

ATP "Vision" Test

"Editor's Choice for Best Recumbent of 1994!"

Until recently, SWB recumbent shoppers had to choose between the "frame-kit" SWB-recumbents and the \$2000 dream bikes. This is one of the contributing factors that has made the LWB recumbent the "Enthusiast Best Seller" over the past several years. Then along comes ATP, an excellent entry level SWB recumbent at almost HALF the price of the SWB dream bike competitors. ATP has set the pace for SWB value in 1994 with the R-40 Vision. Also introduced this year are the R-42 and R-45, which are going after the SWB dream bike manufacturers directly. What has started out to be an entry priced SWB has now evolved into a complete line of recumbent models, prices and options.

Our primary test bike was the SWB underseat steering R-40 Vision. After spending several months with the Vision, we are convinced that this is the single **BEST** enthusiast recumbent that we have seen for under \$1,000. And it is also the single best SWB underseat steering recumbent that we have ever seen.

VISION EXPERIMENTER KIT

For around \$1200, you can order up enough Vision parts to try out SWB, LWB, upright steer, underseat steer and try and figure out what your personal tastes are for a recumbent bicycle. The Vision could be marketed as the "Ultimate Recumbent Bicycle Experimenter's Kit." If there is a drawback to the Vision it is the almost limitless adjustments and options to dial-in the bike just for you. It is the perfect entry level/ beginner enthusiast recumbent.

VISION HISTORY

The SWB Vision takes advantage of nearly fifteen years of SWB technology. The very capable designers, Joel Smith, former Boeing Engineer and founder of ATP (R-20) and Grant Bower, Engineer and Bower-Bike SWB designer. The Vision has the best attributes of the original ATP R-20 (RCN#9) but none of the complications. Grant Bower has

been experimenting with his SWB "Bowerbikes" for longer than I have been involved with recumbents (they have never been sold commercially). Anyone who has spent any time in the Northwest or at any of the IHPVA speed events has seen the exquisite BowerBike.

DECIPHER THE MODELS:

At first glance, you may get the impression that you should enroll at your state University's Engineering program in order to decipher the ATP model letter/ number descriptions, but hey, it's not that hard. One look at the ATP Vision ordering "menu" and it starts to make sense. With this new modular system, ATP has become a leader among SWB recumbent manufacturers.

- *The ATP Vision VR-40AU is the SWB-direct underseat steering version. The VR40AT is the upright steering version of the same bike. The original "R-40 Vision."
- *The ATP Vision VR-40BU is the LWB-remote underseat steering version. The VR40BT is the upright steering version of the same bike.
- *The ATP Vision VR-42AU is the SWB-direct underseat steering version. The VR42AT is the upright steering version of the same bike. The R-42 has upgraded components and an aluminum boom & seat stays.
- *The ATP Vision VR-42BU is the LWB-remote underseat steering version. The VR42BT is the upright steering version of the same bike.
- *The ATP Vision VR-45AU is the SWB direct underseat steering version.
- *The VR45AT is the upright steering version of this bike. The R-45 is a sub-22 pound dream bike. The frame is of the same design, but lighter and uses a smaller diameter 1.75" main-tube. The R-45 comes in SWB only and will be built to order.

The R-40 & R-42 models are fully convertible from SWB to LWB and back as long as you have the correct set-up. This is the only recumbent in history that offers this feature.

VIVA La DIFFERENCE

So what's the scoop? Well, we are partial to the VR-40AU SWB, or in simplified terms, the original Vision. This bike costs less than one thousand dollars, offers great wheels, a great entry level drivetrain and a bulletproof frame, fork & seat. For the bucks, this is the bike. Those (like me) who have "one-step-itis" may want to step up to the R-42 with it's aluminum boom, seat stays and Shimano/ Grip Shift drivetrain. The R-45 is strictly for the advanced riders club. An R-45 customer may be one who wants an ultra-light recumbent, a super-high performance recumbent or as an upgrade from your venerable R-40. The R-45 is a custom built bike. The frame uses nicer stays and a 1.75" diameter chro-moly main-tube. Best of all is the ultra-light weight, at under 22 pounds, it is the lightest recumbent under \$2500. The only other bikes that even approach this feather-weight are the composite Lightning R-84 and the \$5000 Titanium Presto. The R-45 is most definitely a "break-through bike" and with this model, ATP has entered the SWB dream bike market.

