

Tales from the Bike Shop



At first this guy just couldn't understand why I told him he couldn't bring his 3-wheeler into the shop (because the sign wouldn't fit under the door!!! I had to block the door to keep him from damaging either his bike or our door). Actually a pretty nice guy, you just have to tell him to tone things down a bit.

We have a much more, well, "interesting" clientele in our Redwood City store than Los Altos. More diverse in every way, and sometimes, that brings some challenges. Like yesterday, when this older guy ("older" means anyone over 50 now, despite that I fit into that category myself) comes in with a bike from the 70s, a bike that's in need of more TLC than practical. Chain so badly stretched that a new one is going to skip over the sprockets that the old one has destroyed, and it goes downhill from there.

We tell him that it's likely not worth fixing unless he has some sentimental attachment to it, and what happens? He gets mad. At us. Because it's a bike! And bikes are cheap! And we shouldn't be charging much to fix a bike! The idea being that, since we're a bike shop, we have some obligation to ignore the costs of staying in business and fix his bike for what it might have cost to fix it in the 70s. He eventually leaves, and I'm trying to figure out what my lesson is here, what can I do next time something like this comes up. And I think I've got it.

I'm going to look straight at the guy and tell him, "You know what makes me mad?" And I fully expect he's going to step back a bit, thinking I'm about to really go at him. "Motel 6 isn't \$6 a night! And they still call it Motel 6!" I can't wait to use this line. And for those not old enough to know, yes indeed, Motel 6 did actually charge \$6/night back in the 60s.

Our daily parade of interesting characters continued this morning, when we open our shop to find the guy in the picture, a 3-wheeler with a flat tire. 3-wheeled bikes are a problem for us in general; we can't get them up the stairs to our service department, so any work we do on them has to be on-the-spot and on an available-time basis. This particular 3-wheeler is more-challenging than most because of the advertising sign it carries above it, which prevents it from coming through our doors. That didn't prevent the guy from trying to bring it in through the doors, despite my telling him to stop, it won't fit. It all worked out in the end; we sent Charlie out to take care of it and get the guy on his way.