



Official Newsletter  
March 2004  
Come Ride with Us



---

## Inside

- 2 How to Contact Us
- 3 Meeting and Ride Schedules
- 6 From the Office of the President
- 7 Club Officers, Chairpersons, and Ride Coordinators

# Like a Dork on Your Bike

**By Maynard Hershon**

In February '02, Michael Sylvester came to our bike shop in Tucson to teach us his program for fitting people to bicycles. Sylvester, 45, a veteran bike rider and racer and a yoga instructor, knows the body and how it works on a bike.

He rides everywhere in Portland, OR, where he works for the four Bike Gallery stores. He has never owned an automobile. He's lean and super-flexible and an example of what we should be as athletes, though few of us are.

All he does at the Gallery is bike fits, six a day, four days a week, \$100 per fit. He's booked three weeks ahead - year 'round. He fits racers and freds, fat people and thin, every kind of rider. He's done 1000s of shop fits and traveled the nation for Serotta Cycles teaching dealers how to do Size-Cycle fits.

*(Continued on page 2)*

---

**Next Membership Meeting  
March 11, 2004  
Rockridge Branch Library  
5366 College Ave (at Manila)**

(Continued from page 1)

You look at him and listen to him and you can not sustain your skepticism. Even when he tells you that you have to put a jive, high-rise Technomic stem on your Lighthouse, a stem so tall you're gonna look like a dork on your bike forever and take big heat from your buddies, you cannot doubt him.

Our mornings with Mike Sylvester began with short yoga classes. We did poses or stretches that made us aware (often painfully) of how limited are our own ranges of motion, so that we'd recognize similar restriction in others.

He believes that we have to be comfortable to ride well, that comfort on the bike is more important (in non-track cyclists) than aerodynamics or a so-called power position. He works with nearly no formulas and seldom uses a tape measure.

He is fanatical about level, though, using an expensive spirit level that rests on identical discs screwed onto the quick-release skewer ends, front and rear. He sets you up on your bike on a raised platform so you're eye-level. He stands a specific distance away.

He does everything consistently, so results are consistent from client to client and from this year's fitting to next year's.

Before you climb on your bike or a Size-Cycle articulated trainer, he asks you maybe 20 questions about your riding today and in years past, your crash-and-broken-bones history, your medical past as it might relate to your pedaling or sitting on a bike, your intensity as a rider, on and on.

Then he has you lie down on the floor. He asks you to do certain stretches and notes your flexibility and alignment in several areas, especially your relative ability to tilt your pelvis.

If your hamstrings are tight, as mine are, you

are unable to tilt your pelvis so that you can reach for your bars with a properly flat back. Alas.

Unless your pelvis tilts and your back is flat, you curl your spine as you reach forward. Spinal considerations aside, you shorten the distance between your navel and throat, com-

(Continued on page 3)

---

## How to Contact Us



Oakland  
YellowJackets  
Bicycle Club

2185 Manzanita Drive  
Oakland, CA 94611  
510.986.9011

[Info@oaklandyellowjackets.org](mailto:Info@oaklandyellowjackets.org)

<http://www.oaklandyellowjackets.org>

*Free Wheelin'* newsletters are free with paid membership.

Opinions expressed by contributors do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher.

Permission to reproduce these materials in part or whole, or to share, load, or rent them can be obtained through the Oakland Yellow jackets.

Submit *Free Wheelin'* articles at any ride or club meeting, or call the Oakland Yellowjackets voice mail (510.986.9011) to make special arrangements. Handwritten or typed articles or hard copy with the accompanying file on diskette, are accepted. Electronic files can also be sent to the club's e-mail address.

*(Continued from page 2)*

pressing your lungs, restricting your breathing.

You adopt the shoulders-forward "cyclist's slump," further compressing your upper lungs. You need a higher handlebar position than most of us ride.

Sylvester chose me for his first demonstration. I was older and less flexible than anyone else there. Because I am so damn imperfect, I was the perfect model: So many elements to consider in the fitting process.

I did not realize how limited my flexibility was. I knew I could barely tilt my pelvis, that I was rounding my back as I reached for my bars. Michael Sylvester saw all that and raised my already highish Nitto Pearl stem above the minimum-insertion line, until my bars were nearly level with my saddle top.

Not high enough, he said, and spoke the awful word, Technomic.

One of my fellow students asked: "Are you really suggesting that Maynard put a Technomic stem on his beautiful Lighthouse?"

"Without a second's hesitation," said Michael Sylvester, the handlebar raiser.