LONG WHEELBASE

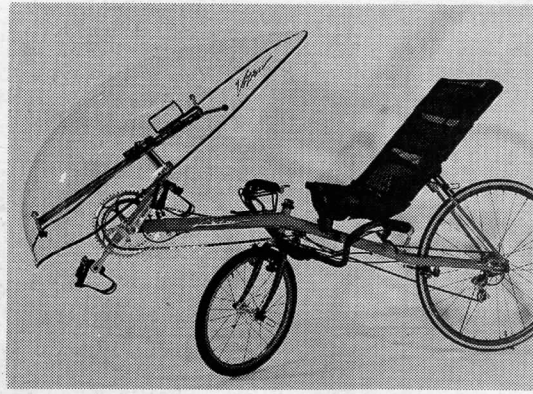
Anaheim, California: I can still remember the day back in the fall of 1992. It was late in the afternoon, and I was headed back from a long day at the Interbike Trade Show to RCN headquarters (Candy Cane Motel behind Disneyland). As it turned out, home to the ATP Crew, too. I ran into Joel Smith in the parking lot, he then proceeded to describe to me a SWB recumbent that would easily convert to a LWB. Four months later, during a light snow in Kent, Washington, Joel demonstrated the bike to me. "Truly ingenious," were the only words that came to mind. Joel was able to convert the bike from SWB to LWB in a matter of minutes. The deluxe "ATP Experimenters Kit" will allow ATP customers to experience both and choose what they like best. ATP has also incorporated two-steering linkage settings that allows the rider to select between two steering settings. This basically controls how quick the steering geometry is. Compared to other LWB recumbents, we found the ATP a quick handling bike that could be described as, "a SWB rider's LWB." The bike is sporty feeling, compact and unique compared to the other LWB recumbents available today. The most unique option of the ATP is the ability to convert it back and forth between LWB & SWB. We prefer the SWB Vision, but recommend you try both versions.

SIDE-NOTE-A: In areas of the USA that have four seasons, a recumbent rider may want to own a SWB recumbent for the summer and a LWB for the winter. With the ATP, you can have one bike that does both.

SIDE-NOTE-B: When RCN subscribers ask us what we prefer LWB or SWB, we always say, "a dedicated recumbent rider should both a LWB & SWB." With the Vision, you can accomplish this and own just one bike.

UPRIGHT STEERING ATP

At the 1993 Interbike Show, ATP unveiled the new upright steering option. The one we tried was a pre-production prototype. Zach Kaplan (RCN's Zach-Tech) had this to say in RCN#18, "They also had a slick version of folding (upright) handlebars that will retrofit on Vision models. It uses internal cable routing inside the bars." As the LWB kit changes the Vision's personality, the upright steering kit does as well. The ATP underseat steering is so nice, but I cannot say that I liked the upright steer as well on this bike. In saying that, we still highly recommend trying this option. The Vision has the unique ability to easily convert to many different recumbent variations.



The ATP Vision R-40AU & Zzipper-ATP

OPTION LIST

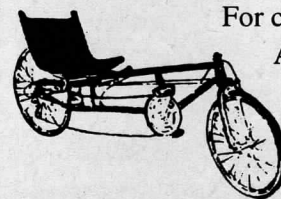
The option list is extensive. ATP has a new clear lexan chainguard. The idea is great, however, we haven't ridden a bike with one of these yet. The Seat Back Bag is designed for those who don't want a rear rack. The Cordura nylon bag has a capacity of 550 cu. inches and has a shoulder strap for use off the bike. This new bag gets a five star rating from us. It is expertly designed by and for recumbent riders who really use their bikes. The new Vision fairing with Zzip bubble is another breakthrough. The bubble is similar to the Presto Zzipper (slightly different shape—but same size), but the mounting system is ultra-simple and should work (with minor mod.'s) on many different SWB models. A computer mount that fits on top of the front derailleur tube also is a great place to mount a headlight. This option is not needed if you have

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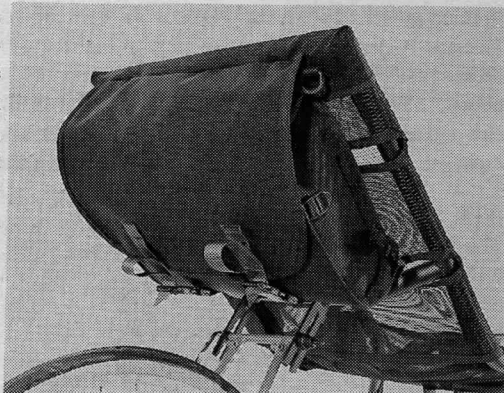
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the Vision fairing, because there is plenty of room on the fairing framework for computers, waterbottles and headlights. Also available is a Thermarest seat bottom cushion. Read all about it in the next paragraph.



