



JEFF JONES CITY & TOURING

BY PATRICK O'GRADY

→ It was April 1981, and I had left the last in a long line of Schwinn's behind in Arizona, along with a job as a copy editor at a Tucson newspaper. The new job in Corvallis, Oregon, was an easy stroll from my Tyler Avenue fleabag so I didn't bother acquiring another bike.

Also, the new gig was at an afternoon paper, which meant my shift commenced at 6:00 AM instead of 4:00 PM, as was usual for a copy editor at a morning daily. Thus 2:00 PM became quitting time, 2:15 PM became happy hour (did I mention that Squirrel's Tavern was just a short detour on the way home?), and 9:00 PM became bedtime, or should have.

You may see plenty of opportunity for cycling somewhere in that 2:15 to 9:00 PM time frame. I didn't, thanks to the lack of vision correction in my Guinness goggles. Call it my "Squirrelly" period — one of them anyway.

The Willamette Valley climate didn't help. Enduring 40-plus inches of precipitation per annum is what caused my ancestors to invent *uisce beatha* and subsequently become their own best customers. Long story short, after a couple years of being wetter inside than out, I quit that job, too, waddling back to the high desert of Colorado to recuperate. The next time I went to Oregon, it was to Ashland, I was 30 pounds lighter, and I brought a bike.

The Jeff Jones City & Touring is not your granddaddy's touring bike. Its design grew out of the single-track trails

SPECIFICATIONS

JONES CITY & TOURING

Price: \$3,267 (as built with racks, panniers, taillight)
Size available: 23 inch
Size tested: 23 inch
Weight: 29.2 pounds (without pedals)

TEST BIKE MEASUREMENTS

- 1. **Seat tube:** 18 1/2 inches (center to top of seat collar)
- 2. **Top tube:** 23 inches (virtual); 21 inches (actual)
- 3. **Head tube angle:** 70°
- 4. **Seat tube angle:** 72°
- 5. **Chainstays:** 17 3/8 inches
- 6. **Bottom bracket drop:** 3 inches
- 7. **Crank spindle height above ground:** 11 1/2 inches

- 8. **Fork offset:** 55mm
- 9. **Wheelbase:** 42 inches
- 10. **Standover height:** 32 1/2 inches
- 11. **Frame:** Jones 4130 chromoly butted. Braze-ons for rear rack at dropouts; bosses for three bottle cages and a Crud Catcher; cable stops for front/rear derailleurs; attachment points for disc-brake-cable housing; disc-brake tabs; derailleur hanger insert plus single-speed dropout insert
- 12. **Fork:** Jones unicrown, 4130 chromoly, with custom-butted blades. Braze-ons at dropout and mid-fork designed for Tubus Duo low-rider rack; attachment points for disc-brake-cable housing; disc-brake tabs
- 13. **Rims:** Velocity Blunt 35 disc, 32 hole (front), 36 hole (rear)



- 14. Hubs:** Jones 135-F 32-hole (front), Shimano XT FH-M775 32-hole (rear)
- 15. Spokes:** DT Swiss SuperComp, 2mm, 1.7mm, 1.8mm. DT aluminum nipples
- 16. Tires:** Schwalbe Big Apple, 29x2.35, and Maxxis Ardent, 29x2.4
- 17. Bottom bracket:** Shimano XT SM-BB70, Bushnell eccentric
- 18. Crankset:** Shimano XT HollowTech II 10-speed, 170mm, 42/32/24 chainrings
- 19. Cassette:** Shimano XT M771 10-speed, 11, 13, 15, 17, 19, 21, 24, 28, 32, 36
- 20. Chain:** Shimano HG-X XT 10-speed
- 21. Brake levers:** Shimano Deore XT
- 22. Shift levers:** Shimano Deore XT RapidFire 10-speed

