

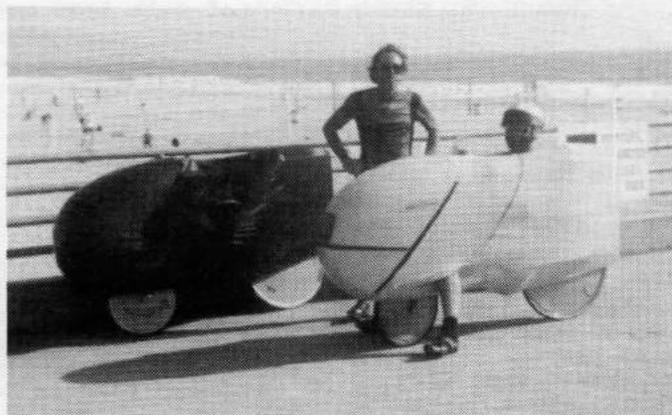
THE OUTRAGEOUS LIGHTNING F-40

The word is out. The outrageous-looking Lightning F-40 is one outrageously fast recumbent bicycle. Don't expect any other bicycle to be pedaled from Los Angeles to New York City in five days and one hour, as the Lightning was in August 1989. Members of the four-man relay team that powered it took turns every hour to two hours, obeyed all traffic laws, lost their hydraulic brake gripping power in torrential rains, had seven flat front tires, accidentally wandered into the fast lane of a freeway, and even broke the long drive chain once during energetic hammering by Bob Forney. Then they went on to finish well over a day ahead of the second and third place HPV teams. The box-stock F-40 is so fast, given the right rider, it is capable of winning any of the increasingly-popular criterium races for GT-class Versatile Vehicle HPVs.

Not so apparent to the casual observer is the F-40's outrageous comfort. Sure, it has the great ergonomics of the Lightning P-38-- and more. The full-length fairing obviously keeps you snugly warm in cool weather. It must be uncomfortably warm on a hot day, you're thinking. That's the outrageous part! The Spandex midsection is an efficient sunshade with controlled ventilation. It's amazingly cool and comfortable in the hot sun. It makes sense then, that four of these rare and exotic machines are in regular use in sunny Southern California. Pete Penseyres cuts 20 minutes off his daily bicycle commute by riding his F-40. Many people find it outrageous that the well-streamlined F-40 can be comfortably and safely ridden in strong crosswinds. Experienced F-40 riders have learned to actually enjoy crosswinds because the faring acts like a wing sail to increase the already out...uh super speed advantage. Just lean into the wind and the F-40 tracks straight and true.

There are three things about the F-40 that knowledgeable bike connoisseurs agree are not outrageous. The first is the 45-inch wheelbase. This leads to the second item: near perfect weight distribution and handling. The third point of agreement, and the hardest to swallow, is the \$3500 price tag. It's a lot of money for a bicycle. And it's a genuine bargain for the Ferrari F-40 of bicycles. The Ferrari F-40 namesake is not nearly as attention-getting or as superior to other cars as is the Lightning compared to other bikes. One Ferrari F-40 would set you back the price of 100 Lightning F-40 bicycles.

I've owned my F-40 for two years and 12,000 miles of near-daily use. I'm totally spoiled for any other bicycle. Including the un-faired or partially-faired version. The 18-speed gearing range on my bike is 24-132 gear-inches. I can pedal comfortable up steep hills in my 37-pound touring configuration (advertised weight is 32 pounds). I do find it pretty easy to spin out the 54-



tooth chainring/ 11 tooth freewheel cog on any kind of a downhill, though. This means I have to coast when I reach a mere 50 mph where the RAAM racers were able to use slightly higher gearing to advantage and were clocked coasting at 65 mph down some hills.

Designer-builder Tim Brummer of Lompoc, California is currently working on the solution to what I consider the only important design flaw of the F-40. This is the short Reynolds 531 front forkset in which the 17-inch diameter front wheel rides. This size wheel was originally intended to be used only on sprung-suspension Moulton bikes. The large fiberglass front fairing assembly strapped into the forward-located crank bracket of the F-40 is highly stressed when negotiating rough roads at F-40 speed, accentuating the need for shock-dampened front suspension. The upcoming suspension mod will transform the Lightning F-40 from merely outrageous to the definitive practical HPV in a world all too accustomed to mediocre bicycles.

by Gerald Pease
Manhattan Beach California

RYAN CONT'D1991 RYAN UPDATE:

After the above road test was finished, but before press time, I was able to get the latest word on the '91 model. The changes are a more simplified seat/ handlebar mounting system. The seat-horn, the fitting that holds the forward section of the seat up, has been lowered a little for even more comfort. The frame is virtually the same except for the bottom-bracket which will be mounted 1.5" higher. The biggest news for '91 is the addition of the chain idler. It can be retrofitted to any Ryan. The cost for the idler is \$19.95 from Ryan Recumbents. A new optional seat-mounted pack is also available.

THE RYAN COMMUTER, A new model, hopefully will be unveiled this Spring. The Commuter will have the same frame built with lower-line components. Price is not available at press time.

Robert Bryant