thought this was too much to ask. I was sure most of the bikes would remain at Pedal Rev and I would have to go and get them in a (ugh) car. WRONG!

The ride down Market was glorious. Led by Dildo Man, we were a sight to behold. A whole Muni bus full of commuters stared and waved as we passed. When we got to City Hall we were greeted by the media and Gavin Newsom who wants to put free bikes on the street but is getting stymied by liability issues. We passed them to ride a victory circle around City Hall coming around again for the big ribbon cutting in front of the gates of power. As the bikes began to disperse to various parts of the city Newsom was heard to say to one of his aids, "They beat us to the punch!"

I took my bike to work. Rather than leave it on the street I brought it inside to show off to my coworkers and customers. I couldn't stop staring at it! Finally I took my baby, leaned it next to bus shelter and waited. Four minutes passed before someone walked by and did a double take. "Public bike?" he asked incredulously. "Take it," I said. "Just be careful. The street are dangerous." A big smile swept across his face as he mounted the bike and, unsteadily at first took it down the sidewalk. As he gained confidence he took it on to Howard Street and disappeared onto Langton Alley. My little bird had left the nest and flown!

I invite you to repeat this experience for yourself. Take that old bike that's been in sitting in your garage for years, pump up the tires, paint it yellow and put it out there. Maybe someone who's got to go to Kinko's at lunchtime might get the idea to pedal there for a change. You might play an integral role in changing someone's life! We can talk and block traffic but for people to really know what we're up to they need to experience the joy of cycling the streets of this great town.

See you at the after mass party!

*by Sprocket Man*

## WHAT IF I NEVER BECAME A BICYCLE COMMUTER?

I would alternate between mass transit, and driving a car, because I would have never gotten rid of my car.

While taking mass transit, I would be greeted every day by glum faces ready to begin the workday. I may as well be waiting for the 2nd coming, if I'm waiting for Muni, and certain buses would have the oppressive smell of sweat and urine mixed with equally oppressive heat.

While driving, I wouldn't mind paying through the teeth: over \$1500 for gas a year, \$1200 for car insurance, and perhaps \$1000 for miscellaneous repairs/replacements. That's \$3,700 a year, \$22,000 over 6 years the average time it takes before the average American considers getting a new car. On top of that I would spend on average, ten forty-hour weeks behind the wheel. (Conservation Law Foundation, August 1996) I wouldn't notice all the pollution (pounds of it) that I'd be throwing into the faces of pedestrians and cyclists.

Since, I live in the Sunset, I would be supporting a retrofit of the Central Freeway. If I did have a car, I would California stop through signs thinking only of me, and just not caring. I wouldn't be voting "NO" on proposition H, because I wouldn't consider my car as an impediment to community. I wouldn't ever stop by Hayes Valley to see how beautiful it is now without the freeway, because I would be in my car.

I would still be working 40-60 hours a week at a job that I would walk into everyday with a frown on my face. I wouldn't generously give my morning smiles away because I was in the outdoors commuting by bike, swooshing pass the cars stuck in traffic, and waving at cyclists passing by.

The Critical Mass Ride of July would confirm all the superstition and prejudice I hold about cyclists. Rather than biking on weekends for recreation, I would shamefully hide my bike in an attic, and drive to Golden Gate Park. Once on JFK drive, I would ignore those folks petitioning for a car-free JFK.

The day of the August Critical Mass, 200 flyers asking cyclists to smile, stop at lights, and meet at Dolores Park would have never been passed out.

Would I ever engage in constructive dialogue about transportation issues? Would I see myself as not an innocent, but as somebody who in some small way is part of the problem rather than part of the solution?

Well, it's really not good to dwell on what might have happened. Ride a bike!

*By Jim Barcelona*

## IN THE BEGINNING, THERE WAS MASS AND MASS FELT GOOD

*A personal account of 5 years of Massing, with no guarantees of accuracy or relevance. By A. Sojourner*

"Hi, my name's Michael. How are you?" I shook the proffered hand and introduced myself in turn. That's how it all began for me.

Within a few minutes of arriving at my first Mass, late in 1992, I had been warmly welcomed. The ground was wet, but people were giddy. That night we rode together slowly, singing, hootin' and hollerin', and most of all, talking to each other. Fistfuls of xerocratic missives radicalized and educated us. Routes were simple, the parties were great, and open friendliness was the rule.

The first ride to Sausalito was incredible! We couldn't believe we went so far—this was when we used to head up Market, perhaps to Castro Street, then back around to Dolores Park, so the change was heady. We stopped at Crissy Field along the way to let everyone catch up. "What are you doing? That looks like so much fun!" a couple in a car said to me in the Marina "How can I join next time?" was a common question from people in cars.

Things changed over the course of the next two years. Attendance grew exponentially. The third time I rode to Sausalito was one of the worst rides I've ever been on. Someone decided we "had" to go there and I found myself pedaling furiously in a huge, eerily quiet (meek?) crowd. "SLOW DOWN!" I yelled. Nothing happened. I got some sideways looks. "MAKE NOISE!" I tried, and clanged my Snoopy bell. My companion looked embarrassed and shifted on his seat. I thought to myself "SHIT! Who are these people?" They thought I was crazy! That night, we went all the way to Sausalito so goddamned fast. People were wiping out left right and center. No one spoke to each other. We had become slaves to the destination. I stopped going to CM regularly, and only stayed for the beginning when I did go.

How did this happen? Xerocracy had died. Attendance had exploded, and Critical Mass was becoming something to say you had done—a destination, a chic statement, a safe way for assholes to think they were bucking the system when they weren't doing anything but following the fuzz around. Yuck! We began having pointless confrontations with cops and the public. One ride people were blocked from the Stockton Tunnel and some dickhead started chanting "We need a slogan!" It made the papers. Hordes of riders wanted nothing more than to create a ruckus.

The velorution wasn't on the agenda anymore—people didn't care if they transformed the city. People were treating CM like a cat-and-mouse with the fuzz, a way to taunt and alienate motorists instead of making them envy our sexy selves. Well, as my 99 year-old grandma Elsie used to say, "Fuck that Shit"! What can I say? None of us is more responsible than the other for the decline of Mass. There are a lot of people who really care about CM and San Francisco, who are articulate and motivated and who want to radicalize and educate riders and observers both. For a few years, it was too difficult. There were too many new riders to educate all at once. Let's face it, who can afford 1,000 photocopies and all their spare time for this ride unless they're psychotic?

Things changed for me this year when I heard about splinter masses from Pier 7 and other locations. I rediscovered the joys of massing in a small group. With the July '97 ride behind us, and the fuzz no longer "facilitating" (oh, the irony), we're poised to once again be the greatest social movement around. I'm excited that new riders may get a chance to experience the beauty and community of CM through Mini-Masses. I hope everyone gets to have as much fun as I did, and that they learn as I did to use that experience to transform our experience of urban life. We will make this city livable, lovely, and car-free—and this is the place to begin!

If you're new to the Mass, WELCOME, and here's some free advice—relax, and introduce yourself to a stranger. Join a small group and **TALK FAST AND RIDE SLOW.**



December '92, discussing Critical Mass at the Zeitgeist.

# To cork or not to cork, that is the question.

(Whether it is nobler in the mind to suffer the pepper spray and batons of outrageous policemen...)

"Nothing is permanent but change". A quote from my favorite teacher. He actually made Ancient History seem interesting. Hmmmm, "Nothing is permanent but change". Five years ago there was no Critical Mass. Today we get thousands of people every month. A few years ago we needed corking to maintain a Critical Mass™. Do we still need to do so today? Are we being forced to change or are we getting what we want? Hmmmm, "Nothing is permanent but change".

**Corking**—\kor-king v (1993) 1: the act of facilitating a ride by blocking cross traffic in an intersection in order to let entire group move through together, even when light has turned red 2: great way to really piss off people.

**Ancient History 101:** At first we didn't need corking because the group was small enough but then we were also small enough to all fit in Zeitgeist bar. As the group got larger, we needed to stay together for safety and to prevent splintering. People learned how to cork using strategy like holding up signs saying "Thanks for waiting," talking to motorists explaining what is going on, and people waving at honkers.

Police joined in about 4 years ago after some dork in a car that was delayed only a short period of time ran over a bicycle. Police then wouldn't let participants cork. We lost our ability to adapt.

Critical Mass became bigger and bigger which caused longer and longer delays. Growing pains became apparent. July '97, police told people they were going to facilitate (do the corking) but didn't follow through. Many people thought that things were as normal and went through lights as always.

August '97, police said that they were not going to facilitate the ride so we had to decide "to cork, or not to cork".

The evolution of Critical Mass is kind of like that of alternative music. First it was exciting and interesting. After a while, it became co-opted, boring, without meaning. Corporate bands playing same old derivative shit. People driving their SUVs from Fremont to Justin Herman Plaza and then going on a ride that has been san-

itized for your protection by the police. Welcome to PacBell Critical Mass.

THAT ISN'T THE FUCKING POINT!!! Alternative music now sucks and Critical Mass was really starting to get stale. Now we have the power to make things worthwhile once again.

So why didn't we cork in August. Where we just scared of getting tickets? Did we not want to block traffic? Or is it a lot more than that...

The mass had been stale for many months. Boring, just following the person in front of you. Some of us had been talking about splitting into mini-masses a long time ago but it is hard to change what people are used to. Finally the police gave us the ability to improve things by not doing or even allowing corking anymore. This was the catalyst we needed. They aren't taking something away from us. They are giving us the chance to fix things, to make things a whole lot better.

One of the big things about corking is that it causes everyone to simply follow the person in front of them, steady pace, only on streets that are big enough and level enough so that everyone can do it together. If lemmings could ride bikes, we know what it would be like.

So what happens when we don't have corking?

We stop at lights. Big deal. The police have nothing to do so they go away (yeah!). We don't block MUNI and peds so we get more people on our side, more power. Good politics but there is more. When we are stopped at a light there is nothing better to do but turn to the person next to you and introduce yourself. We are not on an elevator here! You aren't supposed to look up at the little floor lights. You can talk to the pedestrians when you are stopped. Tell them why you are doing this. You aren't locked in the isolation that is a car. You are part of society. Interact with it.

Anything that doesn't adapt becomes extinct.

Then what happens when the light turns green? Well, the people ahead are already a block ahead doing their own thing so do you really need to follow them? No, of course not! You can go wherever your group decides. Someone can yell out "Hey, lets turn right and go through



## Berkeley, 1993: MASSIVE CRITIQUE

So much of our lives we are forced to accept situations which we have not chosen for ourselves. As consumers, as voters, as employees, we allow crucial decisions about our lives to be made by other, more powerful people. How sad it is then—and yet how predictable—that our movements for social change are so often cursed with this same problem. When we join a political party, or sign a petition, or take part in a rally, more often than not we are simply accepting someone else's opinion, chanting slogans we did not create, and endorsing laws we do not understand.

Critical Mass is, or should be, something different . . . A space where people do not have ideas or actions imposed on them, where people can take an active, rather than passive role in building a livable future, in however small a way.

Because no one is in charge on our monthly ride, and no specific ideology is set forth, participants are free to invent their own reasons for being here. The lively Xerocracy that has sprung up, the preponderance of flags and hand-painted signs—not to mention the fact that Critical Mass is spreading to other cities—these things are all signs that we are doing something right.

Unfortunately, not everyone sees things this way.

There are those who enjoy Critical Mass and regularly participate, but who criticize the ride for its formlessness and what is called its "apolitical" nature. For these people, the task at hand is to politicize the ride by setting up some sort of steering committee, complete with chants, bull-horns and official security (in day-glo jackets, no doubt). If you listen carefully, you can hear talk of "pulling in the reins," "harnessing" the energy of Critical Mass in order to attain some worthy, though predetermined, political goal.

But who is the rider here? And who the proverbial horse? Not only are such analogies absurd and repulsive, but the approach is counter-productive, as those who have been to or heard of the over-organized but sparsely attended Santa Cruz ride can attest.

### Tyranny of the Minority

Another group who would seek to impose the stamp of their political ambitions on Critical Mass, and who have been to some extent more successful, are those who advocate an aggressive, antagonistic stance for the ride. Tactics along these lines have included surrounding and harrasing motorists who inch toward the Mass, baiting the police, and pedaling up to the front of the ride and abruptly turning off the agreed route in an attempt to "hijack" the ride.

The purpose is presumably to "radicalize" Critical Mass by pushing it in a more confrontational, even violent direction, an idea that recalls Chomsky's comment that tactics, in and of themselves, do not amount to radicalism.

What both of these approaches share is an impatience with the slow, painstaking task of educating others and organizing toward a future worth living. A truly radical approach to the social problems we face would be to build community and to offer an alternative—a fact that apparently eludes those who believe people have to be tricked or stampeded into creating a

better world.

