

SUMMER/FALL 2016

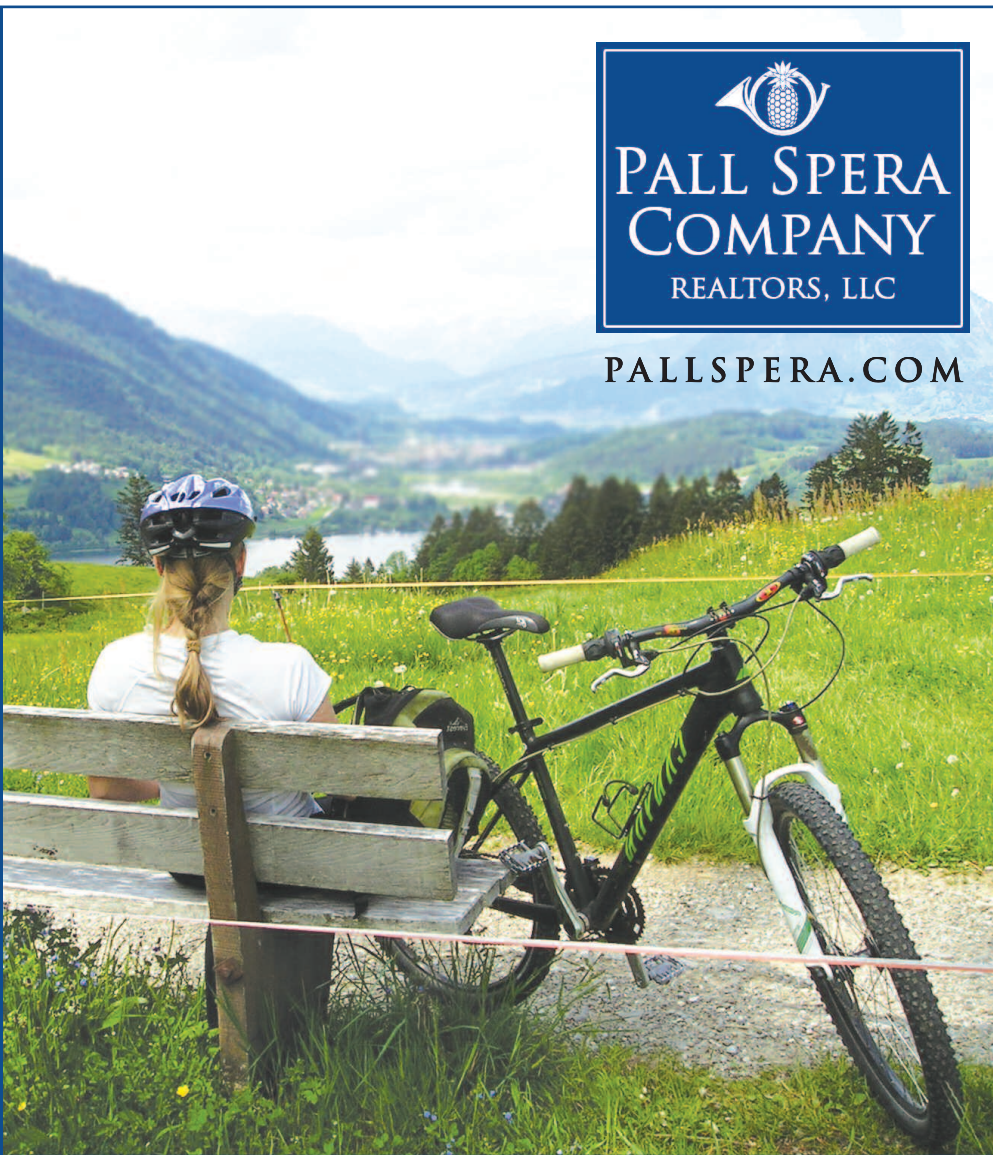
TRAILS



PHOTO BY WIKIENITELMAN

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Ride

ADRENALINE PROVIDES FUEL FOR MOUNTAIN BIKE RIDE

By Kayla Friedrich

Helmet. Check. Hydration pack. Check. Look over bicycle. Check. Lastly, examine the map of the trails, and start pedaling.

Heart pounding, sweat dripping down the bridge of my nose. I had made it up the Cady Hill Climb in Stowe for the first time this season, and had never felt less in shape in my life.

Taking a break at the Green Chair Outlook, I was almost glad that I took on the trails alone, so nobody could see how out of breath I was — though having a more experienced rider with me may have been a motivator to push forward.

After some much-needed water, and a few riders who passed by, I continued on, my focus on one thing: navigating the winding mountain bike trails.

Flying downhill at 15 miles per hour, trying to avoid the trees and rocks that rush up before me, I was in the zone. Adrenaline fuels the climb up the next hill, and down the other side as I get into the attack position to tackle the gnarl in front of me.

There's no time to look away from the trail, because one stump, one rock, can cause even the best of riders to go over their handlebars in an acrobatic feat, especially if you end up on the wrong track.

Beginners, beware when you ride the Cady Hill Forest Trails in Stowe. Though a number of trails are marked for all levels of riders, one wrong turn could lead you to the advanced trail loops with faster dips, sharper turns and rock gardens. Even for the advanced biker, without the right equipment, it could get tricky.

Pedaling down the more technical Zog's trail, I had to walk my bike a few times, because without rear suspension, and little front



suspension, it became difficult to navigate my Schwinn Sidewinder through some of the rocky spots.

Finishing my ride, I exited via Charlie's Trail — behind iRide — and made my way up Mountain Road, back to the main parking lot across from Town & Country Resort.

Ride Stowe

The Cady Hill Forest property consists of 258 acres with an estimated 11 miles of single-track and double-track trail.

The land is open to the public for a variety of non-motorized recreational activities, including running, hunting, Nordic skiing, snowshoeing, hiking and biking.

