







A race against

BY MICHAEL KRANISH

Cyclist Marshall "Major" Taylor of Worcester conquered speed and racial barriers 100 years ago. A hero then, he is all but forgotten now. **time**

Sydney Taylor Brown is 96 years old now, her face still radiating an elegant beauty and her mind still full of memories of the way her father, the great Major Taylor, overcame racism to become champion of the world. "This is all history," she says, sitting in the sun-filled parlor of a care facility in Pennsylvania. "Why do you want to talk to me?" Slowly, she puts herself back in time. Sydney Taylor Brown can still see herself as a young girl in Worcester, riding on the handlebars of her father's bicycle. Such a carefree ride, so pleasing to her father, who was known as the "fastest bicycle rider in the world." As the petite woman tells this story of herself and her father, she puts her head slightly back, as if still feeling the wind in her hair from that long-ago ride. "Yes, I remember," she says, and so the story begins.

ON JULY 1, 1899, TWO YOUNG MEN, ONE WHITE AND ONE BLACK, READIED THEMSELVES AT THE STARTING line of the Charles River Park racing track in Cambridge. The spectators at the elegant Massachusetts Avenue stadium, which seated 10,000, screamed at the start, urging their favorite to win the \$1,000 purse, more than many Americans then earned in a year.

The white man was Tom Butler, a local favorite. The black man, from Worcester, was Marshall Taylor, known to all by his nickname, "Major." His appearance was not without controversy. He had been banned in the South. Many white racers refused to compete against him, partly due to racism and partly because he possessed such blazing speed that he almost certainly would win. Taylor had once been choked by a competitor at the finish line *Continued on Page 21*

Michael Kranish is a staff writer in the Globe's Washington bureau.

11

ality masked and encouraged an un-self-reflecting consumerism. In its own laid-back way, much of Boulder chases taste as rigid as any set by a north-of-Boston matron. When once I never thought I'd last a week in Gloucester, now I could not imagine living anywhere else. Here are the twisted arms of a wild cherry tree reaching out through a pocket of fog, there, the skipping dance of an ebb tide over lambent stones. In the harbor, white sails point to the sky, and frosted crests break against chiseled shores. Even on the gray days, I now know, it is so beautiful as to make one gasp.

As for Mary, she will never be my taste, but now I try hard not to pass judgment when I see her holding court in a kidney-shaped pool of white gravel edged with painted rocks. To other eyes, I know she will always be beautiful: Every time a fishing boat returns safely to the harbor, she has answered someone's prayer. □

A race against time
Continued from Page 11

and threatened repeatedly with death.

Taylor was a compact, extraordinarily fit man. At 5 feet 7 inches, with muscles sculpted from winters of workouts, he had perfected an aerodynamic stance on the bicycle in which his back was perfectly flat and his head barely tilted up.

Taylor's specialty was the 1-mile track sprint rather than long-distance road races. Track racing is a dangerous event, which is partly why it drew so many eager spectators. Riders maneuver at high speeds on a narrow, sloping wooden track, angling for advantage like horses in a breakneck pack. A mistake occasionally costs the rider his life.

On this day in 1899, Taylor started slowly and

Boston Design Center

Sale
Open to the public
2 days only
Saturday, September 22nd
10am - 5pm
Sunday, September 23rd
12noon - 5pm

RED TAG SALE
Chairs, Tables, Antiques, Oriental Rugs, Desks, Sectionals, Orientalia, Vases, Beds, Ottomans, Armchairs, Accessories, Chests, Sofas, Lamps, Art, Office Furniture, Frames, Kitchen, Bath, Window Treatments, Home Electronics

SAVE 30%-70%
Off Showroom list prices

All items sold as is.
Major credit cards accepted at many showrooms

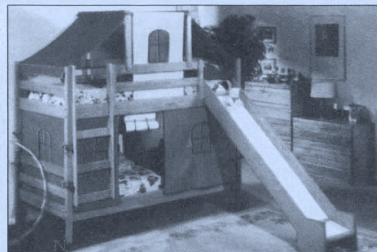
25+ Showrooms Open Shop where interior designers shop. "Designer on Call" will be available on a complimentary basis.