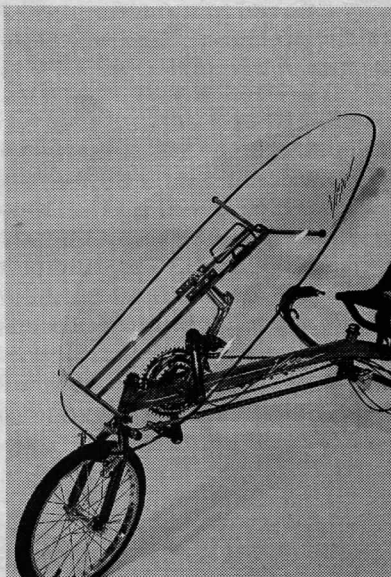
The Vision quick release seat and Seat-Back-Bag-ATP

THE ATP SEAT

The ATP seat is another breakthrough—kind of. From a design standpoint, this is a five star seat. In a matter of seconds, it pops right off the frame through the use of two conveniently located quick releases. The seat stays either fold down, or come off with an allen wrench. The seat frame now sports a black finish, is made of aluminum and is light weight. The seat-back height is great for all sizes of riders. Here is where the “kind-of” comes in. Some recumbent seats have what we describe as “seat-horns.” This is where a metal fixture of some kind protrudes forward from the front edge of the seat frame to pull the material tight and keep the rider from sliding forward. Our findings show that riders of bikes with seat-horns don’t even notice them until someone (like me) brings it up. Also, light riders (160 pounds or less) will not notice it as much as large riders. Larger riders may notice that the Vision seat has a smaller base than either a Presto or P-38. Dick Ryan’s Vanguard has a similar seat-horn and Dick claims that only a few riders are bothered by the seat horn. As it turns out, I am

of the chosen few and I’ve always rated “horned seats” lower because of the potential for irritation.

ATP is a local company and well aware of my idiosyncrasy. Prior to testing, ATP, brought over what I consider the “best upgrade” option that they offer, the Thermarest Seat Bottom Cushion.” We were introduced to these neat cushions while testing the Thebis (standard on the Thebis), then later with the Ryan (optional on the Ryan, too) and now the Vision. ATP has a unique way of mounting the cushion; it straps under the seat mesh providing superior comfort from this self-inflating air/foam seat cushion. With the addition of this optional cushion, the ATP seat is right up there with the very best. In fact, we can think of quite a few manufacturers who should take a serious look at how this seat mounts on the bike. It is quite certainly the best seat mounting system available on any recumbent.

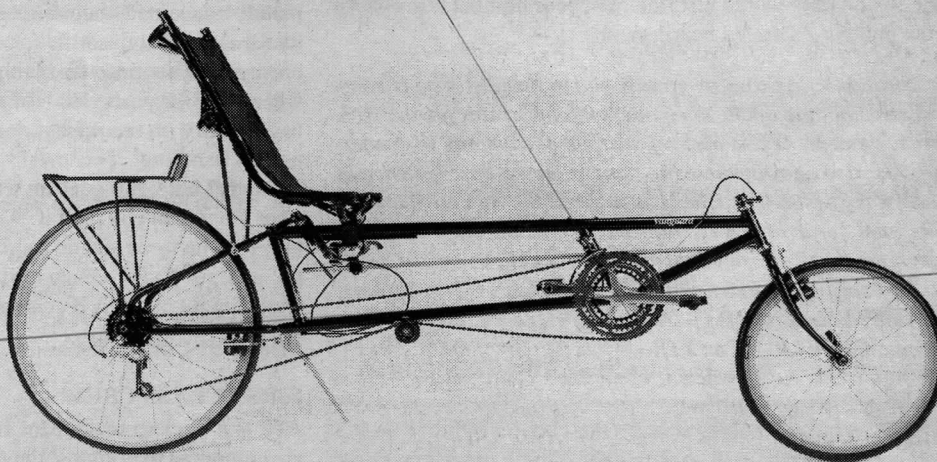


The Vision Zipper mounts on SWB & LWB models-ATP

Another Vision breakthrough is the adjustable seat recline angle. Every recumbent rider that I know wishes he/she could adjust the angle of the

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seat, or at the very least experiment with it. This is a built in feature for all Vision recumbents. This very important feature alone is enough reason to buy this bike over other SWB models.

