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THE DERAILLEUR

An unofficial publication of Chicago Critical Mass

SEPTEMBER 2008



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Happy Friday!

Last year, a bunch of you decorated postcards to cheer Joseph up after his surgery to remove a fist-sized tumor from the base of his skull. **Thank you (again) for your well wishes.** Your kind thoughts and humor helped us get through a difficult time.

This month's Derailleur is dedicated to Ezra, a NY cyclist fighting colorectal cancer. His friend Megan kicked him out of his blog (fastboycycles.com/teachingcancertocry) for a day to allow visitors a chance to write something to cheer him up—thoughts which are now printed here. *(A copy of this issue is on its way to Ezra as you read this.)* **Ezra rode an assless bike to and from cancer treatments** since his doctors said he couldn't ride a bike with a seat. How's that for being hardcore?

The back cover is for you to cut off, decorate, and send to Ezra. So, go sharpen your colored pencils and dig out 27 cents of postage; **let's show Ezra how much Chicago loves him!**

Get out your hanky because what you're about to read is **guaranteed** to make you **bawl your eyes out.**

—willow P.S. If you want to contribute to The Derailleur (words, ideas, art, etc.) write to me at TheDerailleur@gmail.com

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Information for Newcomers

What's up with this "Happy Friday" thing? "Happy Friday" is the greeting of choice for Chicago Critical Massers. It's our way of wishing people along our rides well. Help spread the love by saying this to everyone you see!

What is a "Chicago Holdup"? Occasionally, when riders move through intersections, they spontaneously lift their bikes over their heads. This is called a "bike lift" or "bike salute" in other parts of the world. It is a symbolic gesture to emphasize our belief that bikes are superior to cars as a form of urban transportation.

There is safety in numbers—The concept of a Critical Mass is that there is safety in numbers. Many of the places the Mass goes would be dangerous for inexperienced cyclists so the Mass attempts to stay together. Sometimes this involves riding through red lights or stop signs. Laws are generally obeyed, however, safety always comes before the law. When the Mass becomes stretched or fragmented, some drivers attempt to drive through the Mass. To avoid this, Massers can do the following things:

Cork an intersection—Corking is when riders sit in front of cars to prevent them from trying to drive through the Mass. Usually, more experienced riders cork, as it can be a tense situation. If you see a fellow Masser corking, be sure to thank them as you pass. **Never block oncoming traffic**; it doesn't help us get anywhere and it antagonizes drivers. Also, **NEVER block emergency vehicles or train tracks**.

"Mass up!"—Massing up can be frustrating and slow down the ride, however, when the ride becomes thin, cars begin to break up the group, putting everyone at risk. **If you are at the front of the Mass and you hear, "MASS UP!", stop at the next light (even if it's green) and wait at least two full light cycles before you move forward again. If you're in another part of the Mass and you hear, "MASS UP!", pass the call forward.** For "critical mass" to be achieved, all riders need to ride together as a unit.

To learn more or to get involved, go to chicagocriticalmass.org

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Ezra Caldwell has taken on the truest form of grace under pressure that I have ever witnessed. I've had the pleasure of knowing him through his muse, Hillary, my wonderful sister. The scope of his work (from restoring kitchens, building furniture, taking photographs, customizing assless bikes, etc.) could almost make you hate him!! Except that you never could because he is just so good. Ezra is witty and smart but I never truly knew who he was until I've seen how he has taken on this cancer. His spirit never faltered and you can't help but wonder what makes Ezra so brave? Perhaps we'll never know; we can only hope that we could have his character when our day comes. —Lauren Matthews

Your willingness to share yourself so fully, so openly, and so publicly is truly inspirational. I know you're going to be okay. Like I said before, you already are okay. I know that, should I be challenged by something similar, I'll be stronger knowing Ezra has blazed this road so powerfully. —Noah Stone

Big hugs and best wishes to you, Ezra, and thanks for all the great flickr photos of Putney. Good people everywhere who love pit bulls and fight prejudice thank you for your generosity of spirit and your artistic talent. As the Trek folk say, "Live long and prosper!" —Luisa

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WHAT IS CRITICAL MASS?