Admission \$5.00
Parking \$10.00
Rebate on purchases over \$200.00

Located off Summer Street at Dry Dock Avenue, next to Black Falcon terminal one mile from Rte. 93 and South Station
617-363-0656

Bedrooms

LARGEST SELECTION OF BUNK BEDS IN NEW ENGLAND



Rte. 1 South
PEABODY
(Next to the Cabaret)
(978) 535-6421

Rte. 9 East
FRAMINGHAM
(200 Worcester Rd.)
(508) 820-0497

www.Bedrooms1.com



BostonWorks

The best jobs in Boston

In The Sunday Globe and at BostonWorks.com.



Smooth. Comfortable. Loaded with options.
And you'll love the way it takes corners.

Our made-to-order upholstery gives you unlimited design possibilities. Visit or call for a free color catalog.

Charles Webb
CLASSIC MODERN FURNITURE



Harvard Square:
6 Story St., Cambridge MA
(617) 547-2100
Hours: Mon-Sat 10-6,
Sun 1-5, Thurs. 'til 8

Factory & Showroom:
51 McGrath Hwy. (Rt. 28), Somerville MA
(1/4 mi. outbound from Museum of Science)
(617) 776-7100
Hours: Mon-Sat 9-4

www.charleswebbcidesigns.com

Stanley • Lexington • Highland House • Mobil • Ekornes • Lane •
Nichols • Stone • Berkshire • Bryhill • Camdell • And More



Bring this ad in for a \$25 Rebate off any purchase over \$250
Not applicable to prior sales. Must be presented at time of purchase. 1 per household. Expires 10/31/01.

Comfort Furniture Showroom
www.comfortfurnitureshowrooms.com
LOWELL
978/453-5651
Our 50th Year!

Mirna, from Rtes. 3 & 495, Thorndike St. exit off the Lowell Connector
Hooker • Pulaski • Universal • Wesley-Hall • Vaughn • Brown Street

Schmidts • Durkin • Sam Moore • Flanagan • Chibola

Not your usual diamond studs.
AN IDEAL COMBINATION
Spirer-Somes Jewelers & Lazare Diamonds®



SPIRER-SOMES JEWELERS
www.spirer-somes.com
Custom Jewelry Designers
1794 Mass. Ave., Cambridge
617-491-6000 Tue-Sat

Ideal cut to achieve maximum beauty

stay home saturday nights.



MEMBER
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BILLIARD COLLEGE OF AMERICA

Seasonal POOL & PATIO
www.seasonalpoolpatio.com Burlington
256 Cambridge St., Rt. 3A • 800-698-8422 • Open 7 Days

SCANDINAVIAN CONTEMPORARY FURNITURE



LOTHAR FUCHS
CUSTOM FURNITURE
(978) 256-4848
Rte. 3, exit 29 (Rte. 129) to Mill Rd.
(only 500 yds. from exit)

Mon-Fri. 10-6. Sat. 10-5
262 MILL ROAD, CHELMSFORD, MA OFF RTE. 129 AT RTE. 3

only leaped into the lead at the last second of the 1-mile contest. The crowd angrily called for an all-out race from start to finish. Taylor agreed to a rematch and won again.

Within two months, he would become world champion at the 1-mile distance, and within several years, he would become one of the best-paid, best-known athletes anywhere.

It may seem hard to imagine now, when cycling is but a footnote on American sports pages except when the Tour de France unfolds, but there was a time when there was no bigger attraction than the dangerous sport of bicycle track racing and there was no bigger star than Massachusetts's own Major Taylor.

Taylor was dominant like Babe Ruth; he made racial history like Jackie Robinson. And yet he is all but forgotten today except by cycling diehards. Taylor receives practically no official recognition from the state of Massachusetts; his story is rarely told in classrooms or textbooks or museums. A small group of Worcester residents has been trying to erect a statue to his memory but is short of funds. The sad fact is that Taylor is honored more in Indiana, the state he fled, partly because of racism, than he is in Massachusetts, where he sought sanctuary and became world famous. Yet few stories say more about Massachusetts, about sports, and about racism a century ago than Taylor's tale.

THE WORLD OF MAJOR Taylor was one in which the bicycle was king. "Bicycle racing was the most popular sport," says Sydney Taylor Brown, ambling with a walker around her care facility.

Around the time of Taylor's race at Charles River Park in 1899, America had 75 million people,

5,000 cars, and 20 million bicycles, according to Peter Nye, an expert on the era who rates Taylor as one of the five best bicycle racers in US history. Nearly every significant city had one or more racetracks with grandstands that often could seat thousands — "velodromes," as the venues were lyrically called. Some racers earned more than \$20,000 per year, four times as much as top baseball players.

