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Transcript

Speaker 1

It's time for the outspoken cyclist your weekly conversation about bicycles, cyclists, trails, travel, advocacy, the bike industry, and much, much more. You can subscribe to our weekly podcast at outspokencyclists.com or through your favorite podcasting app to listen anytime. Now here's your host, Diane Jenks.

Speaker 2

Hello and welcome to the outspoken cyclist. I'm your host, Diane Jenks. Thanks for joining me today. I think spring is pretty close by. And with that, there are thoughts of great riding ahead. Before we get started today, I wanted to mention an upcoming show about a new documentary. As you know, one of the greatest writers to ever live and compete on a bicycle was Marshall Walter Taylor. Most of us know him as Major Taylor. Titled Major Taylor champion of the race, the documentary will be coming to you from Indiana Public Media's WT IU on February 26th at 8:00 PM. If you have the PBS app, you can find it there, or you can go to wtiu.org after the program airs and download it for streaming. We'll be talking with past US champion John Howard, one of the luminaries of the documentary, in an upcoming episode of the Show before it airs. So we will remind you again. My first guest today is Dave Simmons, the executive director of Ryde, Illinois. We've spoken with Dave in the past, but today's conversation is about bicycle related crashes and fatalities in Illinois, along with some data or should I say lack of it, about E bikes. I wanted to catch up with Dave because of the ride. Illinois Bill tracker that the organization is making available on their website, it offers you the ability to not only track statewide bills, but also federal legislation as it pertains to bicycling infrastructure and such things as E bike rebates. In the second-half of the show, we're going to speak with Mark and Kal Norstad from Paragon Machine works. Tarragon supplies, the custom frame builder with high quality precision bicycle components from dropouts and head tubes to bottom brackets, as well as parts tools and accessories. Mark, who started the company in 1983, will be passing the torch to Sun Cal in June and I wanted to catch up. With them before the transition. Illinois, along with so many other states, is experiencing the horrific consequences of more people riding more bikes more often, which is, was and always will be. The goal of all advocacy organizations. By crashes, injuries and fatalities are up and whether there needs to be more legislation, better enforcement of the rules of the road or something more. Of is part of my discussion with Ryde, Illinois executive director Dave Simmons. We also talked about the organization's new online bill tracker and some of the events that will take place in the state this year, as well as the dubious distinction that Illinois has as either the only or one of just a few states. That has a law on the books stating that bicyclists are permitted

but not intended users of the road, and that needs to change. Hi, Dave. Welcome back to the outspoken cyclist, Happy New Year. How are you?

Speaker 3

Hello Diane. Happy New year. Hey, all's all's well. Cold, but we're good.

Speaker 2

Yeah. I just spoke with somebody who said he'll say happy New Year for another week, then he.

Speaker 3

Interesting. And this came up in conversation with us too, and some people were saying it's OK through January, but after that. You'll need to cut it off.

Speaker 2

Yeah, right. Just cut it out. Do something different. So we spoke. Wow. It's been almost three years now. Now and you were relatively new to Ryde, Illinois. I wanted to catch up with what's going on because I saw your build tracker and I thought it was a really cool idea. Then I spoke with somebody earlier today, which you don't know yet, who said that Evanston is doing some really cool things. So let's get started.

Speaker 3

Let's see how looking forward to the conversation.

Speaker 2

I I don't really want to talk about it, but we're going to talk about it and that is bicycle fatalities. It was terribly high in 2023. Was it bad in Illinois too?

Speaker 3

Yeah, yeah. Definitely a grim milestone. For the first time, at least in the data that we're familiar with, there were 40 bicyclists killed in Illinois. So put that in perspective. There were 33 bicyclists last year. So either way you look at it, you know it it is a a new, a new threshold. But it's also it was. 21% increase over the previous year, so. Not that you want.

Speaker 2

What do you think you attribute it to the?

Speaker

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Speaker 3

That's a great question because and it comes up fairly regularly, some will say heavier vehicles, bigger vehicles, distracted drivers and then kind of on the flip side of that is more people on E bikes and you know that can move a little bit faster. I don't I haven't seen. Any conclusive data? It's probably a combination of all those things we as an organization we our board approved in a a new strategic plan last year and the number one goal is to greatly reduce and ultimately eliminate bicyclist fatalities. And it's interesting when we look at things from that angle and then. Remind ourselves that you know there are more people on E bikes or, you know, mobility devices that are moving faster. Maybe some folks who are not as familiar with how those work like that can come into play. We're not questioning our goal of eliminating fatalities, but it it's an interesting like when we step back from it, it's like, hey, well, we have to, we have to keep this in mind too, because transportation in general is kind of evolving or kind of evolving.

Speaker 2

It is. It is so do you know how many of those fatalities were on ebikes? Is that a number that you do know or don't know?

Speaker 3

That is not something that, from the data we have, which is data that is provided by the Illinois Department of Transportation, it's kind of the, you know, the official. Record if you. Will that does not share that information, but I'm I'm going to take that as something to look into, Diane possible either even if it's just via.

Speaker 2

Yeah, I would, you know.

Speaker 3

Like the news stories, because we've been, we've been tracking. So we had data from 2018 to 2022 that was provided. It's the, you know, the official data if you will. And then we as an organization started tracking. Fatalities based on news reports and Google alerts and that last year, and we'll continue that. So we can definitely look into and I can follow up to see if we have anything that is meaningful.

Speaker 2

Does Illinois have a vision zero plan?

Speaker 3

Not no. The state does not. I will say though, the state if through the the Department of Transportation developed a new active transportation plan last year with a very strong focus on vulnerable road users. So obviously bicycles fall into that. That due to the the latest infrastructure bill, the IA because there were so, so many fatalities in Illinois, the dot had to produce available road users safety assessment. So trying to trying to gauge

where things stand and then offering some suggestions. To, you know, municipalities to counties, townships, whoever is, is owning and maintaining Rd. It's and I. Have to say it's it's a pretty well done document right now that it's kind of like any plan. It's a it's a document now. How do how does that get implemented, you know, in in rural suburban urban settings? So I well, there's not a vision zero plan. There are efforts underway. If implemented properly, you know can have an impact on on some of these tragedies.

Speaker 2

Let me reintroduce you and then I want to talk about your bill tracker, which I find very interesting. We're speaking with Dave Simmons. He is the executive director of Ryde, Illinois. We will give you a way to track the bills that he is. So tell us about this bill tracker. It's it's really a good idea, I think, and it might engage some more people. To get involved.