But Cady Hill is just one of many places in the Stowe area to get out on your mountain bike. Cyclists have lots of choices, and many of the trails are networked.

The trails have evolved over the years and, according to Evan Chismark, executive director of Stowe Mountain Bike Club, the beauty of riding in Stowe is that

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On our cover: Adam Ogden shows speed, exhilaration and control as he maneuvers around a curve in a photo by Mike Hitelman.

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everyone is on different bikes and riding at different levels, but they can all use the trails.

Chismark joined Stowe Mountain Bike Club's board of directors when he moved to the area in 2012, and became its executive director this year.

Chismark says Stowe is becoming a hub for mountain biking in Vermont because you can ride, eat and stay right in the town.

"The mountain biking scene in Stowe is really becoming the ski season for the summer," Chismark said. "It draws in more tourism, and after the winter we've just had, we need it."

Chismark began his journey along the Stowe trails by joining group rides, then began exploring paths to take on his own.

Dylan Conte, leader of the Thursday group rides in the Cady Hill Forest — which leave from Picasso on an almost weekly basis — agrees with Chismark.

"If anything, mountain biking keeps you in shape for the ski season," Conte said. "And Stowe is one of the places to be for the sport."

Conte has been involved in mountain biking in Stowe for several years.

He got started at the dirt jumps that used to be at the Polo Fields

on Mayo Farm Road, and now works for iRide and competes in downhill races on the pro circuit all across the country.

Andrew Smith joined Conte's ride last Thursday, and says it's nice to live in a place where you can go out the door and ride on all manner of trails.

"Since I started, mountain biking has really grown a lot here," Smith said. "You see a lot more families as well as more women's groups out on the trails, and there is everything to ride."

For some, riding has become a family affair.

Middle school student Alsacia Timmerman started downhill with her dad — Erik Timmerman, a member of Stowe Mountain Bike Club's board of directors — at a young age, and has since graduated to the mountain bike trails.

She has also helped her dad build some of the trails, and says "machine-built trails are the best to ride on."

Cady Hill has a combination of machine and hand-built trails.

Aside from the Cady Hill network, Stowe is also home to the Adams Camp trails — just past the Matterhorn — which are geared toward intermediate or advanced riders.

Cotton Brook and Kirchner Woods and Sterling Forest have trails for all levels.



Photo by Gordon Miller

Cyclists head uphill in the Cady Hill Forest in Stowe, knowing that an excitement-filled ride awaits them once they get to the top.



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INVOLVEMENT MATTERS; YOUR VOICE COUNTS

By Evan Chismark

There's this bifurcation in my life as a mountain biker, a sort of separation between my youthful cycling escapades and my emergence as an "adult" cyclist.

I started riding bikes when I was a kid, tried my hand at a few cross-country races but never really went all-in until my early 20s. I was living in California when I emerged from mountain bike puberty, having just moved out there from Vermont.

The year was 2001 and I was still just a dabbler; I liked mountain biking, but certainly wasn't passionate about it (yet).

Shortly after I arrived in California (Tahoe City, to be exact), luck or serendipity or karma or whatever you want to call it intervened on my behalf and I ended up meeting a couple of dudes from the local bike shop — who still happen to be some of my closest friends to this day.

My new buddies took me on a few rides that I'd characterize as a mix between pure punishing anguish and utter ecstasy. Despite my bike being incredibly ill-suit-

ed for the trails, and being ill-prepared both mentally and physically for the rigors of riding high-alpine terrain (there was a lot of coughing, wheezing and crashing), I knew that day that somehow the scales had tipped. I was hooked.

So after a bit of cajoling, I left my outdated hardtail in the rearview and plunked down what seemed like a small fortune — which it kinda was — for my first real bike: a Specialized Enduro Pro. It sported 120 millimeters of front and rear travel and had those XTR dual control brakes/shifters that I unapologetically still pine for.

At the time, one could classify my standing on Tahoe's broad social spectrum as "dirt bag," a badge I admittedly wore with some pride. To contextualize this purchase in the framework of my life, when I put my new bike on top of my car, the car's value immediately tripled — seriously. But I digress.

That period in my life set me on a path of borderline obsession with bikes that persists to this day. Employment became as much a

means to put a roof over our heads as it was a way to afford my next bike or upgrade.

But that bike represented a symbolic turning point in my life as well. Realizing the benefit of having the proverbial right tool for the job, I ceased pursuing cycling as a hobby and, instead, took a more analytical approach to maximize the fun quotient.

As my growth and focus on mountain biking increased, so did the riding opportunities at my disposal. Over the past decade and a half, I've lapped A-Line at Whistler and dodged copperheads in Brevard; I've ridden the infamous White Rim in Moab, Grand Junction's Lunch Loops, and Downieville's seemingly endless descents. And now I'm lucky enough to call Vermont's mountain bike mecca my home.

I think my progression as a mountain biker mirrors the trajectory of mountain biking itself in a lot of ways. We as mountain bikers started out doing things the best we could at the time, leveraging our exuberance to build trails whenever and wherever we could, sometimes at the expense of our own credibility. But as our sport and culture evolved, we learned, we corrected course as needed, and as a result, we increased our riding and trail-building opportunities in a legal and, more importantly, sustainable manner.

The pioneers of Stowe mountain biking had the foresight to do the same, and since its inception in the year 2000, this organization has grown from a club — a small group of likeminded enthusiasts



Courtesy photo

Evan Chismark asks: What's mountain biking worth to you?

