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Interbike: the Faces : Red Kite Prayer

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Above is Brad Devaney, an engineer with Litespeed. Brad and I met in 1989 while working for the Peddler Bike Shop in Memphis, Tennessee. The Peddler crew was a tight-knit, collegial bunch and we frequently rode together. Of the mechanics I worked with, Brad was clearly the most resourceful and mechanically adept. A few years ago I bumped into Brad and asked him about one of our old coworkers, a triathlete named Corey; Brad and Corey were tight. It was there on the show floor that Brad told me Corey had been hit by a car while on a ride and killed. The show floor was a rotten place to hear the news, but there was no one I'd rather have delivered it.



I met Alan Coté when I joined the UMASS cycling team in the fall of 1989. Alan was very fast and one of the only guys on the team who knew how to wrench on a bike. We spent a portion of one summer working at Bicycle World Too in Amherst before he moved to Boulder to be with his girlfriend (now wife) Megan. Today, Alan is a contributing editor to *Bicycling* and has been writing about cycling for longer than I have. He got his start freelancing for *VeloNews* and worked his way up to *Bicycle Guide*. It was as a result of Alan's help that I got my foot in the door at *Bicycle Guide*. He questioned my sanity when I expressed my willingness to leave Northampton for Los Angeles—"Pat, isn't Los Angeles the on-ramp to the apocalypse?"—to which I responded, "Dude, I've been to Mississippi."



Jeff Winnick is an independent sales rep in New England. His lines have changed over the years, but he's the same warm, straightforward and honest guy I met while working at Northampton Bicycle in 1990. I took Jeff to lunch one day to ask his advice on how to move from retailing into the industry side of the biz. He was generous with his time and knowledge, still is.



If you've ever raced a bike in New England, chances are Merlyn Townley wrenched on your bike in a neutral pit at some point. Merlyn and I met at the Olympic Training Center in 1992 when we were there to get our mechanics' licenses. He was a delight to share a room with then and we worked together at many events over the next few years. Merlyn always impressed me with his utterly tireless enthusiasm for working on bikes. He is one of the only mechanics I can say reminds me of the great Bill Woodul. Today Merlyn has an upstart OEM wheel building business based in Chattanooga, Tenn.



Devin Walton called me up in May of 1994 to work neutral support for Shimano at the 1994 World Cup mountain bike event at Mt. Snow, Vermont. Over the weekend I worked on more bikes than I typically saw during a week at a shop. Devin's professionalism filled me with a new respect for Shimano and the talent they assembled. Today, Devin is still with Shimano and has one of the company's most coveted posts: media relations guy. He handles all media relations as well as some pretty heavy lifting on the PR side.



One of the other mechanics on hand for that June 1994 weekend was this guy, Mike Conlan. Mike was the first bike mechanic I ever saw don latex gloves for grimy work. A real pro and a very nice guy. Today, Mike is the manager of Outdoor Sports Center in Wilton, Conn. His instincts are as sharp as ever and he is a guy whose opinion I always ask when it comes to retailing trends.



I met Larry Theobald in Greenfield, Massachusetts in 1991. He was working for Breaking Away Tours in the summer and riding with us in the spring and fall. His wife, Heather, was finishing her doctorate at UMASS and I rode with her from time to time. In the winters, I'd frequently see him at one of the cross-country ski areas up in the Berkshires. These days Larry and Heather have a tour company called [Cycle Italia](#) that is known for excellent rides, great accommodations and even better food.



Butch Balzano may be the only mechanic in New England who is even better known than Merlyn Townley. I worked a few races with Butch in the early '90s and thought him so competent as to make me superfluous. He has been providing race support through Campagnolo, Shimano and now SRAM for more than 20 years. He's as easy going a guy as there is, and one of the few guys I can say for whom a 12-second wheel change is routine.



Richard Fries became known to me as a Cat. 1 who started a magazine called *The Ride*. I began freelancing for *The Ride* with its second issue and gradually became more involved in the magazine, eventually writing a column called Shop Talk. It was funny to write for a magazine whose publisher would frequently feature in headlines (I recall many along the lines of "Fries Wins Again in Marlborough"). Richard and his wife, Deb, published *The Ride* for more than 10 years; it was easily the best regional I ever saw published. Along the way a funny thing happened: Richard's son, Grant was born and became old enough to ride his own bicycle, and Richard got concerned about where Grant could ride. Today, Richard is one of the nation's most ardent and effective voices for bicycle advocacy, working with a variety of organizations, including Bikes Belong. Oh, and if you ever need to know anything about the Civil War, he's faster with the facts than Wikipedia.



The man in the Reynolds booth is another former Northamptonite, Jonathan Geran. Jonathan's easy way has seen him in sales for Merlin, Parlee, McLean Quality Composites and now Reynolds. The one thing we try not to do when we see each other is to discuss the mountain biking we used to enjoy in western Mass.



Chris Carmichael called on me to help the Junior National Team with several races in 1993. He was easy to work for and had the ability to tell each rider exactly what they needed to hear right before a race. I remember thinking it was no wonder he was head coach for the U.S. National Team. In the years since, Chris has been generous in giving me quotes for many articles and a book.



Derreck Bernard was one of the first people I met when I joined the staff of *Bicycle Guide*. He was part of the ad sales staff and was as nice and easy going a guy as you'd want to work with. He helped change my perception of the high-pressure ad sales guy. Since Petersen's sale and re-sale, Derreck joined the staff of Hi-Torque Publications, where he sells ads for *Mountain Bike Action*, *Road Bike Action* and *BMX Plus!* Thanks to my freelance work for *Road Bike Action*, even though we don't work together directly, its fun to think of him as a coworker again.



Carol and Bill McGann are the former owners of Torelli Imports. Bill and Carol are an incredible team and really collaborate on everything; their affection and respect for each other is something to envy. Bill still works for the company some, so I still get to see them in the Torelli booth each year. He is one of the rare guys on the manufacturing side of the business who really taught me a lot about the industry, rather than just his line. He's got an incredibly expansive view (he's an armchair historian which may help explain his ability to see the bigger picture) of the bike industry and has helped me see trends as they develop. He's also one helluva travel companion and the week I spent with him in Italy will go down as one of the finest weeks of my whole life.

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