

Survey shows bike shops offer similar rates

by Jeff Cohen,
Staff Writer

For people confused about which of the five Chapel Hill bicycle shops to patronize, a *Daily Tar Heel* survey learned that both brand-name products and quality repairs are offered by each shop at similar costs.

Each store also sells 10-speed bikes in about the same price range, as bottom-of-the-line bikes generally start at \$125 and better bikes may cost \$1,000.

The shops questioned in the survey include Bailey's, Carolina Bikeways, The Chapel Hill Cycle Shop, The Clean Machine and Tumbleweed Cyclery.

Although the five shops have similar costs and repair services, there is one major distinction among them—one store rents out repair space and tools, two shops lend tools to customers and, presently, two stores neither rent nor lend tools.

Chuck Lewis of the Clean Machine said that his shop rents out both tools and working space at 50 cents per hour. He added that the service includes a complete tool selection.

Carolina Bikeways allows people to borrow tools to make their own repairs, according to owner Gordon Sumrel. Alan

MacDonald of Tumbleweed Cyclery said that his shop also lends out tools to patrons. Butch Bailey, the owner of Bailey's, said that presently he does not rent space or tools, but added that he may sometime in the future.

Dave Witten of The Chapel Hill Cycle Shop said that he also does not rent out tools. "I don't rent tools, but I have considered it and I might do it in the future," Witten said.

All five shops offer experienced repairpersons. Butch Bailey said he has been in the business three years and his part-time helper has one year of experience. "I have a mechanical engineering degree, and I have worked on helicopters and motorcycles before opening the store," Bailey said.

According to Gordon Sumrel of Carolina Bikeways, "I have worked on bikes all my life, including three years professionally."

There are three part-time graduate students repairing bikes at The Chapel Hill Cycle Shop, the least of which has five years experience.

While Chuck Lewis of The Clean Machine has five years experience, there are two Tumbleweed repairpersons with a total of nine years experience.

The five stores also have similar costs for parts. Each shop was asked to give the cost of

both a freewheel sprocket and a standard steel rim. The steel rim prices showed little variation, for the prices ranged from only \$4.50 to \$6. The cost of the sprockets were also similar, with the prices ranging from \$7 to \$10.

Tumbleweed offers the least expensive rim at \$4.50, while The Clean Machine and the Chapel Hill Cycle Shop both sell a steel rim for \$5. Bailey's offers a rim for \$5.95, and Carolina Bikeways sells a rim for \$6.

Tumbleweed sells a freewheel sprocket for \$7, while Bailey's and The Clean Machine both offer a sprocket for \$7.50. The Chapel Hill Cycle Shop sells a free wheel sprocket for \$8, and Carolina Bikeways sells the sprocket for \$10.

However, all store owners added that there are a variety of rims and sprockets at a wide range of costs, and the cheapest may not be suited for everyone's bicycle.

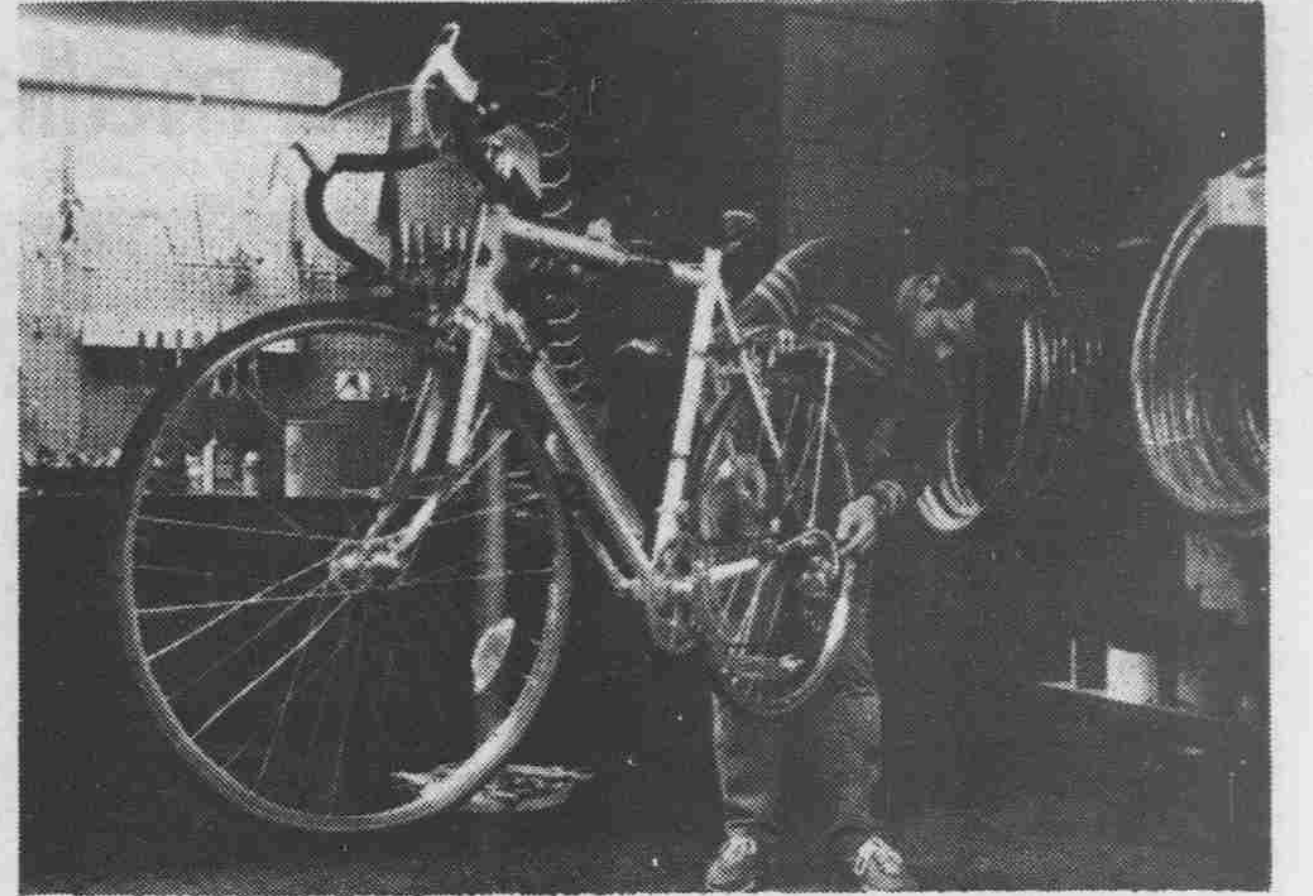
The five shops also sell dependable, brand-name bicycles in similar price ranges.