If we play our cards right, I believe this trend of expanded opportunity will continue. We're part of a statewide movement that's helping key players under-

do the same, supporting the businesses that support the Stowe Mountain Bike Club — all of those are links in a very long chain that enables this organiza-

MEMBERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION ARE STILL INVALUABLE
TO STOWE'S MOUNTAIN BIKE COMMUNITY ... A VERY LONG CHAIN ENABLES
THIS ORGANIZATION TO CONTINUE WORKING TO PROTECT, MAINTAIN
AND ENHANCE STOWE'S TRAILS.

quietly working to gain land access for trail construction — into a trails stewardship and mountain bike advocacy group with over 700 members.

Through the hard work of many dedicated volunteers, this organization has built meaningful and long-lasting relationships with the Town of Stowe, the Stowe Land Trust, the Vermont Mountain Bike Association, and many private landowners who allow the mountain bike community to access their land.

stand the value of mountain biking and, as a result, broadening riding opportunities all over Vermont.

But let's not forget, these opportunities are hard-fought and, despite our ascension up the social and economic food chain, still require a lot of work.

And that's why membership and participation are still invaluable to Stowe's mountain bike community. Pitching in at trail workdays, buying a membership and encouraging your friends to

tion to continue working to protect, maintain and enhance Stowe's trails.

So ask yourself, what's mountain biking worth to you? Where has mountain biking taken you since you started? Whether it's around the world or around the block, your involvement matters and your voice counts. Now more than ever.

Evan Chismark is executive director of the Stowe Mountain Bike Club.

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HARDY AVERY IS A MASTER OF TRAIL-BUILDING POETRY

By Caleigh Cross

It's becoming one of Stowe's favorite love songs: the swish of tires on dirt against the soft, lubricated percussion of spokes through otherwise quiet woods, punctuated only by the occasional whoop of glee.

Mountain biking is fast becoming Stowe's summer crush. It's easy to get into and public groups abound. Its allure is similar to a freshly powdered hill on a bright winter morning, so it's no surprise that it attracts the same crowds.

You can see them gathering at the trailhead after a hard ride, leaning on hatchbacks and bike racks to wipe their brows and compare notes on what master trail-builder Hardy Avery calls the "brown pow."

"We're always chasing the elusive brown pow," Avery said. "It's like how you want to be on the part of the mountain with the fresh powdered snow, where no one is. You want a nice, soft, lonely surface. That's beautiful."

Avery is the composer behind the ballad of the mountain bikes here in Stowe. He's been in business for himself under the moniker Sustainable Trailworks for the past nine years, although when pressed, he can't quite put a finger on when he started crafting woodland trails. He's been doing it for long enough that his stamp is on trails that wind through Cady Hill in Stowe, including its signature steep-grade climb, and on some of the Trapp Family Lodge biking trails and even a project or two at Norwich University.

When talk turns to the hows, whys and whens of trail-making, Avery's voice warms up.

"I'm probably going to tell you way more than you need to know," he said.

Before Avery puts down his first marker flag or even opens a map, he walks in its entirety the land he's about to divide. That can take one day or up to four, he says.

"You scout the property," Avery said. "It's just walking. No flags, no property lines. You're determining what its assets are."

When he's scouting, Avery takes into consideration both the land's trouble spots — potential water drainage issues, inclines — and the parts he's excited to include. "I go through with a detailed eye and pick out the terrain features. Like, for instance, the 500-year-old pine tree that you really want people to see."

Once he's acquainted with the land, Avery works up a conceptual design, which includes a map. From there, it's a matter of getting the map approved by whomever he's building for and determining the cost.

Then, the fun begins.

Avery loves building trails that celebrate the natural landscape. "I like interesting rock formations you can ride on, or open, exposed



Photo by Gordon Miller

Hardy Avery cruises along a trail of his own making.

ledges," he said. "My trails really focus on aesthetics. It's important. It's like I'm creating my own art out there, putting my imprint on the land."

Avery says his favorite part of building a trail is exposing the terrain. "I love being able to bring people to places they've never been. It gives people the opportunity to be on the land."

When he's building a trail, Avery can take one of two approaches: He can set to work by hand or with a machine. He specializes in both machine-built and

hand-built trails. The 1,200-foot Cady Hill Climb was constructed by Avery and his machine.

"Machines are faster and cheaper. They make a wider tread, so it's more durable for much less money," Avery said. "They're also easier to maintain. It's more efficient overall."

Avery says with his machine he can average 300 to 400 feet of trail built every day. By hand, his rate is half that.

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Photo by Gordon Miller

Dylan Conte pulls an exuberant wheelie while going over a rise in the woods.

"I LIKE INTERESTING ROCK FORMATIONS YOU CAN RIDE ON, OR OPEN, EXPOSED LEDGES. MY TRAILS REALLY FOCUS ON AESTHETICS. IT'S IMPORTANT. IT'S LIKE I'M CREATING MY OWN ART OUT THERE, PUTTING MY IMPRINT ON THE LAND."

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Machine-built trails are best for places like Cady Hill that get a lot of traffic, says Evan Chismark, executive director of the Stowe Mountain Bike Club. Excessive traffic is one factor in trail breakdown, so trails that carry a lot of riders need to be built to accommodate the load.

"Here, we build to a standard of 100 people a day," Avery said.

Despite the efficiency of the machine, Avery says trails lose something when they're made with a machine. Hand-built trails have their place, he says.

Right now, Avery is gearing up to design and build Callagy's Trail in Sterling Forest in honor of Callagy Ross, a 23-year-old Stowe woman who died in a snowboarding accident last year.

That trail will be built by hand, Avery said, so it's more in keeping with the Sterling Forest area, which is less accessible than the machine-built Cady Hill trails.

That's the key difference between the two methods, according to Avery. Building a trail by hand allows for a "more primitive feel."

"It's a little more soulful," Avery said. Hand-built trails tend to be single paths, meaning riders can't ride two-abreast. Riders seeking more challenging routes often prefer hand-built trails.

