

# Remembering Captain America

## Farewell to a Phoenix cyclist Who Embraced Bicycling and Bicyclists

By Kari Redfield

For many of us, cycling is something that we were mentored into, in one way or another. For several cyclists, Leon Smith, known fondly as Captain America, was that mentor.

Smith, 77, recently passed away.

A passionate cyclist, "The Captain," as most riders know him, didn't just show up for group rides, he embraced those new to the ride and those new to cycling. To the less experienced, he gave advice, encouragement and coaching. One of his regular group rides was with the Phoenix Metro Bicycling Club's loop from Kiwanis Park every Saturday.


"Leon was an inspiration to a lot of us," says cyclist Bob Hoeberrmann. "On one of my first rides with him I was really impressed by the number of men, and women, who came up to give him a hug, and then later told me what a great guy he was. I remember his going back from where we were resting along the route to find stragglers and newbies ... and then cruising up the road, with a big wave, to deliver them to us."

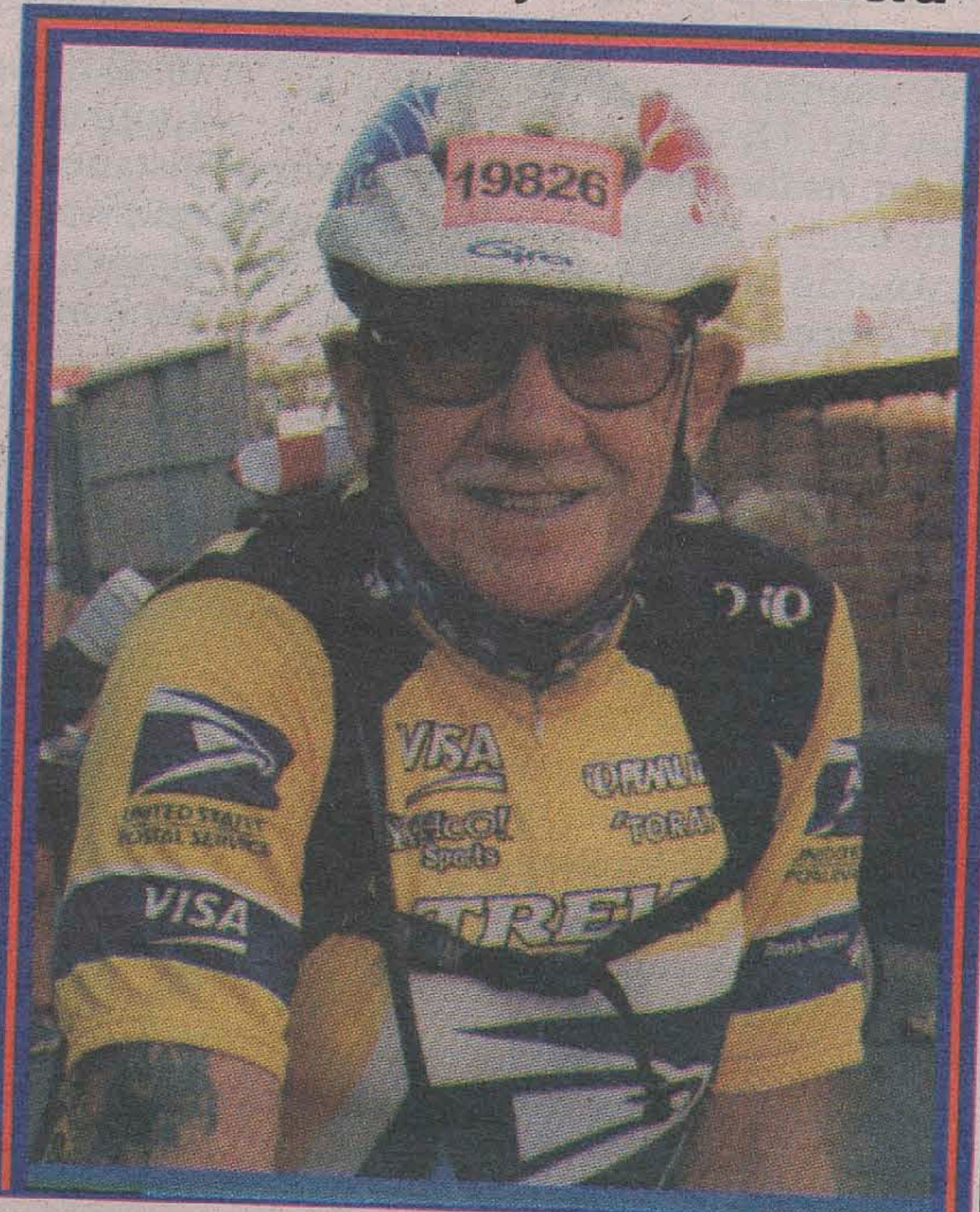
Some of his friends estimate that he has helped dozens, maybe even hundreds, of beginning cyclists get started.

Leon Smith was a regular in Perimeter Bicycling events year in and year out since he moved to Arizona about 15 years ago. He began planning for the next year's event even before he left the hotel, booking rooms for the next year. He loved big events and small ones, including El Tour de Tucson, Cochise County Cycling Classic, Casa Grande Century, Palm Springs Century and the MS-150. Two years ago, he traveled to South Africa for the Cape Argus Pick 'n Pay Cycle Tour, the world's largest cycling tour, with 35,000 riders doing a 109Km course.

The events were fun, exciting, and as close friend and riding partner Mark Miller says, "gave him a focus, an audience, a goal and a finish line. A mile from the finish line he'd sprint and go rocketing across the line. He was really focused and excited when he was getting to the line. I think he lived for that moment. It gave him that same thrill of being in the limelight.

"His whole life revolved around cycling and planning the next cycling event. He was a great planner of trips. He got a lot of people involved in cycling.

"We will miss him." 



Phoenix cyclist Leon Smith, known as Captain America, was an inspiration to many in the cycling community.