New England was the center of the bicycling craze, with many bike manufacturers and racing clubs. An organization called the League of American Wheelmen successfully lobbied for the paving of roads to enable the easier use of bicycles. Some credit the

Major Taylor is honored more in Indiana, the state he fled, than he is in Massachusetts, where he sought sanctuary.

bicycle with greatly advancing the equal-rights cause: "Rational dress societies" advocated that women wear bloomers instead of dresses, to facilitate riding.

But this was still a world, barely three decades after the end of the Civil War, in which racism was rampant and lynching all too common, particularly in the South. Few blacks were able to participate in top professional sports, and it would be a half-century before Jackie Robinson would break the color line in baseball.

Into this world came a teenager named Major Taylor, having earned his nickname because he wore a military uniform when he performed cycling stunts as a child. Born in Indianapolis on November 26, 1878, Taylor went to work at age 13 for a bike manufacturer

there who was impressed with his speed and skills.

"He rode his bicycle to and from work, 25 miles each way," Sydney Taylor Brown says. "That's why his legs were so strong."

One day in 1895, some friends of Taylor entered him in a local 75-mile bike race. His entry was kept secret to avoid a racial outcry. But Taylor appeared at the starting line, and then began to race with such speed that some of the white riders "threatened to do me bodily harm if I did not turn back," Taylor wrote years later. But this only inspired him to ride faster, "to make doubly sure that none of them caught up to me." Taylor won easily, despite riding the last stretch in a driving rainstorm.

As Taylor became more successful, and more subject to racist threats, he and his manager, bike manufacturer Louis "Birdie" Munger, began to think about moving to Massachusetts. While the Bay State had its share of racial problems, it was far more open than Southern and border states. At the time, the all-important League of American Wheelmen had voted to prohibit black members. The delegation from Massachusetts, where the organization had been founded, had voted unanimously against the proposal. Thus, Massachusetts seemed like the best place where Taylor could compete, and compete fairly.

So, in 1895, Taylor and Munger boarded a train from Indiana to Worcester. "Before our train pulled out of Indianapolis," Taylor wrote later, "Mr. Munger informed his friends that some day I would return to that city as champion bicycle rider of America."

Worcester was a haven. "I was in Worcester only a very short time," Taylor wrote, "before I realized there was no such race prejudice among the bicycle

riders there as I had experienced in Indianapolis.”

The following spring, the citizenry of Worcester anticipated the first bicycle race of the season the way that Bostonians now await Opening Day at Fenway Park. How big was bike racing? The headline from the *Worcester Telegram* tells the story: “Fifty Thousand People . . . Biggest Crowd Ever Got Together by Daylight in Worcester.” The throng watched 30 cyclists, including Taylor, compete for a gold-and-silver cup. The 17-year-old Taylor came in sixth place, but he was on his way to stardom.

The most popular event of the time was a nearly inhumane test of physical prowess: the six-day race, a nearly nonstop contest on a circular indoor track, with perhaps one hour of sleep for every eight hours on the ring. By the sixth day, riders were so exhausted they could barely stand, much less pedal.

The crowds loved it the way Romans loved gladiator duels. Munger, hoping to turn his young protege into a national star, entered Taylor in a six-day race at New York City’s Madison Square Garden in December 1896. A French reporter called it “one of the worst tortures that one could possibly ask a human being to undergo,” according to Andrew Ritchie’s 1988 biography, *Major Taylor: The Extraordinary Career of a Champion Bicycle Racer*.

Taylor finished the race, coming in eighth after riding 1,732 miles. Crowds of more than 12,000 people had watched him at the Garden, and newspaper reporters from around the world chronicled the event.

Soon, Taylor was winning races – and winning easily. The more successful he became, the more some white riders tried to exclude him or at least intimidate him. He was banned from most venues in the South

GRACE LEE DESIGN

s h i l l i n g

FURNITURE MAKERS AND INTERIOR DESIGN



The Creation of Tables
 As Shown: The Zen Table in Tiger Maple With Ebony Detail

With appreciation for fine natural materials, Grace Lee continues to create furnishings that enrich the lives of those who own them. All tables can be crafted in solid cherry, ash, oak, maple, bird’s eye maple, tiger maple or walnut, and personalized with intricate inlay details.

