

ADVERTISEMENT



Other editions: [Mobile](#) | [News Feeds](#)

Find it: [Jobs](#) | [Cars](#) | [Real Estate](#) | [Apartments](#) | [Classifieds](#)

**HOMETOWN**life.com

Search Home Town Life

- All
- Local News
- Businesses
- Coupons
- More »

Sponsored by: BUY MOVIE TICKETS!

POWERED BY YOU AND THE Observer & Eccentric mirror Hometown

## Unicycle builder stands 'em tall

By Alex Lundberg OBSERVER STAFF WRITER August 21, 2008

[Print this page](#) [Email this article](#)

Share this article: [Digg](#) [icio.us](#) [facebook](#) [Digg](#) [Reddit](#) [vswine](#) [What's this?](#)

Sem Abrahams was in his native Suriname reading a comic strip in which the main character couldn't afford a whole bicycle and bought a unicycle.

ADVERTISEMENT

Abrahams never forgot that comic strip.

One day a few years later, he purchased one on a family trip to the Netherlands and taught himself how to ride.



Sem Abrahams, unicycle rider and the world record holder for tallest unicycle ever ridden, rides down his Livonia street. (Tom Hoffmeyer | Staff Photographer)

Sem Abrahams astride his record-breaking unicycle in the Pontiac Silverdome in 2004. There is a possibility he may reconstruct it for exhibitions in Suriname and the Netherlands.

"Afterward, my father decided to try building a taller one from a bicycle," Abrahams said. "A friend of ours noticed and said the record in the Guinness Book of World Records was 20 feet."

That was 1975 and Abrahams and his father agreed they could beat that record, so they started building one 25 feet tall. They were set to call the people at Guinness when they got a

---

newer copy of the book and found out they were off the mark by more than 10 feet. It was back to the drawing board to create a 45-foot tall unicycle in 1976. In 2004, they decided to go for a record that would be extremely hard to beat.

That year, they rented the Pontiac Silverdome and Abrahams rode his 114.8-foot tall unicycle far enough Jan. 29, 2004, to prove he had it under control - 28 feet. The aluminum cycle was lashed together with steel wires for structural strength.

It's hard to say how much the cycle cost; the raw materials were somewhere in the \$20,000 range, but the engineering work was done for free. The entire cost was underwritten by the crane company that made the guidewire system they used for safety.

Since that Silverdome appearance, the cycle sits in pieces in the Abrahamses' garage.

"There's talk in Suriname about bringing it there for a public event," Abrahams said. "There's also some talk about recreating the stunt in the Netherlands."



Tom Hoffmeyer | Staff Photographer Riding high Unicycle rider Sem Abrahams of Livonia rides one of his designs, an adjustable-height unicycle. The unicycle was designed by Sem and his father. For more, turn to Page A4.

Dozens of bikes of all kinds also are inside the garage, including 1800s-era boneshakers to a monocycle - a one-wheeled motorcycle where the driver sits within the wheel.

Sem, along with his wife, Teresa, started Semcycle out of their home. The business was started 25 years ago when it became easier to build unicycles to Sem's exacting specifications rather than try to purchase them from retailers. They're stronger, and rugged enough to use for mountain biking, Abrahams said.

But while tall unicycles thrill the people who compile world records, the big project at the Abrahams household is Cirque Amongus, the couple's educational enrichment business.

"We teach circus arts to people," Teresa said. "We do everything from birthday parties to corporate functions."

The couple will go to a school (or corporate retreat) for a whole day to teach circus skills like unicycle, juggling, magic, tight wire, stilts, etc. Participants learn a skill, practice it, and then participate in a circus at the end of the day complete with face painting and carnival music.

[alundberg@hometownlife.com](mailto:alundberg@hometownlife.com) (734) 953-2109

## In your voice

[Read reactions to this story](#)

characters left



Although it sits dismantled, Sem Abrahams of Livonia holds the wheel that was used in the 114.8-foot unicycle he rode in 2004, setting the world record for tallest unicycle ever ridden. (Tom Hoffmeyer | Staff Photographer)



HOMETOWN LIFE

# TEAMFANSHOP

GET YOUR WOLVERINES GEAR HERE



CLICK HERE



Partners: Jobs: CareerBuilder.com Cars: Cars.com Apartments: Apartments.com Shopping: ShopLocal.com

[Home](#) | [News](#) | [Weather](#) | [Voices & Views](#) | [Obituaries](#) | [Community Life](#) | [Sports](#) | [Entertainment](#) | [Classifieds](#) | [Customer Service](#) | [Site Map](#)

[Terms of Service](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Subscribe](#)

Copyright ©2008 the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, Mirror Newspapers and Hometown Weeklies  
Use of this site signifies your agreement to the [Terms of Service](#) and [Privacy Policy](#) , updated March 2007.