

## A rather spectacular scene on Mt Hamilton



Riding up to the top we missed this scene entirely; it took the sun at just the right angle to make it incredibly striking. This is \*not\* snow; it's ice, made all the more beautiful by the fact that it was melting so it had an almost polished appearance. It started the way many prior New Years Days have. Kevin and I got up about 7:30am, got our bikes ready and ride to the Redwood City train station, where we catch the first train to San Jose. Before getting on the train there's the ritual breakfast and coffee at Starbucks (it's right there, y'know? Sure, there's better coffee around but not many places as convenient or even open on New Years Day).

It's a 50 minute train ride to San Jose, and by the way there's no issue with space for bikes on holidays. Ever. From there it's a 35 minute bike ride to the base of the climb; it would likely be closer to 20 if not for the zillion red lights along the way! Today we met up with Todd, who chose to drive rather than take the "boring" train (What? Boring? What does that say about my conversational skills???). This delayed a trip up the hill just a bit as Todd discovered, before getting too far from home, that he'd forgotten his shoes. See, that's a darn good reason for riding to the train! Because it's pretty darned unlikely you're going to discover, after riding away from home, that you're wearing the wrong shoes.

Was it cold this morning? Not too bad at the start; about 48 in downtown San Jose. It gradually dropped as we climbed, dipping into the upper-30s halfway up, and by the time we got to the top, a chilly 32. There was good reason Kevin and I brought along two sets of cold-weather gloves, one "normal" (for the climb) and another for more-extreme conditions. Descending at speed when it's 32 degrees constitutes an example of extreme conditions.

Of course, first we had to get to the top. Not much trouble for Todd & Kevin, but I struggled quite a bit in the cold air. It's not that I like climbing when it's 85 degrees, but I certainly do a lot better under those conditions! And I was between 40 and 53 degrees away from those conditions this morning. Todd & Kevin stayed with me for the first half of the climb, after which I strategically exited out the back, so as not to embarrass them. It would be terribly bad for their morale, after all, if they couldn't drop someone breathing as hard as I was. That's my story and I'm sticking to it.



On a cold day, everyone eventually finds their way here. It's warm, there's a bathroom, and you can buy a cold coke that's probably warmer than whatever's in your water bottle. Somehow I managed to make it up without getting passed by anyone else, which makes a pretty strong case for the idea that the faster cyclists head up earlier. Still, it was with some measure of fear and trepidation each time I passed someone else, wondering if I would shortly run out of gas and get passed in turn by that same person. One of the first

rules I taught Kevin as he began to get stronger way back in the day- do not, ever, pass somebody unless you're absolutely certain you can stay ahead of them. And at the top, Kevin was waiting for me, Coke in hand. I wasn't sure I really wanted a cold coke at that point, but quickly realized that the drink mix in my water bottles was going to be pretty close to the ambient temperature (32 degrees at the moment), so the coke was actually going to be warmer!

We didn't stay too long at the top; the area inside, where the observatory offices, bathrooms and coke machines are, is pleasantly warm and it wouldn't take too long before you simply couldn't be talked into leaving. Besides, it starts getting a bit crowded in there; nobody rides up the hill without at least a quick stop inside.

It was on the descent that we spotted the scene in the photo at the top of this entry. The angle of the sun must have been just right, since we hadn't noticed the iced trees on the way up, even though that would have been at much lower speed. Startlingly beautiful. I really should have spent more time trying to get the perfect photo.

The descent was uneventful and, as usual, we were thankful for that first uphill climb where you get a chance to warm up. Kevin and I continued on after leaving Todd at his car. Continued into stop-light hell, but with enough time for the train that we were able to stop for coffee near the station. Then caught the train back to Redwood City and rode up the hill home. A good ride to start the new year. Now, if only I hadn't forgotten to restart the timer for the descent, so I wouldn't have that straight line suggesting I took a helicopter back down the hill!