Dear Editor:

Your interview with my old friend Charlie Love in RNJ 18/2 brought back fond memories of living 34 years up in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, during which occasional visits with Charlie and his folks were always a treat. His comments about his recent work excavating moai haul roads also reminded me of a lengthy phone conversation we had awhile back in which he mentioned the “U” shaped road-bed profiles noted in the article. On the phone he said that some places seemed to be more “V” shaped than “U” shaped, but the problems posed for upright moai movement seemed to him similar either way.

Back in 1999 (RNJ 13/1, pp 16-17), I proposed a method for moving big rocks using only levers and suggested it solved the problem of mobility where workspace was too limited for large gangs of people pulling on ropes. The idea occurred to me during the 1998 NOVA shoot on Easter Island, where it seemed especially useful for getting a moai those last few meters up a steep ramp and onto a seacoast ahu. It is, however, a system quite well suited to moving heavy loads in any circumstances, whether workspace is limited or not. In demonstrating the idea to the students of a charter school just down the road from my home recently, a 9 year old girl was able to single-handedly move a sled carrying me, her teacher and all 14 other members of the class!

As the enclosed sketches show, a slightly dished-out, “U” or “V” shaped roadbed is exactly the profile needed to easily level the ladders and eliminates the need to level the entire road surface. Whether using ladders or rails of some sort for rollers beneath the load, a level surface perpendicular to the direction of movement is absolutely necessary. Otherwise, the sled will always turn towards the low side every time it’s moved. Simply moving the ladders right or left across Charlie’s concave cross-section until water in a hollowed-out crossbar confirms a level placement easily solves the problem.

In theory, a pair of level rails for rollers could be provided by turning a ladder-like frame upside down, so that the crossbars are on the bottom. The problem with rollers is that they need to be perfectly straight, the same diameter throughout their lengths and all the same thickness. If they’re made from trees, this is a tall order. But even if these three conditions are met, they only work on flat ground. If there’s any variation at all underneath the rollers, they tend to bunch up or go askew. Going uphill or downhill it is almost impossible to control either the rollers or the load and they don’t work at all. The use of ladders instead of rollers under the sled and the friction between the two in the system shown here solves all of the above problems.

Dear Editor:

In Eyraud’s (the French brother’s) account published last year in RNJ (Vol. 17(1):49-57), I notice the editor (of the article) glosses E pohe o’e as ‘you will die of hunger’ (p. 54). Now I’m no Tahitian scholar, but I’m pretty sure that ‘die of hunger’ would be something like pohe i te o’e, and that what the brother actually intended to write was E pohe ‘oe - you will die (in Tahitian) – but he just misplaced the apostrophe.

Vince Lee, Architect

Dear Editor:

In RNJ 18/2 I mentioned the “U” shaped road-bed profiles noted in the article. On the phone he said that some places seemed to be more “V” shaped than “U” shaped, but the problems posed for upright movement seemed to him similar either way.

Loloma yani,
Paul Geraghty, Suva, Fiji