R-40 FRAME

The Vision utilizes a 2" diameter seamless chro-moly mainframe that is ultra-stiff and worthy of the LWB conversion that makes it possible to convert any R-40 or R-42 model. The seat stays, chain stays and custom 16" fork are all TIG welded chro-moly. All of these parts are over-built, durable and tough. The Vision realistically weighs in at just under thirty pounds, which is not exactly a light weight, but could be the lightest recumbent under \$1000. For gram counters, ATP weighed it's first production R-45. Get this, 21.75 pounds. This bike is less than half the price of a Ti Presto or Lightning R-84! Of the dream bikes, the R-45 is the most realistically priced and deserving of our highest rating (as admitted retro-grouches, we like chro-moly anything).

R-40 and R-42 models come in the ATP trademark Teal color. The R-45's come in your choice of Teal, Red-Baron Red, Royal Blue, Grape Purple (the official RCN Crew Color), White and Black Powdercoat. This is the perfect coating for this bike and it is just as durable as you would expect from ATP.

R-40 DRIVETRAIN

Our test R-40 had a SunTour drivetrain. When discussing \$1500 and \$2000 bikes, we look for the name "Shimano" emblazoned on the componentry, but for \$995, the SunTour drivetrain does what it is supposed to do. The gears index about average compared to other recumbents. The shifters are SunTour twist-grip shifters. They shifted adequately, but we'll take Grip Shifts or Bar-Cons if given the choice (Grip Shifters do not have a friction shift option). The crankset is a SunTour X-1 and has alloy crankarms & steel chainrings. It is a proven, durable and heavy crankset. Overall, the drivetrain is durable and should be trouble free— everything you'd want it to be on a recumbent that retails for \$995. For those hyperglide fanatics, order an R-42 or R-45.

The Vision bikes come with a derailleur pulley on a custom mount as a chain idler. This proven system is right off Grant's BowerBike (Vision forerunners). I have criticized these on other recumbents, so we'll throw our two cents in. I prefer delrin or skateboard/ Rollerblade wheel chain idlers, but the Vision idler works just fine. So, your best bet is probably to upgrade the pulley to a sealed bearing unit.

SunTour vs. Shimano: As a retro-grouch and enthusiast who is completely against the thought of one component manufacturer having 99% of the component market and is also against the cheapening of components and who is also against the whiz-bang planned obsolescence in the bike industry, my first impression is to outfit a bike with no Shimano. I instinctively want to run directly to SunTour or Sachs. But, I must say, that Shimano components work better than any others currently available. If you don't care about index shifting, Hyperglide or Grip Shifters, stick with the other brands, but for pure shifting elegance, there is nothing like Shimano Deore LX, XT or XTR.

ATP BRAKES

The American bike buying public reveres the cantilever brake as it's sweetheart choice of brake. If a Specialized Stumpjumper or Giant Iguana has anything buy cantilevers, the American MTB buying public would just plain freak out. The Vision brakes are good quality SunTour cantilevers. They are strong and give the bike superior braking. We didn't care for the "feel" or modulation of these brakes as compared to their Shimano counterparts, but they work fine and you should never be short of

braking power. Cantilever brakes work well, are very strong and are serviceable by just about any bike shop in the free world. The downside to these brakes is that they are difficult to set up and adjust by the inexperienced. Your best bet is to find a gonzo local MTB mechanic who lives, eats and breathes dirt, slip him a few bucks on the side to get an A-1 adjustment job. We know of just the place if you live in Renton, WA.

ATP WHEELS

The wheel build quality is very good and we had no trouble with the test bike's wheels or tires. The 26" rear wheel is a strong MTB wheel, and the bald slick Fat Boy 1.25" tire is a perfect choice. The real breakthrough for the Vision is the new Kenda 110 psi 16" X 1-3/8" front tire. This tire is 100% responsible for me changing my mind about "tiny tired" recumbents. This new tire should eliminate the need to use the rare and difficult to find Moulton 17" as an upgrade. This makes the Vision even more appealing.

LATE NOTE: ATP is now offering a high performance 16" x 1" high pressure performance rim/ tire combination on the R-45. We were able to see this new wheel/ tire at Bike Expo and it is tiny.