- 23. Front/rear derailleurs:** Shimano Deore XT downswing (front), XT M781 Shadow SGS (rear)
- 24. Brake calipers:** Avid BB7 mountain cable-actuated discs, Avid G2CS rotors, 200mm (front), 180mm (rear)
- 25. Pedals:** None
- 26. Seat post:** Thomson Elite setback, 27.2mm
- 27. Stem:** Thomson Elite X4, 100mm
- 27. Handlebar:** Jones aluminum loop H-Bar, 66cm
- 29. Headset:** Cane Creek 10
- 30. Saddle:** WTB Team Laser V

Gearing in inches:

	42	32	24
11	110.7	84.4	63.3
13	93.7	71.4	53.5
15	81.2	61.9	46.4
17	71.6	54.6	40.9
19	64.1	48.8	36.6
21	58.0	44.2	33.1
24	50.8	38.7	29.0
28	43.59	33.1	24.9
32	38.1	29.0	21.8
36	33.8	25.8	19.3

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and unpaved roads near Jones' shop in Medford, Oregon, and, although it can safely be labeled a mountain bike — a 4130-chromoly, rigid-specific 29er — it's really an all-terrain vehicle that handles asphalt as well as it does aggregate.

Its muscular appearance is deceptive. Sure, the Jones bears a passing resemblance to the clunkers of yore, but it's much more agile than it appears at first glance.

The mechanic who built it pronounced himself impressed, as did the carpenter rebuilding our front porch, a neighbor who commandeered it for a short spin around the 'hood, and a homeless guy who saw me sailing down a bike path and rasped, "Man, that thing looks like it could do some damage!"

Indeed. If you feel like putting the hurt on Rand McNally, the Jones will have your back.

Mine arrived with everything you'd need for a serious road trip save pedals and the legs to push them: a crisply shifting 3 x 10 Shimano Deore XT drivetrain and Avid BB7 disc brakes; bosses for three bottle cages and a Crud Catcher; Planet Bike fenders; Tubus racks (Duo low rider up front, Logo Evo behind); and five Ortlieb bags — two Front Roller Classics, two Rear Roller Classics, and a Rack Pack, just in case I T-boned an elk en route to wherever and didn't feel like lashing it to the handlebars where staring at it would only make me hungry.

There's plenty of room for road kill and other accessories on those swept-back Jones H-Bars (I settled for a Cateye Velo 7 computer and a Crane bell). Spanning 66 centimeters from tip to tip of their cork grips, the H-Bars were a full 14 centimeters wider than the straight Easton bar on my old mountain bike.

Also wider than their counterparts on my mountain bike were the tires. The Jones came with a pair of Schwalbe Big Apples in 29 x 2.35, and although at first they give you pause — "Holy hell, look at the size of those tires!" — for a cyclist in

Colorado, where the American Society of Civil Engineers deems 70 percent of the roads to be in poor or mediocre condition, it's nice to have a big rubber cushion between you and the rubble.

Remember the Road Warrior? When the gas finally ran out, I bet those guys were riding something like the Jones.

Its creator sure is. A tech-editor friend told me that Jones “thinks bikes all the time,” and it shows after a couple dozen emails and a few phone chats. He is an evangelist for tall wheels, wide rubber, and short cranks, and is less interested in how his bikes are categorized than in how they ride.

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What was he thinking when he came up with his City & Touring bike?

“I designed it for me,” Jones said, adding that the typical road bike with its drop bar, skinny wheels, and thin tires “is good for something I don’t ever do — trying to get away from people while sprinting and then trying to maintain a high speed.”

I don’t do that sort of thing either, not any more, and since I quit racing, I’ve come to enjoy a more upright cycling position and fatter tires. But I’m still riding drop bars and turning 175 millimeter cranks, and the rubber is usually 700C x 32 or thereabouts. So I was curious to see how it felt to ride the road on something that looked like a cruiser designed for some post-apocalyptic beach.

