The great time of the bicycle was the 1890’s. The “Safety” bike superseded the “Ordinary” and people were truly mobile for the first time.

The ordinary was the first bike with a high enough gear for true cruising. The gear came from the very large front wheel. In fact the Ordinary was also called the Penny-Farthing due to the great difference between the front wheel and the rear wheel. The rider sat on top of the large front wheel, which caused many accidents as “Headers” occurred during heavy braking.

The Safety bike had a chain to the rear wheel and the rider sat between the wheels. A safe, rapid, efficient transportation system was born. The rider of the safety was still high and forward. Heavy application of the front brake could still bring on the header.

Both the “Safety” and the “Ordinary” had one common characteristic. They were single speed machines. A suitable gear for cruising is too high for starting. The rider was forced to sit in a position above the cranks to attain a high-torque mode. The rider had to stand on the pedals to achieve additional torque for starting. Bike riders have been relegated to setting on a leather strap above the cranks, for more than a century.

Comfortable recumbent bicycles, with suitable seats, were inevitable when gearing became available. The rider could chose a low gear for starting and a high gear for cruising. People could move down to a safer position between the wheels. The seating position was more comfortable and allowed maximum braking with little chance of a header. Then a short circuit happened. The recumbent revolution never came about. Some say that racing bans were the cause. Perhaps that is the case. I believe that something quite different is the cause.

A custom frame builder of today’s safety bike, has well known guidelines for his frame geometry. He builds the bike, measures the geometry and happily bends the fork forward to provide the rider with proper handling qualities. A recumbent builder doesn’t have that luxury. His rider is in a completely different position; the wheels are of wildly differing sizes and no guidelines exist.

The “Chronicles of the Lords of the Chainring” is a first attempt to provide those guidelines to the recumbent builder. I envision a time when the builder measures the geometry of his bike. He carefully notes the position of the seat relative to the rear wheel contact point. He checks the seat-back angle, and happily bends the front fork backward to provide the rider with proper handling qualities.

Time and general acceptance will tell.