



The Lost Cyclist

David V. Herlihy

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In the late 1880s, Frank Lenz of Pittsburgh, a renowned high-wheel racer and long-distance tourist, dreamed of cycling around the world. He finally got his chance by recasting himself as a champion of the downsized “safety-bicycle” with inflatable tires, the forerunner of the modern road bike that was about to become wildly popular. In the spring of 1892 he quit his accounting job and gamely set out west to cover twenty thousand miles over three continents as a correspondent for *Outing* magazine. Two years later, after having survived countless near disasters and unimaginable hardships, he approached Europe for the final leg.

He never made it. His mysterious disappearance in eastern Turkey sparked an international outcry and compelled *Outing* to send William Sachtleben, another larger-than-life cyclist, on Lenz’s trail. Bringing to light a wealth of information, Herlihy’s gripping narrative captures the soaring joys and constant dangers accompanying the bicycle adventurer in the days before paved roads and automobiles. This untold story culminates with Sachtleben’s heroic effort to bring Lenz’s accused murderers to justice, even as troubled Turkey teetered on the edge of collapse.

The Lost Cyclist Details

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From Reader Review The Lost Cyclist for online ebook

John_g says

This is a long-winded reporting on 2 round-the-world bicycle trips. The viewpoint from 1890s is interesting but the stories sound like disconnected letters: lifted from diaries and interviews, including some detailed events. But the writing is less dramatic than the otherwise good story, especially the slow sections trying to guess if and how Lenz has disappeared (spoiler: Lenz is the titled lost cyclist).

Maybe could've been improved by expanding on technical progress of bicycle : what were all those tire types? how'd the pumps work?

Compare Lenz to Magellan who likewise died halfway through his trip around the world.

Compare this book to L.Bergreen's *Over the Edge of the World* about Magellan, which is stunning in drama on most pages.

Didn't measure up to other great travel stories: TR in C.Millard's *River of Doubt*, or even the undramatic but witty P.Theroux and B.Bryson.

Ryan says

Social networks collate travel photos, Lonely Planet and its competitors find hotels, and travelogues have become so numerous that we can spend months exploring them before going to the airport. Perhaps the best way to find the unknown is to read a travelogue from the 19th century. David V. Herlihy, author of *Bicycle: The History*, offers a two-for-one deal: a travelogue and an epic tale of adventure and mystery.

Back in the 1890s, Frank Lenz set out from Pittsburgh to cycle around the world alone. He would be one of the first travelers to use the "safety" model -- a bicycle with two tires of equal size! Before this, Thomas Stevens of England had circled the globe on his high wheel. How old school.

Lenz' route was perhaps unusual in that he chose to head west from Pittsburgh. He crossed America, the Pacific, and Japan before entering Shanghai and heading south. From here, Lenz' troubles began. He survived the Far East only to be murdered shortly after entering Turkey. The second half *The Lost Cyclist* depicts William Sachtleben's attempt to find Lenz' murderers.

Although the bicycles were certainly different at this time, other aspects of Lenz' journey are surprisingly familiar. Even at this time, there was commentary about whether China would supplant the West as the next global empire and General Li is curious to know how travelers find China's roads (FYI - China has recently invested a great deal in its highways). Many of Lenz' observations about chopsticks and ordering food can still be found in many a travel blog. Sadly, the blanket assumptions about the Orient are still combated in today's travelogues.

Of course, some things were different.

There was no Internet, for one, and although photography had been invented, it wasn't as though Lenz grew up with photos and videos of Chinese New Year celebrations.

However, the British Empire at this point had set up telegraphs. Lenz was also able to mail spare parts -- extra tires, for example -- before he began his journey. After leaving the docks, most of the Westerners that

could be found in Asia were either missionaries or diplomats. Interestingly, when the Hamidian Massacres began in Turkey, it was the job of the diplomat to protect the missionaries.