As it turns out, I found myself in agreement with the mechanic, contractor, neighbor, and homeless guy. And with Jones too. His bike may look like a beach cruiser, but it’s as much fun to ride as the Ventura Beach bike path.

When I’m pedaling a traditional road bike with drop bars, even a husky touring model, I tend to drift reflexively into a training mentality. There can be a certain clenched quality to the ride. Electronics and muscle memory are consulted, distance, heart rate, and average speed tallied, the training log updated. Odious comparisons will be made.

Aboard the Jones I felt like, hey, I’m out for a spin, ain’t that fine? Sure beats working. There was a strong inclination to keep going until the food, water, and money ran out.

True, those monster-truck tires mounted to a pair of hefty Velocity Blunt 35 rims (32-spoke front, 36-spoke rear) don’t accelerate as quickly as the gossamer geek wheels you see in the other bike magazines, but once you get them rolling, they keep rolling, over just about anything save the sudden gap in that Interstate 5 bridge over the Skagit River. Obstacles you once perceived as daunting — bad roads, high curbs, Minis

parked in the bike lane — become mere speed bumps at the 20-25 PSI Jones recommends. Things that once made you go “Whoa!” now make you go “Whee!”

“The big wheels don’t sprint as well, and they do have more wind drag (compared to normal skinnier tires), but they also factually have less rolling resistance and, of course, a better and safer ride,” Jones said. “Years ago, I toured down the coast of California on a GT 26er mountain bike with 1-inch slicks at 100 PSI. I would not do that today with what I know now.

“The one thing everyone has to get over is this: They do not have more rolling resistance, they do not have more rolling resistance, and they do not have more rolling resistance.”

Last fall, I did a lightly loaded three-day tour of central Colorado on a traditional steel road bike with drop bars and 700C x 32 tires. I’d like to repeat it on the Jones because the route included some heavy chipseal and loose, sandy trails that sucked the wind from my sails.

Lacking the legs and time for that sort of experiment, I loaded the Jones with the same weight I carried in my fall tour — 25 pounds — and rode my usual rolling on- and off-road loops around town. It was like adding a flea to a donkey. Even in a late May in wind that had flags standing out stiff from their poles, the Jones

forged ahead without complaint. And the 170-millimeter XT HollowTech II cranks kept me in the saddle, spinning, instead of doing my usual sumo-wrestler stomp up the steeps.

Next, I stripped the bike of panniers, racks, and fenders, and rode it as a mountain bike. Jones was kind enough to ship a pair of 29 x 2.4 Maxxis Ardent EXOs. I bounced them off various berms, roots, and rocks in Palmer Park — cleaning a few technical sections that exasperate me on other bikes — and bombed down The Chutes, a high-speed, sandy bobsled run from Gold Camp Road to the Stratton Open Space.

The Jones was not designed with a suspension fork in mind so it doesn’t need one. The steering is lively despite a slack 70-degree head-tube angle (the 4130 unicrown fork has a generous 55 millimeters of offset), and the 135-millimeter Jones front hub helps stiffen up the front end. You don’t feel the front wheel going walkabout on you during a sketchy descent.

At the rear end, a similarly relaxed 72-degree seattube angle coupled with a long Thomson Elite setback seatpost (I rode with 10 inches of post showing, from seat clamp to saddle rail) provides a degree of vertical compliance.

What all of this means is that — regardless of terrain and velocity — you can take a moment to glance around and appreciate the beauty of your surroundings instead of focusing laserlike on trail features that are trying to kill you.

This is not to say that the Jones turned me into some sort of latter-day John Tomac. That is a transformation beyond the power of engineering; my style is much more John Cleese, representing the Ministry of Silly Rides.

The Jones City & Touring may not make you a better rider either, but it certainly will make for some better riding, on road or off. **AC**

Patrick O’Grady has written and cartooned about cycling since 1989 for VeloNews, Bicycle Retailer and Industry News, and a variety of other publications. To read more from O’Grady, visit maddogmedia.wordpress.com.