

## ONE-MAN crew

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Bob Hughes' house is tucked away behind a wall of trees just east of downtown, across the street from a vacant home that he says won't rent because of all the gang activity in the neighborhood. "Tell Kevin to get a picture of that gangster," he says, referring to a man walking by. He says the gangs have broken into his house and yard many times; a barrage of No Trespassing signs decorate his yard and front door.

Like the high schoolers who harass *Crazy Mike*, the gangsters may target Hughes - also known as *Bicycle Bob* - because of his backyard collection of bicycles. He says he has about 75 in all, many are tucked away in his garage and shed. Dozens of bikes are lined up beneath a tarp, ready to be ridden, repaired or salvaged for parts. His current ride, a red SCHWINN *Le Tour*, is decked out with a U.S. POSTAL SERVICE mail bin to hold whatever he might need on a trip around town.

Many *Wichitans* have seen Hughes, a retired engineer and AIR FORCE veteran, on his daily commute. Though he can drive, he prefers to bike in all kinds of weather, including



snow. "It's more convenient to hop on a bike and ride," he explains - a realization that came to him as a student at WICHITA STATE in the late '60s. Many college students bike around campus; Hughes just never stopped.

He picks up new bikes at garage and estate sales, balancing a new find on the road like a cane while he pedals the one that got him there in the first place. He once rode home that way from ANDOVER - a 30-minute trip at his speed.

Why buy so many? Well, taking a bike to the shop can be expensive, and you never know when you're going to need a new axle or chain. Plus, *Hughes* mixes and matches parts to create a ride with the perfect fit. "It should be tailor-made," he says.

Though he doesn't have to worry about the price of gas, the lifestyle does have its disadvantages. *Hughes* estimates he's been hit by cars at least 40 times, and the staff at WESLEY MEDICAL CENTER have gotten to know him well. He also doesn't wear a helmet, thinking it lulls the rider into a false sense of security. "You get your neck broke either way, helmet or not," he says.

*Hughes* doesn't consider himself part of the "green" movement. He's looked into electric scooters, but hasn't found one worth changing his current mode of transportation. Instead, it seems as though he bikes to prove something: that even in WICHITA, living without a car can be done.

"It's a constitutional right," he says. "A bike is nothing but a new pair of shoes with a round sole." 