PRACTICALITY

The Vision is probably the most practical recumbent available today. First of all, it is a terrific bargain. Second, it is small enough to be stowed in small places, trunks of cars and on standard bike/ roof racks. To give you an idea, I have a small shortbed pickup. When I haul my LWB, it takes up the whole bed (set in diagonally with the front tire sticking out of the bed). I have put three SWB recumbents in the same pickup bed. Third, the Vision can be used for just about all forms of riding. HPV racing, touring, commuting and best of all recreational use. Generally, a SWB would not be the best choice for touring. This recumbent design was originally considered by most to be a "sport-bike," but, who I am I to judge, both Joel & Grant (ATP partners) have done extensive touring throughout Washington state on the forerunners of the current Vision. Grant & Debbie Bower have climbed every major mountain pass in the state on their SWB recumbents. This is truly a multipurpose bike.

SWB HANDLING

The Vision has a 36" wheelbase. ATP feels that this is the optimum wheelbase for a recumbent bicycle and in no way causes any problems in handling. Many riders consider this too short. These riders were mainly concerned about high speed handling abilities and the possibility for quick weight shifts forward in panic situations. Grant Bower has been experimenting, designing and building SWB recumbents of this wheelbase for years. He told me the other day he is on design #6. He has a theory on recumbent design whereas he wants a bike with 100% neutral handling. This means that he does not want a steep head angle "twitchy" bike, nor does he want an "oversteering" SWB that wants to steer more than you steer it. The completely neutral handling SWB will turn with no force and no fight. Just point it in the direction you want to go, and go! Every characteristic of the Vision recumbent handling is well thought out. It is precise and among the best you could ask for in a SWB in any price range.

FIRST CLASS CREW

ATP is a modern recumbent company, part of the "new breed." They are committed to bringing the recumbent enthusiast bikes that you want. Their goals are to offer the best SWB recumbents at upright competitive prices. The R-40 is a terrific start, the R-42 knocks nearly \$400 off most of the "dream bike" competition and the R-45 is a bargain for a made in the USA sub-22 lb. high performance bike. And it's chro-moly steel too! ATP does not need space age (plastic) technology or industry

buzz words to build a light high performance recumbent. Over the past year, we have thought of ATP as the new kid on the block. After this season, ATP will be considered the standard of the SWB recumbent market. Seasoned SWB builders in the industry will be scrambling to keep up with this forward thinking company and their high quality products.

DESIGN CRITIQUE

1993 brought us some incredible new recumbent companies and models. The Vision is an exceptional recumbent bicycle, however, it has one minor glitch. It was designed as a "one-size-fits-all" frame-size that would offer all riders with "no heel interference," which is rare for a SWB recumbent. This was a difficult task that ATP handled well with this one side-effect. Many large and/or tall riders feel like they are too close to the front wheel. When comparing the ATP to the Presto, P-38, Haluzak or Laid Back, you will find that the seat is rather far forward (close to the head tube). From an enthusiast point of view, there is really no reason for this. The seat appears to have room to move back three + inches. We were not alone in our judgement. We heard the same comment from California, Colorado, Washington state and Washington DC. Two enthusiasts had modified their bikes to mount the seat further back. Just prior to press time, ATP announced that all future models would come with two seat mount positions, the second being 1.5 inches farther back.

Is the ATP wheelbase too short? Riders of long or medium wheel base recumbents may think so, we would have agreed in the beginning of the test, but now realize that there is no apparent rationale for this, other than the conception that it is a shorter bike. Once you get accustomed to this wheelbase, you will most likely love it. We have been extremely impressed with the Vision. It is truly a bike worthy of being named "Editor's Choice for Best Recumbent of 1994!"

USER FRIENDLY SWB

The Vision series of recumbents is the most user friendly of any SWB currently available. First of all, there is virtually no heel interference (never say never) with the front tire. There is no knee interference with the handlebars as on some SWB models. The 16" front wheel makes the bike significantly lower than SWB models with the taller 20" front wheel. This helps in traffic, restarting from a stop and anytime there is slick or loose pavement—you are closer to the ground. Probably the most important factor is the low bottom bracket/ spindle height. With the Vision models, you actually pedal at a downward angle. This makes the bike extremely easy to get accustomed to and use in virtually any riding situation.

DESIGN NOTE: We want to be very careful about this "Design Critique." Riders who noticed the forward seating position were large and/or tall riders or experienced SWB riders. Many ATP riders we spoke to have never even considered this until we brought it up. If you have an existing ATP Vision, they can be modified to move the seat further back. We recommend that you give B.J. Strass at Introspect Cycle in Sacramento, CA. a call, Ph#916-481-2906.

