

## Teaching safety in the Big Apple

*This article was excerpted from Bicycle Forum, Bikecentennial's journal of bicycle advocacy, where it appeared in Issue Number 21. To subscribe to the Forum, send \$14.95 for four quarterly issues to Bicycle Forum, P.O. Box 8308-BR, Missoula, MT 59807. For faster service call (406) 721-1776, and order your subscription with your VISA, Mastercard, or American Express charge card.*

New York City, in spite of its large cycling population, fails to provide bicycle safety instruction for its school-age children. The city's children grow up generation after generation acquiring the cycling habits that are often blamed for New York's bicycle-related accidents.

Anxious to correct this situation, I designed a bicycle education program specifically for New York City children. In the spring of 1988 I showed it to various government agencies and community centers. The Manhattan division of the Girl Scout Council of Greater New York was the agency that offered the earliest opportunity for implementation.

While designing the program I read the literature on bicycle education that I had collected over a period of several years, including important articles from issues of this magazine (*Bicycle Forum*). I also visited one of the rodeos that a creative police officer conducts on Long Island, using a specially-equipped van to carry instructors and equipment from one community to another.

From this preparation I gleaned many useful ideas, especially suggestions for teaching aids and how to set up a rodeo. However, no one program seemed quite suitable for New York's city children.

The rodeos and training lessons that I read about were based mainly on suburban conditions. In the suburbs, parking lots and quiet streets seem to be available for cycling practice, but in New York open spaces are scarce; on-street cycling practice for young children is out of the question.

In suburban communities young children can travel by car to a training site with their bikes in tow or they can cycle to a site on sidewalks; city children generally travel by bus (no bikes allowed) or have difficulty walking

with their bikes if the site is many blocks away. The cycling instructor, therefore, must provide bicycles and must have an assistant to supervise the children while they wait their turn. On-bike sessions must include off-bike activities for these children.

I found that I needed to shift the topic priorities of the programs described in the literature in order to cover the hazards most frequently met by New York cyclists. For instance, how to cycle out of driveways figured heavily in the literature, but in New York how to edge around double-parked trucks or how to weave around starting-and-stopping buses are skills that need special attention.

Hand signalling is expected in suburban traffic, but in the tightly packed traffic of New York, cyclists need to keep both hands on the handlebars, generally indicating their directions by eye contact with surrounding drivers and by cycling predictably according to the general flow of the traffic.

As well as teaching children cycling skills, a bicycle education program for New York children should, I felt, show how bicycles fit into the rich network of the city's many transportation systems. I planned off-bike activities that would give children experience in observing the city as an active hub of the world. I hoped that New York children would respect bicycles in this context as versatile and economical vehicles for travel as well as local transportation.

Directed by the Girl Scout Council, my "Wheels" program, as the agency called it, became the focal component of a 2 1/2-week day camp in my area. It was attended by eight girls. Their ages ranged from 7 to 14 years and their ethnic and social backgrounds reflected the diversity of the city at large. Only two girls owned bikes, but all of them knew how to ride.

I was able to try out most of the activities that I hoped would be fun as well as instructive. I conducted five twice-weekly sessions of on-bike training based on bicycle rodeo routines. These sessions were held in a basketball practice court. One afternoon was spent in a park where the girls had a chance to practice downhill control and where they could ride freely on smooth and open roads.

The on-bike sessions were accom-

panied by off-bike sit-down sessions that included a variety of activities related to transportation topics. A chiropractor who is also a bicycle racer gave a vividly illustrated talk on what different accidents can do to the human body and why helmets are advisable. A former bicycle repairman demonstrated how to patch a punctured tire. I taught some map reading and map making with exercises in using a compass and in drawing grids.

We made three field trips: a visit to Roosevelt Island with its aerial tramway, a ride on the Staten Island Ferry across New York's busy harbor, and a visit to the NYC Department of Transportation Police Training Academy. There the staff presented an engaging afternoon of short films, talks by different officers and a demonstration of traffic directing.

The last session of the program was devoted to a show held in a community center's entrance plaza. Our audience consisted of mothers, several heads of community agencies, and a number of interested passersby. Each girl performed in a five-challenge rodeo. The girls also staged a skit featuring bicycles and sang an amusing "rap" they composed about bicycle safety precautions. They presented posters they had made to show the activities of the program. They all received Girl Scout bicycling badges.

