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Chicago Bike Winter Weather	3
Just how bright is that bicycle light?	4
Generate Some Interest	5
Singing in the Rain	7
Bike Winter Profile: Payton Chung	11
Carfree!!!!	12
Bike Winter Profile: Kathy Schubert	15
Q&A with Jane	16
Bike Winter Profile: Garth Katner	17
Heck on Wheels	19
Winter Cycling Essentials	22
Announcements	23

Cheerleaders: Vic Sholis and Robert Wright

Contributors: Payton Chung, Dan, Jane Healy, Lei Isaacs, DHJ, HK, Garth Katner, Mike Kruger, Bob Matter, Kathy Schubert, JS, and TY. Thanks for your support!

Cover collage: willow naeco

Submissions Needed: If you would like to contribute articles, illustrations, ideas, etc., send them to TheDerailleur@gmail.com. Complimentary copy available upon publication (sorry, no payment).

The Derailleur is an unofficial publication of Chicago Critical Mass. chicagocriticalmass.org This issue was compiled by willow naeco and edited by Robert Wright. Send compliments, complaints, and contributions to TheDerailleur@gmail.com.

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You don't have to wait
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Critical Mass ride.

Ride the
Evanston Critical Mass
or the **Oak Park Critical Mass**
on the **first Friday** of every month.

Evanston Critical Mass

Meets 6:30 p.m.
at Fountain Square
(Davis/Sherman/Orrington)
Departs 7:00 p.m.
Info: ecm@bikechicago.info

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Meets 6:00 p.m.
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My list of essential winter cycling gear:

by Jane Healy

- fenders
- windproof gloves
- ear muffs (which go around the back of your neck so they don't interfere with your helmet)
- fleece neck gaitor/balaclava to cover my nose and cheeks when it's bitterly cold
- lots of reflectors and lights (especially if you have even a chance of being out after 4pm)
- really dark sunglasses (much of winter cycling is dealing with hyper bright sunlight)
- fleece jacket and fleece vest for layering
- waterproof windbreaker or "fall" jacket (usually you need to be more concerned about getting too warm rather than being too cold)
- water resistant footgear

Chick specific:

- mini-size Static guard (I *HATE* arriving at my destination with static cling!). Alternatively, you can keep a dryer sheet in a zip bag.
- hair elastics ('cause your hair can get mashed any ol' which way when you are wearing lots of gear; this will keep your hair out of your way)
- lip balm or emollient lipstick
- anti-chapping lotion or stick, especially if it has SPF. I find my face gets very reddened by the wind/sun in the winter
- kleenex or a bandanna (for wind tears and snot!)

Tip: if your ears are getting super cold, remove any earrings. The metal conducts the cold up to your very bones.

Chicago Bike Winter Weather

Isn't it crazy to bicycle in Chicago during the winter? Aren't Chicago winters too dreadful for even going outside, let alone bicycling? Isn't there too much snow to bicycle?

The Chicago Bike Winter season is defined as the 181-day period between November 1st and April 30th. During that period you can expect 117 days, or 65% of the time, to be +21F or warmer. That means the LOW of the day will be +21F or warmer. Typically the difference between the daily low and daily high temperature is 15 degrees. So on a day when the low temperature is in the low 20's, you can expect the high temperature to be in the mid 30's. That is an excellent temperature range for outdoor activities like cycling and cross country skiing.

In the winter of 2005-2006, the low temperature was +21F or warmer on 140 days, or 77% of the period. On 33 of those days the high temperature was above +60F!

The winter of 2005-2006 had only 26" of snow, 67% of the normal 38". There were only 8 days when it snowed 1" or more. And thanks to a phenomenon I call the "Bilandic Effect," that snow was plowed and salted away from the streets quickly.

We had the normal 14.6" of rain, and there were only 30 days when 1/10 of an inch or more of rain fell.

There are a handful of days when the temperature drops below 0F, and a handful of days when heavy snowfall or

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rainfall makes cycling unpleasant. On those days, walking or taking the bus or train may be more appealing.

But as the above data shows, there are plenty of good cycling days in Chicago during the winter. It's crazy not to take advantage of them!

—Bob Matter

Just how bright is that bicycle light?

Eddy's Bike Shop (www.eddys.com) might have the answer. In the aptly named "How Bright is that Light??" section of their website, Eddy's Bike Shop offers visitors the opportunity to test out headlights prior to making a purchase.

