

APRIL OF 2011 MARKS OUR THIRTIETH (30TH!) YEAR IN BUSINESS.

All month we'll be posting new stories, old stories and images on our website, as often as we can, time permitting. The latest story is below and there's an index to the left. We hope you enjoy!

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Like this story?



"Girlfriending" is a verb that most guys who ride bikes know and have experienced, even if they've never heard the actual definition.

To "girlfriend" is to ride a fixed distance behind your boyfriend, usually about 25'-50' *no matter how fast or slow the boyfriend is riding*. You can go so slow you're nearly falling over, or hammer way past your comfort level, but when you look back, she's still the same distance behind. Girlfriends claim it is never done on purpose, but there's not a guy alive who believes it.

The lesser known and seldom witnessed version is of course called boyfriending.

Girlfriending (although we didn't know the term at the time) was the reason we started making tandems at Ibis.

The first Ibis tandem was built when Scot wanted to go on a bicycle tour of Europe in the summer of '87 with his wife (we use the terms wife and girlfriend interchangeably in the case of "girlfriending"). For some reason, no matter how fast or slow he rode his bike, his wife always rode an annoying distance behind, too far behind to talk or have any sort of conversation, but always close enough not to lose contact.

So they decided that building a tandem would be one way they could actually ride together. Having no experience building tandems, Ibis enlisted the expertise of Rick Jorgensen, who was known for building the best performing tandems anywhere, due mostly to Rick's engineering expertise. Rick made Tango Tandems, and they used a unique frame configuration called an Uptube.

Tandems, before the Uptube, were long and not made with particularly big diameter tubing so they flexed quite a bit. This made for interesting handling in corners as the stoker's inertia 'wound up' the frame through excessive flexing.



It was far worse when you added panniers in a loaded touring situation. Rick's Uptube came to the rescue. Ibis also applied techniques and componentry they had been developing in the mountain bike world to build stiffer stronger bikes. The result of this unique collaboration was a predictable, high performance bike.

Scot built the first Ibis Uptube, and took it to Europe with his wife. That winter he wrote a small side bar in the Tour de France story in Cyclist magazine (RIP) about their experience riding the tandem.

As mentioned in the story to the right, we flew into Zurich. We assembled the tandem on the front curb of the airport, and rode away on the bike path that led straight to and from the airport. Wow!

When we rode into Zurich at the end of our trip, we had no bike box. I simply took the pedals and panniers off the bike, checked the panniers and wheeled the entire tandem up to the check-in counter. They looked a bit sideways at me, and then readily accepted the tandem (no excess baggage charge either). I figured if it got damaged on the way back, I could repair it once I got home. Turns out that they treated it well, probably more carefully than if it was in a box. The tandem made it home without a scratch.

On another tandem touring trip in Europe, Joe Breeze once watched his tandem box go flying down the taxiway after it was set atop the baggage cart and driven behind an idling jet engine. The box tumbled down the asphalt, but he packed it well and it wasn't damaged.

The success of this tandem tour led to the start of a run of building tandems for about 9 years.

We built Uptubes, and then added more traditional configurations.

Ibisiens built themselves tandems, and then we started going on road rides around Sonoma County.

Tandems, when piloted well, are very very fast on the road. There's a bit of a wives tale that they don't climb, they actually climb fine if you have compatible riders, and a sufficiently stiff tandem.

For a few years, during the Wine Country and Harvest Century (in Santa Rosa), a group of 5 Ibisian tandems would do the centuries, but always start last. We could do 100 miles in 4 hours, so that meant passing a lot of people. The more we passed, the better we felt about ourselves. Five colorful tandems zipping along the flats or rollers at 30MPH was quite a sight. We'd get big trains of people behind us, but even the fittest riders had a hard time hanging on.

For a couple of other perspectives, check out Joe Breeze's side story about his 5 wins at the Davis Double on a tandem. Joe's story appeared as a part of a larger and excellent article on our tandems that appeared in the truly excellent Bicycle Guide (thanks Ted!). This story was written by John Derven, and sums up the essence of why we love riding tandems.



Speaking of fast people on tandems, Scot wants to digress and hijack this post with what he claims is a special treat, so here's a note from him:

As we were scanning magazines and photos and memories for this tandem story, we ran across a picture of Andy Hampsten a few pages away from the side bar I wrote (above) for the Dec 1987 Cyclist Magazine. Check out the picture of the mag.



suffer like this, so can I.' I swore to him, then and there, 'Stephan, tomorrow on the Joux-Plane, I will be with you.' "

And with him he was. The Joux-Plane, the last of six climbs on this last day in the Alps, was the obvious showdown spot. From bottom to top Eddy kept the pressure on, Stephan glued to his wheel and Delgado unable to go faster. Eddy had kept his promise.

