

In Portland, Bikes Are Here To Stay

continued ▲ from Front

north Portland reduced car trips there by nine percent.

Creating more bike commuters means those behind the wheel must get used to cyclists and share the road.

Ray Thomas, one of the city's top bike advocates, has legally represented cyclists since 1981. He's tried to push progressive bike laws through Oregon legislature for more than 20 years, only recently succeeding. 2005 saw substantial changes in bike laws, allowing cyclists to pass cars on the right and leave bike lanes to make a left turn.

Thomas attributes the new laws to a shift in the politically conservative attitude. Republicans ride bikes now, joining the ranks of the formerly alienated. 15 years ago, the bike scene included hard-core racers, down and out types who couldn't drive and the pre-pubescent. Now even the mayor rides in Critical Mass, an activist cycling group.

"As the demographics change, what you see is that people treat us differently," Thomas said. "It's not just some bike freak covered in Lycra coming into my office whining at me."

Expect more progression on the Portland bike front, especially as the weather improves and people drag their 10-speeds out of the garage. Meanwhile, visit www.BikePortland.org for political updates, www.Shifttobikes.org for pure biking joy, and www.zoobomb.org if you're insane about cycling.



PHOTO BY ISAIAH BOUIE/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

A cyclist in north Portland passes one of several new signs for bicycle commuters giving distances and timelines for nearby landmarks. The bike-friendly street signs are a new standard; one the city hopes will encourage people to ride more often.

Bicycle Safety, Resources Help

BY SARAH BLOUNT
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

There are an overwhelming number of resources for cyclists on the Web, but the Bicycle Transportation Alliance website is a good place to start. Visit www.bta4bikes.org and click on the legal resources page to download "Pedal Power: A Legal Guide for Oregon Bicyclists."

Written by bike advocate Ray Thomas, the guide is an excellent tool covering laws, maps, guidebooks, classes and

other things to ensure an easy ride.

If you would rather not delve into the legalese of bike culture and just want a painless ride across town, the following cardinal rules of urban biking could dramatically decrease accidents and driver aggression:

Wear a helmet and a headlight. Wear a helmet, enough said. As for lights, when riding at night, you can't be visible enough. Oregon law requires bicycles to have a white light in front, and a red reflector or light to the rear during "limited visibility

conditions." It's best to carry more than the minimum. You can also affix special lights to bicycle spokes and tire valves. Reflective strips come on ankle straps, vests, jackets and bike-specific bags. Overdo it, look like a flying circus, and light up at dusk and on dark days.

Honk. Riding without a horn or audible bell can leave you silently skidding, white knuckles on your handbrakes, into a car that has no clue you exist. A motorist on a collision course with your bike may not see you, but at least they'll hear you.

Ride farther left. This keeps you the most visible in traffic. When you ride very close to the curb you send the message to drivers that they don't have to share the road. A car can intimidate or nearly knock you over when zipping past while you're in a tight space. If you find yourself placed you between the twin dangers of the curb and heavy traffic, choose another street. Chances are, there's a quieter route nearby with more room for a safer ride.

Mind car doors. This is a common accident that never ends well. Car doors fly out, even into bike lanes, catching speedy bikers off guard. Drive slowly on streets lined with parked cars and keep an eye on

each window as you pass.

Give 'em the eye. As a cyclist you should assume, when passing in front of a car, the driver doesn't see you until you lock eyes. Eye contact is especially important if the driver is too busy looking at cars, waiting to pull out into traffic.

Carefully respond to driver aggression. If a driver seriously harasses or injures you, call the cops. If the situation isn't dire, Thomas suggests taking their license plate number and contacting the bicycle alliance, which can obtain the driver's name and address. You can write the driver a letter, drafting your own version or using a form provided by the organization.

