BikeRiding – Life without a Car

My dad is blind, I love my bicycle, and I am happy.

I really do love the bicycling life. I've always loved bikes, but I have also always loved driving.

I have in the past fantasized about giving up the car to do it all on a bike, but Atlanta is not the easiest city to do that in. Don't get me wrong; if I moved back to Atlanta I'd make it work sans car, but it is a lot easier in L.A.

Kristina and I recently moved to Los Angeles. We planned on traveling the whole country but with an auto repair, the cost of gas, and the launch of the new market, greenlifestylemarket.com, it made more sense to got to LA and try the bike and bus way of life.

I'm one of those guys that have had over 50 jobs in my life. I say that as if there is a lot of us, but maybe not so much. I've rarely worked close to home, and when I did I only lasted a couple of weeks. Not because I didn't like working close to home, but because I rarely lasted more than two weeks anywhere.
It's an old story. The less stuff you have the happier you are. The more you exercise, the happier you are. The more fresh air you breath (can you call Los Angeles air fresh?), the happier you are.

Atlanta has a lot of hills, and it's also so spread out. In Los Angeles I can ride for 100 miles. After 20 miles at a good clip, put a hill in my way and my legs are jelly. But I am getting better and better at hills. If I were to get a job

here where I rode even 40 miles a day, I could bike that without a sweat if it's under 80F.Fortunately, my job is what I am doing right now at this very moment.I ride an average of 20 miles a day. I beat traffic almost anywhere I go. It's mostly flat, but if there is a steep hill and I've been riding all day, I won't hesitate to hang on to a car for a break.
The morning after I got my bike, I road about 20 miles. The next day I could barely move! Until, that is, I slathered on some deep tissue oil and then barely got my leg up and over my bike for another 30 miles. BTW, Shillington's Deep Tissue Repair Oil got me through it. Seriously, for sore muscles and injuries, there is nothing better!

I have fun with it. If I can't pass them, I try to at least keep up with the cars. I am careful not to cause anyone else's tension levels to rise too much as I carefully and methodically weave in and out of traffic while ignoring the laws that govern our roads.

Ignore is the wrong word. I certainly take the stoplights and other traffic signs and rules into consideration. And speaking of consideration, I really am careful not to cause other drivers to hit their brakes or go out of their lane unless absolutely necessary to my ability to stay alive. I will hop from road to sidewalk, continually choosing whichever holds the route with the least resistance at that moment. And while I do run red lights, I do it carefully, without causing alarm or brake tapping from anyone.

I've been called reckless before. I disagree, but I am adventurous and I do not give a damn about laws (if you know my history you'd understand). So in this city where almost no one jaywalks and the only way people walk across the street is when the sign tells them to, I get a lot of looks as I blow by traffic, running a red light.

In Atlanta, only tourists consider the crosswalk (whether it be at a lighted intersection or not) anything more than a suggestion.

I need to get a trailer for groceries and baby carrier. Either one of those items will certainly change my riding habits, but I think on most days I'll still be faster than traffic.

Then I think about how my dad rode me on his bicycle. He was a carpenter. He made a little baby seat and put it on the back of the bike above the rear tire. My dad didn't ride me because he loved bicycling everywhere; he did it because he was legally blind. He cannot see well enough to drive. He did at one point, but thanks to a lifestyle of drugs and crap food, he lost his vision at age 21 (if memory serves).

My dad, like me, loved to drive. We both used to race. We both got a lot of tickets. We both drove in a similar manner.

And bicycles are the only vehicles we own.

The difference is, I do it by choice. And he can't get a driver's license.

Well… Sort of by choice. It seems life did pretty much say "No car for you!"

I suppose I needed that to happen. And now, what's happened? I am happier. Much happier. Life is so much better without a car. I should preface: Life is so much better without a car when you live in a temperate climate that hardly ever rains and always has tons of traffic with mostly flat terrain.

It's an old story. The less stuff you have the happier you are. The more you exercise, the happier you are. The more fresh air you breath (can you call Los Angeles air fresh?), the happier you are.

And my dad is miserable. He didn't have a choice.

My dad has made it very clear to me that he believes that the cause of his depression and anger are due to the fact that he has been dealt a short hand in life.

But that’s not likely his issue. I am reasonably sure that he is miserable because he chose drugs and alcohol over anything or anyone else most of his life. I figure he is unhappy about his whole life, but for the most part blames it on the loss of vision.

For all we know, if he didn’t stop driving maybe he would have killed someone with a DUI. He is a man with a conscious, so I am pretty sure that would have made him feel worse than the lose of his eyesight.

Our way of being in this world is so similar in so many ways. But my dad is miserable with life, while I keep having better and better years.

I will try to remember this next time I feel I don’t have a choice. For instance, I run the wrong red light, and end up in a wheelchair. I will try to remember how much fun I have whenever I sit in a wheelchair. I go nuts! Obviously I have a thing for wheels. If I were confined to a wheelchair for a week or for the rest of my life, I like to think I would have fun with it. Hell, I know I would. It may not be my choice, but I promise you this, I would be known, in whatever town I am in, as, “That crazy dude that passes cars and bicycles, running red lights, all while evading cops in his wheelchair!