Showroom: 25 MT. AUBURN ST., CAMBRIDGE, MA 02138 TEL. 617.661.0375 Manufacturing: 66 HAMILTON ST., CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139
 Hours: M-W 10-7, TH 10-8, F&SAT 10-6, SUN 12-5



Scandinavian Furniture



Teak Imports, Inc.
 Scandinavian Furniture
 Open Mon.-Fri. 10-6; Sat. 10-5; Sun. 12-5
 Rte. 114, Middleton, Mass. 01949 (near Danvers Line) 978-777-1953
 Visit us at www.teakimportsinc.com

AMAZING SPACE!



SUMMER SIZZLER SALE!
 Factory Savings Up To 35%* And More. Limited Time Offer!

Enclose your patio or deck or expand your home with a full scale sunroom addition. In either case a Four Seasons room is fully insulated with exclusive MC Wonderglass™ at prices our competitors charge for single glazing.

Independently Owned And Operated

FOUR SEASONS
SUNROOMS

ADDITIONS - SUNROOMS - CONSERVATORIES
 PATIO AND DECK ENCLOSURES - SKYLIGHTS
Outdoor Living...Indoors

www.FourSeasonsSunrooms.com

Massachusetts

Cotuit - 4380 Falmouth Road (Rte. 28) - 1(888) 993-1519
 Marshfield - 600 Plain Street, Route 139 - 1(800)696-1234
 Natick - 35 Worcester Road, Route 9 West - 1(800)258-5300
 Norwood - 596 Pleasant Street - 1(800)216-0061
 Peabody - 285 Newbury Street, Route 1 - 1(800)424-0090
 Seekonk - 1544 Fall River Avenue, Route 6 - 1(800)248-4786
 Worcester - 91 Prescott Street - 1(888)840-6688

New Hampshire

Goffstown - 12 Pleasant Street - 1(800)287-4860
 Salem - 13-15 Delaware Drive, Unit 2 - 1(877)223-3786

Pine Trunks

Antiques & Reproductions

\$399 Save Over **40%**



DecorativeHome
WAREHOUSE
 Antiques • Home Furnishings • For Less

411 Providence Hwy.
 adjacent to Frugal Fannie
 Westwood, MA
 781-407-7777

Store hours: Mon. Tue. Wed. 10-6; Thu. Fri. 10-8; Sat. 10-7; Sun. 11-6
www.dhwarehouse.com

Form & Function of Bygone Years

... and so many stories to tell.

Antique Chinese Armoire
 for clothing, T.V., or computers.
 43"x21"x73"H
 \$1,600 - \$1,900



Japanese Antique Repro
 Multi-purpose storage.
 62"x17"x64"H
 \$1,700 - \$1,900



Chinese, Korean, Japanese antiques and reproductions, from rural farms to museum quality rare finds. Knowledge, value, service.

DYNASTY ORIENTIQUE
 1033 Massachusetts Ave. Cambridge • 617-864-8449

and rode at his own risk in many Northern locales. In Taunton, a rider choked him moments after a race was over, leaving Taylor unconscious for 15 minutes. Even in Worcester, he was thrown to the ground by some other riders, which prompted him to tell a *Telegram* reporter that the numerous threats led him to "have a dread of injury every time I start in a race."

Matters only got worse when he went to Savannah, Georgia, to train during the winter. While working out on the road, he easily beat a group of white riders, who promptly sent him a letter.

Dear Mr. Taylor,
 If you don't leave here before 48 hours, you will be sorry. We mean business - clear out if you value your life.

White Racers
 A crude picture of a skull and crossbones was added. Taylor dealt with these setbacks by training near New York City and committing himself to his Baptist faith, deciding never to race on Sundays. By the time the 1898 season opened, Taylor was in the best shape of his life. Soon, he was setting world records in track races of 1 mile.

Many of his races were at three Boston-area velodromes, in Cambridge, Revere, and Waltham. Before there was a Fenway Park, the Charles River Track in Cambridge was one of the area's top sporting venues. The oval stadium - on the site of today's Necco factory on Massachusetts Avenue - was built specifically for bicycle racing and sometimes overflowed capacity to as many as 16,000 spectators, according to newspaper reports. The track, with bunting-draped grandstands and a prime location, was advertised throughout the region; it became the site of many of Taylor's early victories. Taylor called his win against Tom Butler on July 1, 1899, "one of the greatest

match races of my career." A few weeks later, Taylor won a national championship in Iowa, prompting a newspaper reporter to write: "Major Taylor, the far-famed Negro, was a great surprise to the crowd that attended the National Championship races of the Iowa state meet on the new Ottumwa track. He is a perfect wonder on the wheel. . . . The crowd did not like him and did not want to see him win. In spite of this, he carried his share of the honors."