VISION INTO THE FUTURE

Well, where do we start. The guys at ATP are selling a bunch of ATP Zippers and they are now working on a weatherproof "top stocking" which we hope to see by Fall. We expect to see many more surprises from the ATP Team. Stay tuned to RCN for the latest Vision Reports.

VISION FEE SCHEDULE:

There are so many prices and variations that it would be best for readers to get ATP sales information or see the RCN buyer's guide. Basic pricing is as follows: VR-40AU SWB \$995; VR-40BU LWB \$1150; VR-42AU SWB \$1390; VR-42BU LWB \$1470 and the R-45AU (SWB only) \$2275 custom built to order. Be sure to call ATP for prices on the "Ultimate Recumbent Bicycle Experimenter's Kit."

Can you tell that we loved this bike? ATP has become the LEADER in SWB recumbents. All of their offerings are A-1 and get our highest approval rating. We have not found a "perfect" recumbent yet, but the Vision is sure to please a lot of recumbent riders in 1994. We can hardly wait to receive our ATP R-45 test bike (an excuse to keep riding one) with Zipper fairsing and the new 90 psi Kenda tire. For more information, contact your local recumbent dealer or: ATP, 6201 Ravenna Ave. NE, Seattle, WA. 98115 Phone: #206-789-7323

VISION FACTS

- *ATP bikes fit riders from 5'2" to 6'4." One Vision rider is 6'7" and has a custom extended boom.
- *R-40 SWB weighs under 30 pounds/ R-40 LWB weighs 31 pounds.
- *R-42 weighs 27 pounds/ R-42 LWB weighs 30.5 pounds. (lighter upgraded Shimano/ SunTour component mix with aluminum boom (SWB)& seat stays).
- *R-45 weighs 21.75 pounds (different frame with lightweight top of the line components).
- *Weight distribution (seat in back position) is 59% front, 41% back.

These are the advertised numbers taken ATP with Grant Bower on the bike. His further comments, "since the human body's CG is at the navel, the numbers should not change dramatically with other sized riders."

*Seat height: 22"	*Rear wheel size: 26"/ front 16"
*Crank height: 19"	*SWB wheelbase 36"
*Head tube angle 70 degrees.	*LWB wheelbase 60"

BREAKTHROUGH LIST

The Vision may look like your average run-of-the-mill SWB recumbent, but we have found some really neat features that put this one above the rest.

- *Quick release seat—pops completely off the bike with the flip of two QR's.
- *16" X 1-3/8" 110 psi tire! ATP was instrumental in the bringing to market of this tire. (Early Spring delivery/ imported by J & B Imports, Kent, WA.)
- *Convertible Design: Most ATP models are available as LWB, SWB, Underseat or Upright handlebar steering.
- *A sub 23 pound recumbent for less than \$4999.99. The new R-45 is a light, agile & gorgeous bike.
- *A quality recumbent for less than \$1,000. For this alone, ATP deserves congratulations.

LATE NOTE: ATP expects the new front tires in by the end of May.

THUMBS UP! Affordable Price Bang for buck Excellent quality Good componentry mix Progressive "New" manufacturer Convertible design 16" X 1-3/8" 110 psi front tire	THUMBS DOWN! "hard" brake feel (R-40) Limited color choice (although we do like turquoise) R-40AU SWB was our test model.
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Bill on his LWB Vision.

Vision Quest

by Bill Dowling
Palm Harbor, FL.

I bought the Vision R-40 for one reason: comfort. Boy did I get my money's worth. On my old hybrid I could only go for about an hour before "sore butt" set in. My wrists hurt after 2 hours. My typical ride was about 25 miles. Now I do 50 to 65 miles each weekday morning. On weekends, I "go long." Last weekend I did 111 miles Saturday and 126 miles Sunday. My first "double century." The only sore muscles are just above the knees. Nothing else hurts! The seat has a lot of adjustment for back angle. I've found that 1/2 down position still allows you to press your back into the seat for speed, and removes enough weight from your butt, to allow sitting in it all day without any discomfort. As you adjust the seat-back angle you will find it necessary to adjust the boom for proper pedal length too. The seat is a breathing mesh on aluminum frame. I weighed 250 lbs. when I got the R-40. Now I'm down to 220 lbs. Comfort? a 10 out of 10!

