



IPMBA NEWS



Official Newsletter of The International Police Mountain Bike Association

“The Bike Ride from Hell...”

By Sergeant Joe Martin, Hayward Police Department (CA)

Officer Linda Bailey, of the Dublin, California, Police Services, checked in with her training bureau sergeant. She stopped by to check her mail two days into a forty hour police cyclist course hosted by the nearby Hayward (CA) Police Department. The sergeant asked a routine question, “Howzit goin’?”

Imagine the training sergeant’s surprise when Bailey, a twelve-year veteran cop and former US Marine deadpanned, “I’m on the bike ride from hell, and Sgt. Joe Martin is the gatekeeper.”

The exchange took place on July 16, 1996, and Officer Bailey’s comments took their place alongside those of officers from past classes who described bike patrol training as more grueling than SWAT school. The old saying, “The more you sweat in training the less you bleed on the street” is taken to heart by those responsible

for putting this class together.

During the course orientation, officers are warned: despite the coffee, tea, juice, and continental breakfast included at the rear of the room each morning—bike patrol training is not a vacation assignment. Classes start on time, and end a full eight hours later. Students can look forward to two on-bike skills tests and a 50 question written examination before being certified by both IPMBA and California’s POST. This can be a shock for officers who may have grown accustomed to enrichment or update classes which demand nothing more than being a warm body in the classroom to walk away with a training certificate.



IPMBA training is no walk in the park!

Day one starts out with an overview about what the week will entail, the objectives of the

See “Bike Ride” on Page 4

Technology: From Cut-offs to Environmentally Friendly

By Lt. Tom Woods, Denton Police Department (TX)

It’s been almost 6 years now since this organization blossomed from the high hopes and expectations of a few pioneer officers and dedicated civilians from LAB (then LAW) who gathered to plan our future in Tucson, AZ. That was our first face to face meeting as representatives of police cycling across America, and were known then as the “Police on Bikes Committee” under the auspices of “The League.”

In thinking back to the days of our organizational youth, it’s hard not to remember the state of the equipment we wore and pedaled around so proudly and, in some cases, defiantly, in the face of criticism, ridicule and doubt. Which, generally, came from our brother and sister officers who thought we were nuts.

When you finally found funding, usually from the private sector, it was a scramble to buy as much “stuff” as you could. I can remember calling every known bike patrol around the country seeking opinions on the best equipment for police use. Of course, you couldn’t find the two officers with the same opinion because it seemed very few of us really knew much about how consumer bikes would hold up to police work. Certainly, at the time there really was very little out there designed spe-

cifically for us. That was six or seven years ago. Who would have thought then, that in 1996, police bikes would be sporting carbon fiber wheels!

In those early stages of misinformation and general speculation, we bought a lot of junk that we thought

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SEE THE WORLD "BY COP"

Being the nomadic type, I've had the pleasure of seeing the world through a variety of ways: on foot, by bicycle, motorcycle, plane, ship, and rail. But by far the best way to see the world we live in is by cop. If you think a fellow copper isn't one of the best ways to see the world you're wrong. Law enforcement officers are everywhere you can imagine traveling to and can show you features of a city or town not accessible to the "regular" public. Having law enforcement family around the US & Canada is all the more reason to get out and explore.

You might not think your city, town, or region has a lot to offer to the occasional cop tourist but many times we take for granted what's right in our own back yard. Dayton has a National Police Softball Tournament,

the Air Force Museum, and one of, if not the, best Air Shows in the world because Dayton was home to the Wright Brothers.

I've seen other clubs and organizations that have booklets listing members's phone numbers and addresses for the purpose of brother or sister club members who might be traveling in the area. Some members will not only show you around town but have extra room to put you up for a night.

Because privacy is a serious issue with the kind of work we do, I'd like to get a feel from the membership on what you think about a listing like this for IPMBA Members. If it's well received we could put an

application for "IPMBA Passport Listing" in our newsletter. If you would like to be a contact for your area, you'd apply. Obviously, only basic information would be listed like

"If you think a fellow copper isn't one of the best ways to see the world, you're wrong."

who and where, but also what special attractions your area has and when they occur. If you think this is a good idea write or e-mail Jennifer at IPMBA headquarters (e-mail: LABipmba@aol.com; headquarters: 190 W. Ostend St., Suite 120, Baltimore, MD 21230; fax: 410-539-3496) and we'll work on putting it together.

Until next time, don't let the bad guys or the pavement magnet get ya.