Speaker 3

Yeah, that. And that's really the goal, right? So the kind of the the short history there and right, Illinois has been around for 32 years now. We've done an OK job. I would say when it comes to advocacy to, you know, to pushing for legislative change and policy change. But what we didn't have was. You know a direct way to connect with residents of Illinois. So we we now have an advocacy application which many orgs have had for some time, for example, which could say, hey, Diane, I'll still 1234 was introduced. We encourage you to contact your elected official and voice. Support this and that so. We have that we intend to use it. It's just the start of the legislative session here in Illinois. So there's not anything we can specifically state right now. But with that application that we purchased, there was this this build tracker, which we were like, wow, this seems awesome. So, but essentially what we can do is is flag. All of the state and federal bills that either we're keeping an eye on or that we're interested in good, bad, or indifferent. And make that. Really easily through through a widget available on our website and then individuals can then go on to that and and learn quickly. See the status of the bill. There are hyperlinks where they can learn more about it and eventually once we have those kind of calls to action and advocacy. First, we'll be adding those to this tracker as well, so it's really. A one stop shop for. Folks to to visit and eventually act on things that are important to them. So what was slated works?

Speaker 2

Yeah, that's that's really cool. I think I get alerts from the League Bike league out of Washington, you know, calls to action. And I think that they can't do statewide. But so obviously state organizations should be able to offer that. Not sure if Ohio is doing it or not. They're on my list to speak. To the not too distant future, but I think it's a great idea. So you do have some federal bills there too.

Speaker

There are, yeah, and I.

Speaker 3

Will say what's on the the site right now is really a collection of 2023 bills, some of which will carry into 24. But if someone were to go on our site and you start to start clicking around, they'll see like there's not been a lot of activity, especially in Illinois most of the. The activity that, that, that results in legislative change happens in the spring session, so kind of that January to may time frame. So yeah, some of those bills have really kind of languished since March and and we're really don't expect them to go. Too much further. There is the possibility that they get reintroduced in the 2024 session, in which case. You know there there will be. It'll be more meaningful. We fully intend to maintain that list. I was just checking on on the site, the public facing site iga.gov today to see if there's been any action and there really hasn't the. The House and Senate, you know, I just started meeting again this week, so we expect. A flurry of. Activity at some time and then we'll use that as kind of the the trigger to update that list of bills and then state state bills and then federal, you know we we partner with League of American Bicyclists and I'll be out at the the. Summit in DC. And there's always the priorities that they have in mind. We've not really had.

Speaker 2

Right.

Speaker 3

To your point, LA's been able to send out those blasts. We'll now have another way to kind of amplify that message using this tool, this new tool that we have and have that one stop shop for folks who you know to visit, that that page and learn more about the bills that are out there.

Speaker 2

Are there specific pieces of legislation you'd like to see either reintroduced or introduced for the first time, that would affect cycling in?

Speaker 3

Yes. So I'm. I'm really excited about this thing because we formed through our strategic plan last year. We formed an advocacy committee and the committee has been working quite a bit on identifying our legislative priorities and so. The three that we've identified for 2024 are an E bike rebate or incentive program, which many states have done. I'm sure you've read about it. Cities have done, you know, Denver, Boulder or, you know, like there's great examples out there. We would like there to. The A program that Illinois residents could tap into to lower the cost of purchasing an E bike, and there's lots of different kind of flavors to that, if you will. There can be income requirements, there can be reporting requirements. There's a lot that goes into it. But because we're not. Leading the charge here, we're able to learn from those that have been have gone through the steps and have already established a program. So that that we think can

have a a great, but I guess impact on people's lives could help with some of the greenhouse gas emission goals that the state is set forth. So that excited about that and we do think we are we know there will be some bills introduced along those lines. #2. Would be making it easier for municipalities or owners of those that own and maintain roads to reduce speed limits. So the default speed limit Illinois on in an urban area is 30 miles an hour. So if it's if it if the road is not signed 30 miles an hour is the default. The argument against making it easier to for municipalities to lower that speed limit is that right now it's it's a rather intense effort. There's gotta be, you know, a traffic study. There's got to be lots of data and research that goes into it and. What can happen is through that process. With the 85 fifth percentile and and you know and the things that come into it could actually lead to an increase. You know the research could say, yeah, you know what, 35, you really think this should be 40 so.

Speaker

Right.

Speaker 3

All that being said, we're we we've we've spoken with a member of the state Senate about a bill that passed in Minnesota last year, which basically lessens the the amount of effort and the the burden, if you will, on a municipality not only time wise, but also. Afterwards, cost of of resigning. Roads where the speed limit would change. So we're really hopeful that something like that could pass and the the details to be worked out. But just so if you know any town, Illinois knows that people are going too fast. They have a less. Involved way of of reducing the speed limits in their community. And then thirdly in. Arguably most important is Illinois. To our knowledge, pretty much confirmed by League of American Bicyclists today, is the only state in the country that recognizes bicyclists as permitted users of the road but not intended users. And this goes back to a court case from 25 years ago, which was just. I guess the order the Illinois Spring Court just ruled last month and upheld the previous ruling that bicyclists are permitted users, but not intended. And what that does is if someone were to have a a serious crash, which is the case in in both these situations from 1998. And then 2019, they really have no recourse. Hey, you're not like you can be there, but really didn't make this for you. That has all sorts of kind of ripple effects. So we would love. To and and again, we've already started conversations with at least one state senator about physically stating that bicyclists are permitted and intended and not just when there is specific infrastructure for bicyclists or signage, so.

Speaker 2

It's interesting you bring that up. So I had a conversation with a bike lawyer here in Ohio, Steve Magus, who took a cab. About and that that sort of hinged on permitted but not intended kind of use and it happened to be I. Think on a. Bike path that it changes the responsibility of the operator of the vehicle. In this case the bicycle and I, I cannot believe that states still are saying.

Speaker 3

OK.

Speaker 2

You're permitted, but that road wasn't intended for you. When you go back to the beginning of the 20th century and roads were only built for Vikings, not for cars. So it's pretty sad. I hope you get that. Straightened out there, that would be really nice.

Speaker 3

I think it could be huge because one of one of the real deterrence is that municipalities are reluctant to then build out a connected or any kind of network because once they put in a bike lane protected bike lane aside, you know, whatever it might be, then all of a sudden, based on this ruling. They they could be liable if someone is injured and and one of our fears is that now like that case from 98 has kind of, you know, drift off in memory, maybe folks who are around.

Speaker 2

Right.

Speaker

Right.

Speaker 3

The transportation Planning and engineering sector, maybe some have retired since then, so it it was kind of laying in the weeds and now all of a sudden it's it's been elevated to, you know it's it's right alone has done several radio, TV, newspaper interviews. So like people know about it. So we're afraid that. Some municipalities are now going to kind of be reminded of that and perhaps not pursue some of the things that they've got in their their active transportation plan so.

Speaker 2

Yeah, that's when advocacy needs to step in. You know that people who actually live in a community and ride their bikes want. All of the benefits of being, you know, a vehicle on the. Road, right, right.

