geneva13

a zine of the local

#12

Details, Details

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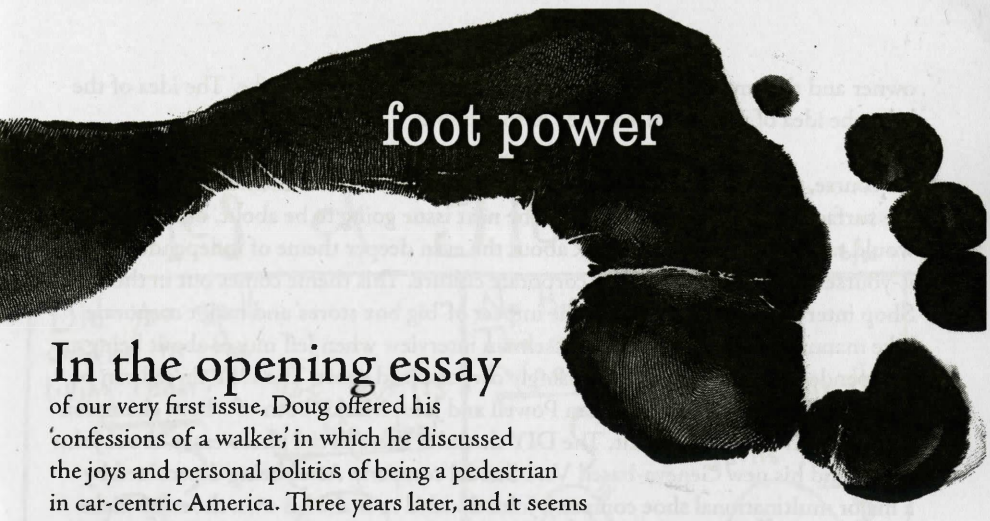


foot power

In the opening essay

of our very first issue, Doug offered his 'confessions of a walker,' in which he discussed the joys and personal politics of being a pedestrian in car-centric America. Three years later, and it seems we've come full circle. Or, perhaps, we're still at the same place, just slightly older and in well-worn shoes. After all, it seems most people in Geneva recognize me primarily as the guy walking around town pulling his kids in a little red wagon.

When people asked us what the theme for this issue was going to be, we had several answers. The short answer was 'foot power.' The three interviews that make up the bulk of this issue focus on foot power—walking, running, pedaling, and, to a much lesser extent, swimming—and how they relate to Geneva. There are two interviews with the Geneva Bicycle Center—one with owner Jim Hogan and another with his five employees—and one with Jeff Henderson, the founder of Geneva's Musselman Triathlon. But as you read this issue, it will probably be apparent that when talking about 'foot power,' we don't just mean physical strength. Though, the stunning achievements of triathlon athletes are nothing to sneeze at.

When we framed this issue around 'foot power' we were also thinking about the power to enact social change. Social change can happen on many levels, and in our discussion with Jim Hogan, we note how effective social change often takes place at the local level, something James Haswell addresses in his last transmission as 'The Genevan.' Social change tends to be slow, with its effects accumulating over time. It is often only in hindsight that one can see the process of change unfolding—perhaps a little bit like the gradual advance (and retreat) of the glaciers discussed by N.C. Arens and D.C. Kendrick in this issue. But social transformation is an ongoing process, played out most significantly at the local level. And this issue addresses some of the ways that foot-related activities are tied to social change in and around Geneva. Like the creation of a new sandal company in town that strives to have as minimal impact on the environment as possible, bucking the trend of setting up shop abroad without much thought to the costly ecological impact of production and distribution. Like the creation of a local triathlon that is driven by a level of community engagement unmatched by other such sporting events. Like a little bike shop that grows into one of the country's top ranked stores because the people who run it—and we mean the

owner and the employees—believe so deeply in the 'idea of the bike.' The idea of the bike, the idea of the sandal, the idea of foot power.

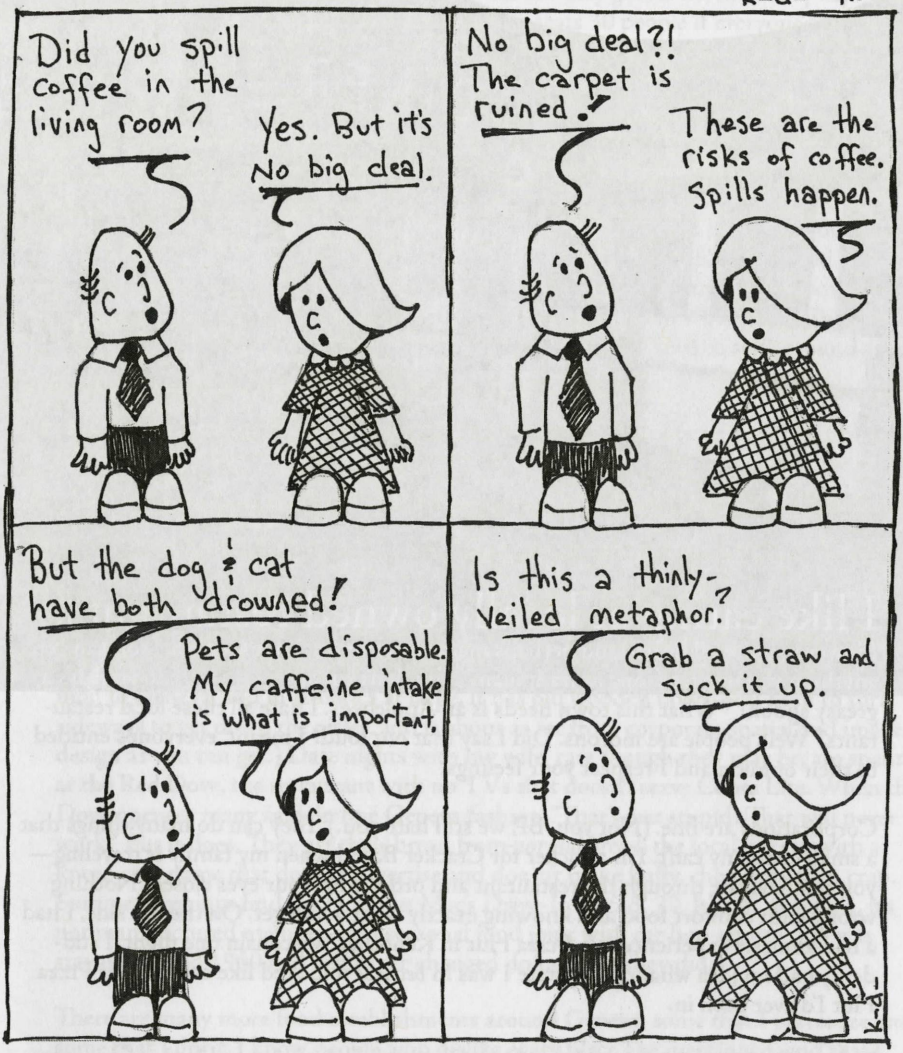
Of course, we like to think that most of our issues have other themes lurking below the surface. To the question 'What is the next issue going to be about,' occasionally we would take a deep breath and talk about the even deeper theme of independent do-it-yourself (DIY) culture versus corporate culture. This theme comes out in the Bike Shop interview when we discuss the impact of 'big box stores' and major corporate bike manufacturers, and in the Musselman interview when Jeff muses about being an independent triathlon in an increasingly corporatized sport. The DIY thread can be seen in the contributions by Ethan Powell and John Marks, both of whom champion the local and the independent. The DIY thread is there in the photo essay about John Eades and his new Geneva-based Vere Sandal company. After being downsized by a major multinational shoe company, John decided to make his own shoes, to make them better, and to make them here.

Recently, when we gave that longer answer—DIY culture versus corporate culture—to a friend, she responded: 'But isn't that what all the issues of Geneva13 are really about?' Yeah, OK, you got us there. But if there is a theme worth revisiting over and over, it is the theme of self-empowerment. Because that is what DIY is about. On one level it is about developing your own set of skills and reducing your dependence on others (For example, because I am literate and can read instructions, I have taught myself how to do my own plumbing and electrical wiring. There is something deeply liberating in that). But I'm actually talking about something more significant than being able to change your own light bulb. The DIY ethos is about dis-alienating yourself. Political thinkers from as far back as Hegel have groused about how modern life alienates all of us. The daily grind of employment (work harder!) and the onslaught of market-led media (buy more!) leave us alienated from ourselves and each other. Economic, political and social forces seem far away, well beyond our reach. They affect us, but we seem to have no effect on them. We become passive consumers, because the system needs us to be passive consumers. The DIY ethos is a rejection of that process and a way of reconnecting ourselves. It is about seeing how we do have economic, political and social power.

Twelve issues ago, we opened this zine by singing the praises of walking. And just for a minute think about what it would mean if you—yes, you—started walking more often, started biking more often. Instead of driving the mile or two to Wegmans or to see Myra at the post office, what if you walked or rode your bike? You'd feel better, your health would improve, and your personal 'ecological footprint'—the measure of human demand on the Earth's ecosystems—would actually decrease. It doesn't have to be every day. Maybe just a few times a week. And if half of us did that at least twice a week, that would be a major social change impacting Geneva and beyond. DIY is about not waiting for someone else to do something for us, but doing it ourselves. It's about transforming ourselves from passive consumers into active producers. It's about social change on the most immediate level possible: the individual. You can do it.

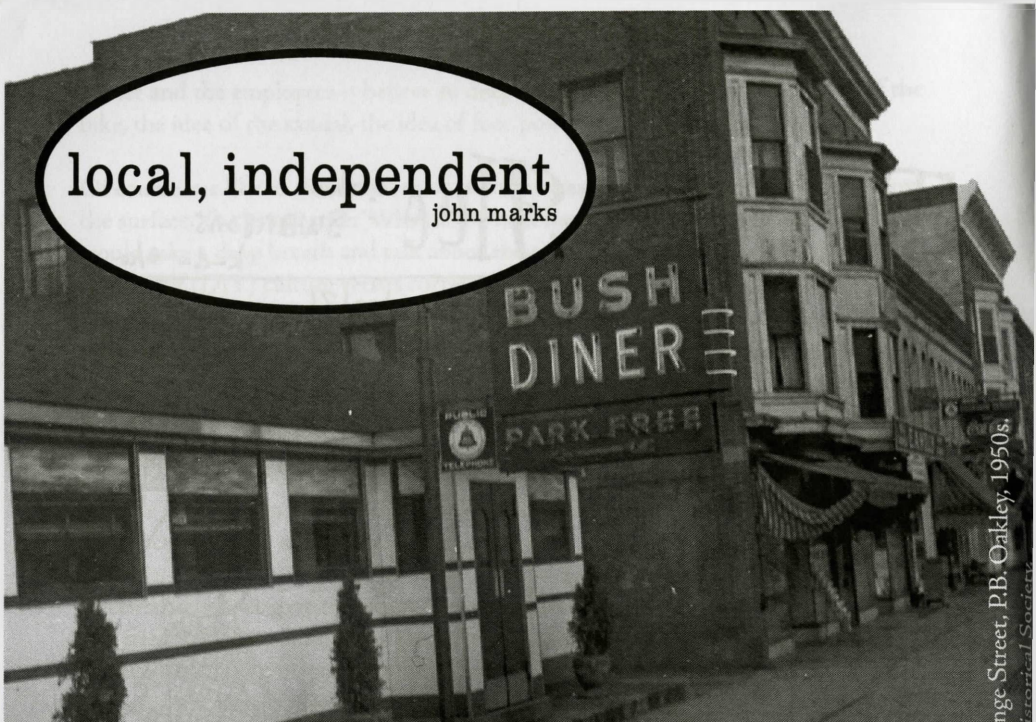
Tales of Glee: the Swansons

k-d- 6/10



local, independent

john marks



Bush's Diner on Exchange Street, P.B. Oakley, 1950s. Courtesy of Geneva Historical Society.

I like eating at locally owned restaurants.

However, we've all heard, and perhaps made, comments about Geneva. "You can get anything you want, as long as it's Italian." "You don't eat at _____, do you? It's a greasy spoon!" "What this town needs is an Applebee's. I hate all these local restaurants." Well, people are morons. Did I say that out loud? I meant, everyone's entitled to their opinion and I respect your feelings.

Corporations are fine. (Not you, BP, we still hate you.) They can do many things that a small company can't. I'm a sucker for Cracker Barrel when my family is traveling—you can navigate through the restaurant and order with your eyes closed. Nothing wrong with comfort food and knowing exactly what you'll get. On the flip side, I had a bad amnesia experience in a Pizza Hut in Kenosha, Wisconsin one night. I suddenly had no idea what city or state I was in *because* it looked like every other Pizza Hut I'd ever been in.

Independent restaurants can be unique. Okay, this is America and "unique" is pretty questionable—there's a standard roster of menu items you'll find in any diner, pizza place, bar and grill, etc. But there's the *opportunity* for uniqueness. The Vice-President for Product Development and Protein Delivery Systems at corporate headquarters isn't mandating what will be served. More importantly, for me, the Human Resources department isn't training the servers how to be friendly or dictating how many pieces

of flair to wear. (Flair—the cutesy pins and buttons designed to make servers seem more fun and to establish a connection with customers. If you haven't seen the movie *Office Space*, you should; it's the ultimate comment on corporate culture.)

My all-time favorite restaurant, the Penn Yan Diner, lies outside the 13-mile radius prescribed by G13's editorial board, but what are they gonna do, take away my birthday? It's in a 1920s dining car that maybe seats 30 people if everyone's had a shower and tucks in their elbows. There are no private conversations, anything is open for comment by anyone else. Harassing the waitresses and the cook is *de rigeur*, and they'll harass you right back. Food is cooked behind the counter; you don't have to wonder if the turkey is "turkey roll" or real bird because you can watch it being carved. You can order stuff that Bennigan's and Chili's will never have on their menu, like liver and onions or codfish gravy (every Friday night, get there early). You will eat pie, and you will love it, and you won't be given the recipe regardless how long you beg. The Diner's not a business, it's a sacred trust. The last time the place changed hands, the old owner stayed on for six months to make sure the new guy learned how to make everything correctly (especially the pies) and didn't screw things up. The "new guy" is now the old guy and is selling the Diner, and it's his turn to stick around and make sure the new-new guy gets it right.

Note: Nobody will celebrate John's birthday in 2011. The editors have spoken.

I've been in Geneva almost ten years now and have my list of favorite eating places. The common denominators are: most of the food is cooked "from scratch"; I've gotten to know many of the owners; and the people who work there are genuine. I ate breakfast at the Water Street Café at 6 a.m. after my son was born; six years later, the boy lost his first tooth there, eating bacon, and the whole room cheered for him. (That's not a comment on the bacon—that tooth was long past due for falling out.) I tried my first beans and greens at the L & R. Friday night is Momberger's Night; we get subs or the hot plate special and eat while watching a family movie. (Momberger's, on North Street, is the last of the small, neighborhood groceries that used to be common in Geneva, and in America at large. It has old wooden floors, you need to turn sideways to get down the aisles, and is about as far from corporate spatial and image design as you can get.) Date nights with my wife, rare though they may be, are spent at the Red Dove, the restaurant with no TVs that doesn't serve Coors Lite. When the Dove opened, many said, in fine Geneva fashion, "That's just stupid! That will never work." But it does. They get their bread from *normal bread*, the local bakery with a lower-case name that doesn't advertise and doesn't make fluffy, chemical-laden crap. Summer evenings find my family at Mac's Drive-In on 5 & 20. It's not nostalgia, it's not manufactured memory, it's a seasonal food joint with car hop service that was started around 1960 and just never changed doing what they did.

There are many more food establishments around Geneva, some that I patronize and some that I don't. I know people who dislike every place I've mentioned, and that's okay. But if you don't like my picks, I hope you eat at other locally owned restaurants. It saddens me to hear comments like, "I don't care how many Italian restaurants you have, I want to eat at Olive Garden—why don't you have one here?" As much as we enjoy Cracker Barrel on our trips, we've started eating at independent restaurants as well. We've found some bad food, we've found some awesome food, but either way we've supported people who are personally invested in their business. Isn't small business supposed to be part of the American Dream?

geneva on foot

gabi mrvova

The very first time I walked around

Geneva, I got frustrated. My frustration was not caused by anything that Geneva did or did not do, but I didn't know that at the time. I didn't know that I was up against something bigger than Geneva, bigger than I could possibly imagine.

I tried to walk up South Main toward the Colleges. I came to this town late the night before and I started walking without even knowing where the downtown was. I knew that the lake was on my left and I was looking for a path to go down to it. My sense was that the downtown had to be really close to the lake. If I could only get to it. I soon reached the 5&20 overpass. I did not know the name of the road back then, all I knew was that the drivers going down the hill towards the lake had a beautiful view. There it is! How do I get closer?