They explain, "When you look at lights in the showroom, it's hard to tell which headlight is the brightest, especially with the store lights on. This made us want to conduct a little test. We took a few of our most popular lights down to the basement. The test is to show how bright these lights are and what the beam pattern is like. Each light was projected on a wall from 15 feet away. On the wall we have numbers placed in increments of 3 feet, starting with zero. The light is then aimed at the zero and turned on. This gives you an opportunity to check out the light beams and patterns of various lights."

So, how bright is that light? Click on the headlights at <http://eddys.com/page.cfm?PageID=493> to see the beams.

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Forty years later, I was back on a tricycle—one of those "Granny in Miami Beach" contraptions with the orange bike flag and the wire basket in the back.

I'm told that the sight of my commodious caboose on top of the 36-inch-high extension seat post rocking back and forth as I pedaled set the sport of bicycling back several decades.

Eventually, I got tired of the leg cramps and the feeling that my kneecaps had been replaced by ground glass, and I got my driver's license.

And then, several decades later, I was reading about all the fun willow was having pedaling her tassels all over Chicago as I paid \$3.50 a gallon for gas. A bike suddenly seemed more attractive than ever.

I know what I want.

A yellow chopper, with three wheels and a roll bar, 26-inch wheels in the back and a trike tire in the front, and a horn that plays "Tequila."

Oh yes, a recumbent, in memory of my former knees. With ringlets of springs under the seat, tassels on the handlebars, and solar-powered headlights.

I wonder what Cynthia is riding these days?
—Lei Isaacs

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seat, with its ringlets of recurved springs. I clutched the handgrips, digging in my fingernails, and kicked my brace-encased legs down. One foot encountered something solid. Looking down, I saw that my left foot had connected with a pedal.

Cool! I could do this! I had ridden pedal cars and trikes before; I knew how to pedal! I kicked my foot down with all my strength, and the bike lurched forward, out of my mother's grasp. For all of a tenth of a second, I was in forward motion, the wind in my hair...And then my ear was full of gravel and my head was bouncing off the driveway.

I don't know who screamed loudest, me, my mother, or Cynthia. Shoving my mother out of the way, she gathered her bike to its wheels, screeching "MY BIKE!" at a decibel level that terrified the robins nesting a block away.

I was watching the little electric green sparks spinning around in front of my face. They were about all I could see, since my glasses had fallen off. My mother, meanwhile, was using some language usually not heard from mommies in the 1940's.

When we sorted out the damage, I had a concussion, the bike had bent spokes and a wicked scratch on its shiny tank, and my mother had a migraine.

Thus began and ended my first bike ride. What I could not foresee is that this was exactly how every bike ride in my life would begin and end. Apparently, when balance was

20

Generate Some Interest

Tired of batteries that give out or get stolen? Had the urge to own your own electrical power plant? Check out bicycle generators for lighting. In a previous issue of the Evanston Bicycle Club's newsletter, Ross Firestone had a nice article about lighting. This article goes into more detail about generators for bicycle lighting.

Are generators still relevant?

Certainly the advent of inexpensive rechargeable batteries and long-life LED lights has pushed generators to the fringe in the U.S. Many of us probably last used one on an old Schwinn we had in our youth—or envied the richer kids who had one.

There are still several good reasons for bicycle generators. First, the light is always available without having to remember to bring the light or recharge the batteries. Second, the optics on most generator lights are superior, and the light they give off from their 3 watts outshines anything I've seen from cheap 4-AA battery lights. Third, along with a cheap LED light, these two light sources make a bright, fail-safe combination.

How do generators work?

All generators work the same way giant power plants work—by using one form of energy (falling water, pedaling, steam) to move magnets and wires around each other, thus converting a portion of this energy into electricity. The electricity then flows along a wire and powers a light. Some

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generators have small storage devices so that the light stays on for a brief time (so you aren't in the dark at stoplights). A bottle generator will be about 40% efficient, which means that to get 3 watts of light you have to put in about 7 watts of pedaling power.

Hub generators

There are several types of generators. At the high end are hub generators like the Schmidt Dynamo front hub or SON, starting at about \$210 for the hub. Adding a light, spokes, and a rim will run the price up more. The Schmidt has almost no drag when off and very low drag when on. There are cheaper (but less efficient) models from Shimano.