But Avery doesn't go it alone. Volunteers are crucial to the building of trails, especially the ones built by hand. Chismark says last year, the Stowe Mountain Bike Club clocked 800 hours of volunteer work. Volunteers can help do anything from picking up brush to digging, all under the direction of the trail-builder.

"There's something really remarkable about looking at raw woods and then later seeing a trail there. It's like, 'We built this, and now we can ride our bikes on it!'" Chismark said. "It's the kind of thing you can really take pride in. It's a rewarding, fulfilling job.

"Let's not overcomplicate this, though. It's wicked fun."

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Photo by Jamie Lee

Clarissa Finks roars through the woods, competing in an enduro race at Burke Mountain.

A RELUCTANT MOUNTAIN BIKER NOW RACING ENDURO AS A PRO

By Clarissa Finks

Once upon a time, I was a soccer player and way too busy — and self-absorbed — to consider my mom's attempts to get me out on a mountain bike.

She'd share stories of conquering technical climbs, the thrills of twisty turning descents and always try to lure me in to consider giving it a try.

I would take one look at her bloodied, bruised legs and just think to myself, "Moms aren't supposed to look like that!" and head out to soccer practice.

Well, fast-forward a couple of years into college and two ACL surgeries later, I found myself on a bicycle rehabbing my knee. At that point, I started to warm a little more to the idea and one day Mom asked again and I finally succumbed and said yes.

On my very first ride, I experienced the thrill of winding through piney single track, worked on conquering a root-filled climb, and punched a hole in the back of my calf compliments of my front chain ring.

What my mom didn't realize was she was setting me off on a path that would lead me to where I am today — racing enduro at the pro level.

Enduro is a race format that is quickly gaining popularity all over the world and it is where I found my place in competitive cycling. I describe it as the perfect middle point between downhill and cross-country riding. The most basic definition is: timed downhill and untimed uphill.

The races that happen here on the East Coast through the Eastern States Cup or Triple Crown Series are one-day events that have any-



Photo by Mike Hitelman

Clarissa Finks sometimes cruises through the woods just for fun.

where between three and five race stages in a day, with the untimed transfers taking you from the finish of one stage to the start of the next.

Depending on the event location, the transfers could require pedaling up and over to the start of the next stage, or could consist of using the chairlift to get from the bottom of the mountain back to the top.

I like to refer to enduro racing as the lazy person's cross-country. While there is no question you must be fit to have a shot at the podium, anyone can head out and have a blast at an enduro race regardless of your level of fitness.

But I think the main reason I love enduro racing is that it doesn't actually feel like racing.

While everyone is competitive with each other, the community and camaraderie that build throughout the course of a weekend are unlike any other form of competition I've experienced. In the end, it's like heading out for a ride with your friends — you chat and take your time on the climb and then you do everything you can to beat your buddies down to the bottom.

If you have ever wanted to give mountain bike racing a try, I highly suggest you check out an enduro race near you. For more information, check out easternstatescup.com.

Clarissa Finks lives in Waterbury Center.

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Fathers and sons

10Q with Roger and Finn Murphy, Andrew and Tucker Volansky

Mountain biking is often a family affair, with parents encouraging their children to come along for the ride. Often, the kids quickly get better than the adults.

Here are two father-son duos following a long Stowe Reporter tradition: answering 10 questions.

10 Questions for Roger and Finn Murphy

Roger teaches social studies and English at Stowe High School; Finn's his son.

Roger first.

1. What do you like the most about mountain biking?

The exercise, the challenge and the community of mountain bikers.

2. How did you get involved in the sport?

I bought my first mountain bike in 1990 when a friend in college was racing for Yeti.

3. How many friends have you persuaded to join you in riding?

I try to get as many people as I can out biking!

4. What do you tell them about it?

I think that it's a tough thing to explain to people, and that they really need to experience it before they make a judgment about



Courtesy photo

Roger Murphy, a Stowe High School teacher, and his son Finn Murphy.

becoming involved in the sport. So much of mountain biking is the physical experience of the effort of the climb or overcoming obstacles and the sensations of rhythm when you manage to sync your movements on the bike with the trail.

5. What other sports do you enjoy?

Skiing of all types, soccer, sailing, hiking, paddling, fishing.

6. How does mountain biking compare to those other sports? Is it like skiing or snowboarding?

It is a lot like skiing in the woods, especially backcountry skiing. The meditative climbs

endured to capture that downhill joy and occasional feeling of being weightless are strikingly similar experiences.

7. Do you ever get scared out on the trail — going too fast, or the trail's too steep or rocky?

I try to avoid dangerous situations and ride to the edge of my ability but not beyond. There is no shame in walking down or around a particularly challenging section of trail. I have four screws in my ankle from a low-speed fall a couple of years ago, so I tend to be a little more cautious these days.

8. If you could pick any three people to go mountain biking with, who would they be? Why them?

As cheesy as it may sound, I would pick my two kids and my wife. Because a family that rides together gets to share in the joys and challenges of being on the trail, and we can encourage and support and celebrate as a family. Our dog has to come, too. Grace loves going biking and chasing chipmunks.

9. What kind of bike are you riding right now?

A 2016 Transition Scout. Sometimes I just go out in the garage and look at it and smile.

10. What else would you like to tell people?

I hope that everyone who rides recognizes that there are a bunch of people who dedicate a lot of time and effort to making mountain biking the best it can be in Stowe for locals and visitors alike. Please consider joining the Stowe Mountain Bike Club and the Vermont Mountain Bike Association (half the cost of a single-day lift ticket) and participating in trail workdays. It's a rewarding feeling to ride the trails you help to build and maintain.

The same 10 questions for Finn Murphy, age 12

1. What do you like the most about mountain biking?

The goal of getting stronger every time you do it, and it is just really fun.

2. How did you get involved in the sport?

My dad.

3. How many friends have you persuaded to join you in riding?

None yet.

