Rudd, Marianne Worth. *Pedal Pushers Coast-to-Coast: A cross-country bike tour fueled by kindness*. Bloomington, IN: Author House, 2019. XII + 341 pp. Illustrations, Reflection Questions. $20.99, paper.

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In 1885 Thomas Stevens became the first person to ride a bicycle across North America, leaving San Francisco and arriving in Boston fourteen weeks later. He wrote an account of the journey, which undoubtedly encouraged others to follow in his wheel tracks. Since then tens of thousands have bicycled across the continent, from one ocean to the other, with hundreds of them publishing accounts of their adventure. The books appear from major publishers, boutique houses, publishers who specialize in sport and adventure or more specifically cycling, and vanity and self-publishing endeavors. A few are classics, many are good, and some should never have seen the light of day. Marianne Worth Rudd’s *Pedal Pushers* describes the culmination of her thirty-two-year dream of cycling across the continent, camping along the way, visiting and staying with friends and family, or if the weather did not cooperate staying in motels. With her husband Terry in tow—it was not his dream, but he clearly supported hers--they spent eleven weeks riding from Astoria, Oregon to Plymouth, Massachusetts. It will never be a classic, but it does fall in the good category, largely because of its theme: she was repeatedly surprised and overwhelmed by the kind, helpful and generous people they met along the way who opened their hearts and their homes to two early 60s cyclists. This thoughtfulness and caring extended to complete strangers energized Marianne in heart, mind, body and soul.

With little preparation and limited experience in long distance bicycle travel they set out from Astoria, Oregon on May 18, 2012 on loaded touring bicycles bound for the Atlantic. When I rode from Los Angeles to Boston in 1991 we had no rain during the forty-seven day crossing. Marianne and Terry faced rain, snow, sleet, and the bane of all cyclists, headwinds. They had built their route to see as many friends as they could. Central to the plan was visiting their son, who was working as a counselor at Skogfjorden, a Norwegian language camp near Bemidji, Minnesota. They wanted to arrive before 9:30 a. m., July 8 to surprise their son at Allsang, a traditional musical event which encouraged audience participation. They stopped at a motel less than ten miles from the language camp to reach the camp before the morning musical festivities. Shortly after leaving the motel and only several miles from their destination a driver sideswiped Terry, knocking him and his panniers off the bicycle. His arm hurt, but he did not think it bad enough to keep him from riding, so they continued on to the camp and their son before going to an Urgent Care for treatment. X-Rays showed an arm broken in two places, which indicated the journey was over, at least temporarily. They returned to the west coast where Terry recovered. To complete Marinanne’s dream he bought a recumbent bicycle which he found much more to his liking. They returned to Bemidji and set out again, only now it was October. Weather, which had been exceptionally unpleasant on the first part of the journey continued to be an issue as winter was approaching. Added to the mix was Superstorm Sandy, which caused a change in plans keeping them from New Jersey’s Atlantic coast, forcing them to cross New York State inland along the route of the Erie Canal. Their plan, always somewhat flexible, was to cycle to Portland, Maine, or perhaps Cape Cod. Once they reached Plymouth, Massachusetts, where the Pilgrims had landed four hundred years earlier, they determined that to be a fitting conclusion.

As with all cyclists, whenever they reached a photo opportunity, they asked anyone nearby to take their photograph. Standing near Plymouth Rock, Marianne and Terry approached a small group of people, explained what they had accomplished and asked if someone would take their photo to memorialize their crossing. Readily agreeing the strangers introduced themselves, one being Shelia Ray Charles, daughter of the singer. She and her manager were in town where Shelia had a speaking engagement about her surviving child abuse, drug addiction and three incarcerations in federal prison. Now clean she wanted to encourage and support others, and invited Marianne and Terry to her talk at a local church. The cyclists felt a closeness to Shelia’s message as they had, themselves, overcome many obstacles to reach their goal, hoping that their presence might lend further support to Shelia’s message.

There are multiple similarities with the adventures of others who choose to bicycle along the slow lane. Marianne and Terry reminded me of Cynthia and Adolphus Jeringham, characters created by Mrs. Edward (Mary Eliza) Kennard (1850-1936), English huntswoman and prolific novelist, long since forgotten. In *The Golf Lunatic and His Cycling Wife* (New York: Brentano’s, 1902), Cynthia, undoubtedly modeled on Mary Eliza’s experiences, is an avid cyclist who convinces her husband to take a cycling holiday in Europe. Like Marianne she revels in the beauty and joy of cycling while her husband, much like Terry, remains a good sport but not one overly excited about the whole endeavor. Both Marianne and Cynthia repeatedly emphasize the beauty of the scenery, thanking God for its creation and for their ability to enjoy it. Both recognized the kindness of total strangers to wayfaring cyclists, due in large part to the vulnerability and openness of cycling. In the years between the world wars, Bernard Newman (1899-1968), cycle traveling’s most prolific author spent his summers cycling through every country in Europe at least once. Newman made clear the bicycle, as opposed to the automobile, eliminated any potential threat or distance between the cyclist and the local people. With the exception of Newman and a few others, notably Barbara Savage, in her classic *Miles From Nowhere* (Seattle: Mountaineers Books, 1983), most authors fail to acknowledge both this bonding and the privilege the cyclist enjoys that makes the journey possible in the first place. To be able to take long periods of time off from work and the day to day obligations of modern life is not something many people can afford. Marianne Rudd repeatedly reminds the reader how blessed she was to have this opportunity to connect with friends, family and total strangers on a beautiful and challenging journey from Pacific to Atlantic.

If you are a cyclist, casual or committed, or if you’re an armchair traveler, my advice is to take a ride with Marianne and Terry.