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Black cocktail dress (left), \$90; aubergine satin (right), \$120  
Black dress available in Corte Madera



Gray heather outfit (left) totals \$167  
Argyle outfit (right) totals \$248 with gloves and handbag

# Marin's mountain bikes sweep the world

By Beth Ashley  
IJ senior feature writer

Remember when you were a kid — and zoomed around town on your fat-tired bike, leaping curbs and doing wheelies? Ah, those were the days — when men were macho and bikes were bikes.

Those bikes are back. Like everything else in American life, they've gone high class and high tech, with price tags as high as \$4,000, but basically they're a toughed-up version of the bike you loved to trash — balloon tires, high handlebars, heavy frames and all.

They're called mountain bikes, and they're a fad that's sweeping the country, catching even the bike manufacturers off guard.

"The prediction in January was that these bikes would get 2 to 3 percent share of the market," says veteran biker Gary Fisher of San Anselmo. "At present, it looks like 10 percent."

IN MARIN COUNTY, says Jeff Bedford of Mike's Bike Shop in San Rafael, the share is 35 percent. That's probably because the whole craze started here.

Gary Fisher, 32, remembers when. "There was a group of guys from Larkspur Canyon about eight years ago that rode those old thrasher bikes — they'd pick them up for \$10 at the Goodwill, and one of the big appeals was that if you crashed them, you didn't have much of an investment. They'd put their bikes in a truck, drive up to the top of the mountain and ride down the fire roads. If they didn't have a truck, they'd push uphill."

Fisher, who had been racing bikes from the age of 12, welcomed the new pastime, but he also wanted to ride his bike uphill as well as down: nobody who's a biker, he says, wants to depend on a truck. So he built his own bike, utilizing contacts he'd made at Wheels Unlimited, the San Rafael bike shop where he worked.

He wanted a bike that was as sturdy — sturdier! — than the old bikes, and as easy to ride, but he wanted to use all the technology of a racing bike.

He added motorcycle lever brakes, high-traction tires, a complex system of gears.

"In the beginning, it was just for me — a bike I

could ride from Point A to Point B and still have a bike the next day.

"Then I began building bikes for my friends, and before I knew it I had made a dozen bikes."

JEFF BEDFORD, WHO'S worked at Mike's for 14 years, remembers that Fisher and others "took 10-speed technology and put it on the old clunker bikes. They converted from steel rims to aluminum rims, steel cranks to aluminum cranks. They went from 50 to 55 pounds down to a more reasonable 30. They went from one speed to 15 and 18 speeds. They became a lot easier to pedal."

"The bike I designed to be rideable in extreme conditions," Fisher says, "turned out to be a wonderfully easy ride in normal conditions."

The bikes caught on. Joe Breeze in Mill Valley, a balloon tire enthusiast, took a class in the East Bay and began building frames. "He built 10 frames," Fisher remembers, "and thought he'd satisfied the demand for eternity, but as soon as he finished them, he had orders for more."

Breeze and Fisher contacted Tom Ritchey, a well-known frame maker from Woodside, and gave him drawings and dimensions for a new frame. "Three weeks later, he had built three frames — one for me, one for him, and one for me to sell. I sold it in January 1979, and that was the beginning of my business."

FISHER NOW TURNS out 700 completed mountain bikes a year in his Mountain Bike Shop in San Anselmo. He uses frames from Ritchey (and a few from Breeze). "Things have been rocketing," Fisher says. "The design work we did in 1979 — the frame, the triangulated handle bar — is the most copied bike of the '80s."

"Anyone who's ever stolen an idea for mountain bikes stole it from Marin," says Bedford.

Several Marinites are making bikes, some for almost as long as Fisher: Eric Koski at the Cove Bike Shop, "one of the original bikers," who makes a bike called the Trailmaster; Mert Lawell of Tiburon, a former motorcycle champion, who builds Pro Cruiser bikes in Hayward; Steve Potts of Mill Valley who makes Wilderness Bikes and is "super motivated";

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Jeff Bedford (left) and Gary Fisher on mountain bikes

IJ photo/Tom Strickland

# Bikes

From page D1

Charles Cunningham of Fairfax, who makes an ultra-lightweight customized bike costing from \$2,500 to \$4,000. Fisher's bikes cost between \$996 and \$1,999, and use parts from Italy, Japan and France. He ships to 200 dealers in the United States as well as England and Canada.

Popular as his bikes have become — "Eric Heiden rides one," he says, and "two of our bikes crossed the Sahara this year" — their monopoly is over.

"I KNOW OF only five manufacturers in the world who are not planning to introduce one," Fisher says.

The craze has spread to Europe: Fisher recently returned from a mountain bike race at La Plagne in France. "It's a brand new sport there, but the riders are very, very good," he says.

In this country, "Everybody sees this as the big opportunity to get Americans back on bikes," Fisher says. "Mountain bikes have a lot of macho appeal, they're very practical, and they're very user-friendly."

"When we started putting them on the floor" at Mike's Bike Shop, Bedford says, "40 and 50-year-old guys came in and said 'That's what I want — I want a bike again.'" His bikes run from \$230 to \$750 each.

