

For Absent Friends (bike shops past / if it happened in the 80s, it almost didn't happen at all)

Visited the dentist again today; very brief check of the tooth extraction (all is well). Someone in the office noted my bike and mentioned that her husband used to own a shop, Broken Spokes in San Carlos. That got me to thinking about all the shops that have come & gone these past 34 years, and an old Genesis song went through my head as I was riding back, "For Absent Friends." If you're really interested, here's a [link to the song on youtube](#).

So just off-hand I'm thinking the original VeloClub on El Camino in San Carlos, Pierre Cuisinot's shop (eventually sold and later closed; Pierre moved to Grass Valley some years back), Pat Barrett's previously-mentioned Broken Spoke on Laurel, Ron Stott's Pro Bike Shop (open for only a year or so on El Camino back in the early 70s), Steve's Bike & Sport on Laurel... San Carlos used to be quite the place for bike shops! In Redwood City we had Olympic Bike Shop on Broadway, another small shop that had been around for years on James right next to the train station (before they paved paradise and put up the parking lots), Redwood Cycle which had first been on El Camino, then Woodside Road and finally for a short time in Sequoia Station before shutting down. Woodside Bike Shop has come and gone and come back again. Family Bike Shop was sold to... me... in 1980. Freedom Bike Shop, where I first worked? Weird, I can't place what became of it.

Menlo Park lost Sugden & Lynch on Santa Cruz Avenue a very long time ago; that was the hangout for the younger guys getting into racing. I still recall the day Tom Ritchey rode in on the first bike he built. Menlo Sports on El Camino went away... late 80s? I worked there during summers while in college. And of course Garner's Professional Bike Shop (the rest of us weren't "Professional"?), originally one location in Redwood City, then expanded to a second location in Palo Alto (Alma shopping center?), moved the second location to a high-rent spot in Town & Country Shopping Center (still in Palo Alto), couldn't make the ridiculous rent so closed that down, then later one of the Garner brothers, Mike, died of a heart condition and the Redwood City location sold and became GoRide.

All those moments will be lost in time, like tears in the rain (Blade Runner quote). It's funny how much has already disappeared; if it happened before Google, unless someone took quite an interest in it, nobody will care. There will be nobody, a few years down the road, to tell the story, and nobody to care about the stories missed, because we assume that Google has everything. Unfortunately, there will be a period of time in which we will see very little documentation, because people generally didn't/don't write books about things until they're semi-nostalgic, and the advent of the 'net & Google took away the necessity & urge to document in print. We might someday look back at the 80's as the lost decade, pre-history in terms of the digital revolution.

The stories... the bike shop in Mtn View that the owner torched... what was the name? Bayshore Bike Works? And the suspicious manner in which a local bike shop owner's house blew up, I mean literally blew up... an owner who was a former Navy demolitions expert. Shop closed down shortly after. Because it happened in the 80s, you won't find anything about it. Part of an oral history that will come up in random conversation from time to time when people connected to that part of cycling on the Peninsula get together.

Wheelsmith, Start to Finish, Spectrum Cycles, Pacific Bicycles (which still has one store in the 'City; used to have a small empire of 7 or 8 I think?), and for a while there was a two-store operation, one in Sunnyvale and another on Woodside Road in Redwood City. What happened to them? I know some of the inside scoop and/or dirt, but really, if it happened in the 80s, it almost didn't happen at all. Start to Finish actually came along in the 90s, but there's some interesting back story to an operation that grew so fast, so quickly, and then disappeared.

But I do recall Downtown Bike Repair on Arguello in Redwood City. Only lasted for 6 months, pre-historic in the context here since it was probably in the summer of 76 or thereabouts. About 330sq ft that I rented as an experiment, to test my ability to run a store-front repair business that would require relationships with banks & distributors and, of course, customers. It was budgeted to lose about \$2500 but ended up making \$2000. A failed experiment of sorts! When the 6 months were up, I closed it down and went off to school at UC Santa Cruz. Bike shops exist and close for a variety of reasons. :-)