Clearly, the lake was spreading in the direction I was walking, just down below. I kept going towards the Colleges but my intention was to find a little path in between the houses (it sure must be here somewhere...) which I could take to the lake, which seemed so close!

I could not find any. It all looked like private gardens to me with no path for strangers. I walked back, climbed down to 5&20 and walked on the side of the crazy busy highway that morning, to the bend where I could take pictures of the lake. It is a view that the drivers have but no pedestrian could ever enjoy, except for me, a crazy foreigner not used to being limited physically like this. Not that in my country people can walk on highways. But somehow the pedestrians always got to places first, before the cars and highways bent the landscape to their logic. Pedestrians make little networks of shortcuts, back paths and seemingly-hidden trails, and the road by foot can still be more pleasant than driving.

I did not stay there for long, obviously. I climbed back up to South Main and walked past the Colleges and even further, on the sidewalk, towards the end of the town. In my country, the end of a town means fields, woods, dirt roads, and public space. Even if the fields are private, the road that leads to them or winds down in between them is public, for everyone to use. And more importantly there's official hiking trails, some heading to hills, forests or just connecting one village with another through an alternative path (not just the road for cars).

I came to the last house on the left side of South Main (14 South) and realized there was nowhere else to go. It ended abruptly and 14 South did not look inviting to a frustrated pedestrian.

Sometimes you only learn what you have when you don't have it anymore. It took me several years to understand fully my feelings of physical confinement as a pedestrian. It doesn't seem to bother locals, nor really any of the Americans I dared speak to about this. Most of them just gave me this blank look. It's like explaining what it feels like to walk on the Moon. You can have an idea but until you do it, you only think you know what it feels like.

I was very lucky to be raised in a country of 5 million people with 14,000 km of hiking trails (8,700 miles). I am not talking about trails created randomly by local enthusiasts. All the marking on these trails is done according to a state norm that defines the size, colors, shape, technical level, and appropriate location of the markings. This makes it extremely easy to navigate the system anywhere in the country. My home country's trail system is one of the best in Europe. But if you're raised with something you don't know is the best, you take it as a norm.

Say you're taking a 5-hour hike to your hometown's biggest hill. It would not start on a big parking lot on the bottom of the hill. The trailhead would be downtown, in the town square. It would continue by the town creek, pass some people's back yards, over a small bridge, to a dirt road and then to the woods up, up, up a steep hill, into the woods. Not private by the way. You would not see any "No Trespassing" or "Private" signs. The wonders of nature belong to everyone.

I know, you're waiting to hear what country this is. But that is not the point of this story. It actually does not matter, since that is not going to help you, dear Genevan. I thought what might be helpful instead is to imagine relocating Geneva into my home country for a couple of months. What would happen to its geography? What would happen if it was suddenly visited en masse by outsiders, who are so used to walking and accessing all the beauties there possibly are, not by car but by foot?

THIS IS WHAT I THINK WOULD HAPPEN IF GENEVA COULD BE RELOCATED TO MY HOME COUNTRY FOR A COUPLE OF MONTHS

I think they (understand: eager pedestrians used to walking to places) would want to put up signs around the town, marking possible routes and their lengths (either by distance or time) by foot to different vistas. One such post would be right by the lake, pointing to Downtown, City Hall, Smith Opera House or in a different direction towards the Marina. This way random visitors who take 5&20 and decide to stop by the lake could see that downtown is really so close by that they could leave their car parked nicely by the lake and just walk across 5&20 and explore the streets.

New signs would also appear at the Pulteney Park pointing to Public Library, Colleges, Headless Sullivan Theater, Prouty-Chew House, you name it.

Also, different trails would appear: one would be up and down Castle Creek. Have you ever walked down by the creek from Brook Street Park? Walking by that creek is so magical. I was always amazed that this isn't a public path for everyone to enjoy openly. Yes, right now you're thinking that the land there could be private. But that's because you're home here. I'm a foreigner, remember? I come from a place where access to water is rarely not public. Creeks running through towns belonged to everyone, it used to be for practical reasons, now it should be for simple pleasure. The same is true about walking up the creek by the tennis courts. I often saw birds coming down there to drink. The shade of the trees is cooling even in the heat of summer. A public path is the best way to use that beautiful space.

A couple of other trails could explore some nice streets in Geneva. And I don't mean just South Main. Some of my favorite to walk around are Washington, Lyceum, Elmwood Avenue or Castle Street, to name just a few. To walk around the Washington St. Cemetery is very meditative and beautiful in any season. Also, have you ever checked out the Genesee Park? The big old trees just call to be run around and used for hide and seek by kids. And it's a stone throw from downtown. Trails could help not only the visitors but local people to focus on and cherish the local beauties and check them out any time of the year (yes, with proper gear we can walk in winter, too)...

The trails would get different funky names, the maps (yes, of course there would be maps) would have clear explanations about the character (historic, nature, architecture) of the trail as well as its difficulty and length, with detailed commentaries about particular points of interest at each trail. And the maps would be easily (free!) accessible in downtown businesses...

I could go on and on... but the question is, what would happen to this transformed Geneva when, after the couple of months of relocation and transformation, it would come back from my home country, here to where it belongs. Would the trails be used, would the locals be curious to see what they have, would they embrace the idea? Or would they look suspiciously from their porches at some daring tourists with maps in their hands, walking around?

Earlier, I talked about my frustration over my physical confinement as a pedestrian. My inability to walk outside of Geneva on foot (without getting run over by a car) made me feel like a prisoner. I don't think proposing a trail between, let's say Canandaigua and Geneva or Geneva and Phelps would be feasible right now. But there is a whole lot of other options, locally, already laid out, trails to be named and enjoyed. What is your favorite walking route?

(photo by a. greenwood)

dared

dared to dream
dared to hope
carefully built walls
broken down
to let light in
love came and
blew my world apart
everything bloomed

everything shattered
take the rubble
rebuild the walls
stronger
nothing will get through
new barriers
a gift from you
to build a crypt for my heart

(b. facey)

Editor's Note: This issue marks the final appearance of The Genevan, at least, the typewritten manifestos we've looked forward to for most of the zine's run. Thanks, James, for the support!

The Genevan #Final: Bridge

Well, fellow Genevans, it's sure been nice being able to talk at you about saving and changing the world. But I think I've had enough talk.

It's time to stop talking about saving and changing Geneva.

It's time to do it.

So, I'm here today to let you know that this is that final entry of the Genevan. It is also the genesis of the call to action.

May I present to you:

http://www.genevalution.com

This will be the center and headquarters for putting into action all the ideals and ideas I've been stewing and spewing for so long.
But I want you to know a secret:

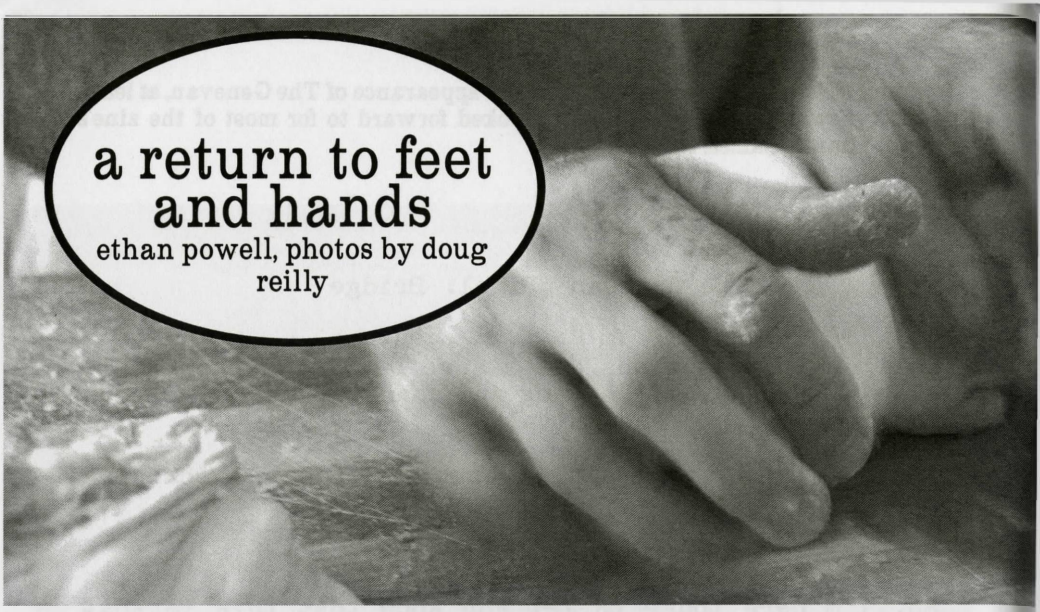
I can't do anything.

But, we, we can do something.

So do something.

Evolution.
Revolution.
Genevalution.

See you on the internets,
James Haswell (aka -g-)



a return to feet and hands

ethan powell, photos by doug reilly

It is early morning. The street outside the bakery rests under a blanket of quiet, waiting for the warming sun to begin its day. Inside, the baker is at his work, scraping the workbench of flour and dough. The mixer churns in the background while he brings the oven to temperature and checks the clock. It is almost time to put in the baguettes. He knows that this one thing is perhaps the epicenter of his art, the bread by which all other breads are judged. And his is good.

But this is not the result of a careless machine-made thing. This simple and elegant form comes only as a result of intensive personal study, an intimate relationship between two living things, communicating through touch and scent, color and texture. He is careful not to damage the dough by over mixing, or exposing it to too much heat, or too little water or an overindulgence of salt. This is his creature, a thing he has created and must care for, since it not only sustains life for others, but is also his life's blood, his living, his bread. He does this daily, while we sleep, while we care for the children and the elderly, while we feed our pets and worry about our problems.

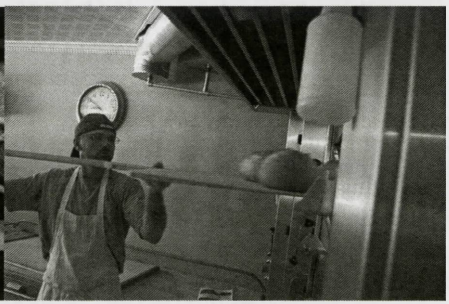
And later, in the light of the afternoon sun, a cyclist leans her bicycle against the large plate glass window of the bakery. Her reflection watches while she collects her bag from the trailer and checks to make sure she has enough money for what she needs. The bakery door is open and she enters, moving from the floral scent of spring to the earthy scent of yeasty fermentation. The young man behind the counter greets her in clumsy French, and does his best to make the shop a reminder of her home in the mountains between France and Spain. But she has not come for conversation, she has come for one thing alone...la baguette, and in buying it provides life for herself and for the baker. In summer and winter she comes. In rain and snow she peddles to accomplish this simple task, and accomplish it she does. Though many may not know

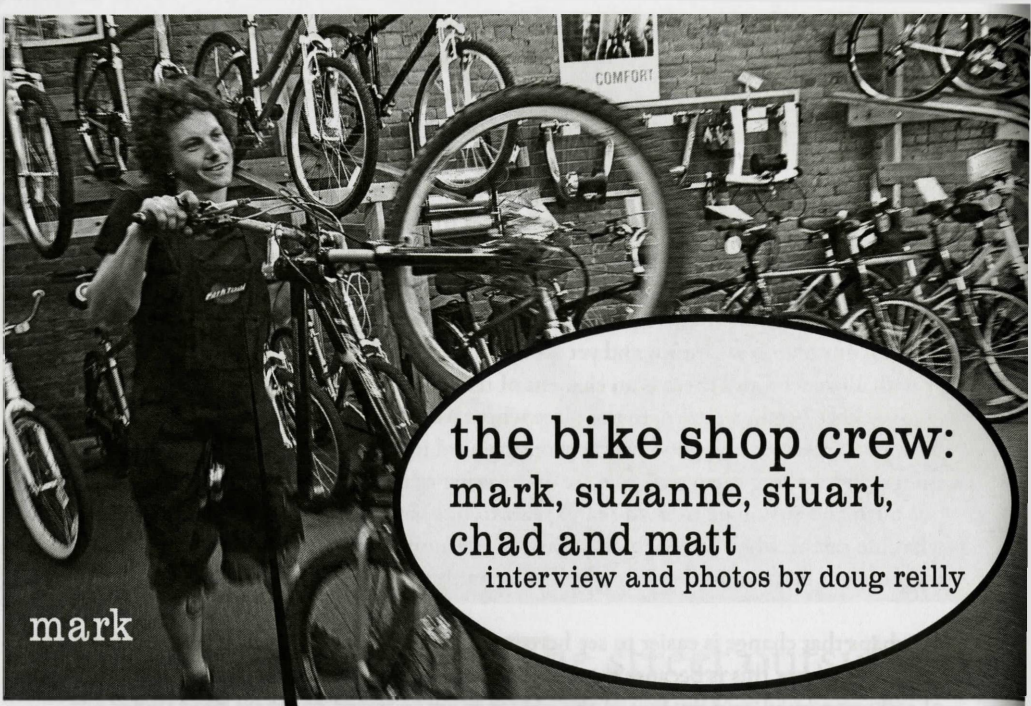
of it, this routine has come to symbolize at the immediately local level, a shift in the Finger Lakes region, and in many other parts of the country.

We are a nation of big things. We've created huge factories that build gigantic machines, so we can erect monolithic structures that dominate a landscape. We drive large cars across the vast distances to see people and things. We've made larger animals, fruits and vegetables to deal with our expanding hunger, so we can fill our stretching pants with an increasing bulk. We consume at an increasing rate in order to fulfill our manifest destiny, and yet we are not satisfied. But this is a generality, and as with all generalities there is an element of truth at the core. But things are changing. We have begun a return, to the place where we started. We are seeing again now what our ancestors saw, good people working hard in small shops, making one or two things, and making them well. We are discovering again the traditions that gave us our birth and sustained us in the early years of our nation. We are remembering again what life can be when we let go of the need to accumulate, and realize that sometimes bigger is not better, and that just a little of something excellent can be enough.

Perhaps that change is easier to see here in Finger Lakes, than in other places in the country. Perhaps this is because there has been a desire here, since the first shovelful of soil was turned, and the first of the "old vines" was planted, to create good things. To realize a dream and to create from the mineral deposits and glacial soil the wine that has come to make this region at least semi-famous. The individuals that started that trend here nearly forty years ago sought the perfection that comes with simplicity of seeing a process through. To offer humbly to friends and family, and then to the public, the best of what they could do, start to finish. The growing collection of artisans, craftspeople and boutique farmers that have taken a firm hold here are a direct result of that action.

The trend continues in places like the Cracker Factory, a reclaimed manufacturing space, now home to art and culture. It continues in small towns across the area, where once empty store fronts are now home to microbreweries and potter's shops. Where small bicycle stores are taking time to custom fit serious bikers, and will in the same breath, change a flat tire for a twelve year-old and cut him a deal because he only has so much money. These are things to be proud of, things that make a difference in people's lives and truly make life worth living in the Finger Lakes.





the bike shop crew:
mark, suzanne, stuart, chad and matt

interview and photos by doug reilly

Can you tell us how you all came to be bike lovers?

FOR ME IT WAS A GRADUAL PROCESS. I GOT INTO IT TO GET IN SHAPE FOR...MOTORCYCLE RACING...AND THEN THIS IS JUST A BETTER WAY TO... GET AROUND.

So you shed the engine? No more motorcycles?

Well, a little bit, here and there. They're fun. But bikes are much better transportation.

Matt: I got into it in the early 90s as a teenager, when mountain biking was in its heyday. You know as a kid you're pretty open to all the advertising and the cool things and I grew up in Naples, so I had really nice trails all around me and I rode for fitness and all that, so I got into it early and then...I sorta put it away for a while and did other things and then got back into it, um...four or five years ago, really pretty hard, but I think it's more reflected on the people you hang out with, more than anything. Different type of people, different friends.

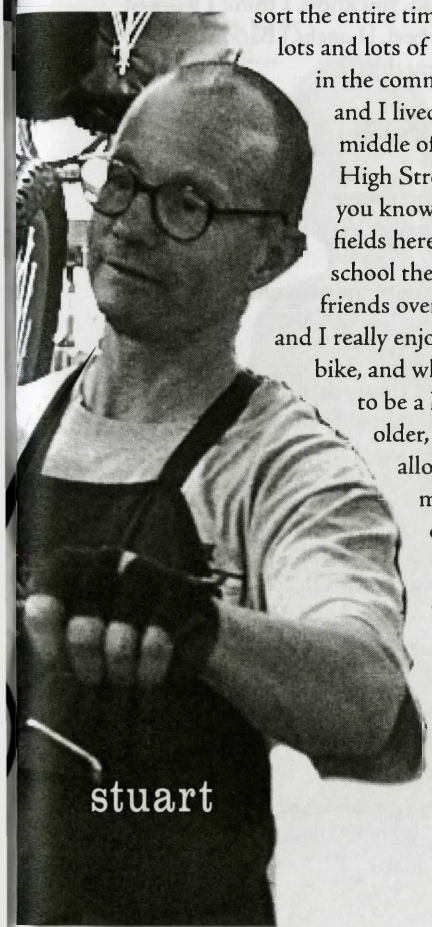
Did you start cycling because you were hanging out with bike people, or did you start hanging out with bike people because you started cycling again?