Obviously, no one should be barred from expressing themselves or sharing their thoughts or opinions. We all want to see Critical Mass be a space where diverse political strategies can be debated and experimented with. The point is that if you want to see Critical Mass go in this or that direction, make copies of your ideas and pass them around. Only cowards and authoritarians shrink from the challenge of persuasion!

It could be that all we're doing is riding from HERE to THERE on bikes. But what is so amazing is that in attempting such a simple task, so many important and provocative questions come up. For a moment, a window is opened onto a possible future: a future where no one is in charge and most people ride a bike!

—Reprinted from a handout distributed at the Nov. 12, 1993 East Bay Critical Mass



North Beach" and your group can decide whether to do it or not or to even split. The mini-masses will split and regroup dynamically like a living organism. Critical Mass won't be a boring parade anymore. It will be alive. It will be able to react. It won't be confined or pigeon-holed. It will always be new and different.

The impact of multiple groups enabled by not corking can be huge. Each group will still be bigger than other Critical Masses throughout the world so we can still have the same feeling of safety and streets without those silly cars, but the groups can spread out all over a neighborhood. Instead of people seeing us on only one street, we will be everywhere. People won't be able to avoid us. We won't piss people off but we will affect people even more. That is true power.

Standing still can be a step in the wrong direction.

There have been police free mini-mass rides for months. They started because some people got tired of the main ride. It wasn't the threat of the police that started mini-masses. It was the desire to explore, to take things further than they could be with the monolithic maxi-mass. Lively, fun, surprising, social.

So if you see a bunch of police up ahead and you don't want to be part of that scene, turn right onto another street. If you find yourself just going down boring Market St. again, check out the Tenderloin. With a big Critical Mass of bikes, it's always safe. Sure it's messy but it sure beats just following the person in front of you.

It isn't about the police. It is about how we interact on the streets. People in cars or buses aren't going to talk to each other and decide where to go next. Go wherever you want. Make some noise. Enjoy yourself and enjoy the people around you. It is your Mass. Make the most of it.

—by Michael Smith

PLEASE JOIN US TO  
**PROTEST THE  
CASSINI  
SPACE LAUNCH**  
SUN., SEPT. 28,  
1997, 11:30 A.M.  
JUSTIN ("PeeWee") HERMAN PLAZA  
at Market & Embarcadero  
SAN FRANCISCO

In October, NASA plans to launch the Cassini space probe. Cassini will carry 72.3 pounds of plutonium dioxide, the most toxic substance known to science.

Cassini will be the first of a dozen planned NASA launches containing large amounts of radioactive material, despite the availability of solar alternatives. Cassini will be launched on a Titan IV rocket, the same type of rocket that exploded just after take-off in 1993. In addition to the danger of explosion on take-off, there is a possibility that Cassini could reenter the Earth's atmosphere, disintegrate, and spread this deadly plutonium over the Earth. NASA estimates that if an unplanned reentry should occur, 5 billion people could be exposed to radiation, and thousands will die of cancer (Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Cassini rocket, Solar System Exploration Division, Office of Space Science, NASA, June 1995, pp. 4-76).

**Please join the Northern California Stop Cassini Coalition in a protest of this insane plan.**

**Cassini Protest Coordinators:**

**Elliot:** 510-527-4055

**Winston:** 707-772-5264

**Green Party of Alameda County:** 510-644-

**2293 Plutonium Free Future:** 510-540-7645

**Social Justice Center of Marin:** 415-454-5027

**Women for Peace - East Bay:** 510-849-3020

**For Internet information:**

<http://www.afn.org/~fcj/space/cassini/>

# Critical Mass around the V

## Critical Mass Cities

These are the cities that have (or have had) Critical Mass rides since they started in San Francisco in September 1992:

Aalborg, Denmark  
Aarhus, Denmark  
Albuquerque, NM  
Amsterdam, The Netherlands  
Annapolis, MD  
Arcata, CA  
Athens, GA  
Atlanta, GA  
Austin, TX  
Barcelona, Spain  
Berkeley, CA  
Bergen, Norway  
Berlin, Germany  
Bloomington, Indiana  
Bonn, Germany  
Boston, MA  
Boulder, CO  
Brisbane, Australia  
Burlington, VT  
Chicago, IL  
Christchurch, New Zealand  
Cleveland, OH  
Columbia, MO  
Columbus, OH  
Copenhagen, Denmark  
<http://home1.inet.tele.dk/chrris/propaganda/kritiske.html>  
Denver, CO  
Dublin, Ireland  
Esbjerg, Denmark  
Eugene, OR  
Hobart, Tasmania, Australia  
Lyon, France  
Madison, WI  
Melbourne, Australia  
Minneapolis, MN  
Missoula, MT  
Montreal, Quebec  
Newcastle, Australia  
New Orleans, Louisiana  
New York City, NY  
Ottawa, Ontario  
Perth, Australia  
Philadelphia, PA  
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania  
Portland, OR  
<http://131.252.52.112/Aaron/Critical/Critical.html>  
Poznan, Poland  
Reno, NV  
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil  
Sacramento, CA  
San Francisco, CA  
San Luis Obispo, CA  
Santa Cruz, CA  
Santa Rosa, CA  
Seattle, WA  
Silicon Valley, CA  
Svendborg, Denmark  
Sydney, Australia  
Toledo, OH  
Toronto, Ontario  
<http://www.semiotek.com/cm.html>  
Tucson, Arizona  
Vancouver, BC  
Washington, DC  
Waterloo, Ontario, Canada  
Zurich, Switzerland  
<http://www.geocities.com/RainForest/8622/>

### "The Critical Mass Times"—Washington, DC.

<http://www.gallaudet.edu/~kjcole/Bike/CriticalMass.html>

### Critical Mass in the UK

<http://www.ph.ed.ac.uk/~jonivar/greens/cm.html>

### Critical Mass, Austin

<http://rene.ma.utexas.edu/users/guilfoyl/ACM.html>

### Critical Mass, New Orleans

<http://studentweb.tulane.edu/~dsaad/mass.html>

### Critical Mass, Portland

<http://131.252.52.112/Aaron/Critical/Critical.html>

### Critical Mass, Sydney, Australia

Ed Gerstner  
<eddie@physics.usyd.edu.au>

## BERGEN, NORWAY

This is something we do, because it is fun! Come by on your way home, and join us for a ride around the downtown. The conditions for bikers in Bergen are bad. It is important to show people that there are many bikers despite the lack of bike roads and -lanes. Only this will force the politicians to consider our interests! Dates for actions: 3 July, 7 August, 4 September and 2 October.

Critical Mass in Bergen was started in September 1995. The first year we biked through the winter. The second year we took a three month break to avoid the worst snowstorms. (We don't really have that many snowstorms here, but we have snow, and it is wet and slippery to bike. Especially, because the snowplows plow the snow to the shoulder of the road, which usually is used by bikers. And as if that is not enough, all walkways are shoveled by the house owners and the snow is deposited on the road shoulder.)

The number of bikers attending varies. Our record is 75, but usually we are around 30 bikers. We have a "soft" profile: we try to follow the traffic rules, and people seem to like us! We have had a lot positive attention from the press. The City Council has approved a plan for walkways and bike roads for the City of Bergen (excluding downtown), but they did not budget money for the plan. With the current level of investment it will take from 50 to 65 years to finish the bike road system. So, the most important task we have now is to create an opinion that allows (and forces) the politicians to put the money where their mouth is!

Keep in touch!

<Heidi.Richardson@kh.uib.no> or  
<sspeo@alfred.uib.no> Eero Olli June 1997

## HELSINKI, FINLAND:

### Less Cars More Parties

On Saturday May 17, 1997, people gathered to the statue of Aleksis Kivi in front of the Helsinki Railway station. The party had been planned up several months earlier by Friends of the Earth Finland. Four hundred people showed up to the statue and where led to destination X, which was at the center of Pohjoinen-Esplanadi.

A van with 5000 Watts of speakers and DJ-equipment was driven sideways to the street to block it. Sounds of traffic where covered when the system got power. You could feel the rumbling of the ground couple of blocks away. The rave had begun and the street was OURS!

The cops showed up too late—what we where doing

was a total surprise to them even when there had been posters all over the town for weeks now. Someone went to police to negotiate and after we promised that we wouldn't damage any property the police gave up and let us have our party...

Huge banderoles were put across the street: "Less Cars More Parties", "Street Party", "Streets Back To People", "Reclaim the Streets"...People started coming attracted by the music and by 2 pm there was more then 700 people there—because the police was not trying to stop us ordinary people where also joining the party. The day was perfect - sun was shining and the teperature was up to +25 Celsius. The Party lasted til 17.30 when the two aggregates which where giving power to the sound system ran out of gas but by that time there had been 3000 people visiting and dancing at the party and more then 10,000 cars had had to go around the place.

Just when we thought the party was over couple of dancers started to dance on another street with much heavier traffic then the one we had already taken over. The police got up there to try to stop us but again it was too late. About 200 people spontaneously blocked the 600 metre street full of cars by dancing on it and the police was forced to clear the street and shutdown the traffic lights. Only public busses where let through. You imagine the atmosphere when the sound system was shut down people started to make their own music by clapping their hands together and singing.

When I left at 18.30 the the street was still blocked by over a hundred people sitting on it.

<http://www.sci.fi/~ransu/party.html>

You can contact the party-peoply from mailto:

<jp56048@uta.fi> Ransu, EF! Finland

## AMSTERDAM

**Radical pedestrians have taken to direct action against cars parked on pavements. (sidewalks) Choose a street near you where cars regularly park on the pavement, make some stickers saying something like "Pavements are for People," and get bouncing! It takes about ten people to bounce them into the road. Be gentle on your backs.**

## GLASGOW, SCOTLAND

**Sunday, 1 October 1995:** The international bike brigade is discovering strength in numbers, observes Anna Burnside. Banding together with 80 others on Critical Mass's rush-hour-stopping ride through Edinburgh or around 40 in Glasgow gives the worm a chance to turn. On the last Friday of every month cyclists defy the rush hour to ride en masse through the city centres, wearing placards and blowing whistles, to show the world what it would be if everyone rode a bike.

On a cool autumn evening in Edinburgh drivers were tolerant, accepted leaflets and waited indulgently while the bikes passed by; only one taxi driver resorted to blasting his horn and stonewalling a leafleter. In Glasgow one cyclist had his back wheel crushed in an encounter with a taxi, but no one was injured.

Critical Mass started in San Fransisco, but no one is quite sure when. In London, more than 1,000 cyclists take part in events. Motorway-bound Glasgow, a tough city in which to cycle, got only 25 last week. With its emphasis on empower-

ment and direct action, Critical Mass sits comfortably in the spectrum of anti-authoritarian, green politics that includes animal issues, motorway protests and the anti-Criminal Justice Bill campaign. That's not to say that all the cyclists who reclaimed Princes Street believe in all these things. With no leaders and no party lines, anyone can join in.

The government wants to encourage city cycling, and the Millennium Commission has awarded civil engineering charity Sustrans £42.5m to build the National Cycle Network, a 6,500-mile system of routes, by 2005. The rest of the cost, £183m, will be met by central and local transport funds, countryside funds, the cycling industry and charity.

This network should revolutionise leisure and long-distance bike riding in Britain and make the country an attractive destination for two-wheeling tourists. What it won't do is encourage city workers to swap their cars for cycles.

Improvements cannot come soon enough for the Critical Massers. When you are one of 80, the pace is slow, the traffic holds back and the road is yours. Then the demonstration is over, and it's back to the real world.

Danny Wright, cycling with Jamie, 9, and Ruby, 7, thinks it's outrageous that this is the only chance young children get to cycle on the road. "They love cycling, and it's such an appropriate form of transport."

Protester Keith Davidson notices the difference immediately. "When the ride breaks up and you cycle home on your own, you really notice how scared you feel. You're into the traffic, everything is moving at 30 or 40 miles an hour, and you feel a lot more vulnerable because it's so much more dangerous."



Edinburgh, Scotland, 1996

# World

BIRMINGHAM  
ENGLAND  
(home of the  
Industrial  
Revolution!)