4. What do you tell them about it?

N/A

5. What other sports do you enjoy?

Downhill skiing, cross-country skiing, soccer and hiking.

6. How does mountain biking compare to those other sports? Is it like skiing or snowboarding?

Yes and no. Mountain biking is like skiing because it is fun when you do it one time, but the next time you do it it is even more fun! It is not like skiing because you do it in the springtime and the fall and you get to do it on a bike, not skis. Also, these sports are similar because I feel really relaxed while I'm doing them both, and both are done outside, which is where I love to be.

7. Do you ever get scared out on the trail — going too fast, or the trail's too steep or rocky?

Sometimes.

8. If you could pick any three people to go mountain biking with, who would they be? Why them?

My dad, my mom and my sister because we are family.

9. What kind of bike are you riding right now?

Norco Fluid 7.1.

10. What else would you like to tell people?

You can't spend a lifetime without trying it. It is just that much fun!

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Courtesy photo

Andrew Volansky, a Stowe architect, and his son Tucker.

10 Questions for Tucker and Andrew Volansky

1. What do you like the most about mountain biking?

Tucker: What I like the most is the adrenalin and freedom it gives me.

Andrew: Adrenalin rush.

2. How did you get involved in the sport?

Tucker: How I got involved in the sport was that my mom and dad biked and I got a bike when I was young so I picked it up.

Andrew: I started in junior high (about 1985) when I outgrew my BMX bike and a small mountain bike shop opened up behind the Green Mountain Inn, back when it was just a vacant lot (currently Green Mountain Inn carriage houses).

3. How many friends have you persuaded to join you in riding?

Tucker: I have probably persuaded a few friends but mostly I ride with three or four friends who already rode.

Andrew: Only a few over the years. Mostly I've made friends on the trails.

4. What do you tell them about it?

Tucker: I tell them that it is mostly fun and amazing.

Andrew: Just go for it; it's a great sport.

5. What other sports do you enjoy?

Tucker: Soccer, lacrosse, running and snowboarding.

Andrew: Tele ski, fly fishing.

6. How does mountain biking compare to those other sports? Is it like skiing or snowboarding?

Tucker: Mountain biking compares to the other sports because you need to be fit and they are all technical sports.

Andrew: Quick thinking, imagination (picking the best, most fun line). You get to see some beautiful places.

7. Do you ever get scared out on the trail — going too fast, or the trail's too steep or rocky?

Tucker: Yes, I get scared sometimes but it is not anything that will stop me from doing it.

Andrew: For sure. I still need to get up the nerve to ride Triple Threat at Perry Hill.

8. If you could pick any three people to go mountain biking with, who would they be? Why them?

Tucker: Danny MacAskill, Brandon Semenuk and Dylan Conte. They have inspired me, and I learned a lot from Dylan Conte

last summer when we rode together.

Andrew: Danny MacAskill, anyone that rides Red Bull Rampage.

9. What kind of bike are you riding right now?

Tucker: Norco Fluid, full suspension.

Andrew: Transition Bandit.

10. What else would you like to tell people?

Tucker: Do not overthink things.

Andrew: Speed equals balance. Try riding a little faster than you are comfortable riding and see how much more you can do.



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THANK YOU!

The Stowe Mountain Bike Club would like to extend a huge thank you to all of the members and partners that enable this organization to continue building, maintaining and protecting Stowe's ever-expanding trail network.

If you haven't yet had a chance to join or renew for 2016, it's not too late! The season is just getting started and your membership contribution is as meaningful as ever. We're proud to represent Stowe's mountain bike community and look forward to more great things in the years to come. Happy trails!

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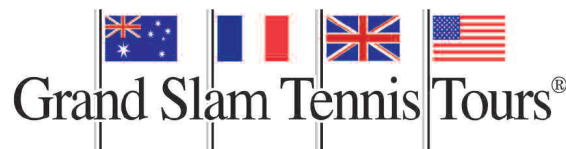
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Special thanks to the Stowe Reporter for supporting mountain biking in Stowe and helping to promote the Stowe Mountain Bike Club.

Ride



Photo by Mike Hitelman

Mountain biking isn't completely about pushing the envelope and adrenalin rushes. The options include some pretty sedate rides through beautiful stretches of the Stowe-Waterbury area.

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STOWE MOUNTAIN BIKE CLUB

rider profile: Jasmine Bigelow

- Name: Jasmine Bigelow
- Occupation: Marketing director, Stowe Area Association
- Hometown: Stowe (via Wolcott)
- Number of years riding: 2 seasons. My first single-track ride was July 5, 2014.
- Favorite local trail: You want me to choose? OK. Bears.
- Favorite nonlocal trail: I've only ridden local. Well, I explored Kingdom Trails with friends one day, and it was awesome. I wasn't paying attention to maps and names, though. I was too busy having a blast.
- Riding partners: Lisa Carey and Cathy Hirce were my very first ride partners (love you both!) Now, I've got a long list of others. Lots of women, especially. This community loves to ride, and ride together. All season long, my phone is dinging with group texts of impromptu invites. But, I also love to mix in early morning solo rides.
- Smooth and groomed or rough and rooty: Both. Definitely both. Variety is important to me. I think in most situations, you need one to appreciate the other.
- Weapon of choice (current bike, list any fancy or unfancy upgrades): Specialized Myka FSR Elite. Straight up, off the shelf. Myka's been very good to me. We are buddies.

Most memorable ride: Uh — there have been so many. Lots of milestones for me, and I remember them all. I don't want to bore you.

To Strava or not to Strava: Strava for fun only. Not to compete with myself or anyone else. Just for curiosity. (Of course, if I ever showed up in the top 10, I might get more competitive. I'm usually in the bottom 10, so it's in my best interest to just have fun with that technology!)

Post-ride beverage of choice: Prosecco. Always prosecco!

