

## **How an 8th place finish in the 1973 Golden Gate Park Criterium bike race formed the future Apheresis Hero of the American Red Cross NorCal Region**

*by Art Maxwell, NorCal Region Apheresis Hero*

“In 1973, after a couple of years of humiliation and total defeat there was finally one race where a top ten finish was made. The race was won by Tom Ritchey; the dreaded senior slayer — so nicknamed for his proven ability to whip Olympic bike racers far older, albeit in races he won illegally, and for which he was later suspended.

My eighth place was a thrill by itself, after being beaten to the line by George Mount. Look him up to see how he became the best ever American in the Olympic Road Race in Montreal (6th in 1976). Also in the race was future State Champion Rod Jewett, as well as Junior Olympic Trackracer, Leonard Nitz.

Later, after the season ended and life's vicissitudes started to weigh much heavier — even as the fire in my spirit kept burning — an amalgam of qualified people basically summed it up for me by essentially saying; “Art! be happy you got to crack the top ten ONCE, because you will NEVER EVER win ANY of those races.”

Much to my chagrin, I absorbed their realistic reasoning as follows:

1. I was not on a team, and bike racing is a TEAM sport. You ride for a team and the team rides for you.
2. Your family and friends are not rooting for you at the race: it DOES make a difference.
3. You don't have enough \$ for equipment and travel like the others. In fact, you don't even drive. Go figure.
4. Even if you had all the previous conditions met, you happened to pick a sport in a location and time when the competition is unbelievably strong.

How are you going to outrace someone who has a coach and support, and is well on the way to an Olympic Spot? I wasn't. Could not and did not. But the spirit was always there residing deep down.

FAST FORWARD 46 years. Now I am on the American Red Cross Team. Friends and family as well as my physician are rooting for me in this quest. I have AB negative blood and a good heart, which is the equipment I need. Lastly there is no real competition, and even if there is, this is not a race.” •