**Birmingham's CM is now almost 4 years old, and has been blessed with a number of enthusiasts.**

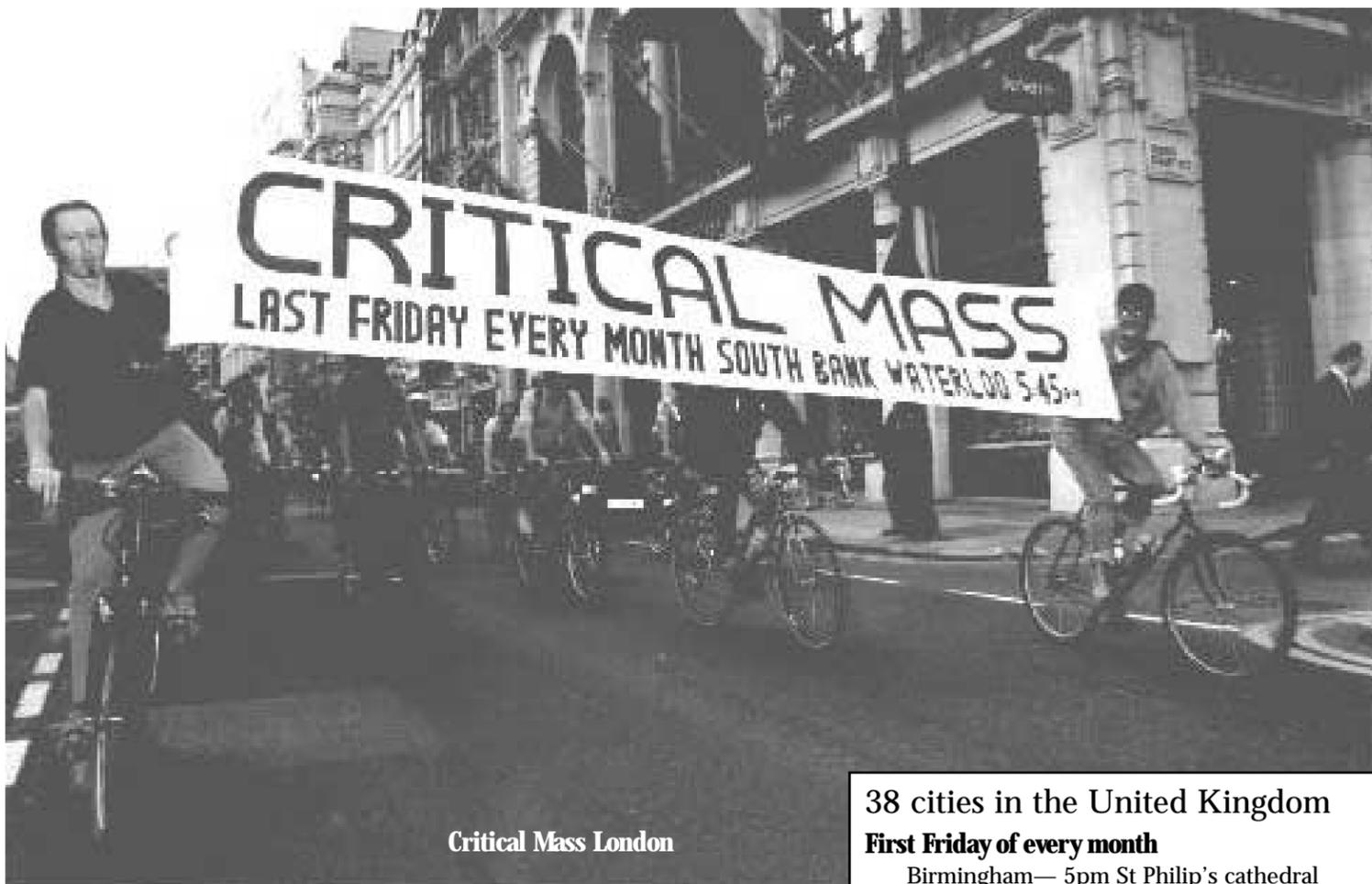
**Spring 1995:** Birmingham Critical Mass bike rides began in December 1993 and have happened on the first Friday of every month since. We meet outside the Cathedral on Colmore Row from 5 pm and the ride normally starts at about 5.20 pm. We always begin by riding around the inner ring road (Queensway) and then head off along one of the radial routes into the city to finish at a pub about a mile or two from the centre.

Birmingham Critical Mass rides have now become a renowned social event for cyclists as well as being a demonstration of our right to use the roads.

We have had very little trouble from the police. For a few months they were present at every ride and provided a motorcycle escort; partly in response to some irresponsible behavior by a few hot heads. They made no attempt to stop us and helped us get around difficult junctions, although they did clamp down on red light jumping, cyclists without lights etc, which is only to be expected. There was a period when they tried to get Friends of the Earth to take responsibility for the rides and register it as an official demonstration, but dropped the idea when they realised that CM is not organised by FoE or any other group and is simply a spontaneous and coincidental assertion of cyclists right to use the road. Participants of other CM rides should take care to ensure that they can not be made to take any responsibility for the rides otherwise they could be in serious difficulties if there is an accident.

At Birmingham CM we have always recognised that many people who come on the rides do not normally cycle in busy traffic. We always keep in a tight group, rather than going single file, and stop if we get split up. Although this is frustrating for those of us who are used to city centre traffic it does provide an opportunity for others to develop the confidence to cycle alone on the same roads. After all, one of the aims of CM is to encourage more people to take up cycling as their mode of transport rather than just being a leisure activity.

I think it is best if CM rides keep within the law and avoid pointless confrontation with other road users and police. I hope we can continue to have a reasonable relationship with the police in Birmingham so we can all enjoy a peaceful ride which will attract even more people to join us. Last month we had 81 cyclists: lets make it over



Critical Mass London

a hundred for the summer months.

—Marcus, December 1995

As it was the second birthday of Birmingham's Critical Mass, and also the last before Christmas it had a party atmosphere...at the start anyway. Party hooters and balloons were distributed to the 55-60 riders, before we set off fully decked-out, hooting and whistling. For the first time (that I can remember) we were getting spontaneous applause from passers-by.

There were a couple of Police at the start, for the first time in many months, asking the usual question about who the organiser was (they really can't get out of their mindset of hierarchical organisations and understand that CM is just what it says it is, an organised coincidence).

Soon after we were joined by one, and then two motorcycle cops. This was handy as they were doing a fine job of corking junctions, and lights, keeping the Mass together and getting the rest of the traffic to behave itself. But as the two motorcycle cops increased to five in number, the atmosphere became a little more tense. They started blocking junctions way too far ahead, and clearing the traffic out of the way just to get the Mass out of the city centre as fast as possible. This got the Mass to split at the Hill St / Hurst St junction, as it stopped at a red light to let pedestrians cross, while the police beckoned them on. A few people wanted the Mass to overtly disobey the police, but fortunately it just continued at its relatively stately rate of about 5mph. One guy got the rear wheel of his Cannondale (ow/) trashed by a car pulling into the Mass, and the police were getting rather irritable and aggressive as people stopped to help, find out what was going on etc. It ended up at the (Greater) Spotted Dog in Digbeth with a certain sense of relief.

And don't forget that next year is the centenary of the car, something that Birmingham (Motor City UK) Critical Mass may well be celebrating.

Jonathan February 1996

The ride on Friday 2nd February saw one of the best rides for a long time (IMHO). There were 50 riders - pretty good for a cold, dark February night. There were no unpleasant incidents, and a couple of positive ones. Especially coming down the inner ring road, where the bus lane was full of cars. A few corkers rode through the traffic to stop the cars moving, explained to the drivers the error of their ways (buses, taxis and bikes only), and allowed the rest of the ride to stream round them to the front. Excellent for its educational effect.

Later on Colmore Circus (a large multi-laned roundabout), the mass was spreading across the lanes nicely, when a car came weaving dangerously through on the inside. This character was soon surrounded by riders, and brought to a halt, letting the rest of the through safely. It was a great moment—cyclists getting back for all those times that they've been cut up, and enforcing a little bit of consideration for the more vulnerable!

It's moments like these that give Critical Mass its buzz, and make it all worthwhile. Just think, light evenings by next month!

Jonathan Powell

These accounts posted by <jonivar@th.ph.ed.ac.uk>



Happy 5th Birthday San Francisco Critical Mass!

## 38 cities in the United Kingdom

### First Friday of every month

Birmingham— 5pm St Philip's cathedral  
Chester 5pm — Town Hall  
Leeds—5pm City Square  
Preston— 4.15pm the Flag Market  
South London— 6.15pm Windmill Pub, Clapham Common  
Walsall— 5.15pm The Hippo

### First Saturday of every month

Brighton— 12.30pm at St Peter's Church  
Norwich

### Second Friday of every month

West London—6pm Shepherds Bush Green, opposite the Empire

### Second Saturday of every month

Cardiff— 2pm outside City Hall

### Third Friday of every month

Kidderminster—5pm Green St car park

### Third Saturday of every month

Worcester—12 noon at the racecourse

### Last Thursday of every month

Reading— 5.30pm Forbury Gardens

### Fourth Friday of every month

Nottingham— 5.15pm Market Square

### Last Friday of every month

Bath— 4.30pm Abbey Courtyard  
Belfast, Northern Ireland  
Bradford— 5pm outside Town Hall  
Bristol— 5.30pm, Arnolfini.  
Cambridge—5.30pm Parker's Piece  
Colchester— 5.45pm Railway Station, St. Botolph's Roundabout  
Edinburgh— 5.30pm Royal Scottish Academy on the Mound  
Exeter— 5.30pm Paris Street Cafe near Bus Station  
Glasgow— 5.30pm Kelvingrove Art Gallery, Argyle Street  
Guildford— 5.15pm Guildford Railway Station

Lancaster— 4.30pm Dalton Square  
Leicester —5pm Town Hall Square  
Liverpool— 5pm Mann Island, Pier Head  
London— 5.45pm NFT building under Waterloo Bridge (South Bank)

Manchester— 5pm St Peter's Square  
Oxford— 5pm The Plain (Magdalen Roundabout) *See also their leaflet*  
<http://users.ox.ac.uk/~mert0063/green/cmass.html>  
Sheffield— 5pm Sheffield Station  
Wolverhampton —5pm St Peter's Square (outside the civic centre)

York— 6pm Barbican Centre

### Saturday after last Friday of every month

North London—12 noon Hackney Town Hall, Mare Street

### Last Saturday of every month

Aberdeen— 12 noon Marischal College  
Newcastle— 12 noon Haymarket

### Every Friday

Coventry— 5pm at Speaker's Corner (outside City Hall)

LAST UPDATED: FEBRUARY 2, 1997

<http://www.critmass.org.uk>

# Critical Mass Australia

## MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA

Critical Mass happened once again in Melbourne on Friday August 29th. Our route took us up all four (and a half) lanes of Elizabeth Street to the Flemington Road roundabout, then up Royal Parade alongside the University, round College Crescent and back again (after a U-turn at Swanston Street), then along Macarthur Road to finish in Royal Park near the Zoo. Anyone who knows Melbourne will know that the College Crescent/Macarthur Road route is a favourite with motorists travelling from the Eastern suburbs to the airport or to Geelong, as it forms a de facto link between two freeways.

While the choice of route was a good one, there were mixed feelings about this month's ride. Many people felt that the spirit of celebration was lacking, and this was attributed to it being the first time we'd ventured into the real traffic 'heartland' of the city. Our attempt to 'reclaim' the giant Flemington Road roundabout did not really succeed, as it seems even a couple of hundred cyclists are insufficient to block this roundabout. The overall impression was that we'd overreached ourselves this time. That aside, I think people enjoyed the ride.

This was also the first time since CM No.1 in November that we had to give real thought to trams, and there was some confusion over the issue (pretty much unique to Melbourne) of giving way to trams, and to pedestrians getting on and off trams. Our usual policy of keeping off tram tracks to allow trams right of way back-fired this month when some opportunistic motorists decided to drive up the tram tracks (which is quite legal BTW); we then could not cork the motorists without blocking trams behind them. Hence it was suggested in a meeting after the ride that we treat the tram tracks as part of the road, and move off them only to let trams through.

This month's ride also highlighted some organisational issues, which it seems needed airing. Looking back, the November ride being the first in Melbourne was quite tightly organised, by comparison with later rides where the organisation relaxed a good deal. The downside of this, as perceived by a few of us net.folks, was that the initiative to 'steer' the Mass was starting to be taken by those with other political barrows to push. Other concerns, mainly over starting time, prompted a few of us to take the initiative at the March ride by handing out our own leaflets, adopting the 'xerocracy' technique from other CMs overseas. . . See you at next month's ride (but bring your lights, 'cause it'll be dark)...

*Tony Morton, University of Melbourne*

## MELBOURNE'S FIRST CRITICAL MASS 24th November 1995

All I can remember is riding around with this idiot grin on my face, looking at people looking at me with similar wide smiles.

After months of reading, and hearing other peoples experiences regarding their Critical Mass rides in cities around the world, it was hard to believe that I was at the first in Melbourne. I was quite nervous to be honest, we didn't know how many riders to expect or what kind of

ride we had arranged, we had spent quite some time planning the first Critical Mass, we had done all we could, all that was left, was for the day to roll around and see what happened. It was quite overwhelming to arrive around a quarter to five and see around 100 riders milling about. By 5:30 there was around 500-600 riders!