Speaker 3

And it goes like flies in the face of all the good thing is a bicyclist. But I'm sorry. Bicycles can bring it to a community, public health community, health less, wearing all that. And now by making it, you know, kind of planting that seed. Of doubt or concern, even from a bicyclist? Stamp. I'm like, maybe I shouldn't jump on the bike because hey, I heard about this thing and if I hurt myself, I'm.

Speaker

Right.

Speaker 3

And out of luck and and our point is we don't want any. We don't want people to fruitlessly be able to sue municipalities that that is absolutely not what we're looking for. We. But we think if there is a serious life altering crash, there should be some recourse.

Speaker 2

Right. Well and just. To make it a level playing field period, you know. Right, right, right. Especially with E bikes now because you have a bike that can go that 20 or 25 miles an hour and and and now they're not intended to be there. That's that's that's an issue. Let's go to a lighter. That's heavy. We're speaking with Dave. Him and CC executive director of Ryde, Illinois. I want to know. What events you guys are coming up with this year?

Speaker 3

Sure. Yeah, you know what we do? So right Illinois, we do an annual Grand Illinois bike tour. That's our biggest fundraiser. It's a. Well, it's it has been a six day tour of different places in Illinois, so it moves around every year. It is June 6th to 14th or 8th to 14th and so this year we're going to be in, in the central part of the state. It's going to be we're going to stop in Champaign, we're going to stop in Springfield and I believe the other town is Maroa. So as you can imagine, Diane and ends up being a loop, right? Because we we start and end at the same place. But we're we're adding a little bit of a wrinkle this year, a good wrinkle in that we're offering 2-3 day options as well. So what the the places we were staying for two nights, Champaign and Springfield were basically offering multiple routes that people can explore but stay in the same place. And and that's based on feedback from our riders who you know somewhere can't ride for 6-6 days. You know, getting a little bit older or folks who just don't have the time. So we're hoping that this will attract, you know, slightly different crowd, maybe some younger folks that can and still enjoy the the casual nature of our tour, but not have to commit, you know, to a week, weeks vacation or a week away from family.

Speaker 2

Right now, is that a fully supported tour?

Speaker 3

It is, yeah. And it, you know, it's small. You know, we're we're right next door to RAGBRAI. So, you know, RAGBRAI, you know, they the people.

Speaker 2

Yeah, that's good. Zillions of people, right. I absolutely do.

Speaker 3

We like ours. We actually due to the the lack of suitable camping sites. So we we typically camped on Community College property or in city parks. Obviously with permission we couldn't find that this year despite lots of work trying to kind of identify. Yes. So it's a hotel only tour, which means we're we'll have somewhere between, you know, 160 to 175 people. So it's it's much smaller. And then, yeah, the big old party that RAGBRAI is. But we like the intimate feel of it in in that in that case, so.

Speaker 2

Is registration open already?

Speaker 3

Registration is open. Yeah, and I think, you know, we tend to sell this out. Obviously, it helps to have, you know, a smaller tour and and really to have a cap, especially when we're working or staying in hotels. I think we're about 80% full.

Speaker 2

Right. Wow. Well, we'd better get on it, right? If you know, if you wanna, if you wanna do this, right, right.

Speaker 3

And then the other events I would. Say that that you know we're affiliated with we help kind of. Insert some, some energy and ideas into a fair number of community bike rides that happened throughout the year. There's some really great rides that happen in the on. The West side. Of Chicago, the street Love Ride is 1 where we literally take over the streets. So right and we're supporting the organization that puts it on. To help with some of the logistics and volunteers that it's like the third Saturday of of August and it's just amazing. We're riding at night. We've got balloons on our shoulders and it's all about. Kind of spreading peace and love and connecting with neighbors in in an area that you know I've had some issues with violence, so it's it's a great positive presence in the community and the other event I would mention is we'll be doing what we call or offering what we call let's ride comma in Illinois. We have to throw the comma in there in which case we. Incentivize or encourage. Folks to plan a community ride, you know, or ride a family friendly ride in their community around the state, and we offer some some guidance on how to make that happen, how to you know, how to make it fun, how to make it safe. We've had anywhere between 17 and 30 rides every year. So we're really hoping to. You know repeat rides in some communities, but then also bring in some new new communities. And once the event happens and it's a 10 day period in September where we encourage people to to plan their rides, we're really. Pretty hands off. You know what? We're there to not there. We're available for questions or to help people refine their event. But it's. To see a community as you know, to ride through a

community on a bike with your neighbors, it's a pretty, pretty awesome thing, so that that's more of an awareness builder.

Speaker 2

Yeah, it's really nice. It's interesting that we did a ride in our community. Now we've lived here over 20 years. We did a ride several years ago. And the ride leader, who was part of the Police Department or worked in the Police Department taking us through neighborhoods. And we're like, we didn't know this was. Part of our you know. It's like you don't get around. You don't get around, right? Yeah.

Speaker 3

The the I would say. The sights, the smells, the sounds. You know, it's just different when you're on a bike, you're going to notice things. You're not going to see when you're in a car.

Speaker 2

So the last thing I want to ask you is how people can find out more about Ridge, Illinois. Look for the grand bike tour that you're gonna do and learn about this bill tracker. What is the website that they can go to?

Speaker 3

Sure, it's right, illinois.org. We also have a presence on the social media, so Facebook, Instagram, Twitter or ex. Yeah. So we're, I think we're pretty accessible. I will mention that there is a another organization, a tour organization called Bicycle Illinois that we oftentimes we're we're frequently we'll swap emails like, hey, this was meant for you, this is. Meant that type. Of thing, but right in Illinois is our organization. Yeah, we'd we'd love to to connect with folks and always. To to get emails and and hear ideas from folks out there that can help with our mission to make Illinois better.

Speaker 2

You're biking. Well, I really appreciate you taking time to talk with me today. We've been speaking with Dave Simmons. He is the executive director of Ryde Illinois. It's Ryde illinois.org. You can find it all on our website, outspokencyclist.com and on all the social media. Good luck with everything this year. Thanks so much for taking time to talk with me in this kind of cold. Time of the year.

Speaker 3

Yeah, I'm happy to do so. Thanks for reaching out and we'll we'll stay in touch.

Speaker 2

OK, have a good one.

Speaker 3

Thanks, Diane.

