

CAPE COD TIMES

LIFESTYLE

Go ride your bike

James E. Carroll Contributing writer

Published 2:01 a.m. ET Nov. 24, 2017 | Updated 6:25 p.m. ET Nov. 23, 2017

As a parent, even in this digital age, I'm sure you've heard this lament from your kids, "we don't have anything to do." As a kid, I said it, my brother said it, my sister said it. Our mother would respond "go outside and play." If you replied, "there's nothing to do there either," you heard, "go ride your bike."

I remember getting my first bike. I was 10 years old. My dad took me to Sears and Roebuck in Woonsocket, Rhode Island. We picked out a 24-inch boys red bike, no training wheels. I tried it out in the parking lot – and right then, at 10 years old, I knew my life had changed forever.

Now I could join my friends as we rode everywhere around the neighborhood and town. We carried our bats and gloves to play baseball. I attached a baseball card to the bike spokes with a clothespin to imitate the sound of a motorcycle exhaust. I put on a set of baskets, and I got my first job delivering newspapers. Yes, I had money in my pocket.

My bike was one speed, one color with coaster breaks. I thought it was just the best. But then, like a lot of other things in life, you start to compare what you have to everyone else's. Vendo had hand breaks on his bike; Rob had silver fenders with his black frame; Frankie had an electric horn; Tav's bike was a three-speed. Looking back, I think car manufacturers must have camped out in the back of bicycle shops then and conducted research on the options for future car buyers of tomorrow.

With my bike I could visit my friends' homes across town. I could ride to the store to get some things for my mom. I could race my friends. I could go places in town I never knew existed. Who didn't love the feel of the wind on your face as your bike raced downhill? And parking? Never a problem when you rode your bike.

When you got to high school, your bike usually got put in the garage. It was difficult, not cool, and often unsuccessful to try and go on a date if all you had for transportation was your bike. You wouldn't even think of riding over to your date's house and announcing you were outside by beeping that electric horn.

But at some point, and for some reason, you started riding your bike again. Maybe you move to the city and it's an easy method of transportation. Maybe you decide that mountain biking is a good form of exercise. Maybe you decide it's fun again to ride on all of the bike paths on the Cape. Or maybe you like the way you look in bike shorts.

But maybe riding your bike is just a metaphor to go do something today that makes you feel good. Call up a friend for lunch. Go hit a bucket of balls at the driving range. Breathe in some November air and take a walk. Drive down to the beach and watch the tide roll in.

Mom was right; go ride your bike.

Jim Carroll recently relocated to East Falmouth. His career as a lawyer talking to jurors taught him the importance of speaking from the heart.