The atmosphere was electric, everyone was excited, being the first Mass, no-one really new what to expect. We had a few welcoming speeches which included a reading of an encouraging fax from the Sydney Critical Mass people, who on that day, were meeting for there 5th ride. I think it was then, that everybody began to understand, this wasn't a single event happening in just Melbourne,

## ALL TIED UP IN TRAFFIC?!?



this was a global event, we were only a part of a much larger ride.

The Mass headed off, we took up a whole city block. This was so cool, people were yelling and ringing bells and honking horns. I had read different people's accounts of their experience of riding in a Mass, that it was a lot more than riding in the street, that it was very special, almost euphoric. All of the social, political and environmental reasons for the ride seemed to disappear for me, the most important reason behind Critical Mass was that it was fun.

At times the Mass was loud and rolling with noise, however, what I found most exciting was when the mass was quiet. It was very weird I'd never been in the city when it was 'quiet' when all you could hear was bicycle tires on the road and hubs clicking, it sent shivers up my spine, and I get goose bumps thinking of it. To me, this was my Critical Mass Experience. I always find cities so noisy, inhibiting and fast, but within the Mass, I felt comfortable, it was quiet, it was almost eerie, coasting through the city centre and hearing voices and bike bells echo off the buildings.

We finished our ride in exhibition gardens, people were jumping up and down and hugging, there was a celebratory feeling of camaraderie (a friend commented that it was a little like the Ewok celebration at the end of Return of the Jedi). One of the fliers stated something like 'no-one is responsible for Critical Mass but everyone can take credit', this is the best way to describe Melbourne's first Critical Mass, the 500 or so riders proved that there is a strong cycling community, and a need for a voice like Critical Mass in Melbourne.

## HOBART, TASMANIA

From: David Dettrick  
davidd@delm.tas.gov.au

We have been very slow at becoming "electric" but I would like you to add Hobart, Australia to your list of Critical Mass rides as of 25 April 1997!

A very brief chronology of Hobart (population 180,000) Critical Mass:

**April 1997: CM1:** 500 people! huge! illegal! (you must register a "street march" with hobart police or it is illegal) 40 skateboarders, 1 marathon runner, 30 kids, 2-3 off-duty mountain bike cops. The feeling of freedom was spectacular. unfortunately after about 1 hour of the ride the police (1 car) arrived and tried their usual fascist "disperse or be arrested" line. CM did disperse — right around the cop car. apparently CM Melbourne (population 3 mill) only attracted 700 so this was a bloody good start!

**May 97: CM2:** 150 people fairly huge! illegal! with police support "after hours"! we were fenced in between two cop cars and two motor bikes. little elation, little freedom. mainly heaps of imprisoned cyclists feelings generally not as much fun until the end when CM split up into 5 groups and descended on the pub leaving the cops in chaos.

**June 97: CM3:** 70 people, no cops! illegal by popular consensus! bike clubs desert us because it is too cold! hobart winter starts to bite. even hobart's mountain bike courier didn't go because in the slow moving mass his muscles get too cold.

**July 97: CM4:** 60 people cops! cops! cops! told them to go home and half of them did. went down sandy bay road and did the classic "macdonalds drive thru" it was really funny watching the police drive thru the "drive thru" with lights flashing etc.

**August 97: CM5** 60 people! no cops! good fun but not enough people but only just starting to warm up again for hope fully HUGE summer.

### CM "VICTORIES" IN HOBART:

change to political landscape... Bicycle Tasmania is a conservative biking organisation that has extensively been involved in campaigning for bikes for 20 years. result: one bike path. length 3 miles.

Bike Tas reports that in the last 6 months more stuff has gone through boardrooms and in planning offices than in the last 20 years, as a result of their shift from "extremist" to conservative middle ground. Previously, conservative old Bike Tas took all the "lefty, pinko, greeny, extremist" comments, but now these are leveled at the mass—which is just how we like it.

### RECENT TRIUMPHS...

- bikes can soon ride 2 abreast in line with the rest of Australia!
- a huge bike path loop around the Derwent River (50kms of bike paths)
- heaps of community discussions in papers, TV and all this without even talking to one city councilor!!!

*David Dettrick "just another participant in the organised coincidence"*

HOBART, AUSTRALIA

I ride everyday in and around Melbourne. It's a quite a bike friendly city, it has a traffic problem (like every city does) and it seems that it's in danger of becoming a huge traffic problem. It seems the state government is hell bent on cutting public transport and building freeways as an answer to continuing traffic build up. Melbourne's Critical Mass has come at the appropriate time, where we have a chance to demonstrate an alternative mode of transport to motorists.

A special thanks goes to Ruth who was the catalyst in making Melbourne's Mass happen.  
by Glendyn Ivin <Glendyn\_Ivin@muwayf.unimelb.edu.au>

## CRITICAL MASS, SYDNEY

Bicycle actions are infectious. A couple of years after the first Critical Mass ride in Sydney, a heap of new bike advocacy and related events have been born. Now, the city's streets resonate with the jubilant whistles and bells of around 700 wheels (bikes, blades, skaters, tandems and trailers) fortnightly, and equal amounts of energy have been directed into working on, and improving the conditions for Sydney's cyclists.

'Bike Action' has been created as an umbrella group, consisting of a loose band of dedicated cyclists who have been responsible for events that generate ever more eye catching ways to grab attention to cyclists' problems and to celebrate their victories. Collaborations between Bike Action and other activist groups have resulted in a new phase of bicycle awareness in Sydney.

The recent burst of spring heralded the start of a regular Sunday critical mass. The first ride was blessed by one of the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence in the shadow of St Mary's Cathedral, before taking off into some of the less salubrious areas of the city, Wollomooloo and Kings Cross. The following Sunday ride featured the 'reverse pollution car', a dismembered shell of an automobile that had been beautifully redecorated and filled with lush foliage for its special trip around the city. Since then, there have been post ride non violence workshops and media training workshops for riders to brush up on skills.

Participants in the July Critical Mass took great pleasure in riding on the bridge over Darling Harbour - on what is finally a legal bike path, with fond remembrances of the steely faces of the security guards that had shooed us off it a few months previous. This ride finished in the Marrickville velodrome, as the 'Movement without Motors' party kicked off. As local acts played on stage, information booths provided flyers on local bike paths, integrated public transport links including the new light rail proposals and updates on the local bicycle users' groups. Groups present ranged from dykes on trikes to the Summer Hill racers. As several of the local Mayors showed their prowess racing in the 'politicians on bikes' class, other more unusual entrants included an eight foot high unicyclist, several recumbents and tandems.

As darkness fell in the velodrome, Sydney's first 'cycle in' cinema lit up. The cinema was a showcase for clips taken during the last year of protests and actions, including the headline grabbing M2 tollway protests. Smartly dressed bicycle commuters in the 'race to work' footage showed definitively that bikes were the fastest form of transport for the morning commute, as cyclists wearing suits, ties and heels sailed past the competing cars, and even beat the public transport contenders. International footage of road protesters was also featured, courtesy of the video activists at Undercurrents UK.

Entertainment on stage was provided by MC Houston Begg—last seen by critical massers wheelie-ing down the steep curves towards Bondi beach before jumping over three cars on his modified cruiser bike.

What's left to do? Well as the summer approaches, there may be another glorious sightseeing trip, riding over the Harbour Bridge. Also, coming up at Halloween is Sydney's inaugural Reclaim the Streets party—see you there!



*Critical Mass crosses the Glebe Bridge in Sydney Australia*

**September Critical Mass Friday 26th  
Sept. 1997  
September Sunday Mass Sunday 14th  
Sept. 1997**

IF YOU DON'T LIVE IN SYDNEY DON'T FRET—Critical Mass has begun in most capital cities in Australia... Brisbane, Melbourne, Perth, Adelaide, Newcastle, Canberra... or you can always start your own!

*report by Donna Green*

# The Chicago Hold Up!

## Critical Mass Arrives in the Windy City



*Jim Redd, Chicago, September 11, 1997*

My son, Adrian, and I bike a lot together. We've ridden the entire Blue Ridge Parkway, spent a week camping and biking the old mining roads in Pocahontas County, West Virginia, and, last January, we single-tracked Tarahumara Indian trails in the Copper Canyon country of Mexico. In Chicago, I bike to work every day, and Adrian is a bike messenger during the summer.

He goes to college in Olympia, Washington. This summer, when he came back to Chicago, he mentioned that he had participated in something called a "Critical Mass" in Olympia. He showed me pictures of bikers riding through the middle of town. He explained to me that "Critical Mass" was big on the West Coast, especially in the Bay Area. We talked a little about the philosophy behind it, and perhaps I entertained the notion of something like that in Chicago, but neither of us pursued it.

Then, on Aug. 25, my neighbor mentioned a news item he had picked up from the S.F. Chronicle Web page. He printed out a hardcopy of the Chronicle's report of the arrests in the SF Critical Mass. I read it, amazed that mere bicyclists could cause such a commotion. But when I realized the scale of the whole thing (5,000 riders) I think I said something like "the bicycle revolution has begun!" to my wife, only half-kidding. I immediately got on the web to find out the details of how such an event could happen, got linked into all the pages describing the event, saw the CM pictures, read Chris Carlsson's piece "Bicycling Over the Rainbow." It all resonated with me: the issues I had thought about and discussed only with a few friends for so many years were brought out into the open in SF. It was an incredible revelation! After seeing some great photos of the CM posted by Mark Motyka, I sent him e-mail, saying I would like to see something like this in Chicago, and he responded immediately. His enthusiasm was infectious. We talked on the phone. He gave me a list of "Do's and Don't's" of how to organize a Mass that were invaluable. He sent me information in the mail. What, me—organizer of a Chicago Critical Mass?

I have never even participated in any "street demonstrations," much less organized one. I have never been a political "activist." I always felt that you need a certain amount of charisma, uncanny political savvy, etc., to pull something like this off. Me? I'm a mild-mannered computer programmer with a wife, 3 kids, and a big mortgage. But yet...It wouldn't hurt to play around with making a flyer. I like to do flyer design anyway. My first design didn't mention the term "Critical Mass." It said something like "Let's ride home together," meeting at some obscure vacant lot in an industrial area. I made 4,000 copies. It fell flat. I trashed them all. No one knew what the purpose was. Why on earth meet in this godforsaken place and ride home together? No one sensed the political/social overtones I had tried to communicate in the flyer. So I made a new one. This time I heeded Daniel Burnham's advice: "Make no small plans." (Burnham was an early Chicago architect and landscape designer, father of Chicago's park system). I put "Critical Mass" in big letters. I made the meeting place Daley Plaza in the middle of the Loop. I made the time 5:30 Friday. I included a "Car-free" symbol. This time, the message was clear. People responded. I put one in the hand of every biker I saw. I put them on lamp posts. Adrian passed them out to bike messengers. I went to bike messenger hangouts and talked it up. We put them in bike shops. Mark gave me the idea of

making "handle bar loops." We put them on 500 bikes at the Chicago Air and Water Show and the Grant Park Jazz festival. We stood on the lakefront bike path and handed them to passing cyclists.

Then, when I began to see "clones" of the flyer appearing, I knew it was working. I met Michael Burton, who volunteered to do media promotion. We planned a meeting to talk about the route. A dozen people showed up. I proposed we ride down State Street and up LaSalle (the heart of the financial district). Some said the route was "too aggressive" for a first Mass. I invoked Burnham's dictum, but we developed a "Plan B" anyway in case we didn't have the numbers to "hold our own" in the Loop. But the enthusiasm displayed at the meeting convinced us that we were on the right track, and that this thing might actually happen. I resumed my flyering with renewed dedication.

The day of the ride I was apprehensive. All along, skeptics had been saying "This is the midwest, not California. People just don't DO this sort of thing here." I feared the worst: maybe 10 riders (just my family and a few friends) outnumbered 5 to 1 by Chicago cops. What a joke it would be! I arrived at the Plaza at about 5:00. I saw 1 (one, uno) other rider and about fifteen cops standing around. I said to myself: Oh shit. As I sat and chatted with the other rider, a few more came up. I gave out a few route maps. A few more came. We were all just looking around at each other: no one knew exactly what to expect. So far, we were nowhere near a critical mass. Then, around 5:40,



people started showing up from all directions! I couldn't believe it! I started passing out strips of colored streamers in an attempt to make things look festive. No one knew what to do with them. "Tie 'em on your bike!" I said. More came, asking for route maps. Then they started asking for streamers. It was catching on!