Bottle generators

Other generators, called bottle generators, look like a bottle and work by having either the tire or the rim turn a wheel. Tire generators are very common, and there are some German models at www.peterwhitecycles.com. Rim generators are similar, but the wheel is turned by the rim rather than the tire, which means they can be used with knobby tires. Some of these models can be seen at www.bikelite.com/.

Recycling old generators

If you like a retro look, you can still use decades-old Schwinn-approved generators. They can give decent output with a few modifications. First, remove the rear red light entirely. The LED blinkies are much more visible than this solid red light. This means you can put a 3-watt halogen bulb

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Heck on Wheels



Six decades later I can still see it in my mind's eye. It was a girl's bike (possibly a Columbia), pearly pale blue and thick ivory white—an ivory white that looked as luscious and impervious as the enamel on our cast iron bathtub. It had a big plump tank on the front,

and right in the middle of the tank, right at the level of my four awed eyes, was a mother-of-pearl button. When one pressed it, a resonant bell chimed like the doorbell at Windsor Castle.

Most importantly, this glorious example of cycling perfection belonged to Cynthia, the little girl who lived next door. She was a year older than I but three inches shorter, although since I was usually seated in my "stroller" the difference in height wasn't immediately obvious.

And now Cynthia was astride her second-hand-new bicycle that her daddy had brought home for her the day before, and I was agog.

My mother scooped me out of the wheelchair that she euphemistically called my "stroller," and asked Cynthia, "Can Lynn sit on it for a minute, dear? She's never been on a bike."

Cynthia relinquished the ivory handlebars (did they have streamers on them? that's one detail I can't recall) with reluctance etched all over her adorable, little freckle-flecked face.

Mom plopped my ample posterior onto the ivory leather

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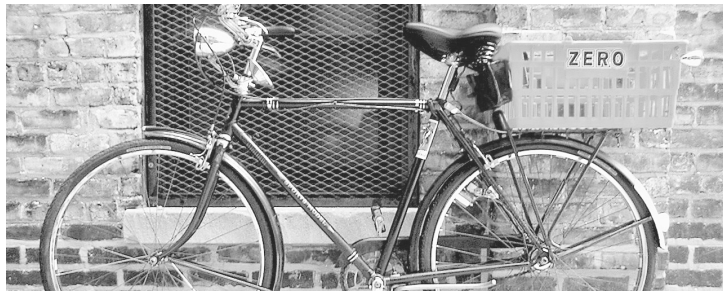
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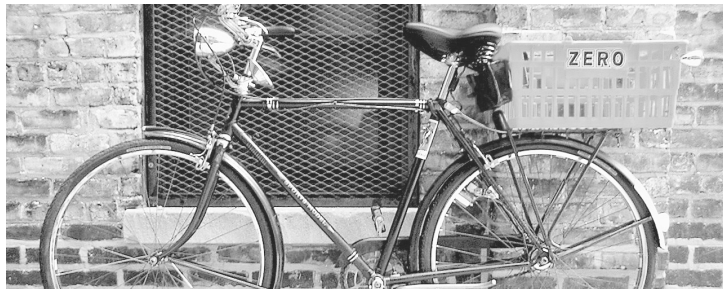


Have any tips for new or potential winter cyclists?

GK: Check out your local army surplus store or find one online. They have lots of cheap stuff like winter gear, gloves, and goggles.

Garth Katner (Da' Square Wheelman) writes Bicycle Diaries, which can be read at bicycle-diaries.blogspot.com/.

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—Mike Kruger (<http://zbicyclist.blogspot.com/>)

Singing in the Rain

I imagine wet English days can polarize productivity somewhat. Even by my country's infamously wet reputation, the rain of the last few days has felt both excessive and pretty tropical, and Friday Oxford's sixth Critical Mass became our first to be under clouds dispensing. And with precipitation came the question "Why are we here?" The ten of us spoke the question louder than the voice inside my head could have ever done.

When I started our monthly mass it was with one motivation: to bring people together...or maybe it was just to

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When Oxford Critical Mass first rolled around the streets of our fine city, dancing to the tune of Sim's sound system 8-Freight (the wheels a Mike Burrows production) in April we were gazing ambitiously towards summer months, and warm dreamy Oxford evenings. Our attendance swelled in no time to as many as seventy—all bitten by the bug of a beautiful city and an eclectic mix of music, bikes, and people. I was finding the people I knew Oxford must have been hiding somewhere.