Although Herlihy has done his homework on bicycles and he has obviously spent considerable time with travel diaries from this period, he offers very little explanation about what's going on in China and Turkey. For example, Lenz is often attacked while in China, but there is no explanation as to why. There is a great deal of unrest in Turkey, but Herlihy assumes that his audience is familiar with this stage of the Ottoman Empire's decline. The British Empire has done a lot of work to make the planet a smaller, simpler place, but Herlihy declines to consider its impact on Lenz' journey -- even though Lenz relies on the empire's infrastructure to communicate with his home and his sponsors. I found these gaps frustrating and sometimes wondered if they weren't irresponsible as well.

The Lost Cyclist is interesting for its history of the bicycle as well as for comparison to other travelogues of the period -- Joshua Slocum's *Sailing Alone Around the World* comes to mind -- but I found it a disappointment.

Philip Hollenback says

Gripping tale of a man who bicycle almost AROUND THE WORLD in the early 1890s before being murdered in Turkey. Only loses one point because the second half of the book about the investigation of his murder bogs down somewhat.

Jeff says

A fascinating account of two independent attempts to circumnavigate the globe by bicycle in the 1890s, and the valiant efforts by William Sachtleben (who along with Thomas Allen formed the expedition that set out to the east from London) to investigate the disappearance in eastern Turkey of Frank Lenz (who was attempting the journey solo, having set out to the west from New York). Herlihy's narrative is well-crafted and brings this long-lost story and its central figures to life, to a degree that many fictional works fail to achieve.

John says

Footnotes would have made a better book

Very interesting and well researched book. As a cyclist and one who lived and taught in eastern Turkey (1964-1966), I found much to like in the descriptions of that area. However, the accounts of Armenian/Turkish conflicts certainly showed a pronounced bias in reporting of events. That said, atrocities on both sides were surely abundant. Footnotes citing sources would have helped clarify his conclusions.

As a cyclist I was amazed at how one could ride a bicycle on train rail beds. Also sometimes the mileage ridden in a day, carrying heavy packs, made the cyclists appear quite strong. Doubtful there are any cyclists today that could accomplish their rides today.

Enjoyable book.

Michael says

This was a good travel "adventure" story (or really, three stories) although it bogs down towards the middle of the third part. If I hadn't been on a plane with nothing much else to read (besides work stuff) I would have put it aside.

There are three parts to this - one is the story of the west-to-east bicycle travel of William Sachtleben and a friend in the first days of the "safety bicycle" (essentially a modern two wheeler but with hard tires), the second is the east-to-west travel of Frank Lenz also by bicycle (who started a bit later, so he had inflatable tires), and the third part is the search by Sachtleben who goes out after his trip is completed to try to determine what happened to Lenz who was apparently murdered in Turkey and had disappeared, causing much hue and cry.

Herlihy did considerable research (described in an appendix), but Sachtleben and his friend described their travels in a book that is available freely on the Internet. "Across Asia on a bicycle; the journey of two American students ..." <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.390150...> - this account is just as readable (if not more so) than Herlihy's, even today.

The book becomes almost unreadable towards the end with repetition of aspects of the essentially fruitless investigation of Lenz's death in Turkey. Also, an epilogue includes a chapter, "reflections," that has "what if" speculations that the author felt compelled to share - I am doubtful that this is a good way to end a non-fiction work since it throws aside all his research in favor of fantasyland.

Not that I could write any better, but the prose are a bit problematic as well. The two travelers described in the first part are continuously referred to as "the globe girdlers" rather than simply "they" and there is other similar usage that slows the flow of reading. There are adverbs that pointlessly offer the author's opinion on whatever is being described. (Like my use of "pointlessly" in that sentence. . .) Most of these opinions we could either form ourselves based on what he has presented or perhaps even come to a different conclusion.

