

Bicycle theft: 'A big business'

By DEAN WHEELER
Of the Emerald

It happens all the time.

A figure bends down beside a bicycle, one of many at the rack, and fiddles with the chain. Nobody pays any attention—it's a common occurrence. He stands up, drops the chain into his pocket, climbs onto the expensive 10-speed and rides off.

The pedestrian pays no attention. Maybe he wishes he too had a bicycle, but that's all he thinks.

That bicycle could have been stolen.

Bicycle theft is a major problem in the city of Eugene, Detective Glynn Michael of the Eugene City Police says.

Completing a study of bicycle theft in the city, Michael's records show 1,357 bicycles reported stolen in the city in the year 1970. That works out to exactly 26 bikes a week.

Twenty-six bicycles. Over a score of two wheeled mechanisms with a total value close to \$1500 dollars.

Bicycle theft is big business in Eugene. It's big business up and down the coast—from Seattle to San Francisco.

The bicycle thief is a very organized person. Michael related one case history: "We noticed an advertisement in the EMU which offered 10-speed bikes for sale. The customer was supposed to call a number between 5:30 and 6 p.m. Officers checked out the number and found it to be a phone booth. An officer investigated the guy (who placed the ad) and found he was

that left town. We traced them to San Francisco where they were sold directly from the truck in a city park. We had the agency (police agency) down there check out the bicycles. There was nothing we could do because the serial numbers were gone."

That seems to be the biggest problem. Identification. The only evidence acceptable in court for proof of ownership is a serial number, a license number, or characteristic unique to his bicycle which the legal owner reported.

The professional thief, or even the amateur, has the common sense to remove serial numbers from stolen bicycles. A file, a little sand paper. Presto-change, the bike is now unidentifiable.

But the problem of theft can be controlled. Captain Oakley Glenn, Office of Campus Security OCS Coordinator, considers it hard to steal a bicycle with a good chain. "A 'good chain' is case-hardened, and costs about \$8, according to Michael.

Michael says, "The matter of investigating bicycle thefts leads one to believe that many of the thefts are brought to bear by the owner's own neglect."

Describing the proper procedure for safeguarding a bicycle, Michael advised: "wrap the chain around a major portion of the bicycle and around some post or through the bike rack. The best kind of chain and lock is heavy, case-hardened, and virtually indestructible."

John Rushby, OCS traffic division, declared, "New bicycles with cheap chains and locks, the types which are chrome and look

downtown bicycle shop, has had his bicycle, the same one, stolen twice. The first time it was locked to a rack outside his class. The scene was night—darkness. When he came out, the chain lay on the ground, cut. No bicycle.

Three weeks later he found the bicycle sitting in the same rack, in the same slot. He was one of the lucky ones.

Two months later his bicycle was stolen again. Henshaw, slipping in his security measures, did not lock the bicycle to anything, just locked up the wheel to the frame. This time the scene was mid-afternoon. The bicycle disappeared and he figured someone picked it up and walked off with it. Apparently no pedestrian protested.

Then, one year and two months later, a "miracle" happened. A man called the shop and asked if a bicycle with a certain serial number was stolen. It turned out to be Henshaw's. Again he regained his ten-speed.

Other people haven't been so lucky.

Tom Mitchell, a Eugene resident, had two children's bicycles stolen from his garage last week. He bought them for his kids at Christmas. Like he said, "you think of your own home as being secure."

Students have had new bicycles stolen within days of purchasing them. One student bought his bicycle, ten feet of chain and a large padlock. Two days later he wrapped the chain through the wheels and around the frame, then tightened the chain on a post. He came out of class and found himself without a bicycle. He has yet to see that bicycle.

If your bicycle is still with you, both Michael and the OCS suggest you register your bicycle and receive a "license." There's no guarantee that the license will stay on the bike if its stolen, but it does act as an additional identification check.

Michael said less than one-quarter of the bicycles stolen last year were registered with the police. Rushby said that "eight-tenths of the bicycles reported stolen to us have an identification of only make and color. We need to know something more about a bicycle than that. There are too many red Peugeots and Schwinn Varsitys on campus for us to identify any single one from that type of description."

Those bicycles which are recovered, but cannot be returned to the owner due to a lack of identification, end up at J & W Towing where the city auctions them off according to Michael. He said, "in one month the city received about \$200 for cost while the auctioneers received about \$750."

According to Michael, the police can spare only one full-time detective to cover bicycle theft. He said, "it's problem of manpower, time and priorities."

Glenn, in describing efforts to put more men on bicycle thefts, said that "bicycle thefts have dropped since student security people" started to patrol the dorm areas.

It appears that bicycle theft can be solved by improving the chains and locks which secure the bicycle or by increasing the number of patrols whose only duty is to control thefts.

Rushby said, "The student must take the initiative. Register the bicycle, report suspicious conditions, and always remember that a poorly secured bicycle is as easy, if not more so, to steal than a car with the key in the ignition."



photo by Sandy Peterson

One University student has found a unique way of keeping his bicycle from being stolen. When he leaves it unattended, he leaves it up a tree.