I found a rider with a big moose horn on his handlebar. I passed the word that the horn would be the signal to start. (Mark never told me how to actually START the thing!) It's supposed to be "anarchic" I thought. But, in reality, everyone was looking for some "leader." I had to assume that role by default.

The guy with the horn and I circled the Picasso, him blowing his horn. I looked back to the group of riders and they were all mounting up, moving, as if some beast had been roused. It was an awesome sight! They flowed in a true organic mass and circled behind me until I peeled off down Washington Street. Everyone followed, and the Chicago Critical Mass was underway!

The cops had blocked off State Street so we had the entire street to ourselves. I felt the energy surging as we whooped and hollered, streamers streaming. As we con-

tinued the route through the Loop, we realized that the cops were actually helping us cork the intersections. As we headed up LaSalle, I looked back and saw the Mass stretching 2-3 blocks, and I knew the whole thing was successful beyond all our hopes.

Once we got out of the Loop, the cops pretty much left us alone. As we approached the Wicker Park destination point, I led the Mass on a slight detour to cross through an intersection all bikers hate because of the car traffic. Since it wasn't on the route map, no cops were there. My intention was to just cork it and ride through, making a left turn so we could block maximum traffic. Someone rode up beside me (I think it was a woman named Amara Baumgarten, who had been on other Mass rides) and said quietly "Let's lift our bikes." I pondered the implications of this for a few seconds, then, remembering Burnham, said to myself "What the hell." As I approached the intersection, I got off my bike, lifted it over my head, and walked out into the intersection. I looked back, and the entire Mass lifted theirs immediately! They surged into the intersection, blocking traffic from 5 directions, cheering with those bikes raised in some kind of bike salute. Bikes over cars! Motorists had no idea what to make of it. Some honked. Some got out and sat on their hoods, watching the spectacle. My intention had been to just briefly raise our bikes and then be on our way, so I put my bike down and headed south. But this time, no one followed. I looked back and the entire Mass was still in the intersection, hollering and cheering. I looked around for cops. None yet, so I lifted my bike again and joined in. Then, as if some silent signal had been given, the riders lowered their bikes, mounted up, and headed toward the park. A squad car showed up, but there was no one to arrest, no trace of what had happened. Car traffic had resumed its normal flow, thus all was right with the world.

My original plan was to have a keg of beer in the park after the ride. However, that would have been all the cops needed — to bust us for public consumption of alcoholic beverages. Fortunately, one of the riders volunteered his side yard for the festivities and we had a "mini-mass" over to his place, about 4 blocks away. There, we tapped the keg, socialized, and drank to our success. But we were already so high on the psychic energy of the event that we hardly needed alcohol.

Well, that's my perspective on the Chicago Mass. Various estimates placed the number at between 250 and 300. We would have considered it a success if we had had only 100. Many people have volunteered services — making t-shirts & signs, creating Web sites, distributing flyers, etc., so I expect the next Chicago Critical Mass, Oct. 3, to at least double in size. We may have to taper off in the winter, but we'll be back in the Spring and I expect to be up in the thousands by the end of next summer.

I want to thank everyone for making the Critical Mass a success, especially my wife, Marshia, for indulging me in yet another unorthodox project, to my son Adrian, the bike messenger connection, to his friend Adrian Garcia, who hauled the keg around, to Tim Metzger who had the foresight to get a mailing list started at the party, to Michael Burton for his PR skills, and Amara Baumgarten and her friends for sharing their experiences in earlier Chicago Masses.

*Jim Redd is a bike-writer as well as a mild-mannered computer programmer. His most recent article, "Ignore Your Granny," appeared in the June issue of Bike Magazine.*

## Austin, Texas



## BOSTON, MASS.

It's a combination political protest and group bike ride, half exercise and half activism. You may have seen the Critical Mass rides — dozens of riders travelling in formation while encouraging pedestrians and drivers to "get out your bikes". In each monthly Critical Mass ride, bicyclists take to the city streets as a group, showing others that bicycles are a usable form of urban transportation. Proceeding together in a group large enough to register on bystanders, the cyclists raise the visibility of cycling in Boston and encourage use of this healthful, convenient, cheap, and non-polluting form of transportation.

Gather at the Government Center T Plaza at 5:45 on the last Friday of each month.

## COLUMBUS, OHIO

WHAT: CRITICAL MASS is an organized coincidence in which bicyclists get together to celebrate our freedom and independence from traffic jams, insurance bills, gas station attendants, and Meter-cops. We are not here to attack or condemn anybody, least of all the victims of car-ownership, most of whom are simply trying to get home from work. We want to get *as many people as possible* out into the streets, so bring your friends and invite every motorist to CRITICAL MASS. The ride will be an informal and leisurely bike ride from the OSU campus to the downtown area and back. You don't need a car. You just need a bike.

WHERE: Meet between Wexner Center and Arps Hall (across from Huntington Bank at 17th and High). At 4:30pm we will head south down N. High St., ride the streets that surround the Statehouse, and then head back north on High St.

## Milwaukee, Wisconsin CARS, CARS, CARS...

The state of urban transportation is in critical condition. Cars, designed for high speed highway trips, are trapped in our cities. They are dangerous, injuring and killing pedestrians and cyclists, spewing noxious odors and creating sound pollution. Cars aren't made for cities. Why are we designing cities for cars? Urban areas devote 40% of their land to parking space for cars alone! There are cars in every city living better than people.

Next time you go for a walk or ride your bike, take a few minutes to look around and picture your city free of cars. What would the streets be filled with? What would your city smell like, sound like, and feel like, without autos? If you can envision a street filled with hundreds of bicycles, casually pedaling down your street, breathing clean air, the serenity broken only by conversations between riders, and the occasional chime of a bell, then you've just pictured Critical Mass.

Critical Mass is a glimpse of what could be in a bicycle-oriented society. If enough people glimpse this, they won't be satisfied with their present condition. Critical Mass is about people-powered machines in a people-oriented society.

Every time I ride around I see other bikers. Sometimes I wave, but usually I just try to react to these huge metal boxes speeding back and forth, cutting me off. It's a familiar image. Wouldn't it be cool if we countered it by riding together once in a while?

**Joseph D. Hofmann, Biker Pride zine—  
Milwaukee, WI**

## WASHINGTON, D.C.

Critical Mass rides used to happen on the first Friday of every month, leaving Dupont Circle at 5:30 p.m. The route criss-crosses the car-choked business district, including the new Pennsylvania Avenue car-free zone, the Dupont tunnel and the Taft Bridge (Conn. Ave.) over Rock Creek.

After the ride, most riders go to the monthly at All Souls Unitarian (16th and Harvard Streets, N.W.), sponsored by Metro D.C. Environmental Network (202) 544-5125. The coffeehouse costs \$8 (\$5 for Met Net members), which includes vegan dinner and great live music; micro-brew beer is extra.

However, due to apparent lack of interest, the D.C. Critical Mass has been suspended for at least this fall. In addition, the Metro D.C. Environmental Network (MetNet) is going through a bit of a financial crisis, and has temporarily discontinued the Coffeehouse, while trying to regroup, reorganize, whatever.

### Critical Mass Rides:

**November: None**

**December: None**

**For further information on the Washington, DC Critical Mass rides, send e-mail to Mark Robinowitz at <mrobinowitz@igc.apc.org>**

## Critical Mass

I rushed from the office at twenty past four  
I raced with the traffic like never before  
The anticipation of a ring road ride  
Filled me at once with fear and excitement inside  
At the meeting place there were bikes galore  
Some owned by friends, some I'd not seen before  
I lingered and watched as others arrived  
In time for the kick-off at five twenty-five  
When the signal was given I heard what seemed  
Like a thousand deafening whistling screams  
With whirring wheels we had pedalling power  
To challenge the city in the space of an hour  
When my bike hit the road I felt a kind of release  
Cycling en masse, my fear of cars ceased  
Slowly we manoeuvred to take up a lane  
But the pace soon quickened when the traffic lights changed  
Going through the tunnel the whistling screams  
Were accompanied by hoots and yells, and streams  
Of laughter. I sensed these were Halcyon days  
Years from now I'd remember the heat and the haze  
Yet another sound was reaching my ears  
I turned, it was singing and strumming, but here?  
I knew we were crazy, but this was going too far  
It wasn't just "Look, no hands", he was playing a guitar!  
My thoughts raced—"We're here, we've got the impetus  
To make this critical mass seem ubiquitous  
No screeching brakes, we're a well-oiled crew  
Get out of your car, you could join us too."  
At each roundabout we sailed past the traffic  
More mobile than cars, our profile prolific  
And at every blow from the whistling chorus  
A car horn replied - well, could they ignore us?  
Oh, this was the life, seeing the city by bike  
I could soon see the end of the circuit in sight  
We carried on as if to take the route round again  
But took a road out of the city, and then  
Found a place to wet our whistles and recount the ride  
I felt the day ended with a sense of pride  
So for critical mass we now knew the score  
Till next month when we'd challenge the city once more

*by Jaquie Caulton*

## Critical Mass: Reno

Mark Newton, a participant in the Reno Critical Mass, says the ride started happening periodically a couple years ago and this year has been held consistently on the first Friday of each month. There were fewer than 20 people at the first ride. Now there's a core group of 25-40 and that swells up to 100 people, like it did in August.

"We had extensive media coverage that was all carryover from the events in San Francisco. Our ride is right after the City's, so it gives you a chance to go to both. All the supposedly negative stuff [from July] carried over to us. Usually there are four police officers and this time there were ten.

Our rides have become better organized. We've only had two police incidents, once when we crossed over to Sparks (the next town), and then last week a person got a ticket for supposedly not riding two abreast.

The Reno Police Department has been very supportive. It's taken a different shape than in San Francisco. We're not allowed to take two lanes. If we had 1,000-1,500 we could. But then we'd need a special event permit, a million dollars insurance, to pay overtime. The police chief tells us we need to obey the laws like cars. You can ride two abreast and take up a lane.

A lot of people have different goals. For some it's a celebration of cycling and bicycle advocacy. For some people, it's their mission in life to be activists and participate in some sort of civil disobedience. Our core group of 10-15 people is wrestling with a group consen-



**Reno, Nevada, August 29, 1997**

sus about what we're trying to do. It is partly to make cars aware and educate people about bicycle advocacy. Right now we have the support of police and favorable press coverage. The coverage has not been critical of people participating in rides and has helped bring attention to a lot of other issues in the city. We're going to focus on routes where there are existing bicycle lanes and where we have proposed bicycle lanes. Where there's a bike lane you have to stay in it. In Reno we've got a lot going on in terms of a regional transportation commission that works with a bicycle council. We're looking at looking at it regionally. And there's Nevada Department of Transportation funding for a program where Reno police officers will go into schools to teach

about bicycle safety and every kid will get a free helmet. That's pretty innovative. There are things going in Reno in terms of broader issues. It's not safe city to ride in. The roads are bad. Motorists aren't aware of bicyclists. We have a lot of work to do. As a movement we're just getting going. We haven't had the big turnouts. And now we're trying to make it more consistent where we spread the

word. We've got work to do there. With numbers it makes it more successful and it's fun. We're talking about doing costumes for the Halloween ride. Usually we end up at a park—Wingfield or another. We tow a keg, play frisbee, have a party, watch a band. It's supposed to be fun too.

For more information about the Reno ride, you can call Mark Newton at (702) 329-4989 or show up around 5:30 at the "Brick Park" next to Java Jungle down by the river in downtown Reno.

# VIDEOTAPING: Theory and Practice at Critical Mass

## “A well-camera'd society is a polite society.”

Depending on what town, what part of town, and who you ride with, Critical Mass can go from being a beautiful safe space to a terrifying war zone, usually thanks to the actions of motorists and police. How can we protect ourselves? How can we prevent these abuses? Knowing our rights and gathering our own evidence are very powerful tools.

When we are organized and prepared, the dirty tricks that police use become liabilities to them and begin to lose their appeal. Showing that you know and are prepared to defend your rights is not only empowering and a deterrent to police abuses, but it helps break down the wall preventing communication between ourselves—the rollers—and they, the coppers. Once that wall is dismantled, and assuming they are not under orders to abuse our rights, they are much less likely to attack.

**KNOW YOUR RIGHTS.** Simply knowing the Vehicle Code (VC) and basic citizens' rights puts you in good position. In California, the VC is available for three bucks from the DMV. Groups like CopWatch hold trainings and have publications to familiarize yourself with how to deal with police abuses. This type of information is online, such as the “Bike Rights Survival Package” found at <http://www.xinet.com/bike/>. In California, you have a right to observe from a “safe distance”. Don't let the police intimidate you away.

**A USEFUL RIGHT TO BE AWARE OF:** You don't have to show ID unless detained with regards to some crime that the officer knows has happened or thinks is happening.

