

W = WW Pick. Highly recommended.

By LEIGHTON COSSEBOOM. TO BE CONSIDERED FOR LISTINGS, submit lecture or reading information at least two weeks in advance to: WORDS, WW, 2220 NW Quimby St., Portland, OR 97210. Email: words@wweek.com.

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 29

Our Mutual Friend

Money can be your best friend or your worst enemy. The Powell's Classics Book Group tackles Charles Dickens' *Our Mutual Friend*, a tale about the social impact of a large inheritance that suddenly ends up in the hands of an unsuspecting working-class family instead of its intended "misanthropic" heir. The story follows the Boffin family as they decide what to do with the newly

acquired fortune and examines "the ingeniousness of the aspiring poor," along with "the unfailing power of wealth to corrupt those who crave it." *Powell's Books at Cedar Hills Crossing, 3415 SW Cedar Hills Blvd., Beaverton, 228-4651. 7 pm. Free.*

MONDAY, JAN. 3

Wayne Thompson

If you've ever wondered why Portland is called Rip City, then

brush up on your town's basketball history with Wayne Thompson's *Blazermania: This Is Our Story*. The book gives an in-depth look at the Blazers' chronicle, recounting the "magic moments," including "the birth of 'Rip City' and the team's rise to prominence" by claiming the 1977 NBA championship. Highlights include the coaching strategies of Dr. Jack Ramsay, the renowned leadership of Clyde Drexler and even a foreword from legendary Trail Blazer Bill Walton. Bonus: The book contains a compilation of Portland hoops photos from four decades. *Powell's City of Books, 1005 W Burnside St., 228-4651. 7:30 pm. Free.*

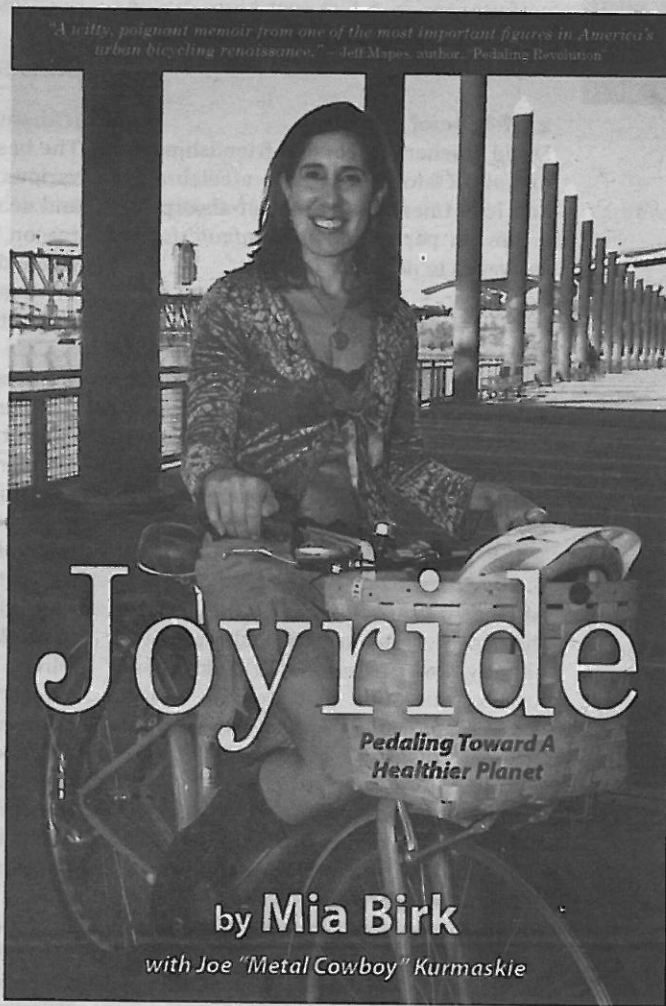
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REVIEW

MIA BIRK JOYRIDE

When one of the Netherlands' major advocates for bicycling was asked this fall to what he attributed Portland's success in becoming one of the world leaders in alternative transportation, he furrowed his brow. "Strong leadership," he said finally. From whom? Another pause. "Mia Birk."

In *Joyride: Pedaling Toward a Healthier Planet* (Cadence Press, 225 pages, \$19.95), Birk, the bike advocate Congressman Earl Blumenauer calls "pathologically optimistic," artfully mixes personal history and facts to create a candid, compelling memoir. With help from city officials and advocates, this feisty visionary transformed Portland into the near-bike-vana so many of us happily pedal today. Newbie Portlanders who take for granted our wonderful Eastbank Esplanade and hundreds of miles of bikeways will learn just what a struggle they took to achieve, while others can take inspiration from the story of how an idealist with persistence and flexibility can change a city literally from the ground up.



How Portland reinvented (two) wheels.

During Birk's ultimately triumphant tenure as Portland's Bicycle Program manager from 1993 to 1999, the erstwhile "car-addicted chubster" successfully battled institutional ignorance—including her conservative Dallas family, the *Oregonian* editorial board, indifferent city and federal bureaucrats, inebriated school district representatives, greedy building management lobbyists and other recalcitrant, often male-dominated, institutions. Telling this potent story via anecdotes (tense public hearings, "wheel and pony shows" and, of course, bike rides) provides a much livelier read than a polemic or wonky policy paper, although the reconstructed dialogue often sounds more expository than the way real people talk. Birk isn't a professional journalist—as the occasional cliché or editing lapse demonstrates—but her humor, determination and idealism shine through.

Birk isn't afraid to call out opponents, nor to admit her defeats and failings (poor event planning, impatience), but her refreshing candor recedes a bit when we don't learn exactly what happened when Portland's bike program was

"downsized" in 1999. Her firm still works with the city, including a major contract this year, so maybe it's unrealistic to expect a full accounting.

After her city service, Birk joined a private planning firm, Alta, a major player in making cities more livable. *Joyride* recounts how, in a decade of consulting from its Portland office, she finds hope and makes progress even in small towns like Government Camp and otherwise benighted suburbs—including in her hometown of Dallas. Birk remains one of Portland cycling's most influential figures.

The book provides clear lessons for anyone who wants to foment change, including a handy, step-by-step postscript. The ride appropriately ends at Portland's Sunday Parkways, a micro-cosmic but tangible realization of the powerful, ever-spreading vision that Birk and her allies have spent two decades turning into reality. **BRETT CAMPBELL.**

GO: Mia Birk talks about *Joyride* at Powell's City of Books, 1005 W Burnside St., 228-4651. 7:30 pm Tuesday, Jan. 4. Free.

ROSE QUARTER
UPCOMING EVENTS

ROSECITY Rollers Portland, Oregon ▶ JAN 15	Disney Live! MICKEY'S MAGIC SHOW ▶ JAN 21
TobyMac Winter Wonder Slam Tour ▶ JAN 29	PBR ▶ FEB 4-5
MONSTER JAM ▶ FEB 12-13	HARLEM GLOBETROTTERS www.harlemglobetrotters.com ▶ FEB 19
SMUCKER'S STARS on ICE 25th ANNIVERSARY TOUR ▶ FEB 26	eric clapton ▶ FEB 28
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