

FAIRFAX

# Vintage bike aficionados gather at cycling's hub

Event held to benefit museum of bicycling

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James McKenzie of Novato longingly eyed a steel blue 1986 Fisher custom comp fillet brazed mountain bike Sunday at the Fairfax Bike Swap, a fundraiser for the Marin Museum of Bicycling.

Asked if he would ride the 30-year-old bike if he purchased it, the vintage bike collector answered without hesitation, "Of course!"

About 50 people turned out despite the rain to the first annual bike swap, admiring rows of new and vintage bikes on sale to benefit the museum. The event began at the Fairfax Cyclery, then moved to the museum a few blocks down on Sir Francis Drake Boulevard.

"Vintage road bikes have been considered a collectible item for a long time, but since the invention of the mountain bike is relatively recent" it has taken them a while to catch up as collectibles, said Lee Dummer, a vintage bike expert, museum volunteer and mechanic.

Marin County has long been considered the birthplace of mountain biking, which started in the late 1970s or 1980s. One of the inventors, Joe Breeze, is the curator at the museum, which opened last year.

The museum is also home



PHOTOS BY SHERRY LAVARS—SPECIAL TO MARIN INDEPENDENT JOURNAL

Aiden Aragon, 8, of Greenbrae, looks over the spokes of a vintage bike Sunday during the Fairfax Bike Swap. The sale attracted enthusiasts from as far away as Europe.

to the Mountain Bike Hall of Fame, which relocated to Fairfax last year.

The museum was founded by Breeze, Otis Guy, Marc Vendetti, Julia Violich, Keith Hastings and Lena Estrella.

Ever the diehard, Breeze rode his bike to the event in the pouring rain Sunday.

"It's only water," he said as he entertained customers at the bike swap.

One collector paid \$3,000 for a pearl white WTB Phoenix mountain bike made in Mill Valley in 1993 by renowned bicycle frame builder Steve Potts, with parts designed by Charlie Cunningham, another Marin mountain bik-



Novato resident James McKenzie points out components on a 1994 Ritchey P-21 bike he bought.

ing legend.

The 1986 Fisher bike coveted by McKenzie was on sale for \$700. The term "fil-

let brazed," somewhat confusing for non-bike-nerds who might picture a braised

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# Bikes

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filet, actually describes the way the frame was constructed, Lee explained.

"I started cycling three years ago and I've lost 40 pounds," said McKenzie. "There's this whole green aspect of not driving a pollution-causing car. I enjoy the feeling of freedom. We're all kids at heart, whether it's mountain or road bikes."

Gesturing toward the rows of vintage bikes, he said, "They're all beautiful engineering works of art."

Shawn Kelly of Corte Madera said he liked a black Ritchey 1994 P-21 on sale for \$800.

Like most of the people on hand Sunday, Kelly owns quite a few bikes, 12 to be exact.

"Each type of bike has its own feel," Kelly said. "If you ride a single-speed bike, some have different gear settings. You could use one bike for hills, one for the flats. It's like golf clubs."

Asked if he would ride the vintage bike if he purchased it, Kelly said, "Oh yeah!"

There's "a whole spec-



SHERRY LAVARS—SPECIAL TO MARIN INDEPENDENT JOURNAL

Fairfax resident Erik Page and his son Julian, 1, look over vintage bikes Sunday at the Marin Museum of Bicycling.

**"We're all kids at heart, whether it's mountain or road bikes. ... They're all beautiful engineering works of art."**

—James McKenzie, bike buyer

trum" when it comes to vintage bike collectors, Dumler said.

"Some people want it in their den or living room as

a display piece. Some might ride it from time to time, like taking a classic car out for a Sunday driver," Dumler said. Others ride their vin-

tage bikes exclusively.

Bike collecting, while popular, has a ways to go before catching up with car collecting. A Google search on "vintage bicycle collection" returns less than a million hits, while "vintage car collection" gets more than 11 million hits.

"Across the board, bicycle collectors are still a pretty rare breed," Dumler said.