On the plus side, many books that are described as "travel by bicycle" (from any age) have little description of the bicycle-specific aspects other than that it is relatively slow travel and that in many travels, there is a novelty to the local population of an outsider being in their midst traveling by bike and how the locals react to the traveler because of that. Here some interesting (to me, anyway) aspects of the bicycles are described, which seems appropriate in particularly since this was the very early days of the safety bicycle (rather than the "ordinary bicycle" which was the bike that had a very large front wheel and small back wheel).

Adrian says

This book is set in the 1890s when cycling was new and hot. A few young guys took the craze to the limit by attempting to cycle around the world. William Sachtleben completed the feat with his partner Allen (500 miles of it by ship) and later Frank Lenz of Pittsburgh tried to do it solo going west rather than east. He made it all the way to Turkey (carried his bicycle thru most of western China and Burma) where he disappeared. His sponsor, a cycling magazine, sent Sachtleben out to find him. Unfortunately this is the weakest part of

the book since it descends into diplomatic bungling and Turkish foot dragging. It's likely Lenz was killed but we can't even be sure of that. The cycling adventures are entertaining but the search for Lenz is a bog.

Lydia Presley says

I was mildly disappointed by this book. The story, in the summary, seemed like an incredible one and I couldn't wait to get started.

The book is broken up into manageable parts each covering a country traveled. It's a fascinating story, once you actually dig through the somewhat dry text to get to it and I'm glad I pushed my way through the book, but.. yes, it was dry reading.

I think one of my favorite parts of the book was in the beginning. Up until reading this book I'd never considered how different it would have been to ride bikes back in the late 1800's. My imagination was caught up in what it would have been like to travel across the countryside, pushing through bogs of mud, filthy and tired but enjoying the incredible scenery afforded by the trip. And then I started thinking of the stamina that such a trip would have taken and I was awed by it all.

One thing I did learn in reading this book was that, when traveling through a place in upheaval (like Turkey) it's never a good idea to show off your coins.

According to the summary I'd read, this was a story about Frank Lenz, the cyclist who disappeared and William Sachtleben, the man sent on his trail to find out what happened. The book was definitely skewed more toward Sachtleben and less toward Lenz, but that was fine - it just took me a bit by surprise since I was expecting more on Lenz.

This book definitely proves that happy endings are not commonplace in real life stories that have tragedy involved. If you are into the history of the bicycle and historic events, then I recommend this novel. If you are looking for a satisfactory mystery in the form of a non-fiction novel I can't say I'd steer you toward this one.

Melissa says

I enjoy books about travel, and was intrigued to find this book about a cyclist circling the world in the late eighteen hundreds. It was rare enough to make that journey by other transportation at that time, so to do it by bicycle was impressive. And since it's non-fiction, it's hard to believe that such feats were accomplished with the machines available at that time.

The Lost Cyclist tells three stories in a sense. The first being that of Sachtleben and Allen, two men who traveled around the world east to west on their bikes (albeit using alternative transportation where needed). The second story was that of Frank Lenz, a man who set out to do the same thing on his own, just in the opposite direction. Sadly Lenz did not make it back and disappeared in the region of Turkey. The third story would be that of Sachtleben who sets out to look for Lenz or his body and investigate what he believes to be

murder. Of course a little history on the bicycle is thrown in as well.

The story of Allen and Sachtleben was actually quite interesting and my favorite part of the book. Which surprised me because really this book was about Lenz and his disappearance. But we never really knew as much about him and his personality and life wasn't as described as the other two wheelmen's were. So as much as I wondered what happened to him, it was in a detached sort of way. There also wasn't that much about the locals they met while on their journeys. Sure when Sachtleben was looking for Lenz's body it described some of the people he worked with, but more in line with the investigation instead of the person's life.

