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Bicyclist Spins Frame Business Close to Home

Bike Maker Says Made in the USA Makes a Difference

By MIKE ALLEN

SAN DIEGO BUSINESS JOURNAL STAFF

Tony Ellsworth sometimes elicits stunned looks when he tells people that he makes his product in this country.

“Even within my own industry, the bike industry, I’ll talk to somebody and they’ll say, ‘Oh, really? You haven’t outsourced yet? You’re still manufacturing in the United States?’”

Yes, Ellsworth definitely is. The founder of Ramona-based Ellsworth Handcrafted Bicycles Inc. has been doing so for about 14 years. It’s a matter of pride for the maker of high-end bicycle frames, mainly for the mountain bike market.

“This is a way of life for me as much as it is about making a product,” says Ellsworth, who looks at least a decade younger than his 46 years. “I believe the United States should maintain its manufacturing abilities. I’ve tried really hard to make my bikes here in the USA.”

Although it would be far cheaper, Ellsworth says farming out the manufacturing of bike frames to places such as China or Mexico would dilute the quality and attention to detail that make his bikes stand out from the crowd.

It would also continue a sad trend of outsourcing more of the nation’s manufacturing base to foreign nations where labor is far less expensive.

While the arrangement has apparently resulted in lower prices for flat-screen TVs, cell phones, and washers and dryers, Americans are ultimately paying a higher price over time, he says.

By surrendering more of the nation’s manufacturing to other countries, we’re supporting nations with few environmental regulations, poor records on human rights, and which treat their workers shabbily, Ellsworth said.

The extensive offshoring of manufacturing has robbed the nation of better paying jobs, and that has led to a diminishing value of the U.S. dollar and contributed to what seems to be an economic recession, he said.

Industrial Art

To say Ellsworth is passionate about making quality bikes is an understatement.

“We consider a bicycle frame a form of industrial art, as transportation and as performance art,” he said. “We take it very seriously.”

Ellsworth, a former financial planner, started making his frames as a hobby, to satisfy his own interest in improving his own bike riding. Soon he was making the frames for friends and other cyclists who recognized the quantum improvement in his bike design over what they were riding.



Longtime cycling enthusiast Tony Ellsworth turned his bicycle frame-making hobby into the Ellsworth Handcrafted Bicycles business that amassed \$3.5 million in sales last year. He takes pride in the Ramona company’s U.S. manufacturing operations based out of Washington state.