

# Bike riding not only 'green,' but also fun way to stay fit

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*Councilmember*



If you live or work in South Dade you have probably seen me on my bicycle at one time or another, even though you wouldn't necessarily recognize me.

I tell people that I ride because it is the "green" thing to do. That is a little bit of a lie; actually I do it because I enjoy it. I get good exercise and I am able to clear my mind like nothing else that I do.

I began my riding when I was about 4 years old when I took my tricycle for a several-mile jaunt, crossing major streets and through several neighborhoods. When I returned home just before dark my mother was not too thrilled about my adventure as you might imagine.

Later when I was 13, I went for a two-wheeler ride from one city, through several others, around 30 miles round trip to visit my sister. I even had to use the Boston Ferry, now long gone, to get across the Mystic River. It cost one cent for pedestrians, so I gave the guy a dollar bill. Rather than give me change, he let me ride for free. I was proud as punch about my big saving that day.

At 73, I continue to ride mostly short distances of 25 miles or less although it was not that long ago that I went on several century runs where I had to ride 100 in a day. I was tired but I loved every minute of the ride.

Lately though, I have begun to have some apprehensions about riding. I have had people honk at me, shout profanities, and in one case, deliberately try to run me off the road, twice. I was so angry that time that I neglected to get his tag number but next time I will. I also have a certain amount of angst about people using their cell phones or texting while driving.

People often complain to me, knowing that I am one of *them*, as to why these large groups take up so much space on the road making it difficult to pass in an automobile. Let me first say

this... read my lips... bicycles have the same right on the road as motor vehicles and must follow the same rules, except they are not allowed on major highways and toll roads. The groups that you see riding bunch up so that you may wait for an opportunity to pass and do so in one sweep as opposed to having them strung out for a mile or so.

People shout at me on occasion to get off the road or ride on the sidewalk. Firstly the sidewalk is no place for a bicycle. It is more dangerous to the cyclist and pedestrians than riding on the road.

Secondly, the so-called bike paths that have been so neglected by the county are impossible to use for a cyclist with a bike that may cost several thousand dollars and is traveling between 20 and 25 miles per hour. When you hit one of those cracks in the bike path caused by tree roots you chance injuring yourself and your cycle. They just don't work. Why so much money was spent by the county without any thought of this eventual result baffles me. Other things in the county baffle me as well. Perhaps I will ask my town chauffeur for an explanation the next time he drives me to a party.

I couldn't write this column without mentioning a nameless person who shares my last name and home. When I was planning on buying my next bicycle and spending a good deal of money to get one that weighed perhaps eight pounds less than my old bike, this person suggested that I could accomplish the same thing by losing eight pounds around my middle. This just shows how dumb women can be. They obviously know little about bicycles.

I did manage to get even for this remark/advice. One day while riding my bike down Old Cutler Road, a car came up behind me and blew its horn... one of the most annoying things you can do to a cyclist. They then repeated it a few more times. That was it! I immediately answered with my only weapon — my middle finger. When the car passed it turned out to be my wife and all her tennis friends returning from practice. We don't have as many friends as we used to.