It was difficult to judge how much the girls had learned by the end of such a mixed program, but they seemed to have enjoyed the activities, the games—and final performance probably the most. They needed much more on-bike practice than we had the space or time for in order to master the cycling skills basic to safe cycling. They left the program, however, understanding more clearly than when they began that using their heads was as important as physical prowess for accident-free and smooth cycling.

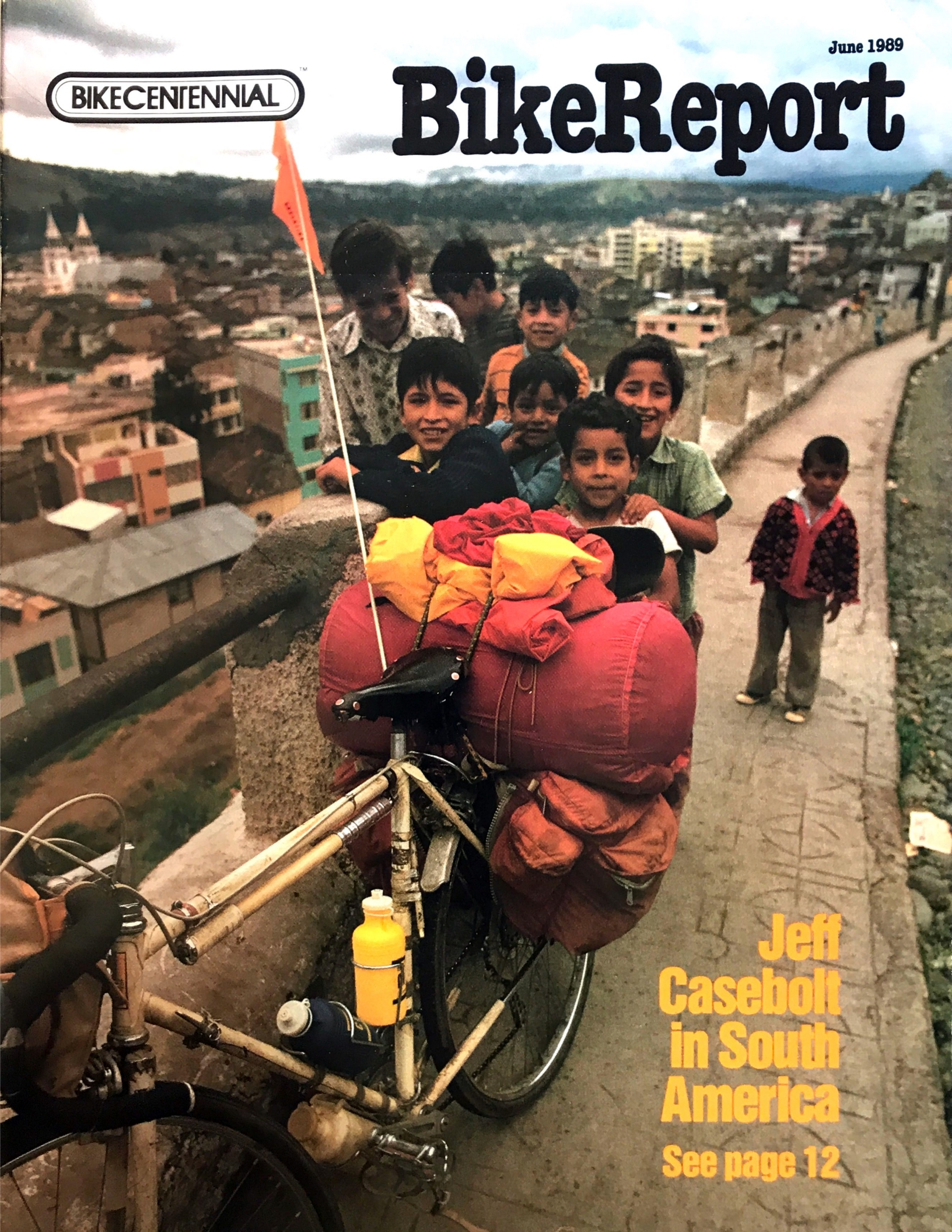
By comparison to city-wide bicycle education programs started, for example, in Miami and Los Angeles, the "Wheels" effort seems limited and insignificant. Nevertheless, it was a first step in New York City where conditions are particularly adverse to giving on-bike instruction. Now, at least, one program has been tested on home ground to which other New York agencies can turn for guidance. ▼



