

## OP/ED

# Biking around the 'Burg: the basics

*Gabe Uhr's protest of parking fees turns out to be adventure in transportation*

At this point in my life, I can't really afford to be a philanthropist. That's why I opted not to pay money for a parking deck for future undergrads. Instead, I decided to invest in a bicycle, which is the best mode of transportation until someone invents some sort of horseless carriage.



I haven't owned a bike for about seven years, and they sure have changed a lot. I went into Mark's Bike Shop to find that most bikes today have more suspension than my Honda Civic; they're also priced comparably. Since I only needed a bike to get me around Harrisonburg, I went with a lower-end model, the '98 GT Outpost.

The salesperson (the salesperson was a salesman, in this case) was very friendly and helpful. He diagnosed my needs and agreed that the Outpost would do me fine. Then he took me outside, sized my frame for the bike frame and showed me some of the bike's features.

"It's got a Cro Mo frame, with GT's triple triangle design," he said.

"It's shiny," I said.

"It's also got Tektro brakes and Shimano Rapid-fire shifters," he said.

"It's really shiny," I said.

"Also, the green paint shines pretty cool in the sun," he added.

"Yup."

I was sold. After a few days of deliberation, I went back and purchased a shiny new bicycle.

Unfortunately, relearning how to ride a bike isn't exactly like learning how to ride a bike. I don't know who made up that stuff about never forgetting how to ride a bike; all I know is that when I learned how to ride a bike the first time, I didn't fall off of it quite as much as I do now. I found out (the hard way) that it's no longer cool to ride around with baseball cards in your spokes and rainbow tassels on your handlebars. I also had to get rid of my license plate that read: USA GABE.

I had to purchase some new accessories before I was ready to take my bike to campus. First, I needed a good lock because malicious criminals steal bikes. Less successful thieves will take only your front wheel. I also bought a seat leash because some deranged individuals actually steal bike seats. Nothing hurts more than having your bike stolen, except for riding a bike with no seat.

Riding a bike to campus is great because you don't have to worry about finding a parking space for your car or waiting for a bus. The hardest part is getting to campus. Every time I ride on Port Republic Road, I fear for my life. I

haven't been hit by a car, bus or tractor yet, but from talking to friends, I know I'm in the minority.

I mentioned the main reason I got this bike was parking, but I think a lot of people had the same idea about buying a bicycle because sometimes parking my bike can be a problem. First, there aren't enough bike racks—sometimes people end up chaining their bikes to trees.

And second, the existing racks scrape all the shiny paint off my bike. I like the bike racks by Court Square downtown. It's easy to chain up your front wheel, and the racks don't scratch up your bike. I don't know a lot about

bicycles or any of the cool bike slang. I can't "hop a bunny" or "pop a wheelie" and I can't ride down stairs commando-style, but I hope to learn someday.

In the meantime, I'm just enjoying riding around. I love my new bike so much that I showed it off to my friend Jon.

"It's got a chrome something, with triple tangles, and troll tech brakes and some kind-o shifters," I said proudly.



"It's really shiny," he said.

"Yup."

*Gabe Uhr is a senior English major who hopes to invent some sort of horseless carriage.*