

Cyclists ride scenic backroads of red clay



In a bright Sunday afternoon Gordon Sumerel led a bicycle expedition to the north of Chapel Hill on Old 86. This writer decided to take the challenge and went along for the ride.

"It's an easy 17 miles," Sumerel told us. "Mostly flat lands. I'll be riding slow since I haven't been out in a while."

With that, our group of five riders left the hallowed Old Well. After passing through Carrboro we were in the country within five minutes. Soon we reached Calvander, which is a deserted two-pump gas station at a fork in the road. To the right was Old 86 and to the left Orange Grove Rd. We took the road

to the left and would loop around and return on the other one.

"The cars are friendly today."

"Are they usually hostile?"

"Well, it depends who's driving really."

We rode in a 2-1-2 formation spread out in our lane on the deserted road. If a car approached from behind we collapsed to a single file and kept to the edge until the car passed.

This was red clay country we were traveling through. The clay is seen in the high banks on the side of the road and in the open fields where the six-inch high corn grows. Some fields are covered with tall grass but the muddy red clay is beneath it all the same. In the middle of many of these fields an old weatherbeaten barn with a rusty tin roof stood sentinel over the crops. Farm houses set back from the road were surrounded by

groves of oak and magnolia. Muddy country roads branched off leading to the outback of the American South where good ole' boys go hunting and fishing. At the edge of the fields rise tall green woods that sometimes stick out like fingers between the fields.

The sun and fresh air hit our faces and blew through our hair in one continuous rush along the road. We could feel every bump in the road and watch the countryside roll slowly aside instead of seeing it as a 60 MPH blur from the windows of a car.

Where do these trips begin? The bicycle excursions are established by Cynthia Summers of the Chapel Hill Recreation Department. Cyclists leave the Old Well every Sunday at 1 p.m. to travel into the country. Each group is led by an experienced rider who selects the route. Some of the leaders are Gordon Sumerel (of the Clean

Machine); Jim Rumpfelt (Clean Machine), Dave Whitten (Chapel Hill Cycle Shop) and Butch Baily (Baily Realty). If you want information on the trips it's a good idea to get in touch with the leaders beforehand.

Cycling Trips for June

- 12— 10-15 miles led by Gordon Sumerel & Jim Rumpfelt
- 19— 10-15 miles led by Butch Baily
- 26— 40-50 miles led by John Hurlbert (Experienced riders only.)

The trips follow the less used rural roads of Orange County because they are safer and more scenic.

"The nice thing about Chapel Hill is that in two to five minutes you can be in total

Carmichael

name. I could call Mary Alice Smith's mother to tell her that her daughter was fine.

"I imagine a lot of people said, 'What's that fool woman doing when she should be doing her job, but it saved many a mother a lot of worry.'"

Though she has remained in Chapel Hill for three decades, Miss Carmichael has shaken the sand out of her shoes several times to travel and teach. Twice she has taught in the Orient, first in 1951-52 as a Fulbright lecturer at Philippine Normal College and later in 1961-62 as a Smith-Mundt professor at the University of Saigon in South Vietnam.

Remembering the time in Vietnam brings back some of her most loving and yet most painful memories. "I was first in Saigon in 1952, when the French occupied the country. The roof of the Opera House had just been bombed, but it was still the Paris of the Orient."

But things changed greatly in 1961, when she arrived to teach. Miss Carmichael speaks of this time slowly with her eyes closed, as if seeing it all again.

"The city had doubled in size, and many sectors were being settled by Northern

refugees. When the American troops began to arrive in late 1961, more barracks and PXs were built. Bars with names like the 'Blue Angel' and 'Neon Lights' sprang up.

Sandbags and barbed wire were everywhere in the once lovely city and the palace, close to where Miss Carmichael lived, was bombed.


Although the government tried not to draft college students, by the time Miss

Carmichael left Vietnam her students were going into the Army. "You must understand that it was really a labor of love to serve in the Army," she remembers.

Katherine Carmichael's philosophy of teaching, no matter where she is, is to believe in what she is doing and to enjoy it. "I have a 98-year-old mother living in Birmingham who once told me, 'Get up and get going with what you want to do.' Isn't that lovely of her?"

Continued from page 8. —

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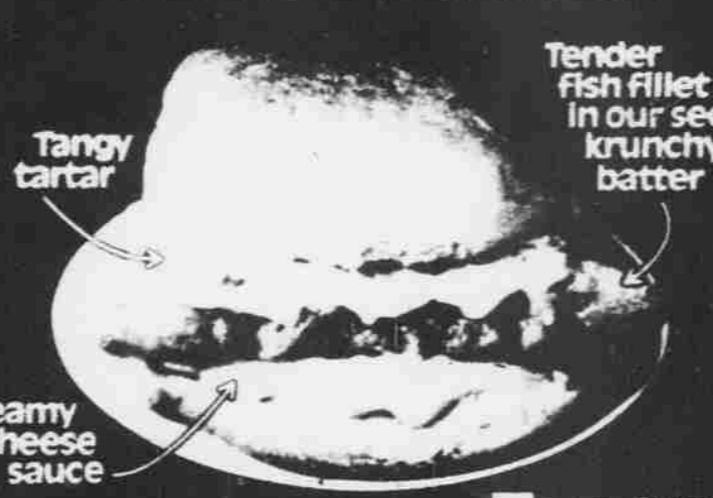
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