

## ROSS SIGNATURE SERIES BICYCLES

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In 1940, Albert Ross started the Ross Galvanizing Works (Brooklyn, NY) which manufactured pipes and pipe fittings for the fencing industry and later, during World War II, galvanized ship hulls for the navy – the company was located in the vicinity of the Brooklyn Navy Yards. In 1946, the company was incorporated as the Chain Bike Corp and began producing bicycles, tricycles, wheel chairs, lawn mowers and roller skates. In the 1950's, the company moved to Rockaway Beach (Queens, NY), and by the late '50s it was solely manufacturing bicycles and tricycles (labeled Ross) – purported to be one of the largest domestic manufacturer of bicycles, trailing only Schwinn and Huffly in sales.

In the early '70s, the company moved its manufacturing to Allentown (PA), and in 1982 changed its name to Ross Bicycles Inc – headquarters, however, remained in Rockaway Beach. By the 1970s, only Schwinn had a larger market share of bikes. In 1988 Ross Bicycles Inc. filed for bankruptcy and was bought by Rand International (Farmingdale, Long Island, NY), an importer of low-end bikes.

Although known for its family line of bicycles, at the urging of Phil Petrick (see below), then vice president of sales (1975-1982), Ross created its Signature series of bicycles and hired Tom Kellogg (presently of Spectrum Cycles, Allentown, PA) to setup its operations. Ross' Signature department was akin to Schwinn's so-called "Cage", where an area next to the office entrance was fenced-off for the exclusive production of Schwinn's flagship model, the Paramount (Frank Greco headed production, Wanda Omelian performed brazing, and pin striping was done by Joe Brilando and Adam Smith). The Signature department was housed in what was once a kitchen, behind the company cafeteria, and utilized the large stove exhaust as a brazing hood. (It should be noted that Petrick and Kellogg were once associated through the Gotham Cyclists Team, which Petrick moved from New York City to the Lehigh Valley in 1971, and which he supported for 18 years.)

### THE PEOPLE

**Tom Kellogg** (1980 – 81)

After finishing college (BA Sociology, University of Rochester), Tom apprenticed with Bill Boston in the summer of '76 – Bill offered Tom a 5 year apprenticeship, but it only lasted two and a half months! That same year he went on to set up his own business in the back of a Schwinn dealership in Allentown, PA, and then in a townhouse basement west of Allentown using a jig that he made in his parents basement in the fall of '76. During the years before being hired by Ross Bicycles, Tom built frames under his own name.

In 1980, Phil Petrick (vice president of sales for Chain Bike Corp) hired Tom to set up their Signature Department and the Signature Bicycles line. In May of 1981 Tom left Chain Bike Corp to start Spectrum Bicycles. He hired Jeff Duser in 1985. Tom also designed the Merlin framesets (Merlin Metal Works) from the company's inception (1987) until they closed their doors (2010) (<http://www.spectrum-cycles.com/>).

**Jim Redcay** (1981 – 85)

Jim Redcay built bicycles under his own name from the early '70s, in his Lambertville NJ shop, until 1981 when he replaced Tom Kellogg at Ross. Jim recruited Jeff Duser from the Ross factory floor to apprentice with him while at Ross. Jim's developed the first Ross mountain bikes, which effectively kept the company in business considerably longer than it otherwise, would have. For a time, Ross was a significant force in high end mountain bikes as a result, according to Tom Kellogg, of Jim's foresight and engineering skills. Redcay later worked as technical editor of Bicycling magazine, eventually leaving the bicycle business altogether.

**Jeff Duser** (1982 – 85)

Jeff was moved into the Signature department by Jim Redcay toward the end of 1982, after spending time on Ross' first production hand built frame line, the Ross model 198. When Jim Redcay left Ross, Jeff was handed the management of the Signature department, reporting that he never felt more alone. Along with Juan Felix, his assistant frame builder and Dave Rodriguez, the signature painter, they were the Ross Signature department until Jeff left to work for Tom Kellogg at Spectrum Cycles in 1985. Jeff has built all steel Spectrums with serial numbers greater than #309.

**Bill Stevenson** (1985 – 86)

In 1971 Bill Stevenson took a frame building class from Albert Eisentraut. He then apprenticed with Eisentraut and built Eisentraut Limited frames. From there Bill went on to build under his own name until 1985. Around 1985 he began running the signature department at Ross Bicycles (see correspondence). In 1993 Bill returned to Olympia, WA, building frames and managing The Bike Stand, a full service pro shop. Bill's son, Shawn, joined Bill building frames from 1995 until 2001. Shawn got back to building frames part time, in 2008. Since 2013, Bill and Shawn have been building Stevenson frames full time (<http://stevensoncustombikes.com/>).

“According to my somewhat faulty memory, I went to work at Ross on August 1, 1985. I worked daily for the following six months filling open orders, building bikes for the Ross pro mountain bike team, show bikes for the New York bike show, a road test bike for Bicycling magazine, and some prototyping. The following February I was sent to Taiwan to teach a frame specialty company how to build fillet brazed frames. I ended up being there for almost two months, but was successful at setting up a line to build fillet brazed frames. On my return to Allentown, I was promoted to product manager and sent back to Taiwan along with my family. While there, during the following year I produced 15 team bikes, again for the Ross pro mountain bike team. They were some of the first bikes built from Tange Prestige tubing, and used a combination of brazed and Tig welded construction. They were very light for that era. They were shipped to Allentown for painting.

