



Getting Hung-Up On Your Hanger by Bud Jorgensen

Readers of the *CycleCanada Guide* will know that I have a long-held bias towards steel frames. The bike I rode on Tour du Canada is a hand-built steel touring bike from the early '70s. If I were riding Tour du Canada this year, I would take the same bike. One reason is its steel derailleur hanger.

On Tour Arctic I rode a cyclo-cross bike with an aluminum frame and carbon front fork, a design that allows for tires 40 mm wide. After two trips down the Dempster Highway over two years, I have replaced both wheels. Factory wheels with too few spokes have been replaced with 36-spoke rims. Going back to the Dempster, I would take that bike again because I now trust the wheels.

Derailleur hangers and wheels are two problem areas that we see frequently.

With wheels, the solution is relatively straightforward. Find a bike shop you trust to give you good advice about the quality and durability of rims you will need **for your weight**. Then ask about the spokes. Ask if replacement spokes are likely to be generally available when you are away from the big city bike shops. Generally it is a good idea to have spare spokes, especially if you have anything out of the ordinary on your bike. We had a rider on Tour Atlantic one year with wheels that had flat bladed spokes. A spoke broke on the first day and he didn't have a spare. You could probably count on one hand the bike shops in all of Atlantic Canada that *might* have replacements. But! In that Tour Atlantic group there was another rider with the identical wheel design and that other rider did have a spare. The odds of that set of coincidences happening again are too long to contemplate.

With derailleur hangers, the solution is not at all straightforward. In case the term sounds strange to you, a hanger is the small metal appendage that attaches the rear gear-changer to the frame. On steel bikes the hanger is brazed onto the frame. Steel is a forgiving metal. If you bend a hanger, it can usually be bent back into shape without breaking. On aluminum or carbon frames, the hanger likely is a small piece of cast or machined aluminum alloy that bolts onto the frame. If an aluminum hanger is bent, there is a high risk of it breaking by trying to bend it back to its original shape.

If you have an aluminum alloy hanger and it gets bent on the road, there is a real risk that you will not be able to find a replacement anywhere close to where you are. There are just too many designs for local bike shops to have a comprehensive inventory. Derailleur hanger is a specialty mail order business all by itself. DerailleurHanger.com now has more than 350 designs in its catalogue. Finding a replacement to fit your bike can be a challenge. Seriously consider getting a spare before you go on a long bike trip. If you got your bike from a local shop, it should be able to order a spare. A replacement hanger is light to carry and it is inexpensive trip cancellation insurance.