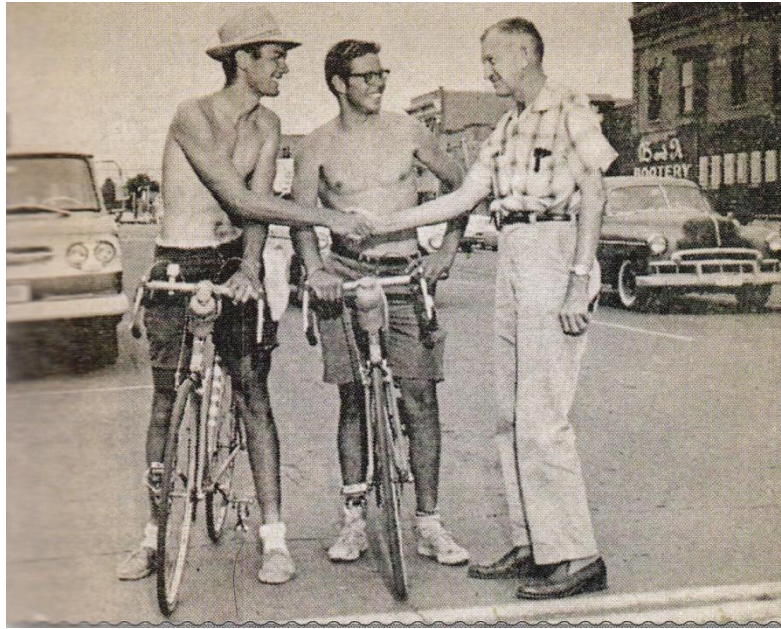


Cross-country cyclists got the royal treatment



Steve Rose, left, and Marty Panizzon, right are greeted by Grand Junction mayor, Ed McCormick, upon their arrival in Grand Junction in August of 1961 and named "Tourists of the Week". Daily Sentinel photo by Robert Grant.

By Kathy Jordan

When Marty Panizzon, 23, and Steve Rose, 22, pedaled into Grand Junction in August 1961 on a coast-to-coast bike trip, they had no idea they were about to be tapped as "Tourists of the Week."

The duo's United States coast-to-coast trip began at the end of a seven-month European adventure which started in 1960 and spanned two continents.

Panizzon and Rose told the Daily Sentinel reporter who interviewed them that they had started their European adventure in their home town of Carpinteria, Calif. when they purchased an old, beaten-up station wagon for \$100 to take them from the West to the East Coast.

When they reached New York, they sold the car for \$75, bringing the total amount they had accumulated for the overseas trip to \$1,000. Knowing they needed more money for the trip, they worked for a couple of months in New York restaurants before heading to Europe on a steamer in April.

Upon their arrival in Europe they purchased a used Mercedes-Benz and toured Spain and Portugal.

They told the Sentinel reporter that their romance with bicycles started when they returned to Italy, where they sold their car and bought two bikes before catching a ship back to America.

When they arrived in the United States they decided the least expensive way to get their bicycles home would be to ride them across country.

Panizzon and Rose said they spent about \$3 a day for food. Most nights they were able to sleep under the stars to keep expenses down.

They had to spend a few days in Denver where they got jobs to replenish their bankroll, because they had spent most of their money on bike repairs before continuing westward.

In a telephone interview Panizzon told me that on the day that turned out to be one he would remember for the rest of his life, they had stopped about 15 to 20 miles outside of town for a break when a Sentinel reporter, who was driving by, spotted them. The reporter asked where they were coming from they said New York. The reporter asked where they were going to. They replied, California.

The quick thinking reporter asked Panizzon and Rose if they would do him a favor and meet him in town. The pair said sure.

When they arrived in town there was a large crowd of people, along with the mayor and a TV camera. Panizzon and Rose first thought was there had been an accident.

The duo then discovered that the celebration was for them, the "Tourists of the Week."

"Tourists of the Week" was a program the Jaycees (Junior Chamber of Commerce) had started to promote Grand Junction. Jaycees was a leadership program for community businessmen under the age of 35.

Jim Eisenhauer, a member of Jaycees, met Panizzon and Rose and had the honor of inviting them to be "Tourists of the Week". When the two agreed, it was the beginning of royal treatment for the next two days.

Eisenhauer said that, in rapid order, the two bicyclists were introduced to Grand Junction Mayor Ed McCormick and given "Tourist of the Week" honors. Their dinner tab was picked up by the Chamber of Commerce.

The Eisenhauer family opened their home to the two young men, who stayed overnight with them.

City automobile dealers provided a car and driver (Jim Eisenhauer) to show the two honorees around the area. According to the Sentinel report, Rose indicated that eating places were a major problem on the trip saying, "We don't mind getting stuck out in the hinterlands, but we do like to hit a good eating place during the day."

While in Grand Junction they were treated to a couple of good eating places. One night they had dinner at Mark's Cork'n Embers, the next at the Manhattan, both trendy places to eat then.

Jim said that in 2008 Marty came to town, riding his bike through Colorado, and he called Jim. The two hadn't talked to each other in 49 years, but they had a good time recalling the two-day stopover so many years ago in Grand Junction.

Last summer, Panizzon and Rose relived their European trip and the royal treatment they received as Grand Junction "Tourists of the Week" in a story which ran in the Carpinteria Magazine. The magazine is a lifestyle publication for the beachside community of Carpinteria in southeastern Santa Barbara County.

The 1961 Sentinel reported that Panizzon and Rose were treated to "old-fashioned western hospitality that reached a new peak as Grand Junction went all out to provide them with a rest period that will take a long time to forget."

Apparently the "old-fashioned western hospitality" made a lasting impression on them.