



Physics Lesson

For today's story, we 'time travel' again, back to the summer of 1965. This would make me thirteen years old, and I must have just completed grade 8 (or '中二年' for Japanese readers). Life - as far as I can remember it from this distance - was pretty good for me; school was no problem (although pretty boring), I was a senior member of a very active Boy Scout troop, and I had a good part-time job delivering newspapers (the proceeds of which I always immediately spent on my stamp collection, which was a source of much pleasure for me).

With all those 'responsibilities' I can't imagine that I had much free time, but of course once the summer holidays began, free time was something we kids had in abundance. We had around ten weeks free - from the end of June until the beginning of the new school year in early September - and I know that if you ask anybody of my age and general background he will say the same thing: those long Canadian summer holidays were the highlight of our yearly 'calendar'.

I had plenty of friends, a bicycle, and complete freedom of the city and surrounding countryside. The only 'rule' really was the "Make sure you get home by dinnertime!" that must have been the last thing we heard each time my brother and I left the house. And I'm sure that we did - most days anyway - although on one occasion, I needed some help in getting home, and if I had been just a tad less lucky, might not have made it at all.

There was a vast and hugely interesting park located on the other side of one of the rivers that ran through our city. It was possible to get there by crossing the river on one of the main roads, but we were much more attracted to a railroad bridge nearby. This was an old wooden trestle bridge, very narrow - only wide enough to carry the tracks and a thin walkway. I have to interject at this point that if you are now anticipating a story about Dave desperately trying to outrun a train across this bridge, you will be disappointed. I have done plenty of dumb things in my life, but there *are* limits to my stupidity! We could hear the long freight trains coming from miles away, and I kept well clear of them.

No, my idiocy was of a more prosaic kind. At one end of the bridge, there was a plot of open land that had been partially renovated, but then abandoned. A number of piles of dirt had been dumped there, which over the years had weathered into a series of smooth mounds. One day I watched an older boy ride his bike across the bridge, zoom down the long ramp at the end, and ride up and over one, two, three of these mounds, one after the other, before he ran out of the power he had built up coming down the ramp.

Hey, I can do that too! So I tried it. I rode to the top, then turned around and pedalled furiously down the ramp. Unfortunately, my sense of the physics involved wasn't quite as well-developed as that of the other boy, who must have kept his speed within reasonable bounds, and I built up as much speed as I possibly could.

I hit the first mound, and launched skyward.

Now these days, every young boy knows about doing 'air' tricks with his bike, having seen innumerable YouTube videos of such stunts, but this had taken me by surprise, and I was completely helpless. I have no

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idea how far I actually flew before crashing in a tangled heap, but I suspect it was a pretty impressive distance. Other boys in the group ran to a nearby house to get assistance, and it was the face of a local housewife that was the first thing I saw when I came to. She was dabbing up blood with a towel, and I suppose she must have been trying to figure out if an ambulance was required.

It turned out that it wasn't. After a bit of recovery time, I was able to walk, although my bike was no longer useable, and a group of my friends escorted me home, helping me to push my bike along the way.

I of course never tried that stunt again, but perhaps I should have persisted. I could have been one of the early inventors of BMX riding, years before it caught on!

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