Tell us how you got into mountain biking: Ha! Oh boy. It's a really long story that involves heartache and thievery and temptation and secrecy and lobbying and friendship. It's fascinating, but you'll have to wait for the movie to come out. Or, share a bottle of prosecco with me after a ride and ask again.

In the end, what's important is that as soon as I rode 20 feet on my first single-track in the woods



Courtesy photo

Jasmine Bigelow with an excellent view of Vermont.

on a mountain bike, I was totally happy and totally hooked. Actually, I'm pretty sure that's how the story begins, not how it ends — lucky me!

You're a big yoga practitioner. Do you think that helps with your skills on a mountain bike? Yoga helps with everything. On a mountain bike and elsewhere. I'm very strong. And that's because of yoga. But, where I get the most benefit is in practicing my breathing skills. In the yoga studio, Zoe (Bikram Yoga Stowe) will always say, "The only thing you need to do in here is breathe. Steady and calm, in and out through your nose. Everything else is optional. If you get to a point in a posture where you're not breathing, you've gone too far."

Always go back to your breath. It's what fuels your body and calms your mind. That is true outside the studio as well. Like, on Snake and Pipeline!

Some words of encouragement for anyone looking to give mountain biking a try: Don't let fear stop you! It's a very supportive bike community. We're not all hard-chargers and gear-heads, and even the really rad riders are friends with new riders.

Take a lesson. You'll learn some skills that will give you the confidence to get out there.

Find a riding friend, which will lead to more riding friends.

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SOME ENCOURAGEMENT FOR ANYONE LOOKING TO GIVE MOUNTAIN BIKING A TRY: DON'T LET FEAR STOP YOU! IT'S A VERY SUPPORTIVE BIKE COMMUNITY. WE'RE NOT ALL HARD-CHARGERS AND GEAR-HEADS, AND EVEN THE REALLY RAD RIDERS ARE FRIENDS WITH NEW RIDERS."



Photo by Gordon Miller

Heading into the woods just seems to put a smile on every mountain biker's face.

A beginner's perspective: This is a contagious sport

By Gordon Hay

After years of chasing snowflakes and wind, I decided to learn what this mountain bike hype was all about.

My ski/board friends kept telling me that mountain biking in Stowe was as wild and adventurous as skiing the famed Mansfield backcountry on an epic powder day. I found that hard to believe, as I had spent most of my winters skiing backcountry and most summers offshore racing sailboats.

The only bike I owned was a beach cruiser used to get libations after spending long days on the ocean.

My perception of cycling has completely changed. I moved back to Stowe and decided to jump into this new world of active fun. I purchased my mountain bike and was surprised to find it didn't have any pedals!

So I just transferred the ones over from my old beach cruiser. How hard

can this be? Any 2-year-old can ride a bike, right?

I rode to the highly acclaimed Cady Hill Forest. My friend Dave met me there and LOL'd when I showed up looking like a first-time skier with 150cm parabolics and rear-entry boots on the wrong feet on a powder day.

Seriously, I had beach cruiser pedals, Vans skate shoes, a Bern Snowboard helmet and my biggest mistake — unpadded shorts!

"OK," he says, "follow me and keep up." As I rounded the first few corners, I soon realized how out of cycling shape I was. I'm a nonsmoker, but I was gasping for air as if I had been chain-smoking for 20 years. Everyone, including grandma and her short-legged, overweight dog, passed me.

After several panting stops of sweat and tears, I finally reached the top of the Cady

See 'Beginner' on Page 16

Advanced rider perspective: I get anxious if I don't ride

By Matt Gauthier

I got into cycling as a way to get healthy — it helped me drop my weight from 360 pounds to half that and keep it there for the last 10 years.

It is low-impact and made me feel great, plus it beats being in a gym on a sunny afternoon anytime.

I always loved biking around South Burlington with my buddies when we were young, finding trails to cut through town fast, but it wasn't until I found it again in my early 20s that I truly gained an appreciation and made it a essential part of my life. Now, I get anxious if go more than a couple of days without a ride.

I started off with road riding a lot while I lived and worked in New Zealand, but in the past few years, my attention has gravitated almost entirely to mountain biking (other than commuter riding). There is not much better feeling than buzzing by trees, roosting dirt, speeding down rocky slopes, careening

at full speed, hitting that berm, trying not to case the double, then stopping to breath and take in the view.

It's exciting and exhilarating, but healthy, safe and fun.

I tend to ride by myself quite a bit, which is great exercise and still a ton of fun, but I really enjoy a ride with a group of people who are as psyched up for a long ride as I am. The energy you get from others adds to the excitement and makes you push yourself harder, longer and faster (especially when you ride with people way faster than yourself).

Some of my favorite rides have been group- or race-based.

Stowe is quickly becoming a mountain bike mecca — so many trails all over that you can link together to make some truly epic rides.

One of my favorites from last year was the Stowe Mountain Bike Club's annual Leaf Blower in the fall. Starting at Cady

See 'Advanced' on Page 16

A BRIEF HISTORY OF MOUNTAIN BIKING

Courtesy of the
Marin Museum of Bicycling

There's a lot of history, information and misinformation floating around about the origins of mountain biking — some that's well researched and some that depends on who had the best public relations firm — and the biggest printing press.

Mountain biking has existed in one form or another since the dawn of cycling. Few roads were paved in the 19th century, so most early cyclists rode on dirt roads or trails.

Some examples of early off-road riding stand out. One is the 25th Infantry Bicycle Corps, a regiment of riders who customized bicycles to carry gear over rough terrain. In August 1896, the riders, black enlisted men and a white lieutenant, rode from Missoula, Mont., to Yellowstone National Park and back — an arduous trip, to be sure. Their mission: to test the bicycle for military use in mountainous terrain. The following year they rode still farther, from Missoula to St. Louis.

