

Apology

by Stephen Cramer

I'd like to apologize
to those dozen or so baseball
players
whose baseball cards
in the early eighties
I rubber-banded into place
to flip against my bike's
wheels.

It had nothing to do
with the teams you were on
or even your looks.
Suffice it to say
that you weren't the most
talented players

ever to take the field. Probably
you were riding the pine,
as they say, watching the stars
from the dugout,
those whose cards
are worth something today,

those whose fans cheered
when they went to bat
or made a diving catch
in the field. Most likely fans
went to get more mustard
for their hotdog

or to refill their drinks
when you came to bat,
because you were probably
just going to get out again
& end the inning. Surely
that was enough for you to
handle

without my spokes bending you
over backward, slapping
your absurdly smiling faces
with grease
again & again & again
as I rode downhill.

Now I admire your tenacity,
your ability to go out
night after night & get
just enough hits
to keep yourself in the majors,
to keep yourself in the round

of city after city after city.
& if you were never the one
surrounded by cheering kids
awaiting autographs, I'd just
like you
to know that you helped me
in ways you can hardly
imagine,

that when I pedaled hard enough,
my little bike
sounded like more
than just an engine. It
sounded
like an entire stadium
erupting into applause.