

Ontario election '77 review

Hard work, dedication of campaign workers paid off says Gord Smith



Waiting for results

Gord Smith and his wife Jean were happy at the results being marked up on the wall. The polls closed at 8 p.m. and

by 8:45 p.m. it was fairly certain Smith was elected representative for Simcoe East.

When all the balloting is done the campaign committee rooms is where the party faithful and the politicians head to

see if they make it or break it.

On Thursday night a crowd of about 30 well wishers packed into the

Progressive Conservative committee room on Hugel St. to witness the election of Gord Smith, M.P.P. for Simcoe East.

Large color posters of Bill Davis and the Charter for Ontario decorate the room and quick nervous puffs on cigarettes pass the time before the results start being phoned in.

"Are you sure the phones are working Fred?" asks Smith of his Midland campaign organizer Fred Hacker.

"It's only eight minutes after eight Gord," replies Hacker.

Mayor Moreland Lynn and Midland School Board trustee John McCullough manned the phones while Brian Parr made quick calculations on the adding machine.

The first result was phoned in at 8:15 p.m. bringing an expectant quiet over the crowd followed by a round of cheers as Barb Hacker marked up the result on the wall.

Smith stood up in expectation as each call came in and the campaign volunteers told him he might as well sit down it was going to be a long night. So he sat with rose in his lapel, eyes glued to the election results on the television.

By 8:30 the results were coming in fast and furious, "Gord, it's looking good," said one worker.

"Give me a tranquilizer," joked Smith.

By the time another 15 minutes had passed Smith was leading by 556

votes in the polls of Midland, Port McNicoll, Victoria Harbour and Tay Township with 75 per cent of the returns in.

"It would appear from the trend that I will be re-elected," said Smith. "If so it's because of the hard work and dedication of the campaign manager in the Midland area, Fred Hacker, along with many people from the Midland team has paid off."

"During the campaign I tried to give honest answers to questions and statements raised and I feel people here are satisfied I have represented them well in the past ten years and they're going to give me the chance to continue in the next parliament, said Smith.

He was then whisked off to the Orillia campaign committee room where he was officially declared elected.

"The victory tonight is your victory," Smith told the crowd. "In this election I've had more people working for me than ever before."

"It is evident to me that people in this area prefer free enterprise over a socialist program."

Smith went on to give special mention to campaign managers Graham Card, Doug Lewis, Fred Hacker along with the women in his life, Jean, his wife, Norma Burton, Enid Fair, Dorothy Wright and Eileen Sutton.

NDP campaign manager traces defeat to opposition's fear tactics

by Jeff Day of the Orillia Wednesday Nighter

The political flame of NDP Roger Pretty had been all but extinguished by 9:00 last Thursday as party supporters watched the returns come in, in Gord Smith's favour.

The optimism that ran so high in the weeks preceding election day was transformed into quiet dismay at around 8:50 when a CBC television flash announced Gord Smith would be elected.

Forty minutes later it was all over. Gord Smith and the Progressive Conservatives were back in power. Davis in minority fashion and Smith outpointing Pretty 13,814 to 10,196. Elinor Bingham was third with 6,726.

After headquarter workers had given up posting results and calculating the trends, campaign chairman Clare Wood attempted to explain the double defeat, that of Roger Pretty and the other of the NDP party as official opposition.

Wood said the major reason for the NDP defeat was due to the fear tactics on the part of the opposition.

"People are afraid of what they don't know. They just don't want to rock the boat," Wood said.

She explained that the PC television advertisements brought fear to the voters and that was a deciding factor.

"When the Pocket announced that we (NDP) were very confident, the people got scared and turned out in greater numbers," Wood said.

"We fought a good honest campaign. We'll be back."

Pretty's wife, Pat, summed up her feelings about the defeat.

"At least there is some consolation. We can go on our vacation to Austria." This election made the PC's sit up and take notice. They were afraid, just look at the type of aggressive campaign

they ran.

Before the final votes decided that there would be another minority government, Mrs. Pretty was asked what she thought of the possibility of a majority Conservative government.

"God forbid," she said. "I'll feel even worse. Even Austria won't look good."

Perhaps the futility of the election was best summed up when an NDP worker told of what a local resident had said when asked what he thought of the results.

"I was kinda' hoping for Bingham, but if he can't even look after his wife, how's he going to run the country?"

Tired but relieved NDP candidate Roger Pretty, looking tired but somewhat relieved told reporters after his defeat Thursday that he was proud of his campaign but warned of the possible consequences a Liberal

opposition may bring.

Pretty told the Wednesday Nighter shortly after returning to his campaign headquarters on Laclie St. when the final decision had been made that, "It's very unfortunate for Ontario to have a Liberal opposition. I believe that very strongly. They're going to have to live with it."

"Ontario was fortunate to have the Ontario NDP as its official opposition."