-Allan

Education Column

Conference Reflections and Our Education Future

WELL, ANOTHER IPMBA NATIONAL CONFERENCE HAS COME AND GONE. This year's National Conference in Rochester, New York was outstanding. We are getting both bigger and better. The pre-conference included the Police Cyclist Course, the Police Cyclist Instructor Development Course and IPMBA's new Maintenance Officer Certification Course. There were over 100 officers present for the pre-conference courses alone. Special thanks to Brad Stumbo with Trek Bicycles and Pat Hayden with GT Bicycles for their strong support and assistance in the Maintenance Officer Certification Course. This course is recognized and sponsored by both TrekUSA and GT Bicycles

The conference itself was a tremendous success. There were over 60 workshops for officers to attend during the 3 days as well as more than 26 different vendors sharing information on their products. I was very pleased with the level of interaction between officers and the vendors as well as the desire demonstrated by the vendors to learn about what bicycle patrol officers need. I taught the Night

Operations workshop and had the pleasure of having representatives of Night Rider and Shimano come along to see how their products were utilized.

The Rochester Police Department and the entire City of Rochester can be proud of the fantastic job they did. Both Lt. Ray Miraglia and Officer Dave Minnick were an integral part of the planning and execution of the pre-conference and conference. No matter what headache came our way, they handled it in short order. Congratulations to both the Lieutenant and Dave.

So, what's next? The Education Committee has several goals for next year's National Conference to be held in Nashville, Tennessee. Trust me, you'll all want to be in Nashville. We added several new conference workshops in Rochester with some specifically for police cyclist instructors. We will be making some additional changes in workshops, so I ask if any of you have some ideas for workshops, please send them to me (c/o IPMBA, 190 W. Ostend Street, Suite 120, Baltimore, MD 21230).

We will be also be developing an EMS Course over the next year in conjunction with experts from the field of emergency medical services, and hope to teach it for the first time in Nashville. More and more, EMS are working on bicycles during special events and highly congested areas. They have asked for training and we will work hard to give it to them.

Also, the Education Committee has recently developed two new tests for the PC Course and is developing a visual aids packet for instructors, and is working on an Advanced Police Cyclist Course. This will continue to maintain IPMBA as the worldwide leader in Police Cyclist training with instructors in the United States, Canada and Australia.

Cops on bikes is not a fad. We are here to stay and IPMBA is leading the way with training that is realistic to our everyday jobs.

Police on Bikes '97 is in Nashville, Tennessee. I hope to see you there!

-Gene Miller, Education Committee Chair

Aerospoke: Tried and True

Product: Aerospoke's MTB Wheel
Reviewed by: Officer Stu Bracken and Officer Gene Miller, Tacoma P.D. (WA)
Available from: Patrol Bike Systems 1-800-208-2032
 Also available from retailers around the Globe!
Price: About \$535.00 a pair

In August of 1995 we had the pleasure of receiving two sets of Aerospoke's for our department bikes. There is no doubt that we were very excited about this prospect. What an idea it was: having a wheel that we would never have to true and one that had no spokes to work their way through and give us those unsuspecting flats. When truing a wheel, inevitably one side is tweaked a little too much and it's back to the beginning! This is not only time consuming, it's frustrating. (And there's always that guy standing behind you saying, "ya know, wheel truin' is an art. Ya should leave that there to a pefesseeanal". Does he offer any sound advice? No, of course not.) Also, it seems that everytime you go down a flight of stairs one or both of your wheels start to do the shimmy, shimmy, shake. Or spokes start to wiggle their way free, extending their flat, grabbing tentacles. Then, BANG! down goes a perfectly good tube in the middle of a pursuit. With Aerospokes, both of these concerns would be eliminated. And after a year of riding on Aerospokes, we feel we can fill you in on what's good about the wheel and what its drawbacks are.

What's good. Not only does it *not* need maintenance -- it looks cool, too! We receive more comments, all positive, about those wheels than anything else on our bikes. People constantly ask where they can get the wheels and ask how we obtained them. The wheels have been an opening to many discussions with the public. But when talk about the bicycle

continues, and the conversation gets around to the cost of the wheels, that's where the discussion ends. Most people have no idea just how much these things will set you back. Some citizens have gone so far as to say that we are lying about the price. When you tell someone that each wheel is about \$250.00 they just can't get over it. Most people don't even spend \$250.00 on a bicycle, let alone one wheel! This price stops most departments, too. You can buy a lot of wheel truing for \$500.00 and many departments see it that way. But when you actually add up the officer's time for wheel truing or shop expenses (not mentioning wheel rebuilding from time to time) over a 7-10 year time period the cost of the maintenance-free wheel is minimal. What most departments forget is that this is a lifetime investment. These wheels don't get left on the bike when it's auctioned out, either. They can be easily fitted to the next purchased bike and will probably outlast most officer's careers, let alone the bicycle. Unless the wheel is run over by a car, it will be around for a very long time.