ON AUGUST 3, TAYLOR broke the world 1-mile record in Chicago. His fame and fortune were rising rapidly; he earned the title "fastest bicycle rider in the world." Backed by the Waltham Manufacturing Co., which produced the Orient bicycle that he used on some of his record-setting rides, Taylor toured the country, lapping up praise in city after city.

But some white riders were trying to find a way to stop Taylor once and for all. The League of American Wheelmen had allowed Taylor to compete in its races even though blacks weren't allowed to be members, so a breakaway group of riders formed a new organization that banned blacks altogether. Wanting to face the best competition in the world, Taylor went to Canada, which was holding a world championship contest.

The August 11, 1899, edition of *The Boston Globe* proclaimed the news. Taylor, the *Globe* said, was a "World Beater."

As the US national anthem played in celebration of his victory in the mile, Taylor recalled later, "I never felt so proud to be an American before, and indeed, I even felt more American at that moment than I ever felt in America. This was the most impressive moment in my young life."

ANTIQUES

THE HOUSE ANTIQUES
 111 WASHINGTON ST. • BOSTON, MA 02111



Staffordshire Art Pottery
 Open Tues.-Sat. 10:30-5:30 • 617-558-1858

ANTIQUE FURNITURE

extraordinary collection for the home

Circa
Antiques
 Furniture
 & accessories

fine designer bone furnishings, lamps, artwork, mirrors, & accessories
 Retail & To the Trade

12 Grove Street Norwell 781-878-8442
 17 So. Main Street Cohasset 781-383-6711

FURNITURE

Boston Interiors!
CLEARANCE CENTERS
20%-70% Off

• Hanover Rt. 123 • (781)871-6416
 • Westboro Rt. 9 • (508)870-0700
www.bostoninteriors.com

HOME FURNISHINGS

LYMAN & HOME
 distinctive - classic furnishings

Does Your Home Interior Need A Breath of Fresh Air?

Discover our Lifestyle Showrooms
 Located in the Refining Mountains of New England
SERVING ALL OF NEW ENGLAND

- Luxurious Home Furnishings and Rugs
- Specializing in Vacation Homes
- Complete Interior Design Service

INSPIRING INTERIORS...ENDLESS POSSIBILITIES
 888-265-3717 • www.lhshowroom.com

YOUR AD HERE

Increase your sales with our Distinctive Shopping Directory and reach 2,460,423 readers each Sunday...

Call
 617 929 2200



WOLFE KEMIN

"New Visions in Pastel"
Opening September 20th - October 20th, 2001

POWERS GALLERY

342 Great Road, Acton • Junction Routes 2A & 27 • 978-263-5105 • Call for hours

Mia
(6 months)



THE BABY PLACE
FURNITURE & ACCESSORIES

We Love Babies!

COMPLETE BABY STORE
50 Worcester Rd., (Rt. 9) Natick
(At the Wellesley Line)
(508) 653-0959 • (508) 655-5305
Open Monday through Saturday 10-5:30
Wednesday & Thursday Even. 11-5:30
Sundays 12-5

www.thebabyplace.com
WE'RE IN THE VERIZON YELLOW PAGES

SOLID INVESTMENT

A Pool Table is a Lifetime Investment. Sure You're Buying Quality.



We will not be undersold on any advertised Olhausen Product.

GUARANTEED LOWEST PRICES!

Getting Into Hot Water has never been so much fun!

15 Coleman Spas on display! Starting at \$3499

SWIMMING POOLS • SPAS • PATIO FURNITURE • DUCANE GAS GRILLS
BILLIARD TABLES AND BAR STOOLS ON DISPLAY

At ... **BEMISTER'S** It's Worth the Trip
FAMILY OWNED AND OPERATED SINCE 1942

SALEM, NH - 57 SO. BROADWAY - Rte 28 (Rte 30 to Exit 1 to Rte 28) - 102m on right (603) 898-9698
Hours: M-F 10-6; Sat. & Sun. 10-5

HAMPTON, NH - 575 Lafayette Rd - Rte 1 (Approx. 1/2 mi North of Galley Head) (603) 929-4447
Hours: M-F 10-6; Sat. & Sun. 10-5 www.bemisters.com

ROGER'S PIANO

781-826-0453 Hanover, MA

Huge selection of vintage & artcase pianos



Now on Sale!

