

The Spokin' Word



Newsletter of the Lompoc Valley Bicycle Club

May 2007

Poke in the Eye with a Stick

By Gene Pritchett

"Poke in the eye with a stick, South Yuba Trail, Poke in the eye with a stick, South Yuba Trail....." "Hmmm, I'm not sure which one would be more painful....." That was how the conversation with my wife started following our recent expedition to Grass Valley for the fundraising ride for Big Brothers/Big Sisters. Three of us brave Lompocans traveled six and a half hours up to Grass Valley to stay with fellow chiropractor and cyclist Darwin Leek. They provided us a wonderful pasta dinner and warned us of the difficulty of the following day's ride. "Yeah, yeah", I thought to myself, "I'm in good shape. Heck, I rode cross country this year. I've done a bunch of double centuries. It can't be *That* hard". Oops.

We started out the morning with a big bowl of oatmeal and drove to the start a few miles from Darwin's wonderful house overlooking the beautiful canyon and forest below. There were almost 50 riders signed up for the ride, each having raised at least \$250 in pledges. Right from the start we started to climb, just at the limit of what we could do in the middle ring, climb. We seemed to climb for a couple of miles before we dropped onto a wonderful singletrack trail along an irrigation canal. Thankfully there were riders with us who knew the trails because there were several unmarked



places where we could have made a wrong turn and gotten lost. (In hindsight, perhaps getting lost would have



been a good thing). We then turned on to the Pioneer Trail. Wow, what a gorgeous ride. We went in and out through the tall pine trees on a smooth trail with outstanding views and the trail was not too technical. It reminded us of riding up in the Santa Cruz area by UCSC. Overall the trail was uphill, but not too tough.

Then we got to the downhill to the little town of Washington. Darwin and his wife described the town as being very remote and a little "backwoods". In fact she said something about hearing "Deliverance" type banjo music playing if you listen real close. The descent was on a very

steep, rocky and rutted gravel road for several miles. At one point my brakes were making so much noise I stopped to let them cool down. The rear disc was black and smoking. (Looking at them later, Dana's is discolored now too). It was finally time for lunch. We had turkey and roast beef sandwiches and refilled our water bottles and camelbacks for the "Really Hard" part to come. (At this point the 45 mile riders turned around and went back the same way).

The South Yuba trail is 17 miles of very technical singletrack with a narrow rocky trail carved into the mountainside along sheer cliffs with steep difficult climbs and treacherous drops and descents. The penalty for making a mistake is high and would be way too dramatic, what with the helicopters and all of that. There are a lot of tight switchbacks and of course the trail is thoroughly lined with poison oak. This is without a doubt the most difficult trail I have ever ridden. It is like Little Pine on steroids. There are parts of this trail that are downright scary, though Bruce didn't seem to be having too much trouble. Then he told us he has almost too much sick leave time built up. After a few miles a couple of guys came up behind us and we encouraged them to go on by. They replied, "No, we're the sweepers. We have to stay behind you." Actually, we were quite thankful because there are several places that the trail forks, (or disappears entirely), and they could tell us which way to go. At one point the trail degraded to the point that we had to carry our bikes and climb over sharp rocks and boulders for a few hundred yards around a point. Without the guides we probably would have been looking all over for the trail and then gotten really lost. Dana and I both started having a lot of trouble with cramping and had to drink a lot more water. It was just too difficult to take a hand off the bars and grab a drink, even with a camelback. Here is a website with a helmet cam video of the trail. Just watching the video makes me cringe in a few spots remembering the trail. <http://ogrehut.com/20060522/south-yuba-video>



When we finally reached the end of the Yuba trail our guides described the climb out of the canyon as not too bad, "it's pretty steep but it's paved and it'll only take about 20 minutes." Liars. I was climbing in my lowest granny gear at 2.9 mph. I tried walking, yep, 2.8-2.9 mph. So I rode/walked the 35 minutes to the top. Dana, Bruce and I all thought, "Yeah, it's a downhill into town!" Our guides said, "well, no, there are a few rollers to go." Hmmm, Harris Grade type rollers for about 5 miles. And then finally a steep drop into town for the finish.