Sylvester set up two of us shop staffers and one woman road rider during the clinic. He

*(Continued on page 4)*



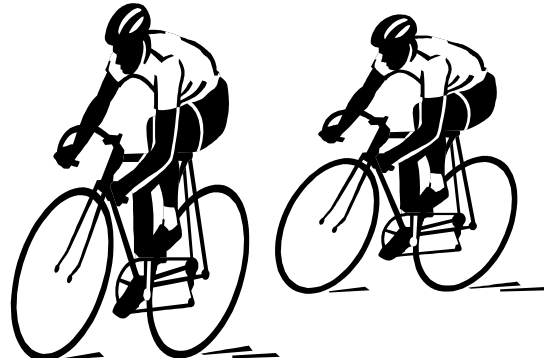
## Meeting Schedule

Membership meetings are on the second Thursday (unless otherwise noted in the newsletter) of every riding season month. Meetings are held at the Rockridge Branch of the Oakland Public Library, located at 5366 College Ave. (at Manila). Meetings start at 7:00 p.m.

**March 11 2004**

**April 8, 2004**

**May 13, 2004**



## Off-Season Ride Schedule

**Off-Season Rides (October to April) - Sat. 9 am** Every Saturday during the off-season rider's meet at the Children's Fairyland Parking Lot at Lake Merritt in Oakland, decide on a route, then depart at 9 am sharp, weather permitting. Routes during the off-season are typically shorter, 25 - 45 miles on moderate terrain.

**April 17 - LAKE - 8:00 AM**

**2004 Season Kick-Off Ride**

20 miles

START: Children's Fairyland, Oakland

Celebrate the start of the Oakland Yellowjackets 2004 riding season with a leisurely ride from Lake Merritt to Bay Farm Island on Alameda and back. Bike tech inspections, rest

*(Continued on page 4)*

raised all three sets of bars. Tight hamstrings: It's epidemic.

I took my bar-raising hard. I felt as if I was finally coming face-to-face with being old, inflexible and hopelessly unathletic. I imagined myself showing up for rides in front of Café Paraiso with my bars above saddle level.

I imagined paying a hundred dollars to someone so they could tell me yes, that's just what you have to do to be comfortable and fully effective on your bike. I'd have paid a hundred dollars, plus the cost of a Technomic, plus installation, for the privilege of serving as the laughingstock of the Saturday ride.

"Maynard's gonna move to Portland," Sylvester said, "and join my yoga class. In a year or so, you won't recognize him. He'll be another cyclist entirely."

I'd be the cyclist I imagine I am, I guess, the cyclist I now know that I am not. I love how my bikes have always looked -- like racing bicycles. Are those days gone, lost forever on Mike Sylvester's setup stand?

In the days following his visit, I told friends about the things I'd learned. Most were only vaguely interested, knowing, it seemed, all they wanted to know about bike fit. Guys in the business wanted to know what the Bike Gallery did with all the parts Sylvester took off of his clients' bikes.

Few empathized with my distress. After all, THEIR stems weren't going up three inches.

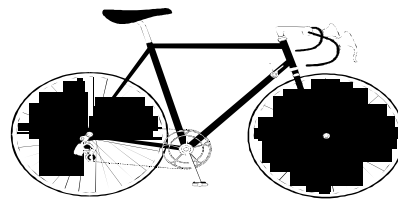
I was sure Sylvester was right, but not nearly so sure I could follow his advice. I didn't feel uncomfortable on my bike as it was. But I'd been set up by the best bike-fitter in the country; could I ignore his recommendations?

While he had me on the stand, Sylvester raised my stem and pushed my saddle forward half an inch. I lowered the stem right away. Later, I pushed my seat back to where it had been. Shoved forward, it felt weird and looked awful.

I did, though, order steerer extensions for my Lighthouse and LeMond, so I can use threadless-style stems with front openings. I'm going to try a 90-degree, 11cm stem instead of the horizontal, 13cm Pearl I have now. I shudder as I type that statement.

I'm doing yoga classes two mornings a week, and plan to expand to three. In yoga, I have a new, time-consuming, expensive hobby that will, I hope, keep me flexible enough to stay at my primary hobby, riding my bike.

If I only had time for one hobby, and I asked Michael Sylvester what I should do, quit cycling or quit yoga, what would he say? Maybe he'd suggest I quit coddling my illusions.



---

*(Continued from page 3)*

stop facilities, SAG wagon and potluck picnic following the ride sponsored by Yellowjackets members. Registration opens at 8:00 AM and the ride begins at 9:00 AM.

**April 24 - LAKE - 8:00 AM  
Point Pinole**

25/40 miles

START: Children's Fairyland, Oakland

Ride through residential neighborhoods of North Oakland, Berkeley, Albany, El Cerrito, Albany and Richmond, then regroup in El Sobrante. Light riders may retrace route to Lake Merritt, while others continue to Point Pinole pier and a clockwise loop around El Sobrante before returning to the lake.

**May 1 - LAKE - 8:00 AM  
Lake Chabot**

29/35/42 miles

*(Continued on page 5)*

*(Continued from page 4)*

**START:** Children's Fairyland, Oakland

A counter-clockwise loop around Oakland and San Leandro. The outbound route is a flat cruise along Doolittle Rd by Oakland Airport and a modest climb up Fairmont Rd in San Leandro. Lights and Intermediates descend the south side of Lake Chabot and return via Bancroft Ave. or Foothill Blvd. Advanced riders complete the loop via Redwood Rd and Joaquin Miller Ave.

