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# Chronicle

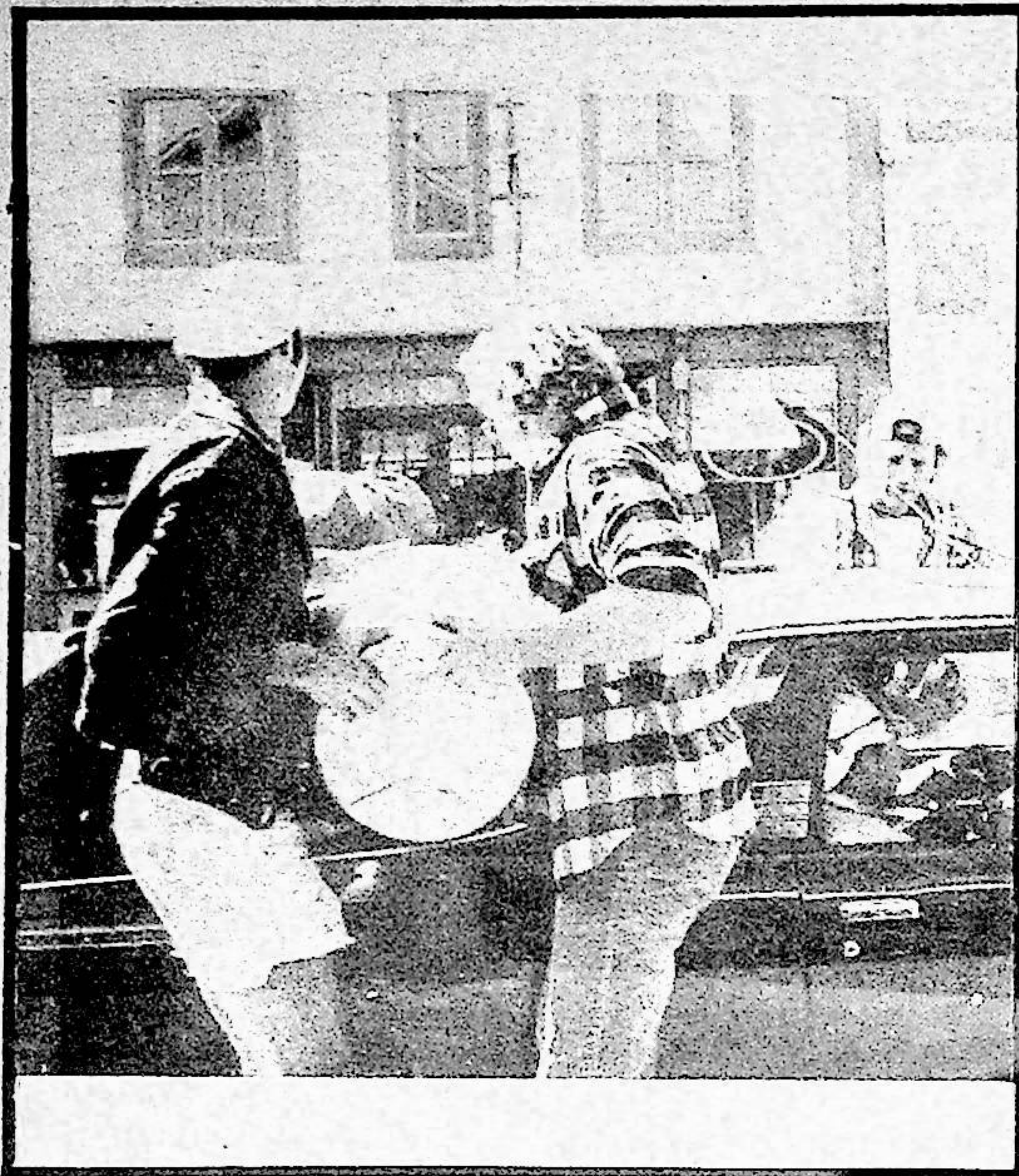
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Photo: Dan Peha

Pearl Pass Klunker Tour





The Beer



The Pass

Photo: Dan Peha

by Murdoch and Friends

In the fall of 1882 Pearl Pass was opened as a mule train link between the mining camps around Aspen and the rail head at Crested Butte.