Drawbacks. One of the biggest problems we've encountered with these wheels was the use of presta valves. At first, all we had in stock were presta valve tubes. Not knowing what we would experience, we went ahead and put those tubes on the rims, even though the stem hole was for schraders. After the tube was in for just a couple of days we would come to work with flats. On each and every presta valve the base would be corroded and the metal split. Due to the wheel configuration, the presta valve had moved around, creating cracks—the cause of the flats. This was not just one or two isolated cases but instead happened to eight separate tubes on all four rims. Since we put in the schrader valves we have not received a flat yet.

Another drawback we have encountered is comfort. Going over a curb or going down stairs on a bicycle equipped with Aerospokes is something you will need to get used to. We think it's almost as bad as our old bikes with straight front forks. When your bike takes the first lip on the stairs, *hang on*, because there is no give in that wheel. With no flex in the wheel, it will beat you up if you're not ready for it. However, a good suspension system will eliminate most of this rough riding.

There was a major problem in the beginning for Aerospoke: the noise. The free-wheel was extremely noisy when coasting, effectively eliminating any stealth advantage you might have. Aerospoke has since made some adjustments. The wheels we have ridden have gotten better. It's still not right, though. But because we are working in a downtown environment the city noises drown out the coasting noise these wheels make. But if you are not in that type of noise polluted area this may not be the wheel for you. It's a distraction and you'll feel the whole world can hear you for miles; not the most comfortable feeling to have.

Aerospoke needs to continue to work on this problem if they want to be seriously considered for police work.

Despite it's drawbacks, all in all this wheel is an excellent buy. There is less down time and overall better durability than any other wheel we've tried. If your department can see its way clear to part with some of that taxpayer's money they will be better off for it. We give it two enthusiastic thumbs up.

Next issue this article will review the Patrol Bike Lightbar by Code 2 Equipment.



Bike Ride

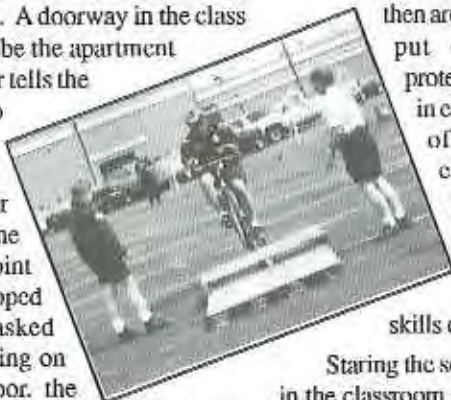
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various units of instructions, and a statement of the course's overall goal. "To make the student comfortable using the bicycle as a law enforcement tool." Emergency data cards with contact phone numbers and medical information are filled out. These are carried by instructors in the event a student has to seek emergency medical aid. Care is taken to accommodate those with limiting medical conditions. Experience query sheets are filled out. The history of bike mounted police and of IPMBA is explained. During this first hour, officers are challenged to think. Especially to think through the tactics and techniques they will be exposed to over the next few days. The students are asked to question how well the tactics will work in their work environment. This challenge is made because modern policing on bikes is just evolving. Tactics are being developed and adopted constantly, sometimes with little forethought.

To illustrate this point in class, two students from different agencies are called up to the front of the room. The more dissimilar the agencies, the better. The two students are told they are working adjoining beats, and have been sent to an apartment on a disturbance call. A doorway in the classroom is selected to be the apartment door. The instructor tells the students to go knock on the door. Taking up positions on either side of the door, one knocks. At this point the exercise is stopped and the students asked why they are standing on either side of the door. The class chimes in, "So you don't get shot through the door!" Yes, the instructor agrees. You are trained to stand to the side so you don't get shot. But who's idea was that? Nobody in the class knows. An officer safety expert sitting around over coffee thinking up tactics? More likely it developed from the experience of Robert Forsythe, an early US Marshal, commissioned personally by George Washington. In 1794, Forsythe stood in

front of the door of a man he came to arrest, and became the first American peace officer to be killed in the line of duty when the man shot through the closed door. Two hundred years later, we stand out of the way. "Everything you do tactically, has been developed because of someone else's mistakes." The class is warned. With the relative newness of policing on bikes, it becomes your awesome responsibility to think through bike related officer safety tactics and share your experience and ideas with others. Also, question whether or not a particular tactic will work in your agency.