"The Liberals don't have the talent and ability to run the opposition properly."

Pretty said that the NDP opposition caucus had a high level of talent and its research department was "unequaled anywhere."

"There wasn't a better research department in the country, probably the best in North America," Pretty said.

Turning to his own campaign in Simcoe

East, Pretty said "I don't feel any regrets at all. The people made a political choice. We fought a solid, reasonable, hard working campaign."

"I still believe we could have done a better job of representing the people than the PC's. I would have enjoyed working for them."

When asked if he thought Gord Smith would deal with the issues presented in the campaign, Pretty said, "No, I think it will be the same as before."

"It's always been difficult to see the NDP squarely. It's going to take time, but we'll do it," Pretty said.

When Pretty made his thank you speech to his supporters packed into the South Ward Community Hall he received a tremendous ovation. He had nothing but praise for his team, particularly,

Clare Wood, Jack Hawkins, Fayne Bullen and his wife Pat.

His opening remarks were, "I arrive here with a keen sense of the absurd," (referring to a description of his character that appeared in a local newspaper) "so does this riding."

"It is still unclear as to where Simcoe East's affections lie," Pretty said.

"I always said if we didn't win, it wouldn't be our fault, Pretty joked.

"I wouldn't change our campaign a bit. We did a damn good job."

The greatest compliment Pretty received came in the form of a telephone call from a man who met him personally two years ago. It read in part, "There is no way Gord will get us off his back. We'll keep at him and at him. The NDP and Roger Pretty have made the working people respectable."



It's all over

Pat and Roger Pretty knew fairly early Thursday evening that victory would not be theirs in 1977. Pretty said after results for the province were out that he was

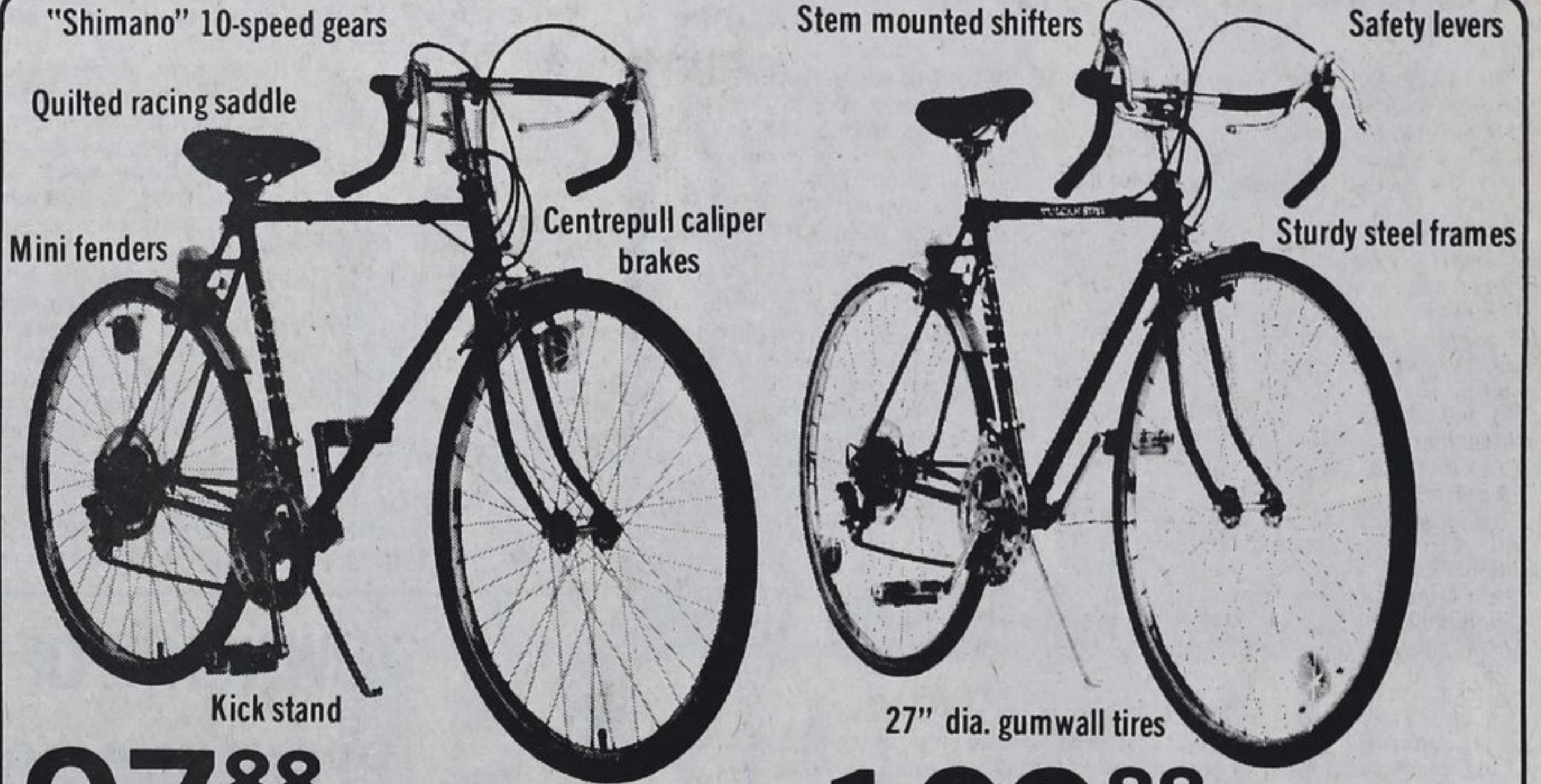
disappointed about both Democrats and his own showing and said he felt a Liberal opposition would not be good for Ontario.