Last weekend, September 23rd and 24th, this same ore trail hosted fifteen bicycle riders in the Third Annual running of the Crested Butte to Aspen Pearl Pass Klunker Tour.

A klunker is typically a heavy balloon tire, one-speed, coaster brake bicycle. This year, however, technological advances were added as a team of California riders brought their custom built, super alloy, twelve geared, balloon tired klunkers for the event.

Duane Reading, with the help of bicycle fans, began organizing the event early this summer. This last week saw feverish activity as klunkers ordinarily employed as "Elk Avenue cruisers" or "beer store runners" were reinforced and tuned for the ultimate test of Pearl Pass.

Saturday morning the activity reached a crescendo at the starting line in front of the Grubstake. Camping equipment was loaded into Duane Reading's truck to be taken ahead for Saturday night's barbeque and camp. Tools and spare parts were put into DeWayne Robert's jeep which was the sweep vehicle following the klunker convoy. Much beer was passed around as the contestants indulged in the high carbohydrate loading technique known to marathoners.

At about 11 a.m. these thirteen hearty men and two very hearty women lined up waiting for Duane's signal: Susan Hussemann, Jim Cloud, Albert Maunz, Richard Ullery, Bob Starr, Archie Archuleta, Chris Carroll, Neal Murdoch, Richard Nelson, Hotchkiss; Richard Ottero, Denver; Wendy Cragg and Joe Breeze of Mill Valley, California; and Charles Kelly, Gary Fischer, Mike Castelli of Fairfax, California.

The first breakdown came at the cow camp gate on Brush Creek Roak as Archie's back tire went flat. A very quick change was done with the help of the California team who carry spare tubes and pumps on their bikes. Archie flashed a sheepish grin as a missing bike part was removed from inside his tire.

On and up through shimmering leaf-strewn aspen groves and cool pine stands. When the road seemed flat, tired legs reminded riders that they were steadily gaining altitude.

The group made a stop at a stream crossing to watch each rider blast through the water. Those with the momentum and the luck not to hit a sunken rock, got wet by their own spray, others went down in the middle of the stream soaked to the knees.

From the stream crossing the road became more noticeably uphill with many stretches of pushing the bicycle. The geared bikes were able to ride up many more of these hills, but not at a much faster pace.



Starr







Archie and Chump



The first group of riders reached camp at the Cumberland Basin turnoff around 3 p.m. with the pack arriving within the next hour and a half. Duane had set up a keg of beer and had started a fire for the barbeque. A good meal was enjoyed and many bike stories were told around the fire.

The riders left camp about 9:30 Sunday morning with cloudy but good weather. The last part of the climb was the most grueling, going up almost two thousand feet in less than three miles. They pushed the bikes almost all the way to the top of Pearl Pass, stopping frequently to rest.

By noon all of the riders reached the top of the pass. Group photos were taken, tire pressure and seat posts were lowered for the descent.

The bicyclists started down in a loose pack. Sometimes carefully picking their way down through loose boulder fields with brakes gripped. Other times sailing down mostly in the air. Richard Ullery broke a brake arm on his bike, giving him a few exciting moments of freewheeling. Jim Cloud also had a flat that was quickly fixed.

The ride down from the top of the pass was over quickly. The klunkers were soon flying past bewildered campers and Sunday drivers on the smooth road at lower elevations.

Just outside of Aspen the riders stopped to tie the traditional balloons to their bike frames. The balloons were turned into the spokes to rub and give the motorized sound familiar to all children.

Triumphantly they rode into Aspen. Pictures were taken and the riders retired to the Pub to relax and talk about the adventures that will surely be told around the fire at the Fourth Annual Pearl Pass Klunker Tour.