The introduction is wrapped up after an on bike screening exercise to help divide the class based on skill levels. Next comes an hour discussing nutrition and injury prevention. Then two hours on basic bike maintenance. Each officer must remove their rear tire, deflate it, take the tube out, simulate a flat repair, and reinstall the tube into the tire, inflate it, and put the wheel back on the bike. This and other simple skills give many neophyte cyclists the ability to put themselves back into service when encountering this and many other common mechanical failures. Following lunch, students must go through an Effective Cycling lecture. Only then are they allowed to stretch out, put on their helmets, eye protection, gloves, and mount up in earnest. The remaining hours of the first day include emergency braking techniques, steering and turning drills, instant turns and an introduction to slow speed bike handling skills on a cone course.



Staring the second day, less time is spent in the classroom and more on the bike. Day two begins with two hours in the morning covering legal & policy issues and equipment selection. Then it's back on the tarmac, stretching exercises and a review of the slow speed drills of the previous day. Running into pedestrians is something to avoid in real life, so slow handling skills get a lot of attention. Students are then introduced to police cycling techniques, including the various dismounts and simple obstacle negotiation.

While the first two day's skill development takes place in comfortable cycling clothes, by the third day it's time to see how a uniform, gunbelt, and protective vest affect balance, breathing, and comfort. Students are warned that if something makes you go, "ouch" a little when you get on the bike, now is the time to move or adjust that piece of equipment. By the end of the day, what was a minor discomfort will be a boil or large irritated patch of skin. Day three begins with a lecture on off-road riding. Not just how to negotiate the trail, but how the skills translate to police cycling skill in the urban environment. Trail courtesy is also discussed, and the importance of yielding to pedestrians and equestrians. Although most of our students are from urban or suburban agencies, an occasional ranger or park police student takes this portion of the class with even more interest. A short, steep ride brings the class to a canyon park trailhead. Here students apply their emergency braking positioning on the bike to downhill off road descents on narrow single track. The course then moves uphill, over three water crossings and up a steep, "get off and push" section before an even more technical downhill. Here the class for the first time encounters the "Yeah, Right Factor." This is when first seeing a steep trail the student says, "Yeah, Right." Three hours later, everyone is exhausted, and some have gotten in touch with the trail in ways they wished they'd not. After a break for lunch it's time to combine freshly honed balance and coordination skills with dismounts and learn about patrol procedures. It shows here who is comfortable on the bike, and who feels they are attempting to do police work with an aluminum albatross around their neck. Students are all forced to play the suspect in these exercises, which allows them to experience just how quickly and silently bike police can be on top of a suspect.

Day four. In the last three days students have had Effective Cycling instruction, police cycling skills, and patrol procedures. The morning begins with group cycling skills. Movement from single to double file. Then to columns of four, eight, and sixteen across using the same basic concept of single and double file riding. Will officers ever ride sixteen abreast while working? Probably not, but

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that's not why we do it. These drills increase communication between students, who, if they don't communicate, learn the dangers of overlapping wheels. These close order drills also give students a chance to bump gently into one another to experience that they can do so without a trip to the pavement.

Now ready to ride in traffic, the officers venture out on a 20 mile tour-de-City. Here every imaginable traffic obstacle is worked into the ride. Prior to the ride, a mock briefing is held giving the students the descriptions of a couple vehicles parked along the route which are "wanted" as well as the name of a business which needs, "extra patrol." Some students will find them, while others blindly ride right past them. Once on the road, the group is stopped occasionally for a pop quiz. "The guy in the pickup truck we just rode past parked outside that liquor store. What was he holding in his lap? What do you mean you didn't look?! This is not a club ride, you're doing *police work!* Observe your surroundings." A few miles later, down an alley where an officer in a patrol car would never venture, the group is stopped again. "Where are we? Anyone? No street signs here. How are you planning to direct a backup unit or an ambulance if you need one?" The students get the idea quickly, and soon you can't catch them with rookie tricks. We hope they remember in real life how quickly a bike can take them into unknown territory.