The whole premise of the book has an air of mystery and history to it. I enjoyed reading about some of the races and clubs that bicyclists had at the turn of the century and never would have expected it to be so prevalent. I also couldn't have imagined someone riding over such rough terrain on the bikes then as I can barely do it on a completely modern bike now. They must have been in terrific shape. Allen and Sachtleben's journey was well described and I must admit that I wish the entire book had been about it. It wasn't that Lenz journey wasn't as daring, it was just that the way his was described was very dry and since he disappeared, it turned into a mystery where much sitting around was done and nothing happened for the last third of the book. I admired Sachtleben's determination to find out what happened, but the author just wasn't able to pull off that part of the book well. I felt that so much was lost in the detail about who was signing what documents and what the diplomats weren't doing, that it lost focus on the fact that a cyclist had been murdered and instead just drowned you in the paperwork that went along with it. Which might explain some of the detachment I felt towards Lenz.

As an aside, this book did contain several journal entries, letters, and pictures that were collected by the travelers. It was neat to see some of the places they traveled and even some of the earlier photos, which were very well done for having the cameras enduring such rough travel. It just added to the authenticity and research for the book. It's clear that the author did do his due diligence in that regard.

If you enjoy cycling, or travel, or just like a non-fiction book about disappearances, this would probably be a good book for you. For me, it just wasn't engaging writing and it was hard for me to enjoy most of the book.

The Lost Cyclist
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302 pages

Review by M. Reynard 2012

More of my reviews can be found at www.ifithaswords.blogspot.com

Laura says

This book had potential to be a 4 or even 5 star book, but the author made some unfortunate odd choices that lowered the final rating.

Set in the later 1800s, this is the story of the early days of cycling. Our hero, Lenz, starts on one of those odd-looking (to us) big wheels, slowly moving to the "safety" (what we think of as the normal bike). We learn a lot about those early bikes, and it's really quite impressive how the early riders raced and took long

trips over not-well-paved roads. The development of biking and cycling clubs is also covered and readers can see how the strength and stamina of those riders surprised and impressed non-riders.

We then move to the "globe-girdling" rides - and this is where the book lost me. Rather than gloss over the previous girdling riders and concentrate on Lenz' adventures in America and Asia, the author alternates chapters of the Allen/Sachtelben ride and Lenz' ride. Why spend so much time on another circumnavigation when the focus of the book is supposed to be Frank Lenz? The decision to speed through Lenz' ride in India and Persia, and go rather quickly through Burma, is also strange.

After Lenz disappears, the book's focus sharpens. The battles between Sachtelben and the American consul, the Turkish officials and the locals over whodunnit are interesting to follow, but more could have been done about why the tensions between the Kurds/Turks and Armenians existed (there is a gloss of "religious tensions" between Muslims and Christians, but additional explanation would have been good). The description of the Armenian massacre will ensure that many Turkish readers will be upset (if they read it at all).

Another, more minor issue was the author's translating some of the place names and not others. Peking, for example, is never Beijing, but other cities in China are given both the name they were known by then and the name we currently use (the same for Persia/Iran).

Mark Schlatter says

This volume covers three connected events: the nineteenth century circling of the globe on bicycle by Americans Sachtleben and Allen, a similar attempt by Frank Lenz that ends in the cyclist's disappearance, and Sachtleben's attempt to find Lenz. The beginning of the book offers a glimpse into early American cycling, the middle reads much like a travelogue, and the end dips into geopolitics. The result is a strange and sometimes dissonant mix.

This is one of those nonfiction works where you can tell that all the research made it on the page (and not necessarily in a good way). Herlihy writes in a dense style with anecdote following anecdote, but without much of the way of introduction. As an example, the early chapters are full of cycling terms (boneshakers, safeties, wheelmen, the "ordinary", etc...) that the reader just needs to absorb and try to parse --- if you don't know the early history of the bicycle, you may feel lost. There is a similar approach with the "globe girdling" of the cyclists; Herlihy appears to tell you every city each of the cyclists travels through.

