

Carl Jameson



Carl Jameson (second from right) distributes bicycles to children around the country as part of his work with the Masons, to encourage health and provide recreational opportunities.

COURTESY: CARL JAMESON

Age: 66

Occupation: U.S. Customs Agent, formerly served with the NYPD for 24 years

Are you a T.A. member? Yes

Where do you commute from? Near the south side of Prospect Park to JFK airport

How many days a week do you commute by bike? Between one and four

What is your route? Linden Boulevard to Conduit, then I take the side roads into the airport. I leave at 5:30 or 6 in the morning and it's ok until you leave the side roads.

What kind of bike do you have? I have a Le Grande ("Suzy") and a Seven ("LuLu")

What kind of gear do you use? Helmet, lights reflective yellow windbreaker, tights with good padding and cycling shoes (they help with drive and give me more power).

How long have you been cycling/commuting? Thirty years, it's a way of life for me.

Why did you start biking? A long time ago, when I worked midnights at the NYPD and I was in school for physical therapy. I started riding in the mornings to wake myself before going to school all day. I'd ride for an hour or so, go to school and then come home and sleep before my shift.

Do you ride in all weather? I try not to ride when the temperature drops below 30 degrees. It's too hard on the respiratory system. I love pleasure riding. To me, it's all about health.

What kind of response do you get from co-workers and friends? I had someone ask me once, "Do you ride everyday?" I said "Do you eat every day?"

What are some of your most memorable experiences on your bike? Two things come to mind right away. First, I participated in many Police Olympics. I would do the 10- and 20 mile time trials and the 800 yard sprints. There were a lot of different age categories and the most amazing thing is that there really wasn't much of a difference in the times between the oldest people and the youngest. Age is only a number when you're on your bike.

And after Katrina I was down in New Orleans helping with the recovery efforts. As a person of color a lot of people wanted to talk to the "FEMA man from Brooklyn." I could feel their pain and anguish. I felt so

helpless because the turnaround time was so slow and there were not enough resources for people. In 2006 the Masons had their annual gathering in New Orleans and we had an essay contest for kids and gave bikes to the 10 winners. Reading their essays made us cry.

What's your daily riding routine? Regardless of whether I bike to work, I always bring my bike to work with me so I can ride at lunchtime. I ride around the airport grounds. During my lunch hour rides I run into a lot of folks riding. You start to look out for each other and feed off of each other's energy. People give me the thumb's up sign all the time.

What was your worst experience/commute? I was riding in Prospect Park and I got to Grand Army Plaza and saw a very elegant woman in a fancy car, it looked like a Bentley or something. As I passed her she flung open her door and knocked me off my bike. At first she was yelling at me, but then she saw my bent wheel and started asking me how much it would cost to repair. I told her what I thought and she wrote me a check on the spot and sped away!

Advice for new bicycle commuters: Respect yourself. Cyclists need to stay visible, keep illuminated, use lights and reflective equipment. Don't be distracted if you like living, that means no ipods, no other distractions. The motorist takes you for granted and is often distracted. You have to make yourself seen and watch out for yourself.

One thing the City could do to make cycling safer: We need more bike lanes, they make it more accessible to ride from point A to point B. If we had more lanes there would be an explosion of cyclists because more people would feel safe to ride.

Ed Note: If you are interested in donating new bikes for Carl's youth bike program please e-mail info@transalt.org for his contact information.

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