

In 2007 I joined my husband in Malibu for 2 months while he worked on a movie. Back home in Vancouver, my tight knit group of ridiculously fit girlfriends decided we should all do the Seattle to Portland bike ride that year - a 200 mile road race/ride - none of us knew much about road bikes. I knew nothing of road riding, but being a committed friend, I set out to find myself a bike in an unknown territory, Southern California. The learning curve was steep and after exploring several bike shops, scouring Craigslist and reading up on bikes, I stumbled upon a funky bike shop, popular with the local biking community in Burbank - Bicycle John's.

The tiny and tightly packed store was busy with a melange like minded folks: a younger more serious sect of fit bodies in tights, middle agers rewinding the clock, disinterested mates of the above, lots of bikes coming in and out both the front and back for maintenance and the friendly staff serving everyone's specific needs. They ambled through the store talking bikes, sipping free coffee and perusing the shelves full of gear, components and everything to make you a better rider or give you a better ride. The atmosphere was positive, energetic and welcoming. A fit affable young man in loose fitting shorts, flip flops with bulging hairless calves happily began the process of further educating me on possible road bike options while he increased my knowledge of what to look for in frames and components.

30 minutes into the informative sales pitch, another clerk (Sandra??) joined the pursuit for my first bike. She was one of only a few women riders in those days and had a spot on the shop's sponsored racing team. Having understood my needs, my budget and reviewing the options available, Sandra remembered a bike tucked away at the back of the maintenance shop - a discarded bike from one of the shop's competitive team members. "It's pretty nice bike" she tells me, an all carbon LOOK 555, in just my size 53 cm.

Similar as to when I first laid eyes on my husband, the infatuation was immediate as the black and white "race" bike was rolled out back for my review. Simple yet sleek, not a common, but more of a prestigious brand. I was not dressed for the part wearing only sandals and shorts, but Sandra fixed the bike up for a quick spin. With my feet balanced on temporary pedals, straddling the tiny, narrow rock hard seat; the bike instantly responded. It was lighter than anything I had ever been on, a little jumpy perhaps? We were out of site of the shop and alone for the first time as we embarked down the back alley.

I was giddy, reminiscent of a child's first solo ride or the first time you got to take out the car all by yourself - that magic of first experience - a rare and memorable moment. Perhaps that's why the turn of events seemingly had no warning, but within 30 seconds while taking my first turn to the left turn, the frame simply slipped out from under me and shot out to the right - leaving all 130 lbs of me flying off in the opposite direction. My next memory is hot asphalt against my skin coming to the realization I was splayed out on the hot pavement - and the subsequent shock of WTF just happened??

Amazed, I dragged my sorry self up to discover the skin on my left arm, hip and leg torn through 3 or 4 layers. The burn and bleeding were excruciating. Somehow in the mix, I had cut my left hand between my thumb and finger right down to the tendon. The laceration was shooting blood - "Kill Bill" style into the air. A nearby shop owner had witnessed the event and came rushing to the rescue. She insisted I come inside and did her best to stop the bleeding. It was futile; I needed stitches and had to have the gravel painstakingly removed from my leg. Hobbling back to the shop a stunned Sandra asked how I fell. I had no idea? She said I had to get myself to the hospital asap and I nodded I would do just that, but first I had to buy that bike!

The next day I followed through on my newly desired attraction. Sandra sold me the proper shoes and put me and the bike on the trainer. She measured my arms and legs, then set about meticulously adjusting heights, lengths and spans of the bike to meld us together into one, all the while counselling me on the basics of riding road. I popped the bike into the back seat of my convertible and we left the shop to embark on a new journey.

With little faith, I cautiously took my bike to the winding roads of the Santa Monica Mountains, the only safe option for riding in Malibu. Donned in my newly purchased kit, new shoes,

learning how to clip in and most especially out, we set out to conquer the peaks and valleys of those imposing mountains. I was tentative at first, climbing the steep hills, navigating deeply twisting turns; all the while my hands squeezing tightly on the brakes with fresh wounds and the memory of falling dominate in my mind. The mountains offer only killer climbs and treacherous down hills and it was these I challenged daily while my husband worked long hours on the movie set.

Initially, I didn't trust the bike, but as I as my stamina grew, so did my faith and the allure. I logged hundreds of miles on that bike, crisscrossing the winding mountainous roads. I road Mulholland Drive from Malibu to Hollywood, crossed the mountains into Calabasas, then up the valley to Oxnard and back to Malibu. My little LOOK bike and I road 85 miles to Huntington Beach one day. We trained together as I learned how to ride efficiently, hydrate, eat properly on long rides and experience what the word "bonk" really meant.

I got back to Canada with my atypical LOOK bike, (everyone rides Specialized) and finally 7 excitedly nervous gals set out in a mini -van towing a trailer with 7 bikes to Seattle as ready as we were ever going to be for the "STP". My little bike and I flew the distance easily – piece of cake. The miles logged ascending those stoic mountains, grueling in the heat on long lonesome rides produced a tough and strong rider - I was hooked.

Mutual respect and understanding developed into a love affair. Together we accomplished much – finishing three Fondo's, several hill climbing events - even placing in a couple of them. We logged thousands of miles on memorable journeys and road trips, with my husband, (who had to become a rider too), friends and countless solo rides - just me and my perfectly fit bike. Across thousands of miles we never had another incident. We danced together like Astair & Rogers.

Sadly today our love affair ends...with the bike perched in the roof rack, I ran into a height barrier at the local mall and broke the frame ☆ . Our 6 year affair ends the way it began, in violent shock.... and then the unbelievable - my bike lying crumpled on the roof of my car. I can't articulate my sense of loss – not to mention the embarrassment of such an idiotic move. An infatuation becoming an affair, which blossomed into deep connection and through my own stupidity is now lost. I did find a new way of being through that bike, which I will continue on with another I know, but there will always be a special place in my heart for the one that made me the rider I am today.