

The plan: 58 miles, 6000ft of climbing. How did it become 91.22 miles & 8758ft of climbing?

This is winter, right? You don't ride as hard during the winter as you do the rest of the year, because there aren't as many hours in the day, and the weather tends to conspire against epic adventures.

So the planned ride today was Old LaHonda/Pescadero/Tunitas, the usual 58 mile run, with a stop at the bakery in Pescadero and that always fun (ok, sometimes fun) run up Tunitas Creek. Kevin and I started out on exactly that right. A minor bit of drama when, about a third of the way up Old LaHonda, I notice he's suddenly slowing down and then falls to the ground (yes, another seizure, yes, it will be nice when they can finally get a handle on them, no, having a seizure doesn't have to ruin his day because he's close to normal within a couple minutes and it's extraordinarily rare to have more than one seizure in a week, much less a day). A couple of guys stop to see if we need any help (thanks, I explained we're fine, this is sorta "normal" but it is sometimes surprising how many don't even give a passing glance at such things), I got Kevin out of the roadway and when his head cleared we were heading back up the hill.

What a great day too! Mid-60s most everywhere, clear skies, so I was a bit surprised we didn't see a lot more people out on bikes. In fact, there were just three we saw during the half-hour break for lunch at the bakery, on the nicest day of the year so far! Clearly, I am not doing my job. It's not just selling bikes, but getting people to go out and ride, push their limits, see things they haven't seen before. You don't have to be a super-strong rider to make it to the coast.

But getting back to the ride, we're in Pescadero, eating our "healthy" cherry turnovers & strawberry-cheese thingees, when Kevin tells me he really doesn't want to do the regular ride. He wants to do something else. I suggest we could add the Los Lobitos cut-off extension to the bottom of Tunitas, but no, that's too boring, no hilly enough, whatever. He suggests a one-way ride to Santa Cruz, with Becky (his sister) picking us up. I tell him no, I'd rather not have her driving all that way, but if he really wants, we could do a ride-until-you-drop (or the sun goes down, whichever comes first), and see how close to home we get. He agreed, called Becky, who agreed to pick us up, and so exiting the bakery we turned right instead of left.

"Right" took us to Davenport, 25 miles along the coast that went by pretty quickly as we watched the many hawks and other large birds of prey soaring in the light breeze, and tried to figure out how the birds managed to fly in our direction, faster than we were riding, gliding the entire time. Why can't we do that on bikes? We stopped for lunch at the taco place in Davenport instead of the too-popular-to-be-fast Whaler Cafe before heading up the too-steep-to-be-fast Bonny Doon grade. Kevin had only seen Boony Doon once before, and that was by car, last year, following the Tour of California. It's a whole lot tougher on a bike, and he agreed the race organizers had things backward; Tunitas Creek should have been a Category-3 climb and Bonny Doon the tougher-rated Cat-2. As we're steadily climbing towards the top of Jamison Creek, I'm keeping an eye on my watch, trying to calculate where we need to be and when we need to be there so we can get to the other side of the hill.

In retrospect, taking China Grade instead of going straight up Highway 9 was probably a mistake, in that it probably added some time to the trip up to Skyline. I'll need to look at the Garmin download to see how much time, but at the time, I thought it would save time, so clearly I have no sense of time, but I sure spent a lot of time thinking about it. We ended up at Waterman Gap (Highway 9 & 236) at 4:22pm, where I sent Kevin on ahead and stopped to give Becky a call, giving her a rough idea of the plan (that we hoped to make it to the top in time to ride down the other side before dark). 6 miles to the top. How long was it going to take? This was one of those rare times when a minute or two really are meaningful!

5:07 we hit the top; just before that, I called Becky while riding (a bit clumsily, but it worked) and told her to leave Redwood City, head down 280 to Foothill/Stevens Creek and head west. This would allow us to take Redwood Gulch down to Stevens Creek, saving Becky quite a bit of driving. What I didn't count on was how wet & slippery Redwood Gulch was going to be! Somehow we managed to ride & slip down the steepest sections without mishap and crossed paths with Becky along Stevens Creek Reservoir. The plan worked, which was good, because in Stevens Creek Canyon, unlike Highway 9's corridor, cell phones don't.

So a relatively routine 58 mile ride stretched to 92 miles, 8700ft of climbing, and the excitement of coordinating a feasible pickup

point while on the run and fighting approaching darkness. We did have tail lights; if we'd thought to bring headlights, we likely would have continued another 8 miles for a full century. Probably better that we didn't!