Over the top Bernard led Eddy, Pedro and Stephan. Just before the first bend of the descent Roche came around the other three to be first into the turn. Bernard was shocked and didn't catch Roche's wheel. The succeeding turns came in rapid succession. Bernard and Schepers made a nice rolling roadblock for Delgado. By the time Pedro got past them he was 50 yards back. Forgetting his fear of this descent (where he broke a collarbone in 1983) he chased as hard as possible. But it still wasn't enough; the gap was eight seconds at the bottom.

Four and a half kilometers to go now,

Hampsten is one of the best climbers in the business, and was closer to Roche than his 16th place finish would suggest.

flat then uphill. Stephan knows what to do, and by the time he reaches the finish line in Morzine, he has carved out 22 seconds from Delgado's already slim lead. Pedro is still in yellow, but with the Dijon time trial coming up in two days the logical winner will be Roche.

Stephan doesn't disappoint. He leads the Spaniard by an ever-increasing gap and takes the time trial by enough to go into an overall lead of 40 seconds.

7-Eleven got a pleasant jolt from Raul's time trial. Third at the intermediate time checks, he just slipped to fifth at the finish. A Tour rider must get stronger with abuse and Raul obviously has what it takes.

Nor was the 7-Eleven party over. Jeff Pierce slipped into a break with just two laps of the Champs-Elysee to go. A number of the Dutch riders in it were getting crafty and slow, so while they looked at each other Pierce took off. The others weren't too worried. But while they fooled around, Pierce put his head down. Between his very hot pace and the "after you" behavior behind, Pierce started to look like he'd make it.

Then Canada's Steve Bauer broke

from the chasing ranks and started to reduce the gap in a hurry. Across the open expanses of the Place de la Concorde Pierce looked over his shoulder. Fear filled his heart as his head urged his legs to "Go! Go! Go!" The line is just 400 yards from the last corner. An eternity. Bauer was getting close, sooooo close, and then, *whoosh*, Pierce was there, his hands in the air, and poor Steve was left with another memory similar to the Olympic final.

Tour founder Henri Desgrange had a favorite saying: "Head and legs." It was his shorthand for what a Tour rider must have. Jeff Pierce may not have been the strongest guy on the Champs Elysee, and Stephan Roche may not have been the strongest rider in the race, but each man exemplified a winning application of the Desgrange formula. It was a race for the complete rider, and we race observers will probably have a long wait before we see a more perfect example of the founder's wisdom in action. ●

Owen Mulholland covered the last three Tours for CYCLIST, and regularly contributes "Snapshots" of past racing greats.



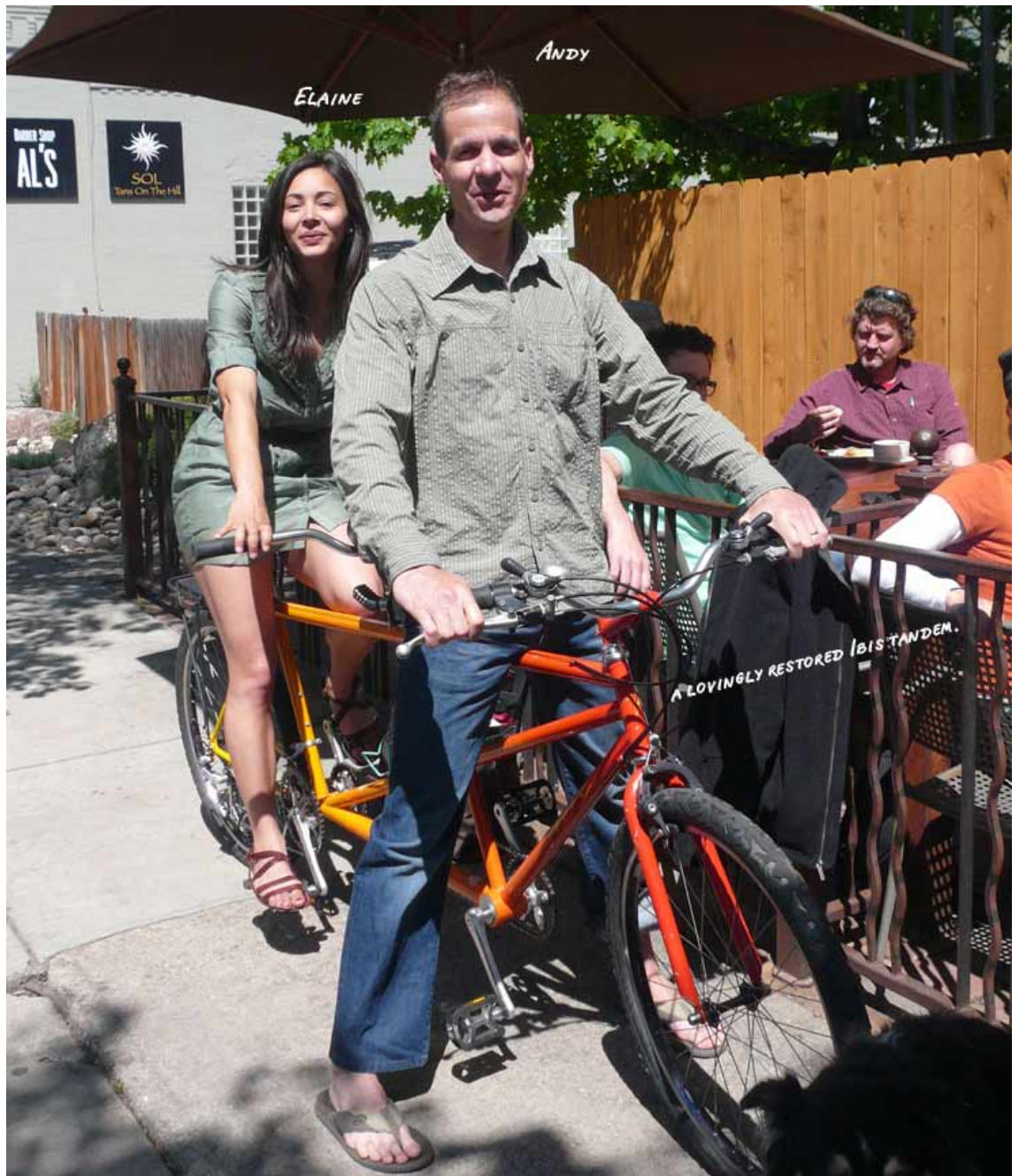
It was a pleasant surprise to see us both in the same magazine, back in our heyday.