Another fascinating example is the Velo Cross Club Parisien, composed of about 20 young bicyclists from the outskirts of Paris. Their riding between 1951 and 1956 was remarkably akin to present-day mountain biking. These riders juiced up their French 650-B bikes with an extraordinary degree of technical sophistication.

History has seen many other isolated occurrences of off-road riding, and people who modified existing bikes for off-road use. Many are barely remembered.

One of the best known is John Finley Scott, an off-road cycling enthusiast in the United States. In 1953 he assembled what he called a "Woodsie Bike," using a Schwinn World diamond frame, balloon tires, flat handlebars, and derailleur gears.

Today's sport of mountain biking evolved through a series of connected events, with the involvement of many people. Mt. Tamalpais in Marin County is generally regarded as the birthplace of the sport and of the mountain bike.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, a group of Marin teenagers known as the Larkspur Canyon Gang rode 1930s-40s vintage single-speed balloon-tire bikes on Mount Tamalpais and through Baltimore Canyon in Larkspur, Calif. Their exploits and attitudes earned them status as local legends and spawned the birth of mountain biking as it grew beyond their circle of friends.

By 1973, "Ballooners" had found their way into the hearts and minds of a group of Marin road-bike racers from Velo Club Tamalpais. Devoted to racing their road bikes and to using bikes for transportation (many of them worked in local bike shops), they

added off-road riding to their cycling passions.

They located, restored and collected old balloon-tire bikes made by Schwinn, Colson, Shelby and others—stripping off extraneous parts from the old mild-steel steeds, but retaining the heavy-duty 1-inch-pitch drive trains and vying for who had the coolest original paint.

The finest bikes of the day would be equipped with much-sought-after high-performance vintage components such as Morrow coaster brakes, Schwinn cantilever front brakes, S2 chrome rims, fork braces, and genuine B.F. Goodrich knobby tires.

These riders and a growing group of friends explored the trails and fire roads on and around Mount Tamalpais, aka "The Mountain," on their trusty, beloved "Inch-Pinchers."

Another example from the early 1970s was a band of cyclists, the Cupertino Riders, aka the Morrow Dirt Club, from 75 miles south of Marin, who were modifying their bikes. They were grafting thumb-shift-operated derailleurs and motor-cycle-lever-operated drum brakes onto their klunkers to help them get up and down the south bay hills.

In December 1974 a few of them came to a Marin County cyclocross race, where their technology was noticed. Then they went on to other pursuits.

In Marin County, the off-road riders not only kept on riding, they started the first organized downhill race series. They called it Repack, because they had to "repack" their coaster brakes with fresh grease after each race. The grease would vaporize in the excessive heat generated from extreme braking during the super-steep descent.

More and more Marin riders got involved. More and more innovation occurred. Eventually coaster brakes and inch-pitch drive trains gave way to lightweight components and completely new bikes with chro-moly frames specifically designed for the sport.

The media were starting to notice — in fact, some of the local riders were writers as well, adept at spreading the word. New businesses formed to sell off-road bikes and market them. A renaissance of bicycling had begun.

The origins of mountain biking were totally innocent. The sport and the bike came into being not as some faddist vision of profit-oriented marketing types, or from any one single person, but rather as the evolving product of true cycling enthusiasts doing what they loved.

These cyclists found through fun and competition that the old one-speed "Klunkers" they were using could be improved with modern cycling technology. One innovation led to another and mountain biking as we know it today was born.

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Ride

Beginner from Page 14

Hill climb. I was both stunned at the view, and at the fact that I actually made it there.

OK, now it was time for the F-U-N everyone talks about — the trail Florence or, if you are fortunate enough to meet the amazing Sue (BTW, don't blink; she's kinda fast), Sue says, "Let's go to Flo!"

Right then, I quickly realized what the hype was all about. Flo is a cross between an Olympic luge and skiing Hell Brook (amazing Stowe backcountry). Insane! Ripping through the woods and around perfectly tailored banked corners, I knew right then I was hooked. I also knew why padded shorts are worth every penny.

Well, that was my Day One. Sue was there to greet me at the bottom and congratulate me with an invite to a local gathering for a local rock-star cyclist. I showed

up, for what in my opinion completed a three-part recipe for any great sport: one part sport, one part nature, one part people!

Sue's après-ride party was like a scene out of the Hobbit — every kind of cycling creature came out of the forest: giants, elves and woolen-clad wizards. All had that "great day of adventure" grin on their faces.

Sue opened her fridge, packed with every beer that people wait in lines for. I had a Heady Topper in one hand and a Sip of Sunshine in the other. What else could possibly go right? I had found my new home.

That was the story of Day One. By Day Three, I could ride without gasping for air, and now, at Week Three, I am pleased to say I can almost keep up with my new "forest" of Stowe MTB friends.

I honestly wake up every day and think, "I can't wait to ride." Mountain biking truly is a contagious sport.

Advanced from Page 14

Hill, riding through Strawberry Hill Farm to Pipeline then Adams Camp and Trapps before heading back through Strawberry and Cady down the wicked fast and fun Bear's trail to the start.

Such a wide variety of terrain and challenge. It ran the gamut from sweet, blistering fast-flow trails to rocky, rooty, long uphill slogfests — all enjoyed by the group I was riding with. A great experience, to say the least.

That's but a taste of the sweet single-track bliss — there are still so many trails interspersed along the way to change it up a little bit every time you ride. Plus Sterling Forest is gem, along with early and late-season rides in Cotton Brook. You have Brewster River and Smuggs trail networks just over the hill in one direction, then down the hill you've got Waterbury's Perry Hill and a little farther still

the Mad River Riders networks — so many options it's hard to decide where to start and end.