In some places, this level of detail works well. Towards the middle of the book, Herlihy focuses on Lenz's travels through Asia. (Lenz, unlike Sachtleben and Allen, tried the trip moving westward.) Herlihy clearly captures how foreign China appears to Lenz, and you can feel the sense of dislocation that gradually diminishes, but never disappears.

[Warning: spoilers from here on out....] Lenz makes it across much of Asia, but vanishes in Turkey, at which point Sachtleben travels to find the cyclist (or, as is much believed, evidence of his murder). The narrative again is chock full of detail, but it is here that a wider perspective is greatly needed. As it turns out, Lenz was murdered by Kurd brigands protected by Turks who end up framing Armenians for the death. Sachtleben's investigation is taking place during the Hamadian massacres of 1894-1896, and Sachtleben himself photographs images of the deaths.

At this point, I was yearning for context --- there is a much larger story taking place, but Herlihy's narrow focus does not introduce it. In some sense, the author's viewpoint mirrors that of Sachtleben's. The cyclist's insistence on American involvement to bring Lenz's killers to justice appears naive, and he makes promises of American protection to Armenians that he cannot fulfill. (To his credit, Sachtleben lectured on the Armenian massacres when he returned to the US.)

The result --- coupled with an epilogue that attempts to second guess most of the protagonists' actions --- ignores the large issues for the small personal details. I'm guessing this is a great work for those who love cycling history, but much of the work was a miss for me.

Alice says

I enjoyed this book very much until the last couple of chapters. The majority is an interesting history of the development of bicycles, primarily in the U.S., but also in Europe, told through the eyes of three men. Two go around the world together one way (East to West), and the solo cyclist goes the other way (West to East). For the most part, the descriptions of their early years cycling in the U.S., coupled with time spent in Europe and cycling through Asia, were quite interesting for anyone interested in cultural history. It's fascinating to think that more than 100 years ago, people were cycling around the world - a feat that is still difficult to do today.

Unfortunately, when the search begins for the lost cyclist, the story takes a very different turn. Suddenly the reader is muddled in the politics of 1890s Turkey and the U.S. It was difficult to navigate the incredibly detailed play-by-play without any previous understanding of the politics at the time, and the author offers no helpful hints (like, "this role is in charge of this and answers to this person" or something like that). It's a painfully slow section to read because of the incredible detailed description of events, leading to a very unsatisfying conclusion.

I actually would have felt better about this if the epilogue had provided a nice after-summary, but the epilogue was really just another super-detailed chapter! That's not what an epilogue is supposed to be at all. I read through one chapter of the "epilogue" and gave up on the rest.

The other thing missing from the book? Maps! Why in the world isn't there a map showing the routes of the two journeys? And of the towns in Turkey? It would have been incredibly helpful and interesting to be able to visualize these journeys.

Joemmama says

In the 1890's bicyclists were called wheelmen. They were transitioning from the high wheeled boneshakers to what was called a safety bike, similar to the bikes we ride today.

Frank Lenz was a wheelman, he participated in racing, and long distance rides, hoping to escape his boring life as an accountant. His goal was to ride around the world on a bicycle by himself.

He had watched as William Sachtleben and a partner, traveled around the world, and he felt he would

succeed solo.

Hardship was part of the travel package. He took his camera to record his travels, and sent articles about what he saw back to the cycling magazine, *Outing*. He endured heat, mud, dogs, crowds of astounded onlookers, unwanted escorts, staying in everything from hovels to palaces.

Frank Lenz loved riding bicycles, he was enthusiastic and headstrong. Frank wrote to his mother and reported back faithfully, but suddenly his letters and reports stopped. First weeks, then months went by with no word.

Headlines shouted "Frank Lenz is Lost", sending shivers through the cycling community, and forcing a rescue mission, headed by William Sachtleben, travelling to the last places Lenz was seen.

What he found was chilling, and disappointing. He discovered what most likely happened, but never found Lenz.

