

You can't get there from here/The Completion Backwards Principle

All these years and that's probably my first reference to the presumably-long-gone SF-grown "musical" group, The Tubes. In their waning days, they produced an album named "[The Completion Backwards Principle](#)." A fitting description of today's ride, which we did... backward. Something I've thought about doing for some time, but today there was a compelling reason to do so.

Why? Was it because we've been doing the exact same thing, twice a week, for way more than 20 years, maybe 30, up to 39 years if you count the rides I did when I used to race? That would make sense, except that this is the always-punctual always-reliable thus always-predictable Tuesday/Thursday-morning 7:45am ride. Up Kings, north on Skyline to 84, down 84 west to west-side Old LaHonda and ride that back up to Skyline, then back down 84 into Woodside. This is what we do.

But not today. Because as we tried to make the right turn onto Kings from Manuella, a not-so-kind County Sheriff told us we couldn't pass due to a downed powerline. Karl asked if we could sneak through, which didn't make the guy very happy, because he said he'd already told "hundreds" of cyclists already (Hundreds? By 7:50am??). We'd actually been warned about the likelihood of Kings being closed by Millo, who had tried to ride out ahead of us a few minutes earlier and been turned back. Supposedly the road would be cleared in 15 minutes or so, but we weren't going to wait around that long, and that's when the idea of doing the ride backward came to mind, because by the time we got to Kings, if we did that last instead of first, they most certainly would have cleared the road.

I'd like to say that everyone looked upon an exact reverse route as a fun thing to do, but some weren't happy about the traffic we'd likely see heading up 84, and others, well... I think some of us are wired like Indy cars, which can only really turn in just one direction. The reality is that blasting up 84 (we didn't have to "blast" but Karl took off at the start like a rabbit chased by a dog), which is a very easy grade, was a lot of fun. You could actually draft and I managed to hang onto the front group until about halfway up, when I lost contact and rode the rest of the way with Nigel. Frustratingly, the faster guys remained just ahead of us, leaving me to think I shoulda, coulda, next time woulda hung on for dear life and stayed with them. Maybe, except that the way Mike R came blowing past about 3/4 of the way up, making quick contact with them, put me in my place.

It's funny how much tougher some things seem in reverse. The total amount of climbing is obviously the same, and in reverse, the steepest parts are all on the descents, not the climbs. Heading down west-side Old LaHonda is a lot trickier and more-technical than going up, which is actually another theme for the reverse direction. The two main descents, west-side Old LaHonda and Kings Mtn, are a lot more challenging than our normal descents of Skyline and 84. It's amazing how different a ride can be when done in reverse.

The hardest part of the reverse ride is the long grind from Sky Londa to Kings Mtn. It's also one of the more-rewarding parts, because normally we're flying through there too fast to see anything along the way, and that certainly wasn't the case today!

Descending Kings is not my favorite thing to do, but I'll admit it's a bit more fun when you're trying to keep up with others. I kept looking for the site of the downed powerline, but it was nowhere to be seen. Finally, after passing Trip Road on our way to Manuella, we came across workers cleaning things up. So it turns out we could have done the regular ride; we just had to detour the first part of Kings by looping out to Trip Road and then back. The County Sheriff could have told us that, but I'm glad he didn't. It was fun doing the reverse loop. Who knows, we might try it again some day!