**May 8 - BART - 7:15 AM**

**Tiburon Loop**

17/46/55 miles

**START:** Embarcadero at Bryant St, San Francisco ([map](#))

Nearest BART station: Embarcadero

A Bay Area favorite. This ride takes you across the Golden Gate Bridge and through Sausalito. Light riders go directly to Tiburon at the end of the Sausalito bike path and return to San Francisco via ferry. Others traverse Camino Alto and Paradise Drive, then return along the north shore of Richardson Bay. Advanced option riders add the Marin headlands loop after crossing the GG Bridge northbound.

**May 15 - LAKE - 8:00 AM**

**Arlington**

41 miles (shorter options to be determined by ride coordinators)

**START:** Children's Fairyland, Oakland

Travel through residential Kensington, El Cerrito and Richmond along Arlington, a scenic alternative to Key Route to get to El Sobrante. The ride returns to the Lake via San Pablo Dam Rd, Moraga and Pinehurst.

**May 22 - BART - 7:15 AM**

**Dumbarton-Alpine**

39/58 miles

**START:** Union City BART

Discover a bike-friendly path across the bay via the Dumbarton Bridge bikeway. Once across the bridge, the short loop for Lights and Humane Intermediates roams around Palo Alto before returning to the Dumbarton bridge eastbound back to Union City. The longer loop continues on to Sand Hill Road, then loops around Portola Valley and Los Altos before rejoining the return path of the short loop.

**May 29 - LAKE - 8:00 AM**

**Tunnel & Grizzly**

38 miles

**START:** Children's Fairyland, Oakland

Climb up the Broadway Terrace, Old Tunnel Road and part of Grizzly Peak Blvd, then reap the rewards of your effort with an exhilarating descent on South Park and Wildcat Canyon Rd. Practice your paceline skills along San Pablo Dam Rd into El Sobrante and return to Lake Merritt via Key Route. Light and Humane Intermediate riders may have alternate routes as determined by their respective ride coordinators.

**May 31 - LAKE - 9:00 AM**

**Memorial Day Decide-and-Ride**

**START:** Children's Fairyland, Oakland

Meet at the Children's Fairyland parking lot and depart on a decided route at 9:00 AM.

The Yellowjackets have a no drop policy and will leave no light or humane intermediate rider behind!

**REQUIRED:** Helmet, waiver, ID with emergency info.

**RECOMMENDED:** Two bottles of water minimum, high energy food, pump, spare tubes, tools, patch kit, padded gloves, padded cycling shorts, protective eye wear, sun block.



## **From the Office of the President**

Welcome, to our new members and welcome back to those members who year after year subject themselves to the joys of riding with the best cycle club in the Bay Area. (writers opinion here).

We, again, are going to have a great season, because a cadre of members have been working behind the scenes to assure same. Of particular mention are the map committee volunteers, who are expending a great deal of their personal time and energy updating the routes so that we can all enjoy the rides. They have ridden, driven, in good and bad weather and met on several occasions to assure you have safe and sane rides. As of this writing they are still busy as bees trying to finalize their efforts. A peak at the preliminary results indicates that we will be pleased with the results. Just imagine, correct mileage and street names and actual mapped and scheduled light rides, as starters.....

What else is in store for this year?

First and foremost, a safe and sane riding season. Everyone should think safety. I am proud to report that last year we did not have ONE serious reported accident. A tribute to all....

A good friendly riding season for all, particularly the new members. I ask that returning members, again, embrace the new arrivals and help them get the "Love" of the Yellowjackets.

For the first time we have a supply, limited, of clothing going into the new year. If you aren't one of the finest attired cyclist in the area here is your opportunity to be recognized as such. Contact me anytime to get your dress for success attire.

As I indicated earlier the ride schedule has been set. As usual we will have our popular picnic rides, but it is important to note that the Monterey ride has been, due to Asilomar availability, has been moved up to September 11...The good and bad news here is that it gives you less time to worry about the ride but less time to prepare..

Finally, I want to thank all of you in advance for the support you will be giving during the year. It's your club, so let's make it work. If called upon please do what you can to help out and make the year a success. See you at the first meeting, March 11, 2004. See you at the Kick off ride...

Al

# **Club Officers, Chairpersons, and Ride Coordinators**

## **Officers**

President: Al Joseph  
510-339-0454  
Vice President: Jim Collier  
510-526-0716  
Barbara Massey  
510-531-5899  
Secretary: Ann Ma  
510-482-1167  
Treasurer: Barbara Moodie  
(415) 586-3783

## **Standing Committee Chairpersons**

Monterey Ride Committee: Kathy Starkey  
510-521-6235  
Map Committee: Brit Harvey  
510-845-9122  
Christmas Party Committee: Kathy Starkey  
510-521-6235

**Newsletter Editor** Jan Smith  
510-893-3374

**Webmaster** Alfonso Estrada  
510-465-1670