This book was extremely good! Even if you do not ride, it is a fascinating story, a mystery, and a travelogue of sorts, that makes it sound like a good idea to ride around your own neighborhood!

I received this book from Net Galley and read it on my new e-reader, Melville for review.

Scott Lord says

Wild story

Dan says

In short, this was a good story that fell a little flat in the telling.

The most interesting parts of this book were pretty much all in the first half, as Herlihy brings us through the early days of the bicycle, with bicycle clubs popping up all over the nation and cyclists debating the merits of the newer "safety" bicycle (with its two equally sized wheels) versus the "high wheeler." By the time the book ends, the glory days of cycling are past, with the automobile supplanting the bicycle as the touring vehicle of choice and bicycle manufacturers going belly-up. This should be a dramatic moment in the tale, but it ends up being treated as little more than a footnote.

The focus of the book is, ostensibly, Frank Lenz, an early adopter of the bicycle who vanished while on his solo round-the-world bike trip. The focus of book really is William Sachtleben, one of a pair of cyclists whose own round-the-world trip was wrapping up as Lenz's was beginning, and the man who was eventually tasked with travelling overseas to track down the truth of what happened to Lenz.

But the focus of the book should have been the glory days of cycling. The emergence of cycling clubs, the abundance of cycling magazines, and the seemingly inexhaustible supply of funding for cycling globe-trotters paint a vivid portrait of a fascinating moment in history. These cyclists -- none of them the first to pedal around the world -- were feted at just about every city and town they entered, followed by parades of

local cyclists and honored with great feasts.

The story of Lenz's trip wants to be more interesting than it is. It sounds good on paper, but the problem is that the final act -- the search for Lenz, which should be full of intrigue and adventure -- is comparatively dull. It mostly consists of a petulant Sachtleben whining his way through a morass of bureaucracy and logistics. What should have been dispatched in a chapter instead filled half of the book. And it's a shame, because to that point the book was telling a pretty great story; only, not on purpose.

Tito the Incognito says

I came across a copy of *The Lost Cyclist* in a free bin at one of the local bookstores and had honestly never heard of it nor Frank Lenz in my life, but I was so glad to have discovered this book as I immensely enjoyed reading it. Herlihy delves quite a bit into the history of cycling, and given that I've never had much of an interest in bicycles, I wouldn't have thought I'd find that aspect of this book interesting yet I surprisingly did. It was fascinating to read about how cyclists initially avoided what was then known as the "safety bicycle" (what nowadays everyone considers the "normal" type of bike with two wheels of equal size), preferring the high wheelers in spite of the dangers associated with riding them. In fact, for bicycle enthusiasts of those times, the risk of sustaining a serious injury was actually part of the appeal ("The element of safety is rather distasteful to a good many riders who prefer to run some risk, as it gives zest to the sport" pg 5)

As far as his description of Lenz's voyage around the world, as well as William Sachtleben and Thomas Allen's trip that was concluding just as Lenz's was starting (before boarding a ship for Canada, they had checked out of the very same hotel in Shanghai that Lenz checked into 12 days later), Herlihy provides a fascinating and well-researched account of what it was like to have made such an arduous and perilous journey by bicycle in the 1890s. I was equally intrigued by Sachtleben's quest to uncover Lenz's fate after the unfortunate and mysterious disappearance of the young cyclist somewhere in eastern Turkey, in spite of the numerous challenges and setbacks that hindered his search, including massacres of Armenians by the Kurds with assistance from the Turkish government.

Some reviewers found *The Lost Cyclist* a boring read, which surprised me. For me personally, it was a page-turner and I simply could not stop reading until I finished the book. My fascination with hearing about people's international travels was probably what caused me to take such an interest in reading about Lenz's endeavor to trek around the world, yet even were it not for that admitted bias, I believe that I would've enjoyed this book regardless as Herlihy has a way of keeping his readers interested until the very end. *The Lost Cyclist* is probably best recommended for those fascinated by the history of bicycles, and the second half of the book (that describes Sachtleben's attempt to discover the who/what/where/when concerning Lenz's fate) would perhaps appeal to those who enjoy murder mysteries. And just maybe, even if you don't fall into either of those categories, you'll enjoy this book anyway as I did.

