

Waving biker finds friendliness in Fort Collins

By Felix Wong

For NEXTnc

After the umpteenth bicyclist on Overland Trail Road had greeted, waved, smiled or nodded at me as I pedaled by in the opposite direction, I started thinking about what a contrast this was from where I cycled in my youth.

Growing up in Stockton, Calif.

— a sad, gang-ridden town haunted by the massacres at an elementary school and multiple McDonald's — I was certainly not accustomed to this treatment.

First off, despite having wide, pancake-flat roads and dry weather nine months of the year, there were very few cyclists in the city of a quarter-million people.

The ones who existed were generally BMX-riding punk kids with purple hair, hobos whose other worldly possessions included stolen shopping carts, or serious recreational riders who kept a

steely gaze on the road ahead or the tire below, seemingly oblivious to the entire world around them.

None of these riders would offer as much as a simple gesture aside from the occasional one-fingered salute in the shape of a bird.

I used to think this was because they were concentrating hard on not getting hit or run off the road by horn-happy, obscenity-yelling motorists who passionately believe that roads were created for autos only.

Then I lived in the San Francisco Bay Area, where cyclists are present en masse and drivers are generally respectful of them. Even there, however, only a small percentage of cyclists would acknowledge fellow cyclists. I have

heard many attempts to justify this including:

“If you can smile or wave, you're not pedaling hard enough.”

“If you encounter lots of cyclists on your rides, it gets tedious to wave at each one.”

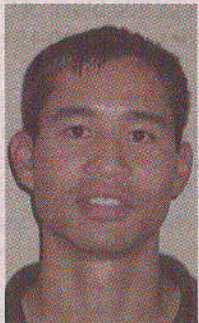
“I don't always smile during sex,

but that doesn't mean I am being unfriendly!”

It is refreshing, then, to live in a cycling-friendly community where — despite having many top riders — such justifications are generally unused and unheeded.

That an unusual number of cyclists take a second or two to nod their head or lift their hands off of their handlebars as they pass another pedal-pusher garners a sense of camaraderie, and is just one of the many reasons that makes cycling in Fort Collins so great.

Felix Wong is an avid bicyclist and runner. He completed the Pikes Peak Marathon last weekend. Wong is a recently transplanted Californian who lives in Fort Collins.



Wong



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BIKE BLOGS ►►

According to the search gods at Google, a few of the best blogs about biking include:

BIKE FOR ALL

www.bikeforall.net

Bills itself as “The essential cycling resource” and attracts bike bloggers from around the world, including one claiming to be penned by Lance Armstrong’s bike.

BIKEBLOG AT BLOGSPOT

www.bikeblog.blogspot.com

Like most Blogspot communities, Bikeblog is updated with contributions from around the world. When checked by NEXTnc staffers, the main page featured a wedding couple riding off through the trees on a two-seater.

CYCLE-LICIOUS: BICYCLE, BLOG, LIFE, NEWS

www.cyclelicio.us

This site is updated by the enthusiasts who like to learn more about the world of cycling. It’s a good place to find videos, rules, and — most recently — a post about the Tour de France as seen through the eyes of The Onion reporters.

NEXTnc staff reports

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Felix Wong
Fort Collins biker



Jason Diaz of Fort Collins, left, and Greg Churchman of Fort Collins, right, welcome Christina Evan-son, center, of Lafayette to the finish line of the Colorado Cycling Festival's Rist Canyon Road Ride in mid-August.

Erin Hooley |
For NEXTnc