The painter in Allentown during my time at Ross was a young Puerto Rican named Davey Rodriguez. He was an exceptional painter. Very creative, and frankly one of the reasons that I went to work for Ross. He was sadly underappreciated, as was everyone who worked in the Signature department.

Another key person during my tenure at Ross was the marketing director, John Kirkpatrick. I believe that the Signature department was John's brain child, as was the pro team, and Ross' early involvement with mountain biking. John was also the only other serious cyclist at Ross while I was there. Both of us were looked on with a certain amount of suspicion for being cyclists. Sadly John died extremely young during a bike tour in France”.

## **Jamie Swan** (1989)

Over a 14 year span, from the mid-70s to the end of the 80s, Jamie built thousands of wheels and one frame. In 1989 he was hired by Ross/Rand to run the Signature shop. No Signature bikes were built at the new Ross (see correspondence). Since then, Jamie has owned a bike shop (Centerport Cycles), built frames on a custom order basis, and since 2007 has worked as a machinist at the Webb Institute, which is located in Long Island Sound (Glen Cove, N.Y) (<http://www.jamieswan.net/>).

"I was hired in 1989 by Ross/Rand to run the Signature shop at the new location in Farmingdale, NY. At that time Nyle Nims was the president of Ross. I only stayed there for about 6 months. I worked on setting up the new shop as well handling other technical duties (mostly CPSC recall stuff) that related to the Ross and Rand production bikes. I never built a bike in that shop, and to my knowledge, no Signature bikes were ever built by the new Ross.

Another thing I remember, that the other builders might appreciate, was some fixtures that I wound up having to scrap. I made several trips to the Allentown factory to bring the Signature shop equipment up to Farmingdale. There were fixtures there that were designed to hold a chain stay, a seat stay and a Campy 1010 drop-out; so that you could build those sub-assemblies which would then be brazed to the main triangles. The thing is that the fixtures were not adjustable, so there was a right side fixture and a left side fixture for every size frame that was offered. I'm thinking that there were at least a dozen of these things. They were nicely fabricated and each one had its own pedestal base. Sadly they went into the scrap bin. I wish I had pictures".

## **Phillip D. Petrick**

From The Morning Call, September 22, 2007

([http://articles.mcall.com/2007-09-22/news/3776104\\_1\\_harley-davidson-el-cajon-kale](http://articles.mcall.com/2007-09-22/news/3776104_1_harley-davidson-el-cajon-kale))

"Phillip D. Petrick, 67, of Walnutport, departed this world, September 20, 2007. Born in Slatington, he was the son of the late Michael and Sophie (Kalabisco) Petrick. He was the husband of Sherry (Wilhoit) Petrick. Phillip worked for NCR from 1963-1975, was vice president of sales for Chain Bicycle Corp. from 1975-1982 and owned and operated Phil Petrick Associates Inc., from 1982 until he retired in 1996. He was a professional rider for Harley Davidson and was the 1962-1963 National Champion of motorcycle hill climbing. He was an organizer of bicycle racing in the Lehigh Valley Velodrome and was instrumental in the initial planning of the Lehigh Valley Velodrome in 1969. He was a member of the Olympic Cycling Long Road Team in 1968 and the Lehigh Wheelmen Association up until 1971. He brought the Gotham Cyclists Team from New York City to the Lehigh Valley in 1971 and supported racing for 18 years".

## **THE BICYCLES**

### **Ross Signature Models**

Tom Kellogg built:

- Signature touring
- Signature Road Super Record
- Signature Piste
- Signature Road Dura-Ace

**241:** Henry James lugs, Campagnolo 1010B dropouts and Columbus tubing.

**508:** Eisho lugs, Hitachi bottom bracket, Suntour dropouts and Takahashi fork crown. Columbus tubing or Ishiwata 022 tubing.

**510:** Prototype to the 508 (according to Tom Kellogg).

### Notes

A Ross Signature labeled JD has Eisho lugs and a Hitachi bottom bracket. It was made in March of 1985 by Jeff Duser, likely for Cindy Whitehead. The frameset was original painted a rose gray metallic.

510 with Henry James lugs and bottom bracket, and Takahashi fork crown built by Tom Kellogg prior to his departure from Ross in May of 1981. However, this frameset was labeled in late 1982 during Jim Redcay's and Jeff Duser's tenures at Ross. According to Tom, this may have been a prototype for the 508, which used Eisho instead of Henry James lugs, Suntour dropouts, instead of Shimano EF dropouts, and a Takahashi fork crown.

### Deciphering Ross Signature Code on Bottom Brackets

**Line 1:** A 3 digit model number followed by a 4 digit number (first two digits are the frame size and the last two are the color code).

**Line 2:** A 2 digit year of manufacture number is followed by a 1 or 2 digit month, which is followed by a 3 digit series number.

Example:

(model #)  
| (frame size – [center-to-top] / color code)  
| |  
241 5214

82 9 010  
| | |  
| | (sequence #)  
| (month of manufacture)  
(year of manufacture)