Bailey's, offering both Panasonic and Zebra-Kenco 10-speed bicycles, has a price range from \$120 to \$565. Carolina Bikeways sells five brands, including Falcon, Centurion, Coppi, Atala and Fuji. Prices for these bikes range from \$129 to \$750.

The Chapel Hill Cycle Shop offers Fuji bicycles from \$125 to \$650. The Clean Machine also sells only one brand, Schwinn, from \$50 to \$750, with 10-speed bikes starting at \$136.95.

Tumbleweed Cyclery sells four kinds of bikes, including Windsor International, Grandis, Motobecane and Viscout. The least expensive bike is the Windsor International, costing \$135, and the most expensive bicycle, the Grandis, is \$1,100.

Concerning future plans, Bailey's hopes to add both motorized bikes and skate boards in the spring, while The Chapel Hill Cycle Shop will emphasize high quality touring equipment for racing and cross-country touring. The remaining stores plan to continue business as usual.



Staff photo by Bruce Clarke

Correction

Due to a composition error, the story on flu in the *Daily Tar Heel* Monday was by-lined Laura Scism. The story was written by Leslie Scism, Laura's little sister.

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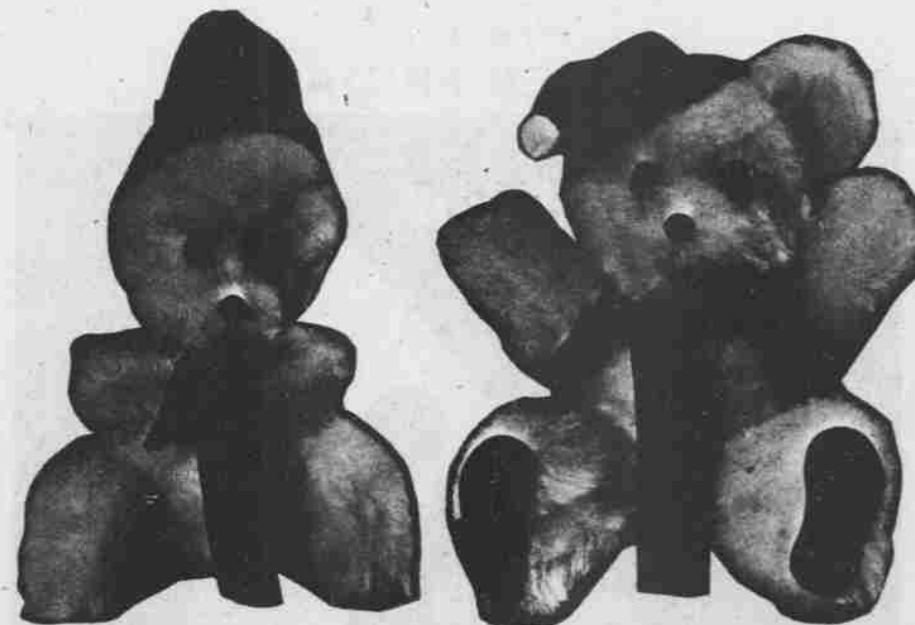
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