



## My Road Warrior

At various times in these stories I have mentioned riding a bicycle. I have no car - actually, I think I am perhaps a bit unusual for my generation in that I have never owned a car - and use a bicycle for all of my daily errands around town. I bring the groceries home from the supermarket in my backpack, and use a box tied to the little carrier on the back of the bike if I have something a bit more heavy to carry. My bicycle is a strong 'mountain bike' and will stand up to quite heavy use.

I need no vehicle for my business because my incoming supplies - woodblocks and paper - are delivered by the parcel delivery services, and as woodblock prints are very light, I can easily carry my outgoing packages to the local post office myself. On those rare times when there are a lot to be shipped, the post office will come and pick them up.

Some things are of course impossible to carry on the bicycle. When I needed a large quantity of lumber for the ongoing construction of my workroom, I had to pay a fee to have it delivered by truck, but such occasions are few and far between, so this is not a major expense.

A European friend of mine who lives in Fussa, a few kilometers away, also has no car and uses a bicycle. Unlike me though, he has a very light and fast French racing bike, so I don't think he uses it to carry his shopping. On hot summer days he sometimes shows up at my house, wearing bicycle racer's clothes and helmet, dripping with sweat, and ready for a cold beer from the fridge!

Around my neighbourhood I don't often see men of my own age riding a bicycle. Children ride, and of course every housewife has a bicycle for errands, but I guess that most males - once they are old enough for a license - switch to using either a car or a motorcycle.

The bicycles I had as a child never seemed to last very long; I guess I grew out of them every few years as I got taller, and I suppose I didn't take very good care of them either. But my current bicycle has been with me for more than 15 years now, certainly a record for me!

This bicycle has ridden back and forth on all the streets in this area, and I am sure that it 'knows' its way around Hamura and Ome very well. I give it new tires every couple of years, have changed the saddle three or four times, and I can't remember how many times I have replaced the brake pads. A few years ago, some of the parts inside the shift system wore out, so I replaced that too. In fact, now that I think about it, I guess the only original parts still left are the two wheels and the basic frame itself!

Each time it needs a maintenance session I give some thought to replacing it with a new model, but so far I have not been able to bring myself to do that. Even though it is showing its age and has quite a battered appearance, I think it has many years of life left in it. I couldn't imagine just tossing it aside on a scrap heap!

Perhaps this is not a good idea; after all, I am sure that modern bicycles are very advanced and efficient, and I suppose it would be very exciting to get a new one. By keeping my old one going so long, am I being 'sensible', or am I being needlessly 'sentimental'?

I really don't know the answer to that question ...

**David Bull**  
**Seseragi Studio**  
**Nagabuchi 8-4-5 Ome City**  
**Tokyo Japan 198-0052**  
**<http://astoryaweek.com>**