Speaker 2

My thanks to Dave Simmons for joining me on the show today. As you heard, neither of us has a lot of data about E bike crashes and since it came up in this conversation as well as the one I recently had with John Sirico in New York, I contacted the NTSB to see what kinds of data they are or are not collecting. Unfortunately, their response was less than satisfying. Brittany Rollinson from the NTSB said quote unfortunately, the NTSB doesn't collect or house data on E bike crashes and fatalities. For our 2022 report, the NTSB used a mix of methods and pulled from several existing data sources to assess the usability of these databases and compile the numbers we used in our report. In our review, we found that this data is non standardized and often not recorded. Due to this fact, the NTSB issued several recommendations to agencies responsible for tracking fatalities and injuries. Pages 33 and 34 in our Report. So if you would like to read that report, I have a link to it on our website outspokencyclist.com and she advised that we go to the Consumer Product Safety Commission to find out if they have more information on E bike crashes. Also the 2024 Illinois Grand Bike Tour runs from June 9th through June 14th. And you can find out more about all the things happening in Illinois, including that tour, the bill tracker and how the legislation might be going to make bicycles intended users of the roadways at rideillinois.org. So let's take a break. And when we return, we'll speak with Mark and Kal Norstad from Paragon Machine works in Redmond, California. You're listening to the outspoken cyclist. Who knew that a bronze replica cannon would lead to a lifetime of machine work? And that is exactly what happened when Paragon machines Mark Norstad first realized that you could actually make such a thing in a machine shop. Taking all the machine shop classes that were offered in high school and on into college, mark started Paragon Machine works in his parents basement in 1983. Fast forwarding several decades mark is about to pass the torch to his son Cal. As Mark looks at retirement this summer. Here's our conversation. Hello, Mark and Cal. Welcome to the outspoken cyclist. Thanks for joining me on the show today. How are you?

Speaker 5

Doing well. Yeah. Thanks for inviting us.

Speaker 2

Now it's my pleasure. And where are you?

Speaker 4

We are in Richmond, CA in my apartment.

Speaker 2

And how is the weather?

Speaker 4

It looks partly cloudy, but it's nice and nice and warm, as warm as you can hope for on winter day.

Speaker 2

Like this? So. So you're not having the whole horrific rain that we keep seeing on the on the?

Speaker 4

No, we are we are. But but today it's been it's been pretty nice and it tends to. Warm up by the afternoon, you know. You can go out and shorts. And a T-shirt if you want so.

Speaker 2

Yeah, my parents live down at the little bit South of, well, actually a little bit north of San Diego at La Costa for 22 years. And I used to love going out there. Cool in the morning, warm in the afternoon near the ocean. It was nice. It was nice. So I want to begin with Mark because he's the Patriarch here. Tell us about. Yourself and how Paragon started.

Speaker 5

OK. So probably starts with the first bicycle I ever got, which is in 3rd grade and I learned to ride the bike and it was fun. I really enjoyed it and we went on on bike rides with all of our pals and then sort of the crucial thing that got me into the other half of this machine work as a friend of the families had a bronze cannon. That he had. And we went up to his ranch and we were blasting off his cannon all day long and had a great time. And I said, where did you get that thing? It's like, where do you find a really nice little model, bronze cannon? And he said I had a. I hired a machine shop to make that. And that was the the little spark in my brain that said machine shop. You can make really fun things that way. So I was heading into high school and they, you know, this is back in the days when. They actually had machine shot last. High school. So I signed up for machine shop and I'd loved it. It's great. Took it for four years every single semester I was in high school, I was in enrolled in the. Machine shop class by my senior year I had enough credits that I could take 5 periods a day of machine shop.

Speaker 4

How things have changed.

Speaker 5

Yes, and I actually end up casting my own cannon in that class. The the teacher had my parents sign a sign, a waiver that if I blew myself up, it wasn't his fault, but that that really got me excited about machine work. And I've been for a long time. I've been excited about my. After high school, I didn't know what I was going to do, where I was going, but the local junior college also had a machine shop program, so I figured I'll just

keep doing this. When I was finishing up that program, the teacher said, well, would you be interested in a job in a machine shop and the job the the idea really hadn't crossed my mind. You know, I love machine work, but I never thought about doing it for a living. So I took the job and worked at the shop for 3 1/2 years. Learned an incredible amount of stuff about production machining, you know, real everyday, genuine machine work. And I quit that job to go back to school. I was in school for another couple semesters. Then I went back to visit my old boss just to say hi. There are two partners there. One of the partners saw me as I walked and he said, what do you want? He is kind of a crab. The other partner said, well, sit down. Let's talk. And he said, what are you doing? I said, well, I'm taking school and said, you know, you ought to start your own machine. And again, the thought never occurred to me, he said. Yeah, I'll, I'll give you some customers, some people you. Can call and. Then yeah, you're you're smart enough you could. Do it and I. Was like, OK, sure, I guess I'll do it. So I borrowed money from family, got down payment for a couple of machines, put them in my folks basement, went out, looked for work for one day and that's the last time I ever looked for work. The work came in steadily size in Marin County. This is the early 80s. Mountain biking was already well established by that time, but people were advancing from cruisers to more. Sophisticated mountain bikes. And so I knew a bunch of people that were in the mountain bike scene and they had parts they wanted made and they said Ohh, you got a machine shop. Can you make this thing for my bike or that thing? It's like, yeah, I can make that. So it just happened to be kind of in the right place at the right time with the machines and an interesting bicycles. And it just kind of coalesced into a career.

Speaker 2

I'll say. Let me take a moment to reintroduce you and then we're going to speak with the next in line. Cal. We're speaking with Mark and Cal N said they are the owners of Paragon Machine works and Mark is passing the torch on to Cal, Cal, chime in and and tell us about you and how. Kept up the interest to now take over.

Speaker 4

Yeah. Well, I I will start by saying that for a long time, I did not have interest in taking over Paragon. I remember a funny story back in like 7th or 8th grade. I was at the farmers market with my mom and we were talking about working at Perry on, and I had been there for two weeks that summer. And I was like. And what I'm not sure if I want to do this. So I said Mom, I need to tell you something. And she said, what are you, are you gay? And I said no, I'm not. But thanks. I am not interested in working at Paragon. She's like, OK, so I got two things out of the way there. But yeah, so over over time, you know, in high school, I prioritized growing over. Everything else so I didn't.

Speaker 2

Wait, wait. Say that again. I missed it. You got prioritized what?

Speaker 4

I prioritized rowing. Yeah, rowing, and I loved it. I did for four years, and I thought that would be my whole life in college as well. But due to an injury ended up not rowing in college and. That decided to take up mechanical engineering kind of just didn't put too much thought into it. Just decide. Hey, this is kind of what I want to do. And so after I started school at Northeastern after my, I guess before my freshman year, I decided to work and save some money at Paragon. And you know, that kind of just. Continued to be the case every summer I'd come back and. I'd try to. Work for a little bit, you know, learn a little bit. We would always take on some cool projects, me and my dad. So I started to enjoy it a little bit more. It wasn't so much just. Standing in front of machines and running parts, who's actually kind of thinking critically and and making decisions that now today, you know, I make a hundred decisions a day. And and I really enjoy that. So it was a pretty fluid process going from, you know, Tom, my parents, I didn't want to do it to completely changing my mind. And the pandemic was really what jump started that because I was supposed to do an internship. In Boston. But you know, they laid off like 5 or 10,000 people, you know, like 16%. They were a large company and sent me on my way. So, you know, I called up my dad and said, hey, is there a spot for me? He said, yeah, sure. Come on in. So it was basically a December of 2020 that I kind of decided, OK. I could see myself doing this. And the rest is history at this point.