—OFFICER: “SHOW ME SOME ID!”

—YOU: “AM I BEING DETAINED?”

—OFFICER: “YES”.

—YOU: “With regards to what crime?”

—If the officer can't answer this, you are being harassed.

But all the righteous posturing in the world can't prove that you've been abused. Fortunately, the availability of cheap, good quality camcorders has given the citizen activist enormous protection and recourse. “A well-camera'd society is a polite society.”

Video evidence has been used again and again to show in court, on the television news, and to Citizens Complaints departments what *really* goes on with the police. There's just no substitute. Good video shows people without a doubt and moves them emotionally. Good video can be carefully analysed for details and an order of events analysis that could never be shown with eyewitness testimony. Video can get the cops off your backs. In Austin, Texas, after police arrests at the first Critical Mass there made the news, the ride tripled. Eventually, the police's own video was used against them and so embarrassed them that they “disappeared forever” from the rides. The footage of the recent police riot in San Francisco has been aired on all the local television stations and has been submitted to the Office of Citizens' Complaints (OCC). The flip side of this is that any crime you record on camera can be used in court. Your tape can be subpoenaed and even used against your own friends. Keep this in mind.

“But,” you protest, “don't they just want to nail the person with the camera?”

Never fear. You are well protected if in a group and you know

your rights and use your camera well. The fact that you are recording means that everything that happens to you is recorded—at least in audio. And if the police turn off your camera, that will look very bad for them in court: as suppressing or destroying evidence. This leads us to the golden rule: NEVER TURN OFF YOUR CAMERA! The police may order you to turn it off—but if it's not in your hand, it's not much different from clothing or a necklace. There's no reason for it to be off if it doesn't interfere with their duties. Even if you are in cuffs, the audio is important.

**STAY LEGAL.** It is important that you stay legal when you record. Your bike should be up to code, and you should not be violating even the smallest law. You need to be verbal when accosted by police, assert your rights, and be very clear if you are being roughed up or otherwise violated. “Hey, that hurts, why are you pushing me”. It is critically important that you maintain a professional demeanor. To be best protected, you need to act as a Legal Observer. A legal observer does not get involved in conflicts, confrontations, fights, shouting matches, escalations, name calling, or any law breaking no matter how minor, if at all possible. Legal observers tend to get special consideration in court.

**“CAN I RECORD THIS?”** Yes. If it's in public, you can record it—although you need permission to record an interview. Police have no reasonable expectation of privacy in California. In some states things are more repressive and you may at least need to inform them you are recording. These rules go for audiotape as well. Phone calls are another story.

**BUDDY SYSTEM.** It's very helpful to have a buddy to help you. Your buddy watches your bike and your back, has spare batteries and tapes, calls out license plates and badge numbers, etc. Because the police tend to cuff camerapeople first if they are making arrests (e.g., the Bay Bridge 6), make sure your buddy is prepared to take the camera off your neck and keep recording. Do so smoothly and on the up-and-up, but as quickly and subtly as possible. Also note that your tape may go into custody for months if they confiscate it. If it's clear you won't be able to record any more, or if you've been surrounded by police and have a chance, switch tapes and give your most recent tape to someone you trust who has no camera to protect it (always demand a property receipt whenever a cop takes something from you).

**FIVE SECOND RULE.** Hold that camera steady. “Firehosing” is when you wave the camera every which way. This can sometimes be helpful for detailed analysis but not for watching by actual people.

**PRACTICE.** Crazy things happen to you during violent situations. Cameras get turned off, the picture goes crazy, you may start babbling useless information that destroys the audio or even destroys your credibility as a witness/legal observer. Practice in tense situations. Practice biking with the camera. Role play. One game that works well for us is playing a pin-the-tail game where people are trying to get a red felt tail off a velcro belt, then pin it on themselves and run. Your job is

to keep up and get a clear picture of who “stole” the tail each time, even while running. WATCH YOUR FOOTAGE RIGHT AWAY. You learn the most from feedback, lessons that can save all in the future.

**IF AN INCIDENT OCCURS:** Go into high-gear record mode. Where are you exactly and what time is it? (Always catch public clocks on film and street and store signs). Who was there? Get the names of witnesses on film. Exchange names and numbers with whoever else was recording or photographing (we've been doing that at SFCM before the start of the ride, too). While the incident is occurring, do not speak unless absolutely necessary. Get the widest view possible. Try to hold the camera steady on the action. If it's a free-for all, brace the camera with two hands or against a pole on the main action and look from side to side for any other incidents of abuse. In the Market and Powell police riot, you see a wave of cops swinging batons rush past the cameraperson, but the cameraperson didn't notice.

**TRY NOT TO ZOOM.** Zooming is generally a bad idea because you can miss a lot while you're waiting to un-zoom. Zooming on badge numbers often doesn't work. Try to get a buddy to call out badge numbers.

**DEBRIEF.** After an incident, write down EVERYTHING you can remember in painstaking detail. Ask everyone else to do the same. Offer to interview them on tape. Remember, get their name and number so they aren't lost. Sad to say, in this society, people just wander away and drop all responsibility. Someone's life and freedom may depend on their testimony. Be forward, don't delay.

**GET IT TO THE MEDIA.** You can call the newsrooms of the local networks. If you capture police abuse or other violent incidents, they may actually buy a copy of your tape. You can demand that they not take it out of context but describe it as what it is. A bad public image can do wonders in reforming your local “police”.

**Video is fun, it's empowering and it helps protect our rights to peaceful assembly. It's worth it.**

by Jason Meggs



## In honor of National Kazoo Day (January 28, 1994) Critical Mass celebrates (in part) the glorious history of The kazoo in San Francisco:

**1776**—The Americans are declaring independence from England on the east coast. Spanish missionaries arrive on the San Francisco peninsula and establish Mission Dolores. While enslaving local natives and “enlightening” them with Inquisitorial Catholicism, missionaries encountered the widespread use of tule reed pipes. The tule reeds were abundant in the Mission Bay marshes, and after drying them, they were shaped narrower at one end than the other, with a small screen of woven blades of grass. The prior inhabitants of San Francisco used these early kazoos originally as a social ritual (the first “jam sessions” in San Francisco), but later learned to transmit secret resistance messages in the underground railroad for escapees. (The original population of San Francisco shrank quickly under the onslaught of arriving missionaries, ranchers, and soldiers. By the time Americans arrived in large numbers in the mid-19th century, the Ohlones and most other indigenes of the Bay Area had died or “gotten out of town.”)

**1848**—Sam Brannan learns of the gold strike at Sutter's Mill near Sacramento. He quickly organizes a small campaign declaring the Gold Rush!™ and

makes a fortune selling stuff to the arriving miners. Kazoos were the symbol of Brannan's fortune, as gold miners preferred nothing to sitting around the campfires at night, sharing a kazoo-circle.

**1865**—kazoos are used to signal “danger, boss approaching” among Chinese railroad workers, building the Central Pacific's share of the Transcontinental Railroad.

**1894**—striking members of the National Railway Union under Eugene Debs use kazoos to send messages along the cars.

**1900**—vast sea of 150,000 San Franciscans gather at the waterfront to serenade a visiting school of whales in a forty-four hour kazoo marathon.

**1907**—angry San Franciscans surround 2849 Fillmore Street where corrupt political Boss Ruef is being held, kazooing derisively.

**1908**—The Secretary of the Interior James Garfield is met at his train by a mob of 1,500 kazooing preservationists, led by the famous John Muir, protesting Garfield's recent decision issuing San Francisco a permit to begin damming the famous Hetch Hetchy Valley in Yosemite National Park.

**1917**—roaming brigades of citizens stage kazoo-ins against the imprisonment of Tom Mooney and Warren Billings, framed on bombing charges.

**1929**—unemployed join in with kazoo orchestral accompaniment for the flying suicides of businessmen along Montgomery Street during Black Thursday.

**1934**—kazoos are again prominent when 10,000 angry workers surround the Labor Council's offices, kazooing their

disapproval of the Labor Council's announcement that the General Strike was over after three days.

**1940**—Kazooing San Franciscans meet Interior Secretary Ickes as he arrives by train. Kazooers approved of his lawsuit victory compelling the city of SF to provide cheap, publicly-owned electricity and gas to its residents.

**1942**—the round-up and deportation of thousands of Japanese-Americans is met by kazooing crowds of civil libertarians and pacifists.

**1953**—massive demonstration of kazooing beatniks clogs downtown San Francisco.

**1966**—Death of the Hippie March down Haight Street is followed by a rousing kazoo-a-thon in Dolores Park. Hunter's Point Uprising is put down with martial law and national guard, kazoos confiscated.

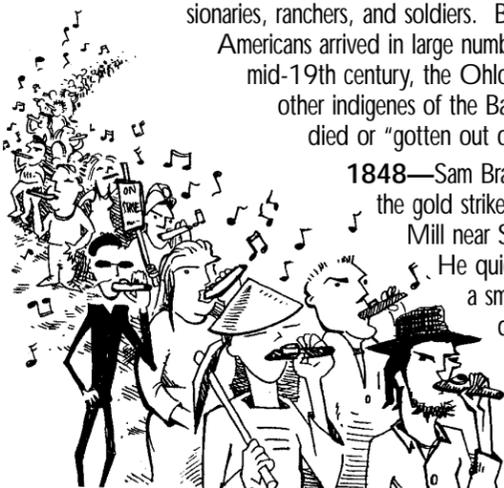
**1976**—Kazoos surround Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant. Kazoo-related accidents are up at San Francisco bathhouses. Kazoos are showing up everywhere.

**1984**—Democratic National Convention in SF is nearly halted due to interrupting kazoos.

**1994**—kazoos become the battle horns of wild-eyed, well-intentioned bicyclists. “Make Way for Bikazoos!”

**1997**—Mayor Willie Brown seeks Kazoo Summit to try and co-opt increasingly provocative kazooing at the edges of the law.

**200?**—kazoos out of control. Capitalism collapses. Nationalism, shortly thereafter. Peace breaks out all over, and a good time is had by all, happily ever after.



# The Hidden Class Politics of Bicycling

## trains, bikes, cars, BART(!)

Transportation is one of the primary arenas in which wealth is transferred from the majority of the population to the wealthy few. Independent of the state of mind of the participants—whether captains of finance or office workers, industrial titans or factory wage-slaves—the process of wealth formation and its eventual concentration in the hands of a few is a process that offers a framework to understand the deeper meaning of the recent “uprising” of bicyclists in San Francisco and around the world.

A lot of folks are still shocked by the heavy-handed rhetoric of Mayor Brown this past summer, condescendingly attacking bicyclists as “weenies” too weak to resist his allegedly tough friends (who wouldn’t have hesitated to leap out of their cars and destroy any bikes in their way!), and dismissing any legitimacy claimed by cycling advocates. He ordered the police crackdown in July and it caused the now-infamous “Stonewall” of bicycling during the July 25, 1997 San Francisco Critical Mass. While 99.9% of cyclists were peaceful, the police attacked dozens of innocent cyclists as they stood awaiting instructions at Powell and Market, as well as during the illegal arrests at Sacramento and Montgomery. Local and national entertainment corporations claiming to be sources of “news” trumpeted false claims of 250 arrests and wildly exaggerated claims of “bicycling hooligans on a rampage,” when it was really the police and the mayor who sponsored the violence and illegal behavior that night. Mayor Brown gave vent to his patriarchal rage in several interviews before and after the July Critical Mass about the petulant bicyclists who should be grounded and have their bikes taken away, until finally he realized he was digging himself into an impossible public relations hole and zipped his lip.

But why have bicyclists inspired such antagonism and fear on the part of the local political establishment? In part it’s because we’ve invented a new style of politics, one that doesn’t seek the participation or consent of the state to validate our activity. Mayor Brown rejects Critical Mass as a political expression because we don’t fall on our knees and ask the state to sanction our “protest” by arresting us. Forget that! But we’ve also inoculated Critical Mass against the logic of “loyal opposition” in which a hierarchical organization sends its leaders into closed meetings to strike a “deal” over some tepid reforms, handing Mayor “Build on Every Square Inch of Available Space” Brown a public relations coup. He can’t find any leaders to negotiate with, he can’t nail down the demands in order to bargain them into insignificance, and he can’t guilt-trip us into playing by his rules. He faces constant and incessant pressure and politicians hate that more than anything!