Matt: I started hanging out with more active people. So I got back into climbing, and since you can't climb all year round and you can't bike all year round, they sorta filled opposite niches.

I THINK THERE ARE TWO KINDS OF KIDS THAT GET BICYCLES AND USE BICYCLES. THERE ARE KIDS THAT SEE BICYCLES AS A LIBERATING KIND OF FORCE, YOU KNOW, FROM THEIR PARENTS. A CHANCE TO TRAVEL AND GET AROUND...

....and there are kids that do that but they see it as a transition until they can get a car, and that's the real liberating experience. And I think I was the first kind, where I found it very satisfying just riding the bicycle, you know, and later, when I took a trip to New Zealand, for a couple of months on a bike, I kinda got addicted to it.

Chad: I think for me it was a combination of what Matt described and what Stu described. I grew up in Geneva and from the time I was in second or third grade, my parents pretty much set the perimeters of 5&20, Pre-emption, and North Street, and said, pretty much anything in that big square, go nuts, and I had a bicycle of some sort the entire time and lots and lots of friends in the community and I lived in the middle of it on High Street and, you know, sports fields here and school there and friends over there and I really enjoyed my bike, and when I got to be a little bit older, my folks allowed me the opportunity to go pretty much wherever I wanted, so I could go to friends houses way out on Billsboro, and the adventure of it, you know, packing up and being ready and thinking about which way I was going to go was a big part of my mind set. And like Matt, I went away from it for a little while. For a while I lived...(something garbled) ... even though I used the bike for transportation then, it wasn't quite the sense of adventure. Then, when I was in college, I had a buddy who ran a bike shop and he said, you know, we could use a little bit of help from someone who knows a little bit about biking in general, you don't have to be a mechanic. They trained me, and I've worked in bike shops ever since.


stuart

Where was that first bike shop?

That was down in St. Mary's City, Maryland, on the Chesapeake. That's how I got associated with the Washington DC market, and I ran a bike shop there for many years before I came home. I have small children, I thought Geneva was a better place for my family...

Than Metro DC.

Yeah, exactly.

Suzanne: As a child, biking was a family thing that we did. I came from a large family—there were seven siblings—and we were always riding around together. I never remember having training wheels, I just kinda jumped on a bike and went. As a teenager, it was more transportation. I lived out in the country so if I wanted to go to town to hang out with friends, I had to ride the eight miles to get there. And then in college, I met Mark, and he was just getting out of Motorcross and getting into mountain biking, and we kinda picked it up at the

same time. And for me it's just, I really like the experiences it gives me, I get to travel and see amazing places. I enjoy mountain biking and you get to see a lot of really cool trails and I enjoy being outside. So here I am.

What's the story of this bike shop?

Mark: Originally it was a key and bike shop. It was down on the corner.

Suzanne: Ray's Bike and Key.

Mark: Yeah.

Where the hobby shop is now?

Chad: No no no...

Suzanne: Where the Four Corners frame shop is now.

Chad: That's where I bought my first bike as a kid. That was 1976.

Suzanne: And then it moved down here, and this used to be a clothing store, Baker and Stark. The building has lots of history. And it was owned by Mike... what's his last name?

Mark: Peterson.

Suzanne: And Jim bought it from him, about 14 years ago.

Chad: Something like that, yeah.

Stuart: When did the shop move from the corner to here?

Chad: Early eighties, because Mike sold hockey equipment too as well as bikes, and I bought hockey equipment here before I moved away, in 1986.

Stuart: And he could have been over there since the sixties?

Chad: I don't know how long he was there. I bought my bike from Mike when he was a younger person and that was in the mid seventies.

Mark: Mike the bike.

Stuart: I'm trying to understand, remember that...we had that old wheel...where its that wheel that hangs around...

Suzanne: One is up front, I think it actually...it got moved...

Stuart: There was this guy that came in once and he was looking at that wheel, and he said, you know, I think I worked on that wheel. [*Laughs.*] Back in the forties or something.

Mark: Wagon wheel.

Stuart: There must have been a bike shop in Geneva even then.

So Jim bought the bike shop 14 years ago...

Suzanne: I think, that was something he always wanted to do, and I think it just so happened that that Mike...wasn't doing well.

Stuart: That's a funny story. I guess Jim was out riding with Bob Schultz, and Bob said, oh you know that guy down there in Geneva is thinking about selling his bike shop, and I think he went from that conversation and rode down here and looked at the shop.

How did he gather all of you?

Suzanne: Well, it used to be just one floor, and it was Jim by himself for a long time and for a lot of winters.

Did he still do keys and hockey stuff?

Suzanne and Mark: No! Just bikes!

Suzanne: Mark's the oldest employee, and he started in 2000.

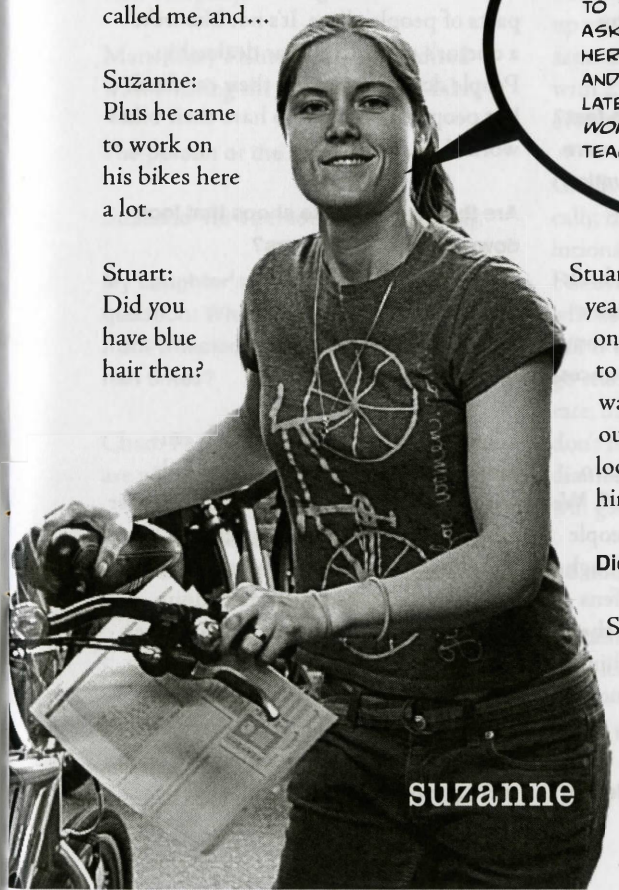
Mark: There were a number of employees before me. Jim called me, out of the blue, to work here, because he liked... how I treated Suzanne.

Suzanne: We were customers.

Mark: He just liked how we interacted, so...he said...that's the dude he wanted to work here, so he called me, and...

Suzanne: Plus he came to work on his bikes here a lot.

Stuart: Did you have blue hair then?



Mark: [After a pause.] Yeah.

Stuart: Ah-hah! Nice!

Suzanne: That was part of the thing when he got hired, was he couldn't have colored hair!

Is that true?

Mark: I couldn't have colored hair or big pants.

So you made the sacrifice.

Mark: I made the sacrifice.

I WAS A TEACHER, AND I WOULD WORK PART-TIME IN THE SUMMERS. WHEN JIM WAS THINKING OF EXPANDING TO THE SECOND FLOOR HE JOKINGLY ASKED ME IF I WANTED TO WORK HERE FULL TIME. I THOUGHT ABOUT IT AND WAS LIKE, *NO*, BUT THEN A YEAR LATER, I SAID, *YOU STILL WANT ME TO WORK HERE FULL TIME?* I GAVE UP TEACHING.

Stuart: I was a customer here for years...eight years...and I came in one day I told Jim I was going to go to United Bicycle Institute, which was a school for bicycle mechanics out in Oregon. And he said "You looking for a job?" I said, "Sure." He hired me.

Did you go to United Bicycle?

Stuart: I did, yeah.

Chad: Probably the only one of us with formal training.

Do you lord it over everyone else, the diploma?

Chad: He does.

Stuart: No. You know, UBI is a great place, but it's just an introduction. It's so short. It's three weeks. So I learned everything from Mark and Jim and Chad and Suzanne and Matt.

You must be constantly learning on the job.

Matt: Yeah, Mark and I were talking about this the other day. The technology is evolving pretty rapidly, right now. If you went on some crazy odyssey for a year, and came back, you'd be so far behind—at least with the high end bikes with constantly changing technology, parts and compatibility...

Why is the technology changing so fast? For a long time it seems that bikes were just bikes. Is it driven by real innovation or marketing?

Matt: My cynical answer is that it's built-in obsolescence. You have to have something to sell new every year. There's some of that. There's also technology advances, but I think it's more the former.

Mark: I think that there's a bit of retro grouching, to some extent, with stuff. We experienced it just the other day, people were saying that we didn't need through-axles, this new technology that stiffens up the front end. "It's good enough the way it is." Some people won't buy things off the bat. You gotta kinda introduce it slowly, then you can make it cool.

So it seems like there are two kinds of customers, those who will get whatever is new and those who will resist.

Chad: We have a lot of customers who are like us, they are daily readers and explorers of what's new, and coming out, and they're reading about the equipment and the technology, and I think just being part of it is exciting to them, and part of their emotional commitment to their recreation of cycling is...the buying process. It's an intellectually stimulating thing. It's participation in a very active process. You could read about something new every day.

Suzanne: Most customers are happy to be here.

Chad: We're dealing with the better parts of people's lives. It's not like we're a doctor's office...or a car dealership. People don't want to get their car fixed, but people are excited to have their bikes worked on.

Are there snooty bike shops that look down on their customers?

Suzanne: Oh, for sure.

Mark: Definitely.

Chad: And there are bike shops employed by low wage high school kids with no experince and that's all they ever employ, just to keep their overhead low, and thus it never grows from a technical perspective, and customers don't establish relationships, and then there's extreme opposite end of that spectrum, where you've got six fully committed adults, and that's all you see every time you come in here, every time we're open, we're the ones you see. And all of us are

just so excited to talk about bikes and stuff, there really isn't any snottery in it, we're just as happy to service some bike from some kid in a trailer park as we are some fancy carbon fiber this or that.

My six-year-old daughter wanted me to ask: What was the first brand of bicycle that the shop sold?

Mark: Gary Fisher. Jim was so stoked, he called all of his friends... *I got Gary Fisher!*

Was that a new company?

Mark: No, it had been around.

Suzanne: It was just a cool mountain bike company.

Matt: Gary Fisher is largely credited with creating the first mountain bike.

The person or the company?

Suzanne: It's a person and a company.

My daughter's babysitter gave me this question: What happened to the giant front-wheeled bicycles from the Victorian times?

Chad: Pennyfarthings or High-wheelers are what they are called.

Why were the wheels so big, and why don't they make bicycles like that any more?

Suzanne: They're dangerous!

Mark: Yeah, they killed people. It was a fixed gear, as long as it move moving, those cranks were moving, and it was hard to get on and off...

Suzanne: It was a long way to fall...

Mark: Eight feet in the air.

Why did they make them that way?

Suzanne: I think because it rolled over everything that way. I think I just read an article in one of bike magazine about it!

Stuart: Well, really the first bicycles had same-size wheels, and you scooted along.

Chad: They didn't have cranks or drives and you just sat in the seat and used your feet.

Stuart: And somebody must have come up with the Pennyfarthing. With the same idea as the 29er now, a bicycle with 29-inch wheels, that it rolls over everything.

Chad: That and the concept, mathematically, that having short crank arms, revolutionary-wise, that cover great distance. For every revolution of the crank, if the wheels are this big, you only go this far, but if the wheel is really really big, you go really far. So you can pedal at a slow rate, but travel a great distance. If you don't have changeable gears, the larger diameter wheel you have, the further you will go.

So nobody rides those anymore?

Suzanne: You still see them around at bike festivals. They are still around.

There has to be a subculture.

Chad: There is.

Suzanne: There is some guy in Ithaca that has one.

Ah...Ithaca. [*Stuart laughs*]

THE BIKE SHOP I USED TO WORK AT, WE HAD THREE OF THEM, AND WE WOULD GO ON GROUP RIDES, LARRY AND I WOULD GO AND DO A FLAT TWENTY MILE RIDE ON THESE THINGS, BUT THERE ARE PEOPLE THAT RIDE THEM ACROSS THE COUNTRY EVERY YEAR. MARK IS RIGHT, THEY ARE VERY HARD TO GET ON, BUT THEY'RE A LOT OF FUN TO RIDE. IT'S A VERY SPECIFIC TECHNIQUE BECAUSE WHEN YOU TURN YOU HAVE TO MOVE YOUR HIPS AND PEDAL AT THE SAME TIME, SO IT'S AWKWARD. TURNING IT AROUND IN A TWO LANE CITY STREET...IT TAKES PRACTICE. THERE ARE SIZES TOO, LIKE THE SIZE I RIDE IS ACTUALLY A 54 INCH.

So the truth comes out! We have a Pennyfarthing rider right here.

Chad: You can still buy them.

Suzanne: Now you know what your daughter wants for Christmas.

Chad: But not here!

Does interest in biking rise and fall? With oil prices, for example?

Chad: It definitely fluctuates. There was a big bubble in the 1990s with the whole Lance Armstrong/Tour de France thing. We attributed a lot of road bike sales to that enthuiasm. Fuel prices do contribute as well, we see more repairs on bikes in those years because people drag their bikes out of their garages and say "I'm going to ride this bike for a while."

Matt: I don't think you can directly link oil prices to bicycle interest, at least in America. It would take $10 a gallon gas.

Just wait a few years.

Chad: One of the things that Jim and I concluded last year when oil prices were so high was that it just left Americans with a little bit less disposable income, but they still filled their tank each week.

The U.S. is just built that way.

Matt: The infrastructure is just not there.

If you're all familiar with the idea of peak oil, and that we will have $10 a gallon gas, or it will simply run out, and sooner than later, where do bicycles fit in a future like that? Can bicycles save us?

Mark: I think our town would get a lot more interesting. We'd have a lot more smaller merchants, farms that were closer...

Suzanne: A localized economy. Instead of people driving to Canandaigua to go to some random hardware stores when there is two locally-owned ones that they can ride their bikes to and do without filling up the tank.

What about the bicycles themselves, with imports costing so much more because of fuel costs?

LOCAL BUILDERS. I THINK YOU'D SEE PEOPLE DOING IT THEMSELVES. SMALL, HAND-MADE, LOCALLY-MADE STUFF. AND PEOPLE WOULD BUY BETTER QUALITY STUFF, AS OPPOSED TO DRIVING TO WAL-MART TO BUY A BICYCLE THAT'S EFFECTIVELY DISPOSABLE. AND ALL THE BUSINESSES OUT ON THE STRIP WOULD GO AWAY BECAUSE...WHO WANTS TO RIDE THEIR BIKE ALL THE WAY UP WHEN THERE IS SO MUCH MORE RIGHT HERE.

Suzanne: Electric bike technology has come a long way too. You can ride 16 miles an hour with minimal effort and go 35 miles, I mean, it's way better than a car!

Has there been interest in that?

Suzanne: A little bit here and there. I don't think people know about them. They need to get out and ride them and actually experience them. They are expensive, they have a high price tag, but when you compare the fact that you don't have to buy insurance for them, or refill a gas tank, you do need to charge batteries but they are so much more economical, people just aren't aware of the options out there because they don't see those ads on TV, they see car ads. How many bike ads do you see on TV? Even during the Tour de France!

I'M LESS OPTIMISTIC. I THINK THAT WHEN THINGS BECOME THAT BAD, AMERICANS AREN'T GOING TO HAVE AS MUCH TIME AND DISPOSABLE INCOME TO SUPPORT SUCH ACTIVE LIFESTYLES. THEY'LL BE SO FOCUSED ON SURVIVAL AND KEEPING THE STATUS QUO...THAT...BICYCLES, WELL, YOU KNOW... SO MANY CIVILIZATIONS HAVE FAILED FOR THE SAME REASONS, OVER AND OVER AGAIN, AND WE'RE REPEATING THE EXACT SAME THINGS OVER AND OVER AGAIN. HUMAN NATURE IS JUST...

Suzanne: I don't think we'd see more high-end racing stuff, but I think that we're going to see the practical transportation bikes...