The ride culminates at the shooting range, a top a brief but steep hill, which forces many to walk. At the range a catered lunch and cool drinks greet the students. Given a chance to regain their breath, the range program blends shooting skills with dismounts, and the added dimension of a helmet, and padded gloves. There is no passing score for the class, but the experience of shooting with gloves and helmets after a long ride is a learning experience. Most all our students find their shooting scores, while passing, decrease under these conditions. Dismounts incorporating baton strikes are also worked

in to lessen dead time between shooting relays. The range is near the classroom site, so a brief ride returns the class in time for a review of the week's material in preparation for the following days testing.

Day five. Road testing takes up the early morning. Then the class is broken into groups and sent out to a number of scenarios. The students apply what they learned about bike riding and what they already know about policing in their attempt to survive the scenarios. "Why did you leave your partner? Did you see that cross fire? Why didn't you find the gun? Are you comfortable where you left your bike? Why did you dismount when you did?"

Lunch is followed by written and police cycling skills testing. Once those obstacles are cleared, it is time for the timed obstacle course. Stairs, curbs, 90 degree turns, dismounts up and over obstacles, remounts and cone patterns, all thrown together to challenge and build confidence. The class had come together long ago, and everyone cheers for everyone else.

Back in the classroom, evaluations are completed, and a graduation ceremony of sorts is held. The "Bike Academy Awards" or the "Owies" are given to students for categories like, "Most Dynamic Unexpected Dismount During a Road Ride," and, "Most Elaborate Bruise Pattern." A special award was given to one student for his continuing role in "The Fall Guy." Seems he liked the idea of clipless pedals after seeing them the first day in class. He showed up on day two with a pair, having never used them before. Anyone who's made the change knows what happens when you are first getting used to clipless pedals.

Overall, the course was extremely challenging and course evaluations reflected the students were overwhelmingly happy with the course. Today, each student can ride with increased confidence and safety, and the warm satisfaction of knowing they survived "The Bike Ride from Hell." □

Wyoming Holds Second Annual Police Cyclist Course

By Officer Dave Van Fleet, Lander Police Department (WY)

Last year, 18 police officers from Wyoming and Arizona met in Lander, Wyoming for a police mountain bike training class under the guidance of IPMBA Police Cyclist Instructors. According to Lander Police Officer Dave Van Fleet, despite the cold, drizzly weather, everyone who attended the course cycled away with an abundance of knowledge of how to do their jobs on a mountain bike.

Van Fleet's interest in starting a course in Lander peaked in 1994, when he attended IPMBA's National Police on Bikes Conference in San Antonio, Texas. In San Antonio, he saw how effective patrolling on a bike can be and he returned to Lander with the desire to get more Wyoming peace officers involved in mountain biking. Van Fleet had been riding his own bike around Lander while on duty since 1992, although he wasn't certified. "After San Antonio, I decided, if we are going to do this, we're going to do it right", Van Fleet said.

Van Fleet is convinced of the positive aspects of mountain bike patrolling. Beyond the health benefits to the officer, patrolling on a bicycle allows officers the opportunity to be in the heart of community events without the use of a cumbersome vehicle. Citizens are more likely to approach an officer on a bicycle and the officers are able to fully use their senses, including smell and hearing more effectively. He noted that the public relations aspect alone generates positive comments from the community and makes citizens feel closer to the officer. In addition, bikes serve as a great stealth tool in the evenings when wayward youths may not be expecting to see a man in blue pull up to their party on a bike.

So to "do it right", Van Fleet contacted IPMBA to locate instructors and began lining up a course in Lander for the spring of 1995. Within a few months, the 18 officers and instructors were in Lander for the first certified police mountain bike course ever held in the State of Wyoming. Officers Tom Madrid and Steve McCaulley of Boulder, Colorado, led the course. The officers spent much of their time indoors due to the miserable weather, but were still able to practice balancing, curb hopping, cone navigation, stairs and minor bike repairs. "Everybody loved it, other than the bad weather," Van Fleet said.

This year the weather was perfect. Those attending the Second Annual Training Class, which was held June 4th through 7th, 1996 came from as far away as Tucson, Arizona, Rigby, Idaho and Rapid City, South Dakota. Van Fleet is already putting ideas together for next years training! □



Bicycle Registration: A Useful Tool for Bike Cops

By Sgt. Tom Northfell, Chicago Police Department (IL)

The situation is common to all of us. We observe a sixteen year old riding a Trek Y33 mountain bike with Aerospoke wheels. What's spinning those clipless pedals? His *Air Jordans!!* Stolen bike? You bet! But, can you prove it? What if it was stolen only minutes before, and the owner hasn't had a chance to report it stolen, or for that matter, even knows the bike is gone.

