

Rodale Press buys *Mountain Bike Magazine*

by Gary Sprung

One of America's most significant magazine publishers has made an investment in Crested Butte with the purchase of *Mountain Bike Magazine*. Rodale Press, owner of *Bicycling*, *Cross Country Skier*, *Runner's World*, *Prevention*, *Organic Gardening* and a host of others, has purchased the small, local publication created three years ago by Hank Barlow and Kimberly Schappert.

Mountain Bike Magazine will continue to be published out of the world's mountain bike mecca, Crested Butte. Barlow and Schappert will remain as editor and art director and Nancy Schappert will continue as office manager.

What will change are the elements related to resources. Circulation will increase, and ad revenue will probably follow. So the magazine

will be able to increase its number of pages. Barlow said the magazine will begin a new section to better fill the most pressing need posed by mountain bicyclists, answers to the question, "Where can I ride?" *Mountain Bike* will expand its coverage of issues such as the environment, land access and trail maintenance and will increase its attention to racing.

The magazine will also gain "leverage, clout and influence in the bicycling industry," the editor predicted. Barlow hopes the new relationship will introduce Crested Butte to many more people than ever before. The town's nordic skiing scene may benefit from an inside track to *Cross Country Skier* magazine.

Barlow said he and the magazine owners had been looking for a purchaser, but had "never dreamed" they would be approached by *Bicycling*, the nation's largest bike maga-

zine with a circulation over a quarter million. The magazine's publisher James McCullagh called Barlow one day and the two had dinner at the Wooden Nickel. "He wanted to know who I was and what I was thinking," Barlow related. "Then at the end of dinner he said he wanted to buy our magazine."

Mountain Bike had earlier been helped out by Stanley Feldberg, a former chief executive officer of Zayre clothing corporation. Feldberg and his wife Teddy own a home in Mt. Crested Butte.

Mountain Bike was originally financed through investments by Don Kraus, Neil Murdoch, Nick Lypps, Mark Ritter and Richard Barlow (Hank's brother). But the high costs of start up — the inevitable loss of money at the beginning — could have easily sunk the new publication.

Feldberg allowed the maga-

zine "to continue over the years," Barlow said. Though *Mountain Bike* appeared on the scene early as the second magazine devoted only to the off-road sport and the first to feature full color, stylish coverage, it has recently faced increasing competition as other companies realized the high growth potential in the sport.

Barlow said his ambition is "to turn *Mountain Bike* into one of the hottest outdoor magazines in the world. And I do mean 'outdoors' and not just 'bicycling.' I want to get people stoked to get out and explore, to leave behind the normal work-day world and experience the backcountry. Mountain bikes are a tool for that experience. They also can provide thrill and exhilaration and a physical challenge. I hope I can lead people to the feeling when you sit down by a creek and just feel good about where you are and what you've done to get

there."

Don Cuerdon, an editor at *Bicycling* and *Cross Country Skier* who is visiting for Fat Tire Bike Week, explained that Rodale had decided to get into the mountain biking field, then realized it would be better to purchase a going concern rather than start a new magazine.

"These guys are experts," said Cuerdon about the *Mountain Bike* staff. "It's easy to start a magazine. But it's hard to hire a staff who really understands the sport and has a vision. You've got to find somebody with a solid belief in the sport."

Rodale's *Prevention* magazine devoted to good health and natural eating and healing has a circulation of over five million, Cuerdon said. Robert Rodale's first magazine, *Organic Gardening*, was started in the early 1930s. The company's headquarters are in Emmaus, Penn.