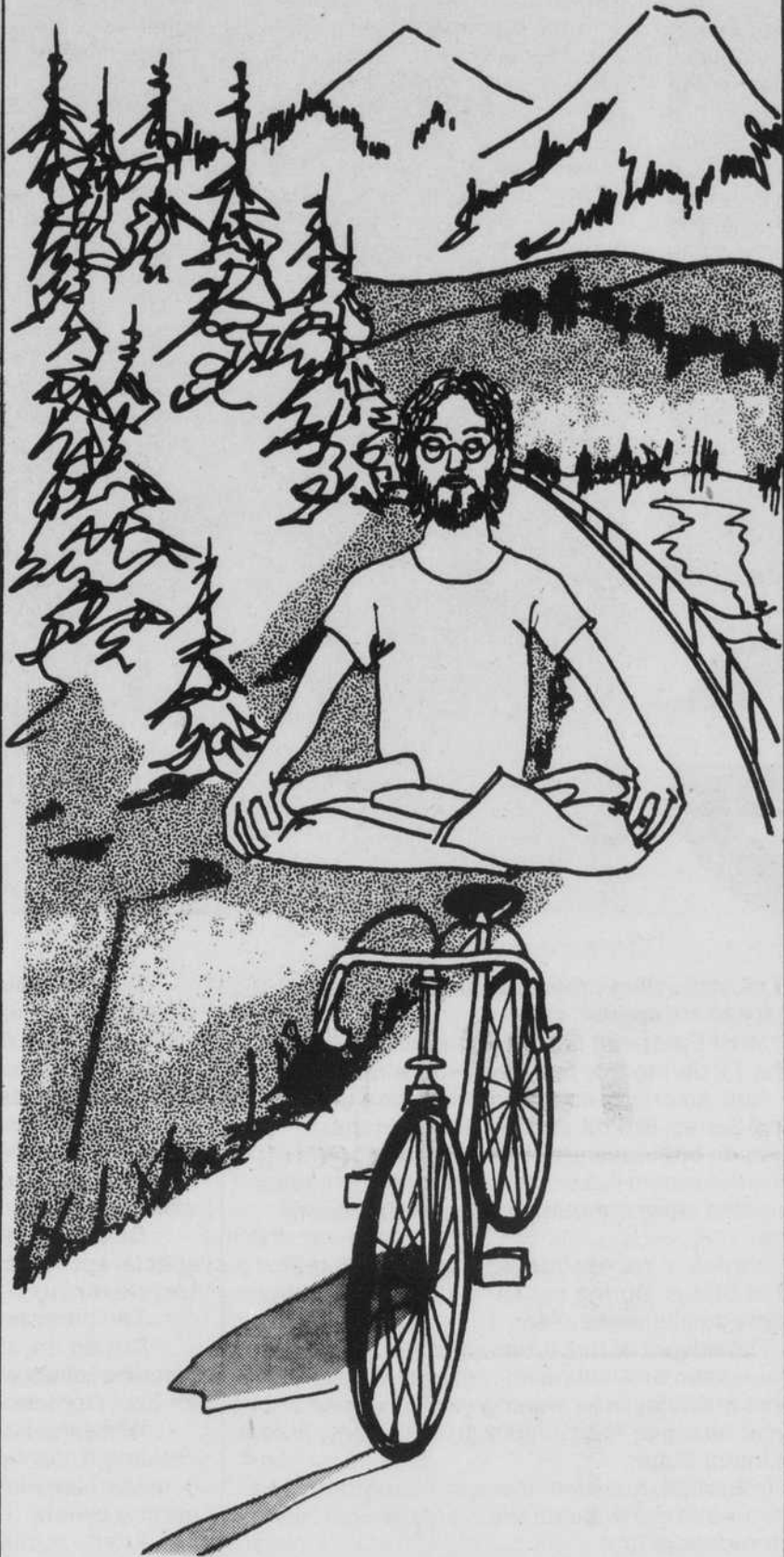


One student has found that bike touring can . . .

Zen you away



Inner Bike Touring, or The Zen of Bike Touring?

Of course. I'm sure some clever writer with an eye on the popular market already has written them. Bike touring, like other sports, is vulnerable to both questionable writers and pop psychology.

But they are vulnerable only because there is something to all the mumbo-jumbo about "inner this" and "inner that."

When my roommate and I returned two weeks ago from an eight-day trip along the Oregon coast, I caught my first real glimpse of whatever "that" is.

It has something to do with changes in perception. On a bike I had to observe what we passed through. I watched the weather, the plants, the animals. I watched myself, trying to figure out each new physical sensation.

I smelled and felt the terrain. I remember certain hills, switchbacks, stretches of river that promise good trout fishing. I learned to accept the rain and wind and devised my own system for staying as dry as possible.

And when I went inside for a hot meal, I watched other people. They belonged to the world that moves too fast and doesn't live outside.

Because food is heavy, stores take on an unusual appeal — even Safeway. There's nothing like chocolate milk — lots of calories — and bananas in the late afternoon with 10 miles to ride before setting up camp.

Even the meals of nuts, raisins, cheese, bagels and lots of water weren't bad when we spent the day riding along a river like the Alsea, which enters the ocean at Waldport. The Alsea is one of Oregon's most beautiful — and unpopulated — rivers.

We began our trip by riding to the Umpqua River via Loraine. From Drain we followed the river to Reedsport, then turned south and rode — through rain and strong headwinds — to North Bend, where we layed over a

couple days to wait out the storms.

The storms waited longer than us. We rode north as far as Waldport, where strong headwinds — it took 2½ hours to cover the 8 miles from Yachats to Waldport — forced us inland up the Alsea. We made the right decision.

After days of wind and rain, feeling the sun overhead while following the south fork of the Alsea over the coast range became a euphoric experience. Euphoric like the stretch of Highway 101 from Florence to

Yachats, where you ride along the edge of the continent, the wind nothing but rain-washed salt air.

Two weeks have passed since that trip, and riding to campus in the rain has ceased to be a major concern. My appetite has almost returned to normal, although I can't get enough bananas. And I've almost finished the outline of my first book.

You guessed it — "Inner Bike Touring."

By Glenn Boettcher
Graphic by Sioux Anderson

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