

INTO THE RIDE #105

Monster Touring on Long Wheelbase Recumbents

by Randy Schlitter

I got a letter the other day (yep, an actual piece of paper!) from a super-nice retired craftsman, who has been busy making monster touring racks for our bikes. He sent along actual photos, some of which I have scanned and included here. The interesting aspect of all this is the great "can-do" spirit that comes across in the letter and photos. His name is Paul Krieg and in the body of the letter there was one sentence (among several) that really stuck out... "I realize you may not have had heavy-duty touring in mind when you developed these bikes, but as often is the case with various products, they end up being used in ways not anticipated by the designers/manufacturers."





The bikes he used in his experimenting were the V2, V3, and Xstream, all similar in the fact that they are high bottom bracket long wheel base bents. All are tough frames and probably capable of taking on the role of heavy loaded touring. The V2 in steel or aluminum is definitely one tough frame; we used to offer this bike in an HD form with a rider weight up to 375 pounds.

[NOTE: Paul did not have a StratusXP available – but it is obviously another excellent heavy-duty touring bike, with a lower bottom bracket position than the others mentioned in this writeup...]





The HD project resulted in a very interesting bike. This version used the Formula frame, which is aluminum and about 2 or 3 pounds lighter over the steel. The wheels and brakes were the "HD", or "heavy duty" part of the bike, since the frame was already up to the task. Two specific considerations to keep in mind with any monster touring application are stopping power and frame stability at high speed -- and the robust frames of the V2, and Formula are up to the task.



The V3 in steel is also a very stout mount. Based off the V2, the V3 frame sported dual 26 or 650 wheels. It is well regarded as a fast bike, with a dedicated following. However, we stopped production of the V3 in favor of the Xstream, which took over in both performance and sales, and has been a winning bike on many levels from the start.* The Xstream26 in particular allows a wide range of tire widths, all the way up to 2.2" Big Apples, with disc brake capability as well.

It would be hard to choose which of the three bikes Paul used are best suited for the role of overloaded touring. I tend to favor the V2 in steel – when it is set up with a 26x20 wheel set, it handles extremely well at slow speeds. This is important to those packing some weight and doing steep long climbs, and this is often the case in Paul's adventures. In his letter he describes forays into mountain fishing spots.



The racks he constructs are made of locally available materials, not aircraft grade tubing. Material selection for such projects is often what a builder finds easy at hand, and it is also often materials that are not necessarily intended for such a use. However, he reports good durability with no cracks or catastrophic failures to date. Let me diverge for a minute here...I am a little surprised at the report of durability, but it does flash me back to my younger days... We used to build some pretty high performance landsailers using local materials. Our "Land Yachts" were based on three 6-foot 2x4s, two 14-foot 2x2's and the mast that supported our over-sized sails was nothing more than 1.5" electrical conduit. We sailed these machines extensively in high winds, and even our best efforts and toughest testing never resulted in a bent mast. You simply have to make do sometimes, and as luck has it, things often work out just fine.



Paul has created some impressive racks, and on top of it, is doing some impressive riding. My hat is off to this gentleman from the Rockies, for both his ingenuity and his stamina as an elderly athlete! I can only hope I am in as equally good shape when I retire. Thanks for stopping by, and until next time, ride safe and stay into the ride!

* *The Xstream won RAAM in 2009 in the 4-man division.*

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