As bike cops, with our knowledge and experience with bicycles, we are more inclined to take notice when we see a *low-end guy riding a high-end bike*. However, this knowledge, and our observation skills, are only half of the equation when it comes to making bike theft arrests. The other half is linking the bicycle with the victim.

For one thing, without a victim, the case is going to be thrown out of court. I don't know about you, but when I leave court after testifying, I prefer that I leave by the front door and the defendant leave through the back door sporting Smith and Wesson cufflinks.

Secondly, there is something very gratifying about being able to return stolen property to its rightful owner, instead of seeing it go to the auction block. While the make, model and serial numbers of all stolen bicycles should be entered into the state and national (NCIC) computer systems, the fact is that many people lose the serial numbers to their bikes. This warrants that law enforcement agencies consider a bike registration program.

In Chicago, the bicycle registration program was retooled three years ago. City ordinances mandate that bike dealers register bikes with the city at the time of their sale. The bike owner is also required to register their bikes with the City of Chicago. This can even be done via the Internet!

Presently, there are over 60,000 bikes in this computerized database. The cross-referencing capability of the computer allows a theft victim,

who no longer has their serial number, to retrieve the information on the bike's serial number using their last

and first names. It also allows the bike

cop to find the victims of unreported thefts using only the serial number. The registration process in Chicago is free. Our bike officers carry a stack of registration cards in their packs, and routinely assist cyclists with registering their bikes. Offering to assist cyclists in the registration process has on several occasions led to finding out that the bike's serial number had been obliterated or the bike was in fact stolen.

Lastly, the bicycle registration program is a great public relations tool, and provides great opportunities for our bike officers to interact with the cycling community. For more information on Chicago's bicycle registration program, visit the Chicago Mosaic Web Site @ <http://www.ci.chi.il.us> -- go to CAPS (Community Policing). □

Bicycle Registration Today!

Announcements

Bike Cops Awarded "Officers of the Year"!

Officers Tim Bradley and Lucia Wroblewski, of the St. Paul Police Bike Patrol were given the annual award by their department supervisors. They helped organized the department's bicycle patrol three years ago and now eight officers patrol the east and northwest areas of St. Paul. Both officers were taught by IPMBA Board Member Officer Kirby Beck. Congratulations!

CPAF Moves

The California Police Athletic Federation, parent organization of the California Police Summer Games and the World Police and Fire Games, have moved their office. The new address will be 8304 Clairemont Mesa Blvd., Suite #107, San Diego, CA 92111. Phone and Fax numbers will remain the same.

College or University Officers:

Are you a police officer with a college or university? If so, do you train college students to do civilian patrol? Or something like that? We'd like to know.