In between the racers, the cycle tourists, and the reluctant commuters, Oxford has a population of people who love their bikes, whether they are sporting huge wicker baskets, fixed gears, or tall bike credentials. Summer is the time of year to be in love, and our masses were full of bike lovers, but autumn...winter? Winter is more a time for discontent.

Oxford has bike-related issues, and I am regularly greeted

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Bike Winter Profile: Garth Katner

Age? GK: 44.

Occupation?

GK: International consultant in humanitarian aid and development.

How many years have you been a Bike Winter cyclist?
GK: Seven and counting.

What is your average daily winter commute? GK: Anywhere from 6 to 10 miles each day.

Biggest Bike Winter challenge?

GK: First, it was dressing too warmly. Then it was how to prep the bike for ice. Still working on fogless eyewear.

What's your favorite thing about winter cycling?

GK: On a really snowy day before the salt trucks go out, the whole city is silent. It's wonderfully calm and magical.

Have a "can't-do-without" winter cycling accessory?

GK: 3M reflective tape and paint for my Raleigh, "that which rolls." It's invisible in daylight so it doesn't ruin the classic look. But in the long, dark winter nights of Chicago, the cagers' lights make it glow like a UFO.

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Photo: New Year's Day.

Q&A with Jane

Q: How do I keep my bike from freezing up while locked up outside in the winter after a ride?

A: It's *very* easy! Any winter cyclist who's gone for a ride when the streets are slushy has discovered the ugly truth that your bike can literally freeze up if you need to stop somewhere. To avoid 'frozen brake/petrified derailleur syndrome,' be sure to bounce your bike up and down a few times before locking it up. This will knock off the most offending slush and goop from your bike, and will keep it from seizing up. It's not a bad idea to have a little can of lock deicer in your bag in really cold weather, in case your lock seizes up or to unfreeze cables.

—Jane Healy

See Jane Healy's Winter Cycling Essentials list on page 22.

16

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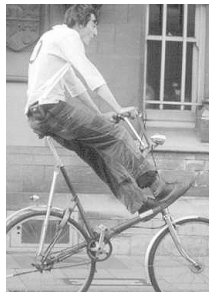
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Sometimes parenting is about being able to let go of something, rather than controlling the "thing" you have put into the world. So am I saying I should take a step back? Nope. We don't stop playing when we get old; we get old when we stop playing, and I believe this motto will see us through an English winter.

One of the really inspiring things about the people amongst our ranks is the creativity and motivation, and I have no desire to let us become complacent. As Oxford fills with the new student ranks, we have started promoting a fancy dress Halloween Critical Mass ride, hopefully with a Halloween vs. Christmas game of bike polo at the finish. For November, I am speaking to a local independent cinema about having a bike-related film showing as a finale to the ride.

If we want Oxford Critical Mass to be focused on the social, the power is in our hands to come up with innovative ways to capture the imagination of those who ride for the



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is driven and molded by something that has influence over it.

As is the case in any group of people, you have natural leaders and enthusiastic followers, and it is down to me and a handful of cool, motivated Oxford kids at this moment in time that help define Oxford Critical Mass. So maybe I am responsible morally for whatever results. In that case, I need to challenge myself to balance the positive and negative effects of the existence of Oxford Critical Mass and support it if its merits come out on top.

Well I'm still here.

Different cities have different agendas. Everyone knows Oxford is full of bikes, and most of the poor drivers must find themselves tip-toeing their way through swarms of pedal-powered contraptions at times.

What we need in Oxford is a bike carnival to remind everyone who has seemed to drift into the feeling that a bike is an affliction that cycling is fun, free, and liberating. Come join us and help me keep Oxford Critical Mass dancing.

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Bike Winter Profile: Kathy Schubert

How many years have you been a Bike Winter cyclist? KS: Six.

What is your average daily winter commute? KS: 10 miles.

What's your favorite thing about winter cycling? KS: Not sweating and not waiting for a bus.

Biggest Bike Winter challenge? KS: Drippy nose.

How did you overcome this challenge? KS: I haven't.

Have a "can't-do-without" winter cycling accessory?

KS: Anything to cover my ears and neck and face.