June 1989

BIKECENTENNIAL

# BikeReport



**Jeff  
Casebolt  
in South  
America**  
See page 12



# BikeReport

Editor  
Daniel D'Ambrosio

Art Director  
Greg Siple

Technical Editor  
John Schubert

Contributing Editors  
Rick Burneson • Nancy Clark •  
Michael McCoy • Harry Turnbull

Editorial Assistants  
Karen Schaefer • Diane Hafeman

Typography  
MacTypeNet

## Staff

Executive Director  
Gary MacFadden

Office Manager  
Marlene Wiles

Trips/Trails Program  
Michael McCoy • Don Lange •  
Charlie MacIntosh • Rita Hennessy

Memberships  
Diane Hafeman • Julie Huck •  
Rae Ann Hauser

Publications  
Daniel D'Ambrosio • Greg Siple •  
Carla Majernik

Sales  
Carla Farnstrom • Chris Tonkinson •  
Sunni Stolpa-Bradshaw

Secretary/Receptionist  
Karen Schaefer

Advocacy  
John Williams

Volunteers  
Florence Bakke-Riel • Frank Winkler  
Ella Downey

## Board of Directors

President  
Nancy Moe

Vice-President  
Charles Pace

Secretary/Treasurer  
Phil Smith

Board Members:  
Matthew Cohn  
Dave Marshall • Angel Rodriguez

### On The Cover:

In this issue, we follow Jeff Casebolt into South America—as always his experiences with people, including Auca Indians in the Amazon jungle, are the highlights of the trip. Photo by Greg Siple.

# CONTENTS

June 1989  
Vol. 15, No. 5

## Features

**THREE WISHES** *What is a cyclist's dream?* .....10  
By Tom Barlow

**TEST RIDE** *Part four of an Alaska to Argentina adventure* .....12  
By Jeff Casebolt

**PET PROJECT** *Where should your pets go when you go on tour?* .....20  
By Carole Lyn Curtis

**RIDING THE RIVER ROAD** *Nature, history, good food and good music* .....21  
By Ernest S. Bernard

## Technicalities

**CYCLE SENSE** *John Schubert* .....4  
**THE ATHLETE'S KITCHEN** *Nancy Clark* .....19

## Departments

**LETTERS** .....6  
**IN BICYCLE CIRCLES** .....7  
**THE CLUB CONNECTION** *Diane Hafeman* .....8  
**BIKECENTENNIAL LIFE MEMBERS** .....9  
**TRAIL BOSS** *Michael McCoy* .....15  
**BIKECENTENNIAL BULLETIN** .....16  
**FROM THE FORUM** *Mary Frances Dunham* .....17  
**CLASSIFIED INFORMATION** .....18

*BikeReport* is published 9 times yearly by Bikecentennial, Inc., a nonprofit service organization for recreational touring bicyclists. Since its incorporation in 1974, Bikecentennial has developed and mapped a nationwide network of bicycle touring routes and has produced a variety of publications and services for bicyclists, including: *The Cyclists' Yellow Pages*, a complete trip planning resource; *The Cyclosource Catalog*, a collection of books, maps, and specialty products; and a Trips Program that offers a wide variety of organized tours ranging from 6 to 90 days in length.

Individual membership costs \$22 yearly, and includes a subscription to *BikeReport*, *The Cyclists' Yellow Pages*, and discounts on Bikecentennial maps and products. Bikecentennial is also a leader in advocacy and educational programs for bicyclists, and publishes *Bicycle Forum*, a national magazine for bicycling professionals and advocates. A yearly subscription to *Bicycle Forum* is available from Bikecentennial for \$14.95 and includes four quarterly issues.

Bikecentennial headquarters are located at 113 W. Main, Missoula, MT 59802. The subscription address for *BikeReport* and *Bicycle Forum* is P.O. Box 8308, Missoula, MT 59807. For membership information call (406) 721-1776; for sales orders, call (406) 721-8719. Free-lance contributions to *BikeReport* are welcomed, and may be addressed to the Editor at either address above. The entire contents of *BikeReport* are copyrighted by Bikecentennial, Inc., and may not be reproduced in any manner, either in whole or in part, without written permission from Bikecentennial. All rights reserved.



*The Bicycle Travel Association*

P.O. Box 8308, Missoula, MT 59807  
(406) 721-1776