

Where HAS everybody gone?



Descending back into the fog on Highway 84, heading towards Woodside There's no way of denying it; our Tuesday/Thursday morning ride, which used to anywhere from 6 to 12 show up, has seen a serious reduction in interest. It's sometimes just myself and Kevin (younger Kevin, not Pilot), although the other Kevin (Pilot) usually shows up if he's not working. JR used to be a regular regular back in the day, but more often than not he's been riding a bit later, with a group of others who seem to enjoy riding a bit more after it's warmed up a bit. Karen attends if it fits into her work schedule and training; she's by far the most-serious athlete in our group. Marcus... we don't see much of Marcus at all anymore, which is really unfortunate because he's the guy who can take Kevin (younger Kevin) for a "real" ride, pushing his limits. Mark P & George S are regulars on the "morning" ride, the ride for those enjoy seeing the sun come up an hour or two after getting out of bed. That's the one group I could never join. Just never saw the attraction to watching the sun come up, especially while riding! And if we turn back the clock a bit more, super-fast Chris and drive-it-hard-on-the-flats Karl. Chris had to become responsible and ditch our ride just about the same time Kevin (younger Kevin) started getting really fast. Chris could have put the hurt to him.

Some of it is simply that I'm getting older, and slower. The days when I could ride at the front and keep track of people are long gone, and for a while, I was the straggler, the "weakest link" that everyone else had to wait up for. That's changing; this year, despite being on the wrong side of 60, I've ridden stronger this year than last. But for that 3 or 4 years that saw my times up Kings steadily increase, it probably wasn't that much fun to ride with me. And then there's the other issue- EVERYONE is getting older. JR is 67 if I recall correctly? Pilot is 63. Some might not think doing the same thing, week after week, year after year, is as much fun in their mid-60s as it is in your, well, late 40s. Wow, that seems so young now, but didn't seem like it then!

So why do **I** keep doing it? A few reasons. First, it's a reference. A way of knowing the shape I'm in, and assessing the effects of age, and sometimes meds and illnesses, on my performance. You can't do that if you're not doing the same thing. Second, there's that fear, a real, not imagined, fear, that some morning I'll wake up and say, I don't have to ride today. I can take the day off. And then, a year or two or three down the road, I'll look back at that date as the beginning of the end. As long as I can keep doing this same ride, there's a sense of immortality. The fact that I'm a bit slower isn't that big a deal; we're talking 3 minutes slower up Kings, and maybe a total of 2 extra minutes elsewhere. So, a ride that used to take 2 hours now takes 2 hours, 5 minutes. That's over 10 years time.

I'm OK doing the ride by myself if need be, but it would be nice if we had some of the faster riders again to challenge Kevin (younger Kevin; the pilot's showing signs of slowing down just like me!). It's fun watching him chase people down, and asking him, when I get to the top, how many days he's been waiting.

So yes, just myself and (younger) Kevin today, on a surprisingly-foggy morning. Casual pace up through the park, escaping the fog about a third of the way up the hill. Nice up on top; dry, low-50s. Great views of the fog on the bay side and clear on the coast side. Saw two rabbits, one in Huddart, the other on West Old LaHonda. Perhaps that rarest of days when the view descending 84 into Woodside might have been better than the view from West Old LaHonda!

I don't know how many more years of this ride I have in me, but I expect a minimum of 5. That's based on JR, still riding with us at 67. If he can do it, I can, right? And I find it very likely I'll not stop prior to 70, just because.