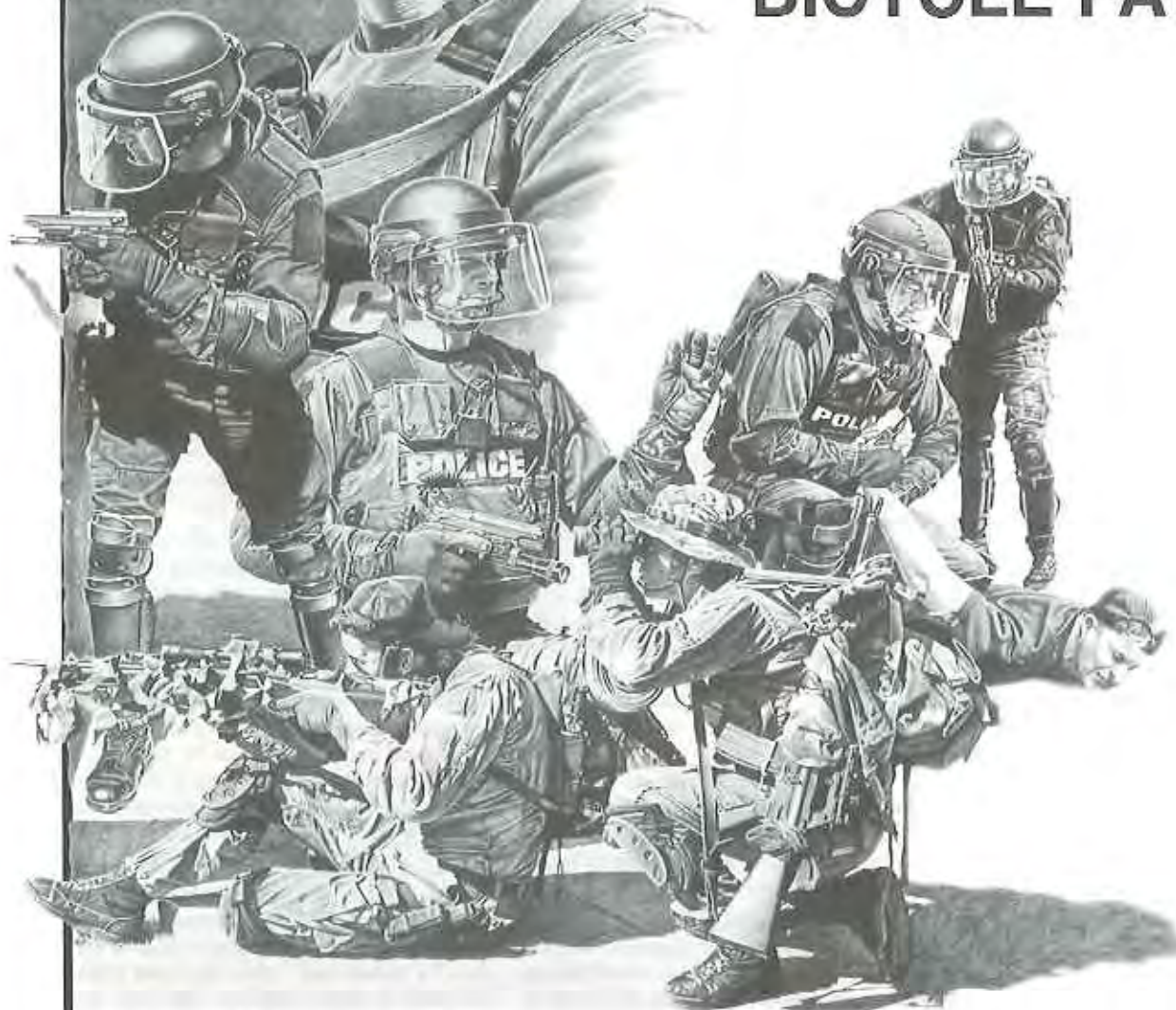
Also, we'd like to know how your department does it's bidding for uniforms and equipment. Do you have a "bid sheet"? Please send it in -- new patrols are always asking and we'd like to provide them with some examples.

Please write to IPMBA at 190 W. Ostend St., Suite 120, Baltimore, MD 21230 or e-mail us at LABipmba@aol.com. Thanks!

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would work. I'm sure a lot of you made the same mistakes I made in purchasing what looked like "good stuff" when you began your bike patrols or, even lately, if you didn't do your homework. A prime example for me was the Gore-Tex rain suits we bought on the advice of a friend (and fellow pioneer) from a much larger agency.

This "good stuff" turned out to be just what it was designed to be: a high dollar rain/wind suit for hiking and mountain climbing, *not cycling*. Of course, the merchant was more than happy to sell us the 10 suits without mentioning that the legs would bind (in tourniquet fashion) at the crotch; the lining would not wick the perspiration to the outer surface, so you stayed wet; and the jacket didn't have a lot of free-play in the shoulders to allow a comfortable riding position. That's not to mention the inability to get out of the them quickly after the three cups of coffee on a cold midnight shift! Actually, he was probably as clueless as we were.

Don't get me wrong, Gore-Tex is hard to beat for bike patrol gear but, in the type of suits we bought, it was a \$325.00 (per set) lesson in the facts of police cycling life. But, hey man, they looked great off the bikes!

Speaking of stuff that looks good off of the bike, there was also a lot of stuff that missed the mark by a long shot. One of my favorite was the "over the calf" white socks with the colored rings at the top. Remember those Kirby? And how about those old helmets with little to no venting? They looked like rejects from the Mork and Mindy Show prop department. (Remember that show?)

As far as uniforms went, most of us had never heard of the benefits of CoolMax; Ultrex; Supplex, (or any other "ex" fabrics), until they became mainstream for cycling clothing a few years ago. The closest thing to an "ex" fabric we had was a pair of "ex-uniform" pants that were transformed into bike patrol uniform shorts with a pair of scissors. Most of the new gear was borne out of necessity.

