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## JAY WALKING

**The Argus Lobster and Willie's calves**

By *Jacqui Zurcher*

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It was a long time ago. I must have been about 16, a schoolgirl cycling devotee. I was riding in the back of a truck on an Eastern Cape coastal road somewhere between East London and Port Alfred, and my eyes were fixed on Willie Engelbrecht's calves. The truck, stocked with spare wheels and other cycling essentials, was driving in front of Willie as he powered along in case the cycling maestro had a mishap during the race.



The top cyclist in South Africa at the time, Willie cut a dashing figure. He just rode beautifully; it was a pleasure to watch him conquering the hills and speeding along the straights. And what astoundingly proportioned calves! For months after the visitation of the cycling legends to the Eastern Cape backwaters, pictures of Willie adorned my bedroom wall.

Now, before I cast myself as some adolescent sicko with photos of innocent cycling heroes plastered on my wall, let me qualify that I was not alone in my choice of wallpaper. My boyfriend and many of our cycling buddies also gave pride of place to their pictures of Willie on our home soil. And the calf thing? After years of cycling behind people and either having to look at their butts or their calves, luckily I developed a calf fascination.

The years passed and the memory of Willie's calves grew dim. I stopped cycling after a nasty viral combo of glandular fever and yellow jaundice, and eventually sold my bike. Like The Ring, thrown from Isildur's hand, my love for cycling lay dormant beneath the ebb and flow of life's river. Until one day, many years later, my friend Mike walked into my office. He was going to America for three months and did I want to use his Argus entry.

The Ring glinted before me. Of course I could use his new shiny bike as well.

But I hadn't cycled for years and hadn't trained! There were only two months before the race — how would I get from zero to Chappies in two months? But I couldn't resist. Riding the Argus had been an adolescent dream, dashed by the liverish sweats of jaundice. Just contemplating the route again

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*Leigh Robertson,*  
*Highlife Editor*

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evoked visions of halcyon days of athletic camaraderie and the smell of greased ball bearings. I was in.

Having committed, I set about organising myself. I had to start training, but first needed some kit: gloves, cycling shorts and new pedals.

So it happened that I found myself surrounded by cycling paraphernalia and once again staring at Willie's calves.

A friend had taken me to Willie Engelbrecht's Lifestyle Centre to get kitted out, but for some reason I was astounded to find Willie in his shop. It was embarrassing; I transformed into a shy schoolgirl and refused to ask for assistance. All I could do was point and whisper to Jaco to look at his calves.

Realising that I might do something heinous like ask for an autograph, my trusty friend ushered me out from among the rows of bikes before I could whip out my digital camera and start snapping away like a star-crazed paparazzi.

To blot out the humiliation of my morning calf-stupor I joined Jaco, rescuer of tongue-tied damsels and my self-appointed Argus partner, on our first training ride that afternoon.

My morning antics had left me gloveless and without butt padding, but the training couldn't wait. After all, I had to convince a rather dubious Jaco that we could easily do the Argus in four hours. Averaging around 30 kilometres an hour was child's play, I had scoffed, my bravado based on some hazy recollection of times achieved in my cycling youth over much shorter distances.

Five minutes into our first training ride my images of a sub 4 Argus lay writhing in their death throws on the steaming tarmac. I was wheezing my way to the top of the hill in my easiest gear.

How could this be possible? I imagined myself reasonably fit. I run regularly. Who was this radish-faced *woos* trailing Jaco up the hill? It seemed I was going to need a bit more than muscle memory and delusions of natural fitness before I could enjoy crunching up Suikerbossie.

With just under three weeks to go and not too many miles on my tyres, I'm resolved to being the lobster lady on the big day. But, before I can strap my transponder to my ankle and make like a hopefully more delicate, but infinitely wimpier Lance Armstrong, I need to pay someone a visit.

I've got to return to Willie's emporium, get my padded shorts and be cool and nonchalant when faced with his formidable calves.

JACQUI ZURCHER lives in Cape Town near a house with very noisy rottweilers. She is a freelance journalist with an honours degree in Computer Science and a Postgraduate Diploma in African Studies, majoring in Postcolonial English Literature from UCT. On occasion she has been known to dabble in IT.

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