NEW SEASONS MARKET

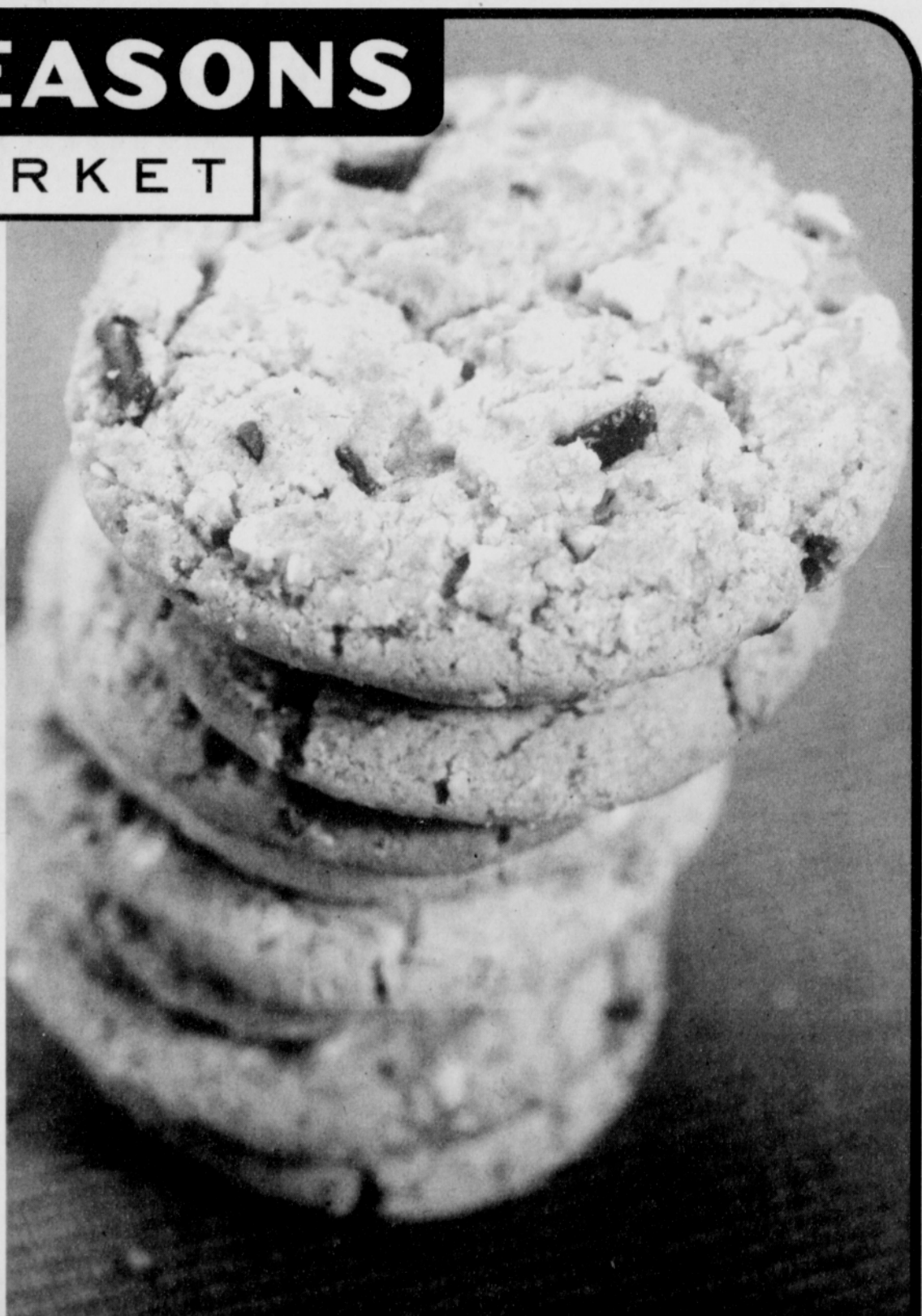
HOW DOES THE
cookie crumble?

SATURDAY & SUNDAY • 11:00AM - 5:00PM

Are you ready to become a cookie connoisseur? There's lots to learn about the world of snaps, grahams, sandwich, oatmeal, chocolate covered, and low fat cookies and there's no better place to do it than at our tasting this weekend. We'll be opening almost 200 varieties of cookies for you to sample. Go for it with the Double Chocolate Chunks. Spice things up with Ginger Snaps. Or, snack lite with Fat Free Fig Newmans. On a special diet? We have some wheat-free and gluten-free cookie varieties that actually taste good.

We know that Oregonians are crazy about coffee but this weekend it's time for tea to steal the spotlight. We'll be sampling the traditional selections like black and herbal, the green teas that everyone is talking about, and some of the more unusual choices like white tea. Taste it freshly brewed, hot or iced or in bottles.

Cookies and tea. How civilized is that?



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