Critical Mass is a bike ride, plain and simple. In Chicago, the ride takes place on the last Friday of every month. Critical Mass is open to everyone and it welcomes all riders to join in a celebration of riding bicycles.

A Critical Mass is created when the group of riders comes together for those few hours to take back the streets of our city. The right of the people to assemble is guaranteed in the Constitution and Critical Mass helps people remember that right.

The Mass itself has no political agenda though; no more than the people of any other community do. As with any community, you'll see people of all types. Some people see Critical Mass as a forum for grassroots political change. Other people see it as a protest against cars. Yet other people just like to ride. The Mass, however, is just that—a bunch of bike riders. You can drive a car the whole month and ride in the Mass. You can be an anarchist and ride in the Mass. The point of the Mass is the Mass, nothing more.

Critical Mass has no leadership. It is a ride where no one is in charge. At any time riders are free to leave, stay, stop, or even help out. Everyone is responsible for themselves and the Mass. Once you realize that, you're free to enjoy the exhilaration of a large bike ride. It's quite a feeling to be parading down Michigan Avenue with thousands of fellow riders, wishing pedestrians and drivers a "Happy Friday!"

Chicago Critical Mass is part of a worldwide Critical Mass community. If you love bikes and you want to show others how you feel about cycling, come join us!

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Keep pedaling, Ezra! Itís like a race, and weíre all cheering you on! ñBob Kastigar

I was first introduced to Ez through Fast Boy Fenders. I couldn't believe that someone could be so inventive in using their craft. When I was ready to purchase, I saw that he was only offering them on completed bikes that he was now building. The choice was simple—I had to have one of his bikes to get the fenders, of course. So the process began and at almost the same time he was diagnosed with colon cancer. Through the many e-mails we have exchanged, I have come to know Ez as compassionate in what he does, thoughtful and loving in his personal relationships, and, from what he shares in his blog and photos in flickr, a fierce, fierce friend. I had come to know this to be a truth among the cycling community. Ez seems to have his own way of tweaking it and making it his own. Whatever comes out of this journey he is on, it is because of his character and his life values that he has an army of people supporting him. I think one photo and the title/caption explains how positive Ez is in life: *How on Earth do you cut your ear while shaving?/Well, son, it's complicated. First you gotta get ass cancer.* We would all be in a better place in the world if we saw life through Ezra's eyes. I have never even met him. —B. Bloomington/Normal, IL

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Ezra can hurl his body backwards in the air as if reeled in by line and hook, turn himself to viscous liquid, and land in a puddle on the floor. —David Thurston

You inspire me. You bring me back to the moment. To your health. Peace. —Marianne

CANCER WILL NEVER, EVER GET BETTER ASS THAN EZRA. —VALANCY JANE

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What an inspiration you are, Ezra! I can't imagine what you are going through but checking and reading your blog is something I do before I start my day. It has been very funny, incredibly moving and, above all, an education. I wish you all the best for your future. -Kirsty (from Southampton, England)



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NEVER MET YOU EZRA BUT YOUR BIKES ARE BEAUTIFUL. LEARNED ABOUT YOUR WORK FROM THE CLEANEST LINE. STAY STRONG AND KICK THAT CANCER'S ASS. -FREE

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Ezra is a unique fellow. I've had the pleasure of riding with him, talking with him, and enjoying his company. He is Good Times™ personified. —Naz Hamid

Forza!!! —Andrea Zucchini

I don't remember how I found your blog, but from that day it's the first thing I read in the morning. I live in Italy but with my head I'm near to you fighting. :) Never give up! —Simone

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—Jill Gatwood

I first came across Ezra's photography on flickr thanks to Putney showing up next to a photo of my pit bull in a group. I visited his flickr stream and was instantly hooked. Beautiful NYC, beautiful Putney, beautiful bikes, beautiful Nova Scotia, and beautiful Hillary. And when captured on film they are all even better. While it may seem weird for a complete stranger to comment, all I can say is: Ezra inspires. —Ericka Bailie-Byrne

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Thank you for sharing your life. your bikes. and your pictures. All are very cool. Now kill that fucking cancer! —Tau

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