

Traveling Companion: Now I am just a Hybrid

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I bought it over thirty years ago and it has served me well. It has toured the roads of Biloxi, Gulfport and Bay St. Louis. Back then, it cost me \$113. It was the top of the line - easy to maintain – just four new tires and tubes and a tune up kept it in shape as it tried to keep me in shape. The 10-speed, racing red, Schwinn bike became a trusted family member, always ready to take me through the highways and byways into scenic pastures. Its banana saddle proved a challenge for my posterior posture most of the time. Eventually, I purchased a more comfortable seat and my posterior thanked me for it.

Then it happened! My Schwinn experienced withdrawal symptoms when another member of its family arrived. A good friend, Joann, arrived with a new 17 speed Schwinn mountain bike. Its wide monster, hungry tires ached to eat the road and rough terrain. Its aluminum frame invited me to take it for a test drive. Its suspension prodded my comfort zone. Its flaming-red paint begged to be noticed. A water bottle hung inside the frame, ready to quench a thirst. A gadget bag tucked itself behind the saddle, ever ready with emergency supplies.

Both bikes were parked on the corridor. I could sense the jealousy as they nervously looked at each other. My 30-year old spoke with pride of its record and history. The new one indicated it was time for it to take over and supply its owner with the newest innovations and technology. The 30-year old one shed a tear at being cast aside while the new one stood with pride and attention, ready to take its owner into the next decade.

Later that evening, I took my new one on a test drive, after having had a cursory glance through its operator's manual. I adjusted the saddle and checked out the thumb-driven gears, built into the handlebars. I noticed the smooth transitions. I felt as if I was riding a mini-Harley as I peddled down the road into history. Seven miles later, I was riding into the driveway, pondering the experience and trying to make a judgment. As I arrived, my 30-year old stood to attention; glad that I had not ridden into the sunset on my latest gift.

Somehow, something didn't seem right about my new one. I didn't experience any romance with it. Maybe, instead, I experience some disillusionment. I dared not let my 30-year old know my feelings otherwise I could hear her say, "I told you so."

The next day, I got another call from Joann. She said she sensed the new bike wasn't right for me, not the right fit. She was on her way to Gulfport to find another. Later I got a phone call from the owner of the store, inquiring about the size of my inseam, my height and some other pertinent information for cycling enthusiasts.

A short time later, it arrived. This time it was a Silver/Lava black with its Alpha Aluminum frame; its inverted tires; Odessa suspension and 24-gears; all promising a more comfortable, upright riding experience. It was a Trek hybrid; a marriage of mountain and road bike. It also had its own lights, tachometer, carrier bag, locking chain, and all kinds of accessories.

That evening, I took it for a 16.3 mile ride and fell in love with it. As I wheeled it into the corridor, I could hear the other two wondering about my reaction. I kept it to myself. As I parked all three there, they wondered about their fate.

I have come to some preliminary conclusions. My faithful friend who stood by me for over thirty years will stay. My step-child, the Schwinn 17-speed will be raffled at our Crab Fest as new; ridden only once by the pastor on his way to church. Definitely, I have joined the Trek generation and will continue to hop on board it.

The whole experience has reminded me how difficult change can be; how hard it is to part with something that filled one with good times. Like an old shoe, it fits so comfortably. Yet, time moves on and if I don't move on with it, I too may end up as a hybrid.