

## Just takes a few days off the bike and... you wish you hadn't taken a few days off the bike!



Eric & Milo on West Old LaHonda. Where was everyone else today?

How do people do it? Ride once in a while, I mean? I suppose if you were just riding as a type of occasional fun, maybe the way you might once in a while go out for a nice dinner, it would make sense. And as I type that, it sounds like it might make perfect sense, for some. Maybe most. But not me. Because for me, cycling isn't something just for fun; it's part of my lifestyle (some might argue an all-consuming part of it). I don't feel right if I'm not riding, and as much as I don't look forward to getting back on the bike after a few days off, and feeling bloated and slow, it's a lot better than the alternative (getting even-more bloated and even-more slow when I get back on).

I was in Las Vegas for just a few days, leaving Sunday night and getting back Wednesday evening. I did manage to get in a good ride Sunday before leaving, so all I missed was Tuesday's regular ride up Kings and the commute to work & back each day. Doesn't seem like all that much! But when it's what you normally do, when it's a routine that you've worked into your daily schedule, where you know exactly how long it takes to ride to work including a stop for coffee... things just don't feel right when you change.

Does it ever become tiresome? Boring? Nope. That's not to say that some days aren't better than others! But the worse it feels when you're riding, the better you feel about it afterward. It's difficult to think of a ride where, afterward, I wished I'd stayed home. I think that says it all.

What brings this up? Besides missing a few days on the bike, that is? Probably Eric asking on today's ride if I ever stopped riding, ever took time off. Seemed like an odd question, and unfortunately, my breathing routine doesn't allow me the luxury of having a conversation very often while riding, particularly once the road tilts upward. It's really got me wondering why he asked.

What's my fear of not riding? The scariest part isn't getting out of shape and putting on weight. Not for me anyway. The scariest part is forgetting what it is to really push yourself on a climb, to pretend you don't mind that headwind and blast your way through it. OK, the idea of not suffering, on my own terms, that's a biggie. I'd miss the pain, my body talking back to me and telling me that I'm not just existing, I'm doing something. Telling me I don't just exist... I'm alive!

OK, standard ride report. Just three of us today; Eric and I at the start, joined up top (on Skyline) by Milo, who'd left a bit earlier. Eric nicely held back and rode with me up Kings (I was OK through the park but by the time we connected with Kings, my speed was gone). Kevin didn't make it; rough night trying to sleep with kidney stone pain. And that brings this full-circle. There's pain you bring upon yourself, and that's fine, because you control it. The amount, and the duration. And in the end, you feel better for it. And then there's involuntary pain, of which there really isn't much good that can be said about it.

We all have some involuntary pain in our lives. Maybe some of us use voluntary (I hesitate to say self-inflicted) pain to keep the other stuff, the other pain, at bay. Maybe when we feel most helpless is when we need to get out on a bike and ride ourselves into the ground, in total control of what we're doing and how we feel. If the desired outcome is to feel like we're in control, it's a fail-safe way to achieve it.

Yes, it does sound like I've gone off the deep end. A couple days in Las Vegas can do that to you. :-)  
--Mike--