And here's one I always wondered about: did anyone's leather holster ever really swell up so much from absorbing sweat that you couldn't get your gun out? Well, if you've never heard of that, it's was one of the reasons touted back then for going to nylon holsters, gunbelts and accessories. "Don't wear that leather gear man! You won't go home tonight!"

It was pretty tough to get new ideas past some administrators back then, so sometimes you had to appeal to their sense of officer safety to slide it by. "No way in hell are my officers

going to be wearing shorts and plastic holsters!" "We're not Boy Scouts, we're cops!" Sound familiar? Unfortunately, there's probably a few admin types out there still hanging on to those old notions of what's appropriate and serviceable. If you know one, send him/her to the Nashville POB Conference next year and we'll dazzle 'em into the present for ya.

Some of us started out with above-the-bar thumb shifters (the non indexed kind) and we were amazed when the new "click shifters" came out. Life couldn't have been sweeter, no more missed shifts! Now we have shift and brake cables with special linings that help your "double throw-down-index-quickshift-under-the-bar-shifters" shift like they weren't indexed at all. Huh?? Incidentally, my personal preference is still the old above-the-bar XT shifters - great stuff never dies.

Next we begged for lighter bikes from the manufacturers to save our energy while pedaling an eight hour shift, only to load them up with as many gadgets as the market brought along. Speaking of gadgets, don't lie now, but, how many of you toiled for hours in your home workshop building one of those little "dashboards" that held all the toggle switches and colored light indicators to mount on your handlebar? I thought so.

How about a sealed headlight from a car for your bike's lighting system, powered by the battery from a lawn tractor tucked into the frame somewhere? A good idea at the time, huh? In the seven years I've been doing this bike patrol thing, I think I've seen it all. At least I say that until the next aberration rolls by at a conference or one of my PC Courses. I can say with the utmost confidence that bike cops are definitely an enterprising bunch of characters.

I can say with the utmost confidence that bike cops are definitely an enterprising bunch of characters.

Thankfully, the days of backyard invention and "enlightened modification" are gone for the most part. We now have a small industry associated with our specialized area of law enforcement dedicated to producing "stuff that works" and "looks good off the bike!" (Now you can go out and but that dashboard you've always wanted, but were embarrassed to tell your buddies you were working on.) And, the major bike manufacturers have recognized our market and responded in kind with just about anything we'd need for bike patrol; and then some.

Aside from uniforms and helmet manufacturers, the major bike companies have been spec'ing out certain models for police use, usually combining the best of various components on a strong/light frame. The result is a much improved ride that's probably five to ten pounds lighter than what we rode in Tucson in 1991, including a suspension fork, that was space-age back then. Of course you can effectively negate the technology they've given us by filling that "high capacity" rack bag with 2 three-course meals and six spare headlight batteries. We all have a pack-rat in our unit, right?

Technology has come a long way in a few very short years, and we can reap the benefits by knowing what we need in terms of strength and longevity in a bike or a component. Understanding the strengths and weaknesses of bike parts, in the context of how they'll be used for police work, can save you a lot of money and headaches in the long run.

That same thought should be put into purchasing uniforms, helmets, etc. The myriad of options out there can be daunting unless you investigate the properties of all the available materials and match what will work for you to the price level you can afford. If you're thinking of starting a bike patrol unit, or replacing old bikes and uniforms take a good look at what's out there before you plunk someone else's money down. You *can* afford new technology if you do your homework and shop wisely.

To cover all the technological advancements in bicycling over the last few years would take more space than we have in the newsletter but there is a way for you to see it and experience it firsthand. The best way is to attend the Annual POB Conference-POB '97 is in Nashville if you haven't heard - where many of the manufacturers who produce quality bike patrol equipment show their wares. If it's new for bike patrol, that's usually where you'll find it first. You probably won't find the new dashboard model but, "new stuff" usually appears every year.

Last, but not least, buy your stuff from our family of manufacturers and vendors. They're the ones who support IPMBA and always show up at the annual conference, helping make it the success it's always been. Also, stay tuned to this newsletter for product reviews, and if you need more info get a copy of the vendor list from the last conference and ask those in the know.

Gotta sign off now. I've been working on a helmet made of recycled aluminum foil that will be light, reflective, cool, anti-magnetic, environmentally friendly, frightening to bad guys, contain particles of nutritional snacks;...gotta work on the seagull problem though! □

Aside from uniforms and helmet manufac-



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Preliminary information will be in the mail to you soon!

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