Still, we must wonder, why is this having such an impact? We have to break loose from our overwhelming amnesia to get a handle on it. Transportation politics has evolved a long way since the first trains inched across North America. In fact, it was that first Transcontinental Railroad that broke the back of the 8-hour day in San Francisco. (Enjoying a labor shortage in the post-Civil War era, skilled white workers had largely forced their employers into accepting the long-sought goal of the working class movement, the 8-hour day...the railroad brought thousands of unemployed workers from the east coast, as well as the newly unemployed Chinese workers who had built the railroad. The roots of San Francisco labor’s endemic racism can be traced back to this period. By 1872, the 8-hour day had largely been overcome by the employers, and the 12-14 hour day was again the norm in San Francisco.)

The trains were built with huge land grant subsidies by the federal government (a subsidy from the taxpaying public, i.e. workers); the 19th century history of railroads and robber barons is well documented. Moreover, the trains introduced entirely new patterns of urban growth, farming, real estate speculation, and market relations. This broke down long established patterns of craft production and stable urban and rural communities. Over and over, new technologies are introduced for their ostensible rational efficiency and have the related effect of disrupting and profoundly altering the human communities they are supposedly designed to serve. One of the major impacts of new forms of production, transit, communication, *et al.* is to regroup workers into new forms of cooperation and association. This in turn creates space for new types of organization and opposition.

The newly industrialized United States discovered this in the near National General Strike known as the “Great Uprising” of 1877, which was prompted by a walkout of rail workers in the Baltimore and Ohio railyards of Baltimore, soon spreading throughout most major cities of the east and midwest.



Mike Mosher’s Hallucination of Emma Goldman on a bike!

In 1894, the American Railway Union staged one of the biggest strikes in American history, shutting down rail traffic across the country. These strikes helped the owners of business see their vulnerability; in the organized chaos called the “marketplace” pressure was developing to decentralize transport for many reasons. The prominent motives creating “demand” for new forms of transit were the chokehold orga-

nized labor could one day exercise over the rail system (this motivated even the big railroad owners), while many smaller businessmen and farmers opposed the chokehold over their products and business enjoyed by the big railroads themselves.

As is so often the case in the history of industrial capitalism, technological changes appeared and as they were more widely adapted, they changed important aspects of the confrontation between capital and labor. In the late 1800s, the bicycle was enthusiastically embraced by people from many classes. In particular, women found an unprecedented freedom from the social constraints of 19th century life in bicycling.

As Mrs. Reginald de Koven wrote for *Cosmopolitan* magazine in August, 1885, “To men, rich and poor, the bicycle is an unmixed blessing, but to women it is deliverance, revolution, salvation. It is well nigh impossible to overestimate the potentialities of this exercise in the curing of the common and characteristic ills of womankind, both physical and mental, or to calculate the far reaching effects of its influence in the matters of dress and social reform.” The bicycle was seen as a cure for women who suffered from the cultural diseases of the era—hysteria, vapors, and nerves—that were brought on by stiflingly



“The Door Is Always Ope,” a guerrilla art installation 3 hours before the February 1993 Critical Mass by the Department of Public Art in “PeeWee” Herman Plaza, at the foot of Market Street in San Francisco... it stayed up for about a week.

tight corsets and social manners.

But the bicycle did more than provide a new degree of personal freedom. What we can only recognize now, in long hindsight, is the way the bicycle set the stage for the automobile which came along in the early decades of the 20th century. (It is a curious irony that San Francisco had a demonstration of 5,000 bicyclists in 1896 ride up Market Street demanding good roads and asphalt!) The bicycle broke individual transit dependence on the biological constraints of the horse, and also started a decades-long process of eroding the monopoly power of the railroads.

The railroads depended on controlling rates along their lines, and utilizing as much capacity as possible. That is, they needed to have trains as full as possible, charging as much as they could and still ensure that the trains were full of goods or people. As competitive lines opened along the major corridors, profits fell, and the enormous investments in railroads began to be devalued. The private car squeezed the passenger business, and trucks began to eat into the shipping side. By the mid-1920s intraurban trolleys were no longer profitable. So what happened? The local government went in and bought them, giving the private owners a good chunk of money on their way out of an unprofitable business.

Meanwhile taxpayers were also paying for the new infrastructure of asphalted roads. Ford and the other auto makers, along with oil, rubber and steel companies, enjoyed booming sales and enormous profits as Americans embraced the car. Profits in these industries were siphoned off the top, with the “true” costs of building and maintaining a huge infrastructure of roads and highways (not to mention medical and funeral costs from the increasing rate of fatal accidents associated with transportation) absorbed by the working public; meanwhile, individual workers privately accepted a huge cost burden of the transit system by embracing the private ownership (with its associated maintenance and fuel bills) of the vehicles by which they would get to work and do their shopping.

Public discussion about public transit departs from the fact that—bizarre as it may seem to some of us—it should “pay for itself” from fares! Transit absorbs money from the working class two ways: by charging ever increasing fares and demanding ever greater amounts of tax subsidies. Rare attempts by liberals to restructure the tax base of public transit to get the real beneficiaries of the system (the large companies by and for whom the public transit lines are designed) to pay more, are invariably “derailed” by claims that it will cause the rich guys to take their

businesses and run away to a place happy to get reamed, just to have “jobs,” which allow the circle of exploitation and suffering to be complete.

### The BART Strike

The BART strike turned up the pressure on what was already a smoggy September in the Bay Area. Daily newspaper slammed the “greedy” strikers, claiming that they were already pulling in over \$40,000 a year, while tens of thousands of workers around the bay found their workdays extended by 2 hours at both commuting ends as they tried to make do without the essential rail artery. Many people couldn’t help but get angry at the BART workers, given their relatively good wages and easy jobs compared to the common under-\$10-an-hour jobs held by most. At least this was the story repeated *ad nauseum* by the entertainment/“news” companies. BART’s bloated management salaries and top-heavy bureaucracy, combined with incessant and unnecessary expansion projects which run up billions in annual expenditures (and forced a 45% increase in fares in the past 3 years) all disappeared from the public eye as the wrath of the corporate media was directed at the “greedy” strikers.

No one has examined how few options were left to the workers, in part because of their own subordination to the institutional dynamics of public transit. Between the hysterical propaganda against the strike, the growing anger of the public, the intransigence of the BART board, and the structure of their own union and the collective bargaining process itself, what else could they have done? And in the end, they got the money they sought, so as far as BART workers are concerned, it may have been unpleasant to be the object of so much abuse, but they won!

The working class, however, suffered another ignominious defeat in the BART strike. Who pays for the settlement, and who pays for BART in general? The users and the residents of the areas through which it lumbers... If the BART workers were interested in gaining some real class-wide solidarity, their cause would have been far better served, and the strike would have been over in an hour or two, if they had merely continued to run the trains BUT REFUSED TO COLLECT FARES! Of course, BART’s hated and idiotic fare collection system, which must waste thousands of human hours per year as we all struggle to feed paper money into its recalcitrant jaws, is really designed to prevent this kind of working class solidarity. With one station attendant at each gate area at most, a fare strike would be easily stopped by police intervention, unlike the MUNI, which is still designed to give the driver discretionary power over fare collection. Automated fare systems clearly have nothing to do with convenience or public service, and everything to do with preempting working class solidarity over the fare box and other types of popular resistance to unjustified and unnecessary fares.

BART workers could have promoted a class solidarity by contesting the direction of BART, resisting the absurdly wasteful expansion to the SF Airport, and insisting on integration with Caltrain, MUNI and other transit systems. But the unions are as afraid of that kind of larger political agenda, and in the case of BART unions in particular, the gravy train is pretty tasty, so why rock the boat? As BART commandeers more and more available transit funding in the Bay Area, there is more for BART workers, too, which is good for the bottom line of the unions that represent them, and their well-paid executives.

The embrace of bike commuting and self-propelled alternative transit was conspicuously absent from news reports on the BART strike and people’s attempts to cope. If six hardy souls hadn’t ridden across the Bay Bridge during an evening commute, getting arrested and charged (briefly) with felonious conspiracy (within two days all charges were reduced to a traffic infraction), bicycling may have never been mentioned during the BART strike.

Those of us who reject the “deal” foisted upon us by corporate America and seek autonomy are increasingly turning to bicycling. The personal advantages of bicycling have been well and often stated within the rich xenocratic heritage of San Francisco’s Critical Mass. In fact, the enormous increase in bicycling over the past five years is probably Critical Mass’s greatest contribution to the quality of life in San Francisco. Second, Critical Mass has successfully pried open a unique public, political space. In this new space, people are meeting, hatching plots, germinating ideas, experimenting with different tactics, and exploring strategy and philosophy. The hunger for real political opposition and an affirmative vision of a life worth living is reinforced and extended by Critical Mass.

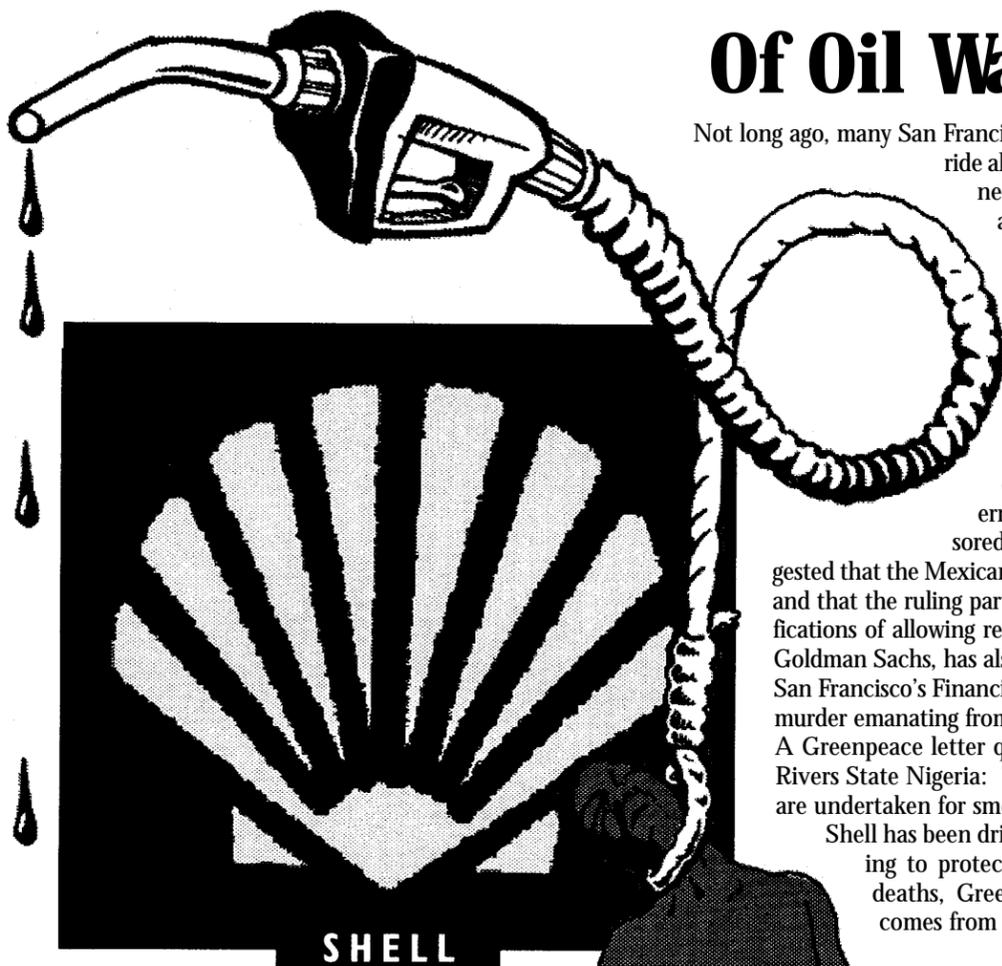
But lost in the shuffle is the role of bicycling as a radical rejection of the capitalist transit deal. We Won’t Pay! When you cycle you are also engaged in a brilliant act of what the Italians call “auto-reduzione” or self-reduction. (In the 1970s, Italian housewives, fed up with inflation, invaded supermarkets by the hundreds and seized goods for free, in what became a widespread movement of self-reduction.)

At this point, bicycling is still a legal act, but make no mistake, it is a major threat to the larger dynamics of class exploitation that lie at the core of transportation politics in the United States (and in most of the world, for that matter). By bicycling, the individual drastically reduces their personal cost of living—it also reduces the extent to which one continues to voluntarily participate in the hyper-exploitation of the transit system, which steadily transfers wealth from the bottom to the few hands at the top. Incidental benefits accrue as well: personal autonomy, solidarity, face-to-face experiences that promote convivial community, better health, etc.

We know we like bicycling for lots of personal reasons. What we forget (or may never know) is that we are in the trenches of the class war, too, and our new mobile army with its mysterious, opaque ability to appear as an “organized coincidence” strikes fear into the beneficiaries of this madness we call “normal life.”

