

Great stories about Peter Rich (VeloSport Berkeley) ~ his heart and help, by Alex Osborne ("Take the Mercedes") and Ray Hosler's (Tour of California). So many of us have stories of how Peter helped us. I bought my bike at Peter's VeloSport in Berkeley ~ a year later I began a three year campaign in Race Across America. Peter helped me in myriad ways with training, technical support, introductions to sponsors, and friendship. Hope we can get him in United States Bicycling Hall of Fame soon! Alex Osborne 14 hrs · Buena Vista, Dominican Republic ·

The year was 1977, it was spring. Early season racing was over. Top three in three races, check. Cat 1 upgrade, check. Summer was coming and I had heard stories about the national circuit, about Milwaukee super week, and the new Red Zinger stage race. This was just a dream of mixing it up with national competition, the guys you only read about in cycling USA. And who knew – who knew, what might come after that. So, some of us got together Calvin "Haystack" Trampleasure (trust me the nickname fits), Rick "Rick-daddy" Moale, at 19 the elder statesman of our group, Roger "de-sade" Marquis, and me, Alex "Frittata" Osborne. We got together and planned the trip. Only "how to get there?", "where to stay?" were unanswered questions. We decided to go to Peter Rich the owner of Velo Sport, who this story is really all about, to ask him to help.

Peter was a husky, soft spoken, but happy guy with spectacles. He had a way of thinking about what he was saying and almost chewing on his words. Peter had been a racer, and it still showed through. He would take you into the depths of his shop sometimes to show you the latest cool thing he imported from Europe. Between stints as a bike shop owner, Peter was a Berkeley cop. That showed through as well. He kind of knew a little bit about all parts of the community. I first met Peter the year before when I got over my procrastinating and went into his shop to ask about getting into racing. I'd tried other sports, for one day at 9 years old I tried Baseball and gave it up. I tried Soccer which I thought required little "hand/eye", but turned out to need a lot of "foot/eye". I wanted to be picked first when choosing teams, I wanted to be good at sports but the only one that came naturally turned out to be cycling. The riding around with my friends turned out to open this amazing sport on the world stage with other-worldly achievements happening every day that I knew I could be good at. Peter smiled, and said there was a team that the shop sponsored and that I could join it. There were monthly meetings. I could come to one and get started.

That was the year before, so this time, with just a little more confidence, we went by the shop and asked Peter about our trip. It turned out the shop VAN was needed so we couldn't take that. Peter thought about it for a bit in his chin stroking way, but only really for a micro-second and said, "Take the Mercedes". Wow,

I thought, "Take the Mercedes"? I had never been in a Mercedes, but in my advertising influenced mind, this was the best car possible. We'd be going to the races after all, and in style! I wondered why Peter would entrust his Mercedes to us? But quickly came to accept that maybe we were worth it and we better perform. Housing for bike racers was a volunteer, stay-at-friend's kind of thing. So, with a little money for gas we were set.

The trip began with a drive from Berkeley to Milwaukee for Super week. Haystack, Rick-Dad and I got into the Mercedes, Roger was going to fly to Colorado to meet us for the Red Zinger. We decided to drive all night in shifts. About 8:00 am the next morning, somewhere in Utah, "Wasting away again in Margaritaville" came on the radio for the 100th time and Calvin reached down to change the station. It had been my shift just before, so I was laid out in the back seat dozing off with a comic book in my hand, when boom, crash, bam we were heading down into the ditch beside the road just missing the cement piling of an over pass. Peter if you're reading this, sorry, I don't think we ever told you this part of the story. We got towed out, got a motel and got some sleep and kept listening to Margaritaville when it came on. The Mercedes was a diesel and it was so slow that we would get behind semi-trucks to draft. Once we got in a convoy in Nebraska and the trucker behind us had a CB radio so powerful he got into our radio band and told us to get the F\*\*\* out of there! We arrived in Milwaukee to a Tornado warning. We raced for a week, we had another adventure with the car, the engine mounts came loose from too much shaking. And finally made it to Colorado for the Red Zinger. The Red Zinger was another world completely. John Denver and Susan Saint James on stage. 10'000 spectators. 4 days of a complete buzz all around Boulder. We felt like stars. We arrived at the Hotel Boulderado for check-in and were greeted by Janie Brennan. Our age, and a racer from a racing family in Flint Michigan. We introduced ourselves to her and she couldn't quite get what we were saying about de-sades nickname, so for the rest of time he is affectionately known as Sug! We were all a bit sick from the weather and living in air conditioning in Milwaukee. Haystack won't admit this, but he cried at getting dropped in the opening days race which was won by Bay Area local Rick Baldwin from legend Wayne Stetina. Rick Moale was a sprinter so he wasn't expected to make it over the hills anyway, but sad day for the rest of us.

Haystack, and Rick-Dad qualified for nationals so after the Red Zinger they drove the Mercedes on to Seattle, while I took a greyhound back to California. That was the end of our trip.

Recently we had a birthday party for Peter, and relived some of the old days. Peter is not in great health, but still the same old, stroking his chin, Peter. The first thing he said to me was "you know the first time I met you?". And I had to think, I knew

it was a trick question. It turns out (and I think I knew this before) that he had come by my house when he was a cop. I used to get in a little trouble, and I guess someone at the city had asked him to come by. This was before I ever got into bike racing. We laughed about that. It was significant to him.

I think about all that Peter has done for cycling, he put on his own version of the Red Zinger, using all his own money, \$70,000 to put on the original Tour of California back in 1971. He influenced so many lives. A few choice words from Peter have stayed with me: "never quit a race", and "always pedal hard over the top of a hill". They might not seem like much, but boy these simple words have been so important in my life – they apply in cycling and kind of everywhere else. Some of my best wins have been at races I wanted to quit so bad in the early part. And damn if things don't get so bad in life sometimes you might want to quit it all, when the best is just waiting around the corner.

I think about all that Peter has done with his giving, and in comparison, I think we are not worthy. And then I remember that with those three little words: "Take the Mercedes" that he gave me the gift of feeling worthy. Worthy as an athlete, Worthy as a person to be trusted with a prized possession. Worthy!

Thank you Peter,

Love, Frittata, Haystack, Rick-Dad, De-Sade, and everyone else you've helped.