The US version of the Chinese Flying Pigeons, affordable, solid bikes...

Suzanne: Yeah, the technology is going to go away from the lightest and greatest material to...this is efficient and it can carry a lot of stuff...

What's the hardest part about working in the bike shop?

Suzanne: I think the toughest thing for me is that...we all enjoy bikes so much... but we can't really take vacations in the summer time, because that's our busy time.

Chad: The fact that we don't have two days off in a row—and I've never had two days off in a row—especially when you've got family, not being available on Saturday—its tough. But that is an absolute. You do not get Saturday off. That's just not a day you can ask for. Once in a while if you've got an important race or a really big family event, that's an exception. That's the hardest thing. And the late hours in the evening. I don't like going home at 7 o'clock. I have a three year old, it's a half an hour and he's off to bed.

What are some of the most interesting customers you get?

Suzanne: We get a wide range! You get some great stories from tourists that have travelled across the country with kitty-litter container saddle bags and $10. Then you have the people staying in ritzy hotels with someone carrying all their gear. We have customers in their 80s and they still ride their bikes from here to DC for some crazy march...

Stuart: Recumbent customers.

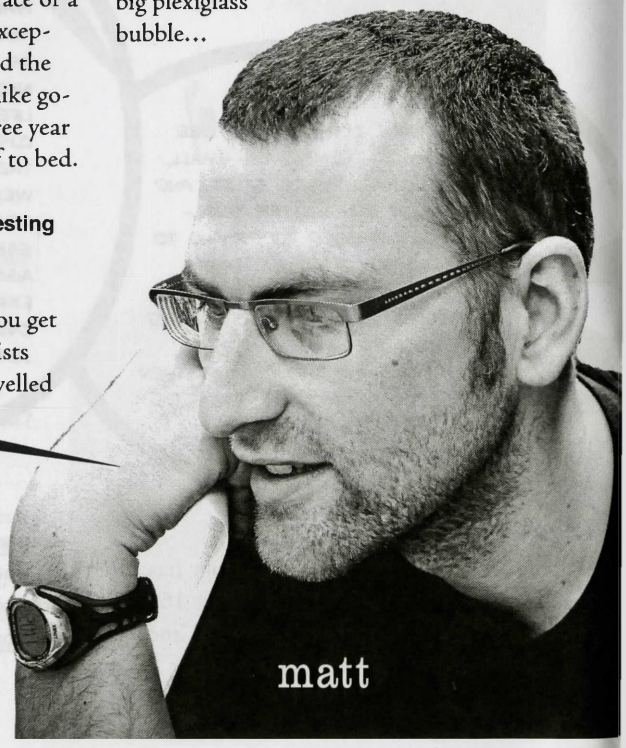
Why are the recumbent riders so interesting?

Mark: Because they are just such a different individual. Eccentric. They're not interested in anything normal. I mean, it's...

Chad: How far outside the box can I go and still make it work? We have customers that have built their own recumbent bicycles.

Suzanne: Lazy-boy recumbents...

Chad: A dozen Wal-Mart bikes chopped into pieces and the parts used, and the bucket seat from some '57 Chevy mounted to the front of it with a great big plexiglass bubble...



Suzanne: So they can't get wet!

Chad: And the thing weighs 180 pounds...

Mark: With disc brakes!

Matt: You have to admire their ingenuity, but at some point we have to deal with it.

Chad: And they come and they just want the weirdest combination of stuff...

Suzanne: We worry about the safety issues....

Chad: Many times they are ridiculously frugal people and that shines through. I want this this this and this, but I don't want to pay for it. You're going to work with me on this, right? And to a large extent, we do.

What do you like about this shop?

Mark: That we are *all* bike riders. You go to almost any shop, and you can always find one dude who works there just because that's his job, he doesn't ride bikes. But if you come here, you ask any one of us, what we did last weekend, and we were on our bikes. For a long time. [*Everyone laughs*] And that's cool.

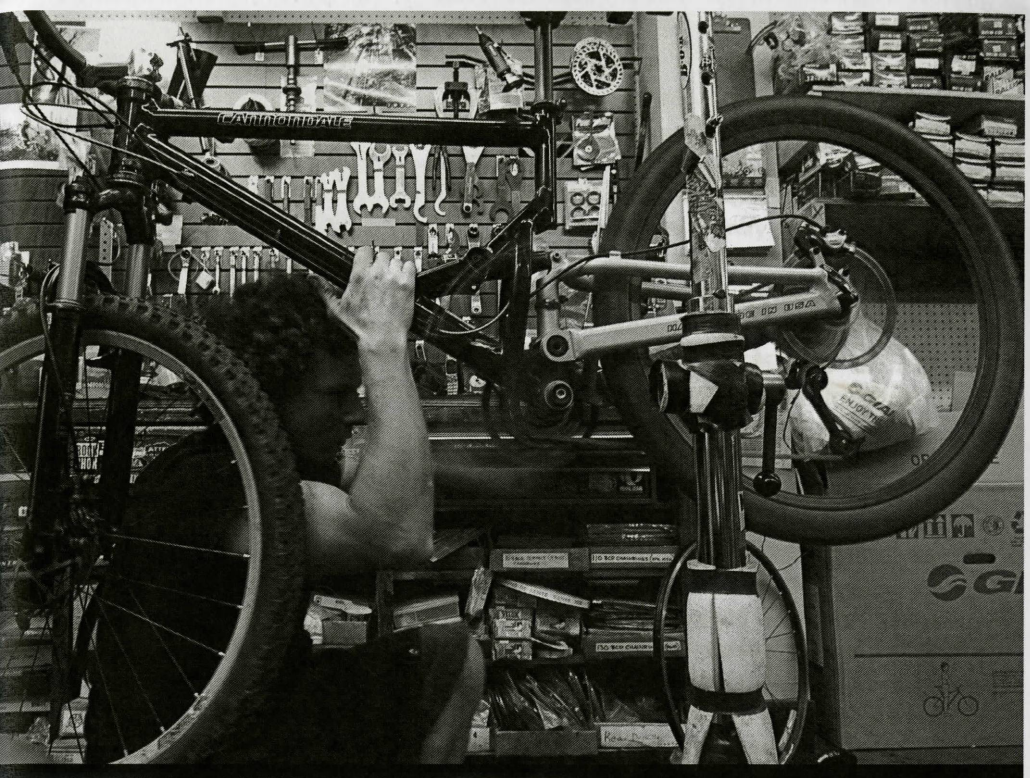
Matt: We also don't have the huge amount of stress, and we spend our days off together, riding bikes. That helps the harmony of the shop. It helps that we're all on the same wavelength.

A customer rolls his bike towards the repair area where we've been talking.

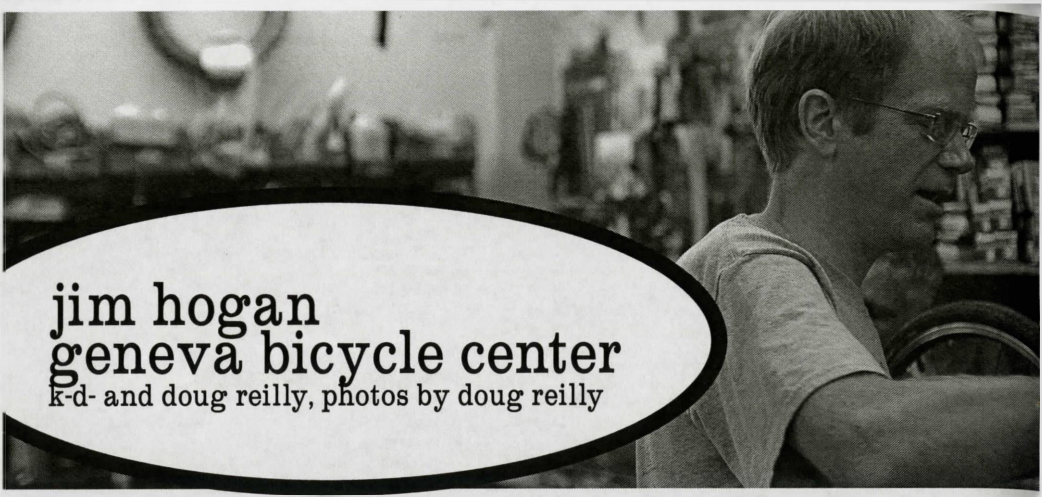
Stuart: Good morning...

Customer: Good morning. I need a tube...


Daddy
GENEVA BICYCLE CENTER




Park Tool



jim hogan
geneva bicycle center

k-d- and doug reilly, photos by doug reilly

"I've worked in bike shops my whole adult life," Jim tells us as we carry chairs up to the second floor of the Geneva Bicycle Center on Exchange Street. The second floor has shiny hardwood floors and row upon row of futuristic, sleek-looking bicycles, some of which look like they could cut you if you touched them the wrong way.

How did your experiences in those shops shape how you wanted to run the Geneva Bicycle Center?

I got a really great education in the three shops I worked in. The first one was the shop I went to as a kid, growing up in Easton. The guy who owned it lived around the corner from me. I was a BMX racer and really into parts and bits and this-and-that. When I graduated from college with this Engineering degree, having always said 'I want to make toys'—whatever that means—I realized that meant that I wanted to be in the bike world and I went down and asked him for a job. He did a great job. His shop was well run. He is a great businessman. People like him. He is a cult of personality in my hometown.

Then, because my wife went to grad school, I had to go work for a major chain in Philly. Not a sporting goods chain that also sold bikes. These were real bike stores, but it was managed by a guy who was born with a silver spoon in his mouth, and knew how to lose money hand-over-fist. And I just couldn't get out of there quick enough. I learned what not to do very strongly.

And then the third place up in Plattsburgh, I really loved working there. It was outside of town on a quiet road. The owner was very laid back and he had a wood-burning stove and he would just chat people to death. He called it 'visiting.' And I would have to be the go-between and say 'That's great Ed, but he just came in for a tire.' And the person would give me a quiet 'Thank you.' [*laughs*] So I got to understand that nature of really enjoying your customer base and getting to know them and getting more out of them. So, with those three experiences behind me, I had a pretty clear vision of what I wanted to do and what I didn't want to do.

The problems with the second bike shop: was that mostly personality or was it due to the corporate mentality behind the store? Or a combination of both?

When you throw enough money on anything, you can overpower the other guy. And that is what he did. He would set up shop next to the local independent bike shop in the next town he wanted to go to and he had gigantic buying power. He bought the worst labor he could find. And he just muscled people out and would end up making an offer on their shop to close them down or move his shop into theirs. It was a terrible way of doing business. It was ten different things that made that a terrible place to work.

Is it still in business?

Sort of. A lot of the shops that were company stores ended up getting bought out as franchises and most of them have either gone out of business or the franchisees have broken their agreement. I know several guys who have broken their agreement and are now running decent shops themselves, and succeeding, but just had to get out from under the mantle.

What is the state of independent bike stores nationally right now?

Well, it is constantly in flux. There will be different times when there will be a large exodus between retirements and stores going out of business and other things happening where we'll lose a great chunk of them at once. Then we'll go through a period of many people opening them up. It is hard to start one these days. Like most industries, like most businesses, things are getting fewer and larger. People come to expect selection and size and service, and if you're not growing, you're dying, so to speak. But from our perspective, we're doing really well. We're having a record year, an amazing record year so far.

What explains that, given the economic situation in the country and here locally?

I couldn't put my thumb on it directly, but I'd like to think that we have a lot of those core competencies: we keep the inventory, we hire folks for personality, we train them well, and my staff knows that the customer comes first and they have to do it in a way that keeps the shop afloat and pays all the bills, or we won't be here next year to help them out.

With Wal-Mart getting bigger down the street, how do you survive as an independent bike store?

They don't really affect us. A lot of people would know that I was involved in the campaign to keep them from going to a Super Center, and it was funny to hear people say crazy things like I was doing that because I was afraid of them. They were adding food and a tire service. I don't compete with them. Their bike business could quadruple or go away and my business would not be affected up or down in any noticeable amount. They're not really competition for me. But there are stores for whom the Wal-Marts of the world are much more trouble.

Why is this shop immune to the big box stores and some other shops are not? What is the key difference between your operation and some of the other ones that are really getting hurt by the big box stores?

Well, part of it is just our focus a bit more towards people who would never want that kind of bike. They want a real

bike. The folks who might be shopping their bikes against ours, we just do a great job explaining the difference between toys and sporting goods, and fit versus one-size-fits-(or doesn't fit)-all, and explain to them how well it is assembled, how we are going to give them free service after, and the other benefits that come with it. Most people understand that if you buy once and buy well, then you won't be back buying the same basic thing over and over. And also some people have to learn the lesson the hard way. We have some folks who are converts after troubles buying two or three basic bikes. And often times people simply have to go for a test ride—that is one of the main things we do is get somebody who is uncertain why a bike should cost $300 to go for a test ride—and they almost always come back saying 'Wow. OK, I get it now. I've never ridden anything like this.'

I'll say that any random large chain that sells very, very basic bikes with very, very basic assembly does the sport and the leisure activity a disservice. You guys saw the gentleman who was here when you were walking in. Your timing couldn't have been better. He bought that very fancy looking bike three days ago. He said he spent $127 on the bike elsewhere. He came in to say 'My handlebars are loose,' and they were. They were rolling back and forth. The seat is loose. You couldn't sit on it. You could not rest the weight of a banana on the back of it without it going nose up. And his left crank arm had fallen completely off. All of which are very dangerous. And then I pointed out to him that the brakes don't work. You could squeeze with one finger both brake levers to the grip and roll the bike.

My first recommendation to him was 'Take it back, and make certain you get someone to look over the bike and make this one safe.' So, I wouldn't say that they frustrate me from a business perspective. They just frustrate me because I think they turn people off from cycling. And by 'they' I mean any place that puts out bikes that don't fit, don't work well, and aren't fun to ride.

With your core clientele, is this a local shop? Is this a regional shop?

Well, if you notice the breakdown of the store physically, our first floor was designed to not give sticker shock because we do have our second floor with 'serious' bikes. I hate to use that exact term because most of the people who buy those bikes are not super-skinny, super-fit, go-fast racers, they are just people who really like to cycle. Rather than spend the money on a gym membership or a snow mobile or a jet ski or any of the ways you can spend your money, they spend it on a bike. So, $600, $700, $1000 for a bike sounds like a lot to a lot of people, but they might also own a $7,000 snowmobile they get to use 12 times a year and have to have it gassed up and trailered and licensed and insured and that sort of thing. So we try to keep the first floor so that someone can walk in, shop for a bike, buy something basic, and not feel like they are in a store that doesn't value them. Not everybody needs to cycle seriously.

Then up here [on the second floor] this is how we became a regional store because people really travel when they know they are going to get fit well, talk to somebody who knows the product and is going to have it in the store to go for a test spin and walk home with it. So, in

any given day, we generally will sell two bikes to people who have traveled as far as, say, Rochester, Syracuse, Ithaca, Binghamton, Corning, and so on. We just got an e-mail from a guy in Watertown who heard about us and wants to come down.

Do you consider Geneva a biking community? And if so, why?

More and more so, definitely. I think we have created a lot of customers. But also you are seeing more and more, just around the country, little bits and pieces like the Green movement, high energy prices, some folks trying to get more fit, a bit more popular media focus on bicycles, and we can't discount Jeff Henderson's contribution with the Musselman. That has really put a lot of people in the cycling mood.

Well, what would you suggest we do to make Geneva an even more biking-friendly community?

This is a great question and it is one that the City's Economic Planning and Development and members of the Green Committee have asked me, and I appreciate the question, but having lived in a lot of places, physically this is a great place to ride. I know some folks who are maybe newer to cycling and less confident on the roads might say 'Well, I think the roads are busy and so on.' But we get a lot of people who come to this area to ride because they have heard of the great riding. The Finger Lakes is a seriously sought after destination to go on rides. People come tour the area and they all say the same thing: 'You don't know how good you have it.' We have great roads, limited traffic, great scenery, hills if you want it, lakes to view.

That being said, I think that often times when we view what needs to be done to make an area better for cycling, it is not just in-town, but between towns. So I think the Seneca-Cayuga Canal Trail is a great way to get to Waterloo. If it is four miles away by trail and it is pretty and off the road, a lot more people might use that for transportation.

So, it is hard for me to come out and say 'Yes, we should spend x thousands or hundreds of thousands of dollars to make a bike path here or there in Geneva because there are lots of alternative routes, quiet side streets, and so on. Now, I felt differently in other places I've lived and I believe in the bike as transportation, obviously, and some people might be upset at these words, but I feel like I have to be realistic and responsible in what I recommend the city spend its money on.