—Chris Carlsson

# Of Oil Wars and Leaked Memos



Not long ago, many San Franciscans participated in anti-Gulf War demonstrations, often on bicycle. Well, as we ride along in our typical Critical Mass, we are still connected to wars elsewhere. The connections between our symbolic and active protest against the consumer end of the auto/oil industry and the hot wars in Mexico and Nigeria are considerably less immediately visible than the Gulf War, but in many ways, the concealed struggles are more interesting. The Zapatistas are fighting for a new model of social power, based on bottom-up democratic communities and extensive discussion and consultation before decisions are taken. Their struggle, centered in the Mexican state of Chiapas among Mayans uprooted by centuries of colonization and marketization, is adjacent to Mexico's large oil reserves, a fact well known to all who live and work in this part of the country. Meanwhile, in neighboring Tabasco state, over 20 oil facilities were besieged for weeks by angry peasants and oil workers in mid-December 1994, protesting fraudulent elections, a corrupt government, and widespread pollution. Not surprisingly, Chase Manhattan Bank sponsored a report to a group of large investors in mid-January, in which it was openly suggested that the Mexican government had to eliminate the Zapatistas to regain the confidence of investors, and that the ruling party, decades-long dictators in a one-party state, should seriously consider the ramifications of allowing real elections to erode their power. Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin's former firm, Goldman Sachs, has also chimed in with conservative advice for the Mexican government. The walls of San Francisco's Financial District surely obscure banal everyday acts just as horrific as these calls for mass murder emanating from Wall Street.

A Greenpeace letter quoting from a restricted memo authored by the Chairman of Internal Security, Rivers State Nigeria: "Shell (Oil Co.) operations are still impossible unless ruthless military operations are undertaken for smooth economic activities to commence."

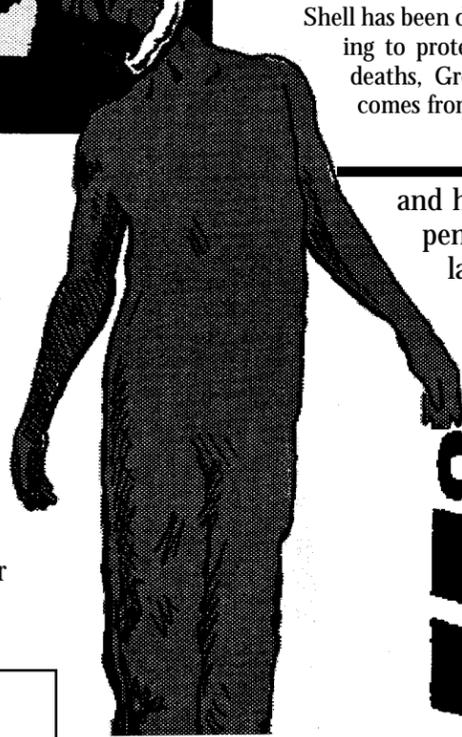
Shell has been drilling for oil in the Niger Delta for 36 years. The Ogoni people have been protesting to protect the Earth and their lives. Their non-violent protests have resulted in 1,800 deaths, Greenpeace reports—because money is at stake. Over 80% of Nigeria's revenue comes from oil, and Shell is the big money generator.

## Ken Saro-Wiwa Murdered by Nigerian Military Dictatorship

The Nigerian military dictatorship murdered Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other Ogoni activists in early November 1996. Fake murder charges have failed to disguise their real "crime": organizing the Ogoni people to demand a cleanup of the ecologically devastated Niger River delta (football field-sized pools of waste oil litter the landscape with the consequential cancer

and health epidemic in their wake), and to demand that Shell Oil compensate the Ogoni people for the \$30 billion of oil pumped from their lands since 1958.

In spring 1994, oil workers, gov't. workers, college students and most of Nigeria went on strike and fought running battles with the military. When European oil companies cut production by 40% in sympathy, San Francisco-based CHEVRON and New York-based MOBIL flew in additional foreign workers to keep the oil flowing from their wells and increased production to 120%. This saved the life of General Abacha's dictatorship.



### LOCAL E-MAILING LISTS ABOUT BICYCLING ISSUES

People can join the mailing lists, or view the archives.

SFBC: <http://www.cycling.org/mailling/lists/sfbike/>

SFCM: <http://www.cycling.org/mailling/lists/sf-critical-mass/>

ALL LISTS: <http://www.cycling.org/mailling/lists/index.html>

## San Francisco Car Co-op

Being organized right now in San Francisco  
(415) 487-1978

## HUMAN-POWERED SUMMIT

The upcoming HUMAN-POWERED SUMMIT is designed to IMPLEMENT certain parts of the bike plan which have been considered too controversial to implement because they require removal of traffic lanes. City policy as stated in the bike plan says these streets should have bike lanes, and the General Plan states that congestion is an acceptable price to pay to achieve other goals of the Plan, such as bike safety. Yet, this policy is being ignored in favor of a non-policy pretending to be policy: facilitate cars!

### THE SUMMIT'S GOAL IS TO IMPLEMENT THE FOLLOWING IMPROVEMENTS:

**Bike lanes on:** Fifth Street, Polk Street, 7th Avenue in the Richmond, Howard Street

**Bike stencils:** that remind drivers that we have a right to the lane on every street in the bike network (map p. 14 old yellow pages, p. 12 new)

**Downtown Bike Station:** Located right on Market in the heart of the financial district, this place would provide low-cost or free bike parking, repair, showers, and lockers for bicycle commuters.

**Traffic calming/bike priority streets:** Two pilot projects started to slow down and restrict cars to improve bicycle and pedestrian safety in residential neighborhoods (e.g. Page Street, Bernal Heights, Sunset, maybe a kids' route to a school).

**Some solution for:** Market Street, Fell/Oak between Scott & Baker

This is a modest list, put together carefully to reflect high priorities that should be easily implemented. If the summit fails to lead to immediate implementation of these items, we can safely say that city officials care more about encouraging car driving than even the most rudimentary elements of bicycle safety! To support this campaign, become a member of the SFBC. Call 431-2453 and leave your name and address. PS. We're pushing for bike lanes on Valencia and on a section of Cesar Chavez through a different, more grassroots process that will yield bike lanes plus an organized and educated citizenry!

### CALIFORNIA VEHICLE CODE: Yes, dear, you do have rights!

Division 11, §21201

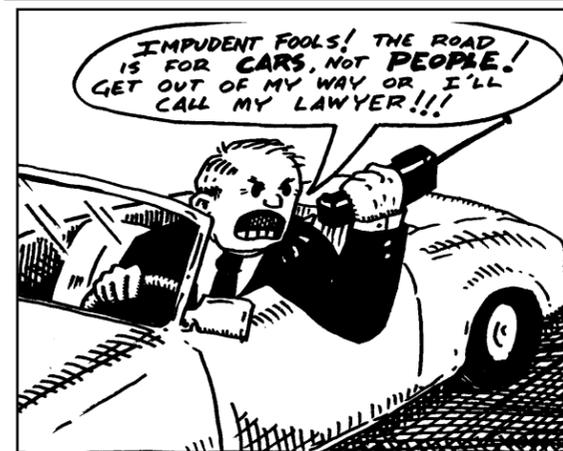
Article 4. Operation of Bicycles

21200. Every person riding a bicycle upon a highway has ALL THE RIGHTS and is subject to all the provisions applicable to the driver of a vehicle...

Operation on Roadway

21202. (a) Any person operating a bicycle upon a roadway at a speed less than the normal speed of traffic moving in the same direction at such time shall ride as close as practicable to the right-hand curb or edge of the roadway except under any of the following situations:

- (1) When overtaking and passing another bicycle or vehicle proceeding in the same direction.
- (2) When preparing for a left turn at an intersection or into a private road or driveway.
- (3) When REASONABLY NECESSARY to avoid conditions (including, but not limited to, fixed or moving objects, vehicles, bicycles, pedestrians, animals, surface hazards, or substandard width lanes) that make it unsafe to continue along the right-hand curb or edge... For purposes of this section, A "SUBSTANDARD WIDTH LANE" IS A LANE THAT IS TOO NARROW FOR A BICYCLE AND A VEHICLE TO TRAVEL SAFELY SIDE BY SIDE WITHIN THE LANE.

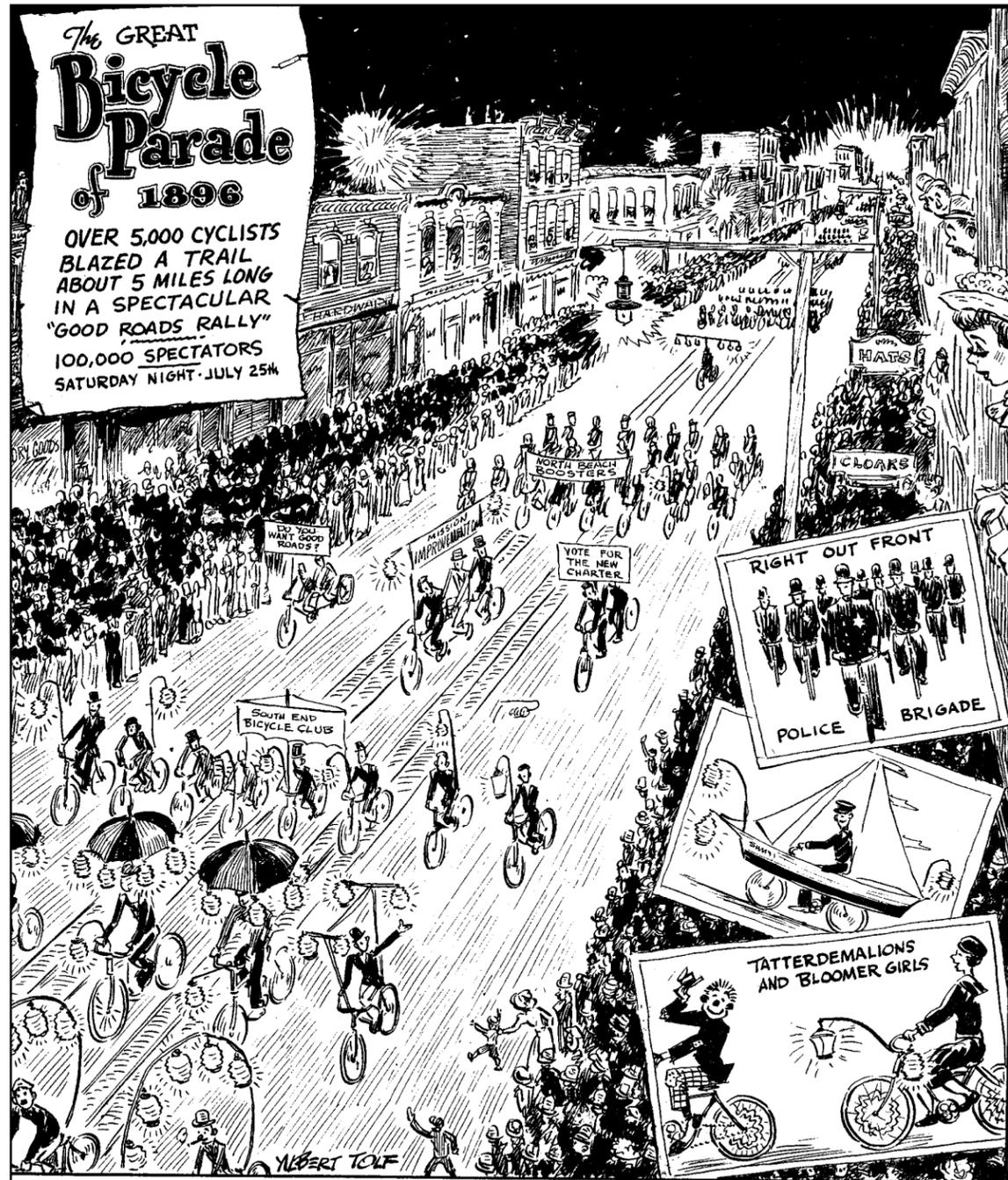


# Stop the CARnage Ban Cars on Market Street

# Happy 5th Anniversary Critical Mass!

September 26, 1997

San Francisco Critical Mass 5th Anniversary Special Edition!!



101 years ago, in July 1896, 5,000 San Franciscan bicyclists rode in a large mass up Market Street. At that time they were demanding . . . good roads and asphalt! We've come a long way, but in crucial ways, we've come TOO FAR!

Bicycling in Critical Mass in 1997 represents dozens of things to different people. Ask someone what it means, and you'll get as many different answers as people you ask... It is a new wrinkle in San Francisco's long tradition of dissent, humor, passion, and social opposition.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

5th Birthday party

meet at the Wave Organ after 8 p.m.

B.Y.O. Everything and something to share

(near Crissy Field, on the northern shoreline, behind the St. Francis Yacht Club)