Long Wheel Base vs. Short Wheel Base:

I bought every back issue of the Recumbent Cyclist News and read the reviews of every bike. I then ordered an R-40 Vision long wheel base. I rode it for 2,500 miles as a LWB. I really liked it, and had no reason to even try the SWB. Then we got 5 days of rain here in Florida. Sitting around the house, with perhaps too much spare time on my hands I decided, why not try the short wheel base configuration, I can always switch back to the LWB. In RCN, comparisons between LWB and SWB were also comparisons of bikes with very different design features. In other words, something other than LWB and SWB may be causing the perceived difference in handling. With the R-40, everything stays the same except for the placement of the front wheel. So you are comparing apples to apples with the only difference being the wheel base! In the SWB mode the bike seemed very quick, even "quirky" at first. But after an hour or so, you get used to it. The SWB bike is far more easily started and more maneuverable than the LWB. After 2 days of riding in the SWB mode, I called the company to order the short boom (no head set ahead of the crank, and 5 lbs. lighter) because I had decided to never go back to the LWB mode. That's right: I liked the long wheel base mode so much I almost didn't even try the SWB mode. Then, after getting used to the SWB mode for 2 days I vowed to never go back to the LWB mode. As my SWB technique grew, I found it to be even more stable at high speeds than the LWB. I think anyone who gives both LWB and SWB a fair test (say minimum of two weeks) will strongly favor the SWB mode. It's cheaper, too!

Learning to ride a recumbent:

The LWB is very difficult to get going (especially on the up-hill). I gave about 20 people test rides while in the LWB mode. They all took two or three false attempts to get rolling. After getting going, they seemed to be able to easily ride in a stable position. So far, I've given about 40 people a test ride in the SWB mode. All but one had no trouble getting rolling, but all seemed jerky or quirky after getting going. I believe all would have gotten used to (adjusted their steering technique) the fast response, as I did, in about an hour's time, but I was unwilling to allow test rides of that length (it was, after all, my new bike!).

Teaching people to ride a recumbent:

Simply telling someone that they will have to re-learn balance is not enough. After a person first learns to ride a (normal) bike the knowledge moves into their sub-conscious. Their conscious mind forgets what they've learned and they are running on auto-pilot. If you ask them how it is that they are able to ride a (normal) bike they cannot tell you anything about the actual technique. So, if you don't want to scratch up the paint on your new recumbent bike by letting people test ride it, here's what you should tell them: (1) As you tip/lean to the left, steer the bike even farther to the left. (2) As you tip/lean to the right, steer the bike even farther to the right. (3) In other words, steer the bike to keep it between you and the ground. (4) Pulling or pushing on the handle bars will do nothing on a recumbent, even though it can be used on a normal bike to make minor balancing corrections.

Above or Below Seat Steering:

To the factors previously discussed in back issues of RCN add: (1) With under seat steering, swatting off bugs or biting insects on one arm using the other arm requires considerable technique especially if they are on the back side of one's arm. Also: (2) with under seat steering a snarling dog running along side produces a more serious situation than with above seat steering. Personally, I still prefer under seat steering, because it eliminates any possibility of wrist pain which I used to get on a ordinary bike.

"No Bike Passes Me!"

I bought the R-40 for comfort, nothing else. I'm 47 years old, and it shouldn't matter to me if I get passed by another bike. The Vision has changed me. Over the last 6 months I've been seduced by speed. My attitude now is "no bike passes me." No exceptions. It all started innocently enough, while riding the Pinellas Trail with Bob on his

home built recumbent. Some roadie would not respond to a "good morning" hail, and Bob would remark "Well, there's another one you've pissed-off, Bill." I'd say "I've never seen that rider before, honest." On my old bike, I just let faster bikes pass. On my Vision, I found I could easily catch up to any that passed me. Then, I discovered, that I could actually re-pass anyone who passed me. And one thing led to another, and now I have this whole new attitude. It was after I was riding the R-40 for about two months, and I was just beginning to see this speed and new attitude in myself. It was a morning ride with Bob. We were doing 17 to 18 mph., when a 4 rider pace line passed us. Bob was just about to say we didn't have to chase them down, but he had already seen the look on my face and knew it was useless to protest. I had joined the back of their pack in about 4 minutes. They were doing 21 to 22 mph. The wine of their fat tires told me all were over 100 psi. My R-40 had 60 psi in front and 90 psi in the rear. They were 3 mountain bikes and 1 road bike. Two aluminum Cannondales, and one carbon Trek, I couldn't see the road bike brand name. After catching my breath by drafting for a minute or two, I gave them the old "on your left" and spun up to 24 mph., which is about all I'm capable of, with a 48/12 top gear. As I passed, I could see the look on their faces. They were very near their maximum effort already. The guy on the road bike hollered out "A recumbent animal! Look at that animal go!" For the next five miles, I managed to stay out in front of them. The guy on the road bike had no trouble catching up, but the guys on the mountain bikes would pull along side, and some how, I found enough to increase to 26 mph. They turned off the trail and I barely escaped being re-passed because I had nothing left at that point. I told myself that was going to be the last time I tried mixing-it-up with strangers. I thought the three riders on the mountain bikes were pro athletes. The guy on the road bike seemed to be their coach. After nearly killing myself with the exertion, I vowed to drop

