



CAROLINE STAUB

EPD officer Schultz tickets Masser Dinae Horne.

bark at about 40 cyclists over a loudspeaker, ticket a young man for running a stop sign and ride into the throng of bikes on his motorcycle.

"It was no longer comforting to see the police," Gunderson wrote by email. "Was the officer ordered to harass cyclists and why? ...

eight of the 12 Critical Mass rides from July 2005 to June 2006 — five times in response to citizen complaints and three times as "planned proactive responses." City taxpayers spent about \$9,000 on those cop appearances, according to figures provided by Stronach. About \$7,000 of that went to overtime pay for the pre-planned responses to the March, April and May rides (see chart).

It's hard to argue that the city of Eugene is anti-bike. Public Works staff promoted biking and walking with the month-long July-in-Motion and until recently encouraged bicycle work commutes with the People Powered Fridays program. Our little city has 119 miles of bike paths and lanes and a thriving bike manufacturing industry (see sidebar). And if that's not confirmation enough, Eugene makes a regular appearance on *Bicycling* magazine's list of the best cities for cycling.

The city brought Portland attorney Ray Thomas, a bike rights advocate, to the Eugene Library on July 12. His bottom line is safety for both bikers and motorists, but his sympathy is clearly with bikers.

Although he has represented Critical Mass participants in court, Thomas isn't a fan of the

woman's heart go into a state of upset because we can't get across the roadway," he said.

Thomas views Critical Mass as an act of civil disobedience that is controversial by nature and likely to exacerbate the very problems that he's trying to fix. "As a trial lawyer, I have to get the jury past their irritation at Critical Massers," he said. "It's difficult to maintain a positive relationship with car drivers when you're holding them up on a Friday night. It's not really a necessity; it's a political statement."

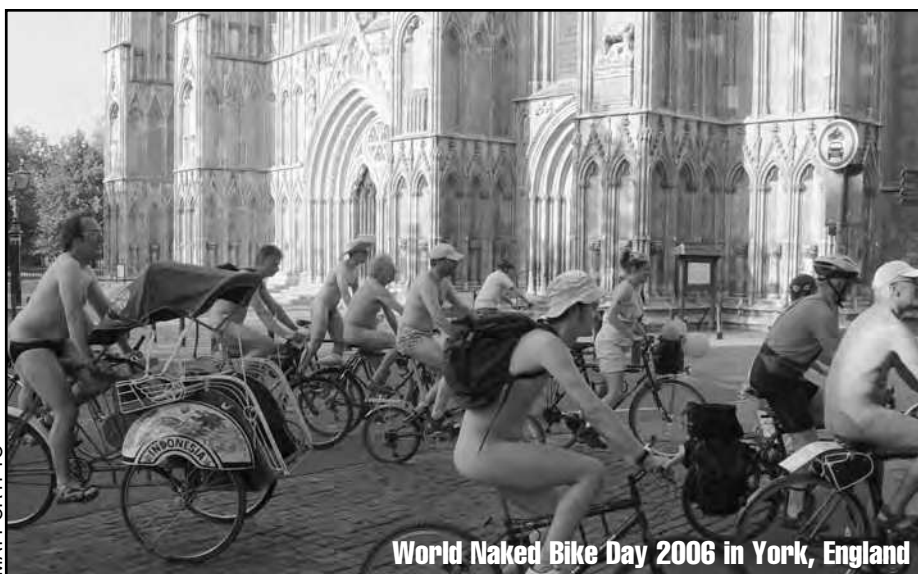
The same argument can be applied to other progressive social change movements. In forest activism, for example, there are the embedded organizations, like Sierra Club, that use legal avenues such as lobbying and outreach to make change. Then there are tree-sitters and EarthFirst!ers who get in people's faces and break the law for their cause. The legal approach may be more palatable to more of the public, but it's the civil disobedience that makes the news.

Eugene's ride is just one spoke in a global bicycle revolution. Since beginning in San Francisco in 1992, Critical Mass has spread to 417 cities across the globe.