~ featuring ~
STEINWAY
BECHSTEIN
Bösendorfer

Route 3 South to Exit 13
www.rogers-piano.com

26

Taylor had finally found a way to avoid the racism of America: He could compete on foreign soil, where his talents were more appreciated. The next logical step was France, which was – and still is – the hotbed of bicycle racing. But the big races in France were on Sunday, and Taylor refused to compete because it conflicted with his religious beliefs. "Taylor Refuses \$10,000," said a New York newspaper headline. "He Won't Race on Sunday."

The action only added to Taylor's fame. In *The New York Telegraph*, an editorial dripping with racism chastised white cyclists for waiting so long to ban Taylor. "It is all very well for these speedy white gentlemen to insist upon proper respect for their color," the *Telegraph* said. "Still, we could have wished that they had boycotted Major Taylor before he defeated them all." Taylor later pasted this editorial in his scrapbook, which is part of a collection donated by Sydney Taylor Brown to the Indiana State Museum.

Taylor's fame had become so great that he was finally able to negotiate a hefty contract to race in France – with no Sunday contests. France gave Taylor the honor he could not get at home. One century ago, Taylor arrived in Paris, lauded by the press there as bicycling's "Messiah." He won race after race, repeatedly earning the title of world champion.

For the next several years, Taylor traveled the world, including two trips to Australia with his wife, Daisy. Their only child, Sydney, was born there in 1904 and named after the city of her birth. After a two-year break, Taylor made a series of European comebacks, including a final one in 1910 in Paris, at which Sydney Taylor Brown, then 6 years old, cheered her father.

After retiring from professional cycling, Taylor tried to transfer his success to the business world. But he lost \$15,000 in one venture, and by 1918 he was working as a machinist in Worcester and later as an auto repairman.

Taylor, however, did not want the world to forget him. In 1928, after six years of work, he published his autobiography, with a title that told the story: *The Fastest Bicycle Rider in the World: The Story of a Colored Boy's Indomitable Courage and Success Against the Odds*. "It is quite obvious what might well be accomplished on a whole as a race in other pursuits of life if granted a square deal and a fair field," Taylor wrote in the preface of his 431-page book.

IN THE END, MAJOR TAYLOR did not receive a square deal. Having lost most of his fortune, and even his Worcester home, he found little success in peddling his autobiography. He separated from his wife and left her and his daughter to move to Chicago. This proud man, once one of the nation's wealthiest African-Americans, became nearly destitute and lived at the YMCA.

In 1932, he died at a charity hospital and was buried in a pauper's grave. Only a local black-oriented newspaper, the *Chicago Defender*, noted his passing. Some of his friends didn't realize he had died until years later, when they unearthed his remains and reburied them with a memorial plaque.

"I didn't know he died," Sydney Taylor Brown says. "I didn't even know where he was."

As she speaks these words nearly 70 years after her father's death, it is clear that Sydney Taylor Brown remains deeply saddened by the way his life ended. Details of his business dealings have been lost to history,

but his daughter believes prejudice played a role. "Blacks weren't allowed to make money," she says. "I've been bitter about that for all this life."

This is one reason why Sydney Taylor Brown is reluctant to discuss history, for the history cannot change no matter how many times she retells it. She would just as soon talk about her son, Dallas C. Brown Jr., a retired brigadier general, and her grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Today, one of those grandchildren, Jan Brown, a lawyer for the federal government, lives in Cambridge not far from the site of the Charles River velodrome, where Major Taylor raced. She believes that her great-grandfather's story must not be forgotten in Massachusetts – not just because he won bicycle races, but because "he turned the then-prevailing notion of white supremacy on its head" and left lessons about determination that are as valuable as ever.

"The sheer joy of winning in competitive arenas is not lost on me," Jan Brown says. "But for me the most breathtaking part of his story is his resistance to the limitations that others would have had for him. ... The fact that he retained the focus and sense of spirit necessary to define and pursue his own goals is itself a prize. The fact that he achieved them, and did so in such a stirring way, is pure icing on the cake."

If you ride along the Minuteman bike path in Cambridge, you might occasionally see Jan Brown gliding along at a modest pace on her three-speed Specialized Globe bicycle, as she thinks about the way her great-grandfather once raced nearby so fast, so long ago. □

Michael Kranish can be reached by e-mail at kranish@globe.com.