Yesteryear Cyclery



by Marilyn Watts

With the snow finally melted and our thoughts turning to spring activities, I stopped by Yesteryear Cyclery to visit and interview owner Kim Camara. Located just off Rt. 140 (Exit 3), many of us are familiar with this bike shop. I have personally known Kim since our kindergarten days at St. Kilian's school, and have fond memories of all my childhood bikes that were purchased from Yesteryear.

The first thing you will notice as you turn into the driveway is the funny saying on the marquee. Much to the delight of customers and passers by, Kim changes the words on the sign often. He tends to lean toward a George Carlin kind of humor; today's quote was, "I used to be decisive-now I'm not sure."

The next thing you'll notice is the high energy music, which can be heard before you even enter the building. As Kim unlocked the door and turned off the alarm, he demonstrated to me how he starts every morning. With arms outstretched , he shouts, "It's Showtime!" Then he's off and running. The shop may be called Yesteryear, but it is very 21st century inside. With the latest and greatest gear available, Yesteryear is great not only for novice bikers, but also for those who require more from a bike shop.



Yesteryear's famous sign during the week-long Cinco de Mayo sale last year.

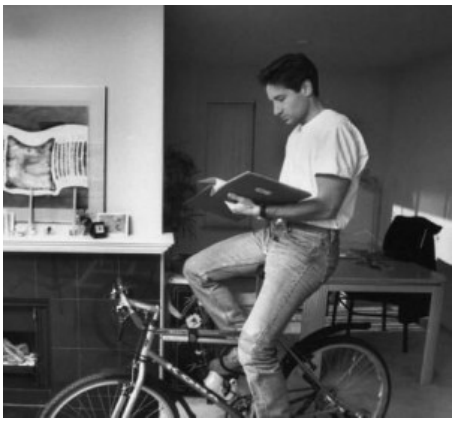
So, Kim, how long have you been in the bike business?
My entire life! When I was about 5-years-old, my dad owned a unique business, which was a conglomeration of many businesses in one. It was part hardware store, part pet shop and part bike shop. Dad got very tired of cleaning out the pet cages, so in 1959 he moved the business to the Hathaway Road location and decided to sell bikes only. The rest, as they say, is history.

What is your busiest time of year?

We do about 70% of our business from April 1st through mid July. Right now I have 11 full-time employees, including four bike mechanics, three assemblers, two salespeople, my wife Karen, who works in the office, plus myself. They say, "Make hay while the sun shines," and we will be doing that over the next six months.

Locals usually shop for bikes around March, April, and May. Bikes are coming out of the cellar, and graduation gifts are popular during that time. In the summer, we get visitors from places like New York and Philly, visitors who, as they put it, want to enjoy their "Southcoast Summer Camp for the rich." In September things slow down, but that's when I attend the various bike trade shows. The Interbike Trade Show in Las Vegas draws about 2,500-3,500 exhibitors and 50,000 bike

dealers. November and December used to be a lucrative time for us, when every 10-year-old kid dreamed of a shiny new bike under the Christmas tree, but those days are gone. Now, most kids want an iPad or a laptop or an Xbox instead. From January through March, we do very little business.



Actor David Duchovny on a bike he most likely purchased at Yesteryear.

Speaking of summer visitors, I understand that you've had some celebrity guests visit the shop.
Yes, James Spader comes in with his kids every summer and buys the boys new BMX bikes. But he's a real kid at heart and always buys himself a new bike as well, usually a much more expensive one than he got for the kids. David Duchovny of *Californication* and *X-Files* fame stopped in last summer with his wife, Tea Leoni. And Billy Joey likes to fly to Martha's Vineyard from the New Bedford airport and will visit on occasion.

What is the "hot bike" right now?
O.K., this may be a bad pun, but the bike business goes in cycles.

Good one, Kim!
In the '70s, it was the 10-speed. Mountain bikes were very popular ten years ago. Then cruisers with the fat tires became

popular with the Baby Boomers. Now, the Pedal Forward bikes, where you sit lower to the ground and the pedals are in front of you, are very popular. It's called recumbent riding and is much better for your back. Most doctors will recommend cycling because it is the 2nd highest calorie burning exercise, next to swimming. It is low impact as well. Due to the bad economy, we see people deciding to ride their bike to work. With the price of gas, it saves money while being a healthier alternative, plus it's good for the environment.



A look at some of the bikes at Yesteryear.

What can one expect to pay for a bike?

Well, there are two types of bikes: cheap bikes and good bikes. I think of this like the auto business: You can buy a junker that burns oil and always breaks down, or you can buy a nice car that's reliable. Dad had a favorite quote: "If you buy cheap, you buy twice." Our bikes are guaranteed for life.

But to answer your question, an adult can expect to pay $300-$500, and a child's bike goes for around $200. A bicycle, unlike a banana, never goes bad. If you get away from cycling for a few years, you can always bring your bike back out of the cellar, pump up the tires, and you're good to go again.

I understand that you are an entrepreneur and have another business as well.
Yes that is true. I have a few business ventures I am involved with in addition to Yesteryear.

Let's start with the restaurant business.
Well, a good friend of mine, who had tended bar for awhile after a career as a mailman, had decided he wanted to buy a bar and turn it into a Scottish pub. He found the old Ward Five Club on Dartmouth Street was for rent and thought it would be the perfect place. He asked for my help, and over five months together we refurbished the place and opened The Black Watch Pub. While he handles the bar, I help out in the kitchen with menu planning, among other things.

We featured Scottish food initially, but found that it wasn't as well received as we had hoped, so we are in the process of planning a new menu. In fact, we both love BBQ and recently bought some smokers, with plans to add BBQ ribs, pulled pork, brisket, and things like that to the menu. We will also offer a catering menu, so we can take our whole hog business on the road. We're thinking of calling it, "Hogs Gone Wild." But the bar itself is a great spot, with 12 beers on tap, an excellent selection of scotch, a jukebox, dart boards, pool tables, and entertainment every weekend.

You have another business as well?



Yes, I'm a musician as well. I've played in bands since the age of eleven. Starting out I learned to play the accordion, before moving on to the organ and other keyboards. I'm in a Top-40 cover band called Soul'd Out. Unfortunately, I tore my rotator cuff not long ago and have had to put that on the back burner for awhile, but we hope to get back out there by mid-summer.

Sounds like you are a very busy guy!

Yes, my day starts at 5:30 A.M. and usually doesn't end until midnight, seven days a week. I don't sleep much. In fact, if you look at Facebook, most of my posts are usually done around 4:45 A.M.

Any special deals happening now that you'd like to share with us?

Yes, this is the perfect time of year to get your bike serviced. We will make sure it runs perfectly for all the riding you'll want to do in the upcoming warmer weather months. We normally charge $125, but right now we are offering a Spring Tune-Up Special for only $85. We service about 200 bikes a week, and our service department is already very busy, so my advice is to get your bike in as soon as possible.

Yesteryear Cyclery is located at 330 Hathaway Blvd. in New Bedford, MA. Hours of operation are: Monday-Saturday, 9-5 P.M. They are closed on Sunday.

Yesteryear's phone number is (508)-993-2525, and you can visit them online at www.yesteryearcyclery.com. You can also find them on Facebook.

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