

## Maybe if we give the park ranger an alarm clock?



The usually-closed gate at the bottom of Huddart Park in its usual state Every once in a while, the gate at the bottom of Huddart Park is open, allowing us to sail on through without stopping. More often than not it's closed, requiring us to either slip through it or ride around it cyclo-cross style. We'll frequently see the ranger heading down, presumably to open the gate, as we're heading up through the park, and that's what gave me the idea that maybe we could drop off an alarm clock at the unattended park office up top, with a note thanking him for opening it up (sometimes) but maybe could he wake up just a couple minutes earlier?

Just four of us on the ride this morning; the two Kevins, myself and JR. Thankfully a fairly mellow pace most of the way, although I did try and keep up with Kevin (pilot) for as long as I could, which meant about halfway up Kings. The other Kevin & JR were hanging out behind a bit, maybe trying to give me a false sense that I'm getting a bit faster again.

Faster. Yesterday I did a bit of research, going through older almost-daily diary entries and checking my Kings Mtn times. It's pretty clear that I peaked in 2006, when I got a pair of 25-something times up the hill. This makes sense; my plan back then was to be faster at 50 (my age in 2006) than I was at 35, and I accomplished that. Past 2006 began a gradual decline in my overall fitness, as I spent more time on longer rides (at pretty slow speeds) with my son, getting him from 5'3 and 230 pounds to his present 5'9 and 175. By 2011 he was clearly faster than me, and in the two years since I've begun to gradually get faster, this year improving about 4% over last year and, finally, getting back into 26-something territory on Kings fairly often.

I'm not sure how far I can go; at 57, it's not realistic to believe I can swim against the tide of getting older for too much longer. But I draw hope from JR who, at 60, is considerably faster than I am today. And Lindsay Crawford, local cycling legend now in his 70s and still putting in long and pretty fast miles. As they say, I'm not dead yet. --Mike--