

A sad ride in the rain yesterday

Yes, I did ride yesterday. I waited long enough for the steady rain to become a steady drizzle, the kind that makes more of a mess of your bike (because it isn't raining hard enough to clean it) and isn't even as fun to ride in because it's not as challenging.

But what made it sad was visiting the site where, last week, we lost a good customer & friend. Lauren Ward, wife of Bob Ward, longtime bike racer and a member of a racing club we sponsored back in the early 80s. Good people. Two kids I think. Steve, my brother who runs our Los Altos store, knew them very well (they lived in Los Altos, near our store).



I rode up to the intersection from the east, and maybe a mile beforehand, had this sudden feeling that this road, doing what I was doing right then, those were some of the last memories of her life. That just didn't make sense in so many ways. I knew it was going to be emotional, but I didn't consider that it was going to be personal. I pulled up to the intersection and studied the markings on the road, the painted red markings and investigative shorthand (AOI for area of impact, RF for right front, as in the final position of the front of the truck whose wheels had run over her).

It didn't make sense.



I tried to play out various scenarios in my mind. I was there at (corrected for the time change) the same time of day, and saw that the sun was much too high in the sky to have been an issue. So I got on my bike and rode through. I shot video of cars overtaking me. I rode through again. And again. And again. It was probably 10-15 times through that intersection, making a U-turn after the overpass and doing it again, often waiting for a fair amount of traffic to show up, thinking maybe I could see something about the intersection, and the way the cars go through it, that might provide a clue.

There were none to be had. Oh sure, lots of little things that could be improved, like removing the sidewalk-to-nowhere on the westbound side (where the accident happened) so you would have another 3 feet of room for cyclists to share with cars. Which made me think of the 3-foot passing law that we don't have, and wonder if maybe that would have helped, because motorists might have to plan a bit more carefully when they see cyclists ahead to make sure they don't get squeezed. But would it have mattered? I don't know.

Past senseless events haven't helped me come to terms with this one, and this one won't likely help me deal any better with those in the future. There are no insensitive cliches that can come out of this and help the family deal with the loss of a wife and mother. Going out there and riding through that intersection wasn't going to make me, or anybody else, feel any better. I knew that. I just hoped that maybe I could see something and understand. --Mike--