

Has it been a year since I've had a flat?

It's been a very long time since I've had a flat. That's a good thing. And it's probably a good thing to get one every once in a while just so you can keep up on your skills. Not the skills needed to replace a tube; I get plenty of practice with that at the shop (yes, an owner does get to change his or her fair share of tubes). Much more exciting are the skills needed to stay upright when you blow a tire at 40.5 mph going on a descent (guess it's obvious that would be a descent). It's an interesting experience that goes like this-

- You hear the tube blow out, and your first thought is, who got the flat?

You realize that your bike is a bit bumpy and know that it was you who got the flat.

You're not sure if it's your front or rear tire, so you're hesitant to apply any front brake because, if it is the front, you might wash out (crash).

- After a longer time than you'd think, you recognize that it's your rear tube that's blown, and start a gradual slowdown as you angle even-more-gradually towards the side of the road, knowing that you want to stop as quickly as possible because you could damage your tire and wheel (both of which are needed to get you home!), but don't want to stop so quickly that you crash.

In real-time, this process seems to take forever. It's not one of those "your entire life flashes before your eyes in seconds" things but rather seems like you've got too much time to dwell on potentially-unpleasant outcomes. Fortunately, I wasn't thinking that way at all, I just knew I had to get the bike over to the shoulder and stopped. So how long did it actually take? I looked at the Garmin readout after the ride, and from 40.5mph to zero was 28 seconds, which really does seem like an eternity.



Descending 84 into Woodside

OK, enough of the faux drama. Pretty big group this morning, including Eric, Chris, Jan, Karen, Ed? (not sure of the name; he arrived just as we had started and I didn't even know he was with us until he caught up when I had the flat), Marcus & John. We rode up through the park (something I should know better than to do when it's 48 degrees) and I guess it was meant to be, as it was one of those rare times that the gate at the bottom was open. Predictably I had a great view of everyone's rear wheel as soon as we got to the toll booth. I briefly caught back up to the main group about a mile past the park but couldn't hold on.

I rode a bit timidly after the flat, not sure of how much pressure I really had in the rear tire (I checked when I got home; it was almost exactly 100psi, 20psi below what I normally inflate to). The final sprint was won by Chris, with Jan making a pretty strong attempt. I won't make it so easy for them next Tuesday!