Speaker 2

So so, Mark, what do you think of? The sort of legacy that you're leaving Cal, and he's picking up that torch. I I know he's eminently qualified after all these years, but how does it feel to watch your son do this?

Speaker 5

Ohh it feels great. Yeah, I mean, you know, sort of all along, I knew at some point I was gonna end up retiring, you know, either you know, either either of my own volition or I'd end up just getting forced out by old age. And it's it's really been great having Calvin come along and take over and be enthused about it. And I know this business is in good hands. I've always felt that Paragon has had a kind of a commitment to our customers, one frame builder told me once, like if you ever go out of business, you're gonna put a whole generation of people out of business as well.

Speaker 2

No pressure.

Speaker 5

Right, exactly. Yeah. So, yeah, but you know, I mean, these customers have enabled us, our family, to make a living.

Speaker 2

Right.

Speaker 5

Donna and I to put our kids through school and have a, you know, be be comfortable. You know, we we can afford decent groceries. You like it? You know? So, yeah. And Calvin taking over is gonna be just really a good thing for the business.

Speaker 2

Yeah, I it probably will be. So you have siblings, Cal.

Speaker 4

Yes, I do. I have one younger sister.

Speaker 2

Ohh well, she's not then she's not going to be a mechanical engineer.

Speaker 4

No, she's studying bioinformatics at University of San Diego. It's like data science and biology kind of combined.

Speaker 2

OK, no metal parts. I got it. Very cool.

Speaker 5

Yeah, soft part.

Speaker 2

Let's talk a little bit about Paragon and what it does and what it offers. There's, you know, before we actually started recording this conversation, I was telling you guys that my husband has an account with you and he tells me ohh yeah, I order stuff from them all the time. So. And and he is A-frame builder. What are you offering and where did you start that process? Like, what was? What were some of the first products you made for the bicycle industry?

Speaker 5

OK, so the very. First products we did were front dropouts for forks for a company called Trail Master Bikes and they were one of the early mountain bike innovators in Marin County. And then it just. Let's see, starting with the front dropouts, it sort of occurred to me that dropouts are this kind of overlooked part of the bike on less expensive bikes. They're just stamped out of out of sheet metal. They're really pretty crummy. All the really nice frames had camping all the dropouts, and that was how you all was told you were able to tell if you had a decent. So that was a sign. Quality and I thought, well, why did? Why doesn't camping all have any competition? Why doesn't someone else have a line of dropouts that is also recognized as a quality dropout and as mountain bikes

came along, we needed to drop out. That was more suitable to mountain bikes as opposed to Rd. bikes. So I sort of I got into designing a line of dropouts. That were more robust, stronger and different design aesthetic than Camp Meola ones. And it turned out to be really well liked in. The mountain bike.

Speaker 2

I I'm gonna jump ahead a second because I have a question that I don't want to forget, and given the way conversations go, that's what sometimes happens. All these new non standard standards, things like slider dropouts, through axles, people trying to put overbuilt forks on carbon bikes, all that stuff is not foreign to me, but it seems like it it may not be necessary. What kinds of changes have you had to make in your production to keep up with this stuff? And do you think it's? Do you think it's really progress?

Speaker 5

I I would say first, yes, it is. It definitely is progress and and the changes we have to make are are simply manufacturing to to a new dimension or a new standard and those dimensions and standards are almost universally driven by the component manufacturers. So by Shimano and SRAM, so things like through. So all that kind of stuff is I've I've come to us through the component manufacturers. And the question about whether or not it is or isn't a genuine improvement. I say look at disc brakes, I'm not going back to rim brakes ever again and index shifting. I'm not going back to friction shifting. And the same with clipless pedals and the same with tubeless tires and any one of these on their own is sort of, well, that's kind of an interesting thing, but you put all these together. And and a bicycle now is quite a bit different from one just ten years ago, and things like we have electronic shifting. You know, there's just a really a, a lot of things that have. To the the consumers experience on their bicycle. So I'd say overall, yes, it's a, it's a huge improvement now from A-frame builder standpoint or also a consumer standpoint. The frame builders got changed their game and if a consumer already has a few bicycles in their garage, which they probably do, having new stuff comes along. Means that the new stuff is not. Interchangeable with the? Stuff and I think it's it. It's a price that the consumer has to pay. But I think ultimately it has a lot of value because like, like I said, bicycles now are much. Better than it used to be.

Speaker 2

Let's take a short break and we'll be back to speak with Mark and Cal Norstad in a moment. You're listening to the outspoken cyclist. We are back on the outspoken cyclist. I'm your host, Diane Jenks, and we're speaking with Cal and Mark Norstead from Paragon Machine works out in Redmond, California. Well, Cal, I have a question for you having come from the night, the late well, the mid to late 70s up till now and having been at that high end of the market with pro bikes, mostly Rd. And and I look at what's happening now when we were building bikes even just 15 years ago, we were saying this is going to be a lifetime machine. You are going to be able to ride this bike for your entire life. It is. It was built for you. It fits you. It's perfect geometry, perfect handling.

Blah blah and now we can't put. Anything new on it? So what about the fact that component companies are not keeping up with that or or supplying that or saying OK, this is planned obsolescence on our part maybe and then how and how do your frame building customers adjust to that? Or are you still supplying stuff to frame builders who are still building in the old style like a Richard Sachs or a Dave wages or or any of them?

Speaker 4

Yeah, it it really depends. So I mean, of course sometimes we get that that customer that builder who's like I have this bike that needs this very specific insert that we haven't made in over a decade, you know, kind of get one of those and the the cost of setting up a machine for something like that is pretty high. So if we can get away with making. 5/10/20 it really drops the production costs. So what I would say to that is. It depends on the situation who it is. You know we we try our absolute best to meet everybody's needs. You know we stock, I think Poly drop is a good example. It's a dropout that we supply. Like and, there's like 20 different inserts for it because you know every anyone with a Poly drop bike may need one specific insert, and if we don't stop that then suddenly they can't ride their bike if something happens to their hanger, their insert. So it's kind of this game of trying to push people forward towards. Newer standards things that we can make in higher quantities, but then it's also respecting the fact that these people, you know, have been loyal customers for 20 years and and saying, you know what, like, we'll, we'll go out of our out of our way and and make this part for you. So it's. Progress takes time, you know, and I think. There's like a rough timeline of about, you know, 20 to 30 years of parts that we have to make. So you know, in another 20 years, I'd say 2/3 of our current inventory will follow, be obsolete to some degree. Probably, yeah.