Barbara McVeigh says

For those who are interested in the history of early bicycle travel (rather than solving the mystery).

Amory Ross says

I really wanted to like this book. Being a cyclist, I was curious about the accomplishments that happened in the first half of last century. It is a time that will never be replicated. Major barriers were broken, and one of them was the attempt of riding a bike around the world.

From 1890 to 1950 (we'll just lop it off there) consider the amount of barriers that fell: man's first flight, the 100-mile-per-hour barrier, first solo flight across the Atlantic, breaking the sound barrier, etc. To say this was the time of human propulsion would be an egregious understatement. Enter the men who wanted to ride around the world.

Frank Lenz was looking to join the ranks of historical people who broke down major barriers. His attempt was full of optimism at its outset and slowly became a difficult journey. The story is much like a bike ride itself: It starts out nice and relaxing, but the return leg can be difficult. And much like a cyclist, one finds himself egging on the effort by saying, "Surely there's a point to all of this just behind the next gigantic hill." Frank Lenz goes missing as he entered one of the most unstable areas of the world. It is there that the book probably could have ended. No new information was truly offered afterwards except Lenz's friends go looking for him. One could just be grateful that the term "globe girdler" was coming to an end. (It felt like it was in every paragraph.)

As we're expecting to get some resolve as to the clues about Lenz, we get none. It is a bit of a let-down. It could have been half the length, for sure.

What did make this book interesting (in the beginning at least) was the recording of the evolution of the bicycle. Gone were the days of the Penny Farthing. The Safety Bike was advancing as a better option for those who didn't want to "take a header." The fact that the Pennsylvania/ New York state area played a role in cycling's early years was fascinating. What also was fascinating was the example of how unstable the Persian area was twenty years before World War I began. It also catalogs the atrocities committed by the Turks toward the Armenians. In the middle was Frank Lenz who paid the ultimate price.

If you're a cyclist, it might be worth reading. Mr. Herlihy put the time and effort into bringing this chronicle, so for cyclists, it may be a worth-while time. Otherwise, gauging by the reception of motorists toward cyclists on any given road in America, the remaining audience might want to move along.

Christina Fierro says

The story should have been fascinating and thrilling. A lone man in the early days of the bicycle, attempting to travel the world by himself, disappears in a dangerous part of Turkey.

Why, then, was it so boring? The story of the titular lost cyclist was interspersed with the story of two other world travelers. Then his story ends and the book spends quite a lot of time detailing the agonizingly slow debate over whether he even disappeared at all. Maybe he's in Russia. Maybe it's a hoax. Maybe he's ill. Maybe he's dead. Maybe he's in a very remote area. Just get on with it already!

The book then chronicles the investigation being undertaken by a man who is presented as so boorish and culturally clueless. I know this is another time, but a foreigner demanding to search the homes of locals and

wanting the authority to arrest suspects? At the same time he is naive enough to believe that he can guarantee protection for a class of citizens that, in 20 years' time, be subject to a genocide committed by their own government. By the way, the genocide is not mentioned anywhere in the book. I would have thought that the Repercussions or Reflections chapter might have been an appropriate place to write about it. It adds another dimension to the circumstances of the disappearance and investigation.

All in all, I didn't hate this book. I enjoyed a glimpse into the beginnings of the bicycle. If nothing else, it's made me eager to go out and ride my bike.

Elizabeth A.G. says

A very interesting book about the sport of cycling, the history of the bicycle, the determination and endurance of the long distance cyclist to break records, an around the world adventure into different cultures and the dangers inherent travelling the world with encounters in treacherous terrain and people and the mystery surrounding the lost cyclist.