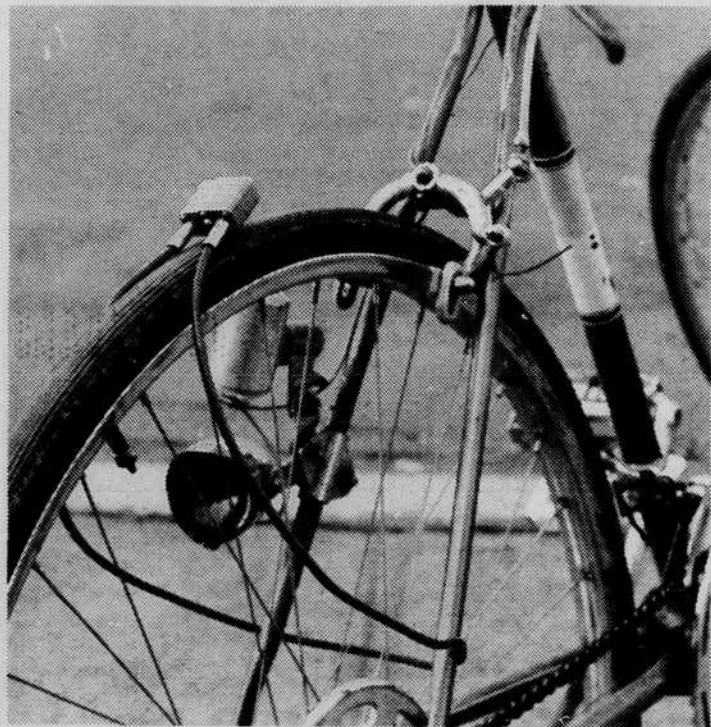


Photo by Tim Helfrich

The lock on this bicycle is a thin wire that can easily be cut and leaves the bike vulnerable to thieves. The bicycle on the front page has a heavy chain that has been wrapped around twice and secured to a post making it almost theft proof.

taking orders. We were not able to prove anything, but we did figure out that he took orders and contracted someone to rip off a bike. He paid the guy something like five bucks and then sold the bicycle for around forty dollars.

"The thing students need to do, is watch out for ads like that. Tell us about it—he could be a bicycle stealer. And if someone offers a pretty new bicycle for a cheap price, check out the guy. Look for a serial number and check that number through us. We just might be able to return that bicycle to the legal owner."

"To some extent, the theft of bicycles is organized. How much so we can only guess," said Michael. He added, "We knew of a U Haul truck full of bicycles Oregon Daily Emerald

nice, are prime bicycles to steal. Those chains just don't hold."

But no matter what you do, your bicycle can be stolen. Bicycle dealers in town have sold multi-speed bicycles to students time after time, each one stolen by someone looking for quick cash.

Rushby said "bolt cutters which fit nicely into a pocket" are used to snip the lighter chains or locks, and when that happens, the bicycle is gone.

OCS reports that the bicycles stolen on campus disappear from anywhere in the University area and at any time. The only pattern is in the types: men's ten speeds, and women's three to five speeds.

Doug Henshaw, University student and employe of a

Stanford students protest invasion

Groups of students at Stanford University in Palo Alto, Calif., responded Sunday and Monday to the U.S.-aided South Vietnamese invasion of Laos with broken windows, fights and rallies.

After a noon rally on Monday, more than 500 students attempted to enter a Stanford Board of Trustees meeting on campus, and upon finding that county sheriffs were barring their entrance to the meeting, the demonstrators attempted to stage a sit-in in Old Union, an administration building. Paul Grushkin of the Stanford Daily told the Emerald. The sit-in was dispersed later in the afternoon by police.

Sunday night, about 250 students "roamed around the Stanford campus," the Daily reported, causing about \$13,000 in damage to eight campus buildings and breaking windows in two Stanford Police Department cars.

After speeches by "members of the community" at a performance of the San Francisco Mime Troupe in Dinkenspiel Auditorium, about 250 of the 600 students attending left the auditorium to go to the Stanford dormitory areas in order to organize. Picking up about 100 more students, the group headed for the center of campus, Rushkin said.

About 20 to 30 out of the group threw bricks and rocks at campus buildings, including the Lou Henry Hoover building, the Graduate School of Business, the Undergraduate Library, the Terman English building, the Job Placement Center, the civil engineering building, Cubberley Hall and the Stanford University Post Office.

Windows were broken in two Stanford Police Department cars, one of which was particularly barraged when it flashed a spotlight at demonstrators who were hurling rocks at the Lou Henry Hoover building.

One policeman was nearly hit in the head with rocks, the Daily reported, when about 15 students attacked him as he was standing in front of Building 10, where President Lyman's office is located. The policeman hid behind a post in order to avoid being hit by the rocks.

Also, at about 10 p.m., a bomb threat was phoned in to the Stanford computer center, Pine Hall, and the building was evacuated. Investigators readmitted people into the building after a search was completed.

No one was injured on Sunday or Monday, the Daily said, and Santa Clara County Sheriff's Dept. Lt. William Miller told the Emerald no arrests had been made.