Mountain bikes are popular for a host of reasons, he says. They appeal to people nostalgic for the old "newsboy" bikes with coaster brakes. They're a lot tougher than the 10-speed bikes that

have been in vogue for the last 20 years. And they're a super-comfortable ride.

"THE CUSTOMER WHO has never ridden a mountain bike can't believe how easily it floats over curbs, over obstructions in the parking lot out back, how easy it is to pedal, and how soft the ride is," says an article in the July issue of American Bicyclist magazine. "They feel as if they're riding a man-powered jeep."

The comfort of these bikes has taken them off the mountain trails and onto the bike paths. "Forget the 10-Speed," reads the headline on a recent New York magazine cover, "Here Comes the City Bike." The mountain bike has become a commuter bike, a bike for teen-agers, and a bike for people who like to tour.

"It's a bike for when you want to get away — to leave the crowded highways and get out in the woods," says Fisher.

"It started out as a downhill bike, but we used it to explore Kent Lake, or visit the seashore. It's a transportation machine."

Mountain bike, city bike, off-road bike, all-terrain bike — whatever you call it, it's the bike of the hour.

STILL, IT HASN'T gone far from its roots.

Fisher smiles happily when he announces that mountain bike aficionados will compete Oct. 8 in a revival (after four years) of the Marin Repack Race "which has become a legend all over the world."

In 1975, he says, he and some Fairfax locals were racing down one of the watershed roads on Mount Tam on the old style bikes. "All the grease was frying out of the rear hub" of the bike ridden by Fred Wolf of Fairfax, Fisher remembers. "He just looked at it and said, 'Time to repack' — hence the name."

The race will be held in the Cascades in Fairfax, on a fire road still called Repack Road — an apparently lasting monument to the obscure Marin fad that started a worldwide craze.

# Weddings

## Gilardi-Sainsbury

St. Anthony of Padua Church in Novato was the setting on Aug. 8 for the wedding of Patricia Sainsbury of Novato to Edwin Gilardi of San Rafael.

A reception followed at the Petaluma Veterans Memorial.

Attending the bride as maid of honor was Barbara Higgins of Sebastopol. Karen McGinnis of Rohnert Park, Rainee Everett of Novato, Linda Rodoni of Pt. Reyes Station, and Susan Shaffer and Debbie Gilardi, both of Petaluma, were the bridesmaids.

Best man was Matthew Caramagno of San Rafael. Scott Day of San Anselmo, Mark Tortorich of Oakland, Don

Sainsbury of South Pasadena, Larry Marple of Tahoe City, and Tom Gilardi and Fred Gilardi, both of Petaluma, were the ushers.

The bride, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Walter D. Sainsbury of Novato, graduated from Novato High School. She attended Indian Valley Colleges and is working for Sleezer & Eckhoff, certified public accountants, in San Rafael.

Her husband is the son of Mr. and Mrs. George Gilardi. He graduated from Tomales High School and attended College of Marin. He is employed at United Markets in San Rafael.



Patricia and Edwin Gilardi

John Dunlop photo

## Moose-Wilson

St. Clement's Episcopal Church in Berkeley was the setting on Aug. 7 for the wedding of Kirstie K. Wilson and James G. Moose. A reception followed at the Faculty Club at the University of California.

The bride, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William Arthur Wilson of Mill Valley, graduated from Tamalpais High School and from the University of California-Berkeley. She works at the Corinthian Yacht Club in Tiburon. She is the granddaughter of Mr. and Mrs. Albert M. Wilson of Escondido.

The bridegroom is the son of Mr. and Mrs. James M. Moose Jr. of Sacramento. He graduated from McClatchey High School in Sacramento and UC-Berkeley and will be entering his second year of

law school at Boalt Hall at UC-Berkeley. His grandparents are Mr. and Mrs. E. T. Grether of Berkeley. His sisters are Katy Culver of Fair Oaks, Anne Moose of Berkeley, and Beth Moose of Santa Cruz.

He works for the Steven Kazan law firm in Oakland.

The matron of honor was Christina Nordeen of Loma Linda. The maid of honor was Phyllis L. Boyd of Manhattan Beach.

The best man was Robert Laughlin of Newport Beach. Brian Plant of Sacramento, John Melvin of Daly City and Neil J. Wilson, the bride's brother, were ushers.

After a wedding trip to Hawaii and Kauai and Maui, the couple will live in Berkeley.



James and Kirstie Moose

Gene Cohen photo

## Wedding forms

The Independent Journal Lifestyles editors will be happy to print your story and a photo of your wedding day. You can pick up free forms at any IJ office,

or you can call the IJ library at 883-8600. Forms and photos must be at the Independent Journal not later than 14 days after the wedding date.

## Fiction workshop

Frances Kiernan, fiction editor of the New Yorker, will lead a two-day workshop for writers Sept. 24 and 25 at the College of Marin.

Twenty participants will be chosen from among the applicants for the workshop. To apply, applicants should send a fiction-writing sample of not more than six pages to the Public Events Office, College of Marin.

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