We talked about the effect of large corporations in the form of big box stores, but let's talk about the suppliers, the producers of bicycles which are also large corporations. Some of them are not US corporations, but based in China. Yours is a small store, very individually focused. Yet you are pulling stock from these behemoths that are gigantic in comparison to you. What are the good things about that and where are the difficulties in that relationship?

We have a bit of a unique relationship with our vendors because I always think of the Geneva Bicycle Center as "found money" for them. For there to be a shop this size in this city is always surprising to sales reps. When they first come they just can't believe the volume we do, the

size of the shop, the selection compared to the town. So, we don't have the same stress dealing with these companies that a lot of others would. But we try where we can to buy American-made products. I'm not the classic 'Ra-Ra, Go America' flag waver, but I do like selling American made products were I can. And I'm not a big fan of Chinese-made products in general, however, there are certain categories where there is none of it made in the US. There is not a single bicycle tire made in the US, and there hasn't been since the Carlisle Company's Pennsylvania factory closed down in the 1970s.

A lot of these companies are big, but even a big bicycle company doesn't begin to approach the size of the average company you buy a microwave from, or even a shoe from. I like dealing with Trek because they are one of the biggest in the world. They are the number one seller in the US, but they are still privately held by the Burke family. They do huge amounts of good locally, nationally, internationally: bike advocacy, bike trips for kids, Safe Routes to School, lobbying for just general bike legislation nationally. Because the company is privately held and the family has all the money they are ever going to need, that is their view, and they keep trying to do good. Now, they try to make their dealerships successful, they want to stay in business, they want to grow. They are business people. I don't have any qualms with that, but I like that a great portion of my business comes from that company.

You noted Trek's sense of community responsibility. The bike shop here is also known for being quite engaged in the community. Is there an ethos that you bring to that? What are your thoughts about your responsibility as a local businessman to the community?

When I bought the shop, I never dreamed that it would be this [looking around]. I thought it would be myself and a mechanic, and I would sell and repair some bikes. The fact that it is two floors with as many good employees as I've got, and we sell as much as we do as far away as we do, is mind-blowing every day. The people of Geneva and the surrounding areas have been so kind to us, I never really feel like we are beginning to give back what we get. People often say that the shop is very engaged in the community and we do a lot, but I think that is what bike shops do in general. Because the folks who start them aren't trying to get rich quick. There is an old saying: 'The best way to get a million dollars in the bike industry is to start with two million.' I'm not complaining. We're doing really well and I would say that life is good, especially because I had extremely low expectations. But I think if you are a person who believes in the bicycle, if I can be that silly and say it that way, it is going to be natural to do good things around bicycles and people. That is why we hire folks based on their personality. We can teach anybody, or most anybody, how to use the cash register and do good assembly work. But you have to like people. So it is not hard to be motivated to do good work for this community.

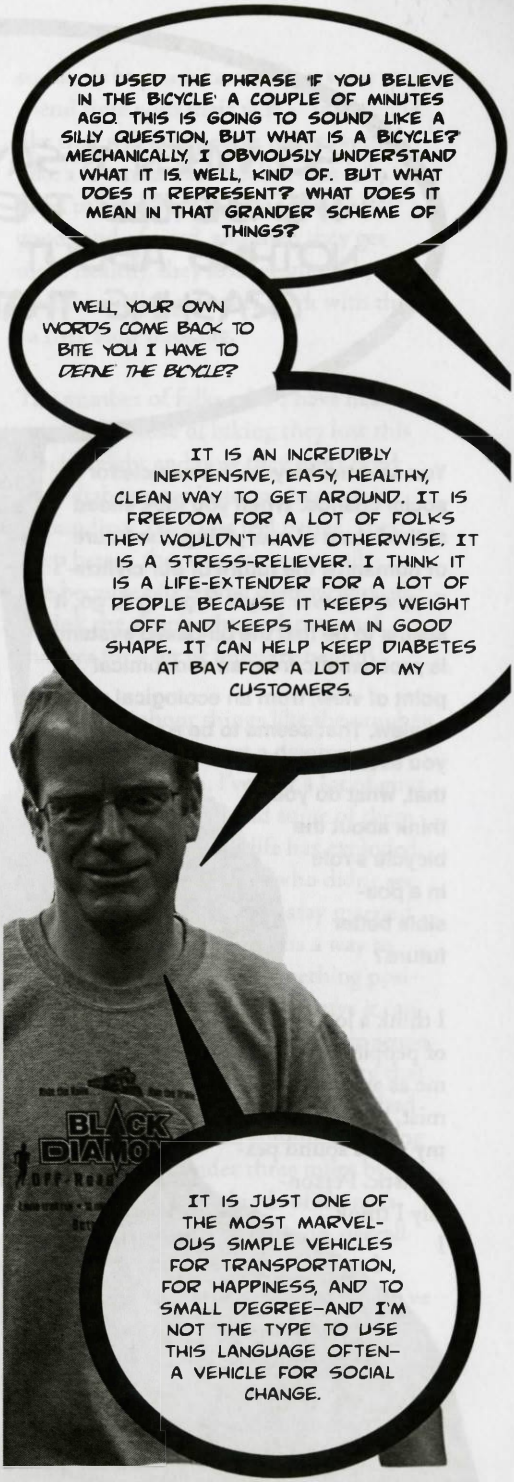
What types of work are you motivated to do?

Well, I think the favorite thing that we do is our bike give-away program. It's a bike fix-up and donate program. We started doing that and looking hard to find places to give those bikes away. We wanted it to be somebody we could trust,

so we'd call the United Way to find organizations that might need bikes for folks. We found one here in town that occasionally calls us for folks, largely moms and kids who have been whisked away from an abusive situation and now the mom and kids have nothing. That is great, but it didn't provide enough of an outlet.

Then one day a nice pastor from Penn Yan, who has been a longtime customer, said "Hey, we want to pay you to fix up some bikes so that we can donate them." And we had an attic with a bunch of bikes, so we said "How about this: you bring me those bikes and I'll give you the one's I've got. You donate those and then we'll fix up the ones you bring us, and then you can come back and pick up those." And that started a really nice relationship with the Baptist Church in Penn Yan and Utica, that gives everything—food, clothes, furniture, our bikes, and much more – to the Burmese refugees in Utica, who have spent two years squatting in a nasty camp as political refugees—and Utica has opened their arms.

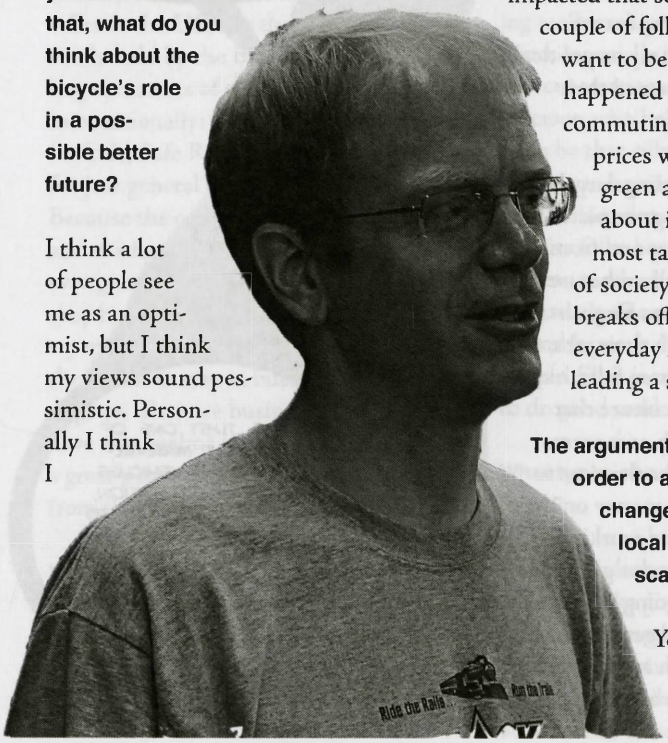
And that is the most rewarding, largely I think because they send us great pictures of these smiling faces and reports from these nice, hard-working folks who use these bikes to get to and from English-as-a-Second-Language class, to their jobs, to their counseling centers. These folks have had a hard time and it is a culture that is used to the bike. As much as it seems wrong to say this, if you take the time to fix up a bike and spend the money on the parts to get that bike in good working shape, you like to think it is not going to go somewhere where it is going to get ridden for three days and then get left out in the rain or left on the porch and get stolen. These folks really value the bikes.



SO WHEN I SAY 'I BELIEVE N THE BICYCLE' THERE IS ALMOST NOTHING ABOUT IT–OTHER THAN CRASHING–THAT ISN'T GOOD.

You said the bicycle is a vehicle for social change. When you look ahead at the future of everything, the future of humanity, the future of our civilization, whichever way it is going to go, it seems to be that the oil-based system is problematic from an economical point of view, from an ecological point of view. That seems to be a given. If you ever muse about that, what do you think about the bicycle's role in a possible better future?

I think a lot of people see me as an optimist, but I think my views sound pessimistic. Personally I think I am a realist when I say that I don't look out on the greater world and see a lot of potential for positive change, to be honest. I can dream up those scenarios, but do I think the will, energy and potential is there in a lot of people? No. When oil prices went really high, people said 'Oh, you must be selling a lot of bikes to people who want to get around.' It barely impacted that sort of thing. There were a couple of folks who would say 'Yeah, I want to be greener.' But really what happened is there was short-term commuting thing and as soon as gas prices went down they weren't green anymore. You either care about it or you don't. It would almost take sort of the breakdown of society and a terrible war that breaks off the pipeline of oil to our everyday lives to make people start leading a simpler, smarter life.



The argument is often made that in order to achieve effective social change you need to focus on the local and not on some grand scale.

Yeah, I can see that.

So if we scale down the

conversation a little bit, or sharpen our focus, how might effective social change be achieved here in Geneva by way of the bicycle?

I guess when you say it that way, I take a smaller view and am less pessimistic and I do think you are right that social change of whatever type happens on a smaller scale, not a larger scale generally. The thing that the bike shop has already done is simply provide the material goods and the convenience for those folks who do commute, get around by bike, use the bike as exercise, stress relief, and we're just going to continue to do more and more of that. We'll have events, educate in store around the benefits of it, and fight my general fear that anytime I open my mouth about the benefits of the bike, it seems purely monetary.

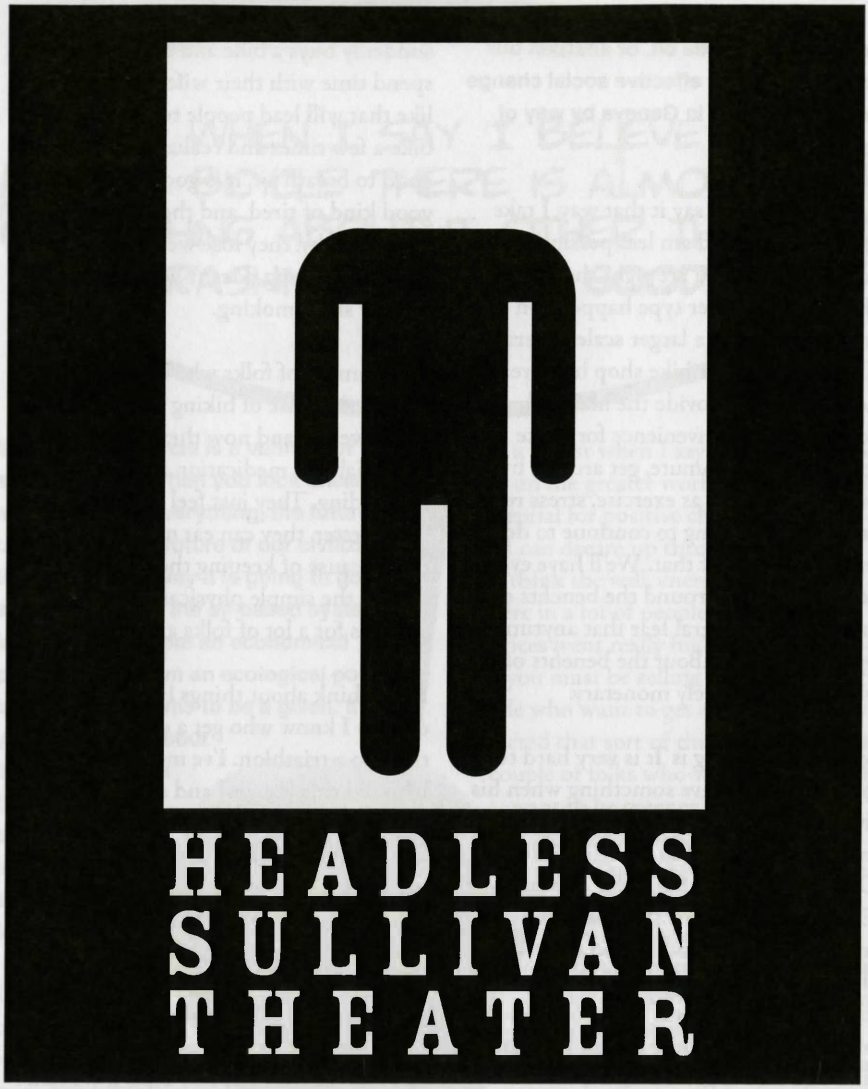
My favorite saying is 'It is very hard to get a man to believe something when his livelihood depends on him not believing it.' All you need to do is listen to Don Blankenship, the CEO of Massey Energy, the company that owns the coal mine that just exploded, and the crazy things that he can say and believe because his stockholders need that. So, I'm often hesitant to come out and say things like 'The bike is great and is a vehicle for social change, and it will change your life,' even though it does change a lot of my customers' lives.

How does it change their lives?

It is amazing how many folks get into cycling that don't intend to. They will take part in a corporate challenge, sadly it might be because they have a DUI and have to ride, or their car gets broken and they can't afford to fix it or their wife suddenly buys a bike and they want to spend time with their wife – any avenue like that will lead people to get on the bike a few times and realize that it is good to breath air, it is good to be that good kind of tired, and then they get more healthy, they lose weight, they realize that smoking doesn't work with this so they stop smoking.

The number of folks who I have heard say that because of biking they lost this much weight and now they don't need their diabetes medication anymore is astounding. They just feel better. They sleep better, they can eat more guilt-free because of keeping their weight off. I think the simple physical, personal changes for a lot of folks are helpful.

I also think about things like the number of guys I know who get a divorce, and then do a triathlon. I've met a lot of guys who did this [*laughs*] and some of them are in my family. Their life has exploded, and often times it is guys who didn't see it coming. They wanted to stay married and got blind-sided, and it is a way to divert their energy into something positive. So these are the strange ways it can change peoples' lives. On a grander sense, certainly if we became a community that did 15% of their trips by bike, if we had 10% of the population commit to taking all of their trips under three miles by bike, if we had those kinds of changes that I think are very hard to do, overall the impact would be dramatic. But I think it is more person-to-person. You've got a guy who likes to buzz cyclists in his pickup truck and lay on the horn and finds that funny, but his co-worker rides to and from work, maybe he starts thinking differently.



COMING THIS FALL!

Headless Sullivan Puppet Theater presents "And the DISH ran away with the SPOON" for kids of all ages.

Auditions! For Josh Tobiessen's "Election Day," directed by Gabi Mrvova. Serious and seriously funny theater for big kids!

visit us at: headlesssully.wordpress.com

rant: the economy's fine

(or the poor service blues)

The economy, they say, is all in a shambles
With blame laid on Wall Street or guys riding camels.
But I just don't see it, if Geneva's like all,
For tradesmen are too busy to answer my call.

My roof was a leakin' and in need of a fixin'
The contract was signed, but the fixer went missin'.
After some months he returned to re-quote,
But vanished again without leaving a note.

A second arrived to check out the matter,
Arrived for an estimate sans tape measure and ladder. (its a ROOF stupid!)
He promised to come back and better prepared,
But like the first one he vanished...perhaps they were scared.

My interior painting was scheduled but then
Woodworking was needed 'fore THAT job could begin.
The builder had measured and sketched and took notes,
He promised to come back with some very firm quotes.

But my phone remained silent, the doorbell un rung,
The builder went missing, perhaps he was hung
By others he promised to do small jobs for
Or perhaps his work ethic was simply too poor.

The interior painter did the best that he could,
Skipping those rooms with the still-damaged wood.
"I'm sorry to have recommended that builder", he said.
"Perhaps he was drafted...or out of his head".

Back on the outside, my spire still a tilt.
With year-old promises to have it re-built.
The turner called the job "easily done",
But has not followed up on my phone calls, not one.

Where have they all gone? Where can they all be?
Allow me some latitude to put forth my theory:

They are all on an island whooping it up.
Feasting on caviar from a hammered gold cup.
Laughing at us whose promised-work goes undone
While holding aloft fat contracts they've won.