my new attitude and go back to being a mature adult. I was a "good boy" for the next week. Then one morning a guy pulls up to Bob and me on the trail. It was the "coach" from the week before. His name was Frank. He owns a bike shop in St. Petersburg. He was their mechanic. Those other 3 riders were Pro mountain bike riders. He said two of them won serious cash the weekend before up in Brooksville, and the other was considered an up and coming talent in Florida. (I was thinking, mountains in Florida?, we don't have no mountains?) Well, his face seemed sincere. He said they were out on a very fast paced training ride doing 20 miles at 20 to 22 mph. before I "attacked." Even so, He and they were shocked a recumbent could go so fast. Well, as you could imagine, this incident put me over the top, and from that point on I was

"Bob says, I need professional help."

"The Recumbent Animal." No one passes me! I bought a heart monitor. No one passes me! Bob says, I need professional help. No one passes me! I think it was two weeks

Later, when I dusted the moped, that put me over-the-top, in Bob's eyes. OK, racing every fast bike that comes along, that's one thing, but racing motorized vehicles? Bob says I've "crossed over" and there's no going back. Bob says I hide in the bushes and attack the first pace line that goes by. Not true. I sit in the shade (on side roads) to eat my power bars and drink my Gatorade. It simply appears I'm waiting to ambush a pace line. OK, one with three tandems and two singles, did out run me, fair and square! But I replaced the 48 tooth big ring with a 52. The next weekend I stuck with a carbon Kestrel. He would try to drop me, and

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Bill's SWB Vision

Religion/ Zen = Vision

Above I've referred to getting used to the quick and quirky handling of a SWB recumbent. Some may think I was saying: enduring a handling "problem," until one develops techniques to allow for a design deficiency. No, that's not it! If you piloted a super tanker and then were given the helm of a 12 meter racing yacht, you would call it "quick and quirky" in comparison. If given a couple of months skippering both, there isn't a single sailor that I know, who would choose the handling of the super tanker for his next boat, even though it could be referred to as "smooth and stable." Some boat reviewer might say the racing yacht needs "steering dampening." Don't believe it. You want to be "as one" with the bike and road, this SWB delivers the feel. Looking back to my LWB experience (3 months, 2500 miles!), the feeling of the bike was pretty lackluster by comparison. It was good, solid, smooth and generally OK. But it didn't have soul. With SWB you're "wired to the road." It's almost a Zen or a religious thing. In other words, I really like SWB!

Short takes:

On my old bike, the only way I could do a 50 mile ride was to ride away from my house for 25 miles, so I had no choice but endure the sore butt & wrists and re-do the 25 miles to return. Last weekend, after doing a 100+ mile loop on my Vision, I continued past my home because the weather was perfect and there was another hour until sunset. I added another 14 miles before ending the day. That's a comfortable bike!!

we would hit 28 to 30 mph. for a 1/2 mile. He backed off to 24 mph. for a mile to regain strength. He attacks for another 1/2 mile. For the next eight miles this goes back and forth. This stretch of road ends at a gas station in Holiday, Florida. I got there first (just barely!). He remarks that that's the fastest recumbent he's ever seen. I say "Well, for a 36 pound (with full tool kit, rain poncho, spare tubes, and full camelbak, etc.) bike..., on fat tires..., with ATB components..., pedaled by a 47 year old..., it ain't too shabby!" Now, if I can just find some room on my credit cards for the new R-45 racing model, then all the roadies in Florida are gonna' be in real trouble!

It shouldn't matter, but it does get to you. There is nothing to compare to passing a class of school kids out on the trail, on their field trip, and hearing 60 to 100 shouts of "awesome bike mister," or "trade'ya bikes, dude?" all shouted with glee.

In the first 6 months I've lost 30 pounds riding my Vision R-40. A friend has spent the cost of an R-40 in a commercial diet plan, buying prepared meals, going to meetings, and only lost 12 pounds, and of course he doesn't have a "world class" bike when he's done!

Ed. Note: By the time you read this, Bill will have just taken delivery of his new '94 Vision R-45.

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