

If I call out "Car Back" could you please move over?

It would be easier to skip this entry and not risk offending anyone, but there are cyclists out there making my time on the road more dangerous and more difficult because... they're rude? Indifferent? Feel privileged?

On Monday's ride (the 94 mile figure-8 to Boulder Creek) Kevin and I were heading up 9 on the return to Skyline, about halfway between Waterman Gap and the top, when we came across a couple of guys out for their own ride in the same direction. Riding two across, they were taking up at least half of the lane on a road with very fast-moving cars. I understand the idea of being social and riding next to someone else; I do it often with Kevin, because it's easier to carry on a conversation. But when I hear a car coming up, I immediately drop back and get in line behind him. Why? Because it's safer, and because there's no reason a cyclist should cause others to go out of their way or get delayed when there's no good reason to. It's called sharing the road.

But these two guys in front of us... I yelled out "Car Back" as I always do, and yes, I expected them to move over. Like most cyclists do. Like considerate people do. Like people who don't feel like they're entitled to the road more than someone else would do.

These guys didn't. They didn't budge in the slightest, even as a car came screaming past them (probably doing well over the speed limit). They weren't deaf; they were chatting at normal levels. I briefly considered telling them they should really think about being a bit more considerate, but didn't think I could do so and keep my cool at the time. In retrospect, I should have said something. Instead, Kevin and I just flew on ahead, trying to put as much distance between us and them as possible and hoping that other drivers didn't express their anger at us because of what they did (or didn't) do.

Sometimes we'll get a mild version of this on our Tuesday/Thursday-morning ride, but for the most part, the regulars understand and control things, keeping the new folk in line and trying to establish our riders as good citizens to the locals (since we see the same people twice a week, week after week, year after year). As a result, we get virtually zero hassles from cars, aside from the occasional yahoo on the run from Sky Londa down to west-side Old LaHonda, where it's admittedly tough for cars to pass even a line of single-file cyclists. Still, I get customers coming in all the time, complaining about being harassed by motorists to a degree that I simply cannot relate to, even after my Bear Creek Road experience earlier in the day Monday (where we were being tailgated, at high speed, on a tricky descent). It just doesn't happen all that often, and I have to believe at least part of the reason is because the people I ride with understand that the roads are for all of us, not just cyclists, not just cars, and that we can, with very little effort, make life a lot more pleasant for others.

As the title says, when you hear someone say "Car Back" do what you can to safely make room. Try to move to a single-file formation, ride in a predictable fashion, smile. But most of all, move over if you can. I'm not yelling "Car Back" because I like the sound of my voice. --Mike--