Where is the contracted-construction to be?
Perhaps in mountains or under the sea.
Whereever it is, it is hidden from view,
That's why they can't get back to me or to you.

Tell me we're doomed and I won't believe ya'
The economy's fine from what I've seen in Geneva.

(George Spelvin)

FINGER LAKES FILM FESTIVAL 2010

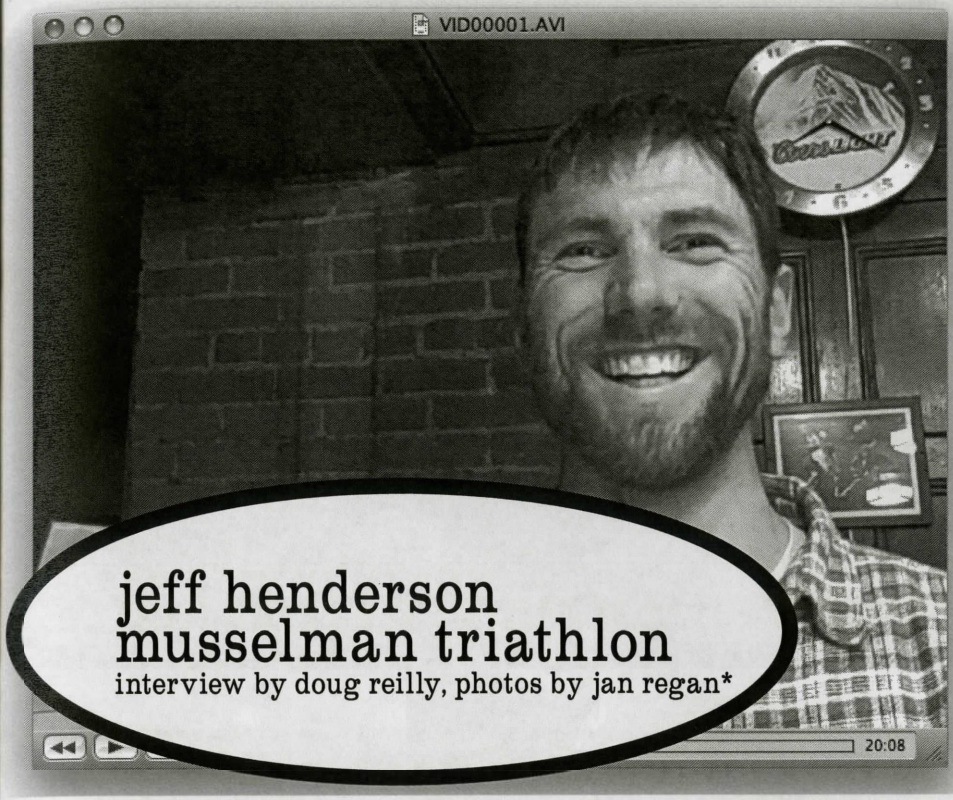
Submit your short film to the 2010 Finger Lakes Film Festival. Films of twenty minutes or less will be judged in five categories (animation, documentary, experimental, narrative fiction, music video) and in three age groups (K-12, College, General). Submission forms and further details can be found at wwwgeneva13.com. Or write to us at mail@geneva13.com or to PO Box 13, Geneva, NY 14456.

Submission Deadline: October 1

Screenings: November 2 & 4

Awards Night: November 6

www.geneva13.com



jeff henderson
musselman triathlon

interview by doug reilly, photos by jan regan*

*This lousy screen shot is not by jan regan, but by doug reilly; the rest are by jan, and they are awesome!

What is your name and what do you do?

Jeff Henderson. I'm a race director.

That's a full time gig?

It didn't start out to be that way. I do a little bit of computer programming and writing during the year, but in the spring and summer, it's full time.

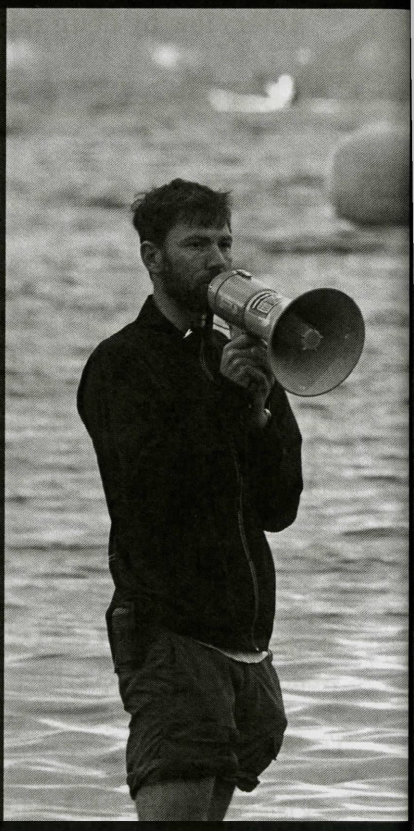
What's your connection with Geneva?

Geneva is where my father grew up, and where my grandparents settled after World War II. I grew up in Baldwinsville, New York, outside of Syracuse, but I've been coming to Geneva since I was little, to visit my grandparents. So I'm very familiar with the area...I also lived here for a period of time.

How did get into triathlon?

I was a competitive swimmer since I was eight and swam all the way up through high school and into college. At the end of college I was getting tired of swimming so I bought a road bike to get outside and started biking a lot and, with the swimming background and the interest in cycling, I decided to try triathlon. It was the year after I graduated from college. I enjoyed the sport, I liked the ability to do three different things. I competed in triathlons for about 10 years before I decided to start my own.

For those of our readers who might not be familiar with triathlon, can you briefly describe it?




FINISH

Triathlon is a relatively new sport, it's a swim-bike-run event where you do each of those consecutively without stopping. It started in the 70s in San Diego, so it's not a very old sport, but the three fundamental disciplines are ancient. So it's an interesting twist on an established theme.

What was the initial attraction to you? Why do you think you took to triathlon?

The primary motivator was that I was getting tired of staring at a black line at the bottom of a swimming pool. I got outside, fell in love with cycling, being able to actually go somewhere and see different scenery all the time. I've never been the biggest fan of running, but with the swimming background and the cycling triathlon was a natural fit.

You've been with the sport for a long time, directing races for 7 years. How has triathlon changed in that time?

Triathlon really has—and this is something I don't necessarily like—but it's trended towards being a sport for the affluent. It's a white-collar sport. Because there's a lot of equipment that's beyond the reach of a lot of people. It doesn't have to be that way, but it's become that way. Expensive bikes and expensive shoes, traveling to exotic locations to compete, so this is a change I've seen over the last seven years that I don't like and I try to confront through my occupation as a race director. But for good or bad, that's the way it's gone.

It's also become a much more mainstream sport. When I started competing it had only been around for about 20 years. It was a niche sport. It was a sport that only appeared on Wide World of Sports, it was synonymous with the Ironman, which is just one distance of triathlon. It was synonymous with hardcore athletes, junkies who wanted to get their athletic fix. It's evolved over the years to include everyone. The Musselman Triathlon has people from ages 5 to 74 competing. So it's much more of a broad-based, mainstream sport. And that came about as a result of a couple of different things. In the year 2000 it appeared on the Olympic program for the first time, so it was introduced to a lot of people, through the Olympics, who had never heard of it before. The growth of the sport has included more events, and events geared towards different segments of the population...

This is a positive thing?

Definitely so. There are all-female triathlons, kid's triathlons, there are events that everyone can take part in, and that's broadened its appeal and made people more familiar with what it is. It's definitely grown up over the last ten years.

As with all things, growth brings both good and bad. The difficulty lies in continuing to appeal to a broad section of the population without it becoming niche again.

How did you turn from a triathlete to a race director, those are different things?

[*Laughs*] Very different things. I was a triathlete for about ten years, well I still am, and in the back of my mind, like a lot of people who do triathlons, I always wondered what it would be like to hold my own race. You go to races, you see good things and you see bad things, you see beautiful venues, you see awful

venues, and you think "What would I do if I put on my own race?"

I was living in Geneva at the time, 2004, and I decided that it was an absolutely perfect place to start a triathlon. I decided to try it. There was nothing really premeditated about it. I never intended it to be a full time career, but it grew into that, because of all the different facets that are involved in producing a race.

What did you see in other triathlons that you had competed in that you wanted to either emulate or avoid?

The things that I wanted to emulate were the camaraderie, the feeling of accomplishment and the ability to affect people's lives to a small degree. And that continues to motivate me today, the need for making a difference in people's lives and enabling them to make a difference in their own lives, so that was a very positive motivation. Things that I didn't necessarily like were, I guess you would call the "commoditization" of the sport. It looked to me like there was a lot of room for creativity. Events were starting to look and feel the same way. Whereas the fundamental ingredients of the race are the same everywhere—you swim, you bike, you run-but everything else about the event can be unique and can reflect the local character of the area, can reflect the different people you find across the country, and so trying to create events that were true to the location, unique and interesting for people, was a driving factor for me.

How did you design the Musselman to reflect the local area?

That is not something that *I* did. The secret of the Musselman lies in all the different people who have a hand in its creation. The first thing I did was to recruit an organizing committee from the local area. I asked Jan Regan, who was a local runner and who had never done a triathlon before, didn't know what the sport was all about, but she enjoyed running, she enjoyed being involved in community events...and that was true for everyone that I talked to. Jim Hogan who owns the Bicycle Center, Tom Rehoe who lives in Canandaigua but spends a lot of time with his kids at swim meets and being active in the local community. All of these people brought different backgrounds to the event, and different feelings about what an authentic race should look like. I don't think anyone on the committee had been to a triathlon—or competed in a triathlon—except for myself, so that combination of backgrounds and different thought processes and ideas contributed to I think making the Musselman grounded in this community, and also distinct from other events.

That's really interesting, because it's like a telephone game. You came and said "This is what a triathlon is and...

Everyone interpreted it differently.

What are some of the unique things about the Musselman that came out of this process?

It tries to involve as many different segments of this community as possible. We're heavily involved with the Boys and Girls Club of Geneva, we have tried to involve the Smith Opera House, we have tried to involve the Colleges. A number of civic groups take part, a

number of youth groups take part. All of these things are distinctive to Geneva and all of these pieces bring a uniqueness and local flavor that infuses the race. Even something as simple as Jan Regan taking pictures of the race for the last seven years. She is not a sports photographer—she's best at portraits—but her photos of the Musselman reflect that, they are beautiful portraits of the people who are involved in the race, from the participants to the athletes to the volunteers to the emergency services people, they reflect a human side to the event that might otherwise be lacking if she was a "sports photographer." That's just one example of the Musselman feel that people notice and appreciate.

You mentioned that one of the things that really hooked you on triathlon—and I'm paraphrasing—was the transformative power of the sport. I'm not an athlete and never have been, so it wasn't until my best friend became a triathlete after a battle with cancer did I start to understand this. A two-pronged question: how can the sport be personally transformative, and how can it transform a community?

The personal stories that I hear through the Musselman are the single greatest part of my job. The very first person to sign up for the Musselman in 2004 was an individual named Lou Battaglia who comes from Rochester. He had had heart surgery and his doctor had told him his days of exercising were over, that he shouldn't stress his heart, that he needed to keep it below a certain threshold and...any rigorous activity....

Like a triathlon!

...it was off the table. But he didn't accept that advice and he was careful and diligent and intelligent about it. He's been in every single race that we've held. And he feels like it has put years on his life. It's things like that that are fulfilling for me, but also of course for the individuals involved. There's a family that comes from Bainbridge every year, the Howe family, and the youngest daughter was I believe 14 at the time of the first triathlon. The entire family wanted to do the event together, but she didn't know how to ride a bike. So they took her to parking lots at the middle of the night, and they taught her to ride and she wasn't thrilled about the process, but she wanted to do it with her family. And now she has fallen in love with cycling and it's going to be a lifelong passion for her. There's a million different stories and a million different reasons for competing and once you start to get to know these stories and these individuals you realize how it's affected their lives. That's really important for me.

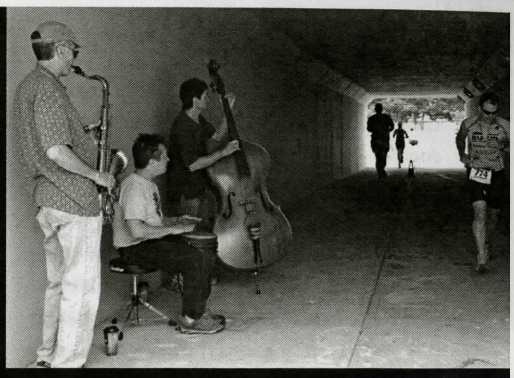
Second prong of your question...How can it be transformative for a community that was your question?

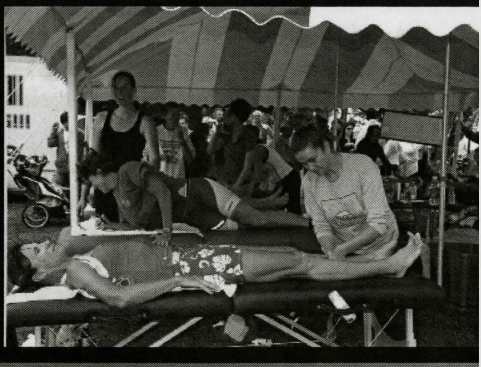
Very good!

Well, there are many different answers to that question, depending on who you are talking to and what you are talking about. A large scale athletic event held in a community certainly has an economic impact - we had 1,700 people come to the Musselman last year and many of them had never seen the Finger Lakes before. The race introduces them to the area, and they'll come back.


ALON


OR





Every spring I see cyclists going down East Lake Road, they're trying out the course. You have people coming to the community and being introduced to the community in a very authentic way and those people return, they spend money here which helps local businesses, and they tell their friends about it. So that's one way.

Another way is the community building we have attempted to do, trying to get different groups to intersect with each other through the race. Maybe there are some connections being made that I don't even know about that happen because two people happen to be next to each other on the bike racks in the transition area. Any time you make a connection it's positive for a community and bringing groups together in shared purpose is a great way to do that.

You wrote in the description for your talk tonight at the Colleges, "How do we effect change now on a very small scale so it can grow up to be a fundamental change that we yearn for? How can we move from a concept of sustainability to livability? How can a consumer-centric society bring itself to consider seven generations hence in a serious manner? This is a great...

Whoa! [laughs]

...really really fundamental set of questions here...

How long do we have?

How can triathlon contribute some answers to these questions?

Everything in a community contributes to those answers, in positive ways and in negative ways. So triathlon, the sport itself, gives you a platform, gives you a coat rack upon which you can hang different things, it allows you to develop your own concepts of livability and sustainability. So if your notion of livability is a strong, connected community, hosting an event and involving as many different segments of your community as possible is one way to do that. If your concept of livability is a fit and healthy population, then holding an event that is welcoming to beginners and allows them to discover a healthy lifestyle can contribute to the livability of that community. That's what most attracts me to the sport of triathlon and the vocation of race production—its ability to, in a small ways that have a ripple effect, enhance the livability of the local area.

You say vocation and not occupation...

[*Laughs*] It's not a job! It's not an occupation yet. A lot of people ask if I can make a living doing this, and a lot of people do, but for me it's—I think that anyone who loves what they do, they don't consider it work all the time.

Let me give you another quote from you...

It's my fault.

You also wrote that sporting events could be "living, breathing organisms that allow for experimentation and creativity in a real world setting that can be applied to problems we struggle with both personally and societally." You sound a little bit like an anarchist there,

which I appreciate.

[*Laughs*] There's a lot of anarchy at a triathlon.

It reminds me of Hakim Bey's concept of the Temporary Autonomous Zone or TAZ. The idea is that people can create a space where experimentation and creativity can occur, outside of normal restraints—be they laws, hierarchies, traditional roles and expectations, or even the expectations and limitations we set for ourselves. It sounds to me like triathlon is a TAZ—it's a break from day to day routine, and it's an event with a unique community spirit. Not only are you bringing people together, you're bringing together in a time and place where people can reinvent themselves and redefine community. I don't think there's a question here...

Well, the last thing you said brings something to the front, which is that Geneva had never hosted an event like this before. One of the very first meetings that I requested was with the Police Chief, the Fire Chief, the head of Parks and the City Manager to explain to them what I was trying to do, and seek their approval. And their primary concerns were around safety. Once I was able to show that we would make safety a priority, we were pretty much free to do what we wanted. We had a blank slate in Geneva. We had a tremendous venue and a welcoming municipality and those things allowed for that Temporary Autonomous Zone to take root. And it could have grown in any number of directions. I think if we had screwed up the first year and there had been dangerous situations, if there had been unhappy people, then we would have been reigned in.

Since we have a receptive community, our responsibility is to give back to that community in some way through the event. So if there is that symbiotic relationship that can take root, it allows for all these smaller TAZs to swirl around on the periphery and come and go through event. It's a very dynamic process.

