

Lesson 1 - The Cyclist



My name is Bill. I am English. I am retired and I live in Poole.

I have a friend called Malcolm. Malcolm is my best friend. We cycle together.

Malcolm is bigger than me but I have a better bike than him. My bike was more expensive than his.

Malcolm's bike is older than mine. In fact, it isn't Malcolm's bike. It's his elderly aunt's bike.

It doesn't have a crossbar and it has a basket on the front for the shopping. But I don't go as quickly as Malcolm.

From time to time we do a bicycle tour in Normandy. Generally, we leave Poole early and we arrive in Cherbourg around midday.

We haven't any maps. Sometimes we go East, sometimes we go West. Or we go South, or Southeast or even Southwest.

We never go North. Why? Because we would need a boat!

Our last trip was in June. We found a small town to the south of Cherbourg but it was difficult to find a hotel because there were a lot of people in town. In the end the owner of a bar gave us two beds for the night and we dined with him and his regulars.

It was a good evening. When the owner learned that we were old soldiers he gave us two bottles of Calvados. Since I don't like Calvados, Malcolm took both of them.

The next morning we heard a lot of noise in the street. There were a lot of young racing cyclists -- evidently a club race -- and a big crowd of spectators.

Malcolm had drunk one bottle of Calvados with his breakfast and he put the other bottle in his basket for the trip. He left about a quarter of an hour after the young racers. Since I knew that I couldn't go as quickly as Malcolm, who had drunk the Calvados, I followed with the owner of the bar on his motorbike.

One by one, Malcolm overtook the young racers -- he was drinking the Calvados at the same time -- then there was only one racer in front of him. It was a big man in black shorts with a yellow jersey.* The man was going very quickly but Malcolm had drunk the last drops of Calvados and little by little he passed him.

Then they arrived at the next town. There was a big crowd with flowers and flags. The people were shouting 'Bravo,Bravo'.

Malcolm was first. He lifted his hand and he smiled modestly. It wasn't until after having seen the television cameras that he realised that he had won a stage of the Tour de France!*

Original stories written by Bernard Mouzer ©2009. Review and audio tracks by Patrick Buda

** The Tour de France is an annual cycling event founded in 1903. It currently takes place over 3000 kilometers and is considered the most prestigious cycling event in the world. The leader after each stage wears a yellow jersey. The leader at the end of the final stage wins the Yellow Jersey - and the Tour de France.*