Final totals for the trip were a few minutes under 8 hours for 50 miles and my computer had a little over 12,000 feet of climbing, (Dana's had a few thousand less, so we decided to use mine). And no, I'm not signed up for next year.

My New Training Partner

By Scott Shaw

I found a new training partner last fall when I started training for the 24 hour races. My new training partner had always been on my previous rides, sucking wheel in a sense, hiding behind and letting the rest of me pull it up the hill. Sure it looked like it was making an effort to spin the pedals like the true poser it was but it really wasn't giving a full effort. I wasn't suspicious that the rest of me was being used until I caught it being the laggard it was. That laggard was my left leg.

Sure, Lefty is always with me on rides pretending to spin the crank just like my other leg. Lefty wears the black lycra bike shorts and the fancy shoe with the cleat and the bike sock with the cute little designs but he was just a poser being seen but not pulling his fair share.

As I analyzed my pedal stroke I realized my right leg was my dominant leg and provided far more power than my left leg. It is especially noticeable as the climbs got steeper and longer. Lefty was providing only enough force to bring up Righty to the top of the pedal stroke so he could pull the wagon.

Miguelito Canyon and I become familiar friends as the weeks progress towards a race. What I started doing is road sign left-legged intervals. I would concentrate on using my left leg to provide the power until I got to the next road marker. I was amazed at how quickly Lefty would tire because it hadn't been providing much power. As Lefty became stronger I could spin for longer distances and the curves of the canyon passed by easier.

Next time you are on a ride, start to visualize your weaker leg. Feel how much power it's producing. There are two telltales that it's not doing its fair share of the work. If your leg begins to tire on the downstroke, your knee may move to the outside or your heel may drop. These actions reduce the effort of your weaker leg.

What to do? Next time you are riding concentrate on your pedal stroke. Can you feel one leg supplying more of a constant force than your other leg? If and probably yes, start thinking about your weaker leg. As you pedal along make your weaker leg do more work. Think about your knees as pistons of an engine: they should track straight up and down. Visualize your heel and make sure it isn't dropping at the bottom of the stroke. Once you start to feel the power difference between legs, start doing short intervals while you concentrate on your weaker leg.

An interesting aside is that I always got chronic pains in my right pelvis after a few weeks of training because it was flexing more due to my right side doing more work. Happily the pain subsided after I evened out my pedaling forces.

In time you will notice that each leg is producing similar amounts of power and you'll realize that you are riding faster and longer without fatigue.

Percent Grade?

I have decided to include an article in each month's edition outlining some historical fact or other interesting tidbit about cycling. This month we explore "Percent Grade"

On a recent ride with Dana we were discussing percent grade versus degrees or the angle of the climb. He was on a trip to Hawaii where they flew over "the steepest road in the world" which he recalled was at 45°. I was curious if it was 45° or 45%. Dana didn't realize there is a difference and I thanked him profusely for the great suggestion for an article for the newsletter.

In researching the title of "Steepest Roads in the World" I came across this great article written by Rob Ainsley about Baldwin Street in New Zealand which is listed by the Guinness Book of Records as the Steepest Road in the World. The road Dana saw was the steepest non-paved road.

“Mark and I”

Our Drum Canyon Loop

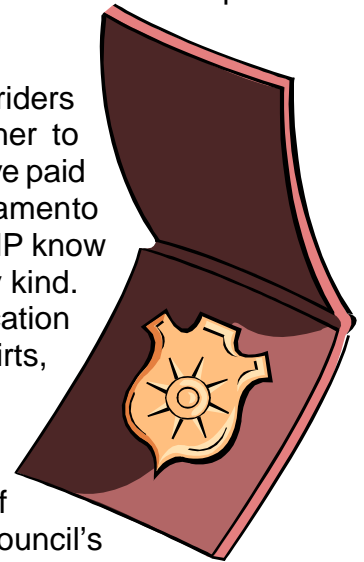
By Bob Goebel

Monday, May 7th, 2007, the day was clear, the day was hot. The local DA's were processing their case loads of former Cinco Da Mayo Warriors who were now sitting in jails waiting for their arraignments.