Speaker 2

Yeah. And 2/3 of those customers will probably no longer be riding bikes. We do have that, that attrition problem of people aging out of of the sport, which brings me to another question. Now you guys are really heavily into mountain bike. You know, and I again, I come from that road bike kind of adventure bike. You know, I I really like the wider tires and and the I still like drop bars and all of those things but. What do you think? Is going to bring a new generation of riders into the sport.

Speaker 4

E bikes.

Speaker 2

Ah, what do you guys do?

Speaker 4

I would. Yeah. So I. Would say E bikes just because they're so accessible and they're starting to get cheaper and cheaper. So though we may not see the future cyclists be anything like, you know, today's average cyclist, it's the convenience of being able to get from point A to point B very quickly, very efficient. You know, the bike is the most efficient method of transportation. When it comes to human, you know, physical power, I think the E bike is this middle ground between the motorcycle, the car and the scooter. And then you know, the common bicycle we see today. Now that's kind of from your average consumer standpoint, if you're talking about. The the hobbyists, the hobby builders, racers, things like that. I think we'll continue to see them stay away from E bikes and look down on those as as not true biking. But I do believe that E bikes are going to be a very significant part of the bicycle industry, just like we're seeing electric cars continuing to take a larger and larger. Market share what was once all gasoline cars.

Speaker 2

So do you see a product or a system to retrofit any of these old bikes and make them? Ebike capable or pedal assist capable?

Speaker 4

That's an interesting question.

Speaker 5

Yeah, yeah, there are there. Are definitely sort of kits out there available, and they're. Excuse me. It's a battery and then the the motor is mounted in in the rear hub. I I've never actually written one or seen one. From what I've heard they seem to be quite reliable and they work well. They do specifically. Retrofit to older bicycles. So so if if you have an old bike lane around, you could barely inexpensively convert it into a new bike. The other thing that that's happening is there are so many inexpensive E bikes that are imported that are coming. In and they have. As far as I can tell, no sort of standard battery. No battery size, no battery mount. All kinds of variations on the motor and the controls. Controls can be very sophisticated electronics and when any of these things break, there is no service available for them. And so the the, the higher end E bike market made of Bosch components or Shimano components or Yamaha, they're very serviceable. They're quite a bit more expensive, but your local bike shop can take care of them. They can fix them, they can repair them. So certain amount of people will be discontented with their inexpensive E bikes. And a certain percentage of those people will say, well, I want to move up to something better. I like my E bike. But I don't like the quality and they're going to be willing to invest money in a a higher quality E bike. Now there's very limited custom E bikes out there right now, but I imagine that's going to evolve. I imagine more and more people as ebikes become more popular, people will want higher quality ebike.

Speaker 2

So will Paragon be able to? Buffer product for that better quality ebike cause yes I understand about the imported and expensive Amazon drops it on your porch and they bring it to us to put together and it's it's pretty mediocre and it's heavy very very heavy these bits. So will you be able to move into that market successfully?

Speaker 4

I think it really depends on the demand. Like I mentioned earlier, quantity is a really important aspect of any manufacturing job. The difference between making ten parts and 50 parts can mean cutting the price in half. So it's really just a matter of of. Testing the waters, seeing what people want, and the fact of the matter is that if people want that we're more than willing to make you know at the end of the day we're a we're a company and we're business and we want to meet our consumers needs. Our consumers want, so I could definitely see that happening. We we are not. Involved in the E bike industry. Pretty much all at this point, I would say uh, but that is a question we get quite often is, you know, will you do that? And I think the answer to that is probably, you know, I only see the E bike industry expanding.

Speaker 2

Sure, sure. So let me reintroduce you one more time then I want to talk about two other things. One is Mark, being inducted into the Mountain Bike Hall of Fame, of course and the other is some thoughts about the health of the industry and moving forward. So we're speaking with Mark and. How Norstad from Paragon Machine works out in California, where it's probably sunny and warm compared to icy and rainy here. But anyway, so tell us about. Being inducted into the Mountain Bike Hall of Fame mark because it's it's really a an honor and a privilege and clearly you have earned it.

Speaker 5

Yeah, that's what I was going to say that exactly it's a, it's a real honor and I'm I'm really. Sort of flattered and proud that people would would think that I that I have have the. Sort of requirements to make it into the Hall of Fame and there's a lot of good company there. I'm really there's some really great people that I I share the Hall of Fame with and as far as it was great being there for the induction ceremony and we all. Went for a. Group ride and it was it's great. It was a lot of fun. So I'm. I'm really that's. It that's. Really, really. One of my higher accomplishments, I think.

Speaker 2

Well, if you look on the website and you drop down the menu of what you offer, I can, there's a lot of stuff there. I was looking at it yesterday and I'm going, holy smokes, there's a. Lot. There again, I'm not building these bikes, so I mean. I know what all those little parts are, but. Ordering them ohh would make me crazy, so let's talk a moment about the health and future of the artisan frame building business. It it is a niche, very small and it is to me a very important part. It used to be that innovation came from the hand builder into the industry. And now it seems like it's coming from the industry and

trickling back down to the hand builder. How healthy is, is the hand building? Part of the business. And do you think it's lacking now because NABS is gone? There are a couple of small shows popping up, but NABS made a big difference I think.

Speaker 5

Yeah, NAV is certainly a a pioneer in in getting the hand built movement to get a lot more publicity and and nabs. Really did a great service to. Hand built industry. Now that we have the main show in Portland and the Philly Bike Expo, I think they've taken the place of NABS and and really done a good job. Both of them are essentially regional shows, although they are definitely getting much more of a national presence and they're sort of. By default, turning into an East Coast show and a West Coast show where NABS travel around to a bunch of different cities and and some cities that Nas went to were not as like enthusiastic say as Sacramento or Portland. You know, so there are a couple of shows there that could have been better attended. And I think one of the things about Philadelphia and Portland OR is just the the level of enthusiasm for bicycles in those cities is really phenomenal. So that's a, that's a really good thing as far as the overall health of the. The hand built business or ours and bikes? It's really a tough way to make a living. It's just, you know, people get into it because they love bicycles. People get into it because they love working with their hands and then they decide they want to build bikes for a living. So the first thing they do is make, you know, free or almost almost free bikes for their friends and their family. And that puts all the people that are doing it. For living, competing with people who are work free and then the people are working for free, you know, some of them actually decide they want to do it for a living. And so they step up and and and try and try and pull it off. And there's really been very few people. Who pulled off well and do it for years and years. Guys like Karl Strong, Brad Bingham. You know, they're Richard Sachs. You mentioned. You know, there there are some guys who really have been able to pull it up really, really well. And then there's a whole bunch of small frame builders that aren't making ends meet. They're not. You know, they have to have a day job. Which is which is kind of disappointing that you have that you work that hard and the quality of your work is expected to be so good and you can barely make.

