

There are no words...



What can you say, how can you possibly describe what it feels like to ride into the scene above?

You wake up at 6:55am (actually 6:47am this morning, a bit ahead of the alarm clock), start the coffee maker, wake up Kevin (my son), get dressed, drink coffee, get the gear that's been charging (bike computers & lights) and set them up on the bikes, air up the tires... and all the time you're doing that, it's a bit of a routine, and you're feeling, at that time, pretty disconnected from anything wonderful. Mostly because it's a routine, timed to the minute so you don't have to get up any earlier than absolutely required.

Even riding to the start is a bit of a routine, as it begins with a 200ft climb, no chance for an easy warm-up. It takes about 9 minutes 30 seconds to get to the start, where you exchange a few pleasantries with whomever showed up, and then, at precisely 7:45am, head out. Once in a while you feel really lively and looking forward to the climb up Kings, but often, the first part of the climb leaves you wondering why you do this twice a week, why you never, ever, do an easier ride through the foothills, skipping any long & steep climbs.

By the time you get to the middle, you've established a rhythm, and set mental targets for finishing times. At the top, you declare victory or defeat.

That's a lot of words for a piece titled "There are no words..."

Once on Skyline everything changes. Or I should say, once you ride south and get past the gradual climb to Swett Road. The tough stuff is behind you and there are no relevant timing points. You've reconnected with everyone else on the ride (we always regroup at the top of Kings, and try to stay together on Skyline), and after the short sprinter's climb to the plateau just prior to Skegg's Point, well, you've arrived at that breathless, "there are no words" part of the ride. If it's been cold, you nearly always emerge into the sun just across from the Skegg's parking lot. The summer fog has almost but not entirely burned off, giving you the scene in the picture. At this point, it is not about you, it's not about your bike, it's just where you are. And where you are wouldn't be as special, wouldn't be as speechless, if you hadn't worked to get there.

It is, simply, amazing. One might think it would become less so after all these years (40?); that it might become routine. But it doesn't. Whether it was a struggle to get there or one of those days your legs felt like they were attached to a throttle, you don't enjoy it any more, or any less. It's all in the moment you're there. --Mike--