For example, this year there's an arts festival.

Exactly. It's called MusselFest. For years we have been trying to get the business and arts community involved in the triathlon, these are important sectors of the Geneva community, and Jackie Augustine was the driver behind that this year, let's create MusselFest, let's try to do some different activities that people who come to town can enjoy that don't have anything to do with triathlon. It took on a life of its own.

If you read the neighborhood report that the town commissioned recently, it said that one of the things holding Geneva back is a belief that things just can't work here, that life is better in Canandaigua say, but what's really interesting to me is that you're saying that the people you encountered were really open-minded. But I think it's an interesting example, a case where the city embraced a vision that was new. It runs contrary to the idea that there is this negative mentality that's holding us back.

I think that mentality is changing. There are a lot of sparks in Geneva, like what you're doing with Geneva13 [interviewer blushes]...it's a vibrant place if you know

where to look, and it's becoming more vibrant all the time. And so step one is getting away from the notion that things can't happen, and then all of a sudden people want to be part of that.

in preparing for this interview, I had a conversation with my friend Phil, who's a triathlete and also a sports doctor and now a training coach, and he has an interesting perspective. He's been in the sport for about 9 years. He echoed some of what you said at the beginning of this interview about the changes in the sport as a whole. He said that in the beginning triathlon was a collection of races run by individuals such as yourself, or smaller organizations, but that's been consolidated by larger corporations. Have you found it difficult to maintain independence in a sport that has become a more corporate-run environment?

That's a fascinating question!

We need about three more hours?

Very much so! For a lot of people in this country, the only exposure to triathlon they have had is through the Ironman which is on TV every October. It takes place in Hawaii, it's the longest triathlon you can do, and it's not necessarily representative of most triathlons, but it's the image most people have in their mind. The race is owned by the World Triathlon Corporation, which sounds like a very Austin Powersish conglomerate, and it very much behaves that way. I wouldn't go so far as to say that Dr. Evil is the owner of the WTC, but it is very much a business-focused, for-profit corporation, it's like a lot of companies who put on races, but it's taken on some practices over the years that people don't necessarily agree with, for instance: Musselman receives a yearly Cease and Desist letter to stop using the phrase "Half-Ironman" to describe one of the distances of the races that we run. They contend that "Half-Ironman" is infringing on their trademark of Ironman, and that Ironman is a descriptor of their trademark and not a distance descriptor. I always ignore the Cease and Desist letters, but they do send them out on a regular basis to a number of different races across the country.

Over the years they've moved from their monopoly on the Ironman distance to developing their footprint in the half-Ironman distance, and they're moving down through the distances, collecting races as they go. It's a popular brand in the sport of triathlon.

You end up with this dichotomy between WTC events and independent events and Musselman has always been an independent event that, in a capitalist marketplace, has to appeal to the consumer. It's competitive and there's a consolidation going on now. It's ultimately up to the consumer to decide, but we know that consumers don't always make rational decisions, so the challenge of maintaining an independent brand in triathlon is to appeal to people's appreciation for authenticity.

The Musselman, when it started, was one of only two triathlons in the Finger Lakes. There was one other, on Cayuga Lake. Now there's a triathlon almost every weekend in this area, within an hour or two, on almost every lake, including a new WTC one next year in Syracuse. It's in September, so it's doesn't necessarily conflict timewise, but geographically they're getting closer and closer. Two years ago the WTC started an event in

Rhode Island on the very same day as the Musselman, and we attract a lot of athletes from the northeast. So there's more and more competition and WTC is getting bigger and bigger. That's going to happen in any industry.

Anything else to say?

I would invite people to come down to the Musselman and wander around and watch. The thing that will strike you is that these people don't look like athletes; these aren't the hard bodies you see on gym commercials. They are all sizes, shapes, and ages, and they're doing things you wouldn't expect them to do with those sizes and shapes.

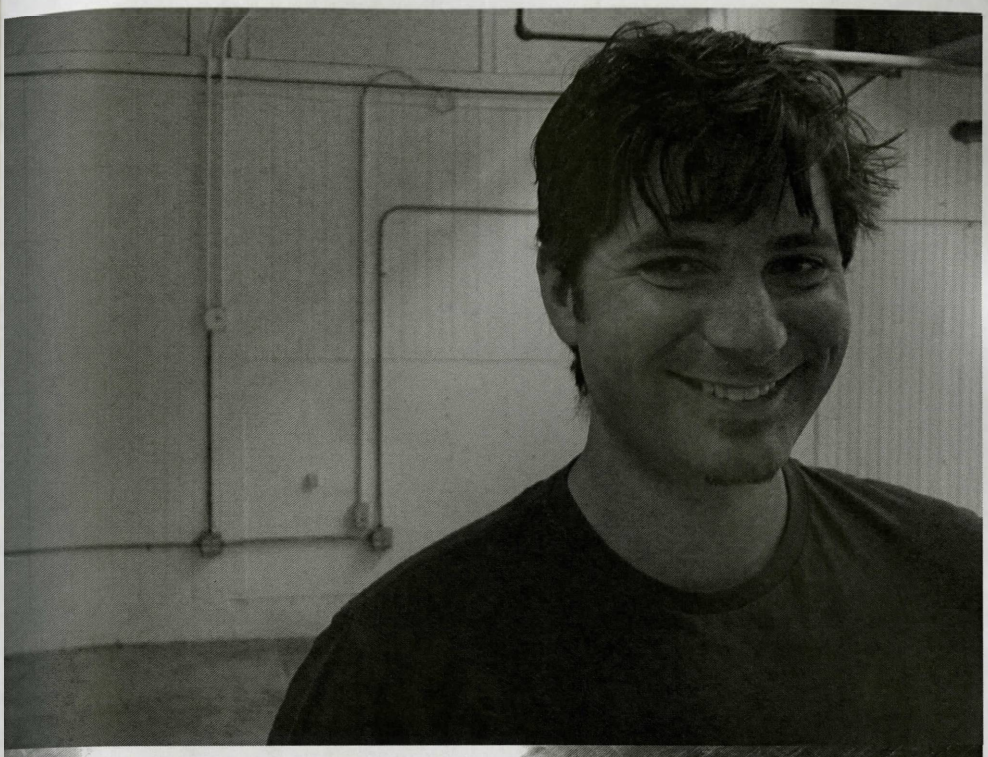
the power of a sandal

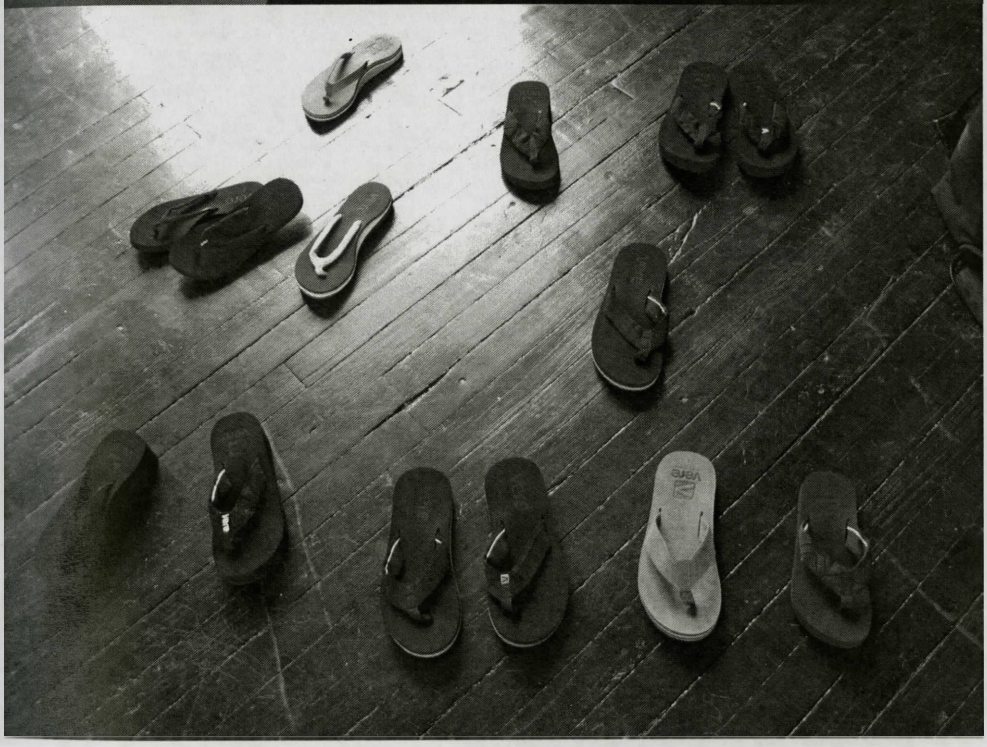
k-d-

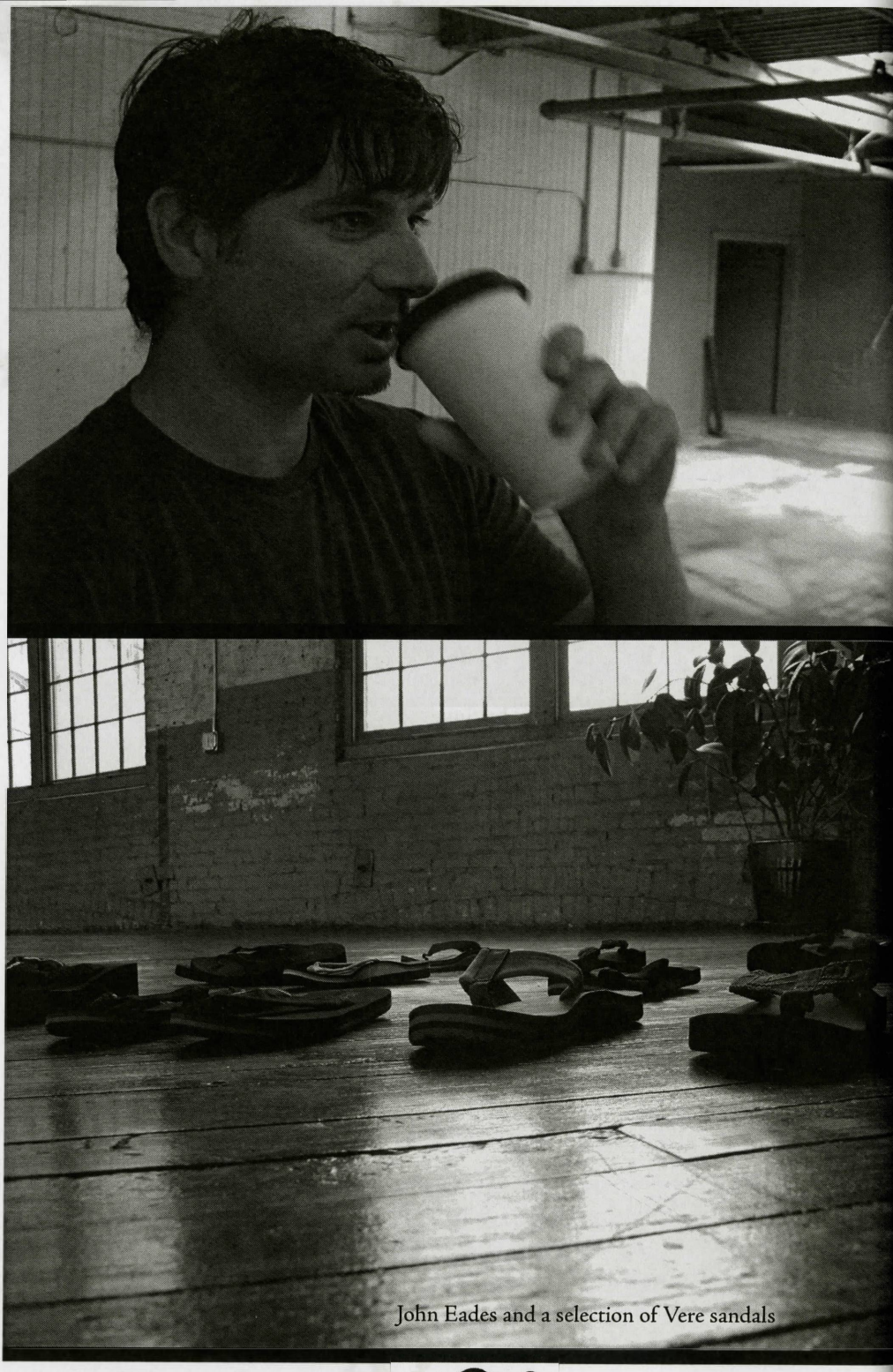
Last year, John Eades lost his job as Footwear Product Director at Reef Sandals due to downsizing brought on by the economic downturn and the earlier purchase of Reef by Vanity Fair. Some people might take that as an opportunity to find another job in another big corporation. But John decided to start his own company. Returning to his hometown of Geneva, John, his cousin Jeff and longtime friend Michael Ferreri began building their own company: Vere Sandals. They had a few specific goals. First, they wanted the shoes to be made in the US. They didn't just want to have the company headquarters in the US while the sandals were made overseas. They wanted the whole operation to be in the US. Hence the company motto: "made here. made better." But it was also John's desire to have the sandals made here in Geneva. John and Jeff are, after all, the grandsons of former mayor Don Eades. Other cities, such as Louisville, KY, aggressively courted John and his associates, but they were committed to being in their hometown and contributing to its economic growth.

They were also committed to creating an environmentally-friendly product as completely as they could. They wanted the sandals to be a mix of recycled and recyclable materials. They designed the sandals to eliminate nearly all the waste in the production process. The slight excess includes dust and small bits of webbing that can be recycled. Even the leather models are tanned without using harmful heavy metals, which means the small scraps can be ground up for fertilizer.

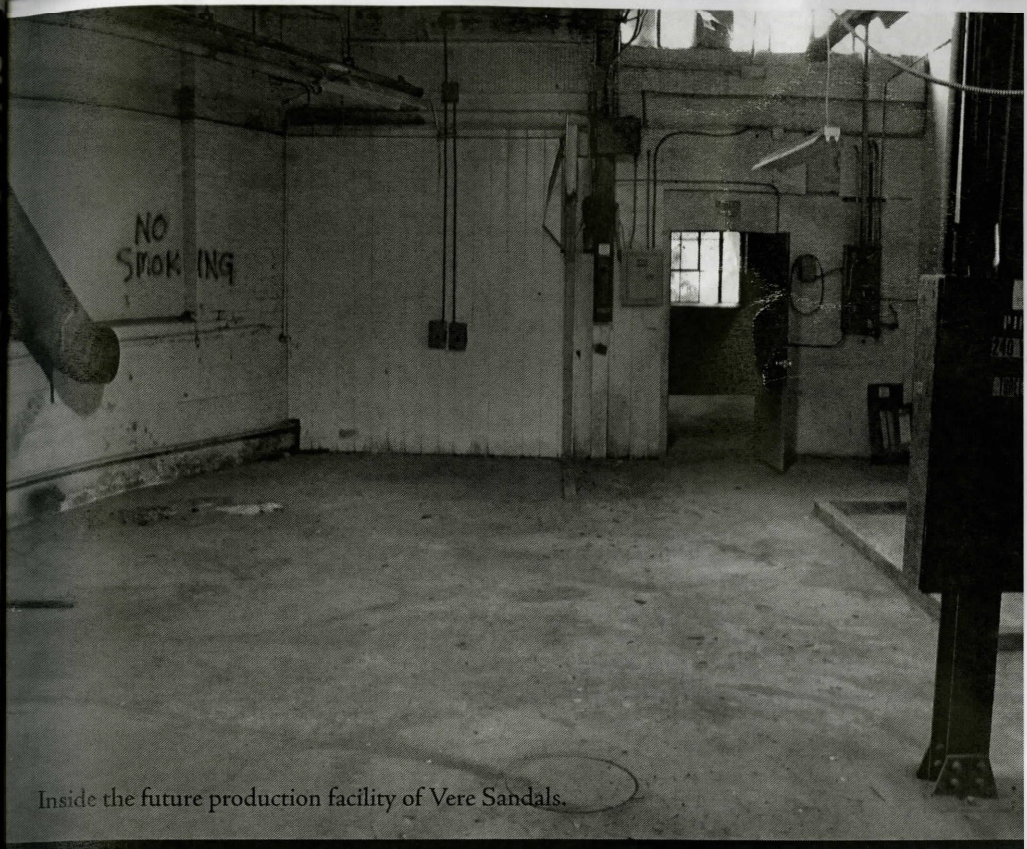
After months of preparation, Vere Sandals will open it production facility in the Geneva Enterprise Development Center in July. By the time you read this, sales representatives will be working the country, preparing the way for the arrival of the new Vere sandals. In a few months, people across the country will be wearing environmentally responsible sandals made right here in Geneva, NY. As John states, "We felt it was time to do things a little differently -- something we could feel good about. Coming home and doing it here just made the most sense."