Bike Resources

- **Critical Mass info:** www.critical-mass.org
- **Eugene Critical Mass' MySpace page** www.myspace.com/eugeneccriticalmass
- **We Are Traffic**, documentary on Critical Mass history, available at **Center for Appropriate Transport (CAT):** 455 West 1st Avenue, 344-1197 www.catoregon.org
- **Critical Mass history:** www.scorcher.org/cmhistory
- **Return of the Scorchers**, bike culture documentary by Ted White
- **"How to Not Get Hit by Cars,"** www.bicyclesafe.com
- **"Why go by bicycle? 15 good reasons,"** www.gobybicycle.com
- **Oregon's bike laws:** www.oregon.gov/ODOT/HWY/BIKEPED/docs/bike-ped_statutes.pdf
- **Pedal Power: A legal guide for Oregon Bicyclists**, by Ray Thomas: www.stc-law.com/pdf/PedalPower_4th-ed.pdf
- **Bicycle Friendly Communities:** www.bicyclefriendlycommunities.org

dom have more than 50 cyclists, police have charged 16 Massers with criminal misdemeanors (mostly disorderly conduct) since June 2005 in addition to an untracked number of traffic violations, Stronach said.



MATT CRYPTO

World Naked Bike Day 2006 in York, England

I've never witnessed police action like this and was told by others that it is not unusual. Why do Eugene citizens tolerate police state tactics?"

Eugene police maintain that safety is their main concern with Critical Mass. "We're all for them having the ride," said EPD spokesman Rich Stronach. "It's just when we start getting calls and they're blocking traffic that we have to do something about it."

According to Stronach, EPD showed up for

'It's difficult to maintain a positive relationship with car drivers when you're holding them up on a Friday night.'

-Ray Thomas, bike attorney

ride. He recalled a time when he was driving his mother-in-law to a Portland hospital to see her dying son, and Critical Massers blocked them in. "So here I am, a bike advocate, and my brothers and sisters of the road are making this



MICHAEL W. PARENTEAU

Critical Mass in San Francisco, April 2005

In San Francisco, 2,000 to 5,000 bikers generally show up for the monthly Mass rides — yet SFPD Captain Al Casciato estimated that police have arrested no more than four Massers over the past year. In Eugene, where rides sel-

The difference is in the policy. The SFPD treats the Mass as one large vehicle, which means that if cyclists at the front of the ride enter an intersection on a green light, the rest of the Mass may proceed even if the light changes. Volunteers from local bike advocacy groups wear orange vests and block the side roads so that motorists won't enter the Mass. That cooperative approach makes the ride safer, more peaceful and easier on the police, Casciato said.

The San Francisco rides weren't always so smooth. There have been mass arrests, angry mayors, angrier bikers. But the SFPD eventually got the point: The system wasn't working. The new approach, with less police presence and more volunteer monitoring, has dramatically cut both the numbers of arrests and motorist complaints. "Now, I can do Critical Mass with my eyes closed," Casciato said. "Normally at the end of the night we say, 'The ride is over,' and we all clap."

Portland police haven't had as much luck. First they monitored the cyclists heavily and got complaints that they were being overbearing; then they left the rides alone and got complaints of vandalism and assault. "Our presence has ebbed and flowed with the tenor of the ride," said Portland Police Bureau spokesman Sgt. Brian Shmaultz. "It's morphed and gotten much calmer over the last year or so."

Now the Portland police generally hand out fliers at the beginning of Mass rides to inform

Helmets and Seatbelts

Last year, about 500 people died in car crashes in Oregon alone — a figure close to the number of annual bike fatalities for the entire country.

According to data provided by city bike coordinator Lee Shoemaker, there were 334 reported accidents involving bikers and motorists in Eugene between 2001 and 2005. Most resulted in injury, and five were fatal.

Bicycles account for less than 1 percent of all trips nationwide, but cycling fatalities made up 1.5 percent of all traffic deaths in the Oregon in 2002. Although these figures imply a greater danger for cyclists than motorists, bikes may constitute a higher percentage of trips in Oregon thanks to our bike-friendly cities.

In terms of motorist safety, residents of denser communities drive less and are at a lower risk of death from car crashes than residents of sprawling places, as reported in Sightline Institute's *Cascadia Scorecard 2006*. The same report says that only 12 percent of Lane County's residents live in compact communities, compared with a quarter of Portland's and two-thirds of Vancouver, B.C.'s residents.

Meanwhile, a fifth of our state's population is obese, likely related to low levels of physical activity. Obesity-related ailments claim 1,500 lives in Oregon a year — many more than the lives lost to bicycle or automobile accidents. — Sarah Mazze



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