Speaker 2

Let's take another short break, and when we come back, we're going to round out our conversation with Mark and Cal Norstead with a look toward the future. You're listening to the outspoken cyclist. We are back on the outspoken cyclist and here is the last part of my conversation with Mark and Cal Norstead from Paragon Machine works. Yes, indeed. And you know what, the bicycle business itself? Just bike shops. It's in general that's, you know, it's easy to get in. But it's not easy to sustain. Yeah, I and I totally understand that. The reason I'm asking the question is because most of the listeners here. Are are the people who ride those exquisite bikes and may or may not understand? What it takes to be a builder who is? Is sustainable. You know, it's hard.

Speaker 5

Yeah. Well, I'd say to to all your all your listeners who do have a hand built bike. You got an awesome deal there.

Speaker 2

You have no idea.

Speaker 4

Yeah. The margins on the amount of time. Into that are very.

Speaker 2

Right. You know, that's the dollar an hour thing, right? On a good day. On a good day. So.

Speaker

Right, yeah.

Speaker 4

Yeah. So I did just. Want to add one thing to that? I am certainly not A-frame builder, I I've never even built A-frame myself, so I'm looking from the outside in and I I don't want to be presumptuous, but one thing I. Think that has. Changed at least I've been told because I haven't. I'm not old enough to have experienced the full timeline of it, but is that frame building has gone from more of an? Artisan industry to more of you know, more competitive capitalist India. I think that is a difference that I've heard explained, and I think with with younger guys I I've seen a lot of friend blowers out there. They're really prioritizing like, can I make a frame in one day and how can I perfect my process so that I can just crank out bikes. And if I have an order for a bike, I can get that to them and you know. Ship it within a week. So my feeling you know and and I'm sure this is not shared with everybody, is that. Frame builder should not focus on providing the perfect product with just the perfect welds and perfect dimensions, I mean. Focus on the process and I think overtime the beauty will follow because once you get your process down, it will open up so much more time for you to truly focus on what people want, which is a really beautiful bike with nice welds. And I think the sooner you are able to make bikes quickly, the sooner you'll be able to flourish so. I believe that should be every frame builders priority, but again I'm no frame builder so I'm sure people have there. There's stuff that I may have. Seen some incredible setups.

Speaker 2

I think it's an interesting perspective. I think it's one that people don't talk about enough that you know and and and I've seen this once, you get the bike jiggled up. You know the the process people think it's all in that welding and that no it's not. It's the finish and getting it painted and getting it out the.

Speaker 4

Yeah, yeah.

Speaker 2

Now we've lost a couple of we lost Waterford this year, which was or this past year, which was really a blow to to in, in our case to to my husband's business because we were a fit design and build studio. You know, he wasn't actually hand building the bikes. He is now some of them. But that was a big blow. And so you wonder, is there somebody who's gonna step into that? Place who? Who can do a semi production kind of run and there are a few people I know. Vicious is doing it well. I think he's calling it something else. Metal guru maybe? Yeah. So there are some people doing that.

Speaker 5

Right.

Speaker 2

But you know, again, we're aging out. We're seeing aging out as so many of these people. The If the young people can find a way to. Make it more. Sustainable and they can actually live doing it that would that is a that's a really good thing I think. Well, are you guys coming out with any new products this year? That you can talk.

Speaker 4

Yeah, certainly we have. We have a few that we're gonna keep on the back burner for now. But I think the most exciting one probably be our new flat mount integrated U DH dropout. So it's machine from like a a 2 LB block of tight cleaning. It's not going to be the cheapest dropout that we offer, but. It will save the builder a lot of time and you know, going back to my point earlier time is money. And so though it may be. A couple, a few \$100, it's like if. You can just. Tack Weld and then mount your brake and save all that time. It's like at a certain point the more expensive dropout does pay for itself, so I think that's one of the more unique products that we've I don't think we've ever really offered a a truly flat mount integrated job out just because I think we've we've been hesitant because of the. Price tag and just because of the sheer machining that's gone into it. But I think over the years I've noticed that we have released quite a few products that really. Take a lot of. Effort to make and we've kind of perfected that process in terms of just being able to hog off material and and turn out a A finished part that looks nice that functions well. So that's the one I'm most excited to see how how people use it, how people like it, something that's new but not so new. We are really pushing to to get some EC37 head tubes out there. You know, I think it's it's very similar to the EC44. Or, except I personally feel it looks better on gravel or city bikes. You know, I just. I like the look of it. I like. It's a little bit scaled down, but it's basically an EC44, just 7mm smaller. So with that, we are going to have some reamers machines not in house because we don't specialize in hardening and grinding. We're going to have those made and offer

that tool as well because I think one of the main reasons that builders have not been using EC37 is because there's like 1. 37mm Reamer company out there. I think they're in Europe and you know, I don't believe their reamer actually interfaces with like park tool or any of those other handles and and our goal is to provide a USA made available reamer that can be used with some of the most standard tooling. Already out there that builders already have on hand. I'm sure some people are excited. Other people are like. Oh my God. Another standard, Hooray.

Speaker 2

No, I think actually, and this is aesthetically and in my opinion, I think 44 is just too beefy. I'm really happy to hear that you're actually going in the opposite direction and not saying that we're going to do like a 58 or something crazy that.

Speaker 5

The 37mm standard has actually been around for a long time. Gary Fisher used it on his mountain bikes for an inch and a quarter straight stair and and now it's being taken over by the gravel and the road community because it is smaller than the 44. It's a it look, it actually looks really nice on. A steel bike? Yeah, definitely, I'd say.

Speaker 4

The steel bike is probably where it looks. The nicest, but we the. First one, we are going to. Do is going to be in titanium.

Speaker 5

We have been stocking steel.

Speaker 4

Well, the first large scale run is going to be in titanium, but yeah, we do have some stock in steel right now. Yeah, just a couple quick ones. We are going to be releasing a 180 post mount insert for our sliding dropouts. That's something that we've had some requests for recently. So we feel it's time to.

Speaker

OK.

Speaker 4

To release that, so stay tuned in the. Next couple months. And then something we released last week is our new utility bottom bracket shell. It is a BSA 1 1/2 inch OD steel. Bottom bracket shell and the difference between these and our current bsas there's kind of two main differences. One, we use 1020 Dom, which stands for drawn over Mandrel Steel as opposed to Chrome Molly. It's about half as expensive so it allows us to make our components cheaper. Therefore, the customer pays less and we do not relieve the ID. So though it is heavier, there are a couple of benefits to it being

heavier. One is that it will distort less when welding and. It also cuts the cycle time in half, meaning that you know you can get a bottom bracket shell from us now for like \$5, which has just never been the case. In these days, you know, \$5 bottom bracket shell. That's a really good deal I think, and just do the nature of our process, we can't compete with. Overseas manufacturers, you know, we can't make a relieved chromoly. Bottom bracket shell for for \$6.00, but you know we wanted to try to offer something to frame builders, hobbyists, anybody so that they can come to our web store and say, OK, I can get what I need here. You know, and that has always been our goal is to be able to provide our customers. With everything they need in one place.