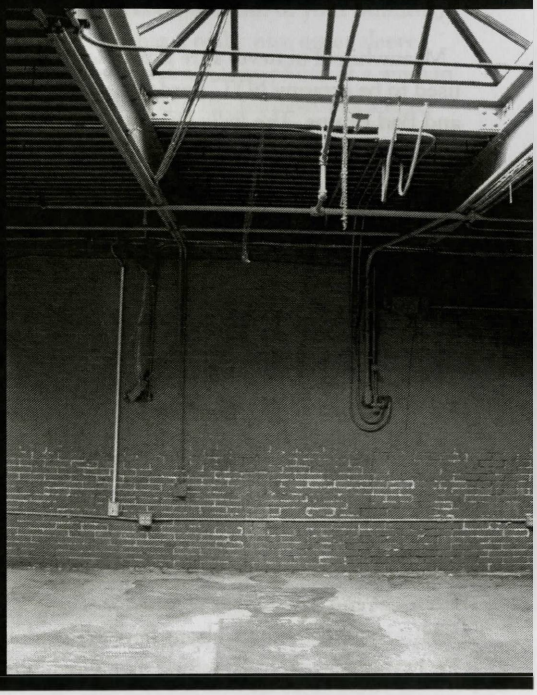




John Eades and a selection of Vere sandals



Inside the future production facility of Vere Sandals.



blap!

matt werts

Hey! It's summer, and music should be a top priority, whether you're picking tunes for an outdoor get-together, bumping horrible bass rumbles from your car, or walking around with your iPod, attempting to make the world a little more tolerable. Here are some things I'll be playing at maximum volume as much as possible: gnarly '80s hardcore, druggy garage stuff, and rock songs about pizza. Plus, a music-y film that might be hard to find, but is worth the effort.

Koro – *700 Club* (Sorry State)
Beastie Boys – *Polly Wog Stew* (Ratcage)

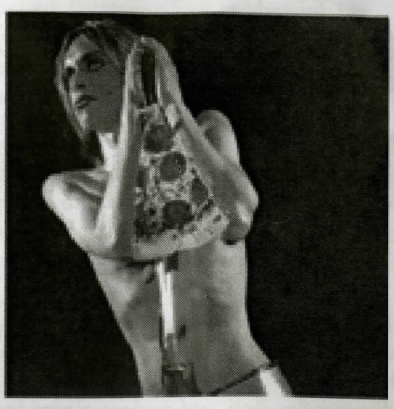
For those of you waiting for awesome, unheard '80s hardcore records to magically appear via time machine or time warp or your friend's stereo, behold KORO. I'm blanking on the specifics, but I think they were from the middle of nowhere and released a small run of their *700 Club* 7" back in '85 or '86. Sorry State re-issued it recently, along with their previously unreleased (I think?) LP, *Speed Kills*. Both are collected on CD, as well, and are probably downloadable in some corner of the internet. Whatever the format, you need to get this. It rages like early D.R.I., but it's more appealing somehow. It's less goofy, if that makes sense. And the whole thing is over in what feels like 3-4 minutes, although you'll listen to it over and over and over, until you decide that "Blap!" and "Acid Casualty" are your favorite songs of the year, every year.

Meanwhile: I'm never sure if people are aware of this or not, but the Beastie Boys used to be scrappy NYC hardcore goofballs who played shows with Reagan Youth and Bad Brains. The *Polly Wog Stew* EP is their first document, or if you want to look at it another way, the first movement in a life of a group that would eventually make the *Paul's Boutique* album and have their videos released on DVD by Criterion. It's something to keep in mind as you hear them rail against farm animals and use the word "hogwash" on "Michelle's Farm," or detail a night of mayhem on "Egg Raid On Mojo," or hear them generally thrash around like angry teen dorks (put this on tape with Deep Wound and you're set for life). Their *Some Old Bullshit* collection includes the original *Polly Wog Stew* record, plus a couple demo recordings played on Timmy Sommer's "Noise The Show," plus their earliest forays into hip-hop. It also puts their music into the proper context, with fanzine interviews and photos of them mugging on the ghostly, grimy streets of early '80s New York. A fan letter accuses them of being a pale imitation of Minor Threat, The Necros, S.O.A., etc., and whatever, that's true. They were also cracking jokes and running free, or at least, that's what I see when I hear them. And if I heard a high school punk band cover "Holy Snappers," I'd flip.

Personal and The Pizzas – *Raw Pie* (Burger Records)

All you need to know about Personal and The Pizzas is on the cover of their *Raw Pie* cassette (soon to be released on vinyl by 1234 Go Records). It's essentially the

cover of Iggy and The Stooges' *Raw Power* album, but with a slice of pizza in place of the microphone stand. Err, that's exactly what it is. They also sound like The Stooges, The Ramones, and maybe the New York Dolls, and some of their songs are about pizza. And they have a song about knowing how to read called "I Can Read." And they're the catchiest band in the world, and this is clearly the album of the year (really a collection of their mostly out-of-print singles). Just stop whatever you're doing and GET THIS NOW (if you can find it).



White Fence – s/t (Make a Mess/Woodsist)

Ben Ratiff is my favorite NY Times music writer because I'm pretty sure we're the same person. We both like Coltrane and doomy abstract metal and Brazilian music, and we both like this White Fence record. White Fence is actually one guy named Tim Presley, who makes bedroom '60s psych that sounds like early Money Mark doing a Syd Barrett record. In other words: he churns out variations on good trippy garage/folk songs, recorded somewhat informally, with tape hiss and the occasional toy instrument or weird overdub. You can either bob your head or chill out to this while drinking some beers on the roof of your building, or grilling some dogs out back. Also, the vinyl version has a really nice outer sleeve with high school notebook doodles on the front cover and a creepy photo of a woman walking like a spider down a flight of stairs on the back, and the fold-out has a scary beach illustration, plus lyrics. I think this record has it all.

Las Historias Mas Sexy Del Mundo directed by Eric Cheevers (Planaria/Chloroform)

I forgot about this film until I was unpacking DVDs in my new apartment, which is crazy because once I found it existed (sometime back in 2005), I couldn't wait to get my hands on a copy. *Las Historias Mas Sexy Del Mundo* is essentially a living tribute to Euro softcore films of the '70s, and Eric Cheevers gets the details so perfectly right, you could easily believe this is just a collection of vintage clips. The unnatural lighting, the dialogue, the cheeseball situations, the outfits, the music. Everything is gold. But then some things are slightly off. All of the sex scenes are edited out – anytime a love scene seems to start, a brief black screen with the letter "X" appears, before cutting to the next vignette. One of the vignettes includes a self-described "neo-luddite" who dresses as a robot "for the sheer irony of it." Another features one of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, who appears as a man snapping photos of two women in the woods (they debate which Horseman he could be). I don't know if it's brilliant, but I like it. There's also an incredible live performance of the song "Session Man" by the band Scene Creamers right at the end. Planaria may still have some copies left (as well as the photo-comic adaptation of it), so check it out. A strange 20-minute ode to '70s horniness on vintage film stock is something you should at least try.

geneva 13...thousand years ago

n.c. arens & d.c. kendrick

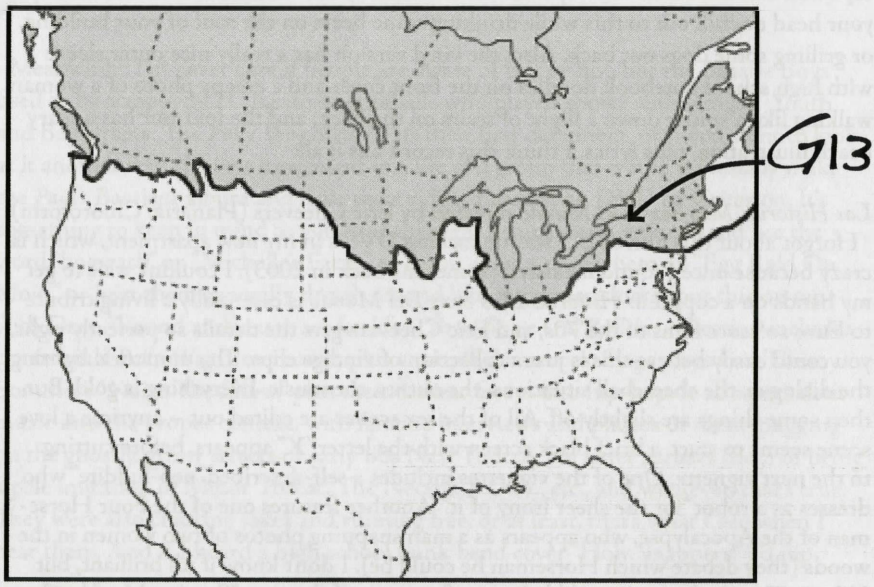
If you have lived in a place for a while, you know how things change. A favorite family business closes and the WalMart bloats all out of proportion. Change is even more obvious when you return to someplace you lived decades ago. New roads have been added, farms are gone, shopping centers sprouted like weeds. Perhaps your best friend's home is now a trendy new day spa.

To see the ultimate change in our space, we need to step farther back in time. Outside of human history into geologic time—a realm that geo-journalist John McPhee has called Deep Time. In the domain of Deep Time, continents shift positions, climates flip-flop, and ancient plants and animals escape from our dreams and nightmares.

So what was it like here in our Geneva 13,000 years ago?

All of Geneva—all of Ontario County—all of New York State—was buried under a mountain of ice ranging from 2.5 to 3 kilometers thick (1.5 to nearly 2 miles thick). The great northern ice sheet began in the Arctic and spread out in all directions, covering all of Canada, Northern Europe, New England and many other northern states. Today, all that is left of it is the glacier of Greenland.

And the ice was on the move. Like all glaciers, the great ice sheets ground slowly



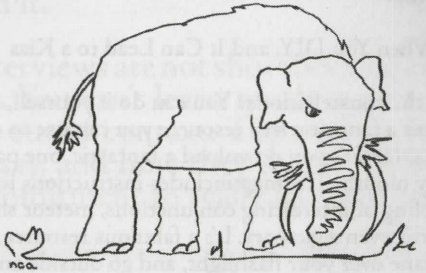
The area coverd by glaciers 13,000 years ago.

(2-10 meters or about 6-30 feet per year) southward, flattening forests, chewing up the ground like a titanic bulldozer and spreading rocky debris across the landscape. Some of this debris turns up as annoying caches of rounded rocks and heavy clay soil in our gardens, still more is piled up in long whale-shaped hills called drumlins that school in great pods just north of the Thruway. The William Smith Hill dormitories and Delancey Street ride two such drumlins. Chimney Bluffs State Park on the shores of Lake Ontario is a drumlin sliced wide open by the gnawing surf, its gravely guts spilling all over the beach.

The embracing ice sheet was not only tall, it was heavy. So heavy, in fact, that it pressed the crust of the Earth down like an overloaded dinghy. And as the ice melted and flowed back to the sea, the ground has been rising slowly back up, once again floating high on the warm, squishy mantle 40 kilometers (25 miles) below our feet. This uplift gave us the cliffs on the shores of Seneca Lake and the waterfalls and glens for which the Finger Lakes are famous.

But there wasn't much life in our Geneva 13,000 years ago. Certainly some hardy bacteria lived under the ice, but little more. The animals and plants fled south before the advancing ice. Travel into Pennsylvania, to the edge of the retreating ice sheet, and you will find the biological vanguard, ready to reclaim the land abandoned by melting ice. The first colonists were scraggly little trees related to today's birch and aspen. But they were hardly trees—just a few feet tall at most—stunted by the dry, icy winds sweeping off the glacier. With them grew hardy grasses and wildflowers to form a type of vegetation called steppe, (unrelated to the Eurasian steppes of Genghis Khan fame) that is found nowhere on Earth today. Still further south, forests of spruce and fir spread down the Appalachian spine. Across the steppe roamed families of woolly mammoth, constantly on the move to find fresh grazing rounds; in their shadow, the predators: giant dire wolves and saber cats.

As the climate warmed, the ice mountains melted, plants spread north again and the animals followed, repopulating the barren, stony land. Geologically speaking, the difference in time between then and now is but an eyeblink, truly. Close your eyes and you might feel the cool air flowing off the retreating glacier as it paused for a few years just along route 96. Close your eyes and you might hear a herd of trumpeting mammoth. Close your eyes and you might smell long-gone wildflowers blooming in the grass. Open your eyes and maybe you'll see their afterimages still among us. It really was just an eyeblink ago.



Climate change? Hogwash! Next thing you'll tell me is that my kind is going extinct.

punkastronomy
by doug reilly

I. The Social Activities of Stars

The universe is filled with things orbiting other things. Moons orbit planets and planets orbit stars. Stars orbit the galactic core and galaxies orbit each other. Stars also orbit other stars. About a third of our Milky Way Galaxy's 400 billion or so stars are involved in pairs and triplets and even more complicated arrangements. We call them binary stars when they are paired up, and multiple stars when there are three or more.

Binary stars are two stars that orbit each other. (Well, technically, they orbit around their common center of mass, but let's not get too technical.) The more massive of the pair is called the primary, and the less massive one is called the companion or secondary. As a fan of *Firefly*, I prefer "companion". Binary stars can sometimes be very close to each other, and their orbits can take only earth days to complete. Sometimes they can be so far apart it's hard to imagine gravity working at such distances, and the period of their orbit is measured in the hundreds of thousands of years.

I'll help you find your first binary star. You don't need a telescope. You just need to be able to recognize the Big Dipper. This time of year, it's a tad northwest and about ¾ of the way up the sky. Right now, in June, it rather looks like it's pouring oil onto the Arctic National Wildlife Preserve. Find the second star from the end of the dipper's handle. Look real closely. Notice a faint star very close to it? Look again, and concentrate. Ah, there they are, Mizar and Alcor. Mizar is the bright one, Alcor the dimmer.

There's a lot of lore about Mizar and Alcor being a kind of vision test for the ancients, and the story is told about the Babylonians, Romans, Arabs, Turks, as well as Native Americans. Who knows? Anyway it's not a very hard eyesight test. I wouldn't choose archers for my army by it.

Actually, I sorta fooled you. Mizar and Alcor are not actually involved in a binary relationship. For a long time, astronomers thought that they were, because they were so close together. Mizar and Alcor are actually what are called "double stars," which are stars that look close together, and may or may not be related. If you have a pair of binoculars, try looking at these two stars. You might be able to detect that Mizar itself is actually a binary star! And it keeps getting wackier: Mizar is not just a binary system. Each of the two stars you can see through binoculars or a small telescope are actually themselves binary systems, making that a quadruplet system. And Alcor is actually a binary star, too.

II. Learning is Cool When You DIY, and It Can Lead to a Kiss

Do you want to learn the constellations? You can do it yourself, and Punkastronomy is all about DIY. There's a fantastic free resource you can use to do it. The website www.skymaps.com let's you download a fantastic, one page star map and celestial calendar every month. The map includes instructions for us, and the calendar gives you a good sampling of interesting conjunctions, meteor showers, and other things to look at. There's even a glossary. It's a fabulous resource, so go print one out, tape some red cellophane over your flashlight, and go outside and try to start learning the constellations. It's one of the most powerful things a nerd can do to dramatically increase his/her chance of getting involved in a binary system. Or multiple system. The universe seems not to judge, I won't either.

Why Geneva13?

Because 12 and 14 are uptight and boring. Because 13 is the type to ride a skateboard down the sidewalk right in front of a cop. Because we have a theory #13 is the most commonly unoccupied PO Box in the US. Because, at one time, we compiled a list of Genevas in the US, and, alphabetically speaking, ours was number 13. We've since found more, but reserve the right to not change the name of our zine.

Geneva13: End-Matter Manifesto

Geneva13 is a quarterly, do-it-yourself, not-for-profit, independent, collective venture that promotes people's creative expression as they construct their identities and communities. It is a love song to this town of ours, and we want as many people as we can get to work on the lyrics.

Geneva13's goal is to present the community with a variety of points of view. We invite submissions, but we also ask people for interviews. We transcribe those conversations, and we let the interviewees read them over to make sure they are comfortable with what they said and how they said it.

Geneva13 interviews are not short because conversations are not short. You can't learn much from soundbites or quotes taken out of context. The truth is in the details, what people say, and how they say it. Understanding is built on a commitment to really listen to one another.

Help Geneva13: When you're done dog-earing the pages and putting coffee spots on the cover, don't recycle, reuse: give your copy to somebody else. We only print 600 copies, so each one has to reach lots of people! This issue's reuse tip of the month: leave it in what we call waiteries...lobbies and waiting rooms of doctors, dentists, barbers and hair stylists, the DMV, Social Security office...

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