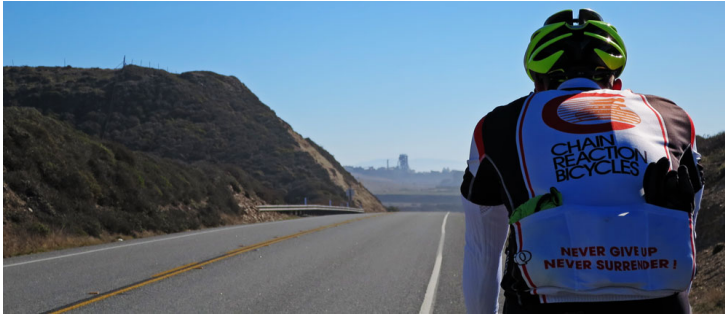


Another end-of-year "Mileage Run"- 112 mile Santa Cruz loop



Remember the Spaceport in the first "new" Star Trek movie? That's it, just to the right of Kevin. Who knew it was just north of Davenport on Highway 1.

I'm not happy with my cycling mileage this year; I was shooting for 7200 and ended up quite a bit short of that. As of yesterday, over 600 miles short. 7200 is simply out of the question this year, but that didn't mean I couldn't go down in flames getting a bit closer! Best way to do that? The usual. The BIG loop. Redwood City/Woodside/LaHonda/Pescadero/Santa Cruz/Highway 9/Skyline North/84 into Woodside and home. 112 miles which, at "only" 9000ft of climbing, doesn't quite qualify as a mountainous ride, but it makes up in quantity for what it lacks in quality.

This would be a "racing the sun" ride too, given its length, our leisurely starting time (8:30am) and it being not too far from the shortest day of the year. As such we were fully equipped with lights and backup lights. We hoped to make it back just before dark, but not an issue if we couldn't. My primary concern was how Kevin would hold out, since he's missed quite a bit of riding lately. Turned out to be only a minor issue.

The weather, for winter, couldn't be much nicer. A bit cool at the start (low 40s through some parts of Woodside, upper 30s in the chill box just outside of Pescadero) but warmed up nicely on the coast (mid-60s) before cooling off just a bit (mid-50s) for most of the ride back home. No wind to speak of, which was a bit disappointing because it's a lot of fun when you're pushed down the coast!



Our new favorite place to eat in Davenport

Our new favorite stop for lunch is the Davenport Caf  , just across the street from the Whaler Caf   which used to be our refueling stop. Nothing wrong with the Whaler Caf  , but the Davenport Caf   has some great food offerings (the burritos today were perfect), much faster service and a lot less crowded. Funny thing about eating on a ride though. A full burrito, especially one the size they serve at the Davenport Caf  , is probably too much. We would have been better off ordering just one and splitting it. But here's the odd thing about that. If you weren't riding, you'd quite possibly be eating more.

By far the least-enjoyable part of this ride is the Santa Cruz to Boulder Creek section. Narrow, crowded and often drivers who don't think cyclists belong on the road. Today we had a woman yelling out of her car, driving the opposite direction, that we should be

riding at the side of the road.



So many type of Mtn Dew, which to choose?Um, ok, we were riding maybe half a foot from the edge; beyond that was a railing and beyond that a pretty good drop-off to the creek below. She really didn't have any idea where we were on the road; she just wanted to harass cyclists. I told Kevin she should be more appreciative that by cycling instead of driving, we were doing our part to reduce the demand, and thus cost, of gasoline for her car.

But Boulder Creek is where it all gets better because the traffic thins out, because just a couple more miles and you start up a real climb (about time!), and most of all, because the gas station/minimart has more varieties of Mtn Dew than I knew existed. 16 ounces of caffeinated sugar water later (plus enough bottled water to make two more bottles of Skratch energy drink) we were off on the final stretch home. Still on the "wrong" side of the hill, but somehow you feel that last 37 miles or so is easy.



This stopped me in my tracks. Caught it in the corner of my eye heading north on Skyline, circled back to get a photo.

Well, not really that easy today, not for Kevin. His recent lack of miles was slowing him down a bit until about two miles from Skyline, when the energy damping field reversed and he found the strength to ride strongly the rest of the way home. Spirited enough that he tried to steal the Skyline Palo Alto City Limit sprint (nothing doing!) and thought he could pull off the Albion sprint as we approached the end of the ride. Got to tell you, it wasn't easy to hold him off, but I did, and I'm going to work at continuing to do that in the future.