One of my favorite ways to spend a day is starting with a morning ride around Perry Hill's Burning Spear, Rastaman and Joe's trails, then hitting up Cady Hill after lunch for some fast FLO-wy laps snaking through the forest, topped off by a cold brew just about anywhere along Mountain Road.

I started mountain biking with an old Trek hardtail that I upgraded over time; no need to spend big bucks to have a great time — though, as the years pass and my obsession seeks to find a boundary, I do spend a considerable chunk of my paycheck on bikes and parts now.

Today, I've got a sweet Salsa Beargrease fat bike — a true year-round one-bike-quiver kind of ride — but that doesn't stop me from ogling all the beautiful new trail bikes showing up in bike shops these days.

One day, they will be mine....

There is not much better feeling than buzzing by trees, roosting dirt, speeding down rocky slopes, careening at full speed, hitting that berm, trying not to ease the double, then stopping to breathe and take in the view.



DOC PONDS

BIKERS WELCOME! (HIPSTERS USE SIDE DOOR)



Photo by Gordon Miller

Fat bikes are showing up more and more, and not just on rough terrain. Here, a group of mountain bikers heads down the Stowe Recreation Path as a family comes the other way, with Dad riding a fat bike and towing a child carrier.

FAT BIKES SAVED OUR WINTER

By Ryan Thibault

The winter of 2015-16 was arguably the best in history — for a small crew of fat-bikers headquartered out of a small bike shop in Stowe.

Low snowpack presented a unique opportunity. Mountain bike trails were exact replicas of their dirt-summer-selves, only smoother with shallow snow blanketing the rooty terrain. There was no need to shovel out the berms, no snowblown bench-cuts to recut. With the lack of arduous foot-grooming (snowshoeing) and hand tooling, we were left with a new option: ride daily.

Like a kids' club in a tree fort, we made plans to meet for our adventures at iRide each evening. Andrew, Max Shredly and I would assemble at the bike shop as Jarrod closed out the till. Post-work meetings brought excited discussions of pedal-powered adventures into the nighttime woods. Lights were mounted to bikes, tire pressures adjusted, frame bags and flasks were filled and into the deep we would ride.

"Where should we head tonight? Sterling Valley? Loops? Adams Camp?" For the first time, all options were open.

On the balmy January day of the Überwinter Fatbike Fest, over 23 miles of trail were running! This was a record for Stowe. That day, we rode all the available mileage with over 150 guest riders from all over the Northeast. While Ol' Man Winter had dealt a bad hand to the ski hill, he had dolled out a straight flush to us. The trails rolled like a well-organized fatbike touring center had engineered and maintained them.

Mid and late winter brought more favorable conditions. On occasion, temps would spike, and rain ensued followed by deep



Courtesy photo

Ryan Thibault is co-founder of Mountain Bike Vermont, mbvt.com.

freeze, turning low-lying trails into formidable icy luge runs. On these occasions, we sought refuge high up on the valley walls, where the snowpack was three times deeper and the rain line started hundreds of feet below. These were my favorite rides.

While we received reports from around the region of abominable no-snow conditions, our stash of trails looked like a snow globe paradise.

Like surfers discovering a hidden break, we knew we were lucky. Blessed in our bubble, we reveled in the unexpectedly prime conditions. Winter 2015-16 was all-time!

Ryan Thibault is co-founder of Mountain Bike Vermont — mbvt.com — and co-author of a comprehensive guide to mountain biking in the Green Mountain State.



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Rick Sokoloff, one of the prime movers in the birth of the Stowe Mountain Bike Club, heads uphill in the Cady Hill Forest.

Photo by Gordon Miller



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BIKE SHOP OWNER:

Four most common bike setup mistakes

By Paul Hammond
Owner of iRide

Bikes these days are pretty amazing machines. But with the amount of bells and whistles, it's imperative that you take the time to ensure your bike is set up properly to perform its best.

Here's a list of the four most common bike setup errors we see at the shop, and how to remedy them.

- Way too much tire pressure.

Yes, it says on the tire that you can inflate to 65 PSI (pounds per square inch), but please don't. Overinflated tires reduce your bike's ability to gain traction and adhere to the trail. Twenty to 30 PSI is appropriate for most of the terrain we have here in Stowe. As a rule of thumb, you can also run 2 to 3 PSI less in the front tire than the rear.

- Suspension out of sync.

Does your bike feel like a chopper when you sit on it? Neither the shock (in the rear) nor the fork should compress more than about 20 to 30 percent when you sit on your bike wearing your riding gear.

If you're not familiar with how to properly set your suspension's sag, come on down to the shop and we'll help get you set up. Owning a shock pump and knowing how to use it is key to maximizing the performance of your suspension.

The difference between perfect

performance and mediocrity can sometimes be just a few pounds of pressure.

- Brake lever and shifter organization on the bars.

Does it look like your grips are keeping everything else from falling off the bars? Take the time to line up your brake levers both vertically and horizontally — make sure the angle is comfortable and aligns with your hand and wrist.

Line up your shifters with your thumbs, as well. Brakes and shifters both rotate and slide with a simple adjustment (usually a 4- or 5-millimeter Allen key) so it's really easy to get the proper alignment.

With modern hydraulic disc brakes, just the index finger pulling on the end of the lever is enough to slow you down. No need for two-finger braking anymore.

- Narrow handlebars.

This was a trend from the 1990s that unfortunately still lingers. True, narrow bars might fit through trees better, but in every other application, narrow bars aren't doing you any favors.

Narrow handlebars are often accompanied by a stem that's too long, which negatively affects steering precision. Tip: If the stem is longer than the travel on the fork, it's too long.

Simply putting a wider set of bars and shorter stem on a bike often drastically increases the level of comfort and control.

Take time to ensure your bike is set up properly.



Photo by Gordon Miller

Mountain bikers move along the fast-flow Bear's Trail in Cady Hill Forest, which shows up frequently on lists of favorite local trails.

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