

I could quit riding any time I want to...



Once in a while, climbing Old LaHonda at the start of a Sunday ride, or Kings on any given Tuesday or Thursday morning, and I'm not quite feeling it, yes, I wonder, why am I doing this? Why am I struggling up this hill, why isn't it fun yet? That feeling can persist for a while, sometimes half the climb, until I first get to that point of no return (half-way there, can't turn back now!) and it becomes habit. Something you're used to doing, one foot follows the other, keep at it and you'll get there. It might not be pretty but you'll get there. 10 miles down, 47 to go. Sounds awful when you put it that way, and feels not-so-great thinking it.



Not everyone wants to ride up the hill; you can see the guy on the right using a transporter beam.

And then, you get to... the top. You don't pause to think about it, you just go down the other side, through the upper forest on West Old LaHonda, past that incredible view of the coast, and everything changes, your mindset shifts, you're on your way. You look forward to the detour past the LaHonda duck pond, wondering if the turtles will be out (they were), and by the time you hit Haskins, that nasty hill between where you are and where you'll be, you're thinking about stretching your legs and seeing how fast you can go in a pleasant way.

On to Pescadero, mild headwinds, not bad, decent speed on a pleasant road shared with a very small number of cars and motorcycles plus a few cyclists in the other direction. Stopping for a drink and pastry at the Pescadero Bakery and I'm a completely-different person than the guy struggling up Old LaHonda just over an hour ago.

And that's when it hits you, that's when you realize cycling is a drug, a drug that offers the hangover first and the extraordinary high later. So no, I couldn't quit, not today, not tomorrow, not as long as I'm able to get past the early-ride blues, not as long as my brain remembers and reminds my legs and lungs how awesome it's going to be in just 30 minutes or so.

It's also cool to come across other cyclists that know me through my writings, like Marty from Modesto, whom I came across at the base of the second climb on Stage Road. I slowed my pace for a bit and rode with him; he thought he was holding me up and said to keep on going, and I'm thinking... why? Killing myself on each climb is just one way to ride, and if I've got a good excuse to ease off a bit and enjoy good company, why wouldn't I? Later in the ride, descending Kings, I flew past someone I thought I recognized, on a bike we sold. And I'm thinking... why? Why fly past? So I slowed down and waited at the wide clearing and we rode the rest of the way down together, and I got to show her the alternate route through the park.

There's a lot more to cycling than just data on Strava. It's the people you meet and the magnificence of getting places under your own power.

I could no more quit riding than you could pry that rifle out of Charlton Heston's cold dead hands.