Andy is one of America's greatest cyclists. He's still the only American to win the tour of Italy, a win he earned in spectacular fashion on the Gavia in a snowstorm in June (poster below). He did the Tour de France 8 times. He won the Le Alpe d'Huez stage. He's enough of a friend that he even tagged his switchback sign on the Alpe d'Huez climb with an Ibis decal, check it out!



Despite the bike habit, a wonderful woman deemed me socially acceptable enough to marry last spring. Elaine loves most of my quirks; my friends find me suitably unplugged when she is around; and I enjoy playing every day with her.

Our backyard wedding party was mostly party, with lots of good food and great friends. Doug from University Bikes restored an '80s Ibis tandem and gave it to us with a nice speech. He and I used to race together back when I would seriously fret over winning enough money to put gas in the car. Now Doug has America's friendliest bike shop at Ubikes in Boulder and gets to ride whenever he wants.



Elaine and I ride the tandem on roads and trails around Boulder. To Gold Hill, up Four Mile Canyon where we saw a mother bear and cubs on our last ride, to organic farms outside of town, as the family SUB with groceries or lumber on it, to bars and cafes, and always to friends' houses for dinner. It rides like its tequila-sunrise fade paint job: smooth, fast and determined to make us have a great time.

Elaine lets me bomb through corners, but has no interest in crashing as we negotiate bike paths, trails and alleys. Our Ibis handles fine at low speed and loves to smooth out the bumps while cruising trails.

Ibis and I were big in the 80s, and I say we're both better now than in our fast years. At least I'm half right. Thanks for the bike, Chuckie!

BACK TO THE STORY

We organized a tandem tour where people came to our shop in Sebastopol, and then we we toured Sonoma County.



We started off building mostly 26" wheeled tandems, that was a wheel size we were more familiar with, and we knew that the strength was there for the rigors of tandem riding (see Joe's sidebar as a reference). Soon we were building 700C based tandems as well, [check out this page on our Titanium tandem that came a little bit later.](#)

We really liked the 26" platform, we could use the Specialized Fat Boy tires one day and then put some big knobbies on the next. You could run drop bars or flat bars.

OFF ROAD TANDEMING

We did a number of fun trips on the Tandems off road. Here's one in November of 1991 we did on the White Rim outside of Moab.







There was also a fun trip on the south end of the Baja peninsula, only two pictures from this one.
First the tandem/birthing chair:



This by the way, is the same Uptube tandem that did the Tour de France trip in Europe the year before. Change tires and BOOM, off road tandem.

Here's the Sea of Cortez:



MORE OFF ROAD FUN-FOR SOME OF US

Mountain Bike Action even put us on their cover. That's Zap on the back of the Ibis, an avowed tandem hater after Chuck took him on a ride to Gary Helfrich's house on hilly twisty terrain one day...



← *CLICK TO DOWNLOAD THE .PDF*

We had a lot of fun building and riding tandems. Still do have fun riding them, but don't count on any carbon fiber Ibis tandems in the near future.