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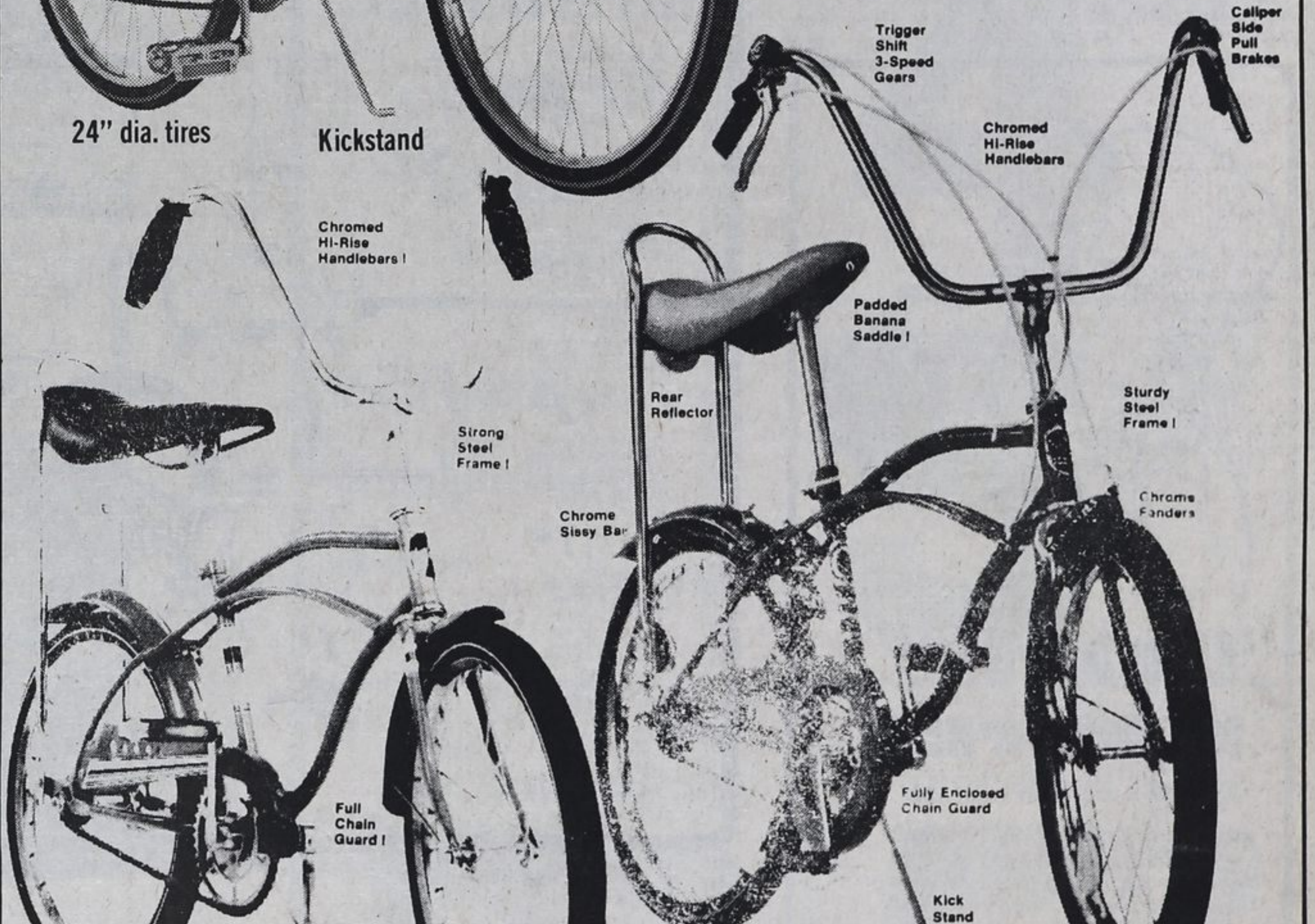
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