Speaker 2

And American made.

Speaker 4

Of course. Always.

Speaker 2

I think that that's something that more and more people are conscious of, you know, in every every product. It's not just bicycles. This has been an interesting conversation. I've learned a lot. I and I love that. So tell listeners how to find you. And let me know if you have any last things you'd want to say.

Speaker 4

Yeah. So our listeners can find us on Instagram, Facebook, or the Custom Frame Forum. I believe we're just paired on machine works across all those platforms. Pretty simple to find us. We also have e-mail. We have a phone. One, we definitely encourage people to reach out with questions, comments, anything at all, you know, just. To discuss.

Speaker 5

Yeah, and don't forget our website Paragon machine works dot. Com. Ohh yeah. That thing? That's that's the best one. Yeah, yeah.

Speaker 2

Ohh that thing you know. I'm sorry, that's an important thing. Mark, what are you gonna do with yourself? And when are you actually walking out the door and not looking back or or is that gonna happen?

Speaker 5

Well, I will always be available for consulting work. You know my goals. See, see Cal succeed wildly beyond his greatest expectations. But the the goal is for me to be formally out of here in June, so it's going to be a transition. I will ease my way out of here and I plan on riding my bike a whole lot more, taking more vacations, doing some

traveling, finishing up a lot of jobs around home that I that I've been putting off for a long time and. Or I still in the building that the business is in, so I. And how's landlord? So I'll be here doing landlord.

Speaker 2

One thing we did not talk about, and that is you do other you do service other industries. Besides, bicycles just quickly sort of enumerate what they are and what you do for them, because I thought they were interesting.

Speaker 4

Yeah, they they're certainly interesting, but I think they make up a smaller part of our yearly revenue than people might think. I would say 90 to 95%. Of what we do. Is by school related really?

Speaker 2

OK.

Speaker 4

And it would be nice to diversify just a little bit, you know, so we're not basically 100% in the bicycle industry, but I think that will always continue to be a majority of what we do. But if you interesting ones are we do parts for a company that makes wine making equipment you know, so we'll keep big like 10 or 12 inch round plates. That are used for squishing grapes. We used to do Caterpillar nuts and other custom fasteners. Those jobs. Have pretty much gone overseas in recent years, so any really large scale jobs like that we we don't we don't get those as much anymore, but we do also work in with companies who do waste management will make different guides and fasteners for them for landfill equipment. And all sorts of things. And then we do a lot of. Custom bicycle related products that don't necessarily fit within kind of the the balance of what we generally do, you know, but. I'd say that kind of covers the 99% of what we do right there.

Speaker 2

So, Cal, are you prepared to be working 28 hours a day, 12 days a week?

Speaker 4

Yeah, I that's probably the one thing I don't aspire to be. You know, I mean, I I I saw my.

Speaker 2

Good luck with that.

Speaker 4

Dad, my yeah. I I saw my dad my whole life, you know, he he basically be gone. When I woke up for school and he'd come. You know, one hour or two hours after me, he'd be gone for 11-12 hours a day. And I remember telling you that, like back when, it was mostly just him, you know, he'd worked 512 hour days, and then in the 8 hour day on Saturdays. So, you know, I think the the difference between now and then is that we have an incredible group of employees, you know, just super hard workers, really. Methodical. Good at what they do. So I am so lucky to not have to come in and work 28 hour days. You know as much as I would like to and and be that productive. I just. I can't, you know, I need. I need to have a life outside of this as well because the last thing I want to do is. Is burnout not be able to to provide for customers and you know, to your question of is there anything else I'd like to add, there is one thing you know with me taking over the business, of course, I think people will see some changes in the way we do things in, in what products we offer. But at the end of the day, our customers have been loyal to us for over 40 years and I do not plan on changing our commitment to our customers. We're going to continue providing bicycle components and. It is 100% in our interest to see the custom frame building. Industry industry thrives, so we're doing everything we can to provide the best components at the lowest price we can. But the fact of the matter is that customers will probably see prices going up a lot in the next couple of years and and that's just as a result of rising material. Costs, rising labor costs, rising utilities, everything has gone up since the pandemic. And so. We're really trying to ride that line of how can we still continue to break even at the end of the year but still provide products that are affordable and make sense for our customers.

Speaker 2

Anybody look at the price of bikes recently?

Speaker 4

I'm too scared. I don't want him.

Speaker 2

Yeah. Well, they're very, very expensive. And so if people don't get that, they do get that they go to the grocery, they see prices increase, they go buy clothes, they go buy shoes. Bicycles are expensive. Sometimes I think there needs to be some sort of reckoning, but not when it comes to what you guys are doing. I I totally get it. Thank you so much for taking so much time to talk with me today. I really enjoyed it. I learned a lot and it's paragonmachineworks.com and you can find them on Facebook and Instagram. Cal. Good luck, Mark, have a wonderful retirement.

Speaker 4

Thank you.

Speaker 2

Thank you. Thanks so much. Have a wonderful day.

Speaker 5

Thanks for hosting us. Appreciate it. Alrighty, bye.

Speaker 4

Yeah. Thank you, Diane.

Speaker

Right.

Speaker 2

My thanks to Cal and Mark for joining me on the show today. If you would like to know more about Paragon machine works, you can follow them on social media or log on to their website paragonmachineworks.com and once again my thanks to Dave Simmons from Ryde, Illinois. Tune in next time when the conversation continues with Doctor Cara Harmon, associate professor from the University of Iowa College of Public Health Department of Epidemiology, Cara is an avid cyclist and teaches as well as conducts research in a variety of areas that include Rd. safety and injury prevent. Mention we'll also be speaking with Terry Lansdale, whose CV is loaded with super cool stuff, including his ultra distance cycling career, as well as his current role as the executive director of Bike Walk North Carolina. Remember that you can follow us on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. Oh, OK. It's X and find show notes, links, photos in a written transcript of the show at outspokencyclist.com. Subscribe to our podcast on your favorite app so you never miss an episode. Thank you so much for listening. Don't forget to get that bike into your local shop for a spring check up soon. Stay well, stay safe. And remember, there is always time for a ride. Bye bye.

Speaker 1

Thanks for joining us today on the outspoken cyclist with Diane Jenks. We welcome your thoughts and contributions on our Facebook page or visit outspokencyclist.com to leave a comment on any episode. We'll be back next. Week with new guests, topics, conversations and news in the world of. Cycling subscribe to the show on your favorite podcast app and you'll never miss an episode. The outspoken cyclist is a copyrighted production of DBL promotions, with the assistance of Wgcu FM Cleveland, a service of John Carroll University. Thanks again for listening ride safely, and we'll see you next week.