For those of us who were free, and off that day, we decided to ride. Yes, like El Diablo, the Devil Wind. In the heat of the Lompoc day we set out from Starbucks just after 10 AM out of town and up Harris Grade. Curves, speed, curves, and after the downhill, we came upon the intersection of RT. 135. But just before we got there, we saw a caravan of SAG vehicles with trailers pull off to their right. They gave us a wave and being curious we stopped.

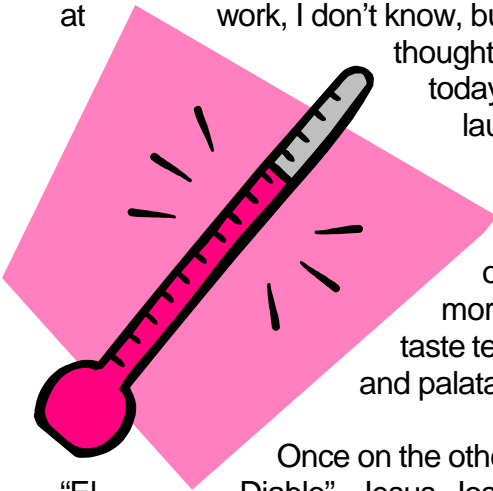
This fine group of folks told us that each year, a group of bicycle riders representing Police Agencies throughout Orange County join together to commemorate the lives of those Orange County Police Officers who have paid the ultimate sacrifice. The riders do this by cycling 630 miles from Sacramento to Orange County to raise money for Project 999. (I, being a former CHP know that 999 is the radio code for an officer down or in grave danger of any kind. When we hear "999" on the radio we drop everything and go to that location immediately.) They also gave us water, energy bars, energy goo, T-shirts, and they took our pictures, and then we got more water.

Over forty-eight peace officers from 20 different law enforcement agencies have died in the line of duty in Orange County, and each of those officers left behind a family in need. The Sheriff's Advisory Council's Project 999 was established to help the financially vulnerable family of a fallen officer with unexpected expenses and to make sure they are not left to fend for themselves alone. It doesn't matter what agency the officer worked for; the fund is available to the family of any peace officer killed or injured in the line of duty in Orange County. On May 4th, Team 999 started their grueling 630 mile trek. The team is comprised of 48 cyclists, each one representing an officer that has been killed in the line of duty. In a group relay format, Team 999 pedaled from the State Capitol to the streets of San Francisco; up the hills and along the cliffs of Big Sur, and through the coastal cities of Santa Cruz, Morro Bay, San Luis Obispo, Lompoc, Santa Barbara, Ventura, Oxnard,



Santa Monica, Long Beach, Seal Beach, and Huntington Beach. Riders participate in this event on their own time.

After that pleasant pause we proceeded to Los Alamos and Drum Canyon. Well it was 94° F in Los Alamos, God knows what it was in Drum Canyon? We trucked on and up after a water break at the park. Mark was an animal, a cruel task master! Perhaps it was his red jersey, or the fact that he out ranked me at work, I don't know, but good gravy it was hell! He pounded up the that hill. Yes, a hill I once thought on a typical coastal weather day was a friendly challenge, but not today. It was a dry sauna, a Mojave of torture, the sadistic sun laughing down at me, and the black asphalt projecting it's snarling heat back up me from below. All in all while Mark is mocking me with his evil grin and quiet countenance. He just pedaled effortlessly while I was sucking anything through my lungs. It felt like a super heated vacuum of space. I tried to imagine worse fates than this to make this misery more tolerable. I thought of making out with Rosie O'Donnell, or being a taste tester at a Roman vomitorium. Yet those analogies were more plausible and palatable as compared to this.



