

Rich Corbett Biked to Work For 36 Years

By

Richard Corbett, 36 Year Everyday Bike Commuter

It was a long time ago that I started bike commuting (January 1971). So, you ask, why did I start?

Well, I had gone through ROTC at the University of Arizona, and was commissioned upon graduation in June 1968, as a US Army Transportation Officer. The Army granted me a waiver to continue on to graduate school, as I was pursuing a graduate degree with a 'major' in transportation engineering. The Army liked having their officers educated in the fields they would be working in.

My graduate degree took three full years to complete, and in the middle of the third year, I received my orders for active duty (that Fall).

I was working part time as a planner in the City Planning Division, and one of my co-workers rode a bike back and forth to work. I knew that when I went on active duty, I would need to be in good condition, so I thought, 'bicycle riding will help me get in shape'.

My eight year old nephew had just won a bicycle in a drawing, but he already had one, so I 'bought' the rights to the one he had won, and picked out an adult size bike from the dealership. I added wire baskets on the rear, and began to ride the three miles back and forth to work in January 1971.

I quickly found out it was fun! I also was able to save the parking fee I paid (\$4/month), as well as saving gas. Later, my auto insurance company found out I was not driving to work, and reduced my auto insurance. I was saving money three different ways!

The first thing I did upon returning from active duty was to buy a better bicycle, and begin to ride farther (more exercise). As time passed, I took to riding 'loops' to add more and more miles. I then realized why 'bikers' wore those funny shorts, when my trousers began to wear thin at the friction points!

The years seemed to fly by as the miles added up and in early 1979 I joined the local bike club – Los Turistas. My love and enjoyment of cycling grew and grew.

I rode my first century in September 1979, and that was the beginning of at least one (and often more) century rides per year. I have now ridden 90 centuries, and have ridden over 183,000 miles on my bicycles.

I later found out that more than half of Tucson area residents live within 5 miles of their workplace. That is an easy distance to bicycle, especially when you ride early in the morning, and then riding home at the end of the day – what does it matter if you get sweaty?

The benefits of bicycle commuting include:

- Saves you money on auto related expenses: gas expenditures, auto insurance, parking fees. The average annual price of running and maintaining a car is \$8,410 a bike averages \$200.
- You reduce traffic, congestion, time spent commuting, and don't have to hunt (or possibly pay) for parking
- Helps keep (or get) you physically fit doing something you have to do anyway - travel to work. Sadly, over 60% of Americans are overweight, or obese (an increase of 40% in the last 10 years!)
- Easy way to get the recommended 30 minutes a day of exercise -seven out of ten do not get this recommended exercise
- Helps reduce air pollution

Bike commuting? It is a really special way to get and stay fit, while saving money and helping the environment at the same time !