Have any tips for new or potential winter cyclists? KS: I have to credit Dave Glowacz for this—put a supply of plastic bags under your seat. Use them to cover your seat when it gets wet.

Got a good winter cycling story (or two)? KS: (1) Nothing like getting caught in a snowstorm on October 12th. But an hour later the snow melted. (2) A few years ago, when my arm was in a cast because of a fractured wrist, I wasn't supposed to be riding a bike, said the doctor. But Critical Mass was happening, and it was going to be zero degrees Fahrenheit that night. I have a goal of riding in colder and

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you've been given the gift of greater harmony with nature as you've relearned how to brave the outdoors without a 2-ton climate bubble to protect you.

Then, after a few months, you rent or borrow a car, and driving it calls back all the feelings of your mundane existence as just another driver: the unbearable monotony of inching forward in bumper to bumper traffic, the incredible isolation of your transportation "independence," the ugliness of the world as viewed from the middle of a highway or expressway, all the negative associations you ever had around being alone in your car; you discover you've become un-numbered, and you experience anew the financial hurt of buying gas, and the guilt associated with the obscene amount of resources you're hogging, and the amount of filth you're creating, and the societal cost of being part of a force that would cover the entire planet with concrete and asphalt and leave no place a child could play safely, just to move a person from Point A to Point B.

In short, congratulations from me as well! Let me know if you need a sponsor....

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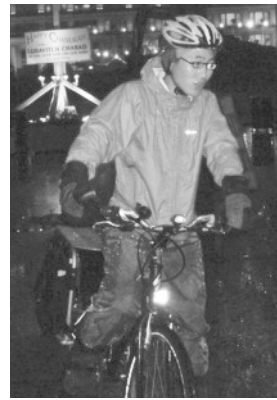
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14



Bike Winter Profile: Payton Chung

Age?

PC: 26.

Occupation?

PC: Researcher.

How many years have you been a Bike Winter cyclist?

PC: This will be my eighth. Bicycling has been my primary mode of transportation for nine years, but I sat out that first winter.

Biggest Bike Winter challenge?

PC: Wind and the lack of sun. I grew up down South, and I'll never get used to the dark northern winter. I usually don't opt out of biking based on temperature alone, but in sustained high winds (above 25 MPH) cycling can feel like a losing battle.

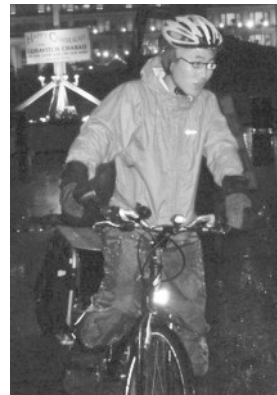
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and any other insulating garment—the wind bites far more than the cold.

Have any tips for new or potential winter cyclists?

PC: Plan ahead. For starters, buy your gear off-season—and yes, the technical outdoorsy stuff actually works. (Last year, I took an autumn trip to Canada and picked up great gear; they really know their winters up there.) Have a Plan B for each trip, which is a good idea in any season. Keep hydrated: although you sweat less in winter, the over-salted streets will keep you thirsty. If you start to burn out, take a short trip: travel is much cheaper in the off-season. Lastly, remember that heat kills more people worldwide than cold!

Photo: Last year's cold Xmas Eve ride.

Carfree!!!!

The following is from the CCM listserv archives:*

TY: Dear all, just wanted to announce my emancipation from car ownership! I donated my car to the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill.

JS: Let me be the first to say—how very fitting! Congratulations!

DHJ: It's like a burden lifted, isn't it? Congratulations!

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You feel a sense of loss that you can only make it to one or two parties in an evening rather than three or four, and then you realize you have a better time that way.

You begin to realize the structure imposed upon you by having to think more about what's close by or what's on your route is a feature, not a bug, as it becomes easier to

choose between the thousands of social and recreational options available to a Chicagoan each day and night.

You pay a little more for something than you think you need to instead of driving to four stores in search of a \$2 savings, and slowly you realize you can afford to buy where and when you happen to be much better than when the car was draining your finances.

You start frequenting the corner store because it's a quick walk, and you find yourself better connected with your community.

On a snowy day you listen to your coworkers gripe about what a nightmare it was to clean off the car and brave the roads, or about how unbearable the weather is because the temperature has plummeted 5 degrees, and you realize

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