

## Still here, but consistency is a thing of the past

There was a time I wondered, how long can I keep this up? At what point do I get too old, too slow, to realistically do the same sort of rides I've done most of my life.

Things like, when will I look back and think, hmm, that was my last-ever 100 mile ride? (Think it was about two years ago, and I'm guessing I've still got a couple years at least where that ought to be possible... in general, distance isn't an issue for me. Steep climbs, on the other hand, that's another thing).

One of the most-obvious changes is that I no longer look forward to nasty weather forecasts. For years, decades, there was an appeal to riding when nobody else wanted to be out there riding. It could be 40 degrees and dumping, howling wind, and I'd be out there. There was an appeal to the absurd. Going to sleep with rain pounding against the windows gave so much more to look forward to than a normal cold winter ride (and generally, if it was raining, it was too warm for their to be ice on the roads).

And snow! It doesn't snow often around here, but when it does, it makes for a very special bike ride. I remember riding up Kings Mtn one morning and seeing (and feeling) the transition and rain turned to snow as I climbed. That's something I'll never forget. Or when we were up on Skyline and built a small snow man in the Skegg's Point parking lot, not realizing our gloves were getting soaked through, making for one of the most-painful descents ever as our hands felt like ice. And the time we discovered that bike tires are skinny enough they punch through the snow and find the pavement, offering traction that cars didn't have. The cars were literally sliding around while we were doing just fine. Providing we avoided the cars that were sliding around.

But starting last year, the rain rides were cut back dramatically. I wimped out, choosing to do Zwift rides on a trainer in the comfort of my family room. It's time on the bike, yes, but it's really not the same.

On more normal, nice days, the challenge is now finishing the ride in time to get to work and open the shop. It took 40 years for that to become an issue, but here it is. Back in the day, we'd reliably end the ride (at Olive Hill & Canada) between 9:18-9:22. Now, a "fast" ride might finish by 9:30, with some as late as 9:40, maybe even later. Regarding Kings, I still have memory of the days where, sick as a dog, there was still no way I'd be slower than 30 minutes. Today? It can be an effort to make sure it's under 40!

It's still wonderful being out there. I still have yet to feel, after finishing a ride, that I wished I'd either not ridden at all or spent the time on a trainer. I hope that never changes.