Once on the other side and down the hill we made it to HWY 246. Now the full force of "El Diablo". Jesus, Joseph and Mary, the *&#@? wind is at least 40 mph and 90° F. Yes it was from the typical direction. (Hey, being from Lompoc, what is the saying, "May the wind always be in your face, and the South County get you in the end.") So we battled back to town and fought off cramps. Mark almost got cramps in his legs and felt nauseous. I thought I had cramps, and then I got real hot in the head and somewhat delusional. I soon found myself hating the *&x%\$# that invented the bicycle and then I regretted ever having children, and then I wanted a new baby and then wondered why Paul McCartney re-married that legless girl, and why I can't find that "cereal shot from guns" anymore! I was so distraught.

Once I made it back, I sat in my unheated Jacuzzi for an hour and it felt so good. I really didn't give a *&%\$? if Mark was even alive, let alone have made it back.

So, that is the ride story.

Ride Calendar

- Great Western Bicycle Rally Friday May 25th to Monday May 28th.

Now is the time to make the annual trek up to Paso Robles to see the custom cars, oops, no, It's time to RIDE! There are a zillion different rides available including the famous swimming at Star Farms, (maybe we'll see the return of "Nessie"), and of course the trip to Adelaida. There is the hilarious Saturday afternoon Huffy Toss, and the delicious Sunday afternoon Barbeque with potluck side dishes from the Bike Club. The website to see all that is happening is: www.greatwesternbicyclerally.com

- ❑ **VAFB mountain bike loop. Saturday June 2nd 8:00 am at the Main Gate. (Bring ID)**
Bruce will lead us on an incredible 25 mile loop around the central part of the base with stunning views of the coast and great singletrack trails. Also included is the awesome Cody Trail. Ride Leader is Bruce
- ❑ **Mother Hubbards – Sunday June 3rd 8:30 at Home Depot.**
Bob will lead us out Santa Rosa road for a breakfast stop at Mother Hubbards in Buellton before returning to Lompoc. Two options for the return, 246 or Santa Rosa, riders choice. Ride Leader is Bob Grant
- ❑ **Los Alamos Loop – Sunday June 10th 9:00 at Los Alamos Flagpole.**
This is one of my favorite rides with some climbing a swift descent and practically a guaranteed tailwind finish. The loop is just about 50 miles including Alisos Canyon, Foxen Canyon, Orcutt and highway 135 to the finish. Ride leader is Gene Pritchett

Standing Club Rides

- ❑ Wednesday Night Mountain Bike Ride. Meet behind City Hall at the corner of C and Cypress at 6:00pm. Generally an up to 2 hour ride of the hills and dales behind La Purisma Mission and around the village.
- ❑ Friday Morning Mother Hubbards Breakfast Ride meets in the Home Depot Parking lot at 8:30. They generally head out Santa Rosa road and return via 246 after breakfast with a mild to moderate pace. About 40 miles.
- ❑ Saturday Morning – 8 am Meet at Southside Coffee Company 105 South H street.
Easy road ride to Surf as a group and a quicker return to town
- ❑ Sunday Morning Show and Go (Unless pre-empted by a scheduled ride above) – 8am
Meet at Southside Coffee Company 105 South H street
Road or Mountain Bike Ride
Easy or Epic – you decide

The next meeting of the Lompoc Valley Bicycle Club is 7pm Tuesday, June 12th at Baker's Square. Come early if you want to eat dinner. See you there!

Check us out on the web at www.bikelompoc.com

If anyone has ride proposals, stories, articles, comments, jokes, or cartoons they would like to share or bicycle things they would like to sell, please contact me (Gene Pritchett) at 735-7763 or